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LEARNING AND ADAPTATION

Case studies from five ActionAid countries

Working towards quality and effective programmes

Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	4
Part 1	7
Nigeria: Shifting women’s perceptions of right violations – Ofuloko community	8
Nigeria: Promoting women’s participation in decision making in Akwa-Ibom through an integrated programme approach.....	10
Uganda: Scaling up reach through mobile aid clinics ...	12
Afghanistan: Including economic activities in reflect circles for greater retention and inclusivity of women.....	14
Part 2	16
Sustainable agriculture- KCP2.....	17
Uganda: Adding value to crops to increase returns and improve livelihoods	17
Education- KCP 5	19
Pakistan: Securing access to education through national solidarity and campaigning	19
Resilience - KCP7.....	21
Afghanistan: Building government ownership for resilience: from provincial to the national level.....	21
Ethiopia: Resilience building mainstreaming	23
CONCLUSION.....	25
REFERENCES.....	26

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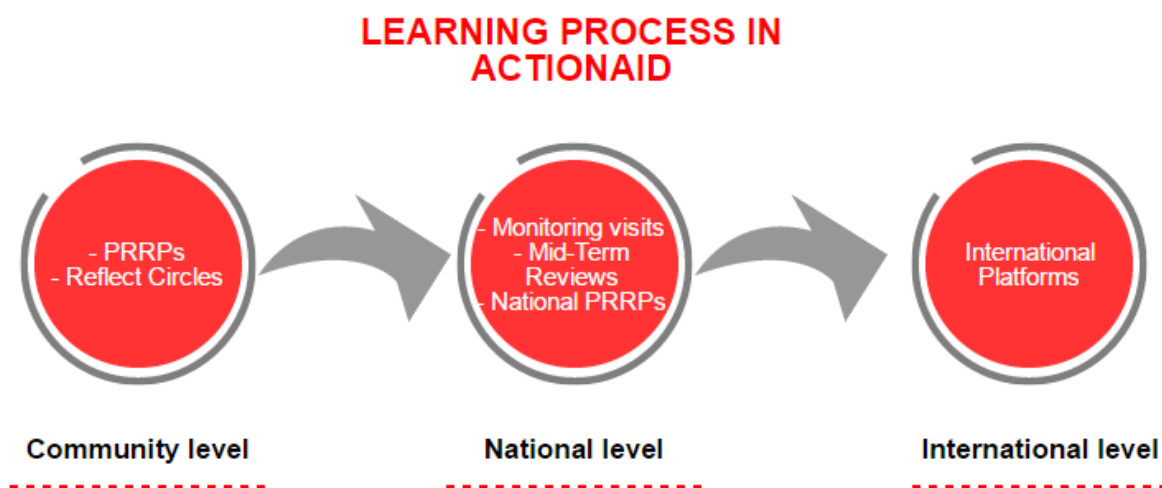
Photo: *Women's Rights in Agriculture Project in Kapchorwa, Uganda, 2015.*

INTRODUCTION

This booklet showcases eight case studies of how five ActionAid countries – Afghanistan, Ethiopia Nigeria, Pakistan and Uganda – have adapted their programming based on learning. The lessons showcase ActionAid’s distinctive Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to development and how it centres on active agency: supporting people living in poverty to learn and claim their rights and hold duty bearers to account.

Over 2011-2016, these five ActionAid countries received flexible funding from the UK Department for International Development’s Programme Partnership Arrangement, through ActionAid UK. The funding was used strategically to deliver on ActionAid’s 2012-2017 International Strategy *People’s Action to End Poverty*, through strengthening capacities to deliver ActionAid’s HRBA, create space for learning and innovation, and adapt programmes to strengthen the impact on people living in poverty.

The eight case studies highlight lessons learnt by the five countries, ranging from the operational to the strategic. Together, they demonstrate how ActionAid’s signature participatory approaches are the bedrock of learning. In ActionAid, the learning process starts by engaging people living in poverty in Reflect Circles to identify and find solutions to issues that affect them. Participatory Reviews and Reflect Processes (PRRPs) are used to review progress. Evidence generated is aggregated at national level and then globally in International Platforms.



While the lessons in this booklet are specific to their own context, they also demonstrate how ActionAid’s HRBA can be used to tackle poverty and promote rights in many different situations.

Part 1 highlights four case studies on changing social norms on Gender Based Violence (GBV). Highlights of what we learned include:

- In **Nigeria**, reducing harmful widowhood practices required shifting the attitudes of the whole community including traditional leaders.
- In **Uganda**, challenging the acceptability of GBV was required AA to bring women support services to the centre of communities for public, open-air discussion.

Part 2 showcases four case studies on applying HRBA to agriculture, education and resilience to create lasting change. Highlights of what we learned include:

- In **Pakistan**, protecting access to free education could only be achieved by combining empowerment, solidarity and campaigning.
- In **Afghanistan**, helping communities find a long-term, sustainable way to prepare for floods and drought was achieved by complementing local resilience-building initiatives with national campaigning and advocacy.

