



TRANSFORMING AGENCY, ACCESS, AND POWER



TAAP Scenario: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

A Supplemental Resource to the TAAP Toolkit and Guide for Inclusive Development

The TAAP Initiative is an evolving and collaborative learning initiative, launched in 2015, in support of promoting and integrating gender and social inclusion in international development projects at organizational and programmatic levels. The TAAP initiative includes the TAAP approach (analytical framework, five TAAP principles and integrating a universal and intersectional approach to social inclusion throughout a project cycle), the TAAP Toolkit and Guide for Inclusive Development, TAAP Tuesday newsletters, partnerships, thought leadership and learning agenda.

TAAP Scenarios are a set of project planning guides, based on real projects, that show what TAAP looks like in different settings. Each scenario provides a project description and an overall strategy for integrating social inclusion; a set of inclusive inquiry and analysis questions; guiding questions to ask across the project cycle; a set of inclusion-sensitive strategies and actions to implement across the project cycle, and a summary of results.

TAAP Scenario: Access to Justice illustrates how the USAID-funded **International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) Muslim Women's Initiative** in India promoted the empowerment of Muslim women as active agents in developing their own communities, arresting the negative cycle of their marginalization and promoting their social, economic and political participation. The IFES MWI was implemented before the conception of the TAAP Initiative, is included here as it serves as a good model that embodies TAAP principles. IFES has been a valued contributor to the TAPP Initiative.

Note: Illustrative questions in Part 3 and illustrative strategies and action in Part 4 of the scenario are a mix of *actual* questions and actions, and *desirable* questions and actions based on the TAAP Toolkit and Guide.

TAAP Scenario Part 1: Project Description and Explore Overall Strategy for Integrating Social Inclusion

The Muslim Women's Initiative (MWI), implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and civil society partners in India¹, promoted the empowerment of Muslim women as active agents in developing their own communities, arresting the negative cycle of their marginalization and promoting their social, economic and political participation. It did this through a phased approach that:



- addressed the knowledge gap among Muslim women about their rights in the Qur'an and under Indian law;
- supported Muslim women in accessing their rights;
- fostered understanding among all sections of the Muslim community (including men and boys) about women's rights;
- encouraged participation in women's self-help groups (SHGs) and income generation projects;
- developed leadership skills among Muslim women; and
- created community-based support for Muslim women's rights.

MWI was supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other funding sources and implemented as a key component of IFES' Women's Legal Rights Initiative. For more information on the WMI project as well as a graphic novel illustrating the project:

www.IFES.org/MWI and www.IFES.org/MWI_graphic_novel.

How has the project been guided by the five TAAP Principles?

1) **Participatory Approaches:** MWI was implemented in a thoughtful participatory manner in which a wide range of key stakeholders at the national and local levels were engaged in developing the program rationale, approach, materials, delivery and support structures. The participatory approach was critical to the project's successful implementation and sustainability (the program's core components are still thriving, 8 years after IFES concluded funding and direct support).

2) **Context Sensitivity:** MWI used a multi-pronged approach to promote Muslim women's rights under Indian *and* Islamic law, both of which were integrated to effectively address the multiple marginalization of Muslim women in India. Critical to its intervention, MWI worked simultaneously with women, girls, men and boys, as well as community and religious leaders to foster understanding about and build broad-based support for women's rights. It is important to note here that the Constitution of India allows

¹ IFES partnered with several local organizations throughout implementation of MWI. These included: Gharib Nawaz Mahila Avam Bal Kalyan Samiti (GNS); Group for Urban and Rural Development (GUARD); SABALA; Spurthi Mahila Mandal; and Visthar.

different religious communities to be governed by their ‘personal laws’ in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance and certain other religious matters. This particular feature is a legacy of British colonial law that equated the personal and family domain with religious identity. Reform of personal laws in general and Muslim Personal Law, in particular, has been an arduous process. Conservative elements within the Muslim community have resisted reform in the name of ‘identity’. The Indian state has often treated the views and positions of conservative leaders as synonymous with the community itself. MWI engaged women’s groups who continued to struggle for equal rights through legal reform. The program was sensitive to the rising right-wing anti-minority and anti-gender-equality rhetoric (interestingly from the same political forces) in some areas of project implementation which made it challenging to address issues of social and legal reform within minority communities whilst they felt besieged by anti-minority sentiments.

3) Emphasis on Dignity and Agency: MWI was guided by the understanding that individuals should not be seen as victims or passive recipients of support, but rather as active protagonists and partners in the development of themselves and their communities. Throughout the MWI program, leadership development for Muslim women provided individuals with the knowledge, resources and support to take a lead role in generating sustainable change and advocating for women’s rights to education, decision-making, dignity, economic independence and political participation.

