

ETHIOPIA VALUE CHAIN ACTIVITY

Partnering with the Agricultural Growth Program

LEARNING BRIEF: TRANSFORMATIVE HOUSEHOLD METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The Transformative Household Methodology (THM) is a tool that aims to create awareness of intra-household gender relations between women, men, girls, and boys.¹ THM is useful in settings like Ethiopia where rural populations are the backbone of the agricultural sector. The tool, which is based in conversations between all family members in the household, facilitates opportunities for women and men, youth and adults to jointly challenge gender and social norms that limit or restrict economic opportunities. Further, this then leads them to reflect on their family and business environment, whereby they plan and make changes to support their future. Applying the THM approach can help ensure that, as agricultural value chains continue to grow, women, youth, and other disadvantaged populations will be able to participate in, benefit from, and feel confident in decisions that impact the developing economy.

This Learning Brief examines the impact of THM on farmer communities engaged through the Feed the Future Ethiopia Value Chain Activity (VCA). This study shows that one way to increase women's and youth's agency is by building mutual respect and understanding between women and men and between youth and adults. Bridging gender and age-based divisions, these value chain actors can work together to define and achieve shared goals and to support their served household agribusinesses, communities, and organizations. The findings and recommendations from the THM data collection exercise and assessment validate shifts in social norm and behavior change, as well as highlight the intervention's effect on women's, men's, youth's, and family's resilience and farm management in Ethiopia, contributing to VCA's broader agricultural advancement objectives. Development

Ethiopia Value Chain Activity

- **Donor:** USAID
- **Period:** January 2017 – December 2021
- **Purpose:** Improve the performance of the agricultural sector
- **Target:** 300,000 smallholder farmers
- **Regions:** Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, Tigray
- **Value Chains:** Chickpea, Coffee, Dairy, Maize, Meat and Live Animal, Poultry

Figure I. Map of Ethiopia and VCA Implementation Regions



¹ Send a Cow Ethiopia (SACE) developed THM in 2009 combining the Harvard Gender Analytical Tool that employs activity profiles and analysis of access and control over resources (and related benefits) with Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools, such as proportional piling, wealth ranking, and seasonal analysis.

practitioners and local partners working in Ethiopia may use the findings and recommendations outlined in this Learning Brief to better familiarize themselves with household methodologies (such as THM) and their impacts. They can also use the findings to plan for future agricultural interventions that aim to transform agricultural systems through inclusive means.

Project Description

The Feed the Future Ethiopia Value Chain Activity is part of the U.S. government's Feed the Future Initiative and the Government of Ethiopia's Agricultural Growth Program II (AGP-II) and represents a major United States Agency for International Development (USAID) investment in the agriculture sector. The activity works to improve agricultural productivity and the commercialization of smallholder farmers through an inclusive value chain and market systems approach that integrates nutrition-sensitive interventions and climate-smart agriculture. The five-year (2017-2021) activity aims to reach 300,000 smallholder farmers in Ethiopia's Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, and Tigray regions. VCA's gender and youth integration efforts help ensure activities respond to the different needs of women, men, families, couples, and youth,² empowering them to make strategic decisions as market-oriented actors in chickpea, coffee, dairy, maize, meat and live animal,³ and poultry value chains. The 2018 *Gender and Youth Action Plan* guides this approach.

VCA's 2018 *Gender and Youth Action Plan*, which propelled the use of the THM intervention, used the Women's Economic Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) as a guiding framework.⁴ This plan outlines the activity's approach to addressing gender and youth issues during implementation by establishing the principles, strategy, and means by which it will overcome key constraints and incorporate potential opportunities to promote gender and youth integration and equity. The *Gender and Youth Action Plan* builds on USAID's *Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy*, USAID's *Youth in Development Policy*, the United States' *Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally*, and AGP's *Gender Analysis Report*. It also draws on a comprehensive desk and literature review, a field-based gender trends analysis, beneficiary interviews, and best practices and lessons learned from previous USAID programming in Ethiopia.

Problem Statement

Within the food security and agricultural sectors in Ethiopia the *Gender and Youth Action Plan* found that, "women and youth have limited access to resources (such as credit and land), decision-making authority, and leadership opportunities. Though the specific roles that women play on their farms varies across Ethiopia's differing cultural and agro-ecological zones, they remain marginalized when compared to their male counterparts.⁵ For example, across Ethiopia women are limited in terms of their access to the agricultural resources and decision-making authority needed to run their farms as profitable businesses. They are time-poor when compared to men as a result of household responsibilities both on the farm and in the home, leaving them with less time to spend on income-generating activities. As a result of their limited access to productive resources, decision-making authority and time poverty, women achieve yields up to 35 percent lower than their male counterparts despite the fact that they perform about 70 percent of farm work."^{6,7}

² USAID defines youth in the 10 to 29 age range. VCA programmatically focuses on youth 15-29.

³ Meat and live animal (MLA) refers to the cattle, goat, and sheep value chains.

⁴ WEAI is based on a market systems approach.

⁵ USAID, *Feed the Future Multi-Year Strategy for Ethiopia (2011-2015)* (2011), 45.

⁶ UN Women, *Preliminary Gender Profile of Ethiopia* (2014), 42.

