



Gender, Assets, Empowerment, and Resilience: Evidence and insights for programs

Fragile Lives Conference 2024

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Berlin | October 1, 2024



Impacts of crises are not gender neutral

“Women are disproportionately harmed by crises, given the structural and normative barriers that limit their resilience and ability to respond effectively. More so than for men, shocks reduce women’s access to food and dietary diversity, decision-making power within their households, assets, services like healthcare, and physical safety, and also deepen their time poverty. These vulnerabilities stem from women’s already limited access to resources, technologies, and services — which is intensified by shocks and crises — as well as to channels of power and influence that could help them benefit from crisis response policies and programming.”

Kosec, Katrina; and Swinnen, Johan. 2023. The road to resilience: Rethinking responses to food crises. In *Global Food Policy Report 2023: Rethinking Food Crisis Responses*. Chapter 1, Pp. 6-19. https://doi.org/10.2499/9780896294417_01



Overview

- Existing evidence that crises affect men and women differently
 - Evidence from Bangladesh and Uganda
- Exploring effectiveness of potential solutions to avoid crises by examining impacts on women's empowerment and gender equality
 - Validated measures of empowerment
 - Evaluating effectiveness of integrated agriculture-nutrition-gender intervention in promoting resilience in Bangladesh
- Applying the Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform Framework to improve effectiveness of anticipatory action for women in Nepal and Nigeria



Existing evidence

- Neither vulnerability to risk nor the capacity to cope with shocks is equal among genders
- Asset disposal is often used to smooth consumption, with consequences for long-term poverty trajectories. Whose assets are disposed of first varies by gender and context
- Decisionmaking and control and ownership over assets key to bargaining power and empowerment

Questions for exploration

Can a gender- and nutrition-sensitive agricultural development program

- Enhance agency and empowerment?
- Build resilience?

Evidence from the impact evaluation of the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Gender Linkages Project in Bangladesh (2016-2018), and its medium-term follow-up (2022)

To what extent do current anticipatory action efforts reach, benefit, and empower women, and transform gender (and power) relations?

Indicative findings from qualitative work in Nepal and Nigeria, on anticipatory action programming in flood-prone communities



Part 1: A focus on assets

- Men & women's assets respond differently to shocks, depending on type of asset and ownership category (sole or joint)
- Whose assets are most affected differs by context, but women's assets tend to be less protected
- This has implications for women's bargaining power and empowerment, if assets are correlated with empowerment, and for the design of social protection systems



Assets: The wealth of families



Different assets can be held by men, women, and jointly—this varies across cultures



Why look at gender-differentiated asset dynamics?

- General: Evidence that risk is not pooled within households (Ethiopia—Dercon and Krishnan; Cote d'Ivoire—Dulfo and Udry; Ghana—Goldstein) and that risk perceptions may also differ between men and women (East Africa--Doss, McPeak, Barrett)
- Considerable empirical evidence rejects unitary model of the household in many countries and specifically for Bangladesh. Unlike in the unitary model,
 - Individuals do not have the same preferences
 - Resources are not pooled within the household
- Social norms favoring female seclusion lead women to be systematically excluded from labor markets in Bangladesh
- Anthropological evidence (Thailand, Indonesia, Bangladesh) suggests that men and women have different asset accumulation strategies, and use their assets in different ways to cope with shocks
- This has implications for the design of social protection mechanisms

Research questions

- Are asset dynamics different for joint and exclusively-held assets? How do these differ from household asset dynamics?
- Is the impact of negative events and processes (flood shocks, dowries, illness, death) different on husband-, wife- and jointly-owned assets? Are these mitigated by positive events?
- How are cultural differences in concepts of marriage, definition of assets, jointness of assets reflected in asset dynamics?

Conceptual framework

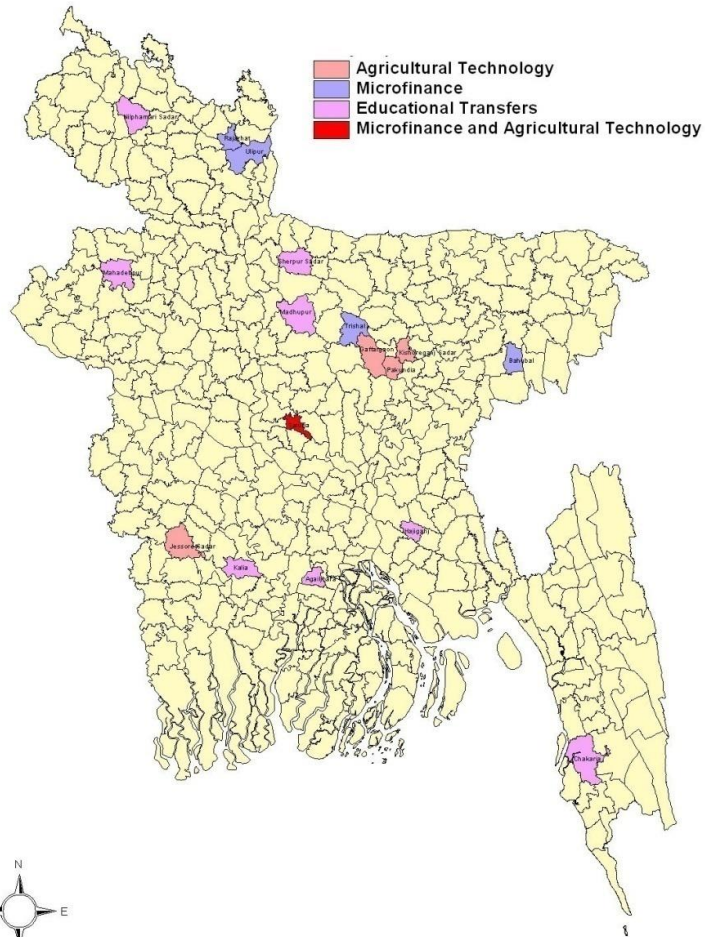
- Barrett, Carter, others: Theory of dynamic poverty traps, empirically tested using data from SSA
- Based on observation that it is easier to measure assets than consumption expenditure or income
- Parametric and nonparametric methods used to derive a dynamic asset frontier, showing relationship between hh asset holdings in two periods

