
International Right to Food Theme Annual Report 2010



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Table of Contents

About this Report	2
Overview	3
Reflection of the Year	4
Lessons Learnt.....	5
Verbatim from External Stakeholders.....	5
Highlights from Our Work	6
Reforming the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).....	7
Responding to Food Crisis.....	7
Engaging in FAO Processes in the Asia-Pacific Region.....	8
Engaging the Civil Society in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Process.....	9
Influencing the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) of the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF).....	10
Improving Programming Work on Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture.....	11
Strengthening Civil Society Networking for Increased Food Security – IFSN.....	14
Organisational Objectives	16
Strengthening Team Capacity and Communications.....	16
Connecting Campaigning/Advocacy and Programming.....	16
Diversifying Income.....	16
Financial Performance	16
Stories of Change	17
Policy and Advocacy.....	18
Africa.....	18
America.....	18
Asia.....	19
Programming.....	19
Africa.....	19
America.....	22
Asia.....	25
Annex: Right to Food Core Team Organogram	29

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Compiled by Youjin B. Chung

About this Report

This report provides an overview of the International Right to Food Theme's work over 2010. The purpose of this report is to share the progress and achievements the Theme has made in 2010 and cumulatively across the strategy period (2006-2010), as well as challenges and lessons learnt.

The report is based on various PRRP (Participatory Review and Reflect Process) sessions that took place throughout the year, as well as feedback and comments gathered from ActionAid staff, stakeholders and partners. This report also highlights ActionAid's food rights work at the national level—stories that capture not only positive changes in poor peoples' lives and livelihoods but also shift in unequal power relations.

The PRRPs conducted in 2010 were more internal with fewer inputs from external stakeholders compared to previous years. Nevertheless, this report epitomises the essence of our work at international, regional and national levels, and we hope that it will allow ActionAid staff and partners, and even those who are less familiar with our work, to gain insights into our impact and learning.

Acronyms

AA: ActionAid	GAFSP: Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme
AFA: Asian Farmers Association	HRBA: Human Rights Based Approach
AHC: Ad Hoc Committee of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific	HLTF: United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis
APRC: FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific	IFI: International Financial Institutions
ASEAN: Association of South East Asian Nations	IFSN: International Food Security Network
AU: African Union	IGO: Inter-Governmental Organisation
AusAID: Australian Government Overseas Aid Program	IPC: International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
CAADP: Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme	NGO: Non Governmental Organisation
CFA: Comprehensive Framework of Action	NSA: Non State Actors
CP: Country Programme	PROPARC: Sub-Regional Platform of Farmers Organisation in Central Africa
CFS: Committee on World Food Security	PRRP: Participatory Review and Reflection Process
CGIAR: Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research	ROPPA: Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organisations of West Africa
CSM: Civil Society Mechanism of the CFS	SACAU: Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions
CSO: Civil Society Organisation	SAARC: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
DA: Development Area	SOMO: Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations – Netherlands
EAFF: East Africa Farmers' Federation	WCMP: World Conference of Muslim Philanthropists
EC: European Commission	
FAO: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation	

Overview

This section provides a brief overview of the external and internal contexts that affected the progress of our work in 2010.

During 2006-2010, there have been a myriad of challenges and opportunities for ensuring global food security and realising the right to food. For the first time in history, the number of undernourished people surpassed one billion in 2009. Indeed, the global food and fuel price spike of 2008 exacerbated the situation of world hunger, highlighting the plight of the world's growing urban populations and their vulnerability to economic change.

The global food crisis deepened food security concerns worldwide, and it contributed to the proliferation of large-scale acquisition of farmland in developing countries by other countries seeking to ensure their food supplies and energy needs. Such "land grabs" have threatened the rights, lives and livelihoods of many poor farmers around the world. Despite pledges made by governments and international donors to respond to the global food crisis and to promote sustainable agricultural development, public sector investment and spending in agriculture has remained low throughout the past five years.

Food price rise was in the news once again in 2010, with price of wheat and other staples surpassing the peak witnessed in June 2008. Subsequently, food riots were

reported in Mozambique, Egypt among other countries. These daunting challenges were compounded by increasing demand for biofuels, pressures on natural resources and climate change. Changes in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters were widely witnessed in 2010—from the earthquake in Haiti to the heat and drought in Russia that caused wildfires and further grain embargos, and to the unprecedented floods in Pakistan. These conditions brought about negative consequences for poor people's livelihoods, and this heightened the need to build their resilience in the face of climate change.

Internally, 2010 was a year of major transition for the Right to Food Theme. The theme went through an organisational change with the recruitment of a new Theme Head in May 2010 and other staff towards the latter half of the year.

With this high level of staff turnover, the theme was not able to fully engage in fundraising activities in the beginning of 2010. In the latter half of the year, however, the new Core Team was able to provide technical inputs into several fundraising proposals on food and agriculture to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, World Conference of Muslim Philanthropists (WCMP), European Commission (EC) and Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID)—of which some of them have been successful and some are currently under negotiations.

Reflection of the Year

The theme had the following six objectives in 2010 and throughout the 2006-2010 strategic period:

1. Citizens and civil society across the world will fight together for the right to food;
2. Poor people and communities will implement sustainable agricultural development models based on small-scale farming and agro-ecology and we will work with them to generate critical knowledge;
3. Poor people and communities will exercise power to secure their rights to food and to gain access to land and control over associated resources and means of subsistence;
4. Poor women will gain power to secure their rights to food and gain access to and control over associated resources and means of subsistence;
5. States and their institutions will be democratic and accountable in promoting, protecting and fulfilling the right to food, and international constraints that constrain poor country governments from fulfilling these obligations will be removed; and
6. Peoples' right to food and control over associated resources and means of subsistence are no longer undermined or denied by corporate power and trade liberalisation.

In the PRRPs that took place in May, July, September 2010 and February 2011, the Core Team identified its main achievements ("prouds") and challenges ("sorrys") for 2010.

Prouds

- Strengthening engagement with farmers' movements in all regions in Africa (ROPPA, EAFF, SACAU and PROPAC)
- Better coordination with HungerFREE, and leading the Hunger Task Force
- Expanding the IFSN and strengthening the capacity of partner organisations
- Bringing climate change to the centre of ActionAid's work and supporting CPs and partners on key research projects on sustainable agriculture
- Building capacity and enhancing understanding on climate resilient sustainable agriculture of national food rights staff in all regions
- Bringing women and other smallholder farmers and sustainable agriculture to the fore of global food policy discussions
- Contributing to the reform of the CFS and engaging with the CAADP process
- Promoting inter-thematic work with Women's Rights, especially around land rights and investing in women smallholders
- Deepening understanding of food price rise at the national level
- Building a new team

Sorrys

- Changes in staff and lack of leadership in the team in early 2010
- Insufficient contact with national right to food staff and building links between HungerFREE and IFSN
- Lack of a coherent food programming guideline
- On women's right to land, this work was mostly carried out by Women's Rights and International Policy and Campaigns, and hence the Food Rights Theme had insufficient and fragmented information on ongoing work
- Lack of long term engagement strategy with FAO and other research institutions



The Right to Food Core Team discusses its achievements and challenges over 2010 during a PRRP Session in February 2011 in Dakar, Senegal.
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Verbatim from External Stakeholders

ActionAid has so far exhibited the willingness to work in synergy with other partners. ActionAid has the potential of expanding its scope of intervention and the capacities needed in mobilising adequate resources aimed at addressing the practical and strategic gender needs of its beneficiaries."

–Chief Alabong Alazebong, Member of the Regional Council of PROPAC and Chairman of CAADP NSA Task Team

"There is excessive branding and ActionAid gives very little space to peoples' organizations and farmers' movements, as in the FAO Regional Conference in Africa. ActionAid proclaims to be different, but then hires a consultant to decide what issues to focus on and what position to take."

–Nora McKeon, former policy advisor on UN-civil society relations at the FAO

Lessons Learnt

Through the PRRP process, the Core Team identified the following key lessons to be learnt and shared.

The Core Team needs to:

- Have a more clear and grounded role in providing programming support to CPs, particularly with a *basic programming guideline*.
- Continue to work closely with other themes and facilitate in gathering best, or "promising", practices and sharing them across the Food Rights Community
- Be able to measure the impacts from local programmes from a rights-based approach—i.e. it needs to direct and embed human-rights based approach (HRBA) into local food programmes.
- Identify varying levels of CP engagement on right to food issues and agree on key countries to focus on under each of our thematic interventions.
- Have more humility when dealing with external stakeholders, and be able to provide more space for farmers' organisations in international food policy arenas.



Land Rights Activists and landless people in India shout slogans at Harding Park in Patna on 28 December 2010 – the last day of Land Rights March from Bodhgaya to Patna.
© RanjanRahi/ActionAid

Highlights from Our Work

Reforming the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

"ActionAid was very involved and influential in the CFS reform process between April-November 2009. It played an important role in the design of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) during 2010 and inputted to civil society policy messages relating to the work of the CFS. ActionAid also participated in the CFS Task Team on mapping of food security actions and resources flows at country level. With all these involvement, ActionAid played a critical role in promoting agreement between Member States on meaningful reforms and helped to create a broad, inclusive CSM."

–Chris Leather, Food and Agriculture Policy Advisor, Oxfam

For the first time in the history of the United Nations (UN), civil society organisations (CSOs) have a seat and a voice in discussing global food governance issues in the reformed Committee on World Food Security (CFS) of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). In other words, civil society constituents—including smallholder farmers, artisanal fisherfolks, herders and pastoralists, the landless, urban poor, agricultural and food workers, women, youth, consumers, indigenous peoples and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)—are **formal participants** in the CFS, alongside Member States, other UN bodies, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), international financial institutions (IFIs), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), private sector organisations and philanthropic foundations.

Through effective lobbying and advocacy, ActionAid supported the establishment of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) of the CFS, in collaboration with International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) and Oxfam

International. The essential role of the CSM is to facilitate the participation of CSOs in the work of the CFS, including providing input to negotiations and decision-making. The CSM is to provide a space for dialogue between a wide range of CSOs in which different opinions and positions can be put forward and debated.



