

## POWER Quarterly Narrative Report July – September 2017

### **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:**

The work has generally gone ahead as planned with all countries now having well organised women's groups who are able to work together, identify priorities, engage with various stakeholders and demand their rights as farmers and carers. The rural women involved in the project have improved their knowledge on women's rights due to their active participation in Reflection Action circles. There are currently 6,400 women's groups in Ghana, 4,037 in Pakistan, 6000 in Rwanda and 5002 in Bangladesh, bringing the total number of women group members to 21,381. This is well above the initial target of 21,000 rural women. In all the four countries women can explain confidently their basic rights as a result of HRBA and reflection training and regularly meeting in groups. Their participation at district level events and community activities reflects their enthusiasm and keen interest in the project interventions such as use of the time diary tool, capacity building workshops/trainings and community theatre shows. Women's reflection action groups have been engaged in initiatives to claim their basic rights, for example in Bangladesh, the 114 women groups undertook advocacy and lobbying actions to claim their rights with Union Parishads which enabled 114 women groups to obtain trade licenses, access to Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and old age allowances from Union Parishad in both project districts, where 42 women groups initiated business initiatives.

In Pakistan, significant progress has been made towards the achievement of this outcome where both elected representatives and women's groups have jointly planned to monitor and track not only government budgets but also the quality of developmental initiatives undertaken by local governments. However, it was noted that there is still under-representation of women in leadership and local structures, which continues to be a major challenge. For example, one lady councillor, Mrs Gulshan Bibi, shared that district government approved 0.5 million Pakistani rupees for developmental activities but the whole fund was utilized for road construction without her consultation. However, as a result of various trainings, rural women now have improved skills, confidence and knowledge in participatory budget monitoring and tracking. This also brought both elected representatives and women's groups together to plan, work and monitor, and created ownership among community members to track these vital local government budget and development processes. A lady councillor from the Union Council Sum shared that despite being in the system it was first time that she understood the exact hierarchy of local government and *"that keeping lady councillor away from development budget will not be as simple as it was."*

Further, in Ghana women's groups, through their organisation and greater influence, have been able to independently identify resources for funding as a result of prioritisation in their reflection action activities. A significant achievement of the groups in the third quarter is exemplified by the women's group in Ul-Kpong, a community in the Jerapa district of Upper West Region. Through their group discussions they identified the need for financial support to renovate their shea butter processing centre and with support from ActionAid received a USD 10,000 grant from the US Embassy to reconstruct the processing centre starting in October 2017. This demonstrates the impact that women organising and acting collectively can have, and these women now have support to develop a product with high international demand.

There is increased solidarity among women to claim their rights from the existing government institutions and, due to group activity participation, women's confidence to participate and influence the existing leadership structures has improved, their assertiveness and ability to articulate demand is growing.

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

The women groups have become platforms for women to demand their rights from different stakeholders and they have conducted different engagements with duty bearers to demand the recognition, reduction and redistribution of the unpaid care work load on women. For example, in Bangladesh, due to women’s continued efforts and meetings with Union Parishad representatives in which the burden of unpaid care work was presented, duty bearers in Larmonirhat district have shown very positive attitudes to reduce women’s unpaid care work. They provided funding to support the fees of six women carers and committed to provide further funds to child care centres and to adopt gender responsive annual budgets to address the burden of unpaid care work. Other local players such as the Market Management Committees also committed to provide space/facilities for women to do their businesses in the market. Overall there is good relationship being built between women groups and duty bearers in all countries, which is likely to contribute to efforts to reduce women’s unpaid care work and for women to fully participate in social, political and economic circles.



Similarly, in Ghana increased awareness of unpaid care work by local authorities has led to the commitment of reallocating the budget to the interventions that contribute to the reduction of time women spend on unpaid care work. In Rwanda at the end of one sensitization session where it was shown that collecting water and fuel was the biggest UCW burden on women in the area, Musanze district’s authorities decided to allocate a budget and set a goal of reducing the distance travelled in search for water from 500m to 200m for the people living in the agglomerations. Local authorities have also pledged to increase the ratio of people using gas cookers from 0.02% to 20%, increase the percentage of Early Childhood Development Centers from 1.37% to 100% at village level. Water tanks have led to the reduction of time spent for fetching water. “I have been using more than 2 hours to have water but I have now water at my household” Budenciana, a women group member from Musanze district expressed.

