

POWER Quarterly Narrative Report January - March 2017

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 resistant sustainable agriculture, accessing markets and reducing, recognising and redistributing unpaid care work.

Introduction

The first quarter has seen ongoing progress on all four outcomes, with significant milestones being reported on women's abilities to demand, claim their rights as farmers and as carers in all four countries. Recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work has continued because of several different types of interventions such as child care centers, fodder cutters, water harvesting, energy cooking stoves, use of biogas by women smallholder farmers. In all the four countries gains have been reported because of implementing climate resilient sustainable agriculture successes have been noted for vegetable gardens in Pakistan, and group model gardens in Bangladesh, use of neem tree for pest management in Ghana, livelihood diversification in Rwanda where animal manure has contributed to improved yields. The project has noted improved access and control of seed by women farmers through the establishment of seedbanks in Rwanda, Pakistan, and Bangladesh and seed preservation at household level in all four countries. Further, women's participation in decision making has contributed much to their economic participation through their engagement of local authorities for resources and services such as land, health screening, child care centers, food and inputs. The visibility of intersections of unpaid care work and women's economic participation has been effectively raised through well researched reports as well as meetings with key stakeholders and policy makers. There were slight delays being reported because of shrinking space in Pakistan as well as delays in recruitment of consultants for some of the activities.

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

Mobilisation and organisation of rural women

The four countries have reported good progress towards the achievement of this outcome during the first quarter. The main activities reported including ongoing meeting of the women's groups in all four countries as well as provision of stipends to facilitators which has resulted in strong and well organised women's groups. There were 6,400 in Ghana 6,000 in Rwanda 3560 in Pakistan and 4,979 in Bangladesh bringing the total to 20,939 women actively participating in the 690 women's groups in first quarter. The women's groups have been reported to be participating well in local structures such as parents evening forum, in Bangladesh (*2294 meetings were held against the target 600 only indicating very frequent meetings by the women on their initiative*) while in Pakistan all the 90 women groups organized their meetings on regular basis where 3,560 women members participated. There has been increased recognition of the women's groups, for example, in Rwanda women have also been invited to take part in an advisory role to the Sector. In this quarter, all the women's groups continued to discuss about income generating activities, agribusiness, violence against women, money savings and how to access markets. Project beneficiaries are now confidently participating in all structures at community level where they play a significant role in influencing decision making at community level. For example, in Bangladesh a total of 25 women leaders in Gaibandha were included in the different community structures like Mondir Management Committee, Legal Aid Support Committee, Village Development Committee. A rural women leader Lipi Begum of Lalmonirhat is now a member of Union Parishad's standing committee on Family Conflict Resolution and Women and Child Welfare where she has successfully stopped 4 cases of early marriages through the standing committee.

Women's participation in leadership and decision making has also been enhanced. Women have continued advocating for their rights through community structures, community public meetings, parents' evening forums and meetings after monthly communal work in Rwanda. POWER project participants have increased their confidence due to the recognition they get from local authorities. *"We are very proud to be among the advisors of our community as when the parliamentarians planned to visit our community, the executive secretary of our sector has invited us in the preparatory meeting and we are now feeling much confident to be our sector advisors in term of water and sanitation, fight against VAWG and how to collectively work in groups"* said Mukakalisa Francine facilitator of Ejoheza group from Kibirizi sector. The influence of rural women has been increased especially for women members of POWER project groups. For example the Executive Secretary of Kibilizi Sector has noted that that the women groups are bringing a positive mindset change in the in the community through mobilization led by women facilitators.

Another important development in Pakistan for women is that they themselves have now started to know, realize and acknowledge their rights to education, living, expression and discuss these in meetings. Some women have reported that they have discussed their rights with their husbands and other men family members. This would never happen before the project period. The women are reporting improved behaviour of their husbands towards them, their contribution in the execution of daily household chores, respect, influence and importance they enjoy at household level.

The project has delivered training on a number of areas relating to unpaid care work, women's economic participation and climate resilient sustainable agriculture. During the first quarter in Ghana training were held on the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and Reflection Action methodology and women have reported increased knowledge in their rights. These reflection-action sessions enhanced individual and group learning on different issues like rights, women rights, Violence Against Women, gender discrimination, CRSA practice, access to services, gender budget. In Bangladesh, 400 group members received refresher training on collectivism in practice and 398 on organizational management. Both trainings refreshed their learning on how to work collectively and develop



cohesion among members especially in case of demanding rights, income generating initiatives, market access etc and how to make collective efforts that can create more benefit and impact than individual efforts. They also deepened their learning regarding the necessity to uphold the group's constitution to keep harmony among the group members.

