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Donor Report to the Ramsey Foundation
Progress on Gender and ATI Initiative
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The Carter Center's Global Access to Information Initiative, with the generous support of the Ramsey Family Foundation, over the past quarter was able to develop and initiate programming to advance the equitable exercise of the right of access to information for women. While access to information is understood as a fundamental human right and a critical link for socio and economic rights, there had never been a critical exploration of the asymmetries confronting women in the exercise of the right to information. As a first step in Carter Center programming, we developed a project framework that would allow a significant analysis of the disparities facing women in the receipt of critical information and implementation activities to address these asymmetries. Critical to the project is a preliminary country-based study designed to assess the facility that women have to access key information for economic empowerment, and compare the ability of women to access critical documents versus men in a similar socio-economic and geographic circumstance. With this data, the Carter Center will work with the relevant civil society organizations and governments to promote creative solutions to assuring that information reaches all people. Thus far, TCC progress has been focused primarily at the country level (Ghana) with some progress with the international community and advancing Gender and ATI as well. These two areas of focus and progress are explained below.

In consultation with partners in Ghana and the international community, the Center decided to focus the assessment and ongoing programming on issues related to economic empowerment. By anchoring the work in a few key areas, we hope to have more immediate impacts. To determine the exact area within the field of economic empowerment that the project would focus, Center program staff consulted widely with gender and development experts. This included meetings with various actors such as the World Bank, the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, the Department of State and others. We determined that the main emphasis would be on information related to government policies and services, and in some cases on information specific to women's rights under the law. At the conclusion of the consultation phase, we have decided to engage four interconnected areas:

1. Land – Are women able to access information on land policy? Are women able to access information on their rights to own/inherit land? Are women able to access land titles?
2. Starting a business – Are women able to access information on the government procedures for starting a small business? Are women able to access policies and procedures for licensing? Are women able to access policies and procedures for government sponsored loans? Are women able to access information relevant to the trade/market of interest, such as how many like businesses exist; taxation; import costs etc?
3. Agriculture – Are women able to access information about pricing for goods? Are women able to access information about government-sponsored programs for seeds and fertilizers? Are women able to access information about water for irrigation and related water policies?
4. Identification Card/Birth Certificates – Are women aware of the procedures for accessing personal information, such as identification cards and birth certificates? Are women able to access these documents?

The Center has been working with an expert to design the methodology for the initial study, as well as the specific instruments (surveys and focal group questions). Broadly, the study will have both a quantitative and qualitative section. We will begin by testing the study in up to four locations (rural and urban) in Ghana and then make any necessary modifications before applying in 2-3 other countries. We plan to have the study methodology and instrument completed shortly, with the intent to roll out the study in fall 2012.

In addition, during this quarter, Center program staff visited Ghana to meet with potential partners and donors. Following a very productive meeting with the Executive Director of the Human Rights Advocacy Centre in Ghana, we have agreed to work together on both the study as well as increasing awareness of the asymmetries and more directly engaging women's groups in promoting the right to information for economic empowerment. For the study, we also have reached out to the University of Ghana's Center for Gender Studies and Advocacy for support in applying and analyzing the results. Notably, the Human Rights Advocacy Center plays a leading role in the civil society movement seeking passage of a freedom of information (FOI) law in Ghana. As such, we will work with this broader freedom of information coalition to review the draft Ghanaian FOI law through a gendered-lens.

Prior to the Carter Center's initiation of this project, there was very little awareness of the gendered asymmetries in the right of access to information. During this quarter, we were able to begin sensitizing key stakeholders to the issues and need to explicitly focus on women's equitable needs for government-held information. Project Manager Laura Neuman was asked to present the topic at a roundtable for relevant staff of the US State Department and USAID (US agency for international development) as they began considering their own programming, and to consider synergies with the World Bank's development programming. Ms. Neuman also was

invited to meet with Ambassador Melanee Verveer, head of Secretary Clinton's Global Women's Initiative. During the conversation, we discussed potential partnership in convening thought leaders and reaching key government ministries in the country's selected to pilot the Center's gender and access to information initiative. Furthermore, the project was in touch with UNWomen to consider areas for partnership.

Overall, in the first quarter of programming the Carter Center successfully entered into an agreement with a renowned local partner in Ghana; began development of the study to assess asymmetries/inequalities in the right of access to information; and raised awareness with key stakeholders in the US government, World Bank and UNWomen. In the next quarter, we anticipate completing the study design and applying the assessment in Ghana, reviewing the draft Ghana FOI law through a gendered-lens to identify potential discriminatory provisions, and to continue developing partnerships with leading international organizations.