



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Insight Study

Shifting Knowledge and Attitudes on Gender related to Forest and Landscape Restoration

Insights from Taita Taveta County, Kenya

About this brief

This brief presents the results of a small study that sought to reveal some of the change dynamics resulting from Chawia and Vuria Community Forest Association (CFA) members' participation in a two-day training, [Breaking Ground: Community Dialogues on Gender and Restoration](#).

This training was delivered under the UK Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions (UK PACT) funded project, "Delivering nature-based solution outcomes by addressing policy, institutional and monitoring gaps in forest and landscape restoration", led by CIFOR-ICRAF in partnership with African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), FAO-Kenya, and the County Government of Taita Taveta, Kenya.

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Project website:

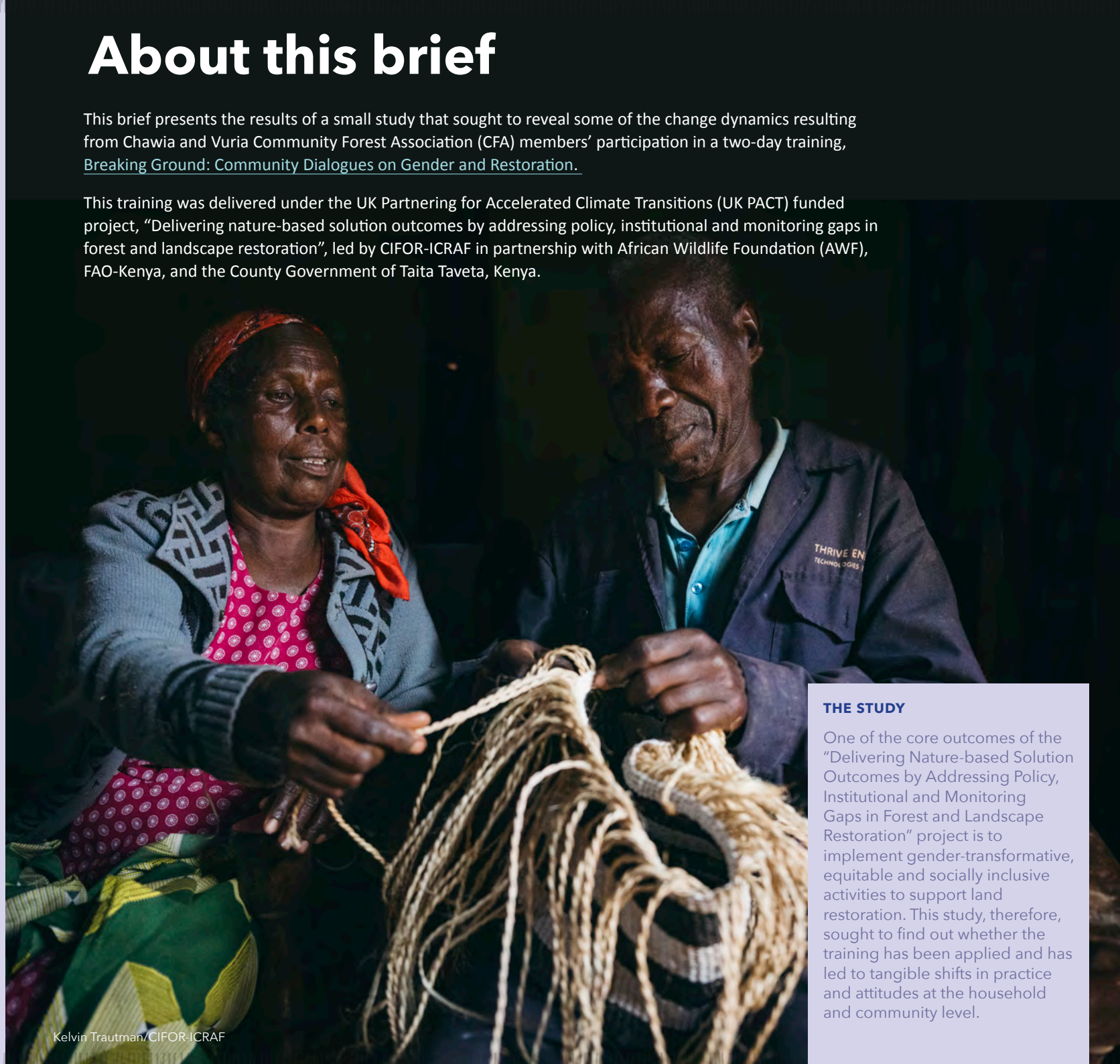
<https://www.cifor-icraf.org/nature-based-solution-for-forest-and-landscape-restoration/>

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THE STUDY

One of the core outcomes of the "Delivering Nature-based Solution Outcomes by Addressing Policy, Institutional and Monitoring Gaps in Forest and Landscape Restoration" project is to implement gender-transformative, equitable and socially inclusive activities to support land restoration. This study, therefore, sought to find out whether the training has been applied and has led to tangible shifts in practice and attitudes at the household and community level.

