



'DEVELOPING A CLEAR IDEA OF MY GOALS IN LIFE'

Insights from young people in Indonesia and Pakistan on their experiences with the Gender Action and Learning System

EMPOWER
YOUTH
FOR WORK



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SUMMARY

The Empower Youth for Work (EYW) programme focuses on enabling young people, especially young women, in rural areas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Ethiopia, to seek and obtain decent work. Within this programme, the Gender Action and Learning System (GALS) – a structured, community-led methodology for empowerment which aims to foster economic, social and political transformation and gender justice – has been deployed in Pakistan and Indonesia. GALS enables individuals and households to plan and track changes in their lives, gender relations and livelihoods; and to identify and negotiate their needs and interests with power holders. Using the stories of 43 young women and men participants (28 and 15, respectively) of the EYW programme, this report explores how GALS contributed to their socio-economic empowerment.

The stories were analysed on the basis of three criteria: participants' perceptions of changes in themselves and other young people, changes in their abilities to develop and participate in economic activities, and how the methodology enabled them to create an enabling environment.

Within the first category, the most significant and frequently mentioned changes that youth in the two countries attributed to GALS were the ability to have a vision for the future and set goals according to this vision. According to them, the vision and goal-setting exercises helped them articulate what they wish to achieve in the future. Young people also noted that GALS activities helped them with planning, time management, problem-solving and confidence building. For young women, enhanced knowledge about their rights, coupled with increased confidence and problem-solving skills, helped them to navigate their way through the challenges posed by traditional gender norms and beliefs.

In terms of economic empowerment, young people saw enhanced confidence to pursue the economic activity of their choice as the key contribution of the GALS methodology. About half of the respondents whose stories and experiences are considered in this report stated that they were able to develop economic activities with the help of GALS and other EYW activities. While the vision and goal-setting exercises and activities focusing on interpersonal and leadership skills – part of the GALS methodology – helped them to articulate their ambitions, the EYW trainings on employment and entrepreneurship skills enabled youth to develop the aptitude to match the positive attitude engendered by GALS. For young women, enhanced knowledge of their entitlements – and of the negative impacts on their lives of traditional gender norms and beliefs – helped them to recognise their ability and right to participate in economic activities.

An enabling environment ensures that people are supported to realise their dreams and ambitions. The analysis of the stories shows that young people play a major role in creating this enabling environment for themselves and their peers. The enhanced confidence and skills among youth in general, and awareness of rights and entitlements among young women in particular, translated into ambitions and actions to bring about changes within their households and in the community. They did so by replicating the GALS tools and processes with their family and friends, and by initiating direct and decisive action within their households and the community on issues such as child marriage, violence against women

and environment protection. Improved access to education and economic opportunities and enhanced mobility were some of the other changes identified in relation to enabling environment.

The observations and findings in this report show that other programmes and strategies can gain significant value by adopting GALS. The methodology can help young people to build mental strength and stamina, which complement the skills and aptitude that are often the focus of economic empowerment programmes. GALS can be particularly beneficial in creating a better understanding of gender and other social norms and the impact of gender-based discrimination on economic productivity, and in helping youth, especially women, to pursue their goals and aspirations with purpose, confidence and resilience.ⁱ

ⁱ For more information about GALS, please visit the Empower@Scale platform: <https://empoweratscale.org/> and check the GALS manual for the catalyst phase (Phase 1): <https://empoweratscale.org/resource-centre/gals-phase-1-manual/>

The practical guide for Phases 1 and 2 <https://empoweratscale.org/resource-centre/gals-phase-1-2-guide-value-chains/>

Or visit the WEMAN page on the Oxfam Novib website: <https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/donors-partners/about-oxfam/projects-and-programs/weman> and check the GALS manual for the catalyst phase: [https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Redactie/Downloads/English/publications/140701_RRDD_manual_July_small\(1\).pdf](https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Redactie/Downloads/English/publications/140701_RRDD_manual_July_small(1).pdf)

