

Integrating gender in BRACED:



Understanding the processes that define the opportunities and constraints for effectively building the resilience of women and girls in the Christian Aid led BRACED projects

Learning Paper #4

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House in Cissin neighbourhood, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, March 2015 (photo: Camilla Audia)

The effects of climate change are being felt by farmers throughout the world. Christian Aid (CA) addresses the challenges associated with this in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia through two BRACED projects which aim to build resilient livelihoods and improve the equitable communication of relevant, timely and accurate climate information.

Women in developing countries are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change due to inequitable access and utilisation of resources such as income, social networks and education; this needs to be considered in the design and implementation of resilience projects. A 2015 study by CA, in conjunction with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), explored how gender is approached within the CA BRACED project in Burkina Faso (Rigg et al., 2015). It highlighted the challenges of addressing the needs of women and girls and integrating gender into resilience programming. This research builds on these findings and investigates both the Burkina

Methods

This study adopted a mixed methods approach involving semi-structured interviews, observation and the analysis of policy documents. Interviews were conducted in person, by phone or through written communication, and were carried out in both country programmes. Interview findings have been triangulated with observation dating from the start of the project development phase in 2014 and with the analysis of key policy documents including the project log frames, M&E plans and theories of change.

The research findings have been analysed according to a sub-set of research questions. These draw out the opportunities and constraints for the partners and policy-makers for effectively building the resilience of women and girls in the two Christian Aid led BRACED projects. These findings are outlined below followed by five key policy recommendations.

Faso and Ethiopia CA projects. It asks the following overarching question:

What are the opportunities and constraints for designing and implementing a gender policy that supports the building of resilience?

In order to answer the overarching research question it is important to first ascertain CA's gender approach in the two projects and explore what impact it has had on the project's ability to address gender issues.

What is the CA BRACED approach to gender in theory?

In the funding application CA states that the projects will analyse gendered roles and responsibilities and how they effect access to capital, resources, power relations and decision-making. They clarify that this analysis will inform the design of specific activities which will "address the inequalities identified and meet the specific needs of women" (Christian Aid, 2014a; Christian Aid, 2014b, section 4). This suggests that the BRACED projects seek to challenge gendered inequalities and therefore take a gender transformative approach.

However, when asked, interviewees expressed uncertainty over the BRACED projects' intended approach to gender. Some interviewees identified an alignment with either a sensitive or transformative approach whilst others thought the projects took a mainstreaming approach. Furthermore there is no specific gender policy document for either project and gender is not specifically mentioned in the theory of changes (ToC). This makes it difficult to clearly identify the projects' approach to gender.

This was explored during the interviews. Some interviewees stated that unclear benchmarks and guidelines for gender programming and implementation had led to confusion over the projects' approach. When questioned about the ToC, some interviewees said that the absence of gender perhaps indicated an inattention to gender within the projects. One interviewee went further and stated that the ToC and project activities were not well adapted to reaching women and girls. This is because women have less access, control and use of the land, radios and phones and therefore whilst women would benefit indirectly from the project the overall ToC was not particularly well adapted for reaching women and transforming their lives.

Key Terms

Gender Analysis: The process of interpreting gendered social meaning and implications from qualitative and quantitative data. It is the scientific process of moving beyond the acknowledgement that the data shows gender inequity, to interpreting why this inequity exists and why it is important.

Gender Sensitive Approach: An approach to recognising society-based injustices or inequalities as a consequence of biological and societal differences between men and women.

Gender Equality: The view that men and women are fundamentally equal, and should have equal opportunities.

Gender Equity: The view that men and women are biologically, and thus socially constructed as different beings. As such, their roles, responsibilities, and needs are often understood to be different within society. In order to have equal opportunities between men and women, attention to these differences (and the inequities associated with these differences) in their social contexts must be acknowledged and addressed.

Gender Transformative Approach: An approach that recognises that men and women are biologically and socially different, and that these differences can present inequities, particularly with regards to power. A transformative approach seeks to challenge these power dynamics within society.

