

TECHNICAL BRIEF: TRANSFORMING GENDER AND SOCIAL NORMS TO INCREASE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN SOUTH KIVU

Introduction

The Feed the Future Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Strengthening Value Chains (SVC) Activity is a five-year (2017–2022), United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded economic development program. SVC aims to increase incomes and access to nutrient-rich crops for 60,000 households in Idjwi, Kabaré, Kalehé, and Walungu, and territories in South Kivu province by strengthening inclusive value chains and markets. SVC's gender, youth, and social-inclusion integration approach ensures activities respond to the different needs and constraints of women, men, youth,¹ and socially excluded groups, empowering them to make strategic decisions as market-oriented actors in bean, soybeans, and coffee value chains. The 2017 *Gender, Social Inclusion, and Conflict Management Assessment and Strategy* guides this approach (Refer to Figure 1).²

In South Kivu's rural territories, inequalities between women and men 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 input than men into strategic decisions about their household's agricultural investments to improve the quality or quantity of their products. Similarly, in producer organizations women hold fewer leadership positions that influence strategic decisions about organizational priorities and marketing. Although the workload women bear, at home and in agricultural activities, is greater than men's, most decisions about purchases, savings, and investments are made exclusively by men. All these gender disparities are rooted in social norms that privilege men's access to and control of productive resources and income.³

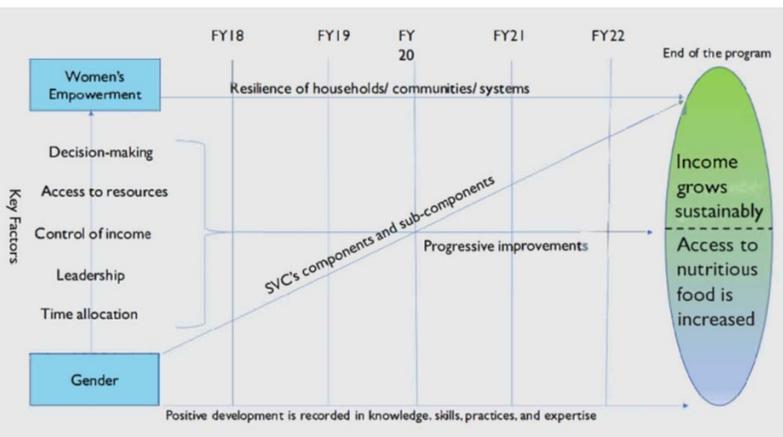


Figure 1: SVC and Gender - A Vision

Similar inequalities exist between youth and adults in beans, coffee, and soybeans value chains. Youth, especially young women, lack access to pathways to inherit or purchase land to become producers. Furthermore, youth do not have sufficient financial resources to purchase or rent equipment or buy inputs to invest in agricultural activities. With few ways to secure these productive resources, youth are discouraged from becoming agri-entrepreneurs. Even if youth could access these resources, returns on investments take time. Youth tend to be more interested in livelihoods with a steady flow of revenue. Some opportunities for landless youth exist as day laborers at coffee washing stations, or as coffee cherry buying point representatives, as

¹ USAID defines youth people in the 10 to 30-year age range, with a general programmatic focus on those aged 15 to 24.

² This technical brief was prepared by the SVC consortium with technical support from Caitlin Nordehn and Bertin Bisimwa Kabomboro of Banyan Global, and Lyliane Bahati Mulengezi of Tetra Tech.

³ Kasindi et al. 2017

transporters, and as agricultural input representatives. These employment options, however, are not attractive to all youth.⁴

Differences in women's, men's, and youth's needs and preferences as well as the root factors that contribute to inequalities must be addressed if women and youth are to access equitable opportunities to participate in agriculture, influence decisions to increase returns on investment, and benefit from their labor. To that end, between 2018 and 2020, SVC implemented the gender-transformative Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology as a pathway to achieving its goals and objectives. This participatory approach aims to transform gender roles and relations to reduce inequalities between men, women, and youth in the household, producer organizations, and the broader community to increase household income and well-being (refer to Box 1).

