

Power People

NEWSLETTER AUGUST, 2016

NOT FOR SALE



**AAR celebrates it's newly
attained ASSOCIATE status**

act:onaid

Power in People

NEWS LETTER



AUGUST ISSUE 2016

ActionAid Rwanda celebrates a major milestone-becoming Associate

Inside. Power in People

Action Aid Rwanda gains 'ASSOCIATE' status	3	Strengthening CSOs in Agriculture policy and Budgeting Project kicks off	8
Australian Member of Parliament, Helen Morton, hails AAR for fighting GBV through cooperatives	4	AA Rwanda staff geared up for the EU/SCAB project	9
Hillaria's hilarious story of recovery from poverty and ignorance	5	Strengthening anti-GBV clubs in Ruheru-based schools	10
Philomena living happily ever after	6	POWER project gives Nyanza women a new lease of life	11
Q & A with AAR Finance Manager	7	Interview with AAR Country Director	12 & 13
		AAR Picture highlights	14

Executive Producer **ActionAid Rwanda** Managing Editor **James Butare**
Content Developer **Maria Kaitesi** Design **AAR Communications Officer**

ActionAid Rwanda gains 'ASSOCIATE' status



AAR staff raise flags during the celebration



AAR Country Director and staff cut cake in celebration of becoming an ASSOCIATE

ActionAid, Rwanda recently moved from being a Country Program to an Associate and is now a member of the ActionAid Federation. This milestone achievement was announced on 23-06-2016 during the Annual Directors' Forum & General Assembly in Maputo.

ActionAid Rwanda staff were elated upon receiving the wonderful news of being approved to be an ASSOCIATE. This latest development comes months after an international review team was constituted to review progress of the Membership Development Plan targets and recommend whether AA Rwanda should progress to Association, based on the already set out MDP criteria; and to contribute to AA Rwanda's continuous improvement, celebrate its successes as well as identify and work on possible areas of development beyond the criteria for Association.

Although AA Rwanda was just approved of late, it is a strong brand in Rwanda and one of the country offices that does not have any highlighted red/high risk areas overall, with finance inclusive.



What does this mean to ActionAid Rwanda?

Having become an Associate, AAR will be able to participate in the decision making and direction of the Organisation at an international level. AAR will now have national Identity and the ability to make own strategic orientations. This also means open financial sources and being to do internal fundraising.

As an Associate, AAR will also be changing contracts from the International status to National status employees. This also means more stability as the opportunity may improve on the financial muscle of AAR Rwanda. With our new status, expect more active participation at federation level. Action Aid Rwanda will now be registered as a national Non-Governmental organisation, and with ActionAid Federation member status.

Power in People

NEWS LETTER

Australian Member of Parliament, Helen Morton, hails AAR for fighting GBV through cooperatives



Helen Morton, Australian Member of Parliament during a visit in Nyanza

During her recent visit to Action Aid Rwanda's Nyanza Local Right Program, Australian Member of Parliament Helen Morton was impressed with how women who were formerly subjected to domestic and gender based violence had been transformed after joining cooperatives. She applauded Actionaid for this initiative.

The Member of Parliament who was in the company of her husband Alan visited Rwabicuma Childhood Development Center and Mpore Dukunde Inzuki cooperative in Nyanza Local Right Program. This cooperative is made up of 30 women who were formerly victims of Gender Based Violence.

During her visit, Helen noted that she learned a lot about how Action Aid Rwanda plays an important role in empowering women and fighting for women rights. She said that gender based violence is still a problem in Australia too and expressed interest in learning from Action Aid Rwanda about how they deal with this through cooperatives.

"Women are still isolated when facing gender based violence in my country. In my country women are helped at an individual level. I like the fact that you use the cooperative approach in solving gender based violence issues. I would like to share this approach back in Australia," she observed.

