



In 1991, CARE launched a transformative program in Niger that would change the world – at least parts of it. It harnessed the ancient practice of group savings in an innovative concept called Village Savings & Loan Associations. VSLAs offered women in particular a safe way to save money and access loans. No outside capital was needed – only a lockbox, three keys and some basic financial training. A quarter-century later, CARE VSLA members are doing the rest. Numbering more than 5 million strong across Africa and other parts of the globe, they are turning financial independence into better lives — for themselves, their families and their communities.

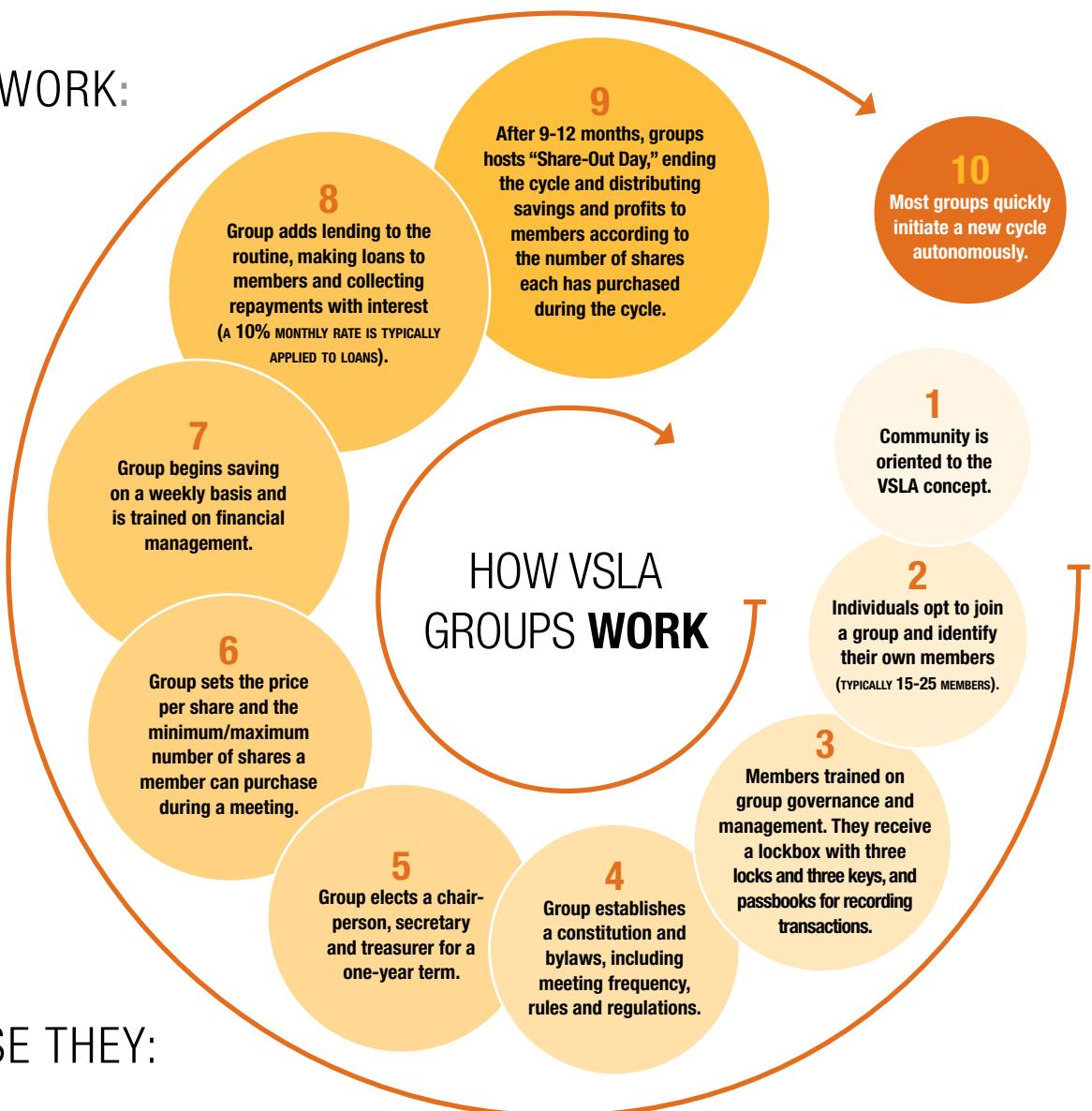


YEARS OF HELPING WOMEN
BE THEIR OWN BANKERS



WHERE CARE VSLA GROUPS WORK:

Afghanistan	Madagascar
Bangladesh	Malawi
Benin	Mali
Burundi	Morocco
Cambodia	Mozambique
Cameroon	Myanmar
Chad	Nepal
The Democratic Republic of the Congo	Niger
Cote d'Ivoire	Pakistan
Egypt	Rwanda
Ethiopia	Sierra Leone
Ghana	Somalia
Guatemala	Sudan
Guinea	Tanzania
Haiti	Uganda
Jordan	Vietnam
Kenya	Zambia
	Zimbabwe



CARE VSLAs WORK BECAUSE THEY:



Are simple and easily adapted to many contexts.



