Gender Transformative Approaches for Women's Land Rights:

Reflections from S4HL Coalitions in Bangladesh, Colombia, and Ethiopia

July 2025

Introduction

The Stand for Her Land (S4HL) global advocacy initiative is a global movement to close the persistent gap between legal protections for women's land rights (WLR) and their realization in practice. Grounded in gender transformative approaches (GTAs), S4HL works to dismantle the structural, social, and institutional barriers that prevent women—particularly those living in poverty and from marginalized communities—from accessing, using, and controlling land, territory, housing, and natural resources on an equal basis with men.

This synthesis report captures the insights and lessons emerging from a reflective learning process undertaken by S4HL Coalitions in Bangladesh, Colombia, and Ethiopia. Through participatory workshops, interviews, and community dialogues, these Coalitions explored how GTAs are being applied in their unique contexts to advance WLR. Their reflections offer valuable guidance for practitioners, policymakers, and advocates committed to gender justice and land rights.

By centering grassroots[1] women's leadership, challenging harmful social norms, and embedding ethics of care into advocacy and programming, the Coalitions are not only empowering women—they are transforming women's sense of agency and lived realities. This document distills their experiences into actionable insights for programming that can inform and inspire broader efforts to achieve equitable and lasting change for WLR.

Background on S4HL

S4HL was established to close the implementation gap for WLR: the gulf between the strong standards in place to protect women's equal rights to land, and the realization of those rights in practice. By closing this gap, S4HL is ensuring that millions of women can realize the transformational power of land rights. Our community of diverse allies works via a coalition model, linking global and local actors and empowering grassroots women leaders and men who are champions for gender justice to advocate for stronger WLR. National S4HL Coalitions comprise local grassroots organizations, national civil society organizations (CSOs), and other non-state actors working towards the shared goal of stronger WLR. Led by a coordinating organization, these Coalitions partner with and catalyze other key stakeholders, including government agencies and civil society, to realize WLR.

Gender Transformative Approaches

GTAs have been part of the development landscape for nearly two decades. Yet, practitioners and policymakers are still navigating how best to design, implement, and scale these approaches effectively. GTAs seek to challenge, shift, and dismantle unequal social relations and power dynamics across households, communities, and institutions. This makes them a powerful tool for achieving sustainable, systems-level change, but also a complex approach to implement and measure. While GTAs are promising in theory, there is a lack of empirical evidence on what interventions result in transformative changes in practice or how outcomes from GTAs compare

[1] S4HL defines "grassroots" people as actors who advocate for and from their communities across the rural to urban continuum, including residents of rural, smallholder, Indigenous, and informal settlement communities.

to gender accommodative approaches.[2] This reflection exercise seeks to build this body of knowledge to support greater, productive integration of GTAs.

What is a Gender Transformative Approach?

According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and other development actors, "A gender transformative approach seeks to actively examine, challenge and transform the underlying causes of gender inequalities rooted in discriminatory social institutions. As such, this approach aims to address the unequal and gendered power relations and discriminatory gender norms, attitudes, behaviors and practices, as well as discriminatory or gender-blind policies and laws, that create and perpetuate gender inequalities. By doing so, it seeks to eradicate the systemic and underlying forms of gender-based discrimination by creating or strengthening equitable gender relations and social institutions that support gender equality."[3]

GTA Resources

IFAD. 2023. Gender Transformative Approaches to Strengthen Women's Land & Resource Rights.

IFAD. 2025. How To Do Note: Designing Gender Transformative Approaches in the Context of Women's Land and Resource Rights.

More resources at the CIFOR-ICRAF Gender Transformative Approaches webpage.

S4HL's theory of change is grounded in GTAs. By catalyzing a sustained, locally-led movement for WLR, increasing the knowledge and resources for stakeholders to realize WLR, and engaging communities in this process, S4HL aims to enhance the voice and agency of women; transform gendered power dynamics in decision-making within households, communities, and institutions; reform discriminatory laws and implementation practices; and dismantle social norms, attitudes, and behaviors that inhibit WLR while promoting those that strengthen WLR.

With funding from Landesa, S4HL is contributing to the evidence base on GTAs by facilitating a structured process of learning and reflection among its Coalitions in Bangladesh, Colombia, and Ethiopia. This initiative also fosters mutual learning with other Coalitions and S4HL partners. The objectives of this process are to:

- Identify and systematize emerging lessons and challenges from implementing GTAs to advance WLR through the S4HL model of grassroots to global advocacy.
- Create opportunities for Coalition members to explore and understand GTA tools that have demonstrated potential to deliver long-lasting, transformative change.
- Host a virtual workshop to facilitate structured, cross-country learning and dialogue on GTA concepts and practices and support the realization of WLR.

