





Overview

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OfERR staff at researcher training in Tiruchirappalli, India (2017) Photo credit: Tamara Megaw



Introduction to research project

- 'I'm Prepared: Equality of Refugee Women in the Return and Reintegration Context' program, funded by DFAT's Gender Action Platform
- Between 2017 and 2021, 'I'm Prepared' worked with:
 - Tamil refugee families in Tamil Nadu, India and communities in north-east Sri Lanka
 - Karenni refugee families in north Thailand and local communities in Kayah State, Myanmar

Program goal:

"Refugee women are
empowered through a return and
reintegration process that
enables full enjoyment of social,
economic and political rights"

Partnership consortium:













Community-based protection for refugees

- 'I'm Prepared' program pioneered a refugee-led approach in the context of return and reintegration, using protection preparedness methods, to strengthen women's resilience and gender equality
- Community-based protection promotes preparation and management of risks,
 challenges and opportunities
- Community-based protection supports more sustainable reintegration
- Community-based protection and focus on gender equality is not common in mainstream refugee return and reintegration praxis
- The 'I'm Prepared' program measured indicators of women's protection and empowerment - safety, justice and dignity



Community-based protection for refugees

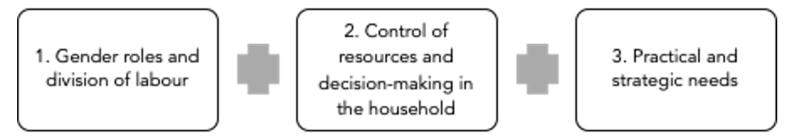
The program gave us specific objectives - Our empowerment training focused more on decision-making and through the livelihood training women were able to gain confidence... With coronavirus everything changed and there was a lot of uncertainty. Women offered a lot of assistance to each other and took care of emotional needs. People in the camps were able to deal with the situation in a much better way than ever before. They say one day we will return, "this too shall pass", that's the kind of attitude brought about through this initiative.

- Women's Empowerment Programme Coordinator, OfERR



Conceptual understanding of gender equality used in the research project

Moser's analytical framework (1993) to help identify changes in gender equality



Division of labour between women and men in types of work:

- Reproductive
- Productive
- Community management
- Community politics

Who has access to, management and control of resources

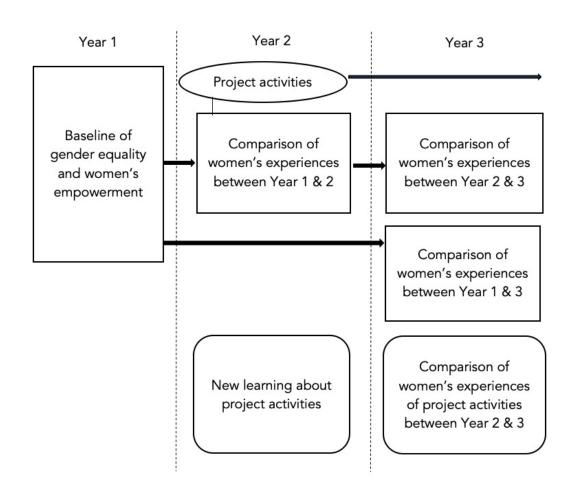
Who makes household decisions about money

Meeting practical needs will address women's inadequate living conditions

Meeting strategic needs will enable women to: transform existing inequalities in roles and decision-making; achieve greater equality in rights, responsibilities and opportunities



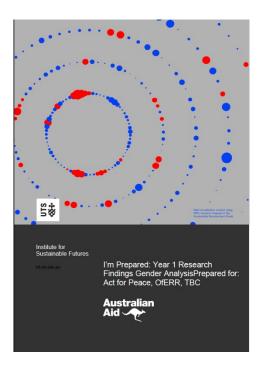
Research approach



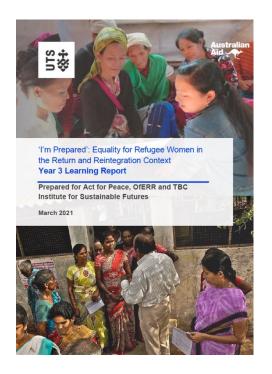
- Longitudinal design comparing a baseline in 2018 of program participant's experience of gender relations and decision-making with an assessment of changes in 2019 and 2020
- In Year 2 and 3 the research explored the contribution of project activities (e.g. gender training, livelihood training, protection training) as well as other factors to influencing any changes experienced by refugee and returnee women
- Interviews of women and men in the same households to compare gendered experiences
 approx. 50 household pairs in Thailand and 50 household pairs in India, including 12 households who returned to Sri Lanka













POLICY BRIEF | MARCH 2021

Gender Equality and Empowerment for Refugee Women in Return and Reintegration Contexts

funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Australian Add program. The research compared a baseline in 2018 of program participants' experience of gender relations and decision-making about return/reintegration with an assessment of changes in 2019 and 2020. The research explored the contribution of program interventions as well as other factors to influencing any changes experienced by refugee and returnes women.