Chris Leather (Oxfam), Beatrice Gasco (IPC), George Dixon Fernandez (MIJARC) and Ruchi Tripathi (ActionAid) © FAO

Responding to Food Crisis

In the first half of 2010, global food prices remained stable. Nevertheless, the Right to Food Theme had realised that despite stable prices at the international level, many poor countries were facing high food prices at the national level. In light of this situation, the Core Team focused on identifying the factors responsible for food price rise at the national level, and commissioned a study in three selected countries – Kenya, Pakistan and The Gambia – to feed into national advocacy and campaign plans. The report triggered positive discussion in the countries studied, and they committed to monitoring and influencing policy responses to food crisis in their respective countries.

The second half of the year witnessed steep rise in global food prices. Mozambique was one of the most severely hit

countries, with violent riots in Maputo hitting the global headlines in September. The Right to Food Core Team, in close collaboration with Policy & Campaigns, took part in media work on the price rise and discussed the options of carrying forward the work around food prices at the national level. In addition, the Core Team took part in global media work on the issue including interviews with Aljazeera Television.

For 2011, the Theme is planning to develop a medium to long term work plan and strategy for food price work, providing support to the most vulnerable countries and communities – along with regional and international advocacy and lobbying at key platforms, such as the CFS, G20 and so on.

Engaging in FAO Processes in the Asia-Pacific Region

"ActionAid has brought to the agenda of the Ad Hoc Committee (AHC) of the FAO Regional Conference in Asia and the Pacific, the importance of engagement with the global process of the CFS and the work of operationalising it at the regional level. ActionAid has urged Asia Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) to be more proactive at the international level to represent Asian farmers in the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) of the CFS. Connecting with ActionAid and International Food Security Network (IFSN) at the CSO Forum in Rome last October has built our capacities and strengthened our networking around food security issues at both regional and international levels ."

—Esther Penunia, Secretary General of AFA and Co-Steering Committee Member of the AHC

2010 was a busy year for ActionAid in terms of engaging and influencing the FAO in the Asia and the Pacific Region, especially in the context of CFS reforms. From 24-25 February 2010, ActionAid participated in the **FAO Civil Society Regional Consultation on Food Security in Asia and the Pacific Region** in Manila, The Philippines, with various civil society actors—including organisations of farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, women and youth, as well as regional and international NGOs and inter-governmental organisations (IGOs). The overall objective of this regional consultation was to share updates on various regional spaces for civil society engagement in policy, dialogue and advocacy for agriculture, rural development and food security, and to agree on a work plan for achieving a concrete civil society agenda with proposed outputs for future FAO regional meetings. In this consultation, ActionAid highlighted the importance of the involvement of regional CSOs in the CFS processes. In addition, CSOs developed their collective plan towards the FAO Regional Conference.

Subsequently, from 27 September to 1 October 2010, ActionAid took part in the 30th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea. In the CSO Parallel Meeting organised by

the Ad Hoc Committee for APRC (AHC) and the Korean CSO Working Committee (KoCWC), ActionAid and IFSN played a key role in organising a session to promote the CFS, particularly the CSM, to Asian civil society networks.

CSOs discussed various ways of working together and met with official government delegates in the APRC. They also prepared a joint declaration which was read in the official conference. The declaration covered issues such as land reforms and land grabs, investment in sustainable agriculture, national and regional food reserves, and emphasized the importance of CFS.

"...strengthen our regional platforms, recognizing other venues at national and regional levels, and how to harmonize within ourselves, sustain the discussions, level off on how to work at integration of efforts at national, regional and global levels. It is critical that we ensure national discussions to happen. We should be clear on our parameters of engagement through the CFS and terms of inclusion".

- Civil Society Declaration, Gyeongju, September 2010



Aftab Alam Khan, Asia Right to Food Coordinator, participates in the FAO APRC in South Korea in September, 2010.
© AsiaDHRRA

Engaging the Civil Society in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Process

"ActionAid is increasingly becoming the conscience of the nation on good governance. This is further buttressed by its recent efforts to get Nigerian civil society to participate in the CAADP process, from which they have all along been excluded."

– Dr Dom Okoro, Chairman of Civil Society Coalition for Poverty Eradication (CISCOPE), ActionAid partner in Nigeria

The Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is a process led by African countries with the goal of eliminating hunger and reducing poverty through improved agricultural productivity. A key principle of the CAADP agenda is to ensure multi-stakeholder participation in the development and implementation of national agricultural policy and investment plans.

ActionAid had various challenges this year in engaging with the CAADP process—including the lack of capacity and awareness on the part of civil society at the local level, inadequate participation of women, and a myriad of continental processes to follow up with limited staff capacity.

Despite these challenges, the theme strived to heighten its engagement in the CAADP process at all levels (i.e. national, regional and continental), and to build capacity and raise awareness of ActionAid food rights staff and partners so as to foster effective civil society participation in the process.

From 21-23 April 2010, ActionAid took part in the **6th CAADP Partnership Platform (PP)** in Johannesburg, and presented a policy brief which highlighted key recommendations for governments, donors and the African Union (AU) towards meeting the commitments made in the Maputo Declaration—i.e. to increase public spending in agriculture by at least 10 per cent of national budgets.

On 21 July 2010, ActionAid participated in **CAADP Day** in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso, which called for a review of the Maputo Declaration. Prior to CAADP Day, ActionAid organised a side meeting – a communiqué which was presented at the main plenary with over 300 delegates across the world. The Burkina engagement served as a capacity building for staff and partners on the CAADP implementation process.

At the **CAADP Africa Forum**—an annual platform of learning and sharing on the progress of CAADP among farmers, agricultural experts, policy and decision makers and various civil society organisations—which was held from 4 to 8 October 2010 in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso, ActionAid, together with IFSN, organised a side meeting for ActionAid staff and IFSN partners to raise awareness and increase understanding on CAADP and its processes across various levels. Particularly, ActionAid consolidated its ties with regional farmers' organisations—including ROPPA, EAFF, UMAGIRI, SACA and PROPAC—so that they can be better represented in the policy-making process.

The Africa Forum was held under the theme of "Meeting the Challenges of Climate Change: Strategies of Smallholder Farmers to achieve Food Security and Income Growth in Africa". At the forum, various speakers presented the causes, effects and impacts of climate change on agriculture. Subsequently, participants were invited on a field trip to visit farmers who were spearheading climate change adaptation in their farms.

One of the key milestones in ActionAid's engagement with CAADP was influencing the CAADP Secretariat to promote the participation of non state actors (NSA) at national and regional levels. ActionAid is at the final stage of negotiating the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the African Union (AU) so that the two organisations can collaborate in strengthening the capacity of stakeholders and farmers to engage and facilitate the implementation of CAADP.



ActionAid organised a side meeting on CAADP Day (21 July) in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso.
© Buba Khan

In addition, to better leverage its engagement in the CAADP process, ActionAid commissioned a study of CAADP from a gender perspective, and commissioned an analysis of the CAADP aligned national investment plans of six selected countries (Nigeria, Malawi, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya and Ghana). The findings of these studies will feed into shaping ActionAid's policy position on CAADP in early 2011.

ActionAid also developed a [toolkit](#) which CSOs can utilise to develop their engagement strategy with CAADP; this was launched at the World Social Forum in Dakar, Senegal in February 2011, and will be developed into an ActionAid advocacy toolkit in collaboration with HungerFREE. This work will also be carried forth in 2011.

At the country-level, the Core Team supported ActionAid Nigeria in its two-day meeting of CSOs on 2-3 December 2010, titled "Stakeholders Forum on the NSA Participation in the CAADP". The purpose of the meeting was to critically review the Nigerian Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP) and agree on how to strengthen NSA participation in the CAADP process. Following this meeting, an Interim Committee was set up to represent Nigerian CSOs in the CAADP Process, and since then, its members have become part of technical

working groups of the NAIP as well as national technical committee on the CAADP. These positive developments are expected to ensure that issues that are critical to women and other smallholder farmers will be addressed in the final version of the NAIP.



The Right to Food Core Team supported ActionAid Nigeria in its two-day meeting of CSOs in December 2010.
© Constance Okeke

Influencing the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) of the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF)

"Your constructive approach has contributed to a stronger Framework which now better reflects the current scenario for food and nutrition security. I am grateful to you for enabling the production of the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action (UCFA). I look forward to continued dialogue and collaboration within the framework of the UCFA. I welcome your thoughts on the best approaches for disseminating the UCFA's principles and for encouraging collective pursuit of its outcomes."

– David Nabarro, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Food Security and Nutrition, and Coordinator of the High Level Task Force for the Global Food Security Crisis

The United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, set up the High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF) in April 2008 to ensure that the UN had a more coherent and effective response to rising food prices. The HLTF developed the original Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) in July 2008 within a very short timeframe against the backdrop of the global food crisis. The CFA looked at the need to have a comprehensive approach to the food crisis and developed a twin-track approach: Short-term measures to respond to immediate needs and longer term

strategies and investments aimed at building resilience to price shocks.

Taking into account the changing international context and various food security initiatives that were launched since the original CFA, the HLTF decided to update the framework. While still based on the twin track approach, the updated CFA includes a wider range of views including the right to food, ecosystem management, access to land, water security, nutrition, urban hunger, pastoralism, gender, employment and involvement of the private sector. This

revision provides the space for civil society, including farmers' organisations and other stakeholders to comment on the framework.

ActionAid made its submission in April, recommending that the updated CFA address the following six priority areas in addition to the areas already covered by the HLTF: 1) Women and food security; 2) Sustainable agriculture, access to natural resources and climate change; 3) Biofuels; 4) Land rights and land reform; 5) Institutions and institutional frameworks; and 6) Public financing for smallholder agriculture.

On 17-18 May 2010, Adriano Campolina, the former Americas and Right to Food Director, and Ruchi Tripathi, Head of Right to Food Theme, attended the consultation meeting hosted by David Nabarro, HLTF Coordinator and Secretary General's Special Representative on Food Security, in Dublin, Ireland. This two-day meeting, co-hosted by Irish Aid and Concern Worldwide, brought together around 150 representatives from the civil society, NGOs, farmers'

organisations, donors, government representatives, UN agencies and other international organisations, and aimed to feed into the updated CFA.

