INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
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RESEARCH PROGRAM ON Agriculture for Nutrition and Health
CGIAR
Led by IFPRI

IFPRI Discussion Paper 01913

March, 2020

Gender Dynamics, Women's Empowerment, and Diets

Qualitative Findings from an Impact Evaluation of a Nutrition-Sensitive Poultry Value Chain Intervention in Burkina Faso

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ABSTRACT

The SELEVER study is a five-year impact evaluation designed to address key knowledge gaps on the impact of a poultry value chain intervention on the diets, health, and nutritional status of women and children in Burkina Faso. This report qualitatively examines the SELEVER program's impact on women's empowerment and intra-household gender dynamics in relation to food production and allocation, as well as control and use over poultry resources in the study areas.

Six villages across five provinces were purposively selected for this study. Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods. In each village, we conducted four sex-disaggregated focus group discussions, and semi-structured individual interviews were held with a man and a woman from two different households. Sex-disaggregated seasonal calendars were created for half of the villages. Interviews were also conducted with project service providers in each community, including group leaders (n=13), voluntary vaccinators (n=10), and poultry traders (n=6). A mix of inductive and deductive thematic coding guided the analysis of the data.

Men and women participants described an empowered woman in terms of her confidence, how she spent her time, financial capacity, and freedom of movement. SELEVER beneficiaries illuminated how gender norms were shifting related to household activities and women's empowerment, such that young boys are now washing dishes and women earn additional incomes from raising her own poultry. Yet results suggest that women's empowerment may threaten men and their masculinity, an important tension of which SELEVER and other projects should be cognizant.

Participants perceived that while SELEVER has increased women's access to the necessary resources and capacity to raise quality poultry, and their incomes, women still lack full latitude to make decisions around when to sell or kill their bird. Instead they must rely on their husbands' permission. Beneficiaries are more aware of the benefits of consuming poultry products, yet barriers persist for actual consumption. This report further details the intersectional nature of these findings, which will be important to consider. The differences in women's role in monogamous versus polygynous households is especially important to consider in interpreting the program impacts and further strengthening the program delivery activities.

The SELEVER program has improved outcomes for women across the village sites in terms of empowerment, awareness raising, and behavior change. Yet barriers and challenges, often rooted in social norms, persist for women's involvement in poultry production, their empowerment, and the potential for the SELEVER program to improve diets of household members.

Keywords: Burkina Faso, gender, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, nutrition-sensitive value chains, poultry production, women's empowerment

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Funding support for the SELEVER study is provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) (Grant number: OPP1149709), and the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH), led by IFPRI (sub-grant number A4NH-202004.040.500). This work was also undertaken as part of the Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project Phase Two (GAAP2), which is supported by and the BMGF [Grant number:OPP1125297], the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) [Grant number: EEM-G-00-04-00013-00], and A4NH. The SELEVER project is implemented by Tanager in partnership with local NGOs, private institutions, and governmental services. Josue Awonon of IFPRI provided research support for data collection. We acknowledge the time and contributions of the SELEVER program beneficiaries and other study participants in making this work possible.

ACRONYMS

ACF	Association chant des femmes
APS	Association pour la paix et la Solidarité
ASIENA	Association Inter-Instituts “Ensemble et Avec”
BCC	Behavior change communication
CBDF	Coalition Burkinabé pour les Droits de la Femme
CLTS	Community Led Total Sanitation
DRRAH	Direction régionale des ressources animales et halieutiques
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GRAINE	Groupe d’Accompagnement à l’investissement et à l’Epargne
GS	Solidarity Groups
IYCF	Infant and young child feeding
MUSO	Mutuelles de Solidarité
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
Pro-WEAI	Project-level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index
SELEVER	Soutenir l’Exploitation Familiale pour Lancer l’Élevage des Volailles et Valoriser l’Économie Rurale
SSI	Semi-Structured Interviews
VVV	Village Volunteer Vaccinators
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WEAI	Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index

INTRODUCTION

A consortium involving IFPRI and partners is conducting a five-year impact evaluation in Burkina Faso designed to address key knowledge gaps on the impact of poultry value chain interventions on the diets, health and nutritional status of women and children. The impact evaluation is designed around the scale-up of the Soutenir l'Exploitation Familiale pour Lancer l'Élevage des Volailles et Valoriser l'Économie Rurale (SELEVER) project, a five-year program funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The SELEVER project is implemented by Tanager in partnership with selected local NGOs, private institutions, and governmental services. SELEVER is designed to leverage agricultural development strategies and nutrition to increase poultry production and improve the diets of women and children in the Centre Ouest and Boucle de Mouhoun regions of Burkina Faso.

The purpose of the study reported herein is to use qualitative methods to examine the gender dimensions related to household food production, acquisition, preparation, and allocation, as well as local understandings of empowerment and related social norms. The data presented here was collected alongside the process evaluation study (Gelli et al., 2019a) and indeed highlights the ways in which the SELEVER program affected household gender dynamics. The findings reported herein are designed to complement a quantitative impact evaluation, for which data collection are currently underway. The overarching research questions addressed in this study are: What are the gender dynamics that underlay how households allocate and make decisions related to the food that they consume, including the labor and resources to produce food? How is the SELEVER program affecting these dynamics? To this end, we address the following specific questions:

1. What are local understandings of empowerment?
2. What are the labor requirements for acquiring and preparing food, dividing food among household members, and managing scarcity?
3. What are the seasonal differences in use of poultry products (meat and eggs)? When are the peak and lean periods of food availability for various foods?

4. What are key actors & service providers views on women's barriers to adopting better nutrition, health, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices? Which households do/don't adopt better practices and what are obstacles/facilitators to adoption?
5. What are the food allocation dynamics amongst co-wives? How do households adapt feeding practices during times of scarcity? How has SELEVER affected these dynamics and practices?
6. How has SELEVER affected whether poultry products are being consumed in households, or whether/how women are able/not able to maintain control of poultry resources?

BACKGROUND

IFPRI is conducting a five-year mixed-methods impact evaluation in Burkina Faso designed to address key knowledge gaps on the impact of poultry value chain interventions on the diets, health and nutritional status of women and children (Gelli et al., 2017). The impact evaluation is designed around the scale-up of the SELEVER project, a five-year initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This report highlight a portion of the findings from the qualitative portion of the study. A second qualitative report and a quantitative impact assessment are also underway.

The SELEVER project is implemented by Tanager in partnership with selected local NGOs, private institutions, and governmental services. SELEVER aims to increase poultry production and improve the nutritional status of women and children in the Centre Ouest, Hauts-Bassins and Boucle de Mouhoun regions of Burkina Faso. The project uses an integrated market-facilitation approach combining revenue generation, women's empowerment, and nutritional behavior change interventions.

Four Burkinabe NGOs were contracted by Tanager to implement the SELEVER program activities. The two NGOs tasked with implementing the poultry and microfinance related activities include l'Association inter Institut Ensemble et Avec (ASIENA) and Groupe d'Accompagnement à l'Investissement et à l'Epargne (GRAINE). The two NGOs responsible for the gender and nutrition activities include the Coalition Burkinabé pour les Droits de la Femme (CBDF) and the Association chant des femmes (ACF). Contracts were also signed with the three regional Government livestock extension directorates (Centre-Ouest, Boucle du Mouhoun and Hauts-Bassins) to provide technical support through training and monitoring, support to NGO facilitators for training in poultry breeding techniques, market facilitation, and supply of vaccines other livestock inputs to village volunteer vaccinators (VVVs).

An additional Burkinabe NGO, namely l'Association Paix et Solidarité (APS), was contracted by IFPRI to implement an enhanced poultry-WASH related intervention in a sub-set of SELEVER supported villages as part of the SELEVER impact evaluation.

Component 1: Poultry production and marketing systems

This component includes vaccinations, financing and training on poultry flock management (including housing). SELEVER strengthens the capacity of village level volunteers to provide vaccination services for poultry producers, aiming to increase vaccination against Newcastle's disease, reduce poultry mortality, and increase poultry production, sales, and revenues. The commercial relations between VVVs and other chain actors, including service providers, are also supported to enhance the efficiency of the poultry value chain system as a whole. In addition, the SELEVER training package for VVVs includes activities around nutrition-related behaviors, including consumption of animal source foods and basic hygiene practices, as well as messaging on women's empowerment and decision-making.

Implementation of the poultry-related SELEVER component

This component is implemented by ASIENA and GRAINE and the 3 regional directorates of livestock resources. ASIENA implements poultry-related activities in villages in the Boucle du Mouhoun and Hauts Bassins regions, whilst GRAINE is mainly active in the Centre-Ouest region. Technical staff at Tanager train NGO staff (including a technical lead and several facilitators per NGO) on the project approach using 8 modules focusing on improved poultry production systems. Tanager staff's role then shifts to providing technical support to the NGO implementers, facilitating collaboration between the different actors involved, and monitoring implementation.

The main roll-out activities at the community level by the NGOs include training, advocacy and follow-up monitoring. Training materials include guideline manuals and videos developed by Tanager for the SELEVER program. The roll-out at the community-level includes some NGO-specific features. In the case of ASIENA, producers in intervention villages who have an interest and are committed to raising poultry are identified and organized into groups called Mutuelles de Solidarité (MUSO). In the case of GRAINE, interested and committed producers are organized in Solidarity Groups (GS). A MUSO has 15 to 30 members and there may be several MUSOs in each village. A GS consists of up to 15 people (both women and men) who have an interest in breeding. Each group appoints a president and a treasurer. In each village there are about 10 GS. Beneficiary groups are then trained by the NGO facilitators on all the

SELEVER poultry modules. The facilitators also monitor credit use and poultry production practices at the beneficiary level. Facilitators are also subsequently trained on a gender and nutrition package (see section below) so that they can incorporate these dimensions into their activities.

Government representatives from livestock extension services, the Direction régionale des ressources animales et halieutiques (DRRAH), in the regions provide technical support through the training and monitoring of VVV, support to NGO facilitators for training in poultry farming technique, market facilitation, supply of VVVs in vaccines and other livestock inputs. Each DRRHA has a focal point from the SELEVER project who monitors activities in the field.

VVVs are the key community-level actors in the implementation of the SELEVER poultry component. VVVs are identified by the livestock services and trained on vaccination and poultry husbandry. They are also trained on gender and nutrition by the project team. After their training, they offer vaccination services, poultry deworming, and nutritional advice to the beneficiaries.

