

doi: 10.5191/jiaee.2019.26204

The Influence of Gender on Rural Honduran Women's Participation and Leadership in Community Groups

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Abstract

Throughout Latin America, increasing women's leadership has been part of many development efforts. However, extensive research on this topic, especially with rural indigenous women, is limited in the literature. Barriers and opportunities for women to participate in leadership within their communities and local organizations may be related to economic, psychological, and social factors that influence their personal empowerment. This study used mixed methods to explore multiple perspectives of community participation and leadership of two Lenca villages in the western department of Lempira, Honduras. The findings from this study provide insight into structural constraints on women's leadership in the community, and how gender affects engagement in agriculture. The importance of this research is its applicability to agricultural extension practitioners working in rural communities where participation in traditional gender roles may create gaps in women's opportunities to engage in decision-making around agriculture, participate in community development, and be valued as leaders. For communities whose livelihoods rely on agriculture, understanding barriers to women's participation can aid extension practitioners working to increase food security, as women play key roles in both agriculture and in supporting their families.

Keywords: gender, women, agriculture, leadership, participation

Introduction

Evidence suggests that rural women in developing countries have played a pivotal role in agriculture for decades (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006; Satio & Weidman, 1990). However, they have often been excluded from participating in rural organizations and from receiving extension support that could increase access to services, productive resources, and bargaining power (Colverson, 1995; Tanwir & Safdara, 2013; Todaro & Smith, 2012). A myriad of barriers to rural women's participation in groups have been identified including: time constraints due to involvement in domestic tasks (Antwal & Bellurkar, 2016; Meinzen-Dick, Behrman, Pandolfelli, Peterman, & Quimsumbing, 2014; Mudege, Nyekanyeka, Kapalasa, Chevo, & Demo, 2015), low levels of education and self-confidence (Fonchingong, 2006; Meinzen-Dick et al., 2014), and constraints related to traditional gender roles and social status in organizations and communities (Gotschi, Njuki, & Delve, 2008; Meola, 2013; Mudege et al., 2015). For Latin America, increasing women's leadership has been part of many development efforts, but extensive research on this topic, especially with rural indigenous women, is limited in the literature. For Honduras, increasing women's participation in agricultural and community organizations is particularly salient due to socioeconomic issues that disproportionately affect them such as poverty, violence, and education (Guillen Soto, 2013; Ronderos, 2011; UNDP, 2016). Projects that have promoted equal participation of both men and women, including those who have involved women in the adoption of innovations, can be catalysts for the empowerment of women and increase productivity and income (Ashby et al., 2009; Tanwir & Safdara, 2013); therefore, understanding the barriers

to women's participation can aid the work of agricultural extension practitioners whose aim is to increase food security and reduce poverty.

In small farmer sectors, women work in crop and livestock activities as well as collect, process, cook and sell food, indicating that women contribute significantly to food security in rural areas of Honduras (Guillen Soto, 2013). However, recent work by Feed the Future's Horticulture Innovation Lab in Western Honduras revealed that gender norms are deeply entrenched and can limit institutional support of rural women as well as their participation in community development and household decision-making (Larson, 2017). Local organizations working with Feed the Future projects in Honduras identified the need to engage women in more leadership roles in agriculture and the community as a strategy for closing gender gaps in these areas (Colverson et al., 2016). By providing more training and support for women in leadership, the social norms that limit women's opportunities can shift, yielding more access to economic opportunities and increased decision-making in the home and community. Understanding women's lived experiences and how they see their roles in the home, community, and as leaders, is necessary to create programs and leadership opportunities that women are comfortable adopting. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to understand rural women's empowerment in agriculture and gender norms around community participation and leadership.

