



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



Investing in rural people



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

FOUNDATIONAL GENDER ANALYSIS



Research Summary Brief



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North, H., Paez-Valencia, A-M., Morgan, M. (Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT). 2023. Developing Gender Transformative Approaches to Strengthen Women's Land Rights in The Gambia: Foundational Gender Analysis. Securing Women's Resource Rights Through Gender Transformative Approaches Initiative. Alliance of CIAT and Bioversity International, Rome.

Technical synthesis, editing, design and layout: KANDS Collective | hello@kandscollective.com

Photographs: ©Hanna North (Alliance of Bioversity International & CIAT)

Prepared for the project: Global Initiative for Gender Transformative Approaches for Securing Women's Resource Rights (WRR), led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)-World Agroforestry (ICRAF) together with the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), with the support of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Special thanks to Mohamed Kebbeh, Ensa Colley and Burang Danjo from the West Africa Rural Foundation (FRAO) and Haruna Cham and Mamour Aliou Jagne who provided significant contributions to the development of the research.



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.

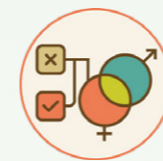
Access to land and resources, as well as control over them, are crucial for women's empowerment. However, women face barriers such as inadequate legal frameworks, ineffective policy implementation, and discriminatory cultural attitudes, which limit their access, control, and use of land and resources. 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

In-depth gender analyses were conducted in all six countries to examine the relationship between local context, gender and land rights; and provide global and context-specific recommendations to inform project implementation, interventions, and policy options.

The gender analysis methodology for the Global Initiative was based on information collected from discussions with program staff, key stakeholders, and existing data, which informed the design and adaptation of tools and approaches. The analysis aimed to understand the root causes of inequalities affecting women's land rights in the intervention contexts and the implications of these drivers of inequality on the recognition, protection, and enjoyment of women's land rights over time.

The analysis focused on intersections between factors influencing women's access to land, such as class, education level, ethnicity, caste, age, and marital status. It drew upon guidelines for intersectionality-informed research (Colfer et al 2018) and methodologies that assess how gender norms shape and are shaped by agency capacities (GENNOVATE methodology developed in Petesch et al., 2018). The analysis considered women's access to land across legal rights, customary practices, and gaps between legal recognition and implementation.

To conduct the analysis, the project built on close engagement with the IFAD team implementers, key stakeholders working on gender and land issues, as well as the extensive experience around gender analysis and research of consortium partners, and drew from existing innovative tools and approaches

such as the Gender Box and an adaptation of the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) called pro-WEAI. These tools allowed for the collection of sex-disaggregated data from primary and secondary sources and facilitated cross-country and program comparisons.

Building on lessons learned from previous work, the project adapted some of these methods to develop a methodology that encompassed several distinct domains: stakeholder analysis to identify influencers of women's land rights and understand their interrelationships and motivations; socio-legal analysis to assess the recognition and protection of women's land rights in different tenure regimes; cultural norms and perceptions analysis to examine context-based norms and their impact on women's land rights; socioeconomic conditions analysis to understand factors affecting women's access and management of land and resources; and political participation analysis to capture women's participation at various decision-making levels.

The project engaged key stakeholders in the design of the protocol and field methods to ensure that the collected data aligned with their needs and IFAD's strategies. The refined methodology and set of indicators developed through the analysis will support future IFAD programming.



Overall, the gender analysis methodology aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing women's land rights and inform the project's design and implementation to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.



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 they 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 The Gambia

