



USAID
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Women's Leadership Program Final Report

September 2015



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| List of Acronyms..... | 3 |
| Executive Summary..... | 4 |
| Background..... | 6 |
| WLP Program-Wide Activities..... | 8 |
| Partnership Summaries & Achievements..... | 10 |
| Women’s Leadership Program in Armenia..... | 10 |
| Women's Leadership Program in Paraguay..... | 12 |
| Women’s Leadership Program in Rwanda - Agriculture..... | 13 |
| Women’s Leadership Program in Rwanda - Education..... | 15 |
| South Sudan Higher Education Initiative for Equity and Leadership Development..... | 16 |
| WLP Performance and Results by Objective..... | 18 |
| <i>WLP Objective 1: Promote and support the access of women to higher education and advanced degrees.....</i> | <i>18</i> |
| <i>WLP Objective 2: Strengthen institutional capacity in research and education on women's leadership.....</i> | <i>20</i> |
| <i>WLP Objective 3: Promote women's leadership through higher education extension/outreach efforts in underserved communities.....</i> | <i>22</i> |
| Challenges and Lessons Learned..... | 24 |
| Conclusion..... | 28 |

List of Acronyms

| | |
|----------|---|
| ACE | American Council on Education |
| ASU | Arizona State University |
| CAVM | College of Agriculture, Animal Science, and Veterinary Medicine |
| DFID | The British Department for International Development |
| CGLS | Center for Gender and Leadership Studies |
| FCA | UNA's School of Agrarian Sciences |
| FECOPROD | Federación de Cooperativas de Producción de Paraguay |
| GBS | Gender Barometer Survey |
| GEWLP | Gender Equity and Women's Leadership Program |
| GOR | Government of Rwanda |
| HED | Higher Education for Development |
| IU | Indiana University |
| KOICA | Korean International Cooperation Agency |
| M&E | Monitoring and evaluation |
| MAED | Master in Education |
| MAWLD | Master of Arts in Women, Leadership, and Development |
| MoEST | Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in South Sudan |
| MSc | Master of Science |
| MSU | Michigan State University |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| PRIME | HED's Partnership Results & Information Management Engine |
| SSHIELD | South Sudan Higher Education Initiative for Equity and Leadership Development Program |
| SPA | School of Public Administration |
| SST | School of Social Transformation |
| UCLA | University of California Los Angeles |
| UF | University of Florida |
| UNA | National University of Asuncion |
| UNU | Upper Nile University |
| UoJ | University of Juba |
| UR | University of Rwanda |
| URCE | University of Rwanda's College of Education |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| VTech | Tech Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University |
| WSU | Washington State University |
| WGS | Women and Gender Studies Program |
| WLP | Women's Leadership Program |
| YSU | Yerevan State University |

Executive Summary

The Women's Leadership Program (WLP), announced by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Higher Education for Development (HED) in March of 2012, partnered five universities in the United States with higher education institutions worldwide to promote gender equality and female empowerment. The WLP partnerships promoted these goals through three WLP program-level objectives.

- Promote and support the access of women to higher education and advanced degrees,
- Strengthen institutional capacity in research and education on women's leadership, and
- Promote women's leadership through higher education extension/outreach efforts in underserved communities.

Following a competitive selection process, five partnerships were selected in four different countries.

1. **Armenia:** "Advancing Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment in Armenia." A partnership between Yerevan State University (YSU) and Arizona State University (ASU) with core objectives to develop instructional, research, and outreach capacity at YSU for promoting gender equality and women's leadership.
2. **Paraguay:** "Women's Leadership in Paraguay." A partnership between University of Florida (UF) and National University of Asuncion (UNA) with core objectives to strengthen UNA's institutional capacity to advance women's leadership and prepare graduates in the agricultural sector who can contribute to promoting gender equality in Paraguay's workforce.
3. **Rwanda (Agriculture-focus):** "Women's Leadership Program in Agriculture in Rwanda." A partnership between Michigan State University (MSU) and University of Rwanda's College of Agriculture, Animal Science, and Veterinary Medicine (UR-CAVM) with core objectives to increase women's access to advanced degrees in agricultural sciences and to strengthen women's empowerment in agriculture.
4. **Rwanda (Education-focus):** "Promoting Gender Equity and Female Empowerment in Rwanda." A partnership between University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and University of Rwanda's College of Education (URCE) with core objectives to foster strategies that promote gender awareness in classrooms through targeted outreach and mentoring programs, to conduct institutional capacity building activities, to create gender-sensitive curricula for teacher trainers, and to promote gender-sensitive teaching approaches.
5. **South Sudan:** "South Sudan Higher Education Initiative for Equity and Leadership Development (SSHIELD)." An initiative managed by Indiana University (IU) with the goal of increasing the capacity of educational leaders in South Sudan, particularly women, to address the needs of students and teachers in conflict-affected areas.

In addition to promoting their own partnership objectives, the five WLP partnerships supported the 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy, by contributing directly to Goal 2 of the strategy,

Improved ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to generate workforce skills relevant to a country's development goals, and the USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy.

The five WLP partnerships collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders, including host country governments, civil society, and private sector partners, to coordinate efforts in each country and maximize their impact. With funding from USAID totaling approximately \$7.6 million, programmatic achievements included the creation of gender-sensitive curricula, the establishment of new higher education policies, the development of joint-research projects, and the promotion of education to local community members.

The purpose of this report is to share accomplishments and lessons learned from the project management teams. This report is based on progress reports submitted by the partners in HED's Partnership Results & Information Management Engine (PRIME) for each semi-annual/annual reporting period between 2012 and 2015.

Background

Through a Leader with Associates agreement with HED, USAID's Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment (USAID/E3) launched a new partnership program titled, "Women's Leadership Program," in March 2012. USAID/E3 sought co-funding with Missions or Bureaus for country and regionally driven higher education partnerships that focused on strengthening women's leadership programming in host country higher education institutions. USAID/E3 provided funding to leverage matching funds from country or regional Missions to launch performance-based, multi-year higher education partnerships established through open, merit-based competition. USAID called upon Higher Education for Development (HED) to mobilize its resources to oversee the competitive awards process and to manage the partnerships during implementation.

