



PHOTO © KARL GROBL FOR GRAMEEN FOUNDATION



NEW FIELD
FOUNDATION

RURAL WOMEN CREATING CHANGE
2003-2016

Dedication

Many individuals, women and men, contributed to the story of New Field Foundation, as we gratefully acknowledge in the back pages of the document. This brief history of New Field is nonetheless dedicated to the rural women of West Africa, whose daily fortitude, unbending spirit, and boundless generosity surpass all efforts to make the world a better place.

*I told Aissatou to prepare the rice seeds
I went to do plots when the rain came
I sowed, then the rice grew...*

*One single measure and the earthen pot is full
One single measure of rice and the pot is full
One single measure and the earthen pot is full.*

*I went to the rice field one Friday
The stalks were out
The rice was ripe...*













*One single measure and the earthen pot is full
One single measure of rice and the pot is full
One single measure and the earthen pot is full.¹*

¹ Excerpt from a communal work song translated from the Diola language in Casamance, Senegal. Source: Women Writing Africa: West Africa and the Sahel. 2005. Esi Sutherland-Addy and Aminata Diaw (eds). The Feminist Press at CUNY, United States.



RURAL WOMEN CREATING CHANGE

New Field Foundation 2003-2016

<i>Introduction</i>	<u>4</u>	
THE UNIQUE APPROACH OF NEW FIELD FOUNDATION	<u>5</u>	
A HOLISTIC MULTI-TIERED APPROACH	<u>6</u>	
<i>Partner Overview: Coordination of Feminine Non-Government Organizations & Associations (CAFO), Mali</i>	<u>9</u>	
RURAL WOMEN CREATING CHANGE	<u>10</u>	
<i>Partner Overview: Association for the Promotion of Grassroots Initiatives (APIB), Mali</i>	<u>11</u>	
<i>Grantmaking Processes</i>	<u>14</u>	
HOW NEW FIELD FOUND GRANT PARTNERS	<u>14</u>	
DIRECT FUNDING OF RURAL WOMEN’S GROUPS	<u>16</u>	
<i>Partner Overview: Forum for Sustainable & Endogenous Development (FODDE), Senegal</i>	<u>17</u>	
<i>Partner Overview: Women in Livestock Husbandry in the Kolda Region (DIRFEL-Kolda), Senegal</i>	<u>21</u>	
TECHNICAL SUPPORT, TRAINING & EDUCATION, & ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT	<u>22</u>	
LINKING ORGANIZATIONS & INDIVIDUALS LOCALLY, REGIONALLY, NATIONALLY, & INTERNATIONALLY	<u>22</u>	
SUSTAINING SUPPORT FOR RURAL WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS	<u>23</u>	
<i>Grantmaking Outcomes</i>	<u>25</u>	
HOW NEW FIELD’S PARTNERS SPENT THEIR GRANTS	<u>25</u>	
<i>Partner Overview: KAFO Farmers Federation, Guinea Bissau</i>	<u>26</u>	
HOW RURAL WOMEN IMPROVED THEIR LIVES WITH NEW FIELD GRANTS	<u>27</u>	
LEADERSHIP IN RURAL WOMEN’S GROUPS	<u>30</u>	
<i>Conclusions</i>	<u>31</u>	
APPENDIX A <i>Acknowledgements</i>	<u>33</u>	
APPENDIX B <i>Lessons Learned: Operating Field Offices in West Africa</i>	<u>34</u>	
APPENDIX C <i>Funding to Support Agroecology</i>	<u>35</u>	

Introduction



Founded in 2003, New Field Foundation grew out of the commitment and interest of its founding board of directors and staff to support the creative initiatives of women and their families to overcome poverty, violence, and injustice in their communities. Our work has touched thousands of women's lives in sub-Saharan Africa through a unique and effective program that supports community-based grantmakers and rural women's organizations. The women involved testify to the transformative power of working together with access to capital, information, and decision-making roles. Their organizations are forming networks and attracting widespread attention, their leaders weigh in on policy dialogues, and the women themselves are increasing food security and peace within their communities.

After more than a dozen years of grantmaking, the foundation closed its primary program in 2016. As a relatively small foundation with board and staff in the U.S. and consultants in West Africa, New Field was consistently engaged in an iterative process to assess our approach. If one approach fell shy of expectations, we would try a different way, until we felt the approach was working as well as possible. Through it all, we always tried to listen to the rural women and respond to their own assessment of their needs and hopes for their future.

In addition to our commitment to empowering village groups, New Field's team was highly motivated to help rural women in West Africa realize their own potential to change their lives and those of their children. At times, we would wonder if a sharper focus on domestic violence or community health would be more helpful than funding to expand crops and livestock for income generation, which was usually considered the highest priority by the women. Over time, we learned to trust their collective decisions and to support rural women in their own choices for resource allocation, rather than funding what we considered important.

We hope to capture in this document a sampling of the successes, challenges, and learnings of this initiative in order to share them with others who may also be drawn to support and work closely with African rural women. Their cause is just, their need is great, and their ability to succeed in the face of adversity and scarcity is profound. We hope other funders will recognize that empowering rural women's organizations is a key ingredient for achieving peace and stability in rural Africa as well as moving these communities closer to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

A small U.S.-based foundation could not have accomplished what New Field did without the support and tireless work of an incredibly dedicated staff, board of directors, team of African consultants and advisors, and grant partners. In order to focus this document primarily on the program work and accomplishments of the African rural women themselves, we include a list in Appendix A of the highly-committed individuals who helped over the years to develop and manage the foundation and this program. We thank each and every one of them for the work, thinking, and inspiration they have contributed to New Field Foundation and its *Rural Women Creating Change* program.

THE UNIQUE APPROACH OF NEW FIELD FOUNDATION

In 2003, direct philanthropic funding for grassroots women's initiatives in sub-Saharan West Africa was very limited. Some North American and European NGOs and foundations were able to leverage funds from larger organizations such as W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Ford Foundation, but most of these efforts did not directly address the specific challenges faced by rural women. The dominant philosophy of rural development strategy at the time was to fund or extend microcredit to individual farmers. There was little recognition that rural women working in groups might garner enough social and economic power to strengthen their own capacity to control their lives and destinies. New Field made a strategic decision to focus on rural African women working in groups, collectives, and alliances at the village level to propel themselves out of poverty.

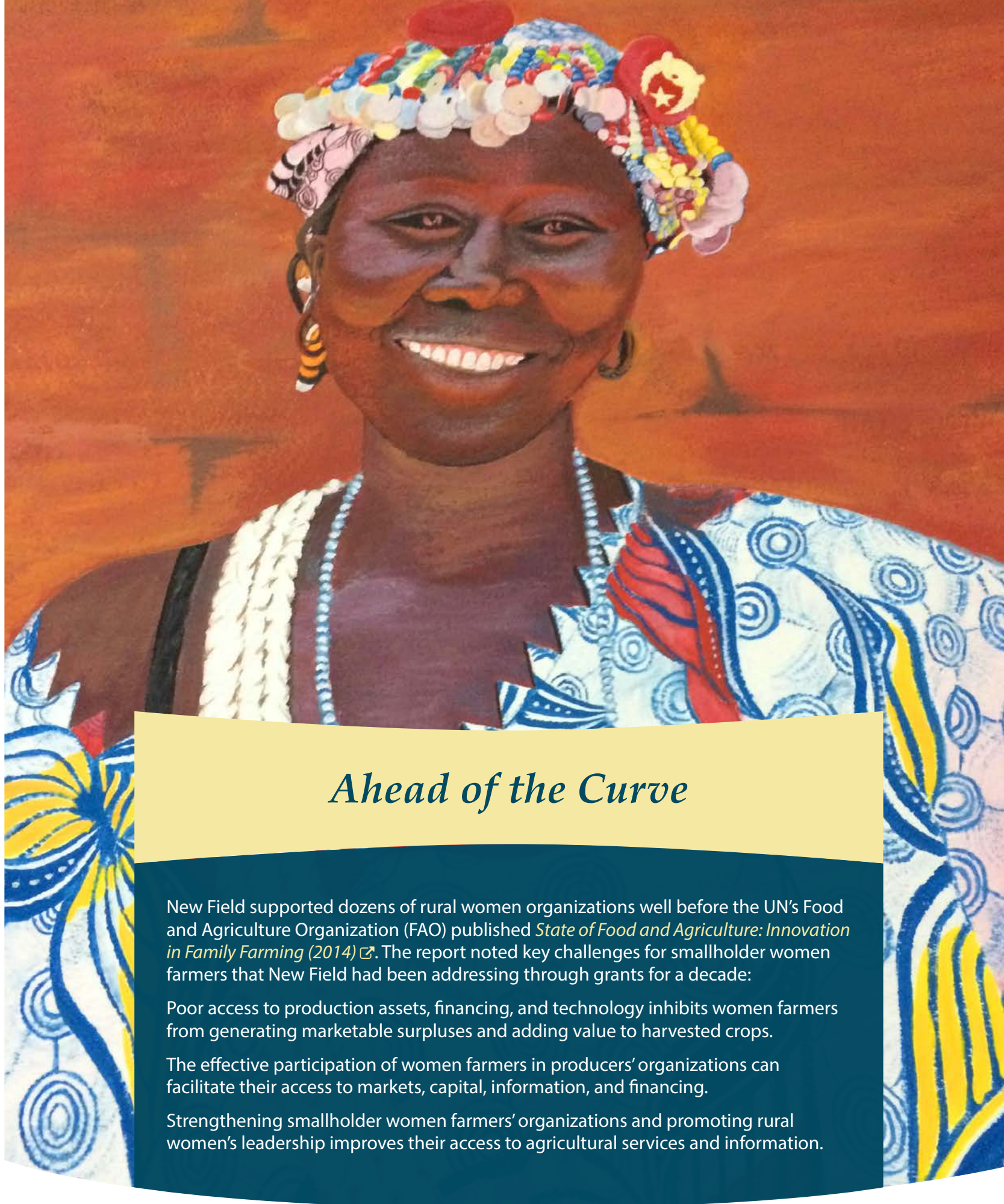
In the end, after 14 years of grantmaking, New Field's strategy created an informal network of 11 national NGOs in four countries of West Africa focused on supporting rural women's groups. Some of the NGOs became "Community Grantmakers" which redirected major portions of their New Field grants to rural women's groups as "community grants" of approximately \$5,000. Hundreds of rural women's groups independently discussed, planned, and presented formal proposals to the NGOs for funding support. The Community Grantmakers awarded community grants to the selected grantees. Funds were then deposited into the bank accounts of rural women's groups and managed by the groups themselves.

The Community Grantmakers monitored the results of the community grants from a wide array of activities. These included market gardens irrigated from wells with solar pumps; collectively farmed plots on community land to which the women had no prior access as individuals; cereal grain storage and retail outlets; technical training centers; internal savings and loan circles; rice hulling and parboiling operations; agroecology demonstration fields; education and training workshops on women's rights; and the production and sale of value-added processed crops.

Some of these Community Grantmakers periodically broadcast the work of the rural women's groups on local community radio networks, heard by thousands of rural residents. New Field also helped raise the profile of rural women by supporting leaders of the NGOs and women's groups to tell their stories at regional, national, and international conferences.

This approach reflects only a portion of the work that New Field grants supported during 2003-16. The general strategy of direct funding to grassroots rural women's groups, however, made New Field's grantmaking fairly unique from its inception.





Ahead of the Curve

New Field supported dozens of rural women organizations well before the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) published *State of Food and Agriculture: Innovation in Family Farming (2014)* [↗](#). The report noted key challenges for smallholder women farmers that New Field had been addressing through grants for a decade:

Poor access to production assets, financing, and technology inhibits women farmers from generating marketable surpluses and adding value to harvested crops.

The effective participation of women farmers in producers' organizations can facilitate their access to markets, capital, information, and financing.

Strengthening smallholder women farmers' organizations and promoting rural women's leadership improves their access to agricultural services and information.

A HOLISTIC MULTI-TIERED APPROACH

When New Field Foundation opened its doors in 2003, human development indicators pointed to increasing levels of poverty, violence and injustice across sub-Saharan Africa, particularly for rural women. Female life expectancy and female adult literacy rates remained some of the lowest in the world, while women and girls also bore the brunt of food insecurity, conflicts and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. At the same time, African women were taking the initiative across national, ethnic, linguistic and religious boundaries, to transform their lives, and those of their families and communities. New Field's approach helped deliver resources and innovation where they had the most impact – in the hands of rural women's organizations.

From the start, New Field strived to support rural women's efforts where the need was greatest, the potential for positive change even greater, and where funding was least available. Our theory of change consisted of five beliefs:

1. When rural women increase and manage their own resources, they use those assets to benefit their families and communities.
2. When rural women organize and work together, they increase their knowledge and resources, improve their status, and become active in civic participation.
3. Rural women need to be in charge of their own processes and tools for resolving conflict, if they are to take advantage of new opportunities.
4. Rural women's organizations and networks have a significant role in national and pan-African initiatives and can shape resources, policies and processes that benefit large numbers of women.
5. Investments in women's self-determination and organizations create the conditions and resources for long-lasting change at local, national and pan-African levels.



The Changing World of Development

Inspired by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, philanthropic and social development organizations began to invest in improving opportunities for women and girls who lived in challenging circumstances. The idea of women's "agency" emerged. It suggested a need for more investment in women's capacity to control and make decisions about the use of family and community resources, including land. In mid-2003, the African Union (AU) adopted what is commonly known as the Maputo Protocol. It was intended to "ensure that the rights of women are promoted, realized, and protected in order to enable them to enjoy fully all their human rights." Despite this positive action, and the general increase in consciousness around the world about women's social and economic status, it took until December 2003 for the United Nations to formally resolve to improve the lives of rural women.

- Resolution 58/146 – Improvement of the Situation of Women in Rural Areas – asked the United Nations Secretary General and relevant UN bodies to set priorities and develop strategies to meet the challenges faced by rural women. It invited Member States to give more importance to improving rural women's situation via national, regional and global development strategies.
- By 2016, 36 of 54 countries in Africa had ratified the *Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women* [↗](#), an effort that New Field supported with several grants to *Equality Now* [↗](#).

