

# Case study

## ***A SEED is planted: Innovating for gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture***

### **The CASE of the Sustainable and Effective Economic Development (SEED) Project, Mozambique**

This case study explores CARE's Sustainable and Effective Economic Development (SEED) project in Inhambane Province, Mozambique from the perspective of gender equality and women's empowerment. In particular, the case study focuses on some of the key project design features and implementation approaches which establish a basis from which SEED can monitor progress and measure the impacts on women's lives. It also highlights one of the key tools SEED has applied for working with women and men on intra-household decision-making around income sources and expenditures -- the *Income Expenditure Tree*. Finally, the case study reflects on SEED's practices using the *Women's Empowerment in Agriculture (WEA) Framework*.

#### **About the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture (WEA) Framework**

The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture (WEA) Framework is adapted from the Women's Empowerment Framework developed and applied under CARE's Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII). *A Place to Grow* provides one of the first opportunities to adapt the SII framework for use in a specific sector -- in this case, agriculture and natural resources.

The WEA Framework incorporates five levers of change that the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)<sup>1</sup> and CARE identified as necessary for promoting women's empowerment in agricultural strategies. These include:

- Gender equitable land, property, and contractual rights;
- Gender equitable division of labor/time poverty;
- Gender equitable control over labor and product of labor;
- Gender equitable access to and control of water, and;
- Attention to gender equality by institutional systems

Each of these can be explored through the lens of **agency** (women's capacities as individuals to take action), **relations** (building relationships, coalitions and mutual support to expand agency and alter structures) and **structure** (social norms and institutions that codify and reinforce gender relations at every level of society) which were used in the Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII) framework and adopted by the WEA Framework. If CARE is to have any meaningful impact upon women and girls in the context of agriculture, then it should be working across these three domains and their sub-dimensions to activate these (and possibly other) levers of change as shown in the example below.

<sup>1</sup> The levers of change have been modified throughout *A Place to Grow* and will continue to be refined as lessons emerge to inform the conceptual thinking.

#### **Example: Activating the levers of change for gender equitable land and property rights**



#### **Sowing the seeds for impact: Design**

*"We won't achieve our objective if we don't address gender and HIV and AIDS."* (SEED's Project Manager).

SEED was established with the aim of reducing poverty and vulnerability by increasing participants' income and negotiating power. It resolved to promote commercial farming and off farm income-generating opportunities – and recognized the need to address gender equality and HIV and AIDS to do so. Women's empowerment and gender equality were addressed in SEED's design and early implementation, and included provisions for staff support to address gender equality and HIV and AIDS.

The table below indicates the different features which were included in SEED's design or early implementation. These help establish a foundation from which the project can demonstrate – *or not* – its impacts on women. Alone, these features cannot guarantee demonstrable impact. However, when coupled with committed, capacitated management, staff and partners (female and male); strong alliances with other programs and organizations; innovative approaches and tools; and long-term commitment with communities, there is a greater possibility of demonstrating and measuring gender equality and women's empowerment impacts.

Presence of key design features addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in SEED		
1.	Goal or objective focused on gender equality, women's empowerment	✗
2.	Gender-sensitive indicators	✓
3.	Specific gender and/or power analysis undertaken (e.g. in baseline, appreciative inquiry, gender analysis, etc.)	✓
4.	Target beneficiaries disaggregated by sex	✓
Additional features included in SEED design/early implementation		
5.	Female staff	✓
6.	Widening alliances with other programs, organizations focused on women's empowerment, gender equality	✓
7.	Gender-sensitive approaches/tools used	✓
8.	Timeframe	2006 – 2012

## Targeting and analysing vulnerabilities

SEED's goal is not specifically gender-focused. Rather, it focuses more generally on increasing poor households' access to, and control over, a diversified portfolio of farm and non-farm income-generating activities that operate on commercially- and environmentally sustainable terms in Northern Inhambane Province.

However, to better understand and respond to the different needs of different households (and individuals therein), the project undertook a detailed baseline study, from which the information could be used as a benchmark for monitoring changes in conditions over the life of the project (specifically through follow-up surveys in years 2, 4, and 7). The baseline survey broke down the target populations by different types of households as follows:

### SEED's baseline survey and target groups

- Female-headed households, who are identified in two ways:
  - households in which the respondents identify women as the household head, and;
  - households in which the husband is declared to be away from home for more than six months in a year. It is assumed that if the husband is away for six months or more, the wife has effective responsibility for managing household affairs.
- Households living with HIV and AIDS are also identified in the following ways:
  - households with orphans (recoded as "not related" or "other relative" in relation to household head) 0 – 14 years of age, and;
  - households with at least one member identified as being "chronically ill" (unable to work);
  - households where there was a death in the family in the last year of a chronic illness.

