



The Who: experimental evidence on the effect of respondent selection on collecting individual asset ownership information

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While asset ownership data continue to be collected largely at the household-level in developing countries, most assets are owned solely or jointly by individuals. But, are we doing enough to capture individual asset ownership by only interviewing the most knowledgeable household member in typical household surveys? Do females provide different information on their ownership when interviewed separately? Does reporting change when other household members are also interviewed? To answer these questions, the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study, the UN Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project and the Uganda Bureau of Statistics collaborated on the design and implementation of the methodological experiment on measuring asset ownership from a gender perspective (MEXA) to assess the impact of the approach to respondent selection on the measurement of individual asset ownership and control. MEXA targeted 140 enumeration areas (EAs) across Uganda and randomly allocated 4 households in each EA to each of 5 treatments that differed in terms of respondent selection. Regardless of the treatment, the respondent(s) were interviewed alone. The first four treatments included interviewing: 1. The self-identified most knowledgeable household member, 2. A randomly selected member of the principal couple, 3. The principal couple together, 4. All adult household members, simultaneously. In Arms 1-4, the respondents reported on all assets owned, either exclusively or jointly, by members of the household. Arm 5 was identical to Arm 4, except that respondents reported only on assets they themselves owned, either exclusively or jointly. The asset types included: dwelling, agricultural land, livestock, agricultural equipment, other real estate, non-farm enterprises, financial assets/liabilities, and valuables. Differentiation across legal, reported, and economic ownership and the bundle of rights (sell, rent out, use as collateral, bequeath, and invest) at the asset level was key. Individuals associated with each of these constructs were uniquely identified. Although the primary purpose was to inform the EDGE-supported surveys in pilot countries in 2015 and the UN guidelines on the measurement of individual-level asset ownership and control, the results are relevant for the broader body of work on gender and asset ownership and intra-household control of resources. The analysis documents the implications of different treatment options in the analysis of gender disaggregated asset ownership and rights; provides a mapping between dynamics of ownership/patterns of rights; presents the extent and correlates of intra-household discrepancies in reporting; and provides detailed metrics on respondent burden, by question and questionnaire module, across treatment arms.

Keywords: gender; land; household survey experiment; Uganda; Sub-Saharan Africa.