

# 2010 Annual Report



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## Context of Work in 2010

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The Gambia like most developing countries continues to experience high increase in prices of basic food commodities such as sugar, rice and edible oil mainly due to the global financial, food and fuel crises. The overall macroeconomic environment variables such as exchange, interest and inflation rates remained unchanged from the plan forecast for the period under review.

The Gambia is mainly an agrarian country of farmers with very small-holdings and low levels of productivity and low volumes of production. This makes it difficult for farmers to negotiate for fair prices and thus often sell their produce at give away prices at harvest. This is further aggravated with the high influx of subsidised produce from developed countries which leaves our farmers very vulnerable. The above issues in addition to the fact that The Gambia is a Sahelian country with only three months of rainfall on the average, thus one crop cycle per annum, coupled with the vagaries of weather and high levels of pest and disease infestations, further worsens the conditions of the small-holder farmers.

Although The Gambia is endowed with both underground and surface water these opportunities are not adequately exploited. The smallholder farmers especially women farmers continue to depend on rudimentary technologies which are both labour intensive and time consuming. This also contributes to the low production and productivity and thus the high level of poverty in the country.

In The Gambia the frequency and degree of disasters have increased over the years. In 2010 the country experienced strong windstorms and floods which caused extensive damages to homes and farmlands in many parts of the country. Although the DAs we work in have not been seriously affected, we had to respond as a programme because of the magnitude of the floods. The level of erosion by both water and wind increased significantly affecting many rural households especially those who depend on farming for their livelihoods. AAITG in collaboration with government and other development partners worked on disaster prevention and also provided support to people affected by the floods.

Work in Rights issues in The Gambia still faces challenges in terms of low level of understanding by some duty bearers. This makes it difficult for us to use the "in-the-street" campaign techniques to push the Rights agenda

forward. People in poor communities in The Gambia are more responsive to the HRBA approach, when Rights programmes are complemented with response to the basic needs interventions. This supports the local popular quotation "An empty bag cannot stand". The high level of poverty which puts the people in Maslow's hierarchy of needs puts pressure on the CP to respond to the basic needs of the people. This enhances communities' response to our interventions.

Donor funding in The Gambia is quite low compared to most countries in the sub-region due to our political environment. This has affected the fundraising ability of AAITG as most bilateral donors consider The Gambia a low priority. However towards the end of the year AAITG was fortunately included in the high value donor list. The Fundraising Manager is working closely with IPD staff and also with the country team and partners to develop high quality concepts and proposals for marketing to different donors. We are thus hopeful that the level of non sponsorship funding will increase during the 2011 period as compared to 2010.

The country's report on around the four areas of change as specified in the GMF with success stories are presented below. The report also covers our international engagements with AAI, main challenges, lessons learned and the way forward for 2011.

## **Progress Against our Strategic Priorities and Plans - Outcomes and Impact in Relation to five areas of Change in the GMF:**

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### ***2.1 Improvement in the Conditions of Poor and Excluded People***

ActionAid The Gambia has made some important contributions to the lives of the poor in the country. These include: among others our work in the Seed and Cereal Banks which makes food available to the poorest during the hungry season; improved access to labour and time saving technologies for women on and off-farm; commodity cooperatives which facilitates marketing and access to production inputs; erosion control; farmland reclamation; REFLECT and literacy for empowerment; and support to people living with HIV/AIDS. Below is detailed description of the specific impact areas and testimonies from individuals.

## **Support to Seed and Cereal Banking**

ActionAid The Gambia has provided support to about 40 Seed and Cereal Banks country wide since 2005 which support continued throughout the period under review. This facilitated access to food and seeds to a large number of deprived individuals and their families. This year over 2, 700 people in DA8 alone received support from the Seed and Cereal bank revolving loan facility. Seventy Five metric tons of seeds were distributed among 879 farmers in 7 clusters. In addition a total of 131 tons of millet and 13 tons of rice were distributed in the DA.

Funds were provided for DA11 for the purchase of 68 tons of millet and 74 tons of groundnut seeds directly benefitting a total of 741 and 968 families. Lisanding one of the women farmer beneficiaries in the area tells the story of how she and her family benefitted from the seed and cereal bank support:

"I am a farmer and I grow rice in two different areas, Baafaro (swamp rice fields) Bantafaro (upland rice fields). During the last planting season ActionAid provided 500 people from 28 villages in my area with 3,000 kg of an improved rice variety called NERICA. This was given out as a revolving loan to individual members from the seed banks. ActionAid and Agriculture people also showed us how to properly plant our crops.



**Lisanding with her Bumper Harvest**



**Lisanding with friends & family helping her harvest**

Usually I grow only small quantities of rice in the Bantafaro because I have only a small piece of land in that area. My main field is in the Baafaro which is frequently affected by salt intrusion. However, despite the small size of my Bantafaro, this year I was able to have bumper harvest due to the high quality seed I received. I even had to ask other women to help me harvest because I could not harvest it all on my own. I am sure I will be able to feed my family until the next harvest (Allah willing) and I will be able to pay back the loan I received from the seed bank. I thank ActionAid for their support” says Lisanding.

### **Increased Access to Production Inputs and Labour and Time Saving Devices on and off Farm**

ActionAid provided support to a number of communities and individuals for production inputs and on and off- farm labour and time saving technologies. These include fertilizers, seeds, milling machines and farm implements. Each of these significantly improves poor rural farmers’ access to food and increased income. This is particularly important for women farmers who mainly depend on manual labour for both on and off-farm activities. The women are responsible for 99% of all food processing and preparation. The processing of coarse grains is particularly difficult for women. The stories below provide information on the impact of ActionAid support.

DA 11 with 60 villages and a population of 12,000 people is mainly dependent on small scale farming for their livelihoods. The initial baseline survey revealed this area to be among the poorest areas in the country. Thirty Two percent and 53% of the population in the area were classified as poor and very poor respectively. These populations are characterised among other things by poor access to production inputs and farm implements. ActionAid’s support with fertilizers and farm implements enhanced increased production in 2010 and thus increase in food and income of the people in the area. The stories below show some of the impact of our work in these communities.

**“I was usually the last to sow or weed my crops and sometimes before I get support from people my crops in the field would have been overtaken by weeds”** says 39 year old Demba Jallow, who benefitted from the farm implement support out of 45 other farmers in DA11. Demba continues to relay his story.

“Until last year, I cultivated my millet and groundnut farms using the local made hand tools or sometimes borrow seeders or sine hoes from other people which support often comes too late into the season when farm

implement owners are ready with their own fields. With the very short rainy season I often have very poor yields due to late planting and weeding. The farm implement support enabled us plant and weed our crops on time. I was able to cultivate and weed all my 2.5 hectares of land on time. Thus this year I have very good harvest and would be able to feed my family for most of the year. Before I have implements I usually had to do odd jobs for people in order to buy food for my family. My own produce never lasted long. There was a year when I went into partnership with a farm implement owner who owned a donkey, a sine hoe and a seeder. The agreement was for me to work on the man's farm for 4 hours daily in exchange for one hour of use of his implements on my farm. Sometimes I would also hire the service of a donkey two or three times in the year which cost me D150 (£4) on each occasion. Lack of farm implements has kept me and many other people in my area to continuously experience food insecurity for many years of our lives as we could only cultivate small areas of land. We can now feed our families from one harvest to the other and no longer need to do any odd jobs to feed our families."

Like most women farmers in the area, farming is the main source of food for Suntu Wally a 45 year old female farmer and her family. However access to good quality seeds and fertilizers was Suntu's problem. This is worsened by the fact that Suntu only has a small plot of farmland which she cultivates year in and year out causing serious soil fertility problems for her. This has resulted to Suntu always having very poor yields. During the last cropping season, Suntu received fertilizer loan from the DA 11Apex revolving loan scheme. Below Suntu tells the story of how the fertilizer benefitted her, her family and the community:



"ActionAid provided money to our apex group for the purchase of more food grains and seeds for the seed and cereal banking scheme. In addition, it also provided funding for the creation of a fertilizer revolving fund for the communities. Like most of my fellow women members from the two schemes, I received 50 kilograms of compound fertilizer, 50 kilograms of nitrogen fertilizer and 70 kilograms of

**Mrs. Suntu Wally weeding her rice field**

improved rice seeds given out on credit by our apex group. I had excellent crops last season due to the improved seeds and fertilizers I used.

If all goes well as anticipated I can safely say that I will be able to provide food for my family for the whole year. These are all made possible through support from Action Aid”.

Another impact area was AAITG’s support with milling machines for women in the rural areas. This support was provided for women in different regions in the country. It has made significant impact in affording women with quality time in addition to reducing drudgery. Fatim Jallow narrates the impact of AAITG’s support with milling machine to the women in her village.

“Many women like me have been relieved from the usual early morning pounding of millet which was always the first activity of every housewife of this area. Like most women in my area, I used to wake up as early as 5am, pound millet, fetch water and cook breakfast for the family before going to the groundnut farm or rice fields. Daily, we walk approximately 8 km to and from the fields and we work for about 7 hours in the fields. At home we continue to dehull millet using mortar and pestle while preparing dinner for the family. This will usually take us for about 3 hours before going to bed.

Now that there is a milling machine in the village, we are able to have some rest and many of us are encouraged to increase our areas of land under cultivation. This year, I personally cultivated a bigger rice field and have 500kg unlike the previous year’s harvest which was around 300kg.



**Fatim Jallow of Baro Kunda village in  
Niamina Dankunku District, DA11**

Currently over 400 women are directly benefiting from this support. The machine is also generating income for the women in the area. We have monthly average savings of D6, 000.000 (£146) after all expenses.

This has been a great achievement to us and we thank ActionAid for helping to reduce the high energy and time required for us to process food on a daily basis”.

## **Support to Producer Cooperatives/Apexes**

The difficulty in marketing of the produce of the small holder farmers and the dire need of immediate income which force small farmers to sell off their produce at a give-away price leaving them in perpetual poverty. This has necessitated the need to form producer and marketing cooperatives. The purpose of these cooperatives is to improve small holder farmers' access to markets and to increase their income through fair price. The cooperative buy the small lots of the small farmers at a price agreed by members or members' representatives, bulks and negotiates for a fair price with the private sector buyers. This takes the risk off the small farmer, provides him guaranteed market and ensures fair price for their produce. The cooperatives are also able to buy production inputs and implements in large volumes through which they can get economy of scale and thus low wholesale prices which they could further subsidize to make them available to the farmers very low costs. Whereas governments are restricted to subsidize for their farmers as a World Bank requirement, even though the big economies are subsidizing for their farmers and dumping their produce in third world countries making it difficult for our farmers to sell their produce competitively, the cooperatives are at liberty to subsidize for their members.

