

# THEORY OF CHANGE

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

WEMAN stands for Women's Empowerment Mainstreaming And Networking for gender justice in economic development. It is a global program of Oxfam Novib with a vision for *"A world where women and men are able to realise their full potential as economic, social and political actors, free from all gender discrimination, for empowerment of themselves, their families, their communities and global humankind"*. Oxfam's mission is for *"a just world without poverty"*. It takes a *"rights based approach"* to economic development and places special emphasis on gender equality and social inclusion. The program links to Oxfam's larger Economic Justice and Gender Justice Programs<sup>1</sup>. The key methodology employed by WEMAN is the Gender Action Learning System (GALS)<sup>2</sup>.

Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is a development goal in its own right<sup>3</sup>. Women have a right to equal treatment guaranteed by the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>4</sup>. However, it is also recognised as a key to achieving other development goals in the post-2015 development agenda. In recent decades absolute poverty has declined, but socio-economic inequalities have grown between and within regions, between rural and urban areas, between genders, and within vulnerable groups<sup>5</sup>. Many development interventions address the symptoms and overlook the root causes of poverty. For example, they focus on technologies and crops rather than on people in complex livelihood systems. Women make crucial contributions in agriculture and rural enterprises in all developing country regions, as farmers, workers and entrepreneurs. But frequently they are engaged at subsistence or household level or through informal employment and contributions remain hidden and undervalued. They are frequently marginalised in decision making.

The WEMAN program is unique in the way it transforms gender relations and social norms

within economic development interventions. It focuses specifically on rural communities and income generating activities, which often involve agricultural activities and small scale (barter) trading (of agricultural products). The approach is adapted to three broad thematic areas: (1) Market and value chain development; (2) Financial Services; and (3) Economic Policy and Planning. The failure of most economic development programmes to analyse and address poverty and gender constraints affects vulnerable households themselves, but also the flow of quality goods and profits further in the chain. Gender differences such as access to land, resources, markets and credit affect household security and the relative ability of female and male farmers and entrepreneurs to invest, to operate to scale, and benefit from new economic opportunities. Gender norms and peer pressure often constrains men's ability to save money and contribute to the household. A joint vision and gender equality typically means healthier children and more productive, faster-growing local economies. Women have proved to be reliable and loyal microfinance clients yet they continue to be excluded from financial services or are used by men as channels for credit. Investing in women's empowerment can reduce risk and increase profits for financial service providers.

This generic Theory of Change is designed to apply the WEMAN framework to the intervention logic of programs and projects. It includes a diagram and narrative. It provides an overview of the intervention strategies, outputs and outcomes that contribute to the gender justice. The Theory of Change draws on the experience of Oxfam and Partners implementing WEMAN programs and services in a range of countries and contexts. It should be used alongside other WEMAN materials (i.e. manuals<sup>6</sup> and web resources<sup>7</sup>) and adjusted to specific local context. Implementing organisations should be committed to the WEMAN vision. Expertise may be required to assist in developing local capacity for WEMAN programs.

## 2. WEMAN ADDED VALUE

The added value of WEMAN is reflected in the Theory of Change:

