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SUCCESS STORY

ILAW: DYNAMIC AGRICULTURAL GROUPS HELP IMPROVE WOMEN'S LAND ACCESS



Photo 1: The President of the women's group of Babadoukou with her new motorized tricycle



Photo 2: A women's group in the west with a formal rental agreement for their agricultural site

"Things are changing," said a young man from Litiangolo, northern Côte d'Ivoire, during a recent social dialogue session on women's participation in land-based decision-making.

"The women who negotiated their new agricultural site, they did so directly with the chief," he explained. "Before they would have had to find a man intermediary to advocate for them. But I think it's better that they can negotiate directly."

Indeed, women's agricultural groups supported by the USAID Improving Land Access for Women (ILAW) in northern and western Côte d'Ivoire are key to helping reduce land inequality and discrimination.

The project's baseline political economy analysis found that restrictive social norms made it difficult for women to speak up for their land rights. However, when organized as agricultural groups—that produce food for the benefit of the whole community—they feel "safety in numbers" and are viewed more positively by male community leaders.

USAID ILAW has been supporting women's agricultural groups to develop vision maps using the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) that include specific objectives related to land. Combined with other communication activities, many groups are now successfully negotiating more land.

In some cases, chiefs are open to registering these vital food crop spaces in the names of the groups. In other cases, they sign long-term rental or usage agreements using official contract models.

To further secure their rights, USAID ILAW is supporting groups to become registered as associations or cooperatives, which allows them to sign legal agreements and own land collectively.

In addition, USAID ILAW recently invested in motorized tricycles for groups, which significantly reduce transportation costs but also offer a secondary income stream through rental income. There are also intangible benefits to the investment.

“Since we received our tricycle, women are taking our work more seriously, and men are coming to help in our fields as well,” said Bakayoko Massogonan, the women’s president of Babadougou. “Everyone is more motivated.”

The new investments and dynamism have boosted the reputations of the women’s groups in their communities. The Gninibagadinmin group from Nambonkaha, for example, used its revenue to help finance the construction of three primary school classrooms and an office.

Afterwards they asked the chief for another parcel of land. He didn’t hesitate to give it to them.



Photo 3: A women’s agricultural group in Litiangolo on their new site tending their maize