

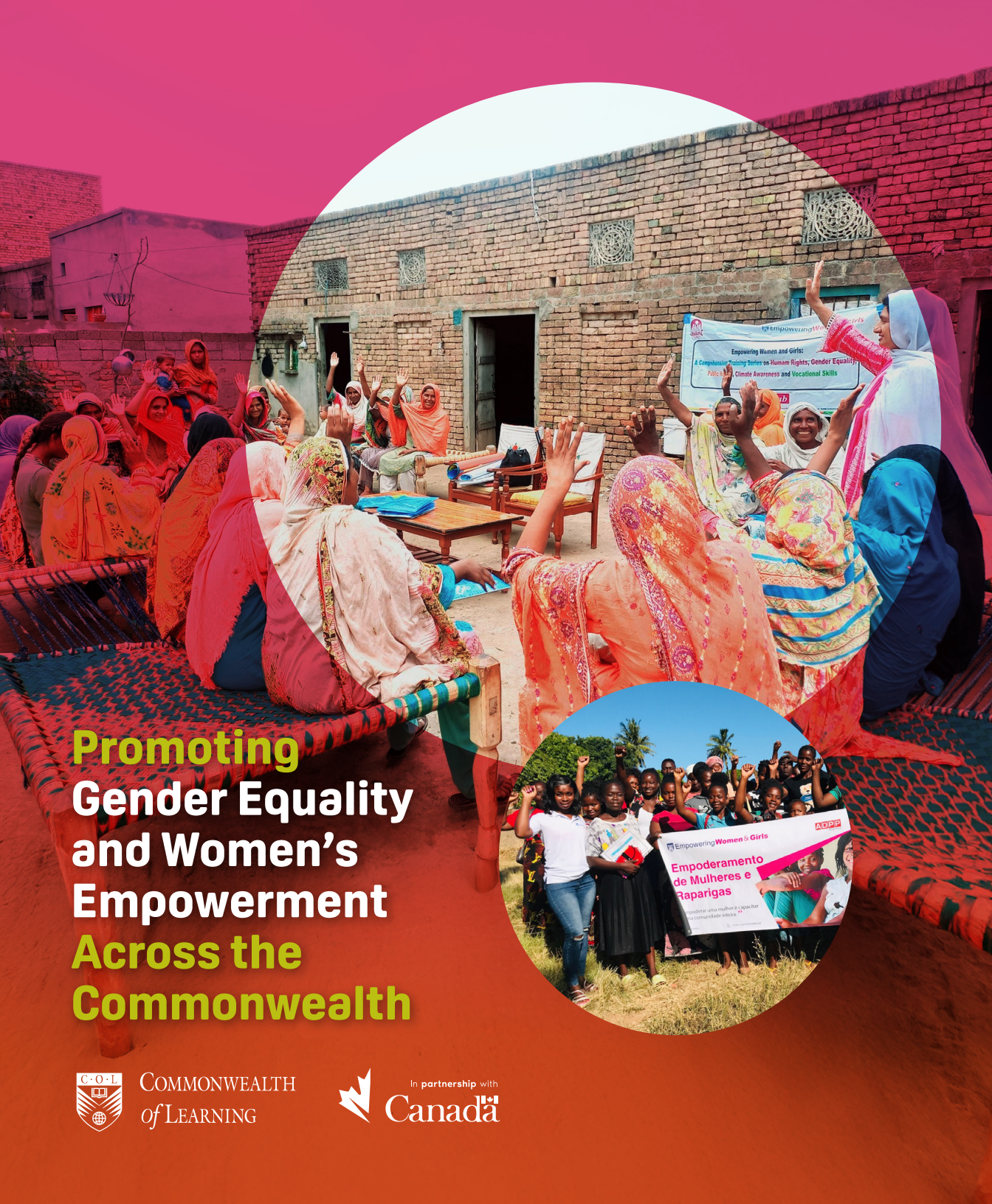
Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Across the Commonwealth



COMMONWEALTH
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In partnership with
Canada



PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

Implemented by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Supported by Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation created by the Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.



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About the Project

The EWG project supports gender equality and women's empowerment in Bangladesh, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Implemented by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) with support from Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the initiative fosters inclusive education, economic resilience, and social change for women and girls, including Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) in rural, remote, and disadvantaged communities.

The project provides life and vocational skills training to 75,000 women and girls, connecting them with employment agencies, financial institutions, and markets. This comprehensive approach fosters employment, entrepreneurship, and school reintegration, all of which contribute to economic independence, poverty reduction and gender equality.

In addition, 20,000 men and boys are trained to ensure that they have the capacity to promote gender equality in their communities and contribute to changing discriminatory social norms. Furthermore, using a context specific and holistic approach, with coordinated interventions operating at the individual,

household, community and societal levels, the project engages government officials, community leaders, Women's Rights Organisations (WROs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), financial institutions, and employers, to create a safe and enabling environment for the successful implementation and the sustainability of the project. This context-specific lens allows the project to cater to the individual and unique needs of women and girls, men and boys and community members which are shaped by the specific geo-political, economic, cultural and climate conditions of their countries.

