

# Involving the whole family to ensure women's economic empowerment

Papua New Guinea Economic Empowerment

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Two agricultural projects in Papua New Guinea are taking a family-based approach to improve gender equality. The projects are demonstrating how working with women and men farmers in their family units can improve economic outcomes and bring a better balance to decision making in homes.

CARE's Coffee Industry Support project (CARE Coffee) is resulting in a 22 per cent increase in income for families from their coffee production. Western Highlands participants of the second project, Family Farm Teams, are reporting eight-fold increases in income. The projects are also resulting in a more equal division of farming and household workloads across women and men in families.

Family-based farming approaches build families' economic security, business management and crop farming skills. At the same time, participants develop a new appreciation of women's workloads and the value of shared work. Family-based approaches explicitly focus on changing household gender norms. Family-based approaches teach family business management and communication skills, whilst encouraging shared decision making. This aims to increase equality between women and men by gradually shifting gender roles to be more equal.

They support women to access skills training and exhibit control over farming activities and income and to share with men more of the household chores. The percentage of households where women and men perform labour and household tasks equally increased by 11 per cent over three years for those households in which the women received training through CARE Coffee.

This is important because typically, Papua New Guinean women face limited access to productive resources, restricted mobility, unequal divisions of labour and low levels of schooling. Their care-giving duties also often impact on their ability to pursue income-generating activities.



Family team in Alona ward, Mul-Baiyer district, Western Highlands province.  
Photo credit: University of Canberra / Jo Caffery.

The Family Farm Teams project uses a peer education approach. Local women and men farmers are trained as Village Community Educators and have reached 4,126 other farmers (2,424 women and 1,702 men) in their communities. They organise training on shared workloads, shared communication and shared decision making. Farmers develop realistic goals for themselves such as better housing, paying school fees or expanding their gardens. The project is implemented by the University of Canberra and managed by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), in partnership with Pacific Adventist University in Port Moresby and East New Britain and University of Technology in Lae.

Project results show evidence of changes in behaviour. For example, a number of women and men report shifts in the more equal way that household and garden work is done within the family by women and men. A woman from Jiwaka described the changes she experienced this way: 'My husband ... completely changed when he attended the training with me. In the past, I used to hide and save money from my husband, but after the training he started working together with me. We are now working as a team and saving our money together.'

The project produces tangible economic benefits for families. A participant from New Ireland explained: 'The training helped me to see the different ways of making money. Farming, gardening, selling at the market, poultry, piggery,

etc. We formed several groups and we are now working hard to achieve our goals.’

The Family Farm Teams project has demonstrated that supporting semi-subsistence farmers to move towards more planned, equitable and effective family farming requires three key and complementary components: working as a family farm team; financial literacy and business skills; and agricultural production skills.

A family-based approach is also used by the CARE Coffee project. It increases women’s access to agricultural extension services and improves farming families’ business management, with women and men benefiting from coffee production and income. Coffee is a major source of farming income in Papua New Guinea with around one-third of the population involved in the production, processing and sale of coffee.

The project is showing positive results. Households in which women participated in extension training have higher coffee productivity. Households in which women received training are also eight per cent more likely to make decisions about selling coffee together.

‘Before the training I used to hide money from my husband and never told him about how much I made from selling food at the market,’ explained a woman farmer. ‘After the training, he tells me how much money he made from selling coffee and I do the same with garden food. Together we decide on how much should be spent on what.’



Coffee growers Ken and Karolin Gigmai from Keto Tapasi Photo credit: CARE / Tom Greenwood.

A mid-term evaluation found that CARE Coffee farming families had diversified their income and were noticing increased savings. Farmers and exporters reported increased yields and improved coffee quality. This creates opportunities to sell to the specialty market, which is gaining prominence and offers better prices for farmers.[1]

The benefit of these family-based projects does not end there. Pacific Women has widely disseminated the learning, approaches, tool kits, training modules and resources developed by these projects. They are being taken up by other Pacific Women partners, the Australian Government, the Government of Papua New Guinea and multilaterally-funded development programs.

For instance, the Women and Extractives project uses Family Farm Teams modules to generate support for women's decision-making roles in mine-agreement making forums. ACIAR has integrated the Family Farm Teams training and approach into its other agricultural projects that focus on cocoa and sweet potato. Projects being rolled out by the International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Bank explicitly incorporate the CARE family business management training and Family Farm Teams modules. With the support of the New Ireland Province Department of Education and the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart International School, teaching resources containing Family Farm Team modules have been provided to primary and secondary schools.

Family-based models are supporting women to have increased economic opportunities and greater decision making in relation to their income and assets. And that's better for everyone in the family.

[1] CARE International in PNG. Coffee Industry Support Project Mid-term Evaluation Report, 2017.

This story has been developed for the Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2019. It features Pacific Women-funded initiatives and partners. For more information about Pacific Women's support for initiatives across the region, refer to the interactive map: <https://pacificwomen.org/map/>