



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Investing in rural people



World Food
Programme

Gender transformative approaches for food security and nutrition



GOOD PRACTICE

Farmers' Field and Business Schools

PREPARED BY

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SECTION 1

OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

Name of the methodology**Farmers' Field and Business Schools (FFBS)****Countries with implementation experience**

- **East and Southern Africa:** Ethiopia, Malawi, United Republic of Tanzania
- **West Africa:** Ghana, Mali
- **Asia:** Bangladesh, India

Start/end date

1 November 2011 – 31 December 2018

Lead organization sponsoring the development and implementation of the methodology

- CARE USA together with CARE International in various countries
- Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Margaret Ann Cargill Foundation (Ghana, Malawi and Mali only) and some individual givers

Purpose of the methodology and the domains of gender inequality that are addressed

The FFBS integrated gender transformative capacity building model for food and nutrition security involves building agency, transforming structures and changing relations in accordance with CARE's Gender Equality and Women's Voice Framework. It focuses on five domains:

- increased capacity and skills;
- expanded access to services, assets and inputs;
- increased productivity, profitability and nutrition;
- increased influence of women over household decisions, assets and incomes; and
- an environment that is better able to foster gender equity, both within communities and in extension and market systems.

The FFBS approach can be packaged into a comprehensive programme, such as Pathways, that has components dealing with agriculture, markets, nutrition, women's empowerment, and participatory monitoring and evaluation. However, it is flexible and can include other innovative elements depending on the context and challenges.

The integration of these components into the agricultural seasonal cycle is a key feature of the FFBS. This integration ensures that knowledge skills and practices of women farmers can be built upon when relevant and in a timely manner.

Contribution of the methodology to wider development/organizational/project goals

The FFBS is CARE's flagship implementation model for women's empowerment, agriculture, food security and climate. It has been implemented by CARE at the community level. So far, over 30 CARE projects in 16 countries (including both Pathways and non-Pathways countries) have implemented parts of, or the full, FFBS as a model. These projects, which have a value of USD 450 million, have reached 9 million beneficiaries in over 10 000 communities.

The FFBS model is the foundation of CARE's new programmatic framework for food and nutrition security, 'She Feeds the World', which provides programming guidance on food and water systems across the CARE International Confederation.

Target group

The selection of the target group should include a set of key socio-demographic characteristics that best define various types of rural smallholder households. Combinations of these characteristics are important determinants in the paths that different types of households take toward more secure and resilient livelihoods.

A FFBS group comprises about 100 farmers, of whom 75-85% are women; however, not all groups include men.

Some characteristics of a typical woman smallholder and her household for direct engagement could include:

- an income of less than USD 2 per day per capita;
- food shortages for part of the year;
- little, no or marginal land for cultivation;
- current production goals that are mainly for consumption, with small amounts being sold commercially;
- little or no control and influence by women over income and farming decisions; and
- significant agricultural labour constraints (often women-headed households).

SECTION 2

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Key entry points for applying the methodology

The FFBS draws its members from pre-existing groups, such as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), self-help groups, producer groups and peer groups. Farmers (mostly women) cultivating similar crops or engaged in a particular value chain are brought together to form a FFBS. Members of a FFBS could come from more than one VSLA, self-help group or producer group.

As the custodians of traditions, community leaders (e.g. traditional chiefs, religious leaders) play a key role as focal points for discussions on social norms. Male role models and change champions are also critical for the FFBS components that engage men.

Local administration (district assemblies, frontline extension agents and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also provide important entry points based on their knowledge of the local context and norms.

Implementing partners

Partners that FFBS could engage with include:

- national government departments (e.g. Ministries of Agriculture and Food Security, Gender, Health) for providing technical expertise and scaling up of FFBS;
- local governments (e.g. district assemblies, state governments) where FFBS is being implemented for providing both technical expertise and taking FFBS to other areas outside the project;
- local NGOs for implementing FFBS in the communities;
- research partners (e.g. national agricultural research organizations) for generating and providing research-based evidence for the better implementation and scaling up of FFBS; and
- other organizations (e.g. UNICEF, Terre des Hommes and the Initiative for Food Security and Nutrition in Segou in Mali) for providing technical expertise on nutrition.

