



Building Resilience in Burkina Faso: Understanding women's empowerment through use of the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI)

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"Since the creation of savings groups, women have emerged that were once in the background because of poverty. An empowered woman is seen by other women as a model. Other women envy and respect her." – BRB participant

Abstract: In 2016, in conjunction with the launch of the *Building the Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in Burkina Faso (BRB)* project, Grameen Foundation conducted an assessment leveraging the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI). After completing the endline pro-WEAI, results suggest that women who participated in the BRB project (treatment group) saw improvements in gender parity but very little change in empowerment; however, their spouses' empowerment visibly improved. In contrast, women in the comparison group experienced improvements in gender parity as well as empowerment, but their spouses saw decreases in empowerment. Despite starting at an empowerment disadvantage at baseline, the treatment group experienced an overall increase in the average number of indicators in which they were classified as adequate while the comparison group saw a decrease in adequacy after controlling for age, sex, and level of education. The research suggests that the BRB intervention may have provided some protection for the treatment group when they faced an economic downturn prior to the endline, indicative of household resilience. Future programming should consider how to meaningfully engage men in savings group formation and access to credit as well as incorporate social norm change activities.

Grameen Foundation

Grameen Foundation USA (Grameen) is a global nonprofit organization that helps the world's poorest people achieve their full potential by providing access to essential financial and agricultural information and services that can transform their lives. In 2016, Grameen and the global nonprofit Freedom from Hunger joined forces under the banner of Grameen Foundation. The integration of the two organizations brings together Grameen's expertise in digital innovation to end poverty and Freedom from Hunger's rich experience providing the world's poorest women with self-help tools to reduce hunger and poverty. Grameen is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with offices in the U.S., Asia, Africa, and Latin America. For more information, please visit www.grameenfoundation.org or follow us on Twitter: @GrameenFdn.

Partners

Grameen's collaborative approach with local partners in Burkina Faso allows for deeper outreach into poor communities to address the needs of vulnerable women and their households. For the Building Resilience in Burkina Faso (BRB) project, Grameen partnered with two local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Office de Développement des Eglises Evangéliques (ODE) and Solidarite et Entraide Mutuelle au Sahel (SEMUS). ODE and SEMUS have a history of savings-led programming to deliver targeted value-added services related to food security and improving health and nutrition. The research documented in this report comes from the research conducted with ODE.

Grameen also partnered with local researchers from Lessokon Sarl in Burkina Faso and research faculty from Brigham Young University based in the United States.



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Executive Summary

In early 2016, in conjunction with the launch of the *Building the Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in Burkina Faso (BRB)* project, Grameen Foundation launched a research effort funded by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) as part of the Gender, Agriculture and Assets Project, Phase Two (GAAP2) to test the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI). The pro-WEAI has 12 indicators that are mapped to three empowerment dimensions: intrinsic agency (power within), instrumental agency (power to), and collective agency (power with).

BRB leveraged women's savings groups as a platform to provide complementary services in nutrition and agricultural education, access to agricultural extension support, linkages to formal agricultural and micro-business financing, and gender dialogues with the aim of improving household resilience. The gender dialogues focused on securing women's access to agricultural land and equipment in pertinent time periods of the year as well as identifying strategies the household could use for lean seasons of the year to ensure adequate and quality dietary consumption.

As part of the BRB evaluation activities conducted between 2016 and 2019, Grameen conducted a baseline and endline assessment using the pro-WEAI in collaboration with Brigham Young University (USA) and Lessokon Sarl (Burkina Faso) researchers. Both BRB savings group members and their spouses were interviewed with the pro-WEAI, which included a treatment and comparison group. The treatment group consisted of savings group members of the Office de Développement des Eglises Evangéliques (ODE), a savings group facilitating organization that participated in the BRB project. The comparison group was comprised of ODE savings group members living in a neighboring province that did not receive the BRB interventions.

Analyses of the pro-WEAI data revealed 38 percent of women in the treatment group achieved empowerment at baseline as well as at the endline; 55 percent of women at baseline achieved gender parity and this increased to 61 percent at endline. In the comparison group, 44 percent of women achieved empowerment at baseline and this increased to 51 percent at endline; 53 percent of women in the comparison group achieved gender parity at baseline and this increased to 65 percent at endline.

Thirty-six (36) percent of men in the treatment group achieved empowerment at baseline and this increased to 47 percent at endline. In the comparison group, 75 percent of men achieved empowerment at baseline and this decreased to 67 percent at endline.

The drivers of empowerment remained the same for both the treatment and comparison groups (for both men and women) between baseline and endline and suggest that household economics contribute most to disempowerment among this population. Among those classified as disempowered, access and decisions on credit and finance, input into productive decisions, autonomy in income were most likely to contribute to disempowerment.

Women were more likely to have adequate empowerment in

- Productive decisions
- Group membership
- Membership in influential groups

Men were more likely to have adequate empowerment in

- Attitudes towards domestic violence
- Control over use of income
- Work balance

While starting at an empowerment disadvantage at baseline and maintaining this disadvantage at endline, participants from the treatment group reported an increase in the average number of empowerment indicators in which they were adequate while the comparison group saw a decrease in average adequacy over time ($p = 0.002$) after controlling for age, sex, and level of education. However, these gains by the treatment group were not substantial enough to result in increased classification as “empowered”.

The BRB impact assessment that was conducted in parallel to the pro-WEAI assessment documented an economic downturn due to drought and poor harvests in the region and found that the comparison group did not bounce back from the downturn in the same manner as the treatment group. Similarly, the pro-WEAI assessment found that men in the comparison group in particular were more negatively affected by this downturn than women. This research suggests that the BRB intervention may have provided some protection for the treatment group, which is indicative of household resilience.

Future programming should explore a more meaningful engagement of men, particularly as it relates to the formation of savings groups access and use of credit as well as incorporate approaches that have been shown to mitigate the risk of and decrease gender-based violence (GBV), including approaches such as gender and community dialogues and approaches that increase intra-household distribution of economic resources and cooperation. Women’s empowerment cannot come at the disempowerment of men. While gender equality assumes women need to “catch up” it is also possible that men can “fall back” to the detriment of women and men alike. Particularly among poor populations, as has been shown here, men are almost equally disempowered.

To understand the influence of a multiple-intervention project designed to influence women’s economic empowerment, the pro-WEAI has been found to be a useful tool for identifying priorities for improving empowerment suggesting a “stay the course” for some already-implemented interventions such as the expansion of agriculture and income-generating activity credit and an expansion of other interventions such as the gender dialogues to take a stronger emphasis on attitudes towards GBV.

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Acronyms

BRB	Building Resilience in Burkina Faso Project
FCFA	Franc Communauté Financière Africaine (currency used in Burkina Faso)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FINACOM	Finance Communautaire
GAAP2	Gender, Agriculture and Assets Project, Phase Two
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IGA	Income-Generating Activity
ODE	Office de Développement des Eglises Evangéliques
OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)
PPI	Poverty Probability Index
pro-WEAI	Project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
RCPB	Réseau des Caisses Populaires du Burkina
SEMUS	Association Solidarité et Entraide Mutuelle au Sahel
SGs	Savings Groups
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

Introduction

Background

In early 2016, Grameen Foundation^a launched a 5-year grant received from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) as part of the Gender, Agriculture and Assets Project, Phase Two (GAAP2). Building on GAAP 1, GAAP2 works with several grantees to adapt and validate a measure of women's empowerment for use by agricultural development agencies and project implementers to diagnose key areas of disempowerment, design appropriate strategies to address deficiencies, and monitor projects related to women's empowerment. The new empowerment measure is based on the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)^b developed by IFPRI, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), but has been adapted for project use, thus creating a project-level WEAI, or pro-WEAI.

IFPRI provided grant funding to Grameen to support quantitative and qualitative research activities to pilot and validate the pro-WEAI. The survey was administered to female participants that were also participating in Grameen's accompanying project, *Building the Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in Burkina Faso (BRB)*. The survey was also administered to husbands or male heads of household. The pro-WEAI builds upon the five domains of agriculture in the WEAI - production, resources, income, community leadership, and time use – and tests additional domains such as physical mobility, intra-household relationships, autonomy in decision-making, self-efficacy, life satisfaction,^c attitudes about domestic violence, and nutrition. Results shed light on both the components of empowerment in the rural Burkinabe context as well as changes in empowerment associated with the BRB project.

