

ADVANCE II

Reducing gender gaps in agriculture– a story from ADVANCE Ghana

Background

ADVANCE is a five year project, funded by USAID/Feed the Future and implemented by a consortium led by ACDI/VOCA, with Technoserve, PAB Consult and ACDEP as the partners. The project's main goal is to increase the competitiveness of the maize, rice and soya value chains in Ghana, more specifically in the Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Ashanti, and Brong Ahafo regions. ADVANCE achieves this through boosting the agricultural productivity of the three commodities, improving the value chain actors' access to market and finance, and strengthening local capacities.

Gender strategy

The project will reach over 113,000 smallholder farmers by end of 2018, out of them 40% will be women. At the end of 2015, since the beginning of the project, a total of 70,238 smallholders benefitted from the project, 30,510 of them (or 43.44%) were women. To impact women farmers' lives and mainstream gender equity in the targeted communities, ADVANCE designed and implements a gender strategy. The related activities in FY14 and FY15 evolved around the key points below:

- *Actively engage women in capacity building:* This includes among others making sure that the women can attend and benefit from the trainings through gender appropriate materials (more pictorial given their low literacy level) and training settings (sometimes with husbands), times, frequency and duration (in the afternoon or after serving dinner where they have more free time, for not more than two hours), in local languages etc.
- *Recognize relevant technology:* Technologies that meet women's needs and preferences, and are time saving, less physically demanding, and affordable will be the ones promoted towards women farmers through trainings and demonstrations
- *Build women's leadership capacities* through training, mentorship, awareness campaign, and networking
- *Improve women's literacy and numeracy skills* through specific trainings
- *Facilitate women's access to land* through advocacy activities, sensitization, and linkage development with outgrower businesses
- *Increase women's access to agriculture inputs* through community input promotion and Village and Savings Loans Associations (VSLAs) formation to save for inputs acquisition during crop season

As of end 2015, the project was able to train over 20,000 women in good agricultural practices, farming as a business, sell more for more, post-harvest handling, leadership, literacy and numeracy, business management and the like. The targeted number of women training beneficiaries for the whole life of project is 36,000.

Purpose

This note summarizes the extent to which the project was able to reduce the gender gap by increasing women’s yields through the above mentioned activities.

Methodology

ADVANCE conducts every year a survey to estimate beneficiaries’ yields from a representative sample, through crop cut procedures. In addition, the projected collected in 2015 data on women’s ownership and uses of assets, resources and income, as well as decision making processes in the households from a representative sample of its FY15 beneficiaries, which included 1,592 women planting maize, rice and soya. Data was analyzed and statistical tests were conducted to assess relationships and their significance between the support provided and women’s yields.

Findings

Analysis of the 2014 and 2015 yields showed that men farmers always obtained higher yields, across crops. However, as seen in **Table 1** below, women’s yields increases were much higher than the men’s, especially in maize and soy.

Table 1: Yields values and changes in 2014 and 2015

	Maize		Rice		Soy	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
2015 yield (MT/ha)	3.65	3.73	3.81	4.07	1.8	1.86
2014 yield (MT/ha)	3.18	3.58	2.82	3.04	1.49	1.65
% increase	14.65%	4.14%	35.28%	33.95%	20.42%	12.57%

To ascertain whether the project’s gender strategies contributed in those significant changes, further analysis and tests were conducted. Data on the 2015 crop season indicated that the women who attended the good agricultural practices (GAPs) trainings were more likely to use improved seeds (chi-square test p-value of 9.99797E-72): 50.8% of the female farmers who attended the GAPs training used improved seeds while this percentage is only at 42.9% for those who didn’t attend.

Further analysis showed that use of improved seeds significantly influenced yields (t-test p-value 3.60861E-08). The women who used improved seeds had their yield 21.23% higher than those who didn’t in average. This implies that those who attended GAPs trainings, were more likely able to get higher yields as they were more likely to use improved seeds. This assumption has been confirmed by a t-test on the relationship between GAPs training attendance and yields that was found significant (p-value of 7.91841E-05). The women who attended had over 20.43% higher yields in average. Many other factors were tested (ownership and use of assets, inputs into decisions, attendance to other trainings etc.), but no relationship was found as significant. However, further analysis are being carried out.

Lessons

These findings imply that to increase women’s yields, the key activity



With ADVANCE’s support, Margaret Tabla increased her maize yield from 0.3 MT/acre to 1.04 MT/acre, earning her an income of \$1,330USD

would be training them on GAPs. Any other type of assistance has to be accompanied by GAPs to get better impacts, in the case of ADVANCE. It is also fairly assumed that the GAPs trainings so far are effective and are properly reaching the women farmers. The project implements those through demonstration sites. Inputs providers sponsor the setting up of these sites through donation of all the needed inputs. The demo sites represent a marketing opportunity for those companies, allowing them to expand their customer base and sell more products. Through the established relationships between them and the farmers, the project increases women's access to improved inputs, which would have been difficult to them otherwise. This fits into ADVANCE's sustainability strategy, as that relationship is likely to remain, even after the project ends. Implemented corollary activities helping the beneficiaries to apply the GAPs knowledge are the formation of VSLAs by the project so that the women can finance the inputs purchase, and provision of women friendly tools and equipment through small grants programs.