



Annual report: Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER) project, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Period covered by report: January to December 2018

Grant holder: ActionAid UK (AAUK)

Implementing countries: ActionAid Ghana (AAG), ActionAid Rwanda (AAR), ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB) and ActionAid Pakistan (AAP)

Project locations: Ghana (Nanumba North and South districts, Talensi, Nabdam, Jirapa, Asutifi South, Train and Adaklu districts), Rwanda (Nyanza, Gisagara and Nyaruguru districts in the Southern Province, Musanze district in the Northern Province and Karongi district in Western Province), Bangladesh (Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat districts) and Pakistan (Mansehra and Shangla districts).

Implementing partners: Ghana (Songtaba, Bonatadu, Widows and Orphans Movement (WOM), Global Action for Women Empowerment (GLOWA) and Social Development and Improvement Agency (SODIA), Rwanda (Duhozanye, Faith Victory Association and Tubibe Amahoro), Bangladesh (SKS Foundation) and Pakistan (Saiban Development Foundation and NIDA).

Long term objective: To contribute to the increased economic empowerment of women

Specific objective: 21,000 women in Ghana, Rwanda, Bangladesh and Pakistan have increased income and ability to control their income, through practicing climate resilient sustainable agriculture, accessing markets and reducing, recognising and redistributing unpaid care work.

Target group: 21,000 rural women (smallholder farmers and producers) (6,000 in Ghana, 6,000 in Rwanda, 5,000 in Bangladesh and 4,056 in Pakistan) and 6,000 men (3,000 in Ghana, 1,000 in Rwanda, 1,000 in Bangladesh and 1,000 in Pakistan), local authorities, Government ministries, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, African Union and South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation.

Overall comment

The year 2018 has seen significant progress across the four outcome areas related to organising and demanding women's rights; recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work; gaining access to productive resources, markets and increasing income; and creating greater visibility of and changes in policies and practices on these three interconnected issues. On average across the four countries 79% of women participants surveyed reported having greater skills and confidence in participating in community structures. Women have also reported increased influence at household level and community levels. The interventions that lead to reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work have been very successful, for example with women reporting reduction of unpaid care work by up to 3 to 4 hours in Ghana as well as making savings on purchase of energy cooking stoves.

As climate change continues to impact on communities, agroecology has proved to be an effective alternative to be used by women farmers. Farmers have been using compost, green manure, animal manure, pest control using Neem and other techniques to adapt to climate change while 25,339 women have been able to access seeds through seed banks (18,889 in Bangladesh, 30 in Ghana, 6000 in Rwanda and 890 in Pakistan). In all countries, women have reported improved adaptation to climate change and increased yields. Notable progress has been observed on access to markets because of training using the gender sensitive access methodology, which involves participatory approaches of assessing the demands of markets, then producing based on demand, and campaigning for gender sensitive spaces and resources at the market such as access to water and child care.

Patriarchal norms, systems, and traditional beliefs continue to influence gender roles in terms of unpaid care work, decision making and behaviours in all four implementing countries. In some women's groups this was further compounded by religious norms related to women's mobility, as well as geographical remoteness of some areas. While some progressive laws have been put in place in Rwanda such as the land law and national family law, which provide equal rights to men and women, there is still a strong male dominance informed by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and values. In Bangladesh, the period under review was interesting particularly towards the end of the year when there were elections in December. The elections provided an opportunity for women to participate in electoral politics. In Ghana, the year under review saw steady progress in the advancement of women across all outcome areas. During 2018, the operating environment continued to restrict the operation of international NGOs in Pakistan. ActionAid Pakistan was amongst 18 International NGOs whose registration was declined by the Ministry of Interior of the Government of Pakistan, therefore the project activities in Pakistan ceased in October 2018 with the support of the ActionAid Federation.

