

PALS: Project model Accredited Learning & Support

Increasing programming effectiveness by
developing, sharing & recognising field expertise

**“If you are not willing to learn, no one can help you.
If you are determined to learn, no one can stop you” Author Unknown**

Summary

PALS is an online community learning approach that delivers facilitated **module based learning and support** to World Vision economic development programming staff based in the field.

Developed by World Vision Australia’s Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development Team (SEED), PALS is delivered and accredited via the global World Vision eCampus online learning platform which uses Moodle as its Learning Management System.

It acknowledges learners as individuals who shape their own knowledge development rather than merely being receivers of information. This is achieved by harnessing the power of collaborative learning through an online global community of peers and more experienced practitioners who are constantly sharing questions, challenges, reflections and insights over the lifecycle of their respective programmes.



The **objectives** of PALS are to:

- Develop and recognise the expertise of our field staff who can go on to provide locally-based support to their peers;
- Provide an online learning community in which staff can share their expertise and experiences and learn from their peers and more experienced practitioners;
- Increase the impact that our economic development project models achieve within the communities we work by having more experienced and informed practitioners.

The PALS approach is currently being piloted across 8 African countries, 25 projects and 44 participants, with plans to extend to over 30 countries and 150 participants in 2014. It is focusing upon the Local Value Chain Development (LVCD) project model which helps producers to increase their incomes through collective empowerment and better engagement and access to markets.

There are **opportunities** for World Vision to work with partners such as RMIT to explore the applicability of PALS to other programming areas; refine and develop the approach to adopt latest digital technologies; and use the platform as a way to better communicate and engage with World Vision supporters and partners to develop a true motivated community of practise that extends beyond the life of the learning course.

Background

World Vision Australia is Australia's largest international non-government organisation (INGO) with over 60 years of experience in holistic, long-term community development and emergency relief initiatives. World Vision Australia currently contributes to the sustained wellbeing of almost two million children in over 60 countries each year.

The SEED team within World Vision Australia supports World Vision's Regional and National Offices globally by developing and advising upon economic development programmes which aim to enable the poor to sustainably increase their own household incomes to better provide for their children.

Research shows that formal training including scheduled workshops, classes and courses accounts for only 5-10% of the way employees learn how to do their jobs. In comparison, approximately 70% of the information an employee requires to successfully perform their job is learnt from experience, by trying things out, mimicking what works for colleagues, asking questions, making mistakes, and conversing with friends. *Kajewski, K. Marsden, V. 2012. Demystifying 70:20:10. Deakin University White Paper.*

Historically, INGOs including World Vision, prescribe training or capacity building in terms of a face-to-face interaction in which a recognised 'expert' attempts to teach the implementing staff and equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge they require to achieve impact in the field. The training is most commonly face to face, expensive, once-off and retention is relatively low given the participants are not able to apply that knowledge in their specific contexts during the training session.

Audience

Analysis identified that World Vision was not capturing, nor recognising the rich on-the-job learning of our economic development field-based practitioners, which accounts for approximately 70% of their learning, to benefit current and future staff. This limitation is further exasperated due to many of these staff working in isolation in their respective programmes and therefore not benefitting from the sharing of information and regular interactions with their economic development peers.

The identified field staff have internet connection every 1-2 days and English as a second language. Many have University qualifications or high-school as a minimum.



