

Connecting smallholder root and tuber growers to markets through
Farmer Business Schools







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International Potato Center

Av. La Molina 1895, La Molina, Peru

Apartado 1558, Lima 12, Peru

cip@cgiar.org

www.cipotato.org

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Production coordinators:

Diego Naziri and Camille Joy Enalbes

Design and layout:

José Enrique Torres,

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About FoodSTART+

Food Resilience Through Root and Tuber Crops in Upland and Coastal Communities of the Asia-Pacific (FoodSTART+) is a project (2015-2019) that built on and expanded the scope of the IFAD-supported Food Security Through Asian Root and Tuber Crops (FoodSTART) project. It was coordinated by the International Potato Center (CIP) and implemented in collaboration with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in Asia as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB). It was funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the European Union (EU).

The project aimed to enhance food resilience among poor households in upland and coastal communities of the Asia-Pacific region through introducing root and tuber crop innovations. To achieve this goal at scale, the project developed, validated and implemented effective partnership strategies with IFAD investment projects to promote root and tuber crops for food security.

FoodSTART+ was implemented in partnership with Livelihoods and Access to Markets Project (Megha-LAMP), India; Smallholder Livelihood Development Project (SOLID), Indonesia; Fisheries, Coastal Resources and Livelihood Project (FishCORAL) and Integrated Natural Resources and Environmental Management Project (INREMP), Philippines; and Sustainable Rural Development for the Poor Project (SRDP), Vietnam.

The project's key components were:

1. Project start-up and scoping studies, including mapping on food vulnerability of root and tuber crop farmers;
2. Research for development (R4D) partnership development;
3. Analysis of the needs and opportunities in gender-sensitive root and tuber crop innovations;
4. R4D action planning and launching; and
5. Documentation and knowledge product development.

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FoodSTART+ partners

Meghalaya Livelihoods and Access to Markets Project (Megha-LAMP), implemented by Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA), India

Integrated Natural Resources and Environmental Management Project (INREMP), implemented by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Philippines

Fisheries, Coastal Resources and Livelihood (FishCORAL) project, implemented by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Department of Agriculture (DA-BFAR), Philippines

Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARMP2), implemented by the Department of Agriculture (DA), Philippines

Resource Persons

Diego Naziri, CIP

Camille Joy Enalbes, CIP

Willy Pradel, CIP

Arma Bertuso, CIP

Johanna San Pedro, DENR, Philippines

Ma Lorena Castino, DENR, Philippines

Rhine Joy Lesigues, DA-BFAR, Philippines

Raymundo dela Cruz, Jr., DA-BFAR, Philippines

Leonora Verzola, DA, Philippines

Cameron Odsey, DA, Philippines

Bashisha Kharchandy, MBDA, India

Evangel Shanpru, MBDA, India

Photos

Sara Andrea Fajardo, CIP

Camille Joy Enalbes, CIP

Leo Abuda, DA-BFAR, Philippines

Shayne Marie Araullo, DA-BFAR, Philippines

Therese Relma Teruel, DENR, Philippines

Richie Tabat, DENR, Philippines

Ebor Tariang, MBDA, India

Preface by FoodSTART+

Hundreds of millions of people living in poverty in developing countries depend on root and tuber crops such as potatoes, sweetpotatoes and cassava for food and income, particularly in Africa, Asia and the Americas. These crops are second only in importance to cereals as a global source of carbohydrates and are also rich in some minerals and essential vitamins, thus contributing significantly to food and nutrition security. Furthermore, many roots and tubers can be grown with few inputs, often under harsh conditions, and can cope well with both the long-term effects of climate change and increasingly frequent climate-related extreme weather events. Despite these advantages, root and tuber crops receive relatively little attention from research and development practitioners, and are often overlooked in policy deliberations. As a result, the potential of these crops to improve food security, nutrition, income and climate change resilience of smallholders, especially women and youth, remains largely untapped.

The 'Food Resilience Through Asian Roots and Tubers Crops in Upland and Coastal Communities of the Asia-Pacific' (FoodSTART+), a project implemented by the International Potato Center (CIP) with financial support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the European Union, has taken up this challenge by identifying and introducing root and tuber crop innovations in the framework of large-scale IFAD investment projects implemented in the Asia-Pacific region.

One of the key innovations introduced by FoodSTART+ is the Farmer Business School, an approach to promote farmers' entrepreneurship, stimulate value addition to roots and tubers, and allow participation of smallholders in more profitable value chains. We are pleased to hear that the approach has been highly appreciated by our partner national agencies to the point of being sometimes scaled out and up beyond original targets and institutionalized within their programs. It is also interesting and rewarding to hear the voices of the rural people who have been directly involved and benefited from the schools.

This book features a collection of stories of 24 women and men who participated in Farmer Business Schools in the Philippines and India, and of project staff of partner organizations who have facilitated the process. Since innovations are inherently linked to change in practices and lives, the stories were collected using the 'most significant change' (MSC) approach as a technique for capturing project outcomes. MSC is a qualitative evaluation tool based on community members' response to a simple question: What do you think was the most significant change in your life brought about by this initiative? This encourages community members to tell the story of how their lives are now different and what part of that difference they value the most. The stories are inspiring. They bring insights on how change has come into their lives as a result of joining the school. From gaining self-confidence, higher incomes, to peace of mind --- the stories describe the struggles of peoples in remote mountainous and coastal areas to improve their quality of life. The most significant changes they experience may not be what the project intended, but they are the changes that left their mark on the storytellers' lives. These are their stories and they are the ones to tell them.

There are limitations to MSC as a tool to capture project outcomes. However, here it complements other tools by bringing out the project beneficiaries' perspectives and provides real and relatable faces to the cold impersonal data of quantitative evaluation techniques.

Listen to what these women and men tell you. Let their stories move you to do more for the development of peoples in remote rural areas. These are tales of hope from the fields, the mountains and the seas!

Diego Naziri

Value chain and postharvest specialist
FoodSTART+ Project Coordinator
International Potato Center

Preface by IFAD Country Program Officer

This book, Connecting smallholder root and tuber growers to markets through Farmer Business Schools, is a collection of stories from the individuals and rural communities that participated in the FoodSTART+ project.

Implemented in support of the IFAD investment projects in India (Megha-LAMP), Indonesia (SOLID), Vietnam (SRDP) and Philippines (FishCORAL and INREMP), FoodSTART+ provided expertise and knowledge products on roots and tuber crops research and extension, and the replication and expansion of the unique and innovative Farmer Business School (FBS) methodology in both farming and fishery commodities.

At the corporate level, the FoodSTART+ project has contributed to IFAD's strategic objectives on increased social, human and financial capital of poor rural people, and enhanced productivity, profitability, resilience and diversification of poor rural people's economic activities.

In the Asia Pacific Region, with more IFAD investment projects supporting the development of inclusive value chains involving poor rural producers and private agribusiness, the stories presented in this book accentuate the importance and relevance of the tools and knowledge products developed by FoodSTART+.

The stories are inspiring. They bring insights on how change has come into the lives of project participants and their communities in various ways. From gaining self-confidence, applying the technologies learned, adding value to the commodities and products, improving their enterprise knowledge and skills, understanding markets for better product positioning, and eventually improving their incomes and livelihoods --these stories have left a mark on the storytellers' lives.

We are certain that this book is an important addition to a growing body of knowledge on innovative methodologies and tools that are relevant and useful in supporting poor rural producers and their communities in creating more profitable, inclusive, environmentally sustainable and climate resilient livelihoods.

Jerry (Jing) Pacturan

Country Program Officer, Philippines

Asia Pacific Division, Programme Management Department

International Fund for Agricultural Development



What our partners say about us

“The INREMP project focuses on forestry. Originally, roots and tubers were considered just as food for farmers, but now we have realized that they can also contribute to the project’s business and poverty alleviation-related goals and, indirectly, to forest conservation through livelihood diversification. The learnings that the farmers gathered in the whole Farmer Business School process, especially in terms of market linkages, will contribute to the profitability and sustainability of their products, and their farming activity at large. In fact, the Regional Director of Region 7 has expressed the desire to adopt this approach for all farmer beneficiaries of the INREMP project and, possibly, other projects or programs managed by the department.”

Johanna San Pedro, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines

“The Aqua-based Business School (ABS) was introduced through the collaboration with the CIP-FoodSTART+ project. The approach has been instrumental to the FishCORAL strategy in addressing developmental challenges and gender gap of the project beneficiaries. Seeing the benefits of the ABS, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Region 8 plans to roll out ABS in its regular programs, even after the end of the collaboration with FoodSTART+.”

Rhine Joy Lesigues, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Philippines

“The Farmer Business School is as an effective extension modality towards market-oriented production. It has contributed to strengthening the business mindset among farmers and, over time, it has become a key vehicle for the department to promote the value chain approach for small-scale farmers in the Cordillera region of the Philippines.”

Leonora Verzola, Department of Agriculture, Philippines

“The key strength of the Farmer Business School is the involvement of few active members in each school who do not want to give up and always try to push the other fellow members to work together. Because of the enthusiasm and commitment of these active members, the chances of succeeding are pretty high.”

Bashisha Kharchandy, Meghalaya Basin Development Authority, India

Introduction to FoodSTART+

Despite decreasing poverty rates and rising incomes, millions of families in the Asia-Pacific region still face food and nutrition insecurity, particularly in rural areas. There is a pressing need for innovative approaches to help improve the livelihoods of the rural poor, especially in the communities most vulnerable to climate change.

The FoodSTART+ built on and expanded upon the scope of the Food Security Through Asian Root and Tuber Crops project (FoodSTART), funded by IFAD and implemented by CIP between 2011 and 2015. FoodSTART was conceived as a source of innovation for enhancing the contribution of root and tuber crops to food security and poverty reduction in Asia. Following the positive experience in the first phase, FoodSTART+ was designed to directly support IFAD's strategic framework (2016-2025) with the specific objective to enhance agri-food system resilience among poor households in upland and coastal communities of the Asia-Pacific region, which are recognized as the most exposed to the threat of climate change. FoodSTART+ was implemented between 2015 and 2019 by CIP in collaboration with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in the framework of the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB).

FoodSTART+ strived to enhance the resilience of rural communities through introducing root and tuber crop innovations, primarily within the framework of IFAD investments. Accordingly, the project identified and implemented relevant innovations in collaboration with partners and local stakeholders based on gender-responsive needs and opportunities identified through preliminary vulnerability assessments among food insecure households where root and tuber crops are produced and consumed. As part of this effort, the project developed and validated partnership strategies with IFAD investment projects for promoting roots and tubers for food security and resilience at scale.