1. **Inspire with visions:** the catalyst and driving force for any WEMAN intervention is a vision for change - vision drawings inspire women and men to take action. These are reviewed and updated regularly and adapted in response to change. Simple visual diagramming tools are used by each community member to analyse challenges and identify strategies to overcome them, while always clearly reinforcing the vision to avoid people becoming discouraged when they face problems.
2. **Women and men become agents of change:** the program enables both women and men to become leaders in their own households, communities and beyond. It challenges conventional leadership concepts, builds the skills and voice of the most vulnerable and guides leadership transition. All participants take personal responsibility for changing their own lives and sharing with others, but also provide their own materials (i.e. pens and exercise books) wherever possible to minimise program costs. This ensures external resources are used for maximum benefit, promotes active participation and ownership of individual and collective outcomes.
3. **Gender Justice is non-negotiable:** Human rights, including women's rights established in CEDAW<sup>8</sup>, are non-negotiable. They underlie the WEMAN program and the types of interventions which are supported by implementing agencies. Focusing on women's rights under CEDAW has proved to be the most effective way of gaining wide agreement on women's rights and addressing gender inequality. CEDAW informs national laws, policies, international commitments and action.
4. **Building the economic case for gender equality in development:** Severe poverty and inequality is frequently economic in nature. Women often lack access and control of productive livelihood resources and are under-represented in economic decision making. Addressing gender inequalities also benefits other outcomes for economic development and poverty alleviation. The economic case for gender equality is the entry point to motivate participants to engage in a wider process of necessary mutual support.
5. **Making win-win is possible:** the approach is used as the basis for negotiating win-win strategies to change power and gender relations and promote gender justice, efficiency and higher income generation at all levels. Common interests are identified between poor and vulnerable people and more powerful actors in economic development. In this way the skills, energies and resources of the private sector and institutional stakeholders are engaged in the change process for mutual interests. WEMAN includes tools to integrate gender justice in different thematic areas (i.e. market and value chain development; financial services; and economic policy and planning).
6. **Broad spectrum social change:** interventions target multiple levels (i.e. household, community and organisational level), across sectors (i.e. value chain and economic decision making) and over multiple time-frames to bring about social change in many areas (i.e. domestic violence, food security and crop productivity). WEMAN core strategies include empowerment, mainstreaming and networking which address different domains of change, an approach which is likely to have greater impact on, tackling gender justice. The most effective, cost-efficient and sustainable approach is to gradually integrate the approach with existing activities or to build the capacity of an organisation.
7. **Scaleable, sustainable movements for change:** the approach is designed to grow and be sustainable. It employs pyramid peer learning to reinforce learning and development. Those trained train others because they have self-interest in helping or changing. These people then go on to train others and so on - similar to pyramid marketing. This enables real reversals of ownership and power relations. Resources, staff energies and expertise can be focused where they are really needed. This contributes to scaling up and sustainability of the change movement and outcomes.
8. **Synergy, innovation and impact:** the WEMAN process is distinct and effective. Synergies develop through a process of community-led innovation using visual diagramming tools. It ensures the approach is adapted and responds to the needs and demands of the target group, local actors, country context and thematic areas. Its focus is specifically on empowering women and men in rural communities and income generating activities, with tangible benefits flowing from household, to community and organisational level. Learning is promoted from local level to a global network for social change.

### 3. USING THE THEORY OF CHANGE DIAGRAM

The Theory of Change diagram is linear to highlight key milestones and concepts. In practice, WEMAN strategies (empowerment, gender mainstreaming and networking) are more complex, but they all contribute to gender justice. The pathways of change should be questioned and adapted to the particular context that the Oxfam Office or partner is working in, rather than used as a template. This is especially important given the inter-dependence between strategies, and the fact that there are multiple feedback loops within and between the different elements in the Theory of Change. The narrative below details each stage of the Theory of Change including examples (which must also be adapted to the specific context). This provides a guide to formulating objectives. The diagram should be read vertically from top to bottom starting with the vision.

#### Stage 1: Vision

The social change outcomes in the Theory of Change supported and influenced by each of the three other outcomes, lead to the WEMAN vision for gender justice in economic development.

##### *Example program/project goals:*

- > Women in all their diversity and as equal and active citizens are able to contribute to and - together with their families - benefit from sustainable economic development, participate in decision making processes and live free from violence*
- > Responsive and inclusive economic decision making secures community resource needs;*
- > Inclusive growth contributes to national development goals;*
- > Women have a respected, collective voice, influencing local and national economic development initiatives;*

The focus of the vision is on empowerment so that poverty is alleviated; mainstreaming to reduce the risk of marginalisation and networking for global influence.

The WEMAN vision goes beyond women's access to resources to a situation where gender equality is actively promoted and contributions of women to economic development are recognised. A just world means that everyone can realise their full potential and mutual benefits can be reached through collaboration.

