

# COMMUNITY-LED VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT FOR GENDER JUSTICE AND PRO-POOR WEALTH CREATION: A CASE FROM RWANDA

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This case study covers the work of Bureau d'Appui aux Initiatives Rurales (BAIR) in Rwanda. Behaviour change for improved livelihood: *Vestine* now a champion in the Iris potatoes value chain had given up hope of living a life free from poverty and suffering. Today, 39 year old, and mother of 4 children, is proud of her achievements from the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology which all begun with her husband's change in behaviours. The project aims to contribute to sustainable pro-poor wealth creation, and value chain upgrading through empowerment of women and men from the poorest and most vulnerable households and the establishment of equitable participatory processes for economic decision-making at various levels. This is achieved through adapting and up-scaling the innovative pictorial GALS methodology for community-led action research in a range of value chains, contexts and organisations. The local experiences of integrating GALS in particular value chains or types of interventions are documented as "integration models".

This Case Study was a background briefing for Oxfam Novib's 2013 Annual Review, prepared in partnership with Bureau d'Appui aux Initiatives Rurales (BAIR), and describes the programme in Rwanda. Although it is not a formal evaluation it does consider lessons learned by both Oxfam Novib and its partner organisations.

These Case Studies are shared in the form in which they were submitted, often written by partners whose first language is not English, and have not been edited since submission. We believe that the meaning is clear enough, and the authenticity of the reporting and the availability of Southern Voices on development makes their inclusion in the Oxfam iLibrary worthwhile for sharing with external readers.

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**Programme Partner: Bureau d'Appui aux Initiatives Rurales (BAIR)**

# AIM OF THE PROJECT

The project aims to contribute to sustainable pro-poor wealth creation, and value chain upgrading through empowerment of women and men from the poorest and most vulnerable households and the establishment of equitable participatory processes for economic decision-making at various levels. This is achieved through adapting and up-scaling the innovative pictorial GALS methodology for community-led action research in a range of value chains, contexts and organisations. The local experiences of integrating GALS in particular value chains or types of interventions are documented as “integration models”.

## CONTEXT

The project focuses on poor and vulnerable women and men in rural areas in Rwanda by prioritising implementing the approach in grains value chains (maize and rice), soy beans, horticulture (pineapples, tomatoes, onions), potatoes and coffee.

### Vulnerable value chain stakeholders

Women currently represent over 52% of Rwanda’s population and provide almost two-third of the labour on family farms. There is also a large number of women-headed households in agriculture. Crop cultivation is the main source of income for rural people, however much of their crops are used for home consumption. Agricultural land covers half of the country’s total surface. More than 90% of all Rwandese live in households that own some farming land; however land holdings are generally very small. The most vulnerable are people without land or with less than 0.2 ha to cultivate. Renting (additional) land has become more common. As the Government is trying to stimulate investors to invest in large scale production of cash crops or cattle keeps boosting the country’s economy, it becomes harder for smallholder farmers to find arable land.

Women spend more time in unsalaried farming activities than men (56% of women against 19% of men), still they own smaller plots, have fewer assets and control over income. Their access to services is constrained by gender issues at different levels, which makes it more difficult for women to access financial and non-financial services. Still, Rwanda scores among the highest positions in the gender equity index in 2007 with Sweden, Finland, and Norway. This good performance has been achieved by the application of affirmative action policies, particularly for political quota legislation and labour market equity.

Individual farmers have often little market information and weak negotiation skills. Cooperatives are favoured as a way to organise farmers to improve marketing. Trade in crops such as maize, potatoes is partly initiated by village traders from the product areas.

### Powerful stakeholders

Some of the more powerful actors in the priority value chains that the project aims to influence, include private sector players and Government institutions. The Rwanda Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) is a Government institution providing seeds.

The Rwanda Coffee Development Authority (OCIR CAFÉ), under the Rwandan Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI), supervises coffee related activities from production to commercialization.

One of the key buyers for maize and beans is WFP under the P4P (Purchase for progress). This initiative is to support the Government’s efforts to boost agricultural production and to improve the income of smallholder farmers by developing the market. Sosoma Industries procures maize, soy and sorghum for the production of ‘family porridge’ for marketing in mainly Rwanda and Burundi.

Bulk buyers such as Sosoma and RADA lend money to producers to buy agro-inputs, on the condition to sell their produce back to them at a fixed price at harvest. At harvest time prices elsewhere are sometimes higher.

