

Women's Empowerment in Western China: Measurement, Correlation with Household Poverty, and Its Determinant Factors

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Outline

- Background: Poverty alleviation and women's status in China
- Theory and Concept of Women's Empowerment
- Women's Empowerment Index
- Evidence from western China: correlation with household poverty, determinant factors

Poverty Alleviation in China

- China's poverty alleviation is significant to the world

1981-2017, using the international poverty line (US\$1.90 per person per day, 2011 purchasing power parity) , about 34 million fewer poor people in the world each year, with 24 million of them coming from China (World Bank, 2022).

- Targeted Poverty Alleviation Program since 2013

Index system for poverty registration;

Identified 1.28 million poor villages and 29.32 million poor households, 88.62 million population;

Five Strategies: Relocation, Development of local industries, Education support, Social security expansion;

- Elimination of Extreme Poverty in 2021

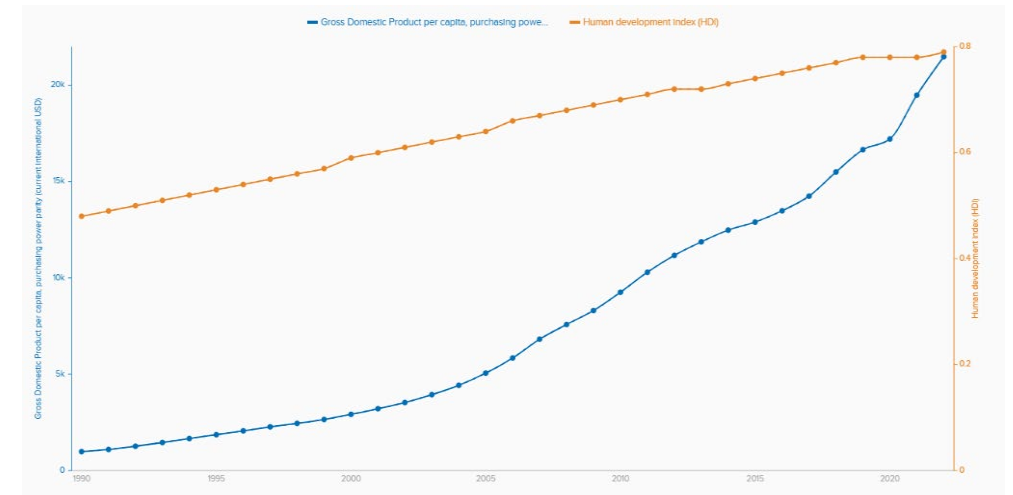
Benchmark graduation threshold: CNY2300 in 2010 constant price; “free from worries over food and clothing, ensured access to compulsory education, basic medical services and safe housing”, with diversification in difference provinces. (State Council Information Office, 2021)

Women's Empowerment in China

Fourth National Survey on Women's Social Status (2020)

- 70% of women in employment;
- Among rural women in employment, 39.5% in off-farm employment, 15.4 percentage points higher than 2010;
- Net primary school enrollment rate nearly 100%, no gender gap for boys and girls;
- 20 million women covered by subsistence allowance.

