

# BANGLADESH COUNTRY REPORT

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## Promoting Opportunities for Women Empowerment and Rights (POWER) Baseline Study

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## Abbreviations

<b>5DE</b>	Five Domains of Empowerment in Agriculture
<b>AAB</b>	ActionAid Bangladesh
<b>CRSA</b>	Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture
<b>GPI</b>	Gender Parity Index
<b>IFPRI</b>	International Food Policy Research Institute
<b>ISG</b>	International Solutions Group
<b>POWER</b>	Promoting Opportunities for Women Empowerment and Rights
<b>UCW</b>	Unpaid Care Work
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WEAI</b>	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

## Executive Summary

Women in Bangladesh are both isolated and under great strain caused by the dual burden of performing long hours of unpaid care work (UCW) essential to the functioning of their families and also undertaking tasks that contribute to the household economy, such as raising livestock/poultry and making quilts and cigarettes. UCW, which includes everything from collecting fuel and water to cooking meals, doing laundry, and tending to children, elderly, the sick and disabled is commonly viewed as low-status and accepted as women's "duty." Hence, women work 2.8 times longer in UCW activities than men do. Cultural norms that severely restrict women's mobility outside the home, combined with a lack of free time caused by a long work day (on average 39 minutes longer than men's), prevent women from participating in community groups, accessing a full range of economic activities and otherwise engaging in public and political life, education, and other means of advancing their wellbeing. The ultimate consequence of this situation is to deny Bangladeshi women the opportunity to realize their full potential as income earners, citizens, and humans.

In an effort to address the denial of women's civil rights caused by the unequal distribution of work, ActionAid is implementing the Promoting Opportunities for Women Empowerment and Rights (POWER) project. A key premise of the project is that women will only have the time to bring Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA) into practice if the burden of unpaid care work is recognized, reduced and/or redistributed; and they have the means to insist on and enforce their own civil rights. CRSA is a practice that ActionAid developed to increase poor peoples' incomes and food security, while equipping them to deal with the consequences of changing climate. Reducing UCW frees up time that women may use to learn and practice CRSA, which has the potential to boost yields and create surpluses to sell, a rarity under current agricultural and social conditions. CRSA can thereby facilitate women's economic empowerment, which can in turn build or reinforce empowerment in other spheres, including gender equality on a community and societal level.

The project has four intermediate objectives:

1. By the end of 2020 21,000 rural women are organized and are able to demand their rights as farmers and carers and have greater influence in their households and communities
2. By the end of 2020 Women's UCW is more highly valued within households, communities and government, more evenly distributed within households, and hours spent by women on UCW is reduced, resulting in more free time for women to engage in social, economic and political activities.
3. By the end of 2020, 5,000 rural women have more secure and sustainable access to markets and productive resources leading to increased income.
4. Greater visibility of intersections of CRSA, women's UCW and women's economic participation leads to changes in policy and practice by sub-national, national, regional and international stakeholders by 2020.

The purpose of this baseline study was to collect, analyse and report data related to women's empowerment, unpaid care work, and the introduction of CRSA techniques into the work practices of women in rural Bangladesh. Project staff, policy makers, and ActionAid Global will use the information included in the study to:

1. Design project interventions
2. Measure impact during the project's implementation and at its conclusion
3. Advocate for improvements in women's rights
4. Inform ActionAid's future strategy

## **Methodology Summary**

The POWER baseline study was built on two analytical frameworks: the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), and the POWER program project indicator matrix. ISG and ActionAid worked together to modify the WEAI framework to include POWER indicators. The framework matches POWER outcomes and verifiable indicators with WEAI’s domains.

The baseline study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to provide context and details to ensure progress toward quantitative goals is also meaningful. The study employed a modified version of the WEAI household survey for its quantitative data. The WEAI measures the extent of women’s empowerment, agency, and inclusion in agriculture. Its concept of empowerment is described via the Five Domains of Empowerment (5DE): Production, Resources, Income, Leadership and Time Use.

The study collected qualitative data through key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Focus group participants were potential project beneficiaries. Duty bearers were interviewed to discover their attitudes and inform policy and strategy initiatives.

The POWER baseline survey sought to interview one man and one woman that live together in the same household from 500 randomly-selected households,<sup>1</sup> or 1,000 individuals. In actuality, the team interviewed 1,053 total respondents. The method for selecting households at the village level is discussed in the full report.

## **Findings Summary**

Women in the target communities for the Bangladesh POWER project, according to the WEAI score (detailed in the full report), experience an extreme lack of empowerment. 77% of women surveyed have not achieved empowerment across all 5DE. Among this population, a heavy workload and very low group participation rates are the biggest factors preventing women’s empowerment.

### **Women’s Household and Community Empowerment**

Women’s awareness, and subsequently their participation rate, is extremely limited when it comes to the types of groups that work to advance women’s economic empowerment and rights. Particularly problematic is the fact that only 2.11 percent and 1.34 percent of women are aware of the presence of any agricultural producers’ groups and women’s rights groups, respectively, in their communities; since these groups are directly related to POWER project outcomes, it could make the outcomes more difficult to achieve. More study is needed to determine if the issue is chiefly one of awareness or if there is indeed a dearth of agricultural, civic and other organizations in these communities.

Although women’s lack of confidence in public speaking, and the rare number of times they reported speaking publicly, was not a major contributors to women’s low empowerment score, it is still a matter of concern that nearly 62% of women surveyed stated they were not at all comfortable speaking publicly. This could prevent women from standing up for their rights and for issues that are important to them.

Men are far more likely than women to say they are the owners of all agricultural assets except poultry; consequently, poultry is the only agricultural asset class over which women exercise more

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<sup>1</sup> The WEAI Instruction Guide provides definitions of households and directions for selecting household respondents

decision-making authority as well. Women also have more ownership and rights with regard to small consumer durables, such as radios and cookware. Interestingly, although a higher percentage of women reported living in a household with a cell phone, only 21% of women said they are the sole owners, and fewer women reported joint cell phone ownership than men.

Households appear to have sufficient access to credit, with NGO lenders being the most popular option. It should be noted that while the study focused on agricultural sources of income, 88% of households reported sources of income they felt were more important than agriculture. Further investigation is needed to understand the nature of these sources, women's decision-making authority over the assets generated in relation to this income, and whether CRSA training could in any way negatively impact these established livelihoods.

### **Unpaid Care Work**

Unpaid care work occupies a full 10.5 hours of the average women's workday, according to survey respondents; this is 2.8 times the amount of care work that men perform. This disparity also contributes to a longer workday for women (by 39 minutes) as compared to that of men. In the abstract, both women and men were comfortable sharing UCW equally, but this broke down when the research team asked about concrete tasks and who should do them. UCW is considered "low status" and yet both women and men report high levels of satisfaction with traditional roles. A complicating factor is that men often overestimate their own contributions to care work, while also underestimating women's labor. Focus groups also significantly overestimated men's time devoted to economic activities as compared with time use diaries.

### **Market Access and Productive Resources**

Market participation is quite low with more than 75% of men and women stating they did not sell at the market at all during the year. The most common reasons women cited for not selling were that they produced only enough for household consumption (54.3%) and that they were too busy with housework (43%). Only about 17% of women reported attending markets at least once per month to sell products. Those women who did sell earned 14% more than men who sold at the market, despite the fact that women traveled an average of .5km further to market than men.

Due to a translation error, the survey collected limited data on agricultural production and business and the data that was collected may not be representative.

### **Changes in Policy and Practice**

3 out of 4 duty bearers at the national level readily acknowledged the need to reduce and redistribute women's UCW. This was largely representative of the government's current emphasis on cross-cutting gender themes.

Although women have land ownership and inheritance rights in Bangladesh, traditional practices such as the custom of the husband being the one to purchase land and the wife commonly forgoing inheritance rights when in-laws make claims to land impede women's exercise of these rights. Land ownership is an important precursor to agricultural productivity and so the POWER project should work to remove these informal barriers.

Lack of sanitation services (13% of women reported having no access whatsoever to toilets), the pervasive threat of arsenic contamination in the water, and an outsized reliance on fuelwood serve to heighten women's UCW. Women also reported very limited access to facilities and services that



could ease women's UCW, such as childcare facilities (available in only 8% of villages surveyed) and health clinics (51%). Distance is a primary obstacle to accessing these services.

## ***Priorities and Recommendations for Empowering Women Summary***

The baseline study concludes with recommendations for prioritizing POWER's opportunities to reduce women's unpaid care work burden and create new income streams from agricultural activities. The recommendations are:

### **Redistribute Unpaid Care Work (UCW)**

Addressing women's unpaid care work burden is the first step toward achieving program objectives. Housework (as a subset of UCW) is women's most time-consuming activity. Women will be hard-pressed to find time for leadership roles or learning skills that improve their livelihoods before their work burden is relieved. However, ActionAid must approach this objective strategically and with caution due to men's and women's entrenched traditional ideas about work and family. Most men and women stated that they both should be equally responsible for domestic and care work, although data showed that women do most of the UCW. Working with communities to find specific ways that they can implement this ideal is one of POWER's key objectives and greatest challenges.

### **Improve Access to Facilities and Utilities**

Women who have stable access to public service facilities and public utilities have a lower burden of unpaid care work. Advocating for childcare facilities, as well as universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, are potential high-impact POWER activities in the target communities.

### **Increase Awareness of Unpaid Care Work Burden among Men and Women**

Reducing women's unpaid care work could start with changing men's minds that care work is emasculating and women's minds that they are powerless to ask for help from men and the government. Although the process of achieving such a dramatic cultural shift is likely to take a long time, education and advocacy efforts, designed with community input, should begin immediately. It may be helpful to frame the discussion in economic terms and demonstrate how decreasing women's UCW can lead to more opportunities for income-generation and improved quality of life for the family.

### **Increase Awareness of Women's Rights of Mobility**

One of the greatest potential challenges is the issue of cultural restrictions on women's mobility, which was raised in several of the focus groups and key informant interviews. Women are still unlikely to leave the house, let alone go into the fields or to market on their own, in many of the POWER communities under current prevailing attitudes. ActionAid will need to double-down on awareness of mobility as a fundamental human and women's right and seek influential local partners to create a shift in this paradigm.

### **Generate Income**

As extreme poverty forces communities to concentrate efforts on subsistence agriculture, and other basics of survival, it will be a slow process to free up the necessary time and create the assets needed to take advantage of increased economic opportunities. Additionally, women face informal barriers to market access that ActionAid should work to remove. Further agricultural analysis is necessary on at least two fronts. First, a thorough review of community agricultural practices should reveal means

of increasing productivity. Second, the relative economic merits of agricultural activity versus other economic activities, such as quilt and bidi production, deserves more investigation.

### **Improve Women's Leadership in Economic and Community Organizations**

There is a lack of awareness among both men and women about economic and community organizations, apart from mutual help and religious groups, in the target communities. It is not clear whether this is solely an issue of publicity and education or whether there is in fact a dearth of organizations for agricultural producers, civic causes, women's rights, microfinance, etc.

Understandably, without awareness, the participation rates are also extremely low. ActionAid should independently confirm the widespread presence or absence of desired groups and partner with existing groups to execute awareness campaigns. If such groups do not exist, or are not widespread, ActionAid can provide guidance to help communities to start their own.

# 1. Introduction

ActionAid is implementing the project titled ‘Promoting Opportunities for Women Empowerment and Rights (POWER)’ across four countries – Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ghana and Rwanda. The present report is the outcome of the country level baseline study in Bangladesh. The baseline aims to establish a starting point of reference against which ActionAid Bangladesh can measure the progress over time of the project interventions at two operating districts – Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha.

Women’s economic empowerment lies in their equal access to, and control over, resources and economic opportunities. Important resources include control over their time and income, which are a major focus of this study. Several interlinked social, political and economic factors hinder women’s empowerment both at local and national levels. The key factors include women’s unequal workload, lack of appropriate public policies and poor implementation across all governmental levels, women’s limited knowledge and mobilization around their rights, limited representation in decision-making, and gender-based violence. The underlying reasons are inherently structural--built around unequal power relations and gendered norms that perpetuate women’s time poverty and the disproportionate balance between paid and unpaid work, these conditions limit access to productive resources, opportunities and markets, undermine their decision-making and last but not least, reinforce patriarchal attitudes and male domination that inhibit women’s advancement. This is further worsened by climate vulnerability, thereby limiting agricultural productivity and yields. It is in this backdrop that the POWER project has designed its interventions focusing on four interlinked areas:

- The empowerment of women at household and community levels, raising awareness of and claiming their rights;
- The recognition, redistribution and reduction of unpaid care work (UCW) which keeps women in the private sphere;
- The increase of women’s access to productive resources, markets and knowledge of sustainable practices, which will ensure women continue to have a livelihood in the longer term;
- Effecting policy and institutional change to provide an enabling environment that supports women’s economic empowerment

In line with these broad areas of interventions, the project set four medium term outcomes:

**Outcome 1:** By the end of 2020, 21,000 rural women are organized, able to demand their rights as farmers and caregivers and have greater influence in their households and communities

**Outcome 2:** By the end of 2020, Women's UCW is more highly valued within households, communities and government, more evenly distributed within households, and hours spent by women on UCW is reduced, resulting in more free time for women to engage in social, economic and political activities.

**Outcome 3** - By the end of 2020, 21,000 rural women have more secure and sustainable access to markets and productive resources leading to increased income.

**Outcome 4** - Greater visibility of intersections of CRSA, women’s UCW and women’s economic participation leads to changes in policy and practice by sub-national, national, regional and international stakeholders by 2020.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. *Ethical Principles in Conducting the Baseline Study*

ISG works to improve the lives and environment of the people we serve. Accordingly, the baseline study was guided by the three core principles described below, which are in-line with ActionAid's Ethical Standards in Evaluation Activities.

1. *Participatory evaluation design and implementation:* The maximum number of people who have a stake in the outcome of a study or evaluation should have a chance to identify risks in conducting the study and opportunities to suggest ways to reduce those risks. Following this principal, we solicit comments and input from our clients and their stakeholders on inception and design documents, as well as data collection and research tools. When clients have created terms of reference, we review the terms for input from stakeholders and ask for a representative stakeholder review when possible.
2. *Respect the rights, privacy and dignity of evaluation stakeholders:* ISG aims to minimize risk in evaluation management and outcomes. The primary aim of our work is to benefit the people who are most affected by its outcomes. We put the safety, dignity, and privacy of those that participate in our projects above the rewards that we hope to achieve for ourselves or our firm. As such, we ensure that survey, interview, and focus group participants are fully informed of the nature and purpose of the research that we are conducting, obtain their consent before asking any questions or engaging them in any other research, and allow them the opportunity to deny or remove consent at any point in the process. We do not use names or identifying information in reports, except in specific circumstances and then only if the participant is fully informed and in agreement. ISG utilizes secure data protocols to ensure that respondents' information is not used in any way beyond that which they have provided permission. We minimize risk to participants including carefully designing questions that may recreate traumatic or harmful feelings. Finally, ISG believes that participants in our work have the right to benefit from it. We work with our clients to produce multiple versions of documents and materials to facilitate the distribution of results.
3. *Informed and reasonable judgements:* The work that ISG conducts often influences the distribution of resources and activities in vulnerable communities. We consult with our clients to ensure that conclusions are drawn from rigorously vetted evidence, and that following actions are based in reliable findings. ISG's evaluators detail the strengths and weaknesses of our methodology and the limitations of the study given available resources and contextual barriers.

Accordingly, at the inception meeting and subsequent training, ISG and ActionAid discussed particularly sensitive aspects of the POWER data collection tools, such as questions about domestic violence, access to economic resources, and other issues that require sensitivity in interviews and discussion groups. We also worked with National Level Consultants to determine best procedures in each country should reports of domestic violence or criminal activity be revealed during the data collection process.