⁷ References and content in this paragraph come directly from the following source: USAID, *Gender and Youth Action Plan*. (Prepared under the USAID-funded Feed the Future Ethiopia Value Chain Activity, 2018).

The forthcoming *Advancing Women’s Economic Empowerment: Social Norms Landscaping Study* conducted through USAID’s Women’s Economic Empowerment Community of Practice found that, “constraints to women’s economic empowerment are strongly correlated with gender norms about the acceptability of work in specific sectors and activities; mobility and respectability; and norms concerning care responsibilities and domestic divisions of labor.⁸ Norms that disadvantage women in the economy include the allocation and devaluation of care work (generally unpaid, not considered “work” and disproportionately undertaken by women), the overrepresentation of women in informal sector, and stereotypes that suggest women are less capable than men, which become reproduced in the workplace and institutions.⁹ Discriminatory gender norms dictate women’s economic roles and time-use activities, shape access to employment, networks, and information, and influence how different types of skills and work are valued which affects prices, wages, benefits gained.¹⁰ They also affect women’s access to and control over income and other assets and the allocation of unpaid work and resources within the household.¹¹ Social norms are broadly understood as implicit and informal rules that define acceptable and appropriate behavior within a given group and/or society.¹² Many social norms are essentially gender norms that define appropriate actions for women and girls, and men and boys, and regulate roles and responsibilities. While gender norms tend to be deeply entrenched and more difficult to change, a growing number of studies provide evidence that positive shifts in social norms can and do lead to increased economic opportunities and agency, and more equal divisions of care and domestic work.^{13,14}

Social and Behavior Change

“A gender-responsive approach recognizes that social and behavioral change is part of the process of women’s empowerment in agriculture. Gender norms, beliefs and behaviors limit women’s decision-making power related to production, assets, resources, income, leadership and membership in groups, and how they spend their time. They perpetuate an imbalance of power between women and men. Therefore, to stimulate a sustainable process of empowerment, these norms, beliefs, behaviors and power relations need to change. It is important to note that both women and men internalize and perpetuate these gender norms, and both need to be targets of social and behavioral change initiatives.”

Intervention Guide for the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), 2016

According to the study, “overall transformative and relationship-level interventions have the strongest evidence base for shifting social norms and effecting changes in women’s economic power and gender equality.” These include household methodologies (HHMs) which “conduct dialogues with men and women to address gender inequality and promote equitable relations and dynamics within households and communities.” Further, the study found that, “HHMs have demonstrated effective and sustained shifts in social norms leading to improved

⁸ Rachel Marcus, *The Norms Factor: Recent Research on Gender, Social Norms, and Women’s Economic Empowerment*. (London: Overseas Development Institute London, 2018).

⁹ Rachel Marcus, “Gender, Social Norms, and Women’s Economic Empowerment,” in *Women’s Economic Empowerment: Insights from Africa and South Asia*, ed. Kate Grantham, Gillian Dowie, and Arjan de Haan (Routledge Studies in Development and Society, 2021), 126–153.

¹⁰ Nisha Singh et al., *Shifting Social Norms in the Economy for Women’s Economic Empowerment: Insights from a Practitioner Learning Group* (Oxfam and SEEP Network, 2018).

¹¹ Rachel Marcus, *Changing Discriminatory Norms Affecting Adolescent Girls Through Communications Activities: Insights for Policy and Practice from an Evidence Review*. Overseas Development Institute (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2014).

¹² Lori Heise and Karima Manji, “Professional Development Reading Pack: Social Norms”, *Applied Knowledge Services*, no. 31 (2016).

¹³ CARE USA. *Measuring Gender-Transformative Change: A Review of Literature and Promising Practices* (2015); D.T. Miller and D.A. Prentice. *Changing Norms to Change Behavior*. Annual Review of Psychology no. 67 (2016): 339–361; B. Cislighi et al. *Changing Social Norms: The Importance of Organized Diffusion for Scaling Up Community Health Promotion and Women Empowerment Interventions*. Prevention Science 20 (2019): 936–946; WomenConnect Challenge Webinar Series. *Digital Frontiers Steps to Success Series: Challenging Social Norms and Cultural Perceptions* (2021).

¹⁴ References and content in this paragraph come directly from the following source: Charla Britt, *USAID Women’s Economic Empowerment Community of Practice Advancing Women’s Economic Empowerment: Social Norms Landscaping Study* (Prepared by Banyan Global, 2021).

relationships and cooperation within households and between partners, more equitable workloads, expansion in economic opportunities and increased income, and reductions in gender-based violence.”

As a means to support social norms and behavior change among smallholder farmer households and their larger communities, VCA recommended, adapted, and promoted the THM approach and tool for demonstrations at farmer field days, trade fairs, and technical trainings to support household-level behavior change among women, men, families, and youth.

Transformative Household Methodology

THM is a tool that aims to create awareness of intra-household gender relations between women, men, girls, and boys.¹⁵ THM identifies the different roles and responsibilities of household members, their access to and control over resources, and their related benefits. While other methodologies focus on societal and community groups, THM focuses on the household, putting strong emphasis on gender relations. This tool has proven to be particularly effective in rural agricultural contexts where education levels may be lower because it is based in participatory conversation that uses images that do not require reading, and promotes a process that is simple and easily understood by all household members.

