How do women’s empowerment metrics measure up?: a cross metric analysis.

Abstract: Hunger and undernutrition disproportionately affect women, and recent research has identified women’s empowerment as a critical factor for nutritional outcomes (UN Women 2012, Herforth & Harris 2014, Kadiyala et al., 2014, Malapit et al, 2015, Narayanan et al., 2019). Despite this widespread interest, the ways to measure empowerment as it relates to nutrition remain unclear. A variety of empowerment metrics are widely used, yet we know little about the strengths and weaknesses of the many options being employed to track empowerment in nutrition projects and programs. Using data from northern Kenya, we compare four commonly used empowerment metrics: The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index, The Women’s Empowerment in Nutrition Index, The Women’s Empowerment in Livestock Index, and The Survey Based Women’s Empowerment Index. We examine the performance of widely used empowerment metrics and provide careful empirical analysis and guidance on the tradeoffs across metrics to inform practitioner, researcher, and policymaker decisions.