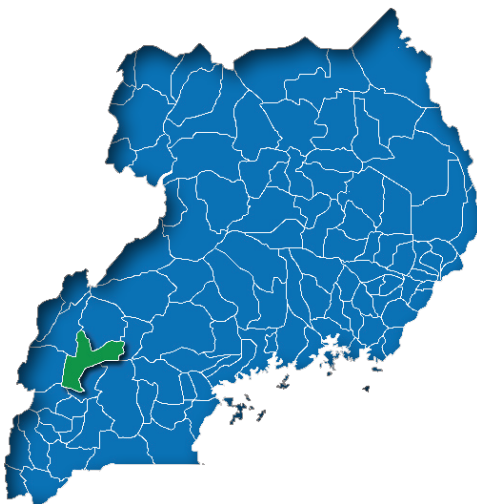


## Gender Transformative Coaching & Programming in Cohort 2

These briefs share learning and insight gathered through after-action reviews after the first year of implementation of cohort 2 (Cohort 1 was conducted over 30 months, ending in June 2021, and followed by a 6-month refinement period prior to the start of cohort 2) which began in February 2022 and will run for 24 months. Findings will inform refinements and adaptations needed for the remaining year of programming as well as contributing to the evidence base around the model and promote the most effective and efficient approach to supporting extremely poor households to become more self-reliant and resilient.



Photo: AVSI Foundation



Graduating to Resilience is a 7-year (2017-2024) USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) funded Activity implemented by AVSI Foundation, in partnership with Trickle Up and the American Institutes for Research (AIR). The Activity seeks to test the Graduation Approach's ability to graduate 13,200 economically active, but ultra-poor refugee and host community households in Kamwenge District, Uganda from food insecurity and fragile livelihoods to self-reliance and resilience.

### BACKGROUND

Graduating to Resilience (the Activity) employs a woman plus household approach to identifying and engaging participants. The Activity selects an economically active woman, or in some cases a youth, within the household to engage in programming as a primary participant. This approach is intentional, as women are traditionally excluded or marginalized from decision-making around livelihood choices and earned income. The Activity understands that engaging not only the woman, but also the entire household, is essential for promoting long-term sustainable changes in gender norms and empowerment. To examine the extent to which the Activity facilitated a change in gender norms during cohort 1, the consortium designed and conducted a follow-on Gender Assessment in 2021 to better understand which interventions were most influential in changing gender dynamics. Findings from this study indicated that coaching is a key driver in changing gender norms at both the household and community level. Further detail can be found in the cohort 1 Technical Brief on Gender.

Building upon the Activity's systematized learning processes including the cohort 2 refinement phase, Theory of Change annual review, and development of a Gender Mainstreaming Framework, seven core gender considerations were identified to support the **intentional integration and mainstreaming of gender-sensitive approaches** within the Activity for cohort 2.

### Core Gender Considerations

- **G1:** While women are the point of entry, interventions engage all household members to achieve more equitable gender roles and dynamics.
- **G2:** Interventions are considerate of women's responsibilities and time usage, to not overburden women and change norms around gender roles.
- **G3:** Gender analysis is a core component of all assessments to foster critical examination of gender norms and dynamics.
- **G4:** Promote women's participation in VSLA to foster leadership, promote a social support network, increase self-confidence, and reduce barriers to formal financial inclusion.
- **G5:** Gender considerations must be taken into account when selecting modalities for distributing resources and information, such as consumption support, asset transfer, market-based and private sector information, pesticide use, etc. to mitigate risks, address women's specific needs, and promote their control and decision-making power.
- **G6:** Coaching promotes positive gender norms and prevents and responds to GBV.
- **G7:** All training materials and curricula mainstream gender to enable women's full participation and promote equitable gender norms and are reinforced through coaching (coaches attend the training).



### HOW WE ADAPTED

Findings from the first cohort indicate that coaching was overwhelmingly identified as the most influential activity in changing gender norms. It was also noted that coaches can play a role in building the knowledge and skills among participants and their partners so that they may de-escalate and resolve conflicts, reducing some risk of gender-based violence (GBV). The Activity made the following program design and implementation adaptations for cohort 2 to deepen the gender transformative approach to coaching as well as mainstream gender throughout program components to further promote and enhance gender equity outcomes.