AAITG is working with 6 commodity cooperatives starting since 2004 with the groundnut cooperatives. Groundnut marketing is one of the major problems of farmers in The Gambia since the closure of The Gambia Cooperative Union and its affiliate cooperative societies in the country. Farmers find it very difficult to market their produce, some of them travel across the border to the Republic of Senegal to market their groundnuts or sometimes sell to private buyers which is normally through credit buying. Sometimes they get their money late or most times not at all. ActionAid International The Gambia (AAITG) is currently supporting three groundnut cooperatives located in different parts of the country. Below are the testimonies of two women on the benefits they received from their cooperatives. The first story is by a 50-year old woman, Kodeh Camara from WAD (Wulli Association for Development):

"Until last year I could not attend any social events in my village or communities for lack of money. I could not attend naming ceremonies or weddings because my priorities were to feed my family. Last season unlike other seasons, I was able to sell all my groundnuts to the

cooperative and I was paid all my money on the spot. I sold 8 donkey loads (16 bags) of groundnuts from which I earned D6, 000.00 (£146). Today I am like any ordinary woman in my community. I now feel good about myself, thanks to WAD and AAITG support”.

Another story of change as a result of the services provided by the cooperatives is told by Haminata Sowe, a 60-year old woman of Nioro Tukolor community.

“Like most of my fellow women in this area we cultivate groundnuts every year to take care of our families. In my community, women are responsible for their own clothing, and children’s education, clothing and care. Last year we had very poor harvest from our groundnut farms. I had only 304 kg. This could be attributed to late planting resulting from late acquisition of seeds. At the beginning of the season I took a 20kg loan of groundnut seeds at 50% interest from a trader. After paying my seed loan (30kg), I was left with only 274 kg which I sold at D2, 329 (£57). I was not able to save seeds for the coming year because I needed the money to feed my family.

This year through the Apex, I took a 40kg seed loan at 5% interest rate. This was received on time and I was therefore able to plant on time and my crops performed extremely well. I am now threshing and I anticipate a yield of not less than 1,000kg. Without the Apex I would not have been able to secure seeds on time which would have affected my production. I pray that the Apex organisation progresses and continues to help me and other women who benefitted from the support”.

The access to groundnut markets in this area has also really improved family relations especially between husbands and wives. It has increased income and improved access to inputs like seeds and fertilizers. It is also worth noting that the communities indicated that this year’s trade season has reduced or eliminated credit buying and the usual long distance travel to sell their produce. Furthermore, the timely access to money helped the people address most of their needs. Food availability and festivities increased. Overall, the people are happy. “We are now able to pay for our children’s school fees, prepare our daughters and sons for marriage and buy Tobaski rams and clothes. We can eat good food as well”, says Hatou Gunera, a 50 year old woman.

The Rice Growers Cooperative is another AAITG partner Community Based Organisation (CBO) established in 2005 in the Lower Fulladu

District. It has a total membership of 8,952 farmers living in 78 villages (Jahally 29 and Patcharr 49 villages). The main aim of this partnership was to facilitate optimal use of the river water for irrigation to facilitate double cropping in the year for both food and income increase. During the 2010 period, AAITG supported the cooperative with a grant of D500,000 (£12,195). Out of this total, D350,000 (£8,536) was used to buy 300 bags of fertilizer for 337 farmers and the balance of D150,000 (£3,659) was used to buy 16 donkey carts and 16 donkeys for 16 women farmers on loan. The loan was D7,500 per set and each woman made an upfront payment of D1,500 (£37). The outstanding balance of D6,000 (£146) with each woman is to be paid over a period of 3 years. Periodic radio panel discussions were conducted at the Brikamaba Community Radio (sponsored by AAITG) to create community awareness on key issues related to the Rice Farmers Cooperative Society (RFCS). The cooperative also provided a total of 2,550kgs of improved rice varieties and ploughing services at a cost of D548, 750 (£13,384) for 674 smallholder farmer members. Members are also supported in the area of rice processing; marketing and training on improve production techniques.

As a result of this project intervention, rice is now available and affordable all the year round in the project communities. An average yield of up to 4 tons/hectare has been realised. The technical expertise provided by the Taiwanese was also a very important factor in the yield increase. The tidal irrigation which was used to replace the pump irrigation greatly reduced the production cost. Government has now hired the services of a very qualified and skilled irrigation engineer to open more areas for tidal irrigation

Seventy percent of the rice growers, the majority of whom are women now have access to land for year round rice cultivation. According to the members, most communities have village group bank accounts. Over 120 women farmers from the Patcharr area have opened accounts with their Village Savings And Credit Associations (VISACAs). This has been largely due to the easy access to milling services coupled with the farmers agreeing to sell 50% of their produce to the mill. This has increased the women's income level steadily. Quoting 40-year old woman Nuimi Barba of Pacharr and 35-year old Maimuna ceasay:

"This scheme has helped me to get on my own two feet. I am now less dependent on my husband". "Now I only have to take a walk to the bank and withdraw the amount I need to pay my children's' schools fees and medications. The children in this community are

now able to go to school without fear of being sent away because of lack of school fees. In addition to the main apex, all of the sub-groups have separate bank accounts such as the water, management, ploughing, loans, marketing and land allocation committees” says Mrs. Maimuna Ceesay, a 35-year old woman.

Juju Sidibeh a 50-year old woman, married with five children narrates the story of how her yields improved as a result of seed loan she received from the DA Apex:

“Every year, I cultivate rice using local varieties which are long duration and low yielding. Access to high yielding rice varieties has always been a problem in this area for smallholder farmers like me. This is true for all small holder women farmers in the area. This has limited our production and often individual rice growers realise yields of between 500 kilograms and 1000 kilograms per half a hectare annually for many years now. In order for us to get seeds we have to go for hired labour and get paid with paddy rice. This has always been difficult because for most of us to get enough seeds as we would require, we have to embark on this hired labour individually for at least five full days. What we gather in the 5 days, is what we usually require for our individual pieces of land. This has a negative impact on our production. Now with the formation of the Rice Farmers Cooperative Society, there are arrangements in the society for supporting members with seeds which are always interest free. Last season like most of my fellow women members, I received 50 kilograms of improved seeds from the society as soon as we began nursery preparation. I cultivated a plot of half hectare and I obtained a yield of 2,380 kilograms. This was the first time I ever obtained such a large quantity from my half hectare plot. I used 38 bags for food for the family and sold 30 bags from which I got D4, 000 (£98) which I saved at our VISACA Bank. Most of the women now have savings accounts which used for our children’s health and education. The increase in our production thus the increase in our income has helped to raise our status in the society. This has boosted our moral and we are beginning to confidently speak up at meetings. We thank ActionAid and the Apex”.

## **Support to Soil Erosion Control Projects to Enhance Human Security**

AAITG through the Alliance for the Promotion of Human Security (APHS) and the DAs supported several interventions responding to disaster risk reduction. The rainy season in 2010 was a particularly bad year in terms of the severity and frequency of floods throughout the country. Some villages were totally destroyed and in other communities the severity of erosion made it difficult for people to travel from one part of the village to the other or event to their farmlands. In addition, farmlands which are the main source of livelihoods for these communities are also destroyed through soil erosion. Below is a gallery of disasters encountered during the period under review.

### **Gallery of Disasters Encountered During 2010**



**Pictures of different parts of the gully that separates Allunhareh village**



**Houses collapsed by flood at Badari Village in URR**

The communities of Allunhareh and Sare Fodikeh of URR South and North respectively are among 10 communities identified for support as part of the disaster risk reduction pilot. Each of them developed a community

action plan from which wind and water erosion control were identified for support. The programme involved intensive sensitisation for both communities prior to the implementation of the project. The community of Allunhari was supported on water erosion control whilst Sare Fodikeh was supported with tree planting to control wind erosion. In addition, live phone-in radio sensitisation programmes were organised through The Gambia radio and Unique FM in Basse to raise people's awareness on disasters (how they occur and means of mitigation and/or adaptation).

Allunhareh is a highly flood-prone community. It is located at the foot of a hill in the south, the source of high runoffs. The village has over 300 closely knitted compounds with narrow streets and a population of 4, 571 people (2,389 females). The landscape in the outskirts is characterised by deep gullies especially in the western and south west areas. These separate the inhabited area with both the upland and lowland fields where food crops and vegetables are grown. In the peak of the rainy season, these gullies are filled up with water making access to both the village and the fields more or less impossible. The same road networks link 8 communities in the north and 5 in the south to the main road through Allunhari. Thus in effect, all these communities are severely affected any time there is a heavy downpour.

"Anytime it rains heavily in the afternoon we asked the youths to go out to the gullies to cross women and children coming back from the farms. It usually takes a minimum of 7 days before the place is declared safe for crossing as water almost gets to one's waist when you get inside" explained Mrs. Jankey Camara a 45-year old woman.

As part of the DRR pilot the community of Allunhareh like Sara Saidou in Niamina West District were trained in gabion construction to prevent disasters a result of floods. In addition to the training the project included actual work on gabion construction and placement of 21 gabions at specific locations within Allunhareh community and its outskirts. The community provided unskilled labour as well as cost of transport. Mr. Alhagi Dembo Tunkara, a 78 year old man and chairman of the VDC had this to say:

"This year the people of Allunhareh are able to celebrate safety. The work on the gabions was followed by heavy rains but this time round when the rains subsided, both the people and goods within the community of Allunhari and other satellite villages are transported through the gullies with little or no fear of getting drowned. Currently most parts of the gullies are gradually filling up with sand

especially at our crossing points which link Allunhari to other villages, our fields and the main road networks. We have also instituted a byelaw that anyone found extracting sand from the sites will be fined an amount of D5000 (£122).

The community needs to be supported with more materials to enable them construct more gabions to make the project more complete and therefore have more impact on the lives of the people. Distance between the gabions should be reduced to allow for more sedimentation. However, any further support to be given to this community will be done alongside more sensitisation on rights and more advocacy work as a matter of urgency to empower communities to be able to make demands on duty bearers in addressing their strategic and practical needs/concerns.

### **A story of hope:**

Like Allunhareh Sara Saidou a village in DA 11 and its neighbouring villages are situated on sloppy hills. During the rainy season, rain water flows down the hill to farmlands eroding the top soil and its nutrients leaving the bare land for farmers to cultivate. The run-offs from the rains cause soil erosion and thus create a deep gully that traverses through the entire village down to the river. Houses located beside the gully are vulnerable to destruction during the floods. The speed with which water flows down the gully to the river is so high that it can carry away anybody who tries to cross from one side of the village. This restricts peoples' movements within and outside the village and to the farms during rains. It also results to very poor yields due to the drastic decline in soil fertility as a result of soil erosion. Thus the farmers in this community frequently experience food shortages.

