

Revisiting women empowerment through a cultural lens

An in-depth analysis of empowerment methodologies in horticulture in rural Ethiopia

Authors: Sarah De Smet; Smaranda Boros



Research

- Collaboration between SNV Ethiopia and Vlerick Business School through ICP programme (prof. dr. Smaranda Boros)
- Research on PALS in the GYEM project with the objective to:
 - Assess the validity of the intervention
 - Assess the impact of the intervention
 - Assess the unforeseen side-effects of the intervention
 - Draw lessons about the larger system
- Data collection:
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Observation in the field
 - Assessment checklist of farmers trained in PALS
 - Own reports from field activities

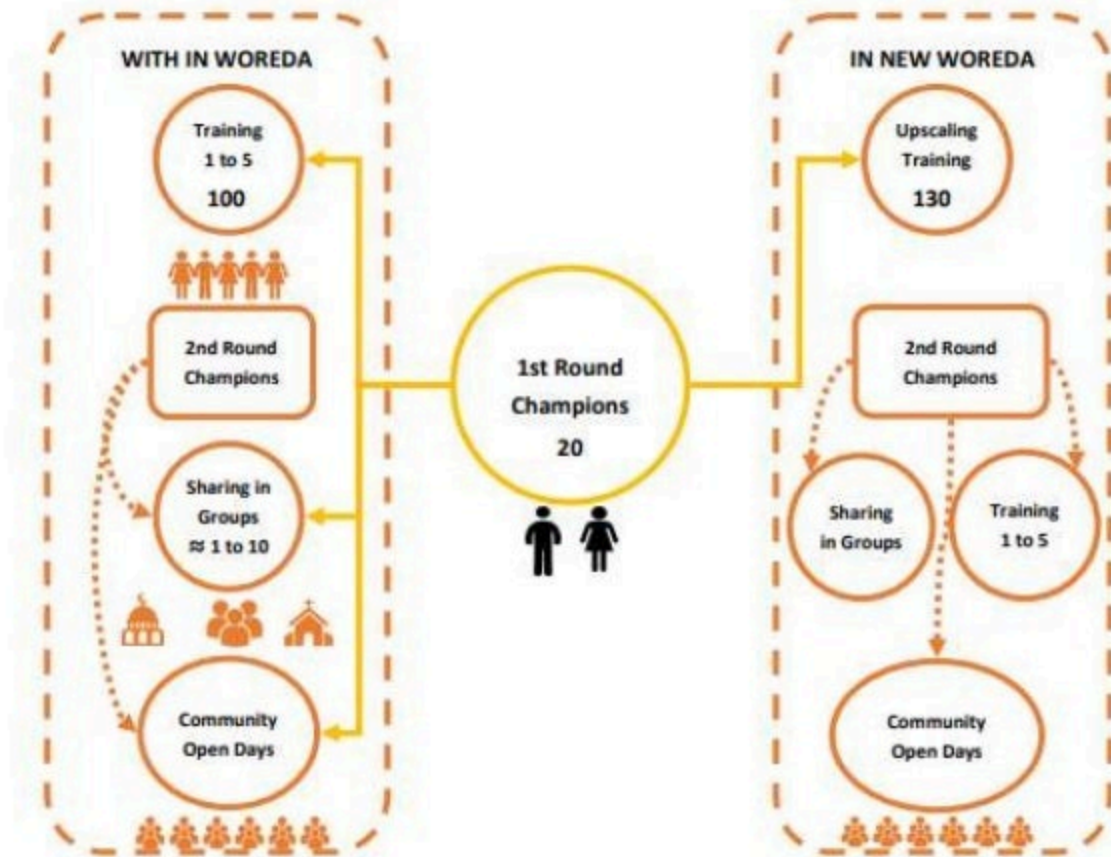
Theoretical background

- Women empowerment:
 - A process by which disempowered women acquire the ability to make strategic life choices (Kabeer, 1999)
 - Increase choice and agency at individual level AND address structural inequalities
 - External facilitators needed to challenge power inequalities
 - Avoid cultural and value based tensions + approach social change as open ended
- Power distance:
 - Hofstede (1984): the degree to which individuals, groups, societies accept inequalities in power as unavoidable, legitimate or functional
 - Implications on perception of justice, on emotions, on behaviour and leadership

