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#WeCareForHer Equality

Impact Story 7

KEY IMPACTS

Through research, awareness-raising, community dialogues and policy advocacy, this project sought to promote the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid domestic care work (UDCW) carried by women and girls in Zimbabwe while positioning UCDW as a governance, development and gender equality issues requiring policy action. The project has contributed to institutional recognition of unpaid care work and opened a pathway towards long-term policy reform in Zimbabwe.

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Project Overview

The [#WeCareForHer Equality](#) project - implemented by the Women's Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence (WALPE) in partnership with PADRE, Oxfam in Zimbabwe, the Health Law and Policy Consortium (HLPC) and Bethany Trust - was established to address the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) carried by women and girls in Zimbabwe and the ways in which this limits their participation in leadership, decision-making, economic activities, and public life. The project responds to social norms that position women and girls as primary caregivers, reducing their time for productive work, education, political engagement, and leadership opportunities.

Through research, awareness-raising, community dialogues and policy advocacy, the project sought to promote the recognition, reduction and redistribution of UCDW while positioning UCDW as a governance, development and gender equality issues requiring policy action.

The project worked with women and girls, including women with disabilities (WWD), young women affected by unequal care responsibilities, while also engaging men and boys as allies in redistributing care work. At the institutional level, it engaged parliamentarians, government ministries, women's rights organisations and other policy actors to advance reforms that recognise unpaid care work and support women's participation in leadership and economic life.

Project Activities

WALPE focused on translating research evidence and community engagement into policy influence. The project implemented sustained advocacy through side-to-side dialogues with parliamentarians, high-level conferences, petitions, jingles, skits, surveys, documentaries and stakeholder engagements to raise awareness of unpaid care and domestic work and its impact on women's participation in leadership and economic life.

The project also conducted focus group discussions with young women and girls aged 15-30 across all ten provinces of Zimbabwe and produced research on the impact of unpaid care and domestic work on women and girls. Community dialogues intentionally engaged men and boys to encourage reflection on shared caregiving responsibilities and support behavioural change at household level.

WALPE further collaborated with the Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus, the Ministry of Women's Affairs Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission, local government/municipalities and private-sector actors, and the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe to advance policy discussions and generate support for legislative reform.

Project Achievements

The project achieved a significant policy milestone by supporting the adoption and debate of Zimbabwe's first Parliamentary Motion on Unpaid Care and Domestic Work, marking the first formal legislative step towards a National UCDW Policy. Following the debate of the motion in Parliament, the project secured buy-in from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, which committed to lead the drafting of the National UCDW Policy and to take it forward for Cabinet consideration and adoption.

The project also contributed to broader institutional change, with the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development integrating UCDW into its strategic priorities, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission committing to support the policy process, and the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe had already developed the care policy before this project.

At community level, project monitoring, focus group discussions, and beneficiary feedback indicate growing recognition of unpaid care work and increased dialogue around sharing care responsibilities within households. Women reported spending fewer hours on unpaid care and domestic work, which they attributed to greater awareness and redistribution of caregiving responsibilities. The project gathered evidence from 500 young women participating in focus groups, 345 beneficiary

testimonies, and 300 Women's Leadership Network (WALAN) members reporting improvements linked to greater recognition and redistribution of care responsibilities. Women also reported increased participation in income-generating activities and leadership spaces.

The project also influenced public spending priorities. Following sustained advocacy and submission of gender responsive budget proposals, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion increased allocations to water, health, sanitation, and related public services by 10%, helping reduce care burdens such as time spent collecting water. Together, these outcomes demonstrate progress in advancing the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work in Zimbabwe.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

The project identified slow legislative processes and competing national priorities as key challenges in advancing policy reform. These experiences reinforced the importance of sustained engagement with policymakers, coalition building, and continued evidence generation in order to maintain momentum towards adoption of a National UCDW Policy. The project also learned that change requires action at both household and policy levels, combining community dialogues and behaviour change initiatives with formal policy and legislative advocacy.

Care Sector Contributions & Next Steps

The project's main contribution has been helping position UCDW as a governance and public policy issue rather than solely a social or household concern. Through research, advocacy, coalition building, and parliamentary engagement, the project has contributed to institutional recognition of unpaid care work and opened a pathway towards long-term policy reform in Zimbabwe.

Next steps include monitoring the progression of the Parliamentary Motion, supporting technical inputs for the development of a National UCDW Policy, engaging the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion on care-related budget allocations, and continuing advocacy with communities, traditional leaders, and national stakeholders. WALPE will also continue strengthening partnerships with key institutions and women's rights organisations to sustain momentum for the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work in Zimbabwe.

About the Africa Cares Together Community of Practice

The [Africa Cares Together Community of Practice \(ACT CoP\)](#) is a vibrant, inclusive network of diverse actors committed to amplifying care work across Africa. It is coordinated by ActionAid International (AAI) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and the Hewlett Foundation. The ACT CoP network is made up of members from the 19 projects of the [Scaling Care Innovations in Africa \(SCIA\)](#) initiative, a partnership between IDRC and GAC.

Acknowledgements

This Impact Story was compiled by the '#WeCareForHer Equality' project team and the ACT CoP. Project partners include the Women's Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence (WALPE); Oxfam Zimbabwe; Padare Men's Forum on Gender; Bethany Trust; and Health Law Policy Consortium.