The deep gully that cuts across and divided Sara Saidou community into two halves does not only cause inconvenience for the Sara Saidou villagers alone but its impact is felt by the 8 communities clustered in the area. The high depth of the gully has cut off the entire communication network. The people here encounter a lot of transportation difficulties especially during the rainy season. The only means of communication are motor cycles, bicycles and animal drawn carts the owners of which would not like to take the risk involved in crossing the gully when water is flowing. During the trade season farmers on the other side of the gully are charged a lot of money to transport their crops to the markets. Perishable crops like water melon frequently get rotten before they reach the market due to transport difficulties. The middle men avoid travelling

to buy crops in the area making life very difficult and eventually most people end up selling their produce at give away prices to the few middlemen who take the risk of going to the area. Most of their produce are lost to storage pests mainly due to poor market access caused by the gullies. This is a real concern for people in this area as it affects all aspects of their lives and livelihoods – economic and social. This is particularly important for the women especially pregnant and lactating women.

In an effort to find a solution to this problem, the elders of the village and youth representatives sought support from the Local Government Authorities in the area but to no avail. However, an agricultural project (the Participatory Water Management Project) being currently implemented in the area responded to their request by creating water diversions outside the village. This failed to address the problem because the amount of water that flows down the hill was so powerful that it cut off the blockage between the gully and the new diversion causing water to flow with more force through the village. It was after this serious event that the community turned to the DA office in Kudang (DA8) for support. AAITG financed a five-day training for 40 participants from the affected cluster in the DA (Papa Cluster) on gabion construction, erosion control and the construction of Irish Crossing at Sara Saidu. One of the participants, Musa Jallow explained how the training benefited him and his community:

“Most of us who participated in the training now have the knowledge and skills to weave and construct gabions for erosion control. As part of our practical training, we weaved 15 gabions which were filled with boulders and placed at strategic locations across the gully from the hill down to the village. Within the last 12 months, the gabions blocked the sand eroded from the hill thus gradually filling the gully. This reduced the speed of the water down the hill thus decreasing soil erosion and the loss of soil nutrients. We have begun realising better crop yields this year. We are hopeful that in few years to come, our villages will be saved from floods and the farmlands shall recover the lost nutrients so that crop yields will increase and food security improved. We are with great hope and confidence that life in Sara Saidu and the surrounding villages will soon go back to normal.

With the support from AAITG to construct Irish crossing reconnecting the villages, the highly motivated young men of the area came out in large numbers on a self-help basis. This afforded us easy access from village to village, to weekly markets and to do other valuable transactions as before. We the youths of the area have recognised the fact that we also have a role to play in bringing about development and

lasting improvements in the quality of life of our people. We have gained such confidence and self reliance thanks to the capacity building efforts and provision of supplementary resources by ActionAid. ActionAid "Jarama bui"! – ActionAid thanks so much"!!!!

### **Gabions constructed by the communities to fill up the gullies**



**Deposits of sand and other debris accumulating behind a gabion**



**A gabion at close range**

The eight communities in Papa cluster realised more income and food from their farms and this has improved the lives of the people in the area. Awareness creation on the people's rights to food was also conducted to enable them hold duty bearers more accountable.

In addition to the above support, AAITG also responded at the national level to the call to support flood victims following widespread floods experienced across the country during the rains. AAITG contributed D500,000 (£12,195) to the flood victims through the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA). Reliability of data collected at national level has greatly improved which has helped in improving the quality of plans developed and responses made. We shall however continue to work with the NDMA in supporting those affected by the floods to rebuild their livelihoods in the coming years.

### **Support to Land Reclamation for Enhancing Food Security and The Right to Food**

Nema Kunku village is located in DA9, Upper Niumi district, North Bank Region and has an estimated population of 1000 people. For many years the village has been faced with the problem of salt intrusion in their rice fields and intensive soil erosion leading to gullies in the village. This has culminated into serious decline in production of important crops for people's livelihoods such as rice, vegetables and fruit trees especially

oranges. In 2010 then construction of a spillway and a bridge was sponsored in DA9 for the people of Nema Kunku. Through this intervention, the community was able to reclaim 1,500 hectares of land fit for rice cultivation currently benefiting about 1000 people, 85% of whom are women. The project has successfully controlled saline intrusion in the rice fields. According to the rice farmers during the last PRRP, they have realized a rare increase in their production levels which was unheard of for at least more than 25 years. The hungry season has been significantly reduced. Farmers have started to grow bananas and vegetables in the intervention area. The production of other fruits such as mangoes and oranges has also improved. Furthermore, the village is now connected to another nearby village called Aljamdu where the health post is located for the provision of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services. Binta Mass a 55 year old woman narrates the benefits they accrued from the support:

"I live with my family of 11 members in Nema Kunku village. My husband and I like most other couples in this community depend on small scale farming. The males cultivate groundnuts and millet while women grow rice. The millet and rice we produce are used for family consumption and the groundnuts are sold for cash to meet other family commitments. Nema Kunku community was known for producing enough rice to serve the community for the whole year (from one harvest to the other). This however became history when salt water intrusion started into fields many years ago. The rice yields declined to a level that what we harvest to feed our families only last three months. Like most women, I alternate rice with the millet my husband cultivates from the farm but the produce only feeds my family for not more than 5 months. When food finishes, my husband collects and splits fire wood which he sells for cash and sometimes he does unskilled labour for people from which he gets money which is used to buy food while I work in the garden along with other women. We sell part of our vegetables to earn some income and the family consumes the rest. Sometimes we seek support from relatives or take credit from business men to pay back after harvest but this does not help in any way because the interest they levy is usually too high. When we pay our debts, the balance of food stock is usually very small. Our families have been in this perpetual state of food insecurity and debts for years of saline intrusion in the rice fields until ADWAC in collaboration with AAITG supported the community with the construction of a bridge and spillways. This has reduced the salinity in the rice fields which improved our yields. Like most of my fellow women, the rice I produced this year can alone feed my family for atleast five months. Combined with the millet harvest we have enough food to feed the family for the whole year. Now are vegetable and fruit

trees are all doing well due to the reduction in salt. The bridge has also provided easy access to MCH services for the neighbouring community of Aljamdu”.



**Dike and spillway constructed in Nema Kunku rice fields**

Jufureh village is another community in DA9 that has been suffering from saline intrusion in their rice fields for a long time. This community was also supported with materials and technical input to construct a 400m x 250m dyke. This considerably reduced salt intrusion in the rice fields. A total area of 200m x 125m directly benefiting 800 women farmers was reclaimed. Like Nema, the food and income situation of the people improved significantly and they are also able to access the health centre in the neighbouring village.



**Improved rice field as a result of the dikes to control salt intrusion in Jufureh**

## **Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) and People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV)**

The interventions in this programme are funded by the Global Fund. They include: implementation of participatory methodologies to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS and other community issues using STAR, Stepping Stones and the Kabilo approaches. It also includes life-skills education for in and out of school youths, students and teachers; condom distribution at community and institutional levels throughout the country; training of partner institutions in all communities; community sensitization and mobilization through the use of Mass Media, provision of Home Based Care and Psychosocial support to PLHIVs and, Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) as well as provision of Peer Health Education for Commercial and Sex Workers (CSWs).

As at end of December 2010, 62, 014 people were reached through the use of various participatory approaches highlighted above. Over 15, 000 young people aged 10 – 24 years were reached through Life-skills HIV/AIDS education in and out of school. An additional 1,255 students (15 – 24 years) and teachers were also trained on life skills HIV/AIDS education and 125 Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs) have been trained as Peer Health Educators (PHE). Across the country 398,807 condoms were distributed. A total of 396 and 3,221 PLHIVs and OVCs respectively were provided with Home Based Care (HBC) and Psychosocial and basic external support including educational and nutritional support.

Overall, the programme performed well. All the reportable indicators have been achieved except for one. This is the HBC which is due to design problem as a result a study is under way to redefine the target which was set too high.

### **A story of change**

"My Name is **Amie Jallow**; I am 35 years old and the President of the Jaatakendeya Support society. This is a society of people living with HIV/AIDS. I feel that many people are now talking about equality between men and women, those living with HIV/AIDS and those who are not which is good. But in many cases, in practice, husbands do not own up to their responsibilities towards their wives and children. My husband died but even when he was alive I served as both mother and father to our children. I was and still am the only one taking care of our children, I provide school fees for the children and they would always come to me for their needs. So when I learnt about my HIV status like many, I

was lost, I thought I will never be able to provide for my children's needs and that has affected my mind. I was always stigmatised and think that people think bad of me.

Sometimes things happen for a reason and ActionAid made me believe in that. I was counselled and advised to join the Support Society. As a member of the Society, I received nutritional and educational support for me and my children and also psychosocial support with courtesy of AAITG. AAITG supports the society's monthly meetings and this is one of the most helpful supports. Now I have regained my self esteem like most society members and I am able to provide psychosocial support to many other PLWHIVs particularly women. Now I can say I am an ambassador and sometimes I feel I am overwhelmed with demands from women living with HIV. This is why sometimes I think God made me positive so that I can understand and help others. With the intervention of AAITG, I can do a lot of things now, including income generating activities. Sometimes I used my own money to help women living with HIV. For example the last time they discharged a woman from hospital and she did not have fares to go home and another time the hospital beds were full and cannot accommodate sick women. I supported both of them with my own money because now I have money to do this from my Income Generating Activity (IGA). One of them slept here (in the support society office) for two days. Sometimes the hospital staff call me if they have problems with any patient. AAITG has contributed a lot in my life particularly in helping me regain my self esteem. Thinking about the HIV disease alone can kill you if you do not have someone to give you support as we have from ActionAid. That is why I cannot say anything to AAITG but thank you and only Allah will pay you."

