

# C:AVA

Cassava: Adding Value for Africa



## **GENDER AND DIVERSITY AUDIT - NIGERIA**

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## **Executive summary**

Cassava: Adding Value to Africa (C:AVA) is a four year project aimed at creating sustainable and equitable high quality cassava flour (HQCF) value chains and thereby improving the livelihoods and incomes of smallholder households and micro, small and medium scale enterprises. The project is committed to mainstreaming gender issues and social inclusion throughout its activities, emphasising equitable distribution of benefits, participation, and the empowerment of women and disadvantaged groups.

As part of this commitment to equitable project activities, the Gender and Diversity Audit was conducted with C:AVA partner organisations to inform all project objectives. The gender and diversity audit will identify their current status as regards G&D and also areas where capacity strengthening is required. This is to help ensure that the impacts of the project are equitable, that opportunities are promoted for different groups and that adjustments are made to encourage participation at all points along the value chain.

### **Organisational management**

The organisational analysis revealed that staff were generally positive about their organisations and felt that they performed well in most activities, particularly planning and financial management. The areas that they identified for improvement were incentives, communication, policy influence and monitoring. There were some differences in areas of strength and weakness between partners, which highlight possibilities for shared learning. The constraints on improving organisational performance and meeting C:AVA objectives were lack of, or difficulty with mobility, especially for female staff, lack of funding and unsupportive government policies.

Recommendations in organisational management were to promote shared learning between partners through partnerships and mentoring, and increasing support for staff, both monetary and non-monetary. The availability of motorcycles should be improved and gender-friendly transportation methods should be provided. Capacity building should also be conducted in advocacy, sourcing funds, communication in order to overcome organisational constraints.

### **Providing equality of opportunities and promoting equality**

Partner organisations had a good understanding of equal opportunities and there was evidence of equitable organisational cultures. However, they lacked policies and did not often recognise more subtle types of discrimination. Generally, there was low representation of female staff among some partners, particularly among cassava processing enterprises, due to a lack of female applicants and high staff turnover. Cassava processing enterprises had very few women working in permanent positions or operating machinery. Partner organisations felt this was due to the perception that the agriculture sector or factory work was for men or that women did not want to undertake hard work. Despite these differences, there was a resistance to using affirmative action to rectify inequalities as it was felt to conflict with a merit-based approach to employment.

Recommendations included improving the understanding of equality and identifying more nuanced forms of discrimination. Organisations should establish equal opportunities policies and target employment for underrepresented groups. Monitoring of staff and client characteristics should be undertaken.

### **Awareness and responsiveness to practical gender needs**

Partners had a good understanding of the concept of gender and practical gender needs but this was more evident in field activities than within organisations. The most significant barrier for female staff in the workplace was travel requirements, which was not being addressed by most partners, and some staff felt that their organisations did not always comply with gender-sensitive behaviour. However, there were examples of good practice, such as partners providing childcare. Operationally, service providers have instituted a number of programmes that address the practical needs of women in a holistic way, focusing on women's traditional gender roles in agriculture. Partners were aware of the different approaches needed for men and women and some were developing and using gender-friendly technologies.

Recommendations included implementing more equitable employment terms for women and addressing practical needs, such as providing childcare, flexible working and gender-friendly transportation. Women should also be provided with support in employment. In partners' field operations, practical gender needs should be considered in all field operations, acknowledging women's multiple roles and time limitations. Gender-friendly technology should also be promoted.

### **Impact on women's strategic needs and women's empowerment**

There was a general understanding of women's empowerment and strategic gender needs among partners. However, there was some resistance to the concept and inconsistencies between approaches. Partners were uncomfortable in addressing what they saw as encroaching on value systems of male and female roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, partners felt that their activities were having an impact on women's empowerment, particularly in regards to poverty reduction, social status and challenging gender roles. Most organisations employed women in areas that related to their gender or in areas that were stereotypically female; however, there was evidence of good representation of women at different organisational levels. In field activities, most partners promoted women's leadership but there were some cases where women leaders had very little actual decision-making power or men were leading women's groups.

Recommendations included increasing the understanding of empowerment and developing an organisational approach to gender. Partnerships with women's organisations can support this. Women's representation in management and leadership positions should be increased, particularly in male-dominated sectors. In field activities, ownership should be encouraged among women by facilitating access to sufficient credit. Women should be exposed to new skills (such as entrepreneurial and literacy skills and value addition) and activities outside their traditional gender roles. Gender indicators should be included to measure partner performance.

### **Awareness and responsiveness to key diversity issues**

Partners had a low awareness of diversity as a social concept but a high appreciation for the insight it provides. Some partners were addressing key diversity issues, but there was a perception that it could run contrary to a merit-based approach. In field activities, service providers were participating in activities that address diversity issues, especially with regard to youth, but staff feel this can be improved as other diversity issues may be overlooked. Finally, monitoring and evaluation of diversity was not undertaken in a systematic way.

Recommendations included improving the understanding and application of a diversity perspective in the organisations and in field activities. Staff may need capacity strengthening in conflict resolution due to tension between different groups.

Diversity indicators such as gender, age, tribe, disability, or country of origin etc, should be included in monitoring.

### **Enabling participation**

There was a high understanding of participation and recognition of its importance among partners, but participatory approaches were not mainstreamed. Organisational participation was mainly through staff meetings and networking with other organisations. The majority of staff felt that the opinions and views of women and diverse groups were sought out; however, there could be more strategic attention to gender, particularly in decision making and staff meetings. In field work, staff used a range of methods and approaches to enhance participation among partners in their field activities and felt it was much easier to think about participation in this area. Service providers incorporated methods that enhanced the participation of women in their activities, such as working with women's groups and setting targets for women's participation. However, women face a number of barriers to participation that could be addressed. Staff require capacity building in different participatory approaches that include attention to issues of access, power structures and inequalities that prevent people from participating.

Recommendations included developing an organisational participatory approach and increasing staff understanding of participatory methods in complex social circumstances. Current approaches should be adjusted to address issues of access and inequality. Barriers to participation for women should be addressed, such as increasing literacy, improving access and control over resources and combating gender stereotypes. Participatory evaluations should be conducted on a regular basis and community monitoring committees established in each work area.

### **Innovation**

Innovation was largely understood as the production and introduction of new technologies, which was an essential part of most partners' work, but it should be extended to look at processes of shared learning between organisations. Partners were using innovative methods in their day to day work and in addressing practical and strategic gender needs. Knowledge sharing and innovation also occurred through partnerships, which were effective, but there were some issues around donor funded projects, and between academic research and extension services. Other barriers to innovation include lack of incentives, lack of ownership and rigid management structure.

Recommendations were for partners to improve their understanding of 'innovation systems', and focus more on information sharing, and examining ways in which their organisations can facilitate innovation. Staff should be encouraged to innovate through skill and confidence building and incentives. Effective partnerships should be created and maintained, particularly between research and field operations.

### **Strategy**

The Gender and Diversity Strategy includes the following activities:

1. Gender Learning Network: shared learning with Gender Specialist
2. Awareness, leadership & partnership: learning for country team and partners on gender and diversity, with establishment of Gender Champions and Subject Champions
3. Strategy development & prioritisation of recommendations for partners
4. Field learning network: Skill-set development in field-based strategies
5. Organisational learning network: web-based capacity building for organisations
6. Monitoring partner improvement

# 1. Introduction

Cassava: Adding Value to Africa (C:AVA) is a four year project aimed at creating sustainable and equitable high quality cassava flour (HQCF) value chains and thereby improving the livelihoods and incomes of smallholder households and partners in micro, small and medium scale enterprises. The project is committed to mainstreaming gender issues and social inclusion throughout its activities, emphasising equitable distribution of benefits, participation, and the empowerment of women and disadvantaged groups. While this is an important end in itself, it is also a means to ensure project efficiency, sustainability and viability (World Bank 2006).

As part of this commitment to equitable project activities, the Gender and Diversity Audit was conducted with C:AVA partners to inform all project objectives. A Gender and Diversity Audit is a type of social audit that is used to analyse organisational culture, technical capacity, policies and practices in order for partners to develop more sensitive practices and structures.

## Objective

The objective of the Gender and Diversity Audit is to identify how partners think and how they do things regarding gender and diversity. This is to help ensure that the impacts of the project are equitable, that opportunities are promoted for different groups and that adjustments are made to encourage participation at all points along the value chain. The idea is not to impose ideas but rather explore opportunities for C:AVA partners to meet project goals.

## Purpose

- identify good practice and areas for improvement in gender and diversity
- identify the training and capacity strengthening needs of partners to address gender and diversity issues in their work
- provide accessible and understandable results
- provide a baseline for monitoring and evaluation
- be participatory and encourage ownership
- inform overall activities in the C:AVA project

## Partner Organisations

The gender and diversity audit was conducted with local service providers, cassava processing enterprises and learning institutions. This report attempts to discuss general performance for partners and identify the main issues that need to be addressed through C:AVA. However, the organisations are very different in their organisational mandates and structure, which poses some difficulty in reporting on the general findings. Therefore there are some exceptions to the findings in which qualifiers, such as 'some', 'few' or 'many' partners, are used to flag this issue.

The main service provider organisations are Ogun and Ondo Agricultural Development Programme (ADP); NGOs and civil society organisations, the Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN) and the Justice, Development and Peace Movement (JDPM); and learning institutions, the University of Agriculture Abeokuta (UNAAB) and the Federal College of Agriculture (FECA). In this report, all partners will be referred to as 'partners', which includes NGOs, public sector extension support, cassava processing enterprises and learning institutions. The term 'service providers' refers to NGOs and public sector extension support. Findings from intermediary organisations will be presented in the organisational section, as they are not engaging in service delivery at the field level.

## **Approach**

The analytical approach to the C:AVA gender and diversity audit will include equal attention to structures (rules, policies, leadership) and power relationships (discourses, language, symbols) in performance areas. This will help to identify explicit and implicit opportunities and constraints to achieving equality. Importantly, the audit approach is non-judgemental. As was the case in the gender audit of DfID Rwanda (2008), a partnership approach will help encourage debate, discussion and shared learning. This contrasts to other audits that establish an ideal type to measure performance against. Therefore, a broad understanding of the concepts is utilised to be responsive to the context of each partner.

The analytical framework utilised for the gender aspects has been informed by literature on gender analysis frameworks, particularly Moser (1987, 1989 and 1993) and Kabeer (2001). These frameworks emphasise practical and strategic gender needs and women's empowerment in overcoming poverty, which is helpful to identify gender priorities and their impact. These frameworks are also reflected in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Gender Strategy and C:AVA project objective one.

The approach to diversity was to examine areas of social difference (including age; class; ethnicity; religion; disability; national origin; language) and how partners identified and responded to issues and needs that arise due to these differences.

Participation and innovation are included within the approach to bring additional context to Gender and Diversity Audit. Participation is widely accepted as being an intrinsic part of development processes and business innovation. Participation in socio-economic and political life is also a crucial tool for achieving greater equality and gender equality, and overcoming poverty (Sen, 2001; Chambers, 2007). Therefore participation is a key element of partners' performance.

Innovation is included within the audit in order to gauge partner performance in dealing with a rapidly changing environment. New constraints and opportunities are continually arising and require new methods for understanding and addressing difference. In this context, innovation is examined through a gender and diversity lens to identify the extent to which partners create an equitable environment for new ideas to be realised. Analysis will include an 'innovation systems' approach that will examine the extent to which innovation is stimulated through communication (Hall et al., 2004). This will highlight innovative work of partners in gender and diversity, and how it is used, transferred and built-on by partners.

## **Performance**

The approach of the Gender and Diversity Audit is to measure partner performance in six gender and diversity areas, as described below. The performance areas reflect overall project objectives, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Gender Strategy, and have been informed by a review of academic and grey literature on gender and social audits. The performance areas are interrelated and mutually dependent. Therefore references are added to related chapters to signpost some of the areas that overlap. The performance areas are:

- Providing equality of opportunities and promoting equality
- Awareness and responsiveness to practical gender needs
- Impact on strategic gender needs and women's empowerment
- Awareness and responsiveness to key diversity issues
- Enabling participation
- Innovation

Each performance area is split into 'Organisation' and 'Operations'. The design highlights the dual roles of partners in operational activities (services it provides or goods it produces) and as an organisation (employer).

### Methods

Based on the lessons learned from previous social audits (Underwood, 2000), the methodology for the C:AVA gender and diversity audit attempts to triangulate evidence and include both internal and external evaluation. This is to ensure that the data obtained is reliable, and reflects both tangible and intangible gender and diversity aspects. However, because the gender and diversity audit is being conducted with a wide range of partners with various structures and levels of participation in the C:AVA project, the methodological tools will be used flexibly but the audit team will strive to make the results as comparable as possible.

