



# Fostering Gender-Transformative Change in Sustainable Forest Management

## A CASE STUDY OF DGM GHANA

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**The US\$5.5 million DGM Ghana country project focuses on strengthening knowledge and practices of targeted local communities in REDD+ processes and sustainable forest management.** In implementation since 2018, with 212 subprojects either in implementation or completed, there are ample opportunities for detailed examination of specific subprojects. This can offer insight on the issue of whether, and how, DGM projects are influencing women’s participation and leadership on the ground, and provide some indication of the extent to which the project may be influencing broader social and gender norms at the community or regional level. This case study provides primary information to supplement and inform the DGM Gender Study, which seeks to analyze the contribution of the DGM project to promoting women’s economic achievement, access to and control over productive assets, voice, and agency.

**Our conceptual framework for this study follows a stepwise, yet flexible and dynamic, progression toward gender transformative change.** The framework begins by assessing the inputs that the DGM project provides to beneficiaries, such as assets, information, skills, and capacity building. This assessment looks at what types of inputs are provided, to whom and how they are provided. Next, we assess how those inputs have influenced women’s income and assets, and building on that, how women are gaining voice and agency. Next, we assess whether and how those changes

in voice and agency are influencing gender norms, attitudes, and perceptions of women and men at multiple levels—from individual to household to community. Finally, we look at whether those shifts have the potential to be sustained beyond the lifetime of the project and influence more formal practices, rules, policies, and laws that treat women in an unequal way.

**Unlike other case studies in this series, this focuses on a community where multiple subprojects were implemented in tandem.**

This methodology was used for several reasons: first, the layering of projects was common in the DGM-Ghana portfolio; second, it would have been very challenging to separate out one specific subproject intervention from another in the same community as the interventions were so tied together; and third, the multiple and varied interventions were deemed more likely to provide a clear demonstration of how DGM could lead to gender-transformative change.

**This case study provides clear indications of movement towards gender-transformative change.** Community members—female and male, migrant and native—report a number of benefits and positive normative shifts for women at the individual, household, and community level, suggesting that the DGM Ghana project has been successful in supporting meaningful, positive changes for women at multiple scales.





## Country context

**Ghana is home to a complex diversity of more than 90 ethnic groups and sub-groups, with great variety in socio-economic levels.**

Of the main ethnic groups are the matrilineal Akan of southern Ghana (47%), the Muslim Mole-Dagbon of northern Ghana (16%) and the patrilineal Ewe of coastal Ghana (14%). Agriculture, forestry, and agroforestry account for more than 50% of land use and employ about 60% of the population, including 53% of women (DGM Ghana PAD). Across the country, there are large geographical and gender differences in social outcomes, with lower education and literacy rates and higher fertility and infant mortality in the north. In the north, only 2% of women own land compared to 50% in south; likewise, women's access to credit, markets, and information is lower in the north (World Bank 2018). While Ghanaian women can access and own land through inheritance, marriage, lineage, and contractual agreements, these conditions do not apply consistently across the country and largely depend on one's ethnic group (Britt et al. 2020).

**Despite strong efforts since independence to close gender gaps in the education, financial inclusion, and political spheres, Ghana remains in the middle when compared to other African countries** (In the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap it ranks 19<sup>th</sup> out of 34 African countries). Despite a long history of women in traditional leadership (particularly in the south) societal beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors continue to dictate women as subordinate or inferior, which hinders their participation in decision-making and representation in political and governance positions. Women in rural communities are often overshadowed by men, and women usually are quiet at meetings unless encouraged to voice their opinion.

**At the same time, some ethnic groups in Ghana recognize Queen Mothers who are traditional female leaders drawn from royal lineages and largely responsible for women and children's issues.** While there is some variation in the power and influence of Queen

Mothers across different societies in Ghana, with colonization and the independence government not formally recognizing their role, they continue to play an important role in politics and governance within communities. The role of Queen Mother is most notable in southern Ghana where they form an important part of the matrilineal Akan society. Queen Mothers are recognized as co-rulers with joint decision-making and are estimated to number 10,000 across the country. Recently, with improved communication and access to education, Queen Mothers are connecting and collaborating with each other to increase their influence and address the challenges facing women and children.

**Land access and ownership security play a significant role in people's decision making on climate mitigation interventions that involve tree planting, such as agroforestry and tree plantations.** While the constitution grants equal rights to women and men in accessing property, in practice only about 10% of landholders are women, and women often only have access to land through their spouses, sons or brothers following customary law (Henning 2021). The 2020 Land Bill significantly increased spousal rights to land, requiring that spouses' names be included when registering land

acquired during marriage and presuming that any land acquired during a marriage by one spouse is co-owned; it also requires spousal consent for transaction of any land acquired during a marriage.

**Despite progress at the policy level, traditional land practices continue to be a major challenge for women.** Within certain ethnic groups, particularly in the north, women are not permitted to own property, and since many of the individual DGM subprojects were long term and required land ownership, selecting women as individual grantees could pose challenges to traditional decision-making. Land tenure is even more of a challenge for migrant women since they have no lineage to the land and owners are resistant to leasing to migrant women. Recognizing this as an important barrier to women's engagement and their benefit from the project, in some communities DGM Ghana facilitated discussions with male leaders and landowners about the benefits of granting women this type of opportunity and how it could help the entire household, as well as engaging with traditional authorities and land holders to encourage them to lease land to women migrants under a written arrangement.

