

# Social and Economic Impacts of a Gendered Graduation Approach in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the  
Netherlands

# Women's empowerment

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- Throughout the world
  - women earn less on average than men
  - have smaller social networks
  - face intimate partner violence
  - have less say in household decisions
  - worse mental/physical health
- A classic bargaining model: Economic empowerment → better outside option → better treatment within marriage/household
- Not so fast?
  - “More to fight over”
  - Psychological backlash from men

# Women's empowerment amongst the ultra-poor and conflict-affected

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- Conflict/insecurity can further women's disadvantage
  - entrench harmful gender norms
  - normalize VAW
  - destabilize pathways to earn and increase economic shocks
- However, it can also create opportunities for women if men are killed/absent.
- We study the effects of Women for Women International's social and economic program on a wide variety of welfare indicators among women participants in the DRC
  - And also a complementary Men's Engagement Program

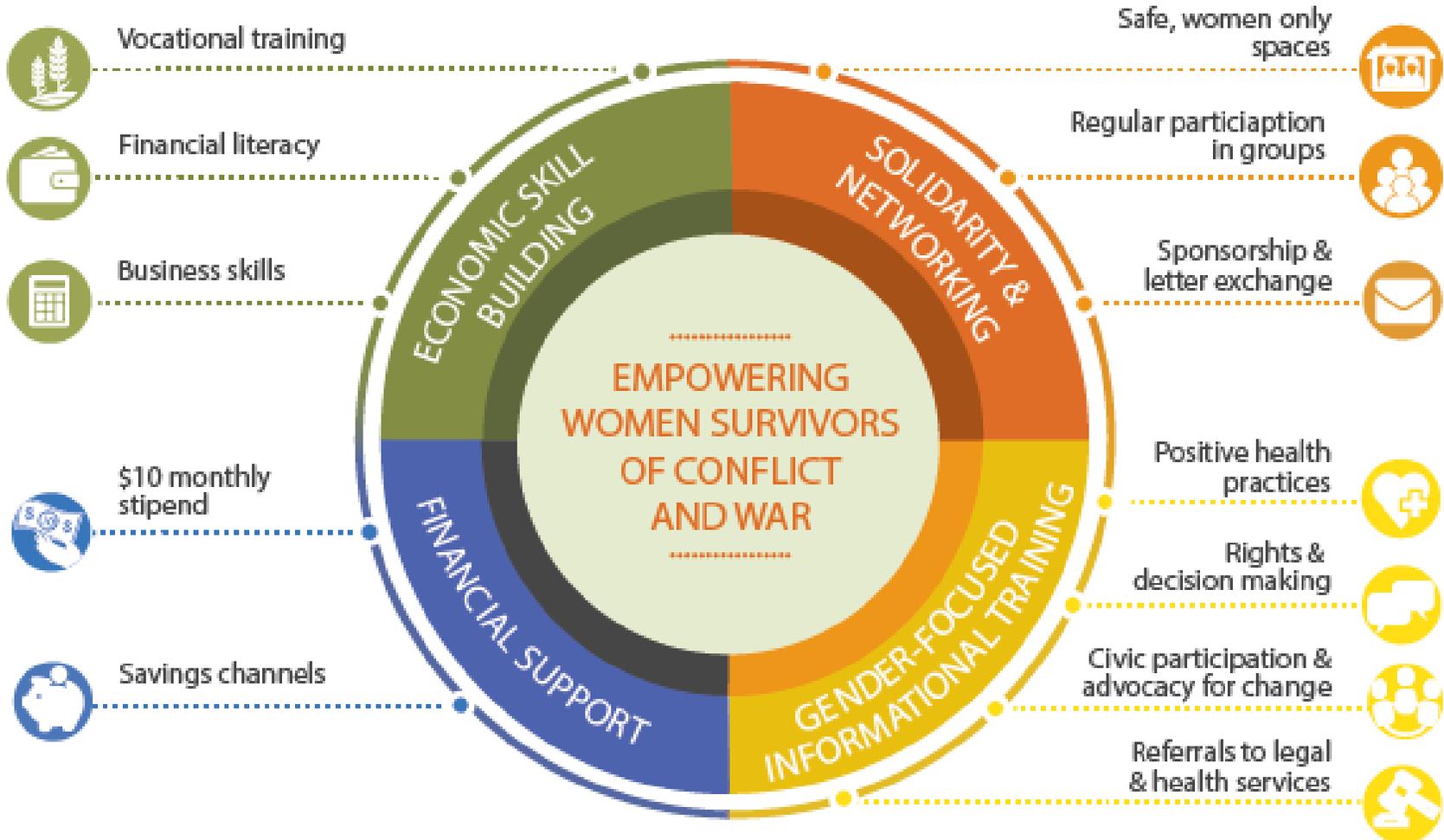
# Women for Women International in DRC



- Over 25 years of conflict and uncertainty in DRC, primarily in the eastern provinces.
- Almost half of the women in South Kivu have experienced physical violence in their lifetime, and 35% have experienced sexual violence

© European Union, 2014. Map produced by EC-JRC.

# Signature Program: Twelve-month social and economic empowerment program



# Men's Engagement Program (MEP) Intervention

- Is a program designed to engage men to become active allies in support of women's social and economic empowerment and rights.
- Male community leaders are trained to share knowledge and facilitate weekly discussion groups with the women's male spouses, partners, or other household members.
- 4 months of weekly discussion groups, led by community leaders (16 sessions).
- 80% of the participants were spouses of WfWI participants.
- An additional "Couple's Dialogue" session for couples identified as needing extra support (groups of ~25 couples).

