



**CGIAR
GENDER EQUALITY AND
INCLUSION**

Facilitator's Guide

Dialogue on the importance of women in leadership positions in the cassava and broader agriculture sector



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General Introduction

This guide is developed to support facilitators in leading gender-transformative group dialogue sessions with members of cassava farmer groups (organizations) and their spouses, their spouses, community leaders and religious leaders from communities where Nyakitonto Youth for Development Tanzania (NYDT) implements its activities. These farmer groups are located in Kigoma Regions.

The guide aims to enable facilitators working with NYDT to facilitate gender-transformative dialogue sessions at the group level on the importance of women's participation in leadership in cassava and other agriculture-based groups. The guide uses participatory approaches to engage participants in reflecting and proposing plans of action to reduce normative constraints towards women's participation in leadership positions.

The guide borrows from existing resources that are used to develop dialogue sessions to fit the local contexts. The objectives of the guide include assisting facilitators in organizing and conducting the different sessions that provide an opportunity for participants to reflect and develop plans of action to address negative perceptions and attitudes toward women in leadership positions in cassava-based and other agriculture-related groups.

The guide targets facilitators involved in implementing gender-transformative group and community dialogue sessions that address the gender norms restricting women from taking on leadership roles in cassava and other agriculture-related groups. Facilitators will need to undergo training on how to use this guide to facilitate the sessions.

Modules and sessions summary

Module/session Title	Objective of the Module/Session
Module 1: Introduction sessions	<i>This module introduces dialogue participants to the purpose of the dialogue and explores basic concepts related to gender norms and equality. The module is further organized into sessions</i>
Session 1.1: Welcome and setting the stage	<i>The objectives of this session are to allow participants to get to know each other's names and a little bit about each other and make them feel at ease and have some fun.</i>
Session 1.2: Gender roles and norms in daily life	<i>The objective of this session is to allow participants to reflect on how men and women are treated in society, the extent of gender inequality, and how men and women are negatively affected.</i>
Session 1.3: Experiencing a power imbalance	<i>The objective of this session is to look at how gender inequality and unequal power lead to harmful practices (i.e. to experience men's power over women and the consequences of community silence)</i>
Module 2: Discussion sessions	<i>This module is organized into four main discussion sessions, which are further divided into several sub-sessions.</i>
Session 2.1: Understanding social, cultural, and barriers to women and girls	<i>The objectives of this session are to enable participants to explore the social, cultural, and economic opportunities and challenges women and girls have in their community, take stock of changes regarding the situation of women and girls and what is still prevailing in the community and take stock of the current level of participation of women in farmer organization leadership. This session is further divided into seven sub-sessions.</i>
Session 2.2: A leader in agricultural	<i>The objective of this session is to reflect on the attributes of a successful leader, whether women and men are equally capable of playing this role, and the importance of women's participation in</i>

cooperatives/farmer organizations	<i>leadership roles.</i>
Session 2.3: Promoting community members to support women to participate in leadership roles	<i>The objective of this session is to facilitate an open discussion on gender equality in leadership, addressing gender norms and encouraging positive change.</i>
Session 2.4: Appreciating the Value of Women's Leadership in Agricultural Cooperatives/Farmer Organizations	<i>This session's objectives include identifying the strengths and contributions women bring to leadership in agricultural cooperatives/farmer organizations; reflecting on how women's leadership improves productivity, cooperation, market access, and inclusion; and beginning to challenge existing gender biases in leadership within agricultural cooperatives/farmer organizations and the community.</i>
Module 3: Developing an Action Plan	<i>This module aims to guide dialogue participants to identify specific strategies for challenging and addressing harmful gender norms that limit women from taking leadership positions in agricultural cooperatives and farmer organizations. This module is organized into six sessions as outlined below.</i>
Session 3.1: Introductions to Developing an Action Plan	<i>The objective of this session is to enable participants to understand what an action plan is and their role in the next steps of creating an action plan</i>
Session 3.2: Understanding Issues in Women in Leadership and their Causes – Answering the WHAT	<i>The objective of this session is to guide participants to identify the root causes of key issues and begin to generate responses to root causes</i>
Session 3.3: Community Mapping Exercise – Answering the WHO	<i>The objectives of this session are to help participants:</i> <i>• To understand what a gatekeeper and a stakeholder are;</i> <i>• To identify who the community gatekeepers and</i>

and WHERE	<i>stakeholders might be to women's access to leadership positions; and</i> <i>To brainstorm how they might, as community members, address or work with these gatekeepers and stakeholders.</i>
Session 3.4: Community Wall and Role-play – Answering the How	<i>The objectives of this session are:</i> <i>To identify the key misconceptions that influence the gatekeepers' power over women's lives in the community, especially women in leadership.</i> <i>To identify the ways in which dialogue participants can collaborate with both stakeholders and gatekeepers.</i>
Session 3.5: Finalizing the Action Plan	<i>The objective of this session is to guide dialogue participants finalize their action plan</i>
Session 3.6: Follow-up on the action plan	<i>This session is expected to happen approximately 2 or 3 weeks after session 3.5 and then again, another 2 or 3 weeks after that.</i> <i>The objectives of this session include:</i> <i>To identify the successful steps towards achieving the action plan.</i> <i>To identify the challenges towards achieving the action plan and receive suggestions/strategies from other sub-groups on next steps</i>

Module 1: Introduction

Session 1.1: Welcome & setting the stage

Activity 1: Pair and share

Objective:

- Allow participants to get to know each other's names and a little bit about each other.
- Make people feel at ease and have some fun.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials: Watch, Ball

Facilitation process

1. Start by briefly introducing yourself and welcoming participants.
2. Ask participants to pair up with another participant they do not know well. Ask them to introduce themselves to each other by stating their name and a couple of interesting facts about them (their favourite food, what they smile today, favourite colour) Stress that they have to listen carefully as they will later be asked to introduce their 'partner' to the group.
3. Ask participants to form a circle and randomly throw the ball to participants, and one has to introduce their 'partner' Once they are reached (1 minute per person)

Activity 2: Why are we here together?¹

Objective: Participants understand the need for a community conversation on gender equality and women's participation in leadership in agricultural cooperatives/farmer organizations and establish ground rules and expectations.

¹Adapted and modified from: K Assefa. 2020. "GOOD PRACTICE Community Conversations." In Gender transformative approaches for food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture – A compendium of fifteen good practices. FAO, IFAD and WFP. <https://gender.cgiar.org/tools-methods-manuals/community-conversations-leading-communities-talk-about-women-farmers>

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials: Flipchart paper, markers

Facilitator's Notes

Ensure every participant understands what the dialogue is all about. Allow participants to set ground rules so they feel a sense of ownership. Guide participants to add rules that will help to run the sessions smoothly.

Facilitation process

1. Explain the overall objectives of the community dialogue:
 - Understand social gender norms that influence our thoughts and behavior, and that can be detrimental to men and women;
 - Identify issues that hinder women from taking part in the leadership of farmer organizations in cassava and the broader agricultural sector.
 - Explore and agree on possible solutions that are suggested and discussed upon by the community
 - Reach some kind of resolution against the issues with which the community will abide by
 - Establish relationships with others to exchange experiences and support each other.
2. Invite the group to establish some ground rules for our work together. If working with a literate group, write the rules on the flipchart paper so all can see (if not, a group discussion is sufficient, or the facilitator can draw pictures that reflect the rule). Make sure that the broader group agrees with every rule suggested. (15 minutes)

Facilitator's Notes: Ground Rules²

- *Treat what you hear in confidence.*
- *Others have the right to believe and feel differently from you.*

² Community Dialogue. (n.d.). Ground rules & guidelines for dialogue – Community Dialogue. Retrieved from <https://www.communitydialogue.org/ground-rules-for-dialogue/>

- *Others have the right to express their beliefs.*
- *You do not have to respect beliefs that are wrong to you.*
- *Treat others with the respect you expect of yourself.*
- *When others share, do not interrupt, show respect, and wait until they finish.*
- *Do not represent the views of a wider group; share your own views.*
- *Do not pressurise anyone into speaking.*
- *All participants' views and ideas have value.*

Activity 3: Importance of gender equality and social inclusion: the walk of life³

Objective:

- Show participants that people are treated differently in the household and society according to their gender, age, disability, etc., and this can affect how they fulfill their potential and take leadership roles. Participants begin to understand how gender, age, and other factors influence everyone's life and why gender equality and social inclusion are important.

