

Final Evaluation

Increasing income and food security through education and vocational training for 450 women and their families who are living in extreme poverty in rural Rwanda



Aspire Rutunga Final Evaluation, Network for Africa, Kamila Wasilkowska, Gender and M&E Consultant, May 2016

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Executive Summary

Scope of Work - Between February 2016 and June 2016, Network for Africa, with funding from UK Aid Direct, commissioned a final evaluation of the 'Increasing income and food security through education and vocational training for 450 women and their families (2,250 people in total) who are living in extreme poverty in rural Rwanda' project in Rutunga, Rwanda. The main goal of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the project has met its objectives, learn what has worked, and why, what can be enhanced and answer the key learning questions set out in the Terms of Reference. A key part of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the project achieved its log frame targets and to assess if there were any other positive or negative unintended consequences.

The research findings are structured into seven main areas – 1.) Overall results, 2.) An assessment of the accuracy of reported results, 3.) Relevance, 4.) Effectiveness, 5.) Efficiency, 6.) Sustainability and 7.) Impact, before finalising with a conclusion and recommendations.

The methodology used a mixed method approach, which consisted of 47 surveys and Most Significant Change interviews with female participants, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) each with 15 female participants, one FGD with 14 male participants, one FGD with eight children, three interviews with male participants who had attended the positive masculinities trainings, four interviews with Aspire staff, three interviews with Network for Africa (N4A) staff and one interview with a key partner from RWAMREC. A total of three Aspire staff participated in the validation workshop in Kigali, and three N4A staff received the same presentation via Skype. In total, 110 stakeholders participated in the evaluation.

One of the main findings is that the project has had good success in the behaviour change work and trainings, but less success on the agricultural side. The project has positively impacted the lives of 2,481 people; however, attributing the project to raising 15,730 people out of poverty is problematic. Multiple variables will affect this figure, including the high levels of economic growth in Rwanda, estimated by the World Bank to be 7.6% in 2016. Contribution to moving some of the 15,730 people out of poverty is more likely. While the project cannot claim these higher target numbers at impact level, it can attribute many positive and deep changes, be it for a lower number of beneficiaries.

From the behaviour change side there were many positive results. Being in a group created networks and social capital for the women. This expanded women's social networks, made some less lonely and provided women with a wider group of people whom they could rely on. For example, through the groups, women borrowed and lent money to one another and provided advice on personal and relationship issues.

Another big success came in women having increased voice, choice and control over income, decisions and assets. A large number (83%) of women said they had a say in decisions about their children and the majority (78%) made decisions on how money was spent in the household, either together with their husband or individually. Importantly, most (85%) women said they had noticed positive changes in their husbands as a result of the Aspire program and 55% of this group said the changes had been significant. The RWAMREC training on positive masculinities had been especially useful and this was paid for at a reduced cost (50% off the usual price) as RWAMREC and Aspire were in a partnership, rather than a contractual relationship. Further, most women (95%) said they had seen positive changes between other Aspire women and their husbands, and a majority (83%) said there was better communication between husband and wife, with a reduction in physical fights for almost all (98%) of the women surveyed.

One in every five women said they had experienced something negative from the project. Negative experiences varied and included jealousy from neighbours (e.g. some women who did not access the project were hostile to Aspire women) and some conflicts and verbal fights with their husbands or partners when women spent time on land that was later unproductive and failed to yield a good harvest (e.g. some husbands felt upset and angry when they supported their wives in the project, but the project did not yield the agricultural output they were expected). This evaluation intended to give an overview of the negative unintended consequences generally; future internal and external evaluations on new projects can quantify the depth and frequency of these disagreements.



On the agricultural side, women had been able to increase their livestock as 225 goats (a donation leveraged from several donors, including an international organisation based in Kigali) had been distributed to the women. In the open market this would have cost the project £7,000 (7,875,000 RWF). Goats were being used for manure for kitchen gardens, and the kids were sold as an income generation activity.

Over half (56%) of the women said there had been some positive change in their monthly income as a result of joining Aspire, while a smaller number (9%) said there has been a significant increase in income. Just over one third (35%) of the women had opened a bank account as a result of joining Aspire.

Just under half (44%) of the women said they had enough food to feed their families, and a third (30%) of the women had surplus food which they sold. Almost all (95%) of the women said they had increased their nutritional knowledge as a result of attending the trainings. Further, **94-100% of children in Cohorts 1, 2 and 3 had increased their Body Mass Index (BMI) from baseline to final.** The childcare was a big win for the project, both in its popularity with women, men and children and in its ability to increase the nutritional outcomes for children. Half of the women (50%) said they would have left the children with grandparents if they had not had the childcare opportunities. However, it is important to note that positive nutritional outcomes experienced by the children (e.g. significant increase in BMI), social outcomes (e.g. children having time to play, express themselves) and educational outcomes (e.g. children getting a head start at school and attaining better grades) are unlikely to have happened without the childcare placement. Additionally, having a number of children present at the training may have affected the training outcomes (e.g. mother being less able to focus on the training due to the double responsibility of looking after children, while attending training). For this reason a number of international NGOs such as Save the Children routinely provide childcare facilities when mothers are asked to attend training.

The Cooperative was not able to generate as much income as expected - £13,296 - compared to £34,995 that was expected for the three cohorts. The £13,296 revenue generated decreases to **£5,716 once agricultural overheads have been taken into account.** That said, there are two important caveats of information to note when considering the figure of £5,716 in profit. First, the Outcome Indicator 2¹ that tracks this figure in the log frame does not require a deduction of inputs. As a result, Outcome Indicator 2 requires the project to report on revenue (£13,296) and not on profit (£5,716). Second, the agronomist confirmed that the project does do this internal calculation to check that after inputs the project is still making a profit. Future indicators may consider taking inputs into account.

This still shows a **2.3 return on investment.** However, two challenges arise. First, the budget for 2015/2016 does **not include payment for renting land** (this is not an issue if farmers have land in the next project, and under the current set up women still have free access to the government land). Second, the £13,296 must be split between the 450 women in the Cooperative; once this is done, each woman receives just under £30 compared to an expected return of £77 per woman.

Almost half (43%) of the women said that kitchen gardens had been very useful in increasing intake of nutritious foods. As a result of Aspire, almost **one in every three women (27%) was able to set up a kitchen garden**, while half (51%) of the women said they had a kitchen garden before Aspire.

The majority (85%) of the women were using at least one agricultural technique they had been taught by Aspire, while 40% of them were using four agricultural techniques.

Overall, data from the internal evaluations comes back with much higher figures than the external data collection. This may be due to a number of reasons. The internal data uses a different scale with more positives than negatives and goes from positive to negative answers, while the external data goes from negative to positive responses, requiring participants to work harder for a positive response.

The project has had some impact (both positive and negative) on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1, and a positive impact on MDGs 2, 3 and 6. Overall the positive outcomes have been relevant to people's needs and the

¹ Outcome indicator 2 in the log frame tracks the 'number of women who produce enough crops enabling them to sell their surplus.'



project has adapted (e.g. timings, type of land, location of land, type of trainings provided) to better suit the needs of beneficiaries. By using the Rwandan government's poverty targeting criteria and available local statistics, the project was able to target the poorest and most vulnerable effectively.

Gender has been mainstreamed throughout the project. Most importantly, the project does not just aim to increase yield and agricultural productivity, but also empowers women by enabling them with more skills, trainings and assets and training their husbands, so that women can have more voice, choice and control over their lives. Gender mainstreaming goes right down to the payment of staff: jobs that are typically filled by men or women are paid the same amount.

Effectiveness – The project has effectively delivered Value for Money (VfM), buying inputs at the lowest cost while maintaining quality. The programme **scores lower on effectiveness as additional inputs (more than expected) were needed** to farm land that was not as productive as expected. In terms of efficiency, again the **small harvests damaged the efficiency of the project**, as it was not able to provide the projected return on investment. In the final year of the project (2015/2016) the behaviour change and training component accounts for 58% of the costs, but appears to have had more success in meeting expected outcomes, compared to the agricultural work that accounts for 42% of the costs with fewer outcomes met.

Key drivers of success included the implementing organisation's ability to build trust with beneficiaries, its strong networks, excellent partnership approach and ability to approach problems holistically.

