

POWER **in** PEOPLE

NEWSLETTER Quarter 1, 2017



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Foreword



Dear Readers,

Welcome to this year's first Issue of the ActionAid Rwanda News Letter that is produced on a Quarterly basis. 2016 was a year of hard work by the team together with our partners and we do have a lot to show for our hard work. One of the major milestones we celebrated last year was transitioning from a country program to an Associate. Last year AAR participated in the campaign for Africa Raising Movement which seeks to shape the Africa we want as stated in the Agenda 2063. We also engaged at the 27th AU Summit on key issues affecting citizens of Africa including child marriage, women access to land and natural resources etc. In the year 2016, ActionAid Rwanda managed to launch Kibangu Early Childhood Development Center (ECD) in Gisagara District. Two new projects were started at AAR last year; these include the SCAB project funded by the European Union and the POWER project funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We do have a lot to celebrate and we shall continue to share with you all that's going on within AAR through our Quarterly Newsletter and our new product; the bi weekly NewsFlash that will be out every two weeks.

The AAR team hit the ground since the beginning of the year and have been busy implementing as you will see the several success stories in this issue. At the beginning of this year, AAR put up a baby room facility and a play space for crawling children. This facility caters for AAR working mothers who are at times forced to bring their children to work due to several unforeseen circumstances. You will read more about that in this issue too. AAR joined the rest of the world to celebrate International Women's Day from all AAR Local Rights Programs. We were also honoured to have the Deputy Dutch Ambassador, Pieter Doste, and visit AAR's Power Project.

Your views, ideas, questions and contributions are very much valued so please feel free to share them with us. We look forward to deepening our linkages with you. Enjoy reading!

In solidarity,
Josephine Irene Uwamariya,
Country Director, ActionAid Rwanda



Baby Room Facility thrills AAR Staff



At the beginning of this year, the long awaited baby room facility was finally put in place at ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) office. AAR staff were very much elated to have such a facility at the work place that comes in handy for working mothers.

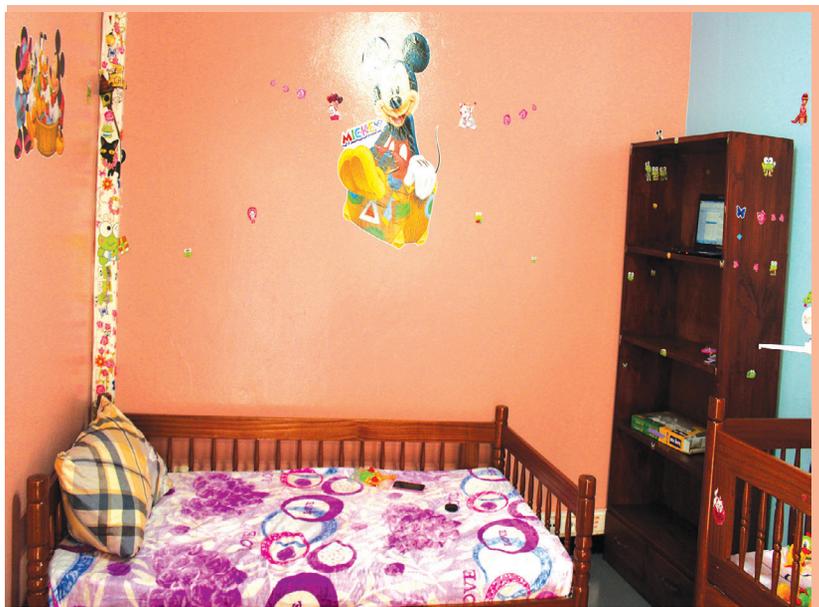
This facility was put in place to facilitate AAR mothers to be able to perform their duties without destruction or worrying about their babies as well as promote the rights of children to breastfeed six months exclusively and under the care of their mothers, according to Clare Katwesigye, the AAR Women's Rights & Advocacy Coordinator.

