

PROMISING PRACTICES

EMPOWERING WOMEN, EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Supporting smallholder farmer communities in the DRC, Malawi and Rwanda



Acknowledgements

SCIAF would like to acknowledge and thank a number of people who have made valuable contribution to this Promising Practices publication.

We are grateful to the communities that participated in the programme, for their open and honest feedback and support, and to women and men whose experiences guided the creation of this document.

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We are also thankful to SCIAF staff for their trust, time, energy, wisdom and contributions.

SCIAF

The Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) is the official overseas aid and development charity of the Catholic Church in Scotland. SCIAF supports people in 27 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, helping hundreds of thousands of people of all faiths and none to overcome hunger, poverty, war and natural disasters every year.

Inspired by the Gospel, our mission is to help the poorest free themselves from poverty by equipping them with the tools they need to survive and thrive.

DFID

DFID is Department for International Development, and a United Kingdom (UK) government department responsible for administering overseas aid. Their goal is 'to promote sustainable development and eliminate world poverty'. DFID is headed by the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for International Development. DFID's development programmes are funded by UK taxpayers.

DFID's UK Aid Match brings charities, British people and the UK government together to change the lives of some of the world's most vulnerable people. For every £1 given by the public to a UK Aid Match charity appeal, the government adds £1 from the UK's international development budget. UK Aid Match gives everyone in the UK a say in how the UK's aid money is spent. The first phase of UK Aid Match was launched between 2013 and 2016.

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“Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys. It is everyone’s responsibility.”

*Ban Ki-Moon,
former UN Secretary General.*

Implementing partners

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

CDJP Bukavu

Commission Diocésaine Justice et Paix de l'Archidiocèse de Bukavu (CDJP Bukavu), formed in 1988, is a recognised authority in promoting human rights, gender equality and justice and peace as a part of Archdiocese of Bukavu. It operates in South Kivu Province of the eastern DRC.

The Republic of Malawi

CADECOM Chikwawa

CADECOM Chikwawa operates in Southern Malawi, implementing projects focused on livelihood improvement and empowerment, climate change mitigation and adaption, and emergency and relief.

CADECOM Dedza

CADECOM Dedza operates in Central Malawi, implementing projects focused on livelihood improvement and empowerment, climate change mitigation and adaption, and emergency and relief.

The Republic of Rwanda

CDJP Kigali

Commission Diocésaine Justice et Paix de l'Archidiocèse de Kigali (CDJP Kigali) was formed in 1992 to support vulnerable people and communities through the promotion of human dignity and sustainable development with interventions focusing on trauma healing, creating community space for dialogue and economic development.

Acronyms

- CADECOM**..... Catholic Development Commission in Malawi
- CDJP**..... Commission Diocésaine Justice et Paix
- CMDRR**..... Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction
- DFID** Department for International Development
- DRC** Democratic Republic of Congo
- DRR** Disaster Risk Reduction
- SCIAF** Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund
- SDG** Sustainable Development Goal
- SGBV**..... Sexual and Gender-based Violence
- ToC** Theory of Change
- UK**..... United Kingdom
- UKAM2** UK Aid Match 2
- VSLA** Village Savings and Loans Association



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Useful websites

SCIAF: www.sciaf.org.uk

THEORY OF CHANGE



Resilience to climate change



More gender equal relations

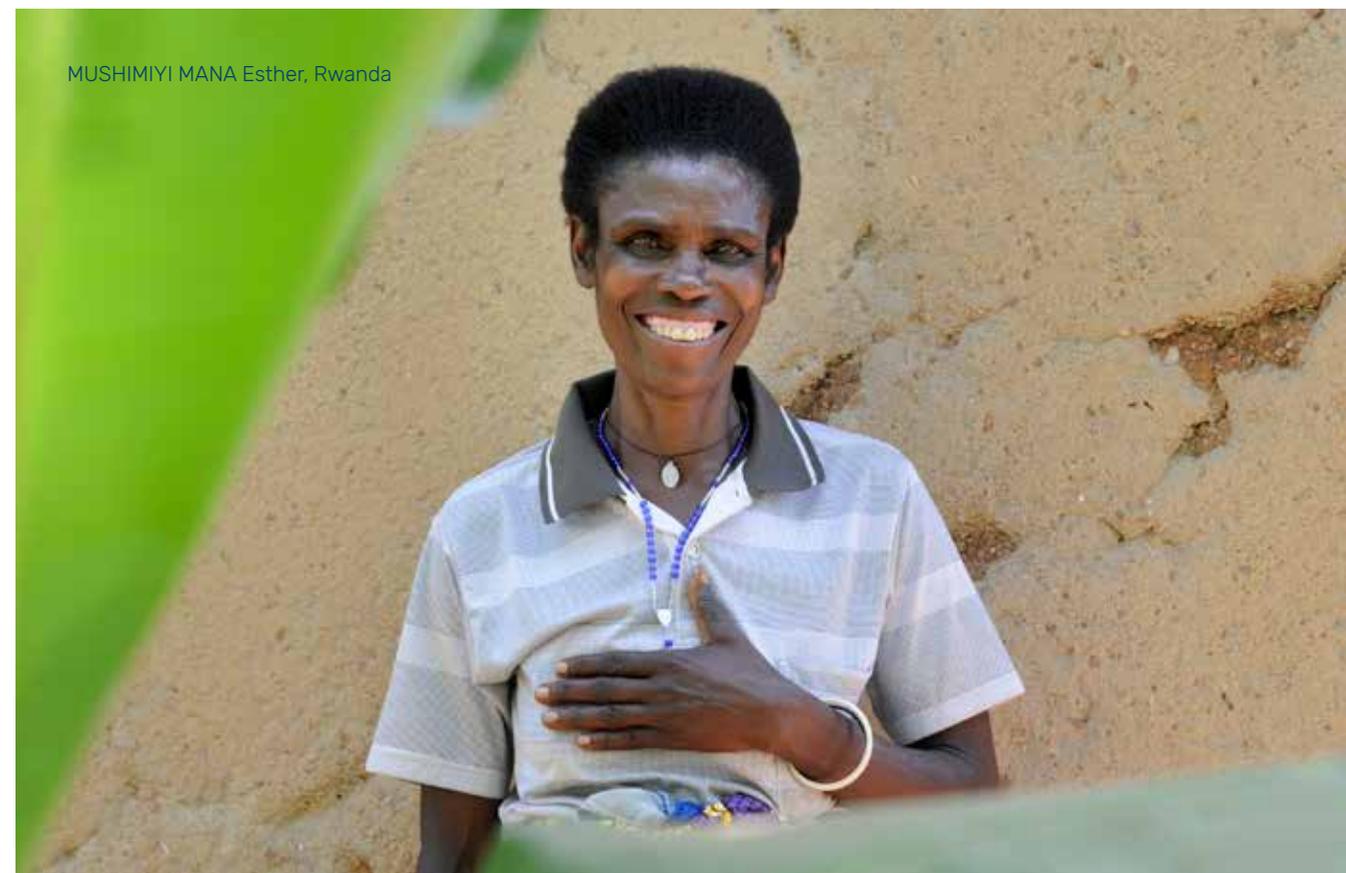


Increased agricultural production



Support farmers to organise

MUSHIMIYI MANA Esther, Rwanda



FOREWORD



A C Dutton

Alistair Dutton
Chief Executive
SCIAF

SCIAF's approach to development has grown out of the Church's long tradition and teaching which emphasises the importance of human dignity, social justice, sustainability, solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest and most marginalised.

Neither women nor men can flourish without one another and there is no sustainable path to development, poverty reduction and eradication of hunger without gender equality. Gender equality is not a 'women's issue' but affects both women and men, as it is rooted in the relationship between the two. Both women and men have to change their ways of working, attitudes and social norms, to ensure both are equal, empowered and dignified.

