

## POLICY BRIEF

# A WIN-WIN FOR GENDER AND NUTRITION

## Testing A Gender-Transformative Approach From Asia In Africa

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### BACKGROUND

Women farmers make up about 43% of the agricultural labor force, both globally and in developing countries, but they continue to face a common set of gender-based disadvantages. Women in Burundi, 80% of whom depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, experience low productivity and profitability of their economic enterprises due to deeply rooted gender discrimination, which exacerbates poverty as well as food and nutrition insecurity. **Gender equality is critical to global development, both in discourse and practice.** Women are key to agricultural research and outreach programs, and also have been recognized by development agencies as effective agents in solving poverty and other social and economic ills. When women have the same access to productive resources as men do, farm yields increase (FAO, 2011).

Conventional approaches to gender mainstreaming and gender integration have focused on closing gaps in access to resources, information and technologies without addressing the underlying

causes of inequality, including social norms and other structural barriers. Gender-transformative approaches – addressing the practical needs for food security and income while also taking on gender and social norms, raising consciousness on women’s disadvantages, building women’s solidarity, and engaging men on gender equality – show much promise and can be a win-win for livelihoods and gender equality.

### WIN-WIN FOR GENDER, AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION

Since 2016, CARE Burundi has implemented the EKATA approach – Empowerment through Knowledge And Transformative Action – integrated into an agriculture program to test its effectiveness against a typical gender mainstreaming approach (Gender Light) and a Control (with agriculture interventions only) in a modified randomized control trial, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

## The objectives are:

1. To contextually adapt EKATA, an impactful gender-transformative approach, for use in a multi-sectoral agricultural intervention in Burundi.
2. To evaluate the differences in outcomes of the EKATA approach compared with a Gender Light approach in the areas of gender equality, food security and economic well-being.
3. To determine the differential costs and capacities required to support lasting transformations in gender equality and improved sectoral outcomes through the EKATA approach, compared with the Gender Light model.

**Table 1: Comparing EKATA Model and Gender Light Model**

Gender-Transformative (EKATA)	Gender Light
EKATA focuses on developing critical reflection skills, power analysis and deeper engagement with male relatives of participating women, male community leaders and the wider community on social norms through group dialogues and the evolution of group solidarity.	Modeling standard gender-mainstreaming approaches, Gender Light integrates key messages and predefined discussion topics alongside the program of livelihoods skills sessions. To ensure that the program does no harm, spouses and community leaders are informed of the program objectives and gender topics even though they are not actively engaged in critical reflection processes.
<b>Package includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and train EKATA trainers.</li> <li>Awareness-raising through power and gender socialization analyses.</li> <li>Building women's critical reflection and communication skills (leadership, conflict management, negotiation skills).</li> <li>Active engagement of community and religious leaders, local government and traditional councils.</li> <li>Active engagement with male relatives of VSLA members using male change agents (<i>Abatangamuco</i>) and reflection groups.</li> <li>Resolution of group action plans through collective action and solidarity between women's (and men's) groups.</li> </ul>	<b>Package includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and train trainers on gender messages.</li> <li>Inform male spouses of the program objectives.</li> <li>Sensitize community leaders on program objectives and gender topics.</li> <li>Disseminate messages and discuss with women's groups, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender division of labor</li> <li>Household decision-making</li> <li>Control over assets and income</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Livelihoods skills, nutrition education and market access:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial education, support for savings mobilization and linkages to microfinance.</li> <li>Networking of VSLA groups.</li> <li>Farmer Field &amp; Business Schools (FFBS)<sup>1</sup>: agricultural training and extension; introduction of agricultural technologies (including improved seed varieties - rice and vegetables); training in market literacy and engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion of women's roles further up the agriculture value chain through training in post-harvest handling, packaging produce for the market.</li> <li>Basic income management and entrepreneurial skills.</li> <li>Nutrition training and information (dietary diversity, meal planning, cooking demonstrations) for participants and spouses.</li> </ul>

CARE's hypothesis was that a gender-transformative approach that focuses on power relations and social norms will not only yield **deeper, more lasting gender equality outcomes**, but also **more profound and more sustainable effects on sectoral outcomes, specifically household food security and economic well-being**.

