

POWER Quarterly Narrative Report April to June 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 resistant sustainable agriculture, accessing markets and reducing, recognising and redistributing unpaid care work.

Introduction

The quarter went on well in terms of all the four outcomes of the project. Among the highlights of this quarter at international level are the FLOW annual policy meeting which was held in the Netherlands where the project shared the tools of data collection on time spent on unpaid care work, and the FAO agro-ecology symposium which was held in Rome where POWER project examples were shared and one woman farmer highlighted experiences on agro ecology. At the regional African Union level, GIMAC pre-summit side event was held in Mauritania with POWER presenting on Unpaid Care Work (UCW), and at the South-East Asia regional level engagements with SAARC were done in Bangladesh. At the national level, ongoing advocacy has resulted in more commitment emerging from the national and local governments in Ghana, Rwanda and Bangladesh to support women's human rights. The 690 women's groups have continued to meet regularly to discuss their issues with a few women not being able to attend the meetings due to workload and other personal factors. The period under review has also seen increased confidence by women to report incidences of violence within the community and to national structures dealing with Violence Against Women (VAW). This is a result of several activities, including regular meetings which increase a sense of support and reduce isolation for women, women's rights awareness raising and training on VAW reporting, simplified referral systems which enable women to know where to report incidences of violence. This has seen increased reporting, for example, women have reported incidences of property related violence such as land rights and other property in Ghana and wife beating and abuse in Bangladesh.

The project has reported increased availability of time for women because of interventions to reduce unpaid care work such as water harvesting technologies in Rwanda, Pakistan and Bangladesh as well as energy cooking stoves for both domestic and commercial purposes in Ghana. Ongoing analysis of

time diaries will show more accurate data on how much time is being saved because of these interventions. Unpaid care work by women is also being reduced because of changing of attitudes which is slowly shifting gender roles in some communities. Men are increasingly participating in unpaid care work and unpaid work activities including the use of fodder cutters to collect fodder, collection of water and fuelwood and taking care of children without fear of community reprisal, shame or mocking.

The project continued to be engaged in income generating activities, use of demonstration plots to promote Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA) and support to women's groups to engage in agro processing activities, livelihood rearing, groups savings and gardening to increase their income. The project observed that increasing women's time through reduction on time spent on unpaid care work also helps women to participate in activities that help women to generate income and participate in women's leadership. The next quarter will see the project scaling up on all activities particularly outcome 3 and 4 to ensure that the indicators are met.

The main challenges faced this quarter includes ongoing uncertainty regards registration of AA Pakistan and partners. During the quarter, AA Pakistan had to stall some of the activities while awaiting approval from the state. The approval came only for one partner, while the other partner did not receive approval to implement POWER. Given the uncertainty activities therefore remain on hold until the election period is over. In some countries some women's groups reported limited time for women to participate in project activities to due to harvesting activities as well as planting activities. The project teams were able to adjust their schedules and ensure that the timing for activities are in line with the women's time availability. Bangladesh continues to struggle with flooding while in Rwanda landslides were reported during the period under review. The quarter also saw some delays in digital time data collection as the project worked with the research partner (IDS) to analyse time diaries from 2017 and improve the tools and processes related to data collection for 2018.

In terms of research and evidence, ActionAid is currently conducting a time diary analysis through collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and a draft report is now in place. The baseline for Ghana, Rwanda and Bangladesh is now complete, however it could not be completed for Pakistan for security reasons. ActionAid will also do a midterm review of the project later this year which will inform the next steps of the project, and an international annual review and planning meeting to review the project will take place in the next quarter.

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.

A total of 690 women's groups and 20,227 women met regularly to claim their rights as farmers and carers in Rwanda, Ghana and Bangladesh and Pakistan. The women's group's capacity to work on Human Rights Based Approach analysis regarding their rights and advocacy were also enhanced. To date a total of 17,426 women have been trained on their rights and violence against women in three countries (Rwanda, Ghana and Bangladesh). Women also reported an improved ability to track and report incidence of violence against women and girls. For example, in Bangladesh reports were made of violence against women in child marriage, dowry, physical and mental violence. Many of the affected women have been able to access health and legal services in Bangladesh. For example, Rita was able to take her case where she was suffering from violence from her husband to the village court. She was able to do this because she was able to share her story with members of her group, she says *"..... I shared my story with the group members. The women leader helped me to resolve the dispute.*

I can understand the strength of the women group which is not possible when I was alone.” A member of the women’s federation (collection of women’s groups) member came forward to support and discuss with Rita’s in laws and husband, and later the case was reported to the village court. The family is now living cordially with the husband supporting some of the unpaid care work duties.