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials: Cards

Facilitator's Notes

To facilitate this session, define gender and related concepts in simple terms, using local examples and expressions:

- ***Gender*** *refers to the social and cultural attributes associated with men and women. Men and women face different expectations about how they should dress or behave and the roles and responsibilities they should or could have in the*

³ Adapted from: Integrated Land and Resource Governance (ILRG). (2022). Training Manual for Household Dialogues on Gender Norms in the Context of Land Rights in Malawi. USAID Integrated Land and Resource Governance Task Order under the Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights II (STARR II) IDIQ. https://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ILRG-Malawi-Household-Gender-Norms-Dialogues-Manual-USAID-Review_508.pdf

*household, workplace, or public sphere. Gender is different from **sex**, which is the biological difference between men and women. Certain biological roles are specific to a certain sex, for example, getting pregnant or giving birth for women or producing sperm and growing a beard for men.*

- **Gender equality** is the absence of discrimination in access to rights and opportunities based on gender. Equality does not mean that women and men become the same but that they both have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities, being treated fairly and according to their needs.
- **Social inclusion** is the absence of discrimination against any other marginalized groups, such as youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, migrants, etc.

Facilitation process

1. Explain that you will need 7 volunteers for this exercise. Volunteers will receive a character and will stand in a line, side by side, while the other dialogue participants (audience) watch from across the room.
2. Invite the 7 volunteers to the front. Assign each volunteer a character from the list below, making sure to whisper in their ear so only they know who their character is. And give them a card/ paper they have to hide to the character given. The characters allocated should match their gender (5 minutes)
 - Married man
 - Married woman
 - Widowed woman
 - Young single man
 - Young single woman
 - Man with a physical disability
 - Woman with a physical disability
3. Say that you will read a series of statements/phrases. Step forward if the sentence makes sense to the character they have been assigned (or is very likely to apply). If not, stay put. Check with participants that they understand and answer any questions they have.

4. Read each sentence, one at a time, reminding volunteers to step forward only if the sentence applies to your character: (15 minutes)
 - “I’m usually the first to be served food at home.”
 - “I can go outside the home at any time I want without asking permission or informing anyone.”
 - “I studied until grade seven.”
 - “I studied up to secondary level or more.”
 - “I know I can be elected a leader in a cassava-based organisation.”
 - “I am confident that if I run for Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Society (AMCOS) or farmer organisation leadership elections, I have a good chance of winning.”
 - “I feel confident speaking freely at farmer organization meetings, in front of anyone.”
 - “Participating and contributing in community meetings is easy for me.”
 - “Domestic responsibilities such as children, cooking, washing, and fetching water do not prevent me from attending community meetings.”
 - “I have a say on how the household income is used.”
5. After all the statements have been read, ask the participants to look at who is “front” in the “walk of life” and who has been left behind. Ask those in front to reveal their character to everyone. Ask the same from those behind. (5 minutes)
6. Facilitate a discussion on the factors that make it difficult for certain people and groups to fully fulfill their potential and assume leadership roles. (20 minutes)

Session 1.2: Gender roles and norms in daily life⁴

Objective:

- This session allows participants to reflect on how men and women are treated in society, the extent of gender inequality, and how men and women are negatively affected.

Session 1.2.1: Gender, gender roles and relations/relationships

Objective:

- Reflect and discuss the attributes and characteristics of being a man or woman, and the privileges and power that they have or do not have.

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitation process

1. Introduce the session to the participants. This session is about exploring our gender identities. It is about being a man or woman and how gender identities affect our relationships, lives and interactions with people.
2. Divide the group in two according to their gender and ask them to sit in their groups.
3. Ask the groups to take time to reflect on the following questions.

Group 1 Women:

- ‘What do you like about being a woman? What do you not like about being a woman?’
- ‘What do you like about how men are? What do you not like about how they are?’

⁴ Adapted from: Prabu Deepan (2020). Masculinities, Faith, and Peace Project: Community Dialogues – Promoting Respectful Relationships and Equitable Communities (Muslim Version). Tearfund. <https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/series/changing-gender-norms-transforming-masculinities/changing-gender-norms-masculinities-faith-and-peace/community-dialogues-masculinities-faith-and-peace-muslim-version>

Group 2 Men:

- What do you like about being a man? What do you not like about being a 'man?'
 - 'What do you like about how women are? What do you not like about how they are?'
4. After fifteen minutes' discussion, invite the groups to plenary to share their thoughts with everyone.
 5. Conclude the session by saying that, as men and women, we both enjoy privileges and power associated with our gender. However, often being a woman is equated with being weak, vulnerable and less important than men, which can lead to denying them opportunities to take leadership roles in agricultural cooperatives or farmer organizations or in the community.

Session 1.2.2: Gender boxes: Act like a woman/act like a man

Objective: Explore how cultural beliefs about gender affect how we see ourselves and others, as well as our behavior.

Duration: 1 hour

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitator's Notes:⁵

Social norms are informal, unspoken rules that govern what people are expected to do in a situation. Gender norms are a kind of social norms that regulate how men and women are expected to act, i.e., what is appropriate or not appropriate for men and women, boys and girls. These norms are learned informally throughout life, from childhood, and are reinforced in the family and the wider social context (school, workplace, religion, media, etc.).

Gender norms can be harmful and affect everyone – men and women:

⁵ Adopted from: Integrated Land and Resource Governance (ILRG). (2022). Training Manual for Household Dialogues on Gender Norms in the Context of Land Rights in Malawi. USAID Integrated Land and Resource Governance Task Order under the Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights II (STARR II) IDIQ. https://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ILRG-Malawi-Household-Gender-Norms-Dialogues-Manual-USAID-Review_508.pdf

- *Girls have less access to education and are more affected by early marriage.*
- *Women have fewer opportunities to earn income, so there is less income for families to invest in the future.*
- *Men are under pressure to be financially, physically, and emotionally strong and are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs, take unnecessary risks, or commit suicide.*
- *Women are limited by norms from enjoying the opportunity to take on leadership roles. Norms dictate that they should assume subordinate roles.*

Facilitation process⁶

1. Thank the participants for their honest reflections in the previous session. Tell them that you want to unpack how gender norms/roles affect our lives, so they understand how this is critical in the discussion of women in leadership.
2. Divide the group in two and tell one group that they will discuss ‘acting/being like a man’ and the other group will discuss ‘acting/ being like a woman’. Ask them to write down their examples.
3. Ask Group 1 to discuss and answer the following three questions:
 - Give examples of messages that men/boys are given when they are told to ‘Act like a man/boy’

Facilitator’s Notes:

Examples of messages that men/boys are given when they are told to ‘Act like a man/boy’:

Leader, tough, not emotional, decision-maker, protector, provider, adviser, the person who disciplines, can have multiple partners, should not ask for help,

⁶ Adopted from: : Prabu Deepan (2020). Masculinities, Faith, and Peace Project: Community Dialogues – Promoting Respectful Relationships and Equitable Communities (Muslim Version). Tearfund. <https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/series/changing-gender-norms-transforming-masculinities/changing-gender-norms-masculinities-faith-and-peace/community-dialogues-masculinities-faith-and-peace-muslim-version>

controls the finances and the women in the house etc.

- Where (*eg. home, schools etc*) and from whom do these messages come?
 - How are these messages given, sent or conveyed (*eg sermons, TV/radio, school, institutions etc*)?
4. Ask Group 2 to discuss the following three questions:
- Give examples of messages that women/girls are given when they are told to 'Act like a woman/girl'.

Facilitator's Notes:

Examples of messages that women/girls are given when they are told to 'Act like a woman/girl':

A woman cannot lead, she has to give birth to many children, if she can't, then she is dishonourable or not valued, she must not speak too much, she has to be submissive and obedient, she should not speak in meetings, be faithful etc.

- Where and from whom do these messages come?
 - How are these messages given, sent or conveyed?
5. Ask the groups to share the main discussion points. (They can do this verbally or even act it out as a group.)
6. Now ask the dialogue participants the following questions:
- What happens to men/boys and women/girls who do not conform to these ways?

Facilitator's Notes:

Beaten, shamed, harassed and forced to do things they do not want to, etc.

- How are men and women kept within these boxes? What strategies/tools/actions are used?