**Table 1 Description of methodological tools**

Methodological tools	Who	Description
Document review	Service providers, cassava processing enterprises, country lead	All available strategies, policies, learning material, reports and evaluations relevant to gender and diversity.
One-to-one interviews	Service providers, Cassava processing enterprises, country lead	Approx 1 interview with C:AVA managers in each organisation. Approx 2 interviews with strategic, operational and human resource management representing the organisation.
Focus groups	Service providers	Approx 2 discussion groups with C:AVA staff/management with 10 people each, one male and one female group.
Self-assessment questionnaire	Service providers, cassava processing enterprises	Distributed to a sample of staff and management relevant to C:AVA project. The sample will consist of those who participated in the interviews and discussion groups, and anyone else showing interest in completing the questionnaire. Questions rating performance on a scale of one to five.

A key point of clarity required for conducting the audit, is the level at which the audit was conducted. This is because some of the partners have only a few staff dedicated to the C:AVA project; they are large bodies and have alternative demands to C:AVA. To overcome this, the scope was limited in the organisational sphere to a sample of staff that are most relevant to C:AVA. This is to ensure that the audit is reflective of the resources, remit and responsibilities of all those involved.

### Structure of report

This report presents an analysis of gender and diversity issues within C:AVA partners' organisations in two states in Nigeria, Ogun and Ondo. It includes services providers (government and non government), cassava processing enterprises and learning and research institutions. Each section considers the current understanding of performance among staff and management, identifies trends in the organisational and operational spheres and summarises recommendations for C:AVA partners. The analysis draws on the issues raised in the Gender and Diversity Analysis report (Butterworth et al, 2008).

Where relevant, the chapters are split into organisational and operational sections to distinguish between the two spheres. The report starts with a short chapter on the findings from the organisational analysis conducted with staff, which identified strengths and areas for improvement for C:AVA partners. This is followed by six chapters, which are based on the six performance areas. An analysis of the capacity strengthening needs is provided, followed by recommendations for C:AVA partners.

## 2. Organisational analysis

An organisational analysis identifies how organisations meet their set objectives. Various elements that make up an organisation, such as governance, planning, incentives or reporting, are examined to determine overall organisational performance. The organisation's strengths and areas for improvement are made explicit so appropriate actions can be taken. This chapter examines partners' organisational management performance based on the views of staff and management.

### Key findings

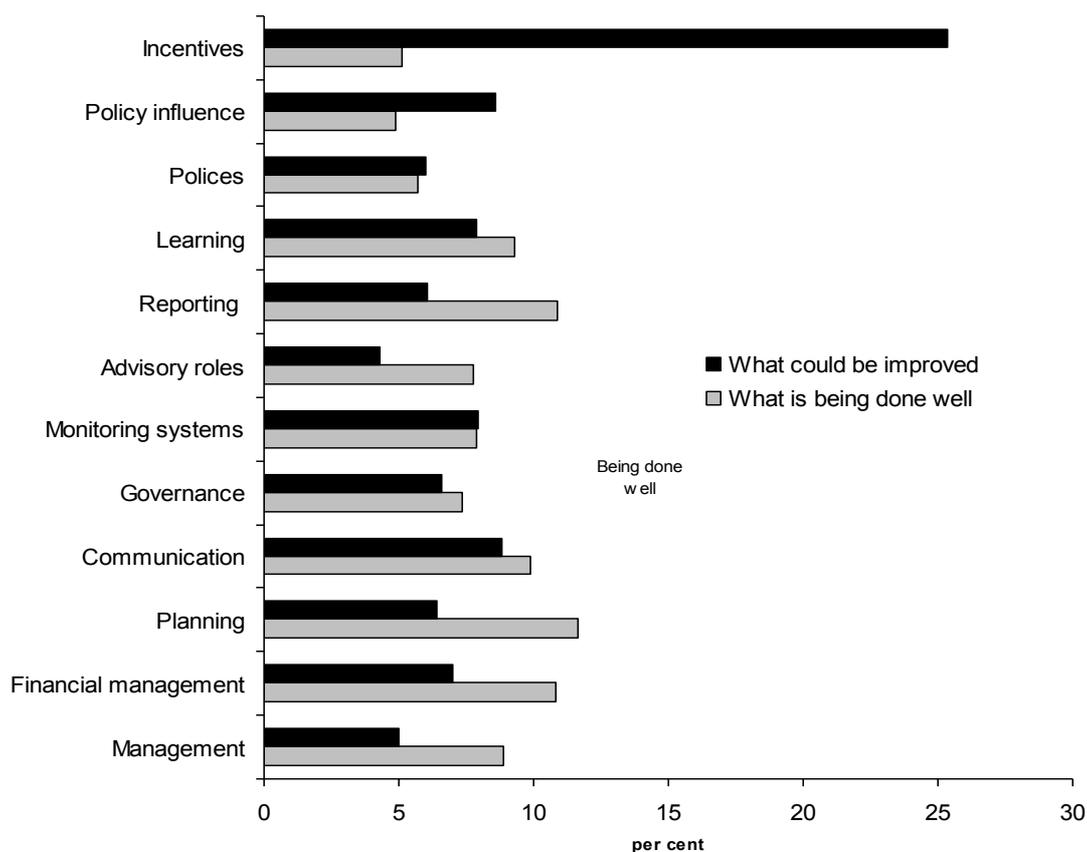
- Staff were positive about their organisations and felt that they performed well in most activities, particularly planning and financial management.
- Areas for improvement include incentives, communication, policy influence and monitoring. There were differences in areas of strength between partners, and within partner groups (such as between NGOs or public extension services). This highlights possibilities for shared learning between partners.
- The major constraints for partners were lack of funding and unsupportive government policies, which could hinder meeting C:AVA objectives. Subsequently, partners felt that they needed to strengthen their capacity in advocacy, sourcing funds and communication, in order to attract more funding and be more influential.
- Lack of mobility was one of the most pertinent constraints that partners face, especially female staff, in carrying out C:AVA objectives.

### Organisational performance

In order to access views on organisational performance, service provider staff were asked to score their organisational performance by distributing 20 points individually among different components of their organisation; first by what they felt was being done well in their organisation and secondly for what needed improvement.

As the figure below demonstrates, there is a relatively even distribution of point allocation among the organisational components, indicating that staff tend to feel that their organisation performs well in most activities. It is notable that organisations have rated some areas as being both done well *and* needing improvement. This indicates that although staff may value the activity or believe it is being done well in their organisation, they also feel it can be improved upon. It could also be due to the differences between the scores by partners, in which case it will be drawn out where relevant.

**Figure 1: Staff ratings of organisational performance – what is being done well and what could be improved**



Total count: 71 staff

Note: The figures are based on the number of points assigned by staff as a percentage for each organisation.

### What is being done well

The area that service providers felt was being done particularly well in their organisations was planning (12 per cent). Other areas that partners felt were performing well were: financial management (11 per cent); reporting (11 per cent); communication (10 per cent); learning and management (nine per cent). Refer to Figure 2 below for a breakdown between partners.

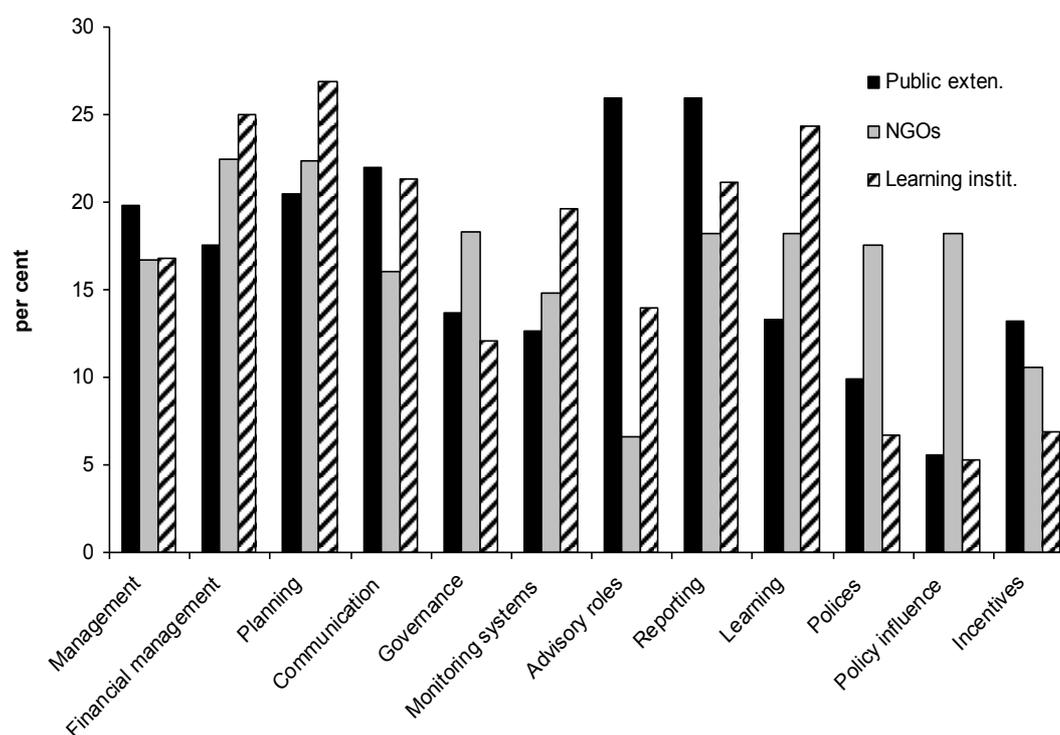
Planning was the area most highly rated in terms of organisational performance and staff reported that proper planning was central to conducting their activities successfully. Learning institutions were slightly more positive about planning in their organisations than compared to public extension services and NGOs. Most organisations developed plans on a weekly, monthly and annual basis, which helped staff to identify their priorities and targets.

Staff also reported that financial management was done well at their organisations, due to transparent financial procedures and monitoring. Staff at one organisation reported that they had ownership over some of the budget and could decide where it was spent in field activities. This is evidence of good practice, as it gives staff the ability to influence budgeting towards the needs they have identified in the field and builds a sense of trust between staff and management. However, public extension services were not as positive about financial management as NGOs and learning institutions, as they felt that funds could be distributed in a timelier manner.

Other features of activities that were done well in organisations were as follows:

- Reporting: continuous; effective, rated very high by public extension services.
- Communication: regular meetings held at all levels; variety of communication methods used with farmers; interface meetings held with local government, rated higher by public extension services and learning institutions, then NGOs.
- Learning: range of staff and beneficiary development activities (e.g. networking, shared two-way learning in communities). Intuitively, learning institutions rated learning very high in their organisations, especially compared with service providers.
- Management: supportive; establishes direction through planning. Smaller organisations had a more informal environment and were very positive about their internal communication with management.
- NGOs were very positive about policy influence and organisational policies compared with public extension services and learning institutions.
- Public extension services rated their advisory roles very high in comparison with NGOs and learning institutions.

**Figure 2 Staff ratings of organisational performance – what is *being done well* by partner group**



Total count: 71 staff

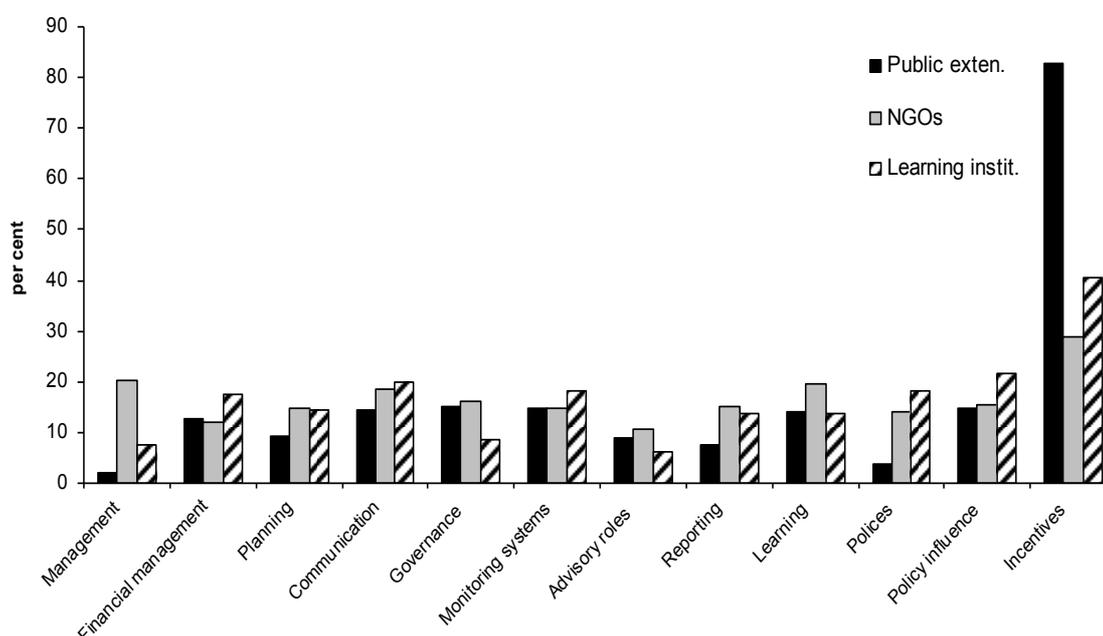
Note: The figures are based on the number of points assigned by staff as a percentage for each organisation.