This paper provides a summary of baseline and endline data from the pro-WEAI, collected under the BRB project. It includes information on the following: background of the BRB project, descriptions of the pro-WEAI methods, results from the pro-WEAI baseline and endline, and the implications of this data for future programming and research.

Building Resilience in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso, a land-locked country in West Africa, is a country that faces constant threats to growth: cycles of short- and long-term droughts, a deteriorating security situation in the regions bordering

^a As of October 2016, Freedom from Hunger combined forces with the Grameen Foundation USA (Grameen). While the BRB Project and the related pro-WEAI research were initiated by Freedom from Hunger, Grameen will be referenced as the organization who initiated, managed, and reported on the pro-WEAI research.

^b WEAI Resource Center. IFPRI. <http://www.ifpri.org/topic/weai-resource-center>

^c To conserve time, Freedom from Hunger did not implement the self-efficacy scale or life satisfaction modules in this assessment, which are now required modules in the final pro-WEAI survey tool and index.

Mali and Niger, high rates of poverty, chronic food insecurity, and a large percentage of the population that relies on subsistence agriculture for their livelihood, among others.¹

Women are disproportionately affected by these threats², but also seen as a key change agent in building resilience³. In Burkina Faso, discriminatory practices towards women are prevalent, despite government commitment and effort to develop policies and frameworks that reduce discrimination.⁴ For example, there are no legal protections in place in Burkina Faso to prevent or discourage domestic violence and there is a high percentage of the population that believes there are even justifications for spousal abuse.⁵ These negative gender-related 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.⁶ These dynamics put women at a particular disadvantage with anticipating, responding to, and recovering from stresses and shocks as their voice, mobility, and capacities are limited.

In 2014, after having worked with local financial service providers on financial inclusion as well as integrated approaches such as *Credit with Education* and *Saving for Change* in Burkina Faso for almost thirty years, Freedom from Hunger developed a multi-sectoral approach to improve household resilience and food security with the three-year initiative called *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 featured 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 savings group members overcome many of the geographic, cultural, social, and economic constraints that hamper their resiliency in the face of shocks and disasters. This is known as a “Savings Groups-Plus” approach. The BRB project aimed to reach 80,000 women through SGs 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 worked 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.
- **Education:** community agents trained by ODE and SEMUS facilitated 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 and micro-business finance:** includes agriculture loans and income-generating activity/livestock loans in addition to group savings and loans accessed through SGs. Originally, these loans were going to be developed in partnership with Réseau des Caisses Populaires du Burkina (RCPB) given their country-wide presence and outreach to rural communities with financial services. However, by the end of the project, ODE's microfinance arm—Finance Communautaire (FINACOM)—also launched similar loan products to fill gaps where RCPB was unable to meet demand. The actual product descriptions are provided in greater detail in the annex.
- **Gender dialogues:** women's empowerment discussions encouraged SG 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 could use for lean seasons of the year to ensure adequate and quality dietary consumption.
- **Formation of new savings groups:** the practice of SGs 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 activities⁷ and to positively impact women's economic, social, and political empowerment.⁸ Working together toward the same financial goal as part of a group that meets regularly creates strong bonds and social capital among members in addition to financial capabilities that contribute to women's empowerment. The BRB project therefore continued to support existing savings groups as well as growing the network of new savings groups.



Savings group members learning planting techniques.
Photo credit: Grameen Foundation

Results from a mixed-methods, longitudinal, quasi-experimental research design⁹ implemented between 2016 and 2018 found that BRB participants experienced improved food security, dietary diversity, self-perceived resilience and sustained savings accumulation despite an economic downturn experienced in 2017 due to a drought and subsequent poor harvests. Women reported increases in the implementation of new income-generating (IGA) activities, earned income, the adoption of climate-smart agricultural techniques and improvements in harvest production as a result of the project interventions. There were mixed outcomes in social norms related to decision-making power, fear of spouse, and confidence in speaking out in mixed-gender forums. Despite the inherent difficulty in measuring changes in resilience, the research supporting the BRB project

suggested a sense of “bouncing back” among the treatment group after the 2017 drought in Burkina Faso compared to the comparison group.

The Project-Level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI)

Empowerment is often expressed in terms of resources, achievements and agency, where resources include access to and future claims to material, human, and social resources; agency is defined in terms of decision-making and negotiation regarding use of financial resources, food, housing, education as well as personal appearance and agency to take care of oneself and others, and achievements in terms of well-being outcomes.¹⁰

The pro-WEAI has 12 indicators that are mapped to three empowerment dimensions of agency: intrinsic agency (power within), instrumental agency (power to), and collective agency (power with). “Power over”, which is often another well-noted dimension of empowerment, is not included in the index because this concept of power suggests that a woman gains power at the expense of men losing power, which can be threatening.¹¹ Table 1 below summarizes the dimensions of empowerment and the associated indicators. A full description, along with the final instrument, can be found elsewhere.¹²

In the calculation of the pro-WEAI index, each respondent is classified as either adequate (=1) or inadequate (=0) in a given indicator with a given threshold. For example, in Table 1 below, under “Ownership of land and other assets” a respondent would be classified as adequate (=1) if they indicated they either solely or jointly owned at least three small assets, OR at least two large assets, OR owned land. Each indicator is equally weighted, and a person is defined as empowered if she or he is empowered in at least nine of 12 indicators, or 75 percent.

The pro-WEAI is then constructed, by aggregating the individual scores into two sub-indices. These indices include the Three Domains of Empowerment Index (known as the 3DE) which carries 90 percent of the weight of the index and the Gender Parity Index (GPI) which carries the remaining weight of 10 percent. The 3DE measures women’s empowerment across three domains of intrinsic agency, instrumental agency, and collective agency. The GPI reflects the percentage of women who are empowered or whose achievements are at least as high as the men in their households. Improvements in either the 3DE or the GPI will improve pro-WEAI scores.

Table 1: Pro-WEAI Domains, Indicators and Adequacy Thresholds

Indicator	Definition of adequacy
<i>Intrinsic Agency</i>	
Autonomy in income	A Relative Autonomy Index (RAI) score is calculated by summing responses to the three vignettes about a person's motivation for how they use income generated from agricultural and non-agricultural activities (yes=1; no=0), using the following weighting scheme: 0 for vignette 1 (no alternative), -2 for vignette 2 (external motivation), -1 for vignette 3 (introjected motivation), and +3 for vignette 4 (autonomous motivation). A person is considered adequate in autonomy of income if they are more motivated by their own values than by coercion or fear of others' disapproval. RAI score > 1.
Self-efficacy ^d	"Agree" or greater on average with self-efficacy questions. They are considered adequate in self-efficacy if their score >=32.
Attitudes about intimate partner violence against women	Believes husband is NOT justified in hitting or beating his wife in all 5 scenarios: 1) She goes out without telling him 2) She neglects the children 3) She argues with him 4) She refuses to have sex with him 5) She burns the food
Respect among household members	Meets ALL of the following conditions related to their spouse, the other respondent, or another household member: 1) Respondent respects relation (MOST of the time) AND 2) Relation respects respondent (MOST of the time) AND 3) Respondent trusts relation (MOST of the time) AND 4) Respondent is comfortable disagreeing with relation (MOST of the time)
<i>Instrumental Agency</i>	
Input in productive decisions	Meets at least ONE of the following conditions for ALL of the agricultural activities they participate in 1) Makes related decision solely, 2) Makes the decision jointly and has at least some input into the decisions 3) Feels could make decision if wanted to (to at least a MEDIUM extent)
Ownership of land and other assets	Owns, either solely or jointly, at least ONE of the following: 1) At least THREE small assets (poultry, non-mechanized equipment, or small consumer durables) 2) At least TWO large assets 3) Land
Access to and decisions on financial services	Meets at least ONE of the following conditions: 1) Belongs to a household that used a source of credit in the past year AND participated in at least ONE sole or joint decision about it 2) Belongs to a household that did not use credit in the past year but could have if wanted to from at least ONE source 3) Has access, solely or jointly, to a financial account

^d This indicator was not included in the BRB pro-WEAI as mentioned in the Methods section.

