

Subjective Measures of Women's Economic Empowerment

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Acronyms

BEE	Business Enabling Environment
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
EWT	Empowering Women Together
FEI	Female Entrepreneur Index
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
OPHI	Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative
P.A.C.E.	Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
S/SE Asia	South/Southeast Asia
STEP	Skills Towards Employability and Productivity
UN	United Nations
UNF	United Nations Foundation
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Abstract

Interest in supporting women's economic empowerment (WEE) in recent years has created an awareness of the need for more accurate and detailed data if gender disparities are to be appropriately and successfully addressed. This brief review finds that initiatives that are collecting data focus on objective measures of WEE, such as productivity, loan amounts, and income) but very few seek to measure women's own, subjective experiences of economic empowerment quantitatively (such self-esteem, satisfaction with work and life, and stress levels). The latter is an important component, as many women face barriers on the road to entrepreneurship and how they feel about different aspects of the process may shape the paths they take, whether to grow and expand their businesses, maintain them as micro or small businesses, or shut them down. This "think piece" first reviews the concepts of women's empowerment, economic empowerment, and entrepreneurship to clarify the areas of commonality and difference among them, before distinguishing in greater detail between "subjective" and "objective" dimensions of economic empowerment. After briefly discussing the review methodology, it describes the current state of gender-informed data bases addressing the various domains associated with women's economic empowerment. Gaps found in current approaches include lack of attention to capturing men's views and actions in supporting or inhibiting women's entrepreneurship as well as attention to women's choice in entrepreneurship. The review concludes with recommendations supporting greater interdisciplinary dialogue and mixed methods approaches to develop measures of both objective and subjective measures of empowerment, and suggests some additional topics of measurement.

I. Introduction

In January 2016, the UN Secretary General announced the first High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, publicly reinforcing both the growing interest about and need for better evidence and insight into how best to overcome gender disparities.¹ This paper reviews current literature and practical approaches to measuring rural women's economic empowerment with the goal of capturing women's own assessments of their level of empowerment, or "subjective empowerment outcomes." This report grows out of a UNF and ExxonMobil Foundation program to create an "evidence-based Roadmap" that documents successful approaches for strengthening women's entrepreneurship, agricultural activities, and wage employment (the latter with special emphasis on young women). One of the accompanying reports, *Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment* (Buvinic and Furst-Nichols 2015), "summarizes recommended measures to assess direct, intermediate, and final outcomes of women's economic empowerment programs," including objective measures, such as productivity and income, as well as subjective measures of women's well-being (such as self-esteem, satisfaction with work and life, and stress levels) and empowerment (such as increased choice and decisionmaking in family and public life) (Annex 1).

This "think piece" is organized to first briefly review the concepts of women's empowerment, economic empowerment, and entrepreneurship to clarify the areas of commonality and difference among them. It then provides a rationale for differentiating between subjective and objective measures of economic empowerment for rural women entrepreneurs. The next section describes the current approaches in place to measure levels of economic empowerment and entrepreneurship and the methodology employed in the review. The final section offers some recommendations for improving approaches to capture subjective measures of economic empowerment.

II. Conceptualizing women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship

History teaches that the process of women's empowerment is one of struggle and heartbreak as much as inspiration and achievement, a narrative of starts and stops. Much more attention should be paid to capturing "empowerment" as it unfolds in time and researchers should not assume that the journey is always experienced as an uptick in confidence and well-being (Scott et al. 2016: 2).

A. Defining women's empowerment and women's economic empowerment (WEE)

There are many definitions of empowerment in the literature, comprehensively reviewed by Ibrahim and Alkire (2007). Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as expanding people's ability to make strategic life choices, particularly in contexts in which this ability had been denied to them. In Kabeer's definition, the ability to exercise choice encompasses three dimensions: resources (defined to include not only access but also future claims to material, human, and social resources), agency (including processes of decisionmaking, negotiation, and even deception and manipulation), and achievements (well-being outcomes). Alsop et al. describe empowerment as "a group's or individual's capacity to make effective choices, that is, to make choices and then to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes" (2006: 10). This definition has two components—the component related to Amartya Sen's (1989) concept of agency (the ability to act on behalf of what you value and have reason to value)—and the component related to the institutional environment, which offers people the ability to exert agency fruitfully (Alkire 2008; Ibrahim & Alkire 2007). Narayan defines empowerment as "the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" (2002: vi, 2005: 5), stressing four main elements of empowerment: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, and local organizational capacity. In most definitions of empowerment, there is a distinction between the initial awareness of empowerment at

¹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/1/wee-high-level-panel-launch>

the individual level and the actions that are then needed (and taken) that achieve an empowered state. The actions typically require external support from institutional sources, such as the state or the legal framework.

Women's *economic* empowerment is more narrowly defined than women's empowerment. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (2013:1) notes, "In simple terms, economic empowerment combines the concepts of empowerment and economic advancement." Becoming economically empowered also depends on capabilities that may lie outside the realm of economic action. Golla et al. (2011: 4) offer a definition of women's economic empowerment which parallels the broader definitions above while emphasizing their economic components, stating:

- A woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions.
- To succeed and advance economically, women need the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions.
 - To have the power and agency to benefit from economic activities, women need to have the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits.