Gender Mainstreaming Approach: An approach that embeds gender analysis at each level within a programme, project or institution, with the aim of achieving greater gender equality.

This ambiguity and the lack of a clear policy results in mixed messages about where partners should be allocating their efforts and leaves them without a roadmap to successfully address gender inequities within their projects. These findings also question how well designed the project is for reaching women and girls and prompts the investigation into how gender was addressed in practice.

What is the CA BRACED approach to gender in practice?

Upon careful analysis of policy documents and exploratory questions during semi-structured interviews it became clear that women's specific needs are investigated through the BRAPA (BRACED participatory approach) and that this information then informs the development of resilience building activities, some of which are purposefully adapted to women's needs.

The BRAPA was designed as an empowerment tool to challenge social norms and empower women by involving them in community level decision-making and carefully facilitated focus group discussions. However partners interviewed for this study had diverging views on the ability of the BRAPA to transform the lives of women and girls in practice. Some perceived it to be well adapted for uncovering and addressing gender roles but the majority stated that in practice it was insufficient for transforming gender relations or questioning power structures. Reasons given for its shortcomings were that it only worked at the community and not at the household level and that it was difficult to capture the nuanced needs, roles and challenges facing women in any real depth. It was also agreed by the majority of interviewees that the value of the BRAPA for addressing these issues largely depended on the capability of the facilitator carrying out the BRAPA at the village level.

Investigation into the monitoring and evaluation practices revealed that data is disaggregated by gender but suggested there was limited analytical investigation into why differences exist between men and women and what would be required to make gender relations more equitable.

These findings suggest that, at the time of research, the project was not well adapted to a gender transformative approach.

Why did this ambiguity over the project's approach to gender evolve?

The research highlighted several key factors that explain how and why the BRACED projects developed an unclear and somewhat piecemeal gender policy that was not well adapted for transforming the lives of women and girls.

- The call for concept notes and proposals for BRACED funding made it clear that strong gender empowerment, and essentially gender transformative components were required within proposals. However funding was capped at three-years, and it is difficult to achieve transformation of gender norms within this timeframe. As a result, commitments were made in the proposal that were difficult to keep. In response to the question of why gender should be central to the project, some interviewees highlighted DFID's gender mandate and one interviewee responded, "because DFID wants it to be". This demonstrates disconnect between expectations

of funding institutions, the proposal documents and project implementation. This is an issue that is not unique to BRACED.

- The development of project proposals was led by Christian Aid's head office in London and the gender sections of both proposals were in larger part identical, despite the very different contexts of Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. This suggests that the projects' approach to gender was decided upon by those removed from the project contexts and that this perhaps contributed to a lack of clarity between different partners and individuals over the desired approach. This is again not an issue that is unique to Christian Aid or BRACED but highlights a continued divide between head offices and regional offices.
- There was also an observed lack of leadership and capacity on gender programming during the project development phase and first year of the project. Whilst there were gender focal points within the different organisations they had limited time allocated for BRACED. No gender policy document, checklist or dedicated budget was developed and there was no BRACED specific gender training. This capacity gap was worsened by the high rate of staff turnover and limited knowledge transfer between staff on gender programming. This is again a common problem for development organisations and highlights the scope for a more rigorous 'learning' system and hand-over process.

Moving forward: What are the opportunities for reaching women and girls in BRACED?

Given that there is no clear gender approach within the CA projects it is difficult to ascertain how relevant or well adapted a given approach to gender is for building resilience. However this research has highlighted a number of lessons on how to define and implement an effective gender policy within development programming more broadly.

Gender should be implemented in a tripartite approach by seeking to improve equity within institutional capacity, research, and project implementation.

The following boxes present the preliminary steps that must take place for any work regarding gender – be it a gender sensitive, mainstreaming or transformative approach.

