

5 Intersectionality at the gender–agriculture nexus

Relational life histories and additive sex-disaggregated indices

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Introduction

The gender–agriculture nexus is often understood in gender and development studies through differentiating women’s and men’s labor and decision-making roles, gendered perceptions and participation, e.g., in resource user groups. Gender research has widely recognized that “women” and “men” differ in regard to their age, land ownership, ethnicity and other social and economic factors. However, approaches to further differentiate sex-disaggregated data, both collected through quantitative and qualitative methods, are often only additive through multiple categories, which has not fully incorporated a thorough understanding of “intersectionality.” Instead, we understand intersectionality as “challenging ideas of difference that rely on fixed identities” (Nightingale, 2011). We argue that intersectional theory has two purposes in regard to the gender–agriculture nexus: firstly, intersectional theory deconstructs boundaries of gender and other social differences and draws attention to how the boundaries of particular gender categories are shifting in both time and space. Secondly, it situates gender construction in specific sociocultural contexts produced by power relations within households and communities or the state. Hence, engaging with intersectional theory is a de-hierarchizing approach and examines power relations that produce gendered subjectivities in particular contexts. Furthermore, intersectionality is useful to break down a number of assumptions about female and male farmers.

Our objective is to critically examine the role of intersectionality in research on the gender–agriculture nexus and the limitations of solely sex-disaggregated data collection. For this purpose, we link and compare qualitatively collected interview data and relational life histories of eight women with their responses and results of the sex-disaggregated quantitative survey, the abbreviated version of the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (A-WEAI). Based on a binary understanding of gender, the A-WEAI has proved a powerful tool to raise awareness on gender in agriculture in international development discourses. However, being non-intersectional, assumptions on women in opposition to men can generalize on complex intersectionalities. If indices are used to compare gender data and the level of empowerment nationally or internationally, donors’ decisions to allocate project funds to promote gender in research and

development projects could be influenced and based on incomplete data and neglecting local meanings of empowerment. In our case study, a highly poverty-driven region in the Far Western Nepal hills, women were shown as empowered in decision-making, group membership, access to resources, and access to credit according to the index. As part of a broader qualitative fieldwork with index respondents in the region, we conducted both the A-WEAI questionnaire and relational life histories, observations and focus group discussions with several female farmers to demonstrate the value and greater validity of an intersectional approach that shows different results than the A-WEAI.

In this chapter, we will first review the emergence and importance of intersectionality as a feminist theoretical intervention. Second, we will reflect on studies on the gender and agriculture nexus and how these relate to intersectionality. Third, with a case study, we will illustrate the importance of intersectional understandings in regard to group membership, labor burden, control over land and water resources and decision making at the household level. We will do so by reflecting on four themes: (i) caste, class and inter-household relations; (ii) age, intra-household position and household composition; (iii) migration, 'female-headed households' and group membership; (iv) time and seasonality.

We will conclude with how to move forward with intersectionality research on the gender- agriculture nexus.

Intersectionality

One feminist theoretical intervention that proves useful in moving forward our thinking about gender and agriculture is the evolving theoretical and political work on intersectionality. Intersectionality focuses on "the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, nation, and other inequalities" (Lykke, 2010). Intersectionality emerged from the confluence of scholarship on feminist scholarship and critical race studies in the U.S. with a focus on the legal discrimination against African American women. Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), drawing on a long history of scholarship and activism by African American women, used the term to show how black women were discriminated against for both their race and gender and that the two categories could not be analyzed separately but involved complex and dynamic social relations. Patricia Hill Collins (2015, p. 2) writes about the definitional dilemmas of intersectionality and describes, "The term intersectionality references the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities." Intersectionality has been taken up by feminist scholars, critical race scholars and many other disciplines as a theory, method and strategy to understand and change overlapping systems of oppression based on race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and gender. Rather than focus on these categories as individual identities and subjectivities, intersectional understandings must emphasize political and structural inequalities (Cho et al., 2013).

While intersectionality has been widely adopted by feminist scholars across a number of contexts, some scholars have raised concerns that we must use

caution and vigilance in uncritically adopting this theory without considering the ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations of the concept (Rodó-de-Zárate and Baylina, 2018). Recently, scholars have also called for looking at cross-border relations in intersectionality rather than focusing on intersectionality only within a domestic setting or nation-state (Patil, 2012). Patil argues that

we need to think of the multiple processes, at different scales, that contribute to the emergence of particular local dynamics having to do with gender. From the perspective of intersectionality, merely reframing these dynamics through the lens of domestic intersectionality will only perpetuate the reification of the local. . . . We need to recenter the notion that there are no locals and globals, only locals in relation to various global processes.

