

Solar Harnessed Entrepreneurs (SHE)

Outcome Harvest Study Brief

The **Solar Harnessed Entrepreneurs (SHE) initiative**—a 32-month project funded by the [Rockefeller Foundation](#) through the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet ([GEAPP](#)) and implemented by [CARE Sierra Leone](#) and local partners—aims to demonstrate a model for strengthening women’s access to and productive use of clean energy, by supporting over 7,000 businesswomen in solar mini-grid connected communities to grow their microenterprises through productive use of energy (PUE) equipment investments.

The **SHE initiative builds on energy access opportunities and barriers in Sierra Leone**. Until recently, only 5% of the country’s rural population had access to electricity ([World Bank, 2020](#)). By 2030, the Government of Sierra Leone aims to ensure that 92% of the population has access to energy. In support, the Renewable Rural Energy Project (RREP)—funded by FCDO and implemented by UNOPS and the Ministry of Energy between 2016 and 2022—supported three operators to establish 97 community solar mini-grid systems across the country. While RREP greatly increased access to energy, an evaluation found micro-entrepreneurs are not any more likely to use electricity in their businesses, and female-headed households are less connected to mini-grids than male-headed households ([IGC, 2022](#)). These dynamics reduce the poverty reduction potential of energy access, while also harming the business sustainability of mini-grid operations. The SHE project aims to demonstrate a model for solving productive use of energy barriers, especially among women entrepreneurs.

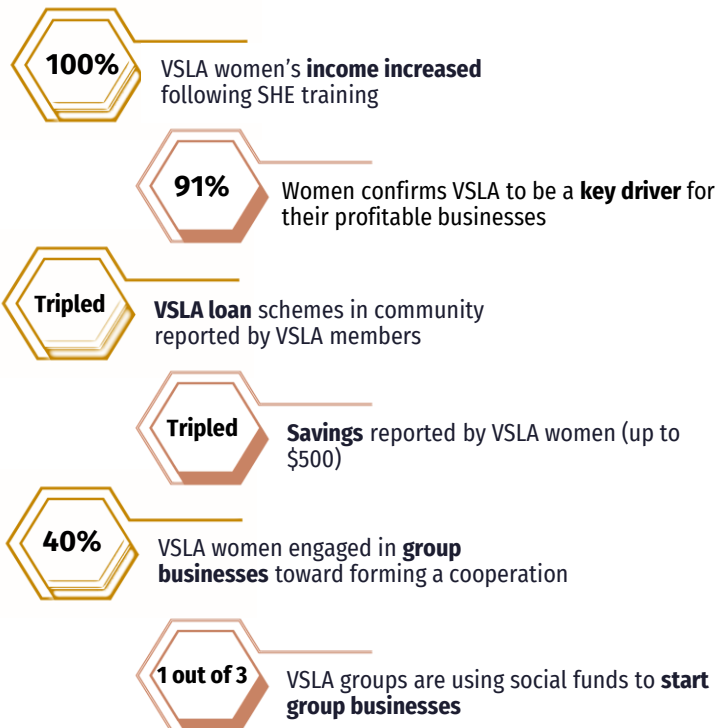


Rural woman in Sierra Leone with her mini-grid powered deep-freezer. ©Rockefeller Foundation / March 2023

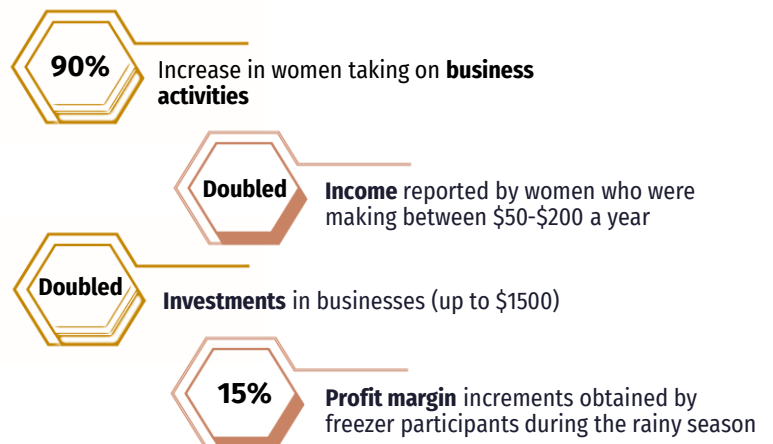
Outcome Harvesting Study Results

In August 2023, CARE conducted an Outcome Harvesting study to capture SHE participant results that continues to inform project learning and adaptive management. CARE facilitated 18 focused-group discussions (FGDs) with randomly selected 270 project participants who are part of Village Savings & Loans Associations (VSLAs) that the SHE project has mobilized.

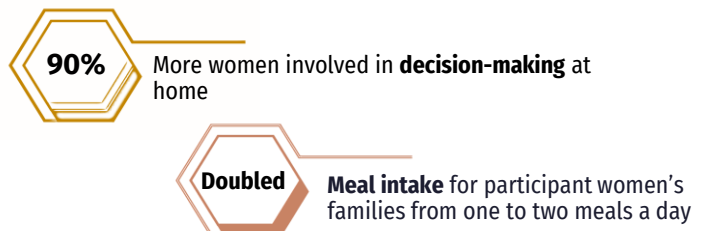
IMPACT FROM SHE-MOBILIZED VSLAS



IMPACT ON INCOME



IMPACT AT HOME



Testimonial from Gilo Swaray, a VSLA Member:
“We did not know about the Social Funds. The VSLA training introduced us to it. Now it is a source of unity and emergency funds for our VSLA Group members.”

Testimonial from Marie Squire, Freezer Project Participant:
“I used to sell alcohol, Oranges & Groundnut before. My family struggled to have one meal a day. After getting the freezer, I started selling cold water & drinks too. I now sell more & have increased my profit by 25%.”