New Field also committed to honor these core values through our grantmaking:

- A **shared vision** for peace and equality whereby people join their efforts, knowledge, and resources together to create strength and accomplish their mutual goals.
- With even a minimum of resources, **women are central** to creating better lives for rural children, families, and communities.
- **Relationships grounded in mutual respect** and shared values that include honest dialogue and empathy to create the conditions for long-term alliances.
- **Collaborative and equitable decision-making** to heal differences and break down power hierarchies, resulting in a vital and living democracy.
- **Responsible stewardship of the Earth**, carefully cultivating soil, seeds and water to create more abundance for future generations.

As one board member said, "New Field believes that change is a dynamic and interconnected process; that change emerges when there's need, leadership, and desire to make change. We want to support partners who engage in transformative change both at the personal and community level, with a belief that women are at the center of making lasting change."



Guided by these ideals, New Field chose to focus on three regions of West Africa, where armed civil conflicts had damaged rural communities both socially and economically. These regions were: 1) the **Mano River Union** bordering Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia; 2) the **Casamance** region of southern Senegal and northern Guinea-Bissau; and 3) the **Niger River Basin** region of southeast Mali and southwest Burkina Faso bordering northern Côte d'Ivoire.

By the end of 2005, New Field had already decided to focus on the **Mano River Union** and **Casamance** regions to direct its funding support, even as the board and staff continued to make grant recommendations to fund partners in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. These two regions were contextually different. The civil conflict that raged for 10 years in the border area of Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia was treacherously violent. The civil conflict in the **Casamance** region was more of an on-going grind that was well underway before the war in the **Mano River Union**. In 2009, having already initiated some funding in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, New Field began to focus more support to the **Niger River Basin** in response to the civil unrest in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire that displaced thousands.

Once a tenuous yet veritable post-conflict peace took hold in each of these focus areas, rural people living there were ready for positive change, often with women at the forefront. After years in refugee camps, where traditional gender roles were frequently disrupted, many rural women learned the importance of organizing into groups to optimize their power. They were more psychologically prepared to take matters into their

own hands. Just the same, many economic and social obstacles to rural women's progress remained firmly in place.

Although rural people in these areas of civil unrest had begun the process of reconstructing peaceful societies before New Field arrived, many rural communities were decimated. Houses and community facilities were destroyed, fields laid to waste, and the rhythm of cultural traditions and practices were lost or neglected. National governments were distant and under-resourced, and the ecosystem of NGOs was tattered and overspent on urgent relief and survival issues. In addition, many urgent aid agencies left when the conflict ended.

In this context, New Field recognized that the issues facing West African rural women were complex and impacted multiple levels of society: from traditional and religious practices at the family and community level to the regional and national governance and economic policies which ultimately affect the social dynamics of their existence. New Field's grant partners worked with rural women leaders on issues related to women's rights, often with a long-term view toward policy change, through education and training at the grassroots level. However, rural women were clear that they could not focus on rights and other issues if they, or their children, faced day-to-day hunger. Therefore much of New Field's support was for on-the-ground initiatives to improve the food security and economic prospects of women who organized themselves into formal or semi-formal groups. As their economic situation changed, they were then able focus on other aspects of their lives.



Partner Overview: Coordination of Feminine Non-Government Organizations & Associations (CAFO), Mali

Founded in 1991, CAFO is a Malian NGO based in Bamako with member groups throughout the country. CAFO's mission is to promote the well-being of women, children, and families through women's rights advocacy, literacy training, health care, water and sanitation management, and enterprise development. To further rural women's social advancement while fostering their economic progress, CAFO increasingly supported its member groups to develop rural agricultural cooperatives. CAFO maintained a high level of visibility in Mali as an institution capable of helping rural women strengthen their organizational capacities. With technical support from CAFO, and grant support from New Field, rural women in Mali made significant progress in obtaining legal access to land for farming by implementing a negotiation process with traditional leaders at the community level.

Thanks to the training in women's rights, I have great confidence in myself. So I decided to run for local elected office. Whether I win or not, I will participate in that way because of the training we received. The project helped us develop our leadership skills and, as a result, we now understand that we have the same rights as urban women.

Mme. Nansa Berthe

Member, Rural Women's Group of Djoliba Village, Mali



Raising community leaders' awareness of women's need for access to land prompted the leader of Samagnyana village to grant two hectares of land to village women.

My joy is great because, thanks to our paralegal training from CAFO, I obtained the legal document proving that I am married, just as urban women do. The training educated our community leaders and husbands too about women's rights. I have an identity card as well and now I feel like a real citizen.

Mme. Mariam Traoré

Member, Rural Women's Group of Krina Somonosso Village, Mali



Nansa Berthe, the president of the women's group of Djoliba at a training on women's rights.

Thanks to CAFO and New Field, our husbands quickly understood the need to grant good farmland to our women's group, and they supported us to sign legal documents proving that, collectively, it is our property. Today we are very proud to be owners of this land because, previously, we only had access to low-quality land that was not close to the village. We would improve the land only to have it taken back from us. Now we are free to improve the land and use it to fulfill our needs without fear that we'll lose it. We are grateful to our village leaders.

Mme. Mariama Diakite

President, Rural Women's Group of Samanyana Village, Mali



CAFO members from Mandé learning to make compost from women farmers in Sikasso, Mali

RURAL WOMEN CREATING CHANGE

From the start, New Field’s grantmaking was grounded in the notion that rural women can create meaningful change in traditional communities when they work together in groups and leverage their resources toward supporting their expressed priorities. New Field believed that with opportunities to design their own initiatives, rural women organized in groups would be readily able to identify the resources and education they need to succeed on their own terms. Trust in rural women’s organizations to implement their own initiatives is empowering and effective, we thought, particularly when it encourages them to manage their own resources.

Most often, New Field’s grant partners were organizations managed by women, or those having significant experience working with rural women. As it turned out, nearly half of New Field’s grant funds awarded over 14 years were used to improve the food production and marketing capacity of rural women organized in groups. Approximately one-third was used to educate rural women about their civil rights, how to access land for farming, and building peaceful communities. Other funds improved the functional effectiveness of rural women’s groups, and supported *agroecology* initiatives – farming that optimizes the use of local natural resources, avoids imported synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and addresses social, economic, and cultural issues *a priori*.² It was fitting that New Field adopted the phrase, “Rural Women Creating Change” to succinctly describe the essence of our grantmaking program.

At the time, the strategy to support rural women’s groups did not conveniently align with popular trends in rural development such as microcredit for individual farmers and support for social entrepreneurs. During New Field’s early years, most international funding organizations were focused on individual-oriented solutions. New Field believed, however, that microcredit strategies could lead to debt problems for individual families, in the absence of the support and collective wisdom of a larger group. New Field’s ideal was to provide grant support to community level women’s groups which, through education and training, learned to open and manage bank accounts, share facilities, and develop cooperative rural enterprises.

² Agroecology prioritizes the aspirations, needs, values, and rights of women and men who grow, harvest, process, and consume food. It aims to shift the food system toward community food sovereignty, local control over natural resources, the end of hunger and poverty, and well-being for all. It is grounded in women and men farmers’ experiential knowledge. It strives to conserve bio-cultural diversity. And it maximizes ecosystem resilience and adaptation in the face of climate change.



Partner Overview: Association for the Promotion of Grassroots Initiatives (APIB), Mali

Founded in 2000, APIB is an NGO in Mali. It's mission is the economic, social, and cultural development of rural Malians in the Sikasso region of southeast Mali. With New Field funding, APIB provided community grants and technical services to rural women's groups for food production and marketing. APIB's strategy is: (1) Strengthen the capacity of rural women's groups to practice agroecology. (2) Facilitate learning exchanges between rural women's groups. (3) Facilitate interaction between local authorities and leaders of rural women's groups. (4) Support rural women's groups to set up internal savings and loan mechanisms for their members. (5) Strengthen the management capacity of rural women's groups. Over six years, APIB made 52 community grants to 11 rural women's groups totaling \$143,506. The groups used their grants to grow crops on collectively-accessed farmland, store grain harvests in cereal banks, and manage market gardens and sheep fattening. The grants enabled group members to increase their income, and learn to better market their local food products.

The Cooperative and Mme. Ouattara herself have used community grants to improve the commercialization of their cereal grain crops, purchase seeds for market gardening, and raise and trade sheep. They learned to make compost on a scale that is adequate for their cooperative, and they have increased their organizational management skills through trainings by APIB. In Mme. Ouattara's words,

My leadership has grown such that I participate in village meetings with men, representing our women members. I have become an information resource for the women in my community. Thanks to our cooperative's internal loan system, I am the primary seller of spices and condiments in the village, allowing me to earn money for family's needs. In my market garden, I adopted agroecological practices that improved my yields.

Mme. Maminata Ouattara
President of the Women's Cooperative Coulibalybougou, Mali



Community grants enabled the establishment of a fund which Association members used to build a compost production facility, and a secure warehouse for the Association to store their harvests and other valuable items like tools. In Mme. Diabaté's words,

I am responsible for managing documents for my Association and accounting. I am a leader in defending the rights of women and children in Sikasso. I have become comfortable speaking in public. Our work with APIB allowed me to travel and see real examples of agroecology. I feel overjoyed that my husband accepts me to participate in our community's development.

Mme. Sali Diabeté
Administrative Secretary of the Association of Women of Zamblara, Mali

The Cooperative and Mme. Diallo have used community grants to improve the marketing of their local value-added products, establish a market garden with fencing, and learn new skills to better manage the rural women's cooperative. In Mme. Diallo's words,

I was practically illiterate prior to our community's relationship with APIB, but today I am responsible for all the accounting and management of our cooperative. Thanks to the knowledge I have about agroecology, I grow a market garden. My leadership skills have grown and allowed me to become a council member in my community. This benefits all the women in my town.

Mme. Rokia Diallo
Administrative Secretary for the Women's Cooperative of Tamba, Mali



Rural women’s leadership development was an important component of New Field grants. The effectiveness of women leaders in rural West Africa depends on having the tools and skills they need to exercise leadership. New Field’s grants reliably supported this need. Grant goals included developing rural women’s skills in organizational and financial management, reading and writing, public speaking, and understanding laws. Leadership education helped rural women manage their community organizations effectively, participate in community advisory committees, and get elected as representatives in local government.

New Field also supported broad communication activities by and about rural women. These included supporting the creation of a community radio network in Senegal and assisting rural women advocates to attend national and global conferences. Rural women leaders were also encouraged to write about their experiences and challenges for influential publications and websites.

Among U.S.-based philanthropic organizations, New Field was an early proponent of funding for agroecology, particularly as practiced by rural women. We supported projects such as We Are the Solution, the Agroecology Fund, and the Global Alliance for the Future of Food. New Field also supported agroecology field schools in Mali, Niger, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, and work by national farmers’ organizations in Guinea-Bissau and Burkina Faso to build the capacity of rural women’s groups in agroecology. The agroecology framework followed by New Field’s grant partners focused on increasing rural women’s access to land, sowing traditional seed varieties, utilizing local biological inputs for food production, and strengthening rural women’s natural resource-based enterprises.

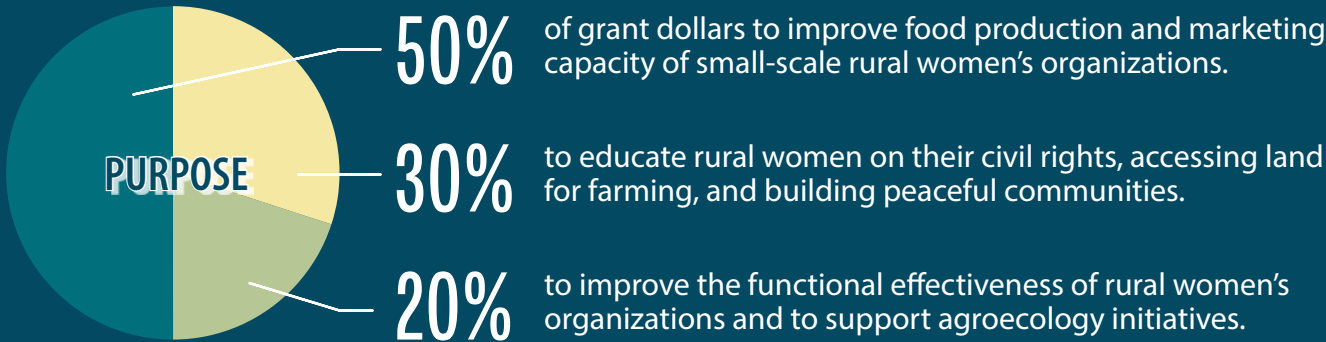
Of great interest to New Field’s board, staff, and many of our grant partners was the notion that funds should reach the most local level to directly support the work of rural women’s groups in West African villages. New Field’s effort at “community grantmaking”, a process by which New Field’s grants to primary grantee partners are re-granted by the partners to community-level women’s groups, is discussed in greater detail in the pages that follow.



New Field Foundation’s Grantmaking

2003-2016

During 2003-16, New Field Foundation awarded grants to create change that benefited families and communities, focusing primarily on post-conflict regions in Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Côte d’Ivoire.



	COMMUNITY	GRANTMAKING
586 GRANTS TO 145 ORGANIZATIONS IN 27 COUNTRIES	\$8 MILLION IN 99 GRANTS TO 14 COMMUNITY GRANTMAKERS	\$4.8 MILLION DISTRIBUTED 1,086 COMMUNITY GRANTS TO 368 LOCAL RURAL WOMEN’S GROUPS
310 Grants awarded to organizations in the 8 countries noted above	usually for a period of 5-7 years	approx. \$4,400 per community group



Transparency International – Sierra Leone (TI-SL)

Ongoing Grantmaking In Transition

The first five years of New Field’s existence (2003-08) was a time of gauging options for initial and longer term grantmaking. Having decided to make rural women’s groups in sub-Saharan Africa a primary focus, and support rural women to overcome violence and injustice, many grants were recommended for international NGOs (e.g., Global Fund for Women) which were working with national NGOs during that period. The initial plan was to provide grant support in “clusters” throughout sub-Saharan Africa in cross-border areas marred by civil conflict. By 2008, New Field began to focus primarily on West Africa.

Beginning in 2009-10, following field visits by board members to Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali, and Burkina Faso, and refinement of the strategic plan, the board’s perception and understanding of New Field’s work took on more profound meaning and significance. The board and staff struggled with issues such as how to ensure that grant impacts were truly felt by women in rural communities, what constitutes a “women-led organization”, and how to “scale up” the positive outcomes. Particularly striking was how much rural women in West Africa had to negotiate the exercise of their power with spouses, community leaders, religious leaders, local government officials, and politicians.