In the plenary, ActionAid raised key points regarding the strong role of the state in promoting and protecting the right to food; the greater need for emphasis on women's rights and the recognition of their multiple roles in designing any food security interventions; and the need for increased and adequate finance to meet coming challenges. A number of ActionAid's recommendations found space in the revised CFA, but not to the full extent. ActionAid also co-facilitated one of the working groups on social protection.

The Updated CFA was released during the 26th Session of the CFS in Rome on 11-14 and 16 October 2010. ActionAid and other CSOs continue to engage closely with David Nabarro in his capacity as Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Food Security and Nutrition, and Coordinator of the High Level Task Force for the Global Food Security Crisis.

Improving Programming Work on Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture



Capacity Building Workshop on Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
© Buba Khan

One of the major achievements of the Right to Food Theme in 2010 was incorporating climate change issues, especially sustainable agriculture and disaster risk reduction (DRR), to food rights work on the ground and to the organisation at large. The growing space of climate change discussions

means that ActionAid staff and partners are more aware of the potential impacts of climate change on food security, agriculture and sustainable livelihoods. It also has the potential to facilitate ActionAid's lobby, advocacy and fundraising activities related to sustainable agriculture both

inside and outside the organisation. Finally, climate change functions as a cross-cutting issue that promotes inter-thematic collaboration—for example between Food Rights and Emergencies team in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency responses, and between Food Rights and Women's Rights in improving women's access to land.

In order to improve the programming work on climate resilient sustainable agriculture, the Core Team organised two regional workshops to raise awareness and to build capacity of ActionAid food rights staff.

The Right to Food Theme, Asia Regional office, IFSN and ActionAid Vietnam organised the **Asia Sustainable Agriculture Workshop** at Hao Binh in Vietnam May 11-15 with the participation of national colleagues/partners from nine countries (Vietnam, China, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and apologies from Thailand).

The main objectives of the workshop were to understand overall approach of sustainable agriculture, learning and sharing experiences and approaches to deepen our work at the national and local level.

Besides sharing experiences and knowledge on sustainable agriculture, participants also learned many lessons from success stories like the FoSHoL project in Bangladesh (See Stories of Change), Rizal dairy and vegetable farming in the Philippines (contributed by external resource person), on-farm and off farm sustainable development projects in Vietnam and so on. Moreover, participants learned about the land reform struggle in Nepal and in depth history of land reforms in Vietnam.

Field visits, which were key part of the workshop, helped participants to understand what sustainable agriculture practices were being carried out by farming families in Vietnam. The constraints found in spreading sustainable agriculture included lack of government focus and subsidies for sustainable agriculture, lack of research, credit issues, extreme weather conditions, lack of training and so on.

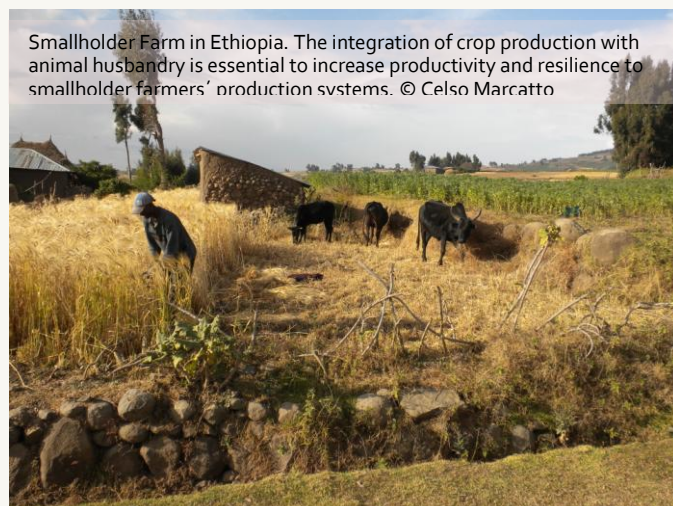
Participants also discussed the importance of the role of state in changing policy, budgetary allocations, research and institutional priorities to spread sustainable agriculture to the larger community of poor women and men farmers. In addition, it was agreed that CSOs should, among others, start documenting (through rigorous research) success stories, facilitate farmer exchange visits and strengthen farmers' networks.

On 22-26 November, the Core Team organised the **Capacity Building Workshop on Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture** in Addis Ababa, with support from ActionAid Ethiopia. Participants were drawn from Kenya, Ghana, Mozambique, The Gambia, Rwanda and Ethiopia. The five-day workshop was mainly to share experiences on sustainable agriculture and natural resource management practices in the face of climate change, among key African

CPs. A field visit to two different Development Areas (DAs) in Ethiopia also offered a good opportunity for participants to interact with farmers' groups on how they have been affected by climate change and how they are coping with the effects.



Meeting of some participants of the Capacity Building Workshop on Sustainable Agriculture in Ethiopia, with the representatives of the community of Gorgo Zuyia, District of Ankober. The irregularity of rain patterns on the recent years has affected the food production and food security of local communities. © Celso Marcatto



Smallholder Farm in Ethiopia. The integration of crop production with animal husbandry is essential to increase productivity and resilience to smallholder farmers' production systems. © Celso Marcatto



Soil erosion in the District of Ankober, Ethiopia. Soil erosion is one of the most common and main problem of smallholder farmers in Latin America, Africa and Asia. © Celso Marcatto

On 13-17 December, the Right to Food Theme, in collaboration with the International Emergencies & Conflicts Team (IECT) and International Policy & Campaigns, held the **Climate Change Skills Sharing Seminar** in Dhaka,

Bangladesh on 13-19 December 2010, with special emphasis on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and sustainable agriculture. The seminar was comprised of several sessions, field visits to Sirjganj and Naogaon, and interactions with external stakeholders.

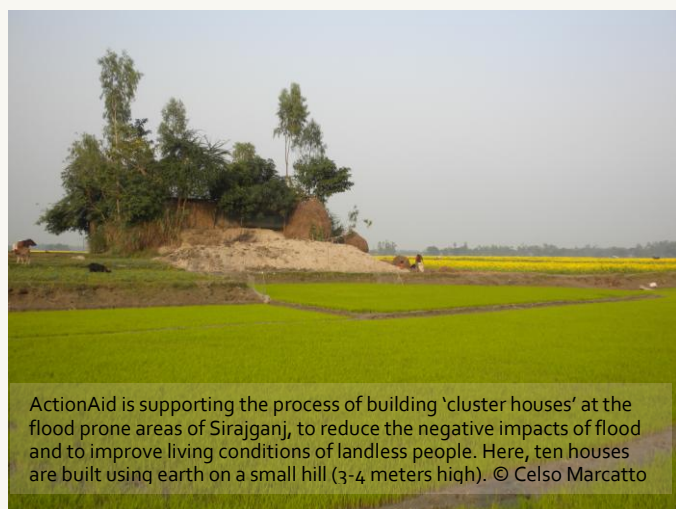


Meeting with members of Sirajganj community to talk about DRR methodologies they are using to identify the main problem and the possible coping mechanisms to reduce the impacts of flood on people's lives and on food security. © Celso Marcatto

Participants engage in participatory exercises at the Climate Change Skills Sharing Seminar. © Celso Marcatto

The seminar was attended by a total of 29 participants from 18 CPs and international secretariat units, including IECT, Right to Food, European region and policy team. External participants included several academics, including Dr Atiq Rahman, Executive Director for Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies; Dr A. K. Enamul Haque, Executive Director for Economic Research Group; and Professor Sharmin Nilormee from Jahangir University, who promoted insightful discussions on issues related to climate change and its ongoing effects on the Bangladeshi population.

Topics discussed at the seminar were: a) Getting basics right – science of climate impact; b) Economics of climate impact; c) Gender dynamics of climate impact; d) Adaptation financing; e) Ecological justice; f) Climate Resilient Programming Tools; g) Sustainable Agriculture in a Changing Climate; h) DRR as Climate change Adaptation Strategy; and i) Policy framework/options for climate change. Field visits to Sirajganj and Naogaon helped participants to understand what communities are doing on the ground to adapt to flood and drought.



ActionAid is supporting the process of building 'cluster houses' at the flood prone areas of Sirajganj, to reduce the negative impacts of flood and to improve living conditions of landless people. Here, ten houses are built using earth on a small hill (3-4 meters high). © Celso Marcatto

Throughout the seminar, participants recognised the importance of linking policy and programming in informing policy advocacy at the national and international level. Overall, the seminar provided guidance for formulating ActionAid's future climate change strategy.

In addition to organising workshops and seminars, the Right to Food Core Team provided guidance and implementation **support to ActionAid Pakistan on post-flood food, agriculture and livelihoods programmes.**

At the national and local level in Pakistan, *Kissan Ittehad* (farmers' unions) and Sustainable Agriculture Action Group (SAAG) were mobilised for a number of consultations, press conferences and mass rallies. Other efforts included public interest litigations to address the rights of women, contractors and tenants, some of which have been successfully achieved.

The Core Team also supported field rehabilitation programmes – encouraging alternative sources of food security and livelihoods, such as kitchen gardening, seed banks, cash for work, and livestock and poultry distribution that provided immediate food needs.



A traditional system to catch fish at the Sirajganj area, Bangladesh. © Celso Marcatto

“The food security policies should not empower large companies at the expense of the hunger of the poor. They should work to stop the further expansion of agro-fuels, GM crops in the rural communities in the South, and prevent the expansion of a new green revolution, since these measures have proven to be more likely to increase hunger and food insecurity of the most affected people, than improve the food security situation. It must take into account the overwhelming case and country documentation that evidences that benefits of such crops and policies have been based towards major agro-business players, excluding peasants and other groups in situation of vulnerability, and in many cases violating their right to adequate food.”

