



Introduction

Interventions in the agricultural sector to promote gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) mainly focus on strengthening women's economic opportunities and decision-making capacities as farmers or in groups. However, the same women often remain disempowered within the household. They lack a voice in determining household priorities and spending patterns, and in addressing their own wellbeing. Men can be overlooked in GEWE interventions yet they too may struggle with traditional gender roles and relations, such as perceptions of "masculine" behaviour and being the sole breadwinner in the family.

Household methodologies (HHMs) tackle these underlying social norms, attitudes, behaviours and systems that represent the root causes – rather than the symptoms – of gender inequality. HHMs shift the chief focus of interventions from things – assets, infrastructure, value chains – to people: especially on who they want to be, what they want to do and how they can do so. The tools help to unite what are often disparate livelihood strategies pursued by women and men, young and old, in the same household or group, into a joint vision and practical strategy.

HHMs are proven to stimulate positive behaviour change by enabling men and women, together, to understand and challenge discriminatory gender norms that drive gender inequalities and hinder poverty reduction. They also reach the "left behind" and support their pathway out of poverty. In doing so, HHMs are a good practice to bring about transformative change in rural areas, contributing to the ambitious targets set in Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. They are mainly relevant to achieve SDG5 on GEWE but also most of the other goals that can only be achieved through GEWE itself.

About HHMs

HHMs have various forms and names but essentially consist of the following elements:

- the involvement of all household or group members to create a joint vision
- the identification of peers to share and support HHMs with other households or groups
- support from service providers and facilitators for the development, implementation and monitoring of visions and action plans, together with peers
- an enabling environment at the community level, for example, support from the village leader.

Achuka and Lopech Uganda
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Gender-sensitive participatory field tools are used to facilitate behaviour change and planning. For example:

- The Vision road journey helps household members or groups to shape their idea of a better life, looking at ways to escape poverty. It analyses the present situation and the past, and identifies opportunities and challenges.
- The Gender balance tree illustrates the distribution of productive and reproductive roles, assets, decisions and responsibilities between household members and the benefits they each accrue.
- The Social empowerment map that analyses relationships with stakeholders, including institutions and looks at the flow of power, money and love.

Implementation typically takes between one and three years.

HHMs in IFAD programmes

IFAD is one of the leading development agencies innovating with HHMs. Starting in 2009, IFAD has piloted different household methodologies in its grant and loan-financed operations such as the Household Mentoring approach and the Gender Action Learning System (GALS). Building on lessons learned, IFAD has used capacity-building events, exchange visits, learning routes and partnerships to integrate HHMs into programmes across sub-Saharan Africa and to a lesser extent in the other regions. By mid-2015, more than 100,000 people had benefited from HHMs in IFAD-supported programmes and by July 2017, HHMs were in the design of, and/or being implemented in, more than 40 programmes in 28 countries.

HHMs integrate gender and social justice into a variety of technical interventions – such as value chain development, rural finance or agricultural extension. They can be included in any project regardless of its technical focus.

Stakeholders and partners

As described above, households or groups are at the centre of the change process, supported by service providers and facilitators to support implementation. Traditional leaders are key to set the appropriate climate for implementation and acceptance of positive changes to gender roles and relations and other power dynamics. Peers and partners, including line ministries, extension services, civil society organizations, private-sector actors and development partners, become key in ensuring the sustainability of positive changes and scaling up. In IFAD-supported projects, the project management unit, country programme officer and country programme manager are vital partners for their demonstrable commitment and buy-in to HHMs.

In addition to partners in individual countries, IFAD's main partners for research and piloting HHMs have been the NGO Oxfam Novib and Linda Mayoux, who developed the GALS. IFAD grants to Oxfam Novib have supported the piloting and rolling-out of GALS in Uganda, Rwanda, Nigeria, Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Other key partners include: PROCASUR, which has supported learning routes to share HHMs with smallholder farmers from different countries; and the Joint Programme Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women, involving IFAD, FAO, WFP and UN Women, which has integrated HHMs into some of its own projects.

IFAD jointly organized the "Forum on Empowerment through Household Methodologies" (Rome, 27-29 June 2016) with Oxfam and Hivos, key experts and champions in HHMs.

Impact

HHMs represent a good return on investment because they deepen the impact and enhance the sustainability of development initiatives. Women, men and their families and communities benefit, as well as companies and financial service providers.

In IFAD programmes, HHMs have led to gender transformative changes and have improved intra-household gender relations, increased engagement with poor households and empowered households to realize their development potential by creating stronger, more resilient and sustainable smallholder farming and other rural livelihood systems.

In the IFAD-supported Rural Finance Institution Building Programme (RUFIN), Nigeria, the GALS has led to positive behavioural changes in men – with better share of household chores and jointly making decisions with other household members – that have improved gender relations at home. It has also improved access to financial resources and household financial management through joint financial planning between men and women, increased household savings and spending money more efficiently.

Similarly, deep impacts were achieved in the IFAD-supported Community based Poverty Reduction Project (RCPRP) in Sierra Leone that used the GALS to empower 3,500 men and women, mainly young, to improve their lives. Men and women started sharing household resources more and fairly redistributing domestic and productive workloads. With better and more diversified incomes, women and young people had more say in decision-making and the household investments made.



