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Scaling up Innovations for Reducing and Redistributing Women and Girls Unpaid Care work in Rural Tanzania

Impact Story 12

KEY IMPACTS

This project is helping reduce the unpaid care burden on women and girls in rural Tanzania by combining rainwater harvesting technology with gender-transformative social norms programming. Early results show increased men's involvement in childcare, household tasks and decision-making, enabling women to spend more time on livelihoods and small businesses. Improved water access, skills development for local artisans, and stronger community ownership are creating sustainable pathways for women's economic participation and wellbeing.

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Project Overview

The [*Scaling up Innovations for Reducing and Redistributing Women and Girls Unpaid Care work in Rural Tanzania*](#) project aims to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work disproportionately carried by women and girls in rural Tanzania, while strengthening women's economic participation and community resilience. Implemented in Kishapu District, the project targets women, men, and youth at household and community levels through three complementary interventions:

- 1) Expanding access to rainwater harvesting technology to reduce time spent collecting water.
- 2) Transforming gender norms related to care, decision-making, and asset use through the BaBaJamii social norms programme.
- 3) Creating awareness through capacity-building initiatives, and equipping beneficiaries with the knowledge, skills, and information required for entrepreneurship opportunities and to access and succeed in formal employment.

The intended beneficiaries include rural women and girls, male household members, local artisans, and community leaders. The project responds to persistent gender inequalities in unpaid care work and aims to combine practical time-saving solutions with behaviour change to enable more equitable participation in economic and household activities.

Project Activities

The project implemented two core interventions during the reporting period.

Under Intervention One, implemented by Relief to Development Society (REDESO), the project expanded underground rainwater harvesting technology in Kishapu District. During Phase Four, eight tanks were completed, with three additional tanks under construction, and the initiative extended to Kijongo village, building on earlier work in Kiloleli, Miyuguyu, Inolelo, and Muguda. The project trained 25 local youth artisans, engaging them in construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation of tanks, while working with community leaders to strengthen ownership and sustainability.

Interventions Two, and Three were jointly implemented by Women and Social Protection (WSP) and Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF). The interventions combined formal job and entrepreneurship skills training with a structured norm-change curriculum, delivered in two phases of 15 sessions each. The BaBaJamii programme was rolled out across 20 social groups, reaching 466 participants by mid-March 2026. Community facilitators were certified after refresher training on the BaBaJamii Manual (2025 edition) and facilitation techniques and supported through monthly monitoring, mentoring, and session reviews. Participants received transport allowances to support attendance, and facilitators were equipped with teaching aids, smartphones, audio recorders, and safety equipment to ensure quality delivery. The interventions were provided into two phases for the purpose of sustainability.

Project Achievements

The project generated early but substantive social, economic, and infrastructure-related outcomes. Through the BaBaJamii intervention, participants reported visible shifts in gender norms, particularly men's participation in unpaid care work and household decision-making. Men increasingly reported engaging in tasks such as cooking, fetching water, cleaning, and childcare. One male participant reflected:

"In our culture, a man who entered the kitchen was laughed at... Today, I fetch water and help with the children. The 'shame' has been replaced by a sense of partnership."

Women reported that the redistribution of care work enabled greater focus on livelihoods. As one woman explained:

"In the past, my husband would never touch a broom or fetch water. Now, we work together... This help means I can finally focus on my small business."

Participants also described improved household decision-making, moving from unilateral control to joint consultation over income, livestock, and expenses, contributing to greater trust and cooperation within families.

At the infrastructure level, the rainwater harvesting intervention improved local water access and reduced the burden of water collection. Skills transferred to trained artisans are already being applied beyond project sites. One trained artisan reported:

“We managed to rehabilitate three tanks at household level and two tanks at a primary school and one tank at Kiloleli secondary school.”

These results are supported by monitoring data from 466 BaBaJamii beneficiaries, field observations, facilitator records, and documented participant testimonies collected between December 2025 and January 2026.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

Implementation faced delays due to the late disbursement of project funds, which affected the scheduling of some construction activities and completion of planned outputs.

The project also learned that deep-seated gender norms require sustained, repeated engagement rather than one-off sensitisation. Practical, participatory methods, such as storytelling, group reflection, and shared activities, proved more effective in shifting attitudes than abstract discussion alone. The importance of continuous facilitator support, incentives and structured monitoring was also reinforced to maintain quality delivery and participant engagement.

The first phase of the formal job skills training was not very attractive, as most beneficiaries felt it was of limited relevance to their needs. Drawing on this lesson, Phase Two adopted a reversed and more context-responsive approach designed to better suit the target population and their environment.

Care Sector Contributions & Next Steps

The project demonstrates the value of combining technical care-reducing infrastructure (water systems) with gender-transformative social norms programming. By addressing unpaid care through both time-saving innovations and behavioural change, the initiative offers a scalable, integrated model for improving women’s economic participation and household wellbeing in rural contexts.

Next steps include completing the remaining rainwater harvesting tanks, continuing BaBaJamii sessions, and strengthening documentation of outcomes. The project will also finalise and disseminate policy briefs based on evidence generated, and deepen engagement with local and national government stakeholders to support institutionalisation and scaling of the model.

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 'Scaling up Innovations for Reducing and Redistributing Women and Girls Unpaid Care work in Rural Tanzania' project team and the ACT CoP. Project partners include Registered Trustees of Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF); Relief to Development Society (REDESO); and Women and Social Protection (WSP).