Community dialogues

Under the project, CIFOR-ICRAF has developed an innovative approach to building capacity in the use of gender transformative approaches (GTAs) for forest and landscape restoration (FLR): Breaking Ground: Community dialogues on Gender and Restoration. This approach involves community dialogues on gender equality and social inclusion (gender-related issues) and a trainer-of-trainers (ToT) scaling model.

The community dialogues bring together six activities from existing toolkits and are designed to engage communities in dialogue about how gender perceptions and gender-related constraints and opportunities in their local contexts influence people's ability to engage in FLR. The activities are participatory and inclusive and spark a new way of approaching work and livelihoods that reach beyond the dialogues' scope. A detailed description of the facilitation tools is available in Crossland et al. (2022a).



To implement and scale the use of these community dialogues, the project employs a **Trainer of Trainers (ToT) model**. This model is done in three main phases. The intention is to cascade the gender work in communities by establishing and building capacity amongst a cohort of local peer farmers, government officials, community groups and other local stakeholders. These trainees become trainers of trainers (ToT) who can deliver community dialogue training in their local communities.



PHASE 1

Hold a two-day main workshop to train lead ToTs



Involves a two-day training of lead trainer of trainers where CIFOR-ICRAF community facilitators (CFs) train a group of selected lead ToTs (champion farmers, government officials, community groups and other local stakeholders) in how to conduct a community dialogue through a learning-by-doing approach. The Lead ToTs are selected based on their ability to share the knowledge they gain with others in the community and are then supported by the CFs in planning their own 1 or 2-day training in their local communities.

PHASE 2

Support lead ToTs to conduct their own local two-day trainings



Involves the Lead ToTs conducting their planned local training with support from CFs. An example of the cascade effect from this model comes from a previous phase of the UK PACT-funded project when 81 participants in Makueni County attended the Lead ToT training (Phase 1) and then scaled the content of the training through events across ten wards, engaging 319 participants to-date ([Crossland et al. 2022b](#)).

PHASE 3

Hold a one-day reflection workshop with lead ToTs and those trained



Comprises a reflection workshop bringing together Lead ToTs and community members who participated in the local training to reflect on the lessons learned from the gender training and identify opportunities for further scaling. The reflection workshops utilise the [How Are We Doing?](#) tool from [Sarmiento Barletti et al. \(2020\)](#).

Working with Chawia and Vuria Community Forest Association

- **Community Forests Association (CFA)** are a key element in forest conservation and management as they are formed by communities that live adjacent to forests.
- The **forest adjacent communities** use the forests sustainably to generate income and improve their livelihoods hence easing pressure on the forest areas.
- CFAs are made up of an **executive committee with members elected** to take up the offices of Chairperson, Secretary, Vice Chairperson, Treasurer and Vice Secretary.
- KFS (Kenya Forest Services), under the Forest Conservation and Management Act 2016, is supporting communities in the **formation, restructuring and registration of CFAs** in accordance to the Registrar of Societies.



The project is working with the Chawia and Vuria Community Forest Associations in Taita Taveta County, to increase participation and ownership of FLR activities amongst CFA members and the community at large. Prior to the introduction of the project, community participation in the CFA was low, and many members were inactive.

Through their engagement with the project the community has a renewed interest in the CFA and the role of the CFA with FLR in the region. To help support more inclusive and equitable FLR efforts, in June 2024, the project trained 340 members of the CFA as Gender-related issues ToTs and in the use of community dialogues (inclusive of other stakeholders including county-level and national government officials).



Table 1. Number and gender of those trained across the CFA

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
	178	162	340

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Methodology

To help identify potential shifts in behaviour or attitudes among those trained, a recall methodology was used to understand two points in time: one **before** the training and one **after** the training. The same **1-5 Likert scale** (1 always lowest and 5 always highest) **was used for both questions to identify any shift**. These were followed by open ended questions to prompt specific examples that could help illustrate any change between the two answers.

22 respondents (11 females and 11 males) representing all CFA blocks¹ were purposefully selected to ensure a range of age groups and status within the CFA were represented. The average age of female and male respondents was 44, with the youngest respondent being 25 and the oldest 68.

22 respondents



11
male



11
female

Youngest
25 years

Average
44 years

Oldest
68 years

¹ Mwanda Kishamba; Mghange Nyika; Mghange Dawida; Mrughua; Dawida/Kisaghenyi; Teri/Kironge; Mwawache/Msavulenyi; Laghonyi/Jangara



Changes in knowledge

First, respondents were asked about their **knowledge** of gender-related issues before and after training. Before the training, the 22 respondents' average knowledge was '**None to low**' with an average score of 1.7 out of 5, with no difference between male and female respondents. After the training, average knowledge had increased to '**High**' with an average of 4.4.

A slightly higher percentage of men respondents (64%) reported their knowledge on gender-related issues to be '**Very high**' following the training compared to women (45%).

When asked to give examples of how their knowledge had changed, several common themes emerged.

