



Gender transformative approaches for food security and nutrition



GOOD PRACTICE

Gender Model Family

PREPARED BY

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SECTION 1

OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

Name of the methodology**Gender Model Family (GMF)****Countries with implementation experience****West Africa:** Ghana, Sierra Leone**Start/end date**

April 2019 – March 2024

Lead organization sponsoring the development and implementation of the methodology

Social Enterprise Development Foundation (SEND) International is an interdenominational organization. SEND Ghana (SG) and SEND Sierra Leone (SSL) are the GMF promoters in West Africa.

SG conceptualized the GMF model during the period 2001–2003 to address the issue of inequitable access to and control over project resources and benefits. Following a strong backlash from husbands who felt excluded from a revolving fund that was established to enable women to rehabilitate their livelihoods, SEND concluded that livelihood and food security projects would not be sustainable unless they started from a foundation of gender equity within the household. The methodology was pioneered in the Northern Region of Ghana with support from Global Affairs Canada and Co-operative Development Foundation (CDF).

In 2010, SG supported SSL to initiate GMF programming in Sierra Leone.

Purpose of the methodology and the domains of gender inequality that are addressed

GMF is a gender transformative approach that enables married men and women (couples, partners) to address unequal power relations and decision making about household resources. GMFs use their positive experiences – especially the benefits gained by women, men, boys and girls of the household – to champion and advocate for gender equality in their communities.

Contribution of the methodology to wider development/organizational/project goals

SEND is committed to addressing unequal gender relations at its roots. SEND has been challenged not just to provide gender awareness training to its farm families but to engage them in a transformative process in which they commit to gender transformation because it is the path to development. As GMFs, women and men are empowered together to benefit from development projects and activities. The GMF programme has strengthened SEND's ability in Ghana and Sierra Leone to achieve interventions with specific development objectives in: peace animation; nutrition education; climate-smart farming practices; women's literacy; women in leadership; farmer cooperatives; women's organizations; microfinance and small-scale enterprise development; water, sanitation and hygiene; women in governance; and small ruminant farming.

Target group

GMF target groups include men and women who belong to:

- farm families,
- rural commercial women's associations,
- village saving and loan associations,
- credit unions,
- family-based farmer cooperatives,
- members of women groups and
- peace animation groups.

SECTION 2

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Key entry points for applying the methodology

The entry point are different groups (cooperatives, associations, networks) formed for development activities. Group meetings are used to introduce, mobilize and recruit GMFs. Effective contexts include a variety of development programmes and projects involving food and nutrition security; water, sanitation and hygiene; women and small-scale enterprise development; small ruminant rearing; and local resource mobilization.

Implementing partners

SEND has partnered with CDF in Ghana, and in Sierra Leone with Welthungerhilfe, Irish Aid, Christian Aid and Solidaridad West Africa.

The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) is supporting SSL as a knowledge partner on the links between women's empowerment and food and nutrition security. KIT has provided inputs to the baseline design, qualitative tools for action-learning about gender transformation and technical support for the analysis and roll-out of key findings.

Process of and criteria for selecting facilitators/champions/mentors**— Facilitators**

GMF facilitators are staff from the implementing organization. They should be models themselves – gender-sensitive, respectful and respected, approachable and patient. They should understand gender concepts and issues within the community, be good communicators and listeners, have good facilitation skills, be able to manage and resolve conflict, and know the community dynamics, culture and language. Their role is to orient men and women who belong to groups in GMF and train couples in the GMF methodology. Community members appreciate the personal experiences of the facilitators. They are responsible for community sensitization, recruitment, training, monitoring and supervising the GMFs.

— GMFs

A GMF is made up of a husband, wife and their children who want to be a model for change and transformation in society by challenging traditional notions of gender roles and responsibilities. A GMF believes that:

- Their lives will be transformed by their efforts to share labour, resources and decision making, and promote gender equity.
- Each member of the family has equal rights and thus is entitled to opportunities to become empowered. Empowerment means that men and women together can take control and improve their lives, and that neither the man nor the woman exerts power over the other. They make decisions together, and share resources and their benefits.
- Anyone in the family can help with cooking and cleaning, running a business or making financial decisions.
- Everyone in the family should have access to and control over resources, including education, which will help them to improve how they make decisions and direct their lives.

