

Project: Improvement of Food and Nutrition Security in Kenema and Pujehun District (Sierra Leone)

A study of the impact of the Gender Model Family approach on food and nutrition security

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1. Introduction

This document presents a summary of qualitative ‘baseline’ action-learning research on the impact of the Gender Model Family approach on women empowerment and the effects on enhanced outcomes along the agriculture-nutrition pathway. The research is conducted in the context of the project Linking Agriculture, Natural Resource Management and Nutrition + WASH / LANN+¹ (SLE 1056) - an integrated food security and nutrition project implemented by SEND Sierra Leone and Agro Forestry Farmers Association (AFFA) in rural Kenema and Pujehun Districts in south-east Sierra Leone with funds from BMZ and Karma Cola through WHH. The qualitative baseline was carried out in late February and Early March, 2019 and complements a quantitative baseline carried out in March/April, 2018.

Welthungerhilfe is a German non-governmental organization with the overall mandate to eradicate global hunger and improve food and nutrition security for vulnerable rural communities. Welthungerhilfe has been operating in Sierra Leone since 2004, and its main operational areas include Kenema, Kailahun and Kono districts, as well as Bombali, Bonthe and Western area urban. Welthungerhilfe implements projects in agriculture, nutrition, WASH, health, skills development, and renewable energy. LANN+ is a global flagship approach of Welthungerhilfe (originally conceptualized in 2009 by Welthungerhilfe and consortium partners) and is implemented both in Asia and Africa. LANN has been implemented in Sierra Leone since 2013, and the approach is currently used in 4 projects.

SEND Sierra Leone is a strategic partner of Welthungerhilfe. SEND is a national non-governmental organization in Sierra Leone with a vision to contribute to a Sierra Leone where people’s rights and well-being are guaranteed. It is part of a West African structure with a headquarters in Ghana and offices in Liberia and Sierra Leone where approaches and experiences are shared. SEND Sierra Leone is an independent structure, a local NGO registered in Sierra Leone, which has its own project portfolio and budget separate from Ghana.

¹ LANN+ means Linking Agriculture, Natural Resource Management and Nutrition plus WASH

SEND's portfolio includes community development, WaSH, health, nutrition/agriculture and women's empowerment. Intervention areas in Sierra Leone are in the districts of Kailahun, Kenema, Kono, Western Areas Urban, and Rural districts and more recently, the district of Bonthe.

The organization has a strong background in gender transformative interventions, including women's political and economic empowerment. SEND pioneered the Gender Model Family (GMF) in the Northern part of Ghana, and scaled up in Sierra Leone where it has been successfully tested and the first GMF manual developed.

SEND and WHH have jointly used the Gender Model Family approach in several nutrition-sensitive projects in Sierra Leone in recent years.

[About the Gender Model Family Approach:](#)

A Gender Model Family is made up of a family that wants to be a model for change and transformation in society by challenging traditional notions of gender roles and responsibilities. It proposes that the family is the basic unit for social transformation and if communities have to be transformed culturally and traditionally, it must start from the family. It assumes that each member of the family has equal rights and thus is entitled to opportunities for empowerment. Both men and women together can take control and improve their lives and neither the man nor the woman exerts power over the other, but that they make decisions together, and share resources and their benefits. Anyone in the family can help out with cooking and cleaning, running a business or making financial decisions or deciding how to mobilize resources to support joint efforts. Everyone in the family should have access to and control of resources, including education, which will help them to improve how they make decisions and direct their lives. And that when it is implemented successfully in a community it transforms the families and the communities for inclusive growth and development.

Expected benefits of being a GMF include:

- The burden of work for women and girls is reduced because men and boys are sharing tasks
- Men and women experience a greater capacity to earn money because they have pooled their resources and are sharing the work.
- GMFs are better off financially
- Peaceful co-existence – family tensions are reduced because of a new and positive start
- Women's self-esteem has increased because women and their roles are valued in the family and community
- GMFs are admired and respected by community members because they have proven that families can experience peace and unity

- Better parenting for all children; both girls and boys are in school

The GMF concept is implemented through five steps: prior to the introduction of the concept, community stakeholders are prepared for the GMF concept. Meetings are held with community stakeholders where the concept will be implemented. These stakeholders are educated on the concept and encouraged to support SEND staff to reach out to members of the community to share the concept with them. With the support of the community stakeholders, field staff organize community meetings where more people and families participate. In these meetings, gender education is used as the first step for people to understand gender and its effect on family and community development. By this, field staff include gender analysis exercises to enable them to understand the roles and responsibilities that men and women play in the family and who does more of the activities and the effect of that on the individual. These meetings are concluded with definition and benefits of gender model family. After this, men and women become aware that through the Gender Model Family it is possible to be fair and strengthen equality between men and women. The families are asked whether they want to enroll and be trained as Gender Model Families to resolve family and community challenges, learning to work together, and live in freedom to perform roles that are complementary and beneficial to each member in the family.

Step two involves the Recruitment and Registration of Gender Model Families. Families who volunteer after the sensitization meeting are registered, trained, supported, and monitored to learn and practice the concept. These are the criteria for selecting GMFs: married, resident in community, either the man or the woman, or both, should have been a participant in a gender sensitization training, husband and wife both agree that they will jointly volunteer, husband and wife are both willing to undergo training together, committed; ready to learn and change. After recruitment, it is explained to the couples that they are expected to recruit 3 other families as GMFs after the first year. These new families will attend monthly GMF meetings with them.

In step three, the first training for the GMFs is conducted: The main purpose of the first training is to have couples draw up their Action Plans for being GMFs. Husbands and wives should come to the training session together. Ensure that they sit together. Husbands should introduce their wives, and wives their husbands by telling about some of their favorite things, such as foods. This helps couples reflect on how well they know and love each other. In this training, the couples are trained on the daily activity profile, the triple roles of women (reproductive, productive and community management roles of women), access and control of resources, and the development of family action plans

Step four is the second training of GMFs: The main purpose of the second training is to follow up on the Action Plan and to discuss any problems and challenges they are having in meeting their commitment. Husbands and wives should come to the training session together. Couples discuss how to share work, share in control of resources and division making, family planning, parenting role and care for children, agriculture and business discussions, community management and leadership roles

The fifth step is where field staff of SEND participate in the monthly meetings organize by the GMFs in each family to discuss with the families and their children to track the progress made in implementing their action plans as part of the change processes.

The LANN+ approach

The project SLE1056 is based on the LANN+ approach which is a global flagship approach of Welthungerhilfe, which is an integrated approach to improving nutrition security for vulnerable rural households (with a special focus on women and young children). It centres on a participatory nutrition education approach with complementary activities in agriculture and WASH.

LANN+ is based on the following key elements:

- **Nutrition Education** (raising awareness of the principles and importance of nutrition, especially for women and children, as well as on improving the use of healthy food for dietary diversity, this is intending to capacitate people to make healthier choices and change their dietary patterns)
- **Nutrition-sensitive Agriculture** (based on nutrition awareness, supporting farmers to ‘grow what they eat’ to enable them to sustain healthier and more diverse diets from their own production)
- **Sustainable Natural Resource Management** (analysing broadly the environment and its food sources – e.g. farm land, rivers, forests – and taking measures to use and manage them sustainably to ensure diverse and sufficient food production from the natural environment in the long term)
- **Income and Market Linkages** (promotion of nutrition-sensitive value chains, savings schemes and other support income generation for farmers, to enable them to sustain healthier diets and prioritize other expenditures important for family nutrition security – e.g. health visits, household hygiene and sanitation)
- **WASH** (newly added to the LANN+ concept, was typically not part of the earlier LANN projects. However, the importance of WASH for nutrition security was realized and this aspect cannot be left out, especially considering the deplorable WASH situation in many of the LANN implementing countries)

The cross-cutting principles (approaches/lenses that should be applied throughout all the above elements/sectors) are:

- **Gender** (recognizing nutrition security cannot be achieved sustainably without addressing gender inequalities both in terms of access to/control of resources, cultural norms and barriers for behaviour change)
- **Community participation and empowerment** (the LANN+ is implemented through a participatory learning and action cycle, where communities are empowered through awareness creation – such as nutrition education – to analyse, prioritize and act on the problems affecting their nutrition security, and involved in participatory monitoring)
- **Rights-based approach** (wherever possible, LANN+ should empower communities to demand services from their governments, and support in advocacy activities addressing structural and policy issues negatively affecting nutrition security of beneficiary communities)

The LANN+ project SLE1056 is implemented by SEND, AFFA and WHH in 60 communities in Kenema and Pujehun Districts, targeting 1,800 direct beneficiaries (900 families).

