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Trickle-Down Effect of Policies and Strategies for Gender Integration



A Case Study by IGNITE
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The Impacting Gender and Nutrition through Innovative Technical Exchange in Agriculture (IGNITE) project was a technical assistance programme, implemented by Tanager and its learning partners, in four African countries from 2018–2024. The project supported 35 African agricultural institutions across 18 countries to integrate gender and nutrition into their business operations and agricultural interventions.



Trickle-Down Effect of Policies and Strategies for Gender Integration

Introduction

To strengthen African institutions' ability to integrate gender and nutrition into their agricultural interventions, the Impacting Gender & Nutrition through Innovative Technical Exchange in Agriculture (IGNITE) project provided customised technical assistance that would address the unique needs, capacities, and priorities of each client institution. One form of technical assistance involved evaluating existing policies, approaches, strategies, plans, or training programmes and providing tools to enhance these documents. Throughout the project, IGNITE supported 16 institutions to develop or revise their gender strategies. From this engagement, two institutions created new gender policies, while 14¹ updated their strategies for specific programmes and initiatives. IGNITE provided a gender strategy template and other relevant guidance documents and tools as part of its capacity building package.

In addition to policy support, IGNITE also offered capacity building and technical assistance on data management, raised staff awareness on gender issues, and equipped them with the necessary skills to implement and monitor their institution's gender policy and strategy. These institutional gender policies/strategies included a gender action plan, which outlined specific actions for each institution to take to implement its strategy. IGNITE hypothesised that these gender action plans or approaches would make institutions more gender-inclusive and responsive in their operations. This, in turn, would increase the likelihood of the institution's programming or interventions contributing to improved gender equality outcomes at the household and individual level, ultimately empowering women within the agricultural sector.

¹ Association Burkinabè d'Action Communautaire (ABAC), African Agriculture Technology Foundation (AATF), Amo Farm, Caisse Mutuelle Du Burkina Faso (CMBF), Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), Food Health Systems Advisory (FHSA), Groupe d'Accompagnement à l'Investissement et à l'Épargne (GRAINE SARL), Hamara, Heifer, Promotion du Développement Industriel Artisanal et Agricole (PRODIA), Sahel consulting, Solidaridad, and Union des Sociétés Coopératives pour la Commercialisation des Produits Agricoles de la Boucle du Mouhoun (USCCPA/BM)

Objectives

This case study explores the institutionalisation of gender policies and strategies in IGNITE's client institutions. It examines how client institutions that received support from IGNITE implemented the gender actions and recommendations outlined in their institutional gender policies/strategies. Additionally, it explores the 'trickle-down'² effects of these changes on gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes at the household and community levels.

It explores whether IGNITE's support led to the successful integration of gender policies/strategies within these institutions, and the resulting impact on both the organisations and households.

First, the case study provides an overview of IGNITE's process for enhancing institutions' capacity to develop and implement gender strategies, with a focus on improving gender equality outcomes at the household level.

It then documents how IGNITE's support in gender strategy development influenced institutional approaches to working with their target groups, such as cooperatives, and the subsequent impact on gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes at the household and group levels.

Methodology

The case study utilises a process evaluation methodology to capture insights from IGNITE's experience in supporting agricultural institutions in developing and implementing gender strategies. This approach is appropriate for understanding how programmes or interventions were delivered and why specific outcomes were achieved, considering the non-linear implementation processes involved. The case study used data from IGNITE's research reports. These reports are produced by IGNITE and address a learning objective on policy and strategy implementation.

To evaluate the effectiveness of its technical assistance services in supporting the development and implementation of gender (and nutrition) integration, IGNITE conducted annual feedback surveys with key personnel from client institutions. The client feedback reports provide information on client satisfaction with IGNITE's services, while the process evaluation explores the client's perspectives on the changes observed as a result of integrating new approaches or gender actions

supported by IGNITE. This case study used data from the Year 5 client feedback report, which presents an aggregated analysis of change for IGNITE clients from Year 2 to Year 5. The Year 5 feedback report included input from 23 respondents, representing 13 out of the 20 clients that IGNITE worked with.

1. IGNITE's support to institutional gender strategy development led to improved gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes

The results in the client feedback survey revealed that more than half (52%) of the institutions reported significant improvements in their gender strategies compared to previous years as a result of IGNITE's technical assistance. Respondents from the client institutions, such as Caisse Baitoul Mall CBM, Association Burkinabè d'Action Communautaire (ABAC), African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) Amo Farm, Digital Green, Africa Union Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (AU-PACA), Promotion du développement industriel, artisanal et agricole (PRODIA), Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), Sahel, and Tanzania Agricultural Development Bank (TADB), reported that their gender strategies had significantly improved with IGNITE's support.

