

WEAI: Making Development Programs Inclusive

Outcomes of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)



Mother and children outside of thatched hut in Northern Senegal
Milo Mitchell/IFPRI

Women play a critical and transformative role in agricultural growth, food and nutrition security, and poverty reduction. Thus, their empowerment is an important determinant for successful development. In 2010, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) approached IFPRI and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative to develop the **Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)**. It was developed to monitor and support the inclusion of women in agriculture as part of the Feed the Future Initiative—the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative. WEAI is a first-of-its-kind tool measuring the roles and extent of women's empowerment in agriculture relative to men within their households, providing a way to measure women's control over critical parts of their lives. It also helps in identifying the women who are disempowered and what areas they are disempowered in, which is instrumental in designing solutions to close the empowerment gap.

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Since its launch in 2012, WEAI has been revolutionizing how women's empowerment and role in agriculture are seen and measured. By 2015, WEAI has been adopted by 19 Feed the Future country programs for monitoring and impact evaluations. In Bangladesh, the 2012 Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey, which collected the WEAI, helped identify

disempowerment gaps, which motivated the government of Bangladesh, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, to design interventions that will close the gaps identified by the index.

WEAI also proved to be very valuable to other organizations' monitoring and evaluation efforts. In 2013, Oxfam adapted WEAI for its project, "**Women's Collective Action: Unlocking the potential of agricultural markets**," to provide rigorous new evidence on the economic and empowerment benefits of women participating in collective action groups. In deciding how to measure women's empowerment in its Pathways Programs, CARE and TANGO International drew heavily from WEAI because of its well-designed and comprehensive indicators. In 2013, CARE and TANGO International incorporated many of WEAI's dimensions in creating its own **Women in Agriculture Index**. Aside from providing a tool for measuring progress, WEAI is shedding light on significant gender gaps that encourages the prioritization of women's empowerment in development programs. Because of the interest of many development organizations to adapt the WEAI, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has funded a second phase of the Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project (GAAP2), which is working with agricultural development projects to develop and test a project-level WEAI in order to identify strategies that work to empower women. USAID is also supporting this effort, which builds on the original WEAI and will increase its relevance to agricultural development projects.

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