Comment on theory of change context: the context is still very much the same in terms of global trends on gender parity. In terms of the gender gap index, Ghana moved up to number from 101 out of 142 to 89 of 149 in the Gender Gap Index (which measures women's economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment) while Pakistan moved further down from 141 reported in the theory of change in 2014 to 148 out of 149 in 2018. No country has achieved parity, and only the top seven countries in the rankings have closed at least 80% of the gap, including Rwanda¹. The mid-term review of the POWER project was completed in early 2019, and the findings will be considered while reviewing the relevance of the theory of change and various change pathways throughout the year. Due to the closure of ActionAid Pakistan, funds budgeted for ActionAid Pakistan activities were reallocated to Rwanda and Bangladesh to scale up activities with new women's groups in new areas. Therefore while the targets for reaching project participants in this report are listed as 21,000 rural women, the target has been reduced in 2019, with the POWER Project now expected to reach 19,501 rural women by 2020.

Outcome 1: By the end of 2020, 21,000 rural women are organised and can demand their rights as farmers and carers and have greater influence in their households and communities

The project reached out to 21,701 women living in rural areas against the target of 21,000. However by the end of the year all of the Pakistan women's groups were dropped due to the closure of the office, therefore ActionAid and partners reached 17,645 women by the end of 2018. The remaining women's groups have been well organised with a total of 6,245 women in Rwanda (target 6000), 6,400 in Ghana against (target 6000), and 5,000 women in Bangladesh meeting regularly. Women participating in these groups now have greater influence in the community through working as groups, and they have been able to **make savings, engage and lobby local officials for resources** to address unpaid care work, as well as address violence against women and girls. Women have also been able to advocate for services such as food, and vulnerability group feeding programmes. In Rwanda, the women's groups have achieved greater economic empowerment through the setting up of voluntary savings groups, which enhance women's ability to access loans with a 2% interest rate on their savings. In Rwanda, the total savings of the women's groups in 2018 was 142 516,478 Rwandan Francs (approximately USD 157.65) with additional interest. In Pakistan, 177 women of target areas were trained on setting up and managing saving schemes at village level. Though the project has closed in Pakistan, it is anticipated these schemes will



¹ See http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf

contribute to women's access to productive resources and increased income.

According to the Indicator tracking table across the four countries 65% of women trained reported having improved knowledge of rights by the end of the training round. All women in Rwanda and 93% in Ghana reported increased skills and confidence in demanding their rights and reporting incidences of violence. Women also reported improved levels of confidence and self-esteem because of the group meetings.

Women have been able to demand their **rights and participate in decision making more and more** as the project progresses. For example, in Bangladesh more than 1,060 women now occupy positions in local decision-making structures and have roles such as conflict mediation, advisors of evening parents' forums, national women's council representatives, and community health workers, while they have also been active in school Management Committees, Violence Against Women Standing Committees, Parent Teacher Associations, and Village Development Committees. They have participated in electoral processes as well as holding positions in elections, for example as centre managers, polling agents and election observers.

In Ghana, one women group community facilitator and a farmer for Madina, Awulatu Yussif was appointed as the government appointee to the Nanumba North Municipal Assembly. As a government appointee, Awulatu contributed enormously towards ensuring that women's issues are given priority, some of which include the water project at the district, planting for food, creating jobs in the district, and the distribution of cashew seedlings to women to encourage them to practice agroforestry for enhanced livelihoods.

Although the Pakistan project was eventually closed, visits in Mansehra district after elections reflected that a total of 5,275 women casted the votes in the project villages out of which 2,078 women were from POWER project groups. These women shared that this was the first time that many of them cast their vote as per their own will and decision. The project has also played a very important role in facilitating alliances and connections with other groups and service providers. For example, connecting women's groups with Khwendo Kor (a local NGO) for free legal aid to VAW women survivors in Pakistan; connecting women's groups in all four countries to the district level departments for agriculture, social welfare and women's affairs to provide women with an opportunity to explore the services and opportunities provided by government.

The project has also enhanced the recognition of women's groups by donors and partners.

