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“Reconcile land system changes
with planetary health”

Does species matter in empowering women livestock keepers in low- and lower-middle-income countries?

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Abstract

Livestock is arguably one of key resources, that women across the global south tend to control, with potential for women's empowerment. The potential of different species of livestock in supporting women's empowerment could vary, possibly by contexts. Consequently, evidence to inform and guide targeted interventions to intentionally support women's empowerment through livestock is necessary. In this study, we assess whether women's empowerment among livestock-keeping households vary by the type of species and breeds of livestock kept in their households across lower and lower-middle income countries. We draw empirical evidence from Ethiopia, Uganda and Vietnam, using unique sex disaggregated data collected. We used the women's empowerment in livestock index (WELI), a standardised tool, for data collection. Our study targeted households keeping one or combinations of different livestock species including large ruminants, small ruminants, poultry and pigs. Results from analysis of women's empowerment across different species of livestock reveal no significant difference in women's empowerment across different species of livestock. However, women keeping smaller species were relatively more empowered implying the importance of smaller livestock species for women's empowerment. Our results also show that women keeping improved breeds of any livestock species were significantly more empowered than women keeping only local breeds of the livestock species. We document that heavy workload and limited mobility are major disempowering factors for women in livestock production in the three countries. Control over the use of income was also found to be one of the main factors limiting both women's and men's empowerment, but it was more limiting for men compared to women. This implies, women appeared to have better control over livestock income. While women were relatively more adequate than men in control over use of income, the converse was true for autonomy in income and self-efficacy. Our study highlights interventions aiming to leverage improvement in livestock production and value chains need to be cognisant of and address the work burden that keeping livestock adds on women. Interventions to empower women through livestock could build on women's position in control over income while expanding women's agency, particularly autonomy in income use and self-efficacy.

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