



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

FOUNDATIONAL GENDER ANALYSIS



Research Summary 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.

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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
(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.

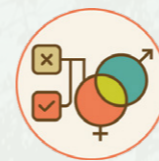
Access to land and resources, as well as control over them, are crucial for women's empowerment. However, women face barriers such as inadequate legal frameworks, ineffective policy implementation, and discriminatory cultural attitudes, which limit their access, control, and use of land and resources.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



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.**



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.



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



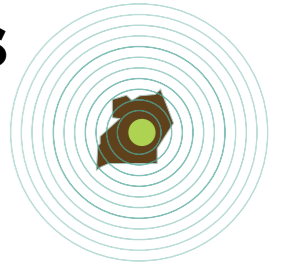
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGD) WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDER GROUPS



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



Uganda Gender Analysis



PROJECT CONTEXT

In Uganda, IFAD focuses on increasing the incomes of rural households living in poverty, improving food security, and reducing vulnerability. The foci are smallholder households with potential for economic activities and extremely vulnerable households that are often bypassed by development initiatives. The IFAD country strategic opportunities programme aims to enhance smallholder agriculture's production, productivity, and climate resilience, integrate smallholders into markets, and increase rural people's access to financial services. IFAD selected the National Oil Palm Project (NOPP) from its Uganda portfolio for engagement with the Global Initiative for

GTAs. Implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF, 2019-2029), NOPP supports inclusive rural transformation through sustainable oil palm investment. The project aims to increase rural livelihoods by building a more efficient and socially responsible oil palm industry. Approximately 30,800 poor and vulnerable rural households directly benefit from NOPP activities, including smallholder oil palm production and employment in the oil palm value chain, household, and community-level approaches to the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), nutrition programs, and alternative livelihoods.

GENDER ANALYSIS

The data collection instruments developed for the gender analysis were adapted to the Ugandan country context and NOPP design.



KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

were conducted with individuals who possessed knowledge about NOPP, including project staff and mentors, partners at different levels, and local leaders. The interviews focused on understanding NOPP's gender mainstreaming approach, gender-related barriers, normative constraints to women's land rights (WLR), and existing and potential interventions. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling



COMMUNITY PROFILES

were developed for eight villages, four in Buvuma district and four in Kalangala district. Two groups of four village leaders, totaling 64 respondents, were interviewed in each village. The selected communities are all targeted by NOPP interventions such as Household Mentoring and Alternative Livelihoods, community-level GALS approaches, and malnutrition training.



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

were conducted across these eight villages, with 12 FGDs in Kalangala and 16 FGDs in Buvuma to explore each of the NOPP interventions in depth. The FGDs were divided by gender and comprised both oil palm growers and non-oil palm growers, as well as participants and non-participants to the NOPP interventions with control groups in non-intervention villages. Total participants numbered 213 (111 women and 102 men) with the majority ranging in age from 18 to 65 years. The FGD guide covered topics such as the community context, existing land and resource rights, NOPP participation, challenges faced, and potential solutions. Poll questions were also incorporated to capture individual views and stimulate discussion.





Key Learnings



In both Kalangala and Buvuma Districts, **land tenure systems** are many, but dominated by a tenure system specific to the Buganda Kingdom in Uganda. Mailo land is that which was gifted by the British Protectorate to a class of institutions (Kingdom land, church land) and individuals (private mailo land) during the colonial era and is equivalent to freehold tenure rights held in perpetuity. The island districts also include leasehold and some freehold land, as well as extensive areas of public and state lands. Land acquired by the state under the oil palm development initiatives are leased to the oil palm investors as estate farms in the public interest while smallholder oil palm producers occupy their own lands. Natural resources including forest reserves are allocated to state land. The majority of residents of Kalangala and Buvuma districts have settled on private mailo land as tenants with rights of occupancy as 'Kibanja' holders. Tenant rights are legally recognized so long as they pay their annual rent to the title holder. Informal settlers on private mailo or freehold land have no occupancy rights as so-called squatters. Women in both districts face customary barriers in inheriting land, although there have been gradual changes over time. Women can access land through their spouses and nearest male relatives, and those who own titled land have obtained it through gifts or personal purchases. While gendered land rights are recognized by the legal system, women's enjoyment of these rights is limited by customary practices. Buvuma has fewer women exercising private property rights compared to Kalangala, potentially influenced by different economic sectors and engagements in the respective districts.

