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Monitoring changes in intra-household decision-making and evaluating its impact: A toolkit

In this IOB policy brief we introduce a toolkit for monitoring changes in intra-household decision-making and evaluating its impact. The toolkit, the manual and an innovative behavioural exercise are available online (Links are included at the end of this brief).

Cooperation between husband and wife – the main decision-makers in agricultural households – is often hindered by traditional roles and responsibilities, as well as norms and customs rooted in patriarchy. Women in this way are often side-lined when strategic decisions are made about the household farm. Increasingly it is being recognized that this intra-household state of affairs is part of the reason why smallholder household farming systems – the dominant agricultural systems in developing contexts – are not efficient and characterised by significant gender inequities. In response, an increasing number of interventions and policies are devised to change the way spouses in agricultural households collaborate and make decisions. Knowing if, and to what extent, such interventions cause changes is not only scientifically interesting, but also essential to be able to build on good practice and contribute to more efficient, sustainable and equitable smallholder farming.

Purpose

The toolkit is meant as a reference guide and as a collection of science-based field-tested tools from which organisations who address inefficiencies and inequities in smallholder household farming can pick to set up a monitoring framework and/or an impact evaluation.

The toolkit is specifically designed to monitor and evaluate changes in the way spouses in dyadic agricultural households in rural developing contexts marked by a patriarchal norm system make decisions and their effect on cooperation between spouses, on the efficiency of their household farm system and on the equitability of the allocation of costs and benefits related to household farming between spouses.

The toolkit starts from the program and monitoring set up of the [Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung](#) but can be flexibly adapted to the needs of specific programs, contexts or organisational set up.

“With this toolkit we have a comprehensive framework that makes us capable of consistently and rigorously monitoring progress and evaluating the impact of our current program, and any future program.”

Tobias Voigt, Monitoring Evaluation Manager at the Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung

The origin of the toolkit

The toolkit assembles field-tested, science- and evidence-based background information, resources, instruments, and tools based on a scientifically designed randomised control trial that was organised as part of an [European Union’s Horizon 2020](#) supported research project conducted from 2016 to 2018 by the author of this IOB policy brief. The toolkit is co-developed by the IOB researcher who conducted the randomised control trial and the Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung.

The randomised control trial was set up to evaluate the impact of the introduction of a participatory way of intrahousehold decision-making in agricultural households through a program comprising interventions with differential intensity, called the [Gender Household Approach](#), developed and implemented by the Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung (HRNS) in Uganda and Tanzania (described in detail in section 2.2. in the [Manual available online](#)). With a participatory way of intrahousehold decision-making we mean that household members, especially spouses, consult with each other and collaborate on issues related to production, resource allocation and consumption in the household farm; which, theoretically, is expected to stimulate cooperation and engender more equal bargaining power between spouses, from which more efficient and more equitable household outcomes are to follow.

The HRNS Gender Household Approach offered the opportunity to study the extent to which the introduction of participatory intrahousehold decision-making caused changes in decision-making by spouses, the extent to which it stimulated cooperation and equity, and the extent to which agriculture related household outcomes became more efficient, more sustainable and more equitable as a result.

Many of the instruments and data collection tools in this toolkit have been specifically designed or adapted from other surveys to be used for the impact evaluation. Some of the instruments and data collection tools originate from monitoring tools of the Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung. Their origin implies all instruments and data collection tools assembled in the toolkit not only have been thoroughly pre-tested but also have been applied in the field and used as the basis for the analysis of impact. The co-development by the IOB researcher and Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung ensures the toolkit functions for research, monitoring and evaluation and programmatic purposes.

The content of the toolkit

The toolkit compiles the elements that can make up a monitoring and evaluation framework. It includes the theory of change on which a program with interventions of differential intensity that introduces participatory intrahousehold decision-making for more efficient and equitable household farming outcomes, similar to the HRNS Gender Household Approach, could be based. It defines the key outcomes that can be expected from the introduction of participatory intrahousehold decision-making and recommends key outcome indicators. It proposes different instruments, data collection tools and methods to monitor progress towards key outcomes, but more importantly to evaluate the impact on key outcomes. The toolkit lists the different questions that can be included in the different instruments to inform the key outcome indicators of interest, all the while explaining how the

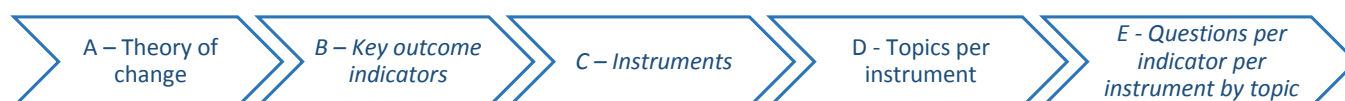
indicators should be constructed from the data collected. We are confident about the construct validity of the questions and indicators because of their scientific base and field application; besides, many of the indicators are commonly used in the literature and in programs, and comparable across studies. The toolkit includes innovative exercises, inspired by lab-in-the-field experiments, that can be used for assessing intrahousehold joint problem solving, investment, and sharing behaviour, and for learning as well.

How to use the toolkit

A first step is defining what the program does and is able to achieve, whereby a *theory of change*, informed by the one in the toolkit is a key feature.

Secondly, once it is clear what your program can and cannot achieve given its set up, target groups, scope and the context in which it is implemented, and a theory of change is drafted, the toolkit will guide in identifying the *key outcomes* to monitor or evaluate, and suggest a set of *key outcome indicators*.

Thirdly, the toolkit proposes a number of *methods, instruments and data collection tools* that may be needed to monitor or evaluate. The selection of these will depend on the scope and budget of the program and its context.