Less well developed is the relationship between economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. In a comprehensive literature review covering 30 years of methodological approaches in the study of gender and entrepreneurship, Henry, Foss, and Ahl (2015:20) equate entrepreneurship with business ownership for the purposes of their review although acknowledging that ownership is not always the same as being involved in starting and growing a business. Terjesen and Lloyd (2015:5) expand on the multiplicity of factors that influence successful entrepreneurship, emphasizing that the characteristics of individuals cannot fully explain who succeeds and who fails, as had been posited in earlier studies. Terjesen and Lloyd's (2015) review of women's entrepreneurship in 77 countries lists a number of such conditions for women entrepreneurs to flourish: (1) provision of childcare services and family leave (Elam, 2008; Terjesen and Elam 2012)²; (2) educational training for women to build confidence in their business skills and ability to identify entrepreneurial opportunities (OECD 2004); (3) freedom to work and travel;³ and (4) a favorable institutional environment that includes equal legal rights, access to education, networks, technology, capital, social norms, values, and expectations. Furthermore, the overall business environment in terms of laws, regulations, and business stability will affect businesses' ability to thrive and grow.⁴

Being a successful entrepreneur can be empowering, but the experience and practice of entrepreneurship—long hours, little pay, lack of capital, work-life conflicts—can often feel disempowering, as one has little control over one's time or an ability to make independent decisions in dealing with one's clients. Capturing both the strengths and weakness of entrepreneurship remains a challenge for most surveys.

Buvinic and Furst-Nichols (2015) present a list of direct, intermediate, and outcome indicators that can be used to monitor the impact of interventions on women's economic empowerment. We use their definitions of the indicators and distinguish between objective and subjective measures of women's

² Child care and family leave are important because women tend to start ventures at a later age (ages 35-40) than men, and must manage work-family conflicts (Shelton, 2006).

³ Terjesen and Elam (2012) find that levels of female entrepreneurship are influenced by differences across countries in terms of women's freedom to work and travel due to traditional family and religious norms.

⁴ See Weeks (2011) for a review of recent tools to assess the business enabling environment (BEE) and their attention to gender indicators. Weeks notes it is important to include informal and customary laws when looking that that dimension of the BEE.

economic empowerment. For some indicators, only objective measures will need to be collected; in others, it is useful for program implementers and evaluators to collect both objective and subjective measures. Collecting both types of information can provide the basis for identifying appropriate arenas for support to rural women in establishing and maintaining their enterprises.

B. Differentiating subjective and objective dimensions of economic empowerment

The argument for distinguishing between “subjective” and “objective” dimensions of economic empowerment is strikingly similar to distinctions between “emic” and “etic” concepts in linguistics and anthropology, first introduced by Pike (1967) and debated by Geertz (1973) and Harris (1979). “Etic” refers to the interpretations of human beliefs and behaviors from the outsider’s (the investigator’s) point of view, whereas “emic” refers to the interpretation from the insider’s (the respondent’s) perspective. In the case of rural women entrepreneurs, subjective measures of empowerment, therefore, are about empowerment as experienced or defined by the respondent, whereas objective measures typically are standard business measures, such as profits, rates of return, number and value of assets, etc. In the context of projects that aim to achieve certain objectives (training, financial literacy, etc.), additional indicators can also be included that relate to outcomes that the project intends to affect directly (having a bank account, etc.).

Arguments for using objective measures of empowerment of rural women entrepreneurs include: (1) ease of verification and comparison across different locations; and (2) regular collection by government statistical agency surveys, minimizing additional investment in data collection. It is also argued that objective measures are easier to verify than subjective measures, because the latter are thought to be context-specific. Metrics for evaluating objective measures also seem transparent or straightforward (for example, if income or earnings is positive, it’s a profit; if negative a loss). However, while objective measures may be easier to verify, particularly if they follow standard definitions used in business practice and national statistical systems, they are not trivial to gather, particularly for rural women, and especially around farming and self-employment. These measures are notoriously difficult to gather for the smallest enterprises that are most dependent on family labor (see Buvinic and Furst-Nichols 2015).

These measures may also be prone to bias. In a thoughtful and comprehensive advisory note on measures of women’s empowerment, Scott and colleagues (2016) argue that, when ordinary business measures are used as a proxy for women’s empowerment, without any adjustment for gender effects, they reproduce bias in analysis (a finding also supported by Henry et al. 2015, Terjesen and Lloyd 2015, and Weeks 2011). “Further, the propensity to look exclusively at business growth or income indicators as indicators of women’s economic empowerment is symptomatic of unclear goals and disagreement about the intended beneficiaries.... Overreliance on growth or income indicators at the expense of measures of well-being and empowerment could result in negative outcomes if not corrected (Scott 2016: 1-2)”

Standard business measures, while useful in identifying gender gaps between women and men who are entrepreneurs, do not necessarily reveal whether lower growth rates among women-owned businesses around the world arise because of different preferences (women prefer to run smaller businesses so that they can fulfill their care obligations) or gender-based constraints (lack of fair access to capital and being unwelcome in “growth” industries). In their study of Walmart’s Empowering Women Together (EWT) program, Scott et al. found that, as women’s businesses grew, the risk of a woman’s losing control increased because of the need to get external investors, who would likely be men. At that point, the business would no longer qualify as “woman owned.” This is consistent with observations from the agricultural commercialization literature that, as agriculture shifted from producing for home consumption to production for the market, there was a greater likelihood that men would take control of women’s crops (see von Braun and Webb 1989; although this is being challenged by recent evidence by Orr et al. 2016). Looking at increased income from own businesses without looking at who within the household controls the income would mean neglecting possible disempowerment impacts of expanding rural businesses.