The EWG project drives sustainable change through three integrated pathways:

Health, Rights and Social Empowerment:

Increasing awareness of human rights, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention, and advocacy through WROs and community-led actions.

Education and Skills Development:

Improving access to lower secondary education, vocational training, and digital learning opportunities for women and girls.

Economic Empowerment:

Enhancing livelihoods through vocational training, entrepreneurship, and improved access to markets and financial tools.



We use intersectional frameworks to understand barriers to empowerment.

Women and girls have multifaceted identities and face intersectional barriers to empowerment. This project is steered by a multi-layered, comprehensive, critical and gender-centric approach that acknowledges these intersectionalities. We employ a multi-dimensional framework to gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by women and girls. This approach allows us to address these challenges in a more targeted and effective manner. Our commitment is to empower women and girls by acknowledging their individual experiences and addressing the specific barriers they face.

Gender Equality Analysis Framework

This framework helps us understand the context in which women and girls and men and boys exist and how programmes and policies can better address the realities of both groups to create gender parity.

Climate and Gender Analysis Framework

Climate change acts as a threat multiplier. This means that women and girls who are already vulnerable in terms of economic empowerment, political protection and social empowerment are at an increased risk of climate-related disasters.

PWDs and Gender Analysis Framework

The Disability-Inclusive Development (DID) lens places an emphasis on how PWDs must be recognised as rights-holding and equal members of society who must be actively engaged in the development process regardless of their impairment or other factors such as race, age, ethnicity or gender.



“I used to find it challenging to understand how climate change and gender are connected, as I thought climate change affected everyone in the same way. However, I am now gaining a clearer understanding of how climate change impacts genders differently. Each day, it becomes more apparent how these effects are not the same for everyone. I’ve learned about various connections between climate change and gender equality, and I’ve also explored what different organisations are doing to address these issues.”

— Samina Afzal, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer, Bedari - Pakistan

Transformation Since Inception

Since 2023, the EWG project has achieved significant Outcome-level changes:

Intermediate Outcome 1100

Improved empowerment of women and girls including women/girls with disabilities from disadvantaged communities asserting their equality of rights and dealing with dominant social norms that perpetuate gender inequality and gender-based violence.

- 20%–25% gains in women’s decision-making (health, education, marriage and economy).
- 21.3%–32.6% rise in WRO engagement in tackling gender discrimination, child marriage and GBV.
- 35.4% increase in men’s gender equality knowledge and 42.1% increase in supportive practices.

Intermediate Outcome 1200

Improved and equitable attainment of lower secondary education among women/girls including women/girls with disabilities from disadvantaged communities.

- 10%–20% increase in girls’ lower secondary school retention.
- 16.3% rise in GBV knowledge and 11.7% improvement in GBV protective practices in schools.
- 90% of communities took action to support girls’ secondary education.
- 64.3%–70% Local Support Group (LSG) involvement in supporting girls’ education demonstrates strong community support.
- 60%–70% of trained women/girls moved from unemployment to entrepreneurship across five countries.

Intermediate Outcome 1300

Enhanced livelihood (agriculture and skills based) opportunities with sustainable climate resilient practices and improved incomes among women/girls including women/girls with disabilities from disadvantaged communities.

- 40%–60% yield and income gains for female farmers via climate-smart practices (except Malawi).
- 60%–70% adopted crop rotation, organic farming, resilient crops and 30%–40% adopted water conservation.
- Improved food security and reduced chemical input use across project areas.
- Land ownership gains for women: strong in Mozambique, 4%–5% in Pakistan and Sri Lanka and no change in Bangladesh and Malawi.
- All countries exceeded targets for non-farm employment days and Mozambique and Pakistan led with 126 and 129 extra days.



Outputs Achieved



598,760

individuals reached through 315 public campaigns



460

communities and villages engaged



444,629

women/girls reached through human rights awareness events



67,479

women/girls participated in awareness-raising events on public health services



73

Civil Society Platforms (CSPs) created to advocate for gender equality



47,934

women/girls trained in livelihoods and vocational skills



5,702

girls and boys reintegrated into formal schooling



1,466

teachers and school management staff trained in skills to deal with GBV



26,952

women/girls participated in financial literacy training



13,002

women/girls linked with employment and entrepreneurship



33,539

individuals trained in climate change issues and mitigation measures



15,844

women/girls accessed digital platforms on human rights and gender equality legislations



How Do We Measure Our Impact?

COL developed a rigorous Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Framework (RM&E) for the EWG project. The overall approach to this framework combines Results Based Management (RBM) with developmental evaluation. Its design fosters organizational learning to inform programme decisions throughout the project cycle and allows accountability to key stakeholders. The Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) of the EWG project provides the foundation in defining RM&E requirements to measure various results that it intends to achieve through clear pathways of change – Outputs, Outcomes, and Impact. This RM&E framework serves as basic reference for the project's performance management. The framework sets the context from the project's aim, global commitment to gender equality, COL's vision of promoting 'Learning for Sustainable Development' and alignment to GAC's development priorities.