– From the 26 country-led IFSN submission on the “Towards an EU policy framework to assist developing countries addressing agriculture and food security challenges”

The International Food Security Network (IFSN), a project co-funded by the European Commission (EC) and ActionAid, entered its 2nd phase in October 2009 with the mandate of “Strengthening Civil Society Networking in the International Policy Dialogue for an Increased Food and Nutritional Security”. Since then, it has been successful in expanding its global network and in executing national food security network plans in 26 countries, which include several distinct pieces of research on food and nutrition security at the national level.

Governance Structure

In 2010, IFSN went through a reform of its governance structure, and it now consists of a Steering Committee and several Horizontal Working Groups. For the first time in its history, the grassroots partners of IFSN have been elected to provide political guidance to the international network and represent it externally. Claudia Carcamo from Honduras has been elected as the Chairperson of the network.

The election of the Chairperson and the Steering Committee members followed a transparent and participatory process. The Steering Committee is expected to work for two years and provide guidance to network, especially in determining the politics and governance of the network. It is worthy to demonstrate how the grassroots food security organisations can play important roles in an international food security network.

The Chairperson led the IFSN delegation to the FAO annual conference and participated in the CSO forums, while Ruchi Tripathi, Head of Right to Food and IFSN Steering Committee member played an important role in defining the structure of the CFS.

Advocacy

In terms of advocacy, IFSN contributed to the consultation process on the European Commission (EC) Issues Paper

“Towards a EU policy framework to assist developing countries addressing agriculture and food security challenges” in January 2010. In the comments, IFSN highlighted the importance of protecting smallholder based agriculture in southern countries. It also stressed the need to make aid more effective, to increase market access for smallholders, to protect farmers’ ownership over land, and to promote a comprehensive social safety-net programme and effective input support for small farmers. Furthermore, IFSN demanded the EU to take actions against corporate land grabbing. The EU appreciated the comprehensive remarks made by IFSN and promised to reshape its policy framework.

IFSN also participated in the European Day and the CTA (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation) Briefing in Brussels on 15 September, 2010. In the CTA Briefing, IFSN highlighted the importance of taking stock of Asian experience of the Green Revolution before the EC pursues similar corporate based scheme in Africa. IFSN also participated in the European Food Security Group (EFSG) meeting on 15 September 2010 at the CONCORD Secretariat in Brussels.

In addition to EC organised events, IFSN was able to forge a better regional and international representation at policy arenas—including the CFS, FAO regional meetings in America, Africa and Asia, CAADP, AU meetings, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)—with active participation of its members.

Capacity-Building

IFSN organised the experience sharing visit of Renato Maluf, President of CONSEA (National Council for Food Security and Nutrition) in Brazil, in IFSN India from 19-22 April, 2010. During his visit, he participated in workshops where he shared his experience on Brazil’s effort in establishing a national food security council and its role in reducing hunger.

He also elaborated how the Brazilian government has prioritised hunger with its Zero Hunger programme.

Farmer to farmer exchange programme between Vietnam and Cambodia was also organized, where the farmers shared their experiences and innovative practices on the sustainable agriculture.

In 2010, the West African IFSN and the Asia Regional IFSN were established to undertake regional advocacy initiatives. In the West African network, there are four IFSN countries while the Asian network has five. Respective regional meetings were held in The Gambia and Cambodia.

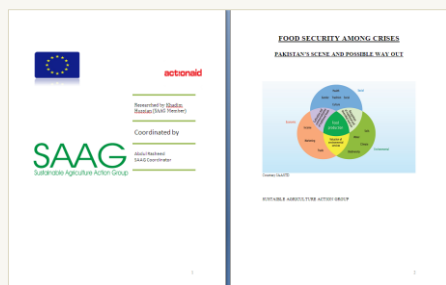
Building CSOs' capacity and understanding of sustainable agriculture was another milestone in IFSN's work in 2010. By co-organising three regional workshops on sustainable agriculture in Africa and Asia and by undertaking thematic research and facilitating farmer to farmer knowledge exchanges, IFSN and ActionAid were able to champion climate resilient sustainable agriculture in its policy and programming work.

Research and Publication

Find these publications on hive: <http://bit.ly/lr351r>

Gender and Access to Natural Resources in the PALOP countries:

The study aims at mainstreaming a gender approach in the access to and management of natural resources. Beyond a conceptual component on the subject of gender and access to land, this study contains an analysis of the international regulatory framework and four case studies (Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique and East Timor) and adds recommendations for action. This potential lobbying and advocacy tool is currently being translated from Portuguese for wider use.



Food Security among Crises: Pakistan's Scene and Possible Way Out:

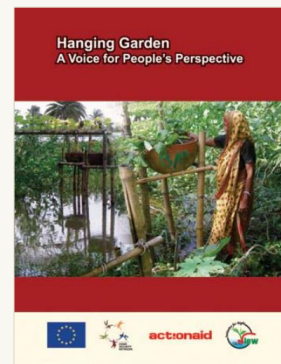
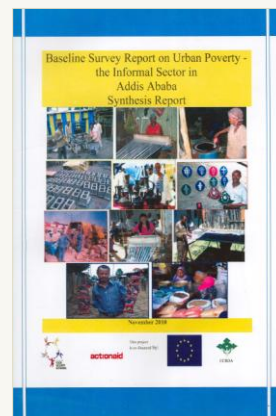
The report focuses on the situation of food security in Pakistan – the government's

approach and civil society's propositions in the realm of policy. It recommends a policy prescription for a sustainable agriculture and food security for the people of Pakistan. The study also sketches out the debate on the related concepts of "right to food" and "food sovereignty" while dwelling upon

its connections with trade, finance and development paradigms.

Baseline Survey on Urban Poverty: The Informal Sectors in Addis Ababa:

In Ethiopia 50.6% people are engaged in the informal sectors (e.g. crafts and related trade work and service, sales work at shops and markets). Using quantitative and qualitative approach, the baseline survey looks at the informal sectors in Addis Ababa and its role in poverty alleviation. The survey also aims to explore the policy and environment related problems affecting the actors of this sector.



Booklet on Hanging Garden: A Voice for People's Perspective:

This publication focuses on the sufferings of the water logged community in the southwest coastal region of Bangladesh and the innovative Hanging Garden for enhancing food security. The booklet also focuses on the people's movements against the 'development disaster' by IFIs.

Policy review on the Draft National Agricultural Policy in Uganda:

The review of the draft National Agricultural Policy was conducted to contribute towards formulation of an appropriate Agricultural Policy that would deliver on sustainable improvement of people's livelihoods and national development objectives in Uganda.



Report on Survey Conducted in Seven Districts of Assam and Meghalaya 2010:

This survey is aimed at exploring the present scenario of the functioning of food security schemes in five districts of Assam and two in Meghalaya in India. It particularly seeks to ascertain the status of implementation on the basic food entitlements such as ICDS (Integrated Child

Development Schemes), MDMS (Mid Day Meal Scheme), PDS (Public Distribution System) and NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) in seven districts of two States.

Organisational Objectives

Strengthening Team Capacity and Communications

One of the main organisational achievements for the Right to Food Core Team in 2010 was building a new team and mentoring for new staff members. The team went through a structural change in May 2010 with the recruitment of a new Theme Head, and a new Global Food Programming Coordinator, a Rome-based Food Policy Officer, and a Team Administrator and Communications Assistant towards the latter half of the year. Africa Food Rights Coordinator also left the team mid year and a new member was recruited. ActionAid's Trade Justice Coordinator who was acting as Interim Head of Theme up until May 2010 assumed the role of Asia Right to Food Coordinator from June 2010. With the joining of a programme coordinator, the team was able to increase its focus on strengthening programming quality especially in the field of sustainable agriculture. The team's capacity to monitor and influence global food policy debate was enhanced with a policy officer who is able to connect with various Rome-based processes and developments. In addition, the team's internal administrative systems and communications work were successfully set up and carried out by the new team administrator and communications assistant, who was also able to redesign and revive the [Food Rights Theme page](#) on ActionAid's intranet, *hive*.

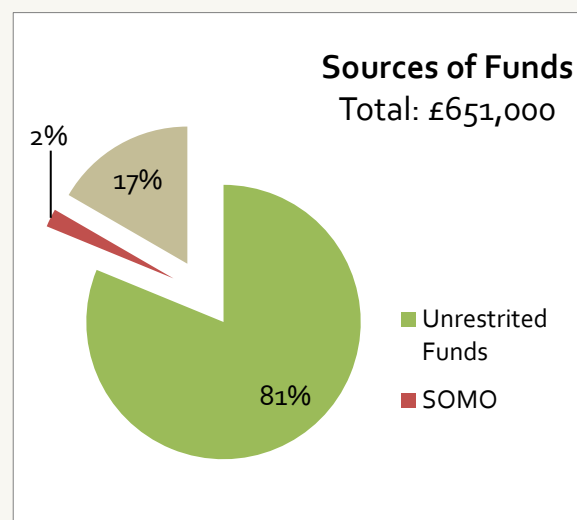
Connecting Campaigning/Advocacy and Programming

The Hunger Task Force, which consists of Food Rights, Women's Rights, HungerFREE, AA USA and regional policy coordinators of Europe, Asia, Africa and Americas, was crucial in facilitating the sharing of plans and coordinating ActionAid's policy and programming work on food and hunger. In 2010, Head of Right to Food Theme chaired the Hunger Task Force, and channelled discussions on priority areas—i.e. investing in women smallholders, land rights, climate resilient sustainable agriculture and global food governance. The Hunger Task Force developed its joint plans as part of the wider programme and policy community meeting in September 2010 in Johannesburg and continues to remain in contact through teleconferences and updates.

Diversifying Income

In 2010, the Core Team was able to provide technical inputs into several fundraising proposals on food and agriculture to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Conference of Muslim Philanthropists (WCMP), the European Commission (EC) and the Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID). AusAID project has been successful; the discussions with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are progressing well; and others are under negotiation.

Financial Performance



Main sources of funds for the International Right to Food Theme in 2010 were unrestricted funds with other minor funds from SOMO (Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations - Netherlands). The approval of the EC funded IFSN project in 2009 also contributed to an increase in the overall income in 2010.

