



SECURING  
WOMEN'S  
RESOURCE RIGHTS  
THROUGH GENDER  
TRANSFORMATIVE  
APPROACHES

**LIFAD**  
Investing in rural people

Country Virtual Learning Exchange Workshop Series

.....  
*Insights from*

# THE GAMBIA



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North, H., Paez-Valencia, A-M. (Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT). 2024. Country Virtual Learning Exchange Workshop Series: Insights from the Gambia. Securing Women's Resource Rights Through Gender Transformative Approaches Initiative. Alliance of CIAT and Bioversity International, Rome.

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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).



#### 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](https://www.ifad.org/en/gender_transformative_approaches)

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## WEBINAR SERIES

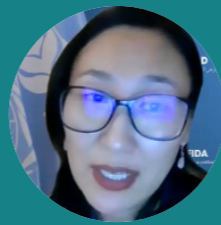
The Country Virtual Learning Exchange Workshop Series served as a platform to share insights and lessons learnt from this initiative, highlighting research from each country project on securing women's resource rights through GTAs. The aim was to showcase the diversity of the projects' implementation, fostering cross-learning and highlighting initiatives and lessons from each country's efforts in securing women's resource rights through GTAs.



## CONTENTS

- Webinar Overview / 4
- Key Findings / 5
- Exploration of Co-Design Phase / 6
- Pilot Activities / 6
- Panel Discussion / 8
- Key Insights from the Virtual Learning Exchange / 9

# Webinar Overview



—IFAD Technical Specialist for Gender & Social Inclusion, **Tshering Chodren** opened the workshop

The webinar commenced with a detailed exploration of the co-design phase undertaken to develop the GTA pilot in The Gambia. Speakers illuminated the collaborative efforts between various stakeholders and the participatory approach adopted to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the intervention. Following this, the discussion delved into the dynamics of partnerships involved in implementing GTAs, emphasizing the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration and community engagement. Moreover, the webinar provided in-depth insights into the GTA pilot itself, examining its design, implementation, and impact on women’s resource rights. Throughout the session, speakers offered valuable recommendations for replicating and scaling up GTAs in other country and programmatic contexts.

## SPEAKERS



**Marie Parramon-Gurney**  
Event Facilitator



**Haoua Sienta,**  
Country Director IFAD Gambia



**Ana Maria Paez Valencia,**  
The Global WLR Initiative



**Hanna North,**  
Alliance Bioversity & CIAT

## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Despite constitutional provisions ensuring equal treatment and opportunities for women, implementation of these laws, particularly in rural areas governed by customary land tenure systems, often falls short. Customary and religious practices tend to favour men, with limited representation of women in positions of authority. Recognizing the institutional barriers faced by women is crucial for achieving gender equality and securing land rights.

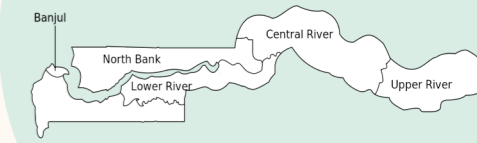
## PROJECT OVERVIEW

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. 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). To achieve its gender-related outcomes, the project engages and supports women’s garden groups, adopts the Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) methodology, and collaborates with village Alkalou’s as project entry points, targeting specific value chains.

## APPROACH TO GTA DEVELOPMENT

The initiative’s approach to developing Gender Transformative Approaches (GTAs) involved **conducting socio-legal and gender analyses** to understand women’s access to land rights and tenure security. Primary data collection complemented secondary data to gain insights into attitudes and norms surrounding women’s land rights. Results were validated through stakeholder engagement and used to inform pilot design, facilitating ongoing pilot activities and collaborative efforts with national partners.

# Key Findings



In The Gambia, two main systems of land tenure exist: customary and legal.

## CUSTOMARY SYSTEM



Land is owned and controlled by the customary authority

Allocated to individuals or families who allocate plots to women for production

Sharia law (2:1 inheritance favouring men)

- The customary system, largely controlled by male heads of families, results in insecure land rights for women.
- Despite theoretically equal land rights under the legal system, practical challenges hinder women’s access to land ownership.
- Bureaucratic processes and the requirement for an Alkalou stamp pose obstacles to women’s land ownership.
- Suggestions from the community to enhance women’s land rights include support for legal documentation, training, permanent fencing, and awareness-raising initiatives.
- Communities identified the need for resources to adequately cultivate land, highlighting potential land reallocation due to underutilization.

