

REPORT OF THE RETREAT FOR COUPLES INVOLVED IN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN GIHETA COMMUNE ON THE SMART COUPLES APPROACH



Family photo at the end of the training of model couples involved in the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) prevention in Giheta commune on the “SMART Couples” approach, September 7, 2023. Photo taken by Grace Horanimana

05-07 September 2023

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0. Introduction

The SMART Couples approach commonly known in Burundi as “Approche Maison Fidèle” is a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) methodology that helps strengthen non-violent communication between couples and produces better joint decision-making. Although it is often implemented to support greater joint decision-making on family needs such as nutrition, health or education, it has been found to reduce gender-based violence and is a real source of social cohesion at the household level.

In Burundi, in the province of Muyinga, the “Maison Fidèle” approach has been successful and has transformed the lives of several couples through the AMASHIGA program. As the government of Burundi has, in its vision the promotion of equity for sustainable development, in 2019, the Minister in charge of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender at the time visited on the ground and observed the changes brought by this approach in the lives of households. He quickly validated this approach at the national level and promised to duplicate it at the national level.

From August 23 to 26, 2022 in NGOZI and GITEGA, CRS-BURUNDI in collaboration with the Ministry of National Solidarity organized a training workshop for Facilitator Couples composed of DPDFS and socio-cultural advisors of the Governors of the provinces throughout the country in order to strengthen their capacities on this approach and equip them with sufficient knowledge and tools that will allow them to ensure good dissemination to other couples in their provinces.

Having heard the testimonies of this approach in the country, the association “Friends Women's Association” with the technical support of CRS Burundi organized a training workshop for couples involved in gender-based violence prevention as part of the Action on Gender-Based Violence (AGBV) project. This training workshop took place at MIPAREC in Gitega from September 5 to 7, 2023.

This report presents the main themes covered, the objectives, the expected results of the workshop, the methodology used, the analysis of the pre and post test results, the initiatives already demonstrated and lessons learned, the conclusion, the recommendations made. The list of people trained, the workshop program and the photos taken during the workshop are also attached to the report.

1. The main themes Covered

The main themes covered were the frame of the house made by the foundation and the four pillars of the house (true love, fidelity, respect for life and communication); the completion of the building of the faithful house made by the walls, the opening door, the windows of forgiveness as well as the roof of conscience; life in the faithful house which speaks of the marriage bed and finally the challenges which await the faithful house including culture, broken and poor houses, economic responsibility.

Objectives of the Workshop

The general objective was to train couples involved in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention of the FWA AGBV project in Giheta commune. Then, they will in turn be able to pass on the approach to other couples from the FWA association or from the community.

The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- Disseminate on a large scale the approach which has already experienced success in Muyinga Province, Bujumbura and Bubanza;
- Equip participants with sufficient knowledge about the SMART Couples approach,
- Develop action plans for disseminating this approach in the community.

Expected Results

The expected outcomes of the workshop were:

- Participating couples understand the content of the SMART Couples approach;
- Participating couples are able to integrate the SMART Couples approach into their daily activities;
- Participating couples master the good facilitation practices of the SMART Couples approach;
- Participants develop plans to implement this transformative approach to couples' lives in the community.

Attendance

This training workshop saw the participation of couples involved in the prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) from the FWA AGBV project in Giheta commune (GBV survivors accompanists, local leaders), the facilitator couple, the coordinator and the four members of the FWA.

In total, there were 11 couples.

A. Methodology

The training favored interactive approaches specific to andragogy and leading to practical achievements. Each presentation attracted the participation of the participating couples and the summaries of the facilitating couple, accompanied by illustrative examples and testimonies from the couples' lives, allowed each participating couple to better understand the subject. Expository, brainstorming and small groups were used

The four main steps the facilitator followed for each lesson:

- Collection of views or ideas from Participants
- Complementary perspectives or facilitators draw on participants' responses and share personal experiences and other relevant information with them.
- Make the lesson concrete through discussion questions in small groups with restitution in plenary.
- Couples' hour" during which the facilitators ask the participating couples to discuss one or more specific aspects of the theme addressed.