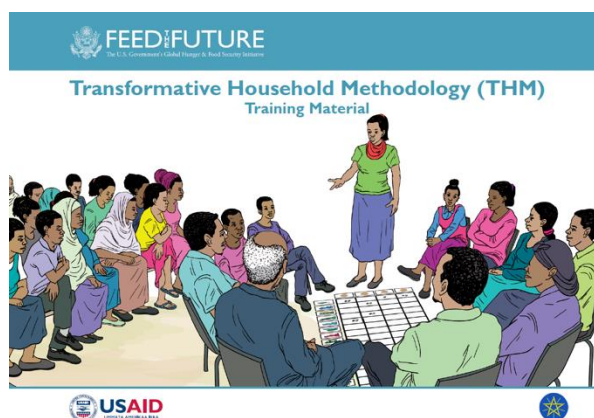
Through facilitated conversation, family members (or intended audience) engage in peer-to-peer dialogue that touches on themes related to gender relations, norms, inequalities and inequities, stereotypes, opportunities, and consequences. During the discussion, they exchange perceptions, experiences, knowledge, and become aware of the differences in workload and differences in access to and control over resources within their own households. These conversations often also focus on division of labor, decision-making practices, and strategies to increase women’s or youth’s participation in farmer-based organizations like cooperatives and common interest groups (CIGs), and income generation activities. Finally, they express their collective interests and develop a family-based action plan for all household members to follow as they make progress towards the changes they wish to see.

VCA has used THM since 2019, both through its integration activities across all value chains, as well as through standalone activities targeted to women and/or youth participants. The tool has been utilized with VCA

¹⁵ THM was developed by Send a Cow Ethiopia (SACE) in 2009 and 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.

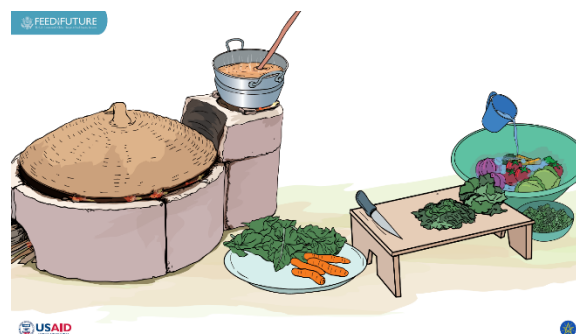
How THM Works

- The facilitator selects at least four volunteers from a single household including father, mother, and children.
- The family sits around a chart which lists all household tasks and possible family members (mother, father, sister, brother etc.).
- Family members place their provided counters, based on their experience of who does what in the household (this includes decision-making and resource use), next to the list of tasks on the chart.
- After the count, the family member(s) with the most tasks, fewest resources, and most limited decision-making power is identified.
- The facilitator guides the family in a learning discussion on how to address the gaps.



Cover of THM training materials in English. Photo credit: VCA

stakeholders in diverse settings including with farmers and their families, development army (DA) representatives and their groups,¹⁶ cooperatives and CIGs, and government employees. VCA developed a THM toolkit which standardized the training materials and delivery with portable designed tools, including a facilitator’s guide, facilitation board, counting chips, family profile cards, and household activity cards. The materials provide step-by-step instructions with detailed, colorful visual cues.



Activity card example in THM training materials. Photo credit: VCA

Between August 2020 and March 2021, VCA’s gender and youth team conducted THM training of trainers (TOT) workshops with 372 male and female DAs in Amhara, Oromia, and SNNPR regions.¹⁷ Following the workshops, the newly trained facilitators led cascaded trainings across their respective regions with their own families, their DA group members, and neighbors.

Over the lifetime of the project, the THM activity has been conducted with more than 52,000 participants.

Assessment

Between April and May 2021, VCA’s gender and youth team led an assessment to collect data from THM facilitators and recipients of the training to discern household level impact – including any shifts in social norms and behavior change and/or effects on family resilience and farm management. The assessment used a mixed-methods approach and included quantitative and qualitative questions guided through focus group discussions and interviews. Assessment respondents were chosen from those that had received the cascaded THM training.¹⁸ They included female and male adults and youth working in the chickpea, dairy, MLA, and poultry value chains from 14 *woredas*¹⁹ across three regions.²⁰

In total, 1,957 people participated in 46 mixed sex, same sex, and youth-only focus group discussions (FGDs).²¹ Of the participants, 68 percent were female, and 32 percent were male. Refer to Table I. Varying group make-up (mixed sex vs. same sex) allowed for comparison of men’s, women’s, youth’s, and adult’s perspectives and openness to transformation and change.

Illustrative Assessment Questions

- **Quantitative:** Have you felt that the decision-making in your household has improved since participating in the THM activities? (yes/no)
- **Quantitative:** Have you felt that you’ve had more time to engage in community activities like go to meetings and participate in cooperatives since participating in the THM activities? (yes/no)
- **Qualitative:** Has THM impacted the household’s income generating activities? (open-ended)
- **Qualitative:** Has THM increased awareness of women’s workload and value within the household? (open-ended)
- **Qualitative:** Has THM increased involvement of women and youth in productive activities? How has women’s access to productive assets increased? (open-ended)

¹⁶ Development army group members perform similar functions as agricultural extension agents.