Between 2018 and 2020, 389 people (61 percent women) participated in two GALS trainings at six sites in South Kivu. Forty percent were young women and 24 percent young men. The SVC gender, youth, and social inclusion (GYSI) team⁵ engaged these 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 increasing food security). Participants identified social norms related to women's and men's roles, responsibilities, rights to resources, and abilities to make strategic decisions as key limiting factors to achieving their goals. Through a visioning exercise, men and women identified pathways to challenge norms about gender roles, responsibilities, and unequal access to and control of income and other resources to reach their objectives. The SVC GYSI team trained 112 GALS champions (52 percent men, 48 percent women) who volunteer to coach and track participants' progress. These GALS champions trained an additional 1669 people (65 percent women and 35 percent men) of whom 46 percent were youth.⁶

In February 2020, SVC's GYSI team led an assessment of the GALS intervention to understand its impact and support the adaptation of SVC's GYSI approach in 2020 and beyond. The SVC GYSI team used a participatory evaluation approach to document the most-significant changes in participants' lives related to gender equality and inclusion since attending the GALS training. The complexity-aware methodology the team used, called Most Significant Change, requires participants to generate and analyze personal stories of change. These narratives reveal both intended and unintended outcomes of the intervention, and GALS participants determine which accounts are most significant.

Study participants were randomly selected. They included youth and adult women and men working in soy, bean, and coffee value chains who had participated in GALS trainings between 2018 and 2019 in Kalehé, Kabaré, and Walungu.⁷ The participants were part of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs),⁸ producer organizations (POs), or youth groups and associations supported through the Development Food Security Activities-FSP Enyanya and TUENDELEE PAMOJA II.



GALS training participant shares her vision, North Idjwi. Photo credit: Bertin Bisimwa/Banyan Global

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Bertin Bisimwa Kabomboro and Lyliane Bahati Mulengezi

⁶ Some GALS champions have received follow-up training, giving them more capacity to influence change.

⁷ Discussions were organized at 12 sites: three in Walungu (Cihirano, Mushinga, and Walungu Centre), six in Kalehé territory (Mukwidja Nyamukubi/Lushebere, Bushushu, Muhongoza, Ihusi, and Kasheke), and three in Kabaré territory (Kashusha, Mudaka/Cituzo, and Mudaka/Cinjoma). The study participants were selected randomly.

⁸ These organizations are known locally as associations villageoises d'épargne et de crédit (AVEC).

In total, 389 people participated in 17 sex-segregated discussions. Of the 389 people, 74% were women and 48% were youth (Refer to Table 1). Sex-segregated group discussions allowed for comparison of men’s, women’s, youth’s, and adult’s perspectives on the extent to which gender roles and relations had shifted and their perceptions about those changes.

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

Key Findings

The most-significant stories of change the participants identified coalesced around seven key domains:

- women’s access to, and control of, productive resources to participate in value chains
- women’s leadership and abilities to make, and act upon, strategic decisions previously denied to them
- men’s participation in household work
- transparency between men and women on household finances
- men’s and women’s strategic investments in their futures
- women’s sense of dignity
- youth participation in targeted value chains

Increase in women’s access to, and control of, productive resources

Through GALS, women envisioned futures with greater access to, and control of, land. In Kalehé, a few women reported purchasing land to build homes. A smaller portion of women in Kalehé, including those married and single, started plans to build homes on land they controlled. Men and women in Kalehé perceived these changes as significant.

Women reported having greater say over how agricultural land—owned or managed by men—is used. In Walungu, a quarter of the 104 women reported now having greater input about which crops to plant, including more permanent crops like bananas. Women in Walungu also were making decisions about land improvements. In the two other target territories, women reported similar decision-making patterns within the bean, soybean, and coffee value chains. This behavior includes decisions about which crops to keep, sell, or donate.

Men increased their share of household and agricultural labor

After participating in GALS, gender norms about roles and responsibilities in the household shifted. Some men returned home earlier in the day from leisure activities, like socializing with friends, to support their households. Men started doing more household tasks like caring for children and doing chores. Men and women reported that men are also more willing to contribute to the agricultural tasks women typically undertake, relieving them of a portion of their daily workload. Women, in particular, perceived these changes as important because it reduced their daily labor burden.

“After the GALS training, I decided to make a positive choice to include my wife and children in everything and to stop seeing some friends so I could reduce my drinking. As a result, **my home life became better**, I started to return home earlier at the end of the day, and my health improved as did my wife’s.”

GALS participant, Married man, Adult

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“Since receiving the GALS training and defining my vision last May and June, my consciousness has been awakened. **I have changed and I am beginning to become more involved in decision making.** Since [the GALS training] I have joined a VSLA. I have now saved 80,000 cdf (40 USD). I am now selling beans and palm oil. With my earnings I have purchased a goat.”

