



Women Empowerment in Niger: from Markets to Households to Communities

VAM Gender and Market Study #11
2017

The *Zero Hunger Challenge* emphasizes the importance of strengthening economic empowerment in support of the Sustainable Development Goal 2 to *double small-scale producer incomes and productivity*. The increasing focus on resilient markets can bring important contributions to sustainable food systems and build resilience. Participation in market systems is not only a means for people to secure their livelihood, but it also enables them to exercise agency, maintain dignity, build social capital and increase self-worth. Food security analysis must take into account questions of gender-based violence and discrimination in order to deliver well-tailored assistance to those most in need.

WFP's Nutrition Policy (2017-2021) reconfirms that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential to achieve good nutrition and sustainable and resilient livelihoods, which are based on human rights and justice. This is why gender-sensitive analysis in nutrition programmes is a crucial contribution to achieving the SDGs. The VAM *Gender & Markets Initiative* of the WFP Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa seeks to strengthen WFP and partners' commitment, accountability and capacities for gender-sensitive food security and nutrition analysis in order to design market-based interventions that empower women and vulnerable populations. The series of regional *VAM Gender and Markets Studies* is an effort to build the evidence base and establish a link to SDG 5 which seeks to *achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*.

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List of Acronyms

3PA	: Three-Pronged Approach
3N	: Nigeriens feed Nigeriens initiative (<i>Initiative Les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens</i>)
C2C	: Communes de Convergence
CRS	: Catholic Relief Services
ENISED	: National study for the evaluation of socioeconomic and demographic indicators (<i>Étude Nationale d'Évaluation d'Indicateurs Socio-Économiques et Démographiques</i>)
FAO	: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organizations
FFA	: Food assistance For Assets
GBV	: Gender-Based Violence
GER	: Gross Enrolment Rate
HEA	: House Economy Approach
HIV/AIDS	: Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
ICA	: Integrated Context Analysis
IGA	: Income-Generating Activities
NER	: Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
P4P	: Purchase for Progress
PCP	: Participative community planning (<i>Planification Communautaire Participative</i>)
PSME	: Livelihood-based seasonal programming (<i>Programmation Saisonnière basée sur les Moyens d'Existence</i>)
RBD	: Regional Bureau Dakar (WFP's regional bureau for West and Central Africa)
RGPH	: General census for population and habitation (<i>Recensement Général de la Population et Habitat</i>)
RWEE	: Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women programme
SCI	: Save the Children International
STD	: Sexually Transmissible Diseases
UNFPA	: United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	: United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	: United States Agency for International Development
VAM	: Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping unit of WFP
WEAI	: Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WFP	: World Food Programme

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Executive Summary

Women's empowerment is a complex subject to grasp, starting with the way it is apprehended. Since the perception of gender relations is influenced by culture and ideologies, the definition of women's empowerment is highly tractable and varies depending on a given context. It thus appears necessary to use a wide and open approach which takes into account the value systems and ideas of targeted societies and, therefore, their intrinsic relationship to women's empowerment.

For village populations of this study (Allakaye, Tahoua region, and Dan Goudaou, Zinder), women's empowerment is first and foremost the strengthening of women's economic capacity. In this context, the theme is often perceived as women's ability to support their husband in providing for the family, thus reflecting the couple's complementary vision as well as the predominance of collective or family interests over individual interests. Although surveyed people do not spontaneously consider the community empowerment, it is still much valued by populations targeted by this study.

Processing and measuring the empowerment concept is challenging because of its many economic, social and political dimensions, or based on WFP's segmentation in market spheres, the community and the household. Whereas dividing empowerment in spheres has a definite theoretical interest, in all practicality there are several inter-relations and overlapping between the spheres. Programming women empowerment-based interventions should thus take into account the issues, challenges and opportunities in each of these spheres, and the manner in which they affect the others. In patriarchal, Muslim and rural societies such as those under study, women's empowerment challenges society models or gender-based roles throughout all the spheres. Thus the initial issues and challenges noted relate to the respect of traditions and, to another extent, power relationships. Depending on whether perceptions and attitudes evolve or resist a change in women's roles (and implicitly men's), empowerment consequences fluctuate between the stigmatisation, if not rejection, of women by their husbands and/or members of the community and, at the extreme opposite, the strengthening of women's image and influence. In the market sphere, women's empowerment also faces the challenge of access to means, in terms of capital, production assets, knowledge and know-how, as well as information networks. In the market sphere, women empowerment's direct issues relate to survival and the development of their families, community, and social status.

With consideration to such elements, the market sphere is a more neutral and legitimate entry point to women's empowerment (as it relates to the fulfilment of primary needs) than the household or community spheres. However, with regard to the culture which weighs primarily heavily in these two spheres, it is essential to *tie* them to the strategical and operational approach of women's empowerment in the markets. It is thus necessary to involve men and local leaders in these processes. Their involvement and adhesion are fundamental, as these actors may be either allies or fierce opponents to women's empowerment.

At the same time and at the community level, it is also important to recognize and strengthen the role of women associations and groupings. These contribute in fact to overcoming the natural barrier to women's empowerment through group strength and the new "models" they offer to women's roles

in the public space, to their awareness actions and to the results of their collective actions, which are bound to become visible and appreciated by the community over time. Women groups constitute also empowerment catalysts as they help women overcome the economic and technical challenges they face in the market, in professional trainings, the pooling of capital resources and/or the development of income-generating collective activities. But since these local groups have limited means, the support of international organizations enable their actions to be more efficient and sustainable.

The central question for this research was to find out whether women's empowerment in the markets lead, or not, to their empowerment in the household and community spheres. A kind of empowerment transfer from the market sphere to the household and community may be observed: the main vector of such transfer is women's income and, to a lesser extent, knowledge acquired. Resulting consequences are multiple: they include the improvement of living conditions (notably in terms of food and nutritional security and health), the ramping up of children education, the increase in the development and resilience of communities and, finally, the strengthening of social and family cohesion. Such women « contributions » earn them the respect and recognition of their husband and of the community and, as a consequence, a relative increase in their capacity of influence within the household and the community. Their self-esteem and feeling of well-being, which are important "subjective" variables for women's empowerment, is as well enhanced.

In contrast, there are few changes observed in women's capacity to self-determination within the household. In the targeted cultural context, women empowerment opportunities may appear as limited in this sphere, observed from the outside. Either women show little or no interest in their self-determination within the household, or men are opposed to it, in which case their wives must resign themselves to submitting to their spouse.

Nevertheless, the conjunction of women's empowerment in the community and in the market gradually contributes to the evolution of women's role and place in society. The development of a relative, multidimensional virtuous circle is manifested, in which women's place in the community (including in the political sphere) and, to some extent, in the household become increasingly more important. From the image of women who break social and marital rules, women who are active in the community gradually benefit from a social status and an image that may be envied by other women and, in some cases, their husband. This further facilitates the empowerment of women involved but, also, creates a ripple effect for the empowerment of other women in the community.

These processes, however, still hardly relate to young mothers, as children care remains viewed as a fundamental duty and function of women. After several children, however, the hardship of meeting the family needs may open the door to mothers' empowerment in the markets, as it enables them to support their husband in providing for the household.

Husband roles require a special attention in women empowerment processes. First off, it is the case for their awareness and involvement in processes, in order to support their wives in the development of their new activities and their new place in society, and eventually in managing their increasing tasks. In fact, considering that the evolution of women's role and place induces the evolution of gender relationships, women empowerment interventions must take into account masculinity issues and prevent any adverse impact in this regard. By definition, the evolution of gender-based roles may not

occur in a “uni-gendered” manner. It is thus important to redefine gender relationships in a joint manner between men and women.

In conclusion, in developing rural contexts with a strong patriarchal culture, economic gains and gains in image and social status constitute the two most important levers of women empowerment, to the extent of what is allowed or valued within the context. To be efficient, these levers must be activated gradually, in the mid- and long-term, among and with both men and women of targeted communities.





1. Introduction

1.1. The Gender and Markets Initiative

“Everywhere in the world, it is mostly women who are responsible for their family’s food security and nutritional balance. However, women and girls are still facing discrimination when it comes to accessing and controlling food – from the production to the consumption stage, improving their livelihoods, and accessing education and healthcare”.¹

WFP’s *Gender and Markets: women’s empowerment in West-African markets* initiative arose from this premise and the consensus that women’s economic empowerment is beneficial to the entire community and the household. Launched in September 2015 by the *Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM)* unit of the *Regional Bureau of Dakar (RBD)*, with support from USAID, the initiative seeks to contribute to the humanitarian community effort in providing gender-equitable programming, reducing gender-based violence (GBV) and promoting women’s empowerment. To this end, the *Gender and Markets* initiative aims to strengthen data collection and analysis on the roles, challenges and empowerment dynamics of men and women in West-African markets.

A first series of studies was conducted in eight West African countries in 2015-2016. The conclusions of Phase 1 of this initiative reveal that West-African women and men are generally active in agricultural value chains, but that they tend to assume different roles and responsibilities at each level. Women are disproportionately affected by inequalities in the region, notably access to productive resources,

markets, capital, livelihoods, etc. In fact, results reflect the necessity to introduce socioeconomic indicators in the comparative gender analysis to better understand vulnerabilities and empowerment. It is further recognized that there is a need for a broader gender definition that would include other cross-stratifiers based on the “age, gender and diversity” approach. Phase 1 results also establish variations between different countries, depending on national and local contexts. The current study is conducted on Niger, a landlocked country in the Sahel region.

❖ The Niger Context

In Niger, 1.3² to 2 million³ out of the 17 million inhabitants are affected by food insecurity and it is estimated that more than 300 000 people are in movement. Challenges related to epidemics, chronic malnutrition, floods and migration influx exacerbate the context and increase local population needs.

The adoption of a gender-specific⁴ approach is particularly relevant in this country, as Niger ranks at the bottom of the world list of gender equality: according to the 2015 gender equality index, it ranks 157th out of 159 classified countries. Women are more affected than men by food insecurity, with rates of 51 percent versus 49 percent, respectively.⁵

Largely governed by religion and Muslim tradition, Niger is characterized by a traditional patriarchal culture, particularly in the rural environment. Gender relations assign a role to women that is essentially centred on managing the household, and confer to men the obligation to provide food to the

¹ WFP. 2015. *Politique en matière de Problématique Hommes-Femmes 2015-2020*, Rome, page 8

² <http://www.unocha.org/niger>.^[SEP]

³ WFP internal source

⁴ A gender-specific approach consists in integrating to any problem analysis – and in the answer provided – differences between men and women (needs, interests, capacities, situations, roles), men-women inequalities, as well as gender-based violence (GBV).

⁵ WFP Niger Country brief, February 2017.^[SEP]

family, lead the household, and take part in community life – a sphere strictly reserved for men.

Gender-based roles are reflected in the unequal access to school by girls and boys, and in the proportion of men in the labour market: the primary school Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) is 82.1 percent for boys and 70.2 percent for girls. Linked to these figures is women illiteracy propensity which is 67.8 percent against 75.5 percent for men⁶. The Niger population occupation rate⁷ is 80.1 percent for men and 36 percent for women. Finally, it is interesting to note that 93 percent of agricultural households are led by men.⁸ More information on Niger's gender profile is provided in Annex 2.

According to results of the base assessment of the joint pilot Programme “Accelerating progress towards the strengthening of women's economic empowerment in the rural environment” (RWEE programme which WFP is part of), conducted in the Falwel municipality, women's empowerment in agriculture remain weak compared to men's. Using the *Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index* (WEAI – see Annex 3), the assessment reveals that women's empowerment is up to 45 percent in the five villages targeted by the Programme and at 37 percent in control villages. The main variables in the lack of women's empowerment, according to WEAI, are their low participation levels in decision-making and their lack of access to resources. The Gender Parity Index (other WEAI component which indicates how many women have achieved parity with their male counterparts in the household), is up to 0.895, with a 0.908 index in intervention villages and a 0.882 index in control villages (in other words, parity is more significant in intervention villages).⁹

1.2 Phase 1 results of the “Gender and Market” study in Niger

In the context of the first phase of the *Gender and Market* initiative, a study was conducted in Niger in 2016 by the University of South Florida. The research consisted in the case study of three villages, close to the Loga region (Dosso region), that are beneficiaries of WFP's *Food for Assets* (FFA) programme.

❖ Targeted villages and WFP's current interventions

These villages are characterized by populations' migration strategies. These movements have become necessary for these communities' survival, as the hostile environment they live in is increasingly affected by soil impoverishment.

Male migrations may cause an acute social and physical vulnerability for women and mothers. It is particularly so when remittance they receive become insufficient. Women's migration may also generate social and physical vulnerability for them. This is notably the case for household-helpers who are often economically or physically abused without any possible recourse. Married women who migrate are exposed to sanctions by society for having left their husband for several months, being even accused of out-of-wedlock sexual activities and of contracting sexually transmissible diseases (STDs).

It is in such context that WFP's FFA programme was introduced, with the objective of employing groups of inhabitants on water retention construction sites created for the benefit of the three communities. Participants to the Programme were chosen by the households (one person per household); most participants were women.

The study of Phase 1 of the *Gender and Markets*

⁶ Niger's Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Protection of Children, UN Women. 2017. *Niger Gender Profile*

⁷ The employment or occupation rate represents the ratio between the population with an employment in a given economy (employed active population) and the population in working age. It is thus the complement to 1 of the unemployment rate. Source: *Ibid.*

⁸ Livestock Data Innovation in Africa BRIEF Joint brief of the World Bank, FAO, ILRI, AU-IBAR with support from the Gates Foundation Issue 1 • January 2011.

⁹ WFP, IFAD, FAO, UN Women. 2017. Bi-annual report of the RWEE programme in Niger, pages 13-14

initiative establishes the FFA programme impact on targeted communities focusing on gender relations, notably women's empowerment, and programme's outcome such as food security, health, education, protection and resilience.

❖ WFP's Food for Asset programme impact and outcome

The first major impact of the FFA Programme was to reduce, if not eliminate altogether, women's need to go on seasonal migrations. This was made possible thanks to a combination of the two components of the programme, that is, the income-generation by the villagers and the introduction of school canteens, for the benefit of children as well as families. Following WFP's intervention, economic migrations have been largely limited to men.¹⁰

There are many consequences at the economic and social level, for households as well as for communities, and positive consequences outweigh negative ones. The elimination of women's need to migrate strengthen the family's cohesion and stability, particularly children schooling. In fact, children used to migrate with their mothers, which disrupted their schooling; only few of them started school again upon their return. Furthermore, according to the report, the absence of a formal educational framework and adoption of an unstable lifestyle led some children to give in to juvenile delinquency and petty crime.

The elimination of women's need to migrate mitigated by the FFA programme is also a step forward in the protection of women and girls. This enabled the maintenance of marriage, thus preserving women from extreme physical and social vulnerability arising from divorce. Finally, household helpers are no longer exposed to the abuses they were victims of during migration.

The participation of women to the FFA programme

has increased their work load: they worked at the same time on WFP's construction site, and had to manage cultivation traditionally handled by men, while being still responsible for the family needs and domestic chores.

The second major programme impact was the economic advantages generated by participants' salaries and its related improvement in living conditions. Thanks to their revenues, women report being better able to respond to their family's medical needs and adopt better hygiene practice in their household, while dedicating most of their income to basic consumption needs. Moreover, money earned allows families to build important cereal reserves – a priority for surveyed people. This enables households to not only provision better foods during the challenging months, but also to avoid contracting loans to provide for their primary needs. This helps break up the vicious cycle of debt repayment, which deprives families of part of their harvest to refund loans, thus generating food insecurity the following year.¹¹

If women's role has been altered and they generate today an income, the study specifies that this does not translate into a gain in influence or control within the household, notably on finances and the capacity to bargain. Women surveyed highlight the fact that in their culture, women's empowerment is more based on their age and social status within the household. Thus, the elderly women in polygamous households are more likely to exercise an influence on the household finances. Young married women who just integrated their in-law families are, on the other hand, incapable of controlling their work load or negotiate priorities within the household.¹²

If the lack of progress in the control of household finances by women participants may be perceived as a failure in women's empowerment, if empowerment is linked to this variable, it is relative

¹⁰ Boyer M, Deubel T., 2016-2017. *Gender, Markets and Women's Empowerment, Sahel Region*, World Food Programme, page 35

¹¹ *Ibid*, page 36

¹² *Ibid*, page 33

or not always the case depending on authors of the study. In Zarma societies, it is considered “normal” that men continue controlling the household’s finances, even if women contribute to revenues. For these women, the gain in empowerment is not situated at this level but rather in the recognition of their work and their recognition to the family economy (their domestic tasks being usually ignored). This modifies the relation of these women to their spouses and it gratifies them. According to surveyed women, to be heard, recognized and considered constitutes a major advancement. This increases their self-esteem and self-pride. The sense of value among women can be observed in the household but in the community as well: thanks to their participation to a community project, women report now feeling like “real citizens”.¹³

1.3 Objective and methodology

❖ Research Theme and Questions

The preliminary results which found that women’s empowerment on markets do not necessarily translate into influence gains within households, as per the adopted definition, caught the VAM’s attention. Its endeavour, pursuant to WFP’s fight against hunger objectives, is to restore women’s major role in the nutrition process, in conformity with WFP’s strategic objective to promote “decision-making by women and girls (...) in the domain of food security and nutrition in the household, the community and society”¹⁴, and with regard to RBD’s objective to empower women through market-based approaches.

It was thus decided to dedicate the second and current theme of research in Niger to the way in which women’s empowerment on the markets translates into and is transferred to the household and community spheres. At the same time, the objective is to highlight in parallel the consequences

of the potential by-products of that empowerment.

So, in order to find out how women’s empowerment on the market translates into households and communities, WFP established the following seven research questions:

1. How does empowerment translate from one sphere to another? ^[1]_[SEP]
2. What dimensions must be specifically taken into account at the household level/in the lives of women and the youth to measure their empowerment?
3. Are there specific barriers that prevent economic empowerment from influencing empowerment in other spheres? ^[1]_[SEP]
4. How can WFP support this global empowerment process? ^[1]_[SEP]
5. What are the contributions of women associations and youth associations? ^[1]_[SEP]
6. Does age play a role in the process of transferring empowerment from one sphere to another? ^[1]_[SEP]
7. What are also the consequences and by-products of this sectoral/multi-sectoral empowerment? And the protection challenges that could be linked to it?

1.4 Definition and reflexions on empowerment

The empowerment concept is complex and widely debated and, thus, varies from one humanitarian or development organization to another. This section aims to provide an overview of the various definitions used and highlight the impact of the definition on research methodology.

❖ Concept definitions

Literature offers many definitions of empowerment.

¹³ *Ibid*, pages 36-37

¹⁴ WFP. 2015. *Op. cit.*, page 16

The Sahel study-Phase 1 report offers a summary in its “Literature review of ‘empowerment’”¹⁵ section. It is noteworthy to highlight the distinction made by Amartya Sen between the “power of action” empowerment component (*agency*, which he defines as the capacity of action over things we value and for which we have reasons to value) and the component relating to the institutional environment which offers people the ability to successfully exercise their power of action.¹⁶

The definition adopted by WFP’s Policy on Men-Women Issues more or less acknowledges these two components while adding the notion that women’s empowerment is relative to men, with regard to the organization’s equality objectives: “women empowerment is the process which enables women to make choices, access power, have options, be able to control their own lives and act. It is an objective in itself. To achieve empowerment, not only women must have the same capacities of action and the same access to available resources and opportunities as men do, but they must also be able to use these rights and capacities to make choices and decisions as full members of society, on an equal footing with men.”¹⁷

In another WFP definition contained in the Purchase for Progress programme, Empowerment is defined as a “series of processes and changes where women and men action is widespread. These are the processes by which the capacity to make strategic life choices and exercise an influence is acquired by those who were denied it until then.”¹⁸ This definition presents a double advantage when it comes to empowerment components: it puts in the forefront at the same time marginalised people (“those who were denied it until then”) and the two sexes (“women and men action is widespread”) –

which is not often quoted.

Finally, it is interesting to highlight the English corresponding term of empowerment which may be translated as “power strengthening”. This term has a slightly different meaning than “*autonomisation*”, the French translation, which contains a notion of comparison or relativity, as autonomy must be acquired in relation to “others”. Whereas in the *empowerment* concept, the process appears to be absolute for a given individual, even if it “can” relate to third parties – by freeing oneself from someone else’s power or by pooling one’s power with others’.

