



RESULTS SERIES

INCREASING ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR FEMALE FARMERS IN UGANDA, TANZANIA, AND KENYA THROUGH MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITIZED DATA

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Digital Financial Services (DFS) can be a safer and more convenient avenue for female farmers to access financial resources compared with conventional products, helping reduce differences in access to productive assets between women and men working in agriculture.

THE CHALLENGE



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A stocktaking assessment conducted globally found that DFS relevant to smallholder farmers were seldomly designed or targeted to women.

THE RESULT

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Technical Assistance (TA) provided to DFS providers in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya led to the design and development of more targeted financial products and marketing.

The project already saw some impact. For example, in Kenya, the project prompted the DFS provider to mainstream a gender-sensitive approach, resulting in the increase of women's uptake of digital financial services. The share of female clients has increased by approximately 10 to 15 percentage points.

Agriculture is the largest source of employment for women in developing countries, with women representing more than 60 percent of the agricultural labor force in some parts of Asia and Africa. Yet, female farmers have significantly less access to productive assets, including financial services. It is estimated that narrowing gaps in access to assets among female farmers could lead to a 20 to 30 percent yield increase per household, benefiting both women and their families.¹

DFS, accessed largely through mobile devices, have expanded the availability of financial products to smallholder farmers. They represent a safe and convenient way to save, obtain loans, and make or receive payments. However, there are significant gender gaps in access and usage of DFS. In low- and middle-income countries, women are 36 percent less likely than men to own mobile money accounts.² Further, a stocktaking conducted by the World Bank, found that while there are many DFS products relevant to smallholder farmers, they are seldom designed or targeted explicitly toward women.

In 2017, the World Bank, with the support of the [Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality \(UFGE\)](#), initiated a project which sought to generate knowledge on the potential of mobile technologies and digitized data to close gaps in DFS usage between female and male farmers.

¹ World Bank. 2017. Mobile Technologies and Digitized Data to Promote Access to Finance for Women in Agriculture.

² World Bank. 2014. Global Findex.

The project first conducted a stocktaking of initiatives that used mobile technology and digitized data, assessing their potential to address inequalities in access to finance among male and female farmers. Findings from the stocktaking exercise were captured in the report [*Mobile technologies and digitized data to promote access to finance for women in agriculture*](#), which provides a set of recommendations to help guide efforts to promote greater financial inclusion. These include: (1) Providing assistance in marketing and promotion to successful DFS services, which are not targeting women as customers; (2) investing in the design of bundled and customized financial services that better respond to women's financial priorities and needs; (3) scaling initiatives and products targeted to women by digitizing them; and (4) driving the collection of digitized data to help expand financial institutions' offerings to female farmers.

Building on these recommendations, the project provided TA to three DFS providers: Fenix,³ an off-grid solar home system provider in Uganda which is developing lending solutions for rural customers; Digifarm, a digital platform which offers a range of financial and nonfinancial services (such as training) to smallholder farmers in Kenya; and MyAgro, a social enterprise that offers bundled services to farmers in Tanzania. In all cases, the TA helped increase providers' understanding of the needs and characteristics of female farmers in their respective markets and leveraged research insights for the design and development of targeted financial products and marketing.

³ Fenix was bought by Engie in 2020 and has now become [Engie Energy Access](#).

In Uganda, Fenix invested in new tools to gather feedback from female clients in a cost-effective manner. The work has been adapted to other countries and the tools are now being applied by the company in other markets, such as Benin.

In Kenya, Digifarm improved their outreach—and its associated uptake—to women. They partnered with a commercial bank to offer savings products and better address the financial needs of women involved in agriculture. In addition, staff now visit female farmers in their homes and organize talks with women's groups to help increase their trust and understanding of offered financial products. They also focus on creating effective links to markets in value chains where women are most active. Women now account for 48 percent of clients of multiple Digifarm products, an increase of approximately 10 to 15 percentage points from rates prior to the provision of the TA.

In Tanzania, MyAgro also adopted new marketing mechanisms. It leveraged the power of influential female leaders to encourage their friends to enroll in programs. Marketing products have been improved by increasing the representation of women in their visuals and introducing terminology used by local female farmers. MyAgro has also sought to make services more accessible by reducing the minimum package size and associated prices.

Lessons learned from these three pilot programs have been captured in a UFGE financed 2021 report, [*Women in Agriculture: Using Digital Financial Services*](#).



The Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality is a World Bank Group multidonor trust fund investing in knowledge, diagnostics, impact evaluations, and data to help policy makers and practitioners close gender gaps in countries and sectors. Learn more on www.worldbank.org/gender/ufge



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