## Design of the DGM Ghana Project

### Country project design

**The Ghana Dedicated Grant Mechanism for Local Communities Project (G-DGM)** was designed to promote the inclusion of communities reliant on forests in policy formulation and initiatives as well as in other REDD+ programs that seek to reduce deforestation and degradation. This is done through capacity building in REDD+ and climate change (Component 1). The G-DGM is also being established to provide sub-grants to local communities for promoting adaptive and coping livelihoods and sustainable management of natural resources, thereby strengthening their participation in and understanding of the Forest Investment Partnership (FIP), REDD+, and climate change (Component 2).

### Project Governance

**The governance structure of DGM Ghana is driven by community decision-making.** Selection of the NSC members followed a stepwise approach where each of the 53 project communities first selected a focal person. This was followed by a forum where these focal persons selected the formal NSC members. The initial gender makeup of the NSC was 13 men/1 woman, however when the opportunity arose to replace one man, it was unanimously decided by the rest of the NSC that the replacement should be a woman and it instructed the community as such. Those who were not chosen to be on the NSC now serve as informal DGM focal points in their communities; it is estimated that about 11 of the 53 representatives (21%) are women. Interviews with both male and female NSC members convey a clear desire to have



Photo: DGM Ghana/ Solidaridad

more women on the committee, but barriers keep women from engaging in this level of leadership. According to the NSC members interviewed, these barriers include (1) the process of community-led selection which preferentially selects existing and well-known leaders who are more often men, (2) literacy and language barriers, (3) lack of interest or desire to engage in political 'campaigning', and (4) inability, or lack of interest, to take on a job that is not remunerated.

### National Executing Agency (NEA)

**The National Executing Agency of the Ghana DGM is Solidaridad West Africa.** Solidaridad, an international civil society organization operates in over 50 countries worldwide and facilitates the development of socially responsible, ecologically sound and profitable

supply chains. Importantly, the NEA focuses on a broad context of social inclusivity with strong institutional gender support and oversight. A regional gender specialist ensures that all staff are trained on gender issues, looks over plans, and supports design, implementation and activity execution. The NEA was selected for its extensive experience in agroforestry, which is central to the DGM Ghana project.

## Subproject design & granting procedures

**As of December 2020, Ghana DGM had 219 active subprojects led by individuals, communities, and community-based organizations (CBO).** The majority of these subprojects focus on climate-smart cashew farming (90 projects), climate-smart cocoa establishment (51 projects), solar-powered boreholes (38 projects), and afforestation (22 projects).

**Of the subprojects 156 were led by individuals with an average of US\$3,205 per grantee. They were focused on agroforestry and improved agriculture.** Anyone in a beneficiary community who had successfully completed the basic climate change trainings given by the NEA was eligible to apply. The process for eliciting the subprojects was done proactively to reach and include women, for example helping women fill in forms, with a target of 50% of the project being led by women. First-round selection of the proposals was done anonymously, with all identifying criteria (including proponent's gender) scrubbed from the proposals from which the NSC members made their selection.

During the second stage of selection (due diligence in the community) the gender of the proponent was revealed, because due diligence included meeting with the prospective grantees



Photo: DGM Ghana/ Solidaridad

and verifying the conditions that could help the person successfully implement the grant (e.g., access to or ownership of land). In each of the communities, the top five potential grantees were selected for the due diligence process that narrowed the field to the three who were awarded the grant. At this point in the process, women proponents were given priority if they had access to or tenure to land that could make the project successful. Of the applicants selected for due diligence, there was a 59% success rate for female applicants and a 60% success rate for selected male applicants. In the end, 42% of individual proposals selected were women-led, and of those, 34% were women migrants. There is at least one woman-led project per project community, and one community where all three individual projects are led by women.

**The DGM supported 47 community-level subprojects, at an average of US\$40,000 per community, focused on three areas: agroforestry, boreholes, and afforestation.** The process for identifying and selecting these subprojects was done in a way to ensure women's full and effective participation and influence. Starting with separate trainings for women, men and traditional community authorities (both Queen Mothers and male leaders) on climate change, the groups identified the best solutions to climate change



(the three areas mentioned above). These solutions were then displayed in both picture and written form and each person was given a sticker to vote.

**Most (60%) communities selected solar powered boreholes; others chose agroforestry (33%) and tree plantations (7%).** An independent analysis of this type of subproject was recently conducted in the Western North Region of Ghana to understand the factors that influenced peoples' choice of climate response intervention and how these selected interventions varied among different stakeholder groups (men, women, and traditional authorities). Through a series of focus groups and interviews, the results showed that traditional authorities mostly preferred cocoa agroforestry interventions, male community members mostly chose solar powered mechanized boreholes, and women were diverse in their choices. Stakeholder selection was influenced, in part, by access to, and ownership of, land: traditional authorities have greater access and ownership, which caused them to lean towards cocoa agroforestry; male and female community members, with less access and tenure, opted for interventions which cannot be owned by individuals and therefore removes the fear of elite capture and benefit sharing (Alorvor, 2020).