## ***2.2 Strengthening of Rights Consciousness, Organisation, and Mobilisation of Poor and Excluded People (Rights Holders): Examine Specifically the Shifts in the Position, Power and Rights of Women and Girls***

### **Rights Consciousness and Awareness Creation to Enhance Community Empowerment**

ActionAid International The Gambia (AAITG) has worked with a consortium on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW&Gs). The consortium comprises 6 organisations with a comparative advantage in various areas: reproductive health and counselling, mobile film shows, community development and puppet shows on various issues affecting women and girls. The consortium during this period, conducted sensitization workshops on violence against women and girls among 60 Women Leaders, 90 trained Peer Health Educators, 210 members of Girl

Power and training of 30 Traditional Communicators who did role plays, songs and drama performances reaching out to over 200 people and 60 Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs). The sensitizations were aimed at creating awareness and raising people's consciousness and promoting dialogue on the effects of VAW&Gs. The main achievement of this consortium is working with strategic stakeholders such as Local Government Authorities and other de-centralised structures to harness synergies at community level and build linkages that will contribute to the attainment of women and girl's empowerment and liberation from all forms of violation against their human rights.

The 16 days activism was also observed in the Gambia with support from AAITG. The main highlight of the campaign was an **Open Clinic Day** organised by the Gambia Family Planning Association (GFPA), a key partner of AAITG. This open clinic day took the form of sensitisation programmes on reproductive health rights, violence against women and girls, girl-child education and HIV/AIDS. It was attended by over 80 women and girls. After the discussions and presentations by consortium members, health workers and People Living with HIV/AIDS, the women were so interested that they requested to have access to services. In this regard HIV counselling and testing was conducted for 10 women, cervical cancer test carried out on 5 women who will receive their results around March 2011, 2 women were registered for antenatal clinic. A woman who suffered domestic violence (beaten by her husband and with an X-ray showing broken ribs) came out to seek support. She was counselled and referred to the Social Welfare department. Another woman reported her partner (a man) for molesting their one year old daughter. This woman was also referred to the Social Welfare Dept and is now separated from her partner. She is temporarily living with the child at the Shelter for Children while the department of Social Welfare promised to take the necessary actions for the man to be accountable for his actions. One HIV positive woman (member of MUTAPOLA, Gambia) made a presentation of her experience on knowing her status and living with the virus. There was a puppet show on girl child education which generated a lot of discussion. On the 26-27 November a sensitisation programme of 60 Traditional Birth Attendants on effects of VAW&G was conducted by GFPA. Discussions were made on their role to prevent VAW and how they can identify different forms of girl child abuse.

The world Aids Day celebration was also marked with a series of activities supported by ActionAid. HIV Messages were sent by SMS from three GSM service providers to all their subscribers. The Messages read:

**“Be responsible: Stop AIDS, I Know MY Status DO You? , With HIV&AIDS, No one is a bystander- You are either infected or affected, Aids is real- Discuss with your family, Stop Violence against Women - Stop HIV&AIDs”.**

Some of these messages were also printed on T-shirts and stickers. World Aids Day was also marked with a march past of schools, voluntary organisations, the security forces, health workers and municipal councils in all the five regions with the central one in the Capital. Speeches were delivered by the Vice President, the WHO representative, UNAIDS, the Lord Mayor of Banjul and other stakeholders. The event was funded in part by ActionAid International The Gambia through the Global Fund HIV/AIDS Round 8 project in addition to all the regional celebrations.

The Women’s Bill was also launched on November 30<sup>th</sup> and the WRs theme in collaboration with the Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia (FLAG) will support the dissemination of the bill. The operational plan for UNAIDS ACTION framework was also launched on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Women’s Bureau is taking the lead on this. On 2<sup>nd</sup> December, a validation of the report on the findings of the research on Female Genital Cutting in The Gambia was conducted. The document is being finalised and will be circulated when completed.

Since 2006 the incidence of rape cases reported has been on the increase DA8. This is a serious form of Gender Base Violence (GBV). It is against this back drop that staff of DA8 mounted campaigns to curb the incidences GBV. The campaign included the training and strengthening of Women Pressure Groups (WPG) which included equipping them with communication gadgets (TV screen, DVD, Codeless microphone, a generator and stabilizer) to facilitate campaigning on gender related violence. The WPGs conducted sensitization campaigns which targeted women’s groups, traditional birth attendants, religious leaders, local authorities, opinion leaders and the general public.

Mrs. Yama Touray a 45 year old female president of Jareng apex women’s pressure group narrates some of the success stories achieved during their outreach programmes. These ranged from resolving land disputes to rearranging marriages and mediation between families, and phone-in programmes held at the Brikama-Ba community radio. In DA11, 700 people (400 women and 300 men) participated in campaigns on gender

based violence which resulted to the formation of two other women pressure groups in the area comprising of 40 females and 32 males. It is interesting that men are part of the WPGs but this helps in the communication with other men when men talk the language of women. Below is a picture of a pressure group receiving communication equipment.



Photo of equipment being handed over to the Niamina West Yiriwa Kafo President Mr Foday Sowe

### **Story of change in DA 8: Impact of the Pressure Groups**

Until recently it is a taboo to talk about rape cases or to even report rape cases in most local communities in The Gambia. People strongly protect girl's virginity and disclosing cases of rape are considered a serious hindrance to have a husband as this will tarnish the image of a girl. It was equally important for adult women not to disclose rape cases for the same reason. Loosing virginity before marriage means a lot morally, religiously and culturally and also most of the time it happens in the locality where almost everybody is a relative. Very often the victims have fear and are ashamed to stand in a law court or at a hearing giving testimony of how the case happened. There is a lot of insensitivity to the victim as the focus is often on the resultant effect of tarnishing the image of the family and

the relationships. The intervention by the court is mainly a way of breaking the culture of silence for rape cases so that others will not emulate the wrongful practice.

Meetings organised by the WPGs attracted a lot of interest and debate in the communities. Issues discussed include among others early & forced marriages, right to inheritance by women, wife battering and divorce, forms of discrimination and FGM. The women pressure group members are also often involved in conflict mediation on the above issues. One of the women who benefited from the women's pressure group sensitization programmes was courageous enough to report her rape case as narrated below.

"My name is Ndey Mbaye. I am about 40 years old and married to one Mot Njomi residing in Mbayen village, Niamina East district, Central River Region South. It was one morning I was going for fire wood collection with my baby sitter and my child on my back, I met one Karimu Cham a native of Chamen and son of the Alkalo (village head). He asked me by saying "Ndey where are you going"? I replied, am going to collect fuel wood. He said "oh with these kids"? I replied in the positive after which he went away.

Whilst in the bush collecting fuel wood my baby sitter called my attention and said a man was coming towards us. When I looked up I suddenly saw an undressed man coming closer. I recognized the face and said to him don't come to me or else I will hurt you with my axe. He didn't listen and then he took a big stick and quickly hit me on my neck. I suddenly fell down and he forceful had sex with me. He ran away to my own village and went directly to my husband's house pretending he was coming from a nearby village.

I quickly went to report the matter to the culprit's father but he didn't respond. I then went to my husband and reported the matter to him. He told me "Karimu (the culprit) just left here. Are you sure he is the one"? I said yes! Fortunately Karimu was in the village then the elders called him and questioned him but he objected that he didn't do anything to me. One of husband's elder brothers called the police and they quickly responded and arrested him and took both of us to the health centre for medical checkups. The medical personnel confirmed that he had forceful sex because he had bruises and sperm on his private part and I was also found in a similar condition. He was taken to the police station and detained. After two days he escaped from police custody. The police followed him up at the village and re-arrested him. Whilst waiting for a vehicle to pick him up he ran again but this time round into the Republic of Senegal and since then and up till now he is no were to be found. The police officer who came to arrest him went back to the police station and

reported the matter. The officer in command at the police station requested for the police officer to be arrested and put behind bars due to his negligence of duty until Karimu was seen. The case is still not finalized and the family of Karimu is still searching out for him for the case to continue. I say a big thank you to the women's pressure group and the various sensitization and training activities accorded us on gender based violence which gave me and most of my fellow women in this community and beyond the opportunity to become fully aware of our rights as women and has empowered us more and more to pursue those rights through collective action as and when the need arises. Since this case happened here, we women are now quite free of rape in this community and the surrounding villages".

Actually there is no statics showing the rate of rape cases because some victims do hide it due to the stigma attached to it. Since the intervention in 2006 we only received one case in 2010 by the said NDEY MBAYE. During her case one lady testified in the same village that it happened to her and caused by the same man almost 5 years ago and this was hidden by her. We can assume that NDEY's case gave her the courage to voice it out.

Another important intervention carried out in DA8 is the capacity building of 70 Community Human Rights Facilitators (CHRFs) selected from the seven Clusters of Jareng and Kudang Wards. These were trained on basic concepts of peace building (conflict prevention, management, mediation and resolution). Specific issues emphasised included recognition of early warning signs of conflict, issues on women, peace and security (United Nations Resolution 1325) and sexual violence (UN Resolution 1820). This was done in collaboration with the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE) and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP).

NCCE provided training on citizenship issues as enshrined in the 1997 constitution such as democracy, responsible citizenship, fundamental human rights, right to life, right to personal liberty, right to property, right to security, right to protection of the law, rights of women, Rights of children and the disabled, freedoms, voting and elections. They were equipped with knowledge (accuracy of information) and skills in delivery to enhance participation of communities. This greatly helped to prepare the Facilitators for effective community sensitisation.

## **REFLECT and Literacy for Empowerment of Women**

REFLECT is a participatory approach for engaging illiterate communities in development activities. It is used to enable illiterates to assess and analyze their own situations within context using symbols and sketches. A baseline survey to assess the mothers' understanding of their roles in the school management and within the school environment was conducted using the REFLECT approach. A ten-day training of 18 participants from six Mothers' Clubs from the three DAs (DAs 8, 9 & 11) was conducted at the Rural Farmers Agricultural Training Centre in Jenoi. The objective was to engage mothers' club members in Reflect and Adult Education, including literacy for social transformation and Action Planning. The outcome of this training will inform our engagements with School Management Committees in the 3 DAs and also the participation of mothers in the school feeding programmes using school canteens for improved feeding as a pilot. This will cover six schools (2 per DA) for one year. The lessons learnt will be shared with the Ministry of Basic Education as part of our policy influencing activities. Good practices will be replicated in other schools in our DAs and in schools in other parts of the country. Six literacy facilitators were identified from the six pilot schools and trained for 10 days on REFLECT and literacy on writing skills in their own local languages (Wololof, Pularr and Mandinka).

## **Enhancing Community Empowerment through STAR**

One of the activities implemented under the HIV/AIDS support programme explained above is the STAR Circles. This is a participatory approach which combines REFLECT and Stepping-Stones approaches. The main purposes of using STAR is to provide communities with skills to analyse their own circumstances so that they are better able to influence decisions that affect their lives at all levels; understand the mode of infection and prevention of HIV/AIDS. In addition to the capacity building training for the circle members in each circle are supported with additional funds to implement IGAs. AAITG is currently supporting 18 STAR circles throughout the country.