Higher Education for Development (HED), a program of the American Council on Education (ACE), operates with the advice and counsel of six U.S. presidential higher education associations and with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to manage higher education partnerships that address global development challenges. Under the Women's Leadership Program (WLP), HED managed five higher education partnerships that promoted opportunities for women in business, agriculture, and education in Armenia, Paraguay and South Sudan; and two in Rwanda totaling at about \$7.6 million in funding from USAID.

USAID's Education Strategy is premised on the development hypothesis that education is both foundational to human development and critically linked to broad-based economic growth. The 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy outlines three goals with which all education development projects funded by USAID must align. Programs and partnerships that HED managed, including the Women's Leadership Program, contributed to Goal 2 of this strategy – improved ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to generate workforce skills relevant to a country's development goals. Women's Leadership Program partnerships were expected to carry out activities that would support USAID efforts related to the Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy that was aimed at achieving one or more of the following three overarching outcomes: reduced gender disparities in access to, control over, and benefit from resources, wealth, opportunities and services--economic, social, political, and cultural; reduced gender-based violence and mitigated harmful effects on individuals; and increased capability of women and girls to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes, and influence decision-making in households, communities, and societies.

Guided by the WLP framework outlined below, four design teams comprised of HED and USAID staff and monitoring and evaluation and gender experts, as needed, traveled to the four countries to work with the Missions to design country-specific WLP programs and develop Requests for Applications (RFAs) for partnerships in late January through March 2012.

Purpose: To support national and local development goals that promote gender equality and female empowerment.

Goal: To enhance the ability of higher education institutions to advance women's leadership.

Objectives: To achieve its goal, the WLP will establish multi-year country and regionally driven higher education partnerships that are focused on strengthening women's leadership programming in host country institutions. The higher education partnerships will include the following objectives:

Objective 1: Promote and support the access of women to higher education and advanced degrees

Objective 2: Strengthen institutional capacity in research and education on women's leadership

Objective 3: Promote women's leadership through higher education extension/outreach efforts in underserved communities

In all, 34 applications were received from U.S. institutions interested in participating in the Women's Leadership Program, and HED conducted 5 peer reviews to select the U.S. partner in consultation with USAID.

- WLP-Armenia: 6
- WLP-Paraguay: 8
- WLP-Rwanda Agriculture: 11
- WLP-Rwanda Education: 5
- WLP-South Sudan: 4

WLP Program-Wide Activities

In the three years of implementation of the WLP partnerships, HED and its partners developed strategies and activities to learn and collaborate in order to strengthen WLP's development efforts. The major initiatives that HED had spearheaded are outlined below by topic area.

Partnership Launch- July 2013

USAID and HED hosted an all partners meeting in Kigali, Rwanda themed, "A Shared Vision for Promoting Women's Leadership through Higher Education." All five partnerships were present for the four days (July 22- July 25, 2013) of strategy sessions, collaboration, and dialogue. The main goal of this meeting was to strengthen the capacity of the five newly launched WLP partnerships to achieve better results and generate greater impact by improving implementation practices. The focus was to improve partners' understanding of USAID and HED requirements, proving result-based management tools for enhancing partnership success, and fostering robust discussions about partnership implementation and impact. Outcomes of the meeting were greater institutional engagement and collaboration between both sides of the partnerships, increased capacity of US and host- country partners' institutions to manage partnership, and synthesized best practices and solutions to implementation challenges. Partners came out with a new sense of purpose and made a strong call for further collaboration and communication between the different partnerships.

Summer Webinar- July 2014

To build on the success of the all partners meeting, HED hosted a summer webinar with all the partners on July 30, 2014. The purpose of the webinar was to launch a dialogue on the collective progress of the Women's Leadership Program towards the three WLP program-level objectives focused on promoting and supporting the access of women to higher education and advanced degrees, strengthening institutional capacity, and promoting women's leadership through higher education extension/outreach efforts in underserved communities. HED also provided an overview of the plan for the WLP evaluations. The webinar provided a great opportunity for the partners to discuss their progress towards tracking relevant indicators. The partners learned about the challenges others faced with reporting and what steps were taken to better adapt to the model. The conversation was very fruitful and educational and the partners agreed to keep the dialogue going moving forward.

Fall Webinar- November 2015

HED's Fall Webinar, which occurred on November 18th, 2015, focused on partnership accomplishments to-date, plans for FY15—the last year of partnership implementation, and sustainability. All partners provided a summary of their accomplishments to date and the overall picture of how their partnerships are succeeding. HED and partners then discussed the plan to move forward towards the last year of implementation and how sustainability should be a focus moving forward. The partners were able to interact and learn about the challenges and successes other partnerships faced. It was a very successful meeting and established a strong momentum to move forward towards the last year of implementation.

External Evaluations- January 2015

In order to synthesize lessons learned across its portfolio of partnerships and thereby better contribute to the body of knowledge about the role of higher education in development, HED recruited external evaluators in January 2015. HED developed a framework, which was shared with the consultants, identifying critical partnership variables and evaluation criteria against which the variables can be examined. Using this framework, the consultants developed their own methods to examine

1. efficiency of management processes and systems,
2. relevance of program design,
3. effectiveness of program implementation,
4. impact of program intervention, and
5. potential for program sustainability.

More specifically, these evaluations were designed to examine each of these items to generate knowledge about how higher education partnerships can contribute to the promotion of gender equality and female empowerment. The evaluations focused on WLP Armenia, WLP Paraguay, and WLP Rwanda Education and Agriculture partnerships. Each partnership had two evaluators, one local and one US based consultant in order to oversee the research.

