

Heifer’s intervention for empowering women to transform communities



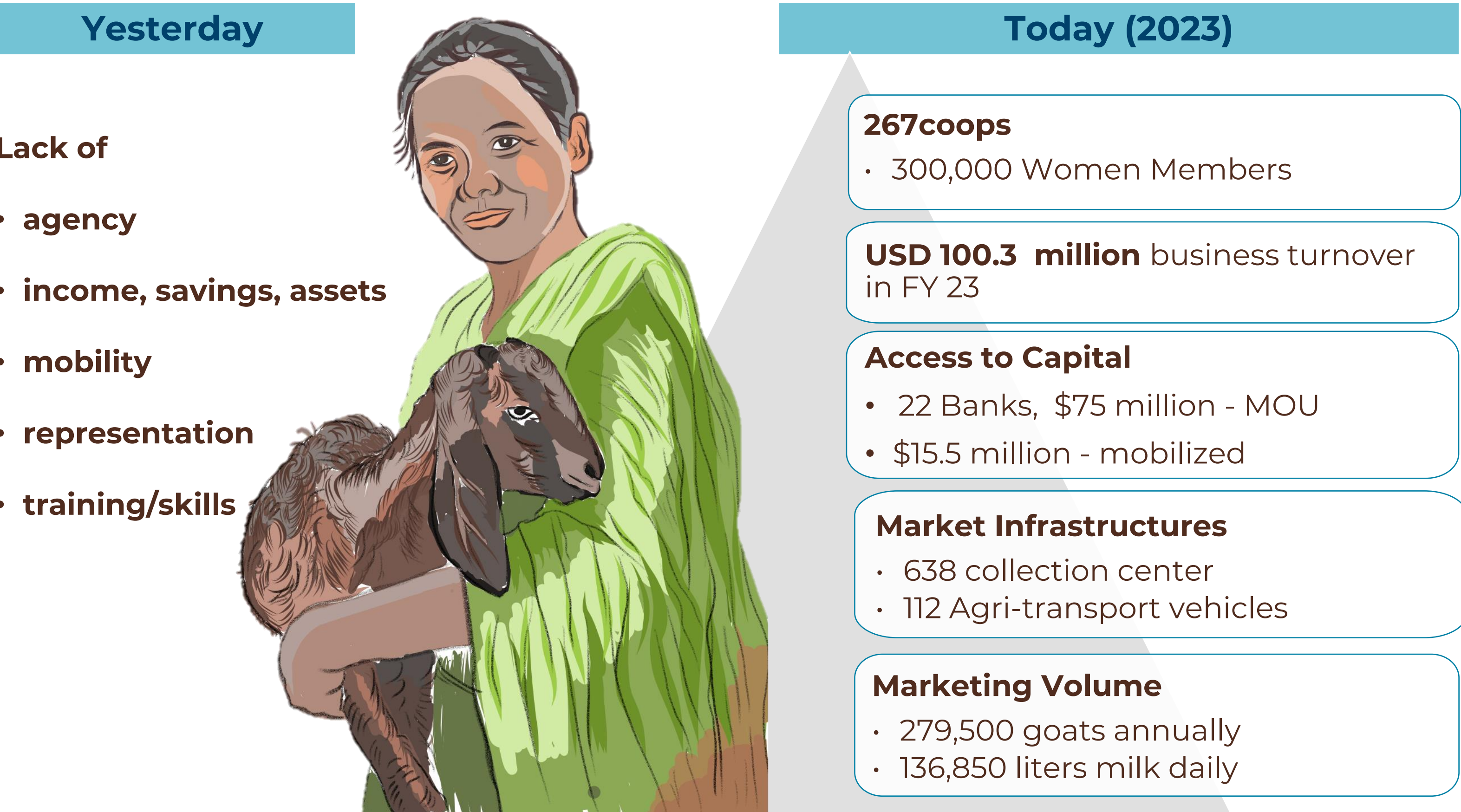
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BACKGROUND

Smallholder farmers in Nepal mostly women, engaged in household and farm activities with limited resources and access to services. Women empowerment is cross cutting and not the primary goal of most of the interventions. This study measures the outcomes of Heifer’s intervention in women’s empowerment to improve livelihoods through strengthening of the social capital, improved access to services, finance and income.

