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RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT (R4D) LEARNING SERIES

3

# Gender policies and implementation in agriculture, natural resources and poverty reduction

Case study of Ghana's Upper East Region

Saa Dittoh, Katherine Ann Snyder and Nicole Lefore

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Saa Dittoh, Katherine Ann Snyder and Nicole Lefore

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## Citation

Dittoh, S.; Snyder, K. A.; Lefore, N. 2015. *Gender policies and implementation in agriculture, natural resources and poverty reduction: case study of Ghana's Upper East Region*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Water Management Institute (IWMI). CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE). 22p. (WLE Research for Development (R4D) Learning Series 3). doi: 10.5337/2015.205

/ gender / women / equity / agricultural policy / policy making / agricultural workers / agricultural production / natural resources / poverty / funding / socioeconomic environment / civil society organizations / local communities / households / resource allocation / case studies / Ghana /

ISBN 978-92-9090-815-9

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*Front cover photo:* Fulani farmer Abdullah Ahjedi's daughter taking readings from rain guage, Duko, Tamale, Ghana. *Source:* Thor Windham-Wright

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## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE) for providing the funding for this research as well as the many people interviewed who graciously gave their time to us for this work.

The names of ministries, departments and agencies of the Government of Ghana in this report represent those in use at the time of research. In some cases, those names may have since changed. This also applies to the names of donors, some of which have also changed.

## Project

This paper was written in 2014 under the Gender Innovation Fund of the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE).

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This work has been undertaken as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE). IWMI is a member of the CGIAR Consortium and leads this program.



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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACDEP	Association of Church Development Projects
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CENSUDI	Center for Sustainable Development Initiatives
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSD	Crop Services Department
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DA	District Assembly
DACF	District Assemblies Common Fund
DAES	Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services
DISCAP	District Capacity Building Project
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FASDEP	Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GADS	Gender and Agricultural Development Strategy
GED	Gender, Environment and Development
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILGS	Institute of Local Government Studies
LACOSREP	Land Conservation and Small Holder Rehabilitation Project
LAP	Land Administration Project
MEST	Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology
METASIP	Medium Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan
MGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MLNS	Ministry of Land and Natural Resources
MOFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
MOTI	Ministry of Trade and Industry
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
NBSSI	National Board of Small Scale Industries
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRGP	Northern Rural Growth Project
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
TZ	Tuozafo (a local meal or pap made from cereals)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WED	Women, Environment and Development
WIAD	Women in Agricultural Development of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture
WLE	CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems

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## SUMMARY

Gender mainstreaming in Ghana's development process has been the policy goal since the early 1990s. Yet there have been critiques that the rhetoric is far from the reality. How far is policy from real implementation practice and if there is a gap, how big is it? Answers to these questions are crucial given the growing importance of changing gender roles with regards to improvements in the socio-cultural, economic, political, legal and civic conditions of the people.

This research and case study was an output of the Gender in National Policy and Implementation in Ghana project supported by the Gender Innovation Fund of the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE). The work intended to provide the foundation for subsequent gender research in the region and for future

collaboration with institutions, including 'non-conventional partners' such as gender advocacy organizations, many of whom are not presently involved in agricultural development. The overall aim of the project was to analyze how gender is addressed in national policy and implementation of agricultural and natural resources management (NRM) initiatives and how the ideas of gender as represented in the national policies may or may not align with the local context and the aims of men and women at the local level.

The findings suggest that sensitization programs on gender have had some success at all levels in terms of raising awareness. However, the study also revealed that adopting narratives around gender and gender equity into policy and even programs does not

necessary lead to implemented projects and activities that increase women's access to resources, control over assets or greater participation and influence in public and political life. A major obstacle for implementation is lack of funding, which is part of the overall constraints on institutional capacity among implementing bodies. In some cases, donor funds earmarked for more direct support for district level implementation on gender and agriculture have enabled the implementation of plans. There is often a disconnect between how gender as understood and prioritized at national level is interpreted at local level at the point of implementation. Much more can be done to better understand and align notions of and priorities for gender toward achieving equity through policy implementation in northern Ghana.



## 1. BACKGROUND

Gender mainstreaming in Ghana's development process has been the policy goal since the early 1990s, but Amoah (2010) says "gender has become a buzz word in Ghana's policy space in the last three decades and substantively remained just that". This statement hints at the potential disconnect between policy formulation and its implementation with regards to gender. How far is the claim of a divide between policy and implement real? To what extent is there a divide, and what are the implications? Answers to these questions are crucial given the growing importance of changing gender roles with regards to improvements in the socio-cultural, economic, political, legal and civic conditions of the people.

The reality in rural areas on gender issues appears to be very different from national policies. Most of the national agricultural, natural resources and poverty reduction policies have given considerable emphasis to gender mainstreaming and increasing the participation of women, youth and marginalized members of communities, yet many of the policies have been developed by an educated urban elite and very influenced by international donor agencies. This research seeks to contribute to a discussion on the extent to which policies have been designed to address the actual gender issues in rural areas which are largely agricultural, where poverty is extensive and most severe, and where the use and degradation of natural resources are high.

Sustainable development, and in particular the promotion of sustainable land management (SLM), cannot be done successfully without a gender perspective. The discussions on women, environment and development (WED) in the 1970s shifted to gender, environment and development (GED) because it was realized that there is need to understand gender relations within social frameworks when analyzing issues relating to environment and sustainable development (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2009; Kwapong, 2009). Wickramasinghe (2009) found the effect of environmental

changes on men and women in a given socio-economic context differs based on differences in contacts, tasks and responsibilities, and noted that "soil degradation and decreasing fertility in tea lands (in Sri Lanka) have made women lose casual work opportunities more than men". Global donors began to emphasize gender in their support to related sector policies following such evidence of linkages between gender, environment and development. This study fills a gap to review the actualization of those policies across sectors and at different levels, most notably at the local level where gender relations in natural resources and agriculture are intricately linked to livelihoods.

### 1.1 Research questions and objectives

The research questions this study sought to address included:

1. How is gender integrated into Ghana's national, especially agricultural and natural resources, policies? To what degree are the policies being implemented?
2. What are the notions (ideas, stereotypes) with regards to gender at different levels?
3. How are these notions of gender transformed or replicated in actual implementation?
4. How do these notions of gender align with local realities and objectives?

