

## The benefits of microfinance for survivors

ARMANDE MAHABI

PHD STUDENT IN MICROFINANCE AT AGDER UNIVERSITY, KRISTIANSAND, NORWAY

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**Accumulating Savings and Credit Associations (ASCAs)** are local microfinance institutions that facilitate the financial inclusion of women, particularly survivors of sexual violence. They work towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **These are groups of 15 to 30 women volunteers who meet weekly over a 12-month period to save and borrow from each other.** The group accumulates funds from their members and then offers lending services in exchange for interest payments that constitute a return on savings at the end of the cycle.

In recent years, ASCAs have gained momentum and interest from academic researchers and others. The results of these studies consistently highlight the social and financial benefits of involving survivors of sexual violence in CSAWs. As a result, access to savings and credit has played an important role in increasing income to facilitate food security, and asset

ownership (livestock, land, etc.). This income generated through micro-credit, in addition to the training received, has played **an important role in empowering women and improving entrepreneurial skills.** These changes in turn have had positive consequences for the consideration and position of women in their households and communities.

Despite these benefits, the groups face certain challenges that impact women's financial capacity and hence the performance of the groups. These challenges are related to political, economic, and environmental shocks: climate change, low bargaining power in the market, migratory movements, and social instability. There is therefore a need for funding, know-how sharing and scientific research to ensure that actions to overcome these obstacles are effective and sustainable.

