



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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 **IFAD**
Investing in rural people

 **World Food
Programme**

Gender transformative approaches for food security and nutrition



GOOD PRACTICE

Farmer Field and Life School

PREPARED BY

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SECTION 1

OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

Name of the methodology

Farmer Field and Life School (FFLS) and Junior Farmer Field and Life School (JFFLS)

Countries with implementation experience

Uganda (North and North Eastern regions)

Start/end date

January 2015 – September 2017

Lead organization sponsoring the development and implementation of the methodology

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Uganda, under the programme, Consolidating Gains in the Multi-sectoral Prevention and Response to Gender-based Violence (GBV) in North and North Eastern Uganda (a joint programme on GBV funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy).
- FAO has been promoting and implementing FFLS globally since 2007. The methodology has also been adapted to meet the specific needs of young people (aged 12 to 17) in JFFLS.

Purpose of the methodology and the domains of gender inequality that are addressed

- Reduction of GBV with specific focus on women and girls of reproductive age
- Transformation of intra-household relations

Contribution of the methodology to wider development/organizational/project goals

FFLS provide season-based experiential learning on good agricultural practices and life skills. The overall objectives of the FFLS are:

- the diversification of income generation opportunities for male and female farmers, which reduces vulnerability to GBV;
- wealth creation;
- an increase in household assets.

Target group

FFLS are geared toward individual men and women aged 18 and over. JFFLS target boys and girls 12 to 17 years old. Initial selection has focused on locations with a high incidence of reported GBV. Within communities, the selection of members of FFLS has been based on the level of interest in participation after a general mobilization.

SECTION 2**IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS****Key entry points for applying the methodology**

- Groups of 25 to 30 members, each drawn from a different household and whose mobilization was done by the implementing partners
- Young people who are selected by facilitators and teachers to join JFFLS (25 to 30 members)

Implementing partners

Implementing partners were local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in the project locations whose role was to facilitate the learning by the group members: Christian Action to End Poverty (CATEP) and Pentecostal Churches of Uganda (PCU).

District and sub-country technical officers responsible for community development and production assumed the role of community mobilization, supervision, oversight and training on specific subject matters (e.g. agronomic and financial literacy training, livestock management, and awareness about relevant government programmes).

Process of and criteria for selecting facilitators/champions/mentors

Community-based facilitators (CBFs) selected from among active and interested group members facilitate the learning by the group members. CBFs are selected in a participatory manner by group members and local authorities. For each FFLS, there were two CBFs – one male, one female.

CBF characteristics include: capable of transferring technical knowledge and skills (e.g. life skills, community mobilization, group organization and gender mainstreaming); resourceful, creative and innovative; knowledgeable about the group and community members; able to influence their attitudes and behaviours to free the community from harmful practices associated with, and/or consequent to, such as GBV; and able to carry out activities on voluntary basis.

Training of facilitators/champions/mentors

Selected implementing partner facilitators benefitted from a three-week comprehensive training for those who had previously not been trained in the FFLS methodology. Implementing partner facilitators who had previously received training in the methodology received a six-day refresher.

The CBFs, in addition to participating in group training activities, were mentored by the implementing partner facilitators to gain skills in group facilitation.

