LAND TENURE CASE STUDY

GREATER RURAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN LEARNING SERIES

MEDA

Canada
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ACRONYMS

CAD  Canadian Dollar
GHS  Ghana Cedi
GROW Greater Rural Opportunities for Women
KFPs Key Facilitating Partners
MEDA Mennonite Economic Development Associates
MGA Male Gender Activist
MoFA Ministry of Food and Agriculture
NGOs Non-Governmental Organizations
UWR Upper West Region

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I. ABSTRACT

Typically, economic development projects focused on agriculture and food security ignore the issue of land tenure. This is because most economic development projects tend to be gender-neutral, which is often gender-blind in reality, focused on male heads-of-households, who tend to control economic resources with the assumption that the benefits will trickle down to women and children. For a women-centric project, like Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW), MEDA found that land tenure was critical and underpinned women’s ability to participate in agriculture, their agricultural productivity – that includes access to all natural resources whether it be water, trees for firewood or fruits from the trees themselves – and ultimately, their income. Once women are able to earn incomes, they are able to make decisions by increasing investments in children’s education and health, and reduced household poverty and improve their overall agency within their homes and community.

A gender lens or gender analysis is required for economic development projects, especially projects focused on agriculture, to identify gender-based constraints, along with general market constraints. Gender analysis can also contextualize and provide implementers and funders with an understanding of the enabling environment, that govern and drive women and men’s behavior and attitudes. Therefore, it is important to identify gender-based constraints, to develop mitigating strategies that reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over the resources and that benefit development. This paper will discuss Ghana’s enabling environment and gender-based constraints, as they relate to land tenure and security, and highlight project interventions, such as advocacy and increased gender awareness. It will also highlight project results, challenges faced by the project and lessons learned, which include designing an outcome around secure land access and conducting advocacy and sensitization events with customary leaders earlier in the project.

II. INTRODUCTION/CONTEXT

A. GROW Project Overview

Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) is made possible with the generous support of Global Affairs Canada and implemented by Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) with a total budget of CAD 20 million. With support from five Key Facilitating Partners (KFPs) – PRONET North, TUDRIDE, PRUDA, CARD and CAPECS – the GROW project operates

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1 The GROW budget of CAD 20 million is made up of CAD 18 million from the Government of Canada and CAD 2 million from MEDA. The project began in 2012 and closes at the end of 2018.

2 MEDA’s KFPs are: CAPECS (Capacity Enhancement and Community Support), TUDRIDE (Tumu Deanery Rural Integrated Development Program), CARD (Community Aid for Rural Development), ProNet (Professional Network North) and PRUDA (Partnerships for Rural Development Action).
in 8 districts in the Upper West Region, empowering women farmers to create opportunities through cultivation, utilization and sale of soybeans, accessing extension services and markets to increase their household's economic well-being.

GROW's goal is to improve food security for 20,000 women farmers and their families in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Project activities include helping women improve the availability, access to and utilization of appropriate and nutritious food by strengthening production, processing and linkages to markets. To achieve this, women Lead Farmers are identified to help train others in their communities on good agronomic practices to maximize crop yields, with a special focus on soybean cultivation. Entrepreneurial women farmers are trained and supported to become Sales Agents, buying and aggregating soy from other women and selling it to processors and markets. Women are linked to appropriate financial services, including Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups, financial institutions and insurance providers. Advocating for women’s increased agency, particularly as it relates to decision-making within the household and community, is another key component of the GROW project.

During the 2017 harvest season, GROW supported 21,500 farmers to harvest 13,643 hectares of soybean, producing a yield of 14,632 metric tons. GROW farmers sold 11,169 tons of this soya at an average price of GHS 200 per 100kg,
The GROW Learning Series

Over seven years of implementation, the GROW project has learned a great deal about food security and women’s economic empowerment in northern Ghana. The project team is happy to share the lessons learned in the GROW Learning Series. The Learning Series papers focus on time use and women’s work, nutrition and food security, financial inclusion, women and technology, conservation agriculture and women’s economic empowerment.