Process of and criteria for selecting facilitators/champions/mentors

Facilitators are selected at two levels: for the FFBS and for the village/community. Each FFBS selects its own leader who is a farmer-to-farmer trainer and who facilitates processes for experimenting, learning and adapting for the FFBS members. At the village/community level, community-based trainers (CBTs) are selected by community members who work with the FFBS and community leaders. A CBT supports more than one FFBS. The criteria for selection of these facilitators include:

- leadership (in some cases quotas were set for women, for example in market research committees where 85% of the leadership consisted of women);
- willingness to host learning sessions on their farms;
- ability and willingness to attend trainings and impart lessons to team members/farmers;
- literacy and/or numeracy in local language; and
- a commitment to displaying gender positive behaviour and becoming a role model and change agent for the community.

Training of facilitators/champions/mentors

Training is provided for CBTs, the staff of the various ministries as needed, and the CARE staff on the FFBS by a team of technical area thematic experts.

The areas covered (as detailed in the FFBS toolkit) are: community mobilization and facilitation skills; sustainable agriculture; market engagement and business skills; nutrition education; gender equality, women's empowerment and men's engagement through gender dialogues; and participatory monitoring and evaluation using the participatory performance tracker.

The trainings are done intensely at project inception and cover all the themes and topics. Afterward, they are done every season when needed and developed with the community once a year in accordance with the FFBS calendar. Special trainings are also held as needed (e.g. during a pest outbreak), or on topics, such as gender-based violence (GBV) and child marriage.

SECTION 3

IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE

Key steps in the implementation cycle

A key feature of the FFBS is that it follows the agricultural seasonal cycle of a particular crop and integrates all the themes to create a FFBS calendar. It may or may not include other crops. This ensures that the trainings are held when needed and that they respect time and labour issues. This also facilitate greater participation of both men and women farmers. The generic steps that apply to any value chain are listed below.

— Step 1: Laying the foundations

- Training CARE staff and partners in facilitation skills and programme approaches
- Group formation and site selection: FFBS brings together farmers cultivating a particular crop
- Training of CBTs after their selection by community with the topics covering: principles of adult learning, qualities and tools of a good facilitator, unpacking the exercises, giving and receiving feedback
- Community visioning to outline aspirations and create project awareness and expectations
- Preparation of seasonal plans and budgets, and preparation of FFBS calendars with CBTs and communities
- Creation of partnerships for production and markets activities

— Step 2: Establishment and running of FFBS

Sessions are conducted in line with the seasonal calendar, and their order is not necessarily fixed. For example, the production/yield estimation is undertaken around two months before the rainfall season begins to facilitate linkages to markets, land allocation and inputs acquisition.

- Sustainable agriculture: selection and set up of demonstration plots; germination tests; manure preparation; soil, water, pest, disease and weed management; harvest and post-harvest management; evaluation of FFBS plots; farmer field days
- Marketing: introduction to marketing concepts, selecting a market research committee, production estimation and determining profitability, conducting market surveys, selection of best products and outlets, designing a business plan, conducting a gendered value chain analysis and marketing as a group
- Gender dialogues: introducing partners/spouses of women farmers to the programme (this ended up being a key success factor for uptake) specifically to attend gender dialogue sessions that cover land and input access, nutrition decision making, workload sharing, income control and role models for men; the daily clock, harmony in the home, interpersonal relations, household decision making, learning to listen; and envisioning empowerment through drawings
- Nutrition: understanding undernutrition using problem trees, food groups and the 'healthy plate' that provides a balanced diet containing all the food groups in the recommended proportions; growing nutritious foods/planning a home garden; cooking demonstrations; and exclusive breastfeeding
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning: participatory performance tracking for self and group assessment, gender dialogue monitoring tools, end of season reflection, focus group discussions

