

ENSURING FOOD SECURITY FOR WOMEN - LIBERIA

Context

In post-conflict Liberia, it is estimated that 76.2 percent of Liberians live in absolute poverty and 52 percent live in extreme poverty. Only 53.9 percent of the eligible population is employed and women account for 39.9 percent of the formal labor force. Agriculture is the main income generating activity with approximately 70 percent of the population depending on agriculture for their livelihood.

Cassava, an important staple crop for all Liberians, is seen as a woman's crop. Women perform almost all activities relating to cassava production and sale; from planting and tending fields to harvest, processing, and marketing. Cassava is currently grown for household use, and for sale; the money from sales of cassava is considered to be the income of the woman of the household. However, women are faced with significant challenges which constrain their productivity and ability to earn substantial income from cassava production. Some of the challenges and constraints include the lack of appropriate processing equipment, transport to market, basic farming tools and the inability to afford necessary inputs for optimal production.

Purpose

The Results Based Initiative (RBI) Liberia Project "Value-Added Cassava Enterprise for the Ganta Concern Women's Group (GCWG)" is a project whose aim is to contribute to the Liberian national strategic objectives of reducing poverty and increasing women's economic empowerment. Specifically, **the RBI is working with the Ganta Concern Women's Group (GCWG)** to support the development of their small-scale women's cassava production operation into an income-generating cassava production and processing enterprise. The project has five major components which include strengthening of the cassava production, processing and marketing, strengthening organizational development and capacity building of GCWG and undertaking a rigorous impact evaluation.

The RBI intends to demonstrate that: (i) **women are good entrepreneurs** and can play an important role in the growth of the agricultural sector and an investment in women cassava producers can contribute significantly to the growth of the cassava industry in Liberia and poverty reduction at the household level; and, (ii) **women's economic empowerment projects can contribute to positive changes in gender relations** at household and community level. The project also intends to show that the RBI methodology can be replicated and used to enhance women's contribution to economic growth.

Results

The project is expected to have an impact at three levels. At the individual level, RBI activities are expected to lead to increased economic security and livelihoods. At the household level, RBI activities will empower women, allowing them to take leadership and control of resources at household level and participate in enterprise activities. Finally, at the community and policy level, the increased cassava production will contribute to promoting the cassava enterprise as a vehicle for growth and poverty reduction.