

**CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES
(CENSUDI)**

**COMMUNITY DRIVEN GENDER
ADVOCACY PROJECT (CODRIGAP)**

FIRST QUARTER REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Community Driven Gender Advocacy Project (CODRIGAP) is one of the projects under implementation by the Centre for Sustainable Development Initiatives (CENSUDI). It is currently being implemented in twenty (20) communities in the Bolgatanga Municipality and Talensi-Nabdam District in consonance with its plans to cover forty (40) communities over a six- year period. To enhance sustainability and ownership of the project the youth, especially females, have been encouraged to actively participate and involve in the implementation process. Communities have also been facilitated to document their resolutions against the Traditional Policies and Practices that Discriminate against Women (TRAPPDAW) in the form of Byelaws. These byelaws will be enforced by the chiefs and elders of the communities in collaboration with the Assemblies.

Notwithstanding some difficult implementation issues encountered, there have been some modest records of achievements during this period of reporting (January to March 2009). Much of the project activities were carried out in an integrative/collaborative manner with other project units. Collaboration started with the Educating for Change project. The ultimate goal of CODRIGAP is to contribute to the sustainable visible enhancement of the socio-economic growth of women (relative to men) in poor rural households in the Upper East Region.

2009 First Quarter Objectives

- Develop Annual work plans and budgets
- Reduction and elimination of traditional policies and practices that discriminate against women (TRAPPDAW)
- Enhance the participation of female youth in decision-making
- Monitor the progress of the project and the way forward

METHODOLOGY

Field activities were very participatory, involving interaction between project staff, community members and other partners. Input, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and brainstorming were the methods employed in facilitating the execution of activities within the period. In some instances, discussions and trend analysis were used during community sessions to evaluate, assess and monitor the progress of the project.

PROCESSES AND ACTIVITIES

Develop annual work plans and budgets

A three-day annual review and planning workshop was organised in January 2009 (15th -17th) for CENSUDI programme staff and community facilitating team (CFT) members of some selected communities. The Farmer Training Centre at Pusu-Namogo in the Tanlensi-Nabdam District was the workshop venue. All CENSUDI's programmes and project activities for the year 2008 were reviewed and

strategic plans drawn for 2009 fiscal year and beyond. The meeting therefore created an opportunity for CODRIGAP plans and activities for 2008 to be reviewed and new targets set for this year.

The review brought to light some key challenges of the project that bothered on implementation. These include among others:

- Low staff strength to effectively handle project implementation
- Inadequate commitment from some beneficiary communities. This was a major challenge in the rainy season as most of the community members were often engaged in farm activities.
- Delay in submission of report: Coupled with persistent electrical fault which results in frequent power off within the block, delay in submission of reports was partly caused by frequent infestation of the office computer by viruses
- Intangible nature of CODRIGAP: CODRIGAP as an advocacy and intangible project takes relatively longer time for its benefits to be realised and most community members do not appreciate this due to the existing poverty condition.

These challenges made it impossible for all activities planned for 2008 to be executed. This is the main reason why implementation in the second batch of communities delayed.

The strengths, opportunities, threats and weaknesses of the CODRIGA project were also analysed with inputs from other programme staff and CFTs. At Spiritual Renewal Centre, Kongo these inputs and contributions were further fine-tuned into strategic plans with the aim of achieving the 2009 targets and plans (Appendix I). A comprehensive annual budget was also drawn for all activities planned for the year.

Reduction and elimination of traditional policies and practices that discriminate against women (TRAPPDAW)

a. Development of Byelaws

In a bid to reduce and/or eliminate some of the traditional policies and practices that discriminate against women, three (3) communities (Nyogbare, Nyorkukor and Kantia) have already developed and signed some byelaws (or resolutions) regarding the practicing of some traditional and socio-cultural practices devoid of humiliation and discrimination against the female folk. These resolutions centre on traditional policies and practices such as widowhood rites, marriage and courtship rites, funeral performances, gender roles and education, and inheritance. In this quarter, five communities from the first batch (Azeamabisi, Kpgraboug, Shia, Yikene and Tindomolgo) have been facilitated (from 24th February to 2nd March, 2009) to develop draft community byelaws (or resolutions) on these traditional policies and practices. These draft resolutions are yet to be finalized and documented.

b. Signing of MoU and Retrieval of CFT Lists

The first commitment of beneficiary communities to the acceptance of the project is selection of community facilitating team members and signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with CENSUDI. Community entry was therefore done in ten (10) communities last year where the project was

introduced to the chiefs and people. A draft MoU was given to the community leaders of which to study and make inputs before signing. They were also asked to select five (5) active and vocal male and female community members (3 female and 2 male) to form community facilitating teams (CFTs) who will serve as link between the communities and CENSUDI.

