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# Community Conversations Assessment Report

DEVELOPMENT FOOD SECURITY ACTIVITY – ETHIOPIA

**Authors**

Maria Veronica Gottret | Senior Technical Advisor for Agriculture and Livelihoods Research | CRS
Rita Muckenhirn | Consultant | CRS
Guy Sharrock | Senior Technical Advisor for Learning and Knowledge Management | CRS

**With contributions from**

Tiruset Haile | Gender and Youth Lead | DFSA | CRS
Belaynesh Tamre | Collaborating, Learning and Adapting Officer | DFSA | CRS
Masresha Yimam | Community Engagement Senior Project Officer | DFSA | CRS
Gregory Makabila | MEAL Manager | DFSA | CRS

**Editor**

Solveig Bang

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Cover photo by Rita Muckenhirn for CRS

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **CA** | community animator |
| **CBO** | community-based organization |
| **CC** | Community Conversations |
| **CCG** | Community Conversations group |
| **CFSC** | Communication for Social Change |
| **CLA** | Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting |
| **CP** | country program |
| **CRS** | Catholic Relief Services |
| **DFSA** | Development Food Security Activity |
| **DIP** | detailed implementation plan |
| **EARO** | East Africa Regional Office |
| **FFP** | Food for Peace |
| **GBV** | gender-based violence |
| **GoE** | Government of Ethiopia |
| **HCS** | Hararghe Catholic Secretariat |
| **HFL** | Harmonious Family Life |
| **HTP** | harmful traditional practices |
| **ICT** | information and communication technology |
| **IGA** | income-generating activity |
| **IHD** | Integral Human Development |
| **INGO** | international nongovernmental organization |
| **IPV** | intimate partner violence |
| **IRB** | Institutional Review Board |
| **KAC** | Kebele Appeals Committee |
| **LAC** | Land Use and Administration Committee |
| **LG** | livelihoods group |
| **MCS** | Meki Catholic Secretariat |
| **MCQ** | multiple-choice question |
| **M&E** | monitoring and evaluation |
| **MEAL** | monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning |
| **NGO** | nongovernmental organization |
| **PSNP** | Productive Safety Net Programme |
| **PWD** | people with disabilities |
| **RFSA** | Resilience Food Security Activity |
| **SBC** | social and behavior change |
| **SBCC** | social and behavior change communication |
| **SILC** | Savings and Internal Lending Communities |
| **SMART** | Skills for Marketing and Rural Transformation |
| **SOW** | scope of work |
| **STA** | senior technical advisor |
| **TOC** | theory of change |
| **TPB** | Theory of Planned Behavior |
| **USAID** | United States Agency for International Development |
| **WC&YO** | Women, Children and Youth Office |
| **WHO** | World Health Organization |
| **YLG** | youth livelihoods group |

# Contents

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Community Conversations groups facilitate discussions to identify, prioritize and address community issues. Photo by Rita Muckenhirn for CRS

# Executive Summary

The USAID-funded Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) program (2016-2021) led by Catholic Relief Services worked with both Hararghe and Meki Catholic Secretariats, and Mercy Corps, to support the Ethiopian Government's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). Its goal was to strengthen livelihoods and resilience to shocks, advance sustainable economic well-being, and improve the food security and nutritional status of vulnerable rural households in Ethiopia's Oromia region and Dire Dawa Administration. To achieve this goal, the program had three purposes—to reduce community and household vulnerability to shocks, to improve household sustainable economic well-being, and improve household nutritional status—and one cross-cutting purpose, to promote gender equity and equality, and youth development.

The program applied the Community Conversations (CC) approach, through the establishment of CC groups (CCGs), which facilitated conversations to identify, prioritize and address community issues, focused on influencing behavior change to promote gender equity and equality, and youth development. These positive behaviors and social norms were considered foundational to achieving and sustaining the three program purposes. The overall objective of this assessment, which was conducted at project midterm and endline, was to evaluate the effectiveness of the role CCGs played in identifying, analyzing and addressing community challenges by influencing needed behavior change in their communities to achieve and sustain the DFSA program development purposes and goal. As such, this assessment aimed to generate improvement-oriented knowledge and evidence for the DFSA, the new Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA) and future projects.

At DFSA endline, 190 Community Conversations groups had been established at the *kebele*[1] level (99% of the 192 DFSA *kebeles*) and an additional 41 youth CCGs (YCCGs) had been established for young adults, aged 18 to 29 years (21% of the DFSA *kebeles*) in response to a midterm assessment recommendation (Gottret et al., 2020).

SenseMaker was selected as the methodological approach to conduct the midterm and endline assessments because of its unique emphasis on the interpretive voice of respondents in comparison to other analytical data methods. Two interview tools captured: i) the functioning of CCGs for prioritizing and addressing community issues; and ii) the individual behavior change processes and outcomes among CCG members and non-members, which were applied at midterm and endline. The tools designed for the midterm assessment were reviewed and adjusted for the endline assessment to shorten them and to further investigate questions raised by the midterm assessment.

Sampling (N=1,000 for the midterm and N=774 for the endline) involved a two-stage cluster design to interview a statistically representative clustered sample of CCG facilitators, members and non-members. In addition to applying standard sampling principles, a purposive sampling approach was applied to ensure enough respondents for each subgroup of interest, given that SenseMaker relies on visualizing patterns of responses.

1. Administrative unit that usually comprises six or seven villages.

The resulting sample included 47% and 52% women for midterm and endline, respectively, and 23 and 33% young adults, respectively, and included respondents from all DFSA *woredas*, 73% of them living far from the *woreda* town. Most respondents were married (86%), followed the Islamic faith (96%), belonged to the Afaan Oromo sociolinguistic group, and were members of a monogamous household (83%).

The respondents' general level of education was low. Almost half (48%) were illiterate and the percentage among women was much higher (72%, compared to 27% of men), as well as among adults (55%, compared to 23% of young adults). The respondents' main income source was agriculture, but the percentage who selected agriculture as their main source of income decreased from 91% at midterm to 85% at endline. Those who did not report agriculture as their main source of income at endline, reported no income, which rose from 1% at midterm to 7% at endline. Shocks and stressors that affected the project implementation zone—such as crop pests and disease, drought and unpredictable or erratic rainfall, and price and market fluctuations, in additional to COVID-19—may have contributed to this.

## FUNCTIONING AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CCGS

CCG members represented diverse community member characteristics, such as sex (52% were women) and age (26% were young adults), but fewer elderly (2%) and people with disabilities (1%). These members represented community-based organizations (21%), faith-based groups (18%), PSNP clients (25%) and non-PSNP participants (3%), and their respective and broad needs and interests, noting that there was intersectionality, as one member might represent more than one interest group.

CCGs were largely functioning well and, in so doing, had reached their communities and, to some extent, other communities and the whole *kebele*. By and large, the CCGs were gender-sensitive and operating in a structured and participatory manner. Most CCG facilitators and members reported that awareness-raising was key to social and behavior change, and often related to some external influence, and that creating space in the communities to discuss issues and their consequences was an effective strategy for achieving the desired change. When CCG facilitators and members were asked about the emotions generated by their experience of participating in CCGs and addressing complex issues, most responses reflected pleasant ones, more in the high-energy quadrant (motivated, energized, joyful, proud and optimistic), but also in the low-energy quadrant (satisfied, grateful, thoughtful and blessed) (See Figure 2).

Priority issues addressed by CCGs included behavior change related to effective financial management, improved agricultural livelihood practices and reducing harmful traditional practices, followed by natural resource management, nutrition, health and sanitation practices, and other gender equity and equality related behaviors (household decision-making, male engagement in domestic and care work, girls' and women's access to education, violence against women and girls, and women's access to and control over resources). On the other hand, they placed less importance on issues related to youth development in general, and to the engagement of women and youth in the public sphere.

These findings suggest that CCGs addressed a broad range of issues across all three DFSA purposes, but placed more emphasis on those related to purpose 2 (improved household economic well-being) and the cross-cutting sub-purpose of gender equity and equality, and youth development.

It should be noted that activities and support provided to DFSA participants did not emanate solely from the CCGs; there were other DFSA interventions working simultaneously, but CCGs reinforced messaging to promote behavior change related to the three DFSA purposes, while placing a special focus on behavior change related to gender equity and equality, and youth development (cross-cutting DFSA purpose). CCG facilitators and members explained that their CCGs gave less priority to issues related to improved nutritional practices (purpose 3) because other issues were more urgent and to some extent because this was already addressed by giving people food or cash for work. Also, less priority was given to issues related to natural resources management (purpose 1) mainly because the communities were already working on it.

CCGs engaged various local and external influencers in CCG-related activities to address prioritized issues. At endline, 80% CCG facilitators and members said that traditional and religious leaders and government workers were engaged, and 73% that NGO workers and other CBO leaders were also engaged. Some 74% indicated that community members were also reached to address prioritized issues. This shows the increased engagement of various influencers since the midterm, most notably traditional and religious leaders, CBO leaders and NGO workers, the most significant increase being among government workers. This engagement reflects the CCG exit and sustainability strategy, which indicates that the DFSA should handover the CCGs to their respective *woreda* government workers and to community leaders. Moreover, CCG facilitators and members considered that these influencers—particularly NGO and government workers—committed to addressing the prioritized issues, and their contributions, together with those of CCG members, were strongly appreciated by respondents. The relatively high level of commitment of government workers is very promising for the longer-term sustainability of CCGs.

Almost all respondents said that their CCGs had facilitated focus group discussions (FGDs) and reflections, which were also considered by CCG facilitators and members to be the most effective means of communication. The use of one-to-one communication also increased from midterm, from 71% to 90% of respondents who shared that their CCGs used this strategy to reach community members. Following the midterm recommendations, DFSA staff intentionally promoted the use of this means of communication to influence behavior change, given that it appeared to be especially useful when discussing more sensitive topics such as harmful traditional practices (HTP) or gender-based violence (GBV), and has proved to be influential where individuals reveal a preference for dialogue with people they know and trust. CCGs' use of personal testimonies and practical demonstrations also rose significantly from 18% and 20% at midterm, respectively, to 62% at endline for both. These strategies are perceived to be effective in reaching community members because they can boost reflection and create awareness. The use of media and educational communication materials also increased significantly after the midterm, but were perceived at the median to be ineffective, perhaps due to the low access to media and the low levels of formal education of community members.

In addition to CCG meetings (cited by 75% of respondents), prioritized issues were also discussed in other formal and informal settings, the most cited being traditional coffee ceremonies (71%)[2], and CBO meetings and assemblies (67%), yet this aggregate figure hides a difference in those most cited by women (CCG meetings) and men (CBO meetings and assemblies). In general, DFSA investment in the formal space created by CCGs to facilitate CCs has been effective.

2. The Ethiopian coffee ceremony is an important part of Ethiopian culture, and involves roasting coffee beans and preparing boiled coffee in a vessel.

This may especially be the case when initiating the dialogue, and then enabling these conversations to be transferred to more familiar interaction spaces as well as to other formal interaction spheres. CCGs have responded well to DFSA encouragement to initiate discussions in various places of diverse issues affecting communities, and CCG members are using these specifically to influence behavior change.

According to 82% of respondents, the strategy most used by CCGs to address prioritized community issues was the direct promotion of behavior change among community members (reported by 82% of respondents), followed by influencing change in social norms (51% of respondents). The latter included confronting negative social norms that inhibit behavior change and/or promoting new positive social norms that encourage needed behavior change. Advocating NGOs to provide support, not used at midterm, and fostering cooperation among communities or *kebeles*, were the third-most cited strategies (13% and 12%, respectively). A similar percentage of respondents mentioned 'managed disagreements or conflict' that doubled between midterm and endline (from 6% to 12%). Encouragingly, there were accompanying reports of a positive response to the role played by the CCG, particularly in instances of family conflict and conflict related to access to and control over community resources, while perceptions of the effectiveness of CCGs in mediating conflict among ethnic groups was less positive and varied.

Despite the challenges to the functioning of CCGs raised by the COVID-19 pandemic, CCGs continued functioning and were able to reach out beyond their own meetings to discuss topical issues in their communities (20%), reached out to more than one village (51%), to all the villages in their *kebele* (28%) and, for a few CCGs (1%), even beyond their *kebele*.

Most CCG facilitators and members (75% and 65%, respectively) reported that their teamwork abilities were important for addressing prioritized issues, while about 40% of facilitators and about 25% of members indicated that their ability to communicate and deliver messages, as well as to facilitate dialogue and decision-making, also helped them address prioritized issues. Other abilities—including those related to gender equity and equality, and youth development—were much less reported. Consistently, more men than women considered that they had the abilities important for advancing the CCG's agenda, showing ample room for improvement in these abilities for female members. CCG facilitators' self-reported abilities were higher than the self-reported abilities of other members for all the abilities, in line with their higher level of formal education.

In general, CCG facilitators and members demonstrated a basic level of the *Good Governance* competency (42% abided by the group constitution and 32% ensured the application of the constitution) while other associated behavioral evidence was less; and, while CCG facilitators demonstrated a developing level of the *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competency, members demonstrated only a basic level (63% participated in group activities, 34% shared the group vision and goals, and 28% contributed to decision-making). At endline, a decision was taken not to reassess this competency because the DFSA did not actively prioritize a strategy of strengthening the organizational competencies of CCG facilitators and members in the period after midterm. For this reason, the midterm data presented are assumed to be applicable at endline. To continue improving CCG performance and sustainability, it would be prudent for the new RFSA to focus on further developing these competencies among CCG facilitators and members.

At endline, there appeared to be a reasonably strong sense of volunteerism among female and male CCG facilitators and members: almost a third (31%) of women indicated that they had been selected to become a member of the CCG mainly because they volunteered, and the equivalent figure for men was just under half (46%). For both female and male facilitators and members, more than half (55% and 54%, respectively) indicated that the main reason for committing their time was that they believed the work of the CCG was important.

The main motive for committing time to their CCGs by both female and male participants at endline was having the opportunity to learn (79%), showing that personal development was a key incentive for committing time to the CCGs. Also important were the desire to achieve tangible results (45%) and meet other people (38%). Other positive attributes were mentioned: appreciating the level of cooperation among members (32%), the standard of group governance (31%), feeling accepted by others in the group (30%), transparency in decision-making (26%), and feeling heard (21%). With respect to barriers, the lack of time to dedicate to CCG activities was cited by just over a fifth (21%) of all respondents, with more men (28%) than women (15%) raising it as a constraint.

Both female and male facilitators and members felt well integrated into the CCGs, contributing to the sense of belonging to a group that is an important indicator of social cohesion. Moreover, no difference was found between young adults and adults, or between facilitators and members. In addition to feeling integrated, facilitators and members agreed that members had a voice in decision-making, and both female and male members considered that, to a large extent, they were responsible for taking and implementing decisions. In relation to the quality of participation, at endline, respondents indicated that, at the median, their participation and that of other members was 'active,' meaning that they had engaged in the collective analysis of current issues, had prioritized them, and designed actions to address them, committing to their implementation. However, respondents' perceptions of their own participation and that of other ordinary members was dispersed between a 'functional' and 'active' participation, meaning that some members were not engaged in analysis, planning and decision-making, but only participated in the activities agreed by others.

Facilitators, on the other hand, were perceived to be 'fully engaged' at the median, meaning that in addition to showing the characteristics of an active participant they had also used their own initiative and were committed, exercising their participation in an autonomous manner. That said, perceptions were widely spread between a 'consultative' and a 'fully engaged' type of participation, suggesting that the level of engagement of facilitators varied significantly and that in some cases they limited themselves to giving their opinion only when consulted. These results triangulate and confirm the results obtained at the midterm.

In relation to the quality of leadership in CCGs, members' responses showed that facilitators considered members' opinions and suggestions when making decisions instead of just instructing them to operationalize decisions already made. At endline, findings suggest that, at the median, CCG members viewed their own contribution to CCG leadership as 'functional,' meaning that leadership was determined by their assigned position in the group achieving an operational interaction among facilitators and ordinary members, although some responded that they had played a 'motivating' leadership role. Respondents saw other CCG members similarly, although they rated their contributions more positively, with the median leaning more toward a 'motivating' type of leadership that affirmed the value and potential of group members and allowed them to form complementary teams to achieve group objectives.

Facilitators were, at the median, seen as having a 'motivating' leadership style, although overall there was a spread between 'functional' and 'transformative,' the highest level of leadership type that not only promotes collaboration and teamwork but also exerts a positive influence on group members to fully commit to achieving group goals and becoming agents of change.

Responses showed that CCGs were motivated by community advocacy rather than due to CCG members perceiving a need to comply with social norms. This helps explain not only the support that CCGs received from community members in dealing with prioritized issues, but also the positive perception of the contribution of CCGs in addressing the prioritized issues noted above, and the positive influence of CCGs in the communities. This is a very encouraging finding from a local accountability perspective and as a contribution to explaining the positive impact of CCGs.

Given the above findings, CCG facilitators and members transitioned from feeling unconvinced of the capacity of CCGs to initiate and sustain change in their communities, when they had just joined their CCGs, to at endline feeling confident of the capacity of CCGs to do so, showing a great reduction in the level of 'CCG sustainability skepticism.' This reflects DFSA efforts to develop exit and sustainability strategies for key activities and regular follow-up on implementation of strategies.

Perceptions of the relevance of CCGs in addressing priority issues remained strongly positive, although it is important to continue tracking the issue of CCG accountability to members in terms of process and results. While most members were prepared to devote their scarce time to the functioning of their CCG, it is imperative that they continue to see a return on their time investment.

## CCGs' INFLUENCE ON BEHAVIOR CHANGE AND SOCIAL NORMS

CCG members and non-members self-signified their individual experiences of behavior change as generating pleasant emotions in the high-energy (motivated, energized, optimistic and joyful) and the low-energy quadrants (satisfied, grateful, blessed and thoughtful). Both types of emotions may help to reinforce the sustainability of the achievements to date and encourage individuals to try other behavior change. However, some individual experiences of behavior change also generated unpleasant emotions (stressed, shocked, frustrated, worried and sad), usually related to stressful family situations or crop failure that led them to pursue their behavior change.

Most CCG members and non-members (65%) pursued one to three behavior changes, while less than 1% did not pursue any; the remainder sought to change more than three behaviors. Half of individuals pursued behavior change related to financial management practices (52%) and agricultural livelihood practices (51%). More women pursued the former behavior change (54%, compared to 51% of men), while more men pursued the latter behavior change (56%, compared to 44% women). Promoting effective financial management was a central intervention of the DFSA, and 99% of respondents were members of a Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC)[3] group and this, together with the messaging reinforcement of CCGs, was instrumental in influencing their pursued behavior change.

3. SILC groups offer their members safe and frequent opportunities to save in the convenience of their local community, while helping them overcome the challenge of accessing useful sums of money to take advantage of investment opportunities or overcome cash shortages for necessary expenditure. Through SILC groups, members also receive education for effective management of their financial resources.

An assessment participant answers a “triad” question, a core SenseMaker question that uses an equilateral triangle with element labels on each corner to understand the relative importance of three different elements of a single concept in the experience shared by the respondent.
Photo by Rita Muckenhirn for CRS

In addition, livelihood groups (LGs) focused on supporting male and female participants to develop on-farm and off-farm livelihoods. Thus, female and male participants also pursued behavior change related to off-farm livelihood practices change, but women assigned greater importance to this behavior change (23%, compared to 18% of men) (See Figure 2).

Between the midterm and endline, a significant increase was observed in the percentage of individuals who pursed a behavior change related to food security and improved nutritional practices, reaching 45% and 40% of respondents, respectively. As a result, 45% of individuals pursued a behavior change related to DFSA purpose 3 to improve household nutritional status. While 41% of CCG members shared that their CCG prioritized issues related to gender equity and equality and youth development, 36% of individuals pursued a behavior change related to this cross-cutting DFSA purpose at endline (46% of CCG members and 23% of non-members).

An important gender-related advance was the larger percentage of men pursuing behavior change related to more equitable household decision-making (20%, compared to 16% of women) and to male engagement in domestic and care work (12%, compared to 10% of women). Also, other gender-related behavior change was pursued by individuals, including improving women's access to and control over resources (8%) and engagement in the public sphere (7%), as well as stopping violence against women or girls (7%) and HTPs (7%). On the other hand, behavior change related to youth development—improving youth access to and control over resources and youth engagement in the public sphere—was much less pursued.

Adherence to the behavior change was lower than at midterm (82%), with 62% of respondents saying that they always acted according to their new behavior; 35% that they started the change but experienced challenges and setbacks, and 3% that they were unable to realize their intentions. Several explanations are possible: first, regular meeting schedules were disrupted due to COVID-19 restrictions, which may have affected the continuous dialogue and discussions around issues; and second, over the additional period to endline, some of the earlier, arguably unrealistic, expectations of always acting according to the new behavior change were tempered by the reality of sustaining any novel behavior change, particularly those related to changes in social practices and norms.

Among the helpful actions to purse their behavior change cited by 75% of the respondents were 'identifying a specific goal' and 'planning how to implement the intention.' Almost all respondents considered that at least one or a combination of the following drove them to pursue their chosen behavior change, in order of importance: the expected effect of achieving their goals (awareness), their confidence in their ability to change their behavior (self-efficacy), and the perceived potential personal gains (interest).

Findings showed that social rewards (and not sanctions) were more effective in encouraging behavior change, particularly among women. Although almost all respondents considered that one or a combination of two external motivations (the need to be accepted or peer pressure) and one internal motivation (personal belief in the importance of the behavior change) motivated them to change their behavior, in practice, peer pressure and wanting to be accepted were seen to be much less important than believing that the behavior change was important for them. The relative importance given to these motivations by women and men was largely the same; however, it can be observed that a slightly higher percentage of women gave the most importance to peer pressure (13%, compared to 9% of men). Young adults acted slightly more than adults on external motivations.

Endline findings also reinforced the importance of awareness of the need to change as fundamental to pursuing behavior change. Once individuals were aware that they needed to change a behavior, what helped them most was continuously practicing the behavior and, to a lesser extent, receiving positive feedback. This means that project interventions need to focus first on creating awareness of the importance of the behavior change, and then supporting individuals as they practice their new behavior until it is fully internalized.

As CCGs engaged diverse influencers in addressing behavior change, individuals who pursued behavior change also mentioned a wide range of 'influencers' who motivated them to change their behaviors and supported them to do so. Among the more mentioned were family members or relatives (74%), followed by government workers (59%), CCG members (51%), other community members (48%), and NGO workers (35%). On the other hand, although CCGs explicitly included in their membership traditional and religious leaders, they were less frequently mentioned (21%) together with leaders of other CBOs (22%). All these influencers were also committed to supporting the change in behaviors, but it varied. NGO workers, CCG members, and family members and relatives were considered the most committed to support. Government workers were seen as less committed than the former but more than both traditional or religious leaders, and leaders of other CBOs.

Although fewer respondents reported that CBO leaders and traditional or religious leaders supported them to change their behavior (12 and 15%, respectively), when they received support from them, they were seen as making a very positive difference, especially when they aimed to pursue behavior change related to the cross-cutting purpose of gender equity and equality, as well as purpose 2 (improved household sustainable economic well-being) and purpose 1 (strengthened community and household resilience). Also, more men reported that traditional or religious leaders supported their behavior change (20%, compared to 9% of women), but those women who were supported by them perceived that their support made more of a difference. Given the significant positive influence of traditional and religious leaders on behavior change across all DFSA purposes, it will be important to review and refine the strategy used to engage them to ensure their commitment to influencing behavior change in their communities.

Individuals who pursued behavior change received messaging mainly through one-to-one communication (85%), and group exchanges and reflections (84%), and considered these two means of communication to be the more effective. These findings are a strong endorsement of the role that Community Conversations play in fostering behavior change. Fewer respondents mentioned being exposed to practical demonstrations (25%) and personal testimonies (16%) to obtain information to change their behaviors and, although they considered them effective, they were seen as less effective than the former ones. Sharing personal testimonies requires a setting in which participants feel safe and confident. An assumption might be that the CCG already provides this space for its members, but this may not be the case for non-members. More than one third of individuals also received messaging via radio, TV or social media (36%) and 13% via education and communication materials, but were less enthusiastic about their effectiveness.

Women and men received messaging that motivated their behavior change in similar places and events, the most mentioned being traditional coffee ceremonies (64%), CBO meetings (58%), family visits (52%) and CCG meetings (44%), followed by special social events (12%), visits to health facilities (8%) and cultural events (8%).

On the other hand, more women reported receiving messages to change their behavior at visits to the market (46%, compared to 30% of men), and traditional food processing events (25%, compared to 4% of men); while more men reported receiving them at CBO meetings or assemblies (62%, compared to 52% of women) and religious ceremonies or gatherings (36%, compared to 28% of women). These findings suggest that it may make most sense to consider a strategic approach on where project efforts on discussing community issues and delivering behavior change messages should be focused, but, at the same time, being opportunistic in using other non-prioritized places and events for interaction. Moreover, the differences between women's and men's responses, and between young adults' and adults', are important to consider when designing gender- and age-responsive strategies for influencing behavior change. The use of informal places and events to deliver behavior change messaging needs to be carefully assessed, while identifying opportunities for dissemination, as it may be that certain topics cannot be discussed in certain settings.

More than three-quarters of respondents were sufficiently self-motivated to share their experiences and practices of behavior change with others, not just with family members, but also among their friends and peers, and other community members. Such secondary diffusion was mainly with other family members (59% of respondents) and with friends and peers (67%), the highest level of acceptance being for family members, followed by friends and peers. Women experienced higher levels of acceptance relative to men when they sought to influence behavior change among community members.

CCG members and non-members who pursued behavior change considered that it generated benefits not only for themselves and their households, but also, to a lesser extent, for their closest community members. At the household level, there were no discernible differences between the perceptions of men and women, while young adults expressed a more positive view than adults, possibly due to a greater importance placed on peer relationships and the desire to be accepted.

Respondents' level of self-confidence in sustaining their behavior changes rose after midterm, although there was still a degree of uncertainty about sustaining them, and the possible need for support from others to do so. The behavior changes that occurred with DFSA encouragement and advice were still relatively nascent, so this diffidence was no surprise. Men and CCG members tended to be more confident, significantly different from both women and non-members, respectively, but there was no difference between young adults and adults.

## CCGs' CONTRIBUTION TO GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY, AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

CCG members and non-members were assessed on the extent to which gender equity and equality norms had affected their behavior. CCG members and non-members who pursued an individual behavior change (46% and 23%, respectively), acted on at least one *negative* norm (e.g., 'Men who share tasks with their wives are considered weak') and one positive norm (e.g., 'Men and women who share tasks provide a good example to their children').

In relation to negative norms and beliefs, at the median, respondents acted slightly more on social norms than on personal beliefs, showing that influencing gender equity and equality requires a transformation at the community and societal levels. As these negative norms are transformed, they will influence further transformation into personal beliefs. Findings show only a statistically significant difference between women and men for the negative statement 'men belong to the public sphere and women to the house,' implying that women who acted based on this negative statement were more influenced by social norms, while men who acted on it were more influenced by their personal beliefs. This suggests that men require support to further internalize positive beliefs related to their support for women's participation in the public sphere.

At the median, all respondents who acted on *positive* norms were motivated by a combination of personal and social norms, but personal norms exerted a major influence. This may enhance the chances of lasting change as individuals who act on positive personal norms could in time become local influencers promoting desirable gender-related behavior. When acting on *negative* norms, differences between women and men emerged in the motivation underpinning behavior changes. Women tended to be driven by *personal* norms while men appeared to be more motivated by *social* pressure. On the other hand, more young adults acted on negative norms (64%) than adults (55%), but more in response to social rather than personal norms.

The effects of behavior change were most keenly felt on household decision-making. Respondents acted more on positive norms ('Husband and wife live in harmony by taking decisions together') than negative norms ('Only men can take good decisions for their household') at 76% and 40%, respectively, and in some cases on both as the shared experience evolved. As a result, improvements toward shared decision-making were perceived by both women and men, but their perspectives reflected subtle divergence: while women stated a greater involvement in a shared process, men indicated that they retained more influence in that shared process.

Despite the advances in behavior change related to gender equity and equality, women and girls continued to bear a heavier burden of domestic and care work. Indeed, both male and female respondents reported even more strongly at midterm that this role was mainly undertaken by women. There is a wider spread of responses, particularly for men, that gives some grounds for optimism that there may be individuals who might serve as models for others in the community. Furthermore, the distribution of domestic and care work between female and male children, showing a higher involvement of male children compared to midterm, bodes well for the future.

Fifty percent of respondents reported that their behavior change experiences led to changes in women's access to and control over land, livestock and financial resources. Overall, women gained access to all three resources as well as some level of control. Responses were more positive in relation to access to and control over financial resources. This aligns well with the finding that the behavior change reported by more respondents related to financial management practices, and that the household decisions that were more influenced by individual experiences of behavior change were those related to the management of household finances. Improvements in women's access to and control over livestock aligns with the second most mentioned behavior change—agriculture and livelihood practices—which, in turn, is reflected in the second most mentioned type of household decisions, namely, those related to agriculture and livelihood activities.

In relation to women's participation in the public sphere, 80% of female respondents participated in at least one CBO, although they felt less integrated than men. There is an opportunity here to strengthen the capacity of women and youth in participation, leadership, communication and decision-making skills. Among those who participated in CBOs, 19% joined during or after their personal behavior change experience. For 57% of women, the CCG was influential in their behavior change, making it the most frequently mentioned of all CBOs.

Despite a smaller percentage of participants having pursued behavior change related to GBV, respondents considered that its occurrence had declined, with an even further decline from midterm to endline as it relates to FGM and girls' abduction. The CCGs can take some credit for influencing this outcome, particularly during the challenging COVID-19 period. Nonetheless, there are still some households in which GBV is practiced. Progress can be made through individuals among those households that have already changed their behavior in this regard. The narratives where positive behavior change occurred are a moving testament to the positive impact on the whole family of reducing GBV. Indeed, narratives cited earlier in this report suggest that improvements in gender equity and equality can positively contribute to improved well-being and livelihoods.

Strengthening young adults' access to and control over resources represents a very different challenge compared to supporting women similarly, and it is reasonable to say that CCG contributions to behavior change related to youth development have been less marked. At best, CCGs have influenced improvements in access to and control over resources for only a relatively small number of young adults while, for most, the situation improved more slowly. In part this may reflect that the participation of youth via a separate youth CCG is a recent phenomenon. In fairness, expecting CCGs to contribute significantly to improved outcomes among youth is a tall order, even though young adults did feel able to voice their opinions in CCG meetings and their ideas did inform decision-making. Effective tangible gains in outcomes for young adults necessitate addressing structural and systemic changes that are most likely deeply rooted in longstanding traditional practices and mindsets and, in consequence, require greater attention, effort and, most certainly, time.

## CCGs' CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVING AND SUSTAINING DFSA DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES

In relation to the contribution of the personal behavior change experiences shared by respondents to the achievement of the Ethiopia DFSA development purposes, the findings show that respondents progressed from feeling vulnerable to feeling prosperous, showing a clear and consistent improvement in the way they felt prior to and over the course of the DFSA, and at endline. Tracking individual responses showed that 96% of participants experienced a prosperous and resilient pathway thanks to their personal experience of behavior change, and only 4% of participants experienced a vulnerable pathway, but the fall was to a much higher level than where they were before joining the DFSA.

This is a remarkable achievement bearing in mind the exogenous shocks experienced by project participants during the project activity, including crop pests and disease (affecting 50% of participants), drought (46%), price or market fluctuations (17%), livestock disease (17%) and unpredictable or erratic rainfall (15%), with the additional challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Gottret et. al, 2021 forthcoming). Overall, there was no difference between women and men or between young adults and adults.

More than half of individuals (58%) reported that their behavior change contributed to their resilience capabilities, perceiving a positive change and improved levels of resilience at endline than at midterm. Women suggested that their self-perceived abilities to deal with unexpected events, although still positive, were less positive than men's.

At endline, 59% of individuals, compared to 73% at midterm, reported that their behavior change contributed to a change in food availability in their household, and those who did perceived a positive change, although slightly less so at endline than at midterm, but with almost no outliers who reported a negative change. Disaggregated findings show that women perceived a less positive change than men, and young adults a more positive change than adults.

At endline, 63% of respondents reported a change in family income, suggesting that the contribution of their behavior change was positive, with men self-reporting a more positive change than women, and young adults reporting the highest levels of positivity regarding the income effects of their behavior change, and more positive than adults.

Half of the respondents reported that their behavior change led to a change in the diversity of their household diet and that the change was positive, being more positive at endline than at midterm. This finding was in line with a higher percentage of respondents who shared that they had tried to change a behavior related to their nutritional practices, most likely in response to the DFSA's use of CCG meetings for cooking demonstrations by engaging both women and men in preparing food for a balanced diet.

Such reported changes in resilience, food availability, well-being and dietary diversity are commendable, and although it is challenging to disentangle the precise level of the 'CCG affect,' as there were other contributory DFSA interventions targeting all participants, it is valid to conclude that CCGs have made an important contribution by reinforcing the messages and generating awareness on the importance of changing these behaviors.

## ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking forward to the RFSA refining and implementing process, program staff engaged in the interpretation of the assessment findings agreed on a set of detailed, actionable recommendations to strengthen the implementation of the CC approach, which are included at the end of this report. The recommendations are organized in broad categories summarized below.

**Collective interpretation of the assessment findings**

This report has surfaced important evidence that can contribute to collaboration, learning and adaptation of the CC approach and an implementation strategy for the RFSA that has entered its 'refine and implement' year and broadly for the design of new projects with similar goals. As such, it is recommended that human and financial resources are invested in facilitating a series of events to engage the project team and key stakeholders in the collective interpretation of the findings to refine the CC approach and its implementation strategy. For this, two interrelated processes of collective interpretation and refinement are proposed that can be implemented in an iterative manner. If these are done well, a sense of ownership of the route forward will develop, ensuring the commitment of partners, allies and stakeholders to its implementation.

The first involves the **engagement of project staff (CRS and implementing partners) and other project allies**, such as government and local NGOs, in the review and collective interpretation of the findings in a collaborative manner to identify actions to refine the CC approach and improve its implementation. This process will need to be carefully designed and well-facilitated, if possible, leveraging needed expertise to ensure an efficient use of time and financial resources and the achievement of the process outcomes. The second involves the **engagement of CCG members and non-members** in a participatory interpretation of the findings to: i) fill information gaps for the refinement process, which are detailed as questions in the recommendations section of the report and can be reviewed, revised and complemented as part of the collective interpretation with project staff and allies; and ii) identify actions that CCG facilitators, and CCG members and non-members can take to improve the performance and outcomes of the CCGs.

**Revisions to the CCG implementation strategy and new areas of intervention**

The RFSA provides a valuable opportunity to sustain and grow the achievements of the DFSA through sustained efforts on some of the more challenging issues that have arisen over the last five years. Based on the successes and learning from the implementation of the CC approach by the DFSA, some concrete recommendations are provided to revise the CC implementation approach to improve RFSA performance. These recommendations aim to:

- Clarify how CCGs support but do not duplicate other RFSA interventions, and complement them while focusing on gender equity and equality, and youth development. For this, it will be necessary to review the role of CCGs in supporting behavior change related to other DFSA interventions, and how best to collaborate with other project teams to create synergies that add value, focusing on the comparative advantage of CCGs to support other RFSA interventions.
- Improve the functioning of CCGs by improving the selection and capacity building of CCG facilitators, encouraging more young adults to take on this role; ensure better representation of the elderly and people with disabilities in CCGs; refine the strategy to engage traditional and religious leaders to ensure their commitment to influencing and supporting behavior change in their communities; and ensure that strategies for promoting behavior change and supporting individuals to sustain it are more gender- and age-responsive.
- Revisit the role of CCGs in further advancing behavior change related to nutritional practices and how they collaborate with other RFSA interventions promoting improvements in the nutritional status of participating households to create synergies that add value.
- Provide better support to project participants to change and sustain their behaviors by: (i) being opportunistic in using informal places and events for interaction and making better use of radio, TV and social media to generate awareness of the need for behavior change; (ii) designing and implementing a strategy to support project participants through the stages of behavior change in a layered manner; (iii) implementing concrete actions to raise awareness of the social norms and personal beliefs that inform individual behaviors and transform negative norms and personal beliefs into positive ones; and (iv) strengthen the use of role models and gender champions to further promote behavior change related to gender equity and equality.
- Effectively monitor CCG functioning and performance for adaptive project management by using the SenseMaker approach (“more stories like this, fewer like that”) to set targets and monitor changes, using selected questions included in the data collection tools used for this assessment and applying them more frequently.

**Emergent CCG roles**

Two new areas for consideration surfaced during the assessment. The first relates to girls' and boys' access to education and the reduction of school dropouts. Moving this agenda forward would be an excellent and economically and socially worthwhile challenge for the RFSA as youth and adult CCGs may be well placed to brainstorm what the community can do to address this challenge, including what support they might need from their local government, and how best to undertake the necessary advocacy work. The second relates to peacebuilding activities to prevent, mitigate and transform conflict. This could build on the work already undertaken by the CCGs in terms of mediating conflict, an emergent activity that in the main has been successful in improving the situation and could be an invaluable CCG role within their communities. However, before advancing with this, it is strongly recommended that the benefits and risks of CCGs taking this role are analyzed to ensure that no harm is done.

**Competency strengthening of CCG facilitators and members**

The competencies of CCG facilitators and ordinary members need to be strengthened for CCGs to continue promoting Community Conversations and addressing priority issues, in the absence of external assistance. At the core of the RFSA, this includes a capacity building process for facilitators and ordinary CCG members to develop the following competencies: 1) organizational competencies (*Good Governance* and *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competencies) as the foundations for CCG good governance and performance and for building social cohesion among group members; 2) facilitation competencies to more effectively engage communities in meaningful conversations; and 3) networking and advocacy competencies. This capacity building process should also ensure that competency gaps between women and men and between young adults and adults are closed and that these competencies are periodically assessed. Ideally, the MEAL system should include an indicator on the percentage of CCG members who achieved at least the functional level of organizational and facilitation competencies.

**CCG collaboration with external allies**

With a multifaceted program such as the RFSA, optimizing collaboration with external allies will help to ensure that resources are used in the most efficient and effective manner, and will represent explicit steps toward establishing a sustainable future for the DFSA achievements and those that are expected from the RFSA. The DFSA started the process of transferring the support for CCGs to government workers and local government as an exit strategy, but now that the RFSA will continue supporting CCGs and facilitating CCs, it will be timely to reflect on how this process can be a consideration from the outset. This will require a clear strategy on how to further engage government workers and provide them with hands-on support as a strategy for the longer-term sustainability of CCGs. This strategy needs to ensure that CCGs are not used by government offices to advance their political agenda, and that the groups maintain their independence and inclusive representation of the different community interests and needs.

An important strategy of the DFSA was also to advocate for NGOs to provide support to influence and support behavior change, and this strategy also needs to be revised based on the findings of this assessment. Together with the potential role of government workers and NGOs in lending support, fostering cooperation among communities and *kebele*s, managing disagreements or conflict, and mobilizing resources for community projects could all collectively serve as a useful package of approaches for the RFSA to discuss with external partners.

# Introduction

The Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) program in Ethiopia is an initiative supported by the USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP) to sustain and build upon the food security improvements achieved under the Government of Ethiopia's (GoE) framework of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). The Ethiopia DFSA began on September 30, 2016, and operated through September 29, 2021, with the goal to *improve and sustain the food, nutrition and livelihoods security of households and communities* in the Oromia region and Dire Dawa Administration. The program pursued one protection and disaster risk reduction/resilience (DRR/Resilience) purpose, two development purposes and one cross-cutting purpose as detailed below.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Protection purpose** | 1. Strengthen GoE (PSNP) and community systems to respond to reduce communities' and households' vulnerability to shocks. |
| **Development purposes** | 2. Improve households' sustainable economic well-being. |
| | 3. Improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, and children under 5 years. |
| **Cross-cutting and foundational sub-purpose** | 4. Increase women's and youth's access to and control over community and household resources. |

The DFSA was strongly focused on the development of women and youth (18-29 years), given their greater vulnerability and the transformational roles they have the potential to play, and to promote the needed behavior changes to achieve and sustain the program goal and its development purposes. To this end, CRS Ethiopia has adapted the Community Conversations (CC) approach since 2012 through the implementation of a previous DFAP program, the Resilience through Enhanced Adaptation, Action-learning and Partnership (REAAP) program, and girls' empowerment programming. This approach has evolved through years of practical experience at the grassroots level, with the aim of influencing social change processes, specifically for programming on gender equity[4] and equality,[5] youth development,[6] livelihoods and nutrition.

This socially transformative approach galvanizes communities to address the underlying causes of underdevelopment and vulnerability, and to influence needed behavior changes. It has been implemented by the DFSA to build the transformational potential of women and youth in their communities, and to achieve and sustain the program's purposes and goal.

4. Gender equity means the fair treatment of men and women according to their respective needs. To ensure fairness, measures must often be put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevented women and men from enjoying the same opportunities.-
5. Gender equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex in authority, opportunities, allocation of resources or benefits, and access to services. It is, therefore, the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between men and women, and the varying roles that they play. Gender equity is a means to achieve gender equality.
6. Positive youth development approaches pursue the engagement of youth along with their families, communities and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential.

The CC approach is being implemented by the DFSA through the establishment of Community Conversations groups (CCGs) in which representatives of different community and interest groups are brought together to engage in meaningful and productive dialogue around issues that are important to the communities, share knowledge and ideas, identify the root causes and underlying factors of complex community problems, and discuss solutions. CCGs are engaged in community-driven planning, action and reflection, and aim to strengthen their members' capacity to advocate for community needs and leverage resources.

The DFSA has been establishing CCGs at the *kebele*[7] level since 2017. Table 1 summarizes the number of CCGs established before the program midterm (2017-2019) that were functioning in 2020; and those that were established between midterm and endline (2020-2021) that were functioning at endline. After midterm, the project focused on establishing youth CCGs to offer young people both space and voice to discuss and address those issues of particular interest to them. Forty-one youth CCGs were set up and supported, more than the envisaged target of 33.

**Table 1. CCG established by the DFSA program (2017-2021)**

| Establishment period | Type of CCG | Age group of members | Number of CCGs established | Percentage of total CCGs established | Number of CCG members |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Before midterm (2017-2019) | Mature | Adults (30+ years) | 128 | 55.4 | 5,120 |
| After midterm (2020-2021) | New | Adults (30+ years) | 62 | 26.8 | 2,480 |
| | Youth | Young adults (18-29 years) | 41 | 17.7 | 1,640 |
| TOTAL | | | 231 | 100.0 | 9,240 |

CCGs follow five cyclical and interlinked stages: community entry, relationship-building and assessment, analysis, community response and reflection (Figure 1, Bete Ubuntu, 2017a). The process starts by identifying and gathering evidence on the challenges facing the community, engaging with community leaders to build consensus on the need to address these, establishing a change team of community members who represent diverse interest groups in the community, appointing a CCG facilitator, and facilitating a process to create a shared vision among group members.

The next steps involve strengthening relations among group members as conversations are facilitated to analyze the current context, followed by an analysis of the nature and depth of prioritized community challenges. This allows group members to reach a deeper understanding of community challenges by exploring the reasons for the prevailing situation. This is followed by a CCG response that involves collective decision-making, planning, acting and monitoring changes. The CCG cycle ends with a collective evaluation of the results achieved and an assessment of the current reality against the shared community vision. This is the end of the short-term goal and the beginning of the next collective action toward a shared vision.

7. Administrative unit that usually comprises six or seven villages.

## Figure 1. Community Conversations Approach Framework


Source: Ministry of Health, Health Extension and Education Center, Health Extension Program, CCE-DA Manual, 2007 (Adapted)

# Assessment Objectives and Questions

Encouraging results of the implementation of the CC approach were observed during the Joint Structured Midterm Review (CRS ELRP, 2019) in terms of perceptions, attitudes and practices related to communities' social norms and the values of women and youth. However, at that time there was no credible evidence of the approach's effectiveness. Furthermore, the program's midterm evaluation recommended ensuring implementation quality and the use of adult learning principles and methods to improve the effectiveness of training and behavior change sessions, advance the promotion of secondary adoption among non-participants, and replicate the intervention in neighboring *kebeles* to ensure its sustainability.

In response to the program's midterm evaluation recommendations, the following positive actions were taken:

**Recommendation 1:** Ensure implementation quality and the use of adult learning principles and methods to improve the effectiveness of training and behavior change sessions:

> **DFSA response:** The DFSA has strengthened its adult learning principles through various activities using demonstration sites, training centers, experience-sharing events, mentoring, supervision and follow-up. Adult-friendly materials and tools that considered the project participants' educational level and implementing *woreda* contexts were developed and used.

**Recommendation 2:** Advance the promotion of secondary adoption among non-participants.

> **DFSA response:** The DFSA paid particular attention to experience sharing between project and non-project participants. This was implemented through the organization of experience-sharing events, including International Women's Day, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, and others.

**Recommendation 3:** Replicate the intervention in neighboring *kebeles* to ensure its sustainability.

> **DFSA response:** The DFSA worked with government stakeholders to encourage them to disseminate DFSA good practices in locations not covered by the program. There is evidence that non-project participants responded positively.

Moreover, the DFSA included some of the recommendations from the first CC assessment report in the project's detailed implementation plan (DIP) for 2021, the final year of the project. These included the following: effective participation of youth in CCGs; broadening discussion to other DFSA sectors (P1 and P3); greater interaction with other groups in the area; and developing the capacity of CCGs to influence actors at different levels (individuals, households, communities and government structures). In sum, it is anticipated that the recommendations arising from both the midterm and the CC preliminary assessments will be very beneficial to the RFSA.

To generate needed evidence and support learning to adjust the implementation strategy of the CC approach to ensure quality implementation, this assessment was conducted with the **overall objective** of generating evidence of the role CCGs played in identifying, analyzing and addressing community challenges by influencing needed behavior change in their communities to achieve and sustain the DFSA program development purposes and goal.

The CC approach assessment has five **specific objectives**:

1. **CCG functioning and effectiveness at addressing community issues.**
   To assess the CC approach and the functioning of CCGs in addressing community issues across the DFSA interventions through influencing attitudinal and behavior change at an individual level, and social norms at the community level.

2. **CCG influence on behavior change and social norms.**
   To evaluate the effectiveness of CCGs in influencing positive behavior change among members, households and communities; and personal and social norms that influence behavior and social interaction.

3. **Contribution to gender equity and equality, and youth development.**
   To assess the contribution of CCGs to promoting gender equity and equality, and youth development; specifically, as they relate to access to and control over resources, equitable gender-based household dynamics, women's and youth's participation in the public sphere, and reducing harmful traditional practices (HTP) and gender-based violence (GBV).

4. **Contribution to DFSA development purposes and goal.**
   To evaluate the contribution of behavior change promoted by CCGs across the DFSA interventions to achieving and sustaining development gains, and food, nutrition and livelihoods security.

5. **Emergent practices for quality implementation of the CC approach.**
   To identify in a timely manner emergent practices that the RFSA can amplify or dampen, as necessary, to ensure program effectiveness and sustainability.

The specific objectives of the CC approach assessment and related learning questions are presented in Table 2.

## Table 2. Learning objectives and questions

| Assessment objectives | Learning questions |
|---|---|
| **1. CCG functioning and effectiveness at addressing community issues**<br>To assess the CC approach and the functioning of CCGs to address community issues across the DFSA interventions through influencing attitudinal and behavior change at an individual level, and social norms at the community level. | 1.1. How are CCGs functioning and being governed, and what are the facilitators' and members' capabilities to perform their functions effectively?<br>1.2. How are CCGs prioritizing and addressing community issues, and to what extent are they addressing issues across the different DFSA purposes?<br>1.3. How are CCGs delivering messages across DFSA interventions to influence positive attitudinal and behavior change at the individual level, and social norms at the community level?<br>1.4. What approaches are CCGs using to influence these changes in their households and communities, and which are proving to be more effective? |
| **2. CCG influence on behavior change and social norms**<br>To evaluate the effectiveness of CCGs in influencing positive behavior change among members, households and communities; and personal and social norms that influence behavior and social interaction. | 1.1 What role are CCGs playing in influencing prioritized behavior change and how effective are they?<br>1.2 How are personal and social norms influencing individual behavior and to what extent are CCGs advocating for changes to these norms?<br>1.3 What is the potential of CCGs to generate behavior change that will sustain DFSA development gains? |
| **3. Contribution to gender equity and equality, and youth development**<br>To assess the contribution of CCGs to promoting gender equity and equality, and youth development; specifically, as it relates to access to and control over resources by women and youth, equitable gender-based household dynamics, women's and youth's participation in the public sphere, and reducing harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence. | 1.1 How are gender-based personal and social norms influencing individual behavior, and to what extent are CCGs advocating for changes to these norms?<br>1.2 How does the promoted behavior change influence gender-based household dynamics (household decision-making and male engagement in domestic and care work), and women's and youth's participation and recognition in the public sphere?<br>1.3 How is the promoted behavior change contributing to gender equity and equality, and youth development, by improving women's and youth's access to and control over resources?<br>1.4 How are the promoted behavior changes contributing to reducing harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence? |
| **4. Contribution to DFSA development purposes and goal**<br>To evaluate the contribution of behavior change promoted by CCGs across the DFSA interventions to achieving and sustaining development gains, and food, nutrition and livelihoods security. | 1.1 To what extent can the promoted behavior change for the achievement of the DFSA protection and development purposes be sustained?<br>1.2 What has been the contribution of the behavior change promoted to strengthening and sustaining community and household resilience, economic well-being and nutrition? |
| **5. Emergent practices for quality implementation of the CC approach**<br>To identify in a timely manner emergent practices that the RFSA can amplify or dampen, as necessary, to ensure program effectiveness and sustainability. | 1.1 What emergent CC approaches and practices are proving effective in ensuring program effectiveness and sustainability?<br>1.2 What threats need to be addressed in a timely manner to ensure program effectiveness and sustainability? |

While this assessment focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of the CC approach, it is important to note that it was implemented by the DFSA as a cross-cutting intervention together with other interventions that were specifically designed to achieve the other three project purposes, and not in isolation. This included major interventions to promote savings and effective financial management through Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) and financial education, and the establishment of livelihood groups (LGs) to strengthen participants' competencies to develop on-farm and off-farm livelihoods, among other interventions directly related to nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that this assessment did not aim to attribute changes solely to the work of the CCGs, but to assess their contribution to the achievement of the different DFSA purposes with an emphasis on the cross-cutting purpose of promoting gender equity and equality and youth development.

# Methodology

This assessment was conducted in two parts during the Ethiopia DFSA implementing period: the first was conducted during FY2020, just after the project midterm evaluation, and was repeated in FY2021 before project closure with a longitudinal and representative sample of project participants to evaluate the advances achieved through the implementation of the CC approach. This assessment was conducted with three aims: 1) to identify and probe emergent practices and threats, and make necessary adjustments to the implementation of the CC approach during the remainder of the project to ensure its maximum impact; 2) to compare and contrast findings from the FY2021 assessment with those from FY2020 to evaluate the outcomes of actions taken based on the findings; and 3) to provide insights and evidence for the design and implementation of new projects, including the new RFSA.

Collective interpretation events were planned to engage key stakeholders—project participants, local stakeholders, partner and CRS staff—in reviewing the findings of the primary analysis, to propose necessary adjustments to the CC approach and act. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the collective interpretation process had to be limited to CRS staff. Plans to engage CCG facilitators and members, partners and key stakeholders with selected relevant findings as part of FY2021 program implementation could not proceed given the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic through the end of DFSA implementation.

SenseMaker was selected as the core method for this assessment as it was developed to explore complex issues such as gender equity and equality, and specifically to assess behavior change and identify emergent practices that can be amplified to promote needed changes in behavior, norms and values. SenseMaker is a complexity-aware, narrative-based method, and can be used to conduct assessments, monitoring, evaluations (baseline, midterm or final) and research studies. SenseMaker is based on narratives that respondents share and to which they give additional meaning. It recognizes that personal narratives—or short accounts of people's experiences—offer valuable insights into contextualized knowledge.

The method enables users to gather and analyze large numbers of experiences from participants, shifting the power of interpretation to the respondent, and away from the evaluator. It is specifically developed to better understand reality through the respondents' eyes. Nuanced insights into their experiences can be revealed through visual data patterns, and statistical and textual analysis. SenseMaker can be used as a standalone method or in combination with other more conventional assessment, monitoring, evaluation or research approaches.

Given these distinct characteristics of the SenseMaker method, it lends itself well to participatory practice and has powerful features that make it different from other methods of inquiry. Other studies conducted by CRS show that the method itself can be empowering to respondents, and thus is in line with the DFSA's women's empowerment objectives. It is also suitable for less literate participants, who are disproportionately women. The features are listed briefly below, while more detailed information on the method and its application can be found in Guijt et al. (2018).

**1. SenseMaker uses a narrative as the entry point.**
The starting point for the method is the narrative that each respondent shares about a specific experience related to the topic of inquiry. Narratives are triggered by a predesigned, open-ended question called a 'prompt question,' intended to enable respondents to share factual experiences important to them, rather than to generate evaluative statements or opinions.

**2. SenseMaker facilitates the self-interpretation of experiences.**
Once a respondent has shared their experience, they are asked follow-up questions called 'signifier questions' that facilitate further reflection and interpretation of the experience. This self-signification process reduces the influence of the external evaluator or researcher during analysis and provides additional layers of information about the experience shared by the respondent.

**3. SenseMaker encourages respondents to deliberate over and nuance their responses.**
The way respondents are asked to provide their answers encourages nuanced and deliberative responses. The nature of the questions encourages respondents to take time to reflect before responding, which is less common in conventional surveys. Four signifier questions are core to the SenseMaker method: the slider, slider with stones, triad, and canvas with stones (see Table 3 for a description of these types of follow-up questions).

Table 3. Key SenseMaker signifier question definitions (Gujit et al. 2018)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Signification framework** | The core SenseMaker instrument, equivalent to a survey instrument. Includes a prompt question, a story title question, a set of signifier questions, and a set of socio-demographic and collection protocol multiple-choice questions. |
| **Signifier question** | Core SenseMaker question used to capture layers of meaning additional to the narrative. Types of signifier questions: multiple-choice, triad, slider, slider with stones, and canvas with stones. |
| **Slider** | A core SenseMaker question wherein respondents are asked to signify what happened in the experience they shared by placing their response on a line between two extremes. |
| **Slider with stones** | A core SenseMaker question wherein respondents are asked to signify what happened in the experience they shared by selecting options relevant to their experience, called 'stones,' and placing them on a line between two extremes. |
| **Triad** | A core SenseMaker question that uses an equilateral triangle with element labels on each corner to understand the relative importance of three different elements of a single concept in the experience shared by the respondent in their narrative. |
| **Canvas with stones** | A type of signifier or follow-up question wherein respondents are asked to signify what happened in the experience they shared by selecting different options, called stones, and indicating where they lie on a two-way matrix of interrelated continuums, representing different elements of a concept. |

**4. SenseMaker allows inclusion of many voices at scale and the hearing of differences.**
Unlike other qualitative methods, SenseMaker allows the inclusion of many voices—hundreds and sometimes thousands—making it possible to listen to diverse perspectives on the same issue. The software helps disaggregate data to compare subgroups and, when robust sampling strategies are used, enables the use of statistical tests and the making of inferences. Valuing each person's experience means there is no biased selection of 'best' stories or 'champion' examples.

**5. SenseMaker empowers respondents as they reflect on their experiences.**
When facilitated well, SenseMaker has the potential to raise awareness among respondents, and to empower them through selecting, sharing and making sense of their experiences. During many SenseMaker studies, when respondents were systematically asked how they felt while sharing and signifying their experiences, their responses showed that SenseMaker made it easier than other methods for those with varying literacy levels to participate and helped them to reflect on their experiences.

**6. SenseMaker values weak signals as important for adaptive management.**
SenseMaker-based analysis can easily generate dominant patterns and tease out means and medians in data. But it also values individual experiences and weak signals or outliers. Weak signals can help to identify aspects of a situation that can provide opportunities for innovation or support to reach positive outcomes (emergent practices) and can also indicate challenges or problems that need to be addressed or reduced. This is essential for monitoring and evaluation to support collaboration, learning and adaptation.

**7. SenseMaker combines qualitative and quantitative data through visual patterns, and textual and statistical analysis.**
Qualitative and quantitative data are analyzed together to complement each other and gain better insights. The SenseMaker approach allows for an agile analytical process that moves between the visualization of patterns from multiple responses, the selection of narratives from dominant and weak patterns for textual analysis, and the combination of responses to visualize association or correlation. Analysis can also include a more structured, assumption-testing phase of looking at visual patterns, narratives and statistics using various software tools.

**8. SenseMaker reframes indicators and the direction of success.**
SenseMaker-based analysis, or sensemaking, can provide a complementary way to frame indicators of success in terms of the desirability of certain kinds of narratives and visual patterns. Targets can be identified by making statements such as: 'Through the program, we would like to see more stories or responses like this … and fewer like that …'

## ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Once the initial scope of work (SOW) was prepared and approved, the CC assessment was implemented in two phases. The first phase began in November 2019 with the design of collection tools, followed by data collection in February and March 2020; the second phase started in March 2021, with the revision of the collection tools, and data collection during April and May 2021. Below is a short description of the activities that were implemented in each of these two phases.

### PHASE 1: MIDTERM ASSESSMENT – FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2020

#### STEP 1: PREPARATION

The preparation step started with the formation of the core team responsible for implementing this assessment. This team was co-led by experts in research and the SenseMaker method (CRS' senior technical advisor for research and an independent consultant) who worked in close collaboration with four members of the CRS Ethiopia DFSA team (the gender and youth lead, the MEAL manager, the Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation officer and the community engagement senior project officer) and the CRS senior technical advisor for learning and knowledge management. This phase included the preparation of a detailed implementation plan and budget.

The team reviewed key DFSA program documents, including the approved proposal, the theory of change (TOC), Community Conversations training guides (Bete-UBUNTU, 2017a and 2017b), and contextual information about the DFSA zone of intervention. This phase also involved the review of relevant literature on social behavior change, social psychology and social cohesion (CRS, 2019a; CRS, 2019b; Petit, 2019; Kessler and Fritsche, 2018; Van Eerdewijk et al., 2017; Arson et al., 2014; Sheeran and Webb, 2016; Cooke and Kothari, 2004; and Mayne, 2018) to design the analytical framing of the study. Framing the design and analysis is particularly important in SenseMaker as it is a method oriented toward unpacking concepts, assumptions and perspectives. Because it is less about asking direct questions, the selection, adjustment or development of the concepts and relationships between them is a critical step in preparing for the SenseMaker process.

#### STEP 2: DESIGN

CRS held a design workshop with the core team and additional thematic CRS and partner specialists to design the data collection tools. The workshop was facilitated by the SenseMaker experts (CRS' STA for learning and knowledge management and an independent consultant) and resulted in the design of two collection tools or signification frameworks. To respond to the research questions, the CC assessment targeted CCG members and non-members, and two tools were designed. The first focused on assessing how CCGs had identified and prioritized community problems or issues, and their experience in addressing them, which was applied only to CCG facilitators and CCG members. The second tool focused on the extent to which the actions implemented by the CCGs had generated the targeted social behavior change (SBC) among CCG members and non-members.

Following the design workshop and subsequent training on SenseMaker data collection, the DFSA team tested various prompt questions with CRS staff. This informed the finalization of the first draft of the tools for field testing by the Ethiopia DFSA Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) officer and the country program MEAL officer with the support of local project staff.

This testing was essential to inform a second draft. In preparation for the collection phase, the independent consultant worked with the CRS STA for research to set up and test the digital collection sites for data collection.

Since the interviews included sensitive topics such as gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices that could pose a risk to respondents' safety, CRS applied for Institutional Review Board approval to the Ethiopian Ministry of Health's Ethical Board and to the Oromia regional and the Dire Dawa health bureaus. The Ethiopia DFSA gender and youth lead gained the Board's approval before the start of the collection phase. Nevertheless, the collection tools designed for this study did not include questions that explicitly asked respondents to share their personal experiences of GBV or HTP.

A facilitators' manual was designed to accompany these collection tools including detailed guidance on how to prompt narratives from respondents and to facilitate the self-signification process. The manuals also included advice on how to facilitate the collection process in a locally adapted and respectful manner, ensuring a proper consent protocol, and facilitating a process aligned with ethical data collection standards. It also included instructions on how to refer survivors of GBV to organizations that could support them, and how to support them if resources were not available (IASC, 2015).

To avoid causing any harm to staff or respondents, CRS developed clear procedures and protocols to ensure the protection of respondents' confidentiality; that privacy was maintained during data collection; that informed consent was gained from respondents; and that referrals were provided if necessary. CRS established the following measures and protocols using World Health Organization recommendations (WHO, 2007):

1. Facilitators who conducted interviews received training on ethical considerations and were provided with instructions on how to deal with sensitive questions and responses, as well as how to provide referral information if needed.

2. Before starting the interviews in each community, CRS staff met with community leaders to provide information on the study and its objectives, explain who was going to be interviewed and how the interviews would be conducted. CRS staff responded to their questions and concerns and obtained their approval.

3. Interviews were carried out in a quiet setting selected by the respondents themselves for security and privacy.

4. The two collection tools included three consent questions. First, after explaining the purpose of the interview, facilitators explained that the data collection was voluntary and anonymous, that confidentiality would be maintained, and that respondents had the option to opt out at any time during the interview. Second, before asking the prompt question, respondents were asked for their consent to record an audio of the interview, and the interview was not recorded if they did not give consent. Third, after respondents shared their experience as a narrative, they were asked for consent to share their narrative and, if they didn't give consent, their narrative was not included for interpretation in this report or shared in any event organized to share the study findings.

## STEP 3: COLLECTION

The collection step started with a one-week training workshop for the facilitators to collect the narratives and facilitate the self-signification process. The workshop focused on ensuring that the facilitators: (a) understood the research purpose, learning questions and analytical framework; (b) had a working knowledge of the SenseMaker method; (c) were familiar with the collection tools and had practical experience in administering them to a high standard; and (d) followed the ethical protocols in place during the collection process. In addition, during the facilitator training, a field practice was conducted in the implementation zone that also served as a final user-testing of the collection tools. This training workshop was facilitated by the consultant and MEAL officer.

Feedback provided by the trained facilitators and participating implementing partner staff from the final user-testing of the collection tools, especially in relation to the use of language and cultural contextualization, was used to conduct a final revision of the two collection tools. Once revisions were made to the paper and digital versions of the tools, the consultant conducted a one-day refresher training for facilitators to ensure that they were ready to start the collection process and, subsequently, supervised the first two days of data collection. The collection process was then supported and supervised by the DFSA CLA officer during the four weeks of data collection, in close communication with the consultant and the CRS STA for research, who were able to troubleshoot all technical problems encountered in the use of the digital platform and provide remote data quality assurance support.

## STEP 4: SENSEMAKING

Sensemaking involves visualizing, examining and recombining the qualitative and quantitative data that SenseMaker generates. It involves the analysis and interpretation of the collected narratives and data with different stakeholders, triggering individual and collective reflections that offer new insights that inform decisions for programming, advocacy or local action. This involved a multi-stage process, with much iteration between visualizing patterns, and open-ended and structured analysis, as described below.

### Primary analysis

Once the collection process was finalized, primary analysis was led by the CRS STA for research and the consultant, in collaboration with other members of the DFSA team and the CRS STA for learning and knowledge management. Primary analysis took an exploratory approach to provide a bird's eye view of the findings to describe and understand the main characteristics of the data. It involved characterizing respondents and focused on presenting responses visually in the form of plots and graphs to identify dominant patterns and outliers, and to identify the need to disaggregate responses and the key variables for doing so. This was done by: (1) using visualization tools (plots and graphs); (2) using quantitative techniques (summary statistics with some basic level of disaggregation, and correlations among selected variables); and (3) reading and analyzing sets of narratives from different groups of respondents and any text that had been entered in the 'other' field of the multiple-choice questions (MCQs). The sets of narratives for analysis were extracted by filtering them using MCQs or by selecting responses from dominant clusters or from outliers. Primary analysis also allowed the assessment analysis team to identify any remaining information needs for further exploration in collective interpretation workshops.

**Collective interpretation**
With all primary analysis findings documented in PowerPoint presentations and included in a first draft of the report, a series of virtual meetings were conducted from mid-June to mid-August with the core Ethiopia DFSA team to interpret these findings, reach preliminary conclusions, propose further analysis needs, agree on actions that the program could take to address the findings, and make recommendations for the remaining implementation period.

**Comprehensive analysis**
Based on the insights and feedback received during the series of collective interpretation meetings conducted with the core DFSA Ethiopia team, comprehensive analysis was conducted to further explore the data and answer the learning questions in a comprehensive manner. For this purpose, the comprehensive analysis used a more structured (focused or guided) approach than primary analysis. As part of this work, a final draft of the report was finalized.

## PHASE 2: ENDLINE ASSESSMENT – APRIL-MAY 2021

### STEP 1: PREPARATION
The preparation for the second phase of the assessment started in January 2021 with the review of the study SOW and the preparation of a detailed implementation plan for the second phase of the assessment.

### STEP 2: DESIGN
Building on the experience obtained during the FY2020 assessment, the FY2021 assessment team conducted a thorough revision of the tools, as follows: first, the tools were reduced in length as much as possible by removing questions that had not added significant value to the original analysis, or where changes after only an additional year of implementation were not expected based on the actions implemented after the first assessment; second, based on the findings of the FY2020 assessment, modifications were made to refine and improve the questions to facilitate comparisons between the FY2020 and FY2021 results; third, a limited number of questions were added to enable a 'deeper dive' into issues that had surfaced during the first assessment.

### STEP 3: COLLECTION
The collection phase started with a three-day face-to-face training workshop for survey facilitators led by the CRS Ethiopia MEAL officer, with remote support from the consultant. The facilitators involved in FY2020 were again recruited for the FY2021 survey. In addition to the workshop, a set of five training videos on using the SenseMaker method were developed and were made accessible to facilitators as a response to the context of a worsening pandemic. The videos proved fundamental to the effectiveness of the training and were downloaded onto the tablets used for data collection. The latter allowed facilitators easy access to the videos to revisit the protocols for each type of signifier question: narrative collection, sliders, slider with stones, canvas with stones and triads. In addition, after the three-day training, a field practice was conducted in the implementation zone that also served as a final user-testing of the revised collection tools.

### STEP 4: SENSEMAKING
Given that the project was reaching its end, data collected in FY2021 was analyzed by the CRS STA for research who collaborated with the former CRS STA for learning and knowledge management, hired in FY2021 as a consultant. The final output is this report, an updated version of the original report that includes data and analysis from both phases of the assessment.