B. Socioeconomic Context

Currently, Ghana ranks 139 out of 177 in the United Nation Development Program’s 2015 Gender Inequality Index (GII) with a value of 0.547. The GII shows if a country is experiencing high inequality and how unequal the distribution of human development is. Ghana’s rank indicates that much work still needs to be accomplished to achieve gender equality. Furthermore, Ghana carries a very high discrimination score (0.2988 out of 1.0) on OECD’s Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), especially in securing access to land. SIGI data confirms that access to land remains a key barrier for women smallholder farmers in Ghana to achieve parity in the equal distribution of economic and natural resources.

Ultimately, land tenure impacts women’s productive capacity and their ability to access formal credit, which is often asset-based lending. For instance, banks in Ghana greatly prefer land and buildings as collateral, but where women have more limited access to property, they have less ability to use property as collateral, limiting their access to credit.4

During the initial soybean market system analysis conducted in 2012, research indicated yields for small farmers in Upper West range from 400-600 kg / acre, which was far below potential yields predicted by MOFA, who identified up to

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3 In 2017, the average exchange rate was 1 GHS (Ghanaian cedi) to 0.30 CAD (Canadian dollars).
2.5 MT/acre for commercial farming, if proper production practices are followed. Value chain actors and soya experts overwhelmingly indicated that these low yields are a direct result of improper application of inputs and incorrect production techniques.

**Background on Land Tenure in Ghana**

Land is among the most important assets for people around the world. Land tenure is the relationship, whether legally or customarily defined, among people, as individuals or groups, with respect to land (including other natural resources on that land, such as water and trees). Land tenure rules define the ways in which property rights to land are allocated, transferred, used, or managed in a society. It also defines the conditions and expiration dates for land access. When land tenure is secure, land can be a cornerstone for economic growth and an incentive for investment. When land rights are insecure, this can lead to conflicts, instability and the exclusion of vulnerable groups, such as women, indigenous people and the poor.

Land tenure was a gender-based constraint identified in the original gender analysis conducted in 2013, as women have limited ownership and land use rights in the UWR.

Ghana’s land is governed by a pluralistic legal system in which customary and statutory systems overlap. Statutory systems involve written, codified rules dictating who has access and for what; customary systems are more informal, based on community understanding and tradition. Customary law considers property as a family asset to be administered by the family head, who is usually a man. Access to land may be through inheritance, pleading, marriage, sharecropping or renting. While there are legal and regulatory systems in place, customary law and social norms undercut these formal guarantees. FAO echoes this statement: “a country’s laws may declare that men and women have equal rights to hold property and to inherit it, but if cultural norms and practices are in conflict with such laws, the rights of women are likely to be ignored.” Eighty percent of land in Ghana is under customary tenure managed by village chiefs, who hold rights to communal land and other custodians of customary lands. Only 20% of land in Ghana is under statutory tenure.

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10 Why Land Tenure Should be Considered in Design of Projects, FAO. Retrieved from: http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4307e/y4307e06.htm#TopOfPage
Customary laws are informal property customs and laws that lack official state recognition, but often supersede the formal legal rules and processes. Within customary law, FAO tries to simplify the three levels of property rights to the following:

- **use rights**: rights to use the land for grazing, growing subsistence crops, gathering minor forestry products, etc.

- **control rights**: rights to make decisions how the land should be used including deciding what crops should be planted, and to benefit financially from the sale of crops, etc.

- **transfer rights**: right to sell or mortgage the land, to convey the land to others through intra-community reallocations, to transmit the land to heirs through inheritance, and to reallocate use and control rights.

Very often the poor in a community have only use rights. Despite this breakdown, FAO states that the exact manner in which rights to land are actually distributed and enjoyed is very complex. Within a family, a woman may have use rights for growing subsistence crops to feed her family, but her husband will have control rights, as he benefits financially from the sale of crops.

Legally, Ghana’s 1992 Constitution states that women and men have equal legal rights in relation to access to and management of non-land assets. It also states that women have the same rights as men to conclude contracts. Article 22(2) identifies a gap in the 1992 Constitution, which states that the Parliament should “as soon as practicable” enact legislation to regulate the property rights of spouses during and at dissolution of marriage. To date, no such legislation has been put in place, which means that married women’s property rights are unclear and their access to land is often restricted. In research published in 2013 in the UWR, it found that 64% of the female respondents did not know about their land rights. This could be attributed to the fact that women’s land rights are not customarily prescribed and institutionalized.