After getting their business registration certificates, women's groups have received enhanced recognition at local level and have attracted some funding. For example, in Ghana, UI-kpong Ebongapari, Mwofo Nuolang, Tampaala Christian Mothers and the Kogri women groups were selected from many other groups in the Upper West Region for a grant under a USAID funded project titled "Northern Ghana Governance Activity (NGGA) project". They were supported with grants ranging from USD \$ 1, 368 to USD \$ 1,899 to enable them to engage in alternative income generating activities. The NGGA assessment report disclosed that the groups were selected because they were already well organized and were registered as cooperatives with evidence of certification. The grants have economically empowered the women groups to expand their businesses, as a result engaging more effectively in alternative income generating activities, especially during the dry season.

The project has also had impacts at the household level. Many women reported that they now have a voice and are considered in decision making processes at the household and community levels. For example, Asinba Abale from Ghana explains "Usually my husband decides for the family without my input. My husband participated in one of our group trainings on effective participation and now we decide what to do with the family income together, which was formally a sole preserve of my husband. Now I can contribute during group and community meetings." Like Asinba Abale, many women have reported that they now have increased status at household level, and control over income from their income generating activities. The changes occurred through trainings that enabled women to build their confidence, and through broader awareness raising which impacted positively on their spouses and male relatives' attitudes and behaviors.

In all four countries the project has yielded results in empowering women to address issues of violence against women. In all countries, communities built strong relationships with the local-level stakeholders such as the police, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer and Stop Violence Against Women (SVAW) Committees to stand against all forms of violence and harmful practices. In Bangladesh, three women leaders received the 'Joyeeta Award' from Government under the social development category, for contributing to women's development in their communities and for setting an example to stop violence against women (VAW) and early marriage.

Similarly, in Ghana, women are now aware of violence reporting mechanisms and confidently report issues of violence without hesitation to Community Based Anti-violence Teams (COMBAT), anti-violence platforms, police and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) mechanism.

Women groups are influencing other women in the community to disclose domestic and community level violence and proactively take action in stopping VAWG. For example, one women's group facilitator in the Adaklu district took her husband to the CHRAJ for his negligence in taking care of their 5 year old daughter. Eventually, CHRAJ made him commit to a monthly payment of housekeeping money. In Pakistan, a divorcee who was a violence survivor was supported by other women in her group in getting back her three children, her dowry items and legal right of haq mehr (the mandatory payment to be paid by the groom to the bride at the time of marriage that legally becomes her property). In Rwanda work has continued on responding to violence against women and girls, and as a result of advocacy through Power Project, ActionAid recently has signed an MoU with the Rwanda National Gender Monitoring Office to work together in the fight of violence against women. The same institution requested ActionAid to share a concept paper with them on unpaid care work and its consequences for women, so the issue can be incorporated in to the national plans of the National Gender Monitoring Office.



Figure 1Belly Begum received an award for her work on violence against women

The women's groups have also developed high levels of confidence and assertiveness as evidenced by their continuous engagement with local authorities to demand their rights.

The project has over time seen increased commitment from local authorities for their direct participation and support in the project. For example, in Bangladesh the Deputy Speaker of Bangladesh, Representatives of Union Parishads, and Local Government representatives visited activities of group members and shared information about how to access government services. In Ghana, the Women's Farmers Movement under the POWER project in the Tain district in Ghana presented a petition to the Tain District Chief Executive demanding from the assembly to support the campaign in fighting against gender-based violence and enforce laws and policies on gender-based violence across various workplace settings. They also called on officials to support the establishment of Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit office in the district, establish childcare centers, increase the availability of potable water sources for drinking (boreholes), promote the agenda for women in leadership, and appoint more women into leadership positions. Similarly Women in Aglefe community in the Adaklu district of Ghana were able to petition their community leaders to request records of how the fees collected for fetching water from the community's borehole were used when the water facility was broken, and demand that it be fixed. This is a clear indication of how assertive these women have become. In response, the community leaders resolved to include a woman farmer as part of the committee, and fix the water facility.

