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**Partnering for Inclusive Development: A Case Study
of Deliberative Capacity in a Soy Value Chain
Partnership in Kenya**

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Inclusive Development, Partnerships, Agribusiness, Kenya, Value Chains, Women Smallholder Farmers, Social Entrepreneurship, Deliberative Capacity, Soy Value Chain

Acronyms

ABC – Agribusiness Cluster (2SCALE terminology)
BSS – Business Support Service (2SCALE terminology)
BC - Business Champion (2SCALE terminology)
BoP – Base of the Pyramid
BoPInc – Base of Pyramid Innovation Centre
ENP – Equatorial Nuts Processors Ltd
IFDC – International Fertilizer Development Center
KALRO – Kenya Agriculture Livestock Research Organization
KIRDI – Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal
SNV – The Netherlands Development Organization
ToT – Training/Trainer of Trainers
VSLA – Village Savings and Loan Associations (2SCALE terminology)

List of Figures and Images

Figure 1: Dimensions of Inclusive Value Chain Integration

Figure 2: Partnerships Capacities Framework

Figure 3: Terms of Inclusion Framework

Figure 4: ENP Partnership Key Actors

Figure 5: Research Participant and Key Informant Overview

Figure 6: Deliberative Capacity and Terms of Inclusion Mapping

Figure 7: Deliberative Capacity and Terms of Inclusion – Examples

Images 1-3: Improvised Grate and cooking process for making *crackies*,
Kakamega County

Image 4: Knife-cut *crackies*, formed in varying shapes

Table of Contents	
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	iv
<i>Abstract</i>	iv
Chapter 1 – Why do ‘Partnerships’ Matter? An Overview of Agribusiness Partnerships in International Development	1
1.1 Research Question and Sub-questions	2-3
1.2 Justification and Relevance of this Research	3
Chapter 2 – Theoretical Background and Modes of Analysis	4
2.1 Elaboration of Key Concepts	4-10
2.2 Introduction to 2SCALE Case Study	10-13
Chapter 3 – Approach to Analyzing Deliberation in Practice	14
3.1 Methodology	14-19
3.2 Positionality	19-20
3.3 Research Limitations	20-21
Chapter 4 – Deliberative Capacity and Value Chain Inclusion in the ENP Partnership	22
4.1 Background of Women Farmers/Value Addition Actors in Kenya	22-23
4.2 ENP Partnership Background and Structure	23-25
4.3 Deliberative Capacity in the ENP Partnership	25-35
4.4 Terms of Inclusion in the Soy Value Chain	35-43
Chapter 5 – Running in Parallel – Deliberative Capacity and Terms of Inclusion	44
5.1 Terms of Inclusion as a Dynamic Process	44-45
5.2 Connections Between the Theoretical Frameworks	45-48
Chapter 6 – Discussion, Further Contributions, and Conclusion	48
6.1 Discussion	49-52
6.2 New Contributions to the ‘Partnerships Capacities’ and ‘Terms of Inclusion’ Frameworks	52-53
6.3 Future Considerations for Development Practitioners	53-54
6.4 Conclusions	55
<i>References</i>	55-58
<i>Annex 1 – ENP Partnership Actor Chart</i>	59

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Abstract

As partnerships become an increasingly prevalent discourse within International Development, this research builds upon existing scholarship analyzing agribusiness partnerships in specific, utilizing the ‘Partnerships Capacities’ framework (Vellema et. al, 2019), honing in on the pillar of Deliberative Capacity through a gender lens. The key research question aims to answer how deliberative capacity influences how women—as both farmers and entrepreneurs—are included in the soy value chain. This research operationalizes value chain inclusion through the framework of ‘Terms of Inclusion (Vellema et. al, 2022). Through a collaboration with the partnerships incubator 2SCALE, this research uses a case study of a soy value chain partnership in Western Kenya to explore these dynamics, finding women’s inclusion in the value chain is very linked to the deliberative capacity of the partnership. This research concludes with observations about the connections between the two theoretical frameworks, the gaps and recommendations for additions based on the research findings, and the nuances of women’s value chain inclusion dependent on the roles they occupy within the partnership structure.

Chapter 1: Why do ‘Partnerships’ Matter? An Overview of Agribusiness Partnerships in International Development

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 describes ‘partnerships’ as a key pillar needed to achieve sustainable development by 2030 (United Nations). ‘Partnerships’, both in the SDGs and in general, are broadly categorized and perceived as something good, with the underlying assumption being that they enhance the empowerment of marginalized actors—including women and gender minorities, youth, and ethnic minorities—through inclusion. This assumption is central to many international development interventions (Stibbe, Reid, & Gilbert, 2019). However, some academic literature questions the function of partnerships—both structurally, and in the outcomes they are able to achieve (Vellema et. al 2019; Ros-Tonen et al. 2019). Partnerships have also been criticized for “reproducing asymmetric power relations”, so while the popular discourse around partnerships is positive, the reality may not always mirror this (Utting & Zammit, 2009, pg. 40; Cheyns, 2011, pg. 2). These power relations can be understood through many different lenses—one being through the deliberation enabled through the partnership, and whether marginalized actors’ voices are included in decision-making. Some researchers have problematized partnerships’ ability to include marginalized interests (Bitzer & Glasbergen, 2015; Cheyns, 2011), but have focused more on geographic status rather than social identities such as gender. However, partnerships are not a static unit of analysis—where inclusion and exclusion are fixed. Vellema et. al (2019, pg. 713) describe how the “practice of partnering unfolds fluidly and reflects an incremental process of navigating interests, tensions, governance dilemmas and risks.” This framing is important, as it demonstrates the dynamic nature of both partnering and partnerships’ capacities. Partnerships are not singular and unchanging—they are evolving, dynamic spaces within which one can examine numerous changing and fluid social interactions.

Given this foundation, this research will build upon initial work regarding partnerships processes, including how partnership capacities and dynamics impact value chain inclusion. In specific, the type of partnerships

this paper will focus on can be categorized as inclusive agribusiness partnerships, which claim to “promote the fair participation of small-scale farmers in agricultural value chains and combine economic profitability with social and environmental values” (Schelle & Pokorny, 2021). Scholars including Vellema et al. (2019) argue that positive outcomes from these types of partnerships are not a given; they must be intentionally sought and organized in ways that can lead to what they describe as ‘inclusive development’. As such, they have identified four partnering capacities—deliberative capacity, alignment capacity, transformation capacity, and fitting capacity—that work in tandem to facilitate the desired outcome of inclusive development (ibid).

This research aims to further explore inclusive agribusiness partnerships—with a focus on one of the four criteria identified by Vellema et al. (2019), deliberative capacity, understood as “the governance dimension within partnerships...that looks at the ability of partnerships to install and use novel decision-making processes” (Vellema et al., 2019, pg. 714). In addition, this topic will utilize a gender-lens, exploring how deliberative capacity influences women smallholder farmers’ inclusion in value chains. This will be achieved by analyzing the linkages between the Partnerships Capacities pillar of Deliberative Capacity and the inclusion in the value chain, visualized through the ‘Terms of Inclusion’ also identified by Vellema et al. (2022, pg. 109) to see how and if the theories connect. This research paper will analyze these dynamics through the case study of an agribusiness soy partnership in Kenya, facilitated by the organization 2SCALE.

1.1 Research questions and sub-questions

Main research question

How does deliberative capacity influence how women—as both farmers and entrepreneurs—are included in the soy value chain through the Equatorial Nuts Processors (ENP) partnership facilitated by 2SCALE?

Sub questions

Sub-question 1: How has space been created for women in deliberation in the ENP partnership?

Sub-question 2: How is women's inclusion in the soy value chain evolving over the duration of the partnership?

Sub-question 3: How do deliberative capacity and value chain inclusion interplay?

1.2 Justification and relevance of this research

If 'partnerships' are being positioned as a solution in international development contexts, it raises the question of whether the nature of the partnership itself—its structure, governance, the language used to describe and codify it, and the ways in which it organizes decision-making—enables desired outcomes, such as increased value-chain inclusion, from the marginalized stakeholders involved (Vellema et al., 2022, pg. 109). More research is needed to understand the full extent to which partnership capacities can influence development outcomes such as value-chain inclusion, and most importantly, transform and enable opportunities for those most marginalized within the partnership to achieve outcomes that are mutually desirable to them. In complex partnerships configurations, where power dynamics are constantly evolving, it is important to understand how the voices of the most marginalized—and in the case of this research, women smallholder farmers—are being heard, recognized, and listened to. When additional social identity dynamics—such as gender or ethnic minority status—are factored into the equation, there may be numerous intersecting identities that complicate producers', entrepreneurs', and smallholder farmers' ability to achieve equitable outcomes through their engagement in agribusiness partnerships. With the directive of bodies including the United Nations, the pursual of agribusiness partnerships has strong backing, without clear oversight, analysis, and understanding of these relationships (Utting & Zammit, 2019, pg. 41). This research intends to explore these challenges further, in specific analyzing how partnerships processes and structures—including discourses—influence women smallholder farmers and social entrepreneurs' inclusion in the value chain.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background and Modes of Analysis

As a starting point of departure, it is important to clarify and elaborate on several of the key concepts included within this research paper, including: **partnerships, inclusive agribusiness, inclusive development and inclusion**. Each term has a deep context within international development and the broader academic literature, which in turn shapes and influences this research. Furthermore, this research will utilize two theoretical concepts developed by Vellema et al. (2019, 2022) to answer the research questions, the **Partnerships Capacities Framework** and the **Terms of Inclusion**. Specifically, within the four pillars of partnerships capacities that enable inclusive development, this research will further explore the concept of **deliberative capacity** (Vellema et al., 2019). While the other three Partnerships Capacities are relevant for the outcome of inclusive development, this research will zoom in on deliberative capacity given its close intersections with gender (Kini, 2022; Crocker, 2007; GrantThornton, 2020).

2.1 Elaboration of key concepts

Partnerships and Inclusive Development

In scholarly literature, ‘partnerships’ do not have a singular definition, even when narrowed down to the international development focus, which is one of the main challenges in assessing and understanding them. When defining ‘partnerships’, popular development discourses such as the language of UN SDG 17, refer to what is commonly described in scholarly literature as “public-private-partnerships”, often abbreviated “PPPs” or “cross-sector partnerships” (Utting & Zammit, 2019, pg. 39). More broadly, partnerships can be conceptualized as “initiatives where private sector companies and civil society organizations enter into an alliance to achieve a common practical purpose, pool core competencies, and share risks, responsibilities, resources, costs and benefits.” (Utting & Zammit, 2009). Not all types of stakeholders are always represented in a partnership—for example, some partnerships may have less involvement of public sector actors. However,

this research paper will focus very specifically on inclusive agribusiness partnerships—a specific type of value-chain partnership where numerous types of stakeholders—ranging from public to private actors—can be involved. While partnerships by definition aim for equality and inclusion, labelling something a partnership does not automatically mean it is meeting those terms. As such, the work of Vellema et al. (2019) in outlining partnership capacities and thinking about ‘partnering’ as a dynamic process rather than a static outcome, is critical for understanding how partnerships are approached in this research.

Scholarly literature describes **inclusive development** in several ways. In some cases, the term is used almost interchangeably with “inclusive partnerships”, “inclusive value chains” and “inclusive business”, though the terms have subtle yet distinct differences. Ros-Tonen et al. (2019) outline these differences succinctly as captured in in *Figure 1*, highlighting the variances in key areas, and noting that inclusive development goes a step beyond inclusive business or inclusive value chains with a multi-dimensional focus on wellbeing and a focus on more than simply economic growth, among other things. Furthermore, **inclusive business** can be conceptualized as a process leading to the outcome of **inclusive development**.

