Women’s Empowerment in Nutrition Index (WENI)

*Measuring nutritional empowerment to better link agriculture to nutrition*

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Research Team

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with

Krushna Ranaware, Ankita Mondal, Udayan Rathore, Nirali Bakhla, among others
Motivation

• Empowerment is domain specific
  – Focus on the domain of nutrition
  – (How) does empowerment in agriculture translate into improved nutritional status?

• Groups whose link with agriculture is indirect (e.g., landless in rural areas, coastal communities)

• Focus on women, not (just) children
Research Objective

• Develop a Women’s Empowerment in Nutrition Index (WENI) that reflects nutritional empowerment across agrarian contexts in South Asia
  • Bangladesh and India (Odisha and Bihar)
  • Rural context, for now
• Examine its relationship to WEAI
Empowerment

- Nutritional empowerment: the capacity for a woman, and not just her children, to be well fed and healthy; to have a meaningful say in household nutritional practices; and to receive support in implementing them.

  - Our starting point is Kabeer’s (1999) conceptualization of empowerment: resources, agency, and achievements
Steps

• Formative research
  – Review of literature
  – Participatory research (CBOT) and GDs to identify overlooked factors that may influence nutritional empowerment
  – Quantitative research to identify candidate components and sub-domains that matter.

• Generate WENI by incorporating findings from participatory research, literature, secondary data

• Collect quantitative and women’s anthropometric data in order to validate WENI
Participatory Research

Three sites
- Northern Bangladesh
- Odisha, India
- Bihar, India (to come)

NGO partners
- Nijera Kori
- JJSS
- Agragamee
- PRADAN
- Anwesha
- Sambhav
Participatory Research: Factors influencing nutrition
Participatory Research: Nijera Kori in Bangladesh

• 5 days of research training of 14 Nijera Kori landless group members
• 10 members (2 were men) selected to interview people from surrounding communities for 7 days
Participatory Research: Odisha

• 4 days of research training of 24 community researchers
• Conducted around 160 interviews in 8 villages (Ganjam, Rayagada, Nayagarh, Kandhmal)
• Coastal community, tribal forest based livelihoods/slash and burn, landless lower caste groups prone to drought and cyclones, those with strong NGO mobilization.
Learnings

- It's still early; we haven’t analyzed our data yet
- Potential implications for our understanding of empowerment.
  - Factors that influence extent of empowerment (education, NGO activity)
  - Contextual conditions that amplify and attenuate the effect of lack of empowerment on food and nutritional intake (poverty, domestic violence, indebtedness, norms and beliefs, social discrimination, agroclimatic factors)
  - Community notions of empowerment (public speaking, freedom of movement, fighting for what is due to them in the village).
  - Generally, challenges faced by women in addressing their food, nutritional and health needs.
Future work

• Complete participatory research in Bihar, analyze data
• Review literature and existing data to identify the domains
• Conceptualize, construct and validate WENI