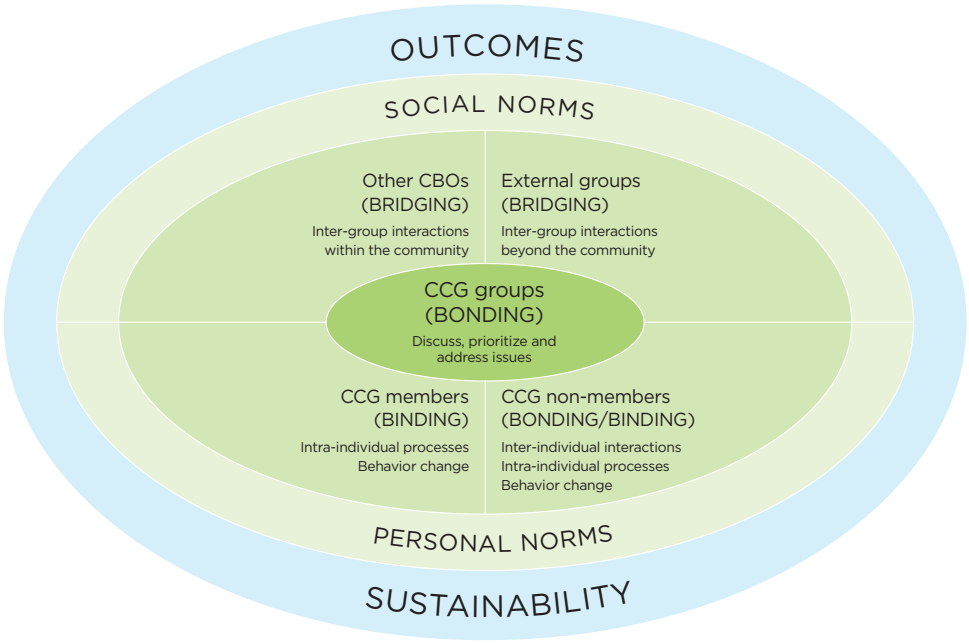
## ANALYTICAL FRAMING

Analytical framing is the bedrock of a quality SenseMaker process. It guides the entire design and sensemaking process. Deciding on the analytical framing is good practice for any evaluation or assessment and is a must for a research process. It is particularly important in SenseMaker as it is a method oriented toward unpacking concepts, assumptions and perspectives. Because it is less about asking direct questions, the selection, adjustment or development of the concepts and the relationships between them is a critical step in preparing for a SenseMaker process.

The basis for the design of the assessment's analytical framing (Figure 2) was the DFSA theory of change, specifically the rationale concerning the CC approach, which is that if Community Conversations foster intra-group interactions to discuss, prioritize and address complex community problems or issues, it would be reasonable to expect that these interactions would first generate social cohesion among CCG members (first inner circle). This process would also directly influence CCG members as they would go through an intra-individual process (binding)[8] of becoming aware of needed personal behavior change that would lead to personal efforts to pursue this change (bottom-left quadrant of the second inner circle). Furthermore, CCG members would also engage with their household members and other close community members (relatives, friends and peers) to influence them to change their behavior through inter-individual interactions (bonding), resulting in non-members' inter-individual processes (binding) to pursue personal behavior change (bottom-right quadrant of the second inner circle).

Given that CCG members represent different community-based organizations, they would also act as key agents for bridging relations between CCGs and CBOs, thus promoting inter-group interactions (bridging) to further advocate for needed behavior change within the community to address prioritized community problems or issues (upper-left quadrant of the second inner circle) in their *kebeles*. Moreover, the influence of CCGs can go beyond the community through the facilitation of inter-group interactions (bridging) with CCGs and CBOs in other *kebeles*, and with other organizations at the *woreda* (district) level (upper-right quadrant of the second inner circle).

**Figure 2. Analytical framing used for the Community Conversations assessment**




8. From CRS' signature 3Bs methodology for building social cohesion: binding, bonding and bridging (CRS, 2019a).

The analytical framework core elements of intra-individual processes, inter-individual interactions, intra-group interactions and inter-group interactions come from social psychology and are proposed by Kessler and Fritsche (2018) as the four levels of analysis of the intra-personal and interpersonal factors that shape individual behavior, together with family, community and institutions, both formal and informal (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Golden et al., 2015; and Petit, 2019). As explained above, these levels of analysis also interlink with the three core elements of CRS' signature methodology for building social cohesion, called the 3Bs, for binding, bonding and bridging (CRS, 2019a). These concepts are defined and described as they were used and adapted to provide the framing for this assessment.

## INTRA-INDIVIDUAL PROCESSES (BINDING)

This refers to the **processes of personal introspection** an individual undertakes to understand their emotions and personal beliefs, and to build awareness of the effects of those beliefs on the relationship between themself and others, and the need to change specific behavior. This can lead to the intention to pursue behavior change that improves an individual's well-being and strengthens their role in building cohesive societies.

## INTER-INDIVIDUAL INTERACTIONS (BONDING)

This refers to **interactions between individuals**, determined by their unique characteristics. Generally, similar characteristics or identities (family, friends, peers and affiliations) prepare them for substantive engagement with the 'other,' which might result in positive or negative interactions between individuals. When these interactions are positive, they usually contribute to bonding.

## INTRA-GROUP INTERACTIONS (BONDING)

This refers to **interactions within a community or group**, the members of which, in the relative safety of their own community or group, work through their commonalities and differences, diverse understandings and opinions, and alternative visions of the future, to aggregate their concerns, needs and priorities, making it easier to give them a voice.

## INTER-GROUP INTERACTIONS (BRIDGING)

This refers to the **interactions among two or more communities, groups or organizations** with different characteristics and identities to address issues of mutual concern. Bridging contributes to purposeful interactions for mutual benefit in a safe space, building trust and creating platforms for collective action that can enable divided communities to focus on advancing a shared agenda.

## SOCIAL AND PERSONAL NORMS

The framework also recognizes that **social norms**—defined as the informal rules that prescribe what actions are regarded by a group as proper or correct, or improper or incorrect (Keefer and Knack, 2008; Mackie et al., 2015)—exert social pressure to perform (or not) a given behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). Thus, they influence **behavior** and **social interaction** within communities and groups, and how they interact with members and groups from other communities. This is because social norms determine what people are expected to do or not given their social context and circumstances. While social norms are externally motivated, **personal norms** are internally motivated personal attitudes, which are consistent with an individual's sense of self-worth (Cialdini and Trost, 1998), and are shaped by an individual's values, beliefs and convictions that are expressed in these personal norms, and are enforced through self-generated emotions (Elster, 2009). Thus, personal norms also influence **behavior** by shaping intra-individual processes of **personal introspection**.

**Social and personal norms are not static and constantly influence each other**. Social norms regulate personal norms by imposing limits, or by fostering personal agency (choices, power, voice and opportunities), at the same time as personal norms influence social norms when enough individuals in a community or group share the same personal norms. Understanding the dynamics of social and personal norms, and the tensions between them, is relevant and important for developing strategies to promote behavior change, as there is evidence that people are more likely to adopt behaviors if they think others like them are doing the same or think positively about it, and conversely, they may choose not to act if they think others like them are not acting or will disapprove (Mayne, 2017).

The extent to which individual behavior is influenced by social norms depends on the individual's **sensitivity to social influence**, which is reflected in their level of autonomy, as, even in a similar environment, individuals are influenced differently by the pressure from the group or the need to comply with collective identity and claim to membership. On the other hand, the extent to which social norms are influenced by personal norms depends on the **strength of the norm**, which is the result of multiple factors, including how widespread it is, the importance of its social role, its alignment with personal attitudes, and the consequences of non-compliance (Petit, 2019).

Following the DFSA TOC's rationale, the analytical framework assumes that **positive changes in both social and personal norms**, as they influence each other, will **result in needed behavior change**, with a specific emphasis on gender equity and equality, and youth development, that will in turn influence gender-based household dynamics (decision-making, male engagement, and access to and control over resources), and help to end GBV and HTP. Positive behavior changes will also contribute to the program achieving and sustaining its development purposes and goals.

## COLLECTION TOOLS

The above analytical framing informed the design of the collection tools that in the SenseMaker method are called a 'signification framework.' This framework consists of the following: 1) A prompt question that invites respondents to share a concrete experience they have lived through, and is asked of all respondents; and 2) A predefined series of questions, or signifiers, that enable respondents to give additional layers of information about their experience. To respond to the research questions, the CCG assessment targeted CCG members and non-members, and two tools were designed. The first focused on assessing how CCGs had identified and prioritized community problems or issues, and their experience in addressing them, which was applied only to CCG facilitators and CCG members. The second tool focused on the extent to which the actions implemented by the CCGs generated the targeted social behavior change (SBC) among individual CCG members and non-members.

Not all the information collected at midterm (FY2020) was collected again at endline (FY2021) given that for some variables (e.g., in the 'personal characteristics' section below) changes were not expected in a one-year period. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic led the team to reduce the number of questions in the collection tools as much as possible, without compromising the quality of the assessment and the need for comparing data between the two time periods.

## TOOL 1: ISSUES ADDRESSED BY CCGs AND APPROACHES USED

The first tool focused on gaining a better understanding of how CCGs had been working, specifically assessing how CCGs identified and prioritized community problems or issues, and their experience in addressing them, which was applied only to CCG facilitators and members. Thus, the following prompt question was designed to elicit the narratives of CCG facilitators and members reflecting their experience in the public sphere; discussing, prioritizing, and addressing community issues; and influencing others to change their behavior.

> *Please share an experience you had within the last two years when your kebele's Community Conversations group discussed or responded to an issue that was affecting your community or kebele. How was the issue identified and discussed? What was the Community Conversations group's response? Who was involved? What were the outcomes (positive and/or negative)?*

The design also included a set of follow-up questions to facilitate respondents' reflection on the experience they shared, providing additional layers of information about the experience, which is referred to as the 'self-signification' process. These core SenseMaker follow-up questions were designed to align with the analytical framing elements and dimensions of change. In addition to these questions, nine multiple-choice questions focusing on respondent characteristics were also included to contextualize the analysis and disaggregate it by key respondent characteristics. The collection tools also included protocol questions to help track key aspects of collection (time and location, respondent ID or survey ID, and facilitator ID), and to ensure all necessary consent protocols for ethical collection.

## TOOL 2: INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR CHANGE PURSUED AND OUTCOMES

The second tool focused on the extent to which the actions implemented by the CCG generated the targeted social behavior change (SBC) among individual CCG members and non-members. Thus, the following prompt question was developed to elicit CCG members' and non-members' narratives about their personal experience in pursuing their own behavior change.

> *Please share an experience you had within the last two years, when you tried to change a behavior, practice or habit, regardless of how successful you were at changing it. What behavior did you try to change? Who influenced you? What influenced you? What were the outcomes (positive and/or negative)?*

While Tool 1 gathered information about the efforts of CCGs to influence SBC and their outcomes from the perspective of group members, Tool 2 gathered information about the results of these efforts in individual behavior from the perspective of CCG members and non-members, mirroring the core SenseMaker follow-up questions for Tool 1. It also included the same MCQs focused on respondent characteristics, as well as the same protocol question to help track key aspects of collection and to ensure all necessary consent protocols for ethical collection.

## SAMPLING STRATEGY

As explained above, the CCG assessment targeted CCG facilitators, and CCG members and non-members, and for each group the study was interested in hearing the voices of women and men, as well as of young adult members (18-29 years) and adult members (30+ years). For sampling purposes, the sampling frame for FY2020 and FY2021 included members of established CCGs in the *kebeles* in which the DFSA was implemented (see Table 1 above), and non-members in these same *kebeles* that were aimed to be influenced by CCG members. Thus, the sampling frame in FY2020 included 5,120 CCG members, an average of 40 members per CCG; and an estimated 51,120 non-members, an average of 10 project participants who were non-members per each member; in FY2021, there were 9,240 CCG members, and an estimated 92,400 non-members.

The sampling strategy followed two steps. The first involved the estimation of a statistically representative sample of CCG members and non-members, and the second an intentional sampling to ensure a minimum sample size of 50 per interest group in each cluster of CCG members and non-members, which is good practice when the SenseMaker method is used, to ensure there are enough observations from each interest group, or subgroup, to be able to observe and differentiate patterns among them. A detailed explanation of each of these two steps of the sampling strategy is detailed below.

### STEP 1: ESTIMATION OF A STATISTICALLY REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

#### SAMPLING OF CCG MEMBERS FOR TOOL 1

To interview a representative sample of CCG members, a two-stage cluster design with a systematic selection of members was used (Stukel and Friedman, 2016), meaning that first *kebeles* and their respective CCGs were randomly selected (first stage) and then members were randomly selected in each CCG in the respective *kebele* (second stage). This sampling approach was used because, at the time this study was conducted, the DFSA had a comprehensive and up-to-date list of all CCGs and of their respective members, who were selected randomly for the interviews.

Given the selected sampling approach, the sample size for CCG members was determined using the following formula for calculating the initial sample size ($n_{inicial}$) for the estimation of indicators of means:

$$\text{Initial sample size} = n_{initial} = \frac{N^2 * z^2 * s^2}{(MOE)^2} \quad \frac{N^2 * z^2 * s^2}{(MOE)^2}$$

where:

N = total number of CCG members
z = critical value from normal probability distribution
s = standard deviation of the distribution of beneficiary data
MOE = margin of error

Since the calculated sample size was more than 5% of the population, an adjusted sample size for a finite population was calculated, using the following formula:

$$N_{adj1} = n_{initial} * adj_{FPC} = \frac{n_{initial}}{(1+\frac{n_{initial}}{N})} \quad \frac{n_{initial}}{(1+\frac{n_{initial}}{N})}$$

A second adjustment was needed because survey respondents within a cluster, in this case within a *kebele*, were likely to share similar characteristics in relation to some (or all) of the indicators of interest. When this happens, the amount of new information that each new interview respondent provides from within the same sampled cluster is less than that of a new respondent using a systematic sampling design. The targeted level of precision in the findings is reached using this adjustment. Given that there were no previous surveys to use as a reference, it is acceptable to use a design effect due to clustering (denoted by $adj_{designeffect}$) of 2, when one level of clustering is used, as was the case in this study.

The third adjustment was also made for the anticipated individual non-response (denoted by $adj_{non\text{-}response}$) as it was expected that some individuals selected for the interviews would be unreachable, unavailable or unwilling to respond to any or all of the interview questions; this is called individual non-response. To ensure that the targeted number of respondents provided complete interviews despite individual non-response, the initial sample size is pre-inflated by multiplying by the inverse of the expected response rate so that the resultant sample size after fieldwork is as close as possible to the targeted initial sample size. If no past information is available on non-response rates, a generally accepted rule of thumb is to assume an estimated response rate of 90–95%. For example, if a response rate of 95% is assumed, then the sample size should be multiplied by $adj_{non\text{-}response} = 1/0.95$. Thus, an anticipated response rate of 95% was assumed, given that DFSA staff had already established a relationship with CCG members.

The resulting sample sizes for CCG members to be interviewed with Tool 1 to evaluate the functioning of CCGs for the midterm (2020) and the endline assessment (2021), and the confidence level and margin error of the resulting sample size, are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Sampling size estimation using a two-stage cluster design with a systematic selection of CCG members to be interviewed with Tool 1**

| Assessment | Sampling frame | Confidence level | Margin of error | Initial sample size | Adjusted sample size for finite population | Sample size inflation to accommodate 5% of non-response |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Midterm (2020) | 5,120 | 90% | 0.06 | 376 | 350 | 369 |
| Endline (2021) | 9,240 | 90% | 0.06 | 376 | 361 | 380 |

## SAMPLING OF CCG MEMBERS AND NON-CCG MEMBERS FOR TOOL 2

The same sampling approach explained above was used for Tool 2. This tool is designed to evaluate the individual process of behavior change for CCG members and non-members. The resulting sample sizes for CCG members and non-members to be interviewed for the midterm (2020) and the endline assessment (2021), and the confidence level and margin error of the resulting sample size are presented in Table 5. To achieve the same sample size of CCG members and non-members, the estimated sample size was divided by 2, resulting in an estimated sample size of 197 CCG members and 197 non-members.

**Table 5. Sampling size estimation using a two-stage cluster design with a systematic selection of CCG members and non-members to be interviewed with Tool 2**

| Assessment | Sampling frame | Confidence level | Margin of error | Initial sample size | Adjusted sample size for finite population | Sample size inflation to accommodate 5% of non-response |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Midterm (2020) | 56,320 | 90% | 0.06 | 376 | 374 | 393 |
| Endline (2021) | 101,640 | 90% | 0.06 | 376 | 373 | 394 |

## SAMPLING PROCEDURE

To sample CCG members, the DFSA's complete and up-to-date list of all CCGs in the *kebeles* and their members was used. In each selected CCG, 28 members were randomly selected from the 40 members that each group had on average (second stage), and those members that the facilitators were not able to contact (had moved, died or left the *kebele* for an extended period) were systematically replaced. Non-members were then selected randomly by the community animators (CA) in the same *kebeles*, and 12 to 13 of them interviewed in each *kebele*.

## SAMPLE SIZE ACHIEVED FOR THE MIDTERM ASSESSMENT (FY2020)

Table 6 shows the expected and achieved sample sizes by tool for CCG members and non-members for the midterm assessment conducted in FY2020. For CCG members, the calculated sample size was fully achieved, while, for non-members, 95% of the calculated sample was achieved. Given that a 5% non-response adjustment was made for sample calculations, this adjustment fully compensates for the shortage of interviews for CCG non-members. When looking at the level of achievement by tool, a 95% achievement for Tool 1 also shows that the sample was fully achieved, given the 5% non-response adjustment used. For Tool 2, the sample size for CCG members and non-members was overachieved.

**Table 6. Planned and achieved sample size of CCG members and non-members by tool at midterm (FY2020)**

| Type of respondent | Tool 1: CCG functioning | | | Tool 2: Behavior change | | | Both tools | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Expected | Achieved | % | Expected | Achieved | % | Expected | Achieved | % |
| CCG facilitators | 50 | 53 | 106 | | | | 50 | 53 | 106 |
| CCG members | 300 | 279 | 93 | 197 | 369 | 187 | 497 | 648 | 130 |
| CCG non-members | | | | 197 | 299 | 152 | 197 | 299 | 152 |
| Total | 350 | 332 | 95 | 394 | 668 | 170 | 744 | 1,000 | 134 |

### SAMPLE SIZE ACHIEVED FOR THE ENDLINE ASSESSMENT (FY2021)

Table 7 shows the expected and achieved sample size by tool for CCG members and non-members for the endline assessment conducted in FY2021. For CCG members, the calculated sample size was fully achieved, while, for non-members, 95% of the calculated sample was achieved. Given that a 5% non-response adjustment was made for sample calculations, this adjustment fully compensates for the shortage of interviews for CCG non-members. When looking at the level of achievement by tool, a 95% achievement for Tool 1 also shows that the sample was fully achieved, given the 5% non-response adjustment used. For Tool 2, the sample size for CCG members was achieved, while the sample size for CCG non- members was achieved with the 5% non-response adjustment.

**Table 7. Planned and achieved sample size of CCG members and non-members by tool at endline (FY2021)**

| Type of respondent | Tool 1: CCG functioning | | | Tool 2: Behavior change | | | Both tools | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Expected | Achieved | % | Expected | Achieved | % | Expected | Achieved | % |
| CCG facilitators | 66 | 65 | 98 | | | | 66 | 65 | 98 |
| CCG members | 330 | 308 | 93 | 197 | 207 | 105 | 527 | 515 | 98 |
| CCG non-members | | | | 197 | 194 | 98 | 197 | 194 | 98 |
| Total | 396 | 373 | 94 | 394 | 401 | 102 | 790 | 774 | 98 |

## STEP 2: INTENTIONAL SAMPLING TO ENSURE ENOUGH INTERVIEWS PER GROUP

In addition to applying the above sampling principles, an important aspect when sampling for the SenseMaker method is the desirability of having a large enough number of respondents from each subgroup of interest. This is important as sensemaking relies greatly on visualizing patterns of responses, and this may not be possible if there are very few responses for one specific subgroup. In addition, comparing visualizations between two groups with a different number of responses may be difficult. For example, a histogram (resulting from responses to a slider signifier question) for a subgroup with more responses will have higher bars than a histogram from another subgroup with fewer responses; or a dominant pattern in a triad signifier question for a subgroup with more responses will have a higher density of dots than a dominant pattern for another subgroup with fewer responses.

Thus, in SenseMaker, the primary driver for sampling design is the need to ensure enough stories to allow for a meaningful visual pattern analysis across all subgroups of interest. For any disaggregation or voice of interest, a minimum of 50 stories is recommended for effective pattern analysis (Guijt et al, 2018). The samples achieved for both assessments, as shown above in Tables 6 and 7, were therefore large enough to allow for a proper comparison between CCG facilitators and members for Tool 1, and between CCG members and non-members for Tool 2.

One of the important comparisons this assessment aimed to make was between male and female respondents. Based on the combination of a representative and an intentional sample, the resultant composition of respondents by assessment, tool and gender is included in Table 8.

As planned, a good representation of both female and male respondents was achieved for both tools at midterm (47% women and 53% men) and endline (52% women and 48% men). The minimum number of 50 respondents per subgroup was also achieved. Therefore, the sample could be properly disaggregated by sex, as considered necessary for the analysis of the findings.

**Table 8. Distribution of respondents by tool and sex for the midterm (N=1,000) and endline (N=774) assessments**

| Assessment | Sex | Tool 1: CCG functioning | | Tool 2: Behavior change | | Both tools | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Midterm (2020) | Women | 175 | 52% | 296 | 44% | 471 | 47% |
| | Men | 157 | 47% | 372 | 56% | 529 | 53% |
| | Total | 332 | 100% | 668 | 100% | 1,000 | 100% |
| Endline (2021) | Women | 186 | 50% | 220 | 55% | 406 | 52% |
| | Men | 187 | 50% | 181 | 45% | 368 | 48% |
| | Total | 373 | 100% | 402 | 100% | 774 | 100% |

Another important comparison of interest requires disaggregation between young adult (18-29 years) and adult (30+ years) respondents. As shown in Table 9, for the midterm assessment (FY2020), the representation of young adults in the sample for both tools was 23% compared to 77% for adults, but the minimum of 50 respondents for each subgroup was achieved, which also allowed for a proper disaggregation of the findings by age group. In addition, disaggregation between young women and young men was also possible for Tool 2 responses, but not for Tool 1 responses. For the endline assessment (FY2021), the representation of young adults in the sample for both tools was 33% compared to 67% for adults although, again, the minimum of 50 respondents for each subgroup was achieved, which also allowed for a proper disaggregation of the findings by age group. Also, disaggregation between young women and young men was possible for the responses from both tools.

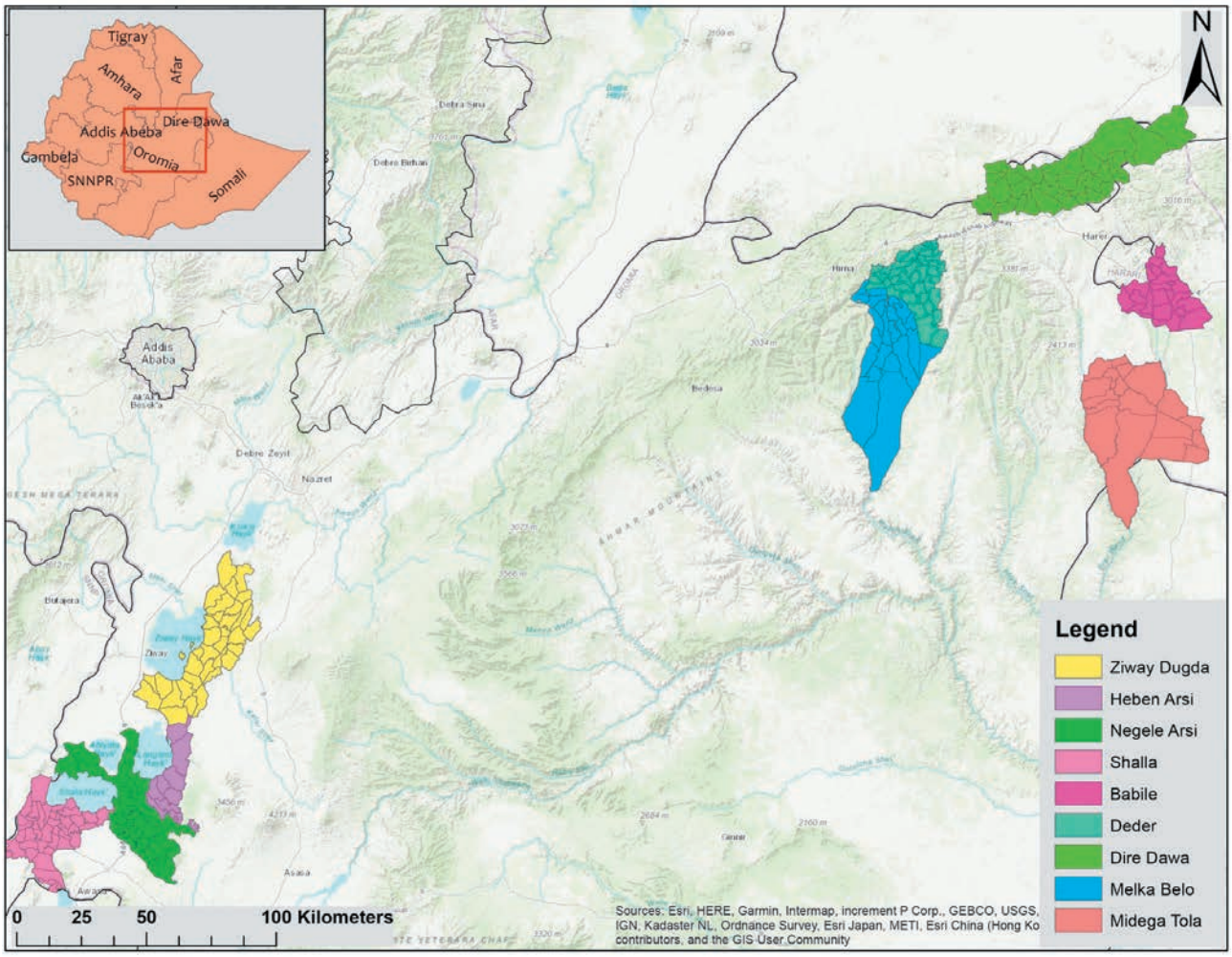
**Table 9. Distribution of respondents by tool and age group for the midterm (N=1,000) and endline (N=774) assessments**

| Assessment | Age group | Tool 1: CCG functioning | | Tool 2: Behavior change | | Both tools | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Midterm (2020) | Young women (18-29 years) | 38 | 11% | 60 | 9% | 98 | 10% |
| | Young men (18-29 years) | 37 | 11% | 94 | 14% | 131 | 13% |
| | Adults (30+ years) | 257 | 78% | 514 | 77% | 771 | 77% |
| | Total | 332 | 100% | 668 | 100% | 1,000 | 100% |
| Endline (2021) | Young women (18-29 years) | 57 | 15% | 51 | 13% | 108 | 14% |
| | Young men (18-29 years) | 76 | 20% | 72 | 18% | 148 | 19% |
| | Adults (30+ years) | 240 | 65% | 278 | 69% | 518 | 67% |
| | Total | 373 | 100% | 401 | 100% | 774 | 100 |

# Characteristics of Respondents

The DFSA was implemented in Oromia, one of Ethiopia's nine regional states, specifically in the East Hararghe, Arsi and West Arsi zones, and in Dire Dawa Administration. These zones are divided into *woredas* (districts), and the program works in those that are considered a priority by the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) based on health and nutrition, agriculture, markets, WASH and education indicators. Interviews for this assessment were conducted mainly in Oromia (95%) but also in Dire Dawa Administration (5%). In these areas, the interviews were conducted in the eight *woredas* and Dire Dawa Administration where the DFSA program is being implemented (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. DFSA project implementation zone and *woredas***




The following characterization of respondents is based on the responses for the whole sample (N=1,000) collected for the midterm assessment (FY 2020) and complemented with those for the whole sample (N=774) collected for the endline assessment (FY2021). As explained in the sampling strategy section above, these samples are representative of CCG facilitators, members and non-members in the DFSA target zone. This includes the data collected using the two tools, as they included the same socio-demographic questions.

## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

The distribution of respondents by zone or administrative unit and CCG membership for the midterm (2020) and endline (2021) is presented in Table 10; visualizations could be disaggregated by zone as the minimum size of 50 was achieved. However, the analysis for CCG facilitators could not be disaggregated by zone or administrative unit as these only added up to 53 and 65 observations for the midterm and endline, respectively. Also, disaggregation by CCG membership for the Arsi Zone and the Dire Dawa Administration need caution in the interpretation as the sample for non-members was insufficient.

**Table 10. Distribution of respondents by zone, disaggregated by CCG membership, at the midterm (N=1,000) and endline (N=774) assessments**

| Assessment | Zone / Administrative Unit | CCG facilitators | | CCG members | | CCG non-members | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Midterm (2020) | East Hararghe | 30 | 56.6 | 366 | 56.5 | 177 | 59.2 | 573 | 57.3 |
| | Dire Dawa | 2 | 3.8 | 31 | 4.8 | 20 | 6.7 | 53 | 5.3 |
| | West Arsi | 16 | 30.2 | 202 | 31.2 | 80 | 26.8 | 298 | 29.8 |
| | Arsi | 5 | 9.4 | 49 | 7.6 | 22 | 7.4 | 76 | 7.6 |
| | Total | 53 | 100 | 648 | 100 | 299 | 100 | 1,000 | 100 |
| Endline (2021) | East Hararghe | 32 | 49.2 | 263 | 51.1 | 91 | 46.9 | 386 | 49.9 |
| | Dire Dawa | 12 | 18.5 | 85 | 16.5 | 29 | 14.9 | 126 | 16.3 |
| | West Arsi | 14 | 21.5 | 108 | 21.0 | 49 | 25.3 | 171 | 22.1 |
| | Arsi | 7 | 10.8 | 59 | 11.5 | 25 | 12.9 | 91 | 11.8 |
| | Total | 65 | 100 | 515 | 100 | 194 | 100 | 774 | 100 |

Table 11 shows the same information as Table 10 disaggregated by *woreda* also for the midterm and endline assessments, showing that disaggregation by *woreda* for the whole sample and for CCG members was possible, but caution is needed when looking at the findings for the midterm for Heben Arsi as only 37 interviews were conducted in this *woreda* and only 23 with CCG members, and at endline for Negele Arsi as only 30 interviews were conducted at endline and only 20 with CCG members. For non-members, analysis disaggregated by *woreda* may not be recommended as the number of observations was insufficient for most *woredas*.

**Table 11. Distribution of respondents by zone and *woreda*, disaggregated by CCG membership, at the midterm (N=1,000) and endline (N=774) assessments**

| Assessment | Zone / Administrative Unit | *Woreda* | CCG facilitators | | CCG members | | CCG non-members | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Midterm (2020) | East Hararghe | Babile | 7 | 13.2 | 73 | 11.3 | 43 | 14.4 | 123 | 12.3 |
| | | Deder | 7 | 13.2 | 81 | 12.5 | 33 | 11.0 | 121 | 12.1 |
| | | Melka Belo | 6 | 11.3 | 78 | 12.0 | 47 | 15.7 | 131 | 13.1 |
| | | Midega Tola | 8 | 15.1 | 107 | 16.5 | 51 | 17.1 | 166 | 16.6 |
| | Dire Dawa | Dire Dawa | 4 | 7.5 | 58 | 9.0 | 23 | 7.7 | 85 | 8.5 |
| | West Arsi | Heben Arsi | 3 | 5.7 | 23 | 3.5 | 11 | 3.7 | 37 | 3.7 |
| | | Negele Arsi | 2 | 3.8 | 47 | 7.3 | 20 | 6.7 | 69 | 6.9 |
| | | Shalla | 11 | 20.8 | 132 | 20.4 | 49 | 16.4 | 192 | 19.2 |
| | Arsi | Ziway Dugda | 5 | 9.4 | 49 | 7.6 | 22 | 7.4 | 76 | 7.6 |
| | Total | | 53 | 100 | 648 | 100 | 299 | 100 | 1000 | 100 |
| Endline (2021) | East Hararghe | Babile | 8 | 12.3 | 89 | 17.3 | 31 | 16.0 | 128 | 16.5 |
| | | Deder | 10 | 15.4 | 90 | 17.5 | 30 | 15.5 | 130 | 16.8 |
| | | Melka Belo | 12 | 18.5 | 85 | 16.5 | 30 | 15.5 | 127 | 16.4 |
| | | Midega Tola | 7 | 10.8 | 42 | 8.2 | 15 | 7.7 | 64 | 8.3 |
| | Dire Dawa | Dire Dawa | 7 | 10.8 | 42 | 8.2 | 14 | 7.2 | 63 | 8.1 |
| | West Arsi | Heben Arsi | 6 | 9.2 | 28 | 5.4 | 16 | 8.2 | 50 | 6.5 |
| | | Negele Arsi | 1 | 1.5 | 20 | 3.9 | 9 | 4.6 | 30 | 3.9 |
| | | Shalla | 7 | 10.8 | 60 | 11.7 | 24 | 12.4 | 91 | 11.8 |
| | Arsi | Ziway Dugda | 7 | 10.8 | 59 | 11.5 | 25 | 12.9 | 91 | 11.8 |
| | Total | | 65 | 100 | 515 | 100 | 194 | 100 | 774 | 100 |

To assess the difficulty of reaching the *woreda* town from the *kebele*, which may have affected the capacity of the CCGs to have influence beyond their *kebele*, respondents were asked about their perception of the proximity of their *kebele* to the *woreda* town (Table 12). These findings are consistent in showing that proximity to the *woreda* town did limit the influence capacity of the CCGs: at midterm, only a quarter of CCG facilitators and members (23% and 27%, respectively) saw their *kebele* as close to the *woreda* town; at endline, the figures were marginally lower (20% and 23%, respectively).

**Table 12. Distribution of respondents' perception of the proximity of their *kebele* to the *woreda* town, disaggregated by CCG membership, midterm (N=1,000) and endline (N=774)**

| Assessment | Distance from the *kebele* to the *woreda* town | CCG facilitators | | CCG members | | CCG non-members | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Midterm (2020) | Close | 12 | 22.6 | 173 | 26.7 | 90 | 30.1 | 275 | 27.5 |
| | Far | 41 | 77.4 | 475 | 73.3 | 209 | 69.9 | 725 | 72.5 |
| | Total | 53 | 100 | 648 | 100 | 299 | 100 | 1,000 | 100 |
| Endline (2021) | Close | 13 | 20.0 | 117 | 22.6 | 46 | 15.6 | 175 | 20.0 |
| | Far | 52 | 80.0 | 398 | 77.4 | 148 | 84.4 | 698 | 80.0 |
| | Total | 65 | 100 | 514 | 100 | 194 | 100 | 774 | 100 |

To assess the degree of difficulty faced by CCG members traveling to the group meeting place, which may have affected their participation in the groups, respondents were asked about the time it took for them to travel from their house to the meeting place (Table 13). Responses show that just under 63% and 70% of CCG members at midterm and endline, respectively, needed to walk for less than 30 minutes to reach the meeting place; and an additional 30% and 25%, respectively, walked for 30 minutes to 1 hour; while there were 8% and 6% , respectively, who walked more than one hour. At midterm, more women were in the latter group (12% of women compared to 3% of men), although at endline it had changed to marginally more men (6%) compared to women (5%). These results suggest that walking time to the CCG meeting place did not constrain the participation for most CCG members, except for the small group of women and men having to walk further as noted above. For those living more than one hour away, it would be plausible to assume that their attendance at CCG meetings could be constrained by distance. In relation to women's traveling safety, CCG members usually traveled to the meeting place in groups, and no security issues were reported. Nevertheless, the issue of women's risks en route needs to be assessed as women are more vulnerable to violence.

**Table 13. Walking time to reach the CCG meeting place for CCG members, disaggregated by sex, midterm (N=1,000) and endline (N=774)**

| Assessment | Walking time to CCG meeting place | Women | | Men | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Midterm (2020) | Less than 30 minutes | 211 | 59.3 | 229 | 66.6 | 440 | 62.9 |
| | 30 minutes to 1 hour | 102 | 28.7 | 105 | 30.5 | 207 | 29.6 |
| | 1 to 2 hours | 36 | 10.1 | 9 | 2.6 | 45 | 6.4 |
| | More than 2 hours | 7 | 2.0 | 1 | 0.3 | 8 | 1.1 |
| | Total | 356 | 100 | 344 | 100 | 700 | 100 |
| Endline (2021) | Less than 30 minutes | 192 | 67.6 | 211 | 71.3 | 403 | 69.5 |
| | 30 minutes to 1 hour | 77 | 27.1 | 67 | 22.6 | 144 | 24.8 |
| | 1 to 2 hours | 15 | 5.3 | 13 | 4.4 | 28 | 4.8 |
| | More than 2 hours | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 1.7 | 5 | 0.9 |
| | Total | 284 | 100 | 296 | 100 | 580 | 100 |

## HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

In relation to marital status, most CCG facilitators, members and non-members were married (86%), but this percentage was slightly smaller among CCG facilitators (79%), who included widowed and divorced women, and single men (Table 14). However, the percentage of married men (94%) was larger than the percentage of married women (76%). This shows that when women are nominated by their communities to participate in the public sphere and assume leadership responsibilities, married women may face more constraints than unmarried, divorced or widowed women who have more freedom to participate and accept leadership responsibilities.

### Table 14. Marital status of respondents, disaggregated by CCG membership, midterm (2020, N=1,000)

| Marital status | CCG facilitators | | CCG members | | CCG non-members | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Single | 4 | 7.5 | 23 | 3.5 | 13 | 4.3 | 40 | 4.0 |
| Married | 42 | 79.2 | 555 | 85.6 | 261 | 87.3 | 858 | 85.8 |
| Widowed | 6 | 11.3 | 62 | 9.6 | 21 | 7.0 | 89 | 8.9 |
| Separated | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 0.8 | 2 | 0.7 | 7 | 0.7 |
| Divorced | 1 | 1.9 | 3 | 0.5 | 2 | 0.7 | 6 | 0.6 |
| Total | 53 | 100 | 648 | 100 | 299 | 100 | 1,000 | 100 |

Table 15 shows that most respondents self-signified their household as monogamous (83%) with no significant difference between CCG members and non-members; while a lower percentage of CCG facilitators self-signified their household as monogamous. This was followed in descending order by respondents who self-signified their households as polygamous (9%), adult female (no male) (6%) and adult male (no female) (2%). When disaggregated by CCG membership, it can be observed that a higher percentage of CCG facilitators and members belonged to adult female (no male) households, and a large percentage of CCG facilitators also belonged to adult male (no female) households.

Although polygamy has been formally abolished in the Family and Criminal Code of Ethiopia, the law is rarely enforced, and the practice is still common, with 11% of married women sharing a husband with one or two other wives (Damtie, 2021). Therefore, the 9% of respondents in the sample who reported belonging to a polygamous household is below the country average despite 95% of respondents reporting that they practiced Islam, which allows polygamy. This can be explained by the abolishment of the practice, coupled with the low economic status of the population as men only tend to marry more than one wife if they have the economic means to do so.

### Table 15. Distribution of respondents by type of household, disaggregated by CCG membership, midterm (2020, N=1,000)

| Household type | CCG facilitators | | CCG members | | CCG non-members | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Monogamous | 36 | 67.9 | 540 | 83.3 | 258 | 86.3 | 834 | 83.4 |
| Polygamous | 8 | 15.1 | 56 | 8.6 | 25 | 8.4 | 89 | 8.9 |
| Adult female (no male) | 5 | 9.4 | 42 | 6.5 | 11 | 3.7 | 58 | 5.8 |
| Adult male (no female) | 4 | 7.5 | 9 | 1.4 | 4 | 1.3 | 17 | 1.7 |
| No response | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.2 | 1 | 0.3 | 2 | 0.2 |
| Total | 53 | 100 | 648 | 100 | 299 | 100 | 1,000 | 100 |

All respondents who reported female-headed households were women, except for one young man. To explore further the extent and causes of the existence of female-headed households, the marital status of this sub-sample was analyzed (N=58), showing that most respondents in female-headed households were widowed (81%), followed by 9% divorced, 5% separated and 5% single (Table 16).

### Table 16. Distribution of respondents from female-headed households by marital status, disaggregated by CCG membership, midterm (2020, N=58)

| Marital status | CCG facilitators | | CCG members | | CCG non-members | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Single | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 4.8 | 1 | 9.1 | 3 | 5.2 |
| Married | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Widowed | 4 | 80.0 | 36 | 85.7 | 7 | 63.6 | 47 | 81.0 |
| Separated | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 4.8 | 1 | 9.1 | 3 | 5.2 |
| Divorced | 1 | 20.0 | 2 | 4.8 | 2 | 18.2 | 5 | 8.6 |
| Total | 5 | 100 | 42 | 100 | 11 | 100 | 58 | 100 |

In addition to asking respondents about their type of household, they were also asked who guided the household and made decisions. At midterm, more than half (62%) considered that the man was the main decision-maker in their household, but an additional 23% said that women and men jointly made household decisions. In addition, 15% of respondents said that the major household decision-maker was a woman. At endline, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents indicating joint decision-making in the household from 23% to 31%, corresponding roughly with the drop in households where men were seen as the sole decision-makers (Table 17).

No major differences could be observed at midterm between CCG members and non-members who considered that women and men jointly made decisions, although this had changed at endline, with 33% and 22% of CCG members and non-members, respectively, reporting joint decision-making. Among CCG facilitators, at both midterm and endline, a larger percentage indicated that women and men jointly made decisions in their household, increasing from 32% to 48%, pointing to the possibility that participation in CCGs may have influenced this positive change in gender-based household dynamics.

### Table 17. Distribution of respondents by gender of household decision-maker, disaggregated by CCG membership, midterm (N=1,000) and endline (N=774)

| Assessment | Household decision-maker | CCG facilitators | | CCG members | | CCG non-members | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Midterm (2020) | Man | 26 | 49.1 | 391 | 60.3 | 198 | 66.2 | 615 | 61.5 |
| | Woman | 9 | 17.0 | 111 | 17.1 | 34 | 11.4 | 154 | 15.4 |
| | Man and woman jointly | 17 | 32.1 | 146 | 22.5 | 67 | 22.4 | 230 | 23.0 |
| | No response | 1 | 1.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.1 |
| | Total | 53 | 100 | 648 | 100 | 299 | 100 | 1000 | 100 |
| Endline (2021) | Man | 25 | 38.5 | 274 | 53.2 | 120 | 61.9 | 419 | 54.1 |
| | Woman | 7 | 10.8 | 70 | 13.6 | 32 | 16.5 | 109 | 14.1 |
| | Man and woman jointly | 31 | 47.7 | 170 | 33.0 | 42 | 21.6 | 243 | 31.4 |
| | No response | 2 | 3.1 | 1 | 0.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 0.4 |
| | Total | 65 | 100 | 515 | 100 | 194 | 100.0 | 774 | 100 |

To explore further situations in which women were the main decision-makers in their households, this sub-sample of respondents (N=154 at midterm and N=109 at endline) was further analyzed. Firstly, respondents who gave this response were mainly women (99% at midterm and 91% at endline). Secondly, these women were widowed (55%) or either divorced, separated or single (12%); however, 34% of the women who considered that they were the main decision-makers in their households were married. A reading of the narratives from these women showed two possible reasons for these responses. The first being the direct work of CCGs in influencing more equitable decision-making, as in the following narrative:

> *In the past, I thought that it was the responsibility of the husband alone to feed the family and make all decisions, and I had no influence in the decisions made in my household; my husband used to decide everything. But, after the CCG training, I started to believe that I should have my share in these decisions. I thought I should decide equally with my husband. I started to decide what livestock to sell and when, what to grow, and how to profit from selling livestock and crops. Now things are getting better. Our income has increased, and we have better food availability. We also have a husband–wife conversation every week on how to deal with things.*

The second was women's economic empowerment, as in the following narrative:

> *Women were very much prohibited before. I did not leave the house to do different activities. Then, an organization came and organized us into a gender association through which I became aware of how a husband and wife should be equal. That shifted our lifestyle, and we are now equal and share every idea to manage our household. Accordingly, first I participated in a CCG and a SILC group to contribute savings and contribute to the household. With my savings and 3,000 birr that I borrowed, I started to buy and sell goats. In three months, I got 4,000 birr and paid the debt back. Getting awareness from that, I organized a group to borrow money from the Oromia Credit and Saving Association to invest in more off-farm activities. Finally, I am now free and well-motivated to act as much as I can to improve my family's livelihood. My husband is well-informed and helps me very much in every activity.*

## PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

As discussed by Petit (2019, p. 22), personal characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, education level, and social and economic status, are important factors that drive behavior and behavior change, which are at the core of this study's objective and learning questions. Thus, noting the personal characteristics of respondents is important for contextualizing and interpreting the study findings. As was noted above in the collection tools section, not all data on personal characteristics collected at midterm were collected again at endline.

### RELIGION

Religious beliefs have a profound effect on people's behavior. Although the predominant religions in Ethiopia are Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and Islam—each thought to be practiced by about 45% of the population—96% of respondents identified themselves as following Islam, and only 3% as following Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, with the percentage who said they followed the latter being larger among CCG facilitators (Table 18). Only a small percentage of respondents said they followed Protestantism and Catholicism.

Most of the lowland pastoralist areas where the DFSA project was implemented were predominantly or exclusively Muslim. According to the 2007 Census (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2008), 97%, 80% and 58% of the population of East Hararghe, West Arsi and Arsi zones, respectively, and 71% in the Dire Dawa Administrative District reported practicing Islam, which is close to the percentage reported for the sample; while the equivalent figures for the population professing Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity were 3%, 11%, 7% and 26%, respectively.

**Table 18. Distribution of respondents by religion, disaggregated by CCG membership, midterm (2020, N=1,000)**

| Religion | CCG facilitators | | CCG members | | CCG non-members | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Islam | 47 | 88.7 | 624 | 96.3 | 287 | 96.0 | 958 | 95.8 |
| Christian | | | | | | | | |
| Ethiopian Orthodox | 4 | 7.5 | 15 | 2.3 | 9 | 3.0 | 28 | 2.8 |
| Protestant | 2 | 3.8 | 5 | 0.8 | 2 | 0.7 | 9 | 0.9 |
| Catholic | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 0.6 | 1 | 0.3 | 5 | 0.5 |
| Total | 53 | 100.0 | 648 | 100.0 | 299 | 100.0 | 1000 | 100.0 |

## SOCIOLINGUISTIC GROUPS

Another important characteristic that influences social norms and beliefs, and therefore behavior, is belonging to a sociolinguistic group. The two largest sociolinguistic groups in Oromia, according to the 2007 census (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2008), were Oromo (88%) and Amhara (7%), while in the specific DFSA implementation zones (East Hararghe, West Arsi and Arsi), 96%, 89% and 84%, respectively, reported belonging to the Oromo sociolinguistic group. Table 19 summarizes the distribution of respondents by mother tongue, showing that 99% reported Afaan Oromo as their mother tongue and can be assumed to belong to the Oromo sociolinguistic group, which is slightly higher than the number reported in the 2007 census.

**Table 19. Distribution of respondents by mother tongue, disaggregated by CCG membership, midterm (2020, N=1,000)**

| Religion | CCG facilitators | | CCG members | | CCG non-members | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Afaan Oromo | 53 | 100 | 642 | 99.1 | 299 | 100 | 994 | 99.4 |
| Amharic | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0.5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0.3 |
| Somali | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.2 |
| Hadiya | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.1 |
| Total | 53 | 100 | 648 | 100 | 299 | 100 | 1,000 | 100 |

## FORMAL EDUCATION

The level of education of respondents was generally low. Almost half of all respondents (48%) had no formal education and were illiterate; however, as shown in Table 20, only 21% of CCG facilitators were illiterate compared to 51% and 46% of CCG members and non-members, respectively.

One quarter of all respondents had attended elementary school, but only 3% had completed it, showing a high percentage of elementary school dropouts. Also, the percentage of CCG facilitators who had attended or completed elementary school was larger (36%), and the difference between CCG members (26%) and non-members (30%) was not large. Beyond elementary school, 7% and 2% of all respondents had attended junior secondary school and completed it, respectively, also showing a high percentage of dropouts. The equivalent figures for CCG facilitators are 13% and 0%, respectively, suggesting that dropping out of junior school may be an issue that cuts across all types of respondents, although the numbers involved are relatively small. Just over a fifth of CCG facilitators (21%) had attended high school but none of them had completed it or were able to advance to higher levels of formal education. This percentage is significantly lower among CCG members and non-members.

The DFSA implemented a functional literacy program for those women and youth who were illiterate, particularly those selected to be CCG facilitators. Since elementary schools are present in most *kebeles*, it is not surprising to see higher percentages for those in the community who had completed elementary school, relative to those who had graduated from junior and high school, given that junior and high schools are less geographically accessible. The DFSA, as part of the CC approach, has been promoting conversations on children's access to education, particularly girls' education opportunities, so CCGs can discuss and address these issues and advocate for better access to junior and high school education in the communities. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the DFSA does not include an education component.

**Table 20. Level of education of respondents disaggregated by CCG membership, midterm (2020, N=1,000)**

| Level of education | CCG Facilitators | | CCG members | | CCG non-members | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| None | 11 | 21% | 332 | 51% | 137 | 46% | 480 | 48% |
| Not attended school but can read and write | 5 | 9% | 20 | 3% | 14 | 5% | 39 | 4% |
| Attended elementary school (Grades 1-6) | 16 | 30% | 154 | 24% | 80 | 27% | 250 | 25% |
| Completed elementary school (Grade 6) | 3 | 6% | 13 | 2% | 9 | 3% | 25 | 3% |
| Attended junior secondary school (Grades 7-8) | 7 | 13% | 36 | 6% | 23 | 8% | 66 | 7% |
| Completed junior secondary school (Grade 8) | 0 | 0% | 12 | 2% | 6 | 2% | 18 | 2% |
| Attended high school (Grades 9-11) | 11 | 21% | 58 | 9% | 28 | 9% | 97 | 10% |
| Completed high school (Grade 12) | 0 | 0% | 4 | 1% | 1 | 0% | 5 | 1% |
| Attended vocational training | 0 | 0% | 7 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 7 | 1% |
| Completed three years of vocational training | 0 | 0% | 8 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 8 | 1% |
| Attended university without getting a diploma | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0% |
| Obtained a university degree | 0 | 0% | 3 | 0% | 1 | 0% | 4 | 0% |
| Total | 53 | 100% | 648 | 100% | 299 | 100% | 1,000 | 100% |

Levels of **formal education disaggregated by sex** show significant differences between female and male respondents (Table 21). While 72% of women were illiterate, only 27% of men were. Not only had fewer women (16%) than men (33%) attended elementary school, but the dropout level among women was higher (only 1% of women had completed elementary school compared to 4% of men). The differences were even larger between women and men in their attendance and completion of junior secondary and high school. Higher levels of education, both vocational and university, were very low among both groups (1% or less).

**Table 21. Level of education of respondents disaggregated by sex, midterm (2020, N=1,000)**

| Level of education | Women | | Men | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| None | 338 | 72% | 142 | 27% | 480 | 48% |
| Not attended school, but can read and write | 13 | 3% | 26 | 5% | 39 | 4% |
| Attended elementary school (Grades 1-6) | 77 | 16% | 173 | 33% | 250 | 25% |
| Completed elementary school (Grade 6) | 6 | 1% | 19 | 4% | 25 | 3% |
| Attended junior secondary school (Grades 7-8) | 12 | 3% | 54 | 10% | 66 | 7% |
| Completed junior secondary school (Grade 8) | 3 | 1% | 15 | 3% | 18 | 2% |
| Attended high school (Grades 9-11) | 16 | 3% | 81 | 15% | 97 | 10% |
| Completed high school (Grade 12) | 0 | 0% | 5 | 1% | 5 | 1% |
| Attended vocational training | 3 | 1% | 4 | 1% | 7 | 1% |
| Completed three years of vocational training | 2 | 0% | 6 | 1% | 8 | 1% |
| Attended university without getting a diploma | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0% | 1 | 0% |
| Obtained a university degree | 1 | 0% | 3 | 1% | 4 | 0% |
| Total | 471 | 100% | 529 | 100% | 1,000 | 100% |

Important differences in the level of **formal education by age group** were also found. While 55% of adults were illiterate, only 23% of young adults were. Moreover, only 16% of adults were able to finish elementary education or advance further, compared with 49% of young adults.

## MAIN INCOME SOURCE

Unsurprisingly, the main income source at midterm and endline was agriculture (88%), although the percentage at endline (85%) was lower than at midterm (91%). In general, other income sources were of much lower significance to households, both at midterm and endline, although, of course, important to those families engaging in other income-earning activities. The decrease among those respondents reporting agriculture as an income source is mirrored by the change in those reporting 'none' which rose from just over 1% at midterm to 7% at endline. This rise can be explained to some extent by the restriction of movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rain shortages that affected agriculture and livestock production.

### Table 22. Respondents' main income source at midterm (N=1,000) and endline (N=774)

| Main source of income | Midterm | | Endline | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Agriculture | 906 | 91% | 651 | 85% | 1,557 | 88% |
| Small business / petty commerce | 44 | 4% | 28 | 4% | 72 | 4% |
| Pastoralist / livestock production | 7 | 1% | 11 | 1% | 18 | 1% |
| Wage as day laborer | 3 | 0% | 6 | 1% | 9 | 1% |
| Salary as public sector employee | 20 | 2% | 11 | 1% | 31 | 2% |
| Salary from employment in the private sector | 2 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 0% |
| Remittances from family living in the city | 4 | 0% | 1 | 0% | 5 | 0% |
| Remittances from family living abroad | 1 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0% |
| Food aid from government or NGO | 0 | 0% | 4 | 1% | 4 | 0% |
| None | 13 | 1% | 54 | 7% | 67 | 4% |
| Total | 1,000 | 100% | 766 | 100% | 1,766 | 100% |

**Disaggregation by sex**

Looking at the highlights of the endline data on the perspectives of sex and age groups (Table 23), the percentage of respondents who reported that their main source of income was agriculture was marginally higher among men (87%), compared to women (83%) (Table 23). Caution needs to be applied in interpreting data for other income sources given that the numbers are relatively small, but they may be indicative. A higher percentage of women (6%) depended on small business or commercial activity as their main income source, while for men the figure was 2%. A small percentage (1%) of men and women relied on a salary from public sector employment while a not insignificant percentage of men and women (8% and 5%, respectively) reported no main source of income.

Overall, the picture suggests that agriculture remained the main source of income for men and women, but, at endline, 8% of respondents were citing non-agriculture-based income as their primary income source. The diversification of livelihoods into off-farm activities was more pronounced for women (11%) than for men (5%). A smaller percentage of women (5%) reported 'none' compared with men (8%).

### Table 23. Respondents' main income source disaggregated by sex, endline (N=774)

| Main source of income | Women | | Men | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Agriculture | 303 | 83% | 348 | 87% | 651 | 85% |
| Small business / petty commerce | 21 | 6% | 7 | 2% | 28 | 4% |
| Pastoralist / livestock production | 8 | 2% | 3 | 1% | 11 | 1% |
| Wage as day laborer | 2 | 1% | 4 | 1% | 6 | 1% |
| Salary as public sector employee | 5 | 1% | 6 | 1% | 11 | 1% |
| Remittances from family living in the city | 1 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0% |
| Food aid from government or NGO | 4 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 4 | 1% |
| None | 20 | 5% | 34 | 8% | 54 | 7% |
| Total | 364 | 100% | 402 | 100% | 766 | 100% |

**Disaggregation by age group**

Important differences can also be observed when data on the **main income source is disaggregated by age group** (Table 24). Endline data suggest that agriculture was as important a main income source for young adults (84%) as it was for adults (84%). Differences between female and male young adults regarding livelihoods diversification into off-farm activities (12% and 9%, respectively) is less pronounced than was indicated in Table 23 for adults. The numbers of female and male young adults reporting 'none' (5% and 7%, respectively) were not unlike the figure for adults (7%).

**Table 24. Respondents' main income source disaggregated by age group, endline (N=774)**

| Main source of income | Adults | | Female young adults | | Male young adults | | Entire sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Agriculture | 436 | 84% | 91 | 84% | 124 | 84% | 651 | 84% |
| Small business / petty commerce | 18 | 3% | 3 | 3% | 6 | 4% | 27 | 3% |
| Pastoralist / livestock production | 7 | 1% | 2 | 2% | 2 | 1% | 11 | 1% |
| Wage as day laborer | 4 | 1% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% | 6 | 1% |
| Salary as public sector employee | 3 | 1% | 5 | 5% | 3 | 2% | 11 | 1% |
| Salary from employment in the private sector | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Remittances from family living in the city | 1 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0% |
| Remittances from family living abroad | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Food aid from government or NGO | 9 | 2% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% | 11 | 1% |
| None | 38 | 7% | 5 | 5% | 11 | 7% | 54 | 7% |
| Total | 516 | 100% | 108 | 100% | 148 | 100% | 772 | 100% |

# Findings

In this section, the findings are presented following the first four objectives of the assessment. Firstly, the findings on the functioning of CCGs are detailed, including an analysis of the community issues discussed, prioritized and addressed by these groups, and the strategies used to influence positive attitudinal and behavior change at the individual level, and social norms at the community level. Secondly, a detailed evaluation is provided of the effectiveness of CCGs in triggering changes in individual behavior as well as in community-level social norms that influence these behaviors and social interactions. Thirdly, the section focuses on gender-related behavior change and norms (personal and social), and how these changes advocated by CCGs advanced gender equity and equality and, to some extent, youth development. Fourthly, it focuses on the contribution of the behavior change promoted by CCGs to date to achieving and sustaining the DFSA's purposes and higher program goal of food, nutrition and livelihoods security.

## FUNCTIONING AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CCGs

This section aims to evaluate the functioning, governance and performance of CCGs in fostering intra-group interactions; and their ability to discuss, prioritize and address complex community problems or issues; and to identify and assess the approaches and strategies that CCGs use to influence behavior change at the individual level and social norms at the community level. In short, this section addresses four of the learning questions that informed this study:

- How are CCGs functioning and being governed, and what are their facilitators' and members' abilities to perform their functions effectively?
- How are CCGs prioritizing and addressing community issues, and to what extent are they contributing to the DFSA purposes?
- How are CCGs delivering messages across DFSA interventions to influence positive attitudinal and behavior change at the individual level, and social norms at the community level?
- What approaches are CCGs using to influence these changes in their households and communities, and which are proving to be more effective?

### CHARACTERISTICS OF CCGs

CCGs have been established by the DFSA to address prioritized community issues by facilitating regular discussion and dialogue among CCG members who are selected to represent diverse social groups and interests in the communities. As initially conceived, CCGs were designed as time-bound (two to three years) social processes aimed to last until the prioritized issues were addressed, based on an agreed action plan.

CCGs are usually made up of 40 members (20 women and 20 men) that represent different social groups in their *kebele*. This includes PSNP clients; representatives of CBOs; religious, traditional and opinion leaders; representatives of informal social protection institutions (*edir*) and financial protection institutions (*ekub*); and representatives of faith-based organizations. In addition, the *kebele* administrator and government body members are also CCG members despite their PSNP status.

CCG members are proposed by community boards and asked to contribute based on their individual interest or willingness (on a voluntary basis) to follow the group's by-laws. A detailed procedure is not specified in the *CCG Facilitator's Guide* (Bete-UBUNTU Learning Organization 2017b), but the DFSA implementing partners facilitated the design of CCG by-laws that provide criteria for CCG membership. To increase the participation of young adults, a quota of 30% youth in adult CCG membership was set at the beginning of 2020, in addition to the existing quota of 50% women. In addition, after the midterm assessment, youth-only CCGs were established and linked to their *kebeles*' CCGs. In many cases, these youth-only CCGs (YCCGs) were linked to the already established youth livelihoods groups (YLGs), the membership criteria were the same as for adult CCGs, and the only difference was age.

CCGs are conducted by two facilitators, a woman and a man, one of whom acts as chair and the other as secretary or minute-taker/reporter, and therefore, at least one needs to be able to read and write. They are selected according to established criteria (Box 1) and their positions are formally confirmed through election by CCG members. The established criteria require that facilitators are selected based on their education level, emotional intelligence and understanding of the facilitation tools. Nevertheless, in some *kebeles,* they were selected based on their communication skills, acceptance by the community and willingness to be available. Literacy is a desirable but not required characteristic for CCG facilitators, given the high percentage of CCG members, especially women, who have no formal education and cannot read and write (Tables 20 and 21 above). CCG facilitators received training from the DFSA. Facilitators interviewed for this assessment included 45% women and 55% men, of whom 77% were adults and 23% young adults, representative of all facilitators and following the expected percentages closely.

### Box 1. Criteria for the selection of CCG facilitators

#### Required characteristics of a CCG facilitator:

- Has a good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Has skills to facilitate learning sessions and community dialogue.
- Has passion and availability to serve the community.

#### Desirable characteristics of a good facilitator:

- Is a good listener; understands participants' expectations; has excellent interpersonal communication, self-control and emotional skills; is friendly, relaxed, positive, supportive and energetic.
- Has good time-management skills and understands the group dynamics; uses non-verbal communication; and uses language everyone understands.
- Respects others' opinions and is familiar with local culture and social values.
- Serves as a role model for the change initiatives and is accepted by the community.
- Can read and write.

**Source:** Bete-UBUNTU Learning Organization, 2017b, p11, with contributions from the Ethiopia DFSA team

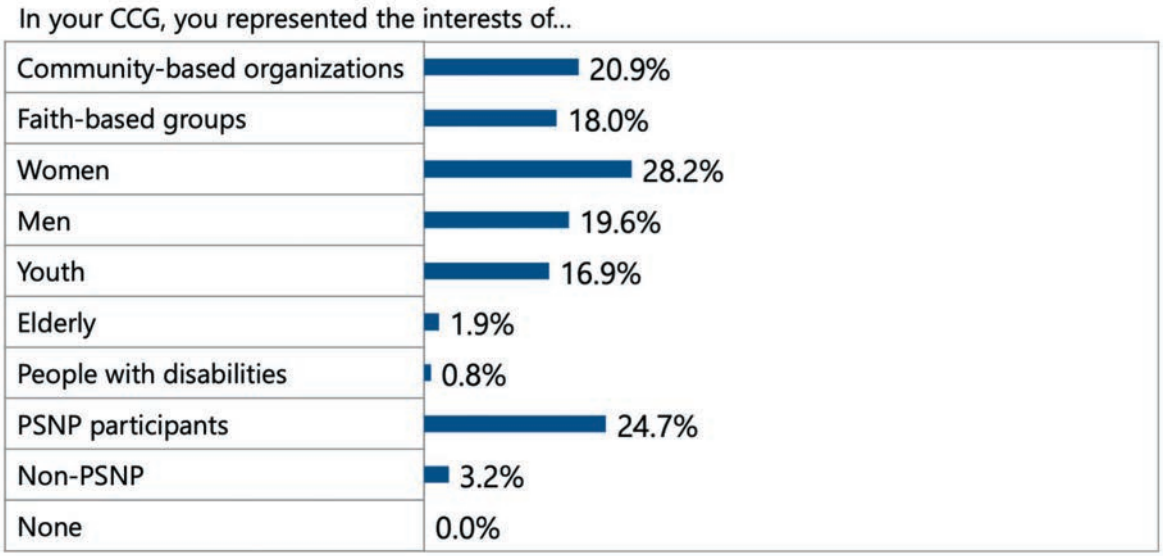
The CCG facilitators are supported by other CCG members with expertise in relevant areas (health, agriculture, nutrition) or type of leadership (religious, education, opinion or community leaders), as well as by invited speakers such as *woreda*-level experts and community animators (CAs). CCG facilitators, in coordination with CAs and *woreda*-level experts, may invite external speakers from the government, implementing partner staff or DFSA team to provide information according to the needs and prioritized issues of the CCGs.

CAs are hired by the DFSA implementing partners and one of their roles is to support the CBOs, including the CCGs. They try to ensure inclusive recruitment of CCG members to contribute to the diversity of the CCGs by following program guidelines on the interest groups that need to be represented, including through quotas for women and youth. During the CCG sessions, their main role is to support the CCG facilitator, and to ensure the free flow of discussion and support its documentation. In some cases, CAs also share results and feedback with *woreda*-level experts, local decision-makers or *kebele* committees.

## REPRESENTATION OF COMMUNITY SOCIAL GROUPS IN CCGs

CCG members were selected to represent the member characteristics—such sex, age and disability—of diverse community and social groups, and their respective and broad needs and interests. There was intersectionality, i.e., one member could represent more than one interest group. For example, a young woman with a disability represents three interest groups: women, young adults, and people with disabilities, meaning that some members perceived that they were representing the interests and needs of multiple groups. When CCG members were asked at endline which social groups they represented (Figure 4), all respondents were clear on the social groups they represented in their CCG, i.e., not one response was 'none.' The most common responses in order of frequency were, women (28%), PSNP participants (25%), community-based organizations (21%), men (20%), faith-based groups (18%), and youth (17%).

**Figure 4. Representation of community social groups in CCGs, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**



A closer examination is required of reasons why the perceived representation of the elderly, people with disabilities, and non-PSNP actors was so low. It may be that the data for the elderly and non-PSNP actors reflect the relative size of these groups within the population but, equally, it is important to not rule out the possibility of inherent bias so that the voices of members of these two groups are not unwittingly excluded. On the other hand, according to survey data from 2015-2016, 9.3% of Ethiopia's population is living with some form of disability, and other estimates suggest even higher percentages, therefore people with disabilities are underrepresented in CCGs.

## CCG MEMBERS' EXPERIENCE OF DISCUSSING AND ADDRESSING COMMUNITY ISSUES

Selected narratives shared by CCG facilitators and members are included in Table 25. The narratives are the verbatim responses to the prompt question on interviewees' experiences during the previous 12 months when their CCG discussed or responded to an issue that was affecting their community. The two key points that emerged from these narratives, most self-signified as positive, are:

1. Awareness-raising on the effects of the issues on communities was key to social and behavior change, and often related to some external influence. In the specific case of adult education, it was less related to a problem and more to an opportunity that was created by the DFSA.
2. Creating space in the communities to discuss issues, and providing evidence of the consequences of the issues, proved an effective strategy for achieving the desired change as reported in the narratives. Once community members understood the issues and their consequences, behavior started to change.

Some narratives were self-signified as negative, such as the one related to girls' early marriage in Table 25. The people who shared them considered them to be negative because they related to difficult issues that happened in their experience, as in the death of a girl following childbirth. Other titles given by respondents to experiences self-signified as negative included: 'girls' early marriage,' 'controlling girl marriages,' 'avoiding polygamous marriage,' 'sending girls to school,' 'stopping girls' early marriage' (x3), 'gender equality,' 'girls' abduction,' and 'harmful traditional practices,' showing similar reasons for respondents to consider their experiences negative.

