



Understanding Gender Norms in Rural Burkina Faso: A Qualitative Assessment

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Version: February 2, 2018

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Executive Summary

This report documents a series of qualitative assessments completed as part of a pilot test of the Pro-WEAI for the “Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project – Phase 2” (GAAP2) project led by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) was launched by IFPRI, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and USAID’s Feed the Future program in February 2012 and was the first comprehensive standardized measure to capture women’s empowerment and inclusion in the agricultural sector. The Pro-WEAI, or project-level WEAI, seeks to assist individual organizations and projects with measurement tools that can be used to assess empowerment of women within the context of agricultural projects. The qualitative data documented in this report was designed to help interpret the results of the quantitative Pro-WEAI survey that Freedom from Hunger conducted in 2016 within one of its projects in Burkina Faso, called the *Building the Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in Burkina Faso* (BRB—Building Resilience in Burkina Faso in short), funded by Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies.

BRB is a three-year initiative that takes a multi-sectoral approach to improving household resilience and food security and is a collaborative effort of Freedom from Hunger and two local partners, Office de Développement des Eglises Evangéliques (ODE) and the Association Solidarité et Entraide Mutuelle au Sahel (SEMUS). BRB features the innovative use of community-based women’s savings groups (SGs) as a platform for providing a multi-sectoral integrated package of agricultural, nutrition, financial services, and women’s empowerment programming to help thousands of SG members overcome many of the geographic, cultural, social, and economic constraints that hamper their resilience in the face of shocks and disasters.

We adapted a series of qualitative tools from IFPRI and implemented them in two communities in the intervention area. Didyr is relatively urban, while Doudoulcy is a typical rural community served by Office de Développement des Eglises (ODE). In November to December 2015, we conducted seasonality calendars, focus group discussions, life histories, and key informant interviews among men and women in these communities as well as with program staff.

The results from each pro-WEAI empowerment domain are summarized below:

- **Production:** Women report that joint decision-making among couples is rare when it comes to agriculture; however, men tend to report making joint decisions with women. Men and women frequently disagree about how to use income. Women perceive themselves to be better at deciding how household income should be spent, arguing that men frequently spend their

money on their own needs or desires. In the more rural community of Doudoulcy, joint decision-making is more common than in Didyr.

- **Resources:** While formal laws for land ownership exist, customary laws and customs dominate and result in few women owning land. Laws regarding access to credit and other financial services appear to be the most advanced regarding actual implementation. Many of the participants acknowledged that, compared to women's ownership of other resources, women have more access to credit and financial services.
- **Income:** When asked about interpretation of "decision-making" regarding income, women tend to interpret this as "getting along" or "harmony" within one's household. However, they report that men generally have the last word. While men tend to know everything about their wives' earnings and wealth, women have very little knowledge of their husbands' income and its use. Women reported that the more income earned by the household, the "more understanding" there was between spouses; men on the other hand, didn't feel like the amount of income earned determined the quality of their relationships with their wives. Men do not appreciate a woman who relies on him for everything (they feel a financial burden). Men appreciate when women bring income into the household, but women's contributions do not result in men's desire to give women more power over household decisions. In fact, men want women to contribute income to the household, but do not want them to have a strong say in its use.
- **Leadership:** Participants frequently mentioned savings group membership when discussing leadership concepts, which is expected as most women interviewed are savings group members. Older men and women tend to take on leadership roles outside of their own households more often than younger individuals. Leadership appears to be interpreted as the number of people for which a person is responsible or the number of people who seek an individual's opinion or counsel; those who are viewed as leaders do not necessarily hold an official leadership position. Women often reference their leadership position in relation to other women; it is not common for women to hold leadership roles in groups of men or in mixed groups of men and women.
- **Workload:** Women reported that men worked about 14 hours a day while women worked 11; they did not estimate or acknowledge as work the time they spent doing household chores, cooking, or caring for children. Both men and women work more during the rainy season when they are planting. Men will migrate during the dry season, leaving women at home to work in their own income-generating activities, such as producing dolo, a traditional beer in Burkina Faso. For some households, children's domestic roles and support in agricultural activities will often constrain a child's ability to participate in school. This is something that both men and women tend to lament.

- **Mobility:** Women either ask permission or inform their husbands of their intent to travel somewhere when they need or desire to travel outside of the household compound. While women tend to be able to travel independently to many places such as health centers and savings group meetings, both men and women confirm that women seek permission from their husbands in most cases. Sacred places are never visited by women (which either literally or superstitiously could result in death). Women state that there is increasing openness about women's mobility, which they attribute to the growing prevalence of savings groups. However, even when women in rural communities are permitted to travel, they still face restricted mobility due to their limited transportation options. These generally include traveling on foot, bicycle, being transported by their husbands on motorcycle (rarely by car), or by bus.
- **Mutual respect:** Both women and men believe women are and should be submissive to their husbands. While women must respect their husbands, there is little reference to men respecting their wives. In fact, there is a perceived danger to a man simply helping his wife. While women and others might interpret this as a husband "caring" for his wife, some people interpret this as a man being weak or even bewitched by his wife. Both men and women perpetuate this belief and norm.
- **Individual empowerment:** Individual empowerment is generally explained in economic or self-efficacy terminology. Women use words such as "autonomous" and "emancipated" to describe an empowered woman. Men and women both perceive empowerment as their ability to finance their basic needs. Women mentioned their role in their savings group as contributing substantially to both changing norms regarding women's ability to contribute to household income as well as their own empowerment.
- **Domestic violence:** While there was very little mention of physical violence, verbal abuse is quite common, but has decreased over time. However, Freedom from Hunger has collected other data among similar populations in Burkina, which suggests that the prevalence of domestic violence is common.¹ In the quantitative baseline report for this project², approximately 50 percent of women reported "fearing" their spouse in the prior year and agreed or strongly agreed that a woman must tolerate violence to maintain stability in the family.
- **Nutrition and reproductive health:** Malnutrition affects women more than men as women will do anything to buffer their children from food insecurity and hunger. Men tend to have access to more meat than women due to their greater financial means. Women tend to make most decisions related to how to respond to sickness, household hygiene, and diversifying the diet. The oldest woman or wife in the household also tends to play an important role in decisions related to distribution of food across the multiple wives' individual households. Regarding family planning, there is both disagreement and dissatisfaction from men and women alike in how

decisions are made or not made. Pregnancies are always perceived as unexpected and discussing family planning is considered taboo.

This qualitative research provided concrete examples of the ways in which women in Didyr and Doudoulcy are empowered and disempowered. It suggests that savings groups have improved the mobility, financial independence, leadership skills, and resilience of women in these communities. The results also shed light on the extent to which women must request permission from their husbands before making decisions or participating in activities. It is evident that, although spouses may discuss certain decisions, men almost always have the final say.

These findings make it apparent that any project aiming to benefit and empower women in this area must also influence men. When women do not use services or participate in projects, we often find that it is due to intra-household disagreements. If a woman's husband is not supportive, she must either risk hiding her participation in a project or not participate at all. Either way, if men resist women's participation in savings groups, the impact of a project will be limited. Even worse, introducing savings groups could unintentionally increase tensions between spouses. We can mitigate this risk by engaging with men to ensure that they understand the benefits of the project for women and their households. If we only assess women's needs and preferences within the context of a women's savings group, then we can only address a small piece of the picture. We must also understand how each woman operates within her household and her community in order to have a lasting impact on her quality of life.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our local partner in Burkina Faso, Office de Développement des Eglises Evangéliques (ODE) for allowing us to engage their staff and their savings group members in this research. Much gratitude goes to the women savings group members and their households for their participation in the focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Finally, we would like to thank Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies for funding the Building Resilience in Burkina Faso project and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) for funding the research documented in this report as well as their provision of research support and guidance.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Acknowledgements	7
Introduction	9
Burkina Faso.....	9
Project background: Building Resilience in Burkina Faso.....	10
Building Resilience in Burkina Faso Theories of Change.....	11
Methods.....	15
Tools	15
Location.....	16
Analysis.....	16
Experience with use of tools	16
Results	18
Context	18
Didyr.....	18
Doudoulcy	24
Local meanings of empowerment	28
Didyr.....	28
Doudoulcy	30
Domains of Empowerment	31
Didyr.....	31
Doudoulcy	39
Discussion and Conclusion	48
Summary.....	48
Implications for quantitative methods.....	50
Implications for the Building Resilience in Burkina Faso Project.....	51
Reach, Benefit, and Empower	53
Conclusion	56
References	57

Introduction

This report documents a series of qualitative and landscape assessments completed as part of a pilot test of the Pro-WEAI for the “Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project – Phase 2” (GAAP2) project led by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) was launched by IFPRI, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and USAID’s Feed the Future program in February 2012 and was the first comprehensive standardized measure to capture women’s empowerment and inclusion in the agricultural sector.³ The Pro-WEAI⁴, or project-level WEAI, seeks to assist individual organizations and projects with measurement tools that can be used to assess empowerment of women within the context of agricultural projects. The qualitative data collected and documented in this report was designed to help inform understanding of the quantitative Pro-WEAI survey that Freedom from Hunger conducted in 2016 within one of its projects in Burkina Faso. The quantitative data are documented elsewhere.⁵

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in Africa, with 44.5 percent of the population living on less than \$1.90 (PPP) per day and 63.8 percent living in severe multidimensional poverty (which captures non-income dimensions of poverty, including education, health, and living standards).⁶ Climate-related hazards such as drought and flooding in northern and central Burkina Faso exacerbate hunger and sickness through various interrelated pathways that involve livelihoods, food security, maternal and child care, water, sanitation, and health. Climate change is projected to continue to decrease food availability and threaten agricultural livelihoods of rural Burkinabé, making entire communities vulnerable to external shocks. The lack of livelihood diversity, access to adequate health, social, and financial resources, in combination with heavy dependence on rain-fed agriculture, creates several barriers to building the resilience of these populations.

A gender index known as the Social Institutions Gender Index (SIGI) assesses countries’ discriminatory social norms across five sub-indices: discriminatory family code, restricted physical integrity, son bias, restricted resources and assets, and restricted civil liberties.⁷ The SIGI score for Burkina is high⁸, which indicates that discriminatory practices towards women in Burkina Faso are prevalent, despite government commitment and effort to develop policies and frameworks that reduce discrimination. Women’s physical integrity is very restricted⁹: studies conducted under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) indicate that Burkina Faso¹⁰ has no law pertaining to domestic violence, that very few women will seek justice for violence against them, and that high percentages of the population believe there are justifications for spousal abuse.¹¹ These negative gender social norms play out not only in government support structures but also in

intra-household social and economic dynamics. Women often face restricted mobility, low decision-making power, and fear of their husbands.¹²

Women generally have lower productivity than men due to decisions that prioritize plots and crops managed by the head-of-household, typically their husbands.¹³ These findings in Burkina Faso are consistent with research conducted across Sub-Saharan Africa where women, while making up half the agricultural workforce, face low land ownership, access to credit and productive farm inputs, support from extension services, and access to markets.¹⁴ The same aforementioned research recommended that designing agricultural extension specifically for women, increasing women's access to land, land rights, and inputs, as well as improving access to child-care support could help remove barriers to women's productivity. While agricultural productivity is only one means of achieving resilience, it is essential for improving food production and increasing income, particularly in rural areas.¹⁵ Moreover, when linked with the health and nutrition sectors, agricultural projects could improve health security as well as food security and resilience.¹⁶

Project background: Building Resilience in Burkina Faso

Freedom from Hungerⁱⁱⁱ is taking a multi-sectoral approach to improving household resilience and food security with the three-year initiative *Building the Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in Burkina Faso* (BRB—Building Resilience in Burkina Faso in short), funded by the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies. Working through two local partners, Office de Développement des Eglises Evangéliques (ODE) and the Association Solidarité et Entraide Mutuelle au Sahel (SEMUS), the approach features the innovative use of community-based women's savings groups (SGs) as a platform for providing an integrated package of agricultural, nutrition, financial services, and women's empowerment programming to help thousands of SG members overcome many of the geographic, cultural, social, and economic constraints that hamper their resiliency in the face of shocks and disasters. The BRB project aims to reach 80,000 women through women's savings groups in the rural areas of Central-Western Burkina Faso (in the provinces of Passoré, Zondoma, Boulkiemdé, and Sanguié) with the following support activities:

- **Agriculture extension agent training:** the BRB team works directly with local agricultural extension agents to directly support women farmers in: 1) growing, conserving, and marketing crops such as cowpeas and sesame and 2) livestock raising, feeding, and care.