Standard business measures, when applied cross-nationally, may not adequately reflect the contexts in which women-owned businesses operate. Adopting developed country standards in developing country settings may miss the blurred lines between productive and reproductive work. For example, the discourse on women's owned businesses assumes that formalization is unambiguously good. However, this has implications for care work: for workplaces in developed countries to pass an audit, they often have to operate in a very specific way, such as not being operated out of a home, workers being paid minimum wage for a fixed number of hours, and compliance with a host of safety regulations, including, in particular, the condition that there can be no children present. These conditions are difficult to meet in the developing world, often changing business operations or type, sometimes introducing real business risk, and often causing culturally inappropriate and insensitive demands on women's time (Scott et al. 2016).

Subjective measures of economic empowerment, while capturing the views of women themselves, may also be prone to bias or other limitations:

- Most commonly used definitions of “women’s empowerment” focus on the “ability” and “capacity” to express views and make choices. Because these qualities are seldom clearly observable, researchers and donors assume that the visible behaviors they measure are appropriate proxies for “empowerment” without knowing whether the outcomes are in fact the women’s own choices. “So, any true study of “women’s economic empowerment” must measure more than the desired outcomes, such as increases in savings or school fees paid. If we are to argue that such outcomes are the result of “empowerment,” then the measures must establish that the woman *actually made her own choices*” (Scott 2016:27).
- “Women’s empowerment” definitions often include language that points, implicitly or explicitly, to persons or institutions controlling the women, thus “disempowering” them. For example, definitions that draw from Kabeer’s (1999) definition of empowerment allude to “someone” or “something” denying people the ability to make strategic life choices, while not explicitly stating what these persons or institutions are. Other definitions (such as those in the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) that include acceptance of intimate partner violence under particular conditions allude to husbands or family members that would subject a woman to violence if certain conditions occurred. But using these measures may not capture the effectiveness of interventions because they do not always include metrics that would acknowledge the likelihood of resistance from those parties. Capturing the resistance from those who would lose from women’s empowerment is not the strength of quantitative methods; nor is exploring what types of relational support are most helpful to women’s entrepreneurs: these nuances are more likely to be uncovered using qualitative techniques.
- Cross-country coverage of survey instruments that capture women’s empowerment is incomplete, making cross-national comparisons impossible, and may not cover both productive and reproductive spheres. The DHS, which are widely applied in developing countries, were not designed to look at economic empowerment and although they report on wage and other employment, they typically focus on decisionmaking only in the domestic sphere (though they also contain questions on decisionmaking on household expenditures). The more recently-developed index by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), focuses on women’s economic and productive roles, but only within agriculture (Alkire et al. 2013).
- With few exceptions (such as the WEAI, with its time use module), most measures of economic empowerment do not address care work.

Lastly, in most subjective measures of women’s empowerment, only women are interviewed, neglecting men’s views on empowerment/disempowerment, which could be quite different, especially, as noted above, when men express resistance and hostility to the expansion of women’s business efforts.

Scott et al. (2016) state that the subjective experience of empowerment is often measured using *ad hoc* questions. They recommend being more intentional and use tested measures from psychology. Examples of the type of surveys that can be used to address this gap include the work being done for the WEAI that is based on measures of autonomy and self-determination from the psychology literature, as well as well-established surveys like the World Values Survey and Gallup polls.

III. Analysis of current approaches

A. Methodology

Annex 1 presents a table of gender-informed data sources that include some subjective measures of women's economic empowerment, focusing on women in agricultural and/or rural settings, including women entrepreneurs of different types. An initial list of surveys and citations was compiled from a combination of site-specific donor and research portals as well as from Google™ searches, as well as citations from key publications in both academic and practitioner literatures. The search focused on finding data from developing countries that had conducted standardized, multi-country, multi-year surveys. Many more sources were reviewed (57) than are presented in the table (9), as the number meeting the criteria below for gender-informed, quantitative measures of subjective outcomes was few.

Drawing on criteria used in a review by the Said Business School at Oxford (Scott et al. 2016) that examined 775 sources documenting interventions to strengthen women's economic empowerment, we sought sources that:

- Feature new, original, advanced or creative thinking or methods; and/or explorations of new topics;
- Utilize quantitative or mixed methods, the later referring to an iterative process of quantitative and qualitative techniques. The review has found that mixed methods applications are either quite rare or underreported;
- Have balance between context specificity and asking standardized questions;
- Contain measures capturing multiple indicators of women's subjective empowerment;
- Examine one or more of the following topics:
 - Report input in decision making (household, agriculture, business, or finance), ownership/rights over assets;
 - Report control (and/or choice) over use of income, social/business networks and leadership, attitudes regarding intimate partner violence, autonomy, self-confidence, mental health/life satisfaction, intrahousehold harmony and attitudes about gender roles; and
 - Include data on both men and women to allow for comparisons (although not all studies do this).

Table A in Annex 1 provides a brief description of each source, indicating the topic of women's subjective empowerment that is covered as well as key information about the sample. Also included is a brief assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the data, elaborated on below, including the quality of the methodology, the data collected, and/or any observed limitations. A summary chart (Table 1) of these characteristics is included below.