The project worked in four countries and partnered with five large-scale IFAD-supported investment projects, implemented by national agencies: the Meghalaya Livelihoods and Access to Markets Project (Megha-LAMP) in India, the Smallholder Livelihood Development Project (SOLID) in Indonesia, the Fisheries, Coastal Resources and Livelihood (FishCORAL) project and the Integrated Natural Resources and Environmental Management Project (INREMP) in the Philippines, and the Sustainable Rural Development Project (SRDP) in Vietnam.

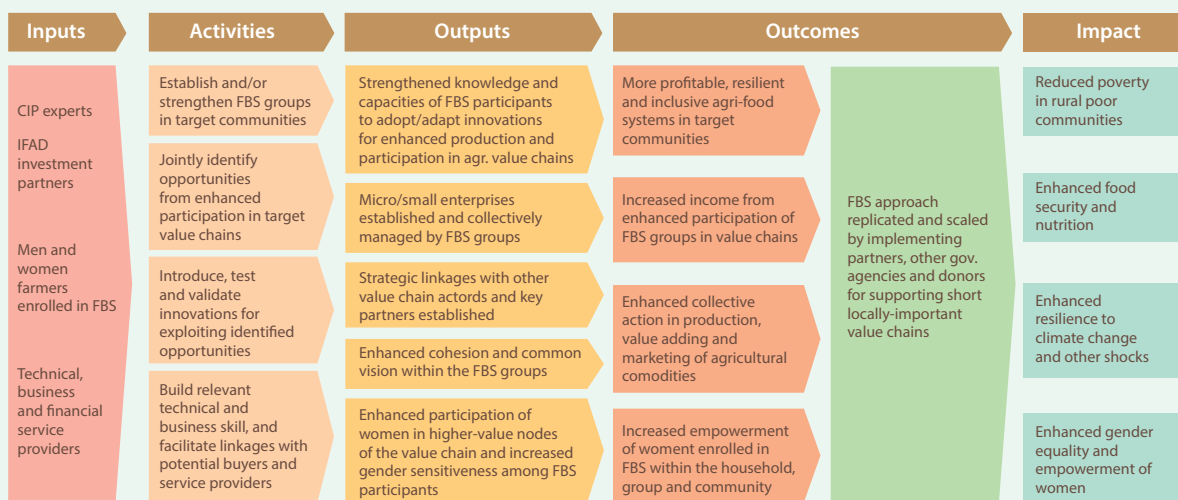
One of the main features of FoodSTART+ was the collaborative implementation approach of a research grant with IFAD investments whereby innovations and project activities were jointly identified, implemented, and funded, and relevant capacities of IFAD partner investments built in order to take the validated innovations to scale. Innovations that were introduced by FoodSTART+ included technological innovation (e.g. new crop varieties and production practices, alternative processing and product development options), system methodologies for value chain innovation and enterprise development, social innovation through establishment of micro/small enterprises, and institutional learning and change in the modes of collaboration between different project and value chain stakeholders. These innovations have been introduced and promoted primarily through the Farmer Business School approach. The grant-investment partnerships are of mutual benefit. From the IFAD perspective, this enables access to innovations responding to specific investment needs, and avoids the 'business as usual' trap. From a research perspective, these collaborations offer the prospect to test, evaluate, validate, promote, and take to scale agricultural innovations for the benefit of large numbers of low-income rural households. The opportunity for this to occur across a wide range of agronomic, environmental, market, socio-economic and cultural settings where partner investments operate can potentially result in a more robust innovation and research-development partnership approach, adaptable to a wide range of circumstances. Furthermore, these collaborations facilitate spill over to other locations and investment projects, and can also feedback to the research process, identifying new topics based on the needs and opportunities of farming households.

The Farmer Business School approach: Promoting farmer entrepreneurship

"I have no access to good markets!" These are words we commonly hear from men and women farmers in many rural areas. Farmers are often constrained by inadequate access to accurate market information, limited understanding of available market opportunities, or they simply lack the required business mindset and skills. These constraints usually force rural households to sell their commodities in small markets located nearby or through traders, with no or minimal added value, resulting in low income. This challenge needs to be addressed in order to help improve farmers' livelihoods. One way is to enable smallholder farmers to participate in agricultural value chains by building their capacities to respond, individually or jointly, to emerging market opportunities.

CIP has responded to this call by developing the Farmer Business School approach (FBS). FBS is a participatory action learning process that aims to enable farmer groups to participate in and benefit from agricultural value chains. Drawing from the experience of Farmer Field Schools on experiential learning and 'learning by doing', FBS comprises a series of group-based activities over a production-marketing cycle, in which farmers interact with other food chain actors and stakeholders. The FBS approach aims at enhancing farmers' capacity to identify, analyze and exploit market opportunities, familiarizing themselves and linking with other chain actors, and possibly starting to engage in a diverse range of activities in a more profitable node of the value chain. Through FBS, farmer groups are able to develop market-driven product innovations, establish and expand linkages with markets, and generate new and additional profits through increased volume and value of their products. As a tangible outcome of FBS, farmer-participants are expected to have actual businesses initiated or strengthened upon completing the learning process. The generic impact pathway of FBS as implemented in the framework of FoodSTART+ is presented in Figure 1.

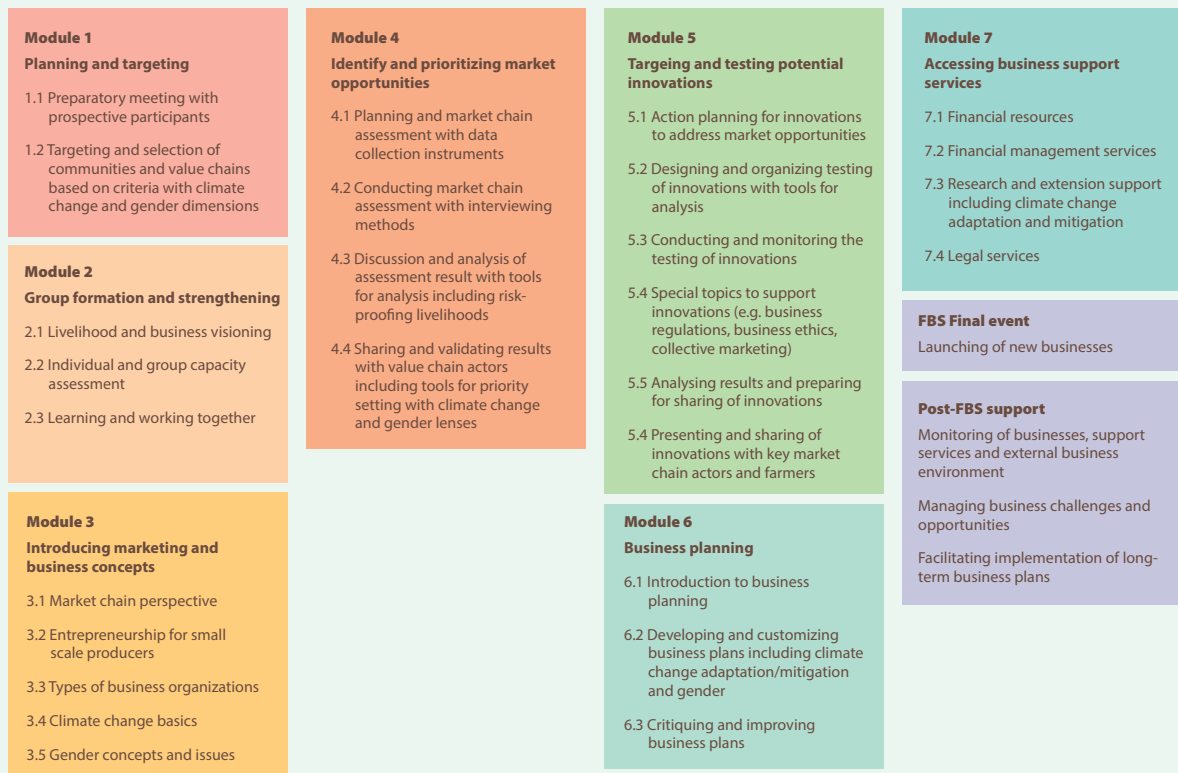
Figure 1. The generic impact pathway of FBS in FoodSTART+



The FBS approach was first launched by CIP in Indonesia in 2009. This was later introduced in the Philippines through the partnership with the Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARMP2), an IFAD investment with which the first phase of FoodSTART started collaborating in early 2010s. By the end of FoodSTART, a total of 72 FBS had been established and 1,747 farmers had graduated. Following the end of FoodSTART, the Department of Agriculture, the implementing agency of CHARMP2, continued to use FBS as its main livelihood approach and being an FBS graduate became one of the requisites for accessing the project's Livelihood Assistance Fund. This experience shows that, through successful research-development partnerships, innovations can be further scaled by national agencies, even after the formal collaboration with the research grant ends.

Since 2017, FoodSTART+ has introduced FBS in the framework of the collaboration with Megha-LAMP in India, SOLID in Indonesia, and INREMP and FishCORAL in the Philippines. Based on the experience gained in practical implementation, the FBS curriculum has evolved over time. The most recent curriculum is structured around seven modules that allow participants to progressively zoom-in on the innovation and product development process (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Standard FBS Curriculum



FBS sessions are usually conducted on a weekly basis and facilitated by staff of the IFAD investment projects who have been previously trained by CIP. Completing the FBS process usually takes eight to ten months, during which staff from CIP and the relevant IFAD investment provide coaching, mentoring, and monitoring services. The process culminates in a final public event at which the new businesses and products are officially launched on the market.

While CIP developed the FBS as a value chain development approach for root and tuber crops, FBS is fundamentally suitable to any commodity and the approach has been used to support a number of businesses focusing on alternative agricultural and animal products—from coffee and organic vegetables to livestock and fishery products—depending on the priorities and needs of partner IFAD investments and their beneficiaries. In the case of FishCORAL, the approach was renamed Aqua-based Business Schools (ABS), following adaptation to fisherfolk in coastal communities.

FBS aims at introducing commercial (new product) and institutional innovations (new ways that value chain actors and stakeholders work together). However, several technological innovations have also been channeled by FoodSTART+ through FBS. These primarily included new farming, post-harvest, and processing practices required for the new product. In other cases, the market-driven incentives from FBS stimulated wider community interest in new varieties and quality planting material for increased productivity and quality, to which FoodSTART+ responded. This combination of FBS with varietal introduction is resulting in a change of attitude to root and tuber crops in these communities, who now increasingly appreciate their commercial and nutritional value.

