TRANSFORMATIVE HOUSEHOLD METHODOLOGY
I. INTRODUCTION

In rural Ethiopia, women play a vital role in the economic and social system both at household and at community level. Women are responsible for a large variety of productive, reproductive (household chores and bearing and nursing children) and social activities. These include responsibilities for farming, post-harvest management, marketing of agricultural produce, caring and watering of livestock, milking, supplying household firewood and water, food preparation and childcare. Moreover, women are engaged in a number of social activities which range from taking care of old and sick community members to providing informal education to children and organizing ceremonies and rituals.

However, women’s efforts in most cases are not recognized and valued by the society. Female family members face the highest workload and are the weakest and most vulnerable group in their communities.

Most women have very little or no control over resources and their level of participation in decision-making processes is extremely low. In times of food shortages women, who are responsible for providing and preparing food, are those family members who receive less food, with severe consequences for their levels of malnutrition and exposure to diseases. Inability to be involved in family planning exposes women to high maternal death rates. Heavy physical workload has dramatic consequences on women’s overall fitness and wellbeing. This has significant impact at family-level, which includes high school drop-out rates of female children who have to support their mothers in carrying out daily work; and resort to seasonal migration of girls and women towards urban centres.
II. THE TRANSFORMATIVE HOUSEHOLD METHODOLOGY

The Transformative Household Methodology (THM) is a tool that aims at creating awareness of intra-household gender relations between women, men, girls and boys. The THM identifies the different roles and responsibilities of household members, their access and control over resources and their related benefits. The methodology is developed combining the Harvard Gender Analytical Tool that makes use of activity profiles and analysis of access and control over resources (and related benefits) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools such as proportional piling, wealth ranking and seasonal analysis.

While other methodologies focus on societal and community groups, the THM focuses on the household, putting strong emphasis on gender relations. This tool has proven to be particularly effective in rural/agricultural contexts because it is illiterate-friendly and promotes a process that is simple and easily understood by all household members.

Send a Cow has made use of the THM in many of its projects in Ethiopia to create awareness and promote improved intra-household relationships among smallholder farmer families.

The THM exercise is practised by all household members under the guidance of a facilitator.

Simple and locally available materials such as wooden sticks, stones or beans are collected. Participating household members sit in one circle to enhance equal participation. The activity can be conducted in the house or outside, as per convenience. Participants build one grid with wooden sticks: each box represents an activity (fetching water, farming, cooking etc) or a resource (food, livestock, cash etc). Each household member is encouraged to place stones or beans in the grid based on his/her workload related to a specific activity or based on his/her access and control over resources. Following the exercise, household members count the number of stones or beans placed on the symbol for each activity and then correlate the result with the gender of the respective family members.

Through facilitated conversation, outcomes are discussed. As household members become aware of the differences in workload and access/control over resources within the household, they develop a family action plan to follow.
III. SEND A COW ETHIOPIA / IFAD PROJECT

In 2014 Send a Cow Ethiopia conducted THM training for community facilitators and government staff in Wolayita Zone (Southern Ethiopia). The training was funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) with the aim of creating learning and disseminating the methodology in Ethiopia. Training participants included staff from other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like Concern Worldwide and the Tarapeza Development Association, working with community groups in Ethiopia. Under Send a Cow’s supervision, training participants have passed on the knowledge gained to 84 peer farmers from selected self-help groups active in Wolayita Zone, for further dissemination.

Peer farmers have reached a total of 20 self-help groups (400 households) thus reaching approximately 2,000 family members (with an average of 5 members per family).

Training was conducted in the heart of smallholder farmer communities and was practical in nature. Each training session lasted for three days and included lectures, group discussions, role plays and field visits.

The main topics covered included: understanding the methodology, roles and responsibilities of THM facilitators, development of activity profiles, practical application of the methodology, effective adult learning strategies, follow up and monitoring impact.
IV. EXPERIENCE SHARING VISIT

A group of 41 selected farmers went to share experiences in the community called “Awramba” in northern Ethiopia. This community is well known for its strong belief in equality and share of workloads between men and women. The objective of this visit was to help farmers realize that positive change in family relations is possible in the Ethiopian context. Seeing men cooking and taking care of children, which is very unusual in Ethiopia, has inspired farmers to change some of their practices. Once back in Wolayita, farmers developed action plans to implement and share their learning.