[2] McDougall, C., Elias, M., Mulema, A. 2021. The potential and unknowns of gender transformative approaches. CGIAR GENDER PLATFORM Evidence Explainer. Nairobi, Kenya: CGIAR GENDER Platform. https://hdl.handle.net/10568/114804.

[3] FAO, IFAD, WFP & CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform. 2023. *Guidelines for measuring gender transformative change in the context of food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture.* Rome, FAO, IFAD, WFP and CGIAR.

How Is S4HL a GTA?

What Is a GTA?	S4HL GTA Principles and Approaches	S4HL Outcomes
Emerges from, and is led by, local collective action and leadership. Mobilizes the power of the collective.	Grassroots women are at the center and leadership of S4HL's activities. The initiative prioritizes the leadership of women from rural areas, informal settlements, and other marginalized communities, recognizing that their perspectives and experiences are at the heart of transforming gendered and economic power dynamics. S4HL is led by national Coalitions of CSOs and works to inspire women's human rights and land governance organizations to prioritize secure WLR in their advocacy and programming while collectively influencing duty bearers for impact. S4HL builds on existing movements and advocacy efforts, collaborating with local organizations to build upon past and current efforts to strengthen and expand WLR.	Women at all levels increasingly exercise strong and gender-equal political efficacy in land governance. A strong, locally-rooted movement for WLR is catalyzed.
Addresses root causes of gender inequalities, including policies, social norms, power relations, and structural and institutional barriers.	S4HL works to effect change at the individual, household, community, national, regional, and global levels. At each level, we must acknowledge and address power dynamics and dismantle barriers while identifying opportunities and allies.	Women increasingly hold and exercise strong and gender-equal political efficacy in land governance. Grassroots women leaders have voice and agency in private and public spheres, influencing decisions that affect their land, livelihoods, and communities.
	S4HL works to empower both rights holders and duty bearers with the knowledge and skills to effectively play their roles in realization of WLR. S4HL aims to organize and strengthen partnerships for collective action.	Women's legal literacy and agency with regard to land rights is significantly increased. Government actors and other leaders have sufficient knowledge, resources, and incentives to realize WLR.
	S4HL is committed to removing social barriers, especially negative norms, behaviors, and practices that inhibit effective implementation of existing laws, policies, and standards for WLR. S4HL engages men, boys, and influential norms holders to shift social norms, including traditional leaders, civil servants, and community members, to take responsibility for advancing WLR.	Social norms that limit WLR are increasingly questioned and addressed in both communities and political spaces.
	SH4L actively advocates for policy agendas and resources commitments that support WLR, targeting both government and international development actors.	National and global actors increasingly provide support necessary to realize WLR.
	S4HL acknowledges that while laws and policies that protect and strengthen WLR are critical, they must be actively implemented and enforced to create real change. S4HL recognizes that advocacy efforts must build political will for implementation.	Duty bearers demonstrate increased political will and capacity to support and strengthen WLR, translating legal commitments into tangible outcomes for women.
	S4HL recognizes that WLR are not only a matter of equity, but also a critical enabler of women's economic autonomy, food security, and protection from gender-based violence (GBV). WLR also strengthens women's ability to respond to disasters and climate change.	Women's use of and decision-making power over land contribute to sustainable development. The role of WLR in addressing women's economic autonomy, food insecurity, GBV, and climate change is increasingly recognized and resourced by governments and development actors.

