

PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PARTNERSHIPS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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1

BACKGROUND

- ❑ Ghana's economy is based primarily on agriculture with industry, imports and exports, and tourism serving as support sectors. Agriculture Accounts for about 51% of GDP
- ❑ Women contribute substantially to the economic development of the country.
 - ❑ They form an estimated 52% of the agricultural labour force
 - ❑ They are also becoming increasingly visible in farm tasks which traditionally have been designated as male preserves, thus breaking ground in typical male dominated areas such as land clearance and growth of cash crops.
- ❑ Women are the most important actors in the food chain which begins from farm production, market and intra household distribution of food.
 - ❑ They account for about 70% of total food production
 - ❑ constitute 90% of the labour force in the marketing of farm produce
 - ❑ They play a lead role in post harvest activities such as shelling of grains, storage, processing and marketing

2

BACKGROUND

- Processing farm produce such as palm oil, gari, sheanut and groundnut oil are prevalent off-farm activities among women farmer and a common income-generating activity.
- In Northern Ghana gathering shea nuts can account for up to 60% of rural women's cash income.
- The women from the most food insecure families sell the nuts immediately for cash, thus losing out on getting the higher earnings that could come from their turning the nuts into shea butter, particularly later in the year, when prices are ten times higher.

In keeping with the review year focus on identifying barriers and constraints in implementation, as well as lesson learned and best practices, this presentation will thus look at a brief overview of our work at the GRATIS Foundation, our partnerships, activities, some achievements, challenges and our glance into the future.

3

The GRATIS Foundation

- The GRATIS Foundation since its inception in 1987 has focused on support to the agricultural sector by promoting small-scale industrialization at the grass roots level and is in direct contact with women's groups both in Ghana and the West African sub region.
- The Foundation transfers appropriate technologies to small scale industries where women abound. It coordinates the activities and provides backstopping to its network of 9 Regional Technology Transfer Units and their clients throughout the country.
- It has contributed to rural poverty reduction by transferring appropriate technologies to small scale industries where women abound and by so doing has improved the quality of lives of these women and their families. The diversity of people we deal with and the varied cultural practices has led to our accumulation of knowledge and experiences and our solutions to problems is participatory in nature.
- Our Main Activities are
 - Manufacturing with focus on agriculture/agro processing, environment and sanitation equipment
 - Gender and Technology Based Training
 - The Gender and Development Unit mainstreams gender as a sustainable approach to development.

Manufacturing Activities of GRATIS Foundation

- GRATIS manufactures the under listed equipment/plant, tools and spare parts to support agriculture/agro processing, environment, sanitation, textiles and industrial sectors.
- Agriculture Sector**
 - Farming Implements, Tools and Animal Traction Equipment
- Agro Processing and Food Security sector**
 - Plant and Equipment for processing of Cassava, Palm Oil, Palm Kernel Oil, Shea Butter, Groundnuts, Fruit Juice, Honey, Cereal and Grain
- Environment and Sanitation sector**
 - Equipment produced includes Open and Closed Solid Waste Containers, Garbage Push Trucks, Hospital Equipment, Steel well and Concrete Moulds
- GRATIS Foundation also
 - manufactures Driers, Ovens and Stoves,
 - And carries out Equipment Installation, Repair and Maintenance Services

5





Food Processing Activities of GRATIS Foundation

- GRATIS provides technical support for the implementation of community based projects in the following areas:
 - Cassava Processing (Gari, Starch, Tapioca),
 - Vegetable Oil Extraction (Shea Butter, Palm fruit/Palm Kernel, Coconut),
 - Cereal and Grain Processing,
 - Fish Processing,
 - Jam, Marmalade and Hot Pepper Sauce ('Shitor') Production
 - Bread and Pastries Production as well as Confectionery Production.

6









Training Activities of GRATIS Foundation

Gender and Technology Based Training

-  GRATIS' training programs are aimed at equipping both men and women with the requisite technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills for self-employment.
-  Extension training programs are also held to support the development of rural Industries for increased employment opportunities and income generation.
-  Skills and Rural Enterprise Training are carried out in areas such as Batik, Tie & Dye Cloth Making, Screen Printing, Soap Making, Pomade and Powder Making, Beekeeping, Mushroom Cultivation, Snail Farming, Grass Cutter Rearing and Brass Wax Casting .
-  The Skills and Rural Enterprise Training program is aimed at providing employable skills and introducing improved and new technologies to develop micro and small enterprises in rural and urban communities.

7

Achievements

-  Provision of agro-processing equipment and training of users of community based organizations throughout the country.
 -  Development and manufacture of agro-processing equipment and agricultural implements for various NGOs and development groups.
 -  Design, prototyping and supply of cassava harvesting equipment for UNIDO/MOTI PSI, Accra.
 -  200 sets of cassava processing machines manufactured for the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs for distribution to food processing groups.
 -  50 Corn mills, 25 sets of shea butter and groundnut oil extraction equipment manufactured for the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs for distribution in Northern Ghana.
 -  Manufactured and supplied cassava, rice, palm oil, fruit juice processing equipment, ox ploughs, ox harrows, feed mill crushers to Sierra Leone.
 -  Design, manufacture and installation of Citronella Oil Distillation Plants for farmer groups in the Brong Ahafo, Eastern, Western and Volta Regions.
 -  Design, prototyping and supply of LPG - fired fish smoking ovens to Abuesi Fish Processors Association.