The project has to main objectives:

- Agricultural production is diversified and increased to create a more diverse diet and enhanced income opportunities.
- Improved health status is achieved through the use of safe drinking water, improved sanitation and hygiene practices.

The project is implemented through various training and extension activities, expecting the following outputs:

1. The target group has improved availability and access to high quality foodstuffs through sustainable farming practices and improved management of natural resources
2. Extended knowledge and consumption of nutrient-rich foods, especially for women and their children, are applied
3. Women have opened up new sources of income through the processing of foodstuffs, integration into value chains and the marketing of agricultural/forest products.
4. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation has been improved and knowledge extended to hygiene practices
5. The technical and management capacities of the local partner organization are strengthened.

GMF in LANN+

In the implementation of the food and security project (LANN+)², SEND uses the GMF approach to mobilize and organize the target group for the further LANN+ approach. The GMF approach thus mobilizes households around the principles of gender equality and thematises (more equal) sharing of roles, responsibilities and decision-making in the household, and leverages the cooperation between husband and wife towards the further behaviour change process towards improved nutrition and hygiene/sanitation in the LANN+ approach.

One observable key feature is the unity the approach for enhancing extremely enhances in extremely rural households towards households' joint decision making and, eventually, community decision making for development. The approach is reported to be a useful tool in promoting gender transformation in many communities where SEND has intervened, especially in the eastern province of Sierra Leone. In the LANN+ project, two of four chiefdoms (Barri and Gaura Chiefdoms) are entirely new to the approach while the other two (Nomo and Tunkia Chiefdoms), have been exposed to the approach before. Only two communities in Tunkia are experiencing the approach for the first time.

As gender is one of the cross-cutting principles of the LANN+ approach, the GMF approach is a useful tool to ensure that gender is systematically addressed throughout the implementation as a fundamental underlying factor for malnutrition challenges.

Background of the research:

The ambition is to scale up the approach by documenting and sharing lessons learned for leveraging by other development partners for implementation. Until now, there has been no systematic effort to document the strengths and weaknesses of the approach, and to understand how it works, how it is adopted by the target group, and how it may enhance the adoption of and sustainability of a positive behaviour change process in regards to dietary practices, agricultural practices, care practices and hygiene/sanitation practices. However, qualitative data collection from other projects indicate a very positive reception by the beneficiaries as well as a strong impact on especially behaviour change related nutrition-sensitive indicators. From experience-sharing with other LANN projects in Sierra Leone, it is observed that projects using the GMF or household approach tend to be more successful in overcoming gender-related barriers to improving household nutrition, as compared to projects implementing through women groups. Quantitative data from other projects suggest a positive correlation between increased decision-making of women in the household and improved dietary diversity, but still, more evidence – also qualitative – is needed.

Therefore, Welthungerhilfe and SEND have embarked on a collaboration with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) in the Netherlands to support an action learning over the lifespan of the GMF-LANN+ intervention. The aim is to generate documented lessons learned to both adjust the approach, if needed, and to promote its integration into other LANN+ project and support its adaption to other development contexts elsewhere in the world.

About the report:

This report is the first of planned qualitative surveys of the GMF approach in LANN+.

The report provides a brief overview of the methodology and then focuses on the key findings.

First, the enquiry sought the motivations of respondents with an objective of understanding who the GMFs are, and why they want to be GMFs.

Second, we look at the that learning – what the participants have learned through the trainings and activities, and what learning they have applied in their households.

Third, captured changes are observed at two levels:

In GMF households with focus on such information as what the participants saw as changes in their households around food and nutrition behavioural changes; and observation [with specific focus] of major

changes between men and women around how household work is shared for husbands, wives and children, how production work (cash crops and other agricultural works) are handled, how decisions are made about income in the household, child care, and recognition of women's voice in the community.

And lastly, a **fourth** section captured the transfer of knowledge from originating GMFs to other families who emerged as GMFs as a result of knowledge cascaded from the former. The key objective here was to understand how GMFs imparted knowledge to other families they reached according to core concepts of gender-based divisions of labour (access/control over resources/ decision making, norms, etc.). Question around what means they used to share knowledge, which topics they shared easily and difficulty and which ones their families they reached were most interested in.

2. Methodology

This report is based on qualitative data collected by tools designed by KIT³ (in consultation with WHH and SEND) on how the GMF approach impacts food and nutrition security. As a whole, it complements the quantitative baseline of LANN+ (SLE 1056) carried out in March/April, 2018. The tools were designed to capture different gender dimensions of agriculture to nutrition pathways with an emphasis on understanding how the GMF approach may be contributing to food and nutrition security outcomes, linked outcomes related to women's empowerment. They have also been designed in a way to complement existing M&E so that data can be collected throughout the project implementation to ensure ongoing learning and facilitate project adaption.

Qualitative data was collected using interview guides for individual household members and focus group discussions designed by KIT. KIT also worked with the Welthungerhilfe and SEND team to pretest and refine them to the intervention area context. Data collection took place in late February and early March, 2019. The data was collected mainly by the M&E manager, the head of project and a field officer (all male, as there are no female team members at the moment).

Gender responsive research approaches were used. For FGDs, we separated men from women. We got the women to play raffles so that those who selected a key number (number 1, in this case) stayed for the interviews and those who selected the other number (number 2) had their husbands to stay. This was done to ensure the enumerators got different views from different households.

Interviewers kept mostly to the interview guidelines, giving respondents the space to elaborate on some response as they saw fit and encouraged every participant to give their individual opinion about the questions asked except in cases where they all kind of agreed on the same thing. However, interviewers

³ KIT is the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam

further encouraged individual respondents to talk about other people having different experiences (as participants in FGDs in Sierra Leone have a tendency of quickly seeking group consensus, which can limit the depth of discussion). This approach encouraged them to give in contradictory information to the group consensus but indeed, they would mainly be opening up on their own experiences – especially if facing challenges - in the individual key informant interviews

2.1. Sampling

We conducted a total of four focus groups (comprising a total 28 respondents) with Gender Model Family members. This included two focus groups with GMF women and two with GMF men. Respondents were sought from communities across all four intervention chiefdoms sampled as annexed. The sampling/selection criteria for these FGD participants hinged solely on their being direct or emerging project beneficiaries.

We also attempted to speak to Emerging GMFs. These are indirect beneficiaries, emerging later than the start of the project as a result of spill over effect of project messages and trainings from the direct beneficiaries (original GMFs). As per the project design's cascading model, each original GMF – initially mobilized by and trained directly by the project by either field staff or multipliers – is supposed to recruit and cascade messages on project themes to around 3,000 additional households which are then referred to as emerging GMF. However, at the time of the data collection – when the project implementation and hence the cascading to new community members was still at an early stage - there were few Emerging GMFs per community to constitute a valid sample size for an FGD.

As a result, amongst the 10 key informants, we spoke to a mixture of key informants from both GMFs and Emerging GMFs. Six were women (three Emerging GMFs and three GMFs) and four were men (two Emerging GMFs and two GMFs).

2.2. Lessons learnt from the approach to data collection

A number of key lessons were around participant engagement, note taking and post interview reflections.