Working together with the UK government through its UK Aid Match programme, and with partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Malawi and Rwanda, we've been working to challenge and change unequal power relations, giving women an equal voice, rights, and opportunities, throughout their lives.

The programme, which ran from 2015 – 2018, targeted the poorest and most excluded groups in society, such as women, the elderly, and people living with disabilities and with HIV and AIDS. Rooted in the concept of equality within the family and community, we helped families to improve their food and income security. The focus on gender equality enabled women to form more equal relationships with men, and have greater control over their resources and assets, with equal participation and joint decision-making.

As you will see throughout this publication, the results of the programme were significant and evidence the difference a gender equality approach can make, not only to individual lives but to whole communities. This document stands as a testament to, and celebration of, years of hard work, learning and, ultimately, significant change.

SCIAF thanks everyone who has contributed to make this work possible, particularly the UK government, and the communities in the DRC, Rwanda and Malawi who welcomed us with open arms.



INTRODUCTION

The UK Aid Match funded programme (UKAM2) was a three-year initiative implemented in 25 villages across three countries – the DRC, Malawi and Rwanda.

The programme was implemented by four longstanding partners of SCIAF – CDJP Bukavu in the DRC, CADECOM Dedza and Chikwawa in Malawi and CDJP Kigali in Rwanda. It supported small-scale farmer households to improve their wellbeing through reducing poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and developing community skills to manage the negative impacts of climate change.

The programme targeted over 2,000 poor small-scale farming households, comprising women-headed households (widows, single women, abandoned, separated), male-headed households, child-headed households, elderly-headed households, chronically ill or disabled people, people living with HIV and AIDS, and women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Of the 2,000 target programme participants, 73% (1,467) were women. The programme also supported an estimated additional 10,000 family members as indirect programme participants.

This report reflects on the gender strategy adopted in the programme, with specific focus on the ways in which gender was addressed throughout the programme and the impacts of these activities. Specifically, it investigates the lead farmer approach, seed banks, community-managed disaster risk response (CMDRR), para-vets and income generation (micro businesses), as well as gender champions. It aims to assess the effectiveness of the UKAM2 programme towards improving women's livelihood, gender equality, leadership, and gender relations, in order to identify lessons learned and promising practices for SCIAF, partners, funders and other stakeholders across the development sector.

By documenting the experiences of participating women and their communities, and reflecting upon the challenges, opportunities and successes achieved, SCIAF hopes that others may be inspired to learn from these lessons and apply these promising practices more widely.



SETTING THE SCENE

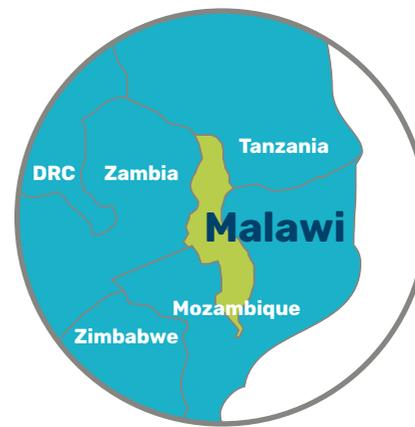


The DRC, Malawi and Rwanda are among the poorest countries in the world, where food insecurity and gender inequality are common issues. Rural poverty is closely linked to poor agricultural practices and lack of capacity and opportunities to diversify income sources and manage disasters. Small landholdings (around 1 hectare) with unsustainable farming techniques and dependence on rain-fed agriculture leading to low productivity, are a shared feature of the target areas.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Resource-based conflicts continue to plague the DRC, with chronic instability contributing to reduced opportunities for communities to farm, trade and access services effectively. South Kivu province is a region characterised by frequent conflict coupled with high population movement, affecting access to resources and income and food security. Numerous militias and rebel groups engage in frequent conflict with government troops, and the country is reported to be one of the worst for women to live globally. While sexual violence associated with armed groups remains commonplace, these challenging social conditions also contribute to endemic sexual and gender-based violence at the community and household level, and presents challenges for the promotion of gender equality.

While Congolese law provides that each child has the right to inherit equal shares of their parents' estate, customary practices undermine women's ability to access these legal rights. Marital rape is not regarded to be a criminal offence and domestic abuse remains under reported, due in part to fear of stigma and reprisals and in part due to lack of awareness of women's rights.



The Republic of Malawi

In Malawi, legal protection for women has been enshrined in the Constitution of Malawi and in a number of Acts of Parliament. These include protection from domestic violence, commitments to gender equality and equal inheritance.

Despite these commitments, women continue to assume the majority of domestic and agricultural tasks within the household, have limited access to resources and are often excluded from positions of authority. Most women are employed in the agricultural sector but they earn only 78% of what their male counterparts earn. Female-headed households are more likely to be amongst the poorest and are disproportionately represented in the lowest quartile of income distribution. Most women are constrained in terms of access to productive assets such as land, credit and entrepreneurship. The gender gap in agricultural productivity between men and women is estimated at 7.3%. Evidence suggest that 42% of married women have experienced spousal violence and SGBV is a serious challenge in Malawi. According to UNAIDS, the rate of HIV and AIDS infection is very high amongst women of 15 to 30 years of age.



The Republic of Rwanda

The government of Rwanda has taken significant steps towards enshrining equal rights for men and women within the law, and under the Constitution women are well-represented in government (more than 50% female members of parliament), education and healthcare. Women are granted equal inheritance rights with men.

However, within the most vulnerable households, these legal rights might not necessarily translate into equality in access to, and rights over, assets and resources, and women are often excluded from decision-making. Traditional patriarchal attitudes are still common and rates of domestic violence continue to be high among women and men. Women are under represented in the non-farm sector and over represented in lower-value subsistence agriculture at 79%.

Gender Inequality Index

The Gender Equality Index is an instrument for measuring gender disparity, introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It shows the loss in potential human development due to inequality between female and male achievements, in 187 countries.



158/187

Rwanda



171/187

Malawi



176/187

DRC

Human Development Index

The Human Development Index is an UNDP initiative to measure three key dimensions of human development - a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living - across 189 countries.



158/189

Rwanda



171/189

Malawi

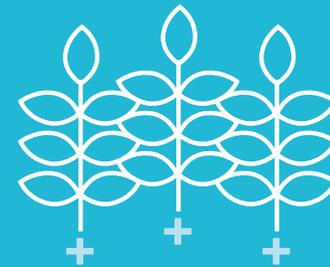


176/189

DRC

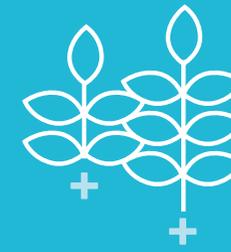
Global Food Security Index

The Global Food Security Index provides a worldwide perspective on which countries are most and least vulnerable to food security, considering affordability, availability and quality across a set of 113 countries. The higher the number, the less food secure the country is.



93/113

Rwanda



107/113

Malawi



112/113

DRC

Agriculture is the main source of income & employment



80%

DRC



72%

Rwanda



70%

Malawi



WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY

“During the initial meetings we found that women were sitting apart, they were very shy and would not speak in front of men. Men told us that women could not study, they could not inherit, and they should not participate in meetings with authorities or local leaders. In fact, they should not even be present in those meetings.

In the household they should do all the domestic tasks but they were like visitors; they could not own the house or the land, and there were lots of violations of women’s rights. They would be beaten even for going to church without asking permission first. Women were not aware of their rights, and they thought this was acceptable behavior. This was the situation at the start.”

Gisele Mulengezi Nanjuma, Programme Manager - CDJP Bukavu

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

“Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support. The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all.”

