

Gender

Women call for support to bridge gender gap

From Kwadwo Baffoe Donkor, WA

PARTICIPANTS in a gender advocacy and mentorship workshop have called for a deliberate approach to support rural women to have access to production resources to improve on their livelihoods as part of the solutions to gender equality.

They bemoaned some cultural practices that have accentuated gender inequality in their communities and noted those practices have over the years inhibited women from contributing effectively to

the development of their communities.

They consequently called on all the stakeholders to be gender sensitive in their decision-making and to ensure that the needs of all segments of the population were taken into consideration.

Suppression

Speaking at a day's training workshop organised by Innovation for Sustainable Rural Development (ISRuDev), a community-based organisation working in the Wa West district, the participants believed that some of the cultural practices seemed to suppress women and restrict their rights and ambitions.

The participants, who were all women drawn from 12 operational communities of ISRuDev, cited the example of access to fertile lands and tractor services saying women were mostly allocated lands deemed not fertile when they wanted to go into farming and also had to wait for men to finish ploughing their land before being allowed to use services of the tractors as some of the practices that were unfair to women.

Again, they said even though most women have their own farms, they still have to help their men on their farms before attending to theirs.

Other challenges faced by women particularly in rural areas included access to

information, shift in role from reproduction to productive roles and access to productive resources.

Objective

Earlier, in his opening remarks, the Executive Director of ISRuDev, Dong-Uuro Philemon Puordeme, said the objective of the workshop was to build the capacity of the women in advocacy to lead the campaign for gender equality in their communities.

As a group that works with women, he said it was important that the women lead the charge to effectively advocate for their groups.

He was hopeful that the women would go back to their communities and train their group members in what they had learned in order to serve as change agents in their community.

Gender inequality

The Upper West Regional Women in Agricultural

Development Officer, Jangu Barikisu Alhassan, observed that even though the country had been preaching about gender inequality and the need to bridge the gap between men and women, the inequality still existed.

She said there was a need to bridge that gap in order to tap the full potential of women in national development.

She said if things continued at the current pace, it would take a long while for the country to see any meaningful development.

She said if more than 50 per cent of the community or society were not empowered enough to be productive, "it is society that loses."

"We are not tapping fully into the potential of women because they are not

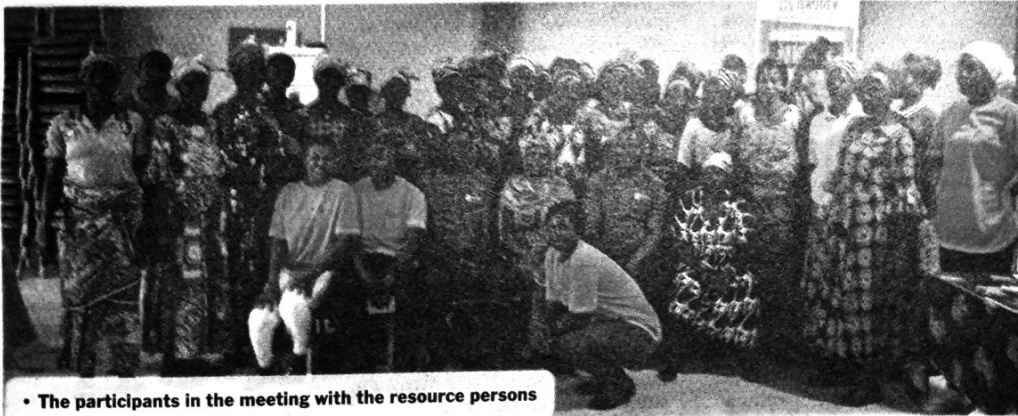
resourced enough," she said.

Even though most women have their own farms, they still have to help their men on their farms before attending to theirs.

Solution

She said gender equality could be promoted through active awareness creation, "active because it has been ongoing but we are trying to put more action into it."

For her, gender advocacy "is the support, promotion and defence of women issues to bring about change in behaviour and practices and in policy to be more favourable towards the woman."



• The participants in the meeting with the resource persons