SECTION 3

IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE

Key steps in the implementation cycle

- **Step 1: Recruitment of implementing partner facilitators to establish and implement FFLS**
 - Facilitators, who are staff members of the implementing partners, were trained in the FAO FFLS group formation dynamics. The facilitators then formed groups in their assigned locations. They carried out a rapid group/member identification assessment in each of the participating sub-counties. The assessment included information on the enterprises selected to be studied by the FFLS and the types of validation that would be done through field trials.
 - For the JFFLS, teachers from schools in the locality were trained in the methodology so that they could co-facilitate learning together with the implementing partner facilitators.
- **Step 2: Groundwork**
 - Selection of new FFLS groups and/or strengthening of existing groups and identification of CBFs
- **Step 3: Establishment of FFLS and the implementation of action learning activities and supporting the FFLS to set up validation/comparative studies/field trials to test and demonstrate learning**
 - The FFLS uses a host farmer's land, school land or allocated community land. Adult groups receive technical guidance on (i) good agricultural practices with inputs supplied mainly for demonstration and learning to increase productivity, diversification and good nutrition practices (inputs include: short-maturing seeds for learning, such as vegetables, maize, beans, soya; planting materials, such as cassava stems and sweet potato vines; and agricultural equipment, such as watering cans, hand hoes and wheelbarrows); (ii) entrepreneurial and farming skills, as well as business and marketing skills; (iii) training in village savings and loans associations; and (iv) life skills, including interpersonal communication, literacy, numeracy and gender roles and decision making.
 - In JFFLS, in-school and out-of-school children and adolescent/youth groups learn about staying healthy and protecting themselves from risks (e.g. GBV, HIV, alcoholism, early pregnancy and marriage). They also develop their potential and build their self-esteem and confidence through interpersonal communication and home gardening practices.
 - Gender Action Learning System (GALS) tools were integrated in the core training. GALS uses hand-drawn pictures to encourage couples and their children to visualize the future they want for their households, including actions that could be taken against societal ills, such as GBV. The tools promote gender transformation and breaking through gender-based barriers at the individual level and within households and networks. These tools include the Vision Road Journey, the Gender Justice Diamond, the Gender Balance Tree and the Challenge Action Tree.
 - Group investment plans are developed, and agricultural inputs and related equipment for group and network activities are procured and distributed as start-up kits. Ideally, a group receives two rounds of inputs: one to learn from and one to invest for the next season. However, this is highly dependent on the availability of funds for the kind of enterprise selected.
 - Follow up actions by facilitators include mentoring of households for any aspects of the learning covered by the FFLS (both agronomic practices and life skills) if requested by a household or identified by the facilitator. In the initial cycle this is undertaken by facilitators and subsequently by CBFs.
 - In the first cycle, the facilitators run the FFLS, but when new FFLS are established, the facilitator mentors the CBFs who later continue working on their own.
- **Step 4: Exchange visits for learning between groups in different locations**

— Step 5: Graduation

The gender-integrated FFLS activities are implemented at household, group and network levels and linkages are made with government programmes.

- Farmers who have completed the FFLS cycle and have the knowledge and confidence to operate a FFLS with the correct use of tools, continue the activities within their group or in a new group (if the number of participants increase) with support from CBFs.
- Group members offer each other peer learning support.
- Members of JFFLS are expected to take the learning to their respective households.
- CBFs are mentored by implementing partner facilitators to take on the FFLS facilitation as an exit strategy.

Average length of the implementation cycle

- Two seasons of learning (about 9 to 12 months)

Graduation from the methodology

Participants graduate after two seasons. The groups continue to function with the support of the CBF.

SECTION 4

MONITORING

Monitoring system

Internal monitoring is done by participants. The FFLS members monitor the progress of the group (e.g. the results of the field trials, observed changes in GBV).

Joint monitoring was conducted by the joint programme team together with government and donor representatives to:

- assess the extent to which GBV was being addressed in a multisectoral way; and
- understand the extent to which livelihoods support improved economic and social status of women.

A final independent external evaluation was conducted for the joint programme using an earlier baseline assessment, which was based on a household questionnaire.