Ban Ki-Moon,
former UN Secretary General

SCIAF’s vision is to work for a just world where the equal opportunities and rights of women and men are upheld. Gender equality is central to all of SCIAF’s work. Gender equality has been incorporated into SCIAF’s five-year strategic framework (2016 – 2020) and SCIAF organisational gender strategy and policy. All departments are responsible for integrating or mainstreaming gender equality into their respective structures, programmes, priorities, and plans through a complementary departmental gender plan.

SCIAF recognises that women frequently face discrimination, injustice and restricted opportunities as a result of discriminatory laws, practices and policies. Gender discrimination is the most widespread form of social exclusion in the world. Reflecting SCIAF’s vision of ‘a just world in which no one is poor or oppressed, and everyone can live life to the full’, gender is therefore one of the strategic organisational aims guiding and underpinning the practices and programmes of the organisation.

The fifth Sustainable Development Goal also gives a specific commitment to gender issues in ‘seeking to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’. There are several reasons for this.



Firstly, research shows that development outcomes are consistently worse for women and girls than for men and boys. Secondly, programmes and projects to promote development do not always serve women and girls, and men and boys, equally. Lastly, there is evidence that projects focusing on women and girls bring enhanced benefits for families and society as a whole.

Addressing gender inequality involves transforming unequal power relations between men and women and challenging underlying structures and systems that perpetuate inequalities such as discriminatory laws and policies and systems. Thus promoting gender equality for women and men means:

- Women and men have equal access and control over resources, participation and decision-making processes
- Women and men enjoy equality under the law and that the law is implemented
- Rights, responsibilities, opportunities and outcomes will not depend on whether you are born male or female

- Women and men have autonomy to make life choices free of violence and without limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and responsibilities
- Systems and structures perpetuating inequality, disempowerment and gender stereotyping are challenged.

The design and implementation of the UKAM2 project, in collaboration with our overseas partners, reflects and embeds SCIAF’s core organisational values and commitments to gender equality and empowerment. This Promising Practices report aims to articulate the ideological and strategic goals underpinning the project, reflect upon the effectiveness of the approach, and draw out lessons learned and recommendations for the future. SCIAF’s work to promote gender equality is rooted in the Church’s teachings, traditions and scriptures, which place particular significance on the fundamental dignity, the ‘transcendent worth’, of every human being.

KEY PROGRAMME STRATEGIES

The UKAM2 Programme was designed to holistically enhance food and income security, gender equality and resilience to climate change of 2,000 farming households. The programme focused on increasing agricultural production and building resilience to climate change, diversifying income sources and promoting gender equality at the community and household level.

The approach promoted capacity building through training and awareness-raising, and prioritised vulnerable groups including women - particularly female-headed households, widows, disabled people, the elderly, and people living with HIV. The UKAM2 programme aligns with several of SCIAF's strategic aims, with a primary focus on supporting improvements in livelihoods and building resilience, the project also aims to contribute to gender equality and justice.

Women in agricultural communities, and particularly female-headed households, struggle with low income and lower agricultural productivity, and lack access to resources, decision-making power and equal participation within the household and society. A range of underlying factors inform these circumstances; women generally have more domestic responsibilities, including those relating to childcare, and they are often less mobile and less educated with smaller social networks. Women are also likely to have access to smaller, less productive parcels of land; often without secure tenure or land rights. Within the household, women have less opportunity to contribute to decision-making on issues affecting their lives; from the selection of crops and agricultural inputs, marketing of produce and the use of income generated. Female-headed households are particularly disadvantaged, and may struggle to meet even basic needs. As a consequence, women and their dependants suffer from poor food security, limited livelihood diversity, inadequate nutrition and socio-economic marginalisation. They may also lack access to favourable markets and opportunities, and even information about prices, freedom of movement and availability of goods.

At the community level, women are often excluded from participating in decision-making forums and leadership positions are dominated by men, while women are expected to focus on household-level activities rather than participate in wider community actions.

Gender equality refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, men and boys of rights, responsibilities, opportunities, resources and rewards. SCIAF's Gender Strategy acknowledges that gender equality is not a 'women's issue' but affects both men and women because it is rooted in the relationships between the two. If relationships and social norms and expectations are to change in ways that make both men and women equal and empowered, both women and men must be involved in these processes. The UKAM2 programme aimed to integrate and mainstream gender equality within each of the core programme strategies in order to address the challenges identified by participating overseas partners and their communities, and enhance food and income security and resilience to climate change. An overview of key programme areas is provided here.



Tantine Ngaomere, DRC

KEY STRATEGIES

1. Lead farmers

“If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed; if in terms of ten years, plant trees; if in terms of 100 years, teach the people.”

Confucius

The Lead Farmer approach supports capable and willing farmers within the community to provide agricultural extension service delivery to other community members. Once selected by the community, the Lead Farmers are entrusted to receive training on their behalf and are then responsible for sharing their skills and knowledge with other community members.

Lead Farmers are selected by their communities based on their technical expertise, literacy skills, clear communication and networking abilities and willingness to innovate and teach, mentor and monitor other farmers. After training, Lead Farmers demonstrate new techniques and crops in their own fields, which become learning and mentoring hotspots for other farmers. By training women as Lead Farmers, supporting them to gain in confidence and build skills and to share these with their communities, participating Lead Farmers become role models for other community members and demonstrate women’s capacities for success.

As Lead Farmers are well known and respected in their communities, speak the local languages, and are familiar with local contexts and challenges, they provide an effective mechanism for disseminating information to other community members. They lead by example, demonstrating successes in their fields and in their own lives.

Situated directly in the communities, they are able to provide ongoing mentoring and backstopping for other smallholder farmers, and ensure that knowledge is locally owned and implemented, increasing the uptake of the new ideas. Lead Farmers are also recognised by local community leaders and local government agricultural representatives, who often rely on them as focal points within the communities they serve.

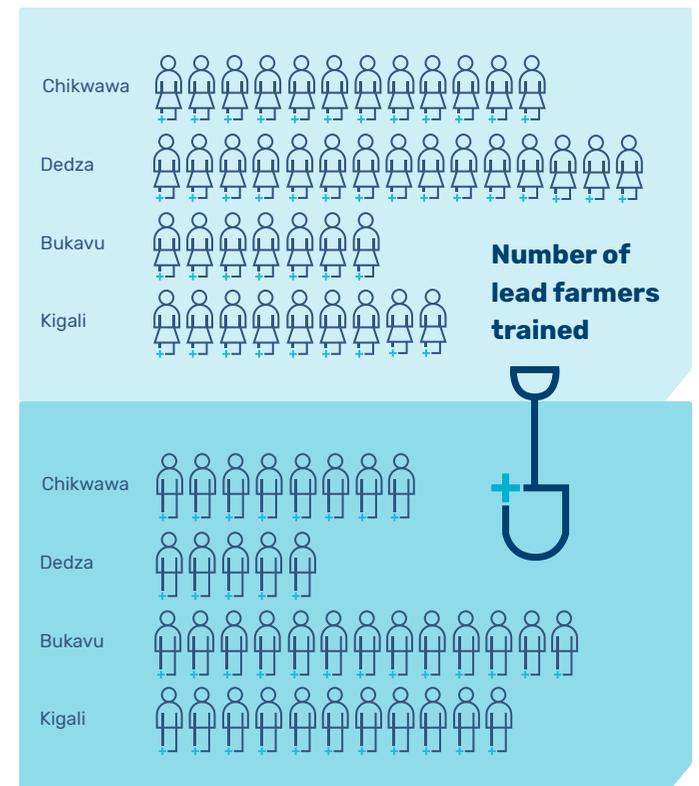
Half of all the Lead Farmers selected by the communities and trained by the programme were women. These women Lead Farmers set a powerful example to other community members; demonstrating that women within their own community can effectively learn and apply new skills and techniques, enhance their production and support their families and neighbours. Supporting women to demonstrate their leadership skills as well as their ability to succeed in the application of new agricultural techniques provided role models for both women and men, boosted the confidence of women and added value to the other programme impacts around food security and economic empowerment.