The Intestate Succession Law PNDC Law 111 (1985) and 1991 amendment is path-breaking departure from customary law and has been described as an important landmark of existing legislation on inheritance rights in Ghana. It creates greater security for widows and children. If a man died without a will,

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the Intestate Succession Law stipulates that the man’s property would be equally divided and distributed among his widow, children, and other members of the extended family. Yet most women are not aware of the existence of the Intestate Succession Law and the guarantees it provides. Even when women are aware of its contents, they often lack support in the process for claiming their rights.16

Laws, policies, rules, and customary laws can reinforce power differentials between men and women, and directly and indirectly discriminate against women, preventing women from full economic participation.17 In the Upper West region (UWR), patrilineal inheritance accounts for 97.1% of land acquisition in the Region.18 Patrilineal inheritance is defined as descent and inheritance as traced through the male figure which therefore has profound implications on gendered power relations. Patrilineal inheritance, which is governed by cultural norms, allows women to access and use land through marriage. As a result, women are dependent on their relationships with male relatives – a husband, father, brother or son. If given permission from their husbands, many wives can obtain temporary use of plots and land. Often these plots of land are undesirable – the least productive plots that are often the farthest away. Unmarried women rarely have access to land and widows are often left without legal recourse, especially if she does not have any male children. Since women do not hold the rights to the land that they are farming, they are vulnerable to sudden changes. These changes include relocation to a different part of the farm or losing access altogether. Women, especially unmarried women and widows, lack legal and cultural recourse to demand land, as she need to be affiliated with a man (husband or son) by marriage to access family or customary land in the UWR. To have access to and control over a land resource provides women with status within the household, as they have a secure source of income and livelihood, and within their community. This ultimately improves women’s bargaining power in household. Landesa, a leading nonprofit focused on land tenure, shares this research from Nepal that states that women who own land are more likely to have the final say in household decisions.19 Landesa also shares other compelling benefits that link secure land rights to better nutritional outcomes and household spending on food, access to credit, educational attainment for children, and improved overall household welfare.20


C. Description of Target Group

The target group for GROW’s interventions on land tenure include GROW women soybean farmers, Male Gender Activists, District Gender Officers, Chiefs and Queen Mothers, and our Key Facilitating Partners. In addition, MEDA has included landowners and the Government of Ghana. In order to target messages to these varied groups, the project designed specific interventions to conduct advocacy and community sensitization. These activities include dialogue and gender awareness-raising sessions with KFPs and Male Gender Activists (MGAs), about the importance of land access. For advocacy, GROW hosted two large events on land tenure focused on those who have influence on customary law, Chiefs and Queen Mothers, District Gender Officers, MGA, KFPs, and GROW Women soybean farmers. GROW also piloted a training on alternative dispute resolution, which discussed land rights and tenure, to advance women soybean farmers’ knowledge in land rights and issues of land tenure.

III. DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

A. Project Design for Land Tenure Activities

The gender analysis reviewed women’s roles and responsibility in agriculture in the UWR. It found that women often remained indebted (culturally) to provide free labour on the family’s farm first, instead of focusing on their own plot of land. Due to these reasons, women’s substantial contribution continues to be systematically marginalized and undervalued in conventional economic analyses and policies, while men’s contribution remains the central, often the sole, focus of attention by governments (FAO, 2011). This marginalization extends to the size and quality of land provided to women smallholder farmers in the UWR. In a 2012 report, FAO stated that “men hold 3.2 times more of the total number of farms in Ghana than women do; and men hold 8.1 times more of the medium and large-sized farms in Ghana (of 5 acres or more) versus women’s holdings of smaller farms, less than 5 acres.”21 In the UWR, women smallholder farmers shared that their holdings were significantly smaller, at 1-2 acres generally, which matched our baseline report findings (see IV. Results and Discussion).