The project has seen the benefits of women's increased knowledge on inheritance laws. In Rwanda this knowledge has facilitated women to move forward with registering their marriage unions which enables them to gain access to inheritance and property rights in the event of death of a spouse or divorce. In Rwanda, 485 families newly registered to ensure wives can equally access family property. Similarly in Ghana, approximately 7000 women and community members benefited from sensitization on laws related to inheritance, including the Intestate Succession Law 111 and Property Rights of Spouse Act 1985. Community perceptions and belief systems are changing in Takurado, Sakpe, Juali and Opijua communities in the Nanumba North and South

Districts. For example, some traditional leaders have now recognised that women have the same right to inherit property as men and are enforcing it. In Bangladesh, women have also reported improved knowledge and practice on women's rights, dignity, violence, harmful practices and community level.

Comment on theory of change: As a result of awareness raising and improved knowledge women have now been able to demand their rights as farmers and carers. In line with the theory of change we have observed that women are now very articulate and able to control their time and resources at both household and community level. The most powerful tool which has worked well is mobilization of rural women in groups, who become independent agents of change for their own demands as women, as farmers and as carers. The key lessons learned under outcome one are that engaging local authorities such as the Union Parishad in Bangladesh, sector and national officials in Rwanda, and district assemblies in Ghana has a positive effect on women's abilities to demand their rights as carers and farmers. In Bangladesh it was also learnt that when women have a direct role in community structures this also enhances their ability to access resources for themselves as well as for other women in the community.

Outcome 2: *By the end of 2020, Women's unpaid care work (UCW) is more highly valued within households, communities and government, more evenly distributed within households and hours spent by women on UCW is reduced, resulting in more free time for women to engage in social, economic and political activities.*

The year 2018 has seen women's unpaid care work being recognised and more evenly distributed within households, while there has been slower progress at the community and government levels. Women from all four countries have reported reduction in time spent on unpaid care work and ability to engage in social and political activities. **Overall the project has reported increased uptake of unpaid care work by men**, for example, in Bangladesh according to monitoring data 3,086 women reported that their husbands and male family members started taking part in UCW such as taking care of children, doing laundry, dish washing, cooking, and preparing the bed. In all countries the use of time diaries, which record the amount of paid and unpaid work undertaken by women within 24 hours, continues to reap benefits where men and boys are gradually understanding the concept of UCW, and women are reflecting on their gender roles. Women group members are reporting increasing numbers of men sharing in household care work such as collection of water, fuel wood, bathing their children, sending them to school, and cooking. This is due to various sensitization strategies such as meetings, cooking competitions, and time diary data.

The project has also provided practical options to reduce unpaid care work such as child care centres, fuel efficient stoves and access to drinking water. In Ghana, the introduction of 10 child care centres has been of particular benefit, providing care to 678 children and supporting 522 mothers to increase their time available for other activities. In Rwanda, 1,991 women were supported with access to tap water which helped reduce time spent on fetching water from remote areas. A total of 2,431 women were supported with energy saving cooking stoves which reduced the time spent on fetching firewood and cooking, while in Ghana 385 women accessed these cooking stoves for both domestic and commercial purposes. In Ghana the pito brewers are reporting a more efficient use of fuel wood to brew the same quantity of pito as compared to when they were using their old stoves in which they could spend half of the revenue generated from the pito sales on fuel wood. For example, Jacqueline has benefited from the provided tap water and she appreciates the support: *"My children no longer have to wake up at 5 am to fetch water before going to school. Washing clothes is being done at home and I have water for my cows to increase milk production. We also have more time to work on in the farm that increases the produce"*.

In Pakistan, 98 fuel efficient stoves and 6 solar cookers were provided to the 104 selected women and the follow up discussions reflect a positive impact. The users of 98 fuel efficient stoves were satisfied with this input as it saved their time in winter to cook and it provided heating, however using solar power was a challenge during the winter seasons. These alternatives allowed women to reduce time spent on unpaid care work between 3-4 hours in Rwanda. In Pakistan women's time spent on fodder management reduced from 3 hours to 30 minutes daily, depending on the number of livestock.