This first reflexion lays the ground on the way women’s empowerment ought to be approached: in a relative or absolute manner; at the individual or collective level.

❖ Empowerment approaches and methodological implications

The approach to empowerment reflects a number of values and ideas. Thus, beyond the socioeconomic nature of gender dynamics, defining and influencing women’s empowerment constitutes an ideological exercise. The following points are here offered to invite a reflexion on approaches that may be adopted and, in the context of the present research, on their resulting methodological implications.

Intrinsic and extrinsic Empowerment

The empowerment concept widely varies from one cultural, religious and socioeconomic context to another. Thus, we must determine if we wish to measure empowerment as people understand and value it (intrinsic empowerment) or based on important criteria from other cultures (extrinsic empowerment) but which targeted communities do

¹⁵ Boyer M, Deubel T., *op. cit.*, page 65

¹⁶ Alkire S., Meinzen-Dick R., Peterman A., Quisumbing A. R., Seymour G., Vaz A., 2012. The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index, *IFPRI Discussion Paper 01240*, page 4

¹⁷ WFP. 2015. Definition adapted from: Van den Bold, M., Quisumbing, A.R. and Gillespie, S. 2013. Women’s Empowerment and Nutrition: an Evidence Review. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington

¹⁸ WFP Purchase for Progress (P4P) programme, Global Gender Strategy, Study Phase 1 Ghana p.60

not necessarily value.¹⁹

Generally, and by nature, humanitarian and development organizations use variables of “extrinsic” empowerment, established in conformity with objectives they pursue, notably because they cannot afford adapting their tools to each specific context and to comparative ends between the various countries. These variables are sometimes considered as objective, exhaustive and “just”, even though they may be distant from any cultural and ideological context.

In order to be sensitive to the context, but also to WFP’s objectives and comparison needs, the current research attempts to capture inasmuch as possible intrinsic and extrinsic variables of women’s empowerment. The analysis of endogenous questions has notably been made using widely open questions, in the beginning of interviews and when introducing each new theme in discussions. Data collection on extrinsic (and sometimes intrinsic) variables relied on the use of multiple-choice questions and closed-ended questions.

Individual or collective empowerment?

Women’s empowerment is usually measured at the individual level. This reflects the perception that it is centred on women rather than on gender relations.

The English translation of “*autonomisation*”, empowerment (the “strengthening of power”), allows for the treatment of empowerment as an individual and/or also collective phenomenon. In this case, it would be about strengthening the power to act as a group; a dynamic in which each one’s power is strengthened, while redistributing and/or pooling everyone’s power. This approach would be so much more relevant on the African continent where most societies are governed by *collectivist* ideas and lifestyles (as reflected by the African Charter of People’s and Populations’ Rights).

In this study, this point was treated minimally, in accordance with the research’s conceptual and temporal framework. Two questions were asked during the individual interviews, in order to verify the hypothesis on men and women capacity-building rather than only women’s. Most surveyed people had a limited understanding of the question. Some answers, however, provide elements to consider regarding men’s role in these processes.

In conclusion, the definition of women’s empowerment is tractable. Beyond the phenomenon’s social nature, ideological and even political challenges may arise from it. The adopted definition necessarily bears consequences on the approach of projects implemented by humanitarian and development organizations. It is thus fundamental to adopt as wide and open a definition as possible.

1.5 Research methodology

Research work was conducted in a five-week span, between August and September 2017. It consists in a secondary literary review and in a case study based on two communes from Niger. The field survey as such was conducted during six days (three days per village) by two teams of four surveyors trained beforehand (two men and two women per team), a Research assistant and the Main Researcher – WFP’s Consultant.

❖ Case study tools and sampling

Approach and tools

The case study was developed using an association of quantitative tools to qualitative tools (mostly) to: satisfy WFP’s need for statistical data; fulfil the need to get a deeper understanding of local dynamics; and to ensure the sociocultural context is taken into account. Developed tools include individual interviews, focus groups and a short survey of local female traders on the local or nearest-by market.

¹⁹ Alkire S., Meinzen-Dick R., Peterman A., Quisumbing A. R., Seymour G. & Vaz A., *op. cit.*, page 5

Targeting and Sampling

The case study targets were, by priority order:

- Women merchants²⁰
- Couples (husband and spouse generating income)
- Women and youth associations
- Local leaders
- Other resource people relevant to the survey (within target villages or among active international organizations)

The sampling of women merchants and couples was established using the following criteria and conditions:

- Variation of age groups
- Variation of marital situations (favouring however married women and meeting monogamous and polygamous households)

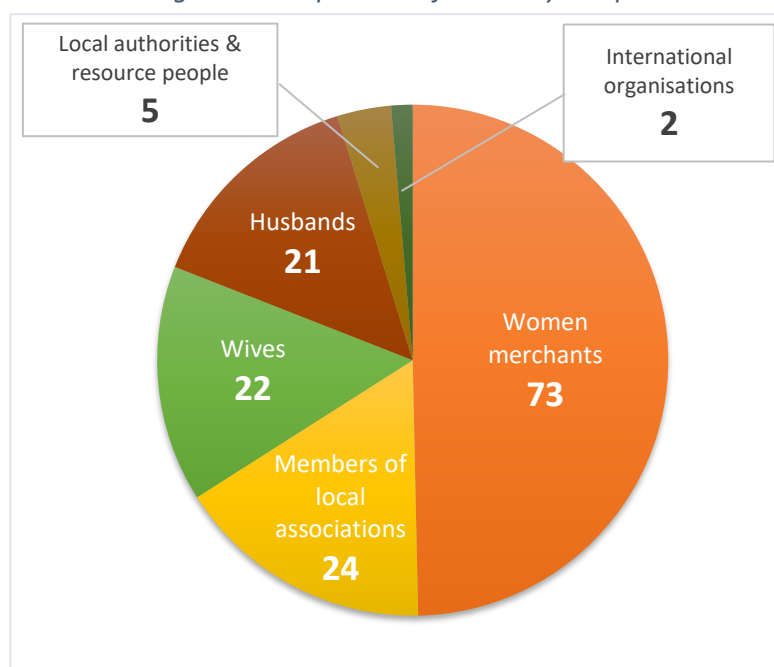
- Women who generate income
- Beneficiaries of WFP activities or other activities related to various programmes/projects that promote gender equality and women empowerment (notably “Dimitra Clubs” and “Husband schools”)
- Members of women and youth associations
- Vary religions and/or ethnic affiliation

Sample actually achieved

The two targeted communities have enabled globally to meet sampling criteria. However, the age group under 30 year-old has little representation. As we will see, this is due to the fact that few women in this age group are autonomous in the markets.

The sampling effectively achieved is composed of 147 people, which composition is illustrated in the following chart. Detail of the sampling, village by village, is available in Annex 3.

Figure 1. Composition of the study sample



²⁰ Even if cases where women merchants were married, they were interviewed alone, unlike for “couples” where husband and wife were interviewed simultaneously.

The “Women merchant” group was surveyed through individual interviews (27 women), short questionnaires at the local market (12 women) and focus groups (34 women in total). The groups labelled “Wives” and “Husbands” were surveyed through individual interviews conducted simultaneously, respectively by female and male surveyors. Although the “Wives” group is labelled as such, these women are all economically active or relatively autonomous. This classification is due to the fact that they were interviewed in parallel with their husband, on the basis of a specific questionnaire; but almost half the “wives” are also women merchant. The “Local association members” were surveyed during focus groups; finally, “International organizations” and “Local authorities and local resource people” were interviewed individually.

Each questionnaire was specific to the various target groups. Some questions were asked in all interviews, notably those that attempted to provide an understanding of the perception of women’s empowerment in communities under study.

❖ Targeted places

Village selection criteria

The two target villages of the study were chosen by WFP Niger on the basis of the following criteria:

- Groups of villages of WFP intervention;
- Presence of relatively empowered women in the market;
- Existence of active women or youth associations;
- Groups of villages where access to physical markets varies;
- Variation of local leaders’ role on women empowerment questions.

Targeted villages

The two targeted villages benefit from the integrated package of multi-sectoral activities implemented by WFP and its partners, that is, Allakaye village in the Allakaye Commune (Tahoua region), and Dan Goudaou village in the Kantché Commune (Zinder region).

Allakaye village, Allakaye Commune, Bouza
Department, Tahoua Region

The village was chosen for the following reasons:

- Convergence commune that contain several agencies of the UN system for a synergetic action;
- Intervention zone of WFP’s multi-sectoral activity package²¹ with a Food for Assets (FFA) programme entry point.
- Club « Dimitra » zone (community-based listening club: women group and youth group platforms set up to discuss issues and needs in a participatory manner, implemented by the United Nations FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), where there are several ongoing or implemented activities.
- Departure zone of men exodus to neighbouring countries;
- Existence of economically empowered women.
- Existence of several women associations.
- Existence of a market.

The main ethnic group is the Haoussa, which holds a large majority. The zone is officially classified as agricultural, but in reality it is agro-pastoral. Communities’ main livelihoods are agriculture (rain-fed and garden farming), farming, economic exodus and small trade.

²¹ This package includes FFAs as well as TFAs (Targeted Food Assistance) and complementary food assistance during the lean season, coverage of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), school canteens with complementary activities, local purchases, awareness on fundamental family practices, nutritional support to young women and school scholarships.



Allakaye localisation and surroundings

The communities' main rain-fed cultures are millet, sorghum, peanuts and cowpeas. A large part of the production is earmarked for family consumption (about 80 percent). Peanuts and cowpeas are destined for sale or for local transformation.

According to WFP Niger, the socioeconomic population distribution is estimated as follows: 54 percent of very poor households; 42 percent of poor households; 3 percent of average and 1 percent of more affluent households²². The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) of secondary schools in the Tahoua region is one of the lowest in Niger, with 9.6 percent²³ against the national average of 19.6 percent.

Dan Goudaou village, Kantché Commune,
Kantché Department, Zinder region

The Dan Goudaou village was chosen for the following reasons:

- Intervention zone of WFP's multi-sectoral activity package with a Food for Assets (FFA) programme entry point²⁴ (without free school canteen service, as is the case for Allakaye)
- Existence of the "Husband school" activity (implemented by the United Nations Population Fund – UNFPA).
- Presence of numerous economically empowered women, notably because of proximity to Nigeria.
- Existence of several women associations.
- Absence of a physical market in the village itself.
- Presence of other development partners such

²² WFP Niger, Study results of the evolution of households, 2017. HEA results could vary slightly from these.

²³ UN Women (2017)

²⁴ WFP activities in the Dan Goudaou site: Food for Assets (FFA), Targeted Food Assistance during the lean season (TFA), Complementary nutrition for the prevention of moderate acute malnutrition (NSPAMM), Integrated coverage of moderate acute malnutrition in the CSI (PCIMA), Prevention of anaemia in young girls 10-19 year-old, Support to schooling of young girls through scholarships, Promotion of fundamental family practices (PFE), Capacity-building of young girls in daily life, Promotion of good practices in the management of natural resources, local purchases of staples with small producers.

as Save the Children International (SCI) and Catholic Religion Service (CRS).

- Strong demographic pressure and place of migration of women and children to Algeria.
- Finally, this zone is subject to few studies, relatively to other neighbouring departments.

As for Allakaye, the majority ethnic group is Haoussa. According to WFP's Participative Community

Planning (PCP) (an exercise carried out with communities, thus relatively subjective), the population is constituted of 30 percent of very poor households, 50 percent of poor households, 10 percent of average and 10 percent of more affluent households.²⁵

This vulnerability classification is based on land ownership, household size and heads of livestock.



Dan Goudaou localisation and surroundings

Agriculture constitutes also the main activity of this area. Whereas the production potential may be high, demographic pressure has resulted in a division of land in smaller and smaller plots. In fact, the population density is particularly high in this Niger commune: about 358 inhabitants per square kilometre in 2011²⁶. Poor households' other

livelihoods include economic migrations as well as agricultural jobs, as well as a certain number of independent activities.

Regarding access to secondary education, the Zinder region is at the extreme opposite of Tahoua, with a NER of 21 percent – one of the highest in the country.

²⁵ Data relative to the Dan Goudaou village and its satellite villages which are Badawa, Zangouna, Dago Haoussa, Dago Bougagé, Ingarki, Arissa. Source : *Planification communautaire participative du PAM*, December 2012

²⁶ Kantché's *Plan de Développement Communal (PDC)*, 2014-2018



2. How to Measure Women’s Empowerment

Measuring women’s empowerment is a complex undertaking. Dynamics involved may be social, economic, or psychological and political, and the process is multi-faceted. The segmentation of empowerment in spheres such as the market, the household and the community has analytical and programming value; however, it is not that clear-cut in the facts as these various spheres are often interdependent.

2.1 Empowerment spheres and theoretical variables

❖ The challenge of segmenting empowerment in spheres

Literature relative to gender questions usually segments women’s empowerment between economic, social and political sectors, while making a difference between private and public spheres. On the other hand VAM, through its current study, endeavours to observe women’s empowerment in – and between – the market, household and community spheres.

Delineating and measuring empowerment in these three spheres is a difficult task. In fact, the market, household and community spheres overlap at several levels. In patriarchal, rural and barely developed societies as those under study, the household sphere is particularly decisive: women’s activities outside of the household are discussed with (or decided by) men²⁷; furthermore, a large portion of women work in family agricultural plots.

Some dimensions of women’s empowerment may be registered in-between the three spheres. It is notably the case for women’s access to resources

such as land ownership, education or credit, all together determined by (and determining of empowerment “in”) the market, which dictates opportunities; the household, the husband’s or father’s opinion being taken into account; and the community or society, which provide norms and social rules. As such, the community sphere plays an equally important role, influencing perceptions and, thus, individual behaviour, including that of couples.

❖ Empowerment variable types

Women’s empowerment is of multiple dimensions in each one of the three spheres. Before identifying them individually, it seems warranted to introduce the different variable “types” in order to be able to differentiate each one in the analysis and extend the scope of the study.

*Direct and indirect variables*²⁸

Empowerment direct variables measure empowerment as it is, that is, the increased capacity of an individual to attain her objectives (in general) on the basis of her values (not what is expected of her). This may include the power to decide how to utilise her income or productive resources; the capacity and possibility to engage in Income-Generating Activities (IGA); or yet the capacity to participate to socioeconomic life in an autonomous manner, for example.

Indirect variables measure empowerment through intermediary means which enable the attainment of empowerment (proxies), that is, the empowerment determining factors or, also, access to needed resources – rather than empowerment in itself. This includes for example, education, information, access

²⁷ On this subject, Martinez-Restrepo S., Ramos Jaimes L. & Yancari J. come to the general agreement that “integration of women into the labour market is a key indicator of women’s intra-household bargaining power”. Martinez-Restrepo S., Ramos Jaimes L. & Yancari J., *op. cit.*, page 2.

²⁸ *Ibid*

to or ownership of factors of production, land; access to credit, etc. Some authors include also in this category group participation (notably producer or solidarity groups²⁹). The two types of variables – direct and indirect – were treated in the research.

Traditional and “subjective” variables

Traditionally, the analysis or promotion of women’s empowerment focuses on economic empowerment. This typically requires to act upon indirect variables such as employment, education or income.³⁰

Over time and with the broadening of the empowerment concept, this approach and these variables have been viewed as being restrictive. Thus, were introduced subjective dimensions to empowerment, such as the power to decide on purchases and expenses, the bargaining power or, yet, freedom of choice.³¹ Other authors seeking to take into account the concept of agency, went even further by introducing subjective variables in the domain of psychology and sociology – perception of well-being, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-determination, liberation – or yet community-level dimensions to empowerment, such as political participation and mobilisation.³²

Whereas these variables may be highly valuable in measuring the capacity of individuals to effectively act, Martinez-Restrepo S., Ramos Jaimes L. & Yancari J. warn that their use may be complex among populations that are little educated and very poor. These concepts are abstracts and difficult to grasp. For example, these populations’ definition of decision-making is often different from that of researchers.³³ The current study has unfortunately confirmed the difficulty in measuring husbands’

respective role in decision-making³⁴.

This precisely leads us to look at perceptions of surveyed communities on women empowerment issues.

2.2 Perceptions of surveyed people on women’s empowerment

The empowerment analysis being subject to a risk of cultural bias, the question of its nature and measure was asked during the 70 individual interviews conducted with couples and women merchants³⁵, in the beginning of the questionnaire.

It must be reminded that the study sample cannot be considered as representative of communities, as the research theme mandated that targeted women be already relatively empowered on the market. Consequently, it is possible that the surveyed people’s perception of empowerment be different (and certainly more *liberal*) than that of the rest of the community.

❖ Intrinsic vision of women’s empowerment

In the Haoussa language, the chosen translation to talk about empowerment was “*matche may doka dawayniya*” or again “*matche may intchin kaye*”. This refers to a woman who has a certain flexibility in making decisions for herself; who has her say in household decisions, or who has a certain financial independence.

To the question “what is women’s empowerment to you?”, interviewed people have exposed a variety of factors, objectives or which are consequences relative to empowerment, or have shared the qualities of a women said to be autonomous.

²⁹ See Baseline survey project RWEE, WEAI in Dosso, page 8: statistically, there is a « strong correlation between empowerment (of both women and men) and the participation in some groups, particularly formal and informal producer organisations, Dimitra clubs, other solidarity groups and religious groups.

³⁰ Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007; Samman and Santos. 2009, cited by Martinez-Restrepo S., Ramos Jaimes L. & Yancari J., *op. cit.*, pages 1-2

³¹ *Ibid*

³² Narayan. 2005, cited by Martinez-Restrepo S., Ramos Jaimes L. & Yancari J., *op. cit.*, pages 1-2

³³ Martinez-Restrepo S., Ramos Jaimes L. & Yancari J., *Measuring subjective Dimensions of Empowerment among extremely and moderately poor Women in Colombia and Peru. Lessons from the field* (date and place unknown), pages 1 and 4

³⁴ Collected answers vary widely and are sometimes contradictory, which prevent drawing conclusions.

³⁵ 22 wives, 21 husbands and 27 women merchants were individually interviewed (total for the two villages).

The primacy of economic capacity-building

For almost all people interviewed, women's empowerment is linked to the strengthening of economic means above all. An empowered woman is first and foremost a working woman and, thus, one who brings an income and/or food to the household. It is a woman who contributes to "fighting against poverty", to "responding to the household basic needs" (notably food) or yet to "developing her family", or even the community. Some women add to this the notion of strengthening women's capacities in exercising their own economic activity.

The pervasiveness of empowerment's economic dimension is such that in answers to questions on empowerment in the household and community, most respondents continue to talk about economic empowerment. In other words, these two spheres of empowerment do not appear to be of much concern, or if they are, it is secondary. This may be explained by the high poverty level in the targeted villages. Thus, if 100 percent of couples interviewed consider women's empowerment as "important", it relates primarily to women's economic empowerment.

Empowerment and couple's vision: primacy of notions of complementarity and "collective" over notions of equality and individual

The economic strengthening of women is expressed under the angle of women's support to their husband by almost a third of respondents: an empowered woman "supports her husband" in the daily household management or in crisis situations. This opinion reflects the role of responsibility of the household by the father, without excluding the fact that this responsibility may be shared between both spouses. This denotes a complementary vision of the couple based on the importance of the collective and the family: women surveyed worry more about their families than their own situation. The notion of individual rights or well-being – and thus of women – appears to be much less important than the well-being of the group. Linked to that, the dimension of empowerment *relative to men* has little presence in surveyed people's responses.

Interviewed husbands express a similar vision of complementarity between spouses, putting forth the fact that their spouse's income help contribute to their effort of achieving economic "fulfilment" for their families or, in a more challenging situation, compensate their temporary shortage of revenue. This appears to be a real relief for some men.

A few references to women's self-sufficiency

Women's financial autonomy is put forth by many respondents. This is more synonymous of self-sufficiency or women taking care of their needs or their family needs. Nevertheless for some surveyed women, it also carries an independence dimension with regard to their husband and the community: "This allows me to not beg friends or family for money".

The occasional perception of empowerment as women's liberation

A few rare women merchants express the idea of women's liberation. They associate empowerment to "liberty" or yet to women's "sovereignty", which demonstrates an attachment to their ability to act freely. For one Allakaye (Tahoua) woman merchant, an empowered woman is a woman "who can make decision alone and go freely about her business when her revenues allow her to do so".

