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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>Canadian Dollar</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPECS</td>
<td>Centre for the Alleviation of Poverty, the Environment and Child Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARD</td>
<td>Community Aid for Rural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td>Community Based Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CECOTAPS</td>
<td>Center for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAC</td>
<td>Global Affairs Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>Good Agronomic Practices</td>
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<td>GIZ</td>
<td>German International Cooperation</td>
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<td>GROW</td>
<td>Greater Rural Opportunities for Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>HoH</td>
<td>Head of Household</td>
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<td>IGAs</td>
<td>Income Generating Activities</td>
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<td>KFPs</td>
<td>Key Facilitating Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>LF</td>
<td>Lead Farmer</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>MEDA</td>
<td>Mennonite Economic Development Associates</td>
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<td>MOAP</td>
<td>Market-oriented Agriculture Program</td>
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<td>MoFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Food and Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-governmental organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>OFSP</td>
<td>Orange Flesh Sweet Potato</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPE</td>
<td>Personal Protective Equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRONET</td>
<td>Professional Network North</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRUDA</td>
<td>Partnerships for Rural Development Action</td>
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<td>TF</td>
<td>Technology Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>ToC</td>
<td>Theory of Change</td>
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<td>ToR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>UWR</td>
<td>Upper West Region</td>
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<td>VSLA</td>
<td>Village Savings and Loans Association</td>
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<td>WEAMS</td>
<td>Women’s Empowerment and Market Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEE</td>
<td>Women’s Economic Empowerment</td>
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<td>WIAD</td>
<td>Women in Agriculture Development</td>
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Executive Summary

MEDA contracted the Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies (CECOTAPS) to conduct an assessment study of the Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) project implemented during 2012-2019 in Northern Ghana. The goal of the GROW project was to “improve food security for families in northern Ghana by helping women increase availability, access, and utilization of a variety of appropriate and nutritious food through strengthening production and market linkages, increasing diversification in production, and creating nutrition awareness”.

This assessment used a mixed-methods approach by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from project clients and partners. The data presented, therefore, provides perspective of the respondents interviewed as part of this assessment. Two primary research questions were referenced to guide the data collection:

1. What is the existing economic situation of project clients in terms of income?
2. Are there any unanticipated results that the project might have produced?

Some key findings include:

- **Increased income**: average income of women farmers has increased from the project’s start (2012) to the time of assessment (December 2021) by 170%. Nearly four-fifths (79%) of women reported an increase in their income between 2012-2019. More than two-thirds reported that their income stayed the same after the project close.

- **Increased assets**: 76% of women farmers indicated that household assets (land and livestock) have increased during their participation in the GROW project. More than half (52%) noted that their household assets have increased beyond the GROW project.

- **Increased recognition and participation in decision-making**: Nearly two-thirds (71%) of women reported ‘active participation’ in household decision-making as a result of their participation in the project. No woman reported ‘active participation’ at the start of the project. The nearly same percent of women (72%) indicated that their control of revenue from the sale of farm produce has ‘significantly improved, compared to only 1% at the start of the project.

- **Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR)**: the post-project BCR for the GROW project is 1.04:1 (0.54:1 at project end), which is much lower than other similar ratios so far calculated for MEDA projects. The cost per client is $741 CAD which is like other MEDA projects.

- **Unanticipated results**: some women farmers have established other soya product-related businesses. A few private and civil society actors have adopted approaches promoted by the GROW project (e.g., the lead farmer model).

- **Challenges and lessons learned**: access to the market and input remains a challenge for women smallholder farmers as the linkages between market actors and women farmers were not strong. There is a lack of access to extension services after the project closed since KFPs and the Department of Agriculture stopped providing these services to project clients. Yields are still low in areas with low soil fertility, and as such, farmers are not competitive in the production and sale of soybeans to end markets.
Introduction

This report presents findings of the post project assessment of the Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) project. The GROW project implemented during 2012-2019 in the Upper West Region of Ghana with a focus on the soybean value chain.

