



# FEED THE FUTURE

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

## Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index



### CASE STUDY PROFILE

#### Nadia, Bangladesh

Nadia, a 60-year-old woman, has lived with her husband, Sharif, in a village in southern Bangladesh for the last 40 years. Nadia and Sharif have two daughters and one son and met through a marriage arranged by a matchmaker. Sharif also has three children with a second wife. Nadia and Sharif's children have only completed basic schooling, according to Nadia, "due to financial conditions." Both parents hope that their children will be able to continue their educations one day, but, for now, they help out with agricultural work. Despite Nadia's own intention to continue studying, an early arranged marriage at age 12 prevented her from going beyond Class 5.

“ The women cannot do what the men do. The men can do field work, can sow seedlings, can harvest paddy. The women cannot, so they are powerless. ”

Nadia does not make independent decisions regarding income-generating activities, but rather discusses all such decisions with her husband, son, and daughter-in-law. "It is good to do work taking into account everybody's opinion," she says. Although farming and agricultural work are incredibly valuable to Nadia—because they provide for her family's basic needs—her husband initially did not want her to participate in these activities. Ultimately, the couple resolved this disagreement because of the need to provide food for the family



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and compromised regarding which crops to grow, namely rice for income and vegetables for consumption.

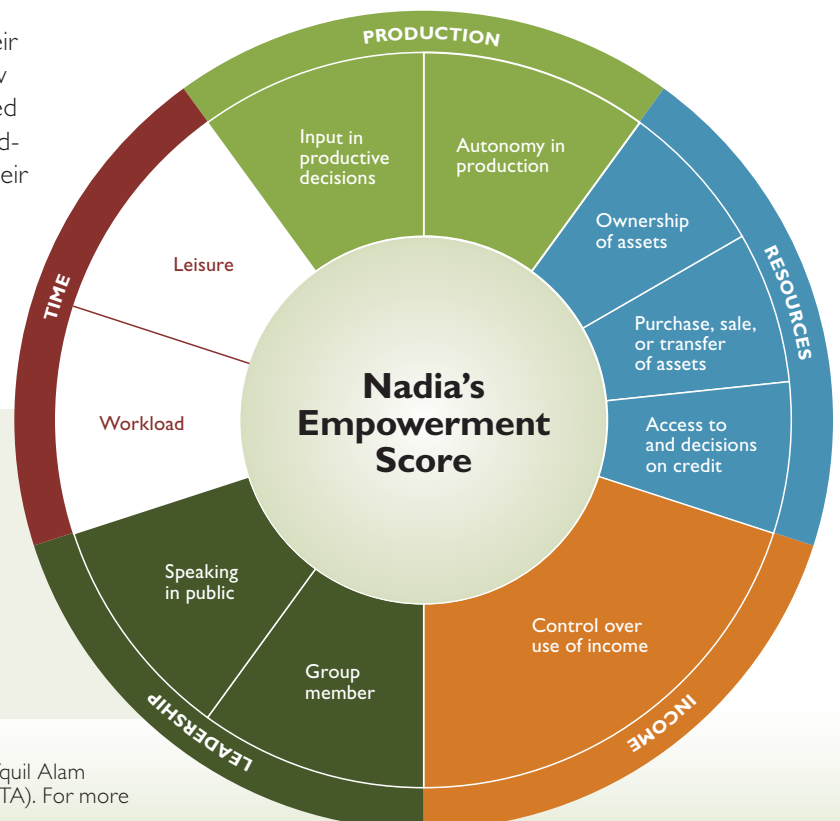
Overall, Nadia and Sharif's household is moderately well off. "We have income from agriculture. Yet, we do not have any shortage or surplus—we break even. We have no loans. We have no savings," says Sharif. This year has given the family higher rice yields than previous years, which puts them in a better position for spending and investing in household needs.

Nadia prizes land ownership as it provides security, although the cost of purchasing land prohibits her family from increasing its land holdings. Sharif says that he will be the sole land owner until his death, after which time the land will pass to his children. Nadia, however, would prefer to share ownership with her sons and daughters. Disagreements over assets have occurred previously in their marriage, particularly due to Sharif's second wife. "Now there is no problem because all assets have been divided [between us]," Nadia says. The couple agree over spending decisions, as all of their money is spent to benefit their family. Nadia feels that her children respect her wishes and decisions.

In the community, "everybody helps," explains Nadia. While many children attend school, they also pull rickshaws and participate in agricultural work. Nadia feels weak in old age, and this has inhibited her ability to participate in agricultural activities. She also suffers from stress caused by constantly worrying about the future. She feels that improvements will be made for families if children focus on their studies instead of helping with work.

The local community leader (or chairman) and village elite make important, community-related decisions. Sharif seeks their advice when he encounters problems. Without the "power of money" and a background in leadership, Nadia feels that no one will listen to her. She equates empowerment with being listened to by others and having money, specifically having the ability to undertake profit-earning agricultural work: "The women cannot do what the men do. The men can do field work, can sow seedlings, can harvest paddy. The women cannot, so they are powerless." Nadia hopes her family can soon increase their land holdings, but, more than that, Sharif and Nadia both hope to witness the success of their children.

Nadia is empowered according to the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index and has achieved gender parity with her husband. In the Index diagram, the outer ring identifies the domains. The shaded segments inside represent the indicators in which Nadia 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.