



A community
typology of
social change
devised from
the bottom-up

Petes, P., Feldman, S., Elias, M., Badstue, L., Najjar, D., Rietveld, A., Bullock, R., Kawarazuka, N., and Luis, J. (2018). Community typology framed by normative climate for agricultural innovation, empowerment, and poverty reduction. *J. Gender, Agriculture and Food Security*, 3(1)

GENNOVATE



- Large-scale collaborative research initiative on interlinkages between **gender norms, agency** and **innovation** in agriculture and NRM across different contexts
- **137 community case studies** in 26 countries and >7,000 women and men of different age- and socio-econ groups
- Standardized **qualitative comparative methodology** enables identification of broad cross-case patterns that remain contextually grounded in local realities
- Bottom-up perspective that draws on feminist and participatory research traditions

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Gender norms

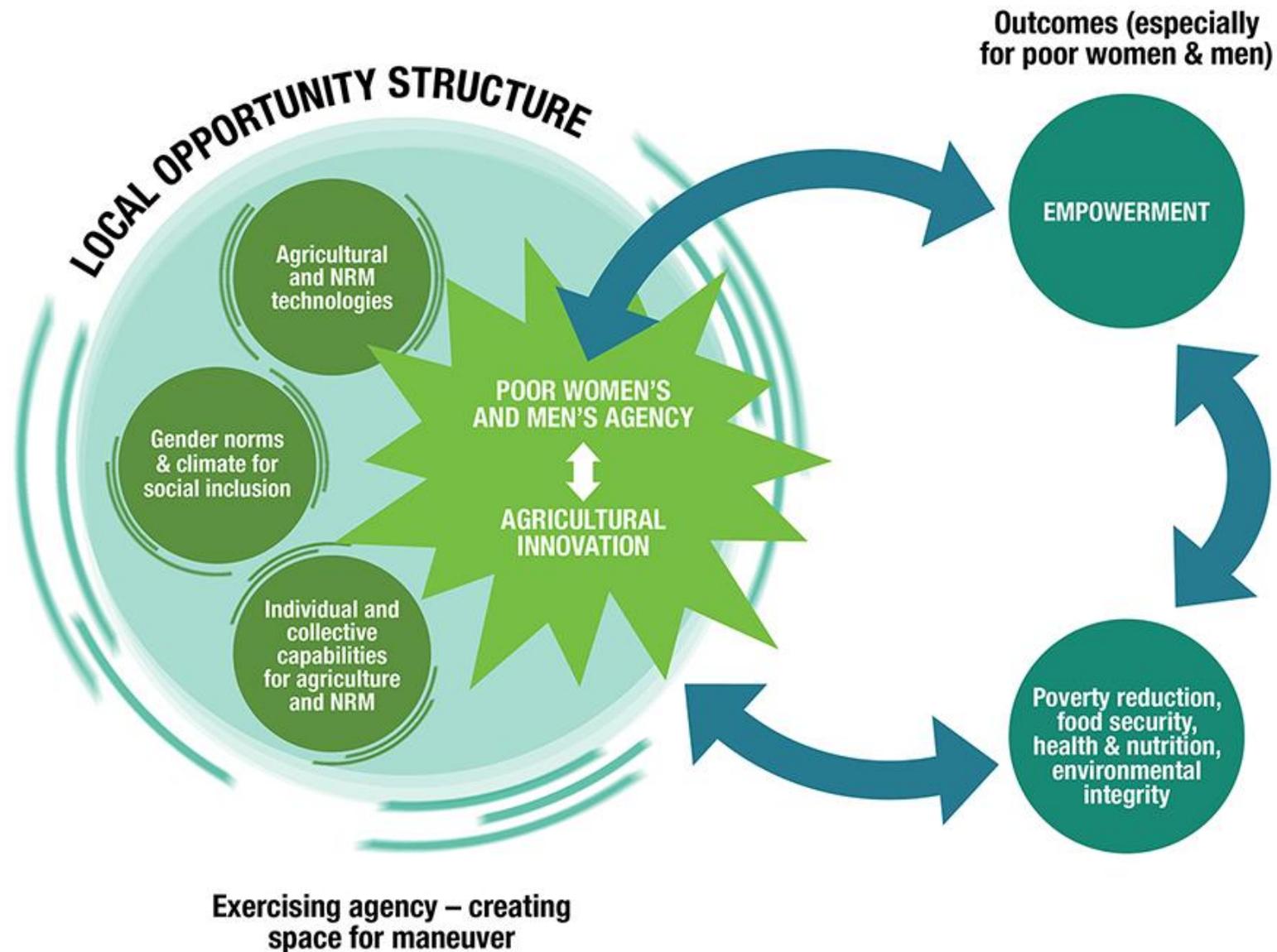
“... specifically mean differential rules of conduct for women and men, including rules governing interactions between women and men.” (Pearse & Connell 2016)

Agency

“The ability to define one’s goals and act upon them.” (Kabeer 1999)



Conceptual Framework



Paper focus

How are gender norms and men's and women's agency changing?

