

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

Mozambique: Emerging issues and innovations

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In June 2008, "A Place to Grow" undertook a review of CARE Mozambique's agricultural projects from the perspective of how they address gender equality and women's empowerment. The review is intended to draw out lessons learned and highlight innovative approaches and tools to share with CARE staff, donors, partners, and others in Mozambique and around the world. A more detailed account will also be shared through reports, case studies, and learning materials prepared.

Overview

The review was based on a number of discussions with the men and women involved in the Conservation Agriculture Project (CAP) as well as interviews with CARE staff in Maputo, Nampula and Inhambane, and a review of project documentation and other studies and publications produced by CARE Mozambique.

Projects covered by the review include:

- Sustainable Effective Economic Development (SEED);
- Viable Initiatives for the Development of Agriculture (VIDA2), and;
- Conservation Agriculture Projects - Olima Wo Suka (Nampula) and Wurime Ga Wuhlayse (Inhambane)

Another project, Strengthening Civil Society Organizations for Rural Empowerment (SCORE), was selected for inclusion in the wider desk review which sampled CARE's agriculture projects from across Africa, Central America and to a lesser extent, Asia. SCORE's gender strategy focuses on addressing women's strategic interests and practical needs in community based organizations (CBOs) and the district level planning processes. To what extent it has made meaningful impact in this area is difficult to tell. SCORE is discussed elsewhere in that context.

Project design and approach

The review revealed a broad spectrum of approaches to addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in CARE's agricultural projects. Some project designs comprehensively considered gender equality and women's empowerment in project design. Others considered these very issues little in the design stage, but have subsequently made attempts to better address them in implementation. Some of the project approaches, impacts, and issues are outlined below.

Sprouting innovative approaches: SEED

The *Sustainable and Effective Economic Development* (SEED) Project in Inhambane Province seeks to reduce poverty and vulnerability by increasing participants' income and negotiating power through promoting commercial farming and off farm income generating opportunities. SEED addressed gender equality and women's empowerment comprehensively in the design phase and included provisions for staff support on gender and HIV and AIDS aspects. SEED also employs two main strategies to address gender equality and women's empowerment. These are:

1. Creating more economic opportunities for women through increasing the participation of female beneficiaries; and
2. Ensuring project benefits for all members of the family through fair decision making.

To implement these strategies, SEED takes the following specific actions:

- Making SEED services better known to women;
- Ensuring that SEED services are accessible to women in terms of time and location;
- Guaranteeing the relevance of services to women such as paravet and extension services in tick treatment sessions;
- Providing options for women including identifying barriers to participation.
- Developing tools to demonstrate advantages of joint decision-making (e.g. community theater, Income Expenditure Tree);
- Integrating women's leadership training into Village Savings and Loans program;
- Ensuring group constitutions reflect human rights;
- Organizing cross-visits on gender concerns, and;
- Training "positive deviants" (supportive husbands, vaccinators, community members) in public speaking and encouraging sending messages of change on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Impacts and challenges: VIDA2

VIDA 2 focused on the introduction of sustainable agricultural production systems to improve farmers' food security and incomes, and child nutrition. Evaluators believed there had been a qualitative shift in gender relations in many of the project areas as a result of the project's proactive stance and deliberate policy to target women as trainers, community demonstrators, and to develop an extension methodology that actively involved women.

When asked about the changes in their lives that they could attribute to their involvement in VIDA, women's responses included:

- Improved access to technical information;
- Opportunities gained through participating in training and meeting people outside their regular circles;
- Improved status and legitimacy to meet others, earn money and travel from their involvement as members or leaders of a group;
- Earned income and control of that income;
- Improved ability to take decisions around their lives and livelihoods because of their increased access to information and income, and;
- Learning about other possibilities and ideas to change their lives.

However, evaluators also cautioned that high levels of illiteracy, girls' limited access to education and the practices of early marriage and child birth pose ongoing challenges to projects such as VIDA.

Building on CARE's experience: CAP

CARE Mozambique promotes conservation agriculture through a number of initiatives, including two CAP projects in Nampula and Inhambane Provinces. Known locally as "Olima Wo Suka" (Nampula) and "Wurime Ga Wuhlayse" (Inhambane), the CAP projects were designed with little attention to gender equality and women's empowerment.

However, the move from design to implementation soon flagged the need to address these issues more effectively. A 2008 consultancy report¹ provides an assessment of the CAP projects in terms of addressing gender equality and women's empowerment. Some of the key recommendations put forward in the report for addressing these issues include:

- Provide training on gender equality issues for extension workers and other staff (including basic analysis and advocacy skills);
- Include key gender sensitive indicators in project log frames and develop guidelines to help staff monitor progress on gender targets;
- Strengthen groups' skills in governance and organization;
- Develop [or adapt] instruments to track how the project has contributed to women's empowerment (e.g. household decision-making and expenditure patterns);
- Provide support to extension workers on how to adjust farming methods for households with chronically ill members (where women's time and labour become even more important concerns).