'We had our policies and processes before IGNITE's support, but we saw the need to update our documents only after support by IGNITE through sensitization meetings.' — CBM Respondent, Burkina Faso

A few respondents from AU-PACA, Solidaridad, and Silverlands also reported slight improvements in their gender policies.

Clients attributed these changes to IGNITE's support in three key areas:

- (1) developing and reviewing gender strategies,
- (2) establishing feedback mechanisms for accountability, and
- (3) providing performance indicators for gender to track progress following implementation.

The feedback report from 11 client institutions revealed, for example, that specific support in developing gender strategies transformed their approach to integrating gender considerations into policies, strategies, and programme interventions, which would then improve gender outcomes at the household level.

² Trickle-down in this case study is defined as the process by which agricultural interventions are influenced by gender policies/strategies and the effects diffuse through the institutions to reach the household level

2. Institutional gender policies and strategies had impact on household gender outcomes

Eight out of 11 clients reported that their interventions had positive impacts at the household level.

The Union des Sociétés Coopératives pour la Commercialisation des Produits Agricoles de la Boucle du Mouhoun (USCCPA/BM) of Burkina Faso partnered with IGNITE in Year 5. In the process evaluation study³ conducted by Tanager, it was found that IGNITE support to USCCPA/BM contributed to positive women’s empowerment and improved household gender outcomes. IGNITE helped USCCPA/BM develop an action plan for implementing its gender strategy, which included measures to involve women at all levels of the organisation and targeted women farmers specifically. IGNITE’s sensitisation efforts also led to an increase in the number of women producers registered as members of the cooperative society. This increased membership resulted in greater access to the services offered by the cooperative and addressed barriers to women’s agricultural productivity.

IGNITE also trained USCCPA/BM staff on women’s empowerment in agriculture and conducted sensitisation sessions to help the institution shift gender roles and intra-household relationships at the farmer level. This approach placed the family structure at the centre of USCCPA/BM’s engagement with farmers, encouraging households to empower young people and allocate land to

women and young farmers. As a result, there were gradual changes in household gender dynamics, with more households allowing women and young children to participate in training and seeing shifts in household responsibilities.

The following results highlight more specifically the effectiveness of IGNITE’s gender integration services in creating tangible positive change at both the institutional and household levels.

a. Increased women’s participation in decision-making in cooperative societies

The findings suggest that IGNITE’s TA to USCCPA/BM to develop and implement a gender action plan resulted in increased participation, membership, and decision-making power for women within the cooperative society. IGNITE’s efforts to raise awareness and provide training also contributed to changing household gender dynamics, empowering women and young farmers, and challenging traditional gender roles (Figure 1).

These results demonstrated that IGNITE’s support in integrating gender considerations into cooperative regulations, specifically in crop marketing, led to greater involvement of women in decision-making processes. Eighteen percent of women reported contributing to most decisions regarding the sale of surplus crop products, highlighting the impact of IGNITE’s support at the household level.

Overall, the findings underscored the importance and success of IGNITE’s services in promoting gender equality and sustainable farming practices. By empowering women and encouraging their