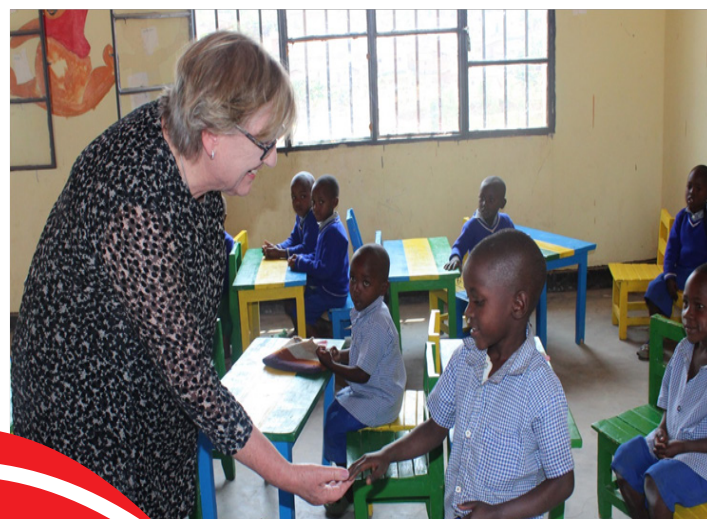
Marie Grace Mukashema, a member and president of Mpore Dukundi Inzuki Cooperative noted that this cooperative mainly practices apiculture (bee keeping) but now have a soya plantation as well. Marie Grace explained to the visitors how all the women in this cooperative were all victims of gender based violence and lived wretched lives.

"We all have in common that united us but made us stronger as we sought for a solution together as a cooperative through the support of Action-Aid Rwanda. We had suffered abuse from our husbands and other family members. We were sad, tired and miserable until we saw the light at the end of the tunnel through AAR. Before we got together into the cooperative our lives were swamped in poverty hopelessness and misery. We didn't even know our rights. Through the cooperative, Actionaid equipped us with knowledge and taught us our rights and gradually we started being aware of our rights and claiming them," she stated.

She added that AAR taught them not only about their rights but also how to earn a living through teaching them and helping them income generating activities such as beekeeping.

ActionAid bought the cooperative land of five million for different farming activities including the purchase of modern and traditional bee hives. Every woman in the cooperative was also given a cow which helps provide them with milk and manure to apply in the garden which had an effect of boosting yields per unit area. The women regained their self-esteem, and they now know their rights. All the women in the cooperative also have their own bank and savings accounts.

Marie Grace, on behalf of the other women in the cooperative thanked Action Aid for the continued support and empowerment. She also thanked Helen Morton and her husband Alan for the visit. She said that the cooperative has brought joy into their lives and therefore they will keep on reaching out to other people who are victims of GBV to help them overcome it.



Hillaria's hilarious story of recovery from poverty and ignorance



Hillaria Mujawamungu is the president of Hungukirwa Muko Cooperative, supported by Big Lottery Fund. She is a happy mother of four children and a leader at sector level. Life is good and it is written all over her face. However, it didn't come all easy. She started from the bottom and was living in self-pity. She had no source of income and was just a sad ignorant woman with no single skill, not even in agriculture yet her family depended on substance farming.

All hope was withered until she joined other women and benefitted from several trainings that empowered her and changed her life.

It all started with trainings organized by Public Financing in Agriculture, a former project that was initiated by AAIR and funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Over 1300 women were trained alongside Hillaria whose journey to triumph started then.

ActionAid Rwanda and Faith Victory Association gave her and other women land and they built storage houses and a cold room where they put fruits and vegetables.

Hillaria explained that through the various trainings and coming together in solidarity with other women to hold each other's hand, they have all developed mentally, physically and financially. Women are no longer living in isolation and can now confidently speak for themselves. They hardly shared their problems but can now freely and confidently share with others. Most of the problems they faced were due to the biting poverty, whereby it was even hard to get a meal. Hillaria and other women would entirely depend on their husbands as they couldn't afford anything on their own. Today, they support the husbands and also take part

to fend for their households according to Hillaria.

"I was always fighting with my husband as he didn't want me to work. He always retorted that no woman works for money. Whenever I would go to meetings with other women, he wouldn't let me sleep in the house. He just wanted me to sit at home yet he wasn't even able to fend for us all on his own," she noted.