¹⁷ Tigray was excluded due to delays in THM TOT activities, subsequent data collection, and regional insecurity.

¹⁸ As THM’s model works with households, facilitators conducted THM with those in their areas such as neighbors and community members. Participants for the data collection exercise were selected amongst these groups.

¹⁹ *Woredas* are the third level of administrative division in Ethiopia after zones and regions. A *woreda* is similar to a district.

²⁰ *Woredas* by region: Amhara (Gonder Zuria, Dera, Mecha, S. Achefer, Dangila, Jabitenan); Oromia (Lume, Degelu, Tijo, Ejere, Adama); SNNPR (Alta Wondo, Dale, Melga).

²¹ Focus group discussions by region: Amhara (12 FGDs including 8 mixed sex, 2 male, 2 female); Oromia (24 FGDs including 6 male, 14 female, 4 youth); SNNPR (10 FGDs including 2 mixed sex and 8 female).

Table 1. Respondents by Region and Sex

Region	Female			Male			Total
	15-29	30+	Total	15-29	30+	Total	
Amhara	38	71	109	13	95	108	217
Oromia	324	386	710	98	218	316	1,026
SNNPR	232	285	517	94	103	197	714
TOTAL	1,336			621			1,957

The assessment findings are summarized in four thematic areas: (1) household workload and gender norms; (2) resources and decision-making; (3) access to income and income generation; and (4) mobility and social networks. The findings also touch on some of the five major domains outlined through the WEAI. Table 2 provides an overview of the WEAI domains mapped to the thematic areas covered in the THM assessment.

Table 2. Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index and THM Assessment Coverage

WEAI Domain	Description	Covered in Assessment?
Decision-making in production, processing, storage, marketing	Access to inputs into production, processing, storage/transport, marketing/sale	✓
	Decision-making autonomy in production, processing, storage/transport, marketing/sale	
Ownership of assets and access to finance	Ownership of assets	
	Purchase, sale and transfer of assets, including land	
	Access to and decision-making authority on credit	
Income	Control and use of agricultural income	✓
Group membership	Group membership	✓
	Speaking in public	
Time	Workload	✓
	Amount of leisure time	

Four main limitations were identified during data collection planning and through data analysis.

- **First**, there was no baseline THM data collected. THM was identified as a promising approach during the project's gender and youth analysis and subsequent 2018 *Gender and Youth Action Plan*.
- **Second**, data collection teams used the same assessment tools but applied them somewhat differently. This has mostly affected the quantitative data. As a result, findings are based on how the data was collected in each region.
- **Third**, only one of the three regions (Oromia), held youth-only focus group discussions. Amhara and SNNPR regions did not arrange youth-only FGDs, and the youth in those two regions were instead mixed with the adult participants. As such, age-disaggregated findings are only noted through Oromia's quantitative data, though general qualitative data related to youth are included through findings from Amhara and SNNPR.
- **Fourth**, the data collection exercise could not be carried out in the Tigray region. In November 2020, war broke out in the region and since then, the political and security environment has remained uncertain, which resulted in activity delays. While Tigray was able to conduct a THM TOT with 57 participants in April 2021, the current operating environment (characterized by long-term internet and

phone outages in addition to security challenges) has not allowed for safe and effective data collection. As such, the Tigray region has been excluded from this assessment.

Despite these limitations, the THM assessment findings provide insight and perspective into the impacts of the tool within families. Also, the findings give insight into the extended effects on surrounding communities. These findings highlight the promising potential of the approach over time.

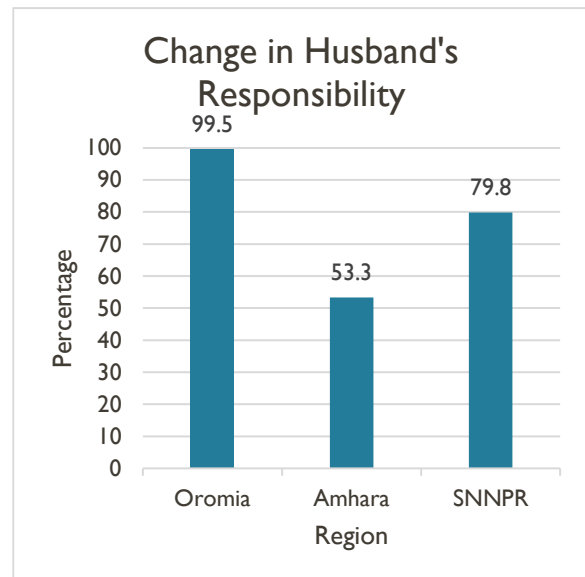
Findings

Household workload and gender norms

THM has improved awareness of differences and disparities between gendered roles and responsibilities in the home and has resulted in some shifts in attitudes and perceptions.

