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# INCREASING WOMEN'S ROLES IN AGRICULTURAL DECISION-MAKING

## FINAL REPORT

FEED THE FUTURE ADVANCING WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

September 2021

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## **Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment**

Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment (AWE) Call Order 7, Increasing Women's Role in Agricultural Decision-Making, was funded August 4, 2020. AWE provides consulting services for the USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS), Feed the Future Focused and Aligned Missions, and Global Food Security Strategy Target and Aligned Missions worldwide in the areas of gender integration, gender-sensitive design, implementation of agricultural programming, building gender capacity of personnel and programming, and knowledge management and learning.

The AWE activity enhances gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture programs by providing targeted technical assistance to Missions, implementing partners, the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, and other USAID operating units to increase women's participation, productivity, profit, and benefit in agricultural systems. AWE is implemented by EnCompass LLC with ACDI/VOCA, MarketShare Associates, and FHI 360.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AWE	Advancing Women's Empowerment Program
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GBV	Gender-based violence
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
J-PAL	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
NGO	Non-governmental organization
pro-WEAI	Project-level WEAI
RAI	Relative autonomy index
RWLP	Rural Women's Leadership Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village savings and loans associations
WAS-6I	Women's Agency Scale 6I
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) may be conceptualized as both a transformative process and an outcome, influenced by a multitude of contextual factors and realized at the individual, household, community, and national levels. While WEE is multi-dimensional and complex, it may be understood according to three domains: resources (which enhance the ability to exercise choice); agency (to act and effect change in spheres that are important to the individual); and achievements (measurable empowerment outcomes). Within the realm of agency, decision-making—individuals' ability and power to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits—is a core element.<sup>1</sup>

In seeking to better understand women's decision-making roles in agriculture and food systems, the Feed the Future Advancing Women's Empowerment (AWE) Program conducted an evidence scan of peer-reviewed and gray literature in agriculture, food, and market systems programming. The scan focused on evidence of specific programmatic approaches and their outcomes, as well as methodologies and metrics to measure women's decision-making and changes through programs. This evidence scan is intended to inform the design and development of capacity support resources to support USAID Missions and implementing partners to enhance women's decision-making power in their programming.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of this evidence scan are to:

- Synthesize evidence on the determining factors and contextual considerations that may create pathways to promote women's roles in decision-making in the context of food systems.
- Review and synthesize existing evidence on programmatic approaches that directly or indirectly increase women's decision-making power across agriculture and food systems institutions, including the household, and identify knowledge gaps
- Examine existing methods and tools for measuring women's decision-making power as an outcome of programmatic approaches
- Capture existing tools, resources, and training materials, provided in an accompanying summary deck in [Annex D](#).

AWE conducted an evidence scan of 134 sources (e.g., program reports, articles, peer-reviewed journal articles and studies, evaluation reports, guides) and interviews with 35 individuals across 23 institutions representing research institutions, implementing partners, donors, government agencies, and regional or community-led agricultural institutions. This evidence scan is a stock-taking exercise in what evidence of programmatic and measurement approaches exist on women's decision-making power, and what evidence gaps remain.

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<sup>1</sup> Buvinic, Mayra, et al., "Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: A Compendium of Selected Tools", Center for Global Development, December 2, 2020. <https://cgdev.org/publication/measuring-womens-economic-empowerment-compendium-selected-tools>.

## FINDINGS

Evidence suggests that women's decision-making power is shaped by a range of **contextual and determining factors** at the household and institution levels. These factors inform pathways to promote and reinforce WEE, creating a feedback loop that further promotes women's decision-making power. These pathways—such as intrahousehold allocation of resources, human capital in the form of access to education, training, and knowledge, and institutions' rules of governance and organizational composition—create an enabling environment for implementing programmatic approaches that can directly or indirectly, through other WEE domains, promote women's decision-making power.

From a programmatic perspective, the implementation context can also critically inform and refine the design and implementation of programs intending to increase women's decision-making power. For instance, gender roles and norms can define household structure and gender power dynamics, and inform decisions on how to select and engage program participants from within a household. Similarly, legal and policy frameworks and customary practices around land ownership and access can inform programmatic approaches that aim to increase women's decision-making through improving their access and control over this critical asset.

**Programmatic approaches** for increasing women's decision-making power that emerged from the evidence scan targeted the household, agriculture and food systems institutions, or were cross-cutting of both the household and institution levels. While some approaches were implemented with the intention of directly increasing women's decision-making power, others were not intended to but did indirectly contribute to improved decision-making, typically by reinforcing other WEE outcomes. For example, while some programs use couples' dialogues to directly affect how decisions are made and promote more equitable decision-making at the household level, others indirectly promote women's decision-making role through interventions such as agricultural technical training, which serves as an indirect route that often promotes women's role in decision-making when combined with other approaches.

While research on women's decision-making in agriculture and food systems institutions is more limited, programs provided capacity-building in leadership and business skills, set up role model, mentorship, and gender champion programs, and used participation and leadership quotas to increase women's participation and voice within agricultural institutions. Across the household and institution levels, programs provide gender training; facilitate women's access to finance and assets, such as through village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) and asset transfers; encourage women's participation in farmers' groups, associations, and cooperatives; and create women-only spaces within agricultural institutions to indirectly promote women's decision-making power.

The programmatic evidence also revealed a number of **good practices and considerations to support effective implementation** for practitioners to take into consideration. First is the importance of male engagement in capacity building and champion interventions to facilitate social norms change and work toward sustainability of outcomes. Integrated programming (i.e., combining programmatic approaches) in implementation also appears to be more effective, particularly for approaches that did not originally have the intended outcome of increasing decision-making power. Finally, implementers must consider gender-based violence risks and integrate Do No Harm principles,

as well as account for time and scale considerations to ensure individual and community buy-in for lasting change.

The research team also reviewed methods and metrics used to **measure women's decision-making power**. Implementers reported that they most commonly used mixed methods measurement approaches to measure programmatic impacts on women's decision-making power. Tools such as the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), or one of its versions, are used to measure women's decision-making power, including WEAI sub-indices and indicators such as the Gender Parity Index and the Autonomy in Production indicator, informed by the Relative Autonomy Index. Implementers across donor and geographic contexts use a range of indicators, e.g., the percent of decisions women participate in, input in productive decisions, and the number of women who make sole or joint decisions at the household level; and participation in groups, committees, or institutions or the number of women in leadership positions within an organization at the institution level. Evidence suggests, however, that there remain considerable challenges and limitations in measuring women's decision-making power, including the challenge of attempting to measure gradual, long-term change within short project performance periods, and a lack of tools to measure women's decision-making power beyond the household level.

## CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are organized according to learning questions provided in [Annex A](#).

### **What approaches are used to promote women's decision-making power—their voice, choice, and control?**

- When implementing programmatic approaches to effectively address the complex challenge of increasing women's decision-making power at both the household and institution levels, implementers should employ good practices of integrated programming, male engagement, and Do No Harm principles, and consider time investment and scalability to ensure uptake and sustainability within their programming.
- Determining factors at the household and institution levels, related to intrahousehold allocation of resources, human capital, and organizational governance and composition, and the context in which programmatic approaches are implemented, must be taken into consideration by implementers in order to ensure positive outcomes for women's decision-making power. Acknowledging these factors in implementation can make programmatic approaches more effective and scalable.
- Addressing gaps in the programmatic evidence base—notably of evidence at the agricultural institution level, and on women's sole decision-making power—can support implementers in more effectively promoting women's decision-making through programmatic approaches.

### **What outcomes and impact have these approaches yielded?**

- While some approaches were implemented with the explicit intended outcome of increasing women's roles and say in decision-making, other programmatic approaches indirectly contributed to decision-making outcomes despite having other primary objectives. Evidence shows that

programs that have broader WEE objectives can reinforce or strengthen their outcomes by integrating targeted decision-making power approaches.

### How have these approaches to promoting women's role in decision-making been measured?

- Programs utilize indicators, tools, and metrics to measure women's decision-making power at the household level, yet gaps and challenges exist in measuring outcomes at the institutional level. Indicators and tools do not comprehensively capture the complexity of decision-making, such as whether decisions are made solely or jointly. However, some indicators – such as those included in the WEAI – do capture women's decision-making power in some domains including agricultural production, or in decisions related to credit or income.

### What resources and tools for implementing these approaches exist?

- Select tools and resources relevant to the programmatic approaches presented in this report are provided in an accompanying summary deck ([Annex D](#)). There were multiple tools available to implement social norms change methodologies and for measuring decision-making; however, there were gaps in specific tools for programmatic approaches as components of other WEE approaches. For example, there was no evidence of programs implementing asset transfers or working to establish VSLAs to promote women's access to finance that also intentionally integrated programmatic tools and approaches targeted to increase women's decision-making power through their program. There are a number of useful measurement tools and resources available, many of which focus on measuring women's agency and therein include components that focus on women's decision-making power.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Suggestions of capacity support and resource documents to develop

- **Curated database of programmatic evidence on decision-making for general use and access by implementers, donors, research organizations, and other stakeholders working in this area.** The research team can further curate, tag, and organize evidence on decision-making and make it accessible to the public as part of an Excel database of resources related to gender and agriculture posted online.
- **How to understand and integrate women's decision-making in agriculture and food systems programs: a checklist for implementing partners.** This resource document will collect key questions, steps, and considerations to help implementing partners better understand how their work intersects with, affects, or has potential to promote women's decision-making power.
- **Guidance document on measuring decision-making across food systems institutions, including the household.** The document may suggest indicators, describe how implementers can identify women's decision-making power, and recommend different data collection and analysis methods based on a program's context. The document may also provide guidance on how to examine and analyze integrated programming in order to measure outcomes.

## **Recommendations for further research**

- **Conduct case studies of programs directly working to increase women's decision-making power.** The research team recommends case studies of programs implementing programmatic approaches with the explicit objective of increasing women's decision-making power, to explore the context in which they are operating, strategies for implementation, details of their programmatic approaches, and observed outcomes that can be directly attributed to and linked to an increase in decision-making power.
- **Improve understanding of joint, sole, and other types of decision-making.** The team recommends further research on better understanding the nuances of different types of decision-making over assets, as well as outcomes associated with those decisions.
- **Explore women's decision-making power as a social and economic return on investment.** Further research on the business case for increasing women's decision-making power, especially where there is already a lack of evidence at the institution level, can support USAID and implementers in designing programs that effectively and pointedly address women's roles in decision-making.

# INTRODUCTION

The Feed the Future Advancing Women's Empowerment (AWE) Program is a five-year activity to enhance women's empowerment and gender equality in agriculture systems. AWE, together with the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS) and other USAID stakeholders, developed a learning and research agenda to guide the program in generating new knowledge and evidence on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture and Feed the Future programs. One of the key topics that emerged as a priority was to better understand women's roles in decision-making across food systems and to learn about the programmatic approaches to promote women's increased decision-making through agricultural and market systems programming.

## RESEARCH PURPOSE

- Synthesize evidence on the determining factors and contextual considerations that may create pathways to promote women's roles in decision-making in the context of food systems.
- Review and synthesize existing evidence on programmatic approaches that directly or indirectly increase women's decision-making power across agriculture and food systems institutions, including the household, and identify knowledge gaps
- Examine existing methods and tools for measuring women's decision-making power as an outcome of programmatic approaches
- Capture existing tools, resources, and training materials, provided in an accompanying summary deck in [Annex D](#)

The scan is structured and guided by learning questions provided in [Annex A](#). In the next phase of this call order, AWE will develop capacity support resources and documents tailored to support USAID Missions and implementing partners in enhancing women's decision-making power through their programming.

## DEFINING DECISION-MAKING

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) may be conceptualized as both a transformative process and an outcome, influenced by a multitude of contextual factors and realized at the individual, household, community, and national levels. While WEE is multi-dimensional and complex, it may be understood according to three domains: resources (to enhance the ability to exercise choice); agency (to act and effect change in spheres that are important to the individual); and achievements (measurable empowerment outcomes). Within the realm of agency, decision-making—individuals' ability and power to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits—is a core element of WEE (15).

