



**SECURING
WOMEN'S
RESOURCE RIGHTS
THROUGH GENDER
TRANSFORMATIVE
APPROACHES**



Investing in rural people



Developing Gender Transformative Approaches to Strengthen Women's Land Rights in **Colombia**

FOUNDATIONAL GENDER ANALYSIS



Research Summary Brief



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Research in Colombia was carried out in collaboration with researchers from the Observatory of Ethnic and Peasant Territories of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogota Colombia.

Since 2009, the Observatory of Ethnic and Peasant Territories (www.etnoterritorios.org) has been an interdisciplinary body within the Faculty of Environmental Studies of the Universidad Javeriana, aiming to improve social welfare and to create knowledge for decision making in traditional communities.



ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

SECURING WOMEN'S RESOURCE RIGHTS THROUGH GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

In 2020, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) invited a consortium of the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) to work with selected IFAD projects to promote and strengthen women's land rights through the integration of gender transformative approaches (GTAs) in rural development interventions by improving policies, tools and practices.

<https://www.cifor.org/wlr>
https://www.ifad.org/en/gender_transformative_approaches

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IFAD project network



Colombia
Building Rural
Entrepreneurial
Capacities
Programme:
Trust and
Opportunity
(TOP)
(2012- 2022)



Niger*



The Gambia
Resilience of
Organizations for
Transformative
Smallholder
Agriculture
Programme
(ROOTS)
(2019 - 2026)



Uganda
National Oil Palm
Project (NOPP)
(2019- 2029)



Ethiopia
Participatory
Small Scale
Irrigation
Programme
(PASIDP-II)
(2017-2024)



Kyrgyzstan
Access to
Markets Project
(2018 - 2023)



Bangladesh
Char Development
and Settlement
Project IV (CDSP IV)
(2011 – 2022)



Introduction

This series of briefs summarizes the key learnings from gender analyses conducted across six countries: Kyrgyzstan, Uganda, The Gambia, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Colombia. As part of the IFAD Global Initiative for Gender Transformative Approaches, these briefs will facilitate co-learning processes, knowledge exchange and capacity building, the scaling out of good practices and lessons learned, and the integration of evidence into advocacy and policy processes.

BACKGROUND

Innovative approaches are needed to achieve the United Nation's Agenda 2030, including reducing gender and other social inequalities. Land rights, understood here broadly as bundles of rights to access and make decisions over the use of land, is one area where inequalities are particularly prevalent. In development practice and policies, interventions that aim to support gender equality and land rights have often failed to effectively address the root causes of inequality. Integrating Gender Transformative Approaches (GTAs) into these interventions can improve land rights practices and outcomes.

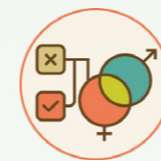
Access to land and resources, as well as control over them, are crucial for women's empowerment. However, women face barriers such as inadequate legal frameworks, ineffective policy implementation, and discriminatory cultural attitudes, which limit their access, control, and use of land and resources. If not recognized and proactively addressed, investments and development initiatives in the agricultural sector can reinforce or even exacerbate such inequalities. Addressing these institutional barriers is therefore essential to achieve gender equality and secure women's rights and access to land.

Gender transformative approaches challenge the underlying barriers that sustain gender inequality by identifying factors that enable equitable involvement of women in decision-making and resource control rather than addressing the symptoms (e.g. unequal income). By fostering lasting and pervasive changes, GTAs aim to create enabling environments for women's empowerment. Integrating GTAs in rural development programs and interventions can help address inequalities in land access, rural services, and markets, thereby enhancing women's livelihood outcomes and ensuring the recognition, protection, and enjoyment of their rights. Such an integration will require understanding gender dynamics surrounding land rights, but also engaging intimately with broader programmatic design and implementation strategies to identify entry-points for effectively transforming policies and processes that (re)produce discriminatory gender relations.

THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

To advance the recognition and protection of women's land rights, IFAD initiated the three-year Global Initiative for Gender Transformative Approaches (2021-2024). IFAD collaborated with the Centre for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry Centre (CIFOR-ICRAF), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) to integrate GTAs in IFAD projects across six countries: Bangladesh, Colombia, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, The Gambia, and Uganda. The initiative aims to scale up GTAs by sharing knowledge and improving policies, tools and practices.