And the practical guide for Phases 1 and 2: https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Redactie/Downloads/English/publications/150115_Practical%20guide%20GALS%20summary%20Phase%201-2%20lr.pdf

For more information about EYW, please visit the Empower Youth for Work website: <https://www.empoweryouthforwork.org/>

1. INTRODUCTION

Young people living in rural areas often lack opportunities to develop themselves. The Empower Youth for Work (EYW) programme focuses on the social and economic empowerment of young people (especially young women) in rural, climate change affected areas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Ethiopia. The Gender Action Learning System (GALS) has been used to support EYW's work on strengthening young people's agency and skills, creating economic opportunities and facilitating an enabling environment for youth employment in the EYW projects in Indonesia and Pakistan.

1.1 THE GENDER ACTION LEARNING SYSTEM

GALS is a structured methodology for empowerment, which aims to foster economic, social and political transformation. It gives women, men and youth more control over their lives and catalyses a movement for gender justice. GALS includes a wealth of visual diagramming tools, principles and peer-learning mechanisms that can be adapted in many ways for empowerment in rural development projects. As described in this report, the tools include 'road journeys', 'diamonds', 'trees' and 'circle maps' to enable individuals and households to plan and track changes in their lives, gender relations and livelihoods; and to identify and negotiate their needs and interests with power holders.

GALS trainers are mainly community members themselves, called champions, who have used the methodology to enable change in their lives and based on their own interest, support change among their household, peers and the wider community. The tools are also used by cooperatives and other actors such as traders and service providers to change gender and power relations that prevent them from achieving their vision. GALS also provides a structured process for multi-stakeholder negotiation for gender equality, better livelihoods, and improved local economies and value chains.

Three phases have been identified in the GALS methodology (also see Figure 1 below), based on lessons learned from applying GALS in different contexts. In reality, these three phases can overlap. GALS can be used for:

1. **Envisioning and catalysing change** linking individuals, families and collective action. In this initial phase, the focus is mainly on increasing the agency and self-esteem of community members and setting up peer-sharing structures.
2. **Mainstreaming gender justice** in programmes, projects, interventions and organisations to bring about institutional change; strengthening negotiation skills of community members to engage with more powerful actors in the (local) economic/political field; and strengthening local networks.
3. **Developing a gender justice movement**: bringing local networks into a national one, and linking the national network to the global one.



Figure 1: The three phases of the GALS methodology

1.2 GALS IN EMPOWER YOUTH FOR WORK

EYW is an Oxfam multi-country programme which is implemented in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ethiopia and Indonesia. Working with a wide range of stakeholders (including young people, government and the private sector), the programme applies a holistic approach to tackle issues of gender-based discrimination, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and education – all of which impact young people in terms of their choices about and opportunities for employment. GALS has been used to support the EYW projects in Indonesia and Pakistan.

In Indonesia, the project aims to reduce poverty in rural coastal areas that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and to facilitate social and economic empowerment among youth. Within this overall objective, the project aims to enable youth (especially young women) to secure viable employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. It does so by building young people’s skills and capacities and helping them to develop positive attitudes and behaviours for work; generating and improving new economic opportunities in the form of entrepreneurship opportunities and paid employment; enabling youth to engage with companies to advocate for better work environments; and assisting youth to realise their rights to better SRH and to enabling environments that support them to grow and achieve their dreams.

In Pakistan, the project aims to reach young women and men in climate change affected rural and semi-urban locations that lack access to knowledge on climate adaptation, job/entrepreneurial skills and economic opportunities that could make youth more resilient to ongoing climate change impacts. Oxfam and partners support young people towards employment through capacity building and market

development, and by fostering an enabling environment (especially in relation to gender norms) for youth employment. In this way, EYW in Pakistan aims to support economic growth and enable young people to build more resilient livelihoods.

