Women farmers in Burkina Faso face a number of barriers to increasing their agricultural productivity and income. Many are the product of cultural norms that limit women’s access to productive resources including land and agricultural inputs. Utilizing the leadership potential of farmers’ organizations and acquiring men’s support have proven to be effective in addressing these norms and empowering rural women.

While women in Burkina Faso are active in the agricultural sector, few own land, instead working on family farms owned and managed by their husbands or male relatives. Because of this, women reap few of the financial benefits of their labour. Further, the additional burden of household chores—placed solely on women in most homes—limits the time they can work on whatever small amounts of land they may control. The buy-in of community leaders and involving men is vital to remedying these issues and supporting the increased economic gains of women farmers.
Farmers’ organizations lead change

P4P and partners carried out a campaign to empower rural women in the North and Boucle du Mouhoun regions, reaching some 37,500 smallholder farmers and their communities. Training activities promoted women’s access to productive resources and their equal participation in decision-making at household, farmers’ organization and community levels. As respected and credible actors in their communities, P4P-supported farmers’ organizations provided an important point of entry.

Leaders of these organizations took ownership of the gender campaign, working alongside trainers from local NGOs to conduct public meetings and organize theatre presentations on gender issues. Farmers’ organization leaders also met with cultural and religious leaders in their communities to mobilize their support for the project, and created action plans to promote gender equity. Men and women members were identified to become community focal points and role models. These individuals are responsible for ensuring the ongoing discussion of gender issues and responding to questions within organizations and the community at large. The gender campaign was carried out in collaboration with the government’s Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Gender and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Men’s participation shifting norms

Ali Ouattara, head of agricultural programmes at the Association Formation Développement Ruralité (AFDR), a P4P-supported farmers’ organization comprised of village-level farmers’ groups, notes that both behaviors and mentalities have changed since the gender campaign began. He observes that increased dialogue and autonomy have allowed women members of AFDR to triple their cowpea production during the 2013 agricultural season. Acquiring the support of men such as Ali has been vital in achieving the gains made by women farmers. Today, many husbands and male family members are sharing farming inputs with women and providing them with more land to farm. According to data gathered by P4P, 70 to 80 percent of women in participating communities have expanded the size of their plots. This is in part thanks to training which has given women the confidence to ask for more land, as well as men’s understanding of the benefits of doing so.

In Burkina Faso, P4P’s ambitious goal of reaching 50 percent female participants in farmers’ organizations has been reached. In the CAP-Yako farmers’ organization, female membership rose from 33 to 55 percent after the initiative began. Male and female members of farmers’ organizations note the difference made by increased gender awareness, with women speaking more in meetings and their suggestions being taken into consideration more often than before.

These efforts have also had an impact at the household level. Both men and women report better communication, empowering women to take part in decision-making where their voice was often unheard previously. For example, decisions on when and where to send children to school—not to mention how to pay for schooling—are more frequently being made together. At the community level, traditional practices have been nuanced towards ensuring the well-being of women and their families.
Men in the North region worked with religious authorities to ban a practice called *mondodin*, in which men close grain reserves to avoid depleting the family’s reserves during the lean season, leaving their wives to feed themselves and their children. This practice has many negative impacts on families, frequently leaving women unable to adequately provide for their children’s nutrition. After raising awareness about the harmful effects of this practice, women confirm they now have access to granaries and family stocks all year. Elsewhere, women have been put in charge of community grain reserves. This has reduced waste, as women are often best placed to assess household needs since they are in charge of preparing meals for their families.

**Moving forward**

Despite these gains, many women require additional support to increase their productivity, and are still limited by a lack of equipment. Martine Sawadogo, a member of AFDR and president of the Nabonswindé women’s group, has tripled her acreage and nearly quadrupled her production over the past three years of association with P4P. However, without access to animal traction or money to pay for labor, she is unable to continue increasing her production and sales.

In 2014 and beyond, WFP will continue supporting the Government of Burkina Faso to build on progress made. A continued focus will be placed on increasing the participation of women in the agricultural sector, both as producers and as leaders in their farmers’ organizations and communities.

*Article by Eliza Warren-Shriner, P4P, Burkina Faso*

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Read more about P4P in Burkina Faso:

- [P4P Burkina Faso fact sheet](#)
- [Increasing women’s voice through agriculture](#)
- [Cycling towards progress: a woman’s journey with P4P](#)
- [From subsistence farmer to business woman](#)
- [Comparative research to reduce post-harvest losses](#)
Five rural women share their stories

Rural women in developing countries generally work around 16 hours a day. Not only are they responsible for tending their family farms for little or no profit, they also engage in a great deal of unpaid work, such as childcare and household duties. This work is both physically demanding and time-consuming, especially as women often don’t have the resources to purchase technology which could lighten their workload. Despite their hard work, women are generally excluded from decision-making within their own households and communities.

