

Empower@Scale Project Success Stories

UPSCALING GENDER ACTION LEARNING SYSTEMS



INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality and norms of masculine behaviour in the household and community are key causes of poverty and result in the poor bargaining power of women as well as men. Gender norms and stereotypes constrain the opportunities for both women and men. Gender and social imbalances in access to revenue, resource distribution, and access to education have all made women and girls vulnerable, pushing them towards chronic poverty. This is gradually becoming a thing of the past in Kenyan rural families, thanks to a Gender Action Learning for Sustainability (GALS), a household Methodology (HHM) implemented by Hivos and Oxfam Novib through the Empower@Scale project (2018-2022).

Funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the 4-year project goal was to contribute to gender equality and sustainable livelihoods for marginalized rural women, men, and youth as a result of more inclusive and gender-equitable programmes for rural transformation. The project sought to propose a mechanism for facilitating the set-up and professionalisation of Empowerment Learning Centres (ELCs) engaging with IFAD-supported projects and other actors for capacity development on HHMs like GALS, maintaining key principles such as gender equality, empowerment, and participation. By linking the ELCs into national/regional networks and a global platform, the Consortium created a strong knowledge and evidence base to support the scaling up of the gender transformative HHM. With rural women and men, the consortium developed and packaged new approaches to HHM for working for instance with youth; integration into rural finance programmes; and engaging with the private sector to achieve gender equality and social inclusion in rural value chains.

GALS is a community-led empowerment methodology that uses principles of inclusion to improve income, food and nutrition security of vulnerable people in a gender-equitable way. It positions poor women and

men as drivers of their own development rather than victims, identifying and dismantling obstacles in their environment, challenging service providers and private actors. It has proven to be effective for changing gender inequalities that have existed for generations, strengthening negotiation power of marginalized stakeholders and promoting collaboration, equity and respect between value chain actors. GALS develops participatory visioning and planning skills and strengthens social networks for women and men at all levels, for all interventions and strategies, including livelihoods, value chain, leadership, organisational development, financial services, food security, environment, civil society development and conflict resolution. In addition, GALS focuses specifically on changing gender transformation linking change at individual, household, community and macro-levels. It develops new visions for relationships between women and men as equal human beings, based on the UN Convention on Women's Human Rights, and implementing changes in gender inequalities in resources and power.

A collection of these success stories affords us the opportunity to step back and celebrate achievements both big and small. It also serves as evidence of Empower@Scale project interventions and impact in Kenya for sharing across different countries and with different stakeholders. This has indeed been a journey of positive change especially among the women and men in the rural areas. Hivos remains anticipative that the encouraging changes that happened in securing gender equality and sustainable livelihoods through GALS serves as evidence base for replication, uptake and/or scaling up by public and private actors through programme development and fundraising. We are optimistic the progressive practices adopted by the communities resulting in sustainable livelihoods will enhance scaling up GALS from thousands to millions.

Mary Kuira, Project Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Specialist.



HOW USE OF GALS IN MY HOUSEHOLD FREED ME FROM POVERTY

The weather is the most inviting phenomenon when driving the Kivwe-Kivote road to Makengi Location in Embu County. We've come to see Bedan Kithinji Mwaniki. After one wrong turn, the path to Bedan's house becomes clear. Butcheries selling fresh goat meat – a popular delicacy – are appealing at Makengi shopping center. To achieve personal gains, one can certainly offer a quid pro quo using the abundance of good meat available here.

If you ask around like we did, women are a little bit apprehensive to talk, they let men reply – even if they are not relatives – you definitely figure out that gender and social inequality have trapped many rural families in vicious cycles of poverty in this region and Kenya at large.

A patriarchal and capitalist society. A background check revealed, after visiting Makengi Location, that access to education and resources that can assist at income creation is limited.

However, the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) implemented in Kenya through the Empower@Scale project by Hivos, in a consortium led by Oxfam Novib is changing the narrative.



We were taught how to achieve our visions. The trick is to connect where you are to where you want to be and then set milestones,”

Bedan Kithinji



The project anticipated, among other changes, the empowerment of economically deprived and marginalized (young) rural women and men. Bedan hails from Karumba village, Makengi Location. Karumba, his village, resonates well with many who understand Kenya's struggle for independence – the Kapenguria six's Kung'u Karumba – where we kept asking for directions. He is a GALS participant.

At his home, as a GALS champion you are greeted by geese that serve as a security system, alerting him to the presence of visitors in his compound.

Having a home on a small plot of land inherited from the father was not the life he had envisioned for himself, even with the little income he was getting from odd jobs. Despite the hard work, he and the wife Faith Gicuku were rarely able to enjoy the fruits of their labor, owing to a lack of vision.

This, coupled with a culture that restricts them from undertaking activities that bring income and/or any profits, ensured the couple was trapped in a poverty maze.

But the GALS training he took part in 2019 changed their lives. The training, he says, opened his eyes and he, in turn, trained his wife, and together they drew a vision – to buy land.

“We learnt how to achieve our visions. The trick is to connect where you are to where you want to be and then set milestones,” he says.

The training, he adds, helped him spot opportunities available to him and his wife.



Opportunities that if exploited would help them achieve their goal of buying a piece of land within two years.

With Bedan and his wife now being equal partners, they could work together to achieve their dream.

Faith found an opportunity to label students' school uniforms with their admission numbers at St John Kiang'ani Secondary school in Makengi, Embu county.

"While working with the school I noticed another opportunity that reflected on tomato shortage," she adds.

Noticing this opportunity led them to engage with GALS even more to find ways of venturing into agribusiness. So, they approached the school again with an offer to supply them with tomatoes.

Kithinji says they started selling milk and taking better care of their coffee farm. This increased the revenue streams for the couple and the fact that Kithinji is a member of a table banking group only made matters better for his family.

He and other farmers in the area talked about forming the Makengi 'Kenya Cereals Enhancement Programme' (KCEP) self-help group to raise awareness about maize farming. The group began operating as an Empowerment Learning Centre (ELC) which they labelled 'ELC on the move' to train others while also earning revenue.

USD 1723

■ Within six months of taking active part with the GALS training, Kithinji had realized a profit of 200,000 (about USD 1723) Kenya shillings.

"We have incorporated an Agricultural Extension Officer of this area and he has helped us reach about 14 groups," he adds. Every time any of these groups has a meeting, Kithinji and the other members offer the GALS training at a fee. Some of the GALS tools widely utilised include the Vision Road Journey, Gender Balance Tree and Social Empowerment Map.

The couple also has a rice selling business at Makengi market.

Faith says her husband has uplifted women in the area as he has trained women groups to adopt GALS.

She is a member of a group that has leased land and is using it for agribusiness.

Within six months of taking active part with the GALS training, Kithinji had realized a profit of 200,000 (about USD 1723) Kenya shillings.

At the time, an eighth of an acre cost Ksh 250,000 (USD 2,154) but Kithinji was able to buy a quarter of an acre in a year. Other than the revenue he was getting from table banking, training sessions, and agribusiness, he had to sell two cows and a motorbike to achieve his goal. Even before he bought the land he knew he wanted it for horticulture.

Kithinji's next goal was to buy some cows and a motorbike.

Though he did not meet his self-imposed deadline, by the end of 2019, he had bought two Friesian cows at a total cost of Ksh114,000 (USD 975) and a motorbike at KSh45,000 (USD 385).

The father of two is also passing on the knowledge to his young son who now takes care of rabbits.

Before the GALS training, Kithinji could not do daily house chores. He now says, he can clean, cook and handle anything for his family that he had imagined was the wife's responsibility.

"Nikipika chapati, huyu anafurahia sana," (when I make chapatis, she goes crazy over them), he says.

