

Needs and opportunities for measuring rural women's empowerment in Guatemala

Possible applications of a Women's Empowerment Metric for National Statistical Systems (WEMNS)¹

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Introduction

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is reflected across policy priorities at global and national levels. Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) seeks to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Moreover, the Government of Guatemala, through the Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM), has supported these priorities through the National Policy for the Promotion and Comprehensive Development of Women and the Equality of Opportunities Plan 2008-2023, particularly under its Equitable Economic and Productive Development policy line, which gives the agenda a thematic focus on women's economic empowerment. Both policy instruments are designed to guide public institutions in achieving the goals that have been set by the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA). Economic empowerment is one of the main lines of policy action under the Regional Policy on Gender Equality and Equity of SICA (PRIEG/SICA). As such, women's economic empowerment is being prioritized at the national level in Guatemala, and also at the regional level across Central America and the Dominican Republic.

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Despite the high priority being placed on women's empowerment, there are limited standardized metrics, at the national or global level. Furthermore, there are no systematic data collection efforts to monitor women's empowerment at the population level. Given these data limitations, it is difficult to track progress toward the goals of empowering women and girls.

Under this framework, a team of researchers from the International Food Policy Institute (IFPRI), the World Bank's Living Standards and Measurement Study team, Emory University, and Oxford University, together with experts from Guatemala and three other pilot countries, have designed and piloted a Women's Empowerment Measurement for National Statistical Systems (WEMNS). The availability of data collected through nationally representative surveys will allow Guatemala and other countries to track progress on the empowerment of the population as a whole, as well as key subgroups (e.g., women, men, indigenous populations, and people with disabilities).

This document first describes the women's empowerment objectives of initiatives specific to Guatemala. Second, it considers how WEMNS can contribute to monitoring progress toward these objectives. Our goal in this document is to motivate the collection of WEMNS as part of regular data collection in Guatemala and to serve as an example for other countries in the region that share the COMMCA/SICA framework.

COMMCA agenda for the empowerment of rural women

COMMCA is a political body of the Central American Integration System (SICA, by its Spanish acronym, which comprises Central American countries and the Dominican Republic), which specializes in women's rights, gender equality, and gender equity. COMMCA issues resolutions on political, economic, environmental, social, and cultural issues. It focuses its work on two policy instruments: PRIEG/SICA and the COMMCA Strategic Plan, 2019–2023. These instruments define SICA's position on gender inequality and discrimination against women.

As a strategic policy instrument, PRIEG/SICA focuses on strengthening the status of women. The goal of this policy is that, by "2025 the States that are party to SICA have incorporated the necessary means to guarantee the full development and advancement of women in Central America and the Dominican Republic, under conditions of equality and equity, in the political, social, economic, cultural, environmental, and institutional spheres, both at the regional and national levels." The intent is to achieve this goal through seven main lines of action (Table 1).

Within the framework of women's rights in Central America and the Dominican Republic, this regional instrument seeks to improve the lives of women and reduce inequalities. To fulfill the requirements of PRIEG/SICA, it is necessary to establish agreements and commitments. Therefore in 2018, heads of state, the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC), and COMMCA joined efforts to generate the Agenda for Economic Empowerment of Rural Women of the SICA Region (AEEMRRSICA) as a strategy to support the achievement of economic empowerment among rural women in the region. The agenda aims to:

"Strengthen the autonomy and economic empowerment of rural women in the countries of the SICA region, in order to develop their capacities and competencies within the framework of intersectoral alliances with the intention that the results impact their lives in the short term both as individual political subjects, and as a collective group." (CAC/SICA, 2018, p. 10)

Table 1: The seven main lines of action under COMMCA

Main line of action	Definition
Economic autonomy	Eliminate institutional, material, and cultural obstacles that limit the achievement of equal economic rights
Equality in education	Strengthen women's abilities, as well as their inclusion in society and productive activities
Comprehensive management and prevention of disaster-related risks	Minimize practices that reproduce inequalities in the planning, organization, and implementation of comprehensive risk management and adaptation to climate change
Equality in health	Improve the conditions of health systems and incorporate a women's rights perspective across the life cycle.
Safety and life free of violence	Promote freedom from violence in public and private spheres
Political participation in the powers of the state	Promote the standardization of national legislation with international commitments, in terms of political rights and citizenship of women
Conditions for implementation and sustainability	Achieve sustainability of the agenda in a way that promotes equality

Source: Regional Policy on Gender Equality and Equity of the Central American Integration System PRIEG/SICA, pp. 62-86 (Panamá 2013).