On a more subjective level, very few women merchants refer to a type of pride and a need for dignity vis-à-vis men – which they may acquire through their economic independence. Finally, three women conveyed the notion of "women awakening" or "mind opening"; opening in their vision of the world, or yet, of an advancement towards well-being or that of others.

Empowerment in the community: little mentioned but highly valued

As indicated above, very few surveyed people think about the community or socioeconomic dimension of women's empowerment. Nevertheless we find a few references to the advancement of women in the community. For one woman merchant, women's

empowerment consists in “making women a little bit stronger in society”. For another woman, it is about a “woman who earned people’s trust”.

Although surveyed people think little about community empowerment spontaneously, we will see further below that it is not less valued, once the sociocultural barriers are overcome.

Positive attributes associated to empowered women

All surveyed couples estimate that women’s empowerment is important and associate to it positive images. Almost half the respondents qualify empowered women as “courageous”, “motivated”, “strong” or “dynamic”.

Although these qualifiers are mostly mentioned by women, some men also use them. One of them declared that empowered women are “more dynamic than men”, and another qualify them as “generous, helping their husband provide for the family”.

These empowerment “definition” elements provided by surveyed people help identify some intrinsic variables to empowerment.

❖ Relevant variables according to targeted communities

In the two villages, empowerment variables that are spontaneously mentioned by surveyed people are:

- Having an occupation that enables to bring home income or food:
 - Linked to that, the capacity of women to contribute to providing for the family, in complement to their husband;
 - Women’s capacity to be self-sufficient (providing for themselves and their family, without help from the husband, the family or the community);

- Having access to trainings or practical knowledge in order to undertake an income-generating activity;
- And for a minority of women, the possibility to make decisions autonomously (self-determination).

These elements have been completed by a question on “relevant criteria” on women’s empowerment in the households³⁶. Answers or variables proposed to surveyed people in this question reflected the interdependence between the household, community and market spheres, with some variables relating to a few spheres.

On the question “To you, which ones of the following aspects of women’s empowerment in households are relevant?”, the 70 respondents³⁷ validated all proposed variables, with the majority estimating each variable as “relevant”. It is particularly the case for women’s access to land ownership, education, trainings; to women’s participation to community decision-making; to participation to associations; the power of decision on the use of family assets, children education, health, nutrition, and crisis management – these variables were qualified as relevant by 90 percent to 96.7 percent of respondents.

Variables which appear to be “less important” to surveyed people are access to a portable phone; participation to political parties; deciding on credits; women’s leadership on markets; and mostly geographic mobility and women’s self-determination in the use of their time: 60 to 75 percent of respondents view these variables as “relevant”.

Some differences may be observed in the answers of women merchants, wives and husbands (see Annexes 3, 4, 5). Differences of opinion are particularly striking on the question of geographic mobility: 90 percent of wives find this variable to be

³⁶ The choice of focusing on this sphere arise from results of Phase I of the Gender and Markets study in Niger.

³⁷ The question was asked to the 22 wives, the 21 husbands and the 27 women merchants surveyed in individual interviews.

relevant against 61 percent of women merchants, and only 29 percent of husbands.

Table 1. Responses to the Question: “To you, which of the following aspects of women empowerment in households are relevant? A little relevant? Not at all relevant?”

	Relevant	A little relevant	Not at all relevant
Access to land ownership	92 percent	4.7 percent	3.3 percent
Access to credit	81 percent	3.7 percent	15.3 percent
Access to education	96.7 percent	0 percent	3.3 percent
Access to trainings	95 percent	3.3 percent	1.7 percent
Access to information	89.3 percent	4.7 percent	6 percent
Access to a cellular phone	67.3 percent	16.3 percent	16.4 percent
Participation to community’s decision-making	95 percent	1.7 percent	3.3 percent
Participation to associations	93.7 percent	1.7 percent	4.6 percent
Participation to political parties	74.7 percent	18 percent	7.3 percent
Public speaking	86.3 percent	7.7 percent	6 percent
Leadership	80.7 percent	14 percent	5.3 percent
Self-determination in the community	82.3 percent	11.4 percent	6.3 percent
Public speaking on markets	76.7 percent	14 percent	9.3 percent
Decision on credits	71 percent	13.7 percent	15.3 percent
Asset ownership	86.5 percent	8.5 percent	5 percent
Decision-making power on buying and selling	86.3 percent	12 percent	1.7 percent
Decision-making power on the use of family assets	92 percent	6.3 percent	1.7 percent
Decision-making power on harvests	87.7 percent	4 percent	8.3 percent
Self-determination on markets	80 percent	14.3 percent	5.7 percent
Leadership on markets	73 percent	20.7 percent	6.3 percent
Women geographic mobility	60 percent	21.7 percent	18.3 percent
Decision-making for women on children education, health, nutrition and crisis management	90 percent	8.7 percent	1.3 percent
Freedom of choice for decisions related to their own body (family planning, maternal and reproductive health...)	79 percent	18.3 percent	2.7 percent

Women's freedom to use their time as they wish (between work, household chores and free time)	60.3 percent	11.7 percent	28 percent
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There are also notable variations in women's decision on credits: it is relevant for 81 percent of wives, 72 percent of women merchants, and 60 percent of husbands.

For other variables, the gaps are noted mostly between women and men: it is the case for women's leadership in markets, relevant for 86 percent of wives and 81 percent of women merchants, against only 52 percent of husbands. If it is difficult to analyse the reasons of these gaps between the two groups of women (women interviewed as merchants and those as wives), there is a relative tendency for men to resist some components of women empowerment in households.

In conclusion, the following graphic tries to summarize women empowerment's direct and indirect variables as identified by the documentary research and the field case study, for the household, market and community spheres, in traditional societies of patriarchal and rural types such as the communities studied in Niger.

The graphic highlights the overlap between the three spheres as well as the major influence of the household sphere, and to another extent, of the community sphere, on women empowerment dynamics.

Direct and indirect variables of Women's Empowerment in Patriarchal and Rural Traditional Societies:
Overlap between Spheres and Sphere influence on Household and the community

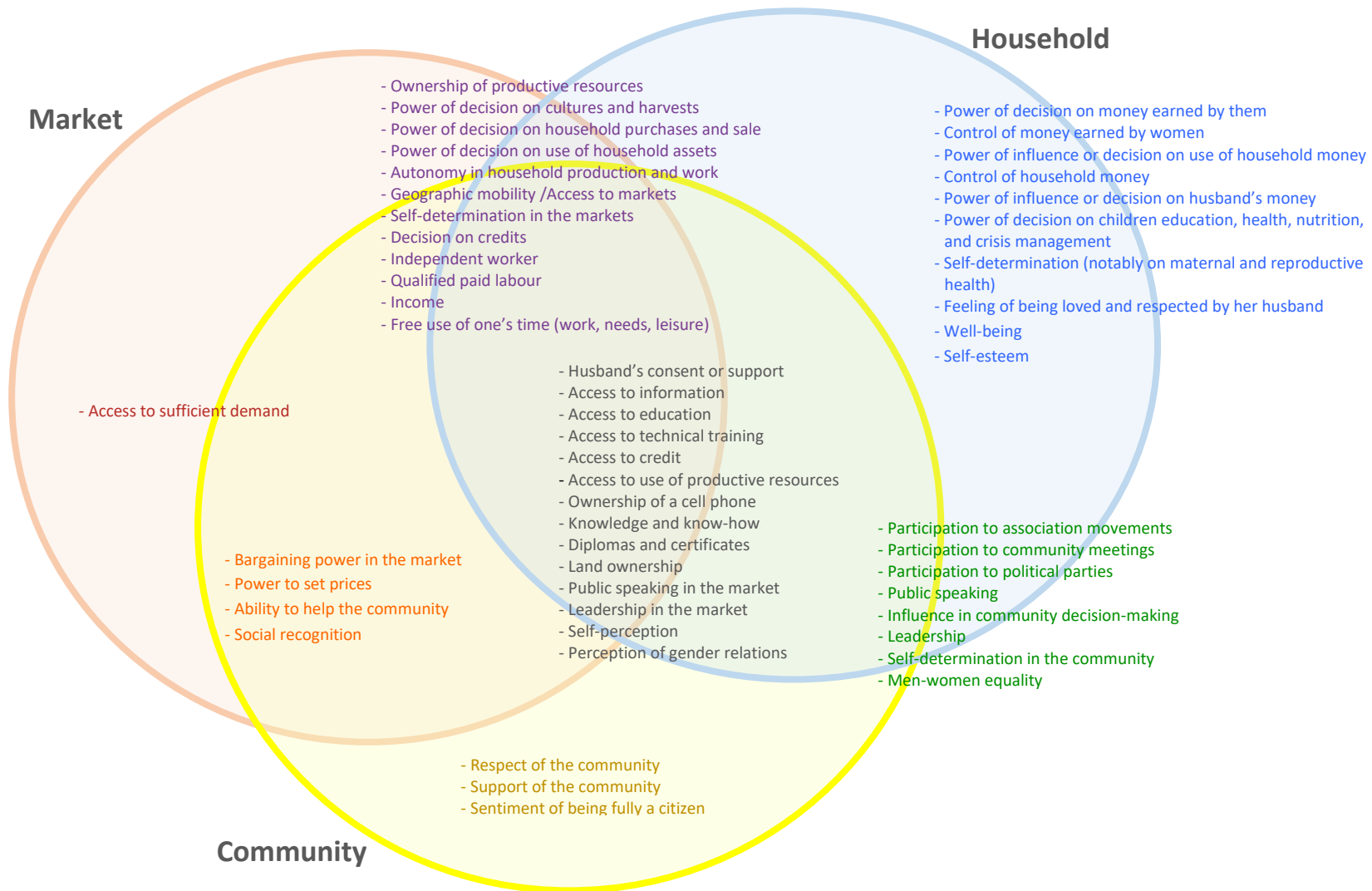




Photo: WFP/Giulio d'Adamo

3. Women Empowerment's Determinants and Actors: Enablers and Hurdles

Women empowerment processes present several barriers, preconditions, determining factors and actors. In this respect, dynamics seem to be the same between the two targeted communities in Tahoua and Zinder. Nevertheless, the variation of present actors appears to have had an impact on the way practices and opinions of women's empowerment have evolved.

3.1 Hurdles or preconditions to women's empowerment

Almost half of the women surveyed report not having faced any barrier in their empowerment process in the household. This intrinsic vision of the phenomenon is not supported by the analysis of survey results from an outsider point of view, which, as we will see below, would tend to indicate women have very little empowerment in their household.

As mentioned before, most respondents however talk mostly about the empowerment's economic dimension, including sometimes when questioned about empowerment in the community and household spheres. The analysis of these answers and answers to closed-ended questions have nevertheless allowed to capture certain challenges to women's empowerment in the household and the community, starting with the cultural and religious environment.

❖ Patriarchal culture and the weight of gender-based roles

The first challenge women wishing to become empowered face, whatever the sphere, relates to the community's patriarchal culture. In Niger and in surveyed communities of Haoussa ethnicity and Muslim religion, women are dependent on men who

dominate decision-making in various spheres of the society. In spousal relationships, men's role consists essentially in providing for the family and lead the household. Women's role, on the other hand, consists in managing the home – child care, house cleaning, laundry, cooking, and collecting wood and water – and often, in rural settings, cultivate the land, with or without their spouse.³⁸ Male domination is more observed in rural settings, which are more traditional and conservative than big cities.

The need for husbands' consent

Pursuant to the nature of gender relations, most women of targeted communities must seek and obtain their husband's consent to engage in activities outside of the house. Asking for the husband's consent may already constitute a hurdle to empowerment for some women. Furthermore, a request denied by their husband constitutes an insurmountable barrier for women.

According to Allakaye women merchants met in focus group, about 50 percent of husbands refuse that their spouses engage in activities outside of the house. This is also the opinion of a group of 9 women surveyed in Dan Goudaou (Zinder). According to these two women groups, the husbands' opposition is mostly founded on the fear of their wives meeting other men if they let them engage in activities outside of the household. Thus, for some of them, women with the most freedom or who are most empowered are widows or divorced. This was illustrated in the case study context since about half of identified women merchants happened to be widowed or divorced³⁹.

Women's empowerment in the household and the

³⁸ More data on men-women inequalities are provided in Annex 1.

³⁹ If this reflects the fact that few married women are authorised to engage in activities outside of the house, it also reveals the fact that widows or divorced women have a greater need for financial autonomy, since they have to provide for their household.

community seem to face greater resistance from men than empowerment in the market. According to 69 percent of interviewed women, one of the reasons for which their economic empowerment does not permeate more into their household is due to the conservative nature of their husband. 50 percent of surveyed men fear that their wife's empowerment in the household might lead to other (negative) behavioural changes.

Linked to this, and more precisely, the resistance by 75 percent of husbands could be explained by their fear to "lose their authority in the household" should their wives become more empowered. This takes us back to the fact that the evolution of women's role implies, by nature, the evolution of gender relationships – and therefore brings men's role into question. Thus, women strengthening may be perceived as (and effectively constitute) a threat to masculine attributes in a given society (such as financial power), and therefore destabilise men or couples. This is why it is necessary to take into account the evolution of gender-based roles as a whole for all actions aimed at empowering women, and redefine gender relationships in a *joint* manner between men and women.

Breaking the rules is problematic; among men, 100 percent of husbands report they fear to lose the respect of other members of the community if their wife becomes more empowered in the household. The image one portrays in society is an important factor in women empowerment processes.

The initial rejection of women's initiatives by the community

Husbands' positions cannot be dissociated from the environment in which they evolve and, thus, the community. Even though some women obtain their husband's consent to engage in activities outside of the house, they generally face stigmatisation and rejection by the community. It may come from other women, but also and mostly from men, and notably community and religious leaders. This is why some UNFPA capacity-building activities for young women

were criticized as "incitation to devaluation of women". In addition to the cultural factor, according to a female community leader, some men fear women's empowerment and success under the pretext that it deprives them of work. Furthermore, according to them, they are afraid to "no longer be able to dominate".

Women from the *Komi da Locaci* (There's a time for each thing) group in Matamèye (Chief town of the Kantché department, in the Zinder region), report also rejection reactions they have suffered when they launched sanitation work. In the beginning, religious leaders insulted them. The social pressure was such that a third of the members left the group. Women groups met in Dan Goudaou, who are active in food transformation and enhanced cultivation, report also community resistance, notably from men, when their first started.

The political sphere also erects barriers to the strengthening of women's position. Stories about election to municipal council all start with hurdles female candidates face. One of them explains that even after being elected, some men wanted to "strip" them of their mandate. Even though men met in focus groups refer to her as an example of women integration in politics in their village, a certain resistance persists: other women willing to run as candidates continue to face this obstacle; in fact, this group of men admit that they would not want a woman to become village chief – a reminder that perception and behavioural changes in gender-related issues take considerable time.

The lack of empowerment desire and women's resignation

The patriarchal culture also seem to influence women's position in terms of empowerment, particularly in the household sphere. We observe two phenomena in this regard: first, they demonstrate little interest for empowerment in the household sphere: 84 percent of interviewed women report "not thinking about it", and 39 percent say they do not see any "interest" in it (see

Table 2 below). If this does not seem to be a concern for women, it is because the cultural framework does not entice them to consider it. An Allakaye spouse explains in fact her lack of empowerment in the household as normal: she says she is a “submissive” or “dependent” women without apparently contesting it, specifying that “he is the head of the family”. 58.5 percent of interviewed women affirm moreover that they “do not favour a change in mentalities by principle, by conservatism”.

The second phenomenon that may obstruct women’s quest for empowerment: the fear of being rejected, and most of all by the community, if they become more empowered in the household: 47 percent of interviewed women fear community rejection, and 26 percent report fearing to be rejected by their husband⁴⁰. This fear may undeniably inhibit them and cause the resignation of some women who might eventually feel a lack of empowerment.

Table 2. Women’s response to the Question: *“To you, why didn’t your economic empowerment⁴¹ strengthen your decision-making power or your capacity to act autonomously in your household?”⁴²*

		Yes	No
1. Regarding yourself	Lack of interest/desire to become empowered or have more power within the household?	39 percent	61 percent
	You do not want to take on more responsibilities at home?	22.5	77.5
	You fear rejection from your husband?	26	74
	You fear retaliation from your husband (violence)	26	74
	You fear rejection from other women?	28	72
	You fear rejection from the community?	47	53
	You are not for the change of mentalities by principle (notably with regard to religion)?	58.5 percent	41.5 percent
	You could be for the change of mentalities, but you fear the possible consequences (fear of the unknown)?	54.5 percent	45.5 percent
	You just simply do not think about it?	84.5	15.5
2. Regarding your husband	He is not for the change of mentalities by principle (Conservatism)?	68.5	31.5
	He fears he will lose his power over you at home?	62	38
	He fears you will change “for the worse”?	62.5	37.5
	He fears he will lose respect from others in the community?	60	40
	He simply lacks interest in the subject (thus does not support you in this effort)?	57 percent	43 percent

In view of perceptions on gender-based roles, FAO put in place dialogue platforms composed of men and women (“Dimitra Clubs”) in the framework of the multi-agency pilot programme “Accelerating

progress towards a strengthening and economic empowerment of women living in a rural setting (RWEE)⁴³. By giving men and women the same place in the group and by discussing gender relationships,

⁴⁰ If these numbers seem to slightly counter results on the relative indifference of women on the question of their empowerment in households, it may be explained by the fact that certain questions asked refer to concerns that were not theirs. Whatever the case may be, these numbers reveal the potential fear of some women of others’ reaction when established social rules are challenged.

⁴¹ To facilitate the understanding of surveyed people, the expression “economic empowerment” was chosen to talk about women’s empowerment in the market, the economic concept of the “market” being difficult to understand for the survey’s target group.

⁴² Question asked to 22 wives and 27 women merchants interviewed, that is a total of 49 women.

⁴³ Le PAM fait partie des agences prenant part à ce programme.

Dimitra Clubs contribute to changing the perceptions of men and women on women's possibilities to play a role in the management of community affairs. "Some women first thought that joining this group meant that they were 'bad women' or were stronger than their husband. Over time, they realized that they could participate to these clubs while still taking care of their families and respecting their husbands" explains a FAO representative in Zinder. As he stresses, "the evolution of mentalities must take place with men just like with women; without that, neither will dare changing the roles".

In parallel to indifference and fear phenomena women experience when pursuing empowerment in their households, there would be a small minority of women who do not want to be empowered in the market as they do "not want to work hard", according to some Allakaye women merchants. This would particularly be the case of young women who are looking to make "easy" money and rapidly, according to them.

❖ Age and the family situation

Empowerment dynamics vary between younger women and more mature women. In particular, few young women are or become empowered. This is what triggered the first phase of the study conducted in Niger in 2015-2016, and what is confirmed by this current research.

Young age and empowerment impossibilities

Surveyed people explain the lack of young women's empowerment with four main reasons, with a focus on the market sphere. First off, according to them, young women have less work experience or production know-how than their elders, which is an impediment to become economically empowered. Then, regarding unmarried young women, the idea of their empowerment is a negative factor for some men: "this is fearsome as young women could leave" according to one of them; for another one, young women's empowerment would be "bad in terms of education, as an unmarried young woman should not manage money", according to him. Many

interviewed people explain that unmarried young women do not need to generate revenues, since they have no family obligation. Allakaye women associations stress however that young women may start to earn money before their wedding to start preparing their household.

Once married, husbands are unfavourable to the idea that women engage in activities outside of the house, according to women surveyed. Age thus appear to be a related factor to the marital or family situation.

Family situation, the main determinant

The marital status and the presence of children strongly determine the possibility for women to become empowered or not in the market. This brings us back to culture and women's role, who are first and foremost mothers and household women, in the Niger context. Consequently, young married women do not engage in IGAs. They dedicate themselves to, and they are expected to dedicate themselves almost exclusively to, their children.

