



# DEVELOPMENT ACTION ASSOCIATION – DAA

## **Theme: Targeting Hunger South - South and Triangular Co-operation for Transforming Agriculture – “Rural Women Prospective”**

Panel 1: Evidence-based policy making for sustainable agriculture and food systems to combat hunger

### **Speech Delivered by Lydia Sasu (Mrs.) – The Executive Director of DAA on the 74<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly, in New York, USA.**

Excellencies,

- It is a pleasure for me to address you today in relation to this crucially important topic on behalf of the *Development Action Association (DAA in short) from Ghana*. We are a smallholder farmer organization, championing the wellbeing of rural farmers, especially women, to reduce poverty by empowering group members to be self-reliant and to participate fully in their own development.

First, please allow me to provide some context before elaborating on successful entry points from our experience.

- In Ghana, women contribute largely to the agriculture sector and to the country’s economy and are responsible for seventy percent (70%) of food crop production. They however, reap minimal benefits from investments in the sector.
- Large proportions of the agricultural workforce are women (52%) with limited capacity to access and adopt improved agricultural technologies, thus most of them are poor.
- Furthermore, thirty percent (30%) of the country’s households are female-headed, with low income levels that make them vulnerable to economic shocks.
- Existing policy frameworks do not adequately recognize the multiple roles that women farmers perform as producers, distributors and caregivers, and the challenges they face and the great economic and social potential they represent.

The DAA’s experience with rural women in fish processing and farming may provide some guidance in making agriculture an economically and socially rewarding undertaking, as a critical theme of this meeting.

In Ghana, small-scale fisheries value chains play a crucial role in ensuring livelihoods for our communities, and women predominate the post-harvest sector. However, women face many obstacles and frequently do not have the same training, rights and opportunities as men.



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**Enhancing local capacities** is crucial: through our interventions, rural women were trained on what inputs should be used, and to find viable solutions to store and market their products.

The women were **socially empowered**: they mobilized, received training to enhance their financial literacy and collectively leveraged access to credit facilities.

Technological innovation has also been essential for success.

The FAO initiative introduced improved fish smoking and storage technology, as well as vegetable production and cassava processing facilities in 13 villages in the Region. . As a result, the final product is of high quality and appealing to customers, therefore attracting the right price, has boosting income levels.

As part of USAID’s Sustainable Fisheries Management Programme, a training center for hygienic fish processing was built to reduce the impact of Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, a dangerous chemical pollutant in fish. The center has already trained more than a thousand rural women fish processors.

The successful reduction of health hazards and work burden while enhancing incomes and livelihoods demonstrates fruitful synergies between rural women farmers and scientific research.

DAA also extensively trained rural women to improve local pig production, for which one of the rural women won a national Best Farmer award, a decoration she never dreamed of. Now young adults and farmers in the area see an opportunity in farming, and positive effects are also evident on children’s well-being.

### ***Which Policy Measures can best support small holders and family farmers?***

In the current development policy framework women’s potential is underutilized, their role in policy formulation remains ambiguous at best, with a significant gap in access to agricultural resources and rewards.

Rural women farmers need to be involved at all levels to make their voices heard. .

Firstly, this can be done through the empowerment of associations and advocacy, so they can interact with the government to discuss their needs. Rural women are often illiterate and unaware of policies that concern them. For instance, we successfully advocated for the Fisheries Law to be translated into local languages to ensure its equitable enforcement.

Secondly, given the lack of appropriate technologies, women perform labour-intensive tasks with the use of outdated traditional farming tools. Modernized agriculture to reduce their work burden is essential.

Rural women mostly live in remote communities.

We advocate for the activities of the Research Extension Linkage Committees to promote research and enhance knowledge sharing on agriculture innovations that can reach rural women and men alike.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today there is no doubt that **resilience** of livelihoods and food systems depends on support to community groups to build capacities on **production and processing of locally grown, safe and nutritious foods**.

This requires rural women’s **empowerment** in the agriculture sectors and providing them with opportunities to thrive and build prosperous societies.

Thank you for your kind attention.