



Annual report: Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights project (POWER)

Period covered: January to December 2016

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, Tain 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), Community Aid for Rural Development (CARD), Global Action for Women Empowerment (GLOWA) and Social Development and Improvement Agency (SODIA), Rwanda (Faith Victory Association, Duhozanye and Tubibe Amahoro), Bangladesh SKS Foundation, and Pakistan (Saiban Development Foundation & NIDA)

Target group: 21,000 rural women (*smallholder farmers and producers) (6,000 Ghana, 6,000 Rwanda, 5,000 Bangladesh, 4,000 Pakistan) and 6,000 men (3,000 Ghana, 1,000 Rwanda, 1,000 Bangladesh, 1,000 Pakistan) local authorities, Government ministries, FAO African Union and South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

Objectives of the report:

This is first annual report for the POWER project which runs from January 2016 to December 2020. The report is guided by the FLOW annual reporting guidelines. The main objectives of this report are:

- 1) Analysis of progress and challenges against outcomes of the project,
- 2) Reflection on the context and premises underlying the Theory of Change,
- 3) Reflection on lessons learned

Long-term Project Objective: *To contribute to the increased economic empowerment of women in Ghana, Rwanda, Bangladesh and Pakistan*

The project has begun to contribute to increased economic empowerment of women in Ghana, Rwanda, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In 2016, most of the activities were concerned with setting up the project, staff recruitment, inception workshops, project launch and carrying out the baseline. A total of 19,206 women (25-30 per group) were organised into groups and have gone through various awareness raising meetings on women's rights, unpaid care work (UCW), climate resilient sustainable agriculture (CRSA), market access and violence against women (VAW). In Bangladesh and Rwanda we have already begun to see emerging impact on women's economic empowerment through the registration of cooperatives, opening of bank accounts for 82 women's groups and increased savings through Voluntary Savings initiatives. Women are also taking up some leadership roles at community levels in market associations, women's groups, local councils and union parishads. This is a result of the training that they have had on leadership, for example, in Bangladesh women increased self-confidence as a result of participating in group meetings. After having trained on and understood UCW, VAW and the human rights based approach (HRBA), women started confidently speaking in public, presenting their demands around UCW and VAW and requesting duty bearers to address these issues. Similarly in Rwanda, after women presented their demands to duty bearers, during last International Rural Women's Day event, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion pledged to establish community childcare centres as part of government's efforts on UCW recognition and reduction.

Our theory of change states that the limited time rural women have got available for activities and time poverty from UCW goes hand in hand with their lack of voice at household and community level. UCW confines most women to the private sphere with limited time for other activities, thus limiting their economic empowerment. Other key contributors to the persistence of gender inequality and challenges to women's

economic empowerment include women's limited knowledge and mobilisation around their rights, women's limited representation in decision making spaces, and violence against women. By mobilising and organising 19,206 women into groups that meet regularly and discuss their rights the project has succeeded in empowering rural women to participate in economic fora such as market associations, and decision making activities such as standing for elections and being members of school committees. In Pakistan, one annual sensitization meeting with local government officials and rural women was conducted in Mansehra district to discuss women's UCW and interventions that support an increased budgetary allocation to reduce Unpaid Care Work. The Officer of the Social Welfare and Women's Empowerment department in Mansehra district signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with project partner Saibaan to facilitate the development of linkages between women's groups and different departments and government officials at district level to get their support in POWER Project implementation and to address challenges being faced by women. These kinds of linkages will have a long term effect on women's empowerment.

Specific Project Objective: 21,000 women in Ghana, Rwanda, Bangladesh and Pakistan have increased income and ability to control their income, through practicing CRSA, accessing markets and reducing, recognising and redistributing unpaid care work.

The progress that has been made so far is largely towards reducing, recognising and redistributing unpaid care work (UCW). In all four countries recognition of unpaid care work is taking place very rapidly at community level, with acknowledgement of the unfair care work burden for women in Rwanda, Ghana, and Bangladesh and Pakistan. The local authorities, spouses and men and boys at community level are taking a greater part in unpaid care work as a result of sensitisation. The local authorities are also beginning to accept the need for reduction of unpaid care work by committing to include budget and interventions such as child care centers to address UCW in their next year's budget and plans. The next step for the project will be to ensure these conversations continue, and to monitor commitments to ensure they are realised in terms of actual changes in budgets, plans and support.