In the EYW projects, the GALS methodology has been used for:

- Strengthening the agency of youth (especially young women), with a particular focus on defining aspirations, influencing decisions in the household and increasing rights awareness, self-esteem, group working and leadership skills. The overall aim is to empower young people to pursue and retain employment and to build their resilience.
- Changing gender/power relations so that youth (especially young women) can access and benefit from (self-) employment opportunities.
- Making violence against women and girls, gender discrimination and economic, social and political exclusion of women unacceptable in different cultural circumstances, both at the individual and collective levels.
- Mobilising youth, their families and communities to take action to change deep-rooted social norms and behaviours.

1.3 ABOUT THIS PAPER

This report is an attempt to make sense of the experiences of GALS champions in Indonesia and Pakistan, and to understand how GALS contributed to their socio-economic empowerment. A total of 43 stories were used for this sense-making exercise. These included the stories of 28 young women and 15 young men, gathered from case studies and programme evaluation documents (see Box 1). Some of these stories were detailed descriptions of the respondents' experience with GALS and EYW in their own words, while some were third-person narrations. In case of the latter, in line with our commitment to protect the identities of participants, the report does not use respondents' real names. As is often the case with gathering data and on the experiences of participants in any programme, some stories include socially desirable responses and programme language. With help from the programme staff, the analysis team was able to base the study on the most relevant and valuable parts of these stories. The stories were analysed based on participants' perceptions of changes in themselves and other young people, changes in their abilities to develop and participate in economic activities, and how the methodology enabled them to create an enabling environment.

Box 1: Reports used for comparative analysis of experiences of GALS champions

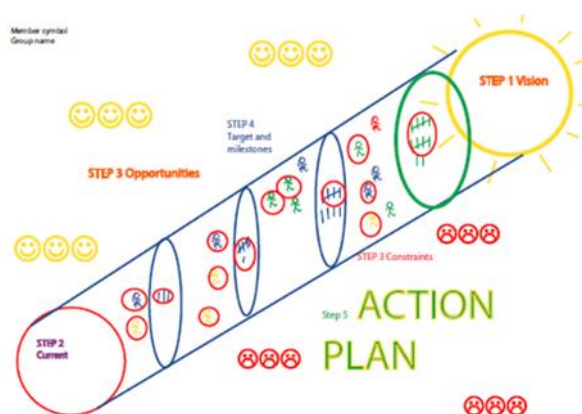
- Pakistan case studies
- Pakistan midline interviews
- Pakistan stories (collected for programme communications)
- Indonesia midline survey
- Indonesia stories (collected for programme communications)

The report is structured around three analysis criteria. Section 2 highlights the changes observed by young women and men within themselves as a result of the GALS tools and processes. Section 3 focuses on what the youth said about the impact of GALS in developing and improving their participation in economic activities. Section 4 illustrates how, according to the youth, the methodology was able to help them to envision and create an enabling environment for themselves, their peers and the wider community. The paper concludes by summarising the impact of the GALS methodology on the socio-economic empowerment of youth and reflecting on how this impact can be enhanced and sustained going forward.

2 CHANGES IN YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN

This section focuses on the **changes that young women and men have observed in themselves and among youth around them** as a result of the GALS tools and processes. Based on the young people's stories, perhaps the most significant and frequently mentioned changes that youth in the two countries attributed to GALS were the ability to have a vision for the future, to set goals according to this vision, and to devise and implement a plan to achieve these goals. This process relates to a specific set of tools in the GALS methodology known as 'road journeys' (see Box 2).

Several young women and men said that prior to GALS activities, **they lacked a vision for their future** and, as a result, did not have specific dreams or purpose or a clear picture of their future. Through the **GALS vision and goal-setting exercises**, they were able to **articulate what they wish to achieve** in the future. These visions included specific aspirations, such as to become a singer, a banker or a teacher, as well as more general wishes, such as acquiring technical skills or being more efficient and organised. Those young people who did have a clear vision for themselves stated that the GALS tools and exercises enabled them to develop their ambitions by **helping them to set goals and targets** and then to devise and implement a plan to achieve these.