A follow-up field activity was carried out in the ten (10) communities from 3rd to 5th March 2009 and this led to the retrieval of the lists of CFTs and signing of the MoU with them. Five (5) communities (Gaare, Pelungu, Dasabligo, Datuku in the Talensi-Nabdam District, Kalbeo and Nyokoko in the Bolgatanga Municipality) have so far signed the MoU and their CFT Lists retrieved and compiled. Yorogo community in the Bolgatanga Municipality is yet to select their CFT members and sign the MoU, but Dulugu and Nyanriga-Doone communities (both in the Bolgatanga Municipality) as well as Tongo-Gung (in the Talensi-Nabdam District) have shown no interest in the CODRIGA project at all. New communities would therefore be selected from each district/municipality to replace them.

Enhance the participation of female youth in decision-making

Unlike last year when most youth, especially female youth, were not actively involved in the project activities, the Female Youth Empowerment and Livelihood Advocacy (F-YELA) component of CODRIGA has so far attracted and sustained the interest of female youth in the project. Along with the facilitation in byelaws development, female youth (aged 15-30 years) in five (5) of the communities (Azeamabisi, Kpagraboug, Shia, Yikene and Tindomolgo) were also sensitised on the benefits of the CODRIGA project. They were sensitised on the need to form active youth groups and/or consolidate existing ones (if any) to promote viable economic and livelihood ventures in the communities. The female youth were also facilitated on the need to register their groups and meet regularly to take decisions that are of concern to them. The need for them to contribute meaningfully to decision that bother on household and community-wide development was also emphasised.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Within the period of reporting Christian Aid, one of CODRIGA's major donors, paid an annual monitoring visit to the project. Represented by its country director (Heidrun K), Christian Aid's visit was meant to assess the performance and impact of the project in beneficiary communities and districts. The visit occurred at the time the byelaws development was on-going and so the officer had the opportunity of observing field activities and processes in Tindomolgo community.

The country director also had a direct interaction with leaders of Shia community in the Talensi-Nabdam District and the following were mentioned as impacts of CODRIGA:

- Reduction in cost of dowry from 4 to 2 cattle
- Reduction in quantity of grains spent in funeral from 3 to 1 basin or even less
- Widows are now allowed to cover themselves during performance of widowhood rites and ritual bathing is now done in enclosed places.

- Band on bushfire burning as a result of the sensitisation they got during their community action plans (CAPs) development
- Husbands now share domestic roles such as cooking, bathing of children, etc. with their wives. Below are quotations from two men from the community.

“When you see me in the kitchen steering TZ, you may think I am a woman” (Regent)

“Does a man still have to wait for his wife who is gainfully employed to close from work and still come home to do all the household chores? No, he has to support her!!” (Elder)

Some social issues that still militate against the community’s development include:

- Use of spinning instruments during funerals by the youth
- Habitual drunkenness and alcoholism by men and drug abuse by the youth

Talensi-Nabdam District Assembly was also contacted as part of the monitoring visit where the Deputy Coordinating Director, Assistant Director and the Planning Officer were interacted with. The interaction also revealed some impacts of the CODRIGA project in the district as

- Sensitised communities and built their capacities to now make demands from the Assembly
- Developed and presented some CAPs to the Assembly
- CAPs have been fed into the Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) and the Assembly has panned and is committed to:
 - Educating traditional authorities to work at eliminating TRAPPAW
 - Ensuring that the vulnerable (women, children, differently abled) are included in decision making

The Assembly also outlined the following as effective ways of collaboration between them and CENSUDI:

- CODRIGAP’s scope is limited and so engaging traditional authorities of non-CODRIGAP communities in workshops to sensitise them on the project is useful.
- Building the capacity of Assemblies’ staff and substructures – area councils, field officers, etc – to support in gender mainstreaming and advocacy. Targeting the area councils and unit committees is an effective way of indirectly getting more communities on board because these structures compose of clusters of communities.
- Fashioning out modalities with other NGOs to effectively handle TRAPPAW issues

- The Assembly has limited funds and therefore, if possible, could cede some of its gender related activities to CENSUDI for funding