Women's economic empowerment in Guatemala

In developing WEMNS, we use the definition of women's empowerment described by Kabeer (1999), in which empowerment is understood as a process by which individuals expand their ability to make strategic life choices, particularly in contexts in which they have been denied this ability. Kabeer conceptualizes the ability to exercise strategic life choices as a bridge among three dimensions: resources, agency, and achievement. Furthermore, Oxfam defines women's economic empowerment as women exercising the right to control and benefit from resources, assets, and income; define how they use their time; manage risks; and improve their economic situation and well-being, particularly when it is obtained in a real and effective way. To support this process, it is necessary to have autonomy, security, the ability to participate in decision-making, and the possibility of life without violence (Kidder et al. 2017).

In turn, whether a policy or program empowers individuals can be analyzed through the Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform conceptual framework explained in Malapit et al. (2020). *Reach* refers specifically to the inclusion of women in activities, considering the barriers to participation they encounter. *Benefit* goes beyond participation in a policy or program to increasing women's well-being. Going one step further, *Empower* means to strengthen women's capacities to make strategic decisions and implement them. Finally, *Transform* transcends the previous concepts, and considers changes in the systems of gender norms and attitudes. UN Women also considers empowerment in terms of these same frameworks (UN Women 2019).

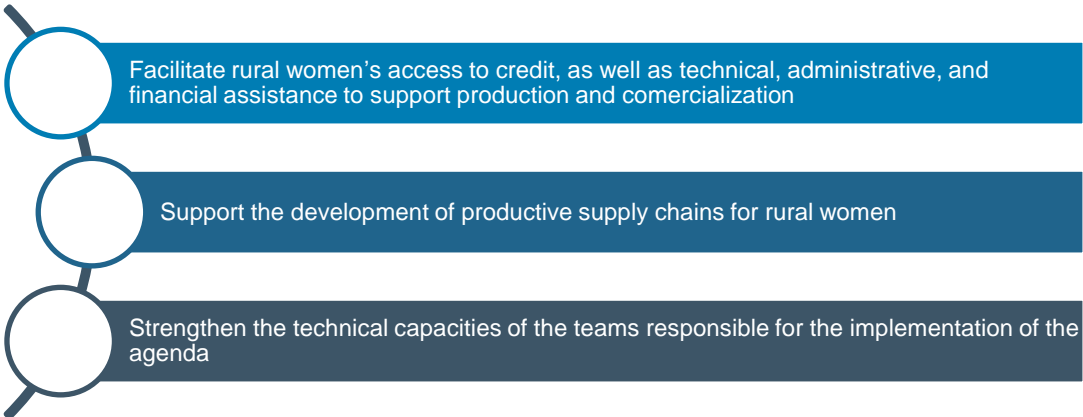
In the absence of national data, women's economic participation can be considered a proxy for women's economic empowerment. In looking at available data, a picture of women's empowerment in Guatemala begins to emerge. For example, in general 80 percent of men participate in the labor market, while only around 50 percent of urban women and 20 percent of rural women do so (INE 2018). Additionally, among economically active women, only 37 percent are formally employed. The lack of participation in the labor market and the high degree of informal presentation is mainly due to assigned gender roles and the fact that many women must dedicate their time to care work (UN Women 2019).

To a large extent, women’s work is invisible, which limits their economic and decision-making potential (ILO 2018).

Based on the inequalities and gaps identified, SEPREM has prioritized the area of equitable economic and productive development, as well as the thematic agenda of women’s economic empowerment within the National Policy for the Promotion and Comprehensive Development of Women and the Equality of Opportunities Plan (PNPDIM-PEO) 2008–2023. In its role as advisor, SEPREM has sought to develop programmatic offerings that not only respond to the needs of women but also draw on an intersectional approach to address needs according to specific situations and conditions.

In coordination with the SICA countries, the Agenda for the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in the Countries of the SICA Region (AEEMRRSICA) was developed by the Central American entities of Agriculture, Fisheries, Tourism, and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. This effort has materialized alongside specific efforts in Guatemala where, in coordination with government entities such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food, the Guatemalan Institute of Tourism, and the Ministry of Economy, additional actions have been taken to identify and generate greater opportunities for rural women. Within the AEEMRRSICA agenda, three objectives are proposed (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Objectives of the Agenda for the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in the Countries of the SICA Region (AEEMRRSICA)



In Guatemala, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food coordinated a technical working-group on rural development with a gender focus, in which they sought to align the AEEMRRSICA agenda with the programmatic activities of institutions participating in the working-group. The intention was to be responsive to regional commitments and, at the same time, improve the conditions of rural women linked to agriculture, fisheries, and tourism. The agenda has three main lines of action for the reactivation of the agriculture, tourism, and fisheries sectors, with different lines of work proposed for each (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Main lines of action under the Guides for the Reactivation of the Agriculture, Tourism, and Fisheries Sectors of AEEMRRSICA