He claims that society is gradually embracing gender equality, but it takes him longer to persuade the older generation that men and women can be equal partners.

During the interview, he reveals that he was in the process of purchasing another piece of land and that the transaction would be completed within a week. Kithinji's next goal in life is to build a modern home for his family and purchase a business vehicle.



HOW GALS HELPED US IN MANAGING OUR FINANCES

As we settle into her home in Kianjagi, Embu County, Anyese Mukami is on the phone with a client negotiating a maize deal.

Before she was introduced to the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) in 2019, Mukami was a model African wife whose job was limited to house chores and taking care of children.

Before the training, Mukami and her husband Justin Njagi Ireri were struggling to make ends meet and they did not have a vision or a development plan.

Her husband relocated to Nairobi in search of work. His adventures led him to Chuma Mbili, Githurai 45 in Kiambu County, where he established a small business cooking and selling bone soup.

Back in Kianjagi, Mukami was entirely dependent on her husband's meager earnings.

But the GALS training opened a door of endless opportunities for the mother of four.

She drew her vision — to start a poultry business — and began teaching her eldest daughter without first informing her husband.

"Poultry farming was the easiest business to start," she says.

Because she lacked capital, she began doing odd jobs in the village and saving the proceeds. After a while, she and her daughter began to purchase chickens.

USD 90

■ A one-day training session earns Mukami Ksh 5,000 (about 45-50 USD). Out of the amount, Ksh 1,000 (USD90) goes to the group.

She bought a dairy cow with the proceeds from her poultry business and a merry-go-round group.

Her husband would frequently arrive late at night and leave early in the morning "so that other villagers who were also struggling to

make ends meet do not ask him for money."

"I started teaching him about GALS but he was hesitant at first," she says.

All this changed when her cow gave birth and died and the calf followed soon after. Mukami attributes the deaths to a lack of experience in caring for cows.

"Having suffered a setback, I decided it was time I told my husband about my vision," she says.

Together, they drew a vision to buy another cow.

"Drawing your vision helps you maintain discipline," she adds.

Meanwhile, the chicken business was still there so Mukami started saving money in self-help groups. This helped her open a kiosk.

Mukami says before the GALS training, she and her husband had many differences.

According to their culture, house chores are not shared as there are certain duties set aside for men and others for women. This was an im-



pediment to their growth until GALS intervened. Through the gender balance tree, which illustrates the distribution of productive and reproductive roles, assets, decisions, and responsibilities between household members and the benefits they each accrue, they have been able to walk the talk on gender equality.

"Now we consult, share ideas and duties as a family and my husband has stopped hiding his money," she says.

"Before GALS, it was difficult for me to reveal my income," Njagi says. "Even my business collapsed at the time," he adds.

With the two now being equal partners, it was easier to work towards their dreams. Because Kenya is a patriarchal society, Njagi was mocked by his peers, but he persisted in supporting his wife and teaching others about the importance of gender balance. He has already succeeded in changing his parents' views on gender balance.

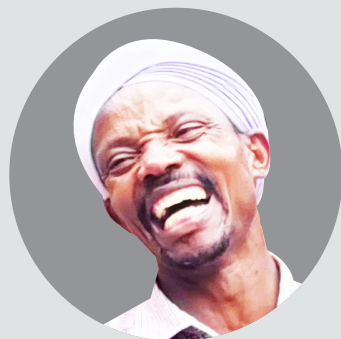
He has also trained five of his friends.

The couple also used lessons

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Before GALS, it was difficult for me to reveal my income, even my business collapsed at the time,”

Justin Njagi



learned from the GALS training to help one of their children, who is in high school, to set up a poultry farming business.

They are members of a Sacco — Kiamokema Coffee Farmers Sacco. The Sacco brings together 8 groups from 5 sub-locations (Locations are a type of administrative region in Kenya. Locations are a third-level subdivision below counties and sub-counties. Locations are further subdivided into sub-locations). The couple trains other farmers within the Sacco.

A one-day training session earns Mukami Ksh 5,000 (about 45-50 USD). Out of the amount, Ksh 1,000 (USD 90) goes to the group.

She says she follows up with trainees to ensure they are still on track. She has trained 40 individuals and 60 others who are in groups.

The couple's vision for this year is to buy a cow and raise fees for their children.

For Mukami and Njagi, who met in church, their relationship has improved since Mukami got introduced to GALS.



GALS PREPARED ME FOR LIFE OF LIMITLESS OPPORTUNITIES

Rose Kawira, her husband and two children were living from hand to mouth before she was introduced to the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) in 2019.

Despite having a farm in Chogoria, in Thakara Nithi County that even had a cash crop — coffee, they had no vision and sources of revenue. The land was a resource they didn't know how to utilize to pull themselves out of poverty.

And Kawira and her husband did not work as a team to achieve goals. They hid money from one another and her husband did not help with household duties.

But in 2019 at their local coffee factory, they were told to pick a few farmers to attend a training session.

"I was picked and to be honest I had no idea what we were going to learn. I thought it was training about coffee farming. But we were taught how to develop as a family and how gender balance can help us achieve our goals," she says.

At the time, Kawira's home used



My husband always trusted and supported me and I am teaching him about GALS," the mother of two adds."

Rose Kawira



firewood as a source of fuel and this she says wasn't good for her health or the environment. And even getting the firewood was also an uphill task. So after the training, she drew her first vision — to install a biogas digester at her home and consequently build a shed for her cows.

She initially thought it would be difficult because they were poor. She began doing odd jobs in the village and saving money through self-help groups to fund all of the projects. By the end of 2019, everything had fallen into place.

Armed with the GALS Vision Road Journey tool, she was able to draw a vision on dairy farming, one of the ventures she had on agribusiness besides poultry and coffee. She started dairy farming with one cow and increased them progressively to five as finances improved.

The following year, she drew her next vision — to build a modern house for her family. At the time, they were living in a wooden house that almost looked like a shack, she adds.



"When I was given the estimated cost of building the house, I felt it would be hard to achieve, but achieving the biogas vision helped me dream big and I knew I would make it if I followed my vision journey," she says.

When she informed her husband about the vision, he was skeptical they would be able to finance the project because school fees for their two children were taking a huge chunk of their earnings.

She focused on her farming and continued to do odd jobs in the village to help finance her house project. She planned to save it along with the money she received from self-help groups. She eventually sold two of her five cows to fund the project.

She had given herself two years to realize her dream. She began construction on the house in November 2019. However, Covid-19 disrupted her plan in 2020, causing her to miss her deadline. She missed it by six

months.

Kawira, who has trained 20 active individuals, claims that before Covid-19, they used to meet and hold group training sessions every two months. However, due to the lockdown, movement was restricted, which hampered her efforts to reach out to more people with the GALS training.

2019

■ **Having achieved her first vision, the next was to build a cowshed which she says she achieved with ease by 2019.**

Kawira has set her sights on building rental houses on land she acquired during her vision journey after successfully implementing the GALS module and reaping the benefits.

She bought the land when she

moved into her new house.

"I moved into the house when we had not fitted the ceiling and we had not painted so instead of doing this, I bought the land," she says.

Though the community around her is patriarchal and customary laws still bar women from land ownership or property inheritance, Kawira says this is not a problem for her because her husband is open-minded and loves "the fact that I am hard-working".

"My husband always trusted and supported me and I am teaching him about GALS," the mother of two adds.

She has also trained her children — one just cleared high school and the other is in Form One.

She believes that GALS champions should be assisted in reaching out to and training more people on the VisionRoad Journey, and Gender Balance Tree, but that as things stand, locals are too poor to pay for training.

FROM OUR LENSES



FROM OUR **LENSES**





THE OUTCOME OF GALS GENDER BALANCE TREE TOOL MADE ME SHED TEARS

Johnstone Muriuki's homestead is tacked in the middle of a banana plantation.