Both men and women work to maintain their households and communities, but their work differs in nature and attributed value. These differences are based on gender relations and can be, at times, the source of conflict. In Oromia, there has been a shift in attitudes with regards to household roles and responsibilities. Almost 100 percent (99.5 percent) of all participants (1,021 individuals) indicated that there has been a change in the husband's household responsibilities since receiving the THM training, with 984 people reporting "a lot of change" and 37 people reporting "some change."²²

In Amhara, 53.3 percent (55 of 103 individuals who shared information on impact in the home) of participants agreed that husbands have taken on more responsibilities in the home post-THM. Participants acknowledged that the training allowed them to see the disproportionate workload of women and girls, and they reflected on the gender disparities in roles and responsibilities. Since receiving the training, some men in Amhara have reportedly had "positive attitudes" and are willing to not only participate in, but also share household chores. A majority of female participants agreed that men and boys are now contributing to chores such as: chopping onions, cooking dishes (such as *shiroo*), serving coffee, cleaning the barn, fetching water, and collecting fuel. There were also reports of increased interest in baking *injera*, a local bread. One female participant reported changes in childcare responsibilities and personal hygiene, e.g., taking care of the children and washing family members' legs, that are now being shared with her husband and male family members. Despite the reported transformation in some communities, there has been resistance in others. Some male participants noted that the THM discussions improved overall awareness but that changing actual practices is difficult. According to them, there is "existing culture" and norms that are considered a "gift of nature" (referring to female and male roles) whereby some people "want to maintain the usual practices in role sharing and decision-making." At least one community reported that the THM discussions enhanced men's ability to challenge taboos and norms in their area.



²² Oromia gender and youth team members provided guidance to participants that "some change" meant at least one thing changed and "a lot of change" meant that more than one thing changed.

“THM is a best practice. Before, I believed that men’s workload is always greater than women’s, but the THM discussion showed the reverse is true. I learned, and my thinking is changed.”

THM participant, male, Amhara

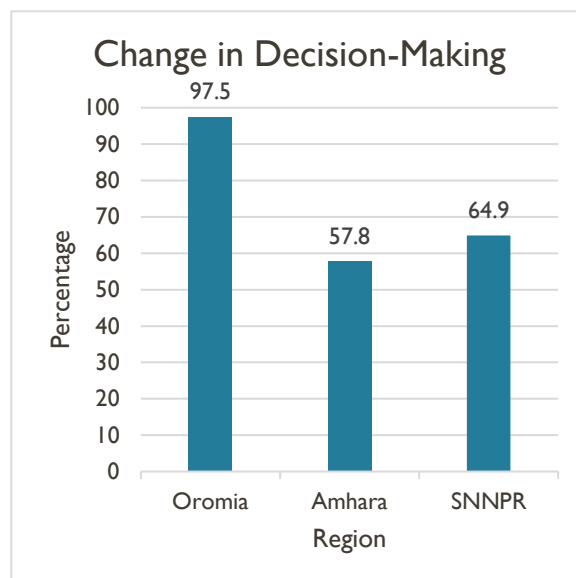
In SNNPR, most participants reflected that prior to the training, they did not fully understand the challenges that women faced in the agriculture sector – such as planting seeds, weeding, and collecting and cleaning produce. They performed these important and time-consuming tasks but noted they felt “jobless” in the home. Since receiving THM, 79.8 percent of the 517 female participants (413 individuals) reported that their husbands have assumed some “on farm” and “off farm” responsibilities in the home, such as bringing in

produce, cleaning and storing it. A majority of male participants also verified that they are sharing responsibilities in the household. However, some men (typically those over age 55) have been more resistant but noted that THM could be a promising practice for youth. A majority of both male and female participants also noted changes in their children’s behavior with mothers. For example, girls’ household responsibilities decreased due to brothers helping sisters on different tasks, such as field plowing, planting seeds, weeding, collecting feed for animals, aiding their mothers to fetch water and collect firewood, washing clothes, and helping to clean the homestead. Some fathers echoed that they have been “happy” that their children have been involved more in these home activities. **Overall, workload and tasks are reportedly being shared more evenly, and women are being credited as producers whose contributions are valued.**

Resources and decision-making

THM has led to changes in decision-making power within households and reported improvements in agency from those changes.

Women are integral members of their families, communities, and societies but have faced limitations in household decision-making including on issues that affect their daily lives. In Oromia, 97.5 percent of all participants (1,001 individuals) reported changes in decision-making in their household following THM, with 937 people reporting “a lot of change” and 64 people reporting “some change.” Ninety-two percent (988 individuals) shared that these changes led to actual improvements – such as increased control over income, joint decisions over business prospects, increased conversations on property and what to do with it, shared decisions on crop planting and diversification, open dialogues on family planning and health – in their households. Further, 79.6 percent of all youth participants (336 individuals) agreed that THM also had led to changes in decision-making in their households, with 264 people reporting “a lot of change” and 72 people reporting “some change.”




“Following THM and the awareness training, the cash management situation in my household improved in a short period of time. My husband started to ask what I needed from the market and bought things based on my recommendations.”

THM participant, female, Amhara

In Amhara, 57.8 percent (77 of 133 individuals who shared information on decision-making) of participants agreed that decision-making has improved in their household since participating in THM activities. Some female participants shared that previously their lives were driven by typical messages like, “Even though women know all, final decisions should be made by men.” Now, however, decisions are shared more equally. Where some wives previously chose to be

quiet, now they are more active in decision processes, and they voice their opinions and question their husbands with regards to profits from sales.

