

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) ABOUT CENSUDI'S MISSION TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES BY EMPOWERING WOMEN

1. What does CENSUDI mean by “empowering women”?

“Empowering women” entails all the processes that we use to increase women's ability to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. CENSUDI’s programs and activities aim to enable women and girls to take more control over their lives, both individually and collectively, through improved access to resources, opportunities, and the decision-making power they need to thrive and achieve their full potential.

2. Why does CENSUDI believe that communities are strengthened when women are empowered?

Women and girls comprise at least 50% of the population in many communities. Additionally, the traditional gender roles assigned to women while evolving remain largely in caregiving and nurturing, homemaking and household management, educators and cultural keepers as well as providing support to men. So, when women have access to resources such as education, healthcare, economic opportunities and legal protections, they do lift themselves out of poverty as well as improve the welfare of their families, effectively multiplying benefit impact and contributing to overall sustainable community development for up to 65% of the populations of their communities.

3. What are some focal areas of CENSUDI’s empowerment activities?

- 3.1. **Social Empowerment:** We address social norms and practices that restrict women's opportunities and deny their rights and well-being.
- 3.2. **Political Empowerment:** We encourage and facilitate women's participation in political processes, decision-making, and leadership roles.

- 3.3. **Health Empowerment:** We ensure that women have access to quality healthcare, reproductive health services, and are free from violence and discrimination.
- 3.4. **Economic Empowerment:** We provide women with access to financial resources, education, small business management tools, new product ideas for their artisanal good. We also facilitate access to international markets for their handicrafts all of which are geared towards improving their economic standing and independence

CENSUDI strives to target at least a quarter (25%) of our programs towards men and boys.

4. Why does CENSUDI engage men and boys in activities meant to empower women?

Men and women comprise the populations of all communities. Women's empowerment is therefore not just a "women's issue" but a societal imperative that affects everyone, impacting families, communities, businesses, economies, and social structures. This is why CENSUDI believes strongly that including men in women's empowerment initiatives is crucial to achieving sustainable community development and creating a more equitable society. Additionally, we involve men because:

4.1 Men are influential

Men often hold positions of power and influence in families, households, businesses, communities and governments. Their active support and advocacy can and has significantly accelerated progress towards giving women access, control and voice. Engaging men, particularly in areas where they have a greater say is essential for improving women's access to resources and decision-making power. It is gratifying to report that some of this kind of strategic and necessary male engagement in our activities, resulted in many male heads of households/leaders in some CENSUDI partner communities willingly sharing compound fertile land with their female partners and documenting this for posterity in land leases/ inheritance documents. Additionally, some chiefs nominated capable women to stand in District Assembly Elections in safe electoral areas ensuring their victory!

4.2 Challenging harmful norms and stereotypes

Traditional gender norms and stereotypes limit opportunities and perpetuate inequalities for both men and women. Men can and have contributed immensely to the success of our activities by challenging these norms, both within themselves and in society. Our informed and sensitized men are promoting healthier models of masculinity, based on equity, respect, and empathy. Over 50% of the communities that CENSUDI partners in the Upper East Region of Ghana now have Community Based Anti-Violence Teams (COMBATS) who oversee and litigate domestic violence matters. Over 60% of violence cases are successfully resolved by COMBATS and nearly 80% of violence cases are initially reported to these COMBATS and not external agencies. The Police and Social Welfare Departments report great progress in enforcement when they involve men.

4.3 Creating positive change

Over 60% of the men and boys who have participated in and benefitted from our women's empowerment activities are now active allies and advocates for women's empowerment. They challenge discrimination, advocate for women's access to and control resources, health, employment and leadership opportunities.

4.4 Creating healthier, enduring relationships and partnerships

By taking responsibility for change and questioning power dynamics, the men we involve have become better spouses, partners and parents. They have built deeper emotional connections with their spouses and children by being responsible parents, sharing some caregiving responsibilities, household roles equitably with their female partners as well as their resources (particularly land). Our sensitized and empowered men are leading the charge to prevent violence against women in their communities and to eliminate discriminatory practices and policies.