To date, over 130 small and micro-enterprises benefitting almost 3,500 farmers have been established through FBS and launched in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines; There have been four times as many women graduate as men. In many communities, women were purposively targeted by the IFAD investment, but in other cases women were more proactive in accessing new opportunities for business and enterprise skills. Furthermore, they are often more comfortable working within groups and appreciated the regular social interaction provided through product development activities. Women are also commonly involved in selling produce in local markets and products developed through FBS can provide them with a welcome additional income stream.

The most significant change approach

Stories captivate the interest of people. Stories of hardship, hope and success are particularly appreciated by readers. Storytelling is a useful tool in development; it presents changes in the livelihood of beneficiaries that cannot be easily quantified, and it also creates an emotional connection with the audience.

The Most Significant Change (MSC) is a participatory, qualitative technique for the monitoring and evaluation of an intervention. The MSC has been described as a “dialogical, story-based technique with a primary purpose to facilitate program improvement by focusing the direction of work towards explicitly valued directions and away from less values directions” (Dart and Davies, 2005)¹.

Developed in 1996 by Rick Davies¹, the MSC was first used for monitoring changes in a rural development program in Bangladesh. It is now used by several international development organizations to monitor and evaluate their programs.

There are 10 steps in the implementation of the MSC. The process may take between a few weeks and months depending on the number of story collectors, the number of stories to be collected, their geographical location, and the available resources. These steps are:

- 1 Raise interest and identify the champions, i.e. motivated people who will facilitate collection, selection, and feedback of stories.
- 2 Define the domains of change which will serve as guide during the story collection (sometimes already identified in the intervention's theory of change).
- 3 Define the period being evaluated, e.g. the duration of the project activity.
- 4 Collect significant change stories from project stakeholders.
- 5 Select the most significant stories by stakeholders in review meetings.
- 6 Feedback the results of the selection process to the storytellers with an explanation as to which story was selected as the most significant.
- 7 Verify the stories and get more information from the field, if necessary.
- 8 Collect quantitative information to support the stories.
- 9 Use other data gathered from the story collection, e.g. gender disaggregation, which may be used for secondary analysis.
- 10 Discuss the lessons learned from the methodology and revise the procedure accordingly to help future story collectors.

The technique is flexible and may be adjusted according to the intervention and its beneficiaries. For instance, not all of the steps are compulsory and definition of domains may not be necessary, or there may not be enough time or information for secondary data analysis.

Cognizant of the value of MSC as an evaluation technique, the FoodSTART project used this approach to gauge the impact of one of its key innovations, FBS. The MSC was first used during the first phase of FoodSTART, where stories of FBS graduates from the Cordillera region of the Philippines under the IFAD-funded CHARMP2 project were recorded and published.

¹⁸² Dart, JJ. & Davies, R. 2003. A Dialogical, Story-Based Evaluation Tool: The Most Significant Change Technique. *American Journal of Evaluation*. Vol. 24, N° .2, pp. 137-155.



In the framework of FoodSTART+, MSC was applied to capture and document the impact of FBS on farmers groups in India and Philippines that had selected root and tuber crops as their target commodity. The project team first developed the theory of change of FBS and preidentified the expected domains of change in the relevant sites of the partner IFAD investment projects in terms of enhanced livelihood, food security, nutrition, gender-equity and resilience to climate change.

The FoodSTART+ Communication Specialist, initially supported by a CIP colleague familiar with the MSC technique, conducted training in Bohol and Tacloban in the Philippines, and Meghalaya in India to introduce the approach and build the capacities of selected staff from the partner IFAD projects and FBS facilitators to collect the stories.

About 10 stories were collected from farmer members of each selected FBS group. Overall, 124 stories were collected from seventeen FBS groups in India and the Philippines.

An important step of this methodology is the review of the stories by selected story collectors, beneficiaries, and managerial staff of the partner projects through a semi-structured workshop with the objective to capture stakeholders' value in the selection of the most significant stories and, possibly, revise the domains of change initially identified. The review and selection in the Philippines were done in a two-day face-to-face meeting with the stakeholders, while for India the meeting was done over Skype, reflecting the flexibility of the process. The whole process from training story collectors to actual collection, review and selection of stories took around seven months.

This book is a compilation of the selected stories depicting transformation and hope from the farmers in each target FBS group, the most significant story from FBS facilitators in each partner IFAD investment project, as well as selected stories from an earlier MSC publication by CIP and CHARMP2.

Members of the Lundag Eskaya Multipurpose Cooperative Jenelie Sandigan, from left, and Kika Lague with some of their sweetpotato chips in the Lundag Pilar community in Bohol, Philippines.





Eskaya

Camote Chips

SWEETENED

INGREDIENTS: Camote (Sweet Potato) 65%,
MANUFACTURED BY:
Lakeland Food Products, Inc.
Boracay, Aklan, Philippines
Net Weight: 100g (3.5oz)
EXPIRATION DATE:
See Container



The Farmer Business School journey
with the Integrated Natural Resources
and Environmental Management Project
(INREMP): Creating incentives for sustainable
forest and watershed management



Bohol is the tenth largest island of the Philippines and is endowed with natural beauty that includes lush mountains and verdant hills with pure waters in its rivers, especially the Wahig-Inabanga river. The increase in population, however, has put pressure on the environment, so much so that even the hills and the mountains, considered timberland and therefore off limits to cultivation, have become residential lots and farms to the Boholanos. This has led to deforestation that necessitated the intervention of the Integrated Natural Resources and Environmental Management Project (INREMP), a project aimed at restoring degraded river basins in the country.

Following a series of consultations and joint conduct of scoping studies, FoodSTART+ and INREMP began their partnership in 2016 when the latter requested CIP support for implementing the FBS approach in the framework of the Livelihood Enhancement Support (LES) initiative. LES, under the project's smallholder institutional investments component, is intended to enable both people's organizations and their members to increase their incomes from more sustainable and market-oriented livelihoods or enterprises while contributing to the overall improvement of the watershed. INREMP's interest in FBS was primarily driven by the opportunity to strengthen its engagement with local people's organizations and by the appreciation that FBS could contribute to improve the quality of life of farmers and provide more diversified sources of income, thus relieving pressure from forest land in the river basins. Accordingly, the FBS was meant to help INREMP beneficiaries by strengthening their capacities to process, market and add value to selected agroforestry products.

In the Wahig-Inabanga River Basin there are 54 people's organizations benefitting from INREMP and out of these, 36 people's organizations benefit from the LES. Among the 36, six people's organizations engaged in the FBS, namely, the Nagkahiusang Mag-uuma sa San Vicente Association (NMSVA) and the Lundag Eskaya Tribe Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LETMULCO) in Wahig-Pamacsalan Watershed; the Concepcion Livelihood and Environmental Association Project (CLEAP) in Dagohoy Watershed; the San Miguel Association Resource Team (SMART) and the San Carlos Association for Rehabilitation of Environmental Degradation (SCARED) in Danao Watershed; and the Ilaya Sustainable Farmers Association of Inabanga, Bohol Inc. (ISFA) in Inabanga Watershed. These people's organizations consist of farmer organizations with a vision to provide opportunities for improving the livelihoods of their members.

A pool of staff from INREMP and the local government units (LGUs), as well as lead farmers of the selected people's organizations were trained by CIP on FBS in October 2016. The 19 participants, 6 women and 13 men, were then responsible for facilitating the implementation of the FBS curriculum with the people's organizations in a series of sessions which lasted for a period of 16 months.

Moreover, facilitators were provided the opportunity to visit and interact with selected people's organizations in Leyte and Cordillera Administrative Region who

have undergone FBS for field exposure to further ignite their enthusiasm in pursuing the FBS approach in their respective areas.

The majority of the people's organizations engaged in FBS selected root crops such as sweetpotato, taro, and cassava as their main target commodity. These crops are widely grown in the communities and serve as a major source of income for the farmers. Root crops are also an important source of food at times of extreme weather events and other natural shocks, such as long droughts, earthquakes and typhoons that regularly affect Bohol.

Participants were trained by experts from CIP and various local government agencies on production, processing, and marketing of their food products. Through the FBS, the people's organizations were able to produce products such as sweetpotato chips, jam, ketchup, candies, cupcakes and beverages; taro and banana chips; cassava chips; and cacao tablets.

During the implementation of FBS and through the linkages facilitated by INREMP and FoodSTART+, the people's organizations were able to interact with and access knowledge, technical support, and capacity building from other government agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, Department of Trade and Industry, Agricultural Training Institute), Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Science and Technology and Bohol Experimental Station.

The business launch, which is the final event of the FBS, was held on 28 July 2018 at the Island City Mall during the celebration of the Sandugo Festival, an annual historic celebration, in the presence of political leaders from the province and municipalities of the people's organizations. During the launch, a graduation ceremony was held for the 125 participants (92 women and 33 men) who graduated from the FBS. When asked about their experience, the graduates said that they enjoyed the event as it was their first time to face a big audience and have the chance to promote their products. They explained that it boosted their confidence and morale, and their ties to the group became stronger. INREMP staff, especially the facilitators, explained that through the event they became more adept within their roles and were determined to help other groups to graduate from FBS and launch their products.

If given the financial support to purchase their own equipment and processing materials, it is envisaged that the people's organizations will thrive and become successful entrepreneurs in the coming years. INREMP aims to provide such support before the project ends in 2020. Seeing the value of the FBS, INREMP also plans to promote the approach to other government agencies.

The two-year journey of FoodSTART+ and INREMP in implementing the FBS has resulted in the development of a good partnership. There may have been bumps on the road, but it all paved the way to the common goal – to build the capacities and provide opportunities for a better life for the farmers in Bohol.

A woman in a pink shirt is smiling and talking to a group of children outdoors. The children are looking at her with interest. The background shows a simple structure and trees.

INREMP at a glance

Goal

To address unsustainable watershed management in four priority river basins: Upper Chico River Basin in Cordillera Administrative Region, Wahig-Inabanga River Basin in Central Visayas, Lake Lanao River Basin in Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao and Upper Bukidnon River Basin in Northern Mindanao.

Objective

To reduce and reverse the watershed degradation, and to provide incentives to local communities and LGUs.

Target areas

24 watersheds in 9 provinces comprising over 1.21 million hectares.

Target beneficiaries

220,000 people, the majority from vulnerable and marginalized sectors with particular focus on indigenous peoples and resource-poor communities.

Components

- River basin and watershed management investment planning
- Smallholder and institutional investments
- Capacity building
- Project management and support services

Implementing agency

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

Duration

2013-2020

Budget

USD 84.83 million



Most significant change stories in Bohol, Philippines





Alvira Gumanoy, FBS graduate Concepcion, Danao, Bohol

Productive business women

The FBS through its various trainings taught us the financial aspect of the business. It also made us realize that aside from the common steamed sweetpotatoes that we consume in our houses or use as feeds for our pigs, sweetpotatoes can be processed into other products that can yield higher profits. In the past, the women in our barangay (village) just stayed in their houses doing house chores and sometimes gossiping. Now, we have this small business that keeps us busy with our day-to-day activities.

