



# **Cultivating rural women's economic empowerment:**

**Exploring interlinkages between Unpaid Care  
Work, agroecology, and violence against women  
and girls in South Asia**

Experiences from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan



## **Unpaid Care Work**

Unpaid Care Work (UCW) refers to all labour activities that sustain human life such as caring for family members, cooking, housework and collecting water.<sup>1</sup> Worldwide, the vast majority of Unpaid Care Work is completed by women and girls for free. Unpaid Care Work is not reflected in national statistics or economic analyses, despite its centrality to our day-to-day well-being. It is perceived as less valuable than paid work and is ignored and not considered “work” even by the women and men who engage in and benefit directly from these activities. The disproportionate burden of Unpaid Care Work ultimately limits women’s available time to practise sustainable agriculture, access markets, study and participate in political activities.

## **Agroecology**

Agroecology is a rights-based approach to sustainable agriculture that promotes food sovereignty and women’s empowerment through culturally and ecologically appropriate practices. Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA) is an agroecology initiative that ActionAid and partners have developed based on the design and implementation of site-specific adaptation strategies aimed at increasing farm productivity, reducing vulnerabilities and increasing the resilience of smallholder production systems.<sup>2</sup>

## **Violence against women and girls**

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) refers to a violation of human rights through gender-based violence that causes physical, psychological, sexual or economic suffering. VAWG negatively affects women’s well-being and societal participation. Economic inequality directly affects women’s material realities through perpetuating women’s socioeconomic, legal and political marginalisation.<sup>3</sup>

## **Women’s economic empowerment**

Women’s economic empowerment (WEE) is the capacity of women to take control over their economic lives, participate in, contribute to and benefit from economic activities. Economic empowerment increases women’s access to markets, jobs, resources and financial services in a manner that fully respects their inputs and human rights.

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FRONT COVER: Nasima Begum, 50, of Gaibandha district is regularly earning money from her vegetable garden. She said, “Once we could not eat rice as a meal. We had to take bread instead. Now my situation has been changed. Now I can feed my family with rice every day.”

PHOTO: NOORE JANNAT PROMA/ACTIONAID

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1. UN Women (2018). Glossary: Unpaid Care Work. Available at: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php>
2. ActionAid (2018). Sustainable Agriculture. Available at: <http://powerproject.actionaid.org/sustainable-agriculture/>
3. UN Women (2018). Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>

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# Executive summary

**ActionAid’s POWER Project (Promoting Opportunities for Women’s Empowerment and Rights) aims to increase women’s economic empowerment. It does this by addressing issues related to the recognition, reduction and redistribution of women’s Unpaid Care Work. It also examines how these issues interact with climate resilient sustainable agriculture, access to markets and violence against women and girls. This report explores the specific interlinkages between women’s Unpaid Care Work and agroecology in South Asia, drawing on case studies and experiences from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.**

Unpaid Care Work (UCW) refers to labour activities completed within the household and community such as caregiving, cooking, housework and collecting water. Overall, women’s Unpaid Care Work in farming communities across South Asia is not well-understood, monitored or recognised. This report explores this knowledge gap and highlights the impacts of climate change on women’s time use and agricultural livelihoods. It also examines field lessons from ActionAid’s POWER Project, which addresses the burden of Unpaid Care Work through an integrated development approach.

ActionAid collected daily time diaries from over 1,843 rural women and 500 men in Pakistan and Bangladesh in 2017 to better understand time use and Unpaid Care Work. Results of this study deliver solid evidence demonstrating that women are responsible for the majority of all forms of Unpaid Care Work. In Bangladesh, women complete nearly eight hours of Unpaid Care Work each day, while in Pakistan women spend over 10 hours daily on Unpaid Care Work.

These disproportionate labour burdens between men and women generate “time poverty” or lack of free time that women can spend on paid labour activities, education or leisure.<sup>4,5</sup> Time poverty is not the only issue for women engaged in Unpaid Care Work. They are also affected by the intensity, drudgery, simultaneity and seasonality of the labour.<sup>6</sup> Women’s responsibilities for Unpaid Care Work limit their schedule, thereby reducing their access to decent paid work.<sup>7</sup> Time poverty gradually erodes women’s access to and control over resources and contributes to diverse forms of violence against women and girls.

Key findings of this report build upon ActionAid’s positive experiences with the POWER Project to demonstrate how to address Unpaid Care Work through the recognition, redistribution and reduction of women’s work activities.<sup>8,9</sup> Addressing Unpaid Care Work is fundamental to women’s enjoyment of their human rights and can also free women to pursue transformative economic, social and political activities.

4. FAO (2015). Running out of time: the reduction of the women’s work burden in agricultural production.

5. Hirway, I. (2015). Unpaid Work and the Economy: Linkages and Their Implications. Levy Economics Institute, Working Paper No. 83.

6. Key stakeholder interviews

7. ActionAid (2016). Not ready, still waiting: Governments have a long way to go in preparing to address gender inequality and the SDGs. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/not\\_ready\\_still\\_waiting.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/not_ready_still_waiting.pdf)

8. ActionAid (2013). Making Care Visible: Women’s Unpaid Care Work in Nepal, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making\\_care\\_visible.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making_care_visible.pdf)

9. Defined by Diana Elson included in ‘Falth, A., & Blackden, M., ‘Unpaid Care Work’ Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction, Issue 1. UNDP, New York, USA, 2009.

Recognition does not refer to direct wage payment for Unpaid Care Work, but rather implies greater visibility and respect for all forms of women's labour. It is not reflected in national statistics or economic analyses, despite its centrality to our day-to-day well-being. Unpaid Care Work is perceived to be less valuable than paid work and it is ignored and not considered "work" even by the women and men who engage in and benefit directly from these activities. Women's agricultural work is so systemically undervalued that they are often not recognised as farmers, which results in their exclusion from agricultural interventions and policies.<sup>10</sup>

Reduction of Unpaid Care Work can be achieved through minimising and decreasing women's labour burdens. This can be achieved through a variety of time-saving interventions such as day care centres and gender-responsive public infrastructure. Unpaid Care Work is also successfully reduced through agroecological practices that save time, build climate resilience and increase agricultural productivity. However, women only have time to practice agroecology and benefit from the resultant gains if their Unpaid Care Work is addressed.

Unpaid Care Work can also be redistributed between women and men through challenging social norms. While participating in the POWER Project, men have become more aware of the unequal burden of women's Unpaid Care Work, which has led them to take greater responsibility for tasks such as cooking and cleaning. Narmaya, a farmer from Nepal, explains her experiences with ActionAid's Unpaid Care Work programme. "Income generation through farming has been possible as household tasks are completed in half the time by working together."<sup>11</sup> Governments and organisations can also redistribute women's Unpaid Care Work through interventions and social services such as effective public healthcare, building infrastructure for water access or providing disaster relief interventions.

South Asian countries are extremely vulnerable to climate change, however very little is understood about the impacts of climate change on women's Unpaid Care Work. During focus groups, women from case studies said that climate change drastically increases Unpaid Care Work because resources such as water, fuel and firewood become scarce and require more time to collect.<sup>12</sup> Climate change further reduces women's available time and resilience to cope with hazards and the impacts of disasters.<sup>13</sup>

ActionAid's agroecology initiative, Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture, provides an excellent opportunity for women farmers to move forward from the constraints they face. Agroecological practices promote sustainability, enhance a farm system's resilience to climate change and reduce the risk of adverse impacts from disasters.<sup>13</sup> Agroecology also increases household food security while promoting local ecosystem health through protecting soil and water.<sup>14,15</sup> As demonstrated in the findings of this report, women from ActionAid focus groups said that Unpaid Care Work reduces their available time to spend on economic activities such as agroecology that build resilience to climate change.<sup>16</sup>

10. Key stakeholder interviews

11. ActionAid (2016). Stories of Change: Strengthening Women's Cooperatives in Nepal. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/stories\\_of\\_change\\_-\\_womens\\_collectives.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/stories_of_change_-_womens_collectives.pdf)

12. ActionAid Focus Groups Bangladesh and Pakistan, December 2017

13. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) (2009). *Agriculture at a crossroads: synthesis report*. Island, Washington, D.C., USA.

14. Ibid

15. Altieri, M.A., Nicholls, C.I., Henao, A. (2015). Agroecology and the design of climate change-resilient farming systems. *Agronomy and Sustainable Development*, 35, pp. 869-890.

16. ActionAid Focus Groups Bangladesh and Pakistan 2017

Women’s access to and control over critical resources such as land and markets must also be ensured for economic empowerment and the viability of agricultural production. However, throughout South Asia gender-responsive public services such as childcare facilities and healthcare services remain limited due to minimal representation of women within decision making bodies among other factors. Limited access to markets reduces women’s access to income generating opportunities and results in violence against women and girls in public spaces. There is substantial evidence from the case studies that women’s capacity to generate income leads to greater valuation within society and their self-confidence grows; in turn, violence against women is likely to diminish.<sup>17</sup>

Achieving these goals requires broad collective action at all levels. In a major advancement, the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals ensure that Unpaid Care Work is anchored in international policy frameworks because Goal 5.4 explicitly prioritises Unpaid Care Work,

*“Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.”<sup>18</sup>*

Addressing women’s Unpaid Care Work is not enough to create gender equality. Power relations within decision making must also be transformed to include women’s comprehensive participation and representation at all levels.<sup>19</sup> Increased access to resources does not automatically lead to control of resources; similarly, increasing women’s time does not necessarily translate to their power to transform their conditions.<sup>20</sup> Decision making must therefore include women’s representation and deliberative participation at all levels to ensure that gender equality is realised. Above all, women’s Unpaid Care Work must be addressed to safeguard women’s basic human rights, as well as women’s rights to sustainable, resilient and secure futures.



Members of Shankar Women Groups of Gaibandha, Bangladesh. They are preparing the land for vegetable garden following the techniques learned from the trainings. PHOTO: NOORE JANNAT PROMA/ACTIONAID

17. Ibid  
 18. ActionAid (2018). Policy Brief: Incorporation of Women’s Economic Empowerment and Unpaid Care Work into regional policies: South Asia. A case for centering Unpaid Care Work within Regional frameworks. Available at: [http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Asia-policy-brief-online\\_FINAL.pdf](http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Asia-policy-brief-online_FINAL.pdf)  
 19. UN Women (2014). Gender Trade and Green Growth. Gender Dimensions of Regional Cooperation and Integration in South Asia.  
 20. Ibid

## Key recommendations

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1. Address women's Unpaid Care Work through recognition, reduction and redistribution.
2. Ensure representation and recognition of women farmers at all levels.
3. Promote agroecology for climate resilience and women's economic empowerment.
4. Empower women farmers by ensuring secure access to and control over land, resources, services, information and opportunities to mobilise.
5. Governments must invest in gender-responsive public services and time-saving agricultural technologies.
6. Protect women farmers and all rural women: enforce the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
7. Support women's economic empowerment through collection of gender disaggregated data and macroeconomic reforms that recognise Unpaid Care Work.
8. Develop integrated policies and programs that address the interlinkages between Unpaid Care Work and agroecology.
9. Ratified policies must be sufficiently funded and monitored for successful implementation.

# 1. Introduction and approach to the study

## 1.1 Introduction

South Asian countries host a wide variety of rich and diverse agroecosystems cultivated by millions of farmers and pastoralists.<sup>21</sup> In the past decade South Asian countries have been hit by more frequent and unpredictable extreme events including severe floods, droughts, cyclones, tsunamis and earthquakes.<sup>22</sup>

Adverse impacts of climate shocks affect rural women disproportionately: worldwide, natural disasters are slightly more likely to be fatal for women, and women are also more likely to suffer from food insecurity than men in every region of the world.<sup>23,24</sup> Women are not more vulnerable to climate change impacts than men because of biological differences, but rather due to social inequalities such as unequal burden of Unpaid Care Work, unequal legal rights, unequal political participation and less access to education.<sup>25,26</sup>

Livelihoods are the most important determinant of climate vulnerability and resilience.<sup>27</sup> Marginalised and poor small-scale farmers, pastoralists, forest-dependent communities and fisherfolk, who do not have alternative livelihood options, are most acutely affected by climate change impacts.<sup>28,29</sup> Extreme climate events directly impact agricultural livelihoods: disasters can result in a variety of impacts including unemployment and loss of wages among farmers, land degradation, crop damage/failure, financial crisis and infrastructure damage.<sup>30</sup> Women and girls without secure tenure to land, and those from resource-poor farming communities, are therefore extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Women's vulnerability also increases if they are poor, widowed, orphaned, disabled, low-caste or from a marginalised ethnic group.