The initiative team worked collaboratively with IFAD project personnel in each country to share, add value and learn from ongoing efforts. Appropriate and relevant approaches have been identified for scaling women's land rights initiatives. Each IFAD project is unique, entailing different phases and timelines of project implementation, approaches to addressing gender, and issues concerning rights to land and resources. While few of these projects explicitly focus on land and resource rights or gender equality, these issues underpin project implementation with multiple entry points for intervention. The initiative works across a diversity of projects and contexts to harvest lessons and promote cross-learning. The lessons are shared with a wider pool of approximately 30 IFAD supported projects and beyond.



Gender Analysis

This series of briefs summarizes key gender analysis learnings from six counties, facilitating co-learning processes, knowledge exchange, capacity building, scaling out of good practices, lessons learned, and integrating evidence into advocacy and policy processes.

To achieve the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and reduce gender inequalities in land rights, integrating Gender Transformative Approaches (GTAs) into development interventions is crucial. GTAs address root causes of gender inequality by fostering lasting changes in decision-making and resource control, offering a strategic framework to enhance women's empowerment in accessing and managing land and production means, as well as natural resources. This involves challenging discriminatory cultural attitudes and institutional barriers.

IFAD's three-year Global Initiative for Gender Transformative Approaches (2021-2024) collaborates with partners to integrate GTAs into projects across six countries: Kyrgyzstan, Uganda, The Gambia, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Colombia. The initiative aims to advance women's land and resource rights by sharing knowledge, improving policies, and identifying diverse entry points for intervention in IFAD-supported projects and beyond.

In-depth gender analyses were conducted in all six countries to examine the intricate relationship between local context, gender dynamics, and land rights. The methodology, based on stakeholder engagement and innovative tools, explored factors influencing women's access to land, including legal rights, customary practices, and gaps between recognition and implementation. By employing diverse data collection methods such as Community Profiles, Key Informant Interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), the analysis aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the root causes of gender inequalities in women's land rights, informing IFAD project design and implementation to advance gender equality and women's empowerment across diverse contexts.



GTAs address root causes of gender inequality by fostering lasting changes in decision-making and resource control, offering a strategic framework to enhance women's empowerment in accessing and managing land and production means, as well as natural resources.



For a more detailed description of the gender analysis methodology, please refer to the **Gender Analysis Methodology report.**

Gender Analysis Methods

The gender analysis methodology utilized qualitative case studies and adapted protocols from GENNOVATE and Pro-WEAI to gather data. Various data collection methods were employed:



KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KII) WITH PROJECT STAFF



Introduction and project approach to gender.



Identify existing barriers and normative constraints to women's land rights.



Survey existing and potential interventions, good practices, risks, and failures.



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGD) WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDER GROUPS



Perception of community context: describe conditions in community from FG participants' point of view.



Existing rights: increase understanding of how participants conceptualize property rights within the community and norms related to those rights.



Challenges and barriers to rights: gain understanding of operation of local rights (formal and customary) to identify patterns/drivers of security and insecurity.



Potential interventions: Understand participants' perceptions of interventions focused on resource rights equity and potential actions the could target existing challenges.



KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY PROFILES THROUGH GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS



Provide social, economic, agricultural, and political background information about the community, and the current situation in terms of use and access and control over key resources



Gain an understanding of community-level factors that generate or reinforce gender norms that hinder the full recognition and enjoyment of resource rights



Learnings from Colombia

PROJECT CONTEXT

In Colombia, IFAD loans and grants are focused on supporting two main objectives. Firstly, they aim to enhance the productivity and income of small-scale farmers and rural entrepreneurs by improving their assets, strengthening their capacity for collaboration, and providing them with better access to markets and inclusive financial services. The goal is to empower these individuals and help them increase their economic prospects. Secondly, IFAD aims to contribute to the development of a robust institutional and legal framework at the territorial level to facilitate the implementation of the rural development agenda and peace agreements. This involves working towards strengthening the governance structures and policies that support rural development initiatives and peacebuilding efforts in Colombia. The IFAD interventions are strategically targeted in prioritized territories as part of the government's post-conflict strategy. By focusing on these areas, IFAD aims to address the specific needs and challenges faced by rural communities in the aftermath of the conflict, with the ultimate objective of promoting sustainable rural development and peace in the country.