**As the NEA explained, women tended to focus their votes on their immediate needs and those which they could benefit from even without land tenure.** Leaders tended to focus more on land-based projects that could serve as a longer-term investment in the community, in the sense that the agroforestry projects would create a pool of sustainable community financing. Boreholes are especially supportive of women, who are responsible for collecting water to meet household needs.

**There are 16 CBO-led projects with an average size of US\$30,000. CBOs eligible to access DGM funding were preselected before the project began.** This was done to discourage the creation of short-term CBOs to capture project funding, and instead build on ongoing locally led efforts. Identification of CBOs was done through community focus groups and the main aim was to choose established and functioning organizations. Gender composition or focus was not a factor in selection; no exclusively women-led groups were selected in the group of eligible CBOs, but women do form part of the management committees of the selected CBO groups.



Photo: DGM Ghana/ Solidaridad

**Basic capacity building was designed to respond to the constraints that women face and to proactively target women participants.**

As the NEA explained, simply observing the social organization and gender norms within the community, which largely discouraged women from actively engaging and speaking up in mixed meetings, led them to take a proactive approach to capacity building. During training for traditional authorities, the project prioritized similar (but separated) training for both the community chiefs and the communities' Queen Mothers: of the 52 project communities, 52 chiefs and 52 queen mothers were trained. The targeting of Queen Mothers was especially influential because



these leaders could mobilize women within the targeted communities to be engaged in the project, as well as serve as role models. Within more general training for community members, the project offered specialized training sessions for women which also included a focus on female leadership. The method of separating women and men during training helped to overcome socio-cultural barriers that hindered effective participation. Careful consideration was given to the timing to serve the needs of the various demographics including women, whose time is constrained as the primary child caregivers; for example, meetings were scheduled to last for a reasonable length of time and project team members volunteered to take care of children so mothers could focus. Trainings were held with women at a time they chose which did not clash with the hours they would be busy looking after their household. Men were more likely to have available time in the evening once they returned home from work, while women tended to be free in the early morning before they headed off to farming.

**Capacity building was tailored to the specific priorities, interests and needs of community members.** Because basic training was a prerequisite for accessing project funding, it was critical to reach an equal number of women and men who were able to participate. The content and delivery were designed to be very practical, engaging and suited to the lives of participants. For example, one activity included showing maps of forest distribution from decades ago and facilitating discussion about how the landscape had changed, and along with it, how access to forest products, water, and other resources had diminished. Recognizing that literacy was especially challenging for women (and migrant women), the training materials were largely visual. The trainings were conducted separately with men and women to provide a more comfortable environment as it was more difficult for

women to engage in mixed company. The timing of trainings was also tailored, with men more able to attend in the evenings and women in the early mornings. The training team also quickly realized that women were being distracted by their babies during trainings and the team responded by providing care for the babies; while this wasn't part of the original project plan, it is a clear example of the gender-responsive nature of the project team.

**Capacity building itself was empowering to women.** At the end of the training sessions participants had to pass a test, given orally to cater for low literacy levels. It was reported by the NEA and World Bank TTL that women were very proud of passing the test, that it was an empowering moment. Ongoing capacity-building and project-implementation support was conducted in a way that easily reached women, such as radio and community information centers.

**Ambitious targets and consistent monitoring were aimed at prioritizing gender outcomes.** From the start, the project set a target of 50% of individual subproject participation for women and migrant beneficiaries. Several key informant interviews suggested that it was important to have a clear and ambitious target such as this to overcome inequalities. The NEA had gender technical support and capacity among the team as a result of the institution's internal practices and priorities which helped to inform project approaches. Despite these efforts (or perhaps because of these efforts) 42% of the 152 grantees under the individual grants were women (and 34% of those were migrants). World Bank and the NEA hypothesized that the 50% target was not achieved for a couple reasons: (1) women-led proposals likely focused less on land-based interventions (given their lower rates of access and tenure) and could therefore have been deemed as weaker proposals for climate change mitigation and (2) overall, women-led

proposals may just not have been written as clearly or the concepts were not as strong as male-led proposals, despite the support given to women project proponents.

**Gender considerations have been well integrated into the project's grievance redress mechanism (GRM).** Women make up approximately 50% of every grievance committee and have contributed to successfully managed grievances that emanated within their communities. The committees are made up of representatives from the District Assembly/Forestry Commission, Area Council, the NEA, an NGO/CBO working in the area, clergy, focal persons and traditional Leaders. Women wouldn't have normally spoken during grievance meetings, or taken the lead in resolving them, but they were active on these committees and helped to resolve grievances.

Through these various approaches, DGM Ghana established, and has largely been able to meet, ambitious targets for benefits to native and migrant women, which has served to create a positive enabling environment for subprojects across Ghana to benefit women, as evidenced in the case study.

## Overall Results of the DGM Ghana

**Overall, DGM Ghana is relatively close to meeting its expected targets and objectives.** As of February 2021, 15% of subprojects were successfully completed and achieved their objectives consistent with FIP objectives, with a target of 65% by April 2022 when the project closes (SAR 11). DGM Ghana only reports on one sex-disaggregated indicator, shown below.