Acronyms

AA	ActionAid
ANDMA	Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority
CRSA	Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture
DRRC	Disaster Risk Reduction Committees
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HTP	Harmful Traditional Practice
IWD	International Women's Day
LRP	Local Rights Programme
PRRP	Participatory Reviews and Reflect Processes
PRS	Promoting Rights in Schools
WPC	Women Protection Centres

Part 1

Shifting social norms to end gender-based violence

Women and girls are at the heart of everything we do. Our 2012-2017 International Strategy *People's Action to End Poverty* makes a promise to challenge gender-based violence:

Key Change Promise 9

We will organise over five million **women and girls** in rural and urban areas to challenge and reject gender-based violence.

ActionAid's HRBA recognises that women can change their own communities and every day we support women and girls to tackle violence and stand up for their rights. To deliver on our promise, our programmes focus on empowering women to get their voices heard and know their rights, for example through Reflect Circles.

Our programmes promote economic empowerment of women, and provide services and demand justice for survivors of violence. We also work on shifting social norms to stop harmful traditional practices and tackle sexual and domestic violence. The case studies highlight how changing social norms to tackle violence and promote gender equality require a community-wide effort, and the creation of new shared beliefs.

Nigeria: Shifting women's perceptions of right violations – Ofuloko community

Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs), such as widowhood rites, are prevalent in Ofuloko community in Kogi state. These rites limit widows' movement for up to one year, their ability to engage in economic activities and their access to inheritance. The rites are enforced by women and men in the community as it is a popular belief that bad things will happen if these traditions are not followed.

Not all women see the enforcement of these practices as a violation of women's rights and some women claim to enjoy the experience.¹ In 2014, there were no organised groups in the community or any government initiatives advocating for the reduction or elimination of these practices.

ActionAid's programme

AA Nigeria has worked in Kogi State since 2006 through its partner organisation (Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in Development) to raise awareness of women's rights in 13 communities within Kogi LRP.

What worked well?

- Capacity building activities were implemented, involving all parts of the community, with particular focus on raising awareness of women's rights. This led to some recognition of widowhood mourning rites as a HTP.
- All-female education groups were established to further women's understanding of gender equality.

What were the challenges?

- Some women in the community considered that reporting cases of widowhood practices was against their culture.
- Although some level of understanding of women's rights was achieved in the community, under-reporting of cases of rights violations continued.

Lesson learnt

AA Nigeria learnt that in order to achieve the reduction of harmful widowhood practices, it needed to shift the perception of the whole community to ensure these practices were recognised as a HTP. This shift in perception would require a long-term, joint approach using different sensitisation strategies at the community and government level to respond to women's concerns around culture. Traditional rulers' support and approval was understood to be central to success, as they have the power to make and abolish community laws and influence community attitudes.

Programme adaptation

In order to respond to these learnings, AA Nigeria and its partner developed activities with a specific focus on shifting perceptions around widowhood practices in their 2015 plan. The organisation refocused its energies on addressing cultural barriers and building the understanding of community members, particularly women (in and out of AA's groups), on issues around gender. They also supported the women to speak out and advocate to their traditional rulers on reduction and elimination of HTPs.²

AA Nigeria and its partner opted for an approach that would not be dismissive of people's traditions and that women could identify with, in order to ensure women's engagement and buy-in from the traditional rulers. This approach promoted a 'symbolic' mourning period where women could still be involved in economic activities.



Maria Ajeku, 44 years old community woman appealing to a traditional ruler to reduce the mourning period for widows. Ofuloko, Nigeria 2016

AA Nigeria and its partner also introduced a paralegal system to support women in the community and encourage community-based interventions to eradicate HTPs. These paralegals (originally trained as part of the all-female education groups) carry out courtesy visits to traditional leaders to challenge the established mourning period and promote the rights of women and girls.

Mass participation events were organised to sensitise members of the community, involving religious institutions, men, boys and the government. For example, during the 2015 International Women's Day events, a female government representative spoke about her experience as a widow and the importance of remaining economically active to guarantee hers and her children's wellbeing.

Impact of the adaptation

As a result of the sustained joint approach, women in the community have a better understanding of their rights and now consider widowhood practices as a negative tradition that affects their wellbeing and that of their children.

Furthermore, as a result of the community-driven actions of the paralegals, traditional leaders have promised to consider further reducing harmful widowhood practices and involve all the other communities in the Local Government in these initiatives. This commitment could result in the reduction of mourning rites in Ofuloko community and in all rural communities in Igalamela/Odolu Local Government Area of Kogi State Nigeria.³

Nigeria: Promoting women's participation in decision making in Akwa-Ibom through an integrated programme approach

Akwa-Ibom state is located in the southern part of Nigeria's coast with a population of over 5 million people. Women in the state are subjected to land disinheritance, sexual violence and other forms of violence. As of 2013, domestic violence prevalence reached 30% in the country with 1 in 3 women reporting having experienced domestic violence.⁴ Furthermore, very few women are represented in state/local government and community leadership. As of 2011, women made up 11% of appointed officials and only 6% of elected officials⁵ in the state of Akwa-Ibom. These issues are aggravated by the lack of government presence and strong ethnic divisions resulting in conflicts and displacement.

