

West Africa Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Program (USAID WA-WASH)

USAID WA-WASH Success Story:

Male gender champions enhance participation of women in MUS

Program Element: Water Multiple Uses Services

Key Issues: Male gender champions enhance participation of women in MUS; number of women participating in gardening and increasing their access to garden plots

Operating Unit: USAID WA-WASH

Headline: Male gender champion enhances women's participation in MUS in the Venne community in Upper West Region of Ghana

Since its inception, the USAID WA-WASH program has observed male domination in multiple use water systems (MUS) in the Venne community. This is a long-standing tradition in an area noted for its patriarchal society.

However, Gervase Hay, a 61 year old farmer and a native of Venne, is leading a group of young men to change the fortunes of women participating in MUS.



Photo1: Women have been allocated plots to engage in dry season gardening

Gervase says “I have worked variously with the Ghana Health Service mainly as a volunteer during immunizations and health education and have seen the sorry state of affairs of poor women in feeding their children with balanced diet. Most men are not bothered whether their children are well fed or not”. Gervase’s practical experience is by no means insignificant. However, he found it difficult to influence his fellow men towards leveraging space for women’s participation and their empowerment in the community. Then, the opportunity arose to participate in gender sensitive training organized under the auspices of the USAID WA-WASH project. This training workshop was held in both Wa and Tamale, Ghana in Year 2 of the USAID WA-WASH project and it is already yielding results.

In Venne, a group of seven men who are part of the MUS unanimously agreed through the influence of Gervase, to give women for the first time access to the garden plots, technical support and moral encouragement within the community. As a result, each of eleven women

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now has access to a 12-square meter plot. As a gender champion, Gervase brought on board nine of the eleven women and successfully advocated for the 12-square meter plots of land for the women instead of the 4-square meter plots originally proposed.

Today, the women's plots have been cultivated and as a result the women's yields are expected to improve significantly during harvest, which will be documented by the USAID WA-WASH program. Training workshops like the one discussed above allow the USAID WA-WASH program to empower women through the identification and involvement of gender champions in resource poor communities. As a Venne community mobilizer stated, "It is not enough to empower only women in a patriarchal society with the aim of overcoming structural traditional barriers, but to give a much constructive training and empowerment to male actors who are committed and influential in community development initiatives."

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Background Information

Program: USAID West Africa Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Program (USAID WA-WASH)

Assistance Objective: Strengthen resilience and sustainable access to water supply, sanitation and hygiene for better livelihoods

Key issues: Male gender champions enhances participation of women in MUS; number of women participating in gardening and their access to plots

Country: Ghana

Region: Upper West

District: Nandom

Village: Venne

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