



2015

FOSTERING Gender Strategy

Funded
by



Foreign Affairs, Trade and
Development Canada
Affaires étrangères, Commerce
et Développement Canada

Acronyms

CUA	Credit Union Association (Ghana)
CHNA	Community Health and Nutrition Agent
CVEW	Community Volunteer Extension Worker
DCMC	District Citizen Monitoring Committee
FOSTERING	Food Security through Cooperatives in Northern Ghana
GMF	Gender Model Family
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PGN	Practical Gender Needs
PME	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
REFLECT	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
SEND	Social Enterprise Development
SGI	Strategic Gender Interests
STAR	Societies Tackling AIDS through Rights

Illustrations by John Abato, Tech of Klass, Accra

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Executive Summary

The ultimate outcome of the FOSTERING project is to achieve sustainable, gender equitable food security for women and men in targeted communities in Northern Ghana.

The three major activity areas lead to the following results:

1. Livelihood services will give women and men increased economic stability and a higher level of gender equitable economic productivity in target communities;
2. Financial services through credit unions and co-operatives will provide increased levels of services / support to women and men members; and,
3. Advocacy will lead to increased awareness and responsiveness of government to food security issues raised by smallholder women and men farmers.

From these expected results, it is evident that women are expected to play a major roles in FOSTERING's success. In order to facilitate women's involvement, FOSTERING has a gender strategy with ten directions, each with different measures for gender equity. Both CUA and SEND have, over the years, developed tried and true methodologies for facilitating gender equality. They have also established positions, groups and committees to implement these methodologies. These are summarized in the table below, and elaborated throughout the gender strategy.

FOSTERING's Methodologies used to promote Gender Equality	FOSTERING's Change Agents used to promote Gender Equality
Gender Training	FOSTERING Gender Equality Officer
Infrastructure Development	Staff of SEND and CUA
Family-based Cooperative Model	Family-based Farmer Cooperatives
Agricultural Extension	Community Volunteer Extension Workers
Nutrition Education	Zonal Cooperatives
Inventory Credit	
Leadership Training, Mentoring, Coaching	Rural Commercial Women's Association
Credit Unions	Credit Union Board of Directors, Committees, Staff
Micro-finance	Solidarity groups
Gender Model Family Programme	Gender Model Families
	Traditional Authorities
	Gender Champions
Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation	Focal NGOs
DCMCs	
Advocacy	
Peace Building	Peace Animators

With these multi-various approaches, FOSTERING builds a critical mass of support for empowering women and men together for gender equality. Moreover, SEND and CUA, through FOSTERING, will be able to strengthen their ability to mainstream gender, giving them the potential to achieve greater coverage and reach of men and women for gender equality.

Introduction

It is CUA's aim to create an enabling environment that allows women as well as men succeed economically. Creating the "happy family" and upholding the cooperative principles can only be achieved if men and women have equal opportunities and equal access to resources, services, participation and decision making. CUA Gender Policy 2010

The purpose of the gender sensitive programming framework is to enable women and men principals to adequately address their practical and strategic needs and interests

as well as those of the wider communities in a sustainable manner. To achieve this, SEND will institute a number of inter-related measures and planned activities. SEND-Ghana Gender Policy 2008

SEND and CUA have been implementing programmes with an aim to promoting gender equality for a number of years. From their experiences in the North-eastern corridor in Ghana, they have learned a number of valuable gender lessons which they are applying to FOSTERING:

- When issues of power and control are not taken into consideration, it does not matter how much food is grown – women and children may not have access to it. Men and women need to come together to make decisions around food and resources management in the home.
- When men are not involved in capacity building programmes involving food processing and nutrition education, it is not likely that women will be able to implement changes in the household diet because they do not have the authority. Men need to join women in learning about the difficult steps involved in not only soya bean production, but processing soya beans into foods with nutritional benefits.
- When women are provided with limited options and choices for producing food and earning income, they may not be

able to ensure that their household is food secure all year long. Women need several sources of food and income made possible through micro-finance, trading, off-farm activities and off-season gardening. If women are involved in various activities, they will have more leverage to contribute to household decision making and more opportunities to diversify their diets.

