

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Journeys of Transformation adaptation program to engage men as allies in women's economic empowerment

GUATEMALA



Program at a Glance

The *Journeys of Transformation (JoT)* program was created and implemented in Rwanda by CARE Rwanda, Rwamrec, and Equimundo (formerly known as Promundo-US) to engage men as allies in women's economic empowerment. Through 2020 and 2021, Equimundo and Global Communities adapted *JoT* and evaluated its impact on rural and indigenous men and women in Guatemala.

The adapted program, known in Spanish as '*Caminos a la Transformación*' (CaT), comprises 13 group learning and discussion sessions based on a curriculum that promotes men's acceptance and support of their female partners' economic empowerment by addressing gendered barriers to women's economic empowerment. Results from the evaluation showed a positive shift in gender-related outcomes including increased support of more equitable gender roles, improved communication between partners, higher male participation in household tasks and childcare, increased support for women's participation in saving groups and decision-making, as well as reduced acceptance of intimate partner violence. See [evaluation brief](#) to learn more about the program outcomes.

Background

Global Communities has worked in rural and indigenous communities in the western highlands of Guatemala for more than 20 years. Since 2014, its work has included the implementation of Global Communities' Women Empowered (WE) savings and loan groups, supporting women's social, economic, and political empowerment. WE groups are self-organized and self-managed savings groups made up of 15-25 women. In addition to standard savings and loan activities, women in WE groups gain leadership experience, practice collective action to address challenges, and pursue productive activities toward developing a sustainable source of income to support their individual goals, their families, and their communities.

Global Communities began to implement WE groups in 2018, as a component of its US Department of Agriculture funded Food for Education program, EDUCAMOS, working to improve the quality of primary education and nutrition in

the municipality of Cuilco, department of Huehuetenango. WE groups were integrated into the program to support women's decision-making power in their households and communities, with a focus on decisions related to time use and participation in economic activities.

To this end, the program recognized the need to address the persistent social and normative barriers to women's economic participation, economic advancement, and decision-making. These barriers included resistance among male partners and male community leaders to women's economic activities outside of the home, to sharing caregiving responsibilities, and to women actively participating as group members or leaders. To address some of these barriers and to enlist the support of members' male partners for women's participation in WE groups, Equimundo and Global Communities adapted the *Journeys of Transformation (JoT)* curriculum, previously implemented

in Rwanda, Mozambique, Zambia, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka to engage men as allies in women's economic advancement and ensure that they understand the positive effects of shifting gender roles around earning power.

The gender-transformative *JoT* curricula engages men, alongside their partners, in group education sessions designed to challenge inequitable gender norms and power dynamics, including those that hinder women's ability to participate in and fully benefit from economic opportunities (1). The field-testing of *JoT* in Rwanda in 2012 found positive transformation in men's attitudes and behavior that contributed to increasing family income, greater participation of men in childcare, and to less engagement in conflict between partners (2).

Program context

Guatemala has made progress in terms of human development indicators over the last decade; however, it continues to be one of the worst countries for women's and girls' rights in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2019 Guatemala ranked 122nd out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report which measures parity between men and women in economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment (3).

In the department of Huehuetenango, 21.9% of women aged between 15 and 49 years that have ever been married or partnered have experienced intimate partner violence (4). The municipality of Cuilco records some of the highest poverty levels in Huehuetenango, where around 8 out of 10 people live in poverty (81%) and almost 1 in 5 people live in extreme poverty (17%) (5)(6). In 2018, around a quarter of the population in Cuilco were illiterate (23%) and the municipality reports less female participation in income generation activities than the national average with 86% of women and 34% of men reporting no labor activity (7)(8). In Cuilco, most men and women work in subsistence agriculture, with only 51% of men and 4% of women reporting agriculture as an income generation activity (9).