Literature Review

Previous research on the economic, social, and psychological dimensions of rural women's lives provided insight into the factors considered influential in their empowerment and ultimate participation in groups and leadership. Structural economic

constraints such as time spent on domestic tasks, lack of control over finances and decision-making, male-dominated extension services, and dependency on men due to limited access to, and control over, productive resources have been documented as influencing women's participation in agricultural groups (Alkire, Meinzen-Dick, Peterman, Quisumbing, Seymour, & Vaz, 2013; Antwal & Bellurkar, 2016; Fonchingong, 2006; Gotschi, Njuki, & Delve, 2008; Mudege et al., 2015). Yet, with increased access to training and extension services, as well as the creation of female dominated agricultural cooperatives, opportunities for women to participate and engage in leadership have been found to be successful (Ferguson & Kepe, 2011; Meola, 2013). Social norms such as women's inability to speak in groups, lack of support by husbands, gendered exclusion from organizations, and gender imbalances in social settings can also be barriers for women in rural communities (Gotschi et al., 2008; Klein, 2016; Mudege et al., 2015; Torkelsson, 2007). Whereas, higher levels of trust in groups, support of the husband, or more autonomy in the home may result in more participation by women (Klein, 2016; Meola, 2013; Weinberger & Jütting, 2001). The psychological factors of low self-esteem and self-efficacy due to lack of education and skill development have emerged as barriers to women's participation in groups and leadership (Fonchingong, 2006; Meinzen-Dick et al., 2014). However, targeted business, leadership, and agricultural training for rural women as well as engagement in entrepreneurial and relationship-building activities increased their capacity and confidence of working in groups, their self-esteem, and enhanced their independence (Chhoeun, Sok, & Byrne, 2008; Ferguson & Kepe, 2011; Rewani & Lalhumlana, 2014).

The aforementioned scholarship on rural women's participation in groups and leadership indicates that targeted engagement can empower women and increase their economic standing, confidence, independence, and community engagement. Specific to agriculture, empowering women through closing gender gaps in assets and increasing their ability to make decisions on what to plant and which animals to rear can increase productivity and self-esteem (Alkire et al., 2013). Although, there has been an observed feminization of the agricultural sector due to women's increased responsibility for subsistence farming (Deere, 2005), the evidence of continuing gender bias in access to extension services and gender-specific constraints in technology adoption has been well documented (Rasaga, 2014). Understanding women's state of empowerment across various dimensions offers insight for agricultural extension practitioners as they work to close gender gaps in services and opportunities. Identifying contextual variables such as the social acceptability of women's agricultural and leadership roles, women's economic needs and decision-making power, as well as what they need from extension services, can deepen the impact of projects for women and their families.

Conceptual Framework

In the context of development research, gender can be understood as a sociocultural relationship, referred to as the roles and meanings assigned to men and women (Moghadam & Senftova, 2005). Lorber (1994) referred to gender as a social institution of which human beings organize their lives, through the process of learning how to be women and men. The process of gender thus creates social differences between men and women, as well as a stratification system in which gender ranks

men above women in status and competence (Lorber, 1994; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Gender was an organizing principle for the study to identify how women's participation differed from men's in both agriculture and the community. Understanding that gender crosscuts development work, the study was also conceptualized utilizing dimensions of women's empowerment to identify factors influencing their participation in leadership.

Broadly stated, empowerment refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life (Narayan-Parker, 2005). Empowerment can also be described at the individual or group level as people's capacity to make choices and then transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006). Structural constraints and opportunities should be attended to when conceptualizing empowerment within development work as Sen (1999) asserted that freedoms, such as political, social, and economic are interrelated, and a freedom of one type may advance others. Moghadam and Senftova (2005) conceptualized empowerment by addressing it, "as a multi-dimensional process of civil, political, social, economic, and cultural participation and rights" (p. 390). For the purpose of this study, the focus was on the economic, social, and psychological dimensions as they were considered to encompass many of the factors that influences women's participation and leadership in rural communities.