### ***2.3 Increased awareness, organisation, and mobilisation of civil society in support of rights of poor and excluded people (rights holders and allies) - (examine specifically the shifts in the position, power and rights of women and girls)***

#### **Strengthening of Networks of Women Living with HIV&AIDS (Mutapola)**

The Mutapola network has become a platform for continuous sharing of experience and best practices among HIV positive women through regular meetings and training workshops and also promotes the spirit of self-reliance within the membership through the introduction of regular monthly subscriptions by individual members and engagement in various Income Generating Activities (IGAs). It facilitates work with the PLHIVs to encourage positive living. Members of Mutapola receive on-going training on Information Technology (Microsoft word, excel and power point presentation skills) as well as social work to make them employable and also to provide psychosocial support at community level. Mutapola has been very instrumental in mobilising other PLHIVs and also on advocating for the rights of PLHIVs in terms of access to treatment and other forms of support.

AAITG has used the concept of rights respecting schools to work with National Assembly to assess the operations of the Madrassa which are now recognized as part of Basic education. The National Assembly Select Committee for Education and Training was supported to carry out visits to more than 20 Madrassas (instruction in Arabic language) nationwide. Some of the observations included among others low remuneration of teachers in most of the institutions visited, high number of untrained teachers and absence of lesson notes.

The executive of the Gambia Teachers' Union was also supported to conduct a Meet the Teachers Tour during which the executive was able to meet and discuss with teachers in randomly selected schools nationwide on issues related to teacher conditions and performance. This tour report informs the GTU on advocacy issues in relation to teachers' welfare.

#### **Livestock Owners Associations formed in DA11 (Niamina West and Dankunku Districts)**

Livestock Owners Associations were formed in the two districts within the DA. That of the Niamina West district is called "Galleh Ainabe" and that of

Niamina Dankunku is called "Beyanti Kafo". A 12 member Executive Committee consisting of both males and females were elected for each of associations. As part of the governance instruments each association formulated a constitution and were registered at the Attorney General's chambers. This was followed by the opening of bank accounts. Each of the 12-man executive Committees was trained on organizational management relating to individual roles and functions of office holders, collective roles and responsibilities of association members, administrative functions, common diseases prevalent in the district, calendar of disease treatment, communication, coordination and networking. One of the tasks implemented by the Associations was the conduct of a livestock census in the two districts the outcome of which activity will help inform their planning for advocacy and fundraising.

***2.4 Increased realisation and fulfilment of rights by duty bearers through changes to laws, policies, institutions, and practices which sustain poverty and injustice (examine specifically the shifts in the position, power and rights of women and girls)***

**Campaigns on Violence against Women and Girls**

Series of activities for increased awareness on violence against women and girls were implemented. These include community sensitization programmes targeting specific sectors of the communities such as the religious leaders, security personnel, area councillors, chiefs and village heads. This was implemented by the Violence Against, Women consortium (set up by AAITG) and the Social Welfare Department, the Child Welfare Unit of the Gambia Police Force and the Child Protection Alliance. This was implemented in all regions covering an estimated population of 100,000 women and men. Topics covered include: implications of forced and early marriage, domestic violence, rape and child sexual abuse. As a result of the continuous campaigns cited above on violence against women and girls carried out by the consortium, the culture of silence instilled in women due to patriarchy is gradually fading away. Women and girls now talk openly about violence against them and their families.

## **Mobilization of Women to Mark International Days**

Women's organisations and individual women were supported to commemorate the International days (International Women's Day, Rural Women's Day and World Food Day). AAITG collaborated with the FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture to mark the Rural Women's Day and the World food Day. Over 300 women from 45 districts across the country turned out to mark the event. During the Rural women's day celebration, women were grouped by district to reflect on why they think they are victims of hunger and what they think could be the long-term solutions to ending hunger. The HungerFree scorecard was also launched during the World Food day. The International Women's day was celebrated in collaboration with the women's wing of the Gambia Teachers' union.



**Members of The Gambia Teachers Union  
Woman's Wing**



**Women farmers displaying their placards  
during the Rural Women's Day Celebration**

### **Progress Against Organisational Objectives:**

AAITG has now acquired Associate status and the 12-member National Board (7 females and 4 males) was inaugurated in August 2010 alongside the launching of the Country Strategy Paper III. The National Board have already been orientated and trained along with members of the Senior Management Team. The current Country Strategy Paper (CSPIII) is planned for a mid-term review in 2011. This will help the Associate realign its strategy to the newly developed AAI strategy.

A staff retreat was also held to enhance exchanges by staff on various issues related to our work. A total of 41 members of staff attended this programme. This also gave us the opportunity to review key policy documents like the HROD, Finance and governance policy instruments.

In an effort to fulfil our accountability requirements, AAITG carried out a Participatory Programme Review and Meeting (PPRM) in all the three DAs (DAs 8, 9 & 11) and with other key partner organisations including the Wulli Association for Development (WAD), Rice Farmers Cooperative Society (RFCS), Group Juboo and the Youth Ambassadors for Peace (YAP). PPRM is an on-going exercise in which AAITG and partners including the communities reflect over joint programmes implemented during the year and their effects on the lives of the poor and excluded people. It is a participatory programme assessment mainly geared towards carrying out reality checks, determining whether the programme is going on well or otherwise and the related reasons/causes and any policy implications. It further helps to assess staff capacity to deliver programmes effectively and efficiently and more so encourages learning and sharing among staff, partners and communities on various field experiences regarding programme/policy work. This interactive process enables AAITG to be better informed and therefore in a better position to develop appropriate strategies geared towards adding value to programme delivery. The results of this exercise along with other programme reports feed into the annual PRRP and annual agency reports.

In an effort to build capacities of its key partner organisations, AAITG carried a partner capacity assessment for 17 partner organisations which report has been validated. This was followed by training of 27 executives representing 9 CBOs on organisational management, governance, record keeping and bookkeeping. In addition, quarterly supervision/monitoring visits have been carried out to partners, communities and DAs as a way of assessing progress, determining challenges and providing programme support/advice where necessary.

In an effort to intensify our partnership fundraising, a visit to the AA/UK was organised for the fundraising manager. This helped to establish a stronger relationship between AA/UK and AAITG Fundraising departments. We have so far uploaded over 5 Concept Notes and Project Proposals unto the HIVE and have organised capacity building training for over 25 participants from partner organizations and 5 AAITG staff on concept notes and projects were development. Already we have received three concept notes from three of our partners who participated in the training. An internal donor scoping of the UN Agencies was also conducted involving the World Food Programme, UNDP and FAO. Partial funding of

£20,008 was received from UK for an education project (the items selected by the donor for implementation commenced during the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 2010). A documentary film producer has been identified for a documentary on the Mothers' Clubs as part of our fundraising efforts which is planned to commence during the First Quarter of 2011. AAITG has also submitted an education project proposal to AA Sweden and we have been shortlisted on the Operation a Day's Work 2012 and the outcome will be relayed to us in March 2011. In trying to build partner and staff capacities in fundraising, we have provided support to the education theme during two Reflect training programmes for the Mothers Clubs in our efforts to raise awareness of over 20 Mothers Clubs for DAs 8, 9 and 11. AAITG has also participated in a teleconference with Funding Affiliates such as Brazil, U.K, U.S, Sweden, Greece, Italy and The Netherlands to name a few, in our efforts to raise awareness of the opportunities and funding challenges at AAITG.

In an effort to increase our visibility and profile in-country and beyond, AAITG signed a contract agreement with the Gambia Radio and Television Services in 2010 for the airing of radio panel phone-in discussions on ActionAid's work and that of its partners. The programmes featured staff of ActionAid and partners and attracted a lot of listeners who called in to commend AAITG for its work and suggested ways of improvement. In all, six programmes were aired, one every fortnight reaching an estimated population of 500,000 people.

A 15 minute documentary on AAITG since its establishment in 1970 was developed and edited in-house and press advisories issued. Copies of the CSPIII, 2009 Annual and PRRP reports were also printed in-house, bound and distributed to key partners and other stakeholders including government to enhance understanding and awareness of what we do. Two newsletters were also published in 2010 and over one thousand copies distributed to partners including government, NGOs, CBO's and donor agencies.

### **Addressing the challenges and gaps experienced in 2009 – what did we do in 2010 to improve/rectify/move forward?**

AAITG in an effort to address challenges and gaps experienced in 2009 continues to provide regular supervision and coaching for key partner agencies with regards raising awareness on rights issues, record keeping and fundraising to reduce their dependence on AAITG. Partner community apex organisations have been encouraged to develop a register of

members and to provide membership cards to their members for proper recording of individual transactions at the level of their respective apexes. Support has been provided to STAR circles and some of the DRR projects towards the implementation of their action plans which emanated from their circle or DRR project engagements. AAITG also continues to effectively manage with the global financial, food and fuel crises especially fluctuations of the exchange rate (Dalasi to the Pound Sterling or Dollar). Partner agencies and DAs have been encouraged to further strengthen seed/cereal banking schemes so as to help bridge the gap of food insecurity as a result of climate change and its effects. Government and other development players have also been lobbied for initiating vibrant employment opportunities and entrepreneurship skills development initiatives for youths in the rural areas so as to curb the phenomenon of rural/urban drift which has been on the increase over the past years. AAITG also supported the organisation of Annual General Meetings for the apex organisations in DAs 8 and 11 as a way of promoting accountability and good governance within these organisations. Through these processes, members of the apexes were able to make their leadership give updates on activities implemented, achievements made, challenges and future plans. They were also able to decide on whether to maintain their leadership or effect changes in accordance with their group constitutional requirements.



