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Research Institute for
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Barilla
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& NUTRITION

Assessing livestock husbandry, gendered decision-making and dietary quality among smallholder households in rural Timor-Leste

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CONTEXT – TIMOR-LESTE



- Independent since 2002
- Post-conflict country
- One of the poorest in Southeast Asia
- Agriculture-based livelihoods
- High child undernutrition



1.2 million–population (GSD and UNFPA 2016)
41% living below the poverty line (MOF and WB 2016)



STUDY

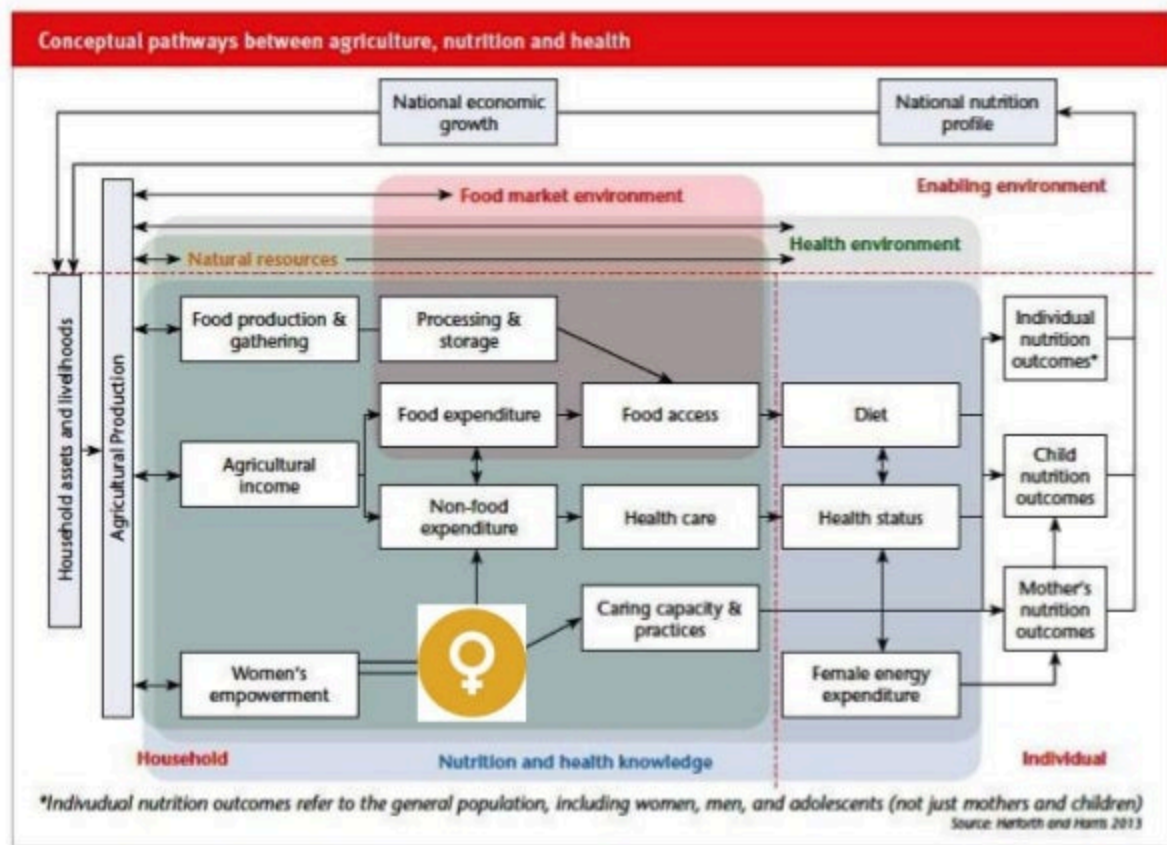
Aim

- Examine gender relations, particularly **women's agency**, related to **livestock** husbandry and sale, and **animal-source food** (ASF) consumption among semi-subsistence smallholders in Timor-Leste

Setting

- 4 rural, least developed and agrarian-based *suku* in Easter Timor-Leste
- CDNIP participants: a nutrition sensitive-agriculture program (NSA) focused on nutrition education and agriculture diversification

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



RESEARCH SITES



RESEARCH METHODS

Longitudinal mixed-methods study

- September 2017 to September 2018

Fieldwork components	2017					2018								
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
I. Dietary & production diversity		S1				S2					S3			S4
II. A-WEAI														
III. Semi-Structured Interviews														

Tools and data

- Seasonal livestock production
- Adapted A-WEAI in dual-headed households (n=282)
- Semi-Structured Interviews (n=30)
- Seasonal child <5 and maternal dietary diversity and animal source foods (ASF) intake