Selection criteria for a GMF include:

- married;
- stable residents in the community;
- husband and wife are both committed to be trained with other families;
- husband or wife, or both, should be a participant in a development project;
- committed and ready to learn and change;
- willing to share their experiences within and outside their communities; and
- willing to mobilise other families to become GMFs (at least three new families after their first year acting as GMF).

Once married couples have volunteered to become GMFs, they undertake a training programme in several phases, and commit to regular meetings with other GMFs and members of their community.

Some GMFs are selected by other GMFs to be leaders or champions in their community. They support the GMF facilitators to monitor and support their colleague GMFs. They are not paid but might be given reward like a photo of the family as a sign of appreciation. They are role models for the success of the GMF process and lead in sharing experiences within their community.

Training of facilitators/champions/mentors

Experienced staff from the implementing organization who are familiar with the GMF model conduct a training of trainers of the GMF facilitators using the GMF Manual for Community Workers. They ensure there are an equal number of men and women facilitators who understand local gender issues and can discuss them in the local language.

The GMF facilitators are responsible for facilitating two training workshops of two days each with the GMFs, following the GMF Manual for Community Workers.

SECTION 3

IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE

Key steps in the implementation cycle

The GMF training programme follows seven steps.

— Step 1: Preparing communities for the GMF programme

This step identifies couples (husband and wife) to volunteer to become GMFs. The GMF facilitators use project meetings or group meetings to inform community members about the benefits of being a GMF. The experiences of previous projects are used to illustrate the benefits.

— Step 2: Recruitment and registration of GMFs

Community members are given time to consider whether they want to volunteer to participate in the GMF programme. GMF facilitators visit each community to register those who are interested. If the interested families exceed ten, then they split into two groups and each group will select a GMF leader or champion from amongst the GMFs. The facilitators then work with the community GMF champions to plan and conduct the training.

— Step 3: First training of GMFs

The first training (two days) is organized for between 10 to 12 couples who have volunteered to become GMFs. It is conducted by the GMF facilitator, and both husbands and wives should attend together. Its main purpose is to enable couples to draw up their action plans for being GMFs. The training uses the Harvard tools for Gender Analysis: daily activity profile, triple roles identification, and access and control profile. On the first day, the gender analysis exercises are accomplished in same-sex groups of men and women. The access and control profile is usually a turning point in men's and women's awareness of gender issues.

The Family Action Plan provides the impetus for gender transformation. Couples identify how to change patterns of gender roles and responsibilities with a focus on equitable sharing of household or reproductive work. Plans also reflect joint pledges by husbands and wives that both their sons and daughters will have equal opportunities, especially to education. Couples share their action plan with the group, which enables group members to hold each other accountable for the implementation of their action plans. The plan can also be used as a monitoring tool, allowing field officers can check to see whether the family is doing what they planned.

— Step 4: Second training of GMFs

The second training (two days) for couples is an opportunity for the GMF facilitator to follow up and clarify any misunderstanding of the GMF concepts, activities and expectations. This involves discussions about sharing household work, family planning, working in farming and business, controlling resources and decision making, parenting roles and care for children, and community management and leadership positions. Attention is also paid to any current problems or potential challenges that families have or will encounter in implementing their plans and meeting their commitments to each other.

— Step 5: Monitoring of GMFs

The GMF facilitator assesses and supports the implementation of the action plans. This usually starts a month after the first training when the GMFs hold their first monthly review meeting. The field officers are trained to use the gender monitoring tools in the training manual.

— Step 6: Monthly and quarterly meetings for experience sharing

Monthly meetings bring GMFs from the same community together to discuss their successes and challenges, and support each other. They are led by the GMF leader/champion and not attended by the GMF facilitator. Quarterly meetings bring GMFs from different communities together to share experiences. They are led by the GMF facilitator and usually held at the project office located in a district capital or chieftom head town. Interested community members can also be invited to observe and participate in the GMF experience sharing sessions. New GMFs and communities are identified for follow-up meetings and recruitment.