Example of Road Journeys: On the left is Vision Road Journey which can be used to plan changes in life and livelihood. On the right, a participant from Indonesia drawing a Multilane Highway in her diary. Multilane Highways can be used to plan changes in life and livelihood, on gender issues and to share the methodology with others.

Box 2: Vision and goal-setting tools

The vision and goal-setting exercises were part of a specific set of tools in the GALS methodology known as road journeys. These are planning tools that support young people to identify a strategy to achieve their long-term vision and short-term goals based on an analysis of their current situation, opportunities they can use, obstacles they expect to encounter along the journey, and the activities needed to achieve the identified goals. Road journeys can be used to plan improvements in the young person's livelihood, or as a framework to plan changes in three different areas: livelihood, gender, and sharing of the methodology with those who are relevant to achieving the vision and

goals. Road journey tools can be used to plan changes at individual, household and group levels. They can also be used to plan changes agreed upon by community members and more powerful stakeholders in the economic and political spheres, following a negotiation process. These tools are used in the different phases of GALS (see introduction and Figure 1 for details on the three phases of GALS).

Articulating a vision and dreams

Through the GALS training, I learned to draw a vision journey. Earlier, I never thought about what I want to achieve in life. This exercise in the training made me think about my long-term goal, which I need to achieve to get going in life. – Male youth, Pakistan

In the GALS training, we made a vision journey where I drew my dream and thought about all the potential barriers and possibilities to overcome those barriers. Through this exercise, I decided to study further and fulfil my dream. – Female youth, Pakistan

Before I got to know GALS, I didn't have a job and didn't even have dreams or things I wanted to achieve... During the GALS training I was taught new and interesting methods that can be used to achieve dreams. Through this, I felt a change in my own personality by becoming more active and overcoming my laziness. – Female youth, Indonesia

In addition to helping with vision mapping, goal setting, awareness raising and planning, several young women and men in both countries stated that the GALS methodology helped them to **develop time management and problem-solving skills**. These themes were particularly prevalent among youth in Indonesia. Through tools such as 'diamonds' and 'trees', young people were able to analyse various difficulties with respect to the vision and goals they had set for themselves. These included: lack of discipline, procrastination, and inability to identify risks and problems. Here, the GALS methods and tools helped them to **undertake a detailed planning exercise**, identify steps and activities at each step, recognise and anticipate possible opportunities as well as risks and problems that may arise, and to view the latter as challenges that can be overcome.



Gender Justice Diamond (also called Identity Diamond) from Indonesia

Time management, planning and problem-solving skills

After joining the GALS training, I had a consistent and ongoing activity: I joined a Youth Hub and through that, I was finally able to manage my own time. The benefit of GALS for me personally is that I can manage my time well because I have something to achieve. Before doing something, I always make a plan and I try so hard to follow that plan. So far, the plans I have made can be carried out and achieved as I expected. – Male youth, Indonesia

The thing that made my efforts fail [before] was that I didn't have detailed planning, and this was what I got when I joined the GALS training. I then applied the GALS method by making plans before doing anything. Since getting to know GALS, I have become more sensitive to the surrounding environment by seeing opportunities and potential in my village. – Male youth, Indonesia

Another common theme observed in the stories from youth in Pakistan and Indonesia was the **positive impact of GALS tools and processes on their confidence**. Young people stated that participation in GALS activities helped to increase their confidence, which in turn helped them with committing to and achieving the goals they envisioned during the vision and goal-setting exercises discussed above. In Pakistan, specifically, many young women and men stated that prior to GALS they felt shy and were unable to express themselves. According to them, the activities helped them to **overcome their shyness and become more comfortable in interacting** with their peers and parents, and even speaking in public. In some cases, their increased confidence, combined with the opportunity to replicate the tools and processes in their community, helped the youth to **hone their leadership skills**.



Example of trees: Challenge Action Tree to analyse causes of challenges (roots), identify solutions (branches) and actions that can be taken (fruits).