HDI and GDP per capita Trend 1990-2022

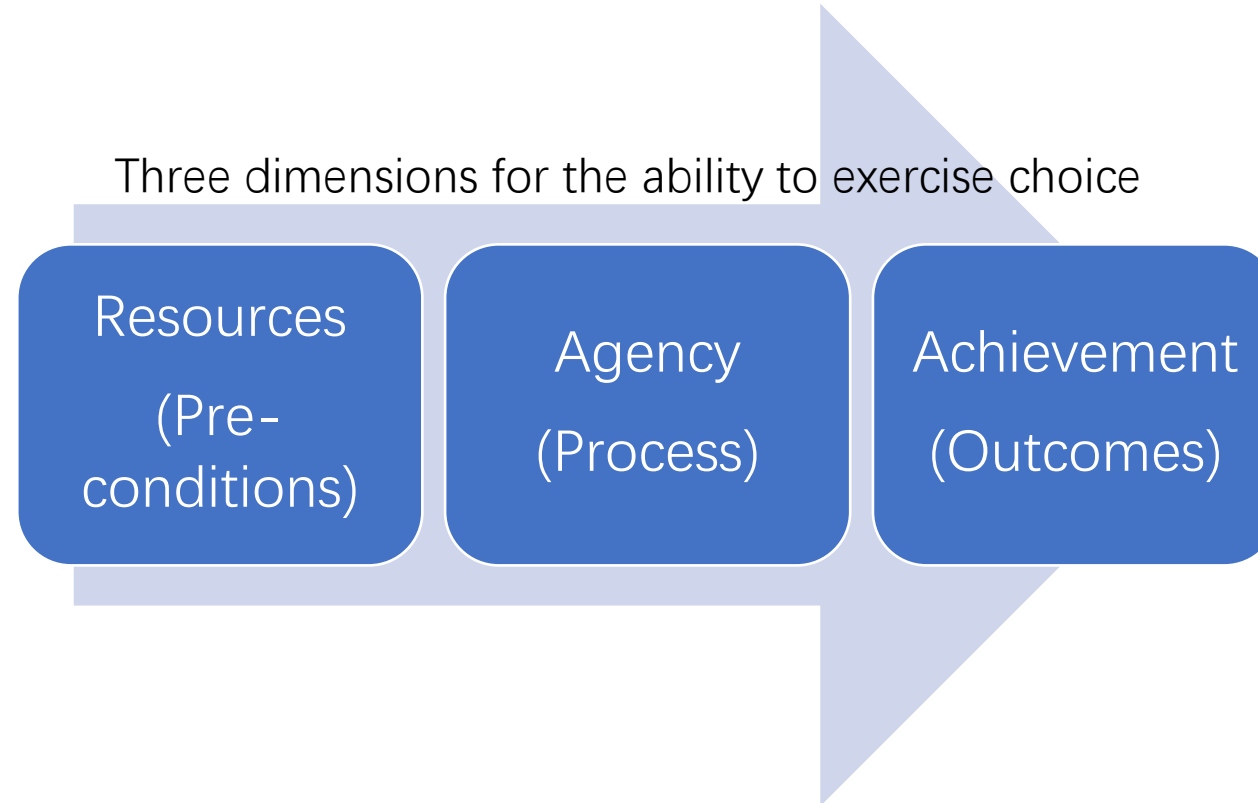


Source: UNDP

How to understand “empowerment”?

Empowerment
entails *a process
of change*

People who exercise
a great deal of choice
in their lives may be
very powerful



(Kabeer, 1999)

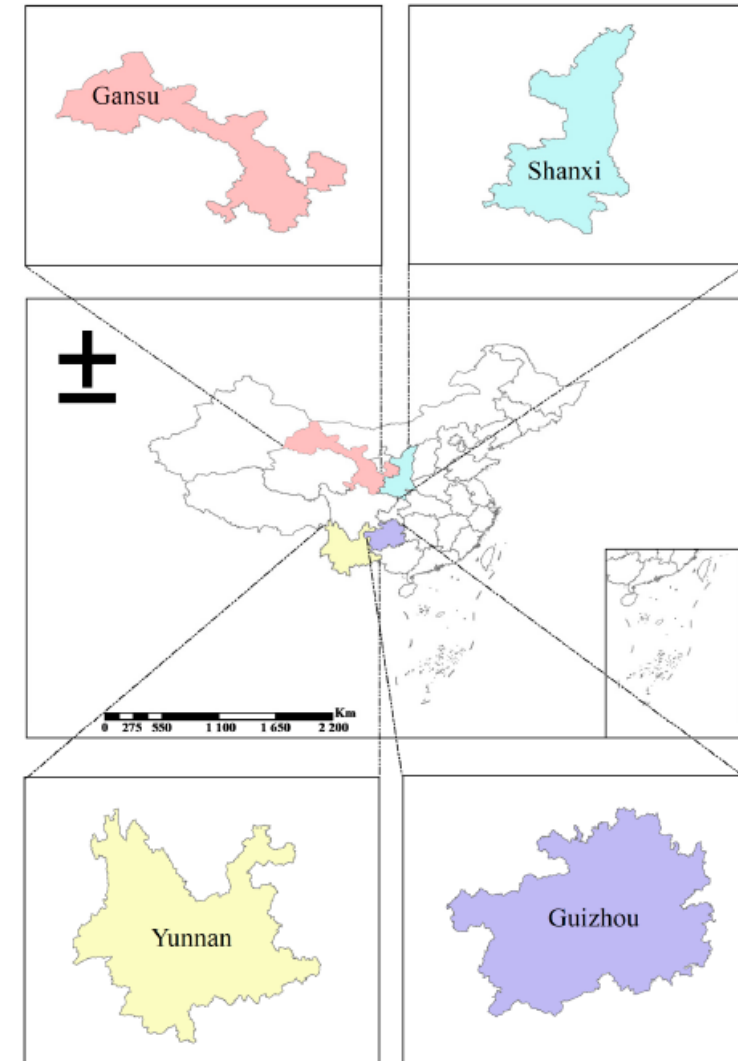
How to measure women's empowerment in agriculture?