Economic empowerment can refer to women's control over income in the household and decision-making related to assets as well as access to employment, markets, and assets (Narayan, 2005). Economic empowerment factors identified for the study as influential in the agricultural context include: how women's time is divided between productive and reproductive tasks; their access to markets in

order to sell agricultural products; their roles in household decision-making over resources; and their access to extension services that enable them to increase their productivity through time-saving innovations. The domain of social empowerment is derived from social capital theory that explains how an individual's relationships and networks along with social norms and trust can provide some type of benefit for the individual (Lin, 1999; Putnam, 2000). Social capital can also be articulated as a community's personal and institutional relationships and networks, and how these enable both increases to an individual's social ties, access to resources, and collective action (Woolcock, 1998; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Lin, 1999). Thus, women's social relationships, the norms relating to familial support and gender within the community, gendered group organization, and the social trust between women farmers and partners or extension practitioners were included as factors that may influence women's participation in the leadership roles. Finally, the domain of psychological empowerment has foundations in the self-efficacy work of Bandura (1995, 1997), who argued that perceived self-efficacy, or the belief that one can do something, influences one's choices, aspirations, effort levels, perseverance, and resilience. This was later integrated into the concept of leadership self-efficacy, which asserts that if a person has confidence that she can make a difference and believes in her abilities, she will be more likely to take on leadership roles (Komives, 2009). Factors in this domain encompass women's leadership self-efficacy, self-confidence in leadership abilities, motivations to participate, as well as the perceived risks, barriers, and achievements related to leadership.

The authors' framework was intended to measure rural women's ability

and freedom of choice to not only participate in local groups and organizations but also engage in leadership roles. For smallholder farming communities, this participation and engagement was related to their empowerment in agriculture and community development as both impact their ability to act in that context.

Purpose & Objectives

To provide a deeper understanding of the spaces for rural women leaders, the primary purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence participation in groups and leadership roles of rural Honduran women in the Western department of Lempira. Specifically, the study sought to (1) describe the economic, psychological, and social factors of empowerment that influence women's group and leadership participation and (2) describe the risk, barriers, and opportunities that affect women's ability to participate in leadership roles.

Methods

A transformative, mixed-methods design was used to frame the study. This design is framed within a transformative theoretical perspective in order to explore inequalities or bring about change in an underrepresented group (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Within a transformative design, the data collection for these two strands can occur concurrently (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), thus quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study occurred in the same phase. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through researcher and enumerator administered surveys, and additional qualitative data were collected through four focus groups. The survey research explored the dimensions of rural women's empowerment in agriculture in order to identify barriers and opportunities related to women's participation in groups

and leadership. The researcher sought to discover common factors that influence women's participation, as well as any correlations among variables between women who do participate and those who do not. Qualitative data provided supportive information for quantitative efforts, and was thus considered to be embedded within the study (Creswell, 2009).

The Western departments of Honduras, one of which comprised the study area, are part of the Feed the Future zone of influence. USAID (2011) identified this population as particularly vulnerable to environmental and economic shocks as well as to the cycle of poverty. Women have been identified as a subgroup with which to work, to avoid further marginalization and maximize development efforts (USAID, 2015). Therefore, the study's target population was rural women who identified as Lenca, one of the nine indigenous communities in Honduras living in the western department of Lempira. The Lenca were chosen so as to focus on one cultural group since social norms and customs that influence women's participation were assumed to be more consistent within the group, reducing the amount of variation in the study. The study participants lived in areas served by non-profit and governmental organizations, hereinafter referred to as partner organizations, working with the Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services (INGENAES) project supported by USAID as part of the Feed the Future initiative. A sampling frame of potential communities was compiled from census data indicating which municipalities were primarily Lenca in the department of Lempira. Two Lenca communities were identified in different zones in Lempira: Posa Verde and San Antonio. Apart from the population being Lenca, these communities were also chosen due to their dependence on subsistence

agriculture and the partner agencies' familiarity with them through extension activities. Access to these communities was also a selection factor, as no public transportation was available and four-wheel drive vehicles were required. Partner agencies assisted the researcher in visiting the communities in order to conduct the study.

A paper-based questionnaire administered to female heads of household utilized open- and close-ended items to collect data for descriptive and evaluative purposes, primarily yielding the quantitative data for the study. The literacy level of the target population and lack of technological access informed the use of face-to-face, orally-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires were based on well-established instruments to gather data on economic, social, and psychological factors that can influence group participation and leadership, thus content validity is considered high. Questions related to household decision-making around production and income generation, influence on decision-making, time allocation, and individual leadership and influence in the community were adapted from the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (Alkire et al., 2013). The Sociopolitical Control Scale (SPCS-R) (Peterson et al., 2006) was used to measure perceived leadership competence, related to psychological empowerment, and was the only latent variable measured using a Likert-type scale. Finally, Grootaert and Van Bastelaer's (2002) questions from the Social Capital Assessment Tool were adapted to explore factors of social empowerment that included confidence and solidarity in the community.