Participant engagement: There appeared to be no problem with women participants opening up on issues to male interviewers. For example, there was not holding back around discussions on contraception or family planning. However, for further investigations during the project implementation, it is important to keep women interviewers for women respondents and focus groups in the future when and if at all possible.

Note taking: Note taking took much time given that an interviewer had to listen, then take notes and ask the next questions. It was only helpful that they could do short hands which was elaborated on when compiling the responses. One possible ease around this in the future would be to use audio recorders during

the interviews which can be transcribed later in the office. It will both shorten the duration of the interview and reduce the burden of writing down responses before proceeding with next questions.

Post interview reflections: Interviewers did not take reflection notes immediately after the interviews. The focus was on getting the target communities done with the available time and just after that, each team member followed up on some other pending activities. It is recommended in the future at the end of each day to compare the interesting things that popped up during the responses. It could even be used to capture excitement or disappointments of the respondents, body languages, etc. this, too, could be made easier with a separate note taker in attendance.

The survey tools were all generally user friendly and relevant. Some questions still seemed repetitive under different thematic areas to a point you get the same answer as before. Such repetitive question could be eliminated or rephrased in the future. Average response time for all FGDs was 129 minutes while interviews lasted on average 120 minutes. It is not certain if it will take less time in the future because that would depend on the length/depth of responses given by participants

2.3. Limitations

The qualitative data gathering had limitations in the number of emerging families that were planned for the FGD. The GMF approach starts off with few families in communities who in turn take the onus to spill newly acquired knowledge to other families who voluntarily opt to live lives of gender transformation as seen from the families an intervention may have started with.

As at the time of preparations for the qualitative data gathering, hopes were high that there would have been adequate Emerging GMFs in selected communities to be able to make the required sample size for FGDs. But there were few. Hence, only KIIs could be conducted with Emerging GMFs.

Additionally, other tools developed with KIT like the checklist and the subjective empowerment tools were so far not used, given the inadequate time and lean staff for the survey.

3. Becoming a GMF

3.1. Perceptions on why recruited as GMF

Wanting to know who the GMFs are – if there is anything that somehow sets them apart from the ‘average community member’ and influences their motivation – and if as such there was a ‘selection bias’ also affecting the target groups’ progress on gender and nutrition indicators - the project collected basic GMF profile data at the beginning of the project to shed light on some potential assumptions. The profile data focused on education level (could it be that GMFs were more educated than others – and maybe more likely

to already have been exposed to gender awareness raising to spark their interest?); relative wealth level through a self-ranking (would GMF tend to be better or worse off than the average – and how would that be linked to the cooperation in the household and to them perhaps seeing the approach as a way of solving their problems?); as well as level of conflict in the household prior to joining (do GMF opt to join to solve domestic problems or do they already experience less conflict whether due to better cooperation due to already ‘better’ gender relations in the household?). Statistically – although of course there may have been a reluctance of the GMF to accurately report on those issues - there was nothing immediately significant about the GMF target group, who were mainly (self)rated as average on those parameters.

In other WHH/SEND projects where the GMF approach has been used, recruitment of GMF has tended to be based on voluntary ‘signing up’ of households based on interest. This ensured a motivation and commitment from the involved households. However, later on when inputs were distributed to the GMF, other community members would raise issues over the fairness of the recruitment strategy as those who voluntarily joined the GMF scheme were not necessarily the most vulnerable. This led to some discussions about the profile of the households who would quickly voluntarily opt to become GMF, vis-à-vis typical vulnerability criteria otherwise normally used for identification of beneficiaries for similar types of projects.

In response to past challenges, recruitment in SLE1056 LANN project was guided by external criteria related to the project objectives (pregnant women, lactating mothers, under-five children in households). Previous projects did not restrict selection of GMFs by these criteria. So, the responses to why they wanted to become GMF varied from community to community and from communities who were entirely new to the approach. From KII, some communities emphasized food security as the key reason for their selection whilst while others focused on peace and unity in their families. A GMF key Informant in Naihun, Barri Chiefdom, said “I was qualified because I was pregnant at that time” while in a GMF FGD with husbands in Waiyehun Nomo chiefdom, one respondent noted that “becoming a GMF brings unity in the home”. No distinction among respondents’ social status – wealth level, level of domestic conflict, or other social influences – was observed as reason for their personal motivation to become GMFs – they rather felt they had been selected by the community and qualified by the project.

Since the husbands were ‘randomly’ selected as beneficiaries – due to external criteria for beneficiary selection applying to their wives – there is no reason to assume that the husbands stand out in any particular way from the ‘average community member’, e.g. being more confident than their average peer. Although some commented that other communities could find it ‘funny’ that they now see them engaged in household chores traditionally associated with women, it does not appear to be very widespread and resulting in negative peer pressure or reluctance of men to engage in behaviour change when it comes to changing gender dynamics towards more equal sharing of responsibilities and decision-making. Rather, the husbands

seem generally proud. Also, it seems that the gender model family principles are not perceived as extremely controversial in the community setting and people are openly embracing them. GMF wives' in Waiyehun Nomo chiefdom, agreed that "yes, since they [other community members who were not previously selected] admired and joined us, we believe we are role models."

3.2. Motivations for becoming a GMF

In a few communities where the concept was new, the GMF principles did not make sense to some non-GMF men. For example, some men couldn't imagine their fellow men taking on domestic chores for their wives in the name of a GMF concept. In other communities, however, the approach was generally admired among many. Key motivations included improved social cohesion within the household, often described as GMF husbands and wives making joint decision about resource mobilisation, child care, domestic chores, etc.

To both husbands and wives, they believe the approach will ensure they will become role models for the communities. This was particularly important for the husbands as it added value (status/recognition) to them in their communities. The recognition seems to be a motivating factor for their joining the project. However, it is also important to note that this also comes from sensitization by field staff. For example, the GMF are *told* by project staff after the recruitment that they are now role models. This in turn reinforces their own behaviour change process – being told they are now role models is taken by them as they must now 'watch themselves'. In communities where the GMF approach has been implemented before (or nearby), new GMF might indeed have seen that new GMF are role models (the approach has also by the project been observed to have a spill over effect with more new families wanting to join because of the benefits they see with original GMF from their 'new' lifestyle) One husband even mentioned that becoming a GMF makes him "a friend to my wife". Another respondent stated being mindful of avoiding open quarrels with spouse because s/he is (supposed to be) a role model.

4. GMF experiences of trainings

4.1. Perceptions on trainings

Generally, from the response of all the participants, everyone involved in one way or another – GMF, Multiplier of Emerging GMF – had been exposed to the same trainings. Hence, responding to the question "can you remember/describe what kind of trainings you have participated in so far?", there was on average

similar responses from the male and female FGDs and interviews which included GMF, nutritional and VSLA trainings. All FGD respondents replied to have taken part in theatre performances⁴.

The women in the KII responded to have taken part in the theatre performances while the men have been observers of the theatre performances. The theatre performance is done with community people/beneficiaries acting various roles in them.

Most of the key informant interviewees responded that they had attended trainings on GMF, Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA), nutrition and agricultural practices. One respondent, Mr. Ansumana Mansaray stated what he had learnt from the trainings was empowerment towards developing the family. GMF KII wife in Gboyama Gaura chiefdom, “I learnt that men should be helpful to their wives, I learnt about nutrition, agricultural practices and large-scale farming”.