B. Comparative Analysis of pre and post Results

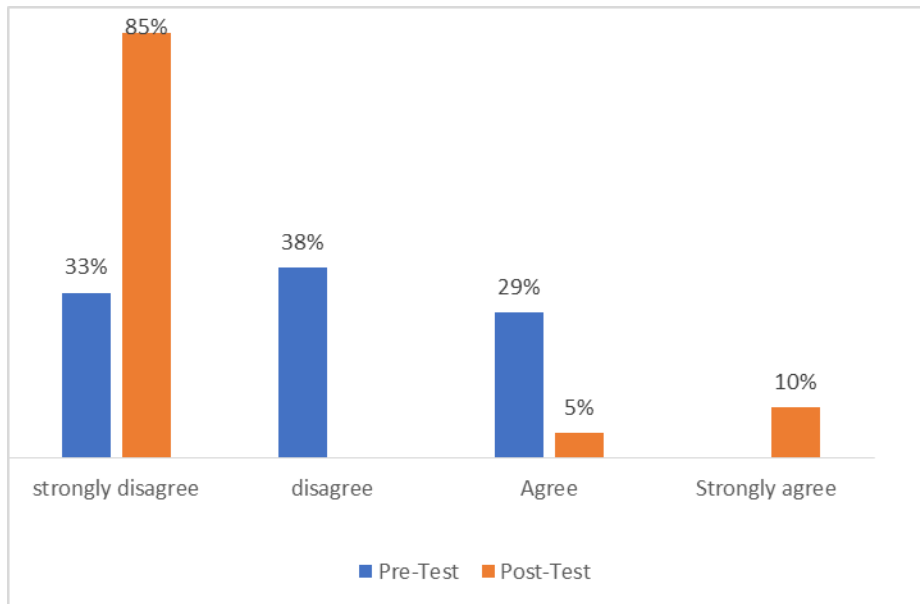
In order to evaluate the impact of the training on the participating couples, the facilitators administered a questionnaire before and after the training. Here we are not going to analyze all the questions contained in the questionnaire but we are going to focus on the themes of the approach that we consider sensitive

Concerted decision making in the household

Fair decision-making is the foundation of the Maison Fidèle approach. Concerted decision-making has several benefits. On the Family Level, it brings understanding and harmony in the home; to the good education and good health of children; good management of family assets. On the Social Level in a family where there is concerted decision-making, there is respect and the community has respect for this family. She is a role model in the community. On the Economic Plan, concerted decision-making improves the economic empowerment of women and fights against the waste of family assets.

Questions were asked to assess the level of understanding of the importance of collaborative decision-making within the household.