## 2.2. Analytical Framework

The POWER baseline study was built on two analytical frameworks; the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), and the POWER program project indicator matrix. ISG and ActionAid worked together to modify the WEAI framework to include POWER indicators. The framework matches POWER outcomes and verifiable indicators with WEAI’s domains.

## 2.3. Data Collection Methods and Tools

The Baseline Study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Used together, these methods allowed the research team to collect broad and deep information about the current status and practices of POWER communities in the Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha districts of Bangladesh. This information represents an initial point of comparison as ActionAid seeks to measure the project’s progress over time. As quantitative methods reveal objectively verifiable changes in the course of striving toward specific goals, the qualitative methods provide details and context to ensure that the changes are also meaningful in the lives of individuals and communities. The data collection tools that informed the baseline study are:

### 2.3.1. Household Survey

The baseline study used a modified version of the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) household survey, developed by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (Alkire, *et.al.*, 2013). The WEAI assesses the extent of women’s empowerment, agency, and inclusion in agriculture. Its concept of empowerment is defined by the characteristics of five domains known as the Five Domains of Empowerment in Agriculture (5DE); empowerment is measured by a respondent’s achievement in eight indicators across the five domains. These indicators are described in the full later in this report. The five domains are:

- 1) Production: Exclusive or joint decision-making about farming, livestock, and fisheries.
- 2) Resources: Ownership, access to, and decision-making about land, livestock, agricultural equipment, consumer durables, and credit.
- 3) Income: Exclusive or joint control over income.
- 4) Leadership: Membership in groups and ability to speak in public.
- 5) Time use: Time spent in productive and domestic tasks.

For each of the eight indicators, an individual is considered empowered if her or his achievement is adequate. Adequacy in this context means exceeding the “adequacy cut-off” for the particular indicator shown in Table 1 (Malapit, *et al.*, 2015). The WEAI also calculates the Gender Parity Index (GPI). The GPI measures the percentage of women who are equally empowered as men in the household, and the degree of equality in the 5DE.

### Survey Design

ISG and ActionAid adapted the existing WEAI household survey to include POWER-specific indicators. ISG then tailored the survey for each country participating in the study, in this case Bangladesh, to ensure that questions and response options were appropriate to the local context. Among the survey issues that were modified were response options listing household assets, specific agricultural activities, and community group categories.

The research team surveyed respondents electronically using Open Data Kit software installed on handheld tablet computers. ODK was combined with software called ValiData, which cleaned data in real time and ensured that enumerators were asking questions correctly and entering data accurately. Using ODK in combination with ValiData greatly reduced the amount of time required to complete each survey.

### **2.3.2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**

Following the completion of the household survey, the national consultant conducted key informant interviews based on a pre-designed interview guide developed by ISG.

The purpose of the interview was to collect qualitative data on attitudes, knowledge and behaviours related to women's empowerment, unpaid care work and sustainable agriculture from targeted respondents including communities' members, leaders, and government officials at the community, district and national level. The guide assisted the interviewer in setting key areas for research and orienting the discussions. The interviews happened as a conversation, allowing the interviewer to ask follow-up questions that led to discovering new and important information that was not easily obtainable via survey.

The interview guide for local level KIIs contained nine broad questions, each including several subsets of questions. The questions mainly aimed at understanding the informants' perceptions on four broad areas – women's access to economic opportunities and control over decisions in this regard, women's workload and role differentiation for care work, potentials and challenges in women leadership and finally, women's access to resources and agriculture industry as well as supportive policy interventions. For national level KIIs, which were mostly targeted at research organizations and government agencies, there were five broad questions with subsets under each question covering the topic of policy support in relation to unpaid care work and agriculture.

The four key informants at the national level represented 4 ministries, namely Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Labour and Employment and Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. At the local level, the key informants (9 males and 6 females) included representatives from Union Parishad (the lowest tier of local government), line departments from relevant ministries, farmers, and opinion leaders. The data collectors conducted face-to-face interviews with this target group of key informants.

In total, the baseline study conducted 19 key informant interviews (4 national levels and 15 local level) using the interview guide developed by ISG.

### **2.3.3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

The baseline study ran seven Focus Group Discussions at the village/community and district level based on a FGD guide developed by the ISG. There were three types of focus groups: Male only, female only, and mixed male and female. Each focus group had 6-10 participants. The national consultant conducted at least two focus groups per region, and invited FGD participants from POWER communities.

The purpose of focus groups was to allow participants to share similar experiences, explore conflicting ideas, and brainstorm around new concepts. The focus groups were also expected to provide some insights into why the survey produced the answers that it did.

The FGDs covered five broad questions including subsets of questions on five topics

- Community mobilization and solidarity, combined with women's rights, leadership and influence in the communities, inclusive of their Violence Against Women (VAW) awareness
- Women's control of economic decisions at household level
- The household distribution of unpaid care work and the degree to which that work is valued
- Women's contribution and role in the agriculture industry and their access to markets, including challenges
- Constraints on women's income, including overall challenges of women farmers

#### **2.4. *Data Collector Selection***

ActionAid Bangladesh hired a national baseline consultant to manage baseline data collection and provide analysis for the study. The interested firms/individuals were invited to submit technical and financial proposals. After a competitive evaluation of the proposals, the consulting firm (hereafter called national consultant) was selected. The national consultant determined the number of enumerators that were needed to conduct the study, and managed the logistics required for data collection.

The WEAI portion of the survey required male and female enumerators to work in pairs. At each household, the female enumerator interviewed the female household respondent, and the male enumerator was matched with the male respondent. This matching helped to increase the accuracy of respondents, especially around sensitive topics.

#### **2.5. *Data Collection Coordination***

ISG provided the national consultant with a household survey implementation guide, key informant interview guide, focus group discussion guide, training materials for data collectors, and other information as requested. ISG and national consultants held weekly calls over Skype to track baseline study progress and address any issues as they arose. The national consultant coordinated and collated data as it was collected and provided the required country baseline report.

#### **2.6. *Sampling Strategy for Household Survey***

For the quantitative household survey, the population was dual adult (male and female) from the households in the ActionAid engaged communities of Bangladesh. Accordingly, a two-stage stratified and systematic sampling was employed to select the samples of 1000 respondents including one male and one female from 500 households.

First, the research team performed a stratified sampling to identify the geographic strata down at the village level. ActionAid operates in total 10 unions including 5 unions from each of the two districts - Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat under the POWER project. As per the official demographic data, the total number of households in 5 unions of each district is 16,887 and 24,990 in Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat respectively. Given this proportion of household counts in these two districts, the national consultant in consultation with ActionAid Bangladesh selected the samples in the proportion of 60% from Lalmonirhat and 40% of households from Gaibandha district. Based on this proportion, the number of villages representing each Union was selected as per the count below with 12 villages in Gaibandha and 15 villages in Lalmonirhat.

Once the villages were identified, the research team used a systematic sampling to select a total of 1031 respondents including 509 male and 522 female from the 27 villages of 10 unions under two districts who will be interviewed for the household survey. From the villages identified, the take out size per village is 20 households as per the global data collection plan. These 20 households were selected by using systematic random sampling. There are some villages where 1 additional household was selected and in total 31 households (about 3-4% of the total samples) were selected as buffer to cover up any missing household respondents after quality check and thus ensure the total sample threshold.

## **2.7. Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index Household Survey**

The baseline study used a modified version of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) household survey to calculate a score representative of women's empowerment against an ideal of 1.0, or the equivalent of full empowerment, across the Five Domains of Empowerment in Agriculture (5DE).

The definitions of the 5DE are:

- 1) Production: Exclusive or joint decision-making about farming, livestock, and fisheries.
- 2) Resources: Ownership, access to, and decision making about land, livestock, agricultural equipment, consumer durables, and credit.
- 3) Income: Exclusive or joint control over income.
- 4) Leadership: Membership in groups and ability to speak in public.
- 5) Time use: Time spent in productive and domestic tasks.

In this survey, eight indicators were used to measure women's empowerment across the five domains. Table 1 provides an overview of the eight indicators and the inadequacy cut-offs for each indicator. The five domains are assigned an equal weight of 1/5 and so are the indicators within each domain. For example, three indicators measure the domain for resources with each weighing of 1/15.

We used the Abbreviated WEAI questionnaire as outlined in the Abbreviated WEAI Instructional Guide (Malapit et al 2015), and included two additional questions from the original WEAI survey (Alkire, et al, 2013). Additional questions include the indicators on the purchase, sale, or transfer of assets, and speaking in public.

### **Individual Empowerment Score or Five Domains of Empowerment**

For each of the eight indicators, an individual is empowered if her achievement is adequate. Adequacy is defined as exceeding the adequacy cut off for the particular indicator shown in table 1 (Malapit, et al., 2015). The individual empowerment score, or the Five Domains of Empowerment (5DE) is the weighted average of the eight indicators using the weights given to each indicator.

### **Gender Parity Index**

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) represents the percentage of women who are equally empowered as men in the household, and the extent of equality in the 5DE. The GPI can be increased by either increasing the percentage of women who are as empowered as men in the household, or by decreasing the extent of inequality in the 5DE (Alkire, et al, 2013). The total WEAI is then calculated as the weighted sum of the country level 5DE and the GPI.



**TABLE 1 DOMAINS, INDICATORS, INADEQUACY CUT OFFS, AND WEIGHTS IN THE WEAI**

Domain	Indicators	Inadequacy cut off	Weights assigned
Production	Input in agricultural productive decisions	Inadequate if individual participates in agricultural production BUT does not have at least some input in decisions; or she does not make the decisions nor feels she could.	1/5
Resources	Ownership of assets	Inadequate if household does not own any asset or if household owns the type of asset BUT she/he does not own most of it alone	1/15
	Purchase, sale, or transfer of assets	Inadequate if household does not own any asset or household owns the type of asset BUT she does not participate in the decisions about it	1/15
	Access to and decisions on credit	Inadequate if household has no credit OR used a source of credit BUT she/he did not participate in ANY decisions about it	1/15
Income	Control over use of income	Inadequate if participates in activity BUT has no input or little input in decisions about income generated, or does not feels she/he can make decisions regarding wage employment and major household expenditures	1/5
Leadership	Group membership	Inadequate if is not part of AT LEAST ONE group; inadequate if no groups reported in community	1/10
	Speaking in public	Inadequate if not comfortable speaking in public or have not spoken up in public in last 3 months	1/10
Time	Workload	Inadequate if works more than 10.5 hours a day	1/5

Source: WEAI Instructional Guide (2013), A-WEAI Instructional Guide (2015)

## 2.8. Description of Survey Respondents

ActionAid Bangladesh divides its beneficiary communities into four different categories: A, B, C, and D with category A describing the highest economic status and D describing the lowest economic status. The respondents sampled for this survey belong to category D. Among of the key features of category D communities is that they are landless people, regularly described as “floating.” They largely live in make-shift houses on the banks of the river Brahmaputra. The periodic river erosion has rendered many villages completely uninhabitable. Respondents are engaged in different types of economic activities; one particular feature of the agricultural activity is that it is seasonal and spans from 3 to 4 months a year. There are reports of wage discrimination in some cases for agricultural labor. Women commonly engage in special kinds of economic activity like- sewing quilts and making bidis (a local kind of cigarette stick).

Eggs and the small harvests from their homestead gardens enable women to save a little money, but they do not regard these as economic activities. Taking care of cattle and other livestock is also viewed as a routine household activity, instead of an economic one.

Many women in Bangladesh do not travel far from home so they may not go to the fields but do post-harvest work at home. This work is also not typically considered “agriculture” in the local context.

**TABLE 2 HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD BY GENDER**

	Men	Women	Total	Percentage of women
Head of Household	399	117	516	22.7%
Second Household Member	110	405	515	78.6%
Total	509	522	1031	50.6%

**TABLE 3 RELATION TO HOUSEHOLD AMONG SECOND HOUSEHOLD MEMBER RESPONDENTS**

	Men	Women
Relation To Head		
Spouse (Wife/Husband)	79.1	91.9
Child (Son/Daughter)	10.0	3.0
Parent/Parent In-Law	3.6	4.5
Son/Daughter In-Law	0.0	0.3
Brother/Sister/In-Law	3.6	0.3
Other Relative	3.6	0.0
Number of respondents	110	397

The following data provides a description of the survey sample.

**TABLE 4 CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENTS (% OF RESPONDENTS)**

Main Religion Of Household	All	
Hindu	20.4	
Buddhist	0.2	
Islam/Muslim	79.4	
Number of households	520	
Literacy of primary respondent	Men	Women
Cannot Read Or Write	8.3	3.3
Can Sign Only	54.6	61.2
Can Read Only	8.5	4.1
Can Read And Write	28.6	31.4
Number of primary respondents	399	121
Highest Education Qualification of primary respondent	Men	Women
Less Than P1 Or No School	39.3	44.4
Pre-Primary Level	10.4	5.1
Primary Level 1-5 Or Equivalent	16.9	14.5
Junior High School 6-8 Or Equivalent	6.8	12.0
Secondary School 9-10 Or Equivalent	6.8	10.3
Higher Secondary 11-12 Or Equivalent	2.2	0.9
University Or Above	0.8	2.6
Technical Or Vocational	0.3	0.0
Adult Literacy Only	16.4	6.8
No Formal Education	0.0	2.6
Don't Know/No Response	0.0	0.9
Number of primary respondents	366	177
What Is Your Employment Status In The Last 7 Days?	Men	Women
Work For Pay	87.5	33.9
Work Without Pay	3.5	19.0
Did Not Work In Last 7 Days, But Has Job	6.8	35.5
Did Not Work In Last 7 Days But Is Looking For Job	2.0	0.8
Did Not Work For Other Reason	0.3	10.7
Number of primary respondents	399	121
Current Main Occupation	Men	Women
Agricultural Day Laborer	80.2	19.8
Other Wage Labor	4.0	0.8
Salaried Worker	3.5	1.7
Self-Employment	5.0	12.4
Farming	6.3	4.1
Livestock/Poultry	0.0	0.8
Processing	0.3	0.0
Domestic Help	0.8	60.3
Number of primary respondents	399	121

**Weights used**

## 2.9. *Data Synthesis, Coding, and Analysis*

Following data collection, ISG cleaned the data to make sure that it was mistake-free and consistent. Particularly, we made sure that there were no duplicate entries, that all reported values were within expected ranges, that the response codes matched the correct questions, and that the distribution of missing responses was within acceptable limits. We also verified time use information to make sure that it matched parameters.

Once the data was clean, we coded the data for analysis. First, ISG tailored the WEAI Stata files to accommodate the POWER information not included in the original WEAI survey. Next, we converted the survey data into Stata-compatible files and uploaded it for analysis.

In addition to using the surveys to calculate WEAI scores for each country and region, ISG used the data to set baseline scores for each WRSI indicator. ISG built an excel workbook to do this analysis. ActionAid will have the option of adapting the workbook to its monitoring and evaluation system for mid-project and final evaluation impact measurement.

## 3. Findings

The following section matches results and findings from the baseline survey to the outcomes and indicators of the POWER project. Before going into the detailed analysis of the baseline results against the four outcomes and their corresponding indicators, we first analyze the status of women's empowerment derived from the country WEAI score.

### 3.1 *Overall Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index Score*

Calculating a WEAI score for ActionAid's partner communities in Bangladesh was complicated by two factors; one related to survey administration and one external to the study. These complications led to men appearing less empowered than women according to our data.