Is context-specific, flexible, and adaptive; uses participatory and experiential learning methods.	S4HL takes an evidence-based approach, beginning with in-depth analysis of legal frameworks, land rights, and prevailing social norms in each context. Coalition autonomy is central. While S4HL follows a shared vision and common principles, each Coalition is empowered to define its own strategy and activities based on local realities. Coalition leads and members co-create their approaches, supported by S4HL Global, ensuring interventions are locally relevant.	Crosscutting
Recognizes complexity, including intersecting forms of discrimination.	S4HL applies an intersectional lens, acknowledging that not all women experience land tenure insecurity in the same way. It recognizes the compounded barriers faced by women based on ethnicity, Indigeneity, age, disability, marital status, displacement, and socio-economic status.	Crosscutting
	S4HL employs a collective approach of shifting power and strengthening women's voice and agency in land governance, particularly women who have been most marginalized (grassroots, Indigenous, slum-dwelling, ethnic and religious minority, young women, widows, and refugee communities).	Crosscutting
	S4HL recognizes and considers a range of land tenure rights in addition to documented individual ownership; for example, collective Indigenous Peoples' land rights.	Crosscutting
Explicitly supports the safety of "disruptors."	S4HL is committed to a "do no harm approach" to all activities. This means proactively identifying and addressing power dynamics, risks, and unintended consequences that may arise from challenging entrenched norms and systems. S4HL recognizes that advocating for women's land rights—especially in contexts of conflict, displacement, or social conservatism—can be risky, particularly for grassroots women leaders and activists. S4HL works to mitigate these risks by embedding safety, care, and ethical reflection into its strategies, including when addressing sensitive issues like harmful social norms.	Crosscutting
Builds trust, fosters critical reflection at all levels, and brings attention to the politics and practice of power within ourselves, our organizations, and our networks.	S4HL values participatory processes[4]: Meaningful participation: Activities are designed to ensure real opportunities for engagement and leadership by minority power groups. Inclusive decision-making: S4HL provides an equal and meaningful opportunity for project participants to be involved in decision-making at various stages of the project. Transparent information-sharing: S4HL aims to share clear, honest, safe, and equally accessible relevant information with all stakeholders to ensure that they understand objectives and activities and can participate in and benefit from them and hold us to account. Responsive feedback mechanism: S4HL establishes accessible, safe, and reliable processes for participants to share feedback or complaints. These processes are integrated into a flexible monitoring and evaluation system with transparent procedures and timelines for response and learning.	Crosscutting

[4] Partially adapted from CARE Gender Marker Guidance (2019).

Coalitions' Reflection Processes

Based on the understanding of S4HL as a GTA, three Coalitions participated in a GTA reflection exercise: Bangladesh, Coalición de Mujeres del Caribe por la Tierra y el Territorio (Colombia), and Ethiopia. (See the box for founding details on each Coalition.)

With guidance from the S4HL global team, each Coalition independently designed and implemented its own reflection process to assess the use and impact of GTAs.

- **Bangladesh Coalition** conducted focus group discussions (FDGs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with Coalition members and stakeholders to evaluate the project's progress toward gender transformation.[5]
- **Coalición de Mujeres del Caribe por la Tierra y el Territorio (Colombian) Coalition**, which prides itself on its commitment to action, reflection, and transformation, reviewed various past reports and activities and conducted interviews with key stakeholders.
- **Ethiopia Coalition** held a Reflection and Learning Workshop to engage stakeholders in a collective review.[6]

Each Coalition produced a report summarizing the outcomes of these reflections. These reports offer rich insights into their experiences and learnings. This document provides a synthesized overview of those reflection reports. The full individual Coalition reports will be made publicly available at a later date.

Background on the Three Participating Coalitions

Bangladesh Coalition

Formed in December 2021, the Bangladesh Coalition is led by the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD). It includes nine national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CSOs, along with individuals from media, legal, academic, research, and activist communities.[7] In addition to national advocacy, the Coalition implements community-based initiatives in three diverse pilot areas within the districts of Dinajpur, Faridpur, and Patuakhali.

Coalición de Mujeres del Caribe por la Tierra y el Territorio (Colombia) Coalition

Established in February 2022, this Coalition serves as a platform for NGOs and CSOs

[5] FGDs: two in Karnai village of Dinajpur, two in Nazirpur Union of Bauphal, Patuakhali, and one in North Channel Union of Faridpur Sadar. KIIs: four agricultural officers, three land officers, one information officer, and one union council representative. The Coalition recorded and analyzed the responses to identify recurring themes and ideas.

[6] The workshop itself used two approaches: presentations and in-depth reflection sessions through focus group discussion. The workshop included 37 participants (27 women and 10 men) including Coalition members, grassroots women, and national task force members.

7 Funding for S4HL activities in Bangladesh is provided by the "Equal Stake in the Soil" project funded by the US Department of State Secretary's Office on Global Women's Issues. The Coalition is built upon the International Land Coalition's (ILC) National Land Coalition membership. Landesa and ILC provide global and technical support.

advocating for the rights of peasant, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and Afro-peasant women.[8] It currently comprises six CSOs and operates at both national and local levels, with a focus on the Montes de María, Canal Del Dique, and Córdoba regions.[9] The Coalition is facilitated by the Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP).