- When women and men meet together in one place for a programme, chances are they will not talk or open up about their issues. Women and men can participate in workshops together, but there should be chances for women to talk amongst themselves in small groups. Establishing quotas for women's participation (2 women, 1 man) gives women greater advantages to become involved.
- When programmes are scheduled late into the afternoon, chances are that women will leave by 3 p.m. and miss important learning opportunities. Women have to leave by 3 p.m. to attend to their families and prepare the evening meal. Programmes are now scheduled so they end at 3 p.m., or they are planned for two days.
- When men and women are both oriented to sharing roles and responsibilities in the household, men are willing to give women more power. Unlike the past when men would deny women the opportunity to take loans or have a savings account at the credit union, they now encourage women to take loans on behalf of the family.

All of these lessons have challenged traditional gender roles, and brought about new norms of how women's contributions are valued. These gender lessons and others have instilled in CUA and SEND the need to mainstream gender in the project cycle and in all aspects of the organization. FOSTERING mainstreams gender equality in two ways.

- First of all, it integrates men's and women's concerns in all policies and programmes, and
- Secondly, it implements specific activities aimed at empowering women and men to examine gender issues and how to overcome them in their environments.
- For example, gender equality is mainstreamed in the design of agricultural extension and nutrition education because gender issues of both men and women are integrated. Gender is also mainstreamed by targeting women with specific measures for gender equity to give them a boost so that they can be involved in development on a level playing field with men. Examples of targeted activities for women are micro-finance and leadership training.

The purpose of gender mainstreaming is to bring about empowerment. This happens both on individual and collective levels, where women and man take control over their lives, engaging in processes that lead to positive and progressive action and change for gender equality.

FOSTERING's methodologies for empowerment involve both meeting practical gender needs and strategic gender interests.

- Practical gender needs respond to needs for improvements in women's and men's basic conditions -- food, nutrition, income, employment, labour-saving and others.
- Strategic gender interests respond to improvements in women's position in society, addressing the disadvantaged position of women -- lack of assets, resources, education, decision-making power.

This table provides a summary of the methodologies that CUA and SEND have honed over the years and brought together as best practices to promote gender equality.

Empowerment	
FOSTERING's Methodologies to promote Gender Equality, supporting	
Practical Gender Needs	Strategic Gender Interests
Family-based Cooperative Model	Gender Training
Agriculture Extension	Gender Activity Plans
Nutrition Education	Leadership, Mentoring, Coaching
Inventory Credit	Credit Unions
Value Chain Development	Gender Model Family Programme
Soybean Processing	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
Micro-finance	Advocacy
	Peace Building

FOSTERING staff need to ensure that the project creates a balance between practical gender needs (PGN) and strategic gender interests (SGI). Efforts toward strategic gender interests should support the greater achievement of higher-level project outcome indicators that show improvements in practical gender needs, such as hunger gap, poverty rate and income.

This strategy comes out of a gender analysis exercise, which analysed the intended activities of the project and their potential to meet practical and strategic gender needs. The study concluded that the planned activities will have a positive impact on women and contribute to gender equality. In order to strengthen the potential of project activities to meet gender equality goals, more than 100 recommendations were made across all four outcome areas. These should be integrated into the work plans and budgets for each activity, according to the Annual Work Plan.

For the purpose of this Gender Strategy, the recommendations were categorized into 10 themes:

1. Women and Men Accessing Equal Opportunities for Production
2. Women Adapting to Climate Change
3. Women Accessing Financial Products
4. Women Building Entrepreneurship
5. Women and Men Working Together to Transform Gender Relations
6. Women and Men Take Control of their Nutrition and Health
7. Women and Men Advocating for Gender Equity and Food Security
8. Building Women's Capacity to Change and be Agents of Change
9. Women Leading for Change
10. Organizations Effecting Institutional Change to Mainstream Gender Equality.