Face validity was established by an expert panel consisting of faculty from [a land grant University] representing the Departments of Agricultural Education and

Communication, The International Center, and the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Global Office. This panel included a native Spanish speaker who reviewed each phase of the instrument. The instrument was pilot-tested with 10 rural women in Western Honduras with similar education levels and communities as the target population. Due to comprehension issues with several constructs, the questionnaire was revised to aid understanding and reduce administration time to under one hour. The only latent scale in the instrument measured leadership competency and due to the small group of pilot-test participants the reliability coefficient was assessed after full administration of the questionnaire. The leadership competence scale was found to be reliable with a post hoc Cronbach's alpha of .78. Other scales were analyzed individually for descriptive purposes. The questionnaire also included open-ended responses that provided qualitative data.

Random, cluster sampling was used in this study to identify households. In both communities, the layout of households was established and the population was used to create clusters. The clusters were randomly sampled, with all units measured in each cluster. The populations of both communities equaled 140 households. Fifty questionnaires were planned to be collected due to time and transportation constraints and forty-nine total questionnaires were completed by female heads of household.

Focus groups were the main qualitative method for collecting descriptive data, along with supporting data collected via open-ended responses from the questionnaire. A focus group protocol was created including instructions for interviewers/focus group facilitators, questions related to leadership and empowerment from the literature, and probes. Participants for the focus group were sampled purposively based on their

willingness to participate, age range, marital status, and participation in community groups. Four focus groups of 6-8 participants, one female and one male per community, were facilitated after the surveys had been completed.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 software yielding descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were reported for the respondents' demographic data and for data from the economic, psychological, and social portions of the questionnaire. Qualitative data from both the focus groups and open-ended responses from the questionnaire were examined using Harding's (2013) thematic analysis process for using codes to analyze focus group data. The recorded focus group discussions were transcribed, summarized, and initial categories identified. Codes were written alongside the transcripts with a revision of a list of categories to follow. Themes and findings were explored in each category relating to gender, leadership, and empowerment constructs and integrated with the quantitative data from the questionnaires during analysis.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Questionnaire respondent demographics are hereto presented. The age range of respondents was 21 to 72, with an average age of 42. Most respondents had either no education (35%) or incomplete primary education (45%). The majority of respondents were either married (63%) or cohabitating with their partner (22%). The number of household members ranged from 2 to 11, with an average household size of

5.5. Female focus group participants included women from a range of demographic attributes including: age, education, and marital status. Male focus group participants were either husbands of female focus group participants or other married or single members of the community. They also represented different age ranges and education levels.

Factors that Influence Women's Participation & Leadership

Economic. Women's roles, how they spend their time, and their access to extension services were factors that influenced women's capacity to participate in and contribute to growth processes that may influence their economic empowerment. Women's self-identity and responsibility as a caregiver arose through both the focus groups and questionnaire findings. The majority of households (73%, $N=49$) included children or grandchildren under the age of 11, ranging from one to four per household. Both men and women in the focus groups discussed how the woman's role was to take care of the children and home, limiting their ability to leave for meetings and trainings.

In addition to childcare, women participated heavily in other reproductive activities, with survey respondents ($N=49$) reporting that they engaged in cultivating crops for family consumption, raising animals, fetching water, fetching wood, cooking, caring for others, cleaning, and sewing. Table 1 displays the average time spent on these activities and represents the entire sample. The activities with the highest numbers of respondents were cooking, raising animals, caring for others, and fetching wood. Apart from raising animals, these activities also had the highest mean hours spent on the task.

