



# Endline Assessment (Qualitative)

The Effectiveness of a Gender-Transformative Program on  
Changing Gender Norms, Livelihoods, and Women's Empowerment

**A Win-Win for Gender, Agriculture and Nutrition**  
**Testing a Gender-Transformative Approach from Asia in Africa**

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the agriculture sector, there is growing attention to the importance of women in smallholder agriculture, as well as a consensus that underlying gender inequalities prevent female farmers from adopting new technologies and participating in markets. In response, there has been a call for further research into **gender-transformative approaches**, which address the root causes of gender inequality, including harmful social norms and institutional and policy biases. However, there are also concerns about the added costs and burdens of overstretched agriculture extension services that may not be trained or equipped for taking on social change responsibilities. Rather than adopting gender-transformative approaches, many donors and actors in the agriculture sector call for lighter-touch “gender-sensitive” approaches that can easily be disseminated through extension services.

CARE’s “Win-Win for Gender, Agriculture and Nutrition: Testing a Gender-Transformative Approach from Asia in Africa” (“Win-Win”) research project responds to this debate, by asking:

**“What is the added value, and what are the associated costs of applying a gender-transformative approach within an agriculture intervention, in terms of accelerating lasting transformations in gender equality, food security and economic well-being?”**

Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Win-Win project compared CARE’s gender-transformative “EKATA” model with a more typical “Gender-Light” model, in which some “light-touch” messages around gender were integrated into an agriculture program. In addition, the project compared the outcomes of each of these with outcomes from an agricultural intervention without any gender-specific elements.

The EKATA model draws on the transformative work of Paulo Freire, whose writings emphasize enabling oppressed people to develop the skills and critical consciousness needed to challenge existing power inequalities, claim basic rights, and drive social change. It takes group members through a multi-stage process of consciousness-raising and action-planning, working simultaneously with men and women. While the EKATA approach aims to build women’s critical consciousness and collective action through solidarity groups, it also works simultaneously and intensively with men as partners in social change. Following this approach, male change agents form their own solidarity groups to analyze power systems and reflect on how their deeply held gender biases and practices (especially gender-based violence, or GBV) negatively impact their own and their family’s well-being. The men’s groups share personal testimonials of positive change and encourage other men in their communities to reflect on and make their own personal transformations.

In contrast to the EKATA model, Win-Win’s Gender-Light approach used a lighter-touch, incorporating only limited focus group discussions with men and women around key gender issues, namely control over income, sharing decision-making, workload-sharing, GBV and control over assets.

In designing the Win-Win Research project, CARE hypothesized that if gender inequality is an underlying barrier to women’s agricultural productivity and economic empowerment, then directly addressing the underlying gender inequalities should stimulate deeper transformations in both empowerment *and* economic outcomes. By positioning women as the drivers of change, creating secure spaces for women to collectively address social constraints, the EKATA model would help women build self-confidence, help men and women develop solidarity and support for one another, and enable the communities to work collectively to change gender norms that affect both women and men in the community.

The objectives of this qualitative assessment were threefold:

1. To assess how livelihoods, intra-household relationship dynamics and women’s empowerment changed across the three test groups (EKATA, Gender Light, and Control);
2. To determine the factors that contributed to these changes and analyze how the changes differed for men and women; and
3. To provide insights and recommendations that can be used to guide future gender-transformative programming.



The following report lays out the findings from the qualitative end-line study of the three-year Win-Win project. The findings seem to support CARE's hypothesis that *a transformative approach can indeed accelerate outcomes in well-being, empowerment, and livelihoods*. In the Control communities, there were limited community development activities, and therefore they continue to show indications of extreme poverty and vulnerability (particularly among female heads of household), food insecurity, and generalized distress and need. In the Gender Light communities, men and women respondents were eager to speak about the project's impacts on their lives, yet there was also a fear that when the project ended, so too would the positive changes they had experienced, particularly in the areas of gender and relationship changes. In the interviews with men and women in the Gender Light groups, the respondents consistently requested further trainings from the project, lest they lose what they had started to change.

In the EKATA communities, men and women were beaming with self-confidence and pride in what they had accomplished. Rather than asking for further help from the project, they talked about their own plans to work with their local authorities to help them carry what they have learned to other communities. There was a strong sense of community ownership, momentum for social change, deep personal transformations and shifting social norms, which are promising for the sustainability and scalability of the intervention in Burundi. A summary of the key differences between study groups follows.

## SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS

### **VARIABLE** Agricultural production, livestock and agricultural labor

**KEY RESULTS** All groups received the same trainings on rice production techniques. It was estimated that previously, a farmer might plant about 10 kg of seeds to harvest 200 kg of rice; however, using new techniques, the same farmers could plant 1-2 kg of seeds and, ideally, harvest up to 400-500 kgs of rice. However, not all of the women were able to practice the techniques they learned through the training, due to land, labor and input constraints. Several women in the Control group were still renting land or sharecropping at end-line, and some still had difficulties getting access to organic manure and inputs. In contrast, Gender Light and EKATA groups did not seem to have challenges with obtaining inputs and were able to draw on loans and agricultural income to purchase their own land and livestock and to start businesses.

Women in the Control communities noted no changes in the sharing agricultural tasks. Labor shortages were particularly acute for female-headed of households or women with elderly and disabled husbands. In contrast, women in the Gender Light and EKATA groups were able to hire agricultural laborers with their extra income or loans from their village savings and loan association (VSLA), which helped save them time. Whereas husbands customarily might provide 1-3 day laborers at most for their wives, women in the EKATA communities were able to hire 10-20 laborers at a time during key periods in the agricultural year.

Men in Gender Light and EKATA groups saw themselves as additional beneficiaries of their wives' livelihoods training, because the increased income reduced economic insecurity and, as a result, intra-household conflict. The results they saw from their wives' increased yields inspired them to get involved with project activities. In the EKATA groups, some men also began helping their wives in the field, rather than simply hiring workers or supervising field activities.

## **VARIABLE** Ownership of livestock assets

**KEY RESULTS** Women in the Control communities accumulated very little in terms of livestock assets. Two of the six individual interviewees had no livestock at all (even chickens). Women in the Gender Light and EKATA groups accumulated significantly more livestock, with the EKATA group gaining the greatest number and diversity of large and small livestock. Livestock are important as they are not only liquid assets, but also a source of manure – a critical agricultural input. Some women in the EKATA groups started to hire local workers to manage their livestock so they could concentrate on running their businesses. Men in the EKATA group were more willing to support their wives by providing fodder and water and cleaning the stalls for the livestock, which is a significant change from baseline.

## **VARIABLE** Decision making and control over income

**KEY RESULTS** Almost all of the women across the three groups describe their decision-making process as “joint,” but the responses showed that there were clear differences in the actual influence that women have in household decision-making, particularly with regards to control over income. In the Control group, women said they agree with social norms that say men should make final decisions and that women should not contradict their husbands.

In the Gender Light groups, there were improvements in communication and men and women seemed to consult each other on financial matters, especially on the use of women’s VSLA loans. However, men in the Gender Light group emphasized that they retained veto power and authority in the household, and the women participants seemed worried that the positive changes would not last without further reinforcement from CARE.

In the EKATA group, in contrast, spouses jointly pooled resources, were transparent about their earnings, felt comfortable borrowing from one another and seemed to have concrete and ambitious plans for joint “development” projects, such as building a house, buying land or expanding a business. The men also described a profound transformation in their attitudes and practices about sharing decisions and money. Women were keenly aware of how much of their own funds they had contributed to joint ambitions, and they could make some independent decisions, including giving gifts of support to others.

## **VARIABLE** Gender division of labor (domestic chores)

**KEY RESULTS** When asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the current division of household labor (10 being very happy, 1 being very dissatisfied): EKATA women scored themselves at 9/10; Gender Light women ranked themselves 7/10, and Control group women ranked themselves on 4/10. This difference is considerable. In the Control group, women were palpably exhausted by their domestic responsibilities, although they considered it inconceivable and inappropriate to ask men for support. In the Gender Light group, women have started to see some change in men’s practices, but it is evident that men’s domestic support is still largely limited to helping only when women are sick or busy. Women in the Gender Light group were still reluctant to let men support them with “women’s work,” and men were afraid of being laughed at by their neighbors. In the EKATA group, while the domestic activities that men took on varied from one household to another, there was considerable evidence of changing social norms. Men were more willing to support with tasks, even in public, and they could shrug off social stigma, because they saw the benefit to their family. A new gender norm was emerging in the EKATA communities, in which men helping their spouses is perceived as an indicator of a healthy relationship and positive development.

## **VARIABLE** Meanings and experience of empowerment

**KEY RESULTS** There was a general tendency for all women across the three groups to see themselves in some way as “empowered,” although in the Control group, some of the women felt that empowerment required spousal support and financial means, both of which they lacked. Some of the women worried that men would actively try to bring women down once they start to get empowered.

The women in the Gender Light groups considered themselves very empowered, and they stated that participating in the VSLA groups had “opened their minds,” allowing them to participate confidently in public spaces and discussions. They defined “empowerment” as being a role model for others, participating in development activities, and being financially independent. They were worried, however, that the effects would not last and that the transformation was incomplete. They requested further support and training to men to prevent losing what they have gained.

EKATA women defined empowerment with an emphasis on autonomy, being able to take initiatives on without waiting for their husband’s approval. They had ambitious aspirations like owning their own motorbike and building a brick house. In particular, female heads of household felt empowered because they had become self-sufficient despite their vulnerable social status. EKATA women reported that they were conscious of women rights and the need for women’s representation, and they were active in community development affairs.

Husbands of women in the EKATA groups viewed women’s empowerment as vital to their family and household development. They felt that the project helped improve communication and spousal relationships, which improved overall household well-being.

## **VARIABLE** Public expression and mobility

**KEY RESULTS** In the Control group, some women were still shy or uncomfortable to speak up even in the VSLA group, particularly if they were illiterate or very poor. They generally accepted restrictions on women’s mobility and agreed that a woman should not speak up in public if her husband is there. Women in the Gender Light groups felt more comfortable speaking up in the VSLA groups and in some public settings. Many had leadership roles, or were sought out as interpersonal counsellors for neighbors and others in the community. They tended to be more comfortable with expressing themselves freely in private than the Control group women, although spouses did not always support their opinions. The Gender Light women seemed to have become more conscious of what they lacked—they still hoped for more freedom of mobility (especially to visit family) and greater encouragement and support from their spouses.

In contrast, women in the EKATA groups stated that the project had “woken them up” to their potential. They felt more comfortable confronting their husbands about extramarital affairs and discussing economic decisions in private, and they were confident to speak out in public. They were aware of their value and started to demand female representation at the Colline level. They spoke out in public, particularly on issues about GBV, polygamy, and mistreatment of women. They still asked their husband’s consent before traveling, but they described this as a courtesy instead of an obligation, and reported having a wider range of mobility than other groups. They felt confident that they could drive change at the local level, and they have taken it upon themselves – outside of the project – to appeal to local officials to support their development goals.

## **VARIABLE** Couples conflict and GBV

**KEY RESULTS** Women in all of the groups had experienced severe forms of violence in their lifetimes (particularly early in their marriages), as well as frequent conflict with their spouses, particularly over alcohol use and crop theft. In general, women might return to their parents for a short time, but they were almost always persuaded to return to their husband. In the Control group, women seemed to see GBV as a fact of life and were generally resigned to it. They explained that the local counsels that were supposed to address GBV were often corrupt or led by men who were themselves violent and abusive.

The Gender Light women reported that there had been significant improvements in how they were able to communicate with their spouses as a result of the project activities, and they found that violence was becoming less common in their communities. They were aware of types of violence (including sexual violence) and were actively involved in resolving conflicts, although the counsel seemed to focus on advising women to correct their own 'bad behaviors.' Some women were afraid that the positive changes would dissipate after the project exit.

Women in the EKATA groups reported significant changes to their own communication approaches that helped to protect themselves from violence and avoid escalating conflicts. They felt more confident addressing issues of sexual violence and extramarital affairs, and they found that conflict had significantly reduced because of the training men received. Husbands appreciated the trainings and the peace in their household. They learned to admit to their own past violence, to listen to their wives' ideas, to respect her right to say no to sexual relations, how to speak without aggression, and how to apologize when they were in the wrong. Most significantly, in the EKATA communities, groups were taking collective actions against GBV to challenge social norms and create lasting change.

## **VARIABLE** Men's transformations

**KEY RESULTS** Men in the *Abatangamuco* groups, the project's men-only support groups, described a process of awakening and total life transformation from being violent, jobless and asset-less drunkards, to being productive, non-violent, upstanding, just and respected community leaders. They described the process of behavior change as slow and gradual, but they explained that the personal testimonials—from others who had lived the same lives of violence and conflict—affected them deeply and encouraged them to change their life. They drew on the solidarity of the men's groups for support, particularly as some of their life changes (such as reducing alcohol use) meant leaving behind old habits and coping mechanisms. The gender training, together with the VSLA and livelihoods training, enabled the men to save and invest, rather than waste resources. Often the drastic change in their material circumstances (along with their personal changes) persuaded other men to adopt non-violence to improve their own household relationships. Through peer scrutiny and support, they committed to modelling what they preach, and they are sought out by local officials to intervene in cases of violence. They are evangelistic about the benefits they have experienced, and they seem eager to share their experiences and knowledge beyond their own Colline.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

This report describes the results of the third and final round of qualitative data collected on the three study groups. The objectives of this study are to examine:

1. How have livelihoods, intra-household relationship dynamics, and women's empowerment changed across the three study groups (EKATA, Gender Light, and Control)?
2. What factors have contributed to these changes? How do outcomes differ, by age group and marital status?
3. What key insights and recommendations can be used to guide future gender-transformative programming?

The study design was based on a two-arm quasi-experimental approach, with reasonably matched comparison groups receiving the EKATA or the Gender Light interventions, respectively. The two groups were compared against a typical agriculture intervention as a control group to isolate the impacts of gender-sensitive activities. Groups in both intervention arms received identical packages of livelihood support, with a focus on introduction of new agricultural technologies (such as improved rice varieties) through training and field demonstrations, market-based agriculture extension support, market linkages, access to microfinance and nutrition information and home garden support. The unique difference between the two arms was the extent and intensity of their respective gender components.

A cluster sampling technique was used to randomly select “Collines” or villages. A study to assess the difference in differences (comparing improvements in the different groups both before and after project implementation) was designed to isolate the impacts of the models and analyze the additional impacts of the three approaches.

The qualitative research reported here uses in-depth interviews of a subset of women and their spouses. For the in-depth interviews, six women per commune and their spouses (two each from the EKATA, the Gender Light and the control arms of the study) were selected to be interviewed every year to document different pathways to empowerment. They were selected at baseline to reflect different social, economic and marital statuses. Women were selected based on age, (with half of the women being under 30 years and the other half being over 45 years old), as well as marital status. This was done in order to observe patterns of whether married and unmarried women, older and younger women followed different empowerment paths. The sampled women were evenly distributed across the treatment groups.

Selection Design					
Wives Age Over 45	Husbands Age Over 45	Wives Age Under 30	Husbands Age Under 30	Female Headed Households Age Over 45	Female Headed Households Age Under 30
6	6	6	6	6	6

The individual interviews were conducted by Africa Gender Centre consultants and implemented in collaboration with the CARE team in Burundi. Key topics covered in the individual interviews included gender division of labor, decision making in the household, control over income, ownership of assets, nutrition, production, general life satisfaction, empowerment, autonomy, leadership and collective action, couple conflict and gender based violence and men's care giving practices.

In addition to the individual interviews, a total of 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) were carried out at end-line. These included four FGDs (two with women and two with men) in each of the study populations. In addition, two focus groups were also conducted with *Abatangamuco* men's groups. In each of the FGDs, participants were asked to identify and prioritize the most significant changes that they had observed in their communities as a result of the project, and to explain what had provoked these changes. They were also asked to identify the trainings, lessons, and techniques that they had found to be most valuable over the course of the project.

In January 2020, a data collection team led by an external consultant, along with representatives from the Ministry of Gender collected the data for this end-line evaluation. Full transcriptions of the audio-recordings were translated into English by a team of external

translators and reviewed for completeness by the external evaluator. Interview responses were entered in an Excel database and were manually analyzed by the external evaluator, who compared responses of male-headed and female-headed households, different age groups, and (where possible) the responses of men and women from the same household. The FGDs were transcribed in French by the same members of the evaluation team who facilitated the interviews. The external evaluator analyzed the FGD transcriptions for patterns that corroborated or diverged from the responses given in individual interviews. Data was compared across the EKATA, Gender Light and Control respondents, between married and unmarried women, and between men and women within and across treatments. These results were also compared with baseline trends from the 2017 report and with the 2018 mid-term report. Personal identifiers have been removed from the dataset included in this report and respondents are identified by household ID, marital status, and Colline. Quotations are left verbatim from the translations.

