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Development of the Project-Level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI)

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Abstract

Although there is growing commitment by agricultural development agencies and project implementers to women’s empowerment, both as a goal in itself and as a way to improve development outcomes, there is still no clear understanding of how to include women’s empowerment indicators in assessing agricultural development projects. Without such indicators, there is no way to know which types of project or project implementation strategies work to empower women and which do not. A recently available standardised survey-based tool, the women’s empowerment in agriculture index (WEAI), has been widely-used to measure and understand women’s empowerment and inclusion in the agricultural sector. However, the WEAI includes indicators that may not be relevant for all projects and excludes others that would be useful for monitoring project impacts. Allowing for flexibility in integrating project-specific questions into the WEAI framework will provide projects with more detailed and useful information for project design, monitoring and evaluation, while retaining both multi-dimensionality to capture indirect and unintended impacts and comparability across projects.

This paper details the adaptation and validation of a project-level WEAI (or pro-WEAI) that agricultural development projects can use to diagnose key areas of women’s (and men’s) disempowerment, design appropriate strategies to address deficiencies, and monitor project outcomes related to women’s empowerment. The paper follows the evolution of pro-WEAI through each step of development, including: (1) how pro-WEAI differs from other versions of the WEAI; (2) the piloting of pro-WEAI by 13 agricultural development projects during the Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project, phase 2 (GAAP2); (3) qualitative work exploring concepts of women’s empowerment in the project sites; and (4) analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data from the GAAP2 projects, including correlations of pro-WEAI with age, education, wealth and other measures of empowerment and intrahousehold patterns of empowerment. The paper concludes by discussing what we are learning from pro-WEAI and possibilities for further development of empowerment metrics.

Keywords: Agriculture, gender, measurement, women’s empowerment