DGM Ghana sex-disaggregated performance indicator		
Indicator	Actual	Target
Percentage of women and migrants (of total grantees) that execute subprojects.	42%	50%

Source: SAR 11

## Case study methodology

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**Case study selection and data collection was done collaboratively and in accordance with geographic, health, and time constraints.** In order to best capture the impacts on women's participation and leadership within the DGM project, and to understand to what extent the project may be influencing broader social and gender norms, we chose to focus on a specific community—Koradaso. Koradaso was selected, at the suggestion of the NEA, because it had all three types of subproject interventions (individual, Community Based Organization (CBO), and community). Throughout April and May 2021, we conducted individual and group interviews online and in-person. We interviewed 14 women and 15 men from the community of Koradaso, four members (two women/two men) of the National Steering Committee, and members of the DGM National Executing Agency (Solidaridad), and the World Bank. All in-person interviews were conducted in Twi (the language utilized by DGM-Ghana) and led by a Ghanaian consultant

who had previously worked with the NEA on community engagement and was very familiar with the DGM and the community. The study team recognizes that this association with the NEA had the potential for conflict of interest via a skew toward an overly positive portrayal of DGM outcomes and gender impacts. Nonetheless, the evidence reported, and conclusions drawn, both from our own data collection and from the consultants' research, provided an accurate portrayal of the DGM's impact on gender outcomes. Our aim was to document the inputs (both tangible and intangible) that the DGM project had invested in the community, the impact of those investments on women's participation and leadership at multiple levels, and the larger societal impacts that may have resulted across broader gender norms within the community. Given that migrants tend to be more engaged in DGM activities, we preferentially selected a larger number compared to natives.



## Community members interviewed

CBO member	M	Migrant <sup>1</sup>
CBO member	F	Migrant
CBO member + individual grantee	M	Migrant
Individual grantee, CBO member + DGM focal person	M	Migrant
Traditional authority	M	Native <sup>2</sup>
Individual grantee	F	Native
CBO member	F	Migrant
Community member	F	Migrant
Women's focus group (10 people)		3 Migrants/7 Natives
Men's focus group (10 people)		7 Migrants/3 Natives
District Assembly person	M	N/A

## MAP OF GHANA SHOWING THE PROJECT COMMUNITIES



- 1 As explained in more detail below, migrants in Koradaso are generally from northern Ghana and have moved south in search of better agricultural lands.
- 2 Native means born in Koradaso or the nearby surrounding area.



Photo: DGM Ghana/ Edward Kyere

## Community case study: Koradaso

**The community of Koradaso is located within the Pamu-Berekum forest reserve in the northern part of the Dormaa East Municipality within the Bono Region in western central Ghana** (see map). It was selected as a DGM project site because of its location within the forest and the fact that livelihood activities therefore have a direct impact on the health of the forest. Koradaso consists of 427 individuals (230 men/197 women) living within 89 households (FIP 2014). The population is a mix of locals (~30%) and migrants (~70%) who are drawn to Koradaso from northern Ghana in search of better weather (the north is becoming hotter and drier) and access to resources such as fertile land and forests. The environment plays an important part in both the push and pull factors for migrants coming from the north, although research shows that it is not 'distress migration' in the face of environmental disaster but instead migration as a way to respond to continual environmental scarcity (Van der Geest 2011). Migrants primarily come from the Dagaati, Gurusi and Frafra groups and do not

speak the local language, Twi, which presents a challenge to new migrants. Despite this, it was reported by the NEA that the migrants are more active and vocal in the DGM project activities. This caused some conflict between locals and migrants, but it has largely been resolved.

**Degradation within the reserve is high, with widespread bushfires causing major damage to soil fertility and reducing the forest cover and associated biodiversity.** As a result of the bushfires and other anthropogenic disturbances, most of the forest reserve has been converted into (mostly degraded) secondary forest (Danquah et al. 2011), resulting in a loss of wild food and traditional medicines. Recognizing this situation, efforts have been made over the years to engage the forest fringe communities. Beginning in 2005, IUCN and government partners implemented a project focused on community-based wildfire management (Njanje & Blay 2011). More recently, the UNDP SGP identified lack of community involvement in reserve

management as a key driver of degradation within the Pamu-Berekum forest reserve, along with a general lack of awareness about the effects of forest clearing. To this end, UNDP SGP implemented a two-year project (2015-2017) to increase community awareness of REDD+ to increase participation in the restoration and sustainable management of the reserve (SGP, undated). Recent research (Appiah 2020) on the success of agroforestry initiatives within three similar Pamu-Berekum fringe communities showed that women play a key role in the success of agroforestry. Study respondents reported that men and women had equal access to agricultural lands and technical and material inputs, effectively enhancing farm output and income. Furthermore, women respondents reported that they received the income and benefits associated with their labor and inputs.

**Clear differences exist between the migrants and locals in terms of how women are regarded and the rights they have.** Several interviewees commented on how migrants from the north tend to have more traditional and conservative gender norms, in which men feel they have ownership over their wives and women lose control over their lives. For the most part, these migrant women are not as active in attending general community meetings and events but are quite active in DGM-related activities. On the other hand, among the native Akan tribe, older traditions that inhibited women's rights are eroding and women have the ability to access, use and own land and participate in decision-making (key informant).