4) Address Power Imbalances: MWI addressed power imbalances by proactively engaging women and girls, men and boys in multiple layers of intervention, from the initial information-dissemination workshops on women’s rights in Indian and Islamic law to fostering community-based support networks that involved men and women in the community. MWI demonstrated that when men in the community were included in the program as partners they often supported the empowerment of women, became active advocates for women’s rights, and helped to create equality-conscious environments with lasting impacts.

5) Think Big/Think the Impossible: MWI did not just envision a context where women were brought into the existing power structures. It engaged women and men together to transform inequitable power structures, promote collective prosperity that enhances both individual and community well-being, and advocate for the full participation of women in all fields and decision-making. As such, MWI made women and men partners in fostering a more equitable environment of their choosing underpinned by Indian Law and rights guaranteed in the Qur’an.

How has the project taken a universal/cross-identities approach?

While universal approaches may be necessary to promote equality (e.g. to empower all girls and women and to ensure universal access to rights and services for all), there is a critical need to target particularly disadvantaged or marginalized groups, especially those facing multiple marginalization.² At the same time, while responding to the specific and overlapping factors that contribute to Muslim women’s unique marginalization, MWI did integrate a universal approach by framing interventions around the common and universally-applicable principles of equality, transparency, accountability, integrity, and the rule of law, and a firm belief in the power of unity, not only within the marginalized community but also with the wider community. MWI used both Qur’anic and secular quotes and resources to establish an atmosphere of strict adherence to democratic values and human rights principles and actively supported Muslim

² Amanda Lenhardt and Emma Samman In Quest of Inclusive Progress, Exploring Intersecting Inequalities in Human Development, Overseas Development Institute, Development Progress, Research Report 04 (2015).

women's participation in the larger women's rights movement. These values and participation were reinforced in the information workshops and MWI events, and through other means such as monthly newsletters and other communication mechanisms.

How has the project taken an intersectional approach?

MWI recognized that women experience different forms of oppression and marginalization depending on their different positions in society. Therefore, responding to marginalization of women based only on their gender fails to account for other forms of oppression a woman may face, and the way these different forms interact with one another to produce a unique pattern of oppression or disadvantage.³ The multi-pronged approach to MWI addressed these overlapping forms of marginalization through targeted, intersectional approaches that included engaging religious leaders and advocates for women's rights, advancing knowledge of women's rights in the context of both Indian and Islamic law, promoting income generation of women, and fostering women's Self Help groups among other interventions.

How has the project taken a transformative approach?

MWI programs to advance the equality of women and men cannot be conceived only in terms of bringing women into the various arenas of the current power structures. They must involve women and men striving together to build a new social order. MWI participants worked together to conceptualize fundamentally different concepts of power, work and equality. Power was conceptualized as the capacity to transform, mutualistic and integrative. Work was conceptualized not just as a means to accumulate material wealth that enriches a few but as a means to collective prosperity that promotes individual and community well-being. Equality was explored as not only a recognition of the unremunerated and unacknowledged work of feeding, nurturing and caring that women perform, but also full participation of women in all fields and decision-making. Exploring, developing, and articulating these concepts contributed to the effective implementation of MWI.

³ Crenshaw, K.W. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color (Stanford Law Review, Vol 6, 1991) 1242

TAAP Scenario Part 2: Inclusive Inquiry and Analysis

The Where, Who, Why, What, How and When framework used below is adapted from the conflict assessment framework at the core of *Conflict Assessment & Peacebuilding Planning: Toward a Participatory Approach to Human Security*, Lisa Schirch, 2013.

WHERE is the social inclusion, marginalization or exclusion taking place, in what context?

Amid recent decades of economic growth and democratic consolidation in India, little attention is given to Muslim women, the majority of whom are triply marginalized as women, persons living in poverty, and members of a religious minority. Such multiple and overlapping disadvantages – poverty, discrimination based on religion, and gender – reinforce Muslim women’s exclusion. Added to this, Muslim women also tend to experience “spatial inequalities” as they are more likely to be concentrated in disadvantaged locations, which in turn contributes to exclusion from political processes and decision making.⁴

WHAT are the driving factors behind the social inclusion, marginalization and/or exclusion, and what can be done to affect these factors?

Key factors driving the low status of Muslim women in India are a lack of education, economic power and autonomy.⁵ Additionally, the overall ghettoization of Muslims has often deprived them of government infrastructure such as health centers, schools, roads, garbage disposal and sewage facilities.⁶ Compounding this is the fact that Muslim women in India face them all in isolation due to restricted mobility imposed by conservative social structures. Exacerbating all of the disadvantages highlighted — and in some respects perpetuating them — is the fact that although Muslim women have the same political and legal rights as the rest of the population, they are unable to properly exercise those rights.⁷ Many Muslim women do not realize they have rights both under the Indian Constitution and religious law.⁸ This lack of knowledge restricts their ability to stand up for their rights, make decisions that affect their lives, earn a livelihood, or access government programs and services intended for them.

WHO is driving the social inclusion, marginalization and/or exclusion, and who is supporting social inclusion?