Control over use of income	Has input in decisions related to how to use BOTH income and output from ALL of the agricultural activities they participate in AND has input in decisions related to income from ALL non-agricultural activities they participate in, unless no decision was made
Work balance	Works less than 10.5 hours per day: Workload = time spent in primary activity + (1/2) time spent in childcare as a secondary activity
Visiting important locations	Meets at least ONE of the following conditions: 1) Visits at least TWO locations at least ONCE PER WEEK of [city, market, family/relative], or 2) Visits least ONE location at least ONCE PER MONTH of [health facility, public meeting]
<i>Collective Agency</i>	
Group membership	Active member of at least ONE group
Membership in influential groups	Active member of at least ONE group that can influence the community to at least a MEDIUM extent

Source: Malapit et al, 2019.

Methods

Study Design

This report presents the results from the pro-WEAI survey that was conducted along with the BRB longitudinal, quasi-experimental, mixed-methods assessment that consisted of baseline, midline, and endline quantitative and qualitative assessments that occurred in March 2016, November 2017, and November 2018, respectively. The pro-WEAI baseline data was collected May 2016 (two months after the BRB baseline); the pro-WEAI endline was collected in November 2017, which corresponded with the BRB midline assessment. Unlike the BRB project-level assessment that had two follow-up periods, the pro-WEAI assessment had only one follow-up assessment.

BRB project level baseline¹³, midline¹⁴, and endline¹⁵ reports and the baseline qualitative¹⁶ and quantitative¹⁷ reports for the pro-WEAI data can be found elsewhere.

Survey Version

The IFPRI team released the first draft of the pro-WEAI to GAAP2 to participating organizations in early April 2016. The month of May was targeted for data collection because it is a month with fewer festivals and before the summer rains begin when women are busy in the fields planting early crops. Grameen staff reviewed the April 12th version of the pro-WEAI survey and sent it for French-language translation. Updates to the pro-WEAI up to the April 22nd version were incorporated into the French

version shared with the research firm. The survey was piloted in from April 25 to 27, 2016 in 5 villages across the villages of Yé and Semaga. The exact same instrument was used for the pro-WEAI baseline. IFPRI provided a revised version of the pro-WEAI instrument in 2018, which occurred after the endline implementation of the pro-WEAI in Burkina Faso which occurred in November and December 2017. The key difference between the updated 2018 pro-WEAI instrument and the version implemented by Grameen was the exclusion of the self-efficacy and life satisfaction questions. These questions were originally considered optional but were then required in the final pro-WEAI tool provided in 2018. Grameen excluded these questions at baseline as they were seen as optional and similar questions were already included in the already-lengthy BRB baseline survey.

A description of the development of the pro-WEAI instrument and the most up-to-date version of the survey can be found elsewhere.¹⁸

Research Partners

Grameen Foundation partner ODE participated in the quantitative and qualitative pro-WEAI research. The research firm, Lessokon Sarl, assisted with the quantitative and qualitative data collection baseline and the quantitative data collection for the pro-WEAI endline. Grameen staff conducted the endline qualitative assessment. Public health faculty from Brigham Young University, Dr. Benjamin Crookston and Dr. Josh West conducted the quantitative analysis and contributed to data interpretation and report writing.

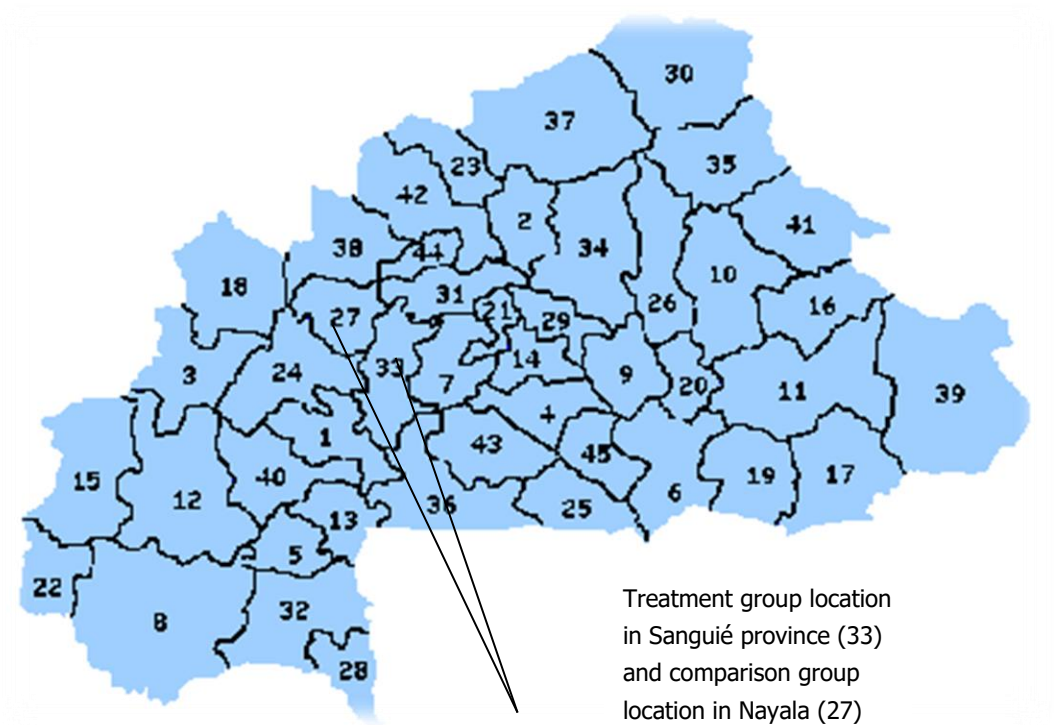
Quantitative Sample

The sample for the pro-WEAI baseline builds on the BRB impact study; therefore, the sample size for the BRB study is described first, followed by the sampling frame for the pro-WEAI.

The quantitative study included members from ODE's SGs who live in Central-Western and the Boucle de Mouhoun Regions in Burkina Faso. The treatment group was selected from women participating in SGs in the Godyr and Didyr communes in the Sanguié province in the Central-Western Region, and the comparison group was selected from women participating in savings groups in the Yé and Gossina communes of the Nayala province in the Boucle de Mouhoun Region. A map of these provinces is provided in Figure 1. While the women were assumed to be similar in socio-economic status given their common membership in savings groups and common economic activities, they were not found to be particularly comparable, which is described further in detail in the Limitations section of this report.

Twenty intervention villages were selected within Sanguié province. Twenty comparison villages were selected in Nayala and were selected based on the following criteria: 1) presence of ODE-formed savings groups that were not expected to receive the BRB services; 2) proximity to the intervention villages; and 3) likeness to the intervention villages in terms of livelihoods and economic prosperity.

Figure 1. Location of the Impact Study: Sanguié and Nayala Provinces, Burkina Faso¹⁹



For the BRB impact study, power calculations based on expected levels of changes in a few key indicators determined that 400 participants, split evenly between treatment and comparison, would be adequate to detect modest statistical differences between groups. Since the program was delivered at the village-level, the design accounted for cluster-level effects and aimed for a minimum of 40 villages overall (20 for the treatment group villages and 20 for the comparison group villages) to allow for clustering at the village level and to account for intra-cluster correlation. To leave room for potential study attrition, the sample size was increased by 10 percent to 440; 220 for treatment and 220 for comparison. The goal was to interview approximately 11 households per village. Ultimately 218 women were interviewed as part of the treatment group and 211 for the comparison group, for a total of 429.

To select participants for the impact study, ODE provided a list of all the SGs in each of the 40 villages selected, with the number of women per group (individual names of women were not available). A randomly-generated list of 11 numbers (representing women) per village dictated which groups to select and which women to ask for participation (after women were randomly assigned numbers at the initial meetings). Three approved alternate participants were provided through the random-number generation in case one of the originally chosen participants could not participate in the

survey. Surveyor teams traveled separately to treatment and comparison groups to finalize selection of women and conduct baseline impact study interviews. Surveys lasted for approximately 2 hours for the BRB impact assessment and all were conducted in March 2016. A total of 429 women were interviewed at baseline across 40 villages; with 218 women in the intervention group and 211 in the comparison group. At midline, 389 women were interviewed (193 women from the intervention group and 196 from the comparison group). At endline, 376 women were interviewed (184 women from the intervention group and 192 from the comparison group). This represents an 88% retention rate of the original respondents from baseline to endline.

