

Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment, and Designing Good Measures

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Goals

- Think through what it means to...
 - Measure women's economic empowerment
 - Design good measures
- Understand how to leverage qualitative and quantitative data collection in an evaluation

One final note on research design

- You do *not* need to work with a *new program* to run an RCT
- Example from female bank accounts study: we worked with the government to test a female-friendly reform to a program (MGNREGA) already functioning nationally via an RCT
- Took advantage of the fact that the reform could not happen everywhere at once → randomly assigned where the reform would occur during the study period, in a limited area

What is Women's Empowerment?

Back to the Basics

- What do we know about women's empowerment?
 - It is an *outcome*, but also a *process*
 - Includes both subjective and objective components
 - It is a product of complex factors in individuals, households, communities

A formal definition of empowerment

- The process of acquiring *resources* that help women gain voice (articulate their preferences) and *agency* (ability to make their own decisions) to meet their goals/fulfill their aspirations (*achievements*)

- Naila Kabeer

- Entails a *process* – people with power do not need empowerment
- Resources, agency, and achievements are inseparable

What resources matter for empowerment?

- Material
 - Land
 - Assets
 - Capital
- Human resources (human capital)
 - Education
 - Skills
 - Self-efficacy
- Social resources (social capital)
 - Networks
 - Political influence or power
- Current and future claims

What aspects of agency matter for empowerment?

- Access to resources
- Control over resources
 - In the household
 - In the community (political influence)
- Decision making power
 - Over marriage, bearing
- Negotiation opportunities

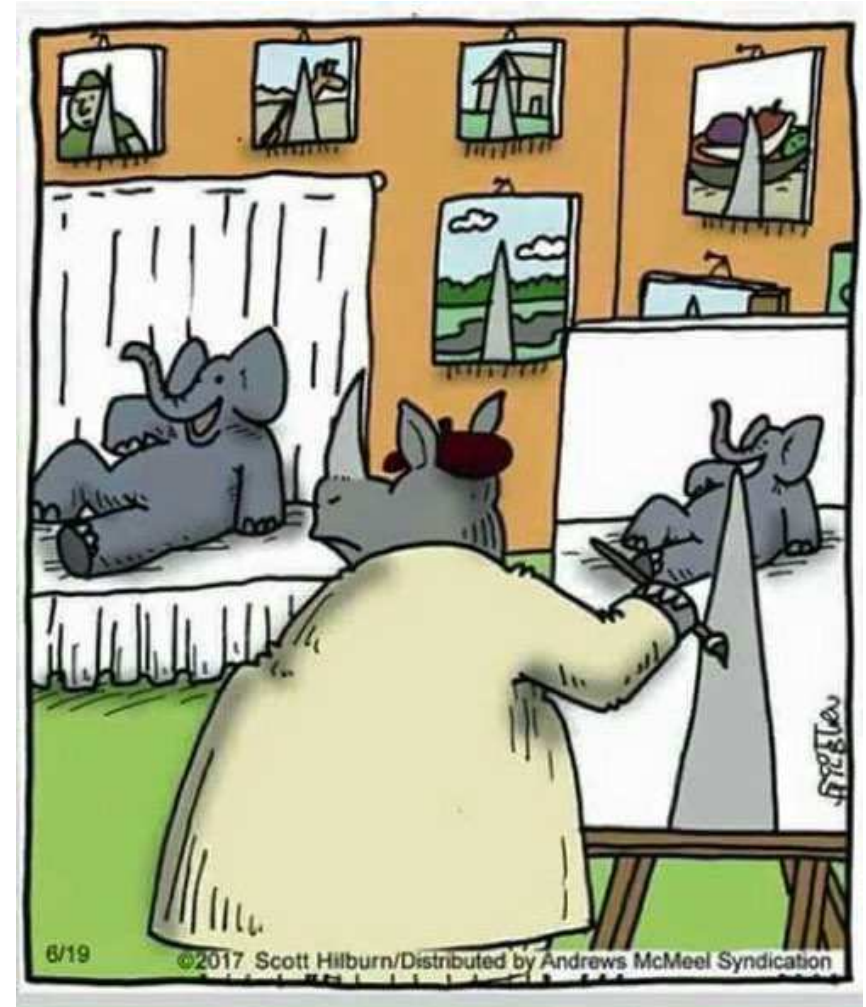
What aspects of achievement matter for empowerment?