Ethiopia Coalition

Launched in January 2023, the Ethiopia Coalition began with 14 organizations and had expanded to 25 organizations by May 2025.[10] It includes local, national, and international partners and is facilitated by Habitat for Humanity Ethiopia (HFHE).

Key Takeaways from Reflection Processes

The three Coalitions focused on a range of GTAs, with both shared and unique elements across contexts. Their reflections can be grouped into three overarching themes:

1. **Coalition Autonomy.** Each Coalition emphasized the importance of having the autonomy to adopt context-specific, flexible, and adaptive methods that respond to local realities and evolving needs.
2. **Addressing Root Causes of Gender Inequalities.** Coalitions engaged in strategies that go beyond surface-level interventions, aiming to challenge structural barriers and transform harmful gender norms.
3. **Ethics of Care and Psychosocial Approaches.** Coalitions placed a strong emphasis on care-centred practices, including emotional well-being, healing, and solidarity, as integral to gender-transformative work.

1. Coalition Autonomy

Coalition autonomy emerged as a foundational element in enabling context-specific, flexible, and adaptive GTAs. While all S4HL Country Coalitions operate autonomously, the reflections from the Colombia and Ethiopia Coalitions particularly emphasized how autonomy empowered them to build on their own skills, experiences, and perspectives to design meaningful, localized interventions.

From its inception, the **Coalición de Mujeres del Caribe por la Tierra y el Territorio (Colombia) Coalition** intentionally positioned itself as a diverse, self-directed alliance of women and organizations representing peasant, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and Afro-peasant communities. While aligned with the broader S4HL initiative, the Coalition asserted its

[8] Among the founding organizations, in addition to CINEP/PPP, are the Network of Rural Women of Northern Bolívar, Ethnic and Peasant Organizations of Displaced Populations of Montes de María, Association of Peasant Women of the Colosó Municipality, Fishermen's Association of the Gulf of Morrosquillo (ASOPARGOLMO), Group for the Defense of Land and Territory, the Rural Communication Corporation of Montes de María, and the Solidarity Development Corporation.

[9] Like the Bangladesh Coalition, Caribbean Women's (Colombia) Coalition S4HL activities are provided by the "Equal Stake in the Soil" project. The Coalition is built upon the International Land Coalition's (ILC) National Land Coalition membership. Landesa and ILC provide global and technical support.

[10] The S4HL project-related activities in Ethiopia are funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), which also funds Coalitions in Uganda and Senegal. Landesa provides global and technical support.

independence to define its own vision and objectives.

Key elements of their autonomous approach included creating their own core principles and distinct theory of change. Their framework emphasized four areas of attention and change: (1) personal and collective transformation among Coalition members; (2) relation accountability in everyday life, including within families, communities, and organizations; (3) institutional change, recognizing that institutions are shaped by people and must evolve in practice, discourse, and attitude; and (4) structural transformation, though challenging systems of oppression, denouncing inequality and violence, and demanding material conditions for dignified living.

The Coalition drafted a powerful collective vision to guide their work: “We dream of a world free of violence against women, being recognized for our work in the territory and enjoying autonomy and self-determination in our land with guarantees of dignified permanence.” They also created a distinct visual representation of the Coalition, symbolizing the diverse identities and experiences of its members (pictured right).

MUJERES DEL CARIBE POR LA TIERRA Y EL TERRITORIO

The Caribbean Women’s Coalition exemplifies how autonomy can foster authentic, grounded, and transformative action, driven by the voices and visions of those most affected.

While the **Ethiopia Coalition** did not emphasize autonomy as explicitly as its Colombian counterpart, it nonetheless leveraged its independence to develop highly contextual approaches to realizing WLR. The Coalition, composed of organizations working across a broad spectrum of women’s rights issues, had only newly considered women’s *land* rights issues. Several parallel actions helped build WLR awareness amongst Coalition members and grassroots women and cultivate a shared vision.

First, the Coalition established inclusive decision-making processes that uplifted all member voices. From the outset, members agreed on participatory governance structures and committed to centering grassroots women in all aspects of the work.