With total income of £651,000 and total expenditure of £480,463, the International Food Rights Theme had an under expenditure of 22.6 percent in 2010. The main reason is lack of staff in the first half of the year to take forward planned expenditure.

On 30 October 2010, ActionAid Rwanda joined the people of Gisagara to celebrate the World Rural Women and World Food day with the official launch of 2.5h of improved banana plantation project in Muganda supported by ActionAid, benefiting over 600 households. The day was marked by traditional dances and songs from women and ActionAid used the day to urge the government to amend the constitution and recognise food as a right among other fundamental human rights.
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Stories of Change

The stories featured in the following pages illustrate powerful examples of community empowerment and the progressive realisation of the right to food. These stories go beyond simple anecdotes of how one individual's life has been bettered because of ActionAid's interventions. Rather, they capture the broader impact of our work, especially in addressing

unequal power relations. These stories will show how poor and excluded rights holders can exercise power to secure rights; how women and girls' empowerment can shift power unequal relations; how citizens and civil society can come together to fight for social justice; and how duty-bearers, including ActionAid, can be made more accountable

Policy and Advocacy

Africa

Kenya: Anchoring the right to food in the national constitution

On 27 August 2010, tens of thousands of Kenyans celebrated the signing into law of the new constitution, which guarantees the right to food, including women's rights to land, ecological justice and promotion of sustainable agriculture. Although implementation (transition phase) of the constitution is expected to take six years, approximately **10 million hunger vulnerable Kenyans** are to benefit from the reform. In addition, the constitution will have significant impact on **47 percent** of undernourished Kenyans. The promulgation of the new constitution is a significant change for Kenya, not only because it marks the end of a twenty-year struggle for reforms, but also because it is a cumulative result of community empowerment, solidarity and influencing of duty-bearers.

The road to the new constitution was a long and winding one. ActionAid Kenya's engagement on the constitutional reform began under the banner of **Basic Needs, Basic Rights**—a long-standing campaign which started in 1998 to advocate for state guarantee of fundamental economic, social and cultural rights, including food, water and education. ActionAid Kenya was at the forefront of championing the progressive provisions on basic rights, leading to introduction of a new chapter on Bill of rights in the new constitution. AAIK supported civic education on all drafts of constitution and facilitated collection of **12,000 submissions** on contentious issues collected from **16 different communities** across Kenya to the Committee of Experts on Constitutional Review, the official government body that led the drafting process.

Upon passage of the draft constitution by the parliament, ActionAid Kenya trained **600 community resource persons** to provide civic education to women, youth, farmers and pastoralists' groups in 16 communities, raising awareness of the provisions of the new constitution, increasing their consciousness as rights holders and mobilizing collective action. ActionAid Kenya also used radio programmes to sensitize the wider public on the gains from the new constitution and to amplify support from citizens and other non-state actors. These efforts culminated in majority support for the draft constitution from the communities with which AAIK engaged, and subsequent endorsement by 67 percent of Kenyans at the national referendum on 4 August 2010. Areas that were critical to AAIK engagement include the bill of rights, devolution, representation and land.

Community participation in policy formulation

Years prior to the new constitution, CSOs and farmers participation in policy making was at the pleasure of policy makers. There have been strenuous efforts on the part of the civil society in pushing for effective agricultural policies. One such example is NGOMA, an organization for small-scale dairy and maize farmers representing seven districts in the Rift Valley Province. Its name is derived from two Swahili words, Ng'ombe (cows) and Mahindi (maize). First launched in 2002 with support from ActionAid Kenya, NGOMA has been operating as a lobby and advocacy group for policies and institutional reforms on issues that affect small scale farmers. Also meaning "drum" in Swahili, NGOMA symbolizes small scale farmers' rallying call for the revitalization of the maize and dairy sectors through effective policy engagement.

Realizing that smallholder women farmers, despite their predominant role in agricultural production, do not benefit proportionately from national agricultural policy which is often controlled by large scale men farmers, NGOMA advocated for policies that provide equal access to inputs to poor and vulnerable rural farmers, especially women. This advocacy work, with support from ActionAid Kenya, culminated in the passing of the National Accelerated Agricultural Inputs Access Programme (NAAIAP) in 2009, which is expected to reach 2.5 million farmers with affordable farm inputs while building markets.

Ms Helen Yego, Secretary of NGOMA, has always challenged the common saying—'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish, and he will feed himself for life'. She rather questions: **"Suppose someone more powerful upstream interferes with the flow of water or pollutes it. The man will not get the fish, despite the training"**.

The new constitution, through real people's participation provides the space for smallholder farmers to play an active role in policy formulation and in creating necessary institutional set ups.

America

Brazil: Guaranteeing the right to food in the national constitution

In February 2010, the National Congress of Brazil approved the inclusion of the right to food in the federal constitution as a fundamental right. This victory was the result of much struggle on the part of ActionAid, and also from various sectors of civil society, social movements, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and networks. It is a big step towards ending hunger for **30.2 percent** of Brazilian households that are food insecure. This

achievement also proves that a strong civil society is a basic condition for any struggle that generates political change.

The root of this success lies in the strong partnership built between ActionAid and the National Food and Nutritional Security Ministry (CONSEA) to promote the HungerFREE Brazil campaign and to establish a working group within CONSEA that brought together civil society actors advocating for the constitutional guarantee of the right to food.

To achieve this goal, the campaign produced a plan of action with three main strategies. The first strategy adopted by CONSEA's Working Group was the promotion of mobilisation and engagement actions to press the Congress for the approval of Constitutional Amendment 47/2003. The second strategy was building a close relationship with the civil society and bringing the campaign's message throughout Brazil by working with NGOs and communicating with the general public via the Internet, mainly social networks. The third and final strategy was building relations and lobbying the government. President Lula has been involved in the campaign since 2009 after ActionAid sent a letter (Explanatory Memorandum 002/2009) to urge his involvement in the HungerFREE campaign and to demand his approval of the constitutional guarantee of the right to food.

These strategies and actions culminated in the approval of the proposal that includes the right to food in the Federal Constitution on 3 February 2010. The proposal was then transformed in the Constitutional Amendment 64/2010 and has become a social right listed in Article 6 in the constitution.

Renato Maluf, President of CONSEA, notes, "*Ensuring the right to food, and with it, food sovereignty and food security and nutrition, becomes the duty of the state, not just a policy issue.*"

When asked about the organisations that had significantly contributed to the achievement of the HungerFREE campaign in Brazil, he highlighted the work of ActionAid.

The next challenge after the adoption of the Constitutional Amendment is monitoring the enforceability of that right. A subsequent campaign, **HungerFREE – Make it work!** has been launched to address this challenge.

Asia

India: Marching in Bihar for land rights

More than **500 landless and marginalised women and men**, along with over 20 civil society groups, Sarvodaya

leaders (those following Gandhian social philosophy of non-violent means of social transformation), JP movement groups (a movement started in 1974 by Jayaprakash Narayan as a part of India's struggle for Independence against the authoritarian rule of the Congress), leftist political parties, Ekta Parishad (a non-violent social movement working on land and forest rights at the national level), various academics and ex-bureaucrats, undertook a **130 kilometre journey** on foot to demand action against the **unfulfilled agenda of land reforms** and on the **promise of land to the landless** to the state Government of Bihar. The march generated fervent energy in hundreds of villages along the route and culminated into a resounding mass public meeting in the state capital to drive home the voices of the poor. A charter of demand was delivered to the Bihar government for immediate action. This was subsequently followed up with personal meetings with various state authorities and bureaucrats who were supporting the cause. With wide local and national media coverage, an extensive public awareness was generated on the issue of land rights.

Consequently, Land and Revenue Department of Bihar Government issued an order to dispose of all pending land grab cases, particularly on homestead and *Bhoodan* land ("land gift"). Furthermore, an order has been issued to give **0.03 acre of land to each landless Mahadalit family** or instead **Rs 20000 (GBP 273)** per family to support them with the purchase of land. So far, **45,000 people** have been allocated homestead land, and similar number of families has been able to claim the land they had been granted earlier but never received. Further **1,443 acres** of agricultural land have been returned to **1,500 dalit families**, some of whom have started cultivating their plots.

Programming

Africa

Tanzania: Turning the tides for seaweed farmers

In North Pemba, Zanzibar, seaweed farming is the major source of livelihood for many people. It contributes to about 25% to Zanzibar's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, for more than two decades, the production of seaweed and management of the business was directly controlled by foreign companies.

Foreign companies would provide seaweed farmers with farming material and ropes on condition that they solely sell their produce to the companies. As a result, farmers had no control on where they could sell their seaweed and at what price. In North Pemba, 30 out of 54 shehias (villages) engage

in seaweed farming, involving 10,000 people, 7,500 of which are women.

This problem has been exacerbated by the failure to observe government rules and procedures by local leaders, some government officials and operating foreign companies. Seaweed farmers were not informed of their rights or entitlements. This all changed in 2006.

In 2006, ActionAid met with farmers to address their problems and sensitise them about their rights and entitlements. The seaweed farmers later went on to establish the **Pemba Seaweed Farmers Association (PESEFA)**. ActionAid facilitated a series of awareness raising and sensitisation sessions to strengthen PESEFA's governance system, leadership and management. With the aim of reducing their dependence on companies, ActionAid provided an initial support for PESEFA to establish its own saving and credit groups and basic farming equipments and material.



'Mkasha Shaame in his seaweed farm'
©ActionAid Tanzania

The changes have been dramatic: there are currently 1,625 members; the price for seaweed has more than doubled (TZS 120 to 250 per kilogram); there is improved production of quality seaweed to about 10,000 tonnes per year; the rights and entitlements of farmers are protected; farmers freely sell their seaweed to companies they want; relations between farmers and companies have improved; farmers have established other means of earning income apart from seaweed farming; farmers can negotiate and demand for tax payment and developments of their villages; and lastly, PESEFA have received recognition from the government and its stakeholders, earning a place at the negotiation table on issues affecting farmers' lives.