Key barriers point to a need for greater risk mitigation and planning and some market and business expertise on the team. N4A and Aspire may seek to hire a short-term markets and business consultant at the start of future agricultural projects to advise on maximising the profit margins for the women while reducing the risk of production. If resources are short, N4A and the N4A Board of Trustees may seek to mobilise their networks to access a market specialist *pro bono*. Additionally, N4A and Aspire may want to join free online market forums (e.g. BEAM Exchange or SEEP Network Linked in groups). These can be useful ways to post questions and garner responses from a range of professional market specialists. A number of **external factors** such as pests, flooding, drought, land being reclaimed by landlords, delays in receiving grant funding and a main private sector actor pulling out all contributed to the poor agricultural outcomes. The **brunt of some of these negatives impacts could have been mitigated with more planning, risk management, risk budgeting, communication and market expertise.**

Overall the project has delivered trainings and behaviour change work on time. Some of the agricultural activities demanded more funding, due to the problems listed above. **Project management and M&E expertise have been strong;** however, the log frame does not have any agency indicators at the outcome level. Agency indicators at impact and outcome level were in the original log frame. The log frame was worked on in collaboration with Triple Line and DFID's Grant Managers and the agency indicators were later removed. The project has been able to adapt to challenges it faced but more frequent communication is needed on significant issues.

The formation of **Cooperatives and the agricultural trainings are the two areas that are most likely to be sustainable.**

Later in the project, fruit trees (bananas and tamarillos) were introduced as a way to diversify income generation activities. The cost of inputs is currently covered by Aspire and N4A as this is a pilot project. However, as the fruit trees start to turn a profit **it will be important to see how women can contribute to the cost of inputs.**

The capacity of Aspire was overall strong, despite some technical gaps in business and market systems approaches. Finally the Aspire team wished to **build their in-house capacity in writing grants applications.**

The recommendations below are targeted at Aspire and N4A.

Recommendations for N4A



- **To have more realistic outcomes** for agricultural outputs
- **To assess the obstacles to Aspire applying for their own grant funding**
- **To look into the possibility of accessing *pro bono* business and markets expertise for future agricultural projects**

Recommendations for Aspire

- **To ensure there is someone on the team with agri-business/markets technical expertise** before going into any agri-business activities. Aspire noted that this is most crucial during the planning and project design stage.
- **To create a budget line for risk mitigation.** This would focus on the most likely risks and the include budget lines to reflect the strategies to mitigate the risks that are outlined in the Risk Matrix.
- **To create a process for communicating negative results** e.g. within what timelines, how and when this should be communicated by the implementing agency
- **To have more detailed assessment of risk throughout the lifespan** of the project and for new initiatives (e.g. fruit trees, working with the PS, pests). To aim to foresee and act on risks faster.
- **To reduce risk of outcomes not being met by, for example, not working with landless Cooperatives, ensuring women are already grouped in a Cooperative, not entering into agri-business without a business specialist.**
- **To devise clear ways that the women can pay back a percentage of agricultural inputs** to increase sustainability.
- **To set a time cut-off point on distances travelled by women to reach the farm** (e.g. no woman should have to walk more than 45 minutes one way to reach the land).
- **To have contracts with the PS before starting work on the land.**
- **To fully assess the cost of production** before starting the project (e.g. assess the quality of the land by taking soil samples and project the cost of inputs and labour etc. accordingly).
- **To not use free land from the government unless a thorough risk assessment has taken place and only with strong mitigation strategies.**
- **To get at the true amount earned by the Cooperative,** and the likelihood that this can be financially sustainable, it may be useful to subtract the costs of inputs (e.g. seeds, pesticides, fertilizers) from the final amount earned by the Cooperative.

Recommendations for UK Aid Direct

- **To ensure that funds are dispersed as planned**
- **To ensure future projects track agency and behaviour change indicators higher up in the log frame** (e.g. at impact or outcome level). To ensure future agriculture, livelihoods and food security projects have indicators on women's agency (e.g. confidence, joint decision making, control over assets, increased access to savings).



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Acronyms

BMI	Body Mass Index
BoP	Base of Pyramid
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
IGAs	Income Generation Activities
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MSC	Most Significant Change
N4A	Network for Africa
PS	Private sector
RWF	Rwandan francs
VfM	Value for Money

Overview of the Project

The local organisation leading this project is Aspire Rwanda, based in Kigali, Rwanda. Aspire Rwanda was established in 2009 with its headquarters in Gisozi (Gasabo sector). To date, it has helped 470 vulnerable but resilient women rebuild their lives in the aftermath of Rwanda’s genocide. Aspire Rwanda’s founder Peace Ruzage started the programme to help the women in her Kigali community who could not find work and were struggling to offer their children a better future. Many were widows or single mothers, illiterate, unskilled, HIV positive, and/or victims of domestic violence. All had witnessed violence during the genocide. In 2013 N4A and Aspire Rwanda received a grant from DFID to replicate the Aspire Gisozi programme in rural Rutunga. The Rutunga project had 10 full time staff, and shared some management staff with Aspire’s head office in Gisozi. The grant ended on 31st March 2016.

The problem the project aimed to tackle

Poor infrastructure and lack of public transport make Rutunga very isolated, and most people there live on less than \$1 a day. Everyone farms small plots of land – there are no economies of scale and no cash crops. No one has direct access to water and there was, at the time of writing the application, no electricity. Most people are malnourished and have little understanding of nutrition, compounded by the need to sell home-grown produce to generate cash (Rutunga Sector officials 2012). People are often caught in a cycle of poverty and ill health, and very few people can afford health insurance. There are high rates of SGBV and child neglect, and the District’s Mayor reports a high concentration of single mothers, who are poor, vulnerable and illiterate.

Description of the project

The goal of Aspire Rwanda’s Rutunga project was to reduce the poverty experienced by women and their dependents in rural Rutunga by training 450 rural women over three years to increase their income through improved farming techniques. The project trained the women in commercial agriculture and helped them form a cooperative so that they could grow and sell crops in bulk, thus getting a better price for their produce. The women also received training in literacy, English, nutrition, business skills, women’s and children’s rights, HIV, family planning, hygiene, and First Aid. The project involved the women’s partners/husbands through positive masculinity training and offered free childcare for their young children. A social worker provided the women with group and individual counselling. The project design was built on the success of Aspire Rwanda’s innovative urban model and was adapted and developed for Rutunga’s rural location. Aspire Rwanda’s mission is founded in the belief that the promotion of human dignity and women’s rights will lead to sustainable community development and strong and lasting grassroots reconciliation.



Organisational Context

The project was implemented by Aspire, which has projects in two areas of Kigali – Gisozi (an urban area) and Rutunga (a rural area 1 hour from Kigali). The project was funded by N4A with funding from DFID. Below is a profile of the two organisations:



Network for Africa

U.K. | since 2007 | Food Security | Health and mental health | Education and Training | Income Generation | Support Women

Network for Africa works with communities torn apart by war and genocide. We help the forgotten survivors of African conflicts left behind by the world after the fighting stops and the humanitarian aid moves on. We train survivors in specialized trauma counseling so they can help each other tackle the long-term psychological consequences that often block recovery. We also help rebuild lives with access to education, health and the means for people to support themselves.



Aspire Rwanda

Rwanda | since 2009 | Education, Training | Childcare | Agriculture

Peace Ruzage founded Aspire Rwanda and its doors opened in 2009. In the last five years, 470 women have engaged in vocational training and rights awareness. The programme offers vocational training, skills and education to vulnerable women living in poverty. Aspire selects hard-working, resilient women to enroll in a 12-month training programme in Gisozi. The center provides complimentary childcare for preschool-aged children. For many Rwandan women who are attempting to raise children and earn money, they have few options for childcare other than leaving young children home alone or withdrawing an older sibling from school to care for them. The Aspire childcare center offers a safe and educational environment for the mothers to leave their children that allows them to concentrate on the programme. Children are provided with two nutritional meals a day and follow a preschool curriculum.

Aspire Rwanda works with many specialist organisations and trainers who provide training on Income Generation Activities (IGAs), positive masculinities, sexual and reproductive rights, governance and civic education and farming techniques among others.