Second, recognizing the need to build internal knowledge, the Coalition provided comprehensive training on WLR, coalition building, networking, fundraising, and advocacy. This enabled members to integrate WLR into their existing work. For example, Community Transformation Ethiopia (CTE) incorporated land rights into its economic empowerment training. Similarly, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA), an organization with more than 30 years’ experience, began advocating for WLR and training community workers on WLR, making a significant addition to its programming.

Third, fortified with new knowledge and contextual insights, Coalition members engaged in high-level policy dialogues, including consultations on the Rural Land and Administration Proclamation. Notably, they advocated for an amendment to recognize polygamous marriages, aiming to protect the land rights of women in such unions.

Finally, throughout its work, the Coalition prioritized listening to and amplifying the voices of grassroots women, including at national and global forums. Traditional women leaders played a pivotal role as local champions of WLR, bridging customary practices with formal legal frameworks.

2. Addressing Root Causes of Gender Inequality

GTAs aim to address not just the symptoms, but also the root causes of gender inequalities. Through their reflections, the Coalitions identified four key types of interventions that contributed to addressing these root causes. First, the Bangladesh Coalition reflected on its efforts to support grassroots women leaders in asserting their voice and agency in both private and public spheres. These efforts helped women participate more actively in land governance processes, challenging traditional power dynamics. Second, both the Bangladesh and Ethiopia Coalitions emphasized the importance of building women's knowledge and confidence around land rights. By increasing land literacy, women were better equipped to claim their rights and engage with local and administrative systems. Third, the Bangladesh and Colombia Coalitions reflected on their work to question and shift social norms that restrict WLR. These efforts included community dialogues, awareness campaigns, journalistic reporting, training civil servants, and creating spaces for the cases and healing of women. Fourth, the Ethiopia Coalition focused on equipping government actors and community leaders with the knowledge and political will to support WLR.

2.1 Grassroots women leaders have voice and agency in private and public spheres on land governance (Bangladesh)

In the early stages of S4HL implementation, the **Bangladesh Coalition** identified and supported grassroots women leaders—particularly those willing to volunteer and advocate for WLR—to become community paralegals and local change agents. These women received capacity building support, including team building exercises and motivational mentoring, along with formal land literacy training. This support equipped them to lead local education and advocacy efforts. As their confidence and skill grew, these women engaged directly with local government offices to advocate for women's access to land and agricultural resources. The women facilitated community awareness sessions on WLR. They also spoke at local and national platforms, presenting their demands directly to policymakers and national influencers. The Coalition is now planning an advanced leadership development program to further strengthen these women's advocacy skills in negotiation, public speaking, and influencing.

These grassroots leaders have become the driving force behind the Coalition's advocacy. Many had never seen themselves as leaders or as individuals with knowledge worth sharing. Their involvement with the Coalition transformed both their self-perception and how they are viewed by their communities. Their collective voice has become a powerful tool for mobilizing action on women's access to land. For example, access to *khas* (public) land remains one of the few viable routes to land ownership in Bangladesh. However, access to *khas* land has become increasingly politicized, with the government suspending allocation in some areas under the false claim that no landless people remain. In response, women leaders across the pilot sites took action to demand resumed access. In Dinajpur, the Coalition organized a mass gathering of over 3,000 people, including many landless families. On this day, not only did CSO representatives speak, but so did grassroots women themselves—a completely new position for them. This gathering and the women speaking are featured in the short film "A Thousand Voices."

2.2 Women's legal literacy and agency is significantly increased (Bangladesh, Ethiopia)

Both the Bangladesh and Ethiopia Coalitions prioritized building women's legal literacy and agency as a core GTA. Their reflections revealed how increased knowledge and confidence around land rights catalyzed broader shifts in gender norms, leadership, and community engagement.

The **Bangladesh Coalition** implemented a comprehensive training program for grassroots women leaders covering legal literacy on land laws, inheritance rights, and land administration procedures; digital land management, including how to navigate and update digital land records; gender equity, intersectionality, and social norms change; and emotional resilience and strategies to address violence against women in land-related contexts. As women gained experience, they began shaping the training agenda, identifying additional needs, and eventually leading local awareness sessions and training new groups of paralegals.

These women, now trained as community paralegals, became trusted advisors and advocates. In Faridpur, for example, paralegals have gone beyond conducting regular community meetings; they have become active advisors. As an example of impact, in a three-month period they assisted 20 individuals with land mutation procedures, guided 95 individuals on inheritance rights, helped 11 people interpret their land documents, and supported 5 individuals with preliminary guidance on court proceedings.

