

The Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index

Vital progress towards gender equality

Photo credit: ILRI/Stevie Mann

Context

Women's empowerment in the livestock sector is essential to progress towards gender equity and foster livestock development. Livestock provide key opportunities for women's empowerment because they are more easily controlled by women than other high-value assets, such as land. Livestock provide animal source foods that are key for women's traditional role in securing household nutrition. Women already represent the majority of livestock keepers and their empowerment is crucial for the development of the livestock sector.

Different strategies to empower women already exist but they are difficult to assess or prioritize without a reliable and accepted means of measuring "empowerment". Combining measurement mechanisms with enhanced understanding of what leads to positive empowerment outcomes supports the prioritization and implementation of empowerment interventions. In 2015, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in collaboration with Emory University developed the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index (WELI) tool based on the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) developed earlier by IFPRI.

The WELI is designed to measure women's empowerment in livestock and crop farming, focusing specifically on key decisions of livestock production, such as animal health, breeding and feeding; and use of livestock products, such as animal source food processing and marketing.

Objectives

- Generate an index measuring the empowerment of women involved in the livestock sector.
- Promote understanding on which livestock interventions impact women's empowerment and how they do that.

Approach

The WELI index includes six key domains of women's empowerment—decisions on agricultural production, decisions related to household nutrition, access to and control over resources, control and use of income, access to and control of opportunities, workload and control over their own time.

WELI data collection is comprised of both quantitative and qualitative components, enabling it to provide complementary information. The quantitative component provides data for calculating the index values for each household. The qualitative information helps ensure the quantitative assessment fits the local context, provides the relevant context for index values and informs strategies to enhance women's empowerment by showing the "hows" and "whys" of the process of change. On the other hand, quantitative results allow for cross-sectional comparisons or time-series analyses of women's empowerment, indicating the relevance of qualitative insights for larger populations.

Four major sources informed the development of the WELL tool: major dimensions of empowerment reported in literature; dimensions, indicators and aggregation procedures implemented within the WEAL; formative studies conducted in Tanzania; and consultations with ILRI livestock experts.

Outputs

The WELL is a work in progress and information on the tool and its development has been shared widely to provide opportunities for feedback. This has proved to be highly valuable as we continue to improve its efficacy in capturing empowerment and its applicability to more contexts.

Here are some key outputs:

1. WELL methodology:

Galiè, A., Teufel, N., Korir, L., Yount, K., Webb, A., Dominguez-Salas, P. and Baltenweck, I. 2018. The women's empowerment in livestock index. *Social Indicators Research* 142 (2) 799–825.

2. Findings from some of the qualitative work:

Price M. J., Galiè, A., Marshall, J. and Ngozichukwuka, A. 2018. Elucidating the linkages between women's empowerment in livestock and nutrition: A qualitative study of smallholder livestock raisers in Tanzania. *Development in Practice* 28 (4) 510–524.

3. A discussion on combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies:

Galiè, A., Teufel, N., Girard, A.W., Baltenweck, I., Domínguez-Salas, P., Price, M.J., Jones, R., Lukuyu, B., Korir, L., Raskind, I.G., Smith, K. and Yount, K.M. 2019. Women's empowerment, food security and nutrition of pastoral communities in Tanzania. *Global Food Security* 23: 125–134.

Implementation

Empowerment is a complex process of change, and because of this, we face two main methodological challenges when developing and implementing the WELL.

Firstly, the combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches may result in contradictory findings, which poses the challenge of reconciling these two approaches and which approach to deem more reliable (see also output 3).

The other challenge arises from the need to balance universal comparability and local relevance. While using universal indicators of empowerment provides a “neutral” and widely comparable measurement, it is also essential to understand and assess empowerment within the local social context.

The WELL establishes the basis for a global conversation about the kinds of interventions that work best to empower women involved in livestock around the world.

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ILRI's research for development agenda

During the past decade or so, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) reoriented its research agenda with the overall goal of having more impact on internationally agreed targets and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ILRI uses theories of change and impact pathways to drive research agendas and engage with the relevant partners from the outset. This means ILRI's range of partners has widened from traditional research partners in national agricultural research and extension systems (NARES) and advanced research institutions around the world, to include actors from the development community—public, voluntary and private.

ILRI intends to accelerate efforts to improve its value proposition and product development research model and strengthen its ability to ensure research products result in impact and improve its overall efficiency and effectiveness. As part of these efforts, ILRI has created a dedicated “Impact at Scale” program responsible for ensuring technologies and solutions that ILRI (and others) have proven are taken to scale and incorporated into development projects.



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