By 2011, New Field’s grantmaking became the program that board, staff, consultants, and grantee partners believed would be the most efficient and effective operational mode for funding rural women’s groups. Some corrections made by 2011 were:

- Changing the grants solicitation process from open to “by-invitation only”
- Building a modest program management structure with local consultant and advisor teams in three countries
- Encouraging agriculture-based business development by rural women’s groups
- Assisting its primary grantees in “re-granting” funds to community-level groups

From 2012 to 2016, New Field became even more focused in its grant recommendations, reducing the number of grants awarded by 50% while maintaining the same overall level of funding. This made more funds available per grant partner in an effort to prepare a smaller set of “key partners” to expand and sustain support for rural women’s groups in West Africa without long-term dependence on New Field.

If there were any positives to the civil conflict in West Africa of the 1990’s and early part of the 21st century, it might be the creation of new social and economic spaces that rural women were able to occupy and exert their own brand of leadership. Rural women in post-conflict zones seem to have decided, independently yet coincidentally, that they welcomed new opportunities to reshape their communities and the larger society. They would never return to conflict if it was in their power to decide. Through local advisors and program consultants in West Africa, New Field recognized this change in mindset throughout the war-torn region. It made rural women’s groups prime candidates for direct, community-level grants, re-granted from national NGOs that were funded by New Field. The national NGOs were not necessarily ready to be Community Grantmakers however, as they had established their own identities well before New Field came along.

TI-SL is one such example. It began in 2001 as the National Accountability Group (NAG), after seven professional Sierra Leoneans participated in a conference in Prague, Czech Republic organised by Transparency International. Its mission was accountability in all matters having to do with public transactions, beginning with educating regular citizens about the rules and laws of Sierra Leone that governed transactions, including land sales, by public institutions managed by elected or appointed officials. In 2005, NAG introduced New Field to funding rural women’s efforts in war-torn Kailahun District. Because the rural women’s groups in the District were not equipped to receive and manage direct funding from New Field, NAG became New Field’s first Community Grantmaker. NAG also provided ongoing financial training to these rural women’s groups.

Thus began a partnership that, through 2014, resulted in more than 21 New Field grants recommended to NAG/TI-SL, totaling nearly \$1.5 million in grants, much of which was invested in developing the capacity of two rural women’s cooperatives, one in Kailahun District, the other in neighboring Kono District. Together these women-led cooperatives numbered more than 50 rural women’s groups with nearly 10,000 members in total. Many of the women members of these cooperatives had been forced to evacuate their homes and fields, settling in refugee camps until the end of the armed conflict.

When the war ended, these women were compelled to start again from practically nothing. They began by gaining secure access to land for farming. Over the course of ten years, the women worked tirelessly to rebuild their lives, eliminate the hunger they had endured, and begin to save money. They were hit again with the Ebola crisis in 2014, during which both Cooperatives assumed major leadership roles for educating the public about stopping the spread of the virus. Ultimately, they were successful, though not without a number of lives lost among their sisters, mothers, and membership. Today Kono Cooperative manages a store/warehouse they built in downtown Koidu City, which the rural women members are proud to call the product of their own perseverance.

Grantmaking Processes



HOW NEW FIELD FOUND GRANT PARTNERS

We cannot overstate the importance of engaging well-qualified African women in Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Burkina Faso to be Program and Administrative Consultants for each geographic “Focus Area” (Mano River Union; Casamance; Bobo-Dioulasso/Sikasso). The Focus Area teams were complemented by Local Advisors in a number of countries who connected with local and regional communities and networks, identified prospective grantees, and monitored the progress of awarded grants. An overview of the Focus Area offices is provided in Appendix B using the examples of Senegal and Burkina Faso.³

Being well-informed in rural women’s issues and well-experienced in NGO management, the Program and Administrative Consultants’ role was to identify and work with prospective and actual grant partners, international institutions and donors, and government agencies in these regions. Put simply, the Focus Area teams were the eyes and ears of our grantmaking in West Africa. They found the potential grantees, helped them to put together their proposals, advised the New Field home office on the potential and challenges of the recommended grantees, and monitored the grantees’ activities and fulfillment of the grant. Because they were local women who spoke regional languages, they were trusted by the communities and grantees.

The grantee selection process was a team effort, led in the field by the Program Consultants and Local Advisors, with New Field staff and the Board of Directors providing input along the way. Staff and Board Members visited West Africa on several occasions, adding contextual information to the process of grantee selection. Proposals submitted to New Field were by invitation only, with no open calls for proposals. This restriction allowed staff to focus on the areas and issues that were specific to our mission, rather than responding to general inquiries.

Most New Field grantees were national NGOs, organizations that are legally registered in a specific nation and primarily work within that nation’s borders. By the time New Field’s staff in San Francisco presented their grant recommendations to the board, usually six times per year, a great deal was known about prospective grantees in terms of organizational objectives, program strategy and history, record of success, staff expertise, and financial condition.⁴

Organizations that were primarily managed by women, or had significant experience working with rural women, were prioritized as grant candidates if they had a record of program success, were well-managed, and not dependent on New Field funding to exist and function.⁵ Once a grantee partnership was established, New Field most often maintained it for seven or eight years. This approach enabled wonderful working relationships between New Field and its partners, and nurtured a mutual sense of program continuity for a significant period of time.

³ New Field established offices for full-time Focus Area teams comprised of Program and Administrative Consultants in Freetown, Sierra Leone; Dakar, Senegal; and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The Local Advisors were provided small stipends and did not have New Field sponsored offices for their use.

⁴ From 2003-2012, New Field was a supporting organization of Tides Foundation. During 2013-16, New Field was a private foundation with a working relationship with Tides. Over 14 years of grantmaking, New Field developed program strategies and made grant recommendations to a Tides Foundation Donor Advised Fund for approval by its board of directors. Tides then administered the grants, working in close collaboration with New Field on management of the grantee partners’ reporting.

⁵ The amount of a New Field grant to any organization was designed to be no greater than one-half the actual income of the organizations from the previous year, nor as projected for the grant year. In other words, if a grantee organization’s actual income from 2015 was \$100,000 but the projected income for 2016 was \$80,000 then the New Field grant would be \$40,000 or less for the grant year of 2016.



Munyu – Burkina Faso

Association Munyu des Femmes de la Comoé is based in Banfora, Burkina Faso. Munyu means “patience” in Dioula. A Key Partner and community grantmaker, Munyu’s membership is 205 rural women’s groups with 10,245 women farmers. Munyu used its New Field grants primarily for agricultural production, transformation, and marketing. It owns and operates a community radio station, *Voix de la Femme* (Voice of Women). Its grant supported the development of an internal system to assure quality control of its farm goods for marketing, namely value-added products processed from crops like fonio, karité shea butter, hibiscus for a popular non-alcoholic beverage (bissap), and baobab tree leaves for ready-to-make sauces and confections. Munyu earns enough income from its central crop processing facility to cover 50% of the organization’s operational costs. Other revenue for its operations comes from a successful and popular restaurant/café on the grounds of its office and education campus in Banfora, an important commercial and tourist town in southwestern Burkina Faso.



MODERN HISTORY OF RURAL WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS IN WEST AFRICA

In post-colonial West Africa, rural women’s organizations can be defined as officially recognized non-government organizations managed by women, with program objectives designed to improve the lives of rural women and their families. Rural women’s groups, on the other hand, are community-based organizations in rural areas that are organized and managed by local women. These are officially recognized by local, regional, or national governments as *Associations* or *Economic Interest Groups* or another such designation.

Historically, many community-based rural women’s groups emerged from traditional savings and loan structures, often called *tontines*, though the term varies by language. Another traditional social structure in rural West Africa is “work groups,” which rural women convene to tackle onerous farming tasks like field preparation or weeding. This practice continues today in most of West Africa. Rural women who organize “work groups” provide food, water, and a grateful welcome to work group participants, who are often members of the extended family, but also neighbors and friends. Work groups may focus on one family’s field one day, then another family’s field the next day, and so on. Traditional work groups and *tontines* lend themselves to more formal organizations like production and marketing cooperatives. Other reasons why rural women organize themselves include literacy, health, and rights education, and developing local, farm-based enterprises.

In 1975, then designated by the United Nations as the first International Women’s Year, rural women’s capacity to organize themselves to achieve a range of objectives was pointedly recognized as a valuable tool in rural economic development. The idea that rural women in groups (*groupements* in francophone West Africa) could be an integral organizing unit for development action gained credence, regardless of whether the groups were officially recognized beyond local authorities. Despite increased attention to rural women’s needs at the UN, in West Africa rural women remained generally marginalized or ignored in most development initiatives for another 10, if not 20 years.

The UN conferences on women in 1985 (Nairobi) and 1995 (Beijing) helped project women into increasingly important roles for the economic and social development of West Africa. Since then, the global women’s movement and women’s overall activism have fueled a slow but discernible trend towards emphasizing the considerable value of investing in women’s organizations, urban- or rural-based. As more girls in rural areas improve their education level, in the age of digital communications technology and social media, the chances are good that more rural women will be better organized than ever. So is the promise of organized rural women, working together for social and economic benefits.

DIRECT FUNDING OF RURAL WOMEN'S GROUPS

In New Field's early years, most grants were awarded to international organizations with programs that worked with rural women⁶, and a few were Africa-based non-government organizations (NGOs). The New Field Board and staff felt that these grants supported good causes, but too little of the funding was getting to the local community level.

It is common enough for West African-based NGOs to receive grants from American and European foundations. Given the large number of NGOs that operate in this region, however, and their ongoing institutional and program financial needs, there is stiff competition for relatively limited funding that is not crisis-driven. Small community-based rural women's organizations (henceforth rural women's groups) rarely receive direct grants from U.S. foundations. Yet rural women's groups in West Africa were the population that New Field wished to serve. In response, after its first several years, New Field initiated a community grantmaking program. Here is an illustration of how New Field's board and staff conceived the process of direct funding to rural women's groups.

Directly funding community-based women's groups was a non-conventional approach. When New Field initiated our community grantmaking program, we knew it was crucial to respect traditional norms by ensuring that local leaders, virtually all of whom were men, were well-informed about the grantmaking process. The work to ensure buy-in from community leaders was mostly shouldered by the rural women's groups themselves. National NGOs that became Community Grantmakers helped facilitate the leadership of rural women's groups to speak for themselves in front of local community leaders.

In the community grantmaking model, each rural women's group would submit its own grant proposal to the Community Grantmaker to which New Field awarded a grant, at least 65% of which was designated for community grants. The Community Grantmaker would select which rural women's groups merited a community grant relative to criteria that were commonly understood by all stakeholders involved.

Rural women's groups that received community grants (Community Grantees) were responsible for administering and accounting for the grant. This is a very different approach to rural development, yet it is potentially quite empowering. In the conventional rural development model, a national NGO grantee is responsible for all grant-related decision making, management of the activities, accounting, and reporting. The community grantmaking approach attempted to bring those functions to the village level where the women's groups resided. Community Grantmakers that received a primary New Field grant were still responsible for reporting the results of the grant to New Field, including results from the work of Community Grantees. Awarding community grants directly to local rural women's groups required creativity, flexibility, and an approach that included:

1. Forming strong partnerships with national NGOs and institutions that provide technical support management training to rural women with low levels of literacy.
2. Training for rural women leaders to build their knowledge and skills in financial management, women's

rights advocacy, organizational governance, and agroecology.

3. Support for community ownership of local media, particularly rural radio stations.
4. Enabling rural women to participate in forums that affect policy and resource allocation at local, national and international levels.
5. Scaling out successful initiatives through replication and learning exchanges.

A premise of New Field's community grantmaking was that rural women's groups would optimize the benefits of grants if the groups themselves managed the funds. New Field and our Community Grantmaker partners trusted rural women to do so; trust that was well warranted. New Field also trusted the Community Grantmakers to determine which rural women's groups could manage their community grants effectively. Nearly all the community grants supported rural women's crop and livestock production and marketing. This allowed Community Grantmakers to use focused technical assistance approaches.

Even with positive outcomes from community grants, rural women members of the Community Grantee groups continued to have low literacy rates and, consequently, administrative challenges with governance and financial management. Nonetheless, community grants helped many rural women learn to read and write. They learned the rudiments of interacting with banks. They opened and managed bank accounts, procured supplies and equipment from vendors, and negotiated with local and national authorities for land and water. With community grants, many rural women's groups established revolving loan funds that were accessible to their members. For more information on community grantmaking, positive results like these and others are explained in four [New Field publications](#). [↗](#)

What About Rural Men?

Quite often, though not always, the reticence of rural men in West Africa to embrace new roles for women presents a consistent challenge for rural women who take action to better their lives. In the context of New Field's community grantmaking, rural women working in groups was a strategy to level the playing field as much as possible. While rural men generally assumed a cautious, "wait-and-see" attitude with respect to new roles for women, some remained very reticent. New Field found, however, that men in rural West Africa can also be pragmatic and supportive, particularly when the financial benefits become apparent. Time and again, rural women whose groups received technical assistance and grant funding for their work attested to the support of men in their homes and communities. In New Field's experience, most rural women insisted that their social and economic progress is more gratifying when men have a clear role in the production activities and processes.

⁶ ADD-FWAP, American Jewish World Service, American Refugee Committee, APDC, AWDF, CONGAFEM, ENDA Tiers Monde, Equality Now, Fahamu, Firelight Foundation, Girl Child Network Zimbabwe, Global Fund for Women, GROOTS, IDEX, Rural Women's Movement, SIN-DO, WANEP, Womankind Worldwide, World Education, World Neighbors.

Partner Overview: Forum for Sustainable & Endogenous Development (FODDE), Senegal

FODDE is a Senegalese NGO founded in 1997 based in Kolda. FODDE has spent about two-thirds of its funding from New Field on women farmers' activities primarily oriented to agroecology. FODDE has awarded community grants to 73 rural women's groups to help improve household food security, reduce rural women's workload, and increase their income. To complement community grants, FODDE provides education to rural women's groups on their lawful rights, offers technical support for market gardening, facilitates exchange visits, and encourages participation in agricultural fairs, and training in organizational management.

Market gardens are cultivated on an individual basis with each woman producer responsible for managing her own plot. To help sustain the market gardens, some groups introduced an annual contribution system by which each member pays (\$20) to a group bank account. The groups then use these funds to purchase inputs. Some groups developed a savings and credit system.

