Women's Economic Justice
Village Savings and Loans Associations
in Nigeria

CARE defines Women's Economic Justice as the fulfilment of women's fundamental human right to economic resources and the power to make decisions that affect their lives. This requires women to have equitable access to and control over economic resources—including the time and opportunity to engage in economic activities—but importantly, it also requires changes to discriminatory social norms and economic structures, laws, policies, and practices that marginalize women.

In line with this, CARE Nigeria implements the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) to address systemic barriers to women's access to productive resources and participation in decision-making through skills building, financial literacy, addressing negative social and gender norms and attitudes, and enhancing access to formal financial services.

Our VSLA model strategically aligns with CARE's Women Economic Justice Strategy and is the backbone to promoting economic empowerment and resilience among women and girls.

Since the roll-out of VSLA in 2019, CARE Nigeria has established approximately 2,010 VSLAs through multiple projects.

OUR APPROACH

Pennies to Power (P2P) Program: The Pennies to Power (P2P) project was implemented to empower women and youth economically and socially through savings groups, by facilitating their access to and utilization of economic opportunities

Reach and Impacts

2,010

VSLA groups formed, consisting of 56,926 women with savings of 644,621,800 Naira or ~$400,000

+75

Community-Based Trainers engaged

474 VSLAs

registered with the state Directorate for Cooperatives

702 VSLAs

registered with the Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDAN)

across 15 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in three states. The project had 48,709 members in 1,717 VSLAs (96% women) and collectively saved ₦344,621,800. Furthermore, 409 of these VSLAs have been registered with the Directorate for Cooperatives, reinforcing their access to finance and elevating recognition for VSLA structures. Notable in the implementation of this project was the introduction of the digital savings platform, MISKASHBOKS and NIRSAL, marking a significant milestone in promoting the use of digital savings systems and driving VSLA sustainability through a market-based model.

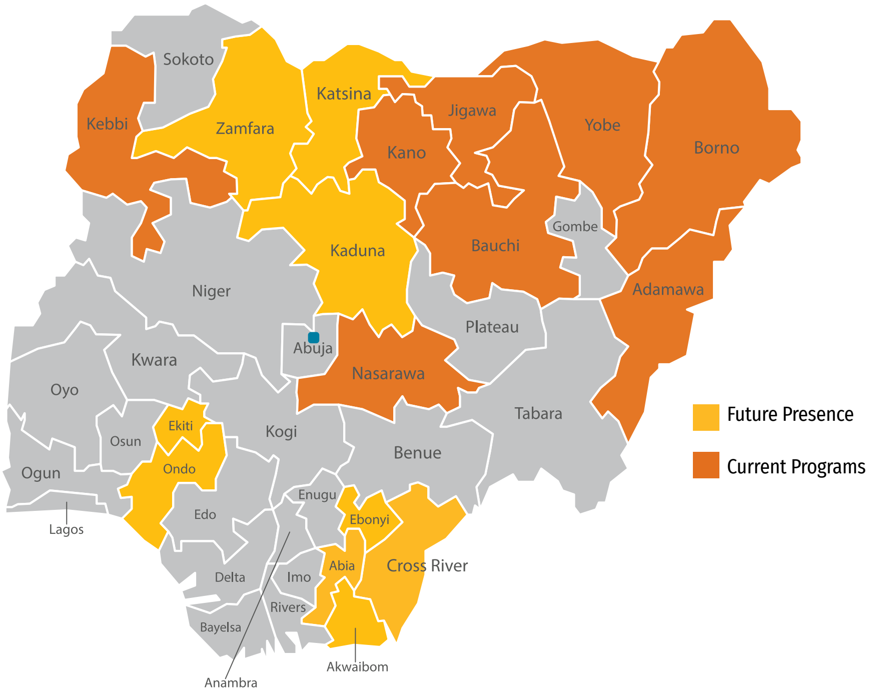
Restoring and Promoting Sustainable Agriculture-based Livelihood for Food Security Project in Borno State: The project improved resilience and financial inclusion among smallholder farmers through a Revolving/Investment Fund Management.