Box 3: GALS facilitation process

The GALS methodology is based on a set of principles related to gender, participation and leadership that shape the use of the GALS tools and process. If these principles are not applied, use of the tools can increase rather than decrease gender inequality. It is therefore essential that facilitators adhere to the principles to ensure that the self-esteem, agency and negotiation skills of community members are strengthened.

For example, during a GALS training, the facilitator (staff member) or trainer (GALS champion/community member) doesn't draw the steps of the tools themselves; rather, participants are encouraged to draw on their behalf. A good facilitator/trainer will identify people whose self-esteem and confidence need to be reinforced (they are usually the ones who do not put themselves forward as volunteers and do not speak a lot) and encourage them to support facilitation or to represent a group. Another way to increase self-esteem and confidence is by celebrating achievements and showing appreciation of participants' opinions, contributions and planned changes. The use of singing, theatre and role-play also supports self-esteem and confidence building, as they pull participants out of their comfort zone. Participants' negotiation power needs to be strengthened before they can engage with more powerful actors. Negotiation power is increased through the creation of collective plans and strengthened using tools dedicated to negotiation (for example, the 'win-win tree').

Box 4: Case study (Indonesia): Gaining confidence through GALS

When she was four years old, Maria (name changed) was involved in an accident that affected the shape of her lips. This made Maria feel insecure and shy, especially when she met people from outside her village. She carried this insecurity and inhibition with her all through her school and college years. Things changed when she had the opportunity to interact with people from across different backgrounds and circumstances at the GALS Catalyst Workshop, who accepted her without judgement. According to Maria, the workshop made her feel good about herself.

Maria, who has been head of the government section at Bontobahari village office since March 2019, mustered the courage to be master of ceremonies at government events in her village. She says that the GALS training helped her to speak in public.

When considering the experiences of women and men separately in terms of the change youth see in themselves, some interesting nuances emerge. Young men mostly talked about vision, goals, skills and confidence – or the lack of it – as the vital issues that were addressed by GALS. Young women, on the other hand, often mentioned one additional, critical element – **enhanced knowledge about their rights**. It is to be noted that this theme was more prominently observed among young women in Pakistan.

Several young women in Pakistan stated that prior to attending the trainings they could not ‘distinguish between right and wrong’ and held generally traditional/regressive views about the status of women in society and their role in the household. Together with the enhanced sense of purpose and improved confidence gained from the trainings, this knowledge of rights and the status of women in society was said to be particularly helpful in **making them aware of and able to address the challenges and barriers they face as women** in profoundly patriarchal communities.

Several young women mentioned facing barriers to participating in the EYW trainings and activities. In most cases, these challenges were posed by parents and community members in general who disapproved of women leaving the house. Even if the young women were able to participate in the trainings and activities, some parents or family members discouraged them from pursuing higher education or the economic activity of their choice. The young women were able to **navigate their way through these challenges by putting their knowledge of their rights, confidence, negotiation and problem-solving skills to use**. They were able to convince their parents to allow them to continue participating in EYW activities and to pursue their education or the economic activity of their choice. According to the young women, such victories also helped them to be optimistic about their future.

As an example, a young woman in Pakistan was discouraged by her father from working or contributing to the household income, despite the family’s difficult economic circumstances. His reluctance was mostly due to community members repeatedly questioning the need for girls’ education and enforcing restrictions on women and girls’ mobility. The household’s financial constraints and the young woman’s inability to move freely outside the home made her dependent on others. She lacked the confidence and skills to engage with the people who upheld these restrictive traditional gender norms and beliefs.

However, as she started participating in EYW activities, the young woman began to engage and negotiate with her parents, family members and the community. Using the skills gained from EYW tools and trainings, she convinced her father not only to let her continue to participate in these activities but also to teach at a local school.

