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Baseline Report Summary



Promoting Opportunities for **Women Empowerment and Rights (POWER)**

July, 2017

The baseline conducted for the POWER project found out that women in Ghana do approximately ten times the amount of care work that men do, and have significantly longer workdays overall. In many communities, Ghanaian women report considerably less decision making power than men over social and economic assets, access to labour-saving equipment, and access to basic facilities and utilities. Women perform the vast majority of unpaid care work (UCW), that is, everything from laundry to cooking, shopping, cleaning, and caring for children and the elderly, while also participating in agriculture and non-farm economic activities. Ghanaian men enjoy much more leisure time than women, who consequently have little opportunity to participate in public life, pursue education, participate in political activities or engage in their own betterment.

In an effort to address the denial of women's civil rights caused by the unequal distribution of work and lack of economic empowerment, ActionAid is implementing the Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER) project. The project has four intermediate objectives to achieve by the end of 2020:

1. 6,400 rural women are organised and are able to demand their rights as farmers and caregivers and have greater influence in their household and communities;
2. Women's unpaid care work is more highly valued within households, communities and



government, more evenly distributed within households, and hours spent by women on unpaid care work is reduced, resulting in more free time for women to engage in social, economic and political activities;

3. 6,400 rural women have more secure and sustainable access to markets and productive resources leading to increased income;
4. Greater visibility of intersections of Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA), women's unpaid care work and women's economic participation leads to changes in policy and practice by sub-national, national, regional and international stakeholders by 2020.

A key premise of the project is that women will have time to practise CRSA if the burden of UCW is recognised, reduced and/or redistributed and if they have the means to demand their own civil rights. The practice of CRSA also impacts on the burden of

UCW on women as certain techniques reduce the time spent. Addressing CRSA and UCW can therefore help facilitate women's economic empowerment, which can in turn build political empowerment and ultimately lead to greater gender equality.

Methodology

The purpose of this Baseline Study was to understand the situation at the start of the project, to inform project approaches and ActionAid's strategies, provide evidence for advocacy and to collect indicator data in order to measure project progress. The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to provide context and detail through interviews and discussions with stakeholders, and document review. The analytical framework used was a modified version of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI¹) to include the POWER project indicators.

¹ The WEAI is an innovative tool composed of two sub-indexes: one measures how empowered women are within five domains, and the other measures gender parity in empowerment within the household.

Key Findings

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture

Women in POWER project communities, according to the WEAI score (0.75), are significantly less empowered than their male counterparts. 63% of women surveyed have not achieved empowerment across all 5 domains of empowerment (5DE). Among this population, lack of access to and decision-making power on credit, workload, and minimal control of assets are the chief factors preventing women's empowerment.

The WEAI score is a weighted average of the 5DE score and Gender Parity Index (GPI)² score which measures overall empowerment taking into consideration the difference between men and women. In Ghana, the average 5DE value for women is 0.74, and for men is 0.90. The Gender Parity Index for POWER Ghana is 0.86. While both men and women experience high levels of disempowerment in POWER communities, 55.5% of women do not have the same level of empowerment as the men in their households. The average empowerment gap between women and males in their households is 0.26, indicating that these women score significantly lower on the aspects of empowerment crucial to POWER's success.

² This sub-index reflects the percentage of women who are as empowered as the men in their households.



Women's Household and Community Empowerment

Participation in community groups is low among both men and women in Ghana. Men generally reported more group awareness than women, with the exception of religious, women's rights and mutual aid/insurance groups, where women were more informed. Women's awareness of agricultural producers and microfinance/credit groups particularly lagged behind that of men. Interestingly, among women who were aware of credit groups, participation was higher than that of men.

The study did not show that public speaking was a significant factor in disempowerment. In fact, women and men reported speaking publicly in roughly equal proportions. However, survey data revealed that women's confidence in speaking trailed that of men by almost ten percentage points. Focus group and interview information further indicated that women were reluctant to speak publicly if their husbands or male relatives were present and/or if the subject matter did not directly involve women.

The study also showed the challenges of obtaining accurate information about violence against women and the potential impact that violence can have on women's daily lives. Although survey data showed that 93% of female respondents reported never being threatened on their way to and from the market, responses changed dramatically in focus group discussions where participants were asked to consider violence in a different context. Focus groups revealed that it was common for husbands to beat their wives if they failed to prepare meals on time or fulfil some other gender-specific domestic activities. The instinct to avoid abuse also drives women to work non-stop, according to participants.

While data indicated that most households have some assets, including widespread ownership of agricultural land, women have less ownership and fewer rights with regard to every asset category surveyed. Women are also less likely to live in

households that own farm equipment, which not surprisingly led to lower agricultural productivity for women. On a more positive note, one third of households produce some cash crops and a quarter of women are engaged in non-farm economic activities, as compared to 13% of men. Women, however, have limited diversity in their income-generating activities and are particularly vulnerable to crop failure.