Indicators

— Quantitative

- Household dietary diversity score among targeted households
- Percentage of FFLS households where members are knowledgeable and using better agronomic practices as a result of their participation in the FFLS
- Percentage of households where members are knowledgeable and have skills related to income generation
- Percentage of men and women in targeted households suffering from GBV reached through awareness programmes (i.e. have learned about causes of GBV and how to reduce its occurrence and tolerance towards it)
- Percentage of households whose members jointly participate in decision making on production and consumption
- Proportion of households whose members are knowledgeable about the roles of men, women, boys and girls
- Percentage of targeted men, women, boys and girls reached through mentoring
- Number of women able to generate income to sustain themselves and their families in order to minimize the dependency of wives for cash on their husbands (one of the causes of violence in the home), and make them instead co-contributors to household cash/income and decision makers in their use
- Gender-integrated FFLS modules and integration of GBV into FFLS (process indicator)

— Qualitative

Other changes are noted through the GALS tools but not reflected as indicators (e.g. freeing time for rest and recreation to weave mats, plait hair)

SECTION 5**BUDGET****Main items of expenditure**

- Training activities
- Demonstration materials at the beginning of the cycle
- In-kind start-up grants (e.g. food store for bulking produce at the network level, seeds and agricultural tools and equipment for J/FFLS demonstrations, and goats for JFFLS groups)
- CBFs do not receive allowances but are given promotional materials (e.g. branded T-shirts, umbrellas, carrier bags) for motivation

Total budget

- USD 691 328 (approximately USD 4 700 per group)

SECTION 6**RESULTS****Number of beneficiaries reached**

A total of 4 138 people (1 798 men and boys, and 2 319 women and girls) in 147 J/FFLS received technical guidance on good agricultural practices, and received inputs to increase productivity, diversify livelihoods and promote good nutrition practices.

Main changes attributed to the methodology

- **Gender-related changes**
 - By giving men and women the opportunity to learn together on effective approaches for livelihood sustainability, men see the value of women’s work and more importantly, the value of women.
 - After the first year, men and women started to participate in the FFLS with their partners as couples/households. This has led to positive transformations in gender relationships within households. Examples include:
 - men carrying out tasks that previously had been left to women (e.g. child minding, cooking, fetching water, cleaning compounds), which gives the women some ‘she-time’; and
 - in some households, men and women discussing the use and allocation of their income together, whereas before it was the man who took these decisions alone.
 - Members of the FFLS became community watchdogs, conducting home support/mentoring visits to ensure that their members do not engage in GBV. This demonstrated that J/FFLS are a powerful tool for peace building, reconciliation and reconstruction of social cohesion within communities. This role is self-appointed, community members watch out for each other in the group and outside.
- **Other changes**
 - Livelihoods improved significantly. Women adopted backyard gardens to reduce expenditure on vegetables and this contributed to improving the household diet.
 - Both men and women started investing in alternative income-generating activities to increase self-reliance and food security.
 - Nutritional status is gradually improving as dietary diversity increases.

Key success factors and strengths of the methodology

- Gender-integrated J/FFLS provide a safe space for women and men, boys and girls, to talk and learn together about topics (e.g. gender roles and relations, women’s time burden) that are not directly related to the group’s original purpose.
- Addressing GBV as an integral component of a broader livelihood programme is a winning strategy. The core business of the FFLS is to improve production and livelihoods, but the gender-integrated approach adds value by approaching it from the GBV angle.

- Providing household support, instead of individual support to women, avoids conflict within households and strengthens the productive capacities of both women and men.
- Integrating activities that build entrepreneurial skills, generate income and contribute to the accumulation of disposable assets through shared decisions of men and women contributes to reducing GBV.
- Developing interventions that consider the relationship between GBV, food and socio-economic security is central to identifying appropriate actions to reduce men and women's vulnerability to violence and mitigate the impact of violence.
- Local government support and participation are essential for ensuring that the intervention to build and strengthen socio-economic and life skills are effective and sustainable within the communities.