ⁱⁱⁱ Please note that as of October 2016, Freedom from Hunger combined forces with the Grameen Foundation (GFUSA), and became a supporting organization of GFUSA. The BRB Project remains under Freedom from Hunger although managed by staff of both organizations.

- **Education:** community agents trained by ODE and SEMUS facilitate pictorial learning conversations on:
 - **“Agriculture as a business” education,** which includes topics such as farm planning, marketing, cost/revenue calculations, and risk management;
 - **Nutrition education,** which includes topics such as healthy diets, strategies for feeding the household during lean seasons, integrating key crops into the diet, and saving for health expenses.
- **Agriculture finance:** agriculture loans and income-generating activity/livestock loans in addition to group savings accounts accessed through a group mobile wallet.
- **Gender dialogues:** women’s empowerment discussions encourage savings group members, their spouses, and their communities to develop their own visions for change in gender relations with particular emphasis on 1) securing women’s access to agricultural land and equipment in pertinent time periods of the year and 2) identifying strategies the household can use for lean seasons of the year to ensure adequate and quality dietary consumption.
- **Formation of new savings groups:** the practice of savings groups is embedded in long-held local traditions of solidarity and is known to strengthen the capacity of women to positively impact family income by increasing savings, smoothing cash flow and enhancing and/or diversifying livelihood activities.¹⁷ Working together toward the same financial goal as part of a group that meets regularly creates strong bonds; social capital is built among members in addition to financial capabilities contributing to women’s empowerment. The BRB project therefore continues to support existing savings groups as well as growing the network of new savings groups.

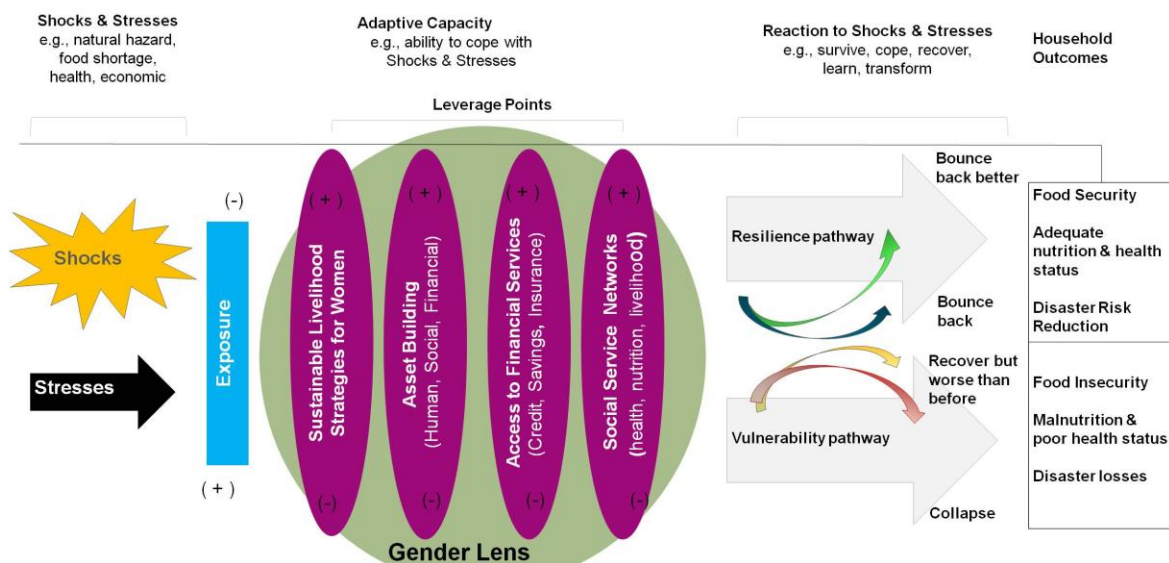
Building Resilience in Burkina Faso Theories of Change

The BRB project utilizes several theories of change to articulate high level alignment with similar projects as well as those to direct project objectives and outcomes. In 2014, Freedom from Hunger adapted a resilience framework that TANGO International (www.tangointernational.com) had created, which itself was built on previous disaster and livelihood frameworks (see bottom notation in Figure 1 for reference). The framework focuses on adaptive capacity or “the ability to learn from experience and adjust responses to changing external conditions, yet continue operating.”¹⁸

In much of the resilience literature, the concept of resilience is examined *as a capacity* with which to respond to shocks. There are three types of resilience capacities to consider: absorptive, adaptive, and transformative.¹⁹ Adaptive capacity is where the services provided in the BRB project fall best—in that access to financial services through women’s savings groups is a leverage point to benefiting from a

group’s social capital and for accessing livelihood, nutrition, and other support services and building assets. Access to and use of these services become the mechanism through which an individual or household can make incremental changes in the response to a current shock or in anticipation of a future shock and could help lead a household down a path of resiliency instead of one of vulnerability. Ultimately, a resilient path can lead to better food security, adequate nutrition, improved health status, and disaster risk-reduction for a household. This framework served as the basis for the design of the BRB project. Freedom from Hunger added the “gender lens” (described below) to the adaptive capacities to ensure the opportunities and barriers faced by women specifically were included in the design and analysis of resilience.

Figure 1. Resilience Framework

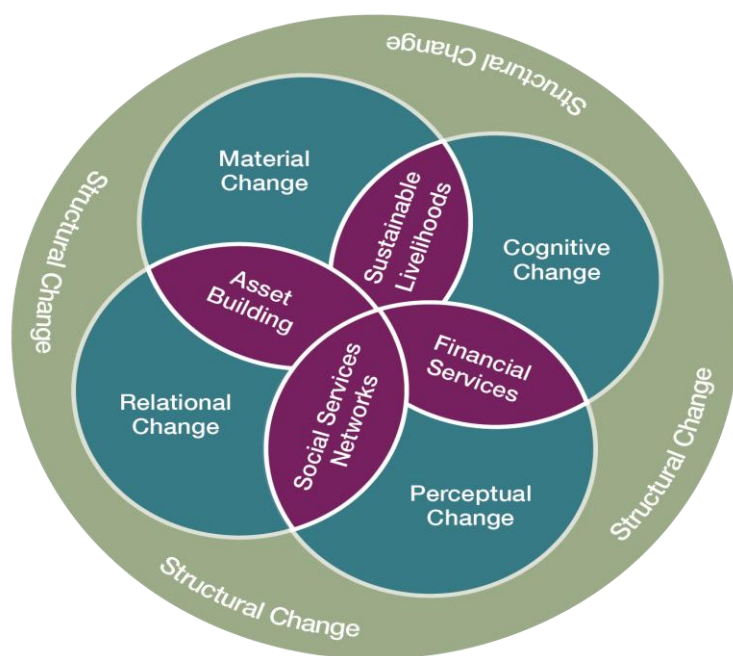


TANGO 2012. Adapted from DFID Disaster Resilience Framework (2011), TANGO Livelihoods Framework (2007), DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (1999) and CARE Household Livelihood Security Framework (2002)

The addition of the gender lens recognizes that households and individuals within households do not necessarily have equal access to services nor do they utilize them equally due to social norms. Women, as articulated above, are known to have less access to credit for agricultural investment and information, face restrictions on mobility, lack confidence and self-esteem, in addition to other barriers. For this reason, Freedom from Hunger adapted a gender framework articulated by Women’s World Banking²⁰ by adding the category of structural change, which acknowledges the importance of not only the internal change a person experiences but also the enabling environment that often drives or hampers these changes such as government policies, support organizations, agents, etc.

Thus, in Figure 2, the adaptive capacities articulated in Figure 1 are layered with five aspects of empowerment: *material, cognitive, relational, perceptual, and structural*.

Figure 2: Gender and Adaptive Capacities



The BRB project seeks to influence:

- **Material change:** improved agricultural assets and production and improved access to agricultural business training, leading to increased revenues and income; improved access to and use of credit, savings, insurance, and remittance services offered through financial service providers; improved group management of financial services; and improved food security.
- **Relational change:** improved decision making and bargaining power in the household regarding use of agricultural services, agricultural assets, financial services, and health and nutrition services; improved mobility with respect to agricultural activities; increased support from group members in agricultural production and business; improved social capital and leadership roles within communities; improved gender equity in household use of financial services and shared workload.
- **Cognitive change:** improved business, agricultural, and nutrition knowledge and skills; improved use of creativity to identify business opportunities and working memory to adapt businesses in changing climates; improved confidence in and ability to make investments, plan for saving and growing assets; improved awareness of agricultural services and available resources.

- **Perceptual change:** women have a clearer vision and goals for the direction of their businesses/livelihoods; improved self-perception of resilience; confidence in ability to meet future expenses and needs; improved self-confidence overall.
- **Structural change:** agricultural extension agents and their supporting organizations are knowledgeable of their own biases and are sensitive to the needs of both male and female farmers; financial institutions design financial services that target the needs of women and men farmers; supporting organizations understand social norm dynamics and how these can influence people's use of their services and seek to draw communities' attention to and change negative norms that impede progress.

Freedom from Hunger's long-standing work in Burkina Faso has contributed to its understanding of prevailing social and gender norms. Burkinabé women play a significant role in the household economy but are expected to prioritize family over income-generating activities. They access land only through husbands, as women are prevented from directly owning land, cannot grow significant crops such as sorghum and millet, nor access livestock markets, and must obtain spousal permission to leave their household compound. The BRB project aims to influence some of these norms while working within the context of others.

Methods

Tools

Freedom from Hunger adapted six tools drafted by the IFPRI GAAP2 team. Adaptations included additions of questions meant to probe further into concepts of resilience or group-based activities that were not covered by the originally drafted tools. The six tools are described briefly below in Table 1. Two communities were chosen for the sites of the qualitative research: Didyr and Doudoulcy. Didyr represents the most “urban” of communities served by the BRB project and Doudoulcy represents a typical rural community. These communities are described in more detail below.

Table 1: Qualitative Tools

<i>Tool</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Activity A. Community profile	To provide social, economic, agricultural, and background information about the communities (Didyr and Doudoulcy).	2 male key informant interviews (1 urban, 1 rural) 2 female key informant interviews (1 urban, 1 rural)
Activity B. Seasonality patterns	To create a production calendar which shows how responsibilities are distributed by sex, and how seasonal variations affect time use for women and men; important for pro-WEAI to identify whether the time use survey data is from a peak or slack season.	2 calendars created (1 by group of men, 1 by group of women; both conducted in Doudoulcy)
Activity C. Local understanding of empowerment	To elicit local understanding of empowerment, and to validate the pro-WEAI.	2 Focus groups with adult women (1 urban, 1 rural) 2 Focus groups with adult men (1 urban, 1 rural)
Activity D. Life histories	Life stories of men and women of different empowerment status to understand perceptions and experiences of empowerment within the context of agricultural intervention projects and to validate elements within the pro-WEAI survey tool.	Semi-structured interviews with: 2 empowered women (1 urban, 1 rural) 2 empowered men (1 urban, 1 rural) 2 disempowered women (1 urban, 1 rural) 2 disempowered men (1 urban, 1 rural)

rural)

Activity E. Market traders	Provide context related to operation of value chain, especially linked to assets being studied. Are there particular gender-related barriers to engaging with the markets?	Key informant interviews with: 1 formal sector trader 1 informal sector trader
Activity F. Project staff	Fill out basic contextual information about the projects and communities in which interventions take place and gain expert insights about the factors affecting the way the project does (or does not) impact women's empowerment.	Key informant interviews with: Freedom from Hunger project coordinator ODE project coordinator ODE group facilitator

Location

The implementing partner of the BRB research, ODE, assisted in the selection of the Didyr and Godyr departments of the Sanguié province in Burkina Faso for the treatment area and villages in the Yé and Gossina departments of the Nayala province for the control area. For the qualitative assessment, we only interviewed villages within the treatment area.

Didyr is the only relatively large community in the program area and Doudoulcy is a fairly small village located near Didyr. Doudoulcy, compared to Didyr, generally lacks access to services and reflects the majority of villages where ODE works. We also believe that these two villages provide the best contrast if access to services, networks, and information are influenced by the location and size of the community.