In all four countries, government departments have been slow in taking up interventions at the national level that reduce time spent on unpaid care work. For example, in Rwanda, the government still promises that by 2024 as per the Rwanda National Strategy for Transformation 2018-2023 (NST), the number of people using firewood for cooking and heating will have reduced from 83% to 42%, though this is not yet visible on ground. The specificity of the NST makes it a great framework to strengthen advocacy work for the reduction of unpaid care work, and ActionAid Rwanda will continue to advocate with the government. Similarly only a few examples exist where the government has taken up national budgetary allocations to reduce unpaid care work.

At the institutional local level, the project has seen some initiatives by government to allocate more resources to reduce unpaid care work. This shows that unpaid care work is being recognized as work. In Bangladesh, because of several advocacy and lobby meeting of women group members, several Union Parishads conducted and prepared open and participatory gender responsive budgets addressing unpaid care work issues. In Ghana, 800 women groups representatives were trained on budget tracking in all 8 districts. Some of the groups have been able to monitor district assembly budgets and spending on their medium-term development plans. For instance, the Nakpa women's group leader, Benidan Laamaani indicated that the group had requested that Nanumba North Municipal Assembly plans include the provision of a dam to aid them during dry season farming, and provision of a borehole for access to water, to address challenges they had reported several times. The dam is currently being constructed. In Pakistan, local government authorities that were leading development works started positively responding and committing to address women unpaid care work related issues by allocating developmental funds for issues prioritised by women. For example, the allocation of PKR 100,000 (909.09 Euros) by the elected representative of a Village Council for repairing of a drinking water system has directly contributed to a reduction of women's time spent on unpaid care work.

Comment on theory of change outcome 2: The structural causes preventing women's economic participation still include unpaid care work and lack of knowledge of agro-ecology as a sustainable method of production. Women continue to suffer from time poverty due to the unequal distribution of unpaid care work, though there are indications that this is changing through the POWER Project's interventions aimed at recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work. In these areas we see that we are now closer to our vision of women's economic empowerment as women have more control over their time, income and resources in line with our theory of change. As more and more women have reduced time spent on unpaid care work due to project interventions, ActionAid has also observed that they have more time to participate in decision making and farming activities which also result in higher yields for their households. We have noted that women report less violence and better relations with their spouses in the context where unpaid care work is redistributed between men and women, compared to when it was done mostly by women. As yet we do not have a study to confirm this, however the recently completed Mid-Term Review report provides further evidence on this correlation between redistributing unpaid care work and reducing violence against women, and another study will be undertaken in 2019 to explore this further. The current Theory of Change does not include a specific change pathway on reducing violence against women and girls, and the Mid-Term Review report also notes this lack of clarity, therefore this will be analysed during the review of the Theory of Change in 2019.

Figure 2. Time spent on fetching water reduced for some women in Rwanda



In Rwanda, project participants' time spent on collecting water has reduced from 3-4 hours to about 20 minutes due to presence of water harvesting tanks at the participants home. This has worked well during the rainy season but proved to be difficult during the dry season. In terms of energy saving technology in Ghana and Rwanda the use of energy cooking stoves has reduced the time spent on cooking by 2 and half hours, from 3 hours to 30 minutes on average. For example Fati from Dangbe community mentioned, *"I used to walk for long distance to collect fuelwood to prepare meals for my family and spends about 3-4 hours on that averagely. With the support of my husband and other family members I do not go for firewood, I now have time to rest, which is good for*

my health and there is peace and love between my husband and me". However greater investment is still required at the institutional level to support the redistribution of unpaid care work.

Outcome 3: By the end of 2020, 21,000 rural women have more secure and sustainable access to markets and productive resources leading to increased income

More and more farmers are practising agroecology, and have gained access to markets and productive resources such as land and agricultural inputs. Although the farmers have not been spared from climate change effects, their resilience to climate change has improved significantly. For example during flooding women in Bangladesh were able to shift their vegetables to higher ground until the flooding subsided, while women in Ghana have been able to use the neem tree to address fall army worm infestations.