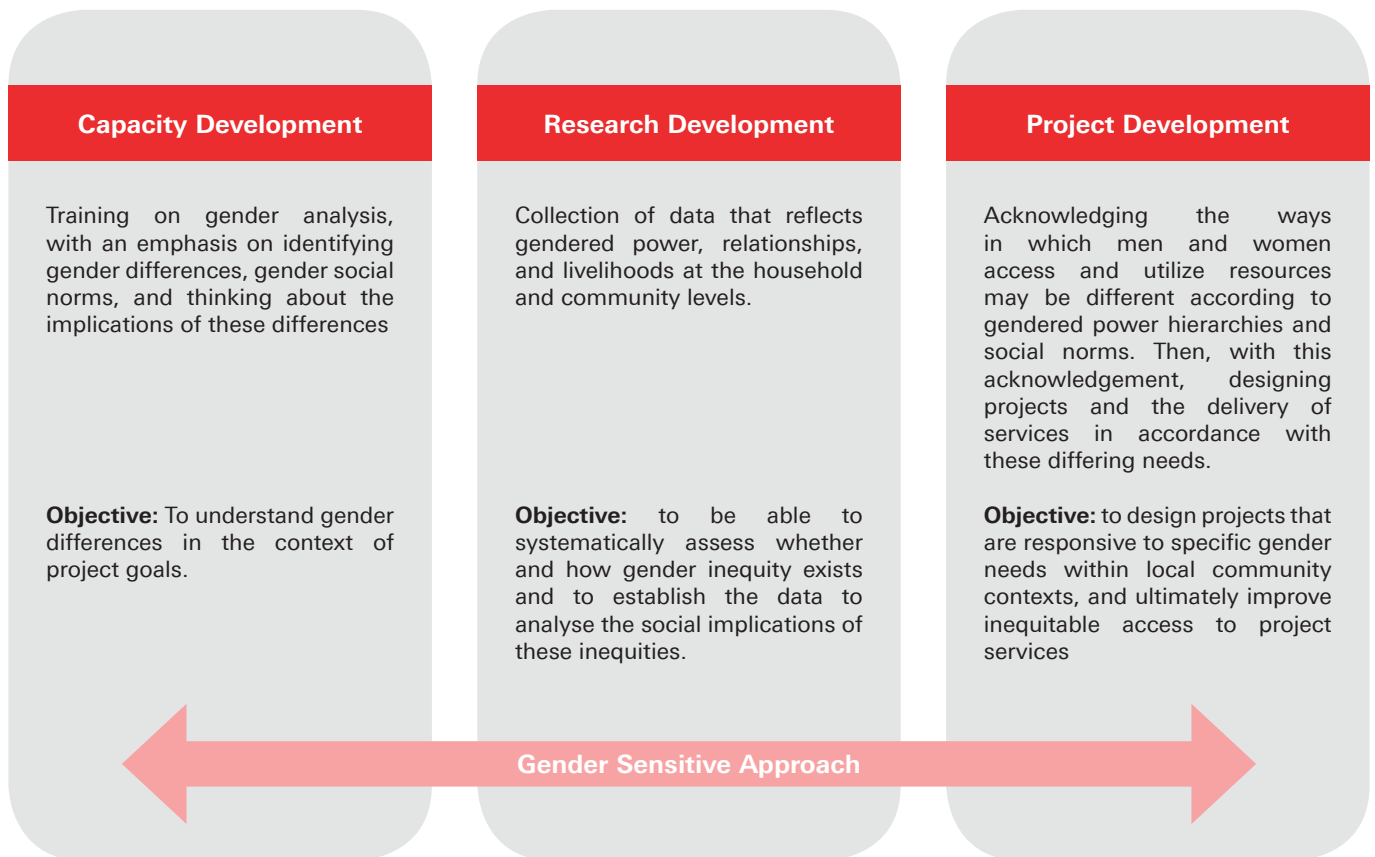


Figure 1: Gender Sensitive Approach: These recommendations improve awareness of gender differences and inequities and enhance gender sensitivity.