WEAI		A-WEAI		Pro-WEAI	
DOMAINS	INDICATORS	DOMAINS	INDICATORS	DOMAINS	INDICATORS
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autonomy in production Input in productive decisions 	Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input in productive decisions 	Intrinsic Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-efficacy Attitudes about intimate partner violence against women Autonomy in use of income
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase, sale, or transfer of assets Ownership of assets Access to and decisions about credit 	Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ownership of assets Access to and decisions about credit 	Instrumental Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input in productive decisions Ownership of land and other assets Access to and decisions on financial services Control over use of income Visiting important locations Work balance
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control over use of income 	Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control over use of income 		
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workload Leisure 	Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workload 		
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group membership Speaking in public 	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group membership 	Collective Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group membership

For WEAI, details refer to 'The women's empowerment in agriculture index' in *World Development*, 52, 71-91. (Alkire, 2013)

Survey Data

- Food Security Household Longitudinal Survey, by All-CAAS in 2021
- **9-module questionnaire (1.5h):** household characteristics, housing and living conditions, household wealth, agricultural production, income, expenditure, food consumption, shocks and coping strategies & women's empowerment at the household level.
- About 1000 households, 16 villages, 7 counties, 4 provinces



Three questions to answer:

- What is the status of women's empowerment in rural China?
- How is it correlated with the poverty status of the rural households?
- What are the determinant factors for women's empowerment?

WEI-from the “dis-empowerment” perspective

Domain	Domain Contribution to M_0	Indicators	Indicator contribution to M_0
Production	16.99%	Input in farm decisions	8.08%
		Input in non-farm decisions	8.91%
Resources	17.91%	Control of productive asset	8.67%
		Decisions on credit	9.24%
Income	11.17%	Control over necessity consumption	3.75%
		Control over use of income	7.41%
Leadership	45.83%	Speaking in public	22.62%
		Group leadership	23.21%
Time	8.10%	Time burden	1.64%
		Freedom of time allocation	6.46%

WEI=0.654

Contextual

Flexible

Correlation between Poverty and WEI

Poverty defined by poverty registration index system

Poor	Non-poor
N=367	N=660
WEI=0.595	WEI=0.718

Poverty defined merely by per capita annual net income (CNY2962)