For Muslim women, marginalization is driven by different actors. Outside of the Muslim community, there is a common misperception that the gender disparity seen in many Muslim societies is a result of the religion itself, leaving non-Muslim Indians to disparage Islam and isolate Muslims as backward. Within the Muslim community, ongoing discrimination against the Muslim minority contributes to a siege mentality among Muslim leaders that encourages a restriction on women’s rights. Finally, within and outside of the Muslim community, men and women subscribe to an interpretation of masculinity and gender norms that is oriented around male control over women. MWI demonstrated that if engaged, these actors - including

⁴ Kabeer, Naila. Can the MDGs provide a pathway to social justice? The challenge of intersecting inequalities. New York: United Nations Development Programme. (2010).

⁵ Hasan, Zoya and Menon, Ritu, Unequal Citizens - A Study of Muslim Women in India (Oxford University Press, 2004), 241

⁶ Action Aid, Jahangirabad Media Institute and Indian Social Institute, “Preliminary Report on the Socio-Economic Condition of Muslims in India” (New Delhi, 2006) pg 5

⁷ Desai, S. and Gheda, T. (2014); see also Narain, V. Reclaiming the Nation: Muslim Women and the Law in India (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) pg 138

⁸ Engineer, A. A., Muslim Women in Indian Society (2007)

religious and community leaders as well as men - can be transformed as pivotal partners in, rather than barriers to, promoting gender equality.

***HOW** are key actors using power to drive the marginalization and exclusion?*

Marginalization and exclusion of Muslim women is perpetuated by actors within and outside of the Muslim community. Government actors, for example, have not consistently ensured that government services extended to Muslim citizens. This was noted in the 2005 Government of India study on Muslims in India — known as the Sachar Report - which found that affirmative action programs and government alleviation projects rarely reached the Muslim community. Within the Muslim community, religious leaders have too often shared conservative and patriarchal interpretations of Islam that undermine women's rights and equality.

***WHY** are the key actors motivated to drive the social inclusion?*

As a core message of its program, MWI recognized that advancing women's equality cannot be seen only as something that benefits women, but rather as a priority that enhances the wellbeing of women and men. The concept of equality, i.e. the full participation of women in all fields of endeavor and decision-making, was explored as something that would have positive impacts on the community's economic and social development, as well as be closer in line with the principles laid out in the Qur'an. This framing helped motivate religious leaders to share more equality-focused interpretations of Islam, in keeping with Islamic principles, as well as encourage men to support their wives, sisters, and family members to engage in public life and economic ventures.

***WHEN** is the social inclusion most likely to open to further expansion and when is the marginalization or exclusion most likely to be open to change for better or worse?*

The IFES MWI program was implemented at a time when there was significant data emerging around exclusion and the challenges therefrom in India. The 2005 Government of India study of the social, educational and economic status of Muslims in India — popularly known as the Sachar Report — assessed the status of Indian Muslims to be among the lowest of all segments of society. The report showed that Muslim women are particularly marginalized and disadvantaged. Women's organizations were also actively lobbying for the passage of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, having come together and formed a national lobby organization called Women Power Connect. The time was ripe for a program such as MWI to galvanize women in Muslim community to action.

TAAP Scenario Part 3: Guiding Questions Across the Project Life Cycle

Guiding questions supported the project team across the project cycle to explore who is included and excluded in India; how and why the marginalization and exclusion impacts the identity groups' agency, access and power; how the project might address exclusion and integrate social inclusion; and how the project can support the MWI stakeholders to integrate social inclusion in addressing India's access to justice challenges beyond the life of the project.

TAAP Phase 1: Inclusive Inquiry and Reflection / Illustrative Questions:

- What do we know and *not* know or understand about social inclusion, including the status of social inclusion and exclusion of Muslim Women in India at various social levels (i.e., individual, family and community level, organizational level, societal and social normative level, policy and enabling environment level)?
- What knowledge, attitudes and experiences did the IFES/MWI staff have?
- Are there biases that may impact individual and/or team efforts to be an inclusive program?
- What aspects of the project team's individual social identities and experiences shape how we approach sustainable development interventions?
- Can we explain the exclusion and the need for social inclusion to our audiences in a simple and understandable way?
- What do we need to learn about gender and social inclusion practices?
- What programming approaches are field staff most familiar and confident in using in their work in the community? How can we use these approaches to promote rights-based approaches to inclusion of marginalized and excluded persons as participants and stakeholders?
- How do the various aspects of the donor's identity (USAID) and the implementing partner's identity (IFES and local organizations), shape the commitment to social inclusion in the project?
- What can we tell (e.g. in TAAP's Phase 1, Step B, Activity 2) about the enabling environment for social inclusion at headquarters and project levels?



TAAP Phase II: Social Inclusion Analysis / Illustrative Questions:

- Scope of Inclusion Analysis: As the primary focus of the project is promotion of Muslim women's social, economic and political participation, what are the parameters for studying marginalized and excluded identity groups within the themes?