4.2. Experiences of trainings

For both men and women, most participants in the FGDs and KIIs answered that they enjoyed GMF trainings most. At the time of data collection, the nutrition and hygiene/sanitation trainings (based on the participatory LANN+ modules) had not been rolled out systematically yet to the target groups, although basic messages on nutrition had been disseminated by both multipliers and field staff. It has been observed as well in other projects that the family cohesion which GMF approach aims to enhance is a major concern of the households – as domestic disputes are a very common source of frustration in their daily lives – hence, addressing gender relations in the household is meeting a major felt need of the target group. On the other hand, nutrition and hygiene/sanitation trainings typically start with a somewhat more abstract problem analysis for the target group to be able to understand, identify and recognize the problems (causes and effects) of malnutrition. This may be the basis for these respondents enjoying GMF training most, this is something that would have to be further followed up during project implementation. Least enjoyed were training on improved agricultural practices especially for men in Wayeihun, Nomo Chiefdom, since they already knew most the agricultural practices, although some farm management practices – e.g., methods of planting potato vines and constructing the ridges/beds – were recognised as new to them. A KII respondent from same community, Vandi Bockarie enjoyed the VSLA training least because, he said, “some of us used to create savings groups among ourselves”. There was no female response on what was least interesting: they did not just mention anything which they considered uninteresting.

⁴ The project uses community theatre activities to sensitize communities generally (be them project beneficiaries or not) on key project messages on health, nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, etc.

4.3. Key messages understood by participants from training

On the side of male respondents, much emphasis was placed on the importance of good and healthy nutrition for the beneficiaries like women and children. It is worth noting here that while organised nutrition trainings had not yet begun at this time [of the interviews], theatre activities had already been going on, sensitising communities about the project's focus on agriculture, nutrition and WASH.

For the women in the FGDs, key messages that were understood centred around decision making in the household. For example, they mentioned the need for their husbands to support them in caring for their households and jointly taking household decisions with them.

From the point of view of Key Informants, working together in the family and dividing labour among themselves, prevented conflicts among the household members were key messages. A GMF Key Informant husband in Niahun, Barri Chiefdom, particularly emphasised that “Joint decisions in everything in our households reduce conflict and fosters development”, while a Key Informant wife in Waiyehun, Nomo Chiefdom, opined that “When we work together, the workload reduces.”

It is worth highlighting that some of the key lessons from the trainings were surprising to respondents. For example, the FGD women in Waiyehun in Nomo seemed to be surprised by the GMF approach not because it is new to them, but because of the changes they experience in the support their husbands give them in their households. The men's perspective was different: those in Gboyama Gaura indicated that all the trainings were surprising while others thought of the sharing of tasks i.e. cooking and caring for the children to be surprising (as it is uncommon vis-à-vis traditional gender roles). This can be attributed to the newness of the approach in the Chiefdom as it is SEND's first time of intervening in Gaura Chiefdom with a GMF approach.

It seemed that there was more surprise amongst male GMF household members around the emphasis around equality of tasks in the household. Amongst male household members of GMFs, there was surprise expressed around the response of their non-GMF male counterparts in their communities who saw their fellow men “doing women's jobs”. There were reportedly just not expecting such transformation but, in any way, did not tease the “transformed men”. For the women it was least surprising, possibly because these were changes that they desired.

4.4. GMF cascading learnings: within households and to non GMF households

The GMF approach has been designed to promote spill over to other community members. The selected GMF family (selected based on criteria at the beginning of the project) is expected to reach out to between one and three other families (known as Emerging GMFs). At the time of this study, less emphasis was placed on investigating spill-over as the project was only in the first year of implementation. Nevertheless,

there were useful responses from this question to further understand how the cascading happens and how the GMF can be supported to reach out to e-GMF.

When asked about how GMF participants cascaded learnings, the responses were similar. Sharing of learnings happened through visits to the E-GMFs' homes and informally through discussions wherever and whenever the need arises. Also, the women in the FGD answered that when the "new" families show interest, they share their ideas with the interested families. Some of the key informants did not share any messages with the other families because they rather acted the messages out themselves first before starting to promote them to others. Some of the husbands responded that by proudly practicing the GMF principles, other families naturally copy. One man added that new GMFs emerge "by explaining to them the key messages and helping my wives so that they can see and learn from me".

For communities in Nomo Chiefdom where there had been previous exposure to the GMF approach/principles, two respondents from the KII replied "no" to cascading knowledge. One stated that they only share their experiences with other people given that they are all mostly GMF and one lady stated that she does not do it because other GMFs already do so. The differences in responding to the same question in a group and in private are clear here, with key informants opening up on what they actually don't do when asked privately.

In the interpretation of the project team, husbands are more used to being outspoken (than women) – both in the domestic sphere and in the community (although, of course, with individual differences) – which may affect how they engage in cascading of messages. Interestingly, for the men, leading a campaign on behalf of their wives – e.g. by convincing other men to help out their wives too in especially domestic chores – is new. As for the women, being outspoken and sharing new ideas in the community is new to them. For many, it has been an eye-opener as they never knew what they were missing, especially with regards to their husbands supporting them with household chores.

The messages conveyed varied from male to female GMFs respondents. In groups, the responses were unanimous: messages conveyed by GMFs were about the benefits of joint household works. On individual basis, however, men treating their [boy and girl] children equally and helping their wives was a message informant commonly stated as promoting. For some, key messages they shared were on the importance of being a GMF and "all the doing good things they have learned from GMF" according to a 50-year-old male respondent. One would assume the good things being, for instance, family cohesion they now enjoy as a result of the GMF approach.

From field observations, it appears that the cascading happens informally. For example, when they are visiting or talking to another household they share some key messages. GMF are also taking on roles in

mediating conflicts in other households. Further follow up is needed with the e-GMF to confirm how the cascading is happening and what specific messages are actually being shared. This would allow the project team to assess if the informal way of cascading is effective or if we need to support them in doing it more formally somehow.

On the surface, the overall picture suggests that transferring learning from original GMFs to emerging ones is taking place with little constraints. However, there are some instances of tension that need close follow up. For example, one female respondent, replied that she faces difficulties because people find it strange when husbands help their wives. This suggests that it is important to continue to strengthen male role models and solidarity between GMF men, [possibly] set up mentoring schemes between strong GMF (confident, not bothered by 'strangeness' or shyness) and e-GMFs. For women, there may also be need for more support to strengthen their confidence in sharing ideas in the community as being outspoken is newer to them.

5. Perceived changes in food and nutrition security and sanitation outcomes

Across all the FGDs, a noticeable improvement was reported in the production of various crops other than rice. Crops such as orange sweet potato and banana, which usually did not attract much attention are now grown and consumed on large scale.

Production and consumption of adequate and diversified locally available foods can be attributed to the fact that the LANN+ intervention is nutrition focused, has given a lot of sensitisation to target groups (both the wives and husbands within the household) about the availability and nutrient value of many foods around them and at the same time, supported with agricultural inputs (potato vines, banana and plantain suckers, beans seedlings). Women even added that they did not have to depend solely on rice any more.

From the KIIs, the responses focused on the inclusivity of family members in meal planning and consumption. Even children, a woman attested, can now eat their father's meat and fish and he (the father) would be supportive of sharing the food. A father expressed a similar sentiment of his encouragement of his children to eat enough fruits, meat and vegetables. These messages about joint meal planning and intra-household sharing of food are ever since included in the LANN+ modules – it is expected that with the GMF approach the adoption of these behaviours may be even stronger.

From KIIs, both women and men spoke supportively of their joint decisions in expanding either on existing farm lands for additional vegetable spaces or even establishing separate vegetable gardens to support with household food needs. In FGDs, however, men were seen to be leading in doing the physical labour on the expansion. The women agreed - for example, GMF wives in Gboyama Gaura chiefdom said their husbands

prepare special backyard gardens for them so that they can add leaves and vegetables to their meals with no constraints.

It is observed that from the KIIs, hygiene knowledge and practices were not solely coming from the project and that these are not new behaviours. Construction of plate racks and cloth lines have been previously advocated by other development actors, although sustainable behaviour change tends to be a major challenge. However, they are practicing what they can with their immediate resources: plate racks and cloth lines constructions are easier to do than construction of household latrines or protected water facilities, for instance. From FGDs, construction and cleaning of household hygiene facilities (dish racks) are common. A GMF husband FGD in Gboyama Gaura chiefdom said, “We are currently constructing plate racks and cloth lines to improve hygiene.”

