

GLOBAL FUND FOR WOMEN

Rural Women Striding Forward

A Learning Initiative to Link Rural Women and Influence Policy and Donor Agendas



Sarah Mwambaze, beneficiary of the Women's Center for Job Creation agriculture project in Uganda, proudly displays her corn.

“Food sovereignty values the producers. It localizes food systems [and] builds knowledge and skills.”

– Gathuru Mburu, African Biodiversity Network



Global Fund
for Women

PROJECT EVALUATION SUMMARY

Project Background

Global Fund for Women believes the empowerment of rural women, a continued focus on food security, and access to resources are women's rights issues; all three are needed to address critical gaps in human rights and development processes. To this end, Global Fund launched a 2.5 year grant making and learning initiative in June 2011 to support 22 rural women's groups working on sustainable agriculture and the promotion of women's rights in Burkina Faso, Kenya, and Uganda.

Our research framework addressed critical questions regarding constraints facing women farmers, and their preferred strategies for enhanced agricultural performance and advocacy for their human rights. We expected the learnings would provide strategic direction for grantees' work, Global Fund programs and the funding practices of other donor and development actors. This summary shares key findings from the 2013 evaluation of the initiative.





Project Strategies 2011-2012

22 rural women's groups in Burkina Faso, Kenya, and Uganda:

- Received a total of \$400,000 in general support grants to implement activities in their communities over 16 months
- Participated in yearly country-level convenings for learning and capacity-building
- Received technical support from country-based consultants
- Undertook research activities with project beneficiaries

Research Methodology

To evaluate the impact of this initiative, Global Fund for Women analyzed the following data collected in all three countries at the baseline and end of the project:

- Organizational surveys completed by the 22 grantee women's groups
- 26 focus group discussions held by grantees with farmers who benefited from their activities
- 230 surveys conducted by the grantees of their beneficiaries

The 22 grantee partners selected for this project all have sustainable agriculture as a main programmatic area, with supplementary activities that promote women's human rights (e.g., literacy training, land rights, and business management skills). Through Global Fund's convenings, grantees were able to link to each other, learn from experts in food security, food sovereignty movements and monitoring and evaluation. They were also able to dialogue with representatives

from the Ministry of Agriculture. At the end of 2012, a select group of grantees also participated in a regional workshop to strengthen efforts to advance women's rights and food security. Through these varied interactions, grantees deepened their understanding of agricultural practices, policies, and debates. Global Fund for Women hopes this learning will better position these groups for increased advocacy work to influence current policies around food security and women's rights.

Accomplishments include:

- 5,251 rural women trained in sustainable agriculture techniques.
- 14,000 men and women participated in women's rights activities.
- 100 acres of land were acquired for women farmers.
- 10,000 people in Burkina Faso were trained on food sovereignty issues (FENOP grantee group).
- One grantee partner's agricultural project earned recognition from the Kenyan government, which then provided additional financial support (Likii HIV/AIDS Home Based Care Group).
- During convenings, grantees strategized to strengthen women's rights organizing, mobilize farmers around food sovereignty, and deepen research into the implications of biotechnology on African farming systems and the environment.



“Women who participated in this initiative work in synergy. One of them became an animator in literacy and another, Fatimata, was elected Municipal Councilor.”

– Participant from Burkina Faso

Grantee partners conducted trainings for rural women on agricultural techniques as the dominant strategy to strengthen women's agricultural productivity, along with the disbursement of agricultural equipment and inputs. Grantees provided supplementary training to help women diversify their

livelihoods, purchase land, or participate in decision-making. Overall, these grassroots grantees and their networks, by transforming women farmers' cropping practices, daily diets, food management, and strategies of information-seeking, helped to spur a stronger women's movement for agro-ecology and agricultural sovereignty from the ground up.

From late 2012 through the fall of 2013, Global Fund for Women completed the evaluation of the initiative, by comparing baseline data with data collected at the end of the project. These included 26 focus group discussions and 230 surveys conducted by grantees of their beneficiaries and 22 organizational surveys completed by the grantee groups. Project data indicates that the Global Fund met our objective of strengthening rural women's groups' ability to provide information, tools, resources, and networking opportunities to improve their agricultural production and advance their human rights. We produced a detailed impact report of the initiative, which outlined key findings and recommendations. The report brief will be available on our website in mid-2014. We will hold dissemination briefings throughout 2014 in the United States and in the project countries. The following is a summary of the major impacts.