Survey design and data

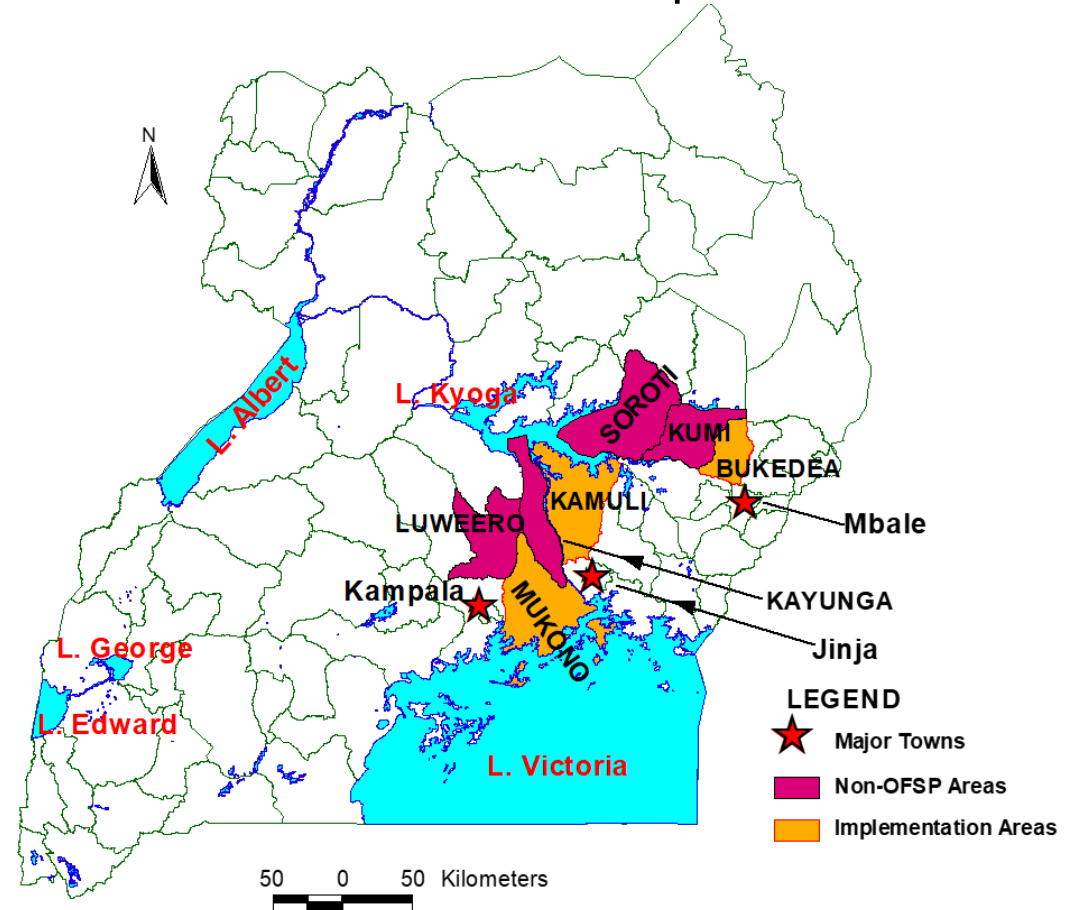


Map of study sites, Bangladesh and Uganda

Bangladesh, 2007 and 2010
CPRC Poverty Transitions Study



Uganda, 2007 and 2009
OSP REU Impact Evaluation



In both countries

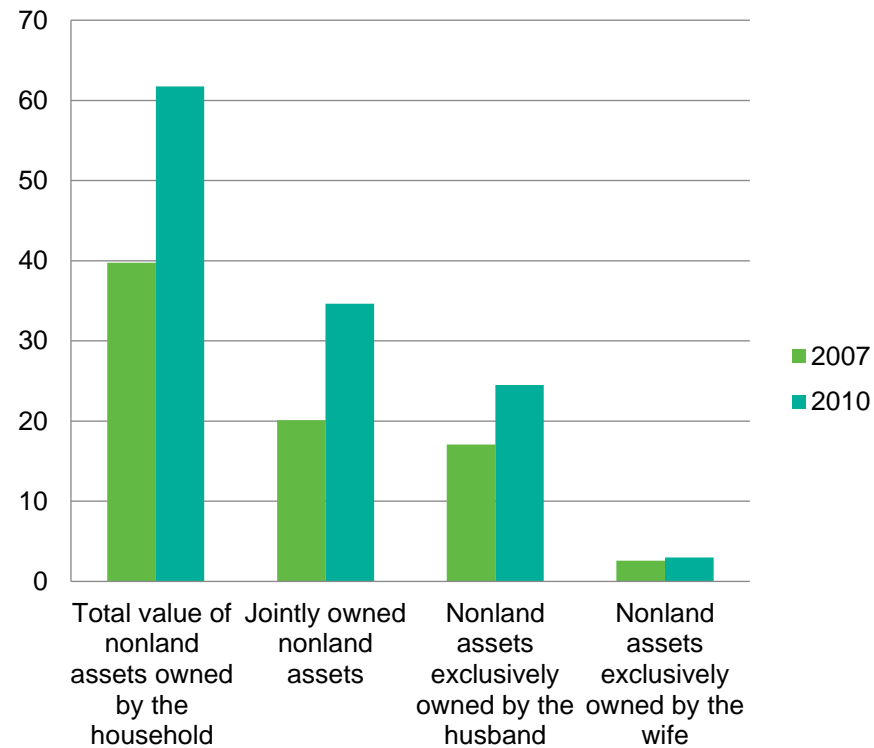
- Surveys conducted with baseline in 2007 and follow-up after the food price crisis (Bangladesh panel is older—1996-97)
- Detailed gender disaggregated data (in Uganda, baseline gender disaggregation collected retrospectively)
- Ownership categories: Joint, husband, wife assets
- Analysis limited to intact, monogamous couples (couples that stayed together between 2007 and 2009/10, excluding polygamous households)
- Regression analysis estimated coefficients of shocks (covariate, idiosyncratic) on asset categories, by type of ownership



Assets have grown over time, but there are clear gender differences in asset ownership

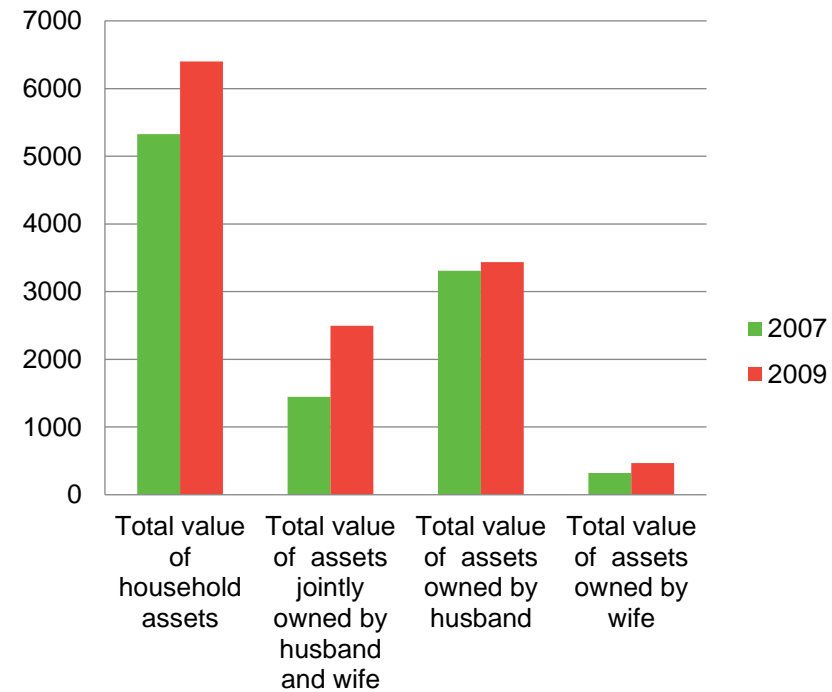
Bangladesh

Total value of assets by ownership status, in '000 taka (2007 values)



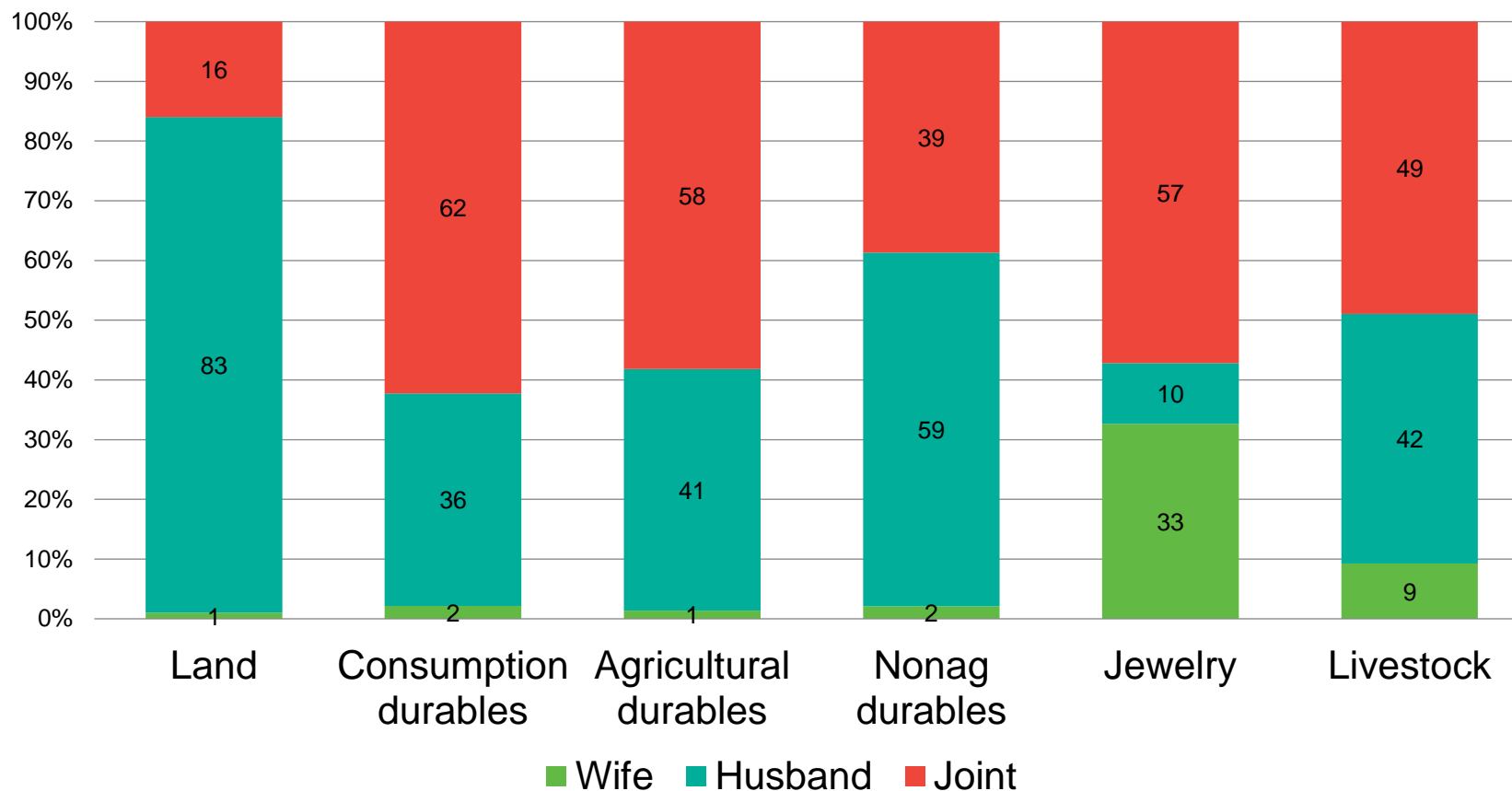
Uganda

Total Value of Assets by ownership status in '000 UGS (2007 values)