B. Existing Survey Strengths and Weaknesses

Overall, there has been strong survey standardization across countries with the ability for country/regional adaptation; further, all multi-country data sources we found include countries in all developing regions of

the world (South/Southeast Asia (S/SE Asia) Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Latin America and Caribbean (LAC).

Surveys addressing the objective measures of empowerment are much more numerous. In mixed methods studies, the subjective measures are typically addressed using qualitative methods, and are generally limited to one or two countries.

The most innovative questions/surveys often take what is best practice for asking questions in a domain (for example, on decision making) and ask those questions (“Who generally makes decisions regarding [DOMAIN]? but also include additional non-standard questions (“In an ideal household, who would make decisions regarding [DOMAIN]?). Another example can be found in intimate partner violence questions, whereby 4/9 studies included questions that covered attitudes regarding physical intimate partner violence, but only the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) study includes a question that asks about emotional abuse committed by the mother in law upon her daughter in law (this is a country/region-specific question). Asking questions regarding abuse that go beyond the intimate partner to include important decisionmakers within the household makes this module innovative.

C. Data Gaps

Most single-country studies measuring women’s economic empowerment have been done in the S/SEAsia and LAC regions (Scott et al. 2016); however, most multi-country data sources we found cover regions spanning low and middle income countries including S/SE Asia, LAC., SSA, and MENA regions.

Few surveys focus specifically on rural entrepreneurial activities. Many of the surveys focused on entrepreneurial activities were administered in an urban context (e.g., World Bank Enterprise Surveys, World Bank Skills Towards Employability and Productivity (STEP) Skills Measurement Household Survey and the Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E) program by Gap, Inc.). Moreover, objective measures are typically used to assess entrepreneurial activities (for instance, in the Female Entrepreneur Index (FEI), one-third of the indicators used to construct the index are subjective measures).

Some topics such as on women’s mobility are not covered subjectively although they could be. For example, questions such as, “are you allowed to leave the home to do [ACTIVITY]?” are asked rather than, “are you satisfied with the amount of times you leave the home to do [ACTIVITY]?” Or, “are you satisfied with your ability to decide for yourself when to leave home to do [ACTIVITY]?”

Some subjective intrahousehold topics have been better covered than others. Questions assessing intrahousehold decision making are present in 4/9 studies, but questions examining intrahousehold harmony were much less frequently asked and only found in 2/9 studies.

Further, some components of women’s self-perception have received much more attention than others. Questions related to women’s autonomy in various capacities were found in 6/9 studies but questions related to women’s self-confidence were uncommon, found in just two studies. No questions related to women’s self-efficacy or self-esteem were found in any of the quantitative studies.

Other topics are covered by a substantial number of surveys but could be done more innovatively. For example, in the context of intimate partner violence, surveys could ask whether verbal abuse (in addition to physical abuse) is justified under various circumstances related to economic activities (rather than, say, burning dinner) or ask about abuse by household members, in addition to the intimate partner/spouse.

While 5/9 studies interviewed both men and women, allowing for gendered comparisons, we did not find surveys that looked at the impacts of women’s work on men’s attitudes regarding gender roles, nor on the role men play in influencing the impact of work on women. The Said Business School study (Scott et al.

2016) highlights this same issue as a data gap, supporting the conclusion that it would be a good area for future module development.

A related point and data gap is that few surveys connect the questions they ask with a theory of change. Most draw from population based surveys rather than impact evaluations. There are some exceptions including the World Food Program/International Food Policy Research Institute (WFP/IFPRI) food, cash, voucher impact evaluation which looks at the causal relationship between women's empowerment (as measured by decision making) and household food security, and the WINGS program, which looks at the effect of small enterprise involvement on women's empowerment. The WEAI and World Health Organization (WHO) surveys were also designed with the explicit intention of examining various theories of change in analysis. It is possible that some of the data sources were designed around theories of change, but these are implicit rather than explicit, and not documented in their narratives.

A final limitation in finding data sources on subjective measures of women's economic empowerment is that much of the raw data used in both the scholarly and grey literature is not made publicly available. For instance the Gender Asset Gap project survey asks a number of questions regarding decision making related to business and bundle of rights over assets as well as voicing opinion in disagreement about various things, but much of the data have not yet been made publicly available. Other data sources will likely be published only in the next year (2017). For instance, the UN Evidence and Data for Gender Equality survey includes questions on entrepreneurship and decision making related to business. However these potentially very good additional sources could not be included here.

In sum, in an ideal world there would be data sources focused on women's rural enterprise that incorporates the characteristics of both the WEAI and Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)/FEI surveys.

Table 1: Data on Women's Subjective Economic Empowerment Characteristics Summary Chart¹