- Stakeholder Analysis: How can we use a stakeholder analysis to understand who the various stakeholders of the Social Inclusion Analysis are and what roles they should play?
- Purpose of Social Inclusion Analysis: Is the purpose of the social inclusion analysis to increase knowledge and awareness about who is marginalized and excluded with regard to the public policy challenges? Is the purpose to recommend inclusion-sensitive strategies for the project's internal application (i.e., in how we recruit and select participants)? Is the purpose to determine effective ways for the project to support marginalized and excluded groups?
- Social Inclusion Analysis Questions: To what extent are the basic rights and needs of people in India met or not? What are the gaps between included, marginalized and excluded identities that exist in MWI program's key objectives of arresting the negative cycle of Muslim women's marginalization and promoting their social, economic and political participation?
- Social Inclusion Analysis Questions: What identity-based inequality exists in India; what form does the inequality take? In other words, what does the inequality "look like"?
- Social Inclusion Analysis Questions: What is the level of importance of each of the six domains of analysis to the purpose of the study: laws, policies; access to and control over assets and resources; knowledge, beliefs and perceptions; power and decision-making; roles, responsibilities and time use; human dignity, safety and wellness? Sample domain-focused questions include: What are the laws with regard to access to justice for women, including from minority language/religion/economic status/caste? What are the perceptions of people with disabilities with regard to poverty?
- Social Inclusion Analysis Question: From whom and with whom will we collect data for selected domains?
- Social Inclusion Analysis Question: What are the root causes of the access to justice problems that the project seeks to engage participants to address? Do the root causes cut across multiple domains? What can be done to affect these factors so that meaningful change can happen?
- Social Inclusion Analysis Question: What are the identity-specific boosters and opportunities for addressing the barriers to access, agency and power?
- Social Inclusion Analysis Questions: How can we identify individuals and groups of individuals whose intersecting identities compound so that they are the most excluded across most or all of the domains? How are programs that improve access to justice available and able to reach – or not available and not able to reach – the most excluded groups, including those excluded based on compounded intersectional identities?
- Social Inclusion Analysis Questions: What transformative interventions will be possible within the scope of the project to recruit participants from marginalized and excluded identity groups? What transformative interventions can address the causes of exclusion and how will meaningful change happen? What activities can the MWI project implement that could sustain collaboration of included and excluded groups after close-out?
- Social Inclusion Analysis Question: What are potential different impacts of the project on included and excluded populations, including unintended or negative consequences?

TAAP Phase III: Inclusive Design / Illustrative Questions:

- How can we ensure that the MWI project team understands the social inclusion analysis results and how it informs project design?
- How can creating a local snapshot – summarizing the situation, relevant boosters, barriers to and opportunities of social inclusion of the disadvantaged groups determined in the analysis – support the understanding of the project team and stakeholders?

- What were the most notable barriers to agency, access and power highlighted in the analysis report and how can the project promote agency, access and power for each of the identity groups, with regard to the public policy themes?
- How can the project team realign the project design to include the stakeholders that emerged from the Social Inclusion Analysis, and explore the motivations, influence and power of the stakeholders to influence positive social change or to resist change?
- How can the project team determine the priority, timing and cost of the recommendations made in the Social Inclusion Analysis report?
- How can the project team ensure that the social inclusion approach that is integrated in the project design goes beyond being inclusion-sensitive (awareness that recognizes the difference in how marginalized and excluded people have agency, access and power) to identifying interventions that would have the most impact for inclusion transformation, i.e., that actively promote change in the systems, social norms and everyday life?
- How can we ensure that disadvantaged identity groups feel safe, empowered and enabled to participate in the MWI project? How can our program vision / design signal to them that they are welcome?
- What actions and approaches can the MWI project take to ensure that the five TAAP principles are integrated throughout the project cycle? How can we engage stakeholders to guide us as we undertake these strategies and actions?
- What recommendations do disadvantaged groups have to improve access to the MWI program? Do these groups feel as though they have a voice in our design?
- Does the implementing team feel empowered to make decisions which bolster social inclusion?
- How can our outreach and recruitment design reach those most marginalized? How can we get outside the typical circle of young leaders in order to engage those from rural communities and disadvantaged groups? Does our participant selection process reflect our value of social inclusion?
- Have we budgeted for social inclusion, e.g. reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, sign language interpreters, travel for rural participants, etc.?
- What indicators can be developed to track and measure our social inclusion goals? How will we hold ourselves accountable to our social inclusion aims?
- How can the project team and stakeholders identify the change that is possible because of the inclusion-sensitivity and responsiveness in the project? How can project teams use the TAAP Theory of Change to identify which levels of change the project will address? (The TAAP Theory of Change posits that expanding the agency, access, and power of marginalized and excluded people will require tackling entrenched norms, institutions and power structures.)
- How can the project team validate the project design with key stakeholders?