Overview of UK Aid Direct-funded activities

UK Aid Direct is DFID’s central funding mechanism for awarding grants to small and medium sized UK and International Civil Society Organisations working to reduce poverty overseas. Formerly known as the Global Poverty Action Fund (GPAF), the Fund was re-launched in 2014 as UK Aid Direct. Since 2010, more than 200 grants have been awarded across 36 countries.

N4A is the grant holder under the project title ‘Increasing income and food security through education and vocational training for 450 women and their families (2,250 people in total) who are living in extreme poverty in rural Rwanda.’

GPAF Ref.: GPAF-INN-012. The project has 15 activities as stated in the activity log.

Division into Units and Cohorts

Women involved in the project were divided into three units based on geography. This consisted of two units (1 and 2) in the marshland (at the base of hill) near the river and one unit (3) in the hills. The project was divided into three cohorts, Cohort 1 – 2013, Cohort 2 – 2014 and Cohort 3 – 2015. The below tables show the units and cohorts with a summary of challenges that each unit and cohort faced.

Units			
#	1	2	3
Geographic Area	Marshland	Marshland	Hills, small marshland (2 hectares)
Challenges:	Private Sector (Fresh Gardens Limited) pulled out in 2015		In 2014 the landlords took back the land after both Aspire women and hired labour had worked on the virgin land to make it fit for purpose.
• PS			
• Time	Long distance to walk to the land		
• Floods	Land flooded		
• Yield	Poor yield		-
Opportunities	Land is on average 30% more productive than in the hills		
• Productivity			

Cohorts			
Graduated	December 2013	December 2014	December 2015
Year	2013	2014	2015
Challenges:	-	Unexpected long dry season	-
• Dry season			
• Staff turnover	- Two key personnel left (Project Manager and Social Worker)		-

Activities and Results Summary

The table below summarises the activities and results. The categories of low, low-medium, medium and high are based on the extent to which the activity was completed effectively. One of the challenges that comes with grouping the activity statements is that while one activity may have performed well, another may not and this brings down the whole activity. To respond to this, the table aims to separate each activity statement. This makes it easier to see at which point the project achieves its intended outcomes and which activities could be enhanced. The table goes beyond the output statements (e.g. did women attend training X?) and shows the extent to which the training created behaviour change (e.g. what effect did training X have?).

Only activities that were actually completed are stated below:

#	Statement	Log frame result achieved	Training affected behaviours
ACTIVITY 1.1	Land is prepared for planting.	High	-
	Land is prepared for weeding.	High	-
	Land is fertilized.	High	-
	Seeds are planted.	High	-
	Seeds are harvested, packaged and sold.	Low	-
ACTIVITY 1.2	Women receive training in cooperative management.	High	High
	Women form and join the cooperative.	High	High
	The cooperative is registered.	High	High
	Women receive vocational training in agriculture.	High	High
ACTIVITY 1.3	Women are able to leave their children in childcare centres and work.	High	High

ACTIVITY 2.1	Women attend sensitization on family planning. ²	High	Low-Medium
	Women attend sensitization on health & hygiene and First Aid. ³	High	Low-Medium
	Women have access to counseling.	High	High
ACTIVITY 2.2	Women and their children purchase the Mutuelle de Sante (government health insurance scheme).	High	High
ACTIVITY 2.3	Husbands/partners attend sensitisation on health and hygiene.	High	High
ACTIVITY 3.1	Women attend literacy and numeracy training.	High	Low-medium ⁴
ACTIVITY 3.2	Women attend training in basic business skills, including bookkeeping, recording income and expenditure and managing bank accounts and savings and loans.	High	Medium ⁵
ACTIVITY 3.3	Childcare centres are set up.	High	High
	Children at the childcare centers participate in activities to encourage early cognitive skills.	High	High
ACTIVITY 4.1	Women attend sensitisation on their legal rights.	High	High
	Women attend sensitisation on family law.	High	High
	Women attend sensitisation on SGBV.	High	High
	Women attend sensitisation on child rights.	High	High
ACTIVITY 4.2	Husbands/partners attend sensitisation on SGBV, conflict management, sharing of decision-making and information with their wives/partners.	High	High
ACTIVITY 4.3	Women access counseling offered by Social Worker - either individually at the Aspire compound, in groups or in their homes.	High	High
	Increased number of SGBV cases being reported to the police.	-	- ⁶
ACTIVITY 5.1	Women receive sensitisation training on nutrition and healthy eating.	High	High
	Women attend demonstrations in cooking nutritional food.	High	High
	Their husbands/partners attend sensitisation on nutrition and the importance of a healthy diet (including BMI testing).	High	High
ACTIVITY 5.2	Day care centres are open.	High	High
	Day care centres are giving children one nutritious meal a day.	High	High

² Although women attended sensitization on family planning a number (40%) were still using less effective family planning methods such as bead counting.

³ This activity was ranked less as around 30% of women could describe first aid techniques.

⁴ The literacy training was at first not as practical as it could be, this was later adapted. Additionally, KIIs with staff noted the literacy training had not had as much of an impact as anticipated.

⁵ These trainings were taught together and it is not possible to separate out these results.

⁶ Log frame indicators do not track this result. Rather they track the number of women accessing support but not the number of women reporting GBV.



Evaluation Framework

Logic and Assumptions of the Evaluation

The evaluation followed the logic in the latest log frame,⁷ but also drew on the internal baseline, final evaluation and the mid-term evaluation tools. These tools were important as they provide the baseline data that can be compared with the independent final evaluation data. Though after working with the DFID Fund Managers, there were a number of changes in the log frame and subsequently the evaluation tools, the tools remain important for comparing baseline to final evaluation data.

Whilst the evaluation includes questions from the log frame (e.g. on women producing enough food to feed their families, on the amount of produce sold, on the number of woman purchasing health insurance etc.) the evaluation also includes **questions about women's agency** that are not in the log frame, or the existing internal baseline and final evaluation tools. These include questions on confidence, relationships with other women, conflicts and fights in the household, women's role in decision-making, stories of Most Significant Change (MSC) and various questions on Gender Based Violence. These questions were incorporated into the tools after discussions with N4A and Aspire on the key areas they would like to assess.

The evaluation assumes that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the latest log frame are still relevant to the evaluation, but also that the **additional gender indicators** mentioned above are key to assessing the true impact of the project. The gender indicators are especially important as the project is not simply an agricultural project, but an agricultural project with a behaviour change component that aims to increase income and yield from farm activities as well as increase women's empowerment through reduced levels of violence, better communication in the household, more joint decision-making between husband and wife and women's increased control of assets.

Project Objectives

The project aimed to deliver the following specific outcomes:

1. Targeted rural women and their dependants **generate sufficient income and food** to lift them out of extreme poverty.
2. Women from the Rutunga beneficiary group have **improved knowledge and skills** in large-scale agriculture and improved access to agricultural inputs, capacity to organise and engage in large-scale agriculture.
3. Women from the Rutunga beneficiary group have **improved knowledge of and access to health promotion; and physical, mental, sexual, HIV and reproductive health services**.
4. Women from the Rutunga beneficiary group and their children have **improved basic numeracy and literacy skills**.
5. Women from the Rutunga beneficiary group have **improved understanding of their rights** and how to access them.
6. Women from the Rutunga beneficiary group and their families have **increased capacity** to manage family hygiene and nutrition.

Evaluation Plan

The assignment was divided into three phases. **Phase One** involved a comprehensive document review of internal and external documents and the design of tools for data collection. Documents reviewed included: project M&E data (e.g. log frame, results chains, baseline and mid-term reports and on-going monitoring records, financial reports, quarterly reports, and M&E systems), annual reports, annual report feedback and comments, Aspire's implementation reports to N4A, national and local government policies and policy initiatives, original funding application submitted to DFID, MOU with DFID, information on collaboration with other actors (e.g. local government, other NGOs and actors). **Phase Two** involved meetings and consultations over Skype and fieldwork in Kigali and Rutunga, Rwanda in May 2016. This phase also included a half-day validation workshop in May 2016 with Aspire staff and one Team Leader from the external evaluation team. **Phase Three** involved data input, coding, analysis and reporting on and communicating findings and

⁷ Entitled GPAF INN-012 reporting log frame.

recommendations.

