



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT MAINSTREAMING AND NETWORKING (WEMAN): A CASE FROM UGANDA

This case study covers the work of CEFORD. As part of a multi-country Women's Empowerment Mainstreaming and Networking (WEMAN) project a farmers' group working with the local NGO CEFORD in Northern Uganda, adapted the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) to their local context, focussing on individual and collective needs for increasing income and food security through addressing gender inequalities, and increasing access to economic opportunities for all.

This Case Study was a background briefing for Oxfam Novib's 2013 Annual Review, prepared in partnership with CEFORD, and describes the programme in Uganda. 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.

Programme Partner: Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD)

AIM OF THE PROJECT

WEMAN aims at gender equality and pro-poor enterprise development in grains, oilseeds, cocoa, vegetables and fruits value chains in Uganda, Rwanda and Nigeria, and influencing IFAD programmes at design and implementation stages in Africa and Asia. It applies the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) to enable value chain actors to develop visions and movements for change and address gender inequalities as a prerequisite for establishing win-win value chain upgrading.



WEMAN participants reviewing their vision road journey for better livelihoods, CEFORD 2013

CONTEXT

Long periods of forced displacement in Northern Uganda have seriously disrupted agricultural productivity in the region. Despite the current fragile situation with people from Southern Sudan seeking refuge, many Ugandans have returned home since a number of years and resumed cultivation. Some households however are left without property and others lost track of their ancestral lineage. Many are traumatised as a result of the war and have lost their parents or other family members. It is a vulnerable region because rainfall is low and the soils are over cultivated due to population pressure. Most farmers are trapped in production for subsistence, buying few inputs, pursuing low value production and participating in the market only when surplus is produced. At the household level there are conflicts about what to sell and what to keep as food for the family.

Rice and oilseeds such as sesame are mainly grown by smallholder farmers, usually alongside a variety of other subsistence and cash crops. Rice is increasingly used to cope with food shortage because it matures more quickly than other food crops. Women play a major role in production of these crops, which are used for food and as cash crops. Production is often so low that limited quantities can be sold. Women face numerous challenges in order to increase their participation in the economy, and gender norms restrain men from contributing to household welfare. Although women have user rights over land, the land belongs to men. This is strongly related to the inequality in distribution of benefits between women and men, as well as women's limited control over income. It is therefore very difficult to invest in improving productivity and quality.

There are some cooperatives, farmers and marketing associations, but many smallholder farmers are not well organised and scattered over large areas with poor roads. Crops are mainly consumed or sold individually through traders immediately after harvest due to limited storage facilities and immediate needs for cash. Many farmers and traders are indebted, which does not improve their bargaining position. IFAD-supported programmes such as the Vegetable Oil Development Project

(VODP) introduce new varieties and technologies, but with its technical focus the root causes of poverty are hardly addressed. The District Livelihoods Support Programme effectively reaches poor people using the Household Mentoring Approach, but can be improved with strategies for movement building and inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Olam is the mayor bulk buyer of unprocessed sesame for export. Middle traders who bulk sesame and groundnuts in their houses, later sell to either small processors of groundnut or sesame paste, which is retailed directly by the processors to either the consumers, or bulk buyers who later repackage it and take to Kampala and other markets. Rice is sold to various companies and traders. The irregular supply and quality and poor terms of trading in rice seeds was identified as a specific challenge in the rice value chain which demand the involvement of input dealers.

Oxfam Novib saw an added value for the WEMAN programme to address the various interlinked challenges to increase the impact of existing CEFORD programmes in the West Nile region.

METHODOLOGY

Central in the theory of change of WEMAN is that gender inequality and related root causes of poverty are critical to understanding and addressing the 'weakest links' in value chains, and that these need to be addressed for sustainable upgrading leading to growth and poverty reduction at the same time. Changing gender norms and relations at household level, gender discrimination in markets, domestic violence, and unequal property rights, for example, all require the building of movements for change at community level.