Source: Langworthy, Mark. *Baseline survey report*, April, 2007.

The project recognized the importance of identifying realistic and relevant entry points around which to plan activities specifically targeting women or seeking to redress imbalances between men and women. For that reason, in November 2007, SEED undertook a brief assessment of "gender challenges" in the field.

The assessment informed the development of a strategy, action plan, and training plan to address gender equality in the project. It included a documentation review; visits to three SEED districts (Mabote, Govuro and Vilankulos) to conduct semi-structured interviews with SEED extension staff, beneficiaries, counterpart representatives of local government, women's income-generating groups and other community associations. Senior extension staff were also interviewed.

The assessment of the gender equality and women's empowerment concerns under SEED was broad in coverage – considering issues from staff and partner capacity to intra-household decision-making to marketing and land tenure security issues.

## A focused gender equality strategy

Following on the findings of the gender assessment, and recognizing that social change takes time; SEED opted to adopt two main strategies to address gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the life of the project. These are:

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

To put the two strategies into effect, SEED set out to engage in the following actions:

### Putting SEED's gender strategies into motion: Specific actions

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

A 2008 Annual Report for the project expected the following results from engaging in this strategy:

- At least 60% of project participants are women.
- Women have greater influence in household decision making for the benefit of the family.
- Increased participation of women in group activities and decision making.

By the time the review for *A Place to Grow* was undertaken, SEED had introduced livestock services for women and

Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) to provide (economic and social) opportunities to women. Moreover, it had also set out to ensure that gender equality and HIV issues were addressed in all training materials and trained paravets in gender equality and HIV issues. It also adapted the *Income Expenditure Tree* tool (see below) to explore and monitor change in intra-household decision-making – particularly around income sources and expenditures.

SEED worked from the premise that VSLAs can provide households with an opportunity to manage their household economy more efficiently and reduce their vulnerability. The VSLA component supports men and women to save their income (with interest of approximately 20%), access small loans, and participate in a micro insurance fund. It supports investment in income generating activities such as commercial agriculture and livestock keeping or small-scale trade.

### Towards impact measurement: SEED's gender-sensitive indicators

SEED's updated Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) from March 2008 includes a number of indicators that are "gender-sensitive"; in other words they are indicators that can help measure the (potentially) different experiences of men and women over the life of the project.

As noted above, SEED adopted a strategy of focusing on two areas – women's participation and intra-household decision-making. The project recognized that social change takes time and opted to engage in areas where staff felt most competent and confident to make change. The indicators included in the LFA and reiterated here reflect the focus on participation. However, monitoring changes in intra-household decision-making patterns and income expenditure are monitored through the use of a tool, the *Income Expenditure Tree*, as discussed further on.

#### SEED's gender sensitive indicators

- Number of men and women who enter into formal contracts year after year.
- Number of men and women reached by training workshops and project BDS visits.
- % of men and women trained who have introduced one or more of the concepts promoted by the project (e.g. costs of production, gross margin/profit, opportunity cost, forward contracts, professional production methods, contracts, etc)
- Number of participants (men and women) reached by training workshops and project BDS visits.
- Number of strategic links and collaboration agreements to and with other organizations (private partner, other CBO's, research, etc.) that allow men and women to improve market position, access information and strengthen negotiating power.
- Number of men and women participating (in savings and credit schemes

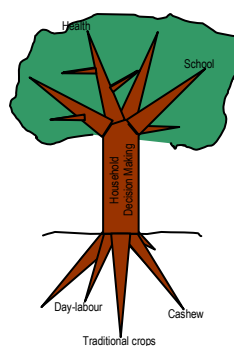
Source: Updated Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) (March 2008)

Notably, the Annual Progress Report April 2007 – March 2008 indicated that a web-based database had been developed and running. With further refinements, it was expected to be used for more effective reporting. The database was to hold participants' information. It was expected that information from the Income Expenditure Tree exercises would be included in the ongoing monitoring.

### Innovative tools and approaches

As noted, SEED has focused on two key gender equality and women's empowerment strategies: one that creates increased economic opportunities for women and the other which seeks to ensure project benefits accrue to all household members through fair decision-making.

To establish a baseline, SEED undertook a survey in project communities. The project also introduced the use of a participatory tool, the *Income Expenditure Tree (IET)*, to work with men and women on income sources and expenditure.



Project facilitators worked with individuals in households on decision-making dynamics and had participants design a tree using cardboard pieces. They then used drawings to depict the roots, leaves, stems, father, mother, food, children, money, etc. The roots and branches symbolized the household income streams and expenditure respectively while the tree trunk depicted

household decision-making.

The tool was introduced to help establish a baseline and for annual monitoring purposes. The IET can be used to track progress in relation to women's and men's income generation and expenditure patterns. In so doing, it also acts as a useful tool for exploring and discussing intra-household decision-making dynamics with men and women. As the tool is a "visual" and interactive tool, it is also useful for men and women who are illiterate.

