

THE AFRICA GENDER INNOVATION LAB'S CORE EMPOWERMENT INDICATORS

DEVELOPING A CROSS-COUNTRY MODULE TO COMPLEMENT CONTEXT-SPECIFIC MEASURES

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To advance economic gender equality in Africa, we first need to know which development programs work to economically empower women. Better data on gender-informed development indicators is imperative for tracking our progress in promoting gender equality, designing interventions to address gender-based constraints and rigorously evaluating their impact. Measurement of women's economic empowerment requires a clear conceptualization of what empowerment is and is not. One guiding definition that we use at the Africa Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) is economic empowerment as the ability and power to generate income and accumulate assets, and to control their disposition. Beyond being clear on what is being measured, how it is measured also matters—and selecting the best tools for the task is no easy feat.

On the one hand, each project can benefit from a tailored approach to measurement since manifestations of women's empowerment are inherently determined by the project and context at hand. In impact evaluations, tailoring measurement to reflect local economic arrangements and capture the specific pathway your project is intending to affect can yield a more precise (and useful) picture of women's economic empowerment. On the other hand, systematically tracking the same indicators across projects can provide a broader understanding of the relationship between intermediate and final empowerment outcomes, as well as between different empowerment domains, such as assets, mobility, time, attitudes, and aspirations. Moreover, practitioners and policymakers have emphasized the need for a concise set of practical metrics that can be easily shared and used.

GENDER INNOVATION LAB

The Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) conducts impact evaluations of development interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa, seeking to generate evidence on how to close the gender gap in earnings, productivity, assets and agency. The GIL team is currently working on over 70 impact evaluations by more than 25 countries with the aim of building an evidence base with lessons for the region.

The impact objective of GIL is increasing take-up of effective policies by governments, development organizations and the private sector in order to address the underlying causes of gender inequality in Africa, particularly in terms of women's economic and social empowerment. The lab aims to do this by producing and delivering a new body of evidence and developing a compelling narrative, geared towards policymakers, on what works and what does not work in promoting gender equality.

GIL'S APPROACH TO DEFINING THE INDICATORS

The World Bank's Africa GIL has been working to address this need by compiling and implementing a set of survey questions that can be deployed across contexts to measure key elements of women's economic empowerment. We do not envisage using these core indicators to generate a single index, as the choice of indicators was determined by their applicability across contexts and is not meant to provide a comprehensive measure of economic empowerment. Given the broad thematic and geographic scope of GIL impact evaluations, the core indicators are meant to complement deeper project-specific measures of empowerment in each impact evaluation. Notable omissions from such a comprehensive measure include measures of income and psychological dimensions of agency as well as community-level empowerment, and there are others as well. Nevertheless, we hope this exercise will be valuable as donors, practitioners, and researchers grapple with how to develop foundational metrics to systematically track and understand impacts across programming aiming to empower women economically.

To begin, GIL drafted and validated an initial list of indicators and associated survey questions, based on a thorough review of the literature and over a hundred existing questionnaires. GIL then held a series of team consultations to deliberate and distill the list of core indicators, ensuring that the indicators could be implemented across all evaluations in our portfolio. Informed by the literature review and team discussions, this initial list also took into account the following considerations:

First, the majority of indicators – in particular final outcome indicators – were chosen to capture economic advancement (“power to”), given the need to identify scalable solutions for women's economic empowerment in Africa, which serves as the Gender Innovation Lab's mission. Second, both indicators on women's empowerment in absolute terms, as well as their relative

outcomes as compared to men (gender equality) were included. Third, we expected these indicators to change as a result of interventions. For example, measuring access to contraception outside of the household was excluded, as GIL-evaluated projects rarely aim to change the provision of contraception at an institutional level. Fourth, we selected indicators that could be captured without placing a heavy additional burden on questionnaires. Since summing across all possible income sources is time-intensive, both total household income and total woman's earned income were dropped from consideration. Finally, indicators that would allow researchers to capture information on multiple constraints simultaneously were prioritized.