Movements are catalysed by poor women and men that have changed their behaviour by themselves, and improved their livelihood and family welfare, rather than existing leaders in the community. As change makers, they influence their peers because these have seen the change in them. Existing leaders need to be engaged to reinforce the change rather than catalyse it. For vulnerable actors to benefit from value chain development, the approach to upgrading needs to be community-led. Changing the linkages between value chain actors in such a way that it does not only promote growth, but also poverty reduction, requires strengthening action learning skills and empowering vulnerable people, often found at the start of the chain, to lead to negotiation process rather than participate through representatives.

The Gender Action Learning System (GALS ¹) provides a community-led empowerment methodology that can be integrated into agricultural extension, rural finance, livelihood training programmes, and value chains or local economic development processes. It structures the movement building for transforming gender relations and promoting respect and collaboration between value chain actors. It uses a set of visual diagramming tools for life planning, which can be used by; i) non-literate women and men; ii) increases agency and expands choices through encouraging reflection and strengthening planning skills; and iii) encourages reflection and action on gender justice.

CEFORD in Uganda is one of the 10 CSO partners from the three countries that is using GALS to contribute to gender justice and sustainable livelihoods. They operate in the West Nile Region of Uganda with programmes focusing on building the institutional capacity of NGOs, community based organisations, farmer organisations, self-help groups and schools focusing on agriculture, education, health and governance. With the low literacy levels in the area, a key strategic entry point is the Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) programme since 2000. Oxfam Novib first introduced GALS to CEFORD in 2008, and by the end of 2011 CEFORD was included in the multi-country WEMAN project co-funded by IFAD. In CEFORD a Programme Coordinator is responsible for implementation of activities and programme officers at the District level as well as Community Link persons at the Sub County level support the implementation.

The role of the Oxfam Novib WEMAN team is to organize capacity development workshops on GALS, monitor the quality of applying the global principles of WEMAN, document and disseminate best practices and manuals, facilitate south-south sharing of experiences and oversee the linkages with IFAD-supported projects. CEFORD works with marketing associations and adult literacy groups in West Nile to adapt GALS to their situation, challenge existing power structures in the communities and develop skills for individual life and livelihood planning; collective action and gender advocacy;

institutional awareness-raising and changing power relationships. This requires CEFORD staff to develop a network of community link agents and GALS peer trainers, to organize workshops to introduce and adapt GALS with the target group to the local context, to strengthen the action learning and peer replication in communities. CEFORD trained groups on self-monitoring using the same visual GALS drawing tools, and facilitated the review of the behaviour changes and livelihoods improvements people had been able to achieve after one year. From this agenda's for change were developed and communicated with sesame and rice value chain actors. Value chain multi-stakeholder meetings and events were organized to identify and negotiate win-win strategies in these value chains that promote increased incomes and gender equality.

For CEFORD to be able to effectively implement this, a change process in the organization was needed. Staff attitudes changed from seeing target groups as beneficiaries that need aid, to change actors that can plan for themselves and dismantle obstacles in their environment that restrain them from achieving their visions in life and businesses. CEFORD integrated GALS in policies: GALS training is obligatory in staff induction, and the methodology is integrated in organisational manuals for mobilization, extension and functional adult literacy programmes. Poroporo Multi-Purpose Group in Yumbe is one of the farmer groups involved in the project.

RESULTS

CEFORD by 2013 had directly reached around 6000 people in vulnerable communities (40% men, 60% women) that have benefited from WEMAN, and an estimated 17,000 people indirectly. This section gives the results of the interventions mid-way the project in one of the groups CEFORD works with: The Poroporo Multipurpose Group in Yumbe district, a remote area in the North-West of Uganda near to the borders of South Sudan and DRC. About 90% of the population is Muslim and families are predominantly polygamous. The information was gathered by a study team and through self-monitoring by the group members. It started as a Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) Group in 2010 with 15 women and increased to 25 members, 6 of whom were men. The group initially aimed to overcome negative impacts on women of cultural and religious practices such as polygamy and early marriages, and high levels of illiteracy. The interventions with GALS helped the group to develop economic activities and grow to 120 members and develop an apex structure with 3 subgroups.