<sup>1</sup> CARE's FFBS is a participatory, women-focused extension approach that helps farmers build skills necessary to increase production; access markets and sell at competitive prices; collaborate with one another; and engage in beneficial and efficient decision-making. It also transforms the status and recognition of women by providing the support they require to be successful farmers, business-people, leaders and agents of change.



## IMPACT EVALUATION

The project has been implemented in the provinces of Kirundo and Gitega. Each province is subdivided into communes, and each commune is further subdivided into collines (the smallest administrative unit). The *Win-Win* project randomly assigned collines to EKATA, Gender Light and Control groups. Baseline data was collected in 2016 – Midterm was conducted in 2018, and end-line data was collected in 2020 from a random sample of 1,315 households and 1,849 individuals (1,059 female heads of household, and 790 male heads of household). Additionally, the project conducted 36 individual in-depth interviews, disaggregated by sex and age – and male- or female-headed households – at baseline, midline and end-line. This data was complimented with focus group discussions (FGDs). The evaluation looked at the impact of EKATA compared with Gender Light and Control on several areas, including rice production (which was the main focus crop), income and wealth, gender equality and women's empowerment. The cost-effectiveness of these approaches also was analyzed. The evaluation used the project level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (Pro-WEAI) to measure changes in gender equality and women's empowerment.

## IMPACT ON RICE PRODUCTION

Overall, the **amount of rice produced increased 74.7%**. In FGDs, all groups described similar increases in yields and cost savings from the rice production techniques. Previously, farmers had used about 10 kg of seeds to harvest 200 kg of rice. Using the SRI techniques, they could plant 1-2 kg of seeds and get up to 400-500 kg in harvest. Households that went through the EKATA process recorded the highest increase in amount of rice produced, with total rice produced more than doubling, from 158 kg per household to 363.9 kg. Some Control participants (especially in female-headed households) still lived in poverty. Gender Light and EKATA groups did not seem to have challenges with inputs and were using loans and agricultural income to purchase land, livestock, and start businesses.

EKATA groups also had the largest increase of rice sold, mainly due to greater production, with a 166.5% increase, followed by the Gender Light group, who increased the amount of rice sold by 110%, and the Control group by 104.5%. The quantity of rice consumed at home from the season's harvest rose from 95 kg to 120 kg per household – an increase of 27%. In EKATA groups, rice consumption increased by the largest margin, with an increase of 124%, followed by Gender Light at 115% and Control by 110%. Overall, *across all the households*, revenue from rice sales



increased by 39.1%, with the largest increase in EKATA groups, where revenue increased by 58.6%, compared with 28.9% in Gender Light and only 8% in Control groups.

With these increased yields, women reported being able to sell part of their rice crop for the first time (rather than keeping it all for consumption), some women mentioned being able to buy pigs or goats, and a few even bought or rented a piece of land.

## IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY

At the beginning of the project, men, married women and widows expressed concern about common problems: undernutrition, lack of financial access, worries related to school fees, and access to land. Food insecurity was a real problem in the project areas, and it went hand in hand with domestic violence and conflict. One widow at baseline admitted,

**“Because of the lack of food, at dusk I often beat my child under 5 to sleep with an empty stomach to prevent him from asking me for food while I have nothing to give him.”**

### Household Dietary Diversity Score and Women's Dietary Diversity Score

Household dietary diversity score (HDDS) evaluates the number of 12 food groups that a household has consumed in the 24 hours prior to the survey. The results show that while households in the EKATA and Gender Light groups had an increase in the HDDS between baseline and end-line, households in the Control

groups recorded a decline, although these changes were not significant. The WDDS, used to evaluate food diversity among women specifically, increased by 3% in EKATA, and decreased by 6% and 1%, respectively, in Control and Gender Light treatment arms.