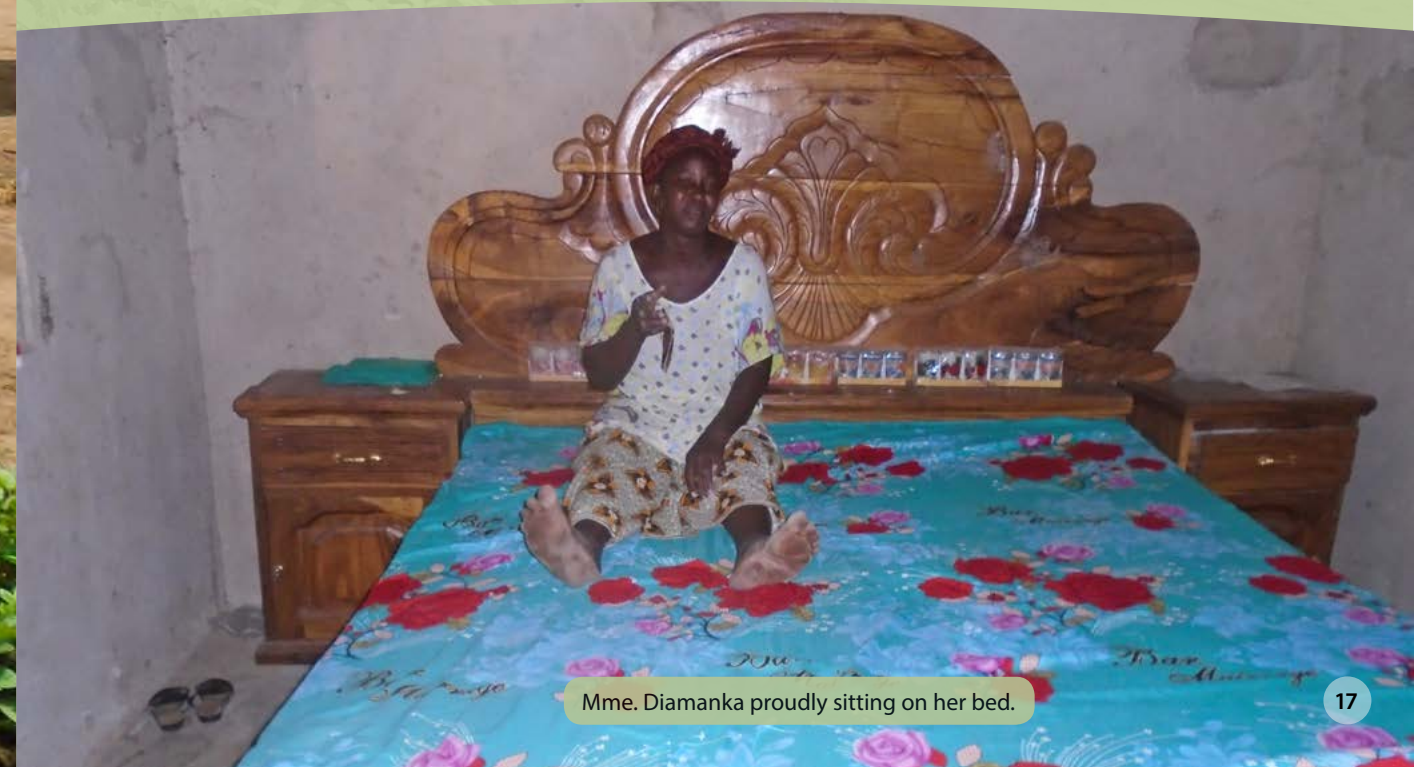
With the (community) grant from FODDE, we developed a market garden and initiated our own savings and credit system called, "Community of Financial Self-Management", or "Bank Saaré" in our local language. This allows us to buy shares as credit to develop other income-generating activities. The profits are shared among all shareholders. With income from the profit sharing, I bought a very nice bed, a female goat, and two sheep."

Mme. Seynabou Diamanka

President, Economic Interest Group of Gueladio Village, Senegal



Rural women's market gardens benefitting from solar irrigation.



Mme. Diamanka proudly sitting on her bed.

Partner Overview: Forum for Sustainable & Endogenous Development (FODDE), Senegal

Continued...

Kawral Sanka ("kawral" means "being together") received community grants to develop a one-hectare market garden. The women paid for a new well, fenced the site, and installed a solar irrigation system.

Thanks to our solar water pumping system, our lives are less exhausting. We now spend no more than an hour to water our gardens, which saves time for all the other household work we need to do, particularly preparing our families' meals. And now, in the afternoons, we have time for literacy class and other types of learning.

Mme. Oumou Diallo

President, Economic Interest Group of Sanka Village (Kawral Sanka), Senegal



Mme. Diallo using the solar irrigation system to water her garden.



Mme. Baldé on her first visit to the market in Kolda, Senegal

FODDE worked with ROPROCAS (Network of Rural Women's Producer Organizations in Casamance) to train women market gardeners in negotiating prices and organizing production to supply local markets.

Before we grew primarily sorrel and okra near our homes for our own use. When we did have crops to sell, it was the men who did so. We had little knowledge about the market, and the income from crop sales was not ours. All that has changed thanks to the grants our group received. Now the crops are ours to grow and sell. I discovered the Kolda market myself, and I earn much more money. Plus we eat well now, and are healthier.

Mme. Kadidiatou Baldé

President, Sinthiang Bacary, Senegal

My name is Kadidiatou Baldé. I am 19 years old. My parents are poor. Not having passed my BFEM [end of middle school exam] in 2013, I was no longer able to attend public school. Wanting to continue my studies, I asked my mother to help me enroll in a private school in Kolda called Nafooré (means "useful") which she agreed to do. With the earnings from her market garden, she paid for my studies. This year (2016), I passed my baccalaureate [high school completion exam]. I am the first girl in our village to have this diploma, thanks to the community grants and income my mother made.

Mlle. Kadidiatou Baldé and her mother, Mme. Binta Sabaly

Village of Sinthiang Bacary, Senegal



"The community grants are truly a tool for the promotion and empowerment of rural women."

The Nuances of Community Grantmaking



What About Corruption?

During 14 years of grantmaking, it was fair to ask inevitable questions about the accountability of funds at the community level. The fact that New Field encountered so few incidents of this nature is testament to the influence of rural women's group members. In only two cases – out of hundreds of grants awarded – did this concern become a real issue. The resolution was positive, however, primarily because the rural women who stood to benefit from community grants to their local groups recognized the problem early, and alerted New Field. Their rationale for blowing the whistle was very simple; they did not want the name of their local organization to be associated with behavior of this kind.

The Community Grantmaking approach was not without its challenges. Although the Community Grantmakers monitored the delivery and implementation of community grants by the rural women's groups that received them, the reporting was not always thorough, often including only the outcomes. For this reason, New Field supported an [intensive evaluation of community grantmaking in the Casamance region](#).⁷ Awarding the community grants and mentoring the rural women's groups that received them was time-intensive. For the national NGOs that became Community Grantmakers, the process of re-granting funds to village level women's groups was unorthodox. In general, it disrupted the NGO's usual way of working in the field, which often consisted of donor-driven activities, rather than open-ended funding of activities prioritized by rural women themselves.

The fact that most rural women's groups that received community grants had very few leaders who were literate necessitated an extra layer of mentorship by the national NGOs. During the last several years of community grantmaking, New Field staff made additional efforts to advise the Community Grantmakers to build sufficient staff time in their proposal budgets as needed so that they would not be managing this initiative at a financial loss.

Despite the challenges and difficulties of community grantmaking, the Community Grantmakers very much appreciated this novel approach. The ability to offer rural women's groups financial capital with which to implement the work they dreamed of doing was its own kind of reward. On several occasions, New Field brought Community Grantmakers together to sift through the challenges and accomplishments of community grantmaking. Participation in these gatherings reassured the national NGOs that they were not alone in experiencing the upsides and downsides of the community grantmaking process. The opportunity for Community Grantmakers to learn from each other was invaluable.



THE PROCESS OF COMMUNITY GRANTMAKING

NEW FIELD'S STAFF RECOMMENDS, AND THE BOARD AUTHORIZES, A GRANT TO A NATIONAL NGO, ON THE CONDITION THAT 65% OF THE GRANT IS RE-GRANTED TO RURAL WOMEN'S GROUPS.⁷

THE NATIONAL NGO, AKA THE *COMMUNITY GRANTMAKER*, AFTER A THOROUGH VETTING PROCESS, AWARDS SUB-GRANTS TO RURAL WOMEN'S GROUPS – THE *COMMUNITY GRANTEES*.

THE RURAL WOMEN'S GROUPS – THE *COMMUNITY GRANTEES* – IMPLEMENT THEIR *COMMUNITY GRANTS*. THE NATIONAL NGO – THE *COMMUNITY GRANTMAKER* – MONITORED AND REPORTED ON *COMMUNITY GRANTS*.

⁷ Community Grantmakers would use the remaining 35% for technical assistance as education, training, and equipment for the rural women's groups and their own institutional support (15% maximum).

RURAL RADIO NETWORK

In 2005, New Field began supporting World Education Senegal (WES) with a series of grants that funded a network of community-based organizations with radio equipment to help support their initiatives to further peace. Community radio enables communities to address the issue of living in peace and joining efforts to reach that goal. The project encouraged women, young people, men, and community leaders to produce radio programs about issues of peace and reconciliation, to breathe new life into traditional cultural values that suffered during many years of civil conflict, and to raise consciousness about predominant social issues.

Community members, especially young people, participated in managing the radio stations and helped identify the issues which became the broadcasts' content. At the time, the internet was practically non-

existent in the Casamance region of Senegal, so low-cost community radio had a vital role for rural people to access information on issues such as vaccination campaigns, the price and availability of grains and produce in markets, farming methods, HIV / AIDS, small arms control measures, and peace initiatives, all of which included diverse local voices that included women, men, and young people.

The grants also allowed WES to provide training on gender equity, journalism skills, women's leadership, marketing and financial resource mobilization by rural women's groups. When the funding ended, a network of 18 community radios stations had been established and was functioning well, primarily in the western portion of the Casamance region. Rural women who received training in broadcast journalism were major contributors to the assessment of the community grantmaking supported by New Field.



Functioning Stations

Partner Overview: Women in Livestock Husbandry in the Kolda Region (DIRFEL-Kolda), Senegal

A rural women's organization in Senegal from top to bottom, founded in 1998, DIRFEL's strategy is to strengthen the entrepreneurial capacity of its members in livestock production and marketing, and amplify rural women's voices through democratic processes. DIRFEL's members raise poultry, sheep, goats, and cattle, in addition to market gardening. DIRFEL educates its member groups about rural women's rights, and participating as full citizens in local and national democratic processes. DIRFEL manages a poultry meat, chicks, and eggs production facility in the city of Kolda to help sustain DIRFEL's financial future. Some DIRFEL member groups grow and sell irrigated forage crops to feed livestock during the long dry season when pasture is scarce. DIRFEL's radio programs have increased public awareness about women's issues in local communities. This has resulted in better representation of rural women's voices in public decision-making, and easier access by women to land for farming.



We begin the process with either goats or chicks purchased with our community grant, raise them in coops – there are 75 chicken coops in Saré Bidji today – then have the option to trade full-grown chickens for a goat, and goats for a cow. I have traded goats for cows three times already. Today I have six cows plus a few goats and sheep. By raising and trading livestock, we are able to keep our heads above water. Thanks to this work, our reputations at home and in the community are better. Now our husbands encourage us to attend DIRFEL meetings, as they have seen the results. Local authorities ask DIRFEL members for our input on decisions that affect our communities. We feel more human because of our work with DIRFEL. Our children go to school and stay there. Our diets are better thanks to more milk and meat.

Mme. Boummelle Baldé
President of the Saré Bidji Women's Group, Senegal



TECHNICAL SUPPORT, TRAINING & EDUCATION, & ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

A key component of New Field's grantmaking was supporting our grant partners to improve their organizational capacity in financial management⁸, fundraising, program monitoring and learning, rights advocacy education, communications systems, and technical service provision, particularly in agroecology. Capacity development was a central commitment to our partners. About 15% of all New Field grant funds were used for this purpose, including allocations to help increase the capacity of village-level rural women's groups. The dedication of New Field's community grantmaking partners to strengthen the capacity of rural women's groups was extraordinary.

It's difficult to know precisely how many individual rural women improved their skills as a result of New Field's support. Overall, 393 rural women's groups received funding for this purpose. If we assume 40 women per group, a reasonable estimate, then nearly 16,000 rural women received training to upgrade their technical skills. This cost approximately \$100 per group member who participated in these training opportunities. Generally, the capacity development grants provided rural women's groups and members with the following:

- Training in the administration and financial management of rural women's groups
- Creating and operationalizing irrigation and market garden management committees
- Education on establishing and participating in group-based savings and loan funds
- Training on methods for seeking, receiving, and managing small grant funds
- Applied learning for hundreds of rural women in opening bank accounts
- Communication skills for group leaders to share information with group members
- Establishing rural women-led advisory groups for various types of activities
- Training to develop annual action plans grounded in group members' priorities
- Support for rural women to serve on community education and health committees
- Training on maintaining accurate, useful, and up-to-date organizational records
- Mentoring rural women to understand and access public and private institutions

In summary, due to New Field's grant support, many thousands of rural women in nine West African countries took advantage of opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills in areas such as those above, all intending to strengthen the capacity of their organizations.

⁸ One grant partner, the UK-based NGO, Mango, received five New Field grants totaling \$233,474 to provide financial management training to 20 grant partners based in Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Guinea.

LINKING ORGANIZATIONS & INDIVIDUALS LOCALLY, REGIONALLY, NATIONALLY, & INTERNATIONALLY

Another New Field-supported strategy to strengthen rural women's organizations and community groups was bringing people together to exchange knowledge, experiences, and ideas. These learning opportunities took on many forms. Our grant partners often budgeted for learning exchanges in their New Field grants. This usually meant bringing together rural women's groups that had not met before, nor knew of each other's existence.