Women and staff from the four countries also reported an increased knowledge on human rights based approach and reflect methodologies as a result of training and refresher trainings. In Ghana, more than 55 communities have been sensitised on issues of women’s rights, the Intestate Succession Law 111, Property Rights of Spouse Act 1985 and gender based violence and women have lobbied for easy access to health care at community level. AA Ghana also carried out a feminist leadership training to enhance staff and partners capacity to work on human rights. Similarly, in Bangladesh refresher training was conducted for 45 project staff and community mobilisers of their understanding on VAW reporting mechanisms and so far, 19 cases have been reported and documented at district level. There has been improved confidence to monitor and track Violence Against Women incidences happened in the community and advocate to prevent it.

In terms of women’s leadership cumulatively 17,594 have been trained with an average of 82% reporting increased skills and self-confidence to participate in decision making. Participation in community structures is also picking up with approximately 19% of the women across the project already reporting regularly participating in community structures of decision making. In Bangladesh, women’s participation in legal and decision-making structures has improved, including Ansar/Village Development Police, Legal Aid Support Committee, Village Development Committee. Women’s groups have also opened bank accounts to generate income and to be able to track their savings.

In Pakistan there has been ongoing linkages of women to the social welfare department and women also experienced improved awareness on issues of violence against women because of sensitisation. The sensitisation meetings included the collaboration of Alwakeel Foundation (a lawyer’s voluntary organization) in Shangla district with active participation of lawyers, government officials, police officers, political leaders and community elders. The lawyers expressed their full commitment to take up the cases of VAW and shall charge no fee for cases referred by POWER women groups. Members of Alwakeel Foundation volunteered themselves for conducting awareness activities at different forums on VAW and UCW. This has greatly enhanced the women’s ability to refer issues of violence and access justice.

To further strengthen women’s knowledge on their rights, a manual with simplified versions of women related laws in Pakistan in Urdu language has already been developed through consultant in last quarter and is under final review.

In Bangladesh, the project activities have also created increased women’s collaboration with government as a result of women’s groups advocacy work, for example a total of 1,349 women received services from government and NGOs among them 1,032 women received social safety net services from Union Parishad, 56 women received training on business plan development and management from Department of Women Affairs at Upazila; 2 women received fish minnow from Upazilla Fisheries and Livestock Office; 5 women received sanitary latrine from Upazilla Parishad, 254 women received emergency relief, loan and cash for work, training on tailoring from NGO, and government. This shows that women are now able to demand their rights, resources and get positive response from government.

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

Women have benefited from increased local authority investments in the reduction of unpaid care work in the form of solar panels, energy saving stoves, support to drill boreholes and support for existing child care centres thanks to advocacy they have done through the women's groups. Sensitisation and awareness raising on reduction, redistribution and recognition of unpaid care work has continued in all communities. Some local authorities have now started to engage in participatory gender sensitive budgeting because of the awareness raising activities.



Energy saving stoves in Ghana

In Ghana, the project has seen increased participation of men in unpaid care work, for example, 80 % (4,800) of women attested their husbands now support them with house work and this has reduced the drudgery of care work. A total of 375 women farmers were provided with household energy saving cookstoves while 79 women processors were also provided with stoves for commercial purposes and 296 were provided with household stoves. The energy

saving stoves have been introduced to support rice processing in some communities and this will help women to reduce time spent on fetching firewood for commercial processes. The stoves were designed with support from SNV and this activity also contributes to outcome 3 of the project as women have more time to spent on income generation.

In Bangladesh a total of 55 women including 15 who are not members of women's groups are now using energy saving stoves while 360 children have been enrolled in child care centres resulting in more free time for women. In Bangladesh local authorities have begun to actively support the child care centres, for example, Upazilla Nirbahi Office contributed 22,000 BDT (220 euro) at Rajpur day care centre while Harati Union Parishad contributed 3,000 BDT (30 euro) in the day care centre in Lalmonirhat district to meet its expenditure. In addition, two (2) day care centres received a tube well and a solar panel. In Pakistan, women organised themselves to collect funds from each household and four boreholes were installed in the area. Because of sensitisation from the project men also supported them in doing this (where often men do not support women to mobilise in such a way). Now more than 100 households' women are benefitting from the availability of clean drinking water beside their homes resulting in reduced work and time saving because of self-initiative because of their motivation from POWER project sensitization process.