Analysis

We summarized responses to qualitative questions and employed inductive analysis²¹ to describe key findings and identify patterns for each of the domains of empowerment associated with the Pro-WEAI measures: production, resources, income, ownership, time use, physical mobility, intra-household relationships, individual empowerment, domestic violence, and nutrition. IFPRI also provided a draft report outline which we used to organize the data presented here.

Experience with use of tools

The instruments are written in French, but the interviews were conducted in local languages (Mooré, Lyélé). The responses were translated to French and then from French into English.

The tools were designed to be comprehensive in nature and therefore were anticipated to take significant time to conduct. Therefore, the Freedom from Hunger research team took a minimalist approach in terms of repetition of the tools. While we estimated that focus group discussions and key informant interviews would take a maximum of two hours to implement, we needed more than 4.5 hours to complete most interviews. In many cases, particularly in the focus group discussions and life histories, there were lively debates and answers and this lengthened the time necessary to complete all questions. The community profiles required more than two key informant interviews as there were few individuals who could provide input on all areas of the profile. This required multiple visits to the community to be able to meet with individuals at a time that was convenient for them. The researchers also found that some people had difficulty thinking about gender barriers, resulting in some people answering questions in such a way that suggested that women faced no gender barriers.

Results

The results section first details the context of the two communities—Didyr and Doudoulcy—and then presents analysis regarding how community members interpret the concept of empowerment.

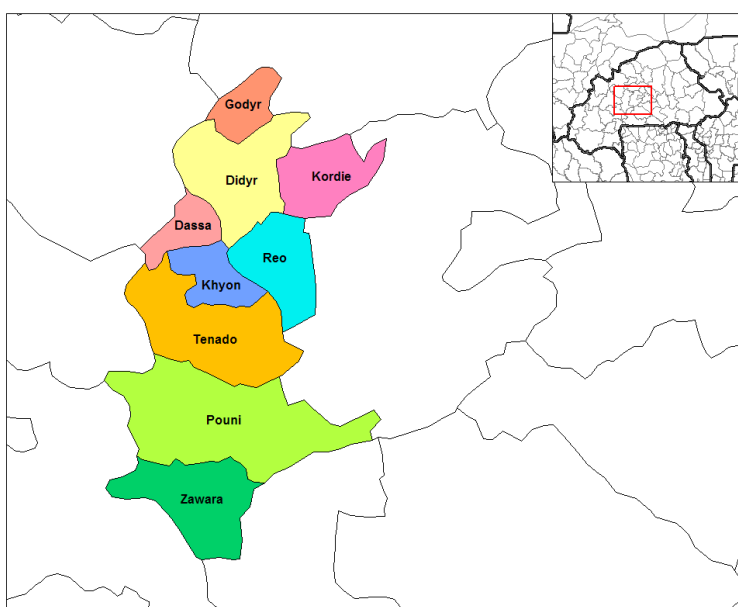
Context

Didyr

Physical environment

Didyr is one of ten municipalities in the province of Sanguié in the Center-Ouest (Center-West) region of Burkina Faso (See Figure 3). The population has decreased over the past decade, from 10,945 people in 2006 to 8,563 individuals in 2016. As a rural village in Burkina Faso (but as the “more urban” village relative to others in the program area), Didyr relies on agriculture and breeding, but has no forests or fisheries. The land is of poor quality, with soils that are sandy and gravelly, and therefore produce low crop yields. Moreover, there is insufficient land for all who wish to use it. The quality of land owned by men is generally higher than that of land owned by women. The Environmental Services office must approve all resource allocation decisions, particularly for shared resources. Water is a poorly developed resource in the community, with no water reservoirs or irrigation facilities for kitchen gardening. As a result, individuals generally use well water, but many wells have a limited water supply during the dry season from February to May.

Figure 3: Map of Sanguié Province



Source: [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Didyr_\(d%C3%A9partement\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Didyr_(d%C3%A9partement))

Shocks

The main sources of shocks in the community are irregular rainfall and bush fires. Many community characteristics limit the capacity of community members to respond to shocks. These include lack of water, low soil fertility, low uptake of new agricultural methods, lack of producer organizations, malnutrition, inadequate family planning, and lack of food for animals.

In the event of a shock, the community often supports the affected individuals. For example, if someone dies, community members generally donate money or material goods to the relatives of the deceased. In the case of covariate shocks affecting the entire village, such as malnutrition or starvation, it is difficult for community members to support one another. The same applies to diseases affecting everyone, but the government may provide assistance.

Households with the following characteristics are perceived by the community as those that can more easily recover from shocks:

- financially well-off relatives
- households working in agriculture and livestock
- households with 5- to 10-year old granaries
- households with varied and diversified activities in addition to agriculture
- households with people who have emigrated to Côte d'Ivoire
- households with children who are civil servants or employees

Microcredit, savings groups or loans from family and friends play an important role in helping households recover from shocks. Shocks often affect women more than men as a result of women's role as caretakers.

For the prevention of disasters, many farmers refer to tradition: they study signs from nature and the position of the stars or they resort to seeking advice from traditional healers. Others who are better off are more likely to seek information from the television or radio.

Apart from subsidized food from the National Society for the Management of Food Security Stocks (la Société Nationale de Gestion des Stocks de Sécurité Alimentaires—SONAGESS), there are no local resources or organizations that provide support to community members in the event of shocks or disasters. SONAGESS²² is a government run program that manages the stocks of three main cereals—millet, maize, sorghum—and mobilizes the distribution of these food stocks in times of drought or other crises. When foreign countries provide food aid to Burkina Faso, SONAGESS receives these stocks and then distributes them based on instruction from the government. This distribution may take the form of free distribution or through the sale of the cereals at subsidized prices.

Roads, Electricity, Water, Utilities, Other Infrastructure

Didyr is located on a paved road that is accessible by national road number 21. In 2016, the main road leading to the village was consistently passable by bus and truck, which transport people, crops, and livestock from Didyr to nearby communities, large cities, and large agricultural markets. The most common road surface is dirt, with the exception of the national road.

Most men in the village travel by motorcycles and bicycles. Most women travel on foot, bicycles, and carts, but some use motorcycles. Women, men, and youth generally take buses to other areas, but only men use trucks capable of transporting crops or livestock to nearby communities and large agricultural markets.

Electricity has been available from solar panels since 2006 as well as from the Société Nationale Burkinabé d'Electricité (SONABEL) network since 2015. The majority of households have solar panels and solar lamps imported from China, which are reliable sources of electricity. Solar panels are reliable during heavy rains as long as the battery is good. Electricity from SONABEL, on the other hand, is sometimes unavailable due to heavy rains. In the event of natural disasters, network electricity is unreliable and expensive.

Home telephone lines as well as mobile phones have been available in Didyr since 2002. Government officials are the main users of home telephones. Women do not use home telephones due to illiteracy and poverty. One individual in each household generally owns a mobile phone, but almost everyone uses mobile phones, with the exception of some older women who have difficulty using them. Smart phones, which are mainly used by officials such as teachers, professors, police officers, and health workers, have been available since 2014. Mobile phones are generally recharged at home, but can be recharged at refill corners with solar plates. In addition, shops and markets in Didyr offer mobile phone credit.

Some homes in Didyr have had running water since 2008 and about 40 percent of households currently have running water. Water pumps, rainwater, and store-bought mineral water have all been available as sources of drinking water for more than 10 years. About 35 percent of households have water pumps while approximately 10 percent use rainwater and 10 percent purchase drinking water. There is no water for irrigation in Didyr center.

Poultry and pigs generally get water from wells in courtyards or rainwater. In some cases, pigs share water from communal watering holes. While everyone can access these water sources, men are generally responsible for bringing water to poultry; women raise pigs and are thus responsible for providing them with water. Girls and boys are responsible for providing water for goats, but goats

generally roam free. Both sheep and cows get water from ponds. Boys are responsible for the sheep and men for cows.

Main ethnic and religious groups in the community

The main ethnic groups in Didyr are the Gourounsi (70%) and the Mossi (25%). The Gourounsi are natives of the area who mainly farm and raise livestock. The Mossi came from other countries and are generally traders. The other ethnic groups (5%) consist of Bissa, Samo, Dafing and Peulhs, who are usually civil servants. Many women in Didyr practice income-generating activities, are educated, literate, work in associations, and are members of savings groups.

Religions practiced in Didyr include Islam (48.8%), Catholicism (40%), Animism (8.7%), and Protestantism (2.5%). There is a good understanding and harmony between the different ethnic and religious groups in Didyr.

Migration

Emigration, which mainly affects young people, is an important part of village life. While internal migration is not very common, external migration is fueled by the rural exodus to major urban centers (Ouagadougou, Koudougou, Bobo, Leo, Dédougou), to gold-mining sites, and especially to Côte d'Ivoire. This migration is mainly seasonal and thus easily predictable. Men generally temporarily immigrate in search of jobs. The migration to Cote d'Ivoire is a well-documented migratory pattern for Burkinabé youth seeking employment and opportunities as well as for flows of remittances.

The migrants who usually return to Didyr do so between December and January to celebrate and build houses. They provide financial assistance to their families using Airtel money, SONAPOST, Western Union, and informal hand-to-hand carriers, although not everyone trusts the carriers. These fund transfers are important in helping families cope with financial shocks. For example, families use these funds to purchase food in the event of poor harvests, to rebuild their house in the event of flooding, and to pay for schooling, funeral expenses, and severe cases of illness. Emigration has become more common and accepted since the famine that occurred ten years ago. As a result, the construction of dwellings has increased and more children are attending school. Women whose families live in Côte d'Ivoire will receive money or clothes that can be sold as income-generating activities.

Agricultural market activity

Although agriculture and livestock breeding are not very successful in Didyr, it is known as a turkey breeding area throughout the region and is richer than most nearby villages. Every third day is considered market day and Didyr also hosts a large monthly market that is frequented by numerous traders from surrounding villages.

Seeds and fertilizer have been available for purchase in Didyr for a long time. Agricultural services have offered seeds since 2008 and fertilizer since 2013. Although animal feed is not available, vaccines and medicines for animals are available to breeders in Didyr. In addition, anyone can purchase small agricultural equipment in Didyr, but must travel a long distance by car to purchase large agricultural equipment. The town also has markets for selling both small and large quantities of crops, livestock products, and meat.

Millet, sorghum, and maize are grown for consumption. Cash crops include groundnut, sesame, cowpea, voandzou (a local pulse), cotton, and market produce (onions, eggplants, tomatoes, and cabbage).

Extension agents and agricultural information providers

Both the Technical Support Zone for Agriculture (ZAT) and the Technical Animation Unit (UAT) of the Ministry of Agriculture periodically provide technical advice on agricultural practices and distribute improved seeds, fertilizer, and farm equipment at subsidized prices to men and women. When there are agricultural shocks, ZAT helps develop an action plan by estimating flooded areas and collecting information to share with the provincial government.

Community Groups and Development Programs

Community groups include savings groups, Groupe Mutuelle de Solidarité (MUSO), and agricultural groups, all of which have women members who regularly speak in public. Savings groups, which are reserved exclusively for women, are the most important group for women. These groups promote a culture of saving and create opportunities for women to share ideas and feel valued. Savings groups also enhance women's ability to respond to shocks by offering microcredit to strengthen women's income-generating activities and providing moral support, particularly in the event of idiosyncratic shocks. Participation is open and free to all women who adhere to group rules and savings expectations. While agricultural groups exist for men and women, they are the most important group for men. During the rainy season, groups are formed to sell their farm hands' labor to those in need. These groups provide men with income or food, which is particularly important in the lean season. Women can be leaders of agricultural groups and also serve as leaders of women's MUSO groups. In the event of shocks, MUSO groups grant microcredit.

The following NGOs are active in Didyr:

- Programme National de Gestion des Terroirs (PNGT) has been active in Didyr for more than ten years and offers technical training, microfinance services, and other activities.
- Fonds Permanent pour le Développement des Collectivités Territoriales (FPDCT) initiated activities in Didyr ten years ago and provides the same services as PNGT.

- Water Aid, which has worked in Didyr for more than ten years, provides water/sanitation services to the community.
- Office de Développement des Eglises Evangéliques (ODE) has worked in Didyr for more than five years and offers agriculture-related activities, water/sewage, microfinance services, and savings groups. This is one of Freedom from Hunger's savings group partners in Burkina Faso.
- FAO has been in Didyr for more than ten years and provides technical trainings, adult education, and agriculture-related activities.
- Action Micro Barrage (AMB), which has been in Didyr for less than ten years, conducts agriculture-related activities, water/sanitation, and other activities.
- Association des Retraités d'Outre Mer (ARPOM) started operating in Didyr in 2017 and provides water/sanitation and other services.