Mollett and Faria (2018) also agree that intersectionality approaches can travel across borders and use the term postcolonial intersectionality to analyze how development processes are tied to patriarchy and race. As we attempt to address issues of gender and agriculture, understanding how interlocking systems of class, race, gender and ethnicity intersect in cross-border dynamics is essential. Building on a range of feminist scholars who have explored intersectionality in relevance to water and forest management, agricultural labor or climate change (Harris, 2008; Arora-Jonsson, 2011; Nightingale, 2011; Rao, 2014; Leder, Clement and Karki, 2017), we revisit the importance of intersectionality in gender and (agricultural) development research as complementary to sex-disaggregated data collection methods.

The gender-and-agriculture nexus

Gender norms, roles and relations needs to be viewed as a highly contextualized, multidimensional processes of which diverse women and men themselves have differing perspectives. Hence, it is important to understand subjectivities and the respective influencing factors in specific contexts. Approaches to understanding gender as a relational and processual concept take social structures and agency into account. Such understandings are crucially underpinning concepts such as empowerment, which define the scope of much gender research and developmental practice.

Different from the often individualized gender and empowerment discourse based on women's decision-making positions, Guérin, Kumar and Agier (2013) point out that women are "not necessarily looking for autonomy and independence from men, but rather for respect within their own community" (also see Basu, 1995; Kabeer, 2001; Cornwall, 2007). During their empirical study on microfinance in Tamil Nadu, they found that many women did not initially understand the term "empowerment," but when they had it explained to them, they defined it in their own words as the ability "to solve problems" and "to manage suffering" (Guérin et al., 2013, p. 80). Some related empowerment to material constraints, while others related it to the freedom of mobility and being respected by their

family. This shows that women perceive their empowerment not as emancipation from male domination but in relation to other women, their husbands, families and communities. Guérin et al. (2013, p. 76) stress the importance of women's relationships with one another: "even where there is solidarity between women, women having agency require or imply domination over other women."

Particularly in the South Asian context, the interaction of multiple factors influencing women's agency needs to be taken into account. These factors include the educational status and land ownership, the influence of which can be ambiguous and needs to be considered in particular contexts. Trommlerová et al. (2015) provide an overview of and add to studies on gender correlates and variables of empowerment. With household-level information and advanced econometric techniques, they measure the correlation between a number of factors with individuals' self-reported ability to induce changes in their lives at both communal and individual levels. Their statistical findings suggest that age, gender, marital status, nationality, economic activity, health, self-reported capabilities and communal empowerment determine empowerment at both levels, suggesting that these findings may help to develop targeted policies towards gender, age and other social divides. Despite the importance of pointing out the multiple interacting factors with the category "gender," quantitative and additive approaches like this miss further relational and processual perspectives that in-depth qualitative studies can provide. In the following, we show the relevance of qualitative studies and how particular assumptions can be debunked.

Gender and intersectionality in agricultural decision making

The assumption that women's participation in agricultural decision-making bodies and grassroots organizations is always empowering or leads to better political outcomes has been rejected by a range of scholars on the basis that the category of women needs to be unpacked – as women benefit differently and some women might benefit more than others (Zwarteveen and Neupane, 1996; Agarwal, 2001; Leder et al., 2017; Arora-Jonsson, 2013). Joshi (2014), based on a study of water inequalities in Darjeeling, states that women in positions of power are as affected as men by political coercion structured by gender, class, ethnicity and other social divides, which influence context-specific cultural norms. Women experience a structural and symbolic relation with environmental resources derived from a "universal patriarchy" (Molyneux, 2001), but this relationship is crosscut by ethnicity, class, color, race and religion and evolves spatially and temporarily, leading to varying experiences. "Individual needs and priorities take precedence in the lives of women in political positions" (Joshi, 2014, p. 252), leading them to be unable or unwilling to address the complexity of water injustices in politics and in terms of a water crisis. Joshi (2014) outlines challenges to a politics of solidarity among diverse groups of women with differing needs, challenges and individual priorities. She argues that simplifying complex realities depoliticizes social hierarchies and inequalities (p. 253). Her study demonstrates how politics, ethnicity, class and religion interfere with an expected solidarity among women.

She argues for viewing gender as relational identity and not as social difference. This means that a homogeneous perspective on women may exclude marginalized women (e.g., Dalits) and may not lead to the change expected.

Agricultural development interventions, such as climate and water security interventions in Nepal, have been found to use the term “women’s empowerment” apolitically and technically framed, failing to understand complex intersectional inequalities (Leder, 2017; Leder et al., 2017). Interventions that included “women” in decision making led to some women benefiting more than others, as differences between women such as age, marital status, caste, remittance flow and land ownership disadvantaged some women to participate. Focusing on inter-household relations within communities, as well as intra-household relations, could help to update the understanding of women’s empowerment in line with current feminist understandings of it as a processual, relational, and multi-dimensional concept (Leder et al., 2017).