"It was the best activity. We engaged the local support group of that village and they knew each household, every feature of the village and each resource, and they gave visuals for everything. I never did such activity before COL and learnt so much from it."

— Staff member, Bedari - Pakistan



Innovation in Monitoring

The Community Report Card (CRC) was introduced as a grassroots accountability mechanism that would enable local communities to monitor the progress of key EWG project performance indicators. Developed within the PMF, the CRC employs a participatory approach and visual representations to assess and communicate project performance effectively. Currently implemented in 60% of the intervention locations, the CRC has fostered active participation among community leaders in data collection. It serves as a vital tool for tracking girls' access to secondary education, vocational training and microfinance opportunities and community engagement in awareness campaigns and environmental initiatives. The CRC has fostered a strong sense of community ownership and accountability. Regular presentations of findings have deepened community understanding of the project.

Capacity Building of Partners

Following a needs assessment of partners' areas for training and capacity building, and needs identified post training, a detailed capacity building plan was developed. For efficiency and consistency, all the training events and webinars take place online using ZOOM, except for in person training when the Senior Adviser visits the partner countries. Each event is recorded and shared with partners together with a feedback survey. The recording serves as a mechanism for cascading the training, retraining and for evaluation. The survey provides information on the effectiveness of the training as well as identifying needs for future training.



“We learnt the tools and techniques of including people with disability (especially those visually impaired) using social media or other communication channels. I was just really impressed that COL anticipated our needs and gaps and was so responsive.”

***— Mzikazi Ntuli, Grants Administrator,
ADPP - Mozambique***

Integrating Technology Mediated and Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

COL is using online learning to build the capacity of partners' staff members. With enhanced capacity partners can offer technology mediated and online learning using Aptus and Moodle platforms. COL deployed 122 Aptus devices and seven Moodle platforms to increase access to digital learning. A mobile app for social protection is currently under development, expanding reach and resilience in underserved communities. The project launched online courses including Strengthening Communities to Attain Resiliency and Food Security (SCARF) course and the Women's Rights and GBV courses. Furthermore, the project developed short videos based on these courses to expand access to a wider range of users.

Publications

For more information on our publications please visit our website [COL - Empowering Women & Girls](#) for a range of resources including:

- Gender Equality, Climate Change and Persons with Disabilities Analysis
- Strengthening Communities to Attain Resiliency and Food Security (SCARF) Series
- Women's Human Rights and Gender-Based Violence Report
- Empowering Women and Girls Project Baseline Study
- Sustainability & Growth: Women Leaders Driving Long-Term Success in NGOs Podcast Series

"I am in the materials development section, and it is the first time that I have learned about OER. This session will not only help ADPP to develop OER but will also help ADPP to share its learning resources."

— Staff member,
ADPP - Mozambique



Stories of Change

At 12, Lisa, from Bangladesh, dropped out of school due to her family's financial crisis and was nearly forced into marriage. She resisted, and with support from the EWG project, returned to school at 14. With waived fees, extra tutoring, and skills training, she now balances studies, work, and home life—determined to graduate and grow her business.

Eneless, a part-time teacher in Malawi, boosted her income through a tailoring course, crafting eco-friendly bags and clothing with support from the EWG project. Her skills now support her family, fund students' supplies, and promote sustainability. Passionate about education and entrepreneurship, she dreams of opening a tailoring shop and sending her sons to university. "Tailoring," she says, "is wisdom that builds a future."

Rosalia, a tenant farmer in Mozambique, struggled under an exploitative land system. Through legal awareness and collective action with support from the EWG project, she secured ownership of land despite resistance from local leaders. Now financially stable and free from unfair harvest dues, she inspires other women to claim their rights. Her journey reflects empowerment, persistence, and progress towards gender equality in land ownership.

Soraya, once a landless woman in Pakistan, earning just US\$13/month, transformed her life through tie-dye training and entrepreneurship provided by the EWG project. Investing in equipment and blending skills, she grew her income to US\$720/year. With business training and family support, she now empowers others, trains women, and influences community attitudes. Her journey reflects resilience, financial independence, and a shift towards gender equity in the country.



Kaushalya, from Sri Lanka, once limited to a single annual crop earning just US\$700, transformed her one-acre farm through off-season cultivation using crop rotation, organic manure, and rainwater conservation with support from the EWG project. Her income rose to US\$2,945, easing household stress and boosting her confidence. Now financially stable and influential in her community, she inspires other women to adopt sustainable farming for year-round productivity.

Our Partners

The success of the EWG project is made possible through strong collaboration with local partners:

- Bangladesh – Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES) and Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha (SSS)
- Malawi – Concerned Youth Organisation (CYO) and Centre for Research and Development Initiative (CERADI)
- Mozambique – Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo (ADPPP)
- Pakistan – Bedari and Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC)
- Sri Lanka – Women’s Development Centre (WDC)

Contact Information



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