



From  
the People of Japan

## Household methodologies for results and impact in IFAD-supported programmes and projects

Household methodologies are an exciting innovation in the development sector. They shift the chief focus of an intervention from an attention on things - assets, infrastructure, value chains - to an emphasis on people: who they want to be and what they want to do. These methodologies 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.

IFAD is one of the leading agencies innovating with household methodologies to enable more effective reach among poor households and to improve intra-household gender relations. The overall purpose of such methodologies is to create stronger, more resilient, sustainable smallholder farming systems by achieving greater gender equality at the household level.

### Why use household methodologies?

Household methodologies build on a growing consensus in the development community that it is not possible to talk of a 'unitary household' with a single goal in many parts of the world. 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 enterprise; often have to pass an important share of their income to their partners; and usually work for their husband's enterprise as well their own. In many cases, women cannot take key farming decisions in their husband's absence, or the man assumes he should receive training even if he is not the lead farmer.

Inequalities in gender relations at the household level have a direct impact upon agricultural production and productivity, and on other desirable development outcomes, such as education, food security and nutrition.

Many efforts to support the empowerment of women fail to address their role and status within the home. Much work has been done to strengthen women's decision-making capacities within groups and organizations, but women still often lack a voice in determining household priorities and spending patterns, securing food security and schooling for their children, and addressing their own health-care needs. Are women really empowered if they belong to a successful income-generating group, yet are unable to make key decisions about how the money they earn is used in the home?



The **International Year of Family Farming** is an opportunity to reaffirm the global importance of smallholder family farmers as producers of food, caretakers of land and natural resources, and contributors to rural economic activity.

However, unlocking the potential of family farming requires more than ensuring smallholders' access to productive inputs and technologies, natural resources and land, financial services, and an enabling policy environment. We also need to look within the family.

Intra-household dynamics are crucial to the productive and long-term success of family farming. Farming families usually share the same living space, eat from the same pot and rely on the family to undertake most of the work.

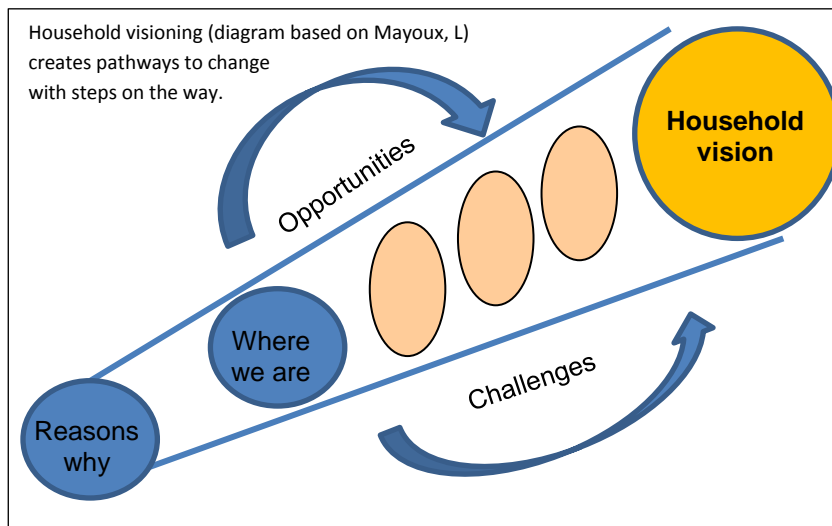
Yet there is often a disconnect between the workloads of family members, their voice in decision-making and their share in the benefits. In some parts of the world, men and women within a household even pursue separate livelihood strategies, with women typically disadvantaged in terms of access to resources, services and markets, and burdened by more onerous daily tasks.

Consequently, what happens inside the family has substantial implications not only for individual motivation and well-being, but also for the productivity and investments of smallholder family farmers. It is essential to consider the family dimensions if this International Year is to generate a commitment to developing the full potential of family farms.