Data Source	Quantitative or mixed methods	Standardized across countries	Surveys men & women	Decision making	Own/ rights	Control over income	Networks and/or leadership	IPV	Autonomy	Confidence	Life satisfaction	HH harmony	Gender roles	Total
Data sources focused on subjective economic empowerment outcomes and the productive sphere														
FEI	X	x					x		x	x			x	6
GEM	X	x	x						x	x				5
WEAI	X	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x			9
Data sources on decisionmaking and empowerment in domestic and reproductive spheres														
DHS	X	x	x	x	x			x	x				x	8
MICS	X	x	x					x			x			5
WINGS Project	X			x		x	x		x		x	x	x	8
WFP / IFPRI study	X	x		x				x			x			5
WHO	X	x				x	x	x			x	x	x	8
World Poll	X	x	x						x		x		x	6
<p>Key - This key provides a more comprehensive listing of the data available for each domain. Decision making: input in decision making (household, agriculture, business and financial); final say regarding decision presently and in an ideal household Own/rights: ownership and/or rights over assets (opinion of who owns majority of asset and who has right over the purchase, sale or transfer of asset) Control over income: control and/or choice over use of income Networks/leadership: social &/or business networks & leadership (comfort in expressing opinion in public; group leadership; relationship with neighbors; family support; whether known as an entrepreneur) IPV: attitudes regarding intimate partner violence (wife beating in various circumstances); perception of how common IPV is in community Autonomy: to make decisions related to agricultural production and business; freedom to choose what to do in life (including choice to start a business); perceived changes in household decision making power over time; whether a woman thinks she can refuse sex to her husband</p>								<p>Confidence: self-confidence (perception of capabilities and risks in starting a business) Life satisfaction: mental health (physiological wellbeing screening, including effect of IPV); life satisfaction in various domains (family life, friends, school, job, health, where live, people around you, physical appearance and life overall; whether life has improved over the past year(s) or is expected to improve in future year(s)) HH harmony: intrahousehold harmony (seek advice, reliance for help, share thoughts/troubles, quarrels/hostility, assertion of opinion in disagreement with other household members; control exerted by man over woman in relationship; effect of dowry/bride price practice on treatment by husband and his family) Gender roles: Attitudes about gender roles (household and purchasing/selling decision making; division of labor; right to express opinion; toleration of physical abuse; feelings about male dominance/superiority (regarding education, sex, intelligence, business); woman's right to initiate divorce</p>						

IV. Recommendations for intermediate and final subjective economic empowerment measures

This review of data sources revealed that a number of existing surveys are already collecting data on a range of both subjective and objective measures of women's economic empowerment. These include both intermediate and final outcomes, listed in Box 1.

Box 1: Measures of Subjective Economic Empowerment

Intermediate Outcomes:

- **Decisionmaking:** input in decision making as related to enterprise
- **Control over income:** control and/or choice over use of income, particularly income derived from the rural enterprise
- **Networks/leadership:** social and/or business networks and leadership (comfort in expressing opinion in public; group leadership; relationship with neighbors; family support; whether know an entrepreneur)
- **Gender roles:** Attitudes about gender roles (household and purchasing/selling decision making; division of labor; right to express opinion) as related to the enterprise

Final Outcomes:

- **Decision making:** input in decision making (household, agriculture, business and financial); final say regarding decision presently and in an ideal household
- **Own/rights:** ownership and/or rights over assets (opinion of who owns majority of asset and who has right over the purchase, sale or transfer of asset)
- **IPV:** attitudes regarding intimate partner violence (wife beating in various circumstances); perception of how common IPV is in community
- **Autonomy:** to make decisions related to agricultural production and business; freedom to choose what to do in life (including choice to start a business); perceived changes in household decision making power over time; whether a woman thinks she can refuse sex to her husband
- **Confidence:** self-confidence (perception of capabilities and risks in starting a business)
- **Life satisfaction:** mental health (physiological wellbeing screening, including effect of IPV); life satisfaction in various domains (family life, friends, school, job, health, where live, people around you, physical appearance and life overall; whether life has improved over the past year(s) or is expected to improve in future year(s))
- **Household harmony:** intrahousehold harmony (seek advice, reliance for help, share thoughts/troubles, quarrels/hostility, assertion of opinion in disagreement with other household members; control exerted by man over woman in relationship; effect of dowry/bride price practice on treatment by husband and his family)
- **Gender roles:** Attitudes about gender roles (household and purchasing/selling decision making; division of labor, particularly in care work; right to express opinion; toleration of physical abuse; feelings about male dominance/superiority (regarding education, sex, intelligence, business))

These measures have been tested, as evidenced by the available data, and some have even been reused, recycled, and adapted to other surveys (e.g., in the DHS and WEAI), indicating consensus among practitioners that these are important topical areas on which to collect data on women's subjective economic empowerment.

There remains wide scope for improving these measures. We offer some additional recommendations for developing best practices questions for these and other topics, especially for measures that can be used across groups of interventions (e.g., access to extension services, business training, cash transfers, credit, savings, ICTs, bundled services).

- Despite the breadth of topics or domains already covered by the gender-informed data sources listed above and in Annex 1, their focus could be sharpened to address business and entrepreneurship issues more explicitly. Expanding such data collection to focus on **rural** women's entrepreneurship is critical.
- As Scott et al. (2016) observe the fields of business and gender studies have not yet had a long history of having “talked to each other.” Fostering interdisciplinary dialogue that can create better metrics to capture both subjective and objective measures that could be collected together, providing a better picture of how each may change in relation to the other is needed.
- Similarly, strengthening the use of mixed methods, where both quantitative and qualitative methods are used iteratively or in a supplementary manner, to capture relationships between objective and subjective experiences of economic empowerment.
- Data on several additional domains could provide critical information for assessing women's subjective economic empowerment. The following areas were noted as needing better measures:
 - satisfaction with time use, particularly on allocating time for (child or elder) care work, market/business work, and personal care;
 - networks and networking, including the role of collective action;
 - input in decision making (household, agriculture, business, or finance);
 - more detailed exploration of the rights women entrepreneurs have over their own and household assets, from use to full ownership;
 - control (and/or choice) over use of own and household income;
 - autonomy and self-confidence; and/or
 - intrahousehold harmony and attitudes about gender roles.
- A large gap in the literature is the absence of comparative data on men's subjective measures of their own and on women's economic empowerment. Collecting men's views would inform understanding of the relational dimensions of women's empowerment, i.e., how men's support or resistance influences women's achievements.
- Finally, with regards to improvement of subjective domains currently covered, we recommend greater emphasis on *choice*, rather than *control* with regards to decision-making. For instance, does a woman have a choice about the type of business she enters, or is she forced into it due to poverty, gender norms, etc.? Although this issue is addressed in both the GEM and the FEI, it is noted as a data gap in need of greater attention (Scott et al. 2016).