Under what conditions do they stimulate inclusive innovation processes?

Materials

- 79 GENNOVATE community case studies in 17 countries
 - Sex-specific FGDs with poor and middle-class men and women and youth
 - Ladder of Power & Freedom
 - Ladder of Life
 - Other data support contextually informed analysis



A resource for scientists and research teams

Photo: Anjali Dhande

LADDER OF POWER AND FREEDOM: Qualitative data collection tool to understand local perceptions of agency and decision making¹

Introduction

The Ladder of Power and Freedom module is a qualitative data collection tool designed to provide **numerical and narrative data** on perceptions of the **capacities of local men and women to exercise agency and make major decisions in their lives**. The focus group module features four questions and two interactive ranking exercises for either focus group or semi-structured interview instruments.

Purpose of method

The purpose of the tool is to provide **meaningful contextual and comparative evidence** of local men's and women's own assessments and interpretations of the levels of **agency** in their lives, and the key factors and processes that they perceive to shape their capacities for making important decisions. Agency refers to the capacity to make important decisions in one's life and act upon them. Measures of agency are central to understanding processes of empowerment and social, political, and economic change both locally and more broadly.²

The Ladder data has research and practical applications, including:

- multidimensional evidence on agency and local gender norms, and how they are interacting to shape gender roles and relations, access to opportunities, and perceptions of wellbeing in a given social context;
- comparative qualitative measures of agency that remain contextually grounded;
- dynamic findings which can contribute to longitudinal research, or to interpretations of quantitative measures of agency and empowerment in mixed-methods approaches; and
- contextual and comparative evidence which can inform programmatic and MSE; needs of relevance to more inclusive and effective agricultural innovation and wider development processes in an intervention area.

¹ The resource builds on Hossain, F., Saito, L., Puri, G. (2019). Gender norms, agency and innovation in agriculture and natural resource management: The GENNOVATE evaluation. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 3: 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2019.00010>. The guide draws on a wide range of additional literature, such as Freedom and Control: Applications of the tool by the field team.

² For a useful general discussion of agency see Sen, G. (1983) *What does agency and freedom?* The *Journal of Philosophy*, 80(4), 183-221; and for gender dimensions in assessments of agency see Kabeer's (1998) *Women, agency and economic development: The measurement of women's empowerment*. *Development and Change*, 29(2), 435-464.



A resource for scientists and research teams

LADDER OF LIFE: Qualitative data collection tool to understand local perceptions of poverty dynamics

Introduction

The Ladder of Life is a focus group tool co-developed with poor women and men. It is meant to explore their understandings and interpretations of the different wellbeing groups and the poverty lines in their community and the key factors and processes that shape these dynamics. Here we outline the purpose of the tool, highlight key fieldwork procedures, and reproduce the interview guide. We also provide an example of findings from the GENNOVATE research initiative.

Purpose of method

The Ladder of Life tool generates:

- **Multidimensional and gender-differentiated narrative evidence** on perceptions of opportunities for local farmers to escape poverty as a community, and insights into the local culture of inequality, normative expectations, and social group differences that underpin their poverty dynamics.
- **Comparative statistics** on household poverty trends at the community level that are contextually grounded in local understandings and opinions of wellbeing and living.
- **Improved understanding of social and gender dimensions affecting technology adoption and benefits** among the poorer social groups in a community, and wider processes of development and social change underway in an intervention area.
- **Collaborative research processes** that give importance to understanding poor women's and men's own interpretations of and responses to their poverty and socio-economic mobility, and to learn in and/or from communities to shared learning and action among stakeholders at diverse levels.



