

PLANTING SEEDS:

FUNDING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
ABRIDGED REPORT 2016

Evaluation by Dr. Rudith S. King, Report by Heather Tucker



AFRICAN
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
FUND

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AWDF would like to express our sincere gratitude to all who took part in the evaluation that formed the basis for the development of this abridged version. The document provides insights to the work done by AWDF and grantee partners and contributes to evolving knowledge on the intersection of women's rights and development in Africa.

Our special appreciation goes to all our donors for providing funding to enable AWDF to support the work of many women right's organisations in Africa. As the report confirms, this contribution has made a positive difference in addressing issues that affect African women. We would also like to say a big thank you to our grantee partners for their invaluable inputs.

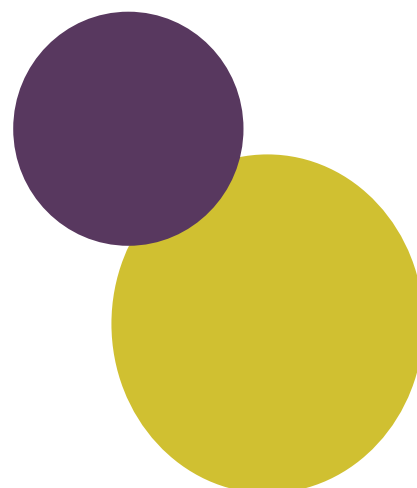
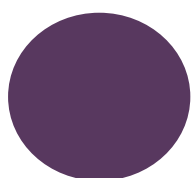
Lastly, we are grateful to Dr. Rudith S. King and her team who undertook the thematic evaluation and Heather Tucker for producing this abridged version.

Best regards,
Zeytuna Abdella Feyissa-Azasoo,
AWDF Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist



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OUR ORGANISATION

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) was launched in June 2000 to support the work of women's organisations that promote women's rights in Africa. AWDF is the first Africa-wide feminist grantmaking organisation of its kind.

THE VISION

AWDF's vision is for women to live in a world where there is social justice, equality and respect for women's human rights.

THE MISSION

AWDF's mission is to mobilise financial, human, and material resources to support African women and the work of the African women's movement to advance women's rights and gender equality in Africa. We believe if women and women's organisations are empowered with the skills, information, sustainable livelihoods, opportunities to fulfill their potential, and the capacity and space to make transformative choices, then we will have vibrant, healthy and inclusive communities.

AWDF GRANTMAKING

Since its inception, AWDF has provided USD 28 million in grants to over 1200 women's organisations in 42 African countries. To make this possible, AWDF draws resources from individuals, corporations, foundations and governments. In addition, AWDF provides capacity building support to women's organisations across Africa.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

The theme of Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods (EE&L) is central to the creation of gender equality, social equality, and obtaining the vision of creating vibrant, healthy and inclusive communities. The aim of the EE&L theme is to

focus on supporting organisations that are innovating new strategies around African women's economic and food security, and environmental issues such as agriculture, climate change, and economic justice. These efforts may result in projects that support economic security, skills development and training, and positive legislative and policy frameworks for African women. As you will find throughout this report summary, a strong focus is placed on funding livelihood generation for women, which is central to this thematic area. More specifically, ***EE&L focused on providing income generating activities to women through local women's organisations.*** Such organisations will seek to achieve the goals set by AWDF, and therefore, contribute to women's rights and gender equality.

In particular, the empowerment and capacity building of women and women's organisations is critical for social equality and healthy communities. While focusing on women's economic empowerment, EE&L directly meets the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), as women's empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and pro-poor growth.¹ As it relates very well with the MDGs, owing to an impact on poverty reduction, equal opportunities, and food security, the thematic area is crucial in developing social equality and well being on the continent.