— Step 7: Experience sharing and Annual GMF Assembly

The Annual GMF Assembly brings together GMFs and other stakeholders. Political, youth, religious and traditional leaders, women and gender activists are invited to attend in order to increase the public profile and recognition of the GMF Assembly. GMFs advocate for gender equality by giving public testimony of behavioural changes and economic transformation experienced in their families. The media is invited to popularize the programme by highlighting its benefits. Successful model families are identified and celebrated at the GMF Assemblies for other families to learn from their experience.

Average length of the implementation cycle

The implementation cycle is approximately one year.

- Sensitization stage – first meeting (Step 1)
- Recruitment – one week later (Step 2)
- First training – one week after recruitment (Step 3)
- Second training – six months later (Step 4)
- Monitoring – monthly and quarterly (Step 5)
- Monthly meetings (Step 6)
- Experience sharing – at end of 12 months (Step 7)

Graduation from the methodology

There is no graduation in this model because becoming a GMF is a lifelong change process that has an impact on the family and the larger community. After a year, GMFs should have built their collective strength by organizing themselves with a champion and recruited at least three more GMFs. Staff inputs, such as GMF facilitator monitoring of the group, is scaled down. In Ghana, for example, a group of 10 GMFs is considered to have graduated once it produces a champion to lead it. After the year, the GMF champion will continue attending the quarterly review meetings until the project ends.

SECTION 4**MONITORING****Monitoring system**

The monitoring system has three levels.

- Community Gender Mentors are GMF champions who have matured in the GMF process by supporting and sharing their experiences with others. They are responsible for regular monitoring and providing direct mentoring support to GMFs at the community level. Children are also asked to take part in the review meetings and assess if they see changes in the conduct of their parents and whether children are involved in decision-making processes.
- Zonal gender mentors are project staff who are present when a project covers many districts. They are responsible for training GMFs and monitoring the activities of community gender mentors within a geographical area.
- Project staff provide training of trainers for zonal gender mentors. They also monitor and mentor the community and zonal gender mentors.

At each of these levels, GMF best practices are documented and shared to promote learning.

Indicators

- **In Ghana**
 - Changes in the reproductive and productive roles in the family
 - Number of other household members that have heard about GMF
 - Women’s involvement in leadership and community management roles
 - Access to and control over productive resources by women in the family and community
 - Number of men who are fulfilling their commitments in the action plans
 - Number of monthly and quarterly experience sharing sessions held
- **In Sierra Leone**
 - Family unity (e.g. husband and wife not quarrelling regularly)
 - Conflict reduction
 - Joint businesses
 - Joint decision making in the family
 - Respect for each other and respect from community members due to the transformation
 - Improved family health status

SECTION 5**BUDGET****Main items of expenditure**

Expenditure associated with:

- printing the training materials (e.g. the manual, GMF posters)
- GMF training in communities
- monitoring of the implementation of action plans
- experience sharing sessions
- annual assemblies
- logistical support for GMF champions and mentors.

Total budget

Not available

SECTION 6

RESULTS

Number of beneficiaries reached

In Ghana, 1 069 smallholder farm families were trained as GMFs under the FOSTERING project.

In Sierra Leone, approximately 58 437 GMFs have been formed, and they participate in delivering different projects of SSL and its partners

Main changes attributed to the methodology

The impacts of the GMF on the participating families and their communities include:

- There is a more equitable division of labour between family members, and the burden of work for women and girls is reduced.
- GMFs are better off financially. Men and women experience a greater capacity to earn money because they pool and share resources and labour more effectively.
- As men and women work together and consult each other, they recognize shared aspirations and their bonds become stronger. There is more openness and transparency within the family.
- Women experience greater ability to express themselves and have more control over resources, including their own labour and time. This creates space for more women to engage in productive activities to generate additional income.
- Women's confidence and self-esteem has increased because women and their roles are valued in the family and community.
- GMFs practice better parenting skills and recognize the importance for both girls and boys to be in school. Academic performance improves for boys and girls from GMFs.
- GMFs experience better health and nutrition status because men are willing to provide money for food, leave the best cuts of fish and meat for their children, and help their wives plan and prepare meals.
- Both men and women from GMFs are engaged in leadership positions. There is an increase of women in leadership positions in communities where there are groups of GMFs.
- In Ghana, the GMF programme has been adopted by some District Assemblies and a number of development partners, including Oxfam Ghana.
- Dissemination of information about GMFs has sparked interest in the programme by organizations in other countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire and Ethiopia.