**There is an undercurrent of distrust of outside interventions, brought on by negative past experiences of NGOs making and breaking promises.** Several people cited this experience, where an NGO has not followed through on a promise, as a reason that some individuals were hesitant

to engage in the DGM at the beginning. According to the NEA, these interventions were largely related to forestry, agriculture and conservation. Many interviewees pointed to the DGM project as a good example of how a project should be designed, with in-depth and careful community buy-in. All of the women interviewees, for example, said the separate meetings and trainings that the project held with women had been key to their engagement.

## Design of subprojects and capacity building

**There are three individual subprojects in Koradaso: one woman-led and two men-led.** We spoke with all individual grantees to understand the process and impact of the project on them individually. Across the three, they all focused on cashew agroforestry on plots of land from 1.2 to 3 ha in size; each received a grant of US\$3,000. To put this into perspective, an economic study estimates that an average (cocoa-producing) rural household in Ghana earns an annual US\$2,789 (adjusted for inflation to 2021) from all income sources (Bymolt et al. 2018). The female subproject grantee is a native and secured ownership of land through her husband for the project. "If you were a woman and had access to land to establish a farm, you received immense support from the DGM," she said. The other two recipients, both men, are also migrants and active in the DGM: one is the community DGM focal point, and both are members of the CBO group.

**The community selected a solar-powered mechanized borehole (US\$40,000) as the community subproject.** Previously, the community had one borehole from which water was purchased. The borehole was chosen within the DGM project to provide



potable water for the community, a decision that everyone reported came directly from women who were very clear on wanting to end the burden of traveling a long distance in search of water or using the old non-mechanized pump. As one migrant woman explained: “[Before the DGM] women and children would have to walk for miles in search of good potable water for our household activities but now we do not walk in search of water.” The choice was supported by men who saw the challenges their wives were having in fetching water—sometimes reportedly even getting frustrated at having to wait for dinner because water was so scarce. Water is also attractive because it cannot fall into ‘elite capture’ like

land-based projects such as reforestation. Once the borehole was chosen, all community members agreed every individual in the community above 18 years would pay a monthly levy to be used for maintaining the borehole and they would create a water committee to monitor and protect the pipe.

**As a community-based organization, the Peaceful Tree Growers Association received a CBO subproject (US\$40,000) to produce honey under sustainable and environmentally sound conditions after receiving training and equipment.** The CBO largely consists of migrants, and it was predominantly migrant women who proposed apiculture since they did not have access or ownership of land on which to do other activities. According to a male CBO member, there is a “good proportion” of women on the CBO project committee and they are “very active” in overseeing the projects. The 21-person group is able to harvest honey two times a year which provides valuable income for the group; in their first year of harvest, they generated an estimated US\$140 which is used for the CBO expenses and loans for members. In addition, the CBO oversees a tree nursery site on an

acre of community land where indigenous trees are raised. The DGM project also supported a water tank for the nursery. Women in the CBO group proposed to sell water from the tank to raise funds to regularly maintain the facility.

**Community-wide education and meetings were conducted strategically to support the full engagement of women and men.** Project-related education in Koradaso focused on the benefits of tree planting and the influence on health, clean air, and rainfall. Nearly all of the interviewees noted that before the DGM, conventional planting methods were unsustainable (e.g., pulling up new trees, not diversifying crops), but that changes in planting are already clear (e.g., more diversification of crops, allowing more shade to grow). As in other DGM project communities, engagement with women and men was done strategically; as one female migrant interviewee reported, previous NGOs usually only engaged men or would bunch all the community members together during project activities and this affected how freely women participated. With the DGM, however, she says that because men and women were engaged separately “we were more motivated to fully participate in most activities and became more vocal in our community.” Another migrant noted that she decided to engage in the project because the approach adopted by the DGM encouraged her to attend “as the women were engaged separately from the men” and that the method of meetings made sure nobody was left out of trainings. She went on to explain how DGM meetings were timed for early morning or evenings after everyone had returned from farming, and sometimes on market and taboo days<sup>3</sup> when everyone was home and more available to attend.

<sup>3</sup> During taboo days it is prohibited to go to a forest, farmland, or river. Taboo days include communal work, visiting relatives and friends, funerals, household work and leisure.

## Project inputs present challenges and supports for women's full engagement and benefits.

The interviews revealed a series of underlying challenges and supports that either hindered or helped women to engage and benefit from the project, mostly related to local customs, traditional rights, and gendered responsibilities. These begin to reveal the complex and challenging climate in which the project operates.

**Access and ownership of land was mentioned many times, by both women and men, as a clear challenge for migrants.** When migrants arrive in the community, they often enter an agreement with natives who own land. The native owner typically gives access to land to the migrant man, who is considered the family head. The land is divided up, and once the migrant farmer harvests, he gives a portion to the landowner and keeps a portion for his family. Once the land is harvested, the migrant farmer is able to register it to his name. While landlessness is a challenge for migrants across the board, migrant women do experience additional challenges. Both male and female interviewees noted that migrant women could not participate because they are "not allowed to own and control assets like land." Migrant interviewees explained that the practice was changing, becoming more accepting of women by encouraging male migrants to allocate land to their wives, but that there remained a stark difference between what is acceptable for native women versus migrant women. One migrant woman said: "I have seen changes in how northern migrant women were controlled by their spouses in terms of access to and owning land, compared to the native women who already had the liberty to own land in their names." This inability

to access their own land meant that some migrant women "did not see the [benefit] of participating [in the DGM]."