KEY EVALUATION AND IMPACT RESULTS

- Improved organizational capacity among the 22 funded grantee groups to deliver agricultural programs and build staff research skills. Capacity gains ranged from 15 to 33 percent within 12 specific areas.
- Increased agricultural yield and crop output in all project countries. Output increased between 5 to 50 percent, with particularly strong gains of 30 to 50 percent in Uganda.
- At baseline, while 42% of beneficiaries earned more than \$51 per year from agricultural activities, by the final evaluation, 55% earned more than \$51.
- Grantee groups and project beneficiaries developed first-time connections with government extension workers for training.
- Nearly 25 percent of beneficiaries added one or more income-generating activities, pointing to livelihood diversification beyond farming for rural women. In Burkina, livelihood activities moved to more secure opportunities instead of the informal sector.
- Increase in the number of meals eaten per day by families and significant increase fruit and vegetable consumption.
- More grantees (re)introducing indigenous crops and farmers using organic and integrated farming.
- Rural women gained a greater understanding of the macro-level barriers to their advancement, including state and trade policies, as well as entrenched inequalities.



“After receiving training on advocacy skills, women formed an advocacy network to voice their opinions during public meetings and held meetings with their leaders.”

– Participant from Uganda

What We Learned

This initiative aimed to answer the question: “What is the value of core support to women working in agriculture?” The impact report revealed that core support – a funding strategy which provides flexible grants – was pivotal to scaling up grantees’ impact and enabling greater program sustainability. Grantee groups also demonstrated their capacity to deliver agricultural training, tools, and resources to rural communities facing food insecurity. This finding is important for donors who have not considered rural women’s groups as potential partners to counter Africa’s food crisis.

The initiative also revealed that participatory and peer-to-peer methods of agricultural education (e.g. the use of successful women farmers as master trainers) were more effective than relying on outside experts.

A key recommendation from the grantee convenings was the need for rural women to be present at decision-making tables to influence policies that impact their productivity and their rights. The increased cohesion among women’s networks at the local level resulting from this initiative, and their ability to learn from each other, points to the potential for stronger collective action. Of note, there was greater grantee commitment to enhance future women’s rights work. In fact, 14 of the 22 grantee groups intend to adjust their mission to assure this outcome, recognizing that more empowered women farmers can better advocate on agricultural and human rights practices and policies that directly affect their lives.

Next Steps

Based on the findings and opportunities presented from the first phase of the initiative, activities in 2014/2015 will place greater emphasis on marketing, post-harvest

management strategies, and advocacy skills to strengthen grantees' ability to influence structural and policy issues. Research activities in 2014/2015 will also include the development of case studies.

MEET SOME OF OUR GRANTEEES

Association Solidarité des Productrices Agro-pastorales de Ouahigouya (ASPAGO) – Burkina Faso

Global Fund support has enabled ASPAGO to support 430 women farmers through agricultural training, seeds, and equipment. It has also trained 1,900 women on food processing and 60 on literacy. One of its greatest successes is its work on the Noogo ravine in a rural area suffering from desertification and loss of arable land. With the help of ASPAGO, the community

was able to mobilize women and men to improve the ravine, including the hard work of harvesting, transporting, and laying gravel for increased water retention so that it could be used by the community instead of quickly washing away. The newly graveled ravine captured much of the plentiful rainfall in 2012 and the land is increasingly enriched – leading to more land that could be used for year-round cultivation and greater agricultural productivity for women farmers.



Action for Rural Women's Empowerment (ARUWE) - Uganda

ARUWE's project supported 120 women farmers and organized training and farmer visits on improved agricultural practices, post-harvest management, pest control, and organic methods. These farmers received improved seeds and plant cuttings, yielding more produce at the end of the harvest season. They were also given goats and pigs and trained to care for them. In addition, beneficiaries learned bookkeeping, savings strategies, and credit management, and received loans from ARUWE's loan fund, which they used to invest in their farms or to start small businesses. The group also trained five community-based agricultural trainers who worked alongside government Agricultural Officers to train other women farmers.

Mrs. Nuliat is a 32 year-old ARUWE member who was married at an early age and now has eight children. After receiving training from the group, she successfully applied for a loan of UGX 2,000,000 (approximately US\$755) to invest in her once dormant bee



keeping business and expand her banana plantation to two acres of land. The results to date are encouraging: with each rainy season, she earns UGX 1.2 million (US\$453). With this new income stream, she has more than enough to pay back her loan and support her children, as well as to purchase other home necessities such as food and medication. ARUWE has also provided Mrs. Nuliat with information on family planning. Through her hard work, Mrs. Nuliat has gained increased respect from her husband who now supports her in her farming and bee keeping activities.

This initiative was made possible with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Photos courtesy of grantee partners ARUWE, ASPAGO, Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS), and Women's Center for Job Creation (WCFJC).

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Since its inception in 1987, the Global Fund for Women has granted over \$114 million to more than 4,705 women's groups in 175 countries.

Stand with women. Stand with us.

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