After the business launch in July 2018, we were able to deliver our products, such as sweetpotato chips, jam and candies, to different sari-sari stores (mini stores) in our community, and also the Wildlife Center, which is one of the tourist spots here in Bohol.

We accept orders from our neighbors and People's Organization members and have established connections with clients in Tagbilaran and Sagbayan. We are also selling our products in the nearby schools, making it affordable to the students by selling chips in small packages at a price ranging from PHP 5 to 10 (USD 0.10 to 0.20).

Every day we dream of having a stable job. Thanks to the FBS, we became productive women -- from being plain housewives we have become business women. The FBS helps us financially because of the income that we receive from the products that we process.

The FBS also strengthened our bond as an organization because the women in the community became productive and stopped gossiping which often led to fights. Today, with FBS we are all bonding and we are all gaining because perseverance solves problems.



Lilibith Avelino, FBS graduate San Carlos, Danao, Bohol

Training little entrepreneurs

I used to be a religion teacher and a lay liturgical minister before I joined the FBS. I heard about FBS and became interested, so I volunteered to be a participant. I attended the first three modules, but due to some unexpected circumstances I had to leave for Manila. When I returned home to Bohol, I continued to participate in the FBS. They were already on module 6 at that time. I participated in the FBS because I want to grow as a person. As the modules went on, I became engrossed in the lessons.

We selected camote (sweetpotato) as our main commodity for the FBS because it is an abundant root crop in our locality. Before the FBS was introduced we sold fresh camote in the market for a low price; we just boiled it, and sometimes fed to the pigs. Only through the FBS did we gain the idea that camote can be processed into ketchup, jam and chips. FBS helped a lot in our lives because it increased our income and our knowledge. We learned that processed sweetpotato costs almost thrice the price as compared to fresh roots.

Currently, we display our products at Danao Adventure Park, an ecotourism center, and nearby schools in our locality. We also receive some orders from our Local Government Unit. Our Local Chief Executive is very supportive of our people's organization and even of our livelihood. It feels good that we are selling nutritious and organically grown food to the children in our community. We are also able to help the students by letting them sell chips with a commission of 1 peso (USD 0.02) for every pack sold. They use their small income as an addition to their baon (allowance).

Before the FBS was introduced in our people's organization, most of us were plain housewives and were busy gossiping. I am happy that FBS was introduced in our locality because it reduced the bystanders and it gave us jobs, even if we just earn PHP 150 (USD 2.95) per day. The small amount is helpful as we use it for the allowance of our children.

Miraflor Divina Gracia, FBS graduate Ilaya, Inabanga, Bohol

A change in routine

In the past, we occupied ourselves by just doing household chores. Our routine changed when the FBS was introduced to us. We became more productive as we learned the correct ways of planting, cooking root crop products and marketing them. Our people's organization prepares food when we have orders. We deliver the finished products to the stores in the town and sell the products in schools. We also sell the products to our neighbors and display these on various occasions in the neighborhood.

Our products range from sweetpotato flour to sweetpotato, taro and banana chips in plain, chili and sweetened flavors. Our chips cost PHP 35 per 100 g (USD 0.70) and sweetpotato flour is PHP 200 per kg (USD 4).

We cook all day until late night when we receive a lot of orders. We even supply our products to the municipal hall. We usually cook 5-10 kg of sweetpotato per week and 3-5 kg of taro and banana per week. We also have members who plant the crops and supply these to our people's organization at PHP 30 per kg for sweetpotato and taro, and PHP 20 per kg for banana. The income we gain is saved within the organization. We decided to increase the capital for the people's organization first before we get our salaries.

I continuously engage in the FBS because my husband supports me. We see that there is a huge possibility that our business will boom in the future.





Guillerma Cayacay, FBS graduate San Vicente, Pilar, Bohol

A community's abundant crop

In our family, we usually plant taro, banana, sweetpotato, cassava, cacao, and vegetables. Cacao is the most abundant crop in our community. We used to plant cacao only for our own consumption and small-scale selling. But through the FBS, the members of our people's organization learned that we can sell it for a higher price.

Through the FBS, we learned how to make tablea (chocolate blocks, used to make a hot chocolate drink) out of the cacao. We sell it at PHP 20 (USD 0.40) per pack containing 10 pieces of tablea to local stores, neighbors, and others. The income supported our families and helped us send our children to school.

The FBS made a big difference in our livelihood and in our organization. We wish to have better facilities and equipment to increase our production. Our group hopes that our tablea will be known in other places. I am thankful to the FBS because my knowledge and skills about business increased. It helped me a lot in my life.

Jenelle Sandigan, FBS graduate Lundag, Pilar, Bohol

The leader within

I used not to believe and trust the trainings given by the government, because it was all just discussions and I cannot see any change in our community. I had to leave to work in Tagbilaran and in Manila. When I returned home, I learned that they have started a FBS in my community. I then decided to join.

Since then, my regular activities involved attending the FBS sessions and teaching at our Child Development Center. There were times when I was discouraged to attend, but when the Agricultural Training Institute provided trainings on how to make different sweetpotato products, I was encouraged to attend again. Before the FBS, we only boiled the sweetpotato. But after attending the sessions, I learned that we can make a lot of products out of it. Seeing how FBS could help our group and tribe, I volunteered to manage our cooperative.

I finished the modules and we had the business launch in Tagbilaran during the Sandugo Festival. I told myself that this was actually real! We sold our FBS products such as sweetpotato chips, beverage and ketchup at the business launch. Our products were sold out and the profit we earned from the business launch was used to pay the money we had borrowed from our cooperative. If we had more financial capital, I believe our business could prosper because we have a vision to help the cooperative and our tribe.

Through the FBS, I realized that I became less shy when facing people, and we should seize every opportunity to attend trainings because we can learn a lot from them.





Analyñ Ayenza, FBS graduate San Miguel, Danao, Bohol

A wider perspective

I used to be a housewife. I did the house chores and helped my husband on the farm. I did not care about trainings and had no self-confidence. When the FBS came, I was doubtful, but I realized that it would be nice to try. I then learned how to make different products from what we get from the farm, such as sweetpotato and cassava. This was a big difference from our practice before the FBS when we just boiled the sweetpotato and cassava for our own family consumption and to sell in our neighborhood.

During the FBS, we did market visits to learn pricing and costing, and selection of ingredients for our products. After finishing the modules, I now know how to improve and market our products. I gained knowledge on how to run a business, which I share with my child and grandchildren. We now have the confidence to inform others about what we have learned from the FBS. We are now knowledgeable in cooking and processing the products (taro and sweetpotato chips, sweetpotato cupcakes and cassava cake).

I became open-minded and gained a wider perspective of the market. I also gained awareness that I can contribute to the conservation of the environment.

I am glad because I can help my husband earn more income, even when I'm at home.

Annafé Hilot, FBS facilitator INREMP, Bohol

A shared success

Farming is close to my heart because I am a daughter of two farmers. As an FBS facilitator, I manage my time monitoring six pilot people's organizations for the FBS of INREMP, mainly the group of farmers from the Concepcion Livelihood Environmental Association Project (CLEAP), dealing with different farmers every day and doing my best to be part of their success.

FBS helped me widen my knowledge and skills. I learned from the training on root crops production that farmers should plant good quality and high yielding varieties. Value addition and product innovation were the main highlights of the FBS. I learned how to process the root crops of all six people's organizations enrolled in the FBS.

Helping empower our farmers to become entrepreneurs and future businessmen was a good opportunity. They developed self-confidence and even gained links to possible market. Instead of selling fresh and raw sweetpotato, the people's organization is now equipped to process their products and earn more.

Come the business launch, I motivated each farmer participant to do their best and be confident in interacting with the various customers and stakeholders to pave way for linking their products to the market. Luckily, CLEAP won the 'Best Business Pitch' award at the business launch. I felt very grateful at that time; their success was also my success.

Now that they already graduated, CLEAP continues to process sweetpotato chips, jam and candies. They sell them in schools, bakeshops, and sari-sari stores (mini stores) in their locality and even tourist sites in Bohol. They are also aiming for a larger market for their products.

FBS brought a significant change to my life. It molded me to be an effective and diligent public servant. As an agent for change, I first placed FBS in the center of my heart and mind. As a mother of two children, I started making sweetpotato chips at home.



**The Farmer Business School journey
with the Fisheries, Coastal Resources and
Livelihood (FishCORAL) project: Improving
the livelihood of fisherfolk through
income diversification**



The Philippines is an archipelagic country surrounded by a mass of water. Those living in the coastal areas rely heavily on fishing for their livelihood. However, the Philippines is also prone to extreme weather events, with an average of 20 typhoons a year. During these times, the fisherfolk must divert to alternative sources of income. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Department of Agriculture recognized the need to support income generation and diversification in fishing communities and developed the Fisheries, Coastal Resources and Livelihood (FishCORAL) project. Jointly-funded by the Government of the Philippines and IFAD, the five-year initiative aims to improve the livelihood of poor coastal communities, strengthen their local food and nutrition security, and enhance their resilience to climate change.

Over the years, there is growing evidence of root and tuber crops playing a role for enhanced resilience to climate change. FishCORAL acknowledged the importance of root crops for fisherfolk as a source of food and income during these changing seasons and during the increasingly frequent climate-related disasters. CIP, through the FoodSTART+ project, introduced the FBS to FishCORAL. FishCORAL saw the potential of the approach to be integrated into their livelihood development component.

The FBS approach was officially adopted by FishCORAL in 2017. Being a commodity-neutral approach, the FBS was customized upon request by BFAR to become what is now known as the Aqua-based Business School (ABS), reflecting the aquatic environment where FishCORAL's activities revolve. The ABS approach provides the opportunity for a sustainable source of livelihood by helping the fisherfolk establish a full-grown business.

FishCORAL and FoodSTART+ agreed to pilot the ABS in Region 8, Caraga Region, and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Seventy-one FishCORAL staff were trained on several occasions to become ABS facilitators, and a series of workshops followed where the FBS curriculum was jointly adapted and a learning guide for the ABS developed. Twenty-eight people's organizations of farmer-fisherfolk were selected to participate in the ABS: fourteen in Region 8, five in Caraga, and nine in BARMM. In total, there were 499 ABS enrollees, 303 (61%) of which were women. The ABS sessions began in the regions in 2018 when FoodSTART+ provided capacity building and technical backstopping for the implementation of the ABS modules.