In total, 80 (43 women and 37 men) Lead Farmers were selected and trained by the programme; 20 per partner.

“The Lead Farmer is the most sustainable approach, as they will still be there in the community once the programme is over.”

Lynda Maluku,
Income Generating Officer,
CADECOM Chikwawa



KEY STRATEGIES

2. Community seed banks

Traditionally, smallholder farmers and their families save their seeds from one harvest to the next as a strategy to guarantee availability for the next planting season, storing them in their own homes. Seed preservation has been a woman's role, and women have greatly contributed to the conservation of diversity at the farm level thanks to their knowledge of seed quality and practices of seed saving. However, these practices have been disrupted due a range of circumstances including droughts, crop failure, floods, disease, pests and poverty, which are eroding both the quality of seeds and the number of plant varieties available to farmers. In the DRC, conflict also represents a barrier to the adequate storage of seeds by smallholder farmers. Furthermore, the storage techniques used are often inefficient and outdated, reducing the quality and availability of seeds from season to season and forcing farmers to buy replacement seed, increasing costs and delaying planting.

Supporting women, and their communities, to enhance the quality and consistency of seed saving through community seed banks plays an important role in linking climate change adaption and gender equality. It builds on traditional practices and community roles to increase uptake and ownership of the processes.

The UKAM2 programme implemented a village (community) seed bank system for storage and diversification of seeds, following management guidelines prepared by the implementing partners with the support of SCIAF, and shared with the target communities. The community seed banks established in target communities provide a sustainable system for storage and diversification of seeds, enhancing farmers' ability to buffer environmental and economic stress, by increasing the availability of crop varieties adapted to a range of environmental conditions.

Community seed banks empower women to engage in leadership positions in the community, by gaining confidence and leadership skills. They also demonstrate women's commitment and ability to make and act upon decisions beyond the household level, and to engage with other community leaders and high-level stakeholders. Women were selected by their communities to lead the community seed bank committees more often than men, and were also well represented in all committee positions within these community seed banks.

KEY STRATEGIES

3. Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR)

A core aim of the programme was to support target communities to reduce their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change by developing and implementing community-based disaster adaption and mitigation strategies. This involved communities' engagement with government officials and community leaders, both female and male, including district council officials, representatives from the district agricultural office, councillors, school teachers, members of school committees, village chiefs, village development committee members, and religious leaders.

To enhance the long-term capacity of SCIAF's partners in this area, staff from the partner organisations were also supported to attend training on climate change and disaster risk reduction at the International Institute of Rural

Reconstruction in the Philippines, specifically addressing household food security in the context of changing climate and environment.

The programme supported the formation of 25 Village CMDRR Management Committees comprising 155 members, the majority of whom (82) are female. As well as receiving training on gender equality and leadership, members of these committees were trained on topics including hazard assessment and mapping, vulnerability assessment, group dynamics, community empowerment, early warning and how best to involve community and local government officials. In these committees, women have demonstrated determination and commitment; contributing their time and effort to ensure that the community DRR plans have been implemented, and encouraging others in the community to engage in these processes.



Members of a community seed bank in Malawi

KEY STRATEGIES

4. Para veterinary (Para-vets)

Para-vets are community based animal health workers whose role is to increase the availability and affordability of private animal services to livestock owners in the rural communities. They work in consultation with and under the guidance of the government veterinary officials. Para-vets provide vaccinations, clinical treatment and sell veterinary drugs.

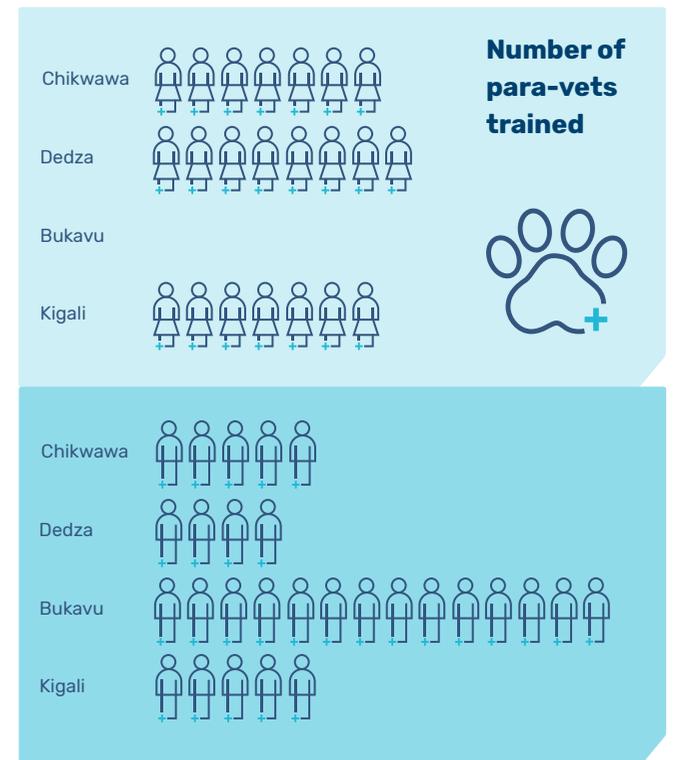
The UKAM2 programme supported farmers to enhance their income through rearing livestock. However, veterinary services were unavailable in the target villages and livestock mortality rates were high. In Rwanda, the UKAM2 programme introduced para-vet training to prevent animal deaths, reduce animal ill health and improve livestock management. In Malawi, as Project Manager Bernard Kanyumbu explains,

“The idea to train people to deliver treatments within the communities was originally designed by the government, to overcome the fact that the number of vets had reduced, and they were no longer able to cover all the areas.”



“The governmental veterinarian said that UKAM2 para-vets help the government a lot, as they provide supplementary help”.

Emily Chitsulo,
para-vet in Kaudza village,
Ntcheu District, Malawi.



In the DRC, the programme provided training to the selected para-vets who were then supported by the government, as Agricultural Officer Alain Cirhuza Cinamula explains,

“The veterinarians of the ministry helped them to make a needs assessment and develop the livestock management committee, which works with the para-vets.”

On completion of the training, each para-vet received a veterinary kit consisting of basic medicines and equipment such as thermometer, gloves, scissors, syringes and wadding blade knives plus a raincoat and gumboots. The para-vets charge a small fee for their services, which is used to refurbish the medicine stock. The fees have been agreed by the villagers, based on the cost of the medicine and in consultation with the government veterinary officials. This service generates employment opportunities for rural youth, both female and male.

Women participated in and completed the para-vet training in both Malawi and Rwanda, and have effectively supported their communities by providing these services and improving the health of livestock. In the DRC, however, women initially exhibited reluctance to engage in para-veterinary training and the care of livestock, regarding these as ‘men’s jobs’. By the end of the programme, women’s increasing engagement in a range of non-traditional activities within the household and wider community, coupled with their demonstrated ability to lead and succeed in social and economic spheres, have contributed to broader shifts in perceptions of men’s and women’s roles and abilities. As a result, women in the DRC are now actively requesting training in para-veterinary skills. At the end of the programme the total number of para-vets was 50 (22 female and 28 male).

KEY STRATEGIES

5. Income generation (micro-business) and village savings and loans groups (microfinance)

Poverty was identified as one of the core challenges facing women and men in the target communities, and compounds issues such as food security and environmental protection. To combat these issues, the programme supported participants to diversify and engage in income generating activities, and to establish self-managed village savings and loans groups (VSLA). The latter enable farmers to access credit, and micro-businesses allow them to diversify income sources and better cope with risk.