Mkasha Shaame, 49, is the secretary of PESEFA and appreciates the success they have gained through ActionAid's support. **"We highly appreciate the efforts made by ActionAid in building the capacity of our leaders and members. PESEFA has managed to mobilise more members and negotiate seaweed prices with buyers. This year we went on strike and refused to sell our seaweed at a low price. Though we were intimidated by the buyers, we**

stood firm. The government has recognised PESEFA's efforts and contributions. PESEFA has been approached by other seaweed farmers in other districts to form a regional level organisation to cater for all seaweed farmers in Zanzibar."

(USD 1 = TZS 1,486.42)

Somaliland: Improving access to water and equipment for smallholder farmers

Food rights work in Somaliland focuses on reducing vulnerability and improving livelihoods of smallholder farmers by promoting better access to clean water, building capacity on modern farming techniques and sustainable water resource management.

ActionAid Somaliland, in collaboration with partners, helped construct **40 berkads**—ground tanks lined with masonry and/or concrete that collect surface run-off during intense rainfall—in Maroodijeex, Togdheer and Sanaag regions. The intervention increased communities' total water volume, mitigating the risks from water shortage during dry spells. A total of **55,590** poor livestock farmers, and especially women and girls in the pastoralist villages who are involved in fetching water, benefitted from the intervention.



'Anab in her vegetable garden'
©ActionAid Somaliland

The improved access to water reduced household burdens on water related expenditures and on having to walk long distances to collect water, especially for women and girls. Moreover, it increased children's enrolment in schools. In Elbahay community, for example, additional **90** pupils were enrolled after benefitting from water storage facility. The construction of water points also provided employment and improved skills to masons and youths in rural areas. Another **55** households (385 people) from Sanaag region benefitted from construction of roof catchment that provided safe and clean drinking water, and children became no longer susceptible to diarrhoea and other diseases from contaminated hard water.

In Udan village in the Gabiley city of Maroodijeex region, **889** agro-pastoralists benefitted from **11 shallow wells**—hand-dug wells made with local bricks and concrete top slabs—and **1 earth dam**. **90** smallholder farmers, **21 of whom are women**, also gained knowledge and skills in modern farming techniques, ranging from planting, post-harvest storage and marketing.

"I can now sleep without any worries. This is how I felt after ActionAid and SOHA (Somaliland Hope Association) built my shallow well. Before, I was worried about how I could repair my well when it kept collapsing. The only way to get water was to carry it on my back from the valley, which is 6km away. Sometimes I would walk for an hour and a half, four times a day. I had a lot of back pain," says Anab, a 50-year old smallholder farmer in the village.

"They also provided me with irrigation tools for my land, such as a pipeline, water pump and spray pump. Thanks to this support, I am now cultivating crops like papaya, tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, onion and maize. I take these crops and sell them at the market. I can earn SL 13,000 (around £1.30) in a day, which I wasn't able to do before. With this, I can buy food and clothing for my family."

According to Somaliland Water and Sanitation Coordination Committee, women's decision-making in the water sector has improved as they now feel they have greater responsibility and they realise that it is not just traditional elders or male members who can take charge. Indeed, the role of women in water management has changed over time. Women are now entrusted with keeping the materials and funds of water-related projects and managing the berkads after their construction.

ActionAid, in partnership with SOHA, also provided **900 tractor hours to 300 agro-pastoral households (250 of which are female-headed)** consisting of **2184** people in nine villages in Gabiley. Most farmers in the region do not have their own tractors and have no money to rent one.



'Milgo with her children'
©ActionAid Somaliland

"I am really excited because now I am harvesting 30 bags of sorghum from my farm. I will sell 50% to pay for my families' food, clothes and school fees for my children. The other 50% I will save so that we can use it in the coming winter time," says Milgo Abdi, a 39-year old farmer and mother of seven children.

"Before, I could barely harvest any sorghum and we did not have enough food to eat. I really used to feel sorry for my children who were always hungry. It was hard to work on the farm—I did not have the equipment, money and seeds to cultivate my farm. Because of ActionAid's support, I now have enough food and income. Thank you ActionAid from the bottom of my heart."

ActionAid plans to support more women smallholder farmers in the future so that families like Anab and Milgo can have better livelihoods. Promoting women's access to productive resources will empower them economically and politically in accessing justice in post-conflict situations.

Rwanda: Increasing trading opportunities for cassava growers in Nyanza Town

In 2008, ActionAid Rwanda provided financial support (RWF 7,950,000, around GBP 8,368) to 2 villages in Nyanza to cultivate improved cassava seeds. This was to ensure more effective prevention and control of diseases such as cassava mosaic and cassava brown strike disease; to improve women's access to inputs; and to improve overall production. This project led to considerable increase in yields of fresh cassava to 8,000 tons. However, this proved to be too much to be consumed by the local market, and many crops became spoiled due to lack of processing and storage facilities. In 2010, ActionAid supported the establishment of cassava growers' cooperative, consisting of 20 men and 300 women. The new cooperative has been equipped with a processing facility with a washing station where the cassava can be washed before milling. This new enterprise increased the added value of cassava flour, improved farmers' access to marketing and diversified the livelihood options of poor farmers.

"This is the only cassava processing unit in Nyanza and consequently, it will attract many people from surrounding areas to this village which will inadvertently increase trading opportunities for my community", says Anathasia Mukandanga, a 43 year old farmer who lost her husband and older children in the genocide of 1994.

She now lives with her two children, aged 4 and 12, in a small community with other women who are similarly affected, and is an active member of the new cooperative.

"The quality of life has improved and our children no longer suffer from diseases that result from unwashed

poisonous cassava. The increased price of cassava will directly benefit 300 households and about 4,500 households in two neighbouring villages", proudly says Anathasia.

Zambia: Reducing nutritional vulnerability of children in Luano Valley

Children in Luano Valley in Central Zambia suffer from food deficiency due to inadequate food and lack of a balanced diet. ActionAid Zambia together with communities in the Valley have been working to change this reality by constructing fish ponds, which will provide more protein and ensure that children in Luano can perform better in schools. According to the Ministry of Health, children who suffer from food deficiency do not perform well in school and drop out in the early stages of schooling. **Six out of ten children in Luano in between the ages of eight and fifteen suffer from food deficiencies.** Consequently, **40 percent** of children in Luano **never complete their Junior School or reach High School.** Last season, over 60 pupils sat for their grade seven examinations, however, only eight made it to High School.

ActionAid Zambia, Luano Valley Development Programme (LVDP) and the Ministry of Food and Fisheries have been working together in building modern fish ponds to breed fish from Luano rivers. This fish farming project is aimed at providing protein for the communities as well as generating income. ActionAid Zambia has given training and support to farmers to construct fish ponds and to buy fish and baits. In 2010, ActionAid Zambia organised a five-day training where farmers from the Buyantanshi fish farming group were trained in integrated fish farming.

Killian Ngoma, Chairperson of the Buyantanshi group, lives in Mufumbe village and is one of the farmers who were trained in fish farming.

He says, **"I have been looking forward to this training for a long time, and I am very happy that I finally have the skills and knowledge to manage a fish pond. My interest in fish farming grew when I saw the success of my friend, Peter Kaimfa, whose fish pond was the pilot project of ActionAid. From that example, we decided to form a group and asked ActionAid to train us in fish pond construction, cleaning and stock fish for breeding. With ActionAid's support, we have constructed two fish ponds, which we will start managing now. We also received training in food security. We now know that we will have rich variety of food to add to our diets. We plan to construct four more fish ponds and we will be selling our fish at a big market. This will help us generate more income to use at home and for children's education."**

The fish ponds can be owned by one to ten people. It can hold over 75 kg of medium-sized fish per week, and it can

benefit about 75 people. For 75kg of fish, fish farmers can make about 100 Euros.

Peter Kaimfa, a fish farmer in Mufumbe village who participated in the pilot fish farming project, explains, **"I am proud to be a role model in this village. My fish pond was used as pilot project in 2007 and now I have fish and money from it. I now divide the fish for food at home, fish to sell and some for breeding. I have about 20 kg of fish for two months, which gives me about 2 kg to sell per week and also some fresh fish to eat at home. I get 5 to 10 Euros a week from fish sales. This is enough income to help me buy other variety of foods for my family, as well as to pay for school supplies for my children."**

America

Brazil: Empowering Women through Agroecology

The agroecological approach promoted by ActionAid aims to increase the production and supply of food, while simultaneously ensuring farmers' autonomy, environmental sustainability and respecting farmers' local and traditional knowledge. The agroecology model of sustainable agriculture is established not through pre-set technological packages, but on the contrary, through experiences constructed on local practices of family farmers. Therefore, agroecological initiatives recognise the skills and experiences of farmers and strive to connect them to academic knowledge on sustainable agriculture.

Initiated in 2007, ActionAid's **Women and Agroecology** Project aims to encourage the creation of a forum in which women can exchange their sustainable agricultural practices, and to strengthen women's capacity to systematise and reflect on their own experiences. By bringing together



'Andrelice Silva dos Santos'
©ActionAid Brazil

women, who are often absent in such debating spaces despite their leading role in maintaining and disseminating agroecological knowledge, the project aims to strengthen the identity of rural women, build solidarity amongst family farming groups, circulate useful knowledge, build self-esteem and achieve

individual and collective empowerment. In the past three years, over 300 women farmers, 60 technicians and 20 civil society organisations (CSOs) were involved in the project, disseminating over 100 experiences from the Northern states of Paraíba, Maranhão, Piauí, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Bahia and Ceará, and the Southeastern state of Minas Gerais, all of which share semiarid characteristics.

"Environmental awareness and knowledge of the richness of diversity has proven to be a huge factor in our agricultural development. Based on the principle of agroecology, we are aspiring towards improving access to water, and good healthy living," shares Léa Santos, President of smallholder farmers' union in Massaranduba city in Paraíba, who participated in Women & Agroecology.

In 2010, together with the **Azione Donna** Project that promoted the political and economic empowerment of Afro-Brazilian women through income generating activities such as raising poultry and maintaining agroecological gardens, the Women and Agroecology project helped raise the income of 450 women farmers and their families in 23 communities in Northeastern Brazil.