## How do household methodologies work?

Household methodologies work on gender relations within the ‘black box’ of the household. They bundle the disparate livelihood strategies pursued separately by women and men (her plot, his plot, etc.) into one coherent strategy. The creation of a ‘family vision’ by adults and children enables the family to conceptualize and work towards shared, time-bound goals they believe in.

The visioning process lies at the heart of household methodologies. Key questions include: Where do we want to be in two or three years’ time? Where are we now and why? What strengths and opportunities can we build on? What challenges and obstacles may we encounter, and how can we overcome them? Creating pathways to change with steps on the way (see box at right) is a central element – both to ensure that the change process is realistic and to act as a monitoring tool, thus allowing for adjustments to be made if needed.



Household methodologies may be facilitated in various ways. The principal routes are through either individual home visits by a trained mentor or extension worker, or initial skills development at the group level with replication at the household level, supported by peer group members and trained facilitators.

### Benefits of household methodologies

**Rural finance:** help household members understand impacts of decision-making on financial well-being of household; facilitate discussions about risk assessment and mitigation.

**Producer organizations:** ensure that organizational goals are inclusive, address issues of power and gender, and strengthen mechanisms for dialogue.

**Land:** support sustainable land use and equitable access to land by different household members.

**Natural resource management:** improve decision-making on use and management of natural resources at the community and household levels.

**Youth:** strengthen household support for youth-led enterprises and assist with mobilizing required resources.

There are many entry points for implementing household methodologies, including groups formed for savings and credit, natural resource management, income-generating activities or value chain development, as well as farmer field schools. These groups provide a forum in which members of different households may develop visioning skills. The visioning, action planning and implementation process can also contribute to group performance.

Achieving significant and sustainable transformation within a household also requires engagement with the broader community. Support from traditional and religious leaders, and engagement with men’s groups, are critical to creating an enabling environment for behaviour change.

## How do household methodologies address gender inequalities?

Few household methodologies talk explicitly about ‘gender relations’ because it simply isn’t necessary. As part of the change process, people realise that gender inequalities – in terms of workload, access to resources and services, voice in decision-making, and control over benefits – are often part and parcel of the reason they stay poor. It becomes clear that male-dominated decision-making can lead directly to poor agricultural production and productivity, and is often ineffective for the overall well-being of the household. Critically, household methodologies do not seek to empower women at the seeming expense of men. During the process of planning a household livelihood strategy, all household members come to realize that working together – including identifying and addressing gender inequalities – is part of the solution and benefits everyone.

## Where have they been used and what have they achieved?

Household methodologies are being implemented across various regions by governments, development agencies (including IFAD) and NGOs. The experiences of IFAD-supported programmes in Malawi, Sierra Leone and Uganda, and an IFAD grant-supported project led by Oxfam Novib in Uganda, Rwanda and Nigeria, demonstrate that these methodologies can contribute significantly to development objectives, including gender equality.

Such transformational approaches to development show that cultural norms that have existed for generations can be changed within one or two years, simply because the benefits of collaboration come so rapidly. There is more understanding and respect among household members. Decision-making on household income and expenditures becomes more transparent, and women exercise more influence in setting priorities for the use of household resources. Women have a much wider range of items they can buy, independent of their husbands, including land and mobile phones. Men start to take on domestic and caring tasks and share work on the land, thus freeing up women's time and securing many personal benefits for themselves, such as more positive relationships with their children.

As a result, participants in IFAD operations using household methodologies report that their livelihoods are now more sustainable and resilient. Farm productivity has increased, along with food security and incomes. Individuals are happier with themselves and with other household members. More girls and boys attend school. And as an indicator of profound behaviour change, the incidence of gender-based violence, such as wife beating, has fallen.

Experience shows that any type of household – male-headed, female-headed or polygamous – can benefit from the visioning, action planning and implementation process. However, some may start from a weaker physical and social asset base, which can limit their ability to progress rapidly and may require additional support.