## **2010 Year End Finance Report Pack**

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### **Financial analysis narrative, including gender budget analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis**

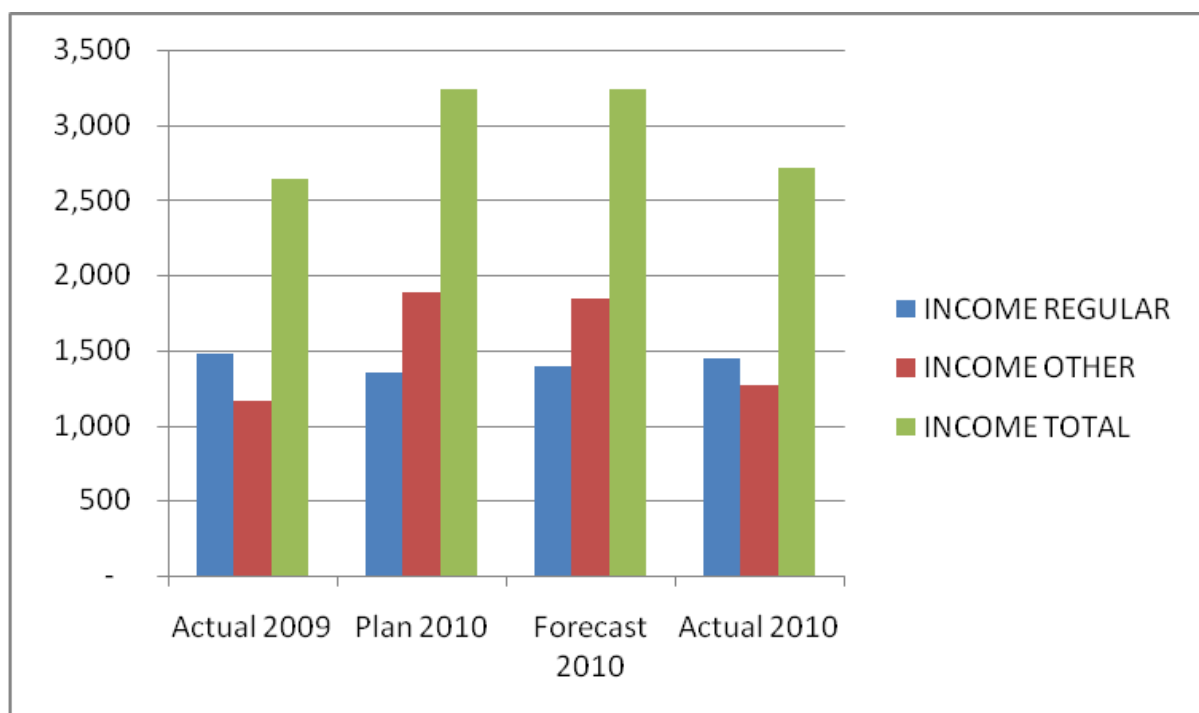
#### **Financial Narrative**

This finance narrative provides commentary on significant financial issues related to the 2010 financial performance of ActionAid The Gambia. Relevant variances against plan and forecast are discussed. The narrative also attempts to provide analysis of various performance trends.

## Summary of movements in income expenditure and funds

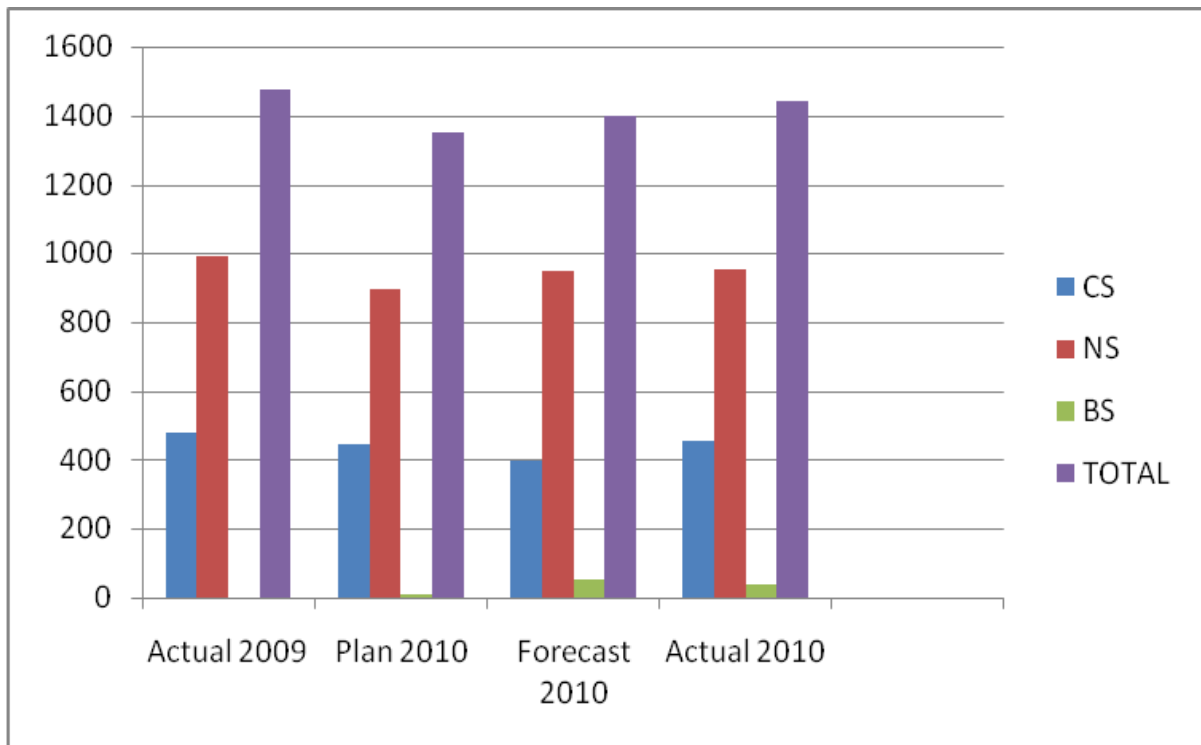
### INCOME

The total income of **£2,713k** including transfers in 2010 has shown a growth of **3%** compared to 2009. This growth is mainly attributed to successful fundraising. The CP secured significant funding from Global Fund Round 8 HIV/AIDS project. However, the total income was **16%** below the plan and forecast due to the over estimation of the Global fund budget.



### Regular income

The total regular income fell by **2%** compared to the previous year's income. This is attributed to the net effect of the global economic and financial crisis.



The UK Child Sponsorship income grew by **2%** against plan but fell by **5%** against forecast. The UK Child Sponsorship income was ahead of plan by **14%** but Italy was below plan by **5%** resulting in the overall rise of **2%** against plan.

The Next Step income was **6%** above the plan and **0.5%** above forecast due to less than anticipated attrition.

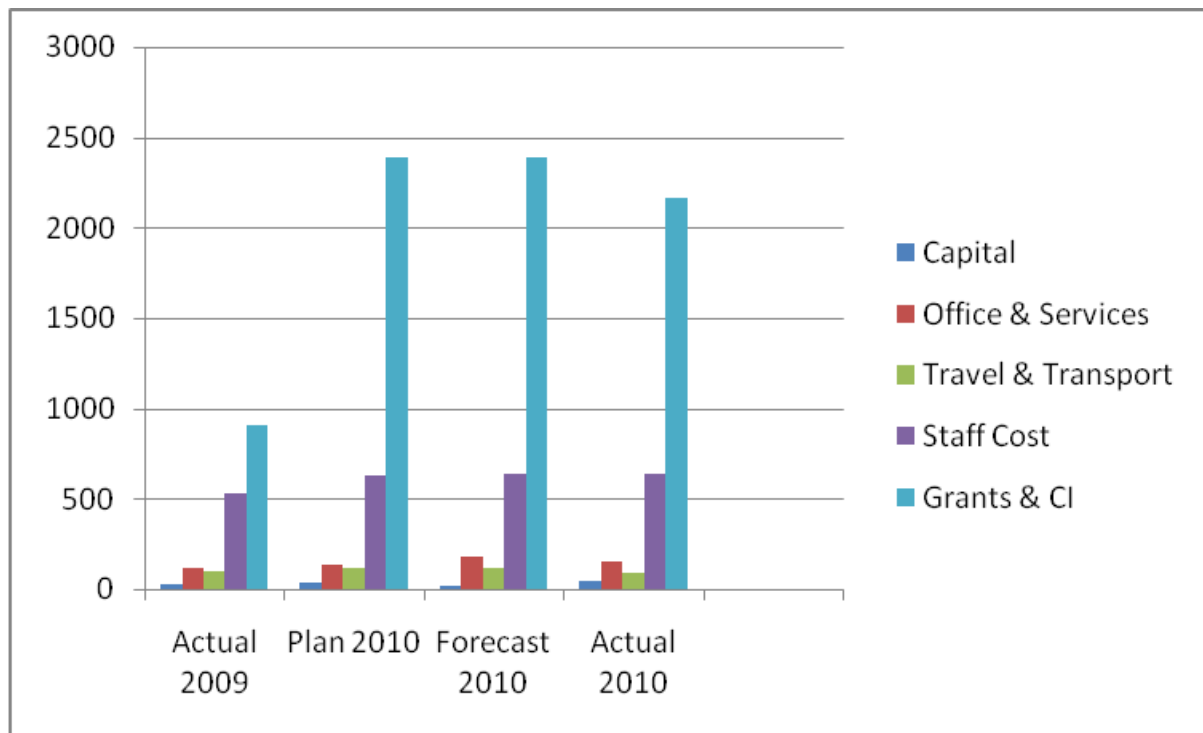
### Partnership Fundraising

**2010** was another successful year for The Gambia. The CP was able to raise £1,215k, equalled to **45%** of total income in this category. The major project for which funding was secured was Global Fund Round 8 (HIV/AIDS). The Global Fund HIV/AIDS Grant contract was signed initially for 2 years with a possibility of extending to five years. This has significantly shifted the income mix ratio of the CP This will continue to improve in 2011 and years to come. The contract value of the first phase (2 years) of this grant is over €3.995k.

### EXPENDITURE

The total expenditure of the CP at **£3,105k** was **6%** below the plan and **7%** below the forecast mainly due to drop in income from the Global fund.