Despite him having so many bananas that had the potential to ensure he led a comfortable life, Muriuki and his family still led a life of poverty.

His home is located in Kigeni, South Imenti in Meru County.

He had no plan for his future and that of his family. For lack of a vision, he says, he could not explain exactly where the little money he was making was going. To add salt to injury, he was blind to the opportunities available to him in Kigeni. But his life changed when he took part in a Gender Action Learning System (GALS) training session in 2019.

"It enlightened me. Some people

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But after the GALS training I realized women can do marvelous things if given a chance,”

Johnstone Muriuki

did not take the training seriously but I did. I remember shedding tears when I reflected on how inconsiderate I had been to my wife,” he says remorsefully.

When he returned from training, he convened a family meeting with his wife and five daughters, and they drew their vision journey together. And he shared everything he had learned with them.

"In our vision journey we prioritized education for my children," he says.

They also drew a vision to build a modern house. Considering he already had a coffee plantation and cows, he started improving on his farming methods.

On the road to building a modern house, Muriuki started by buying two lorries of sand a while later he



bought two lorries of ballast, and later he bought steel bars.

He followed this up with architectural drawings and building stones.

He says the community he lives in believes people who don't have a university or college education cannot achieve big things. He adds that with GALS training, he can disprove this myth.

In his village, only the employed are able to give their children quality education but Muriuki is out to change this by exposing more people to GALS.

Out of his five daughters, the first two have gone up to college and university, the third recently graduated from high school and the last two are in primary school. He is confident that taking her third daughter to campus won't be a problem.

He says the Meru community does not value women and according to their culture; a woman's place is in the kitchen.

"But after the GALS training I realized women can do marvelous things if given a chance," he says.

He, therefore, implemented the

Gender Balance Tree Tool in his home and as a result, the economic load he was carrying alone became lighter for him because he and his wife were working together as equal partners.

40

■ **A staunch Christian and a pastor, Muriuki has a church that has 40 members who he has already trained.**

At the local coffee factory, they have two membership numbers, one for him and the other for his wife. And they sell bananas. He even brags that 60 percent of bananas consumed in Kenya are from South Imenti sub-county.

He bought a piece of land using proceeds from agribusiness and he says all the property he now has, (two cows, land, and coffee), are not his alone, but are family property.

They now even share responsibilities at home so much so that

Muriuki can now go into the kitchen and prepare a meal for the family — something the Meru culture forbids.

The GALS training has also helped Muriuki relate with people. Before the training, he was more of a loner.

He started training people in Embu, Tharaka Nithi, and Meru counties. A staunch Christian and a pastor, Muriuki has a church that has 40 members who he has already trained.

Out of the 40 church members, he says, half are already changing their mindsets on gender balance.

They formed the Meru Empower Learning Center (ELC) and he was elected as the chairman

Muriuki is also a member of the Mikumbuni Coffee Society, which operates four coffee factories, and he has sensitized all of the farmers who work for them (approximately 1,000). Initially, he sensitized the society as a whole, using the Vision Road Journey and Gender Balance Tree tools, but he later expanded the training to individual factories.

The Meru ELC, which is at the Meru National Youth Service compound, is equipped with computers, a projector, and some furniture but these facilities are however not in the hands of champions. This is because the facility was turned into a Covid19 isolation center when the pandemic struck. However, plans are ongoing to have the center back to the GALS champions. This is good indication of public private partnership taking responsibility of empowering the marginalized. The room is provided for free by the Meru County Government in a public private partnership that is helping empower locals and improve their living standards. This is vital because the ELC GALS champions say they cannot afford to rent a place. This is a good aspect of sustainability even after the project comes to a close.

Muriuki says Hivos should help advertise the group and its services and support in the process of handing over the ELC Centre to the GALS Champions.



GALS HELPED US TO **OVERCOME SUPPRESSIVE TRADITIONS** TO FIGHT POVERTY

Doreen Gaichugi from Meru county is one of those who have successfully implemented the GALS methodology and is reaping the fruits.

She says gender is not women versus men, in GALS, women are smart actors and men are their partners.

At her home, one is welcomed by a small plantation of tomatoes, an opportunity she took on land utilization.

For Gaichugi, GALS has provided more time for her to engage in social activities such as training, entrepreneurship, and income-generating activities.

Roles at home were never a collective responsibility. Unlike before, her husband, Edward Mwenda can now enter the kitchen to prepare a meal and is ready to engage in other household and care work. Gaichugi took him through the GALS method-



We do everything together, our love for each other has grown and we have blossomed into successful and confident people who complement each other,"

Doreen Gaichugi



ology and since then, life changed for the better.

Together, they own a business – a shop – under the name MWEGA, which is a coinage of their names (Mwenda and Gaichugi). Here, they sell chips (French fries) and nutritious porridge, a vision achieved through GALS.

They also own a heifer, they rear chicken and sell eggs, and they have a chaff cutter and a chick incubator. Other than these, they farm Miraa, Arrow roots, and tomatoes for sale.

"We do everything together, our love for each other has grown and we have blossomed into successful and confident people who complement each other," said Gaichugi.

With opportunities presented to Gaichugi through GALS, she has been able to reach out to other women through various groups and educate them.



"I have trained over 10 groups about being visionary and how to document their vision journeys, and they have been empowered on how to save money and they are on the verge of forming SACCOs," she said.

Similarly, her husband Mwenda has taught people in groups about GALS which are also on the brink of creating another SACCO.

Her children are also aware of the GALS methodology and she hopes the knowledge will be passed on to the next generations.

She mentioned that her 11 year-old-son had refused to go to boarding school, but after teaching him about GALS, he accepted. He now has a vision of studying hard and becoming a doctor in future

Gaichugi learned about GALS through the Empower@Scale project implemented by Hivos, where they were trained on this methodology. She was among the first to facilitate the set-up and professionalization of Empowerment Learning Centres (ELC) and become the first Vice Chairperson of the Meru ELC in Igoji, Meru County.

According to her, more sensitization about GALS is needed to scale up household methodologies



for empowering rural women and youth in order to create a favorable environment for them, increase employment and income, and make rural societies more inclusive.

Gaichugi says gender equity can be best achieved if both men and women are trained and mentored to self-evaluate and together plan to take actions that reduce the glaring disparities between genders in the household and the community at large.

The elimination of current gender inequalities will contribute to greater opportunities and a better position for women in their homes and local communities.



MY FIGHT FOR **GENDER** **EQUALITY** COST ME MY CHURCH

While Kenya is a capitalist state with a patriarchal society, Jacton Mwaniki's story reads like a script from Martin Scorsese's *'Goodfellas'* from the 1990s. The award-winning film, as he states, parallels Jacton's bizarre and amusing past experiences before settling in his hometown village of Kathangari, Meru County.

A sad state of affairs, with cultural practices and traditions that oppress women, poverty has taken root in many rural households, leading much jobless and desperate youth to drug abuse and a life of crime, and Jacton Mwaniki is all too familiar with this life.

As a young man, Mwaniki joined a different sect of the Kenyan Rastafari movement, often getting high

and abusing marijuana.

He was a hardcore survivalist in a country marred by an economic recession—following a failed coup d'état—that, he claims, gave the country a bad reputation for progress and development. "My actions were motivated by a desire to belong and a sense of purpose." I'd get so high at times that I'd forget my own name. "I was a 12-year marijuana addict," he adds.

2019

■ The former councilor says his second liberation came in April 2019 when he was trained in the Gender Action Learning System (GALS).

It wasn't long before he joined the crime world to feed his addiction and flashy lifestyle.