The project formed 64 VSLAs, consisting of 1,532 participants (825 males and 707 females) and established 12 Cluster Management Committees to oversee savings and loans operations. Sixty-two of the groups opened bank accounts, facilitating secure and transparent financial transactions and 39 groups formed into agro-enterprises.

The project also extended support to vulnerable groups, with 426 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 14 returnees, and 1,074 individuals from host communities.

Income Generation and Vocational Skill Training for GBV Survivors: CARE Nigeria generated income and supported vocational skills for gender-based violence (GBV) survivors and vulnerable women and girls in Borno state. The initiative aimed to break the cycle of violence perpetuated by economic instability within households, which often led to intimate partner violence, survival sex, and early or forced marriage of girls. The initiative linked participants with established women solidarity groups/VSLAs as a coaching mechanism. A total of 400 women and girls (16 VSLA groups) received support for skills development and the establishment or improvement of their micro-enterprises or small businesses within Ngala LGA. The participants comprised 70% of previous survivors who were supported in forming VSLA groups and 30% of new survivors who formed VSLA groups but lacked existing businesses.

Integrated Multi-Sectoral Life-Saving Assistance for Conflict-Affected Households Project: The project addresses needs and challenges faced by conflict-affected households in the region. The project established 100 VSLA groups (48 female groups, 21 male groups, and 31 mixed groups) and is currently implementing its adapted Village Savings and Loans Association in Emergencies (VSLAiE) model, which integrates cash and voucher assistance with a short saving cycle.



INNOVATIONS

VSLA Scale Up and Partnership Platform: To enable a sustainable environment,, CARE is leading the coordination of the Savings Group Implementers Platform (SGIP), comprised of NGO/INGO partners, government institutions, and the World Bank, to engage with the government to develop guidelines and advocate for favourable national policies.

CARE – Pilot on Insurance Products for VSLA Livestock Farmers: CARE Nigeria and Pula (a farmers' insurance institution) are piloting a hybrid insurance scheme, targeting 1,200 livestock belonging to 140 VSLA livestock farmers. This offers compensation for death and supplementary feeds during climate risks, including drought and disease. The project collaborates with the National Animal Identification and Traceability System (NAITS) and utilizes remote sensing and Index-Based Livestock Insurance (IBLI).

Approaches

- Financial Literacy Training
- Business/Entrepreneurship skill Training
- Financial Linkages Workshops
- VSLAiE -VSLAs in Emergency Model
- Social Accountability and Action (SAA)
- Community-based Revolving Fund Management
- VSLA Federation and Cluster Model
- Working with Community Based Trainers (CBTs)
- Partnerships and Advocacy
- Working locally and connecting locally
- Village Agent Network (VAN)

Partners

UN Women

Bauchi State Network of Civil Societies Organization (BASNEC)

Society for Women Development and Empowerment, Nigeria (SWODEN)

Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN)

Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMA&RD)

Mega Corps

The Bauchi State Agriculture Development Program (BSADP)

Donors

European Community Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)

Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Arthur Blank Foundation

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

The World Food Program (WFP)

2024–2030 Strategic Plan

Gender Justice

Contribute to ending causes and consequences of Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) by:

- Improving SGBV prevention and response systems
- Increasing education opportunities for out-of-school girls
- Supporting women- and youth-led advocacy and governance engagement
- Promoting gender-transformative approaches and social-norm transformation
- Provide girls and women with skills in climate adaptive practices

Impact Target:
1.2 million people

LOOKING AHEAD

In the next six years, CARE Nigeria will remain committed to interventions that strengthen systems and will create an enabling environment that ensures women and girls' increased access to financial and productive assets and strengthens their life and business skills, as well as their networking, organizational, and entrepreneurial capacities. CARE Nigeria also aims to integrate digital financial services, tailor interventions to specific contexts, and advocate for an enabling policy environment that supports women's economic empowerment.

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