TAAP Phase IV: Inclusive Implementation / Illustrative Questions:

- Have we created ample opportunities for persons from disadvantaged groups to take part in the project as staff, participants, trainers, mentors, agents of change?
- Is the MWI participant base representative of India's full diversity?
- Does MWI programming, training and project implementation, reflect social inclusion principles?
- Are our MWI participants demonstrating, through their (efforts beyond the project), that they understand social inclusion and can apply (at least basic) social inclusion practices?
- Does our public outreach (including media and social media) articulate values of social inclusion?
- Have we created a range of opportunities for different types of participation from persons with disabilities? (e.g. as beneficiaries, as advisors, as community volunteers and mobilizer, as peers for others, and as leaders in the community)

- How are the diverse skills and capacities of persons with disabilities being profiled throughout implementation?
- What is our process for identifying new or unexpected barriers?
- Have we set targets with our own staff and partners to include persons with disabilities in programs and activities (e.g. as staff, volunteers and beneficiaries)?

TAAP Cross-Cutting Inclusive MEL / Illustrative Questions:

- Does our baseline survey capture whether our participants understand social inclusion concepts?

TAAP Cross-Cutting Inclusive Impact and Sustainability (IIS) S/ Illustrative questions:

- As participants demonstrate commitment to inclusive practices in their activities, are they linking the commitment to long-term positive social change?

TAAP Scenario Part 4: Social Inclusion Sensitive Strategies and Actions

Inclusive Inquiry and Reflection / Illustrative action: Providing support needed to ensure that staff are eager and ready to take part in inclusive design, implementation and learning.

Building staff and partner capacity: For MWI, IFES selected local partners who had valuable experience working on social and economic empowerment of Muslim women. Some, but not all, partner organizations had worked on civic and



political rights within the context of the broader women's rights movement. Almost no one had actively linked these empowerment initiatives to rights guaranteed to women in the Qur'an. To address these gaps, IFES conducted an orientation to build in all project staff and resource persons a holistic understanding of the MWI and what it was designed to achieve, build the capacity of staff to nurture a favorable climate for intervention and equip staff to disseminate information with confidence. Experts in Indian Family Law, Human Rights Law, and Islamic Law, as well as experts in activism and economic empowerment (including private sector) were engaged to develop and deliver a series of trainings. At the local level MWI also engaged numerous activists alongside the local partner organizations including women's rights activists and social workers familiar with existing welfare programs, academicians, teachers and legal specialist.

As part of its ongoing staff capacity efforts, IFES had to address significant resistance initially expressed from within IFES staff and partners as well as externally on whether a separate program targeting Muslim women was necessary. A fear that the program might further entrench a minority community away from the 'mainstream' was articulated by many. There was also considerable subconscious and open bias against male religious and community leaders. A significant amount of work had to be done to examine and address these common biases for Muslim and non-Muslim, male and female team members in the program before and throughout the implementation period. A concrete example of this was the effort to understand the full context and origin of the permission of Muslim men to take more than one wife (up to four) articulated in the Qur'an. Not only was this restrictive of the current practice at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, it also came with a stipulation 'provided he can treat them all equally' which was intended to show the impossibility of taking more than one wife. Also, this permission was intended to provide security and care for widows and orphans from war. Many of the participants were not familiar with this information. Often this law was articulated as a way to establish men's superior role in family

and society, and had to be re-understood in order to overcome misperceptions about Muslim women's rights.

Integrating beneficiaries and community members as decision makers: From the outset of the program, all local partners agreed on the importance of maintaining a respectful, principled approach to the Muslim communities they would be working in. They committed to be mindful of the beliefs, values and practices of the community. To that end, partners agreed that they would employ Muslim women on their teams to assist in interacting with the primary target group; engage with religious and community leaders about the scope and objectives of the program to build support and lessen resistance; and engage Muslim scholars and community leaders to present information and assist with other elements of the program. The outreach to Muslim religious and community leaders, particularly those who were known for their gender-equality stances or were considered likely to support MWI's goals in their areas of implementation, proved critical to MWI success. These leaders came from among the *ulema*, school teachers, lawyers, doctors, business owners and activists. They became a core support group for the project. It was through them that a broader group of community leaders were reached to create an enabling environment for MWI's implementation and sustainability as MWI was aiming for nothing less than significant societal transformation.

Social Inclusion Analysis / Illustrative Action: Planning or conducting participatory consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders including leaders and change agents from civil society and government institutions.

MWI planning and interventions were rooted in the understanding that intersectionality and interconnectedness of various dimensions of marginalization of minority women require multi-dimensional interventions. More than one condition of marginalization will likely exist within any community. These conditions – including lack of education, poor health, poverty and discrimination – may be interlinked. Social inclusion also has to occur in the context of broader issues facing the nation as a whole such as a slow bureaucracy, corruption, rise of right-wing authoritarian politics, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Addressing only the gender-related factors in isolation without considering political, socio-economic and cultural factors will minimize the effectiveness of social inclusion interventions.