These themes are the 10 strategic directions of FOSTERING's gender strategy. The rationale for each direction is described, in addition to how it should be accomplished and by whom. As such, the strategy integrates all the recommendations made from the gender analysis exercise.

FOSTERING's 10 Strategic Directions for Gender Equality



Women and Men Accessing Equal Opportunities for Production

01

The foundations for gender equality in the FOSTERING project are found in the farm family. Between 5-15 farm families form a Family-based Farmer Cooperative. It is essential that both husband and wife from the same family join the cooperative so that both enjoy the resources and benefits from membership.

Each cooperative nominates one man and one woman to become Community Volunteer Extension Workers and Community Health and Nutrition Agents. They are involved in disseminating agricultural extension and nutrition education messages within their cooperative and communities.

From the family-based farmer cooperatives, men and women are voted onto the Zonal Cooperative, which is an executive body acting in the interests of all cooperatives under it. At the zonal cooperative level, women and men participate in inventory credit schemes and have access to tractor services. Zonal cooperatives have Gender Activity Plans ensuring that women have equal access to the services provided without discrimination.

Compared to men, women experience more labour constraints in the preparation and plowing of their fields, weeding, and post-harvest activities, especially getting the harvest from field to home.

Practical Gender Needs are met by:

- Maximizing the use of tractors for plowing, planting, harvesting and transporting harvested crops.

- Providing labour- and time-saving inputs and agricultural equipment for women and men as an alternative to the drudgery of manual labour used in production and harvesting.
- Arranging for more equitable labour arrangements within the family and community, so that women are not left with labouring on their own farms and on their husbands' farms with some reciprocal assistance.
- Training women and men on improved environmental management techniques so that women get better yields from marginalize

Strategic Gender Interests are met by:

- Conducting education/information sessions for women so that they can successfully manage traditionally male crops. In taking on male crops, such as yam and guinea corn, women take on non-traditional roles and break gender barriers.



Women
Adapting to
Climate Change

02

Women are major users of natural resources, especially wood and water, which they need to maintain their households. They also engage in economic activities which are harmful to the environment, i.e. charcoal production. FOSTERING will work with women to adapt to climate change in two ways. First of all, women, along with men, will learn how to manage and replenish natural resources. One example is women's woodlot groups for on-farm afforestation. These groups engage in tree nurseries

and plant large plots of trees, which are used for fuel wood. They are also able to inter-plant soya beans with the trees for greater nitrogen fixing of the soil. Women who are Community Volunteer Extension Workers can assist other women learn these techniques.

The second way that FOSTERING will assist women to adapt to climate change is to take the pressure off of the land, and provide them with alternative, sustainable livelihoods. Women join solidarity groups in order to access micro-finance. With small loans, they engage in trading to generate income, rather than depending solely on farming.

In these ways, Practical Gender Needs are met by:

- Providing information on and demonstrating soil, land and water management techniques and equipment, i.e. stone bunding, A-frame.
- Training women in off-farm alternative sustainable livelihoods, encouraging both collective and individual activities. For example, in areas where cassava is grown, support women to make gari.
- Providing customized business training for women who process soya beans and sell the products, i.e. cheese, flour, milk, dawa dawa.

Strategic Gender Interests are met by:

- Women having their own products, made to comply to certain standards and volumes, with their own branding and packaging. A niche product would be highly marketable and profitable, such as sesame biscuits or tofu. The emphasis is not on “women’s crops” as such, but on value-added processes that women undertake on crops.



Women Accessing Financial Products

03

In order for women to improve their access to and control of resources, they need to access financial products. Women's ability to make money and contribute to the needs of the household makes them partners from men's perspective and not just dependents. When women make money, they are in a better position to engage in decision-making with men.