- Objective measures of well-being
 - Education
 - Health
 - Nutrition
 - Freedom from violence
 - Freedom from abuse
- More subjective measures of well-being
 - Happiness (Depression)
 - Mental well-being
 - Outcomes aligned with preferences

**Where does
economic activity
fit in here?**

What is a “good” achievement?

- Must recognize that we place our own perspective on what “achievement” will look like for empowered women
- Perspective bias
- Women’s economic empowerment assumes economic activity is a worthwhile goal/achievement – but what drawbacks could this present?



Why women's *economic* empowerment?

- Growing recognition that *control over resources* is a crucial component to women's empowerment, and *economic activity/opportunity* is a key means to access resources



De jure power will not become *de facto* without underlying support structures

A micro-founded definition of women's economic empowerment

- “The process by which women acquire access to and control over economic resources, opportunities and markets, enabling them to exercise agency and decision-making power to benefit all areas of their lives.” (*Grantham et al. 2017*)
- Three primary domains:
 - (1) Labor market outcomes
 - (2) Control over household resources
 - (3) Marriage, fertility, and child rearing

Why women's *economic* empowerment?

A feminist's perspective: women's empowerment requires an instrumentalist argument to obtain broad-based support



Why women's *economic* empowerment?

An economist's perspective:
efficiency gains to ensuring
women can act as independent
economic agents

If every country matched the progress toward gender parity of its fastest-improving neighbor, global GDP could increase by up to \$12 trillion in 2025.

Incremental 2025 global GDP over business-as-usual scenario, ¹ %	Incremental GDP, \$ trillion
India	16% 0.7
Latin America	14% 1.1
China	12% 2.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	12% 0.3
North America and Oceania	11% 3.1
World	11% 11.8
Middle East and North Africa	11% 0.6
South Asia (excl. India)	11% 0.1
Western Europe	9% 2.1
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	9% 0.4
East and Southeast Asia (excl. China)	8% 0.9

¹Sample = 95 countries.

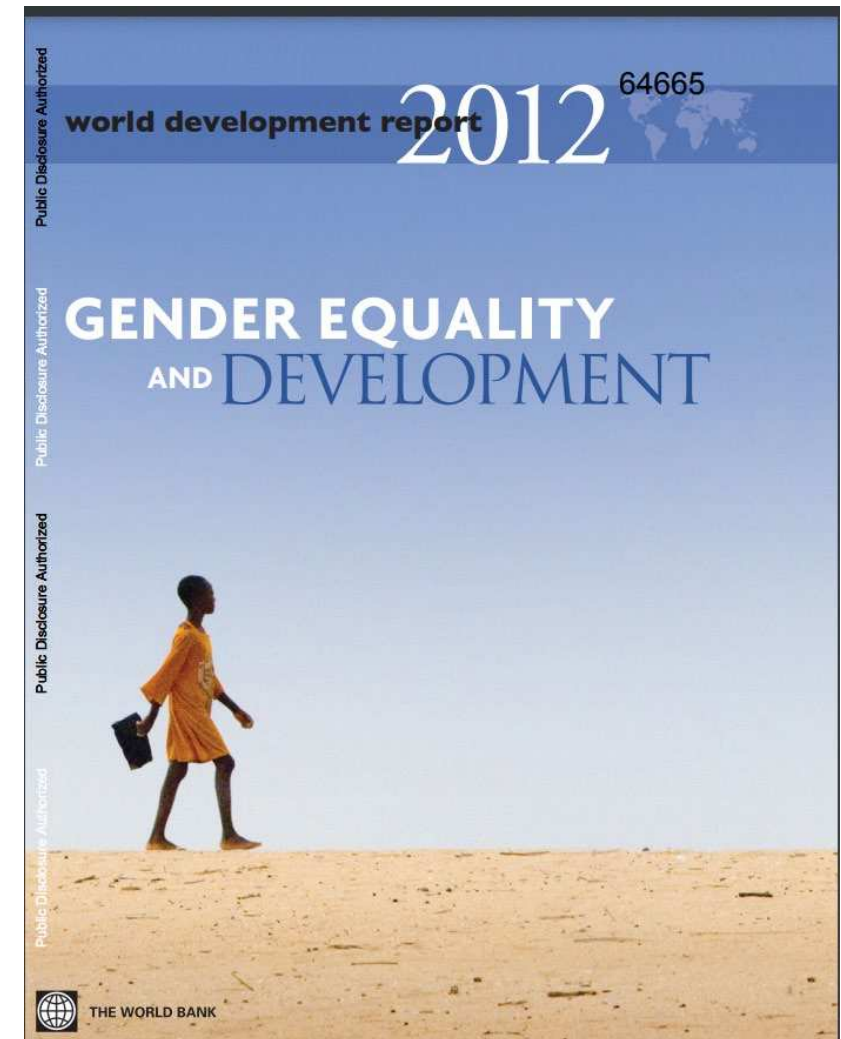
Source: IHS; ILO; Oxford Economics; World Input-Output Database; national statistical agencies; McKinsey Global Growth Model; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