Recognizing this need to address intersectionality and interconnected issues affecting Muslim women's marginalization, several factors were identified as priority considerations for the program. For Muslim Indians in general, it was important to understand the lasting impact of the historic partition between India and Pakistan, and the fact that of the Muslims who remained in India, many felt safe only among members of their own communities. Such spatial inequality perpetuated cycles of discrimination, social stagnation, and educational deprivation, all of which reduced the Muslim community's ability to access India's government institutions or take advantage of India's economic developments. For Muslim women in particular, additional factors related to gender and socio-economic standing, influenced in part by patriarchal interpretations of Islam, further reduced their access to education, employment, and political engagement. As noted in the following section, MWI's inclusive program design recognized that unless the overlapping intersectionalities present in a marginalized community are taken into account in designing an empowerment program, the program may not properly target the conditions of

marginalization and therefore may prove to be of little use, or worse, may actually be detrimental for segments of the community.

Inclusive Design / Illustrative Action: Planning to validate prioritized recommendations with stakeholders.

One of the key challenges to Muslim women's rights that needed to be addressed from program design through implementation was the misperception that gender inequity is inbuilt in Islam. In reality, the Qur'an provides women with rights to education, inheritance, choice of marital partner, divorce and participation in governance and other public fields. Orienting the program around teachings in the Qur'an and other Islamic legal sources helped ensure that the intervention was locally owned, rather than being perceived as being applied from external sources. In addition to Islamic law, MWI also drew on India's Constitution which includes rights to equality before the law; prohibition of discrimination on the ground of religion, caste, race, sex or place of birth; rights to employment; rights to education; and other provisions that complemented principles of gender equality enshrined in Islamic law. Taken together, awareness raising around Islamic and Indian law helped increase knowledge about women's rights from intersecting identities - both as Muslims and as Indian citizens.

While MWI focused on the empowerment of Muslim women, the approach also proactively engaged men and boys to advance effectiveness of the program, deter the risk of male hostility being directed toward women's development/empowerment projects and alleviate the fear that the women might be plotting something against them. At the outset of the program, MWI partners met with religious and community leaders - particularly men - to explain the initiative and seek community leaders buy-in. Additionally, husbands, brothers and sons of activists were encouraged to be actively involved in the planning, execution and evaluation of MWI. Information workshops focusing on the rights of women and girls were organized for men at the same time as the women utilizing the same curriculum.

Finally, it is important to note that MWI's holistic approach ensured that people from other religious communities in MWI's geographic areas of operation were also impacted by the program. Negative stereotypes and preconceived notions about women's rights in Islam were often shattered. Law enforcement officials and the judiciary began to perceive Muslim women as empowered citizens who knew about their rights and expected fair treatment and resolution of issues.

Inclusive Implementation / Illustrative Action: Planning to validate the inclusion-sensitive risk management plan with selected partners and other stakeholders.

The design and implementation of MWI is rooted in a commitment to social inclusion and MWI materials - including training kits - used standardized messaging that included accurate Qur'anic and legal references and interpretations. This represents inclusion of minorities. The program was implemented in areas of significant poverty and illiteracy and the program prepared materials with illustrations originating from art-workshops for the women participants later collated, story-boarded and illustrated by professional artists and promotional and documentation materials. Where the program could have been more effective was disabilities inclusion. While there were a few women with disabilities involved in the program there was not an intentional focus to create opportunities for their social inclusion.

MWI also proactively engaged youth within the community who can be some of the most effective and enthusiastic agents of change. As a clear example, students who had attended classes on women's rights formed small action groups to sensitize family members, friends and neighbors to the status of women

under the Qur'an and Indian law, and the illegality and immorality of practices such as dowry and domestic violence. Additionally, by engaging students, the program also reached new groups of teachers, parents and education officials. It was an effective example of using mainstream structures — secondary schools — to carry out empowerment programs for marginalized communities.

Inclusive MEL / Illustrative Action: Develop an inclusive plan to conduct data collection.

MWI recognized that program evaluation and research efforts must prioritize the marginalized group's own needs, issues, and priorities determined through qualitative discussions with community leaders and people. Triangulating these values where possible from key informant interviews, information reflecting other groups' experiences, and statistics is also recommended. MWI partners were able to both contribute valuable data to the government's own research on minority communities and use the findings and analysis of this data aggregated across the nation when the government published and disseminated the Sachar Committee Report for advocacy. MWI also collected data disaggregated by sex, age, and geographical location, which was critical for designing targeted interventions.

In addition to monitoring and evaluation throughout the program, three years after the end of MWI, IFES conducted follow-on focus group discussions to assess the sustainability of the program intervention. The focus group discussions gathered data on civic activism and democratic engagement among randomly selected groups of women who had taken part in the MWI interventions as well as women from similar communities and backgrounds who had not taken part in those interventions. The latter served as a control group.

