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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.

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.