Figure 1 Consultation with the woman during an expensive purchase

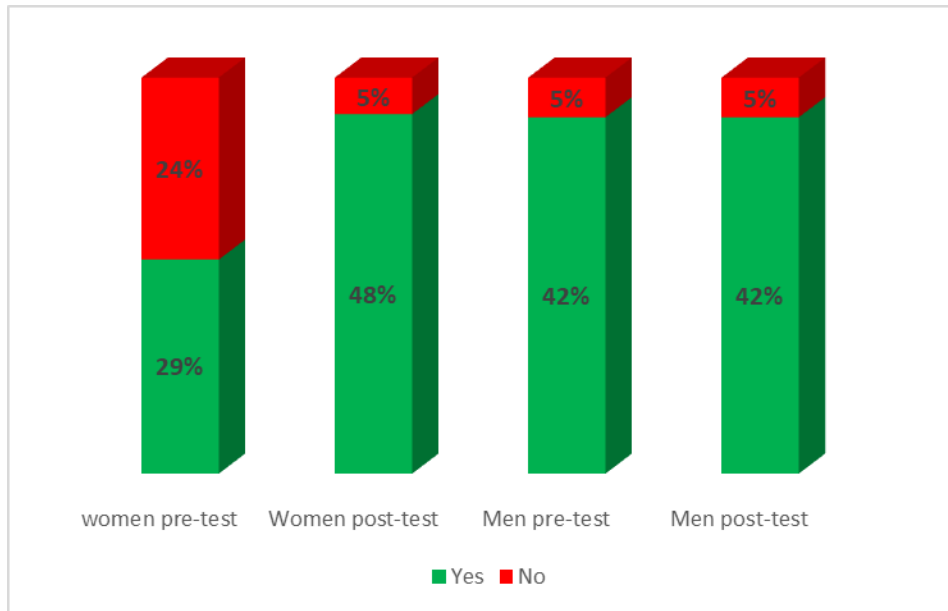


To the statement "A man does not need to consult with his wife about an expensive purchase because he is the one who earned the money", during the pre-test, 33% of participants strongly disagreed with this statement, 38% disagreed and 29% agreed. In other words, 71% of participants were against this statement and 29% agreed with it. During the post-test, there was an increase of more than 50% in those who strongly disagreed with this statement, from 33% to 85%. Also a decrease of 24% was observed concerning those agreeing with this statement, going from 29% to 5%. Only 10% strongly agreed with the statement.

Communication Between spouses

Communication between spouses is the foundation of the couple's life. It is for the faithful house well-being. We asked simple questions to see participants' perceptions of communication between spouses. For example, when asked whether the couple can freely discuss financial matters, the participants' responses are schematized in the figure below:

Figure 2: Can you freely discuss financial matters with your spouse?



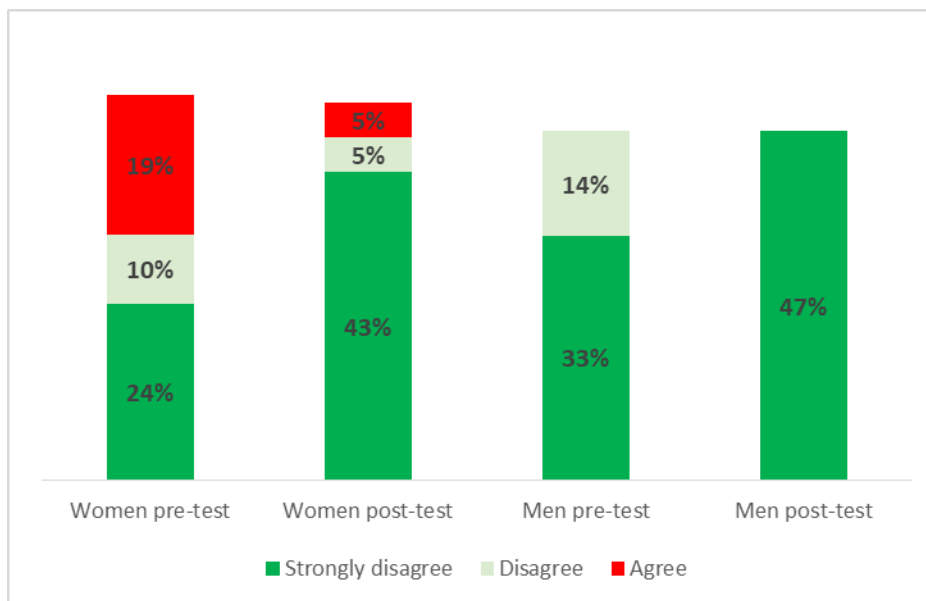
Analysis of the data in this figure shows that during the pre-test, 29% of women answered “Yes” and 24% answered “No”. Regarding men, 48% answered “Yes” and 5% answered “No”. A positive change was observed for women after training. 42% of women now say they are able to freely discuss financial matters with their partner during the post-test. Only 5% gave a negative response. The figures for men nevertheless remained unchanged (42% “Yes” and 5% “No”). This shows that men have not very well understood the importance of communication within the household.