1 OECD (2012) <https://www.oecd.org/dac/povertyreduction/50157530.pdf> (accessed 2016)



ABOUT THE EVALUATION

This abridged report summarises an evaluation of the EE&L theme. The evaluation had the objective to assess the performance of this thematic area from 2001 to 2011. The evaluation's goal is to measure qualitative and quantitative gains in the lives of women and women's organisations, and to examine the approach and scope of implementation. Furthermore, the evaluation draws lessons from the interventions, to provide recommendations to strengthen the thematic focus. Finally, the evaluation assesses efficiency and effectiveness of the approach and contributions to the development of the women's agenda of economic security in Africa.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

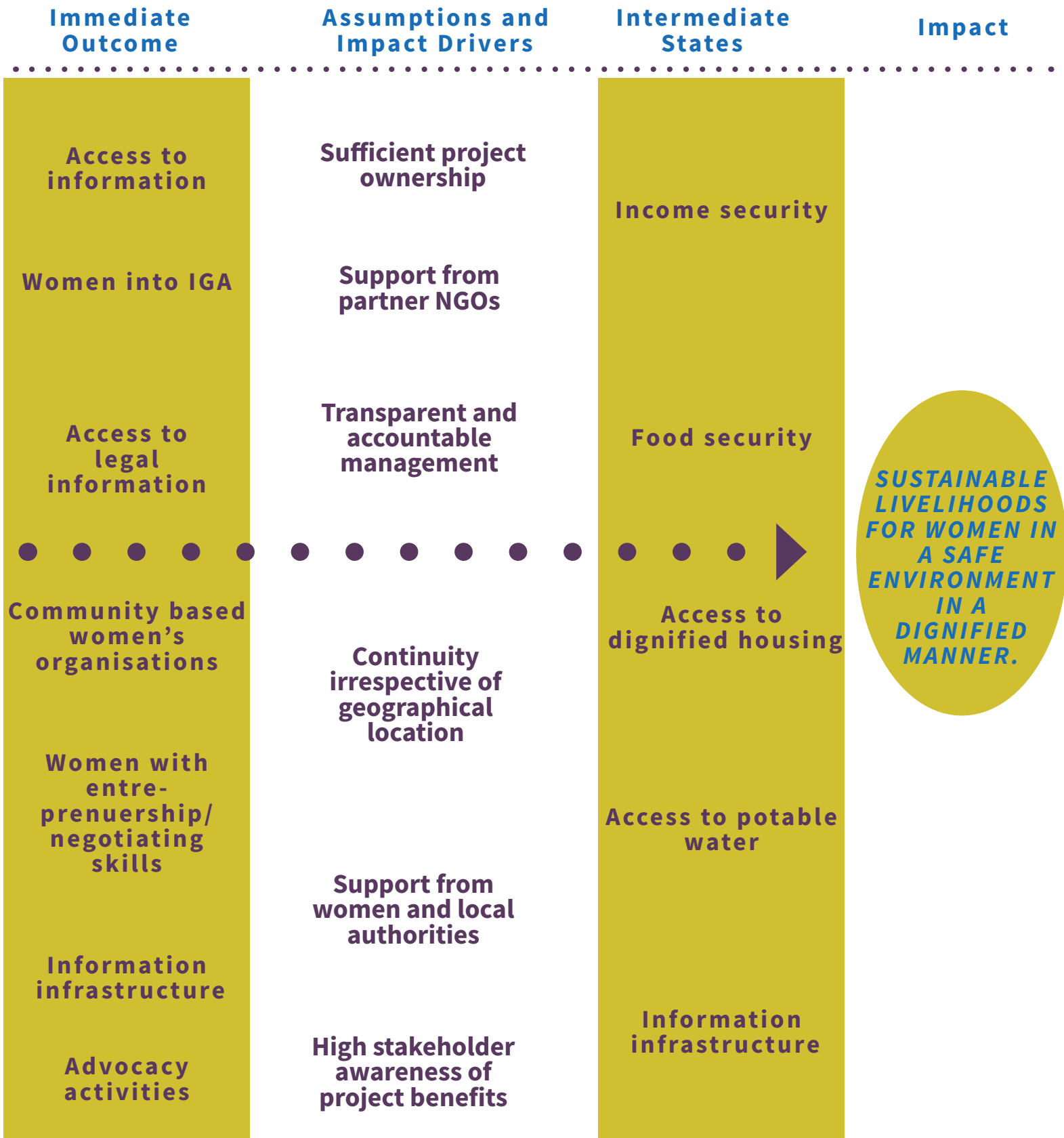
The evaluation was carried out by Dr. Rudith Sylvana King along with supporting consultants Professor Imoro Braimah and Mr. Owusu Amponsah. The method of evaluation used was both a desk review and field interviews, including two country visits, and email interviews in six countries. Out of 187 organisations

