



WOMEN GROUPS AND TRAINING FACILITATORS IN KETA

CALL TO ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FOR WOMEN IN THE VOLTA DELTA

District Assemblies/Local government must work effectively to encourage the formalisation (registration) of all informal women livelihood groups and provide need-based capacity building.

Traditional Authorities must do well to ensure increased participation of women in decision making so as to help in highlighting and addressing gendered livelihood challenges.

Women's groups must seek close collaboration with municipal and district level actors in supporting their activities including the provision of capacity support and opportunities.

Corporate Bodies/Private Sector (Financial Institutions, NGOs) must focus on capacity building components of livelihoods to make women directly responsible for the operations and management of their livelihood activities.

The Project was led by the Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS) and the Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies (IESS) of the University of Ghana respectively, in partnership with Pro-Link, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) promoting equitable development of the rural and urban poor, especially women and girls and in collaboration with Kulima Integrated Development Solutions, based in South Africa.

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Empowering Women for Sustainable Livelihoods in the Volta Delta, Ghana

INFORMATION BRIEF

KEY MESSAGES

- Women empowerment requires a holistic approach and wider stakeholder engagement including the involvement of traditional and local governance structures in order to be effective.
- Formalising and registering of women groups into cooperatives is a way of increasing their agency and credibility for accessing financial and other resources in support of their livelihoods.
- Working with the relevant staff and units of District Assemblies in capacity building activities promotes stronger networks, access to critical information and opportunities, and the sustainability of women livelihood activities.

Why do women need to be empowered?

In the Volta Delta, coastal erosion, salinization of freshwater lagoons and soil and declining soil fertility have adversely affected fishing and agricultural livelihoods in the region. Limited opportunities for local livelihoods have driven many men to migrate out as a coping strategy, leaving behind increasing numbers of female-headed households with the additional labour burdens placed on women for taking care of their families .

Baseline surveys revealed that women are limited in their capacity to effectively use and manage land in order to earn a living from it . This project aimed to fill this gap by providing training to women on how to maximise value from their livelihoods in the Keta Municipal Assembly (Keta) and the South Tongu District (Sogakope).

THE APPROACH

a) Baseline Survey and Stakeholder Consultations

Prior to the capacity building workshops, a baseline survey and consultations with stakeholders such as the Land Secretariats, Traditional Councils, District Assemblies and women groups was undertaken to identify land rights (access, use and ownership) and livelihoods challenges, and opportunities for training and skills development in alternative livelihoods.

Specifically, six women Self Help Groups (SHGs) involved in various agro-based activities and their leaders from the two districts were directly engaged.

The consultations revealed that women face significant challenges in their capacity to adequately utilise lands available to them for increased economic returns.

To advance the sustainability of the initiatives by leveraging support and network for the women in their subsequent activities, representatives from offices of the Gender Desk, Department of Agriculture and the Business Advisories Centres (BAC) of the District Assemblies were strongly involved in facilitating the trainings and also focused on providing the women with details on available facilities within the districts.

b) Training and Capacity building

To support responsive and adaptive livelihoods with the overall vision to “empower women in the Volta delta, through capacity building for the efficient use of lands”, a needs assessment was conducted to identify the capacity needs of women to efficiently utilise their lands. Table 1 summarizes the outcomes of the capacity needs assessment.

Priority	Keta	Sogakope
Very high	How to improve the storage, packaging and marketing of their processed food products	Women’s leadership and empowerment
High	Financial management and bookkeeping	Business management and savings skills to enable them to save enough and purchase land for their ownership and access bank loans
Medium	Keeping good records of group meetings	Access to loans without land as collateral
Low	Access to loans without land as collateral	Forming and maintaining group associations / cooperatives

Table 1: Training Needs of Women the two Districts

The project focused on increasing women’s capacity around land use and management through training and awareness raising. Training programmes included capacity building and skills acquisition of women in:

- Alternative livelihoods,
- Business management and marketing,
- Value-addition/packaging of agricultural produce,
- Market access,
- Crop diversification, and
- Accessing microfinance for businesses.