Program theory of change

JoT was designed to operate in conjunction with women's economic empowerment initiatives to deliberately engage men as allies. It is based on sociological theories of gender and masculinities that highlight how gender inequalities are reproduced, sustained, and transformed in the home. The curricula provides a safe and non-judgmental space for men and their female partners to question and critically reflect on gender norms and how these affect their lives, rehearse behaviors based on equality with same-sex peers and as couples, and internalize these to build caring, equitable, and nonviolent relationships. *JoT* focuses on promoting shared household decision-making and unpaid care work, men's co-responsibility around caregiving and domestic work, increased couple communication, family planning, financial planning skills and prevention of intimate partner violence. The program motivates participants to question inequitable gender norms and power dynamics, including gendered barriers to women's economic empowerment, but, more broadly, those dynamics that sustain inequitable relations. It encourages them to adopt shared beliefs and practices that will advance gender equality. The program also engages with local community leaders and institutions to promote and sustain changes beyond implementation.

For Global Communities in Guatemala, the *JoT* curriculum was seen as complementary to the WE savings group program. While the WE savings groups offered women the opportunity to access informal financial services and gain leadership experience, it had little to no direct involvement with the members' husbands or partners. *JoT*'s theory of change posited that increasing men's support for women's economic participation and advancement while also sharing caregiving and domestic burdens more equally would allow women to benefit more from their participation in the WE groups, increase their decision-making power, and gain the possibility for deeper participation in the economic and civic life of their communities.

Program Design and Description



Adaptation Process

In 2020, Equimundo and Global Communities conducted formative research in two communities where WE groups were formed. The study explored local social norms, as well as the gendered realities and power dynamics at couple, household, and community levels. It found rigid gender norms that placed men in control of their households and communities, and made them responsible for protecting women, based on gendered stereotypes concerning women's vulnerability and risks women face when they venture outside their home. This, in turn, justifies restricting women's mobility and activities outside the home and constrains their autonomy. These norms thus legitimized male dominance over women as well as the use of violence. Women were held responsible for all household and caregiving work, with men only accepting to do these if women were physically unable to. The research also found that even though women

had gained knowledge about their rights and gender equality through their WE group meetings, they found it difficult to translate this to their lives and appropriate the idea that they had the right and capability to be involved in political, financial, and social decisions.

Men and women expressed their willingness to learn about shared decision-making and how work is divided among men and women in the household, talking about sexual and reproductive health as a couple, and managing economic household resources as a family.

Considering the gender norms, priorities, preferred engagement strategies, and learning approaches expressed by participants, as well as local based knowledge from the Guatemala Global Communities team, the methodology and content of *JoT* was adapted and contextualized to create the *CaT* curriculum.

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Design

The *CaT* program centers on nine thematic areas to promote change at personal, couple, and community level:

- 1 Family visioning and the importance of having shared family goals
- 2 Understanding gender
- 3 Exploring and challenging inequitable power dynamics
- 4 Sharing household roles and responsibilities
- 5 Family budgeting and financial decision-making
- 6 Support for women's economic empowerment and leadership
- 7 Addressing and preventing intimate partner violence
- 8 Being gender-equitable role models for children
- 9 Learning about sexual health, reproductive rights, and family planning

These themes are developed through 13 sessions led by local male and female facilitators, trained to create safe spaces, and promote critical reflection through discussion and hands-on activities so that participants engage in meaningful practical exchanges with same-sex peers as well as with their partners. (See Appendix for the Curriculum session outline.)

The first four sessions introduce participants in same-sex groups to gender norms and gender power relations, and how these affect their lives as individuals, as couples, and as a family. Men and women participate together as couples in sessions five to ten, to explore equitable attitudes toward household responsibilities, childcare, communication, and decision-making and rehearse more equitable and caring behavior. The couples are separated into same-sex groups for sessions 11 and 12 to discuss intimate partner violence, national policies against intimate partner violence, existing services to protect survivors, and how violence replicates across generations. The final session brings couples together again to reflect on the process and identify local support networks.