#### Stage 2: Outcomes

The social change outputs, supported and influenced by each of the other 12 outputs, lead to three outcome boxes in the Theory of Change.

##### *Example outcome indicators:*

- > Number of households from baseline reporting a reduction in domestic violence, alcoholism and/or adultery by project end;*
- > Proportion of women vis-à-vis men reporting more equitable access and control of land and productive resources by project end;*
- > Availability of a new policies explicitly addressing women's participation in local level;*
- > Number of women and men reporting improved equity in household decision making and division of labour by project end;*
- > Improved generation and utilisation of gender segregated data for policy and programme development and implementation by Government and other partners;*
- > Number of households with increased male contributions of time and income to the care economy;*
- > Number of formal/informal smallholder groups able to negotiate support and address their collective needs through local economic decision making processes by project end;*
- > Number of financial service providers offering gender sensitive services by project end;*

The three outcomes correspond with the three intervention strategies (empowerment, mainstreaming and networking) and their respective domains of change (household/ community, multi-stakeholder/ organisational and donor investor level).

The boxes at the top of the outcome section focus on social change that is essential for the outcomes to arrive at the vision. The social change outcomes are linked: each supports and influences the other.

WEMAN provides equality of opportunity for men and women and contributes to gender justice. This is referred to by CEDAW as substantive equality between men and women.

### Stage 3: Outputs

Each of the 12 outputs in the Theory of Change is influenced to some extent by each of the three intervention strategies leading to them.

*Example output indicators:*

- > Number of men showing leadership in support of women's rights;
- > Proportion of women and men reporting learning GALS tools and principles through peer learning and mentoring;
- > Number of smallholders, especially women and ethnic minorities taking action using GALS to address gender inequality and negotiate a better position in agricultural value chains;
- > Number of public and private sector staff who have received basic training on GALS methodology;
- > At least 50% of women participating in village development funds report active involvement in management and decision making by the end of year 2 (from a baseline of 10% at project inception);
- > Number of inclusive business partnerships developed to support gender equality in the cattle value chain; and
- > Number of multi-stakeholder gender justice protocols developed and endorsed by project end.

The causal arrows between outputs apply across all the outputs; each output box can affect every other output box. For example win-win strategies contribute to the case for gender justice.

### Stage 4: Intervention Strategies

The WEMAN rests on three linked and mutually reinforcing strategies, which together explain the name and essence of the program. These are outlined in the diagram - with examples of programme entry points and objectives that could apply to each type of intervention.

The intervention strategies support (1) the **empowerment of women** and mobilisation of men for changes in household and community relations; (2) **mainstreaming** for more targeted collective action to address structural barriers to women and men's economic empowerment; and (3) **networking** to link these strategies together to ensure capacity for ongoing innovation.

*Example interventions:*

- > Technical assistance for adapting and integrating Gender Action Learning System (GALS) in agricultural programs and activities of local CSOs, local authorities and businesses;
- > Community-led Gender Action Learning;
- > Informal producer group negotiates improved terms with traders, buyers and financial service providers in the sesame value chain;
- > Establish joint planning and action forums to maintain CSO collaboration with local authorities, and businesses for gender equitable water resources management;
- > Develop and endorse protocols to support gender equality in the coffee sector;
- > WEMAN global forum for data sharing influences donor programming; and
- > Regional advocacy campaign to support women's rights in financial services and in the cacao supply chain.

The causal arrows between interventions apply across all the interventions; each intervention box can affect every other intervention box. In particular *networking* supports both *empowerment* and *mainstreaming*. WEMAN currently addresses three thematic areas: financial services; value chain development and economic policy and planning.

Gender Action Learning System (GALS) is the key methodology used in WEMAN interventions. It is a community-led empowerment methodology (including principles, visual diagramming tools and peer learning mechanisms) that aims to give women as well as men more control over their lives and catalyse and support a sustainable movement for gender justice. This includes promoting women, men and institutions to show leadership for women's economic rights. Initially it is important to build local expertise and capacity for implementing GALS. GALS transforms gender relations and social norms making it unique among existing participatory approaches. The GALS tools can be adapted to a range of contexts - for example the thematic areas.