The project has seen increased advocacy by women in terms of access to resources. For example, in Ghana, women engaged

national authorities through several meetings and could get registered to take part in a programme on planting for food and jobs policy. The meetings have resulted in increased confidence and public speaking skills for women. For instance, Ernestina Addo, a 59 year old woman was part of the team for the engagement process said she used to be very nervous during meetings but has improved her skills in public speaking.

Further, women have also been able to demand and lobby for resources for child care centers and early childhood education. For example, Arise and Shine and Akuapa women's group in the Asutifi South district engaged the district Assembly for Kindergarten block for children in the community. In response to the demand, the District Chief Executive send a team to assess the community towards supporting the community with the school.

Community sensitisation has led to improved respect for human rights for women for example, in Northern Region 16 communities (512 women) successfully completed sensitization on the intestate succession law 111 of Ghana, property rights of spouse act 1985, gender based violence as well as health issues. Community leaders committed and pronounce that spousal properties will be given out to women as well as stop exchange marriages in Takorado community. The groups are also working with young girls in the communities

Similarly, community sensitisation meetings were also held in Bangladesh with traditional and religious leaders and youth with a total of 300 participants. The meeting highlighted that some men were not performing unpaid care work due to traditional and social norms.

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

As the project reaches mid-term there has been notable reduction of unpaid care work. In Ghana there was construction of child care centres, provision of energy saving stoves, time diaries for both men and women and documentation of case studies to raise awareness to reduce unpaid care work. The huge burden of work women do at home and in the communities, has been given significant support and recognition. Philip Frimpong, a 44 year old farmer and a trader in Osiekrom community shares how he supports his wife in a community meeting. He narrated that women have been overburdened for long with a lot of care and unpaid work.

In Bangladesh, during this quarter 32 women started to use energy saving cooking stoves. It saves women's time and reduces fuel cost for cooking. It has also been observed that women now cook with more safety and security. Similarly, day care centre initiatives contribute to save women's time in child care. These women who are benefiting from the time saving interventions are engaging with different



income generation, small business, social activities and other productive works.

In Pakistan fodder cutters have been reported to reduce the time spent on unpaid work. Mrs. Shanshad shared, *"I am very pleased to have the fodder cutter as it reduced my work burden. Before the fodder cutter my most of the time was consumed in chopping of fodder by axe. It took one hour for one-time fodder preparation and 3 hours for whole day fodder preparing, but now in 30 minutes I can cut fodder for whole day which saved 2:30 hours in a day. My husband also shared my work and this takes only 30 minutes. I spend that time in taking rest and family/ social gatherings"*.

Recognition and redistribution

The project has also seen redistribution of unpaid care work through men taking up more care work roles. For example, in Ghana, it was noted that some men are now community champions on unpaid care work to support in washing clothes, fetching water and firewood by men. A total of 70% of women who were supported with water harvesting structures, child care centres and women who have been involved in completing time diaries with men indicated they have more time to do farming and other income generating activities as well as participate in group meetings and community actions. *In Northern and Volta Regions, Ghana, the International Women's Day was celebrated under the theme "Unpaid Care Work: Time to Act!" with rural women and heads of departments such as police service, the army, immigration, academic institutions, head of regional decentralized departments meet to discuss various time savings interventions and the need to continue to promote women rights through reduction in care work. At the end a communique was drafted with the consent of all heads of departments pledging to take practical actions at their organizations in creating*

conducive environment for women and creating more awareness among their colleagues to ensure smooth and stress-free work environment and supporting UCW campaign

Further, 1,174 women in Rwanda have reported access to community childcare centers and this has enabled women to allocate more time to productive work and their income is increasing. *“This ECD has become the reason for my economic empowerment, since I take care of my child which is facilitating me to have enough time to allocate in other economic activities”* Esther Mukashema a member of Duharanirekwigira women group in Nyanza district.