### What needs to be improved

The area that service providers felt needed the most improvement was incentives (25 per cent), which was particularly pronounced among public extension services. Other priority areas for improvement were: communication and policy influence (nine per cent); monitoring systems and learning (eight per cent). There was little variance between partners. Figure 3 provides a breakdown between partners.

Overall, incentives were the area requiring the most improvement for service providers. Almost all staff felt that they were not properly and fairly remunerated for the work and that it decreased their motivation (but to a lesser extent among two providers). Staff felt that they wanted greater remuneration and benefits in general support, allowances, mobility, insurance and safety. It is interesting to note that most of the items that staff felt were incentives, were rather necessities for staff to conduct their jobs properly, such as safety gear. This reveals that staff may have a perception that it is not their right to these items but rather a bonus to their employment with the organisation.

**Figure 3 Staff ratings of organisational performance – what needs to be improved by partner group**



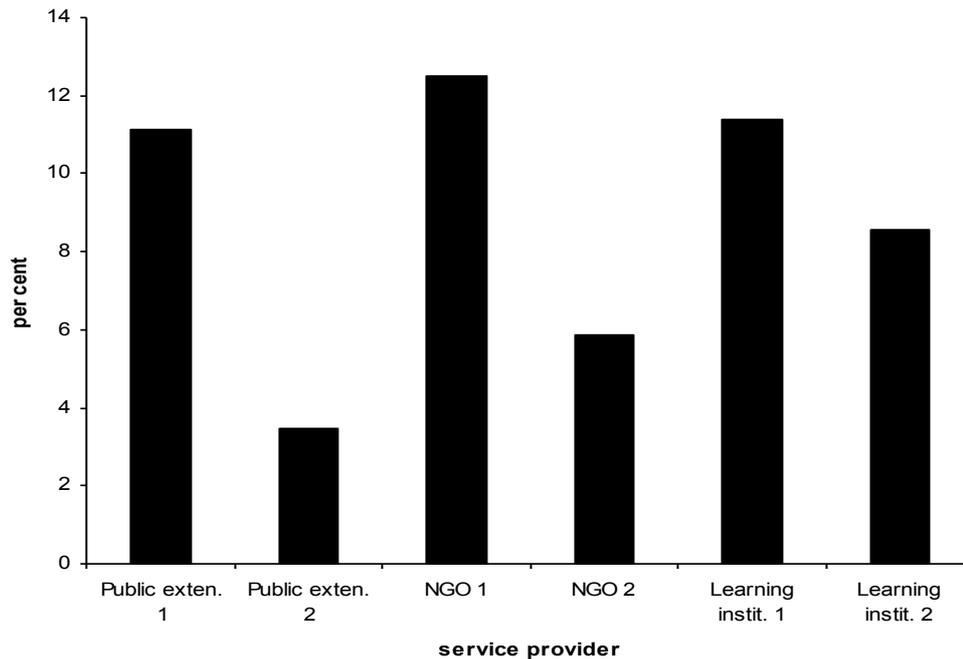
Total count: 71 staff

Note: The figures are based on the number of points assigned by staff as a percentage for each organisation.

Other organisational activities that staff reported needed improvement were:

- Communication:** this was an area that was also considered to be done well in organisations. Staff in some organisations had difficulty with internal and external information flow, particularly between management and field agents. Staff felt that responses from management also needed to be timelier and a more bottom-up approach was required. There also needs to be more resources available for communication tools such as internet, laptops and mobile phones. However, there were differences between organisations within partner groups, as the figure below demonstrates. One public extension organisation felt that their monitoring systems needed much more improvement than the extension organisation in the other state. This trend was also found between NGOs.

**Figure 4: Scores indicating the extent to which communication requires improvement**



Total count: 71 staff

Note: The figures are the number of points assigned for each organisation as a percentage.

- **Policy influence:** Learning institutions, NGOs and agricultural extension services felt that they had little influence on the Government concerning the issues that their clients faced. They felt that this resulted in inadequate funding.

*“They (Government) don’t want to listen to us. They don’t listen enough”  
(male agricultural extension manager).*

As policies were instated in a top-down fashion, they felt they had little ability to influence them from their position. Subsequently, partners felt that they required capacity strengthening in order to improve their advocacy skills, including who to advocate to, where, when and how. This includes activities such as effective communication with Government, concise and cogent reporting emphasising results, and networking and collaboration skills. One NGO had been particularly successful in advocacy, and described their success as being due to strong leadership. Partners also stated that C:AVA needed to play a role in high-level advocacy and champion the cassava industry.

- **Monitoring systems:** staff generally felt that both the monitoring of staff performance and the outcomes of their work required improvement. Internal staff assessments in particular needed improvement, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They felt that monitoring in the field needed to be more systematic but they would need more resources for this, such as better mobility and more time. However, there were differences within partner groups, where one public extension organisation felt that their monitoring systems needed much more improvement than the extension organisation in the other state. This trend was also found between NGOs.

- **Learning:** this was an area that was also scored as being done well in partner organisations. Staff expressed that they are exposed to some learning but that they would like to have greater opportunities. The key learning needs were agricultural management, IT, gender and diversity, community development, group management, human rights and advocacy.

### Key barriers to improving performance

- **Financial resources:** service providers and cassava processing enterprises stated that the lack of financial resources was a severe constraint on their work and achieving C:AVA objectives. In fact, most of their areas requiring capacity, such as staff development, mobility, equipment, ICT and incentives, all require greater financial resources. The reasons given for financial difficulty included: a decrease in funding from Government or donors, lack of funding opportunities and overly bureaucratic funding applications. These experiences have had negative consequences for partners, not only in terms of limiting their activities, but in some cases it has demoralised staff, who feel that their achievements go unrecognised as individuals and as an organisation.

Management and staff explained that funding had decreased because it was a less of a priority for Government. As a result, service providers felt that they are likely to become more reliant on external funding. Subsequently, they would need capacity strengthening in writing research proposals, searching for opportunities, networking with overseas institutions, advocacy skills and marketing their organisation.

- **Lack of continuity of government policy:** the lack of continuity in federal policy on cassava, and agriculture more generally, was another significant constraint for partners. The Nigerian Government's support for the cassava industry through its 10 per cent high quality cassava flour (HQCF) inclusion policy had propelled many farmers and businesses to invest in cassava. However, Government support has diminished, leaving farmers and businesses with little or no market and no returns on their investments. Partners felt that the change in policy was part of a larger move away from agriculture, and that strong advocacy was needed to encourage Government to support the 10 per cent policy and the agricultural sector more generally. They felt the support should take the form of increased funding, more promotion activities and enforcement of the 10 per cent HQCF policy.

*"You go back and cover your face in shame when you see something you advocated for is grossly abandoned and people are disillusioned"* (male agricultural extension manager).

- **Mobility:** mobility was one of the most pertinent issues that partners face for the delivery of C:AVA objectives and for the organisation as a whole. Staff felt that there were not enough vehicles or motorbikes to conduct the necessary field visits, they were not being paid transportation costs, and often had to use their own transportation. In addition, the majority of service providers did not have insurance for field staff and in some cases they did not have adequate protective gear, leading to feelings of insecurity in the field. Staff reported that they worked late hours and would often travel home in the dark, which may

be a deterrent, especially for women, in participating in agricultural extension work.

- **Lack of skills in social relations:** most of the partners have vast experience working with farmers groups but felt that their skills could be improved. Partners had different areas they felt more confident about, which could create opportunities for shared learning. Some key skills in conducting field work are:
  - gender and social difference, how it affects group dynamics and project outcomes
  - conflict resolution between husbands and wives in the villages, indigenous and non-indigenous peoples,
  - leadership skills and group management, as some partners reported that they lacked skills in keeping groups from dismantling. Partners often felt that groups would lose interest when they weren't seeing benefits quickly.

### **Recommendations**

- Shared learning should be promoted between partners based on their strengths and weaknesses. In particular, public extension services could provide support in communication methods, NGOs on policy influence and learning institutions on learning.
- Increase support for staff through incentives, positive feedback and greater independence.
- As a priority, partners should undertake capacity building in monitoring systems, advocacy skills, sourcing funds and communication skills to attract more funding.
- C:AVA should increase their role in advocacy.
- Improvements to mobility should also incorporate gender-friendly methods of transportation for female field staff, such as combining male and female extension visits to the same area so men could lift women on their bicycle, providing scooters instead of motorcycles and motorbike training.

### **3. Providing equality of opportunities and promoting equality**

Providing equality of opportunities and promoting equality relates to the ways that organisations enable opportunities, access and participation in fair and inclusive ways. This impacts on livelihoods and creates benefits to businesses and organisations, such as increasing the range of skills and experiences of staff; meeting legal requirements and donor expectations; using labour more efficiently and contributing to community development. Unfortunately, however, disparities exist in all societies in terms of access to income and resources, ownership, employment, safety and security, mobility, decision-making, discrimination and violence. These disparities often form along lines of social difference, particularly gender, age and tribe in Nigeria. This chapter will examine these issues in the context of the capacity of C:AVA partners to provide and promote equality of opportunities for their staff (organisation) and clients (operations).

#### **Key findings**

- Partners had a good understanding of equal opportunities and there was evidence of an equitable organisational culture. However, they lacked policies and did not often recognise more subtle types of discrimination.
- There was a resistance to using affirmative action to rectify inequalities as it was felt to conflict with a merit-based approach to employment.
- There was low representation of female staff among partners, particularly cassava processing enterprises. Partners stated that this was due to the low number of applications from female candidates, as there was a perception that the agriculture sector was a 'male' sector.
- Some partners, particularly public extension organisations, had difficulty retaining women. This could be due to a lack of attention to practical and strategic gender needs.
- The low representation of female staff and high turnover was linked to a number of stereotypes of women, such as women not wanting to undertake hard work.
- Cassava processing enterprises had very few women who were working in permanent positions or operating machinery, but managers were open to change their practices.

#### **Organisation**

##### **Understanding of equal opportunities**

Generally, partners had a good understanding of equal opportunities. On an organisational level, staff felt that the issue of equal opportunities was most relevant to recruitment and the treatment of staff. By contrast, in field activities it was most pertinent in terms of accessing services. Partners also felt that gender was a significant feature of inequality, as women were often discriminated against.

At the same time, there was a resistance to equal opportunities by most partners. Some felt that a focus on equal opportunities would require actions to rectify inequalities, e.g. an affirmative action policy. They felt that this would result in the employment of unqualified people, on the basis of their personal characteristics. Evidently, there was some disagreement over the constitution of what equal

opportunities measures were. However, it does reveal contestation around applying 'special' measures for underrepresented groups.

*"If you are qualified, you will be employed, one cannot sacrifice merit on gender and diversity issues... I will not employ a misfit in the name of gender balance and diversity" (female manager).*

### Organisational culture

The majority of service provider staff felt that there were equal opportunities in their organisations and that they were treated fairly. In fact, 95 per cent of staff and management felt that their organisation was also very supportive of women and minority groups. There were no reports of discrimination based along gender or tribal lines within the organisations. Even when women (or men) were a very small minority in their organisation, staff felt that they were treated equally and worked as "one big family". However, service providers did not have equal opportunities policies or strategies in place and there were examples of favouritism in organisations, as the table below illustrates.

**Table 2: Do you think your organisation is fair and provides equal opportunities for women and disadvantaged groups?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Disagree	8	4	5
Agree	77	53	61
Strongly Agree	15	43	34

Total count: 26 female, 49 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

**Table 3: Does preferential treatment, favouritism etc. take place in your organisation on the basis of someone's personal characteristics?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Often	8	4	3
Sometimes	44	39	42
One Occasion	16	9	11
Never	36	48	44

Total count: 25 females, 46 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

Cassava processing enterprises also felt that they provided equal opportunities in the recruitment, retention and employment of staff. However, there were no written policies and very few women were working in permanent positions. Cassava processing enterprises were positive about changing some of their practices and were open to new ideas.