Partnership Summaries & Achievements

The WLP partnerships made meaningful contributions to the ability higher education institutions to promote women’s leadership and gender equity in Armenia, Paraguay, Rwanda, and South Sudan. Each partnership was unique in the issues being addressed and the innovative approaches being undertaken to address them, yet they all shared a common commitment to bringing the knowledge and resources of higher education to improve the lives of women and girls in their respective communities. This section of the report provides an overview of the five partnerships and their achievements. Detailed accomplishments and data are included in final partnership narrative reports that can be located in the Development Experience Clearinghouse (<https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/home/>).

Women’s Leadership Program in Armenia

The partnership between Yerevan State University (YSU) and Arizona State University (ASU) focused on improving the capacity of YSU to advance women’s leadership in Armenia through the establishment of a Center for Gender and Leadership Studies (CGLS) at YSU, curriculum expansion, faculty capacity building in policy research, support for YSU’s career development office, and extension and outreach efforts to other nongovernmental organizations and higher education institutions in Armenia. There were four partnership objectives:

- Objective 1: Enhance students’ knowledge and skills and broaden attitudes related to women’s leadership and options for career advancement;
- Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of Yerevan State University to make research-based recommendations, with an emphasis on putting into practice national gender policy;
- Objective 3: Develop YSU’s capacity to deliver coursework that addresses women’s leadership and gender equality; and
- Objective 4: Promote women’s leadership and gender equality through extension/outreach efforts at Yerevan State University.

WLP-Armenia Partnership at a Glance

U.S. Institution:

Arizona State University

Armenian Institution:

Yerevan State University

Life of Project:

September 2012 to June 2015

Funding Level:

\$1,305,000

Specific activities included creation of a mentorship program for approximately 25 female undergraduate and graduate students, launch of a mini-grants program supporting 28 research studies on various aspects of women’s leadership and gender equality issues in Armenia, support for building the capacity of YSU’s Career Services Office to better serve female students seeking employment, and design and implementation of a national Gender Barometer Survey.

In addition, WLP-Armenia featured faculty semesters-in-residence at each partner institution. Six female YSU scholars were based at ASU's School of Public Affairs (SPA) and the Program in Gender Studies (WGS) for one semester, while one ASU faculty member spent one semester in residence at the CGLS. While at ASU, the six scholars-in-residence created 8 new interactive courses that would eventually become the foundation for a new master's degree in women, gender, and development. They also received mentorship support from ASU faculty; learned interactive teaching methodologies; participated in classes, seminars, and workshops; conducted research into issues related to gender and women's leadership; and translated over 6,000 pages of articles, course materials, research, and text from English into Armenian and secured copyrights. The ASU faculty members worked with recipients of small research grants, taught a series of lectures and workshops on research methodology, and provided support for the Gender Barometer Survey.

Through the CGLS, the partnership also carried out a number of outreach activities to engage academic institutions, local women's NGOs, and international organizations to expand women's access to higher education from underserved communities beyond YSU and to train women for career success and public leadership roles. These outreach efforts included networking among higher education institutions, conducting local film screenings and seminars on topics related to gender equality and women's empowerment, hosting two international conferences on gender issues and a national conference devoted to the results of the small grant projects and the Gender Barometer Survey, disseminating policy recommendations generated by CGLS-sponsored research, and using social media to publicize the programming of the CGLS and findings from its policy research.

In spite of these many successes, the WLP-Armenia partnership struggled with Armenia's complex gender and socio-political context. Specifically, there was a widespread "anti-gender" campaign in Armenia fueled by media and public misperceptions surrounding the concept of gender and gender equality. This anti-gender campaign intensified in August 2013 and led to several articles in the press and comments from a subset of YSU faculty members that were critical of the CGLS and its mandate. Strong support from the highest level of YSU's administration and from the CGLS's partners and stakeholders helped the CGLS weather the campaign and eventually become incorporated into the fabric of the university.

By the end of its period of performance, the partnership was able to introduce several significant "firsts" to Armenia and YSU:

- the first gender curriculum in an Armenian University – a master's degree program in women, gender, and development being launched in fall 2015,
- the first nation-wide small grants competition aimed at promoting gender research in Armenia, and
- the first Gender Barometer Survey of more than 2100 households.

Women's Leadership Program in Paraguay

As a part of the Women's Leadership Program in Paraguay, the University of Florida and National University of Asuncion (UNA) are collaborating to advance women's leadership and employability skills in the agricultural sector. The partnership offers gender and leadership trainings, incorporates gender-inclusive components and materials into the existing agricultural sciences curriculum, and promotes policies that create a favorable environment for gender inclusion and female access to higher education.

The partnership objectives are to:

- Promote and support women's access to the National University of Asuncion with a focus on developing leadership skills;
- Strengthen the institutional capacity of UNA's School of Agrarian Sciences (FCA) to produce strong female leaders through training in workforce leadership skills; and
- Develop sustainable alliances between UNA's School of Agrarian Sciences, civil society, and the public and private sector that promote the emergence of female leaders.

WLP-Paraguay Partnership at a Glance

U.S. Institution:

University of Florida

Paraguayan Institution:

Universidad Nacional de Asuncion

Life of Project:

October 2012 to June 2015

Funding Level:

\$811,363

During the three years of activity implementation, the partnership was able to foster a culture of gender awareness and women's empowerment among the UNA/FCA academic community, and through fruitful relationships with external stakeholders. The partnership developed 11 initiatives during the life of the project, all focus towards access, leadership training and professional development for UNA students, and community engagement and gender awareness activities for rural women and men. Among the initiatives, the partnership was able to design and implement a successful mentorship program, which enhanced the leadership skills of more than 70 UNA students and reached to more than 1,000 rural high school students from Agricultural High Schools in Paraguay. This initiative solidified the relationship between the University and the surrounding community and yielded a cadre of young leaders, who promise to be agents of change among their peers.