- Are there men and women who do not conform to these messages? How do they do that?
 - Are there messages here that are harmful to men and women? (*Refer to what happens when they do not conform to messages.*)
 - Are there specific consequences for women and girls who do not conform?
 - Can it be limiting for a man to be expected to behave in this manner? How?
 - Can it be limiting for a woman to be expected to behave in this manner? How?
 - How can “acting like a man” affect a man’s relationship with his partner and children?
 - How can “acting like a woman” affect a woman’s position in society?
7. Conclude by saying we can now begin to see how society creates very different rules for the behaviour of men and women. Explain that these rules are sometimes called ‘gender norms’ because they define what is ‘normal’ for men and women to think, feel and act. Explain that these rules restrict the lives of both women and men by keeping men in their ‘Act like a man’ box and women in their ‘Act like a woman’ box.

Homework for the group:

Reflect on what you are currently doing that might be harmful to others and how you are contributing to shaping these norms. How can you change that?
(Participants should share their thoughts in the next session)

Session 1.3: Experiencing a power imbalance⁷

Objective:

- Look at how gender inequality and unequal power lead to harmful practices (To experience men's power over women and the consequences of community silence)

Materials:

- 15 pieces of paper and 15 pens or pencils.
- A flipchart with the following statement: "In our community, everybody is equal; no one has the right to use his or her power over another person." Set this aside and turn it upside down so that no one can read it.

Facilitation process

1. Welcome the participants to the session and thank them for coming back and their commitment to this process.
2. Invite the group to share reflections on their homework. Prompt people if they hesitate, emphasising that this is a safe space and a space for learning.
3. Explain, "In this next exercise, you will experience power imbalances."
4. Ask for 20 volunteers, preferably 10 female volunteers and 10 male volunteers. If there are not enough females, please ask some of the men to pretend that they are females for this exercise. The rest of the participants will act as community members.
5. Put the three groups into the following positions:
 - Ask the men to line up their chairs in the middle of the room and take a seat. Ask the women to please come and stand in front of a man, so that there are two lines facing each other and 10 female/male pairs.

⁷Adapted from: Health Communication Capacity Collaborative. (2016, September 15). Engaging community leaders to provide a safe and supportive environment for adolescent girls and young women. https://healthcommcapacity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CommunityLeaders_final.pdf

- Ask the men to please stand on their chairs facing their partners. Ask the women to please put their hands behind their backs. Explain that they must stay in this position.
 - Ask the community members to please surround the pairs in a circle and to hold hands.
6. Put a piece of paper and a pen or pencil in between each female/male pair, on the floor in front of the chairs.
 7. Discuss the following questions:
 - Ask the participants on the chairs, "How do you feel standing on the chair"?
 - Ask the participants in front of the chairs, "How do you feel standing before the person on the chair"?
 8. Explain the exercise:
 - "For this exercise, the participants standing on the chairs have more power than the participants standing in front of them on the floor."
 - "The participants standing on the floor have their hands behind their backs, and this will remain so until we say otherwise."
 - "There is one way for the pairs to become equal: by drawing a perfect circle and an equal sign in the middle of that circle on the paper between them. However, the woman and man must do this together with both partners, not just one of them, holding the pen."
 - "Participants on the chairs must remain standing and cannot squat. Participants on the floor have to keep their hands behind their backs."
 - "Participants standing in a circle around them, you are community members. You will watch the game inside the circle. You will remain silent until I show you a flipchart with a certain statement." At that point, read the statement aloud to the pairs in the middle. Ensure that there are no questions and begin.
 9. After about three minutes, ask participants, "Is this working? Are there any perfect circles"? (There will be no perfect circles.)
 10. Announce, "Now, we will switch roles. Change with your partners. Women should stand on the chairs and the men on the floor with their hands behind their backs. Now try to do the same exercise."
 11. After another three minutes, ask participants, "Are there any perfect circles now"? (There will still be no perfect circles.)

12. Ask the pairs to switch again. When the men are back on the chairs, say, "Men have power over women, but the community members think this is not right. Community members, please read your statement! Hold the flipchart with the statement high in the air so that every community member can see it." (In our community, everybody is equal; no one has the right to use his or her power over another person.)
13. After the community members have read the statement, say, "Community silence has been broken. Women standing on the floor, your hands are free now. Now try to do the same exercise again with your hands free, but without squatting on the chair."
14. After another three minutes, say, "Things have improved, but there are still no perfect circles. Men, please balance your power with the women by getting down from the chair. Can there be perfect circles now"?
15. Allow participants to figure out how to draw the circle. Let them show their efforts to community members who can clap for them. Ask participants to return to their seats.
16. Debrief the exercise by asking the following questions:
 - "How did the exercise make you feel"?
 - "Those of you on the chairs"?
 - "Those of you on the floor with your hands behind your backs"?
 - "Those of you who were community members"?
 - "How did you feel when you were able to switch places and have power over the other person"?
 - "Did it help you accomplish your goal"?
 - "Do men often worry that sharing power means they will lose their power? Does this happen? If both people have power, does it mean one person has less"?
 - "How did it feel to be equal"?
 - "Do you think that the community is a powerful influence on behaviour"?
 - "What else can we learn from this exercise"?
17. Summarize the following key points:
 - Power imbalance between women and men is not healthy for anyone. It creates tension, struggle and hatred.
 - Balancing power does not mean losing power. Power does not come in limited supply. It is not a quantity. It is a feeling.

- When someone uses her or his power over another person, the two cannot work together to reach their goals.
- Women and men can create a balance of power in their relationships
- Men's power over women and the community's silence about this are causes of women's suppression.

Homework for the group:

Reflect on how power dynamics affect your day-to-day life, your relationships and also life in the community. How can this be changed? What would life look like if everyone were treated equally? What can you do when you are in the position of an 'observer'?

(Participants should share their thoughts in the next session)

Module 2: Discussion sessions

Session 2.1: Understanding social, cultural, and barriers to women and girls

Objectives:

- Participants explore the social, cultural, and economic opportunities and challenges women and girls have in their community
- Participants develop a better understanding of the problems and are willing to explore potential solutions
- Participants take stock of changes regarding the situation of women and girls and what is still prevailing in the community
- Participants take stock of the current level of participation of women in farmer organization leadership

Session 2.1.1: Understanding the status of women and girls⁸

Duration: 1 hour

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Note to facilitator: Participants should start their discussion on the status of women and girls to understand why they are engaged in the community dialogue. By doing this, participants will be able to understand and recognize the problem and gear their conversation toward creating a practical response to the problem.

Facilitation Process

1. Give brief introduction of the topic and some explanations from the notes provided below (*Facilitator's Notes*)
2. Divide the participants into groups and ask them to discuss on the following. Distribute the questions so that at least each group work on one question.

⁸ World Food Programme (2014). A community conversation facilitators manual focused on women's participation, control and benefits within farmers' organizations (FOs) and the WFP's Purchase for Progress (P4P) program. World Food Programme. <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000110657/download/>

Discussion questions:

- What are some of the social opportunities and problems women and girls face in our community?
 - What are some of the opportunities and economic problems women and girls face in our community?
 - What are some of the cultural opportunities and problems women and girls face in our community?
3. Let participants discuss the questions for 25 minutes
 4. Ask the groups that work on similar question to come together and compare their notes, add on and strengthen their work and prepare it for presentation in plenary.
 5. Then ask participants to come to plenary to present their responses and reflect on the responses through asking questions for elaboration and examples

Facilitator's Notes

Generally, women and girls have unequal status in their society as compared to men.

This is manifested in:

- *Economic dependence and consequently inability to decide on their needs and interests*
- *Limited ability to pursue personal interests due to different challenges, including social and gender norms*
- *Limited decision-making power at the household, Farmer Organizations (FOs) and community levels*
- *Prevalence of social, cultural, and religious values, attitudes, practices, and norms that underestimate the role of women and girls in their community*
- *Limited access and control over resources (such as land and finance) and benefits*
- *Inability to access and benefit from information such as cassava-related extension training and other services*

- *Limited opportunities to leadership in FOs*

Therefore, more focus on women is needed to change this situation

Key Learning

- *Appreciate existing opportunities and challenges for women and girls in the community,*
- *Take stock of the problems or challenges faced by women and girls,*
- *Understand the issue at hand*

Understand the need for open dialogue around the issue

Session 2.1.2: The role of culture in gendered relationships

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitation process

1. Divide the participants into groups
2. Give them the following African proverb:

“When culture is practiced over a long time, it tends to become a religion.”

3. Give them the following questions for discussion in their groups for further analysis of the proverb.
 - What do you understand from the proverb above?
 - How does this relate to the issues raised in the topics above (status of women and girls)?
 - What does it imply about changes in culture?
 - What is the role of culture in defining gendered roles and relationships among members of the community?

