

Gender Action Learning System (GALS)

Written by Linda Mayoux as part of Hivos, GALS@Scale project, September 2014. All resources and further details are available on www.galsatscale.net. They build on earlier work by the author with Oxfam Novib and IFAD's GENVAD process and TWIN-UK's Great Lakes Project.

What is GALS?

GALS (Gender Action Learning System) is a **community-led empowerment methodology using specific participatory processes and diagram tools which aims to give women as well as men more control over their lives as the basis for individual, household, community and organisational development**. GALS is not only a 'methodology for women', but a mainstreaming methodology for women and men to address gender issues important to the effectiveness of any development, including coffee production.

GALS in different forms has been used to promote gender justice by at least 100,000 women and men worldwide, including thousands of coffee farmers. GALS has evolved from the generic **Participatory Action Learning System (PALS)** methodology developed from 2001 for small business and organisational planning with women, and later men, in savings and credit groups and small cooperatives (funded by Hivos, Trickle-Up US Aga Khan Foundation Pakistan, and Kabarole Research and Resource Centre, Bukonzo Joint Cooperative Union in Uganda and Area Networking for Development Initiatives (ANANDI) in India). This work included a focus on participatory monitoring and impact assessment as part of DFID's Enterprise Impact Assessment Information Service (EDIAIS) and was adapted for use in value chain development in trainings funded by ILO in Ethiopia and Kenya. **GALS (Gender Action Learning System)** as a methodology specifically focused on promoting gender justice was developed under Oxfam Novib's Women's Empowerment Mainstreaming and Networking (WEMAN) programme including work with Microfinance Institutions in Latin America, Asia and Sudan linked to the MicroCredit Summit and work on value chains in Uganda, Rwanda and Nigeria under a co-funded Gender and Value Chain (GENVAD) projectⁱ. It was first used for development of coffee production by Bukonzo Joint Cooperative Union, Uganda from 2009 as part of GENVAD and from 2012 by TWIN UK in Uganda and DRC as part of the Great Lakes project funded by Comic Relief. The tools presented here have been developed since 2013 for the **Gender Action Learning for Sustainability at Scale (GALS@Scale)** project with private sector coffee companies in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda funded by Hivos. This is simplifying the catalyst methodology at farmer level as the basis for group formation and self-upscaling, reinforced then by in-depth livelihood planning focusing on coffee and leadership development. The aim is to make it self-funding and financially sustainable beyond an initial one year catalyst phase so that it can be integrated into the business expansion model in the private sector, linked to the GALS@Scale network.ⁱⁱ

Why use this methodology?

Gender inequalities are now generally accepted not only as key causes of female and household poverty and constraints on women moving up the chain, but also poor coffee quality, low production and inefficiencies throughout the coffee value chain for all stakeholders. Gender inequalities are also in contravention of the UN's Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) signed since 1979 by most national governments, the gender mandates of most development institutions and the spirit of Corporate Social Responsibility and Fair Trade. But addressing gender inequalities continues to be seen as both conflictual at farmer level, and costly to implement. Gender strategies have therefore been seen as something that required significant ongoing funding, rather than part of longer term commercial investment in business expansion. GALS

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– if implemented in an empowering way - provides a proven methodology that can be adapted to most business, cultural and organisational contexts to address gender issues in a way that benefits not only women, but also men and other stakeholders and can be fully self-sustaining as part of longer term investment in a socially responsible business model.

What is gained from using it?

Empowerment and Gender balance for farmer and trader households:

- GALS promotes participatory and analytical skills at all levels as a means of visioning, planning and implementing change as individuals, households, communities and organisations.
- GALS strengthens individual life and livelihood planning skills for women and men as a basis for mutual empowerment, joint decision-making and joint land agreements. This has reduced gender conflicts, increased incomes and efficiency of division of labour and reduced unproductive expenditure. This has made men as well as women happier, and inspires youth and children to aim for a better future.
- GALS has led to significant changes in gender inequalities leading to empowerment of women (including equality in decision-making and freedom from gender-based violence) and also empowerment of men through enabling them to change the many destructive dimensions of 'normal masculine behaviour' enforced through peer pressure and frustrations of life (including alcoholism that causes cancer, adultery that is a key cause of HIV, and violence that poisons relationships). Changes have come about for a *significant number of people* (40-60% in strong processes) in a *relatively short time* (1-6 months) as the basis for *longer term widespread change* in other areas like property relations and political rights. Some changes are immediate as an 'enlightenment' on issues and 'wrangles' people had already been struggling with immediately after they have learned a tool. Other changes require changes at wider community and institutional levels and collective efforts over a longer period.
- GALS has formed the basis for setting up of self- or locally-funded farmer groups where these did not exist.