## Natural cost classification

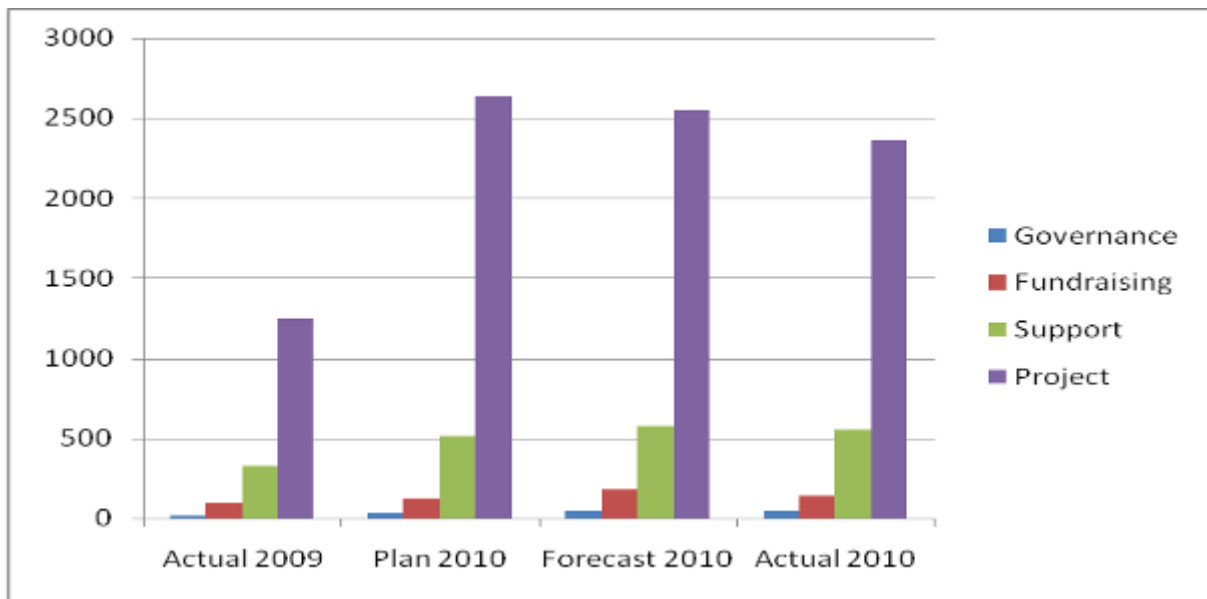


All cost ratios under the natural costs classification have shown significant improvement compared to the previous year. Grants and community inputs have increased by **139%** due the HIV/AIDS Project of the Global Fund resulting in **22%** increase in staff costs and **21%** increase in Travel, office and capital costs against 2009. However, total costs have decreased by **6%** against plan and **8%** against forecast due mainly to ambitious plans and forecast for the Global fund project.

## Statutory costs analysis

AATG's spend by statutory costs indicate that all the ratios have shown significant improvement as in the case of natural cost classification. Project costs increased by **89%**, whereas support costs increased by **72%**. Overall support cost were **18%**, fundraising **5%** and Governance costs **2%** of total costs. We expect further improvement in these costs as we intensify our intervention in the HIV/AIDS programme of the Global fund and raise more partnership official funding.

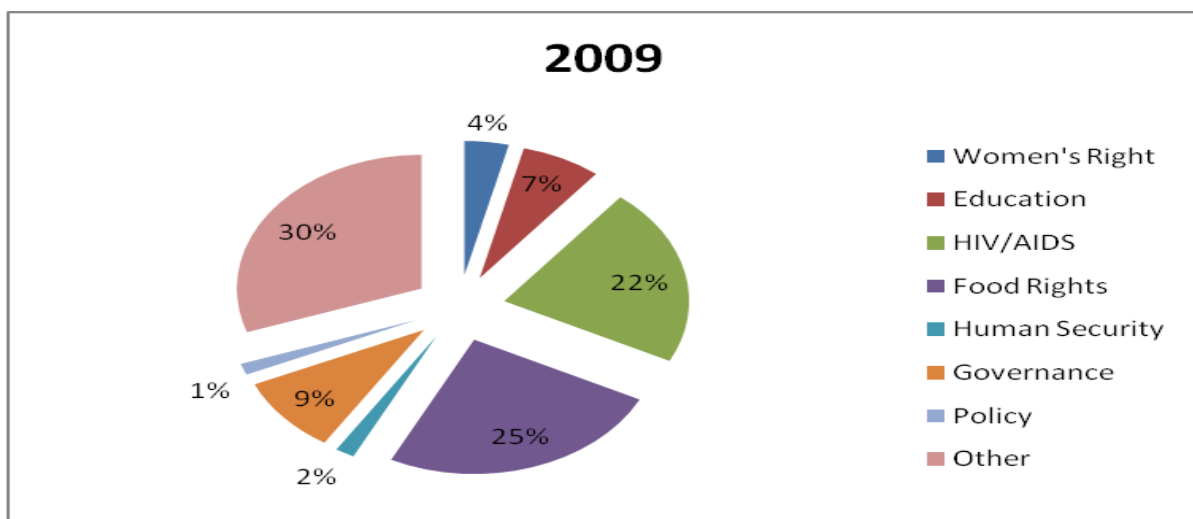
## Statutory costs analysis

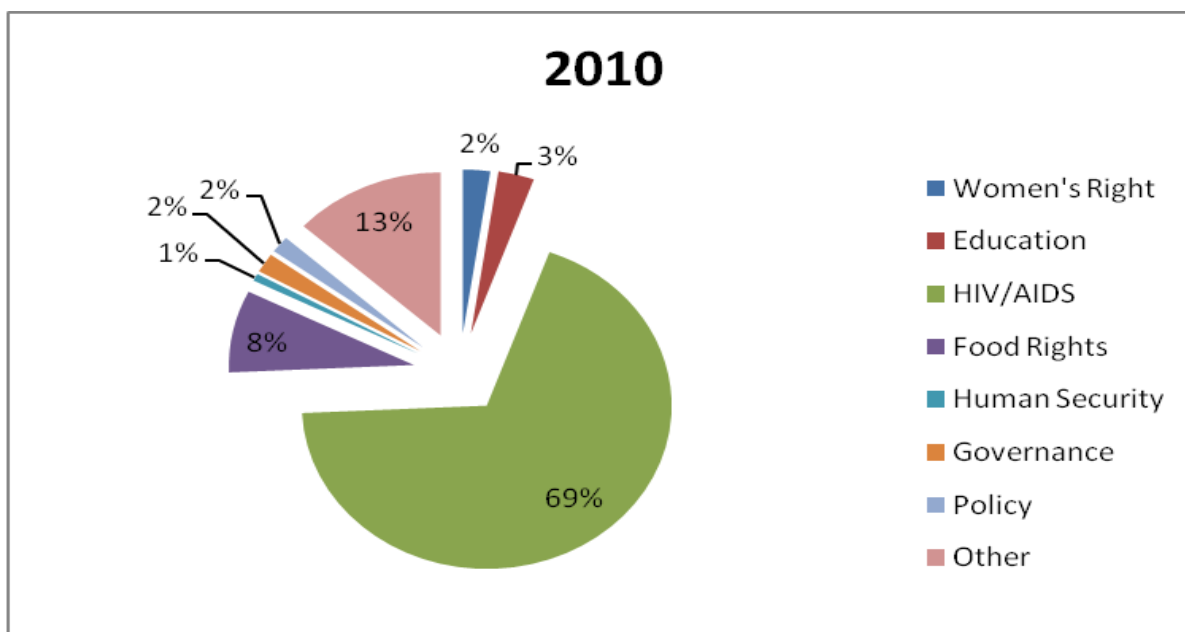


## Project costs by themes

Significant changes have been observed in **2010** on percentage of project spending by themes.

- HIV/AIDS increased by **503%** from **2009** because of the Global fund Round 8 HIV/AIDS project.
- Women's right costs increased by **17%** and Policy by **129%** whilst interventions in Food rights, Education and Governance have all dropped as a result of the fall in Regular giving income.
- Please see the chart below for more details.





### **Closing regular reserves**

The CP began the year with positive reserves and this has continued in **2010** with total reserves of **£673k** equalled to **2.9 months** expenditure of **2011**. All our DAs are with positive reserves except for Guinea Bissau.

### **Closing partner balances**

The closing partner fund balances are significant due to the size of the Global Fund. We had received two quarters disbursement in advance at the end of the year from the fund for the Round 8 HIV/AIDS project.

### **Unconfirmed income raised**

Although the CP exerted quite a lot of effort in developing concept papers and projects, funds were not secured for unconfirmed income.

### **Unplanned income raised**

The CP raised unplanned income of **£226k** in Guinea Bissau for HIV/AIDS work and **£11k** from IFSN.

### **Fundraising costs**

Fundraising costs were in line with the plan and funded from the project funds raised and allocation of CP level funds.

## **Movements in head count**

Four additional staff were employed for the Global fund project in 2010 and only one staff left during the year.

## **Foreign exchange movements**

The actual average exchange rate was D43.00 against a plan rate of D41.00 to one Sterling Pound. This was about 5% depreciation in the local currency. The Finance function monitored very closely the exchange variation during the year and alerted the budget holders on possible actions in order to avoid any significant over/under spending. The finance function was also able to rigorously negotiate with banks in exchanging our foreign currencies into Dalasi.

## **Management accounts**

Monthly management accounts had been produced and distributed to all budget holders while quarterly accounts were discussed in the SMT. All required reports such as debtor balances, CD's expenditure claims, quarterly balance confirmation, etc had been produced and submitted on time to the Regional office and AAI as appropriate.

## **Donor reporting and feedback**

Quarterly financial reports had been produced for the Global fund Round 8 HIV/AIDS project in line with project requirements. So far our performance has been up to project expectations.

## **Partner reports**

Although there have been some improvements in receiving partner reports compared to previous years, we still have a long way to go to ensure timely and accurate reporting from partners. The main challenge in this case is the capacity of the CBOs and local NGOs we are working with. In response to this challenge, a capacity need assessment was carried out in 17 partner organisations, most of whom are CBOs and alliances/networks. The way forward is to develop a capacity building plan based on the assessment outcome and implement it in the current year.

## **Changes in CP management during 2010**

The Head of HR/OD left the organisation in 2010 and her position at SMT was occupied by her assistant. The Head of Women's Right theme was appointed and welcomed at SMT

## **Follow up of Internal Audit recommendations**

The internal audit recommendations have been followed up rigorously. The following are key internal audit recommendations and comments on the progress:

"...In 2007 support costs accounted for 31% of the CP's expenditure... The CD should undertake a restructuring exercise to streamline cost in line with the CP's requirements..."

The CP 's support cost ratio is on the decline due to increase in partnership funds and at end of 2009 it had dropped to 19% and expected to drop even further to about 16% by 2010.

"At the half-year stage Other Debtors in the balance sheet was GBP 121k. In reality these are not debts owed to AATG but Partner grants yet to be accounted for. Grants are required to be expensed once made but there is also a need to monitor Partner costs which can be done in different ways. This treatment is not ideal, but will not cause any real issues as long as none of the debtor balances exist at the year end. The Head of Finance should make the necessary adjustments to truly reflect the position with regards to grants and other debtors. Partner costs can be monitored through a separate ledger in SUN where the plans can be matched with the actual costs."

The debtor balances have been reviewed and necessary adjustments made. The CP's debtor balance as at the year end is £11k.

"...The process of granting imprest (floats) in the Guinea Bissau programme needs to be reviewed to reduce the risk of financial mismanagement. Staff appear to be given significant sums of money which are not retired in good time. Currently, the balance on the account of one staff member is £5,087 and further analysis indicated that much of the amount has been outstanding since 2006... An appropriate approval mechanism needs to be established within the finance function to give assurance on the efficient utilization of funds. The Head of Finance should review the process

for approving imprests at the Bissau programme to ensure that the appropriate level of approval is sought from the Country office in The Gambia.”