He started with petty crime and soon he was the owner of an AK47 rifle. Life at the time was fun and dangerous, or so he thought.

"I had many friends who were either shot dead or killed by mobs," he says.

And he almost died in 1992 in the hands of an angry mob. He however did not change his wayward ways until the following year.

"In 1993 when high, God told me to repent or perish," he says.

And he abandoned the life of crime and set out to free himself from the shackles of drug abuse.

He went back home to Kathangari but life was difficult. Poverty set



root in his home and he had no idea how to free himself.

"I lived in a mud-walled house for 17 years," he says.

But the former councilor says his second liberation came in April 2019 when he was trained in the Gender Action Learning System (GALS). This model seeks to achieve gender equity and lift households out of poverty.

By this time Mwaniki had embraced Christianity and studied theology at St Paul's University.

"I blended what I learned at St Paul's with GALS," he says.

By this time, he operated a church — Deliverance Christian Ministry. And in a bid to ensure his church lives true to its name, he thought he would not only win souls for God but he would also train faithful on GALS so that they could also be liberated from the shackles of traditions that have been passed by time.

But the faithful were not ready to let go of the tried and tested way of living even though it was oppressive toward women. The fight between the new and the old led to Mwaniki being kicked out of the church.

He then decided to concentrate on improving himself economically so that people could see the fruits of GALS.

"I knew my achievements would

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I had many friends who were either shot dead or killed by mobs,”

Jackton Mwaniki.



help me sell GALS to the community," he says.

He delved into pawpaw farming, selling pawpaw and indigenous tree seedlings on his three-acre farm. His proceeds, in one season, reflects Ksh 400,000 (USD 3,420). He envisions

cultivating a new species of pawpaws that will earn him an average of Ksh 80000 per week (USD 780)

With fortunes improving for him, Mwaniki set out to train locals and he has so far managed to take the GALS gospel to 32 people.

"I am now training 20 others," he says, adding that he would be able to reach many more people if he was facilitated.

Mwaniki opened a church at Kanyombora and he trains his congregants on GALS.

A reformed criminal, he has a lot of his life stories which he states can take a whole week to finish narrating. As we take a walk with him toward his papaya farm, he firmly stops and says, "Tradition has messed up women for decades and this has condemned households to a life of poverty."

He says couples in his area do not share responsibilities but he is seeing those he has trained change their lives and those of their families.

Mwaniki plans to acquire more land for farming and buy a car to transport fruits to the market. He plans to achieve this dream in two years.

And for the benefit of the community, he harbors a dream of building a hospital so that locals won't have to travel long distances to access treatment.



HOW GALS HELPED ME REALISE MY POTENTIAL

As you head toward Elizabeth's home, the road leading is not tarmacked, yes, but a Lamborghini will surely survive the steamrolled earthy and golden pathway. Her story is that of a woman who has defied odds and as a GALS champion, according to her, it is never too late to dream.

"Visions and opportunities are endless and achievable with determination and effort," – is the first statement she made when she learned we are interviewing her about the experience.

Elizabeth Njoki, a mother of three, learned about GALS in the year 2019 and since then she has never looked back.

She is an Agricultural Officer in Runyenjes, Embu County, and through her extension work, she trains people, especially women about GALS. So far, she has trained over 200 farmers, out of these, at least 10 have implemented the methodology.

Since where she stays is a distance from her workplace, her first major project was to buy a car to make her



After learning about GALS, I was so determined that I started saving for the car. I was so excited when I told my husband about the car."

Elizabeth Njoki



commute to and from work easier.

Through the implementation of GALS, she was able to achieve this, and she is not stopping any time soon. She is hoping to achieve greater things with the help of GALS.

Additionally, she farms maize and beans for sale, she has three dairy cows and goats which produce milk, also for sale.

"After learning about GALS, I was so determined that I started saving for the car. When I told my husband that I wanted him to accompany me to Mombasa to purchase a car, he could not believe that my dream and vision had come true. I told him how far GALS has brought me and he was impressed. We learned about ideas and how to achieve them," said Njoki.

Roles are a collective responsibility at Njoki's house. Unlike before, there is now transparency, shared resources, and responsibilities since the implementation of the GALS module.

They've learned to collaborate and share investment and household ideas.

She is at ease even when she goes out to do her extension service work and training because there are no



problems at home.

Njoki met her husband, Norman Njeru, at work. They both were teachers at Karangare Secondary School, Ishiara, Embu County.

Njeru is now the Principal of St Mary's Gataka Secondary School.

"I was so rigid with resources, what I got was mine and what my husband got was his, but later I started opening up to him, after learning about GALS and we began implementing projects together," said Njoki.

USD 605

■ I did my calculations and I expected to get over KSh70,000 (USD 605) but due to the drought, it is going to be lower.

She has gone ahead to teach her children about GALS.

"I have similarly taught my children, especially my firstborn about GALS, and they are very receptive. He has become very active at home and this has brought change, he works for his pocket money," said Njoki.

Njoki advised against setting too many difficult-to-attain goals at once. Setting reasonable goals and focusing on one task at a time without digressing, she believes, allows you to self-evaluate and provide good accounts.

A lengthy drought was another issue that Njoki faced. Due to the drought, she always expects decreased returns on her product sales.

"I did my calculations and I expected to get over KSh70,000 (USD 605) but due to the drought, it is going to be lower," said Njoki.

An additional challenge emerges when training GALS. It is time-consuming and not everyone would be willing to take it up while others are slow to implement. At the moment, Njoki says they have no mitigation towards the challenges and are on a path to request support on overcoming them.

Her next project is installing a bio-digester, which will produce biogas for cooking and organic fertilizer for the farms.

"I know I will make it, I have already started preparing psychologically," she said.

In the next five years, she wants to be a landlady.

"I want to acquire a piece of land and build rental houses and I know I will make it because GALS has enabled me to set targets and work towards accomplishing them," said Njoki.

Those who admire her progress in life are usually told not to waste any time because she has been active her entire life and has never rested.

She suggested that more sensitization is needed to encourage more people, particularly farmers, to participate in GALS.

It would also be important to digitize the Vision Road Journey tool in order to include more young people who still have the drive to achieve their goals.



WE OVERCAME GENDER STEREOTYPES TO FIGHT POVERTY

This is how Caroline Kanini Ndoni did it. After she was trained about the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) in March 2021 at Machakos, she did not go back to her home in Makueni, instead, she shot straight to the capital, Nairobi, where her husband works, to talk to him about GALS and explain why there is a much needed change in the home dynamics.

It took two days for her partner to understand the concept, but the goal was achieved. Ndoni went back to her home in Kisauni village, Makueni County, a changed person and with a vision – getting a water tank. This would help in managing water challenges, which the area is prone to.