PROJECT CONTEXT

The strategy of IFAD in The Gambia aims to contribute to the reduction of poverty, food insecurity, vulnerability, and youth unemployment in rural communities. The focus is on addressing gender disparities, improving nutrition, and addressing the challenges posed by climate change. IFAD-supported projects collaborate with traditional *kafos*, which are village groups managed collectively, to reach out to the most vulnerable households. **Key activities of the IFAD strategy** include supporting the development of rice and vegetable value chains by enhancing the capacity of farmers, community organisations, and their members. Efforts are made to strengthen access to markets for agricultural products. Additionally, value is added to rice and vegetable production by improving value chains, promoting business development, and utilising a Capital Investment Stimulation Fund. Through these initiatives, IFAD aims to improve the livelihoods of rural communities in The Gambia, with a particular focus on empowering women, enhancing agricultural productivity, and fostering economic growth in the agricultural sector. The project chosen for

the Global initiative, the **Resilience of Organisations for Transformative Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ROOTS)**, implemented between 2019 – 2026, aims to increase agricultural productivity and access to markets for enhanced food security nutrition and resilience of family farms and farming organisations. The programme is implemented in 39 districts across five regions. Direct programme beneficiaries include approximately 40,000 households (over 10% of the population), targeting women (80% of participants), youth (25% of participants) and people with disabilities (10% of participants). The project also targets microentrepreneurs, government staff in the relevant ministries, agencies and commissions, and the private sector. To achieve its gender related outcomes, the project engages and supports women's garden groups, started by the IFAD funded predecessor project of ROOTS, the NEMA project, and adopted the Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) methodology, adapted to the local context with village Alkalou's being the project entry points, targeting specific value chains.

GENDER ANALYSIS

The data collection instruments developed for the gender analysis were adapted to the Gambian country and project context and needs. Data collection took place in four agricultural communities targeted by the ROOTS project that have participated in the GALS process, each in a different region (Upper River Region, West Coast Region, Lower River Region, and North Bank Region). The communities were selected purposively, considering factors like geographical location, type of value chain, environmental and socioeconomic characteristics.



KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Key Informant Interviews were also conducted with ten project staff including ROOTS managers and regional field coordinators. The interviews focused on getting insights about the factors affecting the way the project does (or does not) have impact on women's rights to resources, and existing and potential interventions to that end.



COMMUNITY PROFILES

Community profiles were created for each of the four selected communities by interviewing 5-8 female and male leaders in each village. Key informants were all people who hold positions of authority and influence such as village heads, committee members, women's group heads and garden leaders. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a better understanding of the community dynamics around land rights, structures of leadership and social, economic, and political background information.



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In each of the selected communities, two Focus Group Discussions were conducted, segregated by sex with the aim to better understand community perceptions on land acquisition and tenure security as well as gender and social norms. Participants included community members involved in the GALS process, village development committees (VDCs), and garden group members.



Key Learnings

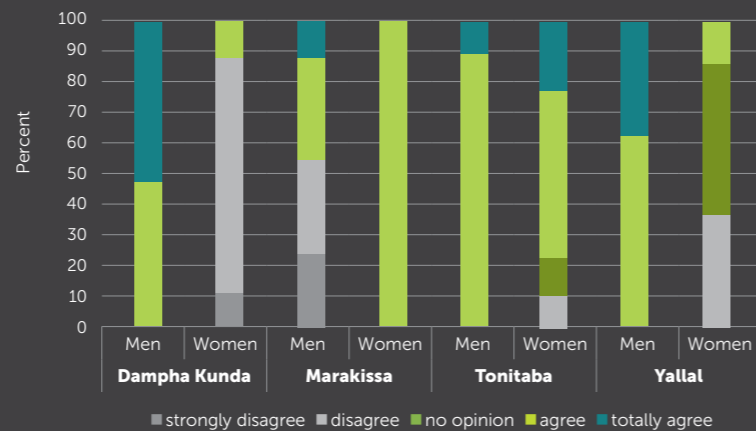
Despite legal provisions safeguarding women's access to resources in The Gambia, their effective implementation remains deficient, particularly in rural areas governed by customary land tenure systems. The prevalent male-dominated decision-making structures, influenced by both customary and religious beliefs, consistently favor men, limiting women's representation in positions of authority. This bias extends to land and resource allocation, impeding women's ownership and decision-making.

Community attitudes vary, with Marakissa generally supportive, Dampha Kunda displaying conservative views, and Toniataba exhibiting mixed responses influenced by GALS initiatives. While some progress in intrahousehold decision-making is evident, persistent resistance hampers women's participation in projects and reflects broader cultural challenges.