## LEGAL SYSTEM



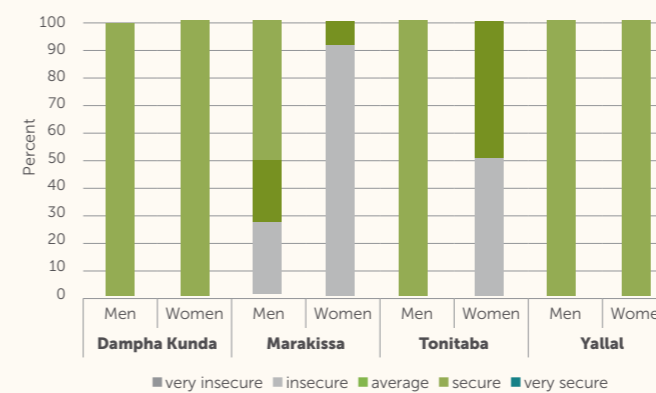
Requires an Alkalou “stamp” for legal registration - doesn’t matter who had it first

Women have equal rights to land in policy

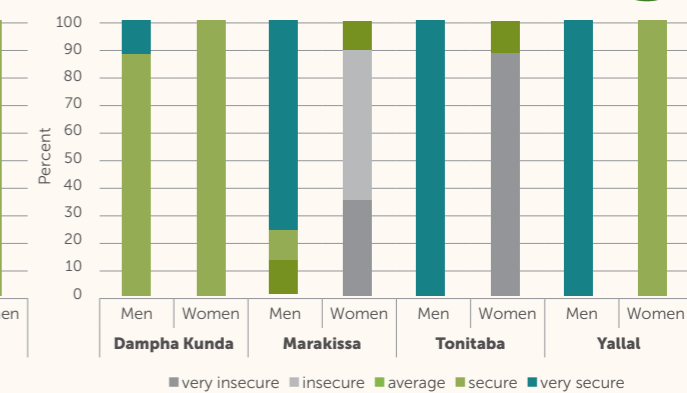
Extremely bureaucratic and slow process

- The Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) process generated interest but required significant time investment.
- Awareness of legal land certification processes varied from grassroots to extension staff, emphasizing the importance of ongoing validation and contextual understanding.
- These findings underscore the complexity of women’s land rights and the necessity for tailored interventions informed by local contexts.
- Continuous engagement and awareness-building efforts are crucial for fostering sustainable changes in land tenure dynamics and promoting gender equality in access to and control over land and resources in The Gambia.

How secure are the land rights for most households in the community?



Do you believe your land rights are secure?



# Exploration of Co-Design Phase

## PILOT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Following the analysis, decisions were made regarding the way forward and entry points for designing the pilot.

### COMMUNITY-LEVEL INTERVENTIONS INCLUDED:

- Engaging women's groups from the ROOTS project.
- Providing legal support through mobile legal clinics.
- Implementing the Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) process.
- Conducting gender sensitization training.
- Organizing awareness campaigns on women's land rights.