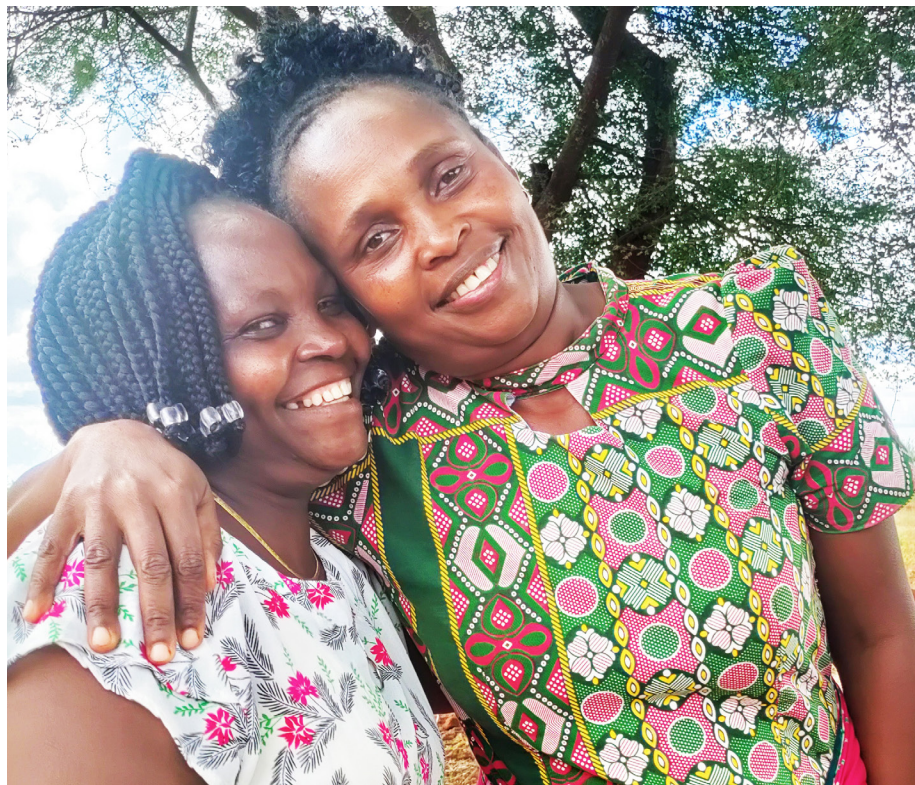
She left Nairobi knowing what she needed to do to get the tank.

“I felt the urge to talk to him to see if he would feel how I felt. It took me two days to make him understand the vision road journey and gender balance tree tools. These are the parts I saw were not right in our relationship, we spoke extensively and we cried together as we looked back at how we had been living,” said Kanini.

Before learning about GALS, the mother of three says she lacked vision, her job was to stay at home and raise the children.

When GALS came, she knew she had the responsibility of making a change and moving the family forward.

“In Nairobi, my husband and I spoke extensively, there were things we felt we were not doing right, like ensuring children go to school, we felt we were not being the parents we ought to be,” said Kanini.



So, they split roles, the woman would handle household issues, while the man pays school fees, however this did not mean that either could not take any other role, or switch places. They agreed to support each other.

700

■ She has trained groups about it and gotten several referrals from other groups. She has trained around 700 people in groups.

Five months after coming from Nairobi, Kanini had achieved her vision of getting a water tank. When Hivos visited her in her village, she was already on her second vision journey, which was repairing her house, to give it a good finish.

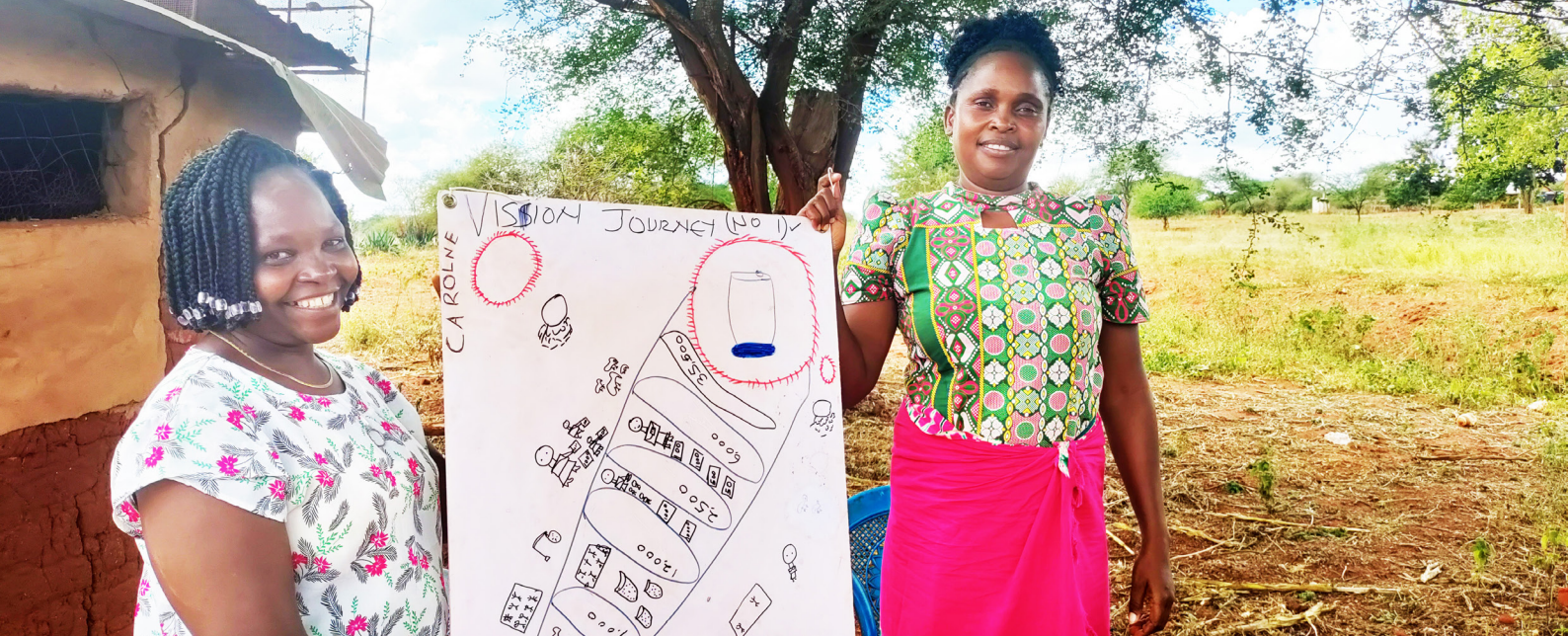
Indeed the water tank came in handy, it stored water that was used to repair the house, among other uses.

“My husband did not believe it, he had to come from Nairobi to see it. I always think about GALS every time I see this tank,” said Kanini.

The house project began in November 2021 and she intends to finish by July 2022.

She has been given a piece of land along the Kenya Railways to use as a demonstration farm to teach farmers how to dig zai pits and basins to collect rainwater for farming. This was also her goal, which she accomplished. Kanini indicated that she had harvested 22 bags of maize from the demonstration farm during a previous season.

This goes to show how public-private partnerships can tremendously change a community.



Such partnerships work better when private sector innovation combines with public sector incentives to accomplish projects.

All too often, interventions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment focus on strengthening women's economic opportunities and decision-making capacities as individuals or in groups.

At Kanini's home, there has been tremendous change in family dynamics since the implementation of the GALS. Before, everybody did their own things and there was no harmony.

"My husband could send only Ksh2,000 in a month for the family. While I also used my money for my personal gains, when children needed anything I would tell them to ask their father, and likewise, he would tell them to ask me, so they would get confused," Kanini said.

She added: "Before, he could take up to eight months without coming home, and I would feel really bad, now he comes fortnightly."

And when he comes, he helps around the home, responsibilities are shared, there is peace and harmony and children are well taken care of.

"I was surprised one morning when I found him sweeping the compound, I quickly left the scene so he would not see me and change his mind, and this is all thanks to GALS," said Kanini.

“

My husband did not believe it, he had to come from Nairobi to see it. I always think about GALS every time I see this tank,”

Caroline Kanini



She also ensures they eat well.

"Before we were not eating well, we would skip meals. I did not want to spend my money because I felt it was my husband's duty to send money for food," she said.

Kanini is a GALS Champion in Kibwezi West Sub-county, Makueni County. She noted that GALS has a demand. She has trained groups

about it and gotten several referrals from other groups. She has trained around 700 people in groups.

"I occasionally get money for transport and lunch whenever I train people, but mostly, I volunteer to train for free," she said.

It becomes a challenge when groups demand but there is no money for transportation.