Different types of assets are held individually and jointly in Bangladesh—joint assets dominate, except for land

Ownership shares by type of asset, 2010



In Uganda, joint assets are less important than husband's assets across most categories

Ownership Shares by type of Asset, 2009



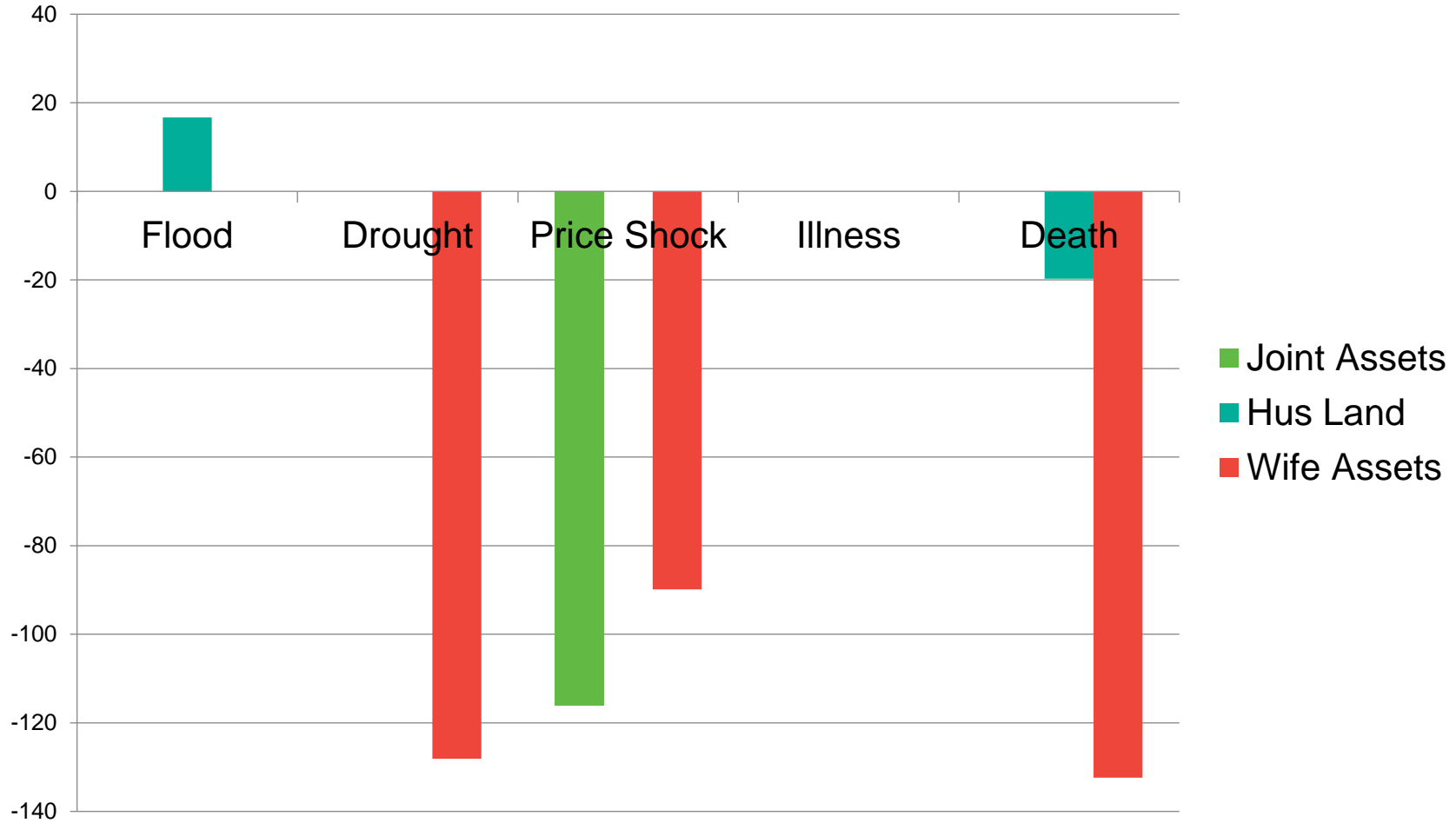
Impacts of shocks on men's, women's and joint assets



Predicted change in assets as a proportion of baseline holdings, Bangladesh



Predicted change in assets as a proportion of baseline holdings, Uganda



Shocks appear to have differential impacts on assets, depending on who owns the asset, and depending on context

- In **Bangladesh**, hhs experiencing a food price shock:
 - Protected jointly held land and assets, but not individually-owned assets
 - **Illness shocks: ↓ women's assets**
- In **Uganda**, hhs experiencing a food price shock protected husband's assets, but not wife's or jointly-held assets
- These ideas stayed on the back burner for a while. It was very difficult to publish this paper because it was an observational study, although it was eventually published.

Part 2: Exploring solutions to build empowerment and resilience

- To monitor progress towards empowerment, we need to define and measure it
 - Introducing the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index and its variants
- Impact evaluation of a gender- and nutrition-sensitive agricultural intervention in Bangladesh
 - Impacts on empowerment (short-term): All treatments had positive impacts on women's empowerment
 - Impacts on resilience (medium-term): Combined interventions targeting agriculture and nutrition, or agriculture, nutrition, and gender, also built resilience

Women's empowerment and gender equality as intrinsic goals



- Elevation of women's empowerment and gender equality to a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG5) created demand for better metrics. Following Atkinson:
 1. motivate political action
 2. monitor progress
 3. help guide the design of effective policy actions: what works and what doesn't
- While there are many measures of gender equality (e.g. Global Gender Gap Index) fewer measures of empowerment

Defining empowerment (Kabeer 1999)

A **process of change** resulting in an “**expansion** in people's ability to make **strategic life choices** in a context where this ability was **previously denied** to them

The capacity to define one's own goals and make strategic choices in pursuit of these goals, particularly in a context where this ability was previously denied