The time diary data indicates the increase of men participation in unpaid care work in some cases. For example, in Bangladesh this quarter 700 women in Lalmonirhat and 569 women in Gaibandha reported their husbands have started to take part in UCW such as childcare, hanging mosquito net, carrying water, cleaning sleeping bed etc. During this quarter, 37 spouse meeting and community sensitization meeting took place where 686 men and boys participated in both districts. The project interventions like completing time diary cards, spouse form meeting and community leader sensitisation meeting contribute to engage men in UCW and redistribute and reduce women’s UCW at household. Monitoring visits also show that religious leaders of different communities have played vital role in this perspective to sensitize men in the communities to support women in doing 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.

The quarter has seen continued advocacy for more secure and sustainable access to markets, increased income by rural women as a result of practising CRSA and improved access to markets. In Ghana, a refresher training on CRSA was completed for 35 participants comprising women group members and selected community facilitators and 80% of the participants reported improved knowledge on practices such as seed testing, preservation, farm measurement, mulching, AA CRSA approaches and principles. Project participants also have reported increasing use of neem tree extract as an effective pest control method as an alternative to the use of pesticides which enabled them to be able to control pest on their vegetables such as okro, pepper and legumes such as beans. From monitoring activities in Ghana, 70% of women who took seeds last year indicated they had good yields because of the use of improved and indigenous seeds.

The project has also contributed to improved financial management for women’s groups. This is important as many of the groups are also involved in group and individual income generating activities for example, in Bangladesh, 187 out of 200 women’s group were reported to have enhanced capacity to keep financial records including to calculate, analyse and manage their income and expenditures. In Gaibandha, 68 groups are bookkeeping independently which is a remarkable achievement. In Rwanda, women have also improved their business and financial management skills with some groups being able to access micro finance, for example, Abishyizehamwe group from Gishubi sector got loan from Tuganeheza Gishubi Microfinance (SACCO) amount to two million Rwandan francs (2,325 USD).

Under outcome 3, the project is facilitating women groups to improve yield using CRSA techniques and methods including seed preservation. Among the important outputs is the preserving of local seed varieties, which are also climate change resilient reduces farmers to rely on seeds from the market. In this quarter, 551 women group members are accessing seeds through seedbanks. In

Bangladesh, a total of 142 seedbanks are running at group level in both districts. In Pakistan, seed preservation is also gaining momentum through seed banks, three seedbanks were established and are functioning. In Pakistan, more than 90% of project participants have grown vegetables which have been consumed at household level and surplus sold at the village level. This has also contributed to food and nutrition security at household level Akhtar Nisa from village Fareedabad shared, *“I have cultivated almost all provided vegetables seeds except peas as due to late distribution it was not suitable to grow. I have sold vegetables of worth PKR 25000 last seasons. The garlic I have grown I expect will give me more income”*, The village level agriculture pattern have also improved with women getting income (though at limited scale) from the seeds packages provided under the project for vegetables and crops directly or through seed banks.

In all four countries, women’s groups consistently have maintained good relationship with the Department of Agriculture and livestock. In Bangladesh Project participants have maintained good relations with the district Agricultural Extension (DAE) services and Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF) at Upazila level. This is has been achieved through partnership where the SKS Foundation and DAE facilitated CRSA refresher training for 3,561 rural women who have improved knowledge and skills on vegetables gardening using CRSA techniques. This refresher training also enhanced their confidence for following CRSA principles and techniques to produce improved yields without use of chemicals. The yields are of high quality, tasty and have high demand in the market. The vegetable produced with organic resources have proved to be resilient, adaptive to local environment.

In Bangladesh, 4,881 women are cultivating vegetable in homestead and field using CRSA techniques including local seeds, seeds soaking, seed bank, small amount of seeds per pit/heap, vegetables cultivation in bed, pit, heap, sac, buckets, earthen/plastic pot, shelf, hedge, roof, multiple bed, organic compost, vermin compost, organic fertilizer, organic pesticide (Bordeaux mixture, neem leaves juice, urine, ash etc), mulching, hand pollination, pheromone trap, hand picking and fencing. They also prepared compost pit, Bordeaux mixer, neem leaf juice for pest control at their household level in both district. Along with this, five women have established five model vegetables gardens in



Lalmonirhat in this quarter. In Pakistan, Khatoon Bibi a rural woman shared that, having received vegetable seeds and inputs she discussed it with her husband and cultivated the summer vegetables on 2 Kanal of their total land. With the active support of her husband her efforts bore fruit and the vegetables grew even better than her expectations. In addition to the domestic consumption, she sold vegetables for about 25,000 PKR. She utilized this amount to repair a part of her house and completed boundary wall. She said, *“It was a pleasant experience for me, I had 25,000 rupees in my pocket which I could spend as per my own will and I did spend on what I wanted to but more than that I enjoyed the support and changed attitude of my husband, he also realized that we could benefit from vegetables, it was a cash crop and to have his realization of my initiative was even more thrilling experience for me. He helps me now, shares my work too and reduces my burden”*.

