

GENDER MODEL FAMILY APPROACH



SEND
SIERRA LEONE
Working to promote good governance and
equality of men and women in Sierra Leone



BACKGROUND

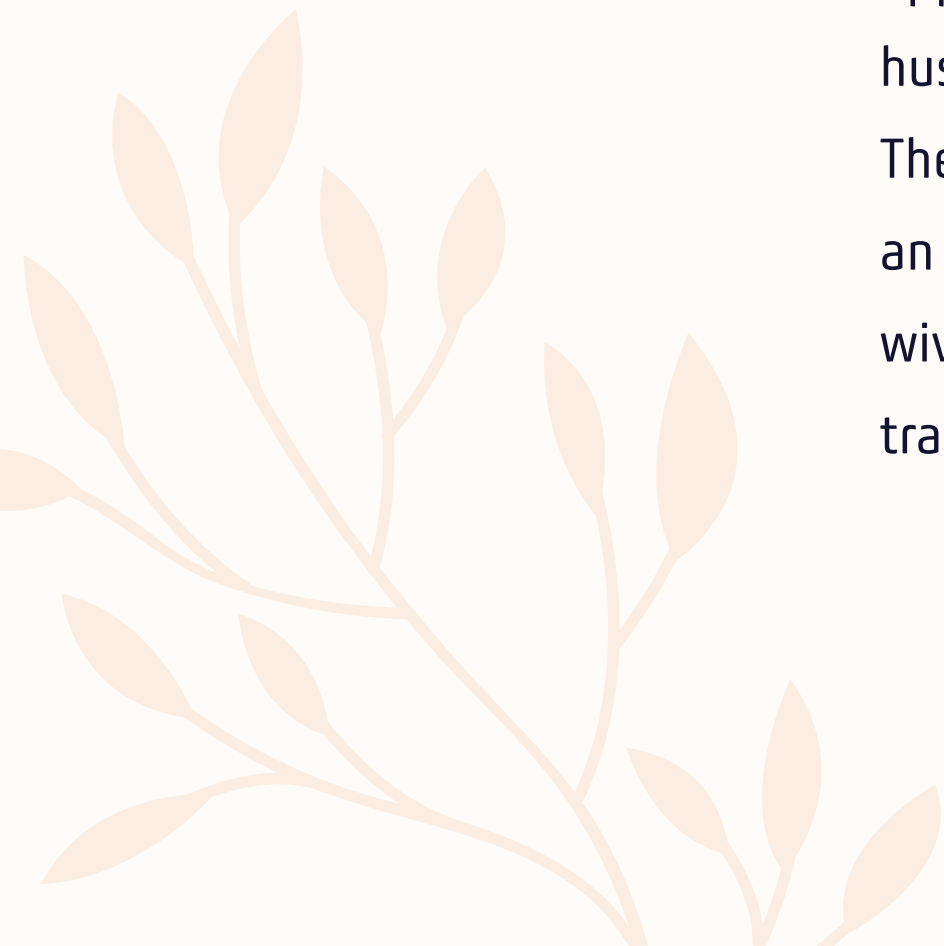
Gender transformative approaches (GTA) have emerged in the last 15 years to challenge different ways of 'doing development'. They focus on transforming the power relations and structures that reinforce gender inequity to achieve both gender equality and development outcomes. They differ from approaches to women empowerment in that they work with both women and men to transform social relations of gender to become more equitable. In spite of the growing interest in GTA, there remains little documentation of what they look like in practice and evidence of the long term change they contribute towards to.

This short brief gives an overview of one example of gender transformative program called the Gender Model Family (GMF) approach where are currently efforts to document the different ways it has been used and provide evidence of its broader impact. GFM was originally conceptualized by SEND Ghana in 2001 to implement a livelihood and food security project promoting soya bean production to address malnutrition.

WHAT IS THE GENDER MODEL FAMILY (GMF) APPROACH ?

The GMF is a gender transformative approach to community mobilisation addressing the unequal power relations between women and men. The approach works by establishing role model families and engaging wives, husbands and children as 'change agents' within their community.

The GMF entails a training program to enable husbands and wives to live in an equitable and just manner by challenging ways in which husbands and wives live together. It targets the family as the basic unit for social transformation, enabling them unlearn unequal gender practices.





Alidu assisting his wife in doing the household chores

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The GMF training program involves the delivery of a curriculum to the target family through a series of 7 steps summarized in Box 1.

The theory of change of the gender model family approach is that through creating a locus of transformation at the household level it will have a ripple on effect at the community level which will be sustained over time. The focus of transformation starts at the individual level within the space of the family. A core aspect of the approach is sparking a process of self-reflection within the gender model family to challenge unequal gender relations.

Gender Model Families have concrete action plans for which they are accountable. GMFs start off with a plan to share household tasks. Building on the benefits of these actions, they also start sharing decisions and being strategic about how they can capitalize on shared household and productive labour and resources. Through initiating their own process of critical reflection, the aim is that they become role models for other families in their communities. Gender model families are expected to cascade their experiences and learnings to others.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

This leads to a process of collective transformation whereby a network of community of change agents are created because GMFs are supportive of each other and always recruiting others to become GMFs. With a critical mass of GMFs, gender transformation will change, not just within families, but entire communities and societies. This leads to sustained transformation whereby GMFs quickly experience the benefits of actively promoting gender equity. They rarely want to go back to the “old” ways of living together because it would be seen as a step backwards in their progress toward a more developed and modern future in which both women and men are empowered by gender equality.