Project Background

The overall goal of the GROW project was ‘to improve food security for families in northern Ghana by helping women increase availability, access, and utilization of a variety of appropriate and nutritious food through strengthening production and market linkages, increasing diversification in production, and creating nutrition awareness’. The project targeted women and their households in eight (8) selected districts in the Upper West Region of Ghana and was implemented through five (5) local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The project targeted 20,000 women and their households and provided a range of services and opportunities including training on good agronomic practices, nutrition and improved production practices, linkages to markets and market information, hand-holding on running and managing small businesses, incentivized to purchased tricycle for carting goods and service to marketing centers, skills on dry season vegetable farming for Income Generating Activities (IGAs), access to appropriate technologies, access to financial services, among others.

Using a market-system approach, the GROW project focused on assisting women farmers to increase and diversify farm production, marketing, and improvements in household nutrition. Because of its market potential and its nutritional advantages, soybean was chosen over other crops for promotion.
Study Objectives, Approach, and Methodology

The GROW Post Project Assessment study was conducted from September-December 2021 (more than two years after the project completion) to respond to the following main research questions:

- What is the existing economic situation of project clients in terms of income?
- Are there any unanticipated results that the project might have produced?

The study used qualitative and quantitative tools to gather data from project clients and partners in 16 communities across the eight districts in the Upper West Region of Ghana that are supported by the five Key Facilitating Partner (KFPs). The study was carried out by CECOTAPS researchers with support from four enumerators. An evaluation matrix served as the basis for semi-structured questionnaires for various stakeholders. Below is a description of data collection methods.

- **Document review**: Key project documents, including the project reports, evaluation reports, external relevant research studies, annual reports, project databases, etc. were reviewed. The review of documents helped in developing data gathering protocols for clients and partners.

- **Client survey**: A total of 96 women farmers were surveyed across 16 communities in the Upper West region of Ghana. Purposive sampling was used to survey women farmers from each project district.

- The majority of the respondents were adult smallholder women farmers (35+ years old) and were married (79% and 81% respectively). More than half (56%) of women farmers were not able to read and write and only 17% had higher than primary schooling. About three-fourths (74%) of women respondents reported that their husbands were the heads of their households.

- **Individual interviews**: Apart from the client survey, enumerators also collected data, noted important quotes, and captured stories of 10 clients (two from each of the five KFPs’ areas) to aid in the development of the most change stories.

- **Key informant interviews**: Nine key informant interviews were conducted, five with KFP staff and four with relevant stakeholders, such as government departments and NGOs.

Structure of the Report

The report is organized into three sections, including the introduction. Section two focuses on the benefits of the project for women farmers. The last section identifies key lessons learned and summarizes the findings according to research questions.
Benefits for Women Farmers\(^1\)

Women farmers identified several positive changes because of their improved knowledge and skills and adoption of improved agricultural practices and soyabean harvesting.

Increased Income

Women smallholder farmers reported an increase in their income which they attributed to their participation in GROW project. On average, income of women farmers increased by more than 170% during 2012 to 2021, from project start to the time of conducting the post project assessment. The extent of increase was significant (105%) prior to their participation in the project (2012) to project close, 2018.

![Graph showing average monthly income](image)

Additional perception data gathered during the assessment survey also shows that nearly forth-fifths (79%) of respondents reported an increase in their income between 2012 to 2018. More than two-thirds (70%) reported that their income stayed the same after the project close.

Some technologies such as motor king, money-maker pumps, soya grinder, and thresher not only conserve energy and time, but also served as additional sources of income for women smallholders and their families. These technologies helped women farmers and their households to raise capital to venture into other businesses such as provision shops, sales of second-hand clothes, among others.