In terms of gender awareness and mainstreaming, the partnership was able to develop a gender policy and a new elective course called *Gender and Interculturalism*. The policy is to be implemented at the School of Agrarian Sciences, and the class will be offered to all its students. To additionally enhance gender aspects among faculty, the UF provided trainings to professors and staff at UNA, and supported the activities of the Center for Leadership at the College.

Despite the achievements displayed by the partnership, challenges emerged in the implementing process. UNA administrators and faculty still refuse to acknowledge the importance of gender as a cross-cutting theme among teachings of agricultural studies, thus making it difficult to push the subject in the class room and approved curricula. Funding for

scholarships to further support access policies for rural women and vulnerable youth, also proved to be an obstacle. Many alliances that the partnership worked to create for this purpose did not materialize at the end due to administrative changes among the contacted institutions and government agencies.

In spite of the aforementioned challenges, the partnership had several high profile achievements:

- 12 new and/or improved policies to support increased access of underserved/disadvantaged populations were created and implemented at UNA.
- 77 individuals from underserved/disadvantaged populations accessed to undergraduate degrees at UNA during the course of the partnership.
- The partnership conducted more than 93 outreach activities in Asuncion and in nearby provinces, reaching rural women and rural high school students.
- The Center for Career and Professional Development was created in 2014, assisting a number of students through job search workshops and internships with external stakeholders, such as FECOPROD and ACDI/VOCA- Paraguay
- Around 689 individuals participated in the Mentorship and Agroleadership Program started and run by the partnership during the 3 years of implementation.

Early on in FY15, the partnership drafted a sustainability plan to secure UNA's support to continue some of the initiatives initiated by the project. FCA/UNA Student Center is exploring the possibility of developing a mentorship program that may mirror the one initiated by the Partnership. Additionally, UNA was able to establish two-three year partnerships with influential Paraguayan Companies, such as Compañía Agrotabacalera del Paraguay, Centro de Desarrollo Regional y Medio Ambiente, and Fundación Ayuda en Acción; all to provide technical assistance on agroleadership and gender empowerment workshops.

Women's Leadership Program in Rwanda - Agriculture

Michigan State University (MSU) in partnership with Washington State University (WSU) and the University of Rwanda's (UR) College of Agriculture, Animal Science, and Veterinary Medicine (CAVM) strengthened UR's capacity to advance women's leadership in the field of agriculture. As an integrated capacity-building initiative, the project addressed the convergence of three of the Government of Rwanda's (GOR) central policy priorities (agriculture, education, and gender) by recognizing the direct links between agricultural development, research capacity, and the promotion of women's leadership and empowerment. The project had three specific objectives:

- Objective 1: Strengthen the human and institutional capacity of UR in teaching and applied research in agricultural sciences.
- Objective 2: Promote and support women's access to graduate education in agricultural sciences.
- Objective 3: Extend UR's knowledge about, and women's expertise in, agricultural sciences to the community.

The primary vehicle for the achievement of these objectives was a gender-sensitive Master of Science (MSc) in Agribusiness program designed and implemented jointly by MSU and UR in order to train future leaders, both men and women, within Rwanda's agriculture sector. The MSc program blended three crosscutting issues: gender sensitivity, experiential learning, and sector involvement. Partners integrated gender topics throughout the curriculum (rather than adding a gender course), which enhanced gender perspectives from multiple angles.

This project faced several obstacles, which threatened the achievement of its objectives. The main challenge was the merger of the seven public universities into a single public institution, the University of Rwanda. The merger caused the project to enter into a period of near paralysis and uncertainty while the new public institution navigated its way through the new structures and processes.

In spite of this major challenge, the project had several high profile achievements:

- 23 students (13 females) enrolled in the master's program.
- 45 faculty received training in pedagogy, gender-sensitive curricula, classroom practice, and online learning.
- 65 top administrators in the UR national system received training in academic leadership.
- 28 upper-class students and 12 faculty members were trained in student peer coaching methods.
- 4 seed grants (\$10,000 each) were awarded to teams focusing on agricultural development.
- 8 representatives from the public/ private sectors established an Advisory Board for the MSc program.

Michigan State University (MSU), together with its project partners, the University of Rwanda (UR) and Washington State University (WSU) began strategizing about the longevity of the project early in the project cycle. In essence, the human and institutional capacity that they built through the partnership activities should sustain itself, and the master's program will be a permanent, long-term deliverable. However, with the impending absence of direct leadership and a lack of funding, the program's future is uncertain.

WLP-Rwanda Agriculture Partnership at a Glance

U.S. Institution:

Michigan State University

Rwandan Institution:

University of Rwanda

Life of Project:

November 2012 to June 2015

Funding Level:

\$1,280,000

Women's Leadership Program in Rwanda - Education

The University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of Rwanda - College of Education (UR-CE) partnered to strengthen the UR – CE's capacity to advance women's leadership in education and prepare graduates who can contribute to the promotion of female economic empowerment. The partnership focused on three main objectives in support of this goal:

1. Increase the number of highly qualified and gender-sensitive teachers in Rwanda by promoting and supporting women's access to UR-CE and teacher training colleges affiliated with the UR-CE.
2. Better inform UR-CE's institutional policies and practices through gender-focused research and capacity building.
3. Improve the capacity of UR-CE to prepare teachers to address gender equity in the classroom through pedagogy, course content, and classroom management techniques.

WLP-Rwanda Education Partnership at a Glance

U.S. Institution:

University of California Los Angeles

Rwandan Institution:

*University of Rwanda – College of
Education*

Life of Project:

November 2012 to June 2015

Funding Level:

\$1,079,996

The partnership implemented a set of activities focused on creating gender balance and equity in access, research, and instruction through outreach and recruitment programs, curriculum re-design, institutional capacity building, and professional development for staff, faculty, trainees, and in-service educators at teacher training colleges throughout Rwanda. These activities included:

- providing workshops and instruction manuals on adolescent reproductive health, using technology in classroom, using excel and access to improve data management, conducting outreach activities, integrating gender into research and teaching, and providing intermediate and advanced mentor training for mentor supervisors.
- implementing a small grants program in support of gender-related research-- eventually funding 7 research projects including one focused on examining low levels of female enrollment at the UR-CE.
- instituting changes in how data is collected and managed to facilitate the creation of reports and data analysis that supports policy decision-making that increases access for disadvantaged populations, including women.
- conducting a series of five community outreach workshops throughout Rwanda focused on promoting girls' education.