The first complication was the result of low response rates to questions that are important to the WEAI score calculation. As described in the methodology section of this report, the Women's Empowerment in Agricultural Index (WEAI) measures individual empowerment for men and women who work in the agriculture sector. It also measures the difference in levels of empowerment between men and women. These measures are derived from the cumulative responses to questions asked about the WEAI's eight indicators within five domains (Table 1, above). Only a small number of respondents, 175 women and 216 men, answered questions that inform two of the eight indicators. These indicators were "Input in agricultural productive decisions" and "Control over use of income." The small number of respondents means that the results of answers to these questions may be considered as having a 7.5 percent margin of error at a 95% level of confidence. As we will describe below, we believe that our Individual Empowerment scores for women are still accurate while the small sample size on the above mentioned indicators led to incorrect calculations for men's individual empowerment, leading to an incorrect calculation of gender parity. We describe how we came to these conclusions and how we deal with them for the sake of POWER program baseline data in the sections below.

The second challenge to calculating WEAI scores is the underlying assumption of many WEAI questions is that people earn their living from agriculture in a relatively consistent way from year to year, while Bangladesh's natural environment is dynamic, demanding quick decision making and flexibility of its inhabitants. In 2016 this dynamism took the form of flooding which affected much

of Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat, the two districts in which the survey was administered<sup>2</sup>. Thus, survey questions that asked men and women about their participation in agricultural, economic activities, or social in the last twelve months, would have received skewed answers because of respondents' to change their means of earning a living and social behavior in response to the floods. Likewise, men who may have left their homes after the floods to earn money elsewhere would not have been available to respond to the survey, which might also explain the survey's inaccurate measure of men's empowerment.

To check the accuracy of our WEAI score calculations, we compared our results to those of a WEAI survey calculated nationwide in Bangladesh in 2014. We found that our measurement of women's empowerment in agriculture was remarkably close to the 2014 survey in all domains. While that does not prove that our data is accurate, it does indicate that our calculation will sufficiently serve as baseline data for the POWER project.

Our scores for men's empowerment, however, differed significantly from the 2014 survey. We believe this is a result of our small sample size on two indicators and flooding in the region. The POWER project has no baseline indicators regarding men's empowerment or men's performance in agriculture, so the inaccuracy is not a problem for measuring the performance of the POWER project as a whole. While not a baseline indicator for the project, the inaccurate score for men's empowerment does mean that our calculation of the Gender Parity Index, discussed in section 3.1.2, is inaccurate. We suggest that the POWER project use the 2014 men's empowerment calculation as an estimate of gender parity, as we discuss in that section.

### 3.1.1 Individual Empowerment in POWER Communities

The WEAI defines an individual as empowered if he or she has achieved adequacy in at least 80 percent of the WEAI's indicators. The indicators and definition of adequacy are described in Table 1, above. The overall score for POWER targeted communities in Bangladesh is a calculation based on the weighted average of empowered individuals, disempowered individuals, and the percentage of WEAI dimensions in which individuals are disempowered. Please see Annex 1 for the calculation of the score.

#### Five Domains of Empowerment (5DE) – Women's Score Results

The 5DE score indicates the severity of individual's disempowerment. The closer a score is to 1, the greater the level of individual empowerment in a population. A score close to 1 could indicate a population in which a small proportion of the population has inadequate scores across the five domains and eight indicators. For example, if only 10% of the population had inadequate scores, even if the scores indicated that 10% was severely disempowered, the 5DE score would be approximately 0.90 5DE. A score close to 1 could also indicate that a large proportion of the population has inadequate scores, but the degree of inadequacy is small. For instance a population that has 50 percent inadequacy, but in which the individual scores just miss the adequacy mark, would receive about a 0.95 5DE score.

According to the POWER project's baseline survey results, the average value for women's Five Domains of Empowerment (5DE) is 0.64 in POWER Bangladesh communities. 77.1 percent of women are not empowered across all of the five domains. The mean score of achievement in the domains for disempowered women is 46 percent, indicating that they are highly disempowered.

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<sup>2</sup> For examples of news coverage of the flooding, see [this article for Gaibandha](#) and [This article for Lalmonirhat](#)

Despite the low sample size for the WEAI indicators mentioned above, we found that our measurement of women’s empowerment was very close to the same survey conducted in Bangladesh in 2014, as shown in Table 5:

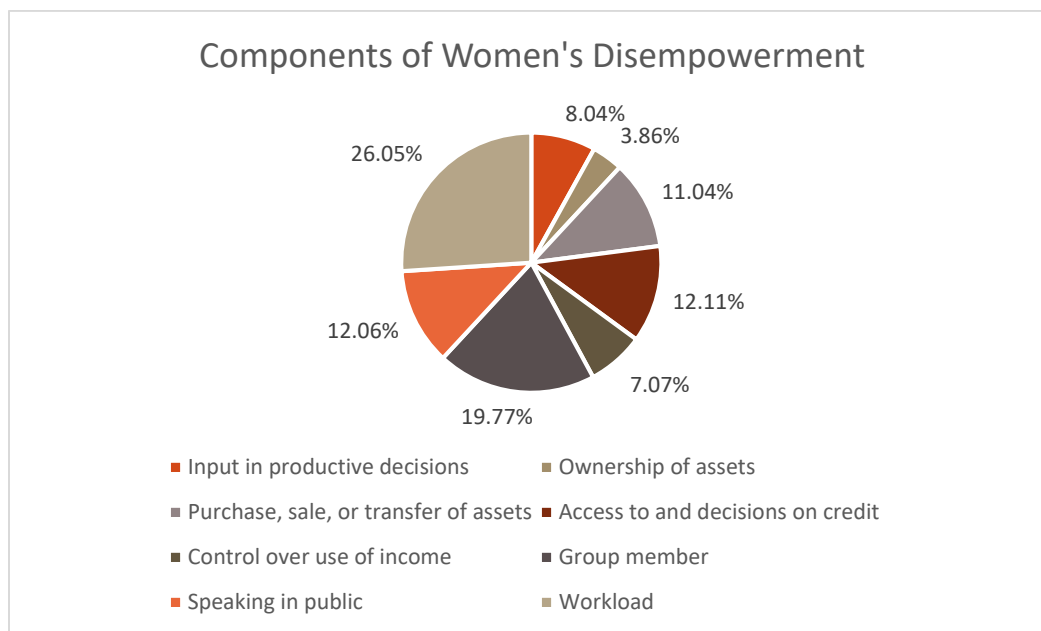
**TABLE 5 COMPARISON OF POWER AND IFPRI 5DE SCORES**

	<b>IFPRI 2014 Survey - Women</b>	<b>POWER Survey - Women</b>
<i>Five domains of empowerment (5DE)</i>	0.65	0.64
<i>Disempowerment Index</i>	0.35	0.36
<i>Percentage of respondents not achieving empowerment (H)</i>	75%	77%

### Disempowerment Index Components

The disempowerment index (calculated by subtracting empowerment index from 1; (Figure 1) can be deconstructed into the contribution of each indicator to overall disempowerment, as presented in figure 1. The larger the contribution of the indicator, the larger the extent of disempowerment in that particular domain.

**FIGURE 1 CONTRIBUTION OF EACH INDICATOR TO DISEMPOWERMENT**



Among all the above indicators that were used to measure WEAI, workload stands as the biggest contributor to disempowerment for both women (26%), which testifies that women (and probably men) are time-constrained by their routine workload in both productive and reproductive work. In turn, these constraints inhibit men and women from improving their standard of living/quality of life<sup>3</sup>. The next largest contributing factor to disempowerment is group membership (19.77%), although the flooding in the region would have limited people’s participation in community groups.

<sup>3</sup> Productive work includes income generating activities, such as employment, self-employment, farming, livestock, fishing, post-harvest, weaving, sewing, textile care, and traveling and commuting. Reproductive

### 3.1.2 Gender Parity

The WEAI also measures gender parity, i.e. the difference in empowerment between men and women living in the same household. It is calculated using the percentage of women that score the same or higher than men on the 5DE, the percentage of women that score lower, and the average difference between men and the women who score lower. The calculation is provided in Annex 1.

Due to the challenges mentioned in the introduction to this section of the report, our calculation of men's empowerment was highly inaccurate. We calculated that men's Five Domains of Empowerment score is 0.54 with as many as 94 percent of men not empowered across all of the five domains. The weighted score of achievement in the domains for disempowered men is 49 percent. All of these data surprisingly indicate that men in ActionAid's communities in Bangladesh are even more disempowered than women.

If these results were true, it would mean that men that work in the agriculture sector in POWER communities have far less empowerment than women. While our men's 5DE calculation was 0.54, the 2014 survey scored men's 5DE closer to 0.83, resulting in the conclusion that men had much greater control over resources, decision making, time, social influence, and other areas crucial to empowerment. This finding contradicts that research that ActionAid carried out in support of the POWER project and the findings of previous WEAI surveys in Bangladesh.

We recommend that the POWER project use the 2014 WEAI results to calculate its baseline Gender Parity Index. According to those results, the GPI for POWER project communities 0.80 with 61.22 percent of women not having achieved gender parity. The average parity gap, according to their calculations, between men and women is each household without gender parity, is 0.33, which is relatively high (Malapit, Sproule, & al., 2014).

### 3.1.3 Overall Bangladesh WEAI Score

The overall country WEAI score is a measurement of the extent of women's empowerment, agency, and inclusion in agriculture. It is used to measure the progress of a particular population in promoting women's empowerment, and is useful as a point of comparison across communities, regions, and countries.

The WEAI score for the POWER communities in Bangladesh is 0.66 (Table 6). The WEAI score is a weighted average of the 5DE score and GPI score. The 5DE score is favored, receiving 90 percent of the weight, with the GPI score receiving 10 percent of the weight. In other words, the score measures overall empowerment taking into consideration the difference of empowerment levels between men and women.

One goal of POWER is to move its targeted communities toward a WEAI score of 1. At .66, the WEAI score shows a relatively high level of disempowerment for women in the agriculture sector. This reflects high levels of gender-based discrimination, limited representation of women in power structures, and women's low levels of influence on the key decision processes at household, community, society and state levels.

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work includes cooking, fetching wood, fetching water, domestic work, care of children, care of adults, and eldercare.

**TABLE 6 POWER BANGLADESH BASELINE WEAI OVERALL AND COMPONENTS SCORE**

Indicator	Women
Five domains of empowerment (5DE)	0.64
Disempowerment Index ( $M0 = 1 - 5DE = H * A$ )	0.36
Number of respondents	175
Percentage of respondents not achieving empowerment (H)	77.1
Mean disempowerment score for not yet empowered (A)	0.46
Gender Parity Index (GPI)	0.80 <sup>4</sup>
Number of dual adult households	126 <sup>5</sup>
Percentage of women not achieving gender parity	39%
Average Empowerment Gap	29%
WEAI score	0.66

Authors' calculations. Weights used.

### **3.2 Outcome 1: Women's Household and Community Empowerment**

**Outcome 1:** By the end of 2020, 5,000 rural women are organized and are able to demand their rights as farmers and care-providers, and have greater influence in their households and communities.

Outcome 1 is disaggregated into four indicators:

- 5,000 women are organized in groups and actively participating in group activities by the end of the project.
- 70% of targeted women report increased skills and confidence demanding their rights and reporting cases of violence by the end of the project.
- 50% of women report having greater control over resources in their households by the end of the project.
- 60% of targeted communities in each country in which a majority of sampled women report greater presence of women on community structures by the end of the project.

To measure the baseline for these indicators, the baseline study surveyed women's membership and active participation in community groups, women's confidence speaking in public, and women's control over household resources to inform.

#### **3.2.1 Group Membership and Participation**

**Target:** 5,000 women are organized in groups and actively participating in group activities by the end of the project

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<sup>4</sup> Score used in 2014 WEAI survey cited above.

<sup>5</sup> Reflects number that completed all questions. Sample size ranged from 509 to 126 for individual dual-household questions.



**Baseline:** Participation is severely low in the types of groups that work toward results under Outcome 1 and that the survey asked about, such as producer’s groups (27.27%) and women’s rights/advocacy groups (0%). Women (1.34%) also seem less aware than men (6.21%) of the existence of agricultural/livestock/fisheries producer’s groups in their community, which could account for their lack of participation in those groups. Lack of awareness could also result from the low percentage of the population, approximately 12 percent, that consider agriculture a major source of income.

### Group Membership and Participation Description

Men and women participate actively in community organizations in about equal proportion, however they do not participate in the same types of groups. Men are slightly more active in agricultural producer groups and mutual help/insurance groups. Women are more active in credit groups, religious groups, and women’s rights advocacy groups (Table 7).

**Presence of organized groups** – The survey was tailored to include the types of groups most likely to exist in ActionAid Bangladesh communities. Both men and women respondents were asked if the types of organizations presented below, were present in their community:

- Agricultural /livestock/fisheries producer’s group (including marketing groups)
- Water users’ group
- Forest users’ group
- Credit or microfinance group
- Mutual help or insurance group (including burial societies)
- Trade and Business Association
- Civic groups (improving community) or charitable group (helping others)
- Religious group
- Women’s Rights, Advocacy group
- Other women’s or men’s group
- Any other group

The survey responses indicate that groups with the highest awareness levels among community members are the religious groups (30.10%), followed by mutual help or insurance groups (16.14%) and trade/business associations (11.21%). It is worth noting that overall awareness of groups is quite low among both men and women in the target communities of Bangladesh, with women’s awareness of the presence of groups lagging behind men’s awareness for groups of all types except mutual help or insurance groups, of which 17.05% of women are aware as compared to 15.25 percent of men who are aware. Particularly problematic is the fact that only 2.11 percent and 1.34 percent of women are aware of the presence of any agricultural producers’ groups and women’s rights groups, respectively, in their communities since these groups are directly related to POWER project outcomes. Interestingly, a greater percentage of men than women responded that they were aware of the existence of women’s rights groups.

**TABLE 7 AWARENESS OF ASSOCIATIONS PRESENT IN POWER COMMUNITIES**

	Men (%)	Women (%)	All (%)
Agricultural producers' group	8.10	2.11	5.13
Water users' group	0.38	0.38	0.38
Forest users' group	0.75	0.19	0.47
Credit or microfinance group	9.60	1.72	5.70
Mutual help or insurance group	15.25	17.05	16.14
Trade and business association group	11.30	11.11	11.21
Civic group	6.97	0.57	3.80
Religious group	35.59	24.52	30.10
Women's rights/advocacy group	6.21	1.34	3.80
Other group	13.18	2.49	7.88
Number of respondents	531	522	1053

**Active participation in groups** – The baseline study next asked respondents if they were active participants in the groups they knew existed in their communities. Not many people were aware of groups in their communities, and only a fraction of those said they actively participated. In Table 8, we present the data we collected regarding active participation in community groups. We have excluded groups that had fewer than 38 people who indicated awareness of the group.

The highest absolute number of female respondents (38 women, or 42.7% of all women who were aware of the presence of mutual help/insurance groups) said they were active members in mutual help/insurance groups. In second place, 35 female respondents (27.34% of all women who were aware of the presence of religious groups) said that they were active in religious groups. There was a precipitous drop-off in numbers of female participants in other types of groups. The group type with the third-highest number of female participants among respondents was credit/microfinance with only 4 participants, representing 44.44% of all women who knew of the presence of credit/microfinance groups. This low level of group participation among women can be attributed to a lack of information. In order to increase group participation by women, it is clear that there must first be a targeted awareness campaign about the existence and usefulness of groups.

**TABLE 8 PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY GROUPS**

	Men	Women	All
Agricultural producers' group	3 (7%)	3 (27%)	6 (11%)
Credit or microfinance group	9 (18%)	4 (44%)	13 (22%)
Mutual help or insurance group	11 (14%)	38 (43%)	49 (29%)
Trade and business association group	9 (15%)	1 (2%)	10 (8%)
Civic group	1 (3%)	1 (33%)	10 (8%)
Religious group	56 (30%)	35 (27%)	91 (29%)
Women's rights/advocacy group	1 (3%)	0	1 (2.5%)
Other group	3 (4%)	2 (15%)	5 (6%)

### 3.2.2 Skills and confidence demanding rights and reporting cases of violence

**Target:** 70% of targeted women that report increased skills and confidence demanding their rights and reporting cases of violence by the end of the project.