Many of the other women in her circle share an experience similar to Hillaria's, whereby their husbands could hardly understand why women would want to work yet ideally they were just supposed to stay home and attend to home duties. It was very hard to change their perception although noticeable progress has been made. The men were at first unhappy whenever women would start working and getting involved in different development and empowerment activities. They perceived it as competition or women wanting to become superior over them.

Hillaria's face lights up beaming with joy as she explains how the men have finally understood the need for women to work and support their families as well. The women also no longer have to entirely depend on their husbands as they can also earn a living, "this too has reduced conflicts of couples especially over money. For instance, we would ask our husbands to give us money for things like salt or clothes (igitenge) and they would instead get furious. But now we can meet most of the needs without asking them but instead support them. They have embraced this and are now proud of us," Hillaria explained.

Like many other women Hillaria was left behind. She was living in despair and ignorance. She didn't have goals in life. She would just wait on the husband. He wasn't happy too! Hillaria was empowered through Actionaid projects including the IFS Muko project that is being funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Today she is the president of Hungukwira cooperative that comprises of 30 women. Her family no longer has to miss some meals since her husband is now cooperative and lets her work to support the family.

Hillaria managed to start up a maize plantation together with other members of the cooperative after being trained in modern farming. Through the Big Lottery Fund support, they managed to get a milling machine.

Hillaria alongside her colleagues produce maize flour that is well packaged and branded, which they sell to different outlets. She can now afford to pay school fees for her children, health insurance, food and buy her own clothing. She calls upon other women to work in solidarity with other women, join cooperatives, gain skills and work hard without waiting for their husbands.

Philomena living happily ever after

40 year old Philomine Nyirasinamenye, a mother of four children did not believe a woman can be an entrepreneur. She had no idea about how to earn a living. All she knew was to dig but even then, she was only familiar with the old and poor farming practices. So all the farming she did was to get a day's meal for her family and wait on God for other needs. Much as she had access to free education, she couldn't afford the scholastic materials for her children.

Her children weren't happy and their grades were wanting mainly because they lacked scholastic materials and other life's basic needs.

Philomine stopped living in ignorance when she joined Twitezeli Mbere Cooperative that comprises of 30 women all from Muko sector in Musanze district. Through funding from Big Lottery Fund with support from Action Aid Rwanda (AAR) and Faith Victory Association (FVA), the cooperative has improved Philomene's life and that of the other women.

"My life and that of other women has been transformed. We have now learnt how to earn a living and support our families. It's a good feeling being able to meet our own needs and support our husbands in fending for the family. As a cooperative, we earn atleast rwf 450,000 per month and even have savings of our own," she added.

She added that through the support of Big Lottery Fund, AAR and FVA, her and fellow members of the cooperative were given 600 kgs of maize seeds, 600 kgs of Irish potatoes for planting, 1000 chickens, 10 pigs and 10 goats. Through this support, Philomena and the other women were able to increase their food productivity and income. "We started with only three gardens but now have over eight of them and have planted on over three hectares of land. In a period of 3 months, we saved over Rwf 500,000 from only Irish potatoes. We have no doubt that the future is bright," the mother four noted happily.

Philomena mentioned that families are now stable unlike before as the men are now happy to see women work and contribute to the needs of their families. Marcelina Uzamukunda, another member of the cooperative expressed her gratitude and hailed Big Lottery, AAR and FVA for uplifting women who were once left behind. "We had low self-esteem, fear and did not believe in our lives. We didn't know we would someday be confident, share ideas and influence change for the good of the community. We have grown in knowledge, wealth and health," she explained.

Today, all the women in that cooperative are always eager to share their life's stories of how far they've come. Despite all the accomplishments recorded, challenges still remain. Lack of enough market for their products is a big impediment to their operations urging that they needed more financial support and market for their products.