This research and case study was an output of the Gender in National Policy and Implementation in Ghana project supported by the Gender Innovation Fund of the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE). The work intended to provide the foundation for subsequent gender research in the region and for future collaboration with institutions, including 'non-conventional partners' such as gender advocacy organizations, many of whom are not presently involved in agricultural development. The overall aim of the project was to analyze how gender is addressed in national policy and implementation of agricultural and natural resources management (NRM)

initiatives and how the ideas of gender as represented in the national policies may or may not align with the local context and the aims of men and women at the local level.

The specific objectives of the project were as follows:

1. To examine how gender is integrated into national policies that relate to agriculture, natural resources and poverty reduction.
2. To find out what or who has influenced the formation of ideas on gender (local notions versus international discourses).
3. To examine how the policies are acted upon by implementers along chains of institutions (government and non-government) from national to community level.
4. To investigate community gender notions (roles and ideology) to ascertain how and if these match or conflict with national level discourses.

### 1.2 Rationale for the research

In Ghana, most of the national agricultural, natural resources and poverty reduction policies include attention to gender mainstreaming and increasing participation and equal access to resources and benefits of women, youth, and marginalized members of communities. Many of these policies have been developed by an educated urban elite at the national level and influenced by donor agendas. The policies appear quite progressive when considered against donor generated indicators or global discourse. However, one must be careful about the assumptions surrounding policy; outcomes of seemingly progressive policies may not meet expectations. The creation of policy and actual implementation are obviously connected, but at the same time, result from very different processes and fall under the responsibility of very different institutions and actors. The potential impact of policies requires further investigation.

The way in which gender and inequality is addressed may be little more than 'box ticking'. For example,

agricultural or natural resource policies to address gender inequities are often operationalized through oversimplified measures, such as collecting gender disaggregated data or setting quotas (set percentages) for women participating in decision-making committees. These are important steps, but they do not do much to address the underlying power differences (both between men and women but also among different categories of women) that can have a significant effect on land use and agricultural production. Women are not a uniform group or community. Differences that exist within the category of 'women' and 'men' including class, wealth, kinship, age, and such are often overlooked and as a result 'better off' women and men are targeted in development and agricultural programs, sometimes unwittingly. And, women's attendance at meetings and formation of women's groups is not the same as ensuring women are listened to by decision-makers and become decision-makers themselves.

In addition, policies and the related programs and projects are often embedded with pre-conceived ideas of the 'gender' issues; policy outcomes are very much affected by ideas that implementers have about gender and

gender inequalities. The notions of gender of the urban elite and/or middle-level program implementer may mesh with local community notions, but often they differ, which can lead to ineffective and failed programs or projects.

This project identified research on the relationship between national policy and implementation as essential for shaping long-term development goals at community and household level and ensuring that more effective programs for gender equity in agricultural production programs are put in place. In addition, the research sought to construct a map of the institutions, both government and non-governmental involved in implementing gender sensitive programs.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Scope

This research was conducted late in 2013 and early 2014, though benefitted from earlier related research by the project collaborators on similar topics. It is a qualitative study focusing mainly on gender issues in agricultural, natural resources and poverty reduction policies and their implementation at the community level in rural areas. The research looked at gender issues in

national policies and therefore among ministry staff and others at national and regional levels. However, gender issues are generally difficult to generalize about because they tend to be quite specific to localities. Therefore, the project undertook case studies at regional, district and sub-district level to better understand the connections between the higher levels of policy making and the more local district and community levels where implementation takes place.

### 2.2 Case study area

The case study area is two districts, Bawku West and Bongo, in the Upper East Region of Ghana, see Figure 1. These districts are considered representative of the Upper East Region with regards to sustainable land management and poverty challenges. They are also areas that benefitted from past gender-related activities of government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The two most prominent programs in the districts were the Land Conservation and Small Holder Rehabilitation Project (LACOSREP), a Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) project supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the District Capacity Building Project (DISCAP), a Ministry of Local

FIGURE 1. CASE STUDY AREA: BAWKU WEST AND BONGO, UPPER EAST REGION OF GHANA.



Source: WLE

Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) project supported by the then Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)<sup>1</sup>. Additional projects have been undertaken in these areas by NGOs, such as the Association of Church Development Projects (ACDEP), the Center for Sustainable Development Initiatives (CENSUDI) and others.

## 2.3 Approach

The project began with a desk review of national policies on agriculture, natural resources, land and environment, and analyzed the extent to which and the nature of how gender has been integrated. The project used questionnaires and interviews for each administrative level: national, regional, district and community. Interviews were held with relevant staff in various ministries and agencies involved in developing policies and programs, and influencing implementation.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 indicates the numbers at the various levels that were interviewed (either orally and/or by questionnaire). Many of the personnel responded to at least parts of questionnaires in writing. In addition, secondary research on the community level social and cultural context was also carried out, focusing on agriculture, natural resource use, development and gender.

At the national level, relatively lengthy discussions were held in Accra with the personnel of ministries and departments responsible for gender, in several cases two or three interviews and discussions were held with the same staff. There are gender desks or a gender focal person in almost all the ministries, though most are not given that official designation. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) has gender focal persons in

all directorates and a gender desk is located in the Women in Agriculture Department (WIAD) directorate. The gender desk of the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources (MLNR) is found within the Land Administration Project (LAP), the Social Development and Gender Unit. There is a gender desk at the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), while the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI) has most of its gendered activities at the National Board of Small Scale Industries (NBSSI). The gender desk at the Ministry of Environment Science and Technology (MEST) is within the public relations unit. Interviews were also held with some personnel of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP), as well as the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS) in Accra, which holds trainings for civil servants at different levels.

At the regional level, in this case Bolgatanga as the Upper East Region capital, interviews were held with relevant staff members in regional line ministries, parastatals and NGOs.

Discussions also took place with district level personnel in Zebilla as the district capital of Bawku West District and Bongo as the district capital of Bongo District.

At the community level, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with men and women separately in eight randomly selected communities in the two case study districts, as indicated in Table 2. The numbers of people in some of the group discussions were relatively large (more than the usual numbers prescribed for FGDs), but it was not appropriate to exclude all those who decided to be part of the discussions.

