

# GENDER ACTION LEARNING SYSTEM

The Gender Action Learning System (GALS) is a methodology for community-led empowerment that is used for:

- Individual life and livelihood planning;
- Collective action and gender advocacy for change;
- Institutional awareness raising and changing power relationship with service providers, private sector stakeholders and government bodies.

GALS was developed under Oxfam Novib's WEMAN programme with Linda Mayoux and local partner civil society partners in Uganda, Sudan, Peru and India. It consists of:

- A set of principles related to gender justice, participation and leadership;
- A series of visual diagramming tools for visioning, analysis, change planning and tracking by individuals, households, stakeholder groups or in multi-stakeholder settings
- Peer learning mechanisms and structures for ongoing action learning
- Mechanisms to sustainably integrate GALS in organizations or interventions such as financial services, business development services and agricultural extension



GALS is designed to complement economic development interventions for: i) Developing action learning skills of vulnerable stakeholders, to enable them to identify and implement strategies to increase resources, economic choices and negotiation power; ii) Engaging skills, energies and resources of public and private power holders to change power and gender relations, through the negotiation of win-win strategies.

The first exercise creates community ownership and action priorities for gender justice during events with community members and the staff of organisations: **Step 1** assists participants to develop individual and then household pictorial visions, before diagnosing their current situation (**step 2**). In order to promote a sense of achievement and cause-effect linkages, the participants reflect where they began. In **step 3**, participants identify the opportunities and constraints that will affect the realization of their vision. **Step 4** focuses upon enabling participants to identify their targets and milestones, and finally, **step 5** asks participants to set activities on the road towards the achievement of their overall vision.

The methodology then takes participants through four stages, all of which are participatory and depend on the use of visual, rather than written, material. This makes it ideal for inclusive and effective joint analysis and planning.

- Stage 1: Preliminary mapping of gender issues and power relations.
- Stage 2: Action learning with vulnerable groups to identify the poverty and gender issues at each level, implement immediate change strategies, strengthen collaboration and peer sharing.
- Stage 3: The identification, planning and negotiation of multi-stakeholder win-win strategies. At this stage the more powerful stakeholders are involved.
- Stage 4: The promotion of sustainable action learning process including peer up-scaling, policy advocacy, and ongoing change planning in existing platforms.

GALS has proved its effectiveness for creating win-win collaboration between marginalized communities and businesses, service providers, government agencies and traditional authorities, and changing gender relations including property rights, decision making and violence. It has been piloted and/or implemented in more than 14 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Oxfam seeks to further innovate and scale up the use of GALS in different contexts, value chains and with CSOs, private sector and government partners at different levels.



Figure: Example of a life planning tool: the Multilane Highway