### 3. CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED AT THE BASELINE

A review of the 2017 baseline data found that across the treatment groups in Gitega and Kirundo, the selected communities were wracked with food insecurity and poverty, poor yields and limited access to inputs and agriculture advice. These livelihoods problems were exacerbated by gender inequality and GBV (economic, physical, sexual, and emotional).

In terms of agricultural labor and decisions, women and girls were the primary providers of labor, while men made the decisions about production and marketing and unilaterally controlled household income. A small portion of the women at baseline stated that they could decide what to cultivate, but they explained that this was still subject to the spouse's agreement. In general, the only crop that women had control over was sweet potato, which was considered a valueless crop in terms of income generation. In households that could afford it, men would customarily be expected to hire day laborers to support their wives, but it was rare that men would work alongside the women. As the chart below shows, men might assist with ploughing the land, finding manure or carrying produce to market, but the vast majority of farming and livestock-rearing tasks were done by women. In terms of livestock management, women did the majority of the work associated with livestock care—including cleaning the cattle shed and feeding the cattle—but all large livestock were officially owned and controlled by men. Some women reported managing the small livestock such as chickens and goats, but could not make decisions regarding larger livestock, like cattle. Even then, men might sell chickens or goats belonging to his wife without asking her opinion.

**2017 baseline data :** At baseline, women performed the majority of the labor for most crops, livestock and IGAs, but had control only over sweet potato and poultry income

Head of Households over age 45							Head of Households under age 30						
Resources	Responsible for		Access to		Control over		Resources	Responsible for		Access to		Control over	
	W	M	M	W	M	W		W	M	M	W	M	W
Banana beer		X	X		X		Rice	X		X	X	X	
Small business		X	X		X		Corn	X		X	X	X	
Savings and loans		X	X	X	X		Beans	X		X	X	X	
Beans	X		X		X		Taro	X		X	X	X	
Sorghum	X		X		X		Sweet potato	X			X		X
Onions	X		X		X		Cassava	X		X	X	X	
Green pepper	X		X				Banana		X	X		X	
Eggs sale		X	X		X		Cassava flour	X		X	X	X	
							Pots making	X			X	X	
							Soy	X		X	X	X	
							Livestock products	X		X	X	X	
							Chickens	X		X	X	X	X
							Goats		X	X		X	

2017 : Baseline agricultural responsibilities				
Married couples over 45 years old		Married couples under 30 years old		Widows (all ages)
Men/boys	Women/girls	Men/boys	Women/girls	Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Plowing</li> <li>· Clearing the land</li> <li>· Looking for organic manure</li> <li>· Looking for chemical fertilizer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Plowing</li> <li>· Planting</li> <li>· Sowing</li> <li>· Weeding</li> <li>· Harvesting</li> <li>· Carrying harvest to market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Plowing</li> <li>· Clearing the land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Plowing</li> <li>· Clearing the land</li> <li>· Planting</li> <li>· Applying manure</li> <li>· Weeding</li> <li>· Harvesting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Plowing</li> <li>· Clearing the land</li> <li>· Planting</li> <li>· Applying manure</li> <li>· Weeding</li> <li>· Harvesting</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Cowshed building,</li> <li>· Vet care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Cowshed cleaning</li> <li>· Giving water to the cattle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Cowshed building</li> <li>· Looking for forage</li> <li>· Giving water to the cattle</li> <li>· Vet care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Looking for forage</li> <li>· Shepherding</li> <li>· Giving water to the cattle</li> <li>· Cowshed cleaning</li> </ul>	

When it came to domestic chores, the baseline, likewise, showed that very few men assisted their wives, except when their wives were sick or otherwise unavailable. Even in these circumstances, men's assistance was not well appreciated by the communities due to stigma and gender norms. In sum, women were primarily responsible for both domestic chores and agricultural labor, in addition to care for children and elderly relatives.

In addition to their extremely unequal workloads, the baseline results also showed that women were victims of severe violence in all its forms – physical, emotional and sexual. The violence suffered by women also had negative consequences on agricultural and income generating activities, as many women said that they did not have the interest or energy to go to the fields, due to the violence and economic exploitation they suffered. Women and men were also indoctrinated into a set of social norms that excused and justified violence against women. In fact, women were more likely than men (at baseline) to say that beating women could be justified for a number of reasons, including refusing sexual relations. However, even if they accepted and justified it, women suffered enormously due to the consistent exposure to violence. For one woman over 45, the violence in her household was at the core of her chronic health problems:

***“I’m sick with the situation of my household. This year, I have been hospitalized five times. I am very worried about my children living in an abusive environment... I am also concerned about my debts that I contracted, up to 70,000 Burundian francs.”***

The omnipresent GBV also shapes the dynamics of intra-household communication patterns and leads to women's lack of voice in household decisions. The baseline survey found that men were the main decision-makers and had the last word on all decisions. Most assets and property, including land, were owned by men, and they could dispose of or use these assets without consulting their spouses. When it came to communication, men had more say than their partners on important decisions that affected their relationship. Close to 90% of the men surveyed at baseline felt that they contributed to important decisions affecting their relationship, compared to just 32.2% of women. Close to 70% of women rarely or never had a say in important decisions to do with the relationship, and close to 60% of women indicated that when there was a disagreement, their male partners always got their way. About 16% of women felt they would *never* be comfortable telling their husbands that they disagreed with them. In contrast, only 3.6% of men felt they would never be comfortable telling their wives they disagreed with them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: 2017 Qualitative Baseline, CARE

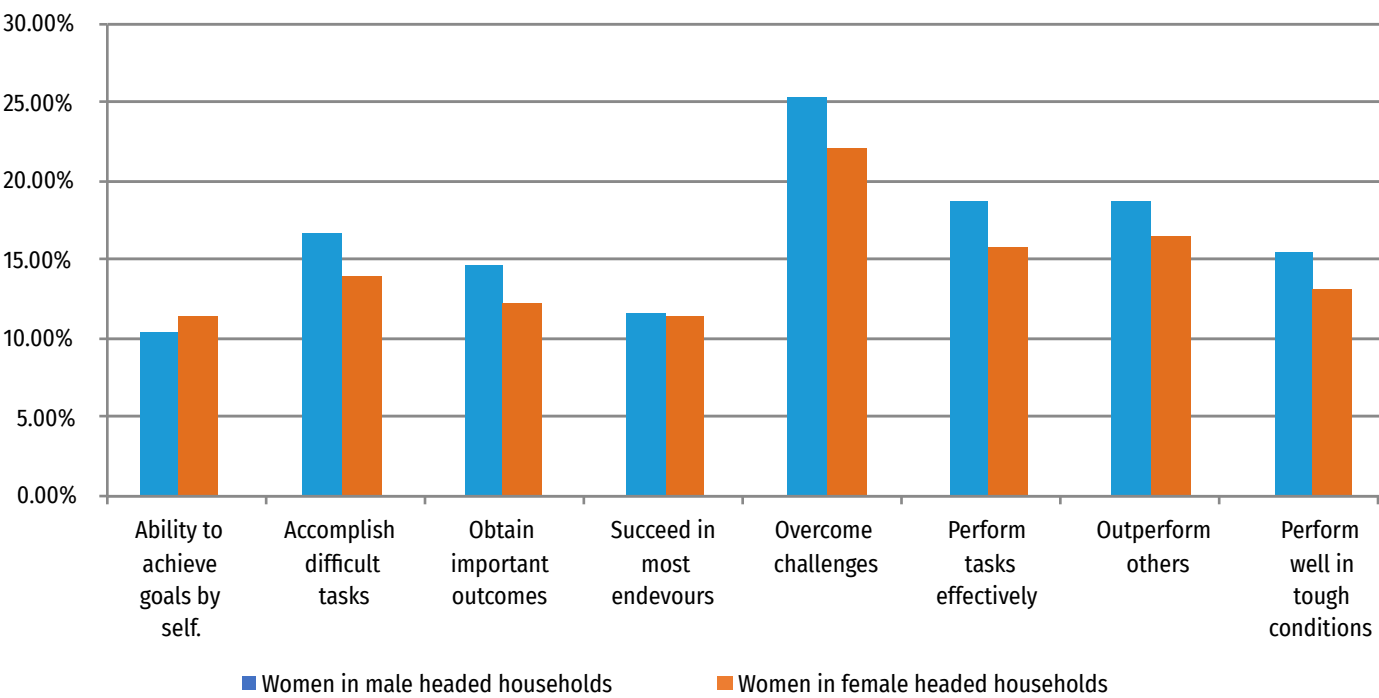
<sup>2</sup> Source: 2017 Baseline Survey, CARE

A young woman under thirty explained the importance of keeping her husband “well cared for” to protect herself from violence and trauma:

**“My husband should be well cared of in his household, because that is where the conflict comes from. He always thinks that I am cheating on him with other men, and because of that he often beats me until I bleed in my private parts. Whenever it happens, I go to my parents, but I always come back after two weeks.”**

At baseline, women’s definitions of autonomy and empowerment varied, but for the most part, women defined “empowerment” according to the characteristics of being a “good wife” (that is, respectable, obedient, hard-working). Self-efficacy scores at baseline showed that only 11% of women felt capable of achieving goals by themselves. Women in male-headed households were slightly more confident that they could overcome challenges than women in female-headed households, which is reflective of the stigma and lack of household support that widows experience.

Figure 1: 2017 Baseline self-efficacy scores for all groups



Food and economic insecurity were real problems in the project areas, and they went hand in hand with domestic violence and conflict at baseline. In one baseline interview, a widow admitted that “because of the lack of food, at dusk I often beat my child to sleep with empty stomach to prevent him from asking me for food while I have nothing to give him.”<sup>3</sup> Married women were deeply concerned about household conflicts and domestic violence, and they suggested that poverty and men’s lack of employment also contributed to domestic conflict.

3 Source; 2017 Qualitative Baseline, CARE



Concerns and needs identified at the baseline		
Married women	Men	Widows
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conflicts in household</li> <li>- Good understanding between spouses</li> <li>- Domestic violence</li> <li>- Illness</li> <li>- Debts</li> <li>- Children's future</li> <li>- Lack of food</li> <li>- Money to continue cultivating</li> <li>- School supplies for children</li> <li>- Bad harvests</li> <li>- House construction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of money to meet family's needs, buy land, cattle, goats</li> <li>- Health and finding food</li> <li>- Lack of money to pay school fees</li> <li>- Lack of money to buy seeds</li> <li>- Changing laws</li> <li>- Increasing production, land, and livestock</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Money for household needs (especially condiments)</li> <li>- Access to agricultural inputs</li> <li>- Bad harvests, land infertility</li> <li>- Loans are not enough to feed my children</li> <li>- Having enough to eat and money for children healthcare.</li> <li>- Money for soap, oil</li> <li>- School supplies for my children</li> <li>- Finish the construction of my house</li> <li>- Preparing the children's future</li> <li>- Being able to set up a family investment</li> <li>- A good education for the children</li> </ul>

For female heads of household, just meeting basic housing needs was a major concern. Most widows faced enormous difficulties in finding decent housing after the death of their husbands. One widow in the village of Kabuyenge expressed her concerns in these words: *"I am concerned that I will not be able to finish my house. The food for my children also worries me because I sold all my crops for the construction of my house, I would also like to find cattle to have manure."*

At baseline in the Win-Win communities, incidents of severe physical violence were rampant, combined with extreme economic violence. Practices of "crop theft" or "harvest waste" (men selling the harvest without the wife's consent, for beer or other leisure) were among the most significant gender challenges for women in the project areas. Some women would result to hiding part of their harvest in a neighbor's house, knowing that they risked violence if their husbands found out. Alcohol use and abuse among men (but also women) exacerbated extremes of poverty and food insecurity, as well as GBV. Across the treatment groups, women and men said that Win-Win came "at the right moment." As one woman in the Gender Light group put it, bluntly:

***"We were on the point of dying, due to the harvest waste by my husband. My husband's former habit was to go to the bar and drink until he wanted to sleep; if he ever come home, it was to beat me."***

In sum, at baseline, the interrelated nature of poverty, food insecurity, gender equality, and intra-household conflict was clear. Women's perceptions of their own rights were very limited, and there were strong social norms in place—among both men and women—that justified and perpetuated GBV and extreme inequalities in sharing workloads and decisions. As the subsequent end-line findings will show, in the Control group, where there was no direct attention paid to gender issues, many of the inequalities described above remained in place in 2020. In the Gender Light groups, there was a significant but tentative improvement in gender relations. However, in the EKATA communities, where the intervention directly and intensively addressed gender relations and issues of men's use of violence together with the livelihoods interventions, there was a transformative effect on communities. The integrated and gender-transformative approach appears to have created space for interpersonal reconciliation and healing, providing tools for intra-household economic cooperation and catalyzing community-level development and social norm change.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS AT ENDLINE

At end-line, a total of 22 women were interviewed (seven from EKATA communities, seven from Gender Light, and eight in the Control communities), as well as eight men (three from EKATA, three from Gender Light, and two from the Control group). Thirteen of the women were married while nine were female heads of household (either widows or separated). In total, six participants (two women and four men) dropped out of the study since baseline. Three of the men had migrated to look for work in Tanzania. In the FGDs, 76 people were interviewed, including 34 women (average age 38) and 42 men (average age 38).

### 4.2 BASIC LIVELIHOODS PACKAGE AND VSLA PARTICIPATION

All three study groups received training on VSLAs, nutrition and home garden skills and participatory agriculture training on system of rice intensification (SRI). The FGDs show that joining a VSLA and getting agricultural training was a significant life event for women in all of the treatment groups. Because many men were opposed to women having access to money or joining groups, women took risks and went to great lengths in order to join VSLA groups, as shown in the following testimony:

***“My husband never let me have money, because he said a woman with money becomes unbearable. Even if I had money, I couldn’t show it to him for fear of being beaten. One day I asked him for permission to join a VSLA and he asked me ‘how are you going to find the savings?’ I told him give me peace I would learn how to manage.”***

Since it took up to a year for the first group pay-out (when husbands started to see the value of group participation in the VSLAs), women who remained in the VSLAs put up with ridicule, economic violence and sometimes even greater financial burdens. As one woman explained:

***“My husband did not want me to participate in a VSLA, and all the neighbors were aware of it. Whenever I asked him to buy salt, he replied ‘Go ask these women you spend time with.’ But I persisted, even he did not want me to participate. If I didn’t have a strong heart, I should have given up participating in VSLA.”***

However, for women whose husbands already failed to meet their basic needs, the VSLA loans were a lifeline and provided a vital source of food security. VSLAs enabled women to eat enough and to meet basic needs of their families, especially clothing, soap, cooking oil and basic food staples:

***“My husband told me that if ever there is something lacking in the household, it’s my problem. But now with my income, there is no problem.”***

***“Before, women could not access soaps. Worse enough they did not even wash their clothes. But now, there is an improvement.”***

Importantly, having access to savings and credit meant not having to depend on their husbands to meet these daily expenses. A recent widow in the Control group noted that her husband had died two years ago, but even before his death, he had not been particularly helpful. However, joining the VSLA at least enabled her to pay for school fees on her own:

***“My husband was a careless man. He used to work for money that he consumed on his own, without contributing any of it to the family. He died two years ago. Let’s say it frankly, he did not add any value in the family. If I hadn’t joined the VSLA, my son would have dropped school earlier due to the lack of fees.”***

While women in the Control group VSLAs only met to give and take loans, women in the Gender Light and EKATA groups used the meetings to share information, ideas, and trainings together. At end-line, they were vocal about the solidarity they gained from joining the women's group. Some women in the Gender Light focus group spoke of the independence and dignity she had gained:

***“I was poor, and even to have soap, salt or oil, I had to hold out my hands to my husband. But with the VSLA, I learned to meet my own needs without always having to count on my husband. These associations give us a spirit of solidarity. If there is a member who falls sick, all of the members come together to give her a hand in cultivating her field, so that she doesn't die of hunger after she recovers.”***

The agricultural and nutrition trainings also provided some vital improvements in terms of food and nutritional security. Learning to “grow in an organized and modern way” meant that women could use fewer seeds to produce more rice. Whereas previously, they might plant about 10 kg of seeds to harvest 200 kg of rice, using the new techniques, they could plant 1-2 kg of seeds and get up to 400-500 kgs in harvest. With these increased yields, women spoke of being able to sell a portion of rice for the first time (rather than keep it all for consumption), with some reporting having bought pigs or goats – a few even bought or rented land. As one 29-year-old woman simply said, “Now I have enough money, and I never fail to eat.”

As the subsequent sections will show, the increased agriculture yields and access to VLSA loans improved the dire economic situation for women in the Control groups and helped them meet their basic needs. In some cases, as yields increased, men eventually came to appreciate the benefits of women's participation in the VSLA—particularly if they themselves joined a VSLA group. On the whole, though, the basic livelihoods package did little to change the underlying gender inequalities in the Control groups. In the short term, in fact, access to loans sometimes exacerbated the economic violence and intra-household inequalities experienced by women in the Control groups, in particular, as some men expected women with access to loans to take on even further financial responsibilities.