ActionAid's programme

AA Nigeria has been working in Akwa-Ibom since 2006. In partnership with the African Human Development Centre, they have been campaigning on unpaid care work, violence against women and promoting women's representation and participation.⁶

AA Nigeria and its partner carried out sensitisation activities in order to promote gender equality with women and children as primary stakeholders. Peer education group meetings were held weekly⁷ allowing women to learn and discuss women's rights and come up with solutions to community issues. Work with males in the communities was limited to health and governance initiatives and men were not involved in work on women's rights.

What worked well?

- AA Nigeria and its partner's work helped to increase women's understanding of their rights. For example, the women's peer education increased their self-esteem, improved their negotiation skills, advocacy skills and some progress was made on women's participation in and out the household⁸.

What were the challenges?

- Women's participation in decision making bodies was limited as they were not represented in community development committees, traditionally dominated by men. Furthermore, their ability to participate in family decisions was still restricted.
- Patriarchal attitudes led to male resistance to women's rights and empowerment. Male community leaders considered that local traditions did not allow women to sit in the traditional council and take decisions with men.⁹

Lesson learnt

Based on its experience in Akwa-Ibom, AA Nigeria learnt that in order to achieve women's participation in decision-making structures, it needed to sensitise, lobby and influence a wider pool of stakeholders including men and boys.

AA Nigeria identified ways to work with male champions who could promote women's rights in the community with other men. Being able to talk to other men, men could increase their understanding of gender equality. This approach would ensure that interventions carried out for women and by women are not derailed by male resistance.¹⁰

Programme adaptation

From December 2013 to November 2014, AA Nigeria targeted men and boys from the community and relevant government institutions. Through education and awareness-raising activities, AA and its partner emphasised the positive effects of respecting human rights and gender equality in 4 communities in Akwa-Ibom, through an integrated approach to knowledge building and community organising.

This integrated approach focused on building the capacity of women to advocate for their rights while also training male influencers as trainers on women issues.

AA Nigeria and its partner facilitated trainings of eight traditional and religious leaders, six police officers and 12 male champions from the communities. These male champions were chosen because they were seen as role models and were willing to challenge issues around patriarchy. Male champions worked alongside coalitions and networks in order to achieve sustainable change and ensure that communities uphold women's rights.

Impact of the adaptation

The use of male social networks in the communities facilitated the engagement of male community leaders, male religious leaders, community vigilantes, fathers and male police officers in the promotion and protection of women's rights. This contributed to forming a critical mass of people advocating and promoting the rights of women and girls. It also promoted women's participation in decision making.¹¹

Male champions became community advocates influencing the way that other men perceived women. For instance, with support of male champions, men in Ediene Attai Community began to return assets such as land and houses to widows who had their late husband's property taken from them.

There are further examples of positive change in Akwa-Ibom, in which male champions have played a part. For instance, the membership of community development committees was opened to women, the community leader of Ediene Attai made it compulsory for women to be involved in judging and resolving conflicts and cases in the community, and two women from different communities (Ikot Udobia community and Mkpeta Itam community) are now leaders in the traditional council. Women now have a voice in important community decision-making spaces¹², which is leading to changes in age-long rules, including HTPs and cultural norms.¹³

Uganda: Scaling up reach through mobile aid clinics

An estimated 56% of women in Uganda aged between 15 to 49 experience Gender Based Violence (GBV). Six in ten women who have been married report having suffered emotional, physical or sexual violence from a spouse.¹⁴ Additionally, 28% of women report having experienced sexual violence at least once in their life.¹⁵

Although the incidence of violence is high, few female survivors seek help to stop violence. In rural areas, 42.2% of women report experiencing violence¹⁶. Of those women reporting GBV, 39% experienced physical abuse, 22% experienced sexual abuse and 52% experienced both physical and sexual abuse.

ActionAid's programme

AA Uganda works through Women's Protection Centres (WPCs) which provide a central point for GBV survivors to receive support. Women receive legal aid, counselling, medical support, temporary shelter and their cases are also referred to government agencies. Paralegals in every parish continue to provide legal aid and the local police support women in completing the relevant forms to report incidents of GBV and request protection. The paralegals and GBV coalitions refer cases and give out information about the shelters and other support. The first three pilot centres were opened in 2008; now there are 10 WPCS in 7 districts across Uganda.

What worked well?

- From 2012-2015, WPCs supported 9,482 women by providing legal aid, counselling, medical services and temporary shelter.
- Through providing a safe space, accessible information and access to a range of systems such as legal aid and psychotherapy, the WPCs offer GBV survivors a place to share their concerns and seek protection and justice.

What were the challenges?