In conclusion, the rising interest in “big data” and gender equality as well as the increased attention paid to women entrepreneurs along different nodes of the value chain provide the right moment to support a push to collect both more and better data on objective and subjective measures of women's economic empowerment. The review documents an expanding and improving data base. Continued assessment and guidance can strengthen these efforts and reveal more nuanced relationships between subjective and objective indicators of women's economic empowerment.

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Annex 1 – Gender-Informed Data Sources

Table A. Review of Gender-Informed Data Sources

Data Source	Survey Description	Subjective Women's Empowerment Topics	Sample Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
Data sources focused on subjective economic empowerment outcomes and the productive sphere					
Female Entrepreneur Index (FEI) by the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute	<p>-Years: 2013 - present</p> <p>-Standardized survey across 77 countries</p> <p>-Developing and developed countries worldwide</p>	<p>-Self-confidence: related to starting a business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perceived capabilities: feel have required skills/knowledge to start business ● Perception of risk: believe that fear of failure would prevent herself from starting business <p>-Business network: know an entrepreneur⁵</p> <p>-Attitudes regarding gender roles: believe men make better business executives than women</p> <p>-Autonomy: related to business choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improvement driven entrepreneurial activity: involved in activity because see business opportunity and want to increase income or be independent ● Necessity driven entrepreneurial activity: involved in activity because see no other option for work 	<p>-Women age 18-64 (not stated how sample identified or size)</p>	<p>-Index measure comprised of 15 indicators, both objective and subjective, which rewards countries scores for improvements in weakest measures</p> <p>-Contains both individual and institutional level measures</p> <p>-Can either look at individual indicators or the overall FEI</p> <p>-Specific to women's entrepreneurship</p>	<p>-Index contains mainly objective (10/15) measures of women's empowerment</p> <p>-Need to work with raw data to disaggregate into individual indicators</p> <p>-Does not collect men's survey so cannot understand men's opinions regarding women entrepreneurs, nor relative equality/inequality of men and women within the same household</p>
Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Adult Population Survey (GEM)	<p>- Years: 1999 - present</p> <p>-Standardized survey across 60+</p>	<p>-Self-confidence: related to starting a business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perceived capabilities: feel have required skills/knowledge to start business ● Fear of failure: rate of population that perceive business opportunity⁶ but indicate the fear of 	<p>-Nationally representative sample (men and women age 18-64)</p> <p>-2,000+ respondents</p>	<p>-Index measure comprised of 20 indicators, both objective and subjective, which rewards countries scores for improvements in weakest measures</p>	<p>-Not all indicators presented as sex- disaggregated but can analyze using raw data</p> <p>-Limited set of indicators from</p>

⁵ It is debatable whether this indicator is subjective, but it has been included here given the wide range of definitions associated with defining who is an entrepreneur which leaves a degree of subjectivity with the respondent to define who is and is not an entrepreneur.

⁶ Perceived opportunities refer to those who feel they see a good opportunity to start a business in their area.

Data Source	Survey Description	Subjective Women's Empowerment Topics	Sample Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
	<p>countries</p> <p>-Developing and developed countries worldwide</p>	<p>failure would prevent him/herself from starting a business</p> <p>-Autonomy: related to business choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improvement driven entrepreneurial activity: involved in activity because see business opportunity and want to increase income or be independent ● Necessity driven entrepreneurial activity: involved in activity because see no other option for work 	per country	<p>-Contains both individual and institutional level measures⁷</p> <p>-Can either look at individual indicators or the overall GEMI</p> <p>-Specific to entrepreneurial activity (i.e. self-confidence and autonomy related to business endeavors)</p> <p>-Asks men and women the same survey to enable comparisons along gender lines</p>	<p>survey are subjective (5/20)</p> <p>-Makes no assessment of relative equality/inequality of men and women within the same household</p>
<p>Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) by USAID/ IFPRI/ OPHI</p>	<p>-Years: 2011, 2015, 2017</p> <p>-Standardized survey across 19 countries</p> <p>-LAC, SSA, SE/S Asia regions represented</p>	<p>-Input in decision making: productive decisions related to agriculture; decisions on credit</p> <p>-Autonomy: autonomy in production related to agriculture</p> <p>-Ownership/rights over assets - opinion of who owns majority of asset and who has right over the purchase, sale and transfer of assets</p> <p>-Control over use of income</p> <p>-Social networks and leadership: group membership influence, comfort with speaking in public</p> <p>-Life satisfaction: leisure time</p>	<p>-Representative of USAID Feed the Future program zone of influence</p> <p>-Interview both primary man and woman in household</p> <p>-Rural/agricultural sample</p>	<p>-Index measure comprised of ten indicators, many of which are subjective</p> <p>-Can either look at individual indicators or the overall WEAI score</p> <p>-Can serve as diagnostic tool to identify ways in which men/women in a particular geographic area are disempowered</p> <p>-Specific to rural/agricultural sector (i.e. decision making related to ag is unique)</p> <p>-Asks men and women the same survey to enable comparisons</p>	<p>-Samples not nationally representative</p> <p>-Women in female headed households are generally found to be empowered (i.e. survey does not consider making a decision alone to be burdensome)</p> <p>-Some limitations and precautions with polygamous households</p>

⁷ Individual level measures subjective, asking about people's opinions about their own business intentions, while institutional level measures are objective and related to measuring rates of entrepreneurial activity in various domains, as well as people's perceptions regarding entrepreneurs' social status within a country.

