



An ATVET student operating a tractor at Adidome Farm Institute in Ghana.

Photo: GIZ

## DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY: GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN AGRICULTURE

The Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training (ATVET) for Women project aims to empower women in the African agricultural sector, using a gender-transformative approach that includes women as well as men.

By Miriam Heidtmann

Women are the driving force in Africa's agricultural sector. They produce 80 per cent of the food and account for nearly 50 per cent of the agricultural workforce, which is mainly active in rural areas. At the same time, women lack access to essential knowledge and training opportunities in relevant agricultural value chains owing to existing socio-cultural norms and barriers. As a result, women's potential to increase agricultural productivity and profitability on the continent remains untapped.

The African Union (AU) established the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) as a strategy to achieve agriculture-based growth and food security on the continent. The ambitious CAADP goals and the vision of agricultural transformation can only be realised if the majority of the workforce in the sector – African women – are empowered. This includes decision-making

power and access to income-enhancing skills development.

For this reason, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), on behalf of the German government and in partnership with the continental partners the NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency and the African Union Commission, is implementing Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training (ATVET). In order for women to benefit, training delivery has to be inclusive, gender-sensitive and labour market-oriented. The ATVET for Women project is currently being implemented in six out of 55 AU member states: Kenya, Malawi, Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo. The gender-transformative approach to agricultural skills development takes into account women's diverse roles and needs in society by focusing on competency-based training courses along

selected agricultural value chains like horticulture, citrus, dairy, aquaculture and others.

### DOING MORE THAN A LITTLE, DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT

ATVET for Women promotes women's economic empowerment, in correspondence with the G7 Leaders' Declaration of Elmau Summit in 2015. In line with the Gender Action Plan 2016–2020 of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), it gives fresh impetus to efforts that involve men as change agents in promoting gender equality. ATVET for Women is the only programme in the agriculture and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sectors with a Gender Equality Policy Marker 2 (GG2) within the German technical co-operation portfolio. Given this status, the pro-

gramme builds gender competence at project and partner level and addresses current needs with innovative interventions and methods.

### **GENDER EQUALITY POLICY MARKER 2 (GG2):**

As a modular goal considering the programme objective of development co-operation, gender equality is the principal objective of the development co-operation measure, i.e. it is crucial to its implementation. Men and boys may also be the target of a GG-2 measure.

As part of the GG2 mandate, the programme has to do more than a little. It is not enough to increase the number of women in agricultural skills development (gender equity). Even doing a lot is insufficient, for example merely taking structural barriers that women face into account, but not seeking to change them. Instead, the ATVET for Women programme strives to do something different. This includes initiating gender transformative change by designing activities specifically to transform gendered power dynamics and to address the social norms and structural barriers to women's inclusion and empowerment.

The programme acknowledges the challenges and respects cultural norms. However, it is striving for innovative approaches to address longstanding traditions in order to achieve women's empowerment in the agricultural sector for a broad-based development on the continent.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEN AND WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE**

The above can also be explained by the reach-benefit-empower principle. Reaching women can involve their inclusion as participants in training along the horticulture value chain. As such we offer men and women equal opportunities to participate. However, men and women are not equally able to benefit from the training. A woman might be unable to benefit from increased productivity and subsequent higher income, because of social norms and customs preventing her from applying her new knowledge and skills on the family plot. In order for the woman to benefit, part of the intervention could be to include the husbands/village chiefs – for example by holding a briefing session at the start of the training and to obtain their consent that the woman can apply the knowledge on the family

plot to increase productivity and income for the family.

In the next step, a gender-transformative approach aims at empowering the women by strengthening their ability to make strategic choices and to put those choices into action. This may include opening their own bank accounts and having decision-making power over the use of the money in regard to investments on the farm, choice of produce to grow and more. In the design of benefit and empower interventions, the inclusion of men, family members and community leaders is crucial to ensure their commitment and support for the women. In Ghana, Agricultural Technical Colleges were trained in gender-transformative outreach to increase the participation of women in their pineapple and citrus trainings. After an outreach campaign that targeted the husbands of interested women, 1,500 women came to register for the trainings – together with their husbands.

### **UNIQUE SELLING PROJECTS – CHAMPIONING WOMEN AS VISIBLE ROLE MODELS**

In the second year of implementation, all participating pilot Agricultural Technical Colleges in the six countries include provisions of national gender-sensitive policies in their work plans and/or statutes. Twenty-six training modules in value chains like soybean, dairy and horticulture with high employment and income potential (e.g. processing and packing) are being implemented. Modules for life skills are integrated into curricula, and several national, regional and international knowledge exchanges have taken place, e.g. alongside the 'Africa talks Jobs' conference by the African Union in 2017.

In all six partner countries, the programme has designed 'Unique Selling Projects' (USPs). These interventions use 'Human Impact Stories' to demonstrate barriers to women's empowerment in agriculture and how to overcome these with gender-transformative skills development. It is intended that championing women – and men – as visible role models and agents of change will lead to a gender-transformative shift in perception and result in glass ceilings finally being shattered for the African female farmer.

In Malawi, a successful couple are showcasing their support for each other on their jointly owned and highly successful training farm as a role model for other couples. In Benin, the USP

is following a female alumna of an agripreneurship training to demonstrate the successes and challenges of becoming a female agripreneur for an innovative product in Benin: organic fertiliser. In Kenya, female agripreneurs are showcasing an all-female mentorship programme to support each other in their agribusinesses.

### **TAPPING INTO THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY**

It is not an option to continue doing business as usual. Only using mainstreaming and sensitisation interventions in agricultural programmes is not enough if we want to tap into the economic potential of women's contribution to agricultural productivity to end hunger and poverty on the continent. Therefore, innovative and, above all, daring and courageous programme interventions that address social norms and barriers for women have to be conceptualised, tested, analysed and upscaled. Project staff have to be coached to become gender-transformative change-makers. All this means showing greater tolerance towards risks, accepting and learning from risks, celebrating gains and pushing the bar continuously higher.

In 2013, during its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, the AU adopted Agenda 2063, a roadmap for the next 50 years. Aspiration Six provides for development that is people-driven, and Goal 17 sets out the bold vision of gender equality in all spheres. At the 2015 AU Summit in Johannesburg, women from grassroots organisations demanded that the continent "Retires the Hoe to the Museum". Women are asking for solutions which not only increase their productivity but create wealth and enable them engage more actively in citizenry. Agenda 2063 is designed to respond to such calls for action, and this programme intends to support these actions through gender-transformative skills development in agriculture across the continent. Tapping into the potential that women hold can truly boost agricultural productivity throughout Africa.

**Miriam Heidtmann** is based in Pretoria, South Africa, and works for Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). She is the co-ordinator of the CAADP ATVET for Women programme.

Contact: miriam.heidtmann@giz.de

For references and further reading, see online version of this article at: [www.rural21.com](http://www.rural21.com)