The key areas of change in the lives of the members include a more equal division of labour between women and men, and within polygamous families; men accepting that women can own land and other property, joint vision for the future at household level. GALS was effective to address (potential) conflicts within households, joint family planning and decision making on assets and income generation, joint household work and improved (both monogamous as well as polygamous) relationships.

Division of labour: from the 81 men who participated in the review, 60 (73%) gave testimonies of behaviour change. Where previously seen as women's tasks, these men now fetch water, cook food, and take care of babies and children. There were also testimonies of more equal sharing of farm labour. Out of 82 women who participated in the review, 60 confirmed the changes in division of labour and care tasks. This increased family welfare and helped women to spend time on developing enterprises and leisure, which was formerly reserved for men.

One of the issues that Poroporo group prioritised was property rights for women, particularly land rights. The common practice in case of death of a husband or divorce is that the in-laws claim the land and widows or divorced women lose their livelihood. Both the men and women have made commitments to have joint land agreements on both inherited and bought land, including the in-laws.

During the participatory review members indicated that women have attained some level of decision making power in their homes, both among monogamous and polygamous marriages. This includes decisions on what produce to sell, for what purpose, and how much to keep for consumption. There were testimonies of women taking the lead in selling large quantities of produce, where formerly they were only allowed to sell small quantities at local markets. For sesame, joint marketing arrangements have been made with agents of bulk buyer Olam. With improved negotiation skills the group members identify which marketing channels benefit them most and more easily engage with agents.

30 women out of 52 reported having been consulted by their husbands on how many children to have, something that has never happened before in their lives. Both men and women also reduced or stopped drinking alcohol and saw that they were more respected in the community. They are consulted by others on family matters or community issues, and are elected for local duties.

IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

These behaviour changes are leading to more income from farming, sowing, selling seedlings and trading in fish. The household and group visions motivated members to reduce expenditures on alcohol and increase their savings. Before the project average weekly savings were between 500 and 1000 Uganda shillings (between 16 and 33 Eurocents), and by mid 2013 this had increased to 5000-10,000 Uganda shillings (€ 1,65 to € 3,35). Poroporo group set a target of accumulating 17 millions Uganda shillings (€ 5,670) in group savings. The increased income and savings enabled members of Poroporo group to invest in land, animals, bicycles and other household properties. Bicycles are used to transport sesame and other goods to far markets. 22 men and 41 women members from the group indicated that they are now able to pay school fees to send their children to school where this was previously not possible.

As a group they bought chairs to hire out for parties and events. The income that was generated was used to build a storage facility for bulking their sesame produce.

GALS created a safe platform for social change agents to emerge (rather than be selected), where also men can openly share their problems and where women and men can develop their local leadership capacity. When the study team visited 8 randomly selected members, 6 of them had been appointed to leadership positions in local schools, religious institutes or the local council, increasing their social and political participation. This was further attested by testimonies from neighbors, community leaders and family members. As change actors members have been able to transform their economic and social status in becoming community role models.

The Yumbe District local government was impressed by the results of the group, and Poroporo group successfully advocated for the local government officials to promote the use of GALS. The council issued a resolution that GALS should be promoted in all 12 sub-counties and one town council. So far they have reached 9 sub-counties i.e (Kuru, Lododnga, Drajini, Kochi, Ramogi, Kululu, Kei, Apo and Midigo).

LESSONS LEARNED

CEFORD and the study team concluded that GALS allows for self-reflection and increases people's awareness how to plan and to mobilise local resources for their own development. While GALS starts with individuals, its potential is significantly amplified in a group:

- The groups provides moral support, offers peer-mentoring and co-learning (and their differences as a source of learning creating group synergy), group monitoring and follow-up on individual plans.
- The group provides a platform creating and building a democratic culture where skills and opportunities for lobbying and advocacy on development issues can be developed. The use of GALS develops a sense of self-reliance for community members to take up responsibility for their own local development and inter-dependence at community level and the notion of community voluntarism.
- The group dynamic enables co-creation of new knowledge and group norms that foster behavioral change within (and potentially outside) the group.
- The bulking and joint marketing of produce as well as the savings attract and motivate members to be part of the group, and to adhere to the new group norms.

