



What dimensions of women's empowerment in agriculture matter for nutrition in Ghana?



Hazel Jean L. Malapit^{*}, Agnes R. Quisumbing¹

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Poverty, Health and Nutrition Division (PHND), 2033 K St N.W., Washington, DC, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12 June 2014

Received in revised form 18 December 2014

Accepted 26 February 2015

Keywords:

Women's empowerment
Gender
Agriculture
Nutrition
Ghana

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates linkages between women's empowerment in agriculture and the nutritional status of women and children using 2012 baseline data from the Feed the Future population-based survey in northern Ghana. Using a new survey-based index, the women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, we conduct individual-level analyses of nutrition-related indicators including exclusive breastfeeding, children's dietary diversity score, minimum dietary diversity and minimum acceptable diet, children's height-for-age, weight-for-height, and weight-for-age z-scores, and women's dietary diversity score and body mass index. Results suggest that women's empowerment is more strongly associated with the quality of infant and young child feeding practices and only weakly associated with child nutrition status. Women's empowerment in credit decisions is positively and significantly correlated with women's dietary diversity, but not body mass index. This suggests that improved nutritional status is not necessarily correlated with empowerment across all domains, and that these domains may have different impacts on nutrition.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Introduction

Gender equality and women's empowerment is an important development priority, as highlighted by its inclusion in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Whether one adopts “instrumentalist” views, or recognizes the intrinsic value of women's empowerment, the important role of gender equality in goals related to reducing poverty, eradicating hunger, and improving food security must be acknowledged. Policy interventions that improve women's status and reduce gender inequalities are expected to improve women's and children's well-being, owing to women's important role in childcare and household food preparation in many societies. Smith et al. (2003) find that women with higher status relative to men have greater control over household resources, fewer time constraints, better access to information and health services, and better mental health, self-confidence, and higher self-esteem. Women with greater status have better nutritional status, are better cared for themselves, and provide higher quality care to their children. In many societies, women also play an important role in agriculture, although this role has tended to

be unrecognized or incorrectly measured. Although the biological processes underlying optimal nutrition are relatively well understood, knowledge regarding which dimensions of women's empowerment matter for good nutrition is limited, both because empowerment is culture- and context-specific and because of the difficulty of measuring empowerment. This lack of knowledge constrains the set of policy options that can be used to empower women and improve nutrition.

Approaches used to measure the relationship between women's empowerment and nutrition include using: nationally-representative data on women's status and malnutrition (Smith et al., 2003); proxy measures of bargaining power such as income, assets, and education (Thomas, 1994); and direct measures of empowerment such as mobility, decisionmaking, and attitudes toward verbal and physical abuse (Bhagowalia et al., 2012). With few exceptions (Sraboni et al., 2014; Malapit et al., forthcoming), most analyses have concentrated on women's decisionmaking within the household or on their reproductive roles, neglecting empowerment in productive domains. Few studies measure women's empowerment in agricultural production as a pathway to improved nutrition, despite the explicit targeting of women in many programs (Ruel and Alderman, 2013).

This paper investigates linkages between women's empowerment in agriculture and the nutritional status of women and children using 2012 baseline data from the Feed the Future Initiative's

^{*} Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 202 862 5600.

E-mail addresses: h.malapit@cgiar.org (H.J.L. Malapit), a.quisumbing@cgiar.org (A.R. Quisumbing).

¹ Tel.: +1 202 862 5600.

population-based survey in northern Ghana. We use the survey-based Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (Alkire et al., 2013), which directly assesses women's empowerment across five domains in agriculture, namely, agricultural production, access to and control over productive resources, control over the use of income, leadership in the community, and time allocation. The women's empowerment score reflects the extent to which women are empowered in these domains. Comparing women's and men's empowerment scores enables us to assess the inequality between the achievements of women relative to the men in their households.

We focus on the women's empowerment score to assess the extent to which women's empowerment in agriculture is linked with the adoption of infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices and nutrition outcomes for women and children. We also use the components of the women's empowerment score to identify how specific domains and indicators are associated with nutrition. For households where both male and female decisionmakers are present (also referred to as dual-adult households), we use information about the empowerment gap between men and women to examine relationships between intrahousehold inequality and nutrition.

