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Advancing Gender Equity Justice through Care-Inclusive Farmer Field and Business Schools

Impact Story 11

KEY IMPACTS

This project aims to improve small-scale farmers' income, increase investment in labor-saving resources, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work, and transform social norms linked to unpaid care and household work (UCHW) in Tanzania. By anchoring the UCHW module within village leadership structures and district extension systems, the project shows how care can be recognised as a structural barrier to women's economic participation and addressed through community-driven solutions.

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Project Overview

The [Advancing Gender Equity Justice through Care-Inclusive Farmer Field and Business Schools](#) project aims to improve small-scale farmers' income, increase investment in labor-saving resources, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work, and transform social norms linked to unpaid care and household work (UCHW).

Implemented in the Iringa region of Tanzania, the project targets women and men small scale producers in Farmer Field and Business School (FFBS) groups, with a specific focus on women who disproportionately spend more time on unpaid care work limiting their participation, leadership, enough time to rest and benefit from agricultural development.

By integrating a UCHW module into the FFBS approach, the project seeks to redistribute care responsibilities within households and communities as a foundation for women's economic empowerment and improve their health by getting enough time to rest. This responds to the persistent under-recognition of unpaid care work, which was identified through earlier FFBS implementation as a key constraint to women's participation and productivity.

Project Activities

The project integrated a structured UCHW module into the FFBS programme, delivered through trained Paraprofessionals and supported by male champions. During the reporting period (September 2025–February 2026), implementation focused on

consolidating the module through community dialogues, experiential learning activities, and close engagement with local authorities.

A total of 29 Village Executive Officers (14 women and 15 men) were oriented on the UCHW module and its role in community development, strengthening village level ownership and enabling follow up and monitoring of dialogue sessions. Regular field monitoring visits were conducted across treatment villages, with project staff interacting with 356 participants (277 women and 79 men) to assess progress and provide technical support.

To deepen engagement, the project collaborated with Nutrition Connect to conduct cooking demonstrations in three villages, reaching 112 participants (62 women and 50 men). These practical sessions linked unpaid care work, nutrition, and shared household responsibilities. Complementary group discussions integrated gender-based violence (GBV) awareness, facilitated by district authorities, highlighting the relationship between unequal care burdens, household stress, and conflict.

Project Achievements

The project recorded early but concrete shifts in attitudes and practices related to unpaid care and household work across 29 villages in Iringa region. Monitoring data indicate that 45% of male participants reported willingness to share household responsibilities with their spouses, signalling gradual change in gender norms around care. Engagement of 29 Village Executive Officers (14 women and 15 men) further enhanced institutional anchoring and sustainability of interventions at the village level. Monitoring visits across all treatment villages enabled direct interaction with 356 participants (78% women), demonstrating continued strong female engagement and highlighting the need to increase male participation (22%) to ensure a more equitable distribution of care work.

These shifts were reinforced through practical engagement activities, particularly cooking demonstrations and community dialogues involving men. Following these sessions, facilitators observed explicit commitments to redistribute care work, with participants noting that “most of them promised to start assisting their wives with household chores.”

Communities also began translating reflection into tangible action. In Igunda, Kidilo and Holo villages, 22 households adopted improved cooking technologies, reducing time spent collecting firewood and cooking. One participant described the impact clearly:

“With this improved cookstove, I have significantly reduced the time spent on cooking and no longer need to walk long distances to collect firewood.”

At the community level, the Tupendane Village Savings and Loan Association group mobilised TZS 700,000 to purchase land and begin construction of a community daycare centre expected to serve around 50 children aged 0–5 years. Reflecting wider change, the group's chairperson observed:

"We are seeing families becoming more united, with both mothers and fathers taking responsibility for childcare and nutrition."

Challenges & Lessons Learned

Deeply entrenched gender norms continue to influence the pace at which unpaid care responsibilities are redistributed, particularly within households. In addition, national elections and political unrest in late 2025 slowed implementation and engagement with some stakeholders due to mobility and availability constraints.

The project learned that experiential learning approaches, such as cooking demonstrations involving men, accelerate reflection and attitude change more effectively than discussion-based methods alone. Integrating GBV awareness into UCHW discussions also proved valuable, reinforcing participants' understanding of the links between unequal care, stress, and household conflict. Based on these lessons, the project adjusted its approach to emphasise practical engagement and delayed the rollout of accountability tools until communities were sufficiently prepared.

Care Sector Contributions & Next Steps

The project's main contribution is demonstrating how unpaid care and household work can be systematically integrated into agricultural extension and farmer training systems through a care-inclusive FFBS model. By anchoring the UCHW module within village leadership structures and district extension systems, the project shows how care can be recognised as a structural barrier to women's economic participation and addressed through community-driven solutions.

Next steps include piloting the Community Score Card (CSC) in selected villages, deepening engagement with district and national stakeholders, and strengthening communication materials to support policy dialogue. The project will continue documenting community level outcomes, such as labour-saving technologies and childcare initiatives, to inform discussions on scaling the UCHW module within national agricultural and gender policy frameworks.

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.

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