Agriculture	Tourism	Fishing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productive investment in agricultural value chains • Access to local, national, and international markets • Access to economic resources • Social protection and employability • Boost the care economy • Reduce the digital divide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing and access to credit • Leadership and empowerment • Training and technology development for rural business development • Promotion and marketing • Interinstitutional coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business development support for individuals, family-owned businesses, and women-owned micro-businesses • Social security in fishing and aquaculture • Support women’s collective associations to promote organized management • Promote the recognition, equal treatment, and non-discrimination of women

Source: Authors’ elaboration of the guides for the economic reactivation of rural women (ST-COMMCA 2021; ST-COMMCA and SICA/OSPESCA 2021; ST-COMMCA and SITCA 2021).

Goals and mandates of government entities relevant to women’s empowerment

Within the Guatemalan government, the following entities have been identified as having a mandate linked to women’s economic empowerment and the AEEMRRSICA agenda.

Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food

Among public institutions, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food is responsible for matters governing agricultural production, livestock, and hydrobiological production, as well as improving the food security of the population. Since one of the responsibilities assigned to rural women is the provision of food to the family, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food is a key actor in ensuring the development of family farming, which provides food for households and surpluses for marketing.

Ministry of Economy

As part of its mission, the Ministry of Economy supports the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises, which coordinates efforts to generate rural and community enterprises, to promote the productive enterprises of women, and to boost their economic autonomy.

Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture Regulations

The fisheries and aquaculture sectors are identified within the agenda and have been linked to government agencies that contribute to the fulfillment of the agenda with the aim of achieving synergies that can enhance results, not only with regard to AEEMRRSICA but also the fulfillment of the SDGs and

framework conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Guatemalan Tourism Institute The mission of the Guatemalan Tourism Institute is the promotion and sustainable development of the tourism industry. Although there are few efforts for the development of rural, community, or eco- tourism, there is great potential in the country for linking women to this industry as a way of promoting economic development.

SEPREM

SEPREM promotes, within the public sphere, actions and interventions related to women's rights in health, education, economic empowerment, socio-political participation, the environment, and the reduction of violence against women. SEPREM also functions as an advisory body for the production of statistical information with a focus on understanding equity between men and women in public governance. These efforts have contributed to the implementation of the National Policy for Participation and Comprehensive Development of Women and the Equality of Opportunities Plan (PNPDIM-PEO) 2008–2023, the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women (PLANOSI) 2020–2029, and SDG5.

Based on SEPREM's mandate to provide technical assistance to public institutions, municipalities, and development councils on women's rights, technical assistance is channeled by supporting the alignment of planning and programming activities conducted by public institutions, which results in programs and projects designed to generate opportunities for Guatemalan women.

SEPREM also promotes the production of data and statistics that are disaggregated according to basic criteria, such as sex, indigenous population group, age, and disability. For statistical reporting that already considers these basic criteria, it aims to further disaggregate the data according to education, occupation, urban-rural area, income, and migration status, among other characteristics. SEPREM intends to provide this technical support for the production of data and statistics with a focus on gender equality to three institutions in 2023 and to reach 21 institutions by 2027.

By 2027, it is expected that the country will be able to count on the greater availability of data related to the topics prioritized by SEPREM, and from these data, have a more precise reading of women's empowerment, which will inform public policy guidelines, both for the planning and programming of public institutions, as well as for actors that promote women's rights.

WEMNS and how it relates to the women's empowerment agenda in Guatemala

What is WEMNS?

As explained earlier in this document, WEMNS is being developed to meet the demand for data to measure the status and monitor progress related to SDG5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." Achieving SDG5 and its related targets can also contribute to the achievement of other SDGs that have cross-cutting women's empowerment targets, and WEMNS was developed with the cross-cutting nature of women's empowerment in mind.

Specifically, WEMNS is being developed primarily for nationally representative and multi-topic surveys as a tool and set of indicators to measure empowerment. Such a tool will allow countries and other users to generate meaningful data to track progress toward empowering women and men without the need for a separate survey on women's empowerment.

The methodological process to develop WEMNS draws on a variety of data collection strategies. One of the first steps taken while drafting the questionnaire was to conduct semi-structured interviews with more than 50 gender experts in different settings: academic, civil society and government agencies from 24 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Learning about priority issues for women's empowerment and current efforts to collect data on empowerment helped ensure that the content of WEMNS aligned with national and global priorities.