Interestingly, Zwartveen and Neupane (1996) brought evidence that non-participation in decision-making processes can actually give women a covertly powerful position in relation to their access to water resources. Their gender analysis of the Chhattis Mauja scheme in Nepal empirically shows that women, despite being excluded from the management of the scheme’s organization, can have a strong agency and access to resources despite non-participation in the water user group. Such an understanding is further related to other concepts in gender and development research, such as Kandiyoti’s (1988) “patriarchal bargains” and Sen’s (1990) “cooperative conflicts.”

Gender, intersectionality and agricultural labor

Workforce participation is hardly the determining factor of women’s agency and well-being (Rao, 2014). Rao conducted a household survey and in-depth interviews in rural Tamil Nadu, which provided evidence that the nature and social valuation of women’s work influences women’s agency. Other factors were also identified as important influences, such as age and stage in life cycle (e.g., own and children’s marital status), reproductive success (especially by the birth of a boy) and caste and economic status. Women’s reproductive work (motherhood, educational status and marital status of a son) can have a strong impact on agency. For example, the social position of a young wife changes if she gives birth to a son by “gaining recognition . . . maintaining an image as a good woman, wife, and mother” (Rao, 2014, p. 11). This can lead to greater agency within the family on issues of education and health care of their children. Because masculine and feminine identities are constructed through different values, “men face social pressures to earn and provide, women face pressures to reproduce – in particular, to produce sons” (Rao, 2014, p. 12). Although this study was not conducted in the agricultural sector, it highlights the separate spheres of productive and reproductive space, in which decision making is relevant. Lundberg and Pollak (1993) also identify these separate spheres in a bargaining model used in marriages (Kandiyoti, 1988), which includes a non-cooperative equilibrium that

reflects traditional gender roles. This understanding may be differently important in the agricultural context, where the productive and reproductive spheres are not as separated. For example, involvement in agriculture, depending on the type of work and access to land, can contribute to family nutrition. The type of work being done also influences the perception of it as drudgery or work burden, even if there is an increase in self-worth that results from contributing to the family's income (Rao, 2014, p. 4).

Conceptualizations of empowerment are relational (see examples in Figure 5.1), while operationalizations require measurable – usually individual-based – approaches to empowerment. Qualitative data often points out to the relational ties diverse women have with each other or within their households and communities as these are embedded in power relations (Kandiyoti, 1988; Rowlands, 1998; Jackson, 2013; Guérin et al., 2013; Rao, 2017). Quantitative approaches aim at giving clear visibility on women's role within agriculture across contexts (Longwe, 1995; Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005; Alkire et al., 2013).

Quantifying gender empowerment in agriculture through sex-disaggregated data

Intersectional approaches to decision making, group membership and labor may help diversify operationalizations of empowerment in the form of measuring individual decision making, the participation in groups and gendered labor divisions. Recognizing the lack of measurements and quantifications of empowerment in agriculture, Alkire et al. (2013) developed the Women's Empowerment in

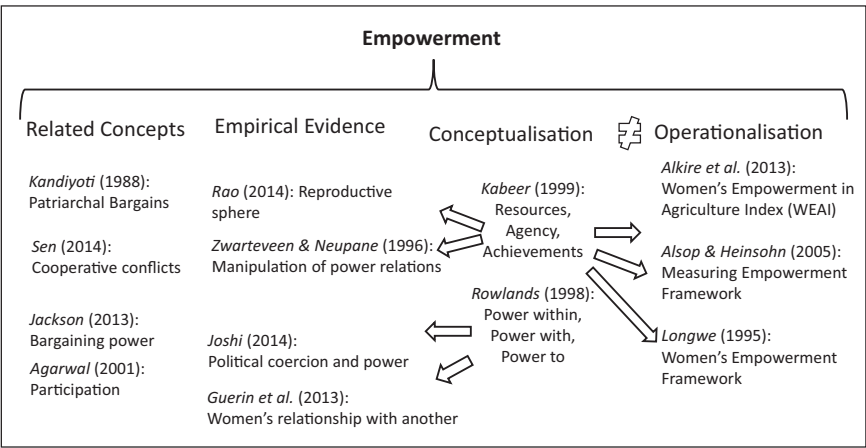


Figure 5.1 Relational conceptualizations and individualized operationalizations of gender and empowerment in agriculture

Source: own draft

Agriculture Index (WEAI). To quantify women’s inclusion in the agricultural sector, the index measures five domains of women’s empowerment relative to men: (1) decisions about agricultural production; (2) access to and decision-making power about productive resources; (3) control of use of income; (4) leadership in the community; and (5) time allocation. The WEAI questionnaire weighs answers on ten indicators according to the “adequate autonomy” (Alkire et al., 2013, p. 74) of women and produces a relative score that shows women’s participation in decision making. If a woman reaches “adequacy” in 80% or more of the weighted indicators, she is empowered. The authors measure “agency,” as defined by Kabeer (1999), while this score provides a situational and static quantification of empowerment from an economic perspective that may overshadow complex power relations within a particular context.