- **Step 3: Field and special topic days**
 - Demonstrate improved agricultural practices to the rest of the community
 - Deliver specific training modules around a number of key issues, including workload burden and time, access and control and use of resources, and GBV
 - Hold gender dialogues on special topics, such as GBV or child marriage
 - These sessions are open to FFBS members, their spouses and entire community
- **Step 4: FFBS graduation**
 - Held at the end of three or four years, based on the collective readiness assessment and the group participatory performance tracker data. At this point, the groups can make both inward and outward linkages related to information, inputs and services.

Average length of the implementation cycle

- Three to five years with at least a half of the groups graduating in year four.

Graduation from the methodology

Graduation out of the FFBS is based on a group's readiness assessment tool that evaluates their governance practices, their ability to independently manage their activities and access extension services, inputs, finances and output markets. They continue to function as producer groups or VSLAs.

The project continues to train and monitor groups that have not graduated to address technical challenges and provide support.

SECTION 4

MONITORING

Monitoring system

- **Internal by participants**
 - The participatory performance tracker tool is applied by FFBS semi-annually to collect data on individual farmer's adoption of practices in all domains (agriculture, markets, gender and nutrition) and group performance data on governance, access to services and inputs and record keeping. The two sets of data provide a group composite score that is used for group evaluation of group maturity.
 - As part of the qualitative review, participants (women, male group members/spouses, community leaders, polygamous and monogamous male-headed households, female-headed households, role model men and non-project men) are involved in developing and monitoring progress markers and outcome challenges for observable gender behaviour changes.
- **External at the programme level**
 - Baseline and endline surveys are used to measure access to services, yields, income, and savings along with household dietary diversity surveys, the Coping Strategies Index, and CARE's Women's Empowerment Index.
 - Qualitative mid-term review is undertaken to review empowerment objectives and 'ground-truth' and contextualize definitions and meanings of key terms by communities. The outcome mapping method is used to measure, monitor, and encourage processes of gender-related behaviour change among men and women based on their own definitions of empowerment. This process led to the development of a gender indicator framework that is used to measure change qualitatively and is now routinely used in other programmes as good practice.
 - Annual review studies, which involve a cohort of households in each country and use key indicators from the baseline covering one woman and man from the household, tell the impact story of key participating households and generate an overall snapshot of programme progress toward target outcomes every 12 months.

Indicators

— Quantitative

The following data are collected at household level from farmers participating in FFBS.

- Percentage change in net income generated by women smallholders
- Percentage change in yield per unit area by sex of household head
- Percentage women reporting change in control over or ownership over a core set of productive resources and assets (land, inputs, water and tools)
- Percentage change in women farmers' access to a core set of agricultural services (extension, information, finance)

— Outcome level

- Food and nutrition security: percentage change in dietary diversity scores
- Economic poverty reduction: percentage change in household income
- Livelihoods Resilience: Coping Strategies Index score
- Women's empowerment: percentage change on the Women's Empowerment Index; the SDE score on the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)

— Qualitative (community level)

- Household decision-making processes
- Women's own definitions of empowerment
- Men's engagement in the programme and personal changes
- Community leaders' views and practices

SECTION 5

BUDGET

Main items of expenditure

- Staffing costs (e.g. personnel, travel, communication, equipment)
- Field facilitation (e.g. setting up and maintaining agricultural demonstration plots, holding nutrition and gender dialogues, organizing participatory performance tracking sessions, monitoring activities and holding formal training sessions)

Total budget

Not available

SECTION 6

RESULTS

Number of beneficiaries reached

The FFBS programme directly reached 52 126 poor women smallholder farmers; 50 290 men and boys (spouses, household members); and 2 055 elites, including traditional leaders. The women were members of 3 619 pre-existing groups that CARE had helped to strengthen in previous years through the VSLAs.