**Table 2: Household and Women's Dietary Diversity Scores**

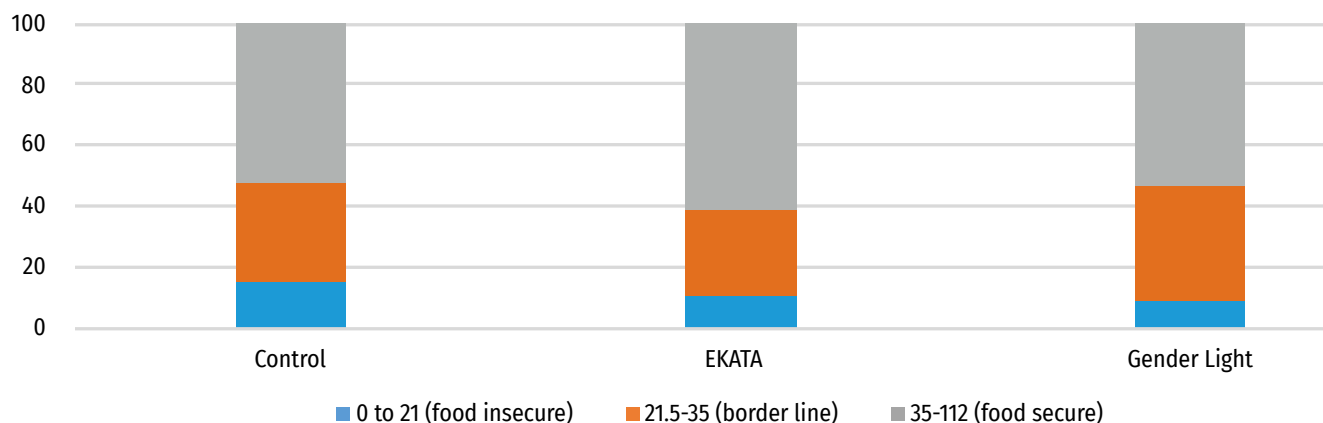
	HDDS			WDDS		
	Baseline	End-line	% Difference	Baseline	End-line	% Difference
<b>Control</b>	5.2	5.1	-1.9	3.24	3.06	-5.56
<b>EKATA</b>	5.1	5.4	5.9	3.14	3.24	3.18
<b>Gender Light</b>	5.1	5.2	2.0	3.16	3.13	-0.95



### Food consumption score (FCS)

The FCS attempts to capture food sufficiency and diversity. Overall, at end-line, the mean FCS ranged from 37 in Control to 41 in EKATA, out of a maximum possible score of 112. Based on the World Food Programme's classification thresholds (2008), EKATA had the highest proportion of households (62%) within acceptable FCS range, followed by Gender Light. EKATA had the highest improvement of FCS by 4 points (from 37 to 41), followed by Gender Light, which improved by 2 points. In terms of thresholds, Gender Light and EKATA had nearly equal improvements in FCS of 5.7 and 5.0, respectively.

**Figure 1: Food Consumption Scores**





## IMPACT ON WEALTH

Wealth distribution was divided into quintiles, with the lowest 20% of the population defined as poor, and the upper 20% as rich. The households in the first quintile are perceived as belonging to relatively higher wealth categories than those in the second and third quintiles, respectively. The results of wealth indices show that EKATA had the greatest proportion

(12.8 percentage points) of the households that moved up to first quintile, meaning improved wealth, as well as the largest decline in those in the third quintile (a reduction of 13.8%). Gender Light had the highest percentage to move down from the first quintile (22.6%) and the highest proportion that moved to the third quintile (27.7%), implying reduced wealth.