Conducting the ABS sessions was not a walk in the park! The farmer-fisherfolk main source of living is fishing. They had to prioritize their daily activities because it was where they earn their income. So the wives of the farmer-fisherfolk, though were also busy with their household chores, enrolled and became active in the ABS. The sessions were delayed but eventually the participants came to appreciate the ABS. The ABS is an 'out-of-the-classroom' type of learning, which is a good way for imparting knowledge to adults. The farmer-fisherfolk were brought to markets to observe and come up with different ways to improve and add value to their products. The ABS also promoted better interaction among the participants; most discussions involved sharing of experiences where they were coached and mentored by trustworthy resource persons. Eventually, they learned how to develop their value-added fishery and root and tuber-based products like tahong (mussel) crackers, bottled tahong, shrimp crackers, shrimp sticks, dried fish, dried squid, and cassava chips.

Region 8 was the first to finish the modules and held the business launch on 29 May 2019. FishCORAL appreciated that the ABS can help increase and diversify the income of fishing households through collective action, enterprise development, and strong market linkages. Hence, a second cycle of the ABS is set to happen in Region 8 starting the third quarter of 2019, by when FoodSTART+ will have ended. It is encouraging to see how innovations brought by FoodSTART+ are being adopted and scaled by the IFAD investment partner, even when technical support by the grant is no longer available. In order to facilitate this endeavor, FoodSTART+ has recently supported FishCORAL to develop a fully-fledged ABS manual through a series of workshops.

Through the collaboration of FoodSTART+ and FishCORAL, both men and women farmer-fisherfolk are now able to directly interact with other market players, government agencies, business development service providers, and potential clients. What's more, the ABS led the farmer-fisherfolk to have a broader vision for their enterprises – a more diversified and demand-oriented type of business engagement. FoodSTART+ and FishCORAL both see a promising future for ABS graduates, who hopefully one day, will no longer have to worry too much when the fish yield is low or when they are unable to go off-shore because they already have an alternative steady business to lean on.

FishCORAL at a glance

Goal

Contribute to a reduced poverty in target coastal communities of the 11 target bays in Regions 5, 8, 13, and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

Development Objective

Coastal communities sustainably manage their fishery and coastal resources generating livelihood benefits for the targeted households.

Target areas

11 bays/gulfs in Region 5 in Luzon; Region 8 in Visayas; Region 13 and BARMM in Mindanao spreading across 14 provinces with 103 municipalities or cities, with 1,098 coastal villages.

Target beneficiaries

188,000 poor households living in coastal communities of which 91,000 are fishing households.

Components

- Coastal resource management
- Livelihood development
- Project management and coordination

Implementing agency

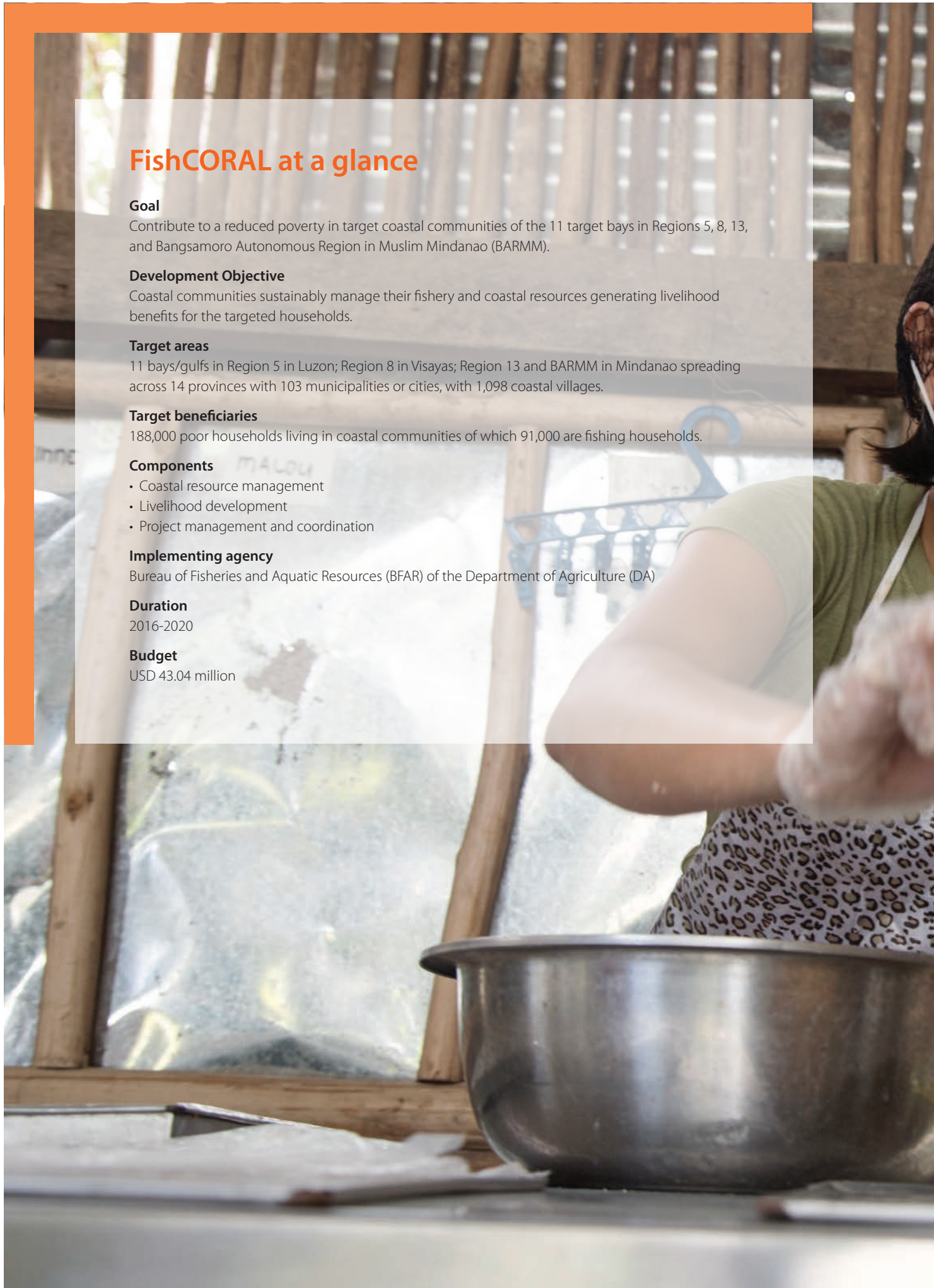
Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Department of Agriculture (DA)

Duration

2016-2020

Budget

USD 43.04 million





The most significant change stories in Eastern Visayas, Philippines (FishCORAL)





Marilou Aboguin, ABS graduate Jiabong, Samar

Desire to prosper

I will never forget the things that I learned from the ABS; it is already engraved in my mind.

The training was not easy, but I personally learned a lot because I fell in love with the ABS.

I used to have a small grocery store. But when my child got sick, I had to sell the business in order to pay for the surgery. That is why I am now focusing on mussel processing because I feel like I can continue my dream of having my own business here. Aside from mussel processing, I also sell pork barbecue every Sunday where I apply the things I learned from the ABS.

I am a business-minded person. One of the things that I learned from the ABS is that even with a small amount, your business can prosper if you put your heart into it.

My hope is for us to be given our own processing center because we already have a handful of people helping us with the processing. My aim is not only to prosper, but to help other people prosper. A peso is important. If I will prosper, so should my association. We all learned together, so we all should prosper together. No one should be left behind.

Our business helps us a lot because I do not need to apply for high-interest loans. When we get the salaries from our business, we can focus on budgeting it.

Thanks to our business, I was able to put my child through college.

We have been through different challenges, but through these was I able to value our business.

If a person has the desire to prosper, he or she has to act. If one will help him or herself, surely, there will be change. In the past, I just slept throughout the day and then I will look for food to eat. Now, my routine has changed. I learned to move and make ways to earn.

Another thing that I realized about myself is that I can now dance and face people at the Business Launch.

I used to be really shy, especially with those with high positions, because I looked down on myself. But when I finished the ABS, my self-confidence gradually grew. I learned how to interact with people from different walks of life. I gained connections from different agencies, like the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Since the beginning, doing business has been in my heart. I will focus on this business even if it means borrowing money from others just to continue the operations, and even if others will leave the organization. I am more confident and inspired to continue the business because I believe in the quality of our products.

I can say that ABS is now part of my life.



Ruperta Gagarin, ABS graduate Guiuan, Eastern Samar

Standing with pride

The ABS has taught us how to prepare our fish better for drying. We were taught how to do marketing, labelling, packaging, especially engage in the value chain. At TienDA sa BFAR (trade fair where fishery and non-fishery products of BFAR-supported groups are sold at a cheaper price), we learned how to do sales talks and convince customers to buy our products. Through the ABS, our knowledge increased, our practices were changed, and we learned to interact with visitors and fellow fisherfolk – we were empowered.

I share the things I learned with my children, such as marketing and the proper way of doing business. We removed the mentality of being too humble because we are 'just' farmers. Now, we can stand with pride and put the right prices on our products.

While our husbands fish, the wives in the association process these catch into dried fish, and our children help us deliver the finished products. The shares I receive from our group's sales help my children with their school projects and school uniforms. In the past, my children would cry whenever we did not have money. Now, they tell me, "good thing you joined the association and the ABS, Mom," because we can now have additional income to help the household expenses. I hope the other associations will be assisted too.

We are fortunate to receive support from FishCORAL. We could have not made it if it were only us. The things we learned will help us in our livelihood. Customers continue to order our dried fish because of its good quality and affordable price. Our group will open a bank account because it's good if our association's money is kept safe in the bank. I am really empowered. The training we received will surely not be put into waste – we'll keep it in our heart, mind, and action.

Anne Jeanette Jaway, ABS graduate Basey, Samar

Stepping stone to a better life

We received a lot of assistance programs after typhoon Yolanda (more widely known as typhoon Haiyan, one of the most powerful tropical cyclones ever recorded), but not all of the relief and rehabilitation programs were successful. Then, the Japan International Cooperation Agency donated the milkfish processing center. We were already processing deboned milkfish, even before we enrolled in the ABS, but our clients said that our milkfish was not fresh. Also, sometimes when we ordered fish, the sizes were not the same. We realized that we have to fix this problem in order for our business to thrive.

Upon joining the ABS, we learned a lot about the production aspect, especially that we should immediately process the newly-caught fish to preserve its freshness. We became confident about ourselves because we have the support of the government which helped strengthen our group. The FishCORAL staff pushed us to be successful and expand our market. They also helped us promote our products.