The platform for increasing women's income and control over that income has been set through training in climate resilient sustainable agriculture mostly applied to kitchen gardens in year 1, registration of women's groups as cooperatives which will enable them to be recognised by banking institutions and the state, access loans and improve their access to markets. As per our theory of change in this area, we expect that these will result in changes that will increase women's income and control over income, and we will be able to start measuring this in the coming year.

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

Our theory of change asserts that group solidarity, platforms for learning, awareness raising and training in leadership all contribute to women's ability to demand their rights and have greater influence. Even in the first year of the project we have started to see changes that support this theory, particularly in relation to the solidarity of groups and platforms leading to increased knowledge, confidence and affirmation which catalyse women to take action.

By December 2016, the project had organised 19,206 rural women in four countries (6,000 in Rwanda, 6,400 in Ghana, 5,000 in Bangladesh, 1,806 in Pakistan). The rural women are constituted from 645 women's groups (200 Ghana, 200 Rwanda, 200 Bangladesh, 45 Pakistan) which were set up or strengthened by AA and partners at community level and are now meeting once per month. In Ghana 100 groups were adapted from the previous phase of the project (FLOW 1) and in Bangladesh 94 groups were adapted from a previous project. An additional 45 groups were organised in 2017 in Pakistan due to delays at the onset of the project (see annex 2 for details). Women have started regularly meeting and discussing their rights, climate resilient sustainable agriculture, violence against women, power relations, income generation alternatives and how to influence decision making processes from household to national level through spouse discussions, community and national sensitizations and campaigns.

By December 2016, women from 645 groups could explain confidently about basic human rights and women's rights issues most relevant to them, such as rights to land, equality in accessing resources, and freedom from violence among others. In Ghana, for example, women's group members have had meetings with parliamentary aspirants in 8 districts to present their demands to parliamentarians and other duty bearers for

consideration when they assume power in 2017. This was done in collaboration with all parliamentarians from all the major political parties and demands included: support for women to take on leadership positions during Assembly Committee composition and other local level committees and as Assembly Representatives and to create local opportunities, training in skills, and linkages to government institutions for women farmers to access markets.

At the individual level, prominent among the changes that occurred was the increased understanding and realisation of the importance of rights and their link to empowerment through active engagement in group activities. A woman from Kanjo community in Ghana said that *"I discovered as part of my participation in this meeting that my psychological needs and safety needs are relevant to my empowerment and self-actualization process..."* Engagement of organized women in group activities has mobilized other women too to become part of such initiatives, for example, in Mansehra district of Pakistan 339 women joined organized women's groups to get awareness about their issues and rights. The training in leadership has also strengthened women's ability to participate in leadership roles, for example, in Bangladesh in 2016, 80 out of 400 women were found to have started demonstrating improved skills and self-confidence in leadership roles after receiving training.

At the family level, there have been improved relationships between parents and children, husbands and their wives. For example, in Ghana men are seeking the consent of their wives due to discussions on time dairies and other sensitizations that have transpired in project communities. Discussions with women's groups during monitoring reveals that 50% of women, representing 3,000 women, pursued their husbands and key family stakeholders to consult with them on household and family issues, and were very successful. In Pakistan, before project implementation there was no culture of women's participation and involvement in community level activities. However women have already started taking part in decision making roles through their groups, through selection of facilitators and selection of right holders for project interventions, and this has begun to challenge traditional power structures, which have limited space for women's participation.