## 5. LIVELIHOODS CHANGES: INPUTS, LIVESTOCK, LABOR

Across the three treatment groups, the main crops produced in the household portfolio were beans, maize, rice, cassava, potatoes or sweet potatoes, and banana. Some also grew vegetables, fruits, sorghum, soya, taro or coffee. Across the three groups, producing and selling banana beer was the most common income generating activity at baseline. One key development for the EKATA and Gender Light groups was the diversification of income generating activities, including managing restaurants, selling pork, eggs, or soap, and even making bricks. The key differences in livelihood security and agricultural productivity between the groups at end-line seem to relate to a) the ability to buy land (rather than rent or sharecrop), b) the ability to pay for manure and other agricultural inputs, c) the increase and diversification of livestock portfolios in the Gender Light and EKATA groups, and d) the ability to buy labor. Despite equal access to VSLA groups in the Control communities, the households in that group did not seem to improve in these indicators, compared to the Gender Light and especially to the EKATA group.

### 5.1 LAND AND FERTILIZER ACCESS

Among the Control group, farming households were still struggling to get land, manure or fertilizer at the end of the project.<sup>4</sup> Uniquely in the Control group, there were project participants living in outright destitution. One 56-year-old woman in the Control group, with eight children and a disabled husband, was the sole provider for her family. She rented land to grow her crops each year, but with her large family, she could not afford to sell any of the harvest at market.

In another acute scenario, a 32-year-old woman, whose husband died while he was away for work, was surviving only on occasional handouts and alms from the community. She did not grow rice, as she did not have the land. When there was work, she could do day labor, although she earned no more than 1,100 francs (about \$0.50) per day:

***“I used to keep a small pig that I used to produce and sell manure. I kept it for six months, but then the pig’s owner took it back last December. This year, I am worried, because I will have no manure at all. My 7-year-old was supposed to start school this year, but he could not start because I did not have enough money to buy a uniform for him. I am hoping that he would go to school next September, if possible. I will do my best to work as much as I can to get the money I need to buy a uniform for him.”***

Due to lack of local opportunities, some husbands were migrant workers – often in the mines or in Tanzania. In the Control group, although not in the Gender Light or EKATA groups, some women also worked as day laborers for others, relying on sharecropping for food and employment. A young married woman explained that sharecropping is her fallback when funds are short, or land is scarce:

***“When we miss money to rent our own land, we search for someone who has land of their own and we grow on his field and share the harvest. When we do have the money, we prefer to rent our own land to cultivate.”***

Women in the EKATA groups did not mention land rental as an activity, and they seemed to have greater ease with raising capital for inputs and obtaining fertilizer and manure. One EKATA woman said that fertilizer was easy to obtain, thanks to the livestock she owned. Another 27-year-old widow in the EKATA group said that government fertilizers were affordable:

***“For fertilizers? We get it from the Government. One has to give the advance and precise how many bags they are willing to take. When it is time to give the remaining balance, you just give it and they give you the bags you have ordered.”***

<sup>4</sup> It is not clear whether there were potentially baseline conditions in the control areas that contributed to this difference in land ownership at end-line. The team will continue to examine the survey data to validate this observation.

## 5.2 LIVESTOCK REARING

At baseline, as noted earlier, livestock were generally cared for by women, but controlled by men, with the exception of poultry. At end-line, there was a significant contrast between Control group households (who still had few livestock) and the Gender Light and EKATA households, which had far more diverse livestock portfolios. In the Control group, only one family mentioned that they had a cow, but this cow belonged to the husband and the rest of the family did not see any proceeds from it. Two out of six individual interviewees in the Control group did not have any livestock at all, while one woman had only chickens.

In the Gender Light group, four of the six households had more than one type of animal; four had a cow or calf (although these were generally controlled by the husband), and two households had six goats each. One Gender Light woman was managing a cow for someone else, but she did not have the proceeds of it. (Her husband also kept a cow, but he used the proceeds for his second wife.)

In the EKATA households, the number of animals that the households accumulated in their portfolio was higher than in the other two groups (even despite loss due to disease). Significantly, EKATA widows were not at a disadvantage, compared to married EKATA women. One EKATA widow, for example, had lost 16 hens to disease, but she still had 9 chickens, 12 rabbits, one cow, and one goat.

Total number of livestock reported by respondents			
	Control (N=6)	Gender Light (N=6)	EKATA (N=6)
Cow	1	4	2
Pigs	3	4	5
Goat	1	12	13
Hens	6	3	24
Rabbits	2	0	24
Mice, guinea pigs	0	10	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>68</b>

This differentiated livestock ownership portfolio continues a trend seen in the 2018 midterm data, which found that households in the EKATA group had acquired more pigs (40%), goats (36%) and poultry (28%) compared to other groups. Similarly, households in the Gender Light group acquired more pigs and goats than the Control group households. At the midterm, households in the Control group had acquired slightly more poultry (24%) than the Gender Light group (22%) but, otherwise, had not increased their livestock portfolios significantly.

## 5.3 AGRICULTURAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCESS TO LABOR

At end-line in 2020, there were seven main cultivation activities identified across the different treatment groups: plowing, planting, preparing the nursery/seedlings, transplanting, applying manure, weeding and harvesting. A few crops (sweet potatoes and cassava) were mentioned specifically as women's crops, while managing the banana plantation (not necessarily the banana beer production) was an exclusively male domain. When asked to explain "Who does what?" with regards to agricultural tasks, the women in the Control group were more likely than those in the other two groups to do most of the cultivation tasks themselves, which remained consistent from baseline to end-line. For widows and female heads of household in the Control group, the agriculture labor is particularly burdensome, as they do not have the money to hire laborers to help. In the Control group, only two women noted a change in the responsibilities for agricultural tasks: one for the better, one for the worse. One 22-year old woman in the Control group stated that the agricultural labor burdens worsened after she joined the VSLA:

*"When I joined NAWE NUZE [the VLSA], some members would come and help me with cultivating. Therefore, my husband became somehow indifferent and lazy and stopped helping me....After joining NAWE NUZE [the VLSA], he has completely left me with those activities, as he says that now that I have joined the VSLA, I am earning money."*



On the other hand, a 61-year old woman from the same Colline said that, even though he was not part of the project, her husband had started to join in the VSLA trainings. The effect of these trainings was that she could participate in income generating activities:

***“He was invited together with neighbors and they asked him about the way we live, how we share tasks, and he explained. The trainings have definitely changed him. Before, he didn’t want me to get money...He thought that when I got money, I would take control over him. But now, there is no problem. When I get money, I bring it at home, and we decide together on what we can do with it. Even the cow we have, we got it from the money I got from my VSLA.”***

In the Gender Light groups, women were more likely to say that they had a fluid work arrangement for sharing agricultural labor, according to which “whoever has time to, goes.” The more common arrangement, however, seemed to be that women would do the work, and men are responsible for providing hired labor (if they can afford it) and money for inputs and fertilizers, using earnings from wage labor, if they have it. For example, a young woman in the Gender Light group, whose husband worked in the local gold mine, explained,

***“We help each other. For example, in searching for feed for the goats, he does it when he has time, or I do it when he is busy elsewhere. It is my husband who goes to hire the workers. When he has time, we go to the field together. When he doesn’t, he hires workers to help me. For weeding and sowing, when he has time, we do it together. But if he doesn’t, he hires workers to help me.”***

In the Gender Light group, four of the six women specifically mentioned the trainings or support from VSLA activities in changing the division of labor for the better. They noted that the trainings gave them “permission” to engage in income generating activities, with their spouse’s blessing.

For head of household Clemence (who is caring for her disabled husband), the project didn’t reduce her work burdens, but she “saluted the project” as it gave her the means to meet her household responsibilities: “since I am responsible of everything in the household like paying the school fees.” While she was clearly exhausted and wished for more “mutual support,” she wasn’t bitter: “When he was still active, we helped each other. Now that he is passive, I need to support him.”

One 41-year old woman noted that the project supported her to be economically active, and it encouraged her husband to support her income generating activities, which reduced a major source of strife in the household. She spoke gratefully about the gender trainings, saying:

***“After one of the sessions, my husband told me that it was as if the whole session was talking about him. From then on, he has changed, and now, he is the one who volunteers. He is even advising his fellow men to apply what they have been taught and suggested that they should start a men’s VSLA.”***

Her husband’s own words, however, reveal a less-than-complete transformation. “There has been some slight change,” he said, but his responses affirm a strict hierarchy, emphasizing that the man is the head of the household:

***“Each one of us has his part to play. For instance, after we have gathered the harvest, she is the one who looks after it. But when it comes to buying bananas and selling the banana beer, I am the one who decides... It is the man who has always been the one who makes decisions and the woman is just a helper.”***

Women in the Gender Light groups usually said that they--or rather their husband--could hire 1-3 workers to support them with cultivation tasks. More important, **one** woman’s husband concurred that while he used to just provide workers for his wife, nowadays, he works side-by-side with her and the workers in the field:

***“It is too difficult to cultivate. The wife cannot cultivate alone; we have to help each other. When we get to the reaping time, we conserve a part of the harvest for home daily use, and another part can be sold if need be. At home, we share all our riches in common; no one says this or that is mine.”***

While four of the six Gender Light women applauded the awareness-raising sessions for men, there was nonetheless a sense of trepidation that the changes might dissipate if they were not reinforced. One said that before the sessions, her husband used to sell the harvest and keep the money, and that he never helped with weeding:

***“Before we participated in the awareness raising sessions on the family management, each of us had to do his own activities without consulting each other. But since we got the trainings, we now work together on whatever needs to be done. However, there are still some decisions that he makes without consulting me, like with bananas. I often tell him that since we share all activities, we should make all decisions together on how to manage our family. Maybe he will change if the training sessions continue.”***

In the EKATA groups, women were able to meet their agriculture needs by hiring associations of day laborers (with income or loans). Whereas at baseline, husbands might, at best hire two or three workers to support their wives, at end-line, women in the EKATA groups could engage up to 10-20 workers at a time, at 2,000 francs per person, a sum that would have been unthinkable before. Hiring labor allowed them to complete key production tasks quickly saving them energy and labor:

***“Sometimes, I can up to 20 people and pay them 2,000 francs per individual and per day. Whether it is expensive or cheap, one must do it, because we cannot stop cultivating while that is our main calling. When the climate has been bad, that is when we complain, otherwise, if it goes well, there is no single problem.”***

Many female heads of household in the EKATA groups had their own thriving income generating businesses, and they preferred to hire day laborers to do the fieldwork so that they could concentrate on their enterprises. One 27-year-old widow with two young children, was so busy with her banana beer business that she hired what she called “employees” even to look after the livestock. She was able to engage a group of 10-20 workers, at 2000 francs, or almost \$1 per day, which allowed her to keep up her business activities:

***“I hire people to cultivate for me because I am busy with my business. Then, I hire qualified cultivators to come and cultivate for me so that I stay focused on other home activities.”***

An older widow (age 60), stated that since the death of her husband, she had bought five plots of land with money earned from her restaurant. Because she is so busy with her restaurant business, she hires workers to “grow for me in a modern way” so that she can get a good harvest while concentrating on her restaurant work. She explained that while before, women would be “cursed” for doing business, now they can:

***“It was Chantal [the Win-Win facilitator] who woke us up, telling us that we have to stand up for ourselves. There is nothing I cannot do, now.”***

Uniquely in the EKATA groups, some husbands attested that instead of just hiring workers for their wives, they themselves were taking a greater interest in supporting their wives’ agriculture labor. For example, one EKATA woman, whose husband is often in Tanzania for work, explained that when her husband is home, he now helps with all of the agricultural tasks, including weeding. When he is away, she uses her own savings to hire up to five workers four times in a season. At first, her husband supported her with her expenses, but not wanting to depend on him, she took a loan to start a banana business, which allowed her to keep paying on her own:

***“When you’re a responsible wife, you cannot turn to your husband so that he sends money always. You can either turn to your savings or use the profit from your small businesses.”***

Men saw that it was profitable for them to put in the effort, and so they started to join their wives in the fields or in caring for the livestock:

***“Before, I was sending money to my wife at home so she could employ workers who could replace me at my absence. But, today, I am always at home and we do all the activities together. I have engaged in agricultural and breeding activities as I have noticed that they supply more money than my old business. Now, we buy bananas and make banana beer for sale, and we get enough money.”***

A 24-year-old married woman explained that her husband still made most of the decisions, but she described a more harmonious sharing of labor, since she (and later her husband) joined the VLSA:

***“We work in partnership. We do everything together. Before, I would go to the farm alone, but now, if he realizes that we cannot go together since he is busy, he asks me to postpone it for another day. As far as the livestock is concerned, he looks for the fodder every morning and I can care for children.”***

Her husband had a more modest appraisal of his contributions, admitting, “We undertake all these activities together, but truly, it is my wife who often deals with them.” Nonetheless, he attributed the change in his own attitudes to the Nawe Nuze (VSLA) trainings:

***“Before, I used to leave her to work on her own. But this changed when the VSLAs came. They have told us to do our best to be in good terms with each other in our everyday life.”***

Even one older husband (who had been imprisoned for 10 years and “no longer wants to work”) admitted that while he prefers to focus on the banana business, he sometimes joins his wife in providing day-labor alongside the VSLA day labor associations.

The men in the focus groups spoke with enthusiasm about the benefits of the agricultural techniques they learned and the increased yields they generated. Although it was principally the women who received the agricultural trainings, their wives shared what they learned, and men followed their advice “without constraint.” Interestingly, many felt that *men* benefitted the most from the project, because it relieved them of the distress, fatigue and frustration of running around trying to earn money for the household. As one man from the Gender Light group described:

***“These changes brought me great benefits. I was running here and there to get money to meet the needs of my family. Sometimes I would return home empty-handed. My wife would ask me what I'd brought, and I would just kept quiet. The children left school and we were. After the agriculture trainings, we have had a good harvest. We grew so much that we were able to sell some of our harvest, which allowed us to buy some small livestock. Now, I don't need to go elsewhere looking for income.”***

In one Gender Light focus group discussion, men said that when the family is suffering for lack of food, it is the men who have to struggle to find a way to feed the family. Some added that thanks to the increased revenue and livestock, they had access to organic manure that they could also share with others in the community. They also commented that most men now work side by side with their wives in the field, rather than sitting in bars, because they saw the potential benefit of their agriculture projects:

***“Before, we men in the community spent our time sitting in public places, doing nothing, because they didn't see the use of working without producing anything. With the increased production thanks to these techniques taught by Win-Win, most men now go cultivate, and there aren't any men who just sit around with nothing to do.”***

In another focus group, men stated that they were now better able to provide for their children, and they no longer spent the day just drinking beer. Because they were able to meet their responsibilities, they had greater respect from their spouses:

***“For my part, it's me who has gained the most, because if the rations are finished, there's no more oil or salt, that responsibility comes down to men. So, if men are not able to meet his responsibilities, it brings quarrels to the family. Now, dialogue is complete, and we decide together on the amount that we'll sell. There is always salt and oil available, and so there is less stress for men. When men are capable of meeting their responsibilities, he is more respected by his wife and his children. That is why I say that men have gained the most.”***

## 6. DECISION-MAKING CONTROL

At baseline, the 2017 report found that men were the main decision makers in all three study groups. Even if some women said that there was consultation taking place before a decision-making, it was generally the man who had the last word. At end-line, however, the differences between the treatment groups were stark. There were clear differences in the leverage and actual influence that women had in decision-making processes, across the three study groups. In the Control group, for example, women found it appropriate for men to make decisions, with the exception of widows or female-heads of household. They said that women have no veto power, and husbands can make decisions without consultation. In the Gender Light group, there was evidence of improvements in communication and significant reduction in men's "crop theft" or mismanagement at the end of the harvest, although women seemed worried that the change would not last without reinforcement from the Win-Win project. Men in the Gender Light group spoke of "joint consultation," but clearly still retained veto power and authority in the household. In the EKATA group, in contrast, spouses jointly pooled resources, could borrow from one another and repay each other. They seemed to have concrete and ambitious plans for joint investments, such as building a house together, buying land, or expanding businesses. The snapshot below illustrates the differences in women's perceptions around decision-making influence and self-confidence.