METHODS

- The study employed a mixed method, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.
- The quantitative study involved 251 respondents, 176 of whom were female beneficiaries and 75 of whom were some of their male family members from Heifer Nepal working area.
- The qualitative study involved 10 focus group discussions and key informant interviews with various stakeholders.
- Secondary data from the nationally representative Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) database of Nepal, Bangladesh, and India were used to corroborate the findings.



BEFORE THE INTERVENTION

- Heifer SLVC I and II programs were introduced to communities living at subsistence level
- Communities experienced multiple disadvantages
- Women dependent on husbands and Economy driven by men
- Lack of training and limited market connectivity
- Limited access to capital/loans
- Little knowledge of starting businesses or alternative income sources

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

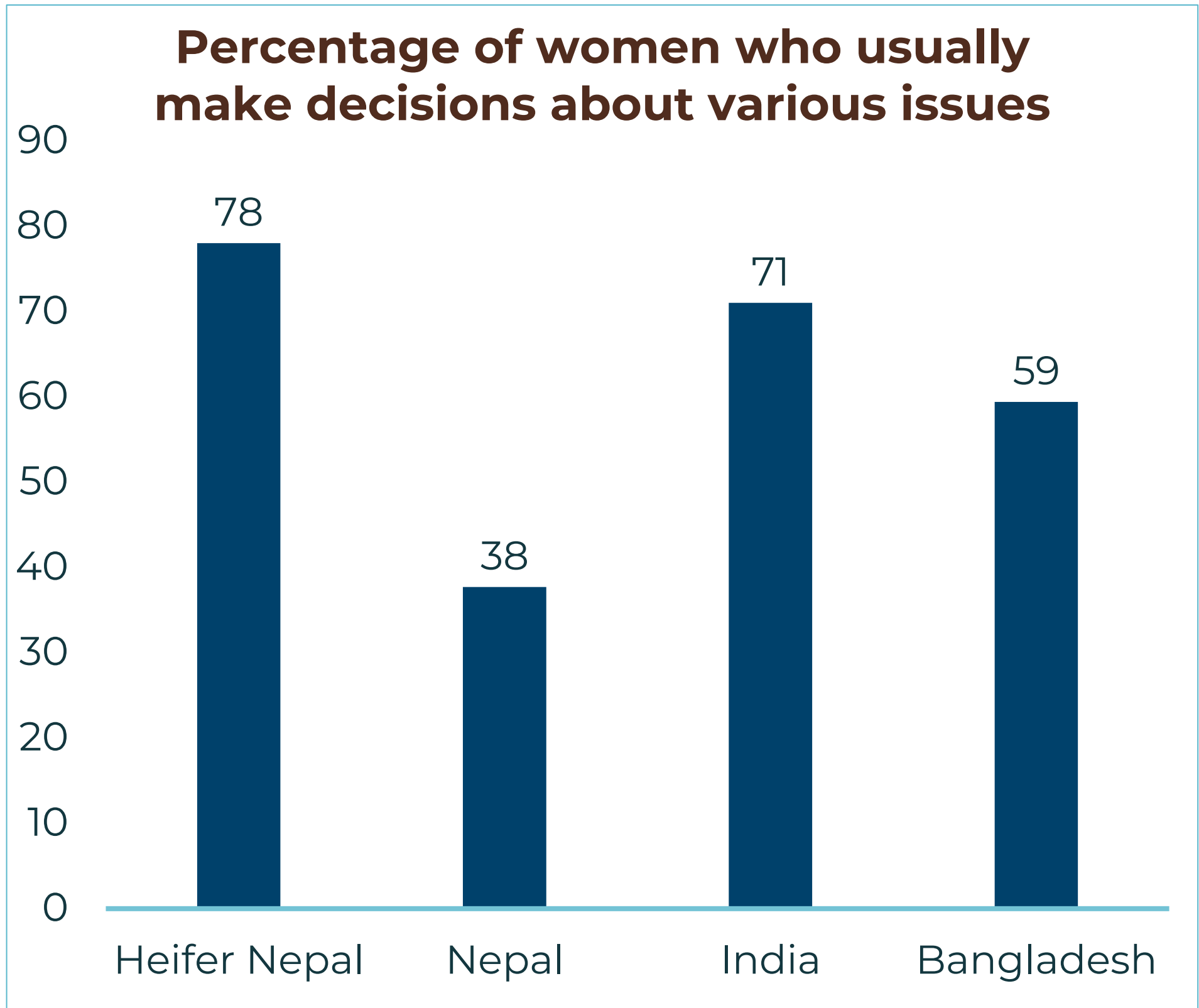