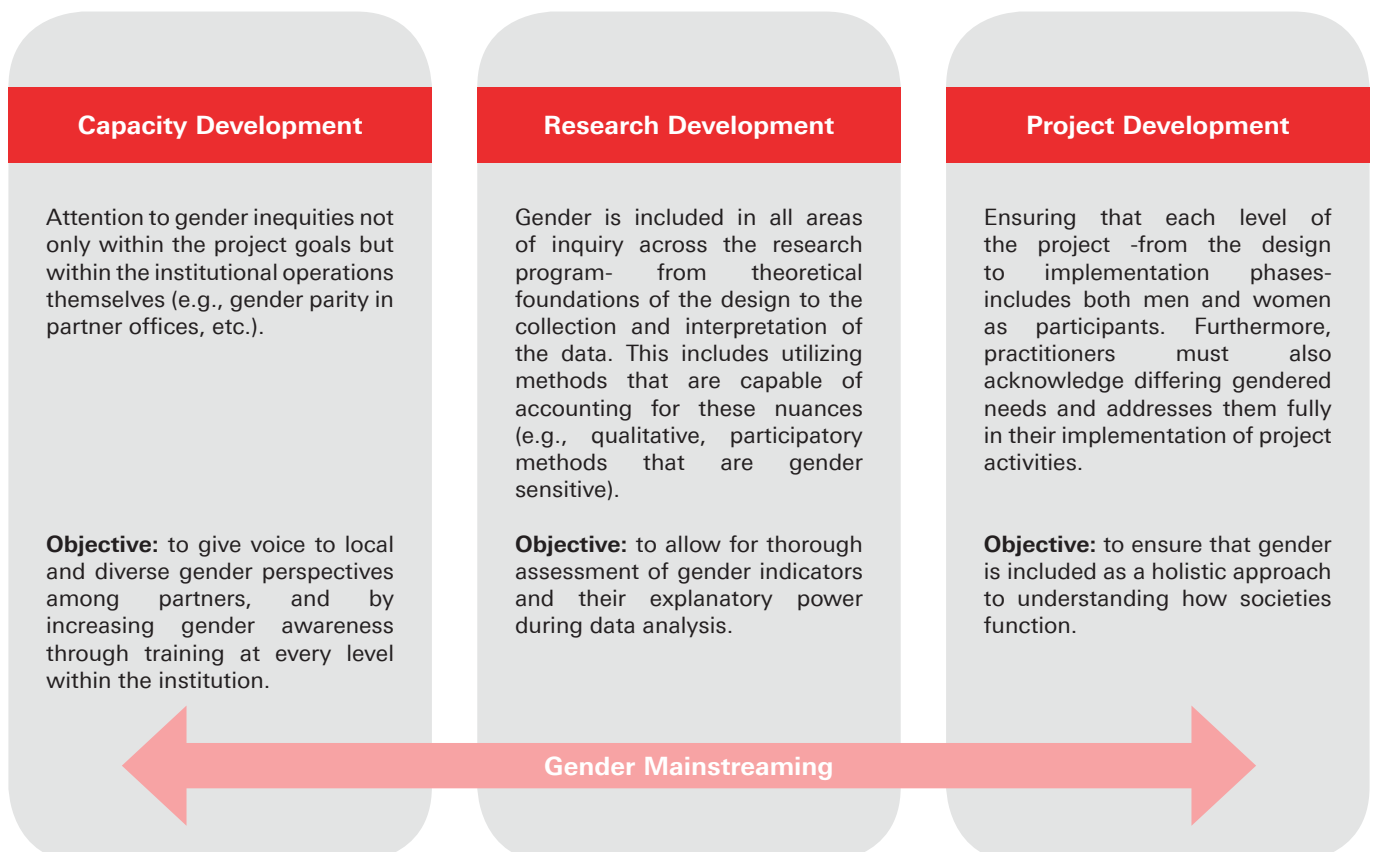


Figure 2: Gender Mainstreaming Approach: These recommendations improve the capacity for gender to be integrated at all levels of project development and implementation.