Prioritizing household needs

Walls (the values of the faithful house) is another important concept of the faithful house and of great interest to the participants. The walls represent the values we hold as a married couple. Our values protect the home, keeping what is most important inside and leaving whatever is harmful or destructive outside. A value is a belief or principle that you cherish and hold dearly. The values you hold reflect your priorities and guide your decisions and behaviors. If something is valuable to you—if it's a priority—then you will devote time, energy, and great care to it. Here is an example, five values must be in order in your life. These are the following priorities: 1-(Belief) 2. Spouse 3. Children 4. Work 5. Others (extended family, friends, social commitments). In any society, great suffering emerges if these five values are not in order.

Let's analyze one of the questions asked to the participants to see if they understood the prioritization of needs in the household:

Figure 3. My job is more important than my work

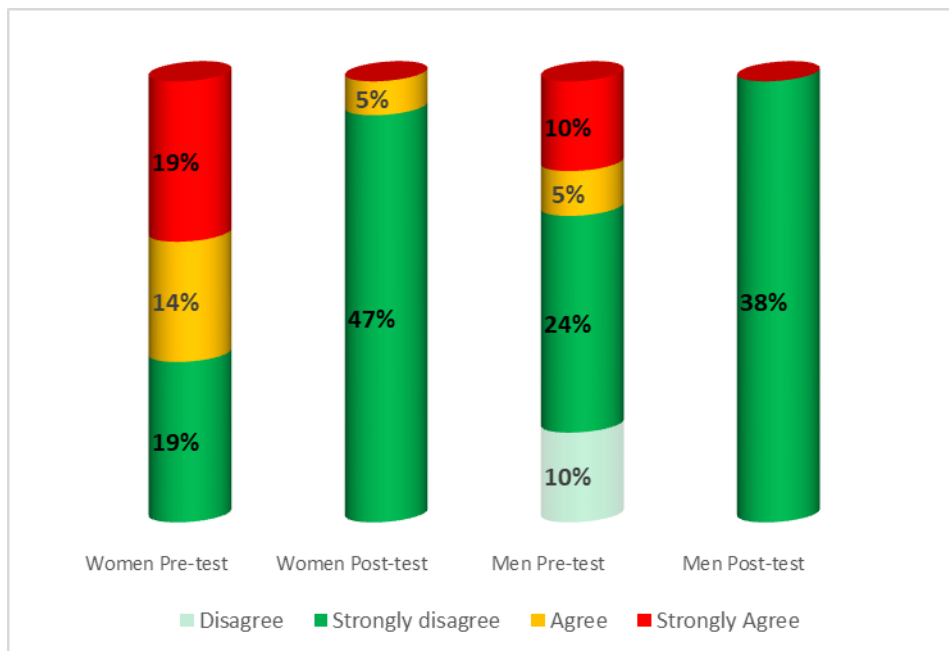


Regarding the statement “Work is more important than my marriage”, during the pre-test, 19% of women agreed with the statement. However, 10% did not agree and 24% strongly disagreed with the said statement. For men, 33% strongly disagreed and 14% disagreed with the statement. After the training, only 5% of women remained in agreement with the statement. An increase of 19% (from 24% to 43%) was noted for women who strongly disagreed. Also 5% of women say they do not agree with the statement. Concerning men, 47% strongly disagreed with the statement. Note that no man agreed with this statement either at the beginning or at the end of the training. We therefore understand that this training allowed the majority of participants to understand the prioritization of needs within their families.

Sexual Gender-based violence

The learning studies that have been carried out on the Maison Fidèle approach have shown that the latter is an awareness-raising tool par excellence in the fight against sexual gender-based violence. Questions were asked to participants before and after the test to check if there was a change in the understanding of sexual gender-based violence

Figure 4: It's okay to have sex with my wife when she wants or doesn't want?