How it works

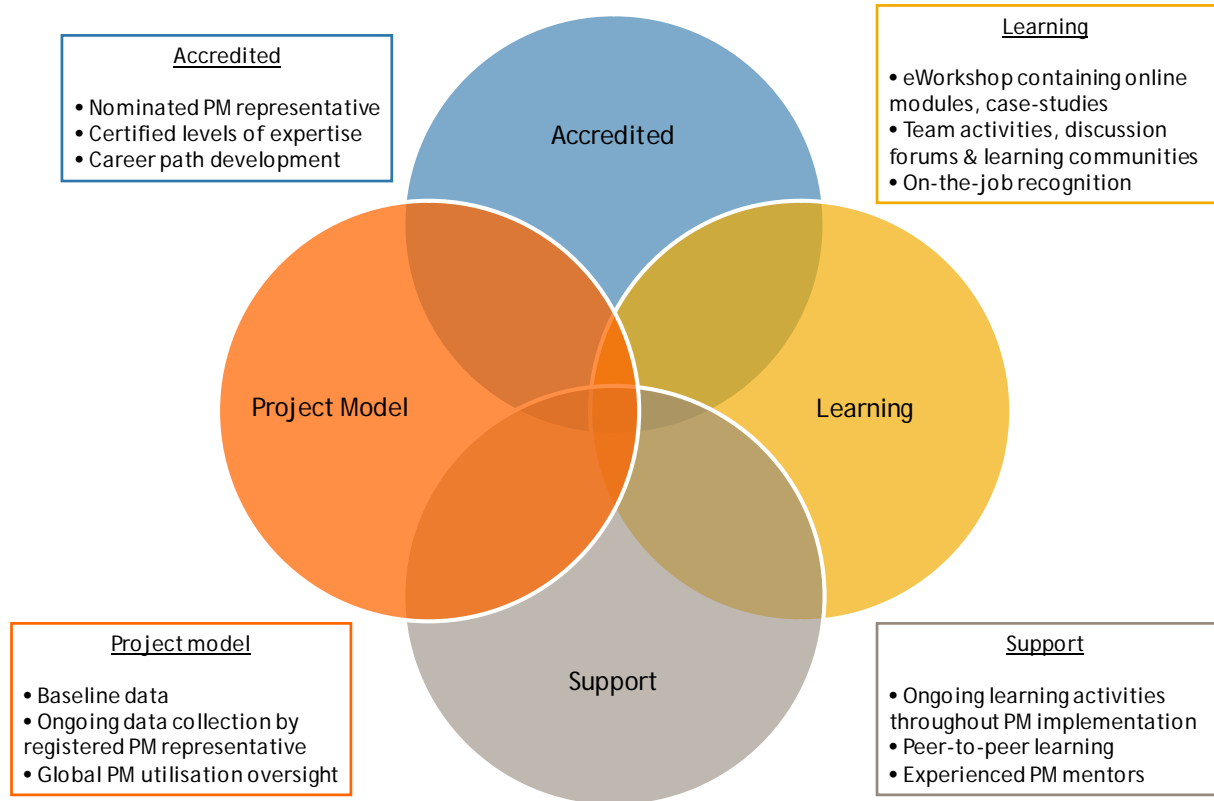
The **PALS** learning platform is located on the WVI eCampus <http://www.wvecampus.com>, which is accessible from any computer with internet connection. Enrolled participants log on using their World Vision email credentials.

Participants complete the online course in addition to doing their day-to-day job allowing them to apply what they are learning in the field and then reflect back to the group. Their manager has endorsed them taking part in the course and considers it as part of their learning development.

PALS follows a standard schedule yet participants are able to choose when and how often they logon to complete the tasks within the allocated time.

This approach allows for the different time-zones, travel commitments, and connectivity issues facing the global participants whilst also ensuring they move through the activities at the same pace and benefit from being part of an online interactive community learning together.

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For more information related to the PALS approach:

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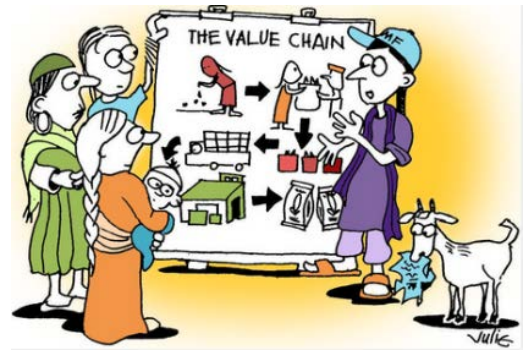
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Workshops currently available through the PALS approach

eLVCD (Local Value Chain Development)

The eLVCD course is an eight month online learning programme taking participants on a facilitated journey through the phases of the LVCD cycle. It uses the power of collaborative learning through an online global community of peers and more experienced practitioners who are constantly sharing questions, challenges, reflections and insights over the lifecycle of their respective programmes as they work through interactive activities and tasks.



Below is a list of outcomes for each phase of the workshop:

Workshop 1: Preparation

By the end of this workshop participants will:

- Feel welcomed, excited and confident to learn online with other LVCD practitioners from around the world
- Have gained the foundational knowledge of economic development, markets and LVCD required to engage in the learning program
- Demonstrate an understanding of the role of the market facilitator

Workshop 2: Situation Analysis and Value Chain Analysis

By the end of this workshop participants will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the market research necessary for shortlisting products through data gathering
- Know the options for developing product selection criteria and undertake a product selection process
- Know the steps involved in value chain analysis and how to identify the opportunities and challenges of a given product
- Undertake a profit analysis of a chosen project

Workshop 3: Engaging producers and action planning

By the end of this workshop participants will:

- Identify and apply skills and approaches that will build trust whilst engaging and mobilising producer groups
- Know the important difference between chairing and facilitating and apply facilitation techniques to action planning workshop scenarios
- Demonstrate knowledge of the five key skill sets for producer groups and identify how to improve their capacity, whilst building their confidence

Workshop 4: Implementing and Facilitating Market change

By the end of this workshop participants will:

- Identify and apply skills and approaches that will build trust between producers and other value chain actors
- Know the key steps in establishing a successful Value Chain Stakeholder network
- Participated in fictional trail marketing exercise
- Identify key skills and characteristics required of local MFs and how to establish a coach/mentor relationship

Workshop 5: Innovation and Scale up

By the end of this workshop participants will have:

- Shared lessons and stories of scale up and innovation with peers
- Completed the LVCD skills scorecard
- Learned about the LVCD Alumni
- Participated in course evaluations and farewell party