

Women's programmes can be improved

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Women endure many hardships as bread winners

EDITOR—On June 21, The New Vision published an article entitled “Only 7% of women own land”. The article highlighted the incredible economic disadvantage and risk to food security women face when they cannot own land.

More important than exposing this inequity, however, is recognising the need for innovative programmes and tools to improve access to land, resources, and agricultural training for women.

As part of our research we have met with small-scale farmers, farmers’ groups and non-governmental organisations throughout Africa who are diligently working to engage female agricultural producers.

The paper, entitled “State of the World 2011: Innovations that Nourish the Planet” will focus on environmentally sustainable ways of alleviating hunger and poverty. When the World Cocoa Foundation realised female participation in its agricultural field schools was low in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, for example, they created a video viewing club to make the training more accessible for both single and married women.

In Mozambique and Malawi, the Food and Natural Resource Policy Analysis Network uses theatre to explain agricultural policy to rural communities, and solicits important feedback to bring back to government. And in Kenya, the Mazingira Institute trains women in processing techniques so they can earn added value for their agricultural products.

Innovations that improve the role of women in agriculture do more than increase income: they raise yields, reduce malnutrition, improve nutrition within families, and increase the number of girls who go to school.

It is imperative that we increase attention and funding to these types of projects, and we are glad to see this important issue discussed in the public arena.

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