By seizing the opportunities presented to them through P4P, these five women farmers have made great strides, leading to improvements in their own lives and those of their families. Read on to learn more about their successes, as well as the challenges which they still have to face.

Chaltu Bultom Ede,
Bechbech Kebele, Ethiopia

As a widow, Chaltu is the head of her household, and must provide for the survival of her family by farming her small plot of land. Like most of the other women in her community, Chaltu wasn’t able to afford oxen with which to plough her field for much of her life. This meant that of the small amount of grain she grew, a large portion went as payment to the men she hired to plough her field. In order to earn extra income, she worked as a day labourer for other farmers, earning only 10 birr (US$ .50) a day.

Since becoming part of a P4P-supported cooperative, however, Chaltu has learned basic business skills, and acquired a loan from her cooperative, which she used to buy oxen and agricultural inputs, such as seeds and fertilizer. She is now able to support her two children independently thanks to her increased productivity and income earned from sales to WFP. With this money, she was also able to rent another hectare of land. She is now planning on sending her children to university. Chaltu says that she has seen great changes in her community, thanks to a conversation session that brings together community, religious and judicial leaders with cooperative members’ wives and husbands. Together, the community decided to better balance the work loads of husbands and wives in the household and on the farm. “I am glad to see my neighbour caring for his children when his wife is cooking,” she says.

“I am now free from being a daily labourer and have started to work on my own farm rather than working for others.” Copyright: WFP
Generoza Mukamazimpaka,
Bibare, Rwanda
Generoza works hard to care for her family and make a living on her family farm, waking up early and resting very little. At harvest time, her husband, like many other men in her community, used to sell most of the crops, leaving her without income. Generoza says that in general, women are afraid to try and change this situation for fear that their husbands will beat them. Although there are laws which protect them, she says, most women are unable to learn about their rights because they cannot read.

After joining the Amizero farmers’ organization in 2010, Generoza’s life began to change. She is now able to produce higher quality crops and market them to WFP through her cooperative. “I’m so happy because now I have money to solve my own problems,” she says. Now, Generoza is able to provide for her children’s education and pay for medical care for her family. She has also purchased a cow, and uses its waste to generate biogas for cooking to reduce the time she must spend preparing food.

Carmelina Oloroso,
El Rodea, Guatemala
Since she began participating in P4P, Carmelina has learned how to use new and more effective agricultural techniques, allowing her to nearly triple her yields of maize and beans. Thanks to her increased income, she has opened a savings account for the first time, and has purchased additional land. She has also been able to improve her house and better care for her six children’s needs. Though she has benefitted greatly, Carmelina still sees challenges ahead. While her cooperative has been able to access credit, the interest rates are very high, and the group still lacks an assured formal market beyond WFP.

Carmelina says that she has benefited greatly from exchange visits with other farmers, and hopes that she will get the opportunity to meet women farmers benefiting from P4P from all around the world. “The trainings specifically aimed at women have been motivating me, because they value us, give us the opportunity to express ourselves, bear us in mind. They also encourage us to excel and to empower ourselves through our economic activities,” she says. Carmelina is the secretary of the board of directors of the Asociacion De Desarrollo Empresarial Comunitario El Rodeo Camotan-Adecro, which has been working with P4P for three years.
**Esinta Jickson, Chiseka, Malawi**

Before taking part in P4P, Esinta profited little from her agricultural labour, making occasional sales to local people and small traders. Today, Esinta is the treasurer of the Chiwoza farmers’ cooperative, which has more than 400 members. In 2013, her cooperative marketed 50 metric tons of maize to WFP. This maize was used in the school meals programme to provide students with nutritious porridge. “With WFP, we can sell more produce and also make a quicker profit,” says Esinta. “We also have a guaranteed market with WFP, so we can plan a bit more for our future.”

**Koné Korotoumou, Zantiébougou, Mali**

Koné is the president of the Sabati women’s group, which was originally formed to pool their resources and assist one another with farming and household work. They joined P4P after seeing increased opportunities for their work, and are now marketing their crops collectively along with 30 other women’s groups in the area. Today, the women of Sabati feel that they have a greater sense of cohesion and loyalty thanks to their work. Under Koné’s leadership, they have opened a bank account, allowing their savings to accrue interest. They have also been able to pay for literacy courses and contributed to purchasing land for a warehouse built with support from WFP. With her increased income from sales to WFP, Koné has been able to purchase a cart to transport her produce to market. However, Koné and the women in her community still aren’t able to afford the farming equipment they need to more efficiently plant and harvest their crops. This means that they must pay for the use of the equipment, once the men have finished working on their own land, reducing their profits and risking losses in crop quality.