Thanks to the ABS, we were also given the chance to sell at the TienDA sa BFAR (trade fair). Something that did not interest us in the past. We are complete with equipment, we just need a stable market – the ABS helped us in this aspect.

So far, our income is not yet divided among the members. We agreed to save it first, then divide it when we earn more profit later. We plan to do the division in a meeting where it will be transparent to everyone.

Our association continue to be united because ABS uplifts us. We were not confident before the ABS because we only processed through order basis, but now our market has widened.

Today, we haven't seen a big change in our market because we still do order basis, but we believe that joining the ABS was our stepping stone. We will not immediately see the change, but gradually we will grow if we will help each other. We want to continue to establish our business even after the ABS to help our members, their families, and the community.



Fisherfolk beneficiaries of the FishCORAL project harvesting seaweed in Eastern Visayas, Philippines







Clarita Pabilando, ABS graduate General MacArthur, Eastern Samar

Seaweed and sympathy

Seaweed farming has been my family's source of livelihood for years. It has helped us put food on the table and send our children to school. Seaweed is an important commodity for us. My family, even my grandchildren, helps us in planting, cleaning and harvesting. Gladly, the value of our seaweeds increased when we joined the ABS.

Through the ABS, I learned how to make seaweed noodles. Our group learned how to make business out of our seaweed noodles, and I can say that the ABS has helped us a lot in this area. In the past, we just planted seaweeds and sell it raw but after undergoing the ABS sessions, we learned that the seaweeds we plant can be processed into noodles.

Thanks to the ABS, I learned about climate change and the proper disposal of plastic. We also planted mangroves and learned about its value in the environment. Because of the ABS, I now know how to interact with other people as part of marketing our products that will help us earn good income.

From the beginning until the end of the ABS, I learned how to get along with other people. I learned how to be humble and speak with calmness. I used to be sensitive, but when I started to study in the ABS, my heart warmed up with people around me. I now know how to understand and sympathize with other people.

We were also able to purchase our own processing center out of the income we saved from our product sales.

Aida Adula, ABS graduate Balangiga, Eastern Samar

A dream, a venture, unity

The ABS has helped me a lot because I learned how to do business. Through our activities, like the market visit, I learned that establishing a business should be well thought of. I can use the knowledge I gained through the ABS to prosper.

I also learned about gender awareness. Here, I learned that women in the past were treated unfairly. Take for example, during elections. Women were not allowed to vote, it was something for men only. Men also got to wear fashionable clothes like heels and skirts, but now women can also wear them—and it suits them better!

Through the ABS, I learned how to produce different sorts of products out of the crops that we plant in our land. This helps us double our profit.

Another important thing that we learned was that cassava can be processed. In the past, I only knew how to make iraid (a local cake made of cassava). I am proud because many people say that our products are delicious because we made it into different flavors.

I believe that knowledge can be gained not only by the youth, but also by the older generation. My confidence to do business was strengthened, even though it's not an easy job. I am happy with this kind of business. In terms of my finances, I dream that our business will thrive, and our community will be united through this venture.



Narlito Armada, ABS facilitator FishCORAL, Eastern Visayas

From imperfection to fulfillment

One thing that really changed when I became a community facilitator was the increase of my self-confidence in terms of sharing my knowledge to the communities of San Antonio and Tinaogan, where I am assigned. I encountered different kinds of people and different characters in every class that I conducted which became a challenge to me as a facilitator.

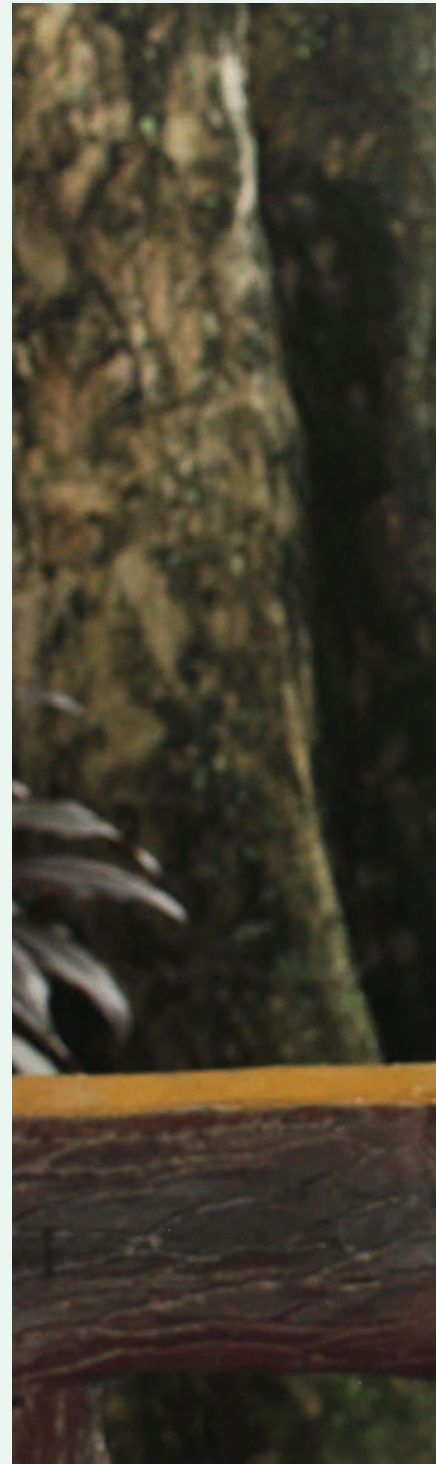
Whether our class turns out good or bad, I learned to be grateful because it molds me into a better person inside and out. I also learned how to accept my shortcomings – as they, 'I'm not perfect'.

I had a lot of questions in my head when the ABS was just starting. There were questions like, 'Are all these leading to somewhere? Why did I even decide to accept this job?' But thankfully, as the sessions began to roll, I found myself enjoying and saying to myself that this is a serious business.

I felt the fulfillment as an ABS facilitator when I saw my students go on stage and do their business pitch, more so when they received their certificate of completion – a proof that they have already finished the ABS curriculum. My joy was that of a parent seeing his children graduate and feeling so proud. That's when I realized that the time, resources and effort I exerted were not put into waste. Having a part in changing their livelihoods for the better was something I really appreciated.

The ABS has given me the opportunity to learn about starting and managing a business. Hopefully, in the future I can establish my own livestock farm which will be the source of income for my growing family.

I consider the ABS as one, if not the most, important life-changing experience I had because I became a better citizen in my community, and I am able to help others improve their state of living.





The Farmer Business School journey
with the Second Cordillera Highland
Agricultural Resource Management
Project (CHARMP2): Bringing hope
for a better life

Feeds - 137

high yield

Fertilizer

Production -

Processing

1 x 0.75 - 3,333

1 x 1 - 1,000

Cassava Vinegar
Cassava chips
Cassava cookies
Cassava granules

COST

For generations, agriculture has been the main economic activity of the indigenous people in the Cordillera Region of the Philippines. However, the income they receive from their crops and livestock barely cover their everyday living. As a result, poverty incidence in the region is still high.

Since 2008, the Department of Agriculture has implemented the Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARMP2) which is supported by IFAD and builds on the first phase of the project (CHARMP), jointly funded by IFAD, the Philippine Government, and the Asian Development Bank.

The nine-year project aims to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of rural highland indigenous communities in the Cordillera Administrative Region. The project focuses on improving land tenure and food security, and on increasing family income of the rural poor in the target area while preserving forest and watershed resources. Under CHARMP2's Agriculture, Agribusiness and Income Generating Activities (AAIGA) component, the project envisioned the implementation of 85 Farmer Field Schools (FFS) -- a season-long participatory training for farmers to enhance the management of their crops. The Department of Agriculture found that implementing FFS with CHARMP2's 15 target commodities was challenging as this would have required developing 15 different FFS curricula, a task extremely demanding in terms of time, financial resources, and needed expertise. Furthermore, FFS was not deemed the most suitable method given the prescribed value chain approach for implementing the AAIGA component.

Through the collaboration with FoodSTART phase 1, CHARMP2 management learned about the FBS approach in 2012. The FBS approach was appreciated for its value chain focus and, being commodity-neutral, was found more flexible and requiring less adaptation than FFS. With facilitation provided by CIP, CHARMP2 started piloting the FBS in the same year with six farmers groups which targeted four commodities, namely, root and tuber crops, native pigs, coffee and organic vegetables. Some groups learned how to produce and market sweetpotato chips, taro chips, processed meat, and ground coffee. Innovations introduced through FBS have not necessarily entailed new product development. For instance, one group focused on consolidation and marketing of organic vegetables and another learned how to delay harvesting of yam tubers

without affecting tuber yield and quality in order to fetch higher prices during the lean months.

The FBS was instrumental in strengthening farmers' business orientation and their collective action for joint production, processing, and marketing of agricultural commodities. Through the FBS, farmers learned processing techniques, developed new products or improved the existing ones, and were linked to traders and businessmen who willingly shared their knowledge and practices. Furthermore, the FBS helped develop their business skills and self-confidence, and paved the way to link them with business development services and financial institutions.

The FBS pilot was appreciated by implementers from the LGUs and received positive feedback from the IFAD supervision mission. Therefore, the AAIGA component changed its FFS targets into FBS and by the end of 2014 a total of 36 FBS had been conducted in 34 municipalities. Based on the positive experience, and despite the end of the first phase of FoodSTART, CHARMP2 senior management implemented an additional 36 FBS in the following years. During the 2-year project extension (2018-2019), named CHARMP2 Scale Up, the Department of Agriculture has implemented 25 more schools and being an FBS graduate has become a prerequisite for farmers to access the project's Livelihood Assistance Fund -- a scheme that provides loans to farmer groups willing to establish an enterprise. The loan can be converted into a grant once the business is found to be profitable and sustainable.

The success of piloting and upscaling FBS has meant undergone numerous challenges. But, thanks to the dedication, networking capacity, and innovativeness of the facilitators, CHARMP2 has overcome them with flying colors and, as of early 2019, a total of 97 groups with 2,864 farmers (2,254 (79%) of whom were women) have graduated from FBS and launched their enterprises. The range of target commodities has broadened over time and includes coffee, maize, rice, poultry, fish and agricultural inputs, among others. One of the highlights of the collaboration between FoodSTART and CHARMP2 is that this experience clearly demonstrates that even after the formal partnership -- and any financial and technical support from the grant project -- ceases, scaling of the FBS approach can continue and positive outcomes expand when this responds to the partner's needs and the right institutional setting is in place.