Methodological Approach and Tools

The assignment used a mixed method approach, consisting of staff interviews, beneficiary case study interviews, FGDs and a survey.

In total six stakeholder groups were consulted, namely, 1.) Aspire staff, 2.) Aspire collaborative partners' staff, 3.) N4A staff, 4.) Aspire women, 5.) Partners/ husbands of Aspire women, and 6.) Aspire children. The following tools were used and tailored to the experiences of different stakeholder groups:

- **Tool 1:** Interviews with Aspire staff
- **Tool 2:** Interviews with Aspire collaborative partners
- **Tool 3:** Interviews with N4A staff
- **Tool 4:** Most Significant Change Stories from women⁸
- **Tool 5:** Surveys with women
- **Tool 5:** Case study interviews with partners/husbands involved in positive masculinity training
- **Tool 7:** Focus Group Discussions with women
- **Tool 8:** Focus group discussions with partners/husbands
- **Tool 9:** Focus Group Discussions with children – highly participatory

Photographs of this process are shown below.



Participatory tools were developed to conduct FGDs with children, Rutunga, May 2016.

In total 110 stakeholders participated in the final evaluation. This consisted of 47 surveys and Most Significant Change Interviews with female participants, two FGDs each with 15 female participants, one FGD with 14 male participants, one FGD with eight children, three interviews with male participants who had attended the positive masculinities training, four interviews with Aspire staff, three interviews with N4A staff and one interview with a key partner from RWAMREC. A total of three Aspire staff participated in the validation workshop in Kigali, and three N4A staff received the same presentation via Skype.

Demographic of respondents

In total 47 surveys were conducted with women who had been involved across the three Cohorts (Cohort 1 – 38%, Cohort 2 – 38%, Cohort 3 – 24%) and who came from different areas of Rutunga. The majority (68%) had a primary education, a quarter (25%) had no education and a few (6%) had a secondary education. The majority (74%) were married, followed by divorced or separated (11%), single (8%) and widowed (6%). The majority (44%) were cohabiting, 33% had both a civil and religious marriage and 22% had only a civil marriage. In terms of age, 42% were 19-39 years old and 58% were 40 years old and above.

⁸ These were incorporated into the survey tool.



Strengths of the selected research method

The research strategy had a number of strengths. It **engaged a wide range of direct beneficiaries (women) and indirect beneficiaries** (men and children). Through participatory drawing exercises and role play with a doll the children were able to open up and talk in simple but concrete ways about ‘what they liked’ about Aspire and ‘how it made them feel.’ The Aspire team on the ground in Rutunga were able to **effectively mobilise a large number of beneficiaries** from the three cohorts and three units. The positive and open working relationship with the Aspire team meant that beneficiaries were mobilized effectively. Without Aspire’s support the evaluation would not have been able to mobilise so many beneficiaries in such a short space of time. Aspire were also able to give their valuable time for interviews, review of the different Aspire sites and the validation workshop. Additionally they provided a safe and confidential room where the interviews, FGDs and surveys took place.

Additionally the team conducted a Key Informant Interview with the CEO of RWAMREC – the key partner who conducts the positive masculinities work. This was important as it gave an opportunity for the team to **triangulate** beneficiaries, N4A and Aspire’s comments on the positive masculinities work with a more detailed understanding of the type of work that was conducted. **Another important data source was the internal baseline and final data that Aspire captured for each of the three cohorts.**

The external team comprised of a **mixed sex team** (one man and three women) that only conducted interviews, FGDs and surveys with members of their own sex. This enabled the researchers to **ask sensitive questions** about how the Aspire project had affected relationships between husband and wife. Additionally, the team were a **mixture of agriculture, gender, research and M&E specialists**. The consultant has ten years of experience in leading evaluations, five of which have been spent conducting agriculture and gender evaluations in East Africa, including in Rwanda. The team leader specialises in gender and M&E and the research assistants have gender and agricultural experience. The team leader and researchers are from Rwanda and speak Kinyarwanda. As the external evaluation team was not from Rutunga they were able to **instil confidence by talking to participants** and assuring them that the evaluation was independent and not linked to Aspire.

Weaknesses⁹ of the selected research method

The external evaluation team was introduced to the community by the implementing partner. Although efforts were made to make clear confidentiality, anonymity and the important separation between the external evaluation team and the implementing agency, the community may still have associated the team with Aspire, or with future grant funding, and tailored their answers accordingly. Given the practicalities of conducting evaluations, external teams frequently rely on the implementing agency to mobilise beneficiaries and make introductions and this was unavoidable.

Ideally, the team would have consisted of **researchers of different ages**. For example older women would interview older women and younger women would interview younger women. In practice, women were only interviewed by other women, and men only interviewed by other men. Ensuring the age and sex disaggregation would have called for a team of eight research staff, plus a consultant; this would have required, for example, one older woman to record the FGD and one older woman to facilitate the FGD and so on. Methodological studies show that when such a choice on the research team has to be made, it is most important to segregate based on sex and then age, especially if asking sensitive questions (e.g. about conflict in the household).

Beneficiaries may have given more negative answers, expecting that if they did so they would receive for funding. This is a **common challenge for external evaluation teams** and was managed through a number of steps. First, expectations were levelled at the onset of the interviews and surveys, and researchers clearly stated their role as independent evaluators. Second, where researchers saw respondent biases they would sensitively ask participants to explain in more detail, give examples and contextualise their responses. This facilitated more detail sharing and enabled the researchers to assess and rank answers accordingly. Third, the research team underwent initial training prior to the fieldwork. This

⁹ This section incorporates a summary of problems and issues encountered



focused on how to gauge respondent bias.

Respondents did not feel comfortable answering some of the questions that were included in the final evaluation from the mid-term evaluation. For example, it was felt that the questions on HIV/AIDs status were not always answered correctly. These questions should be omitted from future tools.

Report Structure

The evaluation findings are divided into seven key sections. These look at 1.) The overall results that are categorised under the log frame impact, outcome and output categories, 2.) Assessment of accuracy of reported results, 3.) Relevance, 4.) Effectiveness, 5.) Efficiency, 6.) Sustainability and 7.) Impact, before finalising with a conclusion, lessons learnt and recommendations.

Findings

The overall findings are summarised in the executive summary above.

Assessment of accuracy of reported results¹⁰

Overall the findings for the same questions in final internal data come up higher than the final external evaluation data. This may be for a number of reasons, as there are two main differences in the data collection methods that mean the final internal and the final external evaluation questions are slightly different:

- **The final evaluation questions go from negative to positive responses.** This makes respondents ‘work harder’ to provide a positive result, and can increase the validity of positive results. An example of this is shown below:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
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- **The final evaluation questions use two positive points, two negative points and one neutral point.** Some of the internal final evaluation questions use three positives and one negative, thus making it more likely the respondent chooses a positive answer.

A crosscheck of Aspire’s reported results finds that Aspire has kept accurate and detailed records for the last three years. The accuracy of the reported results could be enhanced in a few small ways:

- **To use trained in-country researchers instead of teachers** to collect data. One Aspire staff member said that this could enhance the quality of the data collected and provide more accurate results. The staff member also noted the need to employ external people to collect the data as they were more likely to ‘be trusted’ and capture accurate results;
- **To dramatically reduce the number of questions** in the evaluations. Each question should only be asked if the data is of direct use for Aspire or N4A. People get bored of answering longer surveys and are less likely to give accurate results. From an organisational perspective unless each question has a direct purpose collecting data on it wastes time and resources.
- **To take out especially sensitive questions such as on HIV/AIDS status.** These are not yielding accurate data. Research shows that people are often very hesitant to admit their status.
- **To ask for consent on two occasions, first at the start of the interview, and again at the end of the interview.** This is an effective way to ensure that participants give full consent once they know what they have said.
- **To take out the broad questions on Gender Based Violence** (e.g. have you been a victim of GBV). Studies show that participants are more likely to respond with accurate results when the researcher asks specific questions

¹⁰ This question and the following question in the effectiveness section - To what extent are the reported results a fair and accurate record of achievement? – are very similar and interlinked. As a result they are discussed in the assessment of accuracy of reported results section above.