The pro-WEAI participants were drawn from the same households who participated in the BRB impact study. Two survey teams of 4 enumerators and 1 supervisor each returned to the remaining 192 treatment and 192 comparison households that participated in the impact study to conduct interviews with both the women (BRB members, one woman per household was interviewed) and their husbands or main male household member. For the pro-WEAI data collection, the inclusion of husbands or male household members increased the desired sample to 880 participants. Resource constraints, however, led to decreasing the pro-WEAI sample to 190 households for each treatment and comparison, or 380 households in total. With one woman and one man interviewed per household, the total BRB pro-WEAI sample includes 768 participants. Instead of interviewing 11 households per village, each village randomly dropped 1 household, and 16 villages randomly dropped 2 households, dropping 28 households in total from the original sample. Annex 2 provides a table of participating villages, with the number of households and participants interviewed per village. Figure 2 below summarizes the sample frame.

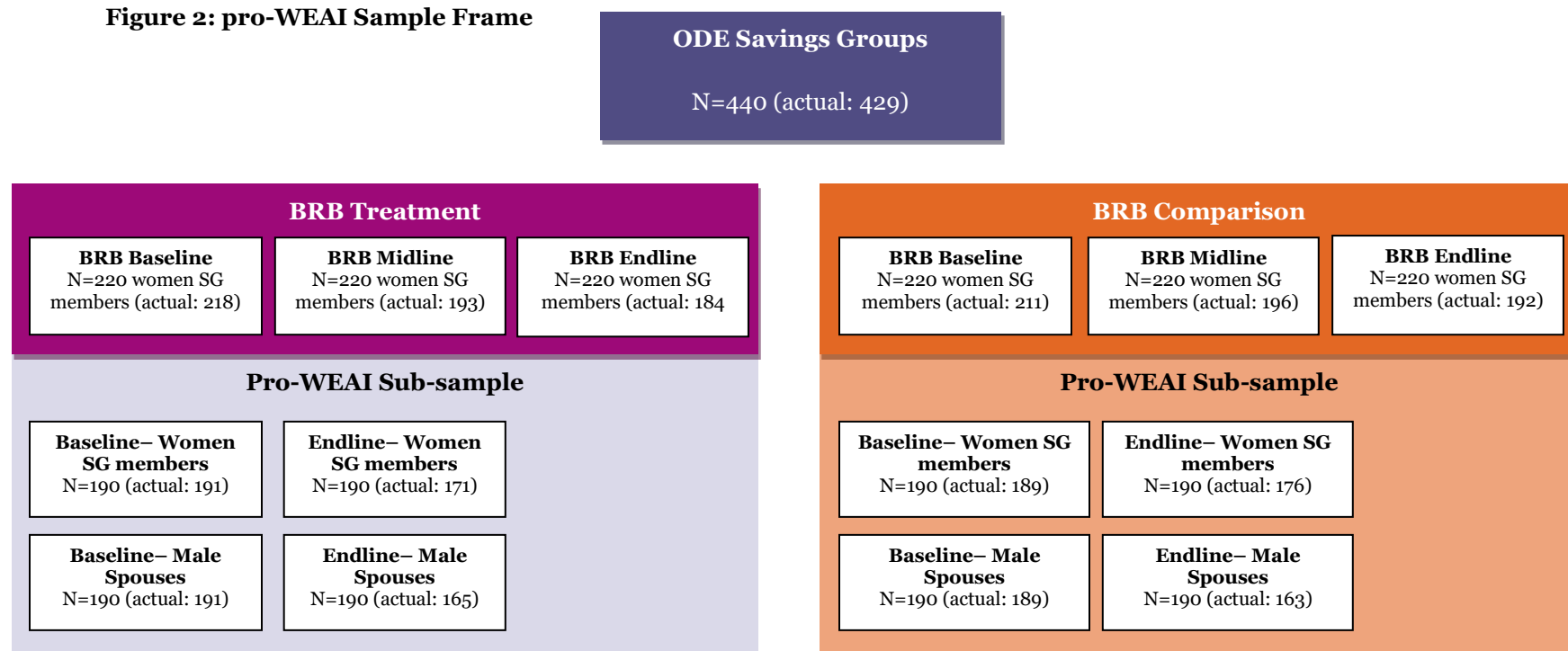
Quantitative Analysis

Data were analyzed using SAS, version 9.4 (SAS Institute Inc., Cary, North Carolina, USA). Frequency statistics were calculated and presented separately for treatment and comparison groups at both baseline and endline. Differences-in-differences (DID) modeling was used to estimate the impact of the agriculture development interventions on women's empowerment after controlling for age, sex, and level of education. DID estimates the differential effect of the treatment by calculating the average change in women's empowerment in the treatment and comparison groups from baseline to endline.

Qualitative

At the endline, several focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews were completed with ODE and SEMUS savings groups, staff, and leadership. Across SEMUS' and ODE's program areas, there were two FGDs completed with women (20 women in total) to discuss women's empowerment and two FGDs conducted with men (25 men in total).

Figure 2: pro-WEAI Sample Frame



Ethics Approval

This study was approved by Brigham Young University. Informed verbal consent as well as a participant signature was obtained from all participants included in the study due to the survey instruments being designed in French but conducted in a local language and among primarily illiterate participants.

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Limitations

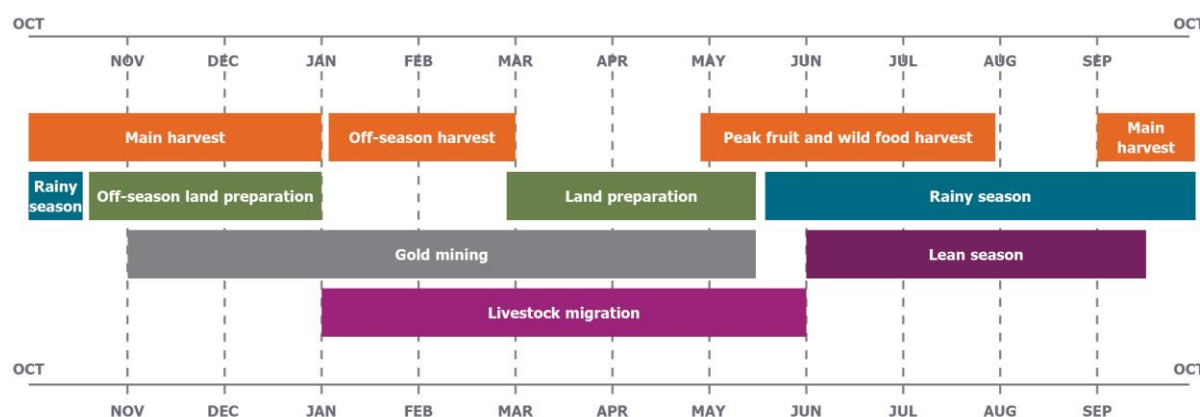
It is important to note that at baseline, the treatment and comparison groups were not found to be particularly comparable.²⁰ The comparison group was found to be more food-secure, better-off financially with higher average incomes and savings and they used formal financial services more than the treatment group; however, they were found to be more “asset poor” as measured by the Poverty Probability Index (PPI). Propensity score matching was attempted to account for the differences between the treatment and comparison groups for developing the baseline sampling frame as well as for the endline analysis; however, this method was not feasible for the analysis given the limitations of available data to make matches. The original design assumed the BRB and proWEAI surveys could be integrated and therefore leverage the substantial sociodemographic data that was collected in the BRB survey. However, this was not possible due to data collection and data entry errors on survey participant identifiers. For this reason, a difference-in-difference analysis was used instead.

Also, baseline data were collected in March of 2016 while midline and endline data were collected in November of 2017 and 2018, respectively. This seasonal difference between baseline and the other two data collection periods could influence the results, particularly those focused on agriculture, food security, and resilience.²¹ Figure 3 below highlights the typical variability in seasons, harvest periods, lean seasons, etc. provided by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) on Burkina Faso. In a typical year, March comes towards the end of the off-season harvest period when household members tend to also migrate and the weather is dry. November corresponds with the main harvest period and follows the rainy season.

