

PROGRAM ONE

Women in vulnerable, chronically food insecure, rural smallholder households

Recommendations from the SARMU Program Quality Meeting, May 2010

After a comprehensive analysis of the underlying causes of poverty in Malawi, CARE has identified three specific impact populations who are most vulnerable and affected by the complex dynamics of poverty in Malawi. These impact populations will form the initial three programs under the CARE International shift to a Program approach of operating¹.

One of these groups is *women in vulnerable, chronically food insecure, rural smallholder households* (Program 1). Since identifying this group CARE Malawi has initiated a series of workshops, field studies, research and analysis to develop a program strategy, including a Theory of Change, to guide the implementation of the program.

In May 2010, CARE Malawi hosted the Southern Africa Regional Program Quality Network workshop. Participants included representatives from CARE Country Offices across the region, as well as from CARE UK and CARE USA. During this workshop CARE Malawi shared its draft program strategies so the Network could evaluate coherence and relevance of current program approaches for each theory of change and the underlying analysis. Teams travelled to field locations to meet impact population representatives and provided specific recommendations for CARE Malawi to strengthen their draft strategies and progress program development.

Methodology

Split into 2 groups, one to talk to women and one to men.

Observations

Both groups agreed the underlying causes of poverty are men. Men are not supporting the aspirations of the women, and although they will negotiate with women they do not support giving women control of finances/business/decision making. It was confirmed that a key constraint for this impact population is a lack of business skills, and that VSL has been a positive initiative for these women. The group agreed there are many social dimensions of what restricts women from being empowered, having more access to and control of resources and higher incomes, and what is needed is a shift away from viewing women as merely production units.

Recommendations

The team recommended the program **broaden its focus** on agricultural production to look at the woman as more than just a productive unit. More explicit **analysis** is required in the strategy document on issues of gender relations and empowerment of women, and this should be reflected in the Theory of Change. Similarly, the team recommended the Program 1 **impact goal is phrased** to include a rights-based focus which reflects the empowerment of women, rather than being so focussed on control of productive resources and economic outcomes.

The team made several recommendations on the wording in the domains of change and revised the **Theory of Change formula** to reflect the multiplying effect of women's contribution and influence in decision making processes and structures. **Pathways** of change and **breakthroughs** were rephrased and new pathways and breakthroughs added, mostly to reflect the broadening of program focus beyond agriculture and food security, to include service delivery, supportive institutional frameworks, gender relations, social position and empowerment of women. These are outlined overleaf:

¹ A program is a coherent set of initiatives by CARE and its allies that involves a long term commitment to specific marginalized and vulnerable groups to achieve lasting impact at broad scale on underlying causes of poverty and social injustice. This goes beyond the scope of projects to achieve positive changes in human conditions, in social positions and the enabling environment.

Domain of Change 1 – Increased access to, use and control of productive resources, services and opportunities by women

- **Service delivery takes women’s needs and constraints into consideration**
- **Women gaining greater access and control of productive assets**
- **Men consult or engage with women on household resource allocation**
- **Legal framework in place that secures women’s inheritance and tenure rights**

Domain of Change 2 - Increased contribution of women to household food security and income

- **Women able to engage in gender-appropriate production options**
- **Women’s participation in producer groups, networks and associations strengthened**
- Access to microfinance services and VSL-IGA
- Access to **markets and** market information services
- Off-farm and non-farm livelihoods diversification
- Productivity enhancing inputs, improved husbandry and conservation agriculture methods applied
- Communities have improved capacity to mitigate risk of disaster

Domain of Change 3 - Increased contribution and influence of women in decision making processes and structures on issues that affect women and their households

- **Building women and men’s understanding of rights and responsibilities at individual and community level to increase women’s agency**
- **Activities to support men in changing of practice that negatively affect women**
- Accountability, transparency and effectiveness of district and community structures (**including VSL groups**) in planning & budgeting and management processes
- Improved coordination b/w Community institutions
- Enhanced civil society **that supports women’s lives**

Summary of recommended P1 Theory of Change

