

# Ladder of power and freedom

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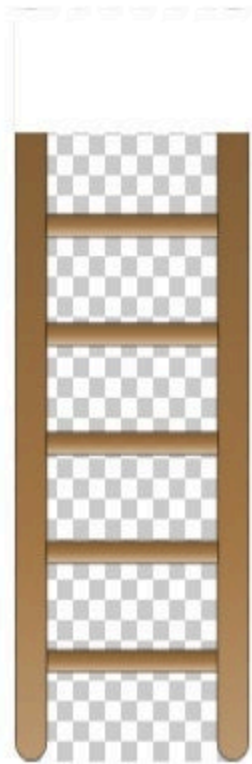


## Purpose of module

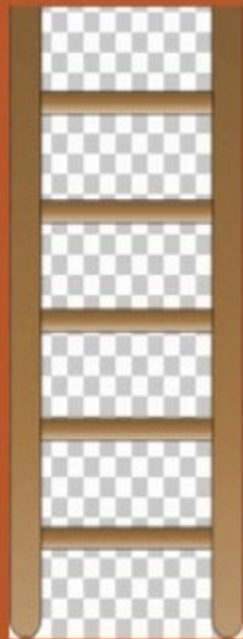
Improve understanding of how women and men assess their capacity for making important decisions, and how they perceive this capacity to be changing compared to 10 years ago.



# Ladder of Power and Freedom



- ✓ Unit of analysis: a community (or individual).
- ✓ Conducted with two single-sex focus groups (or semi-structured individual interviews)
- ✓ A module with four questions (or two questions)
- ✓ Correct application of the tool requires field team training
- ✓ Generates numerical and narrative data



## Focus group module

**Q1.** Please imagine a five-step ladder [show figure of ladder], where at the bottom, on the first step, stand the individual [sex of FGD] of this community with little capacity to make their own decisions about important affairs in their lives. These [sex of FGD] have little to say about if or where they will work, or about starting or ending a relationship with a [opposite sex]. On the highest step, the fifth, stand those who have great capacity to make important decisions for themselves, including about their working life and whether to start or end a relationship in their personal life.

On which step of this ladder would you position the majority of the [sex of FGD] in the village today? [The ratings should be done individually in private by the FGD members.]

### Ladder of Power and Freedom

**Step 5:** Power & freedom to make most all major life decisions

**Step 4:** Power & freedom to make many major life decisions

**Step 3:** Power & freedom to make some major life decisions

**Step 2:** Only a small amount of power & freedom

**Step 1:** Almost no power or freedom to make decisions

[The figure on the flipchart only needs to show the ladder and step #. The narrative in this figure is to help facilitators describe the different steps.]

**Q2.** Why? Would any of you like to volunteer the reasons for your rating?

**Q3.** Now please imagine the community 10 years ago, when \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> happened. On which step of this ladder would you position the majority of the [sex of FGD] in the village 10 years ago?

**Q4.** Why? What has (or has not) changed for the [sex of FGD] in this community?

<sup>3</sup> To aid people's recalls, be sure to substitute a fixed year for "10 years ago" and to mention an important national or local event, such as an election or major weather event from that year.

## Illustration of focus group data generated

**Table 1.** Highlights indicate the most frequently selected step to represent the ladder position of the majority of local women (if a woman's FGD) or local men (if a men's FGD). One women's and one men's middle-class focus groups, Amatuma,\* Kenya, GENNOVATE dataset.

Ladder Step	Women's focus group		Men's focus group	
	Rankings now	10 years ago	Rankings now	10 years ago
5	0	0	0	0
4	2	1	1	3
3	6	1	6	4
2	2	6	3	3
1	0	2	0	0
Mean step**	3.0	2.1	2.8	3.0

\*A pseudonym. \*\*Change in perceived agency = mean step now – mean step 10 years ago.

### Fieldnotes from middle-class women's focus group: Amatuma, Kenya, GENNOVATE dataset

Facilitator:

**Q2:** Why? Would any of you like to volunteer the reasons for your rating [in the current period]?

**Participant 4:** "In my view, women are on step 3 because of poverty which limits their decision making."

**Participant 9:** "I also support step 3 because sometimes women feel they have the power to make the decisions, but when they start a

project they get stuck and need the support of the family to succeed."

**Participant 2:** "Like Gladys says, sometimes women start a group like a merry-go-round but can only stand when other women support them."

**Participant 3:** "In this village I think women are limited in decision making because they do not have the knowledge."

**Participant 6:** "Funds are also limited in that women do not have the financial support for expert farming techniques that can help them eradicate challenges like the rodents which eat up the produce."

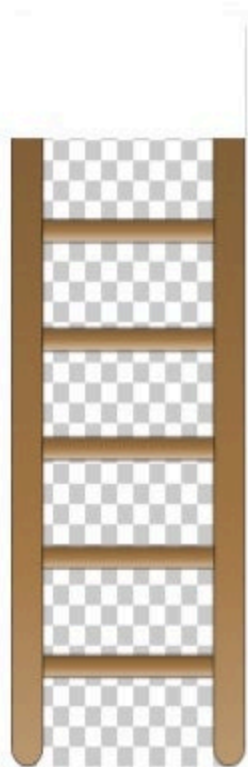
**Participant 8:** "You know most women do not have people to train us on crop farming like cassava for best results."

**Participant 3:** "I also feel ignorance contributes because people do not want to apply techniques like crop rotation and mixed farming. In this case you find that people over-rely on maize for food, which poses dangers in food security. In marriage there are hindrances too because when a woman has an idea, the man opposes them, so they can't get started."

**Participant 4:** "There is also less land in the area, so not much production."

**Participant 7:** "Women also get stuck because they do not have the motivation to progress, so they remain in a dilemma concerning where to start."

# Ladder of Life



- ✓ Multidimensional **contextual evidence** on expressions of agency that are normative for that community, and how agency and norms are interacting to (differentially) shape women's and men's perceptions of their decision-making capacity and of local opportunities.
- ✓ **Comparative statistics** of agency dynamics that remain contextually grounded.
- ✓ **Diverse applications:** cross-sectional, longitudinal, mixed methods for formative research, program or project design, M&E ...
- ✓ **Shared learning** approach can potentially inform and foster commitment to gender-transformative change.