

Undertaking paid work helps women to support their family with basic needs, Musanze District.



## ActionAid's Food Security and Economic Empowerment Programme in Muko Sector, Northern Rwanda: Guidelines for Achieving the Double Boon

Programmatic notes for Women's Economic Empowerment Policy and Programming

August 2017



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PROGRAMMATIC NOTES

Despite an impressive socioeconomic transformation over the past few decades, Rwanda ranks as one of the least developed countries in the world (UNDP 2017). Today, over 75 per cent of the population remain dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods (World Bank 2013), of which women constitute a disproportionate majority (ActionAid International 2015). ActionAid Rwanda's (AAR) Improving Food Security and Economic Opportunities for Women project in Muko sector, Musanze District in the Northern Province aims to combat these intersecting deprivations. The situation in Muko is typical of the problems faced in much of contemporary Rwanda: high unemployment and limited education opportunities coupled with chronic food insecurity and vulnerability to environmental shocks (WFP 2012) have led to a situation where 52 per cent of people live below the poverty line and over half of children aged six months to five years suffer from chronic malnutrition.

AAR's project aims 'to enable 1,200 of the most vulnerable women smallholder farmers and 300 vulnerable male smallholder farmers to improve their food security and economic security through increased agricultural profitability' (Rohwerder *et al.*, forthcoming: 12). This is to be achieved through a combination of: (i) farmer cooperatives; (ii) the establishment of community seed banks, regeneration of the Susa stream,<sup>1</sup> and agriculture-based training sessions; and (iii) the construction of a maize processing plant and cold room for storing stock. This note examines how the AAR programme has contributed to heightened economic empowerment amongst female beneficiaries and the extent to which it may have promoted a 'double boon'; that is, paid work that empowers women and provides more support for their unpaid care work responsibilities,<sup>2</sup> rather than a double burden of additional hard work without taking into account women's heavy care responsibilities.

## Successes of AAR programme

**My household members have no problem with regard to sharing unpaid care work. They feel happy to see everyone at home working.**

Niyonsenga Jeannette, Musanze District

**When I come back from work I always help to do some of the care works at home. This reduces her workload and prevents her from overworking.**

Hakizimana Fabrice, Musanze District

**Table 1 Sample framework for AAR beneficiaries in Muko sector**

|                         | Beneficiaries  |                       |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
|                         | Women surveyed | In-depth case studies |
| Muko (Musanze District) | 59             | 7                     |

A first lesson is that the AAR programme has considerably improved the economic position of beneficiaries. Programme staff claim that 'income has actually doubled' (AAR staff interview 1, 2016), with these increases leading to a number of lifestyle changes. As such, families now 'dress well, want

their children to go to good school, eat well like meat once a week [and] buy bread for the children' (AAR staff interview 2, 2016). Single female-headed households feel more connected to their community and beyond: 'I even bought myself a television [and] am up to date with what is going on in our country. I even have a phone... and am no longer ignorant' (Fidele Wibabale, cited in ActionAid International 2015: 19). Married women have managed to escape cycles of domestic violence due to lessened financial pressures: 'two days after sleeping on the [new] mattress, my husband started smiling and treating me well. He started calling me *cherie* (sweetheart) a word he had not used in a long time' (Marcelline Uzamukunda, cited in ActionAid International 2015: 14).

Secondly, family members are appreciative of the money earned by women beneficiaries, leading to a *decrease in intra-household tensions* as women 'have been able to gain respect [of] their husbands because they also now bring something at home' (AAR staff interview 4, 2016). This increased cohesion is also found across generations. Children are often supportive of their mothers engaging in paid work, even if this has adverse consequences for their own care burden. For example, as one beneficiary explained, '[my] children feel proud of helping me... They know that when I work, I will be able to support the family' (Niyonsenga Jeannette, Musanze District).

Agricultural work is tough on women's bodies, Musanze District.



## Barriers to achieving a 'double boon'

**[I have] to wake up early in the morning or sleep late night in order to perform all activities as planned.**

Umuhoza Agathe, Musanze District

**I feel unhappy but I am overloaded with care work because there is no other alternative [when my parents are at work].**

Uwiragiye Gaspard, Musanze District

The biggest barrier to achieving the double boon, however, is rooted in *the overwhelming time burden of engaging in both paid and unpaid work*. The consequences of the squeeze on women's time often have negative effects not only on the women themselves, but within the household and beyond.