In relation to access to productive resources, in Ghana, 340 women received animals from ActionAid in 2018 including sheep, goats, pigs and rabbits, assisting women to diversify their livelihoods. Rosemond Amofa a member of the Yesu Mo women group at Yawkrakrom in the Asutifi South district had this to say: *"In fact, the provision of livestock enabled me and the other women to have access to animal manure and animal droppings as raw materials for compost making to be used to improve soil fertility and yields."* In Rwanda, since the livestock rearing began in 2016, the livestock distributed to target groups kept increasing whereby cows increased from 304 to 568 (187%), goats increased from 142 to 902 (635.2%) and Pigs from 168 to 1553 (924.4%) and the new animals were passed on to fellow women in groups. Since the project start, 50.3% of total POWER project participants have received livestock. Owning livestock for women increased their socio-economic position in the communities, which challenged Rwandan culture where traditionally livestock belong to men. The increase in livestock also contributed to increased crop production due to increased soil fertility by using animal manure.

In relation to access to land, in Rwanda, women formed farmer networks from sector level to national level and have been requesting local leaders to provide more land. As a result of their advocacy work, district authorities provided 27 hectares of land for women farmer groups to

Figure 3 women in bangladesh at the market selling vegetables



expand their crop production. A total of 6,080 women in Ghana now have access to long-term productive land, consolidated by signed agreements with land owners and traditional leaders. In Jirapa municipality a platform was created which brought traditional leaders, comprising the Chiefs and custodians of land together with women group's representatives to have frank discussions as to how women can be supported to have long-term access to productive land for their agricultural purposes. Traditional leaders from 11 communities indicated their commitment to sign documents for women's long-term use of land and 5 others agreed to consult leaders on the issue in 2018.

The POWER project set up agroecology demonstration plots in Rwanda, Ghana and Bangladesh, and provided agroecology training, which have been a great learning source for both project participants and surrounding communities. In Ghana the training on agroecology has resulted in spill over effects at community level, with communities practicing intercropping cereals with legumes, use of animal droppings, compost preparation and application, and use of neem extracts in spraying cowpea to fight against the spread of fall army worms is now very common in the communities including those who are not group members. Women try to attain the maximum benefit from crop residues which is used for compost preparation. Providing tricycles to selected women groups also reduced the burden of carrying compost materials and the compost itself, and it provided extra income to the group for rendering services to other community members. This saves them from the burden of looking for money to buy inorganic fertilisers.

Figure 4 Gari processing in Ghana



The training on agroecology has also enabled strong resilience where women were also able to set up raised seed and grain banks as way of improving their resilience to flooding in Bangladesh. Raised seedbanks are one level higher against the normal flooding levels, enabling farmers to preserve their seeds and grains during flooding. The building of the seedbanks also supported women's abilities to participate in the accountability structures through regular meetings and discussions. In Pakistan, six seed banks were established in Mansehra district and 87 women benefitted from these three seed banks. Along with seed bank establishment, 50 women farmers were trained on seed preservation and seed bank management. It was noted that the seed banks established last year are now still functional, and it is hoped that this will continue even though the project has ended in Pakistan. This intervention has also contributed to changing the preferences of communities from hybrid to organic seeds because it is a less expensive and more easily available option than the hybrid varieties.

In relation to access to markets, in Rwanda, the POWER Project has established two community selling points that have cooling rooms to reduce post-harvest losses of fresh produce. Selling points with cooling rooms and storage rooms increase their bargaining power, as otherwise they are forced to sell produce from the field to exploitative middlemen. District authorities also contributed with land to establish community selling points, for example in Rwanda, local leaders of Gisagara and Karongi districts provided land for the POWER project to establish two community selling points.