Our theory of change notes that in addition, women's unpaid reproductive, household and caring responsibilities can compound discriminatory social norms and vastly increase vulnerability to violence. In Pakistan, the Social Welfare office of Mansehra District committed to support women to access services for medical aid, legal aid, skills development, production and marketing, transitional care, social and psycho-social care, shelter and protection when experiencing violence. The women from the groups demanded an increased government role in combating Violence against Women and the government has responded. This increased gender responsiveness will have far reaching impacts on women's dignity as well as their ability to enjoy other rights in the economic and political sphere. Similarly the simplification of the matrimonial laws in Rwanda resulted in improved knowledge by women on their rights, and defending them resulted in increased registration of marriages and joint enjoyment of property rights. This was as a result of women groups meetings and being trained on their rights, power relations, income generation alternatives and how to influence decision making from household to the national level through couple dialogues. According to AAR observations, this in turn has led to women's increased participation in leadership. After having trained on and understood UCW, VAW and HRBA, women themselves started confidently speaking in public, presenting their demands around UCW and VAW and requesting duty bearers to address these issues. However, women in leadership have also had heavier workloads in households were men have not taken up responsibilities for unpaid care work.

As a result of training on leadership delivered to 200 women's groups (2,555 women) in Bangladesh, women reported increased confidence in asserting their rights, leading, and influencing decision making. Women have also been active in local decision making structure for example, Union Parishads (UP) (*lowest tier of local Government*) in Bangladesh, and also have formalised their relations as women's group with sub district relevant government departments, like the Agriculture Extension (DAE) Office, Youth Office and Women Affairs Office of Bangladesh. Women who were organised into groups have also joined together with other groups to form a federation and have created important linkages with other women's organisations and farmers organisations such as the Asian Farmers Association. The training has also resulted in improved knowledge on conflict resolution, networking, communication and resource mobilisation. Minnaher, President of Hasi Dal under Udakhali Union (Bangladesh) said, *'After receiving the women leadership training we learnt more clearly to lead the groups properly. Also the leadership role to negotiate and communicate with Union*

Parishad and other service providers to get the right services". The confidence and knowledge demonstrated by women who have undertaken this training, along with the self-affirmation and support provided by the groups and knowledge relating to rights and VAW create an important foundation for women to be able to demand their rights and to have increased influence in their households and communities, as per our theory of change. From the results so far observed we expect this to continue and to become a strong pillar to achieve economic empowerment throughout the lifetime of the project.

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.*

Our theory of change states that time poverty limits women's opportunity to increase sustainable productivity and better access markets; to know how to claim their rights; and to participate in decision making which affects control over their resources. For this reason, women are less likely to take full advantage of economic opportunities and to participate in income-generating activities (IGAs). There is therefore a need to reduce, redistribute and recognise UCW.

Regarding UCW reduction, the project is supporting target communities with low cost interventions such as community childcare centers, rainwater harvesting and supporting women to access cooking biogas using cow dung. It is anticipated that the time diary analysis will be able to share the impact of the low cost interventions at the end of 2016 baseline evidence was collected on how many hours women were spending on unpaid care work. The project is continually testing whether these interventions reduce the time spent on UCW in given contexts and build evidence of which interventions are most effective. Further discussions will also result in more understanding on how much time is being gained as a result of these interventions and how the time gained from these activities is used to engage in other economic and political activities. Based on our theory of change we will test and scale up interventions to reduce the time spent on UCW in new contexts to build evidence of which interventions are most effective. For example, 250 women from Mansehra district in Pakistan were provided with fodder cutters in year one. After getting fodder cutters women shared their feelings of ownership as they have an asset of their own and according to initial field visit reports utilization of fodder cutters saved women 40 minutes a day on average. The introduction of labour saving devices for unpaid work also led to increased participation of women in decision making at community level for the first time as they led the identification and selection of vulnerable community members to receive fodder cutters, something they previously would not have been involved in.

In terms of redistribution, some countries have reported that shared responsibilities between female and male children have improved. For example, in Ghana, boys were reported to be performing some household activities such as washing bowls, fetching water and firewood and supporting in caring for babies and toddlers at home and in communities. This is a result of the project efforts as before the sensitisation activities, boys felt that they were not supposed to do the household tasks but changes were recorded after the sensitisation activities. Also in Ghana, 3,500 men started to recognize unpaid care work and have begun to take on elements of the work in order to reduce the burden on women, for example carrying foodstuffs from the farm to the house using their motor bikes and bicycles in project communities. However, care work is still seen as predominantly a woman's role in all countries, and men often view themselves as helping at the moment. Viewing unpaid care work as a collective responsibility is still a challenge for attitude change at community level. During this project more sensitisation activities will be done to improve men's role and understanding that UCW is not only a woman's role and that UCW benefits all society members and all have a responsibility to contribute.