around verbal conflicts (often an indication of domestic violence), physical fights, financial control and abuse. Indeed an Aspire staff member noted the importance of **looking at psychological as well as physical control in future projects, and tracking if Aspire will create change in these areas.**¹¹

- **To introduce questions on sensitive topics (e.g. HIV/AIDS, GBV) to warn the respondent that the questions are coming up, and offer an ‘opt out option.’** This helps to build trust and increase the accuracy of data.
- **To include questions on sensitive issues that focus on the group, rather than on the individual.** For example, ask questions about the levels of conflict in the households of Aspire women generally, rather than in an individual’s household. Studies show that these types of distancing techniques are effective at eliciting more accurate responses in a short space of time. On the flip side the ‘ideal’ data to collect is about the individual, rather than the individual commenting on their colleagues or friends. That said, distancing techniques are a proven way to capture reliable data in a way that maintains the confidentiality and safety of the participants. For those interested the London School of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine runs a five day short course on Researching Gender-Based Violence: Methods and Meaning. More details on this can be found [here](#).
- **To approach questions on violence more broadly.** Again, studies show that asking questions on GBV directly often yield lower results than asking questions about conflict in neighbours’ households or ‘friends that are in Aspire.’ Importantly, though, these questions do not get at the issue of frequency. For example, many women may be reporting there is GBV among their friends in Aspire, but each person could be talking about the same one or two friends. There are other ways to get at the frequency issue, for example through follow up questions.
- **To attribute 15,730 people having benefited from Aspire at the end of three years is challenging for a number of reasons.** First, a number of external factors will contribute to the reduction in the number of people who fall within the three categories of the Community Development Report capturing the poorest in Rutunga sector. As one Aspire staff member astutely noted ‘we may be able to show contribution, but not attribution.’¹² If there was no Aspire project in Rutunga, it is likely that a number of people would move out of the poorest categories of poverty as the World Bank projects high economic growth rate of 7.4% in 2015 and 7.6% in 2016 for Rwanda overall. External factors such as government interventions and general improved economics will positively move a number of people out of poverty. Second, to capture the extent to which the number of 15,730 people moving out of poverty can be attributed to Aspire’s project would need an attribution analysis that takes into consideration a range of factors. Data¹³ shows that prior to the Aspire project Rutunga saw a 7 point reduction in category 1 and 2 (the poorest categories), as shown in the table below:

2012 VUP Beneficiaries by Category					VUP Beneficiaries by Category at Selection			Change
Rank (by level of graduation)	Sectors	Category 1 and 2	Category 3 and 4	Rich	Category 1 and 2	Category 3 and 4	Rich	
77	Rutunga	40	60		47	53		7

It is challenging to link the project’s planned activities and results towards reducing poverty for categories 1, 2 and 3 of the Ubedehehe lists that measures poverty. It is not clear that the project could (even with achieving all result statements) have positively impacted and moved 15,730 people out of poverty. Within the logic it is not clear how, by working with one woman, she will be able to contribute to raises almost twenty eight more people out of poverty (15,730/ 450 = 28). Closer attribution can be seen by looking at the number of people directly supported by the project and multiplying this by the number of depends they have. For example 450 women X a dependency ratio of 4.9 = 2,250. This brings us closer to the actual number of 2,481 people benefitting from the project.

¹¹ Interview with Aspire staff, May 2016.

¹² Interview with Aspire staff, May 2016.

¹³ Republic of Rwanda (2012), Rwanda Local Development Support Fund (RLDSF), Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) INTERMEDIATE IMPACT ASSESSMENT 2008-2011: http://www.swedenabroad.com/ImageVaultFiles/id_7085/cf_347/VUP_Intermediate_Impact_Assessment.PDF



As mentioned above, the log frame impact goal was changed by DFID from ‘Women in Rwanda live above the poverty line, and have equal access to health, education, and opportunity and enjoy gender equality in line with Rwandan law’ with an impact indicator of ‘Percentage of women living above the poverty line (at \$1 per day)’ to ‘Number of people who fall within the three categories of the Community Development Report capturing the poorest in Rutunga sector.’ The latter statement drops agency and N4A would not have chosen this statement for the reasons listed above. Aside from the question of attribution, the data for impact indicator 1.1 was not available from the government during the final evaluation in May 2016.

Overall Findings

This section presents the overall findings. This also includes a review of the most effective methodologies and approaches Aspire used to bring about changes to people’s lives, what has worked, what has not and why. Further answers to why some areas did not work so well are explored in the barriers and enablers of success section.

Impact: as defined in the log frame – In line with MDG1, women and their families in Rutunga sector are lifted out of poverty

Impact achieved as defined in the log frame

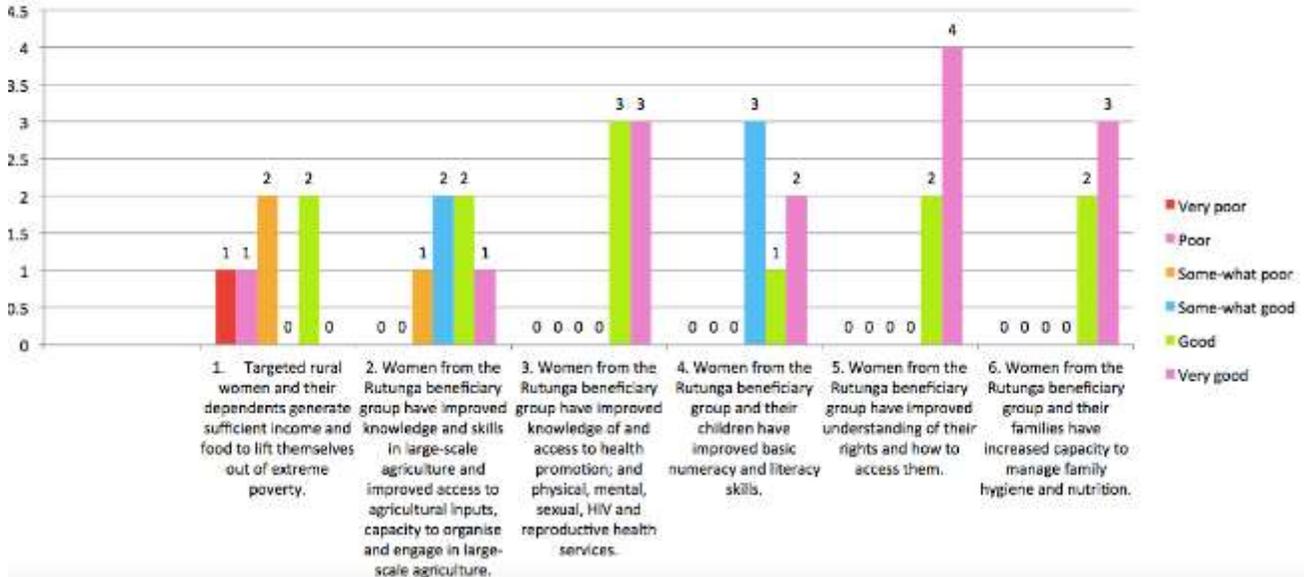
As mentioned above, there are some attribution challenges and no data currently available for impact indicator 1. Despite this the internal data provided by Aspire and the extensive amount of independent data collected for this evaluation provides a number of data points that are used to comment on the extent to which the project has met its other stated outcome and output indicators. The graph to the right registers output in *Mironko* as this is the way many farmers registered their output. One *Mironko* is equal to 1.5 kilograms.