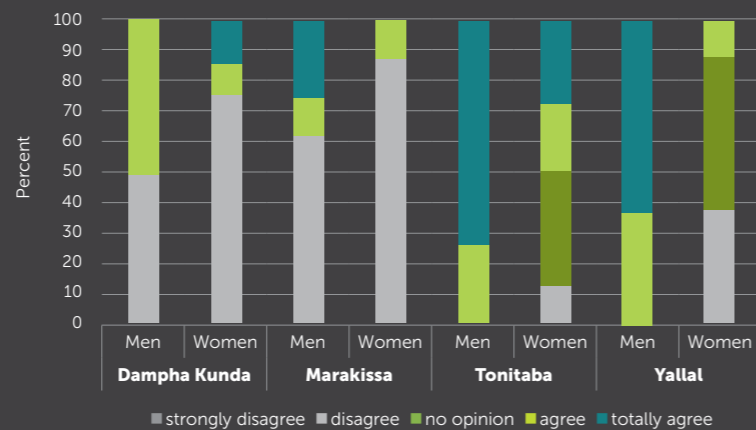
Over the past decade, modest changes regarding people's land and resource rights have occurred, primarily driven by interventions like GALS and NEMA, yet **men still dominate land control**. Community garden groups, though supported by projects, have not substantially increased women's property ownership due to cultural barriers. Sensitization initiatives, while influencing perceptions, have not resulted in a notable shift in women owning more land. Thus, comprehensive efforts are needed to address cultural norms and enhance women's land rights in these communities.

Despite claims of equal land rights in Marakissa, **community responses unanimously indicate that women's land rights are perceived as less secure than men's across all studied areas**. In Dampha Kunda, Toniataba, and Yallal, women's land access is often contingent on allocations, making it vulnerable to revocation. Even in cases where women's land rights are relatively more secure, such as in registered community gardens, challenges persist. The discrepancy between perceptions and realities underscores the need for targeted interventions to address gender disparities and enhance the security of women's land rights in these communities.

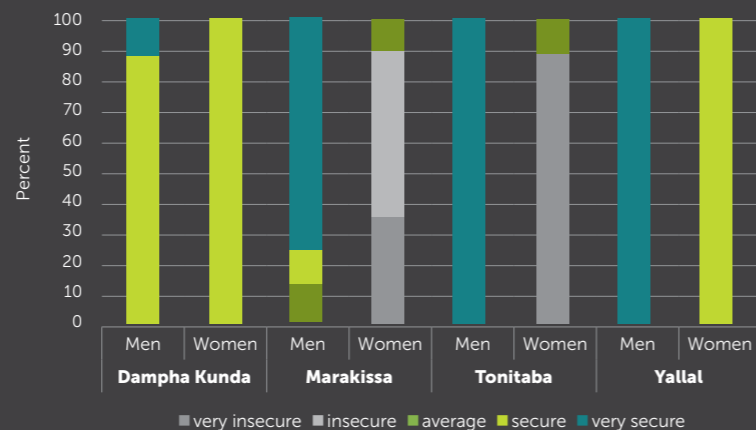
Men should have more influence over decisions about land than women within their household



A man should have more rights to land than a woman



Do you believe your land rights are secure?



Tailored approaches that consider the nuances of each context, engage traditional leaders, challenge cultural beliefs, and promote gender equality can contribute to more inclusive and equitable land tenure systems.



Both men and women in rural areas often lack awareness of the benefits of formalising legal documents, and the risks associated with their lacking, leading to a lack of interest, or understanding in completing the formalisation process. This contributes to the challenges surrounding land ownership and tenure in these communities.

There is a prevalent misunderstanding or lack of awareness among stakeholders regarding land ownership within the customary system of land tenure in The Gambia. Rural communities and many key informants often confuse land allocated by traditional authorities with owned land, overlooking the distinction between leasehold and Alkalou-allocated land. This confusion stems from a limited understanding of formal titling, leasehold or freehold tenure, their benefits, and the central role of the Alkalou in land allocation. Recognizing this, it becomes evident that enhancing awareness about these aspects is crucial for a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the complexities of land ownership dynamics within rural communities.