The picture to the right shows a man from Awramba cooking injera (traditional Ethiopian bread). The other two pictures show a man sewing and a woman weaving cotton.
V. IMPACT

a) Participation in household and productive activities

Send a Cow Ethiopia surveyed 25 households over the project period to understand how their perception of workload and access to resources changed from baseline (pre-training) to project completion. A total of 125 family members (women, men, girls and boys) participated in the survey.

The results show that women’s workload has decreased. While they declared full or a lot of involvement in many activities at baseline, the impact results show that they now declare a lesser involvement. This means that they have delegated part of the responsibility of these activities to other household members.
This is a significant result as women carry most of the household workload. Of particular significance are the drop in women’s involvement in traditionally female productive activities (dairy related, processing enset, transporting grain to the mill, cleaning dung). There is also a decrease in household activities, such as child care, cooking, fetching water or firewood. It is expected that women’s quality of life and health are significantly improved due to the decreased workload.

The results from men’s surveys reflect the same change. At baseline, the vast majority of men declare no involvement at all in most listed activities, except fetching firewood. The impact results show that they are now significantly more involved in virtually all activities, including childcare, purchasing household items, cooking, dairy related activities and cleaning dung. This increased involvement is indicative of a change of attitudes towards traditionally female tasks. Some men reported that they were teased or insulted by community members for performing these “female” tasks, but nonetheless persevered, witnessing a authentic change of attitudes and beliefs.
b) Decision-making

In terms of decision-making, women were traditionally excluded from or had marginal participation in productive activities, such as what to farm, livestock decisions and how to spend large sums of money. They had nonetheless significant or full participation in traditionally female decisions, such as the use of petty cash, food related decisions and education.

Impact data shows that women are more involved in productive activities, showing significant participation in farming, livestock and large money decisions. In turn, they are now sharing decisions over foodstuffs and education with other family members.
Men’s responses reflect this change. At baseline they declare a lot or full participation in productive decisions, while declaring little or no participation over food related decisions. Impact data shows that men are now sharing some decision making power with other household members, as they declare less involvement in decision-making over productive activities as well as over decisions on how to use large amounts of money. They also declare increased decision-making involvement over food related decisions.

These results indicate an important change in attitudes and workload distribution at household level. We must consider that the impact data was collected nine months after the beginning of training, and that most households will continue to change the gender roles within the household due to the continuous (regular THM analysis), participatory (household members analyze gender relations themselves) and community (community gets together to discuss progress) aspects of THM. Therefore, it is expected that more positive changes will continue to occur after the project phase-out, impacting in particular the children in the household and particularly girls.
VI. STORIES FROM THE FARMERS

Fasiko Wogosso, a 30-year old farmer from Wolayita who underwent the THM training, said: “Before the training I didn't prepare firewood, I didn't wash clothes and I didn't wash my children. I have always considered such activities as women’s work and I would have felt ashamed to engage in them. I now support my wife more as I became aware of the huge workload she was facing every day.

“I have trained seven other families: after facing an initial resistance to change by some of them, due to deeply rooted traditional beliefs around labour division, I was able to create awareness and I am now following up the changes in my neighbours’ lives.”

Meseleach Mokammad, mother of five, attended the visit to the Awramba community. “During the THM training I came to realize how much burden I was carrying on my shoulders. My husband, who also attended the training, showed strong determination in helping me. However, all the time I have been wondering whether it is possible for a man to carry our activities that are traditionally left to women.

“In Awramba I saw with my own eyes that a different relationship between husband and wife is possible. My husband and I now consult each other before making important decisions. This has increased the unity and family relationship between us.”
VII. CONCLUSION

- **Simple tool**: the THM makes use of locally available materials and is illiterate friendly.

- **Effective**: the THM stimulates discussion among family members and creates awareness and consensus around critical issues such as division of labour, access and control over resources and benefits for different household members. Farmers can disseminate THM knowledge and skills among their peers at low cost.

- **Impact**: the THM has proven to have a fast impact at household level as women, men, girls and boys change their attitudes towards family relationships. After having conducted THM exercises, workloads are more equally shared by family members and women’s involvement in decision making has increased.

- **Family-focused**: the THM is inclusive as it works at household level and all family members can equally participate, contribute their opinions, be heard, and develop common action plans for improvement.

- **Sustainability**: the THM triggers mindset change that lasts beyond project implementation. Action plans are followed up by community/group dialogue that sustains the impact in the long term. Trained households become role models of change within the community.

- **Scalability**: the THM can be easily adopted by different development actors (government, NGOs) for replication in various contexts as it is cost-effective, easy to understand and participatory.
Our Vision:
A confident and thriving rural Africa

Our Mission:
To give communities and families the hope and the means to secure their own futures from the land

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