Women's livelihoods are constrained due to patriarchal social norms. These often require women to remain within the confines of their household with limited access to public spheres in order to perform Unpaid Care Work such as feeding, caring, nurturing and providing for their family. Women's labour is often not considered valuable because it does not directly generate economic revenue, although economic activity would be impossible without Unpaid Care Work: care is at the base of any society, at the base of human life.

The demands of women's Unpaid Care Work require substantial time, undermining women's economic opportunities and market access which reduces women's secure access to and control over critical resources.

21. ActionAid. (2016). Climate Change Knows No Borders: An Analysis of Climate-Induced Migration, Protection Gaps and the Need for Solidarity in South Asia. <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/climate-change-knows-no-borders>

22. FAO (2015). The Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security.

23. FAO (2011). The Role of Women in Agriculture: ESA Working Paper No. 11-02.

24. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2017). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. Building resilience for peace and food security. Rome, FAO.

25. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAAKSTD) (2009). *Agriculture at a crossroads: synthesis report*. Island, Washington, D.C., USA

26. Nelson, V., Meadows, K., Cannon, T., Morton, M., & Martin, A. (2002). Uncertain predictions, invisible impacts, and the need to mainstream gender in climate change adaptations. *Gender & Development*, 10:2, pp. 51-59.

27. Thomas, D. and Twyman, C. (2005). Equity and justice in climate change adaptation amongst natural-resource-dependent societies. *Global Environmental Change*, 15, pp. 115-124.

28. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAAKSTD) (2009). *Agriculture at a crossroads: synthesis report*. Island, Washington, D.C., USA

29. Paavola, J., and Adger, N. (2006). Fair adaptation to climate change. *Ecological Economics*, 56, pp. 594-609.

30. FAO (2015). The Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security.

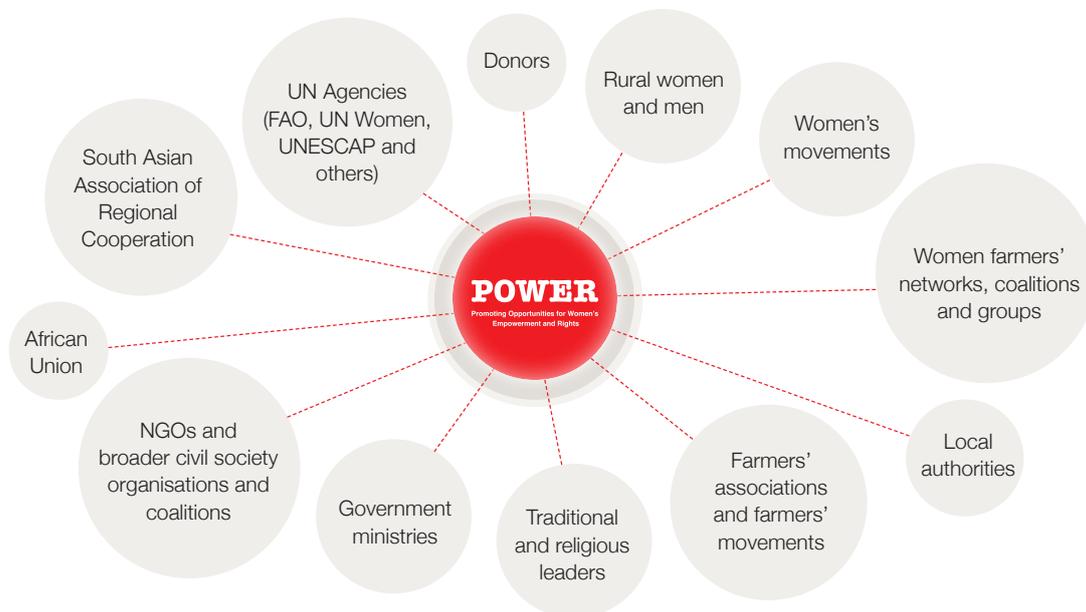
Ultimately, this can also reduce women's capacity to cope with the impacts of disasters and extreme climate events.<sup>31</sup> Women and girls are directly affected by inequalities and discrimination inter- and intra-generationally.<sup>32</sup> Climate change therefore poses a significant challenge, not only for local and global food security, but also for women's rights and empowerment.<sup>33</sup>

## 1.2 The POWER Project

ActionAid's POWER project (Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights) is a five-year programme implemented in Bangladesh, Ghana, Pakistan and Rwanda, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. The POWER Project works closely with local partnerships and engages with 21,000 rural women and 6,000 men to mobilise and raise awareness of the rights of women farmers and caregivers.

The POWER Project uses an intersectional approach through combining three mutually reinforcing thematic areas: addressing Unpaid Care Work, promoting agroecology, and increasing women's economic empowerment. These objectives are achieved through working to increase the recognition, redistribution and reduction (the three Rs) of women's Unpaid Care Work.<sup>34,35</sup> The POWER Project works with rural women who are primarily smallholder farmers and agri-processors, using agroecology as a tool to improve women's livelihoods. This integrated approach increases women's overall empowerment and control of resources, reducing many forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.<sup>36</sup>

**Figure 1:** The POWER Project partners<sup>37</sup>



31. FAO (2015). The Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security

32. Asian Development Bank (2013). Gender Equality and Food Security: Women's Empowerment as a Tool Against Hunger. Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2013.

33. Altieri, M.A., Nicholls, C.I. (2017). The adaptation and mitigation potential of traditional agriculture in a changing climate. *Climatic Change*, 140(33), pp. 33-45.

34. ActionAid (2013). Making Care Visible: Women's unpaid care work in Nepal, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making\\_care\\_visible.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making_care_visible.pdf)

35. Defined by Diana Elson included in 'Falth, A., & Blackden, M., 'Unpaid Care Work' Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction, Issue 1. UNDP, New York, USA, 2009.

36. ActionAid. The Power Project – Women's Economic Empowerment: An Integrated Approach. Available at: <http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/POWER-flyer.pdf>

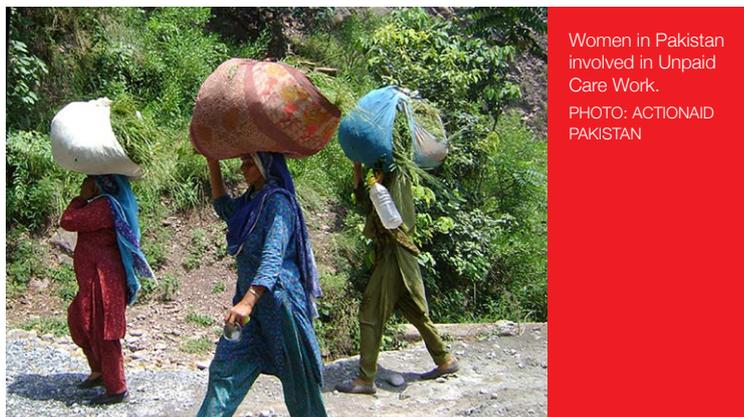
37. Ibid

### 1.3 Agroecology: towards climate resilient sustainable agriculture

Agroecology is a rights-based approach to sustainable agriculture that promotes food sovereignty and women's empowerment through culturally and ecologically appropriate choices and practices. Conventional agricultural production systems do not sufficiently address economic, social or environmental dimensions of sustainability.<sup>38</sup> Agroecological farming approaches apply scientific ecological concepts to produce food through working in concert with the environment.<sup>39</sup> Transformation of food production systems towards more sustainable approaches requires more than technical or agronomic solutions. As such, agroecology and food sovereignty movements advocate for intersectional human rights including social, political and resource rights.<sup>40</sup>

**Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA)** is an agroecology initiative developed by ActionAid and its partners that puts women at its centre through applying the principles of ActionAid's **Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)** to development.<sup>41</sup> CRSA initiatives address several pillars: gender equality, social conservation, sustainable water management, agro-biodiversity preservation, livelihood diversification, product processing and market access, and supporting farmers' organisations (see Figure 2).<sup>42</sup>

CRSA uses participatory assessment to design climate adaptation strategies that are site-specific and grounded in the needs of local farmers and communities.<sup>43</sup> Participatory assessment is also used to identify key local disaster risks faced by rural communities in order to minimise vulnerability to climate disasters. Additionally, the CRSA approach addresses the challenges of women's Unpaid Care Work and climate change impacts that limit sustainable productivity and women's economic empowerment.<sup>44</sup> **ActionAid works closely with resource-poor communities across the world to build resilience to climate shocks and stressors through focusing on women's rights and leadership in disaster risk reduction.**<sup>45</sup>



Women in Pakistan involved in Unpaid Care Work.  
PHOTO: ACTIONAID PAKISTAN

38. FAO (2014). Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition. Proceedings of the FAO International Symposium. 18-19 September, 2014. Rome, Italy. Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services in Agricultural Production Systems.

39. ActionAid (2016). Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture Handbook. <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/climate-resilient-sustainable-agriculture-handbook>

40. Walsh-Dille, M., Wolford, W., and McCarthy, J. (2016). Rights for resilience: food sovereignty, power, and resilience in development practice. *Ecology and Society*, 21(1):11.

41. ActionAid (2010). Human Rights Based Approach to Development. Available at: <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/actionaids-human-rights-based-approach-hrba-resource-book>

42. ActionAid (2016). Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture Handbook. <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/climate-resilient-sustainable-agriculture-handbook>

43. Ibid

44. Ibid

45. ActionAid (2017). Women's leadership in resilience: Eight inspiring case studies from Africa and Asia. Available at: <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/womens-leadership-resilience>

**Figure 2: ActionAid’s Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture approach**

Four main approaches:

- 1** Conducting participatory appraisals to identify local potentials and technical challenges
- 2** Identifying, documenting, testing and diffusion of local knowledge/alternative practices and encouraging local innovation
- 3** Promoting sustainability through appropriate agricultural research and extension services based on technologies that reduce dependence on external inputs and agro-chemicals, help adapt to climate change, build on and reinforce local knowledge
- 4** Empowering farming communities to promote sustainable agriculture through local, national and global campaigning actions for policy and budgetary changes in favour of smallholders

With a particular focus on the following seven pillars:



## 1.4 Methods

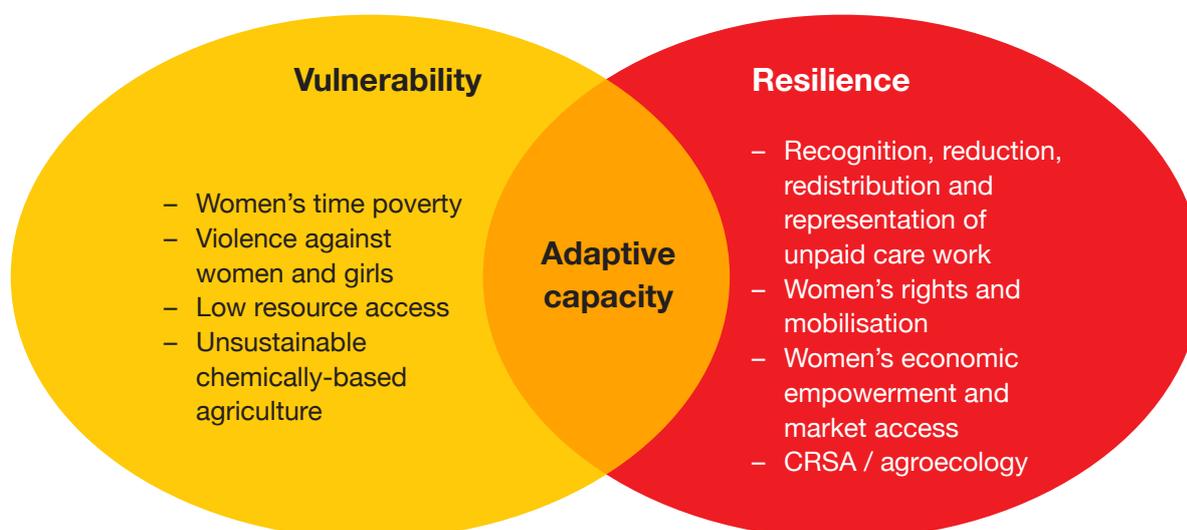
In order to explore the intersections between agroecological practices that promote climate resilience, sustainable agriculture and women’s Unpaid Care Work, comparative case study research was developed by ActionAid and its partners with rural women in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan using participatory action research. We adopted ActionAid’s research signature and human rights-based approach to research in combination with the framework of adaptive capacity.