Philomena also points out the need to purchase more land so they can expand their farming and agriculture activities. Philomena who grows Irish potatoes hopes to expand and sells them in Kigali in the near future. This is one of her goals!

Edward Nsabimana, the Assistant Project Manager of Improved Food security and Economic Opportunities for Women farmers and families Muko mentioned that initially they had 45 hectares of land but because of more funds, the cooperative has 150 hectares which will double the Irish potato production.

Musanze district is famous for commercial Irish potato farming. Besides being a popular meal for many Rwandans, Irish potatoes too are one of the six priority crops in Rwanda too according to the Crop Intensification Program.

This cooperative started in 2013 with insufficient funds especially in investing in land acquisition and enough seeds. This was addressed when ActionAid came in and provided financial support. Through the Big Lottery Fund, the cooperative was given 300kgs of fertilizers, 600kgs of seeds and just last year alone, the 1.5 tones of Irish potatoes were harvested. This provided more seeds while the rest was sold.

AAR BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ITS STAFF MEMBERS

act:onaid



AAR Finance Manager, Innocent Nshyimiimana speaking at a recent Stakeholders meeting

Among the many milestones we are celebrating at Action Aid International Rwanda (AAR), includes AA Rwanda Finance Manager completing a course in Certified Public Accounting. He is now among the very few qualified Certified Public Accountant in Rwanda. We caught up with him to share a little bit of this journey and he managed to achieve this. Below is what he had to say;

1.What is CPA course all about?

CPA stands for Certified Public Accountant. It is the title given to a qualified accountant in the English speaking countries.

2.What does it mean to you having completed this course and being a certified Accountant?

Having completed this course means a lot to me. As someone who is highly skilled and technically capable, I will contribute much to the achievement of the Action aid goals by providing timely, accurate and complete information to support other managers in their daily decision making decisions.

3.For how long was the course and how did you manage with your busy work schedule and studying for this course? How would you juggle the two (work and school)?

I did it within a period of 3 years. The program consists of 18 papers divided into 3 parts of 2 sections each. The examination is done twice a year; that

is in June and December. One cannot move to the next part before passing all papers in the lower part. The minimum period to complete the courses is 4.5 because each part requires 18 months of full time study. Commitment, knowing what I want, and being a good time manager is what led to my success otherwise it is not easy to pursue CPA together with the big work load.

4.What's the estimate number of people in Rwanda who have this certificate?

The estimated number of Rwandans CPA is like 150 but few of them are ICPAR members.

5.Why do you think there are very few people with this certificate?

I think the reason behind is the examination is rigorous and standards are very high and failure is also high leading to desertion by many of students before completion.

6.What is your advice for people who want to pursue this course?

My advice is just to be fearless and have the confidence in you.

7.What would you tell to those who want to study but think it's impossible to study while working as well?

The key to succeed is just to be committed and be a good time Manager.

8.Please add any other information you deem necessary regarding this achievement.

I express thanks to ActionAid Rwanda Management in general and it's Country Director: Josephine UWAMARIYA in particular for sponsoring my CPA study because without AAR financial support, my dreams would have not become a reality.

Power in People

NEWS LETTER

Strengthening CSOs in Agriculture Policy and Participatory Budgeting project kicks off



SCAB/EU staff and partners during a group discussion at the inception launch

Strengthening CSO in Agriculture Policy and participatory Budgeting (SCAB) project Funded by the European Union is a new project that will be implemented by ActionAid International Rwanda together with its partners CCOAIB and CLADHO. This is a capacity building project targeting Civil Society Organizations(CSOs)& Community Based Organizations(CBOs) that are in agriculture to participate in agriculture policy shaping, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and advocate for changes where necessary.

The goal for this project is to support CSOs and give them the capacity to engage in agriculture policy shaping and public accountability to ensure sustainable food security in Rwanda. The objective is to strengthen CSOs capacities in 8 districts to play their roles in agriculture policy shaping and in budget planning processes. The 8 districts include Kamonyi, Gakenke, Muhanga, Musanze, Karongi, Nyaruguru, Nyanza and Gisagara.