TRAVEL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING EXCHANGES

New Field authorized more than \$3 million during 2006-16 to specifically encourage and support international national, regional, and local exchanges. Here are several examples of the international events that rural women's groups' leaders attended :

- World Social Forum (2006 in Mali; 2007 Kenya; 2011 Senegal; 2013 Tunisia)
- Women Deliver Conference (2007 United Kingdom; 2016 Denmark)
- Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) Conference (2007 Mali)
- Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) Forum (2008 South Africa)
- United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2009 United States)
- African Grantmakers Affinity Group (AGAG) Retreat (2010 United States)
- Global Seminar on Agricultural Development and Production in Africa (2011 Austria)
- Edge Funders Alliance Conference (2012 United States)
- Urgent Action Fund Conference (2014 Senegal)

These are a sample of participation opportunities that New Field supported to benefit rural women in West Africa. New Field funded lower-profile gatherings too, such as national agricultural trade shows, regional seed fairs, formal and non-formal workshops or courses on agroecology, local trainings on land rights, agricultural enterprise trainings, and organization management seminars. The value in supporting rural women leaders to participate in events like these is many-layered. Participants' exposure to a wider world was important, as was the opportunity to acquire new knowledge. Additionally, their participation put real faces and voices of rural women from elsewhere in the world in front of decision-makers who influence how financial resources are spent for rural development.

SUSTAINING SUPPORT FOR RURAL WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS

Early in New Field’s history, the board of directors made a strategic decision to support many of our grant partners for five to seven years, assuming no compelling reason to stop the funding. Our grant partners greatly appreciated this longer-term commitment. In addition to the solid professional relationships and a strong sense of trust that New Field developed with our grant partners, the longer funding timeframe helped our community grantmaking partners deepen and expand their relationships with rural women’s groups. It also helped New Field’s board, staff, and program consultants feel that we all shared the community-level grantmaking experiences and institutional learning that took place. The ability of board and staff to travel to West Africa was vital to the spirit of shared experiences, as was the ability to regularly communicate with our partners and program consultants via the internet, usually using Skype.

In 2013, New Field adopted a strategy that we believed would help sustain funding for rural women’s organizations and community-level groups in West Africa. New Field built a body of knowledge and experience sufficient to guide a decision about which grant partners would be best able to manage, expand, and sustain support to rural women’s groups in West Africa. We therefore decided to make fewer grants overall though at generally higher levels through 2016, in particular to a cohort of 11 “Key Partners” – four in Senegal, three in Mali, three in Burkina Faso, and one in Guinea-Bissau. Our aim was to develop the Key Partners’ long-term capacity to offer technical services to rural women’s groups and, for some, continue to award community grants to rural women’s groups. The Key Partners were also awarded supplemental grant funds to participate in financial management, agroecology, and financial resource mobilization workshops.

The Key Partners formally convened on two occasions, in 2015 in Senegal and in 2016 in Guinea-Bissau, to discuss how to sustain support for rural women’s groups, as well as their own organizations, in the absence of New Field grants. All the Key Partners believed they would be able to sustain themselves financially with funds from other donors. They also believed they could continue community grantmaking for rural women’s groups, provided they could find a new donor that would support the approach.

For 14 years, New Field prioritized “capacity development” for our grant partners and for community-level rural women’s groups. Those efforts intensified during 2013-16 when New Field devoted nearly \$600,000 to strengthen the capacity of all 11 Key Partners in financial management, monitoring and learning, and fundraising.⁹

At a 2015 convening of Key Partners, all agreed that the most critical areas to support community-level rural women’s groups were: 1) food production and value-added marketing of farm products, particularly fruits, vegetables, and rice, using the principles of *agroecology*;¹⁰ 2) development of agricultural *enterprises*

using cooperative structures; and 3) *networking* to build broader alliances and facilitate the exchange of useful information. The Key Partners believed that focusing on these interrelated areas would attract consistent donor support, and provide food and livelihoods for rural families, earned income for groups, and opportunities to learn other practices and knowledge from their peers, women farmers.

In early 2016, New Field organized a second convening, held in Guinea-Bissau, to assess the previous 12 months of work, discuss how the Key Partners might use their final New Field grant, and exchange ideas on how to most effectively support rural women’s groups. Building on the previous year’s convening, the key themes of the second convening were **agroecology**, **cooperative enterprises**, and **monitoring and learning**, all areas of organizational capacity-strengthening that New Field had supported more intensively during 2013-16.

Alliance Djibelor

With New Field support, the *Alliance Djibélor* – RADI (Senegal), Federation KAFO (Guinea-Bissau), ADDEF-G (Guinea), and USOFORAL (Senegal) – trained and supported 90 rural women paralegals to inform other rural women about the legal basis for creating and sustaining peaceful communities. *Alliance Djibélor’s* strategy was to implement 600 women’s rights outreach sessions led by the paralegals, backed up with 27 rural radio programs on issues such as civil registry of marriage, non-violent conflict management, and land rights, among others. Due to the paralegals’ education efforts, hundreds of cases of rural women’s rights violations in rural localities of Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, and Guinea were presented to local authorities and resolved. The *Alliance* also printed and distributed 500 guides to practical action on rural women’s rights, and 300 copies of synthesized legal texts pertaining to women’s rights. These documents also contained information on the universal declaration of human rights; the international convention banning all violence afflicting women; the Protocol on Women’s Rights in Africa; the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and portions of the national civil codes related to women’s rights under the law.

RADI

Réseau Africain pour le Développement Intégré
(African Network for Integrated Development)

KAFO

KAFO Farmers’ Federation

ADDEF-G

Association pour la Défense des Droits des Enfants et des Femmes en Guinée
(Association for the Defense of Women’s and Children’s Rights in Guinea)

USOFORAL

Comité Régional de Solidarité des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance
(Regional Committee of Women’s Solidarity for Peace in Casamance)

⁹ New Field also supported [Women Thrive](#), a U.S.-based organization, with three grants totaling \$78,000 during 2014-16 to develop and deliver internet-based guidance and instructional opportunities for NGOs (in English and French) to develop their fundraising and communications capacities. Most of the Key Partners participated in at least one of these activities.

¹⁰ Another area of production and marketing recognized as having strong potential for increasing the income of rural women’s organizations and their members was livestock husbandry: goats, sheep, and poultry. However, this was intensively promoted by only one Key Partner, DIRFEL in Senegal.



Cooperative Enterprises

Five Key Partners had already developed rural enterprises to earn income for their own institutional needs and for their constituent members:

• MANGO VINEGAR PRODUCTION FACILITY BY USOFORAL	6,500+ MEMBERS IN 215 GROUPS
• POULTRY MEAT, EGGS, AND CHICKEN OPERATION BY DIRFEL	2,710 MEMBERS IN 30 GROUPS
• FACILITY TO PROCESS AND PACKAGE FARM PRODUCTS BY COFERSA	3,927 MEMBERS IN 16 GROUPS
• RESTAURANT BY MUNYU	10,245 MEMBERS IN 205 GROUPS
• NATIVE PLANTS FRUIT JUICE BOTTLING FACILITY BY KAFO	27,061 MEMBERS IN 1,033 GROUPS

In 2015, to strengthen the fledgling cooperative enterprises of USOFORAL, DIRFEL, COFERSA, and Munyu (KAFO's juice bottling business was in a more advanced development stage) New Field awarded a grant to [Root Capital](#) to help these four Key Partners study the potential of their enterprises to attract social investments, utilize internal savings, and access credit, and develop an action plan to better position their enterprises for sustained growth and profitability. All four Key Partners earned a positive prognosis from Root Capital despite many challenges which included, in general, an absence of staff expertise in business and marketing, product development, and interacting with investors.

Grantmaking Outcomes

HOW NEW FIELD’S PARTNERS SPENT THEIR GRANTS

For each New Field grant awarded, we identified a principal issue that the funding proposal addressed, and the approach the grant partner was using in its grant implementation. With respect to the issues addressed, we identified six that reflected New Field’s mission. These are shown in Table 1, and suggest how New Field’s grant partners used their funds.

It is useful to consider the outcomes of New Field’s grants to our Key Partners during 2012-16 as being indicative of their efforts to support rural women’s organizations and community-level groups. Taken together, the 11 Key Partners during 2012-16 used 63% of their New Field grant funds to support crop and livestock production and marketing activities by local rural women’s groups. The Key Partners also used:

- 17% of the grant funds for capacity development of rural women’s groups
- 6% for rural women’s rights education
- 5% for non-formal education such as literacy, rural radio, and peer-to-peer information sharing opportunities between rural women in groups
- 9% for the Key Partners’ own institutional development

Seven of the 11 Key Partners were Community Grantmakers. As noted previously, this meant that 65% of their New Field grant would be dedicated to Community Grantmaking. During 2012-16, practically all the community grants were used by Community Grantees to support crop and livestock production and marketing activities. This is not too surprising given that agriculture is a way of life for most rural women in West Africa.

Embedded in the category of agriculture is our Key Partners’ commitment to the principles of agroecology, which inspired further New Field grants to broaden advocacy and research on this more holistic approach. Our strong commitment to agroecology is evident in our support of projects like We Are the Solution, and in New Field grants and leadership in creating the [Agroecology Fund](#) and the [Global Alliance for the Future of Food](#). In addition, New Field supported the development of agroecology field schools in Mali, Niger, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, and significant efforts to build the capacity of rural women’s

PRIMARY ISSUE AREAS	% OF GRANTS AWARDED	% OF GRANT FUNDS
LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS AND AGROECOLOGY	35%	49%
WOMEN’S RIGHTS AND MOVEMENT BUILDING	28%	26%
ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY OF RURAL WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS	14%	14%
ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS	13%	5%
COMMUNITY PEACE BUILDING	6%	4%
RURAL WOMEN’S ACCESS TO LAND	3%	3%

Table 1

organizations in agroecology in Guinea-Bissau and Burkina Faso. Summaries of these agroecology projects are in Appendix C.

Agroecology as an evolving focus of New Field grantmaking was a good fit, given its basis in holistic thinking that seeks to integrate the social, economic, cultural, and biological elements of rural people’s lives. Eight Key Partners had already made agroecology a foundation of their work by the time New Field intensified our funding for it. With New Field support, three Key Partners established their own agroecology learning farms.¹¹ New Field also supported the Coalition for the Protection of African Genetic Heritage (COPAGEN)¹², the mission of which is to protect Africa’s diverse biological resources and the rights of local communities to access and use them without risk from genetically engineered, non-native organisms.

New Field made substantial contributions to rural women’s organizations that transformed themselves into rural women’s agricultural production and marketing cooperatives.¹³ In these cases, not the only ones among New Field’s grant partners, organized rural women farmers focused on adding value to their harvested crops and marketing them to an emerging middle class of urban consumers in their countries. They are business-minded women in social and economic solidarity with one another. They believe their work will determine their children’s future, starting with school fees they can now afford to pay. Rural women’s cooperative enterprises like these have a major role in West Africa’s agricultural future.

11 These are COFERSA in Mali, and AJAC and USOFORAL in Senegal. In Guinea-Bissau, Federation KAFO’s Farmers’ Center at Djali-counda was well established prior to its grants from New Field. These grants supported on-site and on-farm training and education in agroecology.

12 La Coalition pour la Protection du Patrimoine Génétique Africain (COPAGEN)

13 COFRASAD (Guinea); ROPROCAS (Senegal); COFERSA (Mali); Munyu (Burkina Faso); Kono Women’s Cooperative (Sierra Leone), all of which are described in various places in this document.

Partner Overview: KAFO Farmers Federation, Guinea Bissau

Founded in 1997 in Guinea-Bissau, Federation KAFO is composed of 10 smallholder farmer associations that engage in rural development activities to improve the living conditions of local communities. More than 27,000 farmers are members of the 10 farmer associations, two-thirds of whom are rural women. KAFO's head office and rural training center in Djalicounda includes a 200-hectare community-managed forest reserve, a fruit beverage processing unit, a heritage crop seed sanctuary, a natural history museum, and a restaurant, all of which are used for education and training to benefit rural women, men, and youth.

From 2012-2016, more than 3,700 rural women have benefited from Federation KAFO's community grants program, receiving support to engage in a variety of income-generating activities, including horticulture, poultry farming, solar salt-making, artisanal soap production, small ruminant farming, processing and marketing of agricultural and forestry products, rice production, and fruit production.

I am no longer ashamed when I need to sign a document because using my finger or thumb to sign is a thing of the past. I can very competently sign my first and last name.

Mme. Nhima Danfa
Vice President, Rural Women's Group of Bantassu village, Guinea Bissau



Mme. Fatou Seidi showing off her produce.

We own our two rice paddy fields, and no one can take them away, it's our acquired right. The community grants supported us in our day-to-day concerns and helped us to take advantage of our rights to land as peasant women.

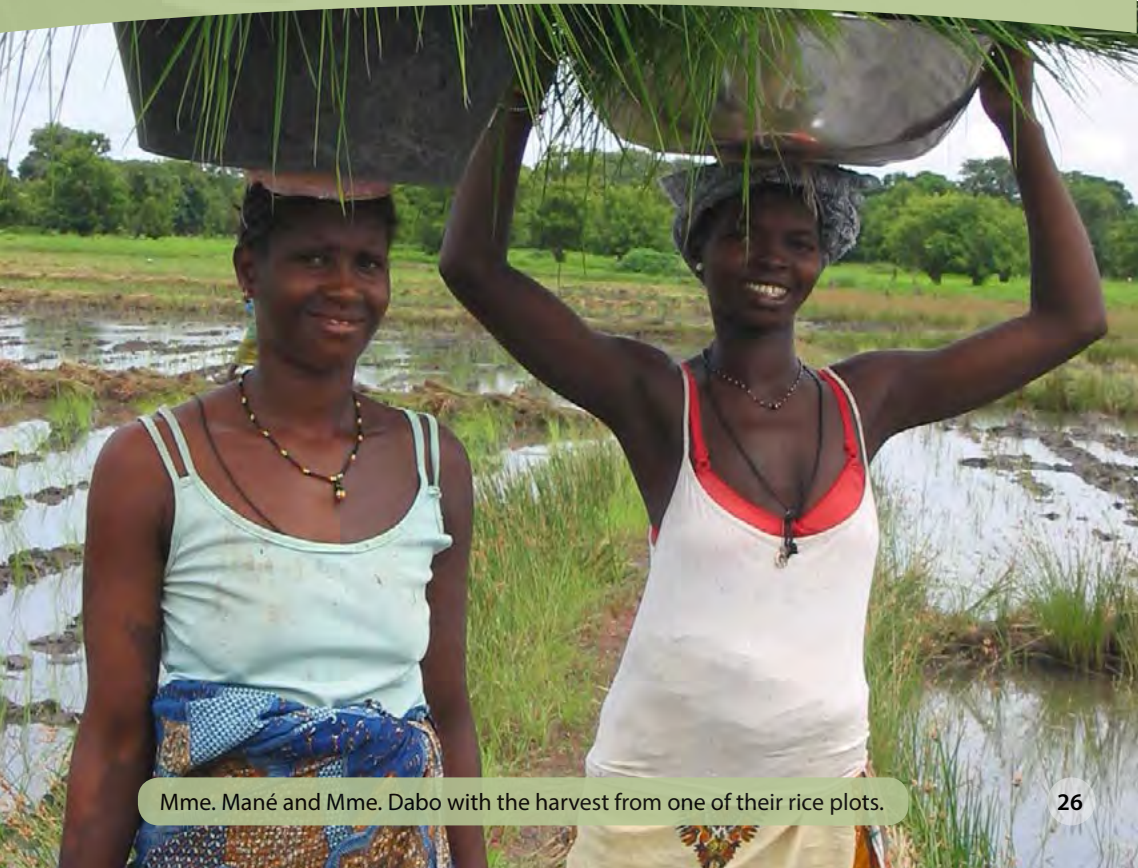
Mme. Muscuta Mané and Mme. Santan Dabo
Members of the Rural Women's Group of Sambaculo village, Guinea Bissau



Mme. Nhima Danfa signing her name on an official document.

