



## Ghana

### ENABLE Challenges Gender Norms

*Addressing gender has been one of CEDPA's main priorities in Ghana. Gender has been integrated both at the program and organizational levels and is a crosscutting theme throughout ENABLE's activities.*

#### The Definition of Gender

The term "gender" is used to describe characteristics of women and men that are socially constructed, in contrast to those that are biologically determined. People learn appropriate behaviors, roles, and how they should relate to other people. These learned attributes are what make up gender identity and determine gender roles. Inequalities often arise from the different roles of women and men or the unequal power relationships between them and often affect many aspects of life, including health, education, and general well-being. CEDPA aims to address these inequalities through education and advocacy interventions at the community level.

#### The Abandonment of Female Genital Cutting (FGC)

CEDPA and its partner organizations adopted a strategy of involving all stakeholders, including men, in the FGC abandonment campaign. In partnership with the Ghana Association for Women's Welfare (GAWW) and the Muslim Family Counselling Services (MFCS), CEDPA carried out several types of sensitization activities for different groups of stakeholders. GAWW and MFCS conducted sensitization workshops for nurses, midwives, local government authorities, Imams, school-teachers, Koranic teachers, traditional birth attendants, and women leaders to raise awareness about the harmful effects of FGC and motivate them to further educate their communities about it. Since participating in these workshops, specific groups such as Imams, elderly women, and youth have been identified to act as focal points for FGC education. Some communities have already developed strategies, including the formation of watchdog committees to talk with parents



Photo: JHU/CCP

of girl infants and an association of young girls to educate peers on the hazards of FGC. CEDPA's strategy of involving different stakeholders added a greater impact to the program.

#### Male Involvement for Safe Motherhood

In partnership with Amasachina Self Help Association, a local non-governmental organization (NGO), CEDPA implemented a safe motherhood project in northern Ghana to prevent maternal deaths and improve maternal and neonatal health outcomes. The project's strategy involved two types of community volunteers: safe motherhood advocates (SMAs) and safe motherhood volunteers (SMVs). Men were also trained as SMAs and SMVs to reach husbands and other male figures in the community. Involving men was a gender strategy adopted deliberately, recognizing that safe motherhood practices take place in a community environment and men also influence those practices. Once men in the communities were educated about harmful practices

that could affect pregnant women, they worked with women to adopt appropriate behavior changes.

## **Mainstreaming Gender at the Organizational Level**

CEDPA made efforts to mainstream gender at the organizational level. Part of this gender strategy was to involve both women and men in program activities, including management. Partners were encouraged to seek a balance in the sex ratio of employees, including employing women in leadership and management roles, which traditionally were filled by men. In addition, both women and men were trained as grassroots volunteers such as community-based distributors, adult counselors, peer counselors, and peer educators. Partner organizations now employ women in management positions and have women leaders who are involved in activities such as writing program reports and preparing budgets.

## **Involving Queen Mothers and Magajias in HIV/AIDS Education**

CEDPA mobilized traditional female leaders such as Queen Mothers and *magajias* into new roles to fight against HIV/AIDS. CEDPA raised their HIV/AIDS awareness and motivated them to educate their communities and to provide care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS. In the Brong-Ahafo region, Queen Mothers are giving talks on HIV/AIDS to schoolchildren. In the Ashanti region, Queen Mothers are working with churches and NGOs to educate communities about HIV/AIDS. A Queen Mother from Berekum has involved the District Assembly in her HIV/AIDS campaign. The *magajias* in the greater Accra region are mobilizing community members to attend meetings on HIV/AIDS awareness. Traditionally, both groups of women hold roles of power and influence in their communities. Although their roles have changed over time, they have proven to be influential in increasing awareness about and sensitivity to issues surrounding HIV/AIDS.

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