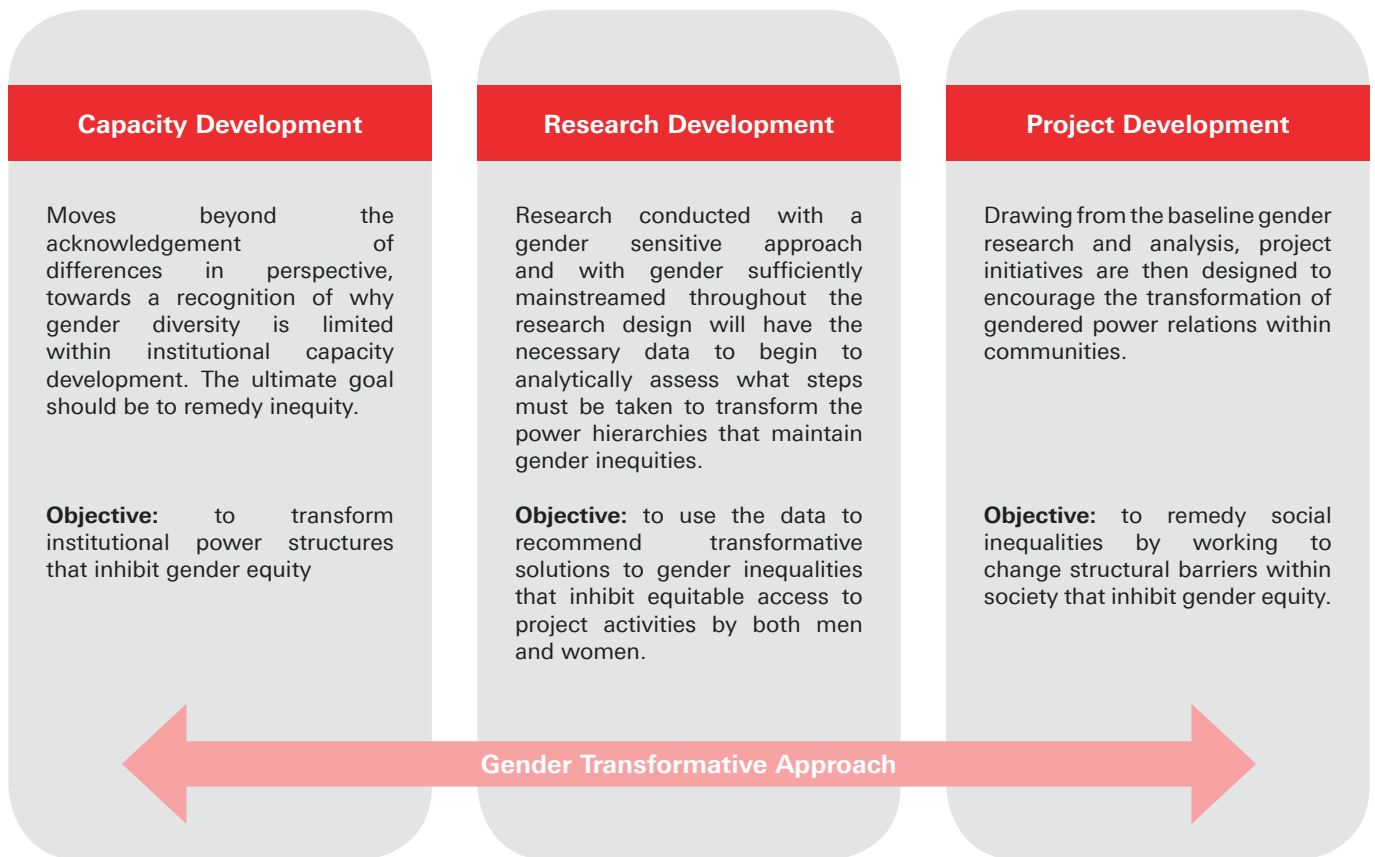


Figure 3: Gender Transformative Approach: These recommendations improve critical analysis of social norms. They challenge gendered power relations through project activities, enhancing transformation and gender equity.