Adaptive capacity refers to the ability of a system to adapt to climate change.<sup>46</sup> The ability of a community to successfully adapt to extreme events is influenced by numerous factors such as gender, literacy levels, livelihood and secure access to and control over resources.<sup>47,48</sup> Adaptive capacity is built through proactively reducing vulnerability while increasing social and ecological resilience.

46. Chaffin, B. C., H. Gosnell, and B. A. Cosens. (2014). A decade of adaptive governance scholarship: synthesis and future directions. *Ecology and Society*, 19(3), pp. 56.

47. IPCC (2014): Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 151 pp.

48. Béné, C., Newsham, A.J., Davies, W., Ulriches, M., and Godfrey-Wood, R.G. (2014). Review Article: Resilience, Poverty, and Development. *Journal of International Development*, 26, pp. 598-623.

**Figure 3:** POWER project builds women's adaptive capacity<sup>49</sup>

To investigate these topics, we listened to ActionAid's webinars and reviewed relevant literature, documents and policies. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants including aid workers, researchers, activists and policy makers from national and international organisations. In addition, focus groups were conducted with rural women from Bangladesh and Pakistan to explore emergent themes. Snowball and purposive sampling was used to identify respondents and data was recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically.

Quantitative analysis was completed through use of time diary datasets. A time diary is a tool that captures the daily activities of women and men. Time diaries increase the visibility of unpaid and unrecognised work and inspire reflection among women and men about unpaid work gender inequities. ActionAid collected time diary data with a total of 2,343 respondents comprising 1,843 women and 500 men in Pakistan and Bangladesh between 2016 and 2017. In Pakistan, time diaries were completed by an additional 600 rural women and men in the Mansehra and Shangla districts during July 2017. Time diary data was also collected in Bangladesh with approximately 600 respondents in each of three communities in November 2016, April 2017 and August 2017. Within the time diaries, labour was divided into four broad categories: Unpaid Care Work, paid work, productive work, and individual and socio-cultural activities.<sup>50</sup>

### **Box 1: What are time diaries?**

**Time diaries are critical educational tools that help increase awareness about women's Unpaid Care Work** both within households and in policy spheres. Over 13,000 women and 2,000 men have completed time diaries in four countries least once as part of the POWER Project's sensitisation and advocacy efforts. Time diaries have helped women and men recognise and understand the burden of Unpaid Care Work, which has inspired spouses to redistribute tasks between family members.<sup>51</sup>

49. Adapted from Engle, N. (2011). Adaptive Capacity and its Assessment. *Global Environmental Change*, 21, pp. 647–656.

50. ActionAid (2013). Making Care Visible: Women's unpaid care work in Nepal, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. Available at: <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/making-care-visible>

51. Ibid

## 2. What is Unpaid Care Work?

Unpaid Care Work (UCW) refers to labour activities completed within the household and community that are often unrecognised such as caring for family members, cooking, housework and collecting water and food. Worldwide, the vast majority of Unpaid Care Work is completed by women and girls. The burden of Unpaid Care Work ultimately limits women's available time to practise sustainable agriculture, access markets, study or participate in political activities.

Cumulatively, lack of time results in a spectrum of inequities that adversely impact women, such as limited time to engage in paid work, which also limits access to resources. Women's Unpaid Care Work burden is also magnified by discriminatory social norms, which greatly increase vulnerability to violence.

Overall, women's time use and unpaid labour are not well understood, monitored or recognised; governments do not yet include this data in macroeconomic indicators. These issues are compounded because women are usually not recognised as farmers by the community, policy makers or society.<sup>52</sup> Women's roles are defined by gender norms, where women are limited to a caregiver role and men to a breadwinner role.<sup>53</sup>

### **Box 2: Broadening the debate on all forms of women's unpaid work**

In order to fully shift women's economic disparity towards greater economic empowerment, it is important that all forms of women's unpaid work are recognised and valued in communities, markets, and macroeconomics. Many activists, scientists and feminists advocate for the general use of the term "unpaid work" which also encompasses Unpaid Care Work. As a member of ActionAid India stressed, "for South Asian women it is very difficult to separate your workplace from your home".<sup>54</sup>



Farmer in Nepal.  
PHOTO: RUPESH  
SHRESTHA/ACTIONAID

52. Key stakeholder interviews

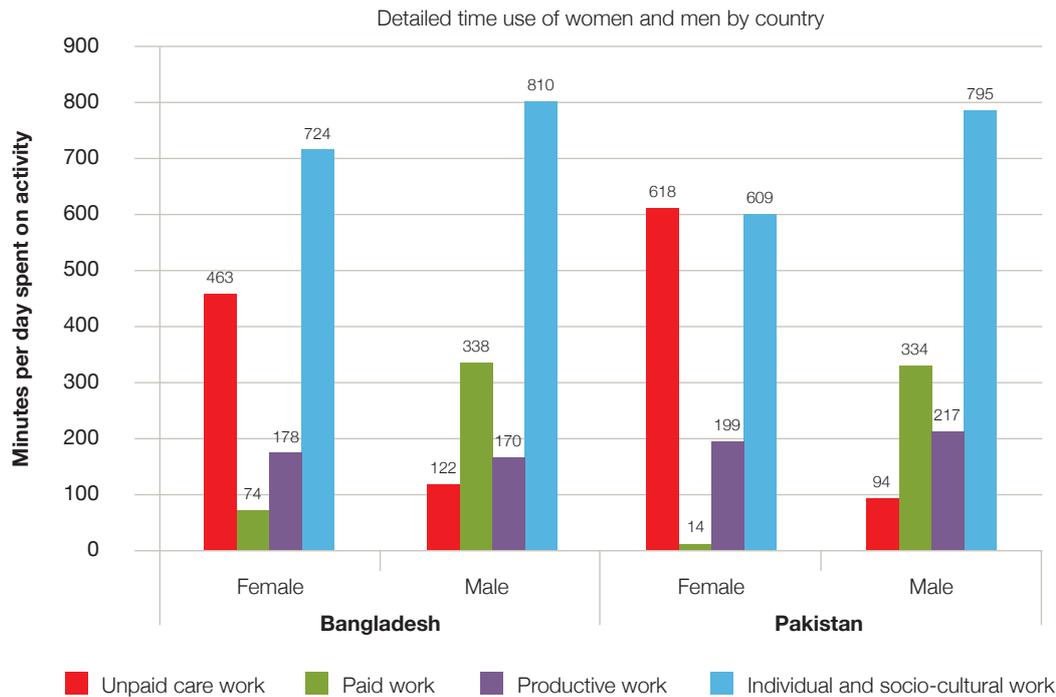
53. ActionAid (2013). Making Care Visible: Women's unpaid care work in Nepal, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making\\_care\\_visible.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making_care_visible.pdf)

54. Key stakeholder interviews

## 2.1 Exploring Unpaid Care Work through ActionAid's time diary data

In order to better understand how much time women and men spend on various activities throughout the day, time diary data collected by ActionAid with communities in Bangladesh and Pakistan between 2016-2017 was analysed.

**Figure 4:** Time diary data collected by ActionAid 2016-2017



As depicted in Figure 4, it is clear that women perform the vast majority of Unpaid Care Work in both Bangladesh and Pakistan. In Bangladesh, women perform more than 7.5 hours of Unpaid Care Work daily, while men perform two hours. In Pakistan, these differences are even more pronounced: women perform an average of nine hours more Unpaid Care Work than men daily. Additional factors also affect women's Unpaid Care Work including age and marital status.

Although time use data was not collected during this study in Nepal and India, other time use surveys have concluded similar findings.<sup>55,56,57</sup> In Nepal, studies demonstrate that women's Unpaid Care Work resulted in a significant labour burden that negatively affected the economic empowerment of Nepalese women and girls.<sup>58</sup>

**PAID WORK** refers to all salaried labour, petty trading and work completed in individual or small businesses that results in income. As reflected in the table, in Pakistan women's participation in paid work is minimal; they spend on average only 14 minutes per day on all paid labour activities activities, while men work 5.5 hours per day. Bangladeshi women expend around two hours on paid work daily, while men spend around 5.5 hours.

55. Nesbitt-Ahmed and Chopra (2014). Unpaid Care Work Programme: Nepal Progress Report (2012-13). Empowerment of Women and Girls: Evidence Report 54. Institute of Development Studies.

56. Key stakeholder interviews

57. UN Women (2015). Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights.

58. Nesbitt-Ahmed and Chopra (2014). Unpaid Care Work Programme: Nepal Progress Report (2012-13). Empowerment of Women and Girls: Evidence Report 54. Institute of Development Studies.

**PRODUCTIVE WORK** broadly includes agricultural work such as subsistence farming, livestock and poultry production, as well as fishing and handicraft production. There are no big differences on time spent on productive work between women and men in this study. However, women often manage a vast spectrum of time-intensive agricultural tasks: land preparation, seed production, sowing, applying fertilisers and manures, weeding, transplanting, threshing and harvesting. Women often care for livestock, such as poultry and pigs. Activities to maintain livestock include cleaning animal sheds, grazing, milking and processing.<sup>59</sup>

Women also collect fuel, fodder and water for household use, agricultural irrigation and animal care. This critically supplements household incomes.<sup>60</sup> Foraging and agroforestry management is also the unpaid work domain of women and girls – these practices are particularly common in tribal-dominated areas and among resource-poor or landless groups.<sup>61</sup> Despite these tremendous work contributions, women’s labour is so undervalued that women are often not recognised as ‘productive’ farmers.<sup>62</sup>

**INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES** include time engaged with social and cultural activities, mass media, sleeping, self-care, religious practice and learning. Women’s Unpaid Care Work burdens result in significantly less free time for individual and social activities than men: in Bangladesh men enjoy 1.5 hours more free time than women. In Pakistan, the gap is bigger due to women’s extreme Unpaid Care Work burden – women spend around three hours less than men in individual and socio-cultural activities including socialising, hobbies and rest.

## 2.2 Women’s Unpaid Care Work activities result in time poverty

**These labour burdens generate a lifelong time tax, “time poverty” or lack of free time that women can expend on paid labour activities, education or leisure time.** Time poverty is affected by a variety of factors such as demographics, customary laws, type of agriculture, infrastructure, access to and control over resources, social services and markets.<sup>63</sup> In Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, women perform the vast majority of Unpaid Care Work; further exploration is necessary to unpack how women allocate their time between activities.

### Box 3: Women’s economic empowerment constraints in Pakistan

**In Pakistan’s rural and tribal areas, women perform 87 % of Unpaid Care Work and informal agriculture work.**<sup>64</sup> Pakistani and Bangladeshi women face significant challenges to participate in paid economic work due to restrictions which control their mobility; patriarchal norms dictate the system of *purdah* (veil) and gender segregation.<sup>65,66</sup> Similarly, patriarchal social norms in Nepal and India result in a situation in which women are traditionally confined to the household.<sup>67</sup>

59. Ghosh, J. (2015). Unseen Workers: Women in Indian agriculture. Frontline Print edition; Indian Res. J. Ext. Edu., 10.