Community typology

- Transforming: 8
- Climbing: 39
- Churning: 32



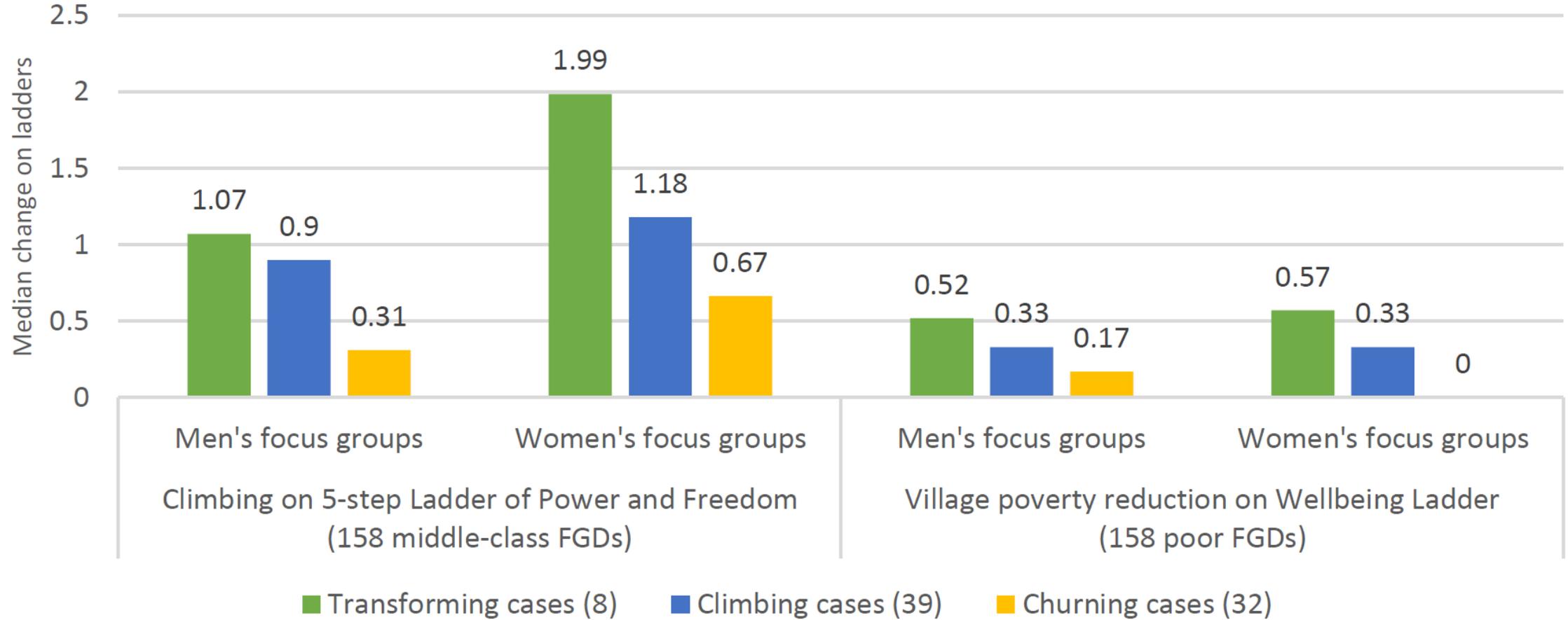


Figure 1. Perceptions of change in power and freedom and poverty reduction, focus group assessments by type of cases (316 focus groups, 79 cases)

Churning context: Amatuma - peri-urban Luhya village of Vihiga county in western Kenya

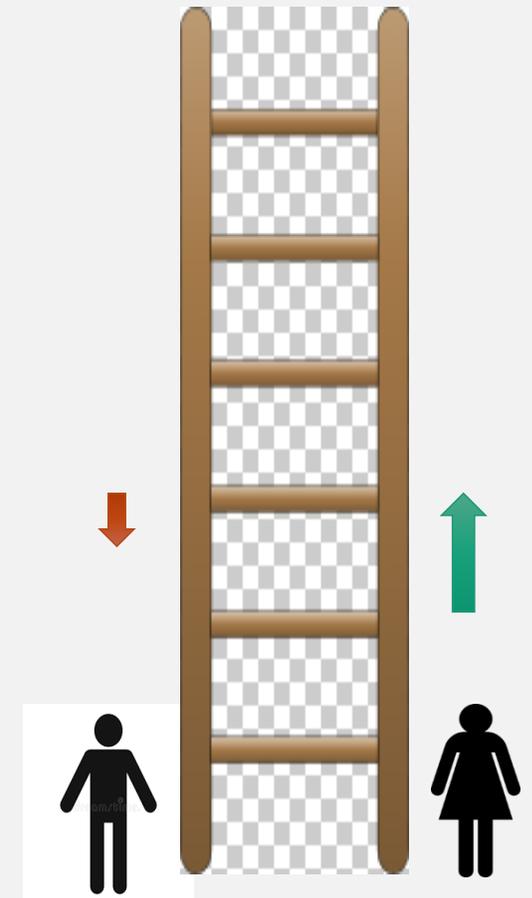
A normative climate where men fear emasculation but norms for women are relaxing as they take on expanded roles in their family and local economy.