Control	Gender Light	EKATA
<p><i>"He gives me the money that we can use for a project, but if he gets little money, he keeps it himself and uses it to buy beer. I can sell small things, such as a basket of sweet potatoes or cassava, but I must inform him. I can't take a harvest of beans and bring them to the market. <b>Even when I want to buy a pullover, I must inform him.</b> I can buy it only after consulting him if I want to use the money that I earn from my own business."</i></p>	<p><i>"There's <b>dialogue within the family</b>, and we make decisions together. Before the project, my husband made all decisions alone – that was the practice in all our households. But <b>we can now say that there has been a change, thanks to the trainings</b> we received, although there are some men who have not changed."</i></p>	<p><i>"I contributed 500,000 francs and he added 100,000 francs. We bought land at 600,000 francs. After, we sold it at 800,000 francs, and then used the profit to buy a better piece of land. In total, <b>I contributed 1,100,000 francs, and he contributed 1,300,000.</b> We now have that capital!"</i></p> <p><i>"With this project, my husband and I became very close to each other and <b>have agreed on projects I had never dreamt to do before.</b>"</i></p>

### 6.1 CONTROL GROUP: NO CHANGE, LIMITED INFLUENCE

None of the women in the Control group reported positive changes in decision-making patterns at the end of the project, except in the cases where a husband had become old, disabled or died, therefore leaving women with the stress and burden of managing all of the livelihood decisions themselves. Only one young couple from Gikuyo built a relationship based on mutual understanding over the course of the project, in which they could occasionally make independent decisions without first informing the other. He once bought a solar panel without informing his wife, and she once bought some hens without telling him. As the husband explained,

***"We talk and discuss about it when we are going to sleep, and I may even find out that she has a more interesting project. Then, I drop mine and consider hers."***

Apart from this household, most of the women in the Control group indicated that it would be inappropriate for women to make independent decisions, and that as heads of household, men have final word on decisions. As one woman in Kidasha explains:

***"He just informs me on what he thinks we can do. I can't refuse, except when I see that it is a bad decision.... Yes, I'm occasionally obliged to accept unwillingly. All that we have belongs to the family. So, if you begin to make decisions alone, you are bringing problems."***

Even though some women used the term “jointly” to describe their decision-making processes, it was clear that women’s influence is limited. Women could start businesses, but only with their spouse’s permission. Women were also expected to use their own earnings to cover household expenses, clothes, and school fees. One 61-year-old married woman explained that her husband entrusted her with the household money, but only so that he would not waste it. Even though she physically handled the money, she did not have the authority to spend it:

***“It is up to him to know when to use it. He gives me the money that we can use for a project, but if he gets little money, he keeps it himself and uses it to buy beer. If I want to buy clothes for our children, I must inform him. I can buy it without consulting him [only] when I use the money that I get from my business.”***

This practice of women managing money for their husbands appears to exist primarily among some older couples. In younger couples, men control the income to avoid being “dominated” by his wife.

In the Control group, most women accepted this decision-making pattern as appropriate, but some were vocally unhappy about it. One even lamented that she did not know any husband who would support his wife’s development, and feared that men actively try to obstruct women’s potential:

***“Instead, when a man realizes that his wife is evolving, all he does is put her down to avoid her empowerment. Women cope by working as much as they can.”***

## **6.2 GENDER LIGHT: IMPROVED COMMUNICATION, BUT “SOMETHING IS MISSING”**

In the Gender Light group, many women reported positive change in decision-making, particularly in terms of “mutual discussion” and reduction in conflict over income. However, the limits of women’s influence are still clear. Most women still said that husbands have the ultimate say, and women do their part to preserve his authority. In one Gender Light household, the husband clearly retained his role as ultimate decision-maker, and he saw her VLSA contributions as a source of revenue for his own projects. While his wife spoke glowingly of their joint discussions, she also admitted that, “most of the time, it is the man who has the last word.”

This woman’s husband was also very clear in his role as head of household, stating that “It is the man who has always been the one who makes decisions, and the woman is just a helper.” From her husband’s perspective, the major change was that, “now, when I tell her such things, she understands,” and that now, when he wants to buy something, she can contribute her VSLA savings and loans to his projects.

In another Gender Light household, a married woman explained that “nothing has changed,” but she was still satisfied, because her husband did not drink much and didn’t waste the harvest. Her responses illustrate the limits of her influence over decisions. She needed her husband’s consent on whether to grow a crop; she contributed money to the family cow, but her husband mainly takes decisions on it; and she bought a pig with her own VSLA contributions, which then became family property. She can give suggestions about what to do with the pig, “but if he said no, I could not oppose him.” When her husband sold one of her piglets, he brought her the money; she decided to buy a plot of land but gave him the ownership title.

The 20-year-old Muslim woman (who was married at the age of 16), claimed that she could influence decisions, because she had encouraged her husband to purchase two goats, to which they both contributed the money, they had opened a savings account (in her husband’s name), and they had made plans to buy a plot of land. In her view, this constituted joint agreement:

***“We make all decisions together and advise each other whenever there are any problems which arise in our household. Of course, I cannot make any decision without his consent; it would appear like I have taken control over him.”***



From her husband's perspective, it was fully clear that she could give her opinion but not make decisions herself. Although they discussed the crop money together, he did not disclose his mining income to her; he also had some livestock that she did not know about. Justifying men's decision-making authority, he explained that sometimes women want to make "unproductive" purchases and men have to say no:

***"For instance, when a woman sees another woman putting on nice clothes, she can express a need to have nice clothes as well. But you can tell her to hold on a bit so that you can meet a given project first and buy the piece of clothes after. But you can notice that this is against her will."***

Even when they spoke positively about changes in joint consultations, some of women in the Gender Light group were cautious about the sustainability of change and earnestly requested further training. For example, the woman whose husband had stopped drinking begged for further training, saying, "It is good to remind someone what he has to do." A married woman who had become more aware of her economic rights complained of the humiliation of having to ask for money from her husband:

***"My husband still believes that all money is his. He is convinced that a woman has no right to touch money, but I can't agree with him on that. For example, when I travel, I may be hungry or thirsty; I should not always have to beg him, I should have some money on my own."***

Women felt there had been "some small changes" among "a certain number of people," and they agreed that the training in household relations was one of the most important trainings they had received from the project. However, they were equally adamant that the training was not enough and that they feared a regression to the norm, once the project closed. As one respondent put it,

***"We need more training so that there can be improvement. There are still a number of cases of theft in the household and violence of all kinds."***

When asked to name the most significant change experienced throughout the project lifetime, one 39-year-old focus group respondent said,

***"There is now dialogue within the family, and we make decisions together. Before the project, my husband took all decisions alone, and that was the practice in all our households. But we can say that there has been a small change thanks to the trainings we received, but there are other men who have not changed."***

Another respondent from Kabuyenge, agreed that more training was needed:

***"Despite the lessons, there are households that have not changed at all, in which the man continues to behave as before, or he falls back into these initial mistakes."***

A third focus group respondent chimed in,

***"This project came at the right time, and we ask that it strengthen training so that men can change completely."***

### **Gender Light: Men's changes**

As to the men in the Gender Light groups, some of the men said that the gender trainings they received "touched us sincerely" and that they also listened to the information that their spouses brought home from their own trainings. The men also agreed that at least the practice of crop theft had almost vanished in their communities:

***"With this project, there's no one who would dare sell the harvest without his wife's consent."***

For many men, the flip-chart images used in the trainings hit particularly close to home. One man said that the image of the men drinking in the cabaret while women worked in the fields inspired him to support his own wife. Another was touched by the image of a man stealing beans from the household stock to spend on beer, while the family remained hungry. One man described his transformation:

***“I said to myself that if I continue in this path, I’ll die poor, and I decided to change and my children returned to school. In short, my family is happy now.”***

Still, even as they described a transformation in this practice of deciding together on the use of the harvest, the men in Gender Light group were also clear that there were limits to women’s influence over decisions. In Kabuyenge, the focus group participants were adamant that men remain the authority in the household, saying for example, *“To be honest, I can’t advance her decisions.... Otherwise she would be the man and I would be the woman.”* Or as another man explained, *“My wife cannot give me any orders or in any circumstances take a decision in my place.”*

While they were touched by images, the men also admitted that they were often reluctant to change, because they feared people would look down on them afterward. On the whole, the Gender Light men, like the women, were hesitant to suggest that there had been a lasting transformation in terms of household relations:

***“In the community, there has been change but it is not considerable. You see that we live in a small village. Certain people accept that there’s change in the household, others remain fixed against these changes. They still leave the cabarets drunk and start quarrels when they get home.”***

### **6.3 EKATA: JOINT DECISION-MAKING IS JOINT DEVELOPMENT**

In the EKATA group (in contrast to the Gender Light and Control groups) women are now able make some decisions on their own. They can make purchases for themselves (particularly to buy their own clothes, and give gifts to others in need); they can sell small animals and simply inform their husband after; and several have now opened their own bank account or opened one jointly with their spouses. They described a genuine transformation in the shared nature of their enterprises. Husband and wife might have their own individual business, but they also had ambitious joint visions for their household and were contributing substantially to these goals with their own money, which gave them greater influence within the household. As one married woman explained:

***“Before this project began, my husband could take all the harvest and sell it without informing me. This made me very sad. He beat me twice, just because I asked why he sold things that we share without my consent.”***

Now, she says, her husband, who runs a maize grinder, tells her his earnings from the maize grinder and understands that couples have to make decisions together. On her own, she can now purchase her own clothes or give support to people in need and only informs her husband after the fact. She also opened a bank account on her own. These days, she and her husband pool all of their income together and whoever needs to use it for their business can use it and repay later. She proudly contributed, from her business and from the VSLA, to purchasing land where they have started to build a house; she was keenly aware of the total funds that she had contributed to their joint projects:

***“I gave him 500,000 francs from my business and borrowing from the association, and he added 100,000 francs. We bought the land at 600,000 francs. After, we sold it at 800,000 francs and then used the money to help buy a larger lot of land where we want to build our house at 2,400,000 francs. In total, I contributed 1,100,000 francs, the rest was given by him.”***

One young married woman whose husband works regularly in Tanzania he considered herself happy with the decision-making, because now she and her husband put their income together and discuss what project to invest in. Even if he is not around at harvest, she is able to sell the harvest to the cooperative on her own:

***“Before, I had no idea on how and where my husband keeps money. But now, thanks to the trainings we have received, he brings money home and gives it to me so that I keep it. I see that he hides nothing from me. We put together everything we get.”***

For the widows and female heads of household, the VSLAs provided an important source of both social and financial support. One widow in the EKATA group supposes that if she hadn't joined the project, she would have been obliged to remarry to survive. However, thanks to support from her VSLA, she has been able to use her savings to buy her own land. She negotiated the sale alone, without her son's presence. Previously, she had to borrow for her children's school fees and pay back in interest; now, she is able to send money to her eldest child, who is away at school. Because all of the household assets belong to her, she considered herself “the head of the household”:

Not all couples described ideal harmony. For one EKATA young couple, the husband still made most of the decisions, and there was frequent quarrelling, because her husband felt entitled to spend some her own business earnings. Before, she said, her husband did not even help her transport her crops to market, “He would tell me to look for somebody else. And that means that I would pay for it.” Asked to rank her level of satisfaction with decision-making patterns, she said, she would give herself an 8 out of 10 (very satisfied), but she still had some dissatisfaction:

***“because I cannot decide to sell anything or buy myself clothes without letting him know...I cannot sell anything even when I know that what I am planning to do with the money is for the good of the family.”***

#### **6.4 JOURNEY OF CHANGE – EKATA MEN**

The men in the EKATA group also spoke of genuine change in their decision-making processes. Although they might not react to it immediately, they said, they would usually mull over their wife's opinion and eventually act on it. For one EKATA husband, their relationship had always been one of mutual respect and he was never a ‘lazy husband,’ but he admitted that in the past, he used to come home drunk and beat his wife, or he would sell a portion of the harvest without her consent. Now, he said, he had taken several major decisions based on her advice, and he credited the trainings and plays with changing his mindset and mentality:

***“With this project, we became very close to each other and have agreed on projects I had never dreamt to do before...Let me give you concrete example. I had a motorcycle and one day, my wife advised me to sell it, trying to show me that it not providing any benefit to us. I didn't react immediately, but I kept the issue my mind. So, after some time, I myself came to realize that her piece of advice was reasonable. Finally, I sold the motorcycle and got sufficient money. After thinking deeply what to do with the money, an idea came. I joined a friend of mine and, together, we bought a mill that grinds maize and cassava.”***

Another young husband admitted that he used to consider himself superior to his wife, imposing work on her and even being severe. He admitted that, even now, he had some livestock assets that she did not know about (“As a man, you understand that I cannot show my wife everything”). He explained, however, that there had been a profound change. Now, he does not interfere in her business decisions, and they discuss together how to use their joint income. He credits the change to the training sessions and the VSLA groups, saying:

***“We owe these changes to the NAWA NUZE Associations. They have told us to do our best to be on good terms with each other in our everyday life. I used to have bad friends with whom we were misbehaving; but when my life changed, all these friends were replaced by good ones.”***

Another EKATA husband, who generally left the farm-work to his wife so that he could do his banana-beer business, acknowledged some change in their relationship:

***“Currently, we really have very good relationships in the household activities to such an extent that people are saying that I have been poisoned by my wife in order to dominate me or have power upon me. I simply tell them that I used to be a man with a severe and careless character, but now I have become a good one. Now, I counsel any man whose behavior looks like that of mine in the past.”***

Evidently, the short plays used as training tools were particularly effective in touching men's hearts and changing their minds. As one woman recalls:

***“They showed us a play about a man who used to beat his wife. He left her in a house, which is not well covered, and raindrops reached her.. Our husbands were here watching the play and they were convinced that it is not good to ill-treat one's wife.”***

The men in the EKATA groups admitted to being “difficult and complicated” before, saying that they would use violence at the slightest disagreement and would never apologize for their behavior. After the training, they explained, both the men and their wives learned to dialogue and to apologize when they were in the wrong. One male respondent explained that, whereas he used to sell livestock without his wife's knowledge, now, he consults his wife, and she has the power to veto his suggestions. More importantly, men explained, they now put their money to more “noble” uses. One 49-year-old man said, *“Now, I cannot sell bananas just to go buy beer, all the income from this sale go to the house to contribute to our family development.”*

## 7. DOMESTIC WORK AND HOUSEHOLD TASK-SHARING

When asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the current division of household labor (10 being very happy, 1 being very dissatisfied), there was a clear distinction between the groups: EKATA women scored themselves at 9/10; Gender Light women ranked themselves 7/10, and Control group women ranked themselves on 4/10.

How satisfied are women with the current division of labor? (1= not at all, 10= very satisfied)		
Control: (N=6)	Gender Light: (N=6)	EKATA: (N=5)
4/10	7/10	9/10

In the Control Group, women expressed a palpable exhaustion with their domestic responsibilities, although they consider it inconceivable and socially inappropriate to ask men for support. In the Gender Light group, women have started to see a change in men's practices, but it is evident that men's domestic support is still largely limited to helping only when women are sick or busy. While women in the Gender Light Group desired to see further changes from men and requested additional trainings, they were also afraid that the community would laugh, and the women themselves were reluctant to let men support them. In the EKATA group, in contrast, the domestic activities that men support varied from one household to another, but there was solid evidence of changing social norms—that is, men seemed more willing to support with tasks, even in public. There is clearly a new gender norm emerging in the EKATA communities, according to which men helping their spouses is perceived as an indicator of a healthy family relationship and positive development.

Women's Views: Men's support with household tasks		
Control	Gender Light	EKATA
"If I request them to do it and they refuse, I do it myself. What can you do if they refuse?"	"He can fetch water, but he refuses to clean the house and the compound... He is ashamed of being laughed at by other men... We still need more awareness raising sessions so that he can be convinced."	"At evening, we arrive home all tired. So, he tells me to do the cooking and he washes the children. My children love their father very much. They want to be sitting nearby him every day. So, he feeds them while I am dealing with other activities."
"I would place myself at a low position since he only helps me when I am sick or when I have taken children to hospital."	"There is still something missing. By the time the training sessions were going on, there was a change underway. Unfortunately, they lasted a shorter time. If those sessions resumed, people would completely change."	"Thanks to the trainings...there has been an improvement, because there used to be activities my husband could not assist me in....There are some who make fun, but he does not care, because he knows that he is working for the welfare of his family."
"They say the man who helps his wife has been bewitched."	"He can do the cooking, clean the house or wash small children before they go to school when I am not at home. But things are never perfect. There should be more awareness raising sessions."	"I teach the kids to help one another in all activities, without any distinction. Whether it's the boy or the girl, I teach them all to take the broom and sweep the house as well as feeding animals...I am very happy to see them sharing activities without distinguishing whose work is whose."



When my husband was alive, I would not dare to tell him to sweep; and he would not bring me firewood or cook food for me unless I was sick.”	“He is too old to change. As I have given him daughters, he thinks they can do the chores. Thus, he was exempted of some of them. He never cooked.”	“There are some things he can do and some others that I can do. I am very satisfied because we agree on everything and there is no injustice.”
“If he helped me, they would say that I have taken control over him.”	“I do most of activities, but he currently does his best. For example, if he realizes I have so much to do, he may wash his own clothes. I wish our relationship changed so that when I am cooking, he would go to fetch water, or if I am washing utensils, he would split branches of trees.	In the past, he would leave in the morning and return at night. Nonetheless, he can now be at home during the day and assist me with some activities like starting the fire or fetching water.”
“When I’ve gone to a meeting, he can feed the baby with the porridge that I have prepared, but he often tells me that if I told him to do so, he wouldn’t... I would like my spouse to help me.”	“I would feel ashamed to see a man fetching water... I don’t know what happens in other households, but I can’t let my husband do that when I am not ill.”	
	“I get extremely tired... I do almost all activities alone. I wish he helped me with agricultural activities. They require much effort.”	