BOX ONE

SEVEN STEPS OF IMPLEMENTING THE GMF

00

PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

Identification of Trainers and roll out of Trainer of Trainers (ToT) . It is important that the staff involved are committed to gender transformation. They should be familiar with Harvard Gender Analysis tools, and possess animation and facilitation skills.

01

PREPARING COMMUNITIES FOR GENDER MODEL FAMILIES

Community sensitisation on the idea of GMF drawing past experiences. The aims is to identify couples (husband/wives) to volunteer to become GMFs.

02

RECRUITMENT AND REGISTRATION OF GMFS

Families can only self-select if they meet certain criteria (married, resident in community, involved in a development project, both able to undergo training together, committed to learning and changing).

03

FIRST TRAINING OF GMFS

Focuses on supporting couples to draw up their Action Plans for being GMFs. The training consists of daily activity profile, triple roles of women (reproductive, productive and community management roles), access and control profile, and action planning where the husband and wife decide how to share tasks to be fair. It can also be used as a monitoring tool, so that field officers can check to see whether the family is doing what they planned).

04

SECOND TRAINING OF GMFS

Focuses on follow up to clarify any misunderstanding of the GMF concepts processing, activities and expectations. Discussions focus on sharing household work, family planning, work in farming and business, control of resources and decision-making, parenting roles and care for children, and community management and leadership positions. They will also discuss implementation of the action plan to encourage the families to address challenges they are having in meeting their commitments to each other.

05

MONITORING OF GMFS

Usually takes place a month after the first training during the first monthly review. Entails field officer visiting GMF to assess and support the implementation of the action plans. Gender Monitoring tools are developed in the training manual and Field officers are trained to use it.

06

MONTHLY AND QUARTERLY MEETINGS

Monthly meetings are organized to bring GMFs from the same community together to understand their successes, challenges and to support each other. Quarterly meetings bring GMFs from different communities together to share experiences. Interested community members can also be invited to observe and participate in the GMF experience sharing sessions. New GMFs and communities are identified for follow-up meetings and recruitment. Whereas the community and monthly meetings are led by GMF leaders, the quarterly meetings are facilitated by field officers.

07

EXPERIENCE SHARING THROUGH THE ANNUAL GENDER MODEL FAMILY ASSEMBLY

It brings together GMFs and other stakeholders (Political, youth, religious and traditional leader, women and gender activists) to increase the public profile and recognition of the GMF. GMF use the assembly to advocate for gender equality by giving public testimony of behavioural changes and economic transformation experienced in their families. The media is invited to popularize the programme by highlighting its benefits. The best GMFs are also publicly recognised through award ceremonies.

HOW CAN IT BE USED?

The GMF approach can be implemented as a stand-alone intervention or integrated with other interventions focusing on food and nutrition security, WASH, climate smart agriculture, health or communities' resources mobilization for local economic development. See Box 2.

BOX TWO

INTEGRATION OF GMF INTO NUTRITION SENSITIVE PROGRAMMING IN SIERRA LEONE

In 2015, GMF was integrated into the Welthungerhilfe LANN+ (Linking Agriculture, Natural resource management and WASH towards Nutrition Security, a food and nutrition security program. SEND and WHH have worked together to adapt the methodology towards encouraging families working together to mobilise their own resources to lead to better nutrition and food security outcomes

HOW

The GMF approach was implemented as part of the community mobilization. It forms the basis for nutrition training deliver. GMF is used to provides a lens for systematically addressing gender and leveraging the improved cooperation of husband towards other indicators

WHAT IMPACT DOES IT HAVE

Currently, efforts are underway to collect evidence around how the GMF works in practice to catalyse the links between women's empowerment and improved food and nutrition security. WHH and SEND have partnered with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) to take this forward. [include link to report]

WHERE IT HAS BEEN USED?

Ghana

GMF was pioneered in Northern Ghana (2001-2003) in various livelihood and food security programmes in soybean production supported by Cordaid; Fostering project (2012-2018) mobilized 1,016 GMFs in programming around climate smart farming practices and nutrition education. The GMF methodology has been replicated by other development partners, such as Oxfam, RING in Ghana.

Sierra Leone

In 2009, SEND implemented GMF with 150 families in Kailahun District, Sierra Leone in a livelihood project funded by CORDAID and Christian Aid UK. From 2015 onwards, SEND in partnership with Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ,) implemented a food and nutrition security program (LANN+) with 10,000 GMFs in nine chiefdoms in Kenema and Kailahun districts. Discussions are currently ongoing with Christian Aid, Irish Aid, Trocaire, and Solidaridad West Africa are also funding SSL to execute projects using the GMF approach in Kailahun, Kenema, Western Rural Districts.

Ethiopia

It is also been implemented in Ethiopia by IFAD-PASDEP, SMIS (Irrigation Support), and 4R.

For more information

Gender Model Family Manual for Community Workers (SEND West Africa, 2013)

-<https://www.graphic.com.gh/features/features/send-ghana-implements-gender-model-family-concept.html>

-<https://sendwestafrica.org/index.php/news1/item/123-send-ghana-hosts-first-gender-model-family-summit>

-<https://www.newsghana.com.gh/18-best-families-participate-in-two-day-gender-model-family-summit/>

-<https://www.facebook.com/citi97.3/posts/about-600-families-who-have-subscribed-to-send-ghanas-gender-model-family-concept/10153769310371107/>

- <https://sendwestafrica.org/nu/gh/training-manuals/>

The Gender Model Family Approach, Women's Empowerment and Nutrition (KIT website)

<https://www.kit.nl/project/thegender-model-family-approach-womens-empowerment-nutrition/>

LANN+: Integrated Food Security (article on Welthungerhilfe website)

<https://www.welthungerhilfe.org/our-work/approaches/lann/>

THANK YOU