



IMPACT EVALUATION OF CASH FOR WORK ON FOOD SECURITY AND GENDER EQUALITY IN HAITI

Haiti is experiencing one of the world's most severe food security crises, with 5.4 million people struggling to access sufficient food amid escalating violence and instability. The country also ranks 169th out of 191 on the Gender Development Index and 163rd on the Gender Inequality Index, leaving women disproportionately affected by the food security crisis.

In response, the World Food Programme (WFP) is working to reduce hunger, strengthen community resilience and promote women's economic empowerment. In 2022, WFP launched the *Expansion of Safety Nets for Vulnerable Populations* project in partnership with the Economic and Social Assistance Fund (FAES) and funded by the Inter-American Development Bank to support communities impacted by COVID-19. A key part of the project is the Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) programme, which provides food while communities work together to create and repair essential local infrastructure.

A joint impact evaluation by WFP's Office of Evaluation and the World Bank's Development Impact Department assessed how these efforts enhance food security and advance gender equality in Haiti. It tested what happens if women, specifically, are encouraged to participate in asset creation activities and receive direct cash transfers in FFA programming.

It compared three groups:

1. FFA for Women (FFA-W)
2. Standard FFA; and
3. A comparison group not participating during the study period.

KEY EVIDENCE

Before the start of the programme (at baseline), selected households faced significant vulnerabilities. Food insecurity was widespread and diets lacked adequate nutritional diversity. Gender inequalities were deeply entrenched: women had limited control over how they used their time and earned less than men. Many women also reported experiencing psychological, physical and sexual intimate partner violence. Mental health challenges were common, with nearly half of women exhibiting symptoms consistent with moderate to severe depression.

After two cycles of asset work (at midline), the programme led to clear improvements in food security, measured by the Food Consumption Score, along with some financial gains such as better access to credit and family financial assistance. However, the programme did not generate significant impacts on household food access, measured by food insecurity experiences (FIES) or other productive livelihood activities.

Some negative effects also appeared. Both FFA groups experienced increased intimate partner violence, especially sexual violence, relative to the comparison group and stress levels were slightly higher in FFA W, though differences were small and not statistically significant. Compared to the standard FFA group, women in the FFA-W group spent less time on self-employment and more time on asset work.

They also earned more from WFP and maintained stable agency over time use, while women in the standard FFA group experienced a decline.

Over the longer-term (endline), targeting women directly helped increase earnings through higher participation in asset work. It also strengthened their role in household decisions slightly, improved men's attitudes toward their time use and reduced intimate partner violence.

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THE FULL
REPORT 

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KEY FINDINGS

1

Does participation in FFA affect key food security outcomes of interest?



Compared to baseline, food security worsened across all households due to political instability.

However, households in the FFA programme were protected from the worst impacts: they saw smaller declines in food security than the comparison group.

At midline, food security was 13% higher in the standard FFA group and 7% higher in the FFA-W group, while food insecurity experiences (FIES) did not improve, likely because participation rates were low.

At endline there was no significant difference in food security between the standard FFA and FFA-W groups.

The programme strengthened short-term financial resilience with both groups showing modest improvements. The standard FFA group saw a larger increase in remittances and a greater ability to access loans and provide financial support to others. However, the programme did not affect wider livelihood activities at midline.

Longer-term effects could not be compared with the original comparison group because they joined the programme after midline. Looking only at the two FFA groups, the programme did not show significant differences in food security several months after it ended and longer-term resilience gains were modest and inconsistent.

2

What is the impact of women's participation in FFA (working outside the household and receiving cash in return) on their social and economic empowerment?



Targeting women through FFA strengthened their economic empowerment during the programme. Women in the FFA-W group maintained more stable levels of agency, while women in the standard FFA group saw declines in agency. Women participating in asset creation also increased their earnings and improved control over time use while the programme was active.

However, signs of backlash emerged: reports of intimate partner violence increased in both FFA groups compared to the comparison group and women in the FFA-W group reported slightly higher stress.

After the programme ended, men's attitudes toward women's decision-making improved more in the FFA-W group. Interpersonal violence, especially sexual violence, declined relative to the standard FFA group.

Longer-term effects beyond the two FFA groups could not be assessed because the comparison group joined the programme after midline.

Impact estimates should be interpreted in light of relatively low participation rates - especially among women in FFA-W, which may have diluted measured effects. Findings should also be interpreted considering severe security disruptions, the reassignment of comparison localities and the resulting decline in statistical power for endline comparisons.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Evidence from Haiti shows that targeting women with cash transfers and livelihood activities can strengthen agency, gender norms and economic empowerment in the short term. However, it also highlights important implementation challenges and lessons for future WFP programming.

1 STRENGTHEN FOCUS ON BOTH FOOD ACCESS AND DIETARY QUALITY.

Future projects should address both food access and diet quality. This may require reinforcing access-focused components (such as combining cash, vouchers and in-kind support during periods of high need) and complementing them with activities like nutrition education, which can help sustain dietary improvements.

2 INCREASE PARTICIPATION, ESPECIALLY AMONG WOMEN.

Participation was lower in the FFA-W group, particularly for women. At midline, only 35% of women in the FFA W group participated in asset work, compared to 25% in the standard FFA group. Programmes should identify the reasons behind low engagement, improve communication of benefits to both men and women and enhance women's ability and willingness to participate. Higher compensation could encourage participation, while safeguards could help to limit men's involvement in women-focused activities.

