Improving food and nutrition security by enhancing women's empowerment

Factsheet

> **"We want to find out to what extent training sessions aimed at changing gender norms and aspirations of women can impact their decision-making ability within the household in such a way that food security and nutrition outcomes are improved."**

2 ZERO HUNGER

5 GENDER EQUALITY

This project focuses on the relationship between food security (SDG 2) and gender equality (SDG 5). Women's empowerment may improve nutrition, as women tend to be the main decision-maker about food preparation and allocation within a household. One way to empower women, for instance, is to give them more control over financial resources, which could enable them to purchase more nutritious foods.

However, there are many other dimensions of gender inequality. For instance, women may take a subordinate position due to psychological constraints, such as lack of self-confidence. Further, the prevailing gender norms in the society can also inhibit the extent to which women can make decisions.

This project will seek to improve our understanding of how tackling these different dimensions of women's empowerment can impact food security and nutrition.

Main Research question(s)

1. What are the pathways by which different dimensions of women's empowerment affect food and nutrition security?
2. Do interventions that focus on social and psychological constraints increase women's empowerment and improve food and nutrition security?
3. How do interventions that focus on social and psychological constraints to improve women's empowerment interact with ongoing interventions to improve food and nutrition security?
4. What is the cost-effectiveness of interventions that focus on social and psychological constraints to increase women's empowerment and improve food and nutrition security?
5. What are the scaling-up possibilities of interventions that focus on social and psychological constraints to increase women's empowerment and improve food and nutrition security?

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Country Focus

The project will run in Bangladesh and Ethiopia, two populous countries with enduring challenges related to gender inequality and food security. Through the research partners in these two countries, both of which are prominent universities, and close engagement of international organizations such as the World Bank, the project is strongly embedded in local and international networks.

Planned Activities

The research team will come up with a conceptual framework that connects the role of hope and aspirations to women's empowerment and consequently to nutrition security. This will be done in consultation with grassroots stakeholders in each country. We will also develop 2 training modules to build aspirations and address prevailing gender norms. These modules will then be executed in a randomized control trial (RCT) layered on top of existing interventions executed by our research partners in these countries.

The RCT will help us evaluate the role psychosocial factors play in improving women's empowerment and nutrition security. Additionally, we will conduct secondary data analysis using Demographic and Health Survey data and other existing household datasets from Ethiopia and Bangladesh to explore the relationship between food and nutrition security and the other SDGs, specifically SDG 5. Further, we will also validate the Women's Empowerment in Nutrition Index (WENI) developed by IFPRI.

Target Audience

We intend that the results of this study will be used to inform policies and programs aimed at improving women's empowerment and at improved food security and nutrition. Therefore, we intend to reach out to policymakers and program staff in governments, NGOs, donor agencies and International Organizations. We further hope that our results will add to the nascent but growing field of inquiry on hope and aspirations within development economics.

What are the anticipated or hoped for results?

Through this project we hope to identify the pathways through which psychosocial factors impact women's empowerment and nutritional outcomes.