Challenges and measures to overcome them

- As a result of budget constraints and limited resources, several planned activities could not be implemented (e.g. provision of start-up grants to all FFLS groups and in-kind support to business planning for FFLS), fewer implementing partners were recruited and activities were scaled down.
- Prolonged dry spells destroyed some of the crops planted, right from the nursery stage. Farm production was reduced and, in some cases, failed completely. Farmers learnt new practices but were unable to benefit from increased agricultural production.
- Despite overwhelming interest by community members to form FFLS groups, there was some resistance by the groups established in 2015 to split and establish new groups. This was overcome through sensitization and household-level mentoring, and by supporting new groups through implementing partners as the CBFs were trained.
- With regard to village savings and loans associations, poor loan recovery by group members resulted in low turn up for group meetings/learning sessions and limited savings mobilization. This was countered by the group leaders adhering to the group constitution of exerting sanctions on defaulters. This led to improvement in attendance and time management for meetings.
- Attendance at meetings was disrupted by external events (e.g. national election campaigns).

Potential for upscaling

- **Requirements to support upscaling**
 - Refine the existing J/FFLS module and disseminate it for use in higher educational institutions, to ensure institutionalization of the approach (e.g. the integration of the J/FFLS methodology into the modalities of agricultural extension)
- **Potential improvements**
 - Strengthen the monitoring of the J/FFLS methodology, especially regarding indicators of gender transformative change at different levels (e.g. household, community, service provider organization)

Potential for replication

- **Key enablers**
 - J/FFLS are an appropriate vehicle for transferring lifelong agribusiness and livelihood skills and for leveraging opportunities by both adults and children, whether literate or illiterate.
 - J/FFLS are best suited for communities that rely on agriculture production for their livelihoods, as they will have a strong motivation for learning and adopting the acquired agronomic, husbandry and business/financial practices.
 - The support of and participation by the local government authorities up to the village level is essential for interventions aiming to build skills and enhance socio-economic conditions to be successful, effective and sustainable in the community.
 - Investing in mentorships and activities that strengthens skills fosters a positive 'do it yourself' culture that reduces reliance on unsustainable external direct support.
 - Empowering women and children with production and financial management skills makes them less vulnerable to GBV.

Sustainability of the methodology once project/external input is complete

- The gender-integrated FFLS materials are now used in all the farmer field school activities of the projects.
- Couples who learn together apply their learning in all spheres of their life more widely than spouses who have learned individually. This is because of the mistrust often held by male partners is overcome when couples attend the meetings together. Skills and knowledge learned together are employed in planning, budgeting, financial management, decision making, health services and children's education.
- In the long run, investments in knowledge and skills improvement is more sustainable than providing agricultural input support. These investments promote self-reliance, whereas external direct support can create dependency. Although the demonstration inputs and start-up kits are an important part of the process, budget constraints compromise their ability to be more impactful

SECTION 7

RESOURCES

Publications

- FAO and WFP (2007) *Getting Started! Running a Junior Farmer Field and Life School*
<http://www.fao.org/tempref/docrep/fao/010/a1111e/a1111e00.pdf>
- FAO Uganda (2010) *Facilitators' Guide for Running a Farmer Field School*
<http://www.fao.org/3/a-bq668e.pdf>
- FAO (2016) *Farmer field school guidance document*
<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5296e.pdf>
- WEMAN and Oxfam Novib (2014) *Rocky Road to Diamond Dreams. GALS Phase 1 – Visioning and Catalysing a gender Justice Movement Implementation Manual, V1.0*
[https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/redactie/Downloads/English/SPEF/140701_RRDD_manual_July_small\(1\).pdf](https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/redactie/Downloads/English/SPEF/140701_RRDD_manual_July_small(1).pdf)

Videos

- Farmers taking the lead: 30 years of Farmer Field Schools (Produced by FAO in 2019)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzZ-1-uofyA>
- Institutionalising Farmer Field Schools in Uganda (Produced by FAO in 2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtJCx2RY3oc>

Cover photo: Member of a FFLS in Kotido district Uganda participating in an exercise on the Gender Balance Tree

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This good practice is part of the publication '*Gender transformative approaches for food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture – A compendium of fifteen good practices*' prepared in the framework of the *Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture (JP GTA)*. The Joint Programme is implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme and funded by the European Union.



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