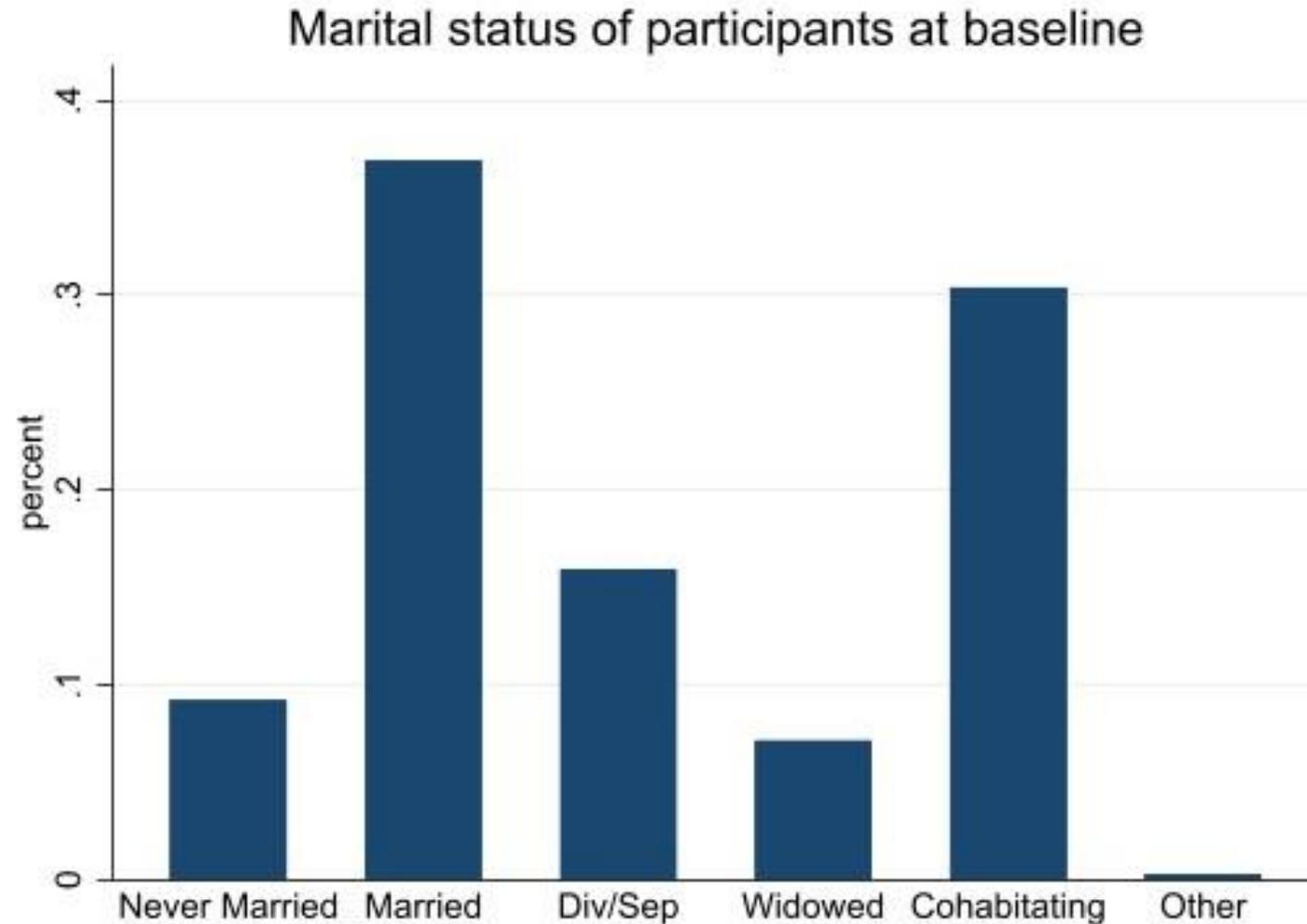


# Participants



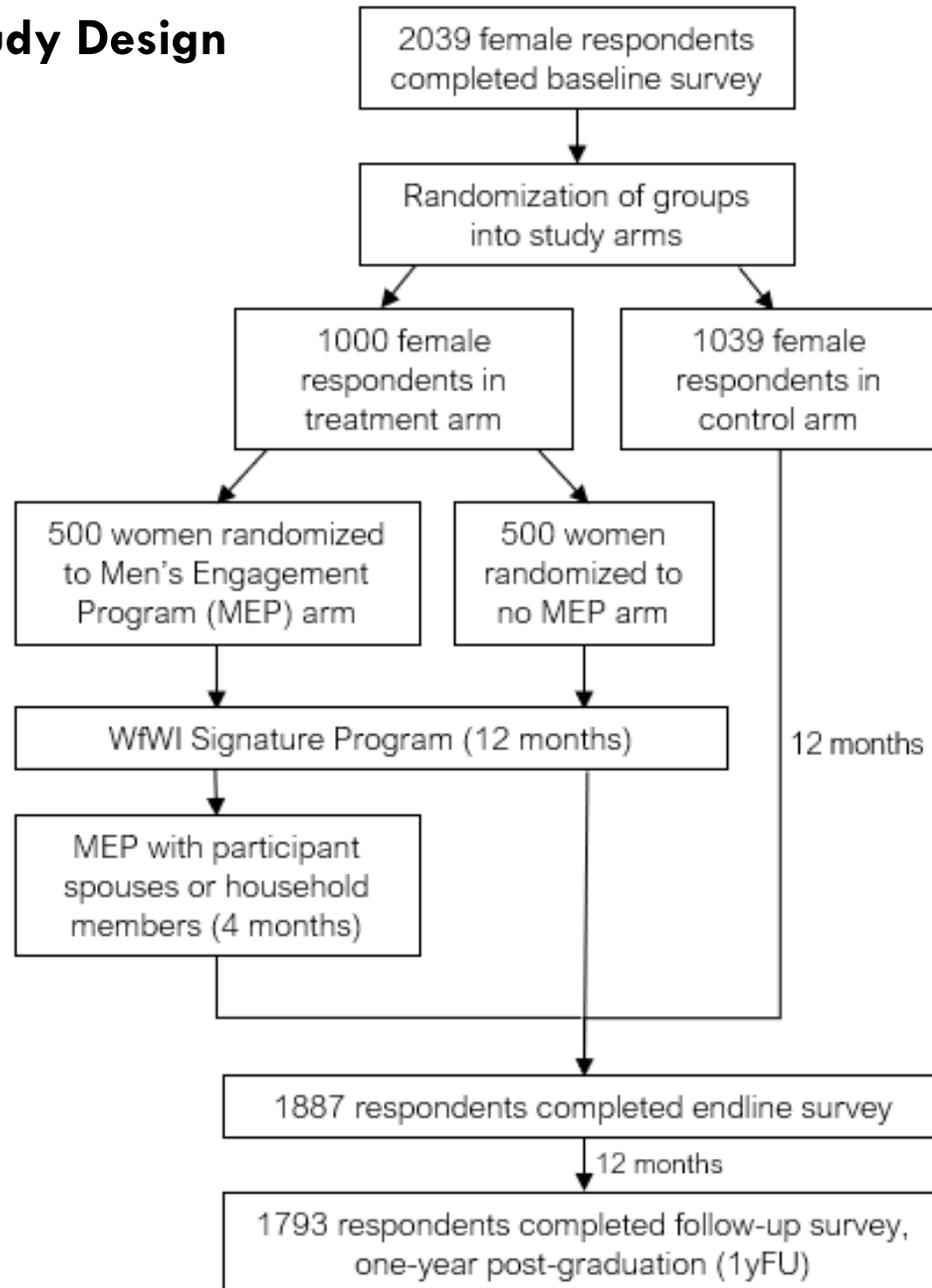
- Recruitment
  - Women are recruited with the help of community leaders.
  - From the lowest economic level in the country. Many are displaced persons, survivors of conflict, and have trauma exposure.
- Characteristics
  - Average age: 33 years old;
  - 57% illiterate.
  - Average weekly earnings were \$1.57 USD (2510 CDF).
  - 9% of participants held any personal savings.
  - Gender attitudes: 63% of women agreed that man should have the final say on household decisions; 62% of respondents agreed a man could beat his wife for refusing sex.