**Baseline Finding:** Speaking in public did not come up as one of the key significant contributors to disempowerment as per WEAI score. Given the socio-economic setting in a country where men tend to have more exposure outside their household compared to their female counterparts, who usually face mobility restrictions, it was not surprising that the baseline research found that men (25.8%) in the targeted communities feel more comfortable than the women (16.86%) in speaking publicly on issues that they find important. The combined mean of both males and females who feel comfortable in public speaking is significantly low (21.37%). Men (28.63%) were almost twice as likely to have spoken publicly as women (14.37%) in the past three months. The focus groups and key informants further reaffirmed that women still shy away from reaching out to the service providers and different duty bearers at the local level. ActionAid activities under this target should focus on moving women who speak publicly with difficulty (21.46%) to speaking publicly without difficulty, and target women who feel uncomfortably speaking publicly (61.69%) to give them the skills they need to stand up for their rights and economic issues that are important to them.

TABLE 9 COMFORT LEVEL SPEAKING PUBLICLY

	Women	Men
No, Not At All Comfortable	61.69%	45.57%
Yes, But With Difficulty	21.46%	28.63%
Yes, Comfortably	16.86%	25.80%

TABLE 10 PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE SPOKEN PUBLICLY IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS

	Women	Men
Yes	14.37%	28.63%
No	85.63%	71.37%

#### Reporting Violence

Worldwide, researchers approach the study of violence against women with apprehension. The POWER baseline study illustrates why that apprehension exists and why it may not be a good idea to embark on a study of violence against a specific group of women without adequate preparation, resources, and training. The difficulties with studying the issue are several.

First is the issue of definition. Does the indicator seek to measure all acts that threaten, endanger, or subordinate a woman, or only acts that prevent the woman from participating in public and economic life? In terms of reporting acts of violence, report to whom? Would the authorities receive reports with the seriousness they deserve? What is the intended result of such reporting? Also, how does this component relate to the activities of the project?

Secondly, studying violence against women carries with it many methodological difficulties. Acts of violence often happen in intimate contexts or have a sexual motivation that may imbue the victim with feelings of guilt and/or shame. Consequently, successful research in this area requires developing specialized data collection tools and specialized training for enumerators. The data

collection tools developed for POWER use broad inquiries into access to public resources and economic life. They were not appropriate for delving into the intimate details of respondents' lives.

The baseline survey did include a question about violence against women. The results illustrate how difficult it is to obtain accurate information on this topic. In an effort to determine if violence against women was an obstacle to market access for female farmers, we asked "In the last 12 months, how often have you been physically threatened or felt physically threatened on your way to or from the markets?" Respondents could answer that they were or felt threatened every time, most of the time, about half of the time, rarely, or never. 95 percent of female respondents said they never felt or were threatened. Only 17 of 523 respondents said that they felt or were threatened every time, most of the time, or about half the time. That number is certainly 17 too many. However, it is difficult to extrapolate the severity of the problem from that data. Interestingly, the numbers were similar for male respondents, suggesting that if there is a security problem, it may be general and not gender based.

### 3.2.3 Control Over Resources

**Target:** 50% of women report having greater control over resources in their households by the end of the project.

**Baseline Finding:** Many households indicated that someone in their household owned the agricultural assets that the baseline survey asked about. For example, 53% of households indicated that someone in the household owned live poultry, and 35% indicated that someone in the household owned large livestock. The survey found that men are much more likely to say that they own these assets than women, with the exception of poultry. However, whether the man or woman of a household makes the decision to sell, rent, mortgage, or give away an asset is dependent on the type of asset. For example, men and women agree that women make decisions regarding poultry, while men have more power over fishing equipment.

Households appear to have sufficient access to credit. Access to credit may be an important economic resource if the credit is used to invest in income generating activities. However, as focus groups suggested, it may also serve as a source of impoverishment if loans are used for consumption or interest rates capture any surplus value the use of credit generates.

The baseline study focused on agricultural income-generating activities. Of the economic activities that the baseline survey asked respondents about, respondents most commonly participated in livestock and poultry raising. The second most common activity respondents reported participating in was food crop farming. Approximately 88 percent of households in POWER communities have other sources of income that they consider more important than agricultural income. ActionAid should identify these sources of income, women's participation in decision making around economic assets that these activities generate, and ensure that POWER activities, such as the promotion of CRS training, do not interfere with established livelihoods.

### Access and Control over Resources

One of the main factors behind women's disempowerment is that men frequently enjoy greater control than women over resources and key family decisions that affect the lives and livelihood of the family. To achieve empowerment, it is important that women gain access and control over resources and decisions at the household level. This indicator aims at measuring ownership of men and women over the productive capital and assets including access to credits and financial services. It also measures control over decisions within households about the use, sale, rent or disposal of those assets. In studying the indicator, the baseline study looked mainly at agricultural assets, but also asked about non-farm business equipment, house or other structures, large consumer items, and small consumer items.

### *Income Generating Activities*

The baseline survey asked all respondents whether they had personally participated in specific, agricultural economic activities in the last 12 months as presented in Table 11. Most respondents (29.7% of men and 30% of women) participated in livestock or poultry-raising, followed by food crop farming (13.8% men and 10.5% women) and fishing/fishpond culture (13.8% men and 10.5% women). Only a few participated in cash crop farming (2.9% of both men and women). Opportunities for paid work appear scarce as the low number of wage/salary employment (1.6% men, 0.8% women) suggests.

In the FGDs, participants reported that there is a seasonal variation in the agricultural labor market and that demand for agricultural labor spans from 3 to 4 months. During these periods people work in cornfields. One focus group participant reported wage discrimination, saying, “It may seem to you people are happily employing these women. But the truth is quite the opposite, for these women are exploited here by their employers. By employing women, the employers secure a higher profit margin. Guess how? Usually, the wage rate for men here is somewhat between 250-300 taka per day. On the other hand, women are paid 100-130 taka for the same work.”

As mentioned earlier, many of the respondents said that they do not regard rearing cattle as an economic activity, rather as routine household work. They do sell milk and sometimes giant corporations’ representatives come to them and purchase milk.

Many homegrown products are informally sold, as available, between neighbors. For example, women’s poultry produce 4-5 eggs per week. Most families usually consume what is produced. If there are any excess eggs, women sell them to their neighbors. This is also true for leafy vegetables. Women regard this small amount of money as their personal savings.

Two special types of economic activities were reported in the focus group discussions, namely sewing quilts and making bidi (cigarette sticks). Focus group participants claimed that these activities are significantly more profitable for women than homestead gardening or rearing cattle.

One important economic constraint was also raised during the focus groups: During the season when there is no paid work available, there are some cooperative organizations from which people borrow money at an exceptionally high interest rate. Over time, this debt increases exponentially, causing many negative ripple effects in the economic status of these communities.

**TABLE 11 PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES**

	Men	Women
Did you yourself participate in activity X in last 12 months?		
Food crop farming	13.8%	10.5%
Cash crop farming	2.9%	2.9%
Livestock or poultry-raising	29.7%	30.0%
Non-farm economic activities (running a business, self-employment, selling goods)	0.8%	1.0%
Wage and salary employment	1.6%	0.8%
Fishing or fishpond culture	13.8%	10.5%
Number of respondents	531	522

### *Accessing Credit*

Access to credit is another critical component to increasing women's ability to participate in income-generating activities. Without credit, it is extremely difficult for women or men to purchase the equipment, supplies, and/or hired labor they may need to start a business, transport their goods or expand their productive work.

When asked from which sources of credit a household member had actually borrowed (Table 12), the most common answer indicated was NGOs (above 99% for both men and women), followed by informal (92.31% men, 88.89 percent women) and formal (82.35% men, 84.62% women) lenders. Additionally, loans from friends/relatives (88.64%) is the preferred choice for women as opposed to the group-based microfinance (81.82%) for men. It is understandable that, given the proliferation of NGOs that run microcredit programs in Bangladesh over the last few decades, that both men and women respondents identified NGO loans as the most popular and credible source. It is notable that the formal lending institutions - banks and financial institutions - seem relatively unpopular for the respondents the project works with. This finding implies that underprivileged and marginalized segments of population groups do not seem to have access to these formal mechanisms.

**TABLE 12 HAS ANYONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD BORROWED FROM THE LISTED SOURCE IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?**

	Men (%)	Women (%)
NGOs	99.01	99.44
Formal lender	82.35	84.62
Informal lender	92.31	88.89
Friends or relatives	42.31	88.64
Group based microfinance or lending	81.82	33.33
Informal credit/savings groups	57.14	100
Number of respondents	531	522

### Control Over Financial Decisions

Women's economic participation, supported by access to finances and resources will not suffice to promote their empowerment unless they also have control over the household level decisions on where and how the income is used. It is important to understand the decision-making process at the household level and women's influence over the decisions.

**TABLE 13 WHO MADE THE DECISION TO BORROW? (% OF RESPONDENTS)**

	NGOs		Informal Lender		Formal Lender	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Self	7.46	5.06	8.33	18.75	17.65	13.64
Spouse	69.65	68.54	91.67	56.25	82.35	45.45
Self with spouse	21.39	26.40	0	25.00	0.00	40.91
Self with others	0.50	0	0	0.00	0.00	0
Spouse with others	0.50	0	0	0.00	0.00	0
Other people	0.50	0	0	0.00	0.00	0
Number of respondents	201	178	12	16	17	22

**TABLE 14 WHO DECIDED WHAT TO DO WITH THE LOAN? (% OF RESPONDENTS)**

	NGOs		Friends or Relatives		Formal Lender	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Self	8.46%	5.62%	64%	30%	11.76%	13.64%
Spouse	68.66%	65.73%	30%	55%	76.47%	45.45%
Self with spouse	21.39%	28.65%	4%	15%	11.76%	40.91%
Self with others	1.49%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Number of respondents	201	178	50	40	17	22

When asked about who makes decisions within the household about from where to borrow the loan, it appeared that men relied heavily on the input of women, as indicated by the large percentages of men who said that their spouse made the decision where to borrow money and how to spend it. This finding was somewhat puzzling, however, given that similar percentages of women stated that their spouse was the primary decision-maker regarding where to borrow money and how to spend it. Significant percentages of women said they jointly decided with their spouse where to borrow money. Among men, joint-decision making mostly applied to borrowing from NGOs. It is to be noted that data for first three most-sought loan sources only (Table 12) have been tabulated in the above two tables to understand the trend of decision making.

As to who within a household usually makes decisions related to livelihood options, the key informants made quite divergent responses depending on their respective gender. For example, both male and female respondents stated that they personally make decisions about each of the livelihood options, whether it is related to crops, poultry or cattle. Nevertheless, as overall interview responses suggest, males make more decisions on crops while women decide more on poultry.



As to who ideally should make decisions about the livelihood options, nearly all key informants mentioned that both men and women, they think, should take decisions related to livelihood and economic opportunities. In terms of how women can be made empowered and stronger to take decisions, the focus groups suggested that awareness building, motivating their male counterparts, and providing them access to assets, resources, income-generating activities and finances could be potential measures in this regard.

### **Control of Household Resources**

In order to further elucidate access to resources, the baseline survey asked, “Does anyone in your household currently have any of the following items?” and presented the options found in Table 15

The research team noted that a significant number of respondents replied negatively for all items listed below, implying a level of extreme poverty. There were also gender differences in the households’ ownership of assets. For example, 29 percent of women stated their households own agricultural land compared to only 5 percent of men. 24 percent of women stated their households own non-agricultural land compared to 0.2 percent of men. Women were also more likely than men to live in households that own means of transportation (women 31%, men 10%).

Women were, in fact, more likely to claim household ownership across all asset categories than men, except for small consumer durables (radios, cookware). In this category, 56 percent of men responded that their household had ownership of one or more item, as compared with 47 percent of women.

**TABLE 15 HOUSEHOLD OWNERSHIP OF ASSETS**

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
<b>Household Owns Agricultural Land</b>	5.3%	28.8%
<b>Household Owns Large Livestock</b>	30.6%	38.4%
<b>Household Owns Small Livestock</b>	17.2%	36.6%
<b>Household Owns Chickens, Ducks, Turkeys, Pigeons</b>	52.8%	53.7%
<b>Household Owns Agricultural Fish Pond or Fishing Equipment</b>	4.5%	27.2%
<b>Household Owns Farm Equipment (Non-Mechanized)</b>	17.8%	43.8%
<b>Household Owns Farm Equipment (Mechanized)</b>	0.2%	21.5%
<b>Household Owns Non-Farm Business Equipment</b>	1.2%	22.3%
<b>Household Owns House (Or Other Structures)</b>	5.4%	22.0%
<b>Household Owns Large Consumer Durables (Fridge, Tv)</b>	2.2%	22.8%
<b>Household Owns Small Consumer Durables (Radio, Cookware)</b>	55.8%	47.0%
<b>Household Owns Cell Phone</b>	33.8%	40.4%
<b>Household Owns Non-Agricultural Land</b>	0.2%	23.8%
<b>Household Owns Means of Transportation</b>	10.4%	31.0%
<b>No. Of Types of Assets Household Owns</b>	2.35	4.38
<b>No. Of Types of Agricultural Assets Household Owns</b>	1.28	2.48
<b>Number of respondents</b>	509	518

However, when we looked at who in the household owned the assets, women were not owners of these physical assets (such as agricultural land, non-agricultural land, and means of transportation). Table 16 shows how few assets women claimed for sole ownership and how they were usually much less likely than men even to claim joint ownership of assets.

Regarding the use of sale, rental, or disposal of household assets, women indicated they were involved in the decision at least 40 percent of the time, across all asset categories as seen in Table 17. Women were most likely to claim sole decision-making authority in the poultry category (40 percent). Interestingly, in households where one spouse made a decision, men more often indicated that their wife would take the decision than women responded that their husband would take the decision when deciding about all varieties of livestock and non-mechanized farm equipment. Both men and women said their spouse took the decision roughly half of the time when it came to the sale, rental or disposal of agricultural land. However, men were more likely than women to answer that they solely decided about the sale, rental, or disposal of assets overall.

TABLE 16 OWNERSHIP OF ASSET (CONDITIONAL ON HOUSEHOLD OWNERSHIP)

	Agricultural land other than fish pond (pieces/plots)		Large livestock (oxen, cattle)		Small livestock (goats, pigs, sheep)		Chickens, Ducks, Turkeys, Pigeons		Fish pond or fishing equipment		Farm equipment non-mechanized	
<b>Women</b>	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Yes, Solely	2.04%	66.67%	14.72%	28.83%	15.59%	25.53%	52.52%	29.79%	4.32%	33.33%	19.56%	47.83%
Yes, Jointly	14.97%	21.21%	38.07%	67.48%	40.86%	65.96%	31.65%	57.45%	22.30%	66.67%	30.22%	52.17%
No	82.99%	12.12%	47.21%	3.68%	43.55%	8.51%	15.83%	12.77%	73.38%	0.00%	50.22%	0.00%
	House or other structures		Large consumer durables		Small consumer durables		Cell phone		Means of transportation			
<b>Women</b>	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men		
Yes, Solely	0.00%	55.56%	0.00%	23.08%	65.30%	36.11%	21.11%	43.68%	0.82%	79.25%		
Yes, Jointly	9.17%	44.44%	10.09%	76.92%	23.29%	62.15%	45.00%	52.30%	10.66%	16.98%		
No	90.83%	0.00%	89.91%	0.00%	11.42%	1.74%	33.89%	4.02%	88.52%	3.77%		

TABLE 17 WHO DECIDES TO SELL, RENT, MORTGAGE, OR GIVE AWAY THE FOLLOWING?