RESEARCH METHODS

Why choosing the **A-WEAI**

- 5 domains of empowerment
- 6 indicators vs 10 (WEAI)
- Shorter administration time
- Internationally validated to

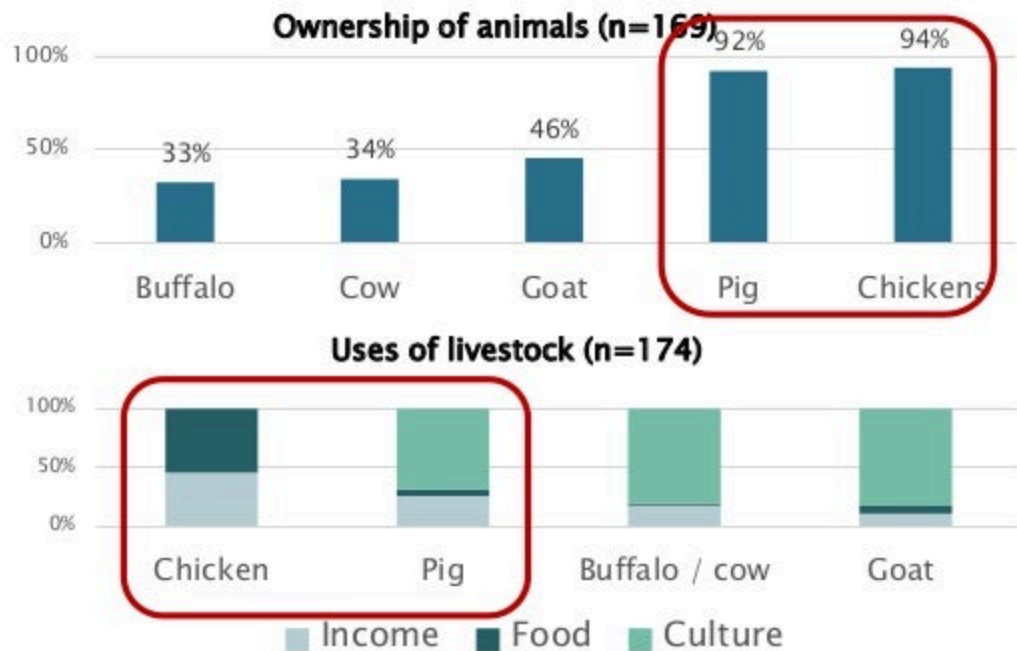
Abbreviated Women's Empowerment in Agriculture

	DOMAIN	INDICATORS	WEIGHT
1	Production	Input in productive decisions	1 / 5
2	Resources	Ownership of assets	2 / 15
		Access to and decisions on credit	1 / 15
3	Income	Control over use of income	1 / 5
4	Leadership	Group membership	1 / 5
5	Time	Workload	1 / 5
TOTAL			100%

Source: Malapit et al. 2015



PRODUCTION PROFILE



Across the seasons, at least 88% of households owned pigs and chickens, with half owning a herd size of 1–10 chickens and 1–2 pigs.

...yet low protein intake



LIVESTOCK OWNERSHIP

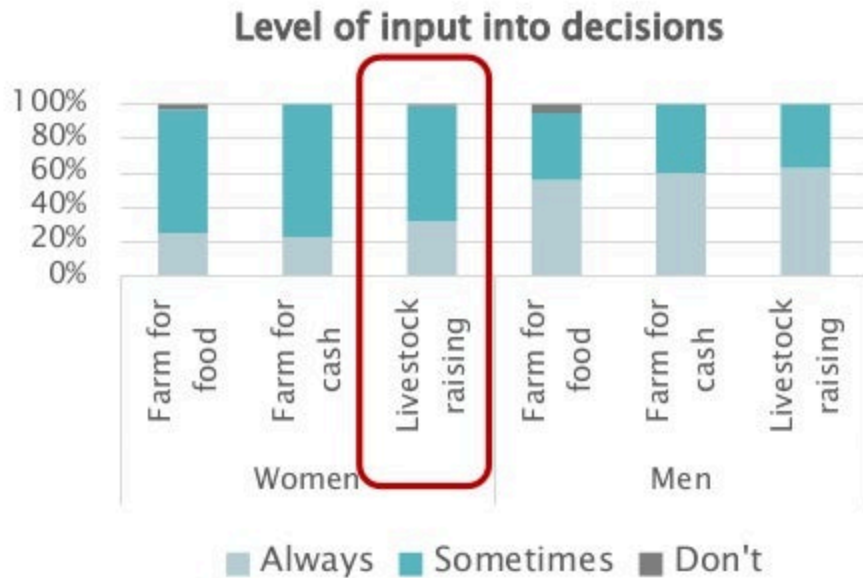
Joint ownership and decision-making on livestock, reported similarly by men and women

- Animals, irrespective of size, were generally considered household's assets and not owned individually
- Most reported making decisions on livestock jointly with their partner and/or family



LIVESTOCK DECISION-MAKING

However, decision-making is nuanced...