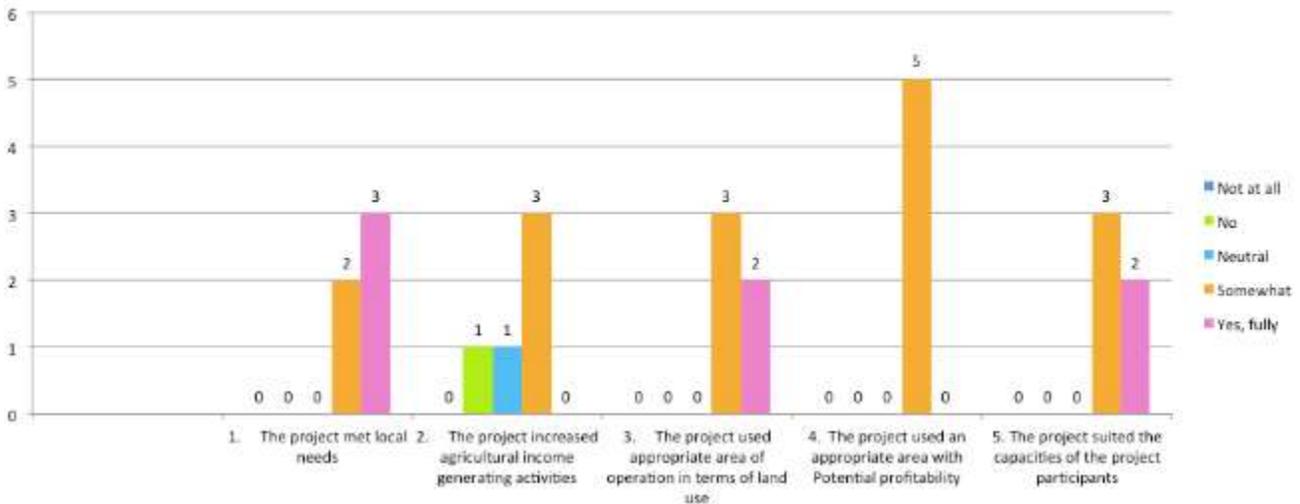
The midterm evaluation and final evaluation data that asked the same question show a **slight increase in the amount of food produced since joining Aspire**, compared to at the final evaluation.

In total **2,481 people have received support** from the project who otherwise would not have received support. The project **performed weakest in objectives 1 (sufficient income and food) and 2 (knowledge and skills in large scale agriculture) and showed greatest results in objective 5 (knowledge of rights) and 6 (capacity to manage family hygiene and nutrition)**. Staff from Aspire and N4A appraised the success of the project as shown in the graphs below. Numbers on the graph show the number of staff that gave responses as very poor, poor, somewhat poor, somewhat good, good and very good. For example, respondents said that women and their families now have good (2/6) and very good (3/6) capacity to manage their family hygiene and nutrition.

Overall how Successful has the Project been at Achieving its Objectives and Outcomes



Overall how Successful has the Project been at Achieving its Objectives and Outcomes:



Outcome: Targeted rural women and their dependants in Rutunga sector generate sufficient income and food to lift themselves out of extreme poverty

Most women (82%) said they were involved in both crop farming and livestock rearing. Women said they owned goats (26%), goats and cows (22%), cows (24%), chickens (4%), cows and chickens (2%), pigs (2%), while almost one in every five (17%) said they did not own any livestock.

Over half of the women (56%) of women said they had experienced a small positive change in their monthly income, for a smaller number (9%) there had been a large positive increase, whilst the remainder (35%) said there had been no change.



The majority (55%) of the women saved in savings cycles, in a bank or SACCO account (23%) and/or in physical assets (15%). In total, most (78%) of the women had a savings account by May 2016. Of the 78% of the women who had a savings account in May 2016, just over **one third (35%) of women opened this as a result of joining Aspire.** This left 22% of women who did not have a savings account, of which 16% said they saved through physical asset, and a smaller percentage (6%) said they did not save money. N4A staff noted that women can now *'access savings and loans and can do basic bookkeeping.'*¹⁴

The majority (91%) of the women said they had health insurance. This is important, as accessing health insurance is an **important indicator of women's resilience to shocks and stresses.** Additionally, it shows that women in Aspire are moving out of extreme hunger and poverty, and are able to put a percentage of their income aside to mitigate shocks and stresses. This question follows the mid-term evaluation that asks about health insurance. It is important to note that the government of Rwanda provides free health insurance for families in categories one and two of the *Ubedehe* list (the poorest citizens). As a result, it is not possible to attribute this result solely to the project; however, it is likely that the project would have contributed to helping the most vulnerable groups access health insurance (e.g. by the social worker linking them up with government services).

Quantitative data from the final evaluation shows that just under **half of women surveyed (44.44%) said they had enough food to feed their families.** Internal data finds that between 90-100% said they had enough food to feed their families. The difference in responses may be explained by a number of factors. These are outlined in the accuracy of data section above. Potential influencing factors include the external and internal data collection tools using slightly different scales: the internal data collection tool goes from positive to negatives, whereas the reverse is true for the external tool. The external tool aims to get respondents to work harder to give positive answers. Further, the external tool has an equal number of negative and positive answers whereas for some questions the internal tool has three positive and one negative answer. This can again push respondents into overly positive answers. This methodological consideration can be adjusted in future evaluation by standardising tools use for the internal and external evaluation. Having questions that go from negative to positive and balanced negative and positive responses for internal baseline will help solve this issue in the future.

One in every three (30.43%) women was able to produce enough crops to sell a surplus, whereas 69.57% said they did not. As above, outcome indicator 2 registers internal data collection to be higher than final evaluation results. Achieved targets for internal data are around 30% higher than external evaluation findings; internal data finds that around 50% more women can sell food as a surplus, which reads at 62% of women for Cohort 1, 69% of women for Cohort 2 and 65% of women for Cohort 3.

For outcome indicator 3, the Cooperative made £13,296, compared to an expected profit of £34,995.

Inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds and pesticides are not included in this calculation. These are provided free of charge to the women by Aspire. To get at the true amount earned by the Cooperative, and the likelihood that this can be financially sustainable, it may be useful to subtract the costs of inputs (e.g. seeds, pesticides, fertilizers) from the final amount earned by the Cooperative. This would mean that the final amount earned of 12,537,900 RWF (£13,296) should reduce once inputs are deducted. The Aspire **agronomist was already doing a quick cost-benefit analysis calculation to project if new agricultural activities would be profitable.** For example, this calculation was used to see that the contract with Fresh Gardens Limited would not make financial sense. This said, the **final calculations for outcome indicator 3 do not account for the cost of production.** However, it is important to note the **original milestone for this indicator does not focus on the cost of inputs.**

Although this project should not be assessed on the revenue minus the inputs, this calculation is important as it shows **potential for sustainability** and the **true profit.** For example, if the revenue minus inputs gives a negative or low figure, the project is unlikely to be sustainable with its current costs and profit. It is important to note that the agronomist was already performing this calculation to assess the feasibility of planned interventions, and to calculate the Return on Investment.

¹⁴ Interview with N4A staff, May 2016.



Kitchen gardens were another way that beneficiaries were able to generate sufficient food. **Almost half (49%) of the women said the kitchen gardens had been helpful to improve household food and nutrition security**, with the **majority (43%) saying they had been very helpful** and fewer women (6%) saying they had been helpful. Almost half of the women surveyed (51%) said they had a kitchen garden before Aspire. This means that **of the women who did not have a kitchen garden, 65% were able to set one up as a result of Aspire**. For women who previously had a kitchen garden, they reported that they were able to increase their agricultural and nutritional knowledge about how to use the gardens to improve nutrition. On kitchen gardens, one woman said:

'I have really appreciated being taught how to set up a kitchen garden. This has really helped and improved the nutrition of my family.'

