



## FEED THE FUTURE ALL-IN PROJECT IN BRIEF

# STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN UGANDA

### Lead Principal Investigator

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### Project Partners

Uganda Insurers Association; Uganda Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, University of Florida

### Development Innovation

Integrating farm inputs, training, community/men support and agricultural index insurance to empower women smallholder farmers

### Commodity

Arable crops and livestock

### Targeted Population

Women smallholder farmers

### Country/Location

Uganda

### Timeline

2021-2024

### Funding

\$450,000 (USAID)

Rural women in developing countries tend to be poorer than men, produce less from farming and are much more vulnerable to an increasing risk of climate change. In Uganda, new ALL-IN research is testing a comprehensive approach to supporting women to improve their on-farm productivity, increase their resilience to shocks and enhance their overall empowerment. This research builds evidence on what mix of interventions create the most opportunity for women to escape poverty and secure resilience to improve the well-being of their families and communities.

### The Challenge

Women are critical to agriculture in Uganda, contributing about 90 percent of the nation's food.<sup>1</sup> Women are also more vulnerable than men to agricultural shocks caused by disasters like drought and flood because the majority are poor, largely subsistence-oriented and depend on less rewarding farming practices to produce low-value crops.

Women's vulnerability to agricultural shocks is exacerbated by additional burdens imposed on them both in and outside of the home. Women have less decision-making power inside the home while carrying a heavy unpaid care workload. Women's limited control over their land and even the proceeds from selling what they grow keep them from opportunities that include quality inputs and extension services, credit and even off-farm income.<sup>2</sup>

As climate change increases farming risks, what interventions help women to adapt? A comprehensive approach focused on building women's resilience and empowerment may be a viable way to enhance general household food security, better nutrition and reduced poverty.<sup>3</sup>

### Research Design

This ALL-IN research project led by Makerere University in Uganda seeks to transform and improve women smallholders' empowerment in agriculture

### RESEARCH INNOVATION

A recent paper<sup>1</sup> argues that policy-oriented research on women's empowerment would benefit more if a combination of methods was applied to better understand the "why's" as well as the "what's" of different approaches. Combining a randomized controlled trial (RCT) with other qualitative methods will generate robust evidence to explain causalities, especially when testing the impacts of different interventions.

Use of mixed methods in RCTs makes it possible to determine both the quantitative and qualitative impacts of the interventions and their causes. Mixed methods combine the counterfactual analysis from an RCT with factual analysis by using quantitative and qualitative data to examine the causal chain. In this study, mixed-methods in impact evaluation yield a more rounded and nuanced picture of an intervention's overall impact by gathering more rich, comprehensive and diverse perspectives from the quantitative and qualitative measures, providing credible evidence and ensuring that the findings are grounded in the experience of participating women smallholder farmers.

<sup>1</sup> De Haan, A., et al. 2020. "To RCT or not, is not the Questions: Methods for Policy-Relevant Research on Gender Equality." *World Development*.

and their resilience to agricultural shocks. The project employs a mixed methods approach that draws on expertise from economics, agriculture, social anthropology and gender studies. The project takes place in Uganda districts with high levels of poverty, poor nutritional outcomes and a high risk of agricultural shocks.

The project begins with qualitative research with men and women farmers, community leaders, policy makers and technical staff to understand the local concepts of women's empowerment and the agricultural shocks women face. The team is measuring women's empowerment with pro-WEAI, which was developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) with support from USAID to standardize field research on women's empowerment in agriculture while providing flexibility to adapt to local contexts.

The team is also testing a suite of interventions that help women respond effectively to agricultural shocks. The interventions include (1) an input package of seed for stress-tolerant and nutrient-rich crop varieties and fertilizer; (2) training on climate-smart agriculture technologies and practices, business skills, gender transformative approaches; and (3) weather-based index insurance to mitigate the risk of crop failure.

The interventions are implemented as a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to test their impacts on key outcomes that include household welfare, women's empowerment and resilience to agricultural shocks. The research team has identified 48 savings/microfinance groups, from which ten women are selected at random to participate in one of five groups:

- T1: Input package, trainings and weather-based index insurance
- T2: Input package and trainings only
- T3: Trainings and weather-based index insurance only
- T4: Input package and weather-based index insurance only
- Control: No interventions

## Development Impact

Climate change is having an indelible impact on poverty in Uganda, causing frequent and intensive weather extremes leading to droughts, flooding, landslides, hailstorms and erratic rainfall that have increased rural poverty from 23 percent in 2012 to 25 percent in 2017.<sup>4</sup> Improving agricultural productivity now is critical considering forecasts that poverty will increase even more due to the current COVID-19 pandemic which caused severe disruptions to rural livelihoods, especially among women.

This project contributes directly to a number of USAID and Feed the Future objectives in Uganda. This includes strengthening and achieving a well-nourished population, understanding key drivers of vulnerability, increasing households' capacity to manage risk and diversifying community and household assets. The project also maintains a strong focus on gender by seeking to empower women by increasing their access to financial resources, improved agricultural practices and reduced vulnerability to agricultural shocks.

National efforts have begun to focus on community-wide rural resilience and on women's inclusion but separately.<sup>5</sup> This ALL-IN project integrates multiple approaches with a focus on improving women's livelihoods as well as their empowerment. This research offers a window for policies that effectively address women's vulnerability to agricultural shocks through interventions that will increase their agricultural productivity, help diversify their incomes and improve the wellbeing of their families.

<sup>1</sup> Feed the Future. 2015.

<sup>2</sup> FAO. 2019. "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019. Safeguarding against economic slowdowns and downturns."

<sup>3</sup> USAID. 2018. "Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Uganda Country Plan."

<sup>4</sup> Uganda Bureau of Statistics. 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Financial Sector Deepening. 2018. "FinScope Uganda: Topline findings report, Kampala."

## FEED THE FUTURE ADVANCING LOCAL LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION NETWORKS (ALL-IN)

This research is funded by the Feed the Future Advancing Local Leadership & Innovation Networks (ALL-IN) initiative, an innovative collaboration between the Kenya-based think tank International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED) and the U.S.-based Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Markets, Risk & Resilience at the University of California at Davis.

Launched in 2020, ALL-IN advances host-country leadership in defining and implementing research projects and to deepen host-country networks. The initiative funds research to develop and test financial and market innovations that take the most promising agricultural tools for rural families in developing economies from the lab to the field.

Historically, Feed the Future Innovation Labs have built their research programs on partnerships between researchers at U.S. universities and researchers at host-country universities and institutions. Historically, these partnerships have been led, in both program administration and the ideas that drive the research, from the U.S. ALL-IN shifts this leadership role to researchers and institutions in Africa.

ALL-IN builds on research capacity in African countries by inverting the traditional model of research collaborations led from U.S. universities. With funding through ALL-IN, researchers at African institutions lead these collaborations, defining research priorities and leveraging their local knowledge, skills and ideas to build actionable evidence for effective policy with U.S. university research partners to supplement their own skills, talents and ideas. ALL IN also addresses capacity gaps among many research institutions in managing large and complex awards.

[Learn more at www.iced-eval.org/all-in/](http://www.iced-eval.org/all-in/)

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## ABOUT FEED THE FUTURE

As the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative, Feed the Future works to give families and communities in some of the world's poorest countries the freedom and opportunity to lift themselves out of food

insecurity and malnutrition. By equipping people with the knowledge and tools they need to feed themselves, Feed the Future addresses the root causes of poverty and hunger, helping people end their reliance on aid and creating important opportunities for a new generation of young people—all while building a more stable world.