Picture 1: Home located water harvesting tank in Rwanda reduce time spent on fetching water

In all countries, the continued awareness raising and frequent spouse meetings in the communities have also influenced the attitudes of family household members towards unpaid care work. For example, all countries are reporting that husbands have started to support household chores including cooking, child care and fetching water. In Ghana, chief of Dzakpo, Togbe Agormeha revealed that he has started bathing for his grandchildren before they leave for school as UCW has become more visible. Practically, during this quarter we have seen a lot of personal improvements in some of the women and their communities.

In Pakistan, two major UCW pilots are being implemented: installation of rainwater harvesting structures and provision of fodder cutters and fodder seeds (*See case study attached*). The results of these pilots will be used to for advocacy to influence policy makers to allocate resources and invest in unpaid care work, as well as to sensitise communities so that they can redistribute unpaid care work. In Shangla district, Pakistan, 167 rainwater harvesting structures were completed and have reduced the time wasted by women collecting water from great distances with additional health and security hazards. The provision of fodder cutter machines to 500 women has also contributed in a reduction of UCW as time taken to manually cut fodder and

feed livestock is reduced, as well as creating less waste fodder. This intervention has started impacting women's unpaid care work by changing gender roles as



their husbands have started helping them with fodder cutting. Sarwar Jan is one example whose husband is preparing fodder now, thus reducing her unpaid care work. This has transformed the gender role of this work at her household level.

Keeping in view the burden of work on women, time diary collection has been ongoing in all four countries. The data is continuously being aggregated, analysed and used for ongoing research on unpaid care work, raising awareness of the issue, influencing duty bearers and decision makers and informing programming going forwards.

Picture 2: provision of fodder cutters to reduce time spent on UCW in Pakistan

### 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.

Women in the project target communities are becoming more aware of their rights and holding local duty bearers to account to provide services that specifically improve women's economic opportunities and agricultural support. For example, women representatives in Bangladesh meet with Upazila government officials once every six months, to discuss issues that affect their lives. This has resulted in 62 women receiving agricultural services including vermi compost support, agro demo plot, paddy seed compost pit support, vegetable seeds and four women received wheat, pulse, mustard seeds and organic fertilizers. This, along with training and support for CRSA provided by the project, is helping women farmers to produce improved quality yields that will compete in the market for increased income, and has encouraged women group members to continue practising CRSA.

In Pakistan this quarter the project distributed four types of summer seed to 250 rural women. Women interviewed during follow up visits shared that this has not only supported them to meet their domestic food needs, but they also sold vegetables in their communities and nearby local markets. These women have started getting income from this, Resham Jan is one such example who earned PKR.9000/-<sup>1</sup> in a month by selling her vegetables. They shared that it gave them the feeling of ownership and self-confidence as it is a source of their **own** income generation since they did not earn anything before.



Madam Esther Tengey is a 48 year old woman from Ahunda Kpodzi of Ghana. According to Esther, the deceased father left over 5 hectares of land for her and the 2 siblings before he passed away. Esther claimed because she is a woman, family members keep threatening, assaulting and warning her never to set her feet on the parcel of land nor use it. She tried all possible means to regain the land but to no avail until she participated in one women's group workshops which introduce her to her rights, GBV and violence reporting mechanisms. She said she quickly took advantage of the learnings and contacted The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) office over her matter. The case of Esther is currently in the hands of CHRAJ for further investigations and resolution.

<sup>1</sup> 84. USD on oanda rate

The project has attracted much interest at regional levels and an official from the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) visited project activities on CRSA in Bangladesh and discussed ways to link the SAARC Seedbank and ActionAids's seedbank, how sustainable agriculture can be linked to safe food or biosafety and how food security and CRSA can improved together by SAARC and ActionAid. The good working relationship between the project will be an important platform for future SAARC advocacy work on CRSA and unpaid care work as well as national influencing on agricultural models.

**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 project has engaged a wide audience from local communities to high level duty bearers to bring to their attention issues including unpaid care work, women's economic, social and political participation. This includes a range of advocacy and lobbying, research and analysis and broader awareness raising activities.