Dimension	Inclusive business	Inclusive value chains	Inclusive development
Economic			
1. Double or triple bottom-line	Combines profitability targets and economic growth with social and environmental goals (P).		Rejects focus on economic growth
Social			
2. Concern for wellbeing	Serving the bottom-of-the-pyramid by delivering societal or developmental benefits; include the BoP as entrepreneurs or suppliers (P).	Higher incomes (O) through market integration and upgrading (applying quality and sustainability standards (P).	Multidimensional wellbeing (material, relational and cognitive-subjective) for poor and marginalized people (O).
3. Inclusive learning and innovation	Frugal innovations (affordable, simple, and resource-efficient products and services with high use value) (O)	Knowledge co-creation based on recognition of local knowledge, best practices, innovations 'from below' and continual learning through participatory monitoring and evaluation (P).	
4. Alignment with smallholders' realities	Acknowledge survival entrepreneurs and multiple markets (P).	Sensitive to diversity among farmers in terms of opportunities, constraints and vulnerabilities; alignment with smallholders' aspirations; accommodating heterogeneity in terms of gender, age, landownership, ethnic/cultural background and household composition (P).	
Relational			
5. Empowerment	Improving the human rights and dignity of those at the BoP (O),	Strengthening farmers' autonomy, capacity and agency vis-à-vis companies, NGOs and donors, through social upgrading (improved rights and working conditions through VC engagement) and labour agency (P). Tackling inequalities and power differences (P)	Attention to local political economy and constraining structures; enhance the capacity of the poor and marginalized to exert choice (take control over their own life) and voice (demand equitable rights and fair conditions of VC engagement) (P).
6. Gender equity and responsiveness	Promotes gender aware women's entrepreneurship by recognizing gendered risks and uncertainties in the BoP community and business environment (gender accommodating) (P).	Addresses gendered bottlenecks to and opportunities for participation and benefits by reforming policies and institutions that constrain women ('levelling the playing field') (gender sensitive) (P).	Sensitive to gender and its intersectionality with age, race, ethnicity, religion, and location and actively challenging the underlying gender norms, institutional constraints and power imbalances (gender transformative) (P).
Environmental			
7. Environmental sustainability	Promotes resource efficiency through frugal innovations (see above) (P).	Upgrading through voluntary certification (P).	Commitment to environmental inclusiveness by avoiding adverse environmental effects; questioning the commitment to growth (P).
Cross-cutting			
8. Enabling environment	Government and networks create an enabling environment for inclusive businesses and producers in the global South (P).	Political will, local civil society and producer organizations are essential for creating inclusive VCs (P).	Governments actively protect people's rights and pursue redistributive policies; multilevel governance addresses interconnected global-to-local challenges (P).

Figure 1: Ros-Tonen et. al (2019), pg. 13

Utting & Zammit (2019, pg. 41) define inclusive development as “patterns of economic growth, resource distribution and decision-making processes that contribute to reducing social and income deprivation and inequalities, enhancing people's rights and empowering groups who historically have experienced marginalization and injustice.” In this definition, there is a clear linkage drawn between decision-making, economic benefits, and the result of inclusion. Other scholars, such as Vellema et al. (2019, pg. 711) broaden the definition further to also include social processes—and further connect partnerships as a key bridge that enables this inclusion and economic/social benefit. They describe how:

“development policy predominantly frames inclusive development as the inclusion of marginalized actors in economic and social processes. Partnerships receive public support because they aim to enhance food and nutrition security in an inclusive manner. The inclusion of vulnerable smallholder producers and base of the pyramid (BoP) consumers is an essential element of the intervention logic” (Vellema et al., 2019, pg. 711).

In these definitions, it becomes very clear that partnerships are central to inclusivity—whether in development discourses, or from a social entrepreneurship/business lens. For example, Chamberlain and Anseeuw (2018) specifically use and italicize the word partnerships when describing inclusive business, defining it as “complex *partnerships* between commercial entities and smallholders/low-income communities, to include the latter in commercial agricultural value chains,’ which offer income opportunities for all partners, but are also regarded as a way of empowering smallholders and communities” (Chamberlain and Anseeuw, 2018, from Vellema et al, 2019, pg. 711).

The Partnerships Capacities

This link between partnerships capacities and inclusive development is therefore one of the foundational aspects of this research. In their study of Partnership Capacities, Vellema et al. (2019, pg. 714) developed “a framework for analyzing capacities of partnerships that...shape inclusive development”. As mentioned earlier, this framework outlines four capacities: deliberative capacity, alignment capacity, transformative capacity, and fitting capacity (ibid).

Capacity	Deliberative capacity	Alignment capacity	Transformative capacity	Fitting capacity
Focus	Decision-making processes within the partnership	Aligning strategy and organization lead agent with development process	Co-creating intervention repertoire and institutional work of partnership	Touching down of partnership strategies in local networks and public domain
Logic	Governance	Competitiveness	Change	Embedding
Literature	Political analysis of deliberative democracy	Strategic management and value-chain analysis	Institutional analysis of organizations	Business systems and state analysis

Figure 2: Vellema et al. (2019), pg. 714

Together, these partnership capacities form the foundation through which Vellema et al (2019) argue that inclusive development is possible. Within the framework, **deliberative capacity** is defined as, “the extent to which a governance arrangement, such as a value-chain partnership, holds structures to host deliberation that is inclusive, authentic and consequential” (Dryzek, 2009; from Vellema et al., 2019, pg. 715). Vellema et al (2019) further elaborate on this, noting that deliberation does not necessarily only refer to decision-making— rather, there are three factors that contribute to ‘deliberative capacity’: inclusiveness, authenticity, and consequentiality (Vellema et al., 2019, pg.715).

The first indicator, “inclusiveness” is defined as “the range of interests and discourses present” in a deliberative process (Dryzek, 2009, pg. 4). This definition counters the assumption that in a successful deliberation, all stakeholders require a ‘seat at the table’; instead, this framing suggests that the diversity of discourses and representation of interests at the ‘decision-making table’ is more critical to the outcomes. As Dryzek (2009, pg. 4) notes, “without inclusiveness, there may be deliberation, but not deliberative democracy.”

Further according to Dryzek (2009, pg. 4), “authenticity” can be determined if “deliberation [induces] reflection in noncoercive fashion, [connects] particular claims to more general principles, and [exhibits] reciprocity.” Schouten (2019, pg. 44) elaborates on this, defining “justification, respect, and constructive politics” as the “main indicators to assess the authenticity of a deliberative process” (Vellema et al., 2019, pg. 715). Ultimately, “authenticity” is concerned with if “powerful actors coerce less powerful actors to adopt a certain point of view” (ibid).

“Consequentiality” is defined by “the degree to which the deliberative processes determine the outputs of a partnership” (Schouten et al., 2012). One way in which “consequentiality” is assessed is through “discourse structuration” and “discourse institutionalization”—the former looking at the frequency of a discourse in a specific social setting, and the latter

addressing when this discourse makes its way into more formalized institutions and practices, such as a Governance Meeting (Hajer, 2006; Schouten, 2012).

Value Chain Inclusion

Ros-Tonen et. al (2019, pg. 14) succinctly note that “inclusiveness is rarely framed as an outcome, but mostly as a process”, reinforcing the idea that partnering and its capacities are fluid, dynamic, and ongoing. In all of these definitions, the commonality is an assumption that ‘inclusion’ will lead to ‘empowerment’ of marginalized stakeholders. **Inclusion**, particularly social inclusion, is a term that has gained increasing importance in social and public policy spheres (Mkandawire, 2004; Esping-Andersen, 1990). In this context, **inclusion** is often defined as “facilitating or enabling the participation of small producers in more remunerative, often global, value chains” (Helmsing & Vellema, 2011). Now heavily adopted by bodies including the United Nations, social inclusion is defined “as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights” (Helmsing & Vellema, 2011). From the lens of partnerships, building off the work of Vermeulen and Cotula (2010) and Chamberlain and Anseeuw (2019), this research utilizes the framework of “**Terms of Inclusion**” in the value chain, specified in the four dimensions of ownership, voice, risk, and reward to further understand inclusion, and to map the connections between agribusiness partnerships and inclusive development (Vellema et al., 2022, pg. 108). These dimensions, further elaborated in *Figure 3*, are particularly helpful to understanding the inclusion of women smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs within the value chain facilitated by 2SCALE partnerships.

Table 1 Operationalisation of ultimate outcomes for monitoring systemic change in 2SCALE impact pathway

Terms of inclusion of SHFs and micro-entrepreneurs	Ownership: the division of assets such as land and processing facilities between SHFs and/or micro-entrepreneurs on the one hand and the company/lead firm on the other hand.
	Voice: the ability of SHFs and/or micro-entrepreneurs to influence key business decisions. This includes their weight in decision-making processes, arrangements for review and grievance, and mechanisms for dealing with asymmetries in information access.
	Risk: the division of risks between SHFs and/or micro-entrepreneurs on the one hand and the company/lead firm on the other. These risks derive from uncertainties in production, changes in demand of consumers and supply of producers, and wider political and reputational risks.
	Reward: the division of economic costs and benefits between SHFs and/or micro-entrepreneurs on the one hand and the company/lead firm on the other. This includes price-setting and finance arrangements.

Figure 3: Vellema et al., 2022, pg. 109

It is also important to note that scholars have found that “‘getting a seat at the (decision-making) table’ does not necessarily mean having equal voice” (Bitzer & Glasbergen 2015, from Vellema et al., 2019). Furthermore, other studies “fundamentally question whether ‘inclusion’ is even a desired outcome of those ‘excluded’” (Hospes & Clancy, 2012). Feminist economists have also critiqued the idea of inclusion, raising the concern that inclusion alone does not mean that there are equal terms of participation (Seguino, 2010). Importantly, particularly in the framework of partnerships, ‘inclusion’ as a concept is not simply a desired, unquestioned outcome or a singular moment; rather, inclusion should be viewed as an ongoing, embedded process within successful partnerships (Helmsing & Vellema, 2011).

2.2 Introduction to 2SCALE Case Study

2SCALE

As mentioned in the introductory statement, this research will utilize a case study co-identified with the organization 2SCALE as a means to explore the research focus and questions. 2SCALE is a partnerships incubator that manages a portfolio of inclusive public-private partnerships in agri-food sectors and industries in sub-Saharan Africa (2SCALE, Homepage). Operating across 10 countries in four different agribusiness domains (Animal Products, Fresh Produce, Soy and Oil Seeds, and Staple Crops), 2SCALE facilitates agribusiness partnerships and provides other services to enable the various stakeholders in the agricultural value chain (ibid). According to one of

their strategy documents, their primary goal is to “support the sustainable integration of smallholder farmers into value chains/markets” (2SCALE, 2019, pg. 4). 2SCALE is co-funded by a consortium including the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), the Base of Pyramid Innovation Centre (BoPInc), the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the current iteration of the organization beginning its work in 2019 (2SCALE, 2023).

ENP Partnership

For the purposes of this research, one specific partnership in Kenya has been co-identified as suitable to review in greater depth given its existing work in creating space for women within the partnership. Through the recommendation of 2SCALE, given the numerous partnerships in their portfolio, [the Equatorial Nuts Processors \(ENP\)](#) partnership was identified as a case study that offered an appropriate platform to research deliberative capacity through a gender lens. This recommendation emerged out of advice and knowledge from the 2SCALE team that there would be sufficient information and evidence on this specific topic of focus. According to the 2SCALE website, this partnership is focused on “providing access to fortified nutritious soy-bean based products to base-of-pyramid consumers” (2SCALE, ENP).

2SCALE forms each partnership in their portfolio around two key actors: the Business Champion (BC) and the Business Support Service (BSS) provider (Key Informant E, Interviews 2023). The business champion—or lead partner—in this relationship is ENP, a large-scale Kenyan manufacturer of edible nuts (2SCALE, ENP). ENP has several manufacturing plants on the outskirts of Nairobi, and sources products from Kenyan farmers in four different regions (ibid). ENP also has a fortified foods division, through which it manufactures fortified food blends using soy, sorghum, and maize including Fortified Blended Flour (FBF) and Corn Soya Blend (CSB+, CSB++), largely for humanitarian and development markets with key customers including the World Food Programme’s Kenya operation (2SCALE, ENP Partnership Description, 2020). Despite the demand for

soy to produce these products, ENP was largely importing soy prior to the formation of the partnership (ibid). This is not unusual—in fact, Kenya has a long history of soy importation, given the national demand for soy vs. local production leaving a deficit of 95% (Wasike et al. 2009; FAO 2012; from ENP D&D Report). As such, the ENP Partnership was formed around the goals to boost the production of local soy, enhance the value chain inclusion of local actors, and increase nutritional outcomes locally (ENP D&D Report, 2020). Furthermore, the ENP Partnership has a specific metrics built into their evaluation framework of “Impact Pathways” focused on the inclusion of women (2SCALE, ENP Partnership Description, 2020; ENP R&A 2021).

Other Key Stakeholders

For the purposes of this research, the key partnership stakeholders are listed below in *Figure 4*.

