

# ActionAid Ghana: POWER Project newsletter

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# About ActionAid Ghana and the POWER project



ActionAid is a global justice federation working to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication in over 45 countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. In Ghana, ActionAid supports the basic needs and rights of the poor, with an emphasis on human rights, women's rights, land rights and the right to education. ActionAid believes that change is possible and it comes from the power in people. Thus, ActionAid Ghana is catalysing communities and people for change.

In collaboration with ActionAid UK, ActionAid Ghana (AAG) secured funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to implement a multi-country project in Ghana, Rwanda and Bangladesh. The project, called Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER), works around four interlinked outcome areas, using an intersectional approach to addressing unpaid care work (UCW), promoting agroecology and increasing women's participation in decision-making structures to advance women's economic empowerment.

The intervention targets 6,000 rural women in Ghana in the: Nanumba North and South Districts, Talensi, Nabdam, Jirapa, Tain, Asutifi South and the Adaklu Districts.

## Community voices



Chief of Mwankuri, Naa Dadine Achilles advising community members to support women. PHOTO: Photo credit: Abiba Nibaradun/ ActionAid Ghana, AAG

"The fight to reduce women's unpaid care work burden is not an individual fight, it is a fight of all of us and we all will have to play our parts"

**Chief of Mwankuri, Naa Dadine Achilles, a traditional leader in Mwankuri community in the Jirapa Municipality**

"I am encouraged and poised to contest for this election because of the trainings I have participated in, like the leadership, lobbying, advocacy skills organised as part empowerment programmes of the POWER project. After taking up the leadership role as a secretary in my group and a water committee member, I know it is the right time for me to contest for the district elections"

**Gifty Ampofo, Secretary to Akuapa Women's Group in the Bono Region.**







Kate Mansa calling her community men to duty. PHOTO: Priscilla Asangalisah/ ActionAid Ghana

**Kate Mansa, a group member of the Akore Women’s Group called the men to duty through a sensitisation campaign at the community.**

She said: “Men should consider unpaid care work as a shared responsibility rather than waiting for praises whenever they help the female”



**Kolog Naab from Damol-Tindingo, Nabdram District:**

“I now have deeper understanding of why groups exist. Some of us just thought groups exist for the purpose of helping each other in times of need, but we didn’t know that its importance extends to identifying, protecting and reducing transaction costs. This would be shared with group members when I get back home” - Kolog is a participant in a financial management and participatory monitoring and collectivism workshop.”

**Tengmah Naoh is a women’s group leader from the Nangodi community in the Upper East region.**

“As a group, our objective is to achieve sustainable change in our lives and in the community. Without effective participation on issues that matters most to us within our group and community, and at the district level, we will continue to face challenges and our voices will not be heard. The trainings on effective participation has unleashed our potential to engage in dialogue. We can contribute to decision-making at the community and household levels. I am now enlightened as a women leader in the community and henceforth, no community meeting shall pass me by. I will regularly attend all meetings so that our concerns and suggestions will always be heard and added to the planning processes.”



**Faustina Suglo in the Jirapa**



Faustina Suglo narrating her experiences on the POWER project. PHOTO: Stephen Awafo/JIFAN

“If we say POWER project meetings are not beneficial to us then it is a lie. For me, it is very beneficial. Women in this community were treated by our own husbands like chickens that were kept in closed cages.

ActionAid and Jirapa Farmers Network held several empowerment programmes organised for women farmers through the POWER project. I am now a very confident and empowered woman.

That is not all, our husbands have stopped beating us and there is peace and harmony at home. They have seen that our meetings are very beneficial to not only us, but to them also and the community at large.

They no longer mock us any time we attend our meeting under these trees.”





**Osman Bawa, Dangbe community in the Nanumba North District**

“I have been in darkness for the past twenty years. Ever since I and my wife got married, I use not to support her in household chores. But things have changed now. I now cook, fetch water and fuelwood even when my wife is in the house. This has helped with her getting time to do her business. She also gets enough rest and we have peace in the house. As an Imam, I give sermons in the mosques about men helping their wives at home”

## “How well can you cook?”

Saa-eib Domego is 37 years old and lives in Ehiamankyene in the Bono Region: “I can now cook well for the family as a result of my constant engagement in house chores. On Fridays, I used to either sleep or play games with my friends all day because we don’t go to the farm. My wife used to carry out all the work in the house without any support from me. Occasionally, I will go to the house and eat and then back to the boys. But now, after learning about how the burden of care work affects women’s economic empowerment, I am more helpful. It has been a very big learning with SODIA and ActionAid”.