Partners will need to examine formal and informal work practices with gender and diversity in mind, in order to identify more subtle types of discrimination. One example of less overt discrimination is businesses' reluctance to hire newly married women for fear that they may have children, which is a common opinion among managers. Therefore, all partners may want to consider developing equal opportunities policies to formalise the responsibilities of staff and management, and to establish procedures and consequences for inappropriate actions.

*"Look, I am a businessman, quality, delivery and timeliness matters to me a lot, so if a lady who is married should be in charge of main operation in*

*the factory develops sudden problem at home, this will grossly affect our productivity and this is not good” (male intermediary, CEO).*

*“They have to be unmarried” (male intermediary, CEO).*

### **Low representation of women**

The representation of women among staff was different for each C:AVA partner; however, the number of women staff in general could be improved. (The one exception to this observation is an NGO that explicitly targets only women).

**Table 4 Percentage of female staff in partner organisations**

<b>Institution type</b>	<b>% of females among core staff</b>
Learning/research institution 1	50+
Learning/research institution 2	20
Public extension service 1	16
Public extension service 2	29
NGO 1	1
NGO 2	90
Intermediary 1	1
Intermediary 2	0

Note: Some of these figures are based on estimates

Partners explained that the low representation of women was not due to discrimination, but due to a low number of women applicants. For example, cassava processing enterprises reported that more positions in the factory were ‘male jobs’, because of the physical strength required to use the machines. Service providers explained that agriculture was deemed a ‘man’s sector’ by Nigerian society. Therefore, there is a need for more targeted recruitment of women, such as posting job advertisements in areas frequented by women or adding the statement ‘women are encouraged to apply’ to job ads. Other partners who have been successful at recruiting women should share their good practice.

Public extension services reported that they had difficulty retaining women. However, they felt that this was not due to their actions or inaction, but that it was due to the strenuous field work involved in sector. However, no interviews had been conducted with women who left their positions. As such, these ideas are largely based on assumptions of staff, which perpetuates stereotypical views of women in the labour market. Exit interviews with gender-sensitive questions can identify precisely why women are leaving their positions.

*“In the line of our work, roles are assigned according to expectations. There is some work that is gender related e.g. injection of raw materials into the machines is more masculine but duties like scaling, bagging and mechanical sieving could be done by women” (male intermediary, CEO).*

Cassava processing enterprises attributed the problem of low representation of women to the belief that women did not want to do work that represented ‘male jobs’. They felt that women would need encouragement to take up such positions:

*“Women are the ones with that mindset that society has dictated to them. It is in their psyche. But now that it is being brought up, we will start challenging more young ladies” (male intermediary, CEO).*

Equal opportunities in terms of recruitment, retention and promotion can be enhanced among partners by identifying and addressing women's practical needs, such as providing crèche facilities or flexible working, which is discussed in the next chapter.

### **Terms of employment**

Because of women's low status in the labour market, women often experience unequal terms of employment compared with men. Management felt that this wasn't evident in their organisations as they felt that the salary and conditions of work were equal for men, women and other groups. However, there were differences in employment terms among processing enterprises. Women's employment was typically casual, paid by piece rate and characterised by a lack of benefits (although there were some female staff employed as secretaries). Underlying this situation is stereotypes of women's ability of factory work and capability of operating mechanised equipment. These findings were also found in the gender analysis of cassava value chains, reported in the Gender and Diversity Analysis report (Butterworth et al, 2008). However, intermediary management were positive about making changes to their employment practices and hiring more women in the future.

Overall, due to the lack of written policies and documents among partners, it is possible for staff to arrive at a number of different interpretations of their conditions, rights and responsibilities, which have no legal basis. Written policies and documents would establish a code of practice that would formalise procedures.

*"A form is given to new workers indicating the firms' expectations from them. We also grant maternity leave to expectant mothers though this is not written down - but we do it on principles" (male, intermediary, CEO).*

## **Operations**

### **Equal requirements for participation**

Partners felt that they provided equal opportunities for their clients in their programmes. This was accomplished mostly by having the same programme requirements for all clients. For instance, one NGO's microcredit scheme required all members to make equal payments for their savings, regardless of their financial status, which helped to foster a sense of equality between members. One learning institution involved in agricultural training ensured that men and women performed the same activities, such as driving tractors, which has helped overcome stereotypes.

### **Provisions to include women**

Most service providers were aware of the importance of gender composition of their groups, since women are often excluded from agricultural activities. Service providers have established targets for women and men's participation, ranging from one-third women, equal numbers or separate groups. These approaches have different impacts in terms of gender, which need to be considered when planning and implementing programmes. For example, a 'women only' group may provide women with the necessary space to participate and not to feel intimidated by men, but it also avoids linking with men for more strategic activities that challenge gender roles. A 'one third women' group, which one NGO had established in its microcredit groups, can place women in marginalised positions, especially in terms of decision making.

In addition, most partners have women extension agents, who work with women clients because it is not culturally appropriate for women to speak with male

extension agents. This shows good practice in enabling services to reach to female clients.

*“Most men do not allow interaction of their wives with other men because of the social and cultural constitution that operate within the society, but they can talk to us because we are women” (female extension agent).*

### **Client monitoring and evaluation**

It is important to monitor the personal characteristics of staff and clients to identify issues surrounding access and impact for different groups. For many service providers, this was not done within organisations and was only conducted at certain stages in field programmes. For example, one service provider described the comprehensive baseline study, which it conducted for its microcredit programme, as including indicators for sex, age, tribe, land ownership, etc. However, the information was not updated or revisited during the project and consequently the impact of the programme could be determined comprehensively. It is therefore vital for services providers to include monitoring and evaluation of personal characteristics and disaggregate data to inform activities and improve performance internally and in their field activities.

In addition, a number of partners had monitoring and evaluation departments, but there was little evidence of activities and information being linked between monitoring and evaluation departments and staff extension workers. Processes should also be put in place to disseminate information from the monitoring and evaluation team throughout the relevant organisation.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Organisation**

- Improve understanding of inequality, stereotypes, and hidden types of discrimination and favouritism in formal and informal practices.
- Design ways to implement equal opportunities in recruitment, retention and promotion and workplace culture and develop written policies.
- Offer women support and opportunities for promotion and permanent employment. Mentor and support for women apprentices or young people moving into agriculture.
- Target women in recruitment, by posting job advertisements in areas frequented by women or adding the statement ‘women are encouraged to apply’ to job ads. Other partners who have been successful at recruiting women could also share their methods.
- Identify and address women’s practical needs to improve retention, such as providing crèche facilities or flexible working.
- Conduct exit interviews with gender-sensitive questions can identify precisely why women are leaving their positions.
- Monitor recruitment, retention and promotion by gender and other diversity characteristics.

#### **Operations (CAVA)**

- Continue providing women-only groups, but increase partnership working with male groups.
- Conduct monitoring and evaluation at every stage of the project cycle, collect data on personal characteristics, disaggregate data and ensure that information is disseminated and used to inform all activities.

## 4. Awareness and responsiveness to practical gender needs

Practical gender needs are what women and men perceive to be immediate necessities for their livelihoods, such as water, food, employment or healthcare. These needs correspond to different responsibilities and priorities of women and men based on their traditional gender roles. Due to inequalities in access, authority, and resources, women often experience difficulty in fulfilling their needs. Subsequently, discussion around practical gender needs usually focuses on women, as is done in this chapter. Addressing practical gender needs is an important area for partners as it can improve the livelihoods of the people they work with or work for. This section reviews the findings on partners' awareness and responsiveness to practical gender needs in the workplace and in field activities.

### Key findings

- Partners had a good understanding of the concept of gender and practical gender needs. This was evident in partners' operational work, but to a lesser extent within organisations themselves. This could be contributing to problems in recruiting and retaining women. However, there were examples of good practice, such as partners providing childcare.
- Travel requirements were a major barrier for women taking employment in agricultural extension.
- Partners' felt they had a positive organisational culture, especially smaller organisations. However, some staff felt that their organisations did not always comply with gender-sensitive behaviour.
- Operationally, service providers have instituted a number of programmes that address the practical needs of women in a holistic way. These programmes tend to focus on women's traditional gender roles in agriculture.
- Partners were acutely aware of the different approaches needed for male and female clients in service delivery in terms of time availability and customs.
- Some partners have experience in developing gender-friendly technologies, such as cassava fryers that minimise heat and smoke, which improves the conditions of work for women and their health.

### Organisation

#### Understanding of gender and practical gender needs

Overall, partners had a good understanding of gender including the different roles, responsibilities and needs of men and women. Staff and management also understood the main gender issues in agriculture and the inequality women face.

However, the understanding of practical gender needs was less evident in partners' internal operations. Staff discussions on gender focused on its relevance within field programmes, but they were less inclined to discuss issues in their own workplace. This could be due to the sensitivity of the issue or a lack of gender consciousness within organisations, as gender was something that related to development work. The next sections raise some of the issues of practical gender needs for female staff that are currently not being addressed.

### **Work environment and conditions of work**

Employment opportunities help men and women meet their practical gender needs by providing access to income, skill acquisition and new relationships. All partners were providing opportunities for women's employment in one way or another and meeting this practical need. However, the work environment and the conditions of work can often be unfavourable to women. This is again due to the different roles of men and women that give rise to different labour market needs. For example, women may require more 'flexible working' because of their roles as carers.

Partners were aware of the increase of women in the labour market in the last decade, but they overlooked the changes that were needed in the workplace, such as separate toilets, flexible working or gender-sensitive behaviour. The table below illustrates that almost 40 per cent of the women consulted felt that the workplace is insufficiently meeting the needs of women and disadvantaged groups. Because there is a significant emphasis on equal treatment in partner organisations, some partners may be uncomfortable in addressing these needs for fear of giving women special treatment. However the lack of attention to practical gender needs could be contributing to the difficulty of recruiting and retaining women for some partners. Therefore partners should critically examine their environment from a gender perspective to identify 'hidden' barriers for staff in the workplace.

**Table 5: Is the work environment and conditions of work adequate for the needs of women and disadvantaged groups?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Not at all	0	2	1
Insufficient	39	16	23
Sufficient	46	64	56
Excellent	15	18	19

Total count: 26 females, 45 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

However, there were examples of good practice, such as the provision of separate toilets and free or subsidised access to childcare. Other good practice in addressing practical gender needs in employment are offering permanent contracts (as often women are hired as casual labour), access to benefits, flexible working conditions, job-shares and part-time work etc. Public extensions services, however, are limited in their ability to provide flexible working and part-time work due to Government regulations. Therefore, these service providers will have to find other ways to address women's practical gender needs.

#### **COWAN: Providing work-life balance**

COWAN is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that has made a considerable impact on addressing women's practical and strategic gender needs. COWAN's aim is to promote women's economic, political and social activities through micro-economic strategies, emphasising self-help, self-improvement and self-empowerment opportunities. The NGO originated in Ondo state in 1982 and has since expanded throughout Nigeria and is now internationally recognised. It currently comprises of 9,000 cooperative societies with a membership of about 260,000.

COWAN realised that one of the greatest barriers to employment for women was childcare. Childcare has traditionally been a female responsibility, where women in many cultures are expected to undertake all or most activities in raising children. Responding to this situation, COWAN understood that in order to recruit women they

would need to address this practical need. COWAN management decided that crèche facilities and a nursery school for children of its staff would be provided free of charge. This has helped to enable women gain income and helped COWAN employ more women than would otherwise have been possible.

### **Travel for extension agents**

Travel was a major issue for female agricultural extension agents and represented a key reason why some women had difficulty working in extension activities. Female staff and management reported the following problems which relate directly to the roles that women play in society:

- Lack of security (harassment)
- Travelling on motorbikes was difficult (large, heavy and most women aren't trained)
- Can't be far from home (can't respond to emergency situations, husband disagrees, not culturally appropriate)

Indeed, because of this situation, men felt that they had to protect women, as the quote below suggests. This exemplifies how when women's practical needs are not addressed it can lead to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and segregate women into particular fields.

