

Forum on Empowerment through Household Methodologies



Achuka and Lopech sharing their joint plan for a better livelihood in Uganda. ©Thies Reemer/Oxfam

Organized jointly by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Oxfam and Hivos
IFAD headquarters, Rome, 27-29 June 2016

Concept note

Household Methodologies (HHMs) are innovative approaches used to promote gender equality by many development institutions, as well as organizations in the public and private sectors.

Women's empowerment cannot be achieved without change at the household level involving all members, young and old, women and men. HHMs shift the focus from the individual to the household level, from things – such as assets, resources and infrastructure – to people, who they want to be and what they want to do.

More and more organizations in the public and the private sector understand the importance of empowering rural poor women and men through participatory community development. It is also becoming increasingly clear that gender equality and women's empowerment are necessary and integral elements of all efforts to reduce and eradicate poverty in rural and urban areas.

Empowerment happens when individuals and organized groups imagine the world differently, have a vision for the future, and challenge and change the relations of power that have kept them in poverty. They also need to be able to communicate this vision with a voice that is respected in planning and policymaking.

One of the most innovative, cost-effective and successful HHMs is the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), a community-led empowerment methodology that can be adapted to different cultural and organizational contexts. It was developed by Linda Mayoux (international consultant) with partner organizations like Hivos, IFAD and Oxfam, in projects to develop pro-poor value chains, and improve agricultural production and rural financial services. GALS has also been used with the private sector in coffee and cocoa value chains in cooperation with Hivos, TWIN-UK and Nestlé/Fair Labor Association.



Investing in rural people



OXFAM



IFAD is the leading United Nations agency and international financial institution innovating with HHMs that effectively reach poor households and improve intra-household gender relations. It has spent several years piloting different household methodologies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in rural and agricultural development, including in its loan-financed operations. In Uganda, a household mentoring approach enabled vulnerable and marginal rural households to improve their livelihoods. In Malawi and Zambia, a household approach was used for agricultural extension services and families at risk of HIV/AIDS. GALS was successfully introduced in IFAD-supported projects on community-based poverty reduction and rural finance in Nigeria, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

Hivos is a thought leader and co-creator of gender programmes in its regional hubs. Hivos sponsored the development of the generic participatory action learning system (PALS) methodology underlying GALS with partners in Western Uganda (Bukonzo Joint) for strategic planning, livelihood development and microfinance. Hivos is currently playing a leading role in mainstreaming gender through GALS in its projects in Indonesia, Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. In East Africa, through three five-year public-private partnerships in sustainable coffee production, Hivos is using GALS and HHMs to promote gender justice, good governance and better incomes within coffee producer organizations. The key achievements are new gender champions, an increase in female membership of producer organizations, increased income for women, joint planning and use of income at the household level, reduced incidences of domestic violence, and improved leadership and governance.

Oxfam started developing GALS in 2007 under its programme "Women's Empowerment Mainstreaming and Networking (WEMAN) for Gender Justice in Economic Development", with IFAD grant support. GALS in value chain development was first piloted with partners in Uganda and then rolled out in Nigeria and Rwanda. Oxfam Novib is currently implementing a programme in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi to integrate HHMs in agricultural extension, value chains and rural finance in French-speaking countries. In addition, as part of the WEMAN programme, GALS is being adapted and applied in other projects in Africa and Asia. It has been piloted for local area development in Sudan, livestock value chains in Zimbabwe, small-scale irrigated agriculture in Niger, and gender transformative agri-business investments in Thailand. In Mali, Niger and Pakistan, it is also part of a larger effort to prevent child marriages and empower young women who are already married.

GALS can be adapted for any context or issue, including:

- pro-poor value chain development
- farmer and producer organizations
- agricultural production and services
- rural finance
- natural resource management and climate change adaptation/mitigation
- land tenure
- food and nutrition security

Over the past three years alone, more than 100,000 women and men have been trained in HHMs and GALS in particular, and many have become advocates for change in their communities. They have reported remarkable developments in terms of greater gender equality, more equal sharing of labour, and increased women's decision-making power and control of assets, including more secure access to land. Families have started to work together towards a joint vision and have sustainably improved their livelihoods. Farmer organizations, self-help groups and cooperatives have increased the volume and quality of their production and raised their incomes, in particular in the coffee and cacao value chains.

Women and young people gain more influence in household decision-making, including decisions about how the money they earn is spent, and increase their ownership of assets. Men and boys take on more domestic tasks to balance the workload in the home and they invest more resources in household well-being. Most importantly, family members report greater harmony and a reduction in domestic violence.

The evidence shows that there is a direct relationship between behaviour change at the household level and improvement in livelihoods. In the context of rural poverty, the new behaviours encouraged by HHMs lead to higher productivity and better access to services and markets. They also result in increased household assets, including livestock, bicycles, motorcycles, farm equipment, radios, mobile telephones and improvements on the house.