4. In plenary, open the issue for discussion, and connect what the participants brought with the ideas raised above for further understanding of the role of culture.

Facilitator's Notes

Social construction of gender: *Community values and allocates duties, roles and responsibilities to women, men, girls and boys. Differential valuing of male and female creates the gender division of labor and determines differences in mobility, access and control to benefits and decision making, which in turn influences power relations and reinforces gender roles. This happens at various levels of gender socialization including family, religion, education, culture, peers and the media. Gender is a learned and internalized behavior. For example, children learn what is masculinity and femininity from their early age from their parents and their community and overtime internalize those behaviors, values, attitudes, and act and enforce them in their day to day lives. Specifically, when girls are being raised, they are repeatedly given assignments that relates to the household chores, such as cleaning, cooking, taking care of children and the like. Though, she has a brother, he is often told to go out in the field. Through reinforcing these, she will learn her womanly duties and will continue to do the same to her children. Everyone is expected to conform to this socially ascribed behaviors and attitudes, roles as well as positions. Social sanctions and disapproval of people are normal ways of discouraging people not to divert from their expected male-female (gendered) norms and practices*

Key Learning

- *That culture is very deeply rooted and not easy to abandon, even if it is obviously resulting in unjust relationships*
- *That people justify exclusionary practices in the culture as if it is a divine rule and follow them loyally*

- *That when people try to question or deviate from the culture, there are grave consequences.*
- *However, change is a process and is also possible*

Session 2.1.3: Norms and Values⁹

Duration: 1 hour

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitation process

Ask participants to form groups and provide the following questions, help them discuss norms and values:

- What are some of the benefits of having such things as “Norms” for our community? Please give examples of norms that have a positive impact on our lives. (for instance, respect for others is one example of norms that have positive connotations on our daily existence)
- What are some of those things women are not allowed to do or seen doing in the community?
- How do norms affect women’s ability to reach further in their lives?
- What are the costs of noncompliance? What would happen if someone did not conform to such behaviors?
- What are some of the challenges we face in trying to ensure compliance?
- How would our effort to ensure compliance affect our relationship as people?
- Try to remember some examples of those practices that were said to be “norms” but are no longer considered as such?
- Why are they no longer considered as such? Try to understand what brings the change.

⁹ Adapted and modified from: World Food Programme. (Year). *A community conversation facilitators manual focused on women's participation, control and benefits within farmers' organizations (FOs) and the WFP's Purchase for Progress (P4P) program*. World Food Programme. <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000110657/download/>

In plenary, open the issue for discussion, and connect what the participants brought with the ideas raised above for further understanding

Facilitator's Notes

Every society has its own traditions (values, belief systems and norms). These guide individual acts and behaviors that are acceptable or not acceptable in a particular society. Norms provide guidelines on individual acts and behaviors that are widely accepted and considered to be normal in specific situations.

Not all cultural values and norms are necessarily detrimental. Rather there are a lot of positive norms that are the basis of our social cohesion. They also play a major role in engendering discriminatory practices and hence power relations through ascription of roles, responsibilities, behaviors and attitudes. Since they are widely practiced and followed religiously, deviation is unthinkable or punishable. People fear questioning or deviating from what is widely considered as “normal” for it might result in bullying, ridiculing/naming and also outright ousting from the community. Transforming gender relations are unthinkable without changing these “normal” practices that we inherited without questioning and developing a new lens as to how we understand and articulate our world.

As much as these norms and values play a major role in our day-to-day existence, they can also be part of the reason why we are not able to progress as desired. Since our gendered relationships are also the result of and are informed by our societal norms and cultural values, it is very important to understand them deeply.

Definitions

Social norms - *These are the informal rules that prescribe behavior considered to be acceptable, appropriate, and obligatory within a group (Cislaghi & Heise, 2018).¹⁰*

¹⁰ Cislaghi, B., & Heise, L. (2018). Theory and practice of social norms interventions: Eight common pitfalls. *Globalization and Health*, 14(1), 83. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-018-0398-x>

Gender norms – Are subset of social norms. They define acceptable and appropriate behavior for women and men (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020)¹¹

Key Learning

- *Not all norms and values have necessarily positive implications for our social cohesion and effort to progress.*
- *We often accept norms without questioning, for they are widely practiced and enforced through positive and negative sanctions*

That culture is not static but is subjected to changes over time

Session 2.1.4: Taking stock of changes in the community

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitation process

1. Divide participants into groups
2. Ask participants, working in groups, to identify cultural or traditional practices that were common in the past but have since changed or are no longer widely followed.
3. Once they list out those cultural practices that have changed, ask participants to analyze the identified practices using the following questions:
 - Are these no longer being practiced anywhere in the community?
 - If yes; why is it that women are still said to have no capacity, exposure and awareness?
 - Why are women not actively participating in FO leadership?
 - Why are we still talking about women as having subordinate position?
 - How would we explain women's absence from leadership positions?
4. Encourage deeper discussion (allow debate on the same issues). Confirm the ideas from the participants through voting if needed.

¹¹ Cislaghi, B., & Heise, L. (2020). Gender norms and social norms: Differences, similarities and why they matter in prevention science. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 42(2), 407–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13008>

Plenary reflection (1 hour)

Take time before the end of the conversation for reflection on overall learning and observation in plenary.

- What have we learned from the discussion?
- What have we realized from the discussion?
- What is the implication of such thinking (generalizing that things are changing or no longer being practiced)?

Facilitator's Notes

Examples of changes many people claim to have happened in the community

<i>Changed practices/new trend</i>	<i>Possible questions to explore the depth of the changes</i>
<i>Women have started to attend meetings and equally speak with their male counterparts.</i>	<i>Why is it then there are very few women in decision making positions? Why is it that there are a few women in leadership positions in Farmers Organizations?</i>
<i>Women are now negotiating with their husbands and are making decision over resources in the household</i>	<i>Are women selling cassava? How is the cassava produced divided between the two? Does she know how much money is raised from for example the sale of cassava? Is she deciding on how to spend that money?...</i>
<i>Women are no longer sitting in the house, they have started income generating activities (IGAs) and bringing in resource in the house as their husbands</i>	<i>What added burdens are there on the women? How does this impact the relationship between the husband and the wife? ...</i>

<i>Men have started to contribute in household chores</i>	<i>What are they doing in the house? When are they doing it? ... how does people respond to this?</i>
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Key Learning

- *It is very misleading to generalize without understanding the depth and width of the changes,*
- *Those practices we think have changed are still practiced somehow or are replaced by new practices that might not necessarily be positive*

Session 2.1.5: getting deeper into the “changes”

Duration: 1.5 hours

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitation process

1. Divide participants into three groups of as much as possible equal number of participants to debate on the following issues:

Dialogue 1

“When women started Income Generating Activities (IGA) and bring in money and resources to the house, the man stops giving money to the household now that she can provide to the household...”

Dialogue 2

Efforts around women’s economic empowerment have resulted in increased burden to women and also impacting the girl child in many ways as more and more household responsibilities are shifted to the female child.

Dialogue 3

“Boys and men are also suffering as a result of discriminatory practices that subordinate women and girls...”

2. Make sure the groups are seated separately

3. Then once again split the groups into two. That means all in all you have formed six groups
4. Let them sit facing each other for the debate, and take one Debate point per group
5. Facilitators, attend the group discussion to observe and moderate the debate if need be.
6. Ask two people from each group to capture the major points of the discussion in order to present it for plenary later
7. Once they have finished debating on the issue ask them to come to plenary and ask their observations and reflection on their understanding.
8. Make sure the participants recognize that this is not meant to win one idea over the other, rather to help participants understand and learn from both sides of the coin.

Session 2.1.6: Women and their participation in the leadership of farmer organizations

Objectives:

- Take a deeper look at some of the issues around women's participation and leadership in farmers' organizations
- Explore some ways to overcome the challenges around the issues and come up with some consensus on how to overcome them

Duration: 2 hours

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitation process

1. Use a proverb/saying that has negative implications for women's participation (select from facilitator's notes box below)
2. Then, ask the following questions on why it limits women's participation
 - What does this proverb/saying mean?
 - Why do you think is it said so? Is it true? If so, give examples
 - What are the implications of such thinking on women's participation in the leadership of farmers' organizations?

- Do you know of any successful female groups? (Here you can bring how successful women have become in saving and credit associations from your community).