The original gender analysis performed by MEDA also examined access and control issues around key resources or benefits, which is important in understanding how project activities will impact (or not) women and their families. The gender analysis identified gender-based constraints and mitigating strategies to address those constraints or challenges, which would ultimately impact the project’s ability to deliver on its ultimate and immediate outcomes. It is fundamental to understand what assets/opportunities women have access to

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and/or control over, who makes decisions about these assets and/or who benefits. As noted above, no one “owns” land in the UWR and focus group discussions with women and men shared that both have access to land, but men and/or community leaders maintain control over the land. In most cases, men/community leaders make the decisions over the use of the land. They also decide who, how much, and what quality of the land that women are entitled to. Through focus group discussions, female farmers shared that although the men/community’s control is evolving, women were still highly subject to men’s control in a multitude of areas.

There were regional differences highlighted in the gender analysis, such as women in communities in Sissala East and Nadowli being given the less fertile land. Women shared their struggles to secure larger land allotments and that their land entitlement would change from year-to-year. Often as the women started to improve the land and began to see higher yields, then men would take back that land from women, only to give them poorer land to start over with. The land accessible to women require intense physical labor to uproot tree stumps, clear rocks and level the steep grades present on the land. Men often provide women with the worst lands, as women are so desperate for land access that women will do the hard labor to improve the land, and when men capture the land, he is able to benefit from the newly improved lands. However, in Wa East, women cited that land was abundant and that men had started to give women better land so that their yields could be higher.

Ultimately, GROW’s gender analysis found that men have better access to land and maintain the highest quality land (most fertile, best access to water, etc.). Men also tend to secure land that is closest to the village. Although women have access to land, they generally struggled to secure good quality land or larger plots of land (over 3 acres) to secure for a longer-term period of time (more than 1-2 years). GROW identified male capture of women’s land and assets as a risk, especially if men see the value of soya.

GROW’s analysis stated that “In order to achieve optimal results for the GROW project, women farmers must have consistent, secure access to fertile land both during and in between growing seasons to allow good stewardship of the soil and other resources.” Therefore, hinged on a key project outcome, increased diverse agricultural productivity of food crops for smallholder farming families, particularly for women in the Upper West and Northern Regions of Ghana, is an indicator on the yield (MT/ha) of soybean produced by participating women farmers. In order to address the need to secure land access for women, GROW focused its interventions around awareness raising and advocacy through customary tenure. Customary law and informal land deals are seen as the most manageable way to provide secure land access to women, especially given that a majority of Ghana’s land falls under customary tenure. Recent research around legal or statutory tenure rules found that women’s access is routinely lost through formal titling and registration. Following this formal statutory strategy would be
very expensive, bureaucratic and slow, and it would require extensive education
to women and men on the process for land registration. 2010 research on land
ownership and gender disparity from Wa shared that 45% of male and 60%
of women respondents who held search reports and allocation notes believed
that they were land leases. This phenomenon is attributable to the low level of
public education on the land documentation process and its importance.22 Also,
women smallholder farmers would also need to be literate for the statutory
strategy to be effective. Therefore, the project pursued advocacy and awareness
raising in order to change cultural norms and practices around land, and other
project interventions focused on improving access to other non-land resources.
This included improving women smallholder farmers’ agronomic practices and
access to improved inputs, which is highlighted in other GROW Learning papers.
By focusing on land tenure and improved agronomic practices and inputs, MEDA
believes that it will lead to greater yields, productivity and eventually, incomes.

B. Steps in Implementing Land Tenure Interventions

GROW’s interventions included gender awareness raising sessions and dialogues to
raise awareness around gender-based constraints and inequalities. These gender
awareness sessions were conducted with the project’s five KFPs, MGAs, market
actors, and project communities. Within the awareness raisings efforts, GROW
conducted a small pilot on alternative dispute resolution, which discussed land
rights and tenure for women soybean farmers. The other land tenure intervention
focused on advocacy events with customary leaders, like Chiefs and Queen
Mothers, along with government officials (District Gender Officers) and members
of the community. GROW hosted two large events on land tenure to discuss and
advocate for land access for women smallholder farmers.