Men are more likely to make decisions on all economic activities with the exception of non-farm economic activities, in which women hold more decision-making power. Access to credit is difficult for both men and women, as all respondents reported low confidence about their ability to borrow from any kind of financial institution. Women also evidenced a resistance to incurring debt.



Unpaid Care Work (UCW)

The study showed that a woman's total workday, on average, is 9.6 hours, compared with a workday lasting only 5.3 hours for men. From this total, women spend 6 hours engaged in unpaid care work, which is almost tenfold more than what men spend on UCW. Women spend more than 2.5 hours a day on housework, and 90 minutes collecting fuelwood and water. One-third of all respondents believe that men and women should share UCW equally, although the allocations of time use in the time diary show that this belief is not borne out in practice. To illustrate, 7% of men said that men are responsible

for childcare in their household and 30.4% of men said that women and men are jointly responsible for childcare, although men typically contribute only 7 minutes daily (per the survey's time diary allocations) to childcare, underscoring the difference between words and behaviour. The most time-consuming UCW activities for women are housework, childcare and collecting fuel wood and water.

Approximately half of both male and female respondents believe that men should be breadwinners and women caregivers, further suggesting strongly entrenched gender norms. However, these gender norms do not preclude women from earning income, as almost one-quarter of women engaged in non-farm economic activity, as compared to 13% of men, over the past year. Likewise, 14% of men still believe that women should not engage in economic work.

Market Access and Productive Resources

72% of women reported ownership or use of agricultural land in the past year, signifying that this population could benefit substantially from the enhanced agricultural techniques, tools and approaches of CRSA. Floods, drought and lack of soil fertility were named as the major agricultural problems cited by men and women, although more than 92% of all respondents stated they did not

attempt to remedy the problems they encountered with cultivation. Further data suggested that this inaction was due primarily to lack of knowledge and resources rather than disinterest or unwillingness to employ new methods.

Market attendance was low among all respondents, with 28% of women and only 8% of men attending the market on a regular basis (twice a month or



more). Roughly half the respondents did not sell their products in the last year, with more than 84% of

women and men reporting that they either produced only enough for home consumption or did not have a surplus to sell. Notably, there is evidence of significant gender inequality in earnings, with women earning only about 22% of men's earnings from market sales.

Changes in Policy and Practice

Although the target of 75% of local and national duty bearers surveyed agree that greater support and investment is needed to reduce UCW by the end of the project, it is important that ActionAid recognises the near-total lack of recognition that UCW is a women's rights issue, even among NGOs with well-established women's empowerment programs.

There is less acceptance of this concept among government-affiliated duty bearers. That said, given the creation of a National Gender Policy in Ghana in 2015 and other indications of government interest in viewing state policy through a women's empowerment and gender equality lens, ActionAid may be able to leverage government support in order to integrate UCW into policy, provided that ActionAid can help bridge the knowledge barrier about the role women's UCW plays in obstructing gender equality.

Recommendations

Reducing Women's Workload

- Change **traditional perceptions of work** as a first step towards redistributing workload.
- Bring **men's perception of UCW** more in line with reality in order for them to understand the actual tasks that must be performed and recognise a need for change.
- Ensure broad and robust **protection for women** who advocate for, or attempt to enact, redistribution or reduction of UCW in their own homes and/or at a community and societal level with the support of local and national duty-bearers to safeguard women's interests.
- Improve **access to childcare and other services** that would reduce women's unpaid care work burden through increasing the availability of services and women's knowledge of their advantages.
- Improve **access to utilities** such as water, fuel, and sanitary facilities to reduce women's work hours.
- Raise **women's awareness and participation in community organisations**, including increasing **women in community leadership roles** to ensure that UCW and other issues pertaining to gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed.



Increasing Women's Income

- Improve **women's ownership of assets**, particularly farm equipment including decisions about sale, rental or disposal of assets.
- Help women get more involved in **decision making about economic activities**, particularly cash crop production, for example through basic financial literacy and livelihood skills training to empower women to become more economically active and empowered to make decisions.
- Encourage **open conversations** about the fair distribution of work generally, including UCW, paid work and unpaid GDP work (agriculture) in economic terms to highlight the benefits of

addressing UCW, implementing CRSA and women's economic empowerment to the whole family.

- Help households to **access credit** by connecting women with financial literacy training and work with lenders to improve financial inclusion in POWER communities.
- Increase women's **access to extension services** for advice and support to increase women's agricultural yields.
- Address **unequal earnings at market** through identifying the causes of the difference in earnings between men and women and addressing them.

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