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Women and young farmers as innovators in community-driven agro-ecological research and development.

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WOMEN AND YOUNG FARMERS AS INNOVATORS IN COMMUNITY-DRIVEN AGRO-ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

- Executive Director: The center for indigenous knowledge and organizational development (CIKOD) in Ghana
- Mission : SANKOFA. Endogenous development, Food sovereignty
- Chair: Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)
- Close to 20 years working with rural communities in Ghana.
- Order of presentation: context, challenges, proposals for innovation approaches

Context:

Approaches for Innovation presented in the context of:

- The agro-ecological African family farming model .
- Focus on whole farm family but emphasis on women and young farmers.
- Traditional agricultural practices and indigenous knowledge as source of innovation
- Endogenous development framework.
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Context

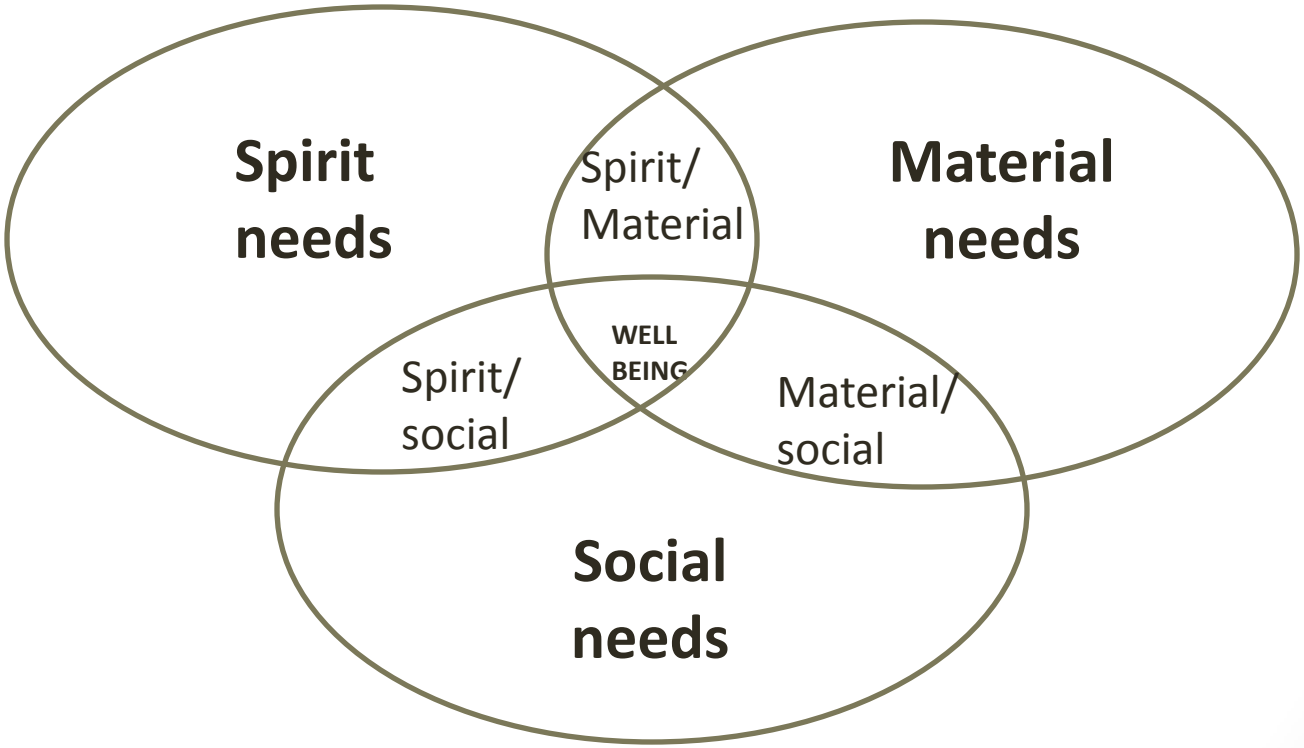
Challenges to African family farmers as Innovators

Challenges

- Formal agricultural research in Africa has so far failed to improve the productivity of small farmers (only about 3% adoption rate). Eg most small farmers still favour traditional seed varieties over new varieties from formal research.
- The blame is on low human capacity of small farmers to innovate to enhance growth in agriculture
- The panacea is to involve small farmers and other stakeholders in formal research processes through **joint research** to raise their capacity to innovate.
- The success of this approach will depend on whose point of view the joint research will be conducted.

Sources of innovation in agriculture by African farm family

The 3-worlds worldview and the African knowledge constellations for well being (Millar)



Alternative proposal from 3-worlds perspective

- So far the objective of Joint research in Africa assumes the objective of the farm family is to meet the material food needs of families (IA) ignoring the other constellations as dictated by African worldviews.
- Joint research is about farmers participating in the experiments of researchers in the industrial farm model and never the vise versa.
- Could this be the reason for the low adoption rate of S&T by African farm families?
- I propose an **endogenous innovations development approach** where, researchers participate in Farmers experiments on the basis of respect for all the knowledge constellations.

Elements of an endogenous Innovations process

- Respect for worldviews as starting point.
- Interdisciplinary research approach.
- Peoples culture, IK, issues of spirituality are important.
- Stakeholder and knowledge mapping and analysis
- Cultural protocols for community empowerment
- Strength based approach – appreciative enquiry

involving women and youth

- Women and young farmers form a critical part of the farm family labour pool.
- In the family farm system each member have specialized knowledge and roles
- Women are the experts for seed development, nutrition, medicinal vegetables, etc. the youth bring in outside knowledge
- The youth especially young women learn from the elders by doing
- Need for special targeting as innovators in their areas of specialization.
- Challenge is that women and the youth have little voice in decision making in the farm family system.

Approach for involving women and youth

- Stakeholder mapping and analysis to raise awareness on the specialized knowledge women and youth have.
- Address unequal power dynamics by including community protocols that create space for women and the youth.
- Create innovations platform with special space for women and young farmers.

Thank you