## 7.1 CONTROL GROUP: RESIGNATION

Women in the Control group described their household tasks as “uncountable,” listing cooking, cleaning, feeding children, sweeping, weaving mats, washing clothes, putting the house in order, chopping and fetching wood as “women-only activities.” All women in the Control group said that they did these on their own or with the help of their children. One married woman explained,

***“It would be shameful to ask him to do that unless he is willing to help. As long as I am healthy, I can do all of them since he would not accept claiming that he has children who can help with that.”***

For this reason, perhaps, even though they spoke quite bitterly about their exhaustion and were unable to count on their family members for support, two female heads of household said that they were “100% satisfied” with their situation. One woman was happy that her disabled husband helps when he can; and the other woman (a destitute widow), because her little children tried to help her to the best of their ability. Apart from these two, all of the other women ranked themselves at 1 or “very dissatisfied” with the current division of labor. One was quite cynical, stating, *“Having a husband or not, it’s all the same for women. The only difference is that, with a husband, you may sometimes get beaten by him.”*

The women in the Control group relied on children for household help, but also explained that daughters could help with household tasks, but not boys. Customarily, men could cook, clean, or wash clothes only if the wife was sick or pregnant.

## 7.2 GENDER LIGHT: “THERE IS STILL SOMETHING MISSING”

Five of the seven women in the Gender Light group stated that they (together with their children) were the ones responsible for the domestic work. One (whose husband had left her for a second wife) stated that there had been no change at all when he left, and that *“even if there were no water at home, he would not fetch it himself, but would wait for her to come home.”* Two women said their spouses now spent more time at home, rather than at the pub, which was a relief to them. One of these women noted that before her

husband “couldn’t even take food from the cooking pan to feed himself,” but now that he spends less time in the pub, he helps with the livestock in the evening and then passes the time “chatting with the children.” Still, she begged for more training from the project and seems uncertain about the changes, worrying, *“sometimes when I am not home, I worry the children are not fed.”* Three women stated that they would feel uncomfortable asking their spouses for support, because the husbands themselves are very busy, because these are “women’s tasks,” or because the spouse was “unconcerned” with such tasks, when there are children to help her.

Nevertheless, the women in the Gender Light group did notice many changes, which they considered significant. Husbands were now more willing to cook if the wives were busy or ill. Some of the men even started to cook occasionally (but not every day), or bring food for his wife and her hired laborers. Two women in the Gender Light group mentioned that now their husbands were stepping up and supporting with school fees and food for the children. However, a third noted a negative change in this behavior, explaining that now that women have access to VSLA support, men do not contribute to buying clothes (for women) or food for the household. *“This is because he feels that his wife can still do it as she has also got some money.”*

There were a number of tasks that men categorically would not do—especially sweeping the compound, cleaning the house, washing clothes, or cooking or doing childcare in the presence of their wife. Women were acutely aware of social sanctions against these activities, explaining that people would say men had been given traditional medicines or love potions, and that men feared being laughed at. Four of the women begged for more gender training, saying, for instance,

***“There is still something missing. By the time the training sessions were going on, there was a change underway. Unfortunately, they lasted a shorter time. If those sessions resumed, people would completely change.”***

### **7.3 MEN IN EKATA COMMUNITIES IGNORE MOCKERY**

In the EKATA group, many of the women were still largely responsible for domestic tasks—either because they were the de facto heads of household, or in the case of one young couple, the husband was simply not interested. However, there were still notable changes in the tasks that men were willing to help with—some, if not all of the time—and a significant change in their evening routines. Namely, many were helping their wives in the fields during the days, and rather than going straight to the bar in the evening, they would see what needed to be done and do it. The men in the EKATA focus group also admitted that whereas before they left all household tasks to their spouse, they had learned to carry water (using their bicycles), to cook beans, and even to wash the dishes or bathe the children. The principle change is that when they see the wife busy with household tasks, they also find a way to support.

For example, one young EKATA woman explained that in the evenings, her husband used to come home scolding her for tasks she hadn’t managed during the day. Now, she says, “we all come tired,” but her husband will now bathe the children while she handles the cooking, and the children love having his attention:

***“Before the project began, people laughed at you when you did such things, but now they are proud to help their wives. They used to say that I gave him traditional medicines so that he does whatever I oblige him to do, but they no longer do it. Many people are now aware that if they don’t work, there is no development... He even convinces other men who are still like he was to change their minds.”***

Her husband concurred, explaining that she has too much to do for him not to help her. While he feels that he has always be a responsible and good husband, after the seminars, *“something positive has been added to my conduct.”* While some men criticize him for spending more time with his family and less in the pub, he shrugs off criticism, because the benefit is clear to him:

***“Yes, there some men who criticize me and even take it for say that my wife has had to rely on wizardry to win my conscience, simply because I spend much of my time at home...but no matter what they say, I don’t care. I tell them, “That’s your concern, I know what profit I am making from my behavior.”***

One young woman whose young husband works intermittently in Tanzania explained that in the past, when he came home in the evening, her husband would just take his bath and go to the pub. Now, whenever he is home, he pitches in and does whatever he sees is necessary. Significantly, he was even comfortable doing tasks like cleaning the children in public. He was able to shrug off mockery from other men, because he was convinced of the development for the family:

***“When people saw my husband undergo a change, they thought that he has been given some medicine. However, because he knows the reasons why he does it, he does not listen to them. There are some who make fun ...but he does not care, because he knows that he is working for the welfare of his family.”***

One young husband drives a motorbike and provides limited support with household tasks (mainly, keeping the fire going or fetching water). In his own words, he considers his main contribution is to provide income, but he now can commit at least to fetching wood and water. While he still feels that there are definite tasks for women and for men, he also admits that he used to do nothing around the house and spent most of his time displaying a “childlike attitude.” His wife concurred that, while he used to be gone all day long, now he can sometimes return at midday to see if she needs support; he occasionally fetches water even without the motorbike or will wash one of the children so that she can attend to her business. If these changes are modest, the wife and her neighbors seemed nonetheless “amazed” at them. She said that her husband was profoundly touched by the training sessions and plays, which he felt were speaking directly about him:

***“The neighbors often ask me the secret that I used to change him. They think that I have bewitched him. However, he personally tells them that he has not been bewitched, as they think, but that it is due to the sessions he went through and he felt pointed at.”***

One young EKATA widow had recently become head of household, but she was proud that she encouraged her son, as well as her daughters, to share equally in the chores:

***“Before being part of the project, telling a boy to take a broom and sweep the house was not an option. But since I became part of the project, I have been encouraging my children to always help one another in all the activities, as husbands are helping their wives to do household activities. That is how you can finish chores very quickly.”***

## 8. EMPOWERMENT

### 8.1 TRAITS OF AN EMPOWERED WOMAN

Respondents were asked to describe the traits of an empowered woman. All three groups were fairly consistent in their descriptions: an empowered woman is one who does not drink or go to bars; who is polite, tells the truth and is honest, and sets an example for others. All three groups said that an empowered woman is one who participates in public meetings or does development activities. In terms of family relations, all groups shared similar understandings that empowered women should have positive family relations and good collaboration with their spouses. In the Control group, these good relations were explicitly deferential (“one who does everything with her husband’s consent, who agrees with him before doing anything or making any decision”), but even in the EKATA group, an empowered woman was expected to treat her husband with respect, consult him before decisions, and behave well in the household. Women in the Control group placed most emphasis on the theme of women’s participation in associations (with husband’s consent), probably because this was the extent their public engagement. In contrast, women in the Gender Light and EKATA groups emphasized financial independence, good asset management, and an ability to think and manage and plan for oneself. Both Gender Light and EKATA groups said that an empowered woman was one who could meet her own needs, does not waste resources, takes initiative, and is not dependent on her husband for food or for identifying opportunities. In the Gender Light group, women said that an empowered woman “does not need to be told what to do, is able to meet her needs, and has freedom to do what she thinks is appropriate.” In the EKATA group, empowered women are those who “get their incomes.” *“They don’t have to wait for their husbands to bring what to eat,” will not wait for her husband to tell her what she is supposed to do, and is able to make decisions without any obstacles for the good of the family.”*

After describing the traits of an empowered woman, respondents were also asked to discuss whether such empowered women exist in their communities, and whether they themselves are empowered (on a scale of 1 to 10). Across the board, there was a tendency for women to rate themselves as empowered, even if the self-ranking did not seem consistent with the personal stories they shared. For example, women who described painful experiences of powerlessness, destitution or submission sometimes gave themselves a 10 (or a similarly high score), because they met the traits of a respectable woman. Resilience, endurance and acceptance seemed to be valued cultural traits, and therefore, when asked to assign a number to one’s satisfaction with the situation, there seems to be a tendency to “round up” the score, perhaps as an exercise of agency in accepting one’s lot. At the other end of the scale, even when women described fully autonomous behaviors, many seemed reluctant to use the ranking 10 out of modesty, stating for example, “nothing is perfect” or “I am not an angel.” Therefore, the self-ranking empowerment scores should be interpreted with contextual clues; the examples are more telling of personal change than the numerical scores.

Do you consider yourself empowered? (1 = Not at all, 10 = Fully)					
Control -5.8 (N=7)		Gender Light – 9 (N=5)		EKATA –8 (N=7)	
3	I am not satisfied that my husband never consults me on decisions.	10	Because I manage assets.	8	Even the president cannot say that he is fully satisfied. When I get a motorcycle, I will move to nine.
9	Because I still do not have a car, motorcycle, or nice house.	10	Though there is something missing, I hope that I will be fully empowered with time.	10	The more time I spend with the project, the more I understand the philosophy, and I get transformed.

2	When I am in good health, I feel powerful because I am capable of doing my work... and bring home some food as a reward.	9	Not yet 10, because I still need permission to sell bananas.	9	They used to say that “many hands make light work,” but I have realized that even one hand can make light work because I can do many things being alone.
3 <sup>5</sup>	My empowerment is low, because I have no financial means.	10	Because I help my husband in everything and can speak in public.	10	I am an empowered woman because if I have difficulties in my household, I am able to resolve them effectively. With EKATA, I got rid of fear.
7	Because I do not steal nor do my children. I adopted a little child.	6	Because we still have problems. There are those who have begun backsliding when training sessions ceased. The change would be greater if they resumed.	10	Yes, I am, 100%. I was empowered before, but there have been improvements.
10	Because I do not have bad behaviors or go to bars.			9	I have peace. I can give food to a friend without any hindrance. I have freedom to join any association.
7	Because I paid back a debt that my husband owed. This made the people recognize me as a powerful woman.			9	In my household, everything is enough and in order, and I manage the income.

## 8.2 CONTROL GROUP: EMPOWERMENT REQUIRES OPEN-MINDED HUSBANDS

Given the tendency to “round up” and emphasize the positive, it is especially revealing that the Control group women were the only ones to give themselves very low scores on empowerment. One stated categorically that she has never felt empowered and another (a destitute widow) initially gave herself a 4, but then re-evaluated, because:

***“I was forgetting some of my sorrows. As a matter of fact, I would even rate myself as 2/10, if I look at how I live.”***

When asked if they could identify an empowered woman in their community, women in the Control group usually described women who had joined VSLA associations and had money to buy plots of land. They also emphasized the importance of spousal support as a prerequisite for women to participate in VLSAs and experience empowerment. Describing the empowered community facilitator in her community, one young woman explained:

***“She has projects that she undertakes jointly with her husband. She also borrowed money from the association and together, with her husband, they opened a shop. Step by step, they moved forward. This is because she has an open-minded husband. You get a husband who is not open, and, in this case, you cannot move on.”***

<sup>5</sup> The respondent answered “low.” To include this response in the average, the project team assigned a “3,” given the tendency of women to skew their situation more positively.

One respondent, however, claimed that even though many women joined VSLA associations and had access to VSLA loans now, they weren't able to turn their loans into viable projects. As a result, she couldn't identify a single empowered woman:

***“There aren't any. All of them complain about hard life. Even those women who get money from the “MERA NK'ABANDI” [VSLA] association are still miserable, for they spend all the money on beer. It truly doesn't help. It, rather, creates endless conflicts among people originating from drunkenness and debts not paid back. Yes, if I analyze in the community, all the women who get that money have no visible achievements; no one has bought a single goat.”***

However, one widow gave herself a 7, referring to her financial power—to pay back two substantial debts that her husband had incurred when he was alive:

***“I had been nick-named “MARIA BOSI” (a name expressing a powerful woman) in the community simply because I happened to pay back a debt of 100,000 francs that my husband owed. This made all the people in the community recognize me as a powerful woman.”***

Focus groups with women in the Control areas revealed that women felt that their “eyes had been opened,” and they wanted to go further in their personal and household development. They were eager for more support from the project. As one 41-year-old woman said, “There is still a long way to go with regard to balance in decision making in our respective households.”

In the Kidasha focus group, some women had heard about the EKATA program, and despite efforts in the Win-Win design to keep the different study groups separate, women in the Control Group explained that their leaders “cheated” and specifically sought out EKATA women to bring their lessons home to their own communities. One community leader expressed a great “thirst” to be trained in the EKATA approach, so that she could counsel other women who came to her:

***“There are times when you come across a woman in the EKATA area. They share the steps they have already taken in relations with their husband, thanks to the training they received, and we try to practice these ideas in our homes. But our wish is that the VSLA members of our hills be trained on EKATA, so that we can be as transformed as our colleagues. We are very thirsty to learn more about EKATA, because the information we have received is superficial.”***

When asked about negative changes that they might have experienced in the program, another respondent worried about regression after the project closed:

***“I'm afraid that after the project's departure, we will return to our previous state, in which people don't understand that women can be emancipated, and that will slow down our forward movement for women's empowerment. That's a real fear that we have.”***

### **8.3 GENDER LIGHT: OPEN MINDS, BUT NEED REINFORCEMENT**

In the Gender Light group, there seemed to be a more outward-oriented model of what an empowered woman does, and their local role models were women who are engaged in giving advice to other women, sharing knowledge with others, participating in development activities and being a model for others in the community—all while being humble and “not showing off.” Because “not showing off” was one of the valued qualities of a respected woman, many were humble in admitting that they were in fact playing these roles of advice-giver or leader already:

***“Since I joined NAWE NUZE and started advising women, they have trusted me, and now I represent NAWE NUZE in this zone. Whenever there is a problem, they come to me seeking assistance. I am not showing off, but honestly, I do my best.”***



While, like the Control group women, Gender Light women emphasized the importance of spousal support and being a responsible housewife, the Gender Light respondents were also more expansive in their descriptions of empowerment, using words like “freedom,” “leadership” and “expressing oneself in public.” They said an empowered woman is someone who has capacity to think and act for herself, “one who is able to meet her needs, who has freedom to do what she thinks is appropriate, who is part of associations, and who doesn’t need to be told what to do.” In contrast to women in the Control group, women in the Gender Light group saw noticeable changes in their own status – which they attributed directly to their participation in the associations and trainings:

***“Before NAWE NUZE came, we were feeling incapable, narrow-minded and so limited that we could not go in front of people and advise them; but as time goes by, we are gaining self-confidence. Now, if you have something to contribute, you can stand up and say what you need to say; and those who have been touched may come to you and tell you that what you have said has touched them and changed them. And this is because you have raised the issue publicly.”***

However, the woman who gave the above description gave herself an empowerment “score” of 6, acknowledging that “there are still some problems.” While she was active in disseminating the gender trainings to others, she was particularly worried that the changes that women had experienced would disappear if they were not reinforced. Already, she had noticed some reverse changes:

***“We have spread out those sessions based on images all over this Colline of Mwurire and change was happening slowly as the sessions were going on. However, there are those who have begun back sliding after those sessions ceased. I hope that the change would be greater if they resumed.”***

Most individual respondents in the Gender-Light group gave themselves high scores of 8, 9, or even 10 on “empowerment,” but when read in context of their decision-making influence and qualifying statements, their answers reveal a rather limited scope of autonomy or incomplete transformation. For example, a 20-year-old wife, who otherwise admits to making no decisions without her husband’s consent, gave herself a 10, because she manages her family assets and does not waste money or steal from her husband. One older woman gave herself a 9 on the empowerment scale, because she was able to buy a cow. However, she still had little control over the cow or the banana income, which was her husband’s; moreover, because she had access to loans, her husband started to charge more of the main household expenses to her, such that she was obliged to borrow from the VSLA association to cover school fees and other needs.

Another young married woman claimed she has been empowered for three years now, since her husband allowed her to join the VSLA and even encouraged her to participate. Although she too gave herself an empowerment score 10, she was tentative about it, saying, “There is still something missing, I hope that I will be fully empowered with time.”