Additionally, many study participants experienced drought conditions during the program period that appeared to have a substantial impact on harvests and other indicators measured at midline and then conditions improved by the endline one year later, also likely influencing the results. It is also important to note that while the team aimed to collect midline data after harvest had been completed, the harvest was delayed for many households in 2017. For this reason, attitudes and perceptions were quite negative. Due to the large reliance on agriculture in assessed areas, drought likely impacted

harvest yields, income, and other key outcomes of interest. Hence, a decline in positive behaviors at midline and an improvement in positive behaviors at endline may be highly influenced by the local weather conditions. However, it is unclear whether people in both provinces experienced the droughts and economic downturns equally.

Figure 3: Typical Seasonal Calendar for Burkina Faso.



Source: Burkina Faso. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). <http://fews.net/west-africa/burkina-faso>

Results

Demographics

Table 2 suggests that female respondents in the baseline sample were younger, on average, than the male respondents, reflecting that men generally marry younger women. Thirty (30) percent of women and 26 percent of men were in a monogamous marriage, while the remainder were in polygynous unions. Approximately 8 percent of women respondents were widowed and 87 percent of women respondents were the spouse of the household head. In order to measure gender parity within households, the sample only includes households with at least one adult male and female. By construction, all of the households in the sample have a male who is considered the household head. A large proportion of the sample is illiterate, never attended school or did not complete primary school, although men are more literate and more likely to have completed primary school than women. The majority of respondents were interviewed without any other household members present.

Table 2: Key Demographics from pro-WEAI Baseline

Variable	Women (n=380)	Men (n=380)
Average age	40.9 years	52.9 years

In a monogamous marriage	30%	26%
Polygynous marriage, 1 st wife	34%	--
Polygynous marriage, 2 nd or 3 rd wife	27%	--
Widowed	8%	0%
Household head	0%	100%
Spouse of household head	87%	0%
Illiterate ^e	84%	76%
Ever attended school ^f	18%	20%
Completed primary school	10%	16%
Interviewed alone	95%	90%

While not measured in the pro-WEAI, the BRB survey (Table 3) also captured poverty and food security levels. This data is reflective of the larger survey of women interviewed in the BRB survey but is also helpful in understanding the households that participated in the pro-WEAI sample. Unfortunately, per the limitations described earlier, the data from the BRB and pro-WEAI samples were not linked due to data collection and entry errors. Therefore, the data provided below represents the full sample of women interviewed for the BRB survey and represents women's answers only.

Using the Poverty Probability Index (PPI),^g in both the treatment and comparison groups, the majority lived below the \$2.50 international poverty line (between 80-85%, estimated at FCFA 576 in 2003 measures), about half lived below the \$1.25 poverty line (estimated at FCFA 288 in 2003 measures), a third live under the national poverty line (estimated at FCFA 226 per person per day—based on year 2003 measures) and a little over 10 percent lived below the extreme poverty line (which represents the median expenditure of people—not households below the national poverty line). The comparison group was slightly poorer than the treatment group at baseline and endline according to those below the national poverty line and the \$1.25 international poverty line; at endline, this difference between the treatment and comparison group was statistically significant. This suggests that on average, ODE clients are slightly less poor than the national averages as established by 2003 data.

While the poverty rate for the treatment group declined over time, even with the downturn in the economy at the midline point, poverty appeared to increase for the comparison group at the midline point and returned to baseline levels at the endline. This suggests that the downturn in the economy at the midline likely influenced the poverty of the comparison group more than the treatment group.

Less than 25 percent of the households were food secure at any time of the survey with the exception of the comparison group at baseline. Food security for both the treatment and comparison groups decreased at midline, which is consistent with the reported poor harvest and lower incomes at the

^e Can neither read nor write

^f This includes those currently in school and those who already attended school

^g This survey was developed using a national poverty survey conducted in 2003. Therefore, the benchmarks provided here are provided by Mark Schreiner in the documentation for the Burkina Faso PPI survey and may not relate to latest poverty measurements found by the World Bank or others. Please see the PPI documentation at <http://progressoutofpoverty.org/country/burkina-faso>.

midline. Food security continued to be on the decline for the comparison group by the endline whereas the treatment group re-bounded by the endline. The treatment group was more than three times as food secure (22%) than the comparison group (6%) by the endline, even though the comparison group was more food secure at baseline (19% among treatment and 33% among comparison group).

Table 3. Key Demographics of Total BRB Study Sample

Treatment (%)				Comparison (%)			P-value
Indicator	Baseline	Midline	Endline	Baseline	Midline	Endline	
N	218	193	184	211	196	192	
Average Age	40.9	42.6	44.0	39.7	42.1	43.1	
Civil status							
Monogamous	20.6	22.3	21.2	35.1	33.2	30.7	0.0788
Polygamous, 1st wife	30.3	32.2	29.9	31.8	33.7	32.8	
Polygamous, 2nd or 3rd wife	37.2	37.3	38.6	25.6	25.5	26.6	
Widowed	9.6	8.3	9.8	7.6	7.7	9.9	
Education							
Illiterate	76.6	79.3	—	83.9	81.1	—	
Had attended school ever	16.5	15.5	—	14.7	14.3	—	
Ethnic group							
Gourounsi	85.8	87.6	—	15.6	16.3	—	
Mossi	12.4	10.9	—	55.9	56.1	—	
Samo	0.0	0.0	—	0.0	37.3	—	
Religious affiliation							
Muslim	22.9	22.3	—	60.7	63.8	—	
Christian	73.4	76.2	—	36.0	32.7	—	
Poverty Probability							
Mean likelihood below Extreme Poverty Line	12.5	11.7	11.0	14.0	15.9	13.4	
Mean likelihood below National Poverty Line	34.0	32.3	31.9	37.1	38.9	35.0	0.0386
Mean likelihood below \$1.25	46.9	44.3	44.3	49.0	51.7	47.8	0.0631
Mean likelihood below \$2.50	82.6	80.1	81.5	83.7	85.2	82.7	
Food security (% food secure)	19.3	7.6	21.7	33.2	22.5	6.3	0.0001

“—” data was not collected at endline

Quantitative pro-WEAI Results

At baseline (Table 4), 38 percent of women and 36 percent of men in the treatment group were considered empowered. The aggregate pro-WEAI disempowerment score for women in the treatment group was 0.71, which is the weighted average of the 3DE score for women, 0.69, and the GPI score, 0.88. Of those women who were disempowered, the mean adequacy score was 0.50 indicating that, on average, disempowered women achieved adequacy in 50 percent of the indicators. Of men who were identified as disempowered, the mean adequacy score was 0.55, indicating that disempowered men achieved adequacy in 55 percent of the indicators. The GPI score was 0.88 and 55 percent of households achieved gender parity. The average empowerment gap between women who did not achieve gender parity and the men in their households was 26 percent.

In the comparison group, 44 percent of women and 75 percent of men in the comparison group achieved empowerment. Among the disempowered, women had a disempowerment score of 0.24 and men had a disempowerment score of 0.11; disempowered women achieved adequacy in 57 percent of the indicators while disempowered men achieved adequacy in 59 percent of the indicators. The GPI score was 0.90 and 53 percent of households achieved gender parity. The average empowerment gap between women who did not achieve gender parity and the men in their households was 21 percent.

Table 4 pro-WEAI Results, Baseline

Indicator	Treatment		Comparison	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Number of observations	191	191	189	189
3DE score	0.69	0.71	0.76	0.89
Disempowerment score (1 – 3DE)	0.31	0.29	0.24	0.11
% achieving empowerment	38	36	44	75
% not achieving empowerment	62	64	56	25
Mean adequacy score for not yet empowered	0.50	0.55	0.57	0.59
Mean disempowerment score (1 – adequacy) for not yet empowered	0.50	0.45	0.43	0.41
Number of dual-adult households	191		189	
Gender Parity Index (GPI)	0.88		0.90	
% achieving gender parity	55		53	
% not achieving gender parity	45		47	
Average empowerment gap	0.26		0.21	
Pro-WEAI score	0.71		0.77	

Note: Weighted by inverse project sample size. Respondents with missing indicators are dropped from the sample.

At endline (Table 5), in the treatment group, those achieving empowerment did not change for women (38% at baseline and endline) but improved for men (36% to 47%). Women from the comparison group saw increases in achieving empowerment over time (44% to 51%), while men saw decreases (75% to 67%). With regards to gender parity, women in both treatment and comparison groups experienced a slight increase in gender parity. For the women in the comparison group, this gain in gender parity is most likely due to men experiencing an increase in disempowerment. The average empowerment gap between men and women was 25% in the treatment group and 20% in the comparison group.