Components 2 and 3: Nutrition and Gender

Though these two components are distinct in terms of training materials and activities, their implementation at the community level has been fully integrated. The nutrition component includes behavior change communication (BCC) on nutrition and diets provided through women's groups, poultry producer groups, and local community leaders. The content of the BCC activities includes the promotion of improved diets at key stages of the lifecycle, including IYCF practices (including breastfeeding promotion for infants) and basic hygiene, amongst other items.

The gender component includes community-level sensitization on women's economic empowerment and gender equity, including strengthening of women's groups. The activities under this component include training participants from existing women's associations on enterprise development, including village saving and loans and enhancing commercial opportunities, for example. The activities also focus on strengthening women's role in decision-making within households and the community on

entrepreneurship, nutritious food production, marketing, consumption and in child health, feeding and care.

Implementation of the nutrition and gender-related SELEVER components

These two components are implemented by ACF and CBDF. CBDF implements nutrition and gender activities in villages in the Centre-Ouest and Hauts Bassins regions, whilst ACF is active in the 10 villages in the Boucle du Mouhoun. Technical staff at Tanager train NGO facilitators on the project approach, including modules on nutrition and modules on gender. Tanager staff then provide technical support to the NGO implementers, facilitating collaboration between the different actors involved, and monitors the implementation.

The main roll-out activities at community level by the NGOs include cascade trainings, home visits, peer-group support, advocacy and follow-up monitoring. Training materials include guideline manuals and videos developed by Tanager for the SELEVER program. The roll-out at the community-level includes some NGO-specific features. In the case of CBDF, once the NGO facilitators have been trained, they in turn begin the community level activities, engaging with community leaders, women leaders, champion husbands, model women, and community groups (MUSO, GS, for example):

- Community leaders, including one or two religious or traditional leaders per village, once trained are then themselves responsible for training the community (MUSO, GS, other peer beneficiaries) on nutrition and gender. They contribute through their status to remove certain barriers or taboos. They develop and implement action plans, including public meetings and home visits.
- Women leaders, selected from women's groups (MUSO, GS) are responsible for training their women's groups on nutrition and gender.
- Champion husbands selected through positive actions on nutrition and gender or on supporting women’s poultry production. They are trained on messaging and sensitization for husbands and men’s groups. They develop and implement action plans.

- Model women: These are women who through their behavior or practices constitute references for other women on nutrition, gender or poultry production (2 per village). They are trained on gender equity and nutrition. They each identify 10 households to raise awareness about gender and nutrition and household spending plans. They also develop and implement action plans

In the case of ACF, trained facilitators conduct advocacy sessions with community leaders, providing information about SELEVER to the targeted communities. 120 people per village are then trained on gender and nutrition. Of the 120 trained, 8 to 10 people are designated by village to form a "network hub[1]". A hub includes the Village Development Advisor, MUSO Leaders, VVV, Community Based Health Officer (CBOA) and other community leaders. The network hub then receives extensive training on gender and nutrition. They are then responsible for training the community (GS) on gender and nutrition through talks and home visits.

Component 4: Poultry-WASH (only in SELEVER+WASH villages)

The enhanced poultry-WASH behavior change intervention aims to enhance the impact of the SELEVER program on children's health and nutrition status by improving the general WASH environment at community and household level, reducing the risk of exposure to livestock feces for young children. The poultry-WASH component involves applying a specific poultry-livestock lens to the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) behavior change approach, integrating these two approaches within a single programmatic activity that is being rolled-out in the 30 SELEVER+WASH communities.

The CLTS component of the intervention is well-defined and encompasses materials developed in the context of the national strategy currently being rolled out across the country. Similarly, the messages related to reducing young children's exposure of poultry and livestock feces are included within the SELEVER intervention package materials.

[1] Or "noyau relais" in French.

Implementation of the enhanced poultry WASH-related component

This component is implemented by APS in 30 villages in the study population. APS worked with the SELEVER and IFPRI teams to integrate SELEVER and CLTS dimensions by identifying the entry points for poultry related messaging within the CLTS materials and roll-out activities. The CLTS approach generally involves three stages (Crocker et al., 2017) including 1) pre-triggering (APS engagement with community members); 2) triggering (APS conducting group meeting activities to elicit emotional responses, including shame and disgust, and generate motivation to eliminate open defecation); and 3) follow-up (monitoring progress and feedback toward eliminating open defecation) in the community. The roll-out of the community level activities undertaken in these 3 stages were broadened to also include livestock and poultry specific topics. In pre-triggering this involves also engaging with poultry and livestock related actors. Poultry and livestock feces are then included as explicit themes in the triggering activities, inducing an action-plan. Following the triggering event, facilitators are trained (1 per commune) and a village hygiene committee is organized within each targeted community. The committees include youth, women, and other resource people with influence in the community. Committee members undertake home visits to follow-up on the planned activities, providing feedback and advice, also linking back with information to APS staff.

METHODS

Data collection

This research study employs multiple qualitative methods. It was conducted in six villages across five provinces in Burkina Faso (Table 1). The study villages were selected from the pool of 60 villages where the SELEVER intervention was underway. These villages were selected for inclusion in this study based on the baseline survey analysis and SELEVER project monitoring data. The goal was to select six villages, three with the standard SELEVER intervention (Kiéré, Douré, Koumbia) and three with the SELEVER+WASH intervention (Goumogo, Koubounga, Ta). The villages were purposively selected based on variability in known characteristics including size of the household poultry flock size, poultry mortality, sales and revenue, village average probability of adequate iron intake in mothers and children, and egg and chicken consumption.

The sites selected for this qualitative study are the same ones selected for the process evaluation of the SELEVER program (Gelli et al., 2019a). In each study village, 11 to 15 households engaged in poultry production were randomly selected from among poultry producing households to participate in a structured quantitative survey (selecting either the primary woman or man), for a total of 81 households across the study areas. General characteristics of each of these villages are described below.

For the qualitative study described herein, within each of these 6 villages, individuals were purposively recruited to participate in this qualitative study due to their affiliation with the SELEVER program, either as a service provider or a beneficiary. Community leaders and other community members also participated (detailed in the following section). The study team worked with each village leader to identify and purposively recruit these participants to join the study.

The qualitative methods used to examine the research questions were adapted from the protocols developed by the Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project (GAAP2) (https://gaap.ifpri.info/), which were designed, among other things, to validate existing metrics being developed for the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) and provide evidence on how gender-sensitive agriculture development projects facilitate opportunities for women to empower themselves (Meinzen-

Dick et al., 2019). These methods include focus group discussions (FGD), participatory activities, and semi-structured interviews (SSI). FGDs were gender disaggregated. Individuals were compensated 500 fCFA[2] for their time after participating in the respective activity. The following section describes each data collection activity and the type of participants that were recruited for each activity.

Table 1 Study Sites in Burkina Faso

	Village	Province	Region	Ethnic Groups	Languages	Religion
1	Guomogho	Boulkiemdé	Centre Ouest	Mossi*, Peulh	mooré, fufuldé	Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Animism
2	Douré	Boulkiemdé	Centre Ouest	Mossi*, Peulh	mooré, fufuldé	Christianity, Catholicism, Islam*, Animism
3	Koubounga	Sissili	Centre Ouest	Mossi, Peulh, Nouna, Dagara Dioula*	waala, fufuldé, nouni, mooré	Christianity, Catholicism, Islam*, Animism
4	Koumbia	Balé	Boucle du Mouhoun	Mossi, Peulh, Bwaba*	mooré, fufuldé, bwamu	Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Animism
5	Ta	Mouhoun	Boucle du Mouhoun	Dafing*, Mossi, Peulh	dafing, mooré, peulhs	Not disclosed
6	Kiéré	Tuy	Hauts Bassins	Bwaba*, Mossi, Peulh	bwamu, mooré, fufuldé	Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Animism

*=Majority

Focus Group Discussions

Two types of gender disaggregated FGDs were held in each village for a total of four FGDs per village (2 with women, 2 with men). Table 2 describes the total number of men and women who participated in each activity. The first FGD consisted of 15 covered topics related to food preparation practices, food availability, consumption patterns, decision-making and food choices, food budgets, and the effect of the SELEVER program on these categories ("FGD Nutrition" henceforth) (Protocol available from authors upon request). This discussion guide built off of an approach developed by Elias et al. (2018). The overall purpose of this activity was to understand the household food acquisition, preparation, and consumption dynamics, seasonality of these dynamics, and how participation in SELEVER affected these dynamics. The FGD Nutrition had between 8 and 12 participants each, and a minimum of 6 participants in each

[2] Approximately $0.85.

group were involved in agricultural production. A total of 63 men and 70 women (133 total) participated in 12 FGD Nutrition across the study areas. This FGD took approximately two and a half hours to complete. No respondents declined to participate.

Table 2 Number of Participants by Activity and Village

Village	Focus Group				Participatory Activity		Semi-Structured Interviews					TOTAL
	Nutrition		Gender Norms		Seasonal Calendar		Household		VVV	Group Leader	Trader	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W				
Goumogho	9	12	10	11	4	4	2	2	2	1	2	**59**
Douré	12	12	12	12	0	0	2	2	4	1	0	**57**
Koubounga	12	12	12	12	4	4	2	2	2	1	0	**63**
Koumbia	8	11	6	15	0	0	2	2	1	4	2	**51**
Ta / Kona	12	11	12	12	4	4	2	2	0	4	0	**63**
Kiéré / Houndé	10	12	6	12	0	0	2	2	1	2	2	**49**
TOTAL	**63**	**70**	**58**	**74**	**12**	**12**	**12**	**12**	**10**	**13**	**6**	**342**

M = men
W = women

The second type of FGD consisted of 11 overarching questions and covered definitions of empowerment, gender norms related to mobility, empowerment, marriage, social status, household and community decision-making patterns about land-use, accessing resources, health and sanitation, and agricultural production, and the effect of the SELEVER program on these related categories ("FGD Gender Norms" henceforth) (Protocol available from authors upon request). This activity aimed to inform underlying social dynamics related to gender-specific barriers and opportunities for accessing resources, market integration, and factors affecting best practice adoption. Participants were selected to include only those specifically involved in raising poultry. Each FGD Gender Norms included between 11 and 15 participants. A total of 58 men and 74 women (132 total) participated in 12 FGD Gender Norms across the study areas (Table 2). This FGD took approximately three hours to complete. No respondents declined to participate.