After several children are born, the financial pressure increasing on the households, some women engage sometimes in IGAs in order to contribute to their household expenses, if the husband consents to it. This case would be mostly observed with women in polygamous households, since they may rely on their co-spouses to take care of children and household chores. Other women resort sometimes to their kin for child care – mother, sister or sometimes spouse. Finally, in Dan Goudaou, one woman says she sends her children to day care and to school during the day. The school canteens facilitates children schooling and women's economic empowerment according to some testimonies. Finally, other women decide to start an activity from their house, which makes their household management easier and is more culturally accepted. As children grow up, after they reach a certain age, married women may become relatively empowered, according to respondents: "when they reach 50, women are almost like men in society", explains a woman merchant. On one hand their life

experience earn them more respect and they are thus better considered; on another hand their spouse “leave them alone” since they do no longer have children to care for.

The generation factor

If age, as such, is not a factor of women’s empowerment, it must be noted that there is a relative evolution of mentalities between generations. According to the Allakaye Commune mayor, gender relationship are indeed evolving: “Before, men would never let women engage in trade. Today, with awareness campaigns, men understand that women can support the household through income-generating activities”. High-school girls met in a youth association in Dan Goudaou express their desire to work “even after being married”, and their success model are women active in politics or holding State functions. Their mentalities seem to also evolve in the community sphere: contrarily to aged men met in the Dan Goudaou focus group, young men from the youth association do not exclude the idea of a woman as village chief “if the woman is qualified” – while admitting that it would be difficult. Men in this mixed association say that they take into account female members’ opinions in the management of the group. Nevertheless, during discussions with the research teams, these women were clearly standing back during the exchanges. If mentalities progressively open up to women’s empowerment and women effectively integrate the public space, men continue to dominate this sphere as well as others.

❖ Socioeconomic barriers to women’s empowerment

Whereas patriarchal culture constitutes the first barriers to women’s empowerment from an outsider point of view, for surveyed people, the first barriers are of a socioeconomic nature, as respondents focus on the market sphere.

According to Allakaye women merchants, about 30 percent of women wish to engage in IGAs but do not know how to go about it; 30 percent of women wish the same but lack financial means to carry out their project; and 30 percent have effectively developed IGAs. According to them, the remaining 10 percent do not wish to engage in any type of income-generating activity. If these numbers are only estimates, they illustrate the importance of access to means, both in terms of knowledge and money, in processes involved in women’s empowerment in the market.

Economic challenges

Over the entire sample under study, the lack of financial means and material constitute the main challenge to women’s empowerment. Whether it is to engage in an IGA (agriculture, transformation of agricultural products, farming, and trade) or run an electoral campaign, women critically lack capital.

Access to credit is very limited, if not inexistent, in these communities, whether for men or women.

For women who managed to engage in a commercial activity, the second challenge they face is the insufficient demand in the market. This results in poor sales and, thus, lack of profits for women merchants. To this may be added the failure of customers to meet their deferred payments, as most village sales are processed on such basis, according to women merchants. In fact, the Niger context is not conducive to trade in general, and to hiring labour. In this country, which is among the poorest in the world⁴⁴, unemployment and poverty limit economic opportunities for most of the population, particularly in remote areas. This factor cannot be ignored when an analysis of income-generating activities available to men and women is conducted.

The third possible challenge in the market: the absence of or deficit in agricultural production, during the “lean season”⁴⁵ or following natural

⁴⁴ In 2015 Niger was second to last of the least-developed countries, out of 188 States, according to the UN human development index.

⁴⁵ Name given to the intermediate season between harvest periods.

disasters. This affects the entire agricultural value chain, from women growers to women merchants, including women collectors and transformers.

Other challenges related to infrastructure have consequences in women access to markets, as many people report the poor road conditions, notably in the Dan Goudaou region.

Knowledge deficit

If the lack of knowledge is rarely reported as a barrier to women’s empowerment, surveyed people’s recommendations indicate that there is a capacity and knowledge deficit since they promote capacity-building and information strengthening among women. Allakaye women associations condemn their lack of knowledge and means to be able to export their products to Nigeria, referring to legislation and custom rules in effect. Moreover, in Zinder, some women explain that they do not know how to enter in politics.

In conclusion, the patriarchal culture, family

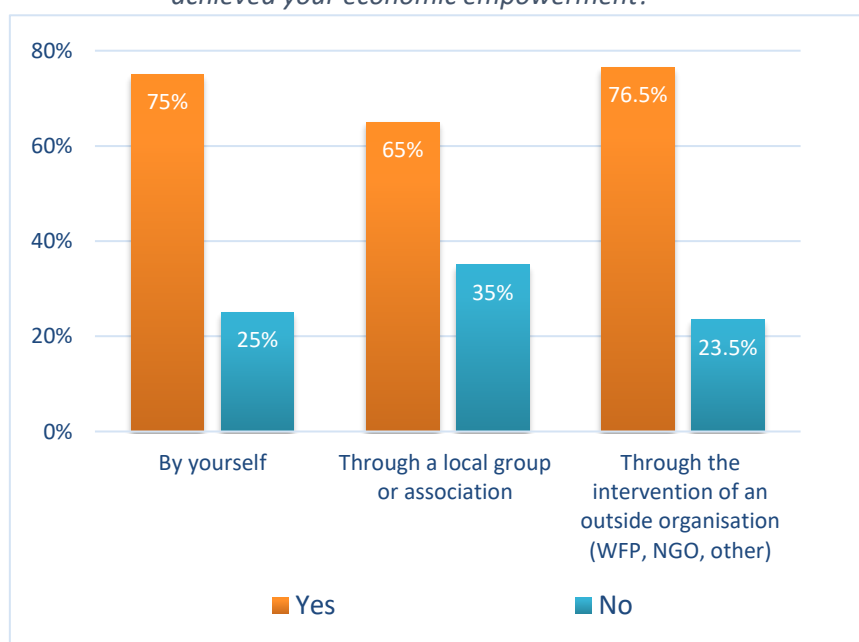
situation, and socioeconomic barriers constitute the three main challenges to women’s empowerment.

If the family situation appears to be a difficult barrier to overcome, other obstacles are sometimes surmounted thanks to the action of actors that are supportive of women’s empowerment.

3.2 Actors-facilitators of women’s empowerment

Women are the first actors of their empowerment; **75 percent of interviewed women estimate that they have contributed to their economic empowerment** (see Figure 2 below). However, third-party support and pooling efforts significantly facilitate this process: 73 percent of wives estimate that outside organizations have contributed to their economic empowerment. Local groups or associations have also contributed to empowerment in the market of 94 percent of women merchants and 36 percent of wives.

Figure 2. Women’s answers to the Question: “How have you achieved your economic empowerment?”⁴⁶

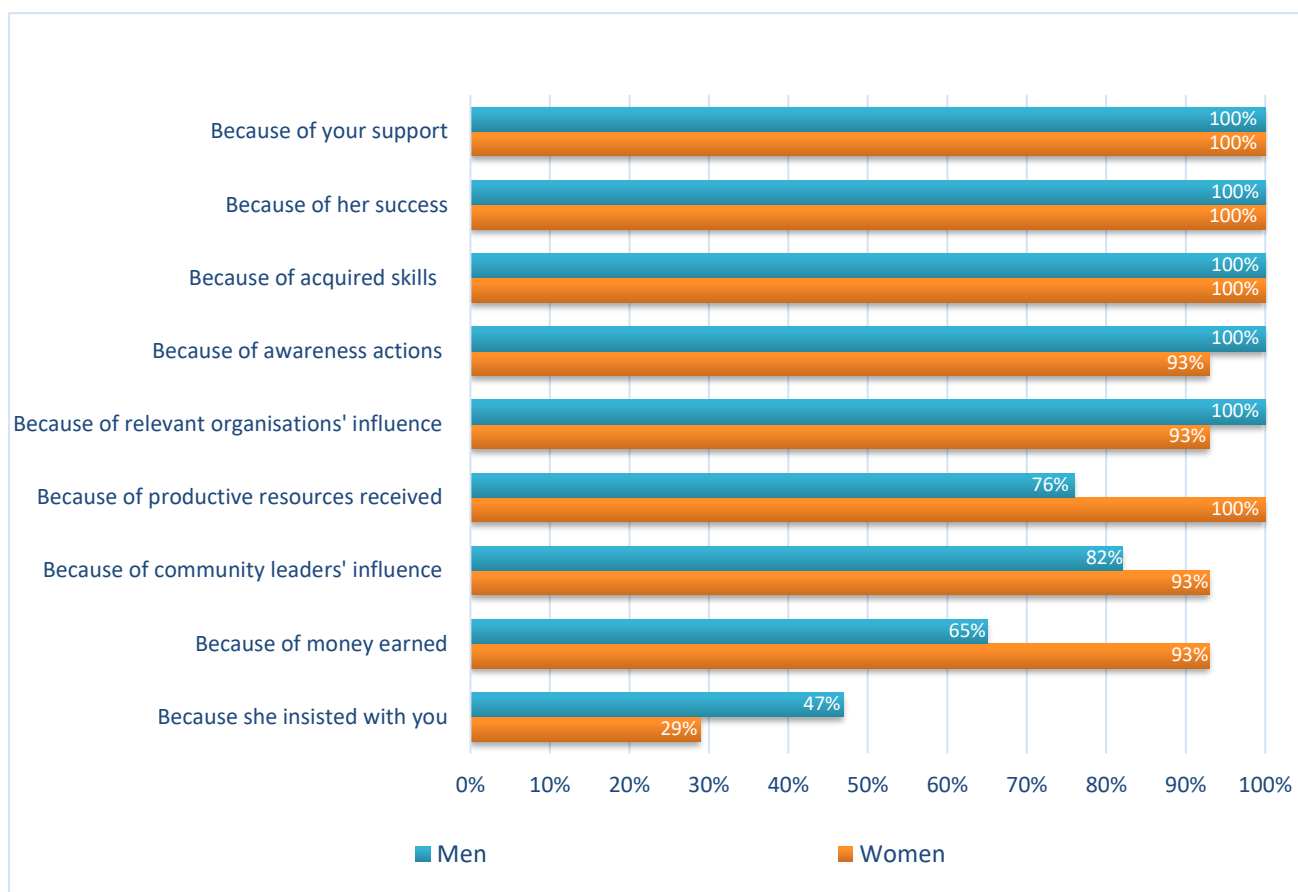


⁴⁶ Question asked to 22 wives and 27 women merchants interviewed, that is 49 women. Many answers were allowed for this question.

Concerning women’s empowerment in the household, more than 90 percent of husbands and wives estimate that organizations that promote women’s empowerment have contributed to this

process (see Figure 2 below). 85 percent of couples also estimate that community leaders have contributed to this process.

Figure 3. Couples’ answers to the Question: “How or why (your/your wife’s) economic empowerment strengthened (your/her) decision-making power or capacity to act in an autonomous manner in the household?”⁴⁷



In Allakaye, just like in Dan Goudaou, the most active local actors in women empowerment are women organizations. There are significantly less **Youth associations** and most of all, they do not appear to aim for this objective as such. Nevertheless, youth associations can be mixed (such as the one met in Dan Goudaou). It would be noteworthy to assess their activity impact on women’s empowerment or

place in the community⁴⁸.

❖ **Women groups, drivers and catalysts of empowerment**

Women groups undeniably contribute to women’s empowerment, in the short term as well as the long term. They enable the strengthening of women’s immediate action capacities, but also to face

⁴⁷ Question asked to 22 couples (22 wives and 21 husbands)

⁴⁸ Due to a lack of availability of youth associations and lack of time, only one youth association was met for the study.

sociocultural challenges within the community.

In the two targeted villages and departments, there are women associations and especially groups – the difference between the two being in their informal or formal nature (an *association* is supposed to be registered and have a formal approval). When the status of an association or a grouping has not been clearly established during a discussion, or when we refer to a set of groupings and associations, we use the term *group*.

Women's economic strengthening through financial support and IGA communes

Women's groups contribute in the first place to responding to the challenge of lack of economic means. Their first mode of intervention is based on the traditional "tontine" system. In these groups created between trustworthy people, and on a voluntary basis, members commit to contributing a fixed amount on a regular basis with the objective of redistributing the money between themselves, each in a turn, in a rotating manner. If the modest level of women's contributions⁴⁹ in rural areas do not allow them to redistribute important funds, it enables women to dispose of a capital they could not otherwise have access to, which they may use to start an income-generating activity.

Other women groupings and associations propose micro-credit to their members (often issued from tontine participations) or facilitate access to micro-credit with other institutions, notably Non-Government Organizations (NGOs).

Some women groupings and associations set up collective IGAs. Thanks to donations or to collective savings as starting capital, some women groups invest in productive resources (farming animals, land, production material, harvest transformation material – such as mills) and develop IGAs. Depending on cases, some women groups thus carry out farming, agriculture (millet, sorghum, peanuts or

cowpeas) or harvest transformation activities.

Products obtained are either destined to group members, on an individual or collective basis for consumption, storage and/or sale. In the case of the *Ta Allah ba Taquba* network grouping of Matamèye, profits from oil extraction and sale activities are used to provide micro-credits to the network's member groups.

Women's knowledge and technical capacity-building

Women's groups also contribute to women's economic empowerment through member trainings – in IGA management (notably managing a business), farming techniques, savings capitalisation and investment – thus responding to women's need for practical knowledge.

Moral support and women's sisterhood

While less tangible, but just as important for women's subjective empowerment, women groups are also places of meeting, information and idea sharing, problem solving and, most of all, mutual support for their members. "These discussions reinforce my decisions. We all have the same objective of growing our activity to provide for our household needs", explains this woman merchant from Zinder. In light of the cultural context, sisterhood and moral guidance constitute major support elements for their empowerment.

Emancipation from cultural barriers

Women groups also contribute to strengthening or "creating a place" for women within their community in many ways. The first consists in earning their place through their actions and, above all, through their results. Several groupings and associations have started to exist through the conduct of their community work; this is the case for the *Dadin Kowa* (Happiness for All) association from Allakaye and for the *Komi da Locaci* grouping from

⁴⁹ For example, members of the Dan Goudaou tontine and association "Patience is Wealth" contribute 250 CFA Francs per week (that is a bit less than 40 euro cents).

Matamèye, which have conducted maintenance, sanitation and hygiene activities in their village and sometimes in neighbouring villages.

Despite the initial rejection reaction from the community, the *Komi da Locaci* spokeswoman tells us that some members have perseverated and posted the first results of their actions. Since this improved the living conditions of the community, the inhabitants have gradually appreciated then accepted the efforts of these groupings. In a conservative patriarchal context, this constitutes for these women a real emancipation from the dominant institutional or cultural framework.

The second way in which these groupings lower cultural barriers to empowerment: through awareness of both women and men. In Dan Goudaou, groupings have thus sensitize men in the strengthening of women. In other cases, women groups brought awareness to communities on more specific questions such as girl schooling or early pregnancy and marriage.

With regard to the social nature of gender issues, the evolution of beliefs and practices is facilitated if it gains support from local authorities.

❖ **The determining support from community leaders**

As opinion leaders, traditional, political and religious authorities also play a determining role in women empowerment processes within their communities. As their male counterparts dominate the public space and, thus, leadership positions, their support is far from being secured. Women groupings from Matamèye, who did not get support from local authorities when they first started, relate the challenges they faced to be accepted and to develop themselves. On the contrary, in Allakaye, the revival and development of *Dadin Kowa* and *Ba a Dolel* (You have no obligation) associations were supported by the two village chiefs, in the aftermath of a project to fight AIDS in the Commune. Their close relationship to the village chiefs opened up the doors they needed to implement awareness actions in the

community.

Religious leaders also play a major role as opinion leaders. One of these women groupings tells that the community Imams insulted them in the beginning, which contributed to their stigmatisation and marginalisation. These same religious authorities who finally recognized the positive effects of their actions for the community, today openly support them: “Now, they come here and pray for us” told us a woman member of the grouping.

The experience from UNFPA’s *Illimin* (Knowledge for Dignity) Programme constitutes an example of good practice in terms of local leaders’ commitment. The Programme collaborated with more than 200 traditional chiefs in formulating its action plans in the fight against early marriage, girls schooling, early pregnancy and women’s empowerment in general. These leaders’ involvement had major impacts: not only did they play a “sensitizer” role on these issues, but some of them even took measures to fight against these problems. Some traditional chiefs thus banned marriage of girls under 18 in their communities; others sent back to school girls who had been pulled out of school to get married. These leaders, according to UNFPA, had already been sensitized on these issues in the past, thanks to a long-term cooperation with UNICEF (United Nations Children Fund). In the framework of the same programme, an Imam known for his open mind also allowed UNFPA to intensify its sensitization actions by training Oulémas in bringing awareness to communities on birth-spacing and the shared responsibility of the couple in this subject.

The role of women community leaders

Although there are not many of them, women community leaders’ influence power in promoting women’s empowerment must also be underscored.

They first play an important role for other women for whom they become a sort of role-models and guides. The Allakaye mayor reports, for example, that the two municipal council women elected in his

Commune contribute to “awakening women’s (and men’s) minds”, thus fighting against women marginalisation. In Dan Goudaou, the woman Municipal Councillor (and women’s grouping president) advise other women interested in entering politics on how to get in the arena. She also seems to inspire many women who wish to become economically empowered: in Dan Goudaou, there seem to be a profusion of women’s groups that are active in the market sphere.

At the same time, this same woman Municipal Councillor declares being the voice of women and promoting their place in the community, notably within the decision-making circles. Men in the village vouch for the respect and influence power of this Councillor: “With all of what she does for women and the community – donations, listening to everyone... – she managed to be loved. Proof is, we always meet at her place!”

Support from community leaders and from women’s groups cannot however be sufficient for married women. As mentioned above, their husband’s support is indispensable to these processes and it happens that they truly contribute to their wife’s empowerment, notably in the market.

❖ **Support from some husbands**

Women targeted by the current study, all somehow economically empowered, report having faced very little resistance from their husband in the development of their economic activities. “My husband is fearless; he supports me in everything I do”, declares a Dan Goudaou woman. Almost a third of women spontaneously report they enjoy their husband’s support in their economic empowerment, including material or financial support in some cases. Moreover, 98 percent of interviewed men and women estimate that the husband’s support

contributed to the transfer of women’s empowerment from the market sphere to the household sphere.

The reasons for which these very men opened up to the idea of empowering their wives, but not others, could not be established during this research. However, one might consider the hypothesis of the education level and/or the exposition to these ideas. The experience from UNFPA’s *Illimin* Programme highlighted the impact of sensitizing men in women’s empowerment process. In the “Husbands’ Schools”, volunteer men selected to be model husbands are encouraged to promote a change of mentalities on men-women relations among other men, acting like “role models” and, thus, actors of change.

Results of this approach seem tangible: in the case of sensitization on maternal and reproductive health, according to UNFPA, there is an increase in women’s visits to health centres. Men from the Husbands’ School who were met in Dan Goudaou confirm the impact of their actions, explaining that they manage to convince reluctant couples or women to go to the health centre in one or two days.

In conclusion, it appears that women’s groups, certain community leaders and spouses can help circumvent cultural and socioeconomic barriers to women’s empowerment. This can be done through financial, material, moral, social or political support, depending on the actors. Whereas support from spouses and local leaders has a determining impact on the legitimacy, if not the development, of women’s initiatives, women’s empowerment however rests first and foremost on their determination and their capacity to organize themselves. In that respect, women’s groups play a catalyst role of major change, notably thanks to the output of their actions.



Photo: WFP/Rein Skullerud

4. Consequences and Output of Women’s Empowerment

Women’s empowerment generates a myriad of positive output and consequences which constitute important levers for these processes. Nevertheless, due to the sociocultural and economic contexts there are also a few negative consequences related to these processes.

4.1 Negative consequences and risks

People surveyed reported few negative consequences to women’s empowerment, whether spontaneously, through open-ended or in closed-ended and multiple choice questions. When asked whether women’s empowerment brought changes for women in the community, 94 percent of merchant women and wives said “yes, and positive changes”. To the same question on changes in the household sphere, 99 percent of husbands and wives answered “yes, positively”. There are however risks for women, with variable impact levels and probabilities.

❖ **Women’s stigmatisation and marginalisation: limited phenomena but with high impact?**

As mentioned in the section on barriers to women’s

empowerment, the dominant culture may lead communities to react negatively to women’s involvement in the public sphere. The first reactions to women engaging in activities often consists in stigmatising them, if not rejecting them outwardly.