The project has also held 285 community sensitisation meetings with traditional and religious leaders, men and boys in schools to champion the redistribution of care roles and challenge social constructs at the community level. The meetings were noted to have big impact in Pakistan where UCW was analysed against the Holy Quran. References of different Muslim noble women of the Holy Prophet's time were also shared who used to adopt certain means of livelihood and spend their earning by their own will for family needs as well as for charity work. Participants showed their commitment to provide support to women groups in their respective areas. Mr. Tariq in the end of session quoted that *"It opened my eyes to know that women actually have a lot of rights given by religion but the community in general (including me) and the women themselves are not aware of"*.

In terms of recognition, community engagement and women groups' discussions indicate that there has been some support for women's rights and shared UCW roles. Engagement with district assemblies and sensitization for their staff has also contributed to the realisation of the achievements with increasing commitment from local authorities to support women's actions and demands. In Ghana, district assemblies in 2016 committed to involve women in the review process so as to enable them to include issues of unpaid care work in their medium term development plans. Going forward, completion of time dairies, mapping and tracking of VAWG and women's group meetings will continue to contribute to the progress of this outcome. Regular dialogue with relevant local and national stakeholders will also help to ensure governments recognise, and provide resources that will facilitate re-distribution and reduction of, unpaid care work.

By December 2016, women's groups had begun presenting their key demands to local authorities using the data collected from time dairies to show how much time they spend on UCW. 230 (200 in Rwanda and 30 in Pakistan) groups were represented in local level government meetings on budgetary allocation and in kind support to address unpaid care work. A total of 200 women representatives were trained on participatory budget monitoring and tracking using community scorecard and social audit. In Bangladesh, as a result of awareness raising among policy makers and increasing women's abilities to demand their rights and determination to get unpaid care work recognised, policy makers have committed to the provision of support for child day care centres, a gender responsive annual budget for 10 Union Parishads (UP) in 2 districts, provision for safety nets and other support for the women groups and the Market Management Committee also assured women that they would be provided with market facilities for women. In Rwanda, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) pledged to take issues of childcare and UCW to the national parliament agenda, and districts committed to sensitise other members of the district on UCW recognition, reduction and redistribution, and to set up at least one childcare centre at cell level (*approx. 2,148 care centres*).

All of these initial activities, outputs and commitments towards longer term outcomes suggest that there are strong foundations being built in terms of UCW and its recognition, reduction and redistribution. The theory of change states that prevailing gender norms and power relations which justify women's heavy workload and limited control over productive resources must be challenged if the economic participation of women is to be improved. As the project progresses and UCW is reduced we hope to see more evidence enabling women to have the time to participate equally in the society and the economy.

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.*

Limited knowledge and time to learn how to increase sustainable productivity and how to better access markets as well as limited control over resources and income limits women's economic empowerment. The project has therefore started to contribute to rural women having more secure and sustainable access to markets and productive resources. In Rwanda, based on mobilization and organization of women as well as discussions on women's rights and knowledge on laws in Rwanda, a number of couples are legalizing their marriages so as to ensure that wives legally co-own family property. This supports women having secure land rights in Rwanda which are important for their economic empowerment. This is also increasing women's self-affirmation to confidently stand for elections and to influence decision making at all levels.

Our theory of change states that at household level women have limited or no influence over how the income they earn should be spent. Therefore, increasing women's influence at household and community levels is crucial to women's economic empowerment because interventions aimed at increasing women's income do not automatically increase women's control over the income they make, or that they access through money saving initiatives (Village Savings and Loan Associations - VSLAs) that help them to finance economic activities and access local financial institutions. In Rwanda, 200 groups were supported with basic kits (boxes, bags, pens, calculator machines and books) to ensure proper performance of saving and lending activities. Similarly, in Bangladesh, women were trained on the use of saving registers, pass books, cash books, and ledgers and are saving 10-12 taka per day. The group money saving initiative linked women's groups to local financial institutions which provide access to bank credit to expand their collective projects.

Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA), through its livelihood diversification approach, has led to the introduction of livestock and other livelihood sources. Livestock helped women to get manure to improve soil fertility and obtain milk for consumption and selling. The fodder cutters distributed to women in Pakistan were also viewed by the women as an asset while at the same time reducing their unpaid work burden. In Bangladesh, women of Burail village under Udakhali Union Parishad established an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) school through communication with Upazila Agriculture Extension Office (AE) which is used to learn new agricultural techniques. As a result of sensitisation activities, representatives of the Market Management Committee and Chambers of Commerce at local level assured that they will ensure market facilities for women and explore women products sale. The introduction of CRSA and the POWER project support for women smallholder farmers with locally available farming inputs has also reduced dependence on external expensive inputs increased the availability of organic food. For example in Rwanda 110 seed banks have been set up, which will enable women to preserve their seeds and help local farmers to adapt to some climate change effects. The farmers are also applying CRSA practices in their respective farms and although progress towards this outcome is at initial stages as preliminary activities have just started, farmers in Rwanda and Ghana are attest to improved food security as a result of their activities in vegetable and kitchen gardens.

Our theory of change states CRSA also reduces dependency on external inputs and is a tool for increasing the preparedness of women smallholder farmers to face the impacts of climate change, thus ensuring they continue to have sustainable livelihoods. As more women are trained on CRSA and market access methodology in the four countries, their productivity is likely to improve enabling them to earn more income and have sustainable livelihoods. However, in order to successfully practice CRSA techniques women must first have the time available to learn about the practice and then implement initiatives, but women's effective participation and resultant gains are only possible when the burden of UCW is recognised, reduced and redistributed.

Outcome 4: *Greater visibility of intersections of CRSA, 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.*

Our theory of change states that if evidence of the correlation between CRSA, UCW, VAW and economic participation are disseminated at national and international level with policy and decision makers to influence relevant policies, then women will have enhanced influence over their households and communities, increased income and control over it, and greater recognition and reduction of UCW, leading to their improved economic empowerment. Evidence generation has commenced and AAI has begun raising the visibility of intersections on CRSA, UCW, VAW and women's economic participation at international level, for example with Food and Agriculture Organization through the sharing of learning in the FAO led Gender and CSA module. The African Union's awareness on CRSA and Women's UCW and agriculture has also been raised, but this is very preliminary and changes in policy at regional and international level are yet to be realized.

At national level, issues of unpaid care work, CRSA and violence against women were made more visible through the participation of women's groups and their leaders in national dialogue, community meetings and international commemorations of rural women's day in the four implementing countries. For example, in Ghana, women took part in a forum facilitated by GAWU and Peasant farmers Association with support from project staff. Women recommended that the government increase funding for extension service delivery and to ensure CRSA practices are mainstreamed in their medium term development plans as well as their annual budget and planning processes. Women also met with parliamentary aspirants ahead of the elections in Ghana and made their demands regarding unpaid care work, CRSA and ending violence against women. This resulted in increased awareness and respect of these issues as aspirants wanted to gain the women's vote. At subnational level, engagement of religious leaders, teachers, boys and girls, police and army in sensitisation meetings has led to increased visibility of the intersections of UCW, CRSA and VAW among the different sectors and how they can work together to contribute to gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

At regional and international level, the project has developed a 4 year advocacy strategy for Africa, and a similar strategy for Asia was completed in early 2017. The strategies emphasise the intersectionality of the project's core issues, and the need to transform gender equality. The strategies also note the active engagement of South Asia Regional Cooperation (SAARC) African Union (AU) and regional organs, UN agencies including platforms such as the Commission on the Status of women (CSW) World Committee on Food Security

CFS, UNESCAP and donor agencies. The project has raised the visibility of unpaid care work and climate resilient sustainable agriculture (CRSA) through sharing 4 cases studies with experiences on the ground with regional bodies such as the Food and Agriculture organisation, The UN High Level panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, engagement with the African Union during the AU Summit and facilitating women's participation in the Kilimanjaro initiatives, Participation in AU sub-committee of meeting of Permanent Representatives Committee . As a result of the success to the advocacy work, the cases submitted to FAO will be included in the Gender and Climate Smart Agriculture Model. The document will shape FAO's approach to gender related issues and influence a comprehensive framework that addresses unpaid care work and sustainable agriculture.