Shared responsibilities and reduced workloads: Participants described how the training helped them understand that tasks traditionally assigned to one gender could be performed by both.



The biggest knowledge I gained was about sharing of responsibilities. It reduces the individual's workload
Male, 49, Chawia



I have learned that everything is not just about men. Women too we have a huge role to play both in household chores as well as farm activities. We all benefit.
Female, 28, Vuria

Change in knowledge on gender-related issues before and after training

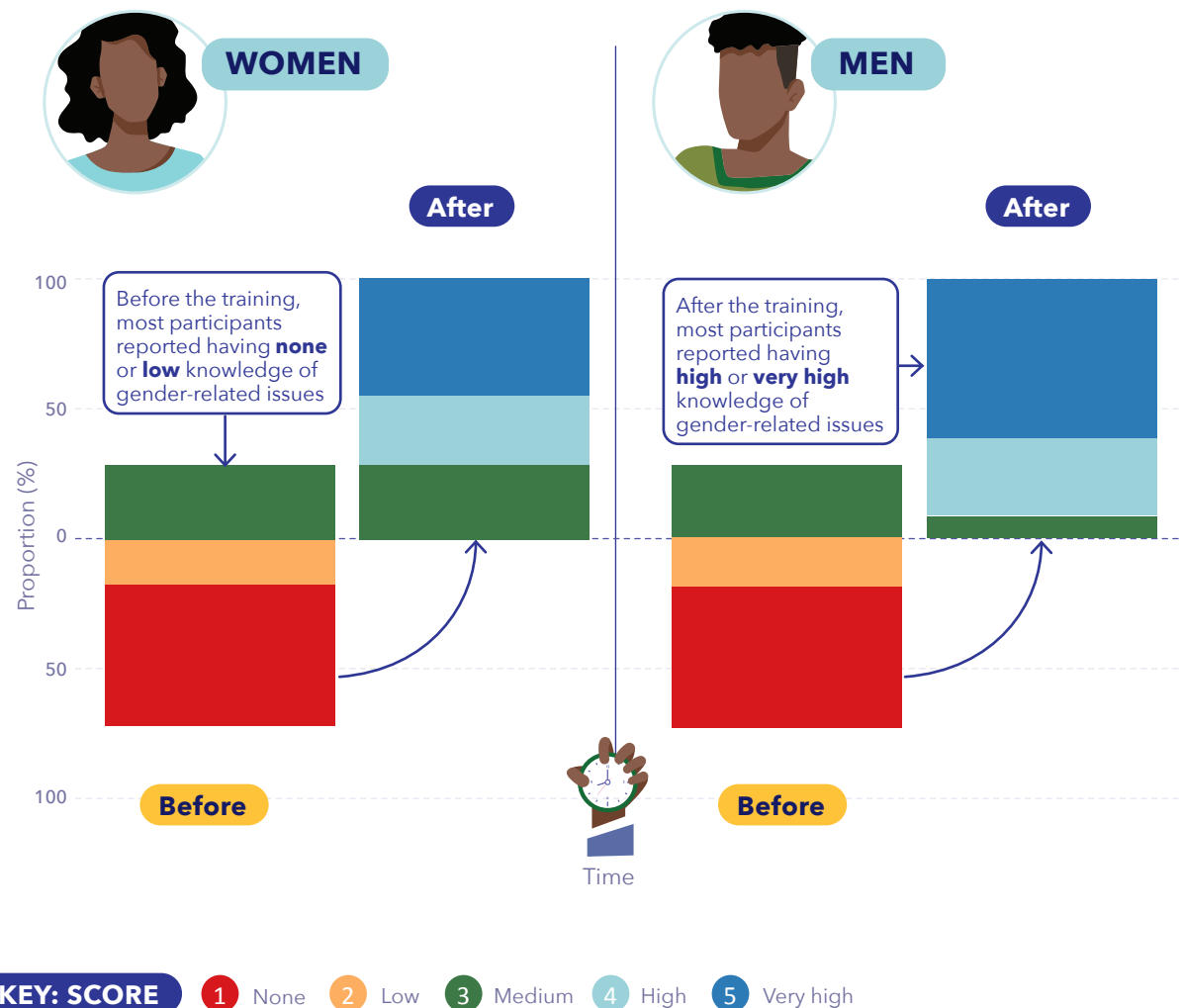


Figure 1: Perceived changes in knowledge on gender-related issues before and after training, for men and women respondents.



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Partnership and joint decision-making:

participants described improved relationships with spouses through collaborative decision-making and shared planning.



I never thought as couples we needed to work together. My roles were mostly household and my business. Currently the two of us work together. My husband usually come to help me run our kiosk business

Female, 40, Vuria



Before training, my wife and I had specific duties. She did hers and I did mine. Nowadays we work together as a family

Male, 42, Vuria

Understanding of sex and gender: participants mentioned gaining clarity on the difference between biological sex and socially constructed gender roles, leading to more flexible thinking about capabilities and responsibilities.



