



Economic opportunities, empowerment, and rights for indigenous poultry farmers

Immaculate Maina, Elizabeth Waithanji, Maureen Miruka, Edna Mutua, Luke Korir, Lydia Miriti, Kathryn Gituma and Patrick Wahome

Introduction

As a strategy to address poverty in Kenya, pro-poor research and development projects are being implemented, focusing on the integration of resource-poor, smallholder households within value chains. In order to participate in and benefit from value chains, however, men and women make choices based on their individual capacities, capabilities and economic opportunities. This is determined by a complex set of factors, many of which are gender related. Women may have access to productive resources but lack control over them, and often have poorer access to capital and technologies than men. Women's participation is usually limited to less profitable stages of the agricultural value chain. Thus, the capacity to make economic choices is influenced, in part, by individual rights and freedoms. This calls for heightened sensitivity to the configuration of relations between men and women so as to identify barriers to entry, define opportunities available to each gender, and facilitate the power dynamics between genders.

The research opportunity

To better understand the synergies between economic opportunity, empowerment and rights, data was collected from beneficiaries of an indigenous poultry value chain project in Naivasha and Malindi sub-counties to help answer the following question:

- What are the differences and underlying factors associated with men and women's empowerment in resource-poor, smallholder communities?

In Naivasha and Malindi, smallholder farmers face high poverty levels. Production of indigenous chickens was considered a pro-poor value chain because it offers immediate returns in nutrition through the consumption of meat and eggs, and makes an important contribution to household income through sales. The enterprise is especially important for women in Kenya because almost all communities put indigenous chickens in the hands of women. However, women are frequently unable to realize the full potential of the chickens they raise, due to a wide range of management constraints related to supplementary feeding, housing, vaccination regimes, pest and disease control as well as organized marketing.

Methodology: the empowerment of female and male beneficiaries of the 'improvement of indigenous chicken rearing and management' intervention in Naivasha and Malindi.

Measuring women's empowerment

To capture the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of empowerment, indicators for measuring women's empow-

erment have evolved from use of single proxy indicators, such as income and women's education, to composite and multi-dimensional indicators. Common composite indicators include the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI), the Gender Development Index (GDI), the Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) and the WEAI.

WEAI is a composite empowerment index that uses two sub-indices - the five domains of empowerment (5DE) and the Gender Parity Index (GPI). The 5DE include (1) decisions about agricultural production, (2) access to and decision-making power over productive resources, (3) control over use of income, (4) leadership in the community, and (5) time use, and are made up of ten indicators. GPI measures the proportion of women who are as empowered as men within their households. WEAI is calculated as a weighted average (relative importance) of 5DE and GPI. Using an adapted WEAI, the study reported here measured the empowerment of female and male beneficiaries of the 'improvement of indigenous chicken rearing and management' intervention. The WEAI was adapted to include a sixth domain, 'health', with two indicators on women's vulnerability - women's perceptions of gender-based violence (GBV) and women's decision-making on reproductive activities. A third indicator on custody of identity card was added to the leadership domain. The adapted WEAI therefore has 13 indicators. A woman is considered empowered if she has adequate achievements in four of the six domains, or is empowered in some combination of the weighted indicators that reflects 67% total adequacy.

Data was collected from 168 households in two project sites, 79 from Malindi in Kilifi County and 89 from Naivasha in Nakuru County, in the Kenyan Coast and Rift Valley Provinces, respectively.

Results and discussions

Characteristics of respondents

The characteristics exhibited by the two communities differed considerably, with most respondents from Naivasha having been resettled there as internally displaced persons and most respondents from Malindi being indigenous to the area. The Naivasha respondents were enterprising, open and receptive of visitors. Conversely, respondents from Malindi were conservative, superstitious, suspicious and interacted poorly with visitors from outside the community.

Access to land

In Malindi, land size ranged between 5.4 and 7.1 acres, whereas in Naivasha, it ranged between 2.5 and 5.2 acres with male headed households (MHH) owning more land than female headed households (FHH) in both places. Owning land, and the quality of land owned, determines whether a person can invest in new technologies. For example, a household with secure land tenure on productive land can make long term investment decisions to develop the land because they are motivated to build assets.