Tenure security remains a concern in the NOPP area, with more than 75 percent of community members being tenants on mailo land without proper documentation of their rights of occupancy. Men enjoy greater security due to land ownership and decision-making authority within households, oftentimes excluding women from control over property and land.

Changes in women's tenure security: As part of the NOPP social mitigation approach, a fund was developed to acquire land for women and youth to participate in the oil palm smallholder scheme. Some women have additionally acquired land through purchase, allocation or inheritance and have successfully planted oil palm for income generation. As a result, these women's tenure security has improved as they were required to register proper land documents for inclusion in NOPP activities. These cases, however few, demonstrate the potential of NOPP for enhancing tenure security and economic participation. The gender analysis, however, confirmed that during the land acquisition and consolidation process for the oil palm estates, compensation for family lands was more often given to the men as household heads. A disturbing trend of men abandoning their marriages followed, leaving many women and mothers landless or with insufficient land for food production. In some cases, men prioritized oil palm cultivation on all available family land, leaving limited space for other crops and reducing women's access to land. Men and women alike cited an increase in income from oil palm cultivation and alternative livelihoods as provoking conflict and incidents of domestic violence, further threatening women's tenure security as they face the risk of being expelled from their households.

In the past, few women owned land as they were primarily housewives and not involved in business or income-generating activities. They were dependent on men for their needs and had limited inheritance rights. However, in recent years, more women have become economically empowered, acquiring land through purchasing and inheritance. Women have also taken on greater responsibilities in providing for their families.

Factors contributing to these changes include increased education, women's economic activities, and parents recognizing the responsibility and capability of their daughters. On the other hand, the introduction of oil palm cultivation and the growing tourism industry have led to increased demand for land, affecting tenure security for residents.

The **current NOPP interventions**, such as household mentoring using the GALS methodology and alternative livelihood programs, have shown promise in achieving meaningful gender inclusion in male-dominated sectors. These interventions have also addressed gender-biased customary norms related to land tenure and have trained the community to effectively utilize limited land resources.

The involvement of men has been crucial in strengthening women's resource rights and overall empowerment. The use of mixed-gender groups has played a vital role in driving positive outcomes and fostering sustainable gender relation transformations. Furthermore, establishing linkages with external actors has been essential for communities to exercise their rights and derive value from them. Other government and private organizations have also played important roles in empowering both women and men in addition to NOPP.

However, these interventions have been implemented on a small scale, reaching only a few households, which has limited their overall impact. It is important to expand these interventions to benefit a larger proportion of the population and ensure wider gender inclusion in the oil palm sector and growing economy of these districts.

The development of a gender strategy indicates commitment to gender equality, although its implementation is still pending. The Kalangala Oil Palm Growers Trust (KOPGT) and both Buvuma and Kalangala District Local Government (DLG) have made efforts to integrate gender into their activities by adhering to Uganda's policies and laws that promote women's participation (minimum of 30 percent).

The implementation of the household mentor programme and community sensitization initiatives have shown positive results in **women's empowerment and decision-making**. The increased participation of women in oil palm production, alternative livelihoods, and community leadership positions is a testament to the project's impact. Joint decision-making and sharing of benefits within households have improved through women working alongside their husbands, children, and other family members. The alternative livelihoods program has potential to economically empower vulnerable individuals, including men, women, youth, and other social groups so long as they fully receive the promised inputs.