Facilitator's Notes

Examples of proverbs with negative connotations to women:¹²

1. *"If you marry a woman and have a daughter from her, then where is her role?"*
2. *"While women think for today, men think for a year)"*
3. *"Women's advice has no place"*
4. *"Too many of women spoil the cabbage"*
5. *"Women are for houses, a mill is for flour"*
6. *"Aborting is better than having a female child"*
7. *"He, who trusts/relies on a woman, takes a handful of fog"*
8. *"Women and weather cannot be predicted"*
9. *"Women's behavior is just like the behavior of a whirlwind"*

These proverbs portray women as their roles are insignificant. Some of these proverbs portray women as unreliable and unpredictable

3. Lead participants to discuss the following questions in plenary:
 - Why the number of women in leadership of farmers' organizations/cooperatives/groups is low as compared to men?
 - What are some of the challenges that limit women from participating in the leadership of farmers' organizations?
 - What is challenging women from participating in the leadership of farmers' organizations?

¹² Adopted from: Wubie, D. B., Mekonen, Y. S., & Tegegne, Y. D. (2022). Proverbs as ideological weapon for relegating women: The case of East Gojam. European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences. <https://european-science.com/eojnss/article/download/6312/pdf>

- What efforts are there to bring more women into the leadership of farmers' organizations/cooperatives/groups?
- What are the reasons why farmers' organizations/cooperatives/groups are considered to be less gender inclusive in terms of leadership?
- Are there any steps being taken to improve their gender inclusivity?

Session 2.1.7: Examining attitude towards women's leadership

Duration: 1 hour

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitation process

1. Use a proverb/saying that has negative implications for women's participation in leadership (select from facilitator's notes box below)
2. Then, ask the following questions discussion questions:
 - What is the implication of such opinions and proverbs on women's participation in leadership?
 - What should be done to overcome the impacts of such attitudes on women in leadership?
 - What are some of the advantages of representing women as leaders?
 - What are some of the advantages of representing both women and men in leadership?
 - How would this contribute to the success of Farmers' organizations/cooperatives/ groups?

Facilitator's Notes

1. *"If a leader is a woman, disaster is bound to happen"*
2. *"The Woman is like a child." (She must be guided all the time)*
3. *"The only contribution a woman can make in society is through her physical hard work."*
4. *"The woman never thinks beyond the bed she sleeps on."*

These negative proverbs in the respective societies imply that culturally, women cannot lead or make decisions.¹³

Key Learning

- *Participants understand why less women are in farmers' organizations/ cooperatives/ groups leadership positions*
- *Participants understand the need to bring in women in farmers' organizations/ cooperatives/ groups leadership positions*
- *Participants set the stage for exploring potential strategies and solutions to bring in women in farmers' organizations/cooperatives/groups leadership positions*

¹³Kamwendo, J. C., & Kaya, H. O. (2016). Gender and African proverbs. *Studies of Tribes and Tribals*, 14(2), 92–99.
[http://krepublishers.com/02-Journals/T%20&%20T/T%20&%20T-14-0-000-16-Web/T%20&%20T-14-2-000-16-Abst-PDF/S-T&T-SV-14-2-092-16-404-Kanwendo-J/S-T&T-SV-14-2-092-16-404-Kanwendo-J-Tx\[3\].pdf](http://krepublishers.com/02-Journals/T%20&%20T/T%20&%20T-14-0-000-16-Web/T%20&%20T-14-2-000-16-Abst-PDF/S-T&T-SV-14-2-092-16-404-Kanwendo-J/S-T&T-SV-14-2-092-16-404-Kanwendo-J-Tx[3].pdf)

Session 2.2: A leader in agricultural cooperatives/farmer organizations

Objective: Reflect on the attributes of a successful leader, whether women and men are equally capable of playing this role, and the importance of women's participation in leadership roles.

Activity 1 - Leadership¹⁴

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitation process

1. Divide participants into groups. Ask them to come up with a profile of a good leader in their community, e.g., an agricultural cooperative, cassava producers' association, or any other structure, including their name, age, gender, and the leadership attributes that they think make them a good leader. Stress that participants can think of someone they know in real life that is leading in any area, but it should not be someone who is in the room (5 minutes).
2. Give each group a flipchart paper. Ask participants to write or draw symbols of what they think the character of their chosen leader does on a normal day (10 minutes).
3. Ask each group to present the profile of their character and allow a maximum of five minutes per presentation.
4. In groups, discuss whether any of the characters were women. If yes/no, why? Can women and men both be good leaders in their community? If not, or if yes, why? What would it take for women to become leaders? Facilitate a discussion around challenging norms around leadership in agricultural cooperatives/farmer organizations management (15 minutes). Some of these norms include:
 - Men are strong and brave, and women are not.

¹⁴ Adapted from: Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves. 2016. Empowered Entrepreneur Training Handbook. Available at: <https://cleancooking.org/reports-and-tools/empowered-entrepreneur-training-handbook/>

- Women should not seek to be in a leadership role as it would conflict with domestic and family care work.
- Men are considered the heads of households, so they are more deserving of the community/FO leadership positions.
- Women should not engage in leadership activities.
- Women should not speak up or assert themselves before men.

Activity 2 – Bhuhehele's story

Duration: 1 hour

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitation process

1. Ask all participants to sit comfortably in a circle.
2. Read the following story:

Bhuhehele's story

Bhuhehele is a married woman with two young daughters. Bhuhehele primarily farms in the fields with her husband, takes care of the home, and runs a small garden for her family. There is a leadership election in her FO in a couple of weeks. Bhuhehele is already a very active and vocal member of her FO and thinks she could do well in taking up a leadership role in the FO. Bhuhehele hesitates to tell her husband about her interest in running. When she eventually tells her husband, he expresses his disapproval of her running because she would be mostly working with men, and if elected, she would not have enough time for her household duties. Eventually, Bhuhehele's husband agrees that other members of the family would share childcare and household tasks if she is elected. With support from her husband, Bhuhehele feels more confident.

Bhuhehele goes ahead to file her nomination, but she is still worried that she does not have the financial resources to campaign like the men, who use drinks and food to gather support. Instead, she trusts her connections to other women and her ability to call for meetings and share her ideas. She ends up being elected and goes to have a seat at the FO. In her new role, Bhuhehele represents the interests of women in her FO; she can

disseminate important information through women's groups and persuade other women in the community to join FOs. Since taking on the leadership role, she has also instilled a strong good agronomic practice ethic in her children, who now look up to her and want to be just like mom when they grow up. Bhuhehele's husband is very proud of her and celebrates her success. This has boosted Bhuhehele's confidence, and she feels motivated to pursue other goals.

3. Facilitate group discussion around the following questions:

- What are some of the challenges that Bhuhehele faced in going into an election for a leadership role? (Answers may include initial disapproval of her husband, gender stereotypes around acceptable roles for men and women in public life, lack of resources for campaigning, etc.)
 - What makes it possible for Bhuhehele to pursue her aims? (Answers may include the support of her husband, women's networks, and knowing that other women have pursued the role and been successful)
 - What are some of the benefits of Bhuhehele pursuing this role? (Answers may include representing the interests of women in her community, inspiring the next generation to get involved in wildlife management, instilling conservation ethics in children, growing her confidence, etc.)
 - What are some of the benefits if more women pursue this role?
 - Do you think it is right for Bhuhehele to take this route? Why or why not?
4. As needed (depending on the points raised or missed by the participants), add that overall, Bhuhehele is successful in the role because she is confident, assertive, does not allow gender norms to limit her, speaks up for the needs of other women, and is an inspiration to her children and to other women and girls in the community.

Session 2.3: Promoting community members to support women to participate in leadership roles

Objectives

- To facilitate an open discussion on gender equality in leadership, addressing gender norms and encouraging positive change.

Activity 1: Ushindi's Story

Duration: 1.5 hours

Materials: Flipchart, Markers

Facilitation process

1. Read the following story:

Ushindi's story

Ilakoze and his wife Ushindi had always worked diligently side by side on their cassava farm. Living in one village in Kibondo District, they understood the traditions and deep-rooted beliefs that shaped their society. Yet, when the leadership position in their farmer organization opened up, Ilakoze saw in Ushindi the qualities of a great leader—vision, intelligence, and a deep commitment to improving the livelihoods of their fellow farmers.

"Ushindi, you should run for the position," Ilakoze said one evening as they sat outside their house, watching the sun set over their fields. Ushindi hesitated. "But you know how things are here, Ilakoze. Women don't lead. People will talk."

Ilakoze took her hand and squeezed it gently. "Let them talk. You have the skills, the knowledge, and the heart to make a difference. If no one ever challenges the norm, change will never come."