GALS participant, Married woman, Adult

Women’s leadership, and ability to make strategic decisions, strengthened

Both men and women emphasized the significance of women’s increased leadership in household and agricultural decisions. Over a third of women across the territories said their husbands were increasingly open to making joint decisions about purchasing plots of land, joining VSLAs/AVECs, and selling or donating food (especially soy, beans, and cassava). The same proportion of women in the targeted territories said they can now make decisions when their husbands are not present. Women also reported making strategic decisions on their own about starting an income generating activity, joining a VSLA/AVEC, and paying school fees for children.

Greater transparency between men and women on household finances

Across the SVC intervention zone, most men and women reported greater transparency concerning income and savings in their households. Both men and women said this increased information sharing about income and savings enabled them to work together towards achieving mutual goals. Men and women emphasized that women’s money management skills also had improved considerably since participating in GALS. Overall, these changes were perceived positively by men and women.

Men and women strategically invest in their futures

More than half of GALS participants now invest in agricultural activities that strengthen their resilience. Nearly half of women started small businesses to generate income. In addition to working in SVC’s targeted value chains, nearly all women and most men started raising small ruminants or poultry. These livelihood strategies provide important revenue sources to smooth income during shocks or supplement income to invest in other agricultural activities. Women also are investing in their children and families. In Kalehé, women said they now had greater access to income to purchase clothing and food for their households.

Greater sense of dignity among married women

Women in Walungu and Kalehé, reported a decrease in public humiliation and domestic violence by their spouses. This change was perceived as significant, because it gave them a greater sense of dignity and self-confidence. No women or men reported an increase in domestic violence.

More-active participation of youth in value chains

After participating in GALS, some youth are overcoming constraints to access productive assets to participate in the SVC value chains. Nearly a third of youth reported that, after GALS, they began commercial agricultural endeavors. To this end, youth negotiated with parents to access land to grow beans, fruits, and other vegetables to sell in local markets. Additionally, members of the youth business group AJP established a relationship with Equity Bank to save income to invest in their agricultural businesses. GALS participants, with

“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 that 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

other members of their group, opened 35 individual accounts and one organizational account.

Findings Summary

The GALS approach has 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 increasing their 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, have 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 has increased women's abilities to make strategic decisions about land use, crop selection, and income across each territory. This change in women's input into decisions is supported by their increased access to and control of assets like land.⁹ The majority of women across the communities surveyed, have a greater stake in, and understanding of, commercial activities in bean, coffee, or soybean value chains. Women now may contribute to decisions, reflecting their own needs and preferences, to lift their household's income generating activities to the next level.

Across the territories, women have greater access to, and control of, income generated through their own and other family members' labor. These changes could benefit farms and homes. When women have greater decision-making authority over income use, it tends to be invested in children's nutrition, health, and education.¹⁰ This trend holds true in South Kivu. Women are now choosing to use income to purchase food and clothing for their children. It also is encouraging that men reportedly value women's improved skills to manage money and are being more transparent and open to joint decision-making. Some spouses are no longer at odds but are complementing and 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.

Conclusions

The findings from this Most Significant Change study validate the importance of the GALS intervention to women's, men's, and youth's resilience in South Kivu, as well as its alignment to SVC's broader objectives. The GALS approach strengthens people's capacities to strategically plan for their futures and to act upon those plans. This study shows one way to increase women's and youth's agency is by building mutual respect and understanding between women and men and youth and adults. Bridging gender- and age-based divisions, these value chain actors can work together to define and achieve shared economic goals and increase their community's resilience to future shocks or stresses. Women's and youths' increased self-confidence can also make it easier for them to voice their opinions and contribute to their household, community, or organizational decisions.

This approach, which strengthens social bonds and trust between groups, is useful in post-conflict settings like South Kivu, where relationships have been fraught by war and political unrest. The GALS methodology facilitates opportunities for women and men, youth, and adults to jointly challenge gender and social norms that limit or restrict economic opportunities for women, youth, and disadvantaged populations. Applying this approach can help ensure that, as these contexts shift from relying on humanitarian relief and start to become more market-oriented that women, youth, and other disadvantaged groups will be able to participate in, and benefit from, the developing economy.

⁹ Doss et al. 2014

¹⁰ Doss 2006, Quisumbing 2003



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