The intersections visibility was also raised in a side event during the 28th session of the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) pre-consultative meeting held in Kigali, Rwanda, under the theme *Implementing Women's Rights in Africa: If not now, when?* During the session on Women's Rights and Economic Empowerment, a rural woman small holder farmer from Ghana was on the panel where they shared the key demands to the Heads of States concerning the barriers to women's empowerment. The project also connected with other projects in ActionAid, including the Public financing for Agriculture and Land for campaigns and the Kilimanjaro initiative. During the GIMAC meeting POWER messages were shared and heard by over 200 delegates including stakeholders¹ like the AU Commission and AU organs, UN agencies, national and international NGOs, farmers' organisations and women farmer's forums. More research at national and international level will be done in 2017 which will be used to highlight the intersections on unpaid care work and CRSA and Violence Against Women. AA also conducted a Webinar with interested stakeholders on the intersections of unpaid care work and violence against women. The Webinar raised awareness among participants on the intersections and the need for follow up webinar on this important topic.

Factors that have enabled progress

The project has been able to progress well because of;

- Good selection of partners who are committed and considered relevant by the communities.
- Regular meetings of women groups due to effective mobilization and organization. All women's groups systematically meet at a locally agreed time and discuss key issues of interest at least once per month. Where funds and resources are not available to train all women's groups the TOT approach has been very effective as well as sharing in reflection action groups.
- Ongoing capacity building of rural women, women leaders and partner staff under the four main outcomes. This is providing women with the foundations they need to realize their potential, independently demand and enforce the respect of their rights. For example, through the regular reflection action meetings of rural women in smallholder groups and the increasing ability of women farmers to take up their issues with local authorities, traditional leaders and household members.
- Capacity building of all project stakeholders involved including International Project Management Team (IPMT), country teams, partners and women groups on key concept such as unpaid care work, Violence Against Women and climate resilient sustainable agriculture and the intersections, monitoring and evaluation as well as reflection action methodologies.
- Good project staffing arrangement with a strong presence in the community where the project is being implemented.
- Generally a favorable political climate for the areas under which the project is operating from.

Challenges

The shrinking space for NGOs, especially International Non-Governmental Organisations in Pakistan. For example, the Government of Pakistan has asked all NGOs to re-register under the new policy. This in reality has a defacto deregistration effect on the INGOs work including restriction of surveys, baselines and researches. The government of Pakistan also restricted INGOs operations in Azad Jammu Kashmir AJK areas, which resulted in the POWER project shifting its operations from Muzaffarabad district Shangla district. More

¹ the UNECA's African Centre for Gender, WIIIDAF, FAS, PAWO, African Leadership Forum, ACCORD, Pan African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development, USAID, UNDP, FAO, UNFPA, NEPAD, DFID, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and Care international among others

information can be found in Annex 2, however, considering the challenges and delays, the project in Pakistan has been able to achieve a considerable amount in the first year.

Climate change effects are already impacting the communities in which we work, leading to disruption in agricultural activities, changes in weather patterns and increased natural risks and disasters. Due to floods in both project areas in Bangladesh in August-September 2016, project interventions faced challenges as a number of families of project participants had to temporarily relocate. The local partner linked flood affected project participants with Local Government for emergency food responses and with Water Aid and Oxfam for WASH related response during the floods. In Ghana, rural women farmers require more accurate information on weather patterns, the project is supporting farmers and linking to weather forecast stations that provide information on metrological issues to help them effectively plan and farm at the right time. This facilitates engagement with the national and regional weather departments to be proactive in providing relevant weather information to support farmers. AAI is also working to strengthen its climate resilient sustainable agriculture approach to mitigate and adapt to climate change effects such as flooding which happened in Bangladesh and drought which are common in Ghana and Rwanda.

Cultural norms are still a huge challenge as the majority of rural men and some rural women still believe that women's main responsibility is to perform household work in all the four countries. The project will continue to sensitise traditional and religious leaders, community, national and regional leaders on the importance of redistribution of unpaid care work. Our theory of change states that UCW confines most women to the private sphere with limited time for other activities, thus limiting their economic empowerment. Our theory of change also notes that prevailing gender norms and power relations which justify women's heavy workload and limited control over productive resources must be challenged if the economic participation of women is to be improved. The project will continue to challenge these norms through the women who are mobilised and also through engagements at regional and international level.