Semi-Structured Interviews

SSIs were held with individual household members engaged with raising poultry, Voluntary Village Vaccinators (VVVs), group leaders, and poultry traders across the village sites. There were four types of SSIs conducted. Explained below are the SSIs with individual household members, VVVs, group leaders, and poultry traders, respectively.

SSIs were held with four individual household members in each village. In each village, two households were selected: one with more than 20 fowl and one with fewer than 20 fowl were randomly identified from the survey roster for an SSI (two total households per village). SSIs were held with one man of each category (two SSIs with men per village) and one woman of each category (two SSIs with women per village). These interviews were conducted by women facilitators. A total of 12 men and 12 women were identified across all study villages for SSIs (Table 2). These interviews consisted of nine overarching questions related to child rearing practices, household dynamics, household decision-making patterns, income-generating activities, community participation, food allocation, and participation in the SELEVER program (Protocol available from authors upon request). Men and women participants were asked the same questions, which were modified to account for participant characteristics.[3] The overall purpose of this activity was to better understand the roles that men and women have in household activities and poultry value chain activities, identify barriers and opportunities for participation, and understand gender dimensions of food allocation practices. These interviews took between one hour and forty-five minutes to two and a half hours to complete. No respondents declined to participate.

The three remaining types of SSIs were conducted with VVVs, poultry traders, and group leaders engaged with SELEVER. A total of 10 VVVs participated in SSIs across all study sites: four women and six men. SSIs were held with six poultry traders in select villages, all of whom were men.[4] Finally, SSIs were held with leaders of local groups. These groups included the GS/MUSO or the women's association, both of which participate in the SELEVER program. A total of 13 individuals participated in the group

[3] For example, women were asked to describe the decision-making dynamics with their husband as well as with their other co-wives, whereas polygynous men were asked to describe the decision-making dynamics with all of their co-wives.

[4] As expected, we did not identify any women who worked as poultry traders.

leader SSIs: eight women and five men (Table 2). The overall purpose of these interviews was to better understand the specific role of VVVs, traders, and community groups in village poultry rearing and women's empowerment and identify opportunities and barriers for women's participation in the poultry value chain. SSIs with women VVVs were asked an additional set of questions to understand their motivations for being a VVV and unique challenges they face to participate in the value chain (Protocol available from authors upon request). These interviews took approximately one hour and fifteen minutes to two hours to complete. No respondents declined to participate.

Finally, two seasonal calendar activities (one with men, one with women) were held in three study villages (Table 2). For each seasonal calendar, four individuals who were well informed of the village's agricultural and poultry raising activities were selected to participate. A total of six seasonal calendar activities were held, with a total of twelve men and twelve women across the study areas. The overall purpose of the seasonal calendar was to understand seasonal activities employed by men, women, boys, and girls within the village specific to agriculture, poultry raising, domestic chores, gendered divisions of labor related to each activity, and the seasonal availability of certain types of food and incomes. This activity took approximately four hours to complete. No respondents declined to participate.

Ethics

Prior to data collection, Institutional Review Board approval was secured to conduct this research project. Prior to each activity, participants were informed of the activity's purpose and that their participation was voluntary. All individuals who participated in these activities gave oral consent prior to participating. During the SSIs and FGDs, facilitators maintained the privacy of each participant. All data collected remained secure and confidential, as each participant was identified with a code in lieu of their name or other identifiers. Participants were notified during the consent process how and to whom they could reach out if they had any follow up questions.

Analysis

All data were collected in person by trained facilitators in the local language and were audio-recorded.

The facilitators, fluent in both the local language (either Moore or Dioula) and French, translated and transcribed the audio recording of each activity into French. The transcripts were coded using a codebook with a combination of inductive and deductive thematic codes, by which sections of the text were tagged as exemplifying specific thematic codes. The lead author drafted the codebook including with the deductive codes using an axial coding scheme (i.e., sub-codes were nested within broader codes) prior to data collection. The codebook was then revised by the first two authors to integrate emergent themes through frequent reflection and preliminary analysis throughout the data collection process. During the first two weeks of data collection, the qualitative research team convened each evening to discuss the day's data collection activities, such as the most useful probing questions and emerging findings. This iterative process inspired only a few inductive codes, specifically concerning co-wife dynamics, cultural barriers, and migration impacts.

The analysis was then conducted by reviewing the text across common codes to identify emergent themes across specific topics to answer research questions. For example, an entire section of codes were concerned with perceptions of empowerment, specifically how the word was defined locally, how empowered men and women were perceived, characteristics of an empowered person, and how the SELEVER intervention affected dynamics of or increasing empowerment. These codes informed the section on local perceptions of empowerment. The codebook is available upon request from the authors.

The field research team consisted of five facilitators, enumerators and supervisors (four women and one man). The entire field research team was Burkinabé and each member speaks French and one (or two) additional local languages (Moore and Dioula). Two members (one man and one woman) of the field team supervised the qualitative and quantitative field collection activities, and occasionally facilitated FGDs or SSIs. The supervisors have training at the Ph.D. level and all field team members had formal qualitative and quantitative social science training. Before data collection, two IFPRI researchers facilitated a week-long training in Koudougou, Burkina Faso on the data collection tools, research objectives, and project themes.

RESULTS

Local perceptions of empowerment

This study operationalizes empowerment as defined by Kabeer (2001, p.1), as the "expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices, particularly in contexts where this ability has been denied to them". It builds on previous work developing the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (Alkire et al., 2013) and pro-WEAI (Malapit et al., 2019). The WEAI, developed by researchers at IFPRI, measures empowerment through five domains and ten indicators for those domains. These domains and indicators include:

1. Production: (i) input in productive decisions, (ii) autonomy in production;
2. Resources: (iii) ownership of assets, (iv) purchase, sale or transfer of asset, (v) access to and decision on credit;
3. Income: (vi) control over use of income;
4. Leadership: (vii) group member, (viii) speaking in public;
5. Time: (ix) workload, (x) leisure.

The pro-WEAI, designed as an impact evaluation tool, builds on the WEAI by collecting these indicators as well as additional ones, and more explicitly mapping the domains to the existing literature on empowerment, namely: intrinsic agency (power within), instrumental agency (power to), and collective agency (power with). The pro-WEAI measures 12 indicators across three domains, to include:

1. Intrinsic agency: (i) autonomy in income, (ii) self-efficacy, (iii) attitudes about intimate partner violence against women, and (iv) respect among household members;
2. Instrumental agency: (v) input in productive decisions, (vi) ownership of land and other assets, (vii) access to and decisions on credit, (viii) control over use of income, (ix) work balance, (x) visiting important locations; and
3. Collective agency: (xi) group membership, and (xii) membership in influential groups (Malapit et al., 2019).

To help determine the extent to which the indicators in the pro-WEAI align with local understandings of empowerment, the FGD tool examining gender norms asked both men and women participants: “How would you describe a woman in your community who is able to make important decisions in her life and to put those into action?” Probing and follow-up questions explored what enables women to build this capacity, the change in women having this capacity overtime, and perceptions of these women by her husband or other community members (men and women alike). The following are descriptions of participants’ perceptions of empowered men and women.

An empowered man is perceived as one who has many assets, such as large flock of poultry, a well-crafted hen house, a large amount of livestock, a plot of land, and a means of transport. He is also a great businessman, able to effectively manage his family’s income and expenses throughout the year. One man describes an empowered man such as: “whatever he wants to do, he can do it. For example, to pay for the schooling of his children, his brothers and sisters, and even build a house and pay for a motorcycle” [SSI, Goumogho].

Empowered women are typically described in terms of their likeness to empowered men. For example, an empowered woman can buy a means of transport, even if her husband does not have one. Additionally, she has accumulated many assets, such as furniture, dishes, or clothing. She is often compared to a man and works in tandem with her husband to manage the family, as described by one participant: “for me there is not a difference because she has the same knowledge as the man” [FGD, Koumbia]. Another described this type of woman as, “the woman who can fix things, this woman is like a man. Because the door that the man can close, she too can close the same door. The work that the man can do, she can do the same work. So, she is equal to the man” [FGD, Kiéré].

According to both men and women, an empowered woman is described as a discrete, simple woman who is well-educated, understanding, and able to solve problems. She is inspiring to other community members and particularly to other women. And an empowered woman is also one who is able to bring people together, suggesting she is an instigator of collective efficacy. She is a natural leader, who aims to work sincerely for the betterment of others and is brave in this pursuit.

An empowered woman is also one who has no difficulty speaking and expressing herself confidently in public, who has a wealth of knowledge, has traveled, and is able to advise and pass information as validly as a man. Having the confidence to express herself publicly also suggests that this woman has the time to engage in the public sphere, as highlighted by one woman: "Here at home, women get rid of some housework when they have the eldest daughters to do it. At the moment she is devoting much more time to agricultural activity. Housework is a drag on women's organization" [FGD, Kiéré]. Other reasons, such as having a sick child, may prevent women from participating in the public sphere, which participants describe as creating a jealousy between those who can and those who cannot participate: "There are some who are jealous and who envy the leaders and their capacity, but do not themselves have the capacity to act like them" [FGD, Kiéré]. Empowered women are able to generate or harness additional personal time by shifting domestic responsibilities to another person in the household, whether it be daughters taking on age-appropriate responsibilities or younger co-wives who have less influence and power than their elder co-wives. The dynamic between co-wives suggests that older co-wives (primarily the first wife) may enact power over the younger co-wives to distribute larger shares of domestic work onto them, enabling their own empowerment while potentially disempowering the younger wives; the idea of power over another individual is typically not considered an aspect of empowerment (Malapit et al., 2019). Women who have lower shares of domestic responsibilities are able to spend their time on other prioritized activities, such as working in the field (to generate higher yields), raising poultry, business-related activities, or community participation.

Financial capacity in terms of their ability earn more money to support their families is an important aspect of an empowered woman. As described by one man: "Yes, [empowered women] have a lot of money. My wife gave me 250,000 fCFA[5] to buy the materials of her house under construction. Women are better than us men. There are women who have cultivated sesame and cashed 250,000 fCFA to 500,000 fCFA[6]" [Seasonal Calendar, Koubounga]. An empowered woman is considered one who is

[5] Approximately $421.00 USD.
[6] Approximately $421.00 - $842.00 USD.

able to sufficiently support her family, which is often intended to mean that she has the financial capacity to reduce her husband's financial burdens and responsibilities by paying more of the household's share of expenses. An empowered woman has a higher income and is able to contribute her income to what are typically the husband's expenses, such as schooling fees or healthcare costs. Although, some women complain that a high source of spousal disagreement is husbands being less likely to share their incomes with their wives for household or food needs, especially when women have their own source of income.