The most important organizations for women are ODE and AMB because they offer savings groups, water/sanitation, and technical trainings related to agriculture and livestock. All projects in the community are considered important for men because of their focus on agriculture, finance, water/sanitation, and village infrastructure development.

Aside from the subsidized cereals of SONAGESS, there are no NGOs or programs in the village that provide additional aid in the event of a natural disaster or shock such as a famine.

Agricultural market activities

Most of the men in the village grow millet, sorghum, sesame, and cotton. Men make the majority of the decisions regarding sowing, maintenance/weeding, crop sales, and the use of income from these crops. Women are involved in crop harvesting activities.

In order to increase their incomes, most of the women in Didyr farm millet, groundnut, cowpea, and voandzou, including planting, maintenance/weeding, and harvesting these crops. At the time of sale, men generally intervene in sales of large quantities and in the use of income.

Marriage practices

Marriage ceremonies in the community are predominantly religious, although customary and civil marriages also exist. Polygyny is a very common practice and some members of the community also practice concubinage. Girls are not customarily allowed to marry before the age of 12. In 2006, girls between the ages of 13 and 15 were sometimes forced to marry due for economic and social reasons, but by 2016 this practice was not as common. Today, most girls marry between the ages of 16 and 18; the legal age for marriage is 17 for girls and 20 for boys. After a couple is married, they generally live close to their families. However, men often live apart from their wives due to urbanization and migration, which was not the case 10 years ago.

Women generally access agricultural land through their husband, direct inheritance, or by asking a relative. In 2006, if a woman's husband died, she would generally stay in the same place and continue to cultivate the land with her husband's relatives. Barring any serious problems, widows would often remarry within the family. Today, if a woman's husband dies, she has no right to cultivate the land. The brothers of a widow's husband usually decide whether or not she can stay. In the event of divorce, women have no right to stay in their home and generally lose the right to cultivate land. Verbal abuse is common within marriage, but physical violence is decreasing due to current interventions. The occurrence of female genital mutilation is also declining. A common practice ten years ago, it is now rare as a result of the sensitization of children.

Doudoulcy

Physical environment

Doudoulcy, which means "new concession" or "new district," is a village about twenty kilometers away from Didyr. Established in the 13th century, Doudoulcy consists of 11 districts (Okouralé, Asso, Daryo, Kalaboumbou, Kelegni, Kabissoua, Papoun, Pankodogo, Odjimalé, Poundji, Ossadji). Between 2006 and 2016, the population of the village increased from 1,371 people in 85 households to 1,752 people in 92 households.

The main physical resources of Doudoulcy include forests, soil, pastures, and fisheries. The village has two forests: a sacred forest and another village forest of about 80 hectares. The sacred forest is one that is used for spiritual/religious ceremonies and sacrifices and where women (and others during specific months of the year) are often restricted from traveling. Community members view the forests as dangerous. Hunting occurs in the village forest every year from February to June and hunters can find rabbits, small does, partridges, monkeys, rats, mongoose, and brush turkeys.

The soil in Doudoulcy is degraded and is generally of poor quality. In order to have good harvests, farmers must fertilize their soil each year. It is perceived by those interviewed that there is sufficient land for all inhabitants in the village who wish to access it and land is shared equitably among men and women in the village. The village and landowners decide how to allocate this resource. It is important to note that this perception does not match perceptions by women and men discussed later in this report which indicate that there is not equitable distribution of land rights and use.

The pastures are of good quality and there are sufficient pasture lands for all who wish to use them. While access is open to all, the village chief makes decisions regarding the allocation of these resources. How the chief decides these allocations is unclear. There have been changes in pasture

availability since the drought that took place over the past decade. Each neighborhood now has its own pasture.

Fishing is not fully developed in the village due to its seasonable availability. The river only exists during the rainy season. This explains why answers from our qualitative study contradict each other as to whether fishing is an activity: it depends on the time of year and whether rains fill the river allowing for fishing.

Shocks

The difficulties faced by the inhabitants of Doudoulcy are manifold and include the inexistence of a health center within the village, the lack of good roads, the absence of latrines, and the lack of drinking water for many neighborhoods. While the community generally experiences arid to semi-arid weather conditions which result in insufficient rainfall and famine, when it does rain, the community will face annual floods due to the absence of flood barriers and reservoirs.

In the event of a famine, the inhabitants share food and emigrants make financial contributions. Women can also ask their parents for help. In the case of serious illness, community members make generous financial donations to the sick. The whole village mobilizes if someone in the village dies: some donate dolo (beer) and others provide goats for funerals.

Resilient households can often sell livestock and generally have children or parents who have emigrated to Côte d'Ivoire or to major urban centers. Informal loans from friends and relatives as well as loans from savings groups are important in the lean season. Women generally suffer more than men when shocks occur because they are responsible for finding water and food for their family. In the event of a natural disaster, only SONAGESS provides subsidized food to the village as they both purchase local food stocks and re-distribute them.

Roads, Electricity, Water, Utilities, Other Infrastructure

There are no paved roads in Doudoulcy and the most common road surface is mud and clay. As a result, in 2016, the main road leading to the village was only accessible by bus or truck during the dry season and was not accessible during the winter season, which extends from June to October. Sometimes the inhabitants spend as much as one month without access to the nearby village Mousséo, which is 4 kilometers away. At the moment, people prefer to go to more remote villages such as Kordié (21km) or Samba (17km).

Most men travel within the village using bicycles, although some officials and wealthy men and women have motorcycles. On the other hand, the majority of women travel on foot, but some

women also use bicycles. Doudoulcy also has motorcycle taxis, which are generally used by trades people. No buses or trucks are available in Doudoulcy, so residents generally travel to nearby communities and agricultural markets by bicycle or motorcycle. Emigrants travel to large cities via trucks of passage or motorcycles. Carts are also available and are generally used by women producing dolo and men during the harvest season.

Doudoulcy does not have access to electricity from a grid or generator. Solar panels, used by approximately 20 percent of households, have been available for the past 10 years. However, they cannot use solar panels during the winter and they are only somewhat reliable during natural disasters. For the past ten years, about 60 percent of households have also had solar plates and torches, which are very reliable.

There are no telephone landlines in Doudoulcy, but cell phones have been available since 2006, along with places to charge them. Men, women, and youth use cell phones. Early warning systems and communication tools used for disaster prevention in Doudoulcy are archaic and include observing the stars, the production and position of trees, insects and bird patterns. They do not use formal sources of weather data.

None of the homes in Doudoulcy have running water and there is no community tap with running water. However, for more than 5 years, about 40 percent of households have had boreholes with a pump and all households have collected rainwater for more than 20 years. In addition, about 20 percent of households have well water.

No irrigation water is available in the village. Poultry and pigs generally drink well water and girls are responsible for ensuring the livestock have enough water. Goats, sheep, and cows generally get water from ponds. While women are usually responsible for providing water for goats and sheep, men are responsible for cows.

Major ethnic groups

The majority (90 percent) of the inhabitants of Doudoulcy are Gourounssi, the aboriginal peoples and landowners in the village. A minority (10 percent) are Mossi, who are farmers and traders who practice agriculture and animal husbandry. There is generally a good dynamic between the different ethnic groups of the village. Everyone participates in village events, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or status.

Migration

Emigration is an important part of life in Doudoulcy and is becoming more and more common. Many illiterate men immigrate to Côte d'Ivoire. They generally leave after the harvests and often return

before the rainy season. Young people who are literate go to the big cities of the country like Koudoudou, Yako, Dédougou, and Ouagadougou. Women do not generally emigrate or migrate for work, but leave if their husbands bring them along. The emigrants and migrants provide substantial support to the inhabitants of the village. They generally send money to their families using Airtel, but some send money through person-to-person carriers. These transfers help fund the construction of houses, the schooling of children, and can cover shortfall in the lean period. Overall, the inhabitants believe that the emigrants contribute to the development of village and help minimize the negative effects of shocks.

Agricultural market activity

There are no agricultural market activities available in Doudoulcy, so community members use bikes or motorbikes to purchase seeds, fertilizer, food and vaccines for animals, and small agricultural equipment from Mousseo, Didyr, or neighboring villages. In order to purchase large agricultural equipment, they must take a bus. They access markets by traveling to neighboring villages or visiting a collector on site.

Cash crops include cowpea, sesame, and groundnut and crops for consumption consist of sorghum, millet, and maize.

Community Groups and Development Programs

The two main community groups are savings groups, which assist with savings and credit, and the forest group, which protects the sacred forest of the village. To be a member of the savings group, you must be a woman and adhere to the rules of entry established by the group (this might consist of that minimum amount the group decides to save during their regular meetings, etc.). These savings groups have no connection with other groups outside the village. Members of savings groups benefit from credit, make contributions, exchange ideas, and receive financial and moral support in the event of shocks. In particular, savings groups provide credit with no interest when a member experiences a shock. Only men participate in the forest group. In the event of bushfires, the group participates in reforestation efforts.

Apart from the Evangelical Church Development Office (ODE), which started operating in Doudoulcy within the last 10 years, there are no other NGOs established in the village. This NGO supports women's savings groups and provides microfinance services. No NGOs provide assistance in the event of a natural disaster.

Agricultural market activity

While men are typically responsible for conducting all agricultural activities, both men and women purchase small agricultural equipment and sell small quantities of crops. Due to the poor quality of

the soil, most men in the village grow millet on their plots. Both men and women make decisions regarding the types of crops to plant and when and how to harvest, but only men make weeding decisions. When selling large quantities of crops, men generally make the decisions, but women make sales decisions regarding smaller quantities. Men generally decide how to use income from the sale of crops grown on their plots.

Most women in the village grow millet, groundnut, cowpea, okra, potatoes, and sorrel to augment their income. Women plant, maintain, weed, and harvest these crops themselves. Both men and women carry out the crop sales. Women decide how to use the income and generally use it to pay for basic expenses of the family. Women's main income-generating activities are fattening small livestock, preparing dolo, and selling condiments.

Marriage practices

Both customary marriages and polygyny are common in Doudoulcy. Concubinage is not widely practiced. Girls do not generally marry before the age of 12 or between the ages of 13 and 15, although it was somewhat common for girls to marry at the age of 13-15 in 2006. Girls frequently marry between the ages of 16 and 18. These marriage practices have not changed significantly over time. However, once a couple marries, they do not tend to live close to either spouse's family, which is a departure from the past. Women generally access agricultural land through their husbands. If a woman's husband dies, she has the right to stay in the home and continue cultivating the land if she stays. However, she has neither of these rights if she and her husband divorce. As of 2006, verbal, psychological, and physical abuse were widespread, as was female genital mutilation, but these practices are now rare.

Local meanings of empowerment

When discussing the translation and concept of "empowerment" in Burkina with staff and the research firm, they use the word "autonomous" to reflect "empowerment". When we asked the women's focus group participants to describe an "autonomous" woman, we requested a description of a woman who is "capable of making important decisions in her life." These group participants described an "autonomous" woman as someone who "can lead others to emancipate themselves through their vision and leadership."

Didyr

How empowerment is defined by women and men

According to women's focus group discussants, an empowered woman makes concrete decisions, works independently, does not depend on her husband's money for her personal needs, has a

husband who respects her, and has the financial means to cope with the health, schooling, and food expenses of her family. An empowered woman is considered to be an "autonomous" or "emancipated" woman. In addition, an empowered woman is a visionary, dresses well, has skin that shines, has good housing, and both she and her children have sufficient food. An autonomous woman differs from an autonomous man because she cares more about her parents and significantly contributes to their well-being. The focus group discussants cited Saran Sérémé, a national politician, as an example of an "emancipated" woman because she is in the local language Mooré "Poug gandaogo" and in Ielé "kainbial", which translate to concepts such as rash, committed, firm and visionary. Similar views are reflected in the life histories.