Data Source	Survey Description	Subjective Women's Empowerment Topics	Sample Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
				<p>along gender lines</p> <p>-Measures relative inequality of primary man and woman within a household</p>	
Data sources on decisionmaking and empowerment in domestic and reproductive spheres					
Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS)	<p>-Years: 1984 - present</p> <p>-Standardized core survey plus country specific questions</p> <p>-94 developing countries worldwide</p>	<p><i>Women's survey:</i>⁸</p> <p>-Input in decision making: income, health care for self, household purchases, visiting family; contraception; who has final say on various decisions</p> <p>-Attitudes regarding intimate partner violence: opinion of wife beating in various situations⁹</p> <p>-Autonomy: whether a woman thinks she can refuse sex to her husband</p> <p>-Attitudes about gender roles: household decision making; division of labor; right to express opinion with husband; toleration of physical abuse by husband to</p>	<p>Women age 15-49 and men age 15-49, 15-54 or 15-59 (depending on country)</p>	<p>-Domestic violence module extensive, includes both objective and subjective measures (allows for analysis of relationship between women's empowerment and domestic violence)</p> <p>-Some of the same gender related questions are asked in both the men's and women's survey allowing for comparisons along gender lines</p>	<p>-No questions with focus on entrepreneurial activities; main focus on health.</p> <p>-Sample restricted to people of reproductive age, misses older generations</p> <p>-Survey only conducted every five years</p> <p>-Survey questions included vary slightly between rounds and countries (for example, the women's status module, which asks many of the questions</p>

⁸ Standard survey includes information available on mobility and asset ownership (land, home). Some countries also collect information on choice of spouse, natal family support, control over money for different purposes and knowledge of and use of micro-credit.

⁹ In the women's questionnaire, the survey also asks extensively about instances of domestic violence, both physical and emotional, and committed by spouse as well as other people.

Data Source	Survey Description	Subjective Women's Empowerment Topics	Sample Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
		<p>hold family together; education of daughters versus sons</p> <p>-Right to sell asset: land, house, jewelry, other property, livestock</p> <p><i>Men's Survey:</i>¹⁰</p> <p>-Input in decision making: income, health care for self, household purchases, childbearing, autonomy</p> <p>-Attitudes regarding intimate partner violence: opinion of wife beating in various situations</p> <p>-Attitudes about gender roles: whether a woman can refuse sex to her husband; women's responsibility for contraception</p>			<p>regarding gender roles and right to sell assets, is not a current standard module but was in previous years and is asked in some but not all countries)¹¹</p> <p>-Most women's empowerment indicators (with exception of some domestic violence and control over income questions) only collected since 1999</p>
<p>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) by UNICEF</p>	<p>-Years: 1995 - present (conducted every 3 years since 2009; every 5 years prior)</p> <p>-Currently in 100 low and middle income countries</p> <p>-Standard survey with option to add</p>	<p>-Life satisfaction: level of satisfaction in various domains of life including family life, friends, school, job, health, where live, people around you, physical appearance and life overall; whether life has improved over the past year or is expected to improve over coming year</p> <p>-Attitudes regarding intimate partner violence: opinion of wife beating in various situations¹²</p>	<p>-Women and men age 15 - 49</p> <p>-Young women and men ages 15-24¹³</p> <p>-Some, but not all, surveys are nationally representative</p>	<p>-Same IPV and life satisfaction questions are asked in both the men's and women's survey allowing for comparisons along gender lines</p> <p>-Country specific questions add-on (for example, in Nepal there is a question about emotional abuse inflicted by a mother-in-law on her daughter-in-law and whether</p>	<p>-Life satisfaction questions only asked to men and women ages 15 - 24 (excludes older generations)</p> <p>-Not all surveys are nationally representative</p>

¹⁰ Standard survey includes information on asset ownership (land, home).

¹¹ Women's status module asked in countries that practice consanguinity.

¹² Same question as DHS survey.

¹³ Only this youth subsample is asked the questions regarding life satisfaction.