As one man explained, "The community appreciates it, people even say that a woman can hold a home in the absence of her husband and that such a husband is lucky to have her as a smart woman. We men want awake women who can fix a situation" [FGD, Douré]. Two other men described during an FGD: 1) "[Empowered women] live better than other women. They are better able to take care of their families even in the absence of their husbands" and 2) "They are women doing better than other women who support their husbands in case of difficulties and when they intervene it is to arrange and not to destroy. They are not rebellious. The other women would like to be them…" [FGD, Douré]. Men describe empowered women in terms of their financial capacity to support their households, in addition to their domestic tasks, and ability to support their husbands in whatever they need.

However, while there are positive perceptions of empowered women and their abilities to support their families, there also exist strong local sentiments that women who are perceived to be empowered threaten men's masculinity. This phenomenon is often described locally as empowered women's lack of respect towards their husbands. In this consideration, empowered women are described as unfaithful, too emancipated, too free, and having no regard for their husbands, because they do not need anything from their husbands. One woman explains, "What we notice, some do not respect their husband. They no longer consider him a man, they speak badly to him in public. But this case is not general" [FGD, Kiéré].

Norms about How Men and Woman Should Behave

In addition to exploring local understandings of empowerment, this study also sought to understand perceptions and descriptions of how men and women (and boys and girls) should ideally behave

according to local gender norms. In SSIs with men and women, participants were asked, “How do you think daughters should be raised?” followed by, “How do you think sons should be raised?”. Probing and follow-up questions explored characteristics of how an ideal woman or man behaves and carries themselves within the community and the household, asking “how should a daughter/son/woman/man behave?”. The analysis below presents participants’ views of the ideal woman or man within their community.

An ideal man is described as respectful, obedient, hardworking, helpful, and able to listen to people. As described by a woman, “through his correct behavior, when he refuses to engage with reprehensible behavior, he moves away from any bad company” [SSI, Koumbia]. This ideal man is the head of his family, in charge of the household in terms of food, health, and his children’s education. He makes the final decisions concerning how to use the family’s fields, the organization and schedule for agricultural activities, and crop management. He decides how to manage the income generated by the sale of agricultural and livestock productions, as well as whether to consume or sell poultry meat. He also makes the decisions regarding how to seek care in case of an illness in the household. And he participates in all necessary community activities.

An ideal woman is described as wise, respectful, hardworking, submissive, who does housework well, who dresses decently, and who fears her parents. As described by a man, “when you say that a girl has been successful, first of all, it’s a girl who accepts submission. A girl who wants marriage but endure a lot of things and a submissive girl usually succeeds in her life” [SSI, Kiéré]. She is considered her husband’s wife, obedient, and submissive. In general, women in polygynous households are excluded from household decisions, whereas women in monogamous households are able to contribute their opinions. In addition to birthing and childcare, an ideal woman must ensure proper household management via a variety of household tasks, including meal preparation, laundry, dishwashing, sweeping the floors, and maintaining poultry and livestock. Women also participate in family farming activities by working in her husband’s field before tending to her own plot. She may engage in a variety

of income-generating activities, partly to cover meal costs but also to support her and her children's needs and support her husband in case of income or food shortages.

Household Decision-Making

Men generally make the first and final decision regarding agricultural activities, land use, and crop management. Typically, in polygynous households, if the husband works on a family plot with his brother, he and his brother will make joint decisions. The husband will then inform his first wife of the decisions and have her relay the message to the other wives, as described by one man: "What we do, if I want to talk with my women, I give the floor to the first woman, who informs the others and returns to me" [SSI, Kiéré]. Sometimes the husband will consult or collect the advice of his wives, however this is not always the case and up to the husband. One woman explains, "Some [couples] do it. They sit down and see together what is going on for the sowing this year. For others, there is no consultation. The husband always decides" [FGD, Kiéré]. Most commonly, the husband makes decisions with either his brothers or his male children.

However, in monogamous households, the husband and wife will discuss each decision. In the case that a husband has emigrated, the first wife and eldest son will jointly make the household decisions in his absence. The following comments from two women during an FGD describe the difference in typical decision-making patterns between monogamous and polygynous couples, respectively: 1) "We [my husband and I] are discussing seeds, what we are going to cultivate. If we see where there is a great need, we can decide to grow the maize in order to consume it, rather than cotton, for example. When we agree, we finish [the discussion]" and 2) "As [my husband] has lots of fields, when we are at home, he first informs the first wife, who then informs us, and then we go to work in the fields" [FGD, Koumbia]. Women in monogamous relationships are involved in the decision-making process and have more say in a decision, whereas women in polygynous households are typically not involved in the decision-making processes. This is consistent with how men describe patterns of intra-household decision making.

In all cases, if there is a disagreement, the wife/wives will attempt to influence or change her/their husband's decision by lobbying the in-laws or a close friend of her husband, or by using flattery. One woman explained, "The women [co-wives] discuss with each other and get along before convincing the husband" [FGD, Ta]. A man in Ta confirms these strategies, explaining that his wives used to use flattery or would bring him a nice meal to influence his mind, however now "women have evolved, and the woman stands up to the man when she is convinced" [FGD, Ta], suggesting that women are expressing more confidence in speaking within the household. However, other women explain, "we can discuss with [our husband] or submit to his decisions" [FGD, Goumogho].

The most commonly cited disagreement shared between husband and wife/wives is how to manage and invest the income from agricultural or poultry production. In addition, women explain other sources of arguments, such as their lack of inclusion in discussions around expense management, husbands being stingy with allocating his incomes for meals and other items, and reproductive and intimacy challenges[7]. Men cite similar sources, but add that arguments arise when women do not perform their domestic duties (cleaning the house on time, feeding or bathing the children on time), or general stress from a lack of money or food.

The head of household is always responsible for deciding whether to kill or sell poultry, regardless of who is involved in household poultry rearing. Men do not inform their wives if they want to kill his or her poultry, whereas women must inform her husband before she wants to kill or sell a chicken, even if they are hers. For a woman to not inform her husband would be considered a gross lack of respect, as women are very much considered under their husbands' domain, such that the women's property is also under his domain. For her to sell her poultry without his permission would be to sell his property to this effect. Two women explain this dynamic further: 1) "Men are not the same, but [since] we are women, we accept everything. Often the man sells without warning you while it is you who takes care of the chicken. Even if they are your chickens, you cannot sell them without warning. Most often he sells

[7] Women in Douré and Koumbia explain that arguments arise between husbands and wives in such cases if a woman does not give birth within 2 years of marriage, or he wants to be intimate within weeks after childbirth and the wife refuses.

them and returns to give you the money. But if you blame him for selling the chickens, that can discourage him," and 2) "You will notice the absence of the hen and it is at this moment that you will realize that he sold the hen" [FGD, Kiéré].

Intra-household decision making patterns depend on the type of marriage. Two men explain different types of patterns: 1) "When it's a monogamous couple, we discuss with the woman. When it's a big family (polygynous marriage), then we make decisions without consulting women" and 2) "If it's a big family, women do not participate in the meeting. We decide how much each woman should have and they are called to give them that money. But if it's a small family, you and your wife, you are calling your wife, and together you see how you're going to use the money. Even if it is a chick that you sold, the woman must know how this money will be used" [FGD, Kiéré].

After participation in the SELEVER project, men highlight that there is more openness towards including women in decision-making within the household and explain how they perceive a stronger cohesion between the couple. This cohesion is described as women showing their husbands more respect, as highlighted by two men: 1) "There were some [women] who did not put water in the shower for their husbands, who did not feed their husbands. Today, these women have changed" and 2) "For example, women who did not ask permission from their husbands before going out, thanks to this project, they now ask permission from their husbands before going out… We mean, if they prepare, they leave the food in the pot. If the man wants to eat, he [prepares it] himself. She will not put the food in front of the man. You can tell the woman 'Bring me to eat'. She will answer you, 'go take [the food] yourself in the pot'" [FGD, Kiéré]. Other men add that they are increasingly incorporating women's views into their decision-making. One man explained, "We learned to talk to women, to consider their opinion" [SSI, Koumbia]. Another man with multiple wives described, "I consult my wives and we discuss before making a decision" [SSI, Goumogho]. And finally, one man gave an example that, "Before winter, [my wives and I] take stock of the past season to readjust the area of land and seeds" [FGD, Douré].

Women, on the other hand, express their views for how the SELEVER project has shifted decision-making patterns with their spouses. The project increased openness among men to allow their

wives to leave the household more and more, enabling women to feel freer in their mobility. One woman describes: “I’m going to Houdé [now] to do my vegetable market. Others go to Bobo [Dialousso] and buy clothes to sell here. It’s done nowadays” [FGD, Kiéré]. Additionally, women indicate that their husbands now consult them more and spouses work together on activities, such as livestock rearing, as described by one woman: “Before SELEVER came into the same household, breeding was done separately. Nowadays, ideas have changed. More and more, there is harmony and cohesion within the family” [SSI, Koumbia].

Decision Making about Income

Decisions related to income management (from grain or livestock sales in particular), how to invest or purchase inputs, and allocation of grain and budgets to the wife/wives are always the husband’s decision (and his brothers, if the land is jointly managed). One man explains, “If the season was plentiful after collecting the entire crop, men gather to make decisions. First, you give five bags to each [wife]…” [FGD, Kiéré]. Men decide how much money to give to their wives to purchase food or other needs, as well as how many sacks of grain each wife will receive. Women typically can decide how much harvest to keep for consumption, but her husband will always sell the surplus, and give her what she is owed after investing into the children’s needs.

Spousal discussion of incomes varies among households. Some women indicate that while in general husbands always know their wives’ income, some only inform their husbands of a portion of their income, because as one woman explained, “Some men are very wasteful [with money]. Once they know you have the money, they will badger you to take the money until the money is gone” [SSI, Koumbia]. This dynamic can shift in the presence of a co-wife, as explained by one woman: “When there is no co-wife, we show [our husband] the full amount [of our income]. But when we have a co-wife, we do not show everything we have” [FGD, Ta]. Men typically can surmise how much money their wife makes based on her activities, but do not always know about her saving practices. While husbands and wives will typically share some information about their incomes with one another, co-wives never share their income or saving techniques among one another due to a lack of trust.