Reading this table makes us understand that at the start of the training, 19% of women strongly disagreed with the statement and 33% were in favor of the statement (19% strongly agreed and 14% agreed). Regarding men, 34% were opposed to the statement (24% strongly disagreed and 10% disagreed) and 15% of men were in favor of the statement (10% strongly agreed and 5% agreed).

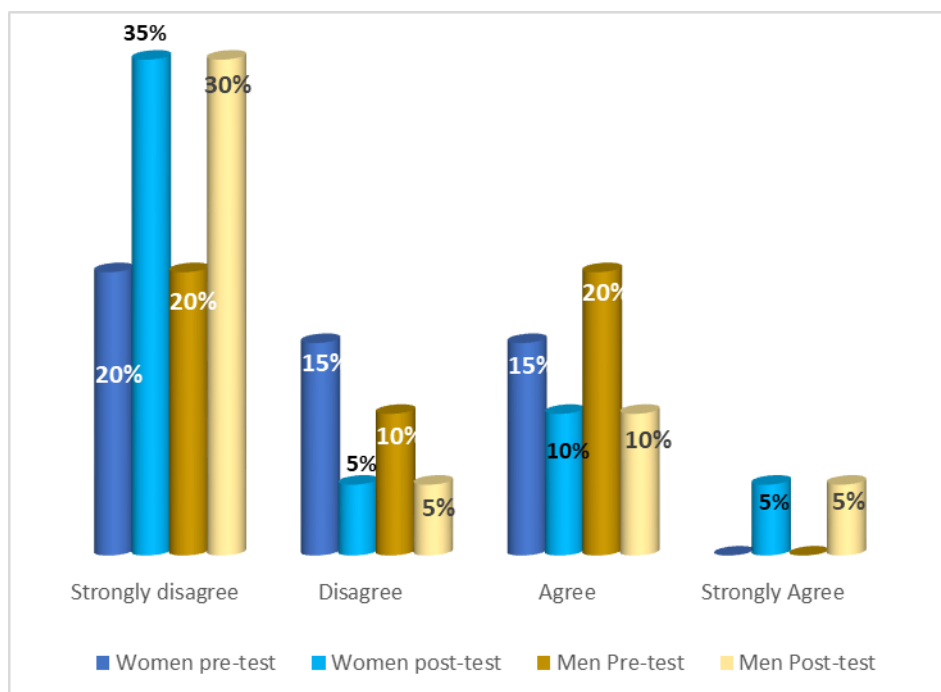
During the post-test, a considerable increase of 38% was noted in the number of women strongly disagreeing with the statement (from 19% to 57%). This means that the approach contributes greatly to the fight against the acceptance of sexual gender-based violence by women. Only 5% of women still agree with the statement. Concerning men, 38% of men strongly disagree with the latter.

In short, the participants understood the theme on the marriage bed and the wedding banquet. They also understood that having a sexual relationship without the consent of one of the spouses is a form of sexual violence.

❖ The Windows of Light and Forgiveness

Forgiveness is fundamental in consolidating the life of the couple. Couples who don't forgive each other soon fall apart. The Maison Fidèle approach states that “In paying homage to the gift of forgiveness and reconciliation, spouses must also forgive each other and reconcile. Once reconciled, they should not reject or reproach each other, but work to be a new creation. » This is an opportune moment that facilitators seize to encourage couples to open the windows of forgiveness through repentance and the search for reconciliation.

Figure 5: *I have trouble forgiving my partner when he annoys me*



During the pre-test, 20% of women strongly disagreed with the statement and 15% disagreed and 15% agreed. For men, 20% strongly disagreed and 10% disagreed. However, 20% of men agreed.

During the post-test, 15% more women strongly disagreed with the statement (from 20% to 35%) and 5% disagreed, 10% agree and 5% strongly agree. Also for men, 30% now strongly disagreed and 5% disagreed. A decrease of 10% is observed for men who agree (going from 20% to 10%) and only 5% strongly agree that they have difficulty forgiving their partner when he annoys them.