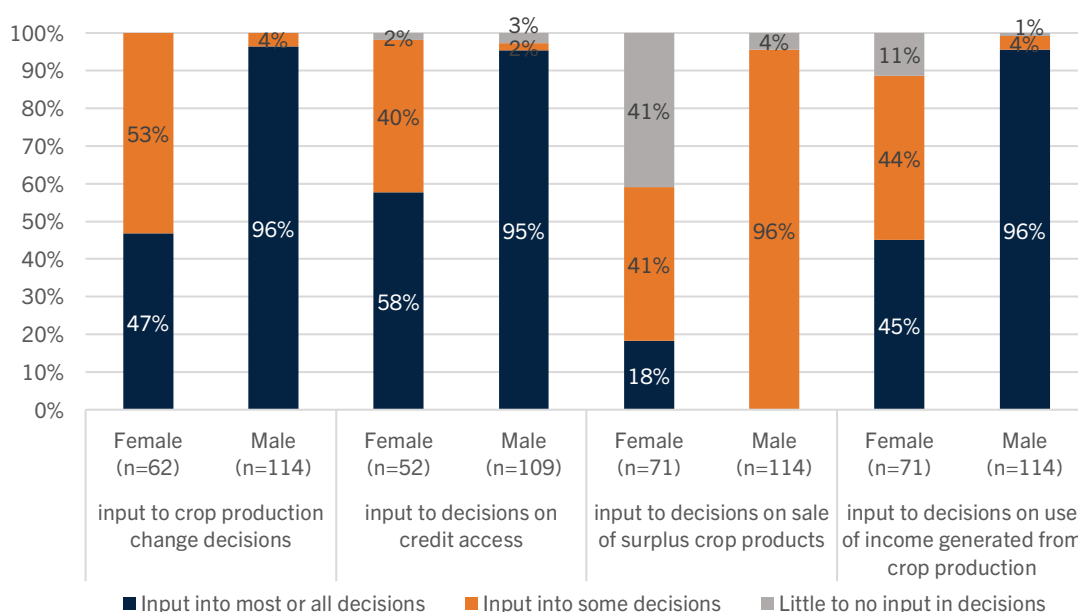


Figure 1: Input to decision making

³ Gender process Evaluation for USCCPA/BM

active participation in agricultural decision-making, IGNITE not only fostered gender equality but also contributed to more productive and resilient farming systems.

b. Enhanced access to agricultural inputs for women farmers

The technical assistance provided by IGNITE also had a positive impact on USCCPA/BM's gender strategy and its efforts to promote women's empowerment. IGNITE supported the development of a gender action plan that prioritised facilitating women's access to resources and factors of production. With the support of IGNITE, USCCPA/BM staff conducted a gender sensitisation training for cooperatives, promoting equitable access to services such as farm supplies, storage, and marketing. USCCPA/BM for instance, introduced a quota system. This led to female cooperative members' increased access to farm inputs, which was a significant departure from the past. More women benefitted from seed and fertiliser supply than before, compared to men (Figure 2).

c. Women gain improved control over income and household assets

Another significant accomplishment that can be attributed to IGNITE's technical assistance to USCCPA/BM was the decision to directly allocate resources to women for income-generating activities. The cooperative body recognised the importance of empowering women economically and actively supported them to own farms and have control over the income generated from surplus production. As a result of this intervention, there have been noticeable changes in the supply of roofing materials to farmer households, leading to increased ownership of assets by women and youth. Programme implementers interviewed during the process evaluation reported this change.

'Some young people revealed to us that after marketing and selling their crops, they managed to change the roofing (material) of their house (from banco to iron sheets) and also some families reported to have bought television sets because of income earned (from farming) by women and

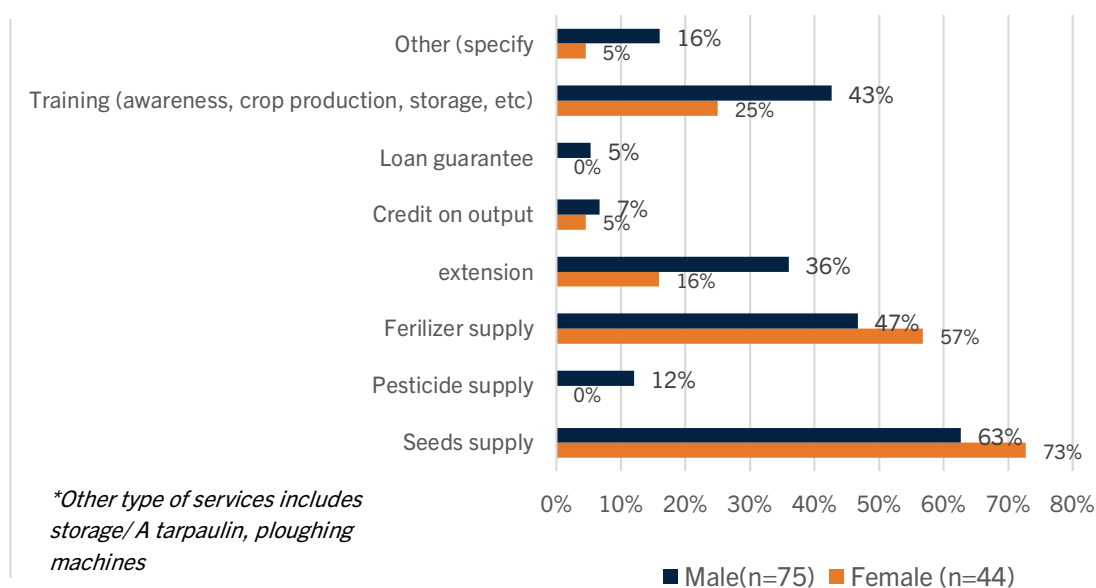


Figure 2: A breakdown by gender of access to the farm supplies provided by cooperative

USCCPA/BM also prioritised young people and women when providing subsidies for small farm equipment, further supporting their access to resources. The study found that more than 60 percent of smallholder farmers received support to access farm inputs from the cooperative society during the specified period.