Access to Communities

Global Communities selected 15 communities with existing WE savings groups as potential communities to implement *CaT*. Each community was visited by male program facilitators who socialized the objectives

of the *CaT* program with local community leaders and community organizations, which consisted primarily of men. From the initial 15 communities, nine communities agreed to participate in *CaT*.



Participant Recruitment

An information session (session 0) was designed to share the objectives of *CaT*, offer potential participants the opportunity to experience a sample of its participatory methodology and invite couples to enroll in the program. To encourage men's participation, WE members were invited to join in session 0 with their

male partners. Male community leaders were also asked for support in promoting the intervention and men's attendance. In total, 215 couples participated in session 0 of which 145 couples expressed their interest to participate in the *CaT* program.



Implementation process

Overall, a total of 12 *CaT* groups were formed in nine communities in Cuilco. Each group received all 13 sessions of the curriculum between April and October 2021. At first, sessions with women were conducted on the same day as their WE group meetings. However, the midline evaluation indicated these over-burdened women as very few could allocate an entire day for workshops. As an outcome, the *CaT* sessions that

included women were scheduled on alternate weeks from WE group meetings. Each *CaT* session lasted around two hours and was led by two local staff facilitators (one male and one female) previously trained by Equimundo and Global Communities. The sessions were held in local schools and community halls. No stipends, reimbursements or rewards were offered to participants.



Attendance and retention

Out of the 12 groups formed, one dissolved and 11 completed the entire program. Ninety-eight couples graduated, with 89% of men and 84% of women participating in at least 75% of the sessions. Twenty-eight men and 29 women dropped out of the program, participating in fewer than 4 sessions. The main reasons

given for dropping out included: the realization that the program was not going to deliver any financial or material assistance, discomfort with the issues, and the perception that their relationships had no problems, and they did not need the program.

Monitoring and evaluation

The program monitoring and evaluation framework included a quantitative baseline study, midline qualitative evaluation and an endline mixed methods evaluation of results and of the implementation process (which included an endline survey, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews). In addition, the implementation team held internal weekly

planning meetings and monthly monitoring sessions with the Equimundo technical team to discuss issues faced during implementation, clarify questions regarding the methodologies and key messages of the sessions, and make any further adjustments to the activities.

Program Successes and Challenges



Successes

RESULTS

The quantitative and qualitative findings signaled positive shifts in gender-related outcomes and the reduction of restrictive gender norms and attitudes that limit women's economic empowerment. At endline, significantly more men reported participating in household and childcare work. Communication between partners improved significantly. More men and women reported being able to talk about their concerns with their partner and that they felt more comfortable when talking about whether to have sexual intercourse post intervention. Men reported feeling more comfortable, open, and willing to dedicate more time to communicate with their partners, especially about financial planning before making decisions about how to spend family resources, how many children to have, and their partner's ability to work outside of the home. Several women corroborated this openness on the part of their partners and felt that they listened to them more and engaged them in conversations regarding decision-making. This led to greater trust between them and gave rise to the possibility of sharing the children's or household needs. Improved partner communication was highlighted as the main benefit obtained from participating in the program.

"We improved our communication, we talk about finances, the family budget, in what we should invest our income" (Male participant)

More men and women reported increased awareness of the importance of joint decision-making and there was a significant reduction in men and women who believed that men should make the final decision about family spending.

The justification of intimate partner violence used by men (in at least one situation of several asked) decreased significantly for both men and women, but in a larger proportion for men. This decrease was reported for two specific situations in particular: (1) if the woman disobeyed her partner, and (2) if she did not take care of their children. Among women, there was increased knowledge about women's rights and the identification of different types of violence. Women also reported an increase in male support of their participation in WE groups, replacing criticism with encouragement and valuing their contribution to the family economy.

IMPLEMENTATION

Establishing close alliances with community leaders was found to be a key factor in promoting the program, recruiting men, and encouraging attendance and retention. Almost all participants (99% of men and 97% of women) stated that their experience in the program was positive or very positive. Most participants

agreed that there was a need for the program in their communities, especially because they perceived high levels of intimate partner violence. The sessions that participants liked the most were those that addressed intimate partner communication, family planning, and building a family vision for the future. For women, it was particularly important to have a representative from the municipality lead the women's rights and violence session.