The project has also invested in capacity building initiatives for 81 rural women from 43 groups in Pakistan. The group members were trained on setting up and managing saving schemes to support women to access finance for income generating activities through one-day training workshop contributed in women confidence, knowledge and skills to establish their local entrepreneurs. About 100% women showed positive change and improvements in their knowledge, and confidence. The partner in Shangla district has contracted a consultant to develop manual on “CRSA and good agricultural practices” and manual on “market oriented agricultural processing and preservation for rural women”.

The project has also promoted many income generating activities through training on agri and non-agri based small business, agro processing, entrepreneurship and savings. In Bangladesh 200 women groups are running small business with on-farm and off-farm crops and products. They started selling products from their home to consumers directly in the community and to have access in market through selling out products to hackers, running in Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat from the beginning of



the project. In addition to that, women members are also selling out their additional vegetables after meeting their family nutritional demand. The availability of child care centres has also resulted in women enjoying more time to invest in income generating activities as well as learning of skills for income generating, for example, Rosina (pictured) started to work on tailoring after receiving some training. Rosina says “Now I am efficiently doing tailoring and earning daily 200-250 taka. It increases during the period of Eid. Now my husband helps me on doing the household chores regularly. My daughter stays in the day care centre. As the stress of earning for the family has been decreased from my husband shoulder, he is also making improvement.”

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.

The quarter has seen continued advocacy work on raising the visibility of unpaid care work, and it’s intersections with WEE and CRSA, in regional and international platforms. The first engagement was through the African Union side event co organised with Gender is My Agenda Campaign. This included a lunch side event on unpaid care work as well as participation in a session on gender responsive public services and women’s economic empowerment. Mrs Mary Lily Bacheyei, a woman farmer from Ghana, was part of a panel where she flagged the challenges faced by women farmers



including land, access to markets, access to productive resources, deepening corruption which results in unavailability of services such as agricultural extension services and lack of protection from police who take bribes when dealing with critical issues such as violence against women. These resulted in the demands on unpaid care work, women's land rights and new consideration on the need for action against Fulani herdsmen whose activities have had a negative impact on women's farming activities as chiefs and police take bribe and fail to protect local people being included in the communique. The communique was presented to the heads of state during the AU summit in 2018 which was held under the theme "Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation". The communique and key discussions were presented to the head of states as part of the women's demands. The event was attended by POWER project staff and partners and women farmers. The AU summit also included participation in side meetings on STEM where ActionAid was also able to flag the issue of unpaid care work and the need to protect the girl child from the unfair burden of unpaid care work compared to their male counterparts. Further a clear demand on addressing and challenging disproportionate unpaid care work during early childhood. The need for gender responsive public services was highlighted to address access to education, water, energy cooking particularly in rural areas where these take a significant amount of time for the girl child having a negative impact on her impact to engage with Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The side event raised the awareness of the participants to the need to include this issue in policy as well as the measurement of the unpaid care work by economist for it to be considered in key policies of regional bodies such as the African union. The pre-meetings were attended by 6 AA staff members, two partners and three farmers from Ghana and Rwanda.



The POWER project supported the participation of 3 farmers, and staff members to 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York which was held under the theme '*Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.*' The POWER project successfully held a parallel event on unpaid care work and climate resilient sustainable agriculture where it also launched a report on the same¹. The report was launched by the representative from the Government of Ghana Ministry of Gender Dr Kojo Appiah Kubi a Member of Parliament and the Chairman of the Select Committee on Gender in Parliament. The launch of the project also

resulted in some key players also sending our tweets on the work of the project for example, the UN Women; the Gender is My Agenda Campaign among others. The Report is available on <http://powerproject.actionaid.org/power-project-csw/> A **blog** and **video** were also produced to support the launch of the report.