From this initial list, the team narrowed down the indicators to those that they felt could be reliably measured across all their survey contexts, for a total of 29 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, including urban and rural locations – and could reliably be implemented by any survey firm. The indicators excluded through this process included psychological dimensions of agency such as motivational autonomy, self-efficacy and sense of freedom and control over one's life. Once the final list of indicators was decided on, several potential survey questions were identified for each indicator, and then the team voted on the preferred question formulation.

These indicators were piloted for 18 months across our impact evaluations, followed by a team stocktaking exercise. Though a few of the survey questions were tweaked as a result, the indicators worked well across contexts and none of them were changed.¹ However, a need emerged for additional guidance in the implementation of certain questions, resulting in an accompanying [enumerator manual](#).

What follows is the list of selected indicators and their associated survey questions:

¹ An example is the question that asks whether anyone in the household currently has a mat to sleep on. The question was intended to capture whether anyone has an asset permitting a household member to not sleep on the bare ground, but it emerged in the feedback session that in some Sub-Saharan African countries a bed is the first sleeping-related asset households acquire, before a mat. The question was thus changed from mat to mat or bed.

INDICATORS

INDICATOR	UNIT OF OBSERVATION	SOURCE
1. Food Security 1.1 Gender Equality in Household Food Access	Household	Rwanda Land Tenure Regularization Questionnaire
2. Asset Ownership 2.1 Gender Equality in Control over Assets	Household	A-WEAI
3. Individual Savings	Individual	FINDEX* (<i>Adapted to include semi-formal financial institutions</i>)
4. Access to Funds	Individual	FINDEX
5. Economic Participation	Individual	LSMS (Tanzania)
6. Input into Productive Decisions	Individual	A-WEAI* (<i>Adapted to include reproductive control</i>)
7. Freedom of Movement	Individual	C-Change Compendium
8. Gender Equality in Occupational Aspirations for Children	Household	<i>Own</i>
9. Lack of Acceptance Towards Domestic Violence	Individual	DHS
10. Sharing of Housework	Household	Roadmap via IMAGES
11. Happiness	Individual	World Values Survey

ASSOCIATED SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. FOOD SECURITY

In the past 7 days, did any member of your household skip any meal because of a shortage of food in the household? 1=Yes, 2=No

On average, how many meals did members of your household skip in the past 7 days?

When food is in short supply (meaning there is not enough for everyone), in what order are household members generally served/fed? Please rank the following groups (tied rank allowed): 1= Male adults, 2= Female adults, 3= Male children, 4= Female children

2. ASSET OWNERSHIP

Does anyone in your household currently have any [ITEM]? Mats/matelas or bed, bicycle, motorcycle/scooter, mobile phone, radio, television. 1=Yes, 2=No

Who would you say owns most of the [ITEM] (i.e., who can sell, mortgage, rent out, give away, purchase new?) 1= Self, 2= Partner/Spouse, 3= Other Male HH Member, 4= Other Female HH Member, 5= Other non-HH member. More than one answer option allowed if ownership is exactly equal between multiple members.

3. INDIVIDUAL SAVINGS

In the past 12 months, have you, personally, saved or set aside any money by ... ? 1=Yes, 2=No

A: Using an account at a bank, a credit union, savings and credit co-operative, [insert local examples], or another type of formal or semi-formal financial institution

B: Using an informal savings club (like [insert local example]), or a person outside the family

4. ACCESS TO FUNDS

Imagine that you have an emergency and you need to pay [insert 1/20 of GNI per capita in local currency]. How possible is it that you could come up with [insert 1/20 of GNI per capita in local currency] within the next month? 1= Very possible, 2= Somewhat possible, 3= Not very possible, 4= Not at all possible

5. ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

In the last 7 days, did you work as an unpaid apprentice even if just for one hour? 1=Yes, 2=No