CHARMP2 and FoodSTART were the first to embark on using the MSC approach to evaluate the impact of the Farmer Business School. An MSC book was first published in 2018 showcasing the selected stories in each province covered by CHARMP2. These stories of hope and inspiration serve as testimonies to the change that the FBS has brought to lives and communities. This chapter presents selected stories adopted from the earlier-published book, to reflect how the partnership flourished and transcended to improving the livelihoods of the farmers.



CHARMP2 at a glance

Goal

Reduce poverty and improve the livelihoods of indigenous peoples living in farming communities in the mountainous project area.

Objective

Increase income of rural poor households through sustainable agricultural development and improve land tenure security, food security and watershed conservation.

Target areas

Six provinces in the Cordillera Region in Northern Philippines: Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mountain Province.

Target beneficiaries

65,000 rural highland indigenous households in 170 barangays (communities/villages) in 37 highland municipalities of the target provinces.

Components

- Mobilization of communities, participatory planning of investments and land titling
- Community watershed conservation, forest management and agroforestry development
- Agriculture and agribusiness development and promotion of income-generating activities
- Development of rural infrastructure
- Project management and coordination

Implementing agency

Department of Agriculture

Duration

2008-2019

Budget

USD 79.79 million

The most significant change stories in the Cordilleras, Philippines (CHARMP2)





Naty Benido, FBS graduate Sabnangan, Luba, Abra

Vinegar and other sweet rewards

My active participation as president of Sabnangan-Omli Mothers Association (SOMA) during the first-year implementation of CHARMP2 has brought about lots of learning that made an impact in my life. My involvement in the School-on-Air on root and tuber crops, and livestock and poultry modules, and in the FBS widened my business perceptions.

The most significant change in my life is the increase in my earnings. I'm able to apply all things I learned from CHARMP2. I realized the importance of planting various crops, including roots and tubers like taro or galingang (an underutilized root crop), sweetpotato and purple yam. When I harvest my plants, I market some and process the rest, especially the ones damaged during harvest. The processed products are sold within the community. Damaged crops that I am not able to process, I use as animal feed. I do not buy commercial feeds for my hogs because these are expensive. I'm now aware that there are so many locally sourced feeding materials that I can get right in my backyard without spending money.

I also learned to process wine and vinegar out of fruits that are available in our farm such as pineapple, banana, bugnay wild cherries and java plum. I am able to produce vinegar for our household consumption and, at times, I am able to sell in our community. If I have excess production that I can no longer sell in the community, I sell it to our association and they sell it outside the community.

All the learnings I acquired positively affected my life. It improved my family's life. Now, I do not need to ask for money from my working children because I can make my own by selling my fruit vinegars and my pigs. As a bonus, I am now also able to contribute to our household expenses.



Rocela Pati, FBS graduate Sabnangan, Luba, Abra

Reaching new markets

The most significant change in my life is the ability to contribute to household expenses. I get my income from selling pigs and processed products like wine and vinegar.

The money I earn from raising pigs, processing fruits into vinegar, and selling them helped in augmenting our household income. I have money to pay electricity bills, my children's education and other household needs. These are big changes in my life.

Through the trainings I attended I learned proper swine raising, organic feed production and root crop production. I also learned how to process purple yam jam, wine and vinegar. Because I learned proper hog raising, I can now cure minor pig illnesses. I do not need to call the livestock coordinator of our municipality for minor issues. When CHARMP2 gave me purple yam clean planting materials, I reproduced it using the rapid multiplication technology which the municipal agriculturist taught us. I make fruit wine and vinegar using fruits available in our community such as banana, bugnay wild cherries, pineapple, mango and others.

Before, I only sold my products in our community; now, I am able to market outside our community. My neighbors order products from me and they sell them in Baguio City, a very touristy place. I also had some products which the office of the municipal agriculturist and CHARMP2 bought and sold during the Kawayan Festival.

Because of my earnings, I have been able to sustain the cost of schooling my children. One of my children has graduated with a degree in education and is now working as a teacher. I am able to share everything that I learned through CHARMP2 with my children and they also apply what they have learned from me.

Editha Bawangin, FBS graduate Pudong, Kapangan, Benguet

Cassava products by the legion

The most significant change in my life from my involvement with CHARMP2 is the improvement of my relationships with others. I was able to overcome my shyness. Through trainings, I am now able to talk in front and teach simple cassava processing and proper food preparation. I can also preside over meetings.

As children, we are used to eating and planting root and tuber crops, like sweet potato and taro. We inherited this way of life from our forefathers. We plant for home consumption only.

When CHARMP2 first came into our community we prepared a participatory project investment plan. We identified cassava as our product because it suits the criteria of the project (organically grown and low risk). There were several trainings and seminars, coaching and mentoring sessions conducted by CHARMP2 in the community. I attended trainings on cassava processing and the School-On-Air on root and tuber crops. I also joined the FBS where I learned how to prepare a business plan and about the value chain.

Under the FBS, we had a learning visit in Bayombong, Nueva Viscaya. We participated in an actual demonstration on how to make pan de sal, vegemeat, noodles, chips, ketchup and frying crackers from sweetpotato. Aside from those sponsored by CHARMP2, we also joined other learning visits regarding root crops, which opened my mind that cassava can be processed into different products for home and market consumption. We enhanced our lipak-libong cassava processing and now we make different products from cassava such as cacharon, cassava roll, cue, cutsinta, pitchi-pitchi, polvoron, suman (various local delicacies) chips and flour. Aside from my learnings, I am grateful for the chance to travel and see different business practices.

I also apply what I have learned to enrich the lives of my family. I cook different cassava snacks for my grandchildren because it is nutritious and has no additives. I substitute cassava for bread. It is a good complement to coffee.

Through trainings, many things have been imparted to us and we can revolutionize the use of cassava.





Glory Ligat, FBS graduate Pudong, Kapangan, Benguet

Better bookkeeping and delighted grandchildren

Now, I have something to do for myself and for my neighbors besides household chores.

The most significant change in my life through involvement with AALIGA activities are the knowledge and skills I gained on cassava processing and bookkeeping. The bookkeeping training helped me a lot in the performance of my duties and responsibilities as the treasurer of our group, the Pudong Cassava Growers Association. I am happy because my knowledge on cassava processing was enhanced. Before, I only boiled cassava for home consumption, but my grandchildren do not like the taste. Now, I can prepare various cassava delicacies to the delight of my grandchildren.

In 2012, we attended cassava processing training conducted by CHARMP2 and our municipal local government with resource persons from the Northern Philippines Root Crops Research and Training Center. After the training, we started producing and selling cassava snacks. Through product promotions during special occasions in our community and in our municipality, we started to have continuous orders for the cassava snacks that we produce. With the starter kits for the preparation of cassava snacks and the PHP 100,000 (approximately USD 2,000) Livelihood Assistance Fund (LAF) provided by CHARMP2, we were able to expand our cassava snack business.

Some PHP 30,000 of the LAF was set aside for our cassava food snack business and PHP 70,000 was loaned to members at PHP 3,000 each for cassava production with 12% interest per year. The members are required to pay the amount they received from our group in the form of cassava tubers, equivalent to 224 kg at a buying price of PHP 15 per kg. This encouraged the members, especially the young mothers, to plant more cassava. This provides our members with income that they could readily use as daily allowance of their school children.

After the cassava processing training, we had the Farmer Business School where we were trained on bookkeeping and marketing. With these, I was exposed to dealing with people. Because we have our group, it is easier for us to sell. Buyers contract our group for order and we deliver. Before, we could not sell as much because we were ashamed to peddle our products on the streets.

Brenda Milo, FBS graduate Pudong, Kapangan, Benguet

Overcoming shyness; mobilizing members

The most significant change in my life is my increased interest in attending trainings like cassava processing and group meetings in organizations like PUCAGA. I attended trainings on writing project proposals, managing a cassava plantation and cassava processing. It helped me overcome my shyness and became more active during meetings and trainings. At present, I help in mobilizing co-members to attend our organization's activities. Attending meetings and belonging to organizations are now given importance by residents in our community.

CHARMP2 interaction convinced me to increase my cassava production since my raw cassava can be processed into different products like flour, cassava roll, tinupig, pitchi-pitchi, and binubudan (local delicacies). Market areas of cassava products are expanding such as in fiestas, municipal foundation celebrations, church anniversaries, and community gatherings. These promoted the consumption of natural foods which are safe to consume, no matter the age.

As a cassava farmer, supplying fresh cassava to PUCAGA helps me in obtaining additional income. CHARMP2 and municipal government interventions also helped us in the mass production of cassava. The provision of the Livelihood Assistance Fund helped in the expansion of cassava plantation and in the hiring of farmhands.

Cassava production is important in order to have continuous supply for cassava processing. If raw cassava is available for sale, we will have additional income. If I have additional income, I have money to buy rice and clothing, to afford education of my grandchildren, to hire laborers for my farm and to pay my taxes.



The Farmer Business School journey
with the Meghalaya Livelihoods and
Access to Markets Project (Megha-
LAMP): Empowering indigenous
peoples in northeast India



Meghalaya is located in the North Eastern Region of India and is one of the poorest states of the country. In its verdant hills reside thousands of indigenous people whose livelihoods largely depend on agriculture. Their meager income can barely sustain everyday needs. The government of Meghalaya has realized that providing only financial support will not create a sustainable livelihood for the people. Rather, this requires building their capacities to make better use of the available resources. The Meghalaya Livelihoods and Access to Markets Project (Megha-LAMP) was officially launched in 2015 by the government of Meghalaya with financial support from IFAD. The project aims to improve the household incomes and quality of life of the rural population in Meghalaya by developing markets and value chains for sustainable livelihoods, and ensuring that these livelihoods are adapted to Meghalaya's agro-ecologies and to the effects of climate change.

Roots and tubers, especially potato and cassava, are an integral part of the diet of the people in Meghalaya. Megha-LAMP decided to partner with FoodSTART+ in 2016 to enhance the implementation and effectiveness of the project's food security sub-component. In particular, the management of Megha-LAMP selected the FBS because of its innovative approach to promoting the establishment and strengthening of rural micro-enterprises. The FBS is holistic and involves the farmers' understanding of the whole value chain. Farmers learned about the market, the various stakeholders, and the ways by which they can establish an enterprise to exploit untapped market opportunities. Six farmer groups were selected to participate in the FBS: Bolchugre, Gadaruge, and Dilsigre from West Garo Hills decided to focus on cassava processing, while Mawngap, Wahlyngkien, and Nongwah from East Khasi Hills focused on seed potato. Eighteen Megha-LAMP staff and farmer group representatives were trained to facilitate the FBS sessions.

