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**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN THE AGRICULTURAL
PRODUCTION IN KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of the article is to assess women empowerment in the agricultural production in Kenya. The agricultural sector has a unique potential for empowering women and providing diverse opportunities. Almost 80% of the world's food is produced on small-scale farms. However, in some country's women farmers are the majority. In eastern Africa, over half of farmers are women. Women farmers are not only being held back because they are women, but they also faced the challenges felt by all small-scale farmers. For starters, they have less access to land, loans and machinery than men do. They also carry the famous "double-burden" of paid work and unpaid childcare/home labour. Growth in small-scale agriculture is two to four times more effective at reducing hunger and poverty than any other sector, and women farmers are playing a central role. Women's empowerment is widely perceived to be a key factor in closing gender gaps in agricultural productivity. we find that having the power to make important decisions about agricultural production to be the most important driver of agricultural productivity. women's empowerment impacts positively on agricultural productivity and suggests a great scope of possible interventions, ranging from financial inclusion mechanisms such as digital savings accounts, affordable mobile-money-based credit schemes and asset-building mechanisms, to programmes facilitating the formation of strong community associations for women. Women specific-training programs are needed to build women's capacity to participate in organic and sustainable farming. Attention should be paid to achieving substantive women's equality. A tickbox approach, for example in counting the percentage of women in a committee, or the number of female toilets, is not sufficient and can indeed disguise a lack of women's agency. A positive and determined choice for women's empowerment needs to be made.

Key words: *Women, empowerment, agricultural, production, Kenya.*

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector has a unique potential for empowering women and providing diverse opportunities. This may not be news to you, but women farmers are held back by multiple barriers that prevent them from feeding their families and improving their livelihoods. Women make up on average 43 percent of the agricultural labor in low- and middle-income countries? Almost 80% of the world's food is produced on small-scale farms. However, in some country's women farmers are the majority. In South Asia, more than two thirds of employed women work in agriculture. In eastern Africa, over half of farmers are women.

Women farmers are not only being held back because they are women, but they also faced the challenges felt by all small-scale farmers. For starters, they have less access to land, loans and machinery than men do. They also carry the famous "double-burden" of paid work and unpaid childcare/home labour. Growth in small-scale agriculture is two to four times

more effective at reducing hunger and poverty than any other sector, and women farmers are playing a central role. Now it is more important than ever to empower women farmers to ensure resilience to climate change and to end world hunger. measures the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the agriculture sector in an effort to identify ways to overcome those obstacles and constraints. The index aims to increase the understanding of the connection between women empowerment, food security and agricultural growth. It measures the roles and extent of women's engagement in the agriculture sector in five domains: decisions about agricultural production, access to and decision-making power over productive resources, control over use of income, leadership in the community, and time use. As a bonus, it also measures women's empowerment relative to men within their households. The WEAI is crucial for identifying which aspects of women's lives are disempowered and understanding how to increase autonomy and decision making in those areas. Killing two birds with one stone? This index will also help us determine any progress made towards gender equality, otherwise known as "Sustainable Development Goal number 5."

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to assess women empowerment in the agricultural production in Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical review

1.The Classical Development Perspective

The theory is concerned about the empowerment of women as a function of economic development, dispensation of democracy, and the removal of social injustices that increase gender inequalities (Lipset, 1959; Rostow, 1960; Deutsch, 1964). Studies have shown that there is positive relationship between economic development and an equitable distribution of educational, occupational and agricultural resources (Bell, 1999; Inkeles and Smith, 1974). Several studies have shown that economic development empowers women by increasing social services to society and according women more time for child rearing and domestic work (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Reynolds, 1999; Rule, 1981).

2. The Human Development Perspective

The Beijing Declaration (Section 13) considers the empowerment of women as the *sin qua none* of social political and economic development in any given nation: Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and space (Fourth World Conference on Women 4). In the past scholars believed that women's empowerment was enhanced by encouraging financial institutions to extend lines of credit to women (Agha, 2000; Kishor, 1997; Hashemi et al 1996). Educated women have the capacity to fight against cultural practices that condemn women to oppressed position in society (Murphy and Graham, 2008). Women who are highly educated gain more access to knowledge, information and new ideas (Maslak and Singhal, 2008). Therefore, the human development perspective relates women's empowerment to cultural practices of capacity building through education, training and development (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Inglehart and Wezel, 2005).

