

From Ponds to Plates: How Women Are Transforming Nutrition in Rural Ghana



Community members at the fish farm in Ghana © IDE

In many low-income rural communities across Ghana, mothers and caregivers struggle to provide regular, nutritious meals for their families due to limited access to protein-rich foods, low household income, and a lack of livelihood opportunities. These challenges are especially harmful for children under five, who are at a critical stage of physical and cognitive development. The limited availability of affordable animal-source protein, such as fish, contributes to stunting, micronutrient deficiencies, and poor overall health outcomes.

Recognizing this need, Transforming Lives Through Nutrition introduced fish farming as a practical and sustainable solution to the nutritional and economic constraints faced by women and their households. Implemented in partnership with the Center for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the initiative was integrated into existing Mother-to-Mother (M2M) support groups to create a direct link between nutrition education and food production.

Transforming Lives provided twenty-four women in the M2M groups with hands-on training in pond construction

and management, feeding techniques, water quality maintenance, and harvesting. To support their start-up efforts, participants were provided with fingerlings (juvenile fish measuring approximately 10–15 cm) and starter feed, removing common barriers that often hinder rural entrepreneurship.

This intervention has enabled mothers to raise catfish not only to enhance the nutritional quality of meals at home but also to generate income by selling

surplus fish in local markets. As a result, women are gaining both the skills and the confidence to become key providers of nutrition and economic stability within their households. Children under five, who are most vulnerable to malnutrition, are now more likely to receive protein-rich meals, while the wider community benefits from increased food availability and shared knowledge. “This is incredible, I never knew we would ever rear fish in this community, we live so far away from the river, but thanks to Transforming Lives, they have introduced and taught us new ways of rearing fish, we will now have enough fish to feed our families and to sell”, said Mary, one of the mothers trained.

This approach reflects the project’s commitment to community empowerment and locally driven development. By pairing health education with income-generating opportunities, the project offers a sustainable, replicable model that strengthens household nutrition and women’s livelihoods, thus creating positive ripple effects across generations.