Before the training I had some knowledge about the roles that community term as related to a particular sex. During the training, I learned that there are no responsibilities attached to a particular sex

Female, 31, Vuria



There some roles we can both perform in different capacities where men or women can take the lead with the other helping

Female, 27, Vuria



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Importance of including community engagement: Participants recognized the importance of including all community members (e.g. youth, PWDs, men and women), regardless of perceived status, in restoration and development activities.



I gained much knowledge on inclusivity. Even those who seem like the least important in the community need to be included in forest restoration efforts. They are of equal importance as the rest

Male, 60, Chawia



Initially, I had the mentality that a project for many people fails; recently I have learned that it is critical to include everyone especially on matters restoration. There is much more to achieve when working together

Male, 67, Vuria



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Capacity to pass on knowledge: several participants expressed confidence in their ability to train others, indicating the training's effectiveness in creating community champions.



I can now train others on gender issues. I now know gender roles previously for women such as farm and household labour can be shared by both sex

Female, 43, Vuria

Such insights suggest that participants are not just gaining theoretical knowledge but are actively implementing new approaches in their daily lives, partnerships, and community engagement.

Changes within the CFA

Respondents were then asked how frequently gender-related issues would be raised during CFA elections. Before the training, they would **'Never'** or **'Almost never'** come up, with an average score of 1.7, while since the training such issues would **'Very often'** come up, with an average score of 4.5. Both male and female respondents gave similar scores (men giving a slightly higher average score in both time periods).

Participants reported:

Increased youth involvement: Young people now actively contest and win leadership positions that were previously dominated by older adults.



At first, many youths had no single regard for any gathering whatsoever. After many people had been trained, we have witnessed many youths come out to contest for leadership positions and have been elected. This is a good gesture
Male, 42, Vuria



The former CFA committees comprised of old conservative men. In the recent days, there has been a great transformation in leadership. In fact, our CFA chairperson is a youth
Male, 49, Chawia

Frequency that gender-related issues came up in CFA meetings before and after training

