



## TITLE OF CASE:

## IMPROVING OUR LIVELIHOODS: GENDER EQUALITY WORKS !

Name counterpart: CEFORD

ONL's strategic programme: Aims 1 and 5

Theme: gender justice in agricultural value chains

Country: West Nile, Uganda

Author: Thies Reemer, March 2014

### Summary of the Case

A group of farmers working with the local NGO CEFORD in Northern Uganda learned about the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) from other farmers in Western Uganda. The methodology helped them to increase their income, have more food for their families and build up collective capital. It made them see clearly the link between gender equality and a better livelihood with more economic opportunities. The initiative was part of Oxfam Novib's WEMAN<sup>1</sup> programme. With support from GIZ<sup>2</sup> and IFAD<sup>3</sup> the effectiveness and reach of GALS were studied in the field through interviews and participatory exercises with one of the farmer groups involved: Poroporo Multi-Purpose Group in Yumbe District. The results are summarised in this case study.

### Full description of the Case

#### a. Aim of the project

WEMAN aims at gender equality and pro-poor enterprise development in grains, oilseeds, cocoa,



**Figure 1: youth in West Nile discussing a vision road journey for gender equality and sustainable livelihoods, CEFORD 2013**

<sup>1</sup> Women's Empowerment Mainstreaming And Networking (WEMAN), a global programme of Oxfam Novib for gender justice in economic development. <http://www.oxfamnovib.nl/weman>. GALS was developed by Linda Mayoux with local CSOs and MFIs from Uganda, Sudan, Peru, Pakistan and India under Oxfam Novib's WEMAN programme established in 2007. It builds on the earlier developed Participatory Action Learning System by Linda Mayoux, and the Appreciative Inquiry, Participatory Learning and Action.

<sup>2</sup> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

<sup>3</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development

vegetables and fruits value chains in **Uganda, Rwanda and Nigeria**, and influencing government programmes at design and implementation stages in Africa and Asia. It applies the Gender Action Learning System (GALS). This enables value chain actors to develop visions and movements for change and address gender inequalities as a prerequisite for upgrading the value chain in a way that everyone benefits.

## **b. Context**

Long periods of forced displacement in Northern Uganda have seriously disrupted agricultural productivity in the region. Despite the 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. Rainfall is low and the soils are over-cultivated due to increasing population pressure. Most farmers are trapped in production for subsistence. They hardly buy inputs and they pursue low value production. Only when surplus is produced they participate in markets. At the household level there are conflicts about what to sell and what to keep as food for the family.

In the West Nile region, 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 as food and as cash crops. Production is often so low that limited quantities can be sold. Women face numerous challenges in order to participate in the economy. Gender norms restrain men from contributing to household welfare. Although women have user rights over land and often do most of the work, the land generally belongs to men. Anything harvested from the land is regarded as men's property. Women therefore hardly control any income from farming and rarely have decision making power on crop planning. Consequently they cannot invest in improving the productivity and quality of the produce.

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. Farmers indicate that this is due to limited storage facilities and because they need cash immediately. Many farmers and traders are indebted. This gives them a poor bargaining position, so they often sell for low prices. IFAD-supported programmes such as the Vegetable Oil Development Project (VODP) introduce new varieties and technologies. This offers solutions for technical problems with farming, but not for outreach to poor people and for the inequalities between women and men. The District Livelihoods Support Programme (DLSP), another government programme supported by IFAD, applies the Household Mentoring Approach<sup>4</sup> for this reason.

Olam is the mayor bulk buyer of unprocessed oilseeds such as sesame and groundnuts for export. There are also individual small-scale traders who bulk sesame and groundnuts and store it in their houses. When prices go up they sell to bulk buyers who take it to Kampala. They also sell locally to small processors of groundnut or sesame paste, who then sell directly to local consumers. Similarly, rice is sold to various companies and traders. The irregular supply by input dealers in terms of quality and timing is seen as a major challenge in the rice value chain.

CEFORD sees an added value for participating in Oxfam Novib's WEMAN programme to address the social challenges and gender inequalities to increase the impact of their existing programmes for rural development in the West Nile region.

