

A pregnant woman with a blue headwrap and an orange t-shirt is standing in a field. She is holding a bunch of green bananas with her right hand. The background shows lush green plants and trees. The text 'GROW-ing Empowerment' is overlaid on the image in a white box.

GROW-ing Empowerment

A Case Study



Women farmers in the Northern Region of Ghana lack access to the financial resources and agricultural inputs needed to adapt to climate change. If women had access to the same agricultural resources as men, agricultural yields could increase by 20-30% and the total number of hungry people would decrease by 12-17%. To address this gender gap, MEDA started its GROW project providing information, training, and resources to female farmers. To reach its goal of 20,000 farmers, MEDA needs a more efficient way to regularly distribute information than bi-annual in-person workshops.

Acknowledging the 13% gender gap in mobile phone ownership, MEDA organized its farmers into groups of 25 with one lead farmer. The lead farmer receives our content services and distributes the information to her group, eliminating the need for universal phone access. These women received weather forecasts, market prices, and agronomic tips through voice messages in their local languages. MEDA also uses the Mergdata platform to record and disseminate their own messages to keep their farmers informed.

Using the lead farmer system and leveraging the power of Farmerline's mobile messaging service, MEDA was able to train 823 lead farmers and increase their overall reach to 22,000 women farmers across Northern Ghana. The voice messaging system allows MEDA to distribute timely information, such as seed information, when it is most useful. The Mergdata platform allows MEDA to scale the GROW project to mass proportions, reducing the education and resource gap between men and women farmers while increasing food security in Northern Ghana.

PROBLEM

SOLUTION

RESULT



40%

of Ghanaians are
vulnerable to
becoming food
insecure

Northern Ghana
has poverty
rates as high as



84%



A Woman's Reach

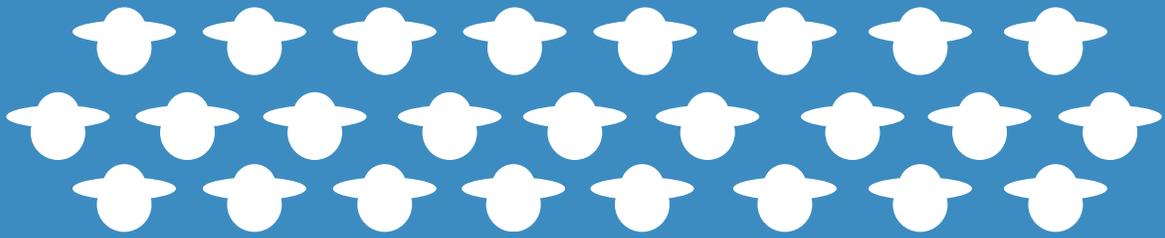
Food insecurity threatens groups across West Africa, even in countries like Ghana which are recognized as being developed. Five percent of Ghana is considered food insecure while about forty percent of people are vulnerable to becoming food insecure. This population is disproportionately located in the northern regions of Ghana: Sixty percent of the food insecure or vulnerable population lives in the Upper West, Upper East and Northern regions.

This disparity in poverty levels can be largely attributed to a lack of resources available to Northern farmers. The north is primarily a savannah zone, rich agricultural land where subsistence crops such as soy, sorghum, maize, millet, groundnuts, and yam are grown. Ghana's agriculture sector has focused on the production of cocoa, which does not grow in the north, limiting government support for northern farmers. The result is regional poverty rates as high as 84 percent. As difficult as this may seem, the odds are stacked even higher against women, who are traditionally prevented from farming large cash crops and have even less access to resources than their male counterparts. Successfully promoting food security and economic stability for the families of northern Ghana requires that this gender gap be addressed.

Leading this charge in northern Ghana, the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) designed and launched the Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) project. The GROW project organized women soybean farmers into groups, with a lead farmer that had access to a phone. This lead farmer communicated the knowledge, resources, and markets sent out by Farmerline's Mergdata system to the 25 women in her group. This information, ranging from weather forecasts to market prices to agronomics tips, helps the women support each other and their families. MEDA set up GROW with the hopes to empower 20,000 female farmers—an ambitious goal that held the promise of a measurable impact in the lives of women and their families.

Before working with Farmerline, MEDA would conduct bi-annual workshops to disseminate soybean production information to women. However, the inefficiency of this process, hampering the scale of MEDA's impact. By using the Mergdata platform, MEDA is now able to reach more women while sending messages when they are relevant, increasing the value of the information. For example, MEDA can send the women tips on planting during growing season or tips on drought management if rain has become irregular.

By cooperating with Farmerline to create a mobile distribution platform, MEDA was able to record messages in 5 different dialects and reach over 22,000 women in Northern Ghana. Based on the success of the GROW project MEDA plans on continuing to use Mergdata to support the GROW project and to help scale other information-based projects.



22,000
Female Farmers



mergdata

Developed by Farmerline, Mergdata is a cloud-based communication, surveying, and data management tool. The combination of Android application and web service provides instant analysis of data collected in the field and allows broadcasting of voice and text messages to thousands of phones at once.



10

countries



Farmerline is transforming smallholder farmers into successful entrepreneurs by increasing their access to information, inputs, and resources to increase productivity. Using the innovative Mergdata platform, Farmerline offers subscription-based information services to rural farmers and licenses its software to agribusinesses to bridge the information gap between organizations and farmers.

For more information visit: farmerline.co

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The Mennonite Economic Development Associates is an international economic development organization whose mission is to create business solutions to poverty. In Northern Ghana, they are committed to empowering female farmers through access to the information, materials, services, and markets they need to improve their incomes and take care of their families.



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