Gender Action Learning System Workshop, RUFIN, Nigeria, 2016 ©IFAD/Anja Rabezanahary

In the District Livelihoods Support Programme (DLSP), Uganda, the “Household Mentoring” enabled the inclusion of the poorest households – that exclude or self-exclude themselves – in development activities and improved gender relations. A network of 600 mentors – backstopped by community development staff – across 13 districts mentored over 20,000 households. After one to two years, many of them had attained a level of self-reliance and were on a sustained pathway out of poverty. Men and women started farming underutilized or unutilized land, which improved household food security. Members of the poorest households started engaging with external opportunities, such as going to literacy classes, accessing health services and joining savings groups. Joint land titling between men and women became common, women had a stronger voice at home and in the community and domestic violence reduced dramatically.

Innovation

HHMs can genuinely turn top-down development on its head. The power to listen to and include the poorest people, change lives, improve gender equality and lift people out of poverty is held by the very members of households and groups it should serve. In the IFAD-supported RCPRP in Sierra Leone, facilitators of GALS used the participatory field tools in their own households, enabling them to “walk the talk” regardless of literacy level or age.

Lesson learned, success factors and constraints

HHMs represent an efficient use of funds. Resources are required to raise awareness about HHMs, train service providers and support them while they train facilitators and peers/mentors. However, the ensuing benefits can be significant, tangible and sustainable with minimal costs.

Common challenges encountered in IFAD-supported projects include: access to experts to design and provide implementation support to HHMs; buy-in and commitment from key stakeholders for proper uptake, implementation and sustainability of HHMs; monitoring and impact assessment; securing continuous support from communities; and, scaling-up activities. HHMs should also be used as methods to empower people to change their own lives, rather than initial project participatory tools.

Sustainability

Continued motivation to engage in the transformation process and sustain the impacts comes from the internal drive of household members, supported by peers and facilitators. Continued support is provided through groups or clusters.

HHMs become sustainable when local actors develop a system of self-help. In RCPRP, Sierra Leone, there was limited need for financial support to GALS once the facilitators were established. They created a community-based organization – the Access Gender Action Learning System (AGALS) – to replace the line ministry coordinating committee used in the pilot and to strengthen their skills and provide GALS services to existing households as well as new groups and districts.

Exchange visits support the sustainability of HHMs by enabling key stakeholders to share knowledge. In RUFIN, Nigeria, exchange visits enabled different local facilitators and participating groups to interact with one another, share their experience of GALS, form partnerships and strengthen their activities.

Replicability and/or scaling up

The success of HHMs is evident by the replication and scaling up of the approach within existing and new IFAD-supported projects and in broader development efforts by local and national partners.

The Government of Uganda recognized the success of household mentoring in DLSP and urged

IFAD to give greater priority to this approach in the country portfolio. In response, the IFAD country strategy identifies household mentoring as the key strategy for social inclusion, supported by national centres of excellence for knowledge management (Makerere University) and the IFAD Policy and Technical Advisory Division. The Ministry of Local Government is also keen to mainstream household mentoring into local government services to reach the districts outside of the DLSP.

The facilitators in AGALS, Sierra Leone supported the scaling up of GALS in other project target areas and project components, such as climate resilience, as well as other IFAD-supported projects in the country. Furthermore, GALS has been scaled up by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security nationwide, and has since been used in other IFAD projects in neighbouring countries. It has also been adopted by private-sector cocoa exporters to their cocoa suppliers.

Peer-to-peer and knowledge-sharing approaches such as learning routes have effectively disseminated knowledge and facilitated the adoption of HHMs in other IFAD-supported projects.

The Forum on Empowerment through Household Methodologies in June 2016 identified key issues that need attention to reach millions rather than thousands of people. Mechanisms for long-term capacity development, for example through “Learning Centers”, are important, rather than just relying on limited project timeframes and project teams. Monitoring and evaluation, research and impact assessment from within the community and by external agents need to align and improve.

Information sources

Documents, websites, multimedia etc. with links

- Toolkit <https://bit.ly/2uxapM4>
- Household mentoring as a tool for social inclusion <http://bit.ly/28R57iw>
- Highlights from the IFAD Household Methodologies Workshop and Writeshop, Uganda <http://bit.ly/28Nyijv>
- Households at the heart of change <http://bit.ly/1spvNld>
- Women are leaders in family farming <http://bit.ly/28R5KbX>
- Can household methodologies contribute to changing lives of rural poor people? <http://bit.ly/28NGUqp>
- Boosting value chains productivity through improved households relationships in Rwanda <https://bit.ly/2igoYZj>
- AgTalk “The power of a dream” https://youtu.be/z6bUkLy-m_A
- Rwanda: Fighting poverty with equality <https://youtu.be/UR59c3-OPQQ>
- Uganda: Imagine your life differently <https://youtu.be/8EJhyerEeQE>
- GALS (Gender Action Learning for Sustainability) websites: <http://www.galsatscale.net> and <https://www.facebook.com/galsatscalenetwork/>


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