Typically, neither men nor women budget or save their incomes, but rather spend all that they have when they have it. For example, if they receive higher incomes from a particular harvest, they might indulge in purchasing higher quality foods for that evening's meal rather than save the surplus for later. SELEVER trainings and community groups, such as the GS/MUSO, have worked to help households discuss and better manage their incomes throughout the year. But the concept of budgeting incomes or grains is not yet well understood nor practiced as a strategy to reduce or diversify risk, in the event of low yields or in preparation for the lean season.

Savings and credit groups for men and women exist in various forms across the communities and are used mostly for acquiring small loans by men and women. However, in both cases, the husband makes the decision regarding accessing a loan, whether for his own agricultural investment or for his wife to take a loan to pay for children's health needs. Participants (both men and women) across the villages indicate that SELEVER has had little to no effect on their ability to access and acquire loans. Loan packages that have been offered (for example, 50,000 fCFA[8] repayable over 6 months in Douré) were rejected by the women because the risk was too high, however they accepted packages offering 25,000 fCFA[9] with shorter repayment periods as the risk was doable. This dynamic is further discussed in a complementary qualitative paper (Eissler et al., in preparation).

Land Use

Land titles are passed generationally through men in each village, with each landowner understanding the limits of his domain. Landowners decide how to manage their land and can lease it to a third party and recover it whenever they want without any issue. In case of a disagreement, an appeal is lodged with the village's head of land, who assists in resolving the issue. Common property, such as forests or grazing areas, cannot be exploited by third parties (non-community members) or groups of people and if so, this action will result in penalties. These lands are protected by the state.

[8] Approximately $84.75.
[9] Approximately $42.38.

As described by one man, “According to our custom, women cannot own land, because she can get married in another village. Where she gets married is where her home is” [FGD, Kiéré]. However, women may have access to cultivate a piece of land, depending on the village, though land and rights to this land always belong to the men. In villages such as Ta, Goumogho, Koubounga, and Koumbia, a woman may be given a piece of land from her husband or may ask her husband to acquire a piece of land for her from someone else in their family or village. In the event that there is limited land to share with wives, the first wife will always have priority to access the land. The quality of land given to women is always low, as explained by two women: 1) “These are uninteresting lands that are given to women. You never give good land to the woman” [FGD, Kiéré] and 2) “Women often have less fertile lands that are remote, in the bush” [FGD, Goumogho]. Men maintain lands that are high quality, which require maintenance and inputs – often in which women cannot or do not invest.

Often, women must first work on the ‘common field’, or her husband’s plot, before working in her own, if she has access. In other villages, women may not have any access to land due to her husband’s refusal. One man explains, “For men, once the woman has her [own] field, she abandons the activities of the common field” [FGD, Kiéré]. In these cases, she is required to work only in her husband’s field.

Women with access to land have changed how they use the land as well. Previously, as described by women in FGDs across the sample, women used to only cultivate peanuts and condiments (diversified foods that accompany staples in a meal, such as sorrel, vegetables, baobob, okra, green beans, etc…), but nowadays they grow cotton, sesame, rice, millet, beans, peanuts, ground peas, and then garden sorrel and onion in the dry season. As one man explained, “Before it was women only who were harvesting, but now with the evolution of things, the men are also harvesting. Everything is evolving now. Before, the women, after the seeds it was finished for them until the harvests, but everything changed, and they cultivate with us [men]” [Seasonal Calendar, Goumogho].

Freedom of Movement

Social norms dictate that while women may occupy any public space – save for certain places of worship – her husband or male relative should accompany her. A married woman – young or old – must always inform her husband before going out of the house and especially, she must inform him if she plans to leave the village and, in this case, must be accompanied by a man. If her husband is absent or she is a widow, she must seek her brother-in-law or in-law's permission. One man explained, "The woman whose husband is traveling cannot go to another village without the consent of his [family or] in-laws, but for movement inside the village, she can do it without permission" [FGD, Koumbia]. However, this practice depends on ethnic group. For example, the Mossis typically live together, so a woman can see her brother-in-law frequently enough to inform him if she needs to leave the household. Whereas the Bwabas live far apart from each other; therefore, a woman may not see her brother-in-law for over a week at times. Therefore, Bwaba women typically will only inform the children or a co-wife before leaving, whereas it is essential for a Mossi woman to inform her husband or brother-in-law always. An unmarried woman must always ask her parents' (mother or father) permission before leaving her house.

According to the participants, a woman must receive this permission to leave so that she can benefit from her husband's (or a man's) support in case an issue arises, as explained by one man: "She must ask permission [because] if something happens to her, she can call on the head of the family [for help]. But if she goes out without the husband's agreement and a problem arises, she won't have any support" [FGD, Ta]. However, others see this practice as an important sign of respect, as described by one man: "It's a sign of respect, simply. If she does [ask your permission and show you respect], you will not hit her. She informs you [because of] the principle" [FGD, Ta]. Men participants describe several reasons for why they might reject a woman's request to leave the household: either there are no co-wives to perform domestic duties or they believe that the woman might commit adultery.

However, participants acknowledge recent shifts in how women are able to navigate public spaces due to projects like SELEVER, which have worked to reinforce awareness for women's equality. One man described: "There were people who did not understand the freedom that should be given to

women. Now they allow their wives to carry out income-generating activities, such as livestock and petty trading, and to attend sensitization trainings" [FGD, Koubounga]. Women now operate in the public space more, usually to buy or sell items, as described by one woman: "Yes, women go to other cities to buy items to sell. Before they were limited [only] to the village market" [FGD, Kiéré], and one man: "Some [women] go to Bobo [Dioulasso] to buy t-shirts and come and sell them here. Before they did not do that. They stayed at the market here to sell. Today, many women go out to buy products. Some go to Houndé to buy products. For example, soumbala costs less in Houndé than here. They go to buy soumbala in Houndé to sell them here. Before they did not do that" [FGD, Kiéré]. Participants have noted norm change around women's freedom of movement, and these norm changes coincide with the SELEVER program, though they themselves do not explicitly link these changes to SELEVER.

A salient example to highlight this change in women's freedom of movement is the emergence of women working as VVVs. In the past, it would have been inconceivable for a woman to work as a VVV, and very difficult for her to even raise poultry. As a result of trainings and support from SELEVER, more and more women are raising poultry and practicing as a VVV, as both men and women are shifting attitudes towards women's freedom of movement in the public sphere. However, with this increase in freedom of movement and subsequent empowerment, there are perceptions of women's increase in lack of respect for their husbands. For women to practice as a VVV or raise poultry, she must have her husband's permission.

Women also need to secure permission before leaving for an appointment, as indicated by one man: "Some VVV [women] trained do not practice the activity because of the refusal of their husbands … The others are sitting at home, because their husbands are forgetful, and they might forget what the project taught them" [SSI, Goumogho]. However, many women VVV explain that they are often praised and encouraged by clients, and benefit from the understanding of their family members.

Participants describe similar challenges should a woman want to work as a poultry trader.[10] As explained by one man working as a poultry trader: "A woman can participate as a poultry trader provided she stay put and call a buyer … because the way men suffer, woman cannot bear this suffering. There are times, we find ourselves 20 kilometers away from the village at night. But if it's a woman, she'll be afraid" [SSI, Kiéré]. However, despite these challenges, more and more women are working as a VVV than before (although none as a trader), highlighting women's ability to secure permission and engage in the profession.

Marriage

Across the study sites, there exist three types of marriage: customary/traditional marriage, religious marriage (*fouri* [Islamic], Catholic, and Protestant), and civil marriage. Civil marriage is obligatory for Christian marriages. And informal unions are observed across the villages, as well as monogamous and polygynous households. In the baseline sample of the SELEVER program approximately 45.7% of the households were polygynous and 53.43% of the households were monogamous (Gelli et al., 2019b).[11] A majority of reported polygynous households across the sample (54.7%) were Muslim, whereas the others were Christian (24.9%) and Animist (12.3%).[12] And reported polygynous households were majorly concentrated in the Centre-Ouest region (60.7%), and others were located in the Hauts-Bassins (27.2%) and Boucle du Mouhoun (12.1%) regions.

Polygyny is more common among Muslims, and men typically favor this type of marriage to benefit from the abundance of labor for agricultural work, and not necessarily for love. As explained by one woman, "Because we are farmers, we are four at home, and obviously it is because of his field that he married us. Otherwise he cannot love us all. It is to work…" [FGD, Kiéré]. Typically, the first wife is

[10] No women poultry traders were identified to participate in this study, and participants did not know of any woman working alone as a trader. These are speculations provided by participants for challenges a woman would face should she want to engage as a trader. However, it was common for a woman to operate as a VVV.

[11] Approximately 0.89% of the sample was missing data for this question.

[12] Approximately 8.0% of the sample was missing data for this question.

promised to the man and he chooses his next wives. Traditional marriage ceremonies are rarely practiced today.

The typical age of marriage for women, specifically, across the villages is between 16 and 21 years old, however this is not always the case as one man explained, "There is no age for marriage; if she is ready, she gets married, but the normal age is 18" [FGD, Kiéré].

While men typically choose their type of marriage based on their religious affiliation, women are increasingly favoring civil marriage, because, as explained by one man, "There is the guarantee for women. In case of problems, they can go to court to assert their rights" [FGD, Kiéré]. One woman elaborates: "With the civil marriage, we have a guarantee not to be expelled, nor the property of our husband withdrawn when he dies" [FGD, Ta]. In Muslim or animist marriages, in the event the husband dies, the woman must either marry her brother-in-law or make a symbolic marriage by appointing a boy as her husband so that she can stay in the family and keep her privileges (i.e., the right to continue raising her children and working on her late husband's field) within 160 days of her husbands' death. However, in Koumbia, a widow may decide to stay or leave after her husband dies. If she decides to stay, "[her husbands'] family can help her, and she inherits the field of her deceased husband to take care of his children" [FGD, Koumbia].

Noticeable changes with regard to marriages practices across religions were discussed by participants. Overwhelmingly, the practice of arranged marriage has decreased and young people are more often choosing who they want to marry. In particular, girls now have a voice and can freely choose their spouse, which was before not the case. Amongst Christian marriages, civil marriage is more often common, in addition to a religious ceremony. Spending on marriage ceremonies has increased, as explained by one man: "The bridewealth nowadays varies between 50,000 fCFA to 100,00 fCFA[13]" [FGD, Ta].

[13] Approximately $84.75 to $169.50.