Encouraged by her husband's unwavering support, Ushindi decided to contest for the leadership position. But as soon as word spread, the community was thrown into commotion. Some whispered that Ushindi had bewitched Ilakoze, claiming it was unusual for a man to let his wife go against long-standing traditions. Others argued that women

had no place in leadership and that by supporting her, Ilakoze was bringing shame to himself and his household.

Despite the growing opposition, Ilakoze remained firm. "My wife is not a witch. She is a capable and intelligent woman who deserves a fair chance. If you believe in fairness, you will judge her by her ability, not by her sex." His words resonated with some members of the community. A few brave individuals began to support Ushindi, recognizing that leadership should be about competence, not gender. However, resistance remained strong, with elders and traditionalists insisting that a woman in power would disrupt the natural order of things.

The campaign was tense, but Ushindi never wavered. She continued with the campaign promising transparency and accountability. Slowly, her ideas began to take root, winning over more supporters. When election day arrived, the community was divided, but when the final votes were counted, Ushindi had won.

Under Ushindi's leadership, the farmer organization flourished like never before. Within a year, the organization became the most successful in the region. Those who once opposed her were forced to acknowledge her achievements. And through it all, Ilakoze stood proudly by her side, proving that true strength lies in standing by what is right, even in the face of strong opposition.

Ushindi's success was not just a victory for her, but for all the women who would come after her, for every girl who dared to dream, and for every man who understood that supporting women in leadership does not diminish his strength but rather enriches the whole society.

2. Facilitate group discussion around the following questions:

- What qualities made Ushindi a successful leader, and how can we recognize these qualities in other women within our community?
- Why do you think some community members opposed Ushindi's leadership, and what does this say about gender norm in leadership?
- How did Ilakoze's support for his wife challenge gender norms? What can men do to support women in leadership roles?

- What are some of the fears or concerns that people might have about women in leadership, and how can we address them?
- How did Ushindi's leadership impact the farmer organization and the community as a whole?
- What lessons can we learn from this story to apply in our own community regarding gender equality in leadership?
- What steps can we take to encourage more women to pursue leadership positions in our organizations and community?
- How can changing gender norms towards women in leadership benefit the entire community?
- How can we support and mentor young girls to become future leaders?
- What role do social and gender norms play in shaping attitudes toward women in leadership, and how can we challenge harmful norms while respecting our heritage?

Facilitator's Notes

1. Understanding leadership qualities

- *Ask: What qualities made Ushindi a successful leader?*
- *Facilitate discussion on skills vs. gender in leadership roles.*
- *Highlight examples of women leaders in other contexts.*

2. Challenging gender norms

- *Ask: Why did some community members oppose Ushindi's leadership?*
- *Discuss the impact of tradition and beliefs on gender roles.*
- *Encourage personal reflections on past experiences with women in leadership.*

3. The role of male allies

- *Ask: How did Ilakoze's support challenge gender norms?*
- *Discuss the importance of men advocating for gender equality.*

4. Addressing community concerns

- *Ask: What fears or concerns do people have about women in leadership?*
- *Facilitate discussion on myths vs. realities of women leaders.*
- *Brainstorm strategies to change negative perceptions.*

5. Positive impact of women in leadership

- *Ask: How did Ushindi's leadership transform the farmer organization?*
- *Discuss the benefits of inclusivity in decision-making.*
- *Highlight real-world examples of successful women-led initiatives.*

Session 2.4: Appreciating the Value of Women's Leadership in Agricultural Cooperatives / Farmer Organizations

Objectives

- Identify the strengths and contributions women bring to leadership in agricultural cooperatives/farmer organizations.
- Reflect on how women's leadership improves productivity, cooperation, market access, and inclusion.
- Begin to challenge existing gender biases in leadership within agricultural cooperatives/farmer organizations and the community.

Duration: 90–120 minutes

Materials: Flip chart or large paper, markers, masking tape

Facilitation process

1. Invite participants to brainstorm on the following questions:

- What qualities does a good leader have?
- Can you give an example of a leader you admire? Why?
- What role does a leader play in a cooperative?

2. Read the story below and ask participants to listen carefully.

Case Story: Mama Pili – Leading with wisdom and trust

Mama Pili is a cassava farmer from a village in Kibondo, Tanzania. For many years, she worked her land quietly, growing just enough cassava to feed her family and sell a few bags at the local market. Like many women in her area, she was not involved in decision-making in the local farmers' cooperative. The leadership had always been in the hands of men, and most people didn't question it.

But a few years ago, things began to change. The cooperative had been struggling. Prices for cassava were low, members were dropping out, and meetings often ended with

disagreements. Some farmers began to feel that new ideas were needed.

That's when a few women, including Mama Pili, were encouraged by a local NGO to attend a leadership training. At first, she was hesitant. "I'm not educated," she said. "I can't speak well in meetings." But the training gave her confidence. She learned about marketing, record keeping, and how to organize collective action.

When the cooperative held elections the following year, several farmers nominated Mama Pili as vice-chairperson. Some people were unsure, "She's a woman. Can she really lead?" they whispered. But she won, and slowly, things began to turn around.

Mama Pili introduced regular farm visits and organized a shared buying scheme for cassava stems. She helped form a savings group within the cooperative, which allowed members to access small loans during planting season. She also arranged for a partnership with a cassava processing centre that now buys directly from the group at a better price.

Within two years, yields in the cooperative increased by over 25%. More women began joining the group, and not just as members, but also as active contributors. Even the men, who had once doubted her, started to praise her leadership.

"We thought she was just a quiet woman," one elder said. "But she listens, and when she speaks, she brings peace."

Today, Mama Pili is still vice-chairperson, but many see her as the true heart of the cooperative. She encourages young women to take leadership roles and teaches them that being a leader is not about being loud or educated. It's about showing commitment, solving problems, and working together.

3. Divide participants into groups and ask them to discuss the key points based on the story. After about 10 minutes, have each group share one insight from their story with the whole group.

Discussion Prompts:

- What leadership qualities did Mama Pili demonstrate (What did you notice about the woman's leadership in this story)?
- What challenges do you think she faced? How did she overcome them?
- How did her leadership affect both women and men in the cooperative?
- Can you think of a woman in your community with similar strengths?
- What lessons can we apply from this story to our own cooperative and community?

4. Group Reflection – What women bring to leadership

Note to the facilitator: Ask participants to consider the strengths and contributions that women bring to leadership roles. You can do this by dividing into small groups or brainstorming as a whole group. Provide flip chart sheets or large paper and markers. Have the groups list qualities and benefits of women's leadership, focusing on areas such as productivity, cooperation, market access, and inclusion. After 15 minutes of discussion, have each group share their lists and discuss any common themes or surprising ideas.

Guiding questions:

- What unique skills or perspectives do women leaders offer in a cooperative or farmer organization?
- How might these strengths improve productivity or market access?
- In what ways can women's leadership increase cooperation and inclusion?
- Can you think of an example when a woman's leadership helped solve a problem in your community?

Facilitation tips:

- Provide clear flip chart headings (e.g., "Strengths," "Challenges," "Benefits").
- Encourage participants to give specific examples, not just general traits.
- Summarize key points on a main flip chart for everyone to see.
- Validate all ideas and highlight connections to the session objectives.

5. Debrief – Why women's leadership matters

- Lead a whole-group discussion to summarize the key points from the session.
- Highlight how women's leadership contributes to stronger cooperatives/farmer organizations. Refer back to the flip charts and notes from previous activities.
- Ask participants to share what they learned and why it matters. Emphasize the improvements in productivity, cooperation, market access, and inclusion that come from women's leadership.

Guiding questions:

- What are the most important points we discussed about women leaders today?
- How have your ideas about leadership changed during this session?
- Why is having women in leadership roles important for our cooperative/community?
- What barriers still exist, and how can we work to overcome them?

6. Summary and Closing

- Thank participants for their contributions.
- Ask for any final questions or comments. Optionally, have each participant state one action they will take based on today's discussion.
- End on a positive note, emphasizing the value of every member's leadership potential.
- Encourage them to share what they learned with others.
- Let them know what the next session will cover.

Guiding questions:

- What is one thing you will remember from today's session?
- What will you do differently in your cooperative/farmer organization?
- Do you have any suggestions for supporting women leaders going forward?

Module 3: Developing an Action Plan¹⁵

Objective:

- To identify specific strategies for challenging and addressing harmful gender norms that limit women from taking leadership positions in agricultural cooperatives and farmer organizations.

