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SUCCESS STORY

ILAW: WHEN LAND TRANSITIONS FROM RURAL TO URBAN, WOMEN CAN BENEFIT



Photo 1: The regional director of construction in Korhogo receiving a women's land rights champion award in honor of his work to include women in new subdivisions



Photo 2: Gender-sensitive land management training for authorities organized by ILAW

Urbanization can threaten women's land access by swallowing up their farmland, pricing them out due to speculation and generating conflict.

This was among the conclusions from the baseline Political Economy Assessment (PEA) conducted by the USAID Improving Land Access for Women (ILAW) project in 2021.

But two years later, ILAW is seeing new opportunities for women to access urban land thanks to the project's focus on changing social norms among customary and government land administrators in both urban and peri-urban contexts.

Following gender sensitivity trainings and over 200 social dialogue sessions, many of these leaders are actively lifting structural barriers and seizing opportunities for women to become landowners.

At a recent forum organized by ILAW, regional directors of urban land described how they convince landowning families to reserve plots for women during the creation of new urban subdivisions.

"It's not easy—really not easy," said the Regional Director of Construction from Ferkéssédougou, in northern Côte d'Ivoire. "But with patience and persistence, people eventually come around."

He described how he cajoles and persuades customary rural landowners. The Regional Director of Construction from Korhogo, who recently received a women's land champion award from the project and its local partner, said that he insists that committees that manage new subdivisions have women members.

"Often a subdivision is managed by men and women don't even know they can ask for some plots," he explained. "If women are not informed, how can they claim their part?"

In parallel, the project's network of "women's land rights champions"—many of whom are linked to customary leadership—are increasingly advocating for women at critical moments.

For example, in the village of Sokoro I, a land and gender champion recalled how the extension of his village's urban subdivision recently unfolded.

“They said, shut up, we’ll beat you up!” he recalled when he suggested that women should also be beneficiaries of urban land plots. “I said, ‘I can’t force you to give plots, but because there is a project about this [ILAW], let’s continue to talk.’”

When it came time to divide up the plots, Mr Kone was disappointed to learn that the chiefs didn’t include women. But when they said they had kept a few plots in reserve, he tried again.

“Every time they call you into town for a meeting with government officials, don’t they ask that the women’s president attend? And you agree that she participates, right? But now that it’s time to divide up the land, you don’t want to include her.”

He described how everyone was silent and waited for what the chief would say. The chief didn’t say anything, but waved his hand, which meant “Give them the reserve plots,” and that’s what happened.

“It was thanks to the project that this happened,” said Mr. Kone. Not because the project told him or the chiefs to do so, but because Mr. Kone changed his own views and became an advocate for change when he was at the right place at the right time.

Working through these local leaders and local systems is at the heart of USAID ILAW’s social and behavioral change communication strategy, and while change is slow, these positive results show that breakthroughs happen when the right people become champions.

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LES HUIT QUESTIONS À SE POSER POUR UNE DÉCISION SENSIBLE AU GENRE

Analyse situationnelle	1	Est-ce que j'ai identifié toutes les parties prenantes directes et indirectes y compris les femmes?
	2	Est-ce que j'ai analysé les besoins, intérêts et ressources différenciés par genre?
	3	Est-ce que j'ai tenu compte des rapports de force différenciés par genre?
Délibération et négociation	4	Est-ce que j'ai encouragé tout le monde à tenir compte des besoins et intérêts différenciés par genre?
	5	Est-ce que j'ai réussi à susciter la participation effective des femmes dans le processus de discussion?
Prise de décision	6	Est-ce que j'ai considéré les impacts différenciés par genre de la décision ou de l'action proposée?
	7	Est-ce que le principe de ne pas nuire a été respecté dans la décision ou l'action?
	8	Est-ce que j'ai fait le maximum pour réduire les inégalités ou injustices basées sur le genre dans le cadre de cette décision?

Photo 3: The 8-question checklist for gender-sensitive decision-making around land management developed for local authorities