



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index



CASE STUDY PROFILE

Florence, Uganda

Florence, a 40-year-old mother of three and a member of the Apedu tribe, rents an old, three-room house by the roadside in the Amuru district of northern Uganda. She attended school through the sixth grade, but, at the age of 11, her family no longer had enough money for her to continue. After the death of her husband in 2011, she was "inherited" by her current partner into a co-habiting marriage. In addition to their home, they also rent a store nearby.

Florence has more than two decades of farming experience, and she and her partner grow food for the family's consumption in a garden adjacent to their home. Florence previously earned most of her money from the home and garden she shared with her late husband, but, after he died, her clan forced her to abandon both. She now worries about her tenuous position as a tenant. Since she is not formally married at present, she would have little claim to household assets or property if anything happened to her current partner or if domestic disputes arose. Despite her and her partner's various activities to generate income for the family—farming, retail, and the intermittent brewing of alcohol for sale—Florence has seen her standard of living decline since her husband's death.

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Florence feels that her greatest personal asset is the health of her family and her greatest material assets are her harvest and livestock. She hopes in time to own more livestock, especially a goat, as insurance against periods of household financial crisis. She would also like to plant soya and *sim sim* (sesame) to boost the family's income.

Florence and her current partner jointly make decisions regarding both the farming and retail businesses, and she believes that decisionmaking should be a cooperative process in the household. However, Florence remains in charge of most financial decisions in the household and says that the primary decisionmaking power lies with the primary earner, regardless of gender.

The amount of time it takes to fulfill both the domestic and farming responsibilities of the household often leaves Florence exhausted. Her partner is physically disabled, so she carries an especially heavy burden with regards to physical labor. Still, Florence emphasizes that farm work is imperative to a successful household, as it minimizes reliance on others and guarantees food security. In Florence's community, leadership is concentrated in the hands of the *jagoo atekere* (clan leader). She previously held a leadership position among the women of the clan but relinquished it following accusations that she used communal

resources for her household. As an elder in the community, she still maintains some authority; as a former choir member, she hopes to rejoin the local religious group soon.

Because women in the community look after their homes and participate in farm work, Florence explains that labor is unequally distributed. "These days women are farming equally to men, and this has made men become lazy and leave all this hard work to the women," she says. She notices how the role of women as leaders at both the household and community level is growing, especially with regards to crop production and livestock: "I have mostly seen that those who are stronger are women. They are the ones who advise men and take care of their families. This role is now ours."

She is motivated by the love of her family and by her own ability to lead, and she feels empowered by her independence and work ethic, despite her difficult circumstances. She says that as her personal empowerment has declined in recent year she has been forced to cultivate her own autonomy in order to provide for the family.

Florence is disempowered according to the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, however, she has achieved gender parity with her partner. In the Index diagram, the outer ring identifies the domains. The shaded segments inside represent the indicators in which Florence has adequate achievements.

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

This innovative new tool is composed of two sub-indexes: one measures how empowered women are within five domains, and the other measures gender parity in empowerment within the household. A woman is considered empowered if she has adequate achievements in four of the five domains or in some combination of the weighted indicators that reflect 80 percent total adequacy. Gender parity reflects the percentage of women who are as empowered as the men in their households.

