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IMPACT NETWORK

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THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

Tamara Megaw and Dr Keren Winterford

Research in partnership to promote learning and
empowerment of women refugees

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

Introduction to research project

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

Program goal:
“Refugee women are empowered through a return and reintegration process that enables full enjoyment of social, economic and political rights”

Partnership consortium:



Community-based protection for refugees

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

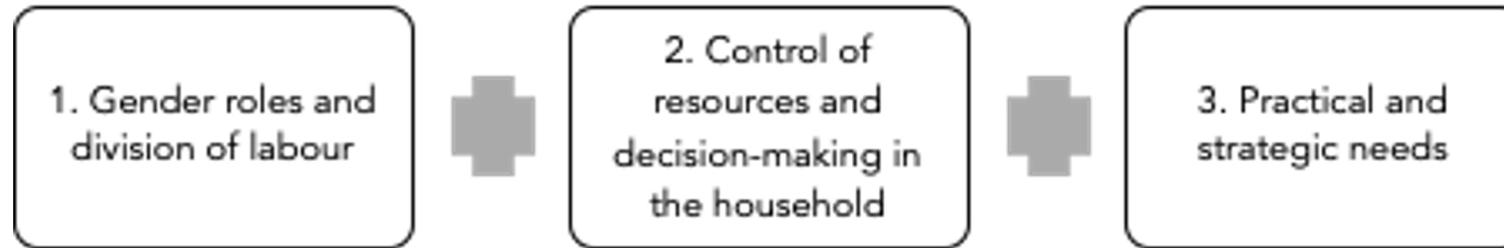
Community-based protection for refugees

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

- Women’s Empowerment Programme Coordinator, OfERR

Conceptual understanding of gender equality used in the research project

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



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

- Reproductive
- Productive
- Community management
- Community politics

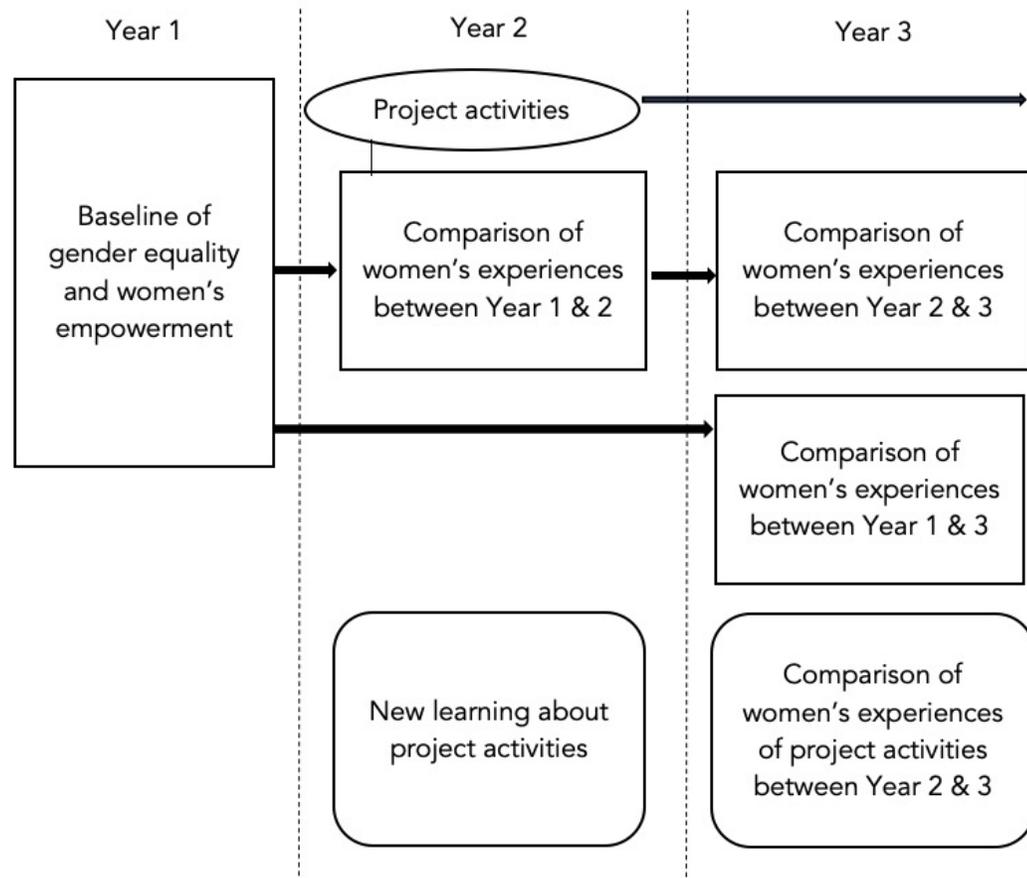
Who has access to, management and control of resources

Who makes household decisions about money

Meeting practical needs will address women's inadequate living conditions

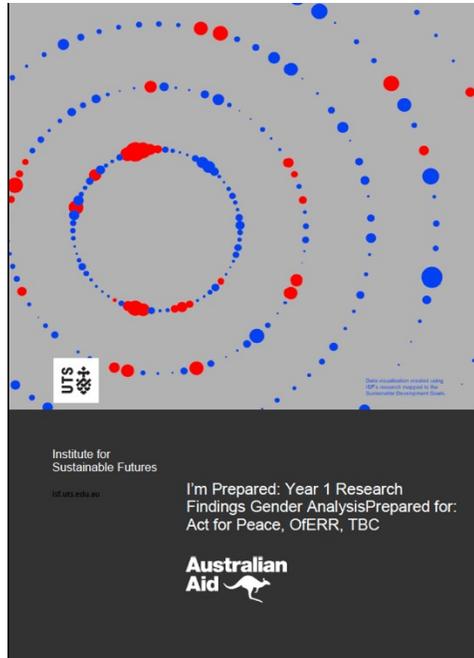
Meeting strategic needs will enable women to: transform existing inequalities in roles and decision-making; achieve greater equality in rights, responsibilities and opportunities