- Findings from a PRRP conducted in 2014 with GBV survivors and other community members highlighted that WPCs were not accessible to many women who did not have the transport or financial means to visit them.
- The referral process for women was not always efficient, involving a lot of time and additional resource.
- It was also identified that in Kumi LRP the police would charge fees to complete the form that women need in order to access support. This causes further financial burden and lowers women's confidence in the support services available.

Lesson learnt

AA Uganda learnt that in order to increase community understanding of GBV issues and ensure that survivors access the services provided through WPCs, it needed to bring these services to the centre of the communities. AA Uganda decided to set up mobile aid clinics to run alongside the existing WPCs to reach more marginalised

women – providing direct support and interventions as well as ensuring community understanding of women’s rights.

Programme adaptation

A decision was made during 2015 planning for AA Uganda’s budget to be allocated to extend the WPC service to set-up mobile legal aid centres, and bring them to the communities so they would not have to travel so far.¹⁷ These legal aid clinics would run in various areas for several days at a time and would provide all the services provided by the WPCs. The clinics would deal with individual cases and run group sessions to help women learn their rights.

Instead of women being referred by others, the mobile clinics deal with cases on the spot with the technical support and expertise available on hand, for example from legal officers. In addition to reaching more women in the communities, AA Uganda and its partners were also able to provide a service where multiple activities could be provided to community members to resolve more issues.

Impact of the adaptation

The mobile clinic approach put discussions about gender and violence at the centre of the community. Community and local leaders have welcomed mobile legal aid clinics and requested that AA Uganda regularly organises these, as they increase understanding and awareness on handling GBV and support survivors. Mobile clinics have helped us to reach an extra 220 women in Kumi¹⁸, and another 315 women in Pallisa.¹⁹

An additional two mobile aid clinics were set up in Gulu district in April 2016, reaching 202 individuals including 126 females and 76 males.²⁰ ActionAid Uganda also targets males in the legal aid clinics to increase their awareness that GBV is a crime and change their attitudes. AA Uganda continues to work with these communities to ensure programme relevance to local needs.

Afghanistan: Including economic activities in reflect circles for greater retention and inclusivity of women

Afghan women identify education and illiteracy, a lack of job opportunities and domestic violence as the biggest problems facing them, according to the Asia Foundation's 2014 survey of the Afghan people.²¹ Women's levels of education and other opportunities vary across provinces. In Bamyan province, for example, only 6% of women were literate in 2007/08.

ActionAid's programme

AA Afghanistan works on women's empowerment in Bamyan, Jowzan and Balk provinces by creating Reflect Circles. These are safe spaces for women to meet and discuss issues that are relevant to them, learn to read and write and run businesses. Members set their own agenda and make their own decisions. The ultimate aim of the Circles is to bring about social change, including improving the lives of women, through women learning their rights and how to claim them.²²

What worked well?

- Improving women's reading, writing and arithmetic is a vehicle for further empowerment and welfare, and is highly valued by participants. For example, improved literacy enables women to read signage and aids their mobility.
- Women also reported that they feel more confident discussing household issues with husbands, children and parents.²³
- The use of participatory tools such as drawing maps of the village and identifying problems within the community worked well to raise awareness and generate problem solving skills amongst women. Participatory tools allow women to communicate their knowledge and experience without needing to be able to read and write, or even speak the same language.

What were the challenges?

- Reflect Circle membership was decreasing mainly due to challenges of livelihoods and poverty. In Jowzan province, this situation was aggravated following severe flooding in 2014. 117 members dropped-out from Jowzan Reflect Circles in 2014, and 100 members from Balkh and Bamyan. Women expressed their preference for working as day labourers to generate income for their family rather than participating in Reflect Circles.²⁴
- While Reflect Circles aim to target women who are living in poverty, evidence on whether they involved the most marginalised members of the community was inconclusive, according to an external evaluation conducted in 2014. The poorest women struggled to attend Reflect Circles because of their livelihood or unpaid care burden.

Lesson learnt

To improve targeting and retention of Circle members, AA Afghanistan needed to ensure that members can access a range of empowerment tools and livelihood opportunities through Reflect Circles. This would also ensure that Circles respond to the needs of the poorest members of the community on livelihoods support and economic empowerment.²⁵



Omina (18), Amina (19), Shukria (17), Bairam (65) and other women participate in the Reflect Action circle in Qezel Ayaq village, Balkh province. Credit: ActionAid

Programme adaptation

With support from AA Afghanistan, over 2014/2015 the Reflect Circle members developed three-year Community-Based Development activity plans for their villages. A total of 97 Community Development Activity plans were developed using participatory tools in Reflect Circles. Plans include livelihood support and literacy programmes to benefit the most marginalised women. In addition, poor and vulnerable Reflect Circle members were targeted to participate in livelihood generation activities through AA Afghanistan's and other organisations' existing project interventions.²⁶ 1,962 Reflect Circle members directly benefited from livelihood interventions, including handicrafts, seedling growing and other activities targeting the wider community.