### Table 25. CCG facilitators' and members' narratives by type of issue discussed and/or addressed by their CCGs

| Issue | Respondent characteristics | Narrative |
|---|---|---|
| Agricultural livelihood practices | • CCG member<br>• Widowed adult woman<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Has no formal education<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in East Hararghe | **Saving and diversifying income sources**<br>In our CCG, we have identified and discussed issues like how to maintain good sanitation, plant different vegetables to generate additional income, protect natural resources by planting trees and conserving our environment, and other activities in our area. First, we had no idea about these issues. But after we were organized into a CCG, we started to implement the ideas we had been told. For example, I am a widow, so it was hard for me to raise my children alone. But after we got support from Catholic Relief Services and different experiences, ***me and my group members started planting vegetables in our gardens and feeding our families well***. I can also supply vegetables to the market for additional income. In such way, ***I became a role model farmer*** in implementing the experiences I learned through the CCG and other individuals. Therefore, we have brought about change in our family and in the community, based on the lessons we got from our group. We are also happy to be involved in the group as it paves the way for changes in my home and community as well. Above all, everybody is very interested in the change we have brought. They want to follow in our footsteps to bring change.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |
| Harmful traditional practices | • CCG member<br>• Married adult man<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Is illiterate<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in Dire Dawa | **Hindering female genital mutilation**<br>Female genital mutilation (FGM) was being practiced in the community, and girls aged 7 to 8 years were suffering from the practice. As the practice was the cutting and sewing of the girl's vagina, this was leading to them getting sick and some even dying. After the project implementation, the CCG raised the issue as a bad practice. FGM and early marriage were the main issues leading to maternal complications. Even a fistula problem developed. Since the CCG was established and has been functioning, ***we have been devoted to hindering FGM as well as [ending] early marriage***. Now we have substantially reduced these practices. It may take time to completely stop FGM.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |

| Issue | Respondent characteristics | Narrative |
|---|---|---|
| Violence against women and girls | • CCG member<br>• Married adult woman<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Protestantism<br>• Attended elementary school<br>• Main income source is small business<br>• Lives in West Arsi | **Gender equality**<br>Gender inequality was the main problem in our community before 2018. I used to feel inferior and my husband decided everything by himself. He was not transparent. If he needed to go out, he did not tell me the specific place he was going. ***Now he is transparent.*** He tells me the specific place he is going. My neighbor has been experiencing sexual abuse as her husband wants sex without her interest. He used to beat her when she refused. As I am the chairperson of the CCG, I went to their home and resolved the problem between them. I followed up with the household and created awareness of gender equality.[9] ***Now they are living in peace and the community accepts gender equality***. Thanks to the project, the community is enjoying such practices.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |
| Girls' early marriage | • CCG member<br>• Single young man<br>• 18-29 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Attended junior secondary school<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in West Arsi | **Stopping girls' early marriage**<br>Early marriage puts the life of girls in danger during childbirth, and also has an impact on the mother's recovery period after birth, if she survives childbirth. A married girl in our village fell pregnant and lost her life during childbirth. She suffered for three days struggling to give birth. This incident became an experience to educate the community to stop giving their daughters for marriage early. Meanwhile, following the CCG discussion on ending harmful traditional practices in the community, girls' early marriage became an issue, and the CCG decision was to prohibit such acts. We have educated the community using the personal experience of the family who lost their daughter during childbirth. The whole community felt the feeling of the parent who had lost their daughter during birth, following an early marriage. To create awareness in the community, the CCG has been working a lot with traditional, community and religious leaders, and extension workers. This led to the community playing its part in ending girls' early marriage. Currently, parents of both the bride and groom discuss and decide on their children's marriage. If the bride is under 18 years old, the marriage is postponed until she is ready.<br>***Experience self-signified as negative.*** |

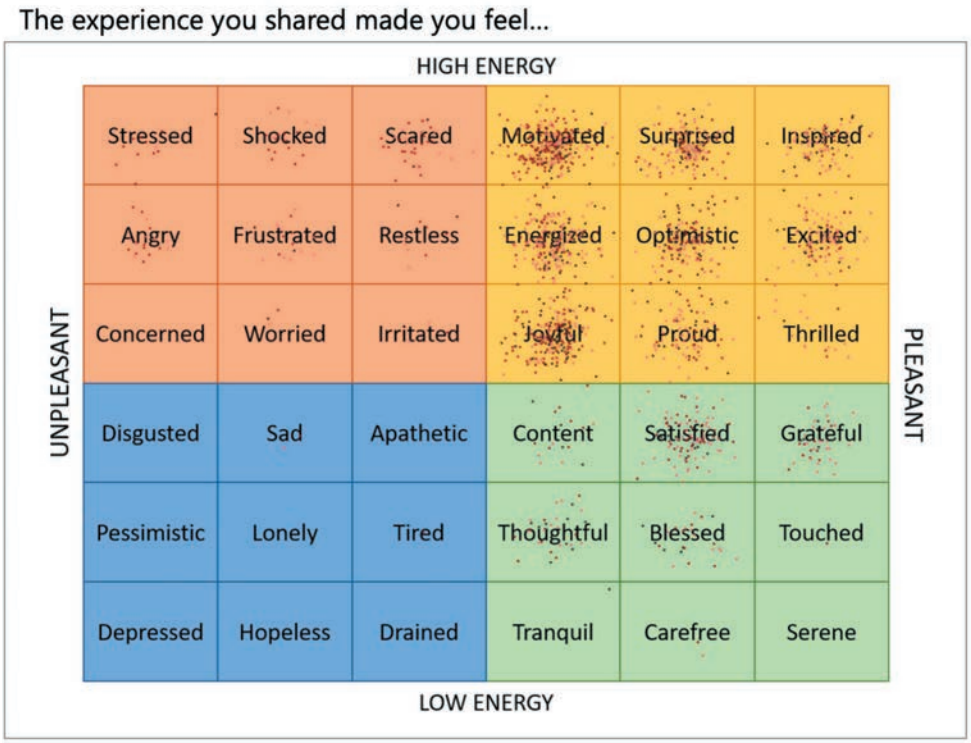
9. It should be noted that this was a decision she made of her own accord; CCG members are not expected to intervene in situations of violence.

| Issue | Respondent characteristics | Narrative |
|---|---|---|
| Health and sanitation practices | • CCG member<br>• Married adult woman<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a polygamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Has no formal education<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in East Hararghe | **Constructing toilets**<br>Toilet construction was uncommon in the community before 2019 and it was common to see open defecation. At that time, diarrhea and trachoma were common. If I had diarrhea, I could transmit it very easily and there was a possibility I could infect the whole community in a short period. Child mortality was assumed to be the punishment of Allah or God. Since the DFSA project and the CCG started to create awareness of this problem, ***each CCG member has constructed a household toilet***. When a CCG member saw feces in their backyard, they called the household head and said, 'You eat the feces then.' He was shocked and wondered how he ate the feces. We told him this happens when you or your children defecate openly around the homestead or elsewhere; if the flies sit on the feces and then sit on your food, you then 'eat feces.' As a result of this phrase, he was convinced to build a toilet. ***Now there is no household without a toilet***.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |
| Access to education for girls and women | • CCG facilitator<br>• Married adult woman<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Is literate<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in East Hararghe | **Our education**<br>In one of our regular discussions with CCG members, an animator from CRS raised the issue of adult education. Most of the group members were illiterate, so we were excited to hear more about it. He told us how we could attend classes. We felt happy at the opportunity. At the end of our discussion, we were told to deliver the message to the community at the village level and to invite those who were willing to attend the adult education program. We were then able to register 60 adults from our zone. Those who registered three years ago are now third-grade students. By seeing our progress, villagers are registering to attend the adult education classes. This means ***villagers' willingness to take adult education classes has been gradually improving from year to year***. We take classes every Monday and Tuesday. Our teacher is an educated person from our village. We are now able to read and write. We even do our assignments with a little assistance from our children. Our improvement has brought excitement in our life.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |
| Male engagement in domestic and care work | • CCG facilitator<br>• Young married man<br>• 18-29 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Attended junior secondary school<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in West Arsi | **Equality of men and women**<br>Before we started participating in the CCG and became aware of the division of work and responsibilities between women and men, men used to put a lot of workload on women. However, after being made aware of this, ***I began to take some of the work and responsibilities from my wife***. Before, I even used to watch her carrying water on her back when she was pregnant. But now I have started baking bread, making coffee and the like. By doing so both of us are now benefiting from the experience.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |

When they were asked about the emotions their experience had generated, most said they felt joy (89%), while some felt surprised (9%). A few respondents felt negative emotions such as sadness, fear and anger (Figure 5). The experiences of CCG members who expressed having felt sadness, fear or anger, were mainly related to HTP and their awareness of the negative impact of these practices on women's and girls' lives. Also, to a lesser extent, locust swarms were mentioned. As explained in the methodology section, facilitators were trained to deal with these types of emotions, but none reported a situation that needed follow-up and referral.

The endline data presented in Figure 5 are encouraging: they suggest that most CCG facilitators and members interviewed expressed positivity (high energy and a sense of pleasure) on their participation and in addressing complex issues within the CCG organizational structure. This is encouraging for a number of reasons: first, it provides an opportunity to further advance the gains made in the current project period; second, there is a basis for extending the success of the CCGs in discussing difficult issues to other areas not yet addressed by the program (e.g. the high education dropout rates as indicated in Tables 20 and 21); third, there were no responses in the bottom left-hand quadrant that would have suggested a low level of energy among CCG members and a correspondingly unpleasant experience. That said, a deeper understanding of the responses in the top left-hand quadrant will be important to ensure that, where necessary, appropriate changes can be made.

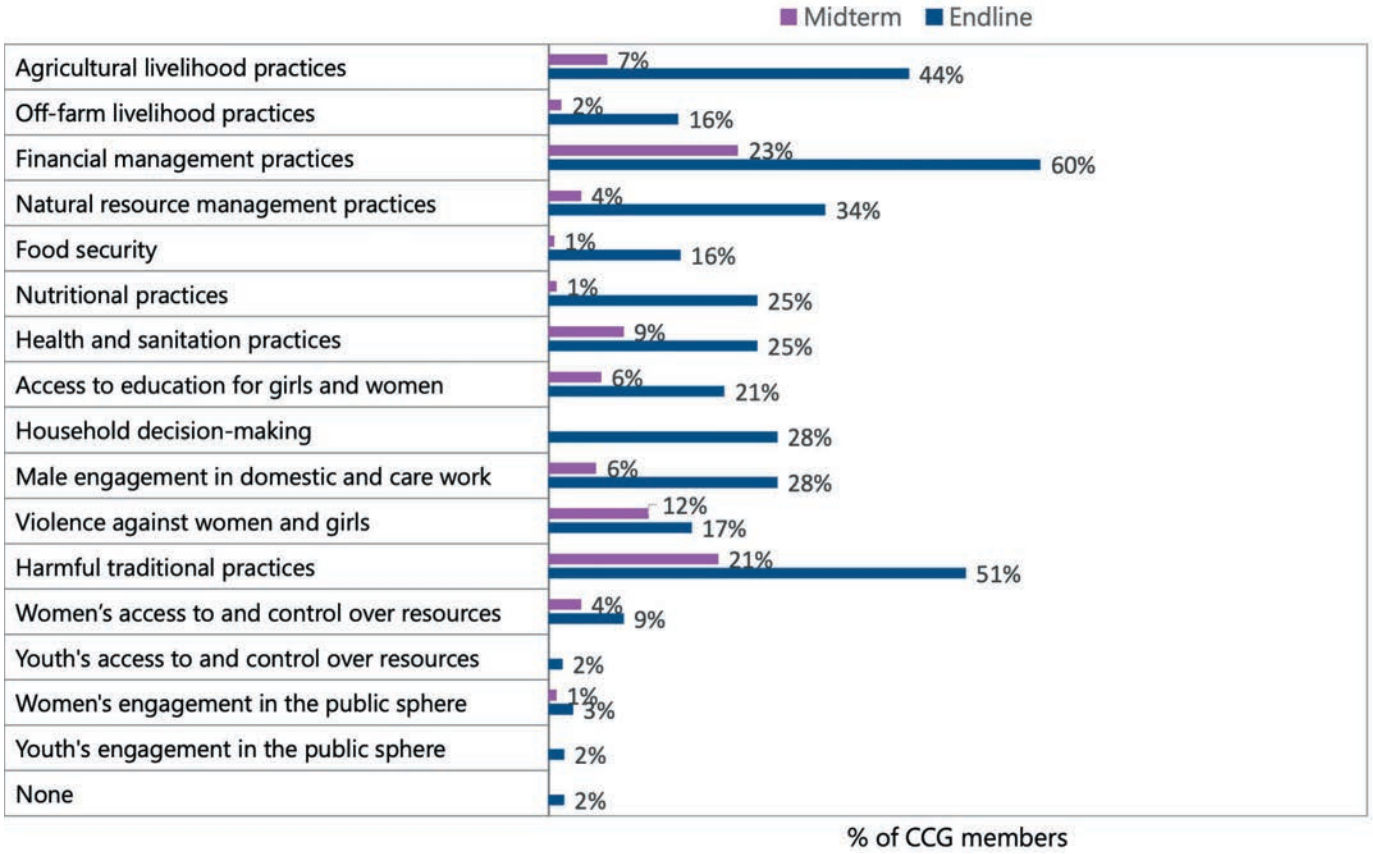
**Figure 5. CCG facilitators' and members' emotions generated by their experiences of participating in CCGs and addressing complex community issues, endline (tool 1; 2021, N=373)**



## ISSUES DISCUSSED AND ADDRESSED BY THE CCGs

After CCG facilitators and members shared their experiences, they were asked about the range of issues discussed and/or addressed[10] by their CCGs during the experience they shared. Detailed responses to this question are shown in Figure 6. There was a significant increase in the frequency with which the issues were discussed by the time of the endline assessment. The issues that were most prominent concerned financial management practices (up from 23% at midterm to 60% at endline), HTP (up from 21% to 51%), and agricultural practices (up from 7% to 44%). Other topics for CCG discussion that saw important increases between midterm and endline were as follows: natural resources management practices (4% to 34%); household decision-making (0% to 28%), male engagement in domestic and care work (6% to 28%), nutritional practices (1% to 25%), and health and sanitation practices (9% to 25%). The increased discussion of the topics, and the range of topics itself, reflects a project that is reaping the benefits of its earlier investments in the careful introduction, establishment and ongoing support of the CCGs.

**Figure 6. Issues discussed by CCGs in the public sphere, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)**

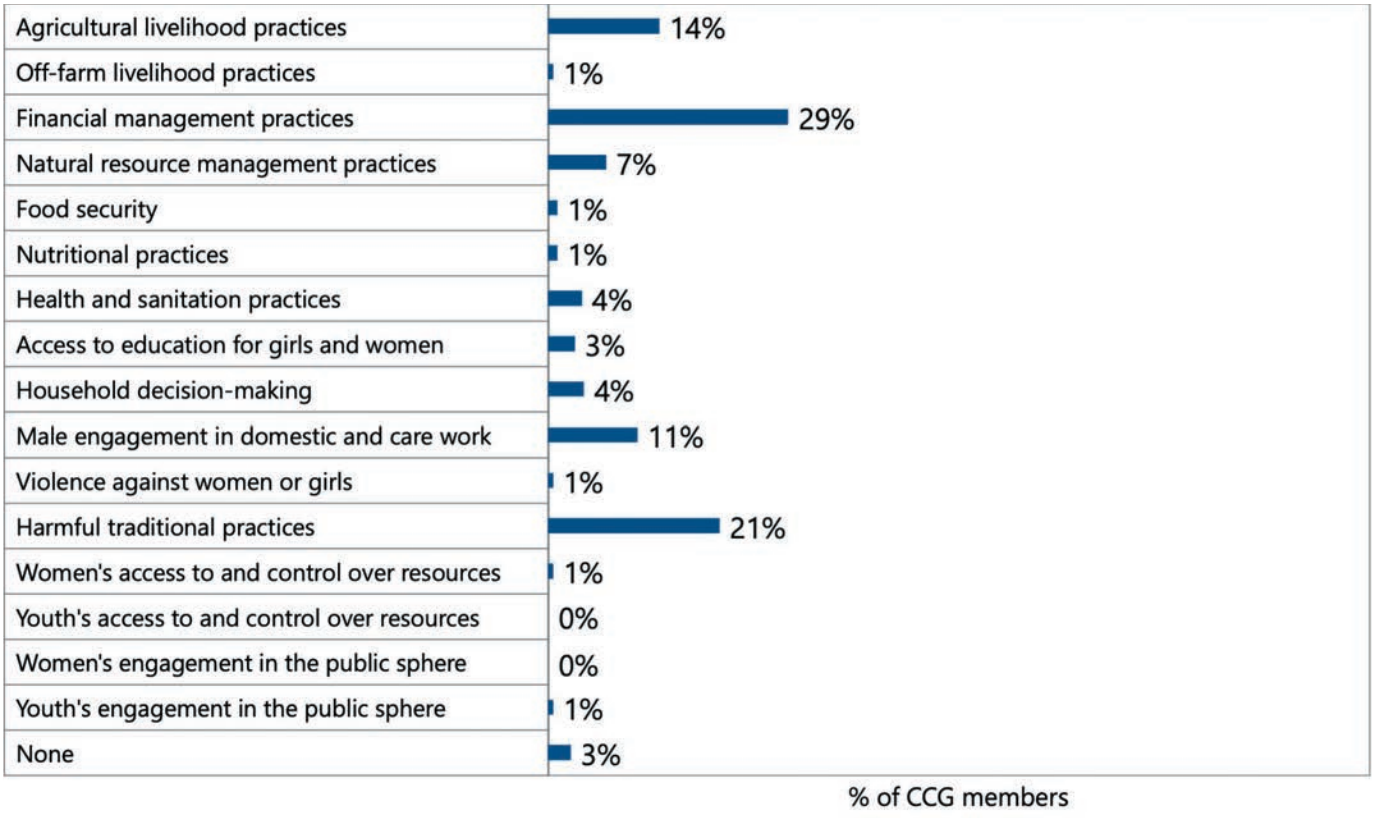



10. As explained in the introduction, *discussing* issues includes the different stages prior to acting in a process of change and can involve identifying the issue, analyzing it to understand its causes and effects, prioritizing them and making decisions, while *addressing* implies planning the response and taking action. Therefore, in the rest of the report, the terms 'discussing' and 'addressing' will be used.

The above findings suggest that CCGs discussed a broad range of issues, which have not been systematically captured to date using the DFSA's routine monitoring system. Nevertheless, these findings align with implementing staff's observations that CCGs were discussing and addressing to a greater or lesser extent a broad range of issues across all three DFSA purposes and the cross-cutting sub-purpose of gender equity and equality, and youth development. Only 2% of CCG members interviewed said their group had not discussed any issue.

While Figure 6 reflects the range of issues that were discussed and addressed, Figure 7 reflects respondents' perceptions of which topics were given *highest priority* by the CCGs. The issues that were seen as being afforded the highest priority were financial management practices (29%), HTP (21%), agricultural practices (14%), and male engagement in domestic and care work (11%).

**Figure 7. Issues discussed and prioritized as the most important for addressing by CCGs in the public sphere, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=332)**




To further assess the level of alignment between the issues prioritized and addressed by CCGs and the DFSA purposes, to evaluate their contribution to achieving and sustaining them, responses were further clustered around the three DFSA purposes and the cross-cutting sub-purpose of gender equity and equality, and youth development. For this, the targeted behavior changes of the issues prioritized and addressed were grouped as shown in Table 26. This grouping presented challenges as some of the targeted behavior changes contributed to more than one purpose. For example, engagement in the public sphere was clustered around Purpose 1 as the core community governance activities are included in this purpose, but this behavior change also contributed to Purpose 2 that includes the establishment and strengthening of LGs and youth livelihood groups (YLGs), and to the cross-cutting sub-purpose of gender equity and equality that includes the establishment and functioning of CCGs.

### Table 26. Targeted behavior change promoted by CCGs grouped by DFSA purpose and cross-cutting sub-purpose

| DFSA purpose | Targeted behavior change |
|---|---|
| **Protection Purpose 1**: Strengthen GoE (PSNP) and community systems to respond to reducing communities' and households' vulnerability to shocks. | Natural resource management practices |
| | Food security |
| | Women's engagement in the public sphere |
| | Youth's engagement in the public sphere |
| **Development Purpose 2**: Improve households' sustainable economic well-being. | Agricultural livelihood practices |
| | Off-farm livelihood practices |
| | Financial management practices |
| **Development Purpose 3**: Improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, and children under 5 years. | Nutritional practices |
| | Health and sanitation practices |
| **Cross-cutting and Foundational Sub-purpose**: Increase women's and youth's access to and control of community and household resources. | Household decision-making |
| | Male engagement in domestic and care work |
| | Violence against women or girls |
| | Harmful traditional practices |
| | Access to education for girls and women |
| | Women's access to and control over resources |
| | Youth's access to and control over resources |

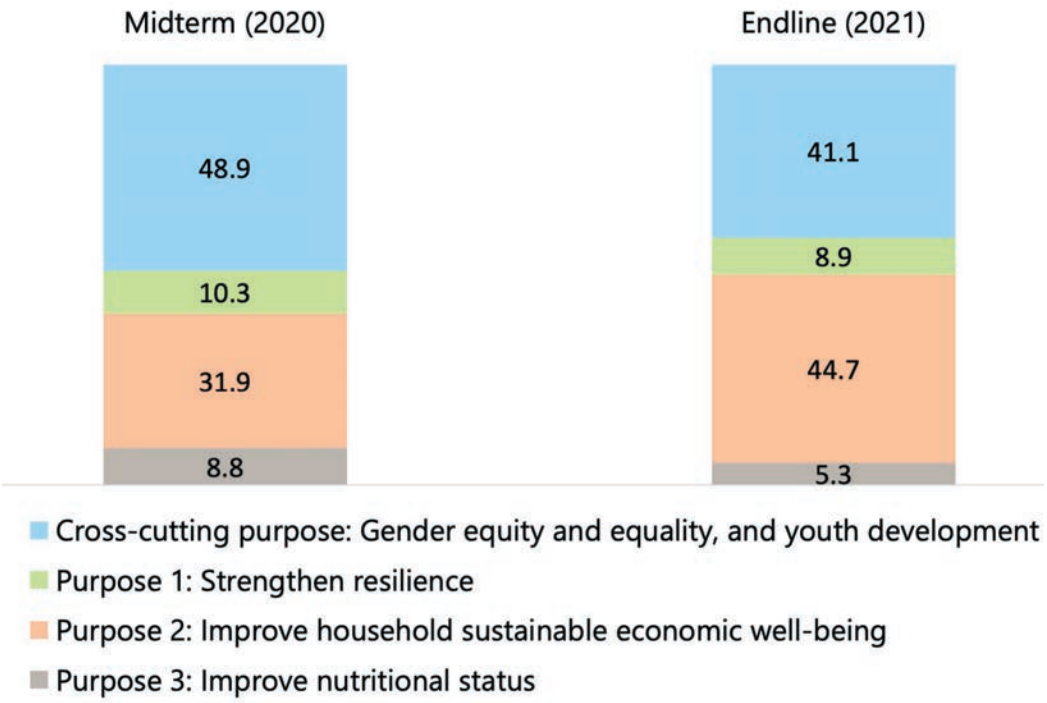
Issues clustered by DFSA purpose for the entire sample and disaggregated by intervention zone show that CCGs had a strong focus on influencing behavior change related to the cross-cutting purpose of gender equity and equality, and youth development, as almost half of respondents shared that this was the main issue prioritized and addressed by their CCGs (Figure 7 above). Midterm and endline data (Figure 8) suggest that there was good alignment with development purpose 2 (in particular, financial management practices and agricultural practices), and with the cross-cutting and foundational sub-purpose (especially HTPs, and male engagement in domestic and care work).

The alignment between activities on the ground and DFSA intention was relatively less apparent for protection purpose 1 (although agricultural practices contribute to improved crop productivity, ultimately contributing to food security) and development purpose 3 (a direct cause–effect relation between increased productivity and improved dietary diversity and nutrition is not strongly proved in the literature).

These findings were expected as CCGs were initially conceived as part of gender-related Community Conversations and as a key intervention for this cross-cutting sub-purpose. Nevertheless, as the DFSA team decided to broaden its influence to contribute to and sustain the other three purposes, CCGs have also been prioritizing and addressing issues that target behavior change related to the other purposes, giving a higher priority to issues related to improving economic well-being, and a lower priority to the nutrition purpose. Issues related to the purpose of strengthening resilience (mainly the distribution of food or cash for work to ensure that poorer households are not food insecure), were less prioritized and addressed as part of the CCGs' activities.

Looking at the data to determine how priorities shifted between midterm and endline, it is clear from Figure 8 that NRM (purpose 1) and nutritional practices (purpose 3), were given even less importance at endline, and there was a shift from issues related to gender equity and equality being the most prioritized until midterm to issues related to economic well-being being the most prioritize at endline. To some extent, this shift may have been influenced by the establishment of YCCGs after the midterm. YCCG members made up 14% of respondents of the sample at endline, which is in line with the proportion of these groups at endline.

**Figure 8. Most important issues prioritized by CCGs for addressing, grouped by DFSA purpose, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)**




Turning to the endline data disaggregated by geographical area (Figure 9), all four zones gave significantly greater priority to the same two DFSA purposes: improving household sustainable economic well-being (purpose 2) and increasing women's and youth's access to and control over community and household resources (cross-cutting purpose). However, at endline, CCGs in East Hararghe and Dire Dawa gave relatively more importance to issues related to increasing women's and youth's access to and control over community and household resources; while in West Arsi and Arsi, relatively greater importance was given to improving household sustainable economic well-being.

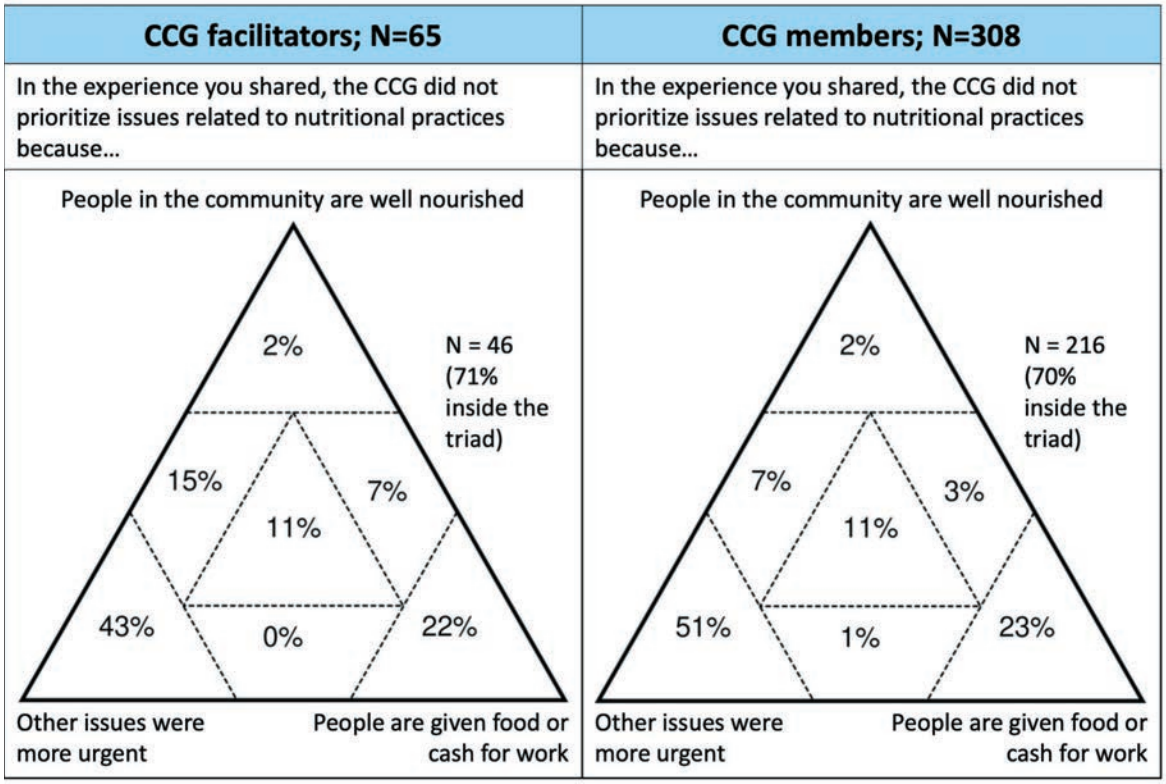
This shows that, for the poor, economic empowerment is the basis for focusing on other types of empowerment, such as gender equity and equality. Given that households in East Hararghe and Dire Dawa were more engaged in business activities and markets, they were also more economically empowered than those in West Arsi and Arsi, and therefore gave more priority to issues related to women's and youth's access to and control over resources.

**Figure 9. Most important issues prioritized by CCGs for addressing, grouped by DFSA purpose and disaggregated by zone, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**


To better understand why issues related to the improved nutritional status purpose were less prioritized for addressing by CCGs (nutritional practices, only 1% of responses, and health and sanitation practices, only 4% of the responses), at endline, a triad follow-up question was used to explore the reasons for these issues being given a lower priority. Findings show that 71% and 70% of CCG facilitators and members, respectively, considered that one or a combination of these three reasons (people in the community are well-nourished, people are given food or cash for work and/or there are other more urgent issues) explained this, and a good degree of alignment in the responses of CCG facilitators and CCG members can be observed (Figure 10).

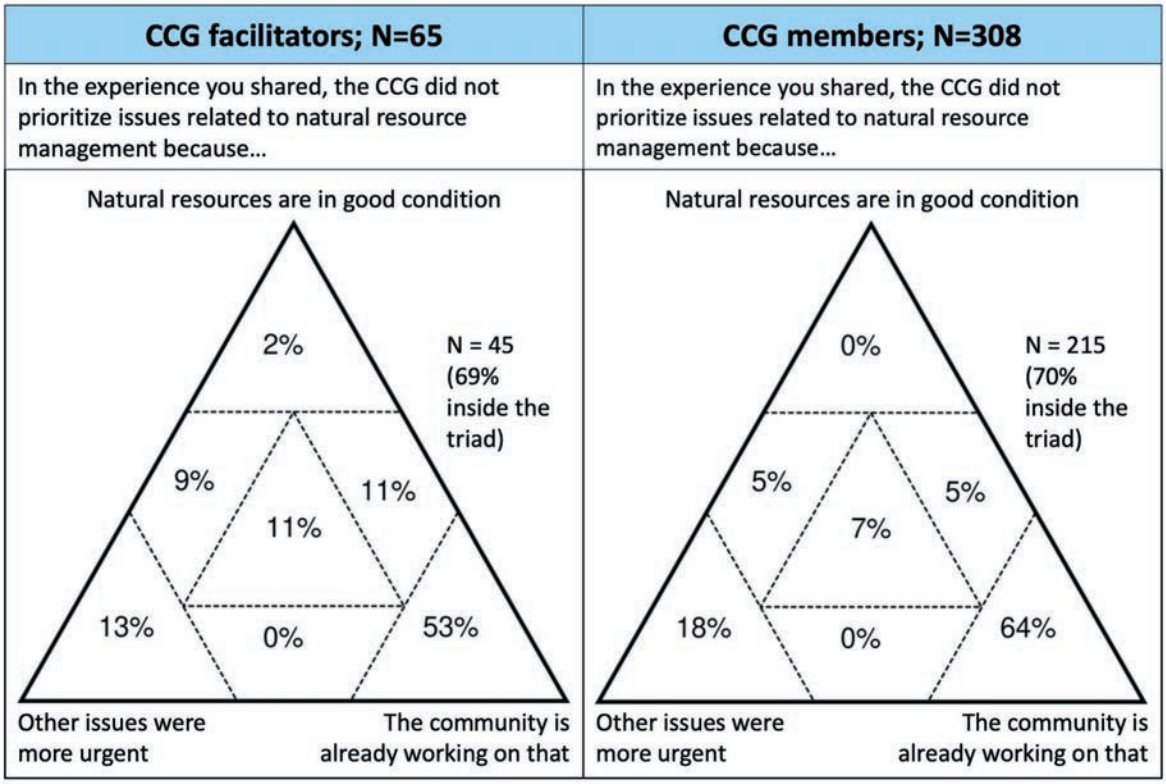
Both groups emphasized that the most important reason was that there had been other more important issues (43% and 51%, respectively), followed by a recognition that people in the project communities were given food or cash for work (22% and 23%, respectively). Also, 11% of CCG facilitators and members considered that the three reasons were equally important (responses in the middle of the triad). That said, this latter response does not quite address why *nutritional practices* and not just food provision had not been prioritized. It would be wrong to assume that the receipt of food or cash for work was synonymous with beneficial nutritional practices, and respondents agreed as only a few considered that these issues were not prioritized mainly because people in the community were well-nourished. Thus, the issue of nutrition remains a priority issue notwithstanding the relatively limited attention it received.

**Figure 10. Reasons given by CCG facilitators and members for not prioritizing issues related to nutritional practices, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**




Issues related to the purpose of strengthening resilience were also given a lower priority by CCGs (food security, 1%, engagement in the public sphere, 1%, and NRM practices, 7%). To better understand the reasons, a similar triad follow-up question was used (Figure 11). There is reasonable alignment between the two respondent groups, with both emphasizing that the community was already working on NRM issues, although relatively more CCG members that CCG facilitators (64% and 53%, respectively) attributed importance to this response. It is noteworthy that very few respondents suggested that natural resources were in a good condition. It could be argued that this recognition is a positive behavior shift since awareness of an issue is a necessary first step before any subsequent action can be taken to address the problem. The numbers of responses indicating that other issues had been more important (13% and 18% for CCG facilitators and members, respectively) were noticeably lower than for the previous question concerning the low priority given to nutritional practices.

**Figure 11. Reasons given by CCG facilitators and member for not prioritizing issues related to NRM, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**




A final point to bear in mind is that there were a lot of interrelated activities taking place in the DFSA. As well as the CCG messaging, much attention was afforded to livelihoods through LGs and SILC, and to gender issues and specifically HTP through other gender-related interventions and, as a consequence, members and facilitators will have been influenced.

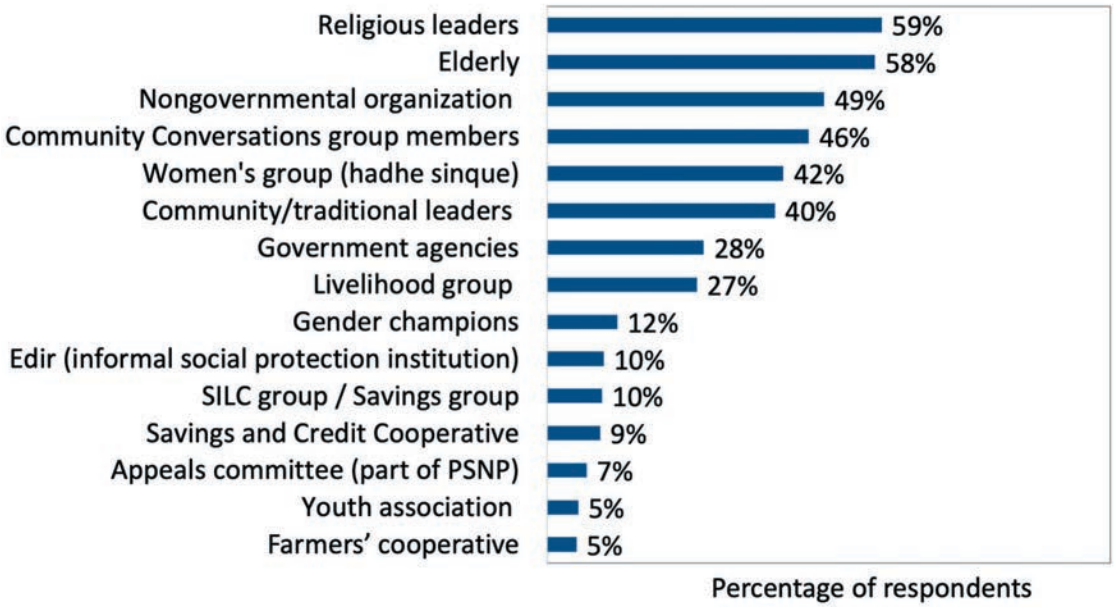
## PROCESS OF DISCUSSING AND ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

### INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

At project midterm, when CCG facilitators and members were asked which people were actively involved in **discussing and addressing** community issues in the experience shared (Figure 12), besides CCG members, who were involved in almost half of the experiences (46%), the most frequently cited were religious, traditional and community leaders who were cited as having played a positive role. This can be explained by the importance that the credibility and authority of the messenger has in influencing changes in behavior and social norms (Aronson *et al.*, 2014, p. 225). It is also important to highlight the role of traditional women's groups (*hadhe sinque*) in discussing and addressing community issues, giving them an important voice in the public sphere that can be further strengthened.

Although CCG members were highly involved in discussing and addressing community issues, as expected, members of other CBOs were less involved at midterm. Nongovernmental and government organizations were also involved in discussing and addressing community issues, but the former more than the latter. Their involvement was mainly in a supporting role, depending on the issue discussed, and based on their expertise (i.e., agricultural extension workers, health workers, teachers) as invited speakers.

**Figure 12. Organizations, groups and individuals involved in discussing community issues, midterm (tool 1, 2020, N=332)**



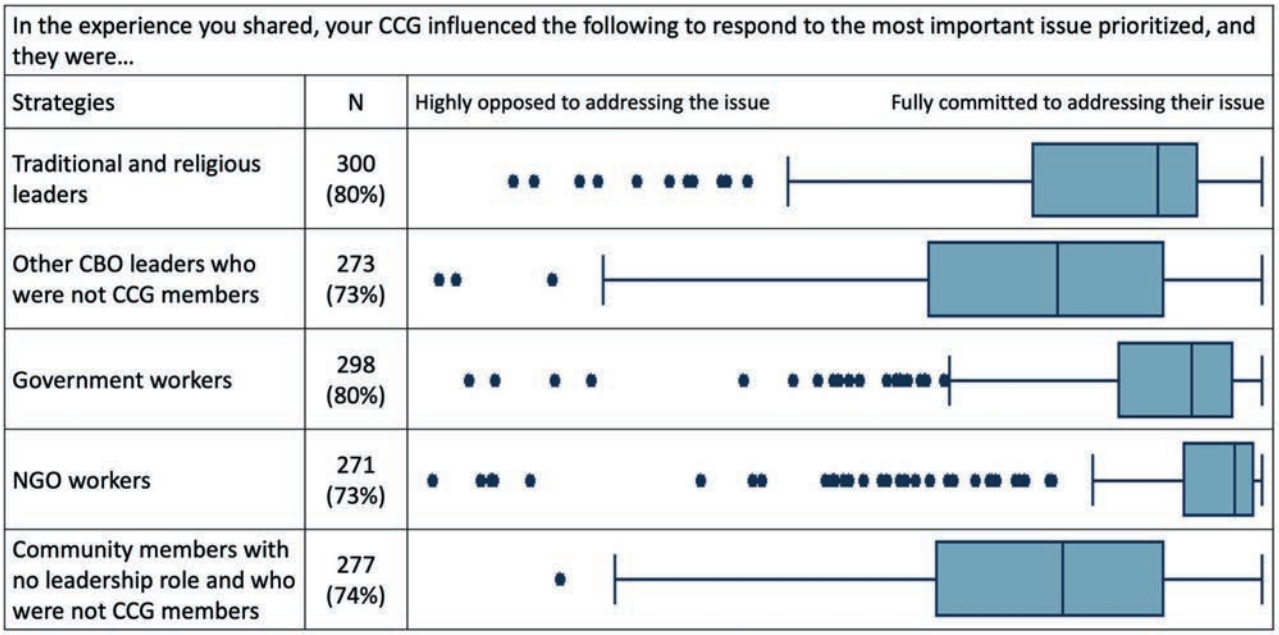

As a follow-up to the previous question, at endline, respondents were asked who was involved in addressing issues prioritized by the CCGs (traditional or religious leaders, other CBO leaders not members of CCGs, government workers, NGO workers, or community members with no leadership role and who were not CCG members), and to place them on a slider showing their commitment to addressing the issues from 'highly opposed' at one extreme to 'fully committed' at the other. Responses are plotted as box plot graphics, the box showing where most responses were placed. The line in the box is the median, with 50% of responses to the right of the line and 50% to the left; the line with the two ends shows the dispersion of the responses; and the markers show outlier responses (Figure 13).

Findings at endline (Figure 13) show that the engagement of all these local and external actors increased from midterm to endline: For religious and traditional leaders, from 59% and 58%, respectively, to 80%; for community leaders, from 40% to 73%; for NGO workers, from 49% to 73%; and the greatest increase for government workers, from 28% to 80%. The significant increase in the engagement of government workers aligns with the effort made by the project after midterm to transfer the support for CCGs from the DFSA to government agencies.

In relation to the level of commitment of the actors, for all of them, the median lines are clearly located to the right, suggesting a positive commitment by all actors to a varying extent, with NGO workers followed by government workers showing the greatest level of commitment. The relatively high level of commitment of government workers is a very promising finding for the longer-term sustainability of CCGs. The CCG exit and sustainability strategy emphasized the need to hand over the CCGs to respective *woreda* government offices (WC&YO) and informal structures (e.g., community leaders) to provide the necessary support and to scale up the positive changes achieved due to CCG.

These two groups are followed in their level of commitment by traditional and religious leaders, which is also a positive finding given their level of influence and their deep roots in the communities. Particularly encouraging is their commitment to discussing gender equity and equality issues. While CBO leaders and community members were committed to addressing community issues, it was relatively less strong than those influencers already mentioned.

**Figure 13. Contribution of influencers in addressing prioritized community issues, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**




It is one thing to be committed as shown in Figure 13, but quite another to make a solid contribution in community discussions, which is the focus of Figure 14. All influencers are, again, on the right of the spectrum, which points to contributions that are on average more positive than negative. The most positive contributions came from CCG members themselves and NGO staff, followed by government workers, and traditional and religious leaders. While the first two groups are arguably unsurprising given their vested interest in the success of CCGs (and some self-reporting bias among CCG members), the positive contributions made by the other two influencer groups is a welcome encouragement for the new RFSA.

**Figure 14. Type of contribution of influencers in addressing prioritized community issues, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**

| In the experience you shared, the following were involved in responding to the most important issue prioritized by your CCG, and their involvement made a... | | |
|---|---|---|
| Strategies | N | Very negative contribution ... Very positive contribution |
| Traditional and religious leaders | 301 (81%) |  |
| Other CBO leaders who were not CCG members | 272 (73%) |  |
| Government workers | 302 (81%) |  |
| NGO workers | 271 (73%) |  |
| Community members with no leadership role and who were not CCG members | 287 (77%) |  |
| CCG members | 315 (84%) |  |

## MEANS OF COMMUNICATION FOR DELIVERING MESSAGES, AND PLACES OF INTERACTION

With respect to the communication strategies used by CCGs to influence community members, it is evident that the use of all six strategies increased from midterm to endline, showing an important advancement, especially on the use of media given the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 15). The visual representation of the issue of 'effectiveness' makes very clear which communication strategies were seen as successful by respondents, and which were not. Four of the six communication strategies lie to the right of the midpoint, suggesting that most people perceived them as making a positive contribution; while two approaches were seen by respondents as relatively less effective.

Group discussions and reflections were most frequently used at midterm and endline, and were considered by CCG facilitators and members to be the most effective means of communication. Group discussions, if facilitated well, can be a very powerful communication means because they help to generate a sense of community and, critically, individuals are more likely to become invested in the outcome of the conversations.

The use of one-to-one communication increased after midterm. This communication strategy was identified at midterm as highly effective, with a lot of potential, and it is especially useful when discussing more sensitive topics such as HTP or GBV. In addition, it is a very powerful method to influence family members, peers and friends because people are more likely to accept impulses to change from people they like or who have credibility or authority (Aronson *et al.*, 2014, p. 223-225). Following the midterm recommendations, DFSA staff intentionally promoted this approach to influence behavior change.

Sharing personal testimonies also increased from only 18% at midterm to 62% at endline. This strategy is perceived to be effective in reaching community members because it can boost reflection and create awareness.

In particular, the production of educational communication materials was viewed by more respondents as ineffective. Given the very low levels of formal education of community members described earlier in the report, the perceived ineffectiveness of written educational and communication materials is not unexpected. Moreover, the resources (in terms of finance and effort) required to generate such materials, makes this finding very helpful feedback. While the use of radio, TV and social media was also perceived as limited, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that these communication channels could provide a way to safely deliver the messages, and thus it will be important to learn more about the reasons why CCG members considered them to be relatively ineffective.

**Figure 15. Use of means of communication by CCGs to address the issues, and their effectiveness, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)**

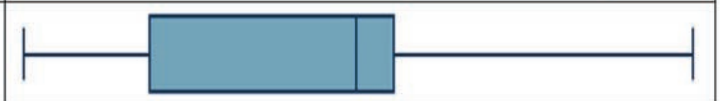
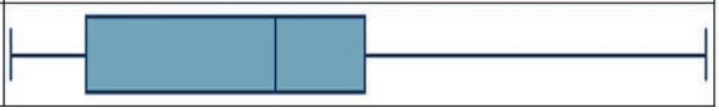
| In the experience you shared, your CCG used the following to reach community members... | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Means of communication | Midterm | Endline | Very ineffective ... Very effective |
| One-to-one communication | 235 (71%) | 336 (90%) |  |
| Focus group discussions and reflection | 318 (96%) | 369 (99%) |  |
| Personal testimonies | 58 (18%) | 233 (62%) |  |
| Practical demonstrations | 67 (20%) | 232 (62%) |  |
| Media (radio, TV or social media) | 33 (10%) | 220 (59%) |  |
| Educational and communication materials | 27 (8.1%) | 199 (80%) |  |

Figure 16 shows that in relation to the places and events where issues were discussed, when compared with the midterm findings, at endline, CCG meetings had overtaken traditional coffee ceremonies as the most cited occasion (75%) for discussing community issues. Yet this endline aggregate figure hides a difference in the most mentioned by women and men (Figure 17). While 78% of women considered that issues were mainly discussed at CCG meetings, followed by traditional coffee ceremonies (73%) and, significantly lower, at CBO meetings and assemblies (57%); men considered that it was CBO meetings and assemblies (77%), followed by CCG meetings (72%) and traditional coffee ceremonies (69%).

Overall, family visits were the only other occasion mentioned by more than 50% of all respondents (53% women, 53% men) although it should be noted that the same figure was reported by women for traditional food processing events. This last may be especially important for women and girls to discuss community issues, particularly those topics that warrant a 'safe space' for women. No other interaction places were selected by more than 50% of respondents. The analysis did not indicate significant differences in the interaction places mentioned by young adults and adults. In general, DFSA investment in the formal space created by CCGs to facilitate Community Conversations has been effective in serving this purpose. This may be especially the case when initiating the dialogue, and then enabling these conversations to be transferred to more familiar interaction spaces as well as to other formal interaction spheres. Apart from cultural and sporting events, all other interaction places were cited by more respondents at endline than at midterm. This reflects the DFSA's effort and attention to this aspect of the program. CCGs appear to be triggering discussions in diverse places about diverse issues affecting communities, and CCG members are using these specifically to influence behavior change.

**Figure 16. Interaction places where community issues were discussed, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)**

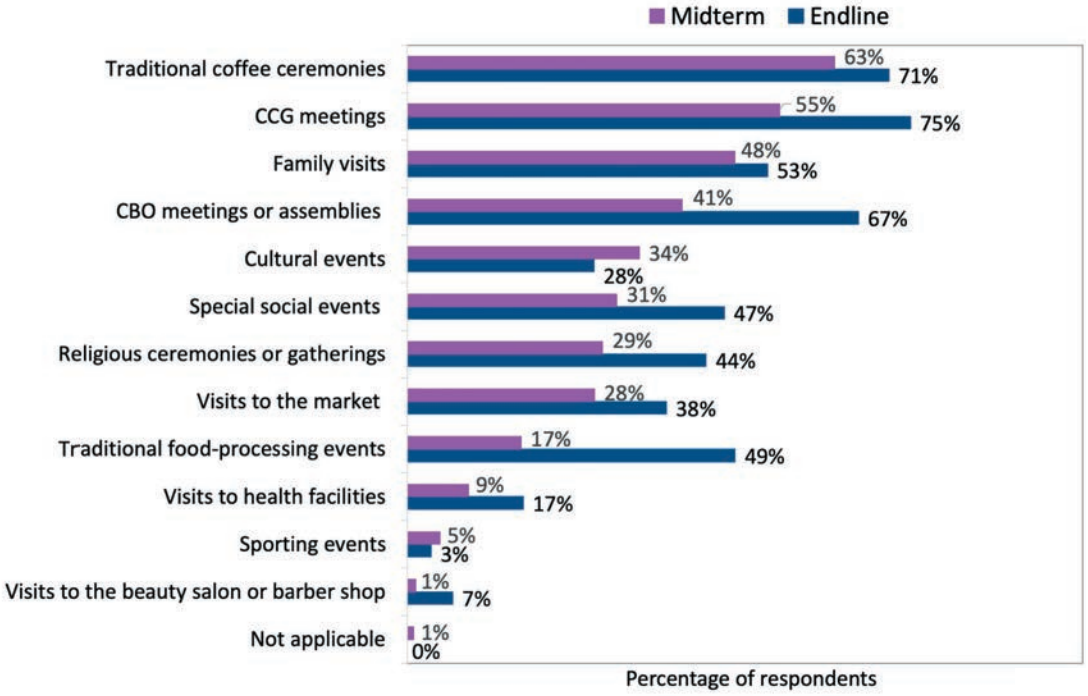
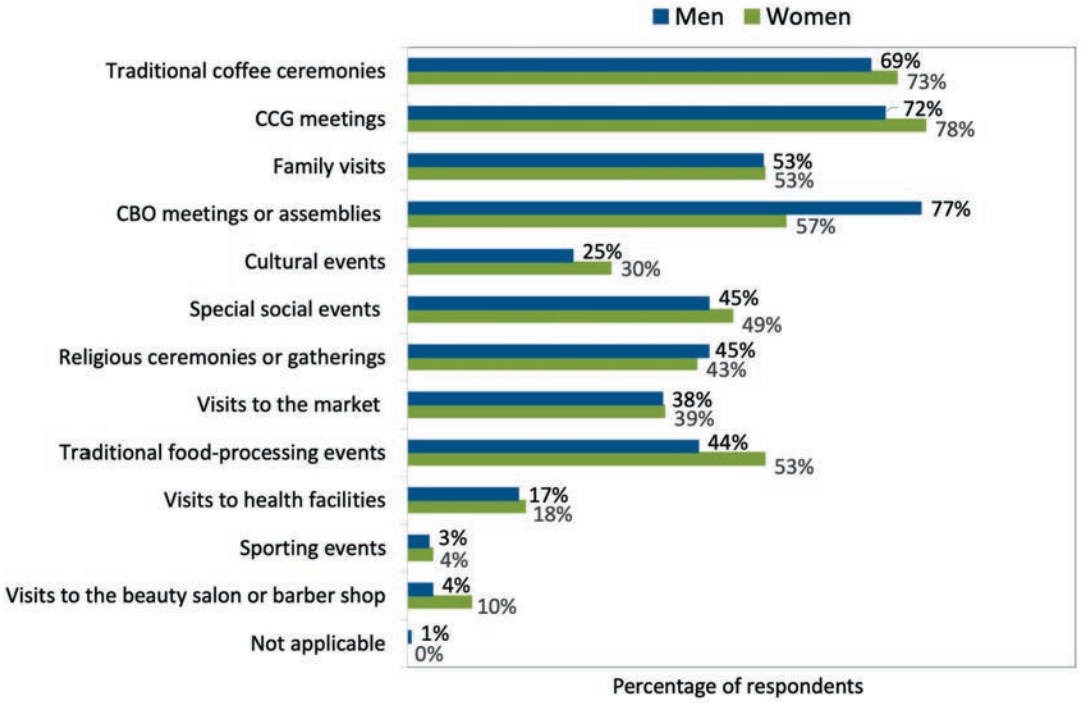


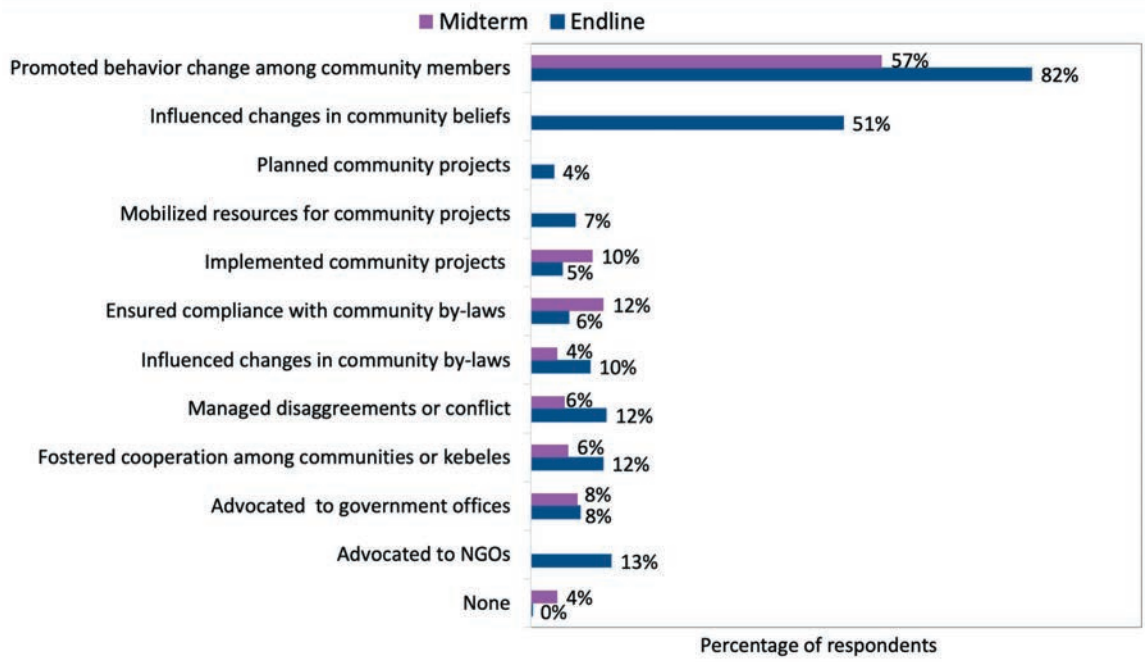
**Figure 17. Interaction places where community issues were discussed, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**




## STRATEGIES USED TO ADDRESS PRIORITIZED ISSUES

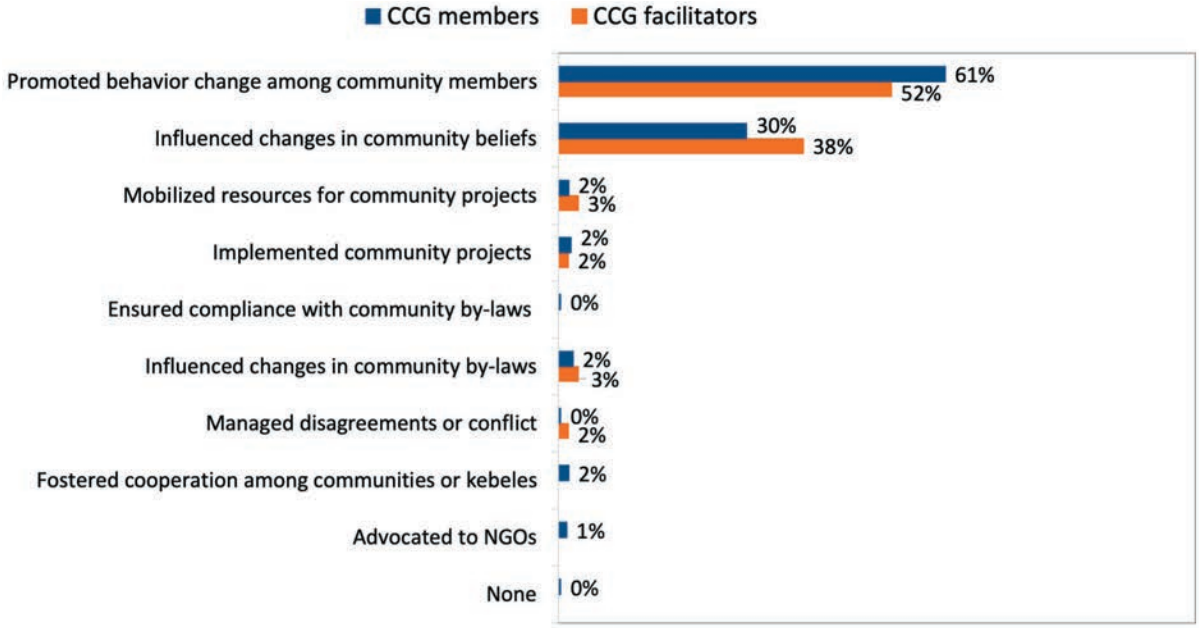
CCG facilitators' and members' responses to the question of how the prioritized issues were addressed are presented in Figure 18. The strategy that was most used by CCGs at both midterm and endline (57% and 82%, respectively) was the direct promotion of behavior change among community members. The next most-cited strategy, not used at the time of the midterm assessment, was influencing change in community beliefs, i.e. confronting existing negative social norms that inhibit behavior change and/or promoting new positive social norms that encourage needed behavior change. Many other strategies were tried, as can be seen in Figure 18, but none reached anywhere near the level of significance as the first two mentioned above. However, advocating to NGOs to provide support, not used at midterm, was the third most-cited strategy (13%) at endline. This, together with the potential role for government offices to lend support (8%), fostering cooperation among communities and *kebele*s (12%), managing disagreements or conflicts (12%), and mobilizing resources for community projects (7%), could all collectively serve as a useful package of approaches for the new RFSA to further advance gains already made. Considering the ongoing conflicts and the fragile situation to keep and build peace and its impact on sustainable development efforts, the above-mentioned strategies should be strengthened and receive more attention.

**Figure 18. Strategies used by CCGs to address prioritized community issues, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)**




When the responses of CCG facilitators and members are disaggregated to explore their separate views (Figure 19), both agreed that the top two strategies used were those noted in Figure 18 above, and with very low use of any other strategies to address community issues. At the margin, they differed in their use of the two top strategies, but this difference is probably not surprising. It is plausible to presume that community members would favor the promotion of behavior change at the community level, a more direct and immediate strategy that they could more easily pursue. In contrast, the CCG facilitators are, perhaps, observing at one remove and can more easily perceive the potential significance of community beliefs in the form of social norms, and thereby the value of addressing what they see as the underlying opportunities or threats to tackle community issues.

**Figure 19. Strategies used by CCG facilitators and members to address prioritized community issues that were perceived by CCG facilitators and members as the most effective, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**

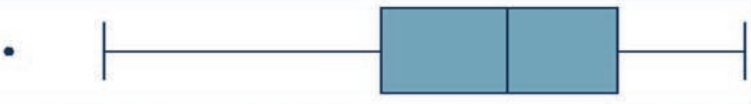


Although CCGs were not explicitly established to mediate and transform disagreements or conflict, at midterm it was found that in some cases they had performed this function, and that when they did the results were generally positive. It is apparent in Figure 18 above that the number of CCGs mentioning 'managed disagreements or conflict' doubled between midterm and endline (6% to 12%, respectively).

To further explore this unexpected CCG function, at endline, a specific question was asked on whether CCGs mediated conflict among family members, among ethnic groups, or related to access to and control over resources, and whether their intervention made things better or worse. Encouragingly, in each of the above three types of conflict, there was a usually positive response to the role played by the CCG. This was particularly the case in instances of family conflict, and where the conflict had arisen over access to and control over community resources; especially in relation to the former, those responding indicated on average that the CCG was close to fully resolving the situation. CCGs were less involved in mediating conflict among ethnic groups, and this also proved relatively more difficult to transform, but perhaps the issue is more complex and intractable and thus requires more time and more diversity within the CCG to find a solution acceptable to all parties.

The recent conflict (July 2020) that affected the Oromia region showed that one event may trigger a social, political, religious and/or ethnic conflict, and can easily escalate. External factors—such as the effect of COVID-19 on people's health and the economy, the effect of the locust plague on food security, and the postponement of elections—can increase the risk of social unrest. CCGs could play an important role in mediating and transforming conflict in their communities to contribute to larger peacebuilding objectives. However, it will be important to carefully assess the benefits and risks of CCGs fulfilling this role as there are also weak signals where respondents indicated that the situation had worsened after CCG intervention.

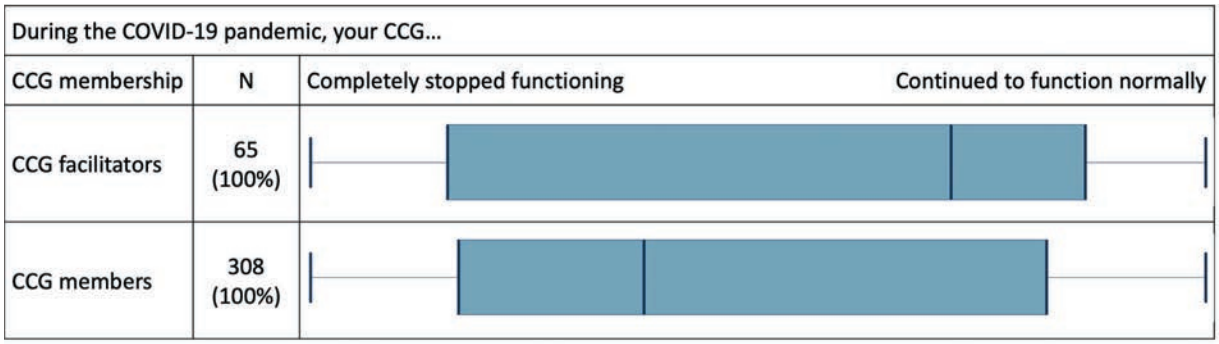
**Figure 20. Role of CCGs in mediating conflict, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**

| In the experience you shared, the CCG played a role mediating disagreements or conflicts and... | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Type of conflicts | N | Made the situation worse | Fully improved the situation |
| Among family members | 271 (73%) |  | |
| Related to access to and control over community resources | 238 (64%) |  | |
| Among ethnic groups | 204 (55%) |  | |

## AREA OF INFLUENCE OF CCGs

To assess the reach of CCGs, respondents were asked at what level issues were discussed and/or addressed. At the outset of the DFSA, CCGs were expected to reach all the villages in their *kebele* to influence behavior change and underlying social norms, and in their *woreda* to influence government and advocate for policy change. It is important to emphasize that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in government-imposed travel and physical distancing restrictions that ultimately constrained the ability of the program—particularly CCG members—to continue functioning normally to achieve its original targets (Figure 21). While there is a wide dispersion of the responses to whether CCGs' functioning was affected by COVID-19, and while facilitators considered, at the median (72%), that CCGs continued functioning to some extent, CCG members considered at the median (37%) that CCGs' functioning was reduced. Restrictions to movement may have prevented them from reaching the whole *kebele*, and especially reaching other *kebeles*.

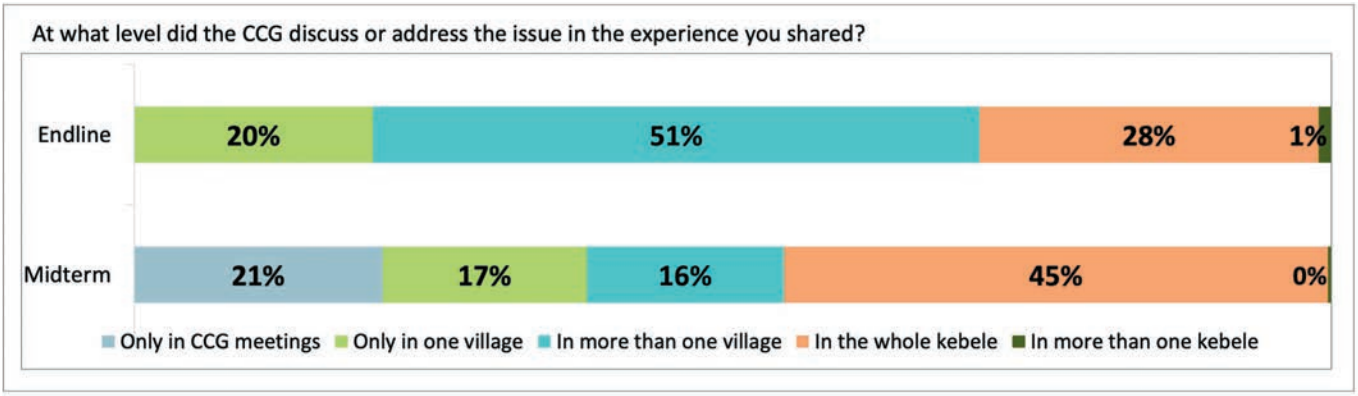
**Figure 21. Effect of COVID-19 on the functioning of CCGs, endline (tool 1; 2021, N=373)**




Despite the challenges to the functioning of CCGs raised by the pandemic, further progress in extending the reach of CCGs was still made. Turning to Figure 22, CCG facilitators' and members' responses show that by endline 100% of CCGs had reached out beyond the confines of their own meetings to discuss topical issues. In addition, almost 51% had reached out to more than one village, and 28% had reached all the villages in their *kebele*. Since midterm, there was a small rise in the number of CCGs reaching out to more than one *kebele*. CCG facilitators and other DFSA-established group leaders and The Faithful House/Islamic Family House[11] couples were considered gender volunteers who were involved in disseminating messages on COVID-19 and advising CCG members on GBV issues. While the rise is small, given the COVID-19 context, this could be described as an important achievement. In large part this is thanks to both the efforts of the DFSA team, noting the key role played by CCG facilitators in continuing to 'function normally,' and the voluntary efforts of project participants.

11. Training conducted by CRS and its partners designed to strengthen marital relationships, promote joint decision-making and foster open communication between couples.

Figure 22. Reach CCGs established, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332, 2021, N=373)




## CHARACTERISTICS OF CCG FACILITATORS AND MEMBERS

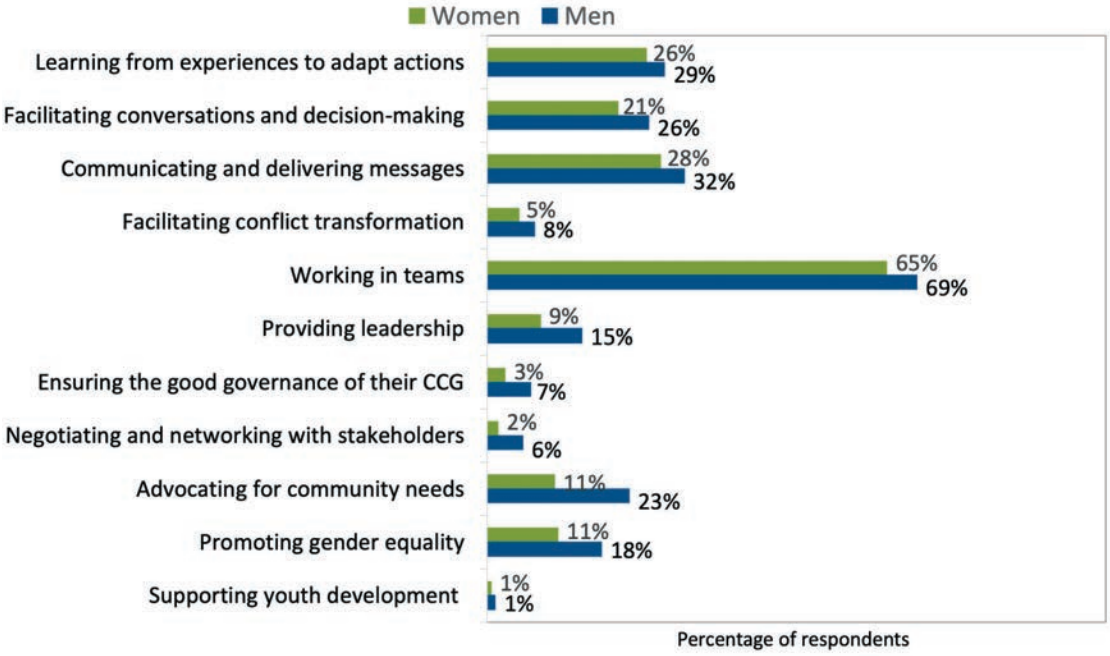
At endline, from the sample, we can infer that 50% of CCG facilitators and members were female and 50% were male, showing that women and men were equally represented in CCGs. Young adults (18-29 years) made up 36% of CCG membership, which is above the established project quota of 30%. As young adults became more represented in CCGs after the midterm assessment, the proportion of young women in youth participation fell from 51% to 43%, compared to young men, who became more represented (49% to 57%). This shows that CCGs attracted more male youth than female youth, after the project started to be more intentional about raising youth participation in adult CCGs, and established YCCGs.

### SELF-REPORTED ABILITY TO ADDRESS PRIORITIZED ISSUES

At midterm, 69% and 65% of male and female CCG facilitators and members, respectively, reported having the teamwork abilities necessary for addressing the prioritized issues, and 32% and 28%, respectively, that they had the ability to communicate, facilitate dialogue and learn (Figure 23). Fewer respondents (18% and 11% of male and female facilitators and members, respectively) said they had the ability to address gender equity and equality issues, and even fewer (1%) the ability to address youth development issues, the latter being notably low given the program's focus on youth. Only 17% self-reported advocacy abilities, with a significant difference between women (11%) and men (23%). Other important abilities, such as facilitating conflict transformation, ensuring good governance, and negotiating and networking with stakeholders, were mentioned much less, linking with findings presented in the previous section that show CCGs assuming fewer advocacy initiatives and being less effective in them.

