

The Growing Place: Update from *A Place to Grow*

Ghana: Emerging issues and innovations

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This update focuses on the recent work undertaken with CARE and its partners and beneficiaries in Ghana. It highlights some of the emerging issues, opportunities, and challenges of addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in Ghana's Agricultural and Natural Resources (ANR) Program. A more detailed account will be available soon through reports, case studies, and learning materials.

Overview of the ANR Program

An in-country review of CARE Ghana's Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Program took place in July 2008. CARE staff, partners, and beneficiaries highlighted a number of issues in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment in the ANR Program. They also revealed a number of innovative approaches and tools for engaging men and women in agricultural programming.

CARE Ghana's ANR Program encompasses five components, including two regional Sub-Programs, the *Forest and Natural Resources Sub-Program* in the Western Region and the *Agriculture and Food Security Sub-Program* in the Northern Region. A number of other components focus on cross-cutting themes such as land, organizational development and innovation, and program design and coordination. An ANR Team Leader and Sub-Program Coordinators manage the program and its components.

Issues emerging from the field

Land access, ownership, and decision-making: Women's access to, ownership of, and decision-making power related to land emerges as an "umbrella" issue with consequences for all other livelihood, production, and well-being concerns.

Women's participation, representation, and voice: Women's "meaningful" significant participation and authentic, rather than token, representation in agriculture and natural resources-related committees and groups emerges as a key issue to be addressed.

Intra-household decision-making: Intra-household decision-making processes are complex and contextualized in systemic structures, perceptions, and values. As one interviewee observed, "[we] haven't

dealt with the issue of relationships [to the extent needed]. When you [seek to] empower women, you need to look at ways to change relationships [between women and men]...Expecting a quick result is problematic...Changing [gender] relations takes time."

Values and perceptions: One interviewee suggested that it is "not what you do that is so important, but the value that's assigned [by society] to what you do." Women's contributions are often overlooked or ignored by husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons as well as community leaders, extension workers, agricultural planners and policy-makers. Other marginalized groups such as the Fulani in the Northern Regions are also overlooked.

Examples of innovative approaches

The ANR Program has developed and implemented a number of innovative approaches for addressing these and other issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

For example, the project design for **Community-Driven Initiatives for Food Security (CIFS)** addressed gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture-related programming by:

- recognizing the need to address power inequalities along gender, ethnic, and other lines;
- setting out to create opportunities for men to network and dialogue about gender issues, and environments in which men and women can generate new ideas for actions that would make a difference toward achieving gender equality;
- identifying the need for improving capacities on gender analysis and gender-disaggregated data;
- involving men and women in project design, and;
- developing gender-sensitive indicators which move beyond "numbers" address issues such as gender discrimination.

The **Security of Land Tenure (SLATE)** component of the ANR Program seeks to identify ways through which women and groups can access land and security of land tenure. Through a process of community-facilitated dialogue, community mapping and community action planning, SLATE helped establish equitable and accountable Community Based Land Administration systems.

This process of sensitization led to:

- increased debates involving men and women;
- greater recognition by men of women's rights and their important role in household income generation and thus the need to include them in decision-making processes;
- improved recognition by men that women's empowerment benefits the whole household (This was an argument for denying women access to land and security of tenure), and;
- increased and real access to land and security of tenure by women.

Opportunities

A number of opportunities exist for strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment in the ANR Program, some of which are mentioned here:

Models and approaches: Innovative models and approaches exist for addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in ANR programming.

Expertise, interest, and will: There is considerable interest, will, and expertise in CARE's programs, its partners, and other organizations to facilitate and strengthen CARE's approaches to gender equality and women's empowerment in ANR programming.

Flexibility: A number of ANR components (and donors) have shown flexibility in addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in projects where there was little included in the design.

Partners: Dialoguing with community leaders and other significant stakeholders provides opportunities for supporting women in their processes of strengthening their control over land and other assets.

Working with men: Including men in community discussions on women's security of land tenure, income generation and expenditure, and community mapping and action planning has provided men with opportunities for supporting women as they move towards greater empowerment and equality. It has also provided opportunities for building more equitable decision-making contexts for women and men at the household, community, and other levels.

Capacity strengthening: In late 2007, a workshop on gender mainstreaming was held for CARE staff and partners. This seems to have (anecdotally) made a great impression on ANR staff and there is plainly room for building on the interest established.

CARE's global focus on women's empowerment: CARE's renewed commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment provides great opportunities for working with donors, partners, staff, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders to strengthen agriculture project and program design and implementation and to show tangible results in this sector.