Why women's *economic* empowerment?

A policymaker's perspective: Development-related gains available through empowering women

“Greater control over household resources by women leads to more investment in children's human capital, with dynamic positive effects on economic growth...Improvements in women's own education and health also have positive impacts on these and other outcomes for their children...Increasing women's individual and collective agency leads to better outcomes, institutions, and policy choices.”

- 2012 World Development Report



Many people/organizations have opinions about WE and WEE!

- Recent review by Center for Global Development (CGD)
 - Identified **20 different tools** to monitor WEE at the population level
 - These measures focus on a variety of different WEE indicators:
 - Women's empowerment in agriculture
 - Women's business opportunities
 - Women's legal opportunities
 - Gender equality
 - ...and more

A few tools to measure WEE

- SDG Gender Index (Equal Measures 2030)
- Social Institutions and Gender Index (OECD)
- Women's Economic Empowerment and Equality Dashboard (USAID)
- Women's Economic Opportunity Index (Economist Intelligence Unit)
- Africa Gender Equality Index (ADB)
- Gender Development Index (UNDP)
- African Gender and Development Index (UN Economic Commission for Africa)
- Indices include anywhere from 4 – 51 indicators

These tools matter

- Where is Kenya?
 - Global gender gap index: 95th/156
 - Economic participation and opportunity
 - Educational attainment
 - Health and survival
 - Political empowerment
 - Has moved down in relative ranking in economic participation and opportunity, education, and improved in health/survival and political empowerment since 2006
 - Gender Inequality Index (UNDP): 143rd/189
 - 126th in 2019

Is Too Much Choice a Bad Thing?

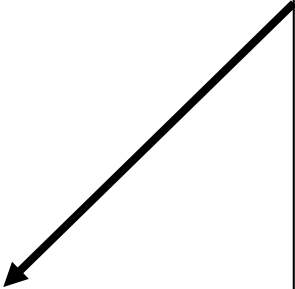


The Building Blocks of Measurement

How can *you* measure women's economic empowerment well?

What makes a good *measure* of empowerment?

A clear underlying
concept (construct):
Women's mobility



Construct: The information we seek. A **valid construct** measures the information we think we measure. A **reliable** measure will obtain the same distribution of answers if asked in multiple instances.

Need to grapple with what mobility actually means for a woman:

- Ability to choose where she goes, when, with whom
- (underlying this) Ability to articulate her preferences
- (underlying this) Ability to know her preferences
- Not everything is observable to a researcher

What makes a good *measure* of empowerment?

