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SUCCESS STORY

ILAW: GENDER JUSTICE MOVEMENT AROUND WOMEN'S LAND ACCESS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE BEGINS WITH HOUSEHOLD DIALOGUE



Photo 1: ILAW Gender Specialist Ghislain Coulibaly helping a GALS champion in Bouandougou explain her “diamond dream” at the initial catalyst workshop.



Photo 2: GALS champion OUIHE showing the garden she planted as part of her personal roadmap

Improving women's access to land is a complex process of lifting barriers and changing deeply held social and cultural norms. Knowing more about one's rights under the law helps, but at the end of the day whether women gain more access or not depends on thousands of individual decisions taken in countless households.

That is why the *Gender Action Learning System (GALS)* is so powerful – it offers a series of visual participatory tools for women and men to map out how to reach their objectives, all while focusing on how better communication and collaboration in their homes can make all the difference.

“At the beginning I was thinking that the drawings we did were child's play but when we started the second day of training, I realized it was serious,” said Silue Koinan from Kohokaha in northern Côte d'Ivoire. “I realized through the exercises that I am the one who controls all property in my family, and that there was no reason not to involve my wife in the management and decision-making.”

Thanks to trainings by the USAID Improving Land Access for Women (ILAW) project, implemented in Western and Northern regions of Côte d'Ivoire from 2021 to 2024, hundreds of community leaders have learned these tools and started to change their lives.

For example, Massogona Bakayoko is a 35-year-old mother from Babadougou in northern Côte d'Ivoire. After learning GALS, she decided she wanted to contribute more to her household, so she asked her husband to find some land for her to grow food. Her husband was skeptical but went along, and she set up her farm.

“For the first time in my life, I have my own farm, and I'm so proud of myself, and so is my husband,” she said. “He has also changed – he's more generous, encourages me, congratulates me. And he's ready to support me.”

GALS focuses on visioning, with tools like the “diamond dream” and the “gender equality tree” help uncover how inequalities directly impact the household's economic potential. This gives an incentive to change gender dynamics and also share the tools with others in their communities.

One such beneficiary was Eric Gnene from Ganhia in western Côte d'Ivoire who learned about GALS from someone who had completed the training. Intrigued, he started applying the exercises to his own life. One of his decisions was to give land to his sisters, who were excluded from the inheritance when their father passed.

"I want to be an example to other youth in my village," he said. "And I decided to give a half hectare to my big sister. She can get her own title on the land, it's not a problem. And I've also decided that my future children whether boys or girls will all have their part."

USAID ILAW is now supporting this nascent network of GALS champions as they apply the same tools to their agricultural and savings associations, helping build collective visions for these groups. Soon these champions will also meet in regional forums with other activists and government officials.

"Change is possible, but it must always start from ourselves," said GALS trainer and USAID ILAW Deputy Chief of Party Safiatu Alabi. "The question of gender justice shouldn't frighten us, because it doesn't aim to make some stronger than others but rather to ensure that both men and women can work together to build prosperity in their households and contribute to the development of their communities."

For a video showing more GALS results, click [here](#):



Photo 3: Members of an agricultural group in Guingouine (Tonkpi) showing their GALS vision maps November 10, 2022.