

Report of the “Circle of Learning on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture”

Entebbe, Uganda

30 March – 3 April 2009

Background

Under *A Place to Grow*, CARE is strengthening learning agendas and testing practical tools for improving its programming at every stage of project design, implementation, measurement, documentation, and learning in relation to women’s empowerment and gender equality in the context of agriculture. The portfolio review undertaken under the project highlighted the interest of CARE agricultural staff and partners to learn from the experiences other projects in their region. In particular, staff and partners were interested in strengthening their capacity to work with women and men in the field on intra-household decision-making as well as supporting process for women to establish a real “voice” in decision-making bodies related to agriculture (e.g. farmers’, marketing groups). It was recognized that there is a wealth of “untapped” (and often undocumented) experience and innovation across CARE’s agriculture portfolio in this and similar respects.



A Place to Grow sought to harness the wealth of experience across CARE’s portfolio and leverage the momentum that is growing within CARE internationally as it repositions itself to more effectively address agriculture and natural resources. The project identified a number of “champions” across CARE’s projects in Africa (and Asia and Latin America). These champions came together at the end of March for a week at the **Circle of Learning on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture (CoL)** to share the approaches and tools they have applied in agricultural projects or programs and to learn from others in so doing. They committed to taking action to share the lessons, approaches, and tools from the CoL with their CARE colleagues in different ways upon return to their workplace.

Objectives of the Circle of Learning

The objectives of the CoL were to:

- Provide an opportunity for those with experience working to address gender equality and women’s empowerment in their agriculture initiatives to come together and facilitate the sharing of different approaches and tools developed (and/or adapted) for use in their initiatives.
- Collect case studies, approaches, and tools from across CARE’s agriculture portfolio across Africa as well as from other organizations to include in a dynamic and user-friendly “toolkit” to share with other staff and partners working across CARE’s agriculture portfolio, as well as with the HG Buffett Foundation, other donors, and other interested users.

Approach to learning and commitment for follow-up

- The CoL was “hands-on,” grounded in participatory, adult-learning approaches.
- A number of participants facilitated participatory, interactive sessions to share their approaches, strategies, and tools in ways that other participants can explore these in a practical context.
- Participants committed to taking the lessons, tools, and approaches back to their projects (and/or other projects in-country) to share the learning with other staff and partners. This commitment was signed by their ACD Programming.

Participants in the Circle of Learning

Representatives from a number of CARE's agriculture projects across the following countries participated in the CoL:

- Angola
- Burundi
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- Honduras
- Kenya
- Malawi
- Mali
- Sri Lanka
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

Participants from outside CARE also participated to share the experiences of their own organizations. These included: Build Africa, GOAL, SNV, and ASPS (Agriculture Support Program – DANIDA).

Learnings from the week

Participants identified a number of different areas they felt they had learned about during the week and which they could take back and share with colleagues

1. Women's Empowerment Framework as applied to participants' own projects and as applicable to project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
2. Tools useful for both baseline analysis and impact measurement of women's empowerment and gender equality (e.g. Income Expenditure Tool, Gender Analysis Matrix, Spider Web, etc.).
3. The design and application of gender-sensitive indicators (GSI) in project logframes and baselines and in measuring project impact on women's empowerment and gender equality (through, for instance, project M&E/performance system and reporting).
4. Strengths of CARE in the agriculture sector (e.g. conservation agriculture, value chains, extension, village savings and loans associations, etc.).
5. Engaging men as change agents and "positive deviants" in strategies to empower women in the context of agriculture.

Participants also had an opportunity to provide inputs into CARE's Agriculture Strategy and the Value Chain Strategy. They identified a number of "global" indicators that they felt CARE should consider across the portfolio; this included a number of indicators related to women's empowerment and gender equality. Additionally, in line with the Agriculture Strategy, they identified a number of areas in which they would benefit from the support of a Regional Women and Agricultural Advisor position.

Example of tools discussed

All of the tools in the left column can be used in project design, establishing a baseline, and in impact measurement over time. The tools in the right hand column were used for the Circle of Learning process and can be incorporated into each participant's action plan for shared learning with their colleagues. Participants were provided with a Resource CD-Rom which included these and many other tools and resources to help them implement their action plans and ongoing work.

Tools for field-based analysis, monitoring and evaluation	Tools used for facilitating learning at CoL
• WEA Framework as applied to projects	• Presentations
• Resource picture cards (AMI case study)	• Small group work
• Income expenditure tool (SEED, Mozambique)	• Plenary discussions
• Visualizing women's empowerment (Burundi)	• Brainstorming
• Spider web tool (CARE Gender Equity Building Block)	• Pair work
• Circles of influence (CARE Gender Equity Building Block)	• Games
• Gender analysis matrix (HIBRET, Ethiopia)	• Cards
• Community Institutional mapping – CIM (FASE, Ghana)	• Visualization

• Land allocation tool (Mali)	• Case studies
• Women's leadership case study	• Role plays
• Organizational strategies (e.g. Agriculture, V.C. Strategy)	• Reviews

Participants also identified areas where they felt they still need support. In particular, these included:

1. Participants prioritized impact assessment as the area they need the greatest ongoing support. This included in relation to strengthening capacity, developing and adapting M&E systems and tools, processes for working with women and men to help them identify their own concepts of impact, and the links to improved productivity.
2. Applying/adapting the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture (WEA) framework in the value chain and identifying and developing practical interventions to bring about change at the structural level.
3. Strengthening capacity to adapt and practice the tools introduced (and others).
4. Supporting women's leadership at higher levels in projects.
5. Understanding and addressing gender-based violence in agricultural projects.

Next steps

- Participants had the opportunity to refine their action plans with the support of others in the CoL. Once back at home, they will implement their action plans which include objectives, targets, and timelines. Together with the COs, CARE US will monitor the implementation of these plans.
- Participants suggested they could benefit from the support of a regionally-based advisor on Women in Agriculture and outlined specific, targeted areas where they felt support was most needed.
- The Lead Consultant will explore the opportunity to adapt and implement Circles of Learning with the Conservation Agriculture Projects (CAP) Mozambique and Ghana to "bring the lessons" home and begin to broaden the process of shared learning across CARE's agricultural portfolio. A local "champion" will be identified to help in this process (either from the Uganda CoL or from within the country). It is hoped that these can be conducted by July 2009 (depending on in-country timelines and priorities).
- Working with CARE, the Lead Consultant will develop a user-friendly "toolkit" that provides links to the numerous excellent tools existing in CARE and elsewhere. These will be formatted to support staff to help them identify suitable tools to address the three dimensions of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Framework (WEA) from design to M&E.
- Participants identified the need to support one another and others through establishing some sort of Community of Practice. In the short-term, it was felt that this could be done most effectively through establishing on-line e-mail contact as a group, conducting follow-up through individual action plans in the different countries, and sharing reports and documentation as it comes available. Finally, it was felt that it would be useful to bring together the CoL again over the next year to assess the process of learning in relation to: i.) individual learning; ii.) project learning, and; iii) others' learning (e.g. others beyond the project). This would also provide an opportunity to assess the tools and processes applied and identify others that could be shared.