# Household structure at baseline



Average household size:  
6.4 people.

## RCT Study Design



## 24 Month Study

**4 locations in South Kivu, DRC:** Kamanyola, Ciherano-Luciga, Nyangezi & Mumosho.

**Principal Investigators:** Dr. Rachel Heath and Dr. Manuela Angelucci

### Baseline (BL) - 2017:

- Data was collected before any program participation.

### Endline (EL) - 2018:

- Data was collected immediately after the treatment group completed the program.

### One-year follow up (1yFU) - 2019:

- Data was collected one year after the completion of the program (88%)
- Qualitative data collection – interviews with 32 program participants and 16 spouses

# Results: road map

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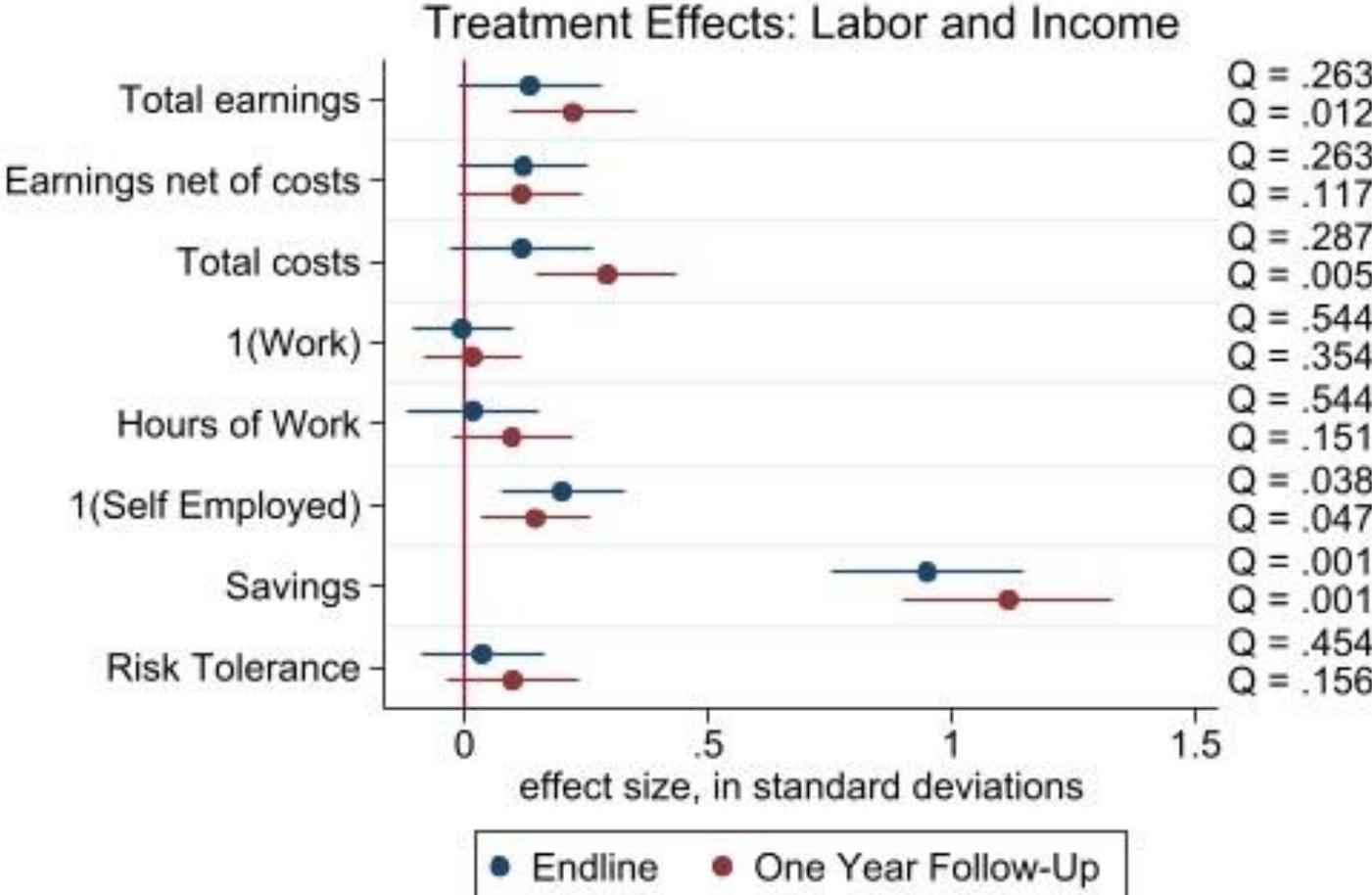
- Focus on results of signature WfWI treatment
  - Additional impact of MEP at the end
- Groups of 25 women formed pre-treatment. So for women  $i$  in group  $j$ , we estimate ITT treatment effects via the ANOVA specification:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_1 Treat_j + \beta_2 Treat_j \times MEP_j + \delta Y_{ij}^0 + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Standard errors clustered at the level of the group.

- Some variables are unbalanced at baseline, so show treatment effects reweighted following Hainmuller (2012)
- Within families of outcomes, show sharpened q-values (Benjamini, Krieger, and Yekutieli, 2006) to control the false discovery rate.