From these findings, it is clear that the support provided to USCCPA/BM by IGNITE led to more inclusive and equitable agricultural practices, by increasing access to resources for women, young farmers, and men

youth in their families' — Programme coordinator, USCCPA/BM

d. Women were empowered to take on leadership roles in the community and households

Implementation of the gender strategy by USCCPA/BM led to a noticeable increase in the number of women in leadership positions within USCCPA/BM cooperatives, demonstrating that the training programmes and commitment by USCCPA/BM to promote gender inclusion and women's leadership have been successful.

Additionally, empowering women to take charge of farm management yielded positive results. By requiring the involvement of women and young people in the management of family farms, USCCPA/BM also facilitated the transfer of agricultural knowledge and skills to the next generation. This not only ensures agricultural succession but also promotes the economic empowerment of women and youth. Furthermore, the training provided to USCCPA/BM members on public speaking and minute-writing equipped women with effective communication and documentation skills. This empowered them to actively participate in cooperative meetings and to speak up, further enhancing their leadership abilities.

Lessons and Recommendations

1. Institutions with a defined pathway for implementing gender strategies can create a ripple effect to improve gender equality outcomes at the household level.

The evidence gathered by IGNITE has shown that a gender strategy needs to be more precisely targeted towards achieving gender equality at the household level. While IGNITE has indeed supported clients in formulating and executing gender strategies, there is urgent need for more explicit guidelines on how these strategies can be actively and effectively implemented by the client across all operational aspects.

The client feedback reports reveal that IGNITE clients were at different stages of implementing their gender strategies. However, a critical link between these strategies and the desired outcomes of gender equality was lacking, as well as how these outcomes would be measured at household level. Consequently, it is imperative for institutions to establish a coherent and transparent pathway that clearly outlines how their gender strategies would be implemented at the institutional level, which would contribute to achieving gender equality outcomes at the household level. Such a well-defined pathway would give clients the necessary framework to ensure that their gender strategies are implemented in a manner that elicits tangible and transformative changes in gender equality.

2. Implementation of institutional gender strategy and other policies and strategies can amplify contribution to household gender outcomes.

Lessons learnt from this project highlight the importance of institutionally embedding gender strategies and maximising their impact by integrating relevant tools and resources. The engagement between IGNITE and USCCPA/BM demonstrated that institutions should not only focus on gender strategies but also consider how these strategies can be effectively integrated into their operations. The case study shows that by combining gender strategies with other relevant tools such as the family farm advisory manual, institutions can empower all members of the household and contribute to more comprehensive gender equality outcomes.

This lesson can be applied by other institutions to promote gender equality in their agricultural activities. By identifying and utilising relevant tools and resources in conjunction with gender strategies, institutions can ensure that their efforts reach all levels of the organisation, from institutional operations down to the farmer households.

Conclusion

The IGNITE project provided technical assistance to strengthen institutional capacities to improve nutrition and empower women. This was achieved through the development of strategies that effectively integrated gender into programme interventions, leading to gender equality outcomes at the household level. This case study, relying on data from a process evaluation and client feedback survey, has provided evidence on how the implementation of institutional gender strategies influenced changes at the household level. The evidence further shows that integrating gender considerations into organisational policies empowered female cooperative members. However, the evidence shows that there is a lack of clear guidance and linkage at institutional level on how these strategies can be translated into tangible improvements for gender equality at the household level. As institutions continue to develop and implement their gender strategies and activities, it is essential to establish clear pathways through which these strategies can influence agricultural interventions, resulting in women's empowerment and improved gender equality outcomes at the household level.

Appendix 1

Key Highlights on Changes in Gender Policies and envisioned impact at Farmer Household level.

