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MULTIPLY IMPACT.

World Vision®

BEYOND ACCESS

Phase 1 Research Report

Evaluation confirms transformative gains in women's empowerment, income, and water access

SUMMARY

Extreme poverty is perpetuated by factors that disproportionately impact women and girls—from harmful social norms to the burden of water collection and limited opportunities for education and economic empowerment. When half the population is held back, progress stalls for entire communities.

Beyond Access is a family-centered program that addresses extreme poverty by placing women and girls at the center of development to create lasting impact. It accelerates transformation through intentionally sequenced behavior change; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); and economic empowerment initiatives. This enables women to transition from survival—often burdened by daily water collection—to lives marked by greater freedom, agency, and opportunity. By unlocking women's potential, Beyond Access strengthens families and uplifts entire communities.

Evaluation findings from Phase 1 of World Vision's Beyond Access program affirm that the intentional design and integration of WASH interventions with economic empowerment activities can strengthen development outcomes for women and girls. Beyond Access was implemented between October 2022 and September 2025 across World Vision program areas in Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. The program

demonstrated measurable improvements across several key empowerment metrics, including women's access to water, participation in savings groups, personal earnings and savings, and decision-making authority.

Phase 1 endline results affirmed that this multisector approach strengthens women's skills and confidence, addresses systemic barriers to participation and agency, and challenges long-held norms that limit opportunity. As a result, women and girls experience greater hope, autonomy, and the ability to shape their own futures, while contributing to the well-being of their families and communities.

Insights from Phase 1, including key findings from the collaborative learning approach undertaken in partnership with Emory University and local research institutions in each of the four countries, have informed the design of Phase 2 (2025–2030).

Beyond Access accelerates transformation by unlocking women's potential to strengthen their families and uplift entire communities.

PROGRAM PHASES

PHASE 1: PROGRAM LAUNCH

Beyond Access was launched in Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, and Zimbabwe as a three-year initiative centered on women and girls as catalysts for change.

PHASE 2: PROGRAM EXPANSION

Building on the demonstrated success of Phase 1, the program is expanding to reach an additional 360,000 people across 12 countries on three continents by 2030.

LEARNING APPROACH

Beyond Access Phase 1 was grounded in a collaborative learning approach designed to examine how integrated, multisector interventions influence women's outcomes over time. Developed in collaboration with Emory University and local research partners in each of the four countries, this approach generated evidence to inform ongoing program adaptations, strengthen implementation, and guide future design and expansion.

The learning approach consisted of two complementary components:

1. Research led by Emory University

Emory University conducted formative research and a process evaluation to assess Beyond Access' underlying theory and implementation. This research deepened our understanding by testing the core assumptions and examining how the interventions functioned in practice.

2. Program evaluations led by World Vision and local learning partners

Baseline, midline, and endline evaluations were conducted by local learning partners in collaboration with World Vision to track impact. This component measured changes in outcomes over time and assessed the overall effectiveness of program delivery.

KEY RESULTS FROM PHASE 1

 **42 pts**

Women earning income from a small business or employment increased by an average of 42 percentage points across all countries.

 **51 pts**

Women with personal savings increased by an average of 51 percentage points across all countries.

 **29 pts**

Women gaining basic water access improved by an average of 29 percentage points across all countries.

 **31 pts**

Women's participation in community water decision-making increased by an average of 31 percentage points across all countries.



“These results—achieved in just three years—reflect what’s possible when we move beyond siloed interventions toward truly integrated programming. The Beyond Access program is delivering rapid, measurable impact and is informing how we design and implement our programs to continue to deliver strong results for women, men, and children.”

Margaret Schuler
World Vision Chief Impact Officer

PROGRAM RESULTS

Local partners conducted standardized surveys with female participants across the four Phase 1 countries at baseline, midline, and endline to measure progress. The baseline used a population-based sample in the target areas. Sampling at midline and endline was conducted among program participants but did not necessarily survey the exact same people. Results demonstrate change in World Vision’s targeted operational areas, rather than nationwide impact. However, all results presented below are statistically significant.