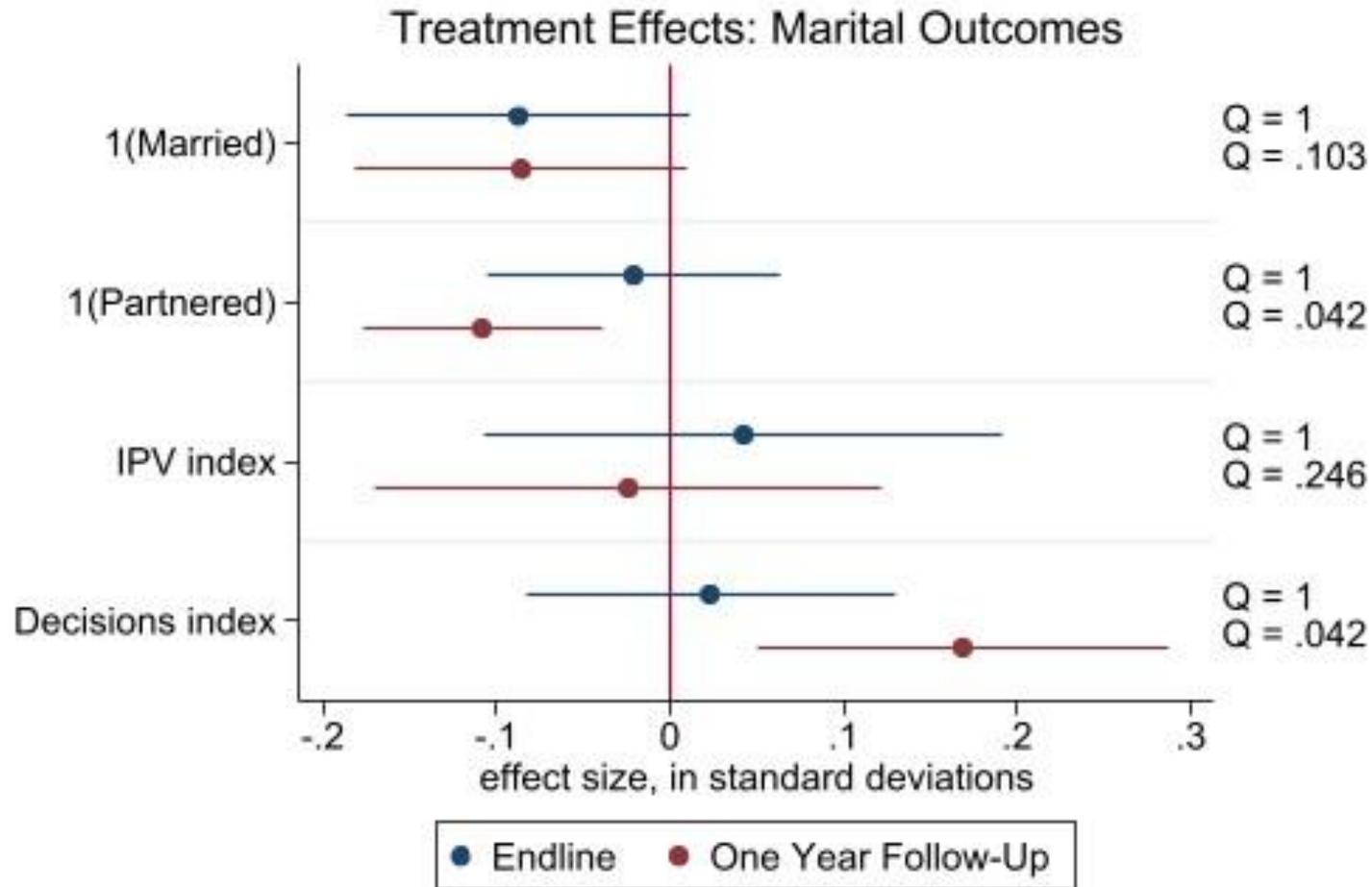
# Women earn more and have more savings.



Standard deviation pertains to control group at endline. 90% confidence intervals shown in graph; to the right of each coefficient is the sharpened q-value (Benjamini Krieger and Yekutieli 2006) Estimates reweighted following Hainmueller (2012).

