Highlight 3: Measuring Women’s Empowerment in Agricultural Development Projects

The Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project, Phase 2 (GAAP2)

Measuring women’s empowerment at the project level

The Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project, Phase 2 (GAAP2), is developing quantitative and qualitative tools to measure women’s empowerment and inclusion in agricultural development projects. In 2018, GAAP2 launched the project-level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index, or pro-WEAI. This tool helps agricultural development projects assess women’s empowerment in a project setting, diagnose areas of disempowerment, design strategies to assess deficiencies, and monitor and evaluate project outcomes.

The project’s 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 incomes. Between 2016 and 2018, 12 of these projects piloted the project-level WEAI (pro-WEAI) quantitative survey modules and 8 piloted the qualitative protocols. The GAAP2 team, in consultation with the GAAP2 projects and other partners, used these data to develop the pilot version of pro-WEAI.

Women’s empowerment in nutrition and health

Many agricultural development projects also have nutrition-related outcomes. For these projects, it is important to understand who in the household makes decisions about women’s and children’s health and diets and about purchasing essentials such as food and medicine. Pro-WEAI includes an optional add-on module that delves into these decisions, focusing on households with women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or raising young children. Between 2016 and 2018, six projects in the GAAP2 portfolio piloted these modules. Using these data, the GAAP2 team developed a suite of seven indicators of women’s agency in nutrition- and health-related decisions.

Building a WEAI community of practice

Since the original Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) was launched in 2012, more than 85 organizations in over 50 countries have fielded and adapted versions of WEAI. In addition to creating new tools, GAAP2 seeks to create a community of practice to engage research partners, policymakers, donors, and other stakeholders around the world. In 2018, two pro-WEAI launch events in Rome and Washington, DC, allowed the GAAP2 team to connect in-person and remotely with partners interested in learning about new innovations in measuring women’s empowerment. GAAP2 also launched an updated version of the WEAI Resource Center website, available at weai.ifpri.info, to compile background, resources, publications, news, datasets, and more related to WEAI. The GAAP2 team held several in-person and online capacity development workshops and seminars about recent WEAI-related research, and initiated development of a distance learning course about how to use and interpret pro-WEAI.

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