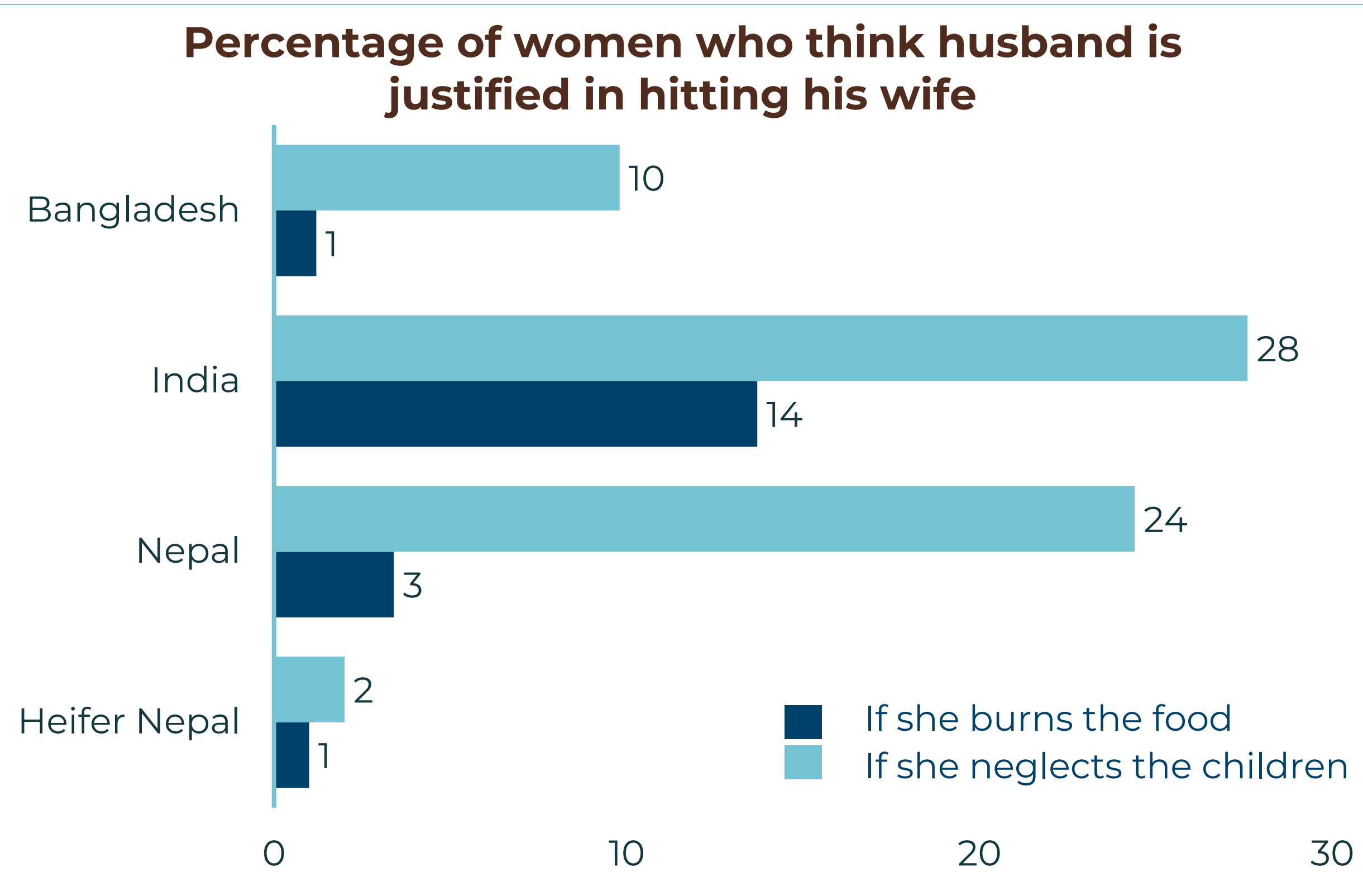
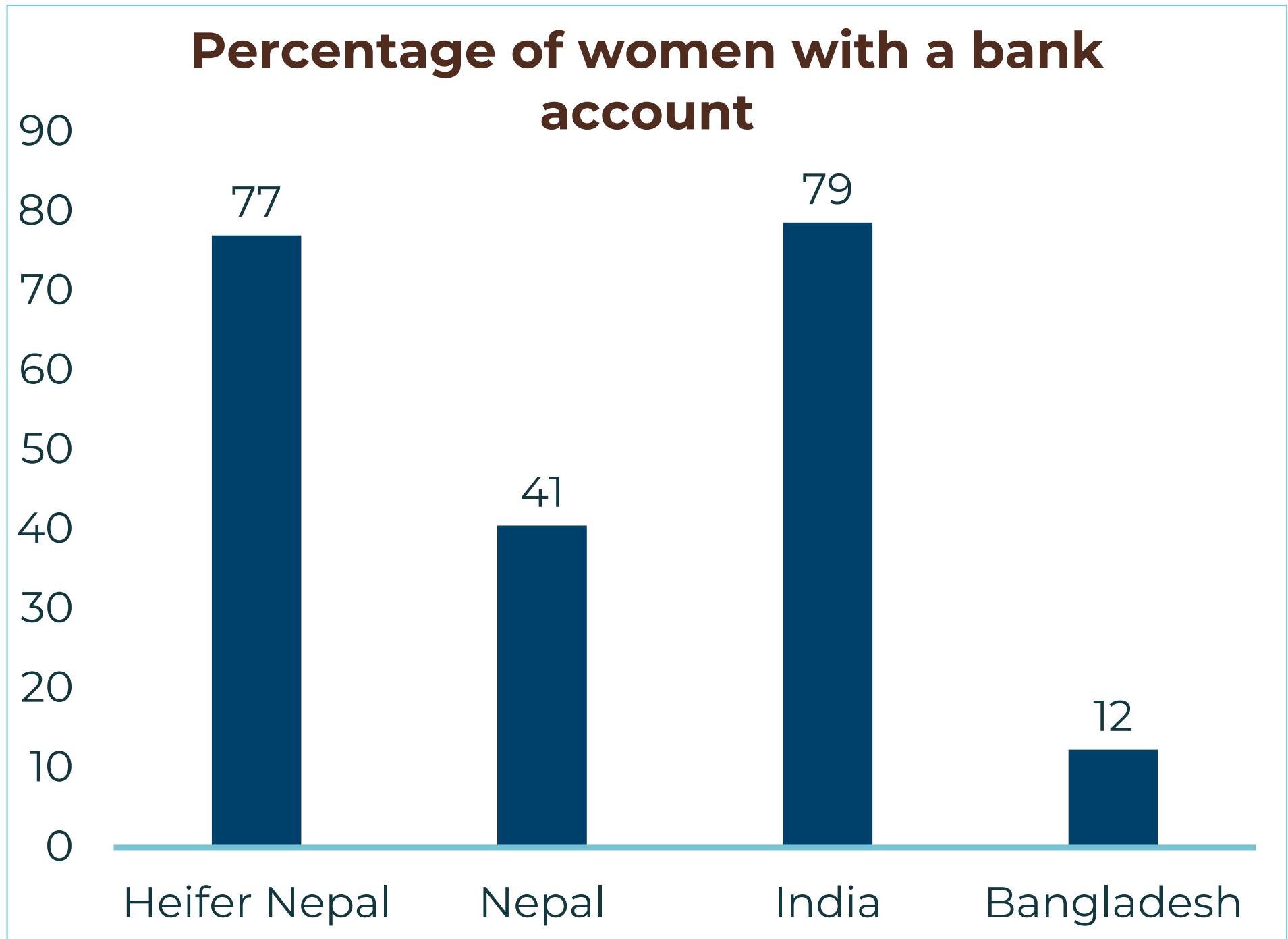
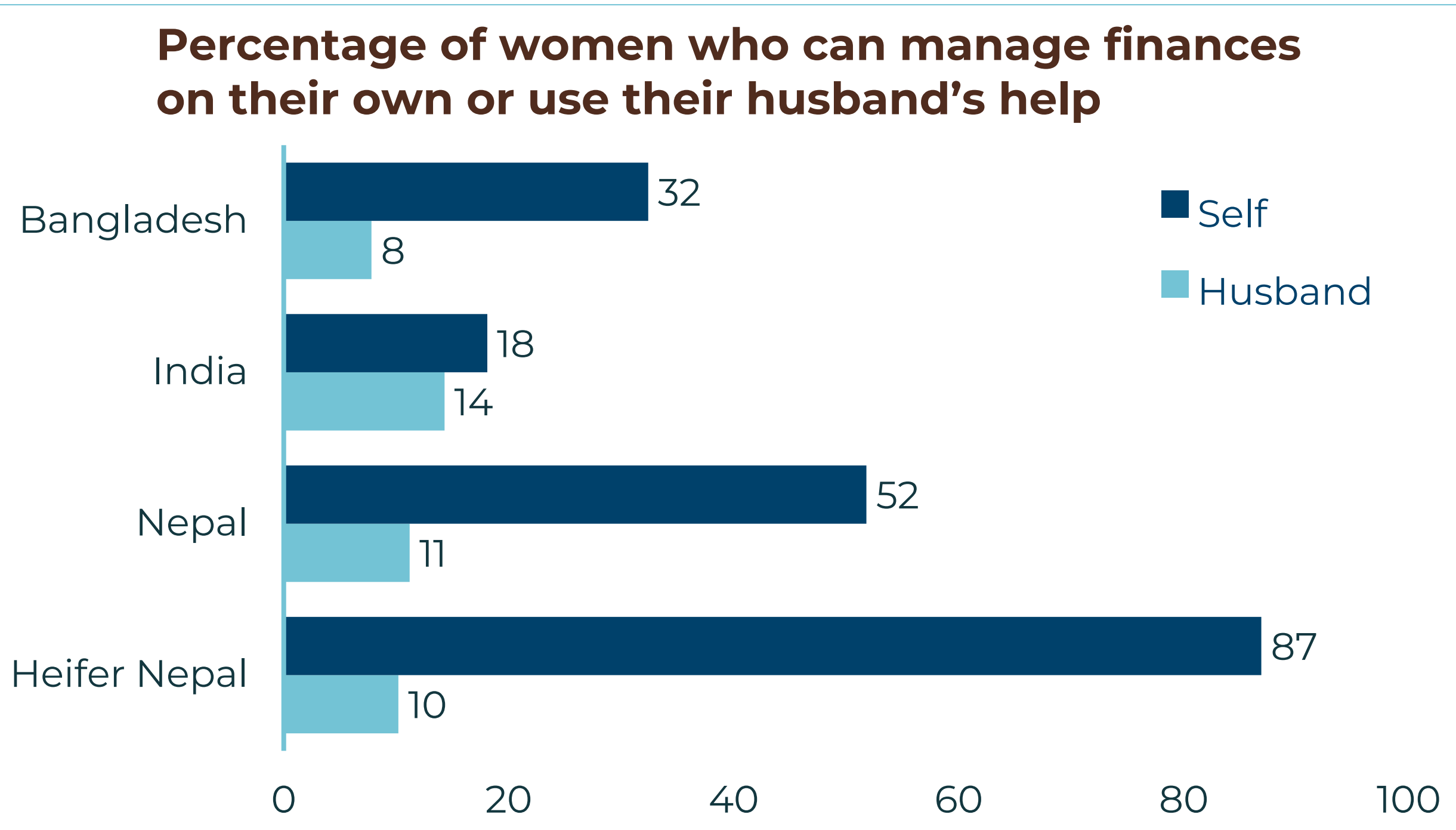
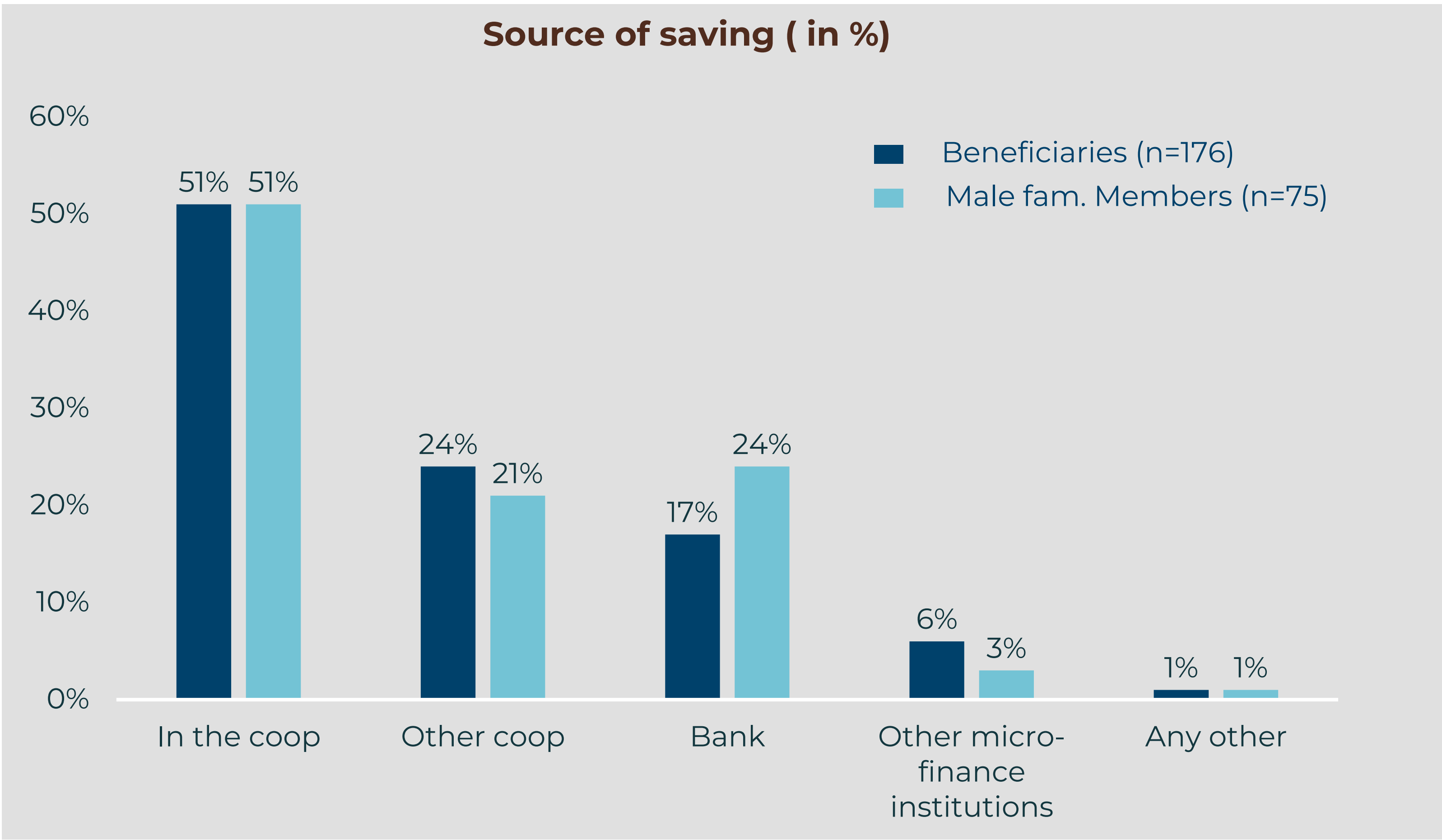
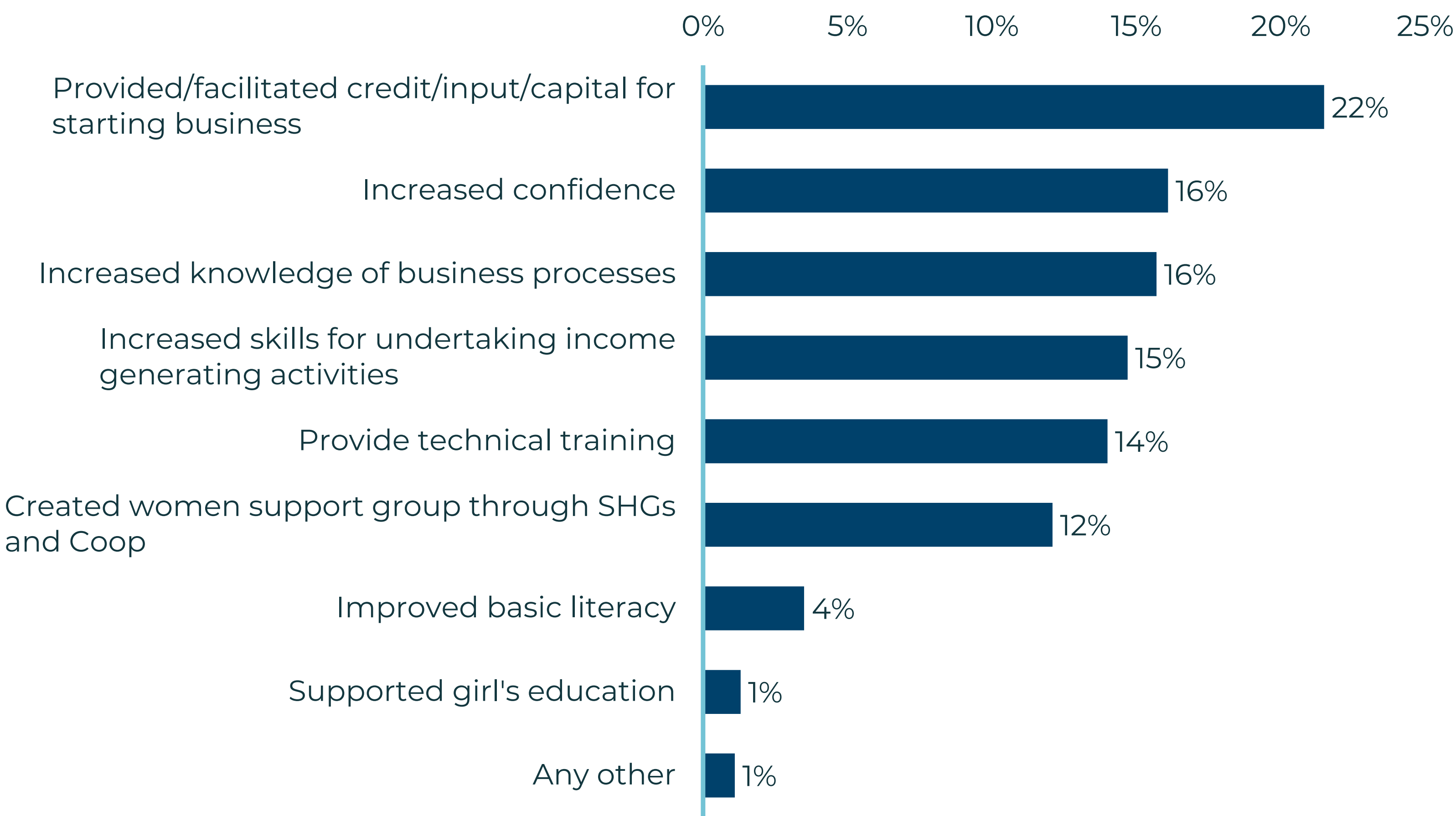
We found that women who are part of Heifer’s intervention, outperform as compared to other women from India, Bangladesh and Nepal in financial independence, ownership of assets, and agency. The result shows the intervention has significantly improved financial autonomy thereby women becoming the primary decision-maker for their personal finances. Their confidence in depositing the savings in formal institutions has increased significantly. A very promising shift in attitudes shows 56% of men agreeing that unpaid care work should be shared equally between men and women. This shows Heifer’s approach to be effective in achieving women’s empowerment.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- The SLVC program has not only been empowering but transformative.
- It has raised self-confidence in women and men to become agents of change.
- The intervention has extended support to girls’ education and improved in basic literacy among beneficiaries.
- It has also helped in inculcating a habit of saving.
- The beneficiaries and their male family members also believe in sharing care work of the household equally between a husband and a wife.
- Compared to the DHS data of India, Nepal and Bangladesh, Heifer beneficiaries were better at managing their own finances, had higher ownership of bank accounts, more active participation in household decision-making and a lower tolerance for violence.

This study was conducted by Independent consultant Dr. Diya Dutta for Heifer International during 2022-2023.

How has HEIFER program supported women in becoming economically empowered? In % (n=176)



ACHIEVING ALL-ROUND EMPOWERMENT

Through primary impact on economic situation and capacity of women, the Heifer program has also had secondary positive impact on social capital generation—increase in self-confidence, support to girls’ education and improvement in basic literacy among beneficiaries.