

POWER: Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights

Quarterly Narrative Report

July to September 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), Social Development and Improvement Agency (SODIA), and GLOWA), 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 (CRSA), accessing markets and reducing, recognising and redistributing Unpaid Care Work (UCW).

Introduction

The period under review saw several activities going ahead as planned among the most notable are the ongoing meetings of 20,229 rural women in the four countries. These included 4,997 in Bangladesh, 6,277 in Ghana, 5,956 in Rwanda and 2,999 in Pakistan. A few of the women did not attend the meetings consistently due to other meetings in Rwanda while some women had to move their homes due to flooding in Bangladesh. The lowest participation was in Pakistan due to only one partner implementing effectively during the period under review. The project has also advocated for recognition, reducing and redistributing UCW and implemented pilots and other activities to demonstrate how UCW can be addressed through energy saving technologies, child care centres, and time diary sensitisation activities. In all countries, the project has noted the strengthened women's groups who have a strong advocacy skills and negotiation skills for their rights with local authorities such as the Union Parishad in Bangladesh, members of parliament, district assemblies in Ghana and sector and district leaders in Rwanda. Women also reported that they had increased confidence to participate in local leadership. The theme of violence against women is now emerging more strongly as a cross cutting issue with rural women's capacity to report incidences of violence having also increased in the last quarter. A total of 17,426 women have been trained on their rights and reporting mechanism on violence against women. In Rwanda and Bangladesh some VAWG cases reported have now been taken up by the judiciary, police or local authorities.

Women's groups have attained recognition in community decision making structures. Some of the achieved results include commitments by the local authorities to support women with water supply systems to address unpaid care work, traditional leaders supporting women's access to land as well as increasing women's participation in local and national leadership with one woman now being elected as a member of parliament in Rwanda, while others are participating in important structures such as the water committee, school management committees, Unit Committee and Union Parishad Standing Committees.

Significant regional commitment at both the SAARC level and African Union were recorded with a communique on the Gender is My Agenda Campaign highlighting the importance of including unpaid care work in the regional policy documents being submitted to the African Union heads of state summit. ActionAid now also has an MOU with the Gender is My Agenda Campaign while an MOU is also being developed between ActionAid Bangladesh and the SAARC Regional Agriculture Centre.

The main challenge faced during the quarter was the halting of activities in Pakistan whilst awaiting the outcome of the appeal for ActionAid Pakistan's registration. This meant only minimal activities were implemented in one district during the quarter, and sadly we have since found out that the appeal was unsuccessful and ActionAid will have to close operations in Pakistan by 30th November 2018. The project as well as ActionAid is now going through the full closure process and all necessary steps have been taken to mitigate risk of funds as well as an exit plan to support and update the project participants and partners as far as possible. Plans for addressing the gap that will be left in the POWER project following the closure of Pakistan are now under discussion and plans will be shared separately.

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.

Rural women have continued to meet at least once a month, discuss the issues that affect them such as the Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture techniques, market access, women's participation in decision making, income generating activities violence against women and unpaid care work. Women also work collectively at group level to make demands for their rights and their influence in communities is increasing, and they have developed skills in community level advocacy. For example, regular meetings have increased their ability to have dialogue at the community level and with other civic society groups and local authorities. In Ghana, Nabdam district, Damol-tindago group have been supported with 2 bore holes by the Nabdam District Assembly as a result of their group advocacy initiative. In Jerapa Municipality, twenty-three (23) women's groups successfully dialogued with traditional leaders and were able to get parcels of land for group and individual farming activities for the next farming season.