Endline results from World Vision’s Phase 1 evaluation show that women participating in Beyond Access experienced improvements across multiple dimensions, including increased income and savings, significantly improved access to clean water, greater agency and autonomy over their time, and increased empowerment and authority in household and community decision-making.

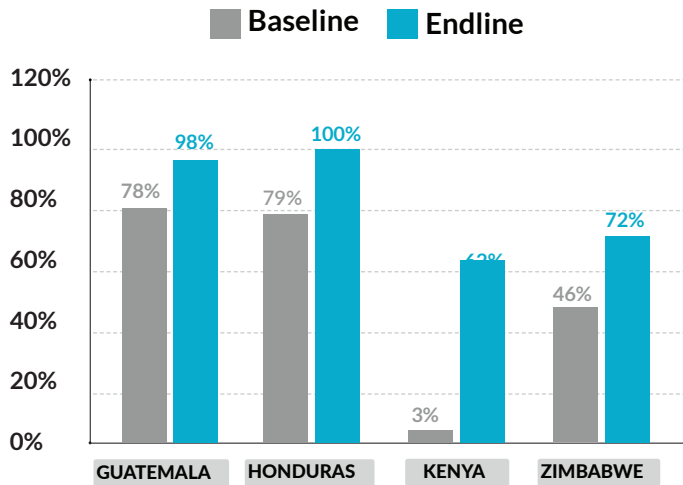
LEARNING PARTNER ROLES

		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected local learning partners and oversaw baseline, midline, and endline surveys Worked with Emory and local learning partners to guide and refine research strategies Adapted the program in response to research learnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigated barriers to women’s economic empowerment to inform solutions Led Water Journeys research to uncover the daily realities and challenges of women Supported and built capacity of local learning partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted field surveys and focus groups to capture voices of participants Collected and analyzed baseline, midline, and endline survey data Partnered with Emory on field research and process evaluations

WASH ACCESS

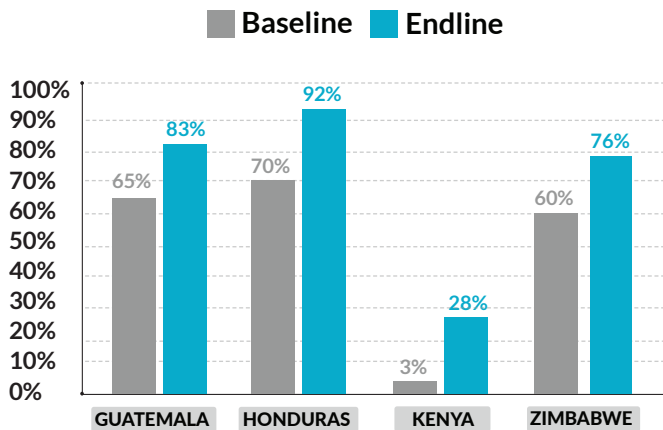
Women in all four Phase 1 countries gained improved water and sanitation access. The Beyond Access evaluation showed important gains for women across WASH indicators in each country program, including access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities with soap.

Percentage of Women with Basic Water Access
(from an improved source within 30 min.)



Across all four Phase 1 countries, women gaining access to basic clean water within a 30-minute roundtrip journey **improved by an average of 29 percentage points**. Access in Kenya increased the most—by almost **60 percentage points**.

Percentage of Households with Basic Sanitation Access



Sanitation coverage increased significantly across all countries, with improvements ranging from **16 percentage points up to 25 percentage points**. Not only does improved sanitation reduce the prevalence of waterborne diseases, but it also offers greater privacy, dignity, and safety—especially for women and girls.

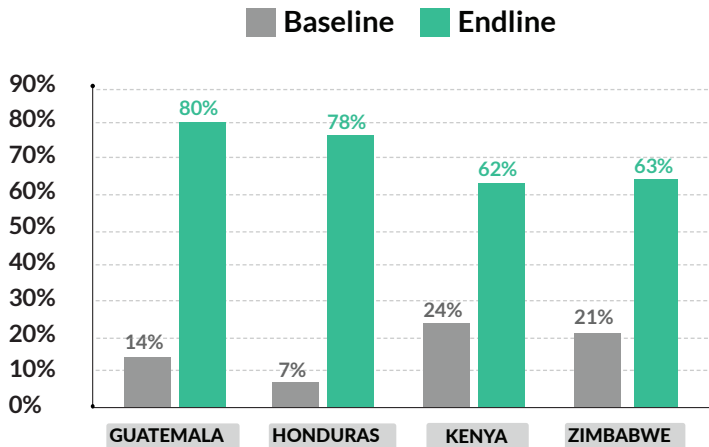
Note: All endline results shown are statistically significant.



ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

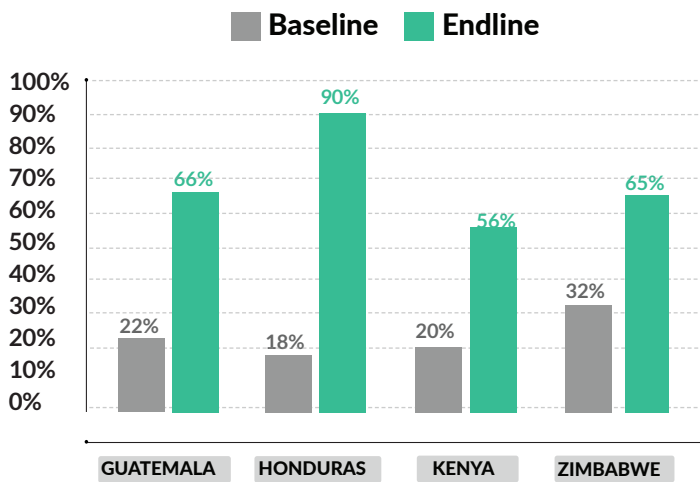
Across all Phase 1 countries, women reported significant economic gains between baseline and endline. High participation rates in Savings for Transformation groups, especially when combined with business and financial literacy skills, helped women build their savings, start businesses, and generate additional income.

Percentage of Women Who Have Personal Savings



Women who had personal savings increased dramatically—by an average of **51 percentage points** across all countries, with the most significant changes in Central America. Guatemala increased from **14% to 80%**, and Honduras from **7% to 78%**.

Percentage of Women with Income From Small Business or Work



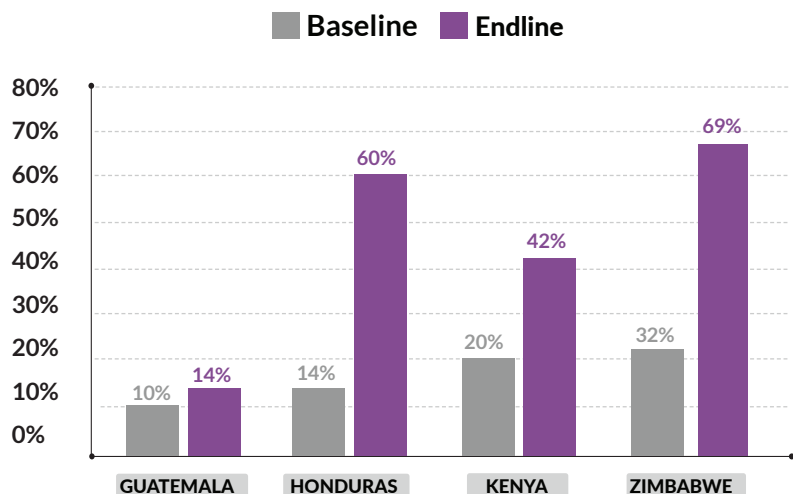
Women earning income from a small business or employment increased by an average of **42 percentage points** across all countries. The most significant improvement was in Honduras, with a **72 percentage point** increase.



PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES

Women in Phase 1 countries experienced positive shifts away from dependency and toward self-efficacy and personal agency—especially in decision-making. For example, women’s participation in community water decision-making increased by an average of 31 percentage points across all four countries. Planning for community water needs is a process most women had been excluded from in the past, despite bearing primary responsibility for their household water needs.

Percentage of Women Participating In Community Water Decision-Making



Among the four Phase 1 countries, the most significant increase was noted in Honduras, with a change from **14% to 60%** of women reporting participation in community water decision-making.



LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons from our program experience highlight what worked, what needs sustained focus, and how these insights will shape future efforts. These learnings reflect both practical implementation realities and strategic considerations for driving lasting impact.

Water burden has an economic impact:

Water collection imposes heavy physical, time, and energy burdens on women. Improved water access cuts down these barriers and frees them to take on opportunities to lead and earn income.

Our integrated approach drives transformation:

Sequencing interventions, including behavior change, WASH, and economic empowerment, while centering women's needs and goals, accelerates progress in the lives of women—as well as in the lives of the men and children in their homes and communities.

Collaborative learning promotes adaptation and innovation:

A collaborative, continuous learning approach enabled program insights to be embedded in real time rather than waiting until the program ended. It also fostered ownership of learnings, adaptation, and innovation among in-country teams.

Men must be engaged as partners and allies:

If men are not engaged at the outset, the social and cultural norms and mindsets that limit women's participation and access will often persist. Lasting progress requires men and women to be partners in the process.

Changing entrenched mindsets requires time and consistency:

Deeply held beliefs about gender roles and personal agency cannot be changed quickly. Nurturing healthy and equitable perspectives must remain a long-term, consistent focus within program interventions.

PUBLICATIONS



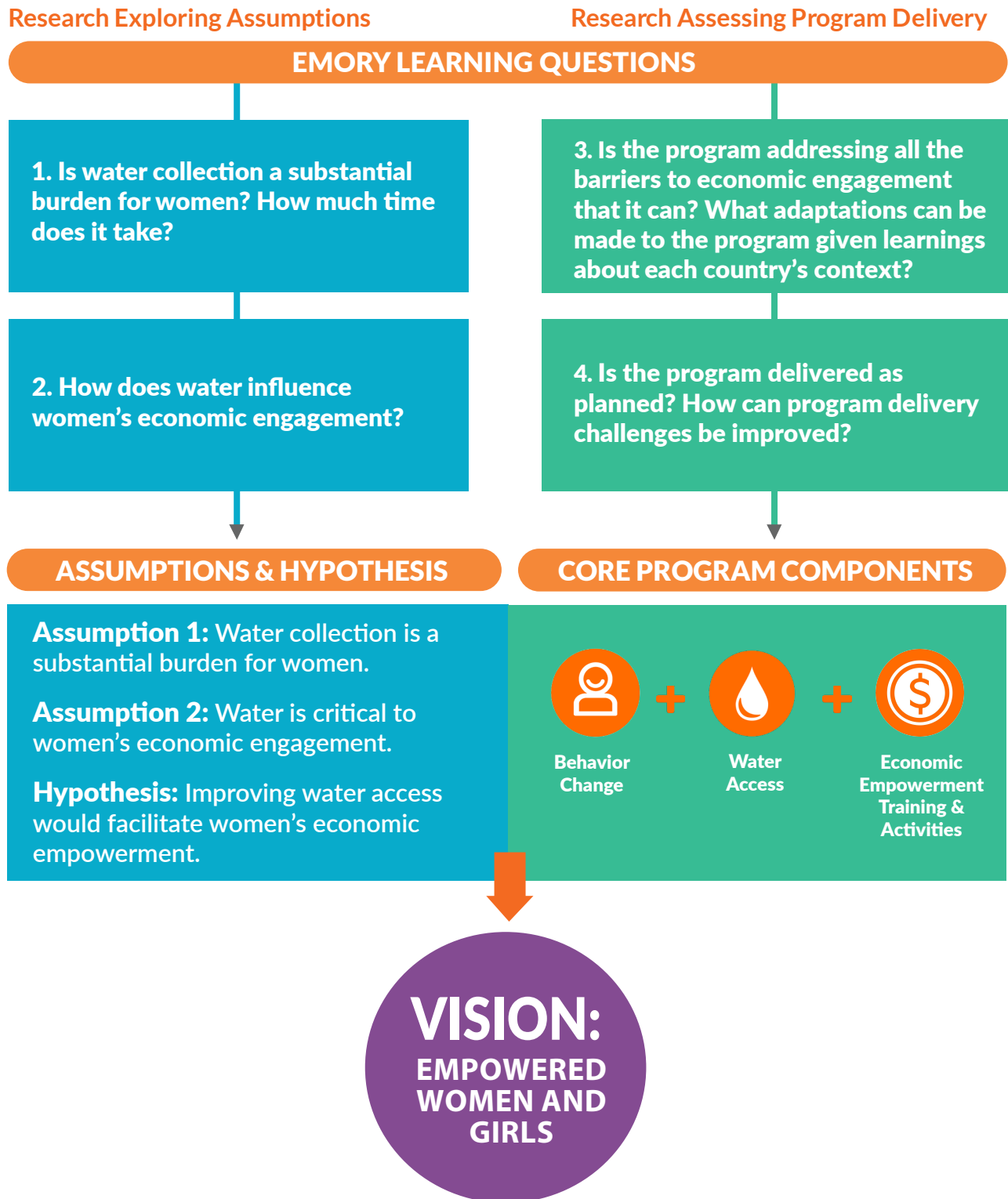
[Women's experiences collecting and accessing water: A mixed methods investigation](#)