Women's decision-making can be conceptualized in a variety of ways depending on the socio-cultural and demographic context, program objectives, and other factors. USAID's ADS Chapter 205 includes patterns of power and decision-making as a gender analysis domain, specifically, "the ability of women and men to decide, influence, and exercise control over material human, intellectual, and financial resources, in the family, community, and country" (95). USAID's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy emphasizes decision-making in terms of women assuming leadership roles and

influencing decision-making in the household (99). Decision-making is also included as a domain in the various versions of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) that Feed the Future uses to understand women's empowerment. The WEAI and Abbreviated WEAI (A-WEAI) measure five domains of empowerment: production, resources, income, leadership, and time; the Project WEAI (pro-WEAI) also measures these empowerment domains, but through the lens of intrinsic, instrumental, and collective agency.

Based on data collected and for the purposes of this evidence scan, decision-making power is defined as ***the ability, capacity, opportunity, and motivation to make decisions alone, jointly with other household members, or collectively within a community or institution.***

## RESEARCH METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The evidence scan was designed through a consultative process between the AWE team and USAID, and conducted in two phases:

- Phase 1: Consultations with research institutions, donors, implementing partners, and community-level agricultural institutions in December 2020–January 2021
- Phase 2: A review of existing data and literature in March–May 2021

The research team was composed of the Call Order Team Lead and three research associates, with technical guidance and oversight from the AWE Project Manager, Gender and Agriculture Systems Advisor, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Manager, and other research staff from consortium partner MarketShare Associates.

### METHODOLOGY

#### GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

The research team held interviews with 35 individuals across 23 institutions, as part of two participant groups. The team used an interview guide ([Annex B](#)) that included questions about programmatic and measurement approaches they have implemented to increase women's decision-making power in their programs, outcomes of these approaches, factors present that enable or inhibit women from increasing their decision-making power, and relevant resources that participants used or found valuable in their work.

- **Group interviews** with 22 global stakeholder participants representing research institutions, implementing partners, donors, and government agencies, including:
  - Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) Passages Project
  - Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA)
  - Agriterra
  - Helen Keller International

- Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Promoting Rural Incomes through Support for Markets in Agriculture (AIP PRISMA)
- Women for Women International
- Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)
- World Bank, including the Gender Innovation Lab
- Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN)
- International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) (WEAI Team)
- Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

- **Individual interviews** with 13 representatives from 11 agricultural institutions at the regional or community level. The team spoke to participants from three agribusinesses, eight cooperatives, one government agency, and one service provider. Four institutions were located in sub-Saharan Africa, six in Latin America, and one was a global organization that implements activities at the community level.

## DESK REVIEW

In addition to resources recommended by interview participants, the research team conducted a systematic online search of the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC); USAID-funded Agrilinks, MarketLinks, and LandLinks websites; agriculture partners' and donors' websites and publications; and other sources of peer reviewed and gray literature using a list of key terms developed to ensure that evidence was tailored to the research questions and key areas of analysis (see [Annex C](#) for a list of search terms). The team also developed exclusion criteria to ensure that sources included in the evidence scan were relevant and selected objectively and systematically.<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately, the research team identified and reviewed 134 documents from USAID programs, international agricultural and development organizations, donors, private sector stakeholders, and research institutions ([Exhibit 1](#)). Documents ranged from peer-reviewed journal articles and studies to evaluation reports to guides; [Exhibit 2](#) shows the distribution of the type of documents reviewed.

**Exhibit 1:** Selection of desk review source institutions

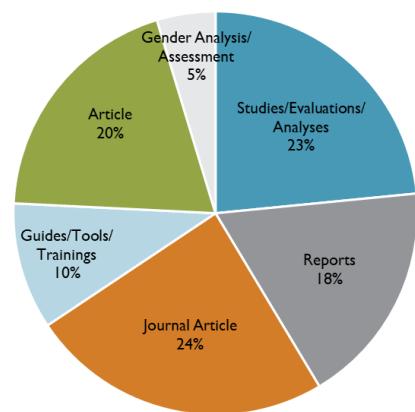
- USAID implementing partners, e.g., ACDI/VOCA, Chemonics, JSI, NORC
- United Nations organizations, e.g., FAO, IFAD, UNDP
- NGOs, e.g., Mercy Corps, J-PAL, The BOMA Project, Oxfam, SNV
- Research organizations, e.g., the SEEP Network, IFPRI, CGIAR
- Donors, e.g., Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, bilateral agencies

<sup>2</sup> Exclusion criteria included: resources that did not explicitly mention “decision-making”; resources published prior to 2010; and other resources published by AWE. See the Limitations section for additional information.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The research team coded key information about each document in an Excel spreadsheet, including title, author, source, year published, donors, geographic focus, and keywords indicating the level of the intervention (household or institution), area of agricultural production, types of institutions, type of decision-making (sole, joint, or collective), approaches presented, and other categories. Researchers reviewed each document, capturing emerging themes and developing data summaries. The team then conducted an internal data analysis and interpretation session, during which it discussed the significance of and interrelationships between the emerging themes, guided by the learning questions, and identified initial findings. The team validated findings, recommendations, and conclusions with the AWE Project Manager, Gender and Agriculture Systems Advisor, MEL Manager, and other research staff from MarketShare Associates.

Exhibit 2: Types of documents reviewed



## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research team incorporated an informed consent section into the group and individual interviews to explain the nature of the research, that participation was entirely voluntary, and to obtain consent to record. The team clarified that participants' names, locations, and any other identifiable information would be kept anonymous. For this reason, names of specific agricultural institutions at the regional or community level that participated in interviews are not included by name in this report. The consent request stated that the purpose of this research was not to conduct a formal assessment, but to identify common trends, challenges, and successes as part of a learning exercise. Additionally, the team received internal review board approval for all interviews conducted in Phase I.

## LIMITATIONS

The research team sought to identify programmatic approaches that engaged women for the purpose of increasing their decision-making power. Many sources, however, equated women's decision-making generally to "women's empowerment", or used approaches to broadly increase women's agency without specifying an intended outcome of increased women's decision-making power. Therefore, the research team limited its evidence base to resources that either (1) included women's increased decision-making as an objective or outcome or (2) resources that described women's empowerment approaches that explicitly mentioned the inclusion of decision-making elements to achieve empowerment.

## NOTE ON CITATIONS

Where the report shares data collected during consultations, "interview respondents" or simply "respondents" are attributed. Where statements are attributed to specific documents (e.g., "sources"), we indicate in-text citations with numbers that correspond to numbered citations in the [References](#).

# FINDINGS

Findings are organized by the following sections:

- **Determining and contextual factors** as pathways to promote increasing women's decision-making power
- **Programmatic approaches** that directly or indirectly resulted in women's increased decision-making power at the household level, institution level, and cross-cutting of households and institutions
- **Good practices and considerations** to support effective implementation of programmatic approaches
- **Measuring women's decision-making power**, including limitations, methods, tools, and indicators

## DETERMINING AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS FOR WOMEN'S DECISION-MAKING POWER

Programmatic evidence suggests that women's decision-making power is shaped by a range of factors at the household and institution levels, as well as the context within which women make decisions, including the presence of limiting gender norms and the legal and policy environment. This section provides a brief summary of this evidence as it informs programmatic approaches and implementation considerations that may support the effectiveness of programmatic approaches at increasing women's decision-making power in agriculture at the household and institution levels.

### DETERMINING FACTORS AT THE HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

At the household level, broad programmatic evidence shows that **intrahousehold allocation of resources**—including access to financial and agricultural resources and land ownership—can shape women's decision-making power, according to multiple interview respondents and sources (27, 41, 50, 66, 76, 102). Interview respondents reported that with access to financial resources, women are better positioned to acquire direct agricultural inputs and tools that allow them to participate more actively in agricultural production, improving productivity and increasing income, which influences their decision-making power. Some respondents and evidence scan sources noted that while access to finance and increased income may increase women's involvement in household decision-making over production, in many cases, men ultimately maintain control over decisions about how that money is spent. For example, a study completed by a USAID program in Mozambique found that men are responsible for purchasing seed, partially due to women's mobility constraints, and therefore, are the ones making decisions about what will be planted within their household (96). There was mixed evidence on ownership as a pathway to increasing women's decision-making power: while evidence from Ecuador showed that women's land ownership was significantly linked to women's decision-making power over agricultural decisions related to that land, two other research studies cautioned that land ownership does not necessarily increase women's empowerment, let alone decision-making power (32, 35, 93).

Additionally, there is evidence that **human capital**—in the form of education and access to knowledge, information and training—often positively determines women’s decision-making power. Several respondents, programmatic resources, and research studies cited lack of access to business skills, literacy, numeracy, and general technical skills as barriers to women’s decision-making power (12, 21, 27, 30, 32, 39, 46, 47, 48, 86, 98). One research study that looked at the influence of education on women’s decision-making power in Nigeria found that women’s level of education was positively and significantly related with their level of contribution to household farming decisions (29). Several respondents and USAID and United Nations resources noted that providing information and training on land rights and entitlement helped women assert their rights over land and increase their decision-making power over production (22, 27, 50, 58, 65, 91, 102). Respondents and programmatic sources also noted soft skills, such as lack of confidence, as a barrier that prevents women from asserting their voice within households and institutions (12, 21, 32, 47, 48).

## DETERMINING FACTORS AT THE INSTITUTION LEVEL

Compared to the household level, the research team found far less evidence of factors that shape women’s decision-making at the institution level – and in most instances, evidence showed impacts across the household and institution levels. However, there was some programmatic evidence that **access to financial resources** may shape women’s decision-making roles at the institution level. For example, one implementer noted that women in Ethiopia supported by their agricultural program felt that a lack of resources prevents them from taking on leadership roles in a cooperative, in addition to having more decision-making influence in the household (96). Evidence from agricultural programs shows that women’s social networks not only allow women to gain confidence in their decision-making skills at the institution level, they also provide a space for women to share information that can help them assert their decision-making power at the household level (16, 24, 27, 48, 77, 90, 102).

**Rules of governance and organizational composition** is another important pathway for women to assume decision-making roles in community-level agricultural institutions such as farmers’ associations and cooperatives. Specifically, eight interview respondents and evidence from two program sources noted that leadership opportunities for women are not typically available, even in institutions where women comprise a large portion of membership (36, 97). For example, one FAO source stated that women’s limited access to leadership roles is due to ingrained beliefs that women lack the ability to lead, and that promoting female leadership is essential for achieving sustainable, long-lasting gains for female members of producer organizations (36).

## IMPLEMENTATION CONTEXT

From a programmatic perspective, the implementation context can also critically inform and refine the design and implementation of programs intending to increase women’s decision-making power. Broad programmatic evidence shows that gender norms and roles, cultural traditions, and the legal framework of the context in which programs are implemented must influence the approach of an intervention to ensure that it is designed appropriately and effectively (37).

**Gender norms** emerged from the evidence as a highly influential aspect of the implementation context. Several respondents noted that childcare responsibilities and time burdens resulting from gender division in labor may limit women's access to income and mobility, impacting their availability to participate in programs working to promote their decision-making role. Time burdens may also affect women's ability to participate in capacity-building activities as well as attending meetings of farmers' groups or cooperatives, where decisions may be made in their absence (97).

Traditional **gender roles** further shape how and to what degree women make decisions within the household - a study on pest management from a USAID program in Uganda showed that men and women viewed pesticide purchasing to be the man's role, and therefore, decisions about pesticide use and purchase were made solely by men (31). Similarly, respondents and sources noted that women struggle to access extension services or training because they are not taken seriously as farmers; gender norms typically ascribe men, often the heads of household, as the farmer or primary breadwinner, and therefore the primary target of programs (2, 105).