Table 1
Time Allocation for Reproductive Activities (N=49)

Variable	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Growing family crops	32	0.5	8	2.23	1.61
Raising animals for consumption	45	0.25	3	0.93	0.64
Fetching water	18	0.25	2	0.67	0.41
Fetching wood	34	0.5	12	2.96	2.65
Cooking	47	0.5	6	3.10	1.30
Caring for others	35	0.5	12	3.09	3.14
Cleaning	29	0.5	4.0	2.20	1.06
Sewing/weaving	18	0.5	8	1.75	1.81

Agriculture was referenced across focus groups, emphasizing its importance to participants' livelihoods. San Antonio women discussed the ability to grow crops and train others in agriculture as something that they valued. This group discussed that it was the men's responsibility to tend to crops, whereas women were responsible for the house. Few women reported participating in agricultural training; however, the aforementioned data revealed

that they did regularly engage in agricultural activities. Decision-making within the household was analyzed to aid in understanding where women's contributions are valued. Here, respondents also reported higher levels of decision-making input for household gardens and raising animals, although fewer respondents participated in selling livestock for income. See tables 2 thru 4 for decision-making related to agriculture within their households.

Table 2
Women's Decision-making in Agriculture – Household Garden (n=47)

Type of decision	Self		Spouse		Joint		Other household member	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
What to grow	10	21.2	19	40.4	17	36.2	1	2.1

Table 3
Women's Decision-making in Agriculture – Crops to Sell (n=22)

Type of decision	Self		Spouse		Joint		Other household member	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
What to grow	3	13.6	13	59.0	6	27.3	n/a	n/a
What to sell	3	13.6	9	40.9	10	45.5	n/a	n/a
How to use income	2	9.0	12	54.5	8	36.4	n/a	n/a

Table 4
Women's Decision-making in Agriculture – Livestock (n=45)

Type of decision	Self		Spouse		Joint		Other household member	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
What to raise	26	57.8	5	11.1	13	28.9	1	2.2
What to sell	15	33.3	3	6.7	10	22.2	1	2.2
How to use income	11	37.9	5	17.2	12	41.4	1	2.2

Psychological. Self-confidence and a sense of self-efficacy are important precursors to action and may explain why individuals with similar abilities and resources differ in actions on their own behalf (Narayan-Parker, 2005). Self-confidence in leadership abilities was discussed in focus groups as a barrier to leadership and group participation, specifically in relation to public speaking and participating in meetings. In the San Antonio focus group, Patricia stated, “we have never been accustomed, so we feel fear to be in a position.” San Antonio women emphasized being timid and the need for training as constraints to holding leadership positions. Quite different from the San Antonio group, Posa Verde women discussed their identities as leaders after they had reflected on the characteristics, abilities, and resources that their leaders exemplified. Daniela from Posa Verde stated, “A woman is always able to perform the role of a leader, in the abilities and characteristics.” Posa Verde women discussed how men and women were equal, but that men had the leadership roles. In this way, women conceptualized leadership to include the social, spiritual, and maternal responsibilities that women carried out in the community.

Gender roles emerged again as a barrier to engaging in leadership during both

women's focus groups; they specifically named marriage as a barrier. Posa Verde respondent Juanita noted “I am a single mother, but in many cases, I have seen many homes that the obstacle they have is that the man says, ‘No you are not going to leave, you are not going to be a leader in the community, and there this is what I order’.” Beyond marriage, Posa Verde and San Antonio women, as well as San Antonio men, commented on how men were more courageous than women in regard to leadership, and this perceived lack of courage served as a barrier to women taking on those roles. This was related to the ability to leave the house or community as well as to physical strength. As Jorge from San Antonio commented, “It is the importance of a man, like they said, of a man, more responsible over all because it's up to them to leave their place for another region or the same region.” The courage or importance of males and their proclivity for leadership roles may also be explained by their physical strength in relation to external threats to safety. As mentioned in the male San Antonio group:

Sometimes they do this (choose men) because the men always feel more courage in ability to travel out of the community.