Cultural norms and constraints presented some challenges at the initial stages in Pakistan, particularly around the engagement of rural women in some areas. However, this is being addressed through sensitization work with men, traditional and religious leaders. Due to difficult cultural barriers young women's mobility and engagement outside their villages is particularly restricted, however as the project moves on and the sensitization process continues, more youth engagement may become possible.

Low literacy levels for women: In all countries, low literacy and numeracy is a challenge and barrier for women to take up roles as community facilitators and other community leadership roles. For example, in Shangla district in Pakistan the literacy rate among women is extremely poor so it is challenging to find facilitators; often only girls less than 18 years of age are found literate. High illiteracy levels of both men and women in rural areas also hampered the smooth filling in of time diaries in some places, which is a key monitoring tool for tracking time use in the project. The next trainings on time diaries will be tailored towards training for women and men on basic literacy to support them in completing time diaries. Reflection action methodology can also be used to improve literacy levels for women and the project will continue to explore different opportunities for improving numeracy and literacy among rural women smallholder farmers.

Political contexts

- At national level, increasing state repression has disturbed the smooth running of the projects for example in Bangladesh and Pakistan where annual registration is required for NGOs. In Pakistan, this has led to delays in the start of project implementation (now underway) and it has not yet been possible to start baseline data collection due to specific restriction on the standardised collection of data (see Annex 2 for more information).
- Opportunities: In Pakistan, after 2015's local government elections, developmental funds were shifted from Members of National Assembly to local governance structure in 2016. These local governance elections resulted in increased opportunities for women's participation in local government elections. Women currently have limited capacities to engage with these structures, however through the project activities it is hoped women can play more of a leading role in addressing issues of VAW, unpaid care work, women development fund allocation, public services, water, health, agriculture and education which can help address structural gender inequality.

Gender Analysis and the Theory of Change

The gender analysis and premises underlying the theory of change are still valid. We note that rural women in Ghana, Rwanda, Bangladesh and Pakistan have organised themselves to demand their rights as farmers and carers and they have been able to get support from local government departments for addressing violence against women, access to resources such as agricultural inputs and extension services from agriculture and resources to address unpaid care work such as including child care centers in policy. As rural women have increased their representation in decision making spaces and advocated at the household, community and government level for enhanced awareness about UCW and increased resources to address UCW, they have participated more in market association, community committees and household decision making. Regards the support to practice CRSA interventions as well as to access markets to sell their produce, the project will observe whether and how this leads to increased income and empowerment in the next year as the activities on this outcome are just beginning. The project will continue to work on evidence of the correlation between CRSA, UCW, VAW and economic participation and disseminate this at national and international levels with policy and decision makers to influence relevant policies in 2016. We will see in the coming years the impact this will have on women's influence over their households and communities, increased income and control over it, and greater recognition and reduction of UCW, leading to their improved economic empowerment.

We also wish to highlight these few key observations regards the theory of change:

Poor Budget resource allocation for gender responsive public services: Despite government progress towards gender equality in national constitution policies, laws and the establishment of gender sensitive public institutions, rural women smallholder farmers are still the highly constrained by UCW which limits women's participation in socio-economic and political opportunities. Rural women living in poverty are the most affected by the unpaid care work burden as they do not have resources to support reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work. There is still a huge gap in gender responsive public service delivery at national level to address the multiple issues that affect rural women. Despite women's contributions to tax, their needs are not prioritised. Further, many large corporates enjoy tax havens at the expense of the rural poor women; tax justice can also contribute to more public service delivery which supports gender equality. Our theory of change recognises that women have multiple identities (as individuals, mothers, wives, workers, community members) and do not live single issue lives. We will tackle the issues simultaneously since barriers to markets and economic participation as well as an unequal burden of UCW and widespread GBV are all results of and drivers of gender inequality. A multifaceted approach is therefore required to address these challenges and one of the main focuses in the project is multiple and efficient gender responsive public services. We will explore links with our tax justice campaign efforts to address the resourcing issues as money generated from tax can be used by governments to address inequalities.