Over 1,000 people participated in the November 2017 GROW Land Tenure Forum

22 Kuusaana, Elias Danyi, Land Ownership and Gender Disparity in Ghana; Evidence from the Wa Municipal-
ity (November 5, 2010).
GROW conducted workshops to provide gender awareness training on gender equality for all project staff and partners, specifically gender focal points. Gender focal points are staff responsible for integrating gender within their organization and conduct gender awareness activities within the community. During Year 4, GROW began a new initiative to engage men in the advocacy of women’s rights and building awareness through dialogues with men within community on gender issues. These men, called Male Gender Activists or MGAs, recognize the important contributions of women in society during the gender dialogues. More information on MGAs can be found in the GROW Learning Paper on Male Engagement in WEE.23 GROW partners and MGAs conducted community outreach and mobilization to spread awareness around land access and rights. The initial training sensitized partners and MGAs around gender issues and core concepts, especially around access, which gives a person the use of a resource (e.g. land to grow crops) or access, and control (e.g. sell land), which allows a person to make decisions about who uses the resource or to dispose of the resource. The training also trained partners and MGAs on GROW’s Gender strategy, and their responsibilities in strengthening dialogue between men and women on gender inequality, including land laws and their rights. GROW provided refreshers on gender sensitization, how to conduct community mobilization around the topic of gender, and included time for KFPs and MGAs to gather yearly to discuss learning and troubleshooting issues. The awareness session that were conducted by KFPs and MGAs in the community targeted both men and women to enlighten and educate women and men on the differences between sex and gender, the importance of gender equality, the benefits of long-term and secure land tenure, and began dialogues around gender roles and responsibilities.

Fr. Clement Mweyang Aapengnuo, CECOTAPS, facilitates a dialogue with GROW women on negotiation and rights-based approaches for securing land rights

23 Please find this paper on meda.org
In order to build further awareness around land tenure and rights, GROW piloted a training workshop on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) for women smallholder farmers of soybeans with Center for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies (CECOTAPS). Since the project interventions focus on behavior change, disrupting norms, and power dynamic, especially around limited and scarce resources like land and natural resources, it was essential to pilot this training that would build women’s awareness and skills around ADR. CECOTAPS provided a training on the causes of land and natural resource disputes, their rights to access land, natural resources, and tenure security, and how land use rights formalization can be a tool for conflict prevention and resolution. The training, which was conducted with fifty women from Wa West, included role-plays, drama, stories and songs, to understand the five ways of dealing with conflict: Accommodation, Avoidance, Collaboration, Compromise and Competition. Women were able to understand and practice the skills and processes needed to negotiate and document land use rights in order to prevent conflicts. The training was very participatory, as women smallholder farmers could share experiences through a photo story walk activity, listened to storytelling, and shared knowledge. The ADR training highlighted the importance of negotiation and mediation skills, and how it could improve gender dynamics and land tenure and security to land and natural resources. Ultimately, ADR training will help mitigate the risk of domestic violence, gender injustices, and social isolation. All fifty women participants of the training pledged to use their improved knowledge and attitudes to serve as leaders and to apply their new ADR knowledge in their communities and groups.

On November 18, 2017, GROW hosted a land advocacy event at University of Development Studies in Wa, Ghana, the first of its kind. Facilitated by Fr. Clement Mweyang Aapengnuo, Executive Director at CECOTAPS, the day-long event

![Women talk about their experiences with land tenure](image)
advocated for formalized land agreements for both men and women in the UWR. The audience included Chiefs, Queen Mothers, landowners, community leaders, GROW’s Lead Farmers, KFPs, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, women in agricultural development, MGAs, and opinion leaders. The event engaged more than 1,000 attendees and highlighted the voices of GROW smallholder farmers (see photo to the right). The women speakers advised Chiefs and landowners on how they could help women to create more sustainable livelihoods for them and their families. After six years, GROW smallholder farmers have seen how that investment into their small plots of land is lost with constant changes from one plot to another, and now this message is being shared more widely and heard. The first-hand stories began a conversation within the region on why land tenure for all community members, specifically women, is necessary. Fr. Aapengnuo explained to local community leaders the socio-economic benefits of women accessing land for longer durations, a critical factor in farming success. He also highlighted how providing women access to long and secure tenure was the best form of resource management and security for future generations of farmers.

Following the event, GROW team visited their five KFP partners to ensure that the message was heard and felt throughout the community.