[“If we have water, we have money” A qualitative investigation of the role of water in women's economic engagement](#)

In summary, transformation is possible when programs combine integrated interventions with a strong learning culture and inclusive engagement. Addressing water access, nurturing equitable mindsets, involving men alongside women, and fostering economic opportunities creates the foundation for lasting empowerment and community resilience.

KEY RESEARCH LEARNINGS

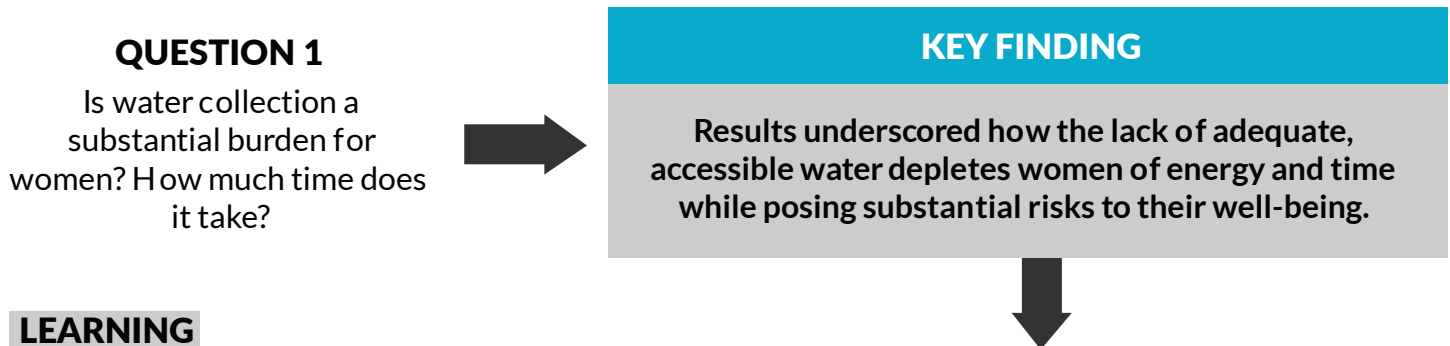
Emory University's research was guided by four primary learning questions. As shown below the first two questions tested the program's core assumptions and the latter two assessed program delivery:



KEY RESEARCH LEARNINGS (CONTINUED)

To explore questions 1 and 2, Emory University led a Water Journeys study to quantify the physical and time burden of water collection among women in program areas. The first round of data collection (2023) included women from all four Phase 1 countries. A second round (2024) followed a subset of participants in Kenya and Honduras to examine changes over time and the influence of water source access and seasonality.