Community sensitisation work on Violence Against Women (VAW) as well as sharing of information on VAW issues, service providers, hotlines has been successful as a way to reduce violence against women and increase support to survivors of violence at community level. Pamphlets on VAW have been distributed to women to help them have good knowledge on reporting violence. The forms of violence addressed include physical and sexual violence such as rape as well as economic violence and discriminatory practices. For example, in Ghana some long practiced traditions on land rights are beginning to change as we saw, during the sensitization meetings at Duusi community, one man made a public commitment to release his late brother's land to his wife and children. He indicated that he had kept this land for a long time due to existing norms, culture and tradition, however after their awareness was raised about the rights of women he decided to release the land. In Rwanda, incidences

of violence are now being reported and referred to one stop centers where women and girls can access medical and other support, for example, a 16-year-old girl was raped by a man from the same community, but the parents did not take the girl to the hospital for care services. A women's group member said *"As we as women's groups have built a good collaboration with Police GBV unit and local leaders, we have taken the violated girl to Mamba Hospital's office of Isange One Stop Centre and now she is under treatment."* The perpetrator was arrested. In Bangladesh, 87 VAW cases including rape, domestic violence, mental torture and early marriage were recorded. One of the cases is now under trial of the court. A six-year girl was raped by a shop keeper in project area of Lalmonirhat district when a women's group intervened. The law took its course and the police arrested him and put the perpetrator in jail. In all communities, group members are now aware about tollfree national hotlines to report violence against women and girls. Women groups members are also opening to report about domestic violence to service providers. However, some difficult cases also exist for example In Nyanza district in Rwanda, a teenage girl was raped while collecting firewood and she is now pregnant, but the perpetrator could not be found to be taken to court.

The project continues to report increased participation in decision making by women. For example, women's groups in Gisagara district have supported their colleague who was the coordinator of the National Women's Council at Gisagara district level to stand for parliamentary elections in the September 2018 electoral campaign and their candidate, Mrs Mbakeshimana Chantal, was voted as a member of Rwanda Parliament 2018-2023. *"Myself and my fellow women are very happy for our colleague being elected as a member of Rwanda parliament for this new term. This is a great opportunity for rural women in Gisagara to advance our policy demands on unpaid care work"* said Nyiraminani Seraphine, member of the women's group from Muganza community/Gisagara District. However, women still note the burden of unpaid care work as a major barrier to their political participation. Similarly, in Bangladesh across both districts 29 women reported inclusion in different community structures e.g. Union Parishad, Standing Committee (Violence Against Women Standing committee), Parents Teachers Associations (PTA), School Management Committee (SMC), Village Development Committee-Red Crescent Society. However, while 79% of the women reported having confidence in participating in these structures, only 19% are actively participating to date. This is attributed to persistence of negative attitudes towards women's participation in leadership. A few of the women are still awaiting the various elections in the different structures.

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

In Rwanda, ten child care centres are being supported by the POWER project and at least two thousand women benefit from community childcare services. In Ghana, one child care centre has been completed while 5 child care centres are still under construction. The child care centres will be used as models to support the reduction of unpaid care work for women. The work has been well covered by the media in Rwanda and in Ghana and the project aims to use evidence from these activities to advocate for local government support to the ongoing running of these centres. The interventions by POWER project have contributed to better sanitation and health as people are no longer collecting water from unsafe water sources which can increase vulnerability to water borne diseases. We have also seen social media contributing to raising the need for access to clean water in Rwanda by reporting on accidents (including deaths) of children when collecting water from unsafe water sources, delays in attending school due to children's roles in collecting water and a high prevalence of water-borne diseases. The Mayor committed to increase the budget so that other communities access

clean water by the end of 2019¹. Jean Paul Hanganimana, the vice mayor in charge of Economic Development for Gisagara District, Rwanda, said *“In 2019, we have planned to extend pipeline of clean water to Muganza community that also highly suffers from lack of clean water in the entire community”*.

In Ghana, women have also benefitted from water harvesting techniques and reported having more time for their economic activities as well as having multiplier effects on the children who often have a role to support their mothers, sisters in fetching water. One woman said *‘I used to spend 4 hours in fetching water due to long distance and the challenge of inadequate borehole in the community. During the farming season, I spend a lot of time fetching water before going to work on the farm. These has really affected time spent in doing farming activities which is the only source of livelihood for the family. The structure has enhanced my children school performance because they were always late in school due to water problem.’*

Fuel/ cooking energy has been a major challenge in most communities with some women reporting 3 to 4 hours in fuel collection for cooking, while others reported using grass and meagre resources to be able to prepare a meal. POWER in Ghana has worked on the provision of energy saving cooking stoves to 695 women in Jerapa, Nabdam, Talensi and Nangodi districts. In Bangladesh, 4,882 women received training on energy saving cooking stoves and they now have confidence, skill and knowledge to share their training and learning with others. Aslema Begum, President of Belly Women’s Group said, *“I am benefiting from using energy saving cooking stove. It reduces cost, time, energy, comparatively keep me clean. So, I can spend my valuable time in group meeting and also other social activities.”* Some women have also noted that the energy saving stoves also reduce the time spent on cleaning cooking utensils.