Leopoldine Uwizeyimana, a mother of a 1 year old and an IT Coordinator at AAR, said that the baby's room was very much needed and has made her life easy thus reducing stress.

"I no longer have to worry when my baby is sick. I can now bring him to work with me and keep him monitored in the baby room facility. I work comfortably and ensure that he takes his medication as prescribed and even breastfeed him exclusively without me having to make the long trip to and from home. I am glad that ActionAid Rwanda goes the extra mile to support working mothers and children through the establishment of such a facility," she added.



"ActionAid Rwanda observes the rights of children and mothers. We therefore found it important to put into consideration a baby's room to facilitate the working mothers to be close to their babies instead of moving long distances to go and breast feed while at work. This also helps in the psychological status of the working mothers being stable and comfortable at work," stated Katwesigye.



Chris Kinyanjui, ActionAid Deputy CEO commends Right holders' achievements



ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) had the honor and pleasure of hosting Chris Kinyanjui, the ActionAid Deputy Chief Executive Officer, who visited early this year. During his visit, Chris joined the AAR Board Members during a retreat and supported with their capacity building. Chris and the AAR board members had a fruitful field visit too.

During his visit, Kinyanjui supported in self-assessment of the board members. He visited Nyanza Local Right Program and the POWER project right holders.



During his field visit, Kinyanjui visited a green banana plantation, biogas and water tanks that were given by the POWER project to reduce Unpaid Care Work. He interacted with Right holders and commended them for their achievements. He further challenged them to extend the successes to other women in the community.



International Women's Day Celebration

The ActionAid Rwanda team celebrated Women's day in all the Local Rights Programs (LRPs) where it is based in 5 districts. The staff at Action Aid Rwanda team wore red in solidarity with the women on strike.



AAR staff holding placards with messages of advocacy of women's rights

AAR staff carried out various pre and post activities in honor of IWD which including exhibitions rural women/right holders' agriculture products. Women also shared their testimonies of empowerment and how their lives have been transformed through the support of ActionAid Rwanda.

However, it was also a very good moment and a platform for advocacy on women's rights issues on Unpaid Care Work, Gender Based Violence, Teenage pregnancies & lack of Gender Responsive facilities in their communities. They also presented their advocacy messages to the Leaders present for action.



Coltilda Mukacyaka, advocating for Gender responsive facilities



AAR staff during the IWD Celebration in Murundi LRP

Josephine Uwamariya, the ActionAid Rwanda Country Director also stood in solidarity with the women strike calling for people to observe the dignity of all women.



AAR Country Director calling for the dignity of every woman



Photo Highlights of the IWD Celebration from the different sectors

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PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS OF THE IWD CELEBRATION FROM DIFFERENT SECTORS



Rural women farmers exhibiting their agricultural products during IWD celebrations



AAR Staff & Partners marching and singing during IWD in Nyanza LRP

Right holders acting a short skit during the IWD celebration in Gisagara LRP



A right holder sharing her testimony on how she was empowered by AAR



atwigireho Cooperative showcasing some of their agricultural products

3 WOMEN FARMERS TRAIN THOUSANDS

The number of cooperatives is currently budding every day for several good causes but with little capacity building and skills to ensure the cooperatives are effective, efficient and meeting their goals and purpose. ActionAid Rwanda alone supports over 280 cooperatives. There is a common saying that goes, "Educate women and their community will prosper. Deny them education and the world will suffer." Three women farmers have proven that this quote is spot-on.

However three ambitious and enthusiastic women farmers who benefited from capacity building trainings organised by the European Union funded project (SCAB) recently took it upon themselves to train over 1,000 other farmers in a period of just three months, in Muko sector, Musanze district.

over 18 other cooperatives that are out of our network, though in the sector where we work from. We want to see them grow so we won't leave them until they attain the required standards," she added.

Hillaria stated that they trained the other farmers on cooperative establishment, management and attaining legal registration.

