

## Abstract

In Ghana, upwards of 50% of the population is reliant on agriculture for a livelihood. Many aid organizations ranging from public to private to non-profits have focused on agricultural based development to reduce poverty. Women face systemic resource bias, restrictions on land rights, and barriers to accessing to more robust commodity markets. International development organizations, social enterprises, and local governments are attempting to tackle gender equity issues with a variety of agricultural initiatives for women's development.

The current initiatives often take simplistic approaches that disregard the underlying structural causes of gender inequity. I argue that in order to foster gender equality, organizations need to focus on an agency-based approach to women's status within agricultural value chains. An agency-based approach includes giving woman an autonomous voice and independent access to resources. This thesis asks:

- 1) What evidence of fostering enhanced agency can be detected in these three distinct programs?
- 2) Which initiative factors seem to be most effective in fostering women's agency?

## Agency vs. Empowerment

The term empowerment has "emerged as a possible counter force to achieving gender equality" (Phillips 2015). Women can benefit from services that are meant to "empower," such as microcredit programs, but still be constrained by structures of oppression such as negative household relationships or barriers to leadership.

The term agency encompasses both economic and structural factors of gender equity and equality. The difficulty in measuring agency lies in societal and cultural factors outside of quantitative measures. While these factors are significantly more difficult to both measure and change, they are vital to creating equality for women not only in the agriculture sector but also around the world.

Definition: "women's ability to take autonomous choices in life and to control resources" describes agency in a simple, understandable way (Selhausen 2016)



## Evaluated Initiatives

Program	Goal	Solution	Effectiveness
<b>Kuapa Kokoo Women's Programme</b>	Enhance the participation of women in the decision making process at all levels of operation and organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quotas for shared governance</li> <li>- Don't require land rights</li> <li>- Targeted training for women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1/3 membership includes women</li> <li>- Women have increased access to microcredit and resources to increase incomes</li> </ul>
<b>MEDA's Greater Opportunities for Rural Women Project</b>	Improve food security by assisting women farmers to grow more soybeans while creating market links to increase incomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distribution of information through SMS messages on mobile phones</li> <li>- Lead farmer model, she oversees 25 farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yet to address underlying patriarchal structures</li> <li>- Increased social support</li> </ul>
<b>Rural Enterprises</b>	Offer alternative form of income to women in agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Train smallholder farmers for entrepreneurial ventures</li> <li>- Increase no tilling land practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased women's employment in non-agricultural related enterprises</li> <li>- Little to no work to help women farmer's specifically</li> </ul>

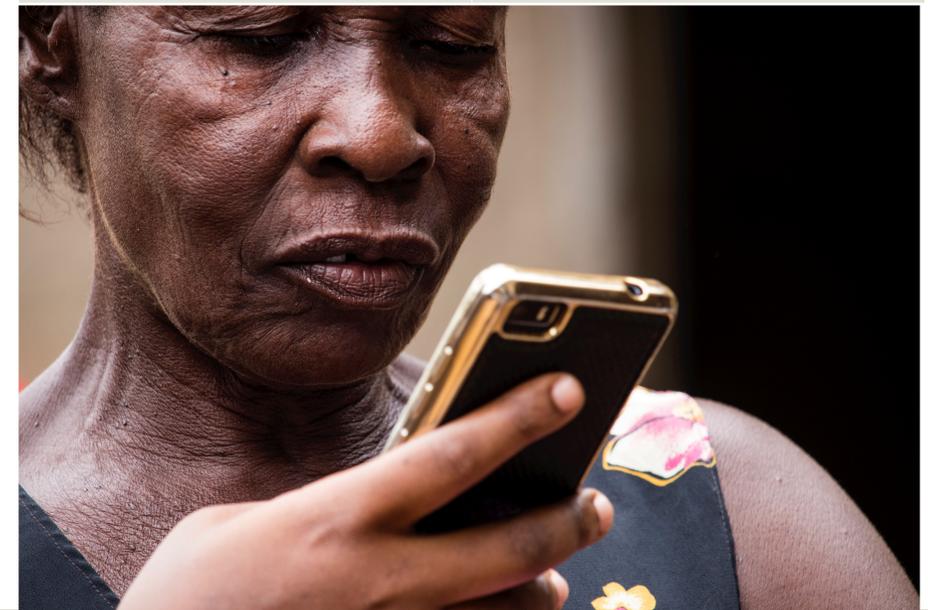
## Results

Based on the evaluative framework, the KKWP has the strongest focus on creating agency for women. The Rural Enterprises program by the Ghanaian government was the least effective at addressing women's agency. However, it is important to note that even though Rural Enterprises addresses fewer criteria, the program does fulfill three out of the four leadership criteria.

Not all forms of agency are created equal. This is what puts KKWP above the other two initiatives. Because KKWP emphasizes leadership and collective action for women above all else, the other types of agency follow. KKWP is taking a top-down approach to increasing women's agency by making it a requirement that women are considered equal members of all participating agricultural communities. A woman is perceived as a contributing member of the community because she is able to participate in the cooperative and has an equal opportunity to be a part of the leadership committee as a man.

## Framework for Assessment

Category of Assessment (Typologies)	Reasoning for Evaluation
<b>Household Agency</b>	
<b>Does the program address the issues of shared household income?</b>	Shared household income is correlated with a women's safety and agency
<b>Does the program teach confidence skills?</b>	The confidence gap often times inhibits women's bargaining power within her household and community
<b>Does the program actively involve men in the breaking down of systemic issues?</b>	Gender based issues must have a cross gender approach that includes the education of men on women's issues
<b>Does the program require land ownership or rights in order to participate?</b>	Land rights are a huge bargaining chip when it comes to participation in value chains
<b>Leadership Agency</b>	
<b>Does the program require women in leadership positions within the organization?</b>	Setting a quota for women in leadership positions overrides cultural stigmatization and gives women a window of opportunity
<b>Does the program teach and provide an enabling environment for women to become better leaders in their community?</b>	One way of overcoming the confidence gap is to equip women with leadership lessons increasing her efficacy and therefore her likelihood to take on leadership positions
<b>Does the program create a value chain that intentionally incorporates women?</b>	Women are often shut out of higher value chains because they do not have the social capital
<b>Does the program encourage women to participate in local, regional, or national elections?</b>	Women gain agency through collective bargaining power active political participation ensures that local leaders have women's interests in mind
<b>Resource Based Agency</b>	
<b>Does the program offer a technological package?</b>	Offering financing for technology is one of the simplest ways to overcome systemic resource bias
<b>Does the program offer a financial package?</b>	Providing women with a financial resource creates avenues of income outside of their normal household roles
<b>Does the program educate women in business skills and numeracy?</b>	Education leads to a woman's higher bargaining power because it increases her overall perceived contributions
<b>Does the program teach women literacy?</b>	Education leads to a woman's higher bargaining power



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## References

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