![Bar chart showing income increase](image)

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\(^1\) It should be noted that the findings are exclusively based on respondents’ reports without further verification.
Increased Assets

The project helped in strengthening women farmers’ assets. Among strategies implemented towards strengthening women’s assets is the technology fund. A two (2) million Canadian dollar fund (CAD) fund was established as part of the special fund to support interested women acquire technologies, including equipment. The other was a strong advocacy involving traditional leaders, landowners and other stakeholders to address normative practice against women access to land. Women farmers reported an increased access to agricultural land from project start (6 acres) to project close (9 acres) and at the time of assessment study (2021). In addition, a large number of women farmers (76%) indicated that their household assets, including livestock, have increased during their participation in the GROW project. More than half (52%) respondents noted that their household assets have increased beyond the GROW project implementation period. Some women had been able to put up decent housing facilities for their families as a result of the additional income they made.
Increased Yield

The GROW project helped in improving soya productivity of women farmers. Nearly two-thirds (58%) women smallholder farmers experienced improved soya harvest between 2012 (before project start) and 2018 (at project close) and 19% recording good harvest. However, between 2018 and 2021, 39% reported high soya harvest. Capacity building and training on conservation agriculture, good agronomic practices, and financial management, business, and negotiation skills increased food harvest and enhanced the capacity and skills of women farmers to do business in an improved manner with their farming activities.

Increased yield also led to improvement in household food security. Survey results revealed that 15% of households did not produce enough food for household consumption before the start of the project while 85% produced enough at the close of the project in 2018 and 83% of households currently produce enough food for consumption in 2021.
Increased Recognition and Decision Making

More than two-thirds (71%) women farmers indicated that they ‘actively participate’ in household decision making at the time of assessment (2021) compared to only 1% before the start of the project. The recognition and inclusion of women in decision-making at the household level is attributed to their financial contribution to the expenses of the household.

In addition, 60% women reported ‘significantly improved’ access and control of productive and household assets, compared to 0% before the project. More than two-thirds (72%) reported ‘significantly improved’ control of revenue from the sale of farm produce, compared to 1% before the project and about the same percent of women (70%) noted ‘significantly improved’ access and control of financial resources, compared to 2% before the project.

Conducive Factors and Challenges

Study participants indicated the approaches and strategies that the GROW project adopted to implement activities contributed to achieving success. The ‘Male Gender Activist (MGA)’, an approach where gatekeepers of power at the community act as agents for change, partners, allies and advocates for women right and access to productive resources was experimented in the GROW project that led to increased awareness about gender issues and increased recognition of women’s economic contribution. The Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA), a tested MEDA approach, has proved to be the most convenient and sustainable financing option for agriculture for rural women. Lead farmers’ approach also contributed to increasing outreach of the project and some lead farmers are still offering technical backstopping to their group members.

Access to market and input remain challenging for women smallholder farmers, especially after the project close. The linkages between market actors and women farmers were not strong enough to continue after the project activities end.
Clementia Mahama is a 55-year-old married woman farmer from Kpaglahi in the Wa East district. Prior to participating in the GROW project, Clementia farmed maize and cowpea and ran a makeshift shop in the village’s weekly market and would earn around GH¢ 18 ($2.25 USD) per week. During the farming season, Clementia would stop her trading to support her husband on the farm. The farm productivity was very low, and her household would experience seasonal food shortages particularly during the lean season.

Clementia learned about the GROW project through an employee of the GROW Key Facilitating Partner (KFP), ProNet North, and decided to join the project activities. She diligently participated in all project interventions and was selected as a Lead Farmer (LF) by her group. As a Lead Farmer, she interacted with many soybean market actors and received training on good agronomic practices (GAP), soy production, soybean processing, financial management, market information, etc.

Clementia adopted GAP which improved her farm productivity and income. Clementia also started the processing and sale of soy kebab at the village market earning GH¢ 50 per week. She bought a motorized tricycle (motor king) and makes GH¢ 150 a week. Her husband also learned GAP from her and applied the same on his farm. Now, with the farming of soybean and her crops of maize, groundnut, and cowpea, Clementia indicates an improvement in her household’s food and nutrition situation as her household has never faced food shortages. She also received greater recognition from the community and household members.

“My husband consults me in all household decisions, and he also respects me”. –Clementia Mahama
Alija Yussif is a 36-year-old who lives with a 7-member household in the Sisala West district of the Upper West region of Ghana. Previously, her husband was the main breadwinner and Alija would support him on their subsistence farm. Alija had no income of her own and could not even buy household utensils.