In Rwanda, the project provided access to water to 2,795 households. Nyampinga Sarah from Nyanza district in Biroro village is happy with access to clear water, *"I have been using 30 minutes to*



reach at water well in the valley and wait for almost an hour to get water but now I use less than five minutes to get at water kiosk and collect water immediately without waiting for so long". However, women continue to face challenges to access water for livestock due to zero grazing practices in Rwanda which still need to be addressed. Women noted that some of the tasks were taking a very long time and depriving them of time to engage in income generating activities and other social and political activities. For example, Jacqueline says she loses time she could be working on the family's dairy farm to earn more income. *"I and my children spend hours on Saturdays, and sometimes the*

whole day, at the spring, washing clothes. We have to wait there for the clothes to dry, since they are too heavy to carry when they are wet...." Karongi district, Rwanda. It was observed that 16.01% (173 of women beneficiaries of POWER project in Murundi and Gitesi sectors) who benefited from access to water taps in their households reported that time spent fetching water had decreased by 100%.

The reduction of time spent collecting water is also having a positive impact on girls who were previously collecting water before school as this time spent used to negatively affect their education performance. In addition to the reduction of UCW, women project participants use water kiosks to sell water to community members to get money for managing the water kiosks and to pay monthly charges for the company in charge of water supply in Rwanda (WASAC LTD). In terms of long term impact, overall 40% of sampled women in Rwanda and Ghana reported having more time to spend on social, economic or political activities by the second quarter of 2018. All the women (100%) who benefited from time saving interventions reported satisfaction with the interventions.

476 out of the 690 women's groups have been trained on participatory budget monitoring and tracking enabling them to engage with local authorities for budgeting. A total of 18,675 women have completed a time diary. Of the targeted 150 awareness raising meetings, 1014 meetings were held since project inception. This was because of the need for more of these meetings at community level and this has generated understanding and commitment to address unpaid care work at community level. In addition to sensitising adults, the project also sensitised boys and girls, for example in Rwanda the sensitization reached 6,328 boys and 6,709 girls as well as local and religious many community members. This helps to contribute to social norms shifting as boys and girls will grow up with the knowledge and awareness of the need to share roles on 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 activities under this outcome are continuing to be implemented as planned and this quarter trainings were held on entrepreneurial skills, financial management and skills development. Most of the women groups now have business plans and can effectively maintain their ledger, however in Pakistan the progress on this activity has been affected by the external environment and therefore CRSA trainings will be held in the next quarters.

In Bangladesh, the project has funded two flood resilient seed banks cum grain storage at Rajpur Union of Lalmonirhat district and Uria Union of Gaibandha district. These resilient seed/grain banks were

inaugurated during this quarter and they will go a long way in securing the women farmers seeds during flooding. In Pakistan, during the reporting period three seed banks were established in Mansehra district and were supported with 150 Kg maize seed along with 3 steel containers with a capacity 1000 kg storage each container. The seed of wheat (250 kg per seed bank) will also be provided to the newly established three seed banks in coming wheat season. A total of 34,407 women across the project (20,682 in Bangladesh, 6,000 in Ghana and 6,000 in Rwanda) now have access to seed banks which will support farmers' climate resilience. We expect this figure to rise once the seed banks in Pakistan begin to be used.



In Bangladesh, every year, the project areas face flood, heavy rainfall, cold wave, river erosion, drought and the livelihoods of the community are heavily affected. Due to these ongoing natural disasters, POWER project participants used to lose their crops and flood water damaged the seeds, grain, poultry and livestock and sometimes even their homes, children or elderly members of the family. One of the key recommendations from the stakeholder consultation process was to set up a flood resilient seed bank cum grain storage so that they can keep the seed and grain safe during the disasters and community can immediately start cultivation after flood. The stored grain will reduce the vulnerability and food shortage after the flood.



Members of Shuvo women's groups

The project has also increased women's capacity to increase their income through CRSA as well as training women on entrepreneurial skills and market access. In Bangladesh, the members of Shuvo women's group have ventured into different types of income generating activities after receiving training. The women note that they are no longer dependent on men's income. *"Our days have changed now. We are not tensed about income of our husband's anymore. We can earn now."* Reshma Begum, president of Shuvo Women.

A total of 99 women's groups have expanded their small businesses including grocery items, trading wheat, maize, rice, cloth, rice processing, livestock rearing, puffed rice in both districts in the quarter. A total of 2,914 women have responded positively about CRSA techniques and practices including seed preservation, seed bank management, while they cultivate vegetables and crops, use of organic manure and pesticides, market demand of their product. Women also earn income from practising CRSA and meet the family demands for vegetables. *"My vegetables have high demand in the market as I do not use any chemical fertilizers...."* says Monowara Begum. She earns BDT 300-350 (3,50-4.10 USD) per day by selling those vegetables to the community people and market. During 2017, she

earned BDT 1200-1300 (14-15 USD) per month from this garden but now she makes BDT 2,500 (29.5 USD¹) per month by selling vegetables, which are also used to fulfil household needs.