## 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 3.1 Influence of development partners and civil society on gender national policies

The literature review and interviews showed influence on integration of gender into the development priorities of Ghana by development partners, through multi- and bi-lateral, development banks and NGOs. They have helped to articulate ideas on gender and ensure these concepts are embedded through financial and technical support to sector policy development, and design and implementation of specific programs and projects. Almost all development partners of European countries and North America (Canada and United States) have emphasized gender mainstreaming in their sponsored projects and programmes. Most development partners make it mandatory to mainstream gender in projects, according to the national level senior personnel interviewed. Gender mainstreaming is noted by informants as a “trigger” for funding in both MOFA and the LAP; next phase funding for a program or project is denied or delayed based on meeting certain conditions of gender mainstreaming. At the least, most development partners insist that gender disaggregated data must be collected. However, the mainstreaming of gender often ends with the drafting of policy and designing of programs.

NGOs have also influenced the integration of gender into policies, programs and projects significantly, according to national level personnel interviewed. In fact, NGOs or civil society

**TABLE 1. NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND DISTRICT LEVEL.**

LEVEL	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
National (Ministries)	8
Regional (Ministries and NGOs)	6
Bawku West District (Ministries, DA and NGOs)	5
Bongo District (Ministries, DA and NGOs)	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

<sup>1</sup> Development activities funded by the Government of Canada now fall under the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

<sup>2</sup> The names of all persons interviewed are withheld to ensure confidentiality.

TABLE 2. COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS.

DISTRICT	NAME OF COMMUNITY	NUMBERS OF PERSONS IN GROUP DISCUSSIONS	
		MALE	FEMALE
Bawku West	Tilli-Azupunga	8	16
	Sapalgu	6	11
	Adagbida	9	14
	Namolgu	7	8
Bongo	Dua-Tarongo	7	12
	Gorogo	15	17
	Sambulgu	10	15
	Atiabiisi	12	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>16 groups</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>109</b>

organizations insist that the benefits of development efforts must be shared by men, women, the youth as well as the vulnerable, according to those interviewed at all levels for this study. This may be partly due to the fact that considerable funding for civil society organizations are linked to international donor agencies and international NGOs, which insist on gender mainstreaming in development activities. Many governmental and civil society personnel have however also now accepted that gender mainstreaming is critical for development of societies and thus do advocate strongly for its integration into policies, programmes and projects at all levels.

### 3.2 Gender in national policy: context and content

Most of Ghana's national policies incorporate attention to gender generally in their goals and objectives. As policies, they outline broad principles for a sector and suggest government's priorities and aspirations, but do not specify implementation plans. Ghana has done a considerable amount of work to increase its attention to and incorporation of gender into national planning, into ministries and into districts. At the global level, Ghana is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Millennium

Development Goals, which focus on improving education and health for women and girls. Donors, such as CIDA and IFAD, have supported integration of gender equity and sensitivity in district development plans.

The National Gender and Children's Policy (2004) aims to mainstream gender into all aspects of national development plans and policies. The policy was developed by the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, which was created in 2001 and since renamed the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP).<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, the national gender policy focuses both on addressing gender inequalities through policy reform and through implementation of activities, as well as the promotion of equal access to resources and benefits for women. A new National Gender Policy with the theme 'Towards Gender Equality, Women Empowerment and Social Protection in Ghana' is due to be launched before the end of 2014.<sup>4</sup>

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection has so far focused on issues of child labour and trafficking, domestic violence, the presence of women in government sectors and the like. The Departments of Children and Women which exist at the regional level (but not district levels) are the implementing units of the MGCSP. In the Upper East Region, the Department of Women is focused on eradicating female

genital mutilation (FGM) and domestic violence issues. It is only of late that the MGCSP seems to be turning some attention to rural economic development activities through the promotion of gari (dried grated cassava) processing by women in some rural areas. Implementation of gender mainstreaming in the northern regions has received support mainly from external donors

The ministries of more direct relevance in this study namely the Ministries of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR), Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) as well as Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI) do not have their own specific gender policies; most ministries reference the National Gender Policy of 2004. However MOFA and MLNR have gender strategies, while the others undertake gender activities in different ways since gender is incorporated as a cross cutting issue.

The Ministry of Food and Agriculture has made gender mainstreaming part of its activities since the 1970s when it created the Women in Food and Agriculture Directorate, which then became the Women in Agricultural Development directorate (WIAD). The Gender and Agricultural Development Strategy (GADS) was developed in 1997 by MOFA, specifically by the Directorate

<sup>3</sup> The ministry responsible for addressing women's issues has been renamed under different political administrations, and at the time of writing this report was called The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

<sup>4</sup> The national gender policy final draft was launched as 'Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment into Ghana's Development Efforts' and validated in February 2015 by stakeholders.

of Agricultural Extension Service (DAES), with support from FAO; it was not operationalized until 2004 (Opare and Wrigley-Asante, 2008). GADS highlights a number of issues that are important for addressing gender in agriculture, including better access to credit, improved access by women to extension services, and increased access to and control over land. Other issues identified by MOFA include low access to labor and technology, high illiteracy and lack of management skills (ibid). GADS has 8 objectives, which include: 1) enhancing institutional capacity within MOFA to address gender; 2) promoting production and use of sex and age disaggregated data; 3) providing more gender equitable extension services; 4) improving farmers' access to financial services; 5) improving access to information about rights to land; 6) improving the development and promotion of appropriate technologies in agriculture; 7) promoting diversification and development of new processed products and; 8) enhancing environmental protection through appropriate agriculture. Within MOFA, WIAD is responsible for implementing the GADS. It also provides gender education and training to MOFA staff at multiple institutional levels.

MOFA itself remains an institution where most of the staff are men (73.27%) (ibid). Other MOFA policies such as Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy (FASDEP I and currently FASDEP II) and the Medium Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (METASIP) for 2011-2015 also highlight gender and emphasize that all policies and programmes should be designed with a gender perspective in mind. The goals and objectives of both GADS and FASDEP II are aligned with priorities of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and those of global and regional financial institutions such as the African Development Bank and the World Bank, but at the same time, the lack of capacity and funding has made achieving these goals a major challenge. Indeed, with 72.3% of the national budget devoted to providing civil servants salaries (up from 57% in 2008), there is little funding to

address institutional and human resource capacity that can ensure the actual implementation of policies (Government of Ghana, 2013). In addition to sector budgetary support, the Government of Ghana supported capacity building to MOFA through WIAD to ensure gender mainstreaming.