Awareness, skills and confidence to challenge patriarchal norms

Through the GALS training, I have learned about gender equality. Before this training, I considered myself inferior as a woman because that's what we were always taught throughout our lives – those men are superior to women, and women should stay at home and be obedient to their husbands, fathers or brothers. But after receiving this training, I understood my importance as a woman. I have learned that men and women are equal, no one is inferior or superior, and everyone should have the same respect and opportunities. – Female youth, Pakistan

Young women's successes – big or small – in their progress towards achieving their dreams and tackling patriarchal barriers also encouraged them to **lead as examples in their communities**. Young women who believed that they benefitted from GALS tools and processes said that they had tried to **replicate the trainings among their friends and their communities**. They stated that they **derived a sense of satisfaction and achievement** when they saw significant changes among those who took part in the trainings. For example, the young woman whose testimony is shared above believes she is becoming the best version of herself and is setting an example for other young women and parents in her community. There were also examples of young women **individually and collectively starting and running entrepreneurial ventures**. Those who replicated the GALS tools and processes **saw themselves as role models** and expressed their commitment to continue working in their communities to enable more young women to experience a change in themselves.

Leading by example

For Rubina (name changed), sharing GALS is not just a training task; she wants to be able to share her knowledge and see how people plan their future and make changes in their lives. She says that GALS is needed to help people envisage their future and to understand the current conditions and challenges so that they can plan well to make their dreams come true. (Indonesia)

After completing different trainings, Seher (name changed) became a role model for other girls in her village. She took the lead in different activities, including arranging the first-ever women's event in her village completely independently. She championed the GALS training and trained her youth group members with great enthusiasm. (Pakistan)

The experiences of youth in Indonesia and Pakistan indicate that they saw **GALS as a process of self-improvement**. At the outset, it **facilitated internal dialogues or introspection** that helped them to define their dreams for the future. The tools and activities helped the young people **to translate their**

dreams and vision into concrete plans and activities. Finally, the confidence-building activities and interactions with facilitators and peers, combined with awareness of their rights and the gender norms that dictate women's lives, led to a sense of self-assurance, the ability to express themselves, and a desire to change their lives and support others to do the same.

3 ABILITY TO DEVELOP ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Several young women and men stated that prior to GALS, they lacked the confidence to pursue the economic activity of their choice. The first step of the process was the vision and goal-setting exercise, where they articulated their dreams and aspirations. For example, a young man from Pakistan expressed his wish to establish himself as a singer, while a young woman from Indonesia set several targets for herself: to find a job, save money to start a culinary business, and then buy a motorcycle with the profits from the business.

While the vision and goal-setting exercise helped young people to articulate their ambitions and establish the motivation to pursue them, the **GALS tools and facilitation processes, interactions with their peers, and public speaking opportunities helped them to build confidence in themselves.** The aspiring musician went on to release a song and started performing with his mentor at small events. The young woman from Indonesia reached her first target and is on the way to accomplishing her second goal, i.e., to start a culinary business.

While the EYW employment-related trainings (in CV writing and in language and computer skills) helped prepare the youth for the job market, **GALS activities helped them to define their goals, to consistently believe in themselves, and to become better able to engage and negotiate with others.** Young people shared examples of how they had applied for jobs, successfully navigated the recruitment process and were now earning an income.

From dreaming to achieving
<i>I was told by my elders that higher education is not affordable, so how could I dream of acquiring it? To do so, I started teaching in a tuition centre. I go and teach kids in a tuition centre, which allows me to save enough money to pay for my own studies. – Female youth, Pakistan</i>
<i>I always wanted to become a teacher, but I used to feel shy talking in front of a class. The GALS training, which we replicated, made me confident to become a good teacher. Now I am very positive about my future because I have gained so many skills, including communication, negotiation, CV writing, and improved English language and computer skills. Because of the EYW project, I can manage my job [teaching at school] and my studies [Master's degree from a private college] at the same time. – Female youth, Pakistan</i>

Young people who nurtured **aspirations of becoming an entrepreneur or self-employed** articulated their desires during the vision exercise. For example, a young man in Pakistan stated that he wished to acquire technical skills and establish himself as an electrical technician but was unable to do so because of financial constraints. He was subsequently linked to technical training institute that was part of the

economic work. Consequently, skill development activities and trainings on business and entrepreneurship **created the aptitude to match this positive attitude.**