Emerging issues

A number of gender equality and women's empowerment issues cross-cut CARE Mozambique's agriculture projects and the agriculture sector in general. In trying to leverage changes in gender equality in its agriculture projects, CARE Mozambique faces a number of *contextual* challenges including:

Women's land access and control Women's access to, control over and ownership of, land are ongoing challenges that face rural women as they strive for food and livelihood security and well-being. Above all, land is a key ingredient for accessing agricultural inputs and improving production output.

Intra-household decision-making All of CARE's agriculture projects face the challenge of working with men and women to develop more equitable decision-making in, and sharing of benefits from, agriculture. As highlighted above, SEED made intra-household decision-making a central focus of its gender strategy and has developed approaches and tools for working on this with men and women.

Women's participation, representation, and voice The CAP gender assessment observed that, "*group membership alone is not a road to women's empowerment; [rather] the group should constitute an enabling environment for women to speak up and be heard, and thus participate in decision-making at collective and private levels.*"

Labor and time For a number of reasons, women face numerous demands on their labor and time. For example, many areas of Mozambique face a high degree of out-migration by men for work in South Africa. Moreover, it is well recognized that HIV and AIDS and other chronic illnesses also constrain women as they reallocate their labor from agriculture to care-giving and other roles.

Marketing: A number of women (and men) in communities noted their lack of skills around business and marketing. They showed great enthusiasm in increasing production, but lacked access to viable markets and/or trustworthy "middlemen" who would give them good value for their produce. Moreover, more cooperative group marketing provided potential for leveraging better prices, but the issue of trust and disclosure between friends and neighbors was one that needs to be addressed.

Meeting the challenges

CARE Mozambique faces a number of organizational challenges in working towards women's empowerment and gender equality in relation to agriculture and natural resources including:

Staff capacity: Staff expressed concern at their limited capacity to address gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly in their field-oriented agriculture work and given the high level of staff turnover.

Monitoring and evaluation: Different interviewees noted their limited capacity to design, collect and use qualitative and quantitative sex and age-disaggregated data to monitor any gendered impacts of agricultural initiatives. Moreover, some project M&E frameworks, such as that for CAP, have focused more on monitoring the technological and production aspects of the project.

Long-term commitment: As the final evaluation report for VIDA observed, social change is slow. SEED and VIDA, both longer term projects, point to the benefits of working with women and men over a longer period of time. Of note, SEED's continued work with men and women on decision-making,

together with the use of “positive deviants,” provides greater opportunities for change in intra-household, community, institutional, and systemic gender relations and structures.

Women and extension: CAP observed that having women extension workers proves effective in the field. It is important to support women staff at the field in terms of mobility, time and location of work. Moreover, it is important to strengthen the skills of all extension workers to appreciate the importance of addressing gender equality concerns in their work as well as adapting their extension programs to effectively meet women’s livelihood, time and labor needs.

Access to tools and materials in Portuguese: During a focus group meeting, CAP extension workers reported the lack of materials on gender equality and the subsequent impact on their work with communities. While a great number of materials exist in English, French, and Spanish on gender equality and women’s empowerment in relation to different aspects of agriculture and natural resources, there are far fewer in Portuguese.

Leveraging change: opportunities

The review identified a number of strengths that CARE can build on, both in terms of organizational and programming perspectives, to address women’s empowerment and gender equality in its agricultural programming. Some of these are highlighted below:

Staff commitment and interest: CARE’s renewed commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment globally provides great opportunities for working with donors and partners to strengthen agriculture project and program design and implementation and to show tangible results in this sector.

Women’s and men’s interest at the community level: CAP staff noted women’s high level of interest in a number of communities to participate in CAP activities. A number of community leaders and many community men and women have shown interest in addressing issues of women’s empowerment and gender equality as shown by the experiences of SEED.

Strategies and models: The Sustainable and Effective Economic Development (SEED) Project in Inhambane Province developed a gender strategy concentrated on a fair distribution of benefits and the increased participation of women. This represents some of the innovative strategies and models within and outside Mozambique which CARE can adapt in other agriculture projects.

Cross-project sharing and learning: There is much scope for cross-project learning and awareness-raising as SEED has developed a number of materials in Portuguese and has developed substantial gender experience through the support of its staff and volunteer working on gender and HIV and AIDS issues.

Next steps

Using the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Framework,ⁱⁱ *A Place to Grow* is analyzing some of CARE Mozambique’s agriculture projects. This augments an in-country assessment of CARE’s agricultural work in Ghana as well as a desk review of CARE’s other agriculture projects across Africa, Central America, and Asia. This work 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 Report of consultancy to integrate a gender approach in conservation farming: *Identifying key gender issues and recommendations for integrating a gender perspective into conservation farming projects in Nampula and Inhambane Provinces, Mozambique*, Maputo, May 2008.

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