Edward Karangwa, the SCAB Project Manager observed that this is a capacity building project targeting CSOs & CBO that are in agriculture to participate in agriculture policy shaping , implementation , monitoring and evaluation and advocate for changes where necessary.

By the end of this project we want to have achieved the project goal through supporting CSOs and CBOs to have the capacity to engage in agriculture policy shaping and public accountability to ensure sustainable food security in Rwanda. The project is meant to promote citizen participation in understanding their roles and responsibility in government development programs to ensure they are part and parcel of their own development,” stated Edward.

The project duration is 36 months and it started 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. The budget for this project is 800, 000 euros, with 600,000 euros being a grant from the EU and 200,000 euros co-fund from Action Aid Rwanda. So far, there has been two inception workshops; one for the staff and another for the partners, introducing them to the project.

AAIR has worked on a similar project before known as Public financing for Agriculture meant to advocate for increased investment for agriculture whereas SCAB builds the capacity of CSOs to participate in agriculture budget planning process to eventually influence agriculture policy shaping or advocate for policy changes.

AA Rwanda staff geared up for the EU/SCAB project



AAR staff and facilitators pose for a group photo during the project inception

ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) recently took on a new project titled Strengthening CSOs in Agriculture Policy and participatory Budgeting (SCAB) funded by the European Commission. In a bid to wholly understand the requirements of the project, AAR staff undertook a 3 day training that was conducted by Catherine Rossides, AAI (IS) Grants and Compliance Officer and Bisrat Alemu (IS Regional Partnerships Coordinator).

The trainers took staff through a series of trainings about various topics including the project structure, contracts and formal agreements among many others. According to Edward Karangwa, the Project Manager, the training helped to build confidence and skills of the ActionAid project management team to meet EU donor contract terms and conditions when implementing the project.

He noted that some of the objectives included understanding the main roles and responsibilities assigned to different staff members and strengthening risk management and accountability processes.

"I believe that through the inception training, staff have increased their confidence to ensure compliance with European Commission requirements including those relating to financial eligibility, procurement, supporting documentation and reporting. AAR staff have also upgraded their knowledge of the critical terms and conditions in the donor contract," said Karangwa.

Through the training also, staff were able to fully understand the project objectives, scope and deliverables as well as understanding what is expected from them in order to successfully meet the project goals and objectives. Through this training staff also understood who plays what role in grant and risk management.

The facilitators took staff through an overview of the European Commission as a donor, donor relationship management and how to reinforce relationships with the donor outside of the contract requirements the donor relationship.

During the Inception training, a team from the European Union delegation attended and shared what it requires to effectively implement a European Union Funded project. The team urged AAR staff to always consult the European Union (EU) in case they are unsure of anything regarding the project and share timely reports. They also called upon AAR staff to always update the EU and involve them in the project such as inviting them to field visits and events held regarding the project. They called upon AAR staff to ensure visibility of all project activities as it's a key requirement from the donor.

Parfait Uwonkunda, the AAR Ruheru Acting Local Rights Program Manager, observes that the inception workshop was very beneficial for her as it was an opportunity for her to clearly understand her role in the project.

"Through the inception training I was able to learn more about the EU/SCAB project that Action Aid Rwanda recently embarked on. I now clearly understand the project management structure and my role in this project as an AAR staff and LRP Manager," Parfait added.

Parfait further noted that there is a lot she didn't know about the project expectations that she learned through the training.

Protogene Mugisha, the AAR Program Quality Coordinator emphasized that there is need for continuous capacity building.

"Continuous capacity building is still very key especially in relation to the log frame and M & E processes in general," he noted.

The SCAB/EU project started on 1st April 2016. The project duration is 36 months and it will be ending on 31st March 2017. The budget for this project is 800,000 euros, with 600,000 euros being a grant from the European Union and 200,000 euros, a co-fund from Action Aid Rwanda. So far, there has been two inception workshops; one for the staff and another for the partners, introducing them to the project.