Lack of intersectional and holistic approach: Platforms for addressing these linkages are few and much still needs to be done. Generally the Departments/ Ministries of Agriculture rarely integrate plans with a holistic view of rural women in agriculture, for example, due attention is not paid to Violence Against Women farmers and the unpaid care work burden even though rural women have to grapple with all these challenges and they impact on their productive work. Our theory of change states that, in order to successfully practice CRSA techniques women must first have the time available to learn about the practice and then implement initiatives, but women's effective participation and resultant gains are only possible when the burden of UCW is recognised, reduced and redistributed. The result can also be piecemeal successes in one aspect and negative effects of women's ability to engage in the social and economic spheres, for example in Rwanda women with the chance to participate in the economy and leadership have often ended up with heavier dual-responsibilities by becoming both bread earners and UCW providers. There is therefore a need for an approach like our theory of change, which considers all of these challenges.

Mobilization and organization of rural women and the women's movement: The project theory of change is built on the premise that if women are able to organize themselves, have strong and greater voices in their own development, practice resistance and resilient productions methods such as CRSA or agro-ecology, then their income will improve through own production systems, with less burden on care work and dignity at their homes and communities, then their overall political and economic empowerment will be attained. There has been significant mass mobilization of women, educating and sensitizing them on their rights, creating avenues for communities and household members to realize the need for women participation in decision making

through project activities. This is currently demonstrating the strength of this approach and validity of our theory of change.

Lessons Learned

- **Planning** – the project has to factor in increased project implementation time for the startup and preparation of large multi-country projects. Activities such as recruitment, management arrangements, inception meetings and inductions, disbursement of funds, signing of MOUs and adaptation of approaches for all countries takes time. The FLOW project proposal assumed that once the grant was approved activities would start immediately in January 2016, however it is recommended in future that at least 6 months is needed for this phase of a project of this size and complexity.
- Working simultaneously with **women organized in groups, men in filling time diaries and media** can significantly contribute to UCW recognition, reduction and redistribution as well as VAW reduction. For example in Ghana, the use of time diaries tools to help women and men to appreciate and recognize the value of time spent in doing care work provided deeper thoughts and reflection on the role of women and collective responsibility of care work. The result so far is more visible along the individual, household, community and some of level of commitment from government to ensure UPCW is re-distributed.
- **Redistribution at household level** can be achieved despite existing cultural and gender norms which embed women's role and responsibility to do the UCW. In all countries we have begun to see examples of men and boys starting to support women in UCW, although their remains a challenges around shifting attitudes away from seeing it as women's work.
- Consideration of UCW can be **included in district level planning** at local government level, for example, in Bangladesh, they committed for providing various support such as preparation of gender responsive annual budget for Union Parishad (UP) and support to child care centres.
- In Bangladesh, there were challenges with addressing unpaid care work as it was difficult to convince **religious leaders** on the importance of the issue. However frequent and regular communication with religious leaders actually helped in community sensitization activities and strengthened the messages on the UCW issue.
- **Involvement of girls and boys** in the project indicated that boys felt they are not supposed to wash dishes at home and girls are seen to be the ones who should be doing UCW. These deeply entrenched attitudes and beliefs handed down from generation to generation still need to be analyzed and challenged. Actions for young boys and girls are very relevant in building sustainability and creating a positive generation towards balanced work load in society for both men and women.

Changes in the strategy

No changes are required in the overall strategy. In the next period, the project will focus on strengthening its interventions and building on gains already made through the mobilization and organization of rural women who are recognized carers and farmers. We will work on UCW being more highly valued within households, communities and government, more evenly distributed within households and the reduction of hours spent by women on UCW in order to provide more time for women to engage in social, economic and political activities. The time diaries will be analysed and we will use findings from that to continually influence community members and duty bearers on the issue. By end of the year all countries will have undergone training relating to CRSA and market access and the linkages with Violence Against Women will be drawn out. We will also be strengthened research on CRSA, UCW and VAW and advocacy work at national, regional and international levels.

Annex 1: Corporate Indicators

Annex 2: Pakistan information