## Main actors

- The project has links with a number of IFAD supported projects that are implemented through the Ministry of Agriculture: Kirehe Community-Based Watershed Management Project (KWAMP), Support Project for the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture (PAPSTA) and also the Project for Rural Income through Exports (PRICE).
- The implementing CSOs use the IPER platform for peer sharing with other organisations and institutions. The IPER platform in Rwanda is part of Agri-Pro-Focus. IPER brings together producer organisations, NGOs, financial institutions, research institutes, private sector actors and Dutch development and research partners to stimulate agro-entrepreneurship in Rwanda.
- The Higher Institute of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry in Busogo for example is involved in research on improvement of potato seeds, and provides technical knowledge relevant for the value chains.
- YES Rwanda, also a member of IPER, shares best practices for working with young people, at the same time strengthening their own approach to stimulate entrepreneurship amongst youth.

## Why did Oxfam Novib get involved?

In August, 2011, 3 ON partner organizations in Rwanda participated in proposal development to IFAD which was approved in August 2011. These include BAIR, ACORD Rwanda and Duhamic-Adri. All the 3 civil society organizations, had participated in the GALS capacity building as part of the small IFAD grant and the larger WEMAN programme of Oxfam Novib. They are implementing the community-led gender action learning system, strengthening the capacity of their staff and the vulnerable stakeholders in the value chain to improve livelihoods in a gender equitable way, and to sustainably engage the more powerful (private sector) stakeholders. The CSOs work directly with farmer cooperatives or other forms of association in the community, such as 'social forums' or 'Ihuriro'. These are spontaneous, traditional or solidarity-based community associations, formed by poor people for a social purpose (related to care for the sick or response to emergencies in the households). To advocate for pro-poor and gender sensitive policies the CSOs play a role in facilitating the dialogue between the farmers and vulnerable stakeholder groups with the authorities, private sector including financial service providers.

## METHODOLOGY

Since November 2007 Oxfam Novib's Women's Empowerment Mainstreaming And Networking (WEMAN) programme has been spearheading the development of an innovative Gender Action Learning System (GALS). GALS is a key methodology employed by Oxfam Novib to challenge and change gender inequalities in households and communities. It also addresses power issues between communities and service providers, religious and traditional authorities, and private sector and government actors. It is an adaptation, specifically for promotion of gender justice, of the Participatory Action Learning System (PALS) used since 2002 for livelihood improvement, participatory monitoring and impact assessment in programmes supported by Trickle up, Oxfam Novib (ON), Hivos and Aga Khan Foundation.

## What was needed to achieve the changes?

Having the GALS manual and all relevant documentation in place, Identification of the partner core staff team, equip them with knowledge on the methodology to identify and train champions who would lead the peer sharing and learning process.

# RESULTS

- Vulnerable and other key stakeholders have been trained, leading to individual and collective pictorial strategic plans for change in gender relations, empowerment, and improved livelihoods. Including plans for peer training and monitoring progress.
- Sustainable and equitable win-win strategies identified, negotiated and implemented with more powerful private sector actors in the value chains.
- GALS methodology adapted to local context, community-level pictorial manual developed for peer learning, strategies, structures and demonstration cases for peer sharing established.
- Preliminary value chain maps of gender and power relations in all the value chains involved and validated by community-led action research as basis for ongoing stakeholder win-win collaboration.
- Capacity of Oxfam Novib and IFAD supported projects strengthened in the community led gender action learning system for ongoing implementation and up-scaling beyond the project in a range of value chains.
- A range of models for gender action learning and win-win strategies identified, implemented, evaluated and documented in a range of contexts, chains and organisations. This is integrated in an updated generic GALS 'mother manual', building on the manual developed in the small IFAD grant.
- Capacity-building materials for community-level and organisation-level peer sharing developed.

# LESSONS LEARNED

## Successes/results

- More unity in households and dialogue
- More joint decision making; before GALS decision making was done by men.
- Joint leisure time; before men used to go alone to the bars, now they go with their wives.
- Acquisition of land to underpin household visions.
- Improved use of resources (animals, constructions of houses, rehabilitation of houses, financial services).
- Some opened bank accounts to save money individually.
- Increased production and income.
- Health insurance. With improved incomes from banana and potato production some managed to pay health insurance for the family.
- Local authorities are convinced of the use of GALS. This provides a window for scaling up the use of GALS in government programmes.
- Women are able to express their view without fair

## Failures/Challenges

- Quantification is difficult. It requires larger groups, and there should be a stronger focus on self-evaluation.
- In the beginning the peer trainers and value chain members were ashamed for drawing and without confidence and qualify this approach as child's play as it's not for their level
- The challenge of language barrier, because the Rwandan communities speak only one language which is Kinyarwanda and all documents are in English even the trainer was speaking in English that require translators.
- Lack of documents in native language to help the coordination team(Lack of books of GALS approach in local language )
- Lack of common monitoring tools of peer trainer
- Keeping and storing the tools and flipcharts is difficult because they get old easily
- Sustainability of the methodology is limited (peer learning, lack of activities generating income)

## Lessons learnt

- Planning together in family is a good practice because it can reduce conflict in family. This is because using GALS tools at home promotes communication in families since it requires planning.
- GALS methodology include literate and illiterate people ,use of diagrams enable most vulnerable people who don't know how to write and read to participate and be confident
- Vision give direction to follow in the household
- Gals methodology is flexible
- Gals methodology can be easily integrated in other projects
- Pictorial expression are more powerful
- The methodology open the mind of the community to analyse their problems and look for solutions
- There is a need to involve as many stakeholders as possible for dissemination of the approach. National Women councils and gender officers in the districts are critical stakeholders.
- There is a need to be innovative in motivating the peer trainers for the sustainability of the approach in the community. Ideas around buying for them bags; organizing quarterly competitions among the peer trainers, where winners (peer trainers with bigger numbers of trained persons and an appropriate methodology) could be awarded with livestock, bicycles...

