



Farmers Field Business School (FFBS) Brief

THE CHALLENGE

Today, nearly 800 million people in the world suffer from/ experience hunger. If current states of affairs do not change, this number will increase to 1.4 billion by 2050. Investing in women farmers such that they have the same access to resources as men could lift 150 million people out of poverty.¹ Of course, this does not mean solely working with women. Collaborations will need to be made across a range of actors for an impact of this scale to be realized. Similarly, there needs to be a reorientation of thoughts, as it pertains to how poverty alleviation is addressed. Statistical evidence shows that agriculture can be 4 times more successful at reducing poverty than other sectors, but only if done right.²

THE SOLUTION

Doing it right means investing in women smallholders. It means getting them the resources, support, and information necessary for them to make investments in their farms, businesses, families, and communities. A woman with access to land; support from the government, her family and community leaders; information from extension agents; and productive resources gets a big return. As a result, she is able to invest in her community, her children, her family's nutrition and the local economy. She is also able to participate in savings and insurance schemes that mitigate her family's and community's risk during bad harvests; severe weather conditions caused by climate change; conflict; or other risks.

“This is the first time my husband has given me land to farm my own crops. Over the years any time I asked for land he would tell me that the land is not even enough for him to share with me and that if I were such a great farmer I wouldn't have left my father's house to come and marry him. So I thank you people for changing the minds of our husbands.”

- Female Farmer in Ghana

Building on decades of success with community-led micro-savings and development, CARE's Pathways program introduced the Farmer Field Business School model (FFBS) in the six countries in which it was active reaching 65,000 women farmers. Now in 2017, the FFBS model has been taken up by 18 other CARE projects in multiple countries which reach a combined total of 175,000 farmers.

THE MODEL

CARE's FFBS is a participatory, women-focused extension approach that helps farmers build skills necessary to increase production; access markets and sell at competitive prices; collaborate with each other; and engage in beneficial and efficient decision making. It also transforms the status and recognition of women by providing the support they require to be successful farmers, business-people, leaders, and agents of change. Evidence shows that participation in the FFBS builds women's self-confidence and expands their autonomy; reduces gender-based violence; and engenders respect from their families and communities towards them.



CARE's FFBS is unique because it goes beyond working with just women farmers to convincing extension agents to work with women as well as men and persuading men together with leaders to work with women to improve women's



circumstances. Our advocacy builds on the evidence of our programs. With is knowledge we engage w with governments to facilitate policy changes that support smallholders, particularly women.

Key advantages of the FFBS model are:

- It provides a flexible model that can be tailored to a variety of different contexts and builds on local knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- It ensures comprehensive support to small scale farmers by providing training on farm production techniques; proper nutrition; gender equality; marketing; and business management.
- It uses gender dialogues to engage men and leaders who can facilitate the change required to assist women farmers and communities reach their full potential. This revolutionary approach can provide dramatic changes in gender equality in as little as 2 months.
- The training cycle integrates learning into the agricultural seasonal cycle ensuring that learning and



other activities are done without requiring additional time investments from women farmers. In two agricultural cycles, groups are ready to graduate from the program.

- It works with existing groups including VSLAs, producer groups, self-help groups that already have established social capital and governance mechanisms. It also focuses on the added value of the other Pathways components.
- It is based on adult learning principles that offer practical lessons through participatory approaches. Farmers can then translate this learning and adapt it into their own fields creating ownership and sustainability of adoption.



- Community-based participatory monitoring and evaluation are built into the FFBS model enabling farmers to track their own progress, costs, profits and losses. This information is then used to make decisions and develop action plans based on farmers' specific circumstances.
- CARE actively promotes the model amongst the private sector, governments, donors and other stakeholders in order to increase access to input and end markets; facilitate scalability of results; and expand the numbers of intended beneficiaries – farmers.
- The program integrates environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient techniques –such as water-smart agriculture – that help farmers cope with the increasingly uncertain weather and degrading natural resources.

THE RESULTS

Pathways has shown remarkable results. A recent study by the New Economics Foundation showed that CARE's FFBS model gives a \$31 return for every \$1 invested over just 3 years³, and those returns will keep growing. The returns vary by country, and ranges from a \$23 return in Mali—which faced armed conflict, displacement, and drought—to \$45 in Ghana. Costs for the model also varied, anywhere from \$10 – \$50 per farmer. The results impacted a range of the issues that contribute to small-scale farmers' challenges. 43% of benefits were in improved food security; 37% of benefits were in improvements in women's empowerment; and 13% of benefits were in improved livelihoods.

In less than 4 years, the farmers in Pathways were able to mobilize:

- 8,932 acres of new access to land for women's farming – 60% of Manhattan
- \$7,240,676 in income on agricultural yield increases and marketing techniques
- \$15,187,867 in savings through VSLAs; \$1,885,693 in loans through VSLA and an additional \$66,736 in loans from formal institutions
- 537,498 metric tons of increased agricultural production.
- Women in leadership positions increased from 20 – 60%, across Pathways countries.
- Adoption rates of improved agricultural techniques increased to 70 –90% depending on the practice and country.

THE SCALE

The pilot phase of Pathways reached 65,000 farmers and 325,000 people in 6 countries. Owing to the successful outcomes of the pilot, CARE sought to scale up the program. Currently, Pathways reaches 175,000 farmers worldwide. CARE is committed to ensuring efficiency and maximizing successful outcomes, to this end we are exploring potential partnerships with the goal of scaling the pathways program further. One of such partnerships is with an organization called Digital Green. With funding from USAID, CARE is partnering with Digital Green to

develop low-cost video versions of tools utilized in the Pathways program. The goal is to ensure the proliferation of these tools so as to positively impact millions of farmers rather than just hundreds of thousands. In line with this vision, CARE has increased staff capacity and is deepening engagement in advocacy, particularly at the national and regional level, to advance policies that facilitate the scaling of gender-transformative, nutrition-sensitive, and climate-resilient agriculture.



Government policies play a critical role in women's success by promoting the replication of successful approaches. The FFBS approach has been proven to assist governments in fixing gaps that exist in national extension systems. Pilot projects showed that access to quality extension services tripled over the three years of Pathways project implementation. Evidence from the program convinced governments to address the needs of women and small-scale farmers in national policies. An example of such accommodations is the inclusion of more women as community-based extension agents. Through policy advocacy Pathways is able to expand its impact and reach well beyond its target population to positively improve the lives of millions of people across the countries in which it works.

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VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Emily Makalipeni, 22 years old, CARE Farmer-to-Farmer

Emily was selected from more than 600 people in her village to teach modern agriculture practices to local farmers in order to help improve food availability in their community. Along with several other volunteers from neighboring communities, Emily attended CARE's Farmer-to-Farmer training course where she learned about agronomy, crop diseases and pests, new crops and modern agriculture techniques. Emily also received support to develop her communication and teaching skills so that she can confidently reach out to farmers and share her newfound knowledge.



Emily says "Being a Farmer-to-Farmer Trainer has helped me to become a well-regarded farmer in the area. People admire me. At such a young age I can produce so much." As a single mother, Emily has pressure from the community to marry and have more children. She says "I'll marry who I want, when I'm ready."

SOURCES

1. <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/52011/icode/>
2. Growth Commission. 2008. The Growth Report: Strategies for Sustained Growth and Inclusive Development. World Bank. Washington, DC.
3. Weatherhead, M., Mariam, S., Arnold, S., Freeman, A. (2016), "Social Cost Benefit Analysis of CARE International's Pathways Program." Report produced by NEF Consulting for CARE USA.