Six dimensions of empowerment

Dimension 1: Production

The production dimension was composed of two indicators: input into productive decisions and autonomy in production. Women in FHH were the key decision-makers in their households in both sites. In MHH in Malindi, consensus over joint decision-making was attained in four activities: engagement in agricultural production, kinds of inputs to buy, kinds of crops to grow, and when and who to market crop produce. In Naivasha, there was consensus over decision-making between male heads and primary females in MHH, with the exception of non-farm business activities.

Overall, male heads in dual adult households had higher autonomy in production than primary females in MHH in all production activities except chicken rearing and egg trading. Thus, chicken rearing and egg trading appear to provide entry points for reducing the 'gender gap' and provide a platform for household negotiations on production. This conclusion should be made with caution because studies have demonstrated that with commercialization, men often take over women's enterprises and the income share of women declines as the total income from a commodity increases.

Dimension 2: Resources

The resources dimension was composed of three indicators: ownership of assets, purchase, sale or transfer of assets, and access to and decision on credit. Ownership of assets at dissolution of marriage by divorce or separation indicates that most assets would revert to the male household heads (but upon death the assets would be owned by the living spouse and/or children). Joint ownership could be negotiated in the ownership of large livestock such as cattle. In both sites, the only asset that belonged to women that would not shift ownership in case of marriage dissolution was their mobile phone.

Decisions regarding purchase or transfer of assets in MHH involved both the household heads and their wives. Primary males and primary females in MHH could decide whether or not to purchase new mobile phones independently. This was also the only decision that primary females in MHH could make alone. Although a woman can sell a mobile phone and keep the money, the trade off in terms of the loss of autonomy associated with connectivity provided by the mobile phone is great.

Decisions on credit were such that, where women in MHH had taken loans from formal lenders, the decision to borrow and use the income was taken jointly and both parties participated in repayment. In Naivasha, repayment also occurred jointly except for money borrowed from family or relatives. The fact that resources reverted to men in the case of divorce, and that men could overrule the primary women's decisions on all assets except a mobile phone, is an indicator that in terms of resources, men wielded more power than women in MHHs.

Dimension 3: Income

The income dimension had a single indicator, namely the level of input into decision-making over income. More male heads of households than primary females in MHH contributed to decisions on use of income generated from production activities (Table 1).

More men than women achieved empowerment in the income dimension. Generally, women in MHH were the least empowered in decision-making across all productive resources. In chicken rearing MHH, women were less empowered than men, which may be explained by the fact that while women and children rear the chickens, men have greater control over accruing benefits. This means that pro-poor research and development projects cannot assume gender equity or enhanced attainment of empowerment for women just because an intervention targets female-dominated activities. Men have also been reported to conduct most chicken sales in parts of The Gambia and Tanzania.

In both study sites, most men in MHH (93.8% in Malindi and 98.2% in Naivasha) and women in MHH (89.8% in Malindi and 89.3% in Naivasha) as well as 100% of women in FHH in Malindi and 95.5% in Naivasha had national identity cards, which they kept themselves. The identity card is a legal document that is issued to each person when they reach 18 years old, and is crucial for all official transactions. Anecdotal evidence from Kenya indicates that some of the most disempowered women - willingly or not - give their husbands their identity cards to keep for them. This was not the case in Malindi or Naivasha.

Dimension 5: Time

The time dimension was composed of two indicators: satisfaction with distribution of workload and satisfaction with leisure time available. Respondents from both sites were more satisfied with the distribution of workload than with their available leisure time. Women in MHH in Malindi were the most dissatisfied with the distribution of their work

Table 1: Percentage of persons empowered in decision-making over income

Income source	Malindi			Naivasha		
	Men in MHH	Women in MHH	Women in FHH	Men in MHH	Women in MHH	Women in FHH
Food crop	90.2	28.6	91.7	48	19.7	64
Cash crop	90	63.2	33.3	100	43.8	100
Dairy	85.7	57.6	100	85.7	36	80
Fishing	100	0	0	0	0	100
Poultry	64.7	60.3	100	50	42.5	77.7
Livestock rearing	75.1	60.6	100	70.6	53.4	94
Bee keeping	66.7	75	100	75	0	100
Non-farm activity	84	94.3	100	95	85.7	100
Paid work	100	81.8	100	95.8	75	100