**Household composition** and the role of "head of the household" often influences who is able to make final decisions over agricultural production, as in Afghanistan, where men still control decision-making as head of the household even though women take on significant agricultural production labor duties. According to interview respondents, power dynamics within the household play an important role in decision-making (e.g., work allocation in agricultural production, production choices). This is particularly evident in rural areas, where a main source of livelihood is linked to production on family farms, and decisions about farming are an integral part of a household's dynamics. Further, within polygamous and extended households, it can be challenging to identify the appropriate members of a household to participate in programming, as cited by agricultural programs and in academic research (39). Conversely, in Uganda, women who identified as head of household were more likely to make sole decisions (31).

In examining **laws and rights around women's land ownership**, a study on the use of irrigation technology adoption in Ethiopia, Ghana, and Tanzania found that even where women inherited and owned land, their husbands still often held final decision-making power. In some cases, women would rent separate plots of land, over which they could make decisions about production and the use of irrigation technology (32). In Malawi and Nigeria, even when there was matrilineal inheritance, men typically still had final decision-making power over the use of land (35). Where women's land ownership is present, implementers will need to assess women landowners' degree of decision-making power and explore household composition and roles when designing and implementing programmatic interventions.

According to twelve interview respondents, the existence and enforcement of national, donor-level, and agriculture institution-level **gender policies** create an enabling environment for women's decision-making power in farmers' groups and cooperatives. Some respondents noted that national gender policies "flow down" to influence social values and norms, which in turn creates more bargaining power for women and allows for their increased institutional and household-level decision-making power. Some respondents noted that this "flow down" has led to increased women's participation in farmers' groups and cooperatives in some contexts. Internal gender policies in agricultural institutions can hold leaders accountable to ensure that women are included as decision makers.

## PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES TO INCREASE WOMEN'S DECISION-MAKING POWER

In addition to determining and contextual factors as pathways for women's decision-making power, a set of specific programmatic approaches emerged from the evidence scan, cited by interview respondents and resources from agricultural programs. The programmatic approaches described below are organized by the household level, institution level, and cross-cutting of households and institutions. While some approaches were implemented with the intention of directly increasing women's decision-making power, others were not intended to but did indirectly contribute to decision-making power outcomes, typically by reinforcing other WEE outcomes. Additionally, many of the approaches below were combined with other interventions in implementation. These nuances are noted and explained where this is the case. Throughout this section, we highlight relevant programmatic tools and resources from the summary deck ([Annex D](#)), in text boxes, that were shown to support specific approaches.

### HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

The following programmatic approaches targeted the household level to increase women's decision-making power. While some examples indicate implementation also at the institution level, demonstrated outcomes from the evidence directly or indirectly promoted women's decision-making power specifically within the household.

#### Relevant Resources: Social Norms Change Methodologies

- Agri-ProFocus, *Gender in value chains: Practical toolkit to integrate a gender perspective in agricultural value chain development*
- Oxfam, *Gender Action Learning System: Practical Guide for Transforming Gender and Unequal Power Relations in Value Chains*
- CGIAR, *Participatory Gender Training for Community Groups: A Manual for Critical Discussion on Gender Norms, Roles and Relations*
- Helen Keller International, *Nurturing Connections – Adapted for Homestead Food Production and Nutrition*
- Mercy Corps, *Household Dialogue Toolkit*

### METHODOLOGIES TO CHANGE SOCIAL NORMS

Based on respondents and at least 14 academic and programmatic sources across various geographical contexts, there is evidence that social norms change methodologies, including couples' dialogues, budgeting, and farming as a family business, are commonly used to increase joint decision-making at the household level (2, 8, 16, 22, 28, 34, 36, 51, 52, 55, 66, 68, 85, 90, 108, 109). According to IFAD, “household methodologies are participatory methodologies that enable family members to work together to improve relations and decision-making, and to achieve more equitable workloads. Their purpose is to strengthen the overall well-being of the household and all its members” (11). While different types of methodologies are used depending on donor and program structure, all include a facilitated and participatory approach to address social norms change at the household level, which was reported to ultimately have a direct effect on women's decision-making power.

Several respondents and programmatic sources indicated use of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) approach developed by IFAD and Oxfam to facilitate couples' dialogues between husband and wife on gender norms and household spending earned from production activities ([Exhibit 3](#)) (34, 66). Household dialogues have also been used to discuss topics including time use, access to credit, gender norms, control over and use of income, and division of labor, all of which factor into WEE and therefore indirectly affect women's decision-making power (9, 52, 85, 108).

Similar methodologies, in addition to the GALS, were implemented at the community level to influence household level decision-making; some programs facilitated public discussions among couples across a community around division of labor and gender norms within the household. These discussions prompted couples to recognize women's role as farmers, the barriers women face in accessing resources and inputs, and increased decision-making power over production decisions and family-owned agribusinesses (1, 51, 89). The Nurturing Connections curriculum, developed by Helen Keller International with support from the International Center for Research on Women, is "a four-month-long participatory curriculum, featuring weekly sessions held within peer groups (women, their partners/husbands and community leaders/elders) as well as one monthly community meeting in which participants from all three groups come together in a mixed group to explore the skills and knowledge acquired beyond the safety of the peer group" (64). Evidence indicates that this curriculum has increased women's decision-making at the household level (43, 64). One program working with coffee value chains in Uganda used community dialogues more specifically within producer organizations and cooperatives, discussing the importance of making joint household decisions over income generated from production activities with both male and female members of the producer organizations and cooperatives (66).

*[The] JP-RWEE in Ethiopia worked with government and NGO partners on women's financial inclusion while encouraging women's participation in household decision-making through community gender dialogues. The program sought to change norms so that cattle can only be sold with the agreement of both wife and husband and built awareness of women's legal protections against domestic violence (49).*

In addition to couples' dialogues, some programs include household budgeting or a farming as a family business approach to increasing women's household decision-making (22, 28, 55, 66). For example, the Farming as a Family Business curriculum was used by the USAID Kenyan Maize Development Project II (KMDP II) to facilitate couples' dialogues to better engage women in the decision-making process over household production (28). Also, two Feed the Future programs in Zambia—Production, Finance, & Improving Technology Plus and Better Life Alliance—used household budgeting between husbands and wives to promote joint decision-making over groundnut production. Budgeting, in addition to household dialogues and encouraging participation in informal saving and loans groups, helped women maintain control over their groundnut production and earned income (22, 55).

#### Exhibit 3: Gender Action Learning System (GALS)

The GALS includes a facilitated process to help overcome gender and GBV barriers. It consists of several phases: (1) preliminary mapping of the selected value chain, (2) action research with different stakeholder groups, and (3) identification of strategies [to address gender-barriers] through multi-stakeholder workshops. (33, 81)

*“I can describe several examples for instance when household methodologies [...] in particular GALS - helped us to improve the decision-making balance within the household and therefore women had a greater say in how to allocate resources and decide what to buy, specifically to purchase food and invest in schooling and books.” –Interview Respondent*

**Demonstrated outcomes.** Several academic and programmatic sources that facilitated GALS and other couples' dialogue approaches noted women's increased decision-making power as a result, in addition to improvements in GBV and spousal relationships (4, 34, 69, 101, 104). For example, one program implemented by WorldFish in Zambia used household dialogues to sensitize men to gender norms and prompt them to reflect on their use of power in their own relationships and support their partner's participation in savings groups. The program completed a randomized controlled trial that found a 40 percent reduction in intimate partner violence as a result of increasing women's decision-making (4). In addition, one program implemented by Mercy Corps found that household dialogues also led to increased resilience at the household level to climate or other humanitarian disasters (8).

## CAPACITY-BUILDING: TECHNICAL AGRICULTURAL TRAININGS

Ten interviewees and eighteen academic and programmatic sources from the evidence scan reported that technical agricultural trainings targeting the household indirectly increased women's decision-making power over household-level production - either when combined with other approaches or by increasing women's technical knowledge, which increased their bargaining power.<sup>3</sup> This includes technical training and capacity-building on planting, inputs, and technology; other related training topics may include marketing or land tenure and rights. In some cases, programs combined technical agricultural training with other programmatic approaches (54, 64, 87, 105). For example, the USAID Feed the Future Rice and Diversified Crops (RDC) program in Bangladesh trained men and women with demo plots on the use of pesticides, herbicides, and other inputs along with follow-up household visits to reinforce the information shared in training. Not only did these household visits provide men and women with technical information, they also addressed gender roles (and indirectly, decision-making) through facilitated discussions. At the end of this intervention, men were glad that the women were able to have access to this information and contribute to production decisions (87).

**Demonstrated outcomes.** Evidence from three USAID programs and one academic study shows that, overall, providing access to agricultural production knowledge and skills can increase women's decision-making role in the household by shifting gender norms, and empower women in their decision-making over production decisions including use of inputs, technology, and overall plot management (40, 42, 64, 105). In addition, evidence from four agricultural programs suggests that women's increased decision-making over agricultural production leads to increased yields and productivity (20, 43, 75, 87). Three programmatic sources and one academic study also noted that these increases in productivity resulting from increased decision-making power also led to increases in income – demonstrating the reinforcing effect of decision-making power on WEE and vice versa (20, 42, 64, 105). In Vietnam, women farmers who received training on crop management, rice technologies, and pest management increased

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<sup>3</sup> 60, 91, 39, 103, 71, 10, 12, 7, 18, 5, 24, 20, 65, 40, 78, 24, 106, 12

production, diversified products and income, and reported that they began participating in household decision-making on selection, management, and processing of crops (20, 42). This type of access to information can also increase women's participation in decisions over income spending and decision-making in family businesses (47).

*Training women farmers and bringing them to the mainstream where decision-making takes place can increase technology adoption thereby increasing overall productivity and in turn reduce poverty and malnutrition (39).*

Lastly, including women in trainings for climate-smart production and encouraging their participation in decision-making about land and water use increases the uptake of climate-smart agriculture, which can increase a family's and community's resilience to climate shocks (32). Sources from USAID, IFPRI, World Bank, FAO, and Care cited enhanced household resilience to climate and economic shocks as an outcome of increased women's decision-making at the household and community levels (24, 32, 41, 56, 111). In addition, a market systems development project implemented by Chemonics, MARKETS II, was able to provide low-cost technology and training to women to increase their decision-making power over production. An ex-post study found that even a year after the activity ended, respondents were still reporting an increase in climate and economic resilience (56).

## FOOD SYSTEMS AND AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTIONS LEVEL

The following programmatic approaches emerged from the evidence scan as directly or indirectly increasing women's decision-making power focused at the food systems and agricultural institutions level. As demonstrated outcomes indicate below, impacts on women's decision-making power at the institution level often indirectly promote their decision-making role in the household as well.

### ROLE MODELS, MENTORS, AND GENDER CHAMPIONS

While some programmatic sources and respondents discussed the use of role models simply as women leaders being present at different levels of an institution, others described specific interventions that used mentors and gender champions to create space for and give women confidence in taking on decision-making roles, thereby indirectly increasing women's decision-making power within institutions (17, 32, 44, 48, 77, 87, 90, 110). For example, respondents and sources from USAID, CARE International, and IFPRI noted that the use of women's leadership circles or social support networks can connect women leaders across rural areas to share their experiences and build leadership capacity and confidence (48, 77, 89). Respondents noted that gender champions can act as leaders in their community, promoting social dialogues about norms and roles of women and creating an enabling environment in male-dominated institutions.

#### Relevant Resource: Role Models, Mentors, and Gender Champions

FAO, IFAD, European Union, *Promoting the leadership of women in producers' organizations: Lessons from the experiences of FAO and IFAD*

*“Again, we do gender integrated planning and we build leadership within those institutions as well. Our success model for doing that is to create what we call gender champions and then create the enabling environment even for those champions because championing this inside these male-dominated institutions is actually extremely difficult work. There is mentorship, there are champions, there is training, and there is formal and informal appreciation reinforcement of that commitment.” – Interview respondent*

Other respondents described using mentorship programs within women self-help groups, where a woman agribusiness mentor guided members in building their businesses or provided leadership and motivational trainings. For example, IFAD’s Rural Women’s Leadership Program (RWLP), implemented in Madagascar, Nepal, the Philippines, and Senegal, aimed to close the gap between women’s contribution to agricultural production and their limited participation in making decisions that affect them, their production, and their communities ([Exhibit 4](#)) (17, 44, 110).