Agriculture remains the main livelihood for the targeted communities, and accordingly many of the income generating activities focused on supporting participants to enhance their productivity, diversify their crops and engage in the production of livestock. Livestock was found to be particularly successful as, in addition to creating income generating opportunities, livestock also produce manure which can be used as fertiliser to enhance soil productivity and boost crop production.

The knowledge and skills gained through participating in the programme, particularly training around the village savings and loans groups, enabled more women to embark on small-scale profitable income generating activities such as vegetable vending, fish mongering, sales of farm produce, baking and many more. Women who had no assets or access to credit from banks, as well as those with low or no levels of literacy, were able to save small amounts of money, borrow in times of hardship, invest in setting up micro-businesses, and increase their agricultural income and productivity.

“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.”

Kofi Annan,

former UN Secretary General



NYIRAKANANI Colette,
Rwanda

KEY STRATEGIES

6. Gender champions

Following the success of the other programme activities, communities were encouraged to identify Gender Champions; men, women and entire households who effectively work together to achieve success, and demonstrate the impact of integrating gender equality within their households. The UKAM2 programme identified 144 community members (74 women and 70 men) to become Gender Champions and act as role models for their communities.

Gender Champions are volunteer couples or individuals selected by their communities on the basis of criteria such as how they treat their own family members, how they share household tasks, equal opportunities given to their children regardless of their sex and willingness to provide leadership. They are selected for putting gender equality principles into practice in their lives and for being able to testify in public the benefits that adopting such principles has brought to their households.

Thanks to their virtuous behaviour, Gender Champions enjoy the status of role models within their communities. They are encouraged to share their experiences using different approaches including sensitisation meetings, public events, and door to door message delivery. For instance, they are available to provide recommendations and advice during the Village Saving and Loans Associations meetings. Periodically, they organise events to sensitise the community on the prevailing gender issues in their villages.

Gender Champions play an important advisory role in case of reported gender-based violence within their communities. They can recommend the course of action to undertake and which authority would best handle the situation, whether family councillors, traditional chiefs, or the police.

In Malawi, the gender champion concept is linked with the government development structures as it is regarded as an extension of the development committees established by the government at the administrative level.



A woman farmer in Malawi

Yvette,

a non-direct programme participant from Kalengera village, told CDJP Bukavu staff how she benefitted from a model couple.

“I was not selected as a direct beneficiary of this project because I did not meet the criteria. However, I benefitted indirectly because my friend, who is a participant in the project, taught me a lot. She showed me how to sow on the line and make the compost, and encouraged me to join the VSLA created by women who used the CDJP model. One day she came to visit me with her husband and they shared with us the importance of collaborating in the household duties and responsibilities. They told us how to identify the need and the desire, and the non-discrimination of children. I was very happy to learn this with my husband. From then on, there is no more “I” in my home, but rather “we”.

CDJP Kigali Programme Officer

“Women were meant to do most of the household activities, and stay at home with the children. Because of this silence within society, women were not able to benefit from anything. The challenge is still resistance to change from the men. There are instances where men even refuse to work because women claim more independence.”

Ban Ki-Moon,

former UN Secretary General.

“Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys. It is everyone’s responsibility.”

CHALLENGES

The UKAM2 programme identified a wide range of challenges affecting women at all levels, and aimed to address these as far as possible through the design and implementation of the programme.

1

Resistance from men and fear of loss of authority

When reflecting on the challenges experienced, initial resistance from men, and in some cases from male community leaders, emerged as a frequent theme amongst programme staff. Perceptions that 'gender' concerns only women, and that empowering women inevitably results in disempowering men, were at the root of these challenges. Early gender trainings provided clear explanations and engagement with the terminology, breaking down these misconceptions and illuminating the dynamic and inter-related values of gender equality and gender equity. The key shifts occurred as men began to recognise the benefits of women's empowerment and equality such as economic growth and hunger reduction, both at the household and community levels.

2

Women's reluctance to challenge the status quo

In addition to initial resistance from men within the target communities, programme staff also identified reluctance from some women to engage in the planned activities, particularly those which challenged traditional norms and gender roles. For many older women in particular, concerns were raised about the risk of creating disharmony within the household and destroying their families if they questioned the status quo, and some older women initially suggested that the programme was only suitable for younger women. Women have also expressed reluctance to engage in areas perceived as 'men's business', although over time the programme has broken down some of these assumptions and women have become more interested in engaging in new practices.

3

Expectations and experiences of customary leaders

Securing buy-in from customary leaders was essential for success, but initially some were suspicious about the planned activities and goals of the programme. Digging deeper, it emerged that the majority of these leaders had not travelled outside of their immediate area, and were unaware that customary practices in their communities were not universal behavioural norms. For some leaders, they had never seen a woman lead a group, speak out in public, or inherit land. Overcoming their expectations and assumptions, and identifying role models, provided a way to overcome some of these assumptions and deep-rooted beliefs.

4

Influence of wider community

Another key challenge which emerged as the programme progressed was the need to roll out the sensitisation to surrounding communities and particularly to opinion leaders and influential figures more widely. As household dynamics in the target communities shifted, programme participants faced scepticism and judgement from outsiders who disdained their new practices of shared decision-making. These wider judgements could negatively influence the less committed participants, and it was therefore essential to ensure that the momentum was maintained and sensitisation rolled out more widely.

5

Literacy and numeracy

For many women, a fundamental stumbling block for engaging in leadership roles or for success in business is their poor education and lack of basic knowledge of literacy and numeracy. It is noteworthy that the women who have gained positions of leadership, and generally those who have succeeded in developing income generating activities, are the most educated women.

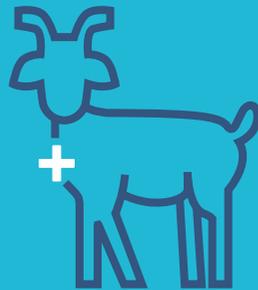
Engaging men in gender equality

Having men in gender equality sessions was reported as an important factor in improved household relations.



Reciprocal approaches

1,856 female and male farmers received goats which helped them create manure.



“The system has been a success in Chikwawa as households have started sharing duties. The cultural beliefs are in the process of changing. The number of women in decision-making positions has increased from 15 to 177. Incidents of SGBV are reported to have been reduced by about a third. The rate of school drops-out because of early marriage has also decreased. Women and children are involved in decision-making on the use of family resources.”

CADECOM Chikwawa

GENDER IMPACTS OF THE PROGRAMME

GENDER IMPACTS

1. Improved decision-making

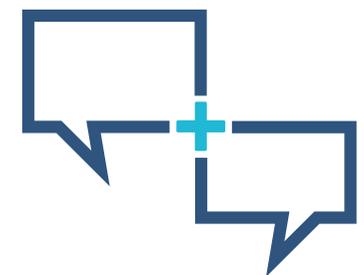
Involving women and men in programme activities, and supporting women to engage in decision-making across a range of domains, both within the household and the wider community, has catalysed shifts in the perception and attitudes of women and men towards decision-making.

By generating independent income, women have been able to enhance their contribution to the household and reduce their financial dependency, and in many cases this shift increases their contribution to decision-making around spending and investment of the household income. Ms Eda, in Dedza, Malawi explained,

“In the past they didn’t think that women could do what men do; for instance, running a business. Through the VSLA I could get a loan for my business, which consists of buying chickens and selling them after six weeks, to support my husband and my household.”

Women have taken leadership and decision-making positions within their communities, for example in the community seed banks and CMDRR committees, in the VSLA groups and as Lead Farmers and para-vets.