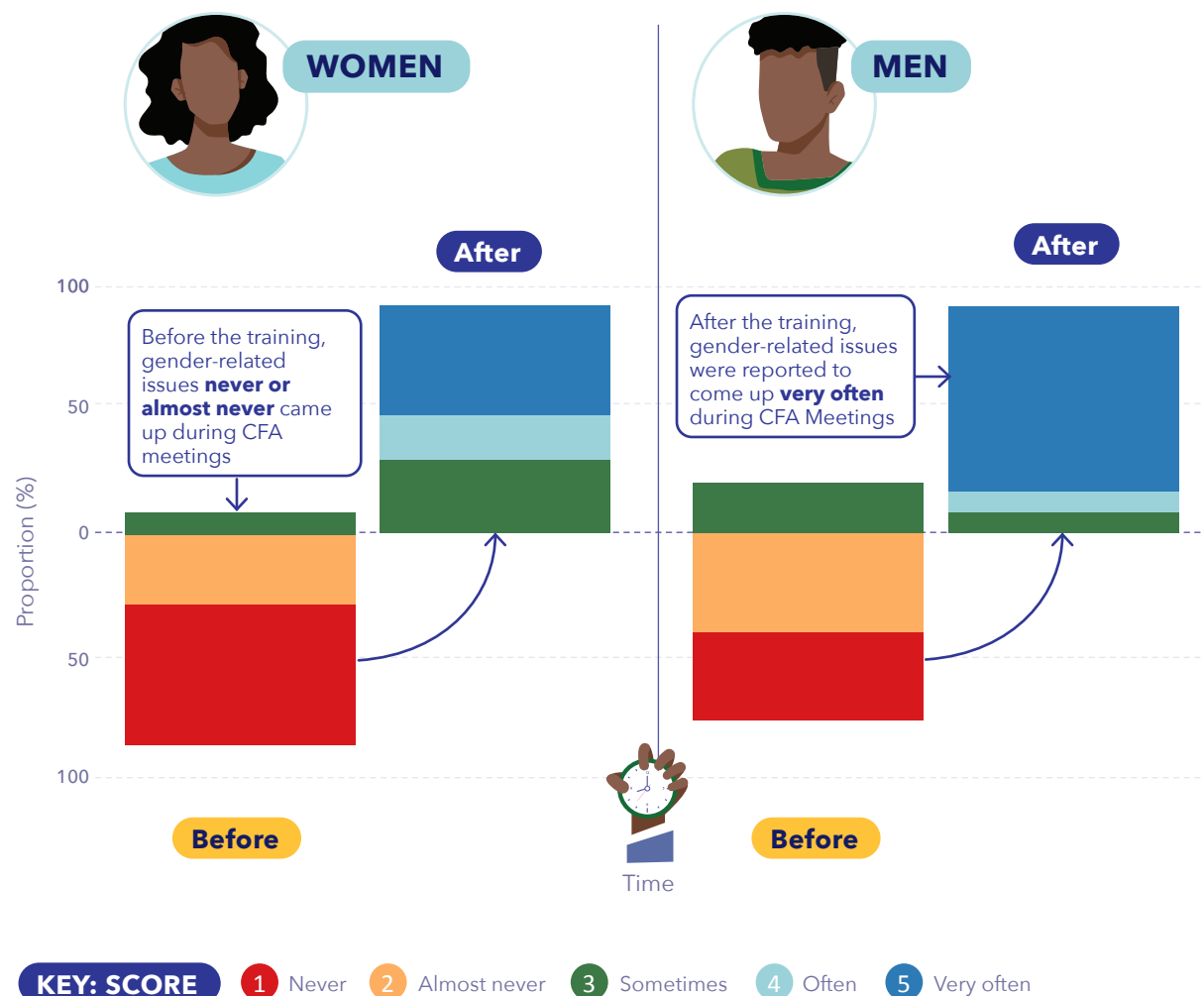


Figure 2: Frequency that gender-related issues came up in CFA meetings before and after the training, for men and women respondents.

Increased women's participation: with many noting that women were previously excluded entirely from leadership positions.



Historically, this CFA was led by men. Not even a single woman would take even the least position. In fact they were never considered as leaders. After the GESI training and reactivation of the CFA, men, women and even youths are getting fully involved. Leadership has taken the right direction
Female, 46, Chawia

Inclusive committees: CFA committees try to include representatives from all demographic groups - men, women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs).



We have now included PWDs in the CFA and one of the executives of our CFA is a PWDs in the recent elections
Male, 59, Vuria

Fair and transparent elections: improvements in the election processes, moving away from favouritism toward merit-based, transparent selection processes.



Initially the elections were conducted with favouritism. You only get leadership position in the CFA if you are known to some influential people. Currently everything is done with transparency. The current leaders deserve it
Female, 47, Chawia

However, while there has been significant progress in terms of inclusivity within the CFA leadership, some participants noted continued challenges (e.g. mistrust between young and older generations, lack of access to natural resources) with youth engagement, suggesting ongoing efforts needed to fully realize youth potential in leadership roles.



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Application of knowledge

Professional lives

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they had applied at least some of the gender training content across different aspects of their lives. Professionally (e.g. within their business), respondents had applied at least some of the gender training material to a **“High”** or **“Very high”** extent, with men and women providing similar scores (men giving a slightly higher average score). Common themes emerging from the professional application of training knowledge included:



Applying tools from the training in their professional lives. This included the "Vision Journey" activity for planning and goal setting across farming, business, and other professional activities and the "Gender balance tree" to improve financial discipline and business profitability.



I have expanded my farm and I'm planting more now since I have targets for my productivity. I have more produce now and I plan to increase some more. I have told people about vision journey and now they ask me to go to design their farms, and I get some money out of it.
Male, 25, Vuria

Using the knowledge gained on gender balance about cutting off some unnecessary expenses, I now have an extra cash which I have channelled it back to my business. Although not that much, but I have a slightly better overall profit
Female, 28, Vuria



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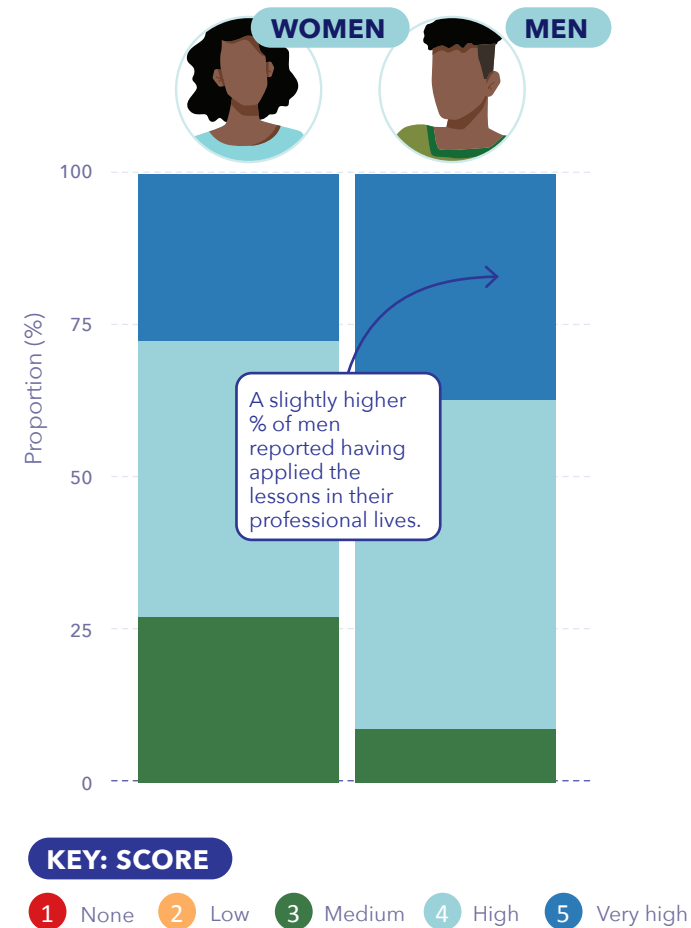


Figure 3: Application of the training content across professional life, for men and women respondents.