Temporary stigmatisation and marginalisation

54 percent of interviewed wives and women merchants estimate that their empowerment has “a little bit” generated their rejection or marginalisation within the community (see Table 3 below). 48.5 percent of them also report having “a little bit” of an image of a “debauched woman or woman who does not respect her religion, her culture or her husband”, since their empowerment. Stigmatisation and rejection seem to mostly come from men, by conservatism and fear to lose their status in society. The evolution of women’s role indeed questions men’s role and, as a result, some manhood attributes (see the section on barriers). However, according to surveyed women, rejection reactions may also come from other women, by conservatism or jealousy.

Table 3: Women’s answers to the Question: “What are the positive and negative consequences of your empowerment in general (economic, in the household or community)?”⁵⁰

		Yes	A little bit	No
Consequences in the Couple/ Household	You have an improved couple relationship (more love, more respect)	94.5 percent	3 percent	2,5 percent
	More collaboration within the couple?	92.5	2.5	5
	Better task distribution between you and your spouse?	74	9.5	16.5
	More tension in the couple’s relationship? (because of your husband’s anger, fear or jealousy)?	7.5 percent	16 percent	76.5 percent
	Your husband became violent with you?	11	4.5	84.5
	For polygamous households: the other spouses who are less empowered than you reject you?	21.5 percent	3.5 percent	75 percent
	For polygamous households: you inspire other spouses who are less empowered than you (they want to follow or imitate you)?	93 percent	3.5 percent	3.5 percent
Consequences in the	You have earned more respect/consideration from the other men?	87.5 percent	10.5 percent	2 percent

⁵⁰ Question asked to 22 wives and 27 women merchants interviewed, that is a total of 49 women.

Community	You have earned more respect/consideration from the other women?	90.5 percent	4 percent	5.5 percent
	You inspire other wives or younger women who would like to do like you?	86.5 percent	13.5 percent	0 percent
	You lost the respect/consideration of other men?	13 percent	5.5 percent	81.5 percent
	You lost the respect/consideration of other women?	6.5 percent	3.5 percent	90 percent
	Image of debauched woman who lacks respect for her culture, her religion or her husband?	4 percent	48.5 percent	47.5 percent
	Rejection/marginalisation from the community?	0	54	46
	Rejection from your group or religious leader?	0	2	98
	You are being insulted because of that?	2	6.5	91.5
	You are subjected to violence because of that?	4	9	87
	You participate more to associations?	69	10,5	20,5
	You participate more to political parties?	62	19.5	18.5
	You participate more to meetings on making community decisions?	60 percent	6.5 percent	33.5 percent
Economic Consequences	You or your husband no longer need to migrate to survive	69	2.5	28.5
	You no longer need to take on credits	21	13	66
	You have reached a certain economic stability/security for the future ⁵¹	19 percent	31 percent	50 percent
	You can better provide for the family in terms of...:			
	Children education	41	18.5	40.5
	Family health	47.5	12.5	40
Subjective Consequences	Nutrition	41	25	34
	You feel less vulnerable/insecure	48	19	33
	You feel happier	82.5	17.5	0
	More useful	94	6	0
	More respected	92	8	0
	Better acknowledged	88	10	2
	Prouder of yourself (self-esteem)	90	10	0
	Freer, less stressed	94	4	2
You are more respected by your children	97	3	0	

Collected testimonies, however, indicate that stigmatisation and rejection reactions are dissolved over time: positive results from activities of women's groups finally bring them acceptance. Some women, nevertheless, may suffer tremendously from reactions of rejection, in the short or long term.

A need to protect a minority of women?

11 percent of interviewed wives and women merchants report that their husband has been violent with them because of their empowerment. Also, 26 percent of surveyed women say that they fear retaliation from their husband if they try to be

⁵¹ Question only asked to 27 women merchants.

more empowered in the household.

Although these rates are relatively low, they are symptomatic of existing risks of social or domestic violence. Moreover, it is possible that this phenomenon had been wilfully downplayed by surveyed people, as populations tend to talk about “positive things” out of pride or desire to convince international organizations to intervene in their community⁵². Taboos on GBV issues, notably domestic violence, constitute another diminishing factor of this type of phenomenon.

The impact of such violence on women may be high, and it is thus important to consider the risk, in terms of prevention and response. 18 percent of interviewed wives estimate that women seeking empowerment need protection. According to some of them, sensitizing the community would be a good way to “protect” them. Considering the stakes and taboos around the issue, the results of this survey should be further developed, notably in cooperation with organizations for the protection of women.

In any case, these risks are a reminder of the importance of promoting women’s empowerment in a concerted and joint manner with their spouses, as the evolution of gender-based roles cannot take place in a unilateral or uni-gendered (meaning, a woman-centred approach without men’s involvement) fashion without posing risks for the couples, for men or for women.

❖ **Women’s overload risk versus men’s de-responsibilisation**

One of the risks of a “uni-gendered” promotion of women’s economic empowerment lies in increasing women’s task burden without supplemental support from their husband, when women are already very

busy with household chores. This observation was already noted in Phase 1 of the Niger study. Some women surveyed in Allakaye and Dan Goudaou talk about their work overload⁵³ and the exhaustion they feel as a result of it. Others complain that this overload reduces quality time with friends and family: “Women no longer have time to dance, sit and chat”, or again “I don’t have time to sit down and eat with my grand-children and my brothers”, report some merchant women.

Although this risk has barely been mentioned by women and may therefore appear to be minimal, its potential impacts should not be ignored: it may affect women’s health, children education and even family cohesion – which is often talked about on the continent. Moreover, the increase in women’s tasks may contribute to reinforcing gender imbalances.

Husbands’ role when facing their wives’ increased activities

According to many women, men would rely “excessively” on their economically active wife: they would rest upon their wife’s income without trying to support her. Even though this phenomenon was not currently reported, other answer elements suggest that the risk is quite probable. To the question whether “it is better to try and strengthen economically the couple than only aim for women’s empowerment”, 100 percent of wives have answered positively (against only 76 percent of their husbands). The main argument invoked is that “women cannot manage everything” and it is “necessary that spouses mutually help each other”. Other women say more explicitly that men should not “become negligent” or “let their wife manage and pay for everything”.

Inversely, with the development of their spouse’s

⁵² One of the bias of this type of studies lays in the fact that some surveyed people associate research team work with work of teams in charge of evaluations and identification of future zones of intervention for international organisations (despite our explanations). As a consequence, some respondents may attempt to provide “results guarantees” to their interlocutor, thinking it would be a determining factor in the selection of intervention zones by organisations, while reporting high needs (sometimes overestimated, here too to convince organisations to intervene in their village).

⁵³ On this subject, it is interesting to note that in Zinder, WFP’s FFA activities and support provided during the lean season have enabled a decrease in men’s seasonal migrations and, thus, contributed to reducing women’s work load.

activities, some men take on the responsibility of some of the tasks that are traditionally assigned to women. According to collected testimonies, some husbands provide children care while the mother is away. However, such occurrences have not been sufficiently illustrated to draw conclusions.

The issue of wives' work overload and husbands' de-responsibilisation must be addressed to prevent furthering men-women inequalities (which limits the impact of women's economic empowerment). It therefore appears necessary to sensitize men in accompanying and supporting their spouse in the empowerment process in the market and/or also target men in these initiatives. Most couples are favourable to this principle, especially considering the fact that it may contribute to the development of the household and benefit the entire family.

❖ **The risk of income unsustainability and destabilising the family**

On another entirely different level, according to some women, improving their living conditions may have the perverse effect of raising their children's expectations. This, they explain, may create challenging, if not conflicting, situations should their income happen to drop again.

This consequence highlights the importance of accompanying women's empowerment process over time, notably in poorest countries like Niger, where the economic environment constitutes an important challenge to women's empowerment in the market.

The negative consequences and risks linked to women's empowerment appear to be moderate to important, considering their low probability, their temporary nature, but also their potential major impact. If these risks are not prevented, they should be at least managed, in accordance with the humanitarian principle of *Do no harm*. It is particularly the case for risks of women's marginalisation and rejection and other possible

forms of GBV that may arise from them.

Negative consequences of women's empowerment are largely outweighed by positive consequences, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and across the various spheres.

4.2 Positive consequences and women empowerment output: from improved living conditions to strengthening women's position

All people met in the course of this study seem greatly convinced by the benefits of women's empowerment, in particular in the market sphere. The main reason for this is that women bring home additional revenues. This enables households to improve their living conditions.

❖ **The improvement of living conditions**

All surveyed people report that women's empowerment help better respond to the needs of the family and, by extent, of the community. According to some respondents, women are "more invested in their household" than men and would better protect revenues. Inversely, men would be more likely to "spend their money elsewhere" or "forgetting about the household".

Humanitarian and development organizations such as WFP also recognize that "it is mostly women who are primarily responsible for ensuring food security and nutritional balance of their families"⁵⁴.

Strengthening food security

Whereas surveyed people are unanimous on the improvement of their living conditions as a result of IGAs developed by women, only 41 percent of women interviewed answer "yes" to the question on improved nutrition in their family. Unless answers to this question are biased by surveyed people's perception of the stakes of this research⁵⁵, this number certainly reflects the persistence of food

⁵⁴ WFP. 2015. *Politique en matière de Problématique Hommes-Femmes 2015-2020*, Rome, page 8

⁵⁵ See footnote 52 above

security needs.

Economically empowered women contribute equally to food security of the community in general. Throughout their production, transformation, transportation (collection) and sale activities, they introduce complementary foods to various levels of the value chain. “There is more food available in the community on any given day”, tells an Allakaye grouping member. A woman merchant from Dan Goudaou further explains that “it is thanks to women merchants that we get supplied, since we do not have a market here. Without them, we would be cut from the world. (...) Thanks to that, we can now buy and resell these products, and generate a profit”.

According to Allakaye mayor and to the village chiefs, activities such as land recovery implemented by WFP have had a significant impact on food security in the community. Making these lands available enables women to benefit from their own harvests, instead of working on landlord plots for a limited income. Furthermore, women report a better and greater production, after capacity-building trainings, notably in agricultural and farming techniques

Omen activities can also contribute to food security at the qualitative level. It is the case for the enriched flour production from the *Garin Yara* (infant flour) cooperative in Matamèye. According to its representatives, sale of this flour has slightly improved infant nutrition, as its composition stimulates breastmilk production. Information sessions conducted by some women groups on children nutrition is another example of contribution to food and nutritional security of the community.

Improved access to health, hygiene and sanitation

Women’s empowerment can also contribute to improving public health. Here again, the main improvement vector is income brought in by women engaged in IGAs, which facilitates access by their family to health care. Although this is brought forth in group discussions, in interviews however, only 47.5 percent of women estimate that their empowerment improved their family’s health.

The second improvement vector lies in information and sensitization efforts by women’s associations and groupings – on subjects such as HIV/AIDS, hygiene or again sanitation in the household and in the community. According to the *Komi da Locaci* grouping founder, “before our sensitization actions, there would be lots of manure stocked in front of houses” (households kept them for future use as fertilizer), which caused hygiene and health issues. “After explaining to inhabitants that discontinuing this unsanitary practice they would save in hospital costs, and that money saved could be redirected to buying fertilizers, people understood and stopped stocking manure in front of their houses”. The *Dadin Kowa* association members also relate the impact of their sensitization action on family hygiene. “Now, houses are cleaner and children wash their hands before and after meals”.

❖ Improving children education

41 percent of interviewed women think their empowerment resulted in an improvement in children education. The first stage is their enrolment. According to members of Matamèye women groupings network, these women are more likely to dedicate part of their revenues to their children’s schooling than men. “Without that, my children was most likely have remained illiterate”, tells a mother. The influx of complementary revenues also allows parents to better dress their children which, in some societies, may be a prerequisite factor to sending children to school.

To the economic factor may sometimes be added the “awareness” which causes parents or mothers to value more their children’s schooling: “After the sensitization efforts and with revenues from our activities, we send more children to school, even if the husband is reluctant” reveals a woman.

Women’s revenues also allows improvement of children education in the household: several actors, men and women, agree that a women who generates revenues is not only more listened to by her husband, but also by her children.

❖ **Strengthening cohesion and the family image**

Many interviewees, notably men, report that women empowerment led to increased “happiness”, “harmony” or “cohesion” within their families, thanks to the household economic strengthening.

The decrease in economic migrations

According to the Dan Goudaou village chief, women’s economic empowerment caused a decrease in villagers’ migration⁵⁶. 69 percent of interviewed women confirm that their husband no longer needs to migrate since they generate revenues. As highlighted by the South Florida University’s study, men migrations have an impact on children’s relationship to paternal authority, but also to the family cohesion in general. Furthermore, in cases where all family members emigrate together, it can destabilise children and cause their de-schooling, according to women’s associations.

Preserving the family’s honour

The increase in family revenues allows preserving the couple’s honour. Men and women notably mention the importance of “keeping the secret” within the household, that is, to be able to solve one’s economic problems internally, without having to ask others for money or food. Some men also stress how importance it is for them to not depend on humanitarian organizations’ assistance, as they also wish to preserve their dignity vis-à-vis outsiders. Some surveyed people stress that they are better considered in the community since they have greater means. In this case, image in the community thus constitutes a lever for the promotion of women’s empowerment.

Improvement of marital relations

According to 94.5 percent of surveyed people, they have “better couple relations (more love, more

respect)” since the woman is more economically autonomous. According to women from the *Ta Allah Ba Taquba* network, it is the relief from financial pressure which contributes to bringing peace in couple’s relations, before anything (the lack of money brings conflicts between spouses). Many surveyed women and men report also greater harmony, a better relationship and improved mutual understanding between spouses. Finally, according to 80 percent of surveyed women (excluding divorcees and widowed), cooperation has improved in their couple since their empowerment in the market.

According to women from the *Ta Allah Ba Taquba* network, their sensitization actions have also had a positive impact on other couples’ relationships: “Before, spouses did not discuss anything and were apart from each other. Since our sensitization actions (on women and children rights), the couple’s life improved through dialogue between the spouses”.

❖ **Strengthening the community: resilience, development and social cohesion**

Whereas women’s income allows an improvement in meeting households’ primary needs, in some cases, women groups’ actions and generated income contribute to further strengthen the community.

Improving resilience

Women’s empowerment contributes to strengthen families’ resilience and, by extension, community’s. In fact, activities and production techniques introduced by women groups (or international organizations, through them) allows the community to develop more rational income and harvest management systems, which in turns enable a better response to financial emergencies, food crisis and lean seasons. This can be illustrated by the strengthening of harvest stocking practices, the

⁵⁶ L’émigration économique ou l’exode, comme l’appellent ces communautés, constitue une stratégie de survie visiblement répandue au Niger. C’est le cas dans les départements voire dans les régions visitées (département de Bouza à Tahoua, et département de Kantché à Zinder), mais aussi dans d’autres parties du Niger comme le département de Loga dans la région de Dosso, cible de l’étude menée en 2016 par l’Université de Floride du Sud pour le PAM. Voir Boyer M., Deubel T., *op. cit.*

development of farming (livestock may be sold should a need for cash arise) or the creation of “emergency” capital through tontines.

Mutual financial assistance between women constitutes another arm of community resilience strengthening: in fact, most women surveyed declare lending money to their kin in need. Moreover, merchant women sell their products on credit when necessary. While this strengthens the community’s capacity in managing crises, many report that, unfortunately, creditors encounter difficulties in getting paid back. Thus surveyed women perceive informal credit as a positive consequence for the community but also as an indirect negative consequence for themselves.

Support to community development and social cohesion

Informal credit between women may also support the development of an IGA by other women. Thus, there is a domino effect in which ones’ empowerment facilitates the others’, with all the positive impacts this may have.

Some of women’s activities also contribute to energizing the local economy: by increasing demand in raw materials on one link of the value chain, it stimulates supply at another level of the chain which, in turn supports demand. For example, in Allakaye, the development of peanut transformation activities by women groupings led the community to increase peanut production, according to the village chiefs. This specialisation example constitutes an important development opportunity for the community, when there are no negative consequences in access to other food products.

The appearance of women’s new economic activities may also affect peoples’ practices in the economic and domestic space. For example, a food saleswoman from Allakaye explains that “thanks to her, people can now eat without wasting any time”. This service may end up in time having an impact of customers’ habits and, notably, facilitate their work. We may furthermore wonder if it may provide relief

for other women’s household chores (such as cooking, which needs collecting wood and water, in addition to preparing food), which would then help re-balance gender-based roles.

Finally, bonds created between women, in groupings and associations, contribute also to developing relations between women and relations between neighbourhoods, according to women from a Dan Goudaou grouping. Facilitating inter-community exchanges while energizing local communities can help strengthen communities’ social cohesion.

❖ Strengthening women’s subjective empowerment

More than 90 percent of surveyed women report feeling freer, more useful, more respected and proud of themselves, since they are more empowered. Moreover, 80 percent of them declare being more acknowledged and happier. While these declarations were provided as answers to questions asked, these women are nevertheless unanimous. In fact, some surveyed women had spontaneously mentioned their feeling of freedom or happiness in open questions or during focus group sessions. Members of the *Dadin Kowa* association report that their husband gives them greater recognition today. They are not only proud of the results of their actions (such as having a clean household), but also, some are proud of their wife’s contribution to the well-being of the community. Some women add that they definitely feel more moved by their husband, a subjective gain which may contribute to feeding women’s empowerment process.

Many merchant women finally report that, by contributing to the local economy, they feel like they have “found their place in the community”. This relates to a more global phenomenon of developing women’s place in society, which is a consequence and a factor of women’s empowerment.

❖ Developing women’s place in society

By adding and completing each other, actions and output of women’s actions in the market and the

community, gradually contribute to changing women's image: to the evolution of expectations when it comes to their role, then to the development of their place in society. It all starts with the example of some women who are "precursor" of such change.

Promoting women's work through example and imitation

Through community or economic actions women initiate, a new gender-based role model takes shape for women: that of a woman who is active outside of the household. The woman who founded the *Komi Da Locaci* group in Matamèye tells that their work contributed to changing women's view of their work capacity, thanks to their "example". "Before, she explains, some women refused to believe that they could generate an income, or even that girls could go to school."

Thus, women's empowerment has a psychological ripple effect. Women active in the market or in the community constitute "role models" and inspire other women to take on economic activities. 93 percent of women interviewed in polygamous households say they inspire their co-spouse, and 86.5 percent of them believe they inspire other women in the community.

This ripple effect may also apply to the envy of other couples to be like families which develop themselves thanks to the mother's income. According to the Allakaye mayor, this creates a phenomenon of "competition" or imitation between couples, which inevitably results in the promotion of other women's economic empowerment.

These dynamics relate to the evolution of social projections for gender-based roles and families' success model. Thus, in the collective imaginary, a family' social status or desire to develop economically may take precedence over the respect of roles traditionally attributed to women.

Changing the image of empowered women

We have seen that, in the societies under study,

image is extremely important to men and to women. The fear to be looked down upon by the community, because of choosing women's empowerment, may constitute a major barrier for wives as well as husbands. However, once the stigmatisation phase behind them, women active in the market or the community are globally accepted, even valued – more than marginalised. The main determinant lays in the benefits families, notably men, and the community draw from women's actions.

Thus, 87.5 percent of women interviewed say they are more respected or considered by the community's men since they are empowered, and 90.5 percent estimate that they are more respected or considered by other women (see Table 3).

As women benefit from recognition and support of the community and their husbands, they enjoy a possible increase in empowerment.

Improving women's role and place in the community

These empowerment gains or *support* to women's empowerment are greater than an increase in women's capacity of action in itself: it depends on the environment in which they evolve. Over time, women acquire a certain legitimacy within the community and with their husband, which allows them to continue investing themselves and becoming more influent in the community.

Thus 69 percent of interviewed women report participating more to associations since they have become empowered; 62 percent participate more to political parties, and 60 percent assist more in meetings on managing community affairs. According to some women groupings, their husbands would now even allow them to participate to activities outside of their village.

The exponential involvement of women in the community may also be observed (or before anything) at the women group level. Because some groups have demonstrated a solid organizational capacity, a strong cohesion or a certain efficiency,

they are increasingly solicited to contribute to initiatives or various meetings. "We now have to do with women, since they contribute to almost all activities in the village. They are today definitely more involved in managing the village's affairs" relates the Dan Goudaou village chief. *Dadin Kowa* and *Ba a dole* women also report that from a situation in which they were "neglected", women are today "involved" in managing the community. Their mere invitation to a focus group for this study is proof for them of the place they have acquired in the community: "It would have been impossible in the past", declares one of them, "it is an honour". Matamèye's *Ta Allah ba Taquba* network female president reports that she is henceforth invited to Municipal Council meetings.

