Gender Sensitivity of Adult Education Activities of Community-Based Organizations in Ghana

Louis Caleb Kutame, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana

Abigail Aryeh-Adjei, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana

ABSTRACT

Gender and gender-related issues have threatened to disrupt the perceived community developmental outcomes community-based organizations (CBOs) strive to achieve. This is because women are viewed as 'second class' citizens of most patriarchal African communities. To understand how CBOs are transforming the uniqueness of women in development in Ghana, a field study was conducted with fifty-seven (57) CBO heads and twenty (20) heads of beneficiary groups to investigate the gender sensitivity of Adult Education (AE) activities of CBOs in the Akuapem North District and how these activities help in empowering women in various community activities. The issue of inclusion of women in AE activities by CBOs is generally agreed on in principle in the communities. It was agreed the AE activities empowered women to have self-confidence to take part in development work among others. Recommendations are that CBO policies to ensure gender equity in AE activities should be critically looked at and necessary changes be made to actively involve more women in community development and education work.

KEYWORDS

Adult Education Activities, Beneficiaries, Community Development, Community-Based Organizations, Gender Sensitivity

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of education is to help in sustaining an individual and the community as a whole. Humans really never stop learning because new ideas and skills in doing things and ways of thinking keep evolving every time and one needs to evolve to keep up or become obsolete. Many of the problems in our societies such as under development are to a very large extent caused by the lack of education (OECD, 2012). Another is the sidelining of the main 'architects' of our societies; women (Hafez, 2011). Governments of the day have not found a solution to this pertinent problems; try as they may so the onus now lies with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) who are not too detached from the people as the government or other civil organization tasked with the mandate of bringing development to the community are. CBOs have long served as an alternate means of educating citizens and in

particular indigenous groups (Makoba, 2002). This is very crucial because education is one of the fundamental factors of development. Indeed, no country can attain sustainable economic development without considerably investing in their human capital (OECD, 2012).

CBOs can be defined as a public or private non-profit organization that are representatives of a community or a significant segment of a community, and are engaged in meeting human, educational, environmental, or public safety community need (Hussain, Khattak, & Khan, 2008). CBOs therefore refer to all the organizations that are situated in the community, established by community members with its primary aim of improving the lives of community members. From the above, it would be appropriate to say that CBOs are mostly for non-profit, voluntary organizations that serve as a support group for community development. Studies have shown that the activities of CBOs in rural project development have been seen as a significant component and a sure way to prompt community development work (Abegunde, 2009). Development or for that matter community development as referred to in this article is a method by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of government authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural condition of their communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (Weyers, 2011). The impacts of CBOs have also been seen in all the areas of the community. Prominent among these areas are policy matters, healthcare, social, economic and physical development of the community (Adeokun, Adisa, & Oladoja, 2006).

In order to be effective and to achieve their goals and objectives, these CBOs engage in mostly non-formal adult education activities. Adult Education (AE) is mainly aimed at preparing individuals for life and specifically, with assisting them lead a more successful and fulfilling life. In so doing AE increases their capacity to improve upon their living conditions. It is therefore not surprising that as heralds of Adult Education, the purpose of CBOs as ably stated by Hussain, Khattak, and Khan (2008) is to strategize in the implementation and monitoring of developmental programs and to provide help where needed to community members. They also usually provide financial services to help the community so as to positively affect rural change; this is to say increase the capacity of community members to develop. CBOs play very important roles in the community. They usually involve community members directly or indirectly in the various community development works they (CBOs) perform so as to help members take their own initiative and develop themselves. They conduct their day to day activities on the premise that everyone has the right and freedom to take control of their own destinies and are entitled to take decisions that affect themselves and their immediate environment (SINA, 1986).

Gender and gender-related issues however, threaten to disrupt the perceived outcomes these CBOs strive to achieve. Gender simply refers to the different social roles that women and men play, and the power relations between them (Population Reference Bureau, 2002). Women have vital roles in the management of community resources, community development, and the passing down of critical sustainable developmental information to the younger generation. Their full participation is essential to achieve development at all levels in the community.

Like minority groups throughout the world, women in the strongly patriarchal rural communities in most parts of Africa are unable to take control over their own lives which has rendered them helpless in making decisions that affect their development and the community as a whole (WBGDG, 2003). The situation in Ghana is no different (FAO, 2013). In order to break free from this shackles that hold them down and fulfill their roles in society, women must overcome many obstacles which have been brought upon themselves by their immediate society, the outside world and to a lesser extent, their own inferiority complex which has come about because most women feel they are the property of men and that even if they became successful in life, it was because they had been 'given' the go ahead to be successful by their 'powerful' male counterparts (analyzed and interpreted from data).

The trend of sidelining women in developmental issues has however lessened due to the advocacy of women rights all over the world and interventions for sustainable development targeted at women (Population Reference Bureau, 2002). CBOs, through their engagement of their AE activities with

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