Together, the interventions lead to 12 outputs. Each intervention can independently influence each output.

## Stage 5: Barriers

The barriers section of the Theory of Change identifies six key obstacles to gender justice in economic development.

### Example barriers:

- > Gender norms and peer pressure constrain men's ability to save money and contribute to the household;
- > Social norms constrain education and literacy of girls and women;
- > Conventional participatory approaches do not effectively address gender relations and social norms;
- > Local economic decision making processes do not meet CEDAW standards in terms of women having a voice;
- > Women continue to face discrimination in accessing financial services despite high outreach statistics;
- > Markets are designed for large and mostly formal private sector players with little, if any, orientation towards the poor.

These barriers are based on a detailed problem analysis and experience of Oxfam and local partners. The intervention strategies are designed to overcome these obstacles.

## Stage 6: Problem

The problem definition at the base of the Theory of Change establishes three inter-related dimensions or problem areas addressed by WEMAN:

- (1) women's human rights;
- (2) poverty; and
- (3) economics.

### Example problems:

- > Women are underrepresented in village authorities;
- > Development interventions focus on providing tenure security without addressing the rights of vulnerable people;
- > Women's rights are not recognised on land certificates;
- > Women lack control of household decision making and finances;
- > Men lack the security offered by a collective household vision and joint control of assets;
- > The potential of micro-finance to contribute to women's empowerment is not utilised;

- > Small and medium sized enterprises do not benefit from women in leadership positions; and
- > Women lack choice and agency in the value chain to negotiate with other stakeholders.

The Theory of Change uses CEDAW as the standard for human rights of women, recognising that women are marginalised based on their gender – i.e. because they are women. WEMAN empowers vulnerable women and men to achieve equal rights, resources and power. Participants develop their own baseline of their current situation as a basis for subsequent interventions.

## 4. ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Oxfam Novib's Gender Justice Programme Objective 2: The promotion of women's transformative leadership and the mainstreaming of gender equality.

<sup>2</sup> GALS (Gender Action Learning System) is a community-led empowerment methodology that aims to give women as well as men more control over their lives and catalyse and support a sustainable movement for gender justice. GALS consists of:

- A set of principles related to gender justice, participation and leadership;
- A series of visual diagramming tools that are used for visioning, analysis, change planning and tracking by individuals, households, stakeholder groups/multi-stakeholder settings;
- Peer learning mechanisms and structures for ongoing action learning in communities; and
- Mechanisms to sustainably integrate GALS in organizations or interventions such as market and value chain development, financial services and economic policy and planning.

<sup>3</sup> Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations (1979). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Retrieved March 15, 2015, from [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm)