Despite progress, challenges remain. The community profiling and FGDs have revealed that while more women are **exercising their land rights** compared to previous years, a significant percentage still face disadvantages and perceive land ownership and decision-making power as primarily belonging to men. **Women's ownership rights** are often secured through land purchase, which poses challenges due to their limited financial resources.





Recommendations

02



Customization of gender strategy:

The NOPP Gender Strategy should be decentralized to the hubs in Kalangala and Buvuma, allowing for customization to address specific local contexts. Capacity building for gender inclusivity across the oil palm value chain should be conducted for women, youth, men, and other groups.



04



Expansion of GALS methodology:

The coverage of the GALS methodology used in household mentoring, along with other gender transformative approaches, should be expanded. This will empower more vulnerable individuals in households, including men, women, and youth.

05



GTA focusing on groups:

Further implement gender-transformative approaches that target groups consisting of husbands, wives, and other household members, including youth, alongside household mentorship programs. This approach allows for broader coverage and dissemination of gender-transformative practices.

06



GTA focusing on men:

Interventions which engage men to continuously and sustainably participate in NOPP social development interventions, for example, household mentoring and community GALS. Gender-specific programming for men can transform their attitudes about gender equality while also promoting pathways for them to share in the benefits of their participation.

01



Oil sub-sector guidelines: The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF) should develop guidelines specifically focused on the oil palm sub-sector. These guidelines should address negative gender norms related to women's access and control over land and resources. Additionally, these guidelines must address the information gap and provide recommendations for informing residents about the oil palm development plans, spatial planning for oil palm and related district priorities, and opportunities for inclusion.

03



Legal literacy and empowerment

Sustained efforts should be made to raise awareness about women's land and resource rights at the village level. This involves educating both men and women, instilling confidence in exercising their rights, and resisting suppression. Sensitization programs should expand to more radio stations and include exposure visits to increase awareness.

08



Recruitment of gender personnel: The NOPP hubs in Kalangala and Buvuma should dedicate funds for gender specialists and staff members to effectively implement the gender strategy and promote gender mainstreaming.

11



Affirmative action for youth: To attract more youth to engage in oil palm production, a certain percentage (e.g., 30%) of youth should be included in NOPP leadership structures, ensuring their active participation and representation.

13



Land fund for women and youth: Maintain a land fund that provides loans to organized groups of women and youth to acquire land for oil palm plantations. Measures should be in place to ensure that the funds specifically benefit women and youth.

16



Provide start-up inputs: Address the current suspension of activities by providing essential resources such as vegetable seeds, fencing materials, and beekeeping equipment for the alternative livelihood program. This support will enable beneficiaries to establish and sustain their ventures effectively.

09



Recruitment of village agents: Similar to the approach in Kalangala, male and female village agents and household mentors who are community members should be recruited and scaled in Buvuma district. Peer-to-peer knowledge dissemination through mentors and village agents can be an effective strategy for improving understanding and adoption of best practices.

14



Use of incentives for land sharing: Provide economic incentives (such as lower interest rate loans) to men who willingly share land with their spouses. This strategy encourages more men to share land with their wives and children, leading to increased beneficiaries.

17



Incorporate market linkages: Include a market linkage component in the program to support the marketing of agricultural products, including high-quality chicken, honey, and vegetables produced by beneficiaries. Facilitate connections with markets and buyers to ensure a sustainable income stream and economic stability.

10



Involvement of cultural leaders: Engaging cultural leaders is essential for leading cultural changes. They can play a role in promoting women's inheritance rights and influencing men to share land with their spouses and female relatives.

12



Involvement of women in oil palm estates: Spouses of estate employees, particularly women, should be allowed to directly or indirectly benefit from the oil palm value chain through programs such as household mentoring and alternate livelihood initiatives.

15



Negotiate lower interest rates on bank loans: NOPP should engage with commercial banks to secure loans for farmers at lower interest rates, taking into account the high likelihood of loan repayment within the oil palm sector.





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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