**Demonstrated outcomes.** Various interview respondents and programmatic sources noted that using role models, gender champions, and mentors was effective in increasing women’s decision-making, both in households and in agricultural institutions (17, 32, 44, 48, 77, 87, 90, 110). One respondent noted that one limitation in this approach is that some women have an easier time speaking up and taking the lead than others, causing some women to dominate in their institutions. Their solution to this issue was implementing rotational leadership among women, so everyone has a chance to lead and take part in decision-making.

#### Exhibit 4: Rural Women’s Leadership Program

The RWLP used the approach of conducting training-of-trainers and mentorship programs to increase women’s decision-making power as leaders. Activities “included negotiation skills, confidence-building, self-development, organizational change, gender mainstreaming and technical knowledge on agricultural issues, including natural resource management.” Mentoring programs were implemented at the grassroots level and prepared women leaders of producer organizations to be agents of change (17, 44, 110)

### CAPACITY-BUILDING: LEADERSHIP, BUSINESS, AND LITERACY/NUMERACY SKILLS

Across various geographical contexts, training on leadership and business skills and literacy and numeracy emerged as programmatic approaches that indirectly increase women’s decision-making power by building their capacity to take on decision-making roles within institutions. One interview respondent stated that training men on women in leadership—e.g., why having women in leadership positions is important and non-threatening—allowed women to take on leadership and other decision-making roles within their institutions. In these cases, capacity-building shifted men’s mindset and, ultimately, created space for women to take on decision-making and leadership roles. Another respondent discussed the importance of training on literacy and numeracy to encourage women’s leadership.

*Women’s business practices are being improved through training on basic, good practices, such as record-keeping (financial, as well as recording farm inputs), while on the other track, training is provided to strengthen women’s communication skills and representation on producer organization committees (91).*

**Demonstrated outcomes.** Literacy and numeracy training were reported to indirectly increase women's decision-making power, as women's level of education was positively and significantly related to their level of contribution to household farming decisions. Further, educated women may be more aware of their rights and responsibilities in the household and may be more assertive about them (30). In addition to increasing women's decision-making power within institutions, business skills trainings were also shown to increase women's decision-making in beyond production spaces by providing them with the skills to develop their own agribusinesses (91, 107). However, there was no data that directly attributed increased decision-making to these types of trainings, only indirectly.

## PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP QUOTAS

Nine interviewees and seven academic and programmatic sources identified quotas as an implementation approach to directly increase women's decision-making power within agricultural institutions (16, 26, 36, 49, 66, 77, 94). Quotas were most often defined as either a minimum percentage of women participants or women in leadership positions. Quotas effectively place women in roles to participate in collective decision-making within farmers' groups, associations, cooperatives, or other community groups, according to multiple interview respondents and other sources (28, 36, 66). Ensuring that women have the opportunity to hold decision-making roles is especially important in democratically run institutions, as one respondent noted. Quota requirements were most often reported to be enforced through national law or institutional policies. In some countries, laws require quotas for women's participation and leadership within institutions, such as in Nepal, where 30 percent of cooperatives' boards must comprise women, according to interview respondents.

### Relevant Resource: Participation and Leadership Quotas

FAO, IFAD, European Union, *Promoting the leadership of women in producers' organizations: Lessons from the experiences of FAO and IFAD*

**Demonstrated outcomes.** Several programmatic sources and respondents noted that quotas were successful in increasing women's participation in agricultural institutions and increasing the number of women in leadership positions (49, 66, 94). However, evidence suggests that quotas are not sufficient without being combined with other approaches (49). Further, three sources from USAID, CGIAR, and UNDP noted that quotas are often solely symbolic—where women are present or hold leadership positions in organizations but still lack decision-making and other forms of power—and therefore are ineffective in increasing women's actual decision-making power (16, 49, 94). For example, women can be placed in positions to fill quotas without having the necessary skills or agency to fulfill the work of the position, which reinforces perceptions that women are not able to perform the role. Also, women who lack skills or social acceptance or support, but are placed in leadership positions through quotas, can be vulnerable to exploitation where their decisions are controlled or manipulated by others, often men, who have social, legal, economic, or political power over them, according to respondents.

*Quotas alone do not guarantee effective representation and equality for women. Women may, and often do, sit on such bodies without a real voice (49).*

## WOMEN-ONLY SPACES

Several respondents and sources from FAO, World Bank, and CARE International noted that creating women-only groups and spaces, such as farmers groups, associations, and cooperatives, provides women with a safe space to exercise decision-making within a group, share knowledge, gain access to markets, and build self-confidence (16, 27, 48, 77, 90, 102). Creating women-only spaces was also shown to indirectly increase women's decision-making within the home (32, 36, 66, 77, 111). Women-only groups and spaces come in many forms and are established for different reasons. For example, as discussed above, VSLAs are common in Africa to provide women with an informal banking system that they are able to manage themselves. Self-help groups are structured organizations in India, which are defined by and registered with the government and follow prescribed rules, even if they are developed and supported by NGOs. In both cases, VSLAs and self-help groups are women-only spaces that can create the opportunity for women to exercise decision-making over their income and make decisions as a group.

### Relevant Resources: Women-Only Spaces

- FAO, IFAD, European Union, *Promoting the leadership of women in producers' organizations: Lessons from the experiences of FAO and IFAD*
- IFAD, *Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP): Madagascar, Nepal, the Philippines, and Senegal*

Making decisions in these groups can be a stepping stone for doing the same in mixed-gender groups or other forums because it gives women a platform to practice, demonstrate, and normalize women's leadership in their communities (32, 36, 77, 111). This is important because women in mixed groups (with both men and women) tend to not take on decision-making roles, or in cases where they do have those positions, defer to the male authority for decision-making (97). In addition, evidence from FAO and CARE shows that women who actively participate in mixed groups often have other experience participating in women-only groups (36, 77). Multiple respondents noted that it was important to include elements of male engagement when creating women-only groups and spaces; in some cases, implementers kept groups single sex, but shared information about the value and efficacy of having such groups so that men would be accepting. Another approach is to have a men-only group parallel to the women-only group, or to include some men in women-only spaces with limited participation and decision-making capacity, to ensure women maintained their voice within the group.

*In some contexts, women-only groups can provide “enabling spaces” where [marginalized] women can gain self-esteem, confidence and skills by creating a space for them to identify their needs, understand their rights and begin to articulate their demands. Women only groups can also provide a step towards wider participation in mixed groups and other decision-making forums (77).*

**Demonstrated outcomes.** Evidence from USAID and FAO demonstrated that some women find that having alternative, or parallel, women-only forums are more effective for making decisions than breaking into male-dominated spaces. Women are able to use these forums to increase their decision-making power over productive resources in the household. Further, women can use these groups as an opportunity for collective decision-making and share as one voice in a mixed forum (32, 36, 97). Three respondents noted that even in women-only organizations, there is a tendency for hierarchical decision-making norms to take shape where the vast majority of women do not actively participate in decision-

making. This also happens in mixed groups, such that decisions are made primarily by leadership and do not include the participation of most group members.

## CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES FOR THE HOUSEHOLD AND INSTITUTION LEVELS

Evidence demonstrated that the following programmatic approaches could be considered cross-cutting, as they can either be applied or have outcomes within or across both the household and institution levels.

### CAPACITY-BUILDING: GENDER TRAINING

The evidence scan showed that gender training is implemented within agricultural institutions across various geographical contexts to address the challenges posed by gender and social norms, including risk of GBV, that prevent women from participating in decision-making, according to multiple respondents and sources. Gender trainings were shown to have a direct impact on increasing women's decision-making both within the institutions where the training took place as well as within training participants' households. Aspects of gender training approaches include role change activities, discussions around division of labor, and a focus on GBV and gender and social norms (27, 52, 54, 59, 63, 78, 79, 96). Notably, gender training is often combined with other programmatic approaches, such as access to finance interventions and agricultural production training within farmer groups, associations, and cooperatives. All members of the Kookoo Pa Farmers' Association in Ghana were provided with gender sensitization training that accompanied an asset transfer approach, requiring couples that owned land jointly to put the woman's name on the title in order to join the cooperative. As gender norms began to shift due to the trainings, women were able to reap the benefits of organizational membership, including gaining access to markets and more decision-making power in family-owned agribusinesses. In addition, the cooperative combined approaches by setting up women-only groups within the association, providing leadership training, and electing women leaders, increasing the collective decision-making power of women within the association (66).

*Some joint households are more flexible because they have received gender training. Things are changing and women are now more involved in decisions on the farm and taking on more tasks, even marketing (96).*

**Demonstrated outcomes.** Although gender norms and roles vary depending on the context, gender training was shown to be effective in addressing gender norms and directly increasing women's decision-making power when adapted to the context in which the training was being provided. In addition to increasing women's decision-making power, two USAID sources also cited a decrease in GBV as an

#### Relevant Resources: Gender training

- CGIAR, *Participatory Gender Training for Community Groups: A Manual for Critical Discussion on Gender Norms, Roles and Relations*
- Helen Keller International, *Nurturing Connections – Adapted for Homestead Food Production and Nutrition*

outcome of implementing gender trainings, another pathway (as described above) that promotes women's decision-making power (4, 63).

## ACCESS TO FINANCE AND ASSETS

Some respondents and programmatic sources stated that providing women access to finance and credit, specifically via village savings and loan associations (VSLAs), increased women's bargaining power within the household, which indirectly increased their decision-making power (1, 22, 27, 75, 96, 97, 98, 111). For example, in various country contexts across Asia and Africa, women were shown to make intra-household decisions on how to use finances they received via VSLAs and self-help groups, typically re-investing those finances into agricultural resources, inputs, technology, or their own agribusinesses (97, 111). In some cases, access to finance was combined with other programmatic approaches and indirectly increased women's decision-making power in the household. For example, the Women's Empowerment Program in Nepal provided combined a literacy training and savings program for 6,500 women's groups. Many of the participants started businesses and reported an increase to their decision-making authority in the home (111).

Some programs facilitated land transfers within communities to women, indirectly increasing women's decision-making power at the household level via the pathway of women's land ownership (22, 27, 50, 58, 65, 66, 91, 102, 106). Land transfers were also shown to indirectly increase women's decision-making power within agricultural institutions. The Kookoo Pa Farmers' Association in Ghana required male members to register portions of their land in their wife's name, as well as have their wife join the association. This approach indirectly enabled women to exercise decision-making power within the cooperative and advocate for their own plots (66). In addition to land, two programs in Bangladesh and Pakistan increased women's decision-making power in the household by facilitating livestock transfers to women (41, 76).

**Demonstrated outcomes.** As exemplified by a study on cacao farming in Nigeria, evidence showed that women's financial contribution to farming activities had a positive relationship with women's household decision-making (30). Similarly, four academic and programmatic sources suggested that access to finance and credit may indirectly increase women's ability to participate in decision-making at the household level and over agricultural production, value addition, and marketing (27, 30, 46, 85). Three respondents specifically noted increased income and economic independence as a result of their interventions using VSLAs and self-help groups to increase women's decision-making, and several others noted that VSLAs can be a platform for women to access production resources collectively. Ultimately, respondents and sources noted or implied that increased access to finance ultimately leads to increased economic independence for women and increased family income, in turn increasing decision-making power (75).

*Access to finance and training leads to higher incomes for farm households. What's more, when farmers are women, we see additional benefits, including a focus on the nutrition and educational needs of children, women's increased self-esteem, and stronger decision-making voice in the home and community (75).*

One academic source suggested that land ownership can also positively influence a woman's bargaining power within the household, thus increasing her decision-making power over consumption and agricultural investment (58). In Ghana, researchers found that when land was registered under women's names in the Kookoo Pa Farmers' Association, it led to women speaking up more and participating more in group decisions (66). Two studies found that livestock transfers to women indirectly increased women's decision-making power by directly increasing household income, women's economic independence, women's social capital, and household resilience to economic shocks (41, 76). One respondent said that when women were given ownership over agricultural technology and able to generate profit—for example, through increased production or by renting the technology to other community members—they were in a position to negotiate their income, which also increased their bargaining power in the household.