	Agricultural Land		Large Livestock (Oxen, Cattle)		Small Livestock (Goats, Pigs, Sheep)		Chickens, Ducks, Turkeys, Pigeons		Fish Pond, Fishing Equipment		Farm Equipment (Non-mechanized)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Self	36.36	6.76	11.04	13.13	11.70	11.17	9.54	40.14	50.00	9.29	20.88	20.00
Partner/spouse	48.48	50.68	63.19	44.44	68.09	53.19	67.49	36.92	33.33	44.29	56.04	39.11
Self/spouse jointly	9.09	34.46	19.63	35.86	17.02	29.79	17.67	22.58	8.33	37.86	21.98	34.22
Other house member	6.06	1.35	6.13	2.02	3.19	0.53	5.30	0.36	8.33	1.43	1.10	2.22
Other non-house member	0.00	6.76	0.00	4.55	0.00	5.32	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.14	0.00	4.44
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Self or self with spouse	45.45	41.22	30.67	48.99	28.72	40.96	27.21	62.72	58.33	47.15	42.86	54.22
# respondents	33	148	141	119	94	188	283	279	24	140	91	225

### 3.3 Outcome 2: Value of Unpaid Care Work

**Outcome 2:** By the end of 2020 Women's unpaid care work (UCW) is more highly valued within households, communities and government, more evenly distributed within households and hours spent by women on UCW is reduced, resulting in more free time for women to engage in social, economic and political activities.

This second outcome of the project aims at bringing positive attitude towards unpaid care work (UCW) within a 3R model - recognition through reports of changed attitude about UCW, redistribution of the burden of care work and reduction of the amount of time that women spend on UCW, thereby allowing more time for women's involvement in social, economic or political activities and thus promoting their empowerment. It is expected that when the communities as well as male counterparts value UCW with equitable redistribution and share the load of care work, women's overall productivity and community engagement will increase.

Outcome 2 is disaggregated into four indicators

- 30% of sampled target households where women report a positive redistribution of time spent on UCW by the end of the project.
- Reduction of at least 15% in the amount of time women spend on unpaid care work between 2016 and 2019.
- 30% of sampled women who report having more time to spend on social, economic or political activities by the end of the project.
- 70% of duty-bearers, men and women sampled from target communities reporting positive attitudes towards addressing unpaid care work by the end of the project.

#### 3.3.1 Women's Unpaid Care Work Burden

##### Targets:

- 30% of sampled target households where women report a positive redistribution of time spent on UCW by the end of the project.
- At least 15% reduction in the amount of time women spend on unpaid care work between 2016 and 2019.
- 30% of sampled women who report having more time to spend on social, economic or political activities by the end of the project

**Baseline Findings:** In ActionAid targeted communities in Bangladesh, women are time-poor both absolutely and relative to men.

*UCW and Gender Differences:* During a typical day, women do approximately 2.8 times the amount of unpaid care work that men do. There are gender differences in the perceptions of who contributes to domestic chores. Men tend to underestimate women's labor contributions. Redistributing UCW will require a cultural shift among both women and men. On the whole, women reported in focus groups and key informant interviews that they welcome and enjoy the age-old division of labor in Bangladesh.

Just as men regard some work as feminine and “low status,” many women regard earning money as masculine. It is common for both men and women to view unpaid care work as women’s “duty”.

*UCW in Absolute Terms:* Women do almost 10 hours per day of “reproductive work” in WEAI terminology, which also corresponds to the ActionAid concept of unpaid care work and comprises childcare, eldercare, collection of fuel and water, housework (which includes cooking, shopping, laundry, etc.). The most time-consuming UCW activities are housework, collection of fuel wood and water, and childcare. Men spend about 6 hours in what is referred to as “productive work” in WEAI terminology (which corresponds to a combination of what ActionAid considers “paid work,” including salaried/wage labor, self-employment and petty trading as well as the ActionAid category of “productive work,” which is restricted to all forms of agricultural work, including fishery, and handicrafts). Comparatively, women reported spending 40 minutes in WEAI-defined productive activities.

Although women do take part in economic activities, there is reason to believe that women did not categorize the full amount of time spent on those activities in the time diaries. Helping women to better understand their role in household activities that are actually economic activities and that bring money into the family will help women see their role as important. In turn, we can expect that women will be better prepared to advocate for positive labor distribution in their families.

*Social, Economic, Political Activities:* Women and men spend about 40 minutes a day on social, cultural, and religious activities, according to baseline survey data. Men spend an hour a day and women spend 25 minutes on mass media use.

Women now participate in NGO meetings and in social gatherings, but to a very limited extent. Engaging more women in group activities means more women can gain a better understanding of their rights, their opportunities and their role in the household, thus creating a virtuous circle.

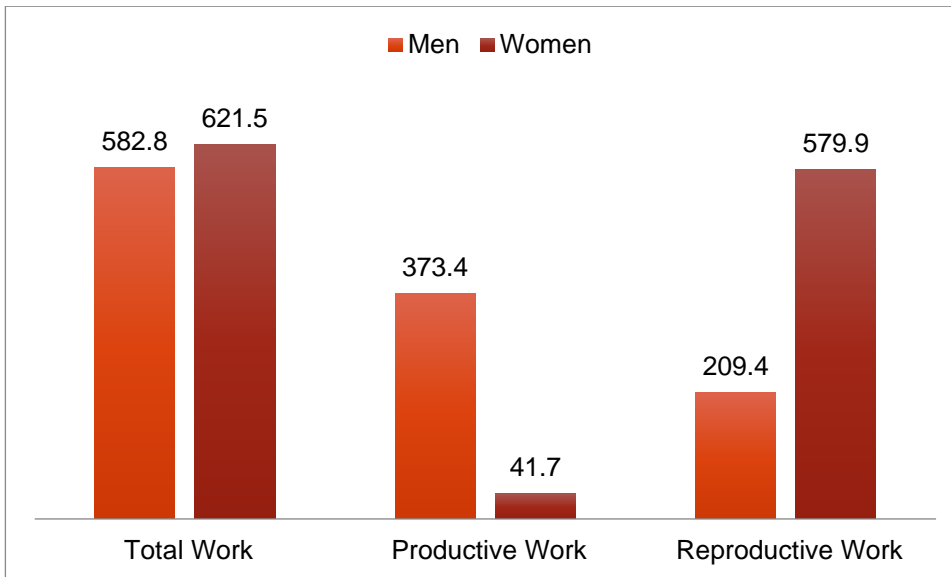
### Description of Unpaid Care Work

The baseline survey recorded how men and women allocate their time among productive work, reproductive work, leisure time, and personal activities in the last 24 hours. Productive work includes income-generating activities, such as employment, self-employment, farming, livestock, fishing, post-harvest, weaving, sewing, textile care, and traveling and commuting. UCW includes cooking, fetching wood, fetching water, domestic work, care of children, care of adults, and eldercare. It also includes shopping and obtaining services such as healthcare.

Survey respondents were then asked if the description was typical of how they spent the day. The purpose of collecting this data was to inform POWER activities on redistributing, reducing, and changing attitudes about unpaid care work.

Figure 2 demonstrates how male and female respondents described a typical day. Total work is the sum of productive work and reproductive work.

FIGURE 2 TIME ALLOCATION IN MINUTES/DAY



Women spend 10.4 hours and men spend 9.7 hours on total work comprising of the sum of productive and reproductive work.

### Time Accounting

Analysis of the time allocation portion of the baseline survey also illustrates the way men and women in targeted communities divide care work, economic work, leisure time, and personal activities. Table 18 presents the data categorized according to ActionAid’s activity definitions. Using ActionAid definitions, paid work includes income-generating activities, such as employment, self-employment, weaving, sewing, textile care, and traveling and commuting. Unpaid GDP work, also called “productive work” by ActionAid elsewhere (not to be confused with the WEAI term “productive work,” which combines both income-generating work and all forms of agricultural work) includes farming, livestock, fishing, and post-harvest activities. Housework entails domestic work, cooking, shopping, and obtaining services.

TABLE 18 TIME ALLOCATION USING ACTIONAID TIME DIARY DEFINITIONS<sup>6</sup>

	Minutes			Hours	
	Men	Women	Equality of means	Men	Women
Paid work, excluding agriculture	139.6	25.0	***	2.3	0.4
Unpaid GDP work (agriculture)	234.4	14.4	***	3.9	0.2
House work	121.3	441.9	***	2.0	7.4
Collection of fuelwood and water	49.7	60.1	**	0.8	1.0
Childcare	29.2	68.7	***	0.5	1.1
Care of adults	8.3	6.4		0.1	0.1
Learning	3.7	1.5		0.1	0.0
Social, cultural and religious activities	41.4	37.9		0.7	0.6
Mass media use	57.0	25.4	***	1.0	0.4
Sleeping	584.3	598.7	**	9.7	10.0
Other personal care	165.9	155.0	***	2.8	2.6
Exercise	1.4	0.0	***	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.1		0.0	0.0
Total	1,436	1,435		24	24
Number of respondents	480	465		480	465

\*\*\*, \*\*, \* indicate difference is significant at 1 percent, 5 percent and 10 percent respectively.

Table 18 describes how respondents spent their time during the previous 24 hours. Table 19 presents the percentage of respondents that said whether the number of hours they worked during the previous 23 hours was more than usual, the same as usual, or less than usual.

TABLE 19 IN THE LAST 24 HOURS DID YOU WORK AT HOME OR OUTSIDE THE HOME MORE THAN USUAL?

	Men	Women
More than usual	3.9	10.0
About the same as usual	85.1	83.3
Less than usual	11.0	6.7
Number of respondents	509	522

The bulk of women's time in reproductive work is on housework, spending more than 7.4 hours on those tasks alone. Women also spend an hour collecting fuelwood and water compared to 50 minutes

<sup>6</sup> It was assumed that doing nothing/other activities were the residual activity. If the total time spent exceeded 24 hours, the amount of time spent doing nothing/other activities was reduced by the corresponding amount in excess. Even with this adjustment, there were 86 observations with a total time exceeding 1480 minutes or falling below 1300 minutes, and so these were dropped.



for men. In the section on access to utilities, we will see that 90 percent of households rely on firewood, leaves or crop residue as the main source of cooking fuel. 25 percent of households obtain drinking water from public tubewells, springs or rivers. It is clear that increasing access to energy sources and safe water would reduce women's work burdens.

Men (3.9 hours) allocated more time to agriculture than women (0.2 hours). They also spent more time in paid work.

The focus groups confirmed what was found in the survey, as detailed in the tables and figure above, that women remain more occupied than men in the non-economic activities, while men devote the bulk of their time to economic activities. The key informants echoed the same, saying that the women are mostly engaged in unpaid care work. The main reasons, they suggested, are the traditional practices and role segregation between men and women. A few even mentioned that the work that women do, essentially unpaid care work, is considered to be low-status or "small" work, which is an insult for a husband to do. This signifies the deep-rooted cultural practices and mindset that define and segregate the productive role for men and reproductive role for women. Although all seven focus groups expressed the need to reduce the burden of care work for women and a few even stated that reduction and/or redistribution might be a solution in which the men can share some of the care work, they appeared reluctant to implement such a plan. When asked about the merits-demerits of the reduction or redistribution of work, no one could find any positive effects, but they did foresee some potential negative effects. For example, they expressed concerns that those needing special care in a family, such as the elderly or persons with disabilities, might face problems and be "left helpless," in their words, if care roles should be changed or care redistributed. They also expressed concerns that reduction/redistribution of women's care work may create chaos and dispute within a family.

### Unpaid Care Work Distribution

Table 20 below shows which household members male and female respondents believe has the responsibility for any specific unpaid care work such as childcare, meal preparation, housekeeping, cleaning, laundry, fetching firewood, fetching water, care of elderly, and care of the handicapped.

There are important gender differences in the perceptions of who contributes to domestic chores. Although women shoulder the bulk of unpaid work as shown in the time use data, men nevertheless tend to underestimate women's labor contributions. As per the results below, both men and women think that women in the households are responsible for most tasks. However, male respondents also think that girls are second most responsible next to women for childcare and meal preparation. Women assign considerably less responsibility to girls than men do and neither men nor women assign any significant responsibility to boys. As far as caring of the persons with disability is concerned, 100% of both men and women respondents regard it as a women-only task. The vast majority of respondents also stated that they follow the usual practices in their village/community concerning division of labor for care tasks.

TABLE 20 INTRA-HOUSEHOLD DIVISION OF UNPAID CARE WORK<sup>7</sup>

Who takes care of [X] in your household?														
	Childcare		Meal preparation		Housekeeping, cleaning, laundry		Fetching firewood		Fetching water (if outside house)		Care of elderly		Care of handicapped	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Women	73.5	95.9	85.7	92.1	44.4	96.7	33.6	87.8	53.4	93.9	78.0	91.7	100.0	100.0
Girls	22.2	3.5	14.3	7.7	16.6	3.3	4.6	10.5	13.8	4.5	6.6	8.3		
Men	4.0	0.6	0	0.2	38.5	0	59.5	1.3	31.0	1.1	14.3	0		
Boys	0.3	0			0.6	0	2.3	0.4	1.7	0.4	1.1	0.0		
Number of respondents	324	315	21	455	169	331	262	229	174	445	91	24	1.0	2.0
Is this usual practice in your village/community?														
	Childcare		Meal preparation		Housekeeping, cleaning, laundry		Fetching firewood		Fetching water (if outside house)		Care of elderly		Care of handicapped	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Percentage who said yes	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0
Number of respondents	324	315	21	455	169	331	262	229	174	445	91	24	1	2
	Childcare		Meal preparation		Housekeeping, cleaning, laundry		Fetching firewood		Fetching water (if outside house)		Care of elderly		Care of handicapped	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women

<sup>7</sup> Care of elderly and handicapped have small sample sizes

If not, what is the usual practice in your village/ community?

Women	52.4	100		100	63.6	100	37.5	100	54.29	100	33.3	
Girls	33.3	0			9.1	0	12.5	0	8.6	0		
Men	14.3	0			27.3	0	46.9	0	31.4	0	66.7	
Boys							3.1	0	5.7	0		
Number of respondents	21	1	0	1	11	2	32	1	35	4	6	0

Nine of the 12 key informants stated that women do all household chores, e.g. water or firewood collection and other unpaid care work. Among the three that differed, one female informant who is a member of the Union Parishad, thinks that both men and women do these household chores and the other two informants – one religious leader/Imam and one Union Parishad Chairperson – think that only water collection is solely done by women but that men do the firewood collection and other outside work. Almost all informants cited prevailing traditional practices as the principal reason why women are left primarily responsible for reproductive work.

All informants stated that women take care of the elderly, children and persons with disabilities in a family, but argued that this role could be redistributed among other family members to share the workload. The only downside to this redistributive arrangement, they stated, is that the elderly may be left “helpless” and the persons with disabilities may face difficulties in physical movement if not cared for by women. This observation implies that informants may believe that gender contributes to the quality performance of some kinds of care work and/or they may not be completely sincere in their desire to redistribute the care work but instead prefer prevailing norms.

In terms of gender disaggregation of daily time use, the focus groups overall mentioned that men spend 8-10 hours on average for economic activities and the remaining 4-5 hours for non-economic activities. Interestingly, this is a significant overestimate of men’s time devoted to economic activities in comparison to survey data, as Table 20 and Figure 2 show that men spend closer to 6 hours daily on economic activities. Focus groups also overestimated that time that women spend on economic activities as 5 hours daily, although survey data showed that it is less than one hour.

### 3.3.2 Attitudes toward UCW

**Target:** 70% of duty-bearers, men and women sampled from target communities reporting positive attitudes towards addressing unpaid care work by the end of the project

#### **Baseline findings:**

The baseline survey uncovered discrepancies in attitudes toward unpaid care work. Respondents felt comfortable agreeing with the general idea that men and women should do equal amounts of domestic and unpaid care work. However, when asked about specific aspects of that work, such as child care, a large percentage of men and women responded that they preferred sticking to traditional gender roles.