Facilitator's Notes:

In this section, the facilitator will guide dialogue participants to a consensus by which they design an action plan to challenge harmful gender norms that limit women from taking leadership positions in agricultural cooperatives and FOs. This action plan should be based on identifying and carrying out an individual, family, and community vision.

At this stage, the facilitator will work with the dialogue group(s) to decide on an action plan based on previous discussions. The action plan is meant to address the obstacles facing women with regard to taking leadership roles in cassava or agriculture-related groups/cooperatives. While dialogue participants are part of ensuring this action plan is implemented in the community, they are not entirely responsible. So, it is important to encourage participants to think about local resources, gatekeepers, and stakeholders who can assist to implement or facilitate this plan.

*A **gatekeeper** is a person who controls access to something, like a community resource or person in the community.*

A gatekeeper is someone with influence or authority in a community who can grant or restrict access to the people within it. This could include religious leaders, elders, community organizers, local leaders, or influential family members. For instance, a man may prevent his wife from taking a leadership role; a community leader can shun or stigmatize you if they do not approve of something you did. These are gatekeepers. In focusing on women, you are especially interested in gatekeepers – community leaders, husbands, male relatives, etc. – who can, because of unequal social and gender norms,

¹⁵ Discussing Marginalized Girls in our Communities: Girls in Domestic Work and Girls with Disabilities Community Conversations Manual for Facilitators. https://girlseducationchallenge.org/media/i4hbgish/58-btaccmanual_engfinalsub.pdf

restrict women's participation in leadership roles.

*A **stakeholder** is anyone who is impacted by, or has an interest in, the success or failure of a project or organization. In our context, stakeholders are individuals or groups who have a positive influence on the intervention and are committed to its success, particularly in improving women's participation in leadership roles in cassava or agriculture-related cooperatives or groups.*

Stakeholders may include organizational partners, but also extend to community volunteers, mentors, local leaders, members of the village council, and even the participants engaged in community or group dialogue.

Session 3.1: Introductions to Developing an Action Plan

Objectives:

- To understand what an action plan is and their role in the next steps of creating an action plan
- To understand the five components of an action plan

Duration: 60 minutes

Materials: Flipchart, markers

Facilitation process

1. Write the following words on a flipchart paper, very big and visible so the dialogue participants can see:
 - WHAT
 - HOW
 - WHO
 - WHEN
 - WHERE
2. Explain to them that by the end of the module, we will have answered each of these questions for our action plan for women in leadership roles.

- “WHAT means the actual activities you want to engage in to improve women’s participation in leadership roles in cassava and agriculture-related groups or cooperatives.”
 - “HOW means how you will do it and what strategies will you use and what resources do you need.”
 - “WHO means who in the community you will work with to improve their participation and who is responsible for each task.”
 - “WHEN means when you will each activity start and end, with dates and time. How much time will be needed?”
 - “WHERE means where will these activities take place, and what resources will be needed?”
3. Divide participants into groups and ask them to discuss the following:
- The current situation regarding women’s participation in leadership roles in roles in agriculture-related groups/cooperatives and the perception of people in the community (how do they envision the state of affairs now)
 - What they want the situation to be like after the community has taken action, led by these participants.
- NB: Each group should make a note of all ideas.*
4. Ask each group to present their ideas. Once the group has finished presenting their ideas, ask in the plenary: When the groups were presenting their ideas, what kind of activities did you see happening to change the situation (to improve women’s participation in leadership roles)?
5. After the discussion has reached a natural end, read them the following:
- “When we imagine a better future, we often jump straight to that future outcome without considering the steps needed to get there. As we begin developing our action plan, we will use the “five questions on what, how, who, when, and where” to identify our current reality, define our vision for the future, and outline the actions required to achieve it. You began this process today by describing your group visions—now it’s time to build a collective one together.”*

Session 3.2: Understanding Issues in Women in Leadership and their Causes – Answering the WHAT

Objectives:

- To build participants' ability to express their ideas through stories about the habits, values, attitudes, and behaviors of their own communities.
- To build participants' understanding of other people's experiences so they can put themselves in the lived experience of women.
- To identify root causes of key issues and begin to generate responses to root causes.

Duration: 90 minutes

Materials: Flipchart, markers

Prep Work: On two flip-chart papers, write "Women in leadership."

Facilitation process

1. Tell the dialogue participants you are going to re-read Ushindi's story from the previous session. You want them to listen and analyze the ideas presented in the discussion following the reading (read the story).

Ushindi's story

Ilakoze and his wife Ushindi, had always worked diligently side by side on their cassava farm. Living in one village in Kibondo District, they understood the traditions and deep-rooted beliefs that shaped their society. Yet, when the leadership position in their farmer organization opened up, Ilakoze saw in Ushindi the qualities of a great leader—vision, intelligence, and a deep commitment to improving the livelihoods of their fellow farmers.

"Ushindi, you should run for the position," Ilakoze said one evening as they sat outside their house, watching the sun set over their fields. Ushindi hesitated. "But you know how things are here, Ilakoze. Women don't lead. People will talk."

Ilakoze took her hand and squeezed it gently. "Let them talk. You have the skills, the

knowledge, and the heart to make a difference. If no one ever challenges the norm, change will never come."

Encouraged by her husband's unwavering support, Ushindi decided to contest for the leadership position. But as soon as word spread, the community was thrown into commotion. Some whispered that Ushindi had bewitched Ilakoze, claiming it was unusual for a man to let his wife go against long-standing traditions. Others argued that women had no place in leadership and that by supporting her, Ilakoze was bringing shame to himself and his household.

Despite the growing opposition, Ilakoze remained firm. "My wife is not a witch. She is a capable and intelligent woman who deserves a fair chance. If you believe in fairness, you will judge her by her ability, not by her sex." His words resonated with some members of the community. A few brave individuals began to support Ushindi, recognizing that leadership should be about competence, not gender. However, resistance remained strong, with elders and traditionalists insisting that a woman in power would disrupt the natural order of things.

The campaign was tense, but Ushindi never wavered. She continued with the campaign promising transparency and accountability. Slowly, her ideas began to take root, winning over more supporters. When election day arrived, the community was divided, but when the final votes were counted, Ushindi had won.

Under Ushindi's leadership, the farmer organization flourished like never before. Within a year, the organization became the most successful in the region. Those who once opposed her were forced to acknowledge her achievements. And through it all, Ilakoze stood proudly by her side, proving that true strength lies in standing by what is right, even in the face of strong opposition.

Ushindi's success was not just a victory for her, but for all the women who would come after her, for every girl who dared to dream, and for every man who understood that supporting women in leadership does not diminish his strength but rather enriches the whole society.

2. After reading the story, ask the following questions. With each question, allow 3-5 minutes for discussion before moving on to the next. Make note of the responses and common themes you hear. Allow the most time for the last question.
 - Why did Ushindi hesitate when Ilakose proposed that she should run for the leadership position?
 - How is the role of gender in limiting women's participation in leadership portrayed in the narrative?
 - What do you think was the community's view of women running for leadership positions?
 - What kind of difference would have happened if more men in the community supported women to aspire for leadership positions in cassava and other agriculture-related groups?
 - Men, what would you do if you were Ilakose?
 - Women, what would you do if you were Ushindi?
3. Based on your notes, summarize the main feedback shared by the participants, and ask them to confirm if it reflects their views or if they have anything to add.
4. Break the participants up into groups again. Instruct the participants,
"Drawing from the story we just explored and the rich discussions we've had over the past few days, we invite you to reflect on the underlying causes that limit women's participation in leadership roles within cassava or agriculture-related groups, or similar community structures. In the left-hand column of your worksheet, please list these root causes. Then, in the right-hand column, write a potential solution or response that directly addresses each cause. Feel free to discuss your ideas with others as you go. This is a collaborative space for reflection and problem-solving."
5. Invite each group to share their ideas with the wider group. After each presentation, encourage the other groups to contribute any additional causes or responses they may have identified. Allow 10–15 minutes for open discussion.

Let participants know that these ideas will form the foundation of the action plan—the 'WHAT'—the concrete steps or activities they wish to take to address the key barriers limiting women's leadership in cassava or agriculture-related groups.

Once all possible actions have been shared, ask each group to work together to prioritize just 3 or 4 key actions they feel are most important or feasible to pursue. Be sure to document their final choices.