-30 year-old woman

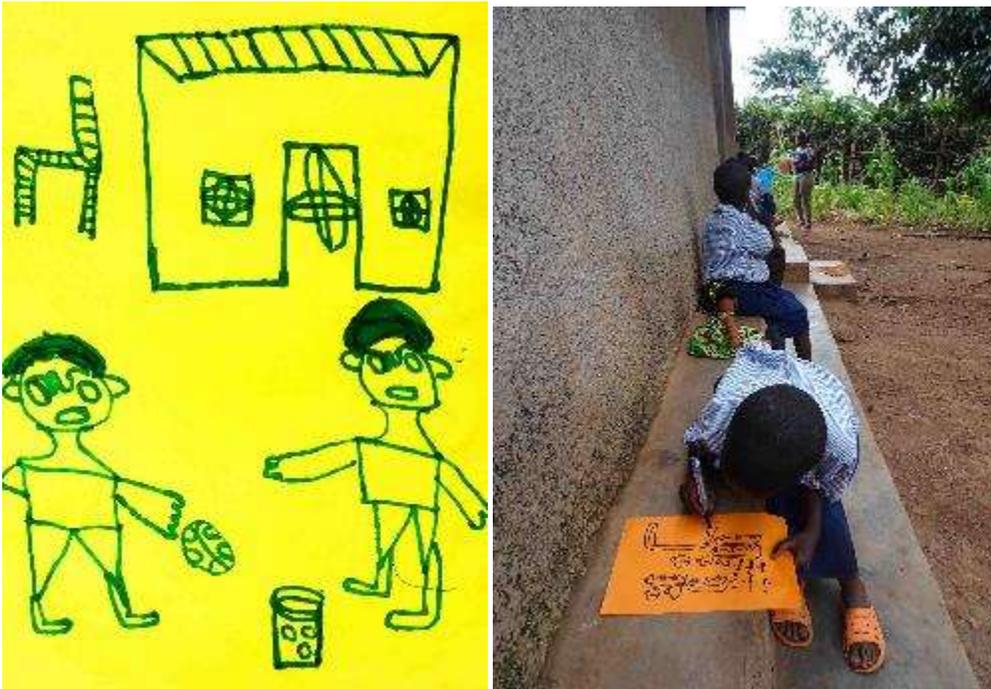
The implementing organisation felt that this finding in particular (65% of women established a kitchen garden) may have been underreported as respondents sought to give inflated negative answers to an 'outside team' who they may have felt would provide additional resources if they responded negatively.

The majority (95%) of women said they had increased their knowledge about nutrition as a result of attending the Aspire training.

Children enrolled in the childcare centre had achieved success at increasing their nutritional intake and BMI. The percentage of previously malnourished children who are now at a healthy weight for age (as defined by the Rutunga Health Centre) since attending the Aspire childcare centre has increased and 100% of Cohort 1, 94% of Cohort 2 and 94% of Cohort 3 children had an improved BMI. From children's and adults' perspectives alike, **the childcare centre was a big success for the project**. Although many parents did not see the point in the children's centre to begin with,¹⁵ by the end of the project it was **one of the most appreciated activities by women and men alike**. When children were asked what they most liked about the childcare centre, the majority said they most enjoyed 'having cups of porridge.' This shows the importance food and nutrition played in the lives of the children and their lack of adequate meals prior to the programme. Similarly, Aspire and N4A staff said that *'children benefited hugely from the childcare centres.'*¹⁶

¹⁵ Interview with Aspire staff member, May 2016.

¹⁶ Interview with Aspire and N4A staff member, May 2016.



Children draw out what they 'liked most' about the childcare centre, Rutunga, May, 2016.

Aside from better nutrition, the childcare centre had a **number of additional benefits** that are not captured in the log frame:

- **The childcare centres improved the behaviour of children**, making them happier and easier to manage when they got home. This is likely linked to them not being hungry and having received play and stimulation during the day;
- **The childcare centres provided women with adequate time** to focus on either attending training or putting into practice the training they had learnt.
- **The childcare is unlikely to have had a significant effect on helping older girls go to school as was previously anticipated.** For example, many women (50%) said that if children were not at the childcare centre they would be at home with grandparents, would have come with their mothers to the training (24%), would be at home with the eldest girl (8%), or would be at home with a neighbour (8%). Few women would have left their children with older girls; however, the mothers noted the quality of the childcare at the centre was higher than what they could provide at home.
- The findings from the surveys and from interviews with N4A staff find there was a greater need for childcare in urban areas.¹⁷ That said, it is important to note this was one of the most appreciated activities run by the project. Both fathers and mothers said the childcare contributed significantly to positive outcomes in health, education and well-being for their children.
- **The childcare centres helped improve the educational attainment of children:** some started primary school at an earlier age due to them being more advanced. Parents noticed how their children outperformed their peers and how this 'set them up for a good start';¹⁸
- **The childcare centres taught children about positive WASH behaviours** and the children imparted their knowledge to their parents and younger siblings;
- **The childcare centres included children with disability and so de-stigmatised these children¹⁹** making them more visible and part of everyday society.

¹⁷ Interview with N4A staff, May 2016.

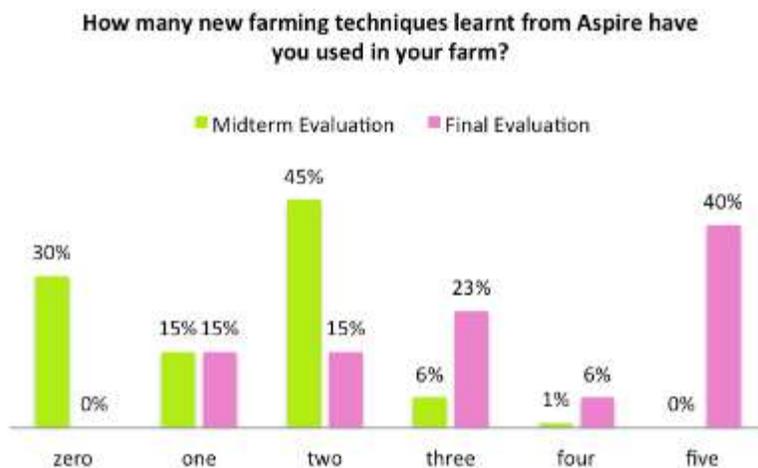
¹⁸ Interview with Aspire staff member, May 2016.

¹⁹ Interview with N4A staff, May 2016.

Output: Women from the Rutunga beneficiary group have improved knowledge and skills in large-scale agriculture and improved access to agricultural inputs, capacity to organise and engage in large-scale agriculture.

Outcome level indicators are focused on agricultural outcomes. **Behaviour change indicators are only tracked lower down as outputs.** This means that **changes in the actions and practice of women, men and children are currently not being captured within the existing log frame.** This section reviews the data that is available for the outcome indicators, but also reviews data on how actions and practice have changed. These are not captured in the log frame.

Women were satisfied with the knowledge they had gained on agricultural farming techniques. Of the women surveyed almost half (46%) were using three, and almost all of these (40%) were using four or more techniques on their farm. By final evaluation more women were using more agricultural techniques than at the mid-term external evaluation, as shown in the graph below. The graph below references if women were using the techniques on their own farms.



The internal data focused on the number of women using agricultural techniques on the communal land. At final evaluation, internal data showed that most (83%, or 373 out of 450) of the women were using three or more agricultural techniques on the communal land. That said, women in FGDs and interviews of Most Significant Change were very positive about the training on agricultural techniques and the package of agricultural inputs all 450 women had received. Although the quantitative data shows there to be fewer techniques used, the **majority of women spoken to (85%) in the independent evaluation said they were using at least one agricultural technique they learnt from Aspire Rwanda on their individual land.**

Few women could name five Cooperative rules. However, it is questionable if this is a good indicator of women’s capacity to organise. This is important as women named **being linked to a Cooperative as one of the key sustainability factors of the project.** They said they were more likely to work together with women they knew, and that they could rely on each other for moral and emotional support and financial assistance. Further, women said they felt stronger and that they could better advocate for their rights when they were grouped.

One in every three women (33%) in the final evaluation reported being able to name three First Aid techniques. There was a two-pronged criteria used to assess this question. First, the research team sat down with Aspire staff and asked them about the types of First Aid participants had been taught. This gave the research team an understanding of what participants had learnt during the First Aid training. Second, an open question was posed to participants through which participants were probed about the types of techniques they had learnt. If women could name at least three of these techniques, this was recorded as a positive answer. The answers were not suggested to women, so as not to falsely influence their answers. This is compared to 66% of women reported in the data given for December 2015 in the latest log frame. Studies show that there is often a **‘drop off’ in**

knowledge around First Aid after being trained. For this reason large institutions often run annual First Aid training and refresher courses. This is not an issue that is unique to Aspire or this project.

As mentioned above, Aspire's data collection of activity data appears to be in good record. As a result the reported figures of 246 women, 81 men, and 101 children tested for HIV/AIDs during Aspire's annual HIV testing day are likely to be accurate.