6. Perceived changes in gender relations

6.1. Gender division of labour

Traditionally sharply drawn lines between men and women in terms of labour seems to be changing after the introduction of the GMF principles. The target respondents were asked various questions about the distribution of labour for reproductive and productive tasks.

Reproductive work: Around reproductive work, respondents were asked about the division of tasks around domestic chores including food gathering, cooking and distribution, fetching, taking care of their sanitation facilities, and taking care of children.

The men FGD stated that they assist wives by equally sharing the household activities. The women confirmed this by stating that men support them in the daily house chores especially when they are away, for example, to the clinic. In the KII husbands stated that the workload is shared and collectively done among the family members to reduce the burden for their wives. Both men and one woman showed that there is more equal share of work on the household now than before. By using a household chores checklist in future data collection, we would be in position to see how equal the division of labour is in targeted households as propagated by the GMF approach.

With regards to food preparation tasks, both women and men in the FGDs indicated that there is help from both sides in both gathering and preparation of food. There was evidence, too, that special nutritional attention is given to vulnerable groups in the household i.e. the pregnant women and children. This is important to enable the growth of children especially under five years and pregnant women who need more nutrients for the growth of the unborn child/children. One KII wife insinuated that everyone in the household helps to cook: “household duties are not fixed on one individual as before. My husband does the

cooking once in a while. The male children too”. Another woman indicated that even though her husband is old, he still helps her to take care of the younger children. One KII husband also replied that he helps his wife in the kitchen.

Other domestic chores such as fetching firewood and water for domestic consumption, which used to be predominantly championed by women were probed. Traditionally, the husband collects firewood from the bush and brings it to the farm house – from there, the woman will carry it to town - also children are typically involved in fetching firewood. According to many respondents, husbands are now increasingly helping to also carry the firewood to town. Some women and men in the FGDs replied that their husbands help them fetch water and firewood while others stated that they all do it together. In the KII, there was response from some of the interviewees who stated that they all do these chores together, while others did not respond to this question. “wood”, a group of husbands in Gboyama Gaura chiefdom added, “is fetched by the husband and the male children.”

With regards to sanitation tasks, few respondents indicated that they clean the house together, while other husbands stated that they do their laundering by themselves during the absence of their wives, which, according to observations of the project team, is not generally unusual in these types of communities, especially if the wife was absent for some reasons. One KII male respondent however claimed to be laundering his own and the children’s clothes even when the wife is around – which he had never done before in his life. This is seen as a change.

As a result of professed more joint responsibilities now in households, the men in the FGDs replied that they have more work to do compared to the women who now have a reduced workload. This was evident also for the men and women in the KII, whereby women’s workload had lessened relative to the men. From a husband group in Wayeihun Nomo Chiefdom, men reported to have been doing much in the past, concluding that they “have more work now.” As a result, the men in the FGDs indicated that their wives are happier and less sick, which has also contributed to more unity in the household. The women also stated that they become ill less frequently as a result of decrease in work load and that there is more unity among them. The men in the KII replied that their wives do not get exhausted and ill easily, while one woman replied that she can now concentrate on her business. It is important to note that the improved health of women could also be influenced by improved diets and better hygiene/sanitation practices, in addition to less exhaustion from high domestic and farm workload. Nevertheless, the fact that this is a perception of both male and female respondents is noteworthy – and overall a great impact.

Productive work: There is a different gender division of tasks for cash crop and food crop farming respectively, at the different stages of the entire process from land preparation to selling of harvest.

For cash crop farming, men are typically handling separate tasks – brushing of cash crop farms, harvesting and selling, for instance, while women lead in the areas of preparing nurseries, watering, processing [palm oil], etc.).

Hence, it was not surprising to see that views on changes in cash crop production and farming varied among GMF husbands and wives in key informant interviews.

Men maintained that they took the lead in cash crop production while their wives served in supportive roles related to cooking, field clearing, transplanting, watering the nursery, etc. This was in contrast to focus group discussions where it was regarded as joint work by both husbands and wives. This may be more related to the shared decision making as one key informant wife responded that their “farming activities are always debatable and we do agree on what to do and how to do it.” The physical work (most likely) remain divided, with the men doing the most part – brushing, felling, burning, sowing, harvesting, etc., and women contributing to transplanting, supporting harvesting and transportation. It is observed that men mostly do the tasks ‘back in the town’ related to drying and fermenting.

On the other hand, traditionally, the work around food crop farming is much divided. Men are typically responsible for land clearing and initial seeding/ploughing, while women do harrow, weeding and planting. For the rice farming, the system of ploughing (planting) has changed since the war and is now less time consuming (but this system leads to higher seed loss). This new system gives more work to women in the harrowing. A general perception is still that men do heavier farm work, although the women’s role is more persistently intensive around the year.

As for changes observed by the project participants - there is still a perception between both men and women, indicating that men lead and the woman supports. Men may take more decisions about issues like labour hire, however the women may be in charge for hiring labour for the tasks that they are responsible for. In FGD, the men reported that they prepare gardens for their wives and support them to do ‘petty things’, another group said all works in the home are done unanimously since accepting the GMF principles. Wives confirmed this as female key informant in Weyeihun Nomo Chiefdom added that they work side by side. “In fact, we go to the farm together and return together.”

Only one group reported to have had livestock (chicken) as at the time of survey, which, children took care of. Similar views came from interviews but one man added that his wife took the lead in taking care of their chicken. At the time of the data collection, the project’s animal rearing activities had not yet been initiated.

In contrast, tasks related to business activities are jointly done by both women and men and in some places, children are directly involved in household businesses (hawking, minding shop while mother is busy – from

observation). In some homes, however, the pattern is women leading in trade, while husbands provided supervisory roles over their wives. The trend is similar among E-GMFs.

6.2. Access to resources and decision making

Decision making in GMF and some E-GMF households are taken unanimously for many of these activities. In two E-GMF households, however, the respondents only partially consider their wives' views in taking household decisions. It seems that the GMF are moving towards more shared decision making in business. This is reinforced when you compare e-GMF to GMF. GMF husbands confirmed that "In our homes now, we discuss and agree in terms of decisions."

Decisions on agricultural and other resources

Decisions about growing nutritious crops are taken mostly by both husbands and wives. In few cases, even the children are part of the decisions. Among the GMFs, however, several pointed out that their wives lead in deciding which nutritious crops to grow. This may not reflect much of a change, as traditionally men are in charge of rice and cash crops, whereas women are in charge of groundnuts, benni (sesame), beans, and vegetables.

Decision about sales of cash crops rests mainly with both husbands and wives. Whilst there are some differences, there appears to be a general move towards more joint decision making. This was clear in the FGDs. Even though responses from Nomo Chiefdom indicate male leadership because of their "understanding" marketing prices, they, however, discuss and agree with their wives before they sell. From the KIIs, there were similar sentiments of some men leading on the sales of cash crops because they care more for (do more of) the production and maintenance of their cash crop plantations. Others jointly decide with their wives before sales. These views were endorsed by female interviewees and extended to even E-GMFs.

For sales of food crops also, husbands unanimously agreed that their wives took the lead in deciding: "the women also sell vegetables, so they decide and support us in the end." For the women focus groups, enumerator recorded no response. In interviews, both husbands and wives said they make decisions together to avoid confusions while others endorsed their wives' leadership in deciding this. For E-GMFs, on the other hand, all husbands shifted the decision over sales of food crops to their wives whereas for the wives, some have joint decision and some decided by themselves.

This may not be entirely new. Traditionally the man manages and decides over the rice harvest, the woman over other crops. However, the men may still influence what happens with the crops grown by women. What we heard before in previous projects – in regards to why households are commonly selling their nutritious crops instead of consuming them – women would say that because men are not giving them chop

money, or money for other household expenditures, they are forced to sell those crops. However, the man would also commonly ask the wife to take crops from her garden and give them to friends/relatives, meaning the wife may not have full power over 'her' food crops.