The project chosen for the Global initiative, the **Building Rural Entrepreneurial Capacities Programme: Trust and Opportunity (TOP Colombia)**, implemented between 2012 and 2022, addressed problems of inequality and poverty in rural areas, and promoted equal access to basic services, including rural financial services. Its target group was composed of approximately 50,000 rural households living in extreme poverty across 17 departments in Colombia. Among these are small farmers, indigenous groups, Afro-descendant communities, rural young people, families who have been forcibly displaced and female-headed households. The overall goal of the programme is to improve living conditions, income, and employment in post-conflict rural areas.



GENDER ANALYSIS

The data collection instruments developed for the gender analysis were adapted to the Colombian country and project context, addressing specific needs. For example, in addition to addressing land tenure and access issues, the data collection instruments were also adapted to capture insights into skill development for economic empowerment.



KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Key Informant Interviews were conducted with ten project staff, including representatives from the National Coordination Unit for TOP Colombia at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. These interviews focused on the informant's role in the project, the project's gender approach, their perception of the project's strengths and weaknesses, and their views on key lessons learned. These interviews also contributed to the selection of four municipalities that participated in TOP Colombia interventions, two in Bolívar Department (San Cayento and Tierra Bomba), and two in the Cauca Department (Morales and Piendamó). The research sites were purposively selected, taking into account factors such as ethnic diversity, socio-economic background, and diversity in economic activities.



COMMUNITY PROFILES

Community profiles were developed for each of the four selected municipalities by interviewing 12 local experts in the Bolívar region and 5 in the Cauca region. Key informants were all individuals with specialised knowledge about local conditions.



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In each of the selected municipalities, Focus Group Discussions were conducted, segregating participants by sex in some cases and using mixed groups in others. The goal was to gain a better understanding of local perceptions of land acquisition and tenure security. A total of 14 FGD were conducted (7 in Bolívar, 7 in Cauca) involving members of associations supported by TOP Colombia, and family members of participants (non-beneficiaries).

The research team encountered some **challenges that required adjustments to the research methodology**. After the initial fieldwork experience in San Cayetano, the team realised that the FGD protocol needed to be revised due to three types of issues. Firstly, the framing of questions in some sections was biasing responses by limiting informant answers to predefined categories. Secondly, certain dynamics within the small group discussions influenced responses, causing some participants to hesitate in expressing their true opinions. Thirdly, some informants found the question format challenging to understand, prompting the team to develop an alternative answer sheet with emojis rather than text and additional explanations for clarity. Also, responses were recorded using anonymous worksheets to allow for more open expression of opinions. The team also used scenario methods to elicit views on how future interventions might better respond to local needs.



Key Learnings

01

WELL-BEING IS MULTIFACETED:

The concept of well-being varies regionally, with individuals in the Bolívar Department emphasizing holistic well-being, encompassing physical and mental health, emotional stability, and financial security. In contrast, in Cauca, well-being is seen as a state of personal and collective satisfaction achieved through factors such as education, stable employment, united families, and the ability to commercialize products locally. Women interviewed in Cauca believed they had more opportunities than men, which they attributed to support from governmental and NGO rural development projects that targeted women.

Across communities in Bolívar and Cauca, both men and women face shared challenges related to extreme poverty, limited access to land, economic hardships, and insufficient basic services, exacerbated by conflict dynamics and low education levels. However, economic well-being was generally perceived as average.

02

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING:

While women in the studied regions may have more opportunities to access external support to participate in economic activities, gender disparity in social structures was persistent. Local context predominantly favours men, particularly in securing land rights linked to traditional masculine activities (e.g. cattle ranching). Additionally, the effectiveness of community organizations in addressing local access issues varied. In San Cayetano, Bolívar, community organizations were observed to have limited involvement in the resolution of land issues. In contrast, in Cauca, community organizations participated more actively in conflict resolution and economic development initiatives.



03

EXISTING RIGHTS TO LAND AND RESOURCES:

Landownership in Bolívar and Cauca is an important facet of well-being, with distinctions between access and ownership hinging on the possession of legal documents. In Bolívar, while land ownership is desirable, some informants reported that formal rights were perceived as risk factors, exposing land owners to tax liabilities or even extortion where criminal elements are still present. In Cauca, perceptions of gender disparities in land ownership underscore the importance of promoting gender equality, while in both regions, the interaction between customary and formal tenure systems reveals challenges in recognizing traditional rights within legal frameworks.