The POWER project shared its position and inputs to issues and language at different levels of engagement at CSW, and input into the text on issues of unpaid care work and climate resilient sustainable agriculture. The inputs made included specific inputs on measurement and valuing of

¹ <http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Cultivating-rural-womens-economic-empowerment-summary.pdf>

unpaid care work and most of them were made through one staff member who was also a member of the European delegation and gave regular feedback to the team to be able to feed into the discussion. The project also shared its main inputs through the NGO CSW Chair with submissions being made to the Australian delegation for further discussions during the negotiations.

Challenges

Women's access to land

One challenge noted is access to land. However the project is seeking innovative solutions, for example for 121 out of 5000 women of Gaibandha who are landless and cannot cultivate vegetables due to unavailable homestead land, the project is taking special measures for them to garden on their rooftop.

Delays in implementation of outcome 3

The pace of activities implementation under this outcome 3 remained slow as per the quarterly plan. Six activities were planned, one has been completed, and three are in the process of procurement and two are totally shifted to the next quarter. These activities require more time than originally planned.

Shrinking space in Pakistan

The declined Registration of ActionAid in Pakistan by Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan effected the project implementation as all project implementation remained stopped until January 2018. ActionAid has submitted and presented its representation with the Ministry's committee of I/NGOs for reconsidering its registration application. Until further decision, the government has issued conditional permission to carry out activities. Staff turnover was also reported as some of the key project staff especially Programme Officers of partners who are responsible for overall management at partner level left due to uncertainty and it slowed the project implementation pace too. To mitigate this challenge new staff have been hired and will be oriented by ActionAid's project team.

Changing practices on CRSA

There is still a dominant view the that favours hybrid seeds and chemical and inorganic fertilizers against indigenous and traditional seed varieties. For sustainable and climate resilient agriculture the project is addressing the dire need to transform rural farmer practices, especially women, to reduce their dependency on multinational companies and chemical intensive agriculture. Some changes have been noted, for example, Mrs. Akhtar Nisa in village Faridabad who has started to prepare her own seed, seedlings for some vegetables and didn't use any type of chemical fertilizers this year. However more farmers need to test these sustainable agricultural methods.

Time diaries

Although the time diary tool has been the main tool for data collection has been used for sensitisation the tool needs review in order to maximise its impact and ensure it is both empowering for women and is generating high quality data. This may result in delays in time diary collection, it might affect some contract signed with the printing company as well put more pressure on partners to collect different periods at the time. We are working together across the project to manage this process carefully.

Meeting with local authorities

It was challenging to ensure participation of Chairmen and Members of all Union Parishads in Bangladesh due to their busy schedule in the duty bearers sensitisation meeting with women groups. Through frequent communication and rescheduling the meeting time and date the project tries to increase their participation gradually.

Delays in funds transfer

The delays funds transfer from the donor in this quarter hampered the implementation of project activities according to plan in Bangladesh and Rwanda. Consequently, the project has shifted some activities in next quarter that would create workload in the next quarter also.

Lessons learnt

- ✓ In Pakistan based on the learning of previous year water tank size has been increased to increase the storage capacity of the water to ensure the amount of time reduced on unpaid care work fetching water is significant
- ✓ Cash crop seeds can benefit the right holders as they can sell their products in the market and get more income.
- ✓ The project learnt that talking and discussing with government line agencies, security authorities and local leadership into confidence and close liaising at district and national level facilitates the process of project implementation and ensure result achievement and remained the best practice to mitigate the challenge of registration decline in Pakistan.
- ✓ Timely finalisation of recruitment of consultants' contracts and TORs- It was learnt that the finalization of trainers/consultants can take considerable time and activities get delayed and this can ultimately overburden the project team. The timely finalization of trainers/consultants will allow project team to execute activities as per planning.
- ✓ Refresher trainings (leadership, VAW, UCW, WR, CRSA, vegetable gardening) were very useful and contributed significantly to refresh and enhance knowledge, skill and understanding of the group members as well as partner staff. The project will render such refreshers based on needs assessment.
- ✓ Community and spouse sensitization meeting are very effective tool for engaging men and building mass awareness on UCW. It contributes greatly in reducing, recognizing and redistributing women's unpaid care works. The project is strengthening these men engagement interventions at community levels, while ensuring women remain the main focus and change agents.
- ✓ Engagement at CSW requires good preparation and some participants would be more effective as part of the government delegations.