If the wife thus has the overall responsibility for food crops (on the surface, at least), it does therefore not necessarily mean something positive for the management of food and other resources. Considerations for programming: What should then rather be recommended is the joint planning of both consumption and selling of food crops, based on an overall joint household resource management. This has also been promoted in past LANN projects.

When the discussion zoomed in on decisions about food consumption, husbands unanimously agreed that their wives took the lead in deciding what food (and in what quantity) to prepare for their households' consumption. Women did not comment on this. In KIIs however, the women had mixed answers. Some took joint decisions with their husbands while others took the decisions solely. For husband interviewees, most let their wives take the lead on this. Similar responses were provided from the E-GMFs as well, whose men gave the food consumption decision to their wives. This (men leaving food consumption decision solely in their wives' hands) poses on the opposite side of tradition. Usually, a man provides the rice and 'chop money'⁵ for other ingredients and tells the wife which dish to cook for the day.

The issue of child nutrition was also discussed. In the FGDs, both women and men agreed about their children having nutritious foods that made them healthy. The women are especially happy that their husbands now pay more attention to their children. Most male GMF key informants agreed on taking responsibility of providing nutritious food for their children by ensuring adequate and diverse food crop cultivation for their households since the LANN+ project started. The wives expressed their happiness again about this. The E-GMFs have full knowledge on food and nutrition and most husbands agree that they eat nutritious foods together with their children. The wives look forward to learning about nutrition in detail because only basic nutrition sensitisations have been done through drama to popularise the project's focus.

Although the project promotes livestock rearing, it must be noted that regular consumption of livestock is not very common – even chicken is mainly consumed for special occasions (or in times of scarcity). In homes where there were livestock, husbands and wives made joint decision about their consumption and sales. For the E-GMFs key informants, there were mixed responses: wives took the lead in some places, while joint decisions applied in other places. In Barri Chiefdom, however, a male respondent differentiated between decisions made depending on the category of livestock. He said he took lead on matters relating to cattle (sheep, goat, cow, etc.) while his wife took control of chicken. This view did not follow a similar

⁵ "Chop money" is the common reference to money used for condiments or generally, food in households.

pattern in other group discussions possibly because most responded that they did not have livestock at the time of the interviews.

Decisions on care and health

On the issue of family planning, almost all E-GMFs responded they have not started family planning yet. FGD respondents however felt that if they were to have the discussion on family planning at a later point, it would be based upon joint decisions between husbands and wives. The wives responded that they learn more about it from the nurses in the clinics, feedback their learning to their husbands and then they decide together if the need arises. From the KIIs, joint decisions still come in, even though for some of the wives' respondents, family planning has not been practiced yet.

A woman did state that even if the husband did not agree, she would still opt to go for family planning. This is in line with observations from previous projects, where the starting point is that a good number of women do go for family planning without their husbands' knowledge. So, it marks a positive change if GMF women feel they would be able to freely have the discussion with their husbands and make decisions together.

Decision-making around children's education matters was also discussed. According to both wives and husbands in GMF focus groups, husbands take the lead in terms of their children's education irrespective of the sex of the child. From the KIIs, reasons for men's leadership on their children's education emerged to be that the children fear their fathers and (as one respondent put it) "play a lot with their mothers". Around homework, it is mostly constrained by limited literacy among families, while school charges remained the responsibility of both husbands and wives. It should be noted that taking the lead in education does not refer to deciding whether or not the child should go to school – but rather to ensuring that they do follow up on the children's homework, etc. A key informant in Giebu, Tunkia Chiefdom said "I support my wife to take [walk] the younger child to school."

Responses to two healthcare questions around going for health services and paying health bills showed that according to GMF husbands' focus groups, it is sometimes a joint decision. Women did not comment. Among key informants, however, both women and men claimed joint leadership in taking care of their children's health needs

In some cases, they agreed to be taking joint responsibility. For E-GMFs' key informants, it seemed that there is more cooperation between husbands and wives than GMF key informants. The E-GMFs stated to be visiting and taking care of the health charges together.

Traditionally, the woman – as being the primary caregiver – would be responsible to take the child to the clinic, but could however not do so without her husband's permission. Now, as has been stated above, husbands are taking greater interest in child care including observing their health and food consumption.

GMF wife FGD in Gboyama Gaura Chiefdom, came out strongly that their husbands “feed the children when we are busy.”

One male interviewee expressed his experience with a more respectful approach of the nurses when he accompanies his wife to the health centre. It is a common feedback from community members that rural health staff can be rude and insulting, which is a deterrent for regular health seeking behaviours. While it is of course positive if nurses are encouraging husbands to continue accompanying wives to clinics, the nurses should be reminded to also treat unaccompanied women with equal respect.

Decisions about hygiene/sanitation

Decisions about having household sanitation facilities (especially latrine) were said to be taken together by both husbands and wives even though latrines are far inadequate as at the time of the interviews. Even though, in FGDs, emphasis was placed on women’s request for latrines, because, according to responses from a GMF husband FGD in Waiyehun Nomo Chiefdom, “women ... feel shy to use the open”. From other projects we have also heard concerns about women risking assault if they go too far into the bush for defecation – however not sure to what extent this happens often.

Key informants clarified in Nomo and Gaura Chiefdoms that the decisions to have household latrines rested with the husbands’ approval. It was not clear why but it could be reasoned that this is mainly because husbands put in the money and or labour for the construction of household latrines as GMF husbands put it in Wayiehun, Nomo Chiefdom, that “we the men also see the need and support”. This is further emphasized by key informants among E-GMF husbands as well.

Experience from other projects also indicate the necessity of latrines mainly being constructed once men start seeing and experiencing the need. In a former LANN project, implemented both in Kenema district and Tonkolili district in the North, Tonkolili households were much more vigorous constructing and maintaining local latrines. Here, it was hypothesized that (besides the climate in the north being somewhat dryer and hence local materials being more durable) the cash crop farming men in Kenema spend much of their time on their farm, and do not pay much attention to the needs of their ‘shy wives’ back in the town. Whereas in the less forested Tonkolili men are also spending more time in town and thus also see the need for a proper latrine for privacy and convenience (the hygiene/sanitation arguments often not being first in convincing people).

In general, a pattern of joint decision making seems to have emerged in families since the GMF trainings. Women even boasted of keeping safe their earnings from any source (keeping it for themselves, without handing it over to husbands). This indicates a positive move towards increased influence and in the longer-term self-sufficiency of women. All FGDs conducted had the mention of consultative planning and

spending on every one of the above topics across all the chiefdoms. KIIs were almost same except for male respondents in Dambala, Nomo Chiefdom, who attested to taking sole control of the income they generate for their households.

7. Gender norms

This section includes any observations about changes in gender norms which refers to the social rules about what women and men can/cannot do, what decisions they can/cannot make, and rules about women's ability to speak up.

7.1. Changes in norms around men's involvement in domestic tasks

Overall it would appear that there has been a change in social rules about men engaging more in domestic house work. When it comes to child care (both feeding and clothing), it seems that is now more acceptable for husbands to be involved since the GMF trainings. From KIIs, both male and female respondents reported that the husbands are more involved in bathing and clothing the children and attending to children while the mothers are busy. To some of them, this did not seem to be something newly coming in from the GMF principles. One woman even said her "husband loves children and before becoming GMF, he has been taking care/helping to take care of them". For E-GMFs, childcare is generally done by both husbands and wives. It must be noted that in the Sierra Leonean contexts, men are not as shy of tending to children as can maybe be observed on other contexts – for example, bathing young children and carrying babies is not uncommon also in non-GMF contexts.

One major observable difference was in changed norms about women speaking up. Women's voice has positively increased among their communities. Many women reported that since joining the project they felt more able to attend public meetings and it seems there are no hesitations now to speak out on issues of their households and communities.