Partner Name	Role/Function
Equatorial Nuts Processors (ENP)	Business Champion
ADS-Western (ADS-W)	Business Support Service
Kenya Agriculture Livestock Research Organization (KALRO)	Private (Government Research Organization)
Farmer Organizations	Small-holder Farmer Groups
County Governments (Tharaka Nithi, Muranga, Kakamega)	Public (Local Government)
Equity Bank Limited	Private (Finance)

Figure 4: 2SCALE, ENP

However, the ecosystem of the value chain—and in turn, the partnership that encompasses it, consists of many more actors, as can be seen in the full mapping of the ecosystem visualized in *Annex 1* through the *ENP Partnership Actor Chart*. Broadly, the categories from the mapping most relevant for this research are the Processor (ENP), the specific Extension Service Provider ADS-W, the Producers—particularly the Value Addition actors, and the Financial Organizations.

The Business Support Service (BSS) in this partnership is ADS-Western, short for Anglican Development Services, the development arm of the Anglican Church of Kenya focused on the Western region. As the BSS, their role involved providing the day-to-day support for the farmers and serving as the trusted grassroots partner.

Structure of 2SCALE Partnerships

Beyond the roles of a BC and a BSS, 2SCALE also operates through agribusiness clusters, as described by the FAO as a “concentration of producers and related firms in a geographical location (2SCALE, 2019, pg. 3).

2SCALE focuses on the agribusiness clusters that are local networks of smallholder farmers, theorizing that “ABCs [are] the building blocks for grassroots actors’ empowerment” (2SCALE, 2019, pg. 4). Initially, 2SCALE engaged with these clusters through ADS-W, the BSS provider. ADS-W hired and identified Trainers of Trainers (ToT) who taught, coached, and engaged in knowledge sharing with farmers in the local community. These positions were paid roles whose scope was focused on training and teaching (Key Informant E, 2023). However, at the beginning of 2021, this model changed with the introduction of the concept of an ‘ABC Coach’, whose responsibilities are more varied, and described in more detail in Section 4.2. Each partnership has their own set of ABC Coaches—for the ENP Partnership, there are a total of 26 ABC Coaches, of which 17 are women (2SCALE, ABC Coaches List, 2021). These coaches play an important role in the partnership, and as such were a target group for my research methodology, as will be elaborated further later in this paper.

Chapter 3: Approach to Analyzing Deliberation in Practice

This work is guided by my overall approach to research, my feminist values, and my fundamental belief that academic research needs to be mindful of not repeating and recreating extractive colonial legacies (Smith, 2012; Harding, 2005). Throughout the research process, my goal was to make use of embeddedness and observation, conceptualizing my role as that of a “witness” rather than a researcher (Motta 2016).

3.1 Methodology

In order to address the research questions, I used a combination of research techniques to gain a holistic view of the partnership. These methods include: semi-structured qualitative interviews, 2SCALE document review, field observation of key stakeholders, and informal conversations/meetings to understand the deliberative capacity of the partnership and its connection to the terms of inclusion. This research process involved close work with stakeholders within the value chain: including 2SCALE, ENP, ADS-Western, and of course farmers/value addition actors. The relationship with 2SCALE was particularly important, as access to many of its records, data, and relationships was a crucial condition for executing the research. In addition, my field research schedule was co-created following recommendations from local partner, ADS-W, and ABC Coaches, after my research focus was shared. A six-day agenda was then crafted, involving multiple community group visits across three counties in Western Kenya.

Semi-Structured Qualitative Interviews

It was very important for me to be able to speak directly with the women farmers/social entrepreneurs within the ENP Partnership, to understand from them their perceptions of the partnership, their roles, and levels of inclusion. Complementary research into Kenyan agribusiness demonstrates the value of this type of data collection, as the insights coming from farmers and entrepreneurs can radically shift assumptions about them and their experiences that

are often built into development interventions (Brouwer, 2023). As part of this research, seven women farmers and value-addition actors from three counties in Western Kenya were formally interviewed. Of these seven women, four of the respondents were ABC Coaches, a role which emerged in the research process as being significant within the context of deliberative capacity. At each group session, I first observed group dynamics and then identified key targets for interviews—based on several factors including formal role or title, or particular observed knowledge of value-addition work. I then pursued those individuals for pull-aside semi-structured interviews, facilitated by my translator. These testimonies were complemented by three interviews with staff at ADS-Western (the BSS level; two formally, and one informally) and with four formal interviews with 2SCALE staff. Within the staff spoken to, one of the ADS-Western respondents was the Partnership Manager for the ENP relationship, and one of the 2SCALE staff members was the Inclusive Agribusiness Advisor. This collection of interviews enabled a broad understanding of the partnership from different power dynamics and levels of engagement. I was also able to speak specifically about deliberative capacity with several of the academic researchers focused on this topic, and have narrowed down one conversation to include within my formal dataset. A full list of interviews can be seen below in *Figure 5*.

Interviewee	Date	Location	Role(s) / Organization
Research Participant G	August 21 (formally), daily informal conversations	Kakamega County	ABC Coach, Value Addition Actor, Soy Farmer
Research Participant R	August 22, 2023	Kakamega County	Group Chairlady, Soy Farmer
Research Participant P	August 23, 2023	Busia County	ABC Coach, Soy Farmer, Value Addition Actor, Aggregator
Research Participant L	August 24, 2023	Kakamega County	ABC Coach, Value Addition Actor, Soy Farmer
Research Participant J	August 24, 2023	Bungoma County	ABC Coach, Soy Farmer

Research Participant S	August 24, 2023	Bungoma County	Trainer of Trainers (TOT), Value Addition Actor, Soy Farmer
Research Participant I	August 25, 2023	Kakamega County	Value Addition Actor, Soy Farmer
Key Informant J	August 21 & 26, 2023	Kakamega County	ADS-W, Partnership Lead for ENP
Key Informant E	August 28, 2023	Nairobi	2SCALE Inclusive Agribusiness Advisor for ENP
Key Informant R	August 21 & 28, 2023	Nairobi	2SCALE M&E
Key Informant L	August 28, 2023	Nairobi	2SCALE Gender & Youth Inclusion Specialist
Key Informant S	September 2, 2023 (Virtual)	Nairobi/The Netherlands	2SCALE ABC Specialist
Key Informant G	August 9, 2023 (Virtual)	The Netherlands	Partnerships Capacities Researcher

Figure 5: *Out of privacy consideration, all interviewee names have been anonymized.

Field Observations of Key Stakeholders

During my ten days in Kenya, I kept daily notes in a field journal documenting observations ranging from interpersonal dynamics, interactions, feelings, body language, and tone—paying specific attention to intangible measures that I could not glean from document review or a formal, recorded conversation. In particular, group dynamics were observed and the behaviour of women farmers/social entrepreneurs as they interacted with me and each other. These observations range from behaviors of participants while driving in the car from location to location with them, and the ways that women farmers/value addition actors supported each other. I was also able to observe other important more formal interactions, including educational sessions where ABC Coaches and groups were providing demonstrations of their value addition work, a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) meeting, and a soy farming day. Following my time in Western Kenya, I spent a few days in Nairobi and was able to attend the launch of the Inclusive Agribusiness Club, coordinated by 2SCALE, where I was able to further interact with several of my research participants in a different social

context and engage with other stakeholders involved in agribusiness partnerships beyond the soy value chain.

2SCALE Document Review

As part of my research, I reviewed documents prepared by 2SCALE—including partnerships overviews, M&E metrics evaluating the ENP partnership, contractual documents and formal partnerships agreements they have helped facilitate, and most importantly Meeting Notes from both Governance Meetings as well as the annual “Reflect and Adapt” (R&A) Workshop. Though a formal discourse analysis was not conducted on these documents, the review did analyze and code for whether certain words, phrases, and ideas were repeated, more pervasive, or centered in conversations, and 2) whether there was a repetition of not only words, but also the pattern of thoughts or stories emerging from different actors. Understanding patterns is key to understanding broader narratives, because through them we derive social and political meaning (Fischer, 2003; from Shenhav 2015, pg. 11). In analyzing what is said, there is also room to analyze the silences—or what is left unsaid—as an important component to examining power dynamics (Bachi, 2009). Furthermore, the document review was used to verify and validate the information provided during the semi-structured interviews. Key quantitative metrics that help provide the contextual understanding of the value chain inclusion are also largely derived from 2SCALE’s own M&E documentation.

Informal Conversations

My research and data collection process included informal conversations that provided important context for the interpretation and analysis of the partnership. Some examples of informal conversations include the following: courtesy meetings with local and national level government officials in one county, a conversation with a representative from KALRO (who did not focus on soybeans), and conversations with village heads. One commonality with these conversations is that they were, for the most part, with men—and often my purpose for speaking with them was an unspoken understanding

that they were the gatekeepers to speaking with my target research participants—the women farmers and social entrepreneurs. This in itself was an important cultural and contextual observation, as it conveys information about how the perspectives of women in a community are valued.

I also use ‘informal conversations’ to document information and important context that was shared outside of the parameters of a formal interview—for example, though my translator was also a research participant, we had many informal conversations and discussions, even processing field interactions, in the car journeying from one location to another during the field work process. The information shared during these moments was some of the most valuable gleaned in the whole trip—often helping me to more fully understand situations I had observed and connect the dots between messages I had heard from different interview participants, given my position as an outsider not fully understanding the cultural context of Western Kenya.

Data Analysis

Upon the return from my field research, I manually transcribed all recorded interviews and coded them for certain words and themes. Two themes that I was focused on included: joint decision-making (‘together’, ‘one-voice’, ‘collective’, etc.) and ownership of non-tangible resources. I also paid specific attention to the verbs used to describe the role of ABC Coaches. Given how rapid the data collection phase occurred, I coded manually—also as a way to remind myself of conversations and to better map out the connections between testimony. Furthermore, I coded for words specifically used within my two theoretical frameworks to describe the pillars of Deliberative Capacity and the Terms of Inclusion, creating tables for both frameworks in which I organized each example as it emerged from the data. A secondary crosscheck included tracing back to 2SCALE documents to see whether discourses and examples emerging from interviews made their way to official partnerships documents and staff—this was done both through verification in the staff interviews and in document review.

3.2 Positionality

As an outsider to this community, there were many challenges I was aware of going into this process—particularly in understanding how to build relationships and interview spaces that would enable true feelings about these potentially sensitive topics to surface. Though I entered into this research aiming to conceptualize my role as that of a ‘witness’ (Motta 2016), the reality was that my intersecting social identities influenced the success of this in numerous ways. Firstly, as a student researcher from the Netherlands, I noticed how my role and task were sometimes misinterpreted by communities I was visiting, whose previous interaction with outsiders was often through the lens of donor visits. As such, it was important to clarify my role often, and clearly communicate my intentions by discussing beforehand with the translator I was working with to ensure my presence was not misinterpreted as a financial opportunity. Furthermore, it was important to distance myself from the organizations—2SCALE and ADS-Western—so that my presence would not be perceived, either by farmers nor staff, as an evaluation of their work.

Furthermore, I mistakenly assumed prior to my travel in Kenya that my identity as a brown-skinned woman would not be perceived in the same way, or similar way, as a white-skinned researcher. However, there were several moments and interactions, particularly in smaller villages where I was referred to using the Kiswahili word ‘mzungu’ which has different meanings depending on the context—“foreigner/outsider” or also “white person”. In one specific instance, I recall a community member in a SACCO I was visiting asking in English about my presence, referring to me as the ‘white girl’. The reality is, in Kenya the intersecting implications of my skin color, nationality, and social identities are numerous—and while I attempted to be a witness, I was being witnessed in return. First of all, there is a long and complicated history of Indian migrants to different East African countries, including Kenya, tracing back to a legacy of colonialism, which may have informed the way that Black Kenyan farmers I was speaking with perceived me and my intentions (Aiyar, 2015; Field Notes). Furthermore, my

nationality as an American also influenced this perception, though this aspect of my identity was not something widely known as my national affiliation was assumed to be the Netherlands. Regardless, my affiliation and connection with an EU country also influenced how I was perceived, as some farmers in particular were aware of the Dutch government's support of Kenyan agriculture.