2. Some testimonials from participants after the Training

The participants really appreciated this training on the Maison Fidèle approach:

- *NDIKUMUGONGO Daniel, husband of BARAMPAMA Euphrasie (local leader of Murayi hill) said that: “I was touched by all the themes of this training module but in particular the themes related to communication and taking decisions. concerted decision.*

I did not communicate with the wife even though the two of us stayed at home. Everyone had their fields to cultivate to get money to use. She couldn't even touch on my soap. No one gave the other a drink. We used to hide money from each other in our house, we even divided the fields; I have my own fields and my wife has her own. I saw that I made so many mistakes because my money was for drinking beer only. My wife had to take care of the children's school fees, search for something to eat and so on. This training has affected my mindset; I learned that our house has no window of forgiveness and is not strong. I really hurt my wife, I asked her to forgive me and I must change. From now on we will share everything, consult each other and agree on all decisions in our family. »

- **NIYONIZIGIYE Mr. Goreth, wife of BIMENYIMANA Célestin** (Giheta community mobilizer), is also satisfied with this training: *“The theme of prioritizing needs really touched me. I was more busy with my agricultural activities and I forgot about my husband. Another thing, I prioritized my brothers and sisters in Bujumbura by sending them part of the harvest without my husband knowing. I wasn't giving my husband the space he deserves. From now on, I will correct all this for the good of our household. »* About sexuality, *I thought it was the husband's job; I used to be there minding my own business until my husband asks for it. I have never invited my husband for sex we even don't prepare for sex and we almost never talk about it. But we have time in this training to fix it.*
- **Pascal the husband of Julienne:** *I had made a decision to never give the money to my wife because I gave her the money to do a business but she causes it to fail. The moment for married couples was very beneficial for us. She was able to understand and evaluate where she was wrong and we planned together to restart the business.*
- **Judith the wife of Protais:** *For intimate relationships, I can't even touch my husband. I was very ashamed to touch him. This training showed me the importance of sexuality in The Faithful House and I want to try to take it seriously and touch him.*
- **Claudine the wife of Egide** *Regarding sexuality in our relationship it is not going well at all because I am a choleric woman and several times if He asked me to have it I refused. In this training, we have time to discuss how we can increase sexually relationship; we saw that intimate relationship must be a sacred thing we learned the process of doing it and we talked about this. So we made the decision to correct it (cleaning and close the room well, get ready until the morning)*
- **MANIRAMBONA Adelard husband of IRYIVUZE Bernice** from the Gitega commune is satisfied with the training: he testifies: *“I was deeply touched by the theme of economic responsibility. At home, everyone had their own resources to manage, no pooling. I had bought a car. One day, Madam went behind the wheel without my permission and broke it down. She was the one who took care of the repair with her own funds and returned it*

to me in good condition. It cost him dearly and even incurred debt. From today, I will change my behavior, I will communicate with my wife, make decisions together in order to preserve harmony in our home.”

- **Aloys the husband of Emmanuela :** *This workshop heals us. I had a plan that my wife will no longer see my money but, after these three days due to the couple's discussions we decided to change especially me as her husband. We will discuss together what concerns finances. We have 9 children and I told my wife that the education of our children concerns her; if a child made a mistake it was my wife fault. My wife used to say that I should help her but I didn't understand. I used to say that children are for women as Burundian men say. I used to humiliate her in front of my children; I have been taking it easy because I don't understand that it's a mistake. I learned that I must help my wife even in activities that our culture considers to be reserved for women such as cleaning, preparing food, educate children etc.....*

3. Some Lessons Learned

- See the themes developed in the faithful house approach and in light of the testimonies of the participants, it is a tool par excellence which will allow couples involved in the prevention of GBV and others to stop all forms of violence. A sufficient time of five days of training could help them to fully understand and appropriate the approach
- The participants really liked the faithful house approach and developed action plans for the integration of this approach into their daily work. They emphasized that during the restitution of the approach, the trained couples living in the same locality will organize themselves together to train the other couples. They will prepare themselves technically and materially; by each bringing their harvests to make up lunch for the other couples in training. The latter would be motivated and will not waste time.