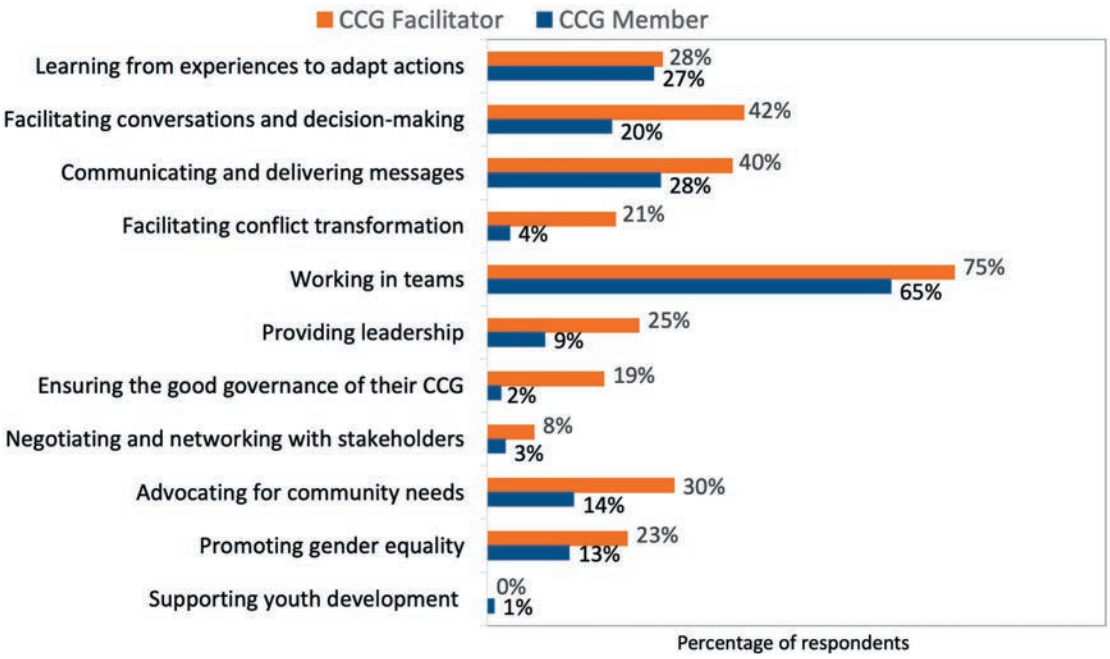
Consistently, more men considered that they had the abilities assumed to be important for advancing the CCGs' agenda than women. Nevertheless, there is ample room for improvement in these abilities for both female and male members. However, it should be noted that the actual level of abilities could not be compared with a baseline as this information was not available and, therefore, it is not possible to know the contribution of the DFSA to strengthening these. This information on the self-reported abilities of CCG members could be useful for identifying their strengths and gaps or areas for improvement on which the program can focus its capacity building activities in the new RFSA.

**Figure 23. CCG facilitators' and members' self-reported abilities to address prioritized issues, disaggregated by sex, midterm (tool 1, N=332)**




Disaggregating these same findings between CCG facilitators and members shows that CCG facilitators' self-reported abilities were higher than those of other members for all the abilities (Figure 24), in line with their higher level of formal education (see Table 20, above). These results are expected as the DFSA trained CCG facilitators but not ordinary members and, therefore, to some extent, ordinary members' abilities can be a proxy baseline; but only if CCG facilitators did not intentionally invest in developing these abilities among ordinary members.

**Figure 24. CCG facilitators' and members' self-reported abilities to address prioritized issues, midterm (tool 1, N=332)**



## LEVEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCIES

The functionality of a group is dependent on the competencies that its members bring to the organization, defined as the set of attitudes, knowledge and skills that enable a person to successfully perform their job, activity or trade. Organizational competencies among CCG facilitators and members are vital for the proper functioning of CCGs, and thus they were assessed for two core organizational competencies*: Good Governance*[12] and *Transformative Participation and Leadership*.[13] Each of these includes behavioral evidence that the individuals needed to demonstrate to show that they had the competency.

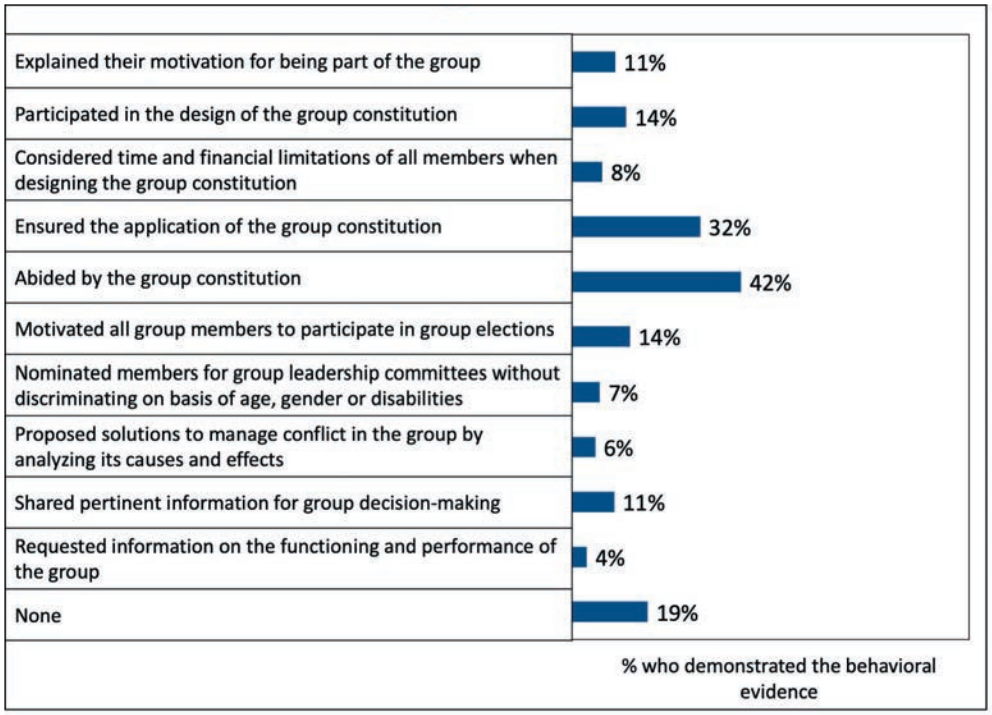
To assess these two organizational competencies, at midterm, CCG facilitators and members were asked what they did to ensure the good governance of their group, and what they did to be part of their groups and provide leadership, respectively, for each competency. As they provided their narrative, data collectors recorded and probed for key evidence to ensure a reasonable level of accuracy.

In relation to the *Good Governance* competency, one finding that stands out is that 42% of CCG members said they abided by the CCG constitution and 32% that they ensured its application, but only 14% said they had participated (as per the CCG methodology) in its design, despite CCGs' by-laws being less formal and simpler than those of other CBOs (Figure 25). According to the information provided by the DFSA team, the CCGs' by-laws were expected to be developed with the full participation of ordinary CCG members with the support of CCG facilitators who had received training and support on how to develop these by-laws. This does not seem to have always been the case, resulting in a gap between the DFSA team's expectations and the implementation realities. Another notable finding is the low percentage of CCG members who nominated members for group leadership without discrimination, as this links to the general commitments to representation, inclusivity and non-discrimination. In general, governance competencies were low, and 19% of respondents showed no behavioral evidence for this competency.

12. The *Good Governance* competency is defined as being accountable to ensure the good governance of their group by ensuring transparent and inclusive elections and decision-making, abidance to the group constitution, and the management of conflict until its resolution.

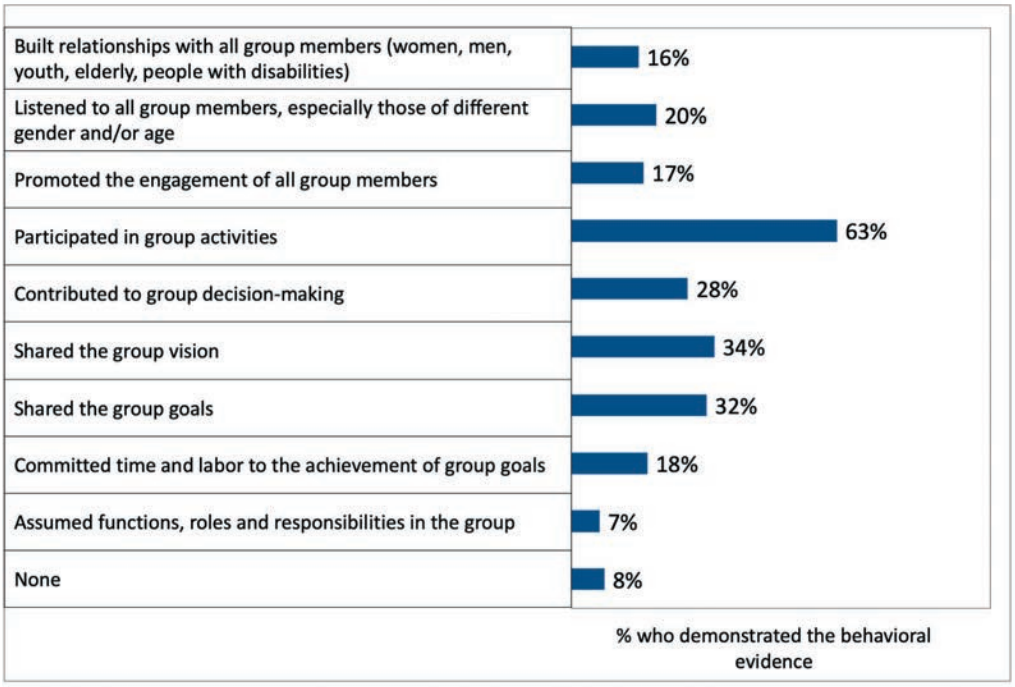
13. The *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competency is defined as committing to group efforts to inspire others to do the same by sharing the group vision and objectives, promoting the inclusion and engagement of all group members, and assuming their given roles and responsibilities.

**Figure 25. Behavioral evidence of the *Good Governance* competency demonstrated by CCG facilitators and members, midterm (tool 1, N=332)**




Findings at midterm on the percentage of CCG facilitators and members who showed behavioral evidence of the *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competency, indicate that CCG facilitators and members (63%) consistently participated in group activities, one third of them shared the group's vision and goals, and more than a quarter contributed to group decision-making (Figure 26). It should also be noted that fewer assumed their functions, roles and responsibilities in the group. Among the behavioral evidence for this competency, 'listened to all group members, especially those of a different gender and/or age' was showed by only 20% of CCG facilitators and members, despite being especially important for CCG members, whose main role is to deliver messages and serve as role models of behavior that promotes gender equity and equality, and youth development.

**Figure 26. Behavioral evidence of the *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competency demonstrated by CCG facilitators and members, midterm (tool 1, N=332)**




At endline, a decision was taken not to reassess this competency because the DFSA did not actively prioritize a strategy of strengthening CCG members' organizational competencies in the period after midterm and, therefore, midterm data continued to apply at endline. Moving forward, this is an area that will require more capacity strengthening as part of the new RFSA.

When the average level among all CCG facilitators and among all ordinary CCG members is compared for both *Good Governance* and *Transformative Participation and Leadership*, it is evident that CCG facilitators had a significantly higher level of both competencies than ordinary members ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000$ and $Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000$, respectively). Nevertheless, on average, both CCG facilitators and members had a basic level (<40%) of the *Good Governance* competency. On average, the level of the *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competency among CCG facilitators and ordinary members was higher than the level of *Good Governance* (Figure 27), but was still at a basic level among ordinary CCG members (<40%) and developing among CCG facilitators (40% to <60%).

In relation to the *Good Governance* competency, fewer ordinary CCG members showed evidence of each of the behaviors for the competency, with the exception of 'nominated members for group leadership without discriminating on the basis of age, gender or disabilities.' Also, only 6% of CCG facilitators showed none of this behavioral evidence, while the equivalent figure for ordinary members was 23%. Similarly, while only 2% of CCG facilitators showed none of the behavioral evidence for the *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competency, for ordinary CCG members, it was 9%.

**Figure 27. CCG facilitators' and members' level of organizational competencies, midterm (tool 1, N=332)**

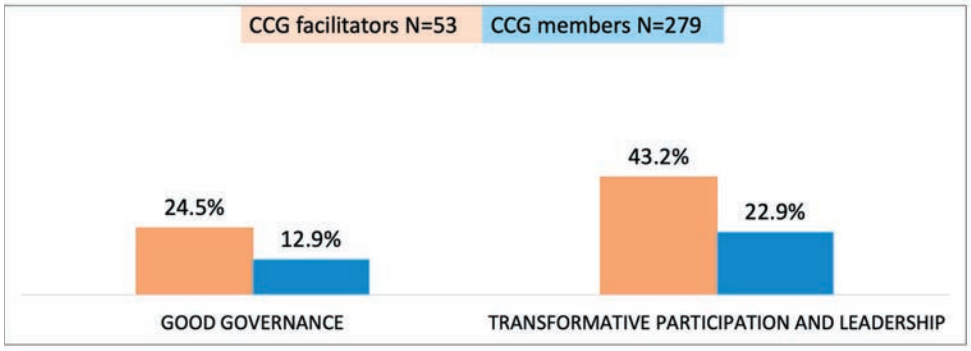
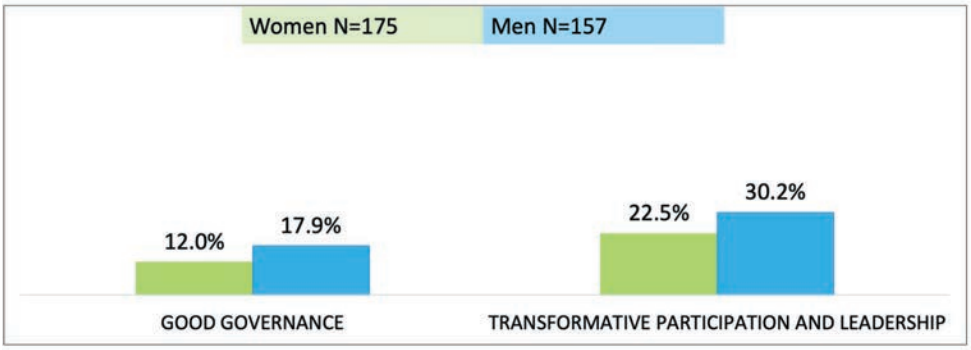



Figure 28 shows the same information disaggregated by sex. The average level of both competencies among all men was higher than among women and this difference is statistically significant at (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 for the *Good Governance* competency and Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0001 for the *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competency. Disaggregating the same data by age group shows no significant difference between young adults and adults for *Good Governance* (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.7486), but a significant difference for *Transformative Participation and Leadership* (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0937), for which the figure for adults was 27% and for young adults, 23%.

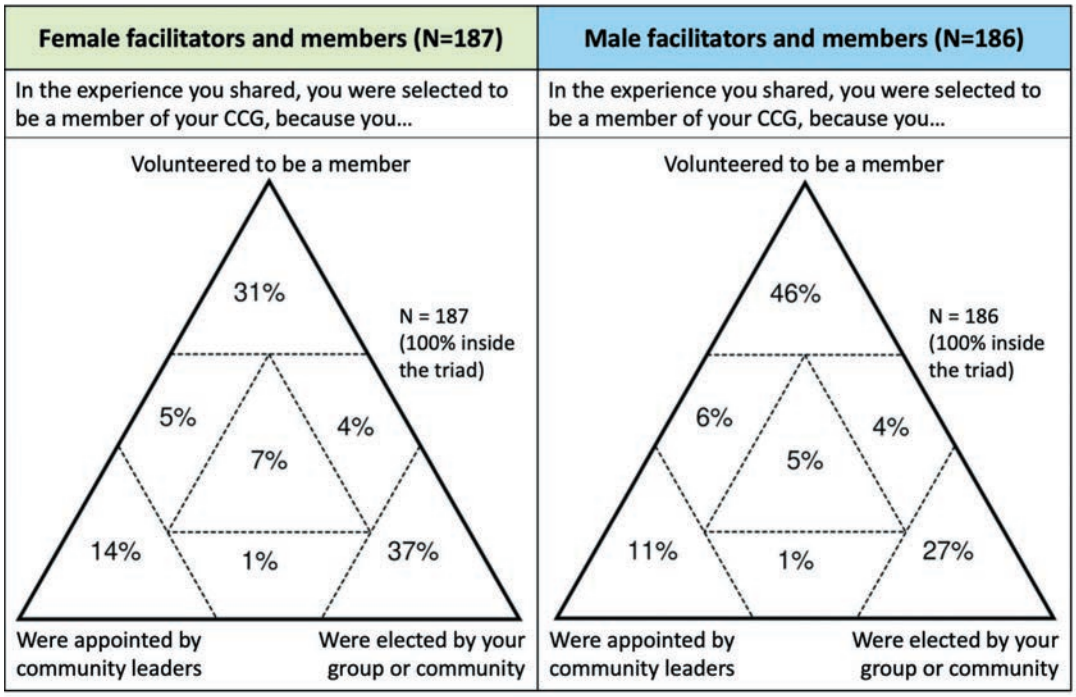
**Figure 28. CCG facilitators' and members' level of organizational competencies, disaggregated by sex, midterm (tool 1, N=332)**




## SELECTION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN CCG AND MOTIVATION FOR COMMITTING

At endline (Figure 29), there appeared to be a reasonably strong sense of volunteerism among female and male CCG facilitators and members: almost a third (31%) of women indicated that they had been selected to become a member of the CCG mainly because of their willingness to volunteer time and effort; the equivalent figure for men was just under a half (46%). Over half (52%) of the female respondents indicated that they were either elected by their group or community (37%), appointed by their community leaders (14%), or both (1%); the equivalent figure for men was 39% (split 27%, 11%, and 1%, respectively).

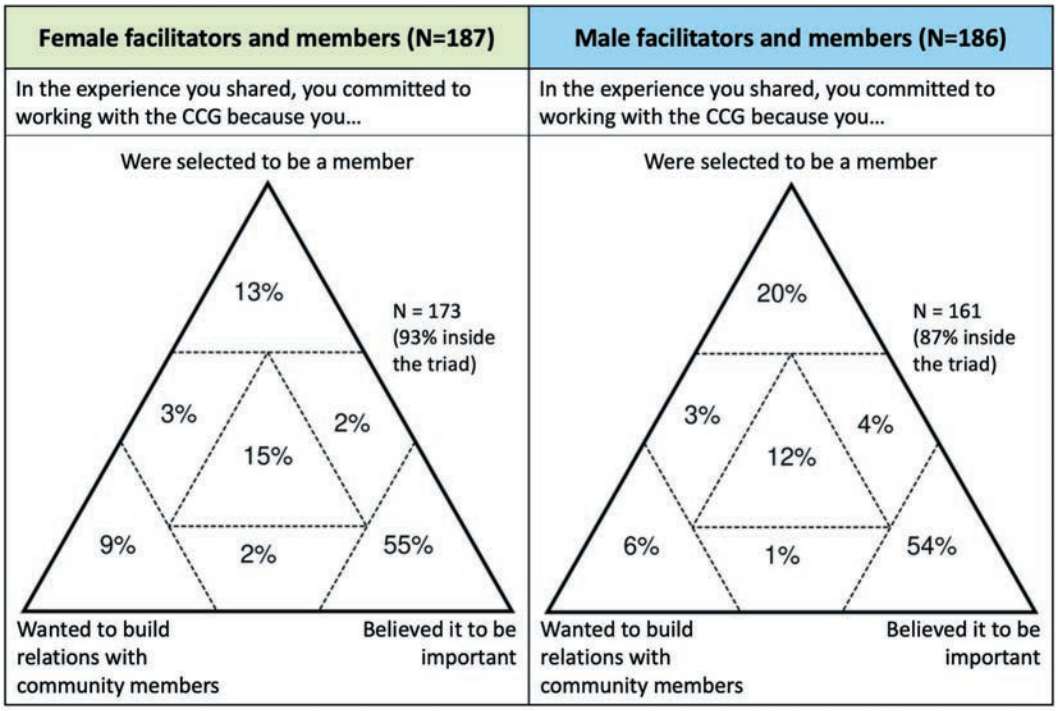
**Figure 29. Selection of CCG facilitators and members endline, disaggregated by sex, midterm (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**




To understand what motivated CCG facilitators and members to commit their time to support their CCG in discussing and addressing prioritized issues, a follow-up triad question was used to explore whether it was because they wanted to be accepted, felt peer pressure and/or believed it was important (Figure 30). Findings show that for both female and male facilitators and members, more than half (55% and 54%, respectively) indicated that the main reason for committing their time was that they believed the work of the CCG to be important. This provides a solid foundation of volunteerism on which the RFSA team can build and, hopefully, develop and deepen further. At the same time, managing, supporting and encouraging additional volunteers will be a critical task for the RFSA team.

The other two motivations were given much less importance by both female and male members, with two less dominant clusters of female (13%) and male (20%) respondents saying they committed mainly because they were selected, and to a lesser extent because of their interest in building relations with community members.

Figure 30. CCG facilitators' and members' motivations for committing to their group, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 1, N=332)




## CCG ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

The previous section analyzed CCG facilitators' and members' individual characteristics, capabilities, organizational competencies, values and personal motivations for being part of the groups, facilitating and participating in conversations, and addressing prioritized issues. This section brings a second layer to the analysis of CCG functionality by evaluating the quality of the collective practices, or organizational practices, especially as they relate to participation, leadership and decision-making.

### INCENTIVES FOR AND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATING IN CCGs

CCG facilitators and members were asked at midterm and endline for their motivations for committing personal time to participating in CCGs. For all possible positive responses, the endline figure was higher than at midterm. The main motive selected by both female and male participants at endline (79%) was having the opportunity to learn, showing that personal development was a key incentive for committing time to the CCGs (Figure 31). Two other important motives were achieving tangible results (45%) and meeting other people (38%). All three top options were selected by more men than women (Figure 32).

The next group of motives are related to the positive attributes of the CCGs—such as appreciating the level of cooperation among members (32%), the standard of group governance (31%), feeling accepted by others in the group (30%), the transparency in decision-making (26%), and feeling heard (21%)—all with a significant increase at endline, and appreciated by more women than men.

**Figure 31. Incentives for committing personal time to CCGs, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)**

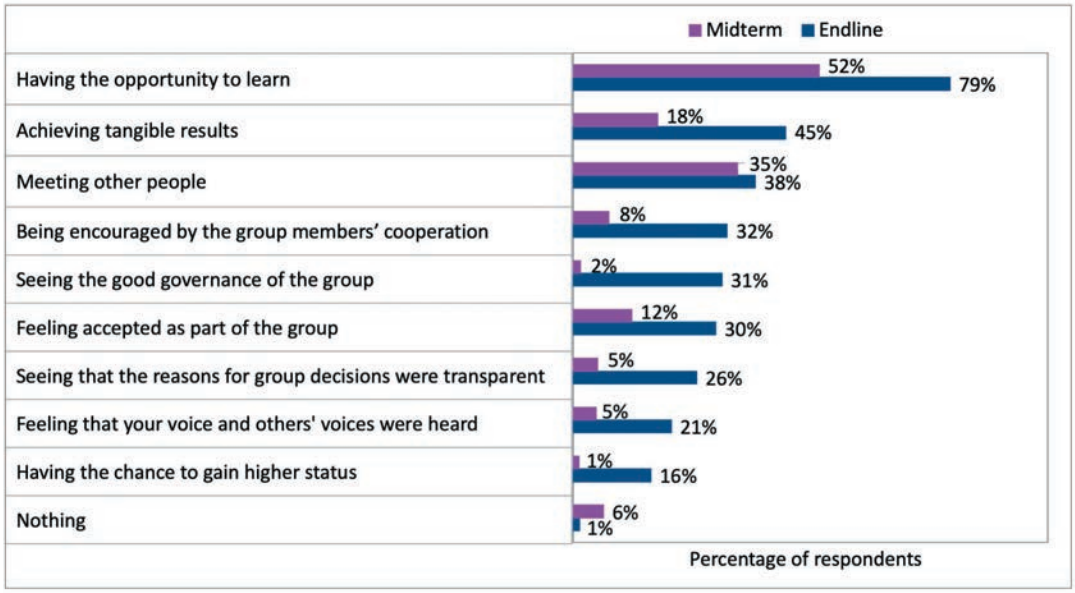
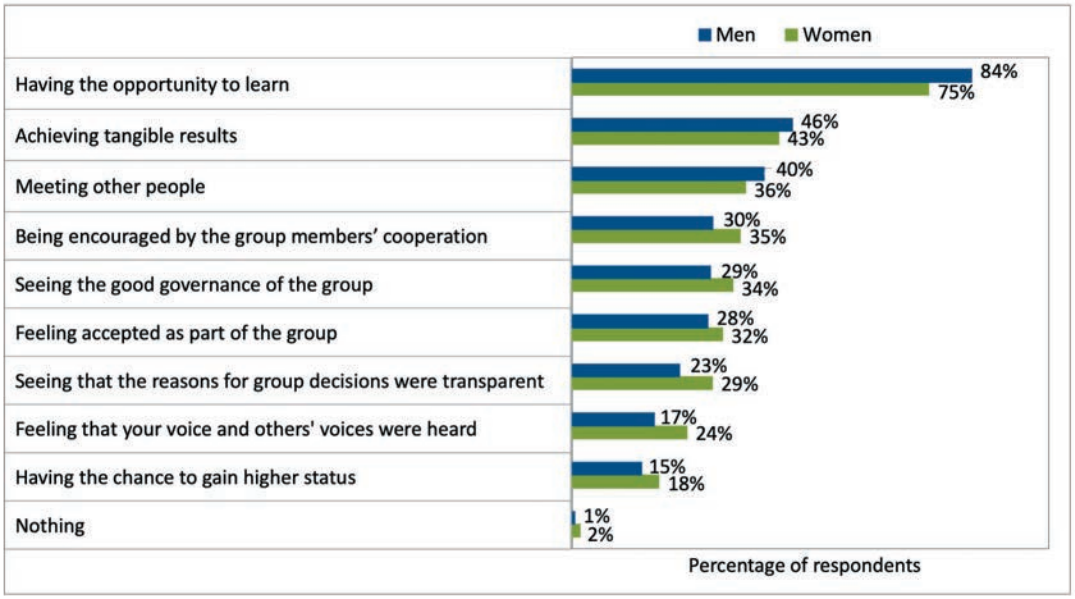


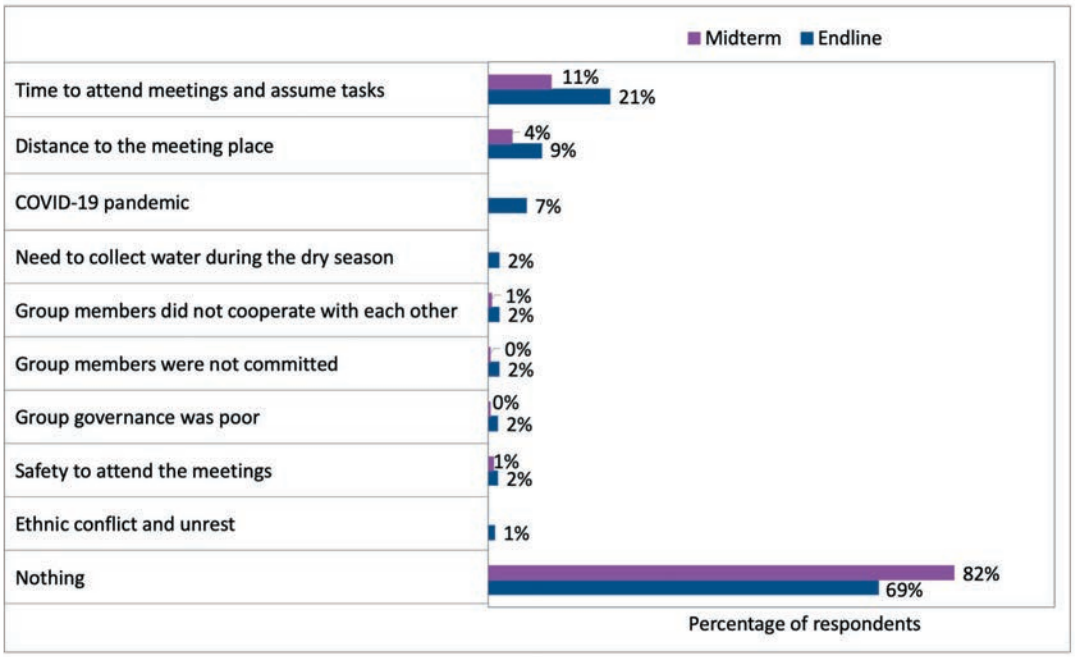

**Figure 32. Incentives for committing personal time to CCGs, disaggregated by sex, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)**



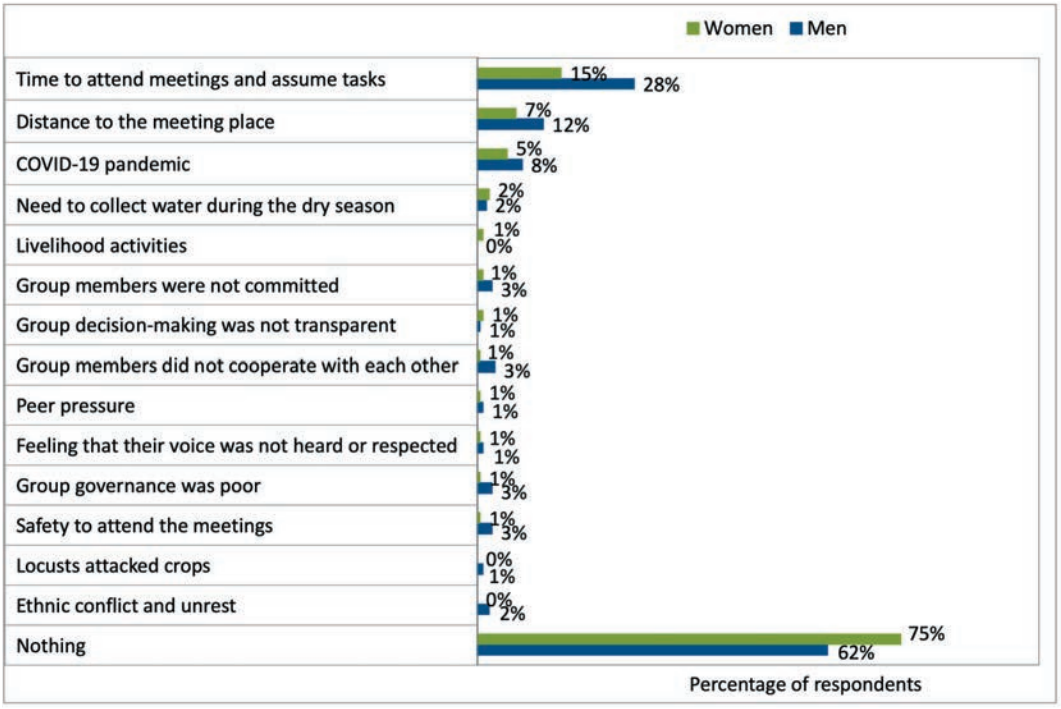

With respect to barriers that limited CCG facilitators' and members' participation in the groups (Figure 33), at endline, a lack of time to dedicate to CCG activities was cited by just over one-fifth (21%) of all respondents; surprising, perhaps, is that more men (28%) than women (15%) raised it as an issue, given that women are generally perceived to have a greater overall workload during a 24-hour period. Despite their heavier workload, women may ascribe more value to CCG meetings as they provide an opportunity for them to come together and have dialogue and discussions. In addition, three-quarters of female participants indicated at endline that they did not face any barriers, higher than the equivalent figure for men (62%) (Figure 34). All other barriers were less significant, including distance to the CCG meeting place.

The proportion of participants indicating that they could not point to any barriers fell from 82% at midterm to 69% at endline. This may reflect the relative novelty of the project up to midterm in contrast with the sense of a longer-term time commitment to the project endline. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic represented an additional barrier that was not present at midterm (selected by 7% of respondents as a barrier at endline).

### Figure 33. Barriers that limited participation in CCGs, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)




### Figure 34. Barriers that limited participation in CCGs, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 1, 2021, N=373)



## QUALITY OF PARTICIPATION

**Inclusion, psychological safety and self-determination** are important conditions for quality participation in groups, and contribute to generating bonding and social cohesion. Aspects of this issue were explored as part of the midterm assessment, and the responses from participants were positive, indicating that they had found the CCGs to be inclusive. Given that the responses at midterm were already very positive and no significant changes were expected at endline, it was decided not to ask these questions again at endline to reduce the size of the collection tool. Nevertheless, these questions were substituted with two additional questions that were designed to further assess the issues of quality of participation and leadership, triangulate the responses, and reduce respondents' gaming. The findings from the midterm are presented below, followed by those of the endline.

To evaluate the extent to which CCG facilitators and members felt included during the experience they shared, they were asked at midterm to select a place on a continuum between 'completely excluded' and 'completely integrated' (Figure 35). Findings show that both female and male facilitators and members felt well integrated into the CCGs, contributing to the sense of belonging to a group that is an important indicator of social cohesion. Moreover, no difference was found between young adults and adults, or between facilitators and members. However, a very few outliers, especially among women, can be observed on the left of the slider.

### Figure 35. CCG facilitators' and members' feelings of inclusion in CCGs, midterm (tool 1; 2020, N=332)

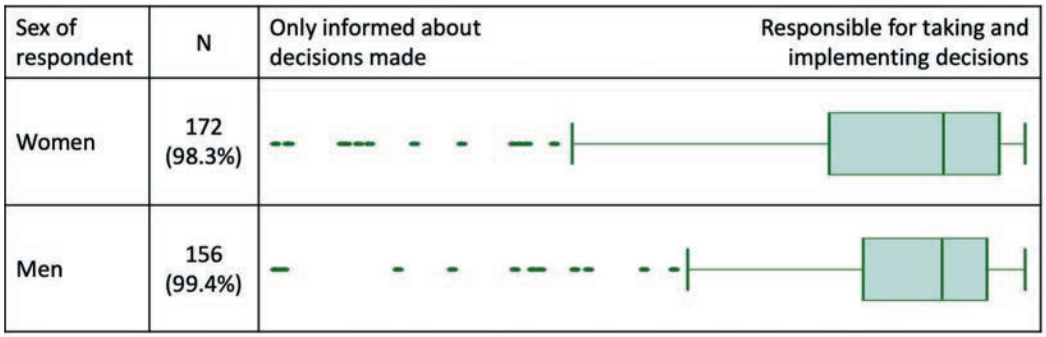
During the experience you shared, in your CCG you felt...

| Sex of respondent | N | Completely excluded ... Completely integrated |
|---|---|---|
| Women | 171 (97.7%) |  |
| Men | 156 (99.4%) |  |

Collective action to address prioritized community issues relates to CCG facilitators' and members' **participation in decision-making**, which requires a sense of responsibility to make and implement decisions, and to be accountable for the outcomes of the decisions made and the actions implemented; thus, it is related to the quality of participation and leadership. To assess this, at midterm, respondents were asked the extent to which they were only informed once decisions had been made or were responsible for taking and implementing decisions. Findings show that both female and male members considered that to a large extent they were responsible for taking and implementing decisions, but women's responses are more dispersed toward the left of the slider (Figure 36), and no significant difference was found either between young adults and adults, or between facilitators and members. It should be noted, however, that despite the high level of responsibility given to CCG members to take and implement decisions, only 7% showed behavioral evidence of 'assumed functions, roles and responsibilities in the group' (Figure 26, above).

Thus, to be able to close this gap, it will be important to further understand why only a few CCG members showed this behavioral evidence. Moreover, there are female and male outliers who considered that they were informed about decisions made but were not given the responsibility to contribute to the decision-making and to take action based on that. Also, a wider spread to the left of the slider can be observed among women.

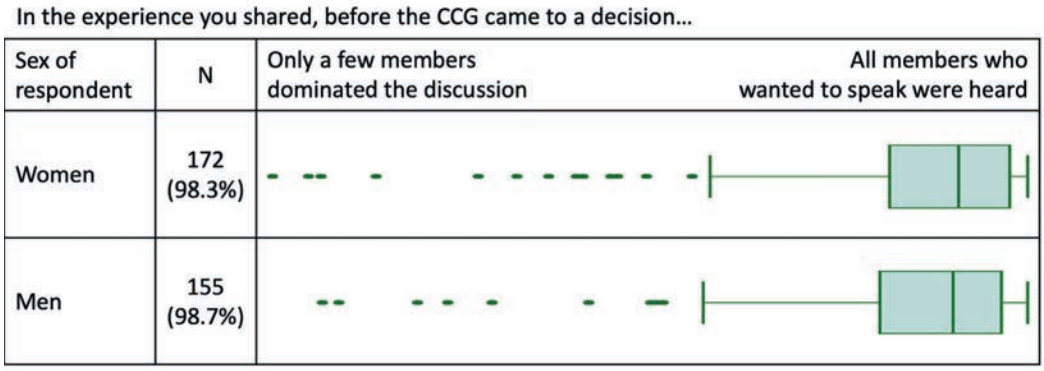
**Figure 36. CCG facilitators' and members' participation in group decision-making, midterm (tool 1, N=332)**




Another important aspect of participation quality is the **psychological safety** that group members feel, enabling them to express their ideas and opinions without being afraid of negative consequences or sanctions from the group or group leaders. This psychological safety directly influences whether individuals **have a voice in decision-making**. To assess this, at midterm, respondents were asked to what extent members who wanted to speak were heard or whether a few members dominated the discussion (Figure 37). Findings show that both female and male CCG facilitators and members considered that most members who wanted to speak were heard before the CCG came to a decision, and no significant difference could be observed either by age group or between CCG facilitators and members. This shows that CCGs fostered the equitable participation of all members. As we saw in the previous aspects of participation quality, a few outlier female and male CCG members felt that discussions were dominated by a few.

Although most respondents considered that all members who wanted to speak were heard, it is important to note that, for the *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competency, only 19% and 14% of ordinary CCG members showed behavioral evidence of 'listened to all group members, especially those of different gender or age' and 'promoted the engagement of all group members,' respectively. This raises a question on the extent to which CCG members proactively ensured that all voices were heard or whether they were leaving this responsibility to CCG facilitators, among whom a higher percentage demonstrated this behavioral evidence (31% and 37%, respectively).

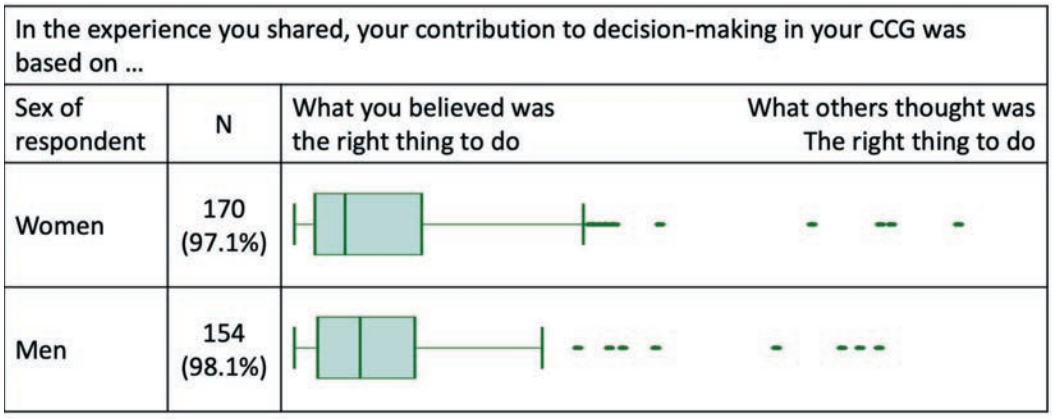
### Figure 37. Psychological safety expressed by having a voice in CCG decision-making processes, midterm (tool 1; 2020, N=332)




**Self-determination or decision-making autonomy** is often in tension with social influence or group pressure in group decision-making. To assess the degree of this tension, at midterm, CCG facilitators and members were asked whether their contribution to group decision-making was based on what they considered to be the right thing to do, or what others considered to be the right thing to do, or somewhere in between (Figure 38). Findings show a high degree of self-determination in decision-making in CCGs, this being even higher among female than male members, showing that they were convinced about the correctness of their contributions to the CCG decision-making processes.

These finding show that most CCG members considered that they contributed to group decision-making; however, only 23% of ordinary members showed the behavioral evidence 'contributed to group decision-making' of the *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competency, while 56% of CCG facilitators demonstrated the behavioral evidence (Figure 26, above). This may imply that although three quarters of members were not proactively contributing to making decisions, when they did, their contributions were based on what they considered to be the right thing to do.

### Figure 38. Perception of respondents about their level of self-determination in CCG decision-making processes, midterm (tool 1; 2020, N=332)



As explained above, the questions posed at midterm were substituted with a new question at endline that sought participants' perceptions of the quality of participation in CCGs, with the aim of triangulating and confirming or challenging the very positive midterm findings related to this issue. For this, five types of participation were described to respondents using a related picture and description, asking them to place their response on a slider between the two extremes of 'passive' and 'fully engaged.' A description of each type of participation adapted from Gutierrez and Gottret (2012) is presented below in Table 27.

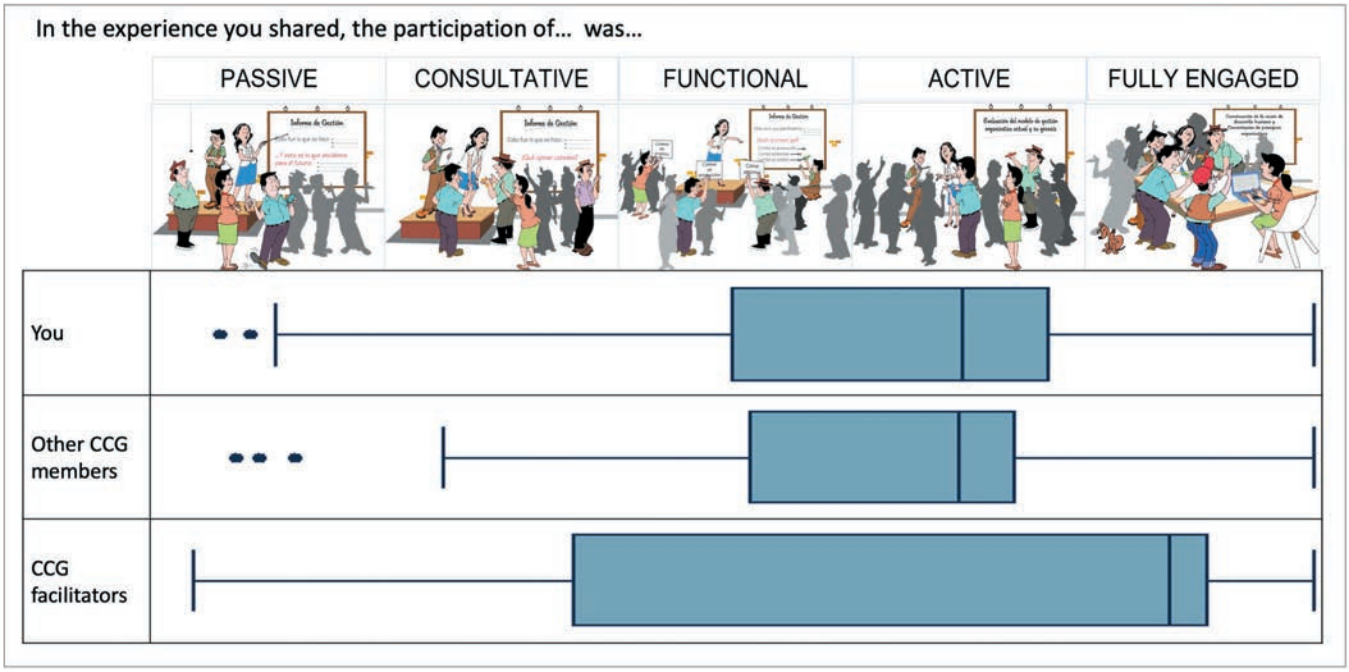
### Table 27. Description of types of participation

| Type of participation | Description |
|---|---|
| Passive | Group leaders unilaterally inform members of decisions made, their implementation, and the results achieved; and no feedback from members is sought. |
| Consultative | Group leaders inform members of the results achieved and ask for their feedback to make decisions and implement them. |
| Functional | Group members participate in informative and consultative meetings, in the different committees established to implement decisions taken and in the activities, once decisions are taken and activities planned by group leaders. To achieve this level of participation, some monetary and/or non-monetary incentives can be used. |
| Active | Group members participate in the discussion and analysis of issues facing the community, and the identification of new opportunities and solutions. Based on these discussions, group leaders facilitate decision-making processes and activities planning, and members commit to their commit to their implementation. |
| Fully engaged | Group members participate as described in the 'active' type of participation but do so on their own initiative and commitment, taking control of decision-making processes and their implementation. This is a higher level of participation in which members are in the position to exercise, autonomously, their right to participate and make decisions in their group. |

Respondents indicated that their participation and that of other members, at the median was (almost) equally 'active,' meaning that they engaged in the collective analysis of the current situation and the design of action plans, committing to their implementation. However, respondents' perceptions of their own participation and that of other ordinary members is dispersed between a 'functional' and 'active' participation, meaning that some members were not engaged in analysis, planning and decision-making, but participated in the activities agreed by others (Figure 39).

Facilitators, at the median, were perceived to be 'fully engaged,' meaning that, in addition to showing the characteristics of an active participant, they did so using their own initiative and commitment, exercising their participation in an autonomous manner. That said, perceptions were highly spread between a 'consultative' and a 'fully engaged' type of participation, suggesting that the level of engagement of facilitators varied significantly and that in some cases they limited themselves to giving their opinion when consulted. These results triangulate and confirm the results obtained at midterm.

**Figure 39. Respondents' perception of their type of participation and that of other CCG ordinary members and their facilitator, endline (tool 1; 2021, N=373)**




## QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP

Participation also depends on the **quality of leadership** to steer the group in the right direction and sustain the community development process in a participatory, inclusive, supportive and effective way. For this, the extent to which facilitators elicited ordinary members' opinions to consider different ideas and perspectives was explored as part of the midterm assessment, and the responses presented below from CCG facilitators and members were very positive, again with a few exceptions.

One of the indicators of leadership quality is the **extent to which leaders ask for members' opinions**. To assess this, at midterm, CCG facilitators and members were asked whether CCG leaders generally told group members what to do or, instead, asked them what was needed, or anywhere in between the two (Figure 40). Findings show that both female and male members considered that their leaders usually asked group members what was needed rather than telling them what to do, showing that CCGs usually consulted members. No difference was observed in the perceptions of leadership between young adults and adults, or between CCG facilitators and members. This shows that facilitators had a democratic leadership style as they considered the opinions and suggestions of members instead of just instructing them to operationalize decisions already made. Nevertheless, some outlier responses can be observed, especially from female members, showing that some CCG leaders told group members what to do.

### Figure 40. Leadership quality in CCGs. midterm (tool 1; 2020, N=332)

In the experience you shared, the CCG leaders ...

| Sex of respondent | N | Told group members what to do — Asked group members what was needed |
|---|---|---|
| Women | 170 (97.1%) |  |
| Men | 154 (98.1%) |  |

Another indicator of leadership quality is the extent to which **different ideas and perspectives are considered** when decisions are made. To assess this, at midterm, CCG members were asked on the extent to which their ideas on how to address prioritized issues were considered (Figure 41). Findings show that both female and male members perceived that their ideas were considered. No difference was observed between young adults and adults, or between CCG facilitators and members.

### Figure 41. Consideration of different ideas and perspectives in CCGs, midterm (tool 1; 2020, N=332)

In the experience you shared, the ideas you shared with CCG members about the response were...

| Sex of respondent | N | Totally ignored — Fully considered |
|---|---|---|
| Women | 171 (97.7%) |  |
| Men | 156 (99.4%) |  |

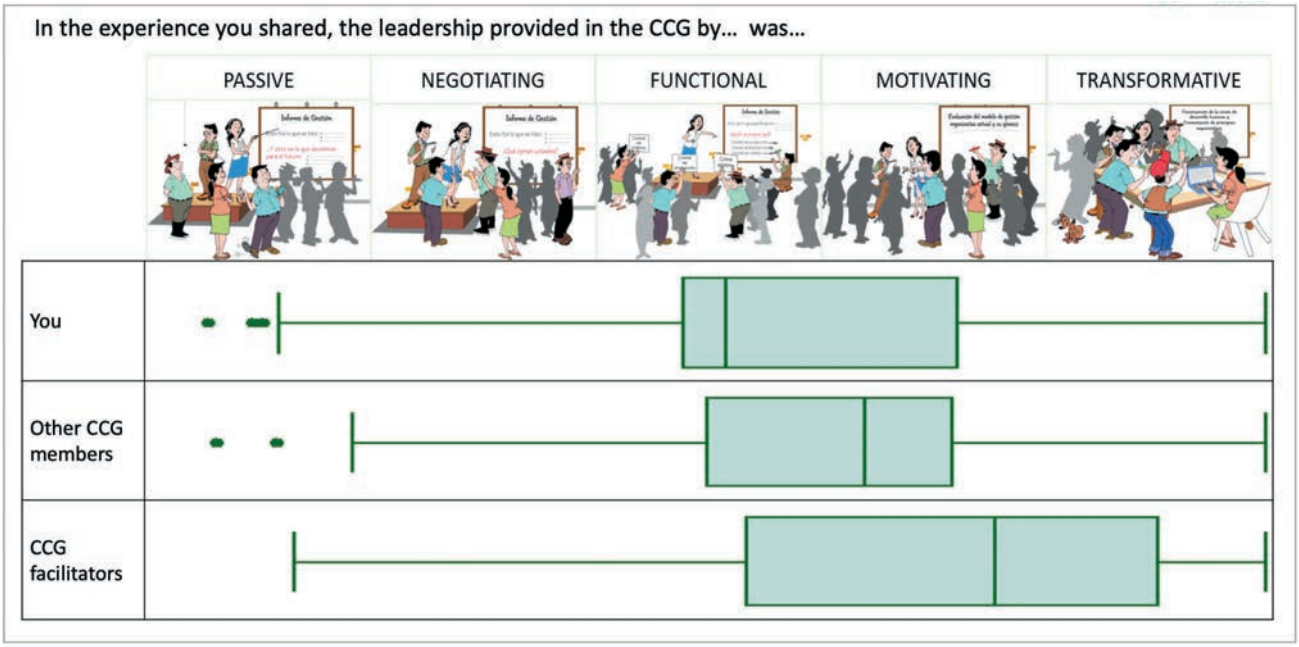
The above questions about leadership posed at midterm were also substituted with a new question at endline that sought participants' perceptions of the quality of leadership in CCGs, to triangulate with the very positive midterm findings related to this issue. For this, five types of leadership were described to respondents using a related picture and description, asking them to place their response on a slider between the two extremes 'passive' and 'transformative.' A description of each type of participation adapted from Gutierrez and Gottret (2012) is presented below in Table 28.

### Table 28. Description of different types of participation

| Type of participation | Description |
|---|---|
| Passive | Leadership is given by the position held, and therefore confers on group leaders the responsibility and power to establish norms and rules, and ensure their compliance, as well as to plan activities and guarantee their implementation. |
| Negotiating | Group leaders ensure compliance with norms and rules, and that planned activities are implemented in a timely and efficient manner, making an efficient use of resources. When they encounter difficulties in the implementation of decisions and activities due to members' lack of ownership and commitment, they negotiate with them using monetary and/or non-monetary incentives. |
| Functional | Group leaders interact with members to ensure compliance with norms and rules, make decisions and implement planned activities. This ensures the functioning of the group, but these leaders do not achieve the level of members' ownership and commitment required for the sustainability of the group. |
| Motivating | Group leaders provide vision to the group, and act with discipline and passion in a way that affirms the value and potential of group members, motivating them to engage in working groups that complement their skills and interests. |
| Transformative | Group leaders provide vision to the group, and act with discipline, passion and ethics, exerting a transformative influence on group members, who, as a result, demonstrate full ownership of their group, committing to the achievement of group objectives and goals. |

A new question was asked as part of the endline assessment regarding members' and facilitators' perceptions of leadership style (Figure 42). Findings suggest that, at the median, CCG members viewed their own contribution to CCG leadership as 'functional,' meaning that leadership was determined by their assigned position in the group achieving an operational interaction among facilitators and ordinary members, although some responded that they had played a 'motivating' leadership role. Respondents saw other CCG members similarly, although they rated their contributions more positively, with the median leaning more toward a 'motivating' type of leadership that affirmed the value and potential of group members and enabled them to form complementary teams to achieve the objectives of the group. Facilitators were, at the median, seen as having a 'motivating' style of leadership, although overall there was a spread between 'functional' and 'transformative,' the highest level of leadership type that not only promotes collaboration and teamwork but also exerts a positive influence on group members to fully commit to achieving group goals and becoming agents of change.

**Figure 42. Respondents' perception of their type of leadership and that of other ordinary CCG members and their facilitator, endline (tool 1; 2021, N=373)**



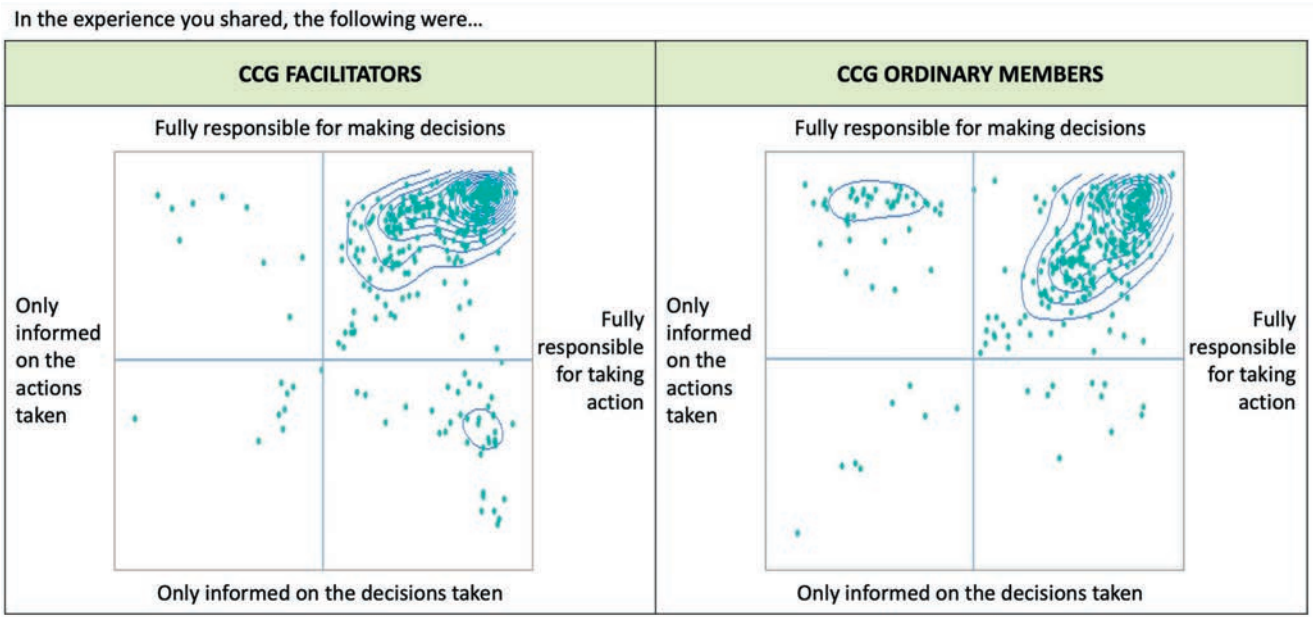

To further explore the issue of participation in decision-making and in taking action, a 'canvas with stones' type of question was used at endline and responses were mapped as a 'heat diagram' (Figure 43). These findings show that the majority of facilitator and ordinary member responses are found in the top right quadrant. This means that CCG facilitators and members possessed personal agency both for making decisions and acting on them, showing what appears to be a strong foundation upon which the new RFSA can build. Nevertheless, there is a potential risk posed by those responses located in the other quadrants.

In relation to CCG facilitators, there is a cluster of responses (bottom right quadrant) where they are perceived as being fully responsible for taking action, despite being less involved in decision-making. When these responses are disaggregated by CCG maturity, no difference can be observed in CCG facilitators' agency to make decisions, but facilitators of mature CCGs were perceived to be less responsible for taking action than those of new CCGs (Pr (|T| > |t|) = 0.0728).

There is also a cluster of ordinary CCG members (top left quadrant) who perceived that they were responsible for making decisions but were less engaged in taking action. Disaggregating these responses by CCG maturity shows that members of new CCGs perceived that they were more responsible for making decisions than members of mature CCGs (Pr (|T| > |t|) = 0.0567), but there was no difference in their level of responsibility for taking action.

These findings suggest that the project team was doing a better job with new CCGs based on the learnings from the midterm assessment, reflecting a 'work in progress' regarding CCG establishment and management that can be further improved by RFSA activities with the aim of moving more of the responses toward the top right quadrant.

**Figure 43. Respondents' perception of CCG facilitators' and ordinary members' participation in decision-making and in acting, endline (tool 1; 2021, N=373)**



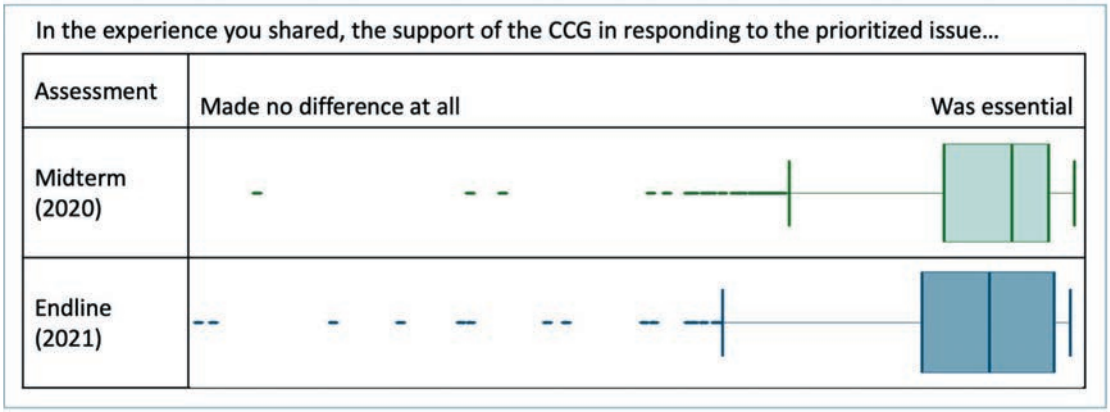

In summary, the above findings indicate that good progress was made during the life of the project to provide incentives and reduce barriers to effective participation in CCGs, and that CCGs' organizational practices promoted equity and equality in women's and men's participation and leadership in their groups. While establishing a women's quota in CCG membership may initially have been understood as merely having the same proportion of women and men in the groups, women are now actively participating as members and leaders.

Findings from the three new endline questions suggest that most respondents were positive about their own and other members' level of participation in CCG activities, but less so about their own leadership, although more positive about other members' leadership qualities. CCG facilitators were, on average, seen most positively with regards to both their participation (fully engaged at the median) and leadership (motivating at the median), although it is important also to note that responses about CCG facilitators are more dispersed. In addition, more work is required to move ordinary members' participation from functional and active to fully engaged, and their leadership from functional and motivating, to transformative.

## CONTRIBUTION OF CCGs TO ADDRESSING PRIORITIZED ISSUES

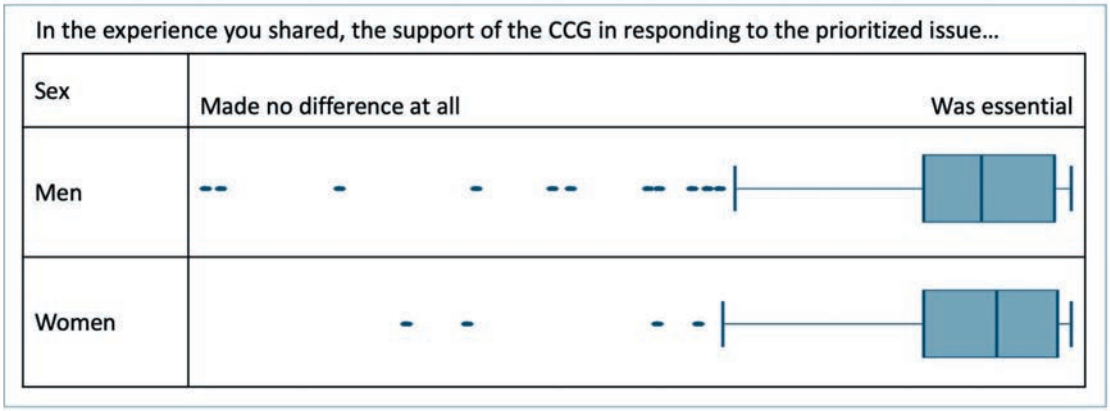
Perceptions of the relevance of CCGs in addressing priority issues remained strongly positive at endline (Figure 44), although there was a slight weakening when compared to the midterm findings, coupled with a wider spread of responses. While the difference is only very small, it can nevertheless serve as a useful prompt for the RFSA team to keep an eye on the issue of CCG accountability to its members in terms of process and results (see also Figures 45 and 46). In this regard, it was noted earlier (Figure 33) that a lack of time to dedicate to CCG activities was cited by 21% of all respondents at endline. Most members remained prepared to devote their scarce time to the functioning of their CCG, but it is imperative that they should continue to see a return on their time investment for such a commitment.

**Figure 44. Perceptions of the relevance of CCGs in addressing prioritized issues, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)**




Female and male responses to the same question (Figure 45) highlight the perception of most female and male respondents that CCG support was essential. At the median, women were marginally more positive although with a slightly wider spread of responses, while a few men reported that the CCG had made no difference at all. No difference in these perceptions was observed between young adults and adults, or between CCG facilitators and members.

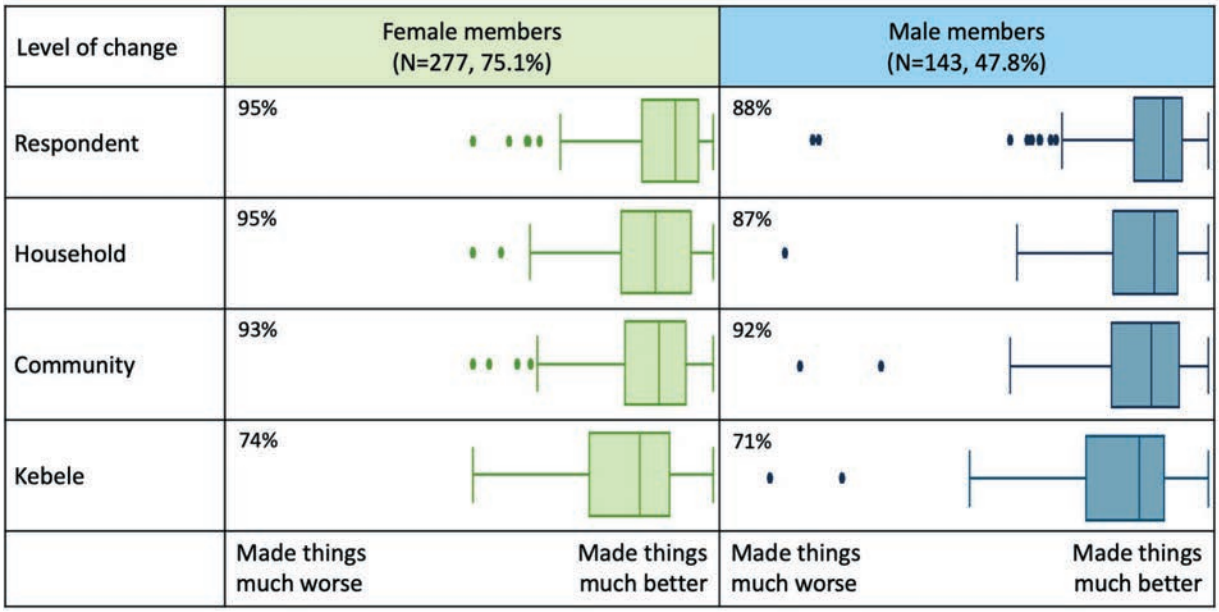
**Figure 45. Perceptions of the relevance of CCGs in addressing prioritized issues, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 1; 2021, N=373),**




When respondents were asked at midterm whether their CCG's response to the prioritized issues impacted on themselves, their households, their community and/or their *kebele*, an important DFSA accountability issue, the results were very positive for both female and male members, particularly at the respondent, household and community levels (Figure 46). While still positive, the findings suggested a lower number of respondents reporting positive effects of CCG activity at the *kebele* level. This may simply reflect that it was harder for respondents to know what was happening outside of their own community. This question was not repeated at endline because it was decided that the remaining time would be insufficient for the results to change substantially. The findings also point to a few outliers who felt less positively about the issue of CCG relevance. While relatively few, it would be valuable to better understand their responses to determine whether overall there was a longer-term risk, more particularly among men, to the success of the CCG approach.

**Figure 46. Outcomes of CCG response at different levels, midterm (tool 1; 2020, N=332)**

In the experience you shared, the response to the issue...

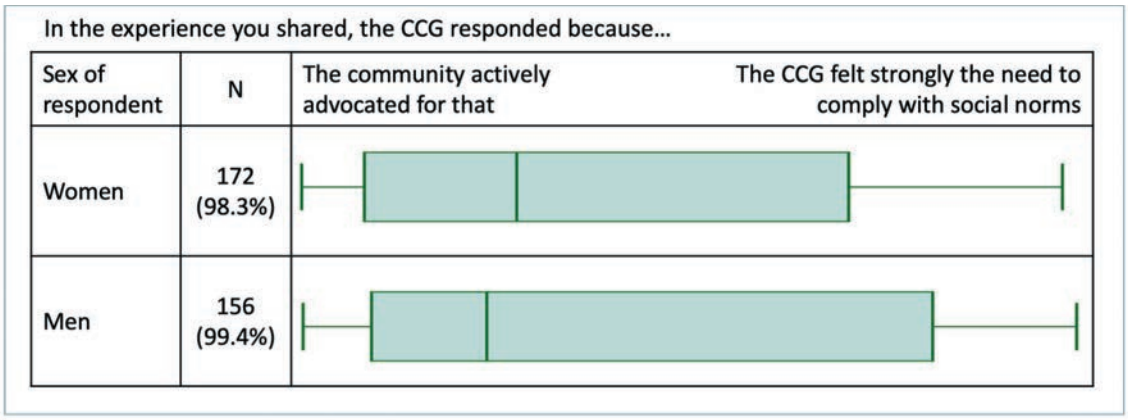



## MOTIVATIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR ADDRESSING PRIORITIZED ISSUES

To assess the motivations of CCGs for addressing prioritized issues, respondents were asked at midterm on the extent to which the group addressed the issue because 'the community actively advocated for that' or because 'the CCG felt strongly the need to comply with social norms' (Figure 47). Responses show that CCGs were motivated to respond by both, but the community advocacy to address was a stronger motivation than CCG members' need to comply with social norms. This perception was shared by both female and male respondents, although more men than women considered that community advocacy was a stronger motivation. As no changes in these responses were expected, this question was not included in the endline assessment.