Firstly, female beneficiaries regularly explained the ill consequences for their health. A recurrent theme was 'suffer[ing] constant sickness due to overworking' (Niyonsenga Jeannette, Musanze District), whilst others have noted that 'while cultivating, [they] can feel back pain and pain in [their] arms' (Musanze women, Care Work Matrix exercise group 2). When the drudgery of work leads to illness, partners often fill the void but 'this results in a lack of income in the family' (Musanze men, 'What Would Happen If' exercise).

Secondly, children within these households often face dual-repercussions of their mothers' increased work burden. The first repercussion manifests itself in the lack of attention dedicated to children. Beneficiaries often lamented their inability to 'find enough time to guide them [the children] when they are doing homework which [consequently] affects their performance at school' (Ingabire Eliza, Musanze District). Others worry about having time to prepare meals, noting that children often have to go to bed hungry (Hakizimana Fabrice, Musanze District). A subsequent repercussion is that the inability of these mothers to complete all domestic duties increases the unpaid care load for the children in the home. These adverse consequences often fall disproportionately on female children. While girls tend to do more of the indoor care tasks and boys more of the outdoor care tasks (Musanze mixed children, Care Basket exercise), findings indicate that daughters take on a greater share of overall responsibility than their brothers. Recounts detail how '[unpaid work] is so tiresome and for instance my daughter does a lot of care activities to the extent that she does not get enough time to play with friends' (Uwizeyimana Grace,

Musanze District). This suggests that further evidence of the impact of the intergenerational transmission of unpaid work is clearly needed.

A second barrier refers to *limitations to the extent to which unpaid care work is truly redistributed*, largely as a result of gender norms. This research has highlighted that ‘most of the time their husbands do not like helping them [female household members]’ (Musanze women, ‘What Would Happen If’ exercise) and that women in single-parent households still assume the overwhelming responsibility for care work as they generally have no other adult to share tasks with.

Similar findings extend to paid work, where opportunities for women are heavily restricted. Some of these differences can be explained by the perception of the types of paid work traditionally undertaken by men and women. For example, carpentry, stone breaking and construction work are deemed unsuitable for women due to the often arduous nature of the task at hand (AAR staff interview 3, 2016). However, calls for women to engage in high-earning jobs, such as finance (AAR staff interview 1, 2016), may often be premature given that in Muko little over 10 per cent of the female population have education levels beyond primary.

## CASE STUDY

# Kamikazi Rose

Musanze District, Rwanda

Kamikazi Rose is a member of an AAR-supported cooperative where she sells local beer to garner extra income for her family of five.

The majority of the care burden falls on Kamikazi Rose as her husband works away from home as a security guard. However, when he is at home, Habimana is happy to help redistribute unpaid care work. He comments,

“When I come back from work, I always help her to sell beer so as to reduce the activities she does. Therefore, she gets enough time to do care work at home. This reduces her workload and thus she gets time for leisure and rest.”

Having a relatively large household also reduces the burden that falls solely on Kamikazi Rose. Her sister and eldest daughter, Rachel Nyirabimana, often take care of the youngest children and contribute to domestic duties, such as cooking, and fetching water and firewood. Rachel is only able to do this when she returns from school but this does, however, allow her mother the choice of working in the evening to bring in additional income.

## Pathways to the ‘double boon’

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### Greater synergies with government services

**The government should provide clean/piped water in our village because when one does not have money to pay it at the tap; then the other source is water in the river.**

**Ubaruta Dative, Musanze District**

A recurrent theme throughout engagement with beneficiaries and programme staff is the need for increased synergies with programmes and service provision as provided by the Rwandan government. For example, while the road between Muko sector and Musanze town was under construction, there was a further demand for ‘feeder roads’ to connect the different villages to ease access to the market. Similar requests were made regarding office space or likewise to be able to host cooperative meetings that often extend beyond the capacity of local establishments. Also, while there was widespread approval of the government for the provision of water, it was noted that some families remained without access.

Those in remote locations and those without access to basic services will face greater obstacles in balancing paid and unpaid work and therefore achieving the ‘double boon’. The AAR programme may be able to address such barriers either by including direct infrastructure and service provision or by creating stronger linkages to sector-level service provision. The latter may involve ensuring that women are aware of services available and their rights in accessing such services as well as arguing for greater service provision in certain areas or for vulnerable groups.