In Pakistan, women's access to markets was reported to be a challenge as markets remain male-oriented. In contrast, 45% of women participants in Bangladesh, 60% in Rwanda and 43% in Ghana have reported increased access to markets. In Bangladesh, the sale of the food produced using agroecology has also increased women's sales as they face competition at the market with many consumers preferring their products over those produced using a lot of chemicals. In Ghana,

a total of 3,400 women confirmed increased access to reliable market and weather information via text messages and voice calls through the Esokoplatform, which has aided them in their marketing activities and farm work. For instance, Asana Haruna of the UI-Kpong Ebongapari women group in Jirapa revealed that, after the market access training, her group was able to link up with a Guinness Ghana agent who buys 'Kapaala' from the group and supplies it to Guinness Ghana. Women who already engaged with income generating activities and entrepreneurship now have enhanced knowledge on market demand including consumer management, accounting and pricing of products. From their analysis they found that small businesses working on rice husking, and trading paddy, cloth, chillies and vegetables are more beneficial in current time compared to cow fattening businesses. Hence there has been a trend of increased investment of women groups in developing small business compared to the previous year.

Finally, women have increased their income from savings through the project. A total of 890 groups starting savings schemes in all four countries, with the benefit of agroecology practices increasing their yields and sales.

Comment on theory of change outcome 3: As the work on climate resilient sustainable agriculture gathers momentum, ActionAid has decided to use the term agroecology as climate resilient sustainable agriculture is often confused with climate smart agriculture, which promotes the use of chemical intensive agriculture such as chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Moving forward the CRSA concept will be replaced with agroecology. The benefits of applying agroecology remain the same. Access to markets has increased among women farmers to different extents in each country, however sometimes this has not always led to increased incomes as women have less products to sell on the market. The coming quarters include increased activities related to access to markets, particularly in Bangladesh.

Outcome 4: Greater visibility of intersections of agroecology, women's UCW and women's economic participation leads to changes in policy and practice by sub-national, national, regional and international stakeholders by 2020.

The project has continued to raise the visibility of the intersections of UCW and women's economic participation, and this has led to some changes at national and regional levels. For example, in Bangladesh and Ghana local authorities have committed to support child care centres in the form of contributions to child care costs, lighting as well as setting aside a budget for water harvesting and drinking supply systems.

In Ghana a national dialogue on unpaid care work was held in collaboration with the Gender Ministry and ActionAid Ghana on the theme: **Women's Care work Counts: Recognise, Redistribute and Reduce care.** The programme brought more recognition to the issues of UCW by the national statistical department, traditional leaders, and the National Development Planning Commission. As part of the dialogue, District Chief Executives who were present committed to supporting AAG with stipends for care givers to boost the sustainability and functioning of child care centres in their respective districts.

In terms of agroecology, several dialogues on agroecology were held with partners including the Food Sovereignty, Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana, Ghana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, a member of the GAWU and the National Women Farmers Movement, and Young Urban Women Movement.

As part of the advocacy activities at the international level, AAG, AAB and AAR and selected women farmers participated in Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC), Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), FAO forum on agro ecology and shared an interview with BBC on unpaid care work. The participation of rural women in these forums have enhanced the inclusion of women's voices through international platforms. This has enhanced responses, for example unpaid care work was not considered seriously until it was put on the agenda by the rural women during the GIMAC meeting, with all the key demands being put into the final communique to be considered by GIMAC. In 2018, research on the intersections of unpaid care work and agroecology was launched during the CSW meetingⁱ. which highlighted the main policy options to follow on unpaid care work including the application of gender responsive public services.

The period under review also saw the project taking a strong role in regional advocacy. The issues of unpaid care work were strongly taken up by other NGOs including GIMAC which has a total of 28 members working on women's rights and gender issues in Africa and included unpaid care work demands in the communique.² Different policy makers made a commitment to support the women's demands on unpaid care work. Actionaid has become a member of the Civil Society Mechanism Women's Rights and Agroecology work stream of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as a result of POWER advocacy work, which will enable regular input into the FAO discussion on agroecology and women's rights.

Comment on theory of change Outcome 4:

The project has been able to gather evidence on unpaid care work and climate resilient sustainable agriculture and this has proved very useful in influencing policy makers in making decisions that impact on women's economic empowerment and reduction of unpaid care work. The participation of women in international platforms makes it possible for a clear connection between local efforts and international and regional efforts to advance women's right. When women interact with others it becomes possible to learn and exchange ideas but also enhances their confidence to be able share with others at local community. The voices of rural women in regional platforms supports advocacy work and more support needs to be provided for rural women to raise their own voices in regional and international spaces.