The influence and support gains acquired by some women, through groupings, may constitute a launch

pad for the development of a political carrier. In Matamèye, it is thanks to her notoriety within the groupings network that a woman was elected to the Municipal Council. Another woman councillor met in Dan Goudaou also attests to the role of women's associations, in terms of sensitisation as well as electorate support (essentially found in women).

These examples of political influence gains are emblematic of the gradual strengthening of women's role and place in society. Positive output and consequences of women's empowerment constitute the driving force of these processes: sphere after sphere, bringing in complementary income, strengthening couples and their image, better valuing women's work and increasing their self-esteem appear to open up, or keeping open, the doors to women's empowerment, thus enabling empowerment transfers between the spheres.



5. Empowerment Dynamics and Transfers between the Market, Community and Household Spheres

The preceding sections of this report have identified barriers, actors, risks, outcome and consequences of women's empowerment. These elements may apply to a given sphere but also to several spheres, by nature or by ripple effect. The current section aims to summarize empowerment dynamics observed through an analysis grid focused on empowerment *transfers* between the spheres. This will provide us a greater understanding in the study context of women empowerment's levers and patterns, in a cross-functional or multi-sectoral fashion.

5.1 The starting point: the Household sphere

We have seen that, in traditional societies of patriarchal and rural type, women's capacity to become empowered – for those who pursue it – depends first on masculine surroundings. For married women, the husband's consent is a must.

Considering roles that are traditionally assigned to women in targeted communities, the husband's consent or support of activities undertaken by his wife outside of the household indicate a gain of empowerment for the woman. This constitutes the first case of women empowerment transfer between spheres – from the household, to the market and to the community.

Once this first door to empowerment is opened, dynamics observed in the market and the community result in subsequent empowerment transfers, notably through women's groups.

5.2 Community-Market-Household transfers through women's groups

In surveyed village, the first step and indicator of women's empowerment in the community resides in women's involvement in women associations and groupings.

As described above, these groups contribute to women's empowerment through the strengthening of financial or material capacities of their members, the development of their knowledge and technical skills, and moral support provided to women.

❖ Economic and financial support: a launch pad of women's empowerment in the market

Whereas some women manage to engage in IGAs by themselves or with the help of their husband, most of them seem to access the market thanks to women groupings, which are catalysts of women's economic empowerment. This constitutes the second case of empowerment transfer between spheres – from the community sphere to the market sphere.

❖ Acquired skills: the vector of expansion of women's influence in the household

Skills and knowledge women acquire through trainings and activities they carry out through women groups also cause a transfer of women's empowerment from the community sphere to the household. This is what 100 percent of interviewed husbands and wives believe, as shown in Figure 3. Sensitization actions also constitute a vector of women's empowerment in the household, according to 96 percent of husbands and wives. Dan Goudaou women associations' members tell us, for example, that they have a greater power of decision within the couple over their maternal and reproductive health, since conducting family planning campaigns. Consequences of sensitization actions are also visible in beneficiary households. In Allakaye, *Dadin Kowa* association members explain that the sensitization of community women (in the domain of sanitation, household hygiene, family planning, maternal and reproductive health, malaria prevention) contributed to strengthening women's action and decision-making capacities within their families. In other words, there is a domino effect in

empowerment transfer dynamics, as empowerment of women in the community sphere contributes to the strengthening of others in the household sphere.

Knowledge acquired by women constitute also a bridge between the community sphere and the market, from which sphere empowerment transfers take place on a larger scale.

5.3 Market to Community and Household transfers: Income, as a vector of women's relative empowerment

In preceding sections, we have identified women income as their main empowerment outcome, especially for targeted communities. In fact, income generates a multitude of positive "by-products" and consequences in the market, the household and the community. Thus, money acts as a major vector for women's empowerment and empowerment transfers, from the market to the community and household spheres.

❖ Expanding women's influence capacity in the Community through financial support

Surveyed women report using part of their income to support their close circle in development of IGAs or response to emergencies. Through these acts, women become "references" or pillars of support for members of the community. The near-totality of women surveyed are also proud to be able to contribute to ceremonies (such as marriage and baptisms) thanks to their income, which is highly valued in the community.

All such actions enables economically empowered women to enjoy a better status in their community: more than half the women interviewed report that they feel effectively "more respected", "more acknowledged" and more "listened to", notably thanks to their financial capacities. Thus constitutes an important factor of expansion of women's influence capacity in the community.

❖ Strengthening women's household influence: real gains but relative to the context

The first phase of the *Gender and Market Initiative* study conducted in Niger identified a lack of women empowerment transfer from the market sphere to the household sphere.

Assessing these transfer dynamics turn out to be a complex task. On one hand, 78 percent of women and men surveyed answer "yes" to the question on whether women's economic strengthening contributed in strengthening their decision power or their capacity to act autonomously in their household; and on the other hand, there is very little illustration of this empowerment in surveyed people answers.

Income: the main vector of strengthening women's power in the household

In their answers to open questions and in focus groups, the majority of surveyed women describe an empowerment transfer from the market to the household by women's capacity to contribute to her household's revenues: "Once you bring in money, you have a greater power of influence at home"; "With the money you bring home, your husband *has to* listen to you", declare surveyed women. Members of *Dadin Kowa* and *Ba a Dole* women associations of Allakaye also report: "economic empowerment is much more important than women's *direct* empowerment in the household. Money is the number 1 empowerment factor in the household. As long as you have no money, you have no influence."

In polygamous households, an economically empowered woman becomes also more influential than other women, according to members of this grouping "whatever the subject and even if the other spouse is right (*versus* the wife who brought in the money)". Thus money takes precedence over knowledge or sincerity, in expanding women's influence capacity in the household.

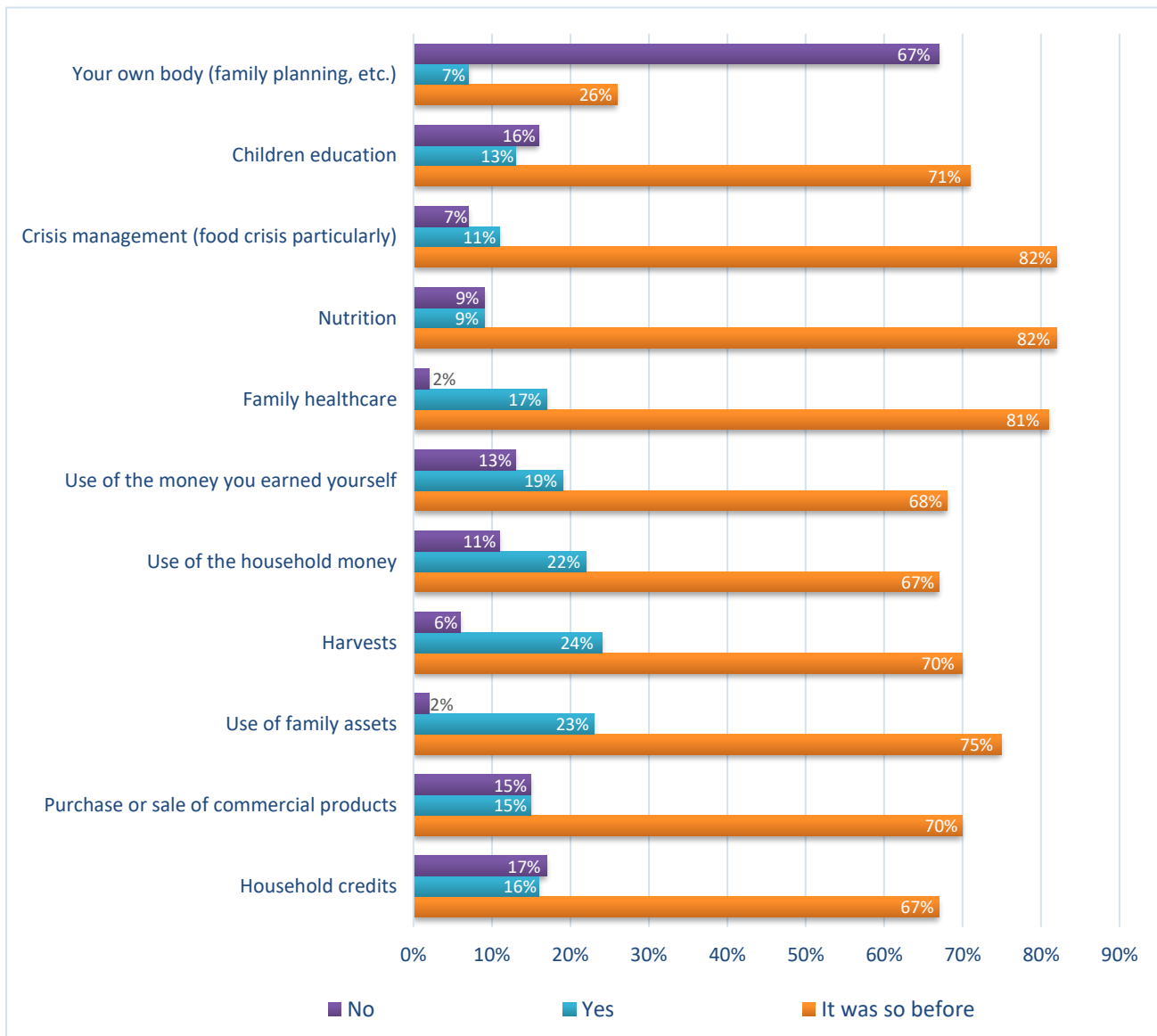
Relative empowerment gains

Figure 4 below highlights a relative empowerment

transfer from the market to the household, through the increase in women’s influence in making-decision on some subjects. Influence gains may be observed particularly on the use of family assets,

harvests, use of household money and use of the money they earned – subjects on which about 20 percent of interviewed women say they have gained influence after their economic empowerment.

Figure 4. Women’s answers to the Question: “Since you are more economically empowered, are you more involved in the household’s decision-making in the following subjects?”⁵⁷



Empowerment gains observed on these subjects are however lesser, compared to what previously existed (before empowerment in the market) of a relative empowerment of interviewed women in the

household. As the Figure shows, most women were already involved in decision-making on the proposed subjects before their economic empowerment.⁵⁸ This particularly regards decisions purchases or sales

⁵⁷ Question asked to 22 wives and 27 women merchants met in individual interviews.

⁵⁸ See answers “yes (meaning, she is involved in decision-making), but it was so before”.

of commercial products, family health care, nutrition, crisis management and children education (for 70 to 82 percent of respondents). This phenomenon may be explained by the fact that husbands who authorised their wife to engage in economic activities have a certain open mind on women's role in general, including in the household.

Women empowerment transfer from the market to the household must be weighed against the absence of influence gain on other major variables of women's empowerment in the household.

❖ **Limits of empowerment transfer from the market to the Household**

Selective or joint management of women's money

According to the survey results, women's freedom to manage their money is often limited to small expenses, except for trade-related decisions and children's education (though this is sometimes handled by husbands). In fact, women may mostly make decisions on food spending and clothing, their own needs or that of their unmarried daughters and, in some cases, health spending.

Other women may not freely use their money: many surveyed women report that this is a joint spousal decision. It must be noted here that, for some of them, consulting their husband or making a decision jointly does not constitute a limitation to their freedom or empowerment. "We may inform our husband on our money and we may decide jointly on certain expenses" without it being an "obligation". Some women thus see the joint decision-making as a form of collaboration within the couple or respect for their husband, in line with the system of values and ideas of communities under study.

Is husbands' insistence on controlling certain domains a violation of women's empowerment or an acceptable cultural norm?

Besides managing money, other important decision-making subjects remain essentially husbands'

domain. It is first the case for women's use of their bodies or maternal and reproductive health: 67 percent of women interviewed report that they are still not consulted in decisions made in this domain. In Dan Goudaou for example, this practice is so "institutionalized" that, at the Health Centre, the husband's consent is systematically required before contraceptives are prescribed to female patients. Members of Dan Goudaou Husbands School express themselves some reluctance to women's self-determination in matters of maternal and reproductive health. According to them, the contraception decision must be made jointly between spouses. If this may be perceived as a resistance to women's empowerment in the household sphere, in the context of the study, this opinion is relatively progressive since other men and women consider that it is entirely men's domain.

Nevertheless, 49 percent of respondents estimate that women's self-determination about their body is a "relevant" variable of women's empowerment in the household (see Table 1). This could be an indication that some women would like to decide on their maternal and reproductive health but they cannot. However, other interviewed women do not seem to have any issue with it: about one fourth of them seem to accept the fact that family planning is a man's role, without having any apparent sense of victimisation. They justify it with their interpretation of Islam tenants and its gender-based roles.

The same dual phenomenon is observed on other decision-making themes that are relatively strategic to women's empowerment. As shown in Table 4 below, decisions on developing an IGA, taking training classes, mobility and use of women's time are mostly taken by the husband or, at best, jointly (which appears to be a common practice, based on interviews). Here again, most surveyed women consider these variables as "relevant" when talking about women in the household (see Table 1)⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ 86% of women estimate that self-determination in the market is a relevant empowerment indicator in the household; 95% view access to training as relevant; 75% for women's mobility; and 91% for the free use of their time.

Table 4: Women’s answers to the Question “Since you have become more economically empowered, can you freely do the following things outside of the house (without your husband’s consent to be necessary)?”⁶⁰

	Yes	No
Undertake new income-generating activities (IGAs)	28.5 percent	71.5 percent
Take training classes	21 percent	79 percent
Decide of your own whereabouts ⁶¹	0 percent	100 percent
Decide on the use of your time (between work and leisure)	23.5 percent	76.5 percent

Just like for maternal and reproductive health, the gap between these numbers and the lack of empowerment in these areas for most of them may be an indication of women’s frustrations. However, here too, we observe a relative indifference of women regarding their lack of empowerment on this subjects. A possible explanation to this would reside in the fact that they make a difference between their theoretical understanding of women empowerment in the household (talking about relevant variables “in general”) and their own situation and expectations. Another part of this reality may be that *some* women suffer from this lack of empowerment whereas others may be satisfied or indifferent to it.

Thus, the breadth of the phenomenon of empowerment transfer from the market to the household must be put into perspective and must acknowledge the meaning most authors and actors in this domain give to it. The development of women’s empowerment in the household must be reset in Niger’s cultural and religious context. Women surveyed convey a relative impression of empowerment in their household (or apparent satisfaction in this regard) without certain variables viewed as strategic being attained.

The observation of one merchant woman from

Allakaye sheds some light on the intrinsic understanding of women’s empowerment in the household: according to them, “a woman who takes good care of her household and who is loyal to her husband can already enjoy a certain empowerment in the household, notably in the domains of children care, food and health”. Though such comment may not be generalised, this observation help us understand the nuances in our understanding of levers for women’s empowerment in the household, under the study context.

A proper appreciation of the empowerment transfer from the market to the household sphere is complex: any conclusion must distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic perceptions of empowerment, while taking into account possible differences between couples or individuals.

However, it appears correct to conclude by putting forth the impact of income brought in the increase of women’s capacity of influence within the household. The more women contribute to household revenues the more they would be listened to and considered by their husband. Furthermore, this enables some women to engage expenses they could not do before. However, the evolution of women’s “power to act” (*agency*) has limits posed by the “institutional

⁶⁰ Question asked to 22 wives and 27 women merchants in individual interviews.

⁶¹ Proposition of answers exclusively provided by the said wives.

environment” in which they evolve, with regard to the two components of empowerment according to Amartya Sen. Despite some improvements (notably between generations and thanks to sensitization efforts), the social, cultural and religious environment remains fairly stable, as are gender relations. Thus, possibilities of women’s empowerment with regard to traditional or exogenous variables appear to be below a certain evolution threshold which is difficult to cross in the household, in the context studied, despite women empowerment gains in the market. The question whether women are satisfied or frustrated in this situation is difficult to evaluate, as taboos and survey bias get infiltrated in the game. This would call for further investigation.

Empowerment’s subjective dimensions seem to experience clearer progress in the household sphere as well as the community sphere and, by extension, in the market. This reflects a cross-functional dynamics of women’s valorisation that is translated sphere by sphere.

5.4 Conclusion: the development of a virtuous circle of relative empowerment

In conclusion, it may be said that the dynamics of empowerment transfer observed between different spheres seem to gradually contribute to the development of a virtuous circle of women’s multi-sectoral empowerment. These dynamics feed and support each other, from the household sphere to the community sphere, from the market sphere to the household and community spheres where,

ultimately, we observe an evolution of women’s place and an evolution of the perceptions of gender-based roles – which, in turn, opens up doors to more significant empowerment dynamics.

Women’s multi-sectoral empowerment is however limited by the relevant socio-cultural framework. In the case of rural communities studied in Niger, patriarchal culture and conservatism do not seem to be compatible with certain empowerment variables, notably in the community and household spheres. This is illustrated by the taking of political leadership positions by women, the full control by women of their money, their capacity to decide alone on matters regarding their maternal and reproductive health, their freedom of movement, or their taking training classes.

Whereas, from an outsider point of view, these variables may be considered as major, from an insider point of view, their importance is not as clear-cut. Collected opinions vary among surveyed women between adhesion to culture and desire of emancipation. This is without factoring in taboos surrounding such themes as well as bias typical to these types of research, which can warp reality. All this reminds us of the need of exercising prudence and cultural sensitivity when promoting such social changes, and thus the need of truly engaging communities as a whole, men and women, in the middle term. This is indispensable in any attempt to re-design the perimeters of gender relations in an harmonious and adapted manner.



Photo: WFP/Nyani Quarmyne

6. Conclusion: How to Support Women's Empowerment?

Based on the analysis of empowerment dynamics, the following recommendations may be provided to WFP and other development and humanitarian actors in order to promote women's multi-sectoral empowerment.

6.1 Recommendations on women's empowerment approach

- With due regard to the context, **take into account intrinsic concepts of women's empowerment** and political, ideological and cultural stakes involved in the process.
- In the value system of communities studied, the empowerment concept is primarily viewed as economic empowerment, the complementary couple's vision and, linked to it, the group (family and community) taking precedence over the individual (woman).
- **Adopt a multi-sectoral approach** to empowerment, taking into account:
 - Prerequisite to women's empowerment in the household sphere (through obtaining the husband's support);
 - The fact that the market sphere constitutes a more neutral and valued entry point (thus legitimate) than others, to start promoting women's empowerment;
 - The fact that the community sphere, which dictates gender relation standards and values, while sensitive to penetrate, is determinant in women's empowerment, (1) thanks to the role of catalyst of change played by women's associations and groupings, and (2) thanks to the positive image women may benefit from, once

perceptions on their roles are changed.

6.2 Programmatic recommendations

Plan for the long-term ...

- **To achieve efficiency:** acknowledging that women's empowerment calls for a change in social norms and rules, which requires adoption of a gradual context-sensitive approach.
- **To achieve sustainability:** with regard to economic and cultural challenges of women's empowerment, accompanying these processes must be done over the middle and long term, to avoid the risks of increasing women's marginalisation or failure in their activities.

On compensating for gender imbalance

Strengthen women's capacity of action ("agency")

- Over the long term, promote **girls' access to education** at the national and local levels.
- In the middle term, support and **multiply the capacity of action of women associations and groupings.**

Such support may be implemented through:

- Donations – money, material⁶², seeds farming animals.
- Microcredit or easing access to microcredit
- Institutional support

This may be done through trainings (in developing and managing an organization, in leadership, in working within a network, etc.) or in the development of the institution in itself⁶³.

⁶² For example, it is thanks to support from an international NGO that the *Komi da Locaci* grouping of Matamèye was able to create the *Garin Yara* enriched flour processing unit.

⁶³ In Matamèye for example, the women groupings Network was created under the impetus of CARE, the international NGO, in order

- In the short to middle term, **support women in their empowerment in the market** (directly or through women groups), through:
 - Support to the development of IGAs (through technical trainings, microcredit or providing production assets, such as cultivable land⁶⁴);
 - Create employment opportunities⁶⁵.
- All the above while taking into account the reciprocal nature of **gender relations** and thus the need to also treat men's role and masculinity in targeted societies.