In SNNPR, 64.9 percent of female participants (336 individuals) felt that the decision-making in their households has improved since participating in the THM activities, increasing their agency and authority to make decisions. Participants discussed that prior to the training, husbands were the ones primarily responsible for selling and buying valuable items, including farm products. Often husbands would sell family items for less than half of the actual price but when challenged, would inform their wives that “It is not women’s mandate to know the price of

 **Implementer Suggestion**

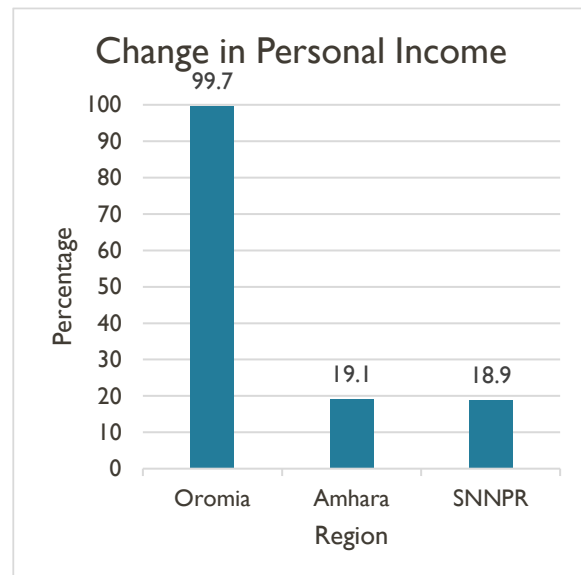
Consider skills building for farmers, agribusiness owners, and their families to better understand competitive market prices.

the market.” However, following the training, women shared that a big change occurred and that now all family members, including themselves, are involved in understanding and determining products prices (to buy and sell). Further, it was reported that both husbands and wives are going to markets together to sell and buy farm inputs like cattle. **A majority of male participants verified that they are sharing decision-making responsibilities with their partner.**

Access to income and income generation

THM has been successful in some regions, like Oromia, in improving women’s access to income. In other regions, like Amhara and SNNPR, THM may be a promising practice to support increased income generation that may be linked to increased division of labor in the home, but it needs further monitoring.

Due to social norms in many communities, women have traditionally performed domestic and household work and been dependent on their husband’s income. However, THM has begun to shift women’s decision-making authority around income, including decisions to directly manage their income generating activities. In Oromia, 99.7 percent of all participants (1,023 individuals) reported changes in personal income – linked with less work burden and more time and opportunity to participate in market activities like buying and selling goods – in their household following THM, with 946 people reporting “a lot of change” and 77 people reporting “some change.” Further, 99.5 percent of all youth participants (420 individuals) agreed that THM also had led to changes in personal income in their households, with 360 people reporting “a lot of change” and 60 people reporting “some change.”



In Amhara, 19.1 percent of participants who shared information on income agreed that their personal income has improved since participating in THM activities. Female participants shared, however, that in general, they haven’t had much time to manage their own income generation activities, in part due to workload. As men take on more responsibilities in the home, their perspectives on income may change, including having their own source of income. Participants further noted that THM discussions have helped shape family thought processes and that after THM, female family members have been seen as contributors to the family livelihood and business; some also have been encouraged to monitor income and expenses.

In SNNPR, 18.9 percent of female participants (98 individuals) reflected that their incomes have increased since participating in THM activities. However, other women stated that as they often work as a family, they did not differentiate between personal income generated and income earned by the family unit. Around 95 percent of male participants (187 individuals) agreed that THM has had positive results on their households. They shared that prior to THM they “didn’t think women were capable of handling resources” and further explained that they assumed women were “not honest with cash” nor with “sharing resources” due to the closeness between them and their relatives. After THM, they think otherwise. THM also has had a positive impact on women’s economic empowerment with many women gaining more authority for their own income-generating activities.



THM facilitation in Oromia. Photo credit: Genet Admassu, Gender and Youth Specialist, Oromia Region

In SNNPR, cattle rearing, dairy farming, and milk collection have traditionally fallen under women’s domains. However, men have traditionally been registered as owners and represented these activities through their local cooperatives, which

included collecting earnings. Since participating in THM activities, some families and communities have reported shifts in these dynamics. For example, some women are registering at cooperatives as milk suppliers, selling the household’s milk and collecting their own income. **THM provides a promising avenue to support women’s increased access to income, particularly when paired with increased shared responsibilities in the home.**



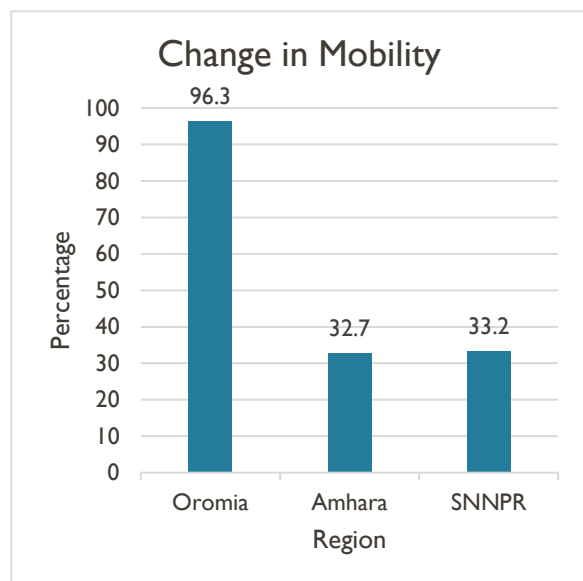
Implementer Suggestion

Consider supporting women, men, and couples through registration processes at cooperatives to strengthen access to income.