In Bangladesh, the project held a national level photography exhibition entitled 'different images of men' in Dhaka in September 2017. The event promoted the recognition and redistribution of unpaid care work among family members. The finance minister in Bangladesh attended the event and committed to carry out research on unpaid care work to understand its economic value at household level. The Secretary General of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has also mentioned that his ministry is planning to develop tools to measure time women spend on unpaid care work and requested ActionAid to support the process.

During the quarter, the project also finalised a policy brief on women's economic empowerment and unpaid care work in Africa. The policy brief was circulated to various stakeholders including the European Union and members of the African Union Commission and will be used in the ongoing consultation by the Department of Women, Gender and Development Directorate in the review of the AU gender policy. The policy brief has generated much discussion with the ECDPM in Brussels as well as the UN Women Economic Empowerment High Level Panel secretariat who have expressed a keen interest in the study and are also keen to know how this balances off with agri business.

During the quarter under review, the project was able to share the work done especially the case study on unpaid care work with the World Committee on Food Security (CFS). ActionAid was considered the most significant contributor to issues of unpaid care work at the CFS forum on women's empowerment in Rome and the case study on policy change in Rwanda formed part of the background documents for the forum in October 2017<sup>2</sup>. The only challenge was that due to visa challenges the women farmers and Country Director for Rwanda could not travel to Rome to speak on the case in person.

## **Partnership and Project Management**

### **Annual Review Meeting and Donor Visit, Ghana, August 2017**

All four countries, the International Project Management Team, all African partners and other key stakeholder came together in Accra in August 2017 for an annual review meeting to share progress, learning, challenges and opportunities for the ongoing implementation of the project. The meeting was a great success and served as an opportunity to improve project management processes, to learn effective programming approaches and successes across countries, to develop new opportunities to improve the project itself, and generate innovative ideas for future activities. A full report will be shared in due course. As well as the annual review

<sup>2</sup> World Committee on Food Security para 94 CFS 44<sup>th</sup> Session ; making a difference in food security

meeting, the project took the opportunity to launch the Baseline Report in Ghana, and to invite our representative from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to join us. We were also able to conduct a field visit with the donor and key project stakeholders which was a highlight for both the workshop and project participants. The communities were also keen to know that women in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Rwanda also faced similar challenges and how the project is addressing these.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

The project has now finalised the baseline for Ghana and Rwanda. Due to an anomaly identified in the data for Bangladesh, we are currently re-running certain aspects of the Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index analysis in order to ensure the findings are accurately representative of the situation of project participants, this should be completed in the coming weeks. In Pakistan, after the difficulty of obtaining permission to undertake a full baseline survey, an alternative baseline methodology has been developed and is about to commence. Despite the delay we feel we will still be able to generate meaningful data, and the experience will allow for some consideration of the differences between methodologies. All country teams have also been trained in the use of a new indicator tracking table which helps in swift aggregation of project indicators and supports the completion of the IATI data on a quarterly basis. Following the annual review meeting, the quarterly reporting process has also been revised to provide a more efficient, informative and streamlined process that allows for better management of risks, analysis of outcomes and reduced time undertaking detailed narrative reports.

### **Partnership**

In Ghana there have been some problems with two of the project partners, resulting in delayed implementation of activities, poor communication and reporting and unresponsiveness to provided support. ActionAid is therefore in the process of working with these two partners to identify issues and try to support them to address these in order to ensure a successful ongoing partnership and implementation of the project. Part of this process involves capacity assessment and review meetings which will take into account progress to date, internal audits completed, the status of the relationship and ways forward. While we are committed to supporting and strengthening our local partners to implement effective programming while meeting donor requirements, we are very conscious of our own responsibilities to ensure high quality, value for money programming. For that reason we will review these partnerships over the coming months and agree on a suitable plan of action, with hopes that we can work together to improve the situation. In the meantime no further funds will be transferred to the partners until the review process has completed.

## **Challenges and Risks**

### **Flooding in Bangladesh**

Due to flooding in both project areas of Gaibandha and Lalmornihart in August 2017, project interventions faced challenges as a number of project participants were affected. This has delayed the implementation of some project activities including financial management, roll out effective participation, access to markets, sensitization meeting with tradition and religious leaders, school boys and girls, six monthly spouses and family members meeting, which will be implemented in the following quarter and into 2018. Emergency support was provided to target communities by partners, government and NGOs following the floods and participants started gardening activities immediately after the flood ended. The Power Project provided seed support for them and also took steps to quickly rehabilitate the livelihoods of the project participants after flood, including small grants and vegetable seeds and linkages with government agriculture offices for input and advice support.

