



FEED THE FUTURE

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

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index



CASE STUDY PROFILE

Ingrid, Guatemala

Ingrid is a 63-year-old woman who belongs to an indigenous Mayan group (Mam) and lives in a small village within Guatemala's mountainous Quetzaltenango district. She lives in a brick house with four bedrooms, electricity, and dirt floors. Ingrid is married, but she is often solely in charge of the household because her husband currently works as a carpenter in the United States and sends money back to support their large family. Ingrid lives with her daughter, her son, and her son's family, including three grandchildren. While they do have available land, Ingrid's family does not have sufficient money to build a separate house for the children and grandchildren. Ingrid stopped attending school after the third grade at age 11 because "there was no money."

“ Although I am tired, I am content. ”

The family cultivates maize and a small amount of broad beans and owns a variety of livestock. Ingrid is actively involved in agricultural production, and she and her husband have been growing maize, a customary crop in the village, since they got married 42 years ago. However, they are only able to produce enough to last three or four months of the year. Her husband makes the decisions on planting while he is at home, and Ingrid makes them when he is abroad. She



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would like to grow more vegetables but does not have sufficient access to water to support them. If disagreements about planting arise, Ingrid and her family discuss them together. She feels the most important decisions for her are those concerning employment and vegetable gardening.

The most valuable asset Ingrid's family owns is their house because, she explains, "that is where we sleep, eat...where we are protected from the weather, the rain." Her most valuable personal assets are her cooking pans and utensils, and if she could purchase something in the coming year, it would be arable land for herself and her husband because she believes that their assets should be shared. In the past five years, she has not seen a change in her assets or rights, nor has she seen changes in the family's income or production levels as they continue to face production and employment problems.

Ingrid rises early each day feeling satisfied with her household responsibilities and the time she has to accomplish them. She feels that she has sufficient control over spending decisions in her household and that both men and women make important decisions in her community.

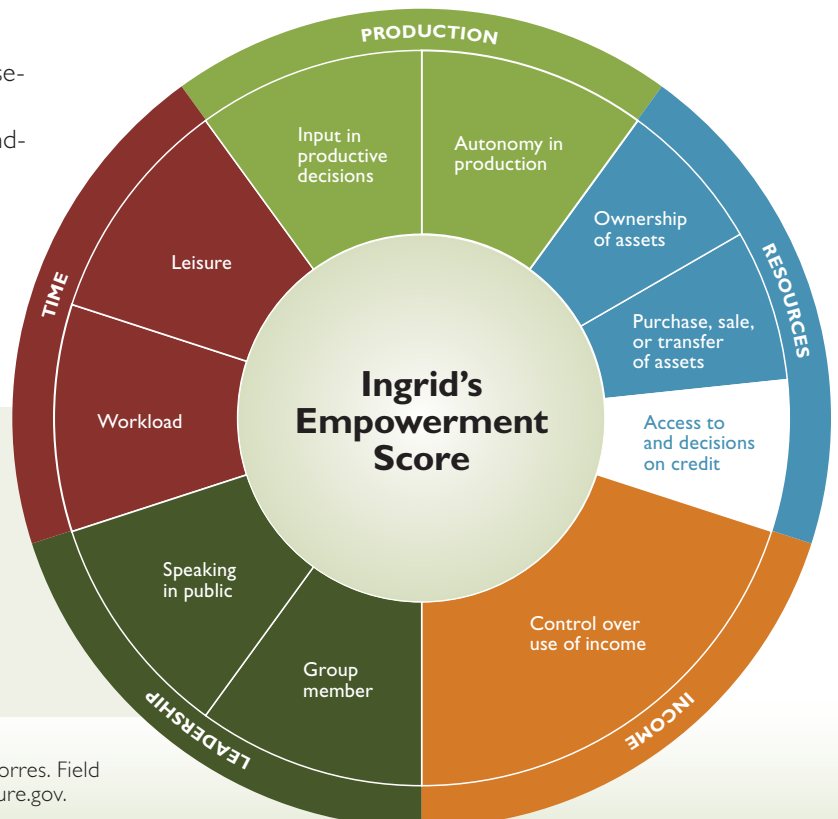
She defines leadership as experience and knowledge and, in fact, considers herself a leader because she has worked with women in her community on

agricultural projects for the past seven years. Ingrid feels that she has been successful in this role because others have confidence in her. Part of the local church community, she also hopes to see a mutual support group created in the future so that she can help others with their agricultural activities.

Ingrid sees empowerment as the ability or capacity "to do something" and that agricultural empowerment means that women are able to undertake agricultural tasks, not just men. Someone who is disempowered does nothing, she says, or feels that she is worth nothing, and men may foster disempowerment by discriminating against and failing to value their wives. Despite considering herself a leader and having decisionmaking abilities while her husband is away, Ingrid has felt empowered only a few times in her life.

She finds happiness in her good health, however, and through agricultural work and a commitment to working with other women. Her hope for the coming year is for her family to acquire more seeds for planting and, in the longer term, to improve their home. "Although I am tired," she says, "I am content."

Ingrid is empowered according to the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, and she 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 Ingrid 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.