Involving family members in business and farming decisions, transforming individual enterprises into family ventures.



Initially I used to own my business as an individual. It was my personal asset. Currently we own it as a family. My husband and children now have free access to this business. Female, 40, Vuria



Through the knowledge on gender balance tree, I have started saving some cash by reducing unnecessary costs. In my business I have set a goal I would want to be in the next 1 year. The vision journey has been of benefit to me
Female, 47, Chawia

Applying GESI principles to their professional practice, for example, religious leaders incorporating gender equality in teachings and community health promoters encouraging harmony.



As a catechist, I teach young boys and girls about sharing responsibilities and that there is no labour assigned to male or female both can help each other in different capacities. It has given me more knowledge to do my regular teachings for children, young couples and families generally
Male, 61, Vuria



Since I gained the GESI knowledge, I preach with vigour. I should say currently I do discussions in the bible study. Discussions are a good approach compared to preaching
Male, 44, Vuria



Personal, household lives



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Respondents also ‘**Highly**’ applied at least some of the training in their personal, household lives, with an average score of 4.5 out of 5. Males and females again provided similar overall scores, however, a larger percentage of women to a ‘**Very high**’ extent compared to men. One female participant reported applying the lessons to only a ‘**Low**’ extent at the household level. She reported not having told her husband about the training ‘because he is hard to change’. Key themes emerging from participants applying the training in their households included:

Shared household responsibilities, with men taking on traditionally female tasks and women gaining support in cooking, cleaning, childcare and helping with household chores



I now help with household chores at home and don't let my sister do everything. I can now cook and wash utensils and I didn't know how to before.

Male, 25, Vuria



My children now share household chores when previously the boys didn't do house chores. My husband now helps around the house.

Female, 43, Vuria



There has been a lot of responsibility sharing; we are now living a better life with less conflicts although my husband has not fully reformed. He is catching up slowly

Female, 46, Chawia



Helping my wife with house chores which I thought was a woman's responsibility before. Sometimes when she's cooking, I cut vegetables.

Male, 59, Vuria

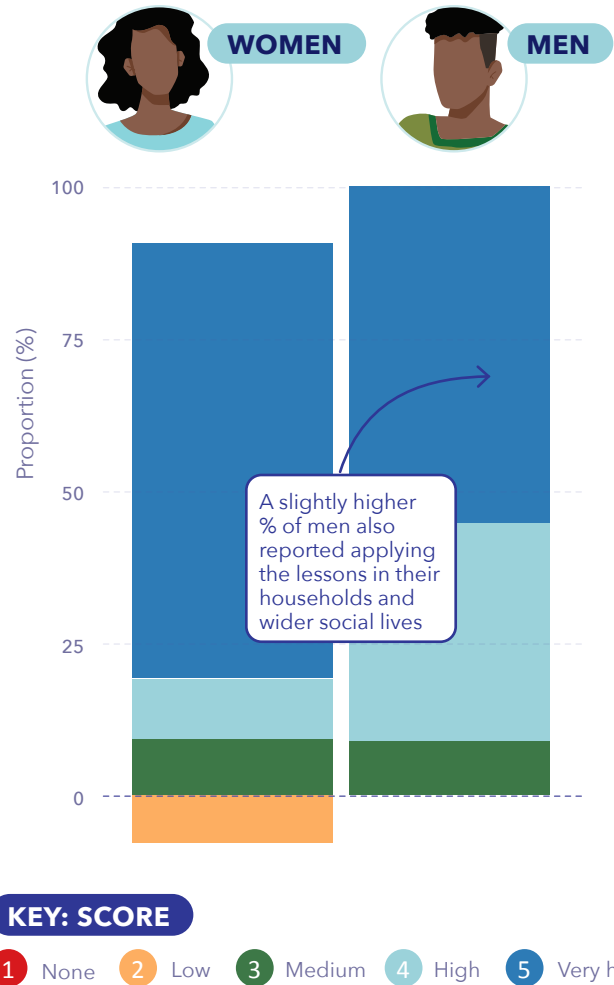


Figure 4: Application of the training content across personal household life, for men and women respondents.

Joint Decision-Making, with participants moving from individual to collaborative decision-making over planning, budgeting and increased transparency in income and expenditure.



Joint decision making on family issues before actualizing them and this has reduced conflicts since we have more organized schedules

Male, 61, Vuria



My wife and children are now part and parcel of whatever I do. I include them in every step of anything I am planning to do

Male, 44, Vuria



Through the Gender balance tree, I have learned to be transparent in my earning and expenditure. Bringing my income to the table for budgeting has saved me off some conflicts with my wife

Male, 42, Vuria

Improved family harmony, as a result of better communication, fewer conflicts and greater appreciation for one another.



We have new rooms in my home because there is unity since we plan together and achieve such things. Reduced labour burden on me because everyone knows their responsibilities and help me in chores.