The focus group discussions highlighted continued knowledge gains, behavior changes, and leadership roles among MWI participants years after program completion. For example, several reported that neighborhood women now perceive them as leaders and approach MWI participants for help in pursuing their own rights. MWI participants were also more likely than control group participants to exercise their right to vote and influence political leaders and the broader political process. For example, MWI participants spoke of approaching the 'paarshad' (local counselor) and other local authorities in order to influence local decision-making. Additionally, MWI participants emphasized the importance and power of collective action, identifying their participation in public protests demanding justice and equity (rare among Muslim women's groups in the past) often with the larger women's rights movement, civil society advocacy and canvassing to affect election manifestos (platforms), budgets and campaign outcomes. Still others spoke of their participation in local rallies to help build support for improving girls' access to education, and one spoke of her campaign to obtain scholarships for students from poor Muslim families. These are powerful examples of MWI participants' continued commitment to accessing the rights to which they are entitled as Muslims and Indian citizens.

Inclusive Impact and Sustainability / Illustrative Action: Planning to make an inclusive impact and sustainability plan.

Several years after the MWI project's end, MWI participants continue to demonstrate changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that show a commitment to advancing social inclusion and equality. On an individual level, Muslim women began exercising their right to education, to choose their marriage partners, and to work and earn an income. The impact on Muslim men and boys was also noticeable both at the level of the family and the community. Women reported greater participation in decision-making in their families. Their status within their families improved dramatically. In MWI program areas, reports

show that Muslim men are increasingly encouraging women to take part in public life even after program completion. Some male stakeholders in the MWI program were involved in solving matrimonial disputes cases and providing legal redress for female victims of violence and other crimes. On the political front, men supported women to run for office and promoted their candidacy. Men encouraged women to exercise their right to vote in both local and national elections. Interestingly, women who sought government positions or political office were not only encouraged and supported by Muslim men in their own community, but also by male leaders from other communities.

Additionally, women participants in MWI did not merely see the program as beneficial to their own situation, but actively sought to support other women in their community by inviting them to become part of their groups, helping them to earn an income, and assisting in their safe escape from abusive relationships. This is highlighted through numerous examples of women's leadership: Nazni Begum, a retired senior citizen, who was an MWI partner, successfully ran for a seat on the Bangalore Municipal Corporation. In this position she secured, several hundred thousand dollars' worth of government funding to address pressing and neglected in her municipality area. Other women's groups decided to run campaigns to "say no to polygamy." They worked to convince men that multiple marriages had adverse effects, not only on the wives but also on children. Another example arose from MWI's series of advocacy trainings that empowered women with the skills needed to advocate to policymakers on issues of gender equality. MWI partners engaged in these trainings went on to conduct advocacy and create public demand for Muslim women's marriage rights. Their efforts influenced the Indian Supreme Court's landmark decision in 2017 to outlaw the practice of giving divorce by saying 'talaq' (divorce) three times.

In addition to social changes, there are also many examples of economic empowerment. Women's self-help groups were successful in obtaining microcredit loans from banks to help fund income generating ventures that enabled women to contribute economically to their households and, in turn, become economically empowered. These and numerous other examples highlight the unique ways that MWI participants understood and advanced principles of social inclusion.

TAAP Scenario Part 5: Social Inclusion Outcomes

The IFES Muslim Women's Initiative met and exceeded its original objective of moving the needle on the status of Muslim women in program areas. MWI:

- increased the knowledge of Muslim women about their rights in the Qur'an and under Indian law and saw many women advocate for and access those rights;
- fostered understanding among all sections of the Muslim community (including men and boys) about women's rights;
- created community-based support structures for the protection and promotion of women's rights by forming women's groups and support groups consisting of religious leaders, administrators, business leaders, academicians, lawyers and activists;
- initiated microcredit and income generating activities for women's groups to increase economic independence;
- increased the demand for and acceptance of change within the Muslim community, leading to overall improvement in the socio-economic status of Muslim women; and
- engendered the emergence of Muslim women leaders who have overcome their exclusion from mainstream economic and democratic processes and promote the empowerment and social inclusion of Muslim women.

By the close of the program, 534 women's groups were functioning with more than 6,000 members. Average group size was fifteen. All activities under the MWI contributed toward the creation of a women-friendly environment within the districts in which the program was implemented, as well as the mainstreaming of Muslim women in their wider communities. More than 1,500 community members including academicians, lawyers, religious leaders, bureaucrats, business leaders, school teachers, and activists became part of support groups and more than 7,000 women received counseling services and legal aid from the counseling centers. A total of 1,500 students attended courses on women's rights in Muslim schools. Ultimately, more than 30,000 women and men, girls and boys directly received information on the rights of women. In addition, MWI partners reported that hundreds of girls were enrolled in schools; benefits from government programs were secured for members of the women's groups, their families and communities. This significantly increased women's roles in family and community decision-making; and markedly enhanced women's political participation and engendered the emergence of scores of new women leaders including many who successfully ran for office and won.