Table 5 pro-WEAI Results, Endline

Indicator	Treatment		Comparison	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Number of observations	171	165	176	163
3DE score	0.72	0.77	0.79	0.86
Disempowerment score (1 – 3DE)	0.28	0.23	0.21	0.14
% achieving empowerment	38	47	51	67
% not achieving empowerment	62	53	49	33
Mean adequacy score for not yet empowered	0.54	0.56	0.57	0.56
Mean disempowerment score (1 – adequacy) for not yet empowered	0.46	0.44	0.43	0.44
Number of dual-adult households	165		163	
Gender Parity Index (GPI)	0.90		0.93	
% achieving gender parity	61		65	
% not achieving gender parity	39		35	
Average empowerment gap	0.25		0.20	
Pro-WEAI score	0.73		0.80	

Adequacy for each pro-WEAI indicator varied by gender, group, and time (Table 6). For example, women were more likely to be adequate in input in productive decisions, group membership, and membership in influential groups. Men were more likely to be adequate in attitudes about domestic violence, control over use of income, and work balance. Adequacy in attitudes about domestic violence improved for all groups over time while control of use of income decreased over time for all groups. Men and women across both the treatment and comparison groups lost adequacy in control over use of income at endline compared to baseline. While men and women in the treatment group lost adequacy in autonomy in income, men and women in the comparison group gained adequacy in

autonomy in income. Women and men in the treatment group lost adequacy in work balance, women notably so, while men and women in the comparison group gained adequacy.

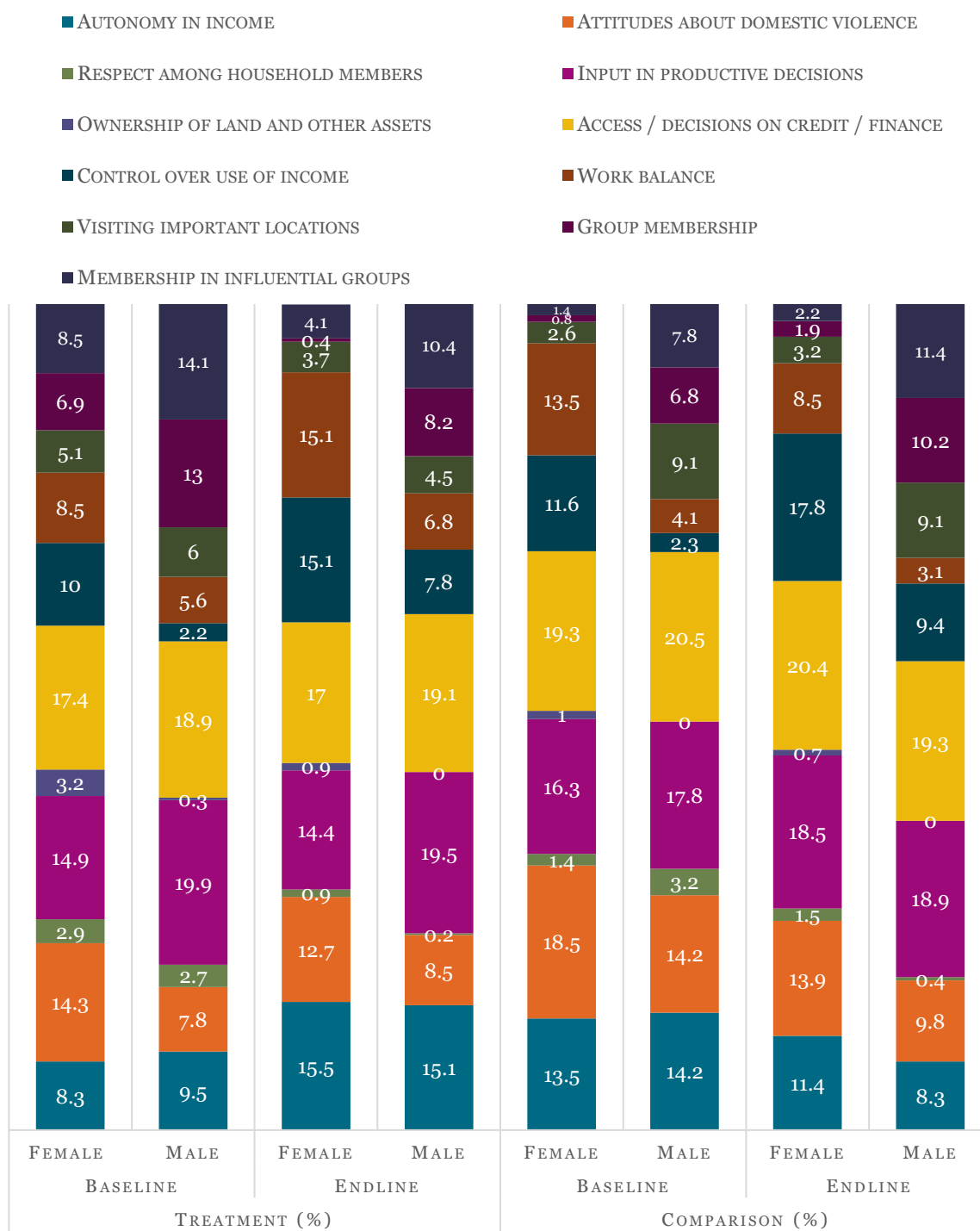
Table 6: Adequacy status for PRO-WEAI indicators by gender, treatment, and time

Indicators	Baseline				Endline			
	Treatment (%)		Comparison (%)		Treatment (%)		Comparison (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<i>Intrinsic Agency</i>								
Autonomy in income	62.8	60.7	44.4	66.1	30.7	48.2	58.2	69.6
Attitudes about domestic violence	37.7	67.0	22.2	57.7	48.9	70.8	52.2	75.6
Respect among household members	89.5	91.6	95.2	94.7	97.1	99.4	96.0	99.4
<i>Instrumental agency</i>								
Input in productive decisions	33.0	5.2	46.0	32.8	47.7	13.1	39.6	22.6
Ownership of land and other assets	88.5	99.0	96.8	100	97.2	100	98.4	100
Access / decisions on credit / finance	8.9	11.5	13.2	21.7	18.2	16.1	8.2	19.1
Control over use of income	62.3	91.6	67.7	95.8	39.2	71.4	37.4	62.5
Work balance	62.8	77.5	54.5	87.3	37.5	69.6	75.8	91.1
Visiting important locations	78.0	79.1	92.1	87.3	86.4	86.3	91.8	80.4
<i>Collective agency</i>								
Group membership	75.4	58.1	97.9	91.5	98.9	78.0	95.1	82.1
Membership in influential groups	70.2	54.5	95.8	90.5	86.9	70.8	94.5	80.4

The drivers of disempowerment remained similar for both the treatment and comparison groups (for both men and women) over time (Table 7 and Figure 1). The proportional contribution of each indicator to disempowerment reflects how much each indicator contributes to disempowerment among respondents who have not achieved empowerment. The main drivers included access and decisions on credit and finance, input in productive decisions, autonomy in income, and attitudes about domestic violence. Membership in influential groups was a larger driver at baseline than endline and was more likely to contribute to male disempowerment. Control over use of income increased in all groups over time and was more likely to contribute to female disempowerment. Attitudes about domestic violence were larger contributors to disempowerment for women than men and decreased slightly over time.