The measure:
**Recent visits to a local
health centre**

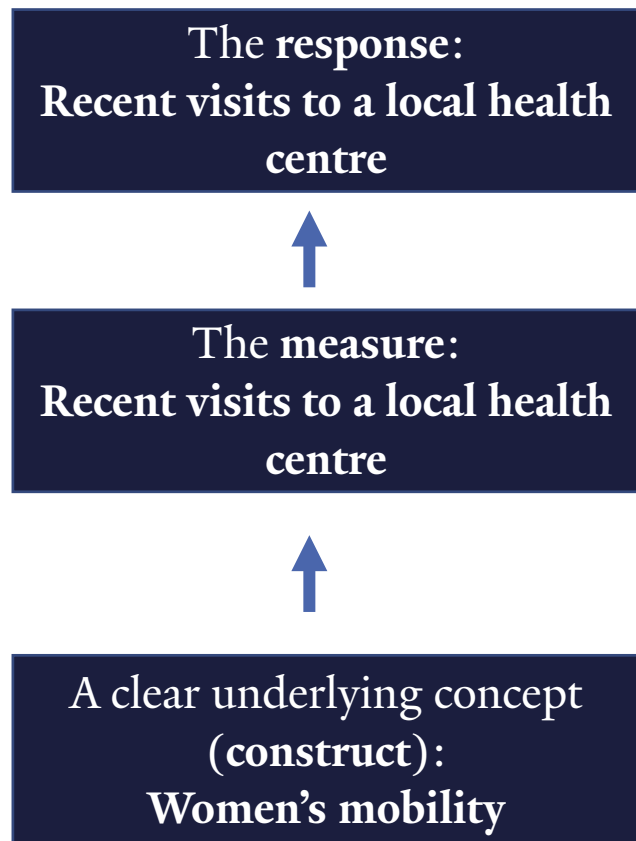


**A clear underlying
concept (construct):
Women's mobility**

Measure: How we gather information about constructs

- Can be through surveys, observation, administrative data
- Could be qualitative (small n, in-depth) or quantitative (large n, surveys)

What makes a good *measure* of empowerment?



- Response: Respondents' answer to particular measurements
 - Could have **random (non-systematic) bias** – or “noise”
 - Could have **systematic bias** in one direction – more concerning
 - Could also have **non-response bias** (what you cannot see)
- As a researcher, you may do additional processing – consistency checks, top-coding, putting into a mobility index, etc.

Criteria to finalize measures

‘SMART’ Selection

- *Specific – address one question at a time*
- *Measurable – Quantifiable, accurate, unbiased, sensitive*
- *Achievable – feasible in evaluation context*
- *Relevant – significant to understanding program functioning and impact*
- *Time-bound – They have the potential to vary over the study period*

Let's improve these questions!

Between April 2020 and March 2021, when you traveled out of the village alone, whose permission did you have to seek to leave home prior to travelling out of the village?

- Problems?
 - Excessive complexity
 - Faulty presupposition – assumes you must ask permission

Have you travelled out of your village alone since the first nationwide lockdown was announced?

- Yes
- No
- Did you seek anyone's permission for that travel?
 - Yes
 - No
- Whose permission did you seek?

Recall and reference periods

- **Retrieval failure** – cannot recall an event, particularly for a specific time
- **Project the present back** – assume things that happen now similarly occurred in the past
- **Telescoping** – assume past events occurred during requested reference period (leads to overreporting)

Recall and reference periods - Tips

- Use commonly recalled reference periods
- Add memory cues
- Construct activities in the order they occurred, logical fashion
- Avoid aggregation if possible
- Collect proxies to validate questions (work in past 30 days, occupation)

Let's improve these questions!

- Would you take work if it were regularly made available at your household?

- Problems

- Grammatical ambiguity
- Vague concepts
- Vague quantifiers

Improvements here depend on what underlying construct you are trying to measure

- Would you accept a job if you were asked to make brooms 20 hours per week from inside your home and were paid xx/broom?
- Do you think you would accept a job that allowed you to work part-time from inside your home?

Let's improve these questions!

- What do you and your husband usually fight about?
- Problems:
 - Too vague – should qualify over what issues
 - Social desirability bias
 - On the other hand, could be *leading*
 - May be too sensitive to ask

All couples, even those with good relationships, sometimes disagree. Over the past month, about which of the following topics did you and your husband disagree? (*read responses aloud; select all that apply*)

- How to spend money
- Children's education
- Children's healthcare
- Where I can go
- Nothing
- Other (specify)

Asking questions related to attitudes

- Ask about only one attitude at once
- Measure the strength of the attitude
- Use visual cues
- Force respondents to make trade-offs
- Ensure questions minimize social desirability bias
- Put sensitive questions at the end of the instrument
- Ensure privacy
- Pre-test to ensure all respondents understand the questions in the same way