The novelty of the program gained interest from local authorities including the Mayor's Office, the Municipal Women's Directorate (Dirección Municipal de la Mujer),

the Municipal Commission for the Prevention of Violence, and Mother and Child Care Centres (Centros de Atención Integral Materno Infantil, CAIMI), and served to strengthen their relationship with Global Communities that support the development of programs that engage men for gender equality. Both men and women valued the opportunity to exchange experiences with peers and to have sessions with same-sex peers as well as together as couples to address different topics. Women emphasized that the program and activities gave them a space and the opportunity to reconnect with their partners.



Limitations & Challenges

IMPACT

One of the areas that was least impacted by the program was women's ability to make decisions autonomously, even when it came to their own resources. This may have been influenced by the program's focus on joint decision-making and building a family vision for the future. Thus, addressing joint decision-making should always consider women's needs and the domains in which they want to make decisions on their own. Facilitators need to be well trained to avoid favoring 'joint' decision-making at the expense of women's autonomy. Also, even though the acceptance of women's ability to generate income and men's participation in household work increased, there was limited evidence of these roles being put into practice and both men and women continued to report the involvement of their spouse as "help" or a "contribution" to their own gendered responsibilities, as opposed to shared responsibilities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Men and women indicated that the program was rejected by some people in their communities because it did not offer any material incentives and because they deemed the thematic focus not necessary for their lives. Although there was a high level of loyalty in program

implementation, facilitators had to contextualize some activities to help participants understand them. This contextualization included adjusting illustrations, adapting activities that involved reading or writing for low-level literacy participants using drawings for instance, modifying case studies, and using examples of relatable persons that represented different levels of power in their community.

Facilitators also reported that participants found it difficult to understand some of the key messages of the manual and required frequent meetings with the supervisor and the technical team. This highlights the importance of recruiting facilitators ideally from the communities or from the areas of intervention they will engage with, that understand gender norms and gender-transformative processes, as well as ensuring that their training is effective, delivered in several opportunities before and including refresher trainings during implementation to enhance their skills, address emerging challenges, and share solutions with the team. Successful adaptation of a program requires making iterative adjustments to integrate feedback from participants and facilitators and practice-based knowledge until the content, methodology, and ways in which participants are invited to engage with it resonate with participating communities.

Lessons learned

***JoT* GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAM CAN SUCCESSFULLY BE ADAPTED TO OTHER CONTEXTS**

The evaluation results indicate that effective program adaptation can be achieved through an initial formative research and a collaborative and iterative process that integrates culturally adequate ways of learning; ensures the use of content, activities and language that resonate with the men and women that it intends to reach; and integrates local practice-based knowledge.

MEN PLAY A KEY ROLE IN LIMITING OR ENCOURAGING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Male partners of women participants in women's economic empowerment programs play an active role in discouraging women's participation through criticism, and by limiting both women's ability to attend meetings and their resources available to contribute to the saving groups. On the other hand, male partners can also actively encourage women's participation through positive and supportive comments, facilitating their attendance by taking on household and/or childcare work and offering funds to be invested in the savings group.

ESTABLISHING ALLIANCES WITH MALE COMMUNITY LEADERS IS ESSENTIAL IN PROMOTING MALE PARTICIPATION

Male community leaders are the maximum authority in the communities and have the power to accept or reject proposed interventions. Likewise, they are often highly respected by community members making

their influence on the opinions of men instrumental in promoting their recruitment, retention, and attendance.

IMPROVING PARTNER COMMUNICATION CONTRIBUTES TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OTHER GENDER-RELATED OUTCOMES

Improved partner communication was the main impact reported by most participants. These improvements facilitated shifts in several gender outcomes related to the quality of couple relationships, such as men and women's increased ability to share their concerns, and more mutual care and support. Moreover, improved partner communication eased discussions around family planning and household needs, contributed to women's participation in decision-making, and helped participants to address conflict in constructive ways and prevent intimate partner violence.