Feminist scholars have argued that Kabeer’s definition of empowerment needs to be analyzed as a process and in its relation to resources and achievements (Leder et al., 2017; O’Hara and Clement, 2018). Particularly, social and human resources can play a great role in creating agency and may lead to different forms of empowerment that cannot be grasped by scoring decision making based on resources, production, income or representation in community groups. For example, not working or contributing to the household economically can be a choice and does not necessarily demonstrate disempowerment. Quantitative assessments on how time is spent (WEAI domain 5) could therefore be easily misinterpreted. Cornwall (2007) addresses empowerment and choice in the context of uncovering “gender myths”:

Seeing poor women as individuals who pursue entirely independent and goal-oriented strategies, as is often the case in discourses on “empowerment” and “choice” in development, is to deny the complexities of their relational ties and the contingencies of lived experience.

(Cornwall, 2007, p. 158)

The WEAI labels women as either “disempowered” or “empowered,” which can lead to their depiction as “victims” or “heroes.” Furthermore, women who are the heads of households have scores that would indicate that they are “empowered” because they make all of the household decisions; however, they may have limited choices and feel strongly overburdened in their role as sole decision makers. Nevertheless, a simplified score may prove helpful in raising awareness of women’s empowerment in international development discourses. To understand the cases in their respective contexts, however, in-depth gender analyses are necessary.

Methods

To critically examine the role of intersectionality in research on the gender–agriculture nexus, we compare sex-disaggregated quantitative survey data with evidence from qualitative social science methods collected from the same respondents. The study was set in two villages in Far West Nepal (Figure 5.2), a

Field sites in Doti and Dadeldhura districts, Far West of Nepal

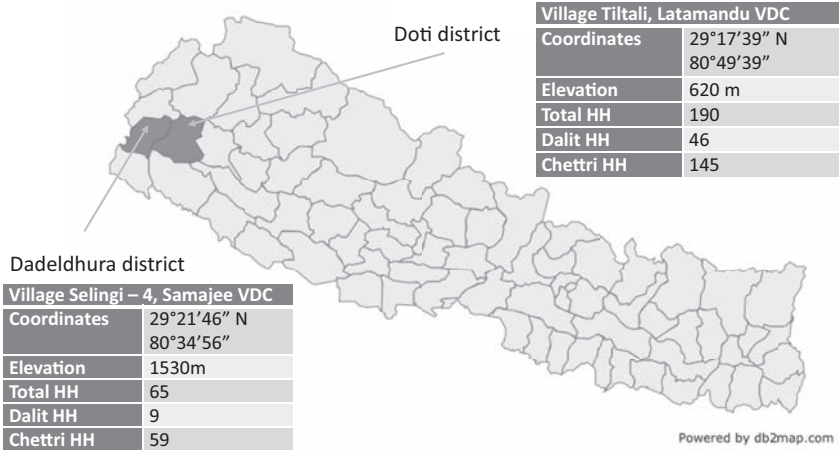


Figure 5.2 Location of two case study villages in Far West Nepal

region marked by a high rate of long-term male out-migration and a high dependence on remittances to manage household expenses. Specifically, we focused on eight households in particular. Based on in-depth interviews and life histories with women of the households, as well as participatory research methods such as transect walks, we aimed at gaining a deeper understanding about gender relations in agricultural practices and decision making. We conducted the A-WEAI for each household, and before reporting and discussing their individual results in visually guided focus group discussions with the respondents of each village, we collected, discussed and rated local notions of empowerment (Figure 5.3). For this purpose, women drew and wrote empowering factors they suggested on cards, and after discussing examples from their own experience, every participants received three stones to put on those factors they perceived most empowering for themselves. We also asked for each participants' self-assessment of A-WEAI dimensions after discussing with them their individual responses. Eventually, we linked the qualitatively collected data to the individual's questionnaire responses to the abbreviated version of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (A-WEAI). This offered a critical perspective on the role of intersectionality, as well as the limitations of sex-disaggregated data collection.