Poor	Non-poor
N=136	N=891
WEI=0.676	WEI=0.823

median of women's individual empowerment

Wilcoxon rank-sum test

$z = 3.789$ Prob $> |z| = 0.0002$

Wilcoxon rank-sum test

No significance

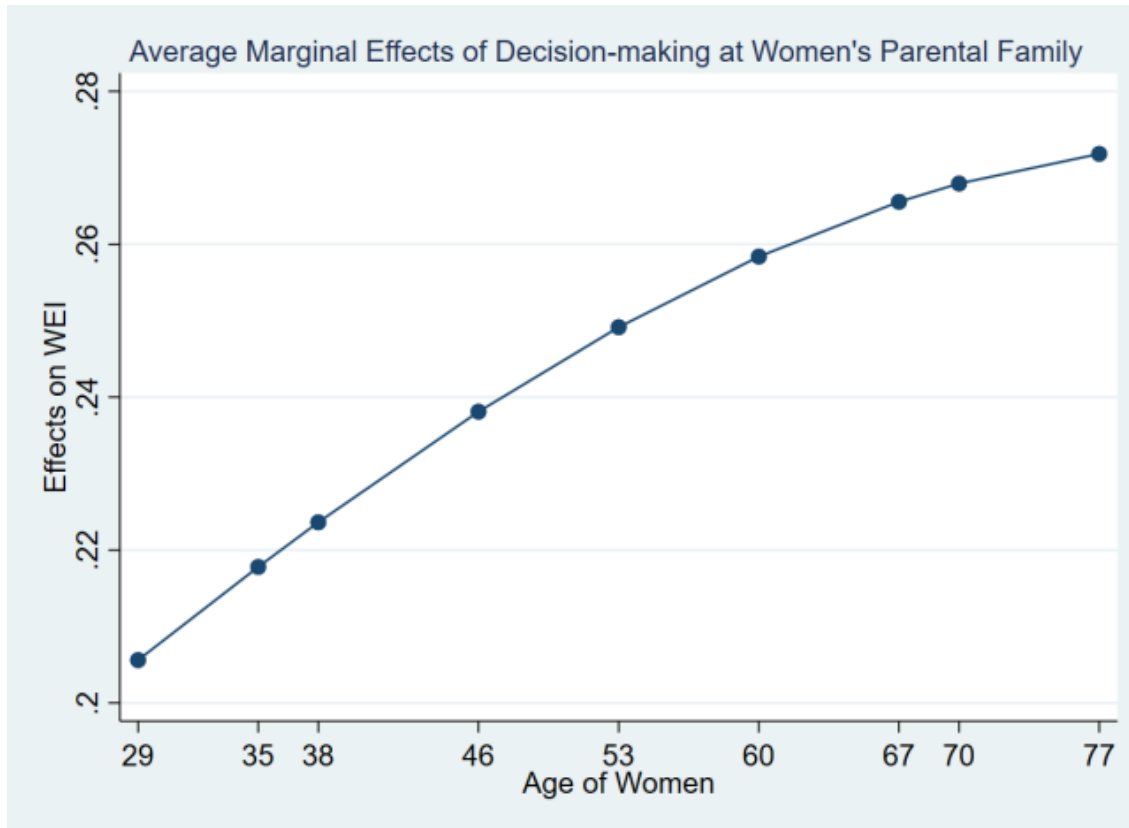
Marginal Effects of the Determinant Factors of Women's Empowerment

	Y=disempowerment (dummy)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Poverty	Income poor	-0.059	-0.053	-0.053	-0.055
		(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.042)
Individual	Age female		-0.005***	-0.005***	-0.005***
			(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
	Education female (years)		-0.012***	-0.009*	-0.009*
			(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)
	Wage income female (dummy)		-0.003	-0.007	-0.009
			(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.034)
Couple	Age difference			-0.003	-0.002
				(0.004)	(0.004)
	Education difference			-0.004	-0.002
				(0.005)	(0.005)
Sociocultural	Decision-making of women’s parental families (dummy)				0.248***
					(0.025)
	Economic status of parental families				-0.007
					(0.026)
Observations		1,027	1,006	1,000	999

Takeaways

- Women are more empowered in the domestic domains than in the public domains;
- WEI remains distinguishing among the poor and the non-poor;
- Women's age, education and the decision-making of women's parental families are significant determinants for women's empowerment.
- The strong effect of sociocultural factor on women's empowerment implies the '*process of change*' could be very slow to achieve but...

Average Marginal Effects of Decision-making at Women's Parental Family



Changes do happen as the marginal effect of parental-family influence is smaller on younger women.



More work to do

- Constraints: weight of indicators for WEI
- Implication: paid work \neq higher WEI (women's empowerment measures do not necessarily benefit women)
- Improve estimation method (i.e. SEM), as women's empowerment can't be measured directly and perhaps poverty neither.

Thank you for your attention!

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