

## „Women plant doctors 2.0“

Empowering female farmers in Tunisia through a smartphone app (Plantix) ?!





**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

## The Context - Tunisia



**15 – 30 % of annual harvest is lost in  
Tunisia** due to plant diseases and pests

**Negative impact on**  
**Food and nutrition security**  
**Income and employment**  
**Environment, natural resources**  
**Health**

**High unemployment** rates of (educated)  
rural youth

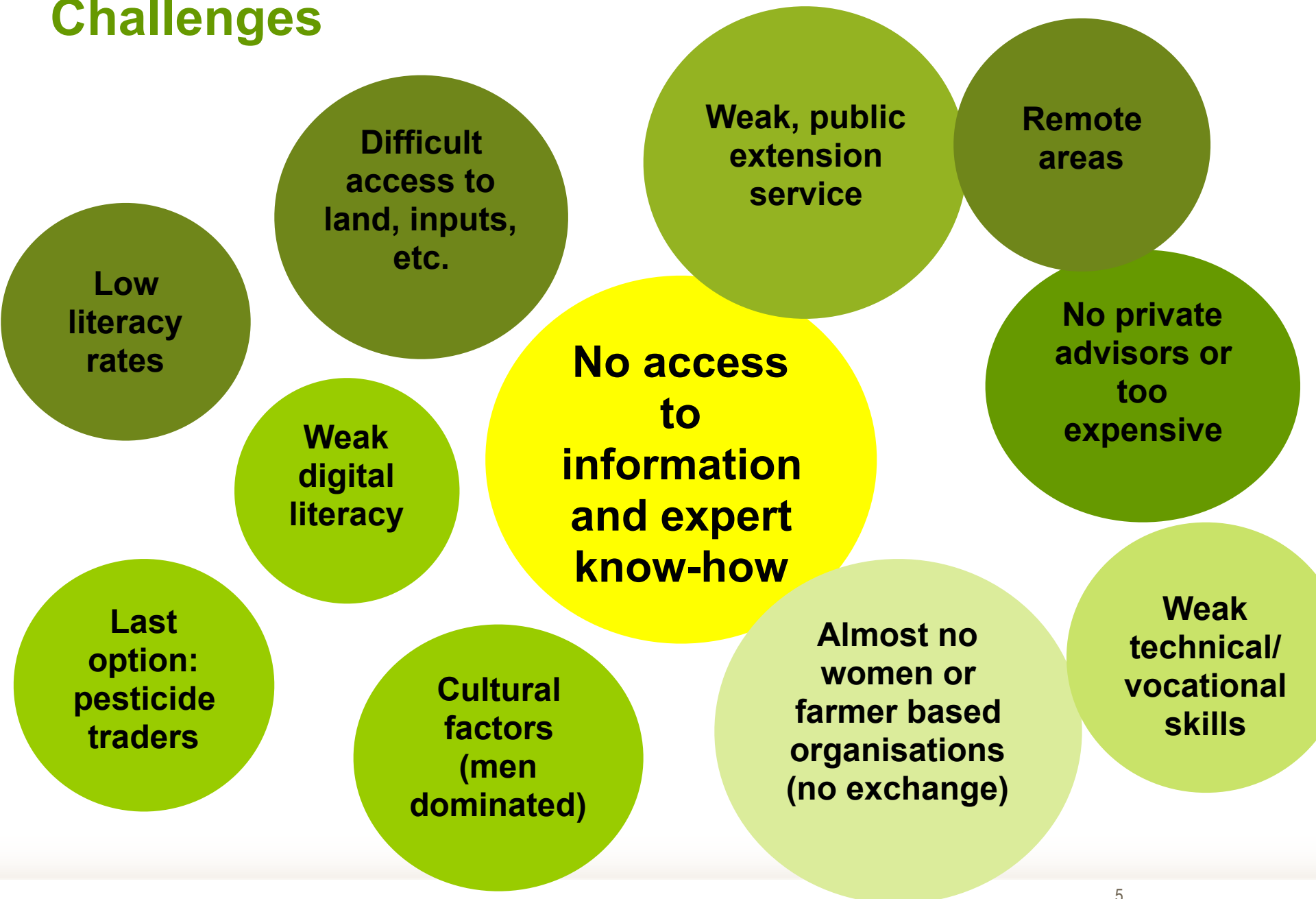




The Tunisian  
agriculture is female!