The findings from the gender analysis and validation exercises highlighted varying understandings of land documentation within the communities. Some communities, particularly those facing high land pressure in peri-urban areas like Marakissa, recognized the importance of formalising documents as a significant challenge. However, in areas with sufficient land for cultivation, such as Toniataba, villagers were less aware of documentation as they relied on the customary system to demonstrate land ownership.

The challenge for women in Toniataba instead lays in social governance, whereby women are allocated lowland plots for rice cultivation, but not the more-desired upland plots for construction or vegetable farming.

The community groups have identified several effective solutions, which include providing support with finance for land development. They emphasize the importance of ensuring that once land is acquired, it is made productive. One reason for this is that, under the customary system, the Alkalou has the authority to reallocate land to another family if it is perceived as not being utilized to its full potential.

Consequently, having unproductive land is considered a stressor, and it disproportionately affects women who lack resources to make the land productive.

Gender and tenure are highly relevant to the project and project sites due to the significant obstacles faced by women in accessing and controlling land. Women often abstain from engaging in high-income generating agricultural activities because they lack control over the land allocated to them by male family members. Land revocations are common if another family member expresses interest, especially once women demonstrate that previously unproductive land can be productive. In peri-urban areas with high land pressure, multiple land titles can be distributed by the Alkalou leading to conflicts mediated and ruled upon by male decision-makers.

Primary obstacles related to gender and tenure stem from the predominant influence of customary and religious systems governing land tenure in rural communities, which tend to favour men. Land ownership approvals by the Kabiloo and formalisation through district courts can be obstacles or enabling forces, depending on the traditional leaders' attitudes. Prevailing community attitudes also play a role, with resistance often encountered when women seek land ownership, particularly from husbands. However, it is important to note that patriarchal attitudes are not solely held by men, as the focus group discussions revealed variations in attitudes and beliefs among women themselves.

These key learnings highlight the complexities of women's access to and control over resources, particularly in rural areas governed by customary systems. It underscores the need for awareness and implementation of legal provisions, as well as tailored approaches that address the specific challenges and priorities of different communities. Tailored approaches that consider the nuances of each context, engage traditional leaders, challenge cultural beliefs, and promote gender equality can contribute to more inclusive and equitable land tenure systems.



Recommendations

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

01



Conduct **advocacy and awareness raising** campaigns focused on women's land rights in the project communities. This should involve disseminating information about formal tenureship, its benefits, and the process of obtaining legal documentation for land ownership. Enhancing awareness about these aspects is crucial for a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the complexities of land ownership dynamics within rural communities.



02



The ROOTS project mandates the legal registration of all women's gardens in the name of the garden group. This requirement aims to secure the rights of the land for women in the future and protect the project's investments. However, the garden group members are not actively involved or capacitated during the formal land registration process. Providing **support and capacity-building** to individual entrepreneurs and women's groups in the process of land titling is key. This can include training on navigating bureaucratic procedures, understanding legal requirements, and accessing resources to cover associated costs.



03



Engage with Alkalous, the traditional decision-makers responsible for land allocation, through **gender sensitisation** efforts. Their involvement in the advocacy process can help foster a supportive environment for women's land rights and influence positive changes within the customary system.

04



The GALS trainings received positive feedback from most community groups acknowledging that the training effectively challenges gender norms. This success can be leveraged by **including all community members in sensitisation** activities to transform perceptions of women's land and resource rights. Engaging both women and men in these discussions can help challenge and change discriminatory gender relations and promote more equitable land tenure practices.



05



Be cognisant of neighbouring communities in peri-urban areas to avoid unintentionally infringing on the land rights of women who are not part of the project community. Collaborative efforts should be undertaken to ensure that women's land rights are respected beyond the project's immediate scope.

“

Overall, a comprehensive approach is recommended, combining advocacy, awareness raising, capacity-building, and engagement with traditional leaders. These actions will contribute to transforming gender norms, empowering women, and securing their land rights beyond the duration of the project.



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.



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

A compendium of fifteen good practices





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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