Advocacy and Savings Groups, Working for Broader Impact

August 24, 2016
Plan Benin’s Experience with Savings Groups

Began promotion in 2006
84,000 members; 95% women and girls
Efforts to organize SG networks for expanded community engagement
Integration of leadership and advocacy training with financial services
Plan Tanzania & Savings Groups

Promotion of SGs since 2004
141,000 members; 75% women and girls
Recent emphasis on SGs for children and youth
Integration of enterprise and financial education
Significant accomplishment in organizing Intermediating Associations of SGs (IMAs)
Poll: Which of the below activities would you classify as ‘advocacy’

A. A group of parents lobbing the school board for better attendance from teachers at the school
B. A child rights coalition advocating for better-integrated national approach to prevent and respond to violence against children
C. A public campaign to pressure local government to improve safety of local roads and lighting
D. All of the above
Poll: Have you been involved in advocacy in your Savings Groups Work?

A. Yes
B. No
What do we mean by Advocacy?
How change happens

- Individual
  - Consciousness, capabilities
  - Resources
- Formal
  - Laws and Policies
- Informal
  - Social norms
- Systemic
Advocacy approaches

1. Organisation-led
   - Focused on formal spaces
   - Laws, policies, strategies, budgets
   - Plan International as lead advocate supported by programme evidence and policy analysis

2. Network/Youth-led
   - Focus on formal or informal spaces, often local
   - Often changing behaviours, norms, practices, sometimes laws or budgets
   - Plan International as facilitator, supporter
Advocacy led by VSLAs in Couffo, Benin

Plan international benin
Presentation outline

I. Context

II. Project Goals

III. Process/ Strategy

IV. Results

V. Lessons Learnt
Plan International Bénin
Since 1994

- 25,000 Sponsored Child
- 1,471 target communities

2 Programme Units
II. Context

The review of MDG’s indicators established in 2007, shows that monetary and human poverty indexes are respectively 40,6% and 45,4%.

Women in rural areas of Benin in general and particularly in the Couffo Department, play the double roles of production and reproduction.

The main activity of women is Agriculture

Women and children are the most affected by poverty
I. **Project Goals**: Women’s empowerment through the promotion of Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA)

**Global Objective**: Ensure economic security for poor households of the Couffo Department

**Specifics Objectives**

- Facilitate the creation of networks of VSLAs in the six Communes of the Couffo Department
- Facilitate accession of new members to VSLA model
- Built the capacity of VSLA members through trainings on various themes such as advocacy and leadership.
Women’s Empowerment Project Theory of Change

- Plan International Benin works with women through a series of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs). These have been used to give women greater access to essential financial opportunities, but also to develop their leadership capacities, allowing them to take greater responsibility within their communities.

- Using these existing groups, Plan works to create powerful networks of associations, allowing individual VSLAs greater social credibility and influence.

- These networks have been strengthened and connected to other stakeholders in the local governance sphere, working together to realize the rights of communities while ensuring good governance at all levels.

- Women influence the decision making process of the networks, improve their representation, and guarantee equitable access to properly managed social services.
III. The Process

- **Long Term**
  - VLS&A Network in PU Couffo
    - 01-VSL&A National Network (VNN)
    - Technical support
  - Evaluation – Capitalisation - Consolidation des bases du réseau - Fiabilisation

- **Short Term**
  - 02- Department Network of VSL&A
    - 06 Districts Networks VSL&A
  - 50- Arrondissement Networks VSL&A
  - 2,188 - Villages VSL&A

VSL&A members leadership empowerment
VSLA Network Advocacy: The Steps

**Year 2011 : Define a Vision ➞** To advocate for access to fertilizer, their priority need and announce this during the celebration of International Women’s Day

**Year 2012 : Develop their Capacity & Define an Advocacy Strategy ➞** Mobilized their own resources (special member contributions for fertilizer purchase and VSLA social funds for transport). Solicited Plan’s support to introduce them to meet the local fertilizer authorities to plead their case

**Year 2013 : Carry out the Strategy ➞** Multiple meetings with local and national authorities necessitating frequent travel. Finally obtained meeting with the National Fertilizer Board where they made their case and obtained a decision for fertilizer to be sent to their location.

**Year 2014 : Implementation ➞** Negotiated with local authorities to obtain a building to store and sell fertilizer and elected a management committee to run it. First delivery of fertilizer made and sold to members. Yearly sales continue up to the present.
Supporting Package

Training on various themes:

• Advocacy
• Management
• How to elaborate their business plan
• Leadership
• VSL&A methodology
Results

- With Plan International Benin’s program support, the VSL&A’s women of the Couffo Department, carried out an advocacy action which enabled them to purchase in cash and out of their own funds, 370 tons of (UREA and NPK) fertiliser for a total amount of 62.150.000 FCFA (approx. US$130,300).

- About 5000 poor women of the Couffo’s six communes have joined VSL&A for that operation;

- Availability of fertilizer for women in communities
**Lessons Learnt**

- The VSLA project is a project of social mobilization but also a powerful local resource mobilization engine.
- The VSLA project contributes to the emergence of female leadership because VSLA women manage to influence certain decisions in their locality.
- The storage system helps VSLA members to better control and manage their associations.
- Advocacy takes a length of time and effort and patience.
Avec eT pour les enfants

Thank You!
Si une fille reçoit une éducation secondaire

C'est simple ...

... n'est-ce pas ?

POURANT globalement, 39 millions de filles âgées entre 7 et 15 ans ne vont pas à l'école, bien que ce soit le droit le plus fondamental pour une fille du monde.

Quelle est la réponse pour les filles ?

L'éducation est hors de portée.

Et que devraient faire les gouvernements ?

Impiquez-vous.

www.savethemtoString.org
how change happens

Please comment on this draft paper: theories of change on empowerment and...
Upcoming SMDP Programs

Next Carsey-Plan Webinar October 5
Beyond Savings Groups: Can Income Smoothing increase school attendance and educational quality?

SMDP Online Savings Groups Course
Adaptive Problem Solving and Programme Design for Savings Groups, SACCOs and other Member-owned Models
October 10, 2016 to March 10, 2017
Facilitator Nanci Lee with Guest Expert Panelists
MasterCard Foundation Scholarships Available
Register Today!

SMDP Kenya
October 31 – November 11
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