



TRANSFORMING SOCIAL NORMS TO INCREASE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Summary

The **Feed the Future Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Strengthening Value Chains (SVC) Activity**, funded through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), worked to increase access to nutrient-rich crops and incomes for 60,000 households in the DRC's South Kivu (Idjwi, Kabaré, Kalehé, Walungu) territories. As a subcontractor to Tetra Tech ARD, Banyan Global utilized the **Gender Action Learning System (GALS)**, a participatory approach that aims to transform gender roles and relations to reduce inequalities between men, women, and youth in households, community organizations, and the broader community to increase household income and well-being. The GALS approach is especially useful in post-conflict settings like South Kivu, where relationships have been fraught by war and political unrest, to help strengthen social bonds and trust among groups.

"I became a different man after the training... It is through this training that I realized that though I earn enough money, I have never achieved more than a few useful and lasting things. I didn't know that I can have dreams for my future life and [the life] of my community and create a vision for how to achieve this future. Also, I was doing my own thing without including my wife in decisions. But after taking this GALS training, I decided to give back to my family, and collaborating with my wife, we drew our vision of our family's future..."

GALS participant, married man, youth

Background

In South Kivu's rural territories, inequalities between women and men, as well as youth and adults, hinder economic growth. Compared with men, women have fewer avenues to obtain the rights to use, control, or own land and productive resources to grow beans, coffee, or soybeans. Women also have less opportunity to provide input on strategic decisions that impact their household's agricultural investments. In producer organizations, women hold fewer leadership positions that influence strategic decisions about organizational priorities and marketing. Similar inequalities exist between youth and adults. Youth, especially young women, lack access to pathways to inherit or purchase land to become producers, and do not have sufficient financial resources to purchase or rent equipment or invest in agricultural activities. If women and youth are to have access to equitable opportunities, influence decisions, and benefit from their labor, then social norms that contribute to inequalities must be addressed.

Methodology

Banyan Global used a layered training approach to implement GALS and build long-term capacity and ownership of the model. Three-hundred and eighty-nine people (61 percent women) participated in two trainings at six locations. Forty percent were young women and 24 percent were young men. The Banyan Global gender, youth, and social inclusion team engaged the women and men in participatory exercises to identify the root causes of inequalities that limit them from achieving their individual, household, and organizational goals, such as increasing income, expanding their agricultural enterprise, building a home, or decreasing food insecurity. Participants identified social norms related to roles, responsibilities, rights to resources, and abilities to make strategic decisions as key limiting factors. Through a GALS visioning exercise, they identified pathways to challenge norms around roles, responsibilities, and unequal access to and control of income and other resources. The team also trained 112 "Champions" who coached and tracked training participants' progress. These Champions trained an additional 1,669 people in the GALS methodology.



Findings Summary

In February 2020, Banyan Global's team conducted an impact assessment of the GALS intervention in three territories. They used the **Most Significant Change** methodology, drawing on personal narratives to reveal changes in participants' lives related to gender equality and inclusion since attending the training. Most Significant Change requires participants to generate and analyze personal stories of change over time. Individuals (389 total, 74 percent women and 48 percent youth) were randomly selected from participating Village Savings and Loan Associations, producer organizations, and youth groups and associations (see Table 1). The participants' narratives revealed both intended and unintended outcomes of the intervention, and GALS participants determined which accounts were most significant. The assessment findings are summarized below.

Table 1. Study participants by gender, age, and territory

Territory	Grand Total	Women			Men			Youth
		Total	Adult	Youth	Total	Adult	Youth	Total
Walungu	138	104	56	48	34	22	12	60
Kalehé	147	117	63	54	30	14	16	70
Kabaré	104	65	32	33	39	17	22	55
Total	389	286	151	135	103	53	50	185

The GALS approach facilitated opportunities for women and youth to increase their engagement in agricultural value chains. Women in all three territories now have greater access to and control of resources necessary to become producers. The majority of women surveyed reported increased access to productive assets like land and inputs, to participate in targeted value chains. Some landless youth, who prior to GALS did not see a place for themselves in agriculture, negotiated with their parents to access land to grow market-oriented crops, like beans, fruits, and vegetables.

Improved transparency and dialogue between men and women increased women's abilities to make strategic decisions about land use, crop selection, and income across each territory. This change is supported by women's increased access to and control of assets including land. The majority of women surveyed reported a greater stake in, and understanding of, commercial value chain activities and that they now contribute to land use decisions, reflecting their own needs and preferences to expand, diversify, hire employees, and operate their businesses.

Women have greater access to, and control of, income generated through their own and other family members' labor. Across the territories, women are choosing to use their new control over income to purchase food and clothing for their children. It is also encouraging that men reportedly value women's improved skills to manage money and are more transparent and open to joint decision-making. Some spouses are no longer at odds but are supporting each other to achieve common goals and become more resilient. Youth are also better able to navigate systems to access capital to start and expand their businesses.

**Almost
50%**

of female
GALS
participants
started small
businesses to
generate
income.

**More
than 50%**

of GALS
participants
now invest in
agricultural
activities that
strengthen
their
resilience.

The impact assessment provided conclusive evidence that GALS had a positive impact on women's, men's, and youth's resilience in South Kivu. GALS demonstrated that one way to increase women's and youth's agency is by building mutual respect and understanding across individuals, families, and communities. Bridging gender- and age-based divisions, stakeholders can work together to define and achieve shared economic goals and increase their community's resilience to future shocks and stresses.

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