To further increase women's access to advanced degrees by providing more flexible course delivery options, the partnership also developed an e-learning platform and launched two

graduate courses: a post-graduate degree in education and a master's degree in education. The University of Rwanda plans to build upon the distance learning platform developed by the partnership and expand it to the entire University of Rwanda system.

In addition to the two new e-learning programs, the partnership developed a gender-sensitive diploma in primary education degree program targeting teachers with certificates who wanted a degree. However, approval and launch of the diploma was put on hold, at the request of the Ministry of Education, to await the announcement of a new national competency-based curriculum. The curriculum for the diploma is currently being revised to reflect the new competency-based standards and is expected to be launched in Fall 2015.

One of the partnership's most notable successes has been its ability to develop a sustainability plan for UR-CE and UCLA's continued engagement that targets national higher education priorities for the Government of Rwanda. Through UR and URCE's endorsement, the partnership has been linked with several donors who have selected project components to support. The Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has agreed to support the planned expansion of the e-learning platform and the creation of a new e-management platform in support of the UR's financial and planning needs. The British Department for International Development (DFID) has agreed to support research and curriculum re-design. UNIFEM also has approached the partnership to collaborate on adolescent reproductive health training using the newly developed training curriculum developed by the partnership.

South Sudan Higher Education Initiative for Equity and Leadership Development (WLP-South Sudan)

Under the South Sudan Higher Education Initiative for Equity and Leadership Development (SSHIELD), Indiana University (IU) increased the capacity of educational leaders in South Sudan, particularly women, to address the needs of students and teachers in conflict-affected areas.

The initial purpose of SSHIELD was to promote gender equality and female empowerment in South Sudan through the creation of a higher education partnership between a U.S. higher education institution and the University of Juba, Upper Nile University (UNU), and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology in South Sudan. As the result of a competition, Indiana University was selected to partner with the South Sudanese universities in October 2012.

SSHIELD (WLP-South Sudan) at a Glance

U.S. Institution:

Indiana University

Life of Project:

March 2013 to June 2015

Funding Level:

\$3,283,212

In December 2013, South Sudan began experiencing extreme civil unrest that resulted in the cessation of most programmatic activities at the direction of USAID. In response to the situation in South Sudan and in consultation with HED and USAID South Sudan, SSHIELD partners proposed to refocus the program to be more responsive to the security situation, concentrating partnership efforts towards social cohesion and peace building goals. The partners proposed to bring South Sudanese students to the United States for a course of study leading to a master's degree that was specially designed by Indiana University. SSHIELD's new objective then became to prepare South Sudanese educators to address the needs of educational institutions, teachers, and students in a conflict-affected environment. This re-scoping of activities was approved by USAID South Sudan in June 2014.

Since the re-scoping of activities, Indiana University offered scholarships to 14 South Sudanese women to complete master's degrees in secondary education and provided visiting faculty appointments to 8 South Sudanese faculty members to engage in co-teaching, research, and mentoring activities to help them support the master's program graduates to affect change in educational institutions upon their return to South Sudan. Further, as part of the Master in Secondary Education degree, Indiana University revised 10 courses to include a focus on education in post-conflict countries and to be relevant to the context of South Sudan's educational system. Indiana University also provided individual tutoring support tailored to the needs of each of the master students to help ensure their academic success. Thirteen of the fourteen master students completed their coursework and successfully defended their theses. Plans are underway for the remaining master student to revise her thesis while in Juba with support from University of Juba and Indiana University faculty.

All 14 master students and all 8 visiting faculty returned at the end of 2015 were greeted at the airport by several media outlets, Ministry of Education representatives, including the Director General for External Relations in Higher Education, and representatives from USAID, upon their return at the end of June 2015. The master students and visiting faculty then presented at a showcase held at University of Juba. With approximately 85 in attendance, the students provided overviews of their theses and highlighted their findings. The faculty discussed highlights and outcomes of their participation. The event was attended by a Ministry of Education official, USAID representatives, members of the NGO community, and students and faculty of the University of Juba.

WLP Performance and Results by Objective

The purpose of the Women’s Leadership Program was to support national and local development goals that promote gender equality and female empowerment by enhancing the ability of higher education institutions to advance women's leadership. To achieve this goal, the WLP partnerships worked towards the following objectives:

1. Promote and support the access of women to higher education and advanced degrees
2. Strengthen institutional capacity in research and education on women's leadership
3. Promote women's leadership through higher education extension/outreach efforts in underserved communities

This section provides program-wide comparisons of partnership achievements by objective.

Table 1. WLP Objectives by Partnership

| WLP Objectives | Armenia | Paraguay | Rwanda Ag. | Rwanda Ed. | South Sudan |
|--|---------|----------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Promote and support the access of women to higher education and advanced degrees. | | • | • | • | • |
| Strengthen institutional capacity in research and education on women's leadership. | • | • | • | • | • |
| Promote women's leadership through higher education extension/outreach efforts in underserved communities. | • | • | • | • | • |

WLP Objective 1: Promote and support the access of women to higher education and advanced degrees

While women have legal access to higher education in most parts of the world, there remain a number of barriers that impede women from fully participating in post-secondary education. Cultural, religious, and political reasons diminish opportunities for women to attain higher education and thus improve the financial situation of their families and communities, hindering the economic and social prosperity of developing countries. Four of the five WLP partnerships developed policies that specifically addressed access challenges by prioritizing female enrollment and participation. Three of the partnerships developed scholarship programs to reduce the financial constraint of education for female participants. And finally, one created a distance-learning program to provide non-traditional learning opportunities and flexibility for female students to increase their opportunities for access to advanced degrees.