Therefore, a woman feels like...it is not that she cannot, but she feels fear during the time that we go out to all these places, there is always this problem of crime. (Luis)

Vulnerability of women traveling outside of the community, coupled with their daily tasks within the home, give little opportunity to engage in activities beyond their village. As a result, women may be forced to rely on men's leadership even if they are thought to be capable of serving in

those roles. The discord between perceived ability and opportunity was illuminated through the quantitative results from the leadership competence scale. The scale measured levels of agreement for statements related to working in groups, serving in leadership roles, and participating in leadership tasks. Women reported low levels of participation in leadership roles ($n=36$), yet higher levels of leadership competencies such as leading with their ideas ($n=38$), trying new and challenging tasks ($n=35$), and problem-solving ($n=39$). Table 5 displays frequencies for each scale item.

Table 5
Frequencies for Leadership Competency Scale Items (N=49)

Scale item	Always	Almost always	Almost never	Never
I am often a leader in groups	8	5	14	22
I would prefer to be a leader rather than a follower	20	3	10	16
I would rather have a leadership role when I am involved in group work	20	5	11	13
I can usually organize people to get things done	15	9	9	14
Other people usually follow my ideas	23	15	7	4
I find it very easy to talk in front of a group	20	7	13	9
I like to work on solving a problem myself rather than wait to see if someone else will do it	27	12	6	4
I like trying new things that are challenging to me	24	11	5	9

Social. The domain of social empowerment is presented in the conceptual framework as the network of relationships among people within and outside of a community, the available resources resulting from this network, and the social norms around gender and groups. Across the focus groups, participants discussed community connectedness as something an individual needed in order to become a leader. This manifested as being supported by the people and, inversely, supporting the people in the community. Specific to the female focus groups, both Posa Verde and San Antonio women discussed how leaders should travel

to, and communicate with, people outside the community in order to collaborate and network with institutions if one was to accomplish this type of work. Survey questions that explored women's social networks were included in the group membership sections. The group with the highest level of participation from respondents was the church ($n=39$) with the next highest being the water users' group ($n=19$), and the school-parent group ($n=18$). More gender parity was reported in the religious group and parent group with 86% and 95% reporting equal male and female participation respectively.

San Antonio women and men, as well as Posa Verde men, discussed the need for a women’s group. Women in San Antonio also felt that a men’s group that could work with a women’s group would be beneficial when it comes to completing projects for the community. Further, the creation of an agricultural collective for men and women, wherein the women are valued equally, was an expressed idea:

If you believe that there should be a collective to grow corn and beans, a vegetable garden, a half a hectare of carrots, it is a goal that all of the group is going to speak. The men and the women have the same value to question each other how we are going to do things,

how we are going to sort it out. (Clara)

Therefore, participants acknowledged the need for women’s representation and organized groups as both a space to engage in the community as well as support livelihoods through agriculture. However, in the men’s groups women’s opportunities in agriculture were limited to home gardens without mention of commercial crops or livestock.

Trust, as another factor of the social dimension of empowerment, was reported for outside community groups with whom women interacted. Table 6 depicts responses for the following groups: local government officials, teacher and school officials, extension technicians, police, and employees of NGOs. The highest level of variability in trust was in local government officials with trust levels much higher for other groups.

Table 6
Levels of trust with groups engaged in community (N=49)

	A lot of trust		Some trust		Little trust		No trust	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Local government officials	15	30.6	8	16.3	12	24.5	14	28.6
Teacher/school officials	37	75.5	8	16.3	3	6.1	1	2.0
Extension technicians	30	61.2	9	18.4	7	14.3	3	6.1
Police	30	61.2	11	22.4	5	10.2	2	4.0
Employees of NGOs	28	57.1	10	20.4	9	18.4	2	4.0

Conclusions, Recommendations & Implications

Gender roles crosscut each of the economic, psychological, and social domains of empowerment. Women’s freedoms around participation in community groups and leadership appeared to be tied closely to their perceived domestic and familial responsibilities and abilities. Male participant statements in the focus groups also supported these beliefs around women’s

leadership participation and gender roles. In particular, the barriers to leadership related to the gendered division of labor and access to opportunities were apparent. The gender division that emerged in the data related to decision-making over use of income and domestic responsibilities aligns with previous women’s economic empowerment research from other developing countries (Alkire et al., 2013; Antwal & Bellurkar, 2016; Fonchingong, 2006; Gotschi et al,

