



THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT INDEX

Context

Overcoming gender inequality is critical to achieving the end of hunger. Women often bear the responsibility for meeting the needs of their family; yet they are frequently denied the resources, information and freedom of action to fulfill this responsibility. Studies show that when women are empowered, all of society benefits. Women's empowerment is an essential component of The Hunger Project's programs.

Challenge

To assess impact and review performance in The Hunger Project's women's empowerment programming, we sought to identify and adopt a standard, recognized approach. Yet, while women's empowerment is a mainstay feature for many international organizations' programs and practices, **a standard, collective approach for tracking progress is still missing.** This is a significant gap given the importance of gender equity to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Approach

To fill this measurement gap, The Hunger Project created the custom Women's Empowerment Index (WEI), which builds on the International Food Policy Research Institute's Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index alongside extensive internal testing. The WEI, tailored to meet the unique needs of The Hunger Project's programs, allows a special focus on measurements that we recognize as central to overcoming rural poverty and disempowerment.

ABOUT THE HUNGER PROJECT

The Hunger Project has a 39-year track record of partnering with people living in poverty as they work to end their own chronic hunger. Our approach is based on three fundamental pillars: (1) Mobilize people at the grassroots level, (2) Empower women as key change agents of their own development, and (3) Forge partnerships with local government. Our work reaches 18.1 million people in nearly 20,000 communities in Africa, South Asia and Latin America.



505,180
trained in women's leadership since 2011



66%
our active participants in our microfinance program are women



726,400+
participants in our HIV/AIDS and Gender Inequality workshops since 2011



Agency

Women are able to make decisions and exercise control over resources and are free to exercise these decisions without fear of repercussion.



Income

Women have the ability to benefit from economic activities and enhanced access to markets and financial resources



Leadership

Women have the ability to participate in community activities and are encouraged to speak in and for their communities.



Resources

Women and girls have access to the resources and skills they need to become equal participants in society



Time

Women and girls are reducing domestic drudgery (time spent on hard, menial, or dull work) freeing up time to pursue productive endeavors, education, child care, and leisure activities.



Emilienne, peanut cookie trader, Zakpota Epicenter, Benin
(Photo by Johannes Odé)

In October 2016, The Hunger Project, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), and the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves (UN Foundation) presented “Converging Metrics in Measuring Women’s Empowerment” at the American Evaluation Association (AEA) conference.

The Hunger Project team shared about the WEI as part of this panel which detailed the various tools the respective organizations are utilizing to measure women’s empowerment.

AEA’s annual conference attracts over 3,000 evaluators and practitioners each year for professional sharing.



What is the WEI?

The WEI is a composite index designed to measure progress in the multi-dimensional aspects of women’s empowerment. Empowerment is considered a factor of both women’s achievements as well as of gender parity with men.

WEI measures progress on women’s empowerment by aggregating results across five key areas (or “domains”). Each domain is comprised of a series of metrics (or “indicators”) which quantifies performance in this domain. The tool is open source, and can be utilized by other organizations seeking to measure women’s empowerment.

In Practice

WEI tracks women’s achievements and gender parity utilizing randomized household surveys to generate an aggregated community score. A higher value of WEI indicates greater empowerment for women in that community. **This is important information which allows The Hunger Project to critically analyze performance of programs to empower women.**

Aligned with The Hunger Project’s Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) approach, M&E teams review the data after an evaluation is completed. Teams in The Hunger Project’s Program Countries across Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal, and Uganda), Bangladesh and Mexico utilize the WEI to strategically design and implement programs for empowering women in these countries.

The results are presented to community partners through community data presentations, where partners can engage with the data and understand their progress against targets. These presentations include visuals, interactive activities, and data comparisons to other Hunger Project communities or national data to imagine what is possible.

To date, data has been collected and analyzed in over 54 of our project communities and 17,000 households in nine countries.



Rosita Mabunda, Epicenter Chairwoman,
Zuza Epicenter, Mozambique

Why This Matters

Program Learning

The WEI provides data and insights into the effectiveness of The Hunger Project's women's empowerment programming. Rather than simply "staying the course," programs can change to better meet community goals and targets and share lessons learned.

Sharing Among Practitioners

As an organization committed to learning and open data, The Hunger Project's leadership in developing the WEI to meet its unique program needs will also support others who are interested in utilizing the WEI to improve their programs to empower women.

SDGs and Gender Metrics

Data disaggregated by gender will be critical to achieving the SDGs. With access to data from more than 17,000 rural households in 54 communities across Africa, Bangladesh and Mexico The Hunger Project's findings are important for government officials, communities, funders, and other influencers who are committed to achieving the SDGs.

Opportunities

- **Investment in supporting** the implementation and continued validation of the WEI as part of ongoing MEL programming, including evaluations.
- **Engagement and utilization by other non-profit organizations or implementation entities** to contribute to the community of learning around measuring women's empowerment.
- **Translation and application to other sectors**, including measuring women's empowerment in urban or corporate settings.

For funding or partnership opportunities:

Lindy Mockovak, Director, Strategic Partnerships and Marketing, lindy.mockovak@thp.org or (212) 251-9115

For questions about the WEI and MEL:

Marissa Strniste, Director, MEL, marissa.strniste@thp.org or (212) 251-9146