Female, 54, Vuria



We share most of the work in the house. There is more peace and unity in our house. Working closely has made us appreciate each other

Female, 47, Chawia



These stories highlight substantial changes within households following the training. The fact that men are actively taking on traditionally female tasks while women are gaining voice and recognition demonstrates genuine attitude and behaviour change. Nevertheless, the few instances of resistance highlight the ongoing challenges in changing deeply ingrained patterns, but overall, the GESI training has provided participants with both the knowledge and practical tools to begin transforming their household dynamics.



Increased voice and agency with female participants described gaining confidence, recognition, and voice within their families.



The knowledge has empowered me and have gained recognition in my family. The freedom of speech in the past was just like a daytime dream.

Female, 31, Vuria

Personal, social lives

In their personal, social lives, the majority of respondents **‘Highly’** applied at least some of the training material (average score of 4.2 out of 5). Men reported having applied lessons from the training to their social lives to a greater extent compared to women participants, with an average score of 4.5 verse 4.0. Key emerging themes regarding training application in participants social lives included:

Knowledge sharing and mentorship with participants sharing their knowledge with others in their communities, churches, and social circles. Participants also reported using their training to help resolve conflicts, particularly in family and relationship contexts, demonstrating practical application of interpersonal skills learned.

I used my knowledge to bring together an estranged couple who are my friends using progress markers. Solving or helping to solve differences in families in my neighbourhood
Male, 61, Vuria

After the training, I feel I have an extra content to deliver to my people. I just feel proud that I have an extra knowledge besides the biblical one
Male, 44, Vuria

I think I am now the leading champion in encouraging community members to join welfare groups. I have seen the need to come together.
Female, 40, Vuria

Improve community collaboration and ability to form community groups. Participants used their training to establish or improve community groups, ensuring gender balance and inclusive participation in various initiatives including tree planting, table banking, and restoration activities.

We started a group and our committee has gender balance. I have brought youth together in the group both male and female together to carry out restoration activities
Male, 25, Vuria

[We are] using vision journey and gender balance tree to run our table banking and it is doing so well
Female, 54, Vuria

Increased self-confidence and willingness to engage socially. This was especially notable among participants who previously considered themselves shy or introverted.

Naturally I don't talk much, maybe I was born shy. However, after the training, I have had courage and confidence and have encouraged a neighbouring couples to live together in harmony.
Female, 28, Vuria

Before the training, I used to look down upon myself, but currently my self-esteem has grown bigger.
Male, 60, Chawia



Figure 5: Application of the training content across personal, social life, for men and women respondents.

Community dialogue activities

Participants were asked which of the six community dialogue activities was their favourite and why. The most popular activity was the “Vision Journey” and the least “developing Progress Markers”.



Activity	
Vision journey	6
Gender position bar	4
Bargaining role play	4
Gender balance tree	4
Sex and gender	3
Developing progress markers	1



Vision Journey was the most popular exercise, with participants appreciating its practical application for setting targets, planning activities, and evaluating progress in both personal and community contexts.

- The vision journey was an eye opener. We now have a more organised planning of our farm. We have also started a tree nursery of our own*
Female, 46, Chawia



Gender Position Bar and Sex and Gender exercises show participants valued learning about gender roles, their flexibility, and how to redistribute responsibilities more fairly.

- Through [the Gender Position Bar] I realised I do so much compared to my spouse. I was happy to rearrange the cards creating a new society with fairly distributed roles*
Female, 46, Chawia



Bargaining Role-Play was particularly impactful for helping participants understand the experiences of the opposite gender, especially men understanding women’s workload burdens.

- It’s only through this activity that I tested what my wife goes through. I realised that she does just a lot. I learned to appreciate her efforts and even assist her in both on-farm and off-farm activities*
Male, 60, Chawia



Gender Balance Tree resonated with participants who appreciated its metaphorical representation of how different family and community members must work together for stability and success.

- It describes the structure of a family and community in a simple way. It is clear that if some parts of the tree do not perform their roles well, the tree is likely to fall on one side*
Female, 40, Vuria



Progress Markers provided a framework for addressing previously unspoken social issues in the community.

Towards restoration: Vision journeys



During the GESI training, participants identified restoration goals using the Vision Journey activity.

Method

Vision Journey is a participatory exercise adapted from Reemer and Makanza (2015) that helps individuals, couples, or groups imagine and plan for an ideal future for their farm or community forest.



By envisioning a **positive future** and then **mapping the steps needed to achieve it**, participants learn key planning skills such as goal-setting, identifying opportunities and constraints, and assigning responsibilities.



The activity uses a **visual “journey” metaphor**—starting from the present and moving towards a desired future—to break down a long-term restoration goal into achievable short-term actions.



It encourages **collaboration** and **reflection** on shared aspirations, and helps participants understand the broader value of planning, which can be applied to other areas of their lives.

Of the 22 participants, 13 had taken steps towards realising their vision journey.

These visions included

- tree growing (6 participants),
- beekeeping (5 participants),
- establishing tree nurseries (3 participants),
- ecotourism (3 participants)
- and increasing firewood production (1 participant).