3.3 Limitations to this Research

There are several limitations and important points that must be addressed to contextualize this research and its findings. Firstly, my initial plan was to include a participatory data collection method in the research mix, given the nature of this particular research topic and the reflexive nature of 'researching a partnership' while being embedded in the partnership as a researcher. Unfortunately, given the time and availability of the women farmers/social entrepreneurs, as well as the partner organizations, coordinating a group participatory session was not feasible during the field research period.

Furthermore, it is important to reiterate that a great deal of what I have observed and discussed has been framed by my cooperation with partner organizations including 2SCALE and ADS-Western, though this can be viewed as both a strength and a limitation. For example, as stated earlier, my visitation schedule in Western Kenya and the research participants I was ultimately able to connect with was predetermined by ADS-Western, through recommendations from the ABC Coaches. However, since my schedule was sourced by women ABC Coaches, each field visit highlighted what they—as women farmers and social entrepreneurs—felt was important to consider for my research questions.

Furthermore, my hired translator for the duration of this data collection period was also an ABC Coach and a research participant. Like the previous topic, this was in some ways a strength of the research and a limitation – as it allowed for me to dig deeper into each interview given that the translator was very familiar with the specific processes, history, and context of

the partnership. Furthermore, all research participants knew and were personal friends with the translator—and in many ways, I believe this helped to remove some of the formality of the interview, allowing for more honest and direct communication. However, there were several moments where I had to connect with the translator and specifically request for them to translate what was directly said, instead of responding from their own perspective. At times when a research participant felt unable to answer a question, they themselves looked to her to help them. In these moments, I tried to be quick to reframe the question in a simpler way so that the intended research participant was able to respond themselves, rather than the interview turning into a dual conversation between the interviewee, the translator, and myself. It is also important to note that not all interviews required translation, as each research participant had a different level of comfort with English—some responded to questions entirely in English with minimal translation, and others required full translation.

Finally, due to the timing of my field visit (which was coordinated around the times most convenient for the host organizations and the farmers, given that it was the beginning of the planting season) I was not able to directly observe a formal deliberative moment – such a Governance Meeting or R&A Workshop – in action. As such, my data on these topics is reliant on second-hand accounts from present stakeholders and review of the documents. However, this also allowed me to analyze other aspects of deliberation that exist in plenty—in the day to day and in the structures of the partnership itself which were ultimately more relevant to my research questions. Unlike much of the academic literature surrounding deliberation and deliberative democracy, that is typically focused on specific deliberative moments or forums, like roundtables and governance structures (Schouten et al., 2012), I was able to focus on deliberation in a different way. This yielded several findings, strongly complementing the second-hand accounts of meetings that I was unable to directly witness.

Chapter 4: Deliberative Capacity and Terms of Inclusion in the ENP Partnership

4.1 Background of Women Soy Farmers/Value-Addition Actors in Kenya

Within the cultural, historical, and economic context of Kenya, farming plays an important role. However, there are several important factors that make this challenging for women. Firstly, even though women comprise almost 80% of the workforce for agriculture (Ng'ethe, 2023), they are not typically the landowners nor decision-makers regarding the farms or crops, owning only 1% of land titles individually and 5-6% jointly (Kenya Land Alliance, 2021). Given this context, the choice of soy itself for the partnership focus played a significant role in the inclusion of women. According to most of the women farmers/value addition actors interviewed, they had been planting soy and making nutritious by-products from it at a small-scale for their families long before the formalization that came through the ENP Partnership. However, one benefit of soy was the fact that it could easily be grown in the second growing season—enabling primary landowners, typically men, to plant cash crops such as maize during the first growing season and leaving more flexibility for women to make choices about crops in the second growing season (Key Informant E, Interviews 2023). With this flexibility, women were able to engage in the ENP Partnership structure, through planting soy in the second growing season and entering into the value-chain in the first place (ibid). The first signs of success from the soy crop, and particularly the expansion and income-generation potential witnessed from the value-addition work, ended up having a positive feedback loop whereby women's business success was positively correlated with their increased decision-making capabilities at both the family and community level (Research Participant G; Key Informant Interview E, Interviews 2023).

Though women did not own the land they were farming on, the soy value-addition work gave them an opportunity for ownership in a different way: through their businesses. Two of the women I interviewed, Participant

G and Participant L, proudly showed me their business licenses during our conversations—complete with branding, formal documentation, and a business name. Participant G even named her business after her young daughter, who also supported her with small tasks in the shop. Participant G emphasized her pride in being able to own a business—with two storefront locations—and that her daughter was able to see her success, particularly given that she lost her husband in the last three years and was raising her three children as a single mother. Beyond their business success, the women I spoke to were also very proud that soy was nutritious and beneficial for their community’s health.

The Partnership furthermore created structures that enabled women’s financial inclusion, such as the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), to address the issue of their lack of ownership of land, titles, or access to business loans. When discussing this topic with one key informant, he noted that “even if [women] wanted to go for these commercial loans, they don’t have a [land] title or log book...so they are not able to access this. So that is why we introduced VSLAs, so they had access to finances” (Key Informant E, 2023). As such, the decisions to choose soy and the structures, included VSLAs, developed within the ENP Partnership were equally as important to deliberation as the space for deliberation itself, given how soy enabled women in the partnership to increase their level of participation in farming, small business and value addition activities, financial access, and leadership in ways that were previously not as accessible to them (Key Informant E, Key Informant L; 2023).

4.2 ENP Partnership Background and Structure

Background with ENP – Partnership Shift Post 2021

The ENP Partnership provided a unique collaboration to study, given how the lead actor—ENP’s—role has progressively declined as the partnership has progressed. Initially involved and named as the Business Champion, which comes with the responsibility of off-taking product, convening key meetings, and organizing value-addition activities, ENP has gradually

stepped back from their role with the BSS, ADS-Western, stepping in to cover a great deal of their role (Key Informant E; Research Participant G; 2023). A large reason for this is that in 2021, ADS failed to keep its promise as the buyer to offtake soy at the agreed upon price from the farmers. This caused issues within the partnership—resulting in the business arm of ADS-W, AWRECO, to be formed to temporarily buy the soy crop from farmers, storing it for several months until alternative buyers were identified. Since this defining moment, the partnership has evolved to mitigate ENP’s retreat-ing role, introducing alternative buyers into the equation and initiating value-addition activities as an additional income-generating activity. Furthermore, ADS-W continues to manage a number of responsibilities nor-mally carried out by the Business Champion, including chairing and sending invitations for key meetings include the Governance Meetings and R&A Meetings. During my last days in Nairobi, this retreat of ENP was further visualized during the Inclusive Business Club Launch, where ENP was sup-posed to have sent three delegates—all of whom cancelled at the last mi-nute. Currently, ADS-W de facto plays the role of the Business Champion, managing all of the immediate concerns of farmers being raised to them via the ABC Coaches.

ABC Coach Function

As described in Section 2.2, one aspect of the ENP Partnership structure that stood out during the course of fieldwork was the role of an “ABC Coach”—a function created by 2SCALE in 2021 as their understanding of the gaps in the partnership structure evolved (Key Informant E, 2023). Originally, the 2SCALE partnership incorporated “Trainers of Trainers (ToT)” models into their partnership structures, relying on trained representatives to facilitate larger-scale training and teaching down the value-chain to other farmers and value-addition actors. However, in a strategy review in 2021, the sustaina-bility of this model was questioned, given that payment constituted an ongo-ing need for the presence of 2SCALE, whose goal was to reduce depend-ency on them—and ultimately was exchanged for the new model of the “ABC Coaches” to complement the agribusiness cluster format (ibid). In the

ABC Coach model, a coach is not paid a stipend as previously with the ToT format; instead, a coach is incentivized to provide certain services and fill in missing gaps in both the partnership and value chain by the business potential—or income potential—of fulfilling those roles (ibid). Some of these roles include “things like selling of inputs, last mile input distribution, aggregation...consultancies, [and] service provision” (Key Informant E, 2023). According to 2SCALE, this incentivization enhances the long-term sustainability of the value chain, by ensuring that critical functions are performed even without the formal structures of the partnership holding them together (ABC Formation & Development Strategy, 2019). In most cases, ABC Coaches are selected by the BSS, ADS-W, through a list of 14 criteria—including demographic identifiers like age and gender, knowledge of community, neutrality, strong technical backgrounds, communication and networking skills, and willingness to cooperate with 2SCALE programs (ibid). It is important to know that, in most cases ABC Coaches are not democratically elected—for instance, all ABC Coaches spoken to through the course of this research were recommended for the position by ADS-W given their previous involvement in outreach activities.

4.3 Deliberative Capacity in the ENP Partnership

Deliberation and deliberative capacity are visible in many ways at different levels of the partnership. In order to discuss the specific examples, I will structure this section according to the pillars of Deliberative Capacity building off the work of scholars (Vellema et al., 2019, pg. 715; Dryzek, 2000, 2009), specifically focusing on the context of “Partnerships Capacities” Framework: Inclusiveness, Authenticity, and Consequentiality (ibid).

Inclusiveness

As described earlier, “inclusiveness” examines the diversity of discourses represented at the ‘decision-making table’; not necessarily meaning that every stakeholder is involved. In the case of the ENP Partnership, this understanding of ‘inclusiveness’ is apparent and actioned through the role of

the ABC Coach. While not every farmer or value-addition actor is invited to the meeting spaces where important decisions are made regarding the partnership, the ABC Coaches in the ENP Partnership function as the representatives to the farmers—consolidating their opinions, concerns, and requests and voicing those on their behalf at key meetings, inflection points, and forums for change, such as the Governance Meetings and R&A Workshops. While research participants spoke about how many of the farmers/value-addition actors share the same or similar problems and challenges, each different group has slightly different needs, desires, and wishes that are collectively decided upon within their unique group settings—such as a VSLA or a cooperative. When I tried to clarify between two ABC Coaches who had brought up a specific problem in a Governance Meeting, the two of them responded saying: “All of us, we are facing the same-same problem. [Same-same problem, echoed by second Research Participant]. The way she’s suffering here, is the way I’m suffering there” (Research Participant G; Research Participant P, 2023). However, two different respondents (Research Participant G; Research Participant J, 2023) later elaborated on the requests their individual groups had made at Governance Meetings and how they differed:

Research Participant G: “[At the Governance Meeting]that is when we requested the machines for packaging.

Maya: 2SCALE, ENP, and ADS chose which machine?

Research Participant J: No, we did.

Research Participant G: In fact, for me I demanded soy cow.

Research Participant J: For me, I demanded oil machine.

When pressed further about these decisions, it became clear that these were not individual requests, though that is what the response implies—rather, these ABC Coaches put in requests for value-addition tools that benefitted their respective groups, and—according to them—had been jointly agreed upon in the group setting. For the ABC Coach representing a cooperative, the cooperative was more interested in oil production from the soy beans they were producing, and had even recently passed legislation mandating every member of the cooperative to plant a certain amount of soy on their

land (Research Participant J, 2023). In contrast, the ABC Coach who had requested a soy cow was operating two shops with value-addition actors who were part of her group and VSLA, and was seeking tools to speed up the production process for making milk—and saw the soy cow as an upgrade to the soy-kit they were currently utilizing to produce milk. In this way, the requests of the farmers were collectively brought to the decision-making table through the voices of the ABC Coach representatives, with each community’s unique needs being addressed.

However, for problems and concerns that farmers faced—such as access to quality seeds, packaging, certification, soybean aggregation, and offtake of produce—it was harder to determine who first raised the issue, and many of the respondents stated that these were problems that were collectively shared across agri-business clusters, and collectively raised by the coaches. It can be seen through the partnerships documentation that these concerns made their way to the decision-making arena in meetings, and were not only documented and accounted for as ‘risks & tensions’ to be rectified with modified ‘impact pathways’, but were also subsequently addressed as reported by interview respondents, 2SCALE and ADS-W staff. (2SCALE; 2021 R&A Report; Interviews, 2023).

One other note related to “inclusiveness” is that all meetings are invitation only, they are not open meetings. The decision-makers for these invitations typically would have been the Business Champion—in this case ENP. However, given ENP’s lack of involvement in their role, many of their responsibilities have been taken over by ADS-W (Key Informant E, Key Informant J; 2023). One of my research respondents, when asked if she attended all meetings responded saying, “not really, but we normally go when we are invited...you need to be invited so that you attend the meetings. Sometimes the meetings are happening, but you don’t know” (Research Participant P, 2023). In this way, not all discourses necessarily may make their way to the decision-making rooms, because not all representatives are always present—one actor has the power to determine who is literally included in those spaces.