Participants also report increased investments in education for girls and boys and a reduction in the number of food insecure months. The increased incomes and savings are used to rent land for farming, to hire casual farm labour, to buy improved seeds and to boost small trade. Better and more reliable productivity enables households to start small family enterprises and establish connections with partners along the value chain, turning them into appealing partners for the private sector.

About household methodologies

Household methodologies build on a growing realization in the development community that, in many parts of the world, it is not possible to talk of a 'unitary household' with a single goal. Women and men are frequently responsible for different production and consumption activities. However, women usually have fewer productive assets than men; are less able to take independent economic decisions about their enterprises; often have to pass an important share of their income to their partners; and usually work for their husband's enterprise as well as their own.

Household methodologies enable people to see how their current ways of working are keeping them locked in poverty and support them in agreeing a vision that will lead to real change. They put people in the centre of the frame, working with household members to make the most of their opportunities, helping them to identify and overcome obstacles and, quite simply, to change their lives for the better. Household members take responsibility for the change they want to see, and they work closely with each other, their friends and the community to make change happen.

In Malawi, household mentoring has been piloted at three irrigation schemes under the Irrigation, Rural Livelihoods and Agricultural Development Project supported by IFAD and the World Bank. The methodology was introduced to enable households to identify and address gender inequality and HIV/AIDS issues at the household level. It has proven to be very popular and has been adopted by the Department of Agricultural Extension Services of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development.

In Uganda, a household mentoring approach has enabled the IFAD-supported District Livelihoods Support Programme to deepen its level of engagement in addressing poverty. Through the programme, very poor households, which are normally beyond the reach of mainstream activities, are selected by the community to participate in individual household mentoring.

About the Gender Action Learning System (GALS)

The Gender Action Learning System (GALS) is a community-led empowerment methodology. It uses a set of visual diagramming tools for life planning. These tools can be used by non-literate women and men. They increase agency and expand choices by encouraging reflection and strengthening planning skills. They also inspire joint reflection and action on gender justice. GALS is applied at three levels:

- **Individual life and livelihood planning:** women and men, including those who cannot read and write, keep individual diaries to develop their own visions for change in gender relations and improved livelihoods, to plan how they can move towards these goals, and to gain more control over their lives.
- **Collective action and gender advocacy for change:** the individual visions and strategies are shared to develop collective strategies – bringing women and men together – linked into participatory decision-making in governments and development agencies to better target and focus resources for empowerment and wealth creation.
- **Institutional awareness-raising and changing power relationships:** communicating these aspirations and strategies, and using the same tools at the institutional level for staff reflection and learning increases respect for the views and interests of poor women and men, challenges established attitudes and behaviours, and gives poor women a voice in institutional decision-making.

Objectives

The positive results yielded by these methodologies have resulted in a high demand by the public and private sectors for HHMs, together with more requests for quality information, support and capacity-building.

The Forum on Empowerment through Household Methodologies brings together practitioners and key players to take stock of the changes that have occurred over the last 10 years. It will be an opportunity to learn from each other, discuss methodologies, assess impacts, and identify benefits and challenges. It will also lay the foundations for future alliances and collaboration.

The Forum will address the following questions:

- **Methodology:** How can we strengthen the case for linking gender equality to economic empowerment and social justice?
- **Communication and knowledge-sharing:** How can we maintain the quality of information disseminated and knowledge transmitted? How can we improve the sharing of experiences about the methodologies and practice?
- **Application:** How can we expand into specific sectors with various actors (for example, value chain development for cacao and coffee value chains; rural finance; extension services)?
- **Capacity-building:** How can we meet the increased demand for the HHMs and address the issues of certification, continuous training and networking among practitioners?
- **Partnership:** How can we strengthen existing partnerships and identify new partners in the public and private sectors?
- **Networks and sustainability:** How can we support and expand a pool of qualified experts and trainers? How can we scale up results and enable communities to continue working on their own?
- **Monitoring and impact assessment:** How can we monitor and evaluate the results achieved and document lasting impact?

Intended outcomes

- Identify concrete proposals for scaling up, based on a common vision and road map.
- Develop new cooperation models among different stakeholders (IFAD, NGOs, practitioners and the private sector).
- Strengthen the HHMs/GALS community of practice for greater impact, outreach and visibility.



Contacts:

Maria Hartl
Senior Technical Specialist – Gender and Social Equity, IFAD
Email: m.hartl@ifad.org

Thies Reemer
Thematic Lead Women's Economic Empowerment, Oxfam Novib
Email: thies.reemer@oxfamnovib.nl

Edith Kirumba
Programme Manager, Hivos Hub East Africa
Email: ekirumba@hivos.org

IFAD Gender Secretariat
Email: gender@ifad.org