Session 3.3: Community Mapping Exercise – Answering the WHO and WHERE

Objectives:

- To understand what a gatekeeper and a stakeholder are
- To identify who the community gatekeepers and stakeholders might be to women's access to leadership positions.
- To brainstorm how they might, as community members, address or work with these gatekeepers and stakeholders.

Duration: 75 minutes

Materials: Flipchart, markers

PREP WORK: On one piece of flip-chart paper write "GATEKEEPERS. On one more piece of flip-chart paper, write "STAKEHOLDERS".

Facilitation process

1. Divide dialogue participants into groups. Ask them to write down who the person/people are in the community who are either making the women access or limit them from taking leadership roles. Allow them 5-10 minutes to complete this step.
2. Once the groups have finished their work, invite one representative from each group to present what they discussed. As each group shares, write down the individuals or groups they identified as potential stakeholders and gatekeepers on flipchart paper for everyone to see.
3. After all presentations, take a moment to revisit the definitions. Clarify the difference between a gatekeeper (someone who controls access or influences others' ability to participate), and a stakeholder (someone who is affected by or invested in the success of the project). Use examples from their lists to reinforce the concepts and deepen understanding.
4. Invite the groups to brainstorm around the following question:
"How can we work with gatekeepers and stakeholders to build stronger support for women in leadership?"

Give the groups 10–15 minutes for discussion. Encourage open sharing of ideas and strategies. As they talk, go around the room and take notes of key suggestions or action points raised by each group.

5. Next, ask each group to review their list of gatekeepers and stakeholders and narrow it down to a smaller, more focused group. Invite them to consider:

“Based on the action steps you identified earlier, which gatekeepers and/or stakeholders would be the most strategic or effective to engage with first?”

This discussion will help them prioritize who to work with, and will lead directly into the next activity.

Session 3.4: Community Wall and Role-play – Answering the HOW

Objectives:

- To identify the key misconceptions that influence the gatekeepers' power over women's lives in the community, especially women in leadership.
- To identify the ways in which dialogue participants can collaborate with both stakeholders and gatekeepers.

Duration: 90 minutes

Materials: Flipchart, markers

PREP WORK: Tape four flip-chart papers together up on the wall. On the flip chart, draw the following table. Add many rows:

Your Perspective	Community Perspective	Misconceptions	Response

Facilitation process

1. Ask the participants to identify their perspectives on women in leadership before the dialogues began. Spend 10-15 minutes on this step.
2. After each group has shared their perspectives, ask them to work together to consolidate their ideas. Encourage them to identify which perspectives or points are similar or overlapping, and which ones reflect shared views within the community.
Through this process, the list should naturally become more focused and refined, highlighting the most commonly agreed-upon ideas or priorities.
3. From the consolidated list of perspectives, ask the group to identify which ones may be based on misconceptions or misunderstandings about women in leadership. Encourage open discussion by asking: *"Are there any beliefs or assumptions here that might not be true, or that limit women unfairly?"* This step will help the group begin to challenge harmful norms and pave the way for more inclusive thinking.
4. Ask which of the stakeholders previously identified share those misconceptions.

5. Divide participants into groups of three. In each group: Assign one person to play the role of a gatekeeper, using the list of gatekeepers and stakeholders identified in the previous activity (e.g., a religious leader, cooperative chairman, elder, etc.). The second person will play a woman who aspires to run for a leadership position within the cooperative or community group. The third person will act as a community member who is either supportive, neutral, or questioning.

- First, ask the participant playing the woman to approach the gatekeeper in the role-play. Her task is to inform the gatekeeper that she intends to run for a leadership position in the cassava marketing cooperative. She should ask for the gatekeeper's opinion, support, or any advice they might typically offer in that role.
- Ask the gatekeeper or stakeholder to respond in a way that reflects how they believe someone in that role would realistically act—based on their understanding of the community's attitudes and norms.
- Now, invite the participant playing the community member to respond—this time, imagining they want to support positive change. Ask them to consider:
 - What would you say to encourage the gatekeeper to support the woman's leadership aspirations?
 - What would you need to feel confident speaking up (information, allies, training, or something else)?
 - If you prefer to take action rather than speak up, what kind of support or resources would you need to make a difference?

Encourage them to think practically and creatively about how everyday community members can become agents of change in supporting women's leadership.

6. Take note of the resources and action steps the role-play surfaced, then open a 10–15-minute discussion. Ask participants: *“Do you have any other thoughts, reactions, or ideas apart from what you observed?”* Encourage them to share any additional thoughts before moving on.

Session 3.5: Finalizing the Action Plan

Objectives:

- To finalize the action plan
- To identify the timeline for action plan activities and final details.

Duration: 100 minutes

Materials: Flipchart, markers

PREP WORK: Tape together several flip-chart papers to create one large sheet and hang it on the wall where everyone can see. Then, draw the table found below on the large sheet to guide the next group activity or discussion. Fill in what you already know about each column, based on their work from previous activities.

Facilitation process

1. Greet and thank the participants for all the work that has been done, and congratulate them for their efforts.
2. Put up the prepared table on flip-chart paper where everyone can see it. Take your time to explain the purpose of the table and read through all the contents aloud, making sure everyone understands, especially participants who may not be able to read it themselves.
3. As you fill in each column of the table, explain that you are using the ideas and points they shared in the previous sessions. While doing so, pause after each column and ask the group if there is anything they would like to add or if anything is missing, to ensure everyone's views are fully captured.
4. Once the group has completed the WHAT, WHO, HOW, and WHERE sections of the table, return to the WHO column. Clarify the purpose by saying: *"When we talk about WHO, we're not only identifying the stakeholders and gatekeepers we want to engage, we are also identifying who within our group or community will take responsibility for making that engagement happen and for leading the work."*

Ask the group to discuss and decide who should lead or support each task. Once they've reached an agreement, write those names or roles into the WHO column of the table.

5. Now, guide the group to focus on the “WHEN” column of the table. Ask them to look at each action step listed under the “WHAT” column and discuss the timeline for completing them. Prompt with questions such as:

- “How much time will you need to prepare for this action?”
- “When can you realistically start?”
- “How long will it take to complete this step?”

Allow 15–20 minutes for discussion. Encourage them to be as specific and practical as possible. Once timelines are agreed upon, write the information clearly in the “WHEN” column.

6. Once the table is fully completed, guide the group to revisit their final vision. Remind them of the vision they had (*What they want the situation to be like after the community has taken action, led by participants*) at the beginning of module 3, and ask them to reflect on that as a way to ground the discussion in their shared vision for change. Then say:

“Let’s now look back at each action step under the WHAT column. For each one, can we ask ourselves: If we do this well, what will be the result? What change will we see for women, for the community, or for the cooperative/farmer organization?”

7. Once they have finished, ask them if there is anything they would like to add.
8. Once all columns of the action plan—WHAT, WHO, HOW, WHERE, WHEN, and VISION—have been completed, take time to read through the entire plan aloud, row by row, and ask them if they approve.
9. Ask them to form six (6) sub-groups for ‘WHAT, WHO, HOW, WHERE, WHEN, and VISION’ of the action plan. Instruct the group as follows:

“Each sub-group will take responsibility for working on their assigned part of the action plan for the agreed duration. During our follow-up sessions, we will come together to share updates on the progress made. For the next session, please come prepared to report on what your sub-group has done to advance your portion of the plan. Feel free to collaborate with other sub-groups if you notice any overlap or connections between your tasks.”

Action Plan

Region District Ward

Village.....

S/No	WHAT	WHO	HOW	WHERE	WHEN	VISION
1						
2						
3						

Session 3.6: Follow-up on the action plan

Note: *This activity should happen approximately 2 or 3 weeks after session 3.5 and then again, another 2 weeks or so after that. So, you will conduct this (session 3.6) twice in about 6 weeks, allowing the sub-groups formed in session 3.5 time to progress in their actions.*

Objectives:

- To identify the successful steps towards achieving the action plan.
- To identify the challenges towards achieving the action plan and receive suggestions/strategies from other sub-groups on next steps

Duration: 70 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper, Markers

Facilitation process

1. Start with one subgroup. Ask the group to report back on what steps they have taken to achieve their portion of the action plan. Ask them to explain:
 - What strategy/rationale was taken for these steps?
 - What has been successful or what have they achieved so far?
 - What have been the challenges?
2. Ask the other groups to respond to the challenges. Does anyone have any solutions to offer? Brainstorm as one large group.
3. Proceed to the next subgroup. Repeat with each group until everyone knows their next steps for the next two/three weeks. Do not forget to take notes.
4. Repeat Activity 6 in two/weeks' time with the sub-groups again.