



Pathways to Empowerment: Mid-Term Review, Ghana

CARE's Pathways program builds on and is inspired by the vital roles that women play in smallholder agriculture and around the world. Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and implemented in six countries, Pathways is designed to promote gender-equitable agricultural systems and increase the productivity and empowerment of women farmers. In Ghana, Pathways is implemented in the Garu-Tempene and Lambussie-Karni districts. It directly targets 1,841 female farmers and their families, indirectly reaching approximately 12,200 people. Ghana's qualitative mid-term review, which took place in June 2014, assessed progress being made towards the program's intended outcomes, with a particular emphasis on women's intra-household influence and the enabling environment. Drawing on key concepts from Outcome Mapping methodology, the qualitative mid-term review examined changes in behaviors and in gender relations among impact group women, spouses and male group members, and community leaders in the Pathways communities.



Highlighted Findings

	Women group members	Male group members and spouses	Community Leaders' views
Key Changes Observed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are paying children's school fees, some inputs, and health expenses • Women are cooking more nutritious meals • Women are making more farming decisions together with their spouses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men are allocating more land to women • Men are quarreling less with their wives • Men are participating jointly in meetings with their wives • Men are helping with chores (fetching water and firewood, washing clothes, cooking) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crop yields and incomes have increased • There are better relations between the community, NGOs and government agencies • There are fewer household quarrels and greater unity in the community
Factors Enabling Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture trainings and market linkages • Gender dialogues, cooking demonstrations, and advocacy on women's land rights • Group membership and easier access to credit 		
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions of "empowered" women or men who support their wives • Gender beliefs that perpetuate male dominance • Input market barriers 		

METHODOLOGY

The objective of Ghana’s mid-term review (MTR) was to explore progress towards Pathways’ intended outcomes, particularly in moving toward more equal intra-household relations and in engaging men and community leaders. The MTR built on Outcome Mapping (OM), a qualitative methodology that focuses on the behaviors of actors with whom the project works. The MTR applied key OM concepts: **outcome challenges**, which describe one target group’s ideal actions, behaviors, and relationships in the Pathways vision; and **progress markers**, which are the specific behavior changes that lead to those ideals.

Data was collected through focus group discussions and key informant interviews in four villages in Garu-Tempene district and Lambussie-Karni district. The evaluation team included Ghana Pathways staff as well as junior researchers from local NGOs. Women from the impact groups and their spouses, male Pathways participants, and community leaders responded to the mid-term review.

Following data collection, the team identified all behavior changes mentioned in the interviews. They grouped these changes by category and tallied the number of times each unique behavior change was noted. In a final analysis, they mapped these into progressive levels of change, from the most frequently observed changes to the more transformative “love to see” changes for women, men, and community leaders.

Area of Inquiry	Key Questions	Respondent Groups
Decision-Making	What changes are being observed in how decisions are made? What is contributing to those changes?	Women from: 1. Male-headed households 2. Female-headed households 3. Polygamous households
Women’s Empowerment	How do target groups define an “empowered woman”? What changes are being observed? What is contributing to these changes?	
Men’s engagement	How does an “engaged” or role model man behave, act? What changes are being observed among men? What is contributing to these changes?	1. Spouses, male group members 2. Male role models 3. Women group members
Community leader views	What changes have been observed by the leaders? What is the role of leaders in supporting change?	Community leaders
Cross-cutting themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload-sharing • Gender-based violence trends • Contribution of collective membership to gender equality • Contribution of productivity/income to gender equality 	

EMPOWERMENT TRAITS

When asked to describe the traits of an *empowered woman*, participants in all four villages stated that having enough money to support the household financially is critical—particularly in the areas of paying for children’s school fees, health costs, and agricultural inputs. Many women stated that they have at least to a certain extent achieved empowerment by having their own income to pay children’s school fees and the family’s health insurance.

Community	An empowered woman...
Kongo	Is hard-working Cares for her children’s health Has her own money
Tankpasi	Is financially independent (“rich”) Can access institutions Takes care of her children’s education and health
Chum	Pays her children’s school fees Pays for family’s health insurance Accesses farm inputs
Koro	Pays her children’s school fees Supports her household financially Pays for family’s health insurance



CHANGES OBSERVED AMONG WOMEN

In Ghana, the most commonly observed changes among women were related to paying children’s school fees, being more involved in household decisions, and having fewer household quarrels, which was partly attributed to skills learned in the Pathways group meetings. Improvements in nutritious cooking practices were also highly valued by women.

Having access to loans through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) and Pathways trainings on improved agricultural practices has increased their productivity and by extension income, facilitating women’s ability to pay family expenses. In turn, women felt that this has given them greater bargaining power over some production and household

decisions. They stated that they now often use their income to influence the outcomes of disagreements; their farm skills and improved financial status also increased their husbands' willingness to discuss important decisions with them.

