



He Says, She Says: Exploring Patterns of Spousal Agreement in Bangladesh

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Abstract:

Participation in household decision making and control over assets are often used as key indicators of women's bargaining power. Yet, husbands and wives do not necessarily provide the same answers to questions about these topics. Using data from the Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey, we examine whether there are substantive differences in the answers provided by spouses to questions regarding (1) who participates in decision making over household activities (2) who owns assets, and (3) who decides to purchase new assets. Across decisions and assets disagreement is substantial, usually occurring in 30 to 50 percent of the sample, and systematic, with women more likely to report joint ownership or decision making, and men more likely to report sole male ownership or decision making. Analysis of the correlations between agreement and women's well-being finds that agreement on joint decision making/ownership is generally positively associated with beneficial outcomes for women, compared to agreement on sole male decision making/ownership. Cases of disagreement in which women recognize their involvement but men do not are also positively associated with good outcomes for women, but often to a lesser extent than when they agree that women are involved.

Bio:

Cheryl Doss is a Senior Departmental Lecturer in development economics in the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. She taught at Yale University for 17 years before coming to Oxford. She has published extensively on intrahousehold decision-making, technology adoption, women's empowerment, gender issues in agricultural development, and the gender asset and wealth gaps.

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