Adapting the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) tool in Timor-Leste – a methodological reflection

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Presentation outline
- Conceptual framework: Women’s empowerment
- The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index
- Tool relevance
- Methodology to adapt and translate instruments
- Adaptation and translation process
- Research in Timor-Leste
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Conceptual framework
Women’s empowerment

Academic views
- As a process (Batliwala, 1994; Kabeer, 1999; Mosedale, 2003; Lee-Rife 2010)
- As a goal (Tengland, 2008)

Definitions of empowerment (Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007)
- Kabeer (1999): Focus: the degree to which they transform underlying gender inequalities
- Narayan (2002): Focus: individual choice can limit the definition of empowerment, especially in cultural contexts wherein community and mutuality are valued
- Alsop et al. (2006): Focus: ability to make choices and the capacity to act upon these decisions

Kabeer (1999: 457) defines empowerment as
“expanding people’s ability to make strategic life choices, particularly in contexts in which this ability had been denied to them.”
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Conceptual framework
Women’s empowerment

Key elements
- Context specific and multi-dimensional
- Focuses on shifting power structures
- Relational concept

How can it be measured?
- Proxy indicators - education, income, autonomy...
- Sectoral approaches - economic (WEE), and the WEAI

The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index

Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)
- Survey-based index
- Measures the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the agricultural sector
- Creates a figure that can be compared across locations
- M&E, diagnostic and research tool

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
Oxford Poverty and Human development Initiative (OPHI)
The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)

- Two sub-indexes:
  - Five domains of empowerment (5DE)
  - Gender Parity Index (GPI)

WEAI = (0.90 x 5DE) + 0.10 GPI

- Aggregated WEAI index shows the degree to which women are empowered in their households and communities of inequality between women and men within the household.

Five domains of empowerment (5DE)

**FIGURE 1. THE FIVE DOMAINS OF EMPOWERMENT IN THE WEAI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Input in productive decisions</td>
<td>1/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autonomy in production</td>
<td>1/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Ownership of assets</td>
<td>1/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purchase, sale, or transfer of assets</td>
<td>1/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to and decisions on credit</td>
<td>1/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Control over use of income</td>
<td>1/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Group member</td>
<td>1/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking in public</td>
<td>1/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>1/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>1/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IFPRI, 2012
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The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index

Five domains of empowerment (5DE) in Cambodia

**FIGURE 2. CONTRIBUTION OF EACH OF FIVE DOMAINS TO THE DESEMPowerMENT OF WOMEN**

- Production decisionmaking: 32.0%
- Access to productive resources: 24.5%
- Control over use of income: 29.0%
- Community leadership: 6.0%
- Time allocation: 8.5%

Source: IFPRI, 2012

**Gender Parity Index (GPI)**

In Cambodia

Gender parity importance, Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Evidence showing that equalizing access to assets and opportunities for men and women helps achieve better development outcomes.

Source: IFPRI, 2014
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The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index

Abbreviated WEAI (A-WEAI)
Streamline tool
Reduced 30% time
Now 25-30 min / respondent
Cognitively tested
Individual and HH level data

Source: Malapit, 2015

Tool relevance

In most low- and middle-income countries

- Agriculture
  - A major source of livelihoods of the rural poor (FAO, 2015)

- Rural areas concentrate extreme poverty in a disproportionate manner (WB, 2015)
  - Exemplified through higher child malnutrition (FAO, 2015)

These are interrelated, often reflecting the gendered nature of social and economic relations
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Tool relevance

- **Gender relations** require consideration, since:
  - Women supply 43% of all agricultural labour in developing nations (FAO, 2011)
  - Productive decisions are mediated by gender roles
  - Women’s greater control of resources is associated with improved child outcomes (Quisumbing, 2003)

Nutrition, Gender and Agriculture are important issues in Timor-Leste
Methodology to adapt and translate instruments

**Method:** *forward-translations and back-translations*  
(WHO, 2016)

- Achieve conceptually equivalent instruments in different countries/cultures
- Cross-cultural and conceptual > literal equivalence

**Steps:**
1. Forward translation
2. Expert panel
3. Back-translation
4. Pre-testing and cognitive interviewing
5. Final version

Adaptation and translation process of the A-WEAI in TL

**Questionnaire adaptation**

- Make categories relevant to Timor-Leste  
  Ex. Adapting animals and crops
  - KARAU 1
  - KARAU-VAKA, KARAU-TIMOR 2
  - BIBI, BIBI MALAE 3
  - MANU, MANU RADE 4
  - FAHI 5
  - KUDA 6
  - ANIMÁL SIRA K'I'IK, ez. KOELHU, ASSU 7
  - IKAN 8

- No women’s empowerment mention!
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Adaptation and translation process of the A-WEAI in TL

Forward-translations and back-translations method (WHO, 2016)

1. Forward translation
   - Professional translation and revision by Timorese gender expert
2. Expert panel
   - Technical Advisory Group review
3. Back-translation
   - Independent translator
4. Pre-testing and cognitive interviewing
   - Target: subsistence farming households (n=10)
   - also women in agriculture cooperative
5. Final version
   - TAG changes approval

Research implications

- Women’s empowerment
  - is one of the conceptualised pathways from agriculture programmes to nutrition outcomes (Herforth and Hank, 2013)
  - is associated with child and maternal nutrition (van den Bold et al., 2013)

Is the empowerment of women in agriculture positively associated with child dietary diversity?

the A-WEAI can help explore this gap
Research implications

- **Agricultural interventions** have the potential to improve both production and consumption of nutritious foods (IFPRI, 2012)

- The pathways by which these programmes can improve nutritional outcomes have been widely discussed (Kadyila et al., 2014; Herforth, 2013; Gillespie, 2012; Hoddinott, 2011; WB, 2007)

- Yet, all converge in that **Women** “are key mediators in the pathways between agriculture inputs, intra-household resource allocation, and child nutrition” (Ruel and Adlerman, 2013:538-9)
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References – req. updating!

The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SDE score</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disempowerment score (1 – SDE)</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (number of observations)</td>
<td>1,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women achieving empowerment</td>
<td>70.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women not achieving empowerment</td>
<td>29.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean SDE score for not yet empowered women</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean disempowerment score (1 – SDE) for not yet empowered women</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPS score</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (number of dual adult households)</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women achieving gender parity</td>
<td>73.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women not achieving gender parity</td>
<td>26.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average empowerment gap</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEAI score</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The WEAI score is composed of 90% SDE and 10% GPL.

Limitations of the WEAI

- While the WEAI provides a rigorous measure of empowerment relevant to agriculture, it is subject to some limitations:
- WEAI results may not be representative of the empowerment of all adult women in a country, because respondents in the WEAI survey are primary decision-makers and may be more empowered than other women in their households.
- Women who are not involved in agricultural decisions may appear disempowered even if they are engaged in decision-making on nonagricultural activities.
- Women in households that do not have a male decision-maker are likely to be identified as empowered because of the WEAI’s focus on decision-making questions.
- Other domains of empowerment not captured in the WEAI, which focuses solely on agriculture, may be more relevant to specific desired outcomes, such as nutritional status.

Source: IFPRI, 2014
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Project partners

Community-Driven Nutrition Improvement Project (CDNIP)

Nutrition education

Support production of

Source: ADB, 2012