INTERGENERATIONAL REFLECTION PROMOTES CHANGE

Engaging men in intergenerational reflection promotes increased awareness and behavioral changes that can help to break the reproduction of restrictive gender norms and attitudes that sustain inequality and violence. These activities allow men to connect their childhood experiences with their own actions and become aware of the impact that they have on their children, thus motivating them to adopt nonviolent, caring attitudes and behaviors to support the aspirations and vision they have for their children and family.

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Appendix: Overview of curriculum

SESSION	OBJECTIVES	PARTICIPANTS
SESSION 0 Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To introduce the <i>Journeys of Transformation</i> program, methodology, and objectives to community members and invite potential male and female participants. 	Community members, women participating in WE and their male partners.
SESSION 1 Welcome & Goal-Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To introduce participants to one another, and to talk to them about the purpose of the meetings. To support them in creating a family vision that will frame their participation throughout the program in terms of their personal goals. 	Men & women separately
THEME 1: EXPLORING GENDER AND POWER		
SESSION 2 Stepping out of the Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore how gender roles are created, discuss their community's beliefs and expectations on what it means to be a man and a woman, and to explore ways of challenging harmful gender norms to improve family well-being. 	Men & women separately
SESSION 3 Challenging Power and Patriarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase awareness of power relations, reflecting on one's own experiences of feeling powerless and powerful and to analyze the power dynamics in the home and how these can be balanced to promote harmony and well-being for all members. 	Men & women separately
THEME 2: EQUALITY INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE HOME		
SESSION 4 Cycles of Caregiving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand how men's and women's roles change over time and reflect on their relationships with their parents so that they can apply the positive aspects they experienced to their relationships with their own children and leave behind the negative. To encourage men's active participation in caring for their children. 	Men & women separately
SESSION 5 Couple Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand the importance of having effective and caring communication skills for open and trusting relationships and to practice creative ways of communicating as couples for successful conflict resolution. 	Men & women together
SESSION 6 Sharing the Care Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore how each partner spends their time, their different responsibilities and work focusing on care and household work, promoting dialogue about pressures and burdens they feel and finding joint solutions to share care work fairly. To integrate this view to their family vision in order to achieve it by working together. 	Men & women together
SESSION 7 Let's Make Decisions Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore the negative impacts of one partner having more decision-making power than the other in the home, understanding the benefits of sharing decision-making power equally and identifying ways to do this as a couple. 	Men & women together or separately

SESSION	OBJECTIVES	PARTICIPANTS
SESSION 8 Family Budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore the importance of establishing shared family financial goals, learn steps to create a family budget and a savings plan to reach their financial goals together. 	Men & women together
SESSION 9 Supporting Women's Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reflect on women's ability to become leaders, exploring the barriers they face and what women, men, and others in positions of power can do to support and foster their leadership in the community. 	Men & women together
THEME 3: SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING		
SESSION 10 Planning our Family Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn about women's menstruation cycle and conception, contraception methods available for men and women, and facilitate couple-based discussion about the contraceptive method that is best for their relationship. 	Men & women together
THEME 4: WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN		
SESSION 11 What Is Violence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To recognize the different forms that violence takes in the home and community, learn about local laws and policies to prevent and sanction violence against women, and explore the role that power plays in violence. 	Men & women separately
SESSION 12 Ending Cycles of Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reflect with men on the cycles of violence that affect them, including how men use violence against others, identifying the factors that contribute to men's use of violence and practicing strategies to better manage difficult emotions so as to prevent the use of violence. 	Men only
SESSION 13 Creating a Healthy Family Life Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To celebrate the changes experienced and reflect on what was learned throughout the program, identifying their social support network, which they can contact when facing challenges. 	Men & women together