The 'three disciples', as they call themselves, have gone beyond the network to reach other cooperatives including farming groups and associations. Hillaria and the other two farmers managed to reach over 1000 farmers in a span of three months by inviting two people (president and facilitator) from each cooperative, train them for at least three days and then equip them to go hold the same training in their cooperatives.



The three women farmers, who are members of the 'Imboni Mwi'terambere Muko' women network, had benefited from trainings in cooperative management, rules & regulations setting up a cooperative and the legal registration process among others.

According to Hillaria Mujawamungu, the President of Imboni Mwi'terambere Muko network her and two other women farmers decided to train several other farmers through their cooperatives.

"We call ourselves the three disciples. We have equipped

"We often times meet at the cell offices and sit under the tree then hold trainings for the cooperative presidents and facilitators then send them off to train the members of their cooperatives. That is how we have managed to effectively reach such a huge number," added Hillaria.

According to Emmanuel Kwizera, the SCAB (Strengthening CSO capacity in Promoting Sustainable Agriculture Policies and citizen's participatory Budgeting) Project Manager, they are currently working with 16 women networks that are in existence.

"We hope to create 3-4 more networks through this project and at least 763 cooperatives will have directly benefited by the end of the project. We empower cooperatives through

trainings on power relations, legal registration, strategic planning and developing 5-years strategic plans, advocacy and campaign. They are also empowered to analyse government policies and to have inputs, budgeting and influencing duty bearers for better policies," noted Kwizera.

All this has been made possible through the support and funding of the European Union who are funding the three year SCAB project that is in partnership with CLADHO and CCOAIB.

Dutch Deputy Ambassador applauds efforts of FLOW II Right holders



Pieter Doste, the Dutch Deputy Ambassador and Head of Development Cooperation of the Dutch Embassy in Rwanda commended the work of the right holders based in Nyanza district, supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was during his recent field visit to Batwigireho Cooperative in Nyanza district supported by FLOW (Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women) Programme under ActionAid Rwanda (AAR). This cooperative is made up of 30 right holders/women farmers who are mainly engaged in banana cultivation.

The Dutch Deputy Ambassador visited a healthy banana plantation that belongs to the Batwigireho Cooperative members, where he interacted with the women farmers

and learned a lot about banana planting. Immaculee Mukakabanza, a member of the cooperative took Pieter around the Banana plantation explaining the whole banana seedlings multiplication and planting process. He thanked the women farmers for the great work they are doing within the cooperative and through their farming activities.

“I am very impressed by the job you are doing. The work you are doing is tremendous and I will definitely share your stories of change with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” said Pieter Doste.

One of the challenges the women farmers raised is lack of profitable market for their agricultural



“We managed to get land for farmer field schools and started planting bananas on consolidated land in our own farms. We now plant high yielding clean bananas. With the income from our bananas we have managed to buy a cow and built biogas using cow dung. Through the planting of bananas, we are now able to save money and get loans from our savings scheme to engage in other income productive activities. We support each other to get mutuelle (health insurance). We are happy that we

are now have access to finances,” she added.

She stated that the cooperative keeps their savings and profits in the SACCO bank where they have accounts.

produce. Pieter advised them to stop selling their harvest on individual level and he called upon them to put their produce together to have enough production and always find a day to take it to the market for sale.

Josephine Uwamariya, the ActionAid Rwanda Country Director thanked the Deputy Dutch Ambassador and the Dutch government for their support.

“We are glad to be supported by the kingdom of the Netherlands and we are committed to continue advocating for recognition, reduction, redistribution and alternatives of Unpaid Care Work for the empowerment and development of women,” noted Uwamariya.

She further stated that market access is one of the priorities of phase two of the FLOW II Project, all in a bid to reduce Unpaid Care Work and provide market alternatives for sustainability.