Table 7: Contributors to disempowerment by gender, treatment, and time

Indicator	Baseline				Endline			
	Treatment (%)		Comparison (%)		Treatment (%)		Comparison (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<i>Intrinsic Agency</i>								
Autonomy in income	8.3	9.5	13.5	14.2	15.5	15.1	11.4	8.3
Attitudes about domestic violence	14.3	7.8	18.5	14.2	12.7	8.5	13.9	9.8
Respect among household members	2.9	2.7	1.4	3.2	0.9	0.2	1.5	0.4
<i>Instrumental agency</i>								
Input in productive decisions	14.9	19.9	16.3	17.8	14.4	19.5	18.5	18.9
Ownership of land and other assets	3.2	0.3	1.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.7	0.0
Access / decisions on credit / finance	17.4	18.9	19.3	20.5	17.0	19.1	20.4	19.3
Control over use of income	10.0	2.2	11.6	2.3	15.1	7.8	17.8	9.4
Work balance	8.5	5.6	13.5	4.1	15.1	6.8	8.5	3.1
Visiting important locations	5.1	6.0	2.6	9.1	3.7	4.5	3.2	9.1
<i>Collective agency</i>								
Group membership	6.9	13.0	0.8	6.8	0.4	8.2	1.9	10.2
Membership in influential groups	8.5	14.1	1.4	7.8	4.1	10.4	2.2	11.4

Figure 1. Contributions of each indicator to disempowerment by gender, treatment, and time

Differences-in-differences (DID) modeling was used to estimate the impact of the BRB development interventions on women’s empowerment (Table 8). While starting at an empowerment disadvantage at baseline and maintaining this disadvantage at endline, participants from the treatment group reported an increase in the average number of empowerment indicators in which they were adequate while the comparison group saw a decrease in average adequacy over time ($p = 0.002$) after controlling for age, sex, and level of education. However, these gains by the treatment group were not substantial enough to result in increased classification as “empowered”.

Table 8. Difference in Difference Regression Models for Treatment Effect, $n = 574$

Variable	Coefficient	SE	t	p	95% CI	
					Low	High
Treatment group	-.936	.116	-8.10	.000	-1.163	-.709
Follow-up	-.174	.109	-1.61	.109	-.387	.039
Treatment group x Follow-up	.427	.159	2.67	.008	.113	.739
Age	.002	.003	0.65	.515	-.004	.008
Education	-.296	.107	-2.77	.006	-.505	-.086

Discussion

Summary of Results

Despite the strong influence of an economic downturn resulting from a significant drought and subsequent poor harvest that occurred at the time of the pro-WEAI endline survey²², this study provides valuable insights related to women’s and men’s empowerment. Results of the pro-WEAI reveal that women in the comparison group experienced greater improvements in empowerment and gender parity over time. Women in the treatment saw no change in empowerment, but did see improvements in gender parity (Figure 2). Results for men were remarkably different: men in the treatment group experienced an improvement in empowerment (Figure 3) while men in the comparison group experienced a substantial decline in empowerment (Figure 4).

Figure 2: Women's Empowerment Achievements

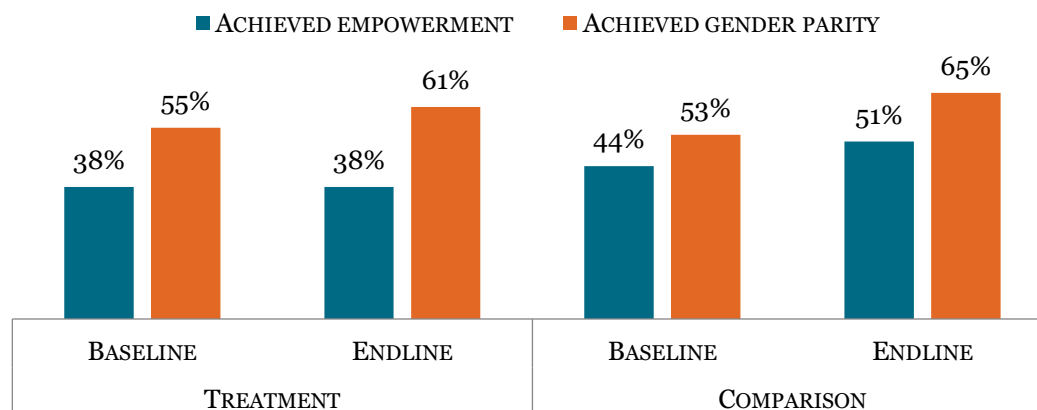


Figure 3: Treatment Group Empowerment Achievements

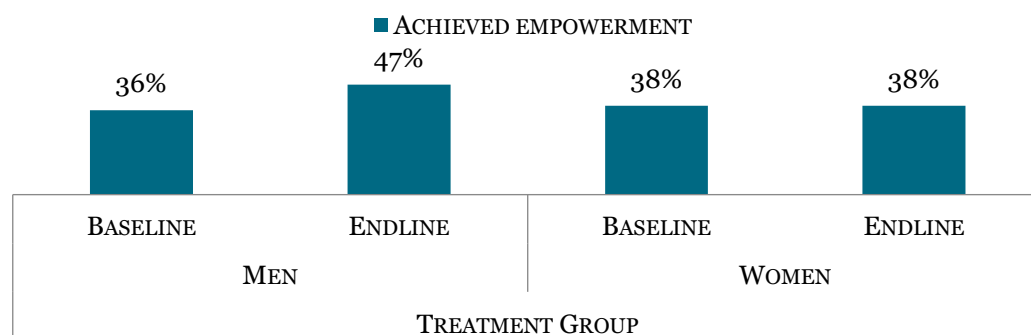
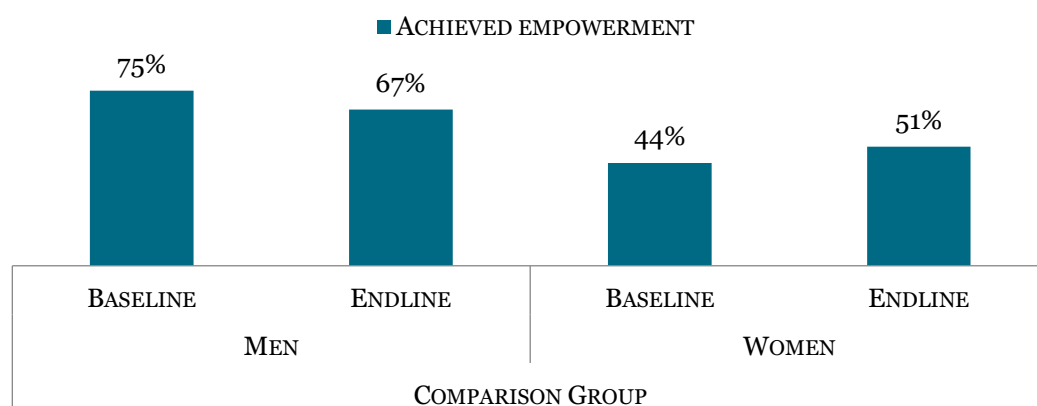


Figure 4: Comparison Group Empowerment Achievements



Men and women in the treatment group started out with an empowerment disadvantage, compared to the comparison group, and maintained this disadvantage at the endline. The full BRB program evaluation baseline also found that the treatment group started out with a disadvantage in economic outcomes and food security (Gash, 2018). However, it is important to note that when assessing individual adequacy scores and adjusting for baseline, sex, age, and education, results indicate the treatment group made greater gains in individual indicators of adequacy, even though this did not result in them passing the thresholds for classifying them as empowered.

The overall decline in empowerment among men in the comparison group but an increase among men in the treatment group suggests that the intervention may have had a protective effect enabling treatment group households to weather a significant shock caused by the drought and subsequent poor harvests and economic downturn. While much of the literature on gender and climate change suggest that women are disproportionately and negatively impacted by climate-change or weather events compared to men²³, these results suggest that some interventions geared towards women may be protective of men as well and improve household resilience.

While there is limited research on the relationship between household economics and male empowerment^h, there are well-known gendered patterns observed across the world where men's higher labor force participation reflects their breadwinning responsibilities²⁴ and that most men around the world define their major social role and their identity as being economic providers²⁵. ProMundo's *State of the World's Fathers 2019* report further suggests that when men are unable to provide financially for their families, it affects their self-esteem. When men face unemployment, women are also more at risk of gender-based violence.²⁶ While this is a risk, there did not appear to be an increase in negative beliefs about gender-based violence among men in the pro-WEAI data nor seen from data in the BRB program evaluation.

Household/Individual Economics and Empowerment

When assessing what contributed most to disempowerment, the following three contributors were most common among women and men in both the treatment and comparison groups and suggest that household economics contribute most to disempowerment among this population.

- Autonomy in income
- Input in productive decisions
- Access to and decisions on financial services

^h It is interesting to note that in a web search for existing research on men's empowerment, very little is available. A search for men's empowerment often results in resources that describe the role of men in women's empowerment. A subsequent change in search words, such as "empowering men," "men and income," and "masculinity and income" equally resulted in very little research. ProMundo, through their *State of the World's Fathers* report and the research conducted by ProMundo, is found to be the only location for resources that explore concepts of empowerment for men. This is obviously an area where very little research exists and an opportunity for further study.