Improved coffee quality and increased quantity:

- Coffee farming households, including women-headed households and youth, have been able to fully implement improved coffee practices and significantly improve both quality and quantity. Farmers reduce early distress sales and can wait until coffee traders can offer them the best prices for best quality coffee. Bukonzo Joint has been able to change coffee in the area from one of the worst qualities in Uganda to one of the best through integrating GALS with other organic and Fair Trade trainings. Bukonzo Joint has purchased their own processing and transport and are now exporting independently to Japan, US and elsewhere. In Kilimanjaro Tanzania, women and men farmers who had previously thought coffee unprofitable are now implementing improved practices.

Sustainable upscaling:

- Experience in Bukonzo Joint Cooperative Union and Hivos GALS@Scale shows that the methodology can be financially sustainable after about one year as a significant contribution to improved quality, increased quantity and improved chain relationships between stakeholders.
- GALS planning at organisational level has supported continuation of cooperatives like Vuasu Union in Tanzania, and started promotion of women in leadership, despite commercial changes and withdrawal of some trading companies from the area.

How does it work?

GALS is based on value principles of inclusion, respect and equity that underlie and are continually reinforced by distinctive participatory facilitation techniques and adaptations of four core diagram tools (road journeys/calendars, concept trees, circle maps and diamonds). These same techniques and tools are used and adapted for different purposes, reinforcing the underlying values, at different levels with different stakeholders.

Gender Justice

- 'Gender' is simple - it means women and men treating each other as equal human beings with equal human rights.
- Breaking through gender constraints is liberating and fun for men as well as women.
- Women are intelligent actors in development, not helpless victims, with human rights established in international agreements like CEDAW signed by most governments.
- Men are allies in change – sharing resources and decision-making means they benefit from a more happy and healthy family and society
- Women and men develop achievable individual targets for change and road maps to move towards their visions, based on analysis of their current situation, past achievements and strengths/opportunities and weaknesses/challenges. Starting with the individual rather than households or groups enables true consensus to be negotiated on the basis of mutual respect for the visions of others, rather than imposing artificial consensus just for a 'peaceful life'. It also enables participation of youth and single people as part of the process.
- Men as well as women identify gender-based barriers at individual, household and community levels which prevent everyone from achieving their vision, analyse the benefits of mutually beneficial cooperation and develop win-win strategies for changing unhealthy relationships – including changes in property ownership, decision-making, and work/leisure balance.

Action leadership

- Inspire with visions and focus on opportunities. Focus first on win-win as the basis for building consensus on more sensitive issues. Action from Day 1 – some changes can be made immediately and add up to longer significant change.
- Inclusion and respect for all – everyone can be a leader. Everyone has responsibility for change, including sharing what they learn with others through pyramid peer upscaling.
- Progress is systematically tracked first at individual level for individual learning and further progress, shared and quantified at group level for mutual support and exchanging experience. Selected information is then aggregated and analysed by the organisation and supplemented by more qualitative investigation of issues arising.

Sustainable Scale

- Contribution and participation are based on principles of inclusion, equality and respect and negotiation of individual enlightened self-interest, not imposing cooperation or exploitation. People identify other people in their own families and networks they have a self-interest in sharing the gender messages and GALS methodology with - either through love and a wish to help people who help them, or because without changing these people they cannot advance. The methodology thus scales up through a type of voluntary pyramid marketing – aiming for a chain of 1-5-3-3 but recent experience indicates the first tier of sharing generally exceeds 1-30 over a year. Voluntary performance is the basis for later identification of the most effective community trainers to be certified and paid from the increased profits generated through improved production to upscale in new organisations and communities.

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- Ways of reducing or eliminating recurrent costs of materials, meetings and activities are identified and implemented from the start – using locally available notebooks and pens people buy, convenient timing and location of meetings, member subscriptions for group costs etc. In order to save resources for investment where they are really needed.
- The empowerment and gender principles, participatory skills and diagrams are integrated throughout other business or organisational activities as the normal way of conducting more efficient transactions and effective supply chain trainings, as well as disseminating and reinforcing the methodology itself.

Who applies the methodology for whom?