Another challenge is that the trainees, a lot of times, do not have the tools to draw vision journeys, and they have to do it on the floor.

"My neighbors also know about GALS, there are about 15 groups I train with. Two groups come to my home on Fridays and some of them have fully implemented GALS," said Kanini.

Her neighbor, who has also been trained on GALS has adopted the zai pits agro-innovation and mentioned that she has food all year.

"*Kanini ni mwangaza wa hiki kijiji!*" (Kanini is the light of this village) and my husband is okay with our friendship."

She was given a piece of land along the Kenya Railways to use as a demonstration farm to teach farmers how to dig zai pits and basins to collect rainwater for farming. This was also her goal, which she accomplished. Kanini indicated that she had harvested 22 bags of maize from the demonstration farm during a previous season.



GALS HAS PUT US ON FAST LANE TO **ECONOMIC FREEDOM**

Without a job or a business, life in Matetani, Machakos County for Charles Ndunda was a constant struggle. He had agricultural land but he had no idea how to use it to pull himself out of poverty.

But in 2014, he participated in a Gender Action Learning System (GALS) training and he learned a lot on how to utilise locally available resources and the importance of gender equity and equality using the Gender Balance Tree and Vision Road Journey tools.

He, however, did not implement the methodology and so the struggle to make ends meet continued the following year. Pushed to the corner, Ndunda decided to implement the GALS model in 2019.

He set his sights on building a two bedroomed house for his family and quickly started exploring ways to finance his project.

Ndunda started working in people's farms to eke out a living and saved the little he made. This enabled him to start his poultry farming business.

He bought 10 chicks at Sh100



I first trained my wife and together we drew the vision for building a modern house,"

Charles Ndunda



each but due to what he calls improper care, six of them died soon after. This however did not vanquish his dream.

He bought another 10 chicks and was much more determined to succeed considering "I had a little more experience than when I first started". But even this could not prevent the deaths of two of the chicks.

The remaining 12 however made it to full maturity and he sold 10 of them at KSh300 (USD 3) each, making a total of KSh3,000 (USD30) from the sale.

At this time Ndunda was still doing odd jobs in people's farms to earn a living. From this, he would earn about KSh300 (USD 3) per day.

Out of the KSh3,000 he made from the sale of chickens, he used KSh2,500 to buy a goat. Determined to pull his family out of poverty, Ndunda then began paying attention to his coffee farm.

His father, who died in 1995 had a huge coffee plantation and after his death the plantation remained largely uncared for.

But Ndunda now knew better.

Before he revived coffee farming, he could get an average of 300 kilograms per season from his half acre plantation which has 280 stems. On average an acre has 600 stems.

After paying the proper attention to coffee, he now harvests between 2,000 and 3,000 kilograms per season. (4000-6600 lbs). He is in turn paid between KSh20 (USD 1.50) and Sh80 (USD 6.4) per kilogram depending on the season.

The price variation, he says, is affected by the quality of the coffee and weather due the effects of climate change.

Seeing his life progressively improve, Ndunda decided to share his knowledge with others.

Training others in his area, he says, has helped him fight long held stereotypes and archaic traditions that determine the roles of a man and woman in a home.

"I first trained my wife and together we drew the vision for building a modern house," he says.

His shy wife, Grace Mwilu, says before the GALS training, Ndunda left all the responsibilities of taking care of the home to her.

She flushes a smile as she tells us that her husband can now cook and wash clothes when she is away. She particularly enjoys eating chapatis cooked by Ndunda.

This, Ndunda admits, made some men in his village start ridiculing him, saying he was no longer in charge of his home. But he trained them on the importance of a man and his wife being equal partners in their marriage.

He says GALS improved communication between him and his wife. Relations between his wife and his ageing mother, who was busy on the farm during the interview, also improved.

He says he has so far trained 10 people in his village and out of these, half have started implementing the GALS model and already seeing their lives change.

He says he and other trainers in his



region were yet to form a group due to Covid-19 disruptions.

With time, Ndunda realised that fellow villagers were traveling far to access shops so he opened a kiosk in his home. The kiosk is run by his wife.

The following year in December, Ndunda finished building his house. He then bought a motorbike which he uses to ferry goods from the market for people including his wife.

He then thought of venturing into cattle rearing and he immediately bought zebu cows. But since this breed does not produce enough milk to help one venture into dairy farming, he sold them and bought a grade heifer in 2020. At the time of

the interview in April 2022, the cow was pregnant.

Since water is a problem in the area and they were being forced to travel a long distance to fetch water, Ndunda bought a 3,000 litre tank and he now harvests and stores rainwater.

He is now planning to buy a bigger one so that they can harvest enough water for domestic use and for his cow.

The father of two says he is already exploring ways of financing school fees for his two children, and he dreams of educating them up to the highest level they want.

"I want to give them what my parents could not afford to give me," he says.

Other than the land he is living in, Ndunda also inherited another piece of land from his father. It is located at the Kathiani-Machakos junction and he says he dreams of setting up a petrol station and rental houses on it. He hopes to achieve this dream in the next five years.

3000 ltr

■ Since water is a problem in the area and they were being forced to travel a long distance to fetch water, Ndunda bought a 3,000 litre tank and he now harvests and stores rainwater.



GALS SAVED MY MARRIAGE

Peninah Wausi's life in Mulin-gana, Machakos County, was difficult, and she and her husband frequently argued about money among other issues.

She says at times she would go back to her father's house in protest.

Traditionally, her place according to the husband was in the kitchen and her responsibilities were limited to taking care of their three children, among them, two daughters.

As you approach their farm, you are greeted by lush green trees, ushering you into a world of calm and a clear picture of a prosperous farmer. They live on a small plot of land. Her husband inherited it from his father, and the prospects for economic growth were slim at the time due to traditional inheritance customs: a hindrance, she claims, to domestic and national economic growth.

Many people are living in poverty despite having land and opportunities all around them.

This was Wausi's life until 2018 when she was introduced to the

Gender Action Learning System (GALS).

"The training opened the door to a whole new world of possibilities." "I knew there would be challenges ahead, but I was prepared to face them," she says with a smile.

USD 1900

■ **Consequently, a piece of land they are targeting will cost a whopping Ksh200,000 (about USD 1900) and she is confident they will have bought it by December 2022.**

When she first started attending the training, Wausi says, her husband — who works in Nairobi and comes home over the weekend— did not take her seriously, often dismissing it as a waste of time.

But Wausi did not give up and she in turn taught her husband everything she learned.

She says before the GALS training,

her husband didn't know much about farming.

Their first vision was to buy a piece of land and they gave themselves one year to achieve the dream. Their target was to buy an acre at a cost of Ksh400,000.

Wausi sold sand and trees to fund the project, in addition to what she had saved from a merry-go-round group and what her husband had saved. In 2020, they realized their dream.

Currently, she is already farming on the mentioned land, and she has planted maize, beans, and sweet potatoes which she sells at the local market or to other traders.

Together with her husband, who now makes decisions inclusively and communicates better, have set sights on another piece of land — a quarter acre.

At first, they had set an August 2022 deadline but they have since pushed it to December 2022. The extension, she says, was because of her illness.



Her legs are bothering her, and she walks with difficulty. due to lack of health insurance, a significant portion of their income goes toward her treatment, slowing their development.

Consequently, a piece of land they are targeting will cost a whopping Ksh200,000 (about USD 1900) and she is confident they will have bought it by December 2022.

"My next goal is to build a modern home and save cash for their children's education," she said.

Wausi says she is training people in her village and has already trained a women's group that has 13 members. She is a member.

She claims that she now shares ideas and chores with her husband and that he can even prepare a meal for the family, which he could not do before 2018. She enjoys it when he prepares Ugali and vegetables.