Based on the men's focus group discussion, men define an independent man as financially wealthy, hard-working, and well-behaved. He has good housing, eats well in both quantity and quality, and takes care of his family. He is not afraid of encountering problems of any size. According to these men, an autonomous woman is ambitious and courageous. She is a worker, a fighter, interacts easily with others, and has leadership skills. In addition, she has money and, as a result of her financial situation, may not show respect or consideration for her husband, suggesting that she is perceived as threatening to traditional cultural norms. The empowered man interviewed for the life history believes that an autonomous woman has a stable financial situation, is sociable, and irreproachable. The disempowered man agrees that an autonomous woman is the one who can financially support her family in difficult times. He also asserts that she is a "courageous, persevering woman capable of making decisions and making them happen" and yet she is also "a submissive woman who values her father's/husband's rules."

Whether empowerment is seen as a good thing or not (and by whom)

According to the women's focus group discussants, many women are empowered because they work in groups, are courageous, ambitious, open-minded, educated, and mobile. Independent women are respected, loved, envied, and regarded as models by other women. Men respect them because they contribute to household income and husbands are happy to have autonomous wives. The discussants also acknowledged that it is more difficult for women to make important decisions and translate them into actions because they always need the advice of their husbands.

In contrast to the female discussants, the men's focus group discussants state that very few autonomous women exist in Didyr. The men attribute this to lack of financial support, courageous initiative, and water infrastructure. Added to this is poor soil and poor harvests caused by unpredictable rainfall. Men assert that an autonomous woman is a fighter and able to manage a family even in the absence of her husband. Thus, a man who has an emancipated wife would be very happy provided the woman is submissive and respectful. The male discussants echo the assertion of female discussants that it is often difficult for women to make important decisions on their own

because they require the consent of their husbands, parents, or heads of household, depending on whether the woman is married, single, or widowed.

Doudoulcy

How empowerment is defined by women and men

Women's focus group participants describe an autonomous woman as someone who can manage a home, is courageous, submissive (respects her husbands or family's wishes), helps her neighbor, dresses well, eats properly, has a beautiful home and can contribute to the empowerment of others through her leadership. She generally cares about the well-being of her children and her parents.

According to the men's focus group discussants, an autonomous man is one who is financially comfortable with the income generated from his economic activities, has a large family that he manages with ease, and is wealthy. An autonomous man differs from the poor in the quality of his housing, the material goods that he owns, and the food consumed by him and his family. When an autonomous man has the money, he takes care of his family and his social circle. Autonomous women, on the other hand, tend to care only for their children and parents.

Men's focus group participants depict an autonomous woman as someone who dresses well, does not ask her husband for money to cover costs at the mill for grinding corn or millet (for flour), can take care of the health and education of her children, and takes good care of the home, in general. Her husband's life is peaceful and his home is stable.

Whether empowerment is seen as a good thing or not (and by whom)

Women assert that there are many "emancipated" women in Doudoulcy because numerous women take care of their husbands and families and pay for the education, food, and health expenses of their children.

The female focus group discussants believe that empowerment is a good thing because autonomous women are hardworking and ambitious. They claim that men find autonomous women to be ideal spouses because they help manage the family and pay for schooling, feeding, and care of children.

Unlike the women's focus group participants, men claim that there are very few independent women in Doudoulcy. They assert that most women did not attend school and can therefore be narrow-minded. They lack initiative, but also financial means. The men also state that women are accustomed to expecting everything from men.

When women leave the village, they realize that other women often disregard them. They are said to be "gnié maan kana," meaning "women who come from afar." Men would like for city women to have a more positive view of their wives.

Both the women's and men's focus groups recognize that it is difficult for women to make important decisions and translate them into action.

Domains of Empowerment

Each of the studied domains of empowerment will be highlighted along with summaries of findings, disaggregated by location.

Didyr

Production **Input in productive decisions, Autonomy in production, Access to information**

In general, men make the final decisions regarding agricultural activities and women help in harvesting the crops. When women grow their own crops (on plots of land that her husband will allocate to her for planting), men generally take responsibility for the sale of larger quantities of crops and in the use of income.

According to women, there are no joint agricultural decisions. The man decides what is needed and shares this information with his wife. He makes the final decision regarding cattle, foods grown for home consumption, and commercial crops grown by the household. If the husband is absent, the oldest woman (or eldest wife) makes production decisions. Men, on the other hand, report that most agricultural decisions are made jointly.

Women report that the most common areas of disagreement concern the sale of cash crops and the use of income without the husband's agreement. Men state that the most common subjects of disagreement are wives' use of part of their husband's field to sow okra without his agreement. Disagreements also arise if men do not give money or grain to women after the harvest so that they can feed the family. Both claim that these disagreements are resolved "through dialogue."

Women can make agricultural decisions without men regarding collective farming, which is a plot of land that women in a savings group may manage together (the revenue from the harvest proceeds will go back into the groups' savings and loan fund and for eventual payout to the group members).

Men, on the other hand, make many agricultural decisions without women. According to men, in the rainy season, women help men plow their fields before plowing their own. Men are more influential and have the final say in decision-making in the home and in agriculture.

Extension agents provide technical advice and distribution of improved seed, fertilizers, and farm equipment at subsidized prices to both men and women.

Both male and female farmers learn market prices through the radio, neighbors, and relatives. For weather information, they use traditional sources including studying signs from nature and the position of the stars.

For farming practices, farmers borrow from government traders, savings groups, and financial institutions (credit unions such as RCPB), and use input subsidies. Men and women generally use different resources.

Resources

Use rights over land, Ownership of assets, Access to and decisions on credit, Access to financial accounts

For the past 6 years, women have formally had the right to own land/property. There are also formal laws governing what happens to land/property in the event of the death of a woman's husband and in the event of the death of parents. In practice, this legislation is not being implemented well.

According to formal law, women have also been able to open a bank account and receive credit for more than ten years. Unlike laws related to property, these laws have been successfully implemented in practice. The most important financial services are Airtel (now Orange) money, savings, groups, informal loans, and loans from financial institutions. Men, women, and youth have used mobile money accounts for more than five years, but men use this service the most. On the other hand, although both men and women use tontines and informal transfers of funds, women use these services more than men. Individual loans from financial institutions, which are generally used by traders, economic operators, and private and state employees, have been available to men and women for more than ten years. Only women use group loans and participate in savings groups, which have been available for more than ten years and five years, respectively. Men, women, and youth have all used loans from individuals who are not relatives or friends. In addition, men and women with migrant relatives have used formal remittance services for more than five years.

Income

Control over use of income, Autonomy in use of income

According to women, making a decision together means getting along, communicating, and discussing schooling, family health, and well-being. Unfortunately, husbands and wives do not make decisions together regarding the use of income. Men have the last word. Moreover, wives do not know their husband's income, but husbands know how much their wives make.

Women make their own decisions about their income related to savings groups as well as those related to their income-generating activities. As for the men, they decide alone on the incomes from livestock and cash crops. Women assert that they manage their income better than men and generally use their money to care for their children. On the other hand, men like to drink beer and eat good meat. The women believe that this way of making decisions could be improved.

The amount of income earned by women and men in a household affects their relationship. Discussants believe that the higher a household's income, the greater the understanding between husbands and wives.

Elisabeth^{iv}, a 62-year old empowered widowed woman from Didyr shared that she met her husband when she was 18 while she was selling dolo in the market. She shared that she was proud to have found the ideal man. She appreciated her late husband because he was attentive to her, listened to her enormously, and he used her as a facilitator in the event of conflicts between the co-wives. "My husband treated all his wives well. But I was the most beloved." Together with her husband, she took decisions on school expenses for children and support for sickness or death. On the other hand, she took her personal clothing expenses alone. She found this to work well.

Married in 1983, Fabris, an empowered man, is happy to share his life with his only wife Martine: "It was not a forced marriage. It was my aunt's sister who proposed it to me in marriage. I was honored and animated with joy that she accepts me with my physical handicap [polio paralyzed both of his legs when he was 4]. My wife is very obedient, understanding, calm and takes care of me and my children. Sometimes I am tempted to say that she is like a mother hen (cherish her children too much, stay with them and work even in their place). That makes me argue with her whenever it is necessary. We talk about, for example, life, health, education. The decisions I take alone concern, for example, helping someone or contributing to the big family." Compared to the beginning of his marriage, Fabris thinks that his power of decision has declined due to his children. They oppose each other very often and sometimes they take the upper hand. For example, in the organization of festivals, he may judge an expenditure to be too superfluous, but his children insist. He and his wife make decisions regarding their children's

^{iv} Names have been changed to protect privacy of respondents.

education together even though more and more, his wife takes care of it.

Leadership **Group membership**

Women are the leaders of savings groups and women's MUSO groups, in which only women participate. They can also serve as leaders of agricultural groups.

Fabris, an empowered man from Didyr, thinks his home is strong enough and can recover at any time from any situation due to the solidarity in his family as well as his community. "During social events, people help each other. We feel solidarity. And culturally, it's shameful for someone who has the means to not help the person who needs it. Savings groups and Solidarity Mutuals (MUSO) are also very supportive."

Elisabeth, an empowered woman from Didyr, shared, "Today, I am a dynamic, truthful, direct, categorical, passionate, loving, respectful and above all ambitious woman. I am financially well off to be able to help those in need. I fully decide how I want my income. I am seen in my community through my leadership and how to solve the challenges facing women. I had created an association and helped women have micro-credits. Unfortunately, some women did not repay. I assume and endorse this responsibility."

Elisabeth describes an autonomous man as one who is able to manage his family in all circumstances. He is able to cope with spending on health, food and clothing. On the other hand, an autonomous woman is one who knows her rights and duties (respect for her husband and her home) and cares about the well-being of the family.

Time **Workload (+childcare)**

Seasonality patterns were not studied for Didyr; however, Fabris, an empowered man from Didyr shared that one of the greatest challenges to keeping his children in school is their strong participation in domestic and rural work. He owns 2 hectares of land, breeds animals, and owns a mill.

**Physical
Mobility**

Frequency and decisions on physical mobility

There are no formal laws specifying whether women can travel without the consent of her husband. Women in Didyr can travel alone to the market, to visit relatives/family, personal fields/garden, places of worship, and health centers, and to attend savings group meetings. However, according to men, their wives ask permission before traveling to these places. There are no places where women would like to go but are prohibited from doing so. However, a woman can only go to the hospital or to visit her husband's family if her husband accompanies her or if she receives permission from her husband. In addition, she can only seek family planning services when accompanied by her husband and can only visit places of worship with his permission. According to men, women are accompanied by their husbands to funerals, customary marriages, and the dispensary.

Based on rules developed by the ancestors (former chiefs), all women are forbidden from entering sacred places. Failure to comply with this agreement results in death.

Over the past 10 years, the capacity of women to travel has increased because of their membership in savings groups, the sharing of ideas, and their increased open-mindedness. They are much more mobile than their mothers' generation, who did not have schooling or savings groups. Women and men believe that the next generation will be more mobile.

Elisabeth, an empowered woman from Didyr, shares about mobility, "seeing my status as a widow, I think I can do everything. Those whose husbands are alive do not have that right. [Women with husbands] are accompanied [by their husbands] to deaths and funerals. Here, women are more dynamic and fight for what they want more than most men, so I'm thrilled to be able to do whatever I want without consulting anyone. However, I am [still] forbidden to go to the sacred places."

**Intra-
household
relationships**

Mutual respect

The lack of intra-household harmony is felt by men and women alike, with women being most acutely aware of their position relative to a man's position.

Alice, a disempowered widow living in Didyr urban center, was forced to marry without her

consent when she was 17. Although she had never met her husband, she soon learned that he was mature, very understanding, simple, calm, and did not like quarrels. Even though she was the fifth of his six wives, he always wished her well and, when she was sad, he tried to understand why and console her with sweet words. He also knew how to organize decision-making in the home. In general, she believes that a woman is subject to her husband.

Rigobert, a disempowered 33-year old man, states, "I became an adult after my marriage at the age of 24. I have only one wife who I met as part of my business. At first, I was happy and delighted to have children. Later, things got complicated because at the time I speak, we have a litigious, unstable relationship. My wife is very capricious: she wants clothes for which I do not have the money. When I do not give money to the *popote*^v, it is war. It is a feeling of nervousness and discouragement. I am even starting to regret my marriage. I advise my little brothers to look for money first before marrying a woman!" Currently, Rigobert does not have the financial means to develop a good activity: "I am the decision-maker in the family, even if sometimes the decisions are not respected. I am a dejected man. I regret my marriage because that's where the problems got worse."