from 18 African countries that received AWDF grants from 2009- 2011, 41 grantees from Ghana and Uganda were selected by the evaluation team for a visit, as these countries have the largest number of grantees (108 for Ghana and 28 for Uganda). There were varying sizes from USD 1000 to USD 100,000, and the organisations receiving the grants were given a set of questions. The evaluation team targeted fifty-five (55) grantees from 16 countries through email questionnaires in order to collect the needed information for the evaluation.

The concept of the Theory of Change (TOC) was used to analyse the outcome of the impact of the thematic area (see page 5 for an illustration). The TOC is as an evaluation tool used to determine the chances of arriving at the desired impact given the immediate outputs of a project/programme, and possible pathways to change from the programme's outputs to the expected outcomes, and finally, to the intended impact.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Below is an illustration to highlight the TOC process as it relates to this project. The Theory of Change (TOC) is an evaluation tool to determine the chances of arriving at the desired impact given the immediate outputs of a project/programme. This is also known as the Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) analysis.



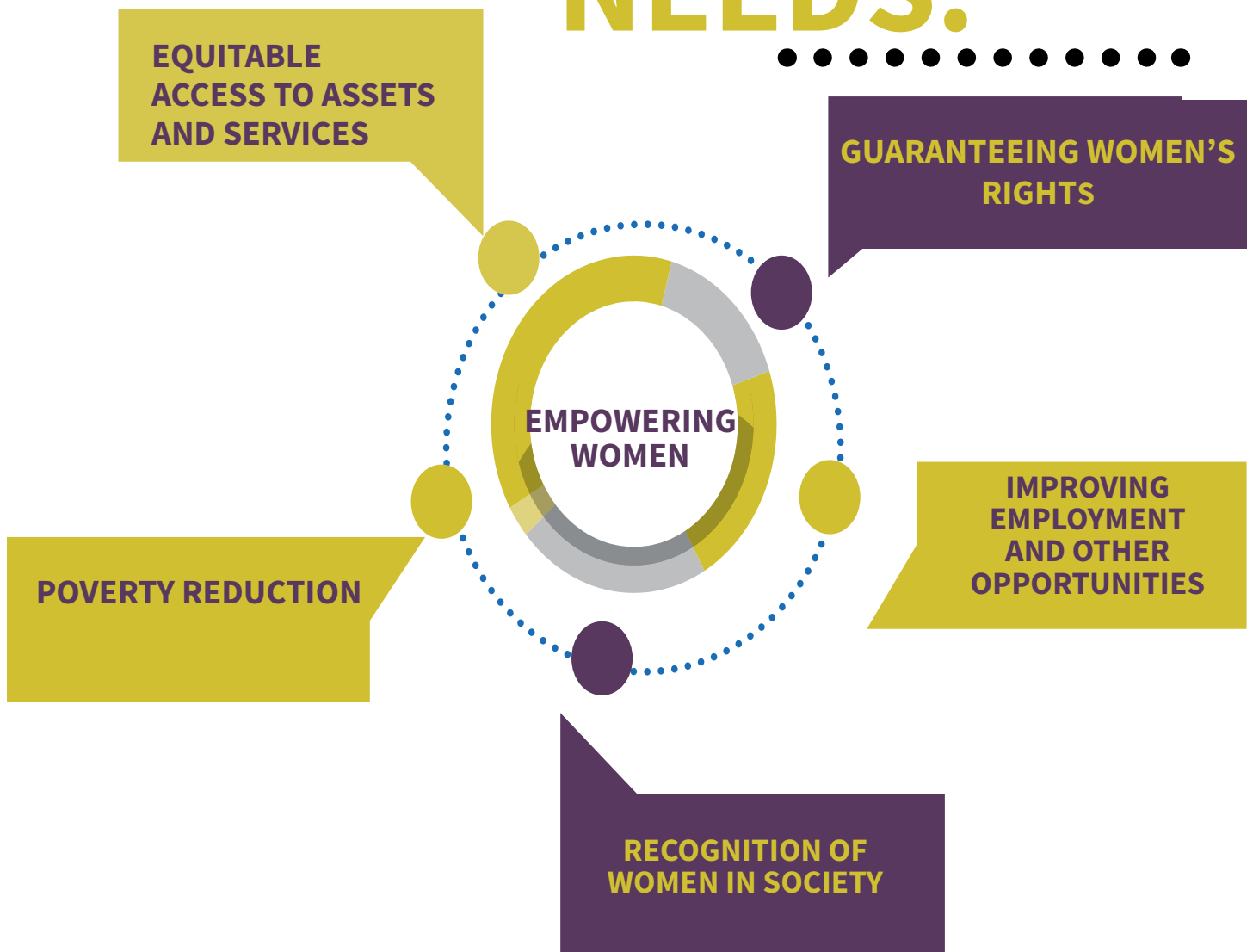
KEY FINDINGS

RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT

The EE&L thematic area was found to be highly relevant to the achievement of AWDF's mission. Evidence from the field points out that the EE&L thematic area, through funding women's organisations that support the sustainability of women's livelihoods, has ***contributed significantly to poverty reduction, and the recognition of women in their society, and hence, women's empowerment at both the household and community levels.***

This empowerment includes access to resources, claiming rights, and improving other opportunities such as access to leadership positions and diversity of household income. The evaluation found that the EE&L thematic area was very critical to these aspects of empowerment, and the EE&L theme improved several conditions for women throughout the continent (see figure below).