3 ADDRESS BACKLASH AND SUPPORT SAFER EMPOWERMENT.

Despite gains in agency and shifts in men's attitudes, women who participated in FFA experienced increased intimate partner violence. This indicates the need for complementary interventions, especially those engaging men, such as gender-equality training, community dialogues on shared decision-making and safety and campaigns to reduce gender-based violence and promote healthy relationships.

CASH-BASED TRANSFERS AND GENDER IMPACT EVALUATION WINDOW

The evaluation contributes to the Cash-Based Transfers and Gender window, a multi-country evaluation portfolio. These windows are designed through extensive literature reviews and stakeholder consultations to identify priorities for new impact evaluations to address key evidence gaps. It shares a similar design with impact evaluation in [Kenya](#), [Rwanda](#), and [El Salvador](#).



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DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The evaluation framework has two components:

1. It measures the short term impact of FFA participation on household food security, resilience and welfare, including households' ability to cope with shocks.
2. It examines how providing women with cash transfers and work opportunities affects labour supply, household decision-making and gender norms, including the "wage effect" of increased income in exchange for reduced time at home.

The impact evaluation used a cluster randomized controlled trial across 78 localities in Haiti, comparing two intervention groups with a comparison group:

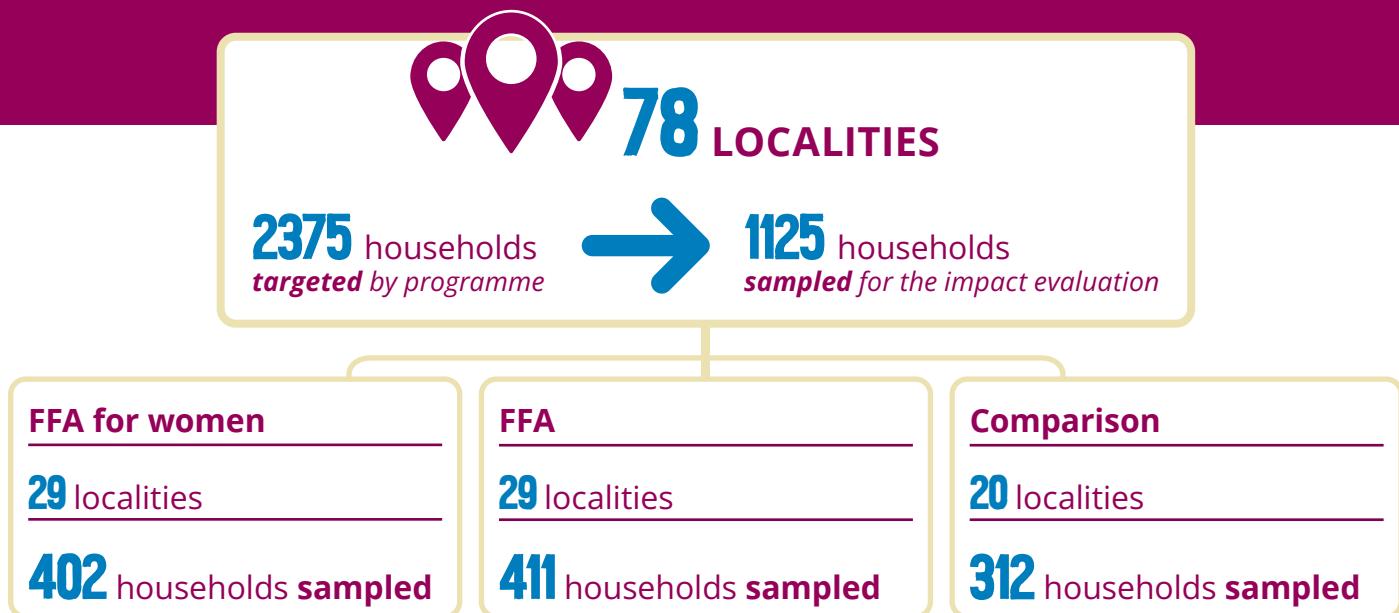
- **FFA for Women:** The household's primary female decision maker was registered to work on community assets and receive conditional cash transfers of up to USD140 per cycle (up to USD560 across four cycles), with each cycle requiring up to 20 workdays per month.
- **Standard FFA:** The primary male decision maker was registered under the same transfer and work requirement structure.
- **Comparison group:** These households received no programme support during the study, aside from a small survey stipend (USD5.34). They joined the programme after the second payment cycle, so comparisons primarily focussed on the first two FFA cycles.

The evaluation team randomized 78 localities into the three study groups and then randomly selected up to 30 of the most vulnerable households per community for interviews, resulting in a sample of 1,125 households.

Quantitative data were collected at baseline, two midlines and endline using a multi-module household survey.

- Baseline took place in April-May 2023
- The first midline in December 2023 after the first FFA cycle
- The second midline in February and March 2024, after the second FFA cycle and
- The endline in August-September 2024, two months after the last cash distribution

Qualitative data were also collected at endline through six focus group discussions: three with FFA for Women participants and three with standard FFA participants, each involving at least ten beneficiaries.



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 wfp.org/independent-evaluation

 wfp.evaluation@wfp.org

 [@WFP_Evaluation](https://twitter.com/WFP_Evaluation)

 Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70, 00148 Rome, Italy

 T +39 06 65131

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