3. The Historical Legacies Perspective

The historical legacies perspective considers the role of government, quasi-governmental bodies and non-governmental institutions as being critical to the empowerment of women in society. According to Najm (2013), government has a duty in developing social, political and economic programmes that empower women. Rahman and Sultana (2012) suggest that non-governmental organisations should come up with projects that give women the power to make decisions that influence positive change on their lives. Women who are allowed to participate in government managed projects have access to resources which they can use to alleviate poverty in their families (Khan and Bibi, 2011). Scholars worldwide argue that the modern state is characterised by the secularisation of the public and this trend has enabled women to free themselves from the oppressive nature of the church and the family, to the extent that greater emphasis is now placed on rationality and individualism (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Inglehart and Wezel, 2005; Rule, 1981; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999).

4. The Institutional Design Perspective

The institutional design perspective is all about the need to allow women to effectively take part in the politics of the country (Datta and Sen, 2003). Women's participation in politics is increasing at a slow pace and what is problematic is that more men than women hold more political power (The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2007:12). The global data for 1980 show that women occupied 10 percent of the world's parliaments and 4 percent of national cabinets. (The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2007:12). In 2007 women represented 17 percent of single and lower houses of parliament, which is a 4 percent increase from 1990 (The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2007:12). In 1993 it was shown that only six women were governmental leaders in the world. (The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2007:12). There is an inverse relationship between both the oppressive and the unequal treatment of women and the existence of political democratic institutions in the country. (McDonagh, 2002; Wezel, 2003). Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between the existence of strong democratic institutions at national level and women empowerment (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Inglehart and Wezel, 2005).

METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW

The methodological approach for these articles is based on qualitative research methods of previous articles. Five articles were reviewed using the content analysis method. In this sense, the research techniques aimed to capture the subjective experiences of women who have been empowered by agricultural production in Kenya. Qualitative and participative methodologies will allow us to recover the voice of the real actors of the phenomenon studied, women who have been empowered by agricultural production. Thus, women's experiences will alert about the limits in the existing concepts and indicators and provide information on the factors that we need to consider in order to agricultural production indicators.

Empirical review

There is a positive relationship between maize productivity in western Kenya and women's empowerment in agriculture, measured using indicators derived from the abbreviated version of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index. Applying a cross-sectional

instrumental-variable regression method to a data set of 707 maize farm households from western Kenya, authors find that women's empowerment in agriculture significantly increases maize productivity. Although all indicators of women's empowerment significantly increase productivity, there is no significant association between the women's workload (amount of time spent working) and maize productivity. Furthermore, the results show heterogeneous effects with respect to women's empowerment on maize productivity for farm plots managed jointly by a male and female and plots managed individually by only a male or female. More specifically, the results suggest that female- and male-managed plots experience significant improvements in productivity when the women who tend them are empowered. These findings provide evidence that women's empowerment contributes not only to reducing the gender gap in agricultural productivity, but also to improving, specifically, productivity from farms managed by women. Thus, rural development interventions in Kenya that aim to increase agricultural productivity—and, by extension, improve food security and reduce poverty—could achieve greater impact by integrating women's empowerment into existing and future projects.

The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), a survey-based tool launched in 2012, has been widely used to measure and understand women's empowerment and inclusion in the agricultural sector. The WEAI was originally designed as a monitoring and evaluation tool for the Feed the Future Initiative (FTF), and has been rolled-out in 19 FTF focus countries. Since then, the WEAI has undergone subsequent rounds of testing and refinement, including a shorter, more streamlined version (the Abbreviated WEAI or A-WEAI), a project-level version suited for different types of agricultural interventions (Project-level WEAI or Pro-WEAI), and a version adapted for measuring empowerment across the value chain (WEAI for Value Chains or WEAI4VC). This webinar will provide an overview of the tool, and take stock of what we're learning so far on women's empowerment in agriculture based on results from the FTF surveys, ongoing pilot studies, and other analyses using WEAI data.