Results

Throughout our study, we identified a number of both conceptual and methodological challenges in regard to the validity of solely sex-disaggregated data and the value of intersectionality.

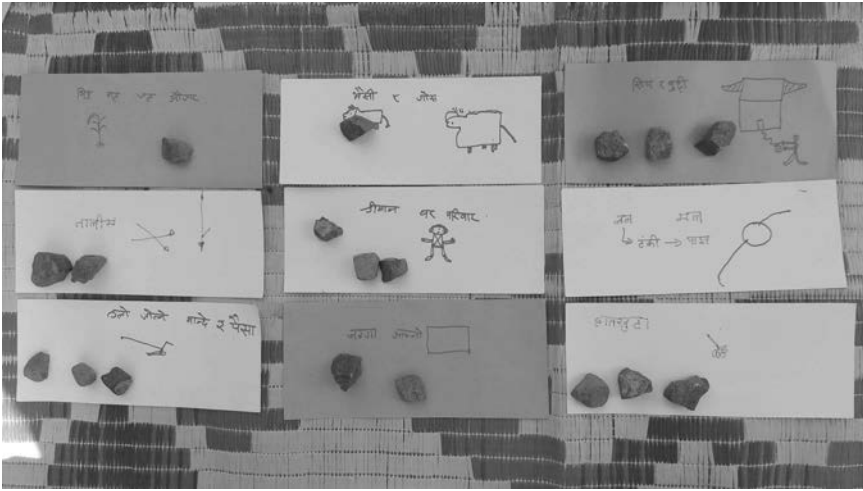


Figure 5.3 Participatory focus group discussion method on respondents' self-perception on empowering factors in agriculture. Five participants drew and wrote empowering factors on cards, and then selected the three most important factors for themselves by laying stones on the respective card

First, individual decision-making abilities are not necessarily considered empowering due to cultural norms and of viewing families as co-operative units. There was a tendency that Dalit women and female household heads were empowered in decision-making in their family according to the A-WEAI, but despite high decision-making power due to less restrictive cultural norms than in high castes or the absence of men. However, they are amongst the most marginalized in the community, with little access to natural resources or influence at the community level (Leder et al., 2017). Apart from that, powerful female leaders can also contribute to the disempowerment of other women, and hence, their success in decision making can reflect negative or “false” empowerment in developmental terms. This is particular common for elderly women with sufficient landholdings, earning sons or powerful husbands, who might overpower daughters-in-law.

Second, women's empowerment is highly relational to intra- and inter-household relations, which are not captured in the A-WEAI. Daughters-in-law of economically better-off Chettri households felt more empowered despite having less decision-making power in their joint families, as it is not culturally desired to be decision makers in their position. Political bonds to more powerful households within the village can be an advantage, too. This demonstrates the need to contextualize survey findings to avoid misinterpretations because of excluding inter- and intra-household power relations. This is even more important in contexts marked by male emigration and caste hierarchies. Relying on A-WEAI data to identify gender relations in agriculture across regions could misrepresent more marginalized women within joint households as empowered.

Third, diverse women attach diverse and different meanings to indicators that they intent to measure. This became particularly clear in regard to control over resources, such as land. In participatory focus group discussion on respondents' self-perception on empowering factors in agriculture (Figure 5.2), women differentiated between land access and land ownership, some considering family land as their land while others stated they only have the ownership if they have the document in their name. The self-assessment of A-WEAI dimensions, the in-depth interviews and the life histories indicated that the A-WEAI as a quantitative tool does not capture women's diverse notions of land ownership. Furthermore, the ownership of livestock, which is considered an "asset" in the A-WEAI, is not necessarily perceived so locally, as women stated to spend a significant amount of time cutting grass and taking care of them without sufficient financial returns when they sell livestock for income. This contradicts the assumption that livestock is a desirable asset per se that leads to empowerment.

Finally, empowering factors identified by women such as mental and labor support by their families and access to land ownership papers were not included in the survey. Similarly, local notions on empowered women (*shashaktikaran* in Nepali) included their ability to help others in agriculture and advise them on crops and cultivation methods: "They can tell us what to grow and how much to plant." These local perceptions on meaningful support through the sharing of knowledge and skills within households and communities are not captured in indices.

These results shed light on the limitation of solely focusing on sex-disaggregated data and the necessity of complementing those with qualitative studies on contextualized gender values and intersectionality. In the following, we highlight how intersectionality is a fundamental approach to apply when aiming to understand gender relations and empowerment in agriculture. We will examine this in regard to (i) caste, class and inter-household relations; (ii) age, intra-household position and household composition; (iii) migration, "female-headed households" and group membership; and (iv) time and seasonality.