There are several other gender policies and sub-sector strategies, such as the Land Administration Project's Gender Strategy. According to the head of the gender desk (of the LAP) "the Ministry [Lands and Natural Resources] is ensuring that gender issues are incorporated into the activities of all implementing agencies. It is also ensuring that the views of women are incorporated into the various policies being developed under the LAP". Other national policies that incorporate attention to gender equity include the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) (2006-2009), the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (2010-2016), the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (2010-2013), the Ghana Water Policy of 2007, as well as the national irrigation policy.

In Ghana, the ministries, at the national level, are expected to create policy, coordinate planning and support the budget process. There are planning and policy units in most ministries to do that. And, the National Development Planning Commission (NPDC) is an overarching body to coordinate the processes across the ministries and various government institutions to ensure it is all aligned and contributes to the principal goals of the executive of the nation. There are further steps to getting policies into implementation, such as required legal instruments and regulations and departmental/agency procedures. The ministries may continue to play a role in seeing those are done, but the ministries (national level) play a very minimal role in implementation of programs themselves, which are effectively the sum of the strategies and procedures that will get policy into practice. Actual implementation falls to regional and district level actors and agencies to ensure projects and

plans are implemented. Indeed, under decentralization and local government reform, districts are supposed to be the key agents for implementation.

The regional administrative level is situated between national and district levels. Ten regional authorities led by Regional Ministers and Deputy Ministers are tasked with monitoring the planning and implementation of policies of all districts within their respective regions. They also act as intermediaries in budgeting and financial management between central and district levels of government.

The Local Government Act of 1993 is directly relevant for implementation of national policies at district level. With this Act, "the District Assembly (DA) became the key institution in 110 newly designated districts within the country's 10 regions" (Crawford, 2008: 242). There are 216 district administrative areas as of June 2012 each managed by a District Assembly. The DA consists of both elected Assembly members (70 percent) and central government appointees (30 percent) representing the Traditional Authorities, religious groups, interest groups, etc.. District Planning Coordinating Units prepare the district medium-term development plans. The plans are supposed to be gender 'sensitive' and include gender equity in the planning process. District plans are also supposed to receive a public hearing before each plan is adopted. These hearings are supposed to have a gender balance, but enforcing the stipulation around attendance is not easy. Many women are not interested in attending or if they do, remain silent, according to informants of this study.

### 3.3 Activities and funding of gender units: public and civil society

Activities of gender units at the national, regional and district levels are funded through projects and programs, which are often initiated and funded by donor agencies either through sector budget support or direct financing. Funding of actual activities on gender is critical for actual implementation of policies; lack of funding suggests lack of commitment



but also failure to implement policies. Therefore, this research included a budgetary allocation review and a ranking of funding for gender-related activities through surveys and interviews. Respondents were asked to rate the financial support given to activities. Activities were described as “active” or “very active” in cases where there was considerable and consistent financial assistance from donors or central government. Low but moderate financial assistance for activities received the rank of “moderately active” or “fair”. Little to no finances for activities would receive the ratings of “bad” or “very bad”.

Gender units in the Upper East Region were ranked as “very active” during the implementation period of the DISCAP and LACOSREP, and some gender units within current projects as also “very active”, such as the Northern Rural Growth Program (NRGP). Also, most NGO gender units in the region are seen as “very active”. Funding for gender activities in the civil society organizations and NGOs is relatively better than the governmental sector, but it is not as good as often perceived. Some NGOs end up spending all allocated resources on gender (women) activities to meet conditions of donors, such as collecting gender disaggregated data. However, this is not necessarily because the personnel believe gender mainstreaming is a priority and can be to the neglect of other planned activities.

Not surprisingly, funding for public institution gender units at national, regional and district levels have been described by personnel as “bad” or “very bad”, especially those reliant on funding from government sources. This is mainly because of inadequate government allocation to ministries generally, and subsequently very inadequate allocations to gender units. Most gender units hardly get any funding at all. According to ministry personnel at all levels, the present situation of very serious financial shortfalls suggests gender issues are not regarded as priorities of government. There are exceptions, such as the LAP, where

the funding situation was described as only “fair”. That means even projects that are considered priority for government and donors, and which have gender strategies and clearly delineated activities, funding for gender mainstreaming is a constraint. One very senior ministry personnel stated that “funding for gender mainstreaming even by development partners is not commensurate with the rhetoric”.

Most critically, funds for district level operations are grossly inadequate. Most DA funding comes from the District Assemblies Common Fund (DCAF), which is allocated by the national government. The DCAF is a percentage (7.5 percent as of 2014) of the total revenue accrued by the nation. However, several deductions are made by the national government for capital expenditures deemed important (e.g. refuse removal trucks for all districts), so not all funds are distributed to the district level. The DCAF is meant to supplement the district revenue received by each DA from property taxes, user fees, licenses, permits, and other locally administered taxes and fees. In many districts, particularly those in the north, the ability to raise funds is very limited, and the DCAF provides most or all the district's finances. The combination of deductions at central level and constrained local revenue leaves districts with significantly reduced funds, despite the approved district plans. The lack of finance to implement policies makes realizing national goals a challenge, much less those specifically targeting gender equality. All informants to this study observed that DAs are generally short of funds.

From the above, it is clear that there is the need to go beyond policy formulation on gender, and ensure support from the ministries to allocate sufficient funds and institute appropriate legal instruments, procedures, and regulations for policy implementation. In addition to the institutional gaps, most DAs lack the required human resource capacity to implement the required and approved plans. As such, how the

gender policies can actually be translated into actions at the implementation level becomes the real issue of interest.

## 4. CASE STUDY: LOCAL CONTEXT, GENDERED ROLES AND SPHERES

### 4.1 Socio-economic and biophysical overview

The research focused generally on the northern part of Ghana above the 8<sup>th</sup> parallel where donors have concentrated attention and resources to address extreme poverty. It includes the Northern Region (NR), Upper East Region (UER) and Upper West Region (UWR), though in some studies will include parts of Brong Ahafo and Volta regions. The three northern regions are characterized by significant poverty, poor agricultural yields, soil erosion, land degradation and erratic rainfall. The regions fall within the savanna vegetation belt and agriculture and livestock-keeping are the main livelihood pursuits of people living in this area. The population of the three regions combined as of 2010 is 4,228,116 (GSS, 2010). Population density ranges from 35 people per sq km in Northern Region to 37 people per sq km in Upper West to 117 people per sq km in Upper East. Table 3 shows the poverty prevalence dynamics for the three regions over the years as compared to the national average.

