



SECURING WOMEN'S
RESOURCE RIGHTS
THROUGH GENDER
TRANSFORMATIVE
APPROACHES



Investing in rural people

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS IN THE GAMBIA:

Co-creating Gender Transformative Pilots



Brief



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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-icraf.org/wlr>

https://www.ifad.org/en/gender_transformative_approaches

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Co-creation is a collaborative process for generating shared visions, knowledge and strategies that lead to action. Co-creating action-research pilots with intended service users or programme partners¹ is a more responsive approach to developing interventions. Apart from being more strategic (as it is more likely to be effective and/or sustained), it is also **fundamentally the right of the groups targeted by interventions to have their preferences and perspectives heard and integrated.**

An iterative co-creation process can be integrated at any stage of design and implementation in ways that support all relevant stakeholders, including those who are targeted by interventions, to be actively engaged alongside project staff.

In The Gambia, the Women’s Resource Rights (WRR) initiative supported a co-creation process to develop Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) pilots aimed at securing women’s land rights. This collaborative process involved local organizations, stakeholders, and women directly affected by land rights issues, ensuring the interventions were context-specific, sustainable, and empowering.

The Role of Co-creation in the Women’s Resource Rights (WRR) Initiative

Co-creation with local stakeholders played a pivotal role in grounding the implementation of the multi-country Women’s Resource Rights (WRR) initiative. This approach ensured that the **voices and needs of rural women were central to the design and implementation of interventions** aimed at securing land rights in appropriate ways for them and their communities. This collaborative process involved engaging women in targeted communities and other stakeholders in identifying barriers, suggesting solutions, and validating research findings. Integrating feedback and insights from those directly targeted or potentially impacted by initiatives can increase the likelihood of more culturally-responsive and lasting outcomes.

¹ Using the terms ‘service users’ or ‘programme partners’ is a conscious choice to avoid reinforcing inequalities through language in these types of processes. See more in Oxfam’s Inclusive Language Guide (2023): <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/inclusive-language-guide-621487/>