There is a great need to contextualize survey findings of the A-WEAI (Figure 5.4) to avoid misinterpretations because of the exclusion of inter- and intra-household relations of power. This is even more important in contexts marked by male emigration and caste hierarchies, as this was highly prevalent in our two case study sites.

Caste, class and inter-household relations

There was a tendency that Dalit women and female household heads were empowered according to the A-WEAI, but despite high decision-making power due to less restrictive cultural norms than in high castes or the absence of men, they are often amongst the most marginalized within a community. In contrast, daughters-in-law of economically better-off Chettri households felt more empowered despite having less decision-making power in their families, as it is not culturally desired to be decision makers in their position. Hence, cultural norms and power relations in communities lead to diverse gendered relations.

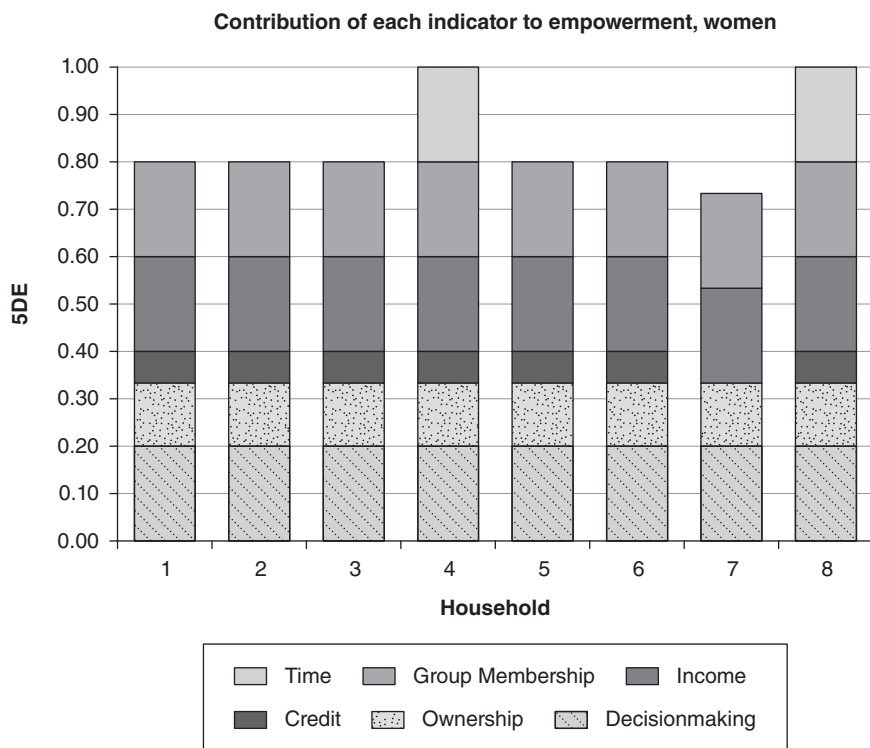


Figure 5.4 WEAI results of 8 women in households in our case study villages: Only household 7 was considered disempowered without reaching the threshold of 80%, as the female respondent was disempowered in both access to credit and time (labor burden)

The role of caste, class and inter-household relations became very apparent in the case of one of our landless Dalit research participants. According to the A-WEAI, Hira was empowered in all domains of the A-WEAI, except time. This was due to her having to work hard to ensure her two daughters and a son could attend school. Her husband has out-migrated to Malaysia and had not sent any remittances. In fact, she has not heard from him, and she felt burdened having to care alone for her children. Her eldest daughter lost her right hand's functionality during a recent accident, and she had no means to pay for medical bills. When we shared her A-WEAI results with her, she was surprised to see herself categorized as an empowered woman. As an agricultural wage laborer, she is dependent on landowning households for her family's food security. Going through the domains, she agreed that she was the one to make decisions and represent the household and that she feels empowered in these categories. However, as the tool does not contextualize the data and considers the respondents

as individuals, and not as someone with relational ties to her household and the community, her responses to the questionnaire falsely lead to the conclusion that she is empowered in agriculture. Instead, her role within the community is highly ambiguous: as a Dalit, she belongs to the most marginalized groups within the community due to the Hindu caste system, as she cannot touch water sources or food of higher-Hindu-caste families. Nevertheless, she is much more privileged than other Dalits who reside further away from the Hindu community. She has a high-caste Chettri “mother,” who took her under her care and allowed her to stay next to her house. This unique relation ensured her food security during times of monsoonal floods and landslides, by which the other Dalits were much more affected because of their geographical exposure towards the mountain stream. For these reasons, Hira has developed both as an outspoken leader among the Dalits but also as a critically scrutinized woman in the village. These diverse gendered and caste subjectivities of Hira demonstrate how empowerment is complicated and shifting over social spaces. This shows the complexity of empowerment.