A 2012 survey study for USAID's Feed the Future project, however, estimates that the poverty prevalence rates for the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions are 21.6 percent, 28.1 percent and 34.7 percent respectively (Zereyesus et. al. 2014). It used a different methodology and the World Bank's poverty line of US\$1.25 as the reference point. It was a gendered study and it showed that in northern Ghana there is higher poverty prevalence in “Male and Female adults”<sup>5</sup> households (25.4 percent) than in “Female Adult Only” household (10.8 percent) and “Male Adult Only” households (5.7

<sup>5</sup> The study categorized households into those with male and female adults, those with a male adult and no female adult and those with a female adult and no male adult, rather than male and female headed households.

TABLE 3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POVERTY INCIDENCE IN NORTHERN GHANA 1991-2006.

ADMINISTRATIVE REGION	1991/92		1998/99		2005/06	
	% POVERTY INCIDENCE	% EXTREME POVERTY INCIDENCE	% POVERTY INCIDENCE	% EXTREME POVERTY INCIDENCE	% POVERTY INCIDENCE	% EXTREME POVERTY INCIDENCE
All Regions (Ghana)	51.7	36.5	39.5	28.8	28.5	18.2
Northern Region	63.4	54.1	69.2	57.4	52.3	38.7
Upper East	66.9	53.5	88.2	79.6	70.4	60.1
Upper West	88.4	74.3	83.9	68.3	87.9	79.0

Note: Poverty line is GH¢371 (USD \$390.53) per adult equivalent per year; Extreme poverty line: GH¢289 (USD \$304.21) per adult equivalent per year: (USD \$1 averaged GH¢ 0.950 in 2007). Source: Ghana Statistical Services, April 2007.

percent). It can be easily inferred from the results obtained that female adults are far poorer in the area.

Agriculture is the basis of the economy of northern Ghana, and as such, the population is highly dependent on natural resources. In addition, most agricultural production is rainfed with lower production in the dry season. According to the MOFA (2008), the average annual rainfall over the last 30 years for NR, UER and UWR combined is 1030 mm, but can range from 700 mm to 1200 mm. The rainy season is from late May to mid-October. Temperatures range from 23 degrees C to 35 degrees C. Crops grown include sorghum, millet, maize, cow peas, bambara beans, groundnuts, sweet potatoes and vegetables such as tomatoes, onions and green vegetables. A limited amount of rice is cultivated in irrigated areas and where water is accessible along river banks. A critical problem is the very erratic rainfall distribution pattern, which is worsening with climate change. In addition, fertile land is increasingly in short supply and soil fertility a serious constraint as years of cultivation have decreased productivity. Population growth has resulted in the abandonment of fallows in farms near compounds and the clearing of forest and bush from fields far from the households.

This area of Ghana is home to a variety of fairly closely linked ethnic groups who speak related languages and share cultural similarities. Descent

among peoples in this region is patrilineal and thus sons inherit land and property from their fathers. Chieftaincies have been a feature of social and political organization in northern Ghana since the 15th century; it was imposed upon the indigenous communities residing there. There is a hierarchy of chiefs and much competition even to acquire the minor titles. Mostly, chiefs are men but there are a few women who have been appointed. Alongside chiefs, there are *tendaanas*, sometimes referred to as earth priests, who in some cases have the role of allocating land for farming and building.

Changes in farm labor mark an important shift in terms of livelihoods. Migration in search of off-farm labor opportunities, usually to the South, is a common feature of northern society; young men leave in the dry season and increasing numbers of young women also go to southern cities in search of opportunities. The impact of migration on the farming system is critical, because northern Ghana used to depend heavily on male labor. Whitehead notes that larger households that had an abundance of male labor were 'positively associated with increased economic security' (2004:3). This survey suggests reliance on male labor for agricultural livelihoods is no longer the case. Female labor is now the dominant labor on farms at least in the Bawku West and Bongo Districts. Men in focus group discussions in both case study districts revealed that

women now undertake almost all farm activities that used to be regarded as men's preserve. "Without women on the farms these days, there will be no food at home", according to the Chief of Sapalgu (Bawku West District).

Livestock are also a critical factor in household security. The more animals a household has, the greater likelihood that they can withstand ordinary shocks such as illness. Bullocks are particularly important to livelihoods as plowing (rather than relying on hand hoe) allows households to cultivate larger parcels of land, increasing their likelihood of achieving food security and/or producing a surplus for sale. Furthermore, households with bullocks and plows enter into arrangements with households who do not have these resources, to plow their lands in return for labor or for cash, thus allowing them to gain further from these resources.<sup>6</sup> Livestock are used as a food security measure to enable purchasing food, particularly grain; purchase of food makes up a significant proportion of household expenditure. One possible reason for higher poverty among women is that they keep far less livestock.

## 4.2 Gender context, roles and priorities

In northern Ghana, gender roles are complementary if divided. Men prepare fields and then women and men collaborate on planting, weeding and harvesting but as indicated above the

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the main request in all the eight communities sampled is for government or NGO assistance to acquire bullock/donkey plows and carts.

roles are very much blurred now. Both men and women in the two districts pointed out that “except for the second weeding (of millet and sorghum), which is often not done, women take part in all farm activities”, see Figure 2.

Meyer Fortes, writing in the 1930s, describes Talensi social organization (Talensi is one of the Mole-Dagbani speaking groups in Upper East, their culture has similarities with the other groups) as having a ‘well-defined spatial basis’ (1936: 239). While many aspects of life have changed since this time, some basic aspects of social organization and gender remain similar. Talensi, and other groups, have large, multi-generational compounds in which a senior male of the lineage is the head. He is responsible for the wider family and younger brothers and sons share the compound, and if married, have their own houses within it. Women marry into this compound from other patrilineal compounds, learning the ways of the household from the mother-in-law until deemed ready to move into her own house in the compound.

As Meyer Fortes observed, the man at the head of the compound organized the use of the land under his guidance. Near the compound houses are the compound fields in which all members of the compound are expected to work. These fields provide the food for the compound head’s granary, which the head disperses to the compound members. The fields with the closest proximity to the house are the most fertile, because they are treated with animal manure and compost. Individual men and women within the compound can also cultivate fields themselves, getting access and permission from the compound head and from the wider community.

