

THE SERIE'S FOUR COMPONENTS:

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Inspiring Initiatives

Some ASP Facts

The Agricultural Support Programme targeted 44.000 households during the course of 5 years.

The Agriculture Support Programme consisted of five main programme components:

1. *Entrepreneurship and business development;*

Building entrepreneurship and business development skills through workshops and action planning, including special courses targeting women, youth and families.

2. *Land, seed, crop livestock development;*

Extension- and micro-training, demonstrations and learning visits were undertaken to enhance the adoption of new production techniques.

3. *Infrastructure fund;*

Investment in small-scale infrastructure projects that enhance economic expansion and marketing opportunities (bridges, market sheds and goat marketing centre).

Why this initiative is inspiring

The Agriculture Support Programme (ASP) of the Ministry of Agriculture in Zambia is an inspiring initiative since it effectively reached women while also producing tangible changes in gender relations at the household level and women's economic empowerment. As a result women's position in the community has improved.

Wife: "My husband used to have the upper hand in marketing cattle. Now the ownership of the cattle is shared among the family members. We sit down and as a family agrees on sale and, if we are not in agreement, we do not sell"

Programme objective

The overall goal of the ASP was to contribute to poverty reduction by improving livelihoods of small-scale farmer households by:

- Improved food and nutrition security; and,
- Increased income through the sale of agricultural-related products and services.

The programme consisted of five components (see left for more details). Gender was mainstreamed into the facilitation and implementation of all programme activities.

Results

The project resulted in women improving their farming and entrepreneurial skills. Women also gained increased control over household income. This in turn led to improved relationships between women and men. Households with more equitable relationships made more economic progress than others. Women's self-esteem and confidence increased and became more involved in decision making both at home and in the community.

The ASP gender mainstreaming efforts and results included:

- The whole family (husbands, wives and adult children) participated in workshops, training and learning visits;
- Women's skills were enhanced and productivity increased;
- Women were confident to become involved in traditionally predominantly male enterprises;
- Women attended entrepreneurship training, saving schemes, established own business enterprises; and,
- Sustainability of food production, as all members of a household knows and can perform the tasks necessary to uphold food security.

4. *Improved service delivery of support entities*

Development and capacity building of any kind of entities (individuals, groups, organizations, trainers, buyers of agricultural produce, etc.) who increase and improve the provision of services that is beneficial to the farmers.

5. *Management information and learning systems.*

Support to the whole programme through measuring, monitoring, documenting and disseminating the impact of ASP activities on the targeted households and sharing the lessons learnt.

ASP 's measures for creating a gender sensitive environment:

- Capacity building on gender issues during orientation of new staff and partners;
- 30% target for all training and meetings, ensuring that at least 30% of participants were women;
- Initiatives to encourage women to participate in leadership positions; and,
- Recruitment of women as Camp Extension Officers, facilitators and ASP district coordinators.

To learn more about the programme and its approach, visit:
<http://asp.ramboll.se/priortoasp.html>

What made a difference?

The success of ASP lies in the household focus, which included *technical training, entrepreneurship development* and the *household approach* for each individual participating household. All activities undertaken with actors such as the community, support entities, implementing partners, and district facilitation teams, included a measure of capacity building and sensitization of gender issues.

The “*household approach*” is highlighted as the central cornerstone of the whole programme cycle. The main elements of the household approach were:

- Regular, consistent and semi-intensive individual household visits by a Camp Extension Officer (CEO);
- All adult household members (husband, wife and adult children) participate in setting the household vision and planning to achieve it together;
- With the guidance of the CEO the household prepared an individual household action plan;
- The household mobilizes resources together; and,
- Progress is reviewed together.

Through insisting that the husband and wife, as well as the children, participate in the ASP activities the households become more efficient. It is evident that in households where the husband and wife work side by side in the farm there is tangible developmental progress and a common vision for the household.

Conclusions

- Agricultural programmes should go beyond the group level - which is where many traditional extension service delivery mechanisms are carried out- and be practiced on the individual level, so as to benefit both women and men.
- Gendered division of labour can be addressed indirectly through involvement of all household members in discussions on “How do we mobilize resources in the best way within the household?”
- Farming programmes, to best serve women’s needs to further achieve economic empowerment, should coordinate with other development efforts to enable investments and development of businesses, for example coordination with infrastructural programmes, PSD programmes, and energy saving programmes.
- A review identified remaining challenges for women to move beyond subsistence farming/production including:
 - Difficulties scaling up their business due to problems with maintaining a savings programme, where each members’ capacity for saving, paying mortgage and interest rates was crucial, since all of them had very limited economic capacity. Therefore the group could not provide money for each other’s needs for investment capital or risk taking.
 - Lack of knowledge in business management and how to develop good business ideas; and,
 - Limited access to the markets for some remote villages since the cost for transport is so high that it “eats up” any profit.