Women in the Gender Light FGDs explained that VSLA participation had “opened their eyes,” particularly to the lack of women’s representation and about the discrimination that women faced in public roles:

***“The creation of savings and credit associations have enabled women to open their minds. It is through these associations that we receive training and we are encouraged to vote and to be elected. During the next elections, we want women to be represented in all the structures on our Colline.”***

In Mwurire, women pointed out that there was now a female leader at the Colline level, and her presence was very important, because women are considered “less corruptible,” and it is now easier for women to approach her, especially about issues of conflict and violence. Still, others spoke of the difficulties that women face, noting that there are still very few men who allow their wives to stand for election:

***“There are ill-intentioned people who, when they see a woman elected to a committee and that she is away from the home, they go spread lies, especially to her husband. If the husband isn’t careful, their relationship can get spoiled.” For this reason, she said, “I don’t think it’s time for the project to leave us, because there are so many lessons that we still have not learned, especially when it comes to behavior change.”***

## 8.4 EKATA: AUTONOMY AND ABILITY TO MANAGE ON ONE'S OWN

In the EKATA group, women described empowerment as having good attitudes, being truthful and supporting other women in the group. They also placed an important emphasis on asset management and planning ahead, that is, considering overall needs and investing in business-expansion or house-building projects—especially together with the husband. Their wealth aspirations were higher than in the Control or Gender Light groups. One identified a local empowerment model as a woman who owned a motorbike and could use that for transporting people to hospital in times of need. Others said they were not quite empowered because they could not yet afford a motorbike or bricks for their house. Even so, they had the conviction that if they continued to participate and stay healthy, they would one day be able to afford these luxuries.

The EKATA group's descriptions of empowerment also emphasized *autonomy*, or not having to wait for their husband to make critical decisions. As a 24-year old married woman put it:

***“An empowered woman is the one who will not wait for her husband to tell her what she is supposed to do and who is able to make decisions for the good of the family. I can now decide to give some food to a friend, like some bunches of bananas or some kilograms of rice or beans without any hindrances, and I have freedom to join any association.”***

A 33-year-old married woman felt powerful, because she had the courage to confront her husband about his affairs and to discuss intimacy issues with him. She emphasized that the training to husbands was also essential to helping women realize their own abilities to make their own decisions:

***“He participated in trainings and he was convinced that development is impossible without the contribution of everybody in the family. He used to beat me, but now he has completely changed. He couldn't let me go even at the market, but now I do my business freely. When I hear that there are beans to be sold, I take money where it is and go immediately to buy. I inform him when I have finished.”***

Women in the EKATA group spoke proudly of their intelligence and their capacity to manage problems as they came up. Several spoke of the transformative effect of joining the association and seeing the world beyond their own household, which also changed their view of what they could do. This was especially true among widows and female heads of household, who felt surprised and powerful because they had not gone backwards since their husband's death:

***“I am an empowered woman because if I have difficulties in my household, I am able to resolve them effectively. I am empowered, and I am intelligent. With EKATA, I got rid of fear and learned to do business. Before, I could not even put a foot where there are people.”***

An older widow added that being able to provide for her children, buy land and pay school fees gave her a powerful sense of capability:

***“I used to think about the kind of life that I would lead in the future and how I would raise my children alone; but thanks to God, I have made it. In my household, everything is enough and in order; and I manage my income well. I bought a plot of land after my spouse died and even my children appreciated that.”***

In the EKATA group, women used the word “development activities” to describe their life changes and household economic enterprises, and they used the phrases “we became conscious” and “our eyes were opened” to explain their own and their spouses' transformations. When they described the important economic changes in their lives (including their land purchases, house-building projects, house-expansion projects, accumulation and sales of livestock, and local businesses), it seems clear that women in the EKATA group were also aware of their rights to household assets and realized the injustice of being previously excluded from the wealth of the household.

***“After receiving the teachings on changing the household and the community, I took it on myself to train my husband. Before, my husband thought that everything was for him, he considered that I own nothing in our household, and he’s the one who made the decision on the household wealth. After the trainings with EKATA, I told myself that I have to do some development project in the household... Later he, too, became conscious and he told me that the lessons are useful. He, too, has benefited from these lessons, even though he was not part of the solidarity groups, everything that I taught him has changed him.”***

With her savings from her VLSA, a 42-year-old woman undertook a “development project” to buy a pig. From the sales of the piglets, she put her money together with her husband’s to buy a parcel of land. They continued to discuss their plans together and decided that they would use their joint income to complete the finishing touches on their house. She contributed to the cement and her husband bought the sand. Referring to the resource-mapping exercise conducted in the EKATA training, she shared:

***“This brought me great satisfaction, and even today, we are still doing development activities to increase our income. Through the resource maps that we did with EKATA, we have learned so many things that can push me toward a development that I never thought was possible.”***

There was a conscious pride and sense of responsibility among the EKATA women about being able to share their wealth, benefits and lessons with others in the community. For example, a 38-year-old married woman explained that with her restaurant business, she was able to pay three employees, one of whom had built a house with the income he earned. In addition, she engaged people to watch and milk the cows, and she even allowed them sell some milk for themselves. She observed:

***“I can see that they use the money for development activities in their own household. I can see that have improved, because we no longer have to ask for credit. If we need to, we can sell an animal for the children’s school fees. These trainings have opened my eyes. I see now that I, too, can earn for my children, even in my husband’s absence—which was not the case before.”***

## **8.5 EKATA GROUP: MEN IN FAVOR OF WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT**

Importantly, husbands of women in the EKATA groups described their own personal transformations, and saw their wives’ empowerment as vital to their own and their families’ happiness. For example, the husband of 33-year-old Matilda (a successful businesswoman) stated, “Her freedom is very advantageous to me and to our family,” and he felt proud to consider himself one of those men who openly stand up for women’s empowerment. He used his own experiences to counsel other men:

***“I can even say that the intelligence I have, I owe it to my wife. All is done freely, now. Normally, if there are personal secrets that a man cannot reveal to his wife and vice-versa, no matter how hard you work, it would not possible for you to have much fortunes in the family. So, I would advise other men not to be severe towards their wives. Men should work with their wives in whatever they do, selling this or that and how to use the money they receive. In general, women are good people, so as a man, do your best to communicate with your wife on everything. You must take an occasion to dialogue with her. That’s my advice to men.”***

An older man (age 61) was less evangelistic, but he nonetheless explained that the characteristics of an “engaged man” were to ‘give freedom’ to one’s wife, let her attend meetings and visit her family, and to avoid arguments. He explained that in his case, the training that they both received on communication and family management had greatly reduced their conflict, particularly over the management of the harvest income. With the trainings, he said, they started to speak differently to one another. “She became more humble, and so did I.” He described this change as a progressive phenomenon; that as his wife became a leader in the association, and they both continued the trainings, it became easier for them both to make important changes.

Another husband in the EKATA group also used the word “humble” to define the character of an “engaged man.” He saw that it was advantageous to support his spouse, because when they had a good relationship, she also would be willing to work harder for the family. When asked how people in the community view a man who supports his wife’s empowerment, he responded:

***“People begin saying that this man has no respect in his family. But, according to me, it’s worth supporting one’s wife if she is really engaged in working hard and taking decisions related to family development.”***

Men in the EKATA FGDs remarked that there had been community-wide transformations toward better gender relations, as men took it upon themselves to advise others in the community. One significant change, they noted, is that now by 8pm, the whole community is calm and quiet, and people are no longer drunk and disorderly, roaming about and causing trouble. Of course, there are still some couples who have difficulty, but they estimated that of 50 households in their community, only five have “yet to change.” For those who do still have quarrels, the men in the EKATA group take it upon themselves to counsel them, usually advising men to stay married rather than to threaten divorce. Largely, though, they felt that the social change came more from leading by example than by talk:

***“So maybe you were a drunk, you wasted money. You wore dirty clothes. But after the trainings you received, thanks to this project, you change. If you sell something or you work and you find 10,000 francs, for example, and ‘the entourage’ know very well that you have this sum and yet you don’t take it to the bar, but rather they see that your wife and children have clean clothes, and after a few days, you can buy some property thanks to good income management, then others start to imitate you and to succeed in changing.”***

All of the important community changes, they felt, started with good household relations, in particular, the ability to communicate and to apologize. They were proud to support the female village head, and they felt that women were ‘less corruptible’ and more honest than men as leaders. They acknowledged that some people gossiped about men who change, saying that because they are no longer violent, they must have been “bewitched” by their wives. However, most were able to shrug this off. “*They say all this to wake up our evil spirits—but in vain,*” explained one respondent. The most useful training techniques, they explained, were the images and the community theater. When asked what could be improved in the project, they said “really, there is nothing.” All of the pieces – the rice techniques, homestead gardens, nutrition training, and good household relations – were all important. However, they did suggest to clearly explain the content of the project from the outset, so that men could more quickly understand the merits of the program from the beginning.

## 9. PUBLIC EXPRESSION AND MOBILITY

### 9.1 CONTROL GROUP: HESITATION TO SPEAK EVEN IN VSLA GROUPS

Women respondents were asked to comment on their comfort with speaking up in public, as well as their ability to speak confidently with their spouse. They were also asked to comment on their mobility—that is, how and when they might have to seek consent or inform their spouse and family about their movements in public spaces. In the Control group, only one of the individual interview respondents stated that she felt comfortable speaking in public. Thanks to her active membership in the political party, she was used to giving speeches in public and had broad freedom of movement to participate in political activities. Nonetheless, she admitted that with regards to family matters, her ability to speak up was limited:

***“[in Burundi,] they say that ‘a hen cannot crow when a cock is there.’ That is why women should not stand up and speak when their husbands are around. Even if there is injustice in my family, I have to wait for him to come. I cannot say anything myself.”***

For all of the other women in the Control group, even speaking confidently to the women-only VSLA group could be daunting, and few were confident enough to do so. One widow had experienced cruelty because of her destitution, which made her decide to keep quiet:

***“I may say something in the meeting and some people laugh at me and some others sympathize with me accordingly. For example, on Christmas Day, when I had put on the clothes given to me as a gift, one woman addressed me ironically, saying that I was wearing clothes that belonged to another person. That’s why I prefer to keep quiet. People may think that a person is poor due to laziness, when he or she works hard and all the time.”***

Another young widow also had felt humiliated when people objected to her viewpoints. As a widow, she felt that her ideas were considered less relevant. One married woman was also hesitant to speak up because she was illiterate. She could only speak up in public, she explained, when she was called to witness in a case of couple’s conflict, or when she herself was protesting unfair treatment.

Women in the Control group generally agreed that some restrictions on women’s mobility were appropriate. In fact, one widow expressed it was a sign of loss and loneliness that she had no one of whom to ask permission, when she wanted to leave the house:

***“I can have 10 out of 10 concerning travel freedom. But this not a good thing. It would be better to have family members to whom you say “farewell” every time you go somewhere.”***

### 9.2 GENDER LIGHT: COMFORTABLE SPEAKING UP IN VSLA GROUPS AND COUNSELING

In the Gender Light group, five of the seven female respondents were comfortable expressing themselves in public, saying that they can speak “without fear.” One respondent (a 20-year old, who was married at age 16) claimed that she was comfortable expressing herself within a VSLA meeting, but that when it came to community gatherings, she felt women should not speak in public. Her husband adhered firmly to ideas of the man as head of household, allowing her only to attend mosque without first seeking his permission. She admitted that she was even cautious with what she expressed to him in private, for fear of disagreement.

Most of the women in the Gender Light group had some sort of community advisory role (one advised youth in the church, others mediated couples’ conflicts or testified in cases of injustice). Four of the women said that most men were supportive of women’s public speaking, although they do not always come out and say so directly. One married women, for instance, noted that her husband would comment in her absence that he was proud of her community work, and another said that her husband would complete her messages when she advised people, which was evidence that he encouraged her. Generally, they felt that things had changed, and people in their communities had more respect for women’s voices now:

***“In the past, a woman would not stand up and express her ideas in public. But now, if you have something to contribute, that is, advising a certain group of people for example, you can stand up and say what you need to say; and those who have been touched may come to you and tell you that what you have said has touched them and changed them. And this is because you have raised the issue publicly.”***

In the private sphere, women in the Gender Light group were slightly more confident than the Control group women in speaking up to their spouses about their concerns, even when they thought he might disagree. One woman had learned, for example, to speak up about the division of labor explaining, “Now, I can openly tell him that I am angry with him when he is treating me unfairly, and he will apologize and promise me that he will not do it again.”

Another still felt frustrated, saying,

***“Sometimes I become so busy that it brings some disagreement between my husband and me. I try explaining the situation, but in vain. However, when he sees the outcome, like a person who has changed as a result of our advice, he then understands and encourages me. I hope that I will finally get full freedom.”***

All women asked permission or informed their spouse, family members or children before going out, and most women felt that it was appropriate and considerate to ask or inform one’s family before going out. However, there were some women in the Gender Light group who felt that mobility restrictions for women were unjust. For example, one older married woman had wanted to visit her sister, but her husband refused, fearing that if she got a taste of the city, she would not want to return. She resigned herself to the situation, but was nonetheless upset at the memory:

***“How can I be happy when he refused to allow me to visit my sister? He should get more training sessions so that he knows that every person has freedom to movement.”***

Another older woman, who enjoyed her husband’s support for her public speaking roles, also expressed women’s ability to move as a right, adding that it was essential to women’s empowerment:

***“I think that women, like anyone else should be free to move from place to place. I think women need to move so that their thinking capacity would increase. Otherwise, they risk staying behind.”***

### **9.3 EKATA GROUP: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SELF-EXPRESSION AND COMMUNITY ACTIONS**

When asked if they could speak up in public (at VSLA meetings or community gatherings), even knowing that their spouse might disagree, women in the EKATA group were emphatic that they could and did. Even one who was admittedly very shy and hesitated to speak in public, said that there had been a big change in her confidence and courage. While she used to just sit at home, now she goes to meetings most days of the week. The women in the EKATA group attributed their change in public participation to the trainings. For example, an older widow credited the project staff and community facilitators for “waking her up:”

***“[They] woke us up by teaching us songs to say that women can. When the project began, many women were afraid and said they could not go to places where many people are gathered. Even during ceremonies, we could not wait to listen to speeches. We had to go home early to look after the animals.”***

On the recent occasion of her daughter’s dowry ceremony, however, this same widow proudly gave a speech herself:

***“I told my brother that none could speak on my behalf. I delivered it myself, and people applauded me and carried me up. They asked me where I learned this, and I told them that I used to listen my father delivering speeches in different ceremonies, and so, I do not have fear to deliver it.”***



In the private sphere, EKATA women felt free to speak what was on their mind, including their sexual desires or concerns about their husbands' affairs. They noticed a great change in verbal violence, which they attributed to skills they and their husbands had learned in how to communicate. Effective communication strategies for women, it seems, were based on not making the spouse feel threatened or scolded. In turn, men learned to pause and reflect, instead of lashing out immediately. One young married woman explained that in the past, whenever she dared to bring up a household need (for instance, that the salt or oil was finished), her husband would yell and insult her, and leave her to solve it on her own, while he went to drink alcohol. The trainings, she explained, taught both her and her husband to speak gently, rather than angrily:

***“Instead of listening to me, he would yell at me, telling me that it is up to me to know how to deal with things, as if we were not together. When I began attending trainings, they told us that whenever we have something to share with our husbands, we have to speak slowly and humbly. I learned to say, ‘if we help each other to do this, it would be good and it will make our lives easier’ as opposed to demanding things. He too has changed, because, before, whenever there was something he wanted to share with me, he would speak to me in a very violent way, yelling at me. Now, he comes slowly, if there is something he wants to ask me, he approaches me and calmly tells me what is in his mind.”***

Married women in the EKATA group still required “consent” and needed to inform their spouse of their movements, but they described this as a courtesy (not a requirement), and they expected their spouses, too, to inform them of their movements and whereabouts. The EKATA women described a greater range of movement than other groups, including an ability to go to market (informing the spouse after the fact) and even to spend several nights away from home, provided there was communication. Visiting friends was important for women, explained one, because you never knew what idea or information you might get. Another, when asked if she agreed with traditional restrictions on women's movement said, that she agreed with the need to inform one's spouse; however, when it comes to traditional proverbs such as “a man does not have limits,” she vehemently disagreed, saying that needed to change, because, “*only a stupid man can say that such things are allowed.*”

Women in the EKATA group were aware of their worth, to the extent that they started to demand representation at the community level. Women in the Mukenke FGD, for example, knew the number of women representatives in each of their Colline committees, and most importantly, a woman had become Colline Head in 2017. EKATA women said they now felt comfortable speaking up without fear on topics of GBV or polygamy. They were frank about the mistreatment and even killings that women had endured: “*Now, no woman can be raped or beaten during the night and stay like that, with arms crossed; that has stopped.*” Their aspiration now was to see women represented in up to 80% of the governing bodies in the 2020 elections.