For example, in Sherbeghan district in Jowzan province, six Community development activity plans were launched with the help of AA's partner, the Food Security Network. One priority activity was canal irrigation: 96 day labourers worked in exchange for food for 12 days to rehabilitate the water irrigation canal, which can irrigate 2,000 jeribs (4 km²) of agricultural land belonging to 740 farmers²⁷.

Impact of the adaptation

The number of Reflect Circle members increased from 6,032 in late 2014 to 6,527 in late 2015 (8% increase), corresponding to fewer drops out of Reflect Circle members and retention of existing members.²⁸ AA Afghanistan also integrated the learnings into new programme proposals.²⁹ While this addresses women's demand for livelihood support opportunities, it also raises questions about the balance between economic empowerment and other awareness raising activities in Reflect Circles. These considerations continue to be discussed in AA Afghanistan and with women.

Part 2

HRBA in action for lasting change in education, resilience and agriculture

ActionAid's 2012-2017 International Strategy *People's Action to End Poverty* includes Key Change Promises to work with people in the three areas of sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture (CRSA), education and resilience:

Key Change Promise 2

We will support marginal and smallholder farmers to secure direct support and policies from their government, and effective accountability of corporates, enabling them to gain a good living from **CRSA** improving food security.

Key Change Promise 5

We will ensure that girls and boys equally enjoy a **quality public education** that respects their rights, leveraging system-wide education reforms designed to improve equal opportunities for all.

Key Change Promise 7

We will build effective risk reduction and **resilience** systems and capacities in over 5,000 communities.

For each promise and for each country, ActionAid's HRBA is applied. The HRBA is based on four pillars: empowerment, campaigning, solidarity and alternatives.

- **Empowerment** is at the heart of our approach. Human rights can only be realised if people living in poverty have active agency.
- **Campaigning** creates and harnesses people's power around a demand, to achieve a change to the structural causes of poverty.
- **Solidarity** involves people and organisations sympathetic to the struggles of people living in poverty supporting and sustaining a movement for change, with people living in poverty taking the lead.
- **Alternatives** to dominant models of addressing poverty are actively explored to identify more effective practices.

When applied alongside long term development work, these pillars contribute to lasting social change.³⁰ While long-term impact is yet to materialise in some cases, such as on the resilience case studies, the lessons learnt and subsequent programme adaptations are made possible through a flexible approach which empowers people living in poverty and harnesses collective action.

Uganda: Adding value to crops to increase returns and improve livelihoods

In 2010, in the eastern Uganda region of Kapchorwa, the food security situation in Kapchorwa improved due to above normal rainfall from September 2009 to January 2010, which benefited both crops and livestock.³¹ Increased agricultural activities in the season provided labour for poor households that helped them increase their income.

ActionAid's programme

ActionAid trains women farmers on CRSA practices ranging from soil conservation, water resource management, use of native seeds, use of composite manure and herbicides and non-use of chemical fertilisers. In 2011, AA Uganda supported 360 women from the Kapchorwa region, previously trained in CRSA practices, to acquire land where they planted seeds for vegetables. In 2015, AA Uganda trained 3,385 farmers in CRSA practices.

What worked well?

- Women are now successfully producing and selling vegetables in the local market since 2011/12 contributing to their economic empowerment. Women farmers were trained on irrigation methods to improve harvests. This provided them with ample amounts of vegetables for the community and to sell.

What were the challenges?

- In 2013, the female farmers had a bumper harvest which led to an increase in produce, exceeding the needs of the local markets. This resulted in an economic loss for the women as they were unable to sell the surplus produce in the oversaturated market. Women raised this issue during 2013/2014 monitoring visits to Kapchorwa, and explained the need to have processes that bring about more profit and 'value addition'.

Lesson learnt

AA Uganda learnt that programmes on CRSA in Kapchorwa need to build in alternative ways of generating income than crop production to ensure livelihoods can be sustainably and optimally enhanced. Different methods such as drying vegetables to allow farmers to derive maximum value from seasonal changing crop yields was identified by the farmers as a way to allow them to preserve and sell the surplus fruits and vegetables.

Programme adaptation

As part of the planning process, a decision was made to support the women's cooperative with a 'solar drier' to dry vegetables, allowing the community to conserve crop yields. This 'solar drier' solution allows produce to last longer than fresh items and reduce the waste both in produce and lost income. This was incorporated in the LRP plan³² and an appropriate budget was allocated³³ to implement this. A drier was purchased in January 2015 and 100 women (in Kapchorwa region) had access to this drier. They began drying tomatoes, cabbage and carrots.

Impact of the adaptation

The solar drier added considerable value to the female farmer's produce. The community members have yielded a higher income by selling more produce at better prices. For example a kilo of fresh carrots was originally sold for around 2,000 Ugandan Shillings but once it was dried, community members were able to sell it for 8,000 Uganda Shillings instead, an impressive 300% increase.

From farmers producing crops and selling on the local market, the women became successful entrepreneurs. ActionAid has supported the women to sell their dried vegetables to two food companies, BEEFA foods & Victoria seeds. These companies continue to purchase from these women today.