4. Initiatives already shown by participants in appropriating the approach

At the end of the training workshop, work towards the appropriation of the approach by the participants was done. Here are some action plans from the participants after the couple workshop:

Activities	Target	Period	Responsible
1. NDIKUMUGONGO Daniel § BARAMPAMA Euphrasie			
1. Sensibilisation of couples in the community on the « Faithful House » approach	Couples	September	Trained Couple
2. Restituer l'approche	Dix Couples	Octobre- Novembre et Décembre	Trained Couple
2. MANIRAMBONA Adelard § IRYIVUZE Bernice			
1. sensibilisation	Couples of the FWA	September	Trained Couple
2. Organize home visits	Couple in danger	October	Trained Couple
3. Restore « the faithful house approach » to others	Three couples	November- december	Trained Couple
3. NIYONKURU Pascal§ KEZIMANA Julienne			
1. sensibilisation and home visits	Couples in the church	September- october	Trained Couple
2. Restore « the faithful house approach » to others	Couples in the church	November- December	Trained Couple
4. NSABIMANA Aloys§ NIYIBIGIRA Emmanuella			
1. Home visits to suffering couples	Nine couples	October- November- December	Trained Couple
5. BAKANIBONA Emmanuel § NGENDAKUBWAYO Anitha			
1. Restore « the faithful house approach » to others	Three couples	October- November- December	Trained Couple
6. NSABIMANA Dismas § NSABIMANA Concilie			
1. sensibilisation during community meetings	Couples	September	Trained Couple
2. Restore « the faithful house approach » to others	Six Couples	October- November-	Trained Couple

		December	
7. NTAKARUTIMANA Egide § NDAYIKENGURUKIYE Claudine			
1.sensibilisation and home visits	Couples	September - October	Trained Couple
2. Restore « the faithful house approach » to others	Six Couples	Novembre - Décembre	Trained Couple
8. BARUMPOZAKO Innocent § NDAKORANIWE Judith			
1. sensibilisation and home visits	Couples -	September - October	Trained Couple
2. Restore « the faithful house approach » to others	Three Couples	November - December	Trained Couple
9. BIMENYIMANA Célestin § NIYONIZEYE M.Goreth			
1. sensibilisation and home visits	Couples -	September - October	Trained Couple
2. Restore « the faithful house approach » to others	Couples	November - December	Trained Couple
10. NTAKARUTIMANA Théogène § NIYONZIMA Spès			
1. Identification of couples in danger	Couple in danger	September - October	Trained couple
2. Restore « the faithful house approach » to others	Couples in danger	November - December	Trained Couple
11. NDARUGENDAMWO Etienne § NIZIGIYIMANA Judith			
Restore « the faithful house approach » to others	23 Couples	September- october- November - December	Trained Couple

5. Recommendations of participants

At the end of the workshop, recommendations were made by the participants:

- Participants suggested that it would be useful to provide training certificates;
- They requested materials such as bags and umbrellas to protect work tools and t-shirts for visibility.
- They also requested technical or even financial support for the implementation of their action plan for implementing the training acquired;
- They proposed an action plan evaluation session in 6 months.

6. Conclusion

Overall, the training met the expectations of the participants. The participation of couples was active. The testimonies of the participants, the content of the module considered interesting, the methodology used, the logistics were retained as the strong points of the workshop.

In order to capitalize on the results of this training workshop and help participants in their efforts to adopt this approach, we propose the following:

- Organize a follow-up meeting to support and evaluate the action plan that the participants developed;
- Continue to provide remote technical support to trained couples who need coaching in the implementation of this approach.