Descent is patrilineal so women do not have rights to ‘own’ land and pass it on to their children. That said, junior males have to struggle to access resources, as do women. Women can access land from the compound head, from their husbands, and from the cognatic kinsmen. Among Talensi, Meyer Fortes (1936) suggested that

they prefer the latter arrangement as it allows them ‘absolute independence of their husbands’. Women often focus on groundnut production in these fields. Women can also access land through borrowing or rental. Getting access to land does not appear to be a problem, but ownership, and the ability to transfer land to children or others, is not possible. However, freehold ownership is not the norm in Ghana, as clan leaders or customary authorities hold the land in trust for future generations.

Men are associated with livestock and with farming, or sell livestock, firewood or grains. Non-farm income opportunities are few for men and they primarily migrate to work as wage laborers. Women, however, engage in both farming and non-agricultural but natural resource-based income activities. In terms of agriculture, vegetable production is the domain of women as they make up the relish in all meals. Non-farm income for women often includes rice processing, making and selling local beer (pito), and trading a wide variety of goods from cloth to charcoal.

Another central livelihood strategy for women based on natural resources is shea nut and dawadawa collection and processing. Access to shea and dawadawa trees are through the household compound and in the bush field of the compound. They can also gather from areas where there is not clear ‘ownership’. Both products are significant sources of income for women and women have control over the process and over the proceeds from their sale. Shea and dawadawa in addition to being cash crops, are also important for household consumption. Meyer Fortes asserts that for the Talensi “the fruits of the shea tree save many a family from the worst straights of hunger” (247). Chalfin, in her study of shea butter production and marketing makes an important point when it comes to rural livelihoods in Upper East Region and indeed elsewhere: ‘the assumption that the conditions of agriculture set the standard terms of entitlement and inequality within all aspects of rural livelihood obscures

the full picture of rural economic life’. Indeed, men in two rural communities emphasized that women have far more income opportunities than men.

For members, compound households represent a tension between individual aims and activities and responsibility to the larger compound. This tension between independence and cooperation plays out for all members – male and female. Chalfin’s study also demonstrates well the differences and hierarchies among women, cautioning us to avoid lumping women into a single category. That said, women often cooperate in their work. Women will involve cooperative work groups known as *Nyoor Yinii*<sup>7</sup> when they work on their own private plots or when they work on compound farms. The groups work together in agricultural work, shea butter and dawadawa processing, as well as organizing funerals, wedding, dances, and other family and community events. Shea butter processing, from collection of the nuts to their processing into butter, involves considerable cooperative effort among women and across the generations.

The studies by Chalfin (2014) and Lasiter and Stawicki (2014) emphasize that most women want to carry out processing and trading, and particularly want to improve and increase these activities through better access to financial services. This was also stated in the FGDs and interviews of this study. However, that does not appear to align with the policy priorities or budget allocations for gender activities. Strengthening women’s off-farm activities and providing mechanisms to support these activities appears to have been sidelined for donor and national emphasis on ensuring land rights for women. It may also reflect perceptions highlighted in interviews at national level that women are not ‘business people’ or as ‘oriented towards the market’; women are perceived to be at the level of subsistence. The policy emphasis that separates land from other productive resources and the relations of production may not lead to equitable benefits for

<sup>7</sup> Nyoor Yinii literally means “same mouth”; that is “unity”.

FIGURE 2. FARMER MEMENATU SALEFU IN HER FIELD OF SOY BEAN, TIBALI VILLAGE, TAMALE, GHANA.



Source: Thor Windham-Wright

women, particularly given that the focus is on securing access to land that is characterized by poor soil fertility with added uncertainties around access to water for agriculture. Local priorities and issues do not focus exclusively on land tenure security, but rather on the combination of productive assets, of which only one is land.

## 5. GENDER NOTIONS AND PRIORITY ISSUES: BY MEN AND WOMEN, FROM CENTER TO PERIPHERY

### 5.1 Ideas about gender

“For many people in Ghana gender means women”. This statement was repeated many times by both men and

women from the national level to the community level in the course of this study. The responses by civil servants at the national, regional and district levels (mainly the Ministries of Food and Agriculture, Lands and Natural Resources, Local Government and Rural Development, Trade and Industry as well as Gender, Children and Social Protection) make it clear that the perception that gender concerns only women is widespread. Respondents believe both men and women have that perception. Most of the respondents at all the levels defined gender as often stated in the books; “social relations between men, women, boys and girls which is shaped through socialization and training”. There are variations, but this reflects the essence of most responses. This common response clearly gives an indication that many civil servants, at least at the director and

near director levels, have adopted the concept provide by donor-supported training.

The survey revealed a number of negative views about gender, as well. Most women personnel in the ministries are generally indifferent or barely welcome the idea of the integration of gender into policy, programs and projects; many women do not see gender inequality as a problem or if it is that there can be a solution to it. Men in equivalent positions in the ministries (civil servants, policy makers, implementers) are indifferent or even antagonistic. About 25% of the respondents at the national, regional and district levels indicated their belief that to some men gender is “about struggle between men and women” and to some women “it is about being equal with men”. Some of the respondents also claim males and females understand gender to be concerned with the

provision of support to women in terms of welfare, possibilities for economic and social empowerment, and the like. The men that tend to be antagonistic fear that women's empowerment will lead to their subjugation. Many however see gender mainstreaming as empowerment and support to women and thus has nothing to do with them as men. Others have come to a conclusion that gender is a slogan to obtain money from donors and suggest they are not committed to gender mainstreaming. Such negative perceptions about gender would need to be addressed if gender policy and mainstreaming is to be implemented effectively.

Sensitization on the concept at local level, especially by the MOFA and NGOs, may be changing perceptions. Some respondents that initially equated gender with women later talked about gender in terms of social and cultural roles ascribed to either sex and of the relations between men and women. It appears that gender sensitization programs have had an impact, at least in the form of discourse in the case study areas in Upper East Region.

Perceptions at district and sub-district level are also noteworthy when compared to the national level as the views there are much more focused on intra-household and productive gender relations. Women in six of the communities visited in Bawku West and Bongo Districts defined the concept of gender as "women being supported in domestic and livelihood activities by their male counterparts", while others explained gender as "women being part of the decision-making process in the home and the community as a whole". Some women in some of the communities, such as Adagbida in Bawku West District, and Dua-Tarongo and Sambulgu in Bongo District, however, expressed the view that they support the men on their farmlands, but when it comes to theirs the men do not see the point in supporting the women: "We support the men in their farming activities, we take care of the children and the home but when it comes to our farmlands, they do not help us and expect us to find money to take care of

the children and the home". Also with regards to household decision-making women, noted that very few husbands consult their wives, though said it is also true that only very few wives consult their husbands on many of their income-generating and trade activities.