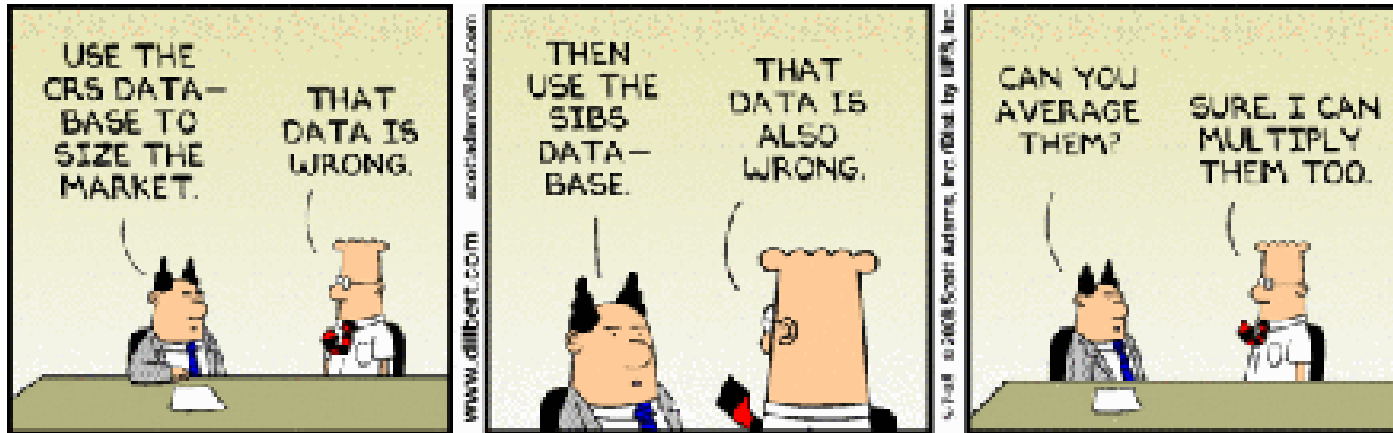
A few more (common sense) best practices

- Use field pretests and pilots to evaluate the questionnaire, field protocols
- Follow best practices related to human subjects research (IRB)
- Use digital data collection software
- Always begin with informed consent
- Make sure survey language is colloquial and relevant to the context
- Begin with easy questions – demographics – to build rapport
- Group questions by topic, and move within topic from general to specific
- Balance concerns re: survey drop-off with desire to place sensitive questions near end
- Ensure surveys are not too long for respondents
- Ensure privacy
- Establish tracking systems to measure and improve data quality

Why???

Balancing survey measures

- Garbage in, garbage out



One of the most commonly-used empowerment measures: household decision making

- Which of these programs has research shown consistently improves women's decision making in the household?
 - Microcredit
 - Savings
 - Unconditional cash transfers
 - Conditional cash transfers
 - Multi-component poverty alleviation programs (eg BRAC's Targeting the Ultra Poor)

How Much Should You Rely on
Measures Constructed by Other
Researchers?

Weighing the trade-offs: Measure success with comparability



Choosing Measures in the Female Bank Accounts Study

What modules/question topics?

Female Survey (wives)

- Household roster and demographic information
- Banking activities and experiences
- Work participation (public/private sector), and time use in past 24 hours
- Personal beliefs and norms
- Household decision making, domestic violence, mental health

Male Survey (husbands)

- Household roster
- Banking activities and experiences
- Work participation (public/private sector), and time use in past 24 hours
- Personal beliefs and norms

We Drew From Commonly Used Measures

- When possible, we pulled from widely used questions/surveys
 - e.g., Demographic and Health Survey questionnaires
 - But sometimes *had* to adapt to ensure women understood the question
 - Translations also were very important for respondents

Questions Drawn from Commonly Used Measures

- Mobility questions: When was the last time that you visited *[location]*?“
- Location = market in community, market in district headquarters, natal home, early childhood development center in village, primary health center

Questions Drawn from Commonly Used Measures

- Joint decision making questions: Who usually decides...how to spend money on the children? (*wife, husband, both, other*)
- Module on recent experience of gender-based violence