### Improved working conditions in recognition of the combined burden of paid work and unpaid care work

**[I] would prefer my mother to work fewer hours than she does and work not far from home since sometimes she works far from home. If she worked nearer, she would help us in doing some work at home and would not get tired.**

**Rugamba Jackson, Musanze District**

Improved working conditions in recognition of the interaction of the time burden and drudgery associated with paid work and unpaid care work could help improve programme design and implementation towards support of a ‘double boon’. For example, the distance that women have to travel for work often causes problems. Offering microcredit services together with training and capacity building focusing on starting or expanding on small businesses close to home may be one way of combatting the distances needed to travel for paid work.

### Streamline delivery of Literacy Development Centres

In response to particular concerns regarding the provision of childcare as women are in work, the AAR programme could benefit from streamlining the delivery of Literacy Development Centres (LDCs). LDCs provide safe spaces where women can leave their children whilst they engage in paid work (AAR staff interview 2, 2016). Currently, however, the provision of LDCs does not match local demand and, in some scenarios, centres have begun to charge mothers and ask for food to be provided by the service users which is further imposing financial constraints on beneficiaries and offsetting demand (AAR staff interview 2, 2016).

Adapting to these problems will enable the AAR programme to become more child-sensitive and offer women the potential to engage more freely in paid work. This could include the provision of support to LDCs in terms of human and financial resources so that they are better able to respond to demand (and thereby preventing user fee charges).

### Include care-sensitive and gender-disaggregated indicators in monitoring and evaluation

Although the monitoring and evaluation of care is ‘conducted by the programme through the use of time diaries to monitor both women and men’ (AAR staff interview 1, 2016), the inclusion of further indicators (aggregated by gender and designed to capture the impact on care) in the programme’s monitoring and evaluation framework would enable further evaluations to be sensitive to the dynamics of care work in such settings. This would need to be accompanied by further training for programme workers in the AAR programme and beyond to be fully effective.

## References

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## Credits

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- This note was written by Liam Kennedy and Keetie Roelen.
- Photos: Birasa Nyamulinda.

## Notes

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1. This is the main stream running through Muko.
2. Further details of research findings underpinning this note can be found in Rohwerder *et al.*, forthcoming.

# ActionAid's Food Security and Economic Empowerment Programme in Muko Sector, Northern Rwanda: Guidelines for Achieving the Double Boon

## Programmatic notes for Women's Economic Empowerment Policy and Programming

Balancing unpaid care work and paid work carried out qualitative and quantitative research in India, Nepal, Rwanda, Tanzania across 16 sites. This research explores how women's economic empowerment policies and programmes can take unpaid care work into account, in order to enable economic empowerment to be optimised, shared across families and sustained across generations. It focusses on the social

organisation of care in low income households, and at the role of families, state, private sector and not-for profit sector.

Ultimately it aims to identify measures that can lead towards a 'double boon', creating paid work that empowers women and provides core support for their unpaid care work responsibilities.

The Balancing unpaid care work and paid work project explores the successes, challenges and lessons for Women's Economic Empowerment programmes and policies.

Creating and sharing new knowledge on the balance between paid work and unpaid care work

Advocating for decent paid work, providing support for unpaid care work responsibilities and removal of barriers to entry and retention in paid work

Resulting in women's economic empowerment that is optimised, shared across families and sustained across generations

LOW PAID WORK

RWANDA



Research was undertaken in 2016 in four sites in the districts of Musanze and Huye in Rwanda:

📍 Muko (Musanze District)

📍 Gishamvu (Huye District)

📍 Simbi (Huye District)

📍 Mbazi (Huye District)

### PROJECT LEAD:



Institute of Development Studies

### RESEARCH PARTNERS:



BRAC REU

Data in Rwanda were collected by BRAC REU team, led by Dr Jenipher Twebaze Musoke.

### UPTAKE PARTNER:



ActionAid

For more project background information, publications and access to datasets and case studies, visit [interactions.ids.ac.uk/wee](https://interactions.ids.ac.uk/wee)

Balancing unpaid care work and paid work is part of the global Growth and Equal Opportunities for Women programme (GrOW) [bit.ly/1PbKwAd](https://bit.ly/1PbKwAd)



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