60. Ibid

61. Key stakeholder interviews

62. ActionAid Focus Groups 2017 in Bangladesh and Pakistan

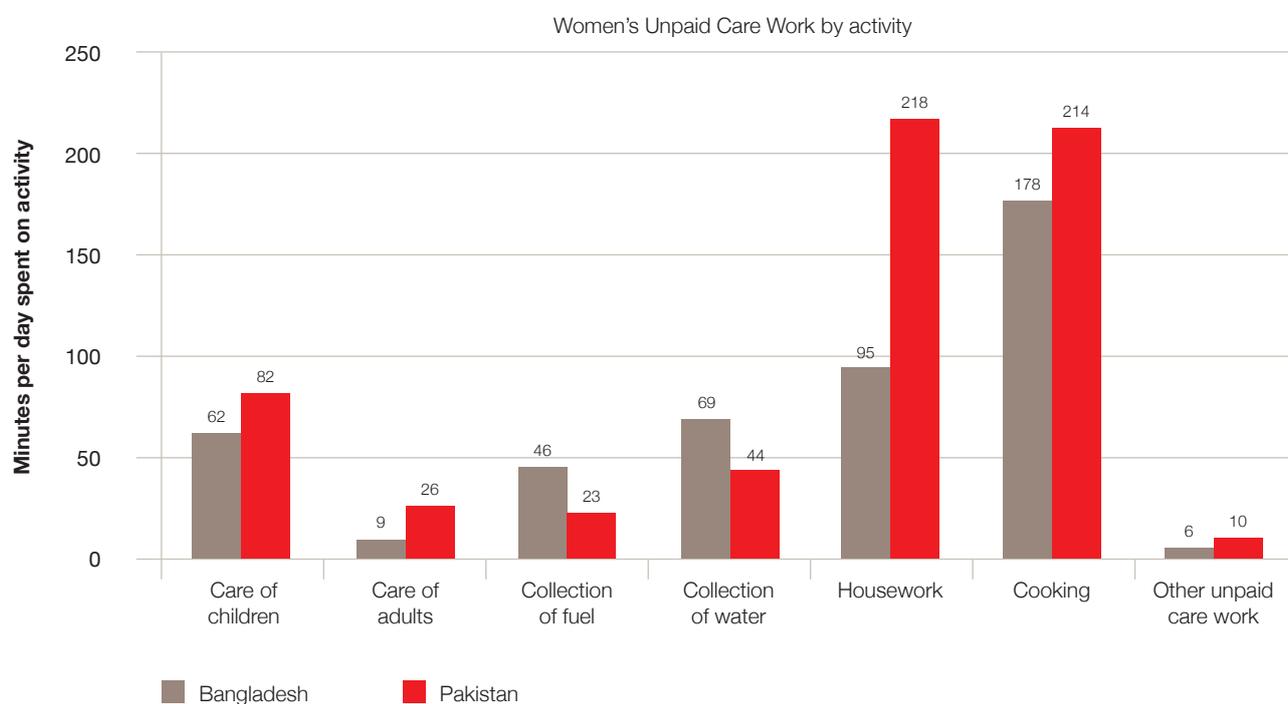
63. ActionAid. The Power Project – Women’s Economic Empowerment: An Integrated Approach. Available at: <http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/POWER-flyer.pdf>

64. Ibid

65. FAO, IFAD, and ILO (2010). Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: differentiated pathways out of poverty.

66. ActionAid. The Power Project – Women’s Economic Empowerment: An Integrated Approach. Available at: <http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/POWER-flyer.pdf>

67. Atreya, K., Johnsen, F.H., Situala, B. K. (2012). Health and environmental costs of pesticide use in vegetable farming in Nepal. *Enviro Dev Sustain*, 14, pp. 477-493.

**Figure 5:** Time diary data collected by ActionAid 2016-2017

In rural areas, **traditional women's roles are characterised by multiple simultaneous and intensive work activities.**<sup>68</sup> In India, a time-use survey across four states found that women spend between 13 –15 hours of their day multi-tasking.<sup>69</sup> Time diaries do not successfully capture this. For instance, Pakistani women may spend 3.5 hours per day cooking, however while cooking they may also be caring for children, cleaning and weeding the garden at the same time.<sup>70</sup> **Women's Unpaid Care Work is not only an issue of time poverty, but it is also about the intensity, drudgery, simultaneity and the seasonality of the labour.**<sup>71</sup>

As depicted by the time diaries in Figure 5, women reported that they spend the vast majority of their Unpaid Care Work time on housework and cooking.<sup>72</sup> In Bangladesh, women participating in the POWER Project benefited from a number of time-saving technologies and interventions such as day care centres, which successfully reduced some of their time spent on care tasks. Pakistani women in the study did not have access to time-saving interventions from the POWER Project and spend significantly more time doing housework and cooking than Bangladeshi women. However, these differences are not so easily explained: they are also influenced by a web of cultural and social norms, as well as factors such as the type of farming system or whether the women had been affected by climate disaster.

68. FAO (2016). Factsheet. Addressing Women's Work Burden.

69. Zaidi, M., Chigateri, S., Chopra, D., and Roelen, K. (2017). 'My Work Never Ends': Women's Experiences of Balancing Unpaid Care Work and Paid Work through WEE Programming in India, IDS Working Paper 494, Brighton: IDS.

70. Key stakeholder interview

71. Ibid

72. Ibid

**Box 4: The impact of social norms**

“Underlying social norms of unpaid care are frequently reinforced by religious norms and government policies. Indirect social norms, such as an unspoken taboo on using external childcare services, perpetuate this. Both women and men are affected by norms around unpaid care, with men reporting a fear that performing ‘women’s chores’ will incite social stigma.” – ActionAid, Beyond Caring<sup>73</sup>

**2.3 Climate shocks increase women’s Unpaid Care Work**

**Women and men are affected by climate change impacts in different ways because of the division of labour responsibilities between genders in agriculture.**<sup>74</sup> Additionally, women are *disproportionately* affected by climate impacts because they bear unequal responsibility for unpaid work activities that are vulnerable to environmental change, such as collecting water and firewood that become scarce during extreme events.<sup>75</sup> **Climate change impacts therefore increase women’s Unpaid Care Work, which reduces their available time to cope with the impacts of disasters and hazards.**<sup>76</sup>

Disasters greatly increase the burden of women’s Unpaid Care Work.<sup>77</sup> **At the same time, different types of livelihoods such as pastoralism or small-scale farming are affected in different ways by the type of climate disaster.** For example, floods most acutely affect crop production systems, while livestock are most affected by drought.<sup>78</sup> Unpaid Care Work is also highly affected by seasonality and events such as monsoon, which affect rainfall patterns and water availability.

During a focus group, women in Kakeya village in Bangladesh explained how floods affect them, “During the flood time, women’s Unpaid Care Work pressure increases – in that time we need to gather feed for our domestic animals, we lose our crops, and we face much more family work pressure.” Bangladeshi women from Golap Women’s group in Gaibandha district face similar challenges during floods. “Unpaid Care Work increases due to the need to repair and making a temporary house and materials to build a shelter, and find water and cooking materials.”<sup>79</sup> Collection of water, fuel and fodder are affected by forest depletion as well as untimely and erratic rain patterns due to climate change.<sup>80</sup>

Pastoralist and agro-pastoralist women throughout South Asia are most acutely affected by droughts because their livestock and livelihoods are highly affected by the environment.<sup>81,82</sup> Women’s arduous Unpaid Care Work is substantially increased by droughts because they need to walk long distances to gather water and fuel in sparse landscapes.<sup>83</sup> In Pakistan, women from the POWER Project currently face severe drought. They report

73. ActionAid (2017). Beyond caring: Enabling women’s leadership in disaster risk reduction by breaking down the barrier of Unpaid Care Work. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/2017\\_womens\\_leadership\\_in\\_drr\\_and\\_barrier\\_of\\_unpaid\\_care.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/2017_womens_leadership_in_drr_and_barrier_of_unpaid_care.pdf)

74. Cramer, L., Forch, W., Mutie, I., Thorton, P.K. (2016). Connecting Women, Connecting Men: How Communities and Organizations Interact to Strengthen Adaptive Capacity and Food Security in the Face of Climate Change. *Gender, Technology, and Development*, 20(20), pp.169-199.

75. FAO (2016). Factsheet. Addressing Women’s Work Burden

76. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAAKSTD) (2009). *Agriculture at a crossroads: synthesis report*. Island, Washington, D.C., USA.

77. ActionAid focus groups in Bangladesh and Pakistan 2017

78. FAO (2016). Factsheet. Addressing Women’s Work Burden

79. ActionAid Bangladesh focus group December 2017

80. Key stakeholder interview

81. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAAKSTD) (2009). *Agriculture at a crossroads: synthesis report*. Island, Washington, D.C., USA.

82. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2017). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. Building resilience for peace and food security. Rome, FAO.

83. Ibid

that fetching water from remote streams for drinking, washing, livestock care and irrigation is women's direct responsibility. This burden has reduced women's time to garden and crop yields have plummeted, which means there is less food to put on the table and less to bring to the market. Overall, this has increased household expenditures and reduced their ability to pay for vital services such as medical treatment and education.<sup>84</sup>



**Oinam Memicha**, India, "I have been farming for the past two years after my husband being diagnosed with a heart ailment. As a woman I find it very difficult to support my family. The price of seeds, fertiliser and pesticides has increased over the years. But during awareness and interaction programmes we have learnt save and use local seeds and how to prepare organic fertilisers by local materials like cow dung, household waste, leaves etc. I look forward such more awareness and trainings. I with my friends have formed Self-help groups. These are new things. I hope to earn better in future from this practice of farming".

PHOTO: GETZI JOEL/ACTIONAID

## 2.4 Addressing Unpaid Care Work and cultivating climate resilience through agroecology

Unpaid Care Work can be reduced through agroecology, which can build resilience to climate change, increase agricultural productivity and save time. Agroecology is well-suited to withstand environmental and economic stressors posed by climate change, rising pest pressures and volatility in petroleum and commodity prices.<sup>85</sup>

**Agroecological approaches enhance a farm system's resilience to climate change and reduce the risk of adverse impacts from disasters.**<sup>86,87</sup> Climate resilience is developed through practices that improve ecosystem and soil health while reducing the use of synthetic chemical pesticides and fertiliser.

ActionAid uses agroecology as a tool to sustainably increase farm productivity. **Over 50% of women participating in the POWER project reported overall increase in crop yields from using agroecological techniques.**<sup>88,89</sup> Current research indicates that organic and ecological agriculture practices including small-scale and traditional systems can also effectively match or even out-perform industrialised production models.<sup>90</sup>

84. ActionAid focus groups 2017

85. FAO (2014). Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition. Proceedings of the FAO International Symposium. 18-19 September, 2014. Rome, Italy. Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services in Agricultural Production Systems.

86. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAAKSTD) (2009). *Agriculture at a crossroads: synthesis report*. Island, Washington, D.C., USA.

87. Altieri, M.A., Nicholls, C.I., Henao, A. (2015). Agroecology and the design of climate change-resilient farming systems. *Agronomy and Sustainable Development*, 35, pp. 869-890.

88. ActionAid. The Power Project – Women's Economic Empowerment: An Integrated Approach. Available at: <http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/POWER-flyer.pdf>

89. ActionAid Focus Groups in Bangladesh and Pakistan, December 2017

90. FAO (2014). Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition. Proceedings of the FAO International Symposium. 18-19 September, 2014. Rome, Italy. Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services in Agricultural Production Systems.

### Box 5: Saving time and building climate resilience through agroecology

Agroecology promotes labour-saving approaches through a synergistic approach (*ie complex adaptive agroecosystems*) of combining cropping and animal production activities to maximise resource and labour efficiency in space and time.<sup>91,92</sup> Many time-saving technologies have been developed that can reduce women's labour burden in agricultural activities, however the majority of these approaches haven't been specifically adapted to women's needs. This has resulted in minimal uptake among women.<sup>93</sup> A myriad of agricultural technologies have been identified as "time-saving", however the majority of these approaches have not been specifically developed or adapted to the needs of women, which has resulted in minimal uptake.<sup>94</sup> **While agroecological practices are designed to maximise productive efficiencies, agroecology is generally both labour and knowledge-intensive.**

ActionAid participants indicate that women's Unpaid Care Work also reduces their ability to learn and practice agroecology for climate resilience.<sup>95</sup> Jamila Khatub learned agroecological practices through training provided by ActionAid and the Government's Department of Agriculture Extension. However, Jamila reports that she has no time for gardening and learning new things due to her Unpaid Care Work. ***"It is very difficult for me to manage extra time for gardening and producing vegetables after completing my Unpaid Care Work. My husband now helps with the household chores, that helps me a lot to have time to work in garden but it is not enough."*** Unpaid Care Work undermines the resilience of women and communities to cope with climate shocks and stressors.