From Survey Question to Analysis Variable

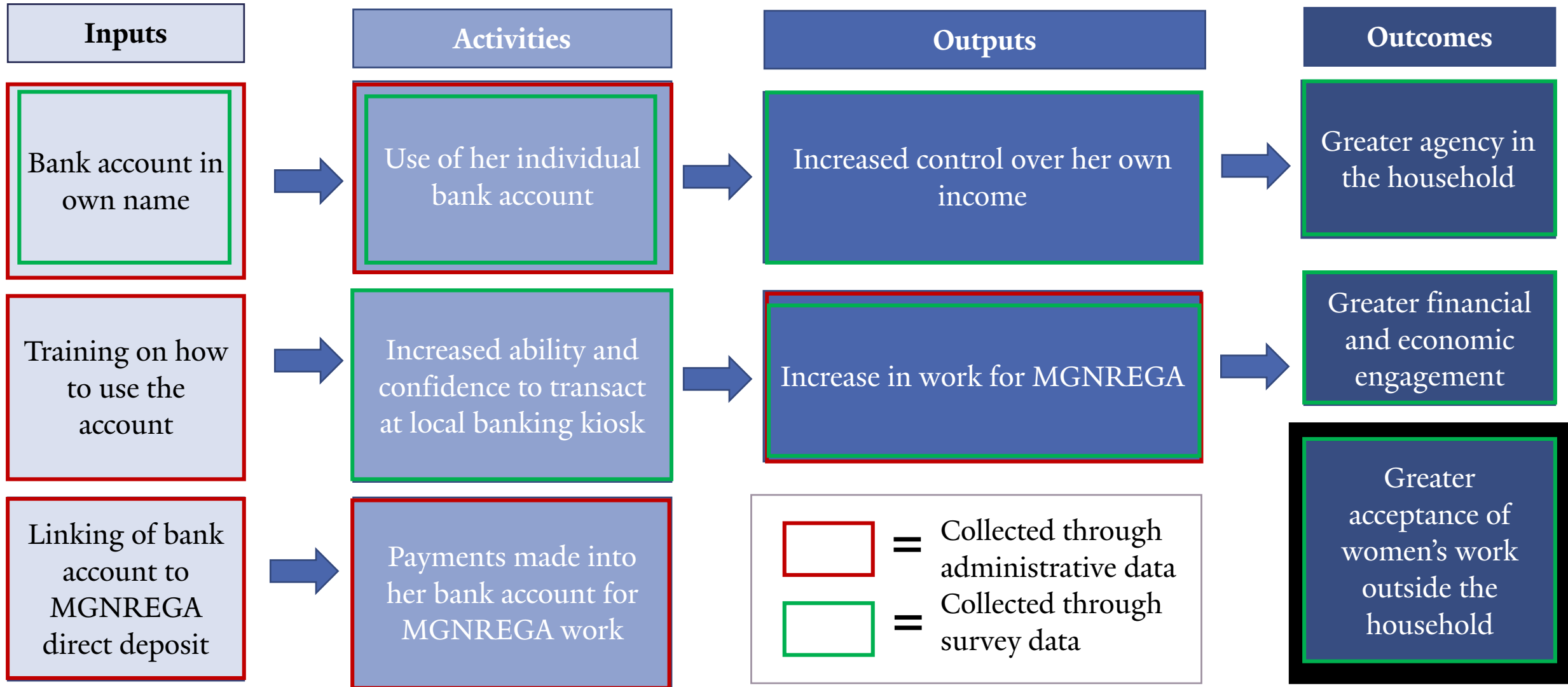
- Example survey question: “Who decides what you spend your own earnings on?”
- Potential responses:
 - My husband mostly decides.
 - I mostly decide.
 - We consult each other and decide together.
- Survey coding:
 - I mostly decide + We decide together = 1
 - My husband mostly decides = 0
 - Coded missing if the respondent refuses to answer or selects “Other”
- Eventually aggregated into normalized decision making sub-index along with employment decision-making survey questions

Question for you re: your analysis work

We also constructed new measures



Our Theory of Change and Data Collection



We needed more measures than existing survey measures, and we needed to contextualize questions

- We knew we needed to gather data on *norms* – views on the acceptability of women and work – but existing survey questions didn't help unpack *dimensions* of norms we hypothesized were affected by the intervention:
 - Both *men's* and *women's views*
 - One's own views, as well as what people *thought* their community members thought
- And we also needed to quantify *why* these views were so important
 - For this, we needed to understand men's and women's *priorities*, and how they differed

How did we construct new measures?