## Improved yields through access to organic manure by

Moses Zamang, Sodja



The adverse effects of climate change are impacting the livelihoods of smallholder women farmers like never before. Resulting in low yield and productivity, farmers are being compelled to spend huge sums of money to buy hybrid seeds and fertilizers, which places huge financial burdens on them. Smallholder women farmers over the years have been committing their resources such as time, money and labour into farming activities, but this effort is being challenged by erratic rainfalls and the purchase of hybrid seeds which comes with conditions of buying fertilizers.



This is very costly for women in their quest to put food on the table and contribute to the upkeep of the families. These issues have made farming unappealing to most smallholder women farmers, rendering most of them with low interest to farm or cultivating on small pieces of lands, which deepens poverty and makes them vulnerable to abuse and marginalisation. There is a shift of power as women now have access to land and control of livestock, compost and dividends on their farms.

Smallholder women farmers in the Bono and Ahafo Regions were given livestock and are now enjoying improved yields. This has led to increases in income and is helping women to contribute significantly to their children's education as well as improve their standards of living. Additionally, there is a shift in some forms of visible and hidden powers between men and women.

AAG & SODIA, under the POWER project selected, trained and provided livestock to some eighty smallholder women farmers as part of measures to strengthen their livelihoods activities and contribute to economic empowerment of rural women.

Smallholder women farmers were trained on compost preparation using animals' droppings and dead plants to enrich their soil fertility, improve yields and increase their income in the quest to fight social injustice and poverty. After acquiring knowledge on agroecological practices, participants put it into practice in their communities, which has resulted in improvement of productivity. For instance, two smallholders women farmers recorded an increase on their garden eggs and pepper production from 2 sacks to



4 sacks and from 1 sack to 2 sacks respectively at Tainso and Bepoyase in the Tain District, without incurring cost on fertilizer and weedicides.

It is in this light that, AAG and SODIA, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture in the Tain district, have identified, trained and provided livestock to some selected smallholder women farmers across the 19 communities in the district. The trainings have equipped the women with knowledge on rearing animals and gathering their droppings as a source of raw material for compost preparation. This compost can then be applied on their farms to improve yield, thus reducing cost of production and eventually increasing smallholder women farmers' income.

Salamatu Iddrisu, said:

"I used to buy chemicals and fertilizer between GHS 100 (US\$19) - GHS 150.00 (US\$28) to spray and apply on my garden eggs and maize farm yet I used not get much profit or income. But barely one year when ActionAid and SODIA provided

us the animals, I have been gathering the droppings and mixing it with other raw materials such as dead plants. After some few months, it decomposed. I carried the compost to my farm and applied it on my garden eggs and maize. The outcome is overwhelming.

This is something I have not seen since I started farming on this piece of land for many years. I did not buy fertilizer, yet I have made huge profits as a result of the compost application. Additionally, the agroecology practices such as mulching and mixed cropping as enabled me to record high income from the sale of my garden eggs. So far, I have made GHS 700.00(US\$131) and I still have some to harvest, besides this, I'm expecting high yields from the maize as you can already see the giant nature of the maize".



## 'Keeping records of income and expenditure in our businesses have become our motivation for hard work' by Abiba Nibaradun, ActionAid Ghana



After a one-day 'Training of Trainer' (ToT) workshop, that was organised by ActionAid for facilitators and treasurers from the twenty-five POWER women's groups on how to manage their income, expenditure and to develop simple business plans, participants at the training developed information dissemination plans to go back to their communities and share the knowledge they acquired with their group members. Participants expressed their joy at being provided sensitisation on increasing their incomes not only at the group level but individually. They also developed interests on starting group and personal record-keepings on their businesses, to assess whether their businesses are growing, or running at a loss.

Habaka Kubing, the facilitator of the Kanguol Women's Group in the Upper West Region shares her testimony on how this has been beneficial to her and her husband. She also shares how she is supporting every woman in her group to keep records of their businesses. She narrates: "We never kept record of our farming and petty businesses. Even myself and my husband never kept records. We didn't know this was beneficial until I returned from the training on managing income and expenditure during the farmer business school.

When I returned from the training, my husband and I wanted to sell our farm produce. We wrote down all the expenses that we incurred last year on the farm. We planted 24 bowls of groundnuts on a two-acre piece of land last year and got 15 bags amounting to 330 bowls. We then sold out 220 bowls (10 bags) for GH¢2,640 (about US\$493).