FOSTERING encourages women from cooperatives to join solidarity groups to gain access to micro-finance. Only women have access to this facility. With small loans, women are able to engage in trading. Many of these women decided to save their money in credit unions. As members of credit unions, they also have access to larger loans. If they are members with a good credit rating in their solidarity group, women can go to the front of the line to get a loan from the credit union because they have already proven they will pay back. Women in remote areas who do not live close to credit unions can still save through the credit union's services of mobile banking and savings boxes.

Women can access loans through family-based cooperatives and groups. Women can also store bags of their produce in the common silo, located at the credit union office, which also functions as the central point for the zonal cooperative. This "grain bank" allows women and men farmers to borrow money based on the bags they have stored. Once the prices are high, the bags are sold by the cooperative. In this way women can

pay their loans and also earn some profit. Women who store their produce in silos always sell it at the highest price. Using inventory credit allows women to control their assets.

Given the success of these methods for credit and loans, Practical Gender Needs are met by:

- Training women on financial literacy.
- Promoting credit union services to women by ensuring that all women in cooperatives and micro-finance groups understand credit union products and services and how to get them. This includes stepping up roll-out of mobile banking and savings boxes.
- Expanding opportunities for women to be involved in micro-finance by graduating women out of micro-finance to credit unions so that others can take their places. To encourage graduation and allow solidarity groups on the waiting list to have opportunity, credit unions could institute a group rotation whereby each group has a set number of micro-finance cycles they can have before they go to the end of the waiting list.
- Promoting women's access to production loans from credit unions.
- Encouraging women to maximize their use of inventory credit by farming as a business.



Women Building Entrepreneurship

04

In order for women to have greater economic stability, they need to become better entrepreneurs. The Rural Commercial Women's Association provides women with leadership training, mentoring and coaching for business, value added production, and access to markets. Linking women to markets through their cell phones gives them immediate information and choices.

Women from cooperatives join the Rural Commercial Women's Association where they not only learn how to be better business women, but also how to empower themselves. By meeting and sharing experiences about their businesses, they also talk about barriers to education, lack of access to land, and violence against women. They can decide to take collective action to address these gender issues.

Like women who access financial products are meeting their practical gender needs, women who build entrepreneurship are meeting their Strategic Gender Interests through:

- A dedicated training package for financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills, including basic marketing business skills, which is customized for women with limited literacy and numeracy.
- Coordination of mentoring and coaching opportunities for women in business.
- Linking with woman-friendly marketing networks and opportunities, i.e. School Feeding Programme. This includes

both face-to-face and electronic networking.

- Formation of collectives for increased production and sales, i.e. women soya bean producers collectives.



Women and Men Working
Together to Transform
Gender Relation

05

FOSTERING works with Family-based Farmer Cooperatives at community level. Husbands and wives work together for agricultural production, each accessing inputs and services through the cooperative. To highlight the importance of gender equity, the zonal cooperatives and credit unions to which the family-based coops belong, have Gender Activity Plans. The plans include leadership positions for women, women's access to training and services, and also ways of easing the labour load of women, on the fields and at home.

The programme that encourages men to assist women with household work is called the Gender Model Family. The model involves a man and a woman who agree to live together in an equitable and fair manner: share domestic chores, make decisions together, commit to providing the same opportunities to their girls as their boys. Finally, they are willing to tell their experiences to their neighbors and community. In this way,

Traditional Authorities and other leaders become Gender Champions, convinced of the value of giving women and girls better access to services to improve their lives.

Peace Animators, both women and men, also work toward gender

equality, especially as they intervene in domestic conflicts and intervene in incidents of violence against women.

Through these transformative methods, Strategic Gender Interests are met by:

- Engaging men in “gender conversations” to sensitize them about the implications of their resource allocations to women, i.e. land.
- Carrying out Gender and Family Resource Management Training for all family-based farmer coops, ensuring that they are sensitized to gender and food insecurity issues, and are able to identify measure for gender equity to address them.
- Activating Gender Activity Plans in zonal cooperatives and credit unions.
- Promoting Gender Model Families by targeting 20-25 families in each cooperative for a critical mass of over 1,000 practicing GMFs, and encouraging each GMF to recruit three more in their community.
- Adding to Peace Animator’s mandate to prevent and stop domestic conflict, especially violence, and sensitizing men to the disproportionate effects of conflict experienced by men vs. women.
- Support both men and women gender “champions” at community level. Encourage Traditional Authorities and elders to influence customary structures and practices for greater gender equality.