Female farmers Hellen Chebet, Eunice Kurong, Irene Mwnaga and Beatrice Sababu showcase their dried chickpeas and cabbages in Kwosir Sub-county, Kapchorwa District, January 2015.

Pakistan: Securing access to education through national solidarity and campaigning

Yazman is located in Bahawalpur District, in the Southern Punjab region, a gateway to the Cholistan Desert. Yazman is characterised by a high level of poverty where communities lack basic facilities such as adequate shelter, food, health and education. Quality of education is the main challenge for the education system in addition to universal enrolment and gender parity.³⁴ In 2012, 5.4 million children were out of school.³⁵ According to the Pakistan Education District Rankings, District Bahawalpur's education score is below the national average (70) and below the provincial average (76).³⁶

ActionAid's programme

AA Pakistan and its partner Al-Sadiq Desert Welfare Organization have been advocating for increased education budgets. AA Pakistan's approach is to empower the community to demand for quality education, including the elected Parent Teacher Councils, and together they can advocate for resources from the government.³⁷ Activities include awareness-raising on 10 core education rights, using creative approaches such as theatre and puppetry for children, tracking budgets and highlighting gaps in provisions and materials in schools.

What worked well?

- AA Pakistan and its partner were able to reach 700 children, 160 parents and 30 teachers on the rights outlined in the PRS framework. Trained participants became more aware of their right to education and the government's duty to provide free quality education to all children.
- Training around accountability processes, leadership and community skills increased community understanding of how local government and other official agencies can be held accountable to provide quality education. Press talks, publications, camp school activities and rallies were organised which caught the attention of the Chief Minister of Punjab.

What were the challenges?

- The reluctance of the Education Department to engage in discussion on legislation on free and compulsory education and a growing trend towards privatisation of the education sector were major challenges.
- In 2012, the Cholistan Development Authority informed local partners and communities that funding for schools would be coming to an end.³⁸ As a result, 75 Literate Cholistan Project schools were to be shut down in 2014, affecting 5,500 children in the district. AA Pakistan was only working in a few villages and was unable to build a national level movement around education issues.

Lesson learnt

AA Pakistan identified the need to increase its outreach and build a national movement to gain political influence on education issues. To keep the 75 schools in Cholistan open requires solidarity across the country. AA Pakistan learnt that they must work together with local communities, NGOs and other organisations and use a mixture of lobbying and campaigning methodologies in order to advance government legislation on education as a right, not a commodity.

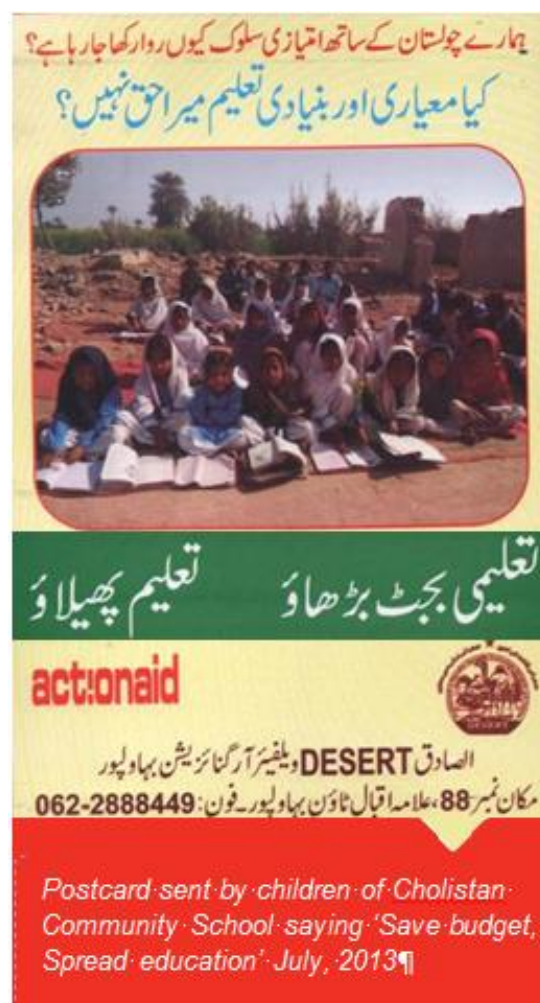
Programme adaptation

To keep the 75 Cholistan schools running, AA Pakistan and its partner scaled up work on campaigning and lobbying government through communities, working jointly with other community groups, NGOs, education networks and local councils.

The key strategy was to create a network of local and national solidarity. The local Reflect Action groups joined a network called the District Action network, and used media outlets and the wider public to reach parliamentary and other government officials that were not easily reachable by the local community (parents, teachers and children). They ran press conferences and a mass media campaign³⁹ involving key parliament members, community leaders and children sending over 1000 postcards to political affiliates, government officials and the media for the restoration of their schools.