This tool is proving very powerful in identifying and addressing gender and inter-generational inequalities, as well as health-related issues such as HIV/AIDS, by generating changes from within the household, rather than imposing them from without. It is also a methodology which can be used to promote the social inclusion of households that are often beyond the reach of conventional development initiatives.

## Voices from the field

### Household mentoring to address gender inequality and HIV/AIDS in Malawi

Working through the Agricultural Extension Development Officers of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, household mentoring has been piloted at three irrigation schemes under the IFAD/WORLD Bank-supported Irrigation and Rural Livelihoods Project. 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 already been replicated in the Agricultural Irrigation Support Project by African Development Bank.

*It was a taboo for men to carry a hoe. Women carried the two hoes – the husband's and hers – and from the farm she also carried water, while the man walked freely carrying nothing. Once at home, the man would wait for food, while the woman will rush to the kitchen to begin preparing food. Our husbands now carry hoes, can fetch water and cook. This is a change for the better, and I am no longer burdened. Planning together has made us more united, and my relationship with my husband is very good.*

Abigaël, wife in male-headed household

*I have seen big changes in our household - given our past and current life. We have BIG things happening! I am a happy man. Initially I was wasting money but with this programme I am clearer. Now we plan, budget together and implement our vision and goals. I am a changed man, I share care work with my wife such as drawing water and taking care of our children.*

Hamton Mdala, male head of household

### Household mentoring to promote social inclusion 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. The success of household mentoring has been recognised not only by the Ministry of Local Government, which is planning to introduce household mentoring in district services, but also by the Government of Uganda, which recently urged IFAD to give greater priority to this approach in the country portfolio.

*Since I joined this programme, I am confident and can now talk in public. I have joined a saving group and started running a grocery shop. My vision is to finish my house; before, I had a grass-thatched house. My main sources of income are from crop farming and small livestock. In the past I sold all my produce without planning, and most of the time my family had no food. Now we have enough for the family to eat.*

Kusaiima Scovia, female head of household

### Gender Action Learning Systems for value chain development

Building on a successful pilot project in Uganda, Oxfam Novib and IFAD extended their collaboration on the community-led Gender Action Learning System (GALS) for market/value chain development – a household methodology aimed at pro-poor wealth creation and gender justice. Since January 2012, Oxfam Novib has worked with 10 civil society partner organizations in northern Uganda, Rwanda and Nigeria to adapt GALS in their local contexts, addressing financial services, farmer training, business development services and market linkages for cereals, pulses, fruits, cocoa and vegetables. The objective is for potentially vulnerable women and men to develop the necessary skills through peer capacity building and action learning. In turn, they can negotiate a better position in value chains and achieve sustainable, equitable, ‘win-win’ collaboration with other stakeholders.



A young couple in Rwanda sharing their GALS vision journey © BAIR

In addition to smallholder farmers gaining the capacity to engage constructively with traders, buyers, input dealers and processors, buyers also see the benefits of farmer groups using GALS. The groups share a common vision, they know what they want and they are better organised, which means that doing business with them is more efficient and reliable.

### GALS for group strengthening in Sierra Leone

to mainstream gender into the project’s inland valley swamp development activities. GALS activities included conducting a gender analysis of resources, income and behaviours; preparing vision journeys; mapping family and societal power relations; and training of community facilitators for peer sharing.

At the group level, women are now participating more actively in meetings, giving their own opinions on issues being discussed, and men are increasingly listening to women and supporting their ideas. The process of producing group vision journeys has opened up spaces for negotiation regarding group structures, which are largely male-dominated, and issues of workloads, access to group resources and information about meetings for women. More women and the youth are joining the groups and advocating for change.

### Further details

For further details about household methodology experiences **contact the gender team in the IFAD Policy and Technical Advisory Division: [gender@ifad.org](mailto:gender@ifad.org)**

Also see: <http://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Value-chains-and-the-rural-economy-making-it-work-for-women-and-men.html>