**Other commitments, and time constraints, made it difficult for some women to fully engage.** Farming is done in the morning, often when meetings usually are held, and this made it hard for women (and men) to juggle competing priorities. On top of farming, women are responsible for household chores. A native woman explained that during the capacity building phase, "quite a number" of women said they were too busy and did not have the time to come to trainings. They therefore also missed out on benefitting from other opportunities, because they were tied to attendance at the trainings. The DGM project was careful to schedule training sessions for times that were proposed by the community members themselves, but the underlying issue of lack of time remained an important challenge for women.

**All interviewees, both male and female, migrant and native, also reported that women generally had a lack of confidence.** Here too there was a reported difference between native and migrant women. One migrant woman said native women "have always been courageous compared to the migrant women." Low self-esteem and fear of public speaking led to women feeling inferior and without the courage needed to engage in projects. In part, this could be due to the language barrier. When newer migrants have not yet mastered Twi. As one migrant woman explained: "I have always had difficulty speaking among people for fear of making mistakes."

**Support and encouragement from male leaders provided important opportunities for women.** One male leader said he consciously delegated opportunities such as attendance at meetings or trainings to women and he had seen how this encouragement could result

in women taking on leadership positions. He suggested that whenever there was an activity or vacant leadership opportunity, quotas should be given specifically to women, and the allowance given to women to identify and select a good candidate for the position. The women's focus group explained that the men in Koradaso "have been intentional about involving women in the actions" and had supported them on every step of the way.

## The subproject brought direct impacts – more income, new assets, voice/agency

### **Women beneficiaries reported increased income and savings because of the project.**

All of the women interviewed and participated in focus groups reported increased income and savings because of the project. As a result of DGM trainings, one woman explained that she was better able to manage her income, expenses, and time. The application of climate-smart production had increased her farm's yield and she was able to pay laborers. The individual grant female beneficiary reported having a 'fully established' cashew farm through the support of the DGM, having switched from slash and burn agriculture to a more sustainable approach (although because of the maturity time of the cashew plants it would likely not be fully productive for about eight years). She reported that the subgrant had allowed her to pay laborers to help her clear land, although this was expensive as rates kept increasing. Another woman who attended capacity building trainings noted that her new knowledge and ability to diversify and cultivate other crops like pepper and cassava alongside cashew and cocoa had improved her income "substantially." This was echoed by the women's focus group (reported in aggregate) whose members explained that the

new practices that the DGM taught—including land preparation, agroforestry, and limiting chemical use—had improved their farm's yields and resulted in more income.

### **Both men and women reported increased confidence of women engaged in the project.**

Across all interviews, it was clear that both local and migrant women in Koradaso were more outspoken and confident than in the past, and this was attributed to the DGM. As one woman noted: "I used to be a very shy person and would never speak during a gathering, now I am able to do so." She noted that, as a migrant, she did struggle with the native language but this no longer deterred her from speaking up. Another migrant woman said: "The DGM project has really empowered a lot of the women to talk in public places and in our homes." Male interviewees agreed, noting that since the DGM was introduced into the community women had gained a certain level of confidence and they now voiced opinion when need be. This ability of women to attend meetings alone (without spouses) and respond confidently to questions had "broken long-existing barriers of low confidence." This also enabled them to voice concerns when they had them.

### **Time burden is reduced through accessible water.**

Clearly, the borehole was a priority for women who advocated strongly for it as a community benefit, as identified by both men and women interviewees. The borehole "has totally eliminated all our water problems, which used to be our biggest concern," one migrant woman explained. This was echoed by a male interviewee who observed that "the community water project was largely done to bring relief to the women and stop the practice of having to travel a long distance to access water." Another man stated that "at first, our meals used to be delayed as [women] would have to struggle for water for cooking, but now they just go to the pipe stand to fetch water."



## Changes within household dynamics

### **Women's increased ability to make money has started to shift their role within the family.**

Among the interviews, all of the community members mentioned a positive shift in gender roles within the family. As one male migrant interviewee explained, before DGM he had been the sole bread-winner in the house but now his wife was able to also provide support thanks to her cashew farming. He said he had also seen this in other households, where women were able to better support the family's needs alongside their husbands. According to the traditional authority figure interviewed, this had reportedly helped decrease conflicts in the homes. As one migrant woman described, before gaining income from the DGM "even if I wanted to buy something for the home, I would have to consult my husband, but I am [now] able to buy small items for housekeeping without consulting him." She said that before DGM she could not have expressed her views on most activities in her household, but now was empowered to make suggestions on most issues they discuss, and her husband was happy with her suggestions. Another woman reported that now that she had established her own farm (thanks to the DGM project) she was able to help support her family and "my husband and I now support each other equally. I am in control of my finances and own farmland which is now my own property. I am also more vocal with my partner when we need to take a decision at home." A third (migrant) woman described how she was now able to "fruitfully discuss" issues with her husband and provide suggestions which she was empowered to do after attending trainings on leadership and management roles as part of a module for the CBO group. While she used to think that engaging in discussion with her husband was rude, after the training she realized the best way was to make suggestions

at home and she said he now engaged her for her opinion. She also noted that, previous to the DGM, at the end of the cropping cycle her husband would keep all of the money made from selling the produce and spend it without her knowledge; now they plan together and save some money for the future.

