



## **4.17 Farmer Field and Business School**

### **1. What, in brief, is the solution?**

The solution is called Farmers Field and Business School (FFBS); a participatory, women-focused training and extension approach that helps farmers build skills necessary to increase production, access markets and sell at competitive prices; collaborate with each other and other stakeholders; 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, businesspeople, leaders, and agents of change. It builds on the traditional Farmer Field School (FFS) approach, but integrates sustainable agriculture practices, market engagement, gender and equity, food and nutrition security, group empowerment, and participatory monitoring and evaluation. This integration strengthens results across the spectrum of food and nutrition security and gender equality.

### **2. What was/were the source(s) from which this solution emerged?**

The FFBS approach emerged as a solution to women's equitable participation in agriculture through equal access to productive resources including agriculture extension advisory and market services as an alternative to the conventional FFS<sup>1</sup> approach. It is designed to influence multiple levers of change (per CARE's Gender Equality Framework), like building agency (building consciousness, confidence, self-esteem, aspirations, knowledge, skills and capabilities), changing relations (the power relations through which people live their lives through intimate relations, social networks, group membership and activism, and citizen and market negotiations) and transforming structures (discriminatory social norms, customs, values and exclusionary practices (non-formal sphere) and laws, policies, procedures and services (formal sphere). FFBS was piloted in six countries (Mali, Malawi, Ghana, Tanzania, Bangladesh and India) and proved to be effective in helping women small-scale farmers improve their productivity, ensure their household's food and nutrition security, enhance their livelihoods and challenge and transform social and gender norm barriers.

### **3. What problem is it trying to address within food systems?**

As an integrated gender transformative extension advisory service approach, FFBS addresses problems related to access to productive resources, markets, nutrition, and gender relations. This is a flexible model that can be tailored to different contexts and age groups and builds on local knowledge, skills, and abilities to address among others: women's inequitable access to services in food systems; gender-based discrimination or the denial of women's rights, insecurity;<sup>2,3</sup> and discriminatory social and gender norms; women's time constraints, reduce duplication of efforts by different development actors by working with existing groups including VSLAs, producer groups, self-help groups that already have established social capital and governance mechanisms. FFBS uses adult learning principles to offer practical lessons even to those with limited literacy.

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<sup>1</sup> *The standard FFS approach is typically gender-light or neutral. It does not have an explicit outreach focus to female farmers, who are often underserved by extension, and it tends to focus primarily on teaching new and improved production techniques, with little attention to business skills or market-oriented production*

<sup>2</sup> *FAO (2019). State of Food Insecurity and Nutrition in the World.*

<sup>3</sup> *FAO (2011). The State of Food and Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development.*



#### 4. Why is addressing that problem important for achieving the goal of your working group?

Ensuring women's equitable engagement in food systems helps ensure women's right to food, water and nutrition security and brings about gender equality and a means to achieving food and nutrition security and alleviating poverty. Despite the significant role that women play in agriculture and the amount of time they spent on agricultural production; agriculture continues to be a male-dominated field with less value to women's contributions. As such, women are usually not the primary targets of extension services. In the 97 countries assessed by the FAO, female farmers only received 5% of all agricultural extension services. Worldwide, only 15% of those providing these services

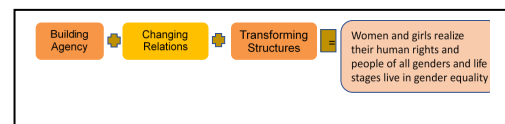
are women. Just 10% of total aid provided for agriculture, forestry and fishing goes to women<sup>4</sup>.

Women's limited access to extension services and its consequences needs to also be understood in economic terms. The reduced agricultural productivity of women due to gender-based inequalities in access to and control of productive and financial resources costs Uganda USD 67 million, Malawi USD 100 million, and Tanzania USD 105 million every year.

Closing the gender gap in agricultural production could lift as many as 119,000 people out of poverty in Uganda, 238,000 people out Malawi, and 80,000 people in Tanzania each year<sup>5</sup>. All these makes addressing gender inequality in food system not only important but also essential.

#### 5. How can this solution address that problem (theory of change)?

Foundationally, FFBS is predicated on CARE's Gender Equality Framework, driving change in three inter-related change domains of building agency, changing relations, and transforming structures. With intentional focus on women small-scale farmers, FFBS builds women's agency by imparting



knowledge and skill in improved agriculture, market, nutrition, communication, planning skills, equitable control over productive assets and income, and building their confidence and promoting positive images of women as farmers, entrepreneurs, and leaders. In addition, power relations in households, marketplaces, and collectives are questioned, challenged, and transformed to enable equitable workload-sharing and caregiving practices and encourage the engagement of male champions, change agents and collectives to challenge repressive gender and social norms. To create an enabling environment for women farmers, FFBS pushes to transform structures through demanding and promoting equitable land, property, resource laws and practices, making extension services and market structures responsive to women's needs and interests and transforming inequitable gender and social norms.

