

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index



CASE STUDY PROFILE

Angela, Guatemala

Angela, a 37-year-old widow and mother of six, is a member of the indigenous Mam ethnicity and lives in a village in the highland Quetzaltenango district of Guatemala. She speaks both the indigenous Mam language and Spanish. Angela never attended school. "I did not have the opportunity," she says. Instead, she traveled with her father and prepared meals for him when he worked away from their village.

Following her husband's death after 15 years of marriage, Angela has taken sole responsibility for her household. She and her husband used to work together, planting maize and potatoes, and she describes him as "a good man." Since his death, she says, "I am the mother and I run everything."

In the agricultural community where Angela lives, most people plant maize for consumption, and some people are also carpenters or masons. Angela only harvests food for her family, not for sale. She is gratified that this work helps maintain her family and emphasizes that the ability to cultivate maize for consumption is vital to her household.

“ We never have more than enough; what we have is not sufficient. ”





Angela makes all of the household decisions. Her garden hoe and machete are her most important personal possessions, as they allow her to carry out agricultural work and cut firewood. Livestock is the family's most valuable asset and includes chickens, pigs, and a cow.

The only change Angela has seen over the past five years in terms of her work is the ability to buy fertilizer. She saw a good harvest in the past year, as there was not too much rain. This has provided Angela with sufficient maize for the year, unlike in the past, when she had to purchase additional maize for her family to eat.

Angela does not have money to cover expenses beyond consumption costs, explaining that "we never have more than enough; what we have is not sufficient." She hopes to begin selling apples for income. If she had any additional funds she would reinvest them in livestock as well as in diversifying the foods in her household, including adding fortified foods such as *incaparina* (a protein supplement given to Guatemalan children) to their diets.

The *cocode* (head of the local community development committee) makes the most important decisions in Angela's community. As an active member of the community, Angela enjoys talking with her neighbors and sees herself as a leader, who participates in the church

group, plants trees as a member of a forestry revitalization group, and helps to construct roads as a volunteer. She hopes to participate more actively in school meetings and to continue to encourage her children's education. She would also like to participate in a cooperative agricultural group, but her own agricultural and domestic work demand too much of her time to allow for additional activities. Being responsible for "everything" has left her feeling exhausted and ill at times, as she finds the constant demands of agricultural production and domestic responsibilities difficult. She is thankful that her older children help her with the work.

Angela sees agricultural empowerment of women as their ability to "work equal to men." She believes that the women in her community are able to make independent decisions and are not constrained by the decisions of men. However, she explains that some women are disempowered by their families, who do not allow them access to education or the opportunity to learn Spanish and become literate. Despite her marked personal sense of independence, she says that she has never felt empowered or had the support to make the material improvements she would like to make for her family.

Angela is empowered according to the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index. In the Index diagram, the outer ring identifies the domains. The shaded segments inside represent the indicators in which Angela has adequate achievements.



Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

This innovative new tool is composed of two sub-indexes: one measures how empowered women are within five domains, and the other measures gender parity in empowerment within the household. A woman is considered empowered if she has adequate achievements in four of the five domains or in some combination of the weighted indicators that reflect 80 percent total adequacy. Gender parity reflects the percentage of women who are as empowered as the men in their households.