



FEED THE FUTURE

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

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index



CASE STUDY PROFILE

Uganda, Lilian

Lilian, a member of the Langi tribe, is 30 years old and lives with her husband of 17 years, Wilson, and their five children in the Lango region of northern Uganda. Her family lives in one of the village's nicer dwellings: a grass-thatched hut with four rooms made from unburned clay blocks, a floor made from cow dung and soil, and a pit latrine. The family uses firewood for cooking and kerosene lamps for light. They recently resettled in their current village, where subsistence farming is the main source of food, after returning from an internally displaced persons camp, where they lived during the conflict in northern Uganda in the mid-2000s. They lost many possessions during this time, including their livestock. Wilson explains, "Before we were displaced to the camps, I had many cows but I lost them all because of displacement." Lilian describes Wilson as "a tough person when he drinks but, when he is sober, he is quiet."

“ [Women] are independent; their thoughts and choices overpower their husbands.

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Lilian completed primary school up to grade 5 (at age 13) but had to quit for financial reasons after the death of her father. Since 1994, Lilian and Wilson have farmed for a living, in particular cultivating simsim (sesame), subsistence crops (such as potatoes), and a small amount of cotton. With the sale of surplus simsim, they bought two goats in the past two years. Lilian says that this brought an important change to the household, especially in relation to her husband's behavior: "In the beginning, he never wanted to buy the goats; he would just drink [away] the money. But now he has changed. He can buy [things] and not waste the money on alcohol."



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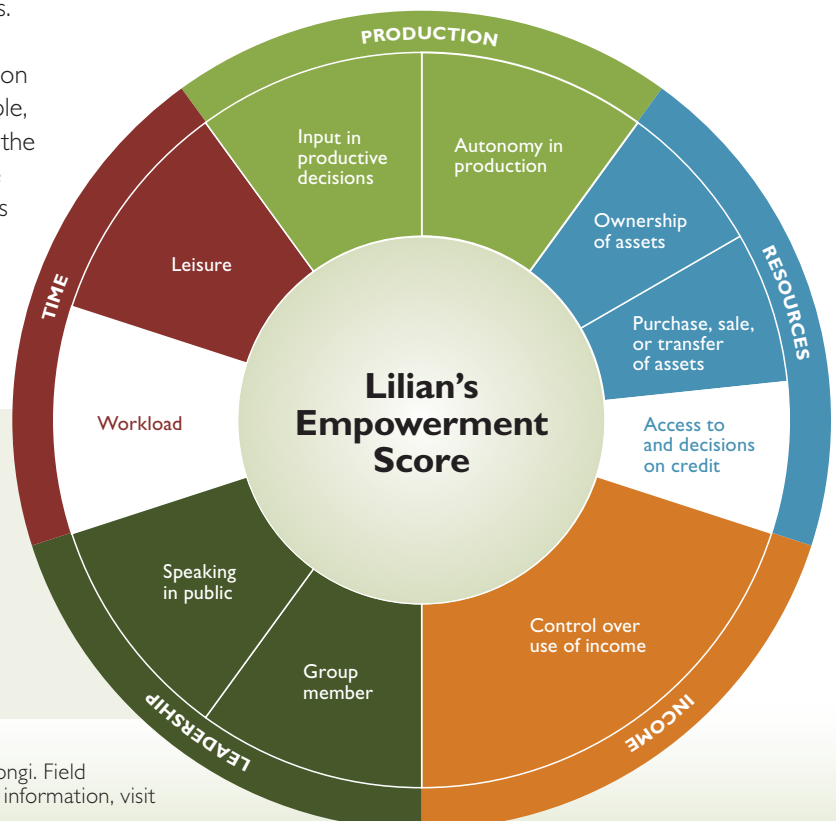
Lilian feels that she does the majority of household work without any help, but remains powerless to change this dynamic. Despite building asset stocks, she has not seen overall improvements in her or her household's quality of life. Both Lilian and Wilson are tired, citing insufficient time to complete all of the necessary tasks and grow sufficient food, let alone start the new business Lilian desires. She believes that women should focus solely on household duties whereas Wilson feels that gardening is also the wife's responsibility. Both explain that children should help out "with this and that," such as sweeping, fetching water, and caring for the household animals. Wilson enjoys animal rearing, in particular; whereas Lilian is happiest taking things to market.

Land and the crops produced on that land are Lilian and Wilson's most important household resources because they enable them to build up other assets. The couple owns most assets jointly and shares income. "We always sit down and devise means to share money," says Wilson. Lilian believes that decisions about garden production activities are the most important and that the household member who earns the most money should make the final monetary decisions. Thus, despite being consulted in decisionmaking process, ultimately, Lilian has to obey Wilson's decisions if there is a disagreement (for example, whether extra food should be sold for profit or kept).

Lilian's most prized personal possessions are her cooking pans. She would like to purchase a bicycle to help expand any small business opportunities, start a beer-brewing venture, and build a new house within the next five years. But the recent bad harvests—brought about by heavy rains during the growing cycle that make cotton production impossible—have made the couple's income unpredictable, so achieving these goals will be difficult. Lilian cannot pay the necessary 10,000 shillings (US\$4.30) entrance fee for the community brewing group. The lack of financial resources has also prohibited the couple from purchasing an ox, which could greatly improve their farming capacities in terms of both efficiency and accuracy. "I would need a bull for plowing land," Wilson says.

In their community, leadership is concentrated in the hands of the local council administrator, who, in Lilian's village, is a woman. In their opinion, effective leaders are bright, can solve problems, give advice, and help the community achieve overall harmony. Lilian feels that she is a successful leader because she loves people and can settle disputes among others. She sees participation in farm production as empowering for women in her community: "They are independent; their thoughts and choices overpower their husbands."

Lilian 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 Lilian 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.