Authenticity

“Authenticity” focuses on *how* decisions are made, with particular focus on whether coercive tactics are exhibited by one or more stakeholders. This is particularly important to understanding power dynamics in a partnership structure.

When evaluating “authenticity”, much of the academic literature assumes and presupposes very top-down vertical power structures, where those at the bottom have the least power and influence in the deliberative process (Dryzek, 2009; Mangnus 2023). In the case of the ENP Partnership, this was not always the case, particularly due to the creation of the ABC Coach role. Furthermore, the creation of this role has proven to play a pivotal role in the inclusion of women in the partnership—not only representing the largely women farmers and value addition actors, but also playing key roles in the partnership structure themselves. For example, field observations and interviews with ABC Coaches revealed that the creation of the role has restructured the top-down power dynamic, instead concentrating a large amount of power and in turn, decision-making control into the hands of the ABC Coaches, who are all farmers. One way this can be seen is through the fact that the ABC Coaches have control over the transparency of the information they deliver—both up the value chain to coordinating actors such as ENP, ADS-W, and 2SCALE, but also down the value chain to farmers and value-addition actors they are organizing on behalf of. An example of this can be seen with how ABC Coaches handled sharing information about the identity of the buyer in the value chain – with almost all choosing not to disclose the ENP’s identity, particularly after they had major issues with upholding their end of the promise by off-taking the soybeans farmers had produced at the agreed upon price and time in 2021. I began asking these questions to ABC Coaches after repeated instances of farmers not knowing who ENP was—despite the fact that they were producing soybeans that ENP was ultimately buying, and were therefore a part of the partnership structure. When speaking with one respondent, I had the following conversation:

Maya: “Did the other members know the buyer had backed out, or had problems?”

Research Participant J: “I didn’t tell them – so it was my own problem – with the community, with the farmers, if you tell them each and every thing and each and every problem – you want to get these soyas, but you won’t get the soyas”

When probed further about why she made this decision to withhold information about the buyer’s identity to the rest of the group, we had the following discussion:

Maya: But you as an ABC Coach, you want them to plant soya?

Research Participant J: As an ABC Coach, I die, I swear, I plant – all by soya....cuz, with the value addition work, it works”

Maya: Are there some members in the cooperative who planted soy for the first time because of your recommendation? [J: Yes] How many?

Research Participant J: We have new members who are not even in a group, ten of them, they have planted - their acreage is more than ours [M: and they had never planted soy before?] Yes.

Maya: And those new members – the ten new ones – did they know about ADS?

Research Participant J: Yes, they know about ADS, because we are the ones who broadcast, who preach the gospel of ADS - so they have heard about ADS and they are aware - we gave them the way and they have planted.

Maya: Are they saying yes because of the trust with you or with ADS?

Research Participant J: They are saying yes because of the trust [with us] - and yes because of what we are doing - what we are explaining to them, what we are producing.

What was communicated in this interview was further validated by the other ABC Coaches with whom I spoke, with one saying “we normally tell farmers to produce for this market, but at times when the immediate market fails, we come to them and buy. We tell them, let’s do the value addition so that we may sustain ourselves” (Research Participant P, 2023). As a result of this, many, if not most, of the farmers producing soybeans and doing value-

addition work within the framework of the ENP Partnership are not aware of the full extent of the value-chain, with that information being deliberately modified or obstructed by the ABC Coaches. They simply know there is a ‘buyer’.

Ultimately, with the new structure of the partnership and the creation of the ABC Coach function, the intention was to incentivize ABC Coaches to continue performing this critical role—a gap, that was previously missing—in a sustainable manner, motivated not by a salary or stipend, but rather through market forces, by seeing the economic earning potential of performing this role within the community. While the ABC Coaches are in fact performing the role, and do see the economic value of this work for themselves, this also influences the way that information is disclosed and changes the transparency of these actors. Ultimately, ensuring that farmers keep planting soy is in their economic benefit, and so it is in their best interests to ensure that the value chain is not disrupted. They have also now understood that the demand for soy is high, and even at current production levels is not meeting the Kenyan market demands—therefore ABC Coaches see soy as untapped potential for themselves and their communities (Research Participant P, Key Informant E; 2023).

This demonstrates that roles are incredibly important within the framework of a partnership—and that even for those with less institutional power, the performance of a role and a title can strongly influence the level of power a stakeholder is able to wield. This can similarly be seen in the other leadership roles within the group structures, such as the Group or VSLA Chair. One respondent I spoke to was not an ABC Coach, but was the Chairlady of her local group, and also a “Nutrition Champion” at her county level. From the conversation, it was clear that her performance of this role was critical to the success of the deliberation in the space—she took on an active role in encouraging those who were not sharing their opinions to speak up, and also was able to influence the success and access of the group through her formalized role at the county level (Research Participant R, 2023). I later saw this same Chairlady at the shop of another ABC

Coach, and realized that she was actively supporting that value-addition work as well (Field Notes).

It is important to note that many of these formalized structures for decision making—groups, VSLAs, SACCOs, and cooperatives—with constitutions, rules and regulations, and membership requirements, were not structures that previously existed in the same way—these governance structures were largely shared and encouraged by ADS-W, and formally adopted in the last three years. Prior to this, a common form of group function was the “merry-go-round” financial sharing, where members would all contribute and the funds would all go to one member on a rotating basis (Research Participant G; Research Participant J, Research Participant R, Key Informant J; 2023). This means that the decision-making models themselves are not authentic to these communities, though each group and community has tried to customize the rules and regulations to their preferences. For example, all groups have fines for certain behaviors: lateness, failure to contribute to the welfare fund, etc.—and that is something that came prescribed in the governance model. However, the level of these fines is something that groups deliberated on within themselves while establishing their constitutions—one respondent shared that “about the fine, it was 50 shillings, but there were complaints that it was too much - it was discussed, it came down to 20 bob, and then down to 10 bob” (Research Participant R, 2023).

One other observation from both formal and informal conversations with ABC Coaches and those that were invited to different meetings where decisions about the partnership were made—including Governance and R&A Meetings—was that none of the respondents realized the different purposes and intentions of the meetings. For example, I asked two respondents whether they had attended an R&A meeting before—both responded no (Research Participant G; Research Participant J; 2023). Later, when speaking to the Inclusive Business Advisor, I was told both women had in fact been at the meetings—which was confirmed by the attendance list within the meeting minutes (Research Participant G; Key Informant E; 2023). When I followed up with research participants about this, their response was that there were too many different meetings and the names and purposes

were not always clear. In the governance structure of the partnerships, the R&A Workshops are meant to play a critical role in the decision-making process—designed, in part, to make space to intentionally “reflect on risks and tensions and find ways to handle them” (2SCALE, 2021). It becomes challenging for these goals to be realized if the stakeholders tasked with representing the various discourses and interests of the farmers in the partnership are not fully aware of the differences in purpose and intention of the varying meetings.

Consequentiality

Consequentiality deals with the extent to which “deliberative processes determine the outputs of the partnership” (Schouten, 2012). In plain terms, this pillar examines whether meaningful deliberation is connected to tangible results—if an issue is raised and discussed, is it later addressed and resolved? If a discourse is discussed, but then there is no follow-up or real way in which that discourse is addressed, then the deliberation lacks consequentiality. Furthermore, consequentiality examines the way discourses evolve and become institutionalized, and how this influences decision-making. One example that has already been discussed is the issue of machines—and how each group’s specific machine request was made through their ABC Coach, documented in the Governance Meeting notes, and then actioned through delivery of those mechanization tools to respective groups in a timely manner (Research Participant G, Research Participant J, 2023; 2SCALE, 2022).

During the course of the field research, there were two main discourses that emerged repeatedly. The first discourse was the “one voice” narrative particularly for farmers, where it was repeatedly stated by numerous stakeholders that unity was critical to achieve when making decisions, as the power of the farmers was derived from numbers and them acting in cohesion with each other. During one group meeting in Kakamega County, one of the farmers I spoke with said that “there was no choice but to come to an agreement” because they needed to have “one voice” when negotiating in order to be successful (Field Notes, 2023). This narrative was not only repeated in formal interviews, but was also articulated by the staff of ADS-W

and 2SCALE. One 2SCALE representative, when discussing the sensitivity around the concept of a broker, stated that “if [the farmers] don’t want to be exploited as they’re saying it, they need to bring their resources together” (Key Informant E, 2023). It was not clear where this discourse emerged from—whether having ‘one voice’ was a function of cultural and community arrangements between farmers, or whether it was a strategic recommendation from the partner organizations like ADS-W. However, since this particular discourse was repeated at different levels of the partnership, it can be seen that the discourse has advanced from the structuration phase to the institutionalization phase. It is now no longer just a facet of the deliberation; it is an organizing structure.

From the point of view of consequentiality, it is clear to see how the unity in voice—particularly when communicating about challenges in the partnership—has been translated to actionable changes and results in the partnership. For example, all of the key challenges I heard from farmers, both in informal conversations and from my interview respondents—quality seeds, packaging, certification, soybean aggregation, and offtake of produce—were all documented in the R&A workshop minutes (2SCALE, 2021; 2022). Furthermore, research participants shared examples of the ways that other partnership actors had responded when issues were collectively raised:

Research Participant P: We presented the issue, and they are really working on it. Last week we were taken to KIRDI, Kisumu, and they are planning for intervention at the same place for certification....we are supposed to be going there for a week to be trained on certification.

Maya: But this is in response to the issue you were raising? [Yeah]

Research Participant P: And also we were linked to AWRECO for branding and packaging. And also marketing for us.

Maya: I just want to still understand – the first time the issue of certification was raised – that was in a Governance Meeting?

Research Participant P: It was in a meeting, in a Governance Meeting – where we were with ENP, 2SCALE, and ADS. In fact, we started earlier. In fact, the county government was also in the house.

But at that juncture, we are representing them [the farmers]. When we go there [to the Governance Meetings], we are the representatives of those groups. When we talk, we are talking on the voice of a SACCO, a group – those clusters.

Throughout the conversations, there was only one issue that I was able to identify as unresolved: one research respondent wished to have more learning trips between groups in different counties. This was the only discourse that I could not find represented within meeting notes, though it was stated to have been communicated at Governance Meetings (Research Participant J, 2023).

The second discourse that emerged over the course of the field research was related to the role of the ABC Coaches. For the four coaches I spoke with, I asked each to describe in their own words what their role was. The most common descriptors used included “linking”, “connecting”, “networking”, and “teaching” (Interviews; 2023). It is interesting that these were the chosen adjectives, given that most ABC Coaches also concurrently perform very concrete roles as well, including aggregating, seed distribution, and input generation. This raises the question about whether the terms used to describe the ABC Coach role, both reflexively used by the coaches themselves and also used by the ADS-W and 2SCALE staff, are intentionally apolitical, intending to downplay the tangible power that these roles hold. Moreover, as noted in Section 4.2, the role of ABC Coach does not simply hold soft power, it derives a financial benefit for the coach for the services they are providing. When clarifying with 2SCALE whether all farmers were aware of the financial benefit ABC Coaches derive from their roles, one respondent stated that some were aware and okay with it, given that the ABC Coach was also providing them with a valuable service, but others were not aware (Key Informant E, 2023). This is a particularly sensitive issue, especially for the topic of aggregation, as there was an observed sensitivity to the idea of ‘brokers’ or ‘middle-men’ from the farmer groups, likely because these actors are perceived as having financially taken advantage of farmers in the past. Yet in the case of the ABC Coach that doubles as an aggregator for her cluster, they would be charging a small price increase for

the work of aggregation—in this case, 5-10 KSH per kilogram (ibid). Regarding this situation, the Key Informant commented that at the end of the day, farmers were still deriving a financial gain that they weren't before, and the ABC Coaches cut was so small that it was negligible (ibid).

This raises the concern over the representativeness of concerns being institutionalized and acted upon. There is no such thing as a neutral actor delivering a discourse or representing a group of discourses—every person has motivations and interests guiding the messaging, delivery, and shape of a discourse in any given setting. If the ABC Coach function is being relied upon to represent the interests of the farmers and value-addition actors in these spaces, it may be challenging for them to fulfill that role in a neutral way if they do not always share the same interests, benefits, or stake in the partnership that their fellow farmers do.

