

CIKOD INCREASES ACTIVISM OF ANR-DEPENDENT POOR THROUGH TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES

By Bernard Guri

Between 2003 and 2008, CIKOD, working in partnership with CRAE International in Ghana has been seeking to engage traditional authorities and indigenous institutions in the CARE Natural Resources Management programme. The mission has been to contribute to the transformation of indigenous institutions and existing local groups in rural communities into vibrant grassroots civil society organizations capable of engaging power bearers for accountable and transparent natural resources governance.

The result so far is that Traditional men and women leaders including queen mothers in southern Ghana and their counterparts in northern Ghana have become more prominent and are engaging with power bearers including local government officials, forestry agents, gold mining companies and NGOs for access to resources and influencing policies in favour of their communities.

Some Specific Achievements

In the Upper West Region, TAs, while recognizing the contribution of the LAP as an important intervention to address most of the problems they are facing with land management, believe that TAs and their communities have not been sufficiently informed and involved in the process of establishing the Customary Land Secretariat neither have their participation been adequately solicited in the whole process. Through the intervention of CIKOD and CARE, the capacity of TAs in the region have been built and they are now challenging the LAP initiative and are working with their communities to develop their own Community Based Land Administration systems that are culturally sensitive and ensure access to land by the poor.

Also in the Upper West Region, with capacity support from CARE and CIKOD, TAs of the Nadowli district have engaged the Azumah Resources Ltd, an Australian gold mining company operating in the Upper West Region to demand transparency in its operations in the area.

In the Birim South area in the Eastern region, chiefs are playing a strong leadership role in engaging both timber and gold mining companies in the Kade area to demand sustainable management practices and adequate royalties for the development of their communities.

Over 50 Traditional women leaders in northern and southern Ghana are implementing action plans for increasing community participation in various development activities including eco-cultural tourism in the Tain and Wenchi

districts, livelihood support for widows and young girls in the Have Traditional area.

In the Brong Ahafo, Ashanti and Eastern Regions, CIKOD and CARE are working with TAs to develop culturally sensitive approaches to prevention, care and stigmatization in HIV/AIDS management.

On the other hand, since 2006, with support from the CRAE ANR programme, CIKOD has been engaging directly with some pilot communities to implement the community organizational development (COD) approach which supports communities to organize themselves along the lines of their existing traditional forms of organization and mobilizing their available resources and articulating and engaging power bearers

Some Specific Achievements

In the Lawra District, the Tanchara community, using the COD process re-organized the community into 10 traditional areas (sections) and implemented an annual development forum through which it successfully engaged local government agents and obtained support for a school building, a nurse for the local community clinic, and irrigation dam and a library.

In the Brong Ahafo Region the Forikrom community, using the COD process mobilized their community resources and demanded support from the District assembly for electrification of the community.

In Have in the Volta Region, Mama Tekke proudly says that the training from CARE and CIKOD has placed her in a new horizon. She recounts the significant changes that have occurred as a result of the training:

“I have successfully organized the women of my clan - “the Abrode clan” - to form the Abrode Women’s Association and the women are now undertaking income generating activities in snail rearing and bee keeping. I have influenced the Have Traditional Council to dedicate one day of their week long annual Agadevi festival to cultural education for women. On this day all females above the age of 18 years are giving cultural education by traditional women leaders to be abreast with norms and cultural values of the community. Competition is held in cooking, dressing and cultural games”.

These stories are an illustration that working with traditional authorities and indigenous institutions has the potential to enhance inclusiveness of the marginalized in their individual as well as community development process. It is therefore recommended that in facilitating any development initiative, efforts should be made to work through the traditional authorities and the existing indigenous institutions.

The most significant challenge is the doubt among some Ghanaians with regards the accountability and transparency of TAs to their people. To address this challenge, CIKOD would go into further research to identify and strengthen the traditional mechanisms for enhancing accountably and transparent engagement with TAs.