AAR has worked on a similar project before known as Public financing for Agriculture (PFA) meant to advocate for increased investment for agriculture whereas SCAB builds the capacity of CSOs to participate in agriculture budget planning process to eventually influence agriculture policy shaping or advocate for policy changes.



AAR staff during a group discussion at the inception launch

Power in People

NEWS LETTER

Strengthening anti-GBV clubs in Ruheru-based schools



Children from Ruheru sector after a GBV meeting

10 year old Samuel Nsengiyaremye is a member of the Gender Based Violence (GBV) club at his school. He is in Primary four at EP Gahotora. Radiating with joy, Samuel said he was proud to have been part of the discussions about GBV.

“I didn’t know much about GBV but now I have gained knowledge and I will take lead against GBV in and out of school. I will be telling other students about GBV too. I will also be wearing my t-shirt with a message against GBV so other people can see it and learn that GBV is bad,” Nsengiyaremye noted. ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) also supported this school GBV club with materials such as books and stickers with messages about GBV. The GBV club was also given a book that will keep records of GBV cases from the school how they have been solved and the way forward.

Nsengiyaremye also said that other students were also given t-shirts with messages against GBV that they will always wear especially during activities of the GBV club. There are also stickers in the classes so students may also be reminded about GBV and their role in fighting it.

Previously, there were so many GBV cases in Ruheru sector; surprisingly even in schools according

to Parfaite Uwonkunda, the Acting Local Right Program Manager of Ruheru.

Children were also affected through their parents who would commit GBV, she added.

“Many women were beaten by their husbands and have no control over resources which also affected their children in one way or the other. In some schools in Ruheru also, there are so many game facilities for only boys, leaving out the girls. Girls couldn’t also attend school when in their menstrual periods because they were afraid of being laughed at,” she explains.

Uwonkunda further observes that Action Aid Rwanda focuses on fighting GBV, promoting children rights and constructing classrooms to facilitate both boys and girls to study in a conducive environment. AA Rwanda too has established safe rooms for girls to be comfortably attend school even during that time of the month. AAIR also works closely with GBV clubs in schools and trains them and their teachers.

Ruheru is one of the areas with high cases of Gender Based Violence. It’s in this regard that Action Aid Rwanda decided to work with different clubs to curb the GBV issue.

In collaboration with the Ruheru community, ActionAid Rwanda organized an activity aimed at strengthening anti-GBV clubs in schools. Through ActionAid Rwanda support, the clubs will be able to know what GBV is, identify GBV cases and reporting on GBV.

The clubs meetings are an opportunity for the children to interact, ask questions and learn more about gender based violence in school and other topics such as prevention and protection against HIV/AIDS, sexual reproductive health rights.

So far, Action Aid Rwanda is working with 6 schools in Ruheru sector to empower the anti GBV clubs and empower the children with knowledge in a bid to curb and prevent Gender Based Violence. AA Rwanda plans to reach out to a bigger number of students thus reinforcing their knowledge on GBV.

POWER project gives Nyanza women a new lease of life



Josephine Mukamasabo, one of the right holders from Nyanza District after receiving a cow

Solange Umutesi, the Nyanza Vice Mayor In charge of Social Affairs expressed her gratitude towards ActionAid Rwanda, Faith Victory Association and the POWER Project for supporting the GIR'INKA government initiative by supporting the women with cows. She noted that cows are a sign of friendship and richness, and called upon AAR and FVA to continue the good deeds through the POWER project.

30 women from Nyanza district were recently supported with 30 cows from Action Aid Rwanda's POWER (Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights) project, formerly known as FLOW II, in partnership with Faith Victory Association (FVA). The cows were given to the most vulnerable women following the GIR'INKA program, to support them and their families.

Josephine Mukamasabo, one of the right holders who was given a cow, said she had last owned one before the Genocide.

"I had last owned a cow before the genocide. I am overjoyed that I am now a proud owner of another cow freely given to me by ActionAid. With the cow, I won't only be able to get milk but to get fertilizers/manure for farming. I can now grow food again, therefore being able to meet many of my needs," Mukamasabo explained.