Client and No. of respondents	Highlights	Farm level impact
AATF (n = 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •AATF made significant strides in gender policies. This includes implementing comprehensive gender integration policies and consistent gender data reporting throughout the institution. While policy reviews had limited impact, a strong dedication to improving outcomes persists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •AATF shows remarkable progress in patriarchal regions, particularly East and West Africa. Sensitisation empowers women in farming and leadership, with South Africa highlighting role advancements. Addressing gender dynamics at the household level promises broad positive impacts, and guided institutional changes effectively tackle gender and nutrition issues for farmers' benefit
AMO (n = 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Amo Farms effectively established and executed a gender strategy with the aid of IGNITE support. This led to the integration of targeted gender processes and operations. Despite initially lacking a dedicated gender focal person, significant progress was achieved in this realm. 	
AU/PACA (n = 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •By partnering with IGNITE, AU/PACA conducted valuable assessments of gender gaps in food safety, leading to recommendations for policy enhancements across countries. Two respondents, noted no changes in their respective areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •AU/PACA drives gender-focused initiatives, noting institutional changes that enhance gender-sensitive policies and equitable support for all genders in food safety efforts. Engagement at continental and regional levels foresee national food safety master plans' impact on farmers, contingent on effective government-level gender and nutrition policies. Empowering women's roles in food safety is crucial. Gender integration, spanning milk to aflatoxin control, bolsters food safety and system-wide improvements.
SAA (n = 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Initially SAA lacked strategies and policies for nutrition and gender. Through IGNITES's help/ training the institution developed a gender policy and is in the process of implementation. 	
Sahel (ALLDN) (n = 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sahel (ALLDN) significantly advanced its gender policies and nutrition strategies, earning positive feedback from all respondents, two of whom highlighted transformative changes. They have increased commitment through appointments of gender focal individuals, a dedicated gender unit, and gender-disaggregated data tracking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The focus of the gender strategy is recognising women's pivotal roles, dismantling traditional gender norms, and promoting equitable resource allocation. Financial empowerment is key, enabling women to take charge of their lives.

Client and No. of respondents	Highlights	Farm level impact
ABAC (n = 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •With IGNITE's support, ABAC crafted a gender and nutrition strategic plan. Though incomplete, a draft exists, providing clearer direction for addressing these concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ABAC made changes that put beneficiaries at the centre. Clear programmes have positive impacts and are considering gender at all levels. ABAC's goal is to effectively support their target groups and improve their lives.
DG (n = 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Digital Green prioritizes gender empowerment by collaborating with women's development groups as a core strategy. The institution's commitment extends to fostering women's growth and empowerment through Self Help Groups, underscoring their dedication to women's development within their programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Digital Green foresees institution-level gender integration and mainstreaming leading to positive outcomes for the farmers they support. This includes increased women's participation in agricultural activities and programmes. They also expect to create content that's interesting and beneficial for women. These changes are projected to enhance agricultural knowledge and adoption among women farmers, ultimately improving their livelihoods.
PRODIA (n = 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •PRODIA is actively revising gender policies. Changes span better adherence, improved governance, and increased staff and stakeholder awareness on gender importance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •PRODIA is adopting a more personalized approach to assist female farmers. This change means moving away from generic products to focusing on the unique needs of women. This approach aims to create products and services better suited to the circumstances of women farmers.
TADB (n = 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The bank had no women and youth policy, but they launched women and youth products, and a special officer was hired. TADB also started reporting on gender related data. There is enhanced capacity on social behavior changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •TADB focuses on empowering women farmers by including gender considerations in programme design and implementation.
Solidaridad (n = 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Solidaridad has made noticeable headway in refining its policies, with insights from both respondents indicating progress. One respondent highlights the formulation of policies and plans, coupled with capacity building efforts. 	
Silverlands (n = 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Silverlands refines gender policies using Tanager's training insights. They aim to integrate these insights seamlessly, enhancing current approaches, and strategically enrich gender perspectives, especially in customer interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Initially uncertain about gender-related changes, Silverlands held reservations. However, witnessing the positive impact of gender integration in the poultry sector shifted their perspective. Contrary to their concerns, they realized that addressing gender dynamics empowered entire families instead of isolating individuals. This transformation prioritized family collaboration and household strengthening. Their viewpoint evolved to highlight collaborative households, stressing the positive influence on family dynamics and overall well-being.

This case study was written by **Leonard Mulei**, Research Associate, Tanager

IGNITE Partners

Tanager, an ACDI/VOCA affiliate, is a global development organization that empowers people to realize life-changing economic and social opportunities. We have 30 years of experience implementing gender-transformative and nutrition-sensitive agriculture approaches, connecting actors across the production supply chain, fostering knowledge and access for women and other marginalized groups, and unlocking sustainable, climate-smart economic opportunities for all.

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