**Lucky Begum** from Gaibandha district, Bangladesh selling vegetables from her homestead garden. Reduction of her Unpaid Care Work burden has meant Lucky can produce more vegetables and make more money for her family. PHOTO: NOORE JANNAT PROMA/ACTIONAID

91. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAAKSTD) (2009). *Agriculture at a crossroads: synthesis report*. Island, Washington, D.C., USA.
92. Altieri, M.A., Nicholls, C.I., Henao, A. (2015). Agroecology and the design of climate change-resilient farming systems. *Agronomy and Sustainable Development*, 35, pp. 869-890.
93. FAO (2015). Running out of time: the reduction of the women's work burden in agricultural production.
94. Ibid
95. ActionAid focus groups in Bangladesh and Pakistan 2017

Rekha Begum grows and sells vegetables produced in her home garden using vermi-compost. She explains, **“the burden of Unpaid Care Work is reducing my progress. I feel overburdened and exhausted [...]** although I am dreaming of growing more vegetables to sell in big market. I cannot go to agricultural extension office, Union Parishad to learn more. Even to observe other farmers’ fields who practise it is a challenge for me.”<sup>96</sup> This demonstrates how **time poverty diminishes women’s capacity to adapt their farm systems and livelihoods to climate change impacts.**<sup>97</sup>



**Rekha Begum, 44**, Bangladesh.  
PHOTO: NOORE JANNAT PROMA/ACTIONAID

### **Box 6: Notes from Actionaid’s webinar on Unpaid Care Work and Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture<sup>98</sup>**

In a recent interactive webinar from the POWER Project, participants discussed that agroecological practices save time and reduce Unpaid Care Work. For example, covering the soil reduces irrigation and weeding; this may be time intensive at the beginning but not in the long-term. In ActionAid’s CRSA programme, the goal is to combine as many CRSA pillars as possible to synergistically increase the overall productivity of a farm system. In Nepal fish ponds have multiple purposes; a smart system water collector for irrigation while small-scale fish farming also provides organic fertiliser and food for consumption.

96. ActionAid Bangladesh Case Study: A tale of two women overcoming Unpaid Care Work and leading preparedness: Rekha Begum and Most Shirin Akhter, Bangladesh

97. Key stakeholder interviews

98. ActionAid (2017). Webinar on CRSA and UCW. Available at: <http://powerproject.actionaid.org/crsa-and-ucw-webinar/>

**Box 7: International human rights law and violence against women and girls**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has been ratified in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.<sup>99</sup> Governments are legally responsible for proactively ensuring that women's Unpaid Care Work does not reduce women's legally ratified human rights.<sup>100</sup> CEDAW's General Recommendation 34 focuses on the rights of rural women, while Article 14 explicitly highlights the legal responsibilities of governments to address Unpaid Care Work.

*“Recognize their [women’s] contributions to local/national economies and to food production, as well as to the well-being of their families and communities, including contributions through Unpaid Care Work and work on family farms, in line with GR 17 (1991) on the measurement and quantification of the unremunerated domestic activities of women and the recognition in the Gross National Product (GNP).”<sup>101</sup>*

**2.4.1 Addressing risks to women's health through agroecology**

Health costs of pesticide exposure have increased globally since the Green Revolution; today many extremely toxic, older and environmentally persistent agrochemicals continue to be used despite compelling alternative technologies. Studies indicate that **women in South Asia face increasing and heightened risk of pesticide exposure due to the skewed division of labour** in agriculture.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, the risk of pesticide exposure is higher among women in South Asia because women's limited access to education and literacy results in low capacity to read agrochemical warning labels and appropriate use instructions. This can be considered a form of violence against women due to its serious potential impact on women's health, and its causes which are firmly rooted in unequal gender norms.<sup>103</sup> Agroecological methods such as Integrated Pest Management have been successfully promoted in South Asian countries such as Nepal because **farmers indicate that they are willing to pay more and expend additional labour to minimise adverse health impacts.**<sup>104</sup>

**Box 8: Health vulnerability of rural women**

“Beyond the invisibility of their work, rural women workers lack proper medical care or can only access poor quality service, particularly in terms of reproductive and sexual services such as prenatal care. In this sense **it is important to highlight the vulnerability of rural women due to constant exposure to pesticides and chemical poisons** agribusiness uses. **Such exposure directly affects human health** and generates depression, disfigured foetuses, causes infertility, among other problems. This violence is covered up and needs to be exposed and debated.” – La Via Campesina<sup>105</sup>

99. CEDAW (2016). General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women

100. ActionAid (2013). Making Care Visible: Women's unpaid care work in Nepal, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making\\_care\\_visible.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making_care_visible.pdf)

101. CEDAW (2016). General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women

102. Atreya, K., Johnsen, F.H., Situala, B. K. (2012). Health and environmental costs of pesticide use in vegetable farming in Nepal. *Enviro Dev Sustain*, 14, pp. 477-493.

103. Ibid

104. Ibid

105. Via Campesina, (2012). Stop Violence Against Women Campaign, Brazil. Available at: <http://www.landaction.org/IMG/pdf/Carlilha-VCSudamerica-ingles-18set12.pdf>

### **Box 9: Breaking pesticide trap through grassroots women's collective action in India**

In India's Punakula village, smallholder cotton farmers fell into a "pesticide trap": a seemingly hopeless cycle of escalating pesticide dependence, poor access to credit and spiraling debts. Failure to pay back mounting loans sometimes resulted in loss of precious familial land. Farmer suicides became endemic.

Community-managed sustainable agriculture programmes using agroecological alternatives to chemical pesticides were launched through the Indian non-profit organisations SECURE and SERC, as well as other local partners funded by the World Bank.<sup>106,107</sup> Local organisations linked up with rural women's self-help groups in Punakula village using farmer field schools and farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing approaches.<sup>108</sup>

Women's self-help groups began to organise and mobilise to spread their knowledge to other villages: within four years, agroecology practices were implemented on 1.36 million acres (over 552,000 ha.).<sup>57</sup> Today, ten million Indian women are organised into over 850,600 self-help groups promoting agroecological practices.<sup>109</sup> 7 Farmers who transitioned to agroecology experienced several benefits: saving money from not buying pesticides, lower health costs, dramatic drops in farmer suicides and reclaiming mortgaged lands.<sup>110</sup>



Woman carrying out Unpaid Care Work in Nepal.  
PHOTO: RUPESH SHRESTHA/ACTIONAID

106. Kumar, T.V., Raidu, D.V., Killi, J., Pillai, M., Shah, P., Kalavadonda, V., Lakhey, S. (2009). Ecologically Sound, Economically Viable. Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture. World Bank.

107. Marten, G. (2005). Escaping the Pesticide Trap: Non-Pesticide Management for Agricultural Pests (Andhra Pradesh, India). Eco-tipping Points. Available at: <http://www.ecotippingpoints.org/our-stories/indepth/india-pest-management-nonpesticide-neem.html#update>

108. Ibid

109. Ibid

110. Ibid

## 3. Violence against women and girls: land rights and market access

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) refers to gender-based violence that causes physical, economic, psychological, sexual or economic suffering.<sup>111</sup> Women's economic inequality can lead to diverse forms of gender-based violence through perpetuating women's socioeconomic marginalisation.<sup>112</sup> **In addition to the burden of Unpaid Care Work, female farmers also face higher risk of economic violence, lack of rights and unequal power relations with men.**<sup>113</sup> Violence, culture and norms must be examined in relation to ways in which they define the material realities of women.<sup>114</sup>

Throughout South Asia, family and customary laws play a major role in the governance of women's economic life. Customary laws govern rights such as the capacity to inherit property; these rights define women's status and thereby determine their work and their ability to prevent violence or exit a violent situation. In this way, familial and customary laws and norms govern the economic and material realities of women and girls.<sup>114</sup>

**Rural women often have lesser legal rights, entitlements and social protections than men, which results in more frequent exclusion from national laws.**<sup>115</sup> These inequalities limit women's access to and control over crucial resources such as land, credit and agricultural extension services.<sup>116</sup>

Women's access to and control over critical resources such as land must be strengthened for women's economic empowerment and the viability of agricultural production. There is a very substantial gender gap in access to land in South Asia; in Bangladesh, men are six times more likely than women to be documented landowners.<sup>117</sup> However, even when landholdings are jointly distributed, women often have no control over decisions regarding how the land is used.<sup>118</sup> Lack of access to and control over critical resources such as land and income may force women to resort to riskier strategies for survival.<sup>119</sup> As agroecology is a process that requires substantial time to develop year after year, therefore women's secure and stable access to land is key in the process of developing productive and resilient farming systems.

### 3.1 Addressing violence against women and girls through women's economic empowerment

**Market access is crucial because it is also interrelated with women's rights and their capacity to access and control resources.** ActionAid's approach "Gender-sensitive framework for access to market and value chains" takes into consideration the demands and specificities women face. Additionally, **there is substantial evidence from the focus groups that women's capacity to generate income leads to greater valuation within society and their self-confidence grows; in turn, violence against women is likely to diminish.**<sup>120</sup>

111. UN Women (2018). Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>

112. UN Women (2018). Glossary: Unpaid Care Work. Available at: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php>

113. Glemarec, Y. (2017). Addressing the gender differentiated investment risks to climate-smart agriculture. *AIMS Agriculture and Food*, 2(1), pp. 56-74.

114. Key stakeholder interviews

115. FAO, IFAD, and ILO (2010). Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: differentiated pathways out of poverty.

116. Asian Development Bank (2013). Gender Equality and Food Security: Women's Empowerment as a Tool Against Hunger. Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2013

117. Kieren, C., Sproule, K., Doss, C., Quisumbing, A., Kim, S.M., (2015). Examining Gender Inequalities in Land Rights Indicators in Asia. IFPRI Discussion Paper, 01429.

118. Ghosh, J. (2015). Unseen Workers: Women in Indian agriculture. Frontline Print edition; Indian Res. J. Ext. Edu., 10.

119. Asian Development Bank (2013). Gender Equality and Food Security: Women's Empowerment as a Tool Against Hunger. Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2013.

120. ActionAid Focus Groups Bangladesh and Pakistan 2017

### Box 10: The story of Dil Kumari's economic empowerment in Nepal

In Hamarjung, Nepal, Dil Kumari Limbu's life has been transformed due to her training through ActionAid. In the past, she grew maize and millet; however, it was insufficient to feed her two young daughters and husband, and she worked as a wage labourer whenever she could. Her household chores limited her engagement with community activities and programmes. Her life was transformed when she took a microenterprise course, where she learned to raise pigs and cultivate Akbare chili. Today, she earns 7,000 Nepalese Rupees (approx US\$110) per month from chili production and an additional 50,000 Nepalese Rupees (approx US\$770) annually from pig production.