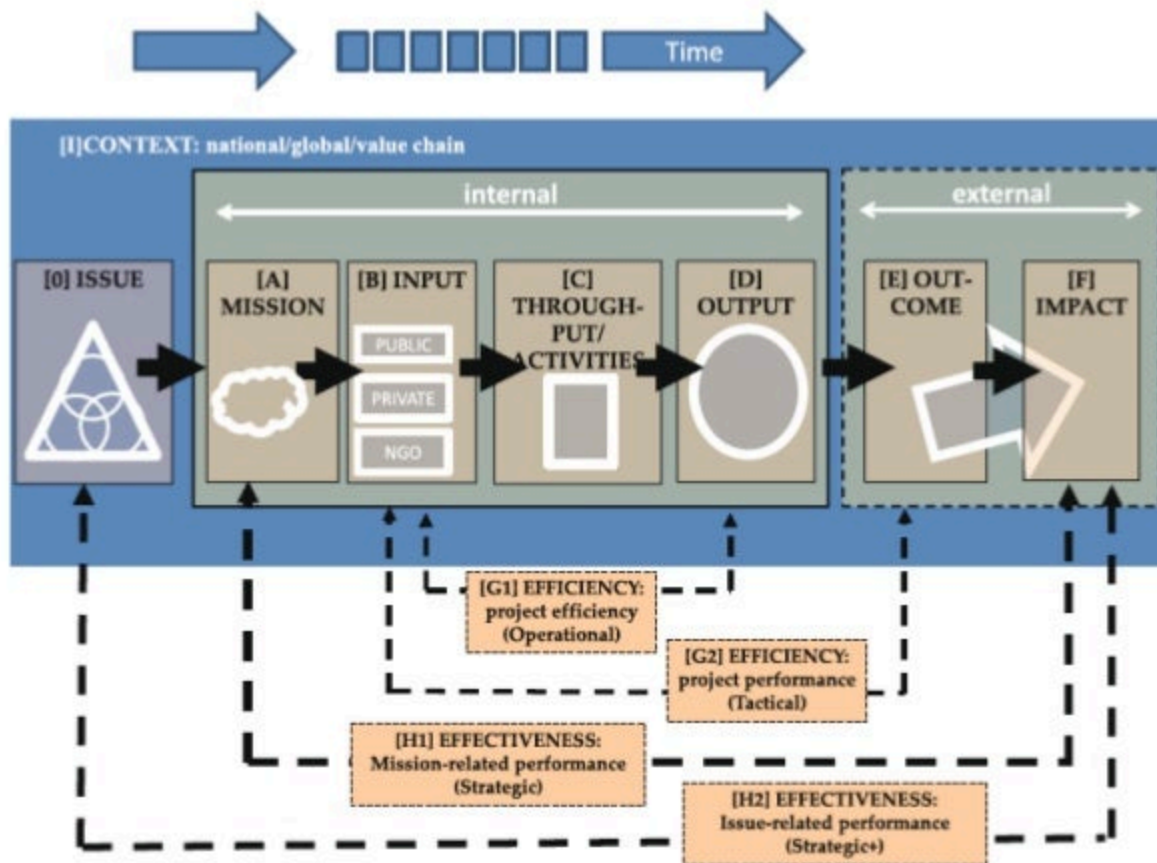
PALS: Participatory Action Learning for Sustainability

- Gender is simple and “means women and men treating each other like equal human beings with equal human rights and social responsibilities”
- Catalyse discussion, reflection and motivation from ‘within’ the participants themselves – based on drawing tools
- Key principles:
 - Start with vision and the positive
 - Everyone can be a leader
 - Action from day 1
 - Inclusion
 - Facilitation from the back
 - Make it fun
- Advocacy and policy

PALS Upscaling



Framework for analysis: Van Tulder model



Findings

- **Mission:**

- PALS: empowerment in order to reach social justice
- Community: "Her son questioned the utility of the training, 'if she did not receive the water pump she wants'"

- **Input:**

- Selection of the champions
 - Men and women from different households: unequal sharing
 - People with 'issues' (70%) mixed with people without 'issues': inspirational for others but risk of failure threatens credibility – gap in pace and understanding during the workshops
 - 4 champions from 5 different villages: little coherence at times, too low number to be influential

Findings

- **Throughput:**

- Facilitation from the back and do not hold the pen of anyone else:
 - Staff level
 - Creative strategies at farmer level

- **Output:**

- Champions understanding of the steps of the tools was mixed
- Champions able to provide content to the the tools was mixed
- Champions sharing with peers and stakeholders was very animated



Findings

- **Outcome**

- Many changes at micro level:
 - Increase of savings (56% women, 50% men)
 - New source of income (60% women)
 - New investments (60% men)
 - Increased respect (50% women, 20% men)
- Meso level:
 - Improved relationship (40%)
 - Less strict division of household tasks (25%)



Findings

- **Impact:**

- Upscaling:

- Frequent copying
 - Uncoordinated facilitation among the trainer farmers, no uniform explanation
 - Lively discussions among champion trainers and 2nd round champion trainees



Recommendations

- **Mission:**
 - Clarify mission from both sides
 - Taking into account power distance between external facilitator and community
- **Input:**
 - Selection of the champions
 - Enough people in number
 - Who are more or less equal in power
 - Involve both husband and wife of the same family
- **Throughput:**
 - In-depth coaching of staff who facilitate the process
 - Facilitation from the back: avoid correcting / organize the workshop in such a way that the need to display power is reduced

Recommendations

- **Output:**
 - Make the tools as simple as possible, disintegrate the steps
 - Reduce various possibilities for interpretation
 - Do provide examples – as many as possible
 - Alter reflection with more discussion in groups with individuals equal in power
- **Outcome:**
 - Timing of gender agenda?
 - Separate structure of women
- **Impact:** Follow up research with second round champions



SNV