Research approach

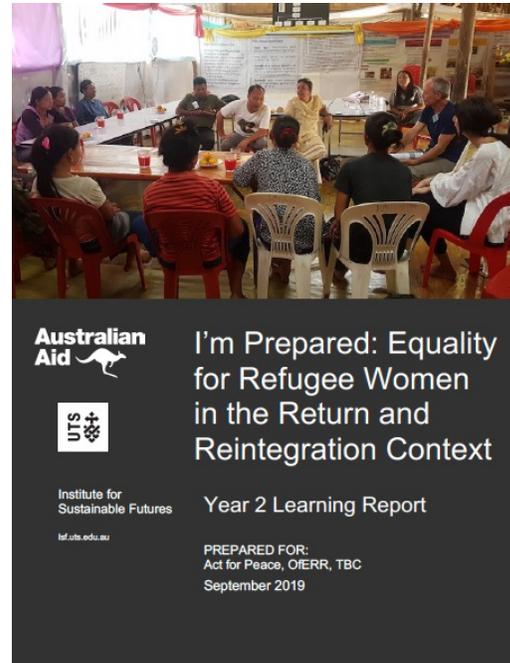


- **Longitudinal design comparing a baseline in 2018 of program participant's experience of gender relations and decision-making with an assessment of changes in 2019 and 2020**
- In Year 2 and 3 the **research explored the contribution of project activities** (e.g. gender training, livelihood training,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

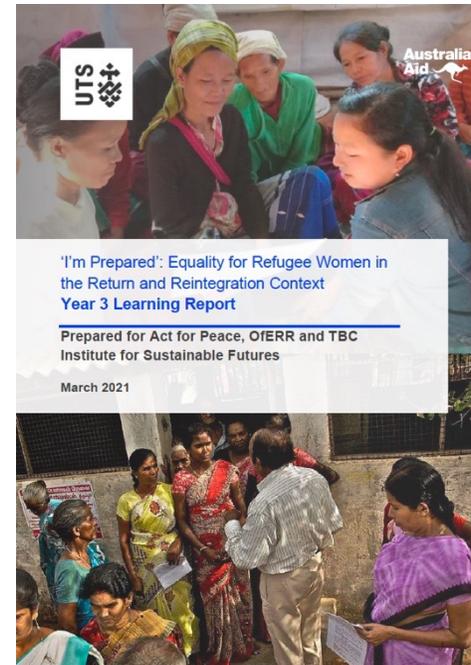
Research publications



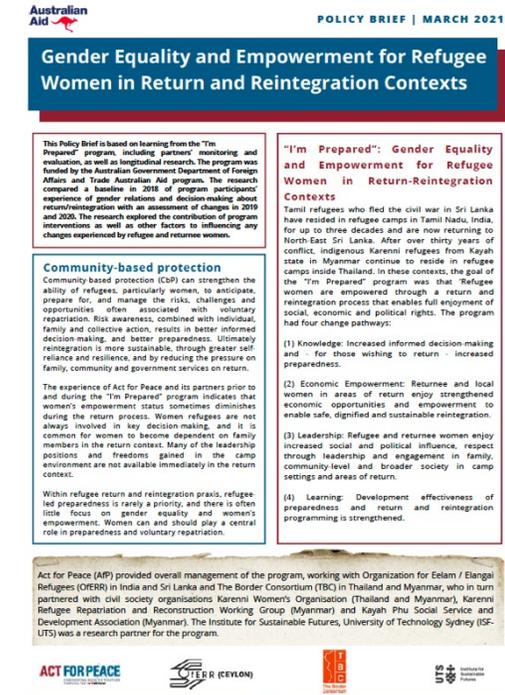
[Year 1 Research Findings Gender Analysis \(2018\)](#)



[Year 2 Learning Report \(2019\)](#)



[Year 3 Learning Report \(2021\)](#)



[Gender Equality and Empowerment for Refugee Women in Return-Reintegration Contexts – Policy Brief \(2021\)](#)

Collaborative approach to research design and implementation

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



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

Partnership approach contributed to quality and rigour of program learning

- Longitudinal study over 3 years with **same cohort of refugees**
- **Rich picture** of women and men refugees' perspectives and lived experiences
- **Learning** from refugee women about the value of program activities **affirmed** the work partners were doing
- 'I'm Prepared' research extended the **gender programming approach of partners**
- The Moser framework helped partners to **understand more** about their contribution to gender equality

“ From ISF we got a new way of looking at gender through the Moser Framework and it added a more systematic way that...allowed us to give greater depth to dialogue on gender with refugee communities and our partners. It was particularly helpful... and we will be extending to the other seven camps where we work.
- Thailand Programme Coordinator,
The Border Consortium

Partnership approach promoted inclusion of diverse knowledges and voices



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

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

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

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



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

Thank you

Tamara Megaw
Research Consultant
tamara.megaw@uts.edu.au

Dr Keren Winterford
Research Director
keren.Winterford@uts.edu.au

Institute for Sustainable Futures – University of
Technology Sydney
Website: [https://www.uts.edu.au/isf/explore-
research/international-development/development-
effectiveness](https://www.uts.edu.au/isf/explore-research/international-development/development-effectiveness)
Phone number: (02) 9514 4950



*OfERR staff at researcher
training in Chennai, India (2019)
Photo credit: Tamara Megaw*