67 year old Josephine Mukamasabo is a mother of four children. She lives with four of her grandchildren in Rwabicuma, Nyanza district. She is among those who benefited from the cows given to several women by the ActionAid Rwanda POWER project.

Mukamasabo was elated to get a cow and added that her grandchildren will not be victims of malnutrition since they will be able to drink milk and a balanced diet through her farming-now that she will have manure.

"ActionAid and FVA show us every day how they really care about women transformation and happiness. I hope the women who have been given the cows will be testifying how the cows have empowered and transformed them and their families. As per the vision of our leadership, I hope the GIR'INKA program scales out to the whole country," said Umutesi.

Josephine Uwamariya, the Country Director of ActionAid Rwanda, hoped that the cows given would have value to families by providing them with milk, reducing malnutrition and providing fertilizers to women small holder farmers.

She stated that when a woman is empowered, all other hardships that hold her back disappear as they can afford to meet their basic needs. She also thanked the Dutch Government for providing funds through this project, which is helping to empower women.

The POWER project is an ActionAid project implemented through the Faith Victory Association Partner. This project gave out 30 cows to 30 women and their families.

Power in People

NEWS LETTER

INTERVIEW WITH AAR COUNTRY DIRECTOR; JOSEPHINE UWAMARIYA

What does becoming an Associate mean?

AAR is structured in such a way that it's a federation comprising of members, associates and affiliates, with a pre-member status of country programmes that are directly managed by the International secretariat. The two term membership involves having a board and legal status at national level.

To become a member requires strengthening the systems and embarking on ownership of what you do at country level and having a say in the decisions that you make. When you are a country programme, approvals are directly secured from the international secretariat but when you become an Associate, you have a national board, legal status, ability to apply for funding as a nationally recognized entity. We've had to seek approval of our funding for projects we have designed through AA UK of which we've been a branch and now partially a branch.

So this is a very big achievement. Being recognized also at national level as a national organization gives us the mandate to speak upright on issues that concern Rwandans and Rwanda, which gives us status of dual citizenship. We can engage at national level with legitimacy. We also engage as part of the global village as part of the global federation.

The Key achievement we are proud of is that we've now been recognized by the federation as a strong program that is of low risk which can support other programs, for instance our financial systems are strong, our structure is operational, we are able to have the Head of Finance being seconded to other countries to provide support and have the operation still run smoothly even during her absence.

What changes should we look forward to?

Country programs have no legitimate engagement at Assembly level so they don't directly inform federation decisions and can't even make proposed motions or have a vote to support or not support some motions. Doors are now open since we are an ASSOCIATE now. We now have one vote and when we become Affiliates, we'll have two votes, meaning that we now have a voice. We've been a branch of ActionAid UK (AA UK) and now

in a transition period of being assessed and reviewed to see if we can sustain our strength. AA UK we'll be looking at how keenly we are fairing before handing over the assets to us. When handover is done, our board will fully take over and will be accountable. This means that change of contracts will be done for all staff, and all the current assets that are presently registered under AA UK, because we've been a branch so the transition will have to be monitored to ensure success.

The Journey to becoming an Associate..... What made it possible?!

Strong leadership! This has enhanced ownership by the team because if the team is not engaged, you can't make it.

When I joined Actionaid Rwanda in March 2010, my assignment was to ensure that I bring the country program back on track because it had been categorized as one of the high risk countries, because of 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 but also we didn't have any strategic focus as we were just driven by the International strategy.

We were aligning to that one without having a strategy for our 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, we took a decision to do a restructuring to ensure that it responds to the actual needs of the communities. Unfortunately we had to lose some staff which was a big challenge. Because of commitment to change, we had to do it. The new team and the others realized this was the way to go to strengthen the country program. We undertook a process of having policies updated but also developing a strategy.

We launched a national level external review which provided guidance on how we can develop and focus on the issues that were upcoming. We developed a strategy under that guidance with support from the IS. It's during that strategy development having gone through restructuring, that we also considered Internationalization and undertaking the membership development.