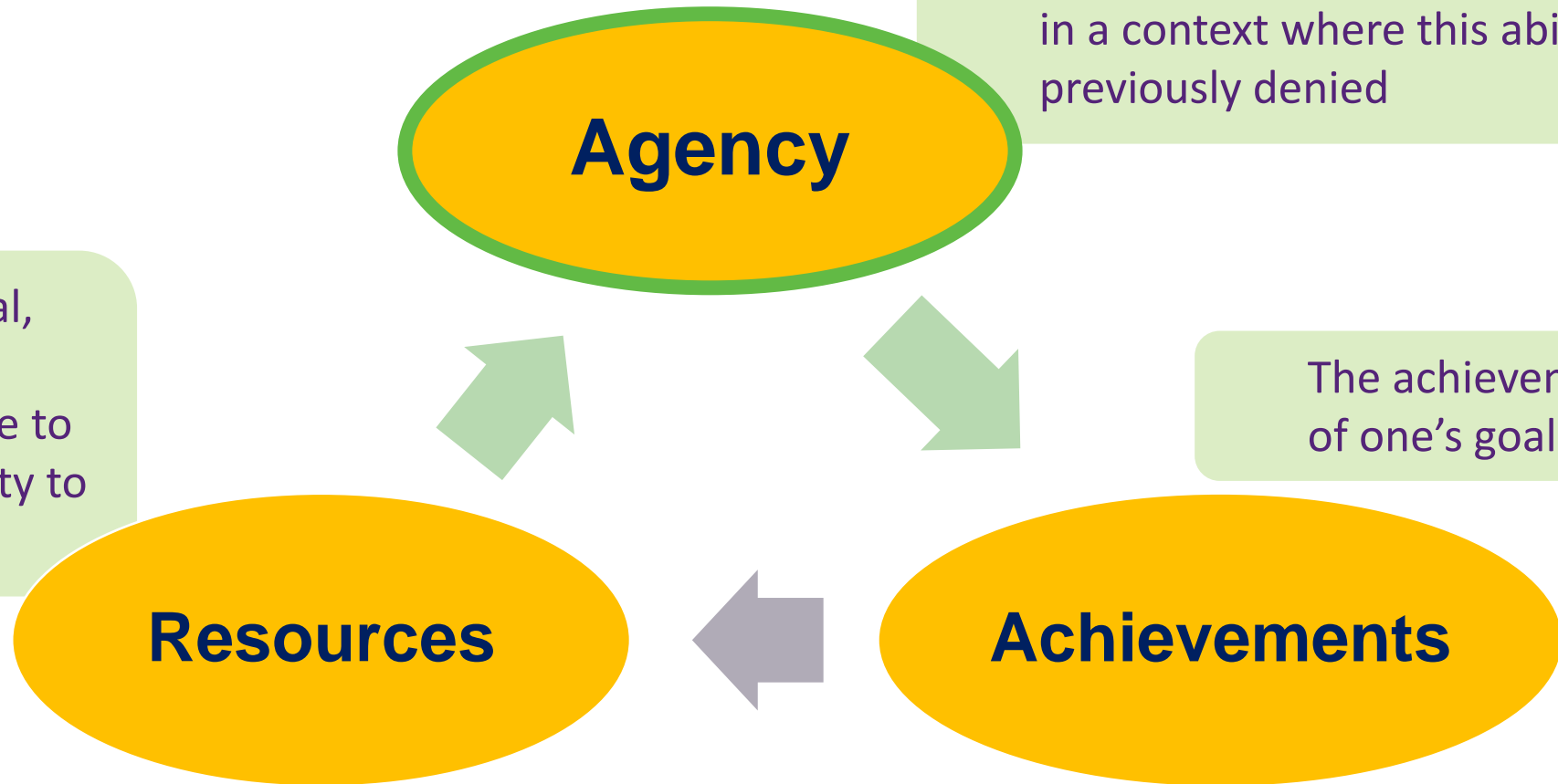
Agency

The various material, human, and social resources that serve to enhance one's ability to exercise choice

Resources

The achievement of one's goals

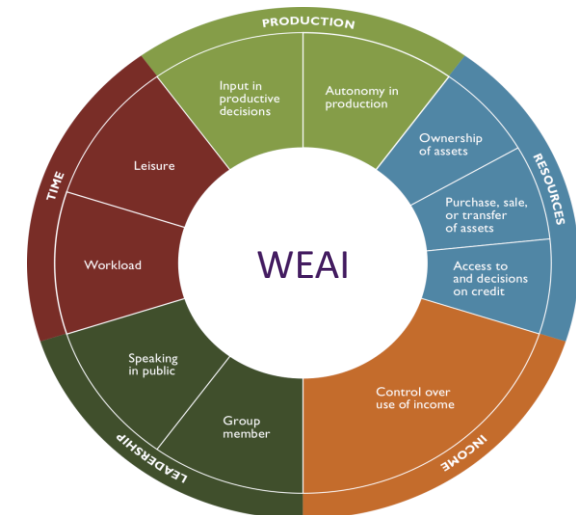
Achievements



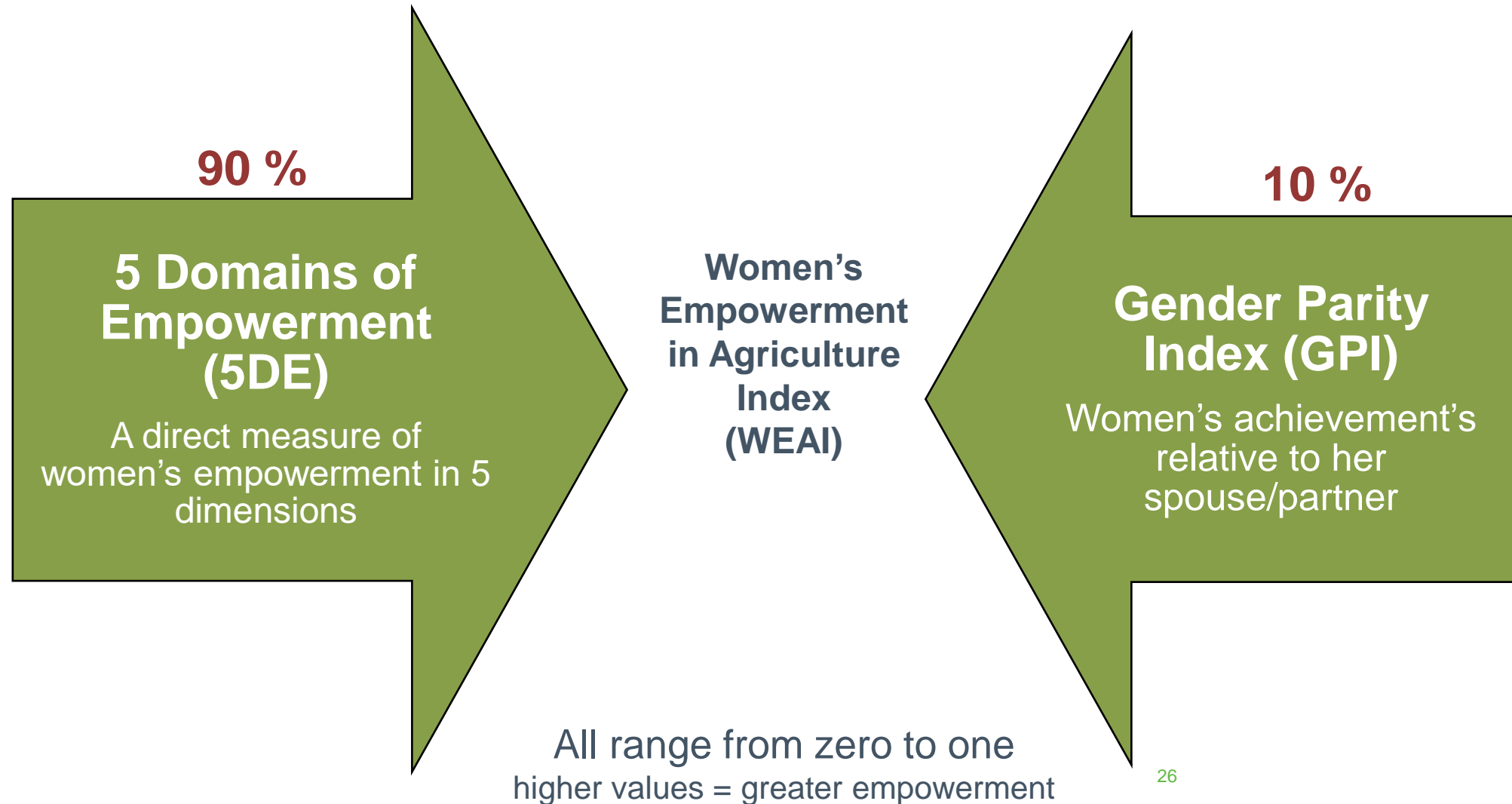
Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (Alkire et al. 2013)

- Developed by USAID, IFPRI & OPHI in 2012
- Measures inclusion of women in the agricultural sector
- **Survey-based** – interviews men and women in the same household
- Designed to look at decision-making and control over livelihoods, resources, and income (both sole and joint), mostly in agriculture, and in population-based surveys
- Covers 5 domains of empowerment: production, resources, income, leadership, time

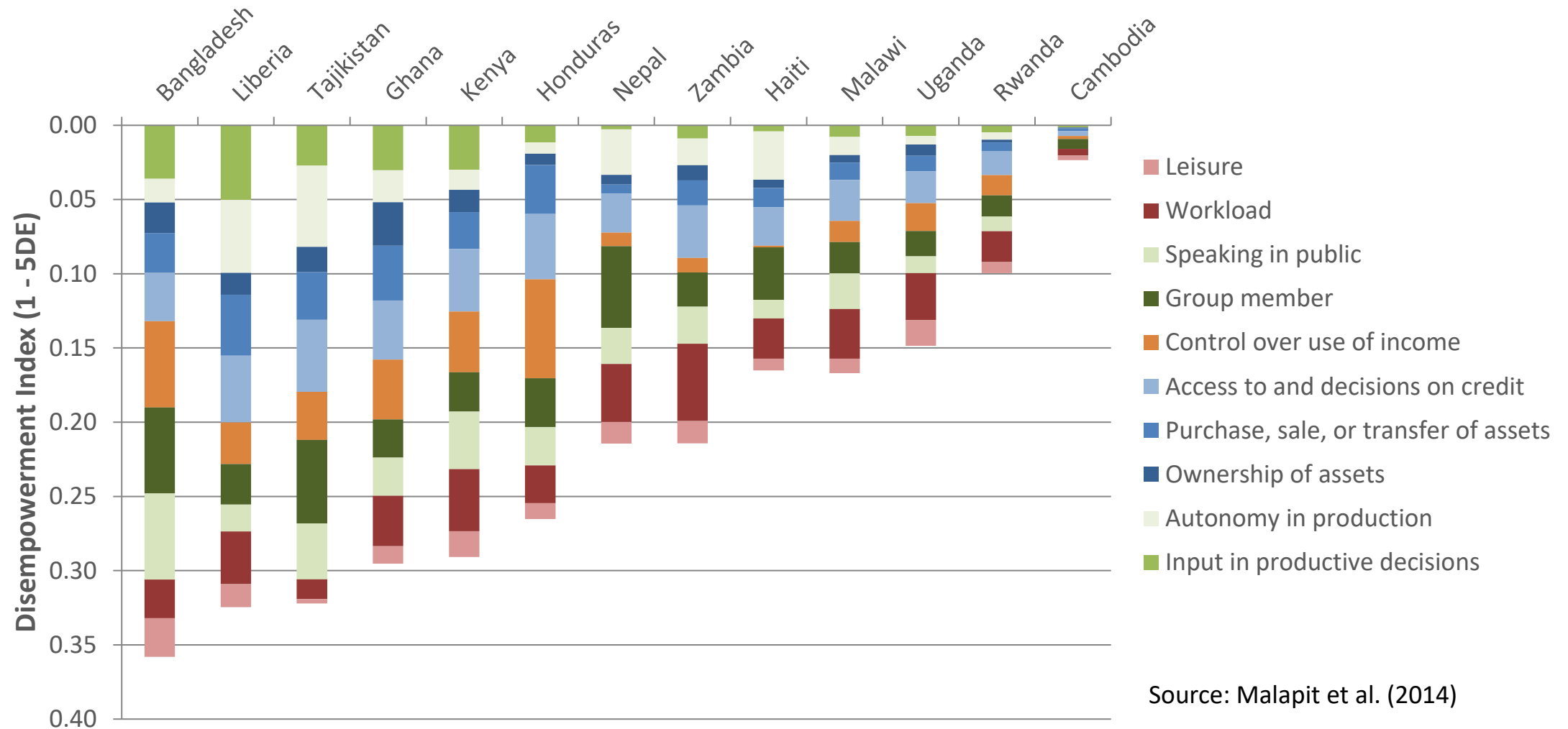
By collecting data on women & men in the same household, allows us to measure gender parity