8

Achievements

- Provision of Business Development Services
 - Over 1,600 entrepreneurs have been grouped into GRATIS Client Associations and assisted to improve and expand their businesses. Clients operate mainly in the food processing, light engineering and textile sectors.
 - 498 people have been assisted with working capital to start and expand their Businesses.
 - 102 people have been assisted with equipment on hire purchase to improve their operations.
 - Provision of technical supervision for the construction of agro processing facilities for rural farmers in the Brong Ahafo, Northern, Western and Volta Regions under the Agricultural Sector Investment Project .
- Specific experiences in working with local authorities and collaboration with different stakeholders by the Gender and Development Unit of the Foundation has led to more women and communities accessing our technical and training services. Examples include the ff:
 - Designed and manufactured shea butter extraction equipment and cotton spinning wheels for Burkinabe Women Groups.

9

Achievements

- Manufactured and supplied palm oil processing equipment to Women's Assistance Business Association (WABA).
- Manufactured, supplied and installed cassava processing equipment for Mother and Child Community Development Foundation.
- Manufactured and supplied Shea Butter Extraction equipment to Women's Group in the Upper West, Upper East and the Northern Regions.
- Construction of sheds and manufacture of agro-processing equipment and training of users in the Volta and Central Regions for African Women's Development Fund (AWDF).
- Construction of sheds and manufacture of agro-processing equipment and training of users of Community Based Organizations in the Greater Accra, Volta, Eastern and Central Regions for Social Investment Fund.
- Manufactured and supplied cassava, palm oil processing equipment, provision of training in batik, tie/dye and soap making and fish smoking facility to United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).
- Manufactured and supplied cassava processing equipment to Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA).¹⁰

Achievements

- Manufactured and supplied Mechanical Stirrer/Roaster to Regional Coffee Association.
- Manufactured, supplied and installed Palm Fruit and Cassava Processing Equipment at Pete Pong Twifo Nyinase and Bawjiase in the Western and Central Regions.
- Two sets of Cassava and Palm Fruit Processing equipment for UNDP for Friends of the Nation, an NGO.
- Manufacture and supply of a set of Palm Kernel Cracker/Separator, Digester and Palm Oil Screw Press for Gbefi Area Council, Volta Region.
- Manufacture and supply of Palm Fruit and Cassava Processing Equipment for UNIDO.
- Manufactured and installed three sets of gari processing equipment at Nswam, Kraboa Coaltar and Mpero for Kudji Foundation of USA.

11

Achievements

- Provision of technical assistance and entrepreneurial training to Women in agriculture under our extension program by the GAD Unit which carried out capacity and capability building programs in concepts in gender and development for institutions nationwide.
- Training under the GRATIS extension program included.
 - 21,164 people including 8,011 women have received technical assistance and entrepreneurial training under the GRATIS extension program. (This includes training in income generating activities such as food processing, beekeeping and textiles production).
 - 1367 young men and women have been trained under the 3-year GRATIS Technical Apprentice Training Program for employment.
 - 2,126 people, (85% female) have been trained under the batik, tie and dye/screen printing training program instituted in 1988. 55% have been assisted to set up their own businesses.
 - 200 blacksmiths in the Central and Northern regions have been provided with training to upgrade their skills.

12

Partners

- ❏ To assist the poor in rural communities The GRATIS Foundation collaborates with multilateral and bilateral agencies, government ministries, departments and agencies and the local communities. Flexible partnerships and national engagements have strengthened.
- ❏ Partnerships have been struck with the vulnerable including small farmers, artisanal fish mongers, rural poor women and indigenous populations to improve upon their incomes, health, nutrition, education of their children and general well-being on a sustainable basis in Ghana and the West African sub region.
- ❏ Contacts have been maintained with both national and international organizations towards sustainable developments.
- ❏ Our collaborators include:
 - ❏ the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, (MOFA), Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, clients/customers, traditional authorities, district assemblies, tertiary institutions in Ghana, Agricultural Engineering Department of KNUST, National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI),Ghana

13

Partners

- ❏ Our collaborators also include:
 - ❏ Africa Regional Centre for Technology (ARCT)- Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Mauritania
 - ❏ Africa Regional Centre for Engineering Design and Manufacturing (ARCEDEM)
 - ❏ United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM),ENERGIA (Netherlands), Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA),German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ),International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD),Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS),United Nations Development Program (UNDP),Aid to Artisans (ATAG),Rural Enterprises Project (REP), etc.
- ❏ The high demand for training at the centers manned by the GRATIS Foundation has inspired the European Development Fund and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to finance some of our programs.