Impact of the adaptation

AA Pakistan's contribution to the network was through its strong links to communities and experience in promoting education as a right through the PRS framework. Through strategically working with policy makers, they have been successful in getting legislation passed in three provinces, and in getting the government to increase the education budgets from 5% to 7% in two districts of the Punjab Province.⁴⁰ Additionally, through the joint mass media campaign, the Government of Punjab reinstated 75 community schools, increasing enrolment in these Schools from 5500 to 6443 children (a 17% increase)⁴¹. Of these 75 schools, 20 were upgraded from primary to middle schools, and 150 teachers were kept in post and their salaries were increased from 2,500-5,000/-Rs to 11,000-12,000/-Rs (a 240% increase).



Afghanistan: Building government ownership for resilience: from provincial to the national level

Bamyan province is located in the central highlands of Afghanistan, and is vulnerable to floods, earthquakes, landslides and avalanches, and extreme temperatures. Balkh province, further north, is highly vulnerable to flood and drought.⁴² Government intervention on disasters in these provinces is generally limited to a first aid response, rather than building resilience and preparing communities.⁴³

ActionAid's programme

AA Afghanistan works to build the resilience of communities through Disaster Risk Reduction Committees (DRRC). In 2015, AA had already established 168 DRRCs in Bamyan and 32 in Balkh. DRRCs aim to reduce communities' vulnerability to disasters by helping communities to develop Community Based Development Plans. Participatory vulnerability analysis is used to identify the vulnerability of their community to disaster. There is good collaboration between DRRCs and government structures at local level, particularly with the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), for example in forming DRRCs.

What worked well?

- Through regular collaboration with the government AA Afghanistan was able to raise their awareness of the importance of resilience.⁴⁴ For example, DRRC collaboration and advocacy in Bamyan contributed to ANDMA altering the provincial disaster management policy to better represent the provincial disaster context.⁴⁵ Forty Community Based Development Plans have been endorsed by the government, and government has started allocating resources for their implementation.⁴⁶
- Local advocacy initiatives can prove successful in securing small gains to build resilience. In Shaikh village in Balkh, erosion along the canal led to overflowing of the Amu river, threatening the water supply to local communities. The DRRC and elders of Shaikh village reported this to AA Afghanistan's partner, the Organisation for Human Welfare. Following advocacy efforts



Khaliq Agha, General Representative of Toqai, stands by the Shaik village canal under threat from the Amu river, Balkh province. Credit: ActionAid Afghanistan

targeting ANDMA Balkh, 8,000 sacks and 1,000kg of string were secured to build bio-dykes. The bio-dykes did not prevent inundation, so AA Afghanistan and the DRRC identified alternative adaptation measures, including vegetation planting on the bank.⁴⁷

What were the challenges?

- The lack of resources at local level challenged the sustainability of resilience initiatives. Both DRRCs and ANDMA faced challenges in terms of equipment and resources and required support to purchase materials and equipment.
- Although AA Afghanistan noticed positive changes in government's understanding of resilience and preparedness, these changes are not yet reflected in their policies which remain focused on emergency response. A review undertaken by 100 women revealed that local policy did not take community concerns into considerations and local context was lacking.⁴⁸

Lesson learnt

The experience in Balkh shows that local level advocacy will not be enough to create a resilient society. AA Afghanistan provided the local government with a network of community structures which it could work with. However, the local ANDMA did not have the means and mandate to systematically provide and resource sustainable solutions. AA Afghanistan has realised the need to advocate at national level to create a joined up approach to resilience, call for policy changes, advocate for increased resources and institutionalise the collaboration between DRRCs and ANDMA.

Programme adaptation

AA Afghanistan developed advocacy work targeting the national government. Linking local to national level issues was identified as a key strategy. The recommendations from the Bamyan review were used to input into the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy in 2015. These recommendations include: the need to build the capacity of vulnerable people to take local action while engaging them in the identification of vulnerabilities and resilience-building initiatives. In partnership with UN Agencies and other organisations, AA Afghanistan will launch a joint advocacy program in 2017 to influence government to own DRRCs as a community based disaster resilience mechanism.

Impact of the adaptation

Linking local level advocacy initiatives to national level policy advocacy is now a key part of AA Afghanistan's 2016/2017 plan.⁴⁹ If the strategy is successful, it is expected that government will allocate financial and human resources for DRRCs and adopt community based disaster risk reduction approach in future policy and strategy.^{50 51}

Ethiopia: Resilience building mainstreaming

Ethiopia's rural population is vulnerable to hazards such as drought, flood, fires, landslides and hailstorm.⁵² There is also risk of epidemics, livestock diseases and pests destroying crops. Since 2015, El Niño phenomenon has caused severe drought across Ethiopia with an estimated total of 15 million people affected by the growing crisis and in need of emergency relief.

ActionAid's programme

AA Ethiopia assists vulnerable people to build resilience, and supports people affected by disaster and economic shocks in restoring their livelihoods. AA is training Kebele committees in early warning systems, as well as vulnerability assessment and effective coordination.⁵³ ActionAid Ethiopia works to increase the resilience of people and improve livelihoods in the community through its programming on Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture, resilience and humanitarian response.

What worked well?