AAR Country Director, Josephine Uwamariya during an interview about being an Associate

In 2013 after the approval of our strategy, that is when we concretized the journey setting milestones of when, to achieve what! In 2013 September is when we did our self-assessment, a new tool (membership development plan) had been developed so we were the first to test it. We looked at all the 8 strategic areas and assessed ourselves and where we identified the gaps, we identified the strategies and milestones of when to achieve them. We submitted our 1st draft to IS for input and support. The Regional Director came in to establish on whether we are ready to start on the journey and she provided management support and realized we are committed to start on the process. She recommended we get a multifunctional country support team which we did. The support team was very supportive in different areas including Fundraising, Governance, Programs and Finance among others.

Our target was June 2015 so we had given ourselves only one year and then they recommended we give ourselves breathing space and we pushed it to 2016. The team met with the potential board members through a rigorous recruitment process. The board was approved in 2015. They 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.

Where do you see AAR in the next 5 years?

We've invested a lot of energy in putting in place the policies and the systems. What is left is to continue reviewing and further strengthening of what we've already achieved. All the policies are there, structure is able to deliver to the aspirations of an affiliate.

The journey to Affiliation started when we started the journey to being Associates. We were reviewed and assessed on the level of affiliation so we meet the conditions but we must strengthen further and work on the recommended areas of improvement. I believe will be able to become an affiliate in 2-3 years. Our board too is committed and I am certain we'll achieve Affiliation in 2 Or 3 years' time.

Now that Rwanda is Associate, the team, board and management need to build on the successes to ensure a bright future. It requires commitment, doing more fundraising to be financially sustainable, be innovative as possible to ensure quality programming, enhance involvement and participation through participatory processes of right holders and stakeholders, to own this national organization.

Power in People

NEWS LETTER

ACTIONAID RWANDA PICTURE HIGHLIGHTS.....



Australian Member of Parliament, Helen Morton, during her visit to Mpore Dukunde Inzuki cooperative in Nyanza



AAR Women Forum ladies during the Gift exchange event(cacahuette)



Some of the AAR Women Forum members cheerfully exchanging gifts



Women in Muko sector based cooperative during the weekly savings activity



A right holder under the IFS MUKO project watering her vegetables

ABOUT AAIR

ActionAid International Rwanda is a country program of ActionAid, an international anti-poverty agency. It works in over 45 countries, taking sides with poor, voiceless people, communities and with like-minded partners worldwide to end poverty and injustice together. Actionaid is a non-partisan development organization that has been working in Rwanda as a full country program since 1997, to eradicate poverty and injustices, with focus on tackling the root causes of poverty rather than just meeting people's immediate needs.

Our Vision

A Country without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life of dignity

Our Mission

We work with people living in poverty with focus on women and girls to eradicate poverty and injustice.

Our Values

Courage of conviction - We are committed to be open, creative and constructively engage without fear - in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty.

Mutual respect

- We recognize and appreciate the inherent value of each human being and the significance of diversity.

Equity and justice

We work to ensure that all people irrespective of gender, ethnicity, location political affiliations, social class, health status, religion, sexual orientation have fair and equal opportunity.

Humility

In all our actions and behavior, we acknowledge and recognize that we are a part of a wider alliance against poverty and injustice.

Honesty and transparency - We are committed being accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and open in judgments and communications with others.

Solidarity with the people Living in Poverty (Women, Children and Youth)

In fight against poverty we align ourselves with powerless, marginalized and excluded to empower them to be the drivers of change.

Independence - Our approaches and actions are free from any religious or party political affiliation.

What we do

Actionaid International, Rwanda has 3 key strategic objectives (CSP 2013-2017)

1. Promoting Sustainable Agriculture, livelihood alternatives and access to natural resources.
2. Promoting Quality of public education for girls, boys, children and youth as drivers of change.
3. Ensuring that women and girls can break the cycle of poverty and violence, build economic alternatives and claim control over their bodies.