This shift—from women rarely visiting land offices to becoming regular, recognized advocates—represents a profound transformation. The paralegals reflected on the most significant personal change that they experienced and responded with the simple statement: “Everybody knows us.” Their visibility and influence mark a significant change in community norms. These stories are featured in the short films: ”Emergence of a Change Maker: Monira Begum, paralegal of Faridpur” and ”Social Change Maker: Rita Murmu, community leader in Dinajpur.”

Similarly, the **Ethiopia Coalition** implemented a range of initiatives to build women’s legal literacy and agency, with participants in the GTA reflection exercise reporting notable shifts in community attitudes and behaviors. Case studies from the Coalition’s reflection report illustrate how education, paired with local support, can drive meaningful change.

Coalition members developed and delivered targeted programs to reach diverse groups of women. For example, EWLA reached over 400 community members through awareness-raising sessions and free legal aid services for grassroots women. These efforts helped women understand and assert their land rights, particularly in cases of inheritance and land disputes. Another Coalition member, CTE, provided WLR training to more than 1,000 self-help group (SHG) members, primarily women but also men. These sessions not only empowered women to participate in land-related decisions but also challenged men’s perceptions about women’s role in land ownership and governance. As a final example, the Mission for Community Development Program (MCDP) focused efforts on housemaids and rural girls at risk of displacement, educating them on their inheritance rights and how to retain access to family land. This intervention addressed a critical issue: many girls migrate to urban areas for work, only to return later in life without land or housing. MCDP’s work seeks to prevent this cycle of displacement and dispossession.

These programs have helped women gain confidence, assert their rights, and influence household and community decisions. Coalition members noted that legal literacy not only improved individual outcomes but also shifted community norms, creating space for women to be seen as knowledgeable actors in land governance.

2.3 Social norms that limit WLR are questioned and addressed in communities and political spaces (Colombia, Bangladesh)

Both the **Colombia** and **Bangladesh Coalitions** reflected deeply on their efforts to challenge and transform harmful social norms that restrict women's access to, use of, and control over land and territory.

When S4HL Global suggested addressing social norms and behaviors to the **Colombia Coalition,** several questions arose. They were concerned that identifying harmful social norms could stigmatize working-class, peasant, Afro-descendant, or Indigenous communities as the only ones responsible for the inequality and violence that women suffer, perpetuating stigmatization and racism. They questioned whether identifying local social norms would overshadow the broader struggle against global systems of oppression.

With these questions in mind, the Coalition reframed the concept by referring to harmful social norms as "myths" that limit women's access, use, control, and permanence on land and territory. Examples of some of the myths they identified include:

> *"Women during their period do not work the land because they fear damaging the crops."*
>
> *"Men don't allow their daughters, partners, spouses, and community members to take part in the [fishing] work because the sea gets jealous."*
>
> *"Women in farming are a nuisance; they are useless."*
>
> *"Women don't inherit because their parents are afraid their husbands will steal them and then abandon them."*

With group consensus the Coalition designed targeted strategies for three priority groups.

Coalición de Mujeres del Caribe por la Tierra y el Territorio (Colombia) Coalition Norms Change Identification

Priority Group	Behavior of Concern	Interventions
Women in Coalition communities	Limited community and political participation in women's agrarian and environmental issues is associated with a lack of knowledge or doubts about their rights to land and territory, the exercise of various forms of violence reduces autonomy and self-esteem, and the presence of psychosocial issues that generate insecurity when it comes to speaking up or demanding their rights.	School of Weaving Knowledges, Defending Autonomies
Men in families and communities	Traditional masculinities associated with violence, hypersexuality, and compulsory heterosexuality persist.	Audio series and community dialogues, "Aha, and why not?" Men committed to gender equality.
Civil servants in the land sector	Normalization of violence against women. Denial of women's right to land due to their identity, physicality, sexual orientation, and physical characteristics. Denial of women's autonomy when trying to access public services related to agrarian matters.	Training seminar, "Aha, and why not?" for civil servants committed to women's rights

Key interventions

School of Weaving Knowledge, Defending Autonomies. A women-only space for reflection, resistance, and empowerment, developed and led by members of the Colombia Coalition. The School fosters dialogue on bodies, land, and autonomy, and strengthens leadership and protection strategies.

"Aha, and why not?" Men committed to gender equality. A five-part series for men, developed by members of the Colombia Coalition, covering themes like caregiving, fatherhood, and women's participation in land and water governance. Shared with more than 40 men and broadcast on four community radio stations, the series was praised for being rooted in lived experience.