## Tips and more

- The use of song and drama in combination with the GALS tools is a key strategy to further strengthen the changes in gender relations.
- The motivations of individuals for voluntary training through internal motivation mechanisation developed by the communities themselves is very critical, i.e. identify other ways to promote peer sharing, e.g. by encouraging communities to compensate the peer trainer (not necessarily in cash, it can be in farm products or food), through public recognition or simple awards.
- Integrating GALS in existing programmes and activities by organizations is considered an essential strategy for scaling up.
- The GALS tools should be used in a flexible way and co-adapted by communities.

# HUMAN INTEREST

## Increased livelihood and behavior change



*Vestine and her family appreciating what they achieved with GALS*

NYIRAHABIMANA Vestine a champion in Irish potato value chain, she is 39 year old, married to MUNYAMBONEZA Esaie and have 4 children, she lives in Nyabihu district, Karago sector, Cyamabuye cell, Buremera village.

Before GALS, her husband used to drink alcohol a lot and hit her and some of her children left school because they couldn't pay school fees for them, all the money was used in alcohol and sometimes they used to sell some of their land to get something to eat; the family didn't have time to talk and sit together for planning for their future. After 2 years in GALS she gave testimony on what GALS helped her to achieve in terms of livelihood and relation with her family: "Before GALS my life was painful, I was very poor and I had Conflict with my husband. I couldn't make a kitchen garden because my husband said that all the land is for him and he will only plant irish potato because it bring a lot of money and said planting vegetable is wasting his land. I tried to share GALS with my husband and children, but only my children adopted it but my husband refused saying that he can't waste time in drawing; he can better go to drink with his friends.

But now I can say that things have changed, because we did our multilane highway and did some plans of buying land together, buying a cow and sheep and having the same right on it, we paid mutual insurance for us and all our children using the money we saved together because before we used to pay this mutual insurance for only children who get sick easily and leave others. Up to now me and my husband we have the same account in the bank (what was not the case before GALS) and we contributed to buy a cow of 87 000 frws (134 USD), and land of 18 acre with 60 000 frws (92 USD), now my husband let me have a kitchen garden where I cultivate vegetable for us to it and it is also a source of income for me because I sell them as well, and the best thing in GALS is that now my husband helps us in planning even if he doesn't draw but he is with us when we plan and he reduced alcohol. I'm really happy for the life I live now and I commit to share my experience with other families who have the same problem I had before GALS."



*Vestine showing the land she planned to buy in the vision with her husband and planted there Irish potato and the kitchen garden.*

Vestine's husband **MUNYAMBONEZA Esaie** testimony on what changed him:" Before I used to think that everything in our family was mine and children and wife didn't have any right on it, and I liked alcohol because I was thinking that every man to be respected by his wife is to come home drunk and hit her, I used also to refuse her to go and participate in cooperative activities. When I saw GALS for the first time, I saw my wife and children planning but I didn't give it importance. What changed my mind was that when I came from the bar drunk I used to come home insult my wife and she would insult me back, and would begin fighting, but after she knew GALS, When I insulted her she didn't insult me back but she was always smiling to me and gave me food, I wanted to know what happened to her and I began to listen to them planning that is when I realized that gender is not about women only but about working with your family to develop, so I commit to share GALS with my friends whom we use to drink together in the bar so that they can change too.

The local authorities in the area (the chief of the village and the agronomist) also testified on the change of this family and also that the methodology helped the family to achieve the performance

contract for their family, neighbours was interested also on the GALS methodology as it can resolve conflict in the family and increase wealth.

Vestine and her family now did also future plans, she said:” Me and my family are happy to achieve what was planned in our vision, for the next year we are planning to buy more land for cultivating more Irish potato so that we can save and pay school fees for all our children, and construct a house where all our family will feel comfortable, I am also planning to grow the land and market where I sell vegetables so that I can save more”.

© Oxfam Novib March 2014, January 2016

First published as an internal document in Oxfam Novib March 2014

Loaded to the Oxfam iLibrary and first published online January 2016

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The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published through the Oxfam iLibrary by Oxfam GB for Oxfam Novib in January 2016.

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