Men in most of the communities said gender expresses "the importance of husbands and wives to support each other in all aspects of their endeavors". Others explained that "women work too much and the idea of gender is for men to help their wives to reduce their workload". Except for some men in the Atiabiisi community in the Bongo District, the men saw the gender messages as very helpful. In all communities, except Sapalgu in the Bawku West District and Atiabiisi in the Bongo District, men now "go to the kitchen to stir TZ (tuozafi)" when their women travel or go to markets and return late. This was unheard of in the past (before the gender sensitization exercises in the areas). The main reason given by men in the Sapalgu and Atiabiisi communities as why they cannot think of cooking when their wives are engaged in other activities is that "the kitchen is not for men".

The notions on gender differ from national and regional level to the local level. Further, even at local level, there are variations. Some communities have had very low contact with agricultural extension services and have had little or no exposure to gender sensitization activities. The differences with regards to awareness and acceptance of gender messages between communities (even in the same district) seem to be very high based on the level of exposure to extension messages on gender.

## 5.2 Perceptions of key gender issues

Gender awareness seems to be relatively high at all levels in Ghana, at least in the Upper East Region, despite the variations in notions and ideas about the meaning of gender. We asked respondents at various levels to identify what they felt were key gender issues in their contexts (departments, districts or communities). Table 4 provides a comparison of responses at multiple levels suggesting

alignment on some perceived issues and disconnect on others.

The list of gender issues at all levels provides the basis for a number of observations about levels of awareness and perceptions on the key gender issues. First, the responses generally underscore the reason most people associate gender with activities that only benefit women; the majority of the issues emphasize the status of women. That said, there appears to be great gender awareness and acceptance of change in rural communities in the Upper East Region. A number of the respondents at the national and regional levels felt that the Upper East Region should not be regarded as typical of Ghana. As indicated earlier, the LACOSREP and DISCAP, as well as several other projects run by NGOs have promoted awareness and acceptance of gender-related messages in the Upper East Region. From our randomly selected communities only two out of the eight communities (25%) did not have much gender awareness. Even in those two communities, several individual men and women showed significant gender knowledge through their interaction with people from other communities. Generally then, interview results provide some evidence that well-structured and well-implemented gender sensitization programs can have significant impact on perceptions.

Second, donors have emphasized the collection of gender disaggregated data, but officials have found the data of little use given the lack of capacity for accompanying analysis. As a respondent in WIAD stated, "Our biggest problem is lack of gender analysis"; there is little in-depth accompanying qualitative work that is carried out that can help explain the significance and reasons behind the patterns in gender disaggregated data. This observation points to a larger issue that emerged during discussions and interviews. Interactions with district implementers of gender related policies and programs, particularly gender desks and agricultural extension officers, clearly indicate that only a few staff members (mainly female) understand the gender-related policies and activities. Most

TABLE 4. PERCEPTIONS ON KEY GENDER ISSUES AT DIFFERENT LEVELS.

NATIONAL LEVEL (SPECIFIC TO WORK WITHIN MDAS)	NATIONAL AND REGIONAL	UPPER EAST REGION	DISTRICT LEVEL	BAWKU WEST AND BONGO DISTRICTS
Imbalance in career progression			Gender wage gap	
Gender discrimination			Gender discrimination	Gender discrimination
Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment			
Lack of gender based budgeting	Inadequate gender mainstreaming in policies and programs		Lack of strong policies to address gender issues; Inadequate support for the vulnerable and disadvantaged people – women, children and the aged.	
Very low training of women in technical areas	High illiteracy rates in rural areas and especially of women	High illiteracy rate of women as compared to men	Access to equal education by both sexes; Girl child education	Girl child education
	Harmful cultural practices that affect mostly women; Patriarchy and male dominated culture;	Prohibitive dowry system in some areas	Cultural barriers	
	Very low access and control of productive resources such as land, credit, labour by women; Inheritance and ownership of land for agricultural purposes	Lack of control over productive resources by women	Lack of access for women to and control of certain productive resources, such as land and cattle	Women access and control of farm lands; Access to productive/ fertile lands by women
				Inadequate resources for women to expand their businesses; Access to financial assistance from banks to support agricultural production
			Same sex marriage debate	Talk of homosexuality and same sex marriages
	Stereotyping of women			
	Low participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels	Low representation of women in local level governance; Low women empowerment	Women's rights	Female leadership; Women rights
				The feeling among people that when women are rich they do not respect their husbands
				Teenage pregnancy
				Migration of youth to the south
				Housing for small ruminants
Low capacity for staff to integrate gender into their work				
Unavailability of gender disaggregated data and information				
Inability to generate gender sensitive reports through gender analysis.				

agricultural and other extension workers seem to have very little understanding of the issues at stake. Some male extension workers are even antagonistic to gender mainstreaming.

Third, most public officials state that considerable work has been done in sensitization on gender, but that does not often translate to tangible activities at community level, particularly as competition for limited financial resources is great. Gender desk officers have been established in districts in the north, but they have little power or resources with which to carry out programs. Within the District Assemblies, 30% of the assembly persons are appointees and few are women. Women will only be appointed to these seats if there is the 'political will' to push for this as it is not a requirement.

Fourth, the notion that gender equity means taking power away from men also arose in interviews. Most informants agreed that this activist stance alienates many people, men in particular. However, if women are to gain more power, the reality of it potentially threatening men's positions is not discussed much. At Atiabiisi in the Bongo District, men brought it up as an issue. They mentioned the threat to marriages. Also, the men in Sapalgu in the Bawku West District were very much against the way domestic violence matters are handled following changes in national policy. They suggested that local means of resolving acts of domestic violence should always be pursued, and claimed the intervention of police and the courts in family matters worsens domestic violence and has the potential to destroy families.