Some also express that married women have more power within a marriage than they previously had before . One woman explains, “Things have changed, women manage to take care of themselves and if one day the husband is not there, she can take care of herself; she’s freer” [FGD, Kiéré]. However, several men in Douré express this as a result of weakened marriage practices: 1) “Today with modernization, marriage has become fragile. Marriage no longer involves both families, but two individuals, and therefore separation has become frequent. Moreover, women refuse to submit and do not hesitate to ask for divorce in case of disagreement” and 2) “Yes, now the marriage is difficult. Women no longer accept suffering, and for a lesser problem, they just want to leave” [FGD, Douré].

Violating Gender Norms

The social punishment for breaking gendered social norms varies depending on location and ethnic group. In some communities, like the Bwaba in Koumbia and Kiéré, women are not systematically repudiated when they violate gender norms. For example, if a Bwaba widow becomes pregnant with a man other than her late-husband or brother-in-law, she will stay at her late-husband’s home and her child will bear her late-husband’s name. The biological father will have no rights over the child and if the biological father attempts to claim his paternity, he will be exposed to sanctions by the late-husband’s family. However, the widow may leave her late-husband’s home and abandon all of her rights and previous children to live with this new man, if she so chooses. This practice, however, is viewed as unacceptable by those living in Ta, who indicate that the pregnant woman must leave her husband or his family to live again with her parents, and she cannot live with the new man.

In general, across the study sites, an unmarried woman still living at her parents’ house may have a child without sanctions, except for those who are Mossi. A Mossi family, for example, will sanction their daughters if they become pregnant outside of marriage. As explained by a Mossi woman**,** “With us Mossis, it is not possible. Even single, if you become pregnant, you have to leave your parents’ home… and join the father of the pregnancy” [FGD, Douré]. Another said, “sometimes if a girl becomes pregnant before marriage, she must join her aunt or partner while waiting to regularize her situation” [FGD,

Douré]. Others mention that with increased tolerance, Mossi girls are less likely to be rejected by their families in case they become pregnant before marriage. As explained by one man, "We lose our traditions thanks to religion making us more tolerant. Today, we really have no choice, and we are forced to keep our [daughters] who fall pregnant" [FGD, Ta].

In the case of divorce, the woman's rights depend on the household. If the woman is to blame for the divorce, the husband can send her back to her parents' home. But if the husband is to blame for the divorce, reconciliations are made so that the woman is not unjustly forced out of her home. A woman can never take the children in the case of divorce, unless the children are young and still need their mother. In some cases, husbands must always still take care of their wives after the divorce, particularly in Muslim marriages.

Excerpt from a man in Kiéré who had migrated on social norms and marriage:

I myself was 24 years on the adventure. When I came back, the children I found with my wife became my children. I am their father … I came to find five children. You can say that you do not want the woman anymore, she can go to her parents. But to say that she has only to go with the children, our custom prohibits this. So, I cannot tell the kids to go to their father's house … You cannot refuse that. If you refuse, you must drive the woman out of your yard. But if you kick her out of your yard, it's as if you've declared the fight to your in-laws. By doing this, the in-laws can remove all their daughters who are at home. Because if you say that one of their daughters is not good, it's because all their daughters in your family are not good. So, they will all leave. That's why we support it by keeping it in the yard…

If she wants, she can bring the child with her. If she wants, she can also leave the child and leave. You too cannot tell the child that you are not his father, that this is the person who is his father. You cannot say that. Once you agree to give him your name, you consider him your own child. If you hear someone outside saying that it's not your child, you are fighting with that person. You must not tell the child that you are not his father.

If the child gets sick, you treat him. It's you who [does] everything for the child. All you do for your children, you do the same thing for this child. Because you consider him your child. He, too, calls you his father and you accept.

Another example includes women who are increasingly pushing the boundaries of gender norms to operate as a VVV. Women VVVs experience additional obstacles that men do not experience, such as accessing inputs and conserving vaccine viability. VVV women struggle to reconcile this profession with their family and household obligations as well as negotiate their capacity to travel outside of their home at different times of day, as described by one VVV: "It must be said that this [profession] is not easy for me

to reconcile with housework, field work, and my VVV work. The cooking hours have changed as well as the hours of work in the field. The time to take care of children is also difficult for me" [SSI, Kiéré]. Self-doubt in properly administering the vaccine and needing to seek their husbands' permission also hinder their ability to practice as a VVV. One VVV woman explained that, "Some people [in the community] still say that a woman will not vaccinate her chickens while some men do, and the chickens die. Once there was a man VVV who has already vaccinated 170 chickens, who are all dead, in addition to the older chickens. I have never vaccinated a chicken that is dead" [SSI, Koubounga].

Excerpts from several VVV women:

My husband tells me not to come home late and my co-wife does not say anything … Some people tell me I'm brave, others think I'm a bandit; others still say this work is only for men [Kordia]

Yes, they are even happy. Before it was someone who came here to vaccinate and leave, and now it is me who takes care of everything in the village and facilitates the task. They often tell me that through my vaccination the hens are in good health, so they are happy. I am alone with my husband. When I did the training, I came to him to explain, and he built the henhouse for me. If he needs chickens, he removes and that's why I say he's happy [Koalio]

If she has a husband, it is complicated for her. There are household tasks that she must do during the evening, and if she has to return at night, that could make some problems for her … whatever this man is, he will always accuse his wife of adultery [Guomogho]

Division of Labor for Household Food Production

There exists a gendered division of labor for household food production across the study villages. In general, it is described that men have the primary responsibility to acquire household food items, whereas women are responsible for preparing and sharing the meals. Men give women rations of grain and money to purchase specialty food items; women are responsible for growing or purchasing condiments to supplement the grain or meat served during meals. Women are mostly responsible for purchasing food items that complement the primary ingredients (described further in the next section). Food management during the lean season is the shared responsibility between men and women.

Women typically decide what to prepare by considering food availability, feasibility (easier and faster cooking methods), and the diversity of the family's diet. Women in the household prepare the meal, and young boys and girls will assist by fetching water or the boys will collect firewood for fuel to cook.

However, sometimes young boys refuse to do any of these chores, as explained by one woman: “When you ask for some boys’ help, they refuse to do it, saying it’s not their job. And they want you to do the laundry for them. When you have a girl, she’s the one who helps you, even if it’s right when she arrives [home] from school. Sometimes you can ask a boy to bring you a dish, and he will refuse, telling you that it’s not a man’s job” [FGD, Ta].

In polygynous families, in general, the co-wives take turns to lead cooking meals. As explained by one woman, “We [co-wives] alternate in food preparation. When you prepare two times in a row, you pass the cooking [responsibilities] to your co-wife, and vice versa” [FGD, Ta]. When it is not a co-wife’s turn to cook, she will assist in meal preparation by arranging leaves for the sauce or pounding the millet or corn. Older co-wives will provide childcare. While women decide on how much and in what way meals are prepared, men can decide the menu, if they have an opinion.

However, in some villages like Kiéré and Koumbia, each wife prepares her own food for herself and her children each meal. In polygynous households, each wife seems to operate like several separate households within the same compound. One man explains, “At home, we do not prepare a single meal for all members of the household. Every woman prepares daily for her, her children, and the husband. So, when she has to prepare [a meal], the woman considers the quantity of depending on the number of children she has” [FGD, Kiéré].

Both men and women explain that because of participation in the SELEVER activities, there is more awareness about the gendered division of labor in the household, particularly from the perspective of men/boys. This awareness has translated into boys and girls increasingly sharing the same tasks; particularly, boys are participating in searching for water and wood. Boys are increasingly helping their mothers by picking up the wood their mothers had collected in the bush and carrying it home. One man explained, “Before, the boys were … considered a boss, but nowadays, with the change of the world, you can see boys washing dishes with his mother, especially if she has no daughter…At first, we did not want to, but nowadays we understand that we have to educate the boys to do everything like a girl, to help his mother, anything that could relieve her” [FGD, Kiéré].

Some women also indicate that sons and some men are now helping with food preparation. Whereas before SELEVER, it would have been impossible to see a man crushing the millet, it is now more common to see men participating in this task. Yet some women observed no difference in men's behavior, such that they did not help with collecting water or firewood, nor did they give additional expenses to prepare the meal, despite receiving awareness trainings.

Food Allocation

There exist gendered divisions of labor for food allocation within a household. After the grain harvest, cereals are stored in the *grenier* [a storage house], and it is the man's responsibility to allocate grain portions to each woman for meal preparation. In Koumbia and Kiéré, after the harvest, the husband gives each wife a certain number of sacks of cereals to keep until the next season. In Koumbia, the husband will give each wife an equal number of sacks (approximately five sacks per woman), whereas in Kiéré, the husband partitions the number of sacks of cereal to each wife depending on how many children she has (for example, if she has three children, she receives two sacks).

In a typical household, the man gives each wife money for high quality food or specialty items (such as meat or spaghetti) as well as the aforementioned cereal rations to prepare food for sharing meals. Women are responsible for growing their own condiments (vegetables, sorrel, onions, aubergine, etc.) to accompany the meals, or purchase these if she did not grow enough in her own garden. The women decide amongst themselves how much food to cook and which method to prepare the meal. Sometimes, men or children will propose an idea for what to prepare, but the women will discuss and decide, always consulting the first wife for her advice on the menu.

Once the meal is prepared, the women and children (particularly young girls) distribute the food. Typically, in polygynous households, the wife who cooks the meal will consume the meal first, while the co-wives and daughter will distribute the food. Typically, the men distribute any portions of meat (chicken, mutton, beef) being served that evening to the entire family to avoid disagreements amongst the women. As explained by one woman, "When the woman distributes [meat], it can create disputes between

the women and the husband" [FGD, Kiére], particularly if the one distributing the food gives a larger portion of the meat to her children than to the others' children. A man confirms this dynamic, indicating that men distributing the meat, "is to avoid disputes, especially in polygynous households" [FGD, Ta]. In villages where co-wives prepare their meals separately, such as Kiéré and Koumbia, the husband allocates the quantity of raw meat given to each wife depending on the number of her children.

While some men indicate that they provide the meals, the majority of the interviewees – both men and women – explain that all meals are provided by women. For example, one man explained, "Here, there is no man who gives the condiments money to the woman" [FGD, Kiéré], while a woman explained that, "The man is content to give the cereal grain ration, [but] it is the woman's responsibility to ensure the money of the meal" [FGD, Guomogho]. Another explains, "Here, it is the woman who goes to the market to buy condiments, most of the time. But if the man goes to the market, it is to buy fish or a food which he wants, to give to his wife [to prepare]. The girls and boys go to the market to buy vegetables at the request of their mother" [FGD, Kiéré].