Key success factors and strengths of the methodology**— Locus for transformation**

The family is the unit for social transformation, where values for gender equality are instilled and principles for gender equity are developed. Intervening at the level of communities with families gets to the roots of gender inequality for effective gender transformation.

— Identity in transformation

GMFs have volunteered and pledged to be models for gender transformation. This sets them apart and draws the attention of other community members to the positive ways men and women can live together more equitably. They become role models that others wish to follow.

— Action for transformation

GMFs have concrete action plans for which they are accountable. GMFs start off with a plan to share household tasks. Building on the benefits of these actions, they also start sharing decisions and become strategic about how they can capitalize on shared household and productive labour and resources.

— Collective transformation

A community of 'change agents' is created because GMFs are supportive of each other and always mobilising others to become GMFs. With a critical mass of GMFs, gender transformation will change, not just within families, but throughout entire communities and societies.

— Sustained transformation

GMFs quickly experience the benefits from actively promoting gender equity. They rarely want to go back to the 'old' ways of living together because it would be seen as a step backwards in their progress toward a more developed and modern future in which both women and men are empowered by gender equality.

— Experience sharing sessions

Families are encouraged to share experiences with each other directly (i.e. man to man and woman to woman). This is especially important for sensitive topics. It also provides opportunities for people who are shy to speak in a group. In addition to helping GMFs to learn from each other, these sessions help to mobilize support among influential members of the communities for the GMF model.

— Low cost input

The GMFs are encouraged to rely on their own resources, including family labour, for implementing their plans. It is the will, commitment and interest of the husband and wife, rather than resources, that are required to sustain adherence to the principles and implementation of the GMF. From the programme perspective, after the initial investment in setting up the GMF, the most important cost is mentoring activities by the field officers.

— Joint training of husband and wife

Joint training enables the husband and wife to discover and analyse their differences related to access to and control over household resources. Joint planning introduces the GMF to the importance of working as a team in their communities and being transparent and accountable to each other. The sharing of the family action plan with other GMFs helps to compel each couple to implement it.

— The quick impact of the GMF and benefits for their relationship

In nearly all cases, GMFs leave the first training session well motivated to implement their action plan. For some, the training session might be their first experience of having a serious dialogue about their family life and resources. Most of the activities in the action plan tend to be about addressing practical and basic needs of the family members. Sharing of domestic chores usually brings relief and happiness to the wife, and both the husband and wife tend to be delighted by the increased attention they get from one another.

— Diverse development impacts

The GMF model triggers a wide range of inter-related development impacts. For example, improved sanitation resulting from the husband helping to sweep the family compound, reduces the workload of his wife, which in turn gives her time to attend literacy classes and acquire reading and writing skills to qualify for strategic leadership positions.

— GMF promotes and sustains positive masculinity in husbands

Participation in the GMF programme provides opportunities for men to change from being 'macho' towards women and does away with the traditional attributes and roles passed on to them by their parents in predominately patriarchal communities. The men accept, live and work with women as equal members within the household and are supportive of their wives' views, efforts and contributions to the household.

— Boys and girls are provided with equal opportunities

This is one of the principles the husband and wife must adhere to with their children. Adherence of GMF parents to this principle for example is enabling the girls to enrol and remain in school and boys to acquire domestic skills.

— Gender-sensitive management and implementation team

Experienced and committed field officers supported by a senior management team that is committed to using development programmes to promote gender equality and equity issues, have been critical for the success of the GMF. A GMF champion in management is absolutely essential for its success and growth.