“I joined my farmers’ organization to feel more empowered in my role as a woman in my community.” Copyright: WFP

“Being on this committee has really helped the women members. It has taught us to be independent. We know we’re equal to the men and that has improved our standing in the community.” Copyright: WFP/David Orr

**Read more about P4P's work with rural women:**

- Blog: Unlocking the potential of women farmers
- Report: Women’s empowerment pathways
- Empowering women farmers through literacy training in DRC
- Gender strategy
- Gender fact sheet
In seven countries worldwide, WFP’s efforts to empower rural women are being strengthened through a joint UN project with UN Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The extensive networks and experience brought by P4P has provided a powerful platform to jointly empower rural women in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Liberia and Rwanda.

The joint UN project Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (RWEE), is being implemented in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Liberia, Nepal, Niger, Kyrgyzstan and Rwanda. RWEE aims to improve rural women’s food and nutrition security, increase their incomes, enhance their decision-making power and encourage policy environments conducive to their economic empowerment. To reach these objectives, the project leverages each UN agency’s comparative advantages and institutional strengths to generate more sustainable and wider-scale improvements in women’s livelihoods and lives.

**Leveraging gains made through P4P**

Throughout the five-year P4P pilot period, some 300,000 women farmers were supported to improve their agricultural productivity and increase their incomes. Today, these gains are providing an entry point for RWEE in four countries, with the joint project expanding upon the work done under P4P, more fully integrating assistance from the other UN agencies. WFP contributes to the project with innovative livelihood support initiatives, including P4P. UN Women and FAO bring technical expertise in women’s empowerment and agriculture to the table. IFAD contributes its co-financing of governments’ investment programmes, which have a strong presence in rural areas.

In Liberia, RWEE is reinforcing P4P’s work assisting women farmers to improve agricultural production and market crops collectively through their farmers’ organizations. These women’s groups are also supported to earn income as processors, through the use of rice mills, and have become shareholders in the Afriland First Bank’s Rural Bank Initiative.

Unfortunately, the Ebola outbreak has recently posed a challenge to implementation, bringing planned leadership training activities to a standstill. In Ethiopia, 2,000 women farmers are being targeted under RWEE, utilizing a gender plan developed under P4P to support rural women with increased access to financial institutions, agricultural inputs, extension services, technology and agricultural and climate information. Community conversation groups are also being held to raise awareness and encourage the creation of resolutions to address norms that cause gender inequality.

In Guatemala and Rwanda, policy and programmes are being shaped to benefit rural women under RWEE. The Guatemalan Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) and its gender unit are benefitting from gender best practices identified during the implementation of P4P. These are being utilized to create an institutional gender policy, to deliver capacity development for government staff and to provide technical support for rural extension staff, as well as to strengthen participation and empowerment of women in farmers’ organizations. Similarly, in Ethiopia, government organizations are being supported to reform policy in ways that promote women’s rights to land and social protection.

RWEE is being supported by the Government of Norway. Despite great strides made through the programme, the ambitious implementation plan is limited by funding shortfalls.
UPDATE
Final procurement figures presented
Deliveries on the WFP contracts made during the five-year P4P pilot period have been completed (September 2008 to December 2013). A full report will soon be published.

- Over **450,000 metric tons of commodities contracted**, with a value of US$ 177 million
- Almost **US$ 150 million paid** to suppliers, of which some US$ 90 million was paid directly to farmers’ organizations
- **367,000 metric tons** (81 percent of the total contracted amount) successfully delivered

IN THE NEWS
Blog by WFP Executive Director Ertharin Cousin
A blog written by Executive Director Ertharin Cousin on WFP’s commitment to smallholder farmers was featured on the Thomas Reuters Foundation’s Trust.org website.

“As a next phase in the evolution of Purchase for Progress, WFP has committed to purchasing 10% of all our commodities from smallholders. Through these purchases, we will assist those facing acute hunger and requiring food aid, while simultaneously creating economic opportunities for small and too often poor family farmers to feed their own children.” [Read more]

THIS MONTH
**Malawi** Maize purchased by WFP from members of a P4P-supported farmers organization through the warehouse receipt system was used to feed refugees in Dzaleka refugee camp. [Read more]

**Global** On **World Food Day**, WFP highlighted progress towards zero hunger through support to smallholder farmers, boosting local economies. [Read more]

**Afghanistan** WFP and partners participated in the government-run International Agricultural Fair in Kabul. Local partner organizations displayed products such as micronutrient-rich fortified flour and biscuits made from locally grown soy and wheat, often by P4P-supported farmers’ organizations. [Read more about P4P’s work in Afghanistan]

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