Her husband is now more conversant with farming and is supporting her in every way, she adds.

"Our communication has greatly improved, and our love for each other

“

I knew there would be challenges ahead, but I was prepared to face them,”

Peninah Wausi



er has blossomed as a result." "Some people make fun of him, but they don't realize what they're missing," she says.

She's also dabbled in poultry farming. She began with 15 chickens, but three of them were eaten by hawks and one died of Newcastle disease.

On the date she gave Hivos the interview, she said, "I sell the chickens at the local market and today, my mother-in-law has taken two of them to the market.

Her recommendation is Hivos should facilitate trainers to reach more people not only in her area but in the whole country. She says doing so will help eradicate poverty in the rural areas and help locals know how to better utilize the available resources.

She says achieving gender equity in the whole country will help accelerate development, adding that gender stereotypes have set root in the Kenyan society due to archaic cultural practices and traditions that clearly discriminate against women.

GALS FREED MY FAMILY FROM POVERTY



The brilliant road network, coffee farms, and livestock, primarily goats browsing grass on reserved pieces of land, are the first things one notices when passing through Ikanga, a roadside town located 230 kilometers east of Nairobi, Kenya.

The remoteness and distance from major city life, such as Nairobi, would lead one to believe that there is no life or progress in this part of Kenya. Redempta Mwende, on the other hand, is from Ikanga and an even more remote village called Kalalani, Kitui County.

It is 5.30 pm as we enter her home. The sun is setting, and her herd of goats and bulls start streaming back into their sheds. She then exclaims, "fate had earmarked me for failure and poverty, in spite of what you see

here in my home."

"Every business I launched failed. This ensured that I was entirely reliant on my husband's salary, which was never adequate for many of the tasks we both desired to complete." She stated.

USD 29-USD 49

■ Currently, she sells goats depending on their size and gender for between Ksh3,000 (USD 29) and Ksh5,000 (USD 49)

Mwende speaks Kamba, a Bantu dialect of the many in Eastern Kenya. Her name means 'the loved one'. Contrarily, she was getting desperate every passing year as she explains that even destiny had no

regard for her blessed name.

She never gave up. That attitude paid off in 2018, when she first learned about and was trained on the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), a methodology that aims to achieve gender equality while also freeing households from poverty.

"This project called GALS by Hivos helped me identify opportunities, spot challenges and strategize on how to overcome them," she said.

She explained that the task at hand was to train her husband and their two children. This was difficult because customary laws prohibit a woman from teaching her husband or doing anything that suggests she is attempting to usurp his authority.

GALS training's main goal is to give their champions the ability and sense of having a vision board, and



their first vision was motivated by a need for a reliable source of water, so they set their sights on sinking a borehole and purchasing a water tank.

Their need culminated from the fact that locals lacked a constant water supply and vending would be a brilliant revenue stream.

"The training helped me figure out cost analysis and come up with ways of how to raise cash at hand that was needed," she stated.

According to her records, she started poultry farming and paid more attention to her local breed of goats and zebu cows. "I realized they had the potential to finance our project," She quipped.

Mwende had fifty (50) goats and eight (8) cows.

At the time she sold half the goats and twenty-six (26) broiler chickens at Ksh700 (USD 6) each. Later, she combined this with her husband's earnings to finance her vision. Currently, she sells goats depending on their size and gender for between Ksh3,000 (USD 29) and Ksh5,000 (USD 49)

Redempta met her husband while commuting between Nairobi and her village town, Kalalani. Hers was a

“

This project called GALS by Hivos helped me identify opportunities, spot challenges and strategize on how to overcome them,”

Redempta Mwende



matatu ride back home when they met. He now works in Nairobi. She says they could not have achieved their vision without a collective effort.

"GALS has helped improve communication in our relationship, it has helped us plan our future and even share responsibilities. Today, my husband can cook and do other house chores. He loves cooking rice," with a smile she states.

Furthermore, to diversify her collective revenue, she has ventured into maize and green-grains farming while selling mud-made building blocks.

It is getting dark as she makes a remark. One of her bulls strays out of the shed. So we ask how much she would sell for, she casually says Ksh120,000 (USD1200).

Suddenly, a raging bull. Chaos breaks out. Mwende assumes the role of a matador by vigorously guiding the bull back into its pen. She remains motionless as the others flee for safety from the raging bull.

According to her, she is not interested in selling her bulls though. "I put them on a yoke and they help me till my land during the rainy season." She states.



GALS TURNED MY LIFE AROUND

Jane Mumbua Kitheka is a true definition of resilience. She has been able to withstand and recover quickly from difficult conditions, difficult conditions that exacerbated her ambitions to seek a solution without success.

The first thing one notices at her home as a visitor is her strict nature with every single aspect of what constitutes her family. A water tap (available for all the villagers) is the first thing you'd notice at the corrugated pathway to her home.

Some trees and lush green indegenous shrubs of no particular origin welcome you to a home of a mother and daughters preparing a traditional and Kenyan style beef and rice lunch.

We later learn, she knew we were visiting her home because of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), and her plan was to make our stay and storytelling session a foody affair.

Jane Mumbua is a GALS champion, and trains men and women on the

“

Sometimes I support my husband and I am proud of it, he supports me however he can and that is how we navigate life,”

Jane Mumbua



Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology. She immediately started implementing it at her home.

Her story, when you arrive at her home in Mlingana, a village located several kilometres from Machakos Town, is riveting.

Years before acquiring the knowledge about GALS, she was just a housewife who did not bother to invest or work toward a profitable farm life. Her main source of support and income was her mother-in-law and husband who worked for Kenya's famous intercity and public bus transport company, the Kenya Bus Service (KBS).

Three months after giving birth to their first born daughter, her husband and the main support pillar got laid off with the Kenya Bus Services. "A doomsday excursion ensued," she said.

According to her, she had nowhere to get supplies as a mother, nowhere to turn to and nowhere to ask for advice, let alone, guidance on how to



exist in the same house with a man who traditionally, she was taught, is supposed to be the sole provider.

She admits that it was not easy, considering that there were restrained resources after her husband stopped working. She says she had to change her mindset and think outside the box and stop depending on her mother-in-law.

"I had resources I could not imagine would help me, I had a lot of coffee, which I did not see its value, I had a farm with bananas and Macadamia nuts, these always went to waste, I was lazy and baby-like because my husband's pay slip was everything," said Mumbua.

Fast-track to 2014, they had three children and it was time for the first (let's call her May) to join the university. This is when she learned about GALS through a training by Hivos in Embu on a different programme, and she started implementing it immediately. She drew a vision journey for the next four years and she was able to achieve it.

GALS uses participatory processes and diagram tools which enable household members to negotiate

their needs and interests to find innovative, gender-equitable solutions in livelihoods planning and interventions.

"I told my partner about GALS and he was extremely receptive and was willing to support. Unfortunately, he never secured another job, but we had to survive somehow. Before, he did not bother about what we would eat, or what was going on in the farms, because his mother took care of us," said Mumbua.

2015

■ May joined the university in August 2015. Mumbua says they worked tirelessly and even took loans together.

She realised that with the farm produce they had and the livestock they could pay school fees. She noted that challenges, especially familial ones that required money were always there, so they had to look for more ways to make money. Luckily, they managed to find a market for their macadamia nuts and bananas.

May joined the university in August 2015. Mumbua says they worked tirelessly and even took loans together with her husband for tuition fees. She has helped her children draw almost the same vision journeys to help discard dependency.

They used all the opportunities they had, Mumbua joined *chamas* (merry-go rounds) and did anything they could to survive, and all her children went to school.

May was taught about GALS while she was in the university; this helped her, especially to save money she got from Higher Education Loans Board (HELB).

