

## Women in Environmental Protection and Poverty Alleviation Ntankah Village Women Common Initiative Group, Cameroon



Harvesting vegetables for sale at the market

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The goal of this project was to protect the environment and improve the socio-economic condition of women. The objectives were:

- Build the capacity of women by curbing the practice of slash and burn agriculture to less than 20% of the present level;
- Teach about 150 women to produce compost from manure, and promote agro-forestry in the project area using leguminous species to at least 400 farms;
- Increase the maize yield of farmers from the present level of 1,050 kg to 2,100 kg/hectare within two years;
- Train the women's group and the community members in better agricultural practices and tree domestication as well as providing viable alternatives to slash and burn agriculture;
- Promote the exchange of information and best practices between women in the communities and elsewhere on effective land management strategies;
- Promote leadership amongst women in relation to environmental issues and promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

At project inception, some members of the organization did not want to abandon the practice of "slash and burn agriculture" as it increases the soil fertility. The technical advisor of the group encouraged women to have demonstration plots, one cultivated without the application of slash and burn agriculture and another one cultivated after burning the grasses.

At time of harvesting, it was observed that the plot cultivated without application of slash and burn agriculture yielded more corn and yams than other plot. Seeing the results, women were encouraged to abandon the traditional slash and burn practice.

**Location:**

Mankon fondom, Cameroon

**SGP Contribution:**

US\$28,501

**In kind co-financing:**

US\$6,040

**In cash co-financing:**

US\$8,347

**Number of Beneficiaries:**

150 families, 900 people

**Duration:**

15 Dec 2007 – 31 Dec 2009

**Awards and Recognition:**

2008 Red Ribbon Award



Women being taught mixed farming and crop rotation

**BACKGROUND**

The northwest province is one of the ten administrative units of Cameroon with a population of almost two million people. It is located in the western highlands and characterised by high altitude ranging from 1,000-3,008 meters above sea level.

Unsustainable agricultural land use practices such as traditional slash and burn, particularly in the northwest province, is often the cause of increased destruction of natural resources resulting to heightened poverty and human suffering.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

The target beneficiaries of this project were 24 women, 14 of whom were infected or affected by HIV/AIDS; and at least 150 women and their families living in nearby communities.

The main project activities were:

- Organization of workshops on the importance of soil and water as a

natural resource, appropriate farming techniques, negative environmental impacts of practice of slash and burn agriculture, modern pig production techniques;

- Production and use of manure to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers;
- Establishment and use of leguminous plants for soil fertility improvement;
- Selection and traditional breeding of five locally-adapted Maize varieties;
- Domestication (rearing) of cane rats;
- Production and sale of pigs and pig manure;
- Establishment of an environmental information and documentation center.

**RESULTS**

Major results of the project are decrease of soil erosion; increase in crop yield; reduction in greenhouse gas production; and reduction in the use of synthetic fertilizer.

Through environmental protection, the project has improved the social

and economic realities of the women and of the entire local population.

Moreover, as some Ntankah Village Women CIG members are women infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, this project gave them an opportunity to participate in community environmental initiatives helped put some value to themselves, by continuing to earn their living despite the disease and avoid the stigma in the community.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

- Greater level of environmental awareness organized for women;
- Increase in the use of organic manure; reduction of the practice of slash and burn and loss of biodiversity;
- Reduction of bush fires as well as the wrong application of chemical fertilizers;
- Reduction of conflicts caused by the spread of bush fires resulting from rampant practice of slash and burn.

# Contribution to the Millenium Development Goals

<b>MDG 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% increase in maize yields in farms owned by participating women</li> <li>• 5 varieties of maize adapted to local soil selected and distributed to 60 farmers</li> </ul>
<b>MDG 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 193 women trained in environment-related issues</li> <li>• 62 women trained in cane rat domestication</li> <li>• Participation of women infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, providing an opportunity to participate in community environmental initiatives, continuing to earn a living despite the disease and avoiding the stigma in the community.</li> </ul>
<b>MDG 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% reduction in use of chemical fertilizers</li> <li>• 40% increase in use of organic manure and compost</li> </ul>



Watering the compost heap

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Through the baseline survey, women members now had a better understanding of their economic contribution to the household and community as they are encouraged to quantify their inputs.

The community was interested in raising pigs and cane rat to leverage additional income. Pig manure was then used as a fertilizer, improving the quality and quantity of other crops such as maize and sweet potatoes.

The information and documentation centre has been popular to the community as they avail themselves of a wide collection of books, magazines and pamphlets as well as making use of new media (internet stations).

Men have recognized women as valuable partners in sustaining homes and families. Moreover,

new partnerships with other development stakeholders have been built because of the success of this initiative. A part of the money from the Red Ribbon Award has been used to expand the piggery and have more animals.

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The project was designed for women, who then participated in all the phases of the project: from design to implementation and evaluation. At least 150 women participated and are to be considered as direct beneficiaries of this project. Lastly, the organisation was invited to participate in gender equality and gender empowerment activities through their membership in Groots International and Huairou Commission.

## SUSTAINABILITY

This project is sustainable due the success of some of its key activities, this is the case of:

- The skills and knowledge learned from cane rat domestication training enables the generation of income. Further, each member is given two animals used for start-up breeding in the piggery.
- The training attended by women on other topics are skills that they can use for job generation or for building up their own businesses.

## LESSONS LEARNED

This project was designed as a participatory, awareness raising, capacity building and income generating initiative owned by women. To this effect, it has succeeded in educating women on the importance of rational and sustainable management of natural resources such as soil and wildlife.

This initiative also enhanced the technical capacity of women to carry out modern pig farming and crop production using low external inputs.



Pruning leguminous tree for optimum performance

## MAIN FEATURES OF THE SGP IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING

- Gender is one of the main criteria considered for the approval of grants.
- Promote mainstreaming of gender at the earliest stages of the project cycle. Men and women participate in the initial stages of project conception, approval and implementation.
- Needs assessment is done at the project development phase and is used to define the roles of women and men early in the project. This helps minimize conflict among different stakeholders during and after the project cycle with respect to roles in project activities and sharing of project benefits.
- Document the contribution of women to project activities in key areas where women already figure prominently (e.g., biodiversity management, in situ conservation of agrobiodiversity, conservation of medicinal plants, etc.). This contributes significantly to enhanced integration of gender considerations in current and future projects.
- SGP National Steering Committees employ checklists and criteria to assess and screen projects for how they mainstream gender. Moreover, some SGP countries have developed gender guidelines to mainstream gender into the project cycle.
- SGP's demand-driven approach at the local level increases the likelihood of receiving proposals from women and marginalized groups.
- SGP holds "proposal writing workshops" and accept project proposals in local languages, and even in oral formats through participatory video proposals. Thus encouraging maximum participation by marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as women and youth.
- SGP encourages women stand-alone projects in line with the GEF focal areas.
- Grantees are encouraged to participate in the global peer-learning network.
- Field evaluation, including monitoring and evaluation and participatory appraisals, incorporates gender-based indicators to track the status of gender mainstreaming in projects.
- Gender-focused training and sensitization workshops are provided for National Coordinators at the regional level and for grantees at the national level.
- National Steering Committees—a voluntary body that makes all decisions on grant making—are required to include a gender specialist.
- National Coordinators performance is explicitly assessed with respect to results achieved in promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Community Action...

**Global Impact**



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