



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index



CASE STUDY PROFILE

Bangladesh, Naju

Naju, a 35-year-old divorcée, lives with her 10-year-old daughter in the village of Amtoli, where she has lived all of her life. Naju finished secondary school, passed her completion examination, and began girls' college. She dropped out quickly after marriage, however, both for financial reasons and because her father-in-law prohibited her from continuing her studies. Although Naju primarily grows crops and cultivates fish to support her family, her varied work experience also includes working with insurance companies, doing development work with non-governmental organizations, and teaching.

“The men make the important decisions in our society.”

Naju divorced her husband because he left her to take another wife and mistreated her once he returned. “My daughter is my everything,” Naju explains. For the past 12 years, she has grown rice and almonds on her own land. Three years ago, she began fish cultivation, and she uses the fish for both home consumption and sale. She is able to produce sufficient rice to meet her household's needs and sells both almonds and fish at the market. Naju would like to purchase additional land to grow wheat and chilies, for consumption and sale. She feels that paddy cultivation is her most important agricultural activity and land her most important asset. Naju makes all of the agricultural decisions



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independently because she is a single mother. However, she feels that in dual households, ideally, both husband and wife should be involved in decisionmaking.

While Naju has sufficient income to pay for her basic necessities, she does not have much left over for additional expenses, such as new clothing. She is content that over the past year, her income has increased both from agricultural production and work outside of the home.

Naju has very little free time because she is responsible for all the food-producing and income-generating tasks in her household. If she had more time, she would spend it visiting relatives or reading. In her village, Naju feels that women should focus on household work and animal rearing, whereas men should focus on agricultural work and fish cultivation. Naju sees great value in education. Children, Naju explains, “should help their parents side by side with their education because income will be increased and money will be obtained from this.” Despite the fact that she knows her daughter will go to live with her son-in-law when she is married, and while a son would take care of her in old age, she is thankful and prefers to have a daughter because of the relationship they have.

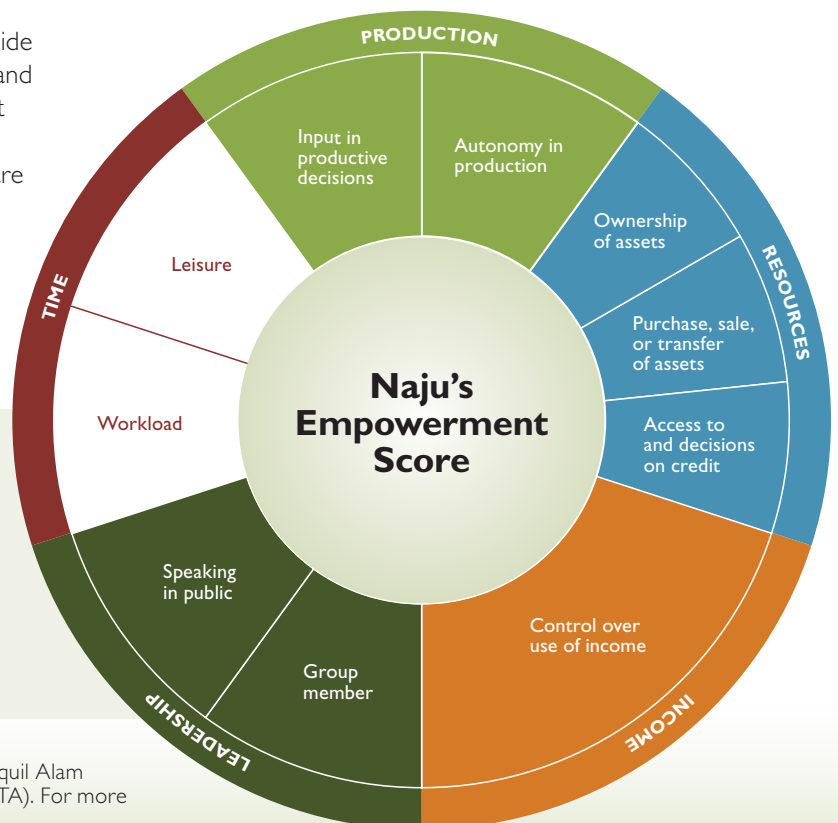
According to Naju, “the men make the important decisions in our society.” Community members listen to

the village’s chairman because of his education and wealth. Naju feels that her own ongoing work in nutrition for non-governmental organizations has earned her respect from community members, explaining “because I have done many things for them, so they will obey my words.” Still, she hopes to become more involved in her community, in particular in a water supply group that might help her deal with the village and household water scarcity issues she faces.

Naju feels that women who work in agriculture and make decisions are powerful “because they themselves grow crops.” In this regard she thinks that people in her community see her as powerful. She sees disempowerment arising from relationships between men and women within the household, specifically husbands not listening to or cooperating with their wives.

Naju aspires to build a solar energy system for her house that provides lighting at night, to further educate her daughter, to buy additional land, and set up a poultry farm. In the next five years, she also hopes to improve her house. She feels that continuously saving and working hard will allow her to make improvements in her life.

Naju is empowered according to the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index. In the Index diagram, the outer ring identifies the domains. The shaded segments of the figure below show the indicators in which Naju 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.