In Paraguay, the University of Florida and UNA created and/or enhanced 12 access policies during the three years of the project. As a result, 66 disadvantaged individuals including single

mothers, young girls from rural high schools, and youth from indigenous groups were granted admission into UNA’s School of Agrarian Sciences (FCA). The policies called for exemption of up to 50% of the FCA’s admission course and tuition fees, in addition to academic and moral support for these new students through the Mentorship Program, also established by the partnership at the FCA.

Under the WLP-Rwanda Agriculture partnership, 13 women were granted admission into the MSc in Agribusiness program. Eleven of the thirteen received full scholarships. In addition, Michigan State University and the University of Rwanda integrated two access policies into their curriculum. The first policy called for 50 percent of newly admitted students to be females. The second policy required applicants to the MSc program to write an essay on questions related to the program’s core principal of gender equity.

The University of Rwanda College of Education and the University of California Los Angeles introduced two new access policies. First, the partnership introduced improvement to the data collection method at URCE. This improvement allowed for the use of data in policy and procedure formulation and resulted in target decision making to increase enrollment of underrepresented populations. Second, the partnership introduced distance learning as a means of increasing access. Eighty-six students were given access to advanced degrees through 2 new e-learning programs through the partnership.

Finally, under the SSHIELD initiative, Indiana University offered 14 ethnically diverse South Sudanese women merit- and needs-based scholarships to complete a master’s degree program in secondary education that was designed to address the needs of South Sudan’s conflict-affected society. All 14 master students successfully completed the required coursework. Thirteen of the fourteen students received passing marks on their theses and received master degrees. The student who did not pass her thesis defense will continue to receive virtual support from faculty at Indiana University and in-person from the visiting faculty that have returned to South Sudan to revise and resubmit her thesis at a future date.

Table 2. WLP Objective1 Results by Partnership

| WLP Objective 1: Promote and support the access of women to higher education and advanced degrees. | | | | | |
|--|---------|----------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Results | Armenia | Paraguay | Rwanda Ag. | Rwanda Ed. | South Sudan |
| The number of women accessing higher education and advanced degrees will be increased. | | • | • | • | • |
| Improved gender-sensitive admissions procedures that facilitate the acceptance of women to higher education programs | | • | • | • | • |
| Expanded merit and/or need-based scholarship opportunities for women | | • | • | | • |
| Increased college preparatory programs | | • | | | |

WLP Objective 2: Strengthen institutional capacity in research and education on women's leadership

The WLP partners were committed to increasing opportunities for women in their respective home countries to pursue higher education and serve as effective and influential leaders in the public and private sectors. They demonstrated this commitment by building strong institutional foundations for programs to grow and sustain beyond the end of the three-year period. The partnerships established institutes, designed mentorship programs, and created new curricula to enhance women's leadership opportunities and advance gender as a transversal topic in higher education.

As one of its first steps towards strengthening institutional capacity in research and education on women's leadership, the WLP-Armenia partnership established a Center for Gender and Leadership Studies (CGLS) that promoted curriculum expansion, faculty capacity building in policy research, and support for YSU's career development office in addition to supporting outreach efforts. The partnership created a mentorship program for approximately 25 undergraduate and graduate students, launched a mini grants program supporting 28 policy research projects, and implemented a national gender barometer survey of over twenty-one hundred households. In terms of curricular development the partnership also launched a new master's program in women, leadership, and development comprised of 8 newly created courses and 20 revised courses.

WLP-Paraguay set up a Center for Professional Development at the School of Agrarian Sciences at UNA, through which students have access to job searching strategies, talks by young professionals, and internship opportunities with external stakeholders. Additionally, with input from UNA's faculty, Gender Specialist from ONU-Women and representatives from the Ministry of Women in Paraguay, the partnership, developed and implemented a Gender strategy at FCA. The partnership also developed an elective course titled *Gender and Interculturalismo* included in the curriculum of five academic programs at the School. Lastly, the Mentorship and Agroleadership Program set up by the partnership and offered to UNA students, strengthened the outreach capacity of the FCA, reaching to agricultural high schools across the country and collaborating with other UNA campuses. Over 680 individuals participated in this program since it was launched in 2013.

One of the greatest successes of the WLP-Rwanda Agriculture partnership was the creation of a gender sensitive Master of Science Program in Agribusiness that prepares students in careers and leadership roles related to agricultural development. The program was approved at the highest level of government and is institutionalized within the university structure. Partners also enhanced pedagogical skills for UR faculty to teach the gender sensitive curriculum and to supervise agricultural sciences research. Additionally, MSU-UR developed leadership training modules for university administrators and faculty.

UCLA and URCE implemented a small grants program in support of gender related research, eventually funding 7 research projects, including one examining low levels of female

enrollment at the URCE under the rubric of the WLP-Rwanda Education partnership. The partnership also provided workshops and instruction manuals on adolescent reproductive health, using technology in the classroom, integrating gender into teaching and research, and provided intermediate and advanced mentor training for mentor supervisors. Using an e-learning platform developed by the partnership, they launched two graduate degrees: a post graduate degree in education and a master’s degree in education.

Under SSHIELD, 8 ethnically diverse South Sudanese faculty from 4 universities received 5 months of professional development training as visiting faculty at Indiana University and are prepared to support the SSHIELD graduates as they return to various education positions in South Sudan by creating a network of support. The visiting faculty program also has equipped the 8 visiting faculty members to provide leadership to South Sudanese higher education institutions in promoting gender equity and conflict-sensitive curriculum and policies. In addition, should the master’s program succeed in being transitioned to South Sudan, these faculty members will be prepared to teach graduate level courses. Further, the knowledge and skills gained by the SSHIELD program graduates and visiting scholars will be put back into the South Sudanese educational system as many of them return to their previous employment and some take new positions. The 14 master students are ready to take leadership roles in curriculum development, teacher education, educational policy, and educational research. SSHIELD also created a teaching and learning resource that remains in use by faculty and students at the University of Juba’s College of Education.