**Table 3: Proportion of Households in Wealth Quintiles**

Treatment	Quintile	Baseline	End-line	% Difference
<b>Control</b>	1	30.3	31.5	4.0
	2	31.4	31.9	1.6
	3	38.3	36.6	-4.4
<b>EKATA</b>	1	34.3	38.7	12.8
	2	33.0	33.2	0.5
	3	32.7	28.2	-13.8
<b>Gender Light</b>	1	36.7	28.4	-22.6
	2	34.8	35.2	1.1
	3	28.5	36.4	27.7

In the EKATA and Gender Light groups, there was a slight diversification into other income-generating activities besides banana beer – for example, running a restaurant; selling pork, eggs or soap; and making bricks. The key differences in livelihood security and agricultural productivity between the treatment groups seem to relate to (1) their ability to buy land (rather than rent or sharecrop); (2) their ability to pay for manure/fertilizer; (3) the increase and diversification of livestock portfolios in the Gender Light and EKATA groups; and (4) their ability to hire labor.

At baseline, livestock generally were cared for by women and controlled by men, with the exception of poultry. At end-line, there was a significant contrast between Control group households (who still had few livestock) and the Gender Light and EKATA households, which had far more diverse livestock portfolios. In the EKATA households, the number of animals that the households accumulated in their portfolio was higher than in other treatments (even despite disease loss). Significantly, female heads of household were not at a disadvantage, compared with married EKATA women. One EKATA widow, for example, had lost 16 hens to disease, but she still had nine chickens, 12 rabbits, a cow and a goat.



IMPACTS ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES

Asset Ownership

Overall, sole ownership of land by women increased by 7.7%, resulting in a decline in joint ownership by 8.4% in the EKATA arm. In comparison, women’s sole ownership of land went up by 9.4% in the Gender Light group, while joint ownership went down by 8.1%. However, across all treatments, more men reported joint ownership of land at end-line compared with baseline. Ownership of non-mechanized business equipment went up for both men and women, with the largest increase for women being in the EKATA groups, where women’s ownership went up by 17%, compared with 15% for Gender Light.

Decisions on Income

At baseline, 25.7% of women in the EKATA groups made decisions on use of income from crops, and this increased to 34.5% at end-line. In the Gender Light groups, only 16.5% of women made decisions on use of income, while in the Control groups, 23% did. At end-line, the highest proportion of women making decisions on livestock income were in EKATA groups, at 37.7%, compared with 14.8% and 26.2%, respectively, for Gender Light and Control groups. Qualitative findings showed more joint decision-making in the EKATA groups compared with the Gender Light groups, as illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Decision-Making on Use of Income Across Treatment Groups

Control	Gender Light	EKATA
<p>“It is up to my husband how to use money. He gives me money that we can use for the household, but if he gets a little extra money, he keeps it himself and uses it to buy beer. I can sell small things such as a basket of sweet potatoes or cassava, but I have to inform him. I can’t take a harvest of beans and take it to the market. <b>Even when I want to buy clothing, I must inform him.</b> I can buy something without consulting him only when I use the money that I get from my business.”</p> <p>—Female, age 61, Kidasha</p>	<p>“There’s <b>dialogue within the family</b> and we make decisions together. Before the project, my husband made all decisions alone, and that was the practice in all our households. But <b>we can say that there has been a change, thanks to the trainings</b> we received. But there are other men who have not changed.</p> <p>—Female participant in FGD, Kabuyenge)</p>	<p>“I gave my husband 500,000 francs, and he added 100,000 francs. We bought land for 600,000 francs. Later, we sold it for 800,000 francs and bought land where we want to build for 2,400,000 francs. In total, <b>I contributed 1,100,000 francs, and the rest was given by him.</b> You can ask any person you meet here; he can tell you that I have the capital!”</p> <p>—Female head of household, age 33, Kivuvu</p> <p>“With this project, we became very close to each other and <b>have agreed on projects I had never dreamt to do before.</b>”</p> <p>—Male head of household, age 36, Kivuvu</p>