"Aha, and why not?" Civil servants committed to women's rights. This intervention built on the series developed for men within communities in Colombia to address land- and gender-related issues for local civil servants in Colombia. Rather than offering gender training, this seminar aimed to provoke reflection among civil servants on how institutional practices perpetuate misogyny, racism, and classism. The goal: to transform mindsets and systems from within.

Social norms have been one of the most persistent challenges faced by the **Bangladesh** Coalition in advancing WLR. The Coalition faced this challenge head on through a multi-level strategy that combined education, reflection, and advocacy. The Coalition trained community paralegals to understand the concept of social norms and reflect on how these norms shaped their own lives. These sessions helped paralegals recognize the invisible barriers women face in accessing land and leadership roles. Paralegals then led community meetings where women and men openly discussed harmful norms. These dialogues created space for collective reflection and began to shift perceptions. Especially perceptions around the belief that land ownership and decision-making are exclusively male domains. The Coalition also engaged government officials, CSOs, and the media to raise awareness and promote openness to change. This advocacy helped challenge the institutional reinforcement of discriminatory norms.

While systemic change takes time, the Coalition has already seen tangible shifts in how women are perceived in their communities. Increases in women's mobility, visibility in government offices, and respect from officials are significant milestones.

One powerful example comes from an agricultural officer who initially dismissed women's capacity to farm, stating, "Women are born to suffer. They cannot do agricultural work in the field because they are not skilled, and also, they do not have agricultural land in their name. It is not worthwhile to support women with Agricultural Cards [government issued cards that allow farmers to access subsidized credit and input services]." After a series of interactions, including visits from women paralegals and his own visit to their village, his perspective changed. He now actively supports women agriculturalists, recognizing their dedication and capability.

2.4 Government actors and local leaders are equipped to support WLR (Ethiopia)

The **Ethiopia Coalition** recognized that achieving gender-transformative change in land governance requires not only empowering women, but also engaging and equipping government actors and traditional leaders with the knowledge, tools, and motivation to support WLR.

Coalition members conducted legal literacy and customary law trainings for community and

religious leaders. These sessions aimed to deepen understanding of WLR, encourage leaders to challenge gender-discriminatory practices, and promote alignment between customary norms and formal legal frameworks. The Coalition also held community dialogues with these leaders to foster shared understanding and collective commitment to change.

To broaden their reach, the Coalition engaged a well-known figure from a major traditional group to promote WLR through media campaigns. These public messages encouraged other traditional leaders to support women's rights, helping to normalize pro-WLR attitudes in culturally resonant ways.

Finally, in partnership with the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, the Coalition conducted a regional assessment on WLR. The findings revealed key barriers, including lack of legal documentation of WLR, limited access to financial resources, and inadequate availability of modern farming tools. In response, the Coalition and Ministry co-hosted training sessions and workshops to address these gaps, guild the capacity of local stakeholders, and promote women's participation in modern farming systems.

3. Ethics of Care Psychosocial Approach

The **Coalición de Mujeres del Caribe por la Tierra y el Territorio (Colombia) Coalition** operates in a region marked by a recent history of violence, including the tragic loss of women allies during the term of its activities. In this context, the Coalition has fully embraced an ethics of care and a psychosocially supportive approach as central to its organizing, advocacy, and internal culture.

Quoting bell hooks, "When wounded people organize in groups to create change, our struggle is often undermined by all the unresolved emotional issues," the Coalition acknowledged that healing and self-recognition are prerequisites for claiming rights and building power.

They recognized that the struggle for land has historically involved trauma for peasants, rural women, Indigenous Peoples, and Afro-descendant communities, fracturing relationships and communities. As such, they committed to centering care, emotional well-being, and collective healing in all aspects of their work.

They adopted core principles to outline the care approach: every action will be guided by an ethic of care, the body and emotions are central to the work, community and shared experiences are prioritized over isolation, care pathways are identified, psychosocial first aid and emotional support are provided, and men's reflection spaces will also be encouraged.

The acknowledgment of this deep need for care in the face of both long-standing and sudden violent acts led the Coalition to carry out two actions to support the organizations and women. One was the Speaking Circle focused on emotional support and self-care. The other was an in-person emotional support meeting for the leaders of Montes de María OPDS.