*When women have secure land rights, women's empowerment increases. Secure access to land acts as a source of empowerment by increasing women's economic security and increasing their control over household decisions. For example, in Nepal, 37 percent of women who owned land had the final say on a household decision, compared to 20 percent of women who did not own land. In Ethiopia, a household land certification program led to a 44 percent increase in the likelihood of a wife deciding which crops to grow on lands under her control (41).*

## **ENCOURAGING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN FARMERS' GROUPS, ASSOCIATIONS, AND COOPERATIVES**

Agricultural institutions, such as farmers' groups, associations, and cooperatives, were cited by six programmatic sources and in six interviews as entry points for indirectly increasing women's decision-making at the household level by increasing women's bargaining power (10, 32, 36, 66, 71, 77). By mobilizing women to join farmers' groups, practitioners can increase women's access to agriculture training, markets, skills transfer, and knowledge, which can in turn influence power dynamics at the household level. In addition, practitioners cited that these institutions can promote gender sensitization within the community, including facilitating discussions between men and women about the importance of shared decision-making within the household (i.e., social norms change methodologies) (32, 36, 66, 72, 77).

In addition to increasing decision-making power within the household, evidence suggests that encouraging participation in these groups is a pathway to increasing women's decision-making power at the institution level. Some sources and respondents noted that cooperatives, in comparison to farmer groups or associations, provide more opportunities for women to participate in decision-making within an institution, due in part to the collective ownership aspect. Joining or forming cooperatives gives women more power to bring products to market and receive a fair price, and take opportunities for leadership positions. This increases women's decision-making power at the institution level over

### **Relevant Resources: Encouraging Women's Participation**

- IFAD, *Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP): Madagascar, Nepal, the Philippines, and Senegal*
- Agri-ProFocus, *Gender in value chains: Practical toolkit to integrate a gender perspective in agricultural value chain development*

organizational management and selling products, and increases women's decision-making power over production by providing access to training and resources (19, 54, 66).

*[Mobilizing] women and increasing their participation as group members of a community-based adaptation project can increase their access to training not only on technical aspects of the project, but also on leadership development and gender equality. This can help members (especially women) to gain influence and control at the household and community levels (32).*

**Demonstrated outcomes.** In addition to promoting women's decision-making power within agricultural institutions, two FAO and USAID sources specifically noted that increasing women's participation in farmers groups, cooperatives, and other organizations increases women's access to markets and increases household income – each of which may further reinforce women's decision-making power in the household (19, 66). In the case of cooperatives, access to information and markets improved women's joint decision-making at the household level as women gained more control over income from selling produce and increased their self-confidence (66). One source noted that women's active participation and leadership in producer organizations leads to improved organizational performance (49). To note, one respondent stated that cooperatives have been shown to be more effective in some contexts than others because of cultural differences. Specifically, cooperatives work particularly well in the Latin America and the Caribbean region because the political and social norms work well within the structure of cooperatives where members are required to pool resources collectively.

## GOOD PRACTICES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A number of good practices and considerations to support effective implementation of programmatic approaches emerged from the evidence scan. **Male engagement** is a general good practice in implementing programmatic approaches, specifically related to capacity-building. Some respondents noted the importance of conducting training with both men and women, as opposed to just women, so that men better understand the gender constraints women face and may then help facilitate social norms change. When implementing role model or gender champion approaches, some respondents noted the importance of male gender champions both inside the home and within the community to promote norms change as a pathway to increase women's decision-making power. One respondent specifically stated that having male gender champions rather than women champions is preferred, because this role can place an additional burden on women, giving them the added responsibility and burden of educating others about the gender norms they consistently combat. Similarly, engaging men through promoting joint decision-making within the household can further address limiting gender norms and promote women's decision-making role. A gender assessment of USAID's Program for Strengthening Household Access to Resources (PROSHAR) stated that encouraging joint decision-making should be a first step to achieving an end-goal of sole decision-making (78).

Evidence also demonstrated the good practice of **integrated programming**, or combining programmatic approaches in implementation—particularly approaches that did not originally have the intended outcome of increasing decision-making power. For example, a mixed method analysis of a

livestock transfer program showed that livestock transfers alone are not enough to even indirectly promote women's decision-making power; women still had limited mobility outside the home and investments from these new resources were largely owned by men. This particular study suggested that male engagement or other social norms change approaches be used in conjunction with livestock transfers to promote women's decision-making power (41, 76).

Multiple interview respondents raised **GBV risk** and **utilizing Do No Harm principles** as a key consideration for implementing programmatic approaches, noting that women may experience physical violence, specifically intimate partner violence, as a result of asserting their voice in the household. Women may also experience violence from men or other women within institutions when they assert their voice or take on decision-making roles. For example, in East Africa and South Asia, the USAID Cooperative Development Activity 4 specifically cited GBV as limiting women's ability to participate in cooperatives and access cooperative resources and services (79). Implementers should incorporate GBV mitigation, prevention, and response measures into design and implementing programmatic approaches to increase women's decision-making power.

In conducting the evidence scan, the research team, in consultation with the broader AWE team, noted **time and scale considerations** for implementing various programmatic approaches. Many interventions to increase decision-making power may affect change gradually over time, often beyond a five-year project period of performance, especially at the institution level. One respondent noted that measuring changes in women's decision-making power over the course of a program cycle is limiting because it takes a long time for change to occur, and the decision-making impacts of an intervention may not be seen until long after a program ends. Short time frames for projects (typically five years), and the demand to show results in that time frame, can drive the use of simplified and output-oriented indicators and lack of robust indicators. Further, there is often the need for individual or community buy-in for the intervention to make lasting change. Scalability of interventions is also a challenge for implementers: couples' dialogues would be difficult to extend beyond one community or close set of communities, given contextual differences at a larger geographic scale. Capacity-building may be implemented at a large scale, but attributing decision-making outcomes to a specific training also poses a challenge to implementers.

## MEASURING WOMEN'S DECISION-MAKING POWER

The following findings from the evidence scan, primarily programmatic sources and group and individual interviews, pertain to how women's decision-making power is measured by implementers at the household and institution levels.

### METHODS

There is evidence that mixed methods approaches are used across various country contexts to measure and understand decision-making at the household and institution levels (68, 18, 7, 43, 14, 1, 105, 11, 97, 26, 97, 24, 19, 30, 102, 80, 40, 76, 104, 42, 29, 80, 103, 74, 28, 27, 70, 84). Household surveys were the most common quantitative method for collecting data on women's decision-making, and were often

combined with qualitative methods such as interviews or focus group discussions. Several USAID-funded programs, as well as The BOMA Project and one SNV funded program, used mixed methods approaches to measure the impact of their program interventions on decision-making, collecting data specifically from program participants (1, 86, 102, 80, 40, 76, 104, 103, 26, 97, 18, 7, 105, 24, 14, 19, 97).

## MEL TOOLS OR FRAMEWORKS

A common tool used by USAID programs and academic institutions to measure women's decision-making is the WEAI or one of its versions, such as the Abbreviated WEAI or the Pro-WEAI (12, 28, 43, 74, 77, 90, 93, 100, 101, 111, 25, 113). The original WEAI measures women's empowerment at the production level, and measures five domains of empowerment:

1. Decisions about agricultural production
2. Access to and decision-making power over productive resources
3. Control over use of income
4. Leadership in the community
5. Time use

Some programs and studies used the WEAI in its entirety, while other sources used questions from the WEAI directly related to decision-making or referred to the WEAI domains as a grounding tool. When asked about measuring decision-making, one source specifically mentioned using the Gender Parity Index, which is a sub-index of the WEAI and measures the proportion of women who are as empowered as men within their households (62).

Some sources also adapted tools from other disciplines to understand the role of women in decision-making over production, such as the Relative Autonomy Index, which is measured in the original WEAI and informed the development of the project-level WEAI, as well as the Autonomy in Production indicator. The RAI is typically used in psychology "to measure the extent to which an individual's actions are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated." This helps discern the nuances of women's autonomy in making decisions, and takes into account both intrinsic and instrumental agency (84). The Women's Agency Scale 61 (WAS-61) is a mixed methods tool to measure women's intrinsic, instrumental, and collective agency that specifically seeks to measure women's conscientization, defined as the "process by which oppressed people move from dominated consciousness to understanding and action." To note, the project-level WEAI also measures intrinsic, instrumental, and collective agency.

## INDICATORS

Throughout the evidence scan, the research team identified a range of indicators used across various donor and country contexts to measure women's role in decision-making. Many of these identified indicators are measured WEAI or could be calculated using WEAI data, and include:

- The percent of women who make sole or joint decisions (specifically, percentage of currently married women age 15–49 reporting that she makes decisions either by herself or jointly with her spouse)

- The percent of decisions women participate in
- Women and men's perception of control over decisions
- Input in productive decisions (either sole or joint)
- Autonomy of production; purchase, sale, or transfer of assets; access to and decisions on credit and control over use of income (18, 40, 56, 60, 67, 69, 74, 92, 111)

While some sources used indicators specific to measuring decision-making at the household level, others used proxy indicators. For example, some sources used increased income or ownership over assets as a proxy for measuring increased bargaining power for women within the household (56, 67). Proxy indicators were used more commonly at the institution level, where decision-making-specific indicators are more limited. According to respondents, women's decision-making was measured by women's participation in groups, committees, and institutions, or in the number of leadership positions held by women (60).

*Common metrics include decision-making questions that inquire about household choices relevant to women's well-being (e.g., household spending, decisions about health care, and visiting relatives/friends) and psychological constructs that aim to capture women's perceived ability to make life decisions (e.g., the Relative Autonomy Index, generalized self-efficacy, and locus of control measures) (18).*

## LIMITATIONS

While the evidence scan surfaced various methods, tools, and indicators that exist for measuring women's decision-making, particularly within women's empowerment frameworks, limitations and challenges for measurement were often cited by respondents and sources. Decision-making as a topic is complex and there are challenges with measuring it in its entirety. One study on intrahousehold decision-making and autonomy noted the complexity of measuring women's agency, as it can vary from person to person, and that it is challenging to fully capture women's role in decision-making with quantitative metrics (84).

Additionally, there is a lack of tools and indicators for measurement of decision-making beyond the household level, indicating a gap in data for women's decision-making at the agricultural institution level (112). Further, respondents noted a lack of accountability for implementers in using robust indicators and disaggregated data by gender. For programs that are agriculture focused and not gender focused, gender indicators measuring decision-making are often not prioritized, all of which affects the level of data available on women's decision-making.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are organized loosely according to the research sub-questions, found in [Learning Questions](#). While the original research questions distinguish between decision-making strategies relevant to either agricultural production or agriculture and food systems institutions, we have combined conclusions based on the complex evidence base that emerged through the scan.

### WHAT APPROACHES ARE USED TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S DECISION-MAKING POWER- THEIR VOICE, CHOICE, AND CONTROL?

*When implementing programmatic approaches to effectively address the complex challenge of increasing women's decision-making power at both the household and institution levels, implementers should employ good practices of integrated programming, male engagement, and Do No Harm principles, and consider time investment and scalability to ensure uptake and sustainability within their programming.*

There is evidence of a predominant set of programmatic approaches used to directly and indirectly increase women's decision-making power, listed in [Exhibit 5](#). Commonly, programmatic approaches were combined for effective implementation. For example, at the household level, capacity-building may be implemented alongside social norms change methods, or gender training alongside an asset transfer intervention. At the institution level, one example was encouraging women's participation in an association combined with leadership training. Evidence also indicates that many programmatic approaches naturally overlap in implementation; for example, capacity-building is often a facet of programs that institute women-only spaces; and quotas are very often implemented alongside leadership training. Additional good practices of engaging men in interventions, considering GBV risks and utilizing Do No Harm principles, and factoring in the time and scale implications of programmatic approaches are critical to ensuring effective implementation and scalability of programmatic approaches.