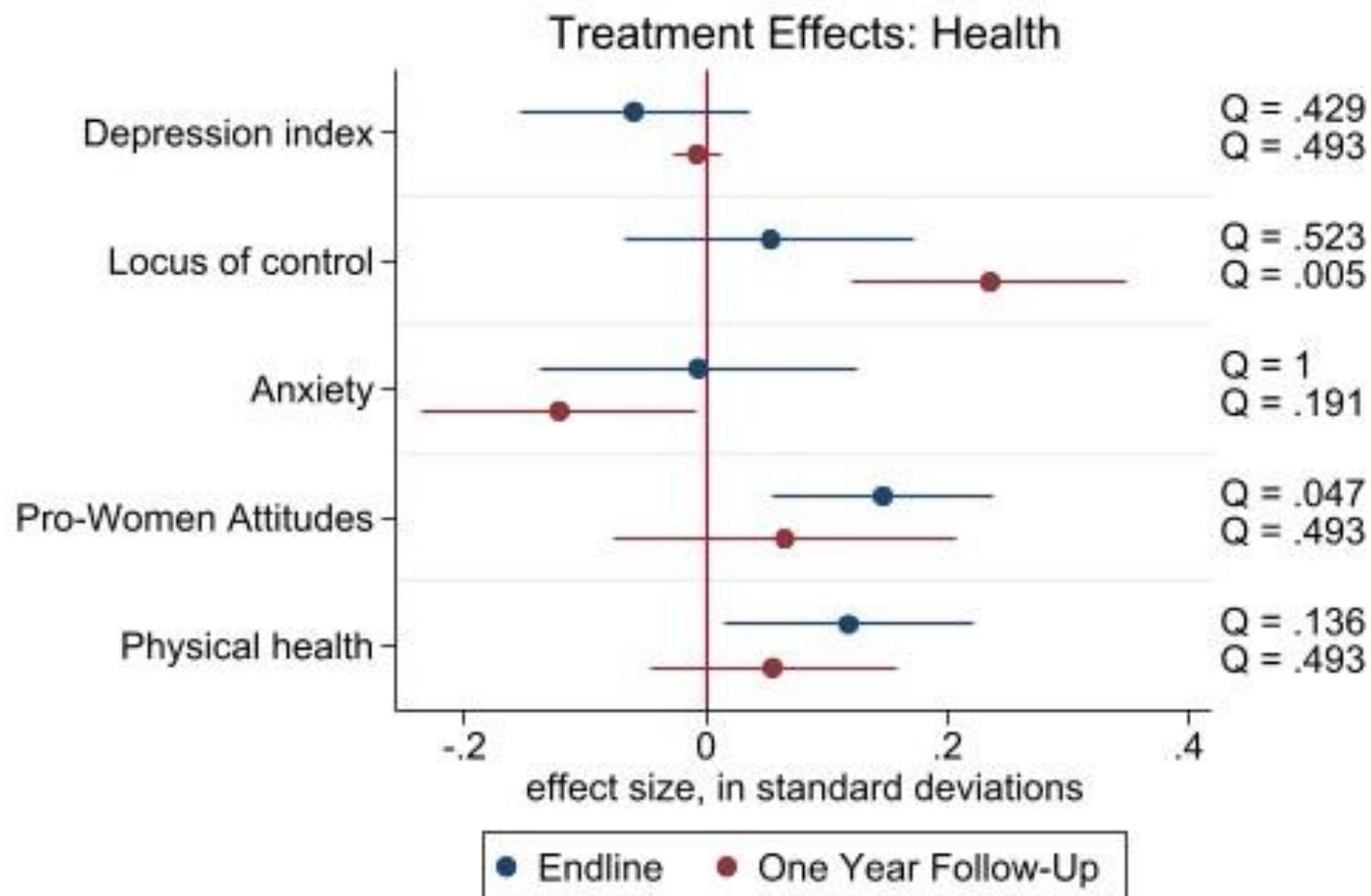


# Women increased decision-making power in households; had lower rates of partnerships.



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# Women showed improved mental health and agency.