These steps lead to the following reflections from Coalition members:

> *"After the pandemic, with the armed strike, the virtual psychosocial sessions were very significant. They impacted me, because they confront you with what you're doing."*
>
> *"If this psychosocial component weren't there, the Coalition wouldn't exist anymore. It allows you to recognize your work and what you do."*

"What destroys us as women are burdens. And through these spaces, we learn to count, to let go, to get to know ourselves. We recharge to carry. We come back stronger to face our reality."

"The songs and literature you share with us are key. I listen to them over and over again, and each time they inspire something different."

Other Coalition actions include the commitment to set aside time during each meeting or work session to carry out exercises in emotional care and support. The Care Grant is another vital component that helps women participate, whether by inviting them to bring their children to meetings or by providing financial support so women can feed their dependents and a caregiver while they are away.

Finally, the Coalition views communications as not just messaging, but as a right, a political strategy, and a creative process. Their communications strategy is designed to challenge stereotypes, promote public dialogue, and influence social and institutional practices. Their key communications initiatives include "*Patios Sabrosos*"[11] (Tasteful Patios); journalistic reports; the audio series, "Aha, and Why Not?" (described above); correspondence among women defenders of land; statements such as the one issued regarding the emergency of violence against women[12]; and travel chronicles[13].

Conclusions and Program Implications

The reflections of the Bangladesh, Caribbean Women's (Colombia), and Ethiopia Coalitions illuminate the potential of GTAs to move beyond programs that reach, benefit, and empower programs and initiatives that fundamentally transform women, families, communities, and institutions. The reflections demonstrate that advancing WLR is not only a legal or technical challenge. It is a deeply social, emotional, and political process.

Across the reflections, we see that:

- **Autonomy** enables Coalitions to design interventions that are responsive and grounded in lived realities.
- **Local grassroots women's leadership** supports transformation within communities and can support broader national and global changes through grassroots women's amplified voices. When CSOs and governments listen to and include grassroots women in programming and budgeting decisions, great progress can be made.
- **Collective action** is a strong method for women to act and achieve lasting change; collective action is often more achievable than individual action.
- **Legal literacy** empowers women to navigate systems, assert their rights, and support others.
- **Challenging and dismantling negative social norms** is essential to shifting perceptions and redistributing power.

[11] Available on Instagram: @mujer.tierrayterritorio | Facebook: @Derecho.tierra.territorio.Colombia

[12] https://cinep.org.co/open-letter-against-the-national-emergence-on-violence-against-women/

[13] https://cinep.org.co/relatos-de-un-viaje/

- **Ethics of care and psychosocial support** are not optional but are foundational to sustaining activism and leadership in contexts of trauma and inequality. S4HL's commitment to "do no harm" remains critical.
- **Bringing along men, boys, and traditional leaders** to ensure that they understand and take responsibility to facilitate WLR ensures that families and communities thrive.

S4HL Programming Implications

1. **Invest in Coalition Autonomy and Flexibility**. S4HL should provide Coalitions with space, resources, trust, and support to define their own priorities, strategies, and timelines. Autonomy fosters innovation and ownership.
2. **Prioritize Legal Literacy as a Core Strategy**. Legal empowerment must go beyond information-sharing. It should include peer-led training, mentorship, and practical support that enables women to act as rights defenders and advisors in their communities.
3. **Integrate Social Norms Change into All Interventions**. Norms change should be intentional, participatory, and culturally sensitive. S4HL should support Coalitions to design creative, community-driven strategies that engage both women and men, as well as institutional actors and influential leaders.
4. **Embed Psychosocial Support and Ethics of Care**. S4HL must continue to recognize the emotional labor and trauma involved in gender justice work. This means allocating resources for psychosocial support and reflection and healing spaces.
5. **Leverage Communications as a Strategic Tool**. S4HL should view communications as not just outreach, but as a political and creative process that amplifies women's voices, challenges stereotypes, and shifts public discourse.
6. **Engage Institutions as Sites of Transformation**. S4HL should continue to support Coalitions to work with government actors as agents of change and to drive change within institutions.

These reflections and implications offer a roadmap for deepening the impact of GTAs in S4HL's WLR work and beyond. They call on all stakeholders—donors, implementers, policymakers, and communities—to center transformative approaches in the pursuit of gender justice.

Our goal must be not just to *reach* women, not just to *benefit* women, not just to *empower* women, but to *transform* women, and not just women but systems, institutions, and power dynamics.