Philomena Mukaburezi, the president of the cooperative recounted how they used to work in disorganization with no coordination at all which would lead to low yields. In 2013 they formed a group and AAR in partnership with Faith Victory Association (FVA) through the FLOW project, built their capacity through training them on banana cultivation, supported them with four farmer field schools and initial banana seedlings and organic manure.



FLOW II Programme has a target of empowering 6,000 women smallholder farmers to address challenges they face as a result of engaging in Unpaid Care Work which hinders their ability to participate equally in the economy and the society as well as adopt sustainable agricultural practices.

School dropping out still a huge challenge-Education Representative



Children dropping out of school is still a big challenge according to Jean Damascene Uyilingiye, the Education Representative of Murundi sector, Karongi district.

He urged parents to take their children to school in order to secure a bright future for them that will benefit children, parents and the community. This call was made during a sensitization meeting on child school dropping out in Murundi sector, Karongi district, organized by Actionaid Rwanda.

“If the parents keep thinking that it’s for the benefit of the government for the children to go to school, then we will still our a problem in education. Let’s take ownership as parents as play our part in ensuring that our children have an education. Children, don’t be fooled by people who lie to you that you should quit school so they can get you fine jobs in town,” Damascene advised.

Perepetua Mugiraneza, a parent with children at Murehe school, Murundi sector noted that poverty is still a big challenge and it’s one of the reasons kids drop out of school and start doing odd jobs to earn some earn money to meet their basic needs.

Mugiraneza also called upon local authorities to punish people who take kids out of school and give them jobs, promising them money and a good life.

Grace Irasubiza, a primary 6 pupil of Mujojo primary school advised other children not to drop out of school so they can enjoy the befits of education in future.

“I love going to school because we learn a lot of great things and get knowledge. Going to school even gives me hope that I will have a bright future and will not live in poverty. I ask all other children not to drop out of school and not to accept people who trick them to live school for jobs or marriage,” said Irasubiza.

Marie Nyirawinjeri, a primary pupil based in Murundi sector too thanked Action Aid for the support they give to school going children and for always raising awareness, encouraging children to stay in school.



Gitesi Community now Role Models in producing the best quality of bananas

Malnutrition, hunger and poverty were key issues due to low agriculture production in Gitesi sector, Karongi district. ActionAid Rwanda then started sensitising people in that community about new farming methods in order to improve agriculture productivity and make it sustainable.

Banana(Matooke) was the main food crop grown in Gitesi however it wouldn't yield much and therefore would produce low quality bananas. ActionAid Rwanda then continues supporting this community with trainings and financial support to improve agriculture.

Through Action Aid Rwanda's support, the community formed groups and put to use the skills they learned through the various trainings. They were able to buy land, improved seeds and organic manure then starts growing bananas.



They now harvest good quality bananas with a bunch at 70 kilograms which was previously 15 kilograms or even less. They are now role models in banana growing and are passing on the lessons to other communities. Hunger, malnutrition and poverty are now rapidly fading away.



ActionAid Rwanda organizes Refresher Training for Staff



efforts, processes and systems towards increasing income. Staff were also equipped with knowledge in Finance and Procurement among other topics.

Participants learnt about proposal writing and development, resource mobilization, financial management, financial controls, internal control systems and procurement.

Jules Nsabuwera, an Intern in the Fundraising Department hailed ActionAid Rwanda for giving such an opportunity to staff and interns to benefit from such trainings as well as get a chance to practice what they learn through intern placement at the organization.

“I have learned a lot as an Intern in the Fundraising Department but am so glad that I not only get to learn on the job but offered more trainings which are equipping me with more knowledge. I didn’t know about Fundraising beyond raising funds but now am confident with more knowledge in fundraisings and am ready to put it into practice,” said Nsabuwera.

He called upon other organizations and Institutions to build staff capacity and always consider Interns so they can be prepared for the careers awaiting them.