Over 60 % of  
the labor force  
in Tunisian  
agriculture are  
women

# Challenges



# 2

## The App - Plantix

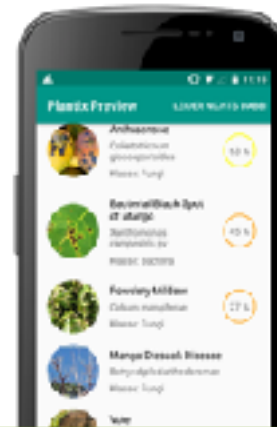
# Plantix – the digital expert in your pocket. How does it work?



Select a crop



Take a picture



Immediate  
answer: List of  
possible  
diseases/pests

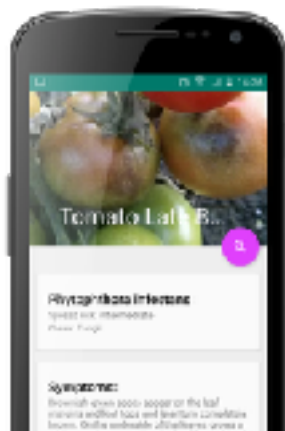


Information  
about the  
disease





## Plantix – an information and decision making tool for (female) farmers and technicians.



...symptoms, causes  
and recommendations  
for treatment (organic  
and conventional)



Recommendations  
for preventive  
measures in the  
future



International  
exchange forum



## The Project: PPP + Women Plant Doctors

## Objective and setting-up of the partnership

**Setting up:** PPP between 2 GIZ projects + 2 startups (PEAT from Germany and RGT from Tunisia)

**Objective:** Adapt Plantix to the Tunisian context and make it available to small-scale farmers (men and women) allowing them to rapidly identify, treat and prevent plant diseases and pests and to access advise/recommendations and good agricultural practices free of charge.

**GIZ Gender-Award 2017 :** Adapt Plantix to the specific needs of female smallholder farmers and establish the “**Women Plant Doctors**” Network

# Who are the women plant doctors and what are they



# 4

## Status Quo + Lessons Learnt



## Status Quo – The glass is ... ??? ... half-full !!!

- **Achievements:**

- Plantix comprises many Tunisian cultures including those cultivated by smallholder women (tomatoes, red pepper, fruit trees, potatoes)
- App content is translated into Tunisian dialect
- Women Plant Doctors are identified, trained, coached, ...
  - Tangible empowerment
  - Some start working as service providers
- Network “PlantMed” of young male and female plant doctors has recently been established (women plant doctors are well presented in steering committee)
- First user tests conducted (in order to adapt the user interface of the app to the needs of female smallholders)

**However...**



## Status Quo – The glass is ... ??? ... half-empty !!!

- **Failures and complications:**

- Reduced number of beneficiaries (plant doctors) due to complicated selection process and early drop outs (100 planned vs. 39 achieved)
- No adaptation of Plantix' user interface for (illiterate) female smallholder farmers so far (e.g. no text to speech function)
- Delayed project implementation (internal GIZ procedures, seasonality, limited partner contributions, etc. )
- Wrong assumptions at the beginning (e.g. effect of digital illiteracy was underestimated, need for support for plant doctors much higher than expected)



## Preliminary lessons learnt

- Plantix (or any other smartphone app) is most likely not an appropriate tool to directly empower female smallholders (who are digital illiterate).
- Technology itself is not enough. It does not empower women. Emphasize on soft skills development (including digital literacy) and changing role models.
- Work with female leaders, champions, change agents, etc. They can close the gap.
- Make user tests at an early stage (direct beneficiaries + change agents).
- Digital technologies in agriculture attract the rural youth and generate great interest on all levels.
- *P.s. Don't buy cheap smartphones!*

Thank you !

