

Case Study 1. International Food Policy Research Institute: (IFPRI): Strengthening Development Impact through Gender and Intra-Household Analysis Project

Countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia (Sumatra), Mexico, Philippines, South Africa

Year(s) of project/ study: Late 1980's – 2002

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Background: Since the early 1990s a growing literature has paid increasing attention to the role that intra-household resource allocation plays in affecting the outcome of development policy. Studies by IFPRI on how the commercialization of agriculture affected the nutritional status of individuals within households in a number of African and Asian countries were among the first to debunk the traditional view that individuals within the household share the same preferences or pool their resources, and that the rights, resources, and responsibilities of men and women may be different, which may influence resource allocation decisions. If household members in fact have different preferences, resources, and responsibilities, then designing policies while relying on a model of the household that assumes that individuals share the same preferences and pool their resources—the unitary model—may lead to policy failures.

Building on these early findings, new research has pushed for the development of new models of household behavior. One of the challenges in testing models of household behavior was to find measures of bargaining power that were exogenous to decisions currently being made within households. IFPRI researchers focused on collecting measures of assets at marriage of husband and wife (as well as inherited assets) across several countries in order to test these models of household behavior. These tests are summarized in Quisumbing and Maluccio (2003) for Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia (Sumatra) and South Africa; related work in other countries found in Quisumbing, ed. (2003)). Comparative studies of such nature bring additional insights to similarities and differences among developing country regions.

Methodology: IFPRI researchers used a common framework and similar survey methodologies to analyze a wide range of policy issues, permitting comparisons across countries. In some countries, modules on intra-household allocation and gender were added to ongoing or planned studies by IFPRI researchers and their collaborators. Researchers made an explicit effort to test the unitary model of household behavior against an alternative that allowed for different preferences of household members and non-pooling of household resources. Because relevant assets and marriage customs differed in each of the countries, assets modules had to be tailored to the specific context.

Findings: IFPRI's intra-household research has produced the following key findings:

- Households do not act as one when making decisions, rejecting the null hypothesis that men and women's resources have the same effects on household decision-making.
- The collective model predicts that the distribution of resources depends on an individual's bargaining power within the household. The distribution of power and resources within the household, however, almost always favors men. This has both economic and social consequences that differ across countries and cultures.
- Improvements in women's status and increases in the resources that women control raise allocations toward education and improve child health and nutrition. Social networks may be an important resource that women can use to help mitigate the impact of adverse shocks. Investment in women, particularly in education, is key to poverty reduction and improved incomes for families as a whole.

- Protecting women's entitlements implies that their rights should be enforced, yet enforcement is not automatic when customary rights and statutory rights are not consistent.
- A new generation of policies and programs has explored innovative ways to increase resources in the hands of women. These initiatives include credit programs targeted to women, have had positive effects on women's earnings and decision-making ability, as well as on child nutrition and educational outcomes.

For more information:

Quisumbing, Agnes (Ed). 2003. **Household decisions, gender, and development: a synthesis of recent research.** Washington, DC: IFPRI. Available at:
<http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/genderbook.pdf>

Sample survey questionnaires can be downloaded, together with their corresponding data sets from the IFPRI website. The core studies are:

- **Bangladesh:** Commercial vegetable and polyculture fish production –their impacts on income, household resource allocation, and nutrition, 1996-1997. Available at:
<http://www.ifpri.org/dataset/bangladesh-1>
- **Ethiopia:** Ethiopian Rural Household Survey (ERHS), 1997 round. Available at:
<http://www.ifpri.org/dataset/ethiopian-rural-household-surveys-erhs>
- **Guatemala:** Strengthening and evaluation of the Hogares Comunitarios Program in Guatemala City, 1999. Available at: <http://www.ifpri.org/dataset/guatemala>
- **South Africa:** Kwazulu-Natal Income Dynamics Study (KIDS), 1993-1998. Available at: <http://www.ifpri.org/dataset/south-africa-kwazulu-natal-income-dynamics-study-kids-1993-1998>

Feedback on case study 1 methodology based on an interview with Agnes Quisumbing:

- 1. What are the unique gender-asset questions and indicators you collected in your survey instrument that were particularly valuable or reflective of methodologies you would like to see replicated in future work and why?**

We collected data on assets at marriage, current assets, and family background, separately for husband and wife. In most cases, the assets module was developed after qualitative work in the survey sites and extensive pre-testing by the principal investigators. In some countries, we also collected information on inherited assets. We found that collecting information on family background of husband and wife was quite important, as they determined assets brought to marriage. In all of the case studies, we also had measures of human capital for husband, wife, and children (education, weight, height). The case studies had different emphases in terms of assets. In Bangladesh, because the emphasis was on nutritional impact (human capital), we obtained blood hemoglobin readings using the Hemocue. The South Africa study focused on human capital. The Ethiopia study built on a panel where gender-disaggregated asset data had not been collected, so we collected some indicators retrospectively. The Guatemala study was implemented in a urban setting (slums) where some assets were owned by individuals, others by the household, and others were shared with other households. In Ghana and Sumatra, where we were investigating the impact of men's and women's land rights on tree resource management, the assets modules on inheritance ended up being quite different because extended family structures are very different in both countries. Specialized assets modules had to be developed for each of these cases, although the general structure of the questionnaire was similar.

2. What are the unique gender-asset questions/indicators you either collected in your survey instrument that you would have implemented differently or you were not able to collect, but which you would have liked to collect and why?

We felt that the data we collected were quite comprehensive for the purpose for which they were collected—testing models of household behavior. However, in hindsight we could have collected more information on control of assets—not just ownership.

3. Asset-gender dynamics are heterogeneous, complex and rooted in social, economic and institutional factors—are there any background factors that relate strongly to gender-asset dynamics that you either collected or wish you had collected?

We did a lot of background work on marriage and inheritance customs before designing the questionnaire. We undertook this by reading the anthropological literature, conducting qualitative work in communities (focus groups and key informant interviews), and doing extensive pre-testing.

4. Are there any particularities about the region or country of implementation which you think are important to recognize in relation to the gender-asset indicators you collected which are important for other researchers to be aware of? Did any of these context- or country-specific factors influence your survey implementation methodology, and how?

Collecting gender-disaggregated assets data requires skilled enumerators who understand the purpose of the study, and in-country collaborators who are willing to change ways of doing things (collecting data only at the household level). Sometimes questions had to be adjusted (particularly in low-literacy populations) so that they could be understood by respondents. In some areas, respondents had difficulties valuing assets at present or recalling what they paid at acquisition. We therefore collected data on when the asset was acquired, what was paid upon acquisition, and current market value or replacement cost, using alternative methods of estimating the value of the asset. In some countries (South Africa, Mexico), our collaborators felt that it would be undue burden on the survey team and the respondent to get the value of assets, and so counts of assets were collected. Much to our surprise, these simpler methods of collecting gender-disaggregated assets data worked very well in the regressions.

5. What do you see as the largest methodological challenges in collecting gender-asset data in general and how can we as a research community work towards filling this gap?

Having collected gender-disaggregated assets data since 1996, I feel that the basics are well understood within a small community of researchers—obtain a listing of relevant assets based on previous anthropological and/or qualitative work, ask husband and wife about individual and joint assets using the household roster to “ID” the asset, be open to looking at different types of assets (non- traditional assets). However, there is some resistance outside this community, people say that it is “too difficult.” It is not that difficult—one just has to be willing to try it!