ADDRESSING RELEVANT NEEDS:



KEY FINDINGS

PROJECT IS EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE

The efficiency of AWDF's approaches to the EE&L project eventually leads to the theme's overall effectiveness. These efficient approaches enabled the fund to achieve significant results with minimal resources.

These cost saving measures included: *collaboration with partner NGOs, AWDF's support for local livelihood activities, the careful revision of grantees' budgets to make them more realistic, and the support of local leaders (traditional authorities and District Assembly members)*. The impact of the projects are summarised in the figure below.

The effectiveness of the EE&L theme was attributed to several factors, including AWDF's integrated approach to women's rights issues. This integrated approach, in addition to funding, interventions, and cooperation with NGOs, resulted in an effective impact.

However, in general, the evaluation found mixed results regarding the use of the grants by grantees. While the large grant recipients showed better prospects of sustaining the benefits of the grants, small grant recipients benefited from the remarkable improvements experienced by project participants. The grants were used as "Jump Starters" by organisations, to leverage support from other donors, and thus attracting new members and potential future funding.

The EE&L focus to *provide for income generating activities through local women's organisations, created an ability for women to contribute to the household income and enhance income diversity*.





The ability for women to contribute financially leads to the recognition of women as decision makers at the household and community levels, a critical step in women's empowerment, and the establishment of equality in communities.

GRANTEES SPOTLIGHT:

AWDF support for the EE&L thematic area has helped organisations such as the Association of Ugandan Professional Women in Agriculture and Environment. The organisation used the funds provided by AWDF to leverage other funding from donors to scale up their activities and to reach out to women in other communities outside Kampala.