TAAP Scenario Part 6: Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Based on lessons learned from MWI, the following recommendations are presented for practitioners and policymakers focused on the social inclusion of marginalized groups in the democratic mainstream.

1. Existing knowledge, beliefs, and strengths of marginalized groups should be taken into consideration in developing and implementing programs for democratic inclusion.

2. Individuals should not be viewed as victims or passive recipients of support, but rather as active protagonists and partners in the development of themselves and their communities.

3. Rights education and support to access those rights builds confidence in marginalized groups needed for greater social and political participation.

4. In any project whose goal is to improve the lives of women, it is essential not to ignore the other half of the community. The involvement of men in women’s empowerment programs is critical.

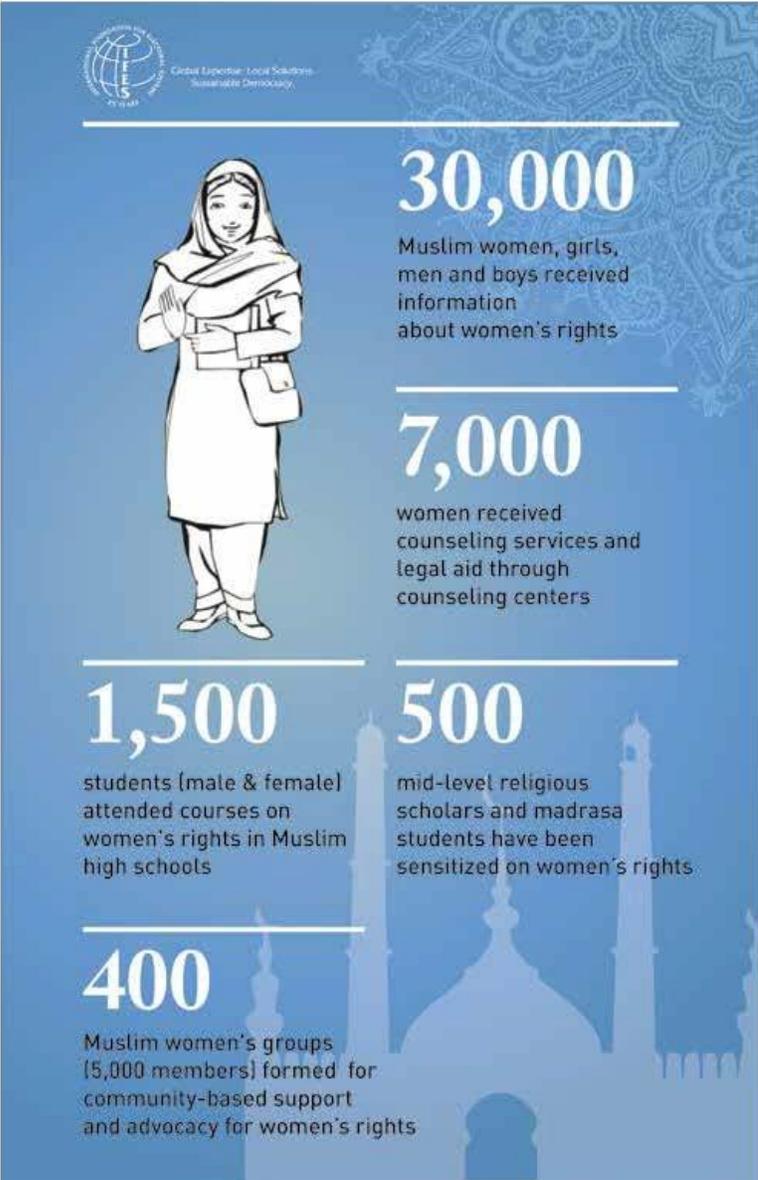
5. Empowerment of marginalized groups requires the involvement of existing leaders and trusted intermediaries from the marginalized community.

6. Youth are a major source of idealism, energy and enthusiasm in communities. Harnessing this potential through school-based programs can be highly effective.

7. Emerging leaders should be introduced to the ideas of community leadership and leading with integrity.

8. Linkages between government and private structures and services, and engagement in mainstream political and governance processes are critical.

9. Intersectionality and interconnectedness of various dimensions of marginalization of minority women (including but not limited to poverty, discrimination, lack of education, disabilities, and poor health) require multi-dimensional interventions.



10. Collective action through community action groups, networking, and building alliances contribute to sustainability of the program.

11. Robust monitoring and evaluation and research should be part of the design of the program to ensure efficacy and inform the wider discourse and practice.

12. Programs aimed at mainstreaming marginalized groups and minorities should be based on principles of equality, transparency, accountability, integrity, and the rule of law, and a firm belief in the power of unity, not only within the marginalized community but also with the wider community of which they are an integral part.

13. Programs to advance the equality of women and men cannot be conceived only in terms of bringing women into the various arenas of the current social power structures. They must involve women and men striving together to build a new social order.