

# Supporting Cotton Communities



## Cotton Pilot Programs Show Promising results



Building on more than 60 years of CARE’s and Cargill’s partnership, two Cargill-funded community development pilot programs were launched in Ivorian and Malian cotton-growing communities in September 2019. Within one year, these pilots exhibited promising results in fighting poverty by empowering women; increasing women’s access to and control of productive assets and markets; improving nutrition; increasing resilience and social protection; increasing access to water and education; multiplying impact; and combatting COVID-19.

In **Côte d'Ivoire** the **Supporting Cotton Communities Pilot Project** (April 2019 – August 2020) supported three cotton producing communities, focusing on sustainable development, implementing community action plans, promoting income diversification, combating child labor, and improving nutrition and sanitation. Some program activities were modified in response to COVID-19. The project directly reached 1,767 people<sup>1</sup> (853 women) and achieved the following results:

- Created three child protection forums in three different communities.
- Raised awareness among 164 people (85 women) about child labor, child protection issues, and the importance of sending children, especially young girls, to school.
- Secured birth certificates for 80 children (30 girls), allowing them to go to school and take exams.
- Built hydraulic pumps in three villages, providing 1,767 people access to drinking water. The project also installed three hydraulic water pumps.
- Established three community development committees, one in each village, that supported the development of community action plans to address key issues like access to water.
- Improved access to finance by establishing ten Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) with 255 members (205 women). To date, those members saved \$1,884 with \$805 distributed in loans. As a result, women from these groups report higher self-esteem and greater ability to participate in household financial decision-making. Some members are even using their savings and loans to diversity their agricultural production.
- Initiated income-generating activities in growing peppers, eggplant, okra, rice, maize, and livestock. The project also provided three women VSLA members with equipment for IGA chicken breeding farms.
- Supported the creation of business plans and the implementation of eight agricultural IGAs and five livestock IGAs.
- Established three level 1 literacy centers with 172 adult learners (100 women).
- Installed 100 traditional handwashing stations and provided training on COVID-19 prevention measures for 190 people (133 women) to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

1,767

People Reached Directly

853

Women Reached Directly

<sup>1</sup> Every community member was a direct beneficiary of community water pumps, so there aren't any indirect beneficiaries to avoid double counting.

In **Mali** the **Supporting Cotton Communities Project** addressed concerns about the need to strengthen education and community resilience by bolstering related issues such as infrastructure, access to water, access to finance, agriculture and nutrition in two southern Malian villages, Toukoro and Falani. As a result, the project reached 7,263 people in total, 4,418 people (2,273 women) directly and 2,845 (1,461 women) indirectly. At the end of the project cycle, the project successfully:

- Trained 2,153 farmers (869 women) to apply new sustainable agriculture production techniques such as aerial composting, land recovery, gardening and seed storage.
- Constructed three classrooms and two latrine blocks (each with three toilets) in Toukoro, helping to increase enrollment for the next school year while improving hygiene. The facilities also all have electricity from newly installed solar panels, allowing lighting of the schoolyard where students can learn or study at night.
- Built a water tower and two water points in Falani village – one in the schoolyard and the other in the middle of the village. The first dedicated system not only provides clean water but also saves women’s time in fetching water from traditional wells that were often unsafe and unreliable during the dry season. As a result, 1,606 people (829 women) now have greater access to water. Five additional villages also fetch water from these water points and tower.
- Improved access to finance by establishing six VSLAs with 163 women and six men. Those groups saved \$2,945.
- Supported 163 women and six men from six VSLAs with income-generating activities focused on selling cereal, shea butter and vegetables that help them pay for family expenses.
- In Toukoro, the women’s group movement made it possible to demand more pay for women’s work in the fields; women were paid \$8.66/day through paid collective work, allowing them to speed up the cotton harvest, get paid quickly and generate more resources for their families. This was negotiated due to the strong connection among the women of the village due to the revitalization of VSLA groups.
- Facilitated 12 educational sessions about the health benefits of each food group and household production of vegetables, fruits and plant leaves to improve the nutrition of children and pregnant women, which was within the government COVID-19 guidelines for gatherings. Some of these women have adopted exclusive breastfeeding as well as fortified porridge and the use of moringa in their diets as an outcome of the project nutrition sessions. 5,098 people were reached directly and indirectly as a result of CARE’s nutrition education.
- As a result of community discussions led by CARE, village leaders committed to increase girls’ education opportunities and allow girls to continue their studies without any risk of early or forced marriage.

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4,418

People Reached Directly

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2,273

Women Reached Directly

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2,845

People Reached Indirectly

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1,461

Women Reached Indirectly

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