---

<sup>4</sup> See the case study: <https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40205133/Household+Mentoring%2C+Uganda.pdf/fb332ae7-77ce-441c-9841-ac464d34ebf0>

## c. Methodology

In the *theory of change of the WEMAN programme* gender inequalities and unequal power relations are seen as critical factors for understanding problems and weak linkages in agricultural value chains. “Pro-poor value chain development” bears the promise of combining economic growth and poverty reduction. However without addressing these inequalities it is unlikely that upgrading initiatives live up to that promise. When upgrading initiatives have a narrow focus on technologies and infrastructure, vulnerable actors in the value chain tend to lose out. They face issues such as market discrimination, exclusion, domestic violence, unequal division of labour and lack of decision making power. These issues are rooted in social norms, stereotypes and beliefs.

To change these, social movements are needed. This needs to start at the family and community level by poor women and men who are changing their behaviour, and who demonstrate how this increases family welfare. They are the best examples to reach out to influence their peers to change as well. Community leaders can enhance this by reinforcing the changes. If value chain upgrading is to contribute to poverty reduction, there should be a focus on empowering those who are currently most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the value chain. Efforts and investments are needed to strengthen these groups to lead the negotiation processes with other actors in the value chain (rather than participate through representatives).

The Gender Action Learning System (GALS <sup>5</sup>) provides a practical *methodology* for this type of “community-led” empowerment process. It can be integrated into agricultural extension, rural finance, livelihood training programmes, and value chains or local economic development processes. GALS provides practical and flexible steps to build a movement for gender equality, and promoting respect, understanding and collaboration between vulnerable and powerful value chain actors. The methodology provides a set of visual diagramming tools (drawing, not writing) that individuals, groups and multi-stakeholder forums can use for visioning, planning, analysis, behaviour change and monitoring. This is backed-up with gender principles and participatory steps, and used in combination with a system for peer learning and group strengthening.

**CEFORD** in Uganda is one of the 10 CSO partners from the three countries that uses 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 challenge power relations and top-down training approaches; to amplify the role of local change makers or “champions” in GALS capacity development activities; to monitor the use of the global principles on gender, participation and leadership; to 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

---

<sup>5</sup> 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

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 trains groups on self-monitoring (using the same GALS drawing tools) to follow and review changes in gender relations and their livelihoods. The self-monitoring helps the farming families to come up with their agenda for negotiation with traders, buyers and service providers in the rice and sesame value chains. Value chain multi-stakeholder meetings and events are organized to identify and negotiate win-win strategies in these value chains for higher incomes and gender equality.

For CEFORD **to be able to effectively implement** this, a change process in the organization was needed. Staff attitudes shifted from seeing target groups as “beneficiaries that need aid”, to “change actors that can plan for themselves” and address challenges that keep them from achieving their visions in life and business. CEFORD integrated GALS into organisational policies: GALS training is obligatory for staff induction, and the methodology is integrated in organisational manuals for social mobilization, agricultural extension and functional adult literacy programmes. **Poroporo Multi-Purpose Group** in Yumbe District is one of the farmer groups involved in the project.

#### d. Results

By 2013 CEFORD had directly reached around 7,278 (61% women and 39% men) who benefited from WEMAN, and an estimated of 18,898 people reached 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 presented below is based on primary data gathered by the study team and through self-monitoring by the group members of Poroporo. 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 (75 women, 45 men) and develop an apex structure with 3 subgroups.

A **key area of change** in the lives of the members was a more equal division of labour between family members. Between women and men, and between members of polygamous households. Participants also stressed that having a joint vision as a family was a significant change, which helped to solve conflicts. Men accepted that women can also own land and other properties just like them. With a joint vision, decision making about assets and income generation was shared more equally between women and men, leading to better decisions for family welfare. Relationships and women’s rights improved in both monogamous and polygamous households.

**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 changes 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. Out of 75 women who

participated in a participatory review 25 (33%), confirmed that they now have their names on the land agreement and have the property rights over that land.