- *“Back then women were less informed, but today we attend seminars like this one so you find that [now] women even can keep cattle for milk produce, which gives them cash.”*

Women’s middle class focus group

- *“There is a crisis in this area. Men are dying at a fast rate! Women are then the heads of the home”*

Female key informant, community leader



Transforming context: Nodira– Commercial farming village of Uzbekistan’s Andijan Province

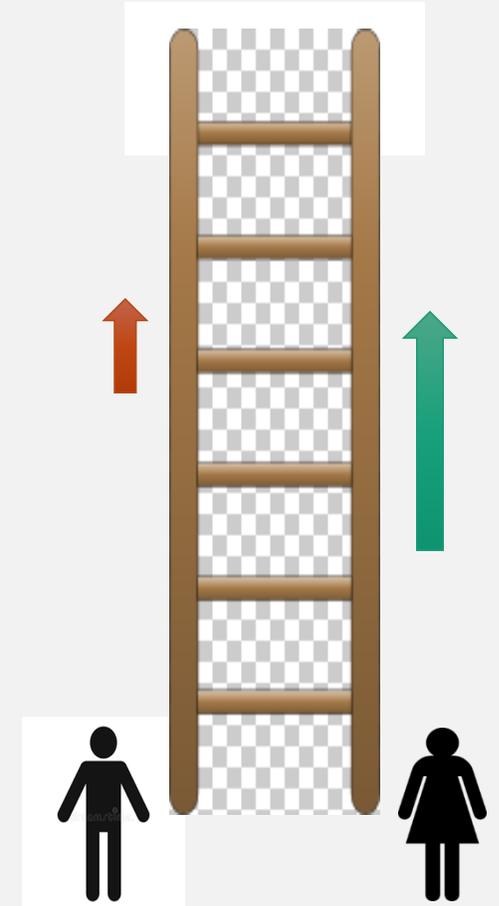
A normative climate where some patriarchal norms persist alongside very relaxed norms that enable women to exercise significant economic roles.

- *“We [women] need to work and take matters into our own hands and head our households. This has had a very strong impact on the economic activity of women.”*

Local social worker

- *[Women] enjoy the same rights as men do. There is nothing bad about this. It’s good. And the longer couples live together, they start to take decisions together related to the household.*

(Focus group of poor men)



