

GALS

Gender Action Learning System

Oxfam in Nigeria



OXFAM



IT'S NOT JUST GENDER EQUALITY IT'S COMMON SENSE

GENDER ROLES STUDY

77.7%

of people believe more care is given to boys education than girls



Only few households involve both spouses in financial decisions

10.2%



Women carry out more household chores than Men



Women spend more time on domestic and community activities than Men



Men spend more time on productive economic activities than Women



50.5%

don't discuss monthly expenses with family



47.4%

of family members are not aware of transactions made

■ From a study carried out by the Institute of Food Security of the Federal University of Agriculture, Markurdi with support from Oxfam in Nigeria to determine the Drivers of Gender Inequality and Youth Unemployment in Rural Areas.

Gender Roles And Family Impact



Strict traditional gender roles hinder effective planning and family productivity



Extra Household workload makes wives and daughters unable to contribute to increasing household income



Violence and misuse of income resulting from the husband's excessive alcohol consumption

In a small village in South West Nigeria, a Cocoa farming family struggle to run their business and their home. Strict traditional gender roles make it hard for the couple to do what makes sense to enable them efficiently utilize the labour available within the family in order to effectively manage their family and work functions. All the extra workload in the household which the wife and daughters have to carry out means that they are often not able to contribute adequately to meet the demands of the farm, resulting in less Cocoa being produced and less income for the family. Even more problematic is decision making on how to utilise the income that eventually does come to the family. Both husband and wife have competing needs, and so how to decide what the family incomes should be spent on is a constant source of tension and friction in the family. Additionally, the husband's excessive alcohol consumption results in regular abuse/misuse of family income. The wife's need to buy clothes from time to time further depletes the income available to the family.

The husband and wife do not function as a team, and so are unable to effectively plan how to maximize opportunities, create wealth, effectively apply and grow the wealth created. Also the family's inability to negotiate roles and responsibilities internally affects how they negotiate externally with other stakeholders' such as private sector companies interested in their Cocoa, Government institutions responsible for service delivery and others.

This need not be so. For Oxfam, enabling families negotiate gender roles (the responsibilities assigned to men and women in any given culture) and priorities is one way in which gender equality benefits both men and women. Gender equality is not about favouring women as most people think, but about creating a just world in which women and men collaborate in a mutually respectful manner that allows them to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to their families and communities.

Oxfam believes that negative gender perceptions and roles affect the ability of men and women, households and communities to work together and create wealth. Supporting men and women to overcome this leads to an enabling context for pro-poor wealth creation towards sustainable poverty reduction. This is why Oxfam invests heavily in gender based programming, because it's through interrogating the traditional or assumed roles of men and women and allowing change to occur when and where it needs to – at the household level, that societies fashion out what actually makes for successful quality living. Changing gender dynamics also helps communities change power dynamics by exposing them to various other possibilities. For instance, a community stuck in the immutability of gender roles is also more likely to consider poverty, relationship with government, buyers etc., as immutable thereby condemning themselves to the role of underdogs in perpetuity.





Women group beneficiaries of GALS setting out their vision for the year

A powerful tool which Oxfam uses to help communities discuss, negotiate and redefine gender roles amongst other roles is the Gender Action Learning System (GALS). GALS is a community-led empowerment methodology that is used for: Collective action and gender advocacy for change; Individual life and livelihood planning; Institutional awareness raising and changing power relationship with service providers, private sector stakeholders and government bodies. The GALS methodology brings a fresh approach to gender interventions. It neither demonizes men as culprits nor does it see women as victims. Rather it provides the support and knowledge required by men and women to overcome negative gender perceptions and actions. It is culturally respectful, gains the trust of men, builds the confidence of women and emboldens poor vulnerable men and women to challenge unjust power relations. This creates the context needed for collaboration for wealth creation at the household and community levels.

OVERALL GOAL

The overall goal of the methodology is to contribute to sustainable pro-poor wealth creation, and value chain upgrading in Nigeria through empowerment of women and men from the poorest and most vulnerable households and the establishment of equitable participatory processes for economic decision making at all levels. GALS is designed as a complementary methodology for economic development interventions.





THE STARTING POINT OF GALS:

1 Addressing gender issues in value chain to achieve pro-poor wealth creation. Inequalities in the households have been identified as the key causes of poverty and poor bargaining power of women and men producers. This supports the target groups to develop gender action learning skills of vulnerable stakeholder groups in the value chain, to enable them to identify and implement sustainable strategies to increase incomes, resources, economic choices and negotiation power.