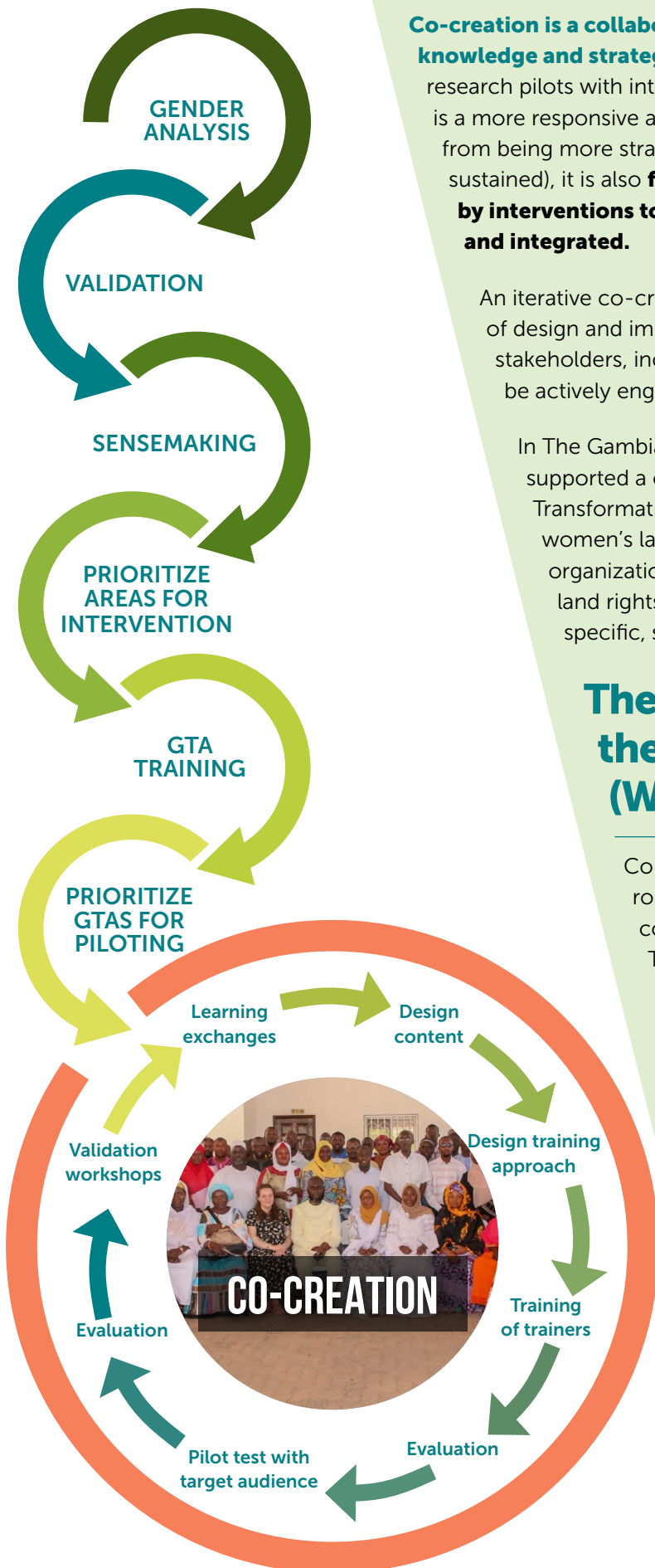


Figure 1. Iterative Pathway of Co-creation Following Gender Analyses



Co-creating GTAs in The Gambia

In The Gambia, the WRR team was committed to developing pilots that would be directed and led by local organizations, building on their strengths and contributing to their existing portfolios on women's land rights. Recognizing both the long journey towards transformative change in women's land rights and the very short timeline for the pilots, the pilots needed to be rooted in existing movements and efforts and led by people and organizations that would continue this work regardless, long beyond the life of the pilots.

The goal was to co-design pilots that would be:



Locally-led



Responsive to the context and needs of targeted groups



Feasible (given time and budget constraints)



Support long-term ownership



Built on the strengths, capacities and existing efforts of the selected partners and the IFAD-funded project (the [Resilience of Organizations for Transformative Smallholder Agriculture Programme](#), or ROOTS project)