### **There are clear examples of changing responsibilities at the household level.**

Most women and a couple of men interviewed mentioned a noticeable change in men taking on more household responsibilities. As a female migrant CBO-member explained, before the DGM project "I [was] expected to wake up early to perform household chores before proceeding to the farm, and also return in time to cook for the home while my husband only works on the farm and sits idle at home when he returns. Now my husband helps me when he returns from the farm earlier than I do, or if I am running late. He even starts the food preparation before I get back, therefore it is not solely my responsibility anymore." A male migrant said women had been "overly burdened with chores perceived to be women-assigned roles at the household level has reduced because the men are more willing and actually do help out with these now."

### **This shift is happening in both native and migrant households.**

Of the natives we interviewed singly, one (of two) mentioned this shift in their personal household, while of the migrants interviewed singly, all of the women and two of the three men did. The women's focus group, which consisted of seven natives and three migrants, also mentioned this at an aggregate level. As one male migrant interviewee explained, the old cultural practices of restricting women's livelihood activities and control of assets like farmland and money has been changing over the years – even before the DGM project—but the DGM was improving on this change. A migrant woman shared that women like her

had been highly intimidated by their spouses because they were considered property of their husband, but that now, because the DGM challenged her to do so, she was able to share her thoughts at home and speak among her fellow women. Intimate partner violence (or any type of gender-based violence) was not mentioned by any interviewees, but key informants did acknowledge that it was present; it was therefore unclear as to what influence the DGM projects may have on mitigating or exacerbating it.

**The changes appear to be well received by men.** A male migrant commented: "This improved relationship in the households [due to shifts in household duties] has brought about another level of peace, joy and comfort." During the male focus group, one man said: "We [men] are really happy as a lot of burden has been lifted off our shoulders" and another said that, while everything in the past had been his sole responsibility, his wife was now able to take initiatives to assist him at home and he "is happy for that." The focus group ended with a respondent declaring that the men will continuously empower everyone in the community to not see women as threats to men because their engagement in activities helps to assist and support men to take care of the family. That said, two male migrant interviewees revealed an undercurrent of concern that women could "get too much power."

## Influence and change at a community/societal level.

**New roles and responsibilities have given women a platform to gain leadership experience.** Through the DGM, several new avenues or platforms for leadership have surfaced, and women have taken advantage of them. For example, women are now on

the community clinic and water management committees, an encouragement for them to take up leadership positions. A migrant woman has been appointed as committee chairperson on a local committee after having DGM trainings which helped her become more vocal and come forward with good ideas. In discussing her, a fellow migrant woman explained that the [the female committee chairperson] had become more vocal and "brings out good suggestions and constructively criticizes during community meetings." A male focus group member agreed, saying that "since her assumption of the role, she has really contributed a lot that we never experienced when a man was leading, which is all very new to us." A male interviewee pointed to a female farmer DGM grantee who he said was a source of motivation for other women in the community. Within the CBO group, where previously only men occupied leadership roles, women have taken positions in the latest election. One male interviewee from the CBO suggested that whenever there is an activity or vacant leadership opportunity, quota should be given specifically to women and give them the ability to identify and select a good candidate for the position.

**The DGM has supported and encouraged the views of women to influence community decision-making.** Across all of the interviews, there was a consistent message that women, both local and migrant, had become more vocal and influential at the broader community. As many people explained, in the past when town meetings were held, women were largely absent, but after DGM's intervention, women now participated and voiced their opinions on decisions that were made. As one migrant woman said: "Now when there is a community meeting, every man is obliged to bring his wife along...our leaders now appreciate the kind of suggests we [women] bring along." One man declared: "we men now permit and

encourage women, especially the migrants, to air their views freely and [do] not inhibit their participation in communal activities.”

**Engagement in the DGM has encouraged women to be more vocal and engaged in public settings.** Multiple women interviewees, native and migrant, described how their involvement in the DGM, and specifically their being encouraged to engage during trainings, had empowered them to speak up and talk in public. Migrant women, as part of the CBO group, received extra trainings in group development and dynamics, financial management and record keeping, leadership and business planning, in addition to the general climate change training for the whole community. For native women, this empowerment largely built on and improved their existing sense of confidence and leadership, while for migrant women, this was sometimes the first opportunity to publicly engage. Where before only a handful of women would be present at communal meetings, now they “show up in numbers” and, as one woman explained, “our leaders appreciate the kind of suggestions we bring along.” One decisive moment that several women and men recounted was the community choice of a borehole; women spoke very strongly in favor of the borehole and one speculated that if the women had not spoken during the initiation engagements with the DGM “I’m not sure the men would have opted for the borehole subproject.”