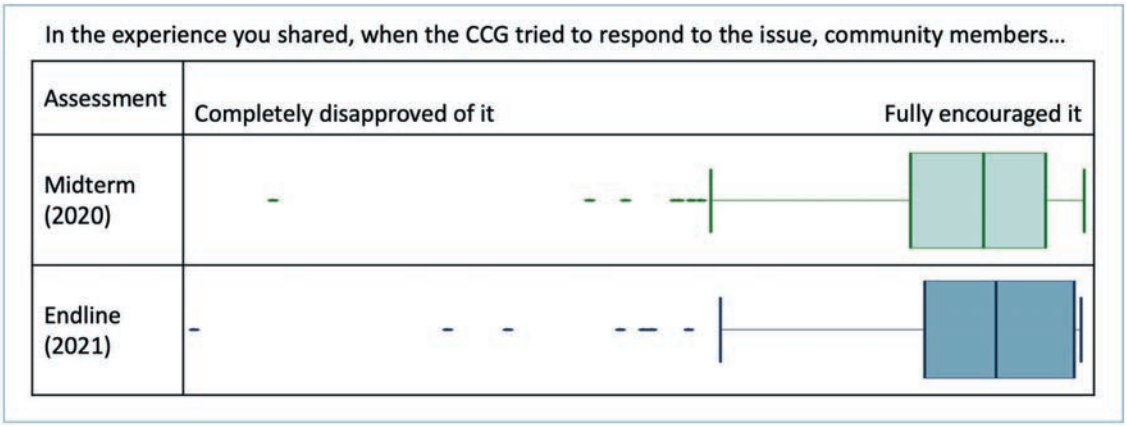
The tendency of CCGs to give more importance to issues advocated by the communities than to complying with social norms might have been a significant factor in their success, explaining the positive perception of the contribution of CCGs to addressing prioritized issues (Figures 44 and 45, above). Put simply, there is greater direct accountability to members when community issues are prioritized. Moreover, this shows that CCGs are organizations that can and do respond to community needs, and that this will ensure community support to address prioritized issues and will contribute to the sustainability of the CC approach in addressing what is relevant to communities.

**Figure 47. Motivations for CCG responses to addressing prioritized issues, midterm (tool 1; 2020, N=373)**




Community members were very positive about the manner in which the CCG responded to issues raised by community members. There was even a very slight improvement between midterm and endline (Figure 48). This is, again, a very encouraging finding from a local accountability perspective and is likely to serve as a positive basis upon which the new RFSA can advance. Some dissenting voices are present in the findings, although not many, but they serve as a reminder that different aspects and perceptions of CCG accountability should be tracked periodically.

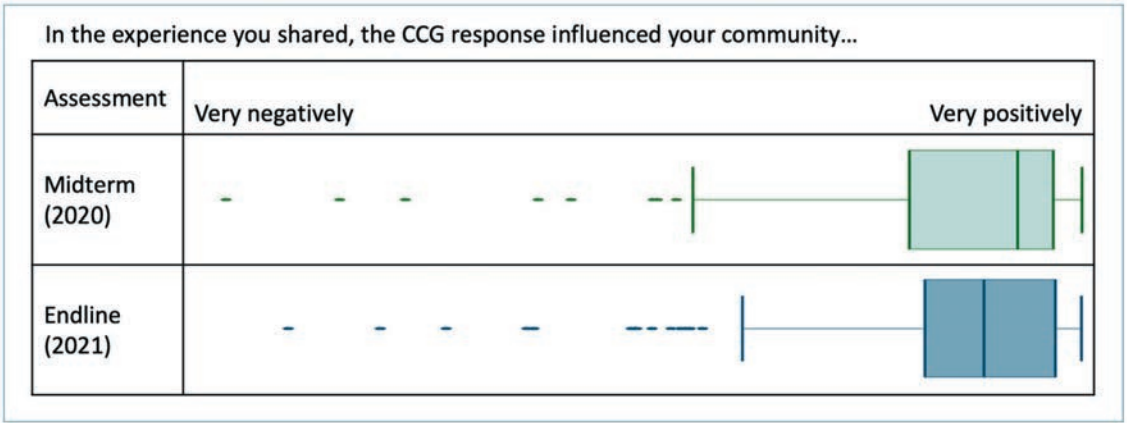
**Figure 48. Community members' support for addressing prioritized issues, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)**




## IMPACT OF CCGs

The impact of CCGs at both midterm and endline was largely very positive (Figure 49). Although at the median there was a small weakening of positivity at endline compared to midterm, the data suggest a very positive result overall. Unsurprisingly, there were respondents who took a different view at both evaluation stages, although they were much smaller in number than those who had a positive view.

**Figure 49. Perceived impact of CCGs, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)**

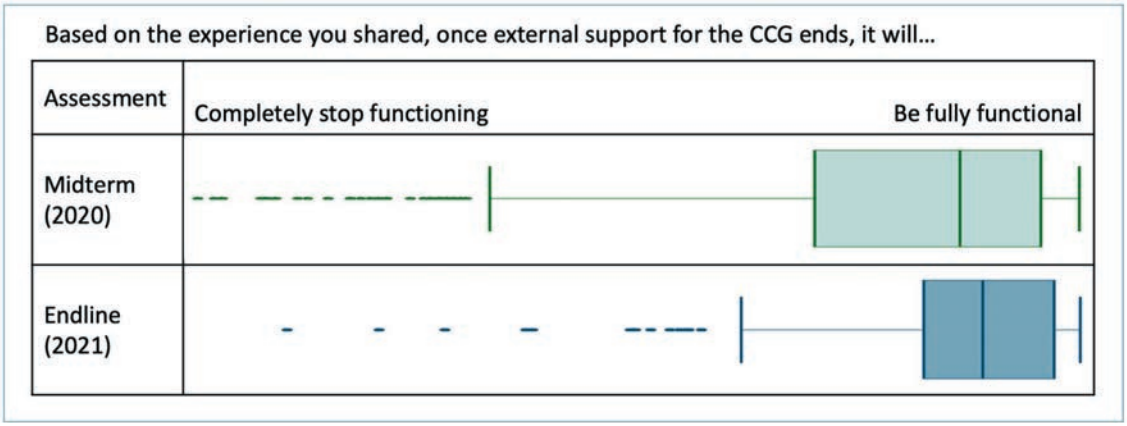



## SUSTAINABILITY OF CCGs

CCG facilitators and members were asked at midterm and endline whether CCGs would continue to function when external support ended, based on the experience they shared (Figure 50). At midterm, most responded that they believed CCGs would continue to function after the DFSA support ended, although there was some degree of dispersion, and there were some outliers who were skeptical that the CCGs would manage to continue functioning. At endline, the findings were more supportive of CCG sustainability in two ways: first, at the median, there is a slight strengthening of positive responses; and second, responses are less dispersed and more concentrated in the positive segment of Figure 50, while the level of 'CCG sustainability skepticism' greatly lessened since the midterm, with fewer outliers on the left of the slider.

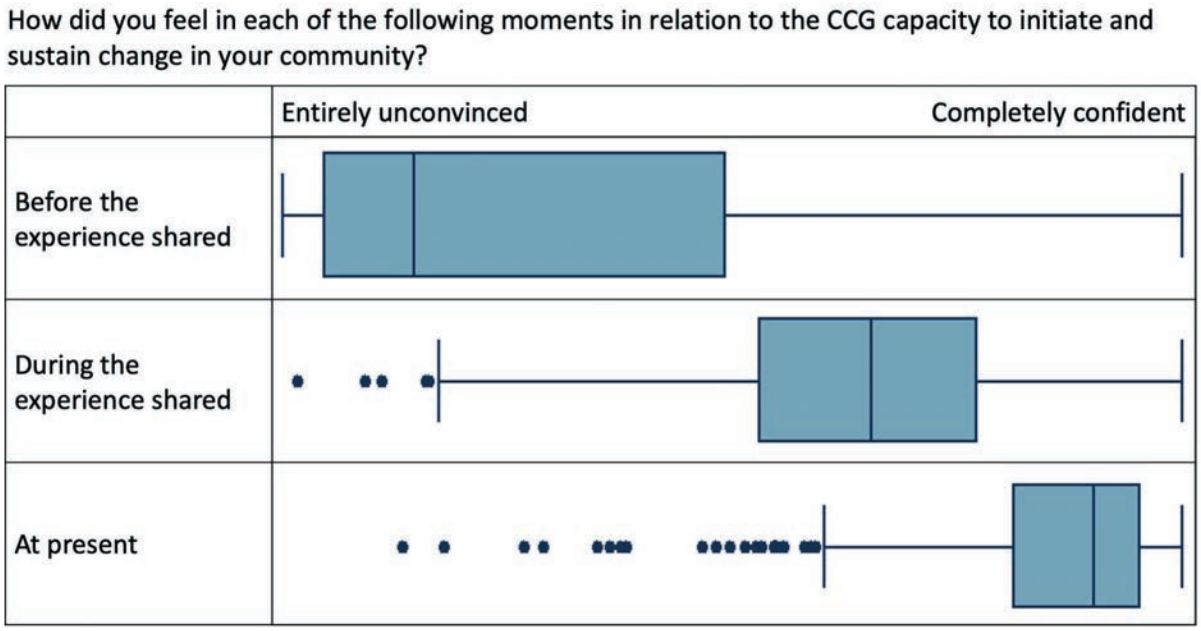
Moreover, when these findings are disaggregated by CCG maturity, it can be observed that responses from members of mature CCGs tend to lean more toward the right of the slider ('be fully functional') than those of new CCGs (Pr (|T| > |t|) = 0.2427). This may reflect DFSA efforts to strengthen groups that existed at midterm and to facilitate their handover to the relevant governmental structures for further accompaniment. Moreover, CCG members had a longer time to observe the effectiveness of their groups and appeared keen to maintain them as a forum for continued information exchange and for promoting community dialogue as new issues surfaced and needed to be addressed.

**Figure 50. Perceived sustainability of CCGs, midterm and endline (tool 1, 2020, N=332; 2021, N=373)**



The findings presented in Figure 51 suggest a marked change in perceptions among CCG facilitators and members that occurred over the course of the project, from start-up to closure. The data suggest clearly that at project closure most CCG members had a high degree of confidence in the capacity of their CCG to continue initiating and sustaining positive change in the community. The same respondents who were unconvinced of the CCG's capacity to initiate and sustain change before were the same ones that felt completely confident at project endline. Nevertheless, there was a small number of outliers who were less optimistic on their CCG's capacity to initiate and sustain change in their communities.

**Figure 51. Perceived effectiveness of CCGs to initiate and sustain change in the communities, endline (tool 1; 2021, N=373)**




## CCGs' INFLUENCE ON BEHAVIOR CHANGE AND SOCIAL NORMS

This section focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of CCGs in advocating and influencing positive behavior change among their members, households and communities; and the personal and social norms that influence behavior and social interaction. It analyzes: 1) how CCGs directly influenced their members as they went through an intra-individual process (binding) of becoming aware of needed personal behavior change that would lead to self-driven efforts to pursue this change; and 2) how CCG members engaged with their family members and other community members (relatives, friends and peers) to influence them to change their behavior via inter-individual interactions (bonding). Moreover, it investigates how social and personal norms shaped individual behavior, and how CCGs were engaging with and transforming these social and personal norms. In so doing, this section addresses three of the learning questions that informed this study:

- What role are CCGs playing in influencing prioritized behavior change and how effective are they?
- How are personal and social norms influencing individual behavior and to what extent are CCGs advocating for changes to these norms?
- What is the potential for CCGs to generate behavior change that will sustain DFSA development gains?

## EXPERIENCES OF PERSONAL BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Selected narratives shared by CCG members and non-members on their personal behavior change experience are included in Table 27. These explore interviewees' experiences of when they tried to change a behavior, practice or habit during the previous 12 months, and whether they were successful. These narratives show a variety of behavior changes pursued by respondents and most of them show the fundamental role that CCGs played in creating awareness among members and non-members of the effect that non-desirable behaviors, habits and practices had, and in supporting individuals as they pursued the behavior change important to them. One aspect to note is that the narratives of non-members were powerful and demonstrate the reach of the CCGs. These narratives also link these experiences with important livelihoods and food security outcomes.

**Table 29. CCG members' and non-members' narratives on experiences related to types of behavior change pursued by respondents**

| Type of behavior change | Respondent characteristics | Narrative |
|---|---|---|
| Financial management practices | • Non-member<br>• Married adult man<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a polygamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Attended elementary school<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in West Arsi | **Saving and managing financial resources**<br>I am not member of a CCG and I don't participate in the PSNP. But what I observed from the CCG and PSNP group members helped me to change my behavior regarding household management, my farming habits and my saving habits. The change to my saving habits in the last 12 months was significant in my life. Previously, I spent my money on unnecessary expenses. What I observed from my neighbors on the importance of saving influenced me to change my saving behavior. I discussed this with my wife and started to save from our income from farm products. After some time, I bought goats with the money I saved, and constructed a new grass-roofed house. Thanks to God, this time I am happy with my livelihood.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |
| Agricultural livelihood practices | • CCG member<br>• Young married woman<br>• 18-29 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Attended junior secondary school<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in West Arsi | **Improved farming system and adopting productive seedlings**<br>Since I began participating in the CCG, I have learned a lot about the importance of changing the farming practices we implemented in the old way, and of the use of improved and productive seeds. The way we previously practiced was not that productive. We also used to cultivate only one crop; in my case, my husband cultivated only maize every year. Based on the knowledge I gained from discussions in CCG meetings, I discussed with my husband the importance of improved farming systems and adopting productive seedlings. He agreed to practice it and applied it in the last farming season. He cultivates improved and productive maize seed and teff using fertilizer and planting by line. At harvest, he was able to collect 25 quintals of maize and 5 quintals of teff. In this way, my family was able to get enough food for the year. What was remaining from our consumption, we sold and bought goats and chickens. Thanks to God and the CCG, we improved our life and plan to continue practicing cultivation of improved seeds and to use fertilizer.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |

| Type of behavior change | Respondent characteristics | Narrative |
|---|---|---|
| Male engagement in domestic and care work | • Non-member<br>• Married adult woman<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• No formal education<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in East Hararghe | **Sharing domestic work and tasks between wife and husband**<br>Since I got married about 20 years ago, the burden of domestic and caring work has rested on my shoulders. My husband did not help me with domestic tasks, only my daughters helped me. Observing how husbands and wives who are members of CCGs helped each other by sharing domestic work, my husband and I discussed how to adopt this good practice in our family. We reached consensus and started to work by sharing domestic and care tasks in our family. When I went to market, my husband kept the house by cleaning and doing other domestic activities. We benefited a lot from sharing the domestic and care work. We are very happy supporting each other.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |
| Health and sanitation practices | • CCG member<br>• Married adult man<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Has no formal education<br>• Main income source is employment in the public sector<br>• Lives in West Arsi | **No alcohol at all**<br>A year ago, I was a drinker. I had no peace with my wife and my younger boys. This was because I used to drink too much alcohol, up to midnight, and then I used to quarrel with them when I arrived home. Since I was a drinker, the income I got was not enough for me and my family. For this reason, I did not educate my children well. At that time, there was big shortage of food in the household. Because of this, the *kebele* leaders selected my household to participate in the PSNP program to get food aid. For many years, my household was included in the list of the poorest of the poor in the *kebele*. When the CCG was established, the *kebele* leaders included my name on the list, and I started to participate in the CCG as a member. Under the CCG, they taught me to try a behavior change. After successive education and trials, I stopped drinking. Now I understand how my bad habit of alcoholism affected the peace of my family. Since I have achieved this good behavior change, I started to save money. I was recruited as a guard in the *kebele*'s school. In addition, I am working on crop production, so that me and my family are at peace.<br>***Experience self-signified as negative.*** |
| Harmful traditional practices | • CCG member<br>• Married adult man<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Attended high school<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in East Hararghe | **Stopping harmful traditional practices**<br>In the past, we used harmful traditional practices such as genital mutilation and tonsil cutting because we had no awareness of the harmful consequences. After I began to participate in CCG meetings and discussions, I learned a lot about the negative impacts of traditional practices such as genital mutilation, tonsil cutting, early marriage and abduction. I shared the knowledge I gained with my wife and we decided not to practice these harmful things, so we didn't perform tonsil cutting and genital mutilation on our one-year-old daughter, which we had practiced on our elder daughter. So, I believe that this was my main behavior change due to awareness I gained from my participation in the CCG meetings and discussions.<br>***Experience self-signified as negative.*** |

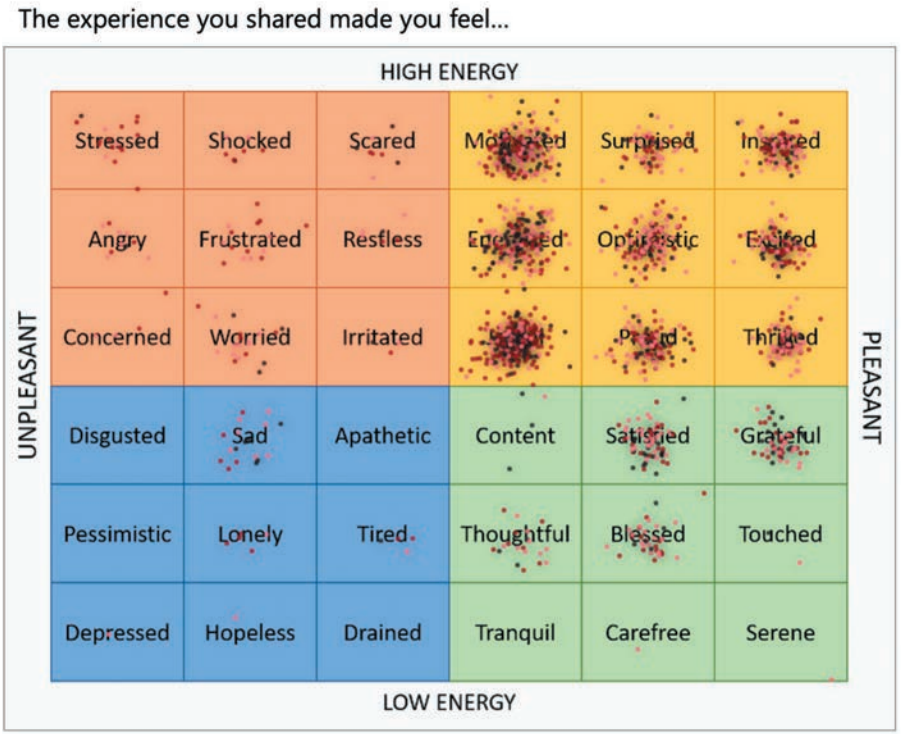
| Type of behavior change | Respondent characteristics | Narrative |
|---|---|---|
| Health and sanitation practices | • CCG member<br>• Married adult woman<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• No formal education<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in East Hararghe | **Behavior change on family sanitation**<br>Before I joined the CCG, I was not able to take care of my household sanitation very well, resulting in my family repeatedly getting sick, and in the unexpected expense of buying medicines, and highly affecting my children. But after I got the necessary support from the CCG, the government, the health extension expert of our *kebele*, and different individuals concerning how to care for my children, prepare food, and wash their clothes, me and my family are living a safe way of life. Now, I give [others] good advice on sanitation practices.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |
| Access to education for girls and women | • CCG member<br>• Single young man<br>• 18-29 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Attended high school<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in East Hararghe | **Learning to continue my education**<br>My behavior change this year was to continue my education. I was in ninth grade when I dropped out of school for three years because there was very limited access to water for my livestock, which forced me to stop going to school and discontinue my education. However, after I became a member of the PSNP and received the benefits, CRS trained me, and the CCG members gave me advice to save so I could continue my education. Now I am back in ninth grade and am also able to help my parents.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |
| Off-farm livelihood practices | • CCG member<br>• Married adult woman<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• No formal education<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in East Hararghe | **My off-farm income-generating activity**<br>I didn't know how to make things better before. My family had experienced many problems. I didn't know how to try some economic activity to help my household survive. On the other hand, there was not enough rain to cultivate and produce enough in agriculture. I was invited to join the CCG, where I got trainings and advice to start an off-farm income-generating activity. I started buying and selling eggs, salt and cooking oil, because of the awareness I gained in the CCG. I now have a more stable life and my family does not go to sleep hungry.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |
| Women's engagement in the public sphere | • CCG member<br>• Married adult woman<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• No formal education<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in East Hararghe | **Increasing participation**<br>I have adopted behavior change in my life. I have begun to participate in the public sphere, speaking at meetings and farming with my husband. Due to a lack of knowledge and awareness, we women are afraid to express our feelings in public, and even at home, but after I took different trainings and participated in capacity building meetings, I have become one of the participants, almost equally with men. For this change, our CCG and extension worker were very influential.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |

| Type of behavior change | Respondent characteristics | Narrative |
|---|---|---|
| Household decision-making | • CCG member<br>• Married adult woman<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• No formal education<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in East Hararghe | **Gender equality**<br>They have been teaching us about equality between a man and a woman. After I took the training, I gained awareness on the way I participate in my community and also about the power I have in my household. In our community, women are involved in domestic work only, but this is not good for the household. After I joined the CCG, I heard a lot about gender, and now I am involved in social work in the community. I also became aware of the value of education, especially for girls. When I was a child, my family gave priority to the education of my brother; they forgot me and I had no chance to go to school, but now I gave this chance to my daughter who is going to school. Now I make all decisions with my husband, and I have started a small business to generate income for my family.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |
| Violence against women or girls | • CCG member<br>• Married adult man<br>• 30-59 years old<br>• In a monogamous household<br>• Follows Islam<br>• Attended elementary school<br>• Main income source is agriculture<br>• Lives in West Arsi | **Family relationship**<br>I was out of control before. I used to harass my wife. Every day I was in conflict with her and beat her many times. Luckily, I became member of PSNP and the CCG. Thereafter, I took trainings and advice on harmful cultural practices. The CCG facilitator encouraged me to stop violating my wife. I also started to practice sharing the domestic work and childcare. Now I am happy, and my family is also in a good position because of this change.<br>***Experience self-signified as positive.*** |

When respondents were asked about the emotions their personal experience of behavior change generated (Figure 52), most responses were placed on the right of the matrix, suggesting positive emotions (high energy and pleasant), while pursuing their prioritized behavior change. At a lower level of energy, a sizable number of respondents indicated pleasant personal experiences of satisfaction, gratitude and feeling blessed. Both sets of responses may help to reinforce the sustainability of the achievements to date and encourage individuals to try other behavior change (Mayne, 2018, p.21).

Personal experiences of behavior change also generated unpleasant emotions in fewer cases, making people feel worried, frustrated and, in some cases, even angry, stressed, shocked or scared. Respondents who experienced these emotions shared experiences related to stressful family situations that led to the need to improve financial management, and in some cases related to addiction. A few were also related to crop failure, despite the pursuit of new farming practices. Negative emotions usually occur during processes of change as people tend to experience resistance and some confusion about the process (Diehl, 2022). Project staff also reported that when negative experiences were discussed during the CCG sessions, emotions arose at the beginning and gradually decreased.

**Figure 52. CCG members' and non-members' emotions generated by their personal experiences of behavior change, endline (tool 2; 2021, N=401)**




## BEHAVIOR CHANGE PURSUED

After CCG members and non-members shared their experience of trying to change a behavior, they were asked which behavior they tried to change. CCG members and non-members pursued one to three behavior changes (65%), which could be manageable for an individual, while less than 1% did not pursue any behavior change. However, an additional 26% pursued four to six, and 8% more than six and up to 13. The latter raises questions on the likelihood of an individual being able to achieve and sustain that many in a period of one to three years.

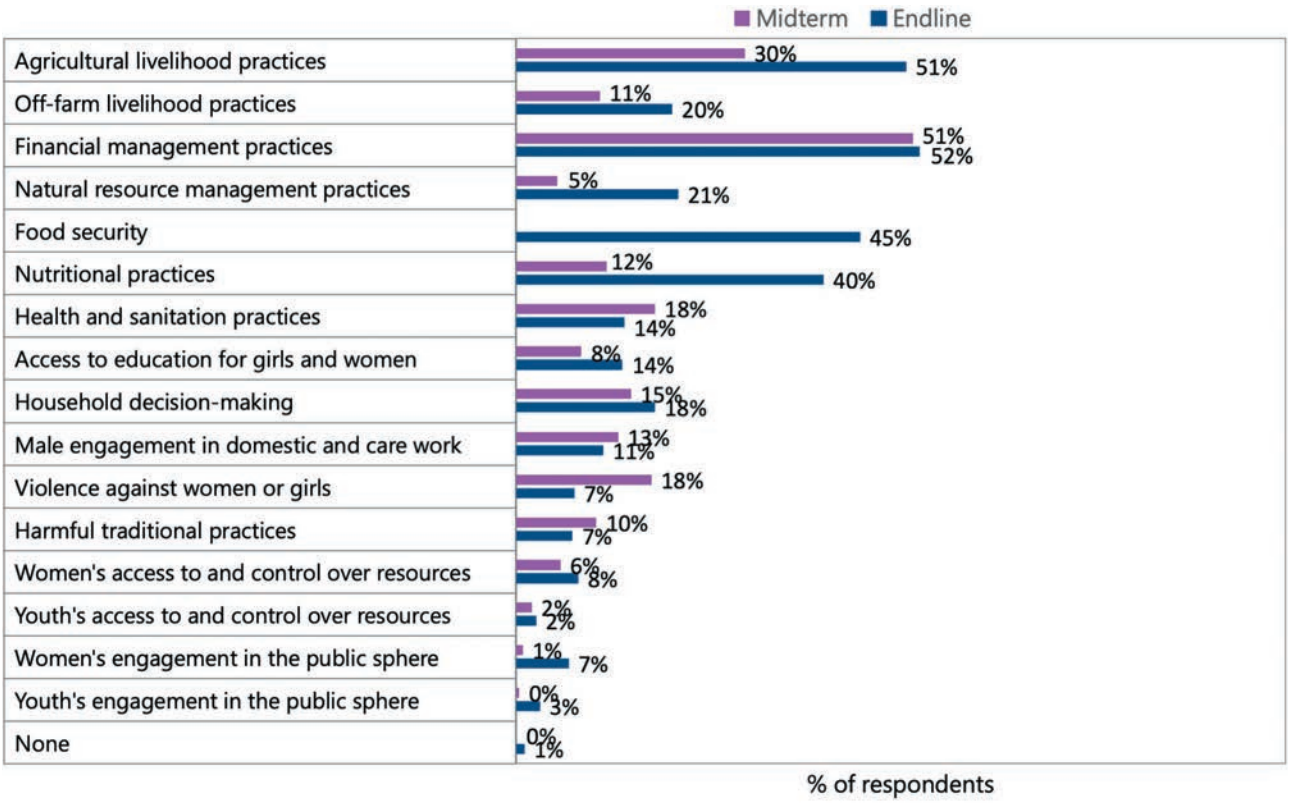
At endline, the two top behavior changes pursued related to the financial management practices (52%) and agricultural livelihood practices (51%)(Figure 53). It is important to note that, in addition to the CC approach, the DFSA program made a significant investment in promoting the Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) methodology with livelihood groups (LG) and providing financial education to their members (Figure 48). For financial management practices, this finding represented little change from the midterm; but, for agricultural practices, the results reflected an uplift of 21 percentage points from the midterm. Work on the other skills besides financial skills was promoted after the midterm assessment. This was achieved by hiring and training livelihood extension workers. This contrasted with the pre-midterm period that had relied on community animators (community members with no specialized technical training) to do this work.

In effect, in both cases, just over half of all CCG members and non-members preferred to pursue behavior change that directly influenced their own personal and household livelihoods. Other important behaviors were related to food security (45%) and nutritional practices (40%), and natural resource management practices (21%), reflecting an increase since the midterm of 28 and 16 percentage points for nutritional practices and natural resource management practices, respectively.[14]

14. Behavior change related exclusively to food security was not assessed at midterm.

With improved agricultural livelihood practices, CCG members and non-members then took what on the face of it appears to be a rational decision to subsequently address issues related to food and nutritional challenges.

**Figure 53. Behavior change pursued by CCG members and non-members, midterm and endline (tool 2, 2020, N=668; 2021, N=401)**

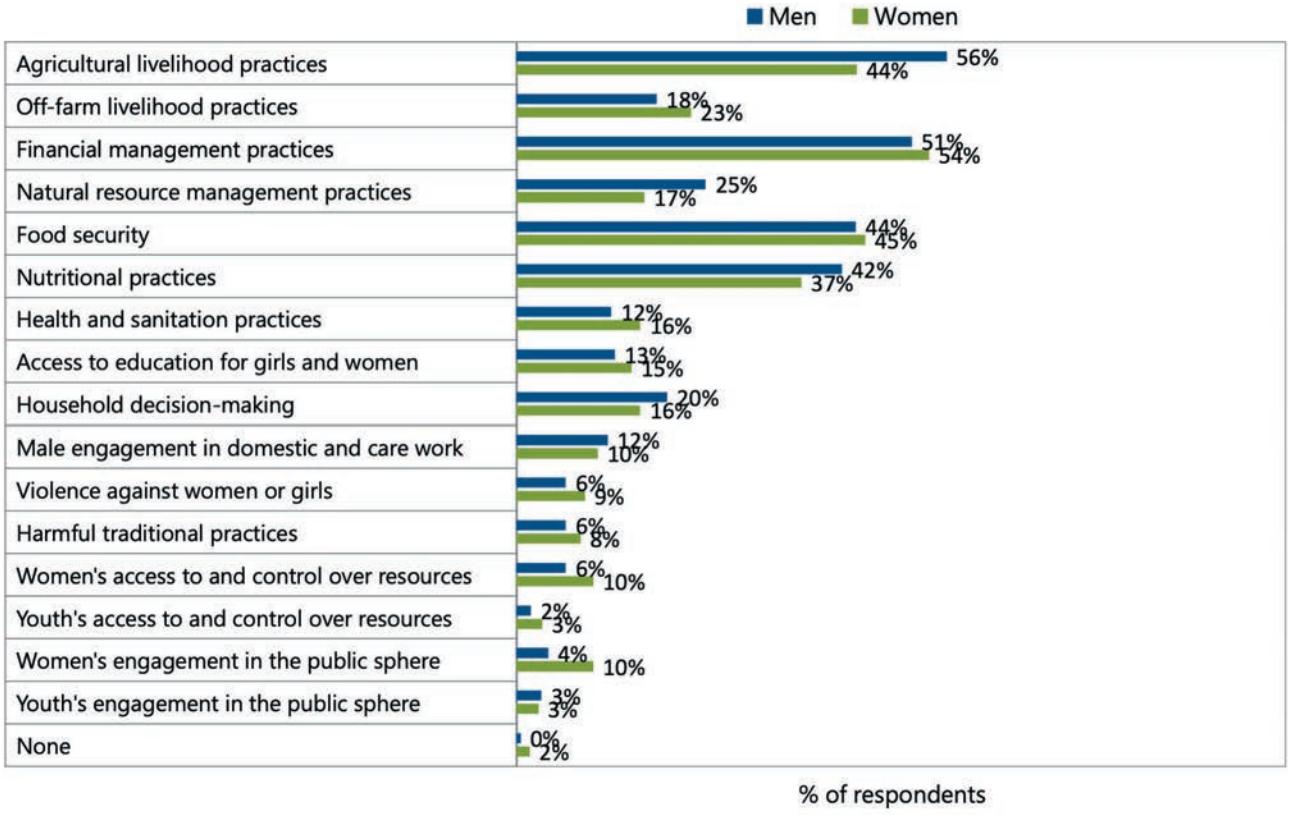



Behavior change related to gender equity and equality continued to be pursued by respondents but were chosen by a relatively lower number of CCG members and non-members than behavior change related to livelihoods described above. However, this may be just an issue of them being more specific than those related to livelihoods where different types of livelihood behaviors are clustered. Also, the changes from midterm to endline were also mixed, with rises in some behaviors (access to education for girls and women, household decision-making, women's access to and control over resources, and women's engagement in the public sphere), and a decline for others (male engagement in domestic and care work, preventing violence against women and girls, and harmful traditional practices).

When the findings at endline are disaggregated by sex (Figure 54), regarding the top two behavior changes respondents pursued, most women pursed those related to financial management practices (54%), which was different from men, the majority of whom (56%) preferred changing behaviors related to agricultural livelihood practices. The importance given to behavior change related to effective agricultural livelihood practices aligns with the importance of agriculture as the major income source for most men and women, but more so for men than women.

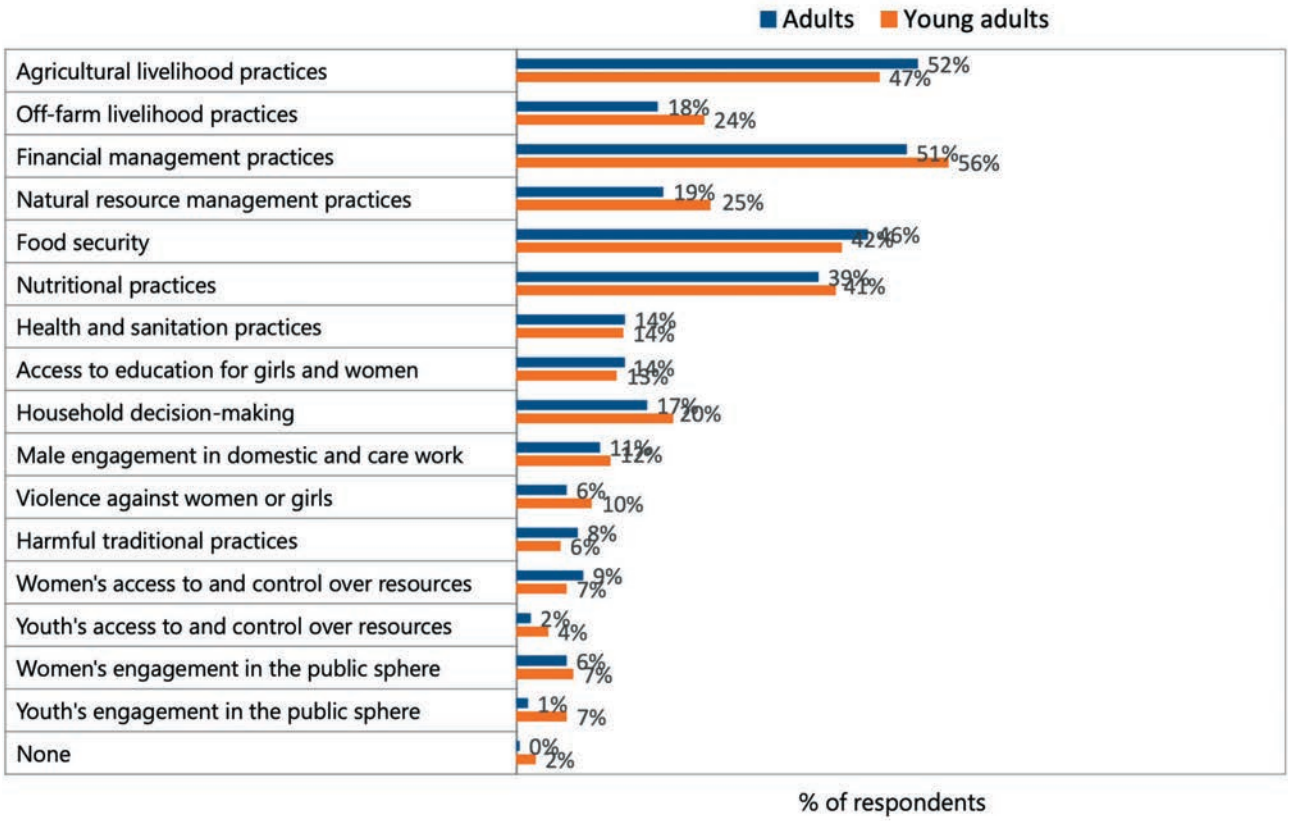
For men and women almost equally (44% and 45%, respectively), food security was an important area in which to pursue behavior change associated with the pursuit of other changes in behavior, as noted above. In addition, women gave greater importance to behavior change related to effective off-farm livelihood practices (23%), highlighting this emergent practice among women to develop their livelihoods. Behavior change related to nutritional practices increased at endline more among men (42%) than among women (37%). This shows that both women and men engaged in CCGs became aware of the importance of this behavior change since it was one of the main purposes of the DFSA.

**Figure 54. Behavior change pursued by CCG members and non-members, disaggregated by sex, endline, (tool 2, 2021, N=401)**




While the percentages of young adults and adults who pursued the types of behavior change differed slightly, the relative priority given to the different behavior changes follows broadly the same distribution pattern, with a few but important differences (Figure 55). Young adults gave more importance to behavior change related to off-farm livelihood practices, while adults gave more importance to those related to agricultural livelihood practices, showing young adults may have been more interested in engaging in behavior change that allowed them to take advantage of off-farm livelihood opportunities given the challenges they faced accessing land for agricultural activities. Also, young adults seemed to be more engaged than adults in behavior change related to more equitable gender-based household dynamics and youth participation in the public sphere, while adults seemed to be more interested in behavior change related to ending types of gender-based violence. Given these subtle but important differences, it will be important to further tailor the intervention strategies to these two age groups of CCG members and non-members so that they address their needs and are relevant for their respective age group.

**Figure 55. Behavior change pursued by CCG members and non-members, disaggregated by age group, endline (tool 2, 2021, N=401)**




When responses from the sub-sample of young adult respondents are analyzed and disaggregated by sex (Figure 56), the pattern of responses and differences between the percentages of young women and young men who pursued the types of behavior change are like the patterns seen in Figures 53 to 55. What is striking is that, of the 16 behavior changes listed, young women were more willing than men to pursue behavior change in 13 of the 16 types of behavior change, and for the three where they were not, the difference was very small. The question that arises is whether, and for what reasons, female young adults are more willing to change their behavior than their male counterparts? Exploring this issue will help to inform the types of interventions to promote youth development pursued in the new RFSA.

**Figure 56. Behavior change pursued by young CCG members and non-members, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 2; N=123)**

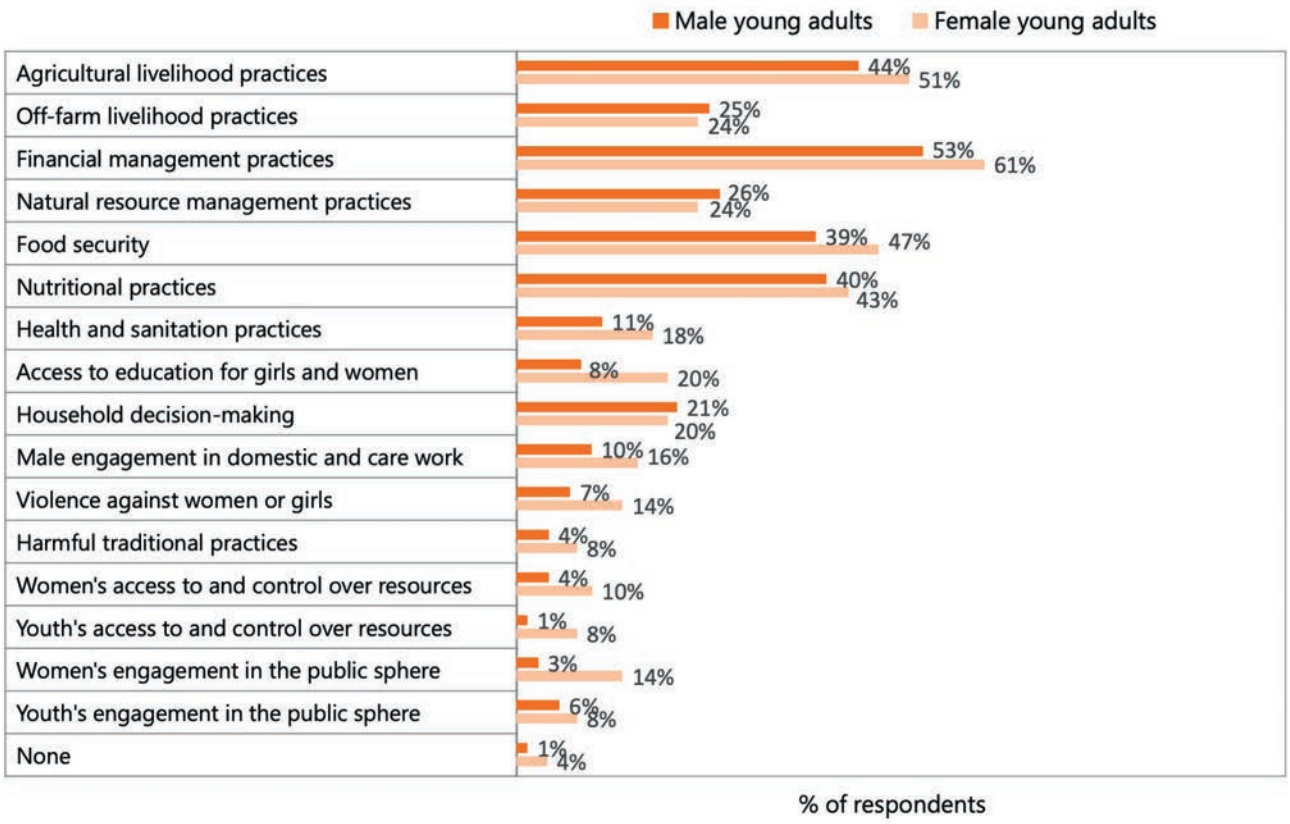
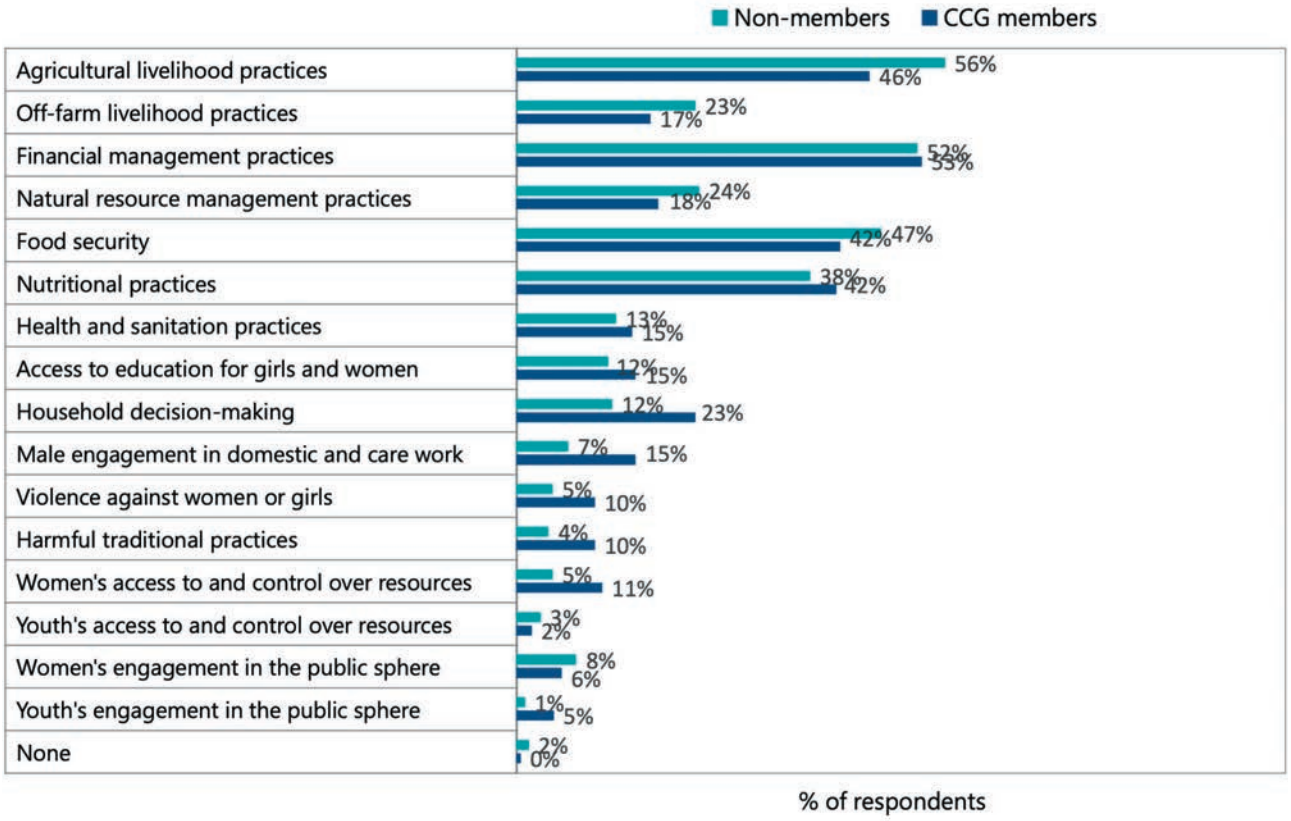



Figure 57 shows the same information but disaggregated by membership of CCG groups to see whether there were differences between project participants who participated in CCGs and those who did not. The main difference is that more CCG members than non-members pursued behavior change related to more equitable gender-based household dynamics—such as household decision-making and male engagement in domestic and care work, ending gender-based violence, improved and equitable access to education, and engagement in the public sphere—showing that their participation in CCGs created a greater awareness among members of issues related to gender equity and equality. This observation should be tempered by earlier findings (Figure 53) that suggested a lower level of pursuit of gender equity and equality behavior changes relative to other possible changes and, in some instances, a decline in interest from midterm to endline.

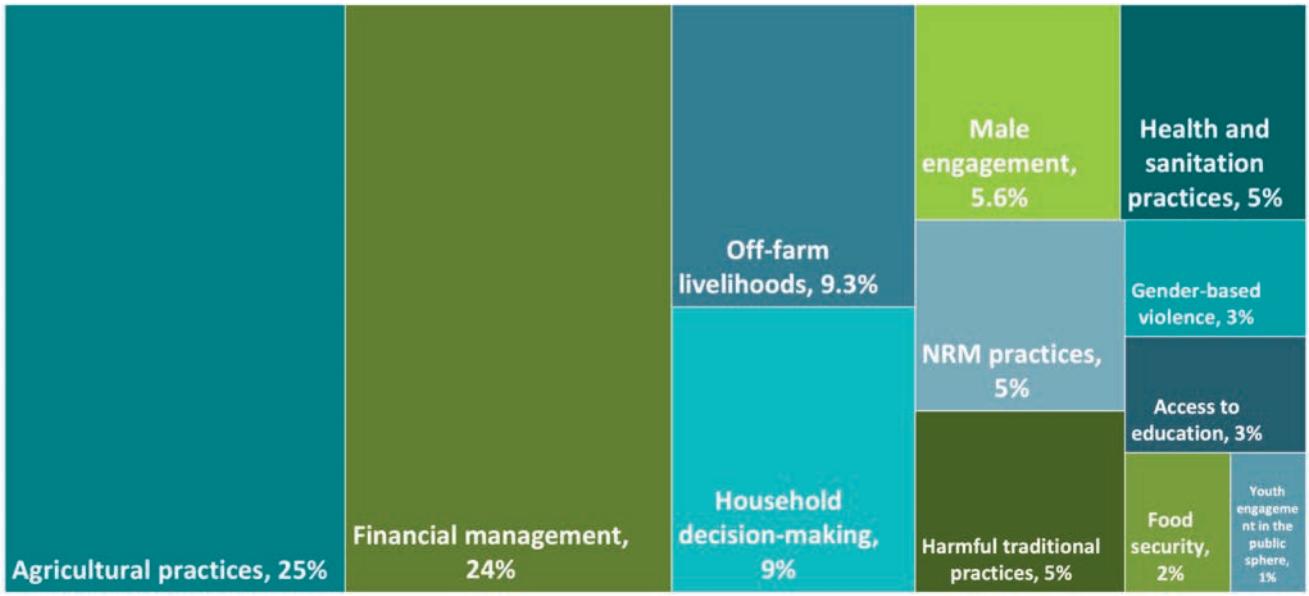
More non-members pursued behavior change related to agricultural livelihood practices, natural resource management practices, off-farm livelihood practices, and food security. This last finding may, at first sight, appear surprising; why would CCG non-members outperform members in some key intervention areas of the DFSA? The answer may be found in recognizing that, in addition to its innovative CC approach, the DFSA had a very large set of activities focused on Skills for Marketing and Rural Transformation (SMART), which included SILC, NRM, livestock, marketing and off-farm business skills, as well as the use of the food/cash-for-work scheme for restoring watersheds. These activities targeted all project participants, not just CCG members.

**Figure 57. Behavior change pursued by CCG members and non-members, by CCG membership, endline (tool 2, 2021, N=401)**




When asked about the most important behavior change a respondent was pursuing (Figure 58), there are clear delineations on the levels of importance. Undoubtedly, the most preferred behavior changes were around agricultural practices and financial management, amounting to just under 50% of all responses. This reflects the relative importance afforded these initiatives under the DFSA, as explained above and, arguably, the more tangible nature of the resulting benefits stream. Of secondary interest to respondents were behavior changes relating to off-farm livelihoods and household decision-making, each at 8% to 9%, respectively. At the third level, each having about 5% of responses, were male engagement, NRM practices and harmful traditional practices.

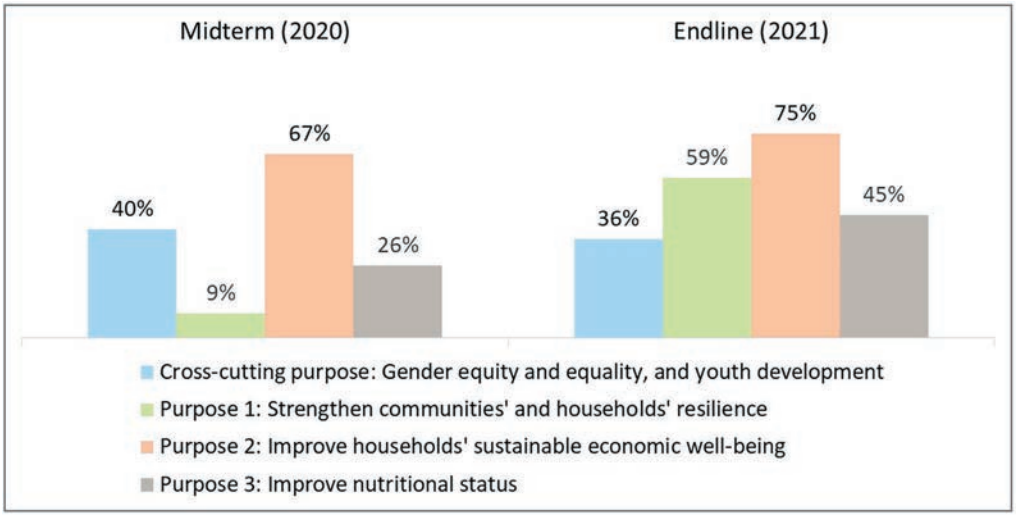
**Figure 58. Most important behavior change pursued by CCG members and non-members, endline (tool 2, N=401)**




Following the same clustering done for the issues discussed and/or addressed by CCGs (Table 26, above), behavior changes pursued were also clustered by the three DFSA purposes and cross-cutting sub-purpose of gender equity and equality, and youth development (Figure 59).

The DFSA purpose that generated the greatest interest in behavior change among respondents (CCG members and non-members), at both midterm and endline, was purpose 2, *improved household sustainable economic well-being*. There was a big rise (9% to 59%) for purpose 1, *strengthened community and household resilience*, following the midterm assessment, and a smaller but important rise (26% to 45%) for purpose 3, *improved nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, and children under 5 years*. The only purpose to show a decline, admittedly small, among respondents interested in pursuing behavior change was the cross-cutting purpose of *gender equity and equality, and youth development*.

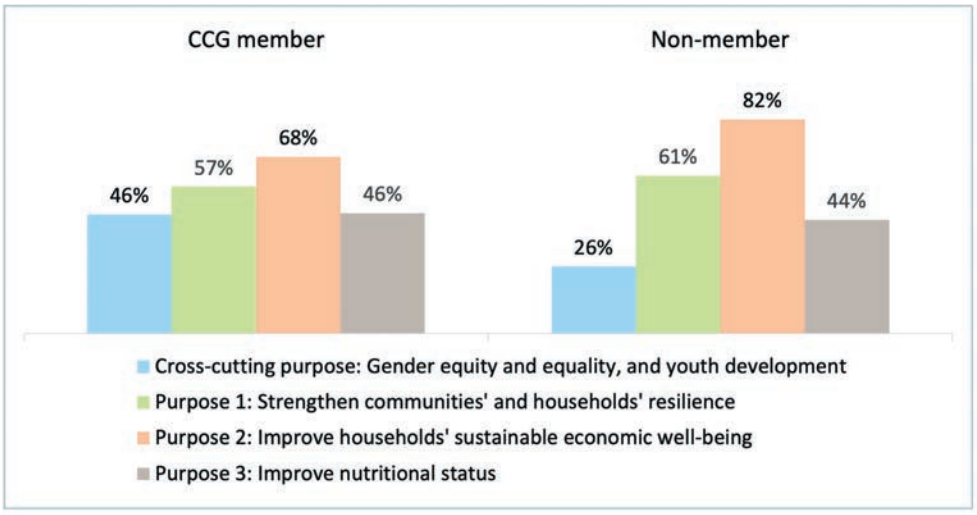
**Figure 59. Behavior change pursued by respondents' groups by DFSA purpose, grouped by DFSA purpose, midterm and endline (tool 2, 2020, N=668; 2021, N=401)**



Findings disaggregated by CCG membership show that most CCG members and non-members pursued not dissimilar behavior change practices, with the most popular being behavior change relating to DFSA purpose 2 (*improved household sustainable economic well-being*), with a greater proportion of non-members (82%) than members (68%) making the change (Figure 60). On the other hand, CCG members afforded greater priority to pursuing behavior change related to the purpose on *gender equity and equality, and youth development*. This is most likely explained by CCG members being more exposed to Community Conversations related to gender equity and equality as this was an early principal focus of CCGs. In short, a greater number of non-members prioritized behaviors that were not related to gender equity and equality.

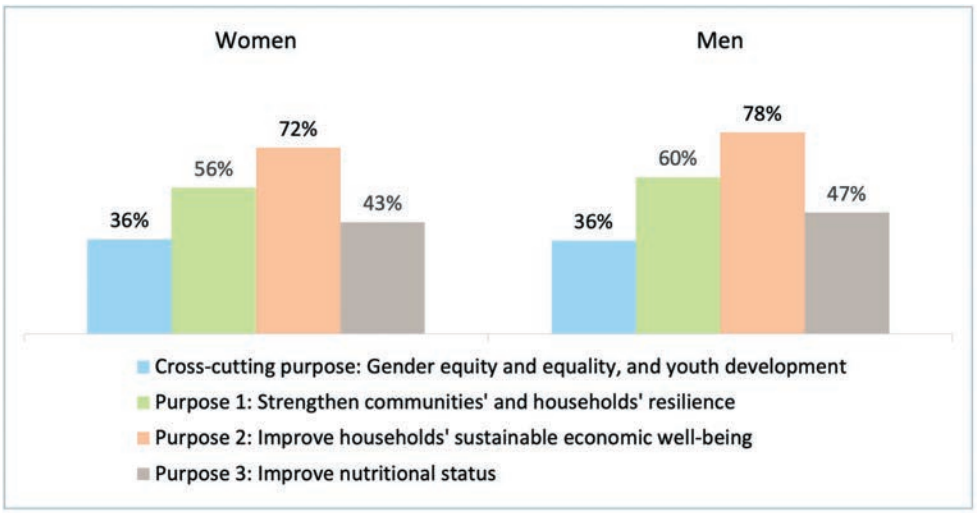
The second most pursued behavior change related to DFSA purpose 1 on *strengthening community and household resilience*. Again, a slightly higher percentage of CCG non-members (61%) pursued this behavior change than members (57%). Less than half of CCG members and non-members pursued behavior changes related to DFSA purpose 3 (*improved nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, and children under 5 years*) with no major difference between them.

**Figure 60. Behavior change pursued by respondents grouped by DFSA purpose and CCG membership, endline (tool 2, N=401)**



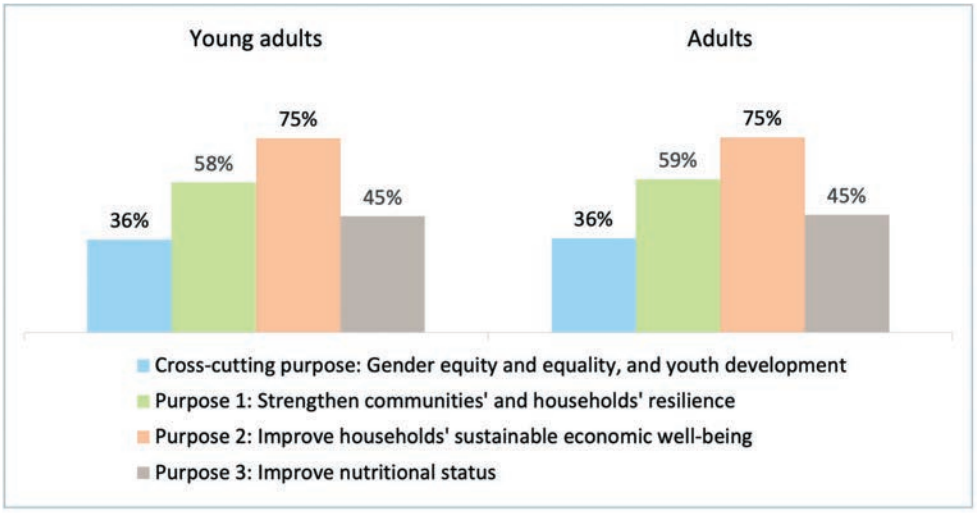

The same data disaggregated by sex shows that more men (78%) than women (72%) pursued behavior change related to DFSA purpose 2 (*improved household economic well-being*), showing the effort that men were making to improve their income (Figure 61), supported by the efforts of women. This was a reverse of the midterm finding, when more women than men pursued this behavior change. Men also showed a slightly higher response than women to behavior change for DFSA purpose 3 (47% compared to 43%) and purpose 1 (60% compared to 56%), and they equally prioritized behavior change related to *gender equity and equality*. Together, this suggests that men had become more aware of the gender and power dynamics of their households and the benefits that behavior change could have for their families' overall well-being.

**Figure 61. Behavior change pursued by respondents grouped by DFSA purpose, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 2, N=401)**




The same responses disaggregated by age group show no difference between the priorities given by young adults and adults to the types of behavior change as they relates to the DFSA purposes (Figure 62).

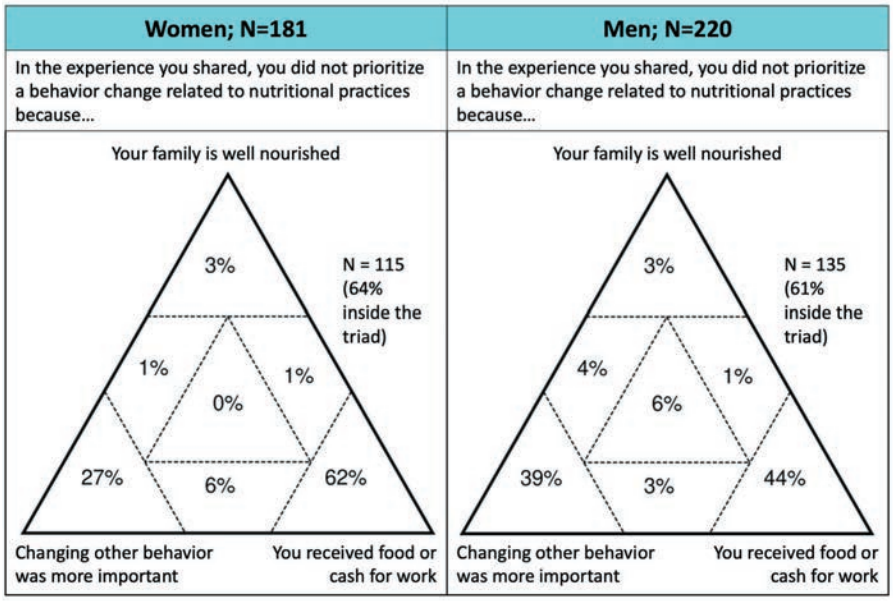
**Figure 62. Behavior change pursued by respondents grouped by DFSA purpose, disaggregated by age group, endline (tool 2, N=401)**




Although 40% of CCG members and non-members prioritized the pursuit of a behavior change related to nutritional practices at endline, an increase of 28 percentage points from the midterm figures (Figure 53, above), it is valuable to understand better why behavior change related to the improved nutritional status purpose was less pursued at midterm, and still only pursued by less than half of project participants at endline (Figure 59, above). A triad follow-up question was used to further explore this question. Findings show (Figure 63) that 64% and 61% of women and men, respectively, considered that one or a combination of three reasons—their family was well-nourished, they received food or cash for work, and there was other behavior change that was more important—explain why they did not prioritize this behavior change, and some degree of alignment in the responses of women and men can be observed.

Respondents emphasized that the most important reason was that they were receiving food or cash for work (women 62%, men 44%), followed by a recognition that the need to prioritize changing other behaviors was more important (27% and 39%, respectively). It is notable that very few respondents (3% of both women and men) considered that the reason for not prioritizing behavior changes related to nutritional practices was mainly that their family was well-nourished; undoubtedly, nutrition remains an important issue to almost all respondents. Although the project had no decision-making power over food or cash distribution, as these decisions are made by the GoE who sets the criteria for receiving this aid, the new RFSA is planning to focus on enhancing project participants' and caretakers' food preparation skills to influence more diversified diets. These responses highlight a need to fine-tune the strategy of providing cash or food for work to lessen the disincentivizing effects it may have on community members' attitudes toward changing behavior to improve nutritional practices.

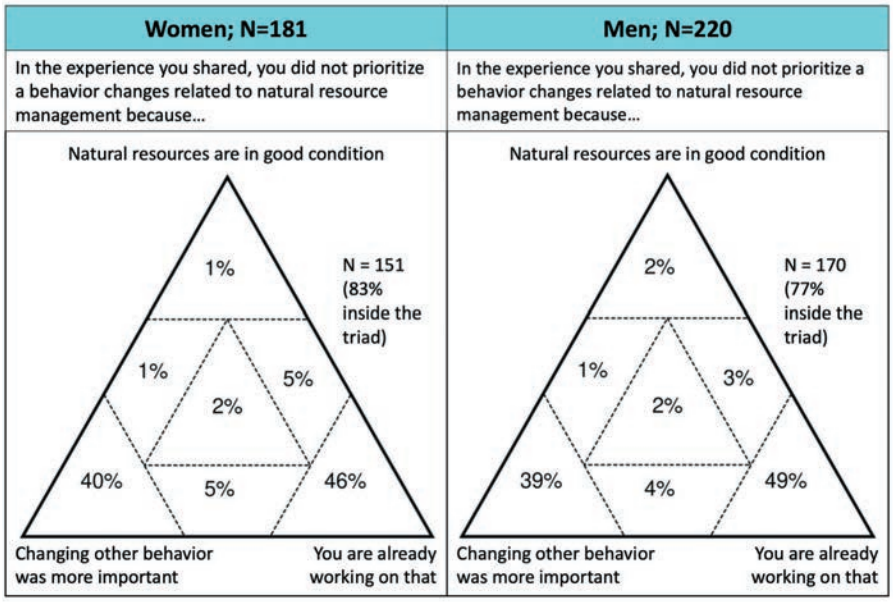
**Figure 63. Reasons given by CCG members and non-members for not prioritizing behavior change related to nutritional practices, endline (tool 2, 2021, N=401)**




Behavior change related to the purpose of strengthening resilience were also given a lower priority by CCG members and non-members at midterm (women's and youth's engagement in the public sphere, 1% and 2%, respectively, and NRM practices, 5%) although these had all risen at endline to 7%, 3%, and 21%, respectively. The rise in behavior changes pursuing NRM practices is particularly impressive, most likely the outcome of targeted DFSA activities, but, even so, behavior change related to NRM practices was only prioritized by one in five project participants.

To assess the reasons, a similar triad follow-up question was used (Figure 64). There is alignment between the responses of women and men, with both emphasizing that the community was already working on NRM issues (46% and 49% of women and men, respectively), and/or that changing other behavior was more important (40% and 39%, respectively). It is noteworthy that there were very few respondents who suggested that natural resources were in a good condition. This recognition itself is a positive statement since awareness of an issue is a necessary first step before any action can be taken to address the problem.

**Figure 64. Reasons given by CCG members and non-members for not prioritizing behavior change related to NRM practices, endline (tool 2, 2021, N=401)**



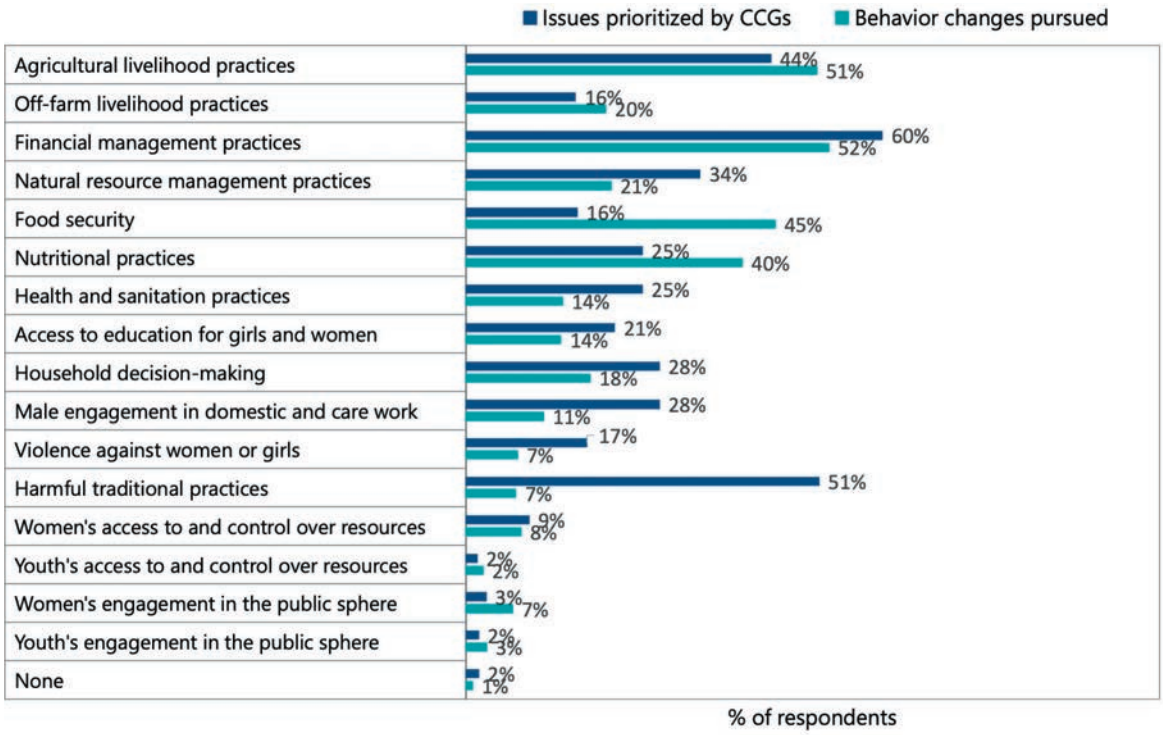

## COMPARISON BETWEEN ISSUES PRIORITIZED BY CCGs AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE PURSUED

To assess the level of alignment between the issues discussed and addressed by the CCGs and their related type of behavior change (identified through the public sphere experiences collected from CCG facilitators and members, using tool 1), and the individual behavior change pursued by CCG members and non-members (identified through the individual experiences collected using tool 2), responses are compared in Figure 65.