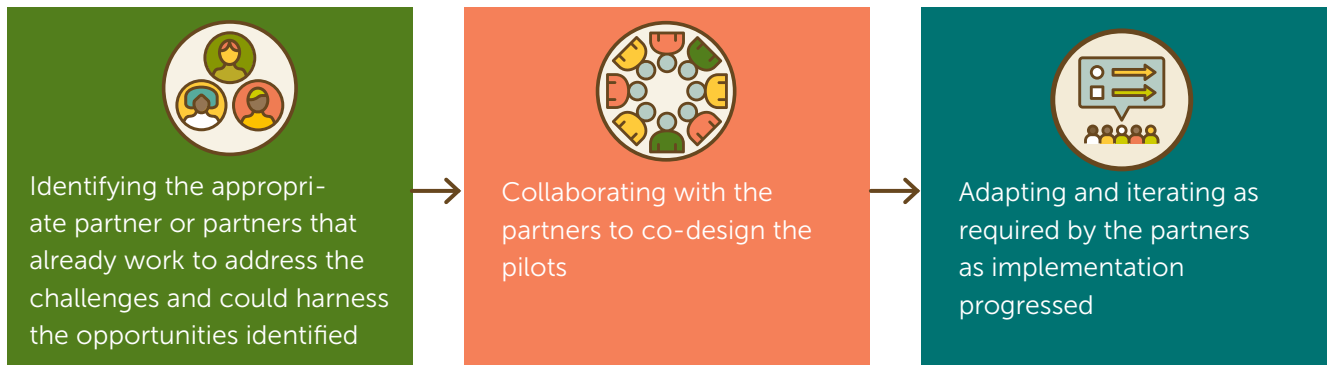
Participatory Sense-making

Following a gender analysis on women's land rights in The Gambia, the results were shared widely with relevant stakeholders. A dedicated [participatory sense-making exercise](#) involved deepening understanding on the barriers to women's access to and control over land and their preferred solutions and strategies to address these. Results were also shared and validated with a range of stakeholders beyond the project communities, including representatives from different government departments, NGOs and civil society, farmers' organizations and ROOTS project staff. Key challenges identified included the lack of finance to invest in agricultural land and the complex process of legally registering land. Stakeholders also highlighted the upcoming development of The Gambia's first land policy as an opportunity for advocacy and institutional change on women's land rights.



Co-Design Process

The co-design process involved:



During the scoping exercise, two potential partners were identified by stakeholders given their existing role and reputation in strengthening women's land rights: the [Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia \(FLAG\)](#) and [ActionAid International The Gambia \(AAITG\)](#).

FLAG

A non-profit association of women lawyers dedicated to the rights of women and children. FLAG provides pro-bono legal advice, advocates for gender equality through legislative reforms, and has extensive experience in adjudicating land disputes.

AAITG

A global justice organization focused on social justice, gender equality, and poverty eradication. AAITG has a strong network of Gender Action Groups and Women Advocacy groups and is experienced in advocacy and campaigning for women's land rights. Strengthening women and youth-led land right campaigns was already one of their key strategic objectives.

In the following months, there were a series of meetings, calls, and emails with these partners (and between them and the ROOTS project) to co-design pilots. It was important that the partners themselves felt the pilots suited the context and their existing work and would be feasible given the short timeframe. It was also key that all stakeholders involved had opportunities to develop strong working relationships among themselves, to **increase the likelihood that their work would continue to be joined up and reinforce each other's efforts** long after the pilots ended.

Taken together, the pilots represent an attempt to employ a more [Gender Transformative Approach to women's land rights](#) in that they sought to:



The process of **co-creating and implementing the pilots by, with and for women in the local context** was also a core constitutive element of a Gender Transformative Approach².

Co-designing the pilots may have required more work upfront than a typical partnership agreement (which can often read more as a service agreement) but they resulted in pilots that are more relevant and locally- led.

² See more on the proposed 'non-negotiable' principles underpinning gender transformative approaches in Morgan, M. (2023) ["How do we know if what we're doing is really 'gender transformative'?"](#) (Blog). The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT.



PILOT WITH FLAG:

Legal Guide on Women's Land Rights

A detailed legal guide on women's land rights was developed to **respond to the gaps in legal awareness and knowledge** identified by stakeholders. While there were several legal aspects requiring attention, FLAG suggested focusing specifically on the **legal process to obtain women's land rights to help equip rural women and their supporters to navigate the otherwise opaque and complex process.** A 'Training of Trainers' curriculum was also developed to be able to cascade the information to stakeholders at different levels, even after the lifetime of the pilot.



PILOT WITH AITG:

act!onaid

Multi-Stakeholder Platform on Women's Land Rights



The pilot was first proposed as a multi-stakeholder platform on women's land rights to inform the development of a new land policy being drafted by the Ministry of Lands and Local Governments. It was originally envisioned as a more centralized exercise to involve and influence central government stakeholders. However, **ActionAid proposed a much more decentralized and grounded approach to build the Platform from the ground up.** They drew on the strength of their existing network of rural women leaders

(specifically the Rural Women's Assembly) to start the platform and **build local capacities across the country to lead and coordinate mobilization and advocacy activities on women's land rights.** ActionAid's approach was more strategic for the context and drew on their wealth of experience and expertise. It also was **more inclusive of regional variation and diverse voices and more responsive to stakeholders and relevant to the context** – and as such more likely to be sustained over time.



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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