We conduct individual-level analyses of nutrition outcomes including exclusive breastfeeding of children under 6 months; children's dietary diversity score, minimum dietary diversity and minimum acceptable diet for children 6–23 months; children's height-for-age z-scores (HAZ), weight-for-height z-scores (WHZ), and weight-for-age z-scores (WAZ); and women's dietary diversity score and body mass index (BMI). Overall, our findings suggest that different domains of empowerment may have different impacts on nutrition, consistent with other findings in the empowerment literature (Kabeer, 1999; Sraboni et al., 2014; Malapit et al., forthcoming).

Overview of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

WEAI is a new survey-based tool designed to measure the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in agriculture using data collected by interviewing men and women within the same households. Initially designed as a monitoring and evaluation tool for Feed the Future, the index can also be used to assess the general state of empowerment and gender parity in agriculture and identify the key areas where empowerment gaps exist (Alkire et al., 2013).

WEAI is an aggregate index reported at the program level and is composed of two subindexes: the five domains of empowerment (5DE) and the gender parity index (GPI). The 5DE assesses the degree to which women are empowered in five domains, which include (1) agricultural production decisions, (2) access to and decisionmaking power over productive resources, (3) control over use of income, (4) leadership roles within the community, and (5) time allocation. The 5DE is constructed from individual-level empowerment scores, which reflects each person's achievements in the five domains as measured by 10 indicators with their corresponding weights (Table 1). Each indicator measures whether an individual has surpassed a given threshold, or has adequate achievement, with respect to each indicator. A woman is defined as empowered if she has adequate achievements in four out of the five domains or has achieved adequacy in 80% or more of the weighted indicators.

Unlike other women's empowerment measures based on interviews of a sole female respondent, WEAI uses survey data from the self-identified primary male and female adult decisionmakers, aged 18 and over, in the same household. Relative empowerment is captured in GPI, which reflects women's achievements in the five

Table 1

The domains, indicators, and weights in the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index.

Domain	Indicator	Definition of indicator	Weight
1. Production	1.1 Input in productive decisions	Sole or joint decisionmaking over food and cash-crop farming, livestock, and fisheries	1/10
	1.2 Autonomy in production	Autonomy in agricultural production reflects the extent to which the respondent's motivation for decisionmaking reflects own values rather than a desire to please others or avoid harm	1/10
2. Resources	2.1 Ownership of assets	Sole or joint ownership of major household assets	1/15
	2.2 Purchase, sale, or transfer of assets	Whether respondent participates in decision to buy, sell, or transfer assets	1/15
	2.3 Access to and decisions about credit	Access to and participation in decisionmaking concerning credit	1/15
3. Income	3.1 Control over use of income	Sole or joint control over income and expenditures	1/5
4. Leadership	4.1 Group member	Whether respondent is an active member in at least one economic or social group	1/10
	4.2 Speaking in public	Whether the respondent is comfortable speaking in public concerning issues relevant to oneself or one's community	1/10
5. Time	5.1 Workload	Allocation of time to productive and domestic tasks	1/10
	5.2 Leisure	Satisfaction with time for leisure activities	1/10

Source: Alkire et al. (2013).

domains relative to the men in their households. Households are classified as having gender parity if either the woman is empowered (her empowerment score is 80% or higher) or her score is greater than or equal to the empowerment score of the male decisionmaker in her household.

All of these indexes have values ranging from 0 to 1, where higher values reflect greater empowerment. The overall WEAI is a weighted average of 5DE and GPI, with weights 0.9 and 0.1, respectively. While the overall WEAI is useful as a headline indicator, similar to how poverty indexes are used to track overall trends in poverty, the WEAI is also decomposable, which allows us to disaggregate the 5DE achievements by domain and by indicator to see which specific areas contribute the most to both women's and men's disempowerment. More details about the methodology, piloting, and validation of WEAI are available in Alkire et al., (2013).

Country context

Ghana is a lower-middle-income country in West Africa that has experienced relatively high rates of economic growth and poverty reduction in the past two decades, although poverty reduction has been much slower in the north (World Bank, 2013, 9). Children's nutritional status has improved in recent years, though the stunting prevalence remains high at 23% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011). Ghana also lags on key MDGs, such as maternal and infant mortality and access to improved sanitation methods, with large disparities in access to key health and education services between north and south and between income quintiles (World Bank, 2013, i).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5070375>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5070375>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)