*"When it comes to environmental issues, men consider it their obligation to safeguard women in the field or while visiting local farmers. Women do more of teaching how to utilise by demonstration but they are definitely not marginalised" (male extension agent).*

Some service providers have taken special measures for women to travel, such as gender-friendly transportation (Mopeds, vehicles) and providing security in the field by day-time visits, mobile phone, or going with a partner. Organisations that took these measures all had a high number of female staff and they did not report problems with staff turnover. Although some of these changes will imply cost, there are cost-effective means of addressing practical gender needs such as providing more flexible work arrangements for female staff to attend to care activities or partnering male and female staff to travel together.

### **Workplace culture**

Generally staff reported a positive workplace culture in their organisations. There was a high degree of camaraderie and teamwork, especially among the smaller organisations. This was also apparent between departments which were often segregated into men and women, as women worked primarily in women-oriented activities.

*"We take as our motto 'Together Each Achieves More' which translates to TEAM. Each could be male or female" (male extension agent).*

*"In their operations men are not involved in processing activities because they can't do processing" (female extension agent).*

However, some staff, particularly female staff, felt that their colleagues were not complying with gender-sensitive behaviour (13 per cent of women and four per cent of men as the table shows below). It may be necessary, therefore, for partners to examine behaviour within the organisation for its gender sensitivity. Policies also

need to be put in place to communicate to staff that gender insensitive behaviour is against the rules.

**Table 6: Does the organisation and staff comply with gender-sensitive behaviour in and outside the office?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Never	0	0	0
Seldom	13	4	7
Usually	46	64	58
Always	42	31	35

Total count: 24 females, 45 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

## **Operations**

### **Programme focus on practical gender needs**

Service providers have instituted a number of programmes that address the practical needs of women. Importantly, most providers take a holistic approach by addressing issues around education, healthcare and poverty to meet women's practical needs. This may constitute, for instance, of women's microcredit groups, post-harvest activities, and health-related programmes (HIV/AIDS awareness, reproductive health programmes, drugs and alcohol). Therefore service providers are interested in and capable of addressing a range of socio-economic issues in rural communities. Some of these programmes are breaking new ground, such as JDPM's HIV/AIDS awareness campaign which has invited women to its meetings despite the fact that the city hall was against it.

In targeting women, most partners focus on the traditional activities of women revealing that their approach mainly consists of addressing practical gender needs. In fact, the concept of gender was largely understood in more practical terms instead of a more strategic approach that emphasises challenging gender roles and reducing in structural gender inequalities. A common split was between production activities for men and processing activities for women. However, this ignores the other roles women play in agriculture, such as planting, weeding and harvesting. In addition, because women generally have control over activities on their own plots, it makes more sense to also expose women to activities in agricultural production. Women are also farmers, not just processors.

*"We are conscious of the fact that females are disadvantaged. Women are more involved in processing than men, so to process, to get your gari products, we must encourage that group" (male, learning institution, manager)"*

*"In their operations men are not involved in processing activities because they can't do processing" (female extension agent).*

### **Ability to address practical gender issues in service delivery**

The Gender and Diversity Analysis report raised a number of gender issues along the cassava value chain which highlight a number of women's practical gender needs (Butterworth et al, 2008). The following table presents these issues and the ability of partners to address them through extension services in terms of the C:AVA project.

<p><b>Time constraints:</b> women can become over-burdened with additional activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners were acutely aware of the different approaches needed for men and women in service delivery in terms of time.</li> <li>They follow the schedules of men and women and choose to visit women after meal times when they are free.</li> </ul> <p><i>“We consider time, environment and methods when we initiate new things e.g. we will not go to women on the market days because we don’t want to delay them while” (male extension agent).</i></p>
<p><b>Access to finance:</b> rural men and women, but especially women, have low access to credit facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service providers (as a group) will likely be able to provide credit to men and women if activities between service providers can be linked up effectively</li> <li>Two NGOs are already providing credit, and COWAN specifically targets and supports women and women’s microfinance groups. COWAN could provide capacity strengthening for JDPM to ensure that gender needs are addressed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical capital:</b> women have difficulty in accessing and controlling labour saving, gender-friendly, technology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was difficulty in identifying if there was the ability or motivation for service providers to ensure technology remains in women’s control.</li> <li>FECA has experience in developing gender-friendly technologies, such as cassava fryers that minimised heat and smoke, which was a significant complaint of women</li> </ul>
<p><b>Human capital:</b> men have greater access to labour, technology, information, media and higher rates of literacy and time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing knowledge of female and male farmers is widely acknowledged by service providers</li> <li>Farmer demonstrations occur regularly by the ADPs and women are encouraged to participate</li> <li>Learning and training occurs at the group level</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social capital:</b> women are organised in communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service providers are currently building on women’s existing social capital</li> </ul>

Responses from the questionnaire revealed that in some cases gender considerations were not fully integrated into all field operations, such as in programme planning, design, implementation, technical capacity and monitoring and evaluation processes. As the table below illustrates, 25 per cent of respondents include gender ‘to some extent’. While a higher proportion (28 per cent) felt that gender was ‘completely’ included in their work, 60 per cent of respondents wanted capacity strengthening in applying a gender approach in their operations.

**Table 7: To what extent do you consider and include gender in your work?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Never	0	0	0
To some extent	32	23	25
To a great extent	48	46	45
Completely	20	32	28

Total count: 25 female, 44 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

Q. “Do you feel that staff have the appropriate gender and diversity skills and adequate resources?” (interviewer).

A. “Not as much as expected” (male agricultural extension manager).

## **Recommendations**

### **Organisation**

- Improve employment terms, such as offering permanent contracts, access to benefits, formalised flexible working conditions, job-shares, childcare etc.
- Provide support and mentorship opportunities for women in employment.
- Provide a gender-friendly environment (e.g. separate toilets and wash facilities for men and women), and transportation (Mopeds, vehicles) and security in the field (day-time visits, mobile phone, going with a partner) to address women's practical needs.
- Critically examine and address organisational culture and staff communication for gender sensitivity. This should be supported by policies that clearly state expectations for staff behaviour.

### **Operations (CAVA)**

- Integrate gender considerations into all field operations, such as in programme planning, design, implementation, technical capacity and monitoring and evaluation.
- Use a holistic approach as much as possible in designing activities, and acknowledge the many roles women play in agriculture production and processing, in the home, the community and the economy.
- Identify the opportunity cost of women's time spent on C:AVA activities compared to other activities to ensure participation and introduce labour saving technology when possible.
- Promote gender-friendly technology, such as smoke and heat free fryers.
- Promote networks of women's groups to provide more exposure to women.



## 5. Impact on strategic gender needs and women's empowerment

*"Women are under the authority of their husband's brothers and cousins, as much as the husband. They see her as 'my' wife as much as her husband and she must respect them. We have tried skilfully to tell them that all of us are equal, especially in order to improve the quality of life and that they should not be surprised that females can excel. There is gender discrimination, but at least women are now saying they can do things for themselves" (male extension agent).*

Strategic gender needs and women's empowerment are concepts that focus on the systemic factors that discriminate against women. Strategic gender needs are long-term, usually not material, and are often related to structural changes in society regarding women's status and equity. Empowerment is an expansion of this concept, and refers to the ability of women to make strategic life choices in a context where it has previously been denied. This section examines partners' impact in this area.

### Key findings

- There was a general understanding of women's empowerment and strategic gender needs among partners. However, there were differences and inconsistencies between approaches, understanding and application of this within organisations.
- There was some resistance to women's empowerment and strategic needs. Partners did not see it as part of their organisational mandate and were uncomfortable in addressing what they saw as encroaching on value systems.
- However, partners felt that their activities were having an impact on women's empowerment, particularly in regards to poverty reduction, social status and challenging gender roles.
- In general, women in most organisations were either working in fields that related to their gender or in areas that were stereotypically female, such as horticulture, home economics, processing etc.
- Some organisations evidenced good representation of women at different organisational levels, where there were at least one or two women in top management positions. In some cases, this had created tension among staff.
- In field activities, most partners promoted women's leadership. However, in some communities women leaders had very little actual decision-making power or men were placed to manage the women's groups.
- There have been some cases where staff have been managing conflicts between men and women due to perceived changes in gender roles.

### Organisation

#### Resistance to women's empowerment

The area of women's empowerment and strategic needs can be contentious because it challenges established structures of power and ways of doing things. There was some evidence of resistance to challenging gender roles and stereotypes, among both staff and management. Surprisingly, some of the resistance came within departments dedicated to helping women. Some of the reasons given for resisting women's empowerment were as follows:

- General apathy
- Not wanting to disrupt cultural practices: “[Our] cultural background influences how gender is played out” (male extension agent).
- Not wanting to cause conflict between men and women
- Personal opinion or belief “it says in the bible that women are the weaker sex” (male agricultural extension manager)
- Women are biologically different and cannot perform the same tasks as men
- Men are ignored
- Focus should be on family
- Conflicts with other programmes
- Limited funding available

If service providers are to take active measures to contribute to women’s empowerment, these perceptions will need to be addressed through open discussion and debate.

### **Understanding of strategic gender needs and women’s empowerment**

There was a general understanding of what women’s empowerment was, or what might facilitate meeting strategic needs, among partners, but the extent of knowledge ranged significantly. Many partners made little reference to explaining gender in terms of power, systematic inequality, unequal power relations or challenging their own assumptions. However, when asked how the position of women has changed in society in the last decade, they raised numerous examples that indicate women’s empowerment .

*“Before now, women could not own land, they had to keep all money earned with their husbands; but now with enlightenment, it is not the case” (female extension agent).*

Staff and management could describe aspects of gender power relations, particularly with respect to control of income and resources, but did not see it as part of their organisational mandate. This indicates that it is less about concepts and understanding than an unwillingness to engage in these areas. Some partners could be uncomfortable in addressing what is seen to encroach on value systems and personal relations; areas felt to be outside their organisational remit of providing agricultural advice, credit, enterprise development etc.

### **Need for a strategic approach to gender**

There were differences between approaches and application of gender within organisations, such as focusing on women’s traditional roles, the family or women’s empowerment. There may be a need, therefore, to develop an organisational approach establishing a framework in which to base activities. This is a critical capacity need as it will establish a consistent and clear organisational approach. This approach should be ‘mainstreamed’ or applied throughout organisational and operational spheres. This will reduce the segregation of gender issues in one department or programme(s).

Partners should examine their assumptions about gender within their approaches to gender, as they often assume a particular gender role for women as being located primarily in the domestic sphere and ignores women’s productive contributions and individual agency. Partners will also need to examine their language in their approach, as there was some ambiguity in concepts such as ‘poor’ or ‘marginalised’,

which can have a number of different meanings and implications for women's agency and empowerment.

One service provider undertook a review of their gender approach and changed their strategy from a 'women in agriculture' approach to a 'gender and development' approach, which represents a strategic shift in emphasis towards the relational quality of gender, and the roles, responsibilities, benefits and rights of men and women that could support change. This approach could also allow greater space for men in its programmes.

Partners showed an interest in developing gender policy and expressed the need for capacity strengthening in this area. Other providers have developed policies and gender strategies; therefore, there are opportunities for shared learning. A good place to start, as one NGO is already doing, is undertaking a review of gender and equality to identify areas of strength and weakness. This is encouraged as it will help partners to be more responsive to staff and beneficiary needs.

#### **AMREC helping UNAAB to mainstream gender (AMREC annual report 2007)**

AMREC is a leading member of the University of Abeokuta's (UNAAB) Gender Mainstreaming Committee who has been tasked with mainstreaming gender throughout the university. As AMREC's Gender Issues and Youth Development (GIYD) programme is the only unit in the UNAAB focusing on gender issues, they are well placed to participate in the committee.

The Committee was inaugurated on 12 Feb 2007, and was developed from a recommendation from the Association of African Universities (AAU). The AAU, along with numerous other high learning institutions, all believe in the centrality of gender in meeting Africa's development goals.

The Committee's terms of reference include: Compilation of a database of the University's gender profile and database as it relates to staff recruitment, student admission and retention and students accommodation; Targeted Scholarship awards for students; formulation of the University's gender policy; organisation training for management; Organisation of seminars on gender for staff and students; develop gender-related courses and establishment of a gender studies and resource centres.

The training delivered to staff was to sensitize University management, academic leaders and administrators on the concept of gender and gender dynamics within the University community. The training models are: basic facts about gender; forming policies and strategies; gender violence and sexual harassment in higher education; mainstreaming gender in the curriculum.

#### **Women in decision-making**

A key method of meeting strategic gender needs and promoting women's empowerment is to promote women's leadership and management. An increase in leadership opportunities can increase women's confidence and allow for more participation in strategic discussions and activities. It can also create more space for gender issues to be challenged, as the quote below exemplifies. However, the degree to which C:AVA partners had women in leadership or management positions varied. Some organisations evidenced good representation of women at different organisational levels, where there were at least one or two women in top management positions (three out of six partners).