We calculated all the expenses on the farm, which amounted to GH¢798 (about US\$149). After subtracting that from the income, we realised we made a profit of GH¢1,842 (about US\$344) and used part to build our new house.

My husband and I, with our children, have now moved out of the family house to our own house. So, on the 25th of June 2019, when the tractor came to plough on our two acres farm, my husband made me to write the cost of ploughing, because he has seen how helpful and necessary budgeting and record-keeping is. My husband is very happy with me because of the meetings I attended are now benefitting him also.

At our group level, we heard that there is someone who buys shea butter in bulk at Piina community, which is just two kilometers away from our community. Based on this, we gave GH¢200 (about US\$37) to each woman from our VSLA [Village Savings and Loan Association] money in the group who was into shea butter processing. We have all been tasked to buy shea nuts and produce the butter in large quantities to be sold at the Piina market. I encouraged all the women to write down their expenses and we all did. We will be writing the cost until we are done producing the shea nuts. When we finish selling, I will support each member to subtract the expenses from their income from the sale of the shea butter. This will help us all to know whether we operated at a loss or we made profit and better prepare us to budget better next time."



**Confidence and continuous engagement results in the construction of culvert by the Talensi District Assembly**  
by Juliet Jalea Adams, AAG & Patricia Ayichuru, WOM



Yagzure is one of the 42 communities that falls under the POWER project in the Talensi district. Most of the women in this community, especially the POWER reflect group (Yagzure Tibonkena Women's Group) are traders who sell and buy various products mainly from the Bolgatanga and Tongo markets. During the rainy seasons, majority of these women are often into the cultivation and sale of vegetables. The only feeder road in the community links them to the two markets in Bolgatanga and Tongo.

Unfortunately, in 2016 one of the culverts in the middle of the road broke down. This made their movements to both markets very difficult. They had to divert from the feeder road onto another road. The diversion unfortunately, was usually muddy, making it very difficult to use. Vehicles often got stuck and at the peak season of the rain, vehicles could not ply that road. This resulted in women not being able to travel to the two markets to sell in 2017 and 2018.

As a result, within this two-year period, most of the women were out of business as they did not

cultivate for fear of not being able to sell their produce. Those who cultivated had majority of their produce go to waste due to poor road network, preventing them from accessing the markets. During a sensitisation meeting organised by ActionAid and WOM with duty bearers on unpaid care work, members of the Yagzure Tibonkena Women's Group raised the issue with local government officials to seek support for interventions and budgetary allocations in August 2018.

Coached by ActionAid and WOM on how to dialogue with public institutions, they made several follow ups to the Assembly to present their demands. The District Assembly promised to fix the road and soon enough, begun to repair the culvert. However, after waiting for two months for the contractors to return to fill the spaces left so vehicles could use the road, the POWER Yagzure Women's Group took it upon themselves to fill up the road and complete the reconstruction process.





The chairperson of the group, Baan Atindanpoka said, “We are very excited that through our own efforts, the road has been fixed for us again. This year when the rains start, we can cultivate our vegetables to send to the markets without any transportation troubles.

She further added: “We decided to fill the place up because we didn’t want our efforts to be in vain.

Now, we can move to do our trading and various personal activities freely because the vehicles can now pass the road”.

She added, “Our children will be able to cross to go to school freely without fear of getting dirty in the mud. We are very happy and proud that we have built-up our strength and confidence to demand for our rights.”

## Addressing Unpaid Care Work with childcare centres in the Goefe community by Priscilla Asangalisah



“I like the way the children are playing, it can be worrying yet so peaceful and interesting” These were the initial words of Delali Asempah, a 26-year-old care giver in Goefe, a community in the Adaklu District of Volta region of Ghana. Delali is a person with disability yet committed to her duties.

Until government adopts childcare centres, communities will have to rely on voluntary services from its members to provide care to children.

This, as it offers little income is a major turn off for people, making it difficult to attract people to volunteer. The Goefe community childcare centre had similar challenges. It was during this difficult time that Delali chose offered her valuable time to reduce the burden on families especially women and promote access to early education for children in her community.

Delali Asempah chose differently. She has decided to care for the careers and children. She has chosen to make an impact. The 26-year-old has dedicated her time to work at the community childcare centre built by ActionAid Ghana through the Promoting Opportunities for Women’s Empowerment and Rights (POWER) project. Through the POWER project, childcare centres have been identified as a means to reduce Unpaid Care Work burden on women. Thus, enabling them to participate in social, political and economic activities.