The data collection as well tried to capture if the women's confidence is increasing. Although respondents did not explicitly label it as *confidence*, there are other indications such as women feeling more able to share in their opinions in their households since their becoming GMFs. It could be likened to the continuous reference to joint household decision in which women's contributions (in terms of their ideas, recommendations, etc.) being recognised, their participation at public forums (which one woman mentioned in an FGD in Wayeihun, Nomo Chiefdom), and their being consulted by non-GMF community members to settle conflicts in their households. Both FGDs and KIIs returned the same response and expressed this as a very positive change. The future data collection will continue to focus on whether and how women's confidence may be increasing, how that affects their conduct in the household and community, and the impact this has.

This, in part, has been inspired by the GMF trainings, which encourage the needed space to be given to women in their households to voice out their concerns. Consequently, by upholding such values for over a year at the household level also inspires women's boldness in some other forums. Their representation in the public space is even recognized at chieftom authority level as observed in a GMF wife's FGD. One female respondent added that "we are not as strong as men but our voices are now heard to certain extent and they do listen to us". GMF wives in Waiyehun, Nomo Chieftom, "Yes. [One of us] represented the community recently in a chieftom meeting and this has not been happening before. We have voice and our voices are recognised."

It must be noted that a similar effect has been observed in previous LANN projects where existing women groups were targeted, rather than using the GMF approach. Here, it was as well their involvement in the participatory training activities – where they were encouraged to discuss, perform and present in front of others - and the strengthening of (female) group cohesion that inspired their confidence in other forums.

8. Impacts and unintended consequences

Impacts of changes in household practices as well as unintended consequences (both positive and negative) emerging from involvement in the GMF approach were also probed.

8.1. Positive consequences

For **women there were noticeable and appreciated benefits** such as reduced workload as men take on more tasks. It was observed that wives don't wait any more until their husbands come home before they can take responsibility of certain actions in their households. From KIIs, respondents attested to better household decisions now with women's involvement and added respect to the outspokenness of women in their communities. Even the E-GMFs endorsed these views.

There were marked improvements in **children's wellbeing**. The impact of all these gender principle changes on them takes similar trend among all respondents (from GMF to E-GMF and both FGDs and KIIs). The indication is that children are much happily responding to the closeness they now feel with their fathers since the introduction of the GMF principles. Wives from Gboyama, Gaura Chieftom, said "They [their children] feel happy, very happy than before."

There were also marked improvements in **social cohesion in the household**. On the whole, positive impacts resulting from changes in decision making range from peace, respect, love, unity, etc., to reasonable, joint resource mobilization and spending drives. Similar response ran across all FGDs and interviews for both GMFs and E-GMFs in all chiefdoms.

Another positive impact was the involvement of GMF families in **community leadership roles**. People generally perceived themselves to be more active than before in ‘community leadership’ roles, although in some instances it may be the case that the GMF were already in those roles before – but here it is about their own perception – either way it is part of their motivation and it gives them confidence for sharing messages as a further boost.

Roles played in community as GMF varied from consultation with household matters to community representation in other areas such as community sanitation drive, or, for instance, a GMF being part of the group “who created the EcoCamp for tourists”⁶ in Niahun, Barri Chiefdom, or a GMF wife being “a chairlady and VSLA key custodian in our midst” in Waiyehun Nomo chiefdom, or another who is now [as GMF Chairlady] regularly consulted to advise other women on household matters. For the eco-camp building, however, interviewers observed the respondent could have been part of the arrangement without being a gender role model.

From the FGDs, both men and women assume responsibilities on key community needs such as cleaning and control of their VSLA schemes. Since hygiene awareness and resource mobilisation schemes are components of the LANN interventions using the GMF approach, one can conclude that it is as well the project in its broader sense that is giving certain people ‘special knowledge’ to share and has been a key contribution for GMFs’ taking responsible roles in the areas they mentioned.

For community leadership, evidence shows from the FGDs that men now hold community leadership positions – in Waiyehun, Nomo (“Yes, some of us are chairpersons, secretaries, and work committee heads in the village.”) – although it is not clear if these people would have held positions in any case also without participating in the project. However, that is not the case for women: the positions they mentioned were still just related to the project activities. In KIIs on the other hand, no female respondent manifested holding any community leadership role as a result of her being a GMF. The men, too, only mentioned project related titles. For the women the change in role (as of now) seems to be more on the personal/inter-household level e.g. being invited to advise other households on matters.

8.2. Negative consequences

FGDs hardly revealed any negative impacts of the GMF approach, nor much in terms of challenges. Responding to a question on their *observation of any unintended negative effects related to these changes in their households*, GMF husbands in Waiyehun Nomo Chiefdom, said “No. They (our wives) still regard us as their husbands. We take decisions together, we work together but they still give us respect and so,

⁶ The Karma Cola Foundation, who is a donor to this LANN+ project, as well support community development and eco-tourism in some Barri and Koya communities around the Tiwai Island (a wildlife sanctuary)

there is no negative effect”, while GMF wives in Gboyama Gaura chiefdom, “No. Our husbands are working with action plans developed from GMF training. They are willing and happy to support us.” The only expressed negative impact of changes in decision making was reported by men. For example, husbands reported not having the freedom any more to spend secretly on their personal desires. This came mainly from the men. Apart from that, all respondents have either not noticed/sensed it or there are just none at all. Or, they are hesitant to report on the challenges since they have this strong sense of having to be role models – so if there are still experiencing conflicts at home, they might fear of being seen as ‘unsuccessful’ GMFs and role models.

Some few instances of increased tension have been observed within the households. Not all GMFs were reporting they were being united, respectful and trusting each other with household decisions. One female respondent (*during the pre-testing of the tools*) did comment they still had conflicts in her home, but they would find ways to handle them quietly – as compared to before where their conflicts were very loud and often requiring mediation by the town chief or others.

8.3. Overall impressions

Highlights have been shed on the entire GMF principle. Although most findings were not new to the project team/facilitators, they found it interesting to observe how much also entirely new GMF (in areas where no similar project has worked before) have learned and to hear about the changes already happening in the households.

During the project team reflections, the following areas were of surprise and interest:

Enthusiasm of project target group: how readily people embrace the concept and that the approach has such a promising spill-over effect in the communities, making the GMF role models and advisers to others. The effect on the women’s confidence and outspokenness was also surprising and impressive to the project team.

The need to monitor unintended consequences: For the time being, no significant negative impacts were observed. However, as mentioned, it is important to observe how new types of conflicts may be played out at household level due to changes in dynamics, and encourage the GMF to not ‘hide’ conflicts but rather analyse them and support them in handling them.

There was a ‘side comment’ in one of the FGD, where a bystander said something along the lines of ‘there will come a time where the women will take over and be in the lead, overcoming the men and not allowing them to do what they want to do’. While this was not a concern of the actual target group, it is however relevant to observe over time if there is a general perception around the limitations of women’s empowerment.

The project team noted that with time, the approach should be careful not being too ‘one-sided’, meaning only looking at the way’s men should change and do things more/differently. In the beginning it makes sense to keep messages simple to tackle the very basic forms of gender inequality and address their impact on nutrition behaviours. The project GMF approach is promoting more of joint decision making and joint management of household income and other resources, rather than promoting women’s exclusive decision making over certain domains and independently controlled income for women. It might also be relevant at some point to address how the woman shares her own income with the husband.

Traditionally the husband is responsible to take care of everything in the household, which is also expected from the woman. If the woman has an independent income, she might spend some on the household and children, but also keep some aside to give back to her parents, leaving the bulk of household expenditures with the husband (who is, of course, both perceived as the breadwinner but also far more likely to have a higher income in absolute terms). Considering that households are not entirely isolated financial units, it is also worth observing how changes in income, decision making over income, and joint prioritization of household expenditures is affected by and affects the (gendered) obligations of husband and wife to others outside of the household.