The community grant allowed me to take charge of my horticultural production which has enabled me to produce 195 Kg vegetables per year: tomatoes, onions, peppers, lettuce, cabbage. My husband, our five children, and I consume part of the harvest and we sell the remainder at the weekly market. I am now able to buy my own seeds, participate in the group savings and credit system for the women of the village, and save a little money.

Mme. Fatou Seidi
President, Women's Horticultural Group of Malbuloto Village, Guinea Bissau



Mme. Mané and Mme. Dabo with the harvest from one of their rice plots.

Along with community grantmaking and rural women’s rights education, New Field’s funding of rural women’s collectively organized enterprises comprise the core of our legacy. It can be summed up in this way: financial resources in the hands of organized rural women, coupled with their understanding of their lawful rights and opportunities as citizens, have a strong chance of being invested in agriculture-based business that are cooperatively managed.

HOW RURAL WOMEN IMPROVED THEIR LIVES WITH NEW FIELD GRANTS

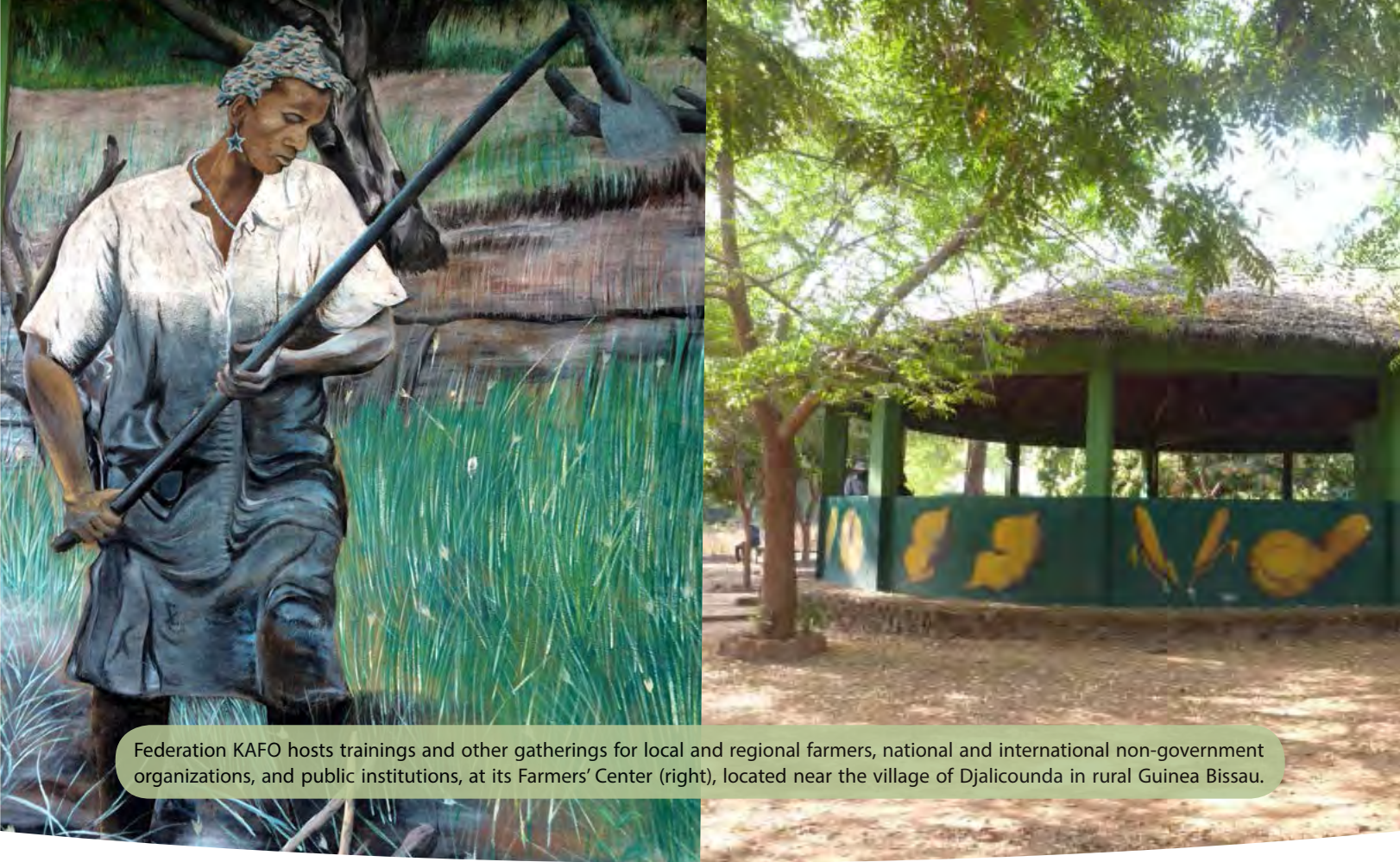
New Field’s national NGO partners in West Africa mainly used their grant funds for rural women’s food production and marketing initiatives, rights education, and organizational development. New Field offered the financial means for rural women to gain greater agency for controlling and managing their local resources. In our experience, this approach improves the social role and status of rural women in spite of their everyday challenges.

New Field learned that rural women organized formally into local groups, with access to useful information and modest levels of financial resources, feel empowered to participate more fully in community life. They can provide their families with more food and livelihood options. Their children are healthier and better educated. They have a little more time to gather and learn about literacy, small business management, farming techniques, and human rights. This is what we mean by women “having agency” over their lives and community.

New Field recognizes that the rural women’s groups that received community grants used them in ways they might use a low-interest loan. Ideally such a loan would be made from an internal savings fund which, in fact, many Community Grantees did establish with New Field funds. It’s difficult to fully assess or estimate how a community grant (or loan) would affect a group’s net income without good data. While this data was not consistently collected by Community Grantmakers and Community Grantees, there’s enough anecdotal data to suggest that community grants are associated with increased group income as compared to the previous year, not counting the community grants themselves as income.¹⁴

Table 2 on the right illustrates several cases in which data were reported well. In no case did a group’s income decline after having received and utilized its community grant, not counting the community grants themselves as income. On the contrary, the community grants catalyzed modest yet significant group income gains. In other words, if used as investments in rural women’s agricultural activities, community grants have demonstrated their power, helping rural women’s groups gain positive returns on the order of 15% to 60% annually.

As a social investment, New Field’s community grantmaking program showed positive results. As an indicator of performance on potential loan scenarios, we recognize that most of the rural women’s groups received community grants for 2-3 consecutive years, interest-free of course. Still, an initial loan of the magnitude shown in Table 3 above, if it is very low-interest and managed skillfully, has a potentially short payback period. This suggests, for example, that a savings program internal to a rural women’s organization, and from which loans can be made to members, is a viable model to consider for increasing rural women’s income and standard of living.



Federation KAFO hosts trainings and other gatherings for local and regional farmers, national and international non-government organizations, and public institutions, at its Farmers’ Center (right), located near the village of Djalicounda in rural Guinea Bissau.

COMMUNITY GRANTMAKER	COMMUNITY GRANTS (COMMUNITY GROUPS)	AVG. GRANT	AVG. CHANGE IN INCOME	AVG. CHANGE INCOME AS % OF AVG. GRANT
DIRFEL 2012, 2014, 2015	23 GRANTS (9 GROUPS)	\$5,165	\$1,387	27 %
KAFO 2013, 2014	18 GRANTS (9 GROUPS)	\$4,376	\$2,626	60 %
APIB 2012, 2015	16 GRANTS (8 GROUPS)	\$2,186	\$865	40 %
USOFORAL 2014	4 GRANTS (4 GROUPS)	\$8,254	\$1,539	19 %
MUNYU 2015	8 GRANTS (8 GROUPS)	\$1,347	\$213	16 %

Table 2

14 Community Grantmakers were asked to report Community Grantees’ annual income in all their grant proposals submitted to New Field but these data were not always provided or even available.



Kono Women's Cooperative – Sierra Leone

Kono Women's Cooperative is based in northern Sierra Leone, the epicenter of the country's civil war and Ebola crisis. Its membership of 27 groups with 6,750 members (6,450 women) engages in a range of farming activities including the cultivation of rice, beans, cassava, peanuts, ginger, and palm oil crops. In its early years (2010-13), the Co-op's members managed land where they grew their crops collectively. In 2014, Co-op members voted to grow their crops individually but market their produce collectively. Crop harvests and sales increased immediately. With New Field support, the Co-op obtained a rice huller to alleviate the onerous task of pounding rice. This has the additional benefit of bringing in additional revenue through rental to non-member rice farmers. The Co-op also exports processed cassava and parboiled rice to neighbouring Guinea, where the demand is strong. New Field's final two grants to Kono Co-op supported the construction of a safe, well-located warehouse and retail venue where the Co-op stores and markets their raw and value-added agricultural products. The facility includes a conference room, business office, and guest rooms. The Co-op uses the conference room and rents it out to other organizations for meetings and workshops.





Indeed, an organization might follow the example of COFERSA in Mali, a union of 16 rural women’s cooperatives. In 2013, COFERSA used some of its New Field funding to create a revolving fund from which its member cooperatives could obtain modest, short-term cash advances. With New Field support, training opportunities for the rural women’s group members were nearly always available as well.

Here is a representative sample of results from the New Field grant awarded to COFERSA in Mali in 2013:

- 51 women learned how to calculate production costs and assess the profitability of their individual farm enterprises, and teach others to do the same.
- 2,812 women from 10 cooperatives learned how to calculate production costs and profitability of their collective efforts.
- 150 women farmer mentors educated more than 3,000 other women farmers on compost production, use, and its utility for regenerating farmland.

- 11 members of COFERSA’s union of cooperatives learned useful tools for monitoring and assessing the strength of organizational leadership.
- 55 women learned leadership skills in two training sessions sponsored by COFERSA.

In another case, from Senegal, a network of rural women producer groups called ROPROCAS developed a strategic plan to become its own rural bank, catalyzed by the income they earned from the purchase, installation, and use of solar pumps in their market gardens.

In Guinea, a national production and marketing organization named AGACFEM¹⁵ used its New Field grants to build a rural women’s enterprise training and processing center, catalyzing a new rural women’s cooperative in the forest region. This zone had been subject to civil conflict in neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone, and then was a vortex of the Ebola epidemic.

In its seventh year of earning New Field grants, AGACFEM developed a comprehensive business plan for a rural women’s cooperative named COFRASAD.¹⁶ After two years of modest support to COFRASAD to implement its business plan, the fledgling organization forged ahead with remarkable success. Aided by AGACFEM’s marketing prowess, COFRASAD’s agricultural products are now sold throughout Guinea and in Canada. In July 2016, Guinea’s President asked COFRASAD to meet with ten of its rural women leaders, where he congratulated the cooperative on being a model for other rural women’s organizations to emulate.

In [New Field’s focused study of community grantmaking in Casamance, Senegal](#), rural women’s groups identified several types of “assets” that had increased due to community grants. These included net income from organizational activities, harvests, savings, and capital equipment. They expressed different solutions for managing their assets such as:


- Organizational ownership of larger equipment such as rotary tillers and solar panels, with a plan and budget for its use and maintenance, and distribution of smaller equipment like shovels and hoes to members for individual ownership and care.
- Organizational title to collective land, in which planting beds are allocated to members, who pay a fee to the organization for equipment, fencing, and water.
- Organizational income for operational costs; organizational savings; member payouts.
- Bulk purchase of organic fertilizer and local seeds for sale to individual members.

The essential point is that rural women’s groups who received community grants were quite capable of managing these funds rationally and prudently for the greater good.

¹⁵ Association Guinéenne pour l’Allègement des Charges Féminines (AGACFEM); Guinean Association to Relieve Women’s Burdens

¹⁶ Coopérative des Femmes Rurales pour l’Agriculture, la Sécurité Alimentaire, et le Développement (COFRASAD); Rural Women’s Cooperative for Agriculture, Food Security, and Development.

LEADERSHIP IN RURAL WOMEN'S GROUPS

As in most communities around the world, in rural West African villages there are women who are natural leaders, ready to represent and communicate the interests of their neighbors in front of local authorities. While natural leadership requires wisdom, charisma, and vision, the effectiveness of women leaders in rural West Africa depends as well on them having the tools and skills they need to exercise leadership. New Field's grants often included support to increase rural women's access to leadership tools and skills in organizational management, financial management, reading and writing, public speaking, and understanding citizens' rights under the law. [New Field's report on leadership success by rural women in Senegal](#)  suggests that success is measured by a leader's increased capacity to:

- manage her own organization effectively;
- become an advisor and committee member for initiatives in her community; and
- be elected as a representative in local government.

These outcomes comprise the goal of New Field's grant support to develop rural women's leadership. The grants enabled rural women's groups to improve their reputation among local and regional authorities, and deepen respect for their efforts by their families and communities. Whether the members of rural women's groups became officers of their organizations or not, all who participated in leadership training activities increased their ability to influence decisions within their families and communities.