- **Intentional targeting of spouses and other household members.** This included pre-coaching and sensitization sessions at household level, dual consent and signing of the social contract by both the primary participant and their spouse before Activity engagement, and the intentional mobilization of spouses and other adult household members to attend coaching sessions. This facilitated attitude and behavior changes

around gender norms and mitigated unintended consequences, as well as promoted joint decision-making and equitable division of labor, and addressed any misconceptions around the woman-plus approach.

- **Refine the coaching curriculum to better address inequitable gender norms.** The sequence of coaching sessions was adjusted to begin with foundational topics such as conflict negotiation and management, joint decision-making, and shared responsibilities to address inequitable gender norms from the outset and allow time for change, with the support of a coach. Positive gender norms set the foundation for other important topics covered in the curriculum, such as nutrition, savings, and WASH.
- **Include specific household touchpoints and visits between participants and their coach.** Although coaching is now being conducted at group level for all cohort 2 participants, the Activity identified particular household touchpoints in which the coaches visit each participant household to deliver specific coaching topics, such as conflict management and negotiation and WASH. This is to ensure all household members receive relevant information on topics that directly affect the

entire household. These household touchpoints enable coaches to identify and strengthen the referral system to medical, legal, protection, and education services and needs, which are beyond the Activity's capacity to respond to.

- **Incorporate community-level sensitizations, outreach, and awareness to promote behavior change around improved gender norms, including GBV.** The Gender Assessment identified negative peer influence and pressure from other community members, particularly among men as some of the main barriers to changing gender norms on a larger scale beyond individual households.
- **Conduct larger sensitizations sessions prior to cash transfers to reduce and mitigate issues of GBV.** Cash transfers (both consumption support and asset transfer) were identified as the main contributing factor to household conflict and GBV. To ensure the Activity does not create or exacerbate any household tensions, dedicated sensitization sessions were conducted which targeted primary participants, spouses, and other household members, as well as other service providers in the area to ensure full transparency. The Activity also incorporated radio spot messaging and direct text messaging to reinforce key messages.



Photo: AVSI Foundation



## WHAT WE LEARNED

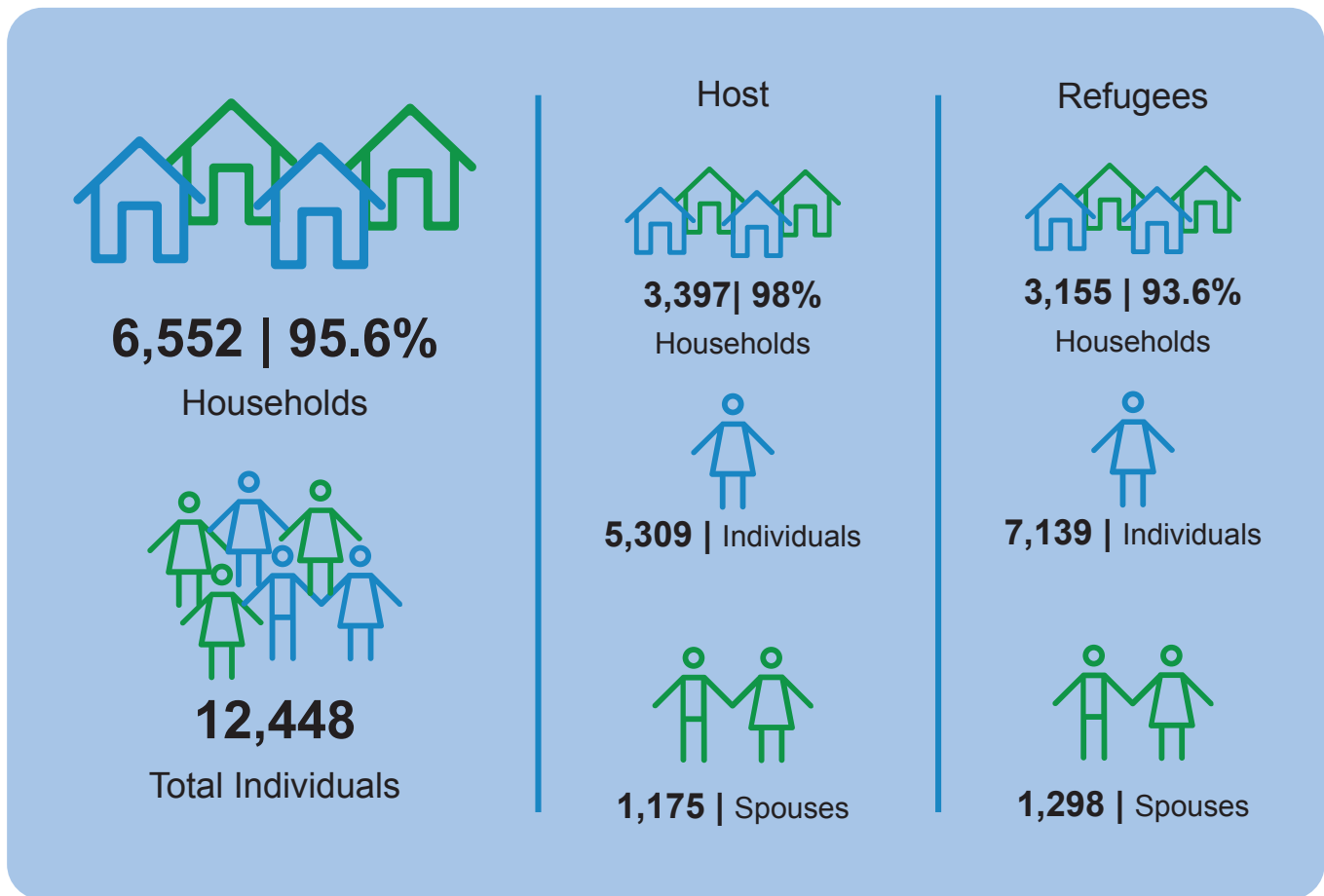
At the end of first year of cohort 2, in February 2023 the Activity conducted a series of after-action reviews (AARs) to understand and provide evidence on the impact of integrating key gender adaptations. A total of 5 focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 71 individuals, including female primary participants and male/youth participants (some of whom were primary participants and some of whom were household members) within both refugee and host communities, as well as a group of coaches for both cohorts. **Findings from the cohort 2 coaching AARs indicate that learning from cohort 1 and refinements made to coaching processes and curriculum for cohort 2 implementation have generally delivered the intended impact.**