Community-based protection

Community-based protection
Community-based protection (CBP) can strengthen the
ability of refugees, particularly weemen, to anticipate,
prepare for, and manage the risks, challenges and
opportunities often associated with voluntary
reparatiston. Risk wareness, combined with individual;
family and collective action, results in better informed
decision making, and better preparations. Ultimately
reliance and recilience, and by reducing the pressure on
family, community and observements exvices on return.

The experience of Act for Peace and its partners prior to and during the Tim Prepared program indicates that women's empowerment status cometimes diminishes during the return process. Women refuges are not always involved in key decision making and it is common for women to become dependent on family members in the return context. Many of the leadership members in the return context. Many of the leadership positions and freedoms gained in the camp provironment are not available immediately in the return

Within refugee return and reintegration praxis, refugee-led preparedness is rarely a priority, and there is often little focus on gender equality and women's empowerment. Women can and should play a central role in preparedness and voluntary repatriation.

'I'm Prepared": Gender Equality and Empowerment for Refugee Women in Return-Reintegration Contexts

Tamil refugees who fled the civil war in Sri Lanka have resided in refugee camps in Tamil Nadu, India, for up to three decades and are now returning to lorth-East Sri Lanka. After over thirty years North-East Sri Lanka. After over thirty years of conflict, indigenous Karenin refugees from Keyah state in Myanmar continue to reside in refugee comps inside Thailand. In these contexts, the goal of the "Im Prepared" program was that "Refugee women are empowered through a return and reintegration process that enables full enjoyment of social, economic and political rights. The program

and - for those wishing to return - increase

women in areas of return enjoy strengthene economic opportunities and empowerment to enable safe, dignified and sustainable reintegration

(3) Leadership: Refugee and returnee women enjoy (a) Leadersnip: nertugee and returnee women enjoy increased social and political influence, respect through leadership and engagement in family, community-level and broader society in camp settings and areas of return.

(4) Learning: Development effectiveness preparedness and return and reintegration

Act for Peace (AfP) provided overall management of the program, working with Organization for Eelam / Elangai Refugees (OfERR) in India and Sri Lanka and The Border Consortium (TBC) in Thailand and Myanmar, who in turn partnered with civil society organisations Karenni Women's Organisation (Thailand and Myanmar), Karenni Refugee Repatriation and Reconstruction Working Group (Myanmar) and Kayah Phu Social Service and Development Association (Myanmar). The Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney (ISF









Year 1 Research Findings Gender Analysis (2018)

Year 2 Learning Report (2019)

Year 3 Learning Report (2021)

Gender Equality and **Empowerment for Refugee** Women in Return-Reintegration Contexts – Policy Brief (2021)





Collaborative approach to research design and implementation

- **Training** of local refugee-led organisations in research skills and gender analysis
- Piloting of data collection tools in the local contexts
- Refugees trained as researchers carried out interviews with other refugees
- Research partners involved in sense-making of results



TBC and KNWO staff at researcher training in Mae Hong Son, Thailand (2019) Photo credit: Tamara Megaw





Partnership approach contributed to quality and rigour of program learning

- Longitudinal study over 3 years with same cohort of refugees
- Rich picture of women and men refugees' perspectives and lived experiences
- Learning from refugee women about the value of program activities affirmed the work partners were doing
- 'I'm Prepared research extended the gender programming approach of partners
- The Moser framework helped partners to understand more about their contribution to gender equality
- From ISF we got a new way of looking at gender through the Moser Framework and it added a more systematic way that...allowed us to give greater depth to dialogue on gender with refugee communities and our partners. It was particularly helpful... and we will be extending to the other seven camps where we work.
- Thailand Programme Coordinator, The Border Consortium





Partnership approach promoted inclusion of diverse knowledges and voices



KNWO staff at researcher training in Mae Hong Son, Thailand (2017) Photo credit: Tamara Megaw

- Learning shared across different working contexts between partners about women's empowerment approaches of community-based protection of Karenni and Tamil refugees
- Amplified the narratives and experiences of refugee women who would not otherwise have voice in international forums





Partnership approach contributed to improved programming practice and influence in the sector

- Through involvement of refugee-led organisations in research, program partners could share learning with a wider audience
- 'I'm Prepared' regional mid-term learning event sharing with donors and the refugee protection sector in Asia
- Policy brief co-written by program partners
- 'I'm Prepared' program shared as best practice on the UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees platform



'I'm Prepared' partners in gender equality discussion group at mid-term learning event (2019) Photo credit: Tamara Megaw



Thank you

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