Apart from the gender principles, CEFORD and the study team concluded that applying the principle that Everyone can be a leader was key for achieving impact. GALS provides a framework and a safe environment for people to express their views in an inclusive discussion where there was no

difference between literate and non-literate people. Change agents emerge from the group and convince others to change based “being the change” themselves.

Organisational support factors contributed to the success:

- GALS was first introduced at the organisational level using either the gender justice diamond² and/or the road journey visioning tool³. The organisation structure of CEFORD greatly influences the way GALS has been implemented or even integrated in existing structures, programmes and projects. In both cases all staff is familiar with GALS principles and its tools⁴.
- The change process in the organisation, particularly the changes in attitude of the staff and the change in the way they relate with the community participants has been essential for achieving impact.
- CEFORD has mainstreamed GALS into all their programmes and considers the use of the methodology to be essential to catalyse change in gender norms and behaviour. CEFORD made use of the existing FAL groups that they were already working with. Currently GALS has been integrated in the FAL curriculum where out of the 5 day training, 1 day is used to introduce GALS.

The Participatory Gender Review that was conducted in 2013 enabled the members of Poroporo to review and continue to monitor progress on the priorities they have set as individuals and as a group. Moreover, it helped the group to clarify and adapt their visions for the future, and learn how they can quicker achieve results. CEFORD concluded that the review is best led by GALS peer trainers from the groups instead of by staff. This created full ownership of the review process in Poroporo, and they decided to carry out the review every 6 months. Although the groups such as Poroporo document their progress in drawings, it remains a challenge for CEFORD to gather and consolidate this information into solid information about impact. Since people do the review for their own information needs, it is done slightly different in each group, which makes it difficult to aggregate the information.

Read more...

For more information see <http://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Value-chains-and-the-rural-economy-making-it-work-for-women-and-men.html> and www.ceford.org.ug

HUMAN INTEREST

Can GALS support women in a polygamous relationship to own and control their own as sets?



Aleti Kubra's initial vision road journey for improving her livelihood and having a happy family

The story of Kubra Aleti: first wife in a polygamous relationship with two other women. Kubra Aleti is a member of the Poroporo Multi purpose Group based in Kemeru Village, in Alinga Parish, Yumbe District. She is the first wife in a polygamous marriage with two co-wives. She has five children, two boys and three girls. The second wife has three boys and four girls, and the third wife has two boys and two girls. Her husband was the first to join the FAL programme and invited the wives. Of the three wives, she was the only one interested and started attending FAL.

After attending the FAL programme for 6 months the other wives began to see a change in Kubra, they also got interested and started attending FAL lessons. Before the GALS programme, the wives were working individually. When GALS came, she was the first one to attend in 2012. She came back from the GALS training and briefed the other core wives and the husband.

She now each has support from the core wives, they help each other in the fields, older children help with looking after the younger ones from the 3rd wife. They have sixteen children between them and have family planning meetings.

Before GALS training, food security was a problem in the family and Kubra said they never realised that their goats were valued and that they could earn money from them. After GALS training they started realising and identifying the resources around them and how they can use these to develop themselves. She received 7 goats as part of the government National Agricultural Technical Services (NATS) programme and had five goats. Within a year, she now has 25 goats and has sold some of the goats and bought two cows. She is encouraging her children to achieve their visions and has given each of them a goat. Marusela, a woman neighbour to the polygamous family, testified that she has seen a significant improvement in the family's unity and well being. She is also ready to join GALS.

NOTES

¹ WEMAN applies three interlinked strategies: 1) Community-led Gender Action Learning System (GALS); 2) Gender mainstreaming and innovation in economic interventions and institutions; 3) Global learning network and advocacy movement.

² See GALS manual 1 “Tree of Diamond Dreams”

³ GALS manual 2 “Steering Life’s Rocky Road”

⁴ CEFORD is familiar with the following GALS tools: Gender Diamond; Achievement Road Journeys; individual Empowerment Maps; Increase income Tree; Impact Tree.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please e-mail info@oxfamnovib.nl

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