WEAI is made up of two sub-indices



Cross-country baseline findings showed that credit, workload and group membership are constraints across countries



Source: Malapit et al. (2014)

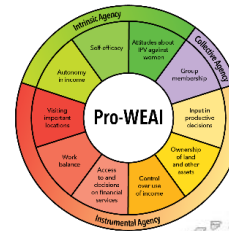


THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AGRICULTURE INDEX:

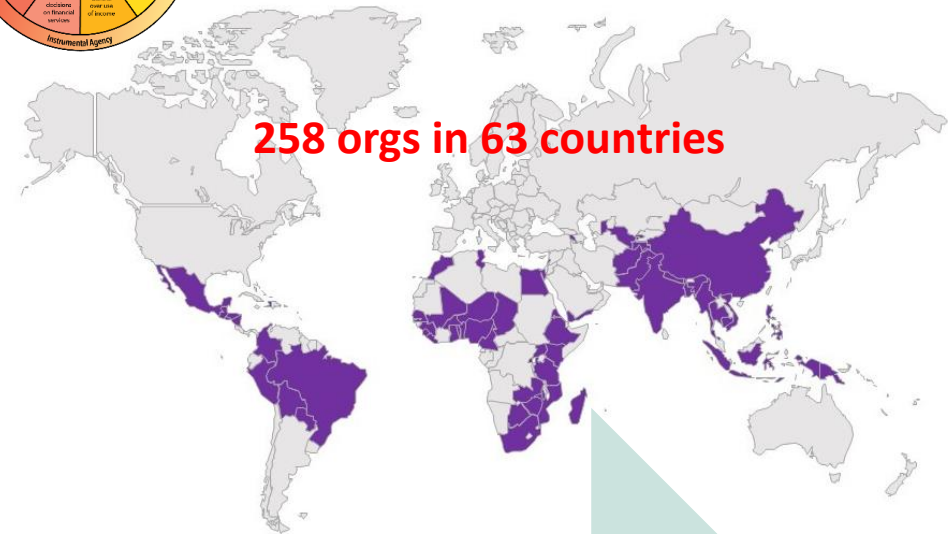
A suite of methods for measuring empowerment and gender equality



How it started...



How it's going...



**WEAI & A-WEAI
for population-
based monitoring**

**Pro-WEAI &
adaptations for
projects**

**Going beyond
production to
market inclusion**

**Scaling up via
national
statistical
systems**



Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform (RBET) Framework



Include women in program activities

Reaching women means ensuring that women have the same opportunity to access the program activities as men.

Increase women's well-being (e.g. food security, economic empowerment, health).

Requires more than reaching women:

- *Women value the intervention*
- *Direct benefits accrue to women*
- *Women's needs, preferences and constraints are considered in the intervention design and implementation arrangements*

Strengthen ability of women to make strategic life choices and to put those choices into action.

Goes beyond reaching and benefiting women:

- *Increases women's agency*
- *Changes gender attitudes among participants**

**could be considered transformative, though depends on scale*

Goes beyond the woman to change gender norms and **structures** on a larger scale (changing households, communities and systems).

Goes beyond empowering individual women:

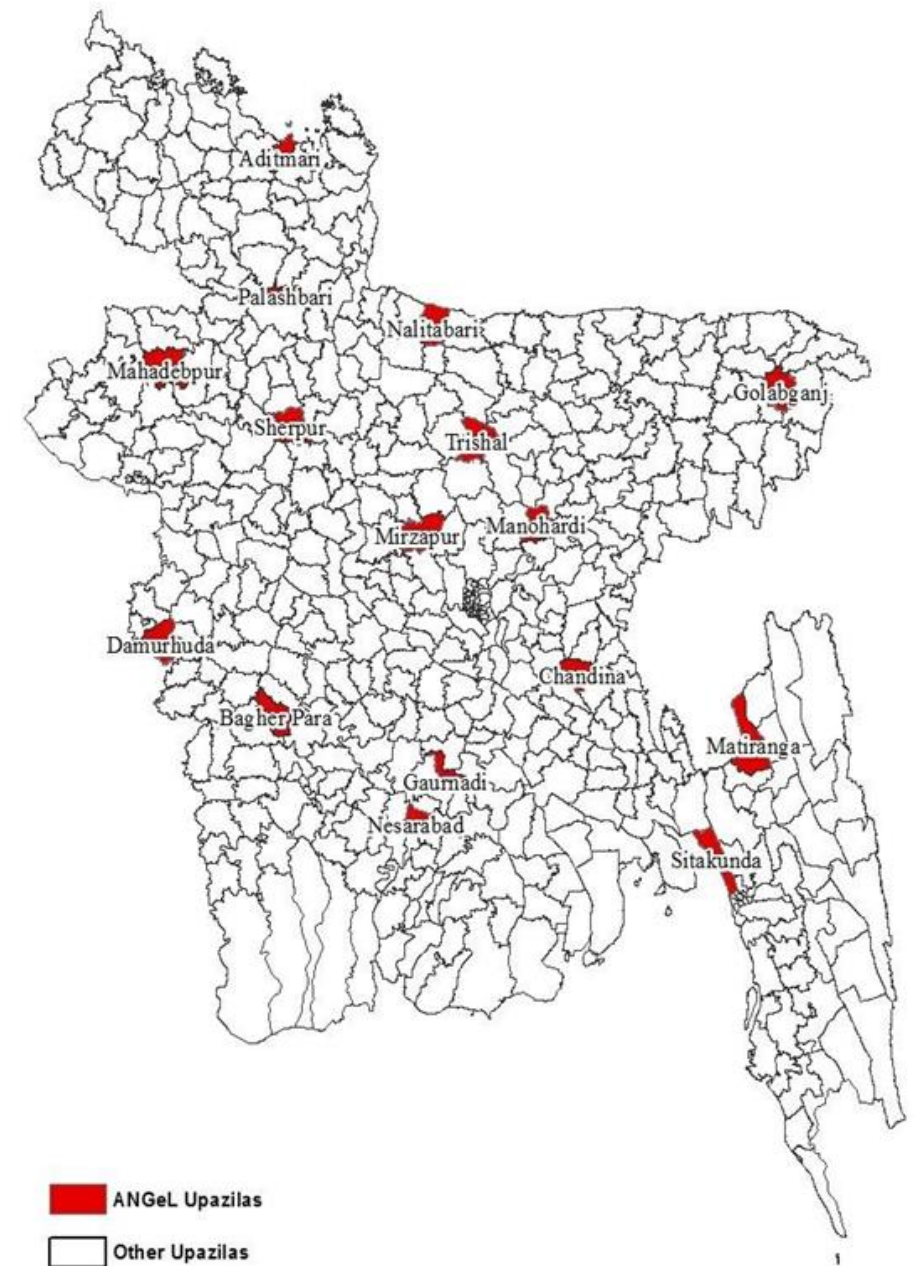
- *Involves men*
- *Changes gender norms at the community and societal levels*
- *Addresses structural, systemic, and institutional barriers*
- *Mobilizes the power of the collective*
- *Commitment to address unequal power relations*



Source: Johnson et al. 2018; Morgan et al. 2023, Quisumbing et al. 2023

Agriculture, Nutrition, and Gender Linkages (ANGeL) Project Aims

- To increase **farm incomes** through agricultural production diversification, improve diet quality (consumption of micronutrient rich foods), and increase women's empowerment in agriculture.
- To be **scalable**. Agriculture and nutrition training delivered by sub-assistant agricultural officers (SAAOs) – also referred to as agricultural extension agents – who are permanent employees of the Bangladesh Ministry of Agriculture. Treatment arms encompassed 16 sub-districts and all eight administrative divisions (regions) of Bangladesh
- To be **gender sensitive**. Husbands and wives were trained together to break down distinctions between “women's” activities (e.g. child rearing) and “men's” activities (e.g. growing crops).