Other innovative approaches employed by SEED include "family theater,"<sup>2</sup> music, and trade fairs. These have also been used as platforms for men and women to discuss gender equality and HIV and AIDS issues. Music has proven an effective tool both in communities and at trade fairs for broadcasting ideas and perspectives on these issues as well. Finally, SEED's trade fairs not only provide opportunities for men and women to market their goods, but also to engage with other communities and visitors. They have also provided opportunities to widen outreach on issues related to gender equality and HIV and AIDS.

<sup>2</sup> Family theatre is an extension of the Income Expenditure Tree and is used to explore different family scenarios with project participants, specifically joint decision-making.

## Committing to capacity

Project management has demonstrated commitment to ensuring that gender equality and HIV and AIDS issues are addressed during the implementation of the project and have taken measures to strengthen staff and partner capacity were supported in this area.

At the time the in-country review was undertaken in Mozambique, SEED had a staff member and a Peace Corp Volunteer supporting staff, partners, and communities to address gender equality and HIV and AIDS issues.<sup>3</sup> This included developing training materials and facilitating training as well as facilitating community theatre and discussions.

## Leveraging change the SEED way

This case study has explored some of the different avenues undertaken by SEED in its efforts to address, both comprehensively and sincerely, the problems of gender inequality and unequal power relations that exist in the communities and organizations with whom the project works.

SEED has sought to build up women's *agency* – for instance through strengthening their capacity and self-esteem in their role as farmers, livestock-keepers, and marketers (among others). SEED has also made efforts to address the unequal *relations* existing in households, communities, and between women and the wider trading environment. Moreover, SEED continues to address *some* of the *structural* barriers to women in the context of agriculture through supporting strategies that promote: i.) equitable access to agricultural work, credit, and inputs, and the benefits accruing from these, and; ii.) women's participation in formal and informal decision-making bodies.

The in-depth country review undertaken elsewhere in Ghana under *A Place to Grow* pointed to the need for a more holistic approach to agricultural programs and projects – one that incorporates not only the five “tangible” levers included in the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Framework (see page 1), but also additional levers which are perhaps even more important (see table this page). While these additional levers are, in fact, applicable across all sectors, they are particularly meaningful in the context of agriculture given the cyclical nature of the sector's activities and the need for long-term commitment to bring about meaningful results. These additional levers are useful global indicators for CARE's agriculture portfolio to apply in determining whether organizational and programming environments are indeed leading the way to improve the lives of women in the context of agriculture.

Through design and implementation, SEED has demonstrated a number of effective approaches. As the project is just over mid-way through implementation, it is early to tell if – and what – kinds of impacts it has made in relation to women's empowerment and gender equality. However, SEED has begun to effect change in the way men and women interact,

<sup>3</sup> SEED is currently considering bringing a gender specialist on board to train staff as the mainstreaming staff has changed completely in the past year.

in the opportunities available to women, and in women's self-confidence in their abilities as producers and marketing agents. More importantly, it has established a solid foundation upon which impact can be measured.

Levers of change addressed by SEED	
• Gender equitable land, property, and contractual rights	✓
• Gender equitable division of labor/time poverty;	✓
• Gender equitable control over labor and product of labor	✓
• Gender equitable access to and control of water	
• Attention to gender equality by institutional systems	✓
Additional levers of change needed by agricultural initiatives and addressed by SEED	
• Management, staff internalization/ prioritization/ translation into action of gender equality and women's empowerment	✓
• Agriculture programming retooled to prioritize gender goals and objectives	
• Donor/organizational commitment to longer period of engagement with communities	7 yrs.
• Indicators of women's empowerment in the context of agriculture developed by women themselves (Income Expenditure Tree does this to some extent)	✓
• Men's involvement in the process of women's empowerment (at different levels)	✓
• Ongoing and long-term dialogue and analysis on power dynamics and gender inequality with women and men in communities and with partners.	✓

## About A Place to Grow

CARE has implemented a number of innovative, cutting-edge agriculture and natural resource management programs. It has also made gender equality a primary consideration in its overall strategy. However, to date CARE has not deliberately made gender equality a significant strategic focus in its agriculture portfolio. Subsequently, it may have missed critical opportunities to accord women equal rights to development.

To redress this situation, CARE has undertaken a review of its agriculture portfolio under a project called *A Place to Grow*. It has set out to assess how it is addressing and impacting women's empowerment and gender equality in the context of agriculture. This means exploring the different strategies employed across the agriculture portfolio. It also includes exploring the strategic programmatic shifts and policy advocacy messages needed to provide the greatest benefit to women and girls engaged in, and impacted by, agricultural livelihoods.

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