On addressing cultural barriers and risk prevention

Act on the “environment”: engage all community actors into rethinking perceptions, knowledge, attitudes and practices of gender-based roles.

- **Initiate the dialogue between men and women** on re-defining gender relationships and promoting a “win-win” reconstruction of roles and attributes for women and men.
- Promote empowerment as a **collective endeavour or a couple dynamics** and sensitize husbands on their support role with their wife.
- Promote **positive outcome and consequences of women's empowerment** by valorising:
 - The increase in revenues, enhanced knowledge and social recognition acquired by empowered women (and their families);
 - These impact of these output: better living conditions, children education, resilience, development of community and social and family cohesion.
- **Inform, sensitize or open the dialogue** in the

communities on questions of maternal and reproductive health, family planning, fight against early pregnancy and marriage, girl schooling and, if the context allows it, men-women equality and human rights.

- To carry out these actions and/or inspire change, it is necessary to **involve key actors of women's empowerment**, by strengthening their sensitization knowledge and techniques, if applicable:
 - **Women groups**, in order to alter the image of empowered women with *facts*; inspire other women to be a role model; and increase knowledge among women and the community through their role as “relays” (sensitization actions);
 - **Husbands who support their wife's empowerment**, in order to set another “role” for husbands;
 - **Local and religious authorities**, in order to legitimate existing or upcoming changes;
 - **Women leaders**, to inspire other women or couple to support the advancement of women's place in the community;

On managing risks

- **Assess empowerment risks** and possible protection needs of involved women **for each targeted context** – as each country, region or community may present different dynamics and risks.
- **Identify ways to prevent these risks and eventual answers as a response, by consulting** with women, men, community leaders and women protection organizations.

to pool resources and strengthen each one of these groupings. Thanks to the NGO's financial support and to the contribution of the sixteen groupings, the Network has been able to create a major start-up fund to develop common IGAs.

⁶⁴ Just like WFP did through the land recovery activity.

⁶⁵ Like WFP also did, notably through its *Food assistance For Assets (FFA)* project.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: WFP in Niger, Niger's gender profile by UN Women, and WEAI

A.1 The World Food Program in Niger

Today, the World Food Program (WFP) Niger implements the 2017-2019 “Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations” (PRRO). In this framework, WFP carries out a multi-sectoral activity package designed to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations with a focus on capacity-building and the development of strategic partnerships.

Activities include:

- *Food Assistance For Assets* (FFA) (cash or in-kind transfers) and technical support for the creation and rebuilding of livelihoods and production means;
- Targeted Food Assistance (TFA) in the form of cash or food during the lean season (from June to September);
- Distribution of complementary nutritional products for children 6-23 months for malnutrition prevention during the lean season;
- Support to School Canteens and complementary activities (grain mill, school farming, etc.);
- Providing care for Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM);
- Local purchases with small producers;
- Sensitization on critical family practices (use of mosquito nets, hand washing, exclusive breastfeeding, etc.)

These FFA activities and assistance during the lean season are carried out in the course of several years in order to support them in their recovery and strengthen their resilience. Activities related to school canteens and providing care for moderate acute malnutrition are also implemented outside of these households.

The targeting of beneficiary households is based on the Household Economy Approach (HEA), a social and economic classification tool. This participative tool allows the classification of households in four groups based on their vulnerability level (Very poor, Poor, Average and Affluent) and thus ensure targeting of the most vulnerable. This approach allows for the identification of criteria specific to each community to measure living standards, which are determined in a participative and collaborative manner. WFP Niger targets households classified as “very poor” for implementation of this package.

The Three-Pronged Approach (3PA) is applied when diagnosing, programming and planning activities.

Geographic targeting is based on the Integrated Context Analysis (ICA) approach, which enables to capture zone vulnerability in terms of food security, climatic shocks and nutrition, while taking into account livelihoods.

Based on this approach as well as existing opportunities (presence of partners experience in the domain of resilience), 37 priority communes, including the convergence communes (C2C, *Communes de Convergence*) were targeted for the implementation of this activity package. As for the care of moderate acute malnutrition and support to school canteens, WFP intervene outside of these priority communes.

In terms of programming and planning, in cooperation with the Niger government, notably the High-Commission for the 3N Initiative ("*Les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens*") and other partners, the WFP implements the livelihood-based seasonal programming (PSME, *Programmation Saisonnière basée sur les Moyens d'Existence*) at the regional and communal level, as well as the Participative Community Planning (PCP, *Planification Communautaire Participative*) at the community level, which enables to identify communities' specific needs in terms of gender and environment, among others. These tools also contribute to the capacity-building of government partners in programming and planning, as well as in coordination.

A.2 Niger's Gender Profile (UN Women 2017 Report)

Population: 17,138,707 inhabitants, among which 50.3 percent of women and 49.7 percent of men (4th RGPH, 2012) for the age group 0-14 y.o. (50.9 percent men against 49.1 percent women); whereas a little more than the population of at least 15 are women.

Economy: The Nigerien population's employment rate⁶⁶ is 57.3 percent, with 80.1 percent for men and 36 percent for women.

Poverty: Agriculture is the population's main activity sector (69.3 percent of men against 30.7 percent of women); farming, fishing and hunting (76.5 percent men against 23.5 percent women). Niger's unemployment rate is estimated at 8.9 percent, with 9.2 percent for men against 8.1 percent for women. Slightly more than one out of three women (36.2 percent) owns at least one land plot, versus more than half (55.3 percent) for men.

Justice: Among magistrates, one person out of ten is a woman. Men represented 55.8 percent of court clerks against 44.2 percent of women. The percentage of women court bailiffs is between 5.9 percent and 11.25 percent over the 2010-2014 period; whereas that of men bailiffs varies between 88.75 percent and 94.05 percent for the same period.

Social protection: According to the 2015 national study for the evaluation of socio-economic and demographic indicators (ENISED, *Étude Nationale d'évaluation d'Indicateurs Socio-Économiques et Démographiques*), births are more declared when the head of the household is a woman (61.5 percent against 57.3 percent). With regard to early marriages, there are more people living in households led by women (63.2 percent) in situation of food insecurity than in households led by men (47.2 percent). There are fewer people in severe food insecurity living in men-led households than in women-led

⁶⁶ The employment rate represents the ratio between the working population of a given economy (employed active population) and the population at working age. It is thus the unemployment's rate complement to 1. Source: UN Women (2017)

households (i.e., 2.4 percent against 3.4 percent).

Education: The number of boys in pre-schooling (1.8 percent) is slightly higher than that of girls (1.4 percent). The primary school level Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) is 76.2 percent, with 82.1 percent for boys and 70.2 percent for girls. Secondary education in Niger is characterized by a low school access (only 19.6 percent of children aged 6-14) and strong discrepancies between boys and girls: on the national level, the recorded gap between Net Enrolment Rates (NER) among girls and boys is of 4.4 points. Among Niger's various regions, the gap is particularly high in Zinder (8,4 points).

Differences between sexes are equally significant for the national rate of first cycle completion, which is 11.9 percent for boys, and 8.4 percent for girls. As for the second cycle completion rate, it is 4.0 percent for boys and 1.8 percent for girls.

With regard to these discrepancies, the propensity of illiterate women remains very high compared to men (that is 75.5 percent against 67.8 percent). Thus, there are less women (45.7 percent) who succeed to final exams in trainings provided in literacy centres than men (60.3 percent).

Health: The analysis of anaemia prevalence shows that women are more affected by anaemia than men (32.7 percent against 26.2 percent). The study also reveals that the majority of Nigeriens (84.1 percent) have never had an HIV/AIDS test. This percentage is higher among men (92.2 percent) than among women (76.0 percent) in the national level and in the various regions of the country, and adult women do not much encourage education of the youth on condom use compared to men.

Regarding decision-making in the household, men are in majority (78.6 percent) when it comes to making a final decision on the woman's healthcare compared to women (21.4 percent).

Politics: With regard to participation in decisional circles, despite an enacted law on gender quotas for elected office, women are still in much lower numbers than men. The National Assembly is composed of 15.8 percent of women and 84.2 percent of men, and 19.0 percent of government employees are women.

Access to water and sanitation: The study reveals that, in Niger, almost 31.1 percent of men-led households get their water supply from non-purified; whereas it is 28.6 percent for women-led households. In the domain of sanitation, the majority of households use non-improved toilet facilities (71.9 percent), and disposal of human excrements is primarily done in the bush or in the open nature.

A.3 Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)

The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) is an index that measures women's empowerment, capacity of action and inclusion in the agricultural sector. Its objective is to identify means to overcome barriers and constraints they face.

This index constitutes a major innovation in this domain as it aims to improve the understanding of the relationships between women's empowerment, food security and agricultural growth.

It measures the role and scope of women's involvement in the agricultural sector in five domains

(each having its own indicators)⁶⁷:

1. Decisions on agricultural production,
 - a) Contribution to decisions regarding production
 - b) Autonomy in production
2. Access to and decision power on productive resources,
 - a) Ownership of production assets
 - b) Buying, selling or transferring production assets
 - c) Access to and decisions about credit
3. Control over the use of revenue,
4. Leadership in the community, and
 - a) Belonging to a group
 - b) Public speaking
5. Use of time
 - a) Leisure
 - b) Workload

Each indicator has a weight⁶⁸.

6. The WEAI also measures women's empowerment in relation to men within their household⁶⁹
(Gender Parity Index – GPI)

⁶⁷ See Alkire S., Meinzen-Dick R., Peterman A., Quisumbing A. R., Seymour G. & Vaz A., 2012. The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, *IFPRI Discussion Paper 01240*. For more details on indicators, see "Index Options" on page 25. For questions per indicator, see page 61 (Table "Five domains of empowerment indicator definitions").

⁶⁸ Alkire S., Meinzen-Dick R., Peterman A., Quisumbing A. R., Seymour G. & Vaz A., 2012. The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, *IFPRI Discussion Paper 01240*, page 8

⁶⁹ IFPRI <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/womens-empowerment-agriculture-index>

Annex 2: Sample actually reached

	Allakaye (Tahoua)	Dan Goudaou (Zinder)	TOTAL
Husbands	9	12	21
Wives	10	12	22
Women Merchants	31	42	73
<i>In interviews</i>	12	15	
<i>In focus groups</i>	13	21 women : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 group and cooperative women: <i>Komi Da Locaci (Each thing in its own time), in Matameye</i> - 9 women from a network of 10 groups (<i>Kantche</i>) - 9 women from 4 women associations 	
<i>On the market</i>	6	6	
Local authorities and resource people	3	2	5
Local associations members	8 women from 2 associations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Dadin Kowa</i> (Happiness for all) - <i>Ba a Dole</i> (You have no obligation) 	9 men from the School for Husbands	24
		7 youth from an association (5 men and 2 girls) Women merchant Associations: <i>see Focus groups</i>	
International Organizations	1 (UNFPA)	1 (FAO)	2
TOTAL	62 people	85 people	147 people

Annex 3: Answers to closed and multiple-choice Questions for Women merchants

QR.2 – Which dimensions need to be specifically taken into account at the household level/in women and the youth's lives to measure their empowerment?

What are the determining criteria?

(QP) As far as you are concerned, which one of the empowerment criteria are relevant to your situation? Specify "Relevant", "Somehow" or "Not at all".	Relevant	Somehow	Not at all
(Access to) Land ownership	100	0 percent	0 percent
Access to credit	88 percent	0 percent	12
(Access to) Education	100	0 percent	0 percent
(Access to) trainings	100	0 percent	0 percent
(Access to) Information	100	0 percent	0 percent
(Access to) a cellular phone	59 percent	26	15
Participation to community's decision-making	97 percent	3 percent	0 percent
Participation to associations	100	0 percent	0 percent
Participation to political parties	67 percent	21	12
Public speaking	100	0 percent	0 percent
Leadership	93 percent	7 percent	0 percent
Self-determination in the community	89 percent	11	0 percent
Public speaking on markets	81 percent	19	0 percent
Decision-making on credits	72 percent	7 percent	21
Decision-making power on buying and selling	93 percent	7 percent	0 percent
Decision-making power on the use of family assets	100 percent	0 percent	0 percent
Decision-making power on harvests	89 percent	7 percent	4 percent
Self-determination on markets	85 percent	11	4 percent
Leadership on markets	81 percent	15	4 percent
Geographic mobility	61 percent	22	17
Freedom to use your time (between work, household chores and free time)	92 percent	4 percent	4 percent
Decision-making on children education, health, nutrition and crisis management issues	100 percent	0 percent	0 percent
Freedom of choice for decisions related to their own body (family planning, maternal and reproductive health...)	65 percent	13 percent	22 percent
(QP) As far as you are concerned, which one of these empowerment criteria are relevant to you? Specify "Relevant", "Somehow" or "Not at all".	Relevant	Somehow	Not at all
Qualified paid labour	45 percent	5 percent	50
Independent worker	75 percent	0 percent	25
Revenue	95 percent	5 percent	0 percent
Self-determination (freedom of choice) in markets	90 percent	7 percent	3 percent
Access to credits	67 percent	11	22

Decision on credits	N/R	N/R	N/R
Access to the use of productive resources (tools, technologies)	56 percent	8 percent	36 percent
Ownership of productive resources	45 percent	11	44
Decision-making power on the use of family productive resources	81 percent	7 percent	11 percent
Access to cultivable land	92 percent	4 percent	4 percent
Land ownership	68 percent	12	20
Decision-making power on the use of land (cultivation and harvests)	79 percent	4 percent	17 percent
Decision-making power on buying and selling products	85 percent	11 percent	4 percent
Power to negotiate or do business with partners	78 percent	4 percent	19 percent
Power to set prices	74 percent	26	0 percent
Public speaking on markets	62 percent	24	14
Leadership on markets	52 percent	24	24
Education	43 percent	19	38
Diploma	26 percent	18	56
Effective access to technical trainings	50 percent	18	32
Effective access to information	81 percent	8 percent	11
Access to a cell phone	52 percent	8 percent	40
Freedom to use your time between work, household chores and free time)	96 percent	0 percent	4 percent
Geographic mobility	58 percent	11	31

QR 1 – How can empowerment be translated from one domain to the next?

3.23	(QP) Have you achieved your economic empowerment/on markets: <i>(provide several answers as needed)</i>	Yes	No
	By yourself?	82	18
	Through a group or association you belong to (women group or other local association)?	94 percent	6 percent
	Through intervention of an outside organization (WFP, NGO, other)?	80	20

QR 1 – Empowerment transfer in households

3.26	QR 1.1 and QR 6 – Have things in your life changed (for better or worse) within the household, since you are more economically empowered? Specify.	Yes	No
		100 percent	0 percent
3.28	QR 1.1 and QR 6: Do you think that your economic empowerment has reinforced your decision-making power within the household, or your ability to act independently within the household? <i>If no, go to question 3.36</i>	Yes	No
		89 percent	11 percent

		nt	nt	
3.30	<i>If yes, How/why? Please answer “yes” or “no” to the possible following causes:</i>	Yes	No	
	Because of acquired skills	100	0	
	Because of money earned	100	0	
	Because of your successful actions or your good ideas	100	0	
	Because of productive resources you received	100	0	
	Because of awareness actions to which your husband (and yourself?) participated, on men-women relationships (or listening clubs, for example)	95 perce nt	5 perce nt	
	Because of your insistence and power of conviction with your husband	47	53	
	Because of the influence of organizations which brought these activities or ideas	91	9	
	Because of the influence of community leaders (favourable to the rebalancing of men-women relationships or to women’s empowerment)	79 perce nt	21 perce nt	
	Because of your husband’s interest in it, with you	95 perce nt	5 perce nt	
3.31	QR 1.1 and QR 6 - (<i>If yes</i>) Have you been more involved in the household’s decisions on the following subjects, since you are more economically empowered? Answer “Yes”, “Yes but it was also the case before (CA)” or “No”	CA	Yes	No
	On household’s credits	56	18	27
	Buying or selling commercial products	76	24	0
	Use of family assets	64	32	4
	Harvests	68	27	5
	Use of household money	68	23	9
	Use of money you have earned yourself	64	23	13
	Family healthcare	76	19	5
	Nutrition	85	10	5
	Crisis management (food crisis namely)	85	15	0
	Children education	62	19	19
Your own body (family planning, maternal and reproductive health, etc.)	33 percent	14 perce nt	53 perce nt	
3.33	QR 1.1 and QR 6 – (<i>If yes</i>) Can you <u>do the following things</u> more freely (without needing your husband’s approval) outside of the house, since you are more economically empowered?	Yes	No	
	Engaged in new income-generating activities	50	50	
	Do a training	35	65	
	Decide of your own movements	NR	NR	
	Decide how to use your time (between work and leisure)	33	67	
3.34	QR 3 – (<i>If yes</i>) Have associations (women’s, youth or other) or women’s groups contributed to strengthening your empowerment within your <u>household</u> ? If yes, how?	Yes	No	
		90 perce	10 perce	

				nt	nt	
3.37	QR 5 - (If no to question 3.28) Same question, but answer “yes” or “no” to the following possible causes:			Yes	No	Comments
	1. Regarding yourself	Lack of interest/desire to become empowered or have more power within the household?		38 percent	62 percent	
		You do not want to take on more responsibilities at home?		25 percent	75 percent	
		You fear rejection from your husband?		25 percent	75 percent	
		You fear retaliation from your husband (violence)		25 percent	75 percent	
		You fear rejection from other women?		29	71	
		You fear rejection from the community?		67	33	
		You are not for the change of mentalities by principle (Conservatism)?		67 percent	33 percent	
		You could be for the change of mentalities, but you fear the possible consequences (fear of the unknown)?		69 percent	31 percent	
		You just simply do not think about it?		69	31	
3.38	2. Regarding your husband	He is not for the change of mentalities by principle (Conservatism)?		64 percent	36 percent	
		He fears he will lose his power over you at home?		64 percent	36 percent	
		He fears you will change “for the worse”?		69 percent	31 percent	
		He fears he will lose respect from others in the community?		64 percent	36 percent	
		He simply lacks interest in the subject (thus does not support you in this effort)?		54 percent	46 percent	
QR 2 – Empowerment transfer towards communities						
3.42	QR 1.2 and QR 6 – Do you think that your economic empowerment (or on the markets) has changed things for you within the community (for better or for worse)?				Yes	No
					100	0

			percent	percent	
QR 6 - Empowerment consequences and effects (General)					
	QR6 – What are the positive and negative (<i>economic, in the household or community</i>) consequences of your empowerment in general? Please answer “Yes”, “A little bit” or “No” to the following possible causes:		Yes	A little bit	No
3.46	Consequences for the couple/ household	You have an improved couple relationship (more love, more respect)	94 percent	6 percent	0 percent
		More collaboration within the couple?	94	0	6
		Better task distribution between you and your spouse?	75 percent	5 percent	20 percent
		More tension in the couple’s relationship? (because of your husband’s anger, fear or jealousy)?	15 percent	23 percent	62 percent
		Your husband became violent with you?	17	5	78
		For polygamous households: the other spouses who are less empowered than you reject you?	29 percent	7 percent	64 percent
		For polygamous households: you inspire the other spouses who are less empowered than you (they want to follow you or imitate you)?	86 percent	7 percent	7 percent
2.47	Consequences in the Community	You have earned more respect/consideration from the other men?	92 percent	4 percent	4 percent
		You have earned more respect/consideration from the other women?	92 percent	8 percent	0 percent
		You inspire other wives or younger women who would like to do like you?	88 percent	12 percent	0 percent
		You lost the respect/consideration of other men?	21 percent	7 percent	72 percent
		You lost the respect/consideration of other women?	8 percent	7 percent	85 percent
		Image of shameless woman who lacks respect for her culture, her religion or her husband?	8 percent	92 percent	0 percent
		Rejection/marginalisation from the community?	0	8	92
		Rejection from your group or religious leader?	0	4	96
		You are being insulted because of that?	4	8	88
		You are subjected to violence because of that?	8	13	79
		You participate more to associations?	79	7	14
You participate more to political parties?					

