

SNAPSHOT

Trading Places: Enhancing the Value of Unpaid Care Work between Men and Women



One of the couples that partook in the Trading Places workshop, sharing their experiences and insights of a day in the life in each other's shoes.

"I learned that I still have a lot to learn about home chores. I know how to take care of our children and now I am going to cook again together with my wife to learn properly how to cook. This exercise was very helpful, and it helped us to discuss as a family."

- man, maize cooperative, Bugesera District



Participating couples in the Trading Places workshop.

Gender inequality and norms are a part of a pervasive social system which exists in virtually all countries and cultural contexts around the world. In Rwanda, Venture37 is committed to engaging with agricultural cooperatives to address gender barriers and power dynamics that negatively affect women's participation in cooperatives, both as members and leaders, and within their households. To empower both men and women through the Cooperative Development Activity 4 (CD4) gender action plan, Venture37 hosted the Trading Places exercise as a transformative approach to training by encouraging husbands to experience firsthand the heavy domestic workload of their wives to foster greater respect, value, and understanding of their work. For two days, couples committed to swapping roles and recording their progress and hours spent on activities using an Accountability Tracking Tool. Four couples from each of the three participating cooperatives (12 in total) attended the exercise.

Since 2019, Venture37 has implemented activities from each of the three components of its CD4 in Rwanda and Malawi, improving the business performance of cooperative organizations across the dairy, maize, and horticultural value chains. To foster further inclusive economic growth and business development, CD4 has mainstreamed gender equality as a significant priority. Using the findings from a subsequent gender analysis in Rwanda, a gender action plan was created to address how gender issues should be integrated into program activities, implementation, and further recommendations. Phase 1 of the gender action plan included four separate trainings at each of the participating primary cooperatives: foundational gender training, gender-based violence training, domestic couples training, and women's leadership training.

After participating in the training, couples were briefed and then asked to do a baseline assessment of each household as a group. They then sat together to compare their tracking tools against the baseline and spoke to their individual experiences while trading places. Men shared a deeper recognition of their wives' daily routine, while women had the time to rest and enjoy more free time during the day. Husbands also spent more time with their children and provided a positive influence on sharing responsibilities within the home. CD4 plans to continue this activity beyond Phase 2 to encourage normalizing such behaviors and breaking down gender barriers to reinvent gender norms and attain a more egalitarian home.

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"I swept the ground, then went to the farm. I cleaned the dishes and my wife started cooking. I realized that women have a lot of work, usually when we come back from farming, men go to rest while the women keep being busy. Women are really heroes! When I went to bathe the children, I forgot to check the fire and it went out. I used to ask my wife what she has been doing when I came home and found that the food is not yet ready. I have really found that we don't value their work enough."

- man, maize cooperative, Rwamagana District

"When we went back home for lunch, he was asked to prepare the table since the children had already prepared lunch. He went and brought only two plates and forks! So, the children asked him, 'daddy, today it is only you and mum who will eat, right?' They laughed at him because he can't even prepare the table. After when we were talking, he told the children, 'sometimes when you don't do things you think that they are simple! Even things that seem easy require time. It is not always as easy as we think!' We had a great moment with the children, and it was a great opportunity for us as a family to spend time together."

- woman, dairy cooperative, Gicumbi District



"Not only should we keep doing this work, but we shouldn't even hide it. We should do all this in the open, and spark the curiosity of others, and tell them to try it, and just wait and see the benefits. Because we know how good it is for the home, and we know it's the right thing to do. So, we should encourage everyone to do it and not be ashamed or hide away, and then others will learn and change, too."

- man, maize cooperative, Bugesera District