...power differentials

DECISION-MAKING ON SALE



Final decision-making on selling livestock

Men

Women



Women were more autonomous to sell eggs and chickens than pigs.

DECISION-MAKING ON INCOME

- Control over income from livestock sales was shared, with more men often deciding on its use.

Men



Women



- Despite women frequently reported as the sole deciders for small ASF purchases...

"My husband brings the money home so I need to ask if he agrees to using it. Having enough rice is the priority"

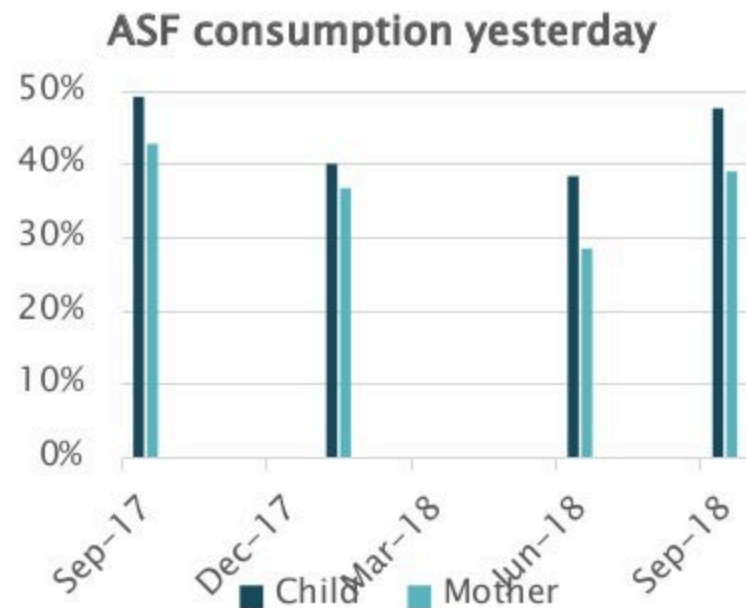
Woman, Samalari

ASF AND INTRA-HOUSEHOLD ALLOCATION

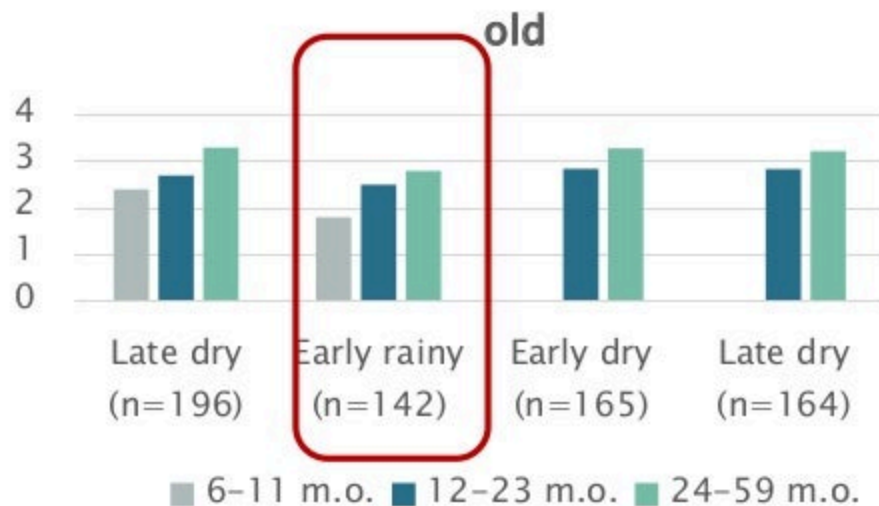
- Around half interviewees described eating meat only during ceremonies, from hunting or when animals die
- Differences in ASF allocation according to gender were not commonly portrayed
- Eggs were often prioritised to children, corroborated by longitudinal dietary data



DIETARY QUALITY



Seasonal mean food groups eaten yesterday by children 6-59 months



Mothers and children 6 to 23 months old presented very poor diets with a maximum of 15% and 25% achieving the minimum dietary diversity respective thresholds

CONCLUSIONS



- Ownership and decision-making among rural smallholders in Timor-Leste is shared
- Decision-making is nuanced and requires unpacking through qualitative enquiry
- Women display stronger agency in small livestock management despite unequal bargaining power informed by traditional notions of gender norms
- ASF intake and dietary diversity are low, vary with the seasons, and eggs are prioritised to children
- Findings suggest that programs focusing on poultry embed large potential to support women's empowerment, poverty alleviation and dietary quality outcomes



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