



Scale X Design
Scale X Design
Accelerator Cohort
3

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Initiative and/or Program Name

"Digitizing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services within reach of women smallholder farmers"

Technical Sector

- ☐ Water
- ☒ Food Security
- ☐ Humanitarian
- ☐ Health
- ☒ Gender
- ☒ Agriculture
- ☒ Economic Development
- ☐ Capacity Building/Governance
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Dignified Work
- ☐ Social Enterprise
- ☐ Youth and Adolescence

Check this box if your application should NOT be entered in the Accelerator as a finalist.

No response

Check this box if your application is a social enterprise or consulting practice that does NOT fit within the Cohort 3 theme: Women's Economic Empowerment. Hidden

No response

Are you submitting your application in English?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

Problem Statement

Women small-scale farmers play a vital role in global food production, yet their contributions are largely invisible and unappreciated. While provision of agricultural extension services in developing economies remains low for both women and men, according to FAO only 5 per cent of all extension resources are directed at women. Moreover, only 15 per cent of the extension personnel are female, limiting women's participation in such services. Also, the way in which extension services are delivered can constrain women farmers in receiving information about crop choices, prices and marketing. Women tend to have lower levels of education than men, which may limit their active participation in training that uses a lot of written material. Time constraints and cultural reservations may hinder women from participating in extension activities, such as field days, outside their village or within mixed groups. Most extension workers reach out to men decision-makers in the homes, but who are not active growers, leaving out the real farmers: the women. Agricultural extension and advisory services (EAS) can therefore, be a powerful tool to help smallholders break the cycle of low productivity, vulnerability and poverty amongst women smallholder farmers. Hence providing farmers with knowledge and tools about modern agricultural practices is a critical force for improving livelihoods. Since 2013, CARE has worked together with national government, research partners, and communities to implement an integrated, women-focused, community-based extension model – the Farmer Field and Business School (FFBS). CARE's farmer field and business schools are a proven and effective way to invest in women farmers. This model integrates not only agriculture, but also gender, markets and nutrition – so that it addresses the holistic needs of smallholder families. To date, the FFBS model reaches 80,000 farmers, primarily women. Unlike traditional teaching methods, the FFBS model puts farmers in charge of testing approaches and building the skills they need to make the best investment decisions for their families. The strength of the model is that it integrates sustainable agriculture practices, market engagement, gender and equity, food and nutrition security, and group empowerment. As a result, farmers are able to link to markets, learn sustainable agricultural practices, find solutions to cope with climate change, improve family nutrition, and transform the gender inequality that prevents small-scale women farmers and their families from escaping poverty. The challenge is: how to reduce the costs and improve the replicability of the successful FFBS extension model, without compromising the quality or integrity of the design – so that government can easily replicate the approach to new communities and trainers? Digitalization of the FFBS Training package for the Community Based Trainers such as Farmer to Farmer Trainers (FFT) is very key in reducing these challenges.

a) Explain how your initiative solves the problem. What evidence exists to prove your initiative solves the problem?

CARE's Pathways Program in Malawi was designed to contribute to alleviating these challenges and works with 16,000 poor rural women farmers and more than 80,000 members of their families. The project has seen significant improvements in adoption of agricultural techniques; increases in savings; access to markets and income diversification. For instance, while farmers across Malawi were experiencing 30-50% drops in yields, CARE Pathways farmers either maintained or increased yields, and were 31% more likely to use savings to deal with the shocks and 2.6x more likely to be using drought tolerant crops. Household incomes went up by 76%, from \$11.40 at baseline to \$20.08 per month at end line in 2016 and households were able to spend 38% more every month. Women's average annual net income from agriculture increased by 53% and their control over income and expenditure decisions also improved. More harmonious relations in the home were reported by both men and women; gender-based violence decreased in part due to men's participation in the program from early on in the program cycle. Women's access to extension services improved from 29% to 82% while their access to output markets rose to 63%. Formal purchase agreements were established between FFBS producer associations and major buyers. Savings invested in the VSLA groups rose more than 166%; 243 groups and 1,344 individuals were linked to formal banks; household dietary diversity scores rose 13%, and women's by 9%.

Since 2017, Malawi has experimented with creating a digital version of the toolkit, producing 8 modules for each of the key domains of the FFBS.

In addition, Malawi has created a digital monitoring tool (E-PPT), which allows groups to monitor the uptake of their practices and send the data to a central database, allowing supervisors to quickly ascertain which practices and groups are lagging, and to tailor support to those groups.

The 2017 Malawi Forum for Agricultural Advisory Service Annual extension week had ICT for extension as its main theme. At the forum, CARE showcased the digitized FFBS Training modules demonstrating use of videos as a mechanism to delivery of agriculture extension and this was done through a presentation and a pavilion. Different stakeholders participating in the events visited the pavilion and appreciated the CARE approach.

Current observations show that, compared to the "standard" FFBS toolkit, the Digital Video version is attracting more farmer participants (particularly to the Gender sessions), creating more demand for the services, and making it easier for CBTs to facilitate some of the sessions

The government of Malawi has expressed interest and demand for this approach. In 2 Districts, the Government of Malawi will be replicating the FFBS without CARE direct support. Scaling up the Digitization of the toolkit and adding a Standardized FFBS Orientation Training on the approach will enable government and other NGO partners to adopt and replicate the toolkit. Currently, one District Agriculture Office of Kasungu has already started using the Agriculture production practices video in its trainings with communities in their Projects.

b) How does the initiative apply the CARE approach? (Increased Resilience, Promoting Inclusive Governance and Gender Equality and Women's Voice – The initiative does not have to apply all four to qualify)

No response

b) b) How does the initiative apply the Women's Economic Impact Strategy?