*“There was a situation that I visited an Emir in the Northern region of Nigeria and I needed to talk to the women too but I was told that women don’t sit in the council. I refused to sit with that Emir until he accorded the same invitation he accorded me to the women and we all discussed together. I am happy to tell you today that the Emir has women as members of his council! That is why we need leadership” (female director).*

On the other hand, as the table below illustrates, almost 30 per cent of both men and women felt that there was inadequate representation of women and other groups at the managerial level. It was also duly noted by partners that the C:AVA project should also recruit females into positions of authority, such as the country manager or desk officer positions. Despite these results, most management and staff were enthusiastic about encouraging more women’s leadership.

**Table 8: Is there adequate representation of women and other groups among staff at the managerial level?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Not at all	19	4	9
Insufficient	12	23	18
Sufficient	58	50	53
Excellent	12	23	20

Total count: 26 females, 48 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

Some staff noticed that higher representation of women at the management level had created tension between male and female staff. Some male staff expressed the perception of ‘reverse discrimination’, where women management enjoyed a number of benefits that they did not. Female staff felt that this view by male respondents was to do with their lack of gender sensitivity:

*“Our males generally... need to be trained to be more gender sensitive and more comfortable working with women; not seeing us as threats when we move up” (female extension agent).*

### **Segmented workforce**

An area of opportunity is to encourage female staff to participate in fields outside their traditional gender roles. In general, women in most organisations were either working in fields that related to gender or women’s issues, or in areas that are stereotypically female (such as horticulture, home economics, processing etc). It is important for women staff to work in areas of their expertise and to counter the assumption that, because somebody is a woman, they are able to understand and/or address gender issues. This may challenge long-held stereotypes of gender capabilities and contribute to more transformative changes.

*“In [our] view, women and men function differently in their job performance, women initiate women’s programs while initiate men initiate men’s program but for the overall success of a project, we all work hand in hand irrespective of gender or diversity” (male extension agent).*

Partners can perhaps take special measures, such as targeted advertising, to encourage women into fields that do not traditionally employ many females. Recruiting females to male-dominated sectors or disciplines may also encourage other females to the field. This is not aimed at threatening the merit-based approach,

but it may encourage people to move into fields where they previously had not seen opportunities. This is an important issue, given that more youth are leaving the agricultural sector. Young women will need to see many opportunities in agriculture in order to feel they have a future in the sector.

### **Cassava processing enterprises and women’s empowerment**

also have opportunities to contribute to women’s empowerment but are currently not active in this area. Private sector businesses however were positive about the positive changes they could make to their business practices. Some examples of good practice in empowering women include:

- Hiring more women in management or leadership positions
- Providing education and training for women to move up in businesses
- Recruiting women into traditionally male-dominated areas of employment
- Providing positive feedback to workers to build self-confidence

## **Operations**

### **Changes in gender roles**

Throughout the Gender and Diversity Audit consultations, there were numerous examples of the impact of partners’ activities and of gender roles being challenged. As the table below aptly illustrates, staff and management feel certain that they have contributed to making changes in women’s lives.

**Table 9: Do you consider that your work has helped empower women or help them to make strategic life changes?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Never	0	0	0
Insufficiently	0	2	3
Sufficiently	68	69	67
Completely	32	29	30

Total count: 25 females, 42 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

For example, many partners felt that they had improved the incomes of women and men in their programmes which has improved their livelihoods and contributed to a reduction in intergenerational poverty:

*“The standard of living of the farm family’s household has improved considerably because farmers now send their children to schools and these children are now being encouraged to take agriculture as their vocation” (male extension agent).*

There were also examples of women occupying a different social status in their communities through the exposure they received to partner activities, such as leading microcredit groups:

*“Initially in Nigeria, when meetings are set up, women were always seen to cook, clap and dance as a form of entertainment for the men as they discuss issues... but [we have] changed this, women are doing much of the talking now while men listen” (NGO manager).*

There are also examples of men taking on some of the responsibilities that were previously considered to represent the women’s domain:

*“When women go to the river we see men frying cassava at the house. Women are contributing to the home, men extend supporting hands and are filling in the gap” (male extension agent).*

However, as discussed in the previous chapter, gender roles can be further challenged if processing and production activities (women and men’s activities) were brought together through partnership working.

### **Ownership**

To increase opportunities of encouraging women’s empowerment, women should be encouraged to purchase and manage technology through investment opportunities. This is a key area as it is where practical and strategic gender needs intersect. Ownership can address women’s need to important inputs and technologies to increase their productivity and income, but it can also provide more strategic access to resources that can provide the opportunity for longer term empowerment. This was recognised by partners to some extent, particularly NGOs and public extension organisations, in that they felt that they required skills in training women in entrepreneurship. However, it is important that the emphasis is not only for women to own inputs, but also their outputs, and have control over their income.

### **Women’s leadership in the community**

Most of the partners’ activities with women clients promoted women’s leadership. This helps build women’s confidence and self-esteem, and helps women’s views feed into the decision-making process - thus impacting on women’s empowerment. However, in some communities women leaders have very little actual decision-making power or men are placed to manage the women’s groups. Staff explained that this was due to high illiteracy among women or that conflicts were occurring within women’s groups that were stopped when men were managing the groups. It may be useful therefore to train women in group facilitation and problem-solving in order to exploit leadership activities.

*“This is the ‘African mentality’, when it concerns a formal position, women are not considered first; e.g. the social secretary may be a woman, but as for chairman, secretary, treasurer, don’t expect them to appoint a woman” (male extension agent).*



### **Managing conflicts**

Importantly, some staff have been involved in managing changes in gender relations by working with men and women and helping men and women to re-negotiate their roles in the household and for men to change their attitudes towards women. To a large extent, partners have been successful at adopting a non-confrontational approach, but this may be because they are working within current gender roles and expectations. Some staff reported that they often have to tell women that their new wealth or status through the programme does not mean they can disrespect their husband. However disrespecting a husband can have a range of meanings and interpretations, and in some cases, may even show how women are standing up for their rights and interests. Therefore, there may be more need for conflict management resources for staff to access.

*“The major point to focus on is empowering those women, e.g. through adult literacy class. The husband of two women quarrelled with them and asked them not to come for classes. He felt threatened. We intervened and counselled the man to allow them to attend... We have strategies to carry men along” (female extension agent).*

### **Monitoring and evaluating gender**

It was evident that gender was a key criterion in many of the partners' activities, with usually a numeric target expressing their commitment to including women in their activities. Many service providers were also disaggregating households into male and females in their scoping activities as well.

However, there were very few other gender indicators included in monitoring and evaluation activities, which means that little is known about the quality of participation and performance of service providers. Monitoring and evaluation of gender was also often not continued throughout the project lifecycle to have reliable data or a discernable impact. There was some indication that monitoring and evaluation processes, as a whole, were not comprehensive.

*“I don't think we record the number of women and men” (female extension agent).*

This will help organisations identify the needs of their clients, raise issues in a timelier manner during the programme and improve understanding of the impact of activities. Moreover, capturing these results and communicating them to external organisations will help build the reputation of C:AVA partners.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Organisation**

- Develop a gender strategy establishing an approach to gender, a framework of action and mainstream it. This process should examine organisational assumptions and values and firmly establish a budget for activities.
- Create partnerships with women's organisations.
- Increase the number of females in management positions and male-dominated sectors, and provide training, mentorship and support for women to move up.
- C:AVA country team should reflect on its processes for selecting service providers and undertake capacity building in this area, if a greater impact on meeting strategic gender needs and women's empowerment is desired.

- C:AVA country team should recruit more females in positions such as the country manager or desk officer positions.

**Operations (CAVA)**

- Promote ownership among women, such as supplying women or women's groups with credit to invest in equipment (e.g. VPUs) and manage gender-friendly technology.
- Train women in group facilitation and problem-solving for leadership.
- Expose women and men to agricultural roles they have not tried previously.
- Extension agents need capacity in providing training in entrepreneurial skills for women, and also in group management and conflict management.
- Train women (and staff) in entrepreneurial skills, particularly in value addition.
- Introduce measures to increase women's control over their income.
- Improve literacy amongst women.
- Develop a set of gender indicators that measure quality of participation and performance through the project lifecycle. Link with reporting and communication.

## **6. Awareness and responsiveness to key diversity issues**

While gender is a principal area of social difference and inequality, it interacts with a number of other characteristics that may increase vulnerability or social exclusion. Some of these characteristics are: gender; age; class; ethnicity; religion; disability; national origin, language. Diversity is particularly important when looking at gender, as when it is combined with other personal characteristics such as age or marital status, it can have a larger affect on the livelihoods of women and increase probability of exclusion. With these characteristics in mind, the extent to which partners are aware of and responsive to key diversity issues will be examined.

### **Key findings**

- Generally there was low awareness of diversity as a social concept but a high appreciation for the insight it provides.
- Some partners were addressing key diversity issues within their organisation and in their activities, such as in staff recruitment. But there was a perception that addressing diversity issues could run contrary to a merit-based approach.
- A diverse workforce gives rise to different staff needs; therefore enabling staff to communicate their needs is very important.
- In field activities, service providers are participating in activities that address key diversity issues, especially in regards to youth, which is addressing issues of youth migration from rural areas. But staff feel this can be improved.
- Some staff felt that non-indigenous people may be discriminated against in rural areas and may be an issue they should address; however, not all staff agreed that they were discriminated against.
- Another issue was working with trade-based processing groups, which may exclude other people from participating if they are not traditionally involved in the trade.
- Monitoring and evaluation was not undertaken in a systematic way in regards to diversity. Diversity indicators were not in place for most partners.

## **Organisation**

### **Understanding of diversity**

Overall there was low awareness of diversity as a social concept but a high appreciation for the insight the concept provides. Some partners were addressing key diversity issues within their organisation and in their activities, revealing that there is an implicit understanding of how personal characteristics can influence rural livelihoods.

However, partners would benefit from a more nuanced understanding of diversity and their effectiveness in reaching different groups in order to improve their practice. This may mean examining a number of areas of social difference in the workplace and their activities, such as marital status, age, disability, language, national origin, etc. It is also important for partners to identify staff groups that may be more prone to exclusion, such as when a variety of characteristics interact (such as gender, age or tribe). By striving to improve services with different groups in mind, it will help to create more effective services and support for all.

## Diverse workforce

A diverse workforce is increasingly being recognised as a valuable asset for organisations and businesses. Taking a diversity approach can help to build a workforce with a range of skills and experience that can ultimately improve activities or even competitiveness.

It was evident that some service providers had consciously applied a diversity approach to their staff recruitment. For example, one provider took steps to ensure that people with different religions were represented on his small team. Another service provider hired staff to work in the areas they were from to communicate to clients more effectively. Both intermediaries had some disabled and older workers employed at their factories, which is contributing to improving the livelihoods of people who are commonly excluded. However, the practices of other service providers didn't reveal explicit attention to diversity, as they felt that hiring was strictly merit based.

A diverse workforce may also give rise to a number of different staff needs; therefore it is essential that there are opportunities for staff to communicate their needs. It was found that in most cases management provide time during meetings for staff to raise these issues; however, it is unknown to what extent these needs are addressed.

*"We are not doing badly. We have a handful of female lecturers and technologists. Some of them are older" (male, learning institution).*

## Operations

### Programmes targeting diverse groups

All service providers, to some degree, were participating in activities that addressed key diversity issues. The main diversity focus for service providers is on youth. This is meeting a key need, as youth are increasingly choosing to migrate to urban centres to avoid agricultural work, which they see it as unprofitable and arduous labour (as identified in the Gender and Diversity Analysis report Butterworth et al, 2008). Some partners are holding learning sessions and facilitating young-farmer clubs to promote the sustainability of the agriculture sector and be more inclusive to the younger generation. Other examples of service providers meeting diversity needs are training for the unemployed and migrants in agriculture and an enterprise programmes for widows.

Staff and management also consider themselves to include diversity 'to some extent' in their work, as the table below illustrates. This reveals that groups that share a particular need may be addressed through separate programmes, but the range of needs within groups may not be considered in all their work.