However, women noted that they still have to be cautious about how they influence decisions to avoid conflict and repercussions:

"To have your voice heard you need to humble yourself and be respectful." – *Musa Kuoyam, 60 (Kongo).*

In general, women had more decision-making power over agricultural decisions than they had over household decisions, and they still rarely have final say over major decisions. Many women expressed a desire to have greater influence in key decisions, particularly those related to women's land acquisition, choosing seed varieties, and marriages and funerals.

"...this is the first time my husband has given me land to farm my own crops... So I thank you people for changing the minds of our husbands."

CHANGES OBSERVED AMONG MEN

Among men, the most commonly observed changes were adoption of new farming techniques, accessing credit through the VSLA groups, and more readily encouraging their wives to participate in Pathways activities. They greatly valued the increased access to farming skills and market information that they learned from Pathways trainings or from their wives.

Although it was less frequently observed, some men had also started allocating farmland to their wives and helping with the household chores such as fetching water and firewood or bathing children. Many also stated that they were more frequently including their wives in household and agricultural decision-making processes.

"First I used to farm and harvest my produce...even when my wife [did] not know when I would sell the food. But now I sit with my wife, we discuss what to sell and what to keep for family feeding. This is from the knowledge I learned from CARE and the group members." – *Anaasa Abugbil, 62*

Like the women, male respondents observed a reduction in household quarrels and greater harmony in the home. Almost all men stated that their engagement in Pathways activities

and VLSA groups has contributed to the improvements in relations between men and women and to their willingness to involve their wives more fully in decisions. They noted that participating in mixed-sex group meetings taught them important communication skills, which they carried into the home. According to one respondent,

"[The VSLA] brings dialogue and healthy communication. It has increased peace in the household." – *Assibobo Alhassan, 33 (Kongo)*

"Men did not allow women to talk in meetings, but now they can talk freely because of CARE and Pathways." -*Akugri Albert, 61*

COMMUNITY LEADERS' VIEWS

The MTR team interviewed community leaders (administrative, traditional, and religious) and community-based extension agents (CBEAs) about changes they made in their own lives and observed in the community at large. The most important changes this group saw related to the program's agricultural and marketing training. Leaders also noted that communities have better relations with government offices such as the Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

The community leaders emphasized their role as mediators, role models, and liaisons to collective resources. They stated that they have been active in resolving spousal and community-level conflicts and teaching youth "good behavior." Some felt that the VSLA meetings and Pathways dialogues had increased unity at the community level. A number of leaders requested further training on gender so



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that they could more effectively address GBV and other gender issues.

FACTORS ENABLING CHANGE

The Pathways-related factors enabling positive changes across the four villages were agricultural and gender trainings; cooking demonstrations that involve men and women; and better access to credit, land, markets, and farming inputs. Thanks to the agriculture and extension support from the CBEAs, women have increased their crop yields and income. Through market linkages facilitated by the program, both men and women have better access to fertilizer, inputs and suppliers, and women are better able to purchase some inputs on their own. As a result of women's financial contributions to the household, women feel that they are increasingly involved in decision-making and receiving greater respect from their spouses.

Gender dialogues have also encouraged men to help with household tasks and support women's land access. In communities where male champions have been active and spouses were involved in Pathways or VSLA activities, it was

observed that men's attitudes were more favorable towards women's rights.

CHALLENGES

Despite early progress towards Pathways objectives of empowerment, equity and productivity, some formidable structural issues, including market barriers and entrenched gender beliefs, remain. Women's timely and secure access to land remains a challenge, and some women are still obliged to work their husbands' plots before their own, which can delay their own planting and affect their own yields. Although there was an overall perception that gender-based violence has diminished in recent years, some women were reluctant to discuss the topic for fear of repercussions. Some men also perceive women's empowerment as a threat, which may cause them to retract some initial changes in attitude and behavior:

“Everybody was happy when [Pathways] shared information, everybody gave lands to their wives, but some women started showing power with men and these husbands have stopped supporting women.” – Saagulo Dawuda, 39 (Koro).

In addition, men themselves may face ridicule for helping women with household chores or allocating quality to their wives. Women felt that some men don't understand the benefit of Pathways, or don't have income to join the VSLA and therefore have not participated in training activities. Both men and women requested greater involvement of men in the program.

IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The MTR findings underscore CARE's understanding that participation in collectives, such as the VSLA and producer groups, facilitates women's empowerment. Collectives provide women access to credit and information that would be otherwise less available, enabling them to earn more income and gain greater household influence. In addition, the findings illustrate the important interrelatedness of the Pathways technical areas and activities (technical trainings and skills, access to finance and markets, nutrition and gender dialogues, and engagement of men and community leaders) to empowering women farmers and improving their well-being.

Reflecting on the findings, the Pathways Ghana team made plans to strengthen their engagement with men at the community level by providing further training and mentorship to male gender champions and role models, and by creating space at meetings to address men's concerns and gender awareness. To advance gains in productivity and income, the team will intensify efforts on market linkages and women's access to quality agricultural land and inputs.

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