One example of how New Field's grants nurtured rural women's leadership is portrayed by our grant partner, USOFORAL¹⁷, an NGO in Senegal. USOFORAL used its grants to develop a network of four rural women's federations totaling more than 140 groups and 6,500 members.

With technical assistance from USOFORAL, the four federations developed annual action plans grounded in the priorities expressed by their members. The action plans were platforms by which the federations advocated for their members' interests with local and regional authorities who controlled public funds. The plans also informed other civil society organizations about the federations' work. Each federation organized annual meetings, maintained operational records, and managed internal savings and loan systems. One goal was to seat members on advisory and management boards for community health and education programs. USOFORAL's approach emphasized information exchanges between rural women's groups to cross-fertilize ideas and experiences. Support for rural women's agricultural enterprises was key, for any measure of financial clout in decision-making environments dominated by men was significant in facilitating rural women's ability to voice their concerns.

For 14 years, New Field grants in support of rural women's organizations led to better lives for many rural families. Yet there's a long way to go. In much of the world today, the voices of rural women are still not readily heard. It's no secret that rural women in West Africa work from dawn through the evening. They work laboriously in their fields and homes each day, raising children, cooking, and more. The division of gendered labor is unfair. Yet when rural women band together for a common purpose, such as obtaining land to grow vegetables or purchasing farm equipment, and have modest levels of accessible funds, rural life becomes better for everyone. In terms of development, we are convinced that despite the difficulties inherent in this type of grassroots grantmaking, this is a strategy that works.



Rural Women's Think Tank

In the interest of promoting rural women's leadership, New Field experimented with the creation of a three-year Rural Women's Think Tank that gave women change makers the opportunity to shift their focus from survival to empowerment, and brainstorm ways to create more wealth for their organizations and communities. Ashoka joined as the coordinator of the effort. Twelve rural women leaders from associations across West Africa convened annually to find solutions to common challenges that rural women face, and share strategies for effective implementation of their grants.

Through these 3-day convenings, rural women leaders had the opportunity to express themselves, tell the stories of their lives, identify challenges common to them all, and collaborate to find solutions. Through increased confidence and knowledge sharing, they were able to strengthen their associations at home to become more effective and serve their members better. Together, their associations represent thousands of rural women, each of whom was responsible for many family members. Several of these associations linked up to increase their markets, improve their products, and develop their local food systems.

The Think Tank did not reach its full potential due to rising conflict in Mali and other locations where the program participants were situated. However, the notion of bringing rural women leaders together to talk together about their challenges and their organizations' business opportunities proved to be an inspiring forum.

17 Comité Régional de Solidarité des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance (USOFORAL)

Conclusions



Throughout its 14 years, New Field remained true to the ideal that rural women working together in groups can create positive change in families, communities, and local institutions. We knew that an integrated approach that addressed rural women's leadership, agency, rights, and organizational capacity is essential to economic and social change. In awarding grants to directly support rural women's organizations and village-level groups, New Field Foundation stayed consistently true to our core values. By granting not only financial support, but the freedom and trust in our grant partners to decide for themselves how to use the funding, we cultivated a shared vision for peace and equality. Due in large part to the work of New Field's program consultants and advisors in West Africa, we developed deep positive relationships with all our grant partners. New Field's grant partners attest to the environment of mutual respect and shared equality that we jointly cultivated.

The anecdotal and quantified results of New Field's grantmaking suggest that women's groups in rural West Africa that are well-managed, work in a learning environment, and are financially capitalized with relatively modest social investments can achieve tangible gains in their social and economic status. These rural women are productive, profitable, and protective of the environment. And, based on a decade of site visits, monitoring, surveys, and third party evaluations, we are confident that a program of awarding small-scale community grants to village-level women's groups is effective in increasing the agency of rural women.

There may be no single recipe for how a grantmaker can support rural women's organizations effectively, but New Field is committed to a focus on group mobilization, leadership, and empowerment that was clearly effective in most cases. It took a great deal of attention to detail and training to implement these strategies, and we in turn learned a great deal by taking risks and trusting the local people and their process. We also relied on the skills of many West African women and men who served as paid consultants and advisors as well as informal networks of funders and other NGOs that were focused on rural women.

Should a philanthropic organization or individual choose to emulate New Field's approach to grantmaking, they might be advised to commit their support to local groups for at least five years, as New Field did in most cases. A timeframe such as this is useful in several ways. It gives the partnership time to deepen and grow into a more meaningful relationship in which donors and grantees have an opportunity to better understand each other, thereby increasing the potential for effective and efficient actions. It provides opportunity for more purposeful monitoring and learning. And it expands one's view of success by valuing the process of grantmaking as well as its outcomes.

Similarly, New Field's strategy of "fewer yet larger" grants during the last several years of grantmaking bears consideration. To some extent, this approach was experimental, if only because New Field did not wish to create dependency relationships during our first ten years of grantmaking. This change of pace suggested that support comprising as much as 50% of a grant partner's annual income over at least three years provides more options for program and institutional development, particularly for an organization's capacity to attract funding.

To that end, New Field's Key Partners helped sustain themselves and advance the cause of rural women's agency by managing program portfolios that featured rural women's rights education, organizational development, and rural enterprises as complementary components. While none of these components is necessarily more important than another, rural women's capacity to add value to and market agricultural products is vital.

The rural women's production and marketing cooperatives that New Field supported varied in form and function. In the end, it is community grantmaking, rural women's rights education, and support for collectively organized and operating rural enterprises that comprise the core of New Field's legacy. In summary, financial resources in the hands of organized rural women, coupled with their understanding of their lawful rights, have a demonstrably strong chance of increasing rural women's agency in West Africa.

New Field's success began and continues with rural women. Many organizations and individuals made invaluable contributions to our work. They are acknowledged in the pages that follow. Our journey together has no visible end. The rural West Africa that we have come to know owes its existence to the rural women living there, working together, creating a better world for their families, and for all who cross and walk their paths.

While there remain many challenges in administering, funding, and managing small women's organizations in remote areas of Africa, we believe that financial resources in the hands of organized rural women, coupled with their understanding of their lawful rights as citizens, creates a strong chance of success towards increasing rural women's agency. If rural women are empowered to do what they believe is right, then we are sure that their families and communities will benefit as well, leading to a more peaceful and equitable world.



APPENDIX A

Acknowledgements

Board of Directors

Barbara Sargent
Tom Sargent
Barbara Sieck Taylor
Ellen Friedman
Gary Schwartz
Janis Burger
Judy Withee
Muadi Mukenge

Program and Administration Consultants

Aissatou Diaby (Senegal)
Elisabeth Kanssole (Burkina Faso)
Emma Kamara (Sierra Leone)
Florence Kaindaneh (Sierra Leone)
Gloria Irvina Betts (Sierra Leone)
Karie Brown (United States)
Mariamé Ouattara (Burkina Faso)
Raky Gueye (Senegal)
Tabara Ndiaye (Senegal)
Zelene Wilkins (United States)

Translators, Communication and Media Consultants

Amel Gorani
Anne Oben
Atoumane Kane
Dani Gelardi
Jean Nepo Simbayobewe
Jonathan Minor
Rosemary Ekosso
Yan Brailowsky

United States-Based Staff

Bethsheba Orero
Chelsea Smith
Deanna Drake Seeba
Diane Adou
Esther Mallouh
Iris Garcia
Jane Rockhold
Jennifer Greenburg
Jocelyne Takatsuno
Jonathon Landeck
Mawuli Dake
Meleah Mannix
Sarah Hobson
Yuri Futamura
Zoe Rossing

Africa-Based Advisors

Abdou Sarr (Senegal)
Andrew Musa (Sierra Leone)
Fatou Batta (Burkina Faso)
Firoze Manji (Kenya)
Jeanne Manguet (Guinea)
Kaari Murungi (Kenya)
Mamadou Ba (Senegal)
Mamadou Goïta (Mali)
Oulimata Ndiaye (Senegal)
Ousmane Ba (Senegal)
Rosalie Yao (Côte d’Ivoire)
Sebe Conde (Guinea)
Setcheme Mongbo (Mali)
Shannoh Kandoh (Liberia)
Zainab Bangura (Sierra Leone)

Foundation Allies

AJWS
The Christensen Fund
CS Fund
Fahamu
Firelight Foundation
Global Fund for Women
Groundswell International
IDEX
The Oakland Institute
Swift Foundation
Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund
World Neighbors

APPENDIX B

Lessons Learned: Operating Field Offices in West Africa

To support its operations, New Field established a home office in San Francisco and three regional West Africa offices, each with a Program Consultant and Associate Consultant. The regional offices were located in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Dakar, Senegal, and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Making small strategic grants in remote areas of West Africa was relatively expensive to administer and monitor but the presence of focus area offices staffed by talented women professionals unquestionably made the grantmaking effective. In 2012, in order to streamline our operations, New Field decided to discontinue most of our grantmaking in Sierra Leone and close the office in Freetown as well. We retained and strengthened the offices in Dakar, Senegal, and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Using those two offices as examples, here is how a small private foundation based in California managed field offices in West Africa.

Find trusted guides to navigate local laws and government. New Field identified resource people by asking international NGOs that had a working presence in Senegal and Burkina Faso for many years. We worked with legal counsel in both countries with expertise in labor law and NGO registration requirements. We also relied on local advisors with experience and relations with government officials, helping to navigate these structures and processes.

1. **Pay attention to local laws governing independent contractors.** New Field wished to hire local people as independent contractors, given the compliance obligations of employment in Senegal and Burkina Faso. New Field's contracts with local consultants therefore needed to comply with U.S. law and national laws of these countries. We worked with legal counsel in the U.S. and in Burkina Faso and Senegal to ensure compliance on both sides. We also adhered to national tax requirements for consultant fees in Burkina Faso and Senegal.
2. **Contract good administrators to operate field offices.** Running field offices required security and janitorial services, lease agreements, internet and phone service, and a reliable person to pay the bills. New Field therefore contracted Program Administration ("PA") consultants to manage the field offices and our local bank accounts. The PAs supported the logistical needs of travel and meetings as well as regular communications with grantees. The Program Consultants (PCs) also had key roles in overseeing the field office operations.
3. **Set up internal controls for operating in-country bank accounts.** New Field established business bank accounts in Burkina Faso and Senegal, from which we paid all the program and administrative expenses of each field office. The PCs were authorized to sign checks and the PAs prepared the necessary documentation and financial reporting to New Field's home office in California. Bank accounts were reconciled and replenished on a quarterly basis by the home office. Internal controls were developed and documented by the home office for the use of the bank account, a petty cash fund, and financial reporting by the field offices. Having a local bank account allowed New Field to operate in local currency, thus mitigating gains and losses due to the exchange rates between U.S. dollars and West African francs.

4. **Be prepared to invest in infrastructure and still face disruptions.** New Field's field offices were at times disrupted by power outages, slow connectivity, and civic unrest. Our investment in generators and good IT systems were a must. We invested in a cloud-based file sharing platform that allowed users to access saved files offline upon a loss of connectivity. Safety and security were of utmost importance. We maintained close communications with our consultants and grantee partners during periods of civic unrest. In Senegal, New Field shared an office with a peer organization, which saved costs and created a safe community.
5. **Fulfill obligations to local government.** Official recognition by host governments comes with reporting requirements that differ by country and ministry. Knowing the requirements took much effort and follow-up by the consultants, yet New Field adhered to the rules and regulations, always on schedule. Having advisors with contacts within the bureaucracies expedited many procedures. By registering officially in each country, New Field was included in government consultations with NGOs about issues of national development.

In conclusion. The in-country cost of each field office was approximately \$100,000 per year. For New Field, this model was cost-effective, considering the expense of employing one or two U.S.-based program officers and funding their travel to the region several times each year.

For local consultants, New Field's official recognition in-country afforded them credibility in their day-to-day dealings with government officials, peer organizations, international donors, and grant partners. It gave them standing to speak on behalf of rural women's interests. The local consultants were the on-the-ground eyes and ears for New Field, a small foundation based in California. They enabled New Field to provide financial support to rural women in remote areas of West Africa to effectively manage their resources and build the capacity of their organizations. Staff members, board members, local consultants, and grant partners, and everyone else associated with New Field have been enriched by the experience of working together across languages, time zones, challenges, and cultures in order to improve the lives of rural women and their families in West Africa.

APPENDIX C

Funding to Support Agroecology

Five initiatives focused on Agroecology which New Field supported are summarized here:

1. [The Agroecology Fund \(AEF\)](#)
2. [The Global Alliance for the Future of Food \(GA\)](#)
3. [La Via Campesina Agroecology Schools in Africa \(LVC\)](#)
4. [We Are the Solution \(WAS\)](#)
5. [Capacity-Strengthening Grants to Federation KAFO and FENOP](#)

THE AGROECOLOGY FUND (AEF)

In 2011, the New Field board helped found and fund a collaboration of foundations¹ to launch the *International Fund for Amplifying Agroecological Solutions* (IFAAES). By 2014, the collaborative had become the Agroecology Fund (AEF). The AEF was created to increase the volume, collaboration, and effectiveness of research, advocacy, and movement-building for agroecological solutions to sustainable food systems and to climate change policies. Its original goals were:

1. Fund 3-5 partnerships that link farmers' groups, research institutions, and social movements to support agroecological food systems and climate change policies.
2. Support tracking and reporting on the effects of input-intensive agricultural models.
3. Increase the capacity of small farmer organizations and networks to act independently, work collaboratively, adopt effective systems, and refine their agroecological practices.
4. Facilitate grantees to develop and disseminate key messages to promote agroecology.
5. Create opportunities for donor learning and additional funder support to grow the AEF.

By the end of 2016, New Field had authorized more than \$1.2 million to support the grantmaking and operations of the AEF. By then, the AEF had engaged a Coordinator for several years, later to become AEF's Executive Director, increased its funder base to 14 philanthropies,² and awarded \$2.9 million in grants to 24 organizations. These 24 collaborative grant partners on four continents in turn implemented the grants with 136 community-level organizations.