During the participatory review out of the 75 women who participated 63 (84%) indicated that women have gained **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. Out of 150 people consulted, 25 men and 5 women confirmed that they **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 had set a target of accumulating 17 million Uganda shillings (€ 5,670) in group savings. In 2013 they exceeded the target: they accumulated 20.3 million Uganda Shillings. The increased income and savings enabled members of Poroporo group to **invest in land** (34 out of 150 bought land), **animals** (25 out of 150 bought goats). In addition, 15 out of 150 members who participated in the review had bought **bicycles** and 8 had bought motorcycles. Three members managed to finish a permanent house, 85 members bought cooking utensils and 45 acquired chairs 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 neighbours, 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 (Kuru, Lododnga, Drajini, Kochi, Ramogi, Kululu, Kei, Apo and Midigo).

## Lessons learned

CEFORD and the study team concluded that if GALS is well facilitated, it enables participants – including the poor and more disadvantaged group members – to reflect on their lives, 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 group provides moral support, offers peer-mentoring and co-learning, group monitoring and follow-up on individual plans. Differences between people are a source of learning and group synergy.
- The group provides a platform to create 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 behavioural change within (and potentially outside) the group.
- The bulking and joint marketing of agricultural 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 is 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 diamond<sup>6</sup> and the vision road journey tools<sup>7</sup>. The organisation structure of CEFORD greatly influences the way GALS has been implemented or even integrated in existing structures, programmes and projects.
- 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 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 the existing FAL groups. 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<sup>8</sup> 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.

For more information see [www.oxfamnovib.nl/weman](http://www.oxfamnovib.nl/weman) and [www.ceford.org.ug](http://www.ceford.org.ug)

---

<sup>6</sup> See GALS manual 1 “Tree of Diamond Dreams”

<sup>7</sup> GALS manual 2 “Steering Life’s Rocky Road”

<sup>8</sup> A methodology for participatory review of changes, deepening the learning and planning new pathways for change. Forthcoming in a new GALS manual by Linda Mayoux and Oxfam Novib.



## The story of Aleti Kubra

*Can GALS support women in a polygamous relationship to own and control their own assets? The story of Kubra Aleti: first wife in a polygamous relationship with two other women.*

Kubra Aleti is a member of the Poroporo Multipurpose 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. The husband and other wives have all joined the group and individually developed their own

visions which they have combined into a family vision. 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 Advisory Services (NAADS) 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 wellbeing. She is also ready to join GALS.



**Figure 2: Aleti Kubra's initial vision road journey for a better livelihood and happy**



**Figure 3: Aleti Kubra explaining the behaviour changes attributed to the project using a Gender Balance Tree**

## Colophon

### a. Counterpart

**CEFORD stands for Community Empowerment for Rural Development**, one of the Oxfam Novib partners in Uganda that participates in the WEMAN programme. CEFORD has been involved in WEMAN capacity development events since 2008, and by the end of 2011 included in the multi-country WEMAN project co-funded by IFAD.

### b. Project

*Name of the project: GENVAD project under the WEMAN programme*

*Project number: A2020*

*Project period: September 2011 – December 2014*

*Financing: IFAD 1,400,000 Oxfam Novib: USD 700,000 Partners: 70,000 (three countries)*

### c. Bureau/field office dealing with the project

Oxfam in Uganda, and the WEMAN team in Oxfam Novib in The Hague, The Netherlands

### d. Author

Thies Reemer, Oxfam Novib

with contributions of Katja Koegler, based on reports by Okaya John Bosco, CEFORD, Maggie Makanza, Janet Biira (the Study Team).

### e. Source Case

For this case study primary data were gathered from the West Nile region in Uganda by independent consultants Maggie Makanza and Janet Biira through interviews and group discussions, and by GALS champions from Poroporo group in participatory exercises facilitated by CEFORD staff. The case study summarises the information from three documents:

- Case study report by consultants Maggie Makanza and Janet Biira, March 2013
- Gender Justice review report by CEFORD, September 2013
- CEFORD Q1 report 2014 on the GENVAD project

Details about the case study methodology and the number of respondents and participants are available on request.

### f. Aim of the Case

Telling and learning

### g. Approval for publication

Oxfam Novib reserves full copyright of this paper, which was written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues. The text can be freely used for the purposes of campaigning, education and research, provided the source is acknowledged in full.

For further information and other usages of this case study, please email: [prd@oxfamnovib.nl](mailto:prd@oxfamnovib.nl)