Fabris, an empowered man from Didyr, jokingly shared: "As a man I cannot make *tôt (local dish made of pounded sorghum or corn)*. There are men who do it, but I find it funny! In our community, man can do everything unless he does not want to. I also cannot attend a women's savings group meeting. "

Individual Empowerment Self-efficacy, Life satisfaction

Many focus group participants describe autonomous men and women as those who are wealthy and self-sufficient. For example, empowered women can contribute to the education, food, and health care expenses of their children and can manage the home in the absence of her husband. Empowered men can provide for their families without outside assistance. These data suggest that self-efficacy is a central component of individual empowerment.

As a widow, Alice currently makes all decisions for herself, including how to use her income. Three of her children live with her. She experienced famine in the past 5 years. She states, "I have no financial means. I manage to eat one to two meals a day. I do not have a diversified

^v *Popote* is understood as the money a husband gives to a wife for food for the family.

business. But, I think Didyr is resilient. Indeed, most people carry on an activity such as livestock trade or agriculture. In addition, there are many groups that organize to work and help one another in the event of a shock. For example, savings groups do farming and community breeding, save, and in the case of a shock (sickness, etc.) [The community] provides financial support to this member."

Alice belongs to a group of savers who financially support her in case of difficulty. She is well-treated in the community even though she is not influential. She was happy before her husband died, but now she has financial worries. As she gets older, she will rely on her children to take care of her. Above all, she is thankful and satisfied with her present life.

According to Rigobert, he is neither resilient nor autonomous. His wife's hypertension combined with weak agricultural production and his lack of employment after getting a driver's license have caused him to request financial support from his parents. Rigobert wonders how he can build a home and continue to finance the schooling of his children. He is not currently satisfied with his life, but is hopeful for a better future for him and his children.

Elisabeth, an empowered woman from Didyr, expressed herself in the following terms: "I am easy-going and able to face my problems. I manage to educate my children; we eat better and balanced at home. I am envied by some women. So I feel more self-sufficient and satisfied with my life. Thanks to the ODE's (Freedom from Hunger partner) actions in favor of women, my life has changed dramatically. Before, it was difficult for me to save 5,000 FCFA per year."

**Domestic
violence**

Attitudes about domestic violence

There are no formal or customary laws specifying whether it is acceptable for a husband to beat his wife or compel her to have sex with him. Verbal abuse is common within marriage, but physical violence occurs less frequently.

Nutrition

Input in reproductive health decisions, IYCF decision, food consumption generally and while pregnant/breastfeeding, purchasing decisions for medicine and food.

Malnutrition is a problem in Didyr that mostly affects boys and girls aged 6 months to 5 years. There are seasonal trends in the prevalence of malnutrition. Child malnutrition affects women more than men because women will do anything to ensure that their children have something to eat.

Men and women have equal access to drinking water and sanitation facilities. On the other hand, men have greater access to meat as a result of their financial means. Diets have improved over the last decade as a result of nutrition trainings.

There are several governmental organizations/programs available to people suffering from malnutrition in Didyr, including the Nutritional Recovery Center of the Catholic Organization for Economic and Social Development (OCADES), the Office for the Development of Evangelical Churches (ODE), and the Center for Health and Social Promotion.

Members of the community travel by foot, bicycle, and motorcycle to the hospital for all health services.

The State provides free prenatal and postnatal consultations, childbirth care, consultations for sick children, monitoring children's growth, immunizations, and micronutrient supplementation for children under five. However, when there are stock outages for drugs and other services, households are obliged to use money from their own pockets to cover the difference.

Women generally use their own income to pay for consultations when they are sick and for family planning services if they are married. Campaigns sometimes provide free family planning services for unmarried women or girls. The State provides free prenatal and postnatal consultations, childbirth care, and consultations for sick children under five. Both women and men pay to monitor growth and for immunizations and micronutrient supplementation for children under five.

According to women and men, one should go to the hospital in the event of illness and then to the pharmacy, if necessary. The women's focus group discussants want decision-making to change because they do not have any input in contraceptive use or methods even though they are responsible for taking care of the children and make decisions regarding child feeding. Husbands and wives both make decisions regarding the cleanliness of the children, the yard, meals, and water.

Women make decisions regarding how household tasks are distributed. In polygamous households, the oldest woman decides. There are some homes in which men help women with household chores. Women believe that good men who love their wives help them, but believe that men would view such a man as bewitched. While some men report that this would be abnormal behavior, others agree that an understanding man who loves his wife helps her with chores.

Fabris, an empowered man from Didyr, shared that he thought he was the one to “ensure the hygiene of all” and that he works to eat healthy, and that his family attends the health centers in case of illness.

Doudoulcy

Production Input in productive decisions, Autonomy in production, Access to information

Based on the community profile, men and women grow different crops. Men generally make sales decisions regarding large quantities of crops, but both men and women make sales decisions for smaller quantities. Women control the income from the sale of their own crops.

Focus groups of both men and women stated that, as a general rule, men have more influence and make the final decision regarding what food to grow for home consumption. However, women’s focus group discussants claim that both men and women make decisions regarding livestock and they make decisions separately for their own cash crops. Men and women both decide how to use fertilizers or seeds. Some decisions are made separately because men and women grow different types of crops (for example, women grow groundnuts). Women view spouses that make joint decisions as understanding, having a shared vision, and helping one another.

Men’s focus group participants, on the other hand, state that men have the final say in agricultural decisions, in cattle ranching, and in commercial crops. They report that women do not make any agricultural decisions alone, but men make decisions alone regarding the division of labor, types of crops, crop sales, and seeding periods.

According to women, the most common sources of disagreement are related to money, food, and misuse of income. They are usually resolved through dialogue and submission of the woman.

There are some homes in which wives make decisions with their husbands and these women are viewed by other women as emancipated. According to men, the current way of making decisions is good and has not evolved over time.

Dominique, an empowered man from Doudoulcy shares that while an empowered man helps his neighbor with financial, material and moral support, “only a submissive, respectful, intelligent, and hard-working woman may be able to emancipate herself.” This perception highlights the

tension that women and men face: an “emancipated” or empowered woman must be still be perceived as submissive.

The Head Technical Support Zone of Agriculture (ZAT) provides agricultural information to both men and women. There are no regular suppliers for traders, but most suppliers are men. Unlike men, women do not have adequate means of transporting large quantities of crops to the trader or to the market. Becoming a trader requires experience in the business and financial resources and is thus easier for men than for women.

Resources

Use rights over land, Ownership of assets, Access to and decisions on credit, Access to a financial account

Doudoulcy has a customary land tenure system in which those who wish to access land consult the land chief. Women have limited land rights, aside from accessing the land of their husbands, fathers, or other relatives. If widowed, they often remarry elsewhere.

For the past ten years, women have formally had the right to own land/property. However, customary laws govern what happens to land/property in the event of the death of a woman’s husband and in the event of the death of parents.

According to formal law, women have also been able to open a bank account and receive credit for more than fifteen years and these laws have been successfully implemented in practice.

Bank accounts, mobile money accounts, individual and group loans, remittance services, and cash transfers from the government are not available in Doudoulcy. Men and women generally access these services by bike or motorcycle. However, only men receive individual loans from financial institutions. While both men and women use group loans, women use this service more because of their willingness to repay credits. On the other hand, men use bank accounts more because they tend to be more mobile than women. Savings groups and tontines have been available to women in Doudoulcy for more than five years and are the most important financial services for them. Loans from a person other than a family member or close friend have also been available in Doudoulcy for more than ten years and are used by women only. The residents also use Airtel (Orange) money, which is available in nearby villages.

Alice, a disempowered woman from Doudoulcy, was given in marriage by her aunt without Alice’s consent. “Although I was the 5th wife of the 6 wives that my deceased husband had, when, for instance, I came back from the market, he always wished me well, and took the news with great amiability. There was some understanding and when I was sad, he tried to know the

motives and consoled me with sweet words. He knew how to organize decision-making in the home. Every wife had a field. Each wife harvested her own field and stored the grains. As for the food, each wife prepared food for her own family unit. Then the food is gathered in front of the first wife's compound to be shared among the women. [We made] joint decisions related to holiday periods (food, clothing of children) and period of death (expenses and funeral organizations).

Income

Control over use of income, Autonomy in use of income

According to women's focus group participants, men and women do not make any decisions together on the use of income. Wives do not know their husbands' incomes, but husbands know how much money their wives make.

Men usually make decisions about income and have the last word. Disagreements are generally based on the misuse of income. Women claim that when men earn money, they hardly care about the welfare of their families. These disagreements are most often resolved through dialogue and discussion. Women believe that men do not make good decisions and the decision-making process should change. There are no households in which women earn significant incomes. According to women, the amount of income earned by women and men in a household strengthens their relationship and increases understanding between them. However, men claim that the amount of income earned by husbands and wives does not affect their relationship.

Rasmata, an empowered woman from Doudoulcy, shares that she makes most decisions as her husband emigrated to Ivory Coast two year ago. She occasionally discusses with her husband education expenses, health, and clothing expenses. When Rasmata is asked about the biggest disagreements she has had with her husband in the past five (5) years, she says: "It is the inability to pay for children's school fees due to a lack of resources. They got kicked out of school. In addition to this difficulty, our area has experienced a famine. But with the support of some members of the family who emigrated to Côte d'Ivoire and the sale of certain animals (goats, pigs), we were able to climb the slope. Dialogue and understanding have also been important factors in solving these problems."

Leadership

Group membership

Only women participate in savings groups, so all of the group leaders are women. By contrast, no women can participate in forest groups.

Dominique, an empowered man says about leadership: "Currently I am the oldest of the village. On a customary level, I have the responsibility of preserving the tranquility and well-being of the village. I am solicited for financial, material aid, or for food. I give according to what I have. I do not know if I am good or bad. But I get the respect due to my age and my rank. All that one should not do without consulting me, one does not do it. For example, the use of new crops, I am the one who orders the village to consume these crops after having asked permission from the ancestors. Since my young age, I have been entrusted with these responsibilities. I have always been reserved, respectful of social values, especially our traditions. I did not drink any way at the market, I did not frequent the places of debauches (cabaret and others). I was accountable in 2006 as a customary chief."

Rasmata, an empowered woman from Doudoulcy, has been affected over the past five years by the death of her father and seasons of poor harvests. She was able to overcome these harsh trials thanks to the moral and material support (food) of her family, the community as well as the financial support of her savings group "Tchiènè-yin" which means in Lelé language "goodness is interesting". She thinks that her home is resilient because of her belonging to the savings group and the diversity of her activities. It is the same for her community thanks to loans from savings groups, mutual aid (moral, financial and in-kind support), understanding, understanding and compassion (some have pity on others). Her savings group plays an important role in community fields, contributions, microcredit and mutual assistance during lean periods.

Time **Workload (+childcare)**

Both men and women work full-time producing sorghum, millet, and cowpeas during the rainy season from July to October. During this period, women also cultivate peanuts. Annual activities for men include raising small and large livestock. Women also participate in raising small livestock. The qualitative field work was conducted in December, which is in the dry season. Those men who emigrate in search of job opportunities leave after the harvest, so they are generally away from home during this time of year and women are responsible for numerous productive and reproductive tasks,

including producing dolo, running small businesses, and fetching water. During the rainy season, they are able to collect rainwater and thus only occasionally fetch water.

According to women's focus group participants, men generally work 14 hours per day and women work 11 hours, but these estimates do not include time spent on household chores such as cooking, cleaning, or caring for children.

**Physical
Mobility****Frequency and decisions on physical mobility**

There are no formal or customary laws specifying if a woman can travel without the consent of her husband. According to focus group participants, women can travel alone to the market, wells, places of worship, and fields. Women claim that there are no places to which they would like to go but cannot, but men state that women would like to go to the restaurants in town to work, to the market late at night, and to live with their children or brothers in Cote d'Ivoire. Husbands accompany their wives to wakes, funerals, customary ceremonies, and consulting a soothsayer. Women report that they ask their husbands for permission to attend savings group meetings, visit their families, or go to the dispensary. According to men, wives always inform their husbands when they want to go somewhere as a way of asking for permission. Based on the rules of the land chiefs, all women are forbidden from entering sacred spaces. Those who do not comply risk punishment by death.