Transforming cases

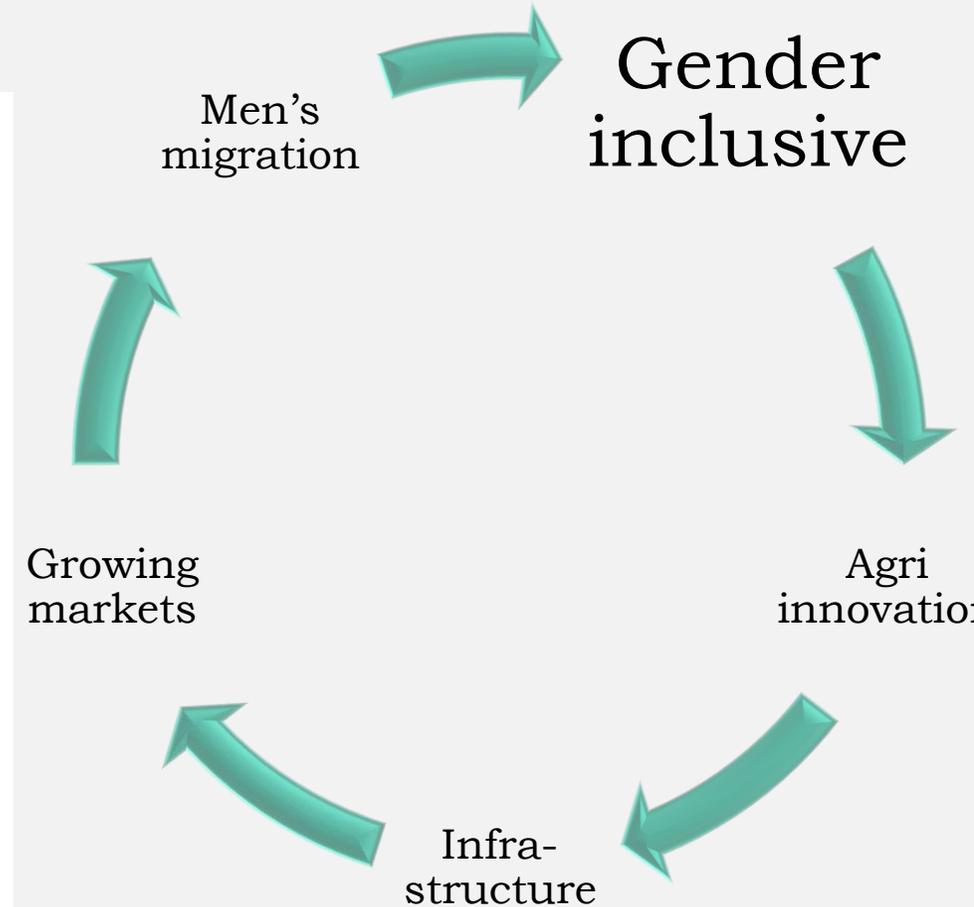
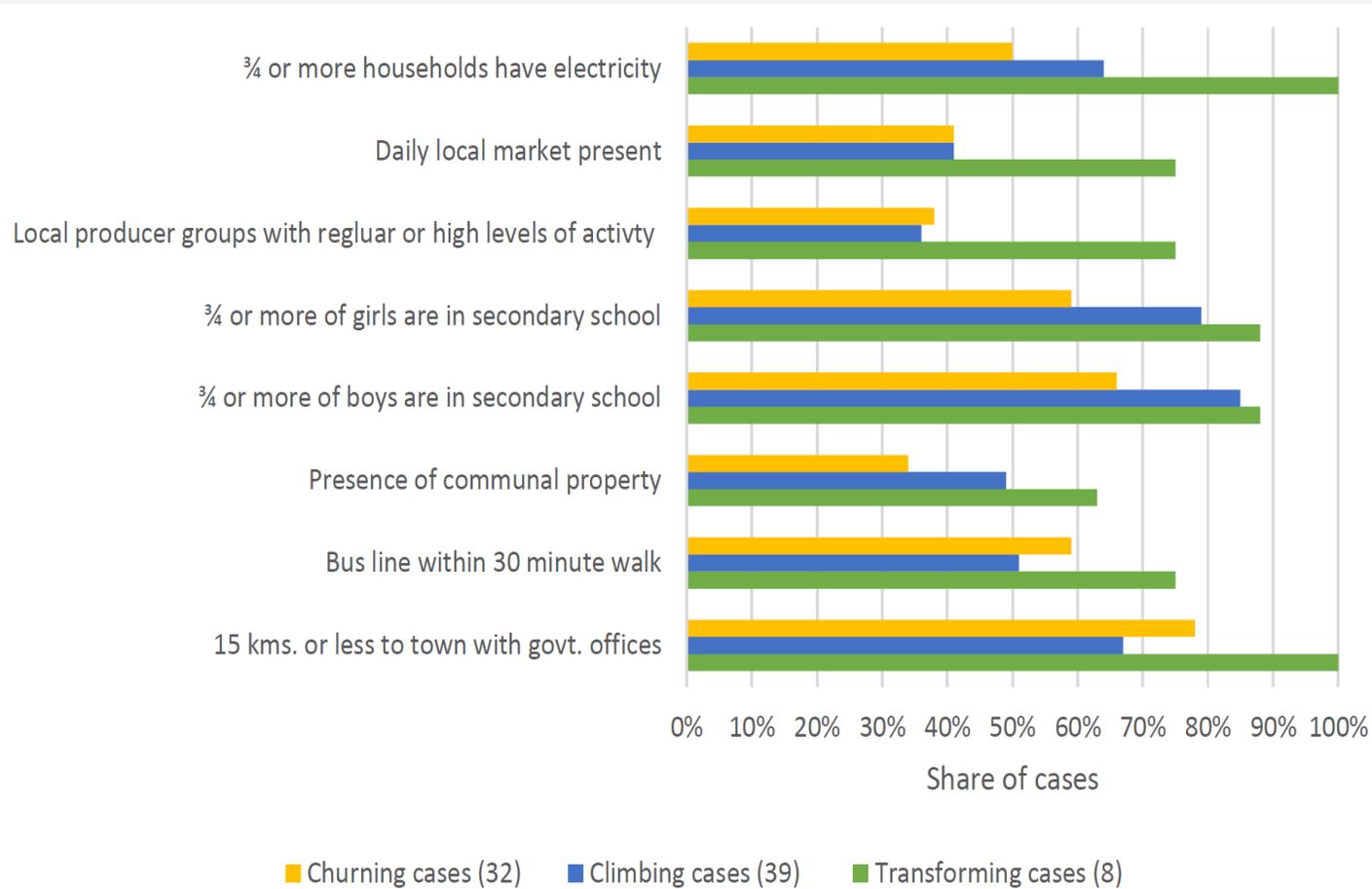
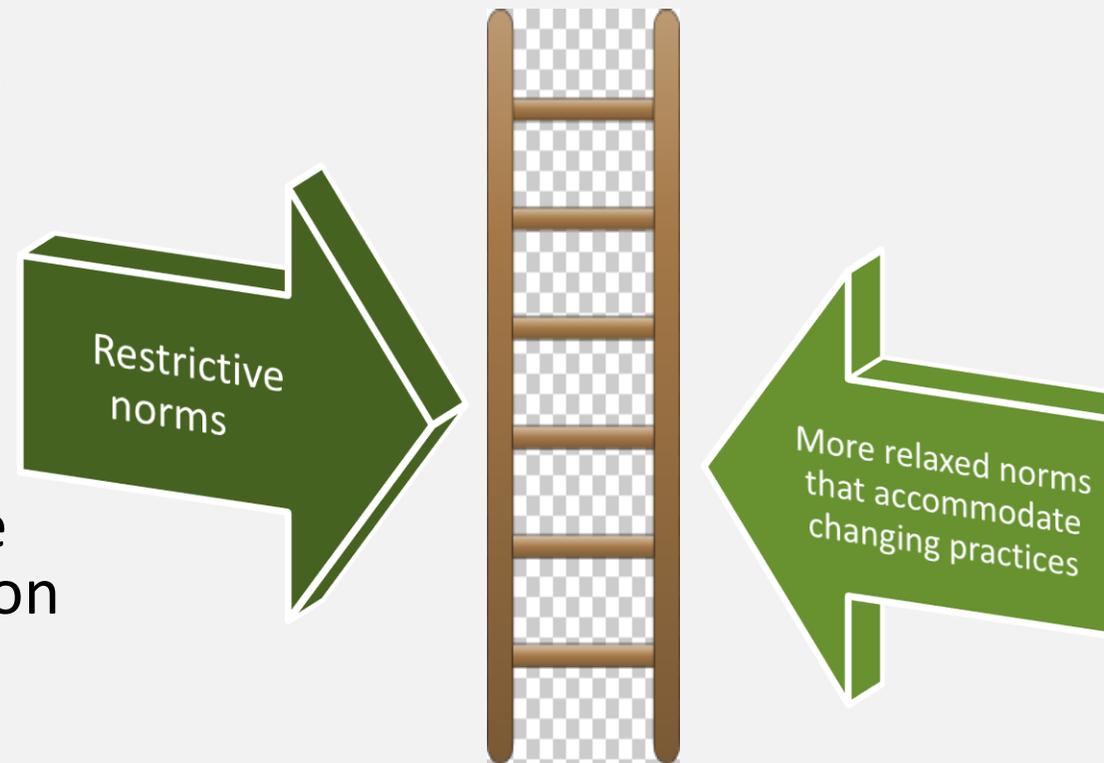


Figure 2. Selected community infrastructure, by type of cases (Key informants, 79 cases)

Conclusions

- Women and men uphold, withdraw from, and sometimes alter gender norms as they pursue their day-to-day lives and interests
 - Contextual - Relational – Fluid
- Women's and men's agency and **engagement with agri innovation strongly conditioned by normative expectations**
 - Position in household and life cycle
 - Provisioning role
 - Institutional reproduction of stereotypes
- Typology informed by local normative climate provides entry point for diversified intervention strategies



Opportunities

- Equality of opportunity a strategic interest for AR4D
- Integration of institutional dimension in targeting
- Invest in institutional innovations in agri-food systems R&D





GENNOVATE

ENABLING GENDER EQUALITY
IN AGRICULTURAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION

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