OUTPUTS FROM FIRST QUARTER ACTIVITIES

- Comprehensive and implementable activities plans and budgets developed for the year including Tracking Table, Results Framework, Detailed Implementation Plan and Budget
- Five communities from second batch have signed MoU with CENSUDI to start the project implementation
- Lists of 25 CFT members for 5 communities retrieved and compiled.
- Talensi-Nabdam District Assembly agrees to fashion out modalities regarding effective implementation of CODRIGA
- 248 youth sensitized on importance and need to actively engage in development activities
- The F-YELA objectives were developed with 145 female youth between the ages of 15-30 years. Though some of the communities visited had formed groups, these were dormant groups.
- 232 female youth energized to form groups. They were sensitized on their roles and they came to a realization of the benefits of group formation to the individuals and communities at large. They also realised the need to contribute responsibly and actively in their respective communities as youth. This will also make them responsible citizens when they grow into adults.
- Between two (2) and four groups were formed and restructured in each community, with a membership of between 15 and thirty (30) per group. The age ranges of the youth groups are 15-30 years. A total of 20 female youth groups were therefore formed in 5 communities. It was observed that there were no existing female youth socio-economic groups in the ten (10) CODRIGAP communities. Most youth groups are dominated by young men-indeed for most communities in the Upper East, youth association is synonymous with young men's association. These dialogue and sensitization sessions catalyzed the formation of female youth groups.
- Registration forms were given out to group leaders to register all members in each group. Group members appreciate the need for the election of active, effective and vibrant people to lead the affairs of their group.

CHALLENGES

- Difficulty in getting some of the communities to sign the MoU as they were unwilling to do so.
- A lot of the planned activities have not been carried out due to frequent interruptions from unplanned programmes. Two unplanned Ghana Community Radio Network workshops (lasting for 6 and 10 working days respectively) were attended by the CODRIGAP Field Officers during which times CODRIGAP implementation was stalled.

LESSONS LEARNT

- There is the need to strengthen collaboration with the assemblies. Keeping the Assemblies updated with the progress of the project and actively involving them in the implementation process is useful in the collaboration
- Selected communities were taken for granted as there was no baseline study before community entry was done and that contributed to failure in getting some of them sign the MoU. Selection of next beneficiary communities for the project should be done carefully and this should be followed immediately with baseline. The criteria for selecting beneficiary communities should also be reviewed
- Need to factor in counseling sessions and programmes for adolescent girls and boys on reproductive health, effects of alcoholism and substance abuse, etc.

WAY FORWARD

- Need to contact the assemblies to replace Tongu-Gung, Dulugu and Nyariga-Doone communities with more serious ones. Mirigu community in the Kasena-Nankana West District, and Azinsum and Daborin in the Bolgatanga Municipality are recommended.
- Criteria for selecting and engaging beneficiary communities should also be reviewed
- Increase in staff strength – There is the need for more staff (especially a Project Officer) to be recruited to shed off the load on the existing Field Officer regarding the day-to-day running of the project. Renewing the engagement contract with the Implementing Partners (IPs) is also necessary at overcoming this challenge.
- Liaise with assemblies to give legal backing to communities to implement their byelaws

ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER

- Finalise community byelaws and collaborate with district/municipal assemblies to start enforcement
- Hold one-day review meeting with IPs to sign MOU
- Organize a three-day training on facilitation skills and PRA tools for CFTs, IPs and CENSUDI Staff
- Organize a one-day sensitization meeting for leaders of ten (10) communities
- Carry out community sensitization to develop community profiles
- Organize inauguration meeting for ten (10) youth groups
- Facilitate the registration of ten (10) female youth groups with the NYC
- Organize a one-day regional fair to launch CODRIGAP Fund
- Facilitate and support community research and gender analysis of TRAPDAW
- Capacity development for communities in advocacy, resource mobilization, financial management and other special skills
- Build capacity of communities to develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation plan to reduce TRAPDAW

- Train female youth's groups in organizational development skills - group organization and management, leadership skills, records keeping, etc
- Facilitate and support the establishment of linkages and communication channels between female youth groups within and between traditional areas and districts by organizing study visits and other networking activities
- Establish seed capital to support and motivate female youth groups' economic activities
- Facilitate and motivate the female youth to initiate their own economic and livelihood ventures
- Facilitate and encourage youth especially female to cultivate the habit of saving by establishing linkages between female youth groups and banks and other financial institutions
- Baseline survey on female youth's knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding reproductive and sexual health
- Build capacity of male groups in gender and advocacy
- Raise awareness of male groups on need to involve women in domestic decisions, support girl children in school and to share domestic activities with women
- Build capacity of men in groups to share domestic burdens with women
- Support male groups develop mechanisms for advocacy with fellow men and custodians of culture