Fish mongers in Accra, Ghana, were trained by the Global Initiative on Rights and Development and were able to increase their income from an average of GH20 a week to GH40.

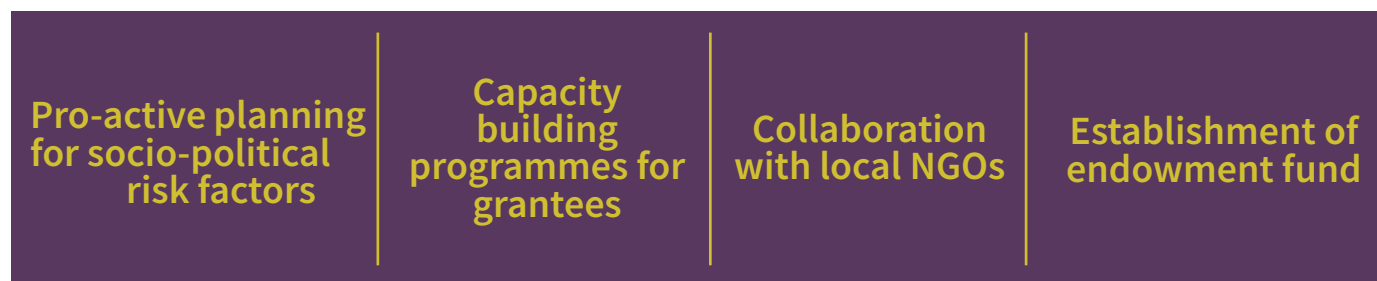
Members of the Tiehusama Shea Butter Processing increased income from GH70 per week to GH200. The Association now offers loans up to GH500 to members, an increase from an initial amount of GH100. Members have better access to health care, and some have supported children to complete Junior High School (JHS), Senior High School (SHS) and Tertiary Education.

The Christian Partners Development Agency (CPDA) in Kenya has increased employment and earnings among young women in Vihiga County where they operate. The youth have also been equipped with necessary life skills. AWDF's grant has enhanced the CPDA's chances of working with other funding agencies like the Kenya Community Development Fund (KCDF).

SOS Addis in Ethiopia has created job opportunities for unemployed women and generated incomes for members from plastic waste collection.

SUSTAINABILITY

AWDF acted strategically to promote the sustainability of the project and the thematic area. Measures were introduced to minimise the effects of the risks on the sustainability of the project outcomes and the transition from outcomes to impacts.



CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Several factors contributed to AWDF producing a sustainable outcome from the EE&L theme.

Firstly, AWDF was able to minimise socio-political factors hindering the sustainability of the program such as insufficient stakeholder membership, and negative attitudes of men and communities against the women. AWDF also carefully selected grantees using critical guidelines to measure the proposals submitted.

Long term sustainability is attributed to the programs receiving **sufficient ownership from the stakeholders. Collaboration with partner NGOs, coupled with capacity building programmes on financial management and enterprise development**, organised for the grantees contributed to decreasing the effects of limited resource mobilisation often experienced by African women's organisations. Another critical contribution to the theme's longevity is **AWDF's establishment of an endowment fund for future grant making projects**. Also, AWDF has implemented commercial projects to generate independent resources and to sustain grant programmes.

IMPINGEMENTS ON SUSTAINABILITY

There were also barriers to sustainability. These included socio-political factors including insufficient stakeholder ownership and negative attitudes of men and communities against women. Another risk to the sustainability of the project was the