Exhibit 5: Identified Programmatic Approaches

- Household Level
  - Social norms change methodologies
  - Capacity-building: technical agricultural training
- Institution Level
  - Role models, mentors, and gender champions
  - Capacity-building: leadership, business, and literacy/numeracy skills
  - Participation and leadership quotas
  - Women-only spaces
- Cross-cutting of household and institutions
  - Capacity-building: gender trainings
  - Access to finance and assets
  - Encouraging women's participation in institutions

*Determining factors at the household and institution levels, related to intrahousehold allocation of resources, human capital, and organizational governance and composition, and the context in which programmatic approaches are implemented must be taken into consideration by implementers in order to ensure positive outcomes for women's decision-making power.*

According to programmatic evidence, accounting for factors that shape women's decision-making, and the circumstances of the implementing context, may make targeted programmatic approaches more effective. Intrahousehold allocation of resources, including income and land ownership, particularly shapes women's involvement in household decision-making. Further, human capital in the form of education and access to knowledge, information and training, also often positively determines women's decision-making power. The same is evident for women's participation in decision-making within agricultural institutions – however the rules of governance and organizational composition of institutions also impacts the degree to which women participate in institutional decision-making. Further, implementers must consider the context in which they are working, and leverage it to ensure programmatic approaches lead to impactful outcomes. Gender norms and roles (including household composition), laws, land rights and customs, and institutional policies must be accounted for and addressed as reinforcing elements that contribute to an enabling or limiting environment for implementation.

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***Addressing gaps in the programmatic evidence base—notably of evidence at the agricultural institution level, and on women's sole decision-making power—can support implementers in more effectively promoting women's decision-making through programmatic approaches.***

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Fifty-nine percent of the sources reviewed in the evidence scan focused on the household level, and 20 percent focused on a combination of the household and institution levels. A considerable minority, 22 percent, of evidence scan sources focused solely on the institution level, indicating a gap in evidence on women's decision-making within agricultural institutions. Further, where there was attention paid to the institution level, cooperatives and farmers' groups had the largest representation, indicating a notable gap of evidence for institutions beyond cooperatives and farmers' associations, including agribusinesses and financial institutions. This gap also extended to measurement approaches of women's decision-making power at the institution level.

Throughout the evidence scan, the majority of sources did not specify the type of decision-making they addressed, indicating a lack of clarity on definitions and differences between sole, joint, and other types of decision-making (for example, decision-making as an institution). Of those that did specify, about 50 percent addressed joint decision-making power or both sole and joint decision-making power. Only five sources specifically addressed women's sole decision-making power, illuminating a key gap in the evidence. An expanded evidence base on these topics would further support implementers in ensuring that programmatic approaches used are effective and scalable.

## **WHAT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT HAVE THESE APPROACHES YIELDED?**

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***While some approaches were implemented with the explicit intended outcome of increasing women's roles and say in decision-making, other programmatic approaches indirectly contributed to decision-making outcomes despite having other primary objectives.***

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Social norms change methodologies were frequently shown to be applied to directly increase women's decision-making power within the household, along with targeted gender training. However, the evidence showed that the majority of the identified programmatic approaches resulted indirectly in increasing women's decision-making power. For example, only by increasing women's bargaining power

in the household did approaches in access to finance and assets increase women's decision-making power. The use of role models, mentors, and gender champions, encouraging women's participation in institutions, and implementing quotas also only indirectly impacted women's roles in decision-making. The programmatic approaches that indirectly contributed to women's decision-making power often did so in tandem with other approaches that also promoted WEE outcomes such as women's control over income, mobility, and economic independence. Evidence shows that programs aiming to achieve WEE outcomes may also promote women's decision-making power by integrating targeted decision-making power approaches.

## HOW HAVE THESE APPROACHES TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S ROLE IN DECISION-MAKING BEEN MEASURED?

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*Programs utilize indicators, tools, and metrics to measure women's decision-making power at the household level, yet gaps and challenges exist in measuring outcomes at the institutional level. Indicators and tools do not comprehensively capture the complexity of decision-making, however some indicators (e.g., those included in the WEAI) do capture women's decision-making power in some domains of agricultural production.*

Some examples of decision-making metrics include WEAI-based indicators (original WEAI, A-WEAI, and pro-WEAI), RAI (also included in the original WEAI), and WAS-6I, which were tested and used in academic studies, population-based surveys, and in project-level monitoring and evaluation. Programs typically utilize mixed methods approaches, such as household surveys combined with focus group discussions or key informant interviews, to collect data on women's decision-making. In some cases, data collected through these methods were measured against programmatic indicators for decision-making power and proxy indicators. Despite having a range of methods, tools, and indicators for measuring women's decision-making at the household level, there are still significant gaps in measuring women's decision-making at the agricultural institution level. Indicators and tools do not comprehensively capture the complexity of decision-making, such as whether decisions made solely or jointly with partners result in positive or negative outcomes. However, some indicators—such as those included in the WEAI—do capture women's decision-making power in some domains including agricultural production, or in decisions related to credit or income.

## WHAT RESOURCES AND TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTING THESE APPROACHES EXIST?

The evidence scan surfaced a number of resources and tools, including training curriculums and metrics, that may support the programmatic approaches presented in this report. These relevant programmatic resources are presented in text boxes and integrated throughout the findings section. There were a number of resources available to support social norms change methodologies and to measure women's decision-making power, many of which focus on measuring women's agency and therein include components that focus on women's decision-making power.

The research team identified a gap in specific tools to promote women's decision-making power as a component of other WEE programmatic approaches. For example, there was no evidence of programs working to increase women's access to finance—e.g., implementing asset transfers or working to establish VSLAs—that also intentionally integrated programmatic tools and approaches targeted at

increasing women's decision-making power through their program. Similarly, the team did not find capacity-building curriculums related to agricultural production or increasing leadership or business skills that were intended or reported to directly increase women's role in decision-making.

A summary deck of selected programmatic tools, guides, training, and other resources aligning with those presented in the Findings section accompanies this evidence scan report in [Annex D](#).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### SUGGESTIONS OF CAPACITY SUPPORT AND RESOURCE DOCUMENTS TO DEVELOP

**Curated database of programmatic evidence on decision-making for general use and access by implementers, donors, research organizations, and other stakeholders working in this area.** This evidence scan has collected and produced a base of 134 resources specifically focused on or related to increasing women's decision-making power. The AWE team specializes in conducting landscape analyses and collecting a range of resources on other topics, including GBV and digital financial services. The research team can further curate, tag, and organize evidence on decision-making as an annotated bibliography and make it accessible to the public as part of an Excel database of resources related to gender and agriculture posted online. This database will also include the summary deck ([Annex D](#)) of practical, programmatic tools.

**A checklist for implementing partners on how to understand and integrate women's decision-making in agriculture and food systems programs.** Conceptualizing women's decision-making power still poses a challenge for implementers. This resource document will collect key questions, steps, and considerations to help implementing partners better understand how their work intersects with, affects, or has potential to promote women's decision-making power. The research team can conduct further research specifically with implementing partners working in this area to create an informed resource.

**Guidance document on measuring decision-making across food systems institutions, including the household.** This resource will provide implementing partners with guidance and resources to measure women's decision-making power and contributing factors within their existing programs to improve and expand existing data. For example, the document may suggest indicators, describe how implementers can identify decision-making, and recommend different data collection and analysis methods based on a program's context. The document may also provide guidance on how to examine and analyze combined programmatic approaches in order to measure outcomes.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

**Case studies of programs directly working to increase women's decision-making power.** While this scan has shown that there is an evidence base of programmatic approaches in increasing women's roles in decision-making, in-depth analyses and explanation of programmatic approaches and outcomes remain thin. The research team recommends conducting case studies of programs

implementing programmatic approaches with the explicit objective of increasing women's decision-making power, in order to explore the context in which they are operating, strategies for implementation, details of their programmatic approaches, and observed outcomes that can be directly attributed to and linked to an increase in decision-making power.

**Understanding joint, sole, and other types of decision-making.** The scan indicated a dearth of evidence specific to different types of decision-making, and specifically sole decision-making. Yet, practitioners are regularly considering the duality of joint and sole decision-making when designing and implementing approaches. As a first step, the team recommends further research on better understanding the nuances of different types of decision-making over assets, as well as outcomes associated with those decisions. Subsequent research may focus on more complex decision-making within businesses (e.g., entrepreneurship and micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises), or case studies of programming that specifically addresses sole decision-making. This research may contribute to developing a framework for understanding and assessing different types of decisions, and where programs and implementers might shift accordingly.

**Women's decision-making power as a social and economic return on investment.** While it is clear that the various approaches noted above lead to women's increased decision-making power, the cost of implementing these approaches compared to the benefits that women and programs experience is unclear. Further research on the business case for increasing women's decision-making power, especially where there is already a lack of evidence at the institution level, can support USAID and implementers to design programs that effectively and pointedly address women's roles in decision-making.

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# ANNEXES

## ANNEX A: LEARNING QUESTIONS

The research questions provided below reflect areas of inquiry that USAID identified as high-level gaps and challenges faced in promoting women's decision-making in agricultural programming.

- I. What evidence-based strategies exist to promote women's role in decision-making in agricultural production?
  - a. What approaches are used to promote women's voice, choice, and control in agricultural production decisions?
  - b. Who (donor funded projects, NGOs, private sector, etc.) is promoting and/or researching these approaches?
  - c. What outcomes and impact have these approaches yielded?
  - d. How have the approaches to promote women's role in agricultural production decision-making been measured?
  - e. What resources and tools for implementing these approaches exist? What resources and tools would add further value to the design and implementation of these approaches?
2. What evidence-based strategies exist to promote women's role in decision-making in food and agriculture systems at the community and institution levels?
  - a. What approaches are used to promote women's voice, choice and control in decision-making in food and agriculture systems at the community and institution levels (i.e., community organizations, farmers groups and cooperatives, agribusinesses, government agencies such as extension services and other institutions)?
  - b. Who (donor funded projects, NGOs, private sector, etc.) is promoting and/or researching these approaches?
  - c. What outcomes and impact have these approaches yielded?
  - d. How have the approaches to promote women's role in decision-making at community- and institution-levels been measured?
  - e. What resources and tools for implementing these approaches exist? What resource and tools would add further value to the design and implementation of these approaches?

## ANNEX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Date:**

**Interviewee name(s):**

**Title:**

**Organization:**

**Interviewer:**

### INTERVIEWER: INTRODUCTION

Thank you for setting aside the time to talk with me today.

**Project Introduction:** The USAID Feed the Future Advancing Women's Empowerment (AWE) program is a mechanism that offers technical assistance, capacity-building, tools, and resources to USAID and implementing partners to advance gender equality and women's empowerment for improved development outcomes.

**Research Introduction:** Under this particular project, we are reviewing and curating existing knowledge and evidence on approaches that increase women's decision-making power, specifically over agriculture production and in agricultural institutions. This interview will ultimately inform an evidence scan and the development of learning tools and knowledge products tailored to support USAID missions and implementing partners in addressing and strengthening women's decision-making power through their programming.

**Voluntary Participation and Confidentiality:** Taking part in the interview is voluntary. We will record and transcribe the interview. Your responses will be used to inform our research, kept confidential, and no respondents will be identified individually unless you choose to release this information.

**Interview Timeframe and Procedure:** The conversation will take about 60 minutes. We will ask you several questions, and I will take notes. Before we begin, do you have any questions?

### QUESTIONS

- I. To start, please share your, name, title, organization, and briefly, how your work has been related to promoting women's decision-making in agriculture or other sectors.

*Probes: Type of work: research, implementation, measurement? How have you worked with each other? Types of decision-making? Within a certain value chain?*

2. From your perspective and based on your experience, how would you conceptualize women's decision-making power in agriculture?

*Probes: or "describe". Types of decision-making? Joint versus sole decision-making?*

**Interviewer say:** From here, our questions are going to focus on evidence-based approaches that you've implemented or observed to improve women's decision-making power in two realms – first, at the **agricultural production level** – where possible, thinking beyond the household sphere; and second, at a **community and institutions level**.