4.4 Terms of Inclusion in the Soy Value Chain

While the aspects of deliberative capacity previously discussed are specific to the partnership structure, the “Terms of Inclusion” are specific to the value chain (Key Informant G, 2023). In the following section, I elaborate on how the Terms of Inclusion can be seen within the context of this soy value chain, but most of the examples I share are about the women ABC Coaches. In the concluding section, I elaborate further on how inclusion is differently felt by women in the partnership—particularly by women who are ABC Coaches vs. women farmers without a title.

Ownership

In the definition of ownership outlined in the Terms of Inclusion, the focus is largely on tangible assets, such as land, technology, and equipment (Vellema et al., 2019). However, from the perspective of the ENP Partnership—these tangible things did not surface as much as the intangible things that could also be owned. For example, one interesting and unique development within the ENP Partnership is that the BSS, ADS-W, was transitioning certain relationships over to ABC Coaches (Key Informant J, 2023). According

to 2SCALE, ABC Coaches now have a direct link with three different stakeholders: KALRO (for seed multiplication), Syngenta Foundation (for inputs), and Real IPM (for inputs) (Key Informant S, 2023). One relationship in particular, with KALRO—the government organization that provided seeds to farmers—was transitioned over to ABC Coaches, with ADS-W no longer attending meetings. During my first meeting with one of the ABC Coaches, she repeatedly stepped out of the meeting to take calls. I later learned that she was remotely negotiating—there happened to be a meeting with the KALRO representative at the same time; she was multi-tasking, giving instructions over the telephone to another farmer she had designated in her place. Owning relationships has significant implications within the context of a value chain, as it enables more direct and unfiltered communication that can enhance decision-making. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, a few of the women I interviewed either individually or collectively (with their respective groups or cooperatives) owned business licenses and business contracts that existed outside of the partnership, but were a result of the partnership.

Beyond physical property, there is also the important topic of intellectual property and know-how. Through the field interviews, it became very clear that the knowledge and recipes used in the soy value addition were known before the formation of the partnership to the women farmers and value addition actors. Other respondents shared with me how they had learned about other important farming topics, including regenerative agriculture, soil conservation, and weed management—and how in some cases they even shared this knowledge with ADS-W to use as a baseline in other trainings they were offering (Research Participant G, Research Participant J; 2023).

Voice

Within the Terms of Inclusion, voice is determined through four pathways: influencing key business decisions, weight in decision-making, arrangements for review/grievance, and mechanisms for dealing with asymmetries in information access (Vellema et al., 2022, pg. 109). Within the ENP Partnership, the clearest way that voice is seen is within the asymmetry

of information access—due to the role the ABC Coaches play in disclosing or withholding information, such as the identity of the buyer and past issues with them upholding their purchase promises (Interviews, 2023). This non-disclosure is a strategic use of the voice of the ABC Coaches, but also could limit other women farmers from fully engaging in business activities as they do not have a full picture of the landscape. This information disclosure challenge is also coupled with the material reality of performing an ABC Coach role. Interestingly, one interview respondent spoke of her performance of this role beyond the constraints and framework of the ENP Partnership. She shared the following.

Research Participant G: ABC coaches are only found in 2SCALE. We have different bodies - for example, right now, we have the 2SCALE, 2SCALE calls us “ABC Coach”. We have other bodies that call us “Farmer Service Center”, FSS - all of these are our titles. [It is just the same title] You will see me in a different fashion, not with ADS, but different [organizations], cuz I’m coordinating on the ground. When there are inputs of products, I have a body that deals with that and it calls me FSS. [M: You work with Farm To Market Alliance?] Yeah! For me, I work with FTMA, I’m their Farm Service Center. In fact, as we are talking, there is another group called Apollo they are looking for me very seriously. I told them no, I’m occupied.

Another interview respondent shared similarly about the way her role and perception in the community has expanded, saying that:

Research Participant P: In fact, there is a meeting down there in a Cassava factory - they submitted there, whereby I was supposed to go and share with them about cassava value chain.

From these responses, it is clear that the role and service being provided by these actors, is in some cases overlapping with the requests and interests of other organizations working in the agricultural space as well. In this way, the profile of the ABC Coaches—both at the community level and at the institutional level—is elevated, allowing them to act as a ‘translator’ or trusted go-between facilitating between farmer groups and multiple international development actors who are operating in Kenya. This clout was also clearly observed—in one situation, I was able to see an ABC Coach speaking to a new group of farmers who were unfamiliar with her. It was obvious that she

held the attention of the room, clearly garnering interest for her work and earning peoples' confidence (Field Notes, 2023). Another interview respondent shared that she traveled all the way from another county to participate in the group where her mentor, another ABC Coach, was leading (Interview Respondent S, 2023). As the profile of the ABC Coaches is raised, demonstrating how space in deliberation has created more voice for women within the value chain, and even beyond with other adjacent markets. However, the power differentials for their relationship with farmers is also transformed. It raises a question of whether they are able to represent group interests in an unbiased way—which will be further discussed in the Conclusion.

Another way that we are able to see Voice in action is through the origins of the value-addition work, and its impact on women's increased inclusion in the soy value chain. Originally the value-addition work was pushed as a result of the buyer, ENP, not following through on their promises to purchase at a given time and price point (Kataka, 2023; Ashitiva, 2023). However, most of the women farmers who I spoke with had been making food like milk and flour out of soy for their families at a small-scale a long time before they were formally expanding their production to local markets as part of the ENP Partnership. One interview participant shared that:

Research Participant G: That is why I told you, these farmers had knowledge of value addition that ADS didn't have, so we raised up, we asked them - how can we do this. And then from the experience that we were on the ground - we knew about soya.

This shows that it was the farmers—in particular, the women ABC Coaches who were already doing this work—that brought value-addition as an idea to ADS-W, who then helped them to scale and operationalize the business beyond the home, enabling deeper integration into the value chain. However, the knowledge was something that was previously with many of the farmers, and it was why they were hired as ToTs in the first place to share this knowledge more broadly within the communities. As of 2023, the value-addition work is a critical component of the ENP Partnership, that was not conceived of at the start of the partnership (Key Informant E, 2023).

This demonstrates the fluidity of a partnership—how situations arise and change constantly, and require renegotiation, redeliberation, and reconfiguration to meet the evolving needs of all stakeholders. It further demonstrates that information and knowledge flow was not unidirectional from the development organizations like 2SCALE and ADS-W down to the farmers—in many cases, knowledge, ideas, and demands were communicated and up the chain via Governance Meetings, R&A Meetings, and other avenues, and then ADS-W and 2SCALE were able to respond to those requests and help farmers expand their reach. In one instance, a 2SCALE staff member noted that the goal of their organization was to “strengthen” and not to “formalize”—indicating that it was not the intention to for the organizations to enter communities and completely change existing structures and systems, but rather to help support what was already in place (Field Notes, 2023).

Voice also unfolds differently depending on the group dynamics—for example, I spoke with community group that had organized itself in a cooperative. According to the ABC Coach part of that group, the cooperative had recently come to a decision where every member would plant no less than $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre of soy on their land. Relating to the review and grievance component of voice, one respondent told me that though the decision to mandate a soy minimum was not unanimous, the benefit of a cooperative formation was that the majority decision was upheld and decision-making was filtered through the structure of the group—with the benefit of the group as a whole also in mind (Research Participant J, 2023). This respondent furthermore elaborated that more members were willing to plant soy after having seen the success of the soy value-addition that women were leading, saying, “as they are seeing how we are moving - we are now creating that interest to join us” (Research Participant S, 2023). In this way, we can understand that Voice is not only singular—it also occurs in a group, and is thereby influenced by the structures through which it operates, in this example, a cooperative. The farmers believed that their collective power was not only stronger than the individual, but collective decision-making was important for the benefit of the whole community. What can clearly be seen is that the collective decision-making in this example was highly influenced

by the witnessed business success of the women doing soy-value addition work—creating a positive feedback loop whereby more wanted to join in, while simultaneously raising the profile and individual power of the women in the partnership.

Maya: can you give me one example, of something in the last meeting that was raised and how it was resolved?

Research Participant S: In the last meeting, we had an agenda of expanding our project to a bigger one, where we decided that...every member has [to plant] a certain portion of the soy, so that when we all harvest our soya and we have something like an aggregation center we shall 1) create jobs made for our young generation 2) in that job creation, we shall need skilled personnel, this will empower our children to not meander around but they will have something to do. And also for us, as African women you are just going to prepare depending on the men, we are now moving out of that state to be independent and thrive.

Maya: Do you feel like this value addition work has made you more independent? [S: Yea] In what way? Financially independent? What do you mean by that?

Research Participant S: As I've said, you know, I'm in Africa, and I know how African women are being treated - so if I can be independent, I mean financially, yes. I can own my own funds, and run my own smaller things, or even bigger things - I'm not just there to run smaller things.

Maya: Is that why you chose to become a trainer, so you could bring other people along? [S: Yes].

This is not the only example of Voice as a group initiative—another relevant example was the recent creation of an “Association of Aggregators”, a representative group intending to negotiate with buyers on prices, pushing for better outcomes for farmers through collective advocacy. In July 2023, 10 Aggregators, serving as representatives from three counties, came together for the first ever meeting of an Aggregators union, where buyers—including ENP were also present (Key Informant E, 2023). “The buyers pitched to the aggregators – their price, their volumes, their quantities, quality, and how they are going to support the farmers. And now the Aggregators decide which buyer they are going with” (ibid). According to this informant interview, the formation of an aggregators association was in part to

also deal with the issue of middle-men or brokers, so that farmers were able to use their combined power to better negotiate and remove the need to rely on brokers to sell their product (ibid). The pattern that emerges demonstrates a connection between Voice and the discourses accompanying it, which I will later unpack further in Chapter 5.

Risk and Reward

When conceptualizing “risk” and “reward” in this value chain framework, the focus is on whether stakeholders within the value chain share the risks and rewards of business ventures equally, or if one stakeholder takes on a disproportionate risk that yields a lower potential for reward (Vellema et al., 2022, pg. 109). In this case study, by far the largest risk was that of the insecurity of the lead buyer, ENP, from which most of the farmers within the partnership were shielded. When ENP first failed in their promise to offtake soy at the agreed upon rate, ADS-W and ABC Coaches stepped in to ensure a smooth buying experience for farmers, with ADS-W taking on the risk by buying the farmers supply as promised (Interviews, 2023). Had they not done this, the farmers—whose soy makes up the bedrock of this value chain and partnership—may not have continued to plant soy. From conversations with ABC Coaches, it appeared that planting soy was considered a riskier investment, due to lack of knowledge, concerns about buyers, and an overall cultural reticence to embracing change, given that maize has historically been considered a safe and acceptable cash crop (Research Participant G, 2023).

Further up the value chain, value addition actors take on risks in their work through the constraints of the partnership. The ENP Partnership framework has enabled women in the value chain to scale their soy entrepreneurial efforts, through trainings, technology, and access to government actors that support with certifications and branding (Interviews, 2023). However, despite the fact that different groups of women operating value addition businesses were all receiving support through the same organization and partnership framework, each group had a slightly different recipe, different tweaks to make something stand out, even if they were in the same

county—green onions in the *mandazi* in Bungoma, chili powder in the *crackies* in Kakamega. Some groups even utilized different cooking techniques, which yielded vastly different final products: knife-cut *crackies* (see *Image 4*) were denser than *crackies* made with a wetter dough using an improvised grate over hot oil (see *Images 1-3*). These unique differences in the products were something each value addition actor was very proud of.



Image 1-3: Krishnan, M., Kakamega County, Kenya. August 2023.
Photo Description: *Crackies* made with an improvised grater; with chili powder.



Image 4: Krishnan, M., Kakamega County, Kenya. August 2023.
Photo Description: Knife and cookie-cutter shaped *crackies*, rebranded as new items to sell by forming the same dough into different shapes and sizes.

However, during the interview process I learned that the value-addition actors were being strongly encouraged to homogenize their products, so that they could achieve the certification needed to access larger markets. When asked about this, the ABC Coaches responded that it was a good thing, because the certification would allow them to sell their products at supermarkets instead of just in local shops or hawking (Research Participant G, Research Participant I; 2023). From their point of view, the reward of shelf space in supermarkets, ability to charge higher prices, and potential for expansion of their market was worth the risk of sacrificing the recipes and

knowledge they each brought to their unique products. From this, a repeated theme emerges: individual or collective success. Their product's uniqueness helps them to stand out in local markets, but expanded formalized markets can be achieved through homogenization and standardization. Within the context of the partnership, women entrepreneurs are forced to make business decisions weighing potential risks and rewards between their individual and their collective success.