The project embarked on a number of activities to raise the awareness of the women’s groups on:

1. The opportunities available for increasing the wealth generation potential of the land they have access to;
2. The importance and value of gaining access to regional markets;
3. The microfinance opportunities available to them; and
4. The economically viable options for diversifying the crops they grow.

Additionally, the women were trained to gain skills in:

1. Alternative livelihood options such as liquid soap making, fortification of agricultural products;
2. Packaging and storage of agricultural products
3. Business management and marketing.

Two separate two-day needs-based workshops on livelihoods training and capacity building were held for women in the two districts respectively. In the South Tongu District, the workshop was held at Sogakope, to train a total of 20 women in various business management skills such as record keeping and planning. Alternative livelihood trainings in the production of liquid soap, hand sanitizer and household bleach were carried out. The participants were also provided a linkage to a rural bank operating in the District, the Agave Rural Bank Limited in Sogakope and the Anlo Rural Bank Limited in Keta; as a way of enhancing access to microfinance. Similarly, in the Keta district, 16 women participated in the two-day workshop that focused on trainings in food processing (fish, vegetables and fortified gari), and access to and management of finance.

The modules used for the trainings were informed by the baseline surveys and consultations that identified the specific needs of the women. The trainings and capacity building were delivered through a mix of facilitator-led presentations, talks, demonstrations, role plays and practical sessions involving participants.



Baseline Data Validation with Stakeholders in Sogakope



Baseline Survey Training Session with Enumerators

MODULE 1	MODULE 2	MODULE 3	MODULE 4
VALUE ADDITION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value Addition • Product registration • Personal Reflections 	BUSINESS MANAGEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a Business Plan • Records Keeping • General Discussions on managing businesses 	BUSINESS FINANCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing your business 	EMPOWERMENT & LEADERSHIP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group dynamics & Leadership • Skills development (soap & detergent production)

ACHIEVEMENTS

- The project has helped in providing skills training to over thirty-six women group leaders in the Keta Municipal and South Tongu districts with the potential to increasing their income levels and sharing knowledge gained with group members.
- The women are now in a good position to access microfinance to grow their businesses, repay their loans and effectively support their families.
- Following the training, Fieve women’s group (Sogakope) have followed up on promises made by the Agave Rural Bank to support women’s groups through applying for savings accounts.

Through media engagements and publicity, the findings from the baseline survey as well as the alternative livelihoods and options for improved productivity have been shared with other women’s groups who were not directly involved in the project. This has been done through the women’s own initiatives and informal meetings among themselves.

LESSONS LEARNT

- Women’s empowerment requires a holistic approach in terms of activities and actors involved. Activities should include awareness creation, needs based capacity enhancement in livelihoods as well as advocacy. Actors that need to work together include traditional leaders, local government agencies (Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies - MMDAs) as

well as women groups and individuals to ensure there is greater support for the empowerment of women.

- Care must be given to consider implications of activities: since women are key caregivers and home keepers additional activities may add labour burden; but this may be offset by increased agency over their own livelihoods.
- Financing remains a major challenge to women’s groups due to their informal nature, formalising these groups by registering them as cooperatives with the MMDAs would increase their credibility for financial access in the future.
- The involvement of governance structures such as the Municipal and District Assemblies provides a strong network for the women. In this project, officials of the Municipal and District Assembly units were extensively engaged and contributed to the training processes to ensure the women have linkages for easy access of information and opportunities relating to their livelihoods in the future.



Training of Women Groups on Business Management by the NBSSI in Sogakope



Practical Skills Development Session for Women’s Groups in Sogakope



Practical Session on Tomato Preservation in Keta



Consultation Meeting with District Assembly Officials at Sogakope on Outcomes of the Baseline Survey and how the Project could Proceed to Benefit Women



Project Staff and District Assembly Officials in Keta after an Engagement Meeting on the Next Steps Following the Baseline Survey