**The intentional inclusion of spouses and other household members in the coaching sessions has helped ensure the Activity supports the development of the entire household, not just the primary participant.** As noted by one coach, *“The men feel they are also part of the program where in cohort 1 it [the Activity] was called a program for women.”* Relatedly, coaches noted that the inclusion of spouses has made their jobs **easier in delivering the coaching topics** and have observed an increase in understanding and implementation of information learned. The inclusion of spouses in the coaching sessions has also **relieved pressure from the primary participant**, who previously was seen as the one responsible for making all household improvements.

## Gender Transformative Coaching & Programming in Cohort 2

Although coaches indicated that more spouses are attending coaching sessions compared to cohort 1, the male FGD participants indicated that many spouses may still not be attending, despite their active participation in other Activity interventions, particularly the community sensitization prior to the asset transfer. **It is important to maintain targeted mobilization of spouses and other household members throughout the program to attend and participate in coaching sessions.**

Based on internal Activity monitoring data, by the end of March 2023:



Starting the coaching engagement with gender topics (including Conflict Management and Negotiation, Basics of Gender, and Exploring and Sharing Household Responsibilities) enabled coaches to **build rapport with the entire household** and understand the unique challenges participants faced. Coaches also noted that introducing the **gender topics earlier in the coaching curriculum has helped participants and their household appreciate their specific roles and responsibilities from the beginning.** Earlier delivery of conflict management and negotiation topics was critical given that most conflicts documented in cohort 1 were attributed to cash transfers (consumption support and asset transfer) and this enabled the coach to refer participants back to this topic and emphasize the knowledge they received.





## Gender Transformative Coaching & Programming in Cohort 2

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“When there’s a misunderstanding with my husband, having my husband in the coaching session helps bring us together and for my husband to understand.”

- Female refugee participant

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Both female and male FGD groups highlighted the **positive impacts of group coaching** which encourages peer-to-peer learning and fosters group solidarity. Furthermore, **household touchpoints or follow-ups are useful** to ensure participants implement what they are taught and help ensures other household members receive information. Overall, participants were happy to have a combination of group coaching and individual household touchpoints.

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“Delivery of these topics in a two-way form has eased our work. For example, at the group level when you coach certain topics and you then follow them up at household level, when you come back to the group, participants have more stories to tell other people. It has eased the relation between the coach and participants of the group and improved the relationship between the coach and other members of the household who don’t come to the group meetings. The topics have been delivered well and received by everyone at the household level.”