Original study design and resurvey

Cluster RCT in rural Bangladesh

Husbands and wives participated in the following treatment arms

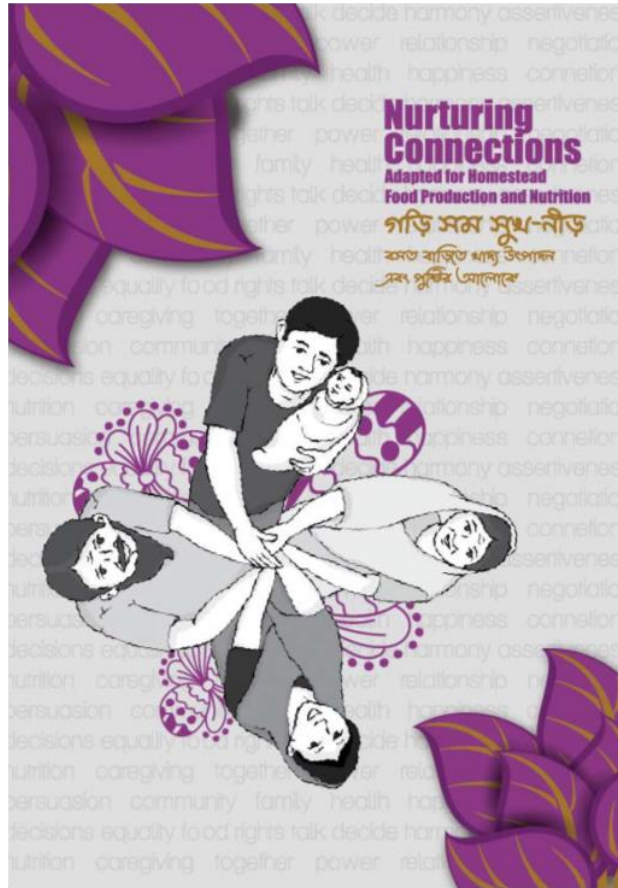
- **T-A: Agricultural Production training**
- **T-N1: Nutrition Behavior Change Communication (BCC)**
- **T-N2: Nutrition BCC**
- **T-AN: Agricultural Production training and Nutrition BCC**
- **T-ANG: Agricultural Production training, Nutrition BCC, and Gender Sensitization**
- **C: Control**

T-N1, T-A, T-AN were implemented by government agriculture extension agents as was the agriculture and nutrition BCC components of **T-ANG**

T-N2 was implemented by an NGO (Helen Keller International)

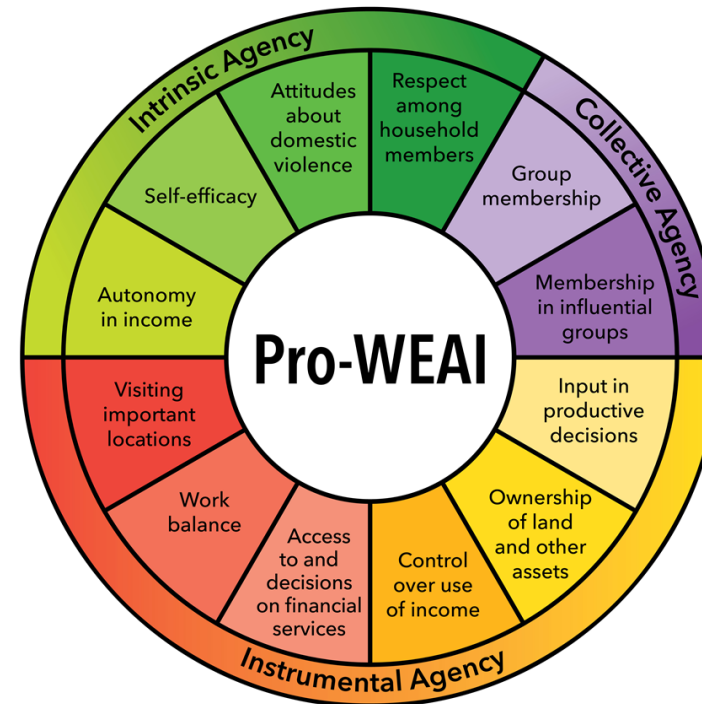


Gender sensitization: based on HKI's Nurturing Connections Curriculum



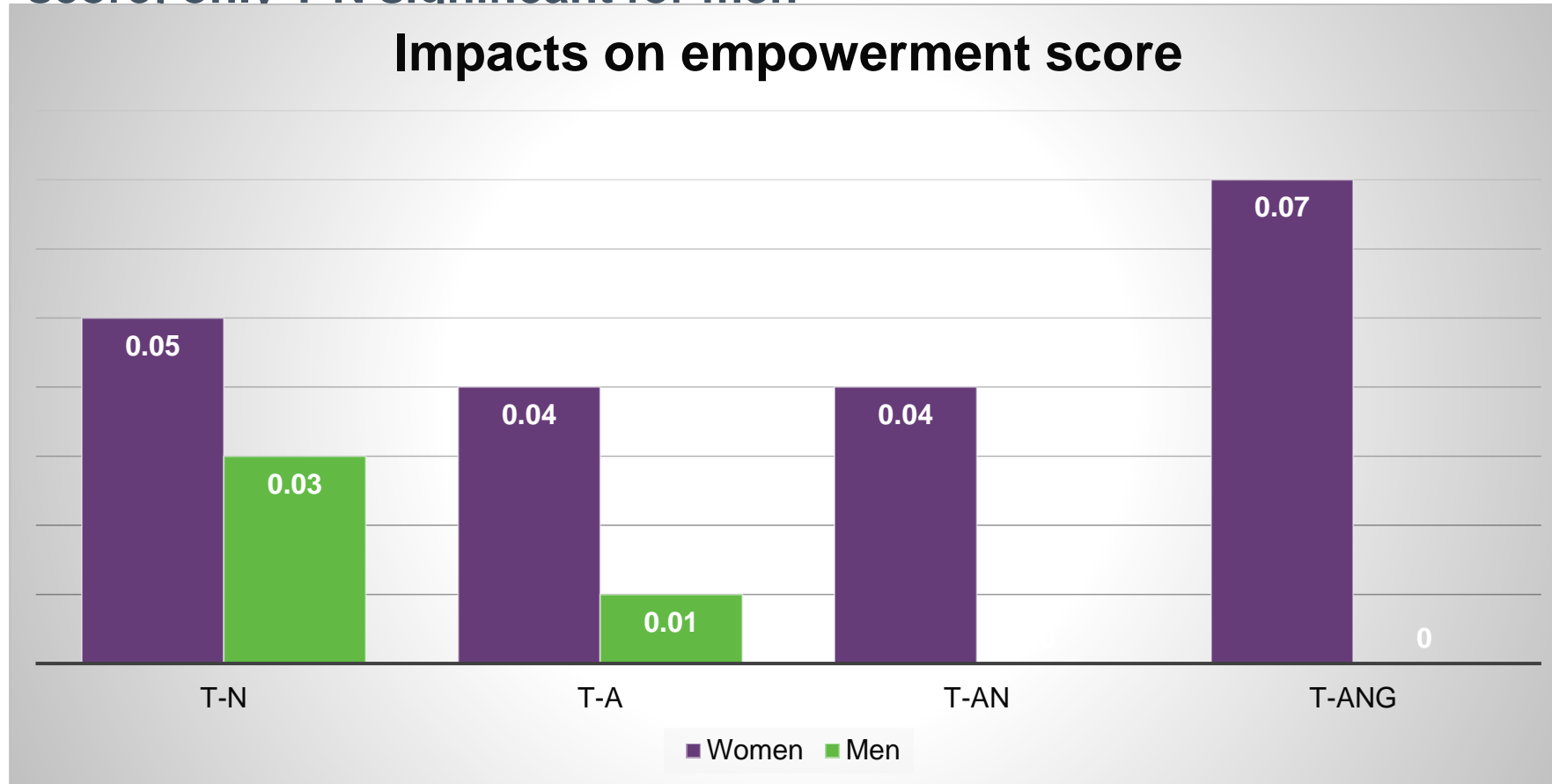
Empowerment (pro-WEAI) (Malapit et al. 2019)