Main changes attributed to the methodology

- **Gender-related changes** achieved under the CARE Pathways programme through the FFBS model
 - Increase in the number of empowered women: The number of empowered women, according to CARE's Women Empowerment Index (a variation of WEAI) more than doubled in Ghana and the United Republic of Tanzania.
 - Increase in women's decision-making power over assets
 - More women leaders and more women felt confident in their ability to speak out
 - Changing attitudes about gender equality in family life: Pathways' interventions changed women's perceptions about gender issues in their homes and communities. Although patriarchal attitudes about family life and the distinct roles of men and women in the household still persist

in communities, participants revealed during focus group discussions that gender relations have improved over the project period, enhancing harmony in household relationships.

- Women in positions of power: In Ghana, with support from the Pathways programme, 18 women successfully ran for seats in local government bodies. Engagement with district assemblies influenced change in the way the assemblies operate: the District Assembly in Ghana now has women members in the finance and works committees, which were initially dominated by men. Additionally, there are now five more female district representatives (up from one in 2013). Women representatives now constitute 13% of the District Assembly.
- Changing government policies: In Ghana, 12 communities have written by-laws that address a range of gender-related issues, such as protection from domestic violence and women and girls' rights to land. In Mali, the government passed a law in 2015 that set a quota for a minimum of 30% women's representation in all government bodies.
- Increased access of women to fertile land
- Reduced acceptance of GBV

— Other changes

- High return on investment: The Social Cost Benefit Analysis of the programme conducted externally in 2016 showed that Pathways had a USD 31 return for every USD 1 invested. This was split between women's empowerment, improved food security, and higher incomes, with 25% of the impact coming from spillover into the communities from Pathways farmers.
- Higher farm incomes
- Improved access to finances: Pathways participants in all locations cited VSLAs as the most impactful intervention. Many noted that access to credit was the best outcome from the project.
- Increased quality and quantity of food: This change can lead to increases in dietary diversity and women are able to access more diverse diets within the family.
- Improved resilience: Even in an El Niño year in 2015, with critical droughts, cyclones and flooding in many of the implementing countries, agricultural production increased by as much as 56% for some crops. In places where national yields dropped by 30 to 50% (e.g. Malawi), yields for Pathways farmers typically remained constant or increased.

Key success factors and strengths of the methodology

- Engaging with the government and traditional leaders helped the project advance its goal of women's empowerment. Government engagement enabled the passing of voting acts to improve women's access to land, and the traditional leaders helped to change social norms.
- Having a master calendar helps set project expectations, supports staff in overcoming their technical biases and increases community ownership of the process and outcomes.
- Standardized tools simplify things so that 'everyone' can use it, including community-based extension agents who have between 8 to 12 years of education, and improve CARE's ability to monitor effectiveness and quality.
- Demonstration plots and discussions on social topics engage the entire community, while dialogue sessions on gender and nutrition contribute to positive changes in relationships at the household level.
- Involving spouses early in the process has been a key success factor of the FFBS approach.
- The commitment of community leaders is crucial to the promotion of sustainable behaviour change.

Challenges and measures to overcome them

- Motivating and incentivizing CBTs was a major hurdle to sustainability, as they spend much of their time working for their communities on a voluntary basis.
 - Registering them with the government services provided CBTs with recognition as a village/ community-level service provider. They became the entry point for government and NGO-run projects to work with farmers.
 - They were also trained to be service providers (e.g. agri-kiosk owners) and earned an income from sales while providing information.
- Securing ownership titles for plots allocated to women remains a key challenge.

- The project works with community and religious leaders and the community as a whole to change this situation.
- High interest for loans from financial institutions limited women’s access to loans and thereby limited their income from agriculture.
- Social pressure on men influences whether they change their behaviour towards women in some villages.
 - Establishing networks for male/gender champions addressed this issue to certain extent.