- **Community champions and facilitators:** The main drivers in all GALS processes are GALS practitioners or ‘champions’ - women and men in communities who use the methodology to change their own lives, and share what they learn with others through pyramid peer sharing. Champions are generally not existing leaders, but people who really need the methodology to turn their lives around and including people who cannot read and write, people with alcohol and violence issues. In many cases these people have made very dramatic changes in their lives and become the most effective leaders of change in others. Existing leaders are informed and encouraged to join and contribute their skills and resources as equal participants in the process – particularly removing obstacles and blockages at higher institutional levels.
- **Process catalyst and reinforcement team:** The catalyst process is initiated, reinforced, supported and monitored by a small core of ‘process catalysts’ - senior and core implementing staff. They are guided for about a year by an expert consultant who progressively introduces more advanced facilitation techniques and tools, reviews progress and helps to design the most cost-effective and sustainable way of integrating the methodology into existing activities.
- **Other organisational staff:** Once the initial catalyst process is strong enough in the original communities (usually 3-6 months) upscaling can start through other staff learning from the original champions and process catalyst team, using the tools to change gender relations in their own lives and integration of the tools in their other activities and organisational planning.
- **GALS network:** GALS processes can link to the GALS national and global networks to arrange farmer to farmer and inter-organisational exchange visits and e-discussion to learn from and contribute to other processes and increase collective voice for gender advocacy. Details and links to GALS resources can be found at: www.galsatscale.net.

Stages of implementation

GALS has been implemented in different ways adapted to different business, cultural and organisational contexts – including communities where no organisation exists, cooperatives of varying sizes, private commercial companies and NGOs and donor agencies. Implementation is currently conceived for the Hivos GALS@Scale project, focusing on coffee farmers in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, in the following three phases that progressively introduce and strengthen core skills and tools:

Phase 1: Catalyst Phase – 0-6 months

Champion Catalyst Workshop/s (6 days) with 20-60 champions from one or more communities and organisations facilitated by GALS expert practitioner/s. This introduces at least the first four tools: Soulmate visioning, Vision Journey, Gender Balance Tree and Empowerment Leadership Map together with songs and cultural innovations and basic facilitation and peer sharing skills. Champions then track and share progress in existing or new groups. Aiming to implement their visions and gender changes and for each champion to scale up by a factor of average 1 to 30 over 6 months.

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Community peer sharing workshops (1 day each) immediately following the Champion Catalyst Workshops. The champions practice the facilitation skills, start to establish their leadership networks and reinforce their own understandings of the tools.

Inception meetings (1-3 days) for preliminary introductions and planning at organisational level and personal use of the tools by staff for gender mainstreaming in the organisation followed by sustainability planning after the first workshops.

Ongoing tracking of progress at individual level, group sharing of experiences and support from the local core catalyst team.

Phase 2: Livelihood and leadership strengthening – after 3-6 months

Livelihood and leadership strengthening workshop (6 days) to:

- review experience so far looking at the achievements (red ripe fruits) on the original diagrams.
- introduce more advanced versions of the basic diagram tools adapted for livelihoods (increasing incomes challenge action tree, household business tree, market map, livelihood calendar vision journey) and examine areas for collaboration to increase incomes. This starts to look at how the business case for gender and GALS could be established and how to collect the necessary information. The tools presented in this manual show adaptations of these for coffee production.
- introduce tools for leadership development (leadership soulmate visioning, leadership diamond, leadership challenge action tree and leadership vision journey) and reflect on GALS facilitation and peer sharing experience.
- introduce the core GALS monitoring tool for the whole process (Multilane Vision Journey).

Organisational/stakeholder visioning and planning using soulmate visioning, gender justice diamond, challenge action trees and organisational vision journey facilitated by the champions and core catalyst team to introduce the methodology properly for staff, demonstrate its proven value for the organisation and discuss ways of mainstreaming.

Ongoing implementation and tracking of progress at individual level, group sharing of experiences, organisational quantification and aggregation of information on changes by the local core catalyst team and work on integration into the business model and supporting institutions.

Phase 3: Annual Review and sustainability plan – after 1 year

Annual GALS@Scale Review and Sustainability Planning Workshop

- brings together aggregated information on achievements relating to gender justice and deepens understanding and commitment to gender justice and women's human rights
- brings together aggregated information on achievements on livelihoods to establish the local business case for GALS
- brings together aggregated information on leadership, and the most effective strategies for pyramid peer sharing to accelerate voluntary scaling up and strengthen leadership networks
- identifies and certifies a core set of the best champions who have changed their own lives and taught a significant number of people in their own communities to a good quality standard, and who have participatory facilitation skills. They will qualify to be involved in upscaling, documentation and dissemination on a paid basis in other regions (locally, nationally or internationally) in recognition of their contribution to increasing profits of the company/cooperative and/or reducing costs for the service organisation.
- includes and trains field staff who will integrate gender justice and relevant GALS tools and processes into other organisational activities including technical and other training.
- Includes and trains local government and other stakeholders in the sector/region who will be involved in upscaling.
- identifies of any further resources and support needed at different levels.