In the last 7 days, did you work as an employee for a wage, salary, commission or any payment in kind; including doing a paid apprenticeship, domestic work or paid farm work even if just for one hour? 1=Yes, 2=No

In the last 7 days, did you run a non-farm business of any size for yourself or the household, even if just for one hour? 1=Yes, 2=No

In the last 7 days, did you help in any kind of non-farm business run by this household, even if just for one hour? 1=Yes, 2=No

In the last 7 days, did you work on household agricultural activities (including farming, raising livestock or fishing, whether for sale or for household food) even if just for one hour? 1=Yes, 2=No

6. INPUT INTO PRODUCTIVE DECISIONS

How much input do you have in making decisions about [Income you earn; How household income is spent; Major household expenses; Childbearing; Children's education]? 1= No input or input into few decisions, 2= Input into some decisions, 3= Input into most or all decisions

To what extent do you feel you can make your own personal decisions regarding [Income you earn; How household income is spent; Major household expenses; Childbearing; Children's education] if you want(ed) to? 1= Not at all, 2= Small extent, 3= Medium Extent, 4= High Extent

7. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Have any of the following happened to you in the past 12 months? 1=Yes, 2=No

Husband/other family member prevented you from visiting your relatives or friends.

Husband/other family member prevented you from working outside the home.

8. OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS FOR CHILDREN

What is your desired future occupation for your sons? 1= Join family farming, 2= Run family business, 3= Professional such as teacher/doctor, 4= Join armed forces, 5= Government job, 6= Private sector job, 7= Do not want child to work outside home, 9996 = Other. What is your desired future occupation for your daughters?

9. ATTITUDES TOWARDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In your opinion, is a husband justified in hitting or beating his wife if she burns the food? 1=Yes, 2=No

In your opinion, is a husband justified in hitting or beating his wife if she neglects the children? 1=Yes, 2=No

10. SHARING OF HOUSEWORK

If you disregard the help you receive from other household members, how do you and your spouse/partner divide the following tasks? 1= I do everything, 2= Usually me, 3= Shared equally or done together; 4= Usually partner, 5= Partner does everything

- A: Preparing food
- B: Cleaning the house and washing clothes
- C: Taking care of children

This work has been funded in part by the Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality (UFGE), a multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank to advance gender equality and women's empowerment through experimentation and knowledge creation to help governments and the private sector focus policy and programs on scalable solutions with sustainable outcomes. The UFGE is supported with generous contributions from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

11. HAPPINESS

Taking all things together, would you say you are: 1=Very happy, 2=Rather happy 3=Not very happy, 4=Not at all happy

IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS FOR RESEARCH

Moving forward, GIL aims to use the core indicators to draw broad lessons on final and intermediate impacts across our thematic areas of agriculture, private sector development, property rights, social norms and youth employment. We plan to write a report utilizing this cross-evaluation data and then release the data to the public within the next two years.

Measuring women's economic empowerment in locally relevant ways across an entire continent is a difficult challenge. As outlined in this brief, GIL's strategy consists of a modular approach, focused on developing core indicators to be implemented across all projects ("going broad"), with each project team complementing the indicators with intervention- and context-specific questions on women's economic empowerment ("going deep"). This approach is accompanied by a nascent third arm on methods research ("going forward"), aimed at developing and testing alternative forms of measurement to generate evidence on which measurement method is most appropriate given the policy and research question at hand.

To do this, GIL has formed the Measures for Advancing Gender Equality (MAGNET) initiative in partnership with the Living Standards Measurement Study team at the World Bank, International Food Policy Research Institute, the International Rescue Committee and Oxford University. The initiative has produced a trio of papers summarizing what we know about the relative quality of measurement methods in [women's agency](#), [time use](#) and [control over assets](#): three complicated but crucial dimensions of women's empowerment. The partners plan to conduct a series of measurement experiments across countries to fill the knowledge gaps identified in the papers.

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