



FEED THE FUTURE

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

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index



CASE STUDY PROFILE

Uganda, Harriet

Harriet is a 30-year-old member of the Acholi tribe and has lived with her common-law husband, Patrick, and their six children in the Amaru district of northern Uganda for the past eight years. Patrick has two other wives—one with three children and one with eight. The entire extended family stays in the same compound and shares resources. Harriet's house is one room, with a grass thatch roof and mud floors. She has a pit latrine and, without electricity, she lights firewood to see at night. Harriet only completed primary school through grade five (age 13) because there was no one to pay her fees after her father died.

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During the past season, Harriet's crops—beans and sorghum—were destroyed by a combination of heavy rain and poor soil quality caused by overuse. To help support the family during the lean season, she has started to work as a day laborer in agriculture. Harriet says of agricultural decisions in the household: “If the choices bring good [crop yields] then I am happy, but, if not, then there is no happiness.” In the past, Harriet has encountered problems accessing money from her husband to buy farm inputs (such as seeds and fertilizer), namely when Patrick feels he was not asked in advance or when Harriet spends money without first seeking his approval.

Harriet feels that the most important household activity is growing food for the family to eat and believes that the household's most valuable asset is land because it is the source of food. Overall, the household owns few physical assets, and Harriet's only individual assets are saucepans and small farming tools. While Harriet believes that husband and wife should own assets jointly and make decisions jointly regardless of who earns more money, Patrick remains in control of most spending decisions in their household.

In the coming year, Harriet and Patrick would like to purchase oxen to help expand cultivation and make it more efficient than what's possible with manual labor. Since the workload is currently distributed equally between men and women in the household and everyone does their part to help with chores, purchasing oxen would help the entire family. Over the past five years, Harriet and



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Patrick have not experienced any changes in asset ownership or rights. Currently, their household and many others in the community are engaged in land disputes with local authorities, but overall, Harriet notes, poverty is the largest problem the community faces.

While the local council administrator makes the most important decisions in her community, Harriet feels that anyone who is able to manage and address people's problems in the village is also a leader. She feels that she is capable of leadership but has not yet been chosen to take a leadership position. She is an active participant, however, of a microfinance group that helps women in her community save small sums of money and would like to join a

farming group but does not have the money to pay the 10,000 shilling (US\$4.30) entrance fee.

Harriet believes that empowering someone in agriculture occurs by providing them with livestock, seeds, or other inputs to improve their cultivation and income activities. She has never felt empowered herself and does not think that women in her community are empowered in agriculture. This disempowerment arises from illness, Harriet explains, or from a woman's relationship with her husband, who often wastes income on drinking. Patrick, on the other hand, feels that disempowered women are mostly widows, who cannot stand up for themselves, and women who are mistreated by their in-laws. Harriet hopes to start a business in the next year but needs start-up funds that she does not currently have. Patrick's goals for the next year include increasing household land holdings and starting a cash-crop business.

Harriet 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 Harriet 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.