Fourthly, once the methods, data collection tools, and key outcome indicators are decided upon, the toolkit can be consulted to find the *appropriate science-based field-tested questions* that should be incorporated in the data collection tools to be able to measure the key outcome indicators. The toolkit provides the *instructions for calculating the key outcome indicators* as well.

Practical example

How can the toolkit work for you in practice? Just an example: Imagine your organisation will start the implementation of a program comprising interventions with differential intensity that aims to change intrahousehold decision-making in farming households, quite similar to the HRNS Gender Household Approach, and, as the Monitoring & Evaluation person, you are responsible to set up an appropriate system for a mid- and end-term impact evaluation. Together with the program team, you will think the program through, go back to its theoretical basis and, if it has not been drafted yet, you will draft the pathways of change of the program inspired by *theory of change* included in the toolkit (sheet 'A – Theory of change' in the toolkit). A chart that visualises the logical pathways following from the different features incorporated in the program will enable to determine what *key outcomes* can be expected from the program; an exercise the program team possibly already went through at the design stage of the program. Let say you and the program team, after consulting the sheet 'B – Key outcome indicators' in the toolkit, agree that one of the key outcomes is *shared decision-making by spouses about strategic household expenditures*.

“ We knew what we wanted to achieve with the Gender Household Approach but to see its pathways of change visualised in a flowchart makes it easy to understand why and how we expect the key outcomes we expect; and to explain that to others as well.”

Britta Deutsch, Program Manager
Knowledge Management at the Hanns R.
Neumann Stiftung, commenting on the
theory of change chart

From the toolkit you can get inspiration for the *design of your impact evaluation* from sheet ‘C – Instruments’, which will need to fit within the possibilities of your organisation, the program and the available budget. You might decide to use a difference-in-difference method to evaluate the impact of an awareness raising activity incorporated in the program as compared to not having been exposed to the program if a randomly phased design is infeasible. As the targeted couples volunteer to participate in the awareness raising activity you will need to *combine difference-in-difference with a matching procedure* to address the possible selection bias linked to the self-selection by couples who volunteered – thus may be a select type of couples which, from the start, may be different from couples in a control group. Your method of choice, difference-in-difference with matching, implies the need for baseline data on couples’ and individual spouses’ characteristics for matching. It also implies you need data to construct the key outcome indicators at base-, mid- and endline among couples who participated in the awareness raising activity and among couples without program exposure for the difference-in-difference analysis. You could decide that the more intensive treatment of the program, that follows for a selection of couples who went through the less intensive awareness raising activity, can be randomly encouraged among the latter, enabling the assessment of impact of the intensive treatment as compared to awareness raising activity based on a *randomised encouraged design*. For the impact of the intensive treatment as compared to no program exposure the randomised encouraged design will need to be *complemented with matching* to address the possible selection bias linked to the couples’ self-selection into the initial awareness raising activity. Because of the matching, baseline data on couples’ and individual spouses’ characteristics is needed, also in the group receiving the intensive treatment; as well as mid- and endline data to construct the key outcome indicators.

The toolkit provides the list of survey questions in the sheet ‘E - Questions per indicator per instrument by topic’ that can be included in the base-, mid-, and endline data collection tools to enable the measurement and comparison of the key outcomes across the intensive treated group, the group who has received the less intensive awareness raising treatment, and the control group who was not exposed to the program. In your case, for the key outcome used as an example, you could have opted to focus on the *percentage of households making decisions about major expenditures for the household jointly* as the key outcome indicator. In the survey conducted among individual spouses, you will thus include the question, if a decision about major expenditures for the household – like, for instance, for repairing the house, buying a motorcycle, bicycle, television, or cattle - was made in the course of last three months, *who took that decision. If husband and wife agree they jointly made that decision they count as a household taking decisions about major household expenditures jointly.*

Or else, imagine your organisation supporting coffee farming households did not manage to procure funds for a full-fledged program yet, but decided to keep mainstreaming the importance of reaching out to men and women in its activities by raising the awareness about this among its staff, field partners and farmer leaders. Your organisation obviously wants to keep track of what those efforts produce as results, more particularly on key outcomes such as *joint planning and decision-making on farming and specifically intrahousehold investment behaviour* (sheet ‘B - Key outcome indicators’). As your organisation is awaiting funds, budgets might be tight, which could create the opportunity

for you as the Monitoring & Evaluation person to suggest to *implement or roll out the mainstreaming randomly across areas*, which essentially comes down to a randomised control trial (sheet 'C – Instruments'). In that case, collecting endline data is necessary to construct the key outcome indicators, like for instance *the extent to which the couple, the husband, respectively wife, invests in the common household farm by allocating their available resources to agricultural labour and inputs* as the indicator for joint planning and decision-making on farming. Based on the key outcomes identified for the mainstreaming, you can consult the toolkit to develop your data collection tool, in which case the *intrahousehold investment exercise* (instructions for which are provided in *Instrument C - Joint problem solving, investment and sharing exercises*) can be played among treated and non-treated groups of couples; from which the key outcome indicators of interest can be derived as instructed. By playing the *intrahousehold investment exercise the extent to which couples, husbands, and wives invest in the common household farm by allocating their available resources to agricultural labour and inputs* as a result of the mainstreaming program can be assessed.

Online

[The toolkit, the manual and the joint problem solving, investment and sharing exercises can be downloaded here.](https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/iob/publications/analyses-and-policy-briefs/apb-2018/apb-28/)

[\(https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/iob/publications/analyses-and-policy-briefs/apb-2018/apb-28/\)](https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/iob/publications/analyses-and-policy-briefs/apb-2018/apb-28/)

Suggested citations for the IOB Policy Brief, Toolkit, Manual, and the Joint problem solving, investment and sharing exercises:

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