3. I'd like to invite you to take a moment to think of a time when you or an organization you worked with were most proud of the work you did, related to addressing women's decision-making over agricultural production. As you reflect on that time, please describe the approaches or interventions that you used.

*Probes: What were the outcomes and impacts? Who funded the program? Geographic location? Program length? How long ago was this implemented? Was there a specific women's empowerment focus to the program?*

4. Now, we'd like to do the same exercise - but think of a time when you worked with agricultural institutions to improve women's decision-making (*community organizations, farmers groups and cooperatives, agribusinesses, government agencies such as extension services, and other similar institutions*). As you reflect on that time, please describe the approaches or interventions you used.

*Probes: outcomes or impacts? how they understand or observe women's decision-making within ag institutions; specific types of institutions: community organizations, farmers groups and cooperatives, agribusinesses, government agencies such as extension services and other institutions.*

5. How did you capture and/or use evidence to inform these approaches?

*Probe on specific approaches they've mentioned, clarifying whether they are at the production or institutions levels.*

6. How did you measure the success of this approach, or of other approaches, to promote women's voice, choice, and control over agricultural production?

*Probes: Specific resources/tools they used; was measuring decision-making part of the "standard" MEL approach or a separate effort? Did the program have a CLA approach and did that affect ability to measure?*

7. Based on your experience, what does an enabling environment look like within an institution where women are able to take on leadership roles or otherwise key decision-making roles?

*Probes: What were the motivations for the institution to promote women's decision-making?*

8. Are there any tools or resources that you currently use in implementing these approaches and strategies? And, what tools or resources would be useful, that may not already exist?

*Probes: What about protocols and guidelines? What would make the tools that do exist more effective and useful?*

9. In our next phase of research, we plan to speak directly with representatives of agricultural institutions working in the field to better understand their experiences in this area. Are there any agricultural institutions that you recommend we speak to?

*Reminder: community organizations, farmers groups and cooperatives, agribusinesses, government agencies such as extension services, and other similar institutions*

## CONCLUSION

10. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about approaches used to promote women's decision-making power, whether in agriculture production or within agricultural institutions?

*Probes: Approaches they have heard about from colleagues, or others? Other stakeholders our team should consult or engage?*

11. What questions do you have for us?

Thank you for your time.

## ANNEX C: LIST OF KEYWORDS

This annex outlines the key words used to search, collect, and tag documents for the evidence scan.

### *Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics*

- Polygamy
- Mobility
- Women/female headed household
- Male headed household
- Youth
- Mother-in-law

### *Programmatic Interventions*

- Male engagement
- Gender champions
- Agricultural production training
- Literacy/numeracy training
- Business development services/business skills training
- Change agents (male or female)
- Voluntary standards/certifications
- Access to finance
- Access to inputs/resources/technology
- Social norms change
- Women's only spaces
- Inclusive design
- Role models/mentors
- Quotas
- Household dialogues
- Land rights/tenure
- Gender/GBV policy
- Gender/GBV training
- Livestock transfers
- Leadership/capacity-building training

### *Measurement/Indicators*

- Scales
- Surveys
- Focus groups/interviews
- Other instruments
- Gender indicators
- Decision-making indicators
- WEAI
- Gender Integration Framework (GIF)

### *Evaluation*

- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Mixed Methods

### *Impact/Outcome*

- Improved food security and nutrition
- Improved family related outcomes (WASH, education, health, etc.)
- Economic independence and/or increased income
- Increased productivity
- Resilience to economic and/or climate shocks
- Increased mobility
- Network access
- Women's labor force participation
- Strengthened supply chains/value chains

### *Enabling Factors*

- Voluntary standards/certifications
- Access to finance
- Loans/credit
- Institutional policies
- National policies
- Male buy-in
- Contract farming
- Access to and control over assets

### *Challenges/Barriers*

- Workload/time burden constraints
- Childcare responsibilities
- Resource constraints (land, inputs, other productive resources)
- Financial constraints
- Gender-based violence
- Gender norms
- Lack of leadership skills/confidence
- Lack of education/knowledge
- Lack of access to markets
- Lack of access to transportation

## **ANNEX D: EVIDENCE SCAN SUMMARY DECK**



# FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



# INCREASING WOMEN'S ROLES IN AGRICULTURAL DECISION MAKING

Evidence Scan Summary Deck



*Photo credit: Fintrac Inc*

# Programmatic Tools and Resources to Increase Women's Decision-Making Power

The following resources, guides, and tools support various programmatic approaches used by practitioners to increase women's decision-making power as identified through an evidence scan, including recommendations from implementers via consultations and a review of available programmatic documents and literature.

# Gender in value chains: Practical toolkit to integrate a gender perspective in agricultural value chain development

 **Source:** [Agri-ProFocus](#)

 **Year published:** 2012

 **Sector:** Agriculture

 **Relevant approaches:** Social norms change methodologies | Access to finance and assets | Encouraging women's participation in institutions

 **Targeted level of engagement:** Value chain

 **Key components relevant to decision making:**

- Strategy 2: Creating space for women, p. 21
- Context Analysis: Access to and control over resources and benefits, p.30
- The household approach, p. 91
- Household envisioning and planning, p. 98
- Effective/democratic decision making between household and producer organizations, p. 101
- Increasing women's access to producer organizations through analysis of gender-based constraints, p. 103

 **Potential for scale:** Intended for use by practitioners to implement value chain intervention at all levels

 **Inputs needed:** Across the range of tools, strategies, and approaches provided, inputs required vary; however this toolkit is targeted to implementing partners, NGOs, government, knowledge institutions, and other entities working at all levels of agricultural value chains

## Gender in value chains

Practical toolkit to integrate a gender perspective in agricultural value chain development

The toolkit was developed by Angelita Sengers of Fair & Sustainable Advisory Services, Amy Lemire of Frodos Farm, Marika Venderbosch, independent consultant, and Jacqueline Tarijano, coach of the gender in value chains coaching track of Agri-ProFocus in Uganda with support of Reet Smeets of Agri-ProFocus.



# Gender Action Learning System: Practical Guide for Transforming Gender and Unequal Power Relations in Value Chains

 Source: [Oxfam](#)

 Year published: 2020

 Sector: Agriculture

 Relevant approach: Social norms change methodologies

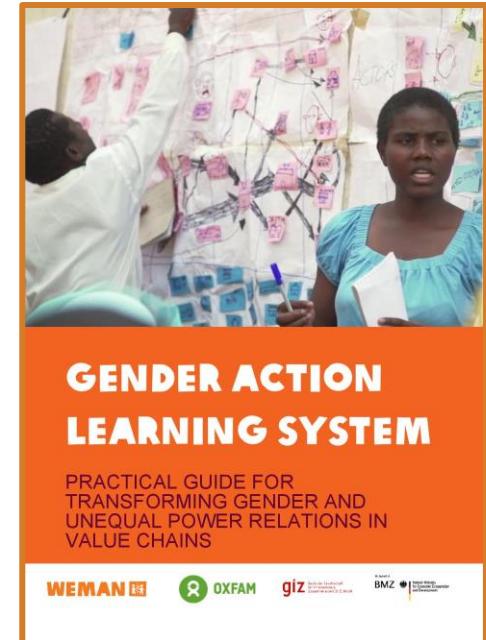
 Targeted level of engagement: Value chain | Communities

 Key components relevant to decision making:

- Monitoring and managing impact, p. 52
- GALS methodology and implementation process, p. 58

 Potential for scale: GALS is considered a complementary methodology that can be integrated in various economic development interventions; however, scalability may be challenging beyond the community-level.

 Inputs needed: Depending on the scale of the intervention, personnel is required to facilitate workshops and trainings.



# Promoting the leadership of women in producers' organizations: Lessons from the experiences of FAO and IFAD

 **Source:** [FAO, IFAD, European Union](#)

 **Year published:** 2015

 **Sector:** Agriculture

 **Relevant approaches:** Role models, mentors, and gender champions | Quotas | Women-only spaces

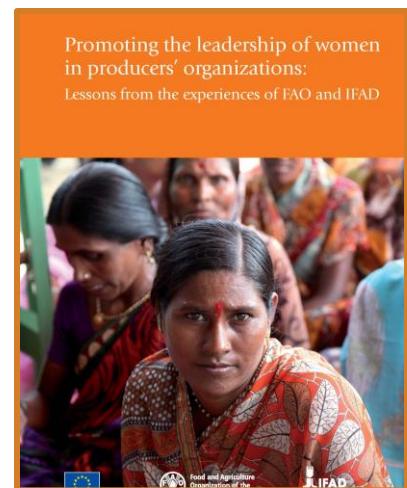
 **Targeted level of engagement:** Institutions

## **Key components relevant to decision making:**

- Part II: How to promote women's leadership in producers' organizations, p. 22
- Part III: How to address issues at the individual level, p. 30
- Annex I: Case Studies, p. 42
- Annex II: The Toolbox, including methodologies for increasing decision making within institutions, p. 68

 **Potential for scale:** Intended as a guide for implementers to support design and implementation of interventions in support of women's leadership in small-scale producer organizations.

 **Inputs needed:** Inputs for the methodologies described vary, yet are intended for use by producer organizations; therefore available budget and personnel must be taken into account.



# Participatory Gender Training for Community Groups: A Manual for Critical Discussion on Gender Norms, Roles and Relations

 **Source:** [CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems](#)

 **Year published:** 2016

 **Sector:** Agriculture | Water management

 **Relevant approaches:** Social norms change methodologies | Gender trainings

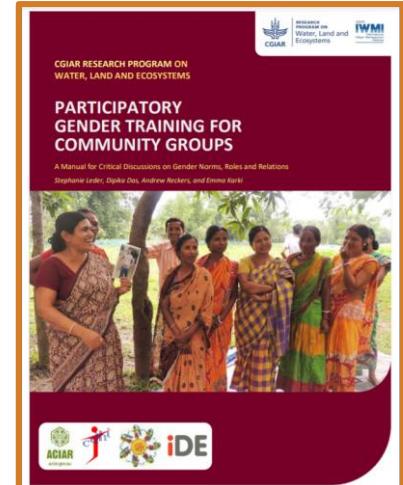
 **Targeted level of engagement:** Households | Institutions

 **Key components relevant to decision making:**

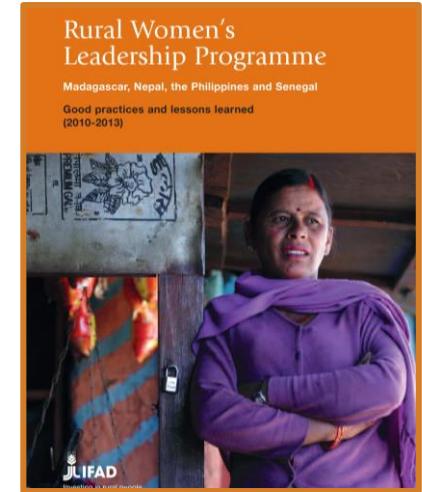
- Participatory training on social norms change, including joint decision making

 **Potential for scale:** Intended for community groups of 5-12 participants, this training may be applied at scale within the scope of a program.

 **Inputs needed:** This 3-hour training requires a facilitator.



# Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP): Madagascar, Nepal, the Philippines and Senegal



**Source:** [International Fund for Agricultural Development \(IFAD\)](#)

**Year published:** 2014

**Sector:** Agriculture | Rural development

**Relevant approaches:** Women-only spaces | Leadership skills capacity building | Encouraging women's participation in institutions

**Targeted level of engagement:** Institutions

**Key components relevant to decision making:**

- Lessons learned from the RWLP to inform similar programs, p. 6-17
- Box 4: Questions to assess support for women's leadership in farmers' organizations, p. 18
- Case studies on the RWLP in four different contexts, p. 20-39
- Box 8 & 9: leadership training recommendations, including competency goals p. 44, p.46

**Potential for scale:** Intended for use by practitioners to promote women's leadership at the institution level (e.g. rural organizations, including community-based organizations, self-help groups, trade unions, natural resource management groups, and producer organizations and their groups and federations); some tenets of the program may be scalable to larger programs

**Inputs needed:** This guidance document is targeted to NGOs, government, knowledge institutions, and other entities working with agricultural and rural organizations; in addition to personnel and financial resources, institutional buy-in and participation is necessary.