May is now a teacher of Chemistry and Mathematics in Nairobi.

"I am empowered, I can dress well, I can do my hair, all my children are decent and smart and they know about GALS. Now I can say that GALS has helped me achieve my first vision, which was giving my children quality education," said Mumbua.

She added: "Sometimes I support my husband and I am proud of it, he supports me however he can and that is how we navigate life."

Through GALS, they also managed to repair their house and get a dairy cow. She is now in the process of constructing a cow pen, and securing her compound with a fence and a gate.

In five years, she wants to build a bigger modern house, where she can unwind with her future grandchildren.

She has transformed her village through GALS, she is the Chairperson of various groups where she teaches others how to transform their lives, for the better. She also gets opportunities to teach about GALS in other parts of the country.

In her view and experience, she believes GALS is a very powerful and transformational tool in terms of developing a country.

"I hope such methodologies can be scaled up to others towards achieving gender justice and essentially inclusive development." She said.



GALS TAUGHT ME HOW TO SPOT AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES

For a long time, Petronilla Ndoti and her husband Wycliffe Mutunga led a disjointed life in Mulingana, Machakos County. She had no idea what his plan for the future was and vice versa.

But their journey out of the cycle of poverty began when Ndoti attended a Gender Action Learning System (GALS) training in 2018.

She always harboured a dream of becoming a dairy farmer but she did not know how or where to start but the training opened her eyes, she says.

"I was able to spot and take advantage of opportunities that were around me," she says.

She was already rearing chicken but did not view them as a potential source of income. But when she drew her dairy farming vision, she started taking poultry farming seriously.

Her farm has many mango trees and this also presented an opportunity to make money in the journey to

financial independence.

Ndoti's first big break came in 2019 when she sold mangoes and chicken and used the proceeds to buy a dairy cow at a cost of KSh60,000 (USD 550-600)

In the same year, she opened a shop at Mlingana shopping centre and she is now planning to expand the business.

USD 550-600

■ Ndoti's first big break came in 2019 when she sold mangoes and chicken and used the proceeds to buy a dairy cow at a cost of KSh60,000 (USD 550-600)

She named the cow 'Promise' and she has now set sights on buying a second one which she plans to name 'Hope'.

The cow produces 10 litres of milk every day — six in the morning and four in the evening.

Ndoti's husband works in Nairobi

and goes home every weekend.

After her training, Ndoti decided to teach him about the GALS. She admits it wasn't easy at first but "with time he came around."

"He realised the importance of treating me as an equal partner in the marriage and the importance of working as a team towards a common goal," she says.

This enabled him for the first time to disclose how much money he made in a month. This in turn helped them plan their future and how to finance their projects.

They now share responsibilities at home and Ndoti admits that her husband is better at cooking chapatis.

At first people in the village would spread rumours that her husband was no longer in charge of the home but she says she is working towards changing people's perspectives and she is using her achievements as proof.

The couple has also acquired a piece of land and Mulingana shopping centre and Ndoti says they plan



“

I have trained my brother-in-law who is a businessman and he has embraced GALS. He is progressing well with his vision journey,”

Petronilla Ndoti



on building rental houses within the next five years.

Being a big dreamer, Ndoti has now set sights on buying another piece of land which she says she will put under maize farming. And her dreams do not end there because she is also planning to sink a bore-hole in her homestead so that she can venture into horticulture farming.

With access to piped water remaining a pipe dream, Ndoti has acquired a 5,000 litre tank to store rainwater.

Ndoti and her husband are already saving for school fees for their seven-year-old son.

She says GALS has also helped her and her husband plan their family and they are looking forward to having two more children.

Seeing how GALS was transforming her life, Ndoti decided to share

her knowledge with the community.

“I have trained my brother-in-law who is a businessman and he has embraced GALS. He is progressing well with his vision journey,” she says.

She has also trained women groups in her local church and she says about 30 people have incorporated GALS teachings in their lives and are in various stages of their vision journeys.

She particularly mentions her best friend Fridah, who she says was living a hard life.

“But after I taught her about GALS, she can now raise school fees with ease and has also bought a tank to store rainwater,” she says proudly.

Ndoti says Hivos should organise sensitisation campaigns so that the GALS training can reach all people in rural areas in Kenya.



I DITCHED CULTURE TO FOLLOW MY DREAMS

Jane Nduku was wallowing in poverty before she joined a growing list of rural families who are using the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) to change their lives.

Before her training in 2015, Nduku and her husband, who live in Mulin-gana in Machakos County, followed what their culture and tradition demanded — the man of the house was the provider and a woman's role was to take care of children.

All responsibilities of taking care of the home were hers and she did not contribute to the family's finances. She was in a merry go round where she and other women would save money but she hid this money from her husband.

Her husband, Nicholas Wambua, also hid his money from her and Nduku had no idea how much money he made in a month. Wambua works in Nairobi and goes home over the weekend.

“

GALS has also brought us closer together and we no longer fight like we used to,”

Jane Nduku



Nduku, a mother of three, says that after attending the training, she went home and taught her husband and children everything she had learned especially on the different tools; Vision Road Journey and Gender Balance Tree

Their first vision was to build a modern home and they gave themselves two years to achieve this dream.

She ventured into poultry, banana and avocado farming. She used the profits she made from these and the money she saved at the merry go round to finance the house project. Her husband also contributed to the project.

They entered their new modern house in 2018 and Nduku turned her attention to her next vision — buying a cow so that she could venture into dairy farming.

In 2020, she bought two friesian cows. One cow produces 15 litres of milk every day. Part of which she sells.

Her next vision is to buy a piece



of land that she estimates will cost her KSh200,000 and she has so far saved KSh50,000.

She says after implementing GALS, she was able to pay college tuition for her first born, Alicia Wambua who studies Fashion and Design at Technical University of Mombasa.

Nduku also helped her daughter, now a mother of one, draw her own vision and venture into poultry farming. She has also trained 15 other women.

She says her husband now treats her as an equal partner and they make all decisions together. Responsibilities are now shared without certain chores being set aside for her.

"GALS has also brought us closer together and we no longer fight like we used to," she says.

She adds that before the training, raising school fees was a problem but today, they do not struggle to pay

Sh200,000

■ Her next vision is to buy a piece of land that she estimates will cost her KSh200,000 and she has so far saved KSh50,000.



school fees for their 14-year-old second born and they are already making plans on how to educate their last born who is four years old.

Her daughter says she started poultry farming with 10 chicks and she is slowly but surely expanding her business. She however points out that raising capital is not easy. She has prioritised her son's education. After she was trained by her mum, she in turn shared her knowledge with seven classmates.

"Mum taught me the importance of inclusivity, women empowerment and setting goals," Alicia says.

Nduku says other than the usual challenges like harsh weather conditions, animal and plant diseases, life has been good for the past seven years.

She says she and other GALS champions are planning to set up table banking and she asked Hivos to help them achieve this dream.

“

Agribusiness has helped us improve our quality of life and this would not have happened without GALS, now life is good,”



Her biggest challenge was transporting the chickens to Mlolongo, the nearest and bigger town with better market prices. The fact that she had no farming or business licence meant paying local county authorities at every border stop to access different localities toward the big market.

“This is not a challenge, as I have managed to navigate going to the market and getting the necessary documents that allow my chickens to be sold in my own way,” she said.

Her personal success story is pegged on how she has taught six (6) locally-based self-help groups with an average of 17 members and 7 neighbors on the GALS methodology.

Her recommendations were urging the implementation of Hivos projects to organize more training sessions. She also states that the training need to incorporate subsistence farmers and GALS to get integrated into agribusiness.

“Agribusiness has helped us improve our quality of life and this would not have happened without GALS, now life is good,” she closed.