Age, intra-household position and composition of households

Gender norms are highly dependent of intra-household relations, and how these influence participation in farmer meetings and resource user group meetings is not adequately captured in the A-WEAI in the context of Nepal. The relationship between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law is particularly important, as the status of a woman rises with the marriage of her son, and even more so, the birth of (male) grandchildren. In return, her higher status can go to the benefit of the daughter-in-law, who has to comply to certain norms on manners and assigned (agricultural and reproductive) labor, which was before the domain of the mother-in-law. Hence, with a daughter-in-law, a mother-in-law has substantially less labor burden as she shares household responsibilities with her daughter-in-law.

In addition, daughters-in-law can be excluded from participating in farmer group meetings and agricultural trainings due to the presence of a mother-in-law. This exclusionary effect on a younger woman due to her mother-in-law participating and representing the household is not captured in the surveys, as only one female per household is interviewed. Furthermore, even if she would attend meetings, she could not participate to maintain cultural norms of respect towards her elder mother-in-law: “If she (the mother-in-law) is here, then I cannot say anything. She participates in trainings and meetings”(. This demonstrates how gender norms and roles in agriculture are shifting over time. While one woman within a household can attend meetings and agricultural trainings, another woman may be unable due to her lower position in the household, as well as time-consuming labor roles she is expected to fulfill. However, this does not necessarily mean that daughters-in-law feel disempowered, as another daughter-in-law shared as part of her life history: “They (in-laws) will tell me what to grow, where to grow. I don’t feel like saying anything. They tell me what to do. I don’t feel bad about it. That is fine. They know better.” This is in line with Bourdieu’s notion

of “doxa,” as gender (and age) inequalities within the household are culturally desired and not questioned.

Similarly, assumptions on the availability of loans for women has to be differentiated from actual control over credit. In several cases, the approval of elder female and male household members is required: “the wife cannot take a loan if the husband refuses to pay (back).” In other instances, females were requested to access loans to deliver the money to the head of the household.

Migration, “female-headed households” and group membership

Women with out-migrated husbands, who do not live with in-laws, (so-called female-headed households), are able to take decisions independently, but they might experience this as a burden rather than a form of empowerment. The A-WEAI scores indicated for one of our respondents in such a situation that she is empowered in decision making based on her position as household head without the presence of in-laws or her husband. However, the loneliness and worries about her son’s health, how to pay back multiple loans for group memberships and her children’s education, as well as her husband’s security abroad are not captured by the A-WEAI. Furthermore, she lacks family support on financial and everyday matters such as child care. As phone calls to her husband are expensive, communication and mental support from him are very limited, and her maternal family lives far away. In fact, mental, financial and labor support by families was listed as empowering factors by women in focus group discussions; however, these relational aspects are not included in the survey.

These insights on women’s positionality within households and families and perceptions about their role as “female household head” demonstrate how decision making and group membership measured by the A-WEAI can be considered a burden and that the measurement of the availability of loans does not necessarily translate into actual access and financial security. There have been a great number of prior development interventions in our study villages, which made every woman a member of at least one or several groups. However, group membership was in most cases token, as these groups were reportedly not functional.

Time and seasonality

The agricultural workload varies not only according to gender, class, caste, age and migration status of the household but also, and most importantly, with the seasons. Hence, it is important to reflect a reported lower workload in the A-WEAI as given at a fixed time of the year, and the data may vary a few weeks later, also across gender. For example, in focus group discussions around the gendered labor burden, perceptions on workload varied among women, as some stated to be burdened, and others felt the current workload was less in comparison to the end of the cropping season. Even more so, at days toward the beginning or the end of a cropping season, the workload of males can be particularly high as they conduct

labor such as plowing and marketing the produce, which often falls under the male domain of work.

Conclusion and outlook

Our findings indicate that understanding cultural norms and power relations in communities is crucial for intervention planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Women's age, caste, marital status, mental and labor support by families, remittance flow and land ownership shape their participation in decision-making processes on agriculture.

The A-WEAI survey results categorized women as empowered, but we found that women's decision-making abilities are highly dependent on the household composition and their position within the household. Female household heads tend to take more decisions due to their husband's absence; however, they often feel burdened and worried by the increased responsibilities of managing the household alone and in particular under climatic stress. Women living in joint families have among themselves power relations, depending on their position, with the mother-in-law having greater influence and authority as compared to the daughter-in-law.

As Sultana (2015) concluded on her women's perception of empowerment in Bangladesh, there is a need to "move beyond seeing women as victims or heroines, and engage with their everyday realities . . . to do more than give individual women economic opportunities . . . to tackle deeper-rooted structural constraints that perpetuate inequalities."

