



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/four-seasons-women%E2%80%99s-empowerment-agriculture-index>

Four Seasons of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

A year ago in March, we [updated you](#) on the progress of the innovative [Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index](#) (WEAI) and how we were using it. A lot can happen in a year!

Consider the Earth, which circles the sun in a year, generating seasons and times of warmth and cold, light and dark, abundance and dearth.

Like the Earth in its orbit, the WEAI went through many transitions and transformations over the past 12 months. With that in mind, here's our year-in-review, tracking the four seasons of the WEAI.

Spring

"Spring drew on...and a greenness grew over those brown beds, which, freshening daily, suggested the thought that Hope traversed them at night, and left each morning brighter traces of her steps." —Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre

As the plants were greening and the cherry blossoms bursting forth, we started the spring quietly with our nose to the grindstone, working to complete baseline data collection for the WEAI across Feed the Future's [focus countries](#).

Instructional Guide

To support our partners in collecting and using WEAI data to inform program design, WEAI team members from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) published a WEAI [Instructional Guide](#) in late March 2013.

This incredibly useful tool provides guidance and helpful tips on implementing the WEAI: everything from training enumerators to running statistical analyses to interpreting the WEAI results. WEAI team members are continually collecting and consolidating information on implementation from partners to update this guide periodically. If you have any stories or tips on innovative ways you use the WEAI or how you address a WEAI implementation challenge, please let us know.

Learning Exchange

As spring wore on, the [WEAI Resource Center](#) at IFPRI worked throughout April to shower partners with needed advice and materials to apply the WEAI. As they say, April showers bring May flowers, and we saw a true blossoming of WEAI use in May as WEAI users from around the world congregated for Feed the Future's [Global Learning and Evidence Exchange \(GLEE\) on Gender](#).

The Gender GLEE was a USAID-sponsored event that focused on promising practices for gender integration in programming and how to maximize results in gender equality and women's empowerment. To that end, we held a [plenary session on the WEAI](#), where IFPRI presented on how the WEAI is used, and staff from USAID Missions in Bangladesh and Ghana talked about how they had used the WEAI to inform and shape program design for existing and new programs.

The GLEE also consisted of a learning lab where Missions and implementing partners worked with gender specialists to address specific needs. As part of the learning lab, we launched the new Gender Integration Framework (link coming soon), a tool that helps partners use the WEAI and other gender assessment data to identify and examine the greatest constraints to gender equality in a given context or country and then determine effective practices to address those constraints. The framework, like the WEAI, is a bit of an innovation and its launch marked the start of a period of using WEAI data to systematically examine gender integration in programming.

Open Data

Yet another new seed was planted in the spring, as President Obama's [Executive Order](#) on open data was rolled out, chronicling the U.S. Government's commitment to making data available to the public to promote greater learning and evidence-based innovation. The WEAI was right in line, making publicly available the first [two full WEAI data sets](#) from Bangladesh and Ghana.

Feed the Future has made a commitment to make all survey data sets publicly available once cleared by partner nations and that commitment remains a top priority. We want all researchers and practitioners to get as much use out of our data as possible.

Summer

"Ah, summer, what power you have to make us suffer and like it." —[Russell Baker](#)

The WEAI's summer was not all popsicles and splashing in swimming holes. While marked by no meetings or big product rollouts, the WEAI team labored to get final data analyzed and baseline reports drafted. Many members of the Feed the Future monitoring and evaluation team took to the road to ensure that incoming WEAI data was well understood and used. The Gender Integration Framework was developed into a presentation for USAID Missions. WEAI data were analyzed, and we held trainings in Missions to help them understand their WEAI results.

Fellowships

Outside the Missions, four doctoral students supported by USAID and IFPRI through [WEAI fellowships](#) started research and fieldwork for their dissertations. Not only do these fellowships support some of the best and the brightest conducting research on women's empowerment in agriculture, their studies are a vital component of our [research agenda](#) to learn more about how the WEAI works across cultures and to better understand certain WEAI domains.

For example, Chris Manyamba, a Malawian doctoral student at the University of Pretoria, took part in enumerator training and fieldwork for the Feed the Future baseline survey in Malawi. He is using the survey data to conduct his study on the intersection between women's empowerment and food security.

Fall

"I would rather sit on a pumpkin, and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion." —[Henry David Thoreau](#)

In the passage of a season, we witnessed the changing leaves tell a beautiful and colorful story of transformation. In that time, the WEAI began to slowly transform from drab (yet important!) survey numbers and codes to a story about the state of women's and men's empowerment in agriculture.

Our partners in the field who collected baseline data on the WEAI as part of a larger population-based survey were hard at work crunching numbers. They worked closely with the core WEAI team (USAID, IFPRI, OPHI) to ensure the survey results were accurate and reliable. But how were we to know if women face similar constraints to empowerment in different regions of the world? Or if empowerment is associated with other indicators such as poverty, income, and nutrition? Our partners at IFPRI undertook a rigorous multicountry analysis to better answer these questions and provide greater interpretive depth on the constraints to empowerment.

Learning Event

In late November, as families and friends gathered together to share a Thanksgiving feast, our extended WEAI networks and friends who implement the WEAI around the world joined the core WEAI team for a [WEAI Learning Event](#) hosted by IFPRI. Participants exchanged information and firsthand experiences on local adaptations of the WEAI instrument, as well as field implementation challenges and solutions. Following the event, the WEAI core team met to reflect on the outcomes of the learning event and map out a way forward. The end of autumn marked a commitment to incorporate feedback from partners to develop a WEAI 2.0. More on that below.

Winter

"I have heard the news that winter too will pass, that spring is a sign that summer is due at last." —[Maya Angelou](#)

Here in Washington, D.C., we've had our fair share of snow this winter. The cold and wintry weather was a good reason to stay indoors and delve deeper into the WEAI instrument and collected data. The WEAI core team began consolidating feedback received from partners on potential modifications as we prepare to design a WEAI 2.0: a cost and resource efficient, streamlined version of the original WEAI.

The WEAI team also continued to analyze the survey results we received from our partners in Feed the Future countries. We published two IFPRI discussion papers based on the WEAI experiences in [Nepal](#) and [Bangladesh](#).

During the fall WEAI Learning Event, the core team decided that the best way to disseminate the results of the WEAI more widely would be to develop a WEAI global report. This report would aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the WEAI baseline results for 13 countries and summarize the relationship between factors that might affect empowerment and related outcomes.

This brings us to International Women’s Day 2014 and the year ahead.

The multiple snow days this winter led us to reflect on our activities this past year during the warmer weather of spring and summer. From the transformation of the survey data to results on the state of women’s empowerment in Feed the Future focus countries, how best could we support our field Missions and global partners to strategically integrate gender into their current and future activities?

We’ve now come full circle back to International Women’s Day and the development of the Gender Integration Framework. The Feed the Future WEAI team has partnered with the Feed the Future gender team to begin developing a framework-related webinar that assists field Missions and our global partners to better interpret, analyze, and incorporate the WEAI results into food security and agriculture activities.

Throughout 2014, we plan to gather evidence on how the WEAI is being used for program design improvements. The WEAI core team also will launch the WEAI global report and roll out the WEAI 2.0.

We look forward to an exciting and productive 2014 for advancing women’s empowerment in agriculture. Happy International Women’s Day!

This post originally [appeared](#) on the Agrilinks blog. The authors are members of the Feed the Future monitoring and evaluation team.