4 CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

As mentioned previously, GALS tools and activities made many young women and men aware of women's rights and the need for women and men to have equal rights and opportunities. This awareness and the subsequent actions planned not only led to **changes at the personal level**, according to youth, **but also to changes within the household and in the community through the peer replication system**. Several young women said that it was through GALS that they became aware of the degree of entrenchment of gender inequality that exists in society, and that women have the same rights and entitlements as men. This awareness translated into a **desire and actions to enable small but significant changes within their households**. For example, some young women in Pakistan said that they would ensure that their daughters have the same access as their sons to education and other opportunities. Some also emphasised the need to spread this awareness among their peers and to the next generation. A young woman in Indonesia stated that because of youth engagement with the community, parents were now allowing their children (including girls) to study and work outside the village.

Awareness of rights and entitlements

After taking part in the GALS training, we discussed how men and women have equal rights. Women should have the same opportunities as men to education or employment. I think it is very important to teach these things to our generation. I am glad that I became a part of these trainings and learned these things. Now I am aware of my rights, and I can fight for them. – Female youth, Pakistan

I replicated this training with my youth group members and fortunately many have changed their way of thinking and they now support equal rights for women. In this session, we also learned that there must be a balance of the likes and dislikes of the husband and wife [referring to the gender justice/identity diamond – a GALS tool]. Both should take care of each other. – Female youth, Pakistan

Enhanced awareness of rights and entitlements, and improved confidence among the youth, motivated several young women and men to **become more active in the community**. A strong urge to engage in **solving problems among their immediate circle and the wider community** and to generally contribute to the community's betterment was observed, based on the understanding that others (family, friends and the wider community) have an impact on an individual's ability to achieve their goals. One means of engagement and contribution by young people was to **replicate GALS tools and processes with others among their family and friends**. Another was to **initiate direct and decisive action within the community** if they saw a pressing matter. For example, one young woman in Pakistan stated that she and her youth group members were successful in stopping a child marriage. A young man in Pakistan talked about how training participants applied the problem-solving skills they learnt in

GALS to engage with influential members of their community to find a solution to a situation where a young woman was being harassed by a young man (see case study below).

Case study (Pakistan): Enlisting the support of power holders to solve community problems

During the EYW project intervention, a case came to light of a girl facing harassment following the arrangement of her marriage. A young man claimed that she was his fiancée and said that he wouldn't let the marriage go ahead. He started to threaten the girl and her family with a social boycott and tribal conflict.

During the GALS training, a young man named Sajad came across a tool called the 'empowerment leadership map', in which he learned how to identify local people with power in the community, whom young people can approach if they need any kind of support.

Sajad, along with a friend, identified well-known people and community leaders, and convinced them to help the girl and her family. They immediately organised a meeting and invited both parties. The young man was asked for evidence of the engagement, which he failed to provide. He eventually apologised for his behaviour. The community appreciated the efforts of Sajad and his friend, and they have since been asked to help address other matters in the community. The young men resolved a situation which could have led to a tribal conflict and even a so-called 'honour killing'.

Sajad says: 'I was taught in the training that we should take a stand without creating any risks for ourselves; thus, I involved my elders to intervene first in such a sensitive issue. If I had acted alone, I would have faced a lot of resistance and criticism. I used the learning from the training and executed it. So I can say that due to these trainings, not only me but my whole community has been changing. The traditional concept that women should stay at home and should not go outside has become obsolete.'

Young people's contribution to the community was not limited to social issues. There were examples of young women and men **expressing commitment to expand economic opportunities for themselves and for their peers**. Some of the entrepreneurial ventures in the two countries were **collective initiatives**, such as the women farmers group in Indonesia. It is to be noted that these individual and collective ventures were not focused solely on creating economic opportunities, but also addressed other issues in the community, such as environment protection. For example, the women farmers group collects plastic waste and converts it into useful items such as mats, shopping bags and other handicrafts.