Gender indices like the A-WEAI data can raise awareness of the importance of gender in agriculture in international discourses. In order to identify specific gender-sensitive interventions, intersectional approaches are necessary to ensure the inclusion of diverse marginalized women.

In the context of agricultural research and development projects with community engagement, we identified a risk to reproduce or even exacerbate existing gendered inequalities and further marginalize female-headed households, Dalit women and young daughters-in-law through engaging primarily with already empowered community members. Therefore, the category of "women" needs to be further subdivided to ensure that women of different age and caste are represented, that is to ensure the participation of, for example, young mothers and daughters-in-law, time-constraint female household heads as well as Dalits.

Recommendations for development projects on the gender–agriculture nexus

In order to develop a better understanding of various power relations in specific communities, an intersectional feasibility study (see Table 5.1) can be conducted before the implementation of agricultural research or development project and the formation of farmer groups. We identified a need to go beyond technical feasibility surveys to also integrate assessment of social inequalities and in particular

how multiple social markers intersect to shape access to natural resources within local communities. Since the influential households tend to dominate the decision-making process (even those who are not farming themselves), a participatory empowerment ranking exercise with the community members will help identify vulnerable and resource-weak households that should benefit from the project, particularly time-constraint female household heads, Dalits and young daughters-in-law. Including these households helps avoid reproducing existing power relations through project interventions and empowering those further who already hold powerful positions in the community.

We further recommend taking an intersectionality approach to women's empowerment by engaging project staff in planning and monitoring the interventions with diverse representatives of women in terms of age, caste, class and household composition to actively engage with sociocultural and economic divides amongst women (see Table 5.1). To encourage active participation of often marginalized groups such as female household heads, young female farmers and marginalized Dalit women, additional time and capacity building of project staff is necessary. For many project staff, we suspect that gender and caste are simply categories for reporting rather than markers of social inequalities that should be addressed in diverse ways to ensure wider benefits from interventions. Efforts must be made to actively engage representatives in the discussion process on new interventions, e.g., seed distribution or water tap installation, to cater to their diverse needs. Therefore, the local staff must be encouraged through participatory intervention processes to use the community's diverse knowledge for more inclusive approaches.

Agricultural interventions and trainings need to develop beneficiary categories appropriate at the village level, for example with at least three intersecting categories at the gender- caste/class – age nexus (= 8 subgroups) and differently approach different caste/class representatives of:

- Young men (sensitizing for gender issues, involving in programs as they otherwise become future migrants)
- Young daughters-in-law (child care as incentives)
- Female-headed households (adjusting timings and reducing work burden)

Recommendations for research on the gender–agriculture nexus

To examine the degree to which an intersectionality lens is applied in gender–agriculture nexus studies and development practice, we developed a simple tool named the “intersectionality grid” (Table 5.1). We plot common dimensions of social differentiation against sections of a research process (theory/approach, literature review/references, data collection/implementation, data analysis/monitoring, conclusion and recommendations) in which these could be addressed. This grid enables us to identify which dimensions of social differentiation are addressed and whether this is done in an additive (weak) or comprehensive (strong) manner. As some markers of social differentiation are stronger than others, and the type of marker varies as well (e.g., caste is mostly relevant in Hindu

Table 5.1 Intersectionality grid to review the degree of intersectionality applied in research and development practice

	Theory/ Approach	Literature Review/ References	Data Collection/ Imple- mentation	Data Analysis/ Monitoring	Conclusion and Recommen- dations
Socioeconomic dimensions of differentia- tion	Gender	Age	Class	Religion	Caste
	Family composition	Family Position			
Environmental dimensions	Rurality/Urban				
	Landscapes				

communities in South Asia), this grid just gives a first impression on which aspects can be covered. The degree of relationality explored in a study can be in depth by focusing only on the intersectionality between two markers. Hence it is important to review both the extent and quality of intersectional analysis or approach applied.

One can identified four degrees of how intersectionality is conceptionally developed and applied in studies:

- 1 **No intersectionality:** Gender is the only category of difference and findings, are not linked to other possible factors. This runs the risk of essentializing and mispresenting gender as binary, homogeneous categories of women vs. men.
- 2 **Weak, additive intersectionality:** Gender differences are linked to some other social differences such as age or class, and gender sub-categories are developed.
- 3 **Strong, comprehensive intersectionality:** Gender constructions and power relations are analyzed and situated in specific sociocultural contexts, which results in a comprehensive intersectional gender analysis.
- 4 **Full intersectionality:** The production of diverse and gendered subjectivities is explored, notions of gender are embedded in power relations within households and communities, or the state.

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