In the streets of Gounghin, artists neighbourhood in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, March 2015 (photo: Camilla Audia)

Recommendations

1. Establishing a clear budget for gender programming activities:

At the moment, funding specifically allocated for gender programming activities is left to the discretion of partnering institutions. *A dedicated budget and resources for analyzing gender issues, as well as informing project policy, is essential to ensuring these activities ultimately take place.*

Without it, some institutions might use their funds in other ways which may be helpful to the project activities, but neglect gender.

2. Establishing a shared gender mandate and responsibility across partners:

The opportunities for developing leadership and a shared approach to gender will help to foster an environment where a clear and explicit gender mandate can be implemented by partners.

This can and should be done by partners collectively addressing gaps in knowledge. This begins with articulating the unspoken assumptions partners are making about project goals, partner's staff capacity, realities of social norms and contexts, and availability of resources and tools with regards to gender programming.

Shared understandings of the project's goals, clear expectations, and a road map for achieving these expectations will contribute towards efforts of accountability in gender equity goals by partners.

3. Enhancing gender programming leadership institutionally:

There does not appear to be strong leadership or a clear focal point within the consortium on gender issues, despite the presence of gender champions within the partner organizations.

Building leadership capacity with particular regards to gender expertise at all levels of the project will be an important component to focusing BRACED gender activities.

4. Establishing a shared gender approach amongst partners:

The study revealed a lack of collaboration on gender findings, trainings, and approaches across partner institutions. This reveals an opportunity for shared collaboration and development of gender skills and knowledge sharing. *Developing a common language and vision for BRACED gender programming activities is critical. This can and should be done through participatory workshops that encourage partners to clearly define the gender goals of the project.* This should be an iterative process conducted throughout the project.

5. Capacity building and providing project specific gender training:

This study has identified gaps in capacity and gender methods among partners and within the BRAPA. These shortcomings can be addressed through capacity building, workshops, and training. Providing opportunities for partners to collaborate and discuss achievable goals within the context of their own limitations and abilities is essential. Goals must be well informed with knowledge of gender equity and how its improvement can impact the overall aims of BRACED. Careful training in gender sensitivity and gender analysis should therefore be provided.

Understanding the meaning and reasoning of gender analysis prompts intuitive questioning and implementation of appropriate methodological tools, which will improve the research and practical applications of project aims. Ensuring that researchers and project implementers are aware of both gender differences, and the social repercussions of those inequalities, builds capacity to remedy them.

This is the first of many necessary steps in order to move beyond gender sensitive approaches to gender transformative approaches within BRACED.

Concluding thoughts on gender programming within BRACED - Working towards a Gender Transformative Approach:

Given the current position of the project with regards to gender training and capacity, as well as the social conditions that continue to perpetuate norms of gender inequality in both Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, this study begs the question: is a gender transformative approach a feasible option for project partners to implement at this time?

This policy brief firstly identifies a number of steps that would need to be taken should a transformative approach to gender be desirable:

There is a need for discussion among partners about what a gender transformative approach means. This should be done initially through gender trainings by a gender expert that focuses on tools for gender analysis and that facilitates a space for critical thinking about power relationships within local contexts and changing the social norms that inhibit gender equity.

- There is also a need for discussion about what it means to achieve BRACED project goals through a gender transformative lens- that is, what is the reality of social norms in communities and what tangible goals for change are achievable? Assessments of project goals must begin with a baseline assessment of gender inequities. This will require a more thorough assessment than that offered by the BRAPA. The following questions should be explored qualitatively:

* What capacity is currently held/necessary within BRACED partner institutions in order to achieve goals?