Community sensitisation of boys and girls has been done in Rwanda and in Ghana 1,502 boys and girls were educated on unpaid care work at their various schools. 80% of the school children indicated they will actively participate in doing household chores and also pledged to educate their peers through girls and boys clubs meetings and other informal means as way of socialisation for their future roles. Currently girls are expected to do household chores as part of their preparation for adulthood, and the POWER project will continue to monitor risks of shifting unpaid care work wholly to children, younger women or the elderly.

Women are actively lobbying for resources to address women’s rights, for example, women were trained on participatory budget monitoring and tracking. A total of 80 community facilitators and 1,776 women selected from various groups level were also trained to track budget information and tracking process in Nanumba North and South Districts. Women from 10² communities in Nabdam participated in an engagement meeting with Government officials to advocate for support for interventions and budgetary allocation to reduce UCW. In Adaklu district in Ghana, the District Chief Executive promised to absorb the care givers through NABCO flagship program. Similarly, in Bangladesh, 22,000 of community people including Govt Officials, school teachers, Union Parishad Chairman and Members, Imam, Kazi (marriage register), civil society, women leaders, federation and group leaders, spouse of women groups members, students, journalist and local political leaders have participated in 274 dialogue meetings on time diary data sharing.

The use of time diaries has also contributed to the increase in valuing of unpaid care work as men and women recognise through spouse meeting, cooking competitions, theatre that unpaid care work is important and should be done by both men and women.

¹ (<https://umuseke.rw/nyanza-abavomaga-amazi-anuka-yo-mu-byuzi-ubu-baravoma-amazi-meza.html>).

² Nyogbare, Sakote, Kotintaabiga, Nangodi, Pelungu, Damolgu, Damol-Tindongo, Asonge, Gundorg and Zanlerigu

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 outcome has seen steady progress during the quarter under review. Women have been able to access resources and services that lead to increased income, improved social safety nets and some have also received support and training on accessing markets. A total of 10,713 women have been trained on market access, business skills and processing against the target of 15,200 by the end of the project, and most of them have reported increased knowledge on markets after training. Through participating in the project women have also been able to access support from beyond the project, for example in Nanumba North and South Districts in Ghana, 23 women farmers were able to access demonstration farms module by the District Department of Food and Agriculture, while 699 women participated in the government programme where free cashew seedling was distributed. In Bangladesh women were also able to access Vulnerable Group Cards where the most vulnerable group members can get rice and skills training because of group lobbying.

Women have also reported increased skills in farming as a business and agricultural value chains through discussions on the relevant manuals, training on gender sensitive access to markets and in-country value chain learning visits. In Rwanda, due to the increased farm produce, target women farmer groups now regularly participate in the annual local agricultural shows to market their produce and advocate for more financial support from government - especially for climate change adaptation and affordable food processing and preservation technologies. This is most important for fresh vegetables and fruits where 40% of postharvest is lost before reaching the end consumers.

Agroecological practices have led to increased yields among farmers as well as healthier eating habits as farmers are producing a greater diversity and are using organic natural methods of controlling pests such as neem trees, some types of pepper. Women have also increased farm production due to the increased access to animal manure, green manure and compost from livestock as, in Rwanda for example, 178 goats, 223 pigs, and 314 cows have been distributed to date. The cows are an asset as well as a source of food and organic fertilisers and a form of livelihood diversification. Women farmers in Bangladesh have also reported increased resilience to flooding as they use sack gardening and raised seed and grain banks to minimise the risk of loss during flooding.