14

Challenges

- ❖ The potential for our success lies in strong commitment on the part of all stakeholders.
- ❖ Our biggest challenge has been working with completely illiterate groups and getting them to operate and maintain equipment.
- ❖ Inadequate infrastructure, weak managerial capacity and regulatory bottlenecks are some of the challenges.
- ❖ Funding for constant monitoring of implemented programs throughout the country constraints our activities not forgetting inadequate access to finance, lack of market and poor market information for clients.
- ❖ A lot of tact is needed in dealing with stakeholders such as beneficiary groups, ministries, departments and agencies, traditional leaders, community based organizations etc in both rural and urban areas in the selected localities. The target direct beneficiaries normally are the women's groups, government officials, project officers and planners, district assemblies, entrepreneurs etc while the indirect beneficiaries are the grassroots communities who will receive training from trained beneficiaries especially rural women.

15

Lessons Learned from Partnerships

- ❖ Local sustainable development includes many different themes and systems. For example, a concern for sustainability may require changes to transportation modes, land uses and their interaction; consideration of long term as well as immediate costs and benefits or innovation in the use and disposal of resources and energy.
- ❖ In terms of partnership the agricultural sector has established a partnership platform between Donors and government which offers opportunity for partners to dialogue on development issues that affect the sector. In line with harmonization and alignment of development aid, the agricultural sector is working towards adopting a sector wide approach in its planning and implementation processes.
- ❖ The major groups could work together to increase the agricultural output without depleting the natural resources through extensive awareness creation and training on sustainable land management practices to reduce land degradation as well as provide incentives and penal system to encourage use of sustainable land management practices and to deter others for bad practices.

16

Lessons Learned from Partnerships

- ❏ Indigenous knowledge could be used through the participatory technology development approach where beneficiaries are involved in properly identifying the problem and participate in the development of the technology. In the agricultural sector Research Extension Liaison Committees could be effective instruments for capturing indigenous knowledge.
- ❏ Through our association with the forestry commission and the Christian Mothers Group (a not-for-profit registered women's group) for instance, managerial practices best in combating desertification could be the introduction of agro-forestry using communities and food for work programs.
 - ❏ Under such a program the beneficiary groups mostly are women are supported technically to go into agro forestry intercropping with food crops which they harvest to earn an income while the trees remain intact.
- ❏ Among the incentives that could be given to small scale farmers to enhance their transition to more ecologically sustainable practices include credit, technology and guaranteed markets.

17

Lessons Learned from Partnerships

- ❏ The smallholders' systems ability to compete with modern production systems could be improved through credit support to enable the smallholder adopt technology and improve their productivity. They could be integrated into nucleus out grower schemes.
- ❏ Gender mainstreaming in the thematic areas could be achieved through the frequent organization of national consultations targeting specifically academia, development planners, policy makers etc. At the grassroots beneficiary groups and stakeholders could be targeted.
- ❏ Measures to be taken to strengthen the link between farmers and extension services/workers should include
 - ❏ Regular Farmer Field Schools where farmers are taken through a complete training course and given certificates.
 - ❏ Organization of regular open days where demonstrations on technologies are done.
 - ❏ Strengthening of Research Extension Liaison work by ensuring regular meetings and ensuring that farmers' problems are given immediate attention.

18

Lessons Learned form Partnerships

- ❏ Measures to increase number of women in agricultural extension should include
 - ❏ affirmative action on percentage of women to be enrolled in agricultural training programs.
 - ❏ Outreach programs by agricultural colleges and the Ministry of Agriculture in junior and senior high schools to encourage females to take up agriculture.
 - ❏ Mentoring of school children by female agricultural officers must be accepted as a program.
 - ❏ Policy on recruitment of staff into extension, ensuring that a certain percentage is female
 - ❏ Policy on posting of female extension staff, ensuring that they are not separated from their spouses.
- ❏ To prevent water scarcity in agriculture there must be increased training on effective use of irrigation water and irrigation of crops. The adoption of water harvesting technologies could help in both urban and rural communities. Farmers must be trained on water conservation methods such as bonding, contour farming, grassing along river banks.

19

Conclusion

- ❏ In conclusion, partnerships re-echo the issues of women and brings them on to the platform for discussion. Synergies can be tapped through Partnerships to better address women issues in rural development. Partnerships also promote a multifaceted approach to promoting women in rural development.
- ❏ For example, to ensure sustainable development at the small scale food processing level it has been established that females must be trained to carry out minor maintenance of agro-processing equipment in rural communities.
- ❏ The key word is **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT** that is getting more women into decision/policy making positions as well as better access of women to development services, technology, credit, markets, water etc.
- ❏ We at the GRATIS Foundation have a vision to Develop, promote and disseminate marketable technologies and skills with gender considerations for the growth of industry, particularly, micro, small and medium scale enterprises in Ghana and the West Africa Sub Region as well as become a reputable gender sensitive technology development and skills transfer organization in Africa improving access of women to the opportunities, services and resources at the GRATIS Foundation and beyond.

20

**Thank You
For Your
Attention**

21