Common steps taken included **forming community groups** after the GESI training, planting trees and starting tree nurseries. These groups actively included **youths and PWDs** demonstrating continued commitment to social inclusion.



Formed a youth group. We have collected seedlings from farms and formed seed beds. We have 25 (Started with 15) members of youth, PWDs, women and men. We already have tenders from the county government of Taita Taveta.
Male, 25, Vuria



I have also established my own tree nursery together with my dad we have 400 seedlings with avocado, tree tomato, grevillea and cypress.
Male, 25, Vuria



I have planted bananas and some food crops which before I never bothered with farming. I'm starting my own grevillea nursery and have some seedlings already from wildings
Female, 27, Vuria



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In addition to their vision journeys, participants were asked if they had applied any of the knowledge or lessons from the training in other restoration activities. Nearly all participants (20 out of 22) reported having applied training lessons to **land restoration activities**. The most common applications include agroforestry, tree planting, terracing, integrated farming, and beekeeping.



We donated and planted 35 seedlings around a water hole to conserve and protect it.
Female, 46, Chawia



We have planted 500 indigenous trees to protect the forest from losing these species.
Male, 59, Vuria



Nevertheless, several participants identified **financial and practical barriers** to achieving their visions journeys:



We started but later on stopped because we realised the undertaking requires much capital.
Female, 40, Vuria



Challenges are market, water shortage during dry season and potting tubes.
Male, 25, Vuria



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Sharing knowledge beyond the training

Results further revealed that everybody who was trained shared the knowledge and that they would be interested in attending a future gender training session.



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I attended a young couples training at Lushangonyi and shared a lot on joint decision making and sharing responsibilities in a marriage.

Male, 61, Vuria



I taught my husband and mother in-law about transparency in the management of assets and income. This is very crucial for every family.

Female, 47, Chawia



I have talked to my fellow men to change the mentality of having responsibilities for men separate from those of women.

Male, 42, Vuria



The family I helped resolve issues report a shift in the family interactions and relationship. The training is a lifestyle so I'm sure it will keep working.

Male, 61, Vuria



There's already a shift in perception from derogative cultural norms and I'm hoping more will change and help the community at large.

Male, 25, Vuria

Recommendations

Common suggestions from participants include more frequent refresher trainings, youth-focused sessions, couple-based training, and combining the GESI training with more technical training in restoration activities such as tree growing..

Demand for ongoing training and a need for targeted youth trainings.



More trainings for new and the already trained are needed to cement this information in the community.

Male, 61, Vuria



It takes a while to convince people to change especially men in our community. Continuous trainings will help change attitudes.

Female, 68, Vuria



Youth only trainings to help them participate more.

Male, 61, Vuria

Conducting couple training with husbands and wives together



I request for more trainings, mostly focusing on couples. It is easier to transfer the GESI knowledge when the couples are trained together.

Female, 47, Chawia



Take-home messages



This results of this study suggest that the training material has left a lasting impression on community members' knowledge and practices in relation to GESI and forest and landscape restoration in Taita Taveta County.

Across **professional, household, and social spheres**, respondents demonstrated meaningful shifts in gender roles and norms. **Men reported taking on traditionally female tasks, while women expressed increased confidence, agency, and inclusion in decision-making processes.** These changes translated into greater harmony and collaboration within households and communities.

Within the **Community Forest Associations**, the training has catalysed more **inclusive leadership and participation**, with women, youth, and people with disabilities increasingly taking up leadership roles and engaging in restoration efforts. The Vision Journey exercise, in particular, emerged as a effective tool in supporting participants to identify and pursue restoration goals, with many already implementing activities such as tree planting and establishing tree nurseries.

Inclusive land restoration activities that include participation equally from women, men, youth, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, will lead to **more sustainable and equitable outcomes while scaling restoration efforts.**

Ignoring gender in the design and implementation of nature-based solutions and FLR can exacerbate existing inequalities and undermine the success of restoration efforts. **Community Dialogues are a powerful tool to facilitate open discussions** about gender constraints and opportunities and lead to equitable, sustainable, and beneficial land restoration.

The sustainability of the community dialogues and their impact depend on continued community ownership and institutional support for GESI within forest restoration initiatives and the CFAs. For successful scaling, future projects should prioritize capacity building within local institutions, establish mentorship networks among trained community members, and integrate GESI approaches into broader landscape restoration policies and funding mechanisms.



The trainings are really good since they have helped solve many societal conflicts especially in the household and marriage.

Male, 59, Vuria



As a preacher, I have had an easy time preaching to my people. Marriage conflicts are gradually going down. Love is taking over.

Male, 44, Vuria



The training has promoted skills in our community to start up their own ventures.

Male, 25, Vuria



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The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and World Agroforestry (ICRAF) envision a more equitable world where trees in all landscapes, from drylands to the humid tropics, enhance the environment and well-being for all. CIFOR and ICRAF are CGIAR Research Centers.



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