The project has also improved its work on market access during the quarter under review. Women will be accessing community selling points in Gitesi and Kibilizi communities to ensure they increase income with their farm production. In Bangladesh, it was reported that 41.8% (1,345 out of 2,500) of women interviewed have improved knowledge on how to access markets and get information on current market. This is based on women going to the physical market only, however many more are selling products from their homes. This a good start considering that the majority of group members are illiterate or have limited education and their knowledge will be further built through frequent sharing and support around the process and steps of market access. *“We do not sell the rice without any perception. We go to markets of the locality. Compare the prices by visiting different shop and talking with buyers. Then we decide, when we can sell the rice and how much we can earn. But when we first started accessing into market we had to face a lot of questions from regular people over there.”* says Dipti. We noted that access to markets by women is very new and in some cases quite difficult so ongoing support will be needed. Stereotyped social practices continue to be the major hindrance for women to access markets and put learning from training into practice.

Women have also been able to break traditional barriers of mobility and go outside the home to seek market and market information especially in Bangladesh. They are also now members of some Market Management Committees and have made linkages and built good relationships with different

stakeholders. These women are now confident handling consumers, applying marketing techniques to increase their market access and earnings. Women's groups have broadened their market and apart from selling their products at home they are able to process and sell some of their fresh produce to local markets, hotels, schools and other places. Women have pursued and broken some barriers as previously the market was considered to be only for men. Women's participation in the market has had multiplier effects in that they are able to control the income from the produce as well as make savings from the income which enables them to do more income generating activities and enhances their voice. For example, In Bangladesh, 4,500 women received winter vegetable seeds from the seed bank which supports them to cultivate winter vegetables earlier. They sold surplus products in the community and local market, fair, city area and earned money that helps them to meet their family and personal expenditures. In Lalmonirhat district, 36 women's groups extended or initiated their group income initiative with goat, cow and trading paddy and grocery items. The advocacy initiative of women groups has also enhanced women's access to agriculture services, access to safety net resources such as vulnerable group members cards. The advocacy training done by ActionAid is highly valued as only 16.68% (839) of women reported being satisfied with services from local service providers including training, seed, saplings and poultry house, integrated pest management services, vaccination for livestock etc from Upazilla Agriculture Extension office and Upazila Livestock Office.

The project is also raising the visibility of intersections of unpaid care work and CRSA and had some advocacy work at national level. During the quarter under review, ActionAid Rwanda jointly with Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM) organized a national dialogue on the promotion of agroecology in Rwanda. Government institutions including Rwanda Ministry of Environment, Rwanda Agricultural Board, Rwanda Environmental Management Authority, District Agronomists, civil society organizations promoting agroecology like agroforestry, a Swedish organization that promotes agroforestry in East African regions and Rwanda organic farming movements, private sector and farmers participated to discuss possible ways to understand and finance agroecology in Rwanda.

In all three countries, women are actively participating in group savings, keep accurate financial records and are able to manage their income and expenditure. AA and partners also provide regular support to women's groups to enhance their accountability to each other and to the rest of the community for their group activities. In some communities, women's empowerment through the reduction of unpaid care work and training on CRSA has also led to additional opportunities to generate income, for example, Zanlerigu and Nangodi women's groups have been able to link up with the Northern Ghana Governance Activity (NGGA) project led by CARE international to secure funds for pito and sheabutter processing. Others have been linked to get funds for a donkey and cart, for expanding their rice processing centre, building a kitchen, expand their compound and to buy more rice to process for sale this quarter.

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.

In the national dialogue organized by the Rwanda Women's Network, ActionAid was invited to share experiences on Unpaid Care Work and advocacy. The presentation included the 2018 results of districts' annual budget tracking which revealed a continuous reduction in district budget allocation to time and labour-saving interventions from 2016/2017 to 2018/2019. For example, budget allocation to water provision decreased from 3.6% to 2.4% and allocation for cooking energy decreased from 0.5% to 0.0%. Participants therefore requested that annual national plans and budgets should consider UCW interventions during budgeting and planning sessions and the Ministry of

Gender and Family Promotion recommended a nationwide research on unpaid care work to generate reliable data that will be used to design three projects towards addressing unpaid care work in Rwanda. The organizations participated in the dialogue agreed to jointly carry out a formal research on unpaid care work and the representative of National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) pledged technical support from NISR experts.