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- establishes local and/or commercial funding and/or further donor funding for continued upscaling to new communities and organisations and other gender, livelihood or leadership activities to further deepen the local process.
- agrees or at least initiates a sustainability plan for further deepening gender and livelihood changes, strengthening leadership and scaling up for the following year.

Multimedia documentation to finalise training materials that can be used at different levels, and covering gender issues arising to feed into gender strategies and advocacy.

The tools presented here adapt the four livelihood tools from the livelihood strengthening phase specifically for coffee. It is best if the livelihood strengthening process is introduced after a GALS Catalyst process. This will strengthen the local ownership and participatory, leadership and peer sharing skills. The Catalyst process also initiates cultural transformations and develops songs and theatre to make improving gender relations and livelihoods fun. Both are factors that significantly contribute to longer term sustainability. If the farmers have not already participated in a GALS Catalyst process, then the livelihood tools need to be preceded at least by the Soulmate Visioning process (Coffee Livelihood Tool 1 in this Toolkit) to establish coffee in the broader gender and sustainability framework and develop the necessary participatory and drawing skills. They should also be followed up with tracking and monitoring using the Coffee Multilane Vision Journey (Coffee Livelihood Tool 6 in this Toolkit). Ideally those leading the facilitation would be very experienced GALS practitioners who have implemented GALS in a number of locations and/or those leading the process locally should have visited organisations where GALS has already been implemented. Contact details of approved organisations and practitioners are available on the [GALS@Scale website](#).

<h2 style="text-align: center; color: #C85130;">GALS Tools introduced at the different stages</h2>	
<p>Catalyst workshop 6 days inception workshop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soulmate Visioning: develops individual visions and shares these as start of developing drawing and participatory skills and direction to the whole process. • Vision Journey: the basic GALS change planning framework where people plan how to achieve their vision, set SMART ‘milestones’, analyse opportunities and constraints, commit to actions and track progress over time. • Gender Balance Tree: initiates discussion of gender issues and identifies action commitments. • Empowerment Leadership Map: looks at relationship networks and opportunities for pyramid peer upscaling as the basis for subsequent collective action. • may introduce the Challenge Action Tree for at least one of the gender issues arising eg alcohol with at least some of the more advanced participants. • establishes local cultural innovations in songs, dance and theatre as the ‘fun’ part and support peer sharing.
<p>Livelihood and leadership reinforcement workshop 6 day workshop after 3-6 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and share achievements from tracking on the catalyst diagrams, and the songs and cultural innovations. • Livelihood and business development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Challenge Action Tree for increasing incomes, ○ household and/or individual business tree ○ market diversification map, ○ business calendar vision journey. • Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ leadership soulmate visioning ○ leadership diamond ○ leadership challenge action tree ○ leadership vision journey ○ reinforcement of facilitation skills and cultural innovations. • Multilane Vision Journey as the main ‘parent’ monitoring tool going forward – plots achievements in relationship to the original vision and establishing targets for achievement of the remaining desired changes, and new targets from the livelihood and leadership tools towards the business vision, gender balance and empowerment leadership.
<p>Organisational planning workshop within 6 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational soulmate visioning to develop a collective vision for the whole organisation or process • Gender Justice Diamond for gender awareness throughout the organisation • Organisational challenge action trees to look at likely challenges in achieving the vision • Organisational vision journey
<p>Annual review and sustainability planning workshop 6 days after 1 year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review and share gender, livelihood and leadership achievements from aggregated tracking on the individual and organisational Multilane Highways, and the songs and cultural innovations. • examines gender issues in relation to CEDAW or other relevant women’s human rights framework using gender diamonds and challenge action trees • examines livelihood, market and value chain issues using market maps and challenge action trees to establish the business case for gender and GALS • examines peer sharing and leadership experience using leadership spider maps and challenge action trees to establish optimal strategies for sustainability • reviews the vision using the soulmate process and develops a new organisational vision journey and individual multilane vision journeys for the next year.

ⁱ GALS resources up to 2013 can be found together with other gender and value chain mainstreaming resources at www.wemanresources.info developed as part of the Oxfam Novib WEMAN programme.

ⁱⁱ The most recent resources for Hivos GALS@Scale process can be found on the GALS@Scale website: www.galsatscale.net