2008; Mudege et al., 2015). The amount of time women are required to spend in the home taking care of reproductive tasks and working on productive tasks, as well as how much free time they have available, can influence how they are able to participate in community activities. Women in Posa Verde and San Antonio reported higher decision-making power over their home gardens and raising livestock and less over commercial crops. Therefore, an entry point for women's leadership in agriculture using this approach can be through animal husbandry. Their higher levels of autonomy in this area indicate social acceptance for their decision-making roles. Becoming experts in this area could increase their assets and their leadership abilities as they teach others about best practices. However, domestic responsibilities may still present challenges to participating in trainings. These tasks have also been documented in the literature as barriers to increasing women's economic empowerment through participation in agricultural groups. In this study, both focus group and quantitative data clearly reflected women's primary responsibilities for childcare and other domestic responsibilities. Thus, developing training for women must be purposive in that extension technicians should engage in community visits and talk with a wide variety of people before beginning programming to understand local power dynamics and gender norms. This will support extension efforts in designing trainings that cater to these unique dynamics, leading to trainings that take women's time and ability to reach meeting locations into account. Doing so will allow extension practitioners to further incorporate women into their outreach efforts, increasing women's opportunities for leadership and engagement.

Although animal husbandry presents an opportunity, focus group data revealed

that agricultural knowledge specific to crops was thought to be held primarily by men. Also relating to economic empowerment, both women and men valued leaders having technical abilities related to crops and being able to teach others. Women discussed needing additional training in agriculture and expressed the desire to obtain it. The higher levels of trust with extension technicians may demonstrate that women had fairly positive interactions with them. Therefore, those engaged in extension efforts should also identify ways to engage women in horticultural production, while supporting how their contributions could be more highly valued in this domain. However, attending to the accepted social roles of women in agriculture is also important for extension practitioners. Resistance to engagement in trainings may be due to gender norms in the community; therefore, gender sensitive trainings where women may be able to participate with their partners and given opportunities to engage rather than women's only trainings, may be an option. For example, in San Antonio, female focus group respondents discussed the possibility of an agricultural collective for both men and women. Assessing the receptivity of mixed gender groups when working in communities can present the opportunity for extension services to help create this type of organizational structure.

Leadership skills, relating to the psychological empowerment domain, including managing people and speaking in groups were also discussed as needs in the focus groups. Leadership competency scale items indicated that women had self-efficacy in areas of leadership, yet opportunities to practice and gain self-confidence were lacking. Creating opportunities for women to lead a discussion, teach others a new skill, or share their ideas are ways in which to create more inclusive spaces for practicing leadership. In addition, the female Posa

Verde focus group saw themselves as having leadership abilities and characteristics in their roles with family, friends, and church; therefore, supporting and building upon those leadership identities can increase engagement and participation in groups. For both female focus groups, the participants indicated that the discussion itself served as a way to connect with their leadership abilities, learn about leadership, and participate in a way they had not before. There is evidence of how women's only spaces, either through formal training or self-help groups, can provide an opportunity to work together, share experiences, increase their self-esteem, and become less dependent on men (Chhoeun et al., 2008; Oberhauser & Pratt, 2007; Mudege et al., 2015). In both communities, public meetings tended to be male dominated, apart from the church and parent groups, limiting the psychologically safe public spaces available for women. Men and women from both communities expressed the formation of a women's group as opportunities for increased engagement for women.

Agricultural knowledge and the availability of resources were valued in the communities; therefore, there are many opportunities for extension to work with men and women. However, extension practitioners must be aware of how gender norms in communities can influence who is able to participate in and benefit from projects. Establishing trust and support emerged as important to increasing participation for women leadership roles and the power of expert knowledge and resources should not be ignored for those working in poor, subsistence farming communities.

This research article was produced as part of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and US Government Feed the Future project "Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Extension and Advisory Services" (INGENAES).

Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-LA-14-00008 [www.ingenaes.illinois.edu]. The work was made possible by the generous support of the American people through USAID. The contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States government.

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