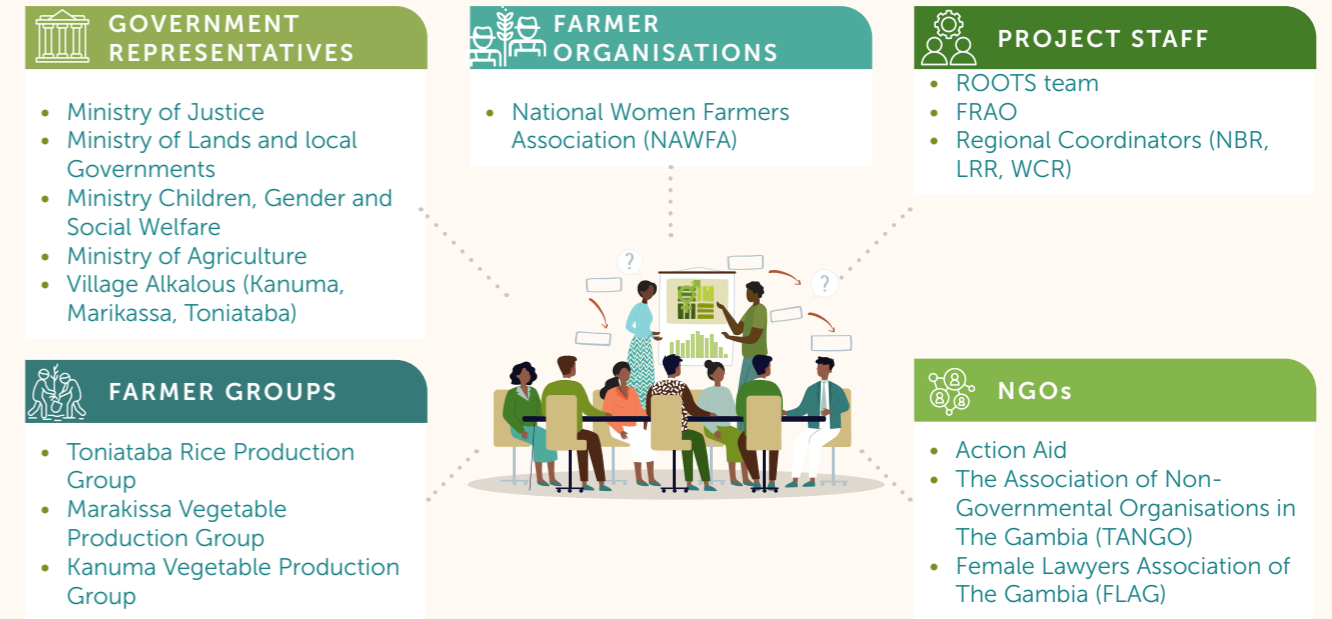
### POLICY-LEVEL EFFORTS CENTRED AROUND:

- Developing the New Land Policy.
- Establishing committees within the Ministry of Justice to address women's land grievances.
- Raising awareness among stakeholders about women's land rights.

### ENGAGEMENT WITH VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS:

- Government representatives.
- Farmer groups and organizations.
- Project staff.
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

## MEETINGS WITH STAKEHOLDERS



Ultimately, three organizations—**Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia (FLAG), ActionAid International The Gambia (AAITG), and the Rural Women's Assembly (RWA)**—were selected based on their expertise, advocacy efforts, and community engagement. Collaborating with these organizations, the pilot design prioritized characteristics including:

- Local leadership.
- Responsiveness to contextual needs.
- Feasibility within time and budget constraints.
- Long-term ownership building.
- Leveraging partner capacities.
- Gender transformative approaches addressing formal and informal systems.

## PILOT ACTIVITIES

- 1 Development of a Legal Guide on Women's Land Rights:** Aimed at raising awareness and clarifying legal processes.
- 2 Establishment of a Multi-Stakeholder Platform on Women's Land Rights:** Intended to advocate for policy changes and build advocacy capacities across different levels of governance.
- 3 Decentralized approach supported by ActionAid's network strengths:** Aims to enhance inclusivity and sustainability; and amplifies the voices and agency of rural women.



### A LEGAL GUIDE ON WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS

- To raise awareness of the benefits of securing women's land rights and to clarify the legal process for people (and especially women) to obtain land rights.
- Training of Trainers to the ROOTS project team and partners to cascade the information to those working with women in communities as well.
- Written Guide + audio voice overs to enable delivery at district and community-level in the future.



### A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM ON WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS

- The platform will convene community, district, national and regional level actors to advocate and campaign for policy changes that benefit rural women's land rights.
- Influence the development of a new land policy being developed by the Ministry of Lands and Local Governments.
- Build the capacities for advocacy and campaigning on women's land rights for Platform coordinators and participants

The establishment of the Multistakeholder Platform (MSP) in The Gambia was a strategic response to the complex land tenure system, where customary practices often marginalized women's land rights. With only 10% of land owned by women despite their significant contribution to food production, the MSP aimed to address these inequalities and strengthen the campaign for women's land rights.

- 1** A thorough examination of the land tenure system revealed the disparities faced by women in land ownership and the critical need for intervention.
- 2** Regional and national consultation meetings were convened to engage stakeholders including Rural Women's Assembly (RWA), project beneficiaries, civil society organizations (CSOs), village heads, district chiefs, and government ministries.
- 3** Lessons learned from the MSP implementation underscored the importance of dialogue between women and local authorities, shedding light on previously unnoticed challenges in land ownership for women. The use of video narratives to amplify women's voices proved effective in advocating for their rights and garnering support from local authorities.