**Land access remains a challenge, but there have been positive changes.** As described above, landlessness among migrants as a whole is a challenge, however women migrants often face additional challenges to access and ownership of land. A male migrant explained: “Migrant men do not also permit women to own their own farmlands, they believe they are to do such things together with their spouses as a family.” A female migrant explained that she

did not own land because there is a shortage of fallow land to buy and not enough money to buy it anyway. She described how female migrants like her from the northern part of Ghana were originally not allowed to buy or own land themselves and had to do it in the name of their spouses or male relatives. However, since the DGM, some women now own farmland in their own name because it was given to them by their spouse since access to land was important in order to engage in DGM-supported activities. A district authority points to cultural barriers including that “women are not allowed to own and control assets like land” to explain why some women are unable, or hesitant, to engage in DGM activities. As the NEA explains in its reporting, the team carried out gender trainings for both men and women to press home the message that granting women these project benefits benefitted the entire household and encouraged men to share or grant access or ownership of their land with their wives in order to receive those benefits.

**Women see the value of their influence in decision-making.** As a government representative suggested, women’s involvement in the DGM has created an awareness that they need to engage more in and beyond their community because their participation will influence the outcome they want to see. This is reflected in the community member interviews, in which all speakers note some level of clear and positive change in women’s confidence and engagement in community-level decision making and how that has influenced choices in the DGM project (e.g., selection of the borehole) and beyond in other CBO and community-level decision making spaces.

**Men are becoming stronger advocates for women and gender equality.** Nearly all of the interviewees, both women and men, mentioned the importance of, and growth in, men actively supporting their wives and

other women within the community as a result of the DGM. As one explained: “Those of us leaders who have had the exposure and experience have been enlightening the other men on the subject, as these practices to me seem archaic...” He said some of the change of attitude had been under way before the DGM began, but he noted: “The project has come to strengthen and intensify it massively.” A migrant woman echoed that impression, saying that husbands really “respect and appreciate our efforts,” and this was not previously the case.

## Conclusion

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**The interviews paint a picture of success in all respects—from individual income and asset growth to positive changes in gender norms and relations at the household and community levels. However it is important to be realistic about the influence that the methodology may have had on results.**

Soliciting honest perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs from people requires trust which often takes a long time to develop. This study was greatly improved by the local consultant’s deep knowledge of gender, the DGM, and the community of Koradaso; however, she was also known as a DGM staff member by community members, which could have influenced how she, and the study, were perceived. As the consultant relayed, one of the most consistent messages that was shared during the study was a request for continued funding; therefore, it is possible that participants felt the need to portray the results in a more positive way. The selection of the participants, too, could have influenced the results, with those experiencing positive outcomes more likely to come forward. When asked why the results were so positive, the consultant hypothesized that the inclusive

**There is optimism that these changes are long-lasting beyond the life of the project.**

While many interviewees noted the common difficulty of sustaining the changes after the donor-funded project, stressing that transformative social and cultural change takes time, all interviewees suggested that the changes in the old practices and norms that had been set in motion could not be reversed. One said that the leadership skills and knowledge that women have gained from the project “become part of them” and therefore “can never be taken away again.” This steady progress will hopefully lead to transformation in the long run.

and tailored approach that the project took in engaging all community members in effective capacity building and decision-making was the primary reason.

**The interviews provide evidence that women who engaged in the different project activities, both native and migrant, saw clear benefits from the project.** There were tangible benefits, such as seedlings, access to water, and increased income from new or improved products, as well as intangible benefits such as new knowledge, enhanced confidence, leadership roles, and changes at the household and community level in terms of how women are perceived. While several interviewees noted that these changes were already under way to some degree before the DGM project, they also noted that the project had certainly contributed to furthering and enhancing them.

**DGM Ghana’s careful approach to engaging the community was critical to success.**

Koradaso had witnessed other similar interventions over the years, but as it was reported, these efforts usually only engaged the leaders or a small number of community



members. Most community members were left feeling that their concerns and priorities were not understood and addressed within the project. DGM Ghana realized this situation when they originally engaged with Koradaso and other beneficiary communities and saw that many previous projects had since been abandoned. The method of engagement across different groups within the community—women, men, migrants—from the beginning was clearly identified in the interviews as a reason for trust and success. As one migrant man explained: “As for DGM, it has been different. They have been very open, honest and transparent with all their intentions and activities within the community.”

**Proactive and targeted engagement with women was important.** As explained above, both native and migrant women faced challenges in engaging and benefitting from DGM support. This included issues such as available time (given their responsibilities farming and in the home), a lack of confidence to speak up, no support from their husband to engage, and barriers to land access or ownership—the last three being more of a challenge for migrant women than native women. The DGM’s approach to separate women out for specific training was identified consistently across interviews as an effective method to engage them and provide a safe space where they could feel more comfortable expressing themselves.

**Financial success and education were identified as critical to fostering change in gender norms.** As women and men in Koradaso related, once women had attended trainings and been able to bring money into the household—either through improved farming or honey production—their ability to engage and influence at the household level was increased. This closely follows this study’s analytical framework which identifies resources (in the form of assets, skills, and capacity building) as the first step toward gender transformative change, allowing women to gain more voice and agency and leading men to recognize the benefits of women’s success.

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