Challenges and lessons learned in 2018

Closure of Pakistan Office: The biggest challenge faced by the project was the uncertainty about the future of the project in Pakistan since late 2017. The changing context for international NGOs working in Pakistan ultimately resulted in ActionAid Pakistan's registration being declined by the Ministry of Interior of the Government of Pakistan, and the closure of ActionAid Pakistan amongst several other INGOs in 2018. Throughout the year the team in Pakistan was supported through the project International Project Accountability Team (IPAT) and a short-term contingency plan was developed for the project. An alternative plan for conducting the baseline study was also developed and data was collected in late 2017/early 2018. The environment also affected the planning of field visits as none of the staff members could be granted a visa to travel to Pakistan. After the project activities finished in Pakistan, the budget that had been allocated to Pakistan was reallocated to ActionAid Bangladesh and ActionAid Rwanda as approved by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Norms, attitudes and changing mindsets: It was noted that in Rwanda, Bangladesh and Ghana, even though the project has attained significant strides in changing attitudes and behaviours, there is some form of resistance to the women-only project approach. To mitigate this the project has engaged with a lot of awareness raising with both men and boys as a way to change attitude of men and boys. Men have also been engaged through time diaries and identification of possible male champions in the community. In Bangladesh some women are still faced with mobility challenges as the market was not seen as the women's place. However, some women have been able to break these barriers through negotiating with their husbands, male relatives and in laws and are now able to engage freely in the market. This also came as a result of increased confidence and knowledge of their rights. Community awareness raising will continue as well as showcasing the benefits of changing some of the discriminatory norms.

Resources for agroecology: Many of the women participants have been practising agroecology, and there is evidence that this increases women's income and access to markets. However, some of the women while knowledgeable about agroecology do not have the necessary technology to do agro processing. The project will continue to support women to be able to make demands for agro processing inputs, however it will not be possible within the current budget to get additional agro processing machines

Capacity building: We have learnt that by building the capacity of our partners we also strengthen the ability to deliver on the project. ActionAid has built the capacity 11 organisations through

² Communique available on this link https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/panafrica.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/32nd%20GIMAC%20Recommendations-FINAL.pdf

training on advocacy, unpaid care work, Reflection Action Methodology, human rights-based approaches, monitoring and Evaluation, and agroecology. The project has both long-term partners who receive funds from the FLOW grant and strategic partners who contribute to the advocacy work of the project and collaborate with ActionAid on various platforms. Strategic partners were supported through the advocacy capacity building workshops as well as other capacity building workshops on agroecology and unpaid care work, supporting rural women's participation in regional and international platforms such as GIMAC, CSW and SAARC events.

Evidence based advocacy on agroecology and UCW: is key for any meaningful results to be reached for example in Ghana it led to more recognition of the practices of these women groups leading to their awards. Further, reports and data on time diaries has been useful in advocacy in Rwanda and Bangladesh. The work on the intersections of unpaid care work and agroecology has been a powerful tool to enhance NGOs and government representative's knowledge on the intersections of unpaid care work and agroecology

Final comment on monitoring, evaluation and learning in 2018

The mid-term review for the POWER Project was completed in early 2019 and a management response is currently being developed. During the 2019 annual review meeting the POWER Project team plans to review the Theory of Change and its specific change pathways in light of the Mid-Term Review findings on its relevance and effectiveness. The logframe has been updated in line with the reallocation from the Pakistan budget, and shared as an attachment to this report.

Note on the annual financial report 2018

Please note that in March 2019 the POWER team informed the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs of a financial mismanagement issue that has been investigated and resolved. The 2018 annual financial report does not include costs incurred against budget line '4.4.13 Organise international participation in international women's day/CSW events' as these costs were partially covered by another project, for which the breakdown is being confirmed.

ⁱ Cultivating rural women' seconomic empowerment :Exploring interlinkages between Unpaid Care Work, agroecology, and violence against women and girls in South Asia -Experiences from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Cultivating-rural-womens-econ-empowerment_full.pdf