Through a collaborative and participatory approach, the establishment of the MSP served as a catalyst for dialogue, advocacy, and action towards securing women's land rights in The Gambia.



# Panel Discussion

## PANEL

**Fafa Cham,**  
Head of Programs & Policy, ActionAid International in The Gambia

**Anna Njie,**  
President, Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia (FLAG)

**Mamour Alieu Jagne,**  
Project Director, ROOTS Project Gambia

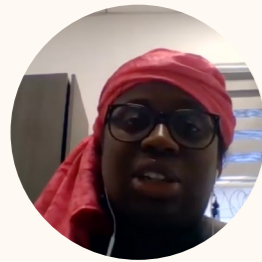
**Fatou Trawally,**  
Member, Rural Women's Association



## SUMMARY

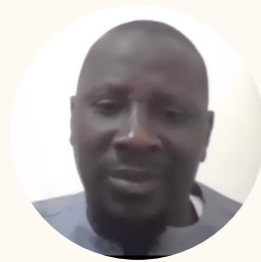
The panel discussion highlighted the legal, cultural, and systemic challenges affecting women's land rights in The Gambia. Key issues include the coexistence of multiple land ownership systems, the need for legal reforms, and the importance of community engagement. Projects like the rural women's initiative and the development of a legal guide aim to address these challenges by mobilizing stakeholders, raising awareness, and empowering women with knowledge of their rights.

## SPEAKER INSIGHTS



**Anna Njie,**  
President, Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia (FLAG)

- Addressed the legal complexities surrounding land ownership and highlighted the need for changes at both community and governmental levels.
- Discussed the legal guide being developed by FLAG to demystify Gambia's land tenure system and empower women with knowledge of their rights.
- Aimed to provide practical insights into navigating legal frameworks, addressing legal complexities, and advocating for systemic change.
- Stressed the importance of legal empowerment in challenging discriminatory practices and fostering a culture of respect for women's rights.



**Fafa Cham,**  
Head of Programs & Policy, ActionAid International in The Gambia

- Elaborated on the transformative potential of multistakeholder platforms in driving systemic change.
- Emphasized the importance of engaging diverse stakeholders, including government and non-government entities.
- Advocated for collaborative efforts to challenge entrenched cultural norms and promote inclusive governance structures.



**Fatou Trawally,**  
Member, Rural Women's Association

- Acknowledged the significance of facilitated dialogue in GTAs to create a shared understanding and foster systemic change, emphasizing effective information sharing.
- Emphasized citizen mobilization and stakeholder collaboration as pivotal in driving change.
- Outlined the role of grassroots initiatives in raising awareness, fostering community dialogue, and advocating for policy reforms.
- Highlighted the transformative potential of community-led initiatives in empowering women and fostering inclusive decision-making processes.

# Key Insights from the Virtual Learning Exchange

Summarised by Tshering Chodren, Technical Specialist for Gender and Social Inclusion, Gender Team, IFAD



## UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL CONTEXT:

- Success depends on understanding the country's cultures and customs.
- Engagement with key stakeholders is essential for project buy-in and success.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION:

- Strategic partnerships at multiple levels are crucial for addressing challenges in advocating for women's land rights.
- Collaboration between various sectors and community engagement are vital components.

## GENDER ANALYSIS AND TAILORED INTERVENTIONS:

- Conducting gender analysis early on allows for the design of interventions that address women's specific needs.
- Identifying key actors and involving them in the process ensures a comprehensive approach.

## PRACTICAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- Development of practical tools like the Legal Guide on Women's Land Rights and Multi-Stakeholder Platforms empowers women and facilitates advocacy.
- Building on existing projects, such as the GALS project, enhances effectiveness and sustainability.

## POTENTIAL FOR SOCIETAL CHANGE:

- Recognizing that customs are shaped by the people highlights the potential for societal change and legal recognition of new norms around land ownership.

“By addressing these themes, projects can better navigate the complexities of advocating for women's land rights and drive meaningful change within communities.”



## 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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