In Malawi, women’s influence has gone beyond the programme’s committees, including government development structures at the community level, such as the Village and Area Development Committees. While some partners reported that women were initially reluctant to apply for higher level positions (Chair, Vice-chair, Secretary, etc.) within these committees, the ongoing gender awareness provided through trainings, learnings from peers and sensitisation increased their willingness to engage, while the leadership trainings supported their capacity and skills. Within the household too, target communities report increased engagement of women in decision-making regarding household spending and investment.



“The participation of women in decision-making in my home and community is good. In my home, since participating in gender focus groups with my wife, we work closely on all household decisions. And besides, to be clear, if my wife refuses a proposition that I’m making and I find it well founded, I do not do it. In short, she is my advisor. At the level of community groups, women’s participation is good. She chairs the VSLA and she is a member of the community seed bank and livestock committees, and everything goes well.”

Mr Ntawiniga, age 63, DRC



NYIRANKUMBUYE Bonifride and her husband, Rwanda

The case of Mr Maneno in DRC and his wife M’kabemba demonstrates the changing power dynamics within households when women begin to independently earn income and gain the respect of their husbands.

Before the programme, Mr Maneno described his wife as “useless”, commenting, “her only job is to give birth and eat here.” With the support of the programme, his attitude began to change. His wife’s self-esteem began to improve as she learned skills in vegetable production, and became involved in her local VSLA group. She started selling vegetables and saving the income, and after one year the group disbursed the savings to all members. M’kabemba decided to use the income she had generated to invest in iron sheets for the roof of the family home, and worked together with her husband to replace the grass thatch with new iron sheets. Through the process Mr Maneno’s attitude changed and he began to respect his wife, in time seeing her as an equal,

“I am living with a woman who can contribute, and can build alongside me. Now we are useful to each other, and we work together.”

Mrs Gratia, in Rwanda, explains the changes in her household and family dynamics as a result of participating in the programme,

“I’m 66 years old and I have eight children. My husband has five wives and I’m the third. There are so many issues that have been fixed in my home thanks to the gender lessons I learned. Before the project came, I had no right to the household’s’ property because they were all managed by my husband... I had no right to agricultural production, even the ones I produced by myself.

“When my husband came home he used to harass me, I was traumatised by him.

“After receiving gender training there are so many changes. I have tried to teach my husband about my rights in a smooth voice and told him that if he continues abusing me, I will report him to the police. Teaching my husband was not easy due to his resistance but day by day he understood.

“Now, my husband is no longer selling the household property, he is no longer insulting me, I have a voice and I’m working peacefully towards the development of my home.”

Nyirankumbuye is 39 years old. She lives with her husband and their five children in a village in Rwanda.

She is an active farmer – she has been growing different crops using modern techniques learned through the programme. She is also a member of Twigire-Rutonde cooperative, where she can access further knowledge on agriculture and new information about marketing agricultural products. The increased production has enabled her to improve the well-being of her family.

“Before I was scared to ask for a loan. As women, we used to have fear in ourselves. Today I am free. I can ask for a loan and make a business. I know my rights. Before, I could not participate in meetings, discussions, and share conversations.

“There has been a very big improvement for me, as a woman. As women, we used to be isolated. Now we are involved in saving and loan groups and have access to income and credit. I can buy soap, salt and oil, and we are clean. I am now able to fulfil some needs. Before I used to depend on my husband to buy soap and clothes, and my husband could refuse. Now I can do business, save and buy what I need for me and my children, like clothes and school fees. I can complement my husband.

“Before, I couldn’t make a decision by myself. Now I can have a conversation with my husband. I do the same at meetings. I can now share my ideas and sometimes ideas are accepted.

“Everywhere in the village women can speak out. The culture has changed. We do the same with children. I take time to have conversations with them and teach them what I learnt from the programme.”



A woman farmer in Rwanda





NSABIMANA Augstin and NIYOMIZEYE Beathe, with their sons Daniel and Eli, Rwanda

GENDER IMPACTS

2. Enhancing family relationships

Supporting women to succeed, and to work together with their husbands and other male family members during trainings and programme activities, is reported to have resulted in deep shifts within the household dynamics of the participants. The programme worked to reduce incidents of SGBV within the community, and at the household level participants report improved relationships, increased respect and cooperation, and women’s increasing involvement in decision-making. During a focus group discussion in Kazembe, Malawi, women explained,

“Families are not fighting as much. One of the advantages was that CADECOM put men and women in the same room so together we could learn about gender.

Now things are better, we can work together, we are doing things in the fields together and in the house – the men can even cook!”

As respect for women improved within the wider community and in the participating households, men have begun to shoulder the burden of domestic responsibilities and engage with their wives as equals; increasingly sharing both tasks and decision-making.

These shifts are likely to result in improved well-being outcomes for women and men, and signal deepening commitment to the values of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

A programme participant in Malawi described both the economic and spiritual shifts within his household since becoming involved in the programme,

“I have experienced great improvements in my farming, I invest less but the amount of harvest has increased. At first I only harvested 12 bags from my farm but now I harvest over 21 bags on the same piece of land, while applying less effort and a smaller investment. My life has now improved – I am able to have surplus harvest to sell and have some money to support my family. I can also save some seed to plant in the next season. I have a family of four and I am able to support them all by employing the farming techniques that I have learned from the project.

“Finally, the biggest benefit is the happiness and love that this project has brought to my house. I used to be an abusive man, I never let my wife decide on anything in my house. I did not beat her but she was never happy with how I ran things. Now I am enjoying a happy family as a result of the gender training from the project.

“My spirituality has also deepened with my growing love for my family. I now believe that I serve the Lord freely with a clear conscience.”

Emily, a programme participant in Malawi, describes the impact of the programme on her physical and psychological well-being, as well as the division of labour within her household,

“I have benefited from the project because it has brought greater balance and happiness into my family. Before the project came I lived in fear of my husband because of his abusive nature. He abused me verbally and physically. My husband never did any work around the house.

“When the project came and trained us, things started changing.

“There is now better communication, which has contributed to our greater happiness. I can tell you right now that I just came from the field and I have left my husband back home cooking food. I am a happier person now and I have to thank CADECOM for that.”

GENDER IMPACTS

3. Role models for success

Supporting women, men and households to become role models for others in their community is a common theme across many of the programme strategies. This approach has been effective at inspiring and promoting women to succeed across a wide range of endeavours, from implementing new farming practices to enhancing income generation.

Gaston Gatera, Agricultural Officer, CDJP Kigali, told us,

“Everyone in the community knows that these women (Lead Farmers) have knowledge and technical skills, and they are respected. Their living conditions are better than others in the community now, their houses are better; they demonstrate success and they have become role models.”

Partners report that with support from Lead Farmers, programme participants have started applying new techniques in their own fields, such as planting in lines and applying manure. Participants also report an increase in their production of vegetables (amaranth, aubergine, onion, cabbage), both for home consumption and market; enhancing their food security and opportunities for income generation.

“I am a single woman. Some of the household tasks were supposed to be done by men. Through the gender trainings, I learned that I could do some of these tasks. I constructed my own toilet, while before I had to use my neighbour’s ... I used to practise traditional farming, producing very little. Now I have a vegetable garden, thanks to which I was able to put up doors at home.”

Mariana, Malawi

In many cases, the benefits of this approach extend beyond the intended programme participants, with partners reporting that the trainings and meetings held by Lead Farmers at the demonstration plots are also attended by community members other than programme participants. These community members are often neighbours of the direct programme participants, who would like to learn new agricultural techniques and how to adopt them in their own farms, expanding and extending the outcomes of the programme.

One of the key outcomes of the programme was women’s increasing confidence and the changing attitudes to ‘men’s tasks’. Traditionally, in the target communities, certain jobs have been perceived as gendered; for example, construction of latrines, or thatching roofs is conducted by men, while cooking and childcare are tasks for women. After the training, women are gaining confidence to take on traditionally ‘male’ tasks and increase their independence. The implications for women empowered to engage in these activities and take responsibility for maintaining and improving their own homes are significant.