POWER Project also supported women smallholder farmers to participate in regional advocacy moments where in quarter 3, POWER participated in the 32nd Gender is my Agenda Campaign held in Nouakchott, Mauritania under the theme of *'corruption and governance impact and way out for women, children and youth'* a total of 4 rural women farmers and two partner staff from POWER project in Ghana and Rwanda participated in the meeting. One-woman farmer, Hilarie Mujawamariya, presented on the challenges and lessons on reducing of women's burden of unpaid care work and the corruption happening in the implementation of gender responsive public services on behalf of POWER. A call was made for governments to effectively address unpaid care work through annual national budgeting and planning to enable women to equally participate in the economy and society. She also called for close monitoring of the implementation of gender sensitive public services (GRPS) to prevent corruption by implementors as it negatively affects quality and sustainability of implemented GRPS. Her demand has been reflected in the 4th of the 10 recommendations of GIMAC 32nd³. GIMAC recommended for AU *'to adopt policies and measures that prioritize gender responsive local and national accountability that address redistribution and reduction of unpaid care work and eliminate all forms of corruption in the provision of essential public services.'* POWER project supported 2 partner staff and 2 farmers from Ghana and Rwanda as way of amplifying women's voices in regional spaces as well as enhancing partner's capacity to participate in regional spaces. The meeting was also a platform for developing linkages with other organisations working on women's rights such as the Rural Farmers Forum, Rural Women's Assembly, WILDAF and FEMNET and enhanced the discussions on mainstreaming unpaid care work in regional policy.

The period under review also saw the completion of the time diary report which was done jointly with the institute of Development Studies. The study will be unpacked and shared with a wider audience.

The International Project Manager and Programme Quality and Assurance Manager also participated in collaborative work on women's economic empowerment through ActionAid's *"Transforming the system: ensuring women's and girls' economic justice and a life free from violence"* meeting where the experiences of POWER project were shared with internal and external stakeholders. This was also a platform for connecting with other organisations working on women's rights which will help strengthen our connections for POWER webinars, research events, publication launches and donor/stakeholder roundtables in the coming year.

In Bangladesh, at the national level, POWER project formed a Steering Committee on **"Recognition of Unpaid Care Work and Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture"**, encompassing the representatives from National Gender Working Group (GWG), Asian Farmers Association (AFA), AFSN, Kendrio Krishok Maitree (KKM), Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Bangladesh Kishani Federation, Work for Better Bangladesh Trust, Prantajan, KHANI Bangladesh, La Via Campatina, OBR, Sangat, BRAC-CGST, CPD, RIB, Naripokkho, Nari Mukti Shangstha and Nari Odhikar Federation. The committee will lead and coordinate the national level advocacy activities for recognition of unpaid care work and promotion of sustainable agriculture. At South Asia regional level the POWER project strengthened its relationship with the SAARC Agriculture Centre and some regional level networks like the Asian

³ http://www.genderismyagenda.com/campaign/files/32nd_GIMAC_Recommendations.pdf

Farmers Association. The SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), Asian Farmers Association (AFA), ActionAid Bangladesh, ICAR-Central Institute of Women in Agriculture, Bhubaneswar and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi jointly organized the SAARC Regional Expert Consultation meeting on “Women’s Empowerment for Agriculture Development in South Asia: Enabling Policies” at ICAR- Central Institute of Women in Agriculture (ICAR-CIWA), Bhubaneswar from 5-7 September 2018. The meeting discussed the gender related concerns in agriculture in South Asia, reviewed the prevailing policies and programs for the empowerment of women and engaging them in agricultural development processes, and proposed policies and strategies contributing to an enabling environment for women’s engagement in agriculture. Some of major recommendations from this meeting were to set up an institutional mechanism for scaling up the issue of women farmers in all SAARC member countries; SAC and members to lay down specific policy recognising women farmers, their contribution in agriculture and the economy and set up specific programme interventions for their development; and an MoU between the Government and development agencies on women’s empowerment in agriculture (MOA, SAC, AFA, ICAR-CIWA, ActionAid, FAO, IFAD) will be developed.



