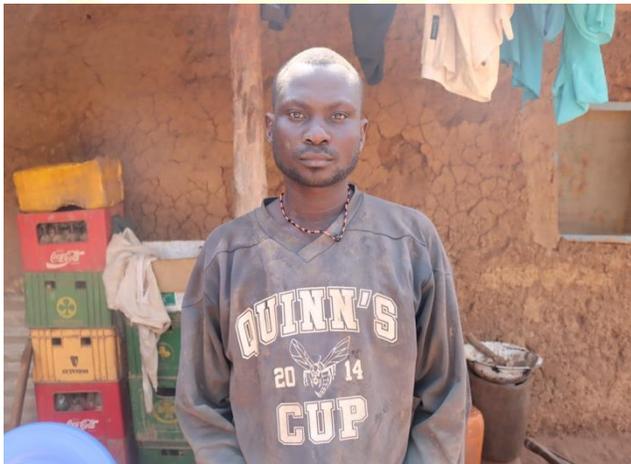


UNDERSTANDING GENDER – MY JOURNEY OF CHANGE

THE STORY OF BEYOUNJIN



Bankamba is a village under the Kpandai district in the Savannah region of Ghana with a population of about 1,800 people with high resistance to gender equality. This is also a district covered by the 4R nutrient stewardship project. The team on their usual village savings and loans (VSLA) monitoring decided to use the opportunity to sensitize the people in group on gender issues.

Our 4R Solution gender officer decided to hold a brief sensitization session on gender equality in this community. *“Chores shouldn’t be stereotyped as a male or a female chore at home”* she said.

Right away there was murmuring from majority of the people in the Bankamba community. Beyounjin from the kuntrile family was spotted in the crowd frowning, giggling and passing comments in low tone in disagreement to what the gender officer was saying, Beyounjin therefore was given the audience by the team to air his views on the subject. He started *“How can a boy and girl do the same chores at home”*, he asked rhetorically. *“I don’t see why my son should wash his bowl after eating when his sister and mother are at home”*

Beyounjin was applauded for his confidence in sharing his view, since other members of the community shared the same sentiments with him.

The gender officer then took them through the difference between sex and gender pointing out that gender is socially ascribed roles to a male and a female and we weren’t born naturally to such roles. She went further to highlight the negative effects

these gender roles pose on their children while they grow up and fit into society. Empowering both sexes is an advantage for both sexes and their families. The gender officer then asked; *“can your son cook?”*. Beyounjin responded in aggression *“Boys shouldn’t cook”* Esther, the gender officer then asked what happens when he goes to a place where his sister or mum isn’t present to cook for him.

He then hesitantly replied *“I don’t know, but maybe he will buy if he has enough money”*

Upon further discussions and dialogue in that session, Beyounjin began to see reasons why his son at home should learn how to cook, fetch water and prepare the fire if his mother isn’t available, why both male and female children should have equal opportunities and why household duties should be shared irrespective of sexes. He began to nod in agreement to what the gender officer was saying and after the engagement, the whole group was asked who would like to volunteer to be gender models in the community and to the teams’ surprise, Beyounjin’s hand was up, he added *“I want to be a part, I want to practice gender equality in my house”* To that some applauded him in excitement while others ignored and laughed at him.

A month later, the 4R Solution team visited the Kuntrile family. In our interaction with Beyounjin, he said he now helps his wife in some activities. To confirm his assertion we also spoke to his wife Balair. She was a bit hesitant with her response at first and finally said: *“he still never helps me with any household activities, its only at the farm he helps me now, sometimes to bring home firewood. That is the only change I see, but he never does any housework.”* Beyounjin shyly in his defence responded, *“The men in the community will laugh at me if I am seen doing house hold chores”*

The team commended Beyounjin for his first step with helping his wife on her farm field and also encouraged him to ignore what the men in his community would call him and focus on the benefits of equality in his household. His family benefits will influence his peers to adopt the practice as well.

Beyounjin’s mother commended the 4R team for the gender component of the project saying if adopted, by the men in the community women will have time to explore other opportunities that will support their families because they are overburdened with a lot of chores and responsibilities.



Beyounjin promised to do more. He said *“Since I have started, I will continue to improve”*.

The team encouraged him to make family decisions with his wife and support her as much as he can while involving his children. The team will keep an eye on the Kutrile family and the Bankamba

community as a whole to monitor the improvement of gender adoption by its members and would continue to strive for change amongst the people of Bankamba community. A total of eighty communities are being introduced to several gender concepts by the 4R nutrient stewardship project to help improve the socio-economic well-being of women and men in these communities in Ghana.

Solution