The next step was to collect data through telephone surveys and in-person surveys. In addition to surveys in Guatemala, data were also collected in Bangladesh, Malawi, and Nepal. Based on these data, new indicators were developed. In all four countries, surveys were conducted in rural and urban areas, and with both men and women. In addition, to test the feasibility of collecting WEMNS data with diverse populations and understand its usefulness as a comparative tool, Guatemala's linguistic richness was considered by conducting the surveys in Spanish as well as in two indigenous languages (K'iché and Q'eqchi').

Throughout this process, we have sought to ensure that WEMNS is able to measure the empowerment of women and men in urban and rural areas, with the flexibility to be relevant to a variety of livelihood strategies in countries at different stages of rural and structural transformation (e.g., agriculture, labor wages), as is the case in the SICA region.

This flexibility also makes it possible for WEMNS to measure progress toward SDG 5 over time. Thus, the tool can be used to (1) compare overall progress towards achieving women's empowerment, (2) compare the status of empowerment among different population groups (by gender, urban-rural, village, etc.), and (3) identify the main factors of disempowerment in a population so that target programs can be identified to address these areas.

Correspondence between the WEMNS indicators and the main lines of action under the Economic Reactivation Guides of AEEMRRSICA

As mentioned above, SEPREM has strived to support public institutions seeking to generate better conditions for Guatemalan women and to create stronger linkages with regional and international instruments. Part of this effort is the alignment of the AEEMRRSICA agenda with the WEMNS indicators (Table 2).

Table 2: Alignment of the main lines of action under the Agenda for Economic Empowerment of Rural Women for the SICA Region (AEEMRRSICA) and the Women's Empowerment Metric for National Statistical Systems (WEMNS) indicators

AEEMRRSICA main line of action	WEMNS indicator	Indicator definition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boosting the care economy 	Awareness of inequalities in the way women and men allocate their time	Aware of inequalities in the way women and men allocate their time
	Influence over time allocation	Has a lot of influence on whether to spend their time on the activities in which they participated in the last seven days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's associations to promote organized management • Leadership and empowerment 	Confidence in participating in community organizations	Has confidence to participate in community organizations
	Participation in community organizations	Participated in at least one community organization in the past 12 months
	Leadership in community organizations	Acted as a leader in at least one community organization in the past 12 months
	Support for women's community engagement	Believes that women are capable of participating actively in community groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing and access to credit 	Use of financial services	Has used at least one financial service in the last 12 months
	Access to credit	Believes would be able to obtain a loan from at least one formal or semi-formal lending source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridging the digital divide 	Use of information and communication technology	Daily use of mobile phone or internet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social security • Promoting recognition, equal treatment, and non-discrimination for women 	Rejection of women's subjection to sexual harassment.	Believes that sexual harassment is not acceptable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to economic resources 	Influence in spending decisions	Has a lot of influence over any source of income and over large household purchases
	Documented property rights	Name listed on land rights document for at least one land parcel or dwelling
	Secure tenure rights	Not at all likely to involuntarily lose ownership or use-rights to at least one land parcel or dwelling
	Secure transfer rights	Able to sell or bequeath at least one land parcel or dwelling

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Note: In the earlier published Spanish version of this project note, we use the indicator names and definitions that had been developed at the time. The updated indicator names and definitions are shown in this table.

Conclusion

In this document, we lay out the policy frameworks and objectives related to women's empowerment in Guatemala from the perspective of regional priorities and describe experiences with local-level data collection on women's empowerment data collection. Importantly, the work carried out by COMMCA brings together the efforts of public institutions from across participating countries as they relate to the empowerment of rural women. In the case of Guatemala, at least five public institutions have a joint agenda

guided by the regional objectives established in PRIEG/SICA, for which SEPREM acts in a public policy advisory role. This support helps enable the public institutions working in agriculture, economy, tourism, and women's rights to promote public policy actions to benefit women. It also creates the need for data and statistics that can measure the effects of these interventions on the target population. WEMNS has the potential to play an important role from this perspective.

WEMNS, a new measure of women's empowerment that has been used to collect data in Guatemala and is comprised of indicators developed using these data, could be used to monitor the progress of women's empowerment objectives and to generate evidence to support strategic decision-making on this topic.

The inclusion of WEMNS in Guatemala's statistical systems has the potential to provide important data that will help reveal the primary areas of disempowerment in the general population, as well as among key population groups. By collecting these data, along with data on other key outcomes, it has the potential to generate evidence linking women's empowerment with other key outcomes, such as economic productivity or nutrition and health status. Collecting these data is of high priority to measure progress on specific women's empowerment objectives, including SDG5, as well as the objectives outlined under the PRIEG/SICA agenda.

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