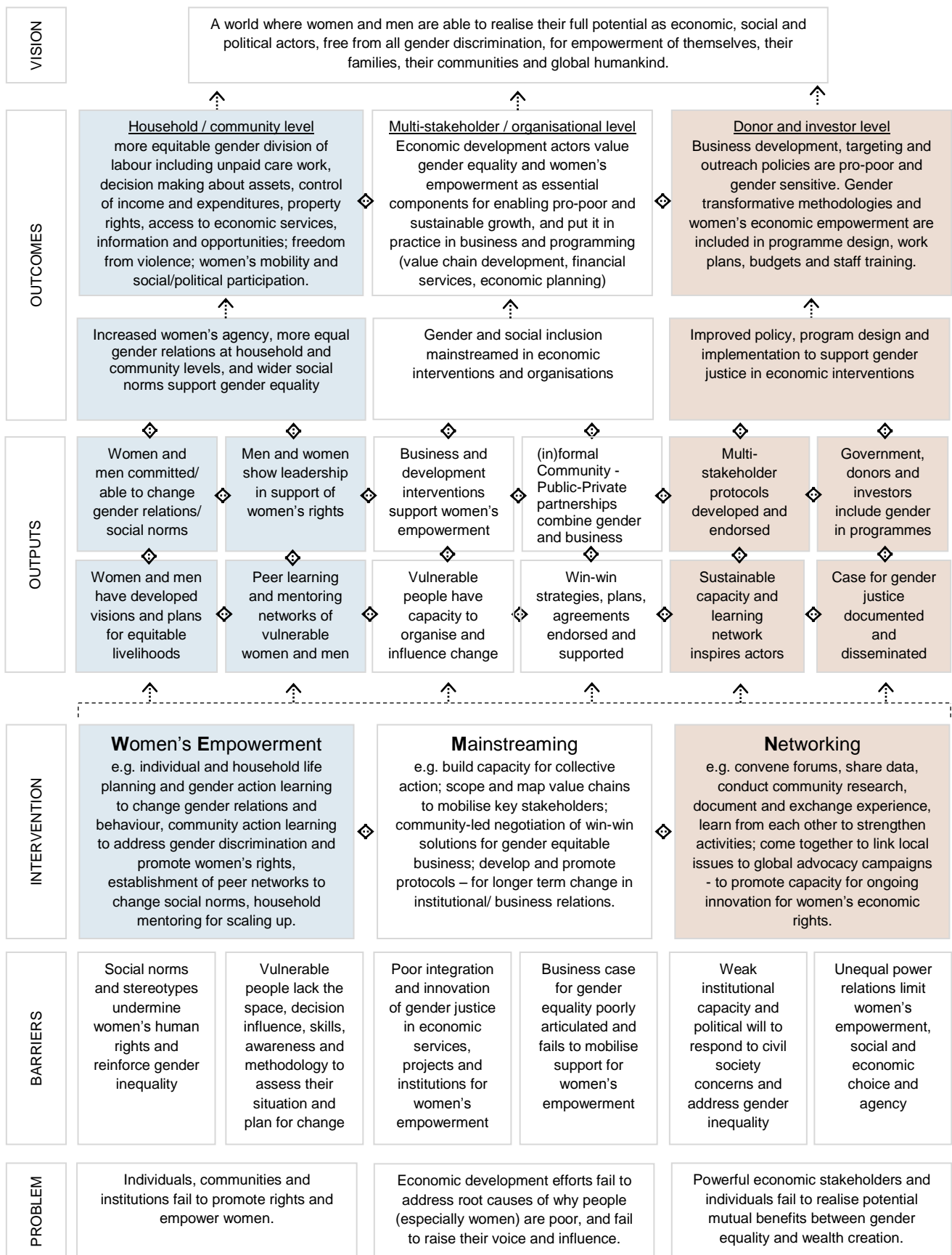
<sup>5</sup> United Nations Development Program. 2012. The Lao Development Journey toward Graduation from LDC Status. Retrieved January 7, 2015, from <http://www.la.undp.org/content/laopdr/en/home/library/poverty/the-lao-development-journey-toward-graduation-from-ldc-status/>

<sup>6</sup> Rocky Road to diamond dreams: GALS Phase 1 Visioning and Catalysing a Gender Justice Movement Implementation Manual, V1.0 - March 2014

<sup>7</sup> [www.wemanresources.info](http://www.wemanresources.info)

<sup>8</sup> UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 CEDAW clarifies the fact that the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights also includes women. By 2005 CEDAW had been signed by 179 countries.

## 5. THEORY OF CHANGE DIAGRAM





**WEMAN STANDS FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT MAINSTREAMING AND NETWORKING (WEMAN) FOR GENDER JUSTICE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. IT IS A GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF OXFAM NOVIB.**

Oxfam Novib  
WEMAN programme  
P.O. Box 30919  
2500 GX The Hague  
The Netherlands  
[www.oxfamnovib.nl](http://www.oxfamnovib.nl)  
[www.wemanglobal.org](http://www.wemanglobal.org)