- AA's support on irrigation and water proved successful in improving farmer's food security. Integrated watershed management approaches (including water conservation, irrigation and forage management) helped improve people's income in one resilience building pilot in Ankober. In 2015, AA Ethiopia provided support to over 15 small scale irrigation projects.
- Providing support through cooperatives and users' associations was an effective approach. AA supported two irrigation water users' association cooperatives in Donbe sale and Garsegarda kebele (Kemba LRP) to purchase farm tools/materials and organise capacity building training. As a result 467 households improved the productivity of their cereal and vegetable crops.
- In Kombolcha LRP, communities started shifting from annual crops to perennial crops as an adaptation to drought. Income from the sale of perennial crops is used to purchase staple foods for household consumption.

What were the challenges?

- The poorest rural populations AA Ethiopia works with had not been included in long term development plans, and as such were unable to withstand the severity of El Niño. AA's emergency response reached nearly 51,450 people affected by the El Niño drought in Ankober, Girar Jarso, Janamora, Seru and Kombolcha LRPs.⁵⁴
- Through AA's Resilience pilot, AA Ethiopia and the communities they work with gained a better understanding of the direct and indirect causes of communities' vulnerability. These new insights highlighted how AA Ethiopia's work on resilience building of people living in poverty in Ethiopia needed to be better integrated across programmes and communities.

Lesson learnt

Through research, consultation with the community and the international Resilience pilot, ActionAid Ethiopia learnt that it needed to develop and implement a more effective integrated resilience building programme. This programme needs to cut across ActionAid's strategic objectives including livelihoods, education and health, whilst at the same time working at different levels: individual, household, community and national.⁵⁵

Programme adaptation

Learning was incorporated into 2016/17 plans. AA Ethiopia will work to ensure mainstreaming of resilience building in all programme work in disaster prone areas and create a clear understanding of AA's resilience building framework.⁵⁶

Learning is being used for emergency assessment approaches, particularly in response to El Niño, to ensure the response builds on existing resilience and contributes to it by integrating long term resilience interventions. Given the frequency and impact of droughts, AA Ethiopia focuses on early warning systems, compiling and sharing bi-monthly early warning reports.⁵⁷ The resilience team is also increasingly coordinating its work with other teams in Ethiopia in order to promote integrated resilience programming.



AAE Emergency Assessment team discussing with key informants in Janamora District

Impact of the adaptation

Developing integrated resilience programming is expected to lead to a more strategic engagement with communities to withstand the shocks and stresses they are facing. Although it is still early to assess the impact of AA Ethiopia's different way of working on resilience, it is already evident that the information from early warning systems is feeding into community planning and informs better programme design. Additionally, the understanding of integrated resilience programming has increased among programme staff.

In 2016, AA Ethiopia is pursuing funding opportunities to fund integrated resilience programming while strengthening the understanding of AA's resilience framework amongst key stakeholders. This work will require appropriate funding from donors willing to support projects responding to hazards outside of silos.

CONCLUSION

The eight case studies in this booklet highlight how, through application of HRBA, ActionAid and partners across five countries have adapted programmes to improve programme impact, working with people living in poverty to claim their rights and challenge GBV. People living in poverty are at the centre of AA's approach. AA's and our partners' rootedness in communities, and the use of participatory monitoring and planning methods, enable the integration of local people's knowledge and ideas into AA's plans and strategies.

Programme adaptation was also made possible through flexible funding and agile management. The flexibility of donors and of funding permitted countries to test new approaches, and created space for reflection to address complex challenges. Ultimately, this flexibility allowed AA to improve the relevance and impact of the interventions, enhancing programme effectiveness and value for money.

Some overall lessons can be drawn from the 8 case studies:

- Empowering and raising consciousness on issues amongst the people that face the issues is the root of a process of change. Innovative solutions often come from rights holders, both in terms of identifying issues and coming up with a practical, alternative strategy to address the issue.
- Challenging social norms that entrench GBV requires multi-stakeholder involvement and a collaborative approach. Responding to commonly held beliefs and cultural attitudes is important in changing behaviours and practices. Bringing discussions about GBV to the centre of communities helps to generate public debate and deliberation about GBV, which is essential for challenging norms. Involving stakeholders across the community, including men in leadership position, can promote positive alternatives to harmful behaviours.⁵⁸
- Connecting people and their struggles in solidarity can raise people's voices and their demands from local to national levels. Collective action and campaigning are fundamental to scale up impact and achieve sustainable change for farmers, schoolchildren and other rights-holders. Supporting people living in poverty to claim their rights through demanding accountability from government is a long-term strategy which may not produce immediate results, but can produce lasting change.

ActionAid is preparing to enter a new strategic period, as the 2012-2017 International Strategy *People's Action to End Poverty* comes to an end. Learning from country experiences across the AA Federation is promoted through the International Platforms, which draws learning from existing structures such as Communities of Practice, Task Forces and Working Groups in order to streamline efforts and identify good practice.¹ This learning is already shaping the next strategy, putting at the centre communities' views and country experiences.

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