Nutrition and Health

06

Although women have responsibility for feeding the family, they do not have control over decisions which may affect family nutrition. Both women and men need to understand the nutrition value of foods and how to use them to feed a family. Community Health and Nutrition Agents are responsible for nutrition education. Both women and men receive nutrition education so that they can together decide how to manage and use their resources toward the health of the family.

FOSTERING's major nutrition messages involve soya bean processing. Both women and men learn how to produce, process and prepare soya beans into nutritious, protein-rich foods. A recipe book has been compiled to show that a variety of dishes can be prepared with soya beans. Soya beans can be processed into cheese, flour, milk and condiments, all used in different and tasty ways to enhance dietary diversification. Adoption by a critical mass of women and men in FOSTERING communities will go a long way to improving family nutrition, particularly for pregnant and breast feeding mothers and children.

Through the soya bean programme, Practical Gender Needs are met by:

- Promoting time and labour saving equipment for harvesting and transporting soya beans.
- Providing communities with drying floors and tarps for threshing and winnowing soya beans.
- Promoting locally-made protective gear for women for safer processing.

- Training women on safe household storage options for their produce.
- Working with the Regional WIAD officer to ensure better coverage of food and nutrition messages for women in FOSTERING districts.

Through an emphasis on gender and nutrition, Strategic Gender Interests are met by:

- Encouraging men to share more produce for household consumption.
- Promoting women and men as peer educators for nutrition education.
- Engaging men in nutrition education using messages that appeal to them.
- Using Gender Model Families to train communities to make soya bean recipes.



Women and Men
Advocating for
Gender Equity
and Food Security

07

FOSTERING will put in place in all its eight districts focal NGOs that work on advocacy issues. These NGOs convene District Citizen Monitoring Committees which comprise civil society representatives, traditional authorities and local government. In addition to the DCMC, the Rural Commercial Women's Association forms a substantial body for advocacy. Moreover, the Zonal Cooperative Executive and Gender Champions also

play a role in advocacy. These bodies are trained to do gender analysis, comparing the relative disadvantages of women and men in household and farming issues which impinge on food security.

FOSTERING is using the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation approach for advocating for gender issues of inequity involving women and food security. Issues to be explored include women's access to land, extension services, agricultural credit, inputs, labour, equipment and innovations. Other issues will look at family resource management and inequities involving sharing of resources, benefits and decision-making, and their effects on food security at community level.

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation involves doing designing and doing research with women and men, analyzing the findings from a gender perspective, and presenting the report to different levels of government, from local to Parliament.

Through PME, Strategic Gender Interests are met by:

- Advocating to local authorities, both traditional and governmental, for women's equal access to land ownership, including enforcement and recourse for non-enforcement.
- Having women and men advocating for gender and food security issues at each level of government, including press conferences and parliamentary hearings.



Building Women's Capacity to Change & be Agents of Change

08

Central to all FOSTERING activities is capacity building, whether training or on-site demonstrations. Capacity building is key to strengthening on- and off-farm activities, management of business and loans, advocacy, nutrition and gender equality. FOSTERING will provide women and men with an empowering environment for learning and at the same time challenging existing inequitable gender relations.

Through capacity building, Strategy Gender Interests are met because:

- Capacity building events create a safe and friendly space for women to build their confidence by drawing on their strengths and providing a forum for women to express themselves freely.
- Capacity building events are held at convenient locations and times for women.
- Measures are negotiated with women to ensure that they feel comfortable away from home, even for a short time, i.e. baby care, child care.
- Women take the lead with other women or men as trainers or facilitators.