However, men will give money to the women to purchase condiments for holiday meals, special events (baptism, funeral, visitors) or whenever their means allow. This is succinctly explained by one man: "With us here, it is the woman who spends for vegetables, the man does not give money [for] them. You can sometimes do a good deed by buying condiments to give to your wife, but apart from that, men do not know how to give money for condiments" [FGD, Kiéré]. A woman from Ta adds nuance to this: "It is always the woman who spends for buying condiments, except when it comes to preparing for people who work in the field. When people come to world in the field, he gives the money to prepare the food for them" [FGD, Ta]. If a woman is experiencing financial hardship and cannot generate her own income, her husband will sometimes allow her to sell two sacks of cereals to earn money to purchase condiments.

More often than not, men and women work together to help each other with the expenses related to meal preparation. One man explained, "When I do not have money, I tell my wife to sell at least two corn sacks. When my wife also has the money from her business, she pays the vegetables" [SSI, Koumbia]. Another said, "sometimes if the woman does not have money to go to the mill or buy

condiments, her husband can give her some. We help each other; if the woman or the man has money, they all participate in the purchase of condiments" [FGD, Kiéré].

Meals are typically shared and segregated by sex, but the structure for how meals are shared depends on the type of family composition and varies from household to household. In monogamous households, the man generally eats alone, and the woman eats with her children. However, this is not always the case as in some monogamous households, the man will either eat with his wife or their children, or both. In polygynous households, if the husband lives with his brothers in the same compound, they will typically share their meal together. The boys will eat together, while the girls eat together, and the wives with the youngest children (under seven years old who have yet to attend school). If grandparents live in the household, they will eat separately. If only one grandparent lives in the compound, they will eat with either the boys (grandfather) or the girls (grandmother). In Koumbia and Kiéré, sometimes in polygynous households each wife will prepare a meal for herself and her respective children, and each will serve the husband. Once the meal is served, the husband and the children are first to eat. The way Burkinabé households share meals varies greatly across households, however regardless of household, young children (under seven years old) typically are fed whenever they are hungry throughout the day and do not wait for mealtimes to eat.

As a result of participation in SELEVER, several beneficiaries recognized a difference in how food is collected and acquired. While it is typical for a man to give women cereal and grains, as well as money to purchase condiments (such as soumbala, tomatoes, onions) and foods (such as dried fish) from the market to prepare, more and more men cite participating in buying food from the market and contributing to the condiment budget, which had previously been the wife's sole responsibility. One man explained, "It's men who give the money to grind corn or millet, and I give rice or beans to prepare. Every market day, I buy dry fish that I give to every woman" [SSI, Kiéré].

Food distribution has also changed slightly since the SELEVER project. For example, the little boys now eat with their mothers instead of eating with the men, who watch and ensure they consume all of their meal and nutrients, and make sure poultry are not pecking at their dish. Men and women will

share meals together more frequently now, as described by a man: “Before many [men] did not eat with their wives. Today, they agree to eat with their wives. They sit together to chat…and exchange ideas” [FGD, Kiéré]. Additionally, children and pregnant women are now prioritized for certain types of foods, such as eggs and poultry meat.

While some participants acknowledge having training on the importance of creating food budgets or savings plans, these are not yet practiced. Food budgets vary day to day depending on generated incomes, and men decide daily how much to give his wife/wives for the meal. In the event of financial difficulties, the husband will sell an animal or a sack of cereal to generate income for the day to pay for the meal.

Periods of Scarcity

The periods of scarcity and abundance vary slightly across the village sites; however, in general, the leanest period of the year is from July to August. One man explained, “There is no food. On the contrary, this period, from May to July until early August, is the most difficult to have food. But from mid-August until December, we start having new foods, such as peanuts and fresh corn. Food begins to decline in April, and then in June to July, it’s hunger here” [FGD, Kiéré].

The foods available during the abundant season are cereals (maize, millet, sorghum), cash crops (peanuts, sesame, beans, peas, rice), and tubers (sweet potatoes). In early August, corn and peanuts are able to be harvested. During the winter season, fresh leaves and vegetables (condiments), such as sorrel leaves, wild aubergine, green beans, baobab, and okra, are available. Women are responsible for producing the condiments, and the purpose of these are to supplement grains during the scarce seasons as well as diversify food sources throughout the year.

Households across the study sites diminish the quantities and quality of food prepared and consumed during periods of scarcity. Foods, such as fish and meat, are not commonly prepared during these months, as both men and women are earning and producing less and unable to cover these costs. Typically, it is the husbands’ responsibility to find, purchase, and provide food for his family, either by

selling livestock (including poultry) or borrowing money from a third party. Once neither of these approaches suffices the households' needs, his wife/wives will support their husbands by supplementing the income from commercial activities, borrowing money from community groups, or relying on their respective families for help.

During this period, most households do not eat more than two times per day – usually only once in the evening and sometimes a small meal during mid-day. A typical mid-day meal consists of any leftovers from the day before. If there are no leftovers, they will eat peanuts, small millet couscous, beans, or *néré* (African locust bean) powder, which is served to children. Co-wives are responsible for finding something for their own respective children to eat mid-day during the lean period. The household head is responsible for finding something to eat for everyone during the evening.

Typically, households will distribute their crops for consumption and sale. If the harvest season has not been good, they will sell all of their high-value crops and then store a portion of their subsistence food for the lean season. The SELEVER project has helped households to better plan for periods of scarcity. One man explains that SELEVER trainings improved their crop management: "The project trained us to restart the harvest. That is to say, to evaluate our annual consumption, to plan the health expenses and the organization of different ceremonies. Also, the project trained us to anticipate the lean season and accommodate our practices to ensure a better harvest" [FGD, Ta].

Use and Control over Poultry Products

Households typically raise poultry with the intention of sale, rather than consumption, particularly for the lean season. Poultry are considered assets to sell during the lean season to insure an income in order to purchase food. However, a chicken will be killed and consumed for special events, as succinctly described by one man: "We rarely kill chickens. It is when you have a visitor that you kill chickens, or kill those who are injured, or when a woman gives birth. We rarely eat poultry…Poultry is raised to sell and meet the expenses of the family. What if we eat everything and a child gets sick…" [FGD, Ta]. However, another man explained that, "It is during the rainy season, at the time of field work, that

members of my family can eat poultry meat, because right now, the whole family is together and can all share the same meal. Everything is difficult during the dry season when everyone is at home and each woman prepares for her and her children daily" [SSI, Kiéré]. While all household members will consume poultry for holidays or when a hen is sick, only some will consume the meat during special events. All members of monogamous households have more access to poultry consumption compared to polygynous households, given the number of people and limited availability of meat.

In general, poultry products are consumed throughout the year, though the peak periods of consumption are associated with high production, from June to January. During the rainy season and during February, poultry production decreases due to adverse weather conditions and increase in flock losses due to disease. Participants also indicate that many types of food are available during the abundant season, from October (the harvest month) to March or mid-April, depending on the village. The scarce period runs from April or May (depending on location) to September, with the peak hunger month in August. Although there is an overall moderate increase in awareness for the benefits of consuming poultry (meat and eggs) due to the SELEVER project, it still remains rare as poultry is prioritized for sale. Persistent cultural beliefs pose barriers to the consumption of eggs in particular, such that it may delay children's speech.

The majority of the poultry resources (incomes, inputs) are controlled by the husband in the household; however, the women do control incomes gained from their poultry, even if it is sold by her spouse. In polygynous households, co-wives who raise poultry do not share their incomes generated by poultry rearing with other co-wives who do not raise poultry. However, it is not clear if these other co-wives might benefit in some other way (i.e., more overall money to support household nutrition) from the poultry sales of their other co-wives. Future research should explore these dynamics further.

Women decide what to do with their income generated by poultry sales. Usually, these incomes are used to purchase condiments, clothes and shoes for herself and her children, soap, and supporting her children's education and healthcare, along with her husband. Men generally use income generated from

their poultry sales to buy food for the family, supplies and tuition for their children's schooling, health care expenses for family members, and clothes for himself or other members of his family.

Participants indicate several changes in how poultry products are used and controlled due to participation in the SELEVER project. Primarily, the SELEVER project increased knowledge and awareness around the many benefits to poultry rearing as well as quality diets. One man explained, "poultry rearing also allows us to consume [poultry] meat outside of the holidays" [FGD, Guomogho]. Another indicated, "we have learned that from time to time it is necessary to kill chickens for consumption and particularly to give the eggs to the children to eat. We learned that eggs help children to grow, and that it gives them a lot of vitamins" [SSI, Ta]. Nothing has been observed yet regarding SELEVER's impact on the intra-household gender dynamics around decision making for consuming poultry products.

However, while participants are more aware of the benefits for consuming poultry products, consumption patterns have not changed as much due to low production and high expenses, requiring households to utilize poultry as a means of insurance. One woman indicated "there is no change" in patterns before SELEVER and at the time of the interview [SSI, Kiéré]. Men across the sample preferred to raise and sell poultry to cope with unexpected shocks, rather than consume it. One man explained that "maybe in the future if there is not enough to sell there will be even more reason to consume" [SSI, Guomogho]. However, with trainings from SELEVER, children are now eating more eggs. And if there is little meat to share, priority is given to the elderly, children, and pregnant women.

Nutrition, WASH and Health

Across the SELEVER activities, the service providers and beneficiaries both describe their knowledge of household nutrition in terms of the three main food categories: proteins (foods that build your body), fats and carbohydrates (foods that give your body energy), and vitamins and micronutrients (foods that protect your body). Elderly women and children are prioritized to receive the highest quality and quantity of food in the household. Men and women across the villages describe the best nutrition and WASH practices to

include cleaning the floors and compound, bringing children to the healthcare center when they are sick, drinking clean water, using mosquito nets, eating healthy diets, and practicing good hygiene. Women typically are in charge of the hygiene practices, and men take care of the water. The hygiene practices learned through SELEVER trainings and practiced by participants across the study villages include cleaning household courtyards (of animal and other wastes), cleaning the poultry houses, separating livestock and poultry houses from the human household, practices for clean water (especially drinking water), practices for clean food (before and after preparation), avoiding stagnant water, and the consequences of defecating in general areas and not in latrines (specifically, the subsequent food and water pollution). The major obstacles reported by study participants to adopting best nutrition, health, and WASH practices are the availability of nutritious foods, the lack of ability to afford a variety of foods, or the lack of constructed latrines.