CCG members and non-members were most keen to change individual behavior that had a direct impact on their economic well-being, and thus gave more importance to changing behavior related to managing their finances effectively (52%), improving their agricultural production practices (51%), better food security (45%), improved nutrition (40%) and, to a lesser extent, NRM practices (21%) and diversifying their livelihoods into off-farm activities (20%); meanwhile CCGs similarly gave a high priority to issues related to effective financial management practices (60%) and to effective agricultural livelihood practices (44%), but their prioritization of other behavior changes were somewhat different from individual respondents' ordering of priorities. For example, food security was prioritized by only 16% of CCGs, and nutrition by 25%, while NRM practices (34%), health and sanitation (25%), and access to education for women and girls (21%) were all higher than the percentage of CCG members and non-members who pursued these behavior changes.

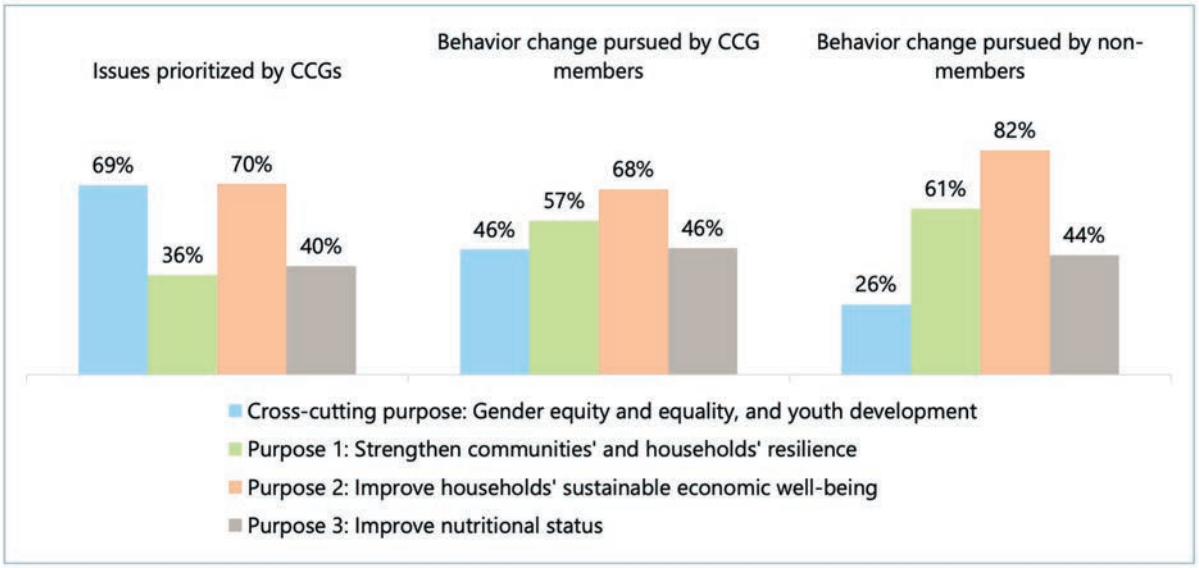
For behavior change related to promoting gender equity and equality, these findings show that while over half (51%) of CCGs prioritized a determination to address issues related to ending harmful traditional practices, only 7% of CCG members and non-members pursued this type of behavior change; and similarly, although less markedly different, 17% of CCGs prioritized ending gender-based violence, but just 7% of individual respondents pursued this type of behavior change. An important area of consideration for the new RFSA will be to understand why the issues of gender equity and equality appear relatively more important for CCGs to address yet pursuing this at an individual behavior change level is not perceived in the same way among individual CCG members.

**Figure 65. Comparison between issues prioritized by CCGs and behavior change pursued by CCG members and non-members, endline (tool 1, N=373 and tool 2, N=401)**




The same comparison for the type of behavior change clustered by DFSA purposes summarizes the findings described above (Figure 66). CCGs prioritized in particular two issues relating to improving household sustainable well-being (70%) and the cross-cutting purpose of promoting gender equity and equality (69%); while CCG members displayed overall a more evenly balanced prioritization across all four purposes, with a more narrow spread of 46% to 68%; in contrast, non-members showed the widest spread (26% to 82%) making clear a strong preference for pursuing changes reflecting the DFSA development purpose of improving household sustainable economic well-being, most likely seeing this as the most immediate need. Given previous comments relating to nutrition (Figure 63), it is likely that this should be a focus of continued activity for the new RFSA since, across all three groups to date, the level of interest in pursuing this area of behavior change has not exceeded 50%. Going forward, gender equity and equality will need greater impetus both among members and non-members.

**Figure 66. Comparison between issues prioritized by CCGs and the individual behavior change pursued by CCG members and non-members, endline (tool 1, N=373 and tool 2, N=401)**



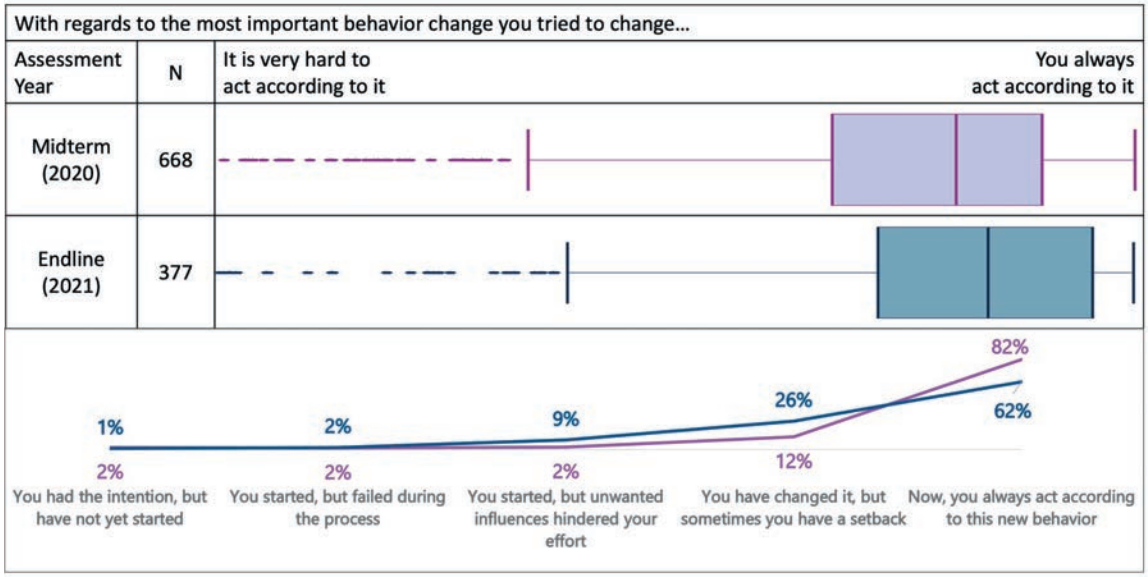

## BEHAVIOR CHANGE INTENTION AND REALIZATION

To assess the sustainability of the change in behavior pursued, respondents were asked to what extent they always acted according to the new behavior or whether it was hard for them to sustain the behavior (Figure 67). At the median, there was an improvement at endline when compared with midterm findings, with a small, but not insignificant, shift toward the right, indicating that a greater number of respondents would sustain their behavior change. When the endline findings are disaggregated by sex, it can be observed that men perceived that it was easier for them to always act in accordance with the behavior change than women, and that this difference is statistically significant at $Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0538$. Also, CCG non-members found it more challenging than members ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0222$) to act according to their behavior change.

The line diagram at the bottom of Figure 67 supports this assertion. After the first stage when a decision is made to embark on behavior change and when there is likely a good degree of uncertainty around making a commitment to change, the next three stages of behavior change showed an endline result that was higher than at midterm, growing in intensity as the gap between the lines increased at each stage. Perhaps surprising is the higher figure at midterm at the last stage, by quite some margin (82% at midterm, 62% at endline). Several explanations are possible. One could be that over the additional period to endline, some of the earlier, arguably unrealistic, expectations of always acting according to the new behavior change were tempered by the reality of sustaining any novel behavior change, particularly those relating to changes in social practices and norms. Moreover, the regular meeting schedules were disrupted due to COVID-19 restrictions, which could have affected continuous dialogue and discussion around issues.

These findings show the positive impact of the DFSA, yet also present a challenge looking ahead as to what interventions might work best, and what changes need to be made to existing approaches to sustain the successes already achieved.

**Figure 67. Sustainability of the behavior change, midterm and endline (tool 2, 2020, N=668; 2021, N=401)**

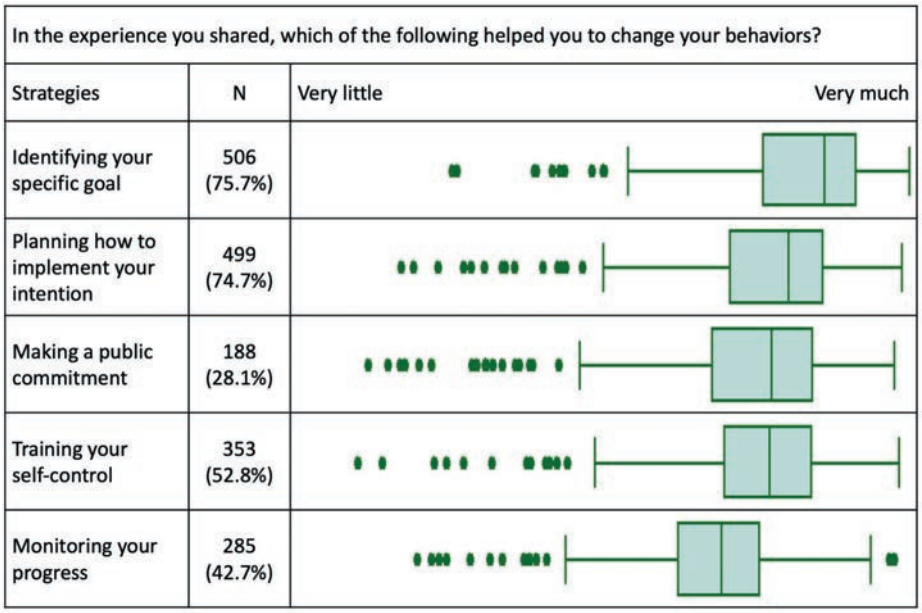



To identify what is needed for individuals to transition from the intention to the permanent behavior change, respondents were asked at midterm what helped them to change their behavior. This question was not repeated at endline. Three-quarters of CCG members and non-members selected 'identifying their specific goal' and 'planning how to implement their intention' and considered these two to be the most helpful actions. However, fewer respondents selected 'making a public commitment,' 'training your self-control,' and 'monitoring your progress,' but those who did still considered these helpful (Figure 68).

It seems plausible to posit that the challenge of making a commitment or training one's self-control is more applicable to behaviors related to gender equity and equality than to agriculture or NRM practices. Further analysis was undertaken of the responses for only those respondents who pursued behavior change related to gender equity and equality. The findings suggest a similar pattern of responses, and that their efforts to make a public commitment or to train their self-control did increase, but only marginally: making a public commitment rose to 32%, training self-control rose to 56%, while monitoring progress fell to 38%. Perhaps the findings reflect that the last three strategies listed in Figure 68 are simply harder to undertake, or to sustain, or both.

Figure 68 shows that, ideally, to avoid relapses and to sustain behavior change, all these actions when combined served as a strong reinforcement of behavior change. They help the process by closing the gap between the intention to change and a more long-lasting adoption of the behavior. These findings, and the tool itself, might provide the basis for productive behavior change conversations—first at the CCG level and then individually—on the optimum timing for adopting these actions. To be confronted with them all at once may feel overwhelming, but, if done judiciously in a more widely spaced and organized manner, then members and non-members may be guided through these critical actions at the relevant stage in the behavior change process. What, however, remains unexplored is whether the actions taken to sustain behavior change are the same for all types of behavior change.

### Figure 68. Actions that helped behavior change, midterm (tool 2, N=668)



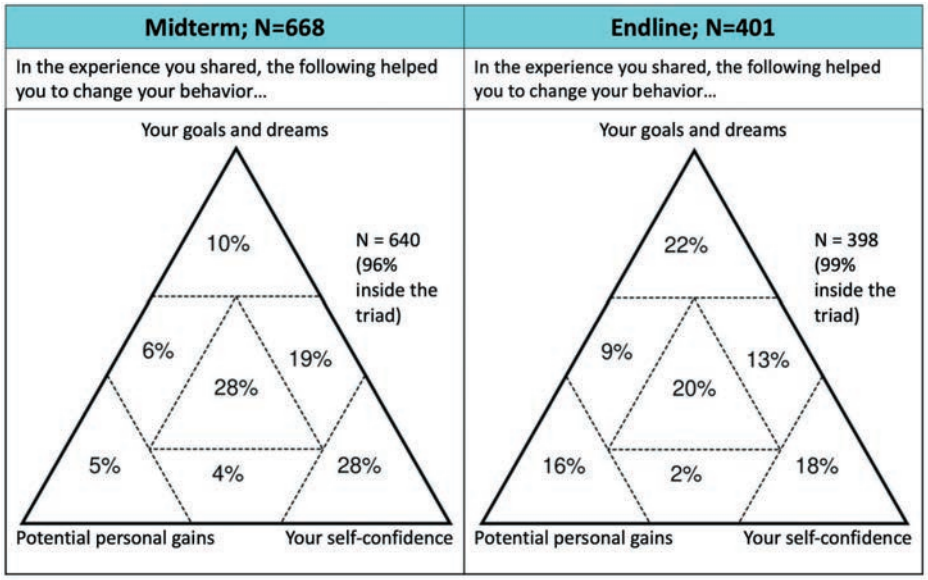

## PERSONAL DRIVERS, MOTIVATIONS AND NUDGES FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE

To add an additional layer of analysis and understanding of individual behavior change, three triads were used to explore the personal drivers, motivations and nudges for behavior change (Figure 69). Related to **personal drivers**, 99% of respondents at endline considered that at least one of the following drove them to pursue their chosen behavior change: the perceived potential personal gains (interest), the expected effect on achieving their goals (attitude), or their confidence in their ability to exert control over their motivation, behavior and social environment (self-efficacy).

While for most (22%) endline respondents, the key personal driver for behavior change was the expected effect on achieving their personal goals and dreams, it is reasonable to argue that the preference for all three personal drivers was, broadly speaking, relatively evenly concentrated: self-confidence in their ability to exert control over their own behavior (18%), and the expected effect on achieving their personal goals and dreams (16%) received not hugely dissimilar support. This was a change from the midterm findings in which personal gain (5%) was self-evidently not a preferred personal driver, perhaps because the benefits of any behavior change had not yet been experienced. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there is also a similar concentration of respondents in the center of the endline triad (20%), reflecting a view that all three personal drivers were equally important to them, although this was less than the midterm figure.

When responses are disaggregated by sex it can be observed that while for men their main driver was their self-confidence or a combination of their self-confidence and their goals and dreams (21% and 13%, respectively), for women their main driver was their goals and dreams or a combination of their goals and dreams and their self-confidence (29 and 13%, respectively). For young adults, their main drivers were their self-confidence (24%), their goals and dreams (20%) or a combination of both (11%); while for adults it was their goals and dreams (24%), followed equally by the potential personal gains and their self-confidence (16%) or a combination of all three (18%).

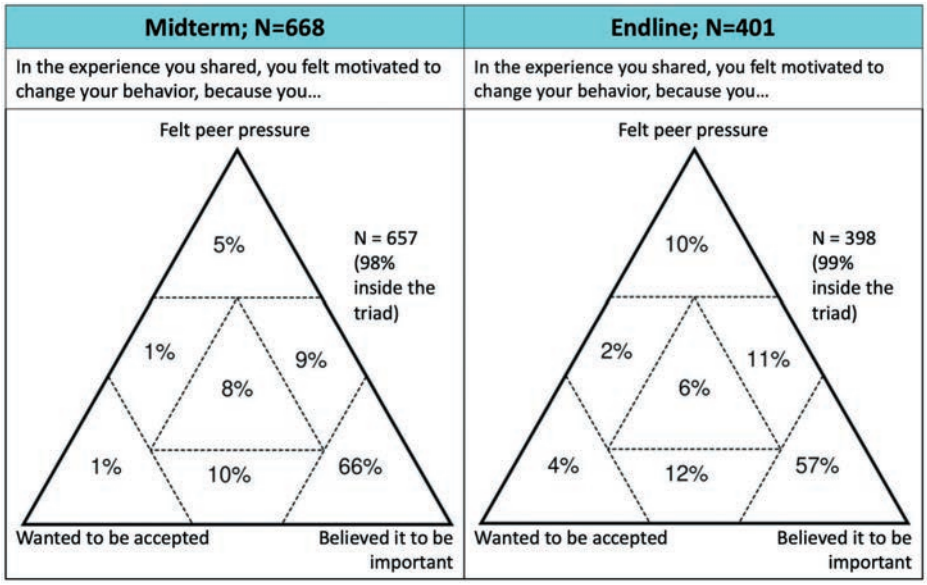
**Figure 69. Personal drivers for behavior change among CCG members and non-members, midterm and endline (tool 2, 2020, N=668; 2021, N=401)**




With respect to **motivation** for changing behavior (Figure 70), 99% of respondents at endline considered that one or a combination of two external motivations (the need to be accepted or peer pressure) and one internal motivation (personal belief in the importance of the behavior change) helped them to change their behavior; however, peer pressure (10%) and wanting to be accepted (4%) (known as *external* motivations) were seen to be much less important than believing that the behavior change was important for them (57%) (*internal* motivation). However, it can be noted that, at endline, the percentage of respondents being motivated by peer pressure, or a combination of peer pressure and belief in the importance had increased, as well as the percentage who were motivated by the need to be accepted or a combination of this with the belief in the importance.

The relative importance given to these motivations by women and men was the same; however, it can be observed that a slightly higher percentage of women gave the most importance to peer pressure (13% of women compared to 9% of men). When disaggregated by age group, it can be observed that young adults acted slightly more than adults on external motivations, especially the desire to be accepted by others (6%) or a combination of the need to be accepted and believing it to be important (16%), but still 54% of them were motivated mainly because they considered it to be important. Moreover, female young adults acted more on peer pressure (8% compared to 4% of male young adults), and less because of their desire to be accepted (2% compared to 8%, respectively), while a higher number acted because they believed it to be important (61% of young women compared to 49% of young men). Going forward, this is a potentially useful finding since it may influence the intervention strategy for different age segments of the project population.

**Figure 70. Motivations for behavior change among CCG members and non-members, midterm and endline (tool 2, 2020, N=668; 2021, N=401)**



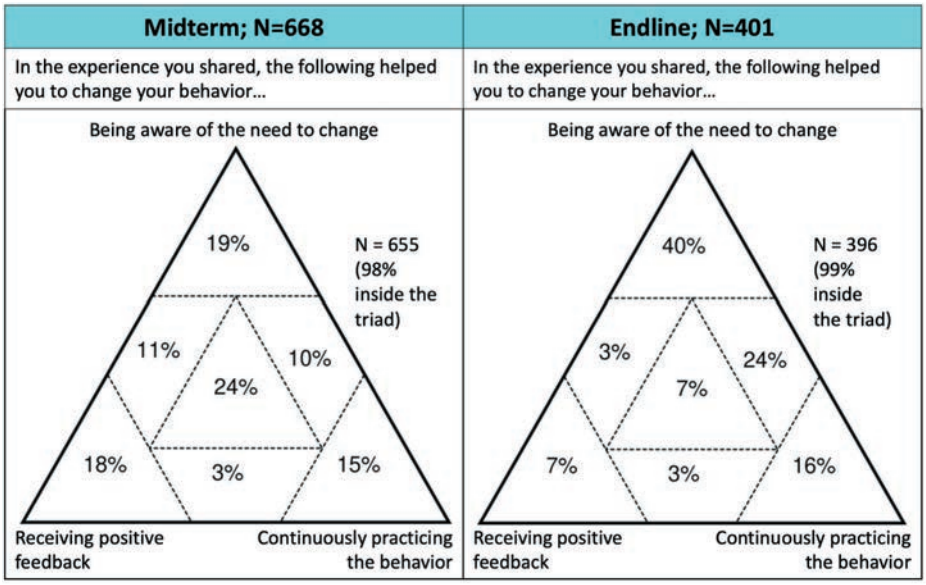

**Behavioral nudges**[15] to change a behavior and sustain it were also important for 99% of respondents (Figure 71). The findings at endline were different from those of the earlier assessment. In particular, the concentration of members and non-members indicating that being aware of the need to change was important as a nudge had more than doubled (from 19% to 40%); more respondents (24% up from 10%) said that a combination of this nudge with continuous practicing of the behavior was a key 'combined nudge.' Receiving positive feedback was not scored highly, but it is not possible to say whether this was because it was not perceived by respondents as a valued nudge, or whether insufficient positive feedback had been offered for respondents to appreciate its value in nudging their behavior change.

Arguably, there is a positive interpretation of these results in that respondents appeared to imply a greater sense of self-motivation (becoming aware of the need to change and continuous practice of the change) and less need for external approval. These findings triangulate well with the narratives shared in Table 27, that point to the fundamental role that CCGs played in raising awareness among members and non-members of the need to reduce non-desirable practices and behaviors.

No difference can be observed in the relative importance given by women and men to these nudges for behavior change, but a higher number of men responded in the center of the triad (9% compared to 5% of women), giving the same importance to all three nudges. No difference can be observed between young adults and adults, but fewer young adults considered that being aware was what helped them the most (38% compared to 41% of adults), and more that continuously practicing the new behavior helped them the most (17% compared to 14% of adults).

15. A nudge is a concept in behavioral economics, political theory and behavioral sciences, which proposes positive reinforcement and indirect suggestion as ways to influence the behavior and decision-making of groups or individuals. Nudging contrasts with other ways of achieving compliance, such as education, legislation or enforcement (Simon and Tagliabue, 2018).

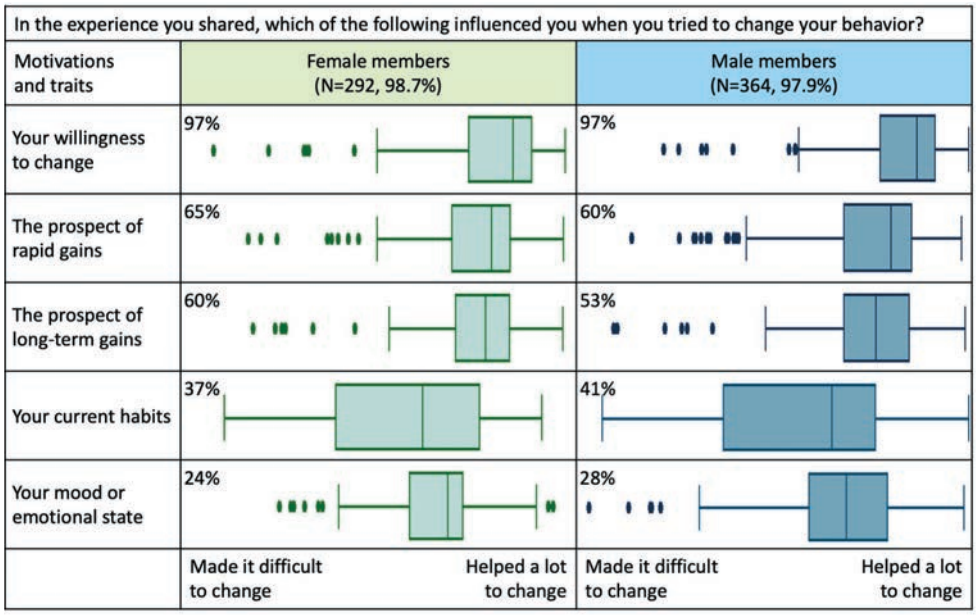
**Figure 71. Nudges for behavior change among CCG members and non-members, midterm and endline (tool 2, 2020, N=668; 2021, N=401)**




To further understand how personal motivation and 'limited rationality'—the reasons why people don't do what they should—(Petit, 2019, p. 21) may help or hinder behavior change, CCG members and non-members were asked whether three personal motivations and two reasons for limited rationality influenced them when pursuing their personal behavior change and, if so, the extent to which these motivations and reasons aided or hindered the change (Figure 72). Findings show that for both male and female respondents, the willingness to change was their main internal motivation and was seen as the most helpful of the options. This was followed by other personal motivations, such as the prospect of rapid and long-term gains, these being options selected by more women than men. The reasons for limited rationality (current habits and mood or emotional state) were chosen by fewer respondents, but by more men than women; while both groups agreed that these reasons helped less to change their behavior than personal motivations.

The emphasis placed by respondents on a willingness to change (97% for both female and male CCG members) offers an important insight. It makes it imperative for project interventions to design and implement approaches that *specifically* address the issue of willingness to change before assuming that further investments in time and effort are worthwhile. This implies a greater upfront commitment in time and effort to encourage this elevated enthusiasm for change, with existing and new intervention approaches aimed solely at this one outcome, to raise individual levels of eagerness to change. In the light of the findings below, a targeted, and likely nuanced, set of interventions, could generate not insignificant benefits.

**Figure 72. Influence of personal motivations and 'limited rationality' on behavior change, disaggregated by sex, midterm (tool 2; N=668)**

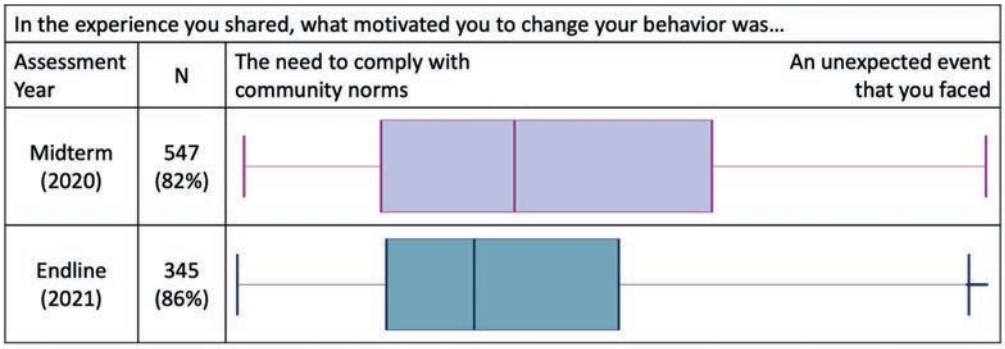



## TRIGGERS OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE

To explore the role that contextual factors played in behavior change, CCG members and non-members were asked to what extent 'the need to comply with rules, norms or laws' and 'an unexpected event faced' influenced their behavior change (Figure 73). Findings show that for 86% of respondents (up from 82% at midterm) their behavior change was prompted by one or a combination of these contextual factors, but the need to comply with community norms played a larger role than unexpected events.

The findings also show a shift further toward complying with community norms at endline, showing a strengthening in the influence of community norms. This suggests a broader community-level change, from which community norms emanate, in what is and isn't encouraged, inspired in part by the wide range of DFSA activities. At endline, female respondents were slightly more disposed to changing their behavior to comply with community norms than male respondents, but women's responses were more dispersed along the slider than those of men. This supports CRS' gender conceptual framework that aligns with the socio-ecological model of different layers of change—individual, relationship and community.

**Figure 73. Effect of contextual triggers on behavior change, midterm and endline (tool 2, 2020, N=668; 2021, N=401)**




## BEHAVIOR CHANGE INFLUENCERS

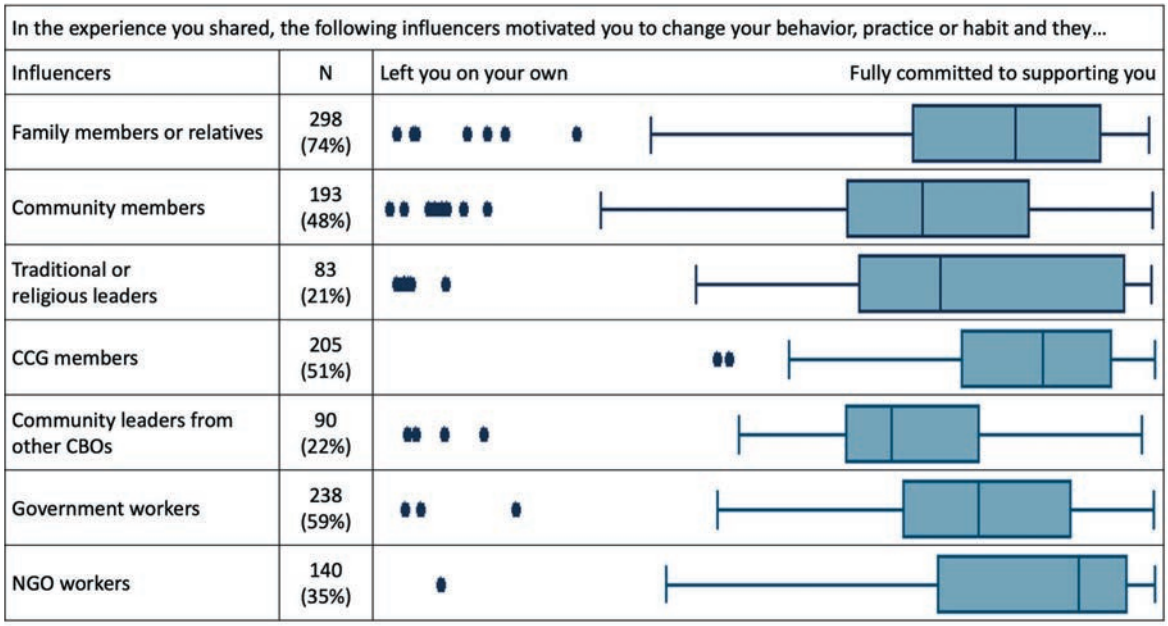
It is usually thought that, in addition to the personal drives and motivation for behavior change discussed above, the promotion of behavior change requires inter-individual interactions between influencers and targeted individuals, justifying the need for external intervention to promote these changes. To assess the importance of a broad range of possible types of influencers, respondents were asked who motivated their behavior change and how committed these influencers were in supporting them to change their behavior.

The clearest finding is just how wide the range of influencers was, ranging from the most selected—namely, family members or relatives—followed by government workers, CCG members and other community members, and NGO workers. On the other hand, although CCGs explicitly included in their membership community and religious leaders, they were less frequently mentioned, together with leaders of other CBOs. Nevertheless, when these different types were selected, at the median, all committed to supporting the change in behaviors, although there are varying levels of dispersion in their commitment to supporting the behavior change. NGO workers, CCG members, and family members and relatives were considered the most committed to support (Figure 74). It is notable too that government workers were more committed than both traditional or religious leaders, and community leaders from other CBOs.

Although CCGs collaborated with religious, traditional and other CBO leaders to address prioritized issues, their perceived commitment to supporting individuals' behavior change was deemed less, despite their having been frequently targeted and involved by the CCGs in addressing prioritized issues. NGO and government workers were perceived as more committed than religious or community leaders. One explanation could be that the gender-related behavior changes that the DFSA aimed to pursue, and that the new RFSA will further advance, are not necessarily aligned with some social norms in the communities. Also, this reflects the collaboration that the project promoted among NGOs and government offices to ensure the sustainability of Community Conversations.

Influencing behavior change, in part, is related to the intensity of the interactions, shown by the important influence that family members and relatives, and CCG members had on the changes, but it is also related to the influence and legitimacy of the influencers. Thus, while working relationships with NGO and government workers may be less intense, they clearly remain highly influential.

### Figure 74. Behavior change influencers and their level of support, endline (tool 2; 2021, N=401)




To deepen the analysis of the extent to which the support of these influencers had a positive or negative effect on individual behavior change, CCG members and non-members were asked to select those who supported their behavior change and to determine the extent to which this support made a difference (Figure 75). Overall, the findings imply that those who supported individuals to change their behaviors, at the median, made a difference, although there is, for some influencers, a wide variation in the responses, such as for community leaders from other CBOs, community members, and even family member or relatives, and government workers.

Fewer respondents reported that CBO leaders and traditional or religious leaders supported them to change their behavior (12% and 15%, respectively). However, when respondents received support from traditional and religious leaders, they were seen as making a more positive difference (which was statistically significant), especially when it related to behavior change on the cross-cutting purpose of *gender equity and equality*, as well as purpose 2 (*improving household sustainable economic well-being*) and purpose 1 (*strengthening community and household resilience*). Also, more men reported that traditional or religious leaders supported their behavior change (20%, compared to 9% of women), but women who were supported by them perceived that their support made more of a difference than men who were supported by them did. Given the significant positive influence of traditional and religious leaders in behavior change across all DFSA purposes, it will be important to review and refine the strategy used to engage them to ensure their commitment to influencing behavior change in their communities.

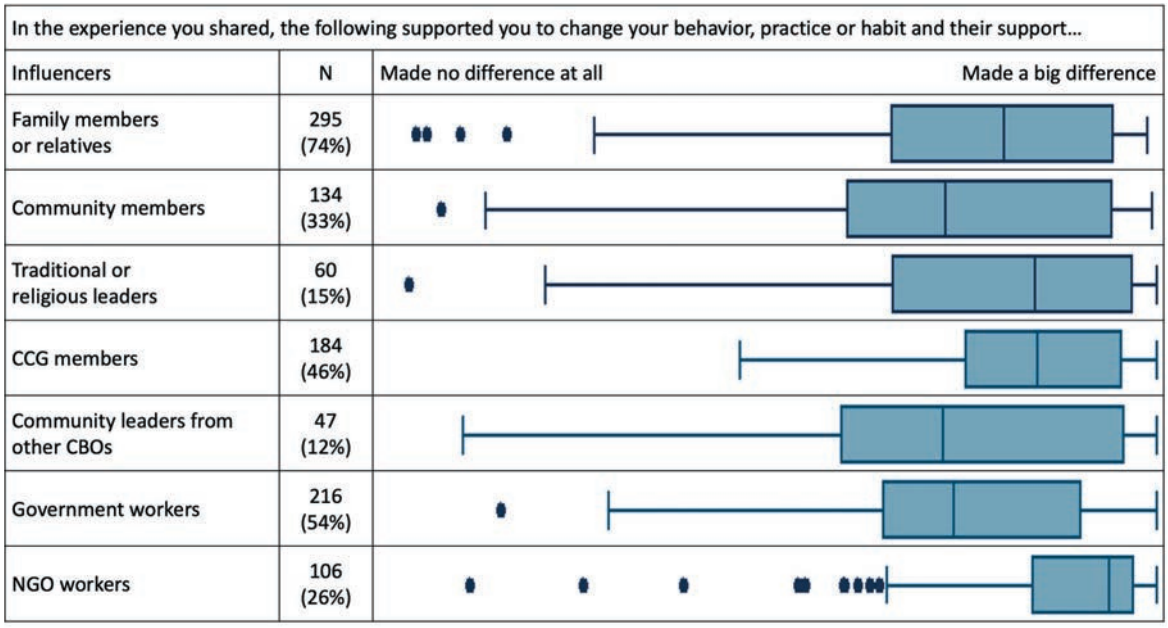
After traditional or religious leaders, NGO workers were also less mentioned as having supported respondents' behavior change (only by 26%), however, when they did, they were seen as those who made the most difference (median further to the right of the slider).

Disaggregating the effectiveness of NGO workers' support by type of behavior change shows that NGO workers made a more positive and statistically significant contribution to supporting behavior change related to the cross-cutting purpose to *improve gender equity and equality* (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0163) and to purpose 2 to *improve household economic well-being* (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0876), with no difference on behavior change related to the other two purposes. On the other hand, although more than half of respondents reported that government workers supported their behavior change, their effectiveness was not significantly more positive for any type of behavior change. Moreover, a slightly higher percentage of men reported receiving support from government workers (59%, compared to 48% of women).

Only one third of respondents reported that other community members supported their behavior change, and perceptions of the effectiveness of their support were very dispersed between not making any difference and making a big difference. The effectiveness of community members was statistically significant for behavior change related to *improving household economic well-being* (purpose 2) and to *promoting gender equity and equality* (cross-cutting purpose). On the other hand, almost half of respondents considered that CCG members supported their behavior change efforts, their contribution being more positive and statistically significant for behaviors related to the *promotion of gender equity and equality* (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0038), but not to the other purposes. Moreover, CCG members were perceived to equally support women and men, making an equal difference to both groups, confirming the more specific role that CCG members played in promoting the DFSA cross-cutting purpose.

Family members or relatives were reported by most respondents as supporters of their pursued behavior change (74%), but perceptions of the effectiveness of their support are dispersed, with a few outliers who considered that they made almost no difference. Disaggregating their effectiveness by type of behavior change shows that they made a statistically significant positive difference to behavior change related to *household economic well-being* and to the *promotion of gender equity and equality*, while they made no statistically significant difference to behavior change related to *improving household nutritional status*.

**Figure 75. Contribution of influencers to behavior change, endline (tool 2; 2021, N=401)**

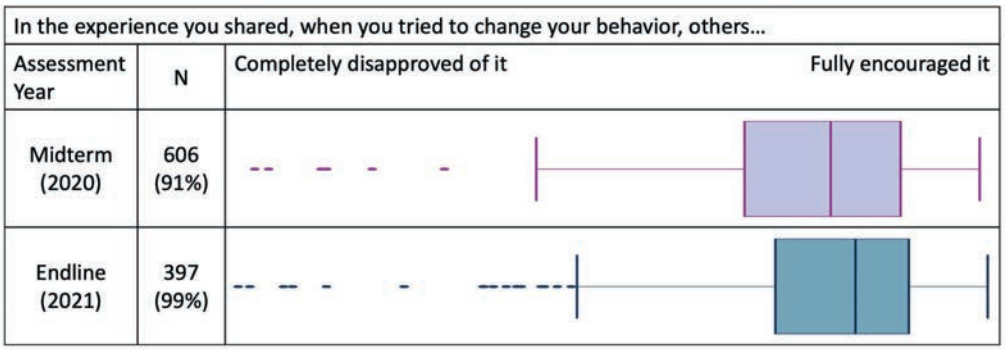


In addition to the role of influencers in behavior change, social rewards or sanctions may also encourage people to or discourage them from changing their behavior. To assess the role of social rewards or sanctions, CCG members and non-members were asked the extent to which their efforts to change their behavior were discouraged or encouraged by others (Figure 76).

Findings show that both female and male respondents felt encouraged to change their behavior, with no significant difference in how encouraged they felt. At endline, both groups felt even more encouraged to change their behavior; however, not all respondents felt encouraged by others (see outliers at the left of the slider). By reading their narratives, it can be extracted that some who responded in this manner were women who had attempted to engage in petty trade or other off-farm activities, and had failed or had to stop due to personal household situations. Among the few male respondents who felt disapproved of, the experience was related to ending a *khat*[16] *addiction.* Others had disapproved of this habit, but had not necessarily encouraged a change in the behavior.

These weak signals, when the experience of behavior change was one of disapproval, merit further investigation to determine whether there is a negative pattern that emerges. This will enable a response to be designed and implemented to help dampen such responses.

**Figure 76. Effect of social rewards and sanctions on behavior change at midterm and endline (tool 2, 2020, N=668; 2021, N=401)**




## EFFECTIVENESS OF MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND PLACES OF INTERACTION

As discussed in the section on CCG functioning, the two means of communication most used by CCGs to influence behavior change were focus group discussions and reflection, and one-to-one communication; these methods were also considered by CCG facilitators and members to be the most effective, followed by the sharing of personal testimonies and practical demonstrations (Figure 15, above). The different groups of CCG members and non-members (women/men, young adults/adults) who pursued personal behavior change also considered group exchanges and reflections and one-to-one communication as the most frequent means of communication used to influence their behavior, and the most effective (Figure 77), reinforcing the earlier findings. These findings are a strong endorsement of the role of Community Conversations in fostering behavior change.

16. *Khat*: A leaf stimulant that is chewed.

When deployed, practical demonstrations and the sharing of personal testimonies were both considered effective by CCG members and non-members. However, while CCG members perceived personal testimonies to be almost as effective as one-to-one communication for promoting behavior change, members and non-members who shared their personal behavior change experience viewed them as a lot less influential. The sharing of personal testimonies requires a setting in which participants feel safe and confident. At endline, young adults rated personal testimonies as less effective than adults did, and this difference is statistically significant ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1085$), while young adults' perception of the effectiveness of other means of communication was not statistically different to that of adults.

CCG members in general were unenthusiastic about the effectiveness of radio, TV and social media, and of education and communication materials for addressing prioritized issues even though they were widely used. In contrast, fewer individuals indicated that they had been exposed to these forms of communication, but those that had been rated their efficacy more highly than CCG members had, but at a level of effectiveness well below that of other means of communication. When these findings are disaggregated by sex, women found media more effective than men and the difference is statistically significant ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1313$).

In sum, direct and personal one-to-one or collective interaction was deemed more effective at promoting behavior change than other communication methods.

**Figure 77. Effectiveness of means of communication for addressing prioritized issues (tool 1, N=373) and influencing behavior change (tool 2; N=401), endline (2021)**

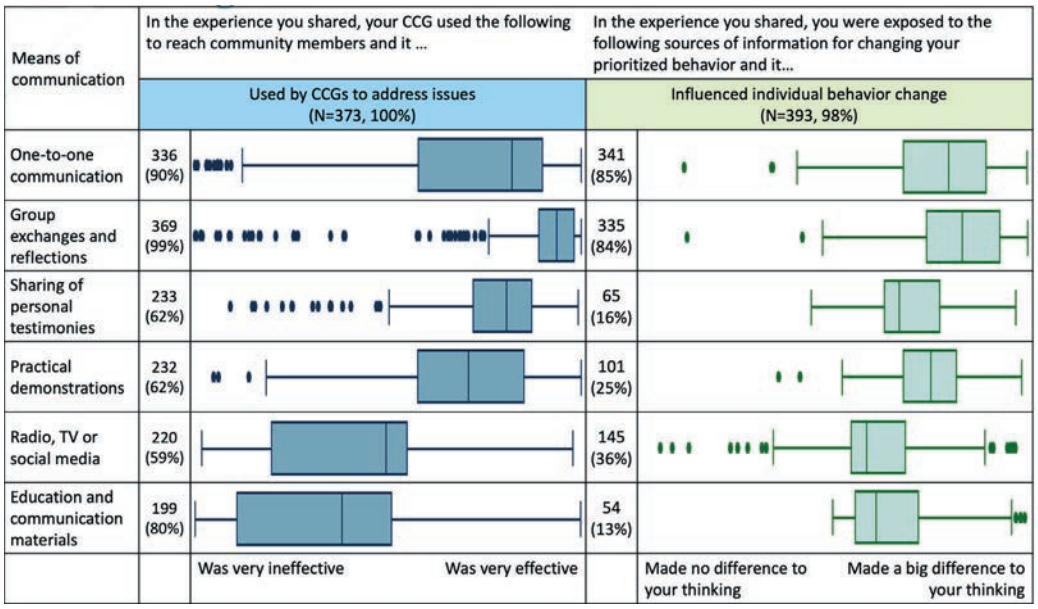
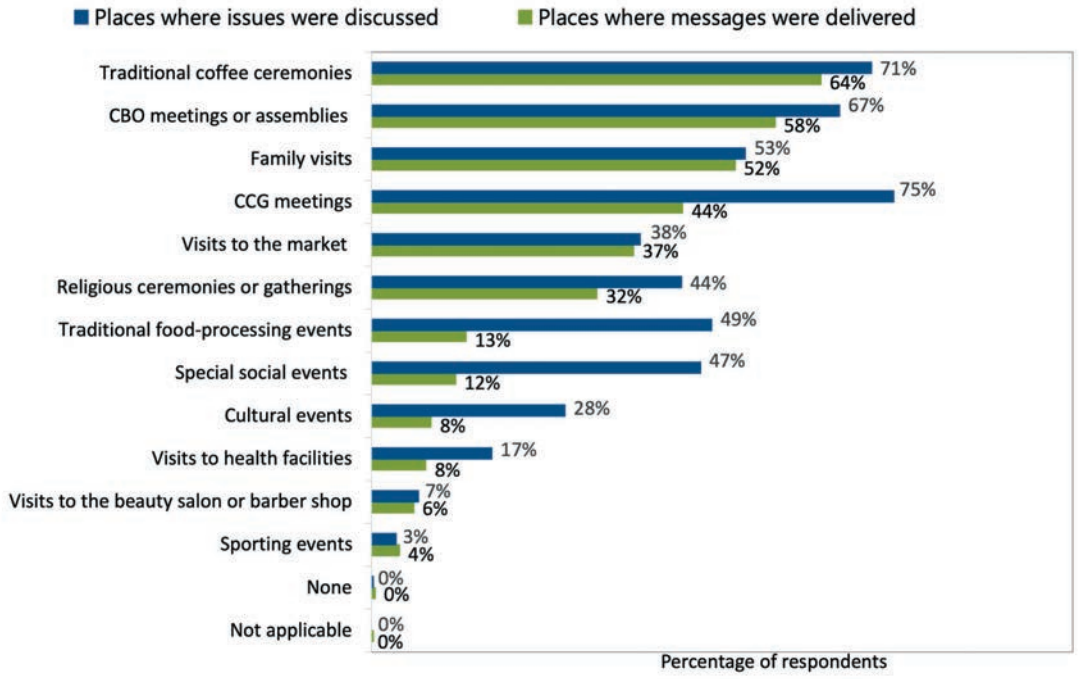



Figure 78 shows a comparison of perspectives on the places and events of interaction where community issues were discussed, and behavior change messaging delivered. The two main perspectives are those of CCG members for discussing issues to address (shaded in blue), and of CCG members and non-members who pursued a behavior change on where they received messaging to change their behavior (shaded in green).

According to CCG facilitators and members, the three most effective places/events for interaction where community issues were discussed were CCG meetings, the traditional coffee ceremony, and CBO meetings or assemblies; followed by family visits when they did occur (Figure 78). For more CCG members and non-members who pursued behavior change, these places/events were also considered as those where they received useful information that made them aware of the need to change their behavior (except for CCG meetings for non-members, as can be expected). Other places/events selected by fewer respondents, where useful information for promoting their behavior change was shared, included traditional food processing events, special social events, cultural events, and visits to health facilities.

Among the most mentioned places/events, CCG meetings were mentioned by a statistically significant higher percentage of respondents who pursued behavior changes related to *gender equity and equality* (Pearson chi2(1) = 18.6358, Pr = 0.000) and to *household economic well-being* (Pearson chi2(1) = 8.5830, Pr = 0.003); while traditional coffee ceremonies were mentioned equally by those who pursued or not behavior change related to *gender equity and equality* (Pearson chi2(1) = 0.2011, Pr = 0.654), and by a statistically significant higher percentage of respondents who pursued behavior change related to the other three DFSA purposes. On the other hand, CBO meetings or assemblies were mentioned by a statistically significant lower percentage of respondents who pursued behavior change related to *gender equity and equality* (Pearson chi2(1) = 10.6668, Pr = 0.001) and no statistically significant difference for behavior change related to the other DFSA purposes was observed.

**Figure 78. Places/events of interaction where community issues were discussed and behavior change messaging delivered, endline (tool 1, N=373; tool 2, N=401)**

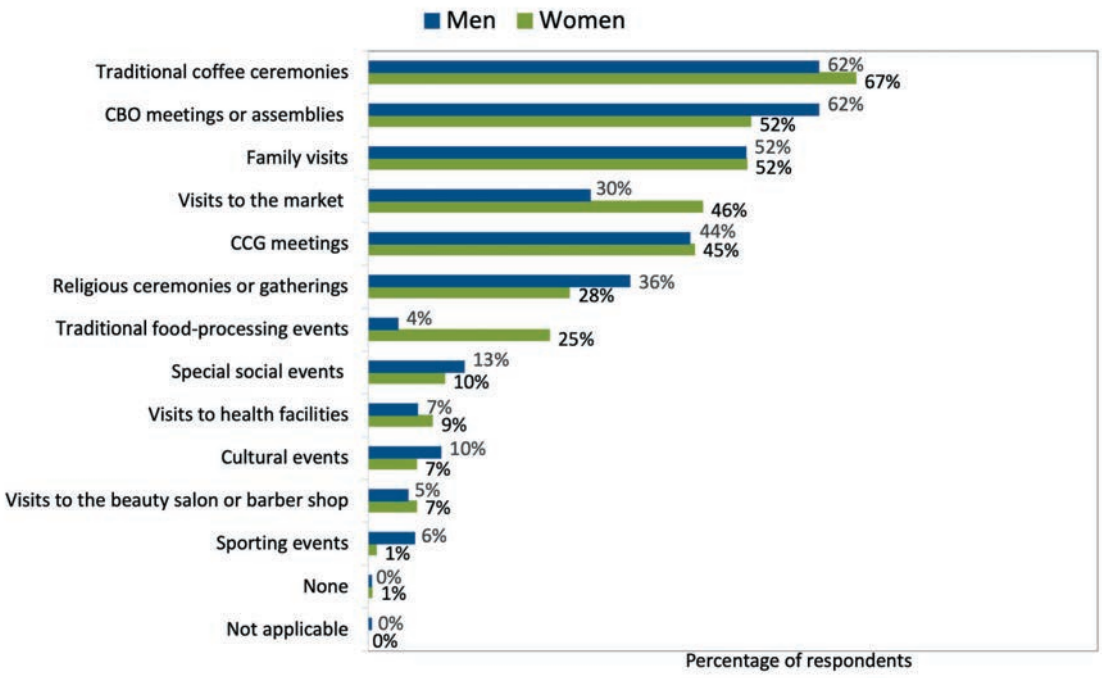


The findings in Figure 79 suggest that women and men had places and events of interaction in common, but also where they showed a difference. Where there was overlap (≤ 5% difference) includes such places/events as family visits, CCG meetings, special social events, visits to health facilities, cultural events and traditional coffee ceremonies. On the other hand, more women reported receiving messages to change their behavior at visits to the market and at traditional food processing events, while more men reported receiving them at CBO meetings or assemblies and religious ceremonies or gatherings.

When differentiated by age group, more adults than young adults reported receiving messaging to change their behaviors during family visits and at health care facilities, while more young adults reported receiving it at sporting events and CCG meetings. For other places/events, no difference was found when disaggregating by age group.

Overall, CCGs appeared to have initiated discussions in diverse places and events about different issues affecting communities, and CCG members were using these opportunities specifically to influence behavior change. One plausible interpretation of these findings is that it makes most sense to have a strategic approach on where to focus project efforts to discuss community issues and deliver behavior change messages and, at the same time, to be opportunistic in using other non-prioritized places/events for interaction. Moreover, the differences between women's and men's responses, and between young adults' and adults,' are important to consider when designing gender- and age-responsive strategies for influencing behavior change. The use of informal places/events to deliver behavior change messaging needs to be carefully assessed when identifying opportunities for dissemination, as it may be that certain topics cannot be discussed in certain settings.

**Figure 79. Places/events of interaction where behavior change messaging was delivered, by sex, endline (tool 2, N=401)**



## OUTCOME OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE

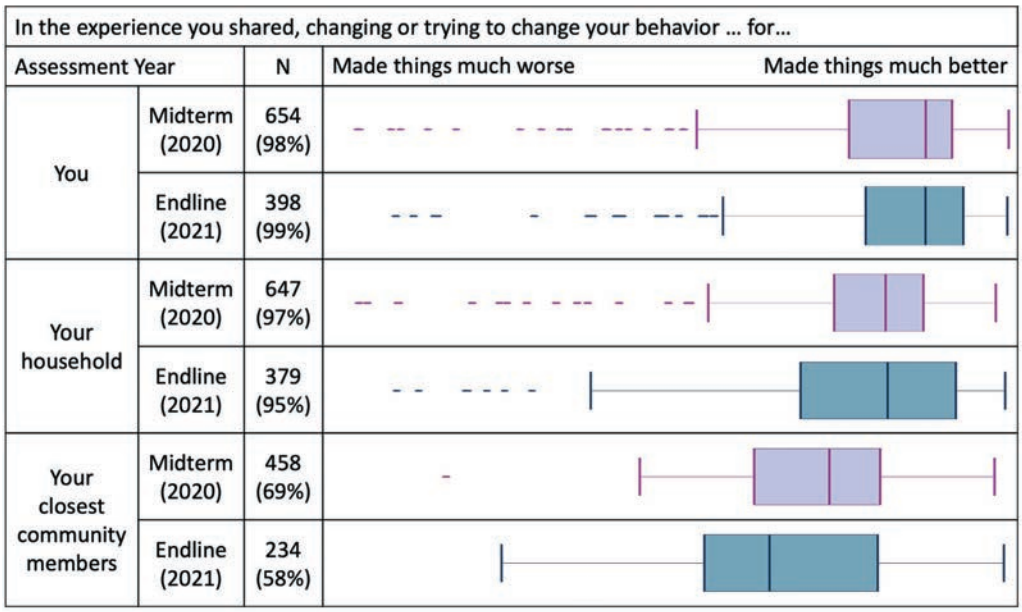
To assess the effect of personal experiences of behavior change, CCG members and non-members were asked whether their personal experience of pursuing a behavior change had any effect on them, their household or their closest community members, and the extent to which it made things better or worse for them, their household or their closest community members (Figure 80). The findings suggest first that, for most individuals, undertaking personal behavior change generated outcomes for themselves (99% at endline) and for their households (95% at endline), while fewer respondents considered that it generated outcomes for their closest community members (58% at endline). Furthermore, their behavior change made things better for both themselves and their household. These two outcomes were very consistent at both midterm and endline, but outcomes at the household level were more spread out at endline. The effect on their closest community members was also positive, although at a lower level at midterm, and dropping even further at endline, and responses were also more dispersed.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that the effect of changing one's own behavior is likely to have the greatest impact on oneself, and then on those individuals with whom one has the closest relationship (i.e., one's household); subsequently, as implied by Figure 80, an effect may well be felt by those individuals living in closer proximity, although this outcome is likely to be more diluted.

Additional analysis indicated that there was no difference in the responses of women and men, but young adults considered that their behavior change made things even better for their households and their closest community members than adults deemed theirs to, possibly due to the greater importance placed on peer relationships and the desire to be accepted. This difference is statistically significant at $Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0074$ and $Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0708$, respectively.

We can see too that the effects of behavior change also generated some unintended negative outcomes, most particularly at the individual and household levels. As the new RFSA reviews its initial design, it would be prudent to understand the significance (or not) of these negative outliers, to determine, first, whether there is a potential risk and, second, if there is, what the most appropriate response might be to dampen the threat.

**Figure 80. Effect of CCG members' and non-members' behavior change on themselves, their household and their closest community members, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)**




## SECONDARY DIFFUSION OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE

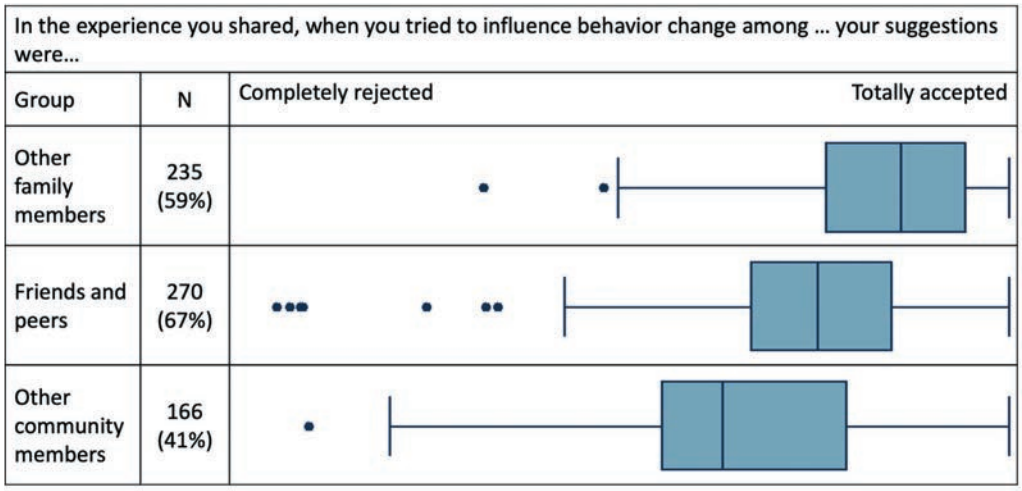
At midterm, 63% of respondents who shared their personal experience of behavior change (75% of CCG members and 48% of non-members) reached out to encourage others to also change their behavior; this percentage rose slightly at endline to 69% (78% of CCG members and 60% of non-members). This appears to be an encouraging finding in that more than three-quarters of respondents were sufficiently self-motivated to share their experiences and practices of behavior change with others, not just with family members but also among both their friends and peers, and other community members. This is termed 'secondary diffusion.'

The focus of secondary diffusion was mainly on other family members (59% of respondents) and with friends and peers (67% of respondents) (Figure 81). The highest level of acceptance of the behavior change was among other family members (median nearer the right extreme 'totally accepted,' with a narrower spread of responses and few outliers). Friends and peers too showed strong acceptance, but as the 'distance' of the personal relationship increased, so the level of acceptance of the behavior change was lower, with more dispersed responses, and outliers indicating degrees of rejection. Fewer respondents sought to influence other community members' behaviors (41%). While those community members still (at the median) showed acceptance, it was at a lower level, with a greater range of responses indicating higher levels of resistance. This may be an area best addressed by CCG members: CCG members performed significantly better in achieving acceptance among other community members ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0251$), while no difference was observed in the relative abilities of CCG members and non-members to influence other family members, friends and peers.

Women experienced a statistically significant (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0992) higher level of acceptance relative to men when they sought to influence behavior change among community members. The RFSA team could usefully explore why this might be the case prior to developing intervention approaches. In comparison with young adults, adults too achieved a statistically significant (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0505) higher acceptance when seeking to influence behavior change among family members. This was true too for acceptance levels among friends and peers, but at a lower level of statistical significance (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1426).

No significant difference can be observed in the perceptions of adults and young adults on their capacity to influence other community members, perhaps because in relation to adults they may be perceived as having a lower legitimacy in their community circles. This presents an interesting conundrum for the RFSA team to consider since young adults can often be more flexible and open to new behaviors and practices and, as the younger generation, they offer the potential for a longer stream of financial and social benefits once they have adopted changes in behavior and practices.

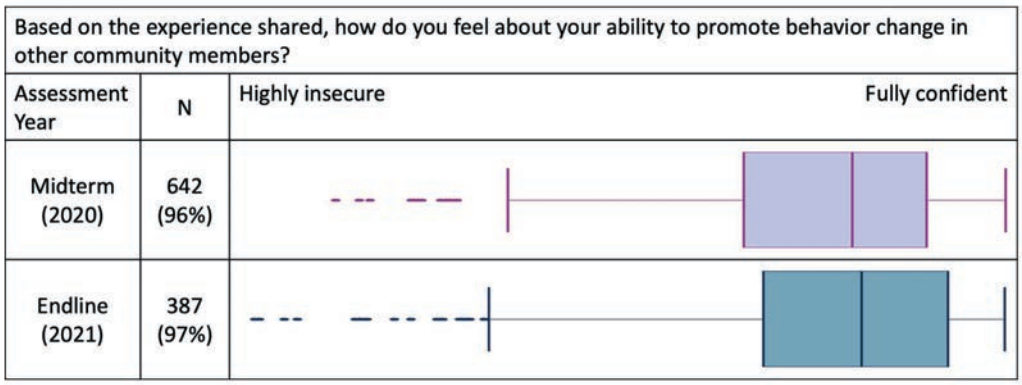
**Figure 81. Influence of CCG members and non-members on changing others' behavior, endline (tool 2, N=401)**




An additional question was asked on CCG members' and non-members' level of confidence in influencing behavior change in their community (Figure 82). The findings at midterm and endline were consistent, suggesting that at the median there was a good level of confidence. Additional analysis points to CCG members being more confident than non-members but only statistically significant at Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1329.

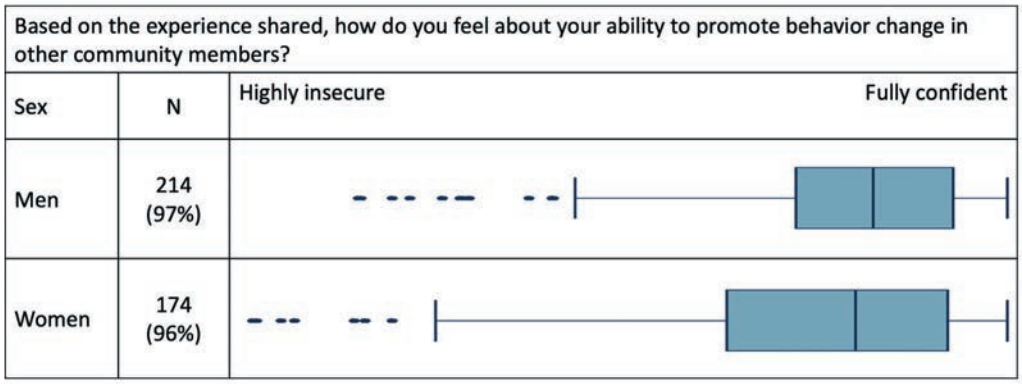
The dispersion and frequency of responses falling on the left of the slider, showing that some felt insecure in their ability to promote behavior change among other community members, increased slightly at endline. This may reflect the real-world experiences of some respondents engaging in this 'dissemination' work and realizing that it presents its own challenges.

### Figure 82. CCG members' and non-members' confidence in their ability to influence behavior change, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)




When disaggregated by sex, it appears that men were more confident than women (Figure 83), and the difference is statistically significant at Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0153. There was no difference in the level of confidence between young adults and adults.

### Figure 83. CCG members' and non-members' confidence in their ability to influence behavior change, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 2, N=401)




## COVID-19 EFFECT ON PURSUED BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic impinged on the activities of all personnel engaged in the DFSA. It was deemed important to get a sense of its impact on CCG members and non-members so that other findings could be informed by the unanticipated new context.

Findings in Figure 84 indicate that 44% of women and 40% of men did not respond inside the triad; that is, they believed they were unaffected by COVID-19. For the women and men who did respond when asked about how COVID-19 had affected them, their responses were remarkably similar: both women (73%) and men (70%), indicated that relationships were most impacted by COVID-19 (Figure 84); this number is even higher if we consider those who responded that the threat of the virus had affected a combination of relationships and mental health (13% and 15%, respectively). COVID-19 had virtually no impact on members' and non-members' physical health. The virus was perceived as a city and town problem; community members were surprised to see DFSA team members wearing masks; however, CRS, in collaboration with stakeholders, educated communities on COVID-19 prevention protocols.

There were only two narratives from respondents that explicitly mentioned COVID-19:

***Public participation***

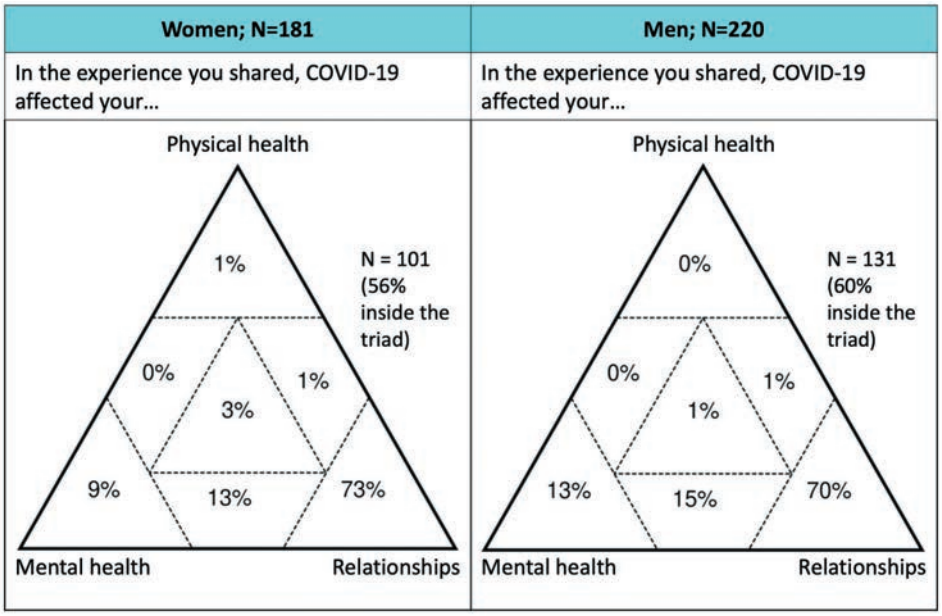
*I am 42 years old. I am very poor, and I participate in the PSNP support program. To receive food and money aid, I had to participate in public works and environmental protection activities. Last year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no public works activities were undertaken. For this reason, I started to construct stone and soil bunds and to plant trees around my farmland to prevent soil erosion and flooding. Now my farm is protected from erosion and soil loss.*

***Livestock-fattening as an income-generating activity***

*A year ago, I started to participate in a youth Community Conversations group. As I did so, the COVID-19 crisis emerged in our country, and we were required not to continue with our meetings and group discussions. Although my participation in the CCG meetings was only for a short time, I learned a lot from those discussions. Most of all, I appreciated and was motivated to undertake income-generating activities, such as goat-rearing and ox-fattening. As a young adult I felt inspired and had the belief that I could be successful. I bought two goats and one ox to initiate the fattening activity. Up until now the animals are in a good condition, and I hope that this activity will generate a good profit. I plan to sell the animals for the upcoming Muslim holiday.*

The regular cash and food distributions followed COVID-19 protocols, and some livelihood transfers for the most vulnerable community members continued through the pandemic. However, some delays were experienced as large gatherings were restricted and the distribution of commodities and inputs had to be spread over a longer time.

**Figure 84. Effect of COVID-19 on CCG members and non-members, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 2, N=401)**

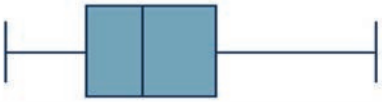


## ROLE OF CCGs IN MEDIATING CONFLICT

A key potential role for CCGs is in mediating conflict. This seems to have been an incipient area of activity as only 26% of respondents were aware of CCGs playing a role in mediating family conflict, 23% in managing access to and control over community resources, and just 7% on mediating conflict among ethnic groups. Nevertheless, these activities showed positive signs of success (Figure 85). In all conflictual settings, responses indicated that the outcome at the median had been positive, more so for family disputes and among ethnic groups, and slightly less so for community resource allocation disagreements. However, it should be noted that in mediating conflict among family members, some responses were slightly toward the left of the slider, 'made the situation worse,' which will require further investigation.

These findings are undoubtedly positive and exciting because they signal the potential value of providing further support and training to those engaged in what is an invaluable CCG role within the local community. However, this is a delicate activity that needs to be carefully planned and implemented to ensure that these interventions do not worsen the situations.

**Figure 85. Role of CCGs in mediating conflict, endline (tool 2, N=401)**

| In the experience you shared, the CCG played a role in mediating disagreements or conflicts and ... | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Type of conflict | N | Made the situation worse | Fully improved the situation |
| Among family members | 105 (26%) |  | |
| Related to access and control over community resources | 92 (23%) |  | |
| Among different ethnic groups | 29 (7%) |  | |

## CONTRIBUTION TO GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY, AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Having analyzed the personal behavior change that CCG members and non-members pursued, this section assesses the contribution of CCGs to promoting gender equity and equality, and positive youth development, specifically as they relate to women's and youth's access to and control over resources, equitable gender-based household dynamics, women's and youth's participation in the public sphere, and reduction of harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence.

Specifically, this section focuses on:

1) Understanding how gender-based social norms have influenced and were influenced by the individual behavior change pursued, given the important role that social norms play in how individuals interact and behave in their inter-individual interactions, as well as in their social groups or organizations (intra-group interactions), and therefore mutually influence their behaviors.

2) Understanding how personal norms have influenced the individual behavior change pursued as they shape intra-individual processes of personal introspection, and the extent to which these personal norms align or contest social norms.

3) Assessing the extent to which this behavior change, and related social and personal norms, contributed to: (i) changing gender-based household dynamics (household decision-making, and male engagement in domestic and care work); (ii) increasing women's and youth's access to and control over resources; (iii) improving women's and youth's participation and recognition in the public sphere; (iv) reducing gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices; and (v) contributing to youth development.