“Traditionally, women cannot build the roof of their house or build a toilet. After hearing about gender equality, I decided to build my own toilet. I used to be shy, but now I do not feel shy anymore. If a woman does not have a husband, who is going to help her?”

Elena, Malawi

For female-headed households in particular, this shift can be revolutionary as they no longer need to hire and pay for men to complete tasks as the female head of household can embark upon them independently. For many women, watching another woman engage in non-traditional tasks, and succeed, can be an inspirational incentive to try out new activities. Promoting successful women as role models for others is therefore a powerful motivator for change.

While some initial challenges were experienced, such as in the DRC where women initially refused to train as para-vets due to community perceptions of this as a man’s role, gender barriers have gradually been broken down. By the end of the programme, women began to actively request training in para-vet skills. Participating women leaders have gained confidence and self-esteem alongside technical skills, and simultaneously provided powerful role models for other women and men in their communities.

The case of NYIRAMISAGO from a village in Rwanda and her family demonstrates the changes achieved through participating in the UKAM2 programme. She explains,

“Before I joined the project... me and my family, we used to eat once a day and sometime had no food, but now we can eat at least twice a day. Here at home everyone has medical insurance; we can go to the hospital or health centre when getting sick. I’m really excited to be a project participant and I have achieved all this thanks to the support of the project.

“I’m a member of a Savings and Credit Group. Thanks to being involved in this group I created a small business; now I can save some money and get a loan. I collect beans, maize and groundnuts from the village and take them to the market where I can sell them at a higher price. After getting the profit I save in the group in order to increase the capital so that my business grows. I not only built a house, but I also bought ten chickens, two goats and a pig.”



UWAYISENG A Violette, Rwanda

Cholohya is a 45-year-old woman living with her husband and two children in the DRC. She explained how participation in the programme has changed her life,

“When I speak in the VSLA group I feel respected in the community and in my family. With the UKAM2 programme, I understood the role and importance of a VSLA in my daily life because now I have a small business project and a field of vegetables at home. My husband and I work together for the household survival. Really, I feel better.

“Before the programme, I could hardly eat and that was once a day for lack of food. But today meals are diverse and three times a day. Before, I did not have a small farm at home. Today I have two goats and my pig has just calved, and we distributed the piglets in the group. Because of these livestock, I no longer lack manure to fertilise the soil and the field.

“Thanks to the UKAM2 programme, I participate in decision-making in the household together with my spouse. We have already started planning our spending and needs. If it is necessary to buy a goat or sell it, there is a consultation in the family. In our group VSLA I occupy the position of councillor and I direct everyone for the smooth management of the team.”

M’bagalwa heads a household living in a village in the DRC. Eleven people live in her household, including her children and grandchildren. M’bagalwa explains,

“My life before the programme was bad. Before the arrival of the UKAM2 programme I used to live as a beggar because my husband abandoned me. I was anxious to join the VSLAs that were in the neighbouring villages but it was impossible. Thanks to the UKAM2 programme, I joined a new local VSLA and quickly organised a micro-business with the funds I received. I sell beer at the market.

“My passion was to continue raising goats and pigs and the project has responded to my needs by offering me this opportunity. As a businesswoman, being a member of a VSLA allows us to have access to credit and saving within the community, when we need it.

“With the regular conflicts, attackers had stolen all my livestock, but the programme gave me new breath by giving me a goat and a pig to begin again. Currently, I have two goats and three pigs. I also didn’t know anything about women’s empowerment and how to cultivate to increase my productivity. Thank God, and with what I learned on the UKAM2 programme, I received the title of my family plot. I have enthusiastically begun breeding goats and pigs. I am member of a VSLA, and I received training on agricultural techniques. I am happy today to grow a vegetable garden which allows me to have enough to eat, and a means to save in our VSLA.

“My life has changed completely. I am currently a small beer and charcoal trader, and I have goats and pigs. God bless SCIAF and CDJP.”



Sezikeye Ildephonse,
Rwanda

PROMISING PRACTICES

The UKAM2 programme has demonstrated a number of promising practices that should be incorporated in future projects and programmes. The majority of the practices documented here have been identified by programme partners or by programme participants themselves.

The three key themes which emerged are:

1) Implement holistic, inclusive approaches

By integrating gender as an underpinning foundation of the other programme activities it can be most effectively reinforced to promote sustainable transformation.

2) Support peer learning and the cross-pollination of ideas at all levels

This includes the level of programme participants and of partner organisations, to effectively share successes and challenges, build communities of practice and knowledge resources.

3) Promote the collaboration of stakeholders to embed new ideas and practices

In addition to sharing knowledge and cross-pollinating ideas, the practices will support the active engagement of a range of stakeholders to ensure the sustainability and ownership of programme outcomes.



An irrigated field in Malawi

PROMISING PRACTICES

1. Implement holistic, inclusive approaches

Gender equality: an underpinning framework

SCIAF encourages all overseas partners to develop and implement their own gender policies and integrate gender equality into all aspects of their work. It was recognised that gender issues are at the heart of the key aspects of the UKAM2 programme, and that efforts had to be made to develop a strategic approach to mainstreaming gender throughout the programme activities. Recognising that SCIAF does not have the mandate to impose a single overarching solution to gender challenges faced by partners working in diverse culture and country contexts, it was nevertheless essential to address the ubiquity of the underlying issue of gender inequality, and the impacts of this inequality on development opportunities for individuals, households and communities.

For SCIAF, the overarching principles of dignity and justice of all persons are fundamental, and in order to uphold these values the UKAM2 programme mainstreamed gender into all decisions and activities implemented.

Supporting communities to identify and address underpinning inequalities, and to recognise the opportunities which emerged as a result of redressing some of these imbalances, supported both the achievement of the programme objectives and the social and economic development of the communities we serve.

Women's empowerment frameworks focus on the interrelationships between women's own aspirations and capabilities (her agency), the environment in which she lives, and which creates the constellations of opportunity for her actions (the structure) and the overarching power relations through which she is able to negotiate her path (the relations). The UKAM2 programme aimed to address these different levels of empowerment by not only supporting and nurturing women's individual agency, but also contributing to deeper structural and relational changes within her society.

Richer households

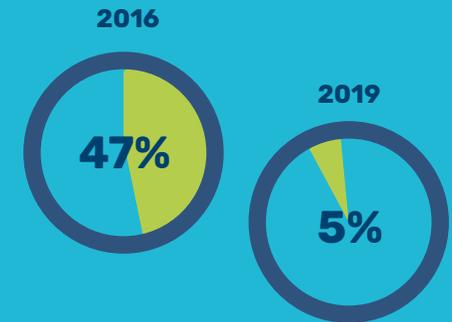
The total average income doubled during the programme.

65 → 137



More stable incomes

In DRC and Rwanda the percentage of people relying on piecework as their main income source dropped dramatically.



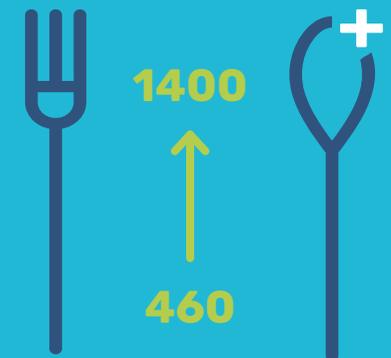
Lead farmers are a success

90%

of participants reported adopting at least two new conservation agriculture techniques.



Better food security



On average more than 900 more households are food secure for at least 10 months of the year.