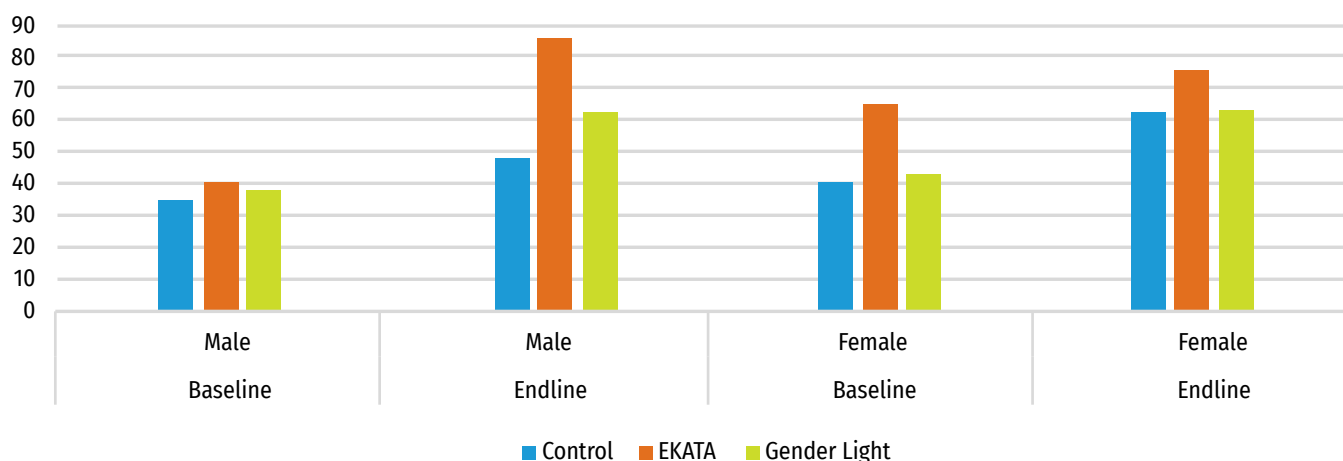


### Attitudes Toward Gender-Based Violence

From baseline to end-line, the EKATA groups reported the highest change in number of people who believe that domestic violence is never acceptable. Among men in EKATA groups, there was a 110% increase, and a 16.9% increase among women. This shows that EKATA changed individual perceptions not only about violence to each other as spouses, but also toward other

community members. In the Gender Light arm, there was a 62% increase in men and 46% increase in women who felt it was not justified to beat a woman under any circumstances. In the Control groups, 38% more men and 55% more women said they felt it was not justified to beat a woman.

**Figure 2: Proportion of Men and Women Indicating Gender-Based Violence Is NEVER Acceptable Under Any Circumstances**



In the Control group, women stated that alcohol, extramarital affairs and disputes over the harvest income – or in response to women’s requests for household needs (salt, soap, oil) – were common causes of violence within the household. In the Gender Light group, women spoke of their recent pasts and the early days of their marriages as marked by severe violence and near-constant quarreling, often over money matters or alcohol use. At end-line, they spoke of reductions in GBV, and ability to speak up on issues that they would not have voiced before, and they were knowledgeable about forms of violence (including sexual violence) and of their rights.

In the EKATA group, women also discussed past experiences of oppression – a word they used freely – particularly economic violence and severe physical force, early in their marriages. At end-line, they spoke about greater peace and communication, and attributed changes in their communities and among their husbands to the trainings on “household and family management,” and to their own awakening. An important

difference in the EKATA group seems to be that instead of individual counseling (neighbor-to-neighbor) or intervention from the colline administration, community groups also intervene to mediate conflicts. All the women in the EKATA group participated actively in conflict resolution. The men in the EKATA groups also spoke of greater peace in their households, and they drew on their own experiences to counsel others in the community.