#### 6. Why does this solution align to the definition and criteria for a 'game changing solution' developed by the Summit?

The FFBS is a one stop platform to address extension, production, markets, gender, nutrition and monitoring and evaluation for small-scale producers, especially women and youth. It is effective in integrating these multiple components, with trainings tied to the seasonal cycle, ensuring that activities

<sup>4</sup> FAO (2012). *The Female Face of Farming: Access to Extension Services*. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/gender/resources/infographics/the-female-face-of-farming/en/> on 5/20/20

<sup>5</sup> UN Women and WB (2015). *The cost of the gender gap in agricultural productivity*. Retrieved from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/847131467987832287/pdf/100234-WP-PUBLIC-Box393225B-The-Cost-of-the-Gender-Gap-in-Agricultural-Productivity-in-Malawi-Tanzania-and-Uganda.pdf> on 5/20/20



are done in real time without requiring extra commitments from already time-constrained women farmers. It builds on existing groups such as VSLAs, producer groups, and self-help groups that already have established social capital and governance mechanisms, but also presents a great platform to develop constructive relationships between farmers, extension agents, researchers, markets and other stakeholders. When adapted to the youth, it is effective at mentoring champions (change leaders, agripreneurs, etc.) to challenge stereotypes of youth roles in the agriculture sector and encourage young women and men to reimagine their livelihoods in agriculture. It is low cost hence scalable even in resource constrained contexts. It promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in food consumption and production systems. It is implementable at a sufficient scale to reach a large portion of the population with low cost.

### 7. Existing evidence supporting the argument that this solution will work, or at least achieve the initial outcomes?

Evidences show that FFBS is resulting in improving not only crop yields and income for small-scale farmers especially, women farmers, but also is instrumental in enhancing women empowerment and nutrition for their households. Following results were recorded in CARE's Pathways, a multi-country program (in Bangladesh, India, Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana, and Mali) which implemented FFBS:

**Increase in the number of empowered women:** The number of empowered women according to CARE's women empowerment index – a variation of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index – more than doubled in Ghana and Tanzania. Similarly, women's empowerment scores increased an average of 14 points for Mali and Tanzania, and 6 points for India, Ghana, and Malawi.

**Increased yields:** Due to increased yields, farmers were able to produce an extra 537,498 metric tons of food than they would have had with traditional practices.

**Higher farm incomes:** Over the life of the project, income from farming went up between 40 and 165%. Women farmers were able to mobilize \$7,240,676 in income from improved yields and better marketing.

**Increased household nutrition:** In India and Malawi, there were significant increases in dietary diversity and women were also able to access more diverse diets within the family.

**Increase in Women's decision-making power:** Women's ability to influence household decisions about assets increased by about 25 percentage points—with the highest impact in Mali at 37 percentage points.

Another project in Burundi where CARE implemented FFBS indicates:

**Increase in the number of empowered women:** The proportion of women who were empowered rose to 68% from baseline to end-line.

**Increased yields:** Overall, the amount of rice produced increased by 74.7%.

**Higher wealth:** The households improved their wealth by 12.8 percentage points over the project period.

**Increased household nutrition:** Household dietary diversity score (HDDS) increased from 5.1 at the baseline to 5.4 at the end-line. Food diversity among women increased by 3%.

### 5. What is the current and/or likely political support for this idea?

The relationship between gender equality and women's empowerment, and food systems is now underscored by all the actors involved in food systems at local, regional, and global levels. The centrality



of women and youth as a game changing impact group for food systems if properly supported is now mainstream. Significant interest by actors involved in agricultural advisory and extension services (research institutes, universities, producers' organizations, NGOs and governments etc.) to take this and similar models to scale. The CFS-HLPE Report on Investing in smallholder agriculture (2013) and the related CFS recommendation provide background and guidance for country level policy. The ongoing CFS workstream on gender is the process leading policy convergence on women's empowerment in food systems. The forthcoming CFS-HLPE report "Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems" specifically addresses the importance of knowledge, training and education for youth and women.

**6. Are there certain contexts for which this solution is particularly well suited, or, not well-suited.**

FFBS provides a flexible model that can be tailored to a variety of different contexts and builds on local knowledge, skills, and abilities. It would be interesting to see how FFBS is applied in conflict settings.