- **Empowerment score** (continuous, ranges from 0-1, individual): Weighted sum of the 12 pro-WEAI indicators
- **Whether empowered** (binary, individual): Adequate in at least 75 percent, or 9 out of 12, indicators
- **Gender parity** (binary, household): Woman is empowered or has at least the same adequacy score as the man respondent in the HH



Individual: data collected on woman and man in the same household

All treatments have significant impacts on women's empowerment score: only T-N significant for men



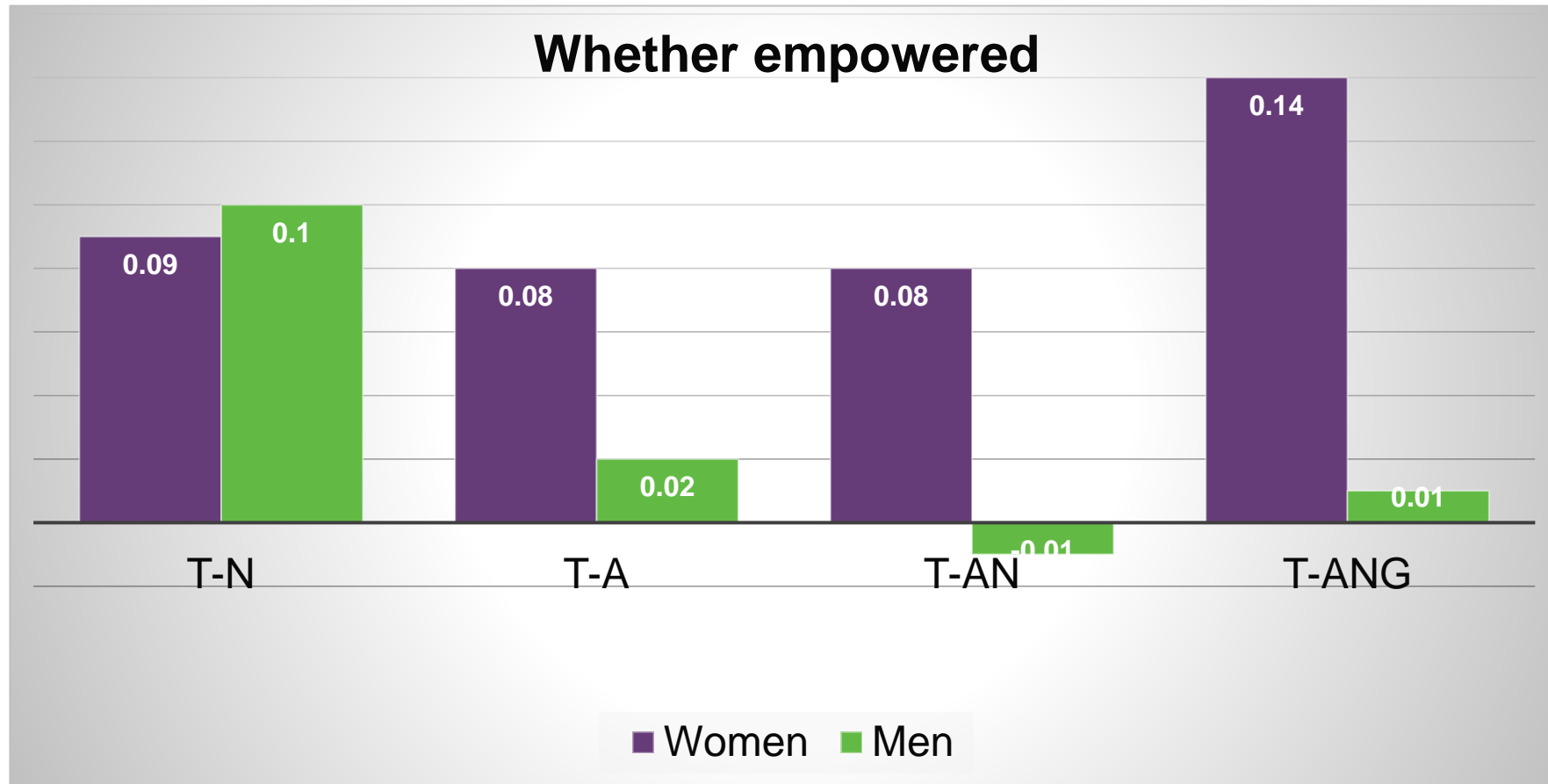
Endline control mean: Women: 0.59, Men: 0.67

Wald tests: Women: no significant difference across treatments

Men: Reject $T-N=T-AN$, $T-N=T-ANG$



All treatments significantly increase likelihood of women being empowered; only T-N significant for men (+)



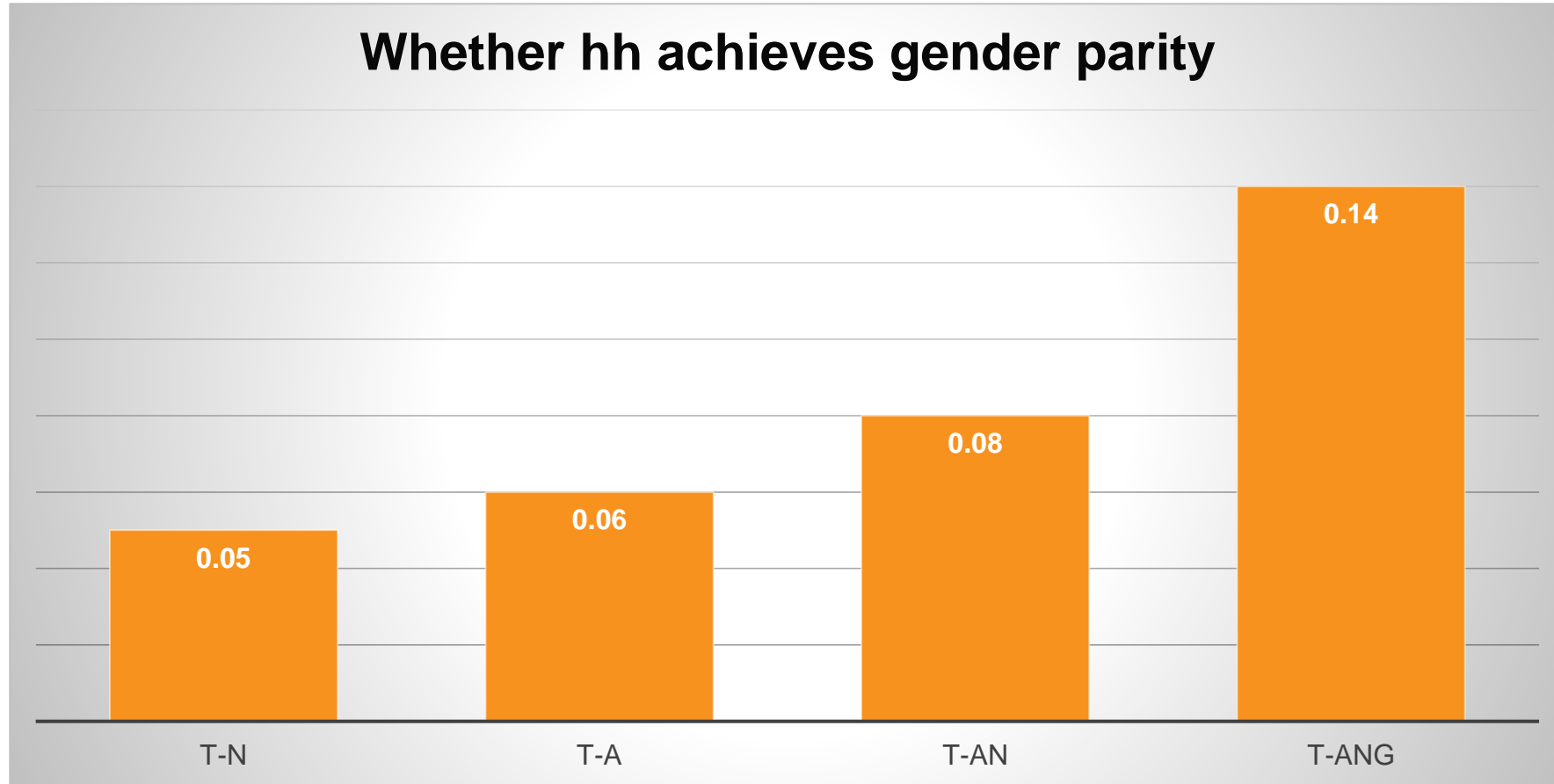
Endline control mean: women 0.25, men 0.39

All impacts statistically significant for women

Only T-N significant for men



T-AN and T-ANG have statistically significant impacts on the likelihood the hh achieves gender parity



Endline control mean: 0.47

Treatments not statistically significantly different
except reject null that $T-N = T-ANG$



Summary of results

- Overall: Success! See Ahmed et al. 2023a, 2023b, Quisumbing et al. 2021
- ANGeL increased both women's and men's empowerment, raised prevalence of households achieving gender parity
- Increases in magnitudes of impact on women's empowerment status (between 8-14 pp) meaningful
- ANGeL empowered women without disempowering men; T-N increased both men's scores and empowerment status
- No unintended impacts on workloads
- Inconclusive evidence of possible increases in IPV



Follow-up study (2022)

- **Shocks:** Typhoon Fani (May 2019); Covid-19 (prevented resurvey in 2020)
- **Households resurveyed in 2022: T-A, T-AN, T-ANG, Control** (funding limitations did not allow resurvey of N1 and N2 arms)
- Main questions:
 1. Were households exposed to the different treatments more resilient?
 2. Were gains from the intervention (especially empowerment) sustained over time?