#### Description of Attitudes toward UCW

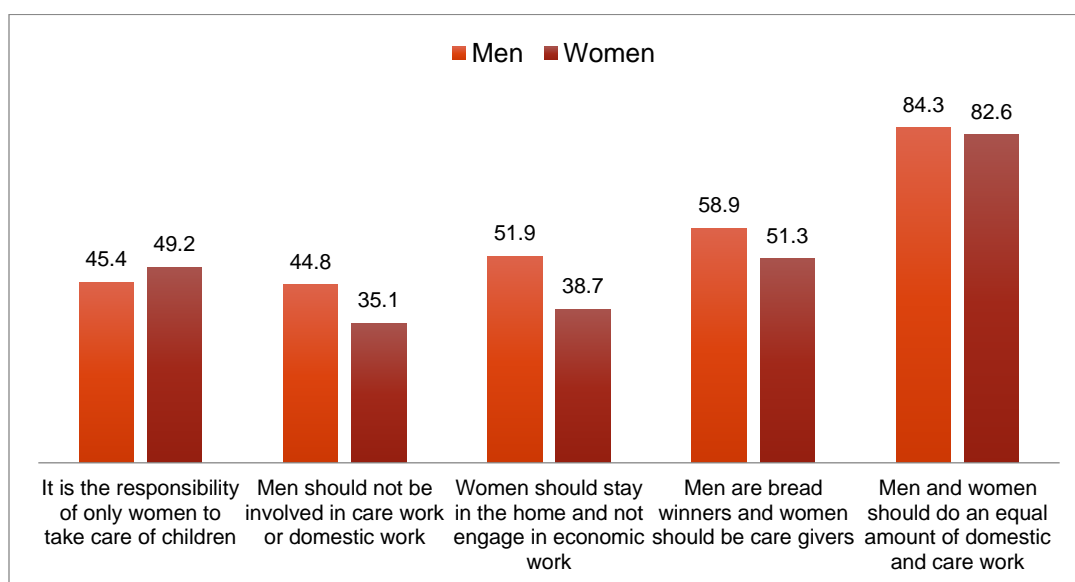
In order to assess gender attitude towards care work, the respondents were given five statements, each describing attitudinal aspects of how men and women may differently perceive their respective role in care work and asked whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with those statements.

The statements were:

1. It is responsibility of only women to take care of children
2. Men should not be involved in care work or domestic work
3. Women should stay in the home, and not engage in economic work
4. Men are bread winners and women should be household care givers
5. Men and women should do an equal amount of domestic and care work

Interestingly, there was little disagreement between men and women. The highest difference in response was recorded as 13 percent; 52 percent men against 39 percent women expressed agreement with the third statement that women should stay home instead of engaging in economic work. This unveils the prevailing attitude and social acceptance towards women's role in care work, thereby restricting their access to economic opportunities outside the home. Another notable feature seems that the highest percentage of both men and women generally agree that women and men should carry out an equal amount of domestic and care work as indicated in statement #5, thus disproving the common notion that men should only be responsible for paid work and women for unpaid work. It may also indicate that men and women know that the socially acceptable response is that men and women are equal, though they disagree when discussing specific examples of care and house work.

**FIGURE 3 GENDER ATTITUDES TOWARD UNPAID CARE WORK**



### 3.4 Outcome 3: Market Access and Productive Resources

**Outcome 3:** By the end of 2020, 6000 rural women have more secure and sustainable access to markets and productive resources leading to increased income.

Outcome 3 is disaggregated into three indicators:

- 60% of women report increased, more regular access to markets by the end of the project
- 50% of women surveyed who report improved yields as a result of using CRSA techniques and agricultural inputs by the end of the project
- 30% of sampled women who report an increase in their income by the end of the project

### 3.4.1 Women's Agricultural Yields

**Target:** 50% of women surveyed report improved yields as a result of using CRSA techniques and agricultural inputs by the end of the project.

#### **Baseline findings:**

The original survey designed for POWER Bangladesh asked in English, “Did you own, rent, or cultivate any plots of land and other natural resources in the past 12 months.” However, a mistranslation led enumerators to ask respondents, “In the last 12 months have you acquired, rented or cultivated any land or other natural resources?” The mistranslation changed the meaning from asking the respondent if they possessed or cultivate land, to asking if they purchased or otherwise acquired new land in the last 12 months. The result is that the baseline captured agricultural information from only 126 respondents (12%) who replied “yes” to the question. We present the baseline data for these 126 respondents here, though the data is of limited value and certainly does not represent the project population.

Of the 126, 30 percent of the agricultural plots are co-owned between spouses. Women report to have produced more than one and half times than the men in terms of kilograms of production per cultivated area. The most significant problems respondents face in cultivating land are flooding (50.38% men, 50.0% women) and drought (12.03% men, 21.67% women). Respondents seem to be at a loss to address these issues, with about 75 percent saying that they took no steps to address the difficulties they face in cultivating their land. Solutions are challenging to find and implement because the population is cash poor, lacks access to input markets and extension services are insufficient.

More female respondents than male respondents access markets on a daily basis but male respondents access markets at a rate more than double the female respondents on a weekly basis. Overall market participation is quite low, as more than three-quarters of male and female respondents indicated that they do not sell at the market at all during the last year. Further detail from female respondents who do sell may not be generalizable as they represented only about 16 percent of sellers and 4 percent of respondents overall. Of those who do sell, women earn approximately 116 percent more than men from the market even though women’s distance from the market is on average 0.5 km farther than that of the men. 54 percent of women who do not sell at the market said they produce only enough for household consumption, while 43 percent said they were too busy with housework to sell.

#### **Description of Agricultural Assets and Production**

This third outcome of the POWER project looks at increasing women’s income by improving women’s access to markets and increasing agricultural yields through the effective and proper use of Climate Resilience Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA) techniques. The baseline data inventoried agricultural assets, production details and access to agricultural services, such as extension services.

The survey only asked 126 respondents about their agricultural production and business. Only about 5 percent of the total respondents mentioned agriculture as their main occupation. This result reflects that most of people in POWER communities live in poverty and very rarely own land. Still, agriculture, especially in the form of day labor, remains an important source of income, if not necessarily the main income source. There is also a tendency to migrate to the capital city Dhaka and other major urban areas for seasonal work, especially during the lean period for cultivation or the interim period between different cropping calendars spanning periods up to 3-4 months a year. This

migration may be a contributing factor to respondents' low levels of engagement in agricultural activities as their main source of income despite largely belonging agricultural communities.

One of the stories that came out from FGD data supports some of these assumptions.

In one FGD with the women from the village bordering Rasulpur, participants said that they work only for two to three months in the agricultural fields during the corn season. The rest of the year, they spend time on homestead vegetable gardening and on small-scale domestic poultry production. Those are not the main source of household income, they added. Their husbands work outside the village and earn money for the family. Their poultry produce to 3 to 4 eggs per day per household. They sometimes sell eggs to their neighbors, or consume the eggs themselves.

### Type and ownership of plots

The respondents were asked to list the plots or other natural resources they own, rent, or cultivate (Table 21), showing that arable land is the most available plot type.

**TABLE 21 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLOTS OWNED, RENTED, OR CULTIVATED (DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER)**

	Men (%)	Women (%)
Homestead	1.80	5.45
Arable Land	94.59	89.09
Bush/Forest	0	1.82
Cultivable Pond Suitable for Fishing/Aquaculture	3.60	1.82
Derelict Pond	0	1.82
Number of plots	111	55

In terms of plot ownership, over 57 percent of the male respondents claim to exclusively own the plots compared to only 18 percent of women respondents to have owned it exclusively. The respondent and spouse jointly own little above 27 percent of plots. 45 percent of the women respondents claim their spouses own the plot exclusively while very few men (1.8%) claim their spouses are sole owners.

**TABLE 22 OWNERSHIP OF THE PLOTS (DISAGGREGATED BY SEX)**

	Men	Women
Owned exclusively by respondent	57.25	18.18
Owned exclusively by spouse	1.80	45.45
Co-owned by respondent and spouse	2.70	27.27
Owned by other family member	6.31	1.82
Group owned	3.60	0
Share Cropper	3.60	5.45
Rented	28.83	1.82
Temp User Right	0.90	0
Number of respondents	111	55

### Agricultural yields and productivity

Annex 2 presents the distribution of crops produced by respondents. The most common crops produced are rice (60 percent of total crops) followed by jute (11 percent) and wheat (6.5 percent). There is not much gender difference in the types of crops produced. Annex 3 presents the average yield produced for rice by sex. Men’s rice yield is higher than women’s, but the difference is not statistically significant.

The baseline survey sought to understand the agricultural management issues respondents faced and if there was a difference in the agricultural management challenges women and men faced. Specifically, the baseline survey asked respondents about soil quality, cultivation issues, use of fertilizers, and use of other farm inputs.

Both men and women respondents claimed that their soil quality is average. The majority however assessed the quality based on own experience without conducting any scientific testing or expert consultation.



**TABLE 23 SOIL QUALITY OF THE PLOTS**

	Men	Women
Soil quality of the plot (by percent of respondents)		
Good	23.64	31.48
Average	76.36	61.11
Bad	0	7.41
Number of plots	110	54
How do you know the soil quality of the plot?	Men	Women
Scientific Test	0.00	5.56
Own Experience	88.18	79.63
Ag Extension Services	11.82	14.81
Number of plots	110	54

When asked about the other problems they face in using their plots, 50 percent of both male and female respondents cited flooding as a major problem, which most men and women attributed to excessive rainfall. Interestingly, a disproportionate number of women (32 percent) attributed problems to insufficient rain, considering only 22 percent of women said that drought was a major problem.

**TABLE 24 MAJOR AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS FACED (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)**

	Men	Women
Soil erosion	0.75	3.33
Drought	12.03	21.67
Flood	50.38	50.00
Marshy	2.26	1.67
Salinity	2.26	0
Land too steep	3.76	1.67
No major problems	28.57	21.67
Number of responses	133	60

The respondents were then asked about the potential solutions to these problems identified. About 75 percent respondents claimed that no steps had been taken while 10.83 percent male opted for dam/irrigation and 11.54 percent women for water harvesting to address the problems.

**TABLE 25 RESPONDENTS' SOLUTIONS TO AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS (MULTIPLE RESPONSES POSSIBLE)**

	Men	Women
<b>Terraces</b>	0	5.77
<b>Tree belts/wind breaks</b>	0.83	7.69
<b>Water harvesting</b>	5.83	11.54
<b>Dam/Irrigation</b>	10.83	0
<b>Drainage ditches</b>	6.67	1.92
<b>No steps taken</b>	75.83	73.08
<b>Number of responses</b>	120	52

A majority of the respondents' plots used fertilizer (86 percent of men's plots and 70 percent of women's plots), with the majority of respondents using a mix of inorganic and organic fertilizers. Availability was cited by both men and women as the biggest factor in deciding which fertilizer to use, with women being much more likely than men (77 percent versus 49 percent) to use a combination of purchased and self-made fertilizer. Information about type of fertilizer, how farmers learn about fertilizer, and sources of fertilizer are detailed in Annex 4.

The baseline survey also captured information on other inputs that farmers in ActionAid communities used to improve agricultural produce. The survey covered pesticides, improved seeds, and other inputs. Pesticides were the most common input (apart from fertilizer) with 70 percent of men and 33 percent of women stating that they used pesticides. Improved seeds were the next most common input choice, with a slightly higher percentage of women (21 percent) using them than men (17 percent). However, 13 percent of men and 42 percent of women indicated that they did not use any of the other inputs listed. Because only 48 women's responses were recorded in this section, this data may not be representative.

**TABLE 26 OTHER FARM INPUTS**

<b>What Other Farm Inputs Did You Use? (Multiple responses possible)</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Pesticides	69.57	33.33
Improved Seeds	17.39	20.83
Improved Fish Fingerlings	0.00	2.08
Animal Feed	0.00	2.08
Did Not Use Any Other Inputs	13.04	41.67
<b>Number of responses</b>	115	48

### 3.4.2 Access to markets

Women’s access to markets is equally important as a proxy indicator of women’s economic opportunities across the supply chain. Increased market access should correspondingly boost women’s economic capacity. In broad terms, it can also facilitate women’s political empowerment process as they continue to gain bargaining power while they compete to access the market and build social capital. This has the potential both to improve their status and their community recognition.

Therefore, the research team asked survey respondents whether they attended markets to sell their products and in what frequency over the past year. Notably, market access appeared limited for both men and women as more than 76% of both genders responded that they did not sell any products in the market in the last year. Of those who did not sell at the market, 82% of men and 54% of women responded that they produced only enough for household consumption. Another 43% of women who did not sell responded that they were too busy with housework to attend the market. Distance from markets did not appear to be a significant barrier.

**TABLE 27 FREQUENCY OF MARKET ATTENDANCE**

How Often Did You Attend Markets To Sell Products In Your Locality Last Year?	Men (%)	Women (%)
Every (Market) Day	5.9	7.7
Once a week	12.8	4.4
Once-twice a month	2.8	4.8
Rarely	2.6	6.5
Did Not Sell	76.0	76.6
Number of respondents	509	522
If Did Not Sell, Explain	Men	Women
Produced For Household Consumption	81.9	54.3
Market Too Far	0.3	2.0
Prices Not Good	0.3	0.3
Too Busy With Housework	17.6	43.0
Other	0.0	0.5
Number of respondents	387	400

### 3.4.3 Income

The survey asks about the value of income from market sales and income from other sources in the last 12 months, both of which added up to their total income from all sources (Table 28). Female respondents in total earn above BDT 25,000 against men’s total earning of above BDT 22,000. Female respondents appear to travel farther to market by 0.5 km more than men.

**TABLE 28 INCOME OVER LAST 12 MONTHS AND DISTANCE TO MARKETS**

	Men	Women
Distance From Sales Point To Production Point, Km	2.1	2.6
Income from market sales (BDT)	7,003.90	10,267.40
Number of respondents (who attend market)Number of respondents	35	19
Income from other sources (BDT)	15,144.20	15,418.10
Total income all sources (BDT)	22,148.10	25,685.50
Number of respondents	509	522

Weights used

The focus groups cited many obstacles for women to access markets, notably lack of security and gender stereotypes that inhibit women’s mobility. When asked about what steps need to be taken to enhance women’s access to markets, they mentioned that infrastructure development, establishing connection with the market committee, setting up adequate toilet facilities and “persuading away the bad people from the vicinity of the market” could be some of the solutions. According to survey data, alleviating women’s care burden and increasing crop yields are also important strategies for increasing women’s market access as 54% of women stated they produced enough food only for household consumption and 43% said they were too busy with housework to attend the market.

### **3.5 Outcome 4: Changes in Policy and Practice**

**Outcome 4:** Greater visibility of intersections of CRSA, women’s UCW and women’s economic participation leads to changes in policy and practice by sub-national, national, regional and international stakeholders by 2020.

Outcome 4 is disaggregated into three indicators:

- 75% of local and national duty bearers surveyed who agree that greater support and investment is needed to reduce UCW by the end of the project.
- 8 new or revised strategy or policy documents from national, regional or international bodies or bi-lateral donors that address gender inequality facing rural women, including the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work and its impact on sustainable farming techniques and women’s economic empowerment.
- Increase in national policy support for interventions that reduce women’s unpaid care work as assessed by key external experts in each country, by the end of the project.

#### **3.5.1 Promoting Support and Investment to reduce unpaid care work**

**Targets:** 75% of local and national duty bearers surveyed who agree that greater support and investment is needed to reduce UCW by the end of the project.

Increase in national policy support for interventions that reduce women’s unpaid care work as assessed by key external experts in each country, by the end of the project.

**Findings:** The study team conducted interviews with four key informants at the national level with representatives from four ministries –Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Planning (MoP), Ministry of Labor & Employment (MoLE) and Ministry of Women & Child Affairs (MoWCA) –

offer a window into the national level policy issues surrounding unpaid care work, climate resilient farming, and overall women's rights.