Potential for upscaling

— Potential improvements

- Working with government departments to mainstream and incentivise CBTs much earlier in the FFBS cycle rather than at the end of the programme
- Stronger focus on business skills, livestock management and climate change resilience (a version of the manual that takes this into consideration is under preparation)
- Collaborating across sectors for integrated and efficient service delivery on important matters, such as the intersection between water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and nutrition, as well as and sexual rights and reproductive rights
- Mainstream ‘staff transformation’ and capacity using CARE’s Social Analysis and Action (SAA) approach
- Mainstream the gender indicator framework and measurement of gender behaviour change at the individual and community level
- Mainstream social consciousness and linkages to social movements for gender behaviour change

— Adaptation

- The model can be, and has been, adapted to local languages and French, and to include a focus on livestock, climate change and additional business skills development
- The digitization of the toolkits and manuals is already underway (e.g. Talking Book and videos to address extension gaps and pass on difficult messages)
- Mainstreaming GBV into the toolkit can prevent, capture and measure GBV

Potential for replication

— Key enablers

- Adaptability of the model to value chains, communities and other local contexts
- Working through existing groups, and presence of a large network of CARE’s flagship of VSLAs as a programming platform
- Presence of a comprehensive process-oriented toolkit that is adaptable
- Ability to digitize the model into low-tech options (e.g. the Talking Book)
- Interest in uptake by government departments as a viable extension model is the key to replication

Sustainability of the methodology once project/external input is complete

- Farmers indicated during the endline study “that the CBTs reside within our communities, thus making it easy for us to call on them for assistance any time.” The CBTs are employable beyond the project, especially those who have been educated to senior secondary school level. “The extra skills they develop through the FFBS provide them with experience to seek similar employment with other NGOs operating in the area or to find other more formalized employment.”
- Uptake within the government departments is another pillar of sustainability. In Ghana, the 341 trained CBTs have formed a network connected to various district departments of agriculture. Through this network, they established a forum to continuously interact, learn and offer support to each other in the absence of an external facilitator. In Malawi, government staff and the Ministry of Agriculture use the FFBS toolkit, videos and demonstration plots for training, field days and agricultural shows. In Malawi, CBTs who were also agro-dealers were registered with Ministry of Trade and Industry to ensure that they were connected to the national network for agro-dealers and were recognized by the association as seed traders.
- Building the capacity and confidence of women in leadership in formal and informal structures, where they will continue to champion rights of smallholder farmers is critical.

- Investment by private sector partners into the model is critical for reaching scale and influencing their practices around the engagement of women.
- Uptake by development partners (e.g. the USAID-funded Food for Peace Harande programme in Mali) was based fully on the FFBS model and reached approximately 310 885 households.
- Linking to social movements such as the Network of Women's Rights (NETWRIGHT) in Ghana and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) will be crucial for addressing GBV and women's land rights.

SECTION 7

RESOURCES

Publications

- The FFBS Toolkit
<https://www.care.org/work/world-hunger/agriculture/models/farmers-field-and-business-school-toolkit>
- CARE (2018) *Social Analysis and Action (SAA) in Food and Nutrition Security Programming*
https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/images/in-practice/Gender-in-the-workplace/SAA-GlobalImplementationManual_FINAL.English.rights-reserved_2018.pdf
- New Economics Foundation (2016) *Social Cost Benefit Analysis of CARE International's Pathways Program*. Prepared by M. Weatherhead, S. Mariam, S. Arnold, S. and A. Freeman,
https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/nef_social_cost_benefit_analysis_of_pathways.pdf

Cover photo: Henry Kazisonga from Kamwana village TA Dzoole in Dowa District – taking care of a baby whilst the woman cooks

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This good practice is part of the publication '*Gender transformative approaches for food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture – A compendium of fifteen good practices*' prepared in the framework of the *Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture (JP GTA)*. The Joint Programme is implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme and funded by the European Union.



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