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# Results: interpretation

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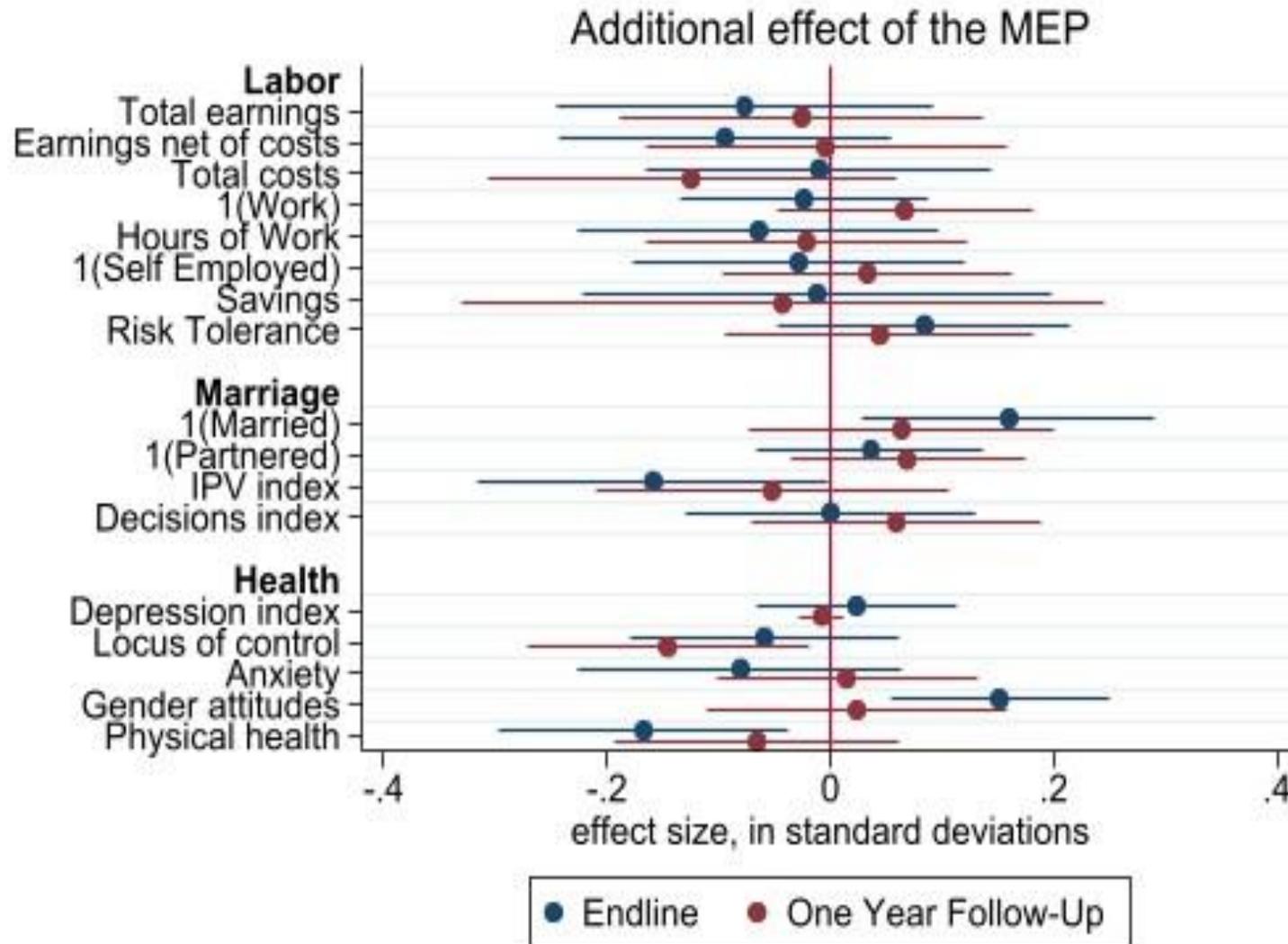
- Treatment effects were generally persistent one year after the program
  - And some even increased (e.g. decision-making; locus of control).
- Women expanded businesses, earned more, and increased savings
  - Savings treatment effect at one-year follow-up: \$7.95 USD (= 13,500 CDF). Represents a 175% increase over the control mean.
  - Net earnings effect at one-year follow-up: \$0.40 USD per week (=680 CDF). Represents a 29% increase over the control mean.

# Results: interpretation (continued)

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- Many welfare measures improved, with no evidence of backlash (on average)
  - Decision-making and locus of control particularly valuable as indicators of increased agency. Changes took time – effects at one-year follow-up.
  - (Relatively) tight zero on IPV. 95% CI = [-0.201 SD's, 0.153 SD's] at one-year follow-up
- In process: consumption (household level and individual-specific); heterogeneity; how to think about results on marriage/partnership

# Some MEP effects at endline, but not one year follow-up.



Standard deviation pertains to control group at endline. 90% confidence intervals shown in graph; Estimates reweighted following Hainmueller (2012).

**Gratitude for  
everyone  
involved.**

**Thank you to:**

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# Questions and Discussion



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