In the future the project will take interventions following ActionAid's Resilience Framework that includes realizing human rights and access to basic services; gain awareness, knowledge and skills; develop collective

action and partnership; and strengthen institutions and influence policy. The project staff will also facilitate women groups so that they would be able to reduce damage of disaster and adaptation in the long term by exploring their capacity and mobilizing required resources.

### **Army worm invasion in Ghana**



An invasion of army worm in Ghana on some farmers' crops has also reduced some farmers' yields. ActionAid is working with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) to address these challenges, however this is also likely to have a negative impact on the final harvest and women's income. The project is reporting cases of invasion to MOFA and undertaking community sensitization on the symptoms and curative measures to adopt.

### **Increased costs for some activities resulting in delays in implementation**

Increased costs for technical consultants (for conducting training, capacity building, research etc) has led to delays in some activities in order to negotiate within available budgets or find consultants with appropriate rates. As part of reflections on how to address this challenge we have reviewed some of our budget lines to be able to cater for increased budgets when needed in 2018 and until the end of the project. A further review will be done in 2018 based on actual annual expenditure.

For example, in Pakistan due to increased costs, construction of rain water harvesting structures is still in progress and will be completed by the end of October. Solar cooker provision has also been delayed due to unavailability of potential vendors, lack of user friendly designs and increased costs of the few cookers available, therefore it is now planned in fourth quarter and partners are doing market assessments.

### **Lessons Learnt**

- **Need to prioritise vegetables and use of CRSA for production:** Women group members' food security has increased and they have been able to consume vegetables, even during flood situations since they cultivated vegetables using CRSA tools and techniques in both Pakistan and Bangladesh. It was learnt that prioritising the distribution of fodder and vegetable seeds and training on farm management can support women in good yields and the adaptation of biological control of pest management will help women to reduce their dependency on pesticides and chemicals.
- **Effectiveness of exposure visits:** Women group participants made exposure visits to observe community managed day care centres and improved cooking systems. After the visit, they applied their learning on the operation of day care centre. Such exposure boosts motivation and helps encourage cross-learning and solution based thinking.
- **Engaging religious leaders:** Frequent and regular communication with religious leaders helped encourage them to attend meetings on UCW issues, a major achievement given their importance in leadership and attitudes at community level.
- **Engaging men and boys:** Engaging men and boys as champions of unpaid care work in sensitization and awareness raising for the public brought a lot of results since they also play an important role in for change in their communities.
- **Water harvesting structures** brought not only more time but also more recognition and respect to the selected women. This attests to the fact women will be respected when they have resources and deeply ingrained cultural norms can be tackled.

### Annex 1 : AAPK Case Study of Sarwar Jan

**Sarwar Jan** is resident of village Teezo. She is 56 years old and has 3 daughters. Sarwar Jan is living in a mud house with 5 family members. Her family is dependent on agro based related activities including livestock rearing and growing of seasonal vegetables.

When a women group was established in village Teezo, Sarwar Jan was also inspired by the concept of community organizations, and joined as a member of the women's group.

Sarwar Jan has two buffaloes and she is responsible for livestock rearing. She shared that livestock is the primary livelihood activity in our area. She is directly involved in cattle management activities such as cleaning of animal and sheds, watering of cattle, milking the animals, fodder collection, preparing dung cakes. Mostly all livestock management activities are predominantly performed by her. Her husband, however, shares the responsibility of taking care of sick animals. It is evident that the women are playing a dominant role in the livestock production and management activities.

She said that she used to spent 1 to 2 hours cutting fodder manually. Women community group members identified the women to receive fodder cutters according to agreed criteria *"The community sought me out, they forwarded me and my family as deserving of support and I am grateful that this call was answered,"* she recounts the day she received the asset under the POWER Project.

She said that her husband supported her for fodder cutting and she supported her husband during the cutting of fodder. Now she is very happy that through this intervention now her time is saved and only 10 to 15 minutes are spent for fodder cutting.

She thanked to women group, Saibaan and Actionaid Pakistan for the implementation of this intervention in their area.

*"It is my wish, that every woman of my village becomes empowered enough to take charge of her own life;;*

