

Women's empowerment and gender equality in CARE Ghana's Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Program

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for *A Place to Grow* – an initiative to put women and girls at the center of CARE's agricultural programming
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In 2008, an in-country review of CARE Ghana's *Agriculture and Natural Resource (ANR) Program* was conducted as a part of CARE's agriculture portfolio review under *A Place to Grow*, made possible by the H.G. Buffett Foundation. *A Place to Grow* is exploring strategic programmatic shifts, policy advocacy messages, and funding opportunities that have the greatest potential to benefit women and girls involved in agriculture. Some of the key findings and reflections and the implications for the ANR Program, CARE Ghana, and CARE's agriculture portfolio in general are summarized herein.

The review was informed and guided by the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture (WEA) Framework developed for *A Place to Grow* and adapted from CARE's Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII) framework. The review consisted of a desk review of documents provided by the Country Office (CO) and ANR Program; interviews with CO staff, key consultants, and partner organizations; focus group meetings with ANR Program staff in Northern and Western Regions; focus group meetings in two project communities in the Northern Region; observation of a Community Based Land Agreement (CBLA) meeting in Western Region; debriefing meetings with staff and HQ staff; and follow-up correspondence.

This document is the summarized version of a more in-depth report by the same name which was prepared for CARE Ghana and the ANR Program under the auspices of A Place to Grow.

Summary of key findings and lessons learned

There is a rather encouraging picture of the overall strategic environment in which the ANR Program operates, particularly given the Strategic Plan and the ANR Gender Policy. The key findings of the review are:

Programmatic

- **Models, approaches, and tools:** Different components and projects have developed or adapted interesting models for addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of agriculture. In particular, models for addressing women's security of land tenure have been tested in terms of advocacy at different levels (community to national) and implementation (through Community Based Land Association) models. Community Institutional Mapping (CIM) and Appreciative Inquiry have also proven to be effective tools for working with men and women on agriculture in a way that challenges their beliefs, values and "cultural norms" in general.
- **Flexibility:** A number of ANR projects (together with their donors) have shown flexibility in addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in projects where there was little

included in the design; this has included flexibility in budget allocations and implementation strategies.

- **Impact measurement:** While project proposals may include goals or objectives related to gender equality and women's empowerment, these are often not meaningfully translated into performance or impact frameworks or reporting. The components and projects herein include a number of gender-sensitive indicators, and are primarily limited to measuring women's participation in activities, training, or community or political representation; although some projects include indicators to monitor the "mainstreaming of gender."

Overall, a number of components and projects have led to positive changes for women and girls -- primarily in terms of accessing, and benefiting from, technologies (e.g. manure and composting for soil fertility, land reallocation or improved access within households); improved child care support from husbands; and a growing recognition of the importance of women's land tenure security. However, without in-depth ex-post assessments of the components or projects (for example, three to five years after a project is completed), it is difficult to confirm that women and girls have benefited from long-term impacts in women's empowerment and gender equality. Typically, it is difficult to access donor funds for such impact studies. Such a review also demands the application and quantitative and qualitative methods involving communities.

Finally, staff and partners highlighted a number of "intangibles" they feel are undervalued in agricultural programming (and thus, measurement frameworks) 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.

- **Working with men:** Including men in community discussions, for example, on women's security of land tenure (SLATE, FOREST, PROGRESS), income generation and expenditure (FASE) and community mapping and action planning (CIFS) has provided men with opportunities to support 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.

Organizational

- **Strategic environment:** At a global level, CARE's renewed commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment provides an enabling environment for strengthening agriculture programming in a way that can more evidently benefit women and girls. CARE Gulf of Guinea's Strategic Plan (2006 – 2011) reflects the international commitments made by CARE together with the global community.
- **Program leadership:** The ANR Programs benefits from leadership committed to ensuring the Program strengthen its gender equality and women's empowerment impacts.
- **Gender policy:** The ANR Program's Gender Policy, developed in 2005, is still relevant with its objective of ensuring that men's and women's specific and collective interests are considered throughout program management and implementation in promoting gender equity in the agriculture and natural resource sectors in Ghana. However, staff awareness of, and translation into action of, the policy seems mixed and deserves attention.

- **Capacity:** Staff and partners expressed their interest in strengthening and retaining their capacity to address gender equality and women's empowerment in their agriculture work, particularly in a context of high staff turnover. Also noted was interest in strengthening capacity to design, collect and use gender-disaggregated data to monitor the impacts of agricultural initiatives on gender equality.¹

External

- **Long-term commitment:** A key lever for facilitating change in support of 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." This is not only true for the community level, but also at the institutional (organizational, policies, capacities, etc.) and more strategic (national/provincial policy and regulations) levels. This long term commitment will be well aligned with CARE's new strategic focus and the shift from project to a more programmatic approach which forces CARE country offices to clearly define their impact group and define a theory of change among others.
- **Partners:** The ANR Program has partnered with organizations committed to gender equality and women's empowerment, both for improving agricultural development impacts, but also as an issue of human rights. Partners have also benefited from working with CARE in terms of strengthening their own approaches to gender equality, yet there is clearly a need for strengthened capacity to support processes that address the structural and relational barriers to women's empowerment.

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Framework (WEA)

This review applied the *Women's Empowerment in Agriculture (WEA) Framework*, which is adapted to the agriculture context from the framework used under CARE's *Strategic Impact Inquiry*. The WEA framework included five "levers of change"² that the [International Center for Research on Women \(ICRW\)](#) and CARE felt are pivotal for women's empowerment in the context of agriculture.

Undertaking this review and others under *A Place to Grow* has demonstrated that while these levers of change are indeed important, it is not possible to isolate them as individual levers. Rather, a more holistic approach to agricultural programs and projects is needed – one that incorporates the different levers above and also includes a number of other levers which are perhaps even more important. The following "intangible" levers, which can act, as more global indicators for CARE's agriculture portfolio, are in fact applicable across all sectors, yet are particularly meaningful in the context of agriculture for a number of reasons discussed in this report.

- Management and staff *internalization of, prioritization of, and translation into meaningful action and demonstrable evidence, of international, regional, and national conventions and agreements (including CARE's global principles) promoting women's empowerment and gender equality.*
- Agriculture programming retooled to prioritize goals and objectives (and related outputs, outcomes, and impacts) that *also* focus on women's empowerment along with those more commonly included (i.e. improved food security, income generation, improved yields, etc.).
- Donor and organizational commitment to longer periods of engagement (10-15 years).³
- Indicators of women's empowerment in the context of agriculture developed by women and girls themselves.
- Men's involvement in the process of women's empowerment.

- Ongoing and long-term dialogue and analysis on power dynamics and gender inequality with women and men in communities and with partners.

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¹ Many CARE staff have made great efforts to incorporate these factors into their work, however this remains an ongoing need. An upcoming event in Uganda (March 2009) and the follow-up documentation of tools and approaches as well as "community of practice or working group" also poses an excellent opportunity for the ANR Program to gain from the experiences of agricultural initiatives from a number of CARE Country Offices throughout Africa and beyond.

² The five levers of change 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.

³ This is very much in support of a move to program approaches to development. This also has implications for strengthening advocacy with donors on the need for longer term commitment.