According to Delali, it all started in 2017 when her



Delali engaging the children in play activities. PHOTO Priscilla Asangalishah/ ActionAid Ghana



community called on her to support at the centre, “I did not just accept because I had no job, but because I saw the realities of women. Most women are farmers and they cannot take the children to the farm. Those who are engaged in trading or processing palm oil get very tired and cannot do much with the children at their back.”

Faced with a physical disability, Delali Asempah is a woman of power and strength, and has garnered enough power to serve. Her work at the care centre brightens the faces of children and their families: “The children are learning quick and they are no longer at risk. If it had not been for the care centre some children who are just slightly grown or toddlers, will be left at home and anything can happen to them.” These words from Delali should raise concerns for citizens to reflect on childcare centres and how they are an avenue to reduce childcare burden on women, protect children from rights violation while enhancing their abilities to learn and adopt to the school environment.

“The kindergarten schoolteachers are praising us, saying that the pupils who come to their schools from the care centre are very bright.” These comments make me and my colleague, Jubilant Yevo, very happy. I see the parents are very happy too. All they have to do now is prepare food for the children when they get home.”

Delali is one of many women providing care services to mothers who cannot access kindergartens in their localities or children below the school-going age;

Her success lies in her ability to rise beyond her physical disability and personal interest and focus on contributing to empowering women in her community. Delali understand the concept of the POWER project and is contributing to reducing the burden of unpaid care work on women and much building resilient communities.

The Goefe Child Care Centre has 32 children currently enrolled and serves four communities. The children at the centre fall within the ages of one (1) to four (4). Delali Asempah believes that her District Assembly, a local government institution, should provide electricity and play equipment to the centre, “Government should consider taking up responsibility for the maintenance of the centre and our payment, because our work is helping everyone.”

ActionAid Ghana, through the POWER project, advocates for childcare centres to be streamlined into national policies. Childcare centres in every part of world is a necessity, especially in rural Ghana as majority of women are in the informal sector and largely live in urban/rural settings. As at 2018, the informal sector contributes 28.6% to Ghana’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a contribution which cannot be underestimated. As such, duty bearers are responsible for providing services that allow contributions of women, who make up majority of the informal economy, to be maximized. It is absolutely imperative that childcare centres are considered a priority and a rights issue for women and children.



## SOME ACTIVITIES IN THE HALF YEAR

By the middle of the year, various activities under the POWER project have been implemented. Staff and partner communities were engaged in numerous activities focused on promoting the empowerment of women.

1. Leadership refresher trainings of 658 women.

2. Construction of 3 seed banks for women farmer groups in the Bono and Ahafo regions.

3. Time use diary collection were distributed with 1,122 (716 women and 405 men) sensitised on its usage and how to record time use diary-related activities in last two quarters.

4. Dissemination of market and Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA) practices through ESOKO to 3,400 farmers.

5. Budget monitoring and tracking engagements with 58 group facilitators and 22 smallholder women farmers.

6. Training on financial management: 253 group representatives participated in this training

7. Meetings with traditional leaders to lobby for long-term access to productive lands: 928 women supported to engage with chiefs and other traditional authorities to lobby for long-term access to land. Overall, 18 communities consisting of 519 smallholder farmers signed long-term land use agreements with landowners.

8. Women farmers, partners and AAG staff participated in the, Gender is My Agenda Campaign annual meeting in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia.

9. AAG commissioned a research to map out policies related to agroecology in Ghana.

10. Initial meeting for the review of the childcare centre has been held with the Department of Children *under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.*



Community debate at Drobo on time use of women and men on Unpaid Care Work



Catherine Dakpanaah after receiving her two sheep



Women in the Upper East Region gathering materials for compost to support Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture practices.





A women's group in the Nanumba District display seeds they acquired for this year farming season due to support of the POWER project



After a fruitful seed preservation session, the team showed their posing skills too, part 1



After a fruitful seed preservation session, the team showed their posing skills too, part 2



During a time-use diary data collection, Joyce Yenumboib, a facilitator, assists her colleague, Georgina



Dery Ophelia, a facilitator of the Ebeye Yie Women's Group in the Drobo community of the Tain District assist group members to share their investments from their savings scheme.



Members of the Sontaa Tietaba Women's Group in Wiasekrom in the Bono region cross-check their investments in their savings books



## Announcements

The POWER project will be participating in the GIMAC, CWSA and WWD. Look out for the updates.

ActionAid will soon call for entries to award the best Writer/Journalist for stories on Unpaid Care Work in early 2020.

## Acknowledgements

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