04

DEMONSTRATING LAND OWNERSHIP:

The TOP Colombia project did not focus on land tenure, but it has implemented measures to promote gender equity within organizations. While land ownership is not a prerequisite for participation in the project initiatives, beneficiaries needed to demonstrate they could access land to support investments. In the sites studied, informants reported challenges related to land and resource access, particularly for women. Informants generally view land ownership as a household condition, with men more likely to have the capacity to invest in land. However, customary property rights play a significant role in ensuring land security in some regions.

05

ECONOMIC AUTONOMY AND CAPACITY BUILDING:

Interventions, like TOP Colombia, should focus not only on improving economic productivity but also on promoting economic autonomy. Effective capacity building can facilitate access to other income sources and economic opportunities for participants.

Promoting gender equity is crucial to ensure women have equal opportunities to access and own land.



06

CONFLICTS OVER LAND AND FOREST:

Land tenure conflicts in Colombia, illustrated by the cases in Cauca and Bolivar, are deeply rooted, with historical origins tracing back to colonial times and exacerbated by factors such as the cultivation of illicit crops, the presence of armed actors, and disputes over ancestral lands. While conflicts in Cauca involve indigenous communities seeking to defend ancestral lands from settler incursions, those in San Cayetano reflect a recent history of violence and displacement. In Tierra Bomba, ongoing disputes are expected to ease with the attainment of a collective land title.

07

ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES:

Land acquisition alone does not promote development or improve land tenure. To ensure land tenure security, interventions must focus on addressing underlying structural challenges. This involves addressing issues related to legal and administrative frameworks, governance, land use planning, access to credit, and other resources necessary for effective land management. Additionally, promoting gender equity is crucial to ensure women have equal opportunities to access and own land.

08

CHALLENGES WITH LAND RESTITUTION:

While progress has been made in acknowledging women's access to land in land restitution processes, further efforts are needed to fully address this issue. A gender transformative approach adapted to collective properties can help improve access to natural resources and advance gender equity.

09

GOVERNANCE ACCESS TO LAND AND DECISION-MAKING IN COLLECTIVE PROPERTY:

Collective access to land and resources varies across sites, with communal systems in Tierra Bomba and the sites in Cauca facing governance challenges. In governance and decision-making for collective property, traditional authorities, mostly men, play a significant role, but there is an observed increase in female participation driven by capacity-building processes and a heightened interest in securing essential resources such as water.

10

TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGIES FOR GENDER INCLUSION:

Quantitative approaches, such as gender quotas, do ensure women's participation but are insufficient in addressing underlying structural problems related to gender exclusion. A transformative and qualitative strategy, backed by gender-based training for both participants and implementers, is necessary to achieve meaningful inclusion of women.

11

ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN'S LAND AND RESOURCE RIGHTS:

Across Bolívar and Cauca, there is general agreement that legally women have equal rights to land, possess decision-making capabilities, and should inherit land from their parents. However, there are notable variations in attitudes towards women's involvement in land decisions, reflecting cultural nuances and suggesting ongoing challenges to gender equality in the regions.

12

CHANGES IN LAND AND RESOURCES OVER TIME:

In Bolívar and Cauca, strategies for land acquisition have historically involve inheritance, purchase, and, in the past, invasion, with variations in the impact of conflict dynamics. Concerns about the scarcity of available land, increased urbanization, and changes in climate and pollution suggest future challenges for young individuals to acquire land, emphasizing the complex interplay of economic, social, and environmental factors in land access. Over time, significant changes in land and resource rights have occurred, marked by a shift from vague, customary patterns to well-defined boundaries and an evolution from exclusive male land ownership to more inclusive, shared titles involving women. Institutional interventions, educational programmes, and a gradual move toward inclusive decision-making have played pivotal roles in fostering awareness, challenging traditional gender roles, and promoting greater equity in land and resource management. The complex interplay of economic, social, and environmental factors in land access emphasizes the need for addressing underlying structural challenges.

13

SECURITY/INSECURITY OF LAND RIGHTS:

Land rights security varies across regions, influenced by factors such as armed conflicts, land invasions, and the ongoing collective land titling process. While perceptions of security differ, conflicts over land are a prevalent concern in both Cauca and Bolívar, impacting community access to resources and overall well-being.