A livestock beneficiary in Malawi

Integrated gender training

From the very start of the programme implementation period, partner staff and wider stakeholders were invited to participate in gender training and related activities to ensure that they understood and upheld the principles of gender equality which the programme aimed to achieve. The inclusion of a wide range of decision-makers, from community and religious leaders to representatives of Justice and Peace Commissions, government officers and members of National Women's Councils, facilitated dynamic engagement and high-level ownership and support of both the programme and the core values of gender equality.

Trainings at these levels were grounded in the theoretical underpinnings of gender equality; from the theological foundations in Catholic Social Teaching to the national and international legal frameworks including women's rights. Furthermore, they addressed the lived experiences of women and men, examining the practices of gendered divisions of labour, ownership, access and control over assets, resources and decision-making in daily life at the household and community level and the implications of these practices for cultural, economic and political inclusion.

To ensure that the key learnings were effectively translated into real impact and practical action, participants (particularly religious and community leaders) were supported to identify next steps and develop action points for implementing these actions in their communities.

Even at the partner level, it was recognised that gender concepts had often been misunderstood: regarded as 'foreign', 'donor-led' and in conflict with traditional cultural

norms and values. Feedback from one participant in Malawi demonstrates this,

"I have a confession to make. Although I have been involved and doing gender programming for some time, I have always told the community that it's the wish of the donor for us to do it. But this training has clearly shown me that the promotion of gender equality is a national mandate. The donor is there to assist us facilitate the process."

Rooting these concepts in deeper national legal frameworks, relating them to universal core values of human dignity and respect, and examining the practical implications of these practices for the target communities, helped to ensure ownership of these values and mainstreaming by key programme stakeholders from the outset.

Gender inequality was recognised as a core barrier at the household and community level across the three countries, with women's exclusion from economic activities and decision-making forums inhibiting development progress. The strategy adopted by the UKAM2 programme entailed the integration of gender training into each aspect of the programme design and implementation; ensuring that messages were conveyed and reinforced at all levels to increase ownership and buy-in. Accordingly, whether the training covered CMDRR or income generation, care of livestock or natural resource management, core values of gender equality and women's rights provided an underpinning foundation to the training content and other activities.

PROMISING PRACTICES

2. Peer learning and sharing ideas

Support women leaders as role models

The UKAM2 programme has supported women to take formal leadership positions in a number of arenas, including community seed bank and CMDRR committees, VSLA groups and farmer associations or cooperatives. Additionally, women have been trained and supported to become Lead Farmers and Gender Champions, supporting other community members with their technical knowledge and skills.



A group of women farmers in Malawi

Share experiences and cross-pollinate learning

An experience sharing workshop was hosted with key programme staff from all four partners and from SCIAF in Malawi. This proved to be an invaluable opportunity for the cross-pollination of ideas and experiences, and enabled programme staff to learn from the successes and challenges of other country contexts and from each other.

The workshop demonstrated the potential of greater cooperation and collaboration to achieve sustainable transformational change and to build the capacity of overseas partners and improve the way they work, and supported partners to:

- Learn from each other
- Share ideas and experiences
- Transfer localised knowledge
- Gain confidence and broaden their context
- Form strategic alliances.

During the workshop, partners shared their experiences implementing each of the key programme areas, from the Lead Farmer scheme to the VSLAs, and identified opportunities to enhance engagement with women and vulnerable groups. The workshop also included an opportunity to meet with women and men in the local communities around Dedza, Malawi, and hear directly from the programme participants about the impact on their communities and households.

Promote the collaboration of stakeholders to embed new ideas and practices

Working with government bodies at the national and local levels has been fundamental to the success of the UKAM2 programme, and is likely to contribute to greater sustainability for the outcomes. A wide range of stakeholders were invited to participate in gender trainings and engage with programme participants both throughout and after the programme implementation period.

In Malawi, Bernard Kanyumbu, Project Manager for CADECOM Dedza explains,

“Working with the Ministry of Social Affairs helped to ensure that gender issues remained at the heart of the programme, and it was really important to engage with them from the start to ensure the continuity of the programme benefits for our target communities. They took a leading role in trainings, and now they communicate directly with the Lead Farmers and members of the committees - they have formed enduring relationships.”

In the DRC, the programme worked together with a local school to train the para-vets; supporting them to develop sustainable networks with veterinarians and local input dealers, as well as increasing opportunities for backstopping and continual professional development. Building these local networks, and mainstreaming gender equality within them, is likely to enhance the sustainability of the programme benefits by embedding them in longstanding local power structures.



A woman farmer in Rwanda

KEY PROGRAMME LEARNINGS

The impacts of the UKAM2 programme are rooted in the networks of trust built and maintained over time; by programme partners, local community and religious leaders, government agencies and the programme participants themselves.

These stakeholders ensured the effectiveness of the programme activities as well as enhanced the long-term outcomes making sure that local structures were established and supported to become sustainable and community-owned. For deep-rooted challenges, such as cultural attitudes to gender norms, local ownership is essential for the success of the programme.

RECOMMENDATION

Map key stakeholders from the outset of the programme to ensure that all key organisations and opinion leaders are engaged in both the design and implementation of the activities. Shifting deep-rooted beliefs and gender norms requires buy-in from stakeholders at all levels, and a commitment to transformative, partnership-based development is a prerequisite for success.

RECOMMENDATION

Gender analysis is integral to effective programme design. Robust gender analysis which recognises and responds to the different challenges affecting women and men is a core foundation on which to build the programme activities. In particular, it is critical to recognise the distinct and diverse needs of young mothers, widows, women with disabilities and those affected by psychosocial challenges, who may require different levels of support and engagement in order to succeed.

RECOMMENDATION

Inclusive approaches are essential to ensure that interventions are designed to meet the needs, and maximise the capacities, of both women and men. Ensuring women's participation at all levels requires flexibility and creativity, and participatory methods can be particularly effective as part of the gender transformative toolkit.

RECOMMENDATION

Role models are powerful agents of change and can inspire both behavioural and attitudinal shifts in target communities and beyond. Empowering women to showcase and celebrate their successes can inspire other community members to support women's achievements.

RECOMMENDATION

A robust Theory of Change (ToC) embedded in solid power analysis is essential to empower all partners and core stakeholders to recognise the interrelationships, root causes and manifestations of gender inequality, and to ensure that these are addressed in a holistic and comprehensive manner

LOOKING FORWARD

The programme has achieved significant impacts in supporting women's sociocultural and economic empowerment, both within and beyond the target households and communities. However, there is more to be done to support women's success, in particular:

Leadership positions: The leadership positions attained by participating women so far have been based within their communities, but it is recognised that the skills and confidence they have gained equips them well to attain positions in higher level power structures, such as ward councillors and committee members to represent their communities at district and council committee levels.

Support women's literacy, numeracy and financial management skills: As participating women increasingly engage in business transactions, there is a clear need to enhance their literacy, numeracy, and even record-keeping and accounting skills to ensure that they maximise their opportunities and avoid exploitation.

Access to finance: Following the success of the VSLA and business development achieved by the participating women, supporting their access to finance through promoting mobile financial facilities or engagement with financial institutions could enable them to expand fledgling enterprises and increase their economic success.

Access to markets and market

information: While women have gained in confidence and productive capacity, they remain constrained from accessing lucrative market opportunities by their limited mobility and access to information. Supporting women, particularly through cooperatives, to develop wider market linkages could further increase their success.

Support to access justice systems: As community members and leaders become increasingly aware of women's legal rights, including rights to inheritance and property ownership, it is essential to support them to access formal justice systems in order to enable women to claim these rights in practice.

Support access to labour-saving

technologies: Women's domestic and economic responsibilities are time-consuming and restrict their opportunities to succeed on equal footing with men. Supporting them with technologies such as solar drying technologies for food preservation or mechanical processing equipment could reduce their burden and increase their opportunities.



NYIRAKANANI Colette, Rwanda



Project participants supported by CDJP Kigali, Rwanda

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