



FEED THE FUTURE

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

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index



CASE STUDY PROFILE

Guatemala, Isabel

Isabel is 46 years old and lives with Eduardo, her husband of 24 years, and their 6 children (ages 7 to 24) in the western highlands district of San Marcos, Guatemala. Their house has cement flooring, metal walls, electricity, a kitchen, and two rooms for living and sleeping. Despite her parents' encouragement, Isabel quit school upon completing only the first grade because she did not enjoy it. Isabel and Eduardo's children have not completed education beyond sixth grade "because of our financial situation," Eduardo explained. Despite these financial troubles, Isabel describes her marriage as "content," and Eduardo describes his wife as attentive, caring, and helpful: "She understands me and I her."

“ We agree on how to do things.

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Isabel's family works on coffee plantations and grows maize for household consumption. Isabel also joined a group that harvests bananas about six months ago. "We work the land to survive," explains Eduardo, and, at times, the family share-crops out their land as they do not have enough resources to plant their own fields. According to both Isabel and Eduardo, the entire family shares ownership of assets and cooperates in household decisionmaking, including which crops to grow. "We agree on how to do things," Isabel said, and their discussions



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the domestic chores, men should work outside the home, and children should “only go to school.” Due to multiple responsibilities including cooking, doing laundry, and harvesting coffee, she feels constantly tired. Despite this and the difficult physical nature of the work, however, Isabel reports enjoying coffee-bean harvesting since it is the same work she did growing up.

According to Isabel, a leader is someone who can talk with people, bring them together, and get things done; in her village, she says, the mayor is the person who makes important community decisions. Isabel feels she could not be a leader because she has difficulty explaining ideas to others, being in the spotlight, and speaking in public. Because of this, she prefers not to participate in community groups and leaves that task to her husband. Isabel says she feels empowered when she spends time with her husband.

In the coming year, Isabel hopes to build a new house and help her children to find work. “My greatest wish this year,” Eduardo says, “is to have life, to have health, and then to have work in order to move my family forward.”

Isabel is disempowered according to the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index; however, 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 Isabel has adequate achievements.

are essential in avoiding conflict. If the family had money to invest or access to credit, Isabel would purchase a pig, which could later be sold for additional income. Eduardo would like to diversify foods grown for the household, including the addition of tomatoes. Although Isabel values all of their household belongings, such as the television and chairs, she says that the house is the most important asset. According to Isabel, the family has experienced no changes in relation to rights, income, or possession of assets over the past five years.

Isabel has a traditional view of division of household tasks. She feels that women should be responsible for

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.