Challenges

The ANR Program also faces different challenges which are outlined here:

Gender policy: The ANR Program has a Gender Policy in place. Its objective is to ensure that the specific and collective interests of both men and women are considered at each stage of program management and implementation in promoting gender equity in the agriculture and natural resource sectors in Ghana. While it is comprehensive in coverage, staff awareness of the policy seems mixed.

Long-term commitment: A key lever for facilitating processes of change in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture and natural resources is long-term commitment on the part of donors, CARE, and its partners. Staff and partners highlighted that long-term commitment is needed to facilitate "changes in men's and women's mindsets."

Project/program design: While a number of project proposals or concept notes include either direct goals or objectives that focus on gender equality and women's empowerment, these are often not translated in a meaningful way (if at all) into the performance framework or reporting. One project included a detailed strategy on *gender mainstreaming and social inclusion*. However, this strategy was not reflected in the performance framework. Rather, indicators focused more generally on "communities."

Capacity: Staff and partners expressed their concern with their limited capacity to address gender equality and women's empowerment in their agriculture work, particularly in a context of high staff turnover. Also noted was the limited capacity to design, collect and use gender-disaggregated data to monitor the impacts of agricultural initiatives in quantitative and qualitative terms on gender equality.

Valuing the "intangible": Staff and partners highlighted a number of "intangibles" they feel are undervalued in agricultural programming that focuses on technological and economic results. These "intangibles" include establishing effective entry points, building relations, and maintaining long-term dialogue, with men and women. This requires long-term commitment from donors, CARE, and partners.

Moving forward: the short-term

A number of staff and partners proposed some ways forward for strengthening gender equality impacts in the ANR Program. For the short-term, they had two suggestions:

Peer coaching: To include support to programming staff through periodic workshops and access to gender expertise (either staff or consultant) as needed.

Experience-sharing forum: To include the Western and Northern Regions as well as other components with experience on gender equality and women's empowerment (e.g. SLATE). The Northern Region has developed innovative approaches to addressing gender equality and women's empowerment – including Community Institution Mapping (and Activity

Profiles) under the CIFS project. The Western Region has developed interesting approaches to community engagement.

Celebrating successes, sharing lessons

An initial review of the ANR Program brings to light a number of compelling issues in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment in the agricultural and natural resources sectors and CARE's programming in this area. It also reveals a number of creative models, approaches, and tools that CARE has developed or adapted.

As so many challenges exist, it is important to celebrate the small and not-so-small successes along the way. There are many successes to observe and share with other CARE Country Offices as well as other staff in Ghana and other organizations seeking to improve their own approaches to addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in their agricultural or natural resources programming.

A Place to Grow offers one venue for sharing lessons learned with other CARE offices and others. Over the next few months, the project will develop a number of accessible reports, case studies and other user-friendly materials. It will also shine a light on some of the tools and approaches employed by some of the agricultural projects underway in Ghana and elsewhere.

Next steps

A Place to Grow is in the process of a more in-depth analysis of a number of agriculture and natural resource projects under Ghana's ANR Program using the *Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Framework*ⁱ. The project will also do the same for agriculture projects from Mozambique and Angola, and through a desk review, agriculture projects from other countries in Africa, Central America, and Asia.

The framework focuses on five levers of change said to be necessary to empower women in the context of agricultureⁱⁱ. The levers are:

- Land and property rights and contractual rights;
- Gendered division of labor/time poverty;
- Gendered control over labor and product of labor;
- Access to and control of water; and
- Attention to gender equality by institutional systems.

These can be looked at through the lens of **agency** (women's capacities as individuals to take action), **relations** (relationships, coalitions and mutual support to expand agency and alter structures) and **structure** (social norms and institutions that codify and reinforce gender relations at every level of society).

The following projects from Ghana's ANR Program will be looked at in greater depth using this framework:

- Conservation Agriculture Project (CAP)
- Sustainable Farming Extension Systems (FASE)
- Community-Driven Initiatives For Food Security (CIFS)
- Forest Livelihoods and Rights for Sustainable Forest Resource Management (FOREST)

- Security Of Land Tenure Project (SLATE)

The analysis of these will form the basis for the adaptation and/or development of capacity strengthening and knowledge management approaches and tools to support CARE's work in agriculture and natural resources.

For more information

The project document with details on proposed outcomes, outputs, and activities, along with the timeline and consultants' biographies, are available at <http://edu.care.org>

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ⁱ Adapted from CARE's Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII) framework for *A Place to Grow*.

ⁱⁱ Identified by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and CARE.