Data Source	Survey Description	Subjective Women's Empowerment Topics	Sample Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
	country specific questions			justified)	
WFP Impact Evaluation study of food cash transfer program by the WFP/IFPRI (Peterman et al. 2015)	-Years: Impact Evaluation 2010 - 2012 -Standardized survey -Uganda, Ecuador, Yemen ¹⁴	- Decision making: who has final say on decisions regarding: whether to work; small/large household purchases; own health; children; family planning; open bank account/take loan; whose opinion taken as final say in case of disagreement; which domains most likely to have control over decisions; who would have final say over decision in an ideal household - Autonomy: whether personal decision making power changed over past year - Life satisfaction: how happy consider self - Attitudes regarding intimate partner violence: how common in community ¹⁵	-Sample size: 1,174 women (Ecuador); 921 women (Yemen); 1,860 women (Uganda) -Women interviewed are age 15 and older and typically either the female head or spouse -Samples in Uganda and Yemen are rural; in Ecuador is urban and peri-urban	-Survey explicitly designed to test various relationships and theory of change regarding women's empowerment and the impact of cash and food vouchers	-Only Uganda and Ecuador data available publically -Ecuador does not have life satisfaction or domestic violence questions -Strong focus on decision making indicators but other indicators regarding life satisfaction and intimate partner violence limited in scope
WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence by the WHO	-Years: 1st round conducted 2000 - 2003 -Standardized survey -Bangladesh, Brazil, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Thailand, Tanzania, Ethiopia	- Social network: family provides support when needed - Attitudes about gender roles: male dominance/superiority, whether a woman can refuse sex to her husband - Attitudes regarding intimate partner violence: opinion of wife beating in various situations ¹⁶ - Mental health: screening questions for depression; effect of intimate partner violence on health	-24,000 women across 2 sites per country (one urban city, one province with mix of urban and rural) -One woman per household randomly selected	- New instrument to measure domestic violence cross-culturally -Survey questions designed with theory of change in mind (i.e. want to understand how different factors contribute to violence and how characteristics of women influence instances of violence)	-Do not collect men's opinions/attitudes re gender, domestic violence. -Does not have explicitly focus on women's economic empowerment, primarily concerned with health outcomes -Only one round of data collected

¹⁴ Niger was also part of the study but was not included in this analysis due to lack of comparable indicators regarding women's decision making.

¹⁵ Also has mobility questions.

¹⁶ Asks extensively about instances of domestic violence, both physical and emotional and committed by spouse as well as other people.

Data Source	Survey Description	Subjective Women's Empowerment Topics	Sample Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
	and Serbia and Montenegro, New Zealand (China, Chile, Indonesia, Vietnam have adapted and/or used parts of the survey)	<p>-Intrahousehold harmony: whether dowry/bride price practice improves treatment by husband and his family; control exerted by man over woman in relationship</p> <p>-Control over income: own earnings¹⁷</p>			<p>-Limited set of countries available.</p> <p>-Need to order CD-ROM (free of charge) to get data.</p>
WINGS Program Evaluation by IPA	<p>-Years: Impact Evaluation 2007</p> <p>-Northern Uganda</p>	<p>- Input in decision making: purchase of large household assets</p> <p>-Autonomy: make purchases at market by oneself; decide how to spend pocket money; use earnings to buy items without permission</p> <p>-Control over income: ability to prevent partner from using spouse's earnings to purchase alcohol</p> <p>-Attitudes about gender roles: wife has right to express opinion when disagrees; wife has right to buy and sell things at market without permission; right to buy clothing for self and children with own earnings</p> <p>-Mental health: physiological well being¹⁸</p> <p>-Intrahousehold harmony: express opinion when disagree with partner; quarrels/ hostility with household members; share thoughts/troubles; seek advice; receive help (child care, when sick, ag work)</p> <p>-Social network: comfort in expressing opinion in group/community, group leader role; relationship with</p>	<p>-1,800 young women age 14-35</p> <p>-Two war affected districts of Northern Uganda (rural)</p>	<p>-Questions adapted from Uganda DHS survey.</p> <p>-Study paper tests program effect on women's empowerment</p>	<p>-Single country study.</p> <p>-No women older than 35 included in study.</p>

¹⁷ Also has group membership and asset ownership questions.

¹⁸ Also has module on intimate partner violence but questions are all objective.

Data Source	Survey Description	Subjective Women's Empowerment Topics	Sample Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
		neighbors			
World Poll by Gallup	<p>-Years: 2005 - present</p> <p>-Standardized core survey, plus region specific questions</p> <p>-160+ developing and developed countries worldwide</p>	<p>-Life satisfaction: standard of living, health, work; mental health (yesterday); life satisfaction 5 years past/future</p> <p>-Autonomy: freedom to choose what to do in life</p> <p>-Attitudes about gender roles (region specific):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Asia</i> - women's control over income from own work; women's right to initiate divorce ● <i>Former Soviet</i> - women's career and family priorities; right to personal freedom ● <i>Middle East/N.Africa</i> - women's right to hold job outside home; women's right to equal legal rights as men ● <i>Muslim countries</i> - whether women treated with dignity; women's control over income from own work; women's right to equal legal rights as men, to hold leadership positions and jobs outside home and right to initiate divorce 	<p>-Represents 99% of world's population</p> <p>-Adult women and men</p>	<p>-Conducted frequently (annual, biannual)</p> <p>-Ask both men and women the same questions about gender roles to enable comparisons along gender lines</p> <p>-Gender questions adapted to be region specific</p>	<p>-No rural/entrepreneurial focus</p> <p>-Only a few questions for each region on gender norms¹⁹</p> <p>-Data not publicly available (need to pay for access)</p>

¹⁹ [Global Women at Work](#) project initiative between ILO and Gallup (release in 2017) designs survey items addressed to women and men to elicit their views on complex gender issues. The new questions in the World Poll are intended to find out what women want in the world of work, what is helping or stopping them from getting it and the support of or the negotiations with men that are essential to achieving this.