The session will begin with an overview of the WEAI tool and the different modifications currently under development, including the pro-WEAI and WEAI4VC. We will briefly discuss how the index is constructed, the different domains and indicators that are measured in the tool, and how these indicators have evolved across the different types of WEAI. Next, we will present a snapshot of the FTF interim results, highlights from the pro-WEAI and WEAI4VC surveys, and some preliminary findings from a cross-country study on the linkages between different dimensions of women's empowerment and nutrition outcomes. We will conclude with some suggestions on how the tool can be applied to future projects, and what implications for policy and practice can be drawn from context-specific findings as well as general lessons learned across regions.

. Women worldwide have much less access to, or control over, privately-held resources such as land, machinery, or money, than do men. It can be hard for women to raise collateral for investment. Their access to resources held in common may be restricted. In many countries around the world, for example, women are barred by custom from entering large water bodies and thus cannot fish – an important detail in areas where income-generation opportunities are few (Yawe, 2006). Lack of access to resources can seriously limit the ability of women to put their values into practice; improving the access of women (and disempowered men) to privately held resources, and to resources held in common, is thus fundamental to sustainable farming. Locally appropriate natural resource management

strategies that are gender-inclusive and pro-poor are, of course, required. At the same time, having more resources does not automatically mean having more agency, or voice. Chiappe and Flora (1998) argue that it is precisely because women are frequently located differently to men both in relation to resources, and to the needs of the family, that they may express different issues with respect to sustainable farming. For example, women may be more reliant on common resources and thus urge their protection, or be responsible for household food security and thus be averse to devoting land entirely to cash crops. Voicing - and listening to - these issues enable broader, deeper understandings of sustainable farming to develop. These understandings should be relevant to both men and women. On the one hand, they enable a wider range of gendered identities in farming to emerge and be legitimised. On the other hand, enriching the sustainability paradigm enables robust, more holistic farming practice. The Literature Review shows that sustainable women farmers have helped add value to localised food production through making and selling preserves, for example. Working with indigenous women helps develop a better understanding of local agro-ecological diversity and its uses. It also enables culturally specific understandings of agency to be understood and worked with in organic farming initiatives.

FINDINGS

Women's empowerment is widely perceived to be a key factor in closing gender gaps in agricultural productivity. In this paper, we explore the relationship between women's empowerment in agriculture—measured using indicators derived from the A-WEAI—and maize productivity, using smallholder maize farmers in western Kenya as a case study. Controlling for potential endogeneity, we find that women's empowerment leads to increased agricultural yield on-making on agricultural production. Extending our analysis, we find evidence of heterogeneity in the effects of women's empowerment on maize yields, namely that female- and male-managed plots experience significant improvements in yield. The effects of women's empowerment on maize yields are insignificant for jointly-managed plots. Hence, our findings provide an important piece of evidence showing that women's empowerment may contribute to closing the gender productivity gap. We contribute to the gender and agriculture literature on two fronts. First, we provide direct evidence that women's empowerment can contribute to closing the gender gap in agricultural productivity that has been widely observed in SSA [12, 66], and more generally, that improvements in women's bargaining position may lead to more optimal allocations of the household's productive resources, evidenced by higher productivity. Second, we illustrate how failing to correctly account for the bounded nature of the empowerment score may lead to overestimating the true impact of women's empowerment on agricultural productivity. Furthermore, we demonstrate how to correct for this feature of the WEAI using various econometric procedures. Our results also offer encouragement with respect to the effectiveness of policies and strategic interventions aimed at stimulating increased agricultural productivity in Kenya through women's empowerment. Although we find that having the power to make important decisions about agricultural production to be the most important driver of agricultural productivity among the six indicators of women's empowerment we tested, all except for the workload indicator had a significant effect on maize productivity. This speaks to the wide range of ways in which women's empowerment impacts positively on agricultural productivity and suggests a great scope of possible interventions, ranging from financial inclusion mechanisms such as digital savings accounts,

affordable mobile-money-based credit schemes and asset-building mechanisms, to programmes facilitating the formation of strong community associations for women.

DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed that there is effect of women's overall empowerment scores on agricultural yield. The results are consistent across the different articles and show that an increase in women's overall empowerment score significantly improve agricultural yields, suggesting the importance of improving women's empowerment in Kenya agriculture to reduce food insecurity and poverty. Inputs (fertiliser, value of seed and pesticides) and agricultural practices (adoption of PPT, intercropping and rotation) are less likely to correlate with errors of yield equation because many explanatory variables that influence the former variables are included. Also, the decision to use these variables (i.e. the input and agricultural practice) occurred before the maize harvest period. For instance, an increase in women's empowerment by 1% led to a 6.4% increase in maize yield. Other significant determinants of agricultural yield in the study area include labour allocation, fertiliser application, expenditure on seed and pesticides, use of push—pull technology on a plot, intercropping, perceived incidence of pests and diseases on a plot, distance to input supply shops and output markets, sex of household head, and credit constraints (i.e., where a household needed but was unable to get credit).

The results indicate that all six indicators of women's empowerment except *workload* are positively and significantly associated with agricultural yields. We note considerable heterogeneity in the magnitude of each indicator's effect on agricultural yields. Thus, while all indicators of women's empowerment are important, number of production decisions indicator has greater effect on improving agricultural productivity. If the number of production decisions made by women increases by one-unit, agricultural productivity can increase by 32 percent. Except the *workload* indicator, all other indicators have a positive and significant effects on maize yields. Additionally, the results reveal considerable heterogeneity in the effects of women's empowerment on maize yields across the three types of plot management. More specifically, we find that the increased agricultural yields due to higher empowerment scores for the women were statistically significant for female-managed and male-managed plots. compare selected attributes of female-, male- and jointly-managed plots to highlight some of the factors that may be critical to closing the gender gap in maize productivity. For example, female-managed plots tend to be less fertile and receive a lower intensity of fertilisers relative to the other plot-manager categories. Most notably, however, stark differences exist in the quantity of labour supplied to female-managed plots, relative to male-managed and jointly-managed ones: on average, female-managed plots receive roughly fewer person-days per acre of total labour compared with their male-managed counterparts, and nearly fewer person-days per acre than jointly-managed plots do.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature with an assessment of the association between women's empowerment in agriculture and farm household productivity change and its components. This assessment involves two steps. To better understand the relationship between women's empowerment and productivity change, we also analyze the effect of gender parity gap, individual domains and indicators of women's empowerment, and the same measures derived using two alternative scoring procedures. The empirical application focuses on Kenyan farms. Further while our study points towards women's

empowerment having a positive effect on maize yield, the cross-sectional nature of our data does not support an examination of the dynamic impacts associated with women's empowerment and maize yield. Furthermore, our data are not nationally representative and, thus, may not reflect women's empowerment status across Kenya. More research, using nationally representative and repeated data from Kenya and elsewhere in SSA, is needed to fully understand the relationship between women's empowerment and maize yield.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Women specific-training programs are needed to build women's capacity to participate in organic and sustainable farming. Training needs to include the handling of machinery, as well as business skills, post-harvest processing etc.
2. Women are more likely to experience agency in organic farming when their participation is supported and endorsed, rather than controlled, by the men of the community. Efforts need to be made to bring local men into the empowerment process.
3. Frequently, external agencies are the source of gender bias. They need to take a step back to consider their own norms reflexively and consider who they seek out as partners. Are they making an active choice to work with women farmers?
4. Attention should be paid to achieving substantive women's equality. A tickbox approach, for example in counting the percentage of women in a committee, or the number of female toilets, is not sufficient and can indeed disguise a lack of women's agency. A positive and determined choice for women's empowerment needs to be made.

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