Dimension 4: Leadership

The leadership dimension was composed of three indicators: group membership, ability to speak in public, and ownership of a national identity card. Group membership revealed that all categories of women were members of micro-finance savings groups while most women in MHH were members of religious groups, which are often homogenous (with almost all group members adhering to ascribed social norms without questioning them) and kin based. Male household heads from both sites had high membership in producer and marketing groups, which are often heterogeneous and non-kin based. Thus, women appeared to be more involved in social groups, whereas men were more likely to be members of an income-generating group. Homogenous and kin-based networks have been associated with poor business prospects and self policing in communities that require women to uphold strict moral codes of conduct. Heterogeneous networks are considered to enhance business prospects. This difference in types of groups may explain why more males achieved the empowerment threshold compared to women, even for women in MHH.

Women in MHH in Malindi were the most disempowered when it came to public speaking. Malindi is a conservative, patriarchal, traditional society, where culturally, women are required to refrain from speaking in public.

load and available leisure time. The workload/leisure time imbalance for women can be attributed to traditional roles and responsibilities, but the expression of dissatisfaction by women in Malindi suggests their increased consciousness of the injustice of these traditions.

Dimension 6: Health

The two indicators comprising the health dimension were level of decision-making on one's reproductive health and perceptions towards GBV. Women in MHH had a higher level of decision-making regarding their use or non-use of family planning methods than their husbands. However, male household heads could determine whether or not to have sex, and to protect themselves from HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, better than their wives. FHH in Naivasha were the most disempowered in their ability to discuss their reproductive health concerns with their partners. These findings indicate that the responsibility for birth control is predominantly left to women, but the decision over whether or not to have sex is still predominantly determined by men. Men decide which partner is risky or not, and hence, they are able to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases more easily than women.

Results indicate that GBV is a widespread problem among resource-poor agricultural communities in the two study

sites. It is also true that people's beliefs are strongly ingrained in their views towards GBV. The fact that many interview respondents believed that GBV should not be discussed in public or reported indicates the risk of under-reporting during the data collection exercise. Since GBV undermines people's wellbeing, more education and awareness is needed in the study sites, in terms of its harmful effects and the legal implications.

Scoring empowerment

Using headcounts, a greater proportion of men than women were empowered in Malindi, while that proportion was almost the same for women and men in Naivasha; using the 6DE, men were more empowered than women in Malindi, while in Naivasha, there was little difference between men and women's level of empowerment. Finally, using the WEAI, women from Naivasha were more empowered than women from Malindi (Table 2).

Table 2: Empowerment scores for indigenous chicken farmers

Site	Gender	Percentage empowered	6DE	WEAI
Malindi	Male	59	0.82	0.697
	Female	44	0.72	
Naivasha	Male	60	0.83	0.789
	Female	61	0.82	

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on these results, it can be argued that entry points for increasing empowerment among male participants are: enhanced decision-making in production, access to and decision-making on credit, capacity to make appropriate reproductive health decisions and change in attitudes towards GBV. Similarly, women's empowerment could be enhanced with: increased access to and decision-making on credit, more control over use of income, better capacity to make appropriate reproductive health decisions and

changing attitudes towards GBV. In essence, empowerment is both an outcome and cause of social and economic factors. This signifies that pro-poor projects cannot focus exclusively on approaches that yield income, growth and utility, but must increasingly consider impacts on individual entitlements, capabilities, freedoms and rights in order to achieve a set of positive impacts both for empowerment and for wealth creation among resource-poor households.

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Contact

Immaculate Maina
immaculate.n.maina@gmail.com



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ILRI is a member of the CGIAR Consortium

Box 30709, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
 Phone: +254 20 422 3000
 Fax: +254 20 422 3001
 Email: ILRI-Kenya@cgiar.org

Box 5689, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
 Phone: +251 11 617 2000
 Fax: +251 11 617 2001
 Email: ILRI-Ethiopia@cgiar.org



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