Capacity building is key for ActionAid Rwanda. Staff at ActionAid Rwanda recently had three-day Fundraising & Finance Refresher training. This training was held to provide capacity building for members of the resource mobilization committee on fundraising and proposal development, and reviewing the Country Program



JOSEPHINE UWAMARIYA MARKS 7 YEARS AS ACTIONAID RWANDA COUNTRY DIRECTOR



When she joined ActionAid Rwanda in March 2010, Miss Josephine Uwamariya's assignment was to ensure that she brings the country program back on track because it had been categorized as one of the high risk countries due to low implementation, absence at community level since all staff were based in Kigali. Staff used to go to

communities as visitors and it was hard to manage the high cost that was associated with the high centrally based staff. There wasn't any strategic focus as ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) was just driven by the International strategy. AAR was aligning to that one without having a strategy for the country program.

Those areas had to be dealt with. It required engagement with staff and staff impression was that they had tried and it wasn't possible to change, but it required resilience too. In 2011, a decision was taken to do a restructuring to ensure that it responds to the actual needs of the communities. The new team and the others realized this was the way to go to strengthen the country program.

When Uwamariya joined, a process was undertaken of having policies updated but also developing a strategy. That is when a national level external review which provided guidance on how to develop and focus on the issues that



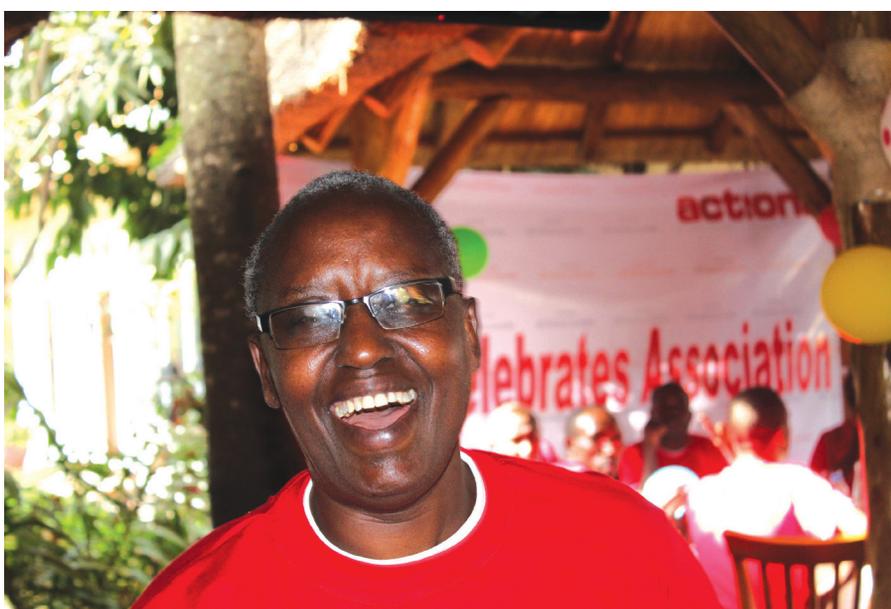
were upcoming; that is when a strategy was developed too. During that strategy development, having gone through restructuring, that is when internationalization and undertaking the membership development was considered with Miss Uwamariya serving as the Country Director.

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In 2013 after the approval of AAR's strategy, that is when the journey setting milestones of when, to achieve what was concretized! September 2013 is when a self-assessment of AAR was done; a new tool (membership development plan) had been developed so AAR was the first to test it.



Under the strong leadership of Miss Uwamariya, the board members & the AAR Senior Management team hit the ground immediately and developed the constitution, governance manual and applied to Rwanda Governance Board for registration which was approved in January 2016. When approval was received, the International Review Team was already constituted. And on 23rd June 2016 during the Assembly in Maputo, Rwanda was unanimously approved as an Associate. ActionAid Rwanda has grown tremendously and achieved under the guidance and management of Miss Josephine Uwamariya.

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS : ACTIONAID RWANDA 2016 RETREAT