Mobility and social networks

THM has been successful in some regions, like Oromia, in improving women’s mobility and engagement through social networks. In other regions, like Amhara and SNNPR, THM may be a promising practice but needs further monitoring, particularly with regards to strengthening more active participation and leadership responsibilities which require vocal roles.

Group membership and civic engagement are pathways to empowerment, but women, often due to their familial and/or professional responsibilities, may frequently have more limited time to participate in these platforms. Changes linked to THM (such as those noted in the above paragraph on workload) have resulted in increased free time within households for family members including female members. In Oromia, 96.3 percent of all participants (989 individuals) shared that since participating in THM activities, there have been improvements in support systems between family members, resulting in more time to engage in community meetings, cooperative gatherings, and other social network-related events in their village. Of the total female youth participants, 55 percent (178 individuals) shared that their social networks improved.



“We are truly experiencing gender equality in our family because of the unique approach of THM which we had learned. Even you can see us today attending meetings which was not common before.”

THM participant, female, Oromia

In Amhara, 33 percent of participants who shared information on mobility agreed that they have had time to engage in meetings, attend trainings and public events, and be active cooperative members since participating in THM activities. Through discussions, participants further shared that while civic engagement has improved, there remains a challenge in women voicing their opinions as some women reported they prefer to keep silent and not speak in public gatherings. While some communities reported

increased registration of female cooperative members, they had a low level of leadership involvement. Participants highlighted, however, that there have been some changes with regards to married women (compared to unmarried women) and their involvement in community organizations and associated events, wherein before there may have been limitations in engagement, but they now have more freedom of movement and are more likely to attend events following invitation. This may be in part to some men’s desires to support their wives in building new professional skills.

In SNNPR, 33.2 percent of female participants (172 individuals) have had time to go to meetings, attend different trainings, and visit friends and relatives. While changes in time use have occurred across THM-recipient households, participants shared that more time was needed to assess their perspectives on feelings of empowerment. ***THM provides a promising path forward to improve women’s mobility and engagement through social networks, and communities will benefit from strengthening women’s active and vocal roles.***

Other notable findings:

- **Nutrition – Participating in THM activities has been linked to improved nutritional practices in some communities.** In SNNPR, participants shared in discussions that, typically, the husband is expected to eat first and receive the best portion of the food. After men, children eat, then the female family members, and lastly the mother, if there is any food remaining. It is possible, with this norm, that mothers may only have coffee as their meals over the course of a day. Mothers, in particular, then carryout a strenuous daily workload with low dietary intake and limited nutrients. In participating in THM activities, both men and women became aware of these nutrition challenges and how they can impact their families including poor health, child underdevelopment, and farm production loss. Since participating in THM discussions some families shared changes that they implemented, including eating more nutritious meals, eating together, and sharing food more equitably.
- **Religion – Some benefits of THM have been referenced to values outlined in religious texts.** In SNNPR, when reflecting on THM, one²³ church pastor noted similarities to values he preaches in the Bible and shared that he would provide the THM training in his church to his congregation.
- **Gender-based violence (GBV) – While VCA did not directly implement GBV-related activities (risk mitigation, prevention, or response), some observations linked to reduced incidence of GBV were noted since participation in THM activities.** In Amhara, some women are now more



Focus group discussion in Amhara. Photo credit: Emebet Yenieneh, Gender and Youth Specialist, Amhara Region

²³ While only one religious leader was included in the focus group discussions in SNNPR, the technical team leading this brief, felt strongly that *had* other religious leaders been included, that the findings would be similar, based on their experiences implementing THM in diverse communities. Given the importance of religion in the Ethiopian context and the esteemed role of religious leaders in communities, the technical team has opted to include this testimony as a potential opportunity.

respected, and their contributions valued. They have worked less through the night, reducing stress, anxiety, and physical setbacks. In parallel, as family members have worked together to reduce women's workload burden, taboos and norms have been challenged, which have minimized frustrations taken out on women, including overwork and physical abuse (such as beatings).

Findings Summary

- THM's participatory approach has fostered impactful conversations for families, leading to changes in behaviors and some improvements within families and communities.
- THM has increased awareness of differences in home-based responsibilities for all family members but may require more efforts to translate that awareness into practical changes.
- THM has resulted in decreased workloads for female family members and promoted a more balanced workload distribution within households (including responsibilities that are traditionally associated with women's or men's domains).
- THM has led to changes and improvements in household decision-making, such as including female members in conversations and in choices related to farm inputs and products sold.
- THM has, in some cases, improved women's access to income. In other instances, it is too early to tell if THM has impacted women's access to income because men's increased contribution to household duties has just now started to shift, and previously women devoted little time to income generating activities, making it difficult to separate personal income gains from family income gains.
- THM has been linked to improvements in women's mobility and increased engagement through social networks, but the activity has not necessarily increased public speaking or leadership roles.
- Changes linked to THM go beyond husbands and wives to affect whole families, including youth and children.
- THM also may indirectly contribute to improvements in nutritional practices or reduced incidences of GBV.
- Religious leaders may help promote THM through their congregations.
- In some communities, there has been resistance to norm changes linked to THM.
- Following (and reflecting periodically on) their tailored family-based action plans developed during the THM activity helps families to lead their own household-level transformation.
- THM's methodological approach has been effective in rural agricultural contexts where, at times, education levels are lower compared to more urban areas.