Table 3. WLP Objective 2 Results by Partnership

| Objective 2: Strengthen institutional capacity in research and education on women's leadership. | | | | | |
|---|---------|----------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Results | Armenia | Paraguay | Rwanda Ag. | Rwanda Ed. | South Sudan |
| Host country higher education institutions will utilize research to identify women's leadership constraints and provide policy recommendations. | • | | • | • | |
| Host country educational offerings that promote women's leadership will be improved. | • | • | • | • | • |
| Increased research initiatives focused on women's leadership constraints | • | | • | • | • |
| Improved host country educational offerings that promote women's leadership | • | • | • | • | • |

WLP Objective 3: Promote women's leadership through higher education extension/outreach efforts in underserved communities

A critical component of the WLP partnerships was outreach and engagement with underserved communities. This was often one of the most challenging components for the partners, but also one of the most potentially impactful. Unlike promoting access or building institutional capacity, outreach activities created instant human connections and direct collaboration with individuals from all backgrounds.

The number of underserved community members using higher education extension/outreach services that advance gender equality and women's leadership will be increased.

Through the CGLS, YSU carried out a number of outreach activities to engage academic institution, local women's' NGOS, and international organization, to expand women's access to higher education from underserved populations. These efforts included conducting local film screenings and seminars on topics relevant to women's leadership and gender equality, hosting 2 international conferences on gender issues, and disseminating policy recommendations from CGLS sponsored research.

The partnership in Paraguay was particularly successful with their outreach initiatives and engaged a large number of community members across a vast geographical area. The partnership conducted 93 outreach activities reaching approximately 1,000 community members including rural high school students, women from agricultural cooperatives, government representatives, and national NGOs. The partnership also signed and executed 11 agreements with outside stakeholders, including ACIDI/VOCA and FECOPROD, and has managed to sign agreements with 3 local and one international organization going through 2016-2017.

The WLP-Rwanda Agriculture partnership created an advisory board with 7 members from the public, private, and NGO sectors that provided community input and feedback to the structure and design of the MSc program. The partnership also sponsored an Employers Listening Session to present details of the MSc program to potential employers that are interested in hosting and mentoring an intern.

In collaboration with Bishop John Rucyahana, President of the Unity and Reconciliation Commission, the WLP-Rwanda Education partnership held a series of outreach forums to raise awareness on the importance of female education among community leaders, religious leaders, and national thought leaders in the districts. The goal of the forums was to encourage community leaders to be proactive in advocating female empowerment in their communities. The forums were held in various districts throughout Rwanda and were hosted by local district leaders.

SSHIELD established an NGO at the University of Juba's College of Education, Gender Equity and Women's Leadership Program (GEWLP), to help link the University of Juba with the local community. This NGO, which is housed at the teaching and learning resource center

established by SSHIELD, remains active today.

Table 4. WLP Objective 2 Results by Partnership

| Objective 3: Promote women's leadership through higher education extension/outreach efforts in underserved communities. | | | | | |
|--|---------|----------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Results | Armenia | Paraguay | Rwanda Ag. | Rwanda Ed. | South Sudan |
| Increased host country institution policy outreach and advocacy activity | • | • | • | • | • |
| Improved host country educational offerings that promote women's leadership | • | • | • | • | • |
| Increased experiential and/or applied learning opportunities for students | • | • | • | • | • |
| Curricula developed/revised to advance women's leadership and gender equality through the integration of stakeholder input | • | • | • | • | • |
| Women's leadership outreach/extension programs established and operational | • | • | | • | • |

Challenges and Lessons Learned

In spite of great progress in many areas, the WLP partnerships experienced challenges that provide the basis for lessons learned and suggest ways to resolve identified constraints. Some of these challenges and lessons learned are described below. Table 5 on page 27 also presents some of the challenges and lessons learned by partnership.

Delays executing the sub-cooperative agreement and finalizing the results framework, partnership implementation plan, partnership management plan, and the baseline report
All five WLP partnerships experienced delays finalizing the partnerships results frameworks and baseline assessments. The baseline assessments consisted of analyzing all baseline data, establishing and confirming objectives, and vetting target data provided for USAID's Standard Higher Education and Gender Indicators as well as the partnership's custom indicators. Although completion of these documents extended partnership start-up periods, the time and diligence in planning and measuring the baseline paid off during implementation for the partnerships.

Complexity of the Gender Indicator

The WLP partnerships struggled with the significance of two USAID Gender Indicators and the applicability of the tool within their local contexts. The USAID instruments used to measure the gender indicators were difficult to use and were not designed in line with contextual considerations. The higher education partners noted that it was unrealistic to track progress on the gender indicators using pre- and post-surveys for every activity. Small change can occur during an activity, but transformative change only occurs over long periods of time. As a result of the challenges associated with the indicators and the tool, several of the partnerships adapted the tool to better meet their needs. For instance, the University of Florida and UNA partners started to collect qualitative data that reflects self-efficacy in more meaningful ways to complement the data received from the USAID instrument. The Arizona State University and Yerevan State University partners, for their part, customized the tool by adding additional questions that are specific to their participant population.

In-Country Coordinating Offices

Four of the five WLP partnerships established offices within the host country to help coordinate efforts. For example, in spite of the fact that the SSHIELD program was originally designed as a three-way partnership between Indiana University, University of Juba, and Upper Nile University, Indiana University felt it was best to operate in-country programs through an independent NGO rather than directly through university partners. It recognized the importance of a strong in-country partner to implement programmatic activities and financial controls on the ground. By establishing a new NGO, GEWLP, Indiana University felt better able to ensure the quality of program management while building capacity in country and paving a path for program sustainability.