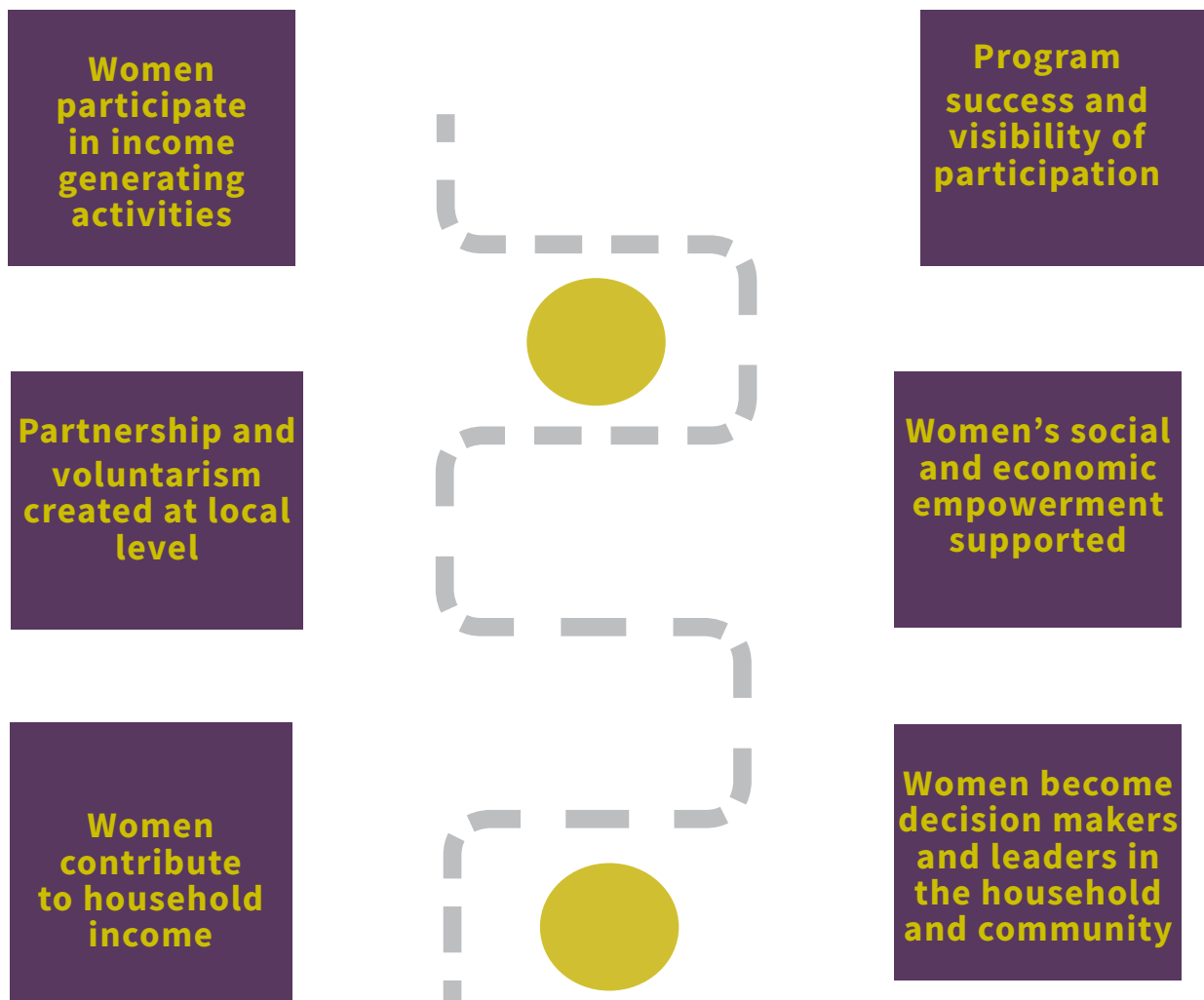
limited capacity of the grantees to manage grants effectively. However, this was reduced through partnerships and capacity building. A major issue influencing sustainability is the limited number of grants AWDF is able to give each year and environmental factors affecting grantees whose income generation activities rely on farming, and therefore, are susceptible to weather changes.

EVIDENCE OF INEFFECTIVENESS

Some evidence that the EE&L theme was not effective can be found in the following examples.