"We are given equal responsibility to our kids [which has resulted in an] amazing change on girl's academic performance recognized at household level. THM is a very convincing approach which helped us to changing our attitude."

THM participant, female, Oromia

Recommendations

For development practitioners, local partners, and others working in Ethiopia with plans for future agricultural interventions that aim to transform agricultural systems through inclusive strategies:

- **Continue to engage men, women, and families with household methodologies like THM through all value chain activities.** The approach has resulted in successes across the board related to household responsibilities, decision-making, income, and mobility. There is opportunity, particularly for agri-business implementers, to now scale-up these successes and integrate THM more widely through all value chain activities to support family and farm goals. Scaling-up also may include other groups outside of the household or cooperatives, such as through schools, government agencies, or other extension-based services like health.
- **Translate awareness of gender issues to practical changes in the household.** While THM has improved awareness of gender related issues in households, it has not always led to actual shifts in behaviors and practices. If this is the goal, it is important for agricultural implementers and community facilitators, such as development army representatives, to continue to provide technical guidance and work together with

families, communities, and leaders to examine, reflect, and refine their personal action plans with practical steps they can take towards real transformation.

- **Couple conversations on household responsibilities and decision-making to bolster income generation for women and youth.** Linking these discussions together, in programs and activities that address social norms and that work towards economic empowerment, will open space to reflect on the current household situation and on how its shifts in dynamics may free time that can be used for additional productive activities, such as operating a business.
- **Integrate and strengthen public speaking and leadership skills for women alongside THM exercises.** It is important to note the augmented engagement of women following THM activities. Yet, there is opportunity, for implementers working to increase women’s empowerment, to build on engagement and support efforts that boost confidence and self-esteem. Nurturing women’s desire to publicly vocalize their opinions and thoughts via civic groups and community-based information and decision platforms is a further area of growth.
- **Explore opportunities to integrate youth and nutrition behavior change modules into THM implementation.** THM’s discussion-based approach opens opportunities for families to share their experiences in the household. Given that both men and women have noted changes in their children’s behavior following THM (and men in particular have encouraged THM for youth), there is a window to expand THM dialogue to more deeply focus on youth and on their contributions to and impacts on the household. Similarly, additional nutrition-based components can help spur conversation around household dietary practices and encourage more healthy living for all family members. This integration may be most relevant for implementers whose main programmatic focus are agriculture, youth, or health activities.
- **Consider working with religious or community leaders to support wider THM adoption.** For implementers who also aim to impact social norms, working with local leaders during the THM process may help some communities, and men in particular, to be more open to actually changing practices after becoming more aware of gender disparities.

“I am now 50. It would have been useful to know this before, to shape my sons for their future.”

THM participant, male, SNNPR

Sustainability

The findings in this Learning Brief illustrate that THM, implemented through the Feed the Future Ethiopia Value Chain Activity, has had a significant impact on farmers, their families, and their communities, contributing to social norm and behavior change and better farm and agri-business management. To capitalize on these successes and to promote THM beyond the life of the activity, VCA put into place several strategies to support continued use of the tool and continued engagement with communities.

First, from the start, VCA invested in staff (including all gender and youth team members) training on gender equality and positive youth development, with modules on THM, so that every individual working on the activity could better understand gender and inclusion considerations relevant to their technical area and be able to apply that lens to strengthen project-based activities and interventions. Through these capacity building opportunities, gender and youth team members received in-depth technical training and facilitation guidance on THM and have executed the training with numerous communities across Ethiopia, ultimately reaching more than 52,000 people. Beyond VCA, staff will retain this knowledge and perspective, contributing to more inclusive future development activities.

Second, VCA built the capacity of local community facilitators as part of the initial THM TOT process including, DA representatives, *woreda* officials, and value chain technical experts, so they would be equipped to cascade THM

training alongside their other activities. Each individual who completed the training received a THM TOT toolkit. Those trained individuals are poised to continue conducting THM within their existing roles.

Finally, VCA conducted project closeout workshops in every region to share achievements, challenges, lessons and best practices, and key tools with government partners and local stakeholders, including among others, the Women, Youth, and Children Affairs Bureau, Agriculture Extension Department, the regional Women's Entrepreneur Association, and the regional Women's Association. At the workshops, VCA organized THM demonstrations and impact sharing, provided participants with THM toolkits, and encouraged partners to carry THM forward through integration in their regular events, such as monthly office meetings, community mobilization events, and common community gatherings, i.e., discussion sessions and family health fairs. To complement the toolkits, VCA also developed an instructional THM training video to further support groups interested in leading THM efforts. This video will be disseminated to local government partners and stakeholders to aid them in facilitation techniques. Additionally, several local NGOs, whom VCA engaged over the course of project implementation and who remain active at the grassroots community level, will receive these tools to utilize to their organizations' needs.

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