To consolidate the gains from the November 2017 forum, GROW organized another advocacy forum with Paramount Chiefs and Queen Mothers, Regional Registrar, Counsel, Registrars, Accountants, Research officer, and other attendants the following year. The goal of the July 9, 2018 forum was to advocate for longer and secure land tenure, get the commitment of Paramount Chiefs, and develop a communiqué, which will be enforced in all communities. The communiqué drafted during the one-day session agreed that Ghana is a pluralistic system as discussed above, and that increased land ownership would increase food security and livelihoods of families. The communiqué pledged to work with all stakeholders, NGOs, and international organizations to map out a clear strategy that will demarcate, document, and synchronize land use in all traditional areas in the UWR. It also advocated to work together for easy and equitable access to land for women and vulnerable communities in the UWR. Lastly, the communiqué advocated for legislation on land related areas, committed to building human capacity of chiefs and stakeholders, in matters of affecting land at the regional, district and traditional area levels, and to build the institutional capacities of traditional councils and customary land secretariats. The communiqué, which was endorsed by Chairman of the Regional House of Chiefs and the Country Project Manager of the GROW project, commits the divisional and sub-divisional chiefs to advocate for women’s long and secure land tenure. The was endorsed with the Regional House of Chiefs, and Queen Mothers were identified as the best individuals to publicize and speak to the community about this communiqué. The Queen Mothers received four copies of the communiqués to give one copy to their community chiefs, to give two copies to a local women’s group, and to give one copy to the Tindaanas (Land owners). The Queen Mothers shared that this
communiqué was a strong weapon for accountability for Chiefs and land owners, as it could justify longer and secure land tenure arrangements for women.

In addition, the Regional Gender Officer has now made the communiqué part of their outreach strategy throughout the region. They are making over 100,000 copies of the document and will devise trainings for all their targeted communities where they have heard of the resistance from men within the communities. This is a great example of how ownership from a government entity will ensure sustainability and a larger outreach to all women within UWR.

Queen Mothers, Chiefs and GROW team stand and sit together, following the July 2018 land tenure, in their commitment to longer and secure land tenure arrangements for women smallholder farmers in the UWR.
IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data on land tenure have been collected from several sources including the project’s initial Soybean Value Chain Analysis (June 2012), which included an integrated Gender Assessment; the GROW Gender Strategy, which included expanded Gender Analysis findings (March 2013); and various monitoring and evaluation reports including the baseline report (June 2013), mid-term evaluation (July 2017) an end-line Report (November 2018). One of the project’s indicators focused on the metric ton/hectare of soybean produced by participating women farmers, which allowed GROW to understand the size of women’s land and how they used that land for agricultural diversity and productivity.

During the initial analysis and gender assessment, research and focus group discussions with female farmers presented land sizes of approximately 1-3 acres, with typically 0.5-1 acre dedicated to soya. The baseline found that the land size that women smallholder farmers cultivated ranged from 5 acres to as small as 0.1 acre, with the average being 1 acre. Further analysis of this shows that the majority of women (82%) cultivated either 1 acre or less with just a few of them (18%) cultivating 1.5 acres or more. When the project began, women cultivated other crops, such as maize, millet, groundnuts, rice, sorghum and various types of beans. Soya was a relatively new crop in Ghana and since its introduction in the early 20th century, it has slowly gained recognition as a significant staple for household consumption. Soybean cultivation was not common amongst the women farmers, during the 2012 cropping season. The baseline report found that only 16% of GROW smallholder farmers grew soybeans.

The project focused on educating women smallholder farmers in not only the economic opportunities in growing soya, but also the nutritional benefits.
The project also focused on improving the productivity of what land women had access to. Therefore, GROW focused on agricultural extension, improving agronomic practices and improved inputs, adopted the Women Lead Farmer model, and aimed to improve women’s access to time and labour-saving technologies through the Technology fund. GROW adopted strategies focused on awareness raising and advocacy to improve women's access to land, which encouraged informal land deals for women to have longer and secure land access. This in turn made women smallholder farmers want to invest in their soil with high quality inputs and invested in farming as a business.

The preliminary November 2018 end-line report shows that the individual female soya smallholder farmer cultivates 1.93 acres in 2018 production season. The lands on which the women farmers cultivated their crops were largely family owned (93.64%). Only 2.44 percent of soy was farmed on rented land and the remaining based on other types of arrangements. Further analysis showed that the average duration of access to land irrespective of tenure type was on average 5 years. This means that the women farmers do not have to yearly negotiate for tenureship before cultivation. However, women farmers in DBI, Sissala East and West tended to have relatively longer duration of access to family lands, which was estimated at about 8 years when compared to the other women in the other districts.