		You participate more to meetings on making community decisions?	70 percent	8 percent	22 percent
		You speak more in these groups/meetings?	56 percent	11 percent	33 percent
		Your opinion is better heard/ more listened to in the group?	68 percent	7 percent	25 percent
		Your opinion is adopted within a group (influence)?	63	11	26
		You are solicited within the community (to contribute to initiative or meetings)?	69 percent	0 percent	31 percent
		You take initiatives within the community (leadership)?	59 percent	15 percent	26 percent
		Your initiatives are adopted?	52	22	26
2.48	Economic Consequences	You or your husband no longer need to migrate to survive	70 percent	0 percent	30 percent
		You no longer need to take on credits	29	21	50
		You have reached a certain economic stability/security for the future	19 percent	31 percent	50 percent
		Children education	41	23	36
		Family health	54	11	35
		Nutrition	50	27	23
3.49	Subjective Consequences	You feel less vulnerable/insecure	59	11	30
		You feel happier	80	20	0
		More useful	96	4	0
		More respected	93	7	0
		Better acknowledged	89	11	0
		Prouder of yourself (self-esteem)	89	11	0
		Freer, less stressed			
		You are more respected by your children	100	0	0

QR 7 – How can WFP support this global empowerment process?

2.56	QR 7 and QR 1 – Do you think women who are beneficiaries of organizations' activities (notably WFP's) have become more empowered? <i>If yes, next question; If no, question 2.58</i>		Yes	No
			96 percent	4 percent
2.57	QR 7 and QR 1 – <i>If yes, what did enable that?</i> <i>For each option, specify "Not at all", "A little bit", or "A lot"</i>	Not at all	A little bit	A lot
	Women's participation to projects/awareness meetings on gender or women's rights issues?	8 percent	8 percent	84 percent

Men's participation to projects/awareness meetings on gender or women's rights issues?	7 percen t	26 percen t	67 percen t
Women's participation to Listening clubs or Dimitra Clubs (with FAO)	23 percen t	15 percen t	62 percen t
Men's participation to Listening clubs or Dimitra Clubs (with FAO)	31 percen t	23 percen t	46 percen t
Community radio broadcast	24 percen t	38 percen t	38 percen t
Women's participation to the management of (UN Women's) cross-functional platforms	32 percen t	24 percen t	44 percen t
Men's participation to the management of (UN Women's) cross-functional platforms	32 percen t	20 percen t	48 percen t
Women who received productive resources (example: small ruminant gift)	13 percen t	13 percen t	74 percen t
Women who received a cellular phone	42 percen t	12 percen t	46 percen t
Women who benefited from technical trainings	32 percen t	0 percen t	68 percen t
Women who benefited from information (on their rights, commercial rules, etc.)	31 percen t	23 percen t	46 percen t
Women who have been employed by WFP (or another organization), and paid either in cash or in food	23 percen t	8 percen t	69 percen t
Women which canteens bought agricultural products (with WFP's "buy local" project)	23 percen t	12 percen t	65 percen t
Women who accessed microcredit	29 percen t	21 percen t	50 percen t
Women who accessed a cultivable land	27 percen t	19 percen t	54 percen t
Young women who benefited from a scholarship	46 percen t	8 percen t	46 percen t
Community sensitization against early marriage of young girls	19 percen t	15 percen t	66 percen t

Annex 4: Answers to closed and multiple-choice Questions for “Wives”

QR.2 – Which dimensions need to be specifically taken into account at the household level/in women and the youth’s lives to measure their empowerment? What are the determining criteria?

2.16	QR 8 – Do you think women’s empowerment is important?	Yes	No	
		100 percent	0 percent	
2.17	QR 8 – If yes, are you for it? For each sector, specify “Yes, absolutely”, “Somehow” or “Not at all”.	Yes, absolutely	Somehow	Not at all
	Economically?	100 percent	0 percent	0 percent
	In households (including yours)?	95 percent	5 percent	0 percent
	In communities (including yours)?	95 percent	5 percent	0 percent
2.18	QR 8.2 and 2.3 – To you, is it preferable to try and strengthen couples economically, instead of only seeking women’s empowerment? <i>(culturally speaking and/or in terms of results for the household)</i>	Yes	No	
		100 percent	0 percent	
2.19	(QR 2.2 and 2.3) – To you, among the following criteria/aspects of women’s empowerment in households, which ones are very relevant, little relevant, or not at all relevant? <i>(in general, no one talks about those here)</i>			
		Very Relevant	Little relevant	Not at all relevant
	(Access to) Land ownership	95	0	5
	Access to credit	87	0	13
	(Access to) Education	90	0	10
	(Access to) trainings	90	5	5
	Access to) Information	86	5	9
	(Access to) a cellular phone	78	13	9
	Participation to community’s decision-making	95	0	5
	Participation to associations/movements	86	5	9
	Participation to political parties	86	14	0
	Public speaking	86	5	9
	Leadership	77	13	10
	Self-determination in the community	77	13	10
	Public speaking on markets	85	5	10
	Decision-making on credits	81	9	10
	Asset ownership	94	6	0
	Decision-making power on buying and selling	95	5	0
Decision-making power on the use of family assets	91	5	5	
Decision-making power on harvests	94	0	6	
Self-determination on markets	87	9	4	
Leadership on markets	86	9	5	

	Geographic mobility	90	5	5
	Freedom to use your time (between work, household chores and free time)	86 percent	14 percent	0 percent
	Decision-making on children education, health, nutrition and crisis management issues	95 percent	5 percent	0 percent
	Freedom of choice for decisions related to their own body (family planning, maternal and reproductive health...)	33 percent	5 percent	62 percent
(QP7⁷⁰) Level of empowerment of surveyed women on markets				
	As far as you are concerned, which ones of these economic empowerment criteria are relevant to you?	Very relevant	Little relevant	Not at all relevant
	Decision-making on children education, nutrition, crisis management issues	95 percent	5 percent	0 percent
	Freedom of choice and of decision-making on their own body (family planning, maternal and reproductive health, etc.)	33 percent	5 percent	62 percent
	Independent worker	82	9	9 percent
	Revenue	73	23	4 percent
	Production and work autonomy	68	27	5 percent
	Self-determination (freedom of choice) in markets	43	48	9 percent
	Access to credits	50	15	35
	Decision on credits	45	10	45
	Access to the use of productive resources (tools, technologies)	71 percent	14 percent	15 percent
	Ownership of productive resources	57 percent	10 percent	33 percent
2.21	Decision-making power on the use of family productive resources	76 percent	10 percent	14 percent
	Access to cultivable land	76 percent	14 percent	10 percent
	Land ownership	41 percent	14 percent	45 percent
	Decision-making power on the use of land (cultivation and harvests)	86 percent	9 percent	5 percent
	Decision-making power on buying and selling products	86 percent	5 percent	9 percent
	Power to negotiate or do business with partners	64 percent	13 percent	23 percent
	Power to set prices	55 percent	14 percent	31 percent
	Public speaking on markets	64 percent	21 percent	14 percent
	Leadership on markets	35 percent	30 percent	35 percent
	Education	52 percent	10 percent	38 percent
	Diploma	80	13	7 percent

⁷⁰QP= Preliminary Question (*Question Préalable*)

		percent	percent	
	Effective access to technical trainings	86 percent	5 percent	9 percent
	Effective access to information	77 percent	14 percent	9 percent
	Access to a cell phone	59 percent	19 percent	22 percent
	Freedom to use your time between work, household chores and free time)	73 percent	23 percent	4 percent
	Geographic mobility	64 percent	0 percent	36 percent

QR 1 – How can empowerment be translated from one domain to the next?

2.23	QR 1.1 – Did you achieve your economic empowerment ...? (provide several answers as needed)	Yes	No
	By yourself?	68	32
	Through a group or local association local association)?	36	64
	Through intervention of an outside organization (WFP, NGO, other)?	73	27

QR 1 – Empowerment transfer in households

2.26	QR 1.1 et QR 6: Do you think that your economic empowerment has reinforced your decision-making power within the household, or your ability to act independently within the household? <i>If yes, next question ; If no, go to question 2.33</i>	Yes	No
		64 percent	36 percent
2.27b	QR 1.1 - (<i>If yes</i>) How/why did your economic empowerment strengthen your decision-making power or your ability to act independently within your household? Answer “Yes” or “No” to the following possible causes		
		Yes	No
	Because of acquired skills	100	0
	Because of money earned	93	7
	Because of your successful actions or your good ideas	100	0
	Because of productive resources you received	100	0
	Because of awareness actions to which your husband (and yourself?) participated, on men-women relationships (or listening clubs, for example)	93 percent	7 percent
	Because of your insistence and power of conviction with your husband	29	71
	Because of the influence of organizations which brought these activities or ideas	93 percent	7 percent
	Because of the influence of community leaders (favourable to the rebalancing of men-women relationships or to women’s empowerment)	93 percent	7 percent
Because of your husband’s interest in it, with you	100	0	

2.28	QR 1.1 and QR 6 – (If yes) Have you been more involved in the household’s decisions on the following subjects, since you are more economically empowered? Answer “No”, “Yes”, or “Yes, but it was the case before (CA)”				
		No	Yes	CA	
	On household’s credits	7 percent	14 percent	79 percent	
	Buying or selling commercial products	29 percent	7 percent	64 percent	
	Use of family assets	0 percent	14 percent	86 percent	
	Harvests	7 percent	21 percent	72 percent	
	Use of household money	14 percent	21 percent	65 percent	
	Use of money you have earned yourself	14 percent	14 percent	72 percent	
	Family healthcare	0 percent	14 percent	86 percent	
	Nutrition	14 percent	7 percent	79 percent	
	Crisis management (food crisis namely)	14 percent	7 percent	79 percent	
	Children education	14 percent	7 percent	79 percent	
	Your own body (family planning, maternal and reproductive health, etc.)	81 percent	0 percent	18 percent	
2.29	QR 1.1 and QR 6 – (If yes) Are there subjects for which you currently decide alone? Which ones?	Yes	No	No, because we decide jointly	
		30 percent	60 percent	10 percent	
2.30	QR 1.1 and QR 6 – (If yes) Can you <u>do the following things</u> more freely (without needing your husband’s approval) outside of the house, since you are more economically empowered?			Yes	No
	Engaged in new income-generating activities			7	93
	Do a training			7	93
	Decide of your own movements			0	100
	Decide how to use your time (between work and leisure)			14	86

2.31	QR 3 – (If yes) Have associations (women’s, youth or other) or women’s groups contributed to strengthening your empowerment and decision-making power within your <u>household</u> ?			Yes	No
				86 percent	14 percent
2.33	<i>(If <u>no</u> to question 2.26)</i>				
	To you, why didn’t your economic empowerment strengthen your decision-making power within the household, or your ability to act independently within your <u>household</u> ?				
	(Answer “Yes” or “No” to the following possible causes:				
			Yes	No	Comments
	1. Regarding yourself	Lack of interest/desire to become empowered or have more power within the household?	40 percent	60 percent	
		You do not want to take on more responsibilities at home?	20 percent	80 percent	
		You fear rejection from your husband?	27	73	
		You fear retaliation from your husband (violence)	27 percent	73 percent	
		You fear rejection from other women? (Specify if women from the family/community, or household, if polygamous)	27 percent	73 percent	
		You fear rejection from the community?	27	73	
You are not for the change of mentalities by principle (notably with regard to religion)?		50 percent	50 percent		
You could be for the change of mentalities, but you fear the possible consequences (fear of the unknown)?		40 percent	60 percent		
You just simply do not think about it?		100 percent	0 percent		
2.34	2. Regarding your husband	He is not for the change of mentalities by principle (Conservatism)?	73 percent	27 percent	0 percent
		He fears he will lose his power over you at home?	60 percent	40 percent	0 percent
		He fears you will change “for the worse”?	56 percent	44 percent	0 percent
		He fears he will lose respect from others in the community?	56	44	0
		He simply lacks interest in the subject (thus does not support you in this effort)?	60 percent	40 percent	0 percent

Annex 5: Answers to closed and multiple-choice Questions for “Husbands”

QR.2 *Quelles dimensions sont à prendre spécifiquement en compte au niveau des ménages/dans la vie de femmes et des jeunes pour mesurer leur autonomisation ? Quels sont les critères qui déterminent cela ?*

		Yes	No	
2.16	QR 8 - Do you think women’s empowerment is important?	100 percent	0 percent	
2.17	QR 8 – If yes, are you for it? For each sector, specify “Yes, absolutely”, “Somehow” or “Not at all”.	Yes, absolutely	Somehow Not at all	
	Economically?	90	10 0	
	In households (including yours)?		0	
	In communities (including yours)?		19 0	
2.18	QR 8.2 et 2.3 - To you, is it preferable to try and strengthen couples economically, instead of only seeking women’s empowerment? <i>(culturally speaking and/or in terms of results for the household)</i>	Yes	No	
		76 percent	24 percent	
2.19	QR 2.2 et 2.3 - To you, among the following criteria/aspects of women’s empowerment in households, which ones are very relevant, little relevant, or not at all relevant? <i>(in general, no one talks about those here)</i>			
		Very Relevant	Little relevant	Not at all relevant
	(Access to) Land ownership	81	14	5
	Access to credit	68	11	21
	(Access to) Education	100	0 percent	0
	(Access to) trainings	95	5 percent	0
	Access to) Information	82	9 percent	9
	(Access to) a cellular phone	65	10	25
	Participation to community’s decision-making	95	5 percent	0
	Participation to associations/movements	95	0 percent	5
	Participation to political parties	71	19	10
	Public speaking	73	18	9
	Leadership	72	22	6
	Self-determination in the community	81	10	9
	Public speaking on markets	64	18	18
	Decision-making on credits	60	25	15
	Asset ownership	79	31	0
	Decision-making power on buying and selling	71	24	5
	Decision-making power on the use of family assets	86	14	0
Decision-making power on harvests	80	5 percent	15	
Self-determination on markets	68	23	9	
Leadership on markets	52	38	10	

	Women geographic mobility	29	38	33
	Decision-making for women on children education, health, nutrition and crisis management issues	92 percent	8 percent	0 percent
	Freedom of choice for decisions related to their own body (family planning, maternal and reproductive health...)	42 percent	50 percent	8 percent
	Women's freedom to use their time as they wish (between work, household chores and free time)	83 percent	17 percent	0 percent

QR 2 - How can empowerment be translated from one domain to the next?

2.20a	QP – Do you consider that your wife is empowered or has been economically strengthened? <i>If no, go to question 2.42</i>	Yes	No
		100 percent	0 percent

QR 1 – Empowerment transfer in households

2.25	QR 1.1 et QR 6 – Since your wife is more economically empowered, have things changed in your household, in good or in bad?		
		Positively	Negatively
	For you?	100 percent	0 percent
	For her?	100 percent	0 percent
	For your couple?	100 percent	0 percent
	For your family?	95 percent	5 percent
2.26	QR 1.1 and QR 6: Has the economic empowerment of your wife reinforced her decision-making power or her ability to act independently within the <u>household</u> ? If yes, provide examples. <i>If yes, next question; If no, question 2.32</i>	Yes	No
		81 percent	19 percent
2.28	QR 1.1 - (<i>If yes</i>) How/why the economic empowerment of your wife reinforced her decision-making power or her ability to act independently within the <u>household</u> ? Answer "Yes" or "No" to the following possible causes.		
		Yes	No
	Because of skills she acquired	100	0
	Because of money she earned	65	35
	Because of her successful actions or her good ideas	100	0
	Because of productive resources she received	76	24
	Because of awareness actions to which you (and maybe your wife?) participated, on men-women relationships (or listening clubs, for example)	100 percent	0 percent
	Because of her insistence and power of conviction with you	47	53
	Because of the influence of organizations which brought these activities or ideas in the community	100 percent	0 percent

	Because of the influence of community leaders (favourable to the rebalancing of men-women relationships or to women’s empowerment)	82 percent	18 percent
	Because of your support/the interest you have in it, as her husband	100 percent	0 percent

QR 5 - (If no to question 2.26) To you, why didn’t the economic empowerment of your wife reinforce her decision-making power or her ability to act independently within the <u>household</u> ?					
Answer “Yes” or “No” to the following possible causes.			Yes	No	Not answered
2.33	1. Regarding your spouse	She lacks interest/desire to become empowered or have more power within the household?	0 percent	100 percent	
		She does not want to take on more responsibilities at home?	25 percent	75 percent	
		She fears rejection from you, her husband?	25 percent	75 percent	
		She fears rejection from other women? (Specify if women from the family/community, or household, if polygamous)	25 percent	75 percent	
		She fears rejection from the community?	25 percent	50 percent	25 percent
		She is not for the change of mentalities by principle (notably with regard to religion)?	0 percent	25 percent	75 percent
		She could be for the change of mentalities, but she fears the possible consequences (fear of the unknown)?	25 percent	0 percent	75 percent
		She just simply does not think about it?	25 percent	0 percent	75 percent
2.34	2. Regarding yourself (as her husband)	You are not for the change of mentalities by principle (notably with regard to religion)?	25 percent	75 percent	
		You fear you will lose your power over her, at home?	75 percent	25 percent	
		You fear she will change “for the worse”?	50 percent	50 percent	
		You fear you will lose respect from other members of the community?	100	0	

			percen t	perce nt	
		You simply lack interest in the subject (thus do not support her in this effort)?	100 percen t	0 perce nt	

QR 2 – Empowerment transfer towards communities				
2.38	QR 1.2 and QR 6 – Do you think that your wife’s economic empowerment has changed things (whether positive or negative) for her or for you within the community? <i>If yes, next question; If no, question 2.42</i>	Yes		No
		Positively	Negatively	
		86 percent	14 percent	

Annex 6: Documentation photos taken in the field



Children in front of a mosque, Tahoua Region



Boys in the fields, Tahoua Region



Representatives of the Komi da Locaci Women's group, Matamèye, Zinder



Interview with a woman in Allakaye, Tahoua



Cereal granaries in Allakaye, Tahoua Region.



Women from the Ta Allah Ba Taquba (God with us) women's group network in Matamèye, Zinder



Dan Goudaou Village, Zinder



Interview with a « spouse » in Allakaye, Tahoua



Young girl washing pots in Allakaye, Tahoua



Dan Goudaou surroundings, Zinder



Garin Yara enriched flour production unit, Matamèye, Zinder



Focus Group with members of the Husbands School in Dan Goudaou, Zinder



Allakaye streets, Tahoua



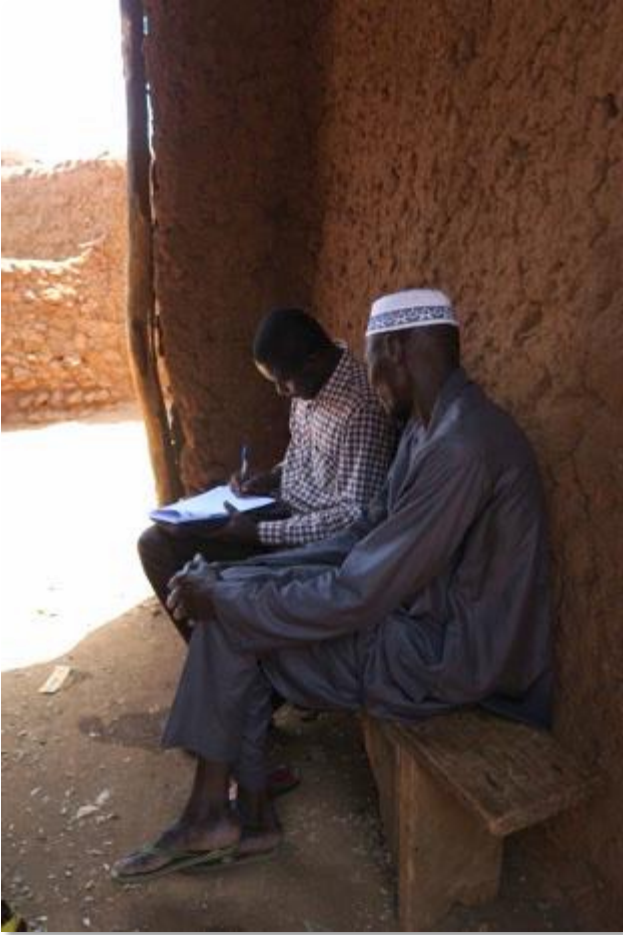
Dan Goudaou children, Zinder



Women leaders and members of Allakaye women associations, Allakaye Town hall, Tahoua



Women working at the Garin Yara enriched flour production unit, Matamèye, Zinder



Interview with a « husband in Allakaye, Tahoua



Young girl feeding ruminants, Dan Goudaou



Headquarters of the Ta Allah Ba Takouba Women group network in Matamèye, Zinder