- Coach

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All participant FGDs unanimously agreed that **coaching has been helpful in improving self-efficacy, joint planning, and decision-making at the individual and household level respectively**. Having other household members attend coaching sessions has been important in ensuring that **more people receive information directly**, which helped limit misunderstanding between household members. As shared by a coach, *“In Cohort 1, you had to tell a woman who had to transfer the information to the man and the man became agitated saying ‘those are your things’. The next time you go there you find things are not done and you had to reinforce/re-coach. But these days when you say something and they are together, they understand and do it so change is easier than in cohort 1.”* It was also noted by all participant groups that having other household members participate in coaching sessions has brought households together to jointly plan how to use their money, particularly the consumption support. The reordering of the coaching curriculum also supported the sustainability of businesses given there is an **appreciation of shared household responsibilities** and how businesses are intended to provide for the entire household. Several coaches shared that in cohort 1 spouses were initially opposed to women doing business, indicating the woman would say *“it’s my money and I will make my business”* but with cohort 2 it’s *“our money and our business”*.

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“Handling the WASH topic it becomes easy to talk to the spouse directly about needing a tippy-tap, because men are the ones engaged in the construction. It becomes easy for me to deliver information directly to the person compared to telling the woman to go tell your husband to do this. They get the first-hand information.”

- Coach

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All participant FGDs highlighted their preference for **individual household visits for immediate support to solve intra-household problems** including discussion of personal issues to be kept confidential. Several participants, particularly from the host community, noted the GBV prevention and sensitization topics have **reduced incidences of abuse and conflict within their household or a neighboring household**. Of note, male refugee and host community participants indicated that domestic violence has decreased due to the conflict management topic. One male refugee participant shared that the most important message he learned was to reflect on the status of his relationship with his spouse. He emphasized that *“I learnt that joint planning is the solution to many conflicts. Many households had challenges with debts because the man or woman borrowed money without knowledge and consent of their spouse.”* Now both women and men understand the joint responsibility of the household, including sending children to school, providing food, savings, and running their business.



Photo: AVSI Foundation



### RECOMMENDATIONS

**Coaches can be more intentional and communicate directly with spouses to ensure they attend the coaching sessions.** The Activity has recently collected all spouse contact information and is disseminating targeted messaging through Telerevit. For future programming, it is recommended that both participant and spouse contact information be collected at the beginning of the project to ensure and improve communication.

**Continue to incorporate additional community sensitizations, radio talk shows, and targeted messaging.** Follow up messaging reinforcing key coaching and gender messages in local languages is helpful in changing community norms and practices. Of note were the sensitization sessions prior to the asset transfer, radio messages on the use and importance of consumption support, and knowledge and safety around fraud. This recommendation is being put into practice with the inclusion of community



Photo: AVSI Foundation

gender dialogues and radio talk shows (surrounding International Women’s Day) which are inclusive of both refugee and host communities.

**Conduct follow up key informant interviews with participants at the end of cohort 2 to measure the full impact of gender integration.** Not all coaching sessions had been delivered to participants at the time of the AARs and therefore it is hard to measure the overall impact of coaching on issues of gender transformation. Follow up interviews will provide a full picture on the impact of gender transformation and measurement of the Activity’s Gender

Mainstreaming Framework. This may also allow participants to more openly share their experiences on gender, including sensitive topics such as GBV. As much as most participants within the FGDs indicated that the Activity has contributed to improved and positive household dynamics, Program Officers indicated they are aware of some issues of conflict (from their engagement with coaches) that did not necessarily come out in the group discussion and therefore individual interviews could provide additional data.



### HOW WE WILL CONTINUE LEARNING

While the Activity made great strides in learning and adapting interventions to better integrate a gender sensitive approach, these findings will continue inform how coaches and community-based trainers can continue to provide ongoing support to participants over the next year to ensure they receive the knowledge and skills to become resilient. The Activity will continue to identify strategic points, such as the 16 Days of Activism campaign and World Refugee Day, within the final year of programming to further disseminate messaging around gender equity. Furthermore, it is important to understand how the Activity’s approach can also promote and shift community level-attitude change around gender norms. Learning from cohort 2 will be shared with donors, policymakers, local stakeholders, and other organizations implementing the Graduation Approach to contribute to the evidence base around the model and promote the most effective and efficient approach to supporting extremely poor households to become more self-reliant and resilient.