Outcome measures

- **Resilience:** Livelihoods Coping Strategy Index
 - Based on 10 questions: “We would now like to ask whether, and how often, members of your household have to engage in any of the following behaviors due to a lack of food or a lack of money to buy food or meet other basic needs since the start of the coronavirus (Covid 19) pandemic in March 2020?”
 - Based on WFP (2023), classify into 3 categories: stress, crisis, emergency
- **Consumption:** Log real per capita consumption, real per capita food expenditure
- **Diets:** Household Global Diet Quality Score
- **Assets:** Total household assets, share of women’s assets (different categories)
- **Empowerment:** pro-WEAI (administered at endline 2018 and 2022)

Preliminary results (Hoddinott et al. 2023)

- Combined training in the diversification of agricultural production and nutrition BCC (with or without gender sensitization training) had sustainable effects on:
 - Real per capita **consumption**
 - Women's **empowerment**
 - Household **asset** holdings in 2022;
 - Built resilience
- Reduced the need for the use of livelihood coping strategies when most households were coping with the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic (and some dealing with the consequences of Cyclone Fani)
 - Less likely to experience reductions in real per capita consumption
 - More likely to maintain the gains in consumption and improvements in diet that they had obtained as a result of the ANGeL intervention
- Agricultural training alone did not build resilience

Part 3. Using the Reach, Benefit, Empower, and Transform Framework to improve effectiveness of anticipatory action for women



Using a RBET Framework to improve effectiveness of anticipatory action for women

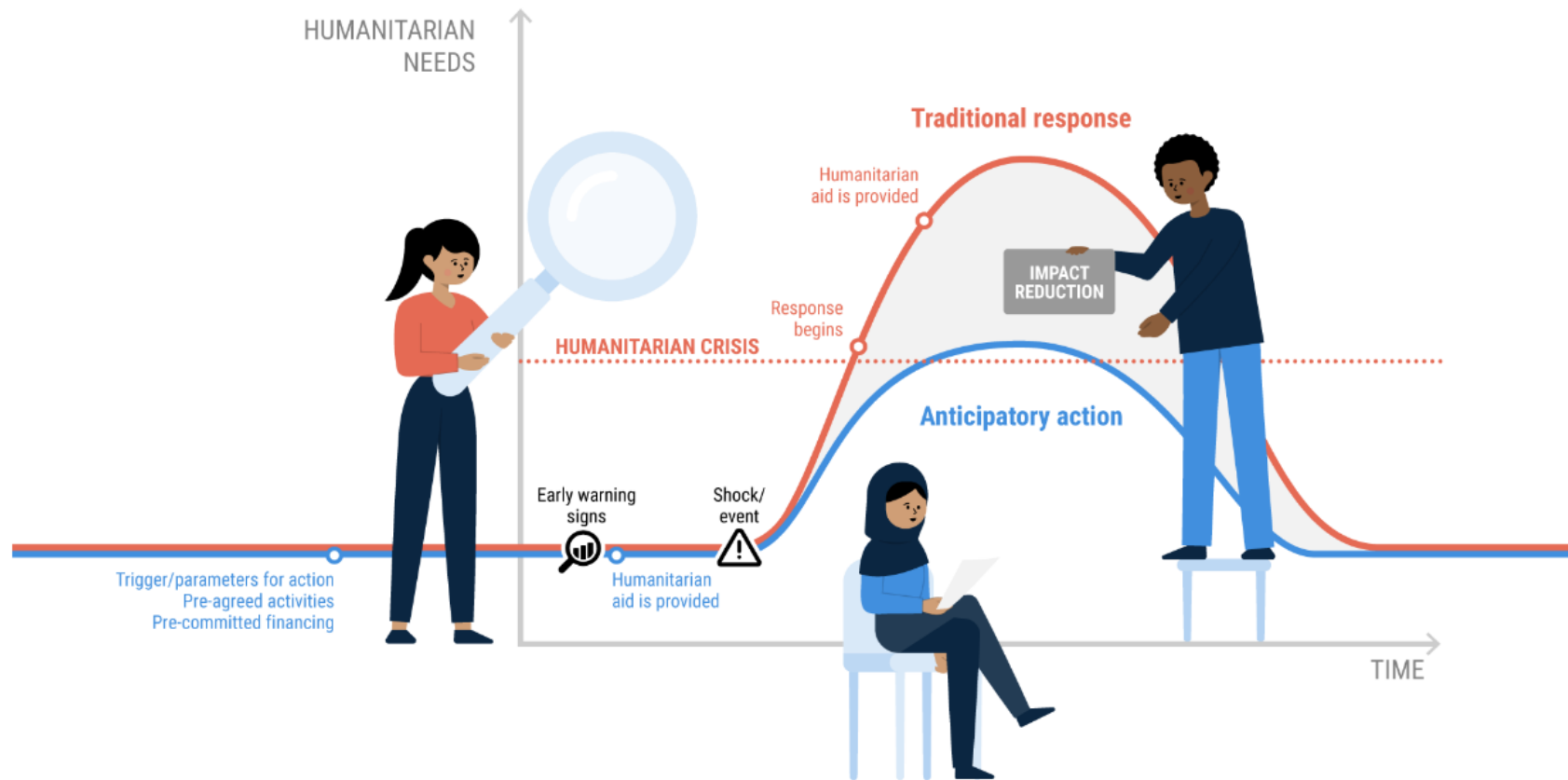
Preliminary Learnings from Nepal and Nigeria

Amica Rapadas, Ana Madero, Caitlin Mittrick, Teresa Gonzales, Katrina Kosec, Jordan Kyle, Emily Myers, and Agnes Quisumbing

What is anticipatory action?

- Anticipatory action framework: formal mechanism that enables humanitarian organizations to collectively get ahead of a predictable shock and mitigate its impact by pre-agreeing who will receive funding for what and based on which rules and triggers.
- Fundamentally different from humanitarian response and development programming.
- Actions taken in advance of a crisis, before either the shock or its peak impact.
- Therefore, anticipatory action makes acting the default when risks, not needs, increase.
- Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)





Source: OCHA <https://anticipatory-action-toolkit.unocha.org/first-steps/>

Methodology used in joint research with George Washington University



DESK REVIEW

- 77 sources of academic and grey literature



INTERVIEWS

- Government officials, civil society representatives, advocacy organizations, local researchers



FOCUS GROUPS

- Nepal and Nigeria: focus groups with civil society representatives
- Nepal: focus groups with male and female aid beneficiaries

RBET in Anticipatory Action Programming



Reach

How women access AA

Benefit

How AA improves women's circumstances

Empower

How AA facilitates women's empowerment

Transform

How AA can change gender norms and structures

Strategies

- Identification of beneficiaries
 - Inclusive information dissemination across multiple modalities
 - Accessible registration processes and distribution methods
- Ensuring aid modalities that address women's needs in flood-prone areas
 - Navigating intrahousehold decisionmaking
 - Mitigating risks of gender-based violence
- Women's inclusion in program design
 - Adding empowerment training into AA programming
- Employing gender-transformative approaches
 - Engaging men and boys in discussions about changing household norms around resource
 - Advocate for women's inclusion in community-level decision making
 - Recognize existing cultural norms and practices but leverage community and religious leaders as agents of change

Putting it together

- Following the thread from gender, assets, empowerment to resilience has generated evidence
 - Gendered impacts of shocks
 - Gender gaps in empowerment
- Research has inspired programs that have themselves generated evidence on empowerment & resilience
 - ANGeL impact evaluation & follow-up
- Applying reach, benefit, empower, transform framework to programs raises possibilities for program design
 - AA programming in Nepal and Nigeria





Thanks to the Chronic Poverty Research Centre, BASIS CRSP, Markets, Risk & Resilience Innovation Lab, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID, CGIAR Research Initiatives on Gender Equality and Fragility, Conflict, and Migration; numerous colleagues and collaborators; and extremely patient women and men stakeholders and respondents from Bangladesh Nepal, Nigeria, and Uganda.

Resources

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