In 2013, Alija was introduced to the GROW project by TUDRIDEP (GROW KFP) in a community orientation meeting. Alija decided to join the project and received training on financial management, crop rotation, row planting, compost making, zero or minimum tillage, soy utilization and processing, etc. After the trainings, Alija started applying the recommended soybean farming practices on the family’s two-acre farm producing around 1,653 lbs (750 kilograms) of soya. Determined to add value, she began processing soya into kebabs and sold them at the local market. With income from sales of soy, kebabs and savings from the Village Savings and Loan Group (VSLA), Alija purchased a motor king through the GROW project’s technology fund initiative to transport her soy produce from the farm to market. She also uses motor king to transport goods for community members from one place to another. These multiple income streams enabled her to have an increased and stable income that she used to buy a soya grinder, a fridge, a hand-dug well, and a plot of land in the district capital, Gwollu.

Alija plans to buy a thresher to reduce the cost of labor, burden, and time while also threshing for other farmers for a small fee.

“I am grateful to MEDA for all the help. If GROW project was still in operation, I have no doubt would have been a very rich woman by now.” – Alija Yussuf
Hayiung Vinyuan is a 39-year-old woman farmer living with her family of nine members in Funi Wa East district. Before joining the GROW project, Hayiung had no business skills or opportunities and was helping her husband in low-yield maize and groundnut farms.

Hayiung joined the project in 2015 with the hope that the project could improve her life and she would not be solely dependent on her husband. Hayiung attended trainings on good agronomic practices (GAP), soya production, soya processing, post-harvest handling and market linkages, etc. She started cultivating soya on a small piece of family farm and implemented agricultural practices that she learned through GROW project which impacted positively on soy harvest.

With fund from the sale of soybeans and weekly saving through village savings and loan associations (VSLA), Hayiung was able to finance 30% of the cost of the soy grinder that provided her with an alternative source of income. Aside from grinding her own soya beans, she also grinds groundnut paste for other women on market days enabling her to earn a weekly income of GH¢ 30. She also sells soya kebobs and earns about GH¢ 120 a week. Hayiung accessed the GROW technology fund to purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which allowed safe handling of agrochemicals. She also purchased a motor king that she uses to cart her farm produce and firewood to save time and energy as well as to generate income when she transports goods of other farmers.

Hayiung plans to expand her soya farm to ensure availability of raw material for soya kebob business. She also wants to acquire technology that could drain water from her processes soyabean before cutting them into kebobs. She intends to increase her customer base by expanding her business to nearby markets.

“I used to only help my husband in his farm but now I have a farm of my own.” – Hayiung Vinyuan
Jahara Ibrahim is a married woman living with her family of eight members in the Wechiau community of the Wa West district. Before joining the GROW project, she was supporting her husband on three acres of sorghum and cowpea fields. The yield was very low, and the family could not afford to buy necessary inputs for their farming business and did not have enough food to eat.

In 2013, Jahara learned about the GROW project through one of the GROW partners, CARD, and participated in several good agricultural practices (GAP) trainings, including soybean cultivation and processing, row planting, dry season farming (e.g., keyhole gardens), and market information. With the project’s support, she cultivated soybean and implemented GAP. Jahara also set up a home garden using compost made of crop residues which provided fresh vegetables for her household consumption, especially in the dry season, which saved her income that would be spent on buying vegetables from the market. Through GROW’s technology fund, Jahara also bought a motorized tricycle (known as motor king) in transporting her produce from farm to market. She carts goods, including cattle, not only to the nearby market center but also to the regional capital, Wa, for other farmers. Her motor king weekly earning is about GH¢ 300.