2 Enabling vulnerable stakeholders to negotiate win-win strategies with more powerful stakeholders in a sustainable and self-replicating process so that value chain is made more sustainable and equitable. This engages skills, energies and resources of the private sector and institutional stakeholders in the value chain to change power and gender relations, through the negotiation of win-win strategies.

In contrast to other conventional gender value chain analysis and planning, GALS assumes that women's empowerment and gender equality can create a win-win situation for both men and women in the chain. GALS uses pictorial diagramming tools to strengthen the skills and negotiating powers of the vulnerable stakeholders. It enables them create goals and a visual journey to where they want to be as key actors in their own wealth creation. The methodology also involves working with private sector actors to change attitudes and behaviours.

It starts with creating community ownership and action priorities for gender justice with targeted households, community members and the staff of organisations. 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 by non-literate with literate participants.

THE GENDER ACTION LEARNING SYSTEM WORKS WITH THE FOLLOWING STEPS:



STEP 1: DEVELOP PICTORIAL VISION

Assists participants to develop individual and then household pictorial visions, before diagnosing their current situation. In order to promote a sense of achievement and cause-effect linkages, step 2 encourages the participants to reflect on where they began. At this point they are supported to implement immediate change strategies, strengthen collaboration and peer sharing.



STEP 2: IDENTIFY GENDER AND POVERTY ISSUES

Focuses on action learning with vulnerable groups, women and men to identify the gender and poverty issues that affect them in their daily lives. This also includes preliminary value chain mapping of gender issues and power relations.



STEP 3: IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES

Participants identify the opportunities and constraints that will affect the realization of their vision. The identification, planning and negotiation of multi-stakeholder win-win strategies is under taken. At this stage the more powerful stakeholders are involved.



STEP 4: IDENTIFY TARGETS AND MILESTONE

Focuses upon enabling participants to identify their household targets and milestones. This stage puts participants through the promotion of sustainable action learning process including peer upscaling, policy advocacy, and ongoing change planning in existing platforms.



STEP 5: MOVE TO ACTION

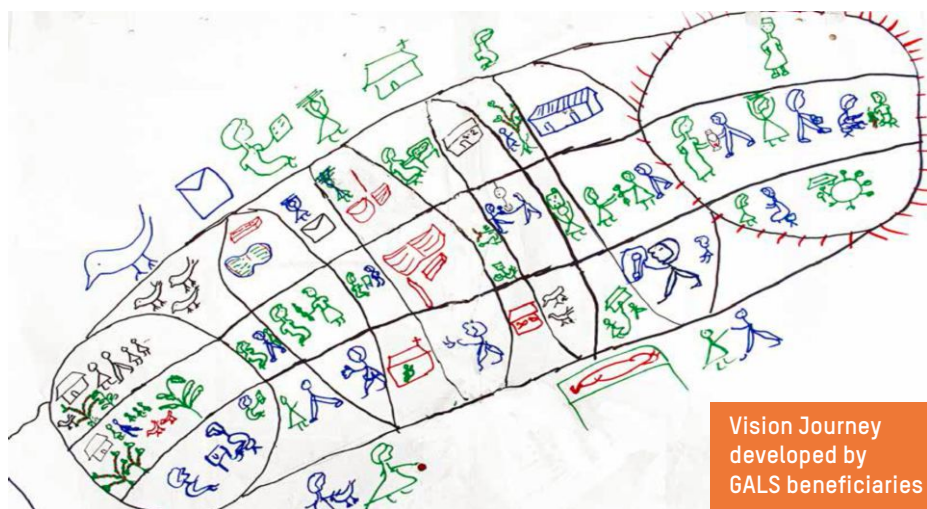
Asks participants to set activities on the road towards the achievement of their overall vision.



Mr. & Mrs. Achuku Lucas
with their new baby Jenifer GALS Lucas



Couple beneficiaries of GALS with their
Family Vision illustration



Vision Journey
developed by
GALS beneficiaries

GALS has proved its effectiveness for changing gender relations including property rights, decision making and addressing domestic violence. It has been piloted and/or implemented in more than 11 countries in Africa including Nigeria, Asia and Latin America. Oxfam Novib seeks to further innovate and scale up the use of GALS in different contexts, value chains and with private sector and government agencies at different levels.