Across the villages, both men and women indicate that healthcare[14] decisions are made by husbands. As one woman explains, "What is certain [is that] we [women] are under their [husbands'] cover, and they have their choice" [FGD, Douré]. When illnesses arise for any family, usually the woman will notice first and tell her husband of the symptoms, and then the man decides what type of treatment to seek and how to seek that treatment. The couple decides how to pay for treatment together such that if the husband can cover it, he pays. Otherwise the wife will help from her income, or they will jointly sell a chicken or goat, or take out a loan to cover the costs. Men will always have the final say, but the women typically employ strategies to influence his decision should there be a disagreement.

Women must always discuss her own health treatment with her husband and take his advice into consideration. She can go to the local clinic for her own treatment, particularly if she is pregnant, but is usually accompanied by her husband and must always have his permission. If she chooses to get contraceptives, either openly or covertly (if her husband has said no), then she always bears these costs. Typically, younger people are more open to contraceptives, but more and more couples are discussing

[14] In Burkina Faso, vaccination, vitamin supplementation, childbirth costs, pre-natal consultations, and healthcare for children under 5 are free. However, households must still incur the cost of transportation, medicines, and other associated costs.

these options. In general, traditional health care practices are almost totally abandoned in favor of seeking medical help from a clinic for all members of the household.

DISCUSSION

This study used multiple qualitative methods to explore women's empowerment, intrahousehold gender dynamics to understand divisions of labor for food preparation and allocation, and gendered social norms as they relate to opportunities and barriers in the context of the SELEVER program and nutrition-sensitive poultry value chain development. The findings of this study raise important insights and questions to further explore. The key findings are summarized herein.

Local understandings of empowerment

Across the study sites, men and women consider men's empowerment in terms of assets, financial capacity, and mobility (i.e., means of transport). Whereas women's empowerment is considered in terms of her financial capacity, confidence, time, occupation in the public sphere, and her likeness to a man. An empowered woman is often compared to a man. We see that submissiveness and obedience are not considered in the offered description of an empowered woman, yet are integral to the definition of an ideal woman. There then exists a tension between wanting to be like an empowered woman yet still needing to fill the role of an ideal woman. To this extent, challenges arise for an empowered woman, such that her empowerment is linked to a perceived increase in the lack of respect for her husband, indicating that women's empowerment may threaten men's masculinity. Future iterations of the SELEVER intervention should be sensitive to this tension and the risk for domestic violence as women become more empowered and continue to include men in sensitization trainings.

Social and Gender Norms

This qualitative study explored local gender and social norms, particularly those related to gender roles, marriage, mobility, land use, household decision-making, and the consequences of violating these norms. While many of these norms are similar across study sites, there exist nuances and differences according to religious affiliation, ethnic group, type of household, among other social factors. Intersectionality is important to consider and integrate in understanding social norms and constraints to women's empowerment across these sites. For example, women in polygynous households have little to no

decision-making power or influence compared to women in monogamous households, who at least share in the decision-making process with their husbands. Polygyny is most commonly practiced by Muslim households, where power amongst household women is concentrated with the first wife.

No woman has access to land rights, but some women, typically first wives or those with their husbands' permission, depending on her husband's allotment, may have access to a garden plot. Access to a parcel of land is essential for women to grow their own vegetables and crops (cash or food) to diversify their households' diet or earn additional incomes, which ultimately affects household food production and subsequent divisions of labor, dietary diversity, and food allocation.

All women must negotiate with her husband to participate outside of her home, whether in business or livelihood activities. There are varying levels to which women are allowed outside of their home, with whom, how far, and to do what activity. Women increasingly engage in the public sphere due to SELEVER sensitization trainings and capacity building activities (for example: attending trainings, working as a VVV, or participating in income-generating activities). However, with this public participation comes labor tradeoffs within the household, such as shifting household burdens to younger girls and co-wives, as well as this being perceived as having a lack of respect towards her husband. This perceived lack of respect can potentially threaten husbands' masculinity, and there are subsequent ramifications for gender-based violence, which should be explored in future research. Future iterations of SELEVER should be sensitive to this tension between empowering women and threatening masculinity, and should continue to include men in sensitization trainings. Social norms are powerful in dictating behavior and how women may engage in the public sphere, access resources, and shift domestic responsibilities to empower themselves.

Divisions of Labor for Food Production and Allocation

Household divisions of labor for food production and preparation are gendered and dependent on the relationships of those living within a household. In polygynous households, the co-wives and daughters share reproductive household tasks and labor on their husbands' farm, before tending to their own garden

plot – if they have one. Typically, only the first wife has her own garden plot, unless there is an abundance of land to give. In monogamous households, these tasks fall to the single wife and her daughters, and potentially sister(s)-in-law if they live in the same compound. However, with SELEVER trainings, more and more men and boys are assisting in labor-intensive activities typically performed by women, such as carrying the firewood or pounding the millet for meal preparation. All women – both monogamous and polygynous – have less access to resources and inputs to invest in their own plots than do the men and are responsible for either growing or purchasing condiments (vegetables, leafy greens, sorrel, etc.) for the household meals. Men grown grain and cash crops on their plots, and benefit from their wife's/wives' labor and access to inputs to invest in their land.

Similarly, household food allocation dynamics are gendered across the study sites, but vary between polygynous and monogamous households. Women are typically responsible for preparing, allocating, and sharing food, although men maintain control over decisions regarding foods of high quality (i.e. meats or specialty items). Beneficiaries attest that SELEVER program has been shifting roles in meal preparation, such that men and boys are beginning to take on some of the food preparation tasks, relieving some burden from the women. This is particularly impactful in monogamous households, where only one woman (or potentially sisters-in-law, if any) and her daughters share the totality of this burden.

Additionally, prior to SELEVER, women were entirely responsible for purchasing vegetables and diversified food sources for the meal (condiments), whereas men contributed grains or money for meats or specialty items. Since SELEVER, beneficiaries indicate that men are increasingly aware of the benefits of quality diets and diversified foods, and are since giving women money to purchase condiments, as well as going to the market themselves to buy diversified food sources for each meal. Men also now give women more rice and beans to use for consumption, which had been previously prioritized for sale.

Control of Poultry Resources

The results of this study indicate that while women are increasingly engaging in poultry production (as well as in the poultry value chain) with tangible benefits, they do not hold full power over their own

production. Men have decision-making power over poultry resources [selling and consuming], but the increase in women's participation in raising poultry increases their decision-making power over their own subsequent increased incomes. These incomes are typically reinvested into her and her children's health and wellbeing, and if there is surplus, into her own productive activities (see Eissler et al., in preparation for further analysis on how women control her own poultry resources).

Additionally, the SELEVER project has increased awareness of the benefits of consuming poultry products (both eggs and meat), although poultry is still overwhelmingly produced for sale. Women, specifically pregnant women, and children are prioritized for consuming eggs and meat, when available.

Best Nutritional and WASH Practices

With regard to nutrition and WASH practices, there is evidence that both men and women are increasingly aware of and adopting some best practices to improve their households' nutrition and hygiene. Women are eating with their sons and daughters who have yet to attend school (up to seven years of age) to ensure they consume all of their nutritious food and to avoid poultry interacting with their children's food. Children and pregnant women are now prioritized to consume more eggs, which had previously not been the case. Both men and women are aware of keeping animal and human occupied space separate and clean, but this labor-intensive task falls to the women within the household. However, barriers still exist, such as lack of access and capital, to adopting these best practices.

Adaptations During the Lean Season

During periods of scarcity, household food consumption and division of labor responsibilities shift to accommodate lower incomes and food availability. Lesser quantities and qualities of meals are consumed, and consumption priorities are given to children. Poultry farming is considered a solution that enables households to cope with food shortages, and the involvement of women in managing grain stocks and revenues has led to better management during the past lean season.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the SELEVER program has improved outcomes for women and their empowerment across the village sites, particularly with regard to increasing awareness and in some case, noticeable behavior change. The results of this study highlight that interactions vary across village site, religion, and ethnic group, and it is important to take into consideration these intersecting factors to best understand implications. In particular, the differences in women's role in monogamous versus polygynous households is an important factor to consider improvements or implications of the SELEVER program.

Perceptions of women's empowerment, described as financial capacity and confidence, is considered concurrent with women's lack of respect for her husband and threats to his own masculinity. Additionally, as empowered women spend more time in the public sphere, this raises the question of how and to whom household tasks are shifted upon – typically eldest daughters – and what are the implications for girls in the household and their own empowerment.

The SELEVER program has increased participants' awareness of divisions of labor within the household, particularly men acknowledging women's labor burdens and domestic care work. Both men and boys are starting to share in typically women-held responsibilities, although challenges persist as not all men nor boys agree to engage in these tasks, citing a resistance to transgress beyond long-standing gender roles.

Through increased opportunities and access to poultry rearing, women have been able to gain additional incomes, which increases her own ability to make decisions over her incomes as well as invest this surplus into her and her children's health and wellbeing. Yet, women lack the latitude to make important decisions related to poultry rearing, as they require their husbands' permission (and in some cases, their husbands do so without informing them) to sell or slaughter a fowl. So, while women do increase their incomes when their poultry are sold, they are unable to decide when to sell or slaughter their poultry. To this extent, the SELEVER program has increased awareness around the nutritional benefits to consuming poultry products, yet households still raise poultry for the intention of sale, rather than consumption.

Women's involvement in decision making in monogamous households compared to their lack of involvement in polygynous households suggest that support or access to opportunities from SELEVER might be more impactful on women in monogamous marriages than on ones in polygynous marriages. Women in monogamous households will have more influence over when to sell or slaughter her fowl compared to women in polygynous households, which enables her to have a stronger control over her income. The SELEVER program should be sensitive to the differing power roles amongst women in monogamous and polygynous marriages, particularly higher order wives, and aim to target inclusion of higher order wives into the program with the support of their husbands.

Finally, the SELEVER program has increased opportunities for women to engage in the poultry production and value chain, as well as increase knowledge and awareness for best nutrition and well-being practices, overall aimed at increasing women's empowerment. Barriers and challenges, often tied to social norms, persist for women's involvement in poultry production. The SELEVER project can continue to address these challenges, engage men in the conversation around women's empowerment, and provide support to women engaging in best poultry rearing and nutritional/WASH practices.

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