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MANAGEMENT**

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Helen Keller International uses the EquityTool to Improve the Health Status of Women and Children around the World

Program Background

[Helen Keller International \(HKI\)](#) was founded in 1915 to fight the causes and consequences of blindness and malnutrition. The organization currently runs more than 120 programs across Africa and Asia. Their Homestead Food Production (HFP) program teaches women about the healthiest ways to feed their families, as well as providing agricultural training and tools in order to increase the yields and diversity of crops grown. This work aims to empower women from poor households to grow and sell their own nutritious food, thereby improving health outcomes and the women's livelihoods. [Learn more about the program.](#)

Equity Measurement

Because the HFP program targets women from poor households and their children in order to improve the nutritional, health, and socioeconomic status of its participants, HKI wanted to learn more about the wealth of the clients it was reaching. The current program model allows women to self-select into the program, which requires a modest household contribution to participate. The organization wanted to learn about who was coming forward to join the program, and how their household wealth changes over time.

Experience with the EquityTool

After researching different methods to assess equity, Helen Keller International selected the [EquityTool](#) to measure the relative wealth of its program beneficiaries, beginning with an assessment in Cambodia. In only two weeks, the organization was able to complete 4500 household surveys across four provinces and immediately calculate equity results. HKI now has plans to expand the use of the EquityTool to their work in Nepal and Bangladesh.

Lessons Learned

By using the EquityTool, HKI learned that they were often serving clients in quintiles 3 and 4 (quintile 1 is the lowest wealth quintile, and 5 is the highest). When the program looked at this in detail, it made sense. In order to meet the financial contribution requirement, households need to own land. Consequently many of the poorest households are unable to make this contribution, and do not opt to join the HFP program. Although the organization has previously collected equity data, the simplified method of the EquityTool allows the program to understand who it is serving and to consider programmatic adjustments based on those results.

This new information allows the organization to ask critical questions, such as “Who is participating in our program?” “How can we change the nutritional status of women and children in the lowest wealth quintiles?” “How can we determine the right household financial contribution?” and “How can we adjust our program model to reach out target populations while also achieving long-term sustainability?”

While many factors influence the success of this program, the EquityTool has allowed HKI to collect and understand wealth data in a way they've never been able to do before. They have found real value in being able to quickly and accurately collect wealth data in order to improve program operations and, ultimately, to improve the health status of women and children around the world.