***“We were taught to respect our wives and vice versa. I simply advise them to focus on what I was taught myself – not to be aggressive to her verbally; not to use a shocking tone when speaking to her; and provide her with new clothes as you can, etc”.***

**—Male EKATA group member, age 62, Mukenke**

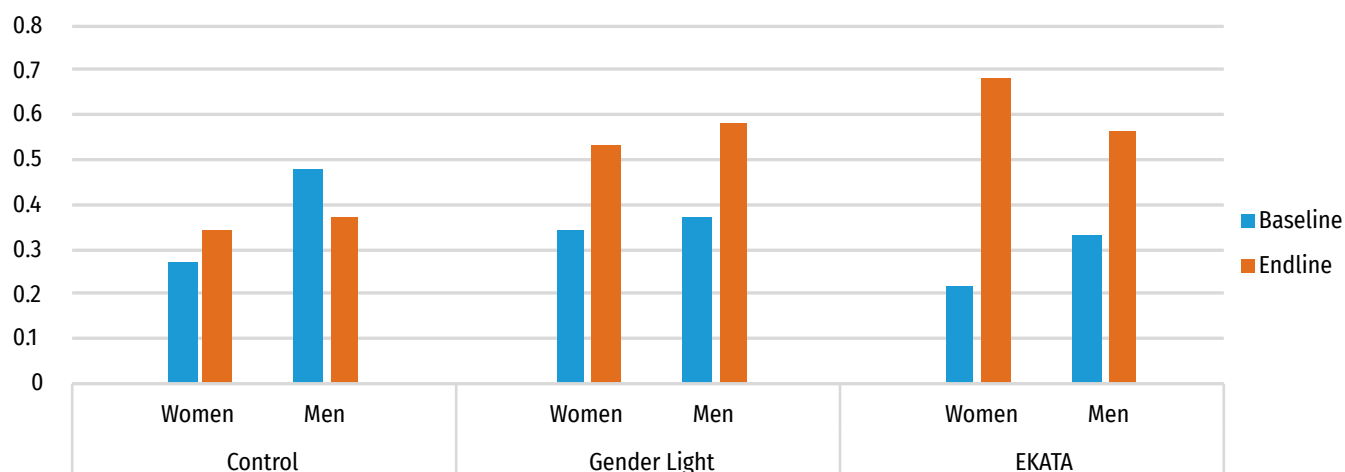


## Women's Empowerment Scores and Gender Parity Index

EKATA group members achieved the highest women's empowerment score of 0.65, showing an 84% increase from baseline to end-line. The proportion of women in the EKATA groups who were empowered rose to 68%, while those for the Gender Light groups rose to 53%, and in the Control to 34%. The Gender Parity Index improved by 51% in EKATA and by less

than 10% in the other groups. The average empowerment gap between women who did not achieve gender parity with men in their households dropped by 55% in EKATA as well, while it only decreased by 21% in Control groups and 15% in Gender Light groups.

**Figure 3: Proportion of Women and Men Achieving Empowerment**



## COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

As expected, the highest proportion of the project budget was spent on the EKATA arm, for training and materials, because it is a more high-intensity intervention. On average, the EKATA arm had the highest average cost of US\$306 per participating farmer, compared with US\$271 for Gender Light and US\$263 for Control. In terms of proportionate distribution of funds, approximately 42% of the budget was applied on EKATA, 31% on Gender Light and 28% on Control.

The value of benefits created by the project also was highest in EKATA, at US\$3,275,088, which was about twice the value of Gender Light (\$1,611,658) and almost 8.5 times more than the Control (\$382,996). Analysis of benefit-cost ratio found that EKATA had a ratio of 5:1, compared with 3:1 and 2:1 for Gender Light and Control, respectively. Evaluating return investment, again EKATA had the highest return, at 410%, compared with 270% for Gender Light and 30% for Control.

## CONCLUSION

The findings bear out CARE's hypothesis that **a gender-transformative approach is a win-win for food and nutrition security, livelihoods and gender equality**. As such, EKATA could be scaled up, incorporating lessons learned and adapting to fit any context.



## For more information contact

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