Later, she joined Fayak Abhiyan Chautari, a women's group with a REFLECT circle, where participants discuss issues such as domestic violence, literacy, income generating activities and health. In this group, she discusses her challenges and comes up with actions to improve problems. She also gained basic literacy skills, which has empowered her to engage with additional agricultural cooperatives; today she leads a women's cooperative focusing on Unpaid Care Work and violence against women. She explains, *"I find much different between the previous Dil Kumari and recent Dil Kumari. Both my position and condition have changed now. It has been easy to run my family, which I learned through the [ActionAid] project. I have been able to spend money, eat and wear the clothes I wish. It would not have been possible if project had not provided opportunity for me."*<sup>121</sup>



**Fency Begum, 31**, of Gaibandha, Bangladesh. *"I did not have the knowledge earlier that I can grow vegetables in such a narrow place (the area around her home). I now grow vegetables in a sack, so that I can easily relocate the vegetables when flood water breaks out. So simple techniques. But before receiving the training (vegetable gardening and CRSA), I was unaware of these."*

PHOTO: DEBORAH LOMOTEV/  
ACTIONAID

*"Women's leadership fosters self-confidence and empowerment among women, which in itself helps transform power relations and overcome barriers which traditionally exclude women from decision making and leadership."*— ActionAid Beyond Caring<sup>122</sup>

121. ActionAid Nepal (2017). Case Study: Dil Kumari's Position and Condition Changed through Akbare Chili Farming.

122. ActionAid (2017). Beyond caring: Enabling women's leadership in disaster risk reduction by breaking down the barrier of unpaid care work. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/2017\\_womens\\_leadership\\_in\\_drr\\_and\\_barrier\\_of\\_unpaid\\_care.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/2017_womens_leadership_in_drr_and_barrier_of_unpaid_care.pdf)

### 3.2 Climate shocks and stressors: migration impacts on women and girls

Climate change has colossal impacts on the livelihoods and food security of resource-dependent farmers and pastoralists across South Asia. Farmers are more likely to migrate or become displaced from their lands due to climate change through both “push factors” (including disasters or lack of resources) as well as “pull factors” such as seasonal labour.<sup>123</sup>

**Today, the roles of rural women are also changing drastically due to global socioeconomic changes.**<sup>124</sup> Foreign remittances have become a major asset for rural families in South Asia.<sup>125</sup> Similarly, farming families affected by climate change may be forced to abandon their farm and move, seeking better opportunities, or send a family member to seek employment. Men are more likely to migrate in search of paid labour opportunities, and these migration patterns have resulted in millions of female-headed agricultural households in South Asia.<sup>126,127</sup> In recent years, the trend has become so pronounced that there are many villages in Nepal with very few or no males of working age.<sup>128</sup> In Bangladesh, extreme flooding and river erosion has also spurred migration of women farmers in recent years.

Feminisation of the agricultural sector results in greatly increased work duties for female farmers including the need to assume traditional male labour roles.<sup>129,130,131</sup> **Women are increasingly burdened with not only Unpaid Care Work roles necessary to care for children and households, but also extremely strenuous labour practices traditionally performed by men** including ploughing and building terraces for rice production. Due to these shifts, **women in South Asia are now required to perform unprecedented and impossible amounts of labour.**<sup>132</sup> Women and children in rural communities without men present may also face higher vulnerability to the impacts of climate disasters. For instance, in Nepal recent earthquakes resulted in higher vulnerability in many communities without men.<sup>133</sup>

#### **Box 11: Nyeleni Peasant’s declaration 2015 on agroecology and women’s Unpaid Care Work**

*“Women and their knowledge, values, vision and leadership are critical for moving forward. Migration and globalisation mean that women’s work is increasing, yet women have far less access to and control over resources than men. All too often, their work is neither recognised nor valued. For agroecology to achieve its full potential, there must be equal distribution of power, tasks, decision making and remuneration.”<sup>134</sup>*

123. ActionAid. (2016). Climate Change Knows No Borders: An Analysis of Climate-Induced Migration, Protection Gaps and the Need for Solidarity in South Asia. <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/climate-change-knows-no-borders>

124. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAAKSTD) (2009). *Agriculture at a crossroads: synthesis report*. Island, Washington, D.C., USA.

125. IOM (2017). Assessing the Climate Change Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia.

126. Ibid

127. ActionAid. (2016). Climate Change Knows No Borders: An Analysis of Climate-Induced Migration, Protection Gaps and the Need for Solidarity in South Asia. <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/climate-change-knows-no-borders>

128. Ibid

129. Key stakeholder interviews

130. Glemarec, Y. (2017). Addressing the gender differentiated investment risks to climate-smart agriculture. *AIMS Agriculture and Food*, 2(1), pp. 56-74.

131. IOM (2017). Assessing the Climate Change Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia

132. ActionAid. (2016). Climate Change Knows No Borders: An Analysis of Climate-Induced Migration, Protection Gaps and the Need for Solidarity in South Asia. <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/climate-change-knows-no-borders>

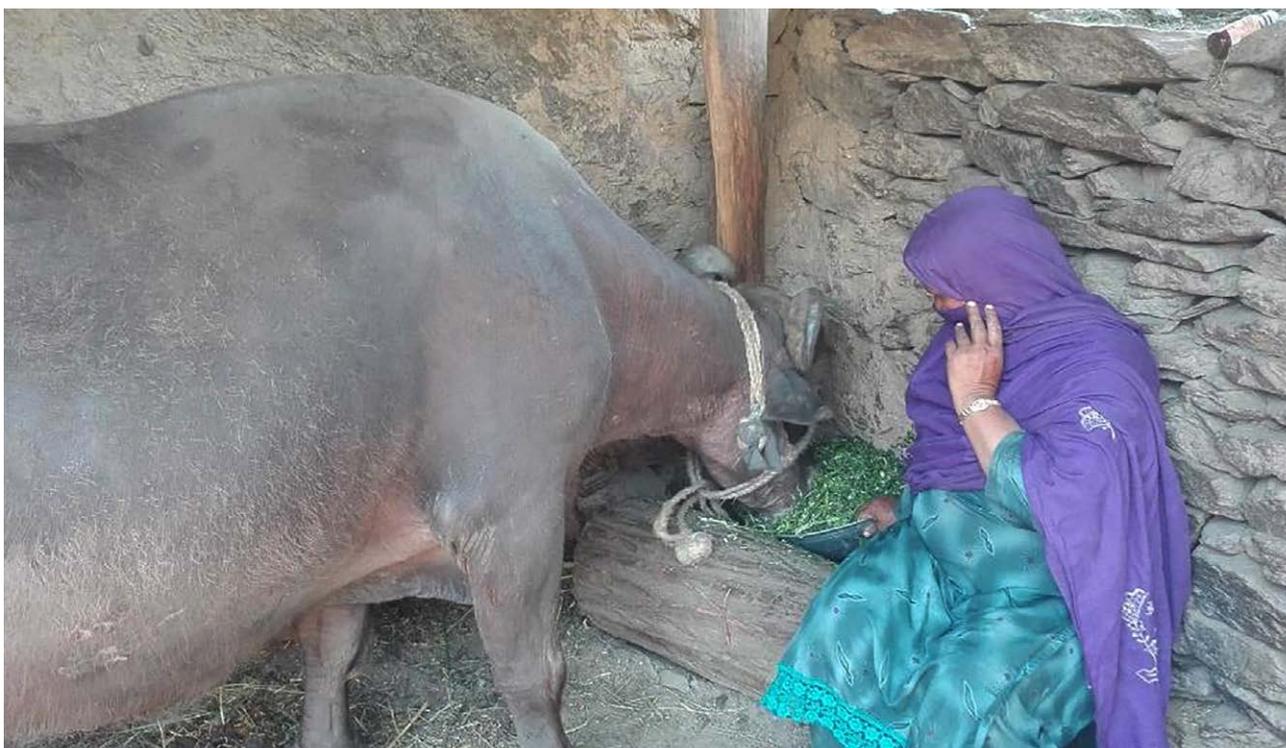
133. Ibid

134. Nyeleni Peasant’s Declaration on Agroecology (2015). Available at: <http://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/NYELENI-2015-ENGLISH-FINAL-WEB.pdf>

### 3.3 Violence against women and girls on the move

South Asian women also increasingly migrate for labour opportunities.<sup>135</sup> Weak rights and lesser enforcement of occupational safety laws may also mean female agricultural migrant workers are more vulnerable to underpayment, harassment and sexual exploitation.<sup>136</sup> **Women's economically disadvantaged positions within society may result in increased vulnerability to trafficking when they are forced to migrate for work.**<sup>137</sup> Rural families often hire "agents" to help them move and identify opportunities; these agents may be traffickers who may later sell young girls and women to brothels or into forced domestic work.<sup>138,139</sup>

Poor families dependent on agriculture for survival often suffer from acute poverty and food insecurity due to extreme climate events. Acute suffering may therefore make poor families more likely to marry off younger daughters or send their young daughters to work as labourers or domestic workers in urban areas to ensure that they are fed. Policy makers must ensure that resources are available within vulnerable communities for the prevention of trafficking, forced labour and young marriages to safeguard women's rights. Further research should be conducted exploring the relationship between climate change and violence against women and girls within farming communities.



**Zarina Bibi**, from Mansehra district of Pakistan used to spend three hours a day cutting fodder. "Before having fodder cutter I was suffering; not have time to rest. I always do one house chore after the other; there is too much work to do at home and to care my livestock too," Zarina said. Through an intervention as part of ActionAid's POWER project, Zarina Bibi's village got a fodder cutter. Now, she spends only 20 minutes a day cutting fodder, leaving her with an additional two and a half hours for other empowerment related activities.

PHOTO: SAIBAAN DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION, PAKISTAN

135. IOM (2017). Assessing the Climate Change Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia.

136. FAO, IFAD, and ILO (2010). Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: differentiated pathways out of poverty.

137. IOM (2017). Assessing the Climate Change Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia.

138. Ibid

139. ActionAid. (2016). Climate Change Knows No Borders: An Analysis of Climate-Induced Migration, Protection Gaps and the Need for Solidarity in South Asia. <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/climate-change-knows-no-borders>

## 4. Addressing Unpaid Care Work through recognition, reduction and redistribution

Technical or agronomic innovations alone cannot sufficiently change the situation of women and girls or address the immense impacts of climate change on women's work. **Patriarchal social norms and the structural causes of inequality must also be addressed.**<sup>140</sup> Transformational change can be achieved through solutions known as “the three Rs”: recognition, reduction and redistribution of women's unpaid work. There are no recipes for realising these changes; approaches must also be grounded in local social and ecological contexts and developed with communities.<sup>141</sup>

### **Box 12: Recognition, reduction and redistribution of Unpaid Care Work<sup>142</sup>**

- **Recognition** of women's Unpaid Care Work requires that work produced is acknowledged by both women and men; **recognition does NOT refer to direct wage payment for Unpaid Care Work.** Recognition simply includes greater valuation, visibility and respect for all forms of women's unpaid work so that it is recognised as being ‘production’ and ‘work’ at all levels.
- **Reduction** of Unpaid Care Work refers to minimising and decreasing labour burdens both for individuals and society as a whole. Reduction can be achieved in numerous ways. Time spent on childcare can be reduced through provision of accessible day care centres. Infrastructure developments such as drilling wells or building reservoirs near women's homes can dramatically reduce time spent carrying water over vast distances. Similarly, increasing women's access to renewable energies such as solar panels can reduce time spent collecting fuel.
- **Redistribution** of Unpaid Care Work refers to more equitable distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men. This may include challenging social norms on women's work; for instance, husbands and brothers may take greater responsibility for helping with tasks such as cooking, collecting water and fuel, and caring for livestock. Governments can also redistribute women's labour through provision of social services such as effective public health care, building infrastructure for water access or providing disaster relief interventions.

140. FAO (2015). Running out of time: the reduction of the women's work burden in agricultural production.

141. ActionAid (2013). Making Care Visible: Women's unpaid care work in Nepal, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making\\_care\\_visible.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making_care_visible.pdf)

142. Ibid



#### 4.1 Recognition

The vast labour contributions of female farmers are often unrecognised; in many cases, the labour women perform is not remunerated and is therefore not considered work. **Women are often not recognised as farmers or agricultural workers both at the community and national levels.**<sup>143</sup> Women are often socially relegated to household-related work activities, so the work they do in the fields and in private spaces is not considered an economic contribution.<sup>144</sup> This results in invisibility, reduces rights and results in exclusion from agricultural extension services and interventions.<sup>145</sup> The importance of recognition of women's significant unpaid labour and Unpaid Care Work is increasingly recognised by diverse institutions and political bodies as very important for socioeconomic development.

**“Women’s work and power within families and in movements must be recognised**, including the economic and productive value of seed selection and food production by women, which requires personal and collective processes, of us and our partners. **The economic contribution that our work represents to agriculture, the household economy and macroeconomic indicators of the nations must be appreciated.**” – Women of Via Campesina International Manifesto<sup>146</sup>

143. Ghosh, J. (2015). Unseen Workers: Women in Indian agriculture. Frontline Print edition; Indian Res. J. Ext. Edu., 10.