Andrelice Silva dos Santos, also known as **Déo**, is a 42 year-old farmer living in the south of Bahia, in the forest region of Camamu. This region is dominated by cacao cultivation and has been characterised by land conflicts over the past three decades. Although cocoa was a profitable crop four decades ago, the case is no longer true as years of monocropping and burning practices have led to extensive soil degradation. Her fervour for claiming her land and finding sustainable farming solutions motivated her to attend civil society discussions on agroecological management of production systems, in as early as 1997. When she finally claimed her land in 1999 after years of family struggle, she decided to put her knowledge on agroecology to practice. However, the process was not smooth to begin with:

"After receiving the plot, we began to develop the agroecological system. But my husband, who hadn't taken part in the discussion on agroecology, doubted its effectiveness; this meant there was a barrier I had to overcome. It wasn't easy to persuade my husband to work in a new form of farming. Our area was swarming with ants. And I told him that we weren't going to resort to burning or hoeing; we were going to plant as it was. He complained a lot. He said that planting like that with so many ants wouldn't work. I was apprehensive, too, asking God for a good crop so he could understand. I thought, 'if he doesn't work, I'm stuck.' I took the seeds and planted them—I planted a lot. The whole time, my husband kept repeating that the ants would eat the plants. I told him that they would eat some, but afterwards they would stop. I had a lot of will power. Three months after this work, we had maize, cowpea, tomatoes and parsley. When we saw the results, he was happy to invest more in agroecology."

In monocropping, the husband is responsible for harvesting and carrying. The woman is considered his 'helper.' Today, Déo has the autonomy to decide what to plant and how to process and sell her products. Her husband works alongside her, not as her 'helper' but as her companion, sharing decisions and ideas. She comments:

"I see this is a kind of total integration that families begin to experience with agroecology. The family starts to gain autonomy and discover its potential. In the agroecological system, everyone wants to be included and can be. There is room for the wife, the husband, the daughter and the son. There is a big difference for women working in agroecology, because the system is diversified. Before working in agroecology, cacao was the main crop and the most important crop placed under men's responsibility. Women now fight and acquire the independence to plant other crops, and women find it easier to convince other women to adopt agroecological practices. We can increase the family's food intake as well as its income."

She did not simply 'gain' this empowerment through agroecology, but she had to endure challenges, conflicts and oppression. Yet, she succeeded in altering the production system on her land, changing its management style and increasing crop diversity. Indeed, the production system of Déo's family has changed dramatically. Her family now produces assai, cupuaçu, pineapple, cashew, guaraná, tropical flowers, maize, cowpeas, cherry tomatoes, parsley and various kinds of vegetables, at the same time breeding goats, chickens and stingless bees.



'Déo's son is an agricultural technician, who plays an important role in what happens on their family farm.'
©ActionAid Brazil

After her successful experience, various farmers began visiting Déo to learn about agroecology and the diversified farming system:

"It was an excellent movement. However, there was a problem. The women weren't taking part. The men were the ones more involved, and they only wanted instant results. Men don't know how to wait. They want to plant and then harvest. Working in agroecology demands patience. Time is needed to obtain a positive result, especially since our [past]

way of farming had damaged our land too much. The men eventually abandoned the new system and returned to conventional methods. The women joined forces and we formed the 'women's group plot'. The women began to learn and fight with their husbands to change, stop the practice of burning, diversify production, feed the soil by covering it with the plants themselves and grow medicinal plants to improve our livelihoods."



'Plan of productive and reproductive activities for the year shared among the family members' ©ActionAid Brazil

Likewise, her involvement in agroecology ignited her participation and leadership in various community processes. She encouraged women in her community to be actively involved in ActionAid's Women and Agroecology project to exchange and systemise their experiences. At regional and national level, she has become the leader of the Women's Group of the Dandara dos Palmares Settlement Association—an organisation that is periodically supported by ActionAid. She is also a member of the Camamu Rural Workers' Union (RWU) Audit Committee, is the President of the Council of Camamu Family Farming School, and the Coordinator of the Patoral da Infancia (Child Pastoral Care). These active civil society participation and achievements reflect her conviction and perseverance; as a result, she is now the regional and national focal person in the field of agroecology and women's participation.

This story illustrates how agroecological innovations can empower women and provide a space for deconstructing unequal power relations. Involvement in agroecology allowed Déo and other women to participate in discussions, such as forestry systems, productive backyards and community vegetable gardens, which they were not able to do before. Most importantly, agroecology has created and strengthened the environment in which gender inequality can be addressed and women's issues be debated.

Guatemala: Building Capacity of Communities to Struggle against Monocrop Agribusiness in the Southern Coast

ActionAid started working with the Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC) in 2006. Since then, ActionAid has provided support to the southern division of the CUC to implement strategic community projects in 15 communities of small-scale agricultural producers and wage-earning farm workers.

In the southern coast of Guatemala, extensive cattle farming and mono-cropping of sugar cane, bananas, palm oil and rubber prevail. The peasant communities in these regions face increasingly difficult circumstances in planting and growing food in their small parcels, or even leasing their land to produce basic foods. Consequently, many have to work in plantations, earning wages.

In 2009, ActionAid, together with the technical-political team of CUC, identified that the most suitable strategy to advance the acknowledgement and fulfilment of the right to food was to build capacity of agricultural workers and communities. With ActionAid's support, CUC implemented ongoing training programmes to men and women, which emphasised raising awareness of the right to food and women's rights, as well as sharing knowledge on agroecology. Agroecology has been considered as an essential strategy for ensuring food security for families and communities, and to make them more resilient to the negative impacts of climate change.



'Amalia López Gramajo'
©ActionAid Guatemala

"Training provides us with the tools we need to organise ourselves and seek alternatives. It is the best way to achieve results and to be able to defend our rights. This year, I learned about raising pigs and how to breed them. These things we can learn, but training activities are more than that; they open spaces for

us, to which we would otherwise have no access to, especially women. We feel stronger now.", says Amalia López Gramajo, a 41 year old woman who lives in and chairs the Board of Trustees of the community, *Los Cerros*.

She feels that training activities have made important changes in her life, as in the lives of many women in the region.

In the past five years, a significant process of monopolisation and concentration of land has taken place. Many communities in the region are in a struggle with banana and palm oil agribusinesses who have built fences around their estates to protect them from floods during the rainy season and to divert the natural course of rivers to irrigate their

fields in the dry season. These land practices have reduced the amount of arable land for smallholder farmers, increased the abuse of water resources and endangered forests and biodiversity. Despite these rampant practices, state institutions are nearly non-existent in the region and the municipal government supports larger farms at the expense of smallholder farmers.

Arturo López, a 52-year old farmer from *Carrizales* communities, shares his experience with CUC and ActionAid.



'Arturo López'
©ActionAid Guatemala

"The construction of these fences by agricultural entrepreneurs started after Hurricane Mitch of 1998 to protect their plantations. This has caused water not to stay on its natural course. During the rainy season, water used to flood the area of the 'pampas' where nobody would plant anything. The communities would harvest corn two times a year. As a result of the construction of these walls around export mono-crops, the water from the rain and the storms goes directly to the crops of the communities, destroying all of them.

We started to build fences in 2004, but when Hurricane Stan hit in 2005 we lost everything. We started tasking the authorities to find a solution, but estate owners blamed it on nature and climate change. Since 2005 until now, we have always lost one of the two harvests, and we need to make ends meet with the little money or food we can save. It is a complicated situation. Now, for 2011, we are asking the CUC to support us so that we can lease a site in higher lands and we can get some help for our community, even if it is very little. We cannot plant. Last year, the flood also affected us in May. But we will not give up, we will continue fighting. Now there is a dialogue with higher authorities, and we have promised not to take de facto measures until there is some progress in the negotiations.

At least now some commissions have arrived to the community to perform evaluations... We recorded a video and several commissions came, but nothing happened. What they want is for us to leave, to put pressure on us and get our land for a little money. Some people have even come to offer projects to us so that we keep our mouths shut, but we did not let them. If the CUC had not supported us, everyone would be on his/her own and trying to do something individually. But we are stronger if we stay together," says Arturo López.

The organisational and capacity building training of CUC, with the support of ActionAid, has prepared communities in their struggles against the government and agribusinesses. In response to the recurring loss of crops and assets due to

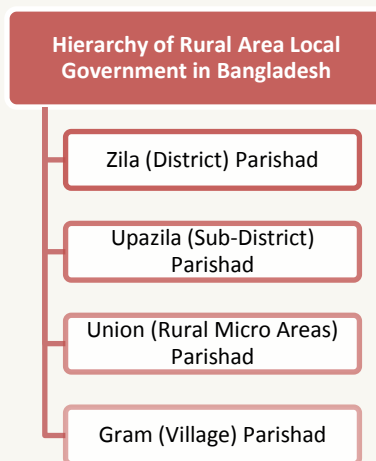
floods, a total of 21 communities acted together with the CUC and the Social Pastoral for Land of the Catholic Church in San Marcos to make their voices heard. By the end of 2010, they managed to create a Verification Commission with the participation of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office and the ministries involved in the issue, and to re-open a case that had been shelved since 2005. The results of this process will be significant for other communities in the southern coasts, which face similar conditions and problems.

Asia

Bangladesh: Safeguarding Livelihood Assets and Promoting Sustainable Livestock Production through Union Livestock Service Centres

Livestock and poultry are indispensable assets for poor farmers who have little or no access to productive land in Bangladesh. However, these assets are vulnerable to various diseases, which can be deadly on one hand and very expensive to treat on the other. Death of a couple of livestock can force families to slide down the poverty slope, as they heavily depend on animals for their source of income. Hence, among many principles of sustainable livestock production, improving animal health and welfare is undoubtedly crucial for resource-poor families in

Bangladesh.



Nevertheless, in remote areas—such as some parts of coastal belt and northern flood prone areas—there are no government services available for livestock farmers. This is because the government's Directorate of Livestock Services (DLS), the main

institution that deals with livestock and poultry related issues, only reaches up to *Upazilla* (sub-district) level, not benefiting much of the poor and food insecure livestock farmers that reside in the *Union* level, the lowest tier of local government in Bangladesh. At the Union level, only Artificial Insemination (AI) services are available; for all other livestock and poultry related services, farmers have to travel miles to *Upazilla* offices.