In Ghana, the Centre for Integrated Development Foundation (CIDEF) in Salaga, in the Northern region, and the Active Vocational Centre in the Volta region, could not provide start-up capital for the women they trained. There were also issues with funding for monitoring and evaluation. For example, SPINnet Textiles and Garment Cluster in Accra, Ghana, were not able to follow up with their work with several women because of a lack of funds available for monitoring and evaluation.

CATALYTIC ROLE AND REPLICATION



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT:

The Association of Women with Disability (AWD) in the Bongo District of Ghana shared how the AWDF grant has given them confidence to try new forms of labor. AWD was granted the sum of USD 2,000 in 2009 to start a revolving fund. Interested members of the association were given loans of GHC 30 each to start petty trading. Members are now able to support their children to acquire learning aids in school as well as contribute to housekeeping. The most important impact of the AWDF grant to the women is that they have been able to regain their dignity.

The Children with Future in Zambia has contributed to reducing illiteracy levels from 84% in the Lumwana area before the intervention to 34% at the end of the project. Women have now become the agents of their own development and can now support their families economically.

LESSONS LEARNED

There were lessons learned which can enhance the future and sustainability of the EE&L theme. The evaluation concluded that while the EE&L theme was successful in grantmaking, there are several lessons to consider.

FUNDING

Funding was a major barrier for a number of organisations targeted for grants, as well as the inability of organisations to report their successes. Due to this lack of funding, AWDF proactively began an endowment fund, which strengthens AWDF's ability to make resources available for EE&L grant making work.

ORGANISATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS MATTER

It is crucial to form partnerships with local NGOs, in order to reduce the costs and risks of the projects. Larger NGOs are well established to make a greater impact than the smaller ones, while smaller organisations with weak capacity can be provided with further support to strengthen their ability to work with women's groups. AWDF is unique in working with small and remote organisations, and is therefore, able to reach out to many women across the continent. It was discovered that trade-based organisations working with credit schemes were able to impact several individuals at one time, providing sustainable income and empowerment to a multitude of individuals. While the large NGOs made a greater impact, the smaller ones could be assisted more than once, and they are required to work with the larger organisations.

ENTREPRENEURS, MICRO CREDIT AND LIVELIHOODS FOCUS

Much can be learned and sustained working with individual women who have entrepreneurial experience. Those groups which focused on entrepreneurial activities and included petty commercial

traders, have more skills and are more likely to sustain gains from grants received, and extend the benefits to other members, groups, and organisations. Also, the micro-credits have played essential roles in the empowerment of women. Those groups that established micro credit schemes were performing creditably well. Those project participants who invested grants in their existing livelihood activities showed evidence of effectiveness and sustainability.

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Central to the success of the project and the prospect of future funding, programmes require regular monitoring and evaluation. However, not all organisations have the funding and ability for this, therefore, it was difficult to obtain quantitative information from the grantees. This lack of funding and training should be central to considering future projects and training grantees to begin documenting and archiving their stories.

MOVING FORWARD

AWDF must take strategic steps forward in order to guarantee the success of the EE&L portfolio. Looking forward, the strategies take into account the barriers as well as the successes of this theme.

Lack of adequate funding for women's rights organisations was considered to be a major barrier. It was suggested that spreading resources thinly among numerous grantees is less sufficient, and therefore, it was recommended that AWDF consider covering a limited number of grantees with adequate grant money to render the benefits significant. Also, it may be beneficial to provide grants to very small and vulnerable organisations more than once. In addition, it was noted that encouraging small organisations to partner with larger NGOs could be beneficial.

Because of the successes of working with entrepreneurs and credit-based schemes, it is suggested that AWDF focus on various forms of credit schemes to support multiple group members as well as work with entrepreneurs who are able to successfully manage the funds. It was also suggested that future grants with the EE&L theme should encourage trade-based associations to start revolving funds using village savings and loan schemes and that AWDF provide financial and administrative support when possible.