The initiative aligns with the CARE's women economic empowerment strategy as the model builds women's capacity and agency, confidence for them to have choice to identify, pursue and achieve their own/collective economic aspirations. Integration of gender and other interventions helps the women to participate in different activities including those that are dominated by men and enable them to influence and make economic decisions. Women participation in different activities helps the women to be exposed to different types of training to build their capacity and confidence to voice out on matters that concern them. The gender piece integrated in the model helps to sensitize, inform, influence and transform community structures and institutions (formal and informal) to enable women have equal access and control over economic resources and opportunities like access to markets and formal finance institutions services. As indicated above the model is in line with SUPER approach that promote integration of interventions to increased impact, bring lasting change and sustainability.

c) Why is your initiative better than what's been done before or by others?

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a) Describe how this initiative could further impact 1million+ people by 2020? How can this be taken to scale, either at the national or international level?

Drawing from the learning, experiences and impacts on evidence generated from Pathways Phase 1, CARE Malawi has learnt that improving women access to resources (land, water, finance and agri-inputs); improving women capacities (in sustainable agriculture and community-based adaptation, gender equality and women's empowerment, group empowerment, market engagement, participatory monitoring and evaluation, nutrition sensitive agriculture) and improving women access to markets (through inclusive value chains promotion); results into gender transformative agriculture, markets and nutrition systems. In order to scale up and multiply its impact to more beneficiaries, the scaling up phase, CARE Malawi therefore, intends to scale up the program through;

(a) Advocacy and Partnering with Malawi Government's Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Water Department through the Department of Agriculture and Extension Service (DAES). This will focus on (a) Promoting replication of the Farmer Field and Business School (FFBS) as a successful means to Improving Women Capacities while catalysing improvement in women access to resources and improving women access to markets. The Program will also work in partnership with the Private Sector in promotion of increased access to input and output markets and value chain development.

(b) Working with academic and research institutions such as Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and the Department of Agriculture and Research Services (DARS) etc., the program will promote and scale up evidence based Research and Innovation pieces that will come through interventions in new technologies and practices such as labour-saving technologies and sustainable Water Smart Agriculture practices. This will facilitate continual learning for influencing, ensuring deliberate generation of evidence and learning across the Malawi's Food and Nutrition Security portfolio and with other stakeholders. Scaling up will be through the Program's Engagement with other stakeholders in Department of Agriculture and Extension Service (DAES) and networks such as Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) and Malawi Forum for Agriculture Advisory Services (MaFAAS) will facilitate knowledge sharing and influencing uptake of researched technologies and practices.

b) Who will pay for taking this initiative to scale? (i.e. what is the funding model? Will government adopt the innovation? Will the initiative be scaled through market-based approaches? Will it be supported through traditional philanthropy or replicated by other NGOs?)

The initiative is building on the investment the CARE's Developing Local Extension Capacity's (DLEC) Feed the Future project initiated. The Pathways Project funding would enable further production of videos on the FFBS approach and training modules on Agriculture production practices, gender equity, market engagement and nutrition practice. These are based on trainings with communities.

The Pathways funding will also facilitate video dissemination, monitoring and evaluation on the adoption of practices between the treatment and control groups and consolidating the learning for influence, Influencing the extension and advisory services through MAFAAS and District level participation and engagement in networks.

On a longer sustainable term, the intervention is designed to work together with Government to create a standardized, digital training program of the FFBS, which can be integrated into foundation training for Ag- Extension Advisors -

c) Based on your experience so far, what is the major obstacle or challenge you feel CARE faces in taking this initiative to scale?

The basic challenge will be procurement of the basic equipment called Pico Projectors which have to be imported and the funding to training further Government and Community Facilitators in video production, video dissemination, monitoring and evaluation on the adoption of the initiative.

a) What is evidence or the analysis that proves there is demand or interest for this initiative? (i.e. is there interest from the government? Are stakeholders such as partners or communities interested in scaling? Have donors or investors shown interest?)

CARE recently facilitated meetings with stakeholders to create awareness of the Digitized FFBS Training package approach to extension and advisory service and to also discuss possible areas of collaboration in scaling up the FFBS through Government and other partners. This meeting was held with some strategic partners which included US Mission, MAFAAS secretariat, SANE Project and the Department of, Agriculture Extension Service. The Major output was the recommendation by the US Mission representative that CARE should work with other USAID funded programs such as SANE to support scaling up efforts by CARE. In addition, MAFAAS secretariat also recommended that CARE should chair the Annual MAFAAS ICT for extension week so that the Digitized FFBS Training modules should be showcased to other stakeholders including community participants and other donors. As for the Department of Agriculture and Extension Services (DAES), they immediately requested for partnership with CARE in PHASE 2 of scaling up the Pathways Project. And therefore, following this discussion, DAES has been in the forefront in the design of the CARE Malawi Pathways project starting with facilitating the Theory of Change.

In the recently approved Food and Nutrition Security Project, the Project will also make use of ICT to improve the delivery of the Care Group curriculum at household level and coupled with specific interventions to enhance male involvement as described above. The Project will pilot digitized community video delivery of the Care Group curriculum to test effectiveness in ensuring the fidelity and quality of messaging to the household level.