***“We didn't understand that women need to get elected in the administration. These trainings opened our eyes and we have seen that we should be there, among the people making decisions.”***

Women in the EKATA group attributed their transformations to participating in the VLSA meetings and to the lessons and ideas they shared with other women. As a young, married woman put it, the power of the collective was the most important thing she gained:

***“Before, we were only staying home, and we could not get new ideas. But now, we learn many new things whenever we get together. Before, my mindset was that if you get money, you automatically consume it. But now, I am aware that, once I get money, I should invest it through my VSLA so that I get interest. All of us get together, we give loans to one another and share all the interest we get together. That is the most important thing I got from these women.”***

When asked to identify the tools and trainings that had been most influential, the group pointed to the “Empowered Woman” drawing, an exercise that asks them to identify the traits and character of a “model woman.” This inspired them to see how they could change their own behaviors, both in the household and in the community. The other useful tool was the problem and solution tree, which helped them to identify and prioritize the revenue sources that would be most advantageous.

Whereas the Control and Gender Light groups requested additional support from the project and seemed afraid of the backsliding that might take place once the project closed out, the women in the EKATA group seemed energized to take on their own activities and to continue to “serve as a model” for others. They spoke proudly of their lobbying and participation in “communitarian works” to build up the community. Together, they had restored communal buildings, lobbied for support to out-of-school children, started a small night market. All of these changes, they explained, “*were completely unexpected, and we are very proud of them.*” Rather than appealing to the Win-Win project, they turned to the local administration to help them to keep up their work and to share their knowledge to reach another 18 Collines. As one respondent explained:

***“Even if the project were to leave today, we will go out to other Collines to give them the trainings that we’ve received, so that they too can live in peace.”***

## 10. COUPLES CONFLICT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

### 10.1 CONTROL GROUP: VIOLENCE AS FACT OF LIFE

In the Control group, women stated that alcohol, extramarital affairs, disputes over the harvest income and women's requests for household needs (salt, soap, oil) were common causes of violence within the household. They generally blamed alcohol for the conflicts and tended to choose to get over it. They also sought support from neighbors and local counselors in extreme conflicts, even though these advisory councils themselves were not always models of good behavior. Women who participated in these advisory committees sometimes helped to resolve a conflict by bringing back a woman who had been chased from her home by a violent spouse.

One young married woman described her husband as "severe" when he is drunk, but blamed herself and her own alcohol use as much as his violence, saying she thought she, herself, would like to give up drinking. After beating her, her husband would say that it was due to the alcohol, and she would accept his apology. She might try to refuse sex when they were in a conflict, but the spouse could force it anyway, so she just did not bother much about it. Because they had been married five years, her solution was just accept the beatings as a way of life. When asked if she ever sought advice from the local counsels, she admitted that her husband is himself a neighborhood chief, and it was his role to counsel others. *"No one is perfect to 100%. He advises them no matter how he behaves."*

An older woman (age 51) whose husband had recently died admitted that her husband used to be extremely violent, to the point that she sought divorce, but her husband refused and took her back home. He used to steal the harvest money and spend it on other women, she said. Her eldest son, currently in Rwanda, used to check in to ask whether the father was still violent; because she hadn't phone access, she hadn't been able to inform the son of his death. While there had been a local advisory committee to reduce violence, she had never sought their counsel. Anyway, she explained, the committee was disbanded by the local chief, because they had "misbehaved," imposing on people in conflict to pay them beer, instead of helping:

***"The local chief thus decided to engage himself in finding solutions for the families who would be in conflicts. He does this very well. All people in the community are satisfied. In fact, he calls the family in conflict and all their neighbors and, after giving the floor to the concerned, he forms small groups of all the attendants to discuss the issue at hand. After listening to all the groups, they decide all together the one who is guilty and what the fine should be. They buy beer and all the people present share it."***

In Kidasha Colline, a destitute widow (age 27) was particularly vulnerable to rape and sexual violence, because her unfinished house had neither a door nor a solid roof. She admitted that this was quite common for widows like herself to experience violence. Responding finally to one persistent harasser, she reached out to her neighbors who helped keep watch at night, and even the Commune Counselor intervened. She said he was one of the kind ones:

***"The Communal Counselor has even held a meeting on my case and warned that the one who would be caught seeking to make love with a widow without her consent would be severely punished. He is the kind of person who listens to people's problems and intervenes helpfully. He asks no beer in order to help people."***

Gender-based violence was presented as common, and as particularly severe in the early years of the marriage, *"in the tradition of many Burundians,"* as one woman explained it. The severity seems to reduce with age (*"now he can just insult me"*), when grown-up children are able to defend their mothers. Still, even if they normalize it, women in the Control group nonetheless expressed hurt and humiliation. One, explaining how her husband used to beat her and accuse her of having affairs when he was drunk explained,

***"I really felt that I was oppressed. A woman may be oppressed at home and nobody can know. But this no longer happens, he has given up now that he sees that I am too old to go with other men."***

## 10.2 GENDER LIGHT: IMPROVED COMMUNICATION, LESS CONFLICT

In the Gender Light group, women spoke of their recent pasts and the early days of their marriages as marked by severe violence and near-constant quarrelling, often over income use or alcohol. At least two of the women had nearly separated over violence. In general, they spoke of reductions in GBV and improvements in their ability to speak up on issues that they would not have voiced before, as a result of the project. They reported being more knowledgeable about forms of violence (including sexual violence) and of their rights.

One 45-year-old, married woman described a history of marital conflict and both sexual and physical violence, particularly over the VSLA loan that she had taken, which her husband (a community leader) took from her to spend on alcohol. She was distressed, because she was unable to borrow more from the group, even as she was doing business activities to repay the loan. His violence was so severe that he was even fined by the community council, while he himself was a community leader. *“I was continually beaten as though I was not human, while I was innocent.”*

Since participating the trainings though, her communication and relationship with her husband had improved dramatically, to the point that she could even let him know when she was on her menstrual cycle and unable to have sex or confront him about his alcohol abuse and affairs. She felt confident to share her projects with her spouse knowing that he encouraged her:

***“We were taught how married people should communicate. They advised those who were committing violence to repent, and they even raised the issue of forced sexual intercourses. There is nothing they left out. Then, they told us that there must be mutual understanding in the family, so that prosperity may have its way. We were also told that we are setting bad models for our children when we are always in disagreement.”***

Another married woman described a marital life marked by her husband’s alcohol use, verbal abuse and physical violence, which she avoided only by staying out of his reach:

***“He was always aggressive whenever he arrived home. I felt very sad; I couldn’t even eat. He often wanted to beat me, so I had to keep away from him.”***

Her husband has stopped drinking since the trainings began, and she claimed that now there is harmony in the household. Whereas she was previously afraid to mention if they were out of salt, oil, or household items (for fear of his violent reaction), she now felt comfortable bringing up anything that was on her mind. Still, she was fearful that her husband might backslide without further training and support from the project. *“There are still some changes that I need,”* she said.

The connection with men’s (and sometimes women’s) alcohol use and violence is a common theme in women’s narratives of violence and conflict. For many women in the Gender Light and EKATA groups, a strategy they have learned to protect themselves is to avoid verbal conflicts when they see their husband is drunk. Alcohol abuse is also an issue for some women. One admitted that she used to be fond of beer, which caused conflict—and subsequently violence—in her home. She said that she had given up drinking because she realized it was jeopardizing her relationship. She also used the flip-chart images from the trainings to discuss the issue of GBV with her husband. He understood the severity of the issue and started to change. Whereas there was near-constant quarrelling before, she says, *“We find time to discuss and we have mutual understanding about things that used to cause disputes.”*

Many of the women in the Gender Light group are actively engaged in advising and counseling others, although some of the counsel seems focused on correcting “women with bad behaviors,” that is, those who are in dispute with their husbands. As one older, married woman explains:

***“We advise one another on the good practices to adopt in our households. When women are not on good terms with their husbands, it can prevent them from participating in the association. And after saving, we urge them to get home earlier to help in the household chores.”***

Not every household had experienced a significant or entirely positive change in this domain. One woman had more peace—because her spouse had abandoned her for a second wife. She said *“I am satisfied with it, since he is no longer there to beat me. He can do whatever he wants, provided that he does not beat me.”* In another case, one EKATA participant noted that instead of being severe, her husband was now just silent. This was admittedly an improvement over the early days of her marriage, when she fled to her parents’ house to escape his violence, but she regrets that she cannot communicate freely with him but turns to the children for company. Her husband has different recollection, saying that he never beat her, although he did remember being *“hard to her sometime in the past.”* He felt that it was *“a man’s duty to be severe in order to eradicate a bad behavior in the family.”* He attributes their greater marital calm now to their mature age, but he also credited the trainings. In fact, two of the three husbands in the Gender Light group requested more training, so that they could advise other couples better.

### 10.3 EKATA: TAKING PUBLIC ACTIONS AGAINST GBV

In the EKATA group, women also discussed past experiences of oppression—a word they used freely – particularly economic violence and severe physical force, early in their marriages. Early in their marriages, they learned to avoid beatings by learning their spouse’s likes and dislikes and regulating their behavior. At the outset of the Win-Win program, some women frankly experienced negative consequences for joining the VSLA. One young wife explained that *“before he changed,”* her husband objected to her VSLA activity, since he didn’t see the benefit:

***“He would ask me to show him what I am getting from the VSLAs that I was always going to. Since I was not seeing the money that he was earning, I would resort to not telling him anything as well. That would lead him to deny me permission to attend activities. Whenever I went, I would be beaten. At times, he would give the command to go farming while I had planned to go trading. Whenever I refused, he would beat me and take my money by force. There were times when I would be overwhelmed to see the kind of husband I was married to.”***

His violent behavior had changed, she explained, thanks to the trainings, but also in part to her own behavioral adjustments. She would now wait to eat with him when he came home, which meant that they communicate more. She appreciated a significant change in the community response to GBV:

***“Before, a woman would be beaten and nobody would intervene, but now that there are those committees, that violence is decreasing. Women used to be treated as worthless and incapable, but now, everything a man does, a woman can do that as well.”***

Across the EKATA group, women spoke gratefully about greater peace and communication in their households, and attributed the changes to the trainings on “household and family management” and to their own awakenings. They also spoke of changes they had made in their own communication approaches that helped improve relations and reduce violent conflict. While it may seem passive and submissive, women in the EKATA group felt that learning to control their own anger, knowing when and when not to bring up concerns with their spouse (i.e., not when he is intoxicated), and how to negotiate their needs were key take-aways from the trainings that gave them greater control and peace of mind. For example, a young wife had frequent disputes with her husband over his affairs and over family planning: She wanted to have more children (for fear that he would seek to have them outside their marriage), while he felt that with land shortages, they could not afford more. Thanks to the training “How to Take Care of Our Husbands,” she was able to confront him about the affairs and to discuss family planning (she ultimately listened to him). Explaining her approach, she says she learned to control her own anger, but was also no longer able to tolerate past oppression:

***“Even when we are angry with them, we don’t have to show them that we are. You always show him that you are happy even when you are not. When he is drunk, you may ask him things and then keep quiet. You also ask him once again in the morning. When he gives the same answer, you know that the answer is that. When he changes his answer, you know that he said it because he was drunk. Before the project began, we were always in conflict, but now, he can no longer treat me as he used to.”***

Another married woman (whose husband was much older) also explained that she also learned to de-escalate conflict when he was drunk—and thus avoid harm to herself—but to bring up the topic again at a safer time:

***“When the training sessions began, we stopped those conflicts, and step-by-step, he also gave up cheating me. Maybe this is because we are getting older. We now live peacefully in our family. Yes. He may still react in a bad way sometimes, especially when he is drunk, but I remind it to him the next morning. He has changed, too, because when he shouts to me and he sees me keeping quiet, he keeps quiet, too. The next morning or when we wake up at night, we discuss the issue once again and find a solution to the problem.”***

An important difference in the EKATA group seems to be that instead of individual counseling (neighbor-to-neighbor) or intervention from the Colline administration, the community collectively intervenes to mediate conflicts. All of the women in the EKATA group participated actively in conflict-resolution. One had noticed that there were fewer couples coming for counseling, thanks to an overall reduction in violence. Another observed that couples who still had the most conflict were those who were not participating in the project activities, or whose husbands didn't permit wives to participate in the VSLAs. One older, married woman explained that “the project came at the very right time” to support women's freedom:

***“Women are free and empowered; they no longer beg for money from their husbands to satisfy their own needs. Women are also free to express their opinions. On national ceremonies, we are invited to sing at the communal office, and I take the lead in singing. Now, the majority of couples are united, there are no longer conflicts, because men are also getting trainings on how to manage their families. Men who used to beat their wives have changed.”***

#### **10.4: JOURNEY OF CHANGE – EKATA HUSBANDS**

The three husbands from the EKATA group did not claim to have totally transformed their behavior, in fact, they admitted that there was “still something missing” or that “they were not angels.” They were frank in admitting their past use of violence and alcohol abuse, even if they downplayed the incidents and the pain that it inflicted on their wives. They also were aware that the most violent men in the community (those who were “severe in such a way that they could beat their wives till bloodshed”) had been taken away for trainings and returned transformed; they felt that the most extreme forms type of violence had been eradicated from the communities. The men were generally grateful for the trainings and the greater peace in their households, and they drew on their own experiences to counsel others in the community.

***“We were taught to respect our wives and vice-versa. I simply advise others using what I was taught myself. It means “not to be aggressive to her verbally,” “not to use a shocking tone when speaking to her, provide her with new clothes as you can, etc.”***

Some EKATA husbands had learned about different forms of violence (including sexual and economic), and they stated that had learned to respect their wives' desires and would now accept a “no” when it came to intimate relations. They associated good communication with better sexual relations, saying, “We have learned that this activity should be done by people who are in the same state.”

A younger husband remarked that he had been positively surprised to see his own behavior change so quickly, as a result of the trainings. While he called himself “not perfect,” he did associate improved gender relationships with overall household development:

***“Today, she can feel happy when she sees me chat with children, which did not happen before. When she tells me something sensible, she does it humbly and kindly. If I find I am guilty, I ask her to forgive me, and I promise her to change. But before, it wasn't like that. I do not ill-treat her these days. This change made my family move ahead positively.”***



## 10.5 ABATANGAMUCO TRANSFORMATIONS

Among the *Abatangamuco* (the male change agents who use their own testimonials to speak out against GBV), the personal transformations were profound and their denunciation of GBV was unequivocal. Men who joined the *Abatangamuco* groups were identified by the community members as the most “hopeless” cases and perpetrators of severe violence. Most had issues with alcohol abuse and lived in extreme poverty. They described their previous household relationships as constant conflict, and even enmity. When they were invited to join a three-day, in-person training with other men like them, most of the *Abatangamuco* were terrified that they were going to be taken away to prison or fined:

***“The first meeting, I thought I was going to be imprisoned. I was a criminal, I committed domestic violence and I really liked alcohol. I did not like my wife. We had difficult times. I beat my wife, I pulled out her teeth and I was imprisoned—and she came to ask for forgiveness so that I could be released. Afterwards she told me I’m going to take revenge, she cut my finger. We coexisted as enemies.”***

During the men-only trainings, the facilitators (who were both project staff and *Abatangamuco* who had been transformed in previous CARE projects) shared personal testimonials and discussed, in detail, stories of violence that occur in the communities. Despite their initial fears, the trainees felt as if they were hearing their own story told back to them, and this common experience gave them the courage to share their own narratives. They told about their own crop theft and how they spent the family income on alcohol, they spoke of the violence they committed against their wives and children, their state of poverty, how the children were often scared, hungry and dispersed among relatives. They talked about all of the household and fieldwork that their wives did and the violence they suffered. Having the several days together gave them the space and time to open their hearts to the co-participants and to process feelings of grief and remorse:

***“They began by telling us about the violence that occurs in households. Everything they said looked like they were talking about my family situation. I wondered if these people sleep under our beds. It was after they asked us to tell the problems that remain in our households. I said to myself, ‘These people know my situation by heart; how can I really lie?’ When my turn arrived, I took courage and I told of all the violence that I committed at home. How I prevented her from participating in a VSLA, I drank beers and I robbed in my household to go to pay beer debts. We spent quite a few days and I felt a remorse and I could see that all I was doing was trying to ruin myself.”***

Although the initial training and discussions had a profound impact on the participants, they admitted that it was not an easy task to make personal changes and give up old habits and friends who were a bad influence. However, with continued participation in the groups and in the male VSLAs, they slowly started to change. Some stopped going to bars, gave up mistresses and started to discuss the harvest income with their wives. Those who stayed the course took about six months to become full-fledged, committed *Abatangamuco*, which carried the responsibility of being a public role model for other men:

***“My friends, to take the initiative to change your behavior is difficult .... there was a negative force in me that did not want me to give up my old habits. At some point I made the decision to start the change process. My first decision was to close the cabaret, perceiving that it was the cause of all ills, and I started to work in the field. After the harvest, we decided together on the allocation of this produce. Development followed, and now my household is at peace. I help my wife in all household activities, I buy clothes for her, which I didn’t do before. Now that I have changed, my wife has shown me how much our income has grown. Now she has complete freedom to participate in VSLA and Colline meetings. After an assessment of my situation, I was admitted as an institutionalized *Abatangamuco*. The *Abatangamuco* sets a good example for his neighbors and the community. The neighbors are astonished and surprised and ask themselves the question of how a person like me could positively change my behavior.”***

Once committed to make their own behavior changes, the men also took their stories and actions to the community, developing role-plays and testimonials to share in public at the Colline level and encouraging others to seek out the *Abatangamuco* for counsel.