From the sale of soybean and motor king business, Jahara not only earns a steady income to help her daughter and son complete senior high school but is also constructing a concrete house. Her husband respects her more and appreciates the impact of the GROW project on their household wellbeing. Jahara plans to complete her housing project and expand her transport business by purchasing another motor king or even a truck for more income.
Unanticipated Results and Project Sustainability

In addition to contributing to increased incomes for women farmers, GROW project contributed to other changes observed in the project area. The assessment study found adoption of the GROW project practices by non-participating men and women farmers in both project and non-project communities. The results of the survey revealed that 85% of the women farmers indicated that they have observed about 698 non-beneficiaries copying some of the innovations of the GROW project for the well-being of their families. This was corroborated through key informant interviews. The common innovations that were reported to be copied by non-project beneficiaries are outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Soya farming in general</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soy processing and utilization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of improved and certified seed crop rotation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Row planting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved post-harvest techniques</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soil and water conservation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zero/minimal tillage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dry season vegetable production</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fertilizer application</td>
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<td>Composting</td>
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Though other projects like ADVANCE I and II, RING project, IITA implemented in the same zone of influence, the GROW project contributed to the adoption of best practices, techniques, services that enhances productivity and profitability in an efficient way by both public and private organizations. Key informants identified that Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), Antika Co Ltd, Savannah Food Company and other civil society organizations, including existing KFPs, have been promoting such approaches as VSLA and lead farmer, although it is difficult to attribute these changes entirely to the project. Some women farmers reported establishing businesses related to soya products such as sale of Kebobs, milk, etc. that provided them additional source of income.

In terms of sustainability, the project activities continued to be implemented by KFPs and other stakeholders that were involved in the project. KFPs continue to provide capacity support services to farmers’ groups through the lead farmers and are paid in most cases paid in-kind even though at a minimal rate due to financial constraints. On-demand technical backstopping to women farmers and facilitation of linkages between farmers and other stakeholders for agricultural services are some services that continued to be provided by these KFPs. For instance, CARD Ghana continues to monitor, and support GROW farmers in their weekly VSLA saving meetings as well as the adoption of good agricultural practices. The organization is currently supporting some group members to access post-COVID recovery grants, strengthening their VSLA operations, as well as maternal and child health support, among others. Another KFP, CAPECS, continues to respond to requests from women farmers to support them with linkages to inputs service providers and aggregators, training on GAPs, support for VSLA activities, and nutrition demonstration training. The KFPs are however challenged with the capacity, especially financial, to reach out to all the beneficiaries to monitor their progress and offer support where necessary. KFPs are registered as not for profit organizations, rely on donor funding and therefore do not charge farmers directly for their services, thus reach out based on demand.

Lead farmers are still offering technical backstopping to their group members in terms of production and other capacity issues. Sales agents continue to serve as aggregators to those who do not have ready markets for their produce whiles the male gender activists are still advocating and supporting women in all their activities especially those facing challenges in accessing productive lands.
Lessons Learned and Conclusions

This section concludes study findings based on the main research questions, including lessons learned that could be applied to such future projects.

Lessons Learned

The male gender activist approach was quite useful in creating community awareness about gender issues, especially emphasising the economic contribution of women to household wellbeing. Future MEDA projects could benefit more by engaging men early in the implementation stage and identify how men could be ‘allies’ to address gender related issues.

The technology fund was reintroduced in the last two years of implementation after switching to the coupon system from e-voucher system which faced challenges such as unavailability of mobile network, mobile phone, literacy to read and understand text messages. Due to late continuation of the fund implementation, only about 24% of the clients accessed the fund. Final verification of some of the equipment were not done as at March 31, 2019. Technology related activities should be incorporated early in the project to enable greater understanding, utilization and enhanced impact.

GROW project was implemented alongside the ADVANC project, RING project, WFP etc in the Upper West Region. The projects mentioned had soybean value chain components with similar interventions. There was however little collaboration with GROW for efficient use of resources. Future MEDA projects could benefit by collaborating with other organizations to avoid duplication of efforts. A rapid assessment of existing initiatives and closer coordination with relevant government departments should be done at the outset and …

Conclusions

The GROW project was successful in meeting its targets as it reached 23,368 smallholder women farmers exceeding the project target of 20,000. Assets and yield of soybeans produced by the women farmers also increased. Other areas where the project was successful included household income from agriculture produce, access to production inputs, and extension services, among others. Women farmers also reported increased recognition in the community and household as well as greater participation decision making.

The project activities and results are sustainable. Non-participating farmers copied practices that the GROW project promoted to improve their yield and income. Other public and private market actors working on rural development adopted GROW project approaches to increase their outreach.
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