Women's mobility has increased in the past ten years as a result of increased schooling, open-mindedness, groups and cooperative movements, pursuit of their ambitions, and better transportation. Both men and women believe that women's mobility will continue to expand in the future.

Based on the response of an informal market trader in Doudoulcy, women's lack of access to adequate transportation limits their abilities to transport large quantities of crops to traders or directly to markets. Sometimes the trader will transport the crops and deduct the cost of transportation after selling the crops.

Regarding mobility, Rasmata, an empowered woman from Doudoulcy said: "I cannot travel long distances to go to work, for example in Ouagadougou or Côte d'Ivoire. All women cannot do this because it requires the husband's agreement, have the granary full and especially mobilized a lot of money. Faced with this situation, it is a feeling of disarray and desolation that affects me because we find that we are always behind compared to other women (Didyr for example). In case of death or funeral in my family, I cannot go alone. I am accompanied and it is so for all the women of my community."

Dominique, an empowered man from Doudoulcy, says he is free to do anything he wants to undertake except cut wood in the sacred forest of the village. When he is accompanied by other people, it is just for pleasure.

**Intra-household
relationships**

Mutual respect

While some respondents to the life histories describe an autonomous woman as respectful, they do not explicitly mention mutual respect between husbands and wives.

Dominique, an empowered man from Doudoulcy, shared that he is the only one who decides most of the decisions of the home. But, he makes sure to inform and prioritize his wives and grandchildren. He thinks the decisions made are good. "God helps us because no one contradicts me. My wives and children also respect the customs." He adds: "When one grows older, one becomes wiser. It's me who decides everything and it works! I am old, I know they [his wives] may deceive me, but I will not decide what will confuse a family. "

**Individual
Empowerment**

Self-efficacy, Life satisfaction

Self-efficacy is a key component of individual empowerment. Financial independence, self-reliance, and ambition are common elements of local definitions of empowerment for both men and women.

According to Christian, a disempowered man from Doudoulcy, although men mock or look down on women who have to rely on them, they simultaneously take pride in being the decision-maker and mock men who do what women want/ask. Men seem to want their wives to be somewhat, but not entirely, dependent upon them. While Christian wants a bright future for his children, he is neither happy with his current situation nor hopeful for his own future due to his visual handicap.

Dominique, a 75-year old empowered man from Doudoulcy, says he always wanted to resemble his father who was a great farmer, breeder, and hunter. He has realized and surpassed this dream: "I possess more things than my father. I have 7 wives while my father had only 2. I have more fields and animals than him. I have 44 children including 30 boys and 14 girls. The oldest

of my children is 51 years old and the very last one only has 2 weeks of life. Other wives are also pregnant!"

Rasmata, an empowered woman from Doudoulcy, shares that she is a hard-working, respectful, rigorous and ambitious woman. She is a member of a savings group that allows her to save, borrow and learn through sharing of exchanges. She feels loved and respected in her village. She tells us to be taken as a role model for some women. She would like to work to change the way of life, the conditions and ways of doing women so that they can take charge of their destiny.

For Rasmata, an autonomous man is one who is hardworking, respectful and respected, lives in a beautiful house, eats in quantity and quality, manages well the food, clothing and health expenses of his family. On the other hand, an autonomous woman is the one who is clean and dresses well. It is also and above all a woman who manages to take care of her family in the absence of her husband in a courageous way. Rasmata feels more autonomous than some women because she has had the chance to undertake income generating activities that provide her with benefits. She believes she would be more self-sufficient if she had more credit for cowpea speculation, government assistance in the form of agricultural loans, availability of drilling quantities, water retention and barrage for market gardening. She believes that the concept of empowerment has evolved with the introduction of savings groups that has given an open mind and saving culture. Currently, Rasmata says she is generally satisfied with her life and is more optimistic in the future. Indeed, she is married, has children, and is able to cope with most of the needs of her household using the diversity of her income. She wants her children to succeed in school in perfect health and harmony.

Widow Amie, a 90-year-old disempowered woman from Doudoulcy perceives herself as a desperate person, discouraged of life, poor, alone and without support. She tells us she is waiting for her death. Her life was shaped when she became blind, when she lost her second husband and the death of her 6 children. The main concern for Amie's future is the health and longevity of her only daughter who remains alive. She has lost faith in the future because of her advanced age. On the other hand, she wants her daughter's situation to improve. To conclude, Amie tells us this: "I am not satisfied with my life. Indeed, I endured many problems: forced marriage, death of my second husband, death of 6 of my 7 children, loss of my sight. In the end, I would have preferred death."

There are no formal or customary laws specifying whether it is acceptable for a husband to beat his wife or compel her to have sex with him. Verbal, psychological, and/or physical abuse was common within marriages in 2006, but it has become increasingly rare.

In one of the life histories, a 90-year-old disempowered woman in Doudoulcy describes her experience with domestic violence, stating, "I married twice. In my first marriage at the age of 25, I was beaten and forcibly handed over to an old man whose age was not far from a hundred...this old man had 10 women and I was the 9th of his wives. This marriage made me sad because I did not love him. It lasted only 10 years, when he gave up his soul. It was then that I fled the village to meet my second husband at the market of Kordié. This one was nice. He bred big and small ruminants and engaged in trade. I was the first wife of 3 of this gentleman. I spent 50 years happily married before he died."

Nutrition

Input in reproductive health decisions, IYCF decision, food consumption generally and while pregnant/breastfeeding, purchasing decisions for medicine and food.

According to the community profile, malnutrition is not a problem in Doudoulcy. Community health workers have taught community members about the importance of eating nutritious and varied foods. Men and women have equal access to food and drinking water. On the other hand, since June 2016, all pregnant women and children under the age of 5 can access health care free of charge, but men cannot.

Diets have not changed significantly over the past decade. There are no governmental organizations or programs available to the people in Doudoulcy who may suffer from hunger and/or malnutrition.

Community members walk or bicycle to the hospital for most health services. However, they may travel by motorcycle for a consultation for a sick woman. Women generally pay in cash for consultations when they are sick and for family planning services. The State provides free prenatal and postnatal consultations, childbirth care, consultations for sick children, monitoring children's growth, immunizations, and micronutrient supplementation for children under five. As with Didyr, when there are stock outages for drugs and other services, households are obliged to use money from their own pockets to cover the difference.

In general, men's and women's focus groups concur that women make decisions regarding the prevention of sickness by cleaning the home, maintaining good hygiene, and diversifying meals. However, if a household member is ill, men make final decisions regarding health care expenses.

Men's and women's focus group discussants disagree on who makes contraceptive decisions. While women report that men decide whether or not to use a contraceptive and which method to use, men claim that women make these decisions alone, without the knowledge of their husbands. Neither group is satisfied with how these decisions are made. Women state that decisions about health and pregnancy are not good and they would like this to change because pregnancies are always unexpected. Men assert that they do not want their wives using contraceptives without their consent because this can create misunderstandings among spouses. One man interviewed for the life history explains that spouses should never discuss having children because it is a taboo subject. Women make child feeding decisions alone, but would like men to be more financially involved in dietary decisions.

According to women's focus group participants, the oldest woman in the household decides how household tasks are distributed. Men and women both report that men do not voluntarily help their wives in household chores. However, opinions on this topic vary, with some women saying that an ideal husband would help his wife with chores and others claiming that he would have to be stupid, afraid of his wife, or bewitched to help her with her chores.

Dominique, an empowered man from Doudoulcy shared that he obliges his wives to “respect and follow the advice of health workers. When the children are sick, they are brought to the dispensary despite the distance and the lack of road in the winter.” For food, he manages the granary himself to avoid waste. He adds, “I hope that my children who listen to me and obey me will have a better life. I live a pure peasant life. But I think that my children will improve their living conditions by building roofs in hard and buying modern material goods (car, tractors, motorcycle etc.)”

Discussion and Conclusion

Summary

The following paragraphs summarize the key findings from the results outlined above. As the two communities assessed were quite homogenous in their answers, only where there is an interesting difference between Didyr and Doudoulcy will a difference be mentioned.

- **Production:** Women report that joint decision-making among couples is rare when it comes to agriculture; however, men tend to report making joint decisions with women. Men and women frequently disagree about how to use income. Women perceive themselves to be better at deciding how household income should be spent, arguing that men frequently spend their money on their own needs or desires. In the more rural community of Doudoulcy, joint decision-making is more common than in Didyr.
- **Resources:** While formal laws for land ownership exist, customary laws and customs dominate and result in few women owning land. Laws regarding access to credit and other financial services appear to be the most advanced regarding actual implementation. Many of the participants acknowledged that, compared to women's ownership of other resources, women have more access to credit and financial services.
- **Income:** When asked about interpretation of "decision-making" regarding income, women tend to interpret this as "getting along" or "harmony" within one's household. However, they report that men generally have the last word. While men tend to know everything about their wives' earnings and wealth, women have very little knowledge of their husbands' income and its use. Women reported that the more income earned by the household, the "more understanding" there was between spouses; men on the other hand, didn't feel like the amount of income earned determined the quality of their relationships with their wives. Men do not appreciate a woman who relies on him for everything (they feel a financial burden). Men appreciate when women bring income into the household, but women's contributions do not result in men's desire to give women more power over household decisions. In fact, men want women to contribute income to the household, but do not want them to have a strong say in its use.
- **Leadership:** Participants frequently mentioned savings group membership when discussing leadership concepts, which is expected since most women interviewed are savings group members. Older men and women tend to take on leadership roles outside of their own households more often than younger individuals. Leadership appears to be interpreted as the number of people for which a person is responsible or the number of people who seek an

individual's opinion or counsel; those who are viewed as leaders do not necessarily hold an official leadership position. Women often reference their leadership position in relation to other women; it is not common for women to hold leadership roles in groups of men or in mixed groups of men and women.

- **Workload:** Women reported that men worked about 14 hours a day while women worked 11; they did not estimate or acknowledge as work the time they spent doing household chores, cooking, or caring for children. Both men and women work more during the rainy season when they are planting. Men will migrate during the dry season, leaving women at home to work in their own income-generating activities, such as producing dolo, a local beer. For some households, children's domestic roles and support in agricultural activities will often constrain a child's ability to participate in school. This is something that both men and women tend to lament.
- **Mobility:** Women either ask permission or inform their husbands of their intent to travel somewhere when they need or desire to travel outside of the household compound. While women tend to be able to travel independently to many places such as health centers and savings group meetings, both men and women confirm women seek permission from their husbands in most cases. Sacred places are never visited by women (which either literally or superstitiously could result in death). Women state that there is increasing openness about women's mobility, which they attribute to the growing prevalence of savings groups. However, even when women in rural communities are permitted to travel, they still face restricted mobility due to their limited transportation options. These generally include traveling on foot, bicycle, being transported by their husbands on motorcycle (rarely by car), or by bus.
- **Mutual respect:** Both women and men believe women are and should be submissive to their husbands. While women must respect their husbands, there is little reference to men respecting their wives. In fact, there is a perceived danger to a man simply for helping his wife. While women and others might interpret this as a husband "caring" for his wife, some people interpret this as a man being weak or even bewitched by his wife. Both men and women perpetuate this belief and norm.
- **Individual empowerment:** Individual empowerment is generally explained in economic or self-efficacy terminology. Women use words such as "autonomous" and "emancipated" to describe an empowered woman. Men and women both perceive empowerment as their ability to finance their basic needs. Women mentioned their role in their savings group as contributing substantially to both changing norms regarding women's ability to contribute to household income as well as their own empowerment.

- **Domestic violence:** While there was very little mention of physical violence, verbal abuse is quite common, but has decreased over time. However, Freedom from Hunger has collected other data among similar populations in Burkina, which suggests that the prevalence of domestic violence is common.²³ In the quantitative baseline report for this project²⁴, approximately 50 percent of women reported “fearing” their spouse in the prior year and agreed or strongly agreed that a woman must tolerate violence to maintain stability in the family.
- **Nutrition and reproductive health:** Malnutrition affects women more than men as women will do anything to buffer their children from food insecurity and hunger. Men tend to have access to more meat than women due to their greater financial means. Women tend to make most decisions related to how to respond to sickness, household hygiene, and diversifying the diet. The oldest woman or wife in the household also tends to play an important role in decisions related to distribution of food across the multiple wives’ individual households. Regarding family planning, there is both disagreement and dissatisfaction from men and women alike in how decisions are made or not made. Pregnancies are always perceived as unexpected and discussing family planning is considered taboo.