144. Key stakeholder interviews

145. ActionAid Focus Groups 2017

146. Via Campesina (2013). Women of Via Campesina International Manifesto. Available at: <https://viacampesina.org/en/women-of-via-campesina-international-manifesto-2/>

## 4.2 Reduction

ActionAid's time diaries with Pakistani women reveal that women spend over ten hours per day on Unpaid Care Work activities alone, which underlines the importance of reducing women's Unpaid Care Work burden. Agroecology provides locally and culturally appropriate labour-saving technologies that can be designed to reduce women's work burden. However, agroecology is both labour and knowledge-intensive and requires time to practice and innovate. Similarly, women in all of the South Asian countries featured in this research indicate that their time poverty reduces their ability to engage with paid employment and agroecology, reducing their adaptive capacity as well as their economic opportunities. **Addressing the unpaid work burdens of female farmers is imperative to ensure that women have sufficient time to practice agroecology for climate resilience.**

ActionAid's POWER Project effectively implemented day care centres in Bangladesh to reduce women's Unpaid Care Work. **Almost 100 % of mothers said they gained extra hours each day from sending their children to day care centres, saving around 90-120 minutes per day on Unpaid Care Work.**<sup>147</sup> Women reported that this helped them increase their engagement with productive work, paid employment and social activities.<sup>148</sup>

### **Box 13: Time-saving services and technologies that reduce Unpaid Care Work**

- **Day care facilities for children and senior citizens** reduce women's Unpaid Care Work demands within the household.<sup>149</sup>
- **Small-scale home gardens** in close proximity to a woman's home, home (such as crop production, keyhole gardens or spiral herb gardens), that make use of household waste and water reduce women's labour burden and can be developed with minimal labour, costs and inputs.<sup>150</sup>
- **Livestock practices and fodder innovation**, such as integrated fodder and crop production, and improved housing for animals, can reduce labour inputs.<sup>151,152</sup> Women participating in the POWER Project in Pakistan have experimented with reducing their fodder collection time burden through alternative fodder cutters, fodder seed provision and redistribution of work to local men.<sup>153</sup> During surveys conducted in 2017, women indicated that they have saved between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours per day and experienced improved health.<sup>154</sup>

147. Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) and ActionAid Bangladesh (2017). Study on How Child Care Initiatives Can Reduce the Burden of Unpaid Care Work: Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER) Project.

148. Ibid

149. Ibid

150. FAO (2015). Running out of time: the reduction of the women's work burden in agricultural production.

151. Ibid

152. ActionAid Focus Groups in Bangladesh and Pakistan, December 2017

153. Ibid

154. ActionAid Time Diary Surveys 2017

- **Harvest and post-harvest processing and crop storage can be improved for labour efficiency** to help women reduce food losses, improve their produce quality and quantity, and conserve labour.<sup>155,156</sup>
- **Economic strategies** such as linking women with markets, innovation and product value addition activities can also help increase women's overall production income. Potentially, this can reduce future labour burdens and increase women's economic empowerment through increased product competition and market value.<sup>157</sup>
- **Improved farm tool technologies** adapted to local production needs and women's physical use requirements, including lighter tools, can also help reduce women's labour.<sup>158</sup>
- **Water infrastructure technologies** such as household level-piped clean water points/taps and microirrigation for vegetable production have successfully reduced women's labour burden in Nepal by 50 % and resulted in significant benefits for household food security and nutrition.<sup>159</sup> Women from the POWER Project in Pakistan have also successfully reduced time spent collecting water through rainwater harvesting.<sup>160</sup>
- **Renewable energy technologies** can decrease women's need to gather firewood and fuel, reducing women's labour burden with additional environmental benefits. Options include solar, wind and biogas energy as well as improved cooking stoves.<sup>161</sup>
- **Aquaponics production** that combines fish and crop production in symbiosis is time-saving and requires little space. Aquaponics is very efficient with women who cannot move outside of their home due to social norms, lack of land access or physical constraints.<sup>162</sup>

### 4.3 Redistribution

Time diary results from the case studies indicate that women in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Nepal work an average of three hours more per day than men when including all forms of work. More equal division of Unpaid Care Work responsibilities between women and men at home can result in transformative changes that create a positive impact on the entire household. Redistribution may include challenging social norms on women's work. For instance, husbands and brothers may take ownership of tasks such as cooking, collecting water and fuel, and caring for livestock.

Raising awareness about the need for redistribution of Unpaid Care Work between women and men is imperative for building women's empowerment, as demonstrated by the experiences of Tika Kumari in Nepal (**Box 14**). Focus group discussions with mothers participating in the POWER Project in Bangladesh revealed that the attitude of their husbands and male family members had significantly shifted after completing time

155. Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) and ActionAid Bangladesh (2017). Study on How Child Care Initiatives Can Reduce the Burden of Unpaid Care Work: Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER) Project.

156. FAO (2015). Running out of time: the reduction of the women's work burden in agricultural production.

157. Ibid

158. Ibid

159. Ibid

160. ActionAid Focus Groups in Bangladesh and Pakistan, December 2017

161. FAO (2015). Running out of time: the reduction of the women's work burden in agricultural production

162. Ibid

diaries. In many circumstances, men's increased awareness of Unpaid Care Work led many men to take on more Unpaid Care Work activities including childcare, collecting water and fuel, feeding cattle and cooking.

Shantona Rani is a young mother in Bangladesh who reported significant decreases in her Unpaid Care Work burden after sending her daughter to the ActionAid childcare programme. Overall, she has been able to increase her time spent on productive agricultural activities including threshing, cleaning and drying, which will likely increase overall productivity. Her empathic husband explained his changed viewpoint. "Family is not only made up of one person, my wife is my partner in all things, I help her in caring work."<sup>163,164</sup> Redistribution of women's Unpaid Care Work is necessary to ensure that women have sufficient time to engage with resilience-building activities such as agroecology or economic activities.

Women also revealed that their participation in the day care programmes had empowered them in various ways: 50 % of women reported higher paid wages, and 40 % of women stated that making more money had resulted in greater participation in decision making.<sup>165</sup> Families also reported an overall increase in household purchasing power as well as improved well-being and peace at home.<sup>166</sup> While these lessons demonstrate the path forward, men must truly take responsibility for Unpaid Care Work in a long-term capacity. Women's control of income and resources should also be given critical attention for transformative change.

#### **Box 14: Tika Kumari's empowerment through redistribution of Unpaid CareWork in Nepal**

Tika Kumari Limbu is a 35-year-old farmer and mother. In her household, all domestic chores were considered her responsibility. Although men don't usually cook within traditional Nepalese culture, her husband Kul Bahadur Limbu recognised the importance of redistributing Tika's work after completing the time diaries and attending a discussion group at Deurali Society. After Tika's training in organic vegetable production, she became vice chairperson of Prajang women's collective. With her income from selling Akbari chili, she was able to mortgage a piece of land to expand her production. Her husband no longer thinks about going abroad for work, and their household dynamic has been transformed. "Now, there is not any hesitation to complete household chores with any of our family members. We all support each other to do work." Kul Bahadur has become a role model and inspiration source for men, boys and the rest of the community because he is breaking gender norms and transforming the gendered division of labour.<sup>167</sup>

163. Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) and ActionAid Bangladesh (2017). Study on How Child Care Initiatives Can Reduce the Burden of Unpaid Care Work: Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER) Project

164. Ibid

165. Ibid

166. Ibid

167. ActionAid Nepal (2017). Case Study: Helping Hand of Her Husband Made Kumari Successful Entrepreneur.

### 4.3.1 State-led leadership redistributes Unpaid Care Work in India

Governments and civil society organisations also play a critical role in redistribution of Unpaid Care Work through provision of public services and infrastructure. Next, we examine two examples from India demonstrating pathways for redistributing women's Unpaid Care Work through state leadership and civil society movements such as India's Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) (see Box 15).

India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005) is a public works programme that assures entitlement to 100 days of waged work each year for every home in India.<sup>168</sup> The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is ambitious; it is one of the largest social protection labour interventions in the world, and it is also the first national law in India to recognise women's Unpaid Care Work.<sup>169</sup> It explicitly prioritises India's most vulnerable, marginalised and poor women.<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, it ensures that women are prioritised through ensuring equal wages between women and men, feasible distances between worksites and homes, nearby access to safe drinking water and provision of day care facilities.<sup>171</sup>

All of these activities transform unequal labour norms through recognition, reduction and redistribution. The Act also reduces Unpaid Care Work through supporting the creation of assets such as wells and ponds.<sup>172</sup>

UN Women and civil society organisations help increase rural women's engagement. However, if the programme is unable to offer suitable work, the government must provide an unemployment allowance of at least one-third of the minimum wage.<sup>173</sup> In Uttar Pradesh, women's participation in paid work rose from 3 % to 21 % within six months of the programme's launch.<sup>174</sup> Due to the state's role as the primary duty-bearer of providing public services, it is critical to develop and implement progressive taxation systems to ensure that funds are available. Gender-responsive public services are crucial to the prevention of violence against women and girls.

#### **Box 15: SEWA and women's collective action reduces Unpaid Care Work in India**

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is an Indian trade union and social movement representing over one million self-employed women workers including domestic labourers, hawkers, producers and agricultural workers. SEWA organises women workers to increase the visibility of women's valuable and unrecognised labour contributions; **94 % of the female labour force in India work in the unorganised sector.**<sup>175</sup>

168. Zaidi, M. and Chigateri, S. (2017). 'My Work Never Ends': Women Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work in India. Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST).

169. Ibid

170. Nandi, S. (2017). Expert's take: Making unpaid work visible creates livelihoods for rural women. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/3/experts-take-subhalakshmi-nandi-unpaid-work>

171. Ibid

172. Ibid

173. Ibid

174. Ibid

175. Nesbitt-Ahmed and Chopra (2014). Unpaid Care Work Programme: Nepal Progress Report (2012-13). Empowerment of Women and Girls: Evidence Report 54. Institute of Development Studies.

A study by UNDP in India indicated that reduction of one hour of time spent per day collecting water could allow women to increase their incomes by US\$100 per year.<sup>176</sup> Women participating in microenterprise programmes launched by SEWA in India reported that women spend longer hours collecting fuel and water during the summer.<sup>177</sup> SEWA's women-led water infrastructure programmes successfully improved access to safe drinking water and reduced women's unpaid time spent collecting water. As a result, women were able to spend more time engaging in paid employment and resting. Women also reported overall empowerment in the community; they were more willing and confident to participate in local *panchayats* (councils), public meetings and self-help groups.<sup>178</sup> SEWA also continues to spearhead interventions to reduce women's Unpaid Care Work through the provision of child care centres at cooperatives and local organisations in different districts throughout India.<sup>179</sup>

## 5. Call to action and recommendations

### 1. Address women's Unpaid Care Work through recognition, reduction and redistribution

- Governments should ensure that agriculture programming is gender-responsive through incorporating the three Rs approach: 1) recognise care work, 2) reduce the burden and drudgery of Unpaid Care Work, and 3) redistribute the burden of Unpaid Care Work.
- Governments should promote community involvement in the development and delivery of practices that address Unpaid Care Work.
- Governments should promote programmes that engage men and boys to take greater ownership of Unpaid Care Work in order to redistribute care tasks at home.

### 2. Ensure representation and recognition of women farmers at all levels

- Women's comprehensive representation, leadership and political participation must be ensured in all levels of decision making.
- Promote the recognition of women as farmers.

### 3. Promote agroecology for climate resilience and women's economic empowerment

- Governments and organisations should promote agroecology within policies, programmes and agricultural extension services.
- Governments and civil society organisations should support and fund the development of community-based seedbanks to preserve local agrobiodiversity necessary for climate adaptation.
- Women's farmers' control over seeds should be guaranteed in law and practice, to give them greater control over their food choices and production.

176. Asian Development Bank (2013). Gender Equality and Food Security: Women's Empowerment as a Tool Against Hunger. Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2013.

177. Nesbitt-Ahmed and Chopra (2014). Unpaid Care Work Programme: Nepal Progress Report (2012-13). Empowerment of Women and Girls: Evidence Report 54. Institute of Development Studies

178. Ibid

179. Key stakeholder interviews

#### 4. Empower women farmers by ensuring access to and control over land, resources, services, information and opportunities to mobilise

- Governments should support and empower women farmers through ensuring women's access to and control over critical resources such as land and markets, gender-sensitive technologies, agricultural extension services and development interventions.
- Governments and organisations should strengthen women's cooperatives and build women's capacity through ensuring access to training, information, techniques and implementation so that they can become well-versed in agriculture and gain equality.