- *Qualitative work:*
 - Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews
 - Focus group-type discussions
- *Extensive pre-testing, piloting, and iterating to improve questions:*
 - We tested various iterations of the same questions to ensure we finalized useful survey questions

Criteria we used to finalize survey measures

- Questions needed to
 - *Be clear to everyone, comprehensible*
 - *Be interpreted the same by all respondents*
 - *Generate response variation to understand underlying concepts*



Our initial qualitative work: Deconstruction

Why do people think women should not work outside the home?

- And how does this view differ across men and women?
- Frequent responses:
 - “People will look down on me if my wife works.”
 - “The community will speak poorly of them.”
 - “That wife’s husband must be a bad provider.”
- We realized several things through trying to understand this better
 - Husbands were driven by concerns of community disrespect
 - Wives were concerned about being an “obedient wife”
 - People tended to think their communities would judge them if the wife worked, even if they personally didn’t think it was bad that she worked.

Questions That Came Out of This Work

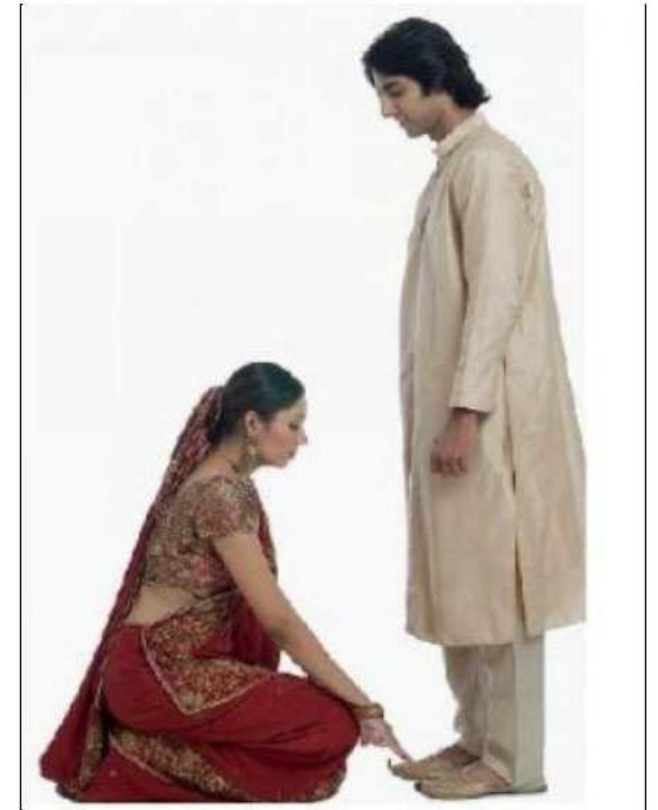
- *Ranking exercise* where respondents have to decide what is relatively *more* important to them (e.g. community respect or a harmonious marriage)



आर्थिक मजबूती - घर पैसो से सक्षम है



समाज में खूद का सम्मान होना



आज्ञाकारी पत्नी - जो पति की बात माने

Questions That Came Out of This Work

- *Vignettes* comparing two households, identical except that the wife worked on someone else's field in one household and the other wife stayed home
- Who do you think is a better...wife? Mother? Caretaker?
- Which woman's husband is a better...husband? Provider?



Questions That Came Out of This Work

- Questions that helped us understand differences across...
 - A woman or man's own views
 - What they thought their spouse thinks
 - What they think community members think (e.g., Which wife would have more respect in your community? Which husband?)
- These questions were ultimately crucial to our understanding of the context and intervention's impact



Roadmap for Future Sessions

Session #5 (May 14):
Data Systems to Ensure High-Quality
Data Collection and Interventions

Session #6 (May 21):
Learning from a Female Mobile Phone
Study (includes Non-experimental
methods):
Collecting Data Through the Pandemic,
Surveying Women

Session #7 (May 28):
Research Team Consultations

Session #8 (June 4):
Paul Schultz: Progresa