Implications for quantitative methods

Due to timing, the qualitative information did not affect how we conducted the quantitative survey. However, the nuanced information generated by collecting qualitative data will be invaluable in interpreting the results of the survey data for both the baseline and endline quantitative data. While more consideration of how the qualitative assists in our ability to interpret the quantitative data will be covered in the quantitative report, a few initial considerations are noted here:

- The index associated with A-WEAI indicates very few men and women are scored as “disempowered”; in fact, more than 90% of men—and women—are empowered. This index appears to contradict what is captured in this qualitative report. Women appear to be quite disempowered relative to men.
- Membership (leadership) in community groups is high for both men and women, and all of the women interviewed with the WEAI modules for this assessment were members of savings groups. This may skew the results to suggest that there is more empowerment than exists. Given this assessment did not capture people who were not savings groups members, it is likely that this population is more empowered relative to those not in savings groups, but within this population, women are not nearly as empowered as men, as the quantitative index suggests.
- When evaluating individual decision-making regarding key production or income decisions or mobility, we find that approximately half of the women respondents report someone else

makes the decision without her input. For example, while 44 percent of women report either she makes the decision alone or jointly with someone else (most likely her spouse), more than 50 percent reported someone else makes the decision.

- The quantitative data appears to capture time use better than the qualitative data presented here and this may be due to women not capturing their time spent on household chores and caretaking. In fact, men report very little time spent on caretaking while women consistently reported it.
- Similarly, the quantitative data appears to capture attitudes toward domestic violence more clearly than the qualitative: women tend to believe hitting or abuse is justified more often than men (and two times as often, in many cases). For example, 62 percent of men report that a man is never justified in hitting his wife, but only 30 percent of women report that a man is never justified. In the focus group discussions, on the other hand, participants mostly mentioned verbal abuse.
- The quantitative data indicates that women are more likely to be responsible for loan payments associated with formal and informal lenders relative to men. This may be due to the influx of financial products developed specifically for women such as savings groups and village banks. The qualitative data validates this finding given the recognition of good implementation of laws regarding access to financial services and by the simple fact that all women in this sample (treatment and control) belong to a women's savings group.

Implications for the Building Resilience in Burkina Faso Project

To facilitate discussion regarding the utility of the qualitative data for informing the BRB project, the project activities are listed below along with commentary resulting from this assessment:

- **Agriculture extension agent training:** The qualitative data suggests that village chiefs or leaders are either consulted or have an important role in land use as well as what is planted within the village. It is not clear to what degree agriculture extension agents engage with these leaders as a way to share important agricultural information versus an agent visiting individual households, which may challenge community norms. This is, however, covered in the gender dialogues for the BRB project. This is something to consider in future research.
- **Education:** Given that women tend to take a consultative role in decision-making, at best, any education provided, whether for health, agriculture, financial services, should also be provided to men to ensure greater impact of that education. This becomes clear as one assesses both the quantitative and qualitative data and recognizes that new information needs to be

delivered to men and women alike. It is important to explore delivery mechanisms for education: what messages should be delivered to men and women jointly, men alone, women alone. Given that polygamous households are prevalent in this sample, it will also be important to consider the role of the oldest wife since the qualitative highlights her particular role in food distribution across the multiple wives and their children.

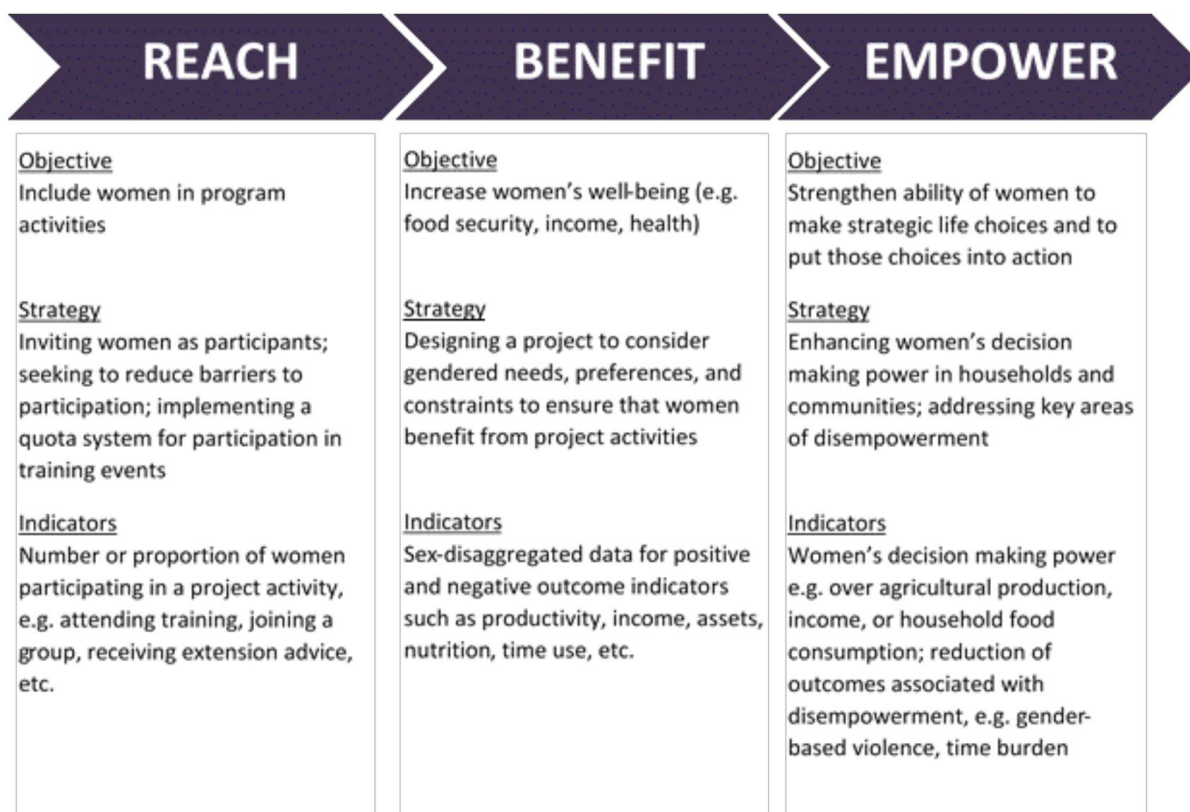
- **Agriculture finance:** The quantitative data, which is not shown in this report, suggests that women are generally responsible for taking credit from both formal and informal sources. This may be one area where women have more access to financial services than men given the recent drive of local and international organizations to develop savings groups and financial services for women. Or, this could reflect something else, such as men's preferences to not manage their own credit responsibilities. This is something to consider for future research. It is also important to break down who is responsible for *taking* the credit as well as *paying* the credit, since this may not be the same person. This could result in women carrying the credit burden for the households, which is not being captured in either the qualitative or quantitative data.
- **Gender dialogues:** Empowered women are often described as "emancipated" or liberated; free from social restrictions. But this emancipation within the context of marriage is not favorable. People assume the husband is weak and that his wife is not submissive to her husband, which is a value described even among some "empowered" women. Men and women both appear "trapped" in this cyclical argument that neither can escape. Gender dialogues should attempt to tackle this trap to seek common understandings of the benefits of a woman's economic empowerment and increased decision-making power.
- **Formation of new savings groups:** Local concepts of empowerment are steeped in economic language –the ability of a person to take care of one's needs. This is the same for men and women. Women appear to be gaining significantly from their savings group membership as this membership requires negotiations around mobility, income use, savings use, etc. It would be interesting and important to analyze communities where savings groups do not exist or are not prevalent to understand whether the language used by women in this report is similar to women who do not participate in savings groups. Research conducted by Grameen in Rajasthan²⁵ on a similar project found a striking difference in the language used by men and women between communities that had self-help groups (SHGs; made up of women who save and lend to each other) and those that didn't. Men from SHG-communities were much more appreciative of their wives' skills and saw their wives more as partners in decisions compared to men from non-SHG communities, who voiced a preference for being the only decision-makers and were also more prone to justify domestic violence.

The key informant interviews with project staff suggest that the project is achieving outcomes outlined in the theory of change. At first, many women were reluctant to join savings groups, but after a few groups were established, all women were happy to join. According to some women, their husbands did not want them to participate in the project at first, but became supportive after observing the positive impacts of the project. Overall, the staff observe that women who participated in the project are more financially independent, speak freely in public, are more resilient, and are more socially connected with other women in their community. They also report improvements in men's respect for women, which is likely a result of both gender dialogues and women's increased contributions to family expenses.

Gender dialogues brought men and women together to discuss issues in their communities and identify solutions. Through trainings, women learned techniques to improve production and conservation of cowpeas, sesame, and peanuts. Despite insufficient rainfall in 2016, the staff report that many women plan to conserve their crops for consumption or resale during June to August when prices are more than three times higher than prices in December. In addition, some women learned how to store good hay to fatten animals that they purchased with loans. These animals will be resold three months later for three to four times the purchase price. These increases in income, combined with loans and diversification of income-generating activities, will enhance women's ability to cope with shocks. The project staff also identified areas for improvement such as increasing the involvement of men in project activities and addressing women's need for clean and accessible drinking water.

Reach, Benefit, and Empower

In a GAAP2 publication²⁶, Johnson et al. (2017) propose a simple schematic to differentiate between approaches that seek to reach women as participants, those that aim to benefit women, and those that empower women. They posit, "Simply reaching women does not ensure that they will benefit from a project, and even if women benefit (e.g. from increased income or better nutrition), that does not ensure that they will be empowered (e.g. in control over that income or making choices of foods for their households). The graphic below highlights the differences between these approaches with proposed indicators to demonstrate the differences.



Graphic Source: Sophie Thies y Ruth Mienzen-Dick. 2016. Reach, benefit, empower: Clarifying gender strategies of development projects. Washington, DC.: IFPRI <http://www.ifpri.org/blog/reach-benefit-or-empower-clarifying-gender-strategies-development-projects>

With this schematic in mind and the findings from this qualitative study, we try to place the BRB project within this framework. First of all, *the BRB project intentionally reaches women with savings groups*, which have been designed specifically for women. As has been mentioned, these groups typically exclude men by design: men tend to not appreciate group-based financial services and given savings groups are often used to deliver education geared towards women (such as women's health, nutrition, etc.), men will opt out. However, other Freedom from Hunger experiences in Burkina Faso²⁷ have also found that the exclusion of men can often inhibit participation by women. When men are offered membership in their own savings groups (even if they decline), they are also more open to their wives participating in their own groups. The extension services are also designed to intentionally target women with agricultural extension agent support for crops women grow and harvest. Since the endline for this project is underway, *it is premature to state whether this project has benefited women*. However, given that our approach is designed to benefit women directly, we anticipate improvements in their agricultural production and knowledge and behaviors related to agriculture and nutrition. *The qualitative data presented here highlight the challenges a project like BRB faces in empowering women*. Both men and women perpetuate social norms that limit women's decision-making power. It is our hope that the gender dialogues implemented in this project will establish the groundwork for further approaches designed specifically to increase women's decision-making power

over income use, land use, time use, and decisions regarding food production and consumption. Savings groups alone appear to be an important foundation upon which women start to gain more empowerment given the increase in mobility in order to attend meetings, the opportunities gained in leadership skills, and the financial contributions she is able to make to her household.

Conclusion

This qualitative research provided concrete examples of the ways in which women in Didyr and Doudoulcy are empowered and disempowered. It suggests that savings groups have improved the mobility, financial independence, leadership skills, and resilience of women in these communities. The results also shed light on the extent to which women must request permission from their husbands before making decisions or participating in activities. It is evident that, although spouses may discuss certain decisions, men almost always have the final say. These findings make it apparent that any project aiming to benefit and empower women in this area must also influence men. When women do not use services or participate in projects, we often find that it is due to intra-household disagreements. If a woman's husband is not supportive, she must either risk hiding her participation in a project or not participate at all. Either way, if men resist women's participation in savings groups, the impact of a project will be limited. Even worse, introducing savings groups could unintentionally increase tensions between spouses. We can mitigate this risk by engaging with men to ensure that they understand the benefits of the project for women and their households. If we only assess women's needs and preferences within the context of a women's savings group, then we can only address a small piece of the picture. We must also understand how each woman operates within her household and her community in order to have a lasting impact on her quality of life.

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