The GALS tools and processes **introduced a sense of purpose that, according to the participants, they previously lacked**. The confidence that grew alongside a sense of self-worth was reinforced by the various trainings on soft skills, vocational skills, and tools to improve efficiency and productivity. It could be said that once the individual attitude and aptitude started bearing fruit, the participants saw

themselves as being capable of enabling change in their households and community. They then started identifying opportunities and challenges where their new skills and attitude could be put to good use.

5 CONCLUSION

The GALS methodology has been used in the EYW projects in Indonesia and Pakistan to strengthen the agency of youth (especially of young women), change prevailing (oppressive) gender and power relations, make violence and discrimination against girls and women unacceptable, and to mobilise youth and relevant stakeholders to change deep-rooted social norms and behaviours. In alignment with the objectives of the EYW programme, the GALS methodology has helped to empower young people to pursue and retain employment and build resilience.

In this paper, the stories and reflections of the youth who participated in the EYW programme in the two countries were analysed with regard to young women and men's perceptions of the changes in themselves, in their ability and confidence to develop and participate in economic activities, and their contribution to creating an enabling environment, i.e. one that is conducive to progressive changes.

It was observed that at the individual level, the methodology primarily helped young women and men to formulate a vision for themselves, which they used as a basis to define goals for the future. Using a range of tools and activities, they were able to identify opportunities and problems and more importantly, view the latter as challenges that can be overcome. The GALS tools and processes helped the youth to create a roadmap to achieve their goals, identify areas for self-improvement, and stay committed to achieving these goals. Young people also noted that the activities helped them with time management, problem-solving and confidence building. What also became evident from the stories was that for young women, the improved confidence and negotiation skills resulting from GALS training, along with the enhanced knowledge of their rights and entitlements, was useful in helping them to understand and face the obstacles posed by traditional gender norms and beliefs.

Enhanced confidence among youth to pursue the economic activity of their choice was observed by young people to be another key contribution of the GALS methodology. Specific trainings focused on enabling economic empowerment, along with the tools and activities that comprised the GALS methodology, helped youth to complement aptitude with the right attitude to achieve their goals. As illustrated in the stories and reflections of the young people, some focused on paid employment and some set their sights on entrepreneurship, while others concentrated on advancing their studies. It was also interesting to observe the differences between young women and men in their journeys towards economic empowerment. While the men had a clear head start, the process for young women began with them recognising and believing that they have the same right as men to participate in economic activities, followed by engaging with their families and the community on whether and how they can participate in their chosen economic activity. It could be said that GALS contributed a little to levelling the playing field by equipping young women with knowledge of their rights and the skills to overcome the obstacles in front of them.

Several indications of GALS' contribution towards creating an enabling environment came to light in the stories and reflections shared by the youth. Perhaps the most interesting among these is the increased awareness of women's rights at the household and community levels. This awareness, along with

increased assertiveness among women, seems to have contributed to improved access to education, economic opportunities and mobility for young women. For example, some young women in Pakistan said that they would like to ensure that their daughters have the same access as their sons to education and other opportunities. The GALS peer replication model, while contributing to spreading the knowledge and raising young people's voices, also helped to hone young women's leadership skills. Young people also reported instances of engagement with their families and communities on child marriage, harassment of women, environmental protection and other social issues. There were also examples of young women and men expressing commitment to expand economic opportunities for themselves and other young people through collective initiatives.

The experiences and responses from the two countries show that GALS can help to strengthen the foundations necessary for economic empowerment. The methodology proved particularly beneficial for engaging with young women, increasing their understanding of gender and other social norms, and highlighting the impact of gender-based discrimination on economic productivity. While the EYW projects in the two countries focused on enhancing the employability and nurturing the entrepreneurial ambitions of youth, the GALS methodology helped to build their mental strength and stamina – especially that of young women. This enabled young people to design their own strategy to realise their identified aspirations and to pursue these with purpose, confidence and resilience.

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