It is the transformation of such “hopeless” cases into positive role models that seems to have an inspiring effect on others in the community. At the same time, the economic changes that they experience also seems key to their convictions: spending less money on alcohol, sharing resources and labor together with their wives, and joining the VSLA groups, apparently, gave these men greater livelihood ambitions and tangible achievements. Many were able to improve their homes, increase their harvests, and put the family income toward school fees, clothes, better diets, and asset accumulation. Often, the drastic change in material circumstances (which follows from the relationship improvement) helps inspire the “newcomers” to listen to and respect the *Abatangamuco*.

For the *Abatangamuco*, the most important factor is to live and demonstrate in public what they believe. To be fully accepted as an *Abatangamuco* role model, their spouses, other group members and community members need to testify to the member’s genuine transformation. Some *Abatangamuco* took on entirely (and unusually) transformed gender roles:

***“The first thing that shows your wife that you have changed is to, in the morning, when the woman goes to work, you, too, take the hoe and you leave together. When you come back, and she starts to prepare food, you bring water and you help her to split the firewood. Doing this will make the neighbors realize that you have completely changed. There should be no façade. For example, when I bring a child to the clinic, I carry him on my back. When I go to fetch water, I carry the container on my head, so I can tell them ‘observe my behavior, I’m not in what I did in the past, it’s over.’”***

Asked to define what makes someone a true *Abatangamuco*, there was agreement that it was someone who used to have bad behaviors, but who has completely changed. The *Abatangamuco* were expected to reach out support and counsel other couples in conflict, but without asking money in return for their mediation and resolution services. When a person in the community seeks out an *Abatangamuco* for advice, the men discuss their own painful pasts, the poor conditions in which they lived, and the negative consequences of their past actions and violence. Sometimes, this exchange of stories moves others to make their own change, and they can make a request to start participating in the *Abatangamuco* groups. As a result of this peer-to-peer outreach and interpersonal counseling, the extremities of violence have diminished in the communities:

***“Abatangamuco is a just man who advises others, who manages conflicts without asking for rewards. He must be fair in everything, and commit to changing others. For example, before we changed, there was no one who came to our household to ask for advice. We could not advise others while our homes were burning. But as the community observes our change, many problem households now reach out to us. We have 29 households that have changed since then. So far, we are on other hills in order to change problem households. Even the administrators come to confide in us to manage their conflicts. They do it because we don’t ask for money.”***

From being the perpetrators of violence, they are now often the first ones called by the Colline administration to intervene and resolve household conflicts, even in the middle of the night. They express pride in their group and in their role in the community. Like the EKATA groups, the *Abatangamuco* are also supporting broader community development ambitions, and they express enthusiasm and ambitions to share their lessons and their benefits with other Collines. As one member expressed his personal change and ambitions:

***“My household lived badly, at my place you could not find a cow there, I had never bought a property. I was a drunkard and a brawler. My great pleasure was drunkenness. But after the training, now the Colline is very calm. So far there are very few conflicts on our Colline. Our greatest wish is to show the other Collines the fruits of our changes. Currently our Colline is very developed. We have already purchased 1,600 solar panels. Today, if we ever learn that there are conflicts in households, we are the first to go there to resolve them. In short, an Abatangamuco is a person who tells the truth, is incorruptible, correct and just.”***

## 11. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, in the Control group communities, the changes in livelihoods, household relations and community well-being were limited, even though they received the same agriculture trainings and access to VSLAs as the other groups. There seems to have been limited socio-economic boost from that basic livelihoods package, as few had enough land or labor to practice the new techniques. It is not entirely clear from the qualitative data if baseline land ownership patterns and economic differences might explain this differential outcome. Many of the baseline stressors of food insecurity and poverty-related GBV were still present in these communities at end-line. “Crop theft” (the practice of men selling the stored harvest for beer or personal use) was still occurring, as was GBV, particularly in the early years of marriage. In fact, the “before” stories of women in the Gender Light and EKATA groups generally correspond to the end-line scenarios in the Control groups. For example, the agriculture work was still begin done largely by women (although men pay for day labor to support their wives, if they have income), while men look for paid work, take care of the banana plants or sit idle in bars. Alcohol use and abuse were still problematic, among women as well as men, and it was closely associated with GBV, economic stress and poor household relationships. In general, divorce is almost unheard of, and as many stories showed, even when cases of violence are so severe that men were imprisoned or fined, the solution that community and administration authorities would generally advise is not to divorce. Women in the Control group also spoke of corruption and hypocrisy among the community structures that are set up to address GBV.

Nonetheless, women in the Control group were very eager to join the VSLAs, and access to VSLA groups and loans provided an important safety-net to face emergencies and meet basic needs (to pay school fees, food, sometimes fertilizers). VSLA savings and loans certainly helped to reduce a sense of total dependence on their spouses, and participating in meetings played an important function in expanding women’s mobility and exposure to the world beyond their households. On the other hand, there may have been negative consequences in the short term. Some women had to defy their spouses and risk their safety and well-being to participate in VSLA groups. Some said that their loans were sometimes taken by their spouses, or men relinquished whatever household finances they had been providing, leaving women to rely heavily on the VSLA group to support themselves and their children. Over time, husbands seemed to appreciate and allow women’s participation.

In general, women in the Control group were overworked and had little control over decisions or mobility, but they seemed largely resigned to their fate and did not challenge gender norms. Those who called themselves “empowered” referred to their “good behavior” as wives and hard-working women. Some, however, had heard about the changes in the EKATA communities and were eager for that knowledge.

In contrast, in the Gender Light—but especially in the EKATA communities—changes in livelihoods and gender relations were significant, and there was a consensus that improvements in livelihoods outcomes and household relationships were correlated and mutually reinforcing. Improvements in yields and women’s access to VSLA loans convinced the men that it was worthwhile to join forces and support women’s agriculture work. There was a sense that couples were working with a shared purpose. In the EKATA couples in particular, men and women were making longer-term development plans and contributing equitably to these investments. There was a marked change in critical consciousness and awareness of women’s rights in both Gender Light and EKATA groups, although change was more pronounced in the EKATA areas. Changes in asset accumulation were significant, with women in the EKATA group gaining the most in terms of livestock portfolios and asset accumulation. In Gender Light as well as EKATA groups, women and their spouses were pooling their income and loans to buy land, fertilizers, bicycles and motorcycles, and even to build houses. Women were using their own income to pay school fees and clothes, and they were no longer dependent on their spouses for cooking ingredients and basic household goods. In the EKATA group in particular, there was not just asset increases but entrepreneurial activity, which women attributed to the Resource Map training that helped the women examine the resources that exist in their communities and helped them to identify opportunities for business. In addition, the sense of solidarity with the group gave them the confidence to take risks and bigger loans.

Perhaps one of the most notable differences in the EKATA group was among widows and female heads of household. As baseline data show (and interviews with the Control group at end-line confirm), widows and female heads of household often find themselves in very precarious and vulnerable positions. Lacking labor, assets and support with household work, female heads of household are

vulnerable to abuse and forms of exploitation, struggle to keep their children in school, and easily slide into extreme destitution and food insecurity. In the EKATA group, however, female heads of household were becoming business owners, restaurant owners, landowners, community leaders and employers. They were confident that they could not only survive but also thrive on their own, and they attributed this confidence largely to the solidarity of the VSLA groups and to being “awakened” to their potential. The self-sufficiency and confidence of female heads of household in the EKATA groups is, therefore, a particularly notable outcome.

The differences in the treatments were most evident when it comes to sharing workloads and decisions. In the Control group, women were clearly overburdened with work, and they admitted to having virtually no authority over decisions. In the Gender Light group, there was a greater awareness of their work burdens and an awareness that men and women should share both decisions and labor. “Crop theft” had evidently reduced in the Gender Light group, and men and women agreed that communicating about how to use the income from the harvest was the new normal. Good communication and sitting together to discuss income were credited with improved decision-making and reduced domestic conflict. However, in the Gender Light groups, scratching the surface of the immediate answer (“we decide everything together”) showed that the social norm granting men’s authority as household heads prevailed, and women still had limited influence over decisions when their ideas ran counter to men’s. Men and women in the Gender Light communities feared that others might think men had been “bewitched” by their wives, or that women had failed in their own responsibilities if men supported with household work. While men came to recognize women’s domestic contributions, men themselves continued to contribute little to household work, except when their wives were sick or busy.

In the EKATA groups, in contrast, women were contributing their own resources and ideas to projects for the household development. They were fully conscious of their financial and intellectual contributions to joint projects, and their husbands were equally ready to pitch in their own resources, labor and money to joint projects. Women shared with their husbands what they had learned from the VSLA groups, and men started to listen to their propositions and to contribute accordingly. The training in communication and GBV evidently enabled both men and women to collaborate more harmoniously and to bring up and to heal some difficult subjects and previous conflicts. Most significantly, husbands in the EKATA communities were convinced enough of the benefit of women’s empowerment and of their wives’ worth and contributions that they were no longer swayed by negative social norms that emasculate men for supporting with household work or for listening to women’s opinions. Men themselves felt relieved by the reduction in conflict and improved communication, as well as by the increased agricultural yields that reduced some of the social pressures that men face to be a successful breadwinner.

In terms of perceptions of empowerment, women in the Gender Light and EKATA groups were both more aware than women in the Control group of violations of their rights, including all forms of GBV and the need for women’s representation at the community level. They valued financial independence and the autonomy to make their own decisions without always waiting on the husband. In the EKATA group in particular, women credited the Win-Win facilitators with “waking them up” to their own potential to solve problems, both individually and collectively. In the EKATA group specifically, women’s groups took collective action in the communities and saw themselves as agents of change who want to share the benefits and lessons they learned to others beyond their own Colline.

## What worked?

The EKATA difference seems to be attributable to a combination of intensive, integrated training and accessible follow-up from the Win-Win staff; transformative reflection exercises and community theater tools; the solidarity from groups and an emphasis on community action plans with the local administration; and the early and simultaneous engagement of men as well as women in training and dialogue.

**Integrated package, intensive trainings, and accessible follow-up support.** When asked to describe which elements of the project were most memorable and useful, respondents explained that it was the total package: the good agriculture practices, the nutrition training, the good household relationships training and the gender trainings. While the livelihoods training, VSLA loans and increased yields helped to garner men’s attention and support for women’s activities and empowerment, the simultaneous attention to gender and non-violent communication also reduced crop theft and strengthened joint economic enterprises among the EKATA group, leading to accelerated livelihoods outcomes, including entrepreneurship and asset accumulation. Ongoing support from the community facilitators (including the agronomic trainers) seemed to build women’s confidence and drive the more profound changes in people’s

lives and communities. Women in the EKATA groups spoke of the Win-Win facilitators as role models who “woke them up” and built their self-confidence, whereas women in the Gender Light group felt that the training was a good start, but not enough to drive lasting changes, and so have asked for additional reinforcement from staff.

**Reflexive tools and personal testimonials.** In the EKATA groups, the “empowered woman” drawing, discussions on women’s rights and the resource-mapping tool had a deep impact on building women’s perception of empowerment, their entrepreneurial ambitions and their confidence to make changes in their own lives. Women in the EKATA groups found that adjusting their own communication styles within their household gave them control over their own anger and reduced the risk of escalating violence, while helping them to find new ways to speak truthfully to their spouses and resolve difficult marital issues. Having the space to openly discuss painful experiences of violence and encouraging men to admit to their harmful actions seems to have played an important role in improving couples’ relationships and reducing violence. The use of the flip-charts, community theater and men’s testimonials showing real-life experiences of transformation were powerful tools of critical consciousness-raising, (although the amount of training in the Gender Light communities did not seem to go far enough to catalyze social norm change). Seeing their own experiences reflected back at them seemed to provoke important “aha” moments among men. Testimonials from the *Abatangamuco* promoted profound transformations, while also being clear that transformative change takes time, continual follow-up and solidarity from peer groups.

**Solidarity and collective action planning with the EKATA groups.** In the Control group, the VSLA seemed to function largely as a lending group, with limited social benefit or interaction beyond that weekly meeting, although simply moving outside the home and participating in meetings was an eye-opening experience for some of the women. In the EKATA groups in contrast, women spoke of the solidarity and support that they gained from being in the group with other women. They spoke of having their “eyes opened,” and they felt that there had been a great transformation in their worldview. They also were able to resolve practical problems through collective action, including resolving the issue of agricultural labor shortages. Most women in the Gender Light and EKATA groups had some sort of leadership role and felt confident speaking up in public. The final stage of the EKATA curriculum focuses on developing community action plans for the Colline, and it is evident at end-line that EKATA women were not only conscious of their responsibility to others in the community, but also confident in their ability to lead change. Rather than waiting for the project to do more, they were eager to share what they had learned with other Collines, so that the development benefits could spread. They had developed action plans and were already working with the Colline administration to take forward their own ideas, which speaks to the greater sustainability of the EKATA model.

**Early and simultaneous engagement of men.** From the Gender Light and EKATA respondents, it is evident that trainings with men are vital to the transformations. It is clear that the increased revenue from the improved yields and VLSA loans were the key to helping the men see the benefits of sharing more actively in the agriculture activities of the household. However, men were equally moved by the gender trainings and equally appreciated the reductions of conflict and improved communications. Practice in communication and reflections on gender inequality and violence were at the heart of the “mutual understanding” and joint development aspirations that men and women experienced from participating in these trainings together. In the Control group, women explicitly stated that, without engagement, men often do what they can to block women’s empowerment. In the Control group, it took significant time simply for men to grant permission for women’s VSLA participation. In contrast, in the EKATA communities, men were vocally and publicly supportive of women’s empowerment and leadership, and they saw it as beneficial to their family development. Women in the Gender Light groups saw that there had been a positive start to men’s awareness about gender issues, but they worried that men would forget what they had learned and fall back into old patterns when the project ended.

## Recommendations

**Roll out EKATA approach in Control areas.** The continued levels of violence and vulnerability make it imperative that the intervention include men and gender relations from the start of the project. A gender-blind intervention risks doing harm to women, who are willing to risk their safety to participate in any intervention that may help them support their families. While having the Control group was vital to the Win-Win research design and demonstrating the importance of an integrated gender approach, it would be unethical for CARE to “have the medicine” and not to give it to the Control communities, where interrelated problems of GBV, poverty and miscommunication persist.



**Collaborate with partners, Ministry of Gender and Ministry of Agriculture.** It was repeatedly confirmed across the treatment groups that a Gender Light intervention is a good start, but it is not enough to reach the optimal level of social transformation and to shift gender norms. There is deep uneasiness in the Gender Light groups that the positive change has not gone deep enough, and may disappear as soon as the project ends. The close collaboration with CARE's partners and the Ministry of Gender throughout the research phase of Win-Win provide a strong technical foundation and political will for institutionalizing the EKATA approach on a broader scale.

**Monitor the changes in women's financial responsibilities and communications strategies.** This study (and others) suggests that when women begin to have an income, they are often asked to assume more of the household expenses, which were previously the husband's responsibility. While this can be experienced as empowerment, it could also lead to women being further exploited, as they gain financial means. Furthermore, while EKATA women found it helpful to modulate their own communication to reduce couples' conflict, there is a risk that women may self-blame or shut up to avoid violence. Ongoing vigilant monitoring and support from skilled gender advisors is important to recognize, understand and prevent such potential harms.

**Recognize experiences of trauma and monitor new forms of social exclusion.** It should be acknowledged that across all groups, interviews touched on lived experiences of abuse, trauma and loss. Men and women in the target areas have lived through political imprisonment, genocide, death of their children and spouses, exile, and migration. These past experiences, no doubt, exacerbate the daily and extreme forms of violence and abuse against women and children in these communities. Recognizing the pressures that men face to meet expectations as family breadwinner, as well as their own unresolved experiences of trauma, is important to ensure that dialogues are implemented sensitively and to prevent any social exclusion or blaming of "bad husbands" who do not meet new social norms.

**Support community-to-community change.** In the EKATA communities, all the elements are in place to support sustainable impact and a deep social transformation, because *Abatangamuco* men and EKATA women are eager to disseminate their experiences with others. Colline administration authorities are highly supportive of EKATA action plans and have taken the EKATA agendas as their own—whether it be through electrifying the village with solar panels, or completely outlawing GBV. What is promising for the sustainability of the EKATA model is that, despite the strict confines of this research design, there is already 'cheating' going on between Collines. Word about the EKATA communities has spread in the marketplace, and others are already seeking out the EKATA women and *Abatangamuco* men to learn from them. With the research phase finished, CARE and our partners and funders can capitalize on this grassroots energy, by supporting community-driven social change, led by the very men and women and community leaders who have been convinced that this EKATA model transforms communities and even saves lives.