14

OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO LAND AND RESOURCES:

Understanding of technical process to formalize land rights or access government programmes varies across communities. The gaps in knowledge emphasize the need for education and socialization regarding rights, especially in areas where boundaries are customary or contested. While technology facilitates access to information, educational initiatives play crucial roles in empowering communities to strengthen land and resource rights, particularly for women. Suggestions from community members underscored the importance of associative work, economic support, training, education, and initiatives like collective land titling to improve women's access and control over land and resources.





Recommendations

To address the challenges, strengthen land and resource rights, and enhance the effectiveness of interventions, a range of recommendations have been formulated:

01



Information Access for Empowerment:

- Leverage technology for disseminating information on government programs, making it easily accessible to both men and women.
- Promote diverse channels for learning, such as those provided by the mayor's offices, National Land Agency, community councils, and educational programmes.



02



Community-Based Initiatives:

- Encourage collaboration between formal institutions, community organizations, and legal clinics to provide effective support on land-related issues.
- Support associative work and institutional articulation, providing economic support, training, education, seed capital, and inclusive rural reform to enhance women's access to land.
- Strengthen formal groups like community councils, boards accredited by ministries, and ethnic advisories to enhance their role in improving land and resource rights.
- Encourage collaboration between formal institutions, community organizations, and legal clinics to provide effective support on land-related issues.
- Emphasize territorial planning, and management, along with organizational capacity building and ethno-education to empower communities.

03



Formalization of Rural Property:

- Collaborate with institutions like Agustín Codazz, ANT, notary and registry services to formalize rural property, prioritizing households led by women and vulnerable populations.
- Consider local context to identify preference for communal or private rights and recognize role of customary rule for mediating security.



04



Addressing Structural Challenges:

- Tackle underlying structural challenges related to legal frameworks, governance, land use planning, access to credit, and other resources necessary for effective land management.
- Address gender-related perceptions and social norms that undercut formal rights to ensure equitable access to secure land tenure, challenging traditional biases against women's land ownership.

05



Promoting Economic Autonomy and Welfare:

- Strengthen capacity to go beyond improving economic productivity, aiming to promote economic autonomy.
- Facilitate access to other income sources and economic opportunities, recognizing that project activities may not be the main source of income for participants.
- Design programmes that diversify economic activities beyond agricultural production to create sustainable income sources.
- Foster community engagement in the design and implementation of interventions.
- Empower communities to take ownership of their economic development, building local capacities for sustainable outcomes.



06



Address Structural Challenges for Land Tenure:

- Analyze and address legal and administrative frameworks, governance issues, land use planning, and access to credit to facilitate effective land management.
- Tackle gender-related perceptions and social norms to ensure equal opportunities for women in accessing and owning land.



07



Consider the Youth Perspective:

- Recognize the role of land access in youth vulnerability and migration. Develop strategies to provide better economic opportunities for the youth, addressing limitations related to land ownership.



08



Improve Land Restitution Process:

- Continue efforts to formalize land ownership by families, ensuring equal representation of men and women.
- Challenge traditional perceptions about land ownership by promoting the idea that both men and women can effectively own and use land.
- Focus on improving access to natural resources for communities with collective land titling.
- Implement a gender-transformative approach tailored to collective properties, addressing economic and technical capacity limitations rather than ownership restrictions.

09






Revise Gender Strategy for Transformative Approach:

- Move beyond quantitative gender strategies, adopting a more transformative and qualitative approach that addresses root causes and ensures meaningful inclusion of women along with effective male participation.
- Provide gender-based training to project implementers so they can recognize their own bias to then enhance understanding and cooperation.




Resources

Compendium of good practices for gender transformative approaches for food security, improved nutrition, and sustainable agriculture (<https://doi.org/10.4060/cb1331en>) which was co-produced by IFAD.

 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
  IFAD Investing in rural people
  WFP World Food Programme

Gender transformative approaches for food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture

A compendium of fifteen good practices



Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition



INITIATIVE CONSORTIUM



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.



Climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and malnutrition. These four interconnected global crises have put at stake the wellbeing of our planet for years. Fueled by COVID-19, their impact on agriculture, landscapes, biodiversity, and humans is now stronger than ever. Reversing this negative trend is a challenge, but also an opportunity for bold choices and integrated solutions. Established in 2019, the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) was created to address these four crises, maximizing impact for change at key points in the food system.



The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. Established in 1975, IFPRI currently has more than 600 employees working in over 50 countries. It is a research center of CGIAR, a worldwide partnership engaged in agricultural research for development.

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