1 : List of participants

N°	Names	Provenance	Fonction
1	NGABIMANA Aloys	Kibogoye	GBV Survivors' accompanists
	NIYIBIGIRA Emmanuella		Spouse
2	BARUMPOZAKO Innocent	Kibogoye	Spouse
	NDAKORANIWE Judith		GBV Survivors' accompanists
3	NSABIMANA Dismas	Gishora	Spouse
	NSABIMANA Concilie		GBV Survivors' accompanists
4	NIYONKURU Pascal	Kibogoye	Pastor
	KEZIMANA Julienne		Spouse
5	MANIRAMBONA Adelard	Gitega	Spouse
	IRYIVUZE Bernice		FWA member
6	NDARUGENDAMWO Etienne	Gitega	GBV Survivors' accompanists and Community Leader
	NIZIGIYIMANA Judith		Spouse
7	NTAKARUTIMANA Egide	Kibimba	GBV Survivors' accompanists
	NDAYIKENGURUKIYE Claudine		Spouse
8	NTAKARUTIMANA Théogène	Murayi	Community Leader
	NIYONZIMA Spès		Spouse
9	BIMENYIMANA Celestin	Kibimba	GBV Survivors' accompanists
	NIYONIZEYE M.Goreth		Spouse
10	NDIKUMUGONGO Daniel	Murayi	Spouse

	BARAMPAMA Euphrasie		GBV Survivors' accompanists
11	BAKANIBONA Emmanuel	Masasu	Spouse
	NGENDAKUBWAYO Anitha		GBV Survivors' accompanists

Annexe 2: Programme of the Workshop

TIMING	POINT	Responsible
DAY ONE		
8h30-9h	Welcome of the participants	Facilitateur
9h-9h05	Opening remarks of the SMART Couples Historical Workshop	FWA Coordinator
9h05-9h30	Introduction participants	Facilitators
9h30-10h	Introduction, expectations and ground rules	Couple Facilitateur
10h-10h30	Tea-Break	Logistics
10h30-10h45	Pre-test	Facilitators
10h45-11h	Why a Faithful House	Facilitators
11h-11h15	The Foundation of a Faithful House	Facilitators
11h15-12h	The first pillar : True Love	Facilitators
12h-13h	Second Pillar : Faithfulness	Facilitators
13h-14h	Tea-Break	Logistics
14h-14h30	Third Pillar : Respect	Facilitators
14h30-15h30	Fourt Pillar : Communication	Facilitators
15h30-16h	Summary and Évaluation of Day One	Facilitators
JOUR 2		
8h30-8h45	Review of Day One and questions	Facilitators
8h45-9h30	The walls of values	Facilitators
9h30-10h	The Door that Opens and The Windows of Light and Forgiveness	Facilitators
10h-10h30	Tea-Break	Logistics
10H30-11H15	The Door that Opens and The Windows of Light and Forgiveness	Facilitators
11h15-11h45	The roof of consciousness	Facilitators

11h45-13h	The marital bed	Facilitators
13h-14h	Tea-Break	Logistics
14h-14h30	The Wedding Banquet	Facilitators
14h30-15h15	Culture and home around us	Facilitators
15h15-15h45	The empty house	Facilitators
15h45-16h	Summary and Évaluation of Day Two	Facilitators
DAY 3		
8h30-8h45	Review of Day Two and questions	Facilitators
8h45-9h15	Economic responsibility	Facilitators
9h15-10h	Participants' testimonial session: impact of the approach on their lives as a couple	Facilitators
10h-10h30	Tea-Break	Logistics
10h30-11h30	Discussions on next steps and work tools	Facilitators
11h30-12h15	Action Plan	Facilitators
12h15-13h	Recommendations from participants	Facilitators
13h-14h	Lunch	Logistics
14h-14h20	Post-test	Couples
14h20-15h	Clôsing + Family Photos	FWA Coordinator

Annexe 3 : Photos



The married couple facilitators







Energizer during the training





Special time for married couples



Small groups



Plenary after small groups



Sketch : A family where there is concerted decision-making





Joy and group photo at the end of the training retreat