Working at the Union level, ActionAid Bangladesh's FoSHoL (Food Security for Sustainable Household Livelihoods) Project aimed at increasing productivity and income of the marginalised resource-poor farmers. FoSHoL played a catalysing role in building farmers' capacity to innovate and adapt suitable farming practices and technologies to sustainably increase their yields and to explore and practice more effective marketing principles to reap higher profits.

Most importantly, the FoSHoL project facilitated the establishment of **Union Livestock Service Centres in 18 Unions** in collaboration with the DLS, Union Parishad (the last tier of local government) and farmers' organisations. The DLS was responsible for providing technical support to the service centre; the Union Parishad provided physical facilities—i.e. a room in its premises with electricity and other utilities; and the FoSHoL project provided basic tools and equipment and support for the capacity building of community vaccinators.

In each centre, there are **8-10 community vaccinators** who have been trained by the project. A total of **211 vaccinators—68% of whom are female**—have been trained, and they are actively working in their communities with support from the government livestock offices at district and sub-district level and with the Union Farmers' Alliance of the FoSHoL Project (See Box 1).

"People refer to me as a 'doctor' now and my husband is no longer violent towards me," says **Noor Jehan**, a 45 year old community livestock vaccinator in Jhakuapara village in Pandul Union of Krigram District, 380 km north west of Dhaka, talking about the changes that have come about as a result of her training with ActionAid's FoShoL project. **"We are earning money and respect"**, says Noor Jehan.



She is among a group of women from Jhakuapara village who received training as livestock vaccinators, gaining awareness about animal diseases and their treatment from the Pandul Union Council. She is helping women to earn more money from their small livestock and poultry rearing efforts, providing them with advice.

"I earn Tk 250 (over 2 GBP) per day from vaccination services provided to community households. It adds to my income and I am also respected within the community", she says proudly. Previously she worked as a domestic servant earning ten times less than her current income.

With such efforts, around **14,000 livestock and 65,000 poultry** are vaccinated each year. In 2010, around **8,000 livestock were covered under the de-worming programme** undertaken by these centres.

Overall, these centres have been a great help to the community farmers as they can now access veterinary services such as treatment and vaccinations, as well as vital information on animal production practices. What is more, these centres have become the main platform through which rural households access other Union Parishad services—including the registration of birth, deaths and marriages, awareness for better primary health care, information about various social safety net programmes, such as the elderly age allowance, widow alliance and various development activities related to agriculture. Most importantly, these centres are now self-managed and self-sustainable. They are generating funds by collecting a modicum of user fees on services provided (e.g. vaccination, treatment of diseases, de-worming and mobile vaccination), and are becoming a model case for service provision to the poor in remote areas.



Box 1. Cumulative Change: FoSHoL (Food Security for Sustainable Household Livelihoods) Project

The FoSHoL Project was implemented from May 2005 to April 2009 with financial support from the European Commission (EC). Notwithstanding the time bound nature of the project, ActionAid strived to invest in the long term development of project participants, particularly by facilitating the creation of farmers' organisations, through which knowledge on a wide range of issues that affect food security can be shared and discussed. Indeed, the Project helped develop 813 village-based farmers' organisations, each of which comprised of 25 to 30 farmers' representatives (60 per cent female) in 600 villages from remote and vulnerable districts of the country. The Project

provided these organisations with customised training on technical, social, institutional, environmental and organisational issues regarding food security, using various participatory methodologies. As the project progressed, these 813 village-based organisations were supported to merge into 30 Union Farmers' Alliances.

When the project was finally phased out on 30 April 2009, a unanimous decision to create a national platform of farmers' alliance—*Kendrio FoSHoL Kirishok Moitree* (Central FoSHoL Farmers' Alliance)—was reached in consultation with the leaders from union based farmers' alliances. The platform is currently creating sustainable livelihoods opportunities for the poorest households as well as advocating and claiming right to food and justice at local, regional and national level, as well as sharing experiences with international level for greater solidarity with other farmers' alliances. ActionAid has provided technical training to these alliances on cultivation, allowing farmers to increase their agricultural production, and linked them with the market and relevant government departments to increase their market access.

"Before the FoSHoL project, smallholder farmers never got a fair price for their produce and seeds but with the organized marketing by farmer alliances, the income has increased", says Mr Muhammad Abdul Awwal, a 65 year old farmer and President of Kurigram Farmers' Alliance, whose seeds are sold at the market through the alliance.

"Our rice production used to be 15-16 maunds (600 Kg). Now with the improved techniques, we get 20-25 maunds (1000 Kg) from the same land. In addition to this, we also have vegetables, poultry, fish and milk. My own annual income now stands at Tk 80,000 (755 GBP) from rice and vegetable. My family has food throughout the year from our small piece of land, which was not possible before the FoSHoL project", adds Mr Awwal.

ActionAid is continuously devising tools to support and nurture this platform so that it can contribute to realising farmers' rights and entitlements towards sustainable food security and sovereignty.

Nepal: Ensuring food security and labour rights of dalits through community grain stores

The practice of paying daily labourers in grain rather than money is still prevalent in Jumla district in the mid west of Nepal. It is of course the poor and marginalised landless and *dalit* communities that bear the brunt of this practice, and the rich, non-*dalit* landlords that benefit. Sometimes, the grain that is given as payment is not enough to feed the family; besides, using grain as a currency for payment is a violation of labour rights.

In order to help abolish this practice and to ensure food security, ActionAid and its partner, Rural Development Group Programme-Jumla (RDGP), helped villagers to set up two *Anna Bhakari Samuha* (community grain stores) in the villages of Devargaon and Kumdi.

Tek Bahadur Bhandari, local resident of Kumdi, is happy with the project: **"The Samuha has consistently distributed food grain to its members in times of need. This has helped to reduce the instances of labour rights violations suffered by the poor and marginalised."**

45-year old **Baishaki Pariyar** also lives in Kumdi village. After the death of her husband, she was left to manage household expenses and provide for the ever increasing needs of her children. With no other option, she became a daily labourer for a local landowner. Despite the long hours of back-breaking work, she received only a nominal amount of grain for her labour.

"While I was working in the fields, my children were working as shepherds—we had a miserable existence," says Baishaki. **"When I became a member of the Anna Bhakari Samuha, things changed completely. The Samuha has given me so much support,"** she goes on.

Baishaki has been the chairperson of the Kumdi branch of the *Samuha* for the last two years, during which time, the concept of grain storage has become very popular with *dalit* communities in the area. When the group is alerted of the fact that a certain household does not have enough food grain, it supplies them some from its stocks. Group members replenish grain stocks following seasonal harvests. To ensure that there is no abuse in the system, the group logs all of the grain that comes in and goes out.

"Since I began receiving grain as credit from the Samuha, I am no longer miserable. My children can now go to school instead of working as shepherds, so the Samuha has also helped them to claim their right to education," says Baishaki happily.



'Baishaki at Anna Bhakari Samuha'
©ActionAid

Elsewhere in Jumla district, 165 households are also directly benefiting from livelihood development funds generated by

three local seed banks which stock 62 types of seed. The seed bank in Talium VDC (Village District Committee) alone has amassed a fund of NPR 575,000 (about GBP 4800) for local livelihood development. Five VDCs in the district have also started apple sapling nurseries which have so far produced around 3,000 young trees which can be sold or cultivated. Through these innovative rights-based community initiatives, Jumla district is championing sustainable livelihoods.

China: Women's self-empowerment through chilli planting

Industrialisation and rapid urbanisation have led many rural farmers to leave their homes in search of higher and more stable incomes. The women were left behind to take care of the land and cultivate crops—the jobs which their husbands and sons were once in charge of. In **Namei village** of Guangxi Province, generations have lived off rice and sugarcane. However, since these crops are labour intensive, it has been difficult for women to farm, and the community has seen a steady decline in crop yields and profits.

Through Women's Learning Centre—a project supported by ActionAid—community leaders encouraged their members to utilise 'group thinking' skills and to come up with a viable solution to their problems. As a result, chilli planting was selected as an alternative, because it requires less labour and less time compared to sugarcane production.

Qin Xiaoxi, facilitator of one learning group says: *"In the beginning, some villagers were hesitant to try. 'It was risky,' they said. They wanted proof that this venture was going to be successful. We were too young to have sufficient influence in the village, so we set about mobilising the elders and other influential villagers to help us. Then in 2009, two women planted their first chilli crops. After six months, these women earned RMB 1000 more than what they would have gotten from sugarcane. They were excited, but soon they faced problems as some chillies became rotten in the second year. This was when the women sought advice from ActionAid.*

ActionAid invited an expert from the Agricultural Department, who guided the women and helped the women's learning group to initiate new ways of planting. The next harvest was very good and women's confidence

was restored. The women are continuously learning, and with ActionAid's support, have carried out SWOT analysis to help them prepare for long-term cultivation and marketing plans. So far, ten families have learned to successfully plant and care for chillies."



Qin Xiaoxi
©ActionAid China

In 2010, the group applied to ActionAid's Innovation Fund—a special fund that encourages women learning centres to develop their own community projects to improve their livelihoods—to finance their chilli cooperative. In addition to providing funds, ActionAid supported the group in securing 37mu (about 6 acres) of land for chilli planting. The women's group also set up a system whereby some are responsible for sowing seeds at harvest time, while others are responsible for monitoring the market price of chillies to determine the optimal time for selling. Two supervisors were also elected to guide the group and to keep an overview on the income and expenditure.

The chilli planting project has become a huge success. As chillies grow much quicker than other crops, women have been able to see quick returns on their investment. As the women are working collectively on this project, they are reinvesting a proportion of their earnings to expand the project. Increased income is also being used to pay for children's education and to fund other development and livelihoods projects that benefit the whole community. Based on chilli planting, women's groups are now planning exposure visits to learn about diversifying crops and to share their experiences with other women's groups.

Annex: Right to Food Core Team Organogram