National Context

All five partnerships struggled to enact transformative changes within difficult national contexts. In Armenia, an anti-gender campaign aimed at women's organizations, gender centers, and individual researchers of women's and gender issues became evident in the media and press in August 2013. This campaign started to negatively impact CGLS activities, and the CGLS director and staff found themselves defending the activities of the partnership before a public that generally is skeptical about issues of gender equality and women's leadership on a number of occasions. With the help of YSU's rector, the CGLS director and staff did their best to address these public concerns on a case-by-case basis. The CGLS also joined a variety of networks and coalitions in order to combine efforts to collectively combat the anti-gender campaign.

For their part, the WLP-Rwanda partnerships faced extensive delays in mid-implementation due to an unanticipated restructuring of the entire university system. By working closely together to adapt to the new priorities that arose out of the restructuring and intensify activities, however, the two partnerships were able to overcome the delays and accomplish their partnership objectives.

Nonetheless, the SSHIELD partners faced arguably the biggest challenge when the December 2013 conflict erupted in South Sudan. The conflict had the potential to derail the entire SSHIELD program. Indiana University and GEWLP were dedicated to meeting the original objectives of the program as much as possible and were able to come up with an alternate plan—to transition training activities to United States. As such, the lesson learned is that flexibility is critical when operating in a conflict-affected environment. The fact that the program was able to continue is due to creative thinking and a strong, collaborative partnership between the implementing partners, HED, and USAID.

Host Country Financial Management Systems

Four of the five partnerships experienced challenges resulting from incompatible financial systems that resulted in significant inefficiencies in management systems and decision-making processes. For example, administrative bureaucracy at URCE delayed requisitions for partnership activities and almost resulted in the cancellation of several important activities, including the partnership launch. In some cases, UCLA would make payments directly from their account to ensure activities could be completed. In other cases, the Principal of the College of Education had to intervene. To expedite the process, the URCE reduced a long list of required signatories to the director of finance and the director of planning.

Sustainability

Sustainability was envisioned and applied differently across partnerships. Michigan State University, together with its project partners, the University of Rwanda and Washington State University, thought about sustainability in two different ways: 1) sustainability structures that were part of the project design; and 2) sustainability efforts that were added in response to unforeseen circumstances. The key structures that were part of the design were the 1) approval of the MSc in Agribusiness by the Higher Education Council and the President's

Cabinet; the 2) establishment of a high-level Advisory Board to guide the MSc program; and the 3) creation of ongoing training opportunities for University of Rwanda faculty members and administrators to carry on the leadership of the program beyond the close of the award. The key structures that were added in response to delays associated with the MSc program approval process were 1) adjusting the credentialing strategy for MSc program faculty; and 2) integrating the internship and peer-coaching programs into the master's curriculum.

The MSc program's approval at the highest levels of government is recognition of the program's relevance and potential in Rwanda. Additionally, the gender sensitivity and active-learning components of the curriculum have spilled over into other university programs and will have a lasting impact. The program is well established within the University of Rwanda's administrative system, however, it will take time and effort to formally institutionalize and build a strong cohort of faculty.

In Paraguay, the partnership was envisioned and executed with a philosophical foundation based on three pillars: cultural relevance, collaboration and sustainability. The partners placed heavy importance on cultural considerations, since most of their beneficiaries in the field came from indigenous and rural backgrounds, making it inadmissible not to take into account the context of the communities and the realities to where they belong. Additionally, the partnership made a significant effort in creating alliances with public and private sector institutions alike. Through cooperative agreements the partnership was able to share ownership of the project with local actors, community organization, rural high schools, NGOs, etc. Lastly, many of the initiatives started through the partnership have been absorbed by UNA in an effort to continue building on the achievements obtained during the years of program implementation. The Center for Professional Development and Job Placement, the access and retention policies, and the Mentorship program will continue on as part of UNA's commitment to women's empowerment and leadership in Paraguay.

Table 5. Challenges by Partnership

| Challenges | Contextual | Financial/ Administrative Structure | M&E and RBM Practices | Aligning with Donor Strategies | Host Country Ownership | Sustainability |
|--------------------|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| Armenia | National anti-gender climate | YSU internal administrative and procurement delays | Complexity of results framework and gender indicator | - | - | External funding needed to support future research initiative Minimum class sizes needed to support the master's degree program |
| Paraguay | Collaboration with Paraguayan Government Ministries to further the Gender agenda | Administrative challenges to implement project activities at subsidiary campuses | Difficulties administrating the gender indicator assessments | - | - | Lack of funding to continue the outreach activities at rural high schools |
| Rwanda Ag. | Institutional merger and MSc program approval | Unresponsive financial management and frozen account | Adjusting indicators and encouraging host-country leadership to follow RBM standards. | Changing project priorities based on donor priorities. | Lack of institutional support and ability to navigate bureaucratic processes. Inactive project leadership at UR. | Lack of credentialed professors, dedicated funding, or university commitment. |
| Rwanda Ed. | Institutional merger and delays in degree program approval | Incompatible financial management systems and shifting leadership | Difficulties administrating the gender indicator assessments.. Adjusted framework mid-implementation | - | - | - |
| South Sudan | December 2013 Conflict | - | - | - | - | Support needed for eventual master's degree in South Sudan |

Conclusion

Throughout the three-year implementation period of the WLP partnerships, the higher education institutions created meaningful change at the individual, community, and national levels. These partnerships strengthened institutional capacity, increased access to education, developed impactful programming, built capacity in policy research related to gender equity and women's leadership, and improved the academic structure of the institution. Through curriculum development and structured programming women were given access to not only gain a valuable academic degree but to raise their leadership potential, gain mentors, and employment opportunities. Though these partnerships are closing, the universities are taking responsibility to sustain these achievements and continue towards promoting women's empowerment.