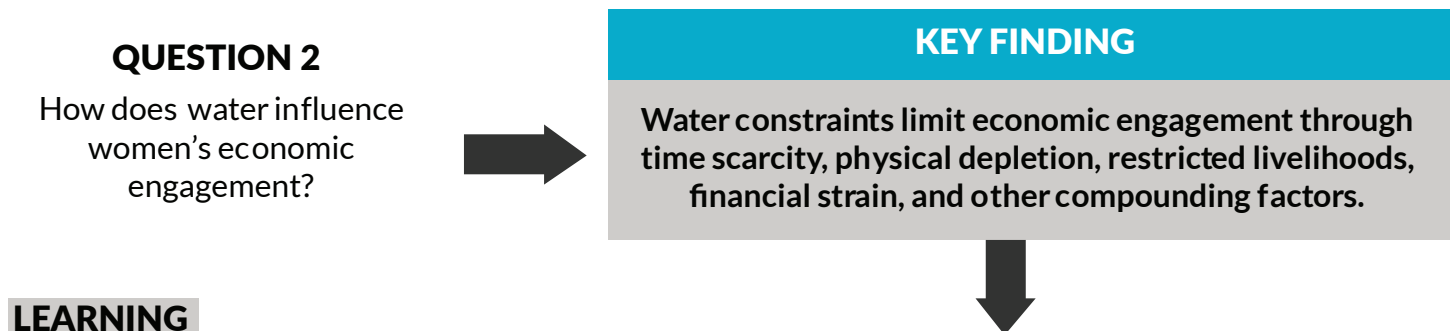
In addition, qualitative research—including 72 focus group discussions (556 participants) and 56 interviews with women and men across all four countries—was conducted by local learning partners to explore barriers to women’s economic empowerment and the role of water in shaping economic participation.



LEARNING

Results from the Water Journeys study demonstrate that water collection places a substantial and multidimensional burden on women across contexts. The research revealed that, in some settings (Kenya and Zimbabwe), women are walking as far as 9.8 miles roundtrip. They are burning as many as 950 calories by carrying up to 110 pounds in their daily effort to collect enough water for their family.

While collection distances and conditions varied by country, women consistently expended significant time and physical energy to collect water, often for quantities insufficient to meet household needs.



LEARNING

Qualitative findings indicate that water constraints significantly limit women’s economic engagement through multiple, interrelated mechanisms. These include time scarcity associated with water collection, physical fatigue and injury, reduced agricultural and livestock productivity, and financial strain resulting from water-related costs. These constraints are often intensified by harmful social norms, seasonality, drought, and life stage factors such as pregnancy, caregiving responsibilities, and household composition.

These findings demonstrate that water collection represents a significant barrier to women’s economic participation and well-being, and that changes in water access can influence women’s time use, energy expenditure, and livelihood strategies.

QUESTION 3

Is the program addressing all the barriers to economic engagement that it can? What adaptations can be made to the program given learnings about each country's context?



KEY FINDING

Programming addressed the majority of root causes constraining women's economic engagement across all countries, demonstrating strong program-barrier alignment.



LEARNING

Problem and solution trees that were used to verify program-barrier alignment at midterm demonstrated that the program was well-targeted. Common barriers emerged, including women's limited access to capital, time, markets, and training, plus unsupportive relationships—all shaped by harmful social norms. Male engagement, noted as the most significant programming gap, was addressed in the second half of the program.

QUESTION 4

Is the program delivered as planned? How can program delivery challenges be improved?



KEY FINDING

The program was largely delivered as planned, with responsive adjustments made as needs were identified.



LEARNING

The evaluation approach led to actionable programming improvements, including adjustments to the sequencing of interventions, refresher trainings, development of localized materials for participants with low literacy, and strengthening of partnerships.



WHAT'S NEXT

As Beyond Access moves into Phase 2, we are scaling these insights to reach a total of 12 countries (Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Viet Nam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) by 2028. By the conclusion of Phase 2 in 2030, our aim is to have empowered 360,000 people to lift themselves out of extreme poverty.

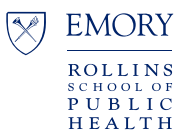
Phase 2 will build on the sequenced and layered model tested during Phase 1, conducting baseline, midline, and endline surveys to track outcomes. We will continue to invest in learning and evaluation to ensure the program remains evidence-based and responsive to community needs.

JOIN US

To learn more about World Vision's women-centered design programming, visit our [Mapping the Blue Thread: Beyond Access program page](#) or contact the Beyond Access program representative [Kristie Urich](#).



Research conducted in partnership with:



World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to helping children, families, and communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

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