Recognition of the need to understand power dynamics in polygamous households: The GMF approach is originally based on monogamous households, however in recent years in Sierra Leone it has been considering to open up to polygamous households (in the operational areas around 20-30% of households are polygamous, and in previous projects other households have also been complaining about being excluded from beneficiary selection because of being polygamous). In this LANN project, the approach was however as well to recruit monogamous households, but it turned out that because not enough monogamous households were fitting the criteria of having pregnant/lactating household members, some polygamous households ended up joining. The project is currently gaining an overview over how many of the beneficiary households are actually polygamous. Some tensions have been observed in the few households officially known to be polygamous, between the ‘official’ GMF wife and the other wife. In some instances, the official wife – who is mainly benefiting from the project activities (and the recognition) – has registered for the small business loan whereas it has in fact been another more business minded wife who was doing the actual business.

Importance of the project to the beneficiaries and whether the project objectives were in line with the project

Although the GMF trainings had been the emphasis at the time of data collection, the beneficiaries remain highly impressed with the GMF principles and the impacts they are having on their lifestyles. The target group highly appreciates the peace and unity it brings to their homes, and the increased cooperation also motivates them to make changes in food consumption, child care, etc.

8.4. Implications for programming

Recommendation is to follow up more on the e-GMF to understand how the cascading is being done and what key messages are actually being passed on. Then decide if the informal cascading is effective, or if strategies/support are needed to make sure it is done more systematically (if not more formally).

LANN+ has nutrition security as its main focus, and the project objectives and indicators centre on nutrition, not gender – however, it is recognized that gender is a major underlying factor for malnutrition and must be systematically addressed within the LANN+ modules and hence this researching focusing on how the GMF approach enhances outcomes in food and nutrition security. Nonetheless, the project needs to be mindful that project activities – like experience sharing, field monitoring, etc. – are maintaining focus, and avoid over-emphasizing a single component (e.g. the GMF trainings and their impacts), despite their immediate popularity with the target group, at the expense of capturing the linkages to integration with and other components of the project.

Whereas it appears that the GMF approach generally improved cooperation and harmony, we have to continue observing that domestic conflicts are not played out in subtler, but still harmful way. GMF should be encouraged to still talk openly about conflicts – maybe new types arise – and not be afraid to be seen as ‘GMF failures’ if they still quarrel with their spouses. It is interesting in itself to observe which conflicts of interest may become more visible (expressed through quarrels) in a situation where women do feel more component speaking up and influencing decision-making.

Joint resource management and decision-making should continuously be emphasized – rather than another division of tasks and responsibilities where the women may on the surface be given sole jurisdiction over a household domain, but ends up still being influenced by her husband’s decisions. However, there is also a need to look detailed into the accounts of joint decision making – when respondents are saying that all decisions are now made unanimously, is that 100% the case, where are the issues where husband and wife disagrees, and what happens when there is disagreement? That being said, from observations in previous projects, and from experience-sharing with other gender-sensitive projects, what people have often appreciated about the GMF approach is exactly its focus on household cooperation (as it articulates empowerment of the woman in a non-confrontational way) rather than an emphasis on the strengthening of women (through for example women focused activities) which is sometimes perceived negatively.

9. Next steps for follow up

Considerations for the next round of focused data collection – as well as for routine monitoring – include the following:

- At the time of data collection, change was mostly visible around husband's participation in domestic chores and more joint decision making. Since the food/nutrition and hygiene/sanitation trainings had at the time not been systematically rolled out, more changes are still expected in those areas. Next round of data collection will focus more on the changes around nutrition, and try to assess to what extent changes in gender dynamics are influencing their motivation and abilities to change behaviours in regards to food, agriculture, nutrition and hygiene/sanitation.
- Cascading: Further follow up is needed with the e-GMF to confirm how the cascading is happening and what specific messages are actually being shared. This would allow the project team to assess if the informal way of cascading is effective or if we need to support them in doing it more formally somehow.
- Food/nutrition behaviours: impacts of gender transformation on household decision making over food type, diversity, quantity and specification to meet the needs of specific members of the households will have to be observed in future data collection.
- Data collection and monitoring to continue to be sensitive to how household socio-economic factors may influence behaviour change (although the GMF profile data did not reveal any major tendencies in terms of wealth level and conflict, it would still be interesting to see from KIIs how this works)
- Further follow up of unintended consequences: On the surface, the overall picture suggests that transferring learning from original GMFs to emerging ones is taking place with little constraints. However, there are some instances of tension that need close follow up. For example, one female respondent, replied that she faces difficulties because people find it strange when husbands help their wives. This suggests that it is important to continue to strengthen male role models and solidarity between GMF men, [possibly] set up mentoring schemes between strong GMF and e-GMFs.
- Investigate further how many polygamous households are there, and how their participation in the project works. Further discussions on how to open up the approach to polygamous households – as up to a third of households in the target areas may belong to this category – and as there is also a vulnerability risk in polygamous households in terms of nutrition, as food is being used politically to attract the attention of or punish the husband (e.g. wives may still give husband better part of the food to gain his favour).
- Follow up on the roles in households: Future data collection will use the household chores checklist to quantify over time the shift in roles for male and female members of the households as concrete evidence of the transformation in terms of what men now do that they traditionally would not do.

Annex 1: Sampling plan

Frequency	Tool	Annex to use	Data from	Sample size	Who collects data	Objective
<p>Bi-annual annual</p> <p>Should be done prior to the participatory review meetings to see if issues come up that can be used to feed into the discussion topics for those review meetings</p>	FGD	Annex 1: Wife Annex 2: Husband	15 GMFs (per village)	6 GMF (3 women's groups and 3 men's groups)	WHH M&E Staff (Peter) Support from Mathilde (nutrition coordinator) and Santigie (HOP)	<p>Understand/measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Motivations for becoming GMF -Changes in gender relations- workload, decision making, especially in regards to agriculture and nutrition -Other positive/negative changes <p><i>Use to adjust training content, potential support activities to overcome constraints, boost especially successful activities, etc.</i></p>
<p>Bi-annual annual</p> <p>Should be done prior to the participatory review meetings to see if issues come up that can be used to feed into the discussion topics for those review meetings</p>	FGD	Annex 3: Em Wife Annex 4: Em Husband	45 emerging GMFs (per village)	6 GMF (3 women's groups and 3 men's groups)	WHH M&E Staff Support from Mathilde (nutrition coordinator) and Santigie (HOP)	<p>-see how cascading is working, if we can support more effective cascading strategies by GMF</p>

Bi-annually	KII	Annex 1: Wife Annex 2: Husband	15 GMFs (per village)	8 key informants (4 male 4 female)	WHH M&E Staff (Peter)	As for FGD but likely more info on challenges and barriers, better understanding of individual household features impacting on changes
Bi-annually	KII	Annex 3: Em Wife Annex 4: Em Husband	45 emerging GMFs (per village)	8 key informants (4 male 4 female)	WHH M&E Staff (Peter)	
Bi-Annually	Checklist	Annex 5: Household	15 GMFs (per village)	20 (GMF) x 6 field staff every six months	SEND field staff (fieldworkers)	To identify key issues to follow up on in FGDs and KII; to monitor unintended consequences
Bi-annually (ideally before the participatory review meetings, so they can also serve as input)	Subjective Empowerment	KIT_WHH Empowerment tool	15 GMFs (per village)	8 groups (4 men's groups & 4 women's groups 4-6 people per group)	WHH M&E Staff	(Participatory empowerment monitoring tool) To understand different and (changing) local visions and definitions of empowerment, Facilitate dialogue to make sure e.g. men and women are working towards the same goal of empowerment
Bi-annually	Participatory Community Review meetings	Standard guidelines & feedback from findings from use of KIT 's tools	Every beneficiary village (60)	GMFS, Multipliers, Me GMF and stakeholders	SEND Fields Staff	Reflection exercise with community, some input for M&E (present findings from subjective empowerment into these meetings)