In 2016, AEF's monitoring consultant began to examine the grants' impacts on women's rights and livelihoods, among other outcomes, to better understand and document the successes for rural women within their organizations and collaborative actions about agroecology. For all three rounds of funding through 2016, evidence of women's leadership in collaborative action was a key criterion in determining the merit of grant proposals. In its first three rounds of funding, AEF supported rural women farmer's work through the following grant partners:

- In India, [Navdanya](#) and the [Tamil Nadu Women's Collective](#).
- In Thailand and India, [Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty](#)
- In Korea, the [Korean Women's Peasant Network](#)
- In West Africa³, the [Fahamu Networks for Social Justice](#) for the initiative, *We Are the Solution: Building a Rural Women's Movement for Food Sovereignty, Agroecology, and Gender Justice* co-initiated by New Field, The Christensen Fund, CS Fund, Grassroots International, and Swift Foundation
- In the Americas⁴, [Social and Economic Development for Indigenous Mexicans](#) (DESMI) for the project, *Buen Vivir in the Americas: Peasant and Indigenous Women-Led and Family-Based Agroecology*
- In Papua New Guinea, [Save PNG](#) for *Food is Life Melanesia: Sharing Agroecology Knowledge through Media Education in the Pacific Region*

By funding projects like those above, AEF supports partnerships that (1) link farmers' groups and movements with agroecology advocates, (2) shift the language and direction of agricultural policies and research agendas, and (3) nurture leadership to bring light to farmer-driven efforts that meet livelihood, nutritional, and ecological goals.

¹ The Christensen Fund; V.K. Rasmussen Fund; Swift Foundation.

² A Team Foundation; Casey and Family Foundation; The Christensen Fund; Franciscan Sisters of Mary Helianthus Fund; McKnight Foundation; New Field Foundation; Peterffy Foundation; SWF Immersion Foundation; Swift Foundation; Synchronicity Earth; Tikva Grassroots Empowerment Fund; Anonymous Foundations (2). By 2016, the V.K. Rasmussen Fund had discontinued its funding support to AEF but remained in communication and implicit collaboration with the AEF donors and Executive Director

³ Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Senegal

⁴ Haiti, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Brazil

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR THE FUTURE OF FOOD (GA)

Inspired by a speech at Georgetown University by the Prince of Wales in 2011 titled *On the Future of Food: A Call to Action*, several philanthropic organizations, including New Field, began to explore the potential of a collaborative network of funders. One year later, these and other foundations gathered at the Prince’s Highgrove organic farm to discuss how they might work together, initiate funding, and develop a vision of “systems change”, a framework for moving forward, and areas of potential collaboration. Within five years of this royal meeting, 23 foundations had signed on to the Global Alliance for the Future of Food.

Global Alliance founders articulated a vision to *cultivate healthy, equitable, renewable, resilient, and culturally diverse food and agriculture systems shaped by people, communities, and their institutions. Its mission is to leverage resources to help shift food and agriculture systems towards greater sustainability, security, and equity.* The strategic approach consists of:

- **Make the Case:** Forge new insights and strengthen evidence for the need and potential for food systems change.
- **Communicate the Relevance:** Raise awareness, lift up diverse knowledge and evidence, and make key findings visible.
- **Advocate:** Engage diverse stakeholders at multiple levels with a focus on policy and systems change for maximum impact.

The GA formed three Working Groups¹⁸ including *Agro-Ecological Transitions* (AETWG) in which New Field primarily engaged through 2016. The AETWG seeks to accelerate the transition to agroecology as a core solution to current and future food system challenges. Through 2016, the AETWG has supported several projects and initiatives including:

1. **Seeds of Resilience:** Experts from across sectors and around the world offered their perspectives on a future food system that protects and improves local seed systems. The result is a document called *The Future of Food: Seeds of Resilience, A Compendium of Perspectives from Around the World*. It is an overview of global efforts to protect and preserve seed systems with commentaries from organic farmers, community activists, business representatives, researchers, and scientists. It is also a synthesis of findings and recommendations for pathways towards more sustainable seeds systems.
2. **Beacons of Hope:** This GA/AETWG project aims to develop a framework of evidence and stories about transitions towards more sustainable food and agriculture systems. Its purpose is for funders, advocates, and policy makers to better understand what pathways to sustainable food systems might resemble, and how certain food system models might be replicated across regions and at the global level.

3. **FAO Regional Meetings:** In 2015, the AETWG led an effort to fund the participation of 36 local food movement leaders in the UN’s Food and Agriculture (FAO) Regional Meetings on Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa and Asia. These events were the first FAO-supported transnational meetings on agroecology in Africa and Asia, an important step in elevating regional and national dialogues about the viability of agroecology as a solution for the future of food.
4. **Seeds Initiative:** On the heels of the Global Farmers Rights Consultations in Bali in 2016, the AETWG has committed to lead the planning and development of a *Strategic Action Framework for Agricultural Biodiversity and Community Based Seed Systems*.

LA VIA CAMPESINA AGROECOLOGY SCHOOLS IN AFRICA

New Field recommended two grants to support the international farmers’ movement, La Via Campesina (LVC), in 2012 (\$185,000) and 2014 (\$240,000). These grants supported development of an African agroecology training network, with a goal to build capacity among smallholder women and men farmers throughout Africa to practice agroecology. Both grants were managed by an LVC fiscal sponsor¹⁹, the National Coordination of Farmers Organization (CNOP) in Mali, one of four organizations to share the grants. The three other partners were: Mozambique National Union of Peasant Associations (UNAC); Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum (ZIMSOFF); Niger Peasant Platform (PFPN)²⁰.

The grants were focused on developing the operational capacity at rural agroecology schools in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Mali, and Niger to provide farmer mentoring training to 200 women and men farmers annually, 50 per school. Each agroecology school contributed to developing an agroecology curriculum that is local in substance yet universal in principles and philosophy. The Via Campesina movement was well established in the Americas and to some extent in Asia. These grants were an initial attempt for LVC to establish a firm base in Africa. All four grant partners were recognized participants in the movement but this was a project to coordinate methods, learnings, and information exchange in a semi-formal network.

Overall, the two grants constituted an ambitious project with a positive achievement despite several challenges having most to do with distance, communication and language since participants spoke English, French, or Portuguese. The agroecology schools were not necessarily “buildings and grounds” because the LVC learning methodology relies primarily on farmer-to-farmer learning in real fields on real farms. Yet two of the partners, CNOP in Mali and ZIMSOFF in Zimbabwe, already had functional agroecology training centers, albeit both in need of infrastructure upgrades. PFPN and UNAC used a good portion of their grants to build classrooms and irrigation systems. The grants supported exchange

¹⁸ Advancing Well-Being; Agro-Ecological Transitions; Externalities and True Cost Accounting

¹⁹ Being a decentralized movement, not an NGO, LVC was not eligible to manage New Field grants.

²⁰ CNOP was founded in 2004 to coordinate 11 smallholder producer federations totaling three million women and men members. CNOP’s mission is to represent and defend the interests of small-scale farm families, forest people, artisanal fishers, and youth. UNAC was founded in 1987 by small- and medium- scale Mozambique farmers as a national organization to represent and protect their interests and have a greater role in building a more just, prosperous, and united society. UNAC’s membership consists of more than 84,000 farm families organized as 2,152 local associations, 84 district unions, 4 provincial clusters, and 7 provincial unions. ZIMSOFF was founded in 2002 with a mission to create a dynamic alliance of rural organizations to improve the well-being of smallholder farmers through participatory ecological land use planning and management. ZIMSOFF’s membership consists of more than 17,000 farm families throughout Zimbabwe. PFPN was founded in 1998 as a nine-member peasant organization to coordinate actions on behalf of rural farmers in Niger, which grew to include smallholder producer associations, federations, unions, and cooperatives totaling more than 2 million members throughout Niger. PFPN’s mission is to defend the interests of its members through action, dialogue, and advocacy.

meetings between representatives of the four schools, and a trip by farmers from each organization to Cuba to observe agroecology and farmer-to-farmer training in action there. All throughout, despite many organizational and administrative hurdles, CNOP managed both grants very well.

Each of the four grant partners made significant progress in developing on-farm sites and in providing training to mentor farmers during 2013-16. Staff members from all four grant partners met in Mali to share their organizations’ agroecology learning curricula. They exchanged ideas and shared their ambitions for a common design and curriculum among the four schools. They produced and implemented a work plan for 2014-16 that emphasized the sharing of information on methodologies, successes and challenges between the schools.

The common agroecology curriculum remained in development through 2016. Over three years, several hundred women and men farmers in the four countries learned agroecological methods for growing vegetables and grains, raising cattle and processing milk, and marketing their products. There was a major focus on traditional seeds and the threat smallholder farmers face from corporate control of seed sources. Much of the work supported by these two grants is included in LVC’s publication, *Peasant Agroecology for Food Sovereignty and Mother Earth: Experiences of La Via Campesina*. [↗](#)

In summary, New Field was at the vanguard in supporting the creation of an agroecology school network in Africa. The grant partners themselves have recognized the difficulty and cost of establishing and maintaining such a network in Africa through a shared grant. The general consensus among the four partners was that making individual grants to each partner was a more efficient way to move agroecology schools forward in Africa.

Still, the opportunity to meet with other practitioners in different corners of the continent was a valuable and long lasting experience for each of the four grant partners, and the women and men farmers who participated directly in grant-supported activities. New Field’s support for the schools did not end in 2016, when both CNOP and ZIMSOFF were awarded New Field grants to continue the development of their agroecology training centers; *Nyeléni* in Mali and *Shashe* in Zimbabwe. In late 2015, UNAC hosted an exchange visit from one of New Field’s Key Partners, Federation KAFO in Guinea-Bissau. Both organizations expressed a true desire to collaborate in the future. UNAC can especially learn from Federation KAFO at their well-established Farmers’ Center at Djalicounda.

WE ARE THE SOLUTION (WAS)

In response to the rising challenge to smallholder farmers from a new “Green Revolution in Africa” that espoused the use of imported synthetic chemical inputs for agriculture, New Field in 2010 forged a collaboration with CS Fund, The Christensen Fund, and Grassroots International to recognize the role of traditional knowledge of African women in agriculture.²¹

These funders decided to jointly support rural women to share their knowledge and advocate for its wider use as a viable alternative to the Green Revolution. The collaborative project, called *We Are the Solution* (WAS), focused initially on 12 rural women’s associations in five countries, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, and Guinea. These associations were already engaged in the practice and promotion of ecological

agriculture, aiming to enhance their expertise and leadership to share agroecological practices on a larger scale across Africa.

The initial WAS strategy was to facilitate the participation of 75 rural women farmer leaders in media and advocacy, engaging them in decision-making processes in local, regional and global campaigns. The goal was to mobilize and sustain an Africa-wide action network of 1,000 rural women stakeholders for information sharing, partnership, and advocacy.

In 2010, the first New Field grant for WAS (\$154,000 for two years) was awarded to a UK-based trust, [Fahamu](#) [↗](#). Fahamu coordinated the participation and leadership in the WAS campaign of 12 rural women’s organizations in five WAS countries. New Field awarded a second grant to Fahamu in 2012 (\$95,000 for 12 months) to expand the influence and strengthen the identity of WAS through messaging and outreach.

Here is a sample how WAS promoted a leadership role for African women in agroecology:

43 rural women leaders from the five WAS countries participated in two “WAS Institutes” to learn about agricultural policies, genetically modified seeds, synthetic agricultural chemical inputs and the WAS vision. These women provided outreach about WAS in their home countries to more than 600 other women farmer leaders.

- Nine WAS leaders received training on communication technology and social media.
- WAS women leaders in Senegal, Mali, and Burkina Faso organized debate-format conferences on what is meant by African food sovereignty and agroecology.
- At the regional agricultural fair in Dakar, Senegal, WAS leaders sat on a panel to discuss agroecology with 150 agricultural leaders attending the fair.
- At the World Social Forum in Tunisia in 2013, WAS leaders organized a forum in which more than 100 food sovereignty activists participated to discuss agroecology in Africa.
- Two agriculture-oriented NGOs in Senegal, two others in Burkina Faso, and one in Guinea established partnerships with local radio stations to inform rural populations and journalists about the WAS campaign’s focus on the promotion of agroecology.
- WAS leaders in Senegal organized three forums on agroecology attended by 70 women and 50 men farmer leaders, emphasizing the conservation of local seed varieties.

In 2014, New Field awarded a grant (\$155,000) to Grassroots International to strengthen and grow the WAS food sovereignty campaign in the five WAS countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Ghana). Fahamu maintained its on-the-ground WAS management role from its office in Senegal. New Field awarded a second grant (\$100,000) to Grassroots International in 2015 to strengthen 12 rural women’s associations (RWAs) and Fahamu to expand WAS participation to 75 other RWAs and 300 women farmer leaders in the five countries. The grant supported technical training for 1,000 women farmers in agroecology, and sponsored 80 rural radio broadcasts about agroecology and the leadership role of women in agricultural policies.

21 During 2010-2014, a total of seven U.S. funders worked together to fund WAS – The Arkay Foundation, Christensen Fund, CS Fund, Grassroots International, Mize Family Foundation, New Field Foundation, Swift Foundation – to which New Field contributed \$601,655 in grants.

CAPACITY-STRENGTHENING GRANTS TO FEDERATION KAFO AND FENOP

During 2013-2016, New Field awarded two grants each to two Key Partners: Federation KAFO in Guinea-Bissau and to FENOP in Burkina Faso (approximately \$450,000 in four grants) to increase the capacity of rural women's organizations to understand and practice agroecology.

In Guinea-Bissau, rural women members of community groups increased their skills in growing fruit and vegetable crops using local inputs only, while learning to add value to some harvested crops for more profitable marketing. A key approach was to create a cadre of 500 rural women as mentors in agroecology for other women in their communities. Federation KAFO also used the rural radio station at its Farmers' Center in Djalicounda to complement community-level trainings, featuring rural women leaders in discussion about agroecology.

In Burkina Faso, FENOP employed a similar approach by creating a cadre of rural women mentors to support other women farmers in their communities to practice agroecology. FENOP also enlisted a specialist from APIB, a Key Partner in Mali, to help deliver training in agroecology to more than 40 rural women's groups.

FENOP's approach was to first document 21 agroecology practices that farmers in Burkina Faso were already using, and then make those practices the focus of its training program. Like KAFO in Guinea-Bissau, FENOP made use of rural radio broadcasts to spread and share information about agroecology. Some broadcasts emanated from a radio station owned and managed by Munyu, another Key Partner. FENOP also published an information bulletin in local languages, distributing 30,000 copies per edition, all of which included a story or two about smallholder farmers practicing agroecology.



PHOTO © KARL GROBL FOR GRAMEEN FOUNDATION



NEW FIELD
FOUNDATION

© 2017 New Field Foundation

www.newfieldfound.org