Many of the women are benefiting from CRSA demonstration plots which they see as an important learning space. In Ghana 10 demonstration plots were set up in the communities and in Bangladesh, 20 demonstration plots on vegetable gardening have been established. Women's groups are also actively engaged in other activities to improve their market access and in Sienchem in the Asutifi South districts in Ghana, women's groups in the community have engaged the traditional authorities to set up a community market and this request was granted and attracted other communities to bring their items or wares for sale. This has improved women's access to market. Similarly, in Rwanda, women's access to markets has increased due to community selling points and 95% of the women in the groups reported increased access to markets. In Rwanda, CRSA is also achieving results for the women farmers with 65% of women surveyed reporting improved yields because of using CRSA techniques and agricultural inputs.

The women farmers movement in Ghana, which was inaugurated last year, elected their leadership and had a networking meeting with Young Urban Women (ActionAid project), Activista and other women farmers from all the regions. The meeting provided the opportunity for women to be trained in communications and social media, networking and advocacy and groups dynamics and has contributed to building networking and alliance building at local level.

In Rwanda, livestock distributed in previous years have increased where goats increased from 117 to 142, Pigs from 108 to 168 and cows increased from 247 to 304. The manure from livestock has led to the increase in agricultural production and consequently led to an increase in income from selling agricultural produce. The milk of cows is used for both home consumption and sale to get money for saving scheme and other needs.

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.



ActionAid and women farmers participate in session during GIMAC ahead of the AU Summit

The project has been able to raise visibility of the intersections of unpaid care work and CRSA interventions in women's economic participation at national, regional and international level. During this quarter, ActionAid engaged with pre-summit African Union events through collaboration with Gender is My Agenda Campaign². The ActionAid project staff, partners and farmers from Rwanda and Ghana led a session on unpaid care work. The meeting was held under the theme "Corruption and Governance: Impact and way out for Women, Children and Youths." The meeting was held in

¹ Oanda currency converter 25 July 2018 <https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

² monitors the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), mainly by holding bi-annual Pre-Summit Consultative Meetings to the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

Mauritania and the final communique included specific recommendations on unpaid care work and for the first time the wording was very clear and specific on the need to recognize, redistribute and reduce unpaid care work.

In South Asia, the project engaged with ASEAN as well as SAARC. Good progress has been reported in Bangladesh where the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), Asian Farmer's Association (AFA) and ActionAid Bangladesh jointly organized an international level learning sharing meeting entitled "*Learning Exchange on Community Engagement on Seed Sovereignty for Resilient Agriculture in South Asia*" with the representation of governments and farmers of SAARC member countries. This presented an opportunity through the learning exchange programme for SAARC, SAC and SAARC member states to ensure farmers and community members have access to and control over seeds and set up a mechanism for community seeds preservation and farmer to farmer sharing in the South Asia for resilient agriculture.

At international level, the case study from Ghana was shared during the agroecology symposium in Rome and the meeting was attended by a farmer and project staff from Ghana and Rwanda from the POWER project. The symposium was the 2nd Food and Agriculture Organisation International Symposium on Agroecology and was held under the theme: '*Scaling Up Agroecology to Achieve the SDGs*'. The POWER project also contributed to the policy brief presented during the meeting as part of advancing agroecology. The policy brief was titled ***Agroecology: scaling up scaling out***³.

Members of the project management team attended the donor annual policy event in the Netherlands where the project show cased the ActionAid time diary tools both the paper and phone version. In addition, the International Project Manager was able to participate in several side meetings organised by ActionAid Netherlands including the Africa day commemoration where the 2 parliamentarians were informed on issues of unpaid care work and women's rights to land and the link to the SDGs⁴. The parliamentarians committed to push for these issues within the parliament as part of the SDGs agenda. Discussions were held with various ActionAid stakeholders on the POWER project model and ways to amplify our messaging and replicate/scale up the model in other countries.

At national level in Rwanda, a national television dialogue was held⁵ to discuss on interventions to address unpaid care work where panellists from women farmers, men engage, government representatives and ActionAid discussed the issues.