- Adult education methods draw on women's experiences and validate them, encouraging women to try new things.
- Training aids show women empowered in non-traditional roles and activities.
- Technical content of training is accessible for women and inspires them to take up new technologies and innovate them.
- Gender issues are addressed during capacity building events and provide an opportunity to have a "gender conversation" about how to address inequities.
- Capacity building events encourage men to challenge their own notions of gender and masculinity in order to address inequities in their homes and communities.



FOSTERING works with different groups and institutions, such as cooperatives, credit unions, Peace Animators and District Citizens Monitoring Committees. In order that gender issues of inequity are tackled, these groups need to ensure that both women and men are represented in leadership. DCMCs and Zonal Cooperative Executives will be expanded so that numbers of

women and men are at parity. Credit Union Boards will include in their constitutions quotas for women executives and committee members.

Micro-finance solidarity groups and the Rural Commercial Women's Association comprise women only. In order to give women more confidence to engage in leadership roles, literacy training will be provided in tandem with leadership training, using STAR and REFLECT methodologies which conscientize and empower women. Linkages will be facilitated between women leaders in FOSTERING communities and districts, including the Women and Peace Network for the Northern Region.

By promoting women's leadership, Strategic Gender Interests are met by:

- Carrying out gender sensitization for communities on the need for women to participate in leadership.
- Rolling out women's leadership training in the FOSTERING districts, particularly in the most remote districts where training has not been delivered.
- Promoting women role models and involving more women in localized mentoring programmes for women leaders.
- Training and promoting women leaders from FOSTERING areas as peace building advocates at regional level.



Effecting Institutional Change to Mainstream Gender Equality

10

FOSTERING is implemented by CUA and SEND. Both have been supported by CCA to put in place gender policies and strategies. As a result, they have placed a high priority on promoting gender equality within their programmes. To ensure that this priority is kept in FOSTERING, a gender officer is dedicated to the project. FOSTERING provides an opportunity for SEND and CUA to encourage greater participation of women, leading to the fulfillment of practical gender needs and strategic gender interests. Through the experience of FOSTERING, SEND and CUA want to improve their organizational development and programme in these ways:

- In order to be effective, FOSTERING staff will be able to implement their organizations' gender policies. The management of FOSTERING should be able to follow the policy guidelines, i.e. special support for women staff who work in remote areas, and resources for women staff, i.e. computer equipment, so that they can be professionally competitive with their men counterparts.
- Staff will be able to integrate gender equality principles through their work with communities. This does not only involve programming, monitoring and reporting, but staff's behaviour and commitment to gender equality so that they do not reproduce gender inequities. Staff are trained in techniques

to ensure that they give gender-sensitive messages to communities, encouraging gender equity. Staff will mentor groups to strive for gender equality. They will use existing gender manuals: Leadership Training, Business Development, Youth Saving, Family Resource Management and Gender Model Family to train staff and project beneficiaries.

- Staff will account for transformation toward gender equality in all aspects of FOSTERING. A checklist will be developed to monitor staff action toward gender equality outcomes.
- Boards and committees will step up “guided democracy” by involving more women. Guided democracy encourages affirmative action to increase quotas and nominations that favour women’s involvement in leadership.
- More financial services and products will be oriented toward women. Particularly, loan products will be offered for off-farm and off-season activities.
- More efforts will be taken to reach women in remote areas through mobile banking and savings boxes.
- There is also an opportunity to mainstream gender issues in the design of new and rehabilitation of existing credit union structures. Sufficient work space and equipment, including computers, will be provided for women staff who work in credit unions. Seating and a meeting room will allow women in solidarity groups to gather.

These seven points illustrate institutional changes to which SEND and CUA are committed. FOSTERING provides them with the opportunity to embed these changes for organizational transformation. When these gains are achieved, CUA and SEND will be able to extend them beyond FOSTERING to other projects and organizational initiatives.

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Funded
by:



Foreign Affairs, Trade and
Development Canada

Affaires étrangères, Commerce
et Développement Canada