FOCUS | Gender and Equity

Highlight 2: Measuring Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture

Measuring women’s empowerment at the project level

The Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project, Phase 2 (GAAP2), aims to develop quantitative and qualitative tools to measure women’s empowerment in agricultural development projects. GAAP2 is adapting the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)—the first comprehensive, standardized tool for measuring women’s empowerment in agriculture, developed by IFPRI, the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative, and the US Agency for International Development in 2012—for use at the project level. The project is also piloting a set of qualitative research tools to help projects understand empowerment in context.

The GAAP2 portfolio includes 13 agricultural development projects in East Africa, West Africa, and South Asia that use crop and/or livestock interventions to improve nutrition and/or income. In 2016 and 2017, nine of these projects piloted the project-level WEAI (pro-WEAI) quantitative survey modules and six projects piloted the qualitative protocols. Using these initial data, the team is developing the new project-level WEAI (pro-WEAI).

A mixed methods approach to index development

Quantitative and qualitative research methods both have important strengths and weaknesses. When used together, however, they can provide strong and perceptive insights into concepts, context, and outcomes. All projects in the GAAP2 portfolio are piloting both quantitative and qualitative protocols. These mixed methods results will be essential for projects to better understand their research populations and impacts. In addition, quantitative and qualitative results, along with theoretical frameworks of empowerment from previous research, will guide the GAAP2 team in creating the pro-WEAI.

Empowerment in nutrition and health

The pro-WEAI will include an add-on module to help projects assess how projects impact women’s empowerment in nutrition and health. This survey module asks women about who makes decisions related to women’s and children’s diets and health, focusing on women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or raising young children. It also assesses who makes decisions about purchasing household products related to nutrition and health, and whether women are able to get these products when they need them.

GAAP2 is led by the International Food Policy Research Institute and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development, and the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health. Learn more about the GAAP2 project online at gaap.ifpri.info.