Require no physical infrastructure and no outside investment.



Offer members transparency in all transactions.



Rely on group discipline and social ties to ensure funds are managed well.



Provide a low-risk opportunity for very poor households to improve their wellbeing.

200,000 CARE VSLA groups in **35** countries have mobilized **5 million** members, more than **70%** of them women. They generate more than **350 million** financial transactions a year, and create **millions of dollars** in annual savings.

Their loan repayment rate is **99%**

CHRONICLING CARE'S SAVINGS-LED MOVEMENT

1991

CARE pioneers the VSLA concept in Niger as a means of empowering women to pool their savings, then loan one another money to start small businesses or pay for important life expenses. Those original groups were called *Mata Masu Dubara*, "Women on the Move."

1993

VSLAs expand beyond Niger for the first time, into Mozambique. They have since spread to 26 countries in Africa and 9 countries beyond the continent. VSLAs were a key piece of CARE's program to help Haitians rebuild their country after the 2010 earthquake, for instance. And they have taken root in Afghanistan, where groups apply service fees instead of interest, which is forbidden under Islamic law.

1996

World Vision becomes the first peer organization to adopt CARE's VSLA model. Others followed suit. As a result, more than 10 million people are engaged in VSLAs and groups like them across Africa.

2009

Barclays, CARE and Plan International launch the first partnership between a global bank and nonprofit organizations dedicated to linking savings groups to formal financial services. VSLA success story Goretti Nyabenda of Burundi appears on the cover of the New York Times magazine with the headline "Why Women's Rights Are the Cause of Our Time."

2008

CARE launches Access Africa — a signature initiative focused on massively scaling VSLAs and access to a suite of financial services across the continent.

2007

CARE VSLA membership crosses the 1 million-person mark.

2001

CARE takes VSLA to East Africa, introducing it in Zanzibar and then mainland Tanzania before scaling across the region. The region today hosts more groups and members than any other.

2010

Niger's *Mata Masu Dubara* organizes a national convention in Niamey, Niger, where hundreds of VSLA members across the country gather to discuss how to better assert their political influence.

2011

CARE launches a first-of-its-kind partnership that uses mobile phone technology to link VSLA groups with formal banks.

2013

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton tours the Tanzanian neighborhood where the Banking on Change program was introduced as a joint effort among CARE, Plan and the Clinton Global Initiative.

2016

CARE and Visa pilot a mobile app allowing VSLA members to record financial transactions so they can establish a credit history and qualify for loans. CARE VSLAs surpass 5 million members.

2014

Existing networks of VSLAs expand in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak, as people see firsthand how savings groups become safety nets and critical information sources. CARE VSLAs surpass 4 million members.

1991

100
members

2007

1 million
members

2014

4 million
members

2016

5 million
members

VSLA MEMBERSHIP GROWTH CHART



Join the Movement

Designing the next generation of VSLA

There are 1.1 billion “unbanked” women in the world. And CARE’s experience has shown that those participating in VSLAs are more than ready for formal banking services. As VSLA groups mature, so grows their need for more diverse financial services like insurance and a more secure place to keep their savings and extra cash. Demand for larger and longer-term loans also increases, particularly at the beginning of a group’s cycle, when savings are minimal. To fill these gaps, VSLA groups increasingly need to link with formal banks. And CARE is making that happen. The payoffs can be significant. Once linked with a bank, group member savings increase between 40 percent and 100 percent, and the average profit per member doubles. It is through these linkages that CARE will map the next frontier of VSLAs. We can give you more than a billion reasons to join us.

Visit care.org to learn more about CARE’s efforts to economically empower women.



What can you do?

Invest in Change

\$25



supplies a VSLA start-up kit, including a savings lockbox and ledgers.

\$94



buys a bike so a CARE agent can travel among villages to train residents on the VSLA model.

\$2,000



funds the organization and training of one CARE Village Savings & Loan Association, which will financially empower marginalized women.

Donate today at gifts.care.org