**Table 10: To what extent do you consider and include diversity in your work?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Not at all	0	11	6
To some extent	50	25	38
To a great extent	27	46	37
Completely	23	18	21

Total count: 26 female, 44 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

### **The Federal College of Agriculture (FECA): Agricultural skills for widows**

Similar to other South West African countries, female widows in Nigeria are commonly marginalised, where widowhood tends to impact far more traumatically upon women than men. They suffer discrimination and social exclusion, and experience extreme hardship due to their lack of control or access to resources, which occurs both during their husband's life and after. Common experiences include loss of resources such as land or income, loneliness, loss of status, fear of the future and depression (Owen, 1994 in Sossou 2002:203). The HIV/AIDS crisis in Nigeria is compounding this problem even more, as a greater number of people are losing their spouses to AIDS and are stigmatised both for being a widow and being linked with the disease.

As part of a federal government initiative, FECA has responded to this issue. As a leading agricultural training college, FECA has developed a series of training courses tailored towards improve the skill sets of widows. Women can select from a range of courses based on their interests to improve their agricultural skills and increase their income from agriculture. After they complete the course they are given materials and equipment to start their venture. This programme is exemplarity in addressing women's practical needs, and also the diversity issue, where age, gender and marital status combine to make them especially vulnerable. FECA is also working with youth and unemployed to improve their standard of living through agriculture.

### **Issues that were not currently being addressed**

Staff raised an issue about non-indigenous people or migrant communities being discriminated against and socially excluded, which will need to be addressed in C:AVA activities. Staff in some organisations reported incidences of non-indigenous people being prevented from attending village meetings, rent land or plant profitable crops. Other staff reported that in some cases migrants were doing better economically than non-indigenous. Therefore activities with C:AVA will need to take special consideration of this group to ensure benefits reach them. The service provider who facilitated the training programme for non indigenous people could be drawn upon.

*“Tribe is an issue. When you are in your community you are more bold.  
But if you leave, people are biased” (female, learning institution, lecturer).*

Partners may also want to investigate technologies that work well with particular groups, such as the disabled, or blind, and use them to facilitate income generating activities.

Another issue was working with already established trade-based processing groups. Some partners focus working with groups based on a trade, such as palm oil or cassava processors. From a diversity perspective, focusing on groups already involved in an existing trade may exclude people from much needed support who aren't involved in that trade. Groups formed on the basis of their trade may come from a particular tribe or lineage and exclude other groups of people. It may, therefore, be interesting to take a participatory approach to trade-based processing and encourage people from different backgrounds to take up the trade.

## Monitoring and evaluation

As discussed in previous chapters, monitoring and evaluation in general was not undertaken in a systematic way. Diversity indicators, like gender indicators, were not in place for most partners. Despite this, 49 per cent of staff and management felt they monitored diversity issues 'usually'. However, this is difficult to do without diversity indicators and is very unlikely to be done in a comprehensive and systematic way.

**Table 11: Is an analysis or monitoring undertaken on the impact of the programme concerning different groups?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Never	4	2	3
Seldom	4	24	17
Usually	58	46	49
Always	35	27	30

Total count: 26 females, 41 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

This situation results in little information being available to monitor or evaluate impact for different groups of people, which is crucial to the C:AVA mandate. There are a range of indicators that can be included in surveys and questionnaires that would supply this information, such as gender, age, tribe, disability, or country of origin etc. This information can then be applied against department and position to determine how diversity is addressed internally, and also against the type of farming, farmer wealth, or village location to gain insight into activities on the field.

## Recommendations

### **Organisation**

- Improve understanding of diversity, how issues can be addressed, and how activities could be extended or improved for different groups.
- Investigate how the organisation and programmes are currently reaching out to different groups and address issues that arise from this.
- Develop an organisational approach in which diversity issues are defined and can be addressed.
- Ensure staff are equipped with conflict resolution skills.

### **Operations (CAVA)**

- Address issues of non-indigenous, encourage people to participate in C:AVA who have not been involved in processing
- Adaptable technologies or processes for different groups
- Integrate diversity characteristics into the monitoring and evaluation system
- Include characteristic indicators for monitoring such as gender, age, tribe, disability, or country of origin etc, and cross tabulate against the type of farming, farmer wealth, or village location to gain insight into activities on the field.

## 7. Enabling participation

Participation in socio-economic and political life is widely seen as a crucial tool for achieving greater equality and overcoming poverty, and is an intrinsic part of development processes and business innovation (Sen, 2001; Chambers, 2007). Subsequently, the Gender and Diversity Audit includes an analysis of participation and how C:AVA partners enable participatory processes internally and with their clients. There are a range of processes and mechanisms for participation; therefore the purpose of this performance area is to identify what is currently being done to enable participation and how it can be improved, with gender and diversity in mind. The focus of this chapter is on how participation is understood and actualised within organisations and in their field operations.

### Key findings

- There was a high understanding of participation and its importance among partners, but participatory approaches were not mainstreamed throughout organisations or through field activities.
- Internal participation was mainly conducted through staff meetings, where staff could learn, problem-solve and innovate with other staff. Smaller organisations tended to be more participatory.
- The majority of staff felt that the opinions and views of women and diverse groups were sought out; however, there is room for improvement.
- There was a lack of more strategic attention to gender, particularly in decision making and staff meetings.
- Partners were effectively engaging with the external environment, which was contributing to innovation and learning.
- Staff used a range of methods and approaches to enhance participation among partners in their field activities and felt it was much easier to think about participation in this area.
- Staff require capacity building in different participatory approaches in order to apply methods that correspond to the situation.
- Service providers face some constraints to participation by going through existing village power structures, such as limiting the people that are exposed to the service or project.
- Service providers incorporated methods that enhanced the participation of women in their activities, such as working with women's groups and setting targets for women's participation. However, women face a number of barriers to participation that could be addressed.
- Service providers used various communication methods to transfer information to clients, but there were some problems with access.

### Organisation

#### Understanding participation

All partners felt that participation was crucial to their organisation and external activities, whether their work involved business, extension services, rural development or education. The general understanding of participation was that it was including the views, experience and knowledge of either staff or clients. This was conducted in a variety of ways, as this chapter will illuminate; however, a more nuanced understanding of participation could increase the quality of participatory activities. A gender analysis for instance, reveals that the understanding of

participation sometimes lacked attention to power relationships or complex social circumstances that influence participation. Moreover, participatory approaches were understood and applied only in certain contexts and not mainstreamed throughout organisations and their operations. Therefore, it would be useful for partners to expand their understanding of participation and incorporate it throughout their organisation and activities.

### **Means of participation within organisations**

The majority of service providers provided opportunities for staff participation through weekly, fortnightly or monthly meetings. Most staff and management felt this was an effective way for staff to learn, problem-solve and innovate with other staff.

Organisational culture played a major role in the extent to which partner’s adapted a participatory approach in their internal activities. Smaller organisations tended to be more informal and open to staff input, and staff felt supported in doing so:

*“We asked for a coordinator at the programme level and we got a permanent programme coordinator. We are very happy now he is in place” (male extension agent).*

In contrast, some of the larger organisations had a much more formal culture and structured meetings for staff participation. Staff reported that management did not always support or listen to their ideas, which left them unmotivated. As the quote below illustrates, this can hurt the ability of partners to innovate, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter:

*“[The organisation] does not encourage innovation among staff because we have unresponsive structure. If you have a great idea you want to pass across to the management, you are sent back home and told to get on with your work and not to bother about any new thing... Our ideas die on the field” (female extension agent).*

In contrast, some of the larger organisations had a much more formal culture and structured meetings for staff participation. Staff reported that management did not always support or listen to their ideas, which left them unmotivated. As the quote below illustrates, this can hurt the ability of partners to innovate, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter:

### **Gender, diversity and participation**

‘Who’ is participating is a crucial question. In partner organisations, the majority of staff felt that the opinions and views of women and diverse groups were sought out (47 per cent). However, 15 per cent of staff (21 per cent female and 13 per cent male) still felt that this seldom occurs, indicating that there is room for improvement in consulting with different groups internally for some organisations.

**Table 12: Are the opinions and views of women and different groups actively sought out by your organisation?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Never	0	0	0
Seldom	21	13	15
Usually	38	32	37
Always	42	52	47

Total count: 24 females, 48 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

When women were consulted, there was an impact, particularly with regards to women's practical gender need, as the quote below demonstrates:

*"The opinions and views of women and different groups are sought at various meetings such as training sessions and the work planning meetings... For example, there was a complaint raised about the condition of the shared toilets which led to the construction of separate women's toilets" (agricultural extension manager).*

However, in the context of strategic gender needs, women's participation in decision making is less evident. Some male staff reported that women colleagues didn't often participate in organisational activities even though they felt it was a comfortable environment. Male staff felt that there should be initiatives to change the "*mindset of women*" to enable them to contribute more strategically

It may also be important to consider the means or avenues through which people participate to identify their effectiveness for different groups. Currently, management feel that meetings are an opportunity for staff to participate in organisational decision making, discussions and to "*cross-fertilise ideas*". However, this may not be a participatory environment for some people, as they may be intimidated in a large meeting room with majority male staff and management present.

### **External partnerships**

Partners were significantly engaging with the external environment, which was contributing to innovation and learning. Partners had a number of external partnerships including the state, local government, civil society organisations and private companies. As the table below demonstrates, 87 per cent of staff and management felt that these partnerships were 'effective' or 'very effective'.

**Table 13: Does your organisation have effective partnerships with external organisations?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Not at all	0	2	1
Ineffective	4	13	12
Effective	46	33	37
Very Effective	50	52	50

Total count: 26 females, 46 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

## ***Operations***

### **Current participatory methods in field activities**

Staff used a range of methods to enhance participation in their field activities and felt it was much easier to think about participation in this area. A mix of consultative and collaborative approaches was used, depending on the organisation and programme. For example, agricultural extension work used a number of different methods in transferring information and skills, such as participatory needs assessments, client questionnaires, field demonstrations and farmer schools. An NGO providing microcredit, however, used group meetings and discussions as a means of invoking participation. Learning institutions conducted participatory research, by consulting rural people about their technical needs, such as the smoke and heat free frying

technology. These approaches do not seem to be value-driven, but rather respectful of local knowledge and structures.

The main method for public extension services was the training and visit method, which combines regular visits to communities (particularly to village leaders and local facilitators) with informal evaluation methods to see how technologies are being taken up, applied, and their impact. One service provider took a more farmer-led approach, where they facilitated the establishment of community monitoring committees to enable service users to judge performance themselves. Another popular method was a group approach, which shifts focus from working with individual farmers to group work, which is cost effective, can reach a higher number of people, and contribute to social capital.

However, it seems that partners were utilising one method for participation, when a range of tools may be applicable for different activities. For example, the training and visit method may be best suited for more large-scale commercial farms than compared with smaller subsistence farmers where the focus may need to be on empowerment. Moreover, the innovation or farming systems approaches, for example, involve suppliers and users of research at the centre of analysis to define problems and develop solutions. Service providers may want to strengthen their capacity in a range of participatory methods in order to apply tools that best fit a situation.

It was also found that partners lacked more systematic methods in incorporating participation throughout their activities such as during planning and design, implementation and monitoring evaluation. Most participatory methods were utilised in the initial phases of activities, but not throughout the project. As the table below demonstrates, 60 per cent of staff felt that consultation with different groups in their field activities, for instance, was 'usually' to 'never' conducted. This indicates that a more consistent approach is required in participatory methods.

**Table 14: Do you actively seek out the views and opinions of different groups when planning and conducting your work?**

	Female %	Male %	Total %
Never	15	7	10
Seldom	12	10	10
Usually	35	43	40
Always	39	41	40

Total count: 26 females, 42 males

Numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

One public extension organisation felt that evaluation and participatory methods were difficult when a programme was undergoing challenges, because of the overly negative feedback they received, specifically from the change in cassava policies have left them without buyers. However, it is in these circumstances that evaluation is most important. Skills in group dynamics and conflict management would help staff to work effectively with groups and encourage their participation in programmes.

### **Addressing power structures in initial community engagement**

Partners need to examine their relationship with existing community power structures in order to understand its effect on participation. Service providers use the approach of working with existing structures and not to challenge them. This has a range of implications for equality and access of benefits and outcomes for different groups, as it reinforces structures of inequality.

*“Before you can talk to a wife in a household, you must pass through the husband and before you can reach farmers within a community, you must pass through the chief of that community” (male extension agent).*

Currently, many service providers start the planning phase of their programmes by contacting the village authority. Village authorities are typically an older male; however, they can also be female (the ‘queen mother’) if the male elder dies. This contact is required in order to conduct work and gather people together in the village, and was seen by both staff and management as vital to community relations. However, this practice can have a number of consequences, as the quotes illustrate below:

*“Sometimes the leaders of the community can be autocratic and self centred and want all the activity to concentrate in only one farm” (male extension agent).*

*“If you are not careful you will concentrate all your efforts on one person – some leaders just want you to help them and they may not organise people for you” (male extension agent).*

There is also a need for extension agents to examine their own position in local hierarchies and how they may be seen by other people. Some local people may feel intimidated by extension agents because of their qualifications or associate them with the Government. Extension agents that work in their own villages of origin may be situated within local hierarchies and be more influenced by existing power structures, resulting in privileging some groups or families. Given this, service providers would benefit from capacity strengthening in participatory methods and examining their own position in order to provide more inclusive services to rural people.