# Nurturing Connections – Adapted for Homestead Food Production and Nutrition

 **Source:** [Helen Keller International](#)

 **Year published:** 2013

 **Sector:** Agriculture

 **Relevant approaches:** Capacity building | Social norms change methodologies

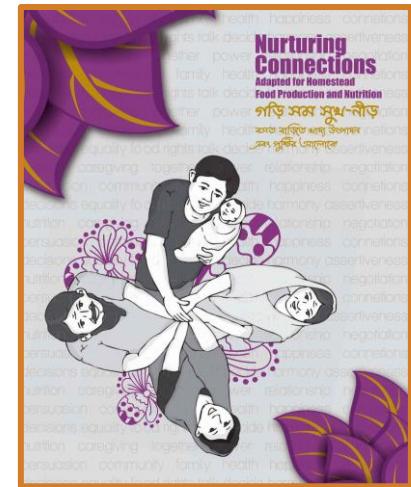
 **Targeted level of engagement:** Households | Institutions

 **Key components relevant to decision making:**

- Block 3: Negotiating Power, p. 47-66
- Block 4, Part 1: Asserting ourselves and making decisions together, p. 68

 **Potential for scale:** Nurturing Connections has been piloted in multiple programs, including at a market systems-level.

 **Inputs needed:** This curriculum requires facilitators that have experience in community engagement and participatory trainings.



# Household Dialogue Toolkit: Training Manual, best practices, and guidance for implementing the Household Dialogue activity

 **Source:** [Mercy Corps](#)

 **Year published:** 2018

 **Sector:** Women's economic empowerment

 **Relevant approach:** Social norms change methodologies

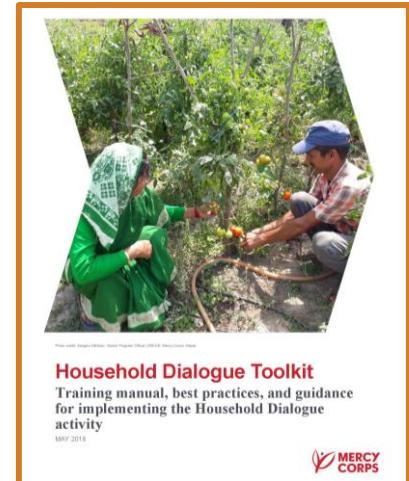
 **Targeted level of engagement:** Household

 **Key components relevant to decision making:**

- Household decision-making tool, p. 81

 **Potential for scale:** Intended for organizations and practitioners to strengthen programming through household-level interventions; may be implemented at scale within a program or region.

 **Inputs needed:** This tool is designed to be integrated and used within programs, and requires facilitators to carry out the activity.



# Social Norms Exploration Tool

 **Source:** [Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University](#)

 **Year published:** 2020

 **Sector:** Community-based development

 **Relevant approach:** Designing and planning interventions

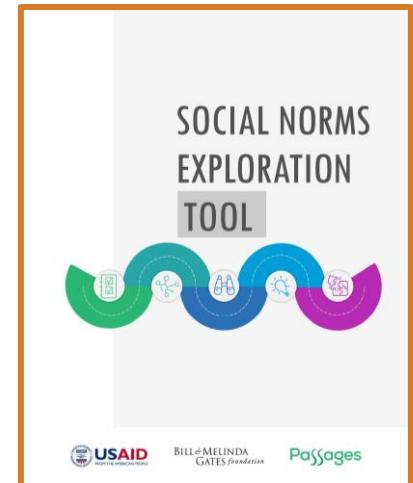
 **Targeted level of engagement:** Institutions | Communities

 **Key components relevant to decision making:**

- Understanding different types of social norms, p. 11
- Phase 5: Apply Findings, p. 54

 **Potential for scale:** Intended for program planners, implementers, or researchers working on interventions at the community-level.

 **Inputs needed:** This tool is structured for implementation by a core team, field team (including facilitators), and analysis team for an estimated 10 days, depending on the size of the targeted group involved (see p. 8)



# Measuring Women's Decision-Making Power

The following tools and metrics, recommended by practitioners or identified through an evidence scan, focus on measuring programmatic impacts on women's decision-making power, whether independently or as a component of women's agency.

# Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) & Instructional Guide on the Abbreviated Women's Empowerment Index (A-WEAI)

The screenshot shows the IFPRI website with a green header bar containing the IFPRI logo and navigation links for LIBRARY, NEWSLETTERS, MEDIA, VIDEOS, PRODUCTS, STAFF, WORK WITH US, and SEARCH. A red COVID-19 button is also present. Below the header, a yellow banner reads "PROJECT" and "WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AGRICULTURE INDEX (WEAI)". The main content area describes the WEAI as a comprehensive measure of women's empowerment in agriculture, composed of two sub-indices: one measuring women's empowerment across five domains in agriculture and another measuring gender parity in empowerment within the household. It also notes the tool measures women's empowerment relative to men within their households. A small photo of two women in a field is shown with the caption "Photo Credit: IFPRI/Partha Khan". Below the photo, a caption reads "Two women collect leafy vegetables in Khulna, Bangladesh, 2014."

**Source:** [International Food Policy Research Institute \(IFPRI\)](#)

**Year published:** 2020

**Sector:** Agriculture

**Relevant approach:** Measuring decision-making

**Targeted level of engagement:** Household | Institutions | Value chain

**Key components relevant to decision making:**

- The entirety of the guide provides instruction on implementing the A-WEAI in three parts:
  - Part A: Survey Design and Data Collection, p. 5
  - Part B: Index Construction, p. 14
  - Part C: Analysis, p. 24

**Potential for scale:** The WEAI is recommended for a minimum sample size of 400 households

**Inputs needed:** Enumerators, based on the sample size and which type of WEAI is implemented, as well as considerable resources to conduct analysis

# A Practical Guide to Measuring Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Impact Evaluations

 **Source:** [Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab \(J-PAL\)](#)

 **Year published:** 2019

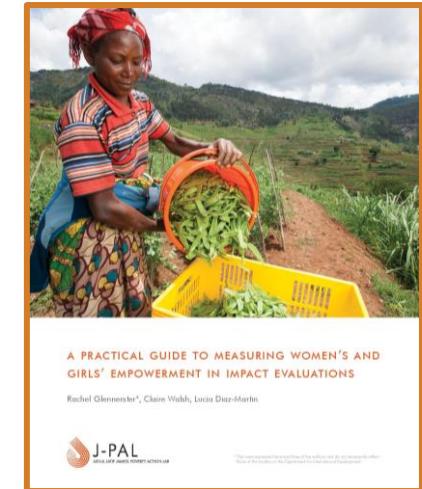
 **Sector:** Women's empowerment

 **Relevant approach:** Measuring decision-making

 **Targeted level of engagement:** Not specified

 **Key components relevant to decision making:**

- Visual and discussion of an empowerment framework related to agency/decision making, p. 5
- Guidance on conducting formative research including participative ranking methodology, p. 12-17
- Tips for selecting outcomes and indicators, p. 21-25
- Measuring the process of empowerment by measuring resources, agency, and achievements, p. 26
- Guidance on data collection, including non-survey instruments, p. 30



 **Potential for scale:** This guide is intended to support monitoring and evaluation practitioners in measuring women's and girls' empowerment in an impact evaluation.

 **Inputs needed:** Required resources are not anticipated to exceed those already required to implement an impact evaluation; however, the evaluation might benefit from a staff person being intentionally dedicated to incorporating measurement of women's empowerment.

# Practical Tools and Frameworks for Measuring Agency in Women's Economic Empowerment

 **Source:** [The SEEP Network](#)

 **Year published:** 2019

 **Sector:** Economic development

 **Relevant approach:** Measuring decision-making

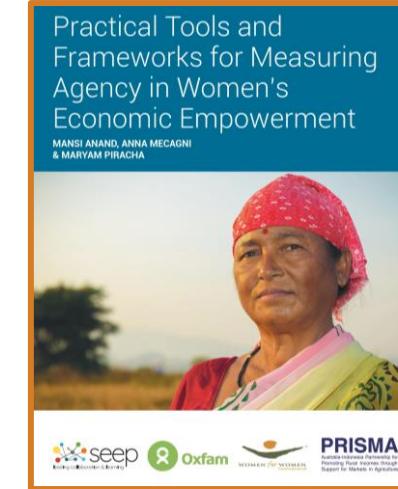
 **Targeted level of engagement:** Household | Institutions

 **Key components relevant to decision making:**

- Challenges of measuring women's agency plus existing frameworks and measures, p. 7-9
- Sample indicators to measure women's agency, p. 9-10
- Program examples of agency measurement, throughout document

 **Potential for scale:** Intended for use by practitioners to measure agency in women's economic empowerment at the program level, however many of the methodologies may be appropriate for measuring women's agency at scale in large programs or across programs.

 **Inputs needed:** Required resources vary depending on the measurement framework or method used, however most presented methods are feasible within the scope of a program team, particularly if measurement approaches are integrated into program design.



# The Women's Agency Scale 61 (WAS-61): A Comprehensive Measure of Women's Intrinsic, Instrumental, and Collective Agency

 **Source:** [Emory University](#)

 **Year published:** n.d.

 **Sector:** Women's empowerment

 **Relevant approach:** Measuring decision-making

 **Targeted level of engagement:** Household

 **Key components relevant to decision making:**

- Survey instruments as examples of indicators and questions, p. 27-40

 **Potential for scale:** The WAS-61 tool requires validation in additional samples to confirm its widespread utility, but potentially could be applied for conducting impact evaluations.

 **Inputs needed:** There is no evident guide for using this measurement tool, therefore the author and/or publishing organization would likely need to be involved in implementing it.

WOMEN'S AGENCY SCALE 61

**The Women's Agency Scale 61 (WAS-61): A Comprehensive Measure of Women's Intrinsic, Instrumental, and Collective Agency**

Received by WOMEN'S AGENCY SCALE 61  
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# Gender Progress Markers

 **Source:** [MEDA](#)

 **Year published:** 2020

 **Sector:** Women's empowerment | Monitoring and evaluation

 **Relevant approach:** Measuring decision-making

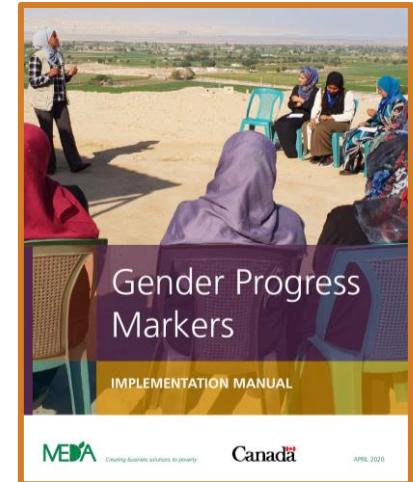
 **Targeted level of engagement:** Institutions

 **Key components relevant to decision making:**

- The GPM Development Process, including agency as a domain, p. 10
- Recommendations, p. 20
- Gender Progress Markers: FGD and KII Guide with sample questions, p. 22

 **Potential for scale:** Intended to be a resource of information and guidance for MEDA and external organizations implementing projects and programs.

 **Inputs needed:** This is a reference tool intended to be used by existing project managers, both at headquarters and field locations; there is no indication of additional required resources, however the tool does recommend a gender analysis.



# Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment

 **Source:** [ICRW](#)

 **Year published:** 2011

 **Sector:** Women's economic empowerment

 **Relevant approach:** Measuring decision-making

 **Targeted level of engagement:** Households | Institutions

 **Key components relevant to decision making:**

- Power and Agency Indicators on decision making, p. 8

 **Potential for scale:** Sample indicators may be applied to programs at scale.

 **Inputs needed:** Measurement strategies and indicators may be integrated into programs with existing monitoring and evaluation structures.