Three out of 4 of the key informants at the national level have clearly recognized the need to reduce unpaid care work and redistribution of workload. The challenge remaining for ActionAid is to leverage their recognition for reduction of unpaid care work and seek their solidarity and support in creating relevant policies and programs or enforcing existing measures that can address the issue of unpaid care work, especially in relation to the POWER sectors and services.

The four ministries that participated in key informant interviews each mentioned having policies that are aimed at achieving their sector goals and objectives. They further added that the policies also address gender dimensions and women's rights within that because of the current government's priority on women and gender.

More specifically, the Ministry of Agriculture has a national Agriculture Policy 2013 and a National Agricultural Extension Policy 2015. The policy priorities are to enable self-sufficiency in food production, ensure access to the market and apply necessary measures and laws to boost the sector. The representative who participated in the key informant interview stated that the Agriculture Ministry is committed to creating an environment for women to take part in the agriculture sector fairly with men and to providing proper amenities and support equally for both sexes. The Ministry of Labor and Employment is responsible for implementing Bangladesh Labor Law 2015 and ILO Conventions among many others and has interventions aimed at safe and women-friendly workplaces, non-discriminatory wage system, training, help line and so forth. The Ministry of Planning has a Medium Term Development Plan (7-year plan) and other initiatives and measures aiming at alleviating poverty and accelerating development. The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs is naturally the key ministry to address gender equity. They are the custodian of the National Women's Development Policy, which is aimed at the advancement of women's rights. Their programs place extra emphasis on violence against women, trafficking, workplace safety and other socio-economic dimensions, but also focus on economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and financial support. They also have a cross-sectoral focus to ensure women's participation in all sectors but the research team was unable to identify a specific program for women and agriculture.

When asked about their sector alignment with unpaid care work, only the Ministry of Agriculture could not find any relationship, while the three other ministries found some connections in the forms of training, meeting and joint collaboration with NGOs in supporting women that might address issues related to unpaid care work.

In terms of women's access to extension services, the Ministry of Agriculture first stressed the need to raise men's consciousness about women rights and the benefit of women's involvement in the agricultural sector, especially for those female-headed households. The Ministry of Agriculture representative further mentioned that they are providing women various forms of assistance for women in the agricultural sector, such as subsidies, low-interest loan, low-cost fertilizers and pesticides etc. Women are also supported in gaining access to marketplaces so that they can get proper prices for their produce.

All of the ministries highlighted the importance of realizing women rights and mentioned their regular measures and activities that support women's rights. They uniformly mentioned the government priority and initiatives to address unpaid care work and redistribute women's workload but unfortunately, their responses did not specify any particular programs or measures that can be directly related to unpaid care work or effective efforts to reduce it. They in general appreciated the

efforts by different organizations to address unpaid care work but declined to name any particular initiative or organization in this regard.

### 3.5.2 New or revised strategy or policy documents

**Target:** 8 new or revised strategy or policy documents from national, regional or international bodies or bi-lateral donors that address gender inequality facing rural women including disproportionate burden of unpaid care work and its impact on sustainable farming techniques and women's economic empowerment.

**Findings:** The current government of Bangladesh has placed a high priority on gender equality and women's rights, which was evident in Vision 2021 and Vision 2042, the election manifesto of the ruling party. At the leadership level in the national government, these topics are frequently mentioned. The sector policies also have put extra emphasis on gender issues more as a crosscutting element.

#### Supportive strategies and policies

The various sectors and their representative ministries recognize the unequal workload women have to bear in terms of unpaid care work and the need to reduce it. The policies mentioned earlier have a gender focus but they do not directly relate to unpaid care work. ActionAid may consider doing a rigorous policy analysis of all relevant sector policies and strategies. This exercise should be able to identify areas that directly relate to, affect or implicate women's unpaid care work, and/or have scope to influence or benefit in the redistribution or reduction. Below we recommend areas, based on field work and secondary research that could serve as a starting point for ActionAid policy and advocacy activities.

### 3.5.3 Promoting behavior change

Bangladesh nationwide has achieved improvements in women's empowerment. However, these improvements are largely the result of increased women's participation in export industries (Kabeer, 2010). However, many of Bangladesh's more rural and traditional areas, much like the places ActionAid is implementing the POWER program, have not realized these gains in gender equality. As secular institutions in Bangladesh have fought for women's rights, many more traditional and religious institutions have resisted instituting those rights (Marshall, 2015).

As the baseline's survey on attitudes toward unpaid care work revealed, Bangladeshis may pay rhetorical service to ideas about gender equality while simultaneously resisting the redistribution of work around specific tasks, such as child or elder care. ActionAid should use advocacy efforts to overcome the suspicion that religious organizations may have of secular organizations promoting women's rights, and the unease that secular organizations have of working with religious communities (Ibid.). In bringing together traditional and secular ideals, ActionAid will have an opportunity to promote activities that change not only reported attitudes in this regard, but also behaviors that reduce unpaid care work for women.

### 3.5.4 Remove informal barriers to women's ownership of land

ActionAid's advocacy activities should address inequality in agricultural land ownership. Owning land is a natural precursor for the incentive to invest in it and realize an improved livelihood. Land ownership is a crucial component of the productivity of any agricultural system and the empowerment of the people who work in the system. Women who own land are more likely to

improve their technical ability to work the land and more likely to increase agricultural productivity (Seymour, 2015).

Women are legally allowed to own land in Bangladesh. However, informal barriers exist that block them from practically owning land. Across Bangladesh, women own only 3% of agricultural land (Kieran, 2015). Traditional practices that give husbands primary responsibility for purchasing property, and give women the obligation to forgo inheritance rights in favor of male family members create a heavy damper on women's land ownership (Ibid.). Overcoming these informal barriers is a starting point to improving women's productivity and stewardship in the agricultural sector

### 3.5.5 Access to facilities and utilities

If women have stable and smooth access to public utilities and service facilities, it can drastically lower the burden of unpaid care work as well as the time spent therein. This indicator is thus meant to measure both the presence of such utilities and services and their convenience of access for women, in terms of distance and mode of transportation.

#### Facilities

POWER should promote the establishment of facilities that reduce unpaid care work in its targeted communities. The baseline survey found that most POWER communities do not have sufficient access to key facilities, such as hospitals/clinics, childcare facilities, eldercare facilities, agriculture offices, community centers, or violence against women centers.

Only 8 percent of women respondents have local access to childcare centers and only 20 percent of women respondents have access to community centers. In communities that have those facilities, over 50% of the women use them. 57 percent of women stated that a hospital or health center is present in their village; of those who lived in proximity to a hospital or health center, 89 per cent of women stated that their families use them regularly. Eldercare facilities and Violence Against Women centers were the least common of all services, as only 0.4 percent and 2.3 percent of women responded that they are present in their villages, respectively.

Distance was cited by most respondents as the predominant obstacle to accessing services as the vast majority of women stated they travel to services by foot.

FIGURE 4 AVAILABILITY OF FACILITIES WITHIN VILLAGES

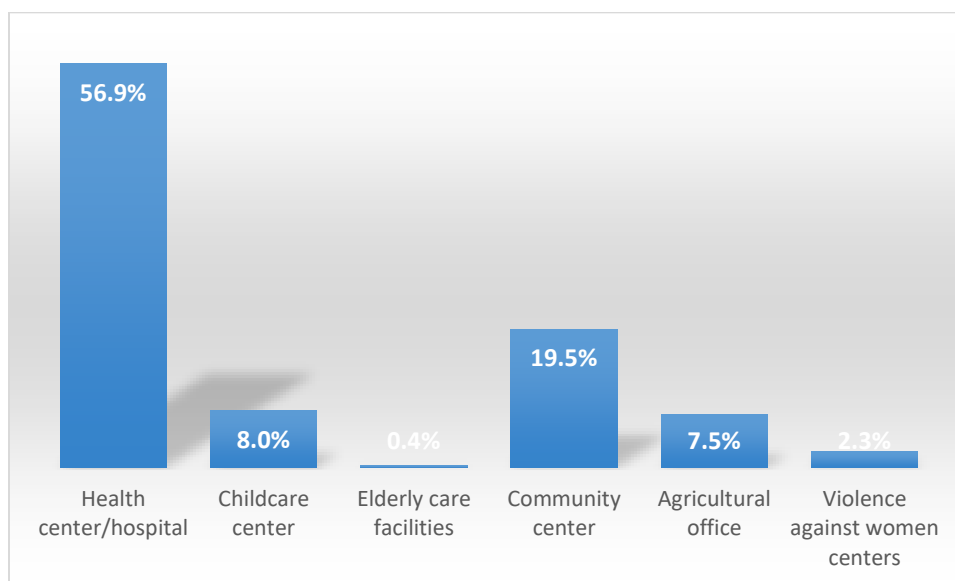


TABLE 29 USAGE OF FACILITIES BY FAMILY MEMBERS

Facilities	% women respondents	# respondents
Health Center/Hospital	88.9	297
Childcare center	66.7	42
Elderly Care Facility	0	2
Community Center	51.0	102
Agricultural Office	30.8	39
Violence against Women Centers	16.7	12

### Utilities

The baseline survey also asked respondents about their access to utilities, particularly the source of drinking water and cooking fuel as well as sanitary facilities.

When it is difficult to obtain utilities, care work creates a burden very often borne by women. The baseline study revealed that 11 percent of women in Bangladesh POWER communities have no household access to drinking water whatsoever and 13 percent have no access to any toilet facilities but resort to using the beach or bush. Nationally, only 1 percent of Bangladesh is subject to open defecation per 2015 statistics.<sup>8</sup> Although Bangladesh had reached near-universal drinking water access in recent years, this percentage dipped below 80 percent nationally as 22 percent of tube wells were discovered to have high levels of arsenic in the early 2000s. It is estimated that nationwide, a full 50 percent of drinking water does not meet safety standards.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/10/07/bangladesh-improving-water-supply-and-sanitation>. Accessed June 4, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/10/07/bangladesh-improving-water-supply-and-sanitation>, Accessed June 4, 2017.

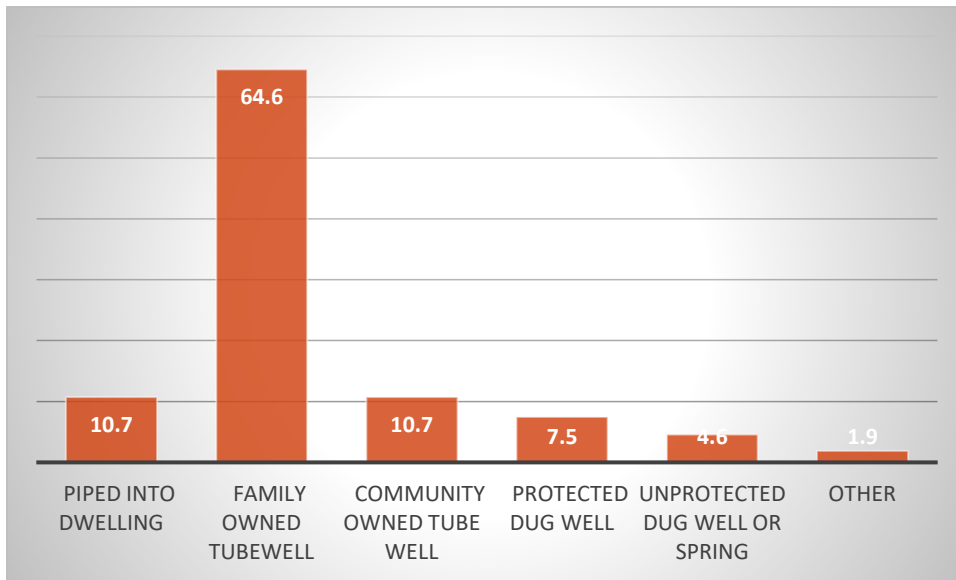


58 percent of women reported household access to electricity or solar, but it is reasonable to assume that electricity plays only a minor role in household activities or unpaid care work at present since only 3 percent of women reported that electricity is their main fuel source for cooking and time diaries indicated that women typically spend one hour daily collecting water and firewood/fuel.

The highest percentage of women (64.6%) responded that family-owned tubewells provide their main source of drinking water, followed by water piped-into dwellings and community-owned tubewells (both accessed by 10.7% of respondents).

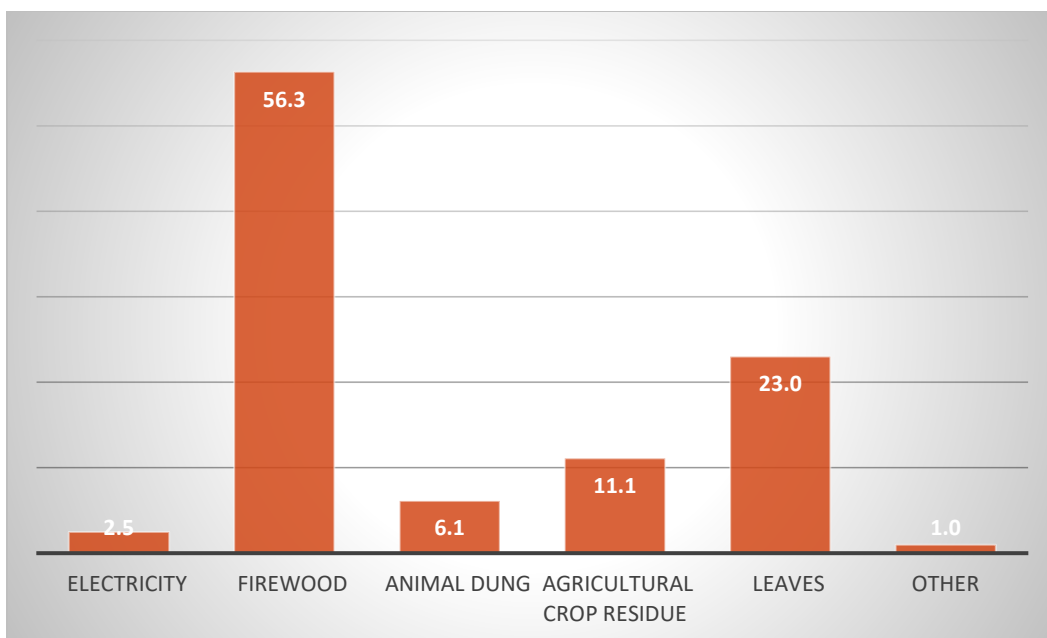
POWER should examine ways to provide better access to safe drinking water and improved electrical coverage for their potential to reduce unpaid care work.

**FIGURE 5 MAIN SOURCE OF DRINKING WATER**



Firewood is the most dominant source of cooking fuel (56 percent), followed by leaves (23 percent). Both fuel sources are labor-intensive as they require women to search for and gather them on a regular basis; this unpaid care burden can be seen in the fact that women allocate an average of one hour daily to water and fuel collection, as mentioned earlier in this report. .

**FIGURE 6: MAIN SOURCES OF COOKING FUEL BY PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE RESPONDENTS**



Survey respondents stated that pit latrines (79.1%) are the most common sanitary facility in POWER communities; the next most common response was from women who said they do not have access to any sanitary facility but must use the beach or bush for toileting (12.8%), a fact that may present additional health and sanitation challenges for this population.

**TABLE 30 AVAILABLE SANITARY FACILITIES**

<b>Flush Toilet</b>	<b>1.1</b>
<b>Pit Latrine</b>	<b>79.1</b>
<b>Composting Toilet</b>	<b>5.6</b>
<b>Public Toilet (Flush/Pit)</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>Toilet In Another House</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>No Toilet Facility (Bush, Beach)</b>	<b>12.8</b>

### 3.5.6 Extension Services

The baseline survey asked the small number of respondents who indicated that they had acquired or rented land in the past 12 months if they or anyone in their household had received extension services from any of the listed service providers. The results show that a significant percentage of our sample of respondents did utilize extension services and far more men used the services than women. 84 out of total 111 male respondents and 35 female out of total 54 female respondents used some form of the services (Table 31). While our sample size was too small to generalize this result to the total population, it does match results found in the WEAI survey conducted in 2014 (Alkire & Meizen-Dick, 2013).