#### 5. Governments must invest in gender-responsive public services and time-saving agricultural technologies

- Governments and organisations should invest in gender-sensitive public services and infrastructure that are accessible for women from rural communities, and reduce their time spent on Unpaid Care Work through increasing public provision such as services for childcare and care of the elderly.
- Governments and organisations should invest in accessible gender-sensitive public services in agricultural communities that reduce women's time spent on Unpaid Care Work activities such as gathering fuels, water or fodder. This can be achieved through providing services such as water wells and reservoirs, irrigation canals, renewable energies and emergency livestock interventions.

#### 6. Protect women farmers and all rural women: enforce CEDAW

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has been ratified in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. **Under CEDAW, countries are legally obligated to monitor and investigate violence against women, provide legal aid and mainstream gender into national policies and research.**<sup>180,181</sup> Governments should give urgent attention to ensuring protection of rural women as stipulated within CEDAW's General Recommendation 34 and Article 14. Specific attention should be also given to monitoring the status of rural women under the stressors of climate change. Governments must take urgent action to enforce, monitor and evaluate CEDAW.

#### 7. Support women's economic empowerment through collection of gender disaggregated data and macroeconomic reforms that recognise Unpaid Care Work

- Governments and organisations should collect gender disaggregated data on Unpaid Care Work and incorporate data into relevant national statistics. Recognition of women's unpaid work must be accomplished through improved visibility and valuation in mainstream macroeconomic policies, labour market analyses, systems of national accounts (SNA), GDP, national statistical systems and satellite accounts.<sup>182</sup> Women's unpaid work must also be included in the design and delivery of realistic and inclusive labour and employment policies. Failure to recognise and represent women's unpaid work in macroeconomic policies reinforces economic inequality between women and men.<sup>183,184,185</sup>

180. ActionAid (2013). Making Care Visible: Women's unpaid care work in Nepal, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. Available at [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making\\_care\\_visible.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making_care_visible.pdf)

181. CEDAW (2016). General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women

182. Hirway, I. (2015). Unpaid Work and the Economy: Linkages and Their Implications. Levy Economics Institute, Working Paper No. 83.

183. Ibid

184. ActionAid (2018). Policy Brief: Incorporation of Women's Economic Empowerment and Unpaid Care Work into regional policies: South Asia. A case for centering Unpaid Care Work within Regional frameworks. Available at: [http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Asia-policy-brief-online\\_FINAL.pdf](http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Asia-policy-brief-online_FINAL.pdf)

185. UN Women (2014). Gender Trade and Green Growth. Gender Dimensions of Regional Cooperation and Integration in South Asia.

## 8. Develop integrated policies and programmes that address the intersectionality between Unpaid Care Work and agroecology

- Governments, researchers and organisations should develop new intersectional approaches that address women's Unpaid Care Work and agroecology.
- Unpaid Care Work is highly vulnerable to environmental change and should be integrated into policies and programmes relating to water, energy and land management. Additionally, Unpaid Care Work should be integrated within policies for climate change adaptation, disaster risk management and economic development.

## 9. Ratified policies must be sufficiently funded and monitored for successful implementation

- Governments and donors must allocate sufficient funding and resources to ensure that programmes and policies do not exist only on paper.

### 5.1 Recommendations for groups

Policy frameworks significantly influence national and local policies and programmes and play a major role in women's Unpaid Care Work in South Asian farming communities. UN agencies such as FAO, IFAD, UNESCAP, UN Women and WFP now explicitly recognise women's Unpaid Care Work. Efforts to address Unpaid Care Work at the national levels and regionally within South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) must be expanded. Additionally, more concrete actions should be made to transform the situation in favour of women.

**South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation demonstrates** trailblazing leadership through promoting women's empowerment in regional development goals. SAARC must act upon the regional challenges faced by women farmers as a focal priority through recognising Unpaid Care Work and agroecology.

- SAARC's Secretary General, Amjad Hussain B. Sial, reiterated SAARC's commitment to achieving gender equality through the development of a **three-year Action Plan** on International Women's Day in March 2017. The Action Plan will address "recognition of the female heads of households, Unpaid Care Work and women in the agriculture sector" as a strategic action area.<sup>186</sup> This marks a tremendous step forward and should be implemented, monitored and adequately funded.
- **SAARC's Agriculture Centre Vision 2020** highlights the key challenges and opportunities faced across the region. SAARC can strengthen gender equality through referencing issues of gender, women and Unpaid Care Work. Additionally, SAARC should strive to create more opportunities for women smallholder farmers to thrive through promoting agroecology and regulating corporate control of markets and seeds. SAARC should take active measures to support community-based seed banks for climate resilience and food security.
- **SAARC's Gender Policy Advocacy Group (GPAG)** was founded in 2013 to ensure prioritisation and monitoring of gender equality within regional policy agendas. GPAG prioritises issues of women's leadership, economic empowerment and violence against women and girls. GPAG should take steps to actively recognise Unpaid Care Work as a central challenge to women's empowerment in rural communities.<sup>187</sup>

186. SAARC (2017). A Message on International Women's Day. Available at: [http://saarc-sec.org/news/detail\\_front/message-on-international-womens-day](http://saarc-sec.org/news/detail_front/message-on-international-womens-day)

187. ActionAid (2018). Policy Brief: Incorporation of Women's Economic Empowerment and Unpaid Care Work into regional policies: South Asia. A case for centering Unpaid Care Work within Regional frameworks. Available at: [http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Asia-policy-brief-online\\_FINAL.pdf](http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Asia-policy-brief-online_FINAL.pdf)

- **SAARC's Development Goals** are a set of indicators developed to meet the key goals defined in the Social Charter. These goals can tackle gender equality through explicitly recognising Unpaid Care Work and critically addressing women's participation and inclusion in labour markets.<sup>188</sup>

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**International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD)** addresses women's Unpaid Care Work in the Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

- **IFAD's Strategic Framework (2016-2025)** reaffirms commitment to "improved and more resilient livelihoods for all of the rural poor, including smallholder farmers, land-poor and landless workers, women and youth, marginalized ethnic groups, and victims of disaster and conflict, while not undermining the resource base." However, the framework does not mention Unpaid Care Work which should be explicitly referenced.<sup>189</sup>

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**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** has taken significant steps to promote agroecology throughout the Asia-Pacific in recent years, and has directly recognised the burden of women's Unpaid Care Work in several reports and documents.

- **FAO's Reviewed Strategic Framework and Outline of the Medium Term Plan (2018-21)** ensures its technical capacity to achieve its Strategic Objectives. While the framework underlines FAO's commitment to supporting gender equality, it does not mention Unpaid Care Work or agroecology. It is imperative that these critical issues are explicitly included within FAO's strategic planning to achieve gender equality, climate justice and sustainability in agriculture. FAO must allocate funding and substantial support for agroecological development.<sup>190</sup>
- **FAO facilitated a multi-stakeholder consultation on agroecology in Asia and the Pacific in November of 2015** in order to foster regional collaboration and debate. A key finding of the consultation stated that women's participation, knowledge and leadership are central to agroecology. In order to achieve these objectives, it is critical to promote agroecology and Unpaid Care Work in regional development programmes and in national policies.<sup>191</sup>

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188. Ibid

189. IFAD (2016). Strategic Framework 2016-2025: Enabling inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.

190. FAO (2016). Reviewed Strategic Framework and the Outline of the Medium Term Plan 2018-21. Hundred and Fifty-fifth Session. Rome, 5-9 December 2016.

191. FAO (2016). Report on the Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on Agroecology in Asia and the Pacific. FAO, Bangkok, 24-26 November 2015.

**United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commission (OHCHR)** directly references the burden of women's Unpaid Care Work.

- **OHCHR Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights** established in 2015 references women's Unpaid Care Work burden in Article 83 and recommends that states address these challenges through “ensuring that caregivers are adequately protected and supported by social programmes and services, including access to affordable childcare.”<sup>192</sup> However, little attention is given to the obstacles faced by rural women in farming communities, nor to the inevitable impacts of climate change on gendered labour burdens, which should be given further consideration in future policy guidelines.

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**World Food Programme (WFP)** provides humanitarian assistance throughout Asia and has made excellent efforts to recognise Unpaid Care Work.

- **WFP's Gender Policy (2015-2020)** explicitly recognises the burden of women's Unpaid Care Work as well as violence against women and girls in farming communities. Intersections with sustainable agriculture and women's economic empowerment should be expanded.
- **WFP's Strategic Plan (2017-2021)** is committed to integrating gender issues into all of its programming and building linkages to achieve SDG 5 including recognition, valuation and redistribution of Unpaid Care Work. Achieving these goals requires adequate funding, support and monitoring.

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**UN Women** remains at the forefront of efforts to tackle women's Unpaid Care Work and has addressed the issue in numerous publications.

- **UN Women in India contributes to the “Collective on Unpaid Care Work”**, a multi-stakeholder platform that provides an excellent example of regional collaboration for collective action and advocacy. Multi-stakeholder platforms and coalitions should be strengthened, funded and expanded into other countries.
- **UN Women's Strategic Plan (2018-2021)** references violence against women and girls as well the struggles of rural women. Article 54 pledges to address women's disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work, promote decent work, promote the rights of workers in the informal sector and increase women's representation through platforms such as trade unions.<sup>193</sup> These objectives must be adequately funded, monitored and implemented moving forward. Agroecology and climate resilience should also be integrated into policy efforts addressing women's Unpaid Care Work.

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192. OHCHR (2012). Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.

193. United Nations (2017). Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

## United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

tackles major challenges across the Asia-Pacific and remains central to the realisation of women's equality and empowerment across the region.

- **UNESCAP held the Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue in 2017** on “Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work” in partnership the UN Women's Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. During this policy discussion many aspects of women's equality were discussed including Unpaid Care Work. However little attention was given to the potential of sustainable agriculture to address these issues.<sup>194</sup>
- **UNSCAP's Social Development Division** addresses several critical issues relating to gender equality, women's political participation, and violence against women and girls. It does not refer to women's Unpaid Care Work, which should be given greater attention. UNSCAP should strengthen policies tailored for the needs of rural women at the intersections between women's Unpaid Care Work and agroecology.<sup>195</sup>



**Partapup Lakra** in India reduces Unpaid Care Work in her farming by using Cycle-Weeder. Smallholder farmers from predominantly tribal Sundargarh district have been supported to adopt or extend locally appropriate, low-cost, sustainable farming practices such as the System of Root Intensification (SRI), inter-cropping, revival of millet production, home gardens, soil health management, integrated pest management and mulching.  
PHOTO: PETER MURPHY/ACTIONAID

194. ActionAid (2018). Policy Brief: Incorporation of Women's Economic Empowerment and Unpaid Care Work into regional policies: South Asia. A case for centering Unpaid Care Work within Regional frameworks. Available at: [http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Asia-policy-brief-online\\_FINAL.pdf](http://powerproject.actionaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Asia-policy-brief-online_FINAL.pdf)

195. Ibid

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International Agroecology Action Network and ActionAid International (2018). Cultivating rural women's economic empowerment: exploring interlinkages between Unpaid Care Work, agroecology and violence against women and Girls in South Asia.



Women in Pakistan growing fuel wood plants as a way to reduce Unpaid Care Work. PHOTO: MS. BEENISH RIAZ/SAIBAAN DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION

## The POWER project

ActionAid's Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER) project is a five-year initiative (2016-2020) supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands under the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW) grant. The POWER project is working through local partners in Bangladesh, Ghana, Pakistan and Rwanda to mobilise and organise rural women to raise awareness of and claim their rights as farmers and carers. The project's objective is to increase the income, and the ability to control this income, of 21,000 rural women in Bangladesh, Ghana, Pakistan and Rwanda. It is doing this by addressing Unpaid Care Work and, at the same time, by increasing productivity and access to markets through the practice of Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture. It also addresses violence against women as a cross-cutting issue. The POWER project is also working with policy and decision makers at local, national, regional and international level to ensure an environment that better supports women's economic empowerment. For more information see the POWER project website <http://powerproject.actionaid.org/>

**ActionAid** is a global movement of people working together to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

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