The role of livestock in enhancing the empowerment of rural women

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Presentation overview

• Women’s empowerment: why and what
• Women’s empowerment and livestock
• WELI tool to assess changes in empowerment of women in livestock
• Rethinking empowerment through experiences from the ground
Women's empowerment: a means and an end

**SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY**
The goal of SDG 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

**WHAT?**

1. End discrimination against all women and girls
2. Eliminate violence against all women and girls
3. Eliminate all harmful practices such as child marriage
4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work
5. Ensure women’s participation and leadership in decision-making
6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights
Defining ‘women’s empowerment’

Capability of women for **self-determination**: to take control over their own circumstances and to realize their aspirations in order to live a life they have reason to value

(Annas, 2003; Kabeer, 1999; Sen, 1990)
Agnes: “I feel empowered when I can take decisions about the cattle I raise and can decide how to use the income from the cattle”

(Price at al 2018)
Why women’s empowerment in livestock development?
Livestock key for women’s empowerment

- Women are the majority of poor livestock keepers (FAO 2011)

- Livestock and products as source of income (Randolph 2007)

- Livestock more easily controlled by women than other assets (Galiè et al 2015)

- Livestock as a mobile bank (Njuki and Sanginga 2013)
However...

Women have limited control over livestock resources (Kristjanson 2014)

Commercialization: women lose control over livestock products (Tavenner et al 2019)

Livestock entrenched in long-standing gender norms (Price et al 2018)

↓

Gender-responsive livestock development for women’s empowerment
Women’s empowerment for livestock

Livestock for women’s empowerment
How can we learn about the ways in which livestock can enhance women’s empowerment?
The Women’s Empowerment in Livestock Index (WELI)
A standardized measure to assess the empowerment of women in the livestock sector  (Galiè et al 2018)
level empowerment of:

- a given woman
- a man in the same household
- women in a community

And...

- what activities affect E. over time
Food for thought

1. Individual path to self-determination VS standard measure
2. Complexity of empowerment VS ‘one index number’
3. Absolute value of index n. VS change for 1 person over time
4. Empowerment woman VS man
Rethinking Empowerment: Power Through
Power through: A new concept in the empowerment discourse

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1. Introduction

Women's empowerment describes the capability of women for self-determination: to take control over their own circumstances and to realize their aspirations in order to live a life they have reason to value (Annas, 2003; Kabeer, 1999; Sen, 1990). The emphasis is on ‘agency’

Social norms clearly play a role in determining ‘the possible’ when it comes to the choices women may decide to make and to enact. Social norms lie outside the immediate control (or agency) of individuals and can greatly influence individual choice. Stewart, 2013 argues that no one can experience complete autonomy: alongside political and economic constraints, their choices are heavily influenced by underlying
Four common definitions of power...

Power within

Power with

Power to

Power over
Power through

involuntary

relational

precondition for dis/empowerment
Power through...

Empowerment mediated by:

1. the empowerment status of associated others
Maha: “when my sister became a teacher, the whole village looked at me with admiration”
Key message 1

Empowerment of individual women is partly *involuntary* and *constituted through* the empowerment of people associated with them.
Power through...

Empowerment mediated by:

1. the empowerment status of associated others

2. personal characteristics vis-à-vis gender norms
“A self-confident but disrespectful wife cannot be an empowered woman”
Empowerment is affected by a complex interplay between individual characteristics of empowerment and the compatibility of these characteristics with locally sanctioned social roles.
Empowerment mediated by:

1. the empowerment status of associated others

2. personal characteristics vis-à-vis gender norms

3. normative judgment by community
Fatma: “When I started selling the milk, I started making money and felt empowered. But the village was not happy. My husband left us”
Key message 3

An individual is accorded an ‘empowered’ or ‘dismayed’ status through the assessment by community members of an individual's performance of gender roles vis-à-vis locally valid gender norms.
Empowerment mediated by:

1. the empowerment status of associated others
2. personal characteristics vis-à-vis gender norms
3. normative judgment by community
4. the gender norms façade
‘In my household my husband takes all the decisions. I look after the children and cook. We look after the goats together.’
Key message 4

Interview participants describe gender dynamics in their own household using stereotypical, local gender norms.

Actual daily performance of roles and responsibilities may be very different.
From Power Through to Empowerment

involuntary

relational

Pre-condition for empowerment

Stay empowered

use agency to maintain the gender norms façade
Concluding remarks

1. Livestock offers key opportunities to empower women.

2. Women’s empowerment needs to be situated within gender dynamics/norms.

3. Empowerment IS NOT a zero-sum game: ‘individual empowerment’ is mediated by the ‘empowerment of significant others’.

4. ‘Individual empowerment’ is affected by personal characteristics and local norms.

5. Empowerment depends on how individuals, hhs, community interpret change.

6. Gender norms façade leveraged strategically to support women’s empowerment.

7. Empowering women purposefully remains critical. Empowering men as a means to empower women simply will not work.