The period also saw the project finalising the combined baseline study as well as ongoing work by the Institute of Development Studies to analyse the time diaries. A consultant is currently undertaking a study on unpaid care work and CRSA in Africa. In Pakistan, a district level development forum was organized with active participation on NGOs active in district Shangla with the aim to link women's groups with this alliance to develop joint advocacy plans. This district level forum shall provide a platform to discuss key issues of development, challenges faced by NGOs and community groups, and especially the empowerment of marginalized and unheard voices of poor women and small farmers. Local women groups organized by POWER and other projects of NGOs shall be linked and taken on board on this forum that will further be influencing the local and district level decision making structures, enhance alliances and coalitions to develop joint advocacy plans.

³ <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/agroecology-scaling-scaling-out>

⁴ <http://www.sdgnerland.nl/nieuws/integraal-sdg-beleid/> SDG Nederland

⁵ <https://youtu.be/mmofKuihOBC> and <https://youtu.be/sDap3Ysbwcl>

Challenges

Registration of AA Pakistan and partners

AA Pakistan has still not received a response to its appeal on the registration status, this has affected programming as during the quarter all activities were stopped pending an updated registration status and risk review by management. One POWER partner (NIDA) received authority to implement all activities, but the second partner did not get authority to implement POWER project and a separate appeal has been made to request approval for POWER project activities. As Pakistan will have elections in July 2018, the staff also faced restricted mobility because of the political atmosphere and this also impacted activity implementation. For NIDA the activities will be resumed after elections. The ActionAid Crisis Management team, and the international Project Accountability Team will continue to support AA Pakistan as it manages this delicate situation. During the annual review of the budget later this year, Action Aid Pakistan will critically review the activities to match with the situation on the ground.

Time diary collection

Monthly data collection of time diary, research work and the trend analysis of time diary data sharing were postponed in second quarter to allow for the team to development improvements to the tool and process identified during the IDS analysis of 2017 time diary data. The revised time diary data collection tool will be presented and training provided during the annual review and planning meeting where the revised process and next phase of time diary collection will be agreed on.

Balancing women's workload and activities

In Ghana, Rwanda and Bangladesh during this quarter, there were challenges with some group meetings as women needed time for harvesting and farming activities at the onset of the rainy season. The project is adapting to these seasonal changes by adjusting activity schedules to fit the women's workload and interests. As in previous years, learning from this will feed into next years planning processes.

Weather conditions

In Pakistan, the considerable deficiency in winter rains this year has affected the production of agricultural products that might affect the results of agro-based project initiatives. Almost all the target areas are rain-fed and agricultural activities are dependent on rain water. The newly provided agro-based inputs activity might also get affected.

Heavy rainfall, floods and landslides happened in the previous rainy season destroyed women groups farming activities, livestock and house especially in Karongi district in Rwanda where even people lost their lives.

In Ghana, the presence of the fall army worm also affected women's abilities to produce food as some of their crops were destroyed. The women's groups continue to use the neem tree to combat the insect as well as regularly reporting to agricultural extension officers for support.

Lessons learnt

- Creative participatory sensitisation techniques such as cooking competitions and interactive theatre received a positive response at a large scale from community members including among men. This contributes to reducing the perception that certain unpaid care work is preserved for women and increasing male participation in UCW so that they can all support the discussion on UCW to reduce the burden of women.
- Demonstration farms provided platform for learning by practicing climate resilient sustainable agriculture for women's groups and for women community members in general.
- Awareness raising on property and inheritance rights is key to addressing violence against women in the form of access to land and their related rights. During monitoring visits in Jerapa District in Ghana, women kept referring to the rights awareness fora on property and inheritance rights. In UI-Kpong, the women expressed gratitude to ActionAid and the collaborators for educating them on the property and inheritance laws and pledged to work towards addressing those issues. The CHRAJ officer also realised that most of the issues of violence, denial of women to land rights was because of ignorance and committed himself to sensitize people within the Jerapa municipality through church gatherings and Assembly sessions.
- In Bangladesh, the project has published a Violence Against Women (VAW) referral pathway which became very helpful for women to know information and take action accordingly in case of any VAW incidences.
- Quarterly participatory monitoring visits of project staff and women group members to monitor and review progress of other groups in village Saloona, Karmang Pain, Seribela, Khait Charbanda, Naka Amlook and Lami of Mansehra districts helped the communities to exchange their experiences and provided a good opportunity to learn from one another's experiences and efforts to empower women. It helped the groups to improve their group level discussions and in maintaining proper record of their group activities.
- In Rwanda water harvesting technologies through tap water and water kiosks provided by POWER project created happiness for women as it has reduced women's burden of unpaid care work at large extent and this activity helped much in advocacy for interventions reducing UCW at district levels.