Finally, at the national level, our respondent at NBSSI indicated some challenges to gender equity specific to small-scale businesses which have wide implications. Most importantly, there is a perception that women are oriented only towards subsistence production and concerns, not as contributors to the national economy, and they are not perceived as business people. This perception is particularly interesting in a country famed for its strong market women. She also indicated that men

find it easier to engage in business and income-earning opportunities outside of the farm because they have wider social networks that link them to opportunities. She noted that technology is also a gendered issue: that women think that machines are male resources and require male capabilities. These biases may contribute to her final point, which added that, in terms of financial products for women, there is a huge gap, a middle layer between microfinance aimed at microenterprises and the loans available through central and national level banks. Women tend to stick to microfinance because they lack the confidence to apply to bigger banks with their onerous documentation requirements and fear the obligations of the formal credit institutions. Banks rarely aim their services at illiterate, small-scale business women. Perhaps the perception highlighted by our informant in NBSSI that women are oriented towards subsistence and not business discourages lending of sufficient sums to women; very few organizations are currently filling that gap. This study could not assess the extent to which these perceptions have informed existing public policy on gender, but the potential certainly exists that such biases could have significant influence on how gender policy, programs and projects are designed.

The key issues raised at national level reflected only minimal emphasis on agricultural and natural resource management. Not surprisingly, the prioritization of agricultural and NRM issues was higher at district and local level. Most community members in both Bawku West and Bongo identified key issues related to deteriorating soil fertility of their lands and the impact on livelihoods generally and on women and children in particular. Men and some women initially stated that they did not think women's access to and control of land for agricultural purposes is a serious problem, because some men claimed that "these days almost all [husband's] farm lands are available to wives to farm". All men and women however conceded during the group discussions that women's 'ownership'

and inheritance of land is a problem. Some men stated that a problem would not arise if the family or community sense of 'ownership' was well understood, because the land 'belongs to the whole family or clan' and individual freehold ownership of agricultural land does not exist in reality.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This project attempted to understand the linkages and differences regarding gender across national, regional, district and community levels. It focused primarily on an analysis of ideas about gender, perceptions on key gender issues, and national policy and implementation. The findings suggest that sensitization programs on gender have had some success at all levels in terms of raising awareness. However, it also revealed that adopting narratives

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**“ The repeated failure to design and appropriately target policies and interventions which address the needs of rural peoples in Africa suggest that something may be wrong with our understanding of the way that these peoples live their lives (Warner et al, 1997:143). ”**

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around gender and gender equity into policy and even programs does not necessarily lead to implemented projects and activities that increase women's access to resources, control over assets or greater participation and influence in public and political life. A major obstacle for implementation is lack of funding, which is part of the overall constraints on institutional capacity among implementing bodies. In some cases, donor funds earmarked for more direct support for district level implementation on gender and agriculture have enabled the implementation of plans. Even in such cases there is much that can be done and better understood with regards to gender and attaining gender equity through implementing policies in northern Ghana.

In addition, this study complements previous studies, albeit limited, on the Upper East Region. Women at sub-district level have expressed that access to financial services and low-interest credit is of significant interest to them to support both on-farm and off-farm natural resource based productive activities. However, issues emphasized in national policy, such as domestic violence and female genital mutilation, often did not rank highly on women's lists for what they needed support in (see also Lassiter and Stawicki 2014). Notably, national policies, seemingly influenced by donors, are pushing for greater land ownership by women. This is an issue perceived as important by women and men at all levels, but the policy tends to isolate access to land from the other productive inputs that women also find as critical, including finance. Some efforts are being made to increase women's access to financial services, such as the IFAD supported Northern Rural Growth Program, but this is not a priority issue and therefore faces numerous obstacles, from negative perceptions at national level about illiterate women relying on subsistence level farming to lack of budget. Greater alignment between national priorities and those at sub-district and district level is urgently needed.

In any case, this study was unable to conclude that achieving the goal of securing land titles for women will actually help achieve more equitable incomes and improved well-being. The poor conditions of soils, low access to water and the high risk of agriculture are clear constraints to enabling women to achieve their aspirations. Given the importance of natural resources products, in the form of shea, dawadawa, and grasses for handicrafts, perhaps greater attention should be made to how to improve processing and reducing labor inputs for women. A more thorough understanding of the multiple income-generating activities that women are involved in is important for assessing entry points for improvements so that greater income can be made, while not increasing the labour requirements of women.

Women utilize natural resources, both on- and off-farm, for household food security, and as such, policy should consider ways to support and ensure the sustainability of the spectrum of income activities. For example, assisting rural women in the Upper East Region to benefit more from the global value chain in shea.

The study also found that policy and associated strategies and regulations do not consider how women organize

productive activities. Women are already organized into cooperative labour groups for many purposes. Some women have formed official Farmer Based Organizations (FBO) to capitalize on NGO and government support (see also Lassiter and Stawicki, 2014), but no support is available to indigenous women's groups, such as Nyoor Yinii. Improved alignment between ideas about gender at different levels may influence policies and programs to support women according to existing and emerging organizations for production.

It is very clear from the study that women make use of numerous resources and many avenues for earning income that go way beyond subsistence at compound or individual farms. Understanding this wide network of activity, and what products produce the biggest and most equitable gains, is critical. Otherwise, there is a risk that policy interventions designed at national level target issues and resources in which women have less interest or which ultimately may provide less equitable and less stable income. And finally, understanding women's networks of resource use across the landscape alongside that of men must be done to understand the dynamics between the two and how they provide opportunities and also constraints.



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### About WLE

The CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE) combines the resources of 11 CGIAR centers, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and numerous national, regional and international partners to provide an integrated approach to natural resource management research. WLE promotes a new approach to sustainable intensification in which a healthy functioning ecosystem is seen as a prerequisite to agricultural development, resilience of food systems and well-being. This program is led by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), a member of the CGIAR Consortium, and is supported by CGIAR, a global research partnership for a food-secure future.

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The **WLE Research for Development (R4D) Learning Series** is one of the main publication channels of the program. Papers within the series present new thinking, ideas and perspectives from WLE research with a focus on the implications for development and research into use. Papers are based on finalized research or emerging research results. In both instances, papers are peer-reviewed and findings are based on sound scientific evidence and data, though these might be incomplete at the time of publication.

The series features findings from WLE research that emphasizes a healthy functioning ecosystem as being a prerequisite to sustainable intensification, resilience of food systems and human well-being. The series brings together multi-disciplinary research, global synthesis and findings that have implications for development practitioners and decision makers at various levels.

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ISBN 978-92-9090-815-9

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