Challenges and measures to overcome them

- How to challenge entrenched traditions and culture that continue to promote inequitable gender relations without undermining positive community and social values?
 - Slow pace of community adoption
 - To bring about rapid acceptance and adoption of GMFs, there is the need to recruit large numbers of families in order to make the social and economic benefits more visible.
- The labour-intensiveness of the GMF programme, particularly monitoring activities
 - There is the need to involve communities in the monitoring process. This is cost-effective and promotes ownership.
- Recruiting GMFs is a challenge for project staff in Sierra Leone. Families need to volunteer, without any promise of rewards apart from their own expectation of the benefits.
 - To overcome this challenge, GMFs are expected to mobilise new members based on their understanding of the approach. These new families attend monthly GMF meetings with the existing families.
- Older members of the household, for example in-laws, grandparents and older siblings of the wife or husband, usually dislike seeing their men sharing chores with the wife and try and discourage the men from remaining in a GMF.
 - Link the family with other GMFs who might have dealt with similar issue from their extended family members.
 - Make it a topic for discussion during monthly and quarterly review meetings of the GMFs.
 - GMF facilitators highlight benefits during project meetings with the stakeholders and emphasize the need for community members and leaders to support the GMFs.
- Polygamous families are predominant in Northern Ghana and Eastern Sierra Leone. Initially husbands were allowed to join with only one wife, but it was soon realized that this created tensions and conflicts within household. The wife who was selected to participate in the GMF activities, was considered by the other wives as being the favourite and SEND was accused of causing the problem.
 - Polygamous families are no longer allowed to enrol in the GMF. SSL is considering developing a gender equality promotion education programme for households with multiple wives because they are significant part of the population with a high incidence of poverty.

Potential for upscaling

The GMF methodology is scalable. For example, in the Eastern Corridor, SEND Ghana started with 105 GMFs in 2003, and scaled up to 1 069 in 2018. The 4R Nutrient Stewardship Programme plans to scale this up to 4 300 between 2019 and 2024.

SEND started the GMF model initially to increase soya bean production and consumption, but over the years it is being used to promote women and gender equity issues in governance, water, sanitation, education, peace building activities, and enable farm families to adopt climate-smart farming practices.

Families of different levels of income, professions, religions and ethnic groups are members of the GMF programme. Communities in Ghana and Sierra Leone have teachers, health workers, farmers, pastors, traditional leaders and traders who are GMFs and actively support each other.

Potential for replication

The GMF methodology has been replicated by other development partners, such as Oxfam, Plan International and RING in Ghana and projects supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development in Ethiopia.

Sustainability of the methodology once project/external input is complete

GMFs continue to promote and be a model for gender change, especially if they are joined with other development programmes that promote gender equality. Men and women belonging to GMFs naturally become leaders in their communities, given that they have undertaken and become committed to positive and progressive changes in their family life. Because GMFs set good examples and are trustworthy, many men and women from the community come to them for advice. This is an incentive for them to continue to promote the GMF model, and engage with traditional authorities, religious and community leaders on the benefits of gender equity.

The GMF programme becomes sustainable when it becomes the main community structure or modality through which all project interventions are delivered at the community level.

SECTION 7

RESOURCES

Publications

- SEND West Africa (2014) Gender Model Family Manual for Community Worker
<https://sendwestafrica.org/nu/gh/training-manuals/>
- Gender Model Family Manual for Ethiopia in English, also available in Amharic, Tigrinya, and Afan Oromia
http://smis-ethiopia.org/wp-content/uploads/kpdocs/93%20AMH_Yelbie%20SAPR%20PY2.pdf
- Gender Model Family manual on Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture
<http://smis-ethiopia.org/index.php/kp-product/nutrition-awareness-for-families-belonging-toirrigation-water-user-associations-facilitators-guide-for-health-and-agriculture-extension-workers/>

Websites

- The Gender Model Family Approach, Women’s Empowerment and Nutrition (KIT website)
<https://www.kit.nl/project/thegender-model-family-approach-womens-empowerment-nutrition/>
- LANN+: Integrated Food Security (article on Welthungerhilfe website)
<https://www.welthungerhilfe.org/our-work/approaches/lann/>

News articles

- <https://www.graphic.com.gh/features/features/send-ghana-implements-gender-model-family-concept.html>
- <https://www.newsghana.com.gh/18-best-families-participate-in-two-day-gender-model-family-summit/>
- <https://cdfsethiopian.com/2020/02/10/gender-model-families-gmf-recognized-in-graduation-ceremony/amp/>

Case studies

- http://smis-ethiopia.org/wp-content/uploads/kpdocs/130%20NPM_Family%20Attitude%20Changes%20Forever.pdf
- <http://smis-ethiopia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Success-Story-GMF.pdf>

Video

- <https://youtu.be/MFEgw0Hn9Zw> – Oromia (English sub-titles)

Cover photo: Osman and Baidu are from Taninihun Village in Tunkia Chiefdom in Kenema District

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