### **Gender and participation**

Service providers incorporated methods that enhanced the participation of women in their activities, such as working with women’s groups and setting targets for women’s participation. There were differences between partners, for example one NGO and public extension services established women only groups, whereas another NGO included men and women in the same group but had targets for each. The later is more difficult as men may dominate activities.

*“[Participation is] part of what we do, we do it as best we can. We have a gender target for participation 60:40 men:women in most of the programmes we have” (male extension agent).*

However, there were a number of barriers to women’s participation in extension services and other support, such as low literacy levels, stereotypes of women as working only in the subsistence or processing spheres, and lack of access to and ownership of resources. These barriers prevent extension services from being taken up by women or women benefiting equally from the services. For example, due to illiteracy, some women’s groups have male leaders, which limits the opportunities for women in leadership opportunities and ownership over group resources. Therefore these root issues should be addressed to enhance women’s participation.

### **Communication methods**

Service providers used various communication methods to transfer information to clients, most typically through field demonstrations, teaching in local facilities, or TV and radio programmes. These are important mediums; however, there are still issues of access, as women have limited time.

The most common method of communicating with clients is through direct contact or visiting the farmer in their fields or home. This is probably the most reliable method of transferring information, especially to reach out to women, but is time consuming. Sometimes, messages are sent through community leaders to disseminate information to villages; however, as discussed previously, it may be incorrect to assume that the information has been disseminated equitably.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Organisation**

- Increase understanding of participation and participatory methods. A more detailed understanding is required with regards to the influence of power relationships and the complex social circumstances.
- Develop more creative ways to encourage staff participation, such as interdepartmental or external field visits, role-playing, staff presentations and external partnerships to increase learning and enhancing performance.
- Develop an organisational participatory approach and mainstream it throughout the organisation.
- As discussed in previous chapters, partners should consider evaluating levels of staff and client participation, using variables such as sex age, ethnicity, language and nationality. Establish targets but also examine the quality and impact of participation. Take measures to identify and address issues of exclusion.
- Cassava processing enterprises should help support a vibrant supplier group that will provide opportunities for participation of women and men.

#### **Operations (CAVA)**

- Review and adjust current approaches to incorporate participation throughout planning and design, implementation and monitoring evaluation and improve access to services and programmes. For example:
  - Extend work from farms and involve farmers in more non-farm activities.
  - Communicate with other village members after village authorities have been contacted.
  - Train local facilitators to act as a link between the organisation and communities to exchange information and ideas.
- Improve communication by making it gender-friendly, having women announcers, presentations in local languages and limiting, if not omitting, written materials.
- Address or support others in addressing barriers to female participation in extension, such as female illiteracy, control over resources and gender stereotypes.
- Undertake capacity strengthening in participatory methods, group dynamics and conflict management to work more effectively with groups and encourage their participation.
- Undertake regular participatory evaluations with clients and establish community monitoring committees in each work area to enable service users to judge performance.

## 8. Innovation

Innovation simply means 'a new way of doing something', or for organisations, doing something new. Innovation is important as it provides different ways to achieve a goal often in terms of improving efficiency, productivity, quality etc. In terms of gender and diversity innovation is also important because gender and diversity relations are constantly shifting and being re-negotiated. New constraints and opportunities are continually arising and requiring new methods for understanding and addressing difference. In this context, innovation is examined through a gender and diversity lens to identify the extent to which partners facilitate processes for the creation of new ideas.

### Key findings

- Innovation was largely understood as the production and introduction of new technologies, which was an essential part of most partners' jobs. Most organisations possess an organisational culture that supports innovation and has an openness to try new things. But the understanding could be extended to look at processes of shared learning between organisations, which could help motivate staff and facilitate innovation.
- There were a number of ways that partners were being innovative in areas that addressed both practical and strategic gender needs. Most of these ideas were done in consultation with female clients.
- Staff meetings were the tool that was most often stated for knowledge sharing. However, the majority of staff reported that they needed to develop their skills to innovate, but felt this wasn't possible due to funding constraints.
- Knowledge sharing also occurs through partnership and external communication, which is critical for gaining new insight, influencing, and even gaining additional funding. This was effective, although there was some tension around issues of donor funded projects, and academic research and practical implementation.
- Other barriers to innovation include lack of incentives, lack of ownership and rigid management structure.

### Understanding innovation

Innovation was largely understood as the production and introduction of new technologies, which was an essential part of most partners' jobs. One service provider, for example, developed a number of value-added products, started new activities in waste management and created its own women's credit scheme. Subsequently, most organisations possess an organisational culture that supports innovation and has an openness to try new things. In addition, some partners had an in-depth understanding of innovation and saw it in terms of internal processes and opportunities for learning and communication, and being relevant to gender and diversity.

### Innovation and gender

There were a number of ways that partners were being innovative in areas that addressed both practical and strategic gender needs. Most of these ideas were done in consultation with female clients. Some examples of this are:

- Development of a community engagement model called the 'ten trusting ten' method, where ten people pass information on to another ten people. This method transfers knowledge efficiently and extends social networks.

- Enhancement of fryers by reducing the amount of smoke and heat they emit, which was a major hindrance to women frying vegetables.
- Assistance and support for rural women entrepreneurs in terms of advice, capital and technical equipment - an area that extension agents felt could be expanded if their capacity in teaching entrepreneurial skills was increased.

### **Learning**

Key to enabling innovation in the workforce is staff development (skill and confidence building) and participatory processes (group discussions, individual consultations). Some organisations revealed good practice in sharing knowledge and ideas, which is key to innovation systems. However, there is room for improvement in this area.

Some organisations built review sessions into their monthly meetings, where staff raised pertinent issues and gained feedback from colleagues. This provided staff with opportunities to examine lessons learned from the field, disseminate information and develop new ideas. In these circumstances, it is important for management to create a flexible and supportive environment so these processes can occur:

*“We share ideas with management, when such innovation is brought forward we call for a meeting to convince management of the need for them to adopt such ideas. We organise in house meetings to build capacity and [hold] in house training, e.g. project planning, proposal writing, report writing, advocacy etc.” (male extension worker).*

However, the majority of staff reported that they needed to develop their skills to innovate, but felt this wasn't possible due to funding constraints. For example, researching on the internet was done on the own time of staff and on their own funds. Therefore it may be useful to make more learning resources available for staff since this is an area that staff would like to see improved and is crucial for innovation. In addition, regular consultation with communities and external partners could encourage more spark new ideas.

### **Networks and partnerships**

Knowledge sharing also occurs through partnership and external communication, which is critical for gaining new insight, influencing, and even gaining additional funding.

*“Yes, they [the organisation] promote innovation. When we attend seminars, conferences and training, we [pass] on what we have learnt to our students” (female teacher in agriculture).*

C:AVA partners were involved in numerous networks and partnerships. NGOs, public service providers, learning institutions and cassava processing enterprises all work in partnership for a range of reasons, such as advocacy, research or support. , For example, NGOs are working with the National Collation for NGOs on advocacy, and learning institutions are working with NGOs in field activities, as the quote below demonstrates:

*“Partnerships with NGOs have enhanced our activities a lot. They enhance our coverage area and publicity” (female manager, learning institution).*

The relationships between public extension services and learning institutions were complex, however. While partnerships in this area were generally effective, there was some difficulty between research staff/institutions and field work. It was argued that knowledge was sometimes not transferred in the reverse way, from extension services to research institutions. In some cases, there was some conflict, rivalry and accusations of favouritism between the two. This may result in reducing effective linkages between technology and implementation.

Donor relationships are another complex area for innovation. These relationships are helping to increase knowledge skills and innovation with partners, by providing training and general guidance. Sometimes, it is through the requirements donors place on funding that has led to changes in partner organisations, which some partners felt was top-down and undermined their potential and skills:

*“They don’t want to listen to us. They don’t listen enough” (male, manager public service provider).*

*“The donor agency dictates the tune; he pays the pipers, so we welcome gender related issues” (female, learning institution, director).*

### **Barriers to innovation**

Partners showed high capacity in being innovative; however, there were a number of barriers that prevented staff and management from being more innovative. Some 'innovation barriers' for partners were lack of motivation from inadequate incentives (bonuses, training, and management support) lack of ownership over their work agenda and rigid management structures.

*“The organisation is hierarchical in structure and this delays timely decisions to be made because any step to be taken would have to pass across many desks before anything could be made out of it” (female agricultural extension manager).*

*“We need to take permission from the director if we want to try new things. We don’t suggest new ways of doing things” (female extension agent).*

### **Recommendations**

- Improve understanding of 'innovation systems' as an approach to innovation, which focuses less on production of new technologies and more on information sharing. Examine organisational structures to identify their conduciveness for innovation (e.g. bureaucracy, rigid rules etc).
- Encourage staff development through skill and confidence building and incentives using bonuses, training opportunities and management support.
- Facilitate more participatory processes between staff and with external partners to examine new ideas and lessons learned from the field, and disseminate information.
- Sustain and create effective partnerships, particularly between research and field operations, which are critical for gaining new insight, influencing, and even gaining additional funding.
- Encourage ownership in the organisation, such as giving staff control over budgets or trying new methods.

## Appendix: Capacity strengthening needs

The Gender and Diversity Audit raised a number of capacity strengthening needs. The partner consulted during the gender and diversity audit and the workshop felt that gender and diversity was relevant to their work but required capacity strengthening (60 per cent of staff interviewed). Some of the capacity strengthening needs that came out of discussions with staff and management with regards to gender and diversity are noted in the table below. There were some partners that exemplified good practice in the areas below which can be drawn upon in capacity strengthening exercises.

**Table 15 Detailed list of gender and diversity capacity strengthening areas**

<b>Organisational</b>	<b>Operational</b>
Gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting	Gender and diversity needs and impact analysis, empowerment, intra-household dynamics
Gender strategy and gender-friendly policies	Gender sensitive approach to group formation and group dynamics
Expanding women's representation vertically and horizontally in the organisation	Encouraging participation in all areas
Equitable recruitment, retention and promotion practices	Targeting hard to reach groups
Gender and diversity disaggregated monitoring internally	Gender and diversity disaggregated monitoring in activities
Gender specialist, resource material, staff training	Challenging gender roles, changing mindsets and building women's confidence
Challenging mindsets	Holistic provision and activities working with men

The Gender and Diversity Audit also identified a number of other capacity strengthening needs outside of gender and diversity, yet intrinsically linked. The following tables summarised self-defined capacity needs for partners. Please note some prompts may have been used.

**Table 16 Detailed list of other capacity strengthening areas**

Technical skills	Agricultural technology; storing and processing approaches; crop preservation, handling, storage and marketing.
Mobility and mobility maintenance	Vehicles, motorcycles, and Mopeds.
Logistics	Enhanced equipment for processing e.g. graters and hydraulic presses; safety equipment for travel.
Communication	Internet; farmer communication systems.
Monitoring and evaluation	Course evaluation and formal feedback system.
Financial management	Accessing external funding; staff recruitment; information on existing markets.
Information Technology	Internet; digital camera; powerpoint training.
Policy development	Gender and diversity strategies, employment policies.
Learning and development	Peace building, group dynamics; group formation; learning materials; demonstrations; project management; opportunities to participate in workshops, exchange programmes and collaborations.
Advocacy and networking skills	Building partnerships; influencing government policy.

**Table 17: Capacity strengthening needs for Nigerian partner organisations**

	Operational capacity needs						Organisational capacity needs					
	Technical skills relevant to CAVA	Mobility and maintenance	Logistics (inc. equipment and safety)	Communication	Gender and diversity skills	M&E	Project management	Financial management (inc. sourcing funds)	Advocacy and networking skills	Information Technology	Policy development (inc. G&D)	Learning and development
<b>Ogun</b>												
OGADEP	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y		Y		
JDPM		Y			Y			Y	Y			Y
PEAK												
UNAAB/AMREC								Y	Y			Y
<b>Ondo</b>												
Ondo ADP	Y	Y			Y		Y	Y		Y		Y
COWAN		Y	Y					Y	Y	Y		
FECA					Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mikmakin												

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