By doing this, the following sub-sections address four of this study's learning questions:

- How are personal and social norms influencing individual behavior and to what extent are CCGs advocating for changes to these norms?
- How is the promoted behavior change influencing gender-based household dynamics (household decision-making and male engagement in domestic and care work), and women's and youth's participation and recognition in the public sphere?
- How is the promoted behavior change contributing to gender equity and equality, and youth development, by improving women's and youth's access to and control over resources?
- How is the promoted behavior change contributing to reducing harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence?

### SOCIAL NORMS AND PERSONAL BELIEFS

Social norms and personal beliefs regulate individual behavior and therefore have an important influence on how intentions, analyzed in the previous section, are realized to become permanent and sustainable behavior change. To assess these norms and beliefs, corresponding positive and negative norms related to gender equity and equality were described in the short statements shown in Table 28. The statements, in their negative and positive forms, were used to design two 'slider with stones' follow-up questions (each statement as one 'stone' or response option) to assess first whether CCG members and non-members had acted based on these negative and positive norms in the experience shared. After they had selected the social norm that had influenced them, respondents were asked to place the selected social norm on a continuum from 'you believed this was correct' on one extreme to 'the community members believed this was correct' on the other, indicating the extent to which their behavior was informed by personal beliefs, social norms, or a combination.

### Table 30. Social norms/personal beliefs related to DFSA gender equity and equality behavior change

| Behavior change | Negative social norms/personal beliefs | Positive social norms/personal beliefs |
|---|---|---|
| Male engagement in domestic and care work | Men who share tasks with their wives are considered weak. | Men and women who share tasks provide a good example to their children. |
| Shared household decision-making | Only men can make good decisions for their household. | Husband and wife live in harmony making decisions together. |
| Women's access to and control of resources | Women are not good at managing financial resources or other assets. | Women are good at managing financial resources or other assets. |
| Stopping gender-based violence | Men have the right to correct their wives and daughters. | Men who dialogue with their wives and daughters are respected. |
| Participation in the public sphere | Men belong to the public sphere and women to the house. | The community trusts women working together for a good cause. |

At endline, 35% of respondents (46% of CCG members and 23% of non-members) indicated that they had acted on at least one of the **negative norms and beliefs** and at least one of the **positive norms and beliefs** influencing gender equity and equality.

The following narrative shows the personal experience of behavior change of a married adult man, in a monogamous relationship, who had acted to transform two of his own negative personal beliefs, including 'men who share tasks with their wives are considered weak' and 'men belong to the public sphere and women to the house.' The catalyst of his wife's poor health led him to change his behavior to reflect a more positive appreciation of the role of women, not only regarding those two existing beliefs, but also with reference to an additional change in which 'husband and wife live in harmony making decisions together.'

> ***Agreement on household relations and tasks***
> *My attitude was that men should not share household tasks, that doing so made them look weak, and that women should stay home. I inherited these ideas from my family, and I continued to live by them. But this attitude negatively affected my wife because all the responsibilities for housekeeping rested on her: caring for the children and working inside and outside. After I saw the consequences of this on her health, I was more ready to change my behavior so that I would also undertake household tasks, such as fetching water and firewood, and caring for the children and other tasks. Furthermore, I started to discuss with my wife what was taking place in the house, what and where to sell our produce, all helping to improve the relationship between me and my wife. My children are now happy, and my wife is healthy.*

The narrative below is an example of a personal experience of behavior change of a married adult man in a monogamous relationship who responded that he believed that he had acted based on the negative norms listed in Table 28:

> ***Family conflict and changing behavior***
> *Twelve months ago, there was a disagreement between me and my wife when she left the house to go to the market and I felt that she had taken too much time. As a result, I beat my wife day after day. When she went to visit her family, I was very upset and beat her again. But now, however, after training from the CCG, community leaders and religious leaders, I have completely changed my behavior, and my wife and I are living with a greater sense of contentment and love.*

This respondent sought to change his behavior by addressing his own personal beliefs that 'men belong to the public sphere and women to the house' and 'men have the right to correct their wives and daughters.' It is clear from the above narrative that the man was influenced by the CCG behavior change advocacy efforts, i.e., to stop gender-based violence. Through his actions, he was able to overcome this negative personal belief/social norm to be more closely aligned with the positive norm in which the community trusts women, an outcome sought by the CCG.

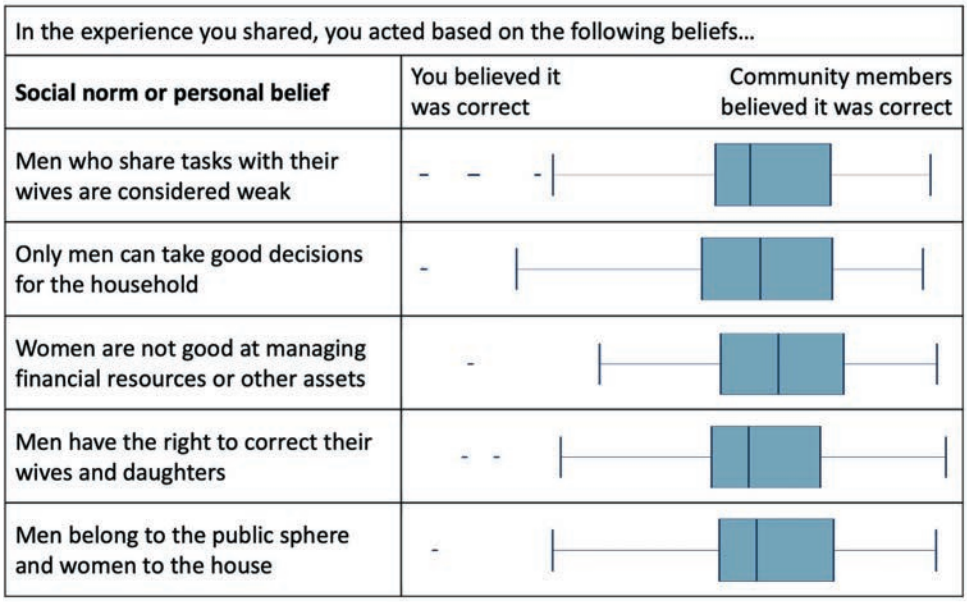
Although social norms and personal beliefs are inextricably intertwined—that is, they can be viewed as two perspectives of the same issue—the intervention strategies addressing them may be different. When behavior is influenced by social norms, people act because of peer pressure and a desire to be accepted in their community, and, therefore, influencing behavior change requires working with community leaders and role models to transform negative social norms into positive ones. On the other hand, when behavior is influenced by personal beliefs, negative behaviors are internalized in the individual, and, therefore, influencing behavior change needs to focus on individual awareness, reflection and introspection. As noted earlier, social norms and personal beliefs are closely intertwined and reinforce each other, so promoting and sustaining behavior change requires a transformation of both to ensure their alignment.

To assess whether respondents, while pursuing their behavior change, acted on social norms, personal beliefs, or a combination of the two, they were asked to first select the norms and beliefs that influenced their acting; and after that, were asked why they acted based on the norm and belief by positioning it on a slider between 'you believed it was correct' on one extreme (meaning based only on their personal belief) and 'community members believed it was correct' on the other extreme (meaning based only on the social norm).

In relation to **negative norms and beliefs**, at the median, respondents acted slightly more on social norms than on personal beliefs (median toward the right of the slider), showing that influencing gender equity and equality requires a transformation in these negative social norms at the community level (Figure 86). As these negative norms are transformed, they will influence further transformation into personal beliefs. Endline findings **disaggregated by sex** only show a statistically significant difference ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0878$) between women and men for the negative statement 'men belong to the public sphere and women to the house' (related to women's participation in the public sphere), showing that women who acted based on this negative statement were more influenced by social norms; while men who acted based on it were more influenced by their personal beliefs. This indicates that men require focused support to further internalize positive beliefs related to their support of women's participation in the public sphere.

When these findings are disaggregated by age group, a statistically significant difference can be observed for two of these negative social norms and beliefs. The first relates to male engagement, 'men who share tasks with their wives are considered weak,' where young adults acted more based on their personal belief, while adults acted more on social norms ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1387$); and the second relates to household decision-making, 'only men can take good decisions for the household,' where the same pattern can be observed ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1308$). This shows that, for these negative norms and beliefs not to be perpetuated across generations, work needs to be done with young adults in relation to them. On the other hand, findings showed no difference between CCG members' and non-members' responses.

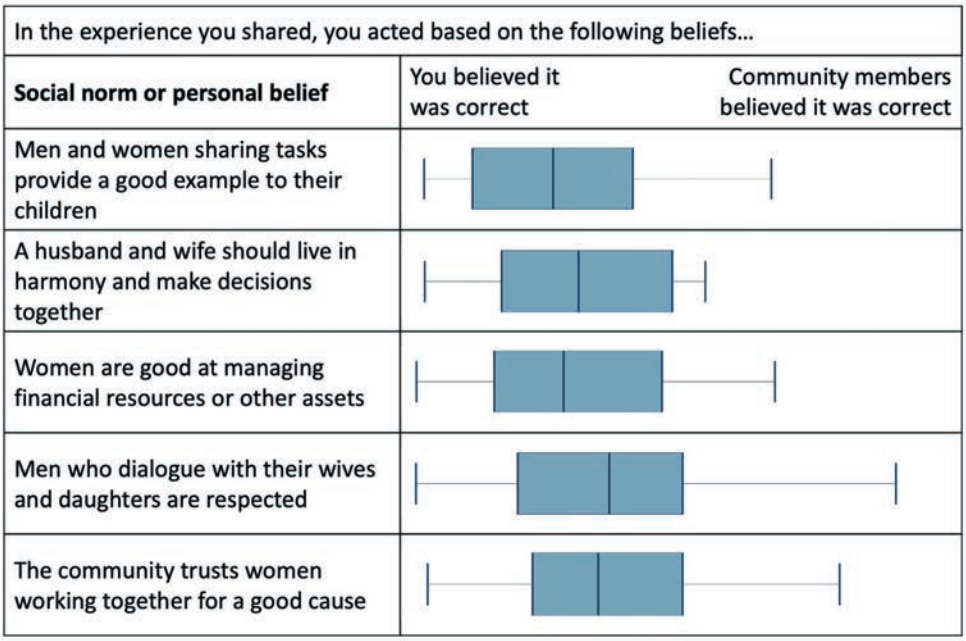
Figure 86. Motivations for acting based on negative norms and beliefs, endline (tool 2, N=401)




In relation to **positive norms and beliefs**, at the median, respondents acted more on personal beliefs than on social norms (median line toward the left of the slider), showing that men and women had internalized these positive norms and beliefs, but more work is needed to transform social norms so they are aligned to reach the ideal response in the middle of the slider (Figure 87). As these positive personal beliefs are more internalized, there is a higher probability that the observed behavior change will be sustained, and that these personal norms and beliefs will further influence positive gender-related social norms.

Findings **disaggregated by sex and by age group** show no significant difference among women and men who acted on these positive norms and beliefs, or between young adults and adults. For the positive statement on women's participation in the public sphere—'the community trusts women working together for a good cause'— CCG members acted more based on their personal belief while non-members acted more on social norms, and this difference is statistically significant at $Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1304$. This shows that participation in CCGs has had a positive influence on changing personal beliefs about women's participation in the public sphere. Changes from negative to positive personal and social norms can be linked to the results of Figure 18, the strategies used by the CCG.

Figure 87. Motivations for acting based on positive norms and beliefs, endline (tool 2, N=401)



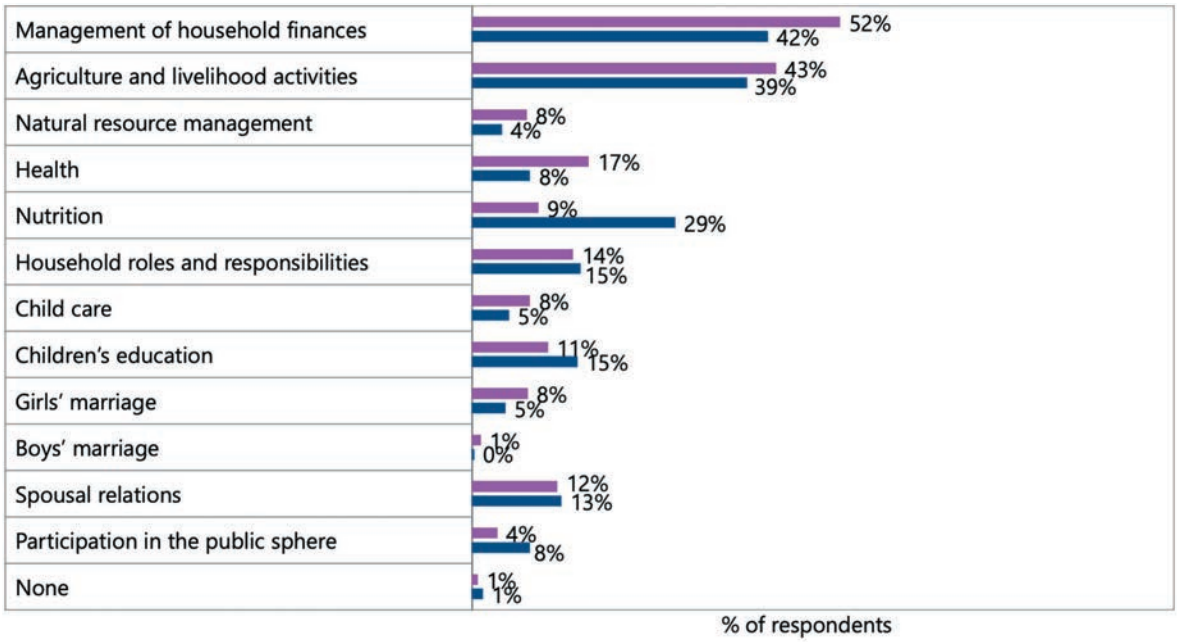

## GENDER-BASED HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS

A foundation for gender equity and equality is women's agency, defined as 'the ability of women to pursue their goals by having the power to express their voice and make choices, and by having opportunities to access and control resources and services, free from violence and retribution' (adapted from van Eerdewijk et al., 2017). This section presents findings aimed at assessing the contribution of gender-related behavior change to improve women's agency at the household level; specifically, as it relates, first, to household decision-making, expressed as women's influence on decisions that affect their lives and futures; and second, to male engagement, expressed in the extent to which men take unpaid household roles and responsibilities that were traditionally assigned to women, such as domestic and care work.

### SHARED HOUSEHOLD DECISION-MAKING

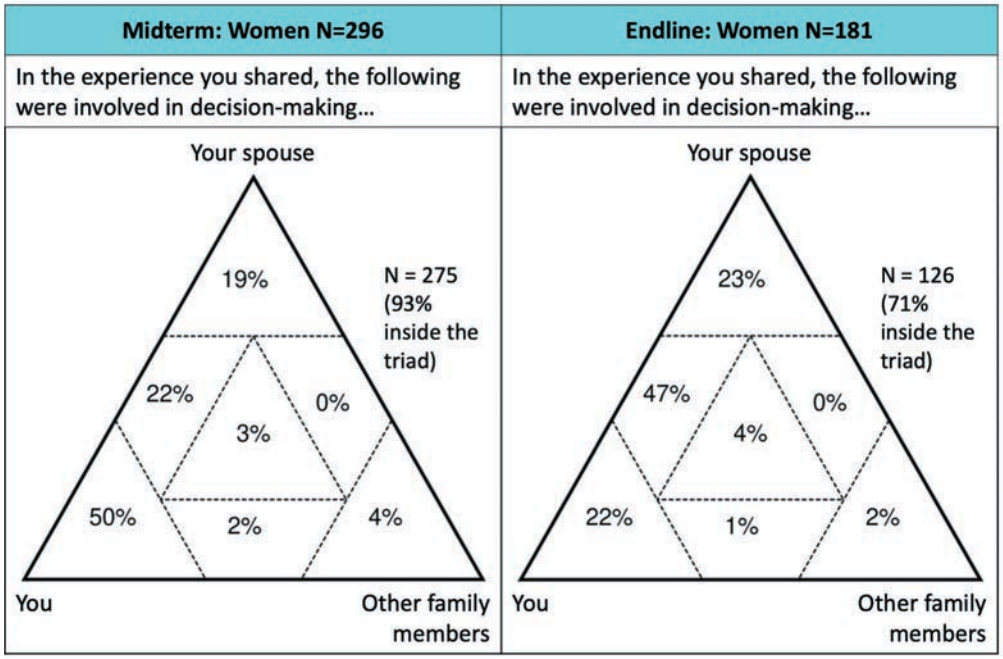
To assess the extent and type of household decisions that were influenced by the individual behavior change that was pursued, CCG members and non-members were asked about the decisions made in their households that were influenced by the behavior change they pursued (Figure 88). Findings show that, in line with the midterm findings on the types of behavior change pursued, the two most frequent decisions influenced related to financial management practices (management of household finances) and agricultural and off-farm livelihood practices (agriculture and livelihood activities), although the proportions responding in this manner were lower than at midterm. Important changes at endline were the elevated proportion of responses indicating the influence of household decisions on nutrition and children's education, and participation in the public sphere, and lower numbers mentioning health-related decisions, natural resource management, childcare and girls' marriage. These were followed by decisions related to the distribution of domestic and care work in the household.

**Figure 88. Household decisions influenced by the personal behavior change pursued, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)**



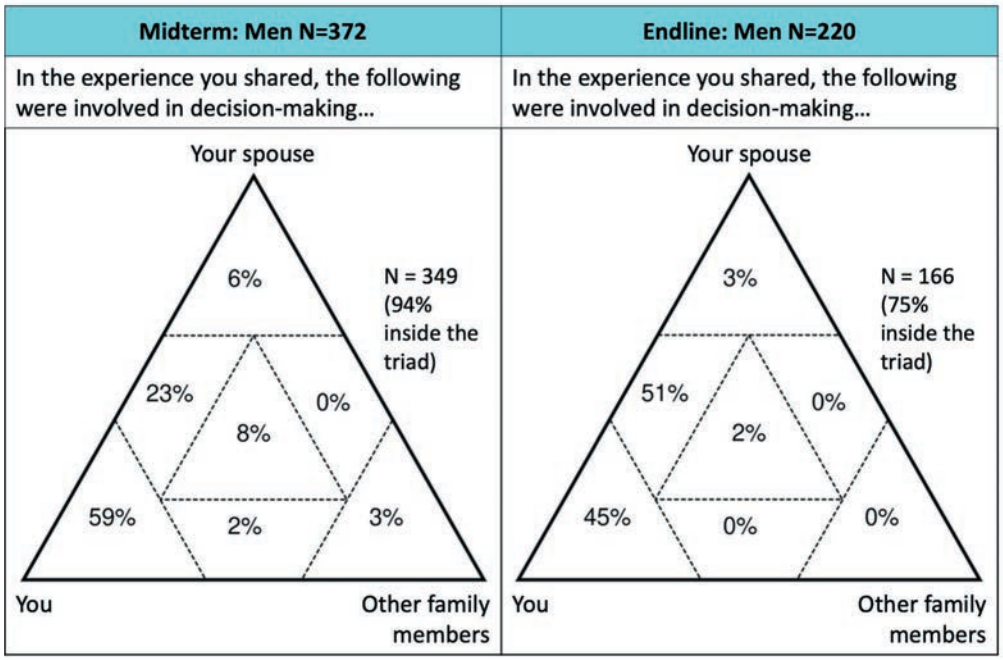

A triad follow-up question was used to assess, at midterm and endline, the relative involvement of married men, married women and other family members in household decisions made in the experiences of individual behavior change shared (Figures 89 and 90). The level of involvement in decision-making perceived by married women at endline (22%+47% = 69%) (Figure 89) was about the same as at midterm (72%). This level of involvement in household decision-making most likely reflects the intense activity of the DFSA team to promote shared decision-making, as described in the previous section on social norms and personal beliefs.

**Figure 89. Shared decision-making at the household level among married women, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)**



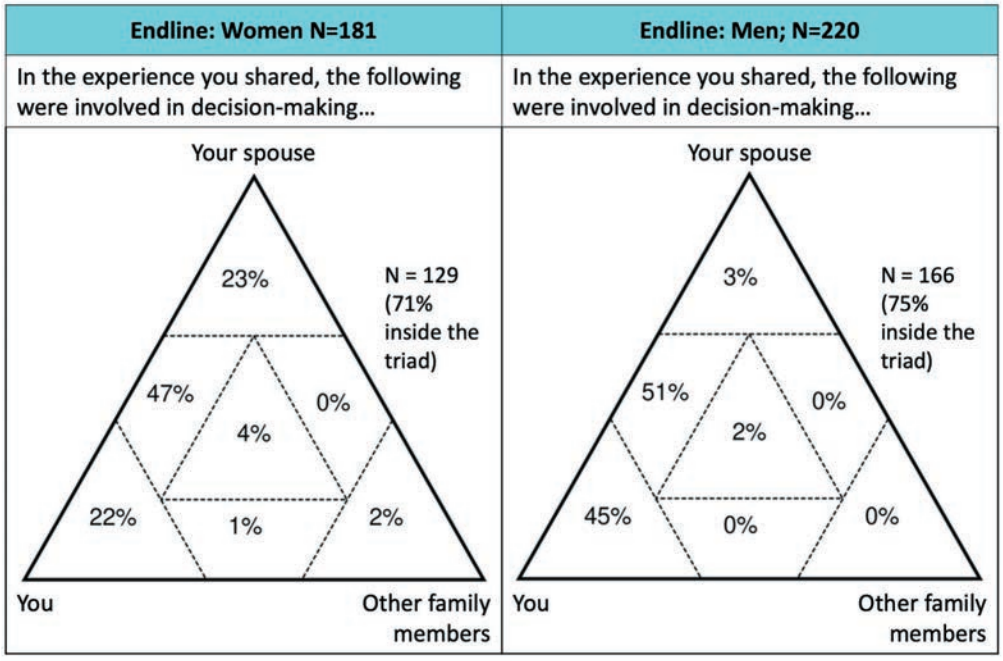
The responses of married men reflected a similar perspective on this positive transformation (Figure 90). There was a drop in married men taking decisions alone between midterm and endline (59% to 45%) and, importantly, a recognition that women were more involved in joint household decision-making (rising from 23% to 51%). In short, over half the households of married women and men surveyed reported that women were actively involved in decision-making at endline.

**Figure 90. Shared decision-making at the household level among married men, at midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)**



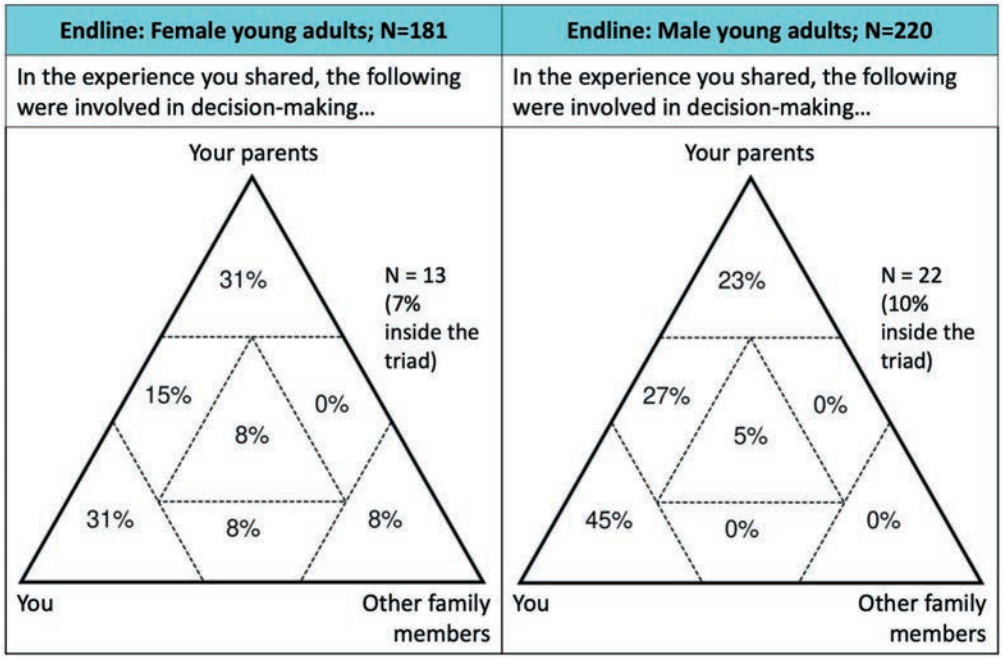

While there were clearly different perceptions between married men and married women of the way decision-making took place in the household, there was a good correspondence in their perception of the degree to which shared decision-making had taken root in the DFSA project area (Figure 91): 47% of women and 51% of men believed that joint decision-making was a current practice. Given the concurrence of these results, it is reasonable to state that there should be a good degree of confidence in their veracity. Nonetheless, there is still room for even further improvement, since 45% of men said their spouse was not involved in decision-making, and 23% of women indicated they had little or no role. The RFSA team will want to consider to what extent they can support married couples not only to model this behavior, but also to discuss it openly with other family members, friends and peers, while the CCG adopts the role of promoting it more actively at a community level, perhaps inviting those already practicing joint decision-making to share their stories and experiences.

**Figure 91. Shared decision-making at the household level among married respondents, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 2, N=401)**




Further analysis (Figure 92) indicates that young unmarried men perceived that they had a great degree of involvement in decision-making, either playing a very significant role (45%), or sharing it to a greater or lesser extent with their parents (27%). Relatively speaking, young unmarried women reported a not dissimilar pattern but at a lower level of involvement (31% and 15%, respectively).

**Figure 92. Shared decision-making at the household level among unmarried respondents, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 2, N=401)**

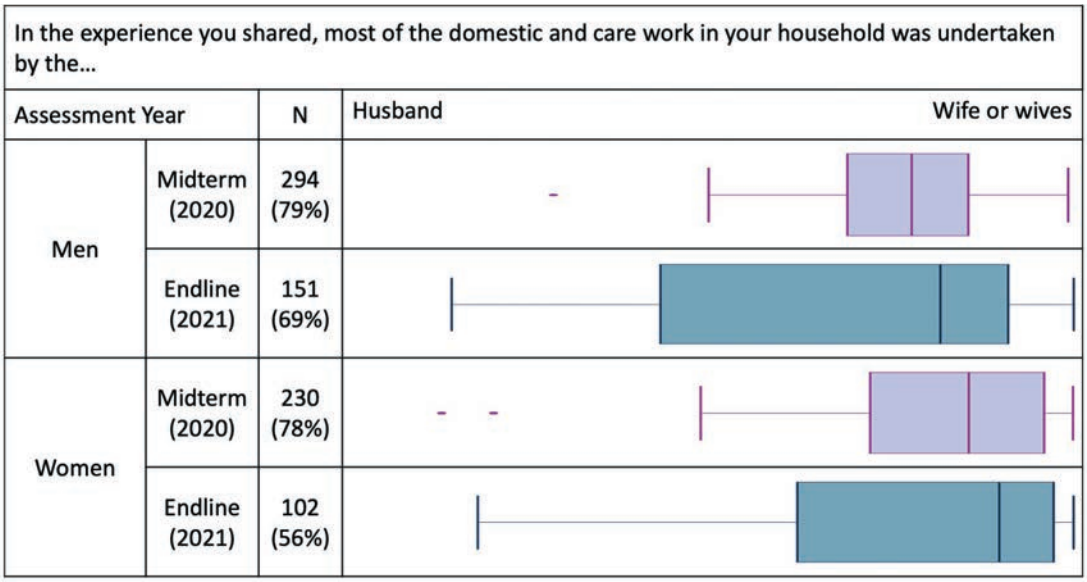


These findings show important advances toward shared decision-making among spouses in those decisions that were most important for both women and men. On the other hand, other family members were deemed to have had very little influence in household decision-making. While excellent progress has been made on the increased involvement of married women in household decision-making, there is more work to be done to explore opportunities for strengthening their role, and also those of unmarried men and women, so that decisions reflect a wider range of perspectives.

## MALE ENGAGEMENT

To assess the contribution of the individual behavior changes pursued by CCG members and non-members, they were asked who undertook the domestic and care work in their household in the experience shared, between only the husband (left of slider) and only the wife or wives (right of slider), or the extent to which such tasks were shared (responses along the slider) (Figure 93). The findings suggest that despite the advances in behavior change related to gender equity and equality, women and girls continued to bear a heavier burden of domestic and care work. Indeed, both male and female respondents at endline reported even more strongly than at midterm that the domestic and care role was being undertaken by women. That said, there is a wider spread of responses at endline—greater for male than for female respondents—that gives some grounds for optimism that there may be individuals (or 'positive deviants') who can serve as models for others in the community.

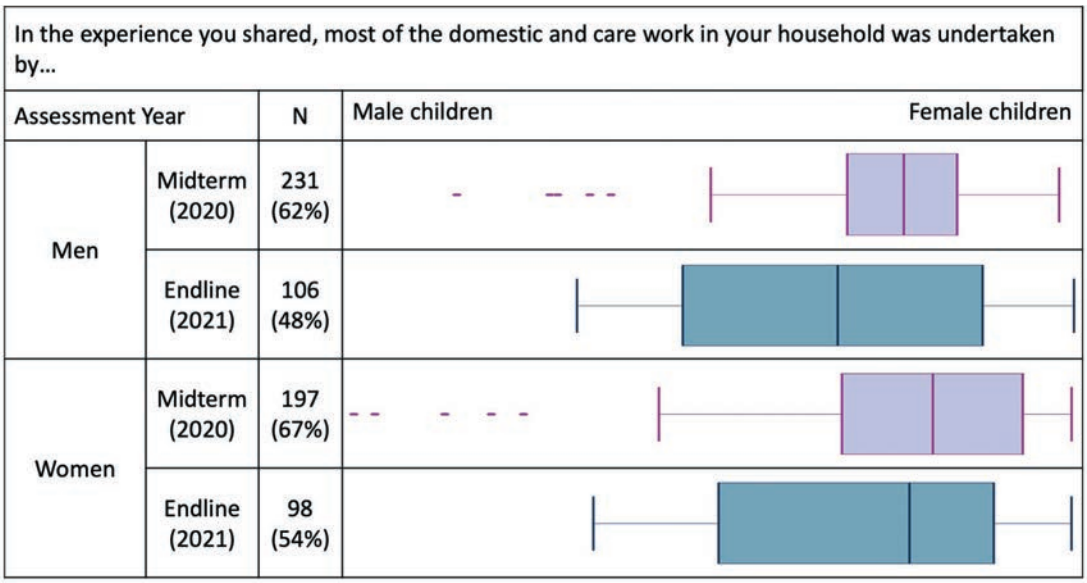
**Figure 93. Perceived distribution of domestic and care work between spouses, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)**




The same type of question was used to assess the distribution of domestic and care work among male and female children (Figure 94). It should be noted that the direction of travel in the distribution of domestic and care work between female and male children is in favor of the former, showing a higher involvement of male children in domestic and care work at endline than at midterm. The DFSA established school gender clubs to reach out to school children, and fair division of labor among siblings in the household is one of the discussion points for the groups. So such transformation could be a result of CCG members' behavior changes and also gender club members' participation. As with adults, the spread of responses at endline was also more marked than at midterm.

This transformation is important as it influences not only personal beliefs but, critically, social norms on the respective roles of female and male children. The RFSA team is well-placed to build on this foundation. There are related child protection and welfare issues relating to girls' domestic and care workload, and the implications for their access to education, leisure time and other opportunities.

**Figure 94. Perceived distribution of domestic and care work between female and male children, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)**




## WOMEN'S AND YOUTH'S ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER RESOURCES

To evaluate the outcomes of CCG efforts to address issues related to women's access to and control over productive resources, CCG members and non-members who shared their personal behavior change experience were asked a 'canvas with stones' follow-up question on whether their behavior change had improved women's access to and control over resources, focusing on three specific resources: land, livestock and financial resources (Figure 95).

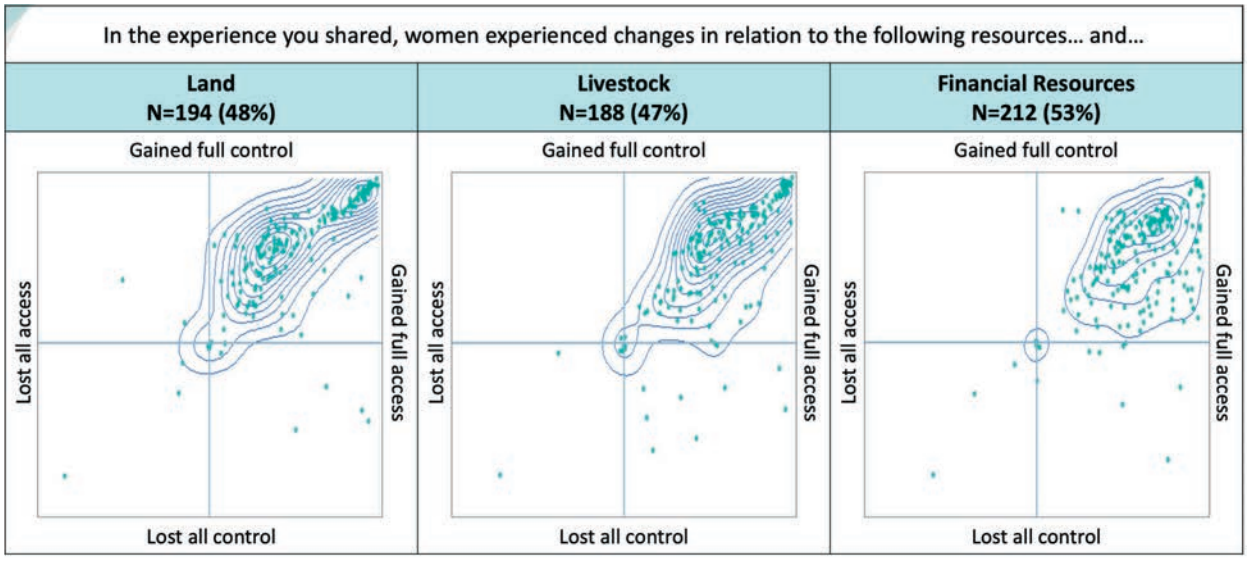
Half the respondents reported that their behavior change experiences had led to changes in women's access to and/or control over land, livestock and financial resources. Most responses lie within the top right quadrant in each of the three diagrams, suggesting overall that women had gained access to all three resources as well as some level of control. It is notable that each of the three diagrams displays a similar pattern of responses. That said, responses are more positive in relation to access to and control over financial resources. This aligns well with the finding that the behavior change reported by more respondents at midterm and endline related to financial management practices, and that the household decisions that were more influenced by individual experiences of behavior change were those related to the management of household finances.

Improvements in women's access to and control over livestock align with the second most mentioned behavior change—agriculture and livelihood practices—which, in turn, is reflected in the second most mentioned type of household decisions, namely, those related to agriculture and livelihood activities.

On the other hand, the improvements seen in women's access to and control over land may, in part, be related to the joint land title introduced by the GoE in 2003 that mandates joint certificates for agricultural holdings between husband and wife, part of ongoing national efforts to formalize land holdings. The operationalization of this land policy employed a participatory and decentralized approach through Land Use and Administration Committees (LACs), comprised of elected community members, that require the participation of at least one female member. As of March 2010, the joint certification program had registered 85% of rural land in the Oromia region. Nevertheless, there are still legal constraints that prevent women's access to land (Girma et al., 2013).

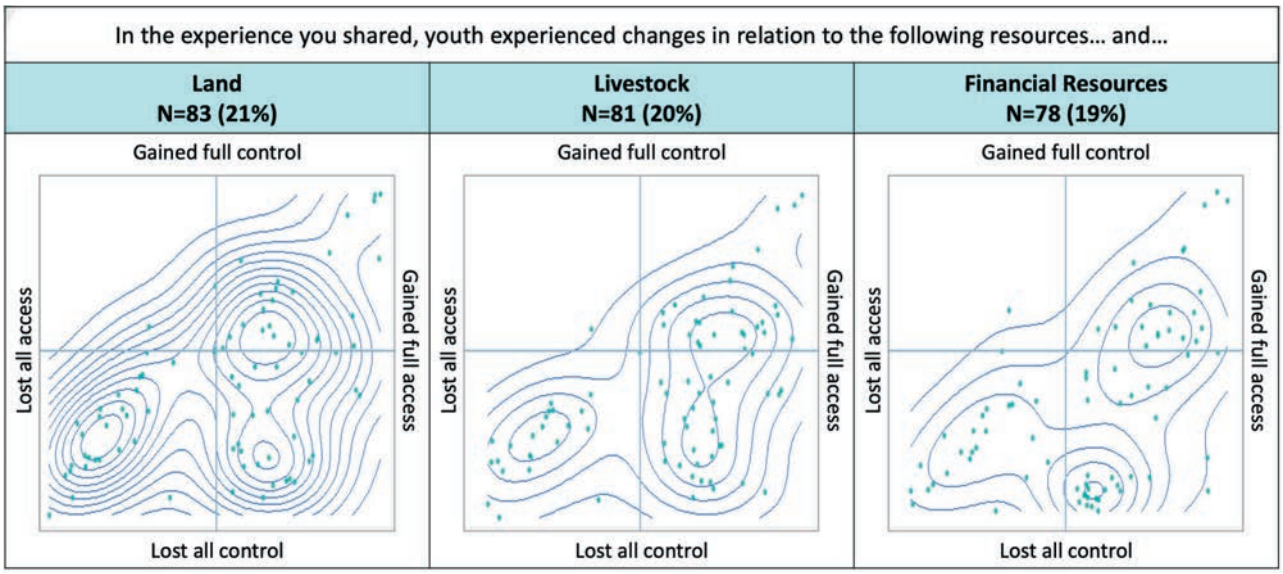
Although the findings are, in the main, positive, there is a degree of dispersion within each of the top right quadrants indicating that women have had varied experiences, some more positive than others, and a group of them neutral (dots in the middle of the quadrant). Furthermore, there are responses outside of the top right quadrant, namely, in the quadrant below. This quadrant reflects the experience of some women that while they gained some access, they also lost some control over the resource. This pattern is repeated for each of the three resources to a greater or lesser extent. There is a small number of outliers located elsewhere on the canvas, but these are relatively few.

**Figure 95. Contribution of personal behavior change to improving women's access to and control over productive resources, endline (tool 2; N=401)**




To evaluate the outcomes of CCG efforts to address issues related to youth's access to and control over productive resources, a similar 'canvas with stones' follow-up question was used, focusing on the same three specific resources: land, livestock and financial resources (Figure 96). In contrast to the findings relating to women's access to and control over resources, the responses on youth's access reflect a much more varied set of experiences. Only a fifth of respondents indicated that their behavior change experience had led to an improvement in youth's access to and/or control over land, livestock and financial resources. Responses are spread mainly in the two lower quadrants (lost access and lost control, and gained some access but lost control), with fewer responses in the top right quadrant, suggesting youth gained some access and control over these resources.

**Figure 96. Contribution of personal behavior change to improving youth's access to and control over productive resources, endline (tool 2; N=401)**




At best, CCGs have influenced improvements in access to and control of resources for only a relatively small number of youth while, for most, the situation has worsened. To what extent this deterioration is related to CCG activity, or to other influences outside of the DFSA, is unclear. Improving youth's access and control is a very different challenge to supporting women similarly. All three resources are, to some extent, intertwined: limited youth rights to land inhibit their access to livestock and capital. This is a structural problem, especially in rural areas where livelihoods depend on agriculture and, therefore, primarily on access to good quality land. Tackling this issue requires a deeper understanding of the issues, political support at all levels of government and, above all, time.

## WOMEN'S AND YOUTH'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The questions included at midterm to assess women's and youth's participation in the public sphere were not repeated at endline. It was felt that the remaining time after the midterm assessment would be insufficient for the results to change substantially and, for this reason, they were deprioritized to reduce the length of the data collection tool. A summary of the main findings at midterm is presented below.

Promoting gender equity and equality requires that women not only participate in CBOs, but also that they have voice and decision-making power. In relation to ***women's participation in the public sphere***, 81% of all respondents participated in at least one CBO, with no significant difference between women and men (80% and 82%, respectively). Among those who participated in CBOs, 18% joined during or after their personal behavior change experience, 19% of women and 17% of men. For women, the CBOs most influential on their behavior change were the CCG (57%) and the *kebele* appeals committee (KAC) (20%), the grievance redress mechanism of the PSNP. For men, the CCG (54%) was also seen as the most influential, and to a lesser extent the KAC (11%) and *edir* (11%), an informal social protection institution.

In relation to ***youth's participation in the public sphere***, 73% of young adults were members of CBOs, while 84% of adults were. More young adults (24%) joined CBOs during or after their experience of personal behavior change than adults (16%). For both young adults and adults, the CCGs were most influential in changing their behavior (51% and 56%, respectively), confirming the legitimacy that CCGs had gained in communities. After the CCGs, young adults considered the KAC most influential (11%), followed by the youth livelihood group (8%), the *edir* (7%), the *ekub* informal financial protection institution (6%), and the livelihood group (5%).

### MOTIVATIONS FOR AND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN CBOs

Most respondents were motivated to engage in CBOs. The ***main motivations*** of both women and men were having the opportunity to learn and achieving tangible results, but women were more motivated by learning opportunities and men by tangible results. Other motivations were the opportunity to meet other people, and the cooperation among members. While more women gave importance to being accepted as part of the group, more men gave importance to group governance. When disaggregated by age, both young adults and older adults were motivated by the opportunity to learn and achieve tangible results. Young adults indicated that meeting other people and feeling accepted was an important motivation, while adults put greater emphasis on members' cooperation. Only 2% of respondents said that nothing motivated them.

In relation to ***barriers to participation and engagement in CBOs***, some 92% of respondents reported that they had faced no barriers to participation, and there was no difference between women and men, or between young adults and older adults. Among the relatively few who faced limitations, the reasons cited included distance to the meeting place (3%), and the time required to attend meetings and assume tasks (3%). A few women mentioned safety concerns (1%), poor group governance (1%) and their voices not being heard (1%).

### QUALITY OF PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN CBOs

To some extent, both female and male respondents felt integrated into their CBO and considered that their voices were heard, and their ideas and contributions considered. When they contributed to decision-making, it was based on what they considered was the right thing to do, but to some extent they were also influenced by what others thought they should do. The only aspect for which a significant difference could be observed when disaggregated by sex, was integration; female members felt less integrated than male members. Young adults felt equally integrated and able to voice their opinions in decision-making, and that their ideas were considered.

### QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP IN CBOs

To evaluate the quality of leadership in CBOs, all respondents who shared a personal behavior change experience and who were CBO members were asked the extent to which they felt that CBO leaders asked members what was needed instead of telling them what to do, and made members fully responsible for taking and implementing decisions instead of only informing them once the decisions had been made. To some extent both female and male respondents considered that leaders asked them what was needed and made them responsible for taking and implementing decisions, with no difference in this opinion between women and men, or between young adults and adults.

### LEVEL OF WOMEN'S AND YOUTH'S ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCIES

Female and male participants in CBOs showed a 'basic' level of competency in both *Good Governance* and *Transformative Participation and Leadership*, which is a similar finding as for the level of these competencies among CCG members. Establishing and raising competency levels is an essential building block to ensure the longer-term sustainability of CBOs. For this reason, this is an area in which the new RFSA will need to invest as developing these competencies is fundamental for all project participants, but especially women and youth, to effectively participate in the public sphere, ensuring that they have voice and choice in community matters. Moreover, monitoring these competencies through the life of the project will be important to ensure that the project is on the right track on building them.

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

One of the areas of interest in behavior change promoted by the DFSA was related to ending harmful traditional practices, defined as all practices done deliberately by humans on the body or the psyche of other human beings for no therapeutic purpose, but rather for cultural or socio-conventional motives, and which have harmful consequences on the health and the rights of the victims (CRS, 2020).

The DFSA focused on gender-related HTPs, which include child marriage, also known as early marriage or forced marriage; female genital mutilation (FGM); and child abduction. Some CCGs prioritized non-gender-related HTPs such as tooth and tonsil extraction (for no medical reason). At midterm, some 21% of CCG facilitators and members said that their groups had prioritized or addressed HTPs in their communities, and 10% of CCG members and non-members said that they had pursued a behavior change related to these practices. When CCG facilitators and members were specifically asked whether these three HTPs were addressed by their CCG, and to what extent they were still being practiced, more than half said that their CCGs had addressed them and that they strongly believed these practices were ceasing. Almost half of CCG members and non-members said they had advocated to end these practices as part of their personal behavior change experience and reported that their incidence was falling.

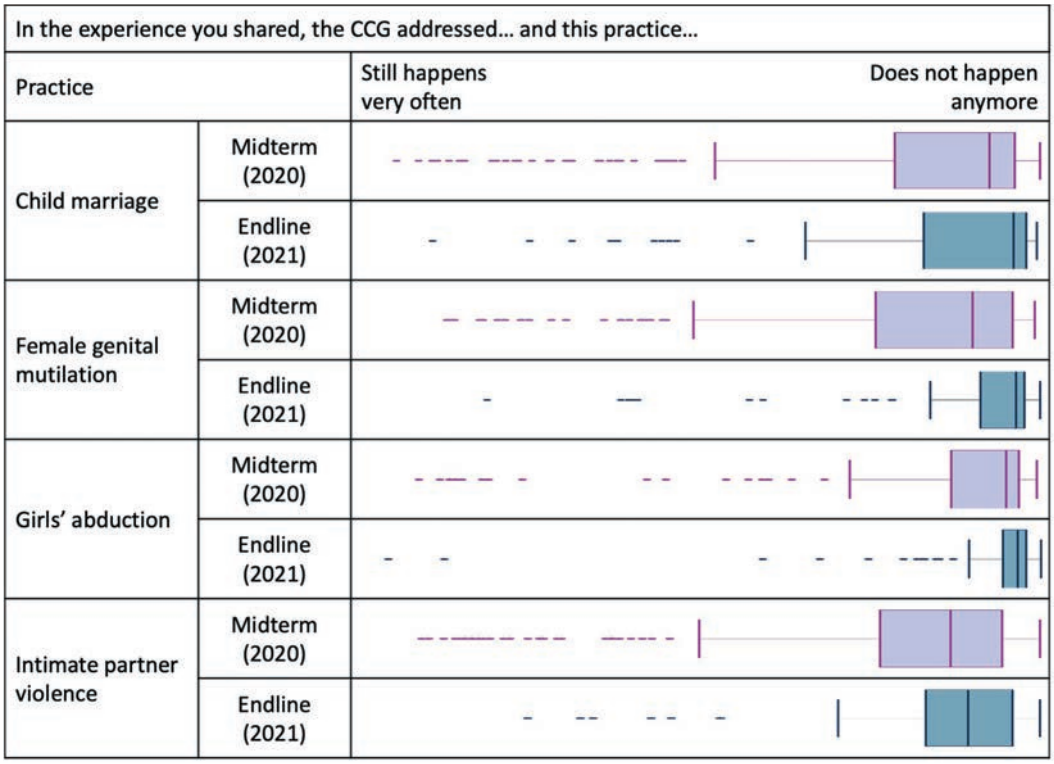
Another of the areas of behavior change promoted by the DFSA related to ending violence against women and girls (not related to HTPs). Some 12% of CCG facilitators and members at midterm selected ending violence against women and girls as an issue that was discussed and/or addressed by CCGs, and 9% CCG members and non-members reported this as a behavior change. When CCG facilitators and members were specifically asked whether their groups had addressed the three types of intimate partner violence (IPV)—physical, emotional and economic—58% indicated that their groups had prioritized and addressed ending at least one type, placing equal importance on economic and physical violence, and less on emotional violence, and that these practices were becoming less prevalent. Some 63% of community members (CCG members and non-members) had advocated to end at least one GBV type, also prioritizing economic and physical violence.

The analysis at endline combined the data for HTPs with gender-based violence (GBV) since HTPs are a form of GBV; however, the data for IPV were not disaggregated between different types of violence, such as physical, emotional and economic (Figure 97).

The findings indicate that for all GBV practices there had been further improvement at endline, with a reduction in incidents of all four broad types of violence: child marriage, FGM, girls' abduction and IPV. In addition, the dispersion of responses also narrowed for all four types indicating that there was a tightening of the responses around the median position. Responses at the median, especially for the first three types, moved close to the point where 'they do not happen anymore' although it should be noted that there were still some responses indicating that violence still happened and, in a few cases, 'very often.'

The DFSA and CCGs should be commended on their work in this area, particularly during the COVID-19 period, which raised logistical challenges for working on this issue, and for which there is global evidence that there was an increase in GBV. Nonetheless, there were still households in which GBV was practiced, and the new RFSA should build on the excellent achievements to date in reducing violence against women. There may be exciting opportunities for the CCGs to identify wives and husbands who are 'positive deviants' and who are well-placed to play a valuable role in working with other families to further change their behavior in this regard.

**Figure 97. Contribution of CCGs to ending gender-based violence, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)**



## CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVING AND SUSTAINING DFSA DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES

This section evaluates the contribution of the behavior changes promoted by the CCGs across the DFSA sub-purpose interventions to achieving and sustaining the program's protection and development gains, as well as to the higher program goal of food, nutrition and livelihoods security. Specifically, this section focuses on:

1) Assessing the sustainability of the behavior change promoted by CCGs.
2) Evaluating the pathways followed by CCG members and non-members as a result of the behavior change pursued.
3) Assessing the extent to which behavior change contributed to improved food availability, nutrition and economic well-being.

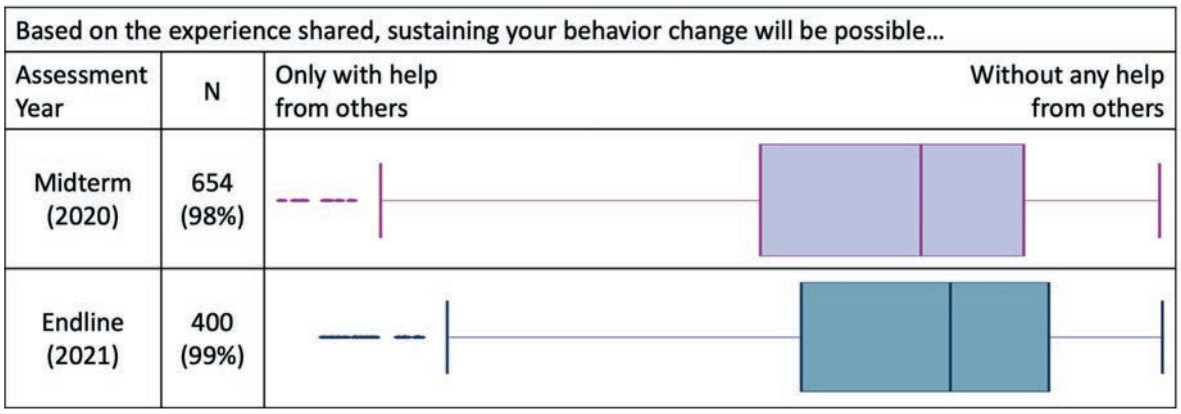
In so doing, the following sub-sections address two of the learning questions that informed this study:

- To what extent can the promoted behavior change for the achievement of the DFSA protection and development purposes be sustained?
- What has been the contribution of the behavior change promoted on strengthening and sustaining community and household resilience, economic well-being and nutrition?

### SUSTAINABILITY OF THE BEHAVIOR CHANGE PURSUED

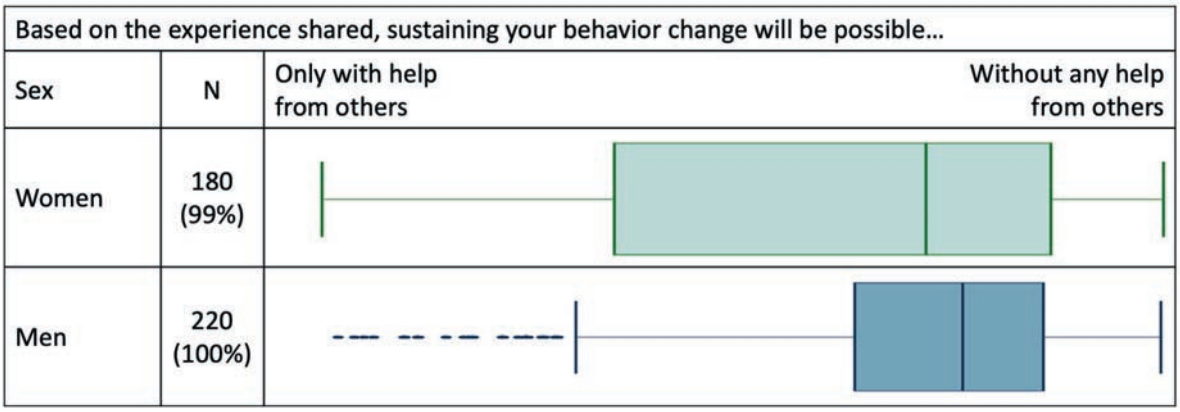
To evaluate the extent to which CCG members and non-members can sustain the behavior change achieved beyond the life of the DFSA, respondents were asked about the extent to which they could sustain these changes in the future completely on their own, or if they would still need support from others (Figure 98). The overall results show that, since midterm, respondents had raised their level of self-confidence in sustaining their behavior changes. That said, there is still some degree of uncertainty about requiring support from others. Given the relative novelty of the behavior changes that have occurred with DFSA encouragement and advice, this observation should not be a surprise; instead, it may merely reflect an innate sense of humility and caution about what the future may hold. Moreover, a target for the new RFSA will be to further move the median toward the right, increasing the odds that these new behaviors will be sustained.

**Figure 98. Sustainability of the behavior change achieved, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)**



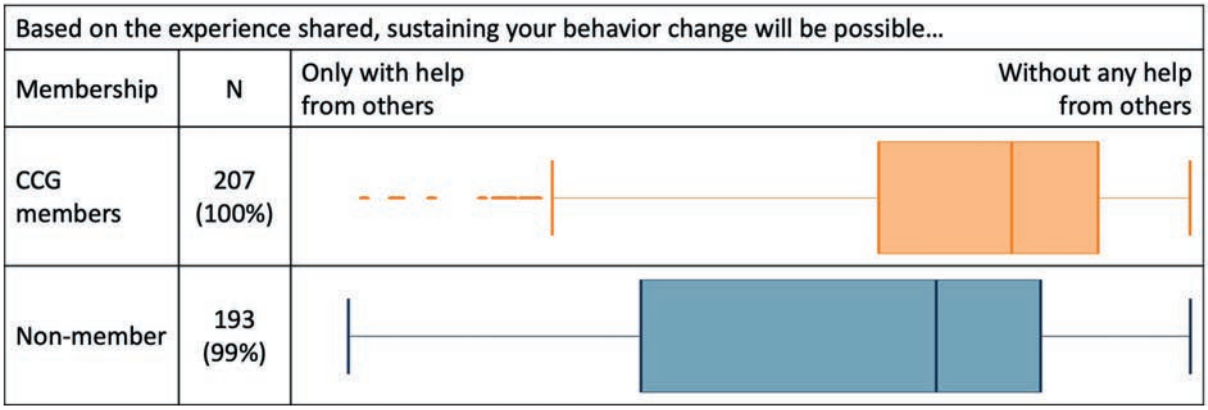
Unlike at midterm, the difference in responses between men and women (Figure 99) at endline was statistically significant (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0741). Men are not only more confident at the median, but their responses show less variation, although with some outliers. There is no statistical difference (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.7829) between young adults and adults.

**Figure 99. Sustainability of the behavior change achieved, disaggregated by sex, endline (tool 2, N=401)**




The difference between CCG members and non-members (Figure 100) was larger and is statistically significant (Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0004). As expected, CCG members are not only more confident at the median, but responses are less dispersed too. On the surface, this could be said to reflect the benefits of CCG participation. However, there is not enough evidence to make a causal inference on whether their confidence in sustaining a behavior change arose because of CCG membership, or whether an individual that chose to become a CCG member has a higher innate level of self-confidence than a non-member. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to say that being a CCG member may have contributed to this greater level of confidence.

**Figure 100. Sustainability of the behavior change achieved, disaggregated by CCG membership, endline (tool 2, N=401)**




Finally, it should be noted that reference to 'others' does not necessarily mean CRS or any other organization but could also signify a perceived need for support from family and community members, or other key influencers as identified in this assessment. As the RFSA considers interventions, it will be important to understand in a more nuanced manner both the perceived need for support among women and men, and the anticipated source of that support to ensure investments are well-targeted.

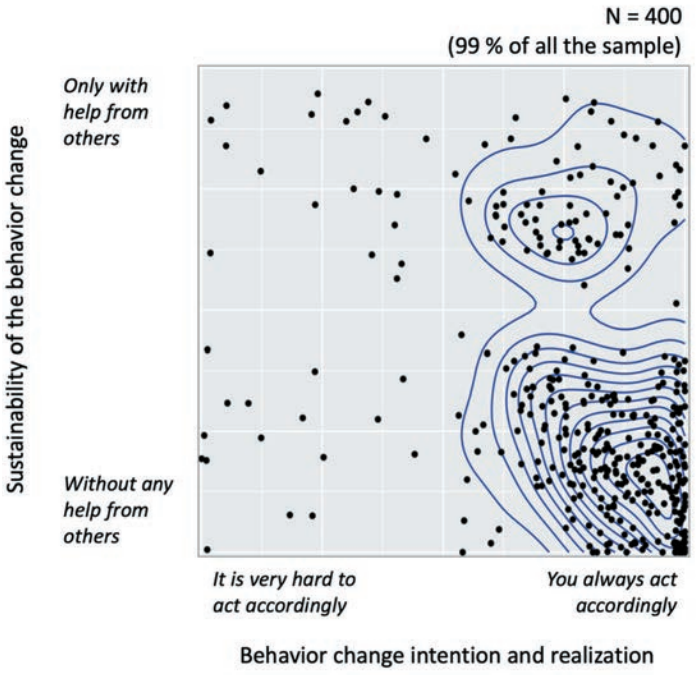
To explore more deeply the sustainability of the behavior change achieved and its relationship to the behavior change intention–realization gap, responses to the above question and those reported in Figure 67 above, were analyzed together to generate the pattern presented in Figure 101. Three dominant response patterns can be observed, based on which three groups of participants can be identified as follows:

- **Group 1: Act according to their behavior change and can sustain it**
  The first is the group of responses in the lower right corner that corresponds to about 73% of CCG members and non-members. Participants in this group always acted according to the behavior change and were confident that they could sustain this change on their own.
- **Group 2: Act according to their behavior change but need support to sustain it**
  The second group of responses, located toward the middle of the upper right quadrant, account for an additional 18% of respondents. This group of participants usually, but not always, acted according to the behavior change and perceived that they still required a degree of support to ensure the change was sustained.
- **Group 3: Find it hard to act according to their behavior change**
  The third group is dispersed on the left side of the upper left and lower left quadrants and includes respondents who considered that it was relatively harder to act according to the behavior change pursued (9% of all respondents). Among this last group, there were two sub-groups: those respondents (5%) who could act, but only with the support of others; and, second, an even smaller sub-group of respondents (4%) who found it very difficult to act at all. There was a higher proportion of women (60%) in the third category of respondents. There was also a higher proportion of non-members (75%) in the third category.

While there is always the possibility of relapse after an experience of behavior change when an individual does not receive some sort of support (Sheeran et al., 2016), other explanations may also be pertinent. Firstly, there is a higher proportion of women (60%) in Group 3, and the findings show that women found it more difficult than men to act in accordance with their behavior change and, at the same time, were less confident than men in their capacity to sustain it without help from others. Together, these may help to understand the cautiousness of some of those in Group 3 in realizing the intended behavior changes. Secondly, there is also a higher proportion of non-members (75%) in this group, and the findings show that non-members also found it more challenging than CCG members to act according to their behavior change and, also, they perceived a continuing need for more help from others to sustain the change, in contrast to CCG members who may also have changed their behavior more recently but revealed a higher degree of confidence.

It is vitally important to understand why some respondents considered that it was hard to act according to their pursued behavior change (upper and lower left quadrants of Figure 101) and, despite this, why 4% of respondents also perceived that they didn't need help from others (lower left quadrant). If not addressed, this represents a threat to the sustainability of the gains achieved by the DFSA.

**Figure 101. Relation between the intention and realization of behavior change and the sustainability of this change, endline (tool 2; N=401)**




Understanding more clearly the nature of these three groups will help the new RFSA to offer more tailored support to project participants to sustain their behavior change in the future. There may be a role for Group 1 participants to serve as model participants to support others who still need support, or who find it difficult to always sustain their behavior. To this end, the DFSA has already worked on a CCG handover plan with the *woreda* office of women, youth and child issues, and to strengthen linkages between the CCGs and the *edir*. With these endline data, this plan may need revisiting to ensure it reflects these more recent findings.

## CONTRIBUTION OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE TO STRENGTHENING HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY AND RESILIENCE

One of the pathways of the DFSA TOC related to the implementation of the CC approach was that IF CCGs were functional in contributing to strengthening local governance structures, THEN:

- Local governance structures will proactively foster inclusive and equitable community development, as community members will increase their engagement in equitable decision-making, especially among women and youth (behavior change related to engagement in the public sphere);
- Productive assets will be built and sustained as community members change behavior related to the implementation of NRM practices; and
- Women and youth will have increased access to and control over community and household resources (behavior change related to household decision-making, male engagement, women's and youth's access to and control over resources, and women's and youth's participation in the public sphere).

These outcomes will then contribute to improved resilience and food security by reducing community and household vulnerability to shocks and stressors. The findings have shown that CCGs are fully functional and a fundamental component of local governance structures, with women and youth actively participating in these groups. Moreover, a quarter of CCG members and non-members pursued a behavior change related to equitable decision-making, male engagement, and women's and youth's access to and control over resources, while a fifth of participants pursued a behavior change related to NRM practices.

Such changes in behavior by individuals were, perhaps unsurprisingly, having a positive effect on their own households (Figure 102) that was tending toward very positive. This was true for both men and women, with men self-reporting a statistically more positive influence ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0499$). Similarly, both CCG members and non-members reported a positive influence on their households, with the former self-reporting at a statistically higher level of positivity ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0198$). Difference by age group is not statistically significant.

**Figure 102. Contribution of behavior change to the individual household, disaggregated by sex and CCG membership, endline (tool 2, N=401)**

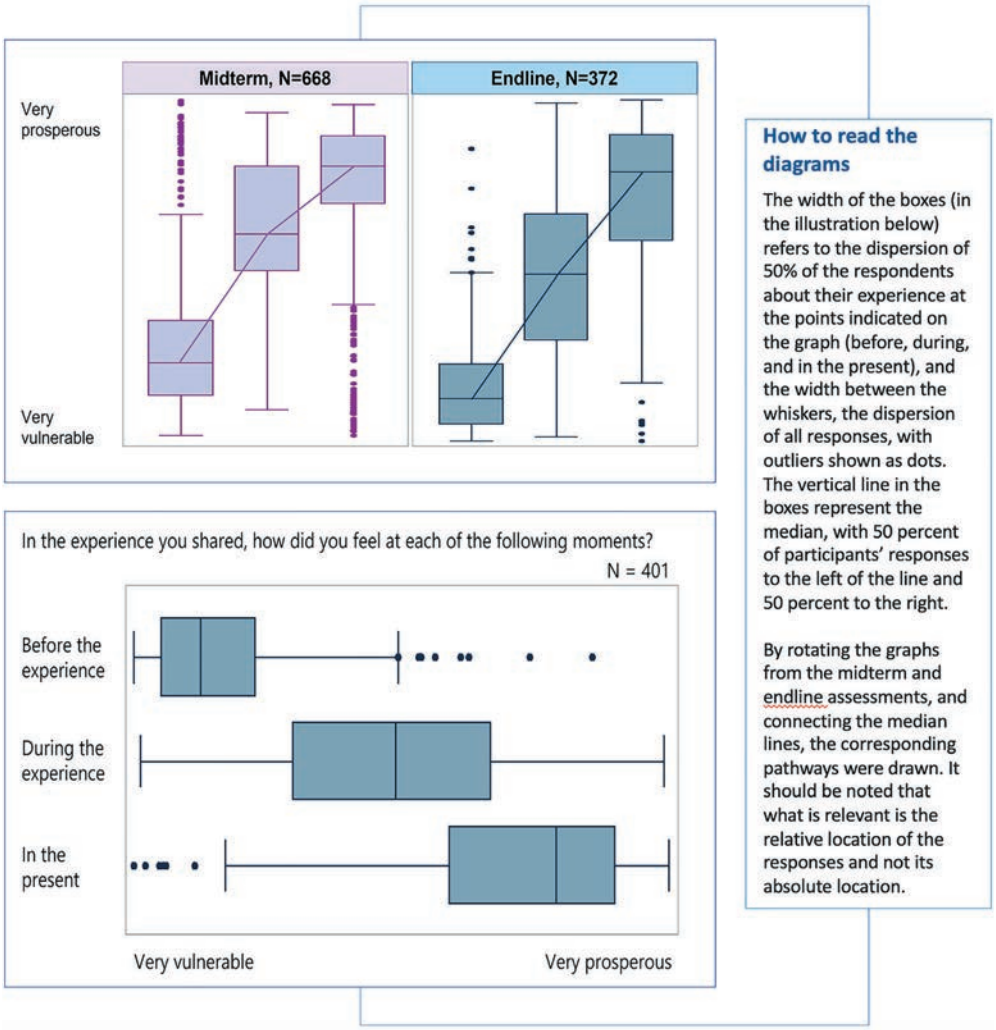

To assess the contribution of the personal behavior change pursued by CCG members and non-members to building resilience (protection purpose 1), respondents were asked to reflect on how they felt before the experience they shared, during the experience, and in the present, and place their responses along a continuum from feeling 'very vulnerable' to feeling 'very prosperous.' Figure 103 shows that at endline and at the median (lower boxplots with the medians indicated by lines in the boxes), respondents progressed from feeling vulnerable to prosperous, showing a clear and consistent improvement in the way respondents felt prior to, and over the course of, the DFSA to endline.

When asked at endline how they felt prior to the start of DFSA interventions, most respondents (except for a few outliers) indicated that, looking back, they felt close to 'very vulnerable.' The lack of dispersion in their responses (i.e., the narrowness of the box) serves to emphasize their perspectives. When asked to reflect on their feelings during DFSA activities, their responses suggest a notable improvement (at the median), although there is a doubling in the degree of variation in their responses. This relatively wider dispersion may to some extent be explained by the different times at which each respondent became engaged with the DFSA, some earlier than others, and their varied experiences. By endline, the median position had moved further toward a perception of greater prosperity, with a slightly smaller degree of dispersion in the responses, and with some responses on the vulnerable side of the slider, and a very small number of outliers who remained 'very vulnerable.'

When the same graph with the midterm data is added to compare with the endline, both graphs are rotated, and the median lines are connected, the pathways at midterm and endline were drawn. These pathways show the same size of change between 'before the experience' and 'during the experience' but an additional shift toward 'very prosperous' between the 'in the present at midterm' and the 'in the present at endline,' showing an additional progression between midterm and endline. It should be noted that, in these graphs, what is relevant is not the absolute location of the responses, but their relative location.