Relatedly, as described in Sections 4.1 and 4.4, several of the ABC Coaches I spoke with had formalized business licenses, certified through the national government, through which they were operating their soy value-addition businesses and storefronts. In these cases, women from within the community group would support with these businesses in various ways. But ultimately, a business license is only in one person's name, and is not owned by a group, even if the group contributes to its success—presenting a risk for the women farmers supporting one value-addition actor in her self-owned business.

Despite this, the movement for soy was very apparent within the community: it was clear that what was just a few years ago seen as a risky crop, was becoming more normalized within the community and seen as a positive thing, particularly with the success of value-addition activities. Even the risk that farmers faced with the insecurity of ENP seemed to work out: with limited faith in ENP in their role, the ABC Coaches and ADS-W doubled down on their efforts to find alternate buyers. Ultimately, this led to the discovery and introduction of KALRO into the partnership—who buy seeds at double the market price (Key Informant J, 2023). The outcome is access to a more robust soy market, where demand is so high that farmers are not able to fully meet it.

Chapter 5: Running in Parallel – Deliberative Capacity and Terms of Inclusion

When the Partnerships Capacities Framework and Terms of Inclusion Framework were designed, they were intended to apply to separate spheres: one to partnerships and one to value chains, though the authors assumed a relationship between the two theories (Key Informant G, 2023; Schouten & Vellema, 2019). However, this connection had not yet been studied or specifically conceptualized. This research and case study have revealed many ways in which inclusion in a value chain is very linked and connected to deliberative capacity of the partnership—and the Terms of Inclusion can be used as a proxy to gauge a partnership’s intended goal of inclusive development. In fact, there are several ways in which we can see that the conditions of the partnership itself are the determining factor to the level of inclusion in the value chain. In the following section, I further elaborate on how the terms of inclusion are constantly evolving over the course of the partnership and then map out the connections between the two frameworks.

5.1 Terms of Inclusion as a Dynamic Process

As with partnerships, the Terms of Inclusion do not represent a static outcome that, once achieved, remains permanently solved. This can clearly be seen with the examples that have been shared, particularly regarding Ownership. Ownership did not happen immediately, nor overnight—rather it was a two-year process, whereby ADS-W facilitated conversations and then slowly transitioned those relationships over to the ABC Coaches. This is also an important reflection for the Deliberative Capacity of the partnership, as this decision mitigated some of the power imbalances that would have been present if ABC Coaches had immediately been linked to external stakeholders. The goal of the partnership, and particularly of 2SCALE and ADS-W, was sustainability and for them to eventually be able to step back, but having ADS-W involved up front as a relationship facilitator eased this transition and enabled the women ABC Coaches I spoke with to become

comfortable with taking on this new relationship management role (Research Participant G, Research Participant J). Several respondents emphasized that their confidence grew over time, with successful engagements in meetings, and with increased business success with their value-addition activities (ibid). Therefore, even though relationships and business titles were not owned by the women ABC Coaches at the onset of the partnership, these were areas that evolved and occurred with time and growth—enabling greater value chain inclusion at later stages of the partnership.

5.2 Connections Between the Theoretical Frameworks

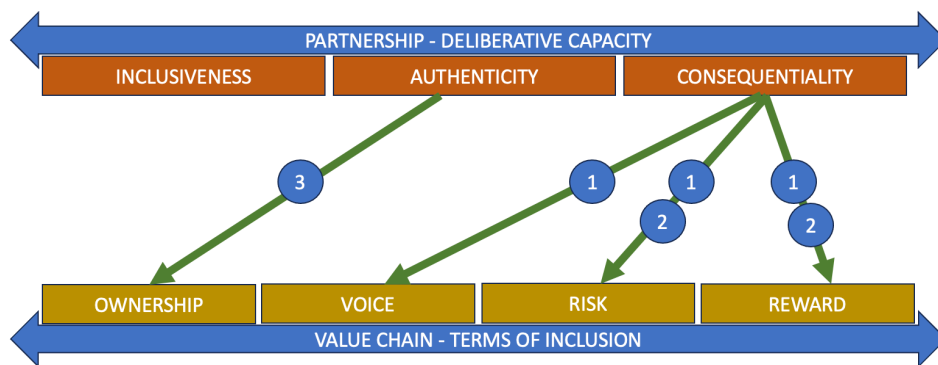


Figure 6

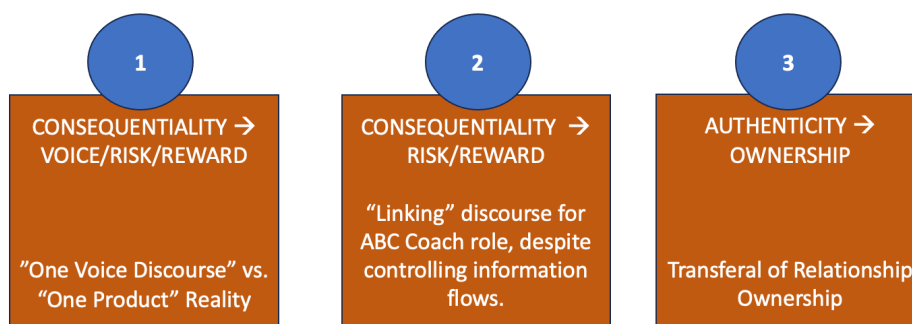


Figure 7

Conceptually, in *Figure 6*, I have mapped the two frameworks as running in parallel, operating within the same ecosystem but measuring and being measured through different metrics. Between the two parallel lines, there are several arrows connecting specific elements of each framework, linked to numbered examples below in *Figure 7*, demonstrating how these

theories are in fact entangled processes, not always remaining purely parallel. When understood as entangled processes, impacts on one can have unintended consequences—for instance, some outcomes for a partnership structure could even reduce the position of women in the value chain.

The first two examples in *Figure 7* look at the connection between Consequentiality (Partnerships Capacity framework) and Risk/Reward (Terms of Inclusion framework). Ultimately, the findings from this case study indicate that the discourses that evolve from pervasive to institutionalized have a material impact on not only the partnership structure, but the extent of inclusion within the value chain.

The first where we can see this looks at the repeated discourse of “one voice” heard from all stakeholders—from the farmers, to ADS-W, to 2SCALE. Over the field research duration in Kenya, it was unclear where this narrative emerged from, and yet it was accepted as unquestioned truth. The complication arises in the context of the partnership, where the push for one collective voice came in conflict with the reality of many different product variations within the value-addition portfolios. As mentioned earlier, field research findings about the consequentiality of deliberation indicated that the “one voice” discourse had matured from the “discourse structuration” phase to the “discourse institutionalization phase” (Schouten et al., 2012). This is a clear example of how the methods of deliberation are funnelled through the discourse—with partnership actors and farmers alike emphasizing the importance of collective decision making and unity leading to greater business success, as opposed to individuality and market competition. Ultimately, the importance of this discourse has influenced not only the structures of the partnership, but the way women farmers and social entrepreneurs are making decisions about risk and reward in their businesses. Furthermore, there is a linkage between Consequentiality and Voice, whereby the creation of the ABC Coach function was assumed to enhance women’s voice and deliberation within the partnership—ultimately boosting the deliberative capacity of the partnership itself, and better linking women entrepreneurs to the value chain. One interesting thing to consider is

whether the terms of inclusion, in particular for women farmers, are unequal, because they were perceived as a homogenous group. However, through the creation of roles including the ABC Coach function, this is not necessarily the case.

The second example can be seen in another discourse regarding the ABC Coach role. As introduced in Chapter 4, the verbs that coaches used to describe their work were often passive and apolitical. This language was repeated from all social actors in the partnership—both ABC Coaches, ADS-W, and 2SCALE staff. As before, with the “one voice” discourse, another discourse of a neutral job description had evolved from a repeated theme, to an institutionalized discourse—even embedded in the 2SCALE job description and selection criteria, listing “neutrality” as the fourth factor for selection (2SCALE, ABC Formation & Development Strategy, 2021). In this way, the consequentiality of the partnership—measured through the discourses that take root, and become more dominant—is very linked to the risk/reward derived from ABC Coaches in particular. It is in their personal benefit and profit, as well as in the benefit of the partnership at large, to project and maintain a depoliticized image. However, all stakeholders have influences, motives, agendas, and interests—there is no such thing as a neutral actor. The introduction of the ABC Coaching function changes the power dynamics of the traditional partnership structure; reorganizing power at the grassroots through the creation of this role. While this is intentional, and in line with the objectives of 2SCALE, which “considers ABCs as the building blocks for grassroots actors’ empowerment”, it also requires additional focus and care, given that those in this role have an outsized influence on decision-making (ibid). This example also demonstrates a connection between Consequentiality and Voice—whereby the dominant discourse surrounding roles and responsibilities of ABC Coaches contributes to two aspects of Voice, information asymmetry and weight in decision-making. The ABC Coach function has a disproportionate power to influence decision-making and represent fellow farmers, demonstrating two tangible ways in which Voice is either enhanced or diminished by the way that the conversation around an ABC Coach’s role has evolved.

The last example noted in *Figure 7* regarding the relationship between the two frameworks is the link between Authenticity (Partnerships Capacities framework) and Ownership (Terms of Inclusion framework). This can be visualized through the transferal of relationship ownership for several key relationships in the partnership structure from the organizing bodies like ADS-W to the ABC Coaches. These relationships, initially facilitated through the partnership structure, are now owned by ABC Coaches, who can negotiate, communicate, and meet without approval with direct contacts. This directly demonstrates the ‘Authenticity’ measure of a partnership, as ABC Coaches can be seen exercising free judgement, without coercion from stakeholders up the partnership pipeline, to make decisions on their own. Not only does this ownership of relationships have a tangible value, it also ensures that farmers and value-addition actors, represented by the coaches, have a more direct say in their own demands and financial negotiations.

Chapter 6: Discussion, Further Contributions, and Conclusion

In this chapter, I will close by summarizing my findings related to my research questions, their implications for inclusive development, and my contributions to this body of work more broadly. In Sections 4.1 and 4.3, I discussed in depth the first research sub-question regarding the deliberative space for women, giving examples ranging from the importance of the soy value chain contextually in Kenya to examples of deliberative capacity across the three pillars. In section 5.1, I further expanded on my findings related to sub-question two, relating to the evolving nature of the terms of inclusion for women. In section 5.2, I mapped out the connections observed between deliberative capacity and terms of inclusion, answering sub-question three. In the following Discussion sub-section, I reflect on the influence of a title on deliberation, and the nuances of women’s decision-making in this soy value chain case study.