The above issued had since been addressed. Imprests and floats held by the Guinea Bissau staff have been reviewed and cleared. Monitoring visits have made to ensure that appropriate level of control exists.

### **External audit**

The 2009 external audit had been performed and there was no qualification. The audit is required by law.

### **Process improvement target for the Finance**

To produce monthly and quarterly management accounts in 10 and 15 working days after month end receptively. These targets have not been met at times due to delays in receiving FIS from Guinea Bissau and sometimes unexpected work load. However, significant improvements have been achieved in respect of producing management accounts regularly, compared to previous years.

### **National board**

The AATG has its board inaugurated in August 2010

### **Training for the Finance**

4 staff in the finance department are undergoing training in ACCA on a sandwich basis.

### **PRRP feedback**

All the Finance team participated in the 2010 PRRP. Issues related to finance have been highlighted during this process:

- The governance of some local NGOs and CBOs we are working with is felt rather weak. Some organisations do not have legally elected or represented executives. Members of such organisations who participated in the PRRP also lamented that information flow (including financial reports, budget) to members is not transparent. Some members are not aware of funds transferred from AATG to their organisations.
- Some partners, especially CBOs have a capacity gap in their financial management systems, which requires immediate response.

It is therefore, absolutely necessary that capacity-building on organisational management for good governance and improved operational systems is needed for partners to manage themselves properly and to manage their partnership relations in a better way.

### **Best practice**

The Finance team is working very closely with thematic leads and fund raising unit from the beginning of proposal development through budget negotiation with donors. This provides an opportunity to the Finance team to clearly understand the nature of the project and its requirements in order to make necessary preparations for the implementation of the projects.

### **Allocation of CP level funds**

The CP has a resource allocation committee, composed of relevant Senior Management and Theme representatives, which allocates national level funds (mainly Next Step income) to various themes and functions on annual basis in a transparent and participatory manner. The activity plans of each theme and function is reviewed and priorities set for the CP. Available funds are allocated according to these agreed priorities and the thematic and function heads requested to adjust their plan & budget accordingly.

### **Up-date on Finance hygiene plans**

Prepared and submitted 2009 year-end financial reports to AAI and the Regional office in time.

1. Ensured uploading of the 2010 budget in to the Sun System in order to facilitate budget control and subsequent production of management accounts.
2. Liaised with external auditor for the audit of AATG's 2009 accounts for statutory requirements. The audit report was unqualified.
3. Ensured that timely management accounts (monthly and quarterly) are produced and distributed to budget holders and discussed.
4. Ensured timely submission of the bi-annual financial reports to Regional office and AAI.

5. Lead the 2011-13 Three Year Planning process and ensured timely submission and up-lading of the plan on Alps tracker.
6. Ensured timely submission of financial reports to the Global Fund Round 8 HIV/AIDS Project.
7. Continued to provide strategic financial management by analysing the financial performance of the CP and discussing financial issues with ED and SMT.
8. Continued to follow up and implement the internal and external audit recommendations from the previous audit exercises.



### **Lessons that may help us/AA improve our work – lessons we would like to share with other AA programmes including lessons from the failures.**

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The Puppet show organised by the consortium on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW&Gs) attracted a lot of interest and stimulated discussions. It enabled the women to participate more fully without being shy. The consortium should continue to use puppet shows for sensitisation on VAW&Gs. It has also been learnt that the STAR circles could serve as entry points for the land campaigns and also as a thematic linkage between HIV/AIDS and Women's Rights. Working with/through partners calls for hard work and patience in order to meet deadlines or accomplish activities within timeframes. Weak capacities of some partners make it difficult to meet programme quality.

Raising funds to adequately respond to disasters in terms of meeting all the needs of the affected people can be a very difficult task. Many donors prefer to respond to emergencies and disasters by giving relief support as opposed to funding prevention and protection programmes.

The weak capacity of apexes to manage themselves effectively and to raise funds independent of AAITG requires maximum attention if we are to achieve meaningful impact in our development endeavours. The membership of the apexes are mostly women, therefore deliberate effort must be made to support women to occupy the leadership of the apexes. The effective participation of Partners in the process of development initiatives is better achieved through capacity building, thus the apexes in

the DA require sustained support in this area. The sustainability and ownership of our development interventions must be premised on mechanisms mutually discussed and agreed with Partners. Improving transparency and accountability of apexes to the local communities (governance systems) creates a better understanding and ensures effective mobilization for activities initiated.



## **Contribution of our work to international AAI work (to the international strategy), campaigns, policy work**

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As part of the preparations for the World Social Forum (WSF) held in Dakar in 2011, AITG supported the national steering committee of The Gambia Social Forum in planning and facilitating the participation of the Gambian delegation (about 40 people) in the mini (mock) forum in Ziquinchor. In the area of Climate change, AAITG supported a one-year Radio sensitisation programme (climate talk) which started in August 2010 and is still on-going. The theme – Rethinking our future was aimed at raising awareness on climate change issues and impact and more importantly build a youth constituency and integrate young people in climate policy advocacy and campaigns. The activities include, panel discussions, recast interviews of people in the streets, farmers, university lecturers and motorists. An estimated population of 300,000 people have been directly/indirectly reached by this programme.

The AA HRBA resource book has been launched. Over 60 participants including our key partners, staff and other stakeholders attended. 18 members from across partners and AAITG were selected to form a practice group to lead the expansion process further.

AAITG participated in the Food Price Rise study commissioned by the International Food Rights Theme Kenya, Pakistan and The Gambia.

Our international engagements for the Education theme include participation in the Anglophone West Africa Education financing training in Sept 2010. AAITG also participated in the West and Central Africa Education Network meeting held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2010 during which issues around the Draft CREST manual and sponsorship were discussed. We also hosted staff and partners of ActionAid International Nigeria (AAIN) who visited The Gambia to learn from the Gambia's integration of Madrassa into the formal system and the role of the

Mothers' clubs in enhancing retention of girls in rural schools. The team were met by senior members of the MOBSE who also supported AAITG to make the visit a success. AAITG In collaboration with the Network of Participatory Methodologies Practitioners (NPMP) (which was set up by AAITG), hosted the West Africa Network meeting by PAMOJA (a name given to all RFLECT practitioners) in The Gambia.

The Women's right theme collaborated with Food rights to support the Journey To End Hunger and participated in the Women and Land Shared Learning Forum held in Kenya where we presented a paper on Women and Land in The Gambia. At that meeting, the AAITG representative was nominated as Focal person for West and Central Africa to coordinate the development of a concept note on Women and Land for west and Central Africa CPs. The concept note was developed and sent to the International Head of Women's rights for funding.

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### **Missed Opportunities in 2006-2010 which we'll work on in the future/have learnt from.**

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AAITG will continue to strengthen the capacity and governance systems of its partner community apexes as well as target the poor and excluded individually. We also intend to support the capacity building/engagement with the Local Government structures provided a positive radical shift has been made in the implementation of Local Government reform and decentralization processes. We'll intensify the implementation of HRBA (political empowerment process) and build the capacity of Community and Human Rights Facilitators and Women Pressure Groups as our DAs and intervention areas. We'll also continue to support the poor and excluded farmers to have access to production resources and encourage youths to engage in agriculture as a business enterprise. Campaigns on climate change and its effects will be further intensified by carrying out sensitisation and awareness creation programmes with a view to mobilize local communities for preventive action. Provide support to local farmers involved in small ru minant management for increased and improved management and maximum utilization of products. Encourage local people particularly youth to be involved in fish farming as a means of improving nutrition and income generation /employment. Engage stakeholders to invest in rice production to ensure food security.



## **Moving forward, 2011 and beyond: focus of work, new priorities, how we'll address the challenges and gaps from 2010.**

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The Alliance for the Promotion of Human Security (APHS) will be strengthened and supported to engage the relevant authorities to carry out advocacy and policy work. Through the network the capacities of individual partners will be built to enhance programme quality and impact. Inter-thematic linkages will be strengthened to enhance mutual support for better performance both in terms of % expenditure and programme quality as well. For better results this collaboration/linkages will have to start at planning and cut through to participatory M&E with all partners especially the communities. Fundraising efforts will be stepped up to help in scaling up the disaster management programme especially in the face of the climate change.

There is the need to increase the capital and cash flow to the apexes engaged in groundnut marketing as crop finance and for the purchase of empty sacs because this calls for a reasonable amount of investment as the venture is expensive. There is also the need to support the groups with trucks to facilitate the transit of their produce to the depots. There is also the need to advocate for the authorities to repair the feeder roads for the rights holders. AAITG should also consider giving the apexes some amount of money as administrative costs so that the project will not run into financial difficulties as experienced by others.

Donor funding for all the thematic units continue to be low, apart from that of the Global Fund Round 8 for HIV/AIDS. This indicates a high level of concentration of non-sponsorship income in one thematic area, thus creating the need for shifting fundraising efforts to other thematic areas. In-country donor funding continues to be low and the Country Programme would need to intensify on local fundraising efforts and other sources such as the Diaspora.

An important strategic approach adopted by AAITG is to work through partners. Thus AAITG is as good as its partners. We are however faced with serious constraints as the partners generally have very weak capacities. They are often poorly staffed and ill-equipped. This often affects the quality of reports and causes delays in reporting. There is thus a very serious need to strengthen the capacities of partners which requires a lot of resources. The problem associated with this is that most donors are not interested in institutional strengthening. Thus ActionAid funds should be available for this.

AAITG was faced with the unfortunate situation of being removed from R9 malaria grant causing us a huge loss of at least a total income approximately \$2 million (€1.6 million). This is despite the fact that we were an SR of the successor project (R6 malaria grant) in which we had an A1 rating. The GF portfolio manager explained that it would be a conflict of interest for us to be an SR under CRS as CRS is already an SR under AAITG HIV R8 grant. Series of options were presented but none accepted. This will certainly affect our achievement of one of our goals under the current strategy. We will like to recommend that AAI builds good working knowledge and relationships with the Global Fund at the highest level. This is something that CRS has done successfully.

The impact of climate change and its effects has a serious impact on the production and productivity of our smallholder farmers. Farmers are no longer able to predict the start and end of the rains and the change in seasons, thus unable to plan their farming calendar. This is important to AAITG activities as smallholder cooperatives are one of our most important areas of intervention. The unprecedented rains are causing a lot of damage to crops.