GROW assisted women the women farmers to diversify their farm crop portfolio. When women smallholder farmers were asked what types of crops were cultivated, 34.2 percent of the women farmers cultivated at least four crops. Of the 2,063 farmers interviewed for the end-line report, 90.06% cultivated soy. For those farmers who could not cultivate soy for the season, farmers shared that they cultivated eight other crops, which include maize, millet, sorghum, beans, cowpea and yam. The three top reason provided for not growing soya included the inability to access inputs in a timely fashion (30.56%), inability to acquire land (28.70%), and no longer having the desire to to farm soya (17.59%).

GROW attribute this change in land tenure to the results from our women clients, who grow soy and now, have increased the household’s access to better nutrition, education for the children, and ability to provide a better economic position for the entire household. Where gains are substantial, men are willing to provide more secure access to the lands for their women. This is evident in the amount of lands cultivated in the UWR. GROW was also able to see that women are now investing in inputs, which shows that they view their land access as more secure, as they previously did not invest in their land. The end-line report showed that 85.17% of the women farmers had access to farm inputs and used inputs, whereas only 14.83% did not have access. This shows an improvement in access to improved inputs from the baseline (14.1%) and control group (55.04%).

“...It was very easy because our husbands readily allocate a portion of their land for us to use for farming...we don't go through hustle to get access to land. On the other hand, if there is even an opportunity to get land from someone to farm, your husband will assume that you share something with the person that’s why the person gave you the land.”

—FGD discussant, on improved access to land during the end-line evaluation interventions
Ama is a 61-year-old widow and mother of five grown children living in the Sissala East District. She joined the GROW project in 2014 and is a member of the ‘Angenkye (who knows tomorrow?)’ Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) group.

Before joining the project, Ama cultivating only groundnut and vegetables on a back-yard plot of land that she inherited from her late husband. Due to her old age, she could not walk the distance to her husband’s farm, which was a vast plot located in the bush. Therefore, she has depended on the half acre backyard plot for her farming activities. There were bigger plots close to her backyard plot, where she could diversify her crops to include soybeans, but Ama’s husband’s brothers refused to release the lands to her. The proceeds from the half-an-acre farm was barely sufficient for her personal and family’s needs. When Ama joined the project in 2014, she wished to cultivate an acre of soybeans but she did not have access to additional land to expand her farm.

As part of GROW’s community mobilization process, the project worked with the women farmers to identify Male Gender Activists (MGAs) within various communities where the project operates. The MGAs serve as allies to women smallholder farmers and sensitize in the community to support their women in farming. Saani, a MGA within Sissala East District, negotiated with Ama’s late-husband’s brothers, who control the family lands, to provide Ama with additional backyard plots, so that she could have more land to cultivate soyabees. In the end, Ama was allocated two and half acres of land. Ama exclaimed “eei se wu be hu se baa wo acres mienu e niferwa fie (hardly would you see a woman with more than two acres of land at home).” During the 2017 farming season, she used the two and half acres to cultivate soybeans.

Ama plans to participate in the GROW’s “Smart Subsidy” Technology fund to purchase fencing wire, so that she can properly protect her plot of land from animal destruction. She expressed her appreciation to the GROW project and its partner, TUDRIDEP, for sensitizing her husband’s brothers and men in her community for allocating land to women. Ama is hopeful for a good harvest, which will support her and her family.
VI. CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSION

FAO shares the following insightful insight on the importance of addressing and changing socio-cultural norms and customary law that manage behaviors, attitudes, and rules around land tenure. “Promoting changes, such as gender equity in land ownership, might require not only changes in land policy and land legislation, but also in the attitudes of much of the population. Because land tenure is a relationship among people, the rules defining the rights of access to land reflect the balance, or imbalance, of power as much as anything else. Changing the rules is not simply a matter of increasing access to some; it may result in a fundamental shift in existing power structures.”24 These power structures are the underlying social and cultural factors that limit women’s ability to interact with and benefit from the agricultural economy, especially in Ghana. Power impacts gender in the perceived stereotypes and assumptions, which lead to discriminatory norms and attitudes that manifests in many of the cultural norms that impact GROW clients beyond land tenure. GROW recognizes that more could have been done to address power structures, increased gender dialogues and awareness, and advocacy. Currently the project discusses gendered power relations and constraints in its gender awareness trainings, but more could have been done earlier to encourage women’s inclusion in customary land governance structures, to sensitize (traditional, religious, and other community) leaders and to encourage women to actualize their knowledge of their rights within the UWR. In order to have address the multidimensional social changes, the project also could have partnered with a local women’s rights organization to help liaise with the other KFPs to build and improve women’s civic education on land laws. GROW is thankful for its partnership with CECOTAPs as it added to the holistic view of women’s economic empowerment that combines rights and conflict resolution to the market systems approach of the project. The gender awareness sessions, along with the advocacy event, started a dialogue between women and men on issues of land, which is needed to facilitate change.

To change socio-cultural norms and customary law takes years and even generations to change. However, change is possible as we can all identify how gender norms in our own cultures are possible. As long as projects like GROW exist to highlight and mitigate gender-constraints, to build awareness to women and men, promote local roles models, and leaders, and improve women’s access and agency, we will slowly, but surely see norms and customs change and get re-learned into a new social construct that values gender equality.

Ghana is in a period of transition from informal to formal, cultural to customary to statutory land use. Each and every individual is impacted by this shift and

24 Why Land Tenure Should be Considered in Design of Projects, FAO. Retrieved from: http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4307e/y4307e06.htm#TopOfPage
how Ghana approaches this will be the foundation for the future of all access to natural resources. Women are vulnerable at all stages from family dynamics, lack of representation in legal matters, and by lack of education. Addressing land tenure must be at the foundation of each and every engagement with women in agriculture. To simply not prioritize gender lenses on the issue of land tenure is to hinder a project’s greater impact and sustainability. One recommendation is to require an immediate outcome, under a gender equality outcome, to ensure that the agriculture project ensure land tenure for women and men, which would ensure that implementers address underlying root causes of gender quality and improve the data gaps around the duration, length of women’s access to land and size. Agriculture projects must engage all stakeholders at each and every level on the issue on land tenure, which is why it is important that land tenure is factored into project design. It will also help with the consistent positive messaging to all that land tenure is simply not the ownership of land but how one’s stewardship of that land, so that it is maintained for the future generations.

GROW and its partners have seen land sold for quick monetary gain, or worse, leasing out to companies who destroy the land’s productivity without remediation penalties. GROW recommend to funders and other project implementers to include formal training of local leaders with government entities, and advocacy for good land tenure. Through our partnership with CECOTAPs, GROW identified the need for further education and training on Land Use Rights Formalization (LURF), which provides greater land security for women and other vulnerable groups, by building their skills and strengthening of community land governance structures. LURF provides opportunities for farmers and other groups to document their landholding to secure loans from financial institutions, creating an entry point for community led advocacy, but also a database of land right holders, along with a hierarchy of resource use and access. The Chiefs and Queen Mothers, , the customary leaders shared the desire to learn more about land tenure – the formal legal rules and legislation, and the informal structures – in order to educate themselves and other stakeholders more. This is echoed in the communiqué, where the Chiefs and Queen mothers identified the need for further forums with land tenure experts, land commission officials, and stakeholders. CECOTAPs’ LURF process outlines engagement with traditional leaders and “Tendamaba” (Landlords), conducting capacity building and training of traditional authorities, and women and youth. Through training on land negotiation and demarcation of the land plots, and the development and signing of land use rights agreements will increase women and vulnerable groups’ secure access to land, reduce land conflict and engender peaceful coexistence.

In order to address poverty and hunger, women need to be able to participate in economic opportunities and to have access to and control over the resources (both land and non-land resources). One building block to improved access, is the knowledge of knowledge and recognition to women’s rights to secure land rights. It is through this knowledge and improved access that women are able to improve
their agency and economic participation. When this occurs, women and men will be able to close the gender gap that FAO shares will increase yields on farms by 20–30 percent which could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5–4% which could reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12–17%.

GROW participant addresses a crowd of stakeholders during the November 2017 Land Tenure Forum
Offices in Canada, the United States and around the world. Visit our website for a complete list.

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