In 2015, the government of Meghalaya proposed a bill to make the state's agricultural production fully organic. FBS was introduced along with some new techniques in organic potato farming, although the farmers were hesitant at first. CIP experts provided trainings to the farmers to build their capacities to grow organically. The farmers eventually came to learn and appreciate its value. Further training through the FBS equipped them to add value to their agricultural products and build their own micro-enterprises.

On 5 September 2018, 165 farmers, of whom 110 were women, graduated from the FBS and launched their new businesses. In the presence of Meghalaya's deputy chief minister, Prestone Tynsong, the farmers proudly showcased their cassava and potato products ranging from cassava flour and cassava chips, to organically produced potato. The farmers were also linked to technical departments and business development agencies for possible additional support to their enterprises.

Megha-LAMP and FoodSTART+ consider that one of the main FBS achievements is the change in mindset of farmers who now see farming as a business. This requires time, creativity, innovation, ownership and capacity to overcome unexpected challenges. For instance, the first year of potato harvest was poor due to two major hailstorms. Farmers used most of the production to replenish their deteriorated seed stock for the next planting season rather than selling seed potato to market. Processing machines for cassava are also not yet available, and farmers still access a community processing plant. However, at the time of writing (July 2019), the farmers are still confident that what they learned from the FBS will help them improve their livelihood in the long run. Megha-LAMP is now committed to continue assisting the farmer groups to underpin their infant enterprises and expand their market.

Megha-LAMP at a glance

Goal

To improve household incomes and the quality of life in rural areas through enterprise facilitation centers in all of Meghalaya's 39 administrative blocks.

Objective

To expand sustainable livelihood opportunities adapted to the hill environment and to the effects of climate change.

Target areas

Meghalaya with enterprise facilitation centers in all 39 blocks

Target beneficiaries

191,070 households in 1,350 villages

Components

- Natural resources and food security
- Livelihoods support with sub-components on: (i) enterprise development; (ii) integrated production and marketing clusters; (iii) livestock development; (iv) marketing infrastructure; and (v) rural finance
- Knowledge services
- Project management

Implementing agency

Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA)

Duration

2014-2022

Budget

USD 174 million





Most significant change stories in Meghalaya, India (Megha-LAMP)





Lassing Langstieh

FBS graduate

Mawngap, East Khasi Hills

Farming together the organic way

We live here in Mawngap and we have an FBS group. Through this group I was able to understand many things about crops and vegetables.

Prior to the FBS, I didn't know much on how to grow crops. But now I share everything I have learned at this school with my family, and I feel this is the right thing to do. I learned how to grow crops like potato, cucumber and pumpkin organically without using chemical inputs. Now we feel much healthier because we only eat organic produce.

We noticed that if we use chemical inputs on cucumber then our yield increases. But the food tastes different when we don't use chemical inputs. It is tastier than before. In my garden, I planted the seed potatoes given to us by CIP and didn't use any chemicals. Looking at them, I think the potatoes are good too.

Aside from organic farming, we also learned basic accounting at the FBS. Now I'm able to keep records of all the accounts, such as expenditures and revenues.

If the entire group agrees, I would like to sell all our produce collectively. Since we visited the market during the FBS, I'm confident we can sell all our produce there. We gained immense knowledge about the market at the FBS.

On a different note, I'm unhappy because we haven't been able to make a storage house in which to safeguard our potatoes. Another problem is that the owner of the plot of land that was given to us to grow potato as a group is unwilling to let us continue using the land. In face of these challenges, we should agree with MBDA officers how to plan to roll out our activities next year; this will also bring us together as a group.



Sarlin Mawphlang

FBS graduate

Wahlyngkien, East Khasi Hills

Hope, unity and linkage to success

It's a great pleasure to be member of one of the first FBS in the state. We had never seen or been a part of a school like FBS before. In this school there are no books, we learn from doing practical activities. The school has taught me so much.

Thanks to FBS we have learned how to keep records of our expenses, and calculate the profit and loss statements from our potato cultivation. It has benefitted us so much that we now know how to price our products and understand what the buyers want. For instance, through the FBS, we have realized that there is a huge demand for organic seed in the market and this gives us hope. But as the traders we have met have told us, we need to improve our packaging.

What I really like about the FBS is that the training is also very applicable to other crops. However, we feel that we need to develop a business plan for all our farming activities so that we can improve cultivation and marketing practices.

During the FBS we learned about climate change. It helped me recognize what is happening to my crops was a result of climate change. The potato season now begins in February whereas it used to start in March. There is no longer much frost on the ground in February.

In addition to the new knowledge we have gained, FBS has brought unity to our group and this is possibly the most important thing.

We had a wonderful experience at the Business Launch. We had never felt so privileged as to be part of such a program. It gave us a chance to show what were able to do.

It is really good that the FoodSTART+ project has given us a chance to interact with civil servants at state departments. We know that even if the project ends, we will be able to contact them and get support from other local organizations.

Christina Rani

FBS graduate

Nongwah, East Khasi Hills

Helping us go organic

My experience in the FBS is unique—this school was something completely new to me. I have benefited a lot from the training on organic cultivation practices. I have realized that organic potato is good for our health and for the environment. And I feel that the potatoes taste better too. Through the FBS, I have learned how to produce high-quality organic seed potato. We have also learned how to use low cost and locally available materials, such as lantana (*Lantana Camara*) leaves and other organic biopesticides we can make, to manage potato in our store to reduce tuber moth infestations

Through the market survey, I have learned how to talk to people in and outside our village. We really got a better understanding of the market demand for organic produce and learned a lot from the opportunity we got to sell our organic potatoes in a local exhibition.

Because of the FBS we are now in contact with other important organizations like the Central Potato Research Station which will give us the chance to replace our seeds every three to four years. We will multiply our potato seed by applying the techniques we learned to maintain the quality. This is important because finding organic vegetable seeds in the market is still challenging.

Through the FBS, we have learned to work as a group. We have decided that each member is responsible for farming organic potato in his or her plot with the help of other members who are also in charge of making sure that the proper farming practices are followed. This will help us make sure that quality organic seed potatoes can be produced.

Some of the initial members were not patient enough and gave up on FBS after a few sessions. Now they are regretting their decisions.





Renila Sangma

FBS graduate

Gadarugre, West Garo Hills

Learning outside the classroom

I'm proud to be part of the FBS. It was first time that I heard about schools helping farmers learn outside of the classroom. This school is special as it has taught us how to work in a group. We discussed farming and marketing as a group, and this has helped unite us.

I found it interesting that the FBS goes beyond the use of books and adopts very practical and interactive approaches. We gained both a theoretical and practical knowledge that will help increase our incomes and improve our livelihoods. We learned about market surveys and how to improve our linkages with markets and buyers. I have also learned how to make different types of products such as namkeen chips and cassava flour. I prepared these products and sold them in schools and local markets.

While these products are in high demand, we cannot meet satisfy market requirements because we lack the capital and the machineries to produce in bulk. While the experience was good, I would suggest that future training focus on value addition to improve our skills. We also learned about climate change and how our root crops can sustain our lives in response to extreme weather conditions.

We are happy that we are now in contact with the Horticulture Office of West Garo Hills and the District Horticulture Officer is now committed to providing us with slicing machines. They also plan to build a working shed for us, hopefully by next year.

Marse Marak

FBS graduate

Bolchugre, West Garo Hills

Igniting hope for a better life

I'm grateful that Basin office has launched the FBS in our village for the first time, and I feel lucky to have been a member of the school. I enjoyed attending FBS because we didn't need any books.

In addition to learning about different farming activities which help us grow and produce good quality products, I also learned how to conduct a market surveys as part of a group, and how to identify buyers and work with them.

I really wanted to start business on my own, but I have learned that doing business as a group may be better than working on my own. In the FBS, we learned about group activities and the importance of working together in order to be very successful—whether in farm production or food processing.

Though I didn't attend the training on value addition, other FBS members who attended taught me how to add value to my crops. I made products at home and sold them in the local village.

I wish that FBS would continue as I feel that we still need to learn a lot, especially about marketing, as I believe that this would help improve our incomes and way of living.







Likistar Synrem

FBS facilitator

Megha-LAMP, East Khasi Hills

Leading by example

I attended the training of FBS facilitators at Bethany Society with support staff from CIP and MBDA. As a facilitator, I feel that the FBS has benefitted us immensely. We were able to share our knowledge with the people in the village, especially with community leaders, and we have also been able to make them understand the importance of organic farming.

Before attending the FBS training sessions, I didn't know much about organic farming. We don't grow our potatoes organically. We feel our soil is not suitable as we have been using chemical fertilizers for so many years. Therefore, we aren't very confident to grow potatoes organically, thinking that they might not grow. But the FBS has really benefitted us as a group; even the other people in the village have gained confidence after seeing us growing potatoes organically. Now, I see that the organic potatoes are much better.

As a facilitator, I invited all the group members to join the FBS sessions at the community hall. I persuaded them and shared the benefits that they could obtain through organic farming. We also shared a lot of knowledge amongst ourselves.

Initially, there were challenges in conducting the FBS sessions. Some of the participants are close to my parents' age, so it is difficult to get them to listen to me because they feel like I'm their child. Instead they tended to tell me what to do. But since I've received training on facilitation skills, I have become more self-confident and have been able to teach them different ways of growing potatoes.

I have realized that the more training I do, the more I can contribute to our group. I also feel that as a group we should be united in thoughts and actions so that we can work better together in the future. After conducting so many activities together, I'm truly hopeful that our group will stay united because I could see the happiness in the members' face when they got the chance to participate in group activities. In the future, when we encounter challenges, we should contact MBDA and ask for help with one voice. We would also like them to visit us more frequently because it boosts morale.

At the end of the FBS, I still feel that I have a responsibility to lead the group and continue promoting organic farming among our members. But, as I always say, I expect the group members to share the same responsibilities and commitments. We can achieve much more as a group than as individuals.





Engage
our
through
savings

CIP is a research-for-development organization with a focus on potato, sweetpotato and Andean roots and tubers. It delivers innovative science-based solutions to enhance access to affordable nutritious food, foster inclusive sustainable business and employment growth, and drive the climate resilience of root and tuber agri-food systems. Headquartered in Lima, Peru, CIP has a research presence in more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

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CIP is a CGIAR research center

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For more information, please contact CIP Headquarters. Av. La Molina 1895, La Molina. Apartado 1558, Lima 12, Peru.

+51 1 3496017 | cip-cpad@cgiar.org | www.cipotato.org | [@cipotato](https://www.facebook.com/cipotato) | [@Cipotato](https://twitter.com/Cipotato) | [@cip_cipotato](https://www.instagram.com/cip_cipotato)