Some of our lessons from GALS methodologies are as follows:

- ▶ Structural cultural and power issues underlying gender inequality can be transformed positively. It stimulates change of behaviour in negative gender perception, roles and attitude without any confrontation.

- ▶ Trainings that simultaneously focus on teaching beneficiaries economic planning as well as household planning seem to be particularly effective, as they seem to improve cooperation between spouses, and diminish domestic conflicts. Many female beneficiaries reported that improvements in the communication and understanding between them and their husbands led to better economic planning, as well as an improvement of their status and influence within the household. It brings unity between men and women at the household and community levels which translates into wealth creation
- ▶ Combining 'economic and household planning trainings' with the provision of material inputs such as loans and farming inputs, furtherer increase successes in income improvement.
- ▶ The process can empower usually marginalized men and women with the skills to stand boldly to negotiate with the more powerful.

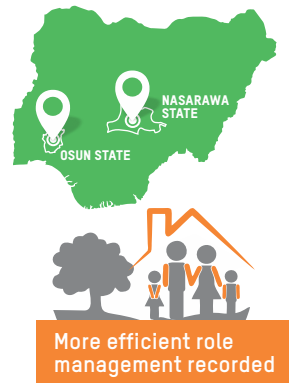


Men and women can find a balance even within traditional boundaries once they understand that gender roles are not immutable. Like every other aspect of culture, the roles assigned to men and women in any given culture are as a result of the exigencies of that culture at that point in time. As societies change so should gender roles and the understanding of what can or cannot be done by men and women.

Significant changes in behaviour and attitudes have been noticed in the men and women who participated in GALS as demonstrated below in a quote from a WEMAN GALS beneficiary:

"I shared GALS with my family and children and also with my church. I support my wife and work together with her now, I now use my motorcycle to carry produce from the farm instead of allowing my wife carry it on her head like before. I now wash my clothes which I never did before. I explained to some members of my community what it was all about - how men and women can work together and lift themselves out of poverty. Some of my friends I shared with asked me if they can join in the workshop."

In Nasarawa and Osun state in Nigeria reports show that significant behavioural change is being achieved, from sharing household tasks and childcare, to working together in the field. Joint decision making determines how to save and spend the household income. Women have a much wider range of items they can buy independently from their husbands, including land and mobile phones. Couples reported that there is more balance between workloads and sharing the benefits.



Households have achieved greater food security and more boys and girls attend school. And the final proof: the number of cases of wife beating reported earlier in the project has dropped drastically and this is attributed to men changing their behaviour, particularly regarding drinking. Many families have built houses, bought lands and expanded their businesses as a result of GALS. Women have acquired properties and ventured into areas that used to be exclusively men's. More excitedly, all beneficiaries have committed to overcoming negative gender biases and behaviours. A family in Nasarawa state was so overwhelmed with the changes brought about by GALS in their lives that they decided to name their baby, born at the time, as GALS.

Oxfam has demonstrated through GALS that by guiding men and women through a gender focused awareness excursion, change can take place in a non-threatening mutually reinforcing manner where it matters most – at the household level. The mostly uneducated beneficiaries have grasped the methodology and it has changed their lives tremendously. About 9,713 farmers made up of 6,478 women and 3,235 men have been reached directly with the project while 19,434 women and 9,705 men have been reached indirectly. The Oxfam example proves that GALS actually works!

Over
38000
reached



DIRECT
IMPACT OF
GALS
PROJECT

OTHERS
REACHED
INDIRECTLY

9,713
farmers reached

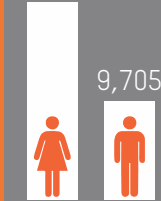
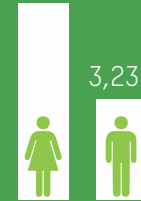
29,139
others reached

6,478

19,434

3,235

9,705



Women Men

Women Men



OXFAM

Oxfam
No. 11 Ganges Street,
off Alvan Ikoku Way,
Maitama, Abuja, Nigeria

+234 (0) 9461 1545
(0) 70 8662 5290

infonigeria@oxfamnovib.nl

www.oxfam.org/nigeria

facebook.com/OxfaminNigeria

@oxfaminnigeria