**TABLE 31 EXTENSION SERVICES**

	Men (%)	Women (%)
Government Extension	9.52	8.57
Action Aid	41.67	48.57
Other NGOs	8.33	5.71
Coop/Farmer Association	1.19	0
Large Scale Farmers	8.33	0
Radio/TV	11.90	8.57
Neighbors	19.05	28.57
Number of HH members who availed services	84	35

It is notable from the above table that female respondents were as likely as male respondents to seek out for information and extension support from different service providers and/or other information sources for improving their farming techniques. ActionAid is found to be the most common source of support both men and women reach out to, distantly followed by neighbors and Radio/TV as key information source. It seems from the results that the government extension services have yet to become adequately popular as the first and foremost service provider to go to.

## 4. Priorities for the POWER program

In this section, we recommend priority areas of action for the POWER program based on the results of the baseline study.

The baseline study was designed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to women’s empowerment, unpaid care work and sustainable agriculture and to gather relevant baseline data on the current status against the project indicators. This data will enable ActionAid to measure progress over time and accordingly inform program planning and strategic decisions as and when required.

### 4.1. *Reduce Women’s Heavy Workload*

The top contributor to women’s disempowerment in the target population is the heavy workload that burdens Bangladeshi women. POWER could reduce women’s workload by addressing women’s housework duties. Currently women spend almost four times as many hours as men devoted to housework each day.

#### 4.1.1. **Redistributing Unpaid Care Work**

Women perform approximately 2.8 times the amount of household/care work that men do. The burden of this work prevents women from participating in community structures and improving their personal and economic lives. At present, housework consumes more of women’s time than personal care, collecting fuel and water, childcare, agriculture, mass media, social/political/religious activities and paid work combined, according to baseline survey data. Women’s free time, best captured by the time allocations they attributed to mass media and social/political/religious activities,

amounts to only 1 hour per day, which leaves scant opportunity for new learning or self-advancement.

However, ActionAid must approach the redistribution of this work with caution. The history of secular NGO's work in Bangladesh has made religious and traditional communities cautious about their activities. As this baseline study and secondary research has demonstrated, men and women may be resistant to upsetting the established, traditional division of household labor. Nonetheless, men tend to underestimate the amount of unpaid care work women do, and at least in principal agree that a reduced women's workload is desirable.

ActionAid faces the risk of further disempowering women if the program makes demands on women's time before addressing women's workload. ActionAid must address women's time poverty before asking women to take on new responsibilities and time commitments such as, accepting leadership roles on community structures, starting self-employment ventures, or attending market more regularly.

#### **4.1.2. Improve Access to Facilities and Utilities**

Women that have stable access to public service facilities and public utilities may have a lower burden of unpaid care work. Advocating for childcare facilities, as well as universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, are potential POWER activities in the target communities.

#### **4.1.3. Increase Awareness of UCW Burden among Men and Women**

Most men and women stated that they both should be equally responsible for domestic and care work although women are found to be doing most of the household work. The time use data further reconfirms that women are far more involved in reproductive work and men in productive work. It remains to be seen whether men in Bangladesh POWER communities are sincere in their desire to redistribute unpaid carework. The potential negative outcomes (and lack of positive effects) that were raised in discussion of redistribution point to underlying reluctance and may mean that confirmation bias was in play when respondents stated that unpaid carework should be equally distributed.

#### **4.1.4. Promote the Reduction and Redistribution of Unpaid Care Work**

ActionAid should pay more attention to the discrepancy between stated attitudes and actual practice regarding unpaid carework and work on educating men and women, but especially men, on the economic and other advantages to families when unpaid carework is more evenly distributed. Ideally, men will be encouraged to actively take on more carework themselves. Women may require a special approach in this regard as survey data indicated that women themselves are hesitant to assign unpaid carework even to girls and boys, let alone to men in their household, and in focus groups women stated that they welcomed unpaid carework, which they saw as their duty, and often viewed income-earning as men's work.

Changing behaviors with regard to unpaid carework may mean overcoming even more significant cultural obstacles than changing attitudes, but as women become more empowered in other areas, such as group participation and decision-making, they will be better equipped to advocate for redistribution of unpaid carework within their families. Likewise, over time women may also be able to organize locally to bring new utilities, services and communally-shared labor practices that can increase the efficiency of some kinds of unpaid carework.

#### **4.1.5. Increase Awareness of Women’s Rights of Mobility**

One of the greatest potential challenges is the issue of cultural restrictions on women’s mobility, which was raised in several of the focus groups and key informant interviews. Women are still unlikely to leave the house, let alone go into the fields or to market on their own, in many of the POWER communities under current prevailing attitudes. ActionAid will need to double-down on awareness of mobility as a fundamental human and women’s right and seek influential local partners to create a shift in this paradigm.

The challenges of entrenched attitudes toward, and cultural restrictions on, gender roles and women’s mobility are the next biggest hurdle after women’s workload and will likely require broad grass-roots efforts to first engender positive attitudes in the home and create a will to change behavior on a societal level over the long term. Changing women’s self-perception will be critical; if women themselves do not believe in their rights and express their need to move about freely outside the home and pursue whatever leadership and economic opportunities interest them, it is doubtful that any outside pressure will manage to accomplish such a shift.

### **4.2. *Generate Income***

As extreme poverty forces communities to concentrate efforts on subsistence agriculture, and other basics of survival, it will be a slow process to free up the necessary time and create the assets needed to take advantage of increased economic opportunities. It is significant that women cited the time burden of housework and a lack of excess produce as the two major barriers to selling at the market. It was not studied in this survey whether women and families even have enough to eat at the present moment, so any additional produce may in fact go toward meeting essential family needs or relieving malnourishment before it can be seen as “excess” that can be sold.

#### **4.2.1. Income from increased agricultural production**

A thorough review of community agricultural practices should reveal means of increasing productivity. With better homestead garden yields through increased guidance and agricultural inputs, it is possible that women may feel encouraged to try bigger agricultural projects, or, at a minimum, participate in more informal selling of their excess produce, eggs, and milk. If men see women as economic and agricultural partners, it is also possible that restrictions on women’s mobility may gradually relax.

#### **4.2.2. Access to Agriculture and Labor Markets**

Women appear to face informal barriers to market access. These include social norms which inhibit women’s ability to access markets, lack of security, and insufficient sanitary facilities. Overcoming these barriers in addition to increasing women’s agricultural production would open new sources of income.

ActionAid should study further why such low numbers of women in the target communities described themselves as engaging in and deriving income from agricultural work. As such, their responses may not be representative of the target communities as a whole and/or there must be further research as to the suitability of this population for agricultural interventions. While earlier report sections on agriculture posited different theories about this, from the seasonal nature of

agriculture and small profits relative to other endeavors to the subsistence quality of their production, there is not one conclusive explanation that can be derived from the baseline data.

It should also be noted that the relative economic merits of agricultural activity versus quilt and bidi production deserve more investigation. If women currently have easy access to income from sewing and rolling bidis and are not convinced that agriculture can be more lucrative than this piecework, it may be futile to invest resources into increasing women's agricultural production for purely economic gain.

### ***4.3. Convert Positive Attitudes to Investment and Action***

The Bangladeshi government actively promotes women's rights and gender equality and has increased its attention on agriculture and rural infrastructure. Men and women in POWER communities and in key government ministries state that men and women are responsible for care work, and that women should have equal access to income earning opportunities. However, men often underestimate the amount of total work and unpaid care work that women manage. Also, traditional views of the division between men's work and women's work still prevail in much of Bangladeshi society.

The concept of unpaid care work is still relatively new in Bangladesh and thus it may not be viewed as an issue deserving of national, regional and local resources. Making it relevant across several key sectors will be important. Furthermore, leveraging ActionAid's influence and respect in to obtain investments that will make a critical difference to target communities could help speed the pace of change.

### ***4.4. Improve Women's Participation and Leadership in Organizations***

There is a general lack of awareness among both men and women about groups, apart from mutual help and religious groups, in the target communities. It is not clear whether this is solely an issue of publicity and education or whether there is in fact a dearth of organizations for agricultural producers, civic causes, women's rights, microfinance, etc. Understandably, without awareness, the participation rates are also extremely low. ActionAid should independently confirm the widespread presence or absence of desired groups and partner with existing groups to execute awareness campaigns. If such groups do not exist, or are not widespread, ActionAid can provide guidance to help communities to start their own.

Simultaneously, ActionAid must deliver education to women about the benefits of joining these groups and speaking up at their meetings. More research may also be needed into the causes of discomfort associated with public speaking in this specific population, which was commonly reported by both genders. As women increase their participation and public speaking, it should organically lead to a greater female presence on community structures. In the meantime, however, ActionAid must encourage their community liaisons to actively seek out talented, interested and influential women and install them on those structures.

Very little data was available upon which to draw conclusions about reporting violence against women in this population. This naturally leads to the supposition that such violence is not discussed, and hence not reported or is under-reported. The fact that 98% of women responded that there is no Violence Against Women center in their village indicates that, at a minimum, more resources need to be developed in this area.

Asset ownership in the target communities is quite low among both men and women, with women more likely to claim sole ownership of the smaller assets such as chickens and poultry while men were more likely to own more productive assets such as agricultural land, house/other structures and means of transportation, each of which has potential for income. In terms of decision-making, women decided on their own about chicken and poultry but decisions on more potentially productive capital, such as agricultural land or livestock, were not easy to characterize.

The key informants claimed that men are still in control of most decisions but stated they feel that women should have greater control and more joint decisions should be taken. In baseline survey data, surprisingly, men often reported that their spouses made key decisions about use of assets (whether to sell, give, mortgage, etc. especially in relation to land, livestock and non-mechanized machinery) and on issues of borrowing (where to borrow, how to use the funds) except in decisions about borrowing from friends and relatives. Women did not report decision-making control as often as men assigned it to them in the survey, however, they did report being involved in the decision-making at least 40% of the time among most asset categories and 31-54% of the time with regard to borrowing decisions. Given women's actual or perceived role in borrowing decisions, it behooves ActionAid to educate women about comparing loan terms and to make women aware of predatory lending practices, particularly as was reported with regard to "co-operative" lenders who make high-interest loans during the lean work season. It may also be worthwhile to alert regional authorities to any unscrupulous loan practices that are observed in the target communities. Finally, more education on financial issues, especially borrowing and lending, may provide women with more confidence, allowing them to make better decisions, which could have a cascade effect by helping them earn more respect for their decisions from male household members and finally garnering a greater role for women in decision-making overall.

The country WEAI score for Bangladesh shows a reverse scenario where women (0.64) scored more than their male counterparts (0.54) with a large percentage of men (94%) not achieving empowerment. The country's Gender Parity Index (0.89) also signifies an upper extent of equality at 5DE where 89% of women are equally empowered as men in the household.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, although the challenges to gender equality and women's empowerment in Bangladesh are many, the study has provided significant data around four project outcomes to inform program design and implementation strategy around women's leadership, unpaid care work, changing policy and practice, and to a lesser extent, market access and agricultural production.

Mobility restrictions on women have a sizeable impact on women's access to resources, economic opportunity, and other tools of advancement and will thus be an important overarching consideration. Several topics uncovered by the study also warrant further investigation, namely the nature of agricultural production and importance of non-agricultural economic activities in Bangladeshi POWER communities, as well as ways to meet the urgent need for safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.

While changing behaviors to match professed attitudes towards reduction and redistribution of UCW will not be easy, there is perhaps an opportunity to leverage the support of two influential groups that often persist in a state of mutual distrust. If ActionAid can use advocacy to bring together secular women's rights organizations and religious organizations in common cause, it could result in a more expeditious and pronounced shift in gender roles and women's UCW burden.

ISG and the evaluation team have been honored to contribute to this project and are grateful for the insights and hospitality of all the respondents, key informants and duty bearers who participated in the study. We look forward to seeing POWER create meaningful and lasting advancements for the women of Bangladesh.



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## Annex 1: WEAI Calculations

### 5 Dimensions of Empowerment Score

The 5 dimensions of empowerment in the WEAI are calculated using a weighted average of individual empowerment scores, disempowerment scores, and dimensions in which individuals are disempowered. The equation is

$$5DE = H_e + H_n (A_a)$$

$H_e$  = The percent of women who are empowered

$H_n$  = The percent of women who are disempowered

$A_a$  = The percent of dimensions in which disempowered women have adequate achievement.

### Gender Parity Index Score

The Gender Parity Index is calculated according to the following equation

$$GPI = 1 - H_w (R_p)$$

$H_w$  = % of women without gender parity

$R_p$  = Average empowerment gap between men and women in the same household.

### Overall WEAI Score

$$(.9 * 5DE) + (.1 * GPI)$$

## Annex 2: Types of Crops Produced and Crop Categories by Gender

	Men	Women
<b>Crops produced (percentage of total)</b>		
Wheat	6.8	5.4
Maize	3.4	0.0
Rice	59.8	56.8
Other Cereal	0.9	2.7
Potato	1.7	0.0
Jute	12.0	8.1
Lentil(Moshur)	0.9	2.7
Chickling Vetch	0.9	0.0
Mustard	0.0	2.7
Onion	0.0	2.7
Pumpkin	0.9	5.4
Patal	0.9	2.7
Carrot	0.9	0.0
Cauliflower	0.9	0.0
Other Green Vegetables	0.9	0.0
Mango	0.0	2.7
Papaya	0.0	2.7
Litchis	0.9	0.0
Tobacco	6.0	0.0
Other By Product	0.9	0.0
Cows, Bulls, Heifers	0.0	2.7
Fish	1.7	2.7
Number of crops	117	37

### MAJOR CROP CATEGORIES (PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL)

	Men	Women
Major Cereals	70.9	64.9
Roots And Tubers	1.7	0.0
Fiber Crops	12.0	8.1
Pulses	1.7	2.7
Oil Seeds	0.0	2.7
Spices	0.0	2.7
Vegetables	4.3	8.1
Fruits	0.9	5.4
Other Crops	6.0	0.0
By Products	0.9	0.0
Livestock	1.7	5.4
Number of crops	117	37

### Annex 3: Average Yield for Chief Crop (Rice)

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
<b>Harvest</b>	605.4	1,151.8
<b>Area</b>	23.7	46.1
<b>Yield</b>	40.3	37.0
<b>Number of respondents</b>	70	20

## Annex 4: Fertilizer Use and Source

	Men	Women
Type of fertilizer used on plot		
Inorganic fertilizer	9.38	10.53
Organic fertilizer	9.38	15.79
Both	81.25	73.68
Number of plots	96	38
How did you learn about the fertilizers used?		
Ag Extension Services	19.42	30.23
Farmers Union	2.91	11.63
Other Farmers	65.05	51.16
Agro-Suppliers	9.71	6.98
Other	2.91	0.8
Number of plots	103	43
How did you choose the fertilizer? (Multiple responses possible)		
Cost	20.34	9.76
Availability	50.00	85.37
Info From Ag Extension	11.86	2.44
Whichever Is Better For Conservation	17.80	2.44
Number of responses	118	41
How did you obtain your fertilizer?		
I Bought The Fertilizer	44.66	16.28
I Made The Organic Fertilizer	6.80	6.98
I Bought Some And Made Some	48.54	76.74
Number of plots	103	43
Total cost of inorganic fertilizer used (Bangladeshi Taka)	1,871.79	894.59
Number of plots	94	94
Total cost of organic fertilizer used (Bangladeshi Taka)	1,005.01	565.43
Number of plots	87	35