* What steps must be taken to move towards social change- both internally within institutional partners and within the projects themselves?

* While women may benefit from improved household livelihoods through project activities at an aggregate level, are women's access and utilisation of resources (particularly with regards to climate information) improving?

* Does this change make these women more resilient? Or, does the change make them more dependent on the men who now have improved access to these resources with the assistance of the BRACED project?

- Secondly, once this data is collected, a space for evaluating goals and processes for achieving them should be fostered through workshops with project partners and facilitated by gender specialists.
- Strong institutional support by BRACED partners should be ensured to evaluate project impacts on gender equity and livelihoods in order to move towards gender transformative approaches. Constructing a gender checklist is a starting point for establishing accountability among partners. This should be fostered during workshops that take place throughout the course of the project, which build cumulatively upon goals and expectations. Other spaces for open dialogue among partners should be encouraged and facilitated.
- Embedded within these discussions should also be an acknowledgement of the feasibility of transformative approaches - what does this mean for development programs which are on a shorter time-scale? Transformative change may be difficult to measure in the course of a three-year project, what are the implications of this?

Ultimately, there is value in the transformative approach, and it is not something that should be abandoned. It is our opinion that a gender transformative approach is still a desirable ambition for the project, but the steps described above need to be undertaken first. Furthermore social change needs to be approached with an explicit recognition of how slow and difficult an endeavour it is to pursue. This is a critical component of implementing a transformative approach within gender programming. The projects should break down larger gender transformative goals into manageable goals and work towards laying the foundations and groundwork that can then be built upon in the future to achieve genuine gender equity.

These findings have highlighted two key areas for further investigation. The first is to explore the relationship between an intervention's approach to gender and its ability to build resilience. The BRACED projects provide a good opportunity for exploring this and it would require an in-depth investigation into the projects' impact on women and girls over the three years and beyond. This leads to the other area to be explored, which is the relevance of the project's ToC for transforming gender relations and the relationship between a project's ToC and its approach to gender.



Hay seller in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, March 2015 (photo: Camilla Audia)

Next steps

- Christian Aid has recently set out its Inclusive Programming Approach that builds on and strengthens gender sensitive programming. To achieve equality more effectively, it focuses on identifying common building blocks to all vulnerable groups.
- The findings from this study have highlighted a need to refine the project's approach to gender. The concept has been discussed within and across the consortia and a learning event is currently being organised. It will be held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in December 2016.
- The workshop is being designed in line with Christian AID's programming and through open communication with the Gender and Inclusion advisor. This will ensure that the suggestions presented in this paper fit well within the bigger picture and overall approach.
- The workshop is likely to focus on some practical steps that need to be taken to move from a gender sensitive approach to a gender transformative one, including but not limited to familiarisation and deepening of theoretical aspects, simulation exercises, possibly a fieldwork exercise and open multiple way discussions throughout. Practical outputs could include the drafting of a new policy brief as well as the development of practical indicators to monitor changes in the gender approach of the project.

References

- Christian Aid (2014a) "Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) Programme, FULL PROPOSAL APPLICATION FORM, Ethiopia"
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- Rigg, S., Lovell, E. and Pinchon, F. (2015) *Assessing Gender in Resilience Programming: Burkina Faso*, Overseas Development Institute, Available at: <https://www.odl.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/10216.pdf>

Overview of the profile of the interviewees

Note: this includes interviews that were carried out in person and those that responded in writing.

| Interviewee profile | Number of interviewees |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Christian Aid London | 4 |
| Christian Aid Burkina Faso | 3 |
| Christian Aid Ethiopia | 1 |
| BBC Media Action Ethiopia | 1 |
| ODE Ethiopia | 1 |
| Action Aid Ethiopia | 1 |
| Oxfam Burkina Faso | 1 |
| Internews Burkina Faso | 1 |
| UK Met Office London | 1 |
| King's College London | 2 |



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