

TRADITIONAL QUEEN GIVES VOICE TO WOMEN IN HAVE COMMUNITY.

Mama Tekke Foliwa II is a traditional Queen of the people of Have, a rural community in the Hohoe district of the Volta Region of Ghana. Although the people all speak Eve, they are organized under several clans and engage predominantly in farming, fishing, *kente* weaving and petty trading. As a Traditional Queen, it is Mama's responsibility to provide leadership to the women folks in the community in terms of organizing them for livelihood activities, mediating in issues concerning women to ensure that they have justice, serving as a role model and giving education to young girls to ensure that they grow into responsible adult women. It is also her traditional responsibility to represent the interests of the women in both traditional and formal political forums.

In February 2005, CIKOD and the Center for Development Studies of the University of Cape Coast jointly organized a 5-day capacity building workshop for Traditional Queens on the theme: "The role of traditional queens in governance and natural resource management at the local level" for 25 selected Queens from all the seven regions of Southern Ghana at the University of Cape Coast.

The workshop was part of the capacity support service of CISOCS. The purpose of CISOCS was to strengthen the organizational capacity of rural communities through their indigenous institutions to be able to effectively participate in decision-making and lead their own development processes. Mama Tekke Foliwa II was one of the 25 participants at the workshop.

Mama had been installed for just six months as a traditional queen when she had the opportunity to participate in the workshop. Mama was already very popular with the women in the community because of her dedication to organizing all the women in her clan – the *ablode* clan – for income generation activities. However, she was not too confident in her role as a leader for these marginalized women. She did not even realize the authority she wielded as a traditional queen and the extent to which she could put this to use for the benefit of the women in the community. She had little information about the local government structure, and had little contacts with the outside world from which to tap new ideas and resources for her work as the leader and source of support for women in the community.

Now Mama Tekke proudly says that all this has now changed. The CISOCS training 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

This story is 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. This will be particularly useful for the various CARE ANR Components – FOREST, SLATE, BURN and FASE.