This is consistent with the qualitative data that was collected for supporting the pro-WEAI quantitative survey²⁷ as well as consistent with the qualitative research conducted on the GAAP2 portfolio of organizations²⁸. The qualitative data collected to support the pro-WEAI found that in Burkina Faso, men and women described “empowerment” in economic or self-efficacy terminology. Women used words such as “autonomous” and “emancipated” to describe an empowered woman. Men and women both perceived 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. Research has also demonstrated that women participating in savings groups alone have been found to experience increased incomes and savings, consumption smoothing, enhanced and/or diversified livelihood activities²⁹, improved business outcomes³⁰, positively impacting women’s economic, social, and political empowerment. Savings groups have also not been found to adversely affect reports of domestic violence.³¹ A recent assessment completed by the SEEP Network, Nathan Associates, FSDAfrica and UKAID also found that economic independence created through savings group member access to financial services is also where the strongest evidence exists demonstrating the connection with women’s empowerment.³²

While men and women were both disempowered in autonomy in income and input into productive decisions, other pro-WEAI research has found that women tend to be more disempowered than men in these two domains.³³ In these two indicators, a person’s adequacy is determined by the degree to which they make decisions regarding agricultural activities and how they are motivated to make decisions based on their own values rather than by coercion or fear of others’ disapproval. In some instances, men were more disempowered in these indicators than women. If men and women are equally disempowered in these two indicators, then who is making the decisions? Anthropological research in Burkina Faso indicates that land tenure and decisions related to agricultural production are often driven by customary laws and social norms, where kinship to original land owners, gerontocracy (rule by older people, such as village chiefs), money and gender equality determine agricultural activities.³⁴ Men who hold temporary land rights are expected to maintain and renew their allegiance and support to the landowner, resulting in collective decisions related to the use of the land.³⁵ Women face even greater challenges to land access since customary laws result in women gaining access to land through their husbands only after they have established land access themselves, even if temporarily.³⁶ If women do not access land through their spouses, they may access land along with other women through collective plots promoted by different development programs.³⁷ In this study, men in the comparison group lost ground in their input into production decisions by endline. This may be due to the fact that in the baseline report³⁸, it was reported that the comparison group was made up of households that identified as Mossi, Muslim, and were noted as “immigrants” compared to the treatment group, which was primarily Gourounsi, Christian, and relied on petty trading as their key income source. The instability of land tenure and collective decision-making in the comparison group may be explained by these cultural and religious differences, something that should be explored in future research.

A key recommendation of the BRB project evaluation was to develop a more meaningful engagement of men, particularly as it relates to the formation of savings groups access and use of credit.³⁹ While access to credit was a significant contributor to disempowerment for both men and women, women in the BRB project noted their greater access to financial services compared to their spouses. It is also often a well-known “secret” that husbands and other household members are the actual recipients of loans. Financial service providers should consider whether loan product designs incorporate this information into loan design. Women’s access to credit is a double-edged sword. While credit may provide women with economic and financial opportunities, credit can also create conflict and cause financial stress, particularly if they are responsible for loan repayment but not benefiting from the loan. Research shows that savings groups provide women with an opportunity to protect their money from spouses, particularly if their spouse is more biased towards the present versus long-term financial needs⁴⁰. The same research also indicates that that people are more “patient” when they make financial decisions together with their spouses. Rozenkrants⁴¹ conducted research on husband/wife couples and their money and found that “joint decision-making” as it relates to financial decisions tends to favor men’s preferences and that financial service providers should provide incentives to couples to engage in financial matters together, and financial tools should have requirements for joint decision making. This may also need to be considered in future iterations of the pro-WEAI where access to and use of credit should be balanced with the responsibility for repayment and the stress they feel carrying this responsibility.

Gender-based Violence and Empowerment

Interestingly, *attitudes towards domestic violence* was the fourth main contributor to disempowerment, but this was more among women than men. This is to say that women in this study were more likely than men to indicate a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for going out without telling him, neglecting the children, arguing with him, refusing to have sex with him, or burning the food. This is consistent with the research conducted across the GAAP2 portfolio of organizations⁴² and the literature from 17 Sub-Saharan African countries where women are more likely to justify domestic violence than men.⁴³ While increasing women’s own condemnation of GBV is an important attitudinal shift, research on strategies to reduce GBV have found that efforts to influence the intra-household distribution of economic resources, promotion of gender equitable norms, promotion of joint decision-making and increasing coverage (such as through media) of messages to the general public regarding alternatives to violence as a means to resolve conflict are strategies proven to reduce likelihood of GBV.⁴⁴

Multiple component projects have been found to have more impact than single interventions.⁴⁵

Research conducted by the World Health Organization and Peacock and Barker also note that one way to address GBV is by targeting men through women’s economic empowerment initiatives.⁴⁶ A study conducted in Rwanda by CARE-Rwanda and ProMundo did exactly this. They compared a comparison group (savings groups of women where men were not deliberately included) to savings

"See women come together, they receive advice that benefits men—it brings peace."

– FGD with spouses of BRB participants

groups of men-only and savings groups where couples were engaged and found that engaging men led to a) more equitable household decision-making, b) decreased couple conflict and increased communication, c) higher income gains for families. ⁴⁷

Despite the sustained acceptance of GBV demonstrated in the pro-WEAI data as a major contributor to disempowerment, the qualitative data collected for the program suggests that shifts are occurring. A group of women shared: *“The violence has decreased, we have fewer demands on our husbands and there is less exasperation on the part of the man.”* *“Before people gave birth like goats, too many children and poverty and that was what led to quarrels due to too many responsibilities.”* Men also shared, *“There has been no case of spousal violence here. Today men understand the importance of women and cooperate. Men are much more supportive of their wives and even serve as guarantors when needed. We must always continue to educate couples.”* Another group of men equated the reduction in violence to *“the training received and the exchanges made in this village.”* *“See women come together, they receive advice that benefits men—it brings peace.”* *“The woman had needs and asked her husband all of the time. If he could not [fulfill those needs], it was a source of conflict. Now they solve problems that the man could solve, this leads to agreement in the home.”*

Future programming should incorporate approaches that have been shown to mitigate the risk of and decrease gender-based violence, including approaches such as gender and community dialogues and approaches that increase intra-household distribution of economic resources and cooperation. Finally, women’s empowerment cannot come at the disempowerment of men. While gender equality assumes women need to “catch up” it is also possible that men can “fall back” to the detriment of women and men alike. Particularly among poor populations, as has been shown here, men are almost equally disempowered. Additional research is needed to understand the negative consequence of male empowerment, not just on themselves, as is often done for women, but on the household as a whole, particularly since a key risk of potential male disempowerment is the resort to GBV as a stronghold on control of the resources and people that surround a male primary income earner. Peacock and Barker⁴⁸ suggest that policies on engaging men to end GBV should 1) promote human rights, including rights of women and girls; 2) remain accountable to and in dialogue with women’s rights movements and organizations, 3) enhance men’s and boy’s lives, 4) be inclusive and responsive to diversities among men, and 5), address the social and structural determinants of gender inequalities. While savings groups and microfinance-based strategies often focus on new product or channel development with little recognition of the role that stresses and shocks related to GBV or conflict and instability at the household or community levels play in the lives of poor women, this is an important area for further innovation.

Conclusion

The pro-WEAI data suggests that men and women of the treatment group experienced statistically significant gains in adequacy across the pro-WEAI indicators, even though this did not translate into passing thresholds to be considered improvements in empowerment. While women in the comparison group saw gains in empowerment, men in the comparison group experienced losses in empowerment. This research suggests that the BRB intervention may have provided some protection for men and

women in the treatment group when they faced an economic down-turn prior to the endline, indicative of household resilience. Leder suggests that there may be a relationship between empowerment and resilience, particularly once the extent to which each dimension or indicator of empowerment influences resilience is determined.⁴⁹ This is an opportunity for future research.

To understand the influence of a multiple-intervention project designed to influence women's economic empowerment, the pro-WEAI has been found to be a useful tool for identifying priorities for improving empowerment suggesting a "stay the course" for some already-implemented interventions such as the expansion of agriculture and income-generating activity credit and an expansion of other interventions such as the gender dialogues to take a stronger emphasis on attitudes towards GBV.

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