Furthermore, the evaluation recommends that AWDF should follow up on grantees that have initiated good projects to consider further support to consolidate gains. Also, AWDF should consider hosting an exhibition of grantees' gains, bringing them together to meet colleagues and share lessons learned. Such peer-to-peer capacity building should be encouraged by those engaging in micro-credit schemes that were successful. AWDF should support cross-programme learning, as done by some organisations, to encourage peer exchange and solidarity.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT:

The Story of the Leader of Abrodi Women's Association, Mama Teke, Ghana:

"Our group keeps bees for honey as a means of income generation for the members but we were unable to harvest the honey ourselves. The men in the community made us understand that the honey can only be harvested after midnight and the women would be stung by the bees so we hired them for harvesting honey. However, we noticed that they brought back only half a bucket full of honey each time they offered the service, so we were more or less sharing the honey with the men.

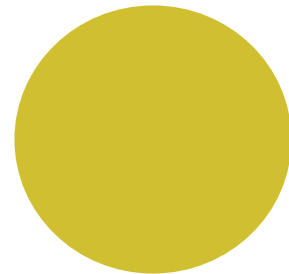
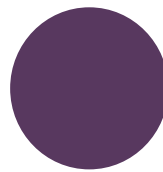
With the grant from AWDF, some of our women were trained on how to harvest the honey and we used some to buy protective clothes and equipment. Since we started harvesting the honey ourselves, the volume of honey harvested is far more than what the men were bringing to us and we have also saved on hiring them. Similarly, they were plucking oranges for us and they would ask questions like, 'do you know what it takes to pluck oranges' and 'can you withstand the ants in the orange trees?' So with this kind of intimidation, now we do all the work ourselves through the support of AWDF. "

MOVING FORWARD CONT.

It was recommended that AWDF enhance women's organisations through support for capacity building in proposal development, documentation of achievements, and communication strategising. In order to sustain their interests in supporting women, young organisations should be given certificates of recognition in appreciation of their work with women's empowerment.

Additional trainings are necessary for grantees in report/story writing, proposal development, searching for donors, and resource mobilisation. It is suggested that AWDF organise a pre-grantee workshop to inform grantee partners about this information and where skills are lacking in certain areas, workshops can be used as an opportunity to provide capacity building.

Regarding documentation, it was suggested that AWDF grantees go through documentation practices, collecting stories on an annual basis to showcase to the public, donors, and partners. In addition, the evaluation highlighted that AWDF should consider encouraging and promoting new areas such as climate change and adaptation in EE&L activities for grantees.



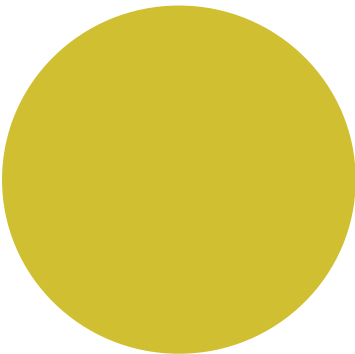
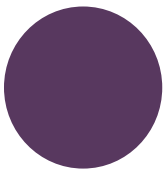
CONCLUSIONS

The EE&L thematic area was evaluated in regards to quantitative and qualitative measures using the Theory of Change. The findings of the evaluation showed that EE&L’s performance during the 10-year period under review was highly satisfactory. Over the years, the number of countries AWDF supported with grants has increased which provides clear evidence of a success story.

Typically, the larger grantees benefited from the EE&L theme, however, some of the smaller grantees were also able to catalyse the funding as “jump starters”. Unfortunately, due to inadequate record keeping and reporting by grantee partners, more of the qualitative gains were used in this evaluation. In fact, grantees had a lot more to say than has been documented.

This can be mitigated in the future with trainings and specific funding to provide information on communication, documentation and archiving. It was found that a larger impact can be made by reaching more grantees with smaller funding. The evaluation of the impact and reach of the EE&L project are to be considered.

In general, AWDF through this thematic area, has been very successful in reaching out to organisations working with women in Africa, promoting women’s empowerment, social justice, equality and respect for women’s work through critically important and sustainable means.





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