Risks and risk mitigation

- Flooding continues to be a risk in some parts of Ghana and in Bangladesh. However, although the groups are vulnerable to flooding they have developed resilience in the farming practices such as early cultivation, use of containers, sacks, movable/ raised seedbanks to support and reduce the impacts of flooding.
- The fall army worm invasion is a major risk to agroecology in Ghana and Rwanda and farmers use neem to address this challenge. However, the worm has developed some resistance and farmers are still battling with this challenge. Community sensitization on early identification of the fall army worm, its symptoms and preventive measures, encourage farmers to used improved seeds during planting and early reporting of detected cases by farmers to the Department of Agriculture

- Failure to meet project targets and full utilisation of budget due to the termination of activities in Pakistan. Plans are in place for a smooth shut down of operations in Pakistan in the next quarter and the POWER project is developing alternative plans to ensure the desired reach and impact of the project can be maintained.

Challenges

- In Pakistan, the termination of activities and impending closure of the ActionAid office following notification from the Government that our appeal has been denied has caused significant disruption this quarter. As well as being extremely difficult for our staff, partners and communities in Pakistan, it has required additional support across the whole POWER team. Plans for filling the gap left by the closure of the project in Pakistan are under development ready for January 2019.
- In Rwanda, the development of ITC based local market information systems in collaboration with E-Soko will not be implemented in 2018 due to the fact that the e-soko Rwanda online system is still under improvement.
- Women farmers have a challenge of postharvest losses due to inaccessibility of fresh food preservation and processing technologies that highly affect their farm income. The project may address this through training on preservation as well as supporting with processing technologies. More technical support will be required to roll out trainings on processing
- In Ghana the frequent rains during the period made it difficult to encourage participation in some of the community awareness activities. In the future the project will continue to identify the time most appropriate for meetings and also consider alternatives such as community radio for community awareness raising.
- Household work load and social stigma of women are still barriers to women's engagement in businesses and access to markets. Continued community sensitisation will go a long way in addressing this challenge.

Lessons learnt

- Sensitisation meetings on Unpaid Care Work with girls and boys in schools was very effective for socialisation and awareness raising for young people. More engagement of girls, and boys will make fair redistribution of Unpaid Care Work a part of their lives. Continuous involvement of men in sensitization and advocacy activities is also important as they are targets for redistribution and can also support women in their advocacy efforts
- Addressing unpaid care work can effectively lead to equal participation of women in productive opportunities and decision-making processes and school timely attendance among rural primary school students. This also can effectively reduce VAWG happening to women and young girls while collecting firewood and fetching water far away at unsafe water bodies/wetlands.
- Monthly group meetings are making women more confident in discussing and analysing issues and challenges confronting them. Majority of the women get empowered through the group meetings process and are now holding leadership positions and communication made women groups more confident to access different services from local government authority.

- National level debate campaigns on unpaid care work have reached mass audiences including young people to raise awareness on unpaid care work. It is an effective tool to engage education institutions and young people for awareness development among the wider public.
- Working with others on regional engagements is the most sustainable, efficient and effective way of addressing shrinking political space. For example, collective working with GIMAC by various projects in AU engagement has created a space for collective demands to be made to otherwise inaccessible forum like the AU heads of state.

Monitoring and evaluation

The project also held an annual review meeting where it reviewed its activities, challenges and theory of change. The meeting was attended by project staff, women farmers, AA implementing partners and project staff from the different countries. This has resulted in main changes being proposed to move the work forward. The review meeting enabled farmers to share their views regarding their aspirations as well as address challenges being faced by the project. The main areas requiring additional support where those related to climate change, climate resilient sustainable agriculture as well as strengthening the approaches on working on violence against women and girls.

The period under review also saw the engagement of a consultancy firm to undertake the mid-term review for the project. The review will include peer to peer support and data collection will be carried out in three countries. The main recommendations from the review will be included in planning for the remaining two years

Capacity building of partners

Two project staff Bangladesh including one staff and one partner staff were also supported to participate in a training on documentation of best practice and the skills will go a long way in documenting case studies and best practices. The project staff have held a feedback meeting and will roll out trainings to other staff in the organisation. Furthermore, by supporting partner participation in regional forums, the project is building the capacity of partners to engage and this contributes to the sustainability of the project.