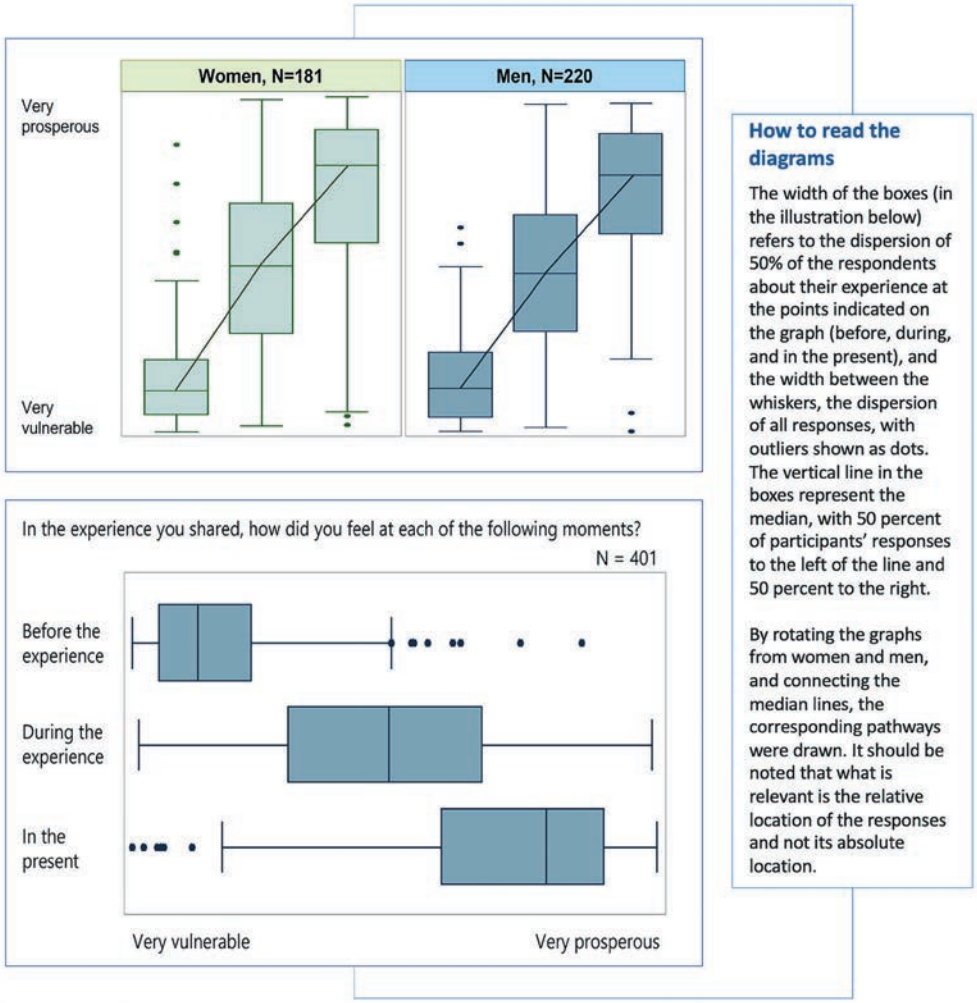
The pace of improvement (the shape of the line connecting the median points at each of the three stages), as perceived by respondents at endline, had continued virtually at the same rate throughout the course of the DFSA. This is a commendable achievement, particularly given the ever-present threat of COVID-19 and the related changes in project operation, and other exogenous shocks faced by project participants, including crop pests and disease (affecting 50% of participants), drought (46%), price or market fluctuations (17%), livestock disease (17%) and unpredictable or erratic rainfall (15%) (Gottret et. al, 2021 forthcoming).

**Figure 103. Midterm and endline pathways as a result of behavior change pursued (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)**




Analyzing the perspectives of women and men (Figure 104), at first sight it appears that women were marginally more upbeat in their perceptions of change (their median line is slightly higher at the 'during' and 'endline' phases); however, there is no statistically significant difference at the median between the perceptions of the two sexes at any of the three stages in the pathway to endline.

**Figure 104. Women's and men's pathways as a result of behavior change pursued, endline (tool 2, N=401)**

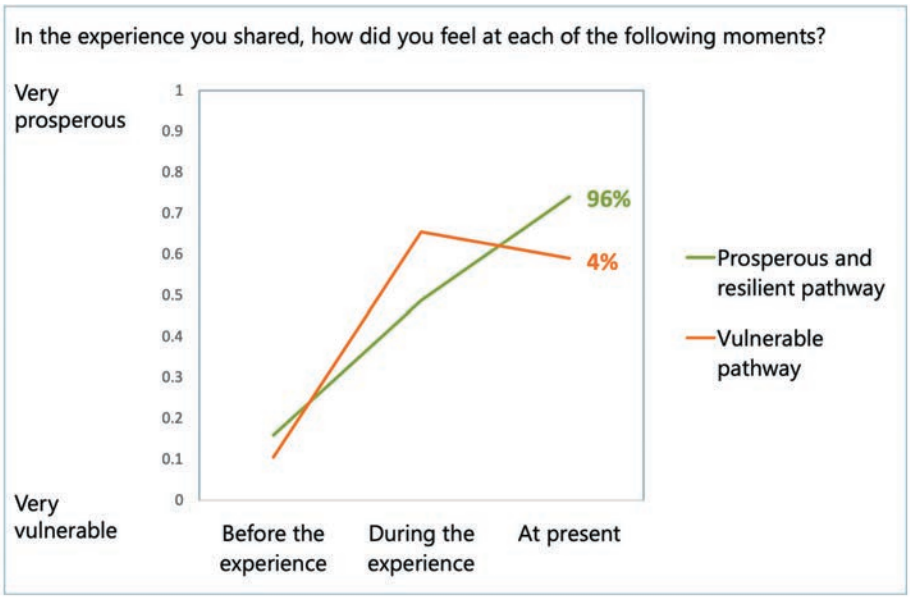



The same analysis disaggregated by age group can be observed when comparing the perceptions of young adults and adults, namely, there is no statistically significant difference on the median at any of the moments (before, during or at endline).

Encouraging results are observed also when analyzing the differences in the pathways followed by respondents. As per the midterm analysis, two types of pathways were observed and plotted: a prosperous and resilient pathway that shows progression from feeling vulnerable to prosperous, and a vulnerable pathway (Figure 105). At endline, 96% of respondents (compared to 73% at midterm) had come along a prosperous and resilient pathway; while only 4% (down from 27% at midterm) experienced a vulnerable pathway. Moreover, for this small, less resilient group, the fall experienced was much smaller. At endline, the fall for the vulnerable averaged -6%, from a median of 0.65 to 0.59 (from a maximum of 1), compared to midterm when the fall was 16%, from a median of 0.70 to 0.54 (from a maximum of 1).

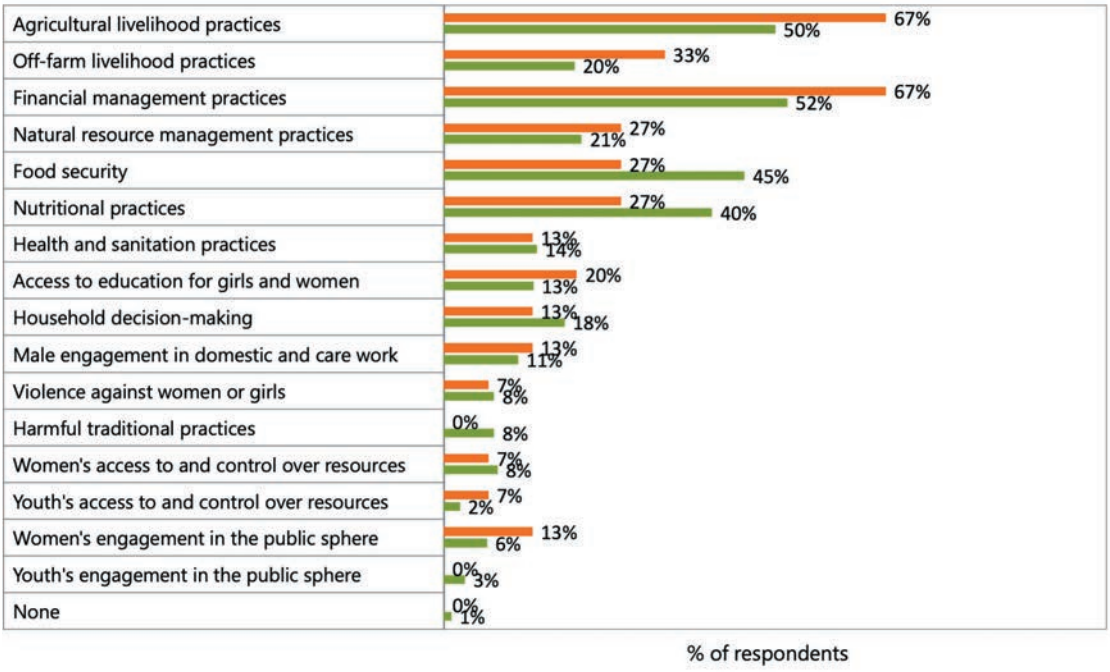
The number of respondents who experienced vulnerable pathways was higher among women than men (5% and 3%, respectively) but this difference is not statistically significant (Pearson chi-square test (1) =1.3901, Pr = 0.238); there is also no difference observed in the percentage of young adults and adults who experienced a vulnerable pathway (4% among both groups). On the other hand, more CCG non-members experienced a vulnerable pathway than CCG members (6% and 1%, respectively) and this difference is statistically significant (Pearson chi-square test (1) = 6.2390, Pr = 0.012).

**Figure 105. Pathways followed by CCG members and non-members as a result of the behavior change pursued, endline (tool 2, N=401)**




Disaggregating the type of behavior change pursued by pathway experience shows that all respondents, regardless of pathway, pursued a variety of behavior changes related to effective agricultural livelihood practices, financial management practices, good food security and nutritional practices (including the implementation of home gardens), and engagement in the public sphere (Figure 106). None of the observed differences are statistically significant as the sample size of those who experienced a vulnerable pathway is very small, suggesting that the decline in their outlook at the end occurred more because of unexpected shocks or stressors that were not directly related to the type of behavior change pursued.

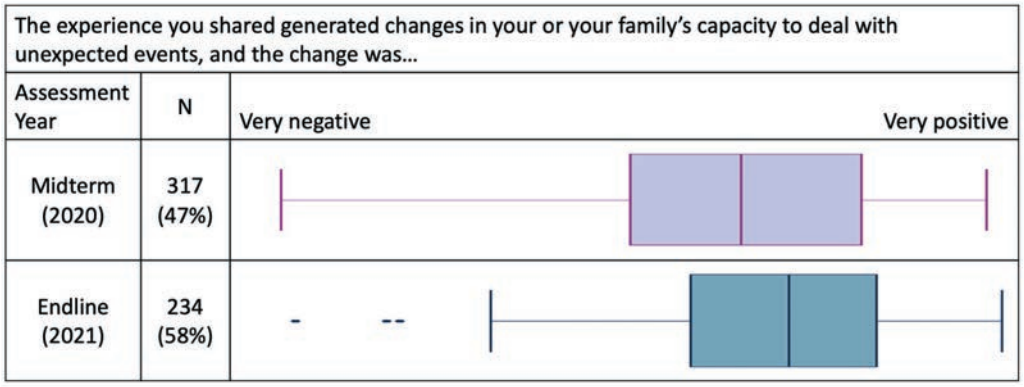
### Figure 106. Type of behavior change pursued, disaggregated by pathway followed, endline (tool 2; N=401)




To complement the above findings for evaluating the extent to which respondents improved their resilience capabilities on account of their personal behavior change experience, they were asked whether the experience led to a change in their capacity to deal with unexpected events (shocks or stressors), as an indicator of resilience, and if so, the extent to which this change was positive or negative (Figure 107).

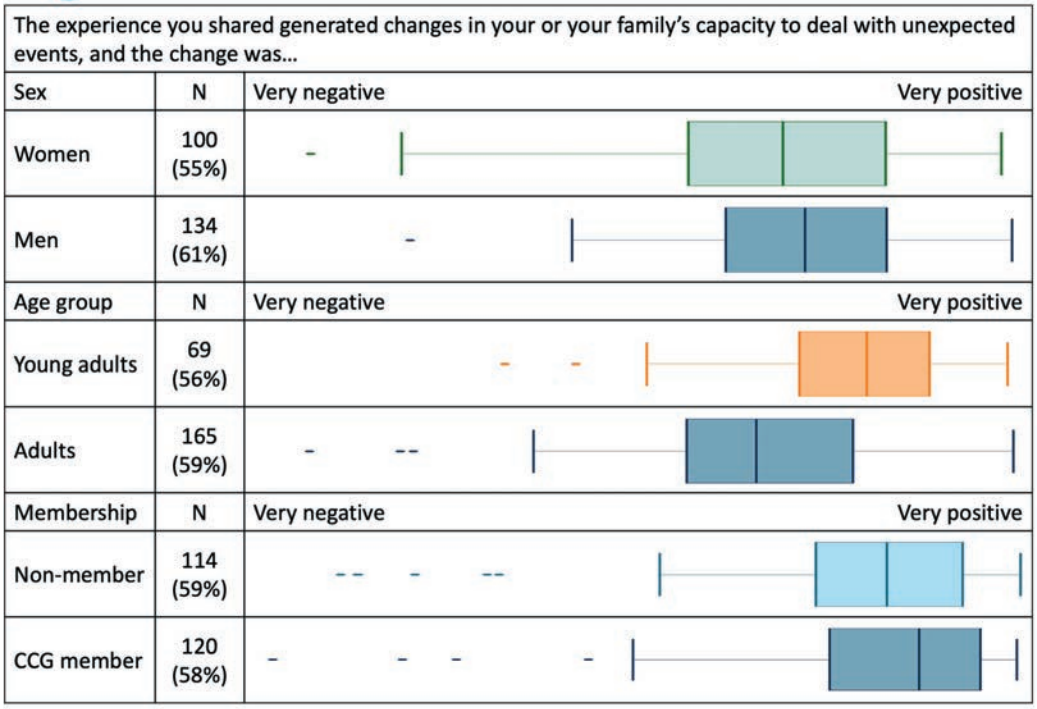
The findings indicate an improvement since midterm in the perception of respondents on their own resilience capabilities arising from their personal behavior change. Not only did a greater proportion of respondents (58% compared to 47% at midterm) provide an answer, meaning that they had perceived a change, but the resulting median response is now further toward the 'very positive' end of the continuum together with less dispersion in the responses. Relatively few outlier responses suggested a decline in self-perceived resilience.

### Figure 107. Contribution of behavior change to resilience capabilities, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)



Responses show that, at the median, more men than women, and more young adults than adults, self-reported a change in their resilience. These changes were more positive than negative (most responses in Figure 108 are on the right of the slider). Responses are dispersed, showing variability in these findings. At the median, the views of women suggest that their self-perceived abilities to deal with unexpected events, although still positive, were less positive than men's ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0687$), and the self-perceived resilience of adults was less positive than that of young adults ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000$). Furthermore, a difference can also be observed when the data is disaggregated by CCG members and non-members, showing that non-members were less positive than members ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0387$).

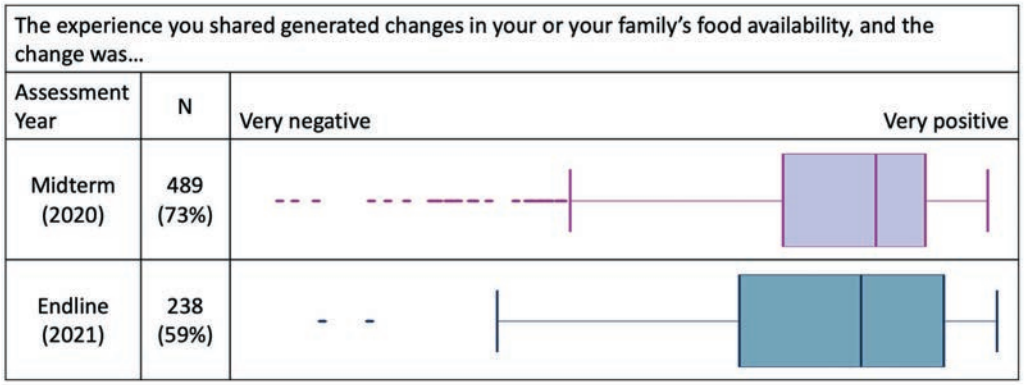
**Figure 108. Contribution of behavior change to resilience capabilities, disaggregated by sex, age group and CCG membership, endline (tool 2, N=401)**




In relation to food security, another strategic objective of DFSA protection purpose 1, CCG members and non-members were asked whether their individual behavior change experience led to changes in food availability as an indicator of food security and, if so, the extent to which these changes where positive or negative (Figure 109).

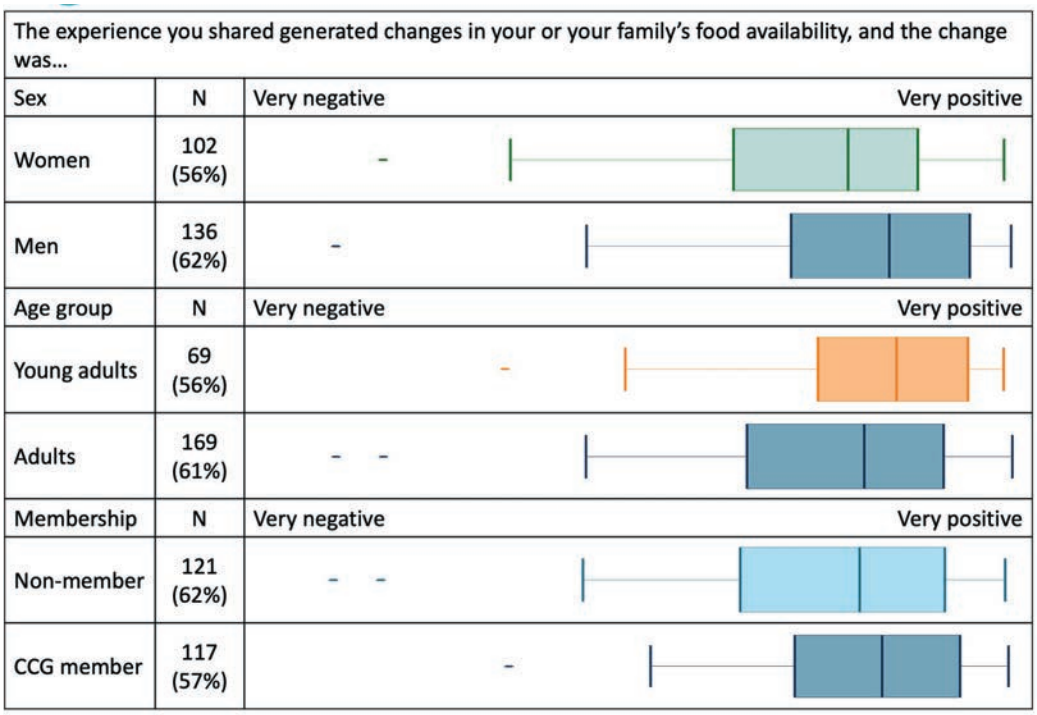
At endline, the percentage of respondents who reported a change in their food availability fell from 73% to 59%; however, those who experienced a change self-reported a positive response to the contribution of behavior change to food availability, at the median, but at a level slightly lower than at midterm. Also, the dispersion of responses is wider at endline with some responses on the negative side of the slider. Given that the agriculture undertaken in the DFSA designated area is solely rainfed, it is plausible to suggest that other exogenous factors (crop pests and disease, drought, price or market fluctuations, livestock disease, unpredictable or erratic rainfall, and the continuing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic) are likely to have contributed to this outcome.

### Figure 109. Contribution of behavior change to food availability, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)




Endline responses disaggregated for the different interest groups suggest that the behavior changes they had undertaken had, in general, positively affected the availability of food (Figure 110). There is variation in the responses: women self-reported changes in food availability lower than that of men ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0281$) with some women expressing negative perceptions of the behavior change. Young adults perceived a more positive change than adults ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0402$), and CCG members also a more positive change than non-members ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0796$).

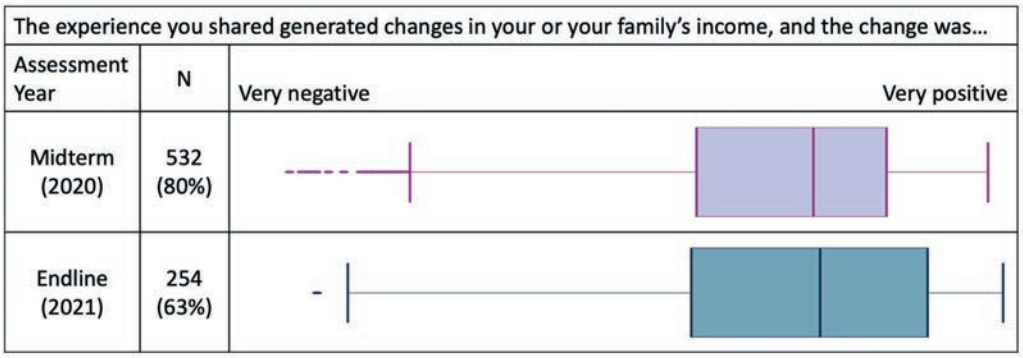
### Figure 110. Contribution of behavior change to food availability, disaggregated by sex, age group and CCG membership, endline (tool 2, N=401)



## CONTRIBUTION OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE TO IMPROVED WELL-BEING

As discussed previously in this report, a higher proportion of the behavior change pursued relates to DFSA development purpose 2, which aimed to *improve household sustainable economic well-being*. To assess the contribution of behavior change to achieving this purpose, respondents were asked whether their individual behavior change experience led to changes in their income (as a proxy for well-being), and, if so, the extent to which these changes were positive or negative. The findings show that the percentage of respondents who reported a change in their income following their individual experience of behavior change fell to 63% compared to the 80% who reported a change at midterm (Figure 111). At the median, no difference can be observed between midterm and endline, but endline responses were more dispersed between the positive and negative extremes, which may well have been an unwelcome consequence of the exogenous factors mentioned earlier.

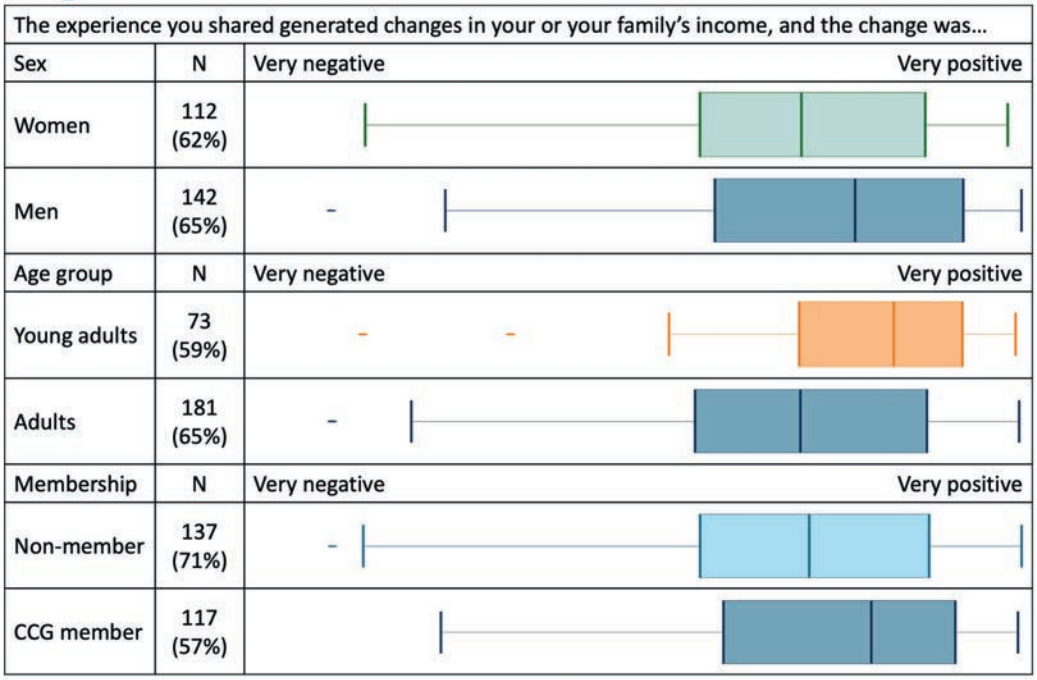
**Figure 111. Contribution of behavior change to economic well-being, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)**




A similar picture can be observed in the findings that are disaggregated by sex, age, and CCG membership (Figure 112). All responses at the median are located on the right of the slider, showing a positive change in income, with men self-reporting a more positive change than women ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1241$), young adults reporting the highest levels of positivity regarding the income effects of their behavior change, and more positive than adults ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0008$). Also, at the median, CCG members perceived a more positive change in their income than non-members ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0301$). In all three disaggregated groups, except for young adults, there were some respondents who reported a negative income effect.

Notwithstanding all the behavior changes that were made by respondents (Figures 53 to 57), and the generally positive perceptions of these changes (Figures 80, 102 and 103), the existence of negative exogenous factors would inevitably put income-generating activities at risk as they are disrupted by both production and market factors that can disproportionately affect the most resource-poor project participants who, despite their best efforts, still experience a degree of vulnerability (Figure 105). Nonetheless, the findings from the resilience-related questions above show that their degree of income vulnerability had most likely lessened because of their behavior change.

**Figure 112. Contribution of behavior change to economic well-being, disaggregated by sex, age group and CCG membership, endline (tool 2, N=401)**

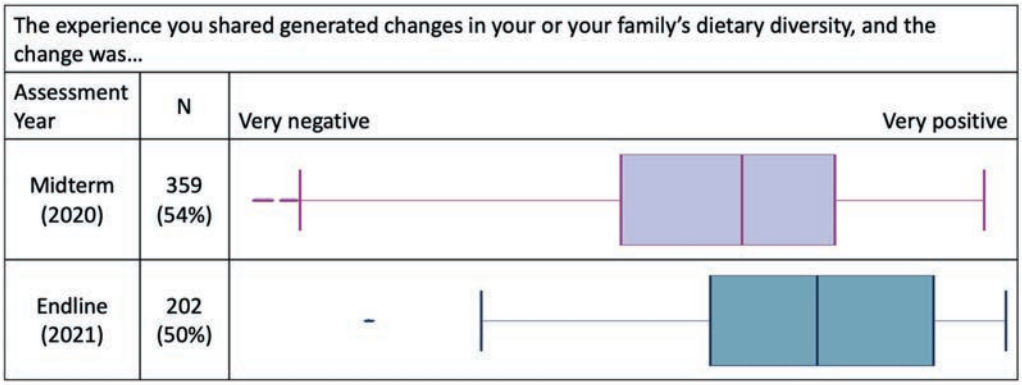



## CONTRIBUTION OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE TO IMPROVED NUTRITIONAL PRACTICES

Behavior change related to DFSA development purpose 3—*improving the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, and children under 5 years*—was less pursued by both CCG members and non-members at midterm, but increased substantially from 12% to 40% of respondents at endline who reported a behavior change related to nutritional practices.

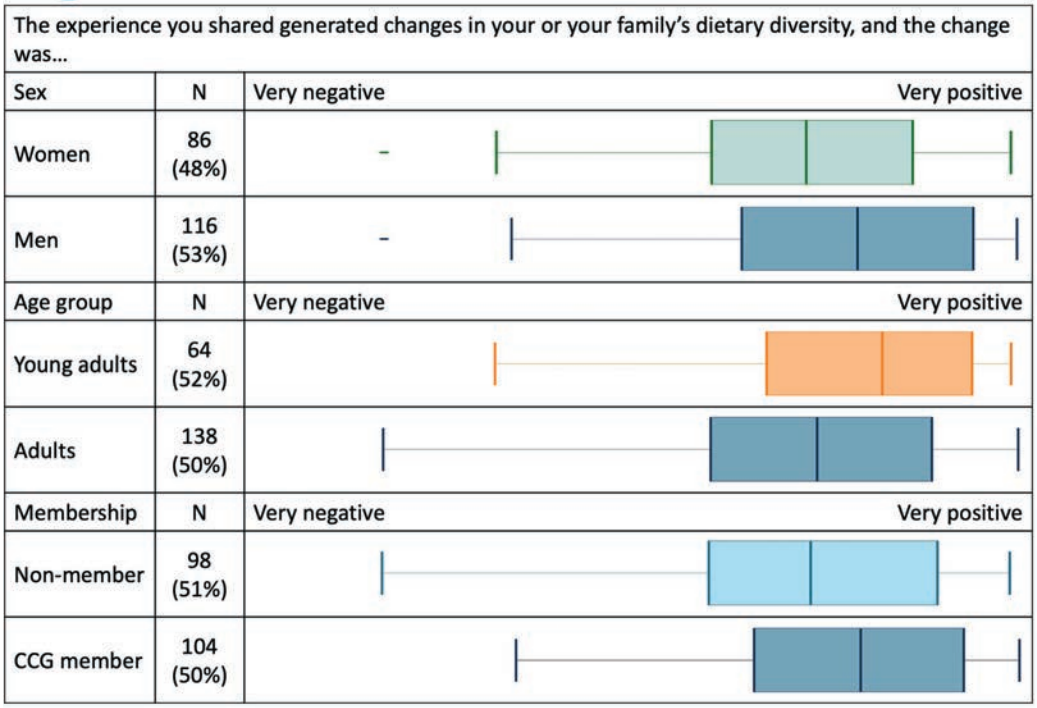
To assess the contribution of behavior change to achieving this purpose, respondents were asked whether their individual behavior change experience had led to changes in the diversity of their or their household's diet as a proxy indicator for improved nutrition, and, if so, the extent to which these changes were positive or negative. Findings suggest that, following the midterm recommendations, the DFSA team placed greater emphasis on improving nutritional practices by using CCG meetings for cooking demonstrations to engage both women and men in preparing food resulting in a more balanced diet. As a result, the perceived contribution of behavior change to better family dietary diversity strengthened, and there was also less variation around the median, and very few responses on the negative side of the slider (Figure 113).

### Figure 113. Contribution of behavior change to household nutritional practices, midterm and endline (tool 2, N=668; tool 2, N=401)




Disaggregating the perceptions of different groups of interest (Figure 114), it appears that, at the median, women self-reported a less positive change in family dietary diversity than men ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0308$), and that young adults perceived the most positive change compared to adults ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0506$) and all other groups. Adults' perceptions were not only less positive than young adults' but were dispersed, with some respondents on the left of the slider, suggesting that their experience of the behavior change had been negative. CCG non-members show a similar pattern to adults and their perceived change was less positive than that of members ($Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0334$).

### Figure 114. Contribution of behavior change to household nutritional practices, disaggregated by sex, age group and CCG membership, endline (tool 2, N=401)



# Conclusions and Recommendations

## CONCLUSIONS

Prior to the DFSA, the Community Conversations approach had been introduced in the DFAP (2011 to 2016). Encouraging results had been observed and the approach was adopted by the DFSA. The DFSA has since provided an excellent opportunity both to refine it and to scale it to a level not previously realized.

The DFSA conducted this assessment with five objectives. Related learning questions were also developed to guide the analysis. This section summarizes the key conclusions, organized by objectives and corresponding learning questions. It also draws on emergent practices that can be amplified and threats that need to be dampened to ensure program effectiveness and sustainability, addressing the fifth objective of this assessment.

There is much to commend in the work that has been undertaken over the last five years, while, by adopting a positive spirit of improvement, there is much that can be learned from what has happened to inform the recently awarded RFSA. With this in mind, the completion of the DFSA, and the exciting prospect of an initial 'refine and implement' year in the new RFSA, implies that this report is as much an improvement-oriented assessment as the team looks forward to the coming five years as it is judgment-oriented, as it reviews a similar preceding period. It is important to remember too that—for a significant period and still ongoing—COVID-19 loomed large, yet the project has adapted and developed processes that have enabled it to continue its work. Given what has been experienced worldwide due to the pandemic, the advances made by those involved in implementing the DFSA represent a noteworthy achievement.

It is also important to emphasize that, for many of the results presented above, there are a small number of dissenting voices. Every complex intervention generates unintended consequences, sometimes positive, sometimes negative, which this assessment sought to capture. It is important to understand them so that, where appropriate, the right adjustments in the way CCGs function to mitigate the concerns of those individuals can be agreed by interested parties. In short, such perspectives, although relatively few, provide the new RFSA team with a valuable and timely learning opportunity, making it possible to build on the advancements made by the DFSA team.

## CCGs' FUNCTIONING AND EFFECTIVENESS AT ADDRESSING COMMUNITY ISSUES

### Assessment objective

*To assess the CC approach and the functioning of CCGs in addressing community issues across the DFSA interventions through influencing attitudinal and behavior change at an individual level, and social norms at the community level.*

Resilience studies conducted by CRS (Gottret et. al, 2019 and Gottret, 2017) showed that 'social resources,' especially community-based organizations, are key to coping with shocks and stressors. CCGs are largely functioning well and, in so doing, have generated a positive spirit and energy within the communities in which they are located and have also been reaching to some extent other communities and the whole *kebele*. By and large, the CCGs are gender-sensitive and are operating in the structured and participatory manner anticipated by the team when proposing this approach as a key DFSA intervention strategy.

A consistent picture has emerged of the priority issues addressed by CCGs during the DFSA, such as behavior change related to effective financial management, agricultural livelihood practices, and harmful traditional practices, followed by natural resource management, nutritional, health and sanitation practices, and other gender equity and equality related behaviors (household decision-making, male engagement in domestic and care work, girls' and women's access to education, violence against women and girls, and women's access to and control over resources). On the other hand, CCGs gave less importance to issues related to youth development in general, and to the engagement of women and youth in the public sphere. It should be noted that activities and support provided to DFSA participants did not emanate solely from the CCGs; there were other DFSA interventions working simultaneously, but CCGs reinforced messaging to promote behavior change related to the three DFSA purposes, while placing a special focus on behavior change related to gender equity and equality, and youth

Overall, CCGs gave significantly greater and almost equal priority to issues related to two DFSA purposes: *improving household sustainable economic well-being* (purpose 2) and *increasing women's and youth's access to and control over community and household resources* (cross-cutting purpose). CCG facilitators and members explained that their CCGs gave less priority to issues related to *improved nutritional practices* (purpose 3) because other issues were more urgent and, to some extent, because this was already being addressed by giving people food or cash for work. Also, less priority was given to issues related to the *management of natural resources* (purpose 1) mainly because communities were already working on it. The level of alignment between DFSA intentions and issues addressed by CCGs on the ground reflected a balancing of the priorities of project participants and the agenda driving the DFSA. This is a healthy tension and provides an opportunity for all the parties engaged in the development activity to learn from each other.

For many participants, the CCGs were completely new, yet the level of engagement was encouraging, and deepened over the life of the DFSA. This involved a range of influencers—traditional and religious leaders, NGO and government workers, other CBO leaders, and community members—who were committed to addressing the prioritized issues, and to finding effective means to deliver the messages (focus group discussions and reflection, one-to-one communication, personal testimonies, and practical demonstrations) and there is likely much that can be done to build on this firm foundation. It is also encouraging to see such a wide range of locations in which conversations took place beyond CCG meetings, such as traditional coffee ceremonies, other CBO meetings and social, religious and cultural events. This diversity is the antithesis of a 'one size fits all' approach and enables adaptation and flexibility at the local level. It also enables respondent sub-groups (women, men, youth, CCG members and non-members) to have their voices heard and issues addressed in settings in which they feel more able and willing to speak. This level of specificity and responsiveness to context is a strength of the CCG approach. In addition, CCGs have also started to play a positive role in mediating disagreements among family members and ethnic groups, as well as addressing issues related to access to and control over community resources, with promising outcomes (an emergent practice).

Some areas in which slower progress was achieved, while recognizing that such things do take time, include finding ways to ensure that members—in contrast to facilitators—are supported in developing their organizational competencies to ensure the good governance of their groups and exert *transformative participation and leadership*. This means a greater contribution of CCG members in designing their group constitution and other rules and procedures by which the CCGs are governed, and to consider the time and financial limitations of all members when doing so; as well as sharing and requesting relevant information for decision-making. It also implies the need for more members to share their group's vision and goals, contribute to decision-making and commit to achieving their group's objectives, and assuming their given functions and responsibilities. Nevertheless, CCG members felt integrated into their groups, having a voice and being responsible for taking decisions based on what they considered was the right thing to do, and implementing these decisions. As a result, CCG members perceived that they were actively participating in their groups and exerting a motivating leadership, being responsible for making decisions and acting.

Perhaps an informative proxy indicator of the functioning and success of the CCGs is the degree to which individuals were willing to commit scarce time and energy to its operations. In this regard, there is an encouraging sense of volunteerism among both CCG facilitators and members based on their expressed belief in the importance of CCG work. There is a general acceptance that the CCG can serve as a forum for continued information exchange and to promote community dialogue in advancing the interests of the community. Over the duration of the DFSA, members showed an improved level of confidence in the capacity of their CCG to initiate and sustain change in their communities. Nonetheless, it would be useful to express a cautionary note that there is scope for strengthening and deepening this still nascent sense of enthusiasm. In this regard, there will be interesting challenges ahead for the new RFSA in finding the right balance between what it takes at an individual level to be personally engaged in sustaining the functioning of a CCG, and the barriers that threaten its future success. These will not be easy issues to address, but a good foundation has been laid to ensure different perspectives can be shared from which ideas for solutions can surface.

## CCGs' INFLUENCE ON BEHAVIOR CHANGE AND SOCIAL NORMS

### Assessment objective

*To evaluate the effectiveness of CCGs in influencing positive behavior change in members, households and communities; and personal and social norms that influence behavior and social interaction.*

It is one thing to have functioning CCGs that are effective in addressing community issues, as noted above. It is quite another that those issues are reflected in personal processes of behavior change involving an ongoing process that balances the interests and commitments of the actors involved. Participatory development is, after all, a collective process of negotiated agreements between interested parties on the priority issues that demand urgent attention, in what manner they should be addressed, and how individuals engage and are touched by these actions.

There is little doubt that CCGs are contributing to the shifts in behavior among project participants. When respondents were asked about the emotions their personal experience of behavior change had generated, most responses reflected positive feelings. While differences between women and men, CCG members and non-members, and young adults and adults could be observed 'at the margin,' the pattern of their preferred behavior changes was broadly similar. Before midterm, CCG members gave the highest priority to behavior changes related to financial management practices and agricultural livelihood practices, and the latter significantly increased after the midterm. This shows that most participants primarily focused, in the first instance, on a small number of behavior changes that directly influenced their own personal and household livelihoods, in line with the project's layered approach to strengthening the competencies of project participants (Gottret et. al, forthcoming).

A change in emphasis following the midterm encouraged greater attention to food security and nutritional practices, and natural resource management practices, all reflecting a significant increase in interest and participant action. In addition, 40% of project participants consistently engaged throughout the life of the project in individual behavior change experiences related to gender equity and equality, pointing to the important contribution that CCGs made to the cross-cutting program purpose. The narratives of CCG members and non-members collected during the assessment serve as valuable evidence of the pivotal and far-reaching role that CCGs have played in drawing the attention of participants to the deleterious effects of negative gender-related social norms and personal beliefs and, subsequently, in providing behavior change advice and support.

There is encouragement to be derived from the existence of those individuals that did effect behavior changes in accordance with the gender equity and equality messaging. Their narratives are particularly powerful, and demonstrate that behavior change in these contentious, demanding and sensitive areas is indeed possible and perhaps essential for sustaining all other DFSA development gains. Looking forward, the new RFSA can use such individuals as examples that CCGs can highlight in their advocacy activities on further change in gender equity and equality, and youth development.

Sixty percent of CCG members and non-members said they always acted according to their behavior change, and an additional 25% did so despite some setback. This finding indicates a positive impact of the DFSA, yet there remains an important challenge as women were finding it more difficult than men to always act in accordance with the behavior change. They also tended to be less confident in sustaining any behavior change without help from others, and more diffident about their ability to influence other community members to change their behavior.

CCG members and non-members were motivated to change their behavior because, in general, they believed the adjustment to be important. Becoming aware of the need to change occurred through both group exchanges and reflection, and one-to-one communication. These proved to be the CCGs' most effective means of creating awareness. Self-confidence and the potential for rapid and long-term gains toward achieving their goals were then key drivers in pursuing the desired behavior change; perhaps unsurprisingly, participants were to a lesser extent also influenced by peer pressure and their own innate desire to be accepted by others. The key step of putting into practice the new behavior required the support of family members; traditional, religious and community leaders; and government and NGO workers. NGO workers, together with CCG members and traditional and religious leaders, were considered by respondents to be the most committed and effective supporters for changing and sustaining their behavior.

## CCGs' CONTRIBUTIONS TO GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY, AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

### Assessment objective

*To assess the contribution of CCGs in promoting gender equity and equality, and youth development, with regard to access to and control over resources by women and youth, equitable gender-based household dynamics, participation by women and youth in the public sphere, and reducing harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence.*

Evaluating the part played by CCGs in contributing to changes in gender equity and equality, and youth development is challenging since they are interwoven with social norms and personal beliefs that regulate individual behavior and that have an important influence on whether and how change intentions are realized. At the same time, as the number of individuals who change their behaviors and their personal beliefs that sustain their new behaviors starts to grow, so social norms are also transformed. In short, behavior change in this area is an iterative and complex, not a linear, process of change.

In relation to *negative* norms and beliefs overall, fewer individual respondents acted on them, and those who did tended to be reacting in response to changing social norms. However, to sustainably change these negative social norms, it is important to reach a critical mass of individuals who stop acting based on them, so these social norms are transformed into their respective positive social norms. Also, it is important that people with authority and/or credibility in the communities (role models) act based on the positive social norms and promote them. In other words, it is at the community level where the process of transforming negative social norms needs to occur first, subsequently influencing changes in personal beliefs. For changes in negative norms, perhaps there is a sense that individuals are, in effect, looking for a lead from the community or society before personally committing to a behavior change.

In contrast, for changes in *positive* norms and beliefs, the opposite seemed to be true. More individuals first acted on their own personal beliefs rather than in response to changes in social norms. This may suggest that these beliefs are more internalized and, maybe, that there is a higher likelihood that the observed behavior change will be sustained, thereby providing a stronger basis for influencing positive gender-related social norms. While social norms on the one hand and personal beliefs on the other can be seen as two sides of the same coin, the distinction is important since their relative influence surely informs the balance of project interventions—at the community and the individual level—to achieve the greatest impact. A change process relating to *positive* norms is initiated through support from CCG members or other trusted peers. In the first instance, this causes the 'targeted' individuals to internalize the norms in question which, in turn, facilitates personal behavior change actions. If enough individuals adopt the changed behavior, there is a good chance this norm will become established as a social norm at the community level. In effect, the personal belief and the social norm become aligned.

At endline, roughly one-third of respondents indicated that they had acted on at least one positive and one negative norm influencing gender equity and equality, in line with the 36% of respondents who pursued a behavior change related to gender equity and equality, and positive youth development. As a result, marked improvements in the involvement of women in household decision-making, as reported by both women and men, can be observed. This reflects a significant success for the DFSA. Work remains, however, as there is still a sizable number of men and women reporting that men still take household decisions alone, and there was also a small setback since the midterm in male engagement in domestic and care work, but a small improvement toward a more equitable distribution of chores between male and female children.

Changes in women's access to and/or control over livestock and financial resources suggest that the behavior change pursued by CCG members and non-members contributed to improving women's access to these resources as well as some level of control, particularly in financial resources, reflecting women's newly acquired knowledge and skills in financial management practices. Changes in access to and control over land resources was, in part, related to the joint land title introduced by the GoE in 2003 that mandates joint certificates for agricultural holdings between husband and wife, part of ongoing national efforts to formalize land holdings. Although the findings are generally positive, at an individual level there is, inevitably, a wide variation in the individual experiences of women.

Strengthening youth's access to and control over resources represents a very different challenge compared to supporting women similarly, and it is reasonable to say that CCG contributions to behavior change related to youth development have been less marked. At best, CCGs have influenced improvements in access to and control over resources for only a relatively small number of youth while, for most, the situation improved more slowly. In part this may reflect that the participation of youth via separate youth CCGs is a recent phenomenon. In fairness, expecting CCGs to contribute significantly to improved outcomes among youth is a tall order, even though young adults did feel able to voice their opinions in CCG meetings and their ideas did inform decision-making. Effective tangible gains in outcomes for youth necessitate addressing structural and systemic issues that are most likely more deeply rooted in longstanding traditional practices and mindsets and, in consequence, require greater attention, effort and, most certainly, time.

Although a smaller percentage of participants pursed behavior change related to GBV, respondents considered that its occurrence had declined, with an even further decline from midterm to endline especially as it relates to FGM and girls' abduction. The CCGs can take some credit for influencing this outcome, particularly during the challenging COVID-19 period. Nonetheless, there were still some households in which GBV was practiced. Making progress can benefit from the existence of individuals among those households who have already changed their behavior in this regard. The narratives where positive behavior change occurred are a moving testament to the positive impact on the whole family of reducing GBV. Indeed, narratives cited earlier in this report suggest that improvements in gender equity and equality can positively contribute to improved well-being and livelihoods.

In short, there is still room for improvement in terms of women's quality participation and integration: this report has shown that there is still a gap between women and men.

## CCGs' CONTRIBUTIONS TO DFSA DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES AND GOAL

### Assessment objective

*To evaluate the contribution of behavior changes promoted by CCGs across the DFSA interventions to achieving and sustaining development gains and food, nutrition and livelihoods security.*

Responses from those interviewed on project performance on the key targets of the DFSA—improvements in resilience, food availability, income and dietary diversity—all suggest very encouraging positive changes, perhaps summarized in the pathway that tracked changes to how they viewed their own prospects at different stages (before the DFSA, during the DFSA and at present), showing, at the median, a progression from feeling vulnerable to feeling prosperous, with no significant difference between women and men, or between young adults and adults. Moreover, tracking individual responses showed that 96% of participants experienced a prosperous and resilient pathway thanks to their personal experience of behavior change, and only 4% of participants experienced a vulnerable pathway, but the fall was to a much higher level than where they were before joining the DFSA. This is a remarkable achievement bearing in mind the exogenous shocks experienced by project participants during the project activity, including crop pests and disease (affecting 50% of participants), drought (46%), price or market fluctuations (17%), livestock disease (17%) and unpredictable or erratic rainfall (15%), with the additional challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Gottret et. al, 2021, forthcoming).

Nevertheless, the overall picture of improvement in resilience, food availability, income and dietary diversity should be tempered to some extent by a recognition that not all respondents expressed the same degree of positivity; there were statistically significant differences in the perceptions of women and men, young adults and adults, and CCG members and non-members, with women, adults and non-members articulating less positive responses than those of men, young adults, and CCG members, respectively. It is also challenging to disentangle the precise level of the 'CCG affect.' There were many other contributory DFSA interventions, targeting all participants, most notably focused on SMART skills, including Savings and Internal Lending Communities, financial education and other skills using trained extension workers, and the use of the food/cash-for-work scheme to restore watersheds.

For the most part, a good deal of conviction on the positive influence and sustainability of the CCGs was expressed by respondents. In general, participants expressed self-confidence in their ability to sustain the behavior change that the DFSA had promoted, and a further improvement in this confidence was observed at endline, compared to midterm. However, women and CCG non-members, at the median, showed greater diffidence about continuing without further support than men and CCG members, respectively; and their responses were significantly more wide-ranging, especially those of non-members, which covered the whole continuum. There were still small pockets of vulnerable respondents who, for whatever reason, found it difficult to change their behavior or, if they did change, continued to need support to sustain it.

Finally, as noted earlier, it is challenging both to isolate and then attribute solely to CCG activities all the positive changes in development outcomes that respondents reported. We have cited other Ethiopia DFSA interventions taking place concurrently that will undoubtedly have had some bearing on respondents' positive reflections on the impact of the DFSA. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that this assessment's findings also show that CCGs added general value to the DFSA in at least three ways. First, as a cross-cutting intervention, the pivotal position of the CCGs in the community enabled them to play a moderating and integrating role that reflected the interconnected nature of different DFSA activities. This was invaluable in acknowledging and better supporting the integrated lives and livelihoods of project participants and communities. Second, CCGs played a central role in advancing the gender equity and equality agenda that contributed to important improvements in household gender-based dynamics and the reduction of forms of GBV. This serves as a solid foundation and has generated invaluable learning upon which the new RFSA can build as it seeks to advance this agenda and to promote youth development. Lastly, a key outcome of participants' CCG experiences over the last five years is the existence of a practicable structure, together with a set of processes, and a body of knowledge, learning and competencies that together provide a springboard for ongoing community-level participatory conversations that will help to address the myriad challenges that lie ahead.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## COLLECTIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

This report has surfaced important evidence that can contribute to collaboration, learning and adaptation of the CC approach and an implementation strategy for the new RFSA that has entered its 'refine and implement' year and broadly for the design of new projects with similar goals. As such, it is recommended that human and financial resources are invested in facilitating a series of events to engage the project team and key stakeholders in the collective interpretation of the findings to refine the CC approach and its implementation strategy. For this, two interrelated processes of collective interpretation and refinement are proposed that can be implemented in an iterative manner. If those processes are done well, a sense of ownership of the routes forward will develop, ensuring partners, allies and stakeholders commit to its implementation.

### ENGAGEMENT OF RFSA PROJECT STAFF AND ALLIES IN THE COLLECTIVE INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The data and conclusions reported above provide a strong starting point for more detailed RFSA team interpretation, reflection and planning as part of the refinement process. Given the interconnected nature of the DFSA and RFSA, and that the CC approach is a cross-cutting one, it is recommended that discussion, interpretation and decisions are undertaken in a collaborative manner, so that the sectors and stakeholders represented in the refinement process can take the opportunity to learn from the perspectives of others. Thus, this process will involve the engagement of project staff (CRS and implementing partners) and other project allies, such a government offices and local NGOs, to review and collectively interpret the findings collaboratively to identify actions to refine the CC approach and improve its implementation. This process will need to be carefully designed and well-facilitated, if possible, leveraging needed expertise to ensure an efficient use of time and financial resources and the achievement of the process outcomes.

This type of process is essential for development interventions occurring in complex settings. Langer (1997) writes that we should, 'implicitly recognize that no one perspective optimally explains a situation…we recognize that there is more than one perspective on the information given and we choose from among these.' This approach to learning introduces a creative and positive sense of uncertainty to one's thinking and thereby establishes a space for 'psychologically safe' learning and an openness to multiple perspectives.

### ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATORY INTERPRETATION WITH CCG MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS

CCG members and non-members can bring insightful and varied perspectives on the report findings. This will encourage a learning climate in which novelty, difference, context and perspective help to generate nuanced understandings of the data presented in this report and, in so doing, provide a launch pad for addressing complex challenges. Thus, this process involves the engagement of CCG members and non-members in a participatory interpretation of the findings to: i) fill information gaps for the refinement process, which are detailed as questions in the recommendations section of the report and can be reviewed, revised and complemented as part of the collective interpretation with project staff and allies; and ii) identify actions that CCG facilitators, and CCG members and non-members can take to improve the performance and outcomes of CCGs.

As part of the learning and refining work that will take place in the first year of the RFSA, the authors have identified questions that will benefit from further interpretation and discussion with CCG members and non-members to provide additional layers of information for the refinement of the CC intervention. Some of them reflect instances where 'weak signals' emanating from the data were identified. Such signals reflect a set of results in which a minority of respondents indicated experiences that were at odds with the majority position. More conventional data analytical approaches might tend to dismiss such experiences merely as outliers, yet SenseMaker provides an opportunity to determine the significance of the alternative perspectives, and whether they pose a risk to, or an opportunity for, future project success.

**Engagement and commitment to CCG functioning**

- What are the motivations and frustrations of those women and men who volunteered as CCG members and facilitators? Why did they volunteer? What would it take for them to continue volunteering and committing to the functioning of CCGs? How can others be encouraged to step forward? What is a good strategy for recruiting volunteers in a manner that reflects the diversity of community members, in terms of sex, age, ethnic group, disabilities and livelihood activities?
- How can CCG processes and activities be streamlined to make them less time-consuming? As part of this, it is recommended to undertake a reflection using the "participation ladder" and what it means in practice in the CCG context. The method proposes a typology of citizen participation that is presented as a metaphorical "ladder" that has eight levels of participation and a descriptive continuum of participatory power, from non-participation (no power), to degrees of counterfeit power (consultation and being informed of decisions made), and to degrees of citizen participation with actual power (making decisions and taking actions collectively). More information can be found here.
- What might explain why some participants expressed negative feelings on the conducting of CCG meetings, including feeling excluded and psychologically unsafe?
- Why did key influencers, such as traditional, religious and community leaders, not commit to addressing prioritized community issues and supporting community members in their efforts to pursue their prioritized behavior change?
- Why did some CCG members perceive the group discussions and reflections, one-to-one communication and personal testimonies as not effective for reaching community members with behavior change messaging? Why did most of CCG members consider radio, TV and social media as ineffective? Why did young adults consider personal testimonies as ineffective for creating awareness to change their behaviors?
- In a small number of instances, why did the role played by the CCG in mediating conflict, especially among ethnic groups make the situation worse? Should CCGs get involved in mediating conflict in communities at all? If so, what should be their role be and what competencies do CCG facilitators and members need to transform (rather than worsen) conflict and how can they be strengthened?
- Regarding secondary diffusion, why did women achieve a higher level of acceptance relative to men when they sought to influence other community members?

**Prioritization of gender equity and equality issues and behaviors**

- Why is it that although two-thirds of CCGs prioritized issues related to gender equity and equality, less than half of CCG members and one quarter of non-members prioritized pursuing an individual behavior change related to these issues?

- Why have only a quarter of CCGs prioritized addressing issues related to male engagement in domestic and care work, and only one fifth of individuals pursued a personal behavior change related to this specific issue? Why, despite all the work done, do women still bear a much greater burden of domestic and care work? Why did this worsen after midterm? Did the COVID-19 pandemic play a role in this?
- In the cases in which behavior change related to male engagement in domestic and care work was prioritized and pursued, did the time invested by women decrease? Why or why not? How did women invest the saved time in these activities?
- What needs to happen to improve male engagement in domestic and care work and reduce women's workload? What can be learned from the improvements achieved in the distribution of domestic and care work between female and male children? What specific support do women and men perceive they need to sustain their behavior change related to this issue, and who would be their preferred source of such support?

**Personal drivers, motivations and nudges for behavior change**

- This study has made some advances in understanding the personal drivers, motivations and nudges for behavior change. This first level of understanding can be further investigated by digging deeper into what drives people to change their behaviors and what external incentives are most effective. Moreover, some differences were observed in what drives and motivates women versus what drives men, and young adults versus adults, that will be worth understanding better to inform more tailored strategies to promote and support behavior change among different groups.

**Youth development needs, barriers and opportunities for a more tailored strategy**

- What drives and motivates youth to change their behaviors? What are their specific support needs to change their behaviors?
- What would motivate youth to assume leadership roles as CCG facilitators and agents of change among their peers and younger cohorts?
- What are the barriers that youth face to access and control resources? What specific interventions can help youth overcome these barriers and foster their access to and control over resources?
- How should strategies for the different age segments (e.g., young adults versus adults) be tailored to improve the status quo for young adults?

**Access to education for boys and girls**

- Is there a role for CCGs in helping reach an understanding of why school dropout rates are high, and is there a way for CCGs to mitigate the fact that more girls than boys drop out?
- What concrete social norms, personal beliefs and behaviors need to change to increase children's (boys' and girls') enrollment in school and to keep them in school?
- What role and advocacy work will be the most effective for CCGs to address issues related to boys' and girls' access to formal education?

**Support for sustaining behavior change**

- What specific support do women and men perceive they need to sustain their behavior change, and who would be their preferred source of support? What makes women more dependent on the support of others?
- Why did some respondents consider that it was hard to act according to their pursued behavior change and, despite this, why did some also perceive that they didn't need help from others?
- What is the potential for individual participants who are 'positive deviants' to serve as role models to support others who still need support, or who find it difficult to sustain their behavior all the time?

## CCG IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY REVISION

The new RFSA provides a valuable opportunity to sustain and grow the achievements of the DFSA through efforts on some of the more challenging issues that have arisen over the last five years. Based on the successes and learning from the implementation of the CC approach by the DFSA, some concrete recommendations are provided to revise implementation of the CC approach to enable RFSA performance to improve. These aim to improve the functioning of CCGs to further support the uptake of behavior change related to nutritional practices, provide better support to project participants to change and sustain their behaviors, and effectively monitor CCG performance for adaptive project management.

### CLARIFY HOW CCGs SUPPORT AND COMPLEMENT OTHER RFSA INTERVENTIONS

Originally, the CC approach was proposed to advance the cross-cutting purpose of the DFSA related to gender equity and equality, and youth development, but it evolved to include behavior change related to the other purposes of the DFSA as it responded to communities' and individuals' priorities. Nevertheless, it will be important to review the CC implementation strategy to ensure that CCGs do not duplicate the efforts of other RFSA interventions but rather reinforce them, while focusing specifically on promoting gender equity and equality, and youth development.

For this, it will be necessary to review the role of CCGs in supporting behavior change related to other DFSA interventions, and how best to collaborate with other project teams to create synergies that add value, focusing on the comparative advantage of CCGs to support other RFSA interventions.

### IMPROVE THE FUNCTIONING OF CCGs

CCG facilitators play a fundamental role in the functioning and performance of CCGs and as role models. Therefore, the criteria for selecting them needs to be revisited to ensure that, in addition to the basic literacy requirements, they have the foundational competencies (soft skills) needed to undertake this role. One way to attract naturally talented individuals could be by encouraging more young adults, who tend to have higher levels of formal education, to take on these roles. Moreover, the content and methods for building the capacity of CCG facilitators need to be reviewed and revised to successfully develop their communication, facilitation and leadership competencies, and to ensure that they demonstrate the behavior change promoted by the project so they can be role models in their communities.

Given the low representation of the elderly and people with disabilities in CCGs, the project can establish a quota, based on the proportion that these groups represent in their communities (positive discrimination), to engage them in CCGs and motivate them to take leadership positions to ensure that their special needs are considered and addressed.

Given the significant positive influence of traditional and religious leaders on behavior change across all DFSA purposes, it will be important to review and refine the strategy used to engage them to ensure their commitment to influencing and supporting behavior change in their communities, which was found to be lower than expected.

The differences found by this assessment between the responses of women and men, between young adults and adults, and between female and male young adults are important and need to be considered when designing gender- and age-responsive strategies to influence behavior change.

This involves carefully selecting the most effective influencers to motivate and support behavior change, formal and informal places and events to deliver behavior change messaging, and means to communicate messages targeted at these interest groups. Moreover, it is also important to select what topics can and cannot be discussed in certain settings.

### ADVANCE FURTHER BEHAVIOR CHANGE RELATED TO NUTRITIONAL PRACTICES

Despite the lower priority accorded to behavior change related to nutritional practices by participants, there is no question that it is important to continue promoting this type of behavior change as there seems to be an awareness among CCG members and non-members that their families are not well-nourished. The strategy consideration is more about the role of CCGs in supporting behavior change in nutrition and, in general, in other intervention areas. It may be that there is a continued role for CCGs, but the recommendation is for CCGs to collaborate with those community groups focused on improving nutritional practices and outcomes. What can the CCGs, specifically, add to support other interventions related to the purpose of improving the nutritional status of participating households?

Aligned with the previous point, there may be a need to fine-tune the strategy of providing cash or food for work to lessen the disincentivizing effects it may have on community members' attitudes toward changing behavior related to improved nutritional practices. This will require further investigation to better understand whether these subsidies provide incentives or disincentives to adopting improved nutrition behaviors. In this regard, there may be opportunities for 'behavior change nudge' techniques, as promoted by USAID.

### SUPPORT PARTICIPANTS TO CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR AND SUSTAIN IT

The new RFSA has a strong focus on SBC and formative research. With this in mind, the RFSA team could improve the CCG strategy by:

- Developing an integrated communication strategy that combines the types of social spaces—not only focusing on those created by the project—best suited to discussions on types of community issues, and for delivering behavior change messages and, at the same time, being opportunistic in utilizing other non-prioritized places and events for interaction. This could increase the relevance of the CCGs and their messages; and engender the habit of discussing issues that could be sustained in other spaces even if some CCGs do not continue after the new RFSA.
- Establishing a baseline on access to and use of radio, TV and social media, and disaggregating these by age group, and also considering the local context and zonal differences that may be appropriate to design communication strategies. For example, access to ICTs may vary geographically and should be taken into account before selecting communication strategies.
- Designing and implementing a strategy to support project participants through the stages of behavior change in a layered manner, from identifying their behavior change goal, planning for their intention to change their behavior, and making a public commitment (if appropriate), to practicing the new behavior, monitoring their progress, and receiving feedback. To avoid relapses and to sustain behavior change that has begun, there would be value in engaging in conversations, first at the CCG level, then individually, to close the gap between the intention to change and the actual long-lasting behavior change. The RFSA should adopt an approach that seeks to mentor, coach and supervise CCG facilitators after the initial training, to facilitate and support this process.

- Designing and implementing concrete actions to raise awareness of the social norms and personal beliefs that inform individual behaviors and transform negative norms and personal beliefs into positive ones, which are foundational to promoting and sustaining behavior change, especially as it relates to gender equity and equality, and positive young adult development. As part of these actions, negative and positive social norms and personal beliefs will need to be monitored at least at baseline, midterm and endline for the adaptation of these strategies as needed.

The emphasis placed by respondents on the importance that the willingness to change has on promoting behavior change offers an important insight. It makes it imperative for project interventions to design and implement approaches that nudge participants to transition from an awareness of the need to change to the willingness to change, before assuming that further investments in time and effort are worthwhile. This implies a greater upfront commitment in time and effort to encourage this elevated enthusiasm for change, with existing and new intervention approaches aimed solely at this one outcome, to raise individuals' eagerness to change. In the light of the findings below, a targeted, and likely nuanced, set of interventions, could generate not insignificant benefits.

While excellent progress has been made on the increased involvement of married women in household decision-making, there is more work to be done with them, and also to explore opportunities for similarly strengthening the role of unmarried men and women, so that decisions reflect a wider range of perspectives. The RFSA team will want to consider to what extent they can support married couples not only to model shared decision-making behavior, but also to discuss it openly with other family members, friends and peers, while the CCG adopts the role of promoting it more actively at a community level, perhaps inviting those already practicing joint decision-making to share their experiences.

### MONITOR CCG FUNCTIONING AND PERFORMANCE

Use the SenseMaker approach ('More stories like this, fewer like that') to set targets related to the promotion of behavior change, support project participants to sustain these new behaviors, and monitor them for adaptive project management using selected questions, including the tools used for this assessment, and applying them more frequently. A few examples will suffice: i) How can existing approaches be adapted to move more responses toward the 'pleasant and high energy' quadrant of Figures 5 and 52? ii) How can CCG facilitators' and ordinary members' participation and leadership be moved further into the 'fully engaged and transformative' extremes of Figures 39 and 42, respectively? or iii) What strategy can be set in place to move more responses to the lower right quadrant of Figure 101, for more participants to be acting according to their behavior change without needing support from others?

## EMERGENT CCG ROLES

Two new areas for consideration have surfaced during the assessment, as follows:

- Dropping out of school, at whatever level, is very damaging to livelihood progress, and there is strong evidence that keeping children and especially girls in school is directly linked to poverty reduction and improved gender equity and equality. Given the low levels of formal education, especially among women, the DFSA made progress in this regard, showing an increase in CCGs that discussed issues around girls' and women's access to education since the midterm (from 6% of CCG members who said their groups discussed and addressed these issues at midterm to 21% at endline), and an increase in the percentage of CCG members and non-members who pursued a personal behavior change related to this issue (from 8 to 14%).

Moving this agenda forward would be an excellent and economically and socially worthwhile challenge for the new RFSA as youth and adults CCGs may be well-placed to brainstorm what the community can do to address this challenge, including what support they might need from their local government, and how best to undertake the necessary advocacy work.

- With the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia, it is timely to analyze the potential opportunities and risks for CCGs to undertake peacebuilding activities in the new RFSA, to mitigate some of the threats that may develop over time. One of the interventions planned for the RFSA is engaging youth as peace ambassadors to give them an opportunity to support their communities and to receive acknowledgment and recognition for such positive roles. These peace ambassadors (young adults and adults) could be trained to assume the role of mediators who could prevent conflict escalation in their communities in a timely and effective way. This could build on the work already undertaken by the CCGs in terms of mediating conflict, an emergent activity that in the main was successful in improving the situation and could be an invaluable CCG role within their communities. However, before advancing with this, it is strongly recommended that the benefits and risks for the team are analyzed to consider how conflict mediation should be promoted to ensure that no harm is done.

## CCG FACILITATOR AND MEMBER COMPETENCY STRENGTHENING

The assessment raised a number of issues related to capacity and competencies. Encouragingly, personal development was one of the main incentives for becoming involved in CCGs, which could provide the basis for continuing to incentivize participants under the new RFSA; and yet, there was a relative low level of self-reported abilities, as well as assessed governance, participation and leadership competencies, which are foundational to functional and inclusive organizational processes. The average level of the *Good Governance* and the *Transformative Participation and Leadership* competencies among all men was higher than that among women, and higher among all CCG facilitators and CCG members. Moreover, despite the high level of responsibility given to CCG members to promote gender equity and equality and youth development, only a few respondents said that their ability to promote gender equality was useful, and very few their ability to support youth development.

In broad terms, the DFSA has introduced the CCG approach to communities, and the new RFSA now has the task of deepening the roots of these structures. The RFSA will need to invest in developing those competencies which are fundamental for all project participants, but especially women and youth, to effectively participate in the public sphere, ensuring that they have voice and choice in community matters. Work is required to move ordinary members from a functional participation to an active and fully engaged one, and their leadership from functional and motivating, to transformative. Also, although CCG facilitators are considered to have more active participation and a motivating leadership at the median, their type of participation and leadership is still variable and minimum standards need to be set for them.

Below are some specific recommendations to further strengthen CCG facilitators' and ordinary members' competencies:

- At the core of the new RFSA there should be a capacity building process for facilitators and ordinary CCG members to develop the following competencies: 1) organizational competencies (*Good Governance* and *Transformative Participation and Leadership*) as the foundations for CCG good governance and performance and for building social cohesion among group members; 2) facilitation competencies to more effectively engage communities in 'meaningful conversations;' and 3) networking and advocacy competencies. These should be accompanied by a periodic assessment of these competencies.
- There is a need to continue the gender integration interventions with a focus on women's and youth's leadership and communication skills to ensure that both women and young adults attain the same level of competencies as adult males. For example, strengthen the capacity building of women and youth in leadership, communication and decision-making skills.
- Ideally, the MEAL system should include an indicator on the 'percentage of CCG members who have achieved at least a functional level of the organizational and facilitation competencies.' There could also be two useful measurable indicators relating to transparency and discrimination that are tracked on a quarterly basis.

## CCG COLLABORATION WITH EXTERNAL ALLIES

With a multifaceted program such as the new RFSA, good collaboration is essential. Optimizing collaboration with external allies will help ensure that RFSA resources are used in the most efficient and effective manner, and will represent explicit steps toward sustaining DFSA achievements and those expected from the RFSA.

The DFSA started the process of transferring the support for CCGs to government offices and local government as an exit strategy, but now that the new RFSA will continue supporting CCGs and facilitating Community Conversations, it will be timely to reflect on how this process can be a consideration from the outset. This will require a clear strategy on how to further engage and reach an agreement on the roles and responsibilities of the RFSA and government offices over the life of the RFSA, and to provide hands-on support to government offices as a strategy for the longer-term sustainability of the benefit stream arising from the DFSA and RFSA. This strategy needs to ensure that CCGs are not used by government offices to advance their political agendas, and that CCGs maintain their independence and provide inclusive representation of different community interests and needs.

An important strategy of the DFSA was also to advocate for NGOs to influence and support behavior change, and this strategy also needs to be revised based on the findings of this assessment. Together with the potential role for government offices and NGOs to lend support, fostering cooperation among communities and *kebele*s, managing disagreements or conflict, and mobilizing resources for community projects, could all collectively serve as a useful package of approaches for the RFSA to discuss with external partners.

A data collector uses an electronic tablet to record a participant's answers to questions during the assessment. Photo by Rita Muckenhirn for CRS

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# Tables

# Figures

Catholic Relief Services
228 W. Lexington Street, Baltimore, MD 21201, USA
crs.org | crsespanol.org