6.1 Discussion

Ultimately, these findings paint a nuanced picture regarding my overarching research question: how does deliberative capacity influence how women are included in the soy value chain? The answer is that the deliberative capacity of the partnership is essential to the ways that women have been included in the soy value chain—particularly if deliberative capacity is understood in a more expansive way. Earlier, in this paper, I defined deliberative capacity as the “extent to which governance arrangements...hold structures to host deliberation that is inclusive, authentic, and consequential” (Dryzek, 2009; from Vellema et al, 2019, pg. 715). In the context of this definition and the ENP Partnership, “governance arrangements” and “structures” do not only mean Governance Meetings and R&A workshops—spaces where it is explicitly understood by all parties that decisions are made. In Section 3.3, I had initially described one of the limitations of my research as being unable to witness one of these specific deliberative moments during my time in Kenya. However, in retrospect, I believe I was able to observe deliberation and deliberative capacity in far more nuanced and embedded ways by being able to meet with, observe, and interact with community groups and ABC Coaches during my field research. From my interviews, it became clear that the introduction of the ABC Coach role was one of the most crucial governance arrangement decisions of this partnership, enabling in particular women farmers at the grassroots level to make decisions that had ripple effects into their inclusion in the soy value chain—at both the personal and community level. The finding from this is the power accompanying a formalized title, even without payment or salary, particularly when the role description is about the mobilization of farmers. In their newfound roles, women farmers—though typically considered to be in a marginalized social position—were making nuanced decisions about disclosing information regarding the buyer, about pursuing value-addition activities as a component of the ENP partnership, about how to collectively share grievances and requests for additional support at governance meetings, and about how to proceed in financial transactions with other partners

that they were directly in communication with. Even though the terms of the Partnerships Capacities were not entirely met—for example, through Authenticity, when information about the buyer was not fully disclosed—this did not have the same impact as if an actor higher up the value chain, like ENP, was not being fully transparent. ABC Coaches were not withholding information out of malicious intent, rather they were focused on the bigger picture of how soy could transform their communities and were culturally conscious of the challenge of introducing soy when it was not previously a popular crop. Their guidance to farmers was followed not because of institutional authority and fear of repercussion, but rather because of trust and reputation. This influence only grew with time, and through their role they expanded their reputation and profile at both the community level and with the organizations they were interacting with. ABC Coaches were akin to local celebrities, known, recognized, trusted and respected—particularly given their advocacy roles and the way that community members saw their financial prospects improving through this work. Ultimately, the role of an ABC Coach—recruited from the pool of farmers themselves with a mandatory gender quota—re-organized the traditional power structures in a value chain-partnership by flipping it on its head and accumulating power at the bottom, largely through these actors’ abilities to make decisions, both informed by personal judgement and their communities’ requests. However, with any position of power, the potential for abuse is possible, and it is important to consider checks and balances to ensure that doesn’t happen. In the case of the ABC Coaches, the selection criteria include neutrality and an ability to work closely with partner organizations. Furthermore, not all coaches are democratically elected, though the criteria outline that it is important for the coach to be embedded and trusted by the community and agri-business cluster within which they’re operating within. Despite this cautionary perspective, from the respondents’ feedback and what was personally observed, the decisions made by women ABC Coaches appeared to be with the best intentions of the community in mind—as community betterment was a powerful motivator for them, beyond just self-interest. As such, it is important to clarify that the inclusion and betterment of an ABC Coach

through their role is not mutually exclusive with the inclusion and betterment of women farmers in the value chain, regardless of title. In fact, in this specific case study it was very clear that inclusion in the partnership—particularly through value-addition activities, was something that raised the social and financial prospects of both women farmers and ABC Coaches, though that inclusion was not necessarily equal. Though the value chain inclusion experienced by women differed depending on their role and placement within the community, the partnership—and its governance and structures—was the key that made inclusion possible in the first place. For women who became ABC Coaches, their entire social and financial standing shifted with the formalization of their role. Furthermore, women farmers were able to take skills they had been cultivating for a long time in the home, share their ideas up the partnership chain through their respective ABC Coaches, and create an entirely new area of partnership with the value addition work that further improved their standing and position in value chain activities. Interestingly, the pursuit of the value-addition activities was also a result of the failure of ENP to offtake soy as promised—and was seen initially as a safety net to protect farmers from the shocks and insecurities of the buyer. This reflects highly on the deliberative capacity of the partnership—and reinforces that partnerships are not static. The initial intended and agreed upon terms of the partnership were not met, and the partnership evolved with the recommendation of women farmers, who were already doing value-addition at home, to adapt to this failure. The result was a more robust, diversified and secure value chain for all farmers, with a completely new income stream from value addition activities to act as a buffer—to the point where several women I spoke with kept the majority of their soy harvest for value-addition activities rather than selling directly. This further reinforces the fact that though different, the partnerships capacities and terms of inclusion are entangled processes. Furthermore, this adds another dimension to research on power differentials in partnerships (Utting & Zammit, 2009; Mangnus 2023), showing that power does not always decrease linearly from top to bottom, and that even when stakeholders who were per-

ceived as marginalized accumulate power through roles and titles, their interests are not necessarily only focused on the self. Furthermore, information asymmetry does not also necessarily mean power is being abused. Rather, we have seen an example where women empowered as ABC Coaches are making complex decisions weighing costs and benefits at more than just an individual level—in contrast to the market-based competition narratives where individuals weigh outcomes based on cost/benefits only related to their own outcomes.

6.2 New Contributions to the ‘Partnership Capacity’ and ‘Terms of Inclusion’ Frameworks

This research expands upon the understanding of both the ‘Partnerships Capacities’ and ‘Terms of Inclusion’ frameworks, as well as further explores their interactions with each other from a theoretical lens. The following are the key theoretical takeaways, informed from this research:

Expansion of “Ownership”

Within the “Terms of Inclusion” framework, this research informs the suggestion that “Ownership” be expanded from a focus on tangible items like property and equipment to also include intangible things including relationships, knowledge (on farming techniques, value addition practices), and recipes. As seen from this case study in specific, the knowledge sharing aspect was crucial and not unidirectional, with a large amount of knowledge flowing from the bottom up through the partnership structure. This meant that a great deal of deliberation, and discourses that were introduced into the partnership were initiated and shaped by ABC Coaches who hold that expertise.

Interplay Between Consequentiality and Risk/Reward

In the previous section, there were two examples outlined that demonstrate the interplay between Consequentiality, through the formalization of dominant discourses, and Risk/Reward. As with the example of “linking” discourse, there are no such thing as neutral actors delivering messages or acting as representatives. The risk/reward for the messenger/representative may

not always overlap entirely, and in some cases, that representative may be responsible for information asymmetry, either because it is in their own interests or because they believe it is in the groups' best interests. However, depending on where this representative sits in the value chain, the assumption of harm coming from information asymmetry may not always have the same impact. The contribution towards the theory this finding suggests is that even if the terms of deliberative capacity are not fully met, that does not immediately imply harm, risk, or an inability for inclusive development to be realized.

6.3 Future Considerations for Development Practitioners

With any development intervention, there are unintended results and sometimes consequences. As described in the beginning, a partnership is a fluid, everchanging process, and the Partnerships Capacities provide just one framework through which their ability to achieve inclusive development can be understood. Deliberative capacity is not the only pillar through which inclusive development can be determined, but it has demonstrated relevance for this particular case study of focus in Kenya. There are broader lessons for development practitioners to be taken from this research given the increasing importance and prevalence of 'partnerships' in development discourses, and echoing the nuanced understanding of what a partnership is. Some of the key takeaways are as follows:

Introduction of Roles and Titles

Roles and titles are important, and can rebalance the traditional division of power in a partnership structure. From this case study in Kenya, we can see that the creation of the ABC Coach role strongly influenced the deliberation potential of women farmers, but also impacted the deliberative capacity of the partnership itself by shifting and reprioritizing discourses, and enabling new developments such as independent relationship ownership. It was extremely important that this role was sourced from the farmers themselves—

as each ABC Coach was already deeply embedded and linked to the agribusiness cluster they were supporting. This further contributes to research that shows the complexity of development interventions where “communities are regarded as homogenous groups with common interests that are willing to make collective decisions when negotiating” (Van Westen & Zoomers, 2016; from Mangnus, 2023). In this case, women cannot be regarded as a homogenous group, and development outcomes for them, including inclusion in the value chain, may not be equally experienced (Schelle & Pokorny, 2021).

‘Strengthening’ vs. ‘Formalizing’ Systems

There is a fine line between strengthening existing systems and structures and formalization. Sometimes, formalization takes different shapes—it could look like the introduction of a governance system that didn’t previously exist, or it could look like marketization as the solution to all problems. In the case of the ENP Partnership, women farmers and entrepreneurs—and community members in general—appeared to be pleased with the introduction of certain modes of governance systems (such as VSLAs as opposed to ‘merry-go-rounds’ for community groups) because of the increased buying potential of the group when interest, fines, and dues were factored into the equation. However, the vehicle and method of deliberation can factor into the final outcome of what is decided. Ultimately more time is needed to see the impact of these initiatives, including the introduction of the ABC Coaching model. As the context and reality evolves and adapts, so too must the partnership in response.

6.4 Conclusions

This research emerged from a place of curiosity regarding the prevalence of ‘partnerships’ within the broader international development discourse, and a desire to better understand how deliberative capacity influences women’s inclusion in the value chain. Ultimately, we learned that deliberation and deliberative capacity are very connected to women smallholder farmers inclusion in the soy value chain, and that women’s inclusion in the value chain is not static, but consistently evolving depending on the ways deliberation occurs. We also saw evidence that women in this partnership experienced inclusion in the soy value chain differently dependent on their role, with ABC Coaches experiencing a very high level of inclusion in the value chain. Despite this, inclusion is not black and white—and intentions play a strong role in influencing the outcomes of the partnership. Further research into this focus area is needed to fully understand the scope of partnerships capacities, and their influence on value chain inclusion—as the nuances explored in this research paper are just the first step into unpacking these dynamics.

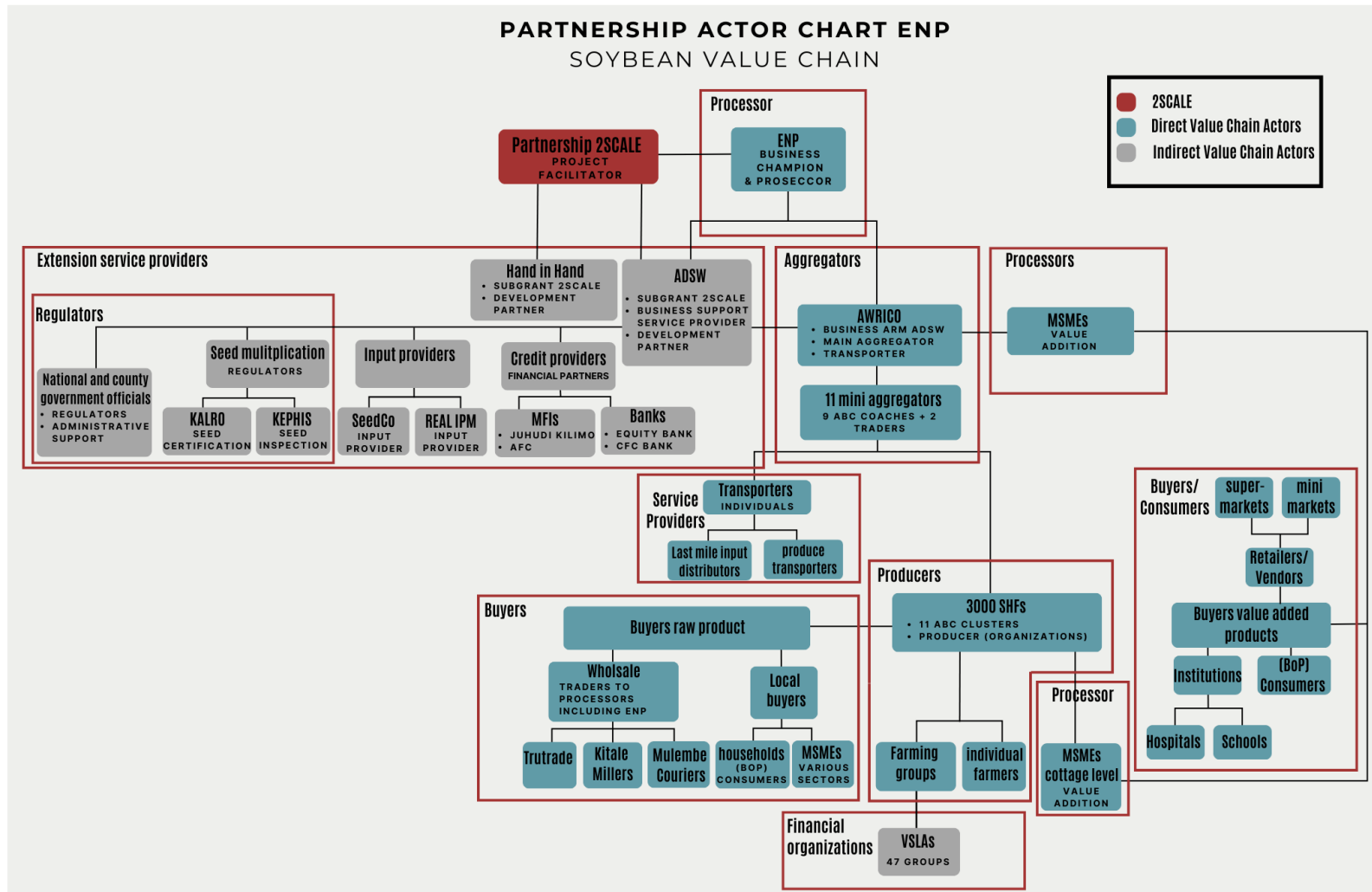
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Annex 1: ENP Partnership Actor Chart



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