64% of women could name three methods of family planning and where they could access these services. However, a larger number (**46%**) of women said they were using **bead counting** as a form of contraceptive; the rest used condoms (23%), injection (22%), sterilisation (6%) and implants (3%). The **majority of women (80%) said they now had better knowledge of safe sex practices** as a result of the Aspire training. Further, a similar number (78%) had **increased their knowledge of family planning practices.** Almost half (47%) of the women said they had learnt about how to **protect themselves from HIV** as a result of the trainings given by the project, and out of the women who were tested as a result of joining Aspire, **90% said they were tested during Aspire's annual HIV testing day.**

One of the **big wins for the project came in how it managed to effect change in the relationships between woman and men.** 83% of the women said they had some say in decisions over their children, with 17% of the women saying they had very little control over these decisions. The **majority (78%) said they made decisions on how money is spent either together with their husband, or on their own.** Importantly, most women (**85%**) **said they had seen positive changes in their husbands** as a result of the training, with 55% saying they had seen significant change and 30% saying they had seen moderate changes. Most (95%) said that the relationships between Aspire women and their husbands had improved. This is triangulated with interviews with N4A staff who have conducted M&E visits every six months. In an interview, a N4A staff member said:



*'As a result of male sensitisation men appear to be more involved in their wives' lives, supporting them in their work in the Cooperative. Some of the men have been helping in the gardens.'*²⁰

Furthermore, women witnessed better (83%) and much better (15%) communication between husband and wife, and said that verbal arguments had reduced (85%) and significantly reduced (13%). Almost all (98%) of the women said that physical fights between husband and wife had reduced. Finally, most (86%) of women said that since joining Aspire, conflict between them and their husbands had reduced.

FGD with Aspire men, Rutunga, Rwanda, May 2016.

Another **major success was the positive relationships the project fostered between women.** Like the positive impact on relationships between husband and wife, this was another strong theme to come through the quantitative and qualitative discussions. N4A and Aspire staff said that *'social bonds between women and social network'* were enhanced as a result of the project and that this had *'been successful in boosting women's confidence in the project.'*²¹

One in every five women (19%) said they had experienced something negative as a result of the project.²² This

²⁰ Interview with N4A staff, May 2016.

²¹ Interview with Aspire and N4A staff, May 2016.

²² The section includes a response to the question - To what extent and how has the project affected people in ways that were not originally intended?

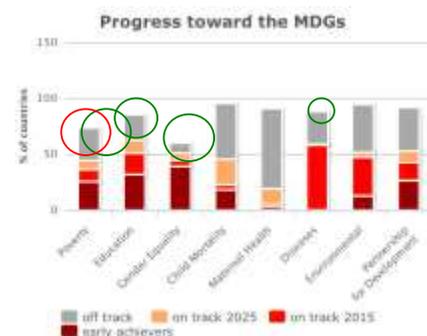
included time lost on land that did not yield a good crop, not having time to spend on their own farms, decreased production in their kitchen gardens as a result of cultivating the joint land that was unproductive, jealousy from other women who had not attended the trainings and a few conflicts with husbands over the sale of assets (goats).

RELEVANCE

To what extent did the project support achievement towards the MDGs, specifically off-track MDGs?

The project made a number of strides towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). First, the project was able to raise the productivity and production of some women, who in turn were better able to feed their families, sell a surplus of product and save and invest. For some beneficiaries this facilitated a move out of extreme poverty and hunger and a move towards MDG 1 – eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. At the same time the project land chosen did not produce as was projected and this meant that women lost time, money and income farming land that was unproductive. As a result of not having as much time to farm

Relevance for MDGs?



individual land, some women lost the opportunity to make income from their own land (e.g. they had less time to farm their land and as a result produced less, and could sell less). This was true for women from geographical units 1 and 2 who worked in the marshland. This is further explored in key drivers and barriers affecting the delivery of results in the effectiveness section. As mentioned above, the project had a positive impact on MDG 3 – promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, through the partnership work with RWAMREC and the follow up work done by the Aspire social worker. The project also contributed to MDG 2 – Universal primary education through the childcare facilities and to a lesser extent contributed to MDG 6 – combating HIV/AIDS. Again this work was mostly achieved through trainings run by the Aspire social worker. More details on how the project supported the achievement of the MDGs is found in the overall findings section above.

Are those changes (outcomes and outputs) relevant to people's needs?

The outcomes listed in the overall findings are relevant to people's needs as they focus on key areas of food production and increasing incomes that remain key areas of importance to women and men in Rutunga.

Studies show the importance of coupling increased production from the farm with more equitable distribution of income. For example, research shows that increasing farm income alone can lead to increased alcoholism and violence. To this end the project took a smart and holistic approach of raising incomes while at the same time increasing communication, budgeting and planning between husband and wife. The results of this dual approach are not captured at the outcome level in the log frame.



At the start of the project the literacy training was not tailored to the needs of women. N4A staff said that ‘many women couldn’t come in the afternoons, and the teaching methodology’ could be enhanced.²³ However this was later adapted by providing training to the staff about embedding literacy into vocational skills. N4A staff noted that ‘this has had a positive effect on the literacy skills of some of the women.’²⁴

How well did the project respond to the needs of target beneficiaries, including how these needs evolved over time?²⁵

The project **responded to the needs of women as these needs evolved over time**. Examples of this are given below:

Need Raised by Women	Response
The women said they were walking too far to the land, usually between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours one way.	The project rented land for a banana farm that was closer to where women lived.
The women missed out on farming their own land due to spending 3 days working on the marshland for the Cooperative. Some women said this meant they did not have enough food cultivated in their home gardens and some said this led to hunger .	The project hired the women’s husbands to help clear the land and reduced women’s work on the land from 3 days to 1 day/ week. The project divided the land into smaller plots to make it more manageable for women to farm the land.
The women requested more vocational trainings (e.g. in making bread, baskets and other IGAs).	The project has not acted on this and believes there is no viable market for some of the request for IGAs (e.g. bread production). There may be a market for other goods but this would require a thorough market assessment.
The women and men requested more RWAMREC training on positive masculinities.	The project has not been able to respond to this, due to budgetary limitations.
The women requested the timing of sensitisations be shifted to suit the women and the farming seasons.	Aspire shifted the timing of the sessions.
The women said that the marshland provided a very poor harvest	Aspire rented better land for women in units 3. Aspire provided goats to give women’s income a boost and encourage them to stay in the project
The women in unit 3 said that their income was still minimal	N4A raised money for a fruit tree pilot project for unit 3. ²⁶

One of the most pressing needs of the women was and is to increase their food production from the land,

²³ Interview with N4A staff, May 2016.

²⁴ Interview with N4A staff, May 2016.

²⁵ This section includes examples of how the programme used learning to improve delivery.

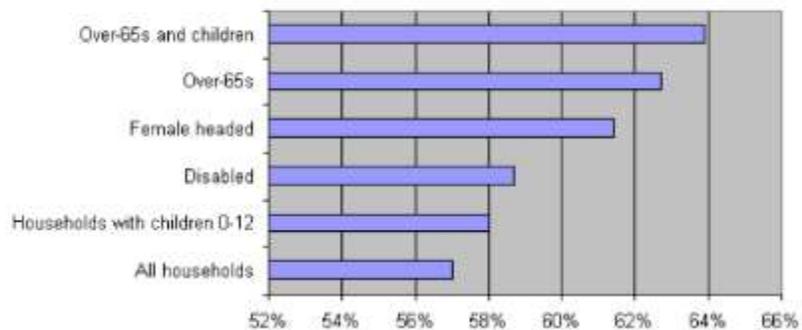
²⁶ Interview with N4A, May 2016.

increase income and the equitable distribution of income in the household. To that end, the project has not met its bottom line impact targets. The responses above aimed to mitigate the issues around lost production. The responses are more risk mitigation, rather than positively responding to the needs of women from a place of security. If the project had been able to increase production from the land (the reasons why this did not happen are discussed in the driver and barriers section), then the response may have been more proactive rather than reactive. Additionally, enhanced agri-business expertise may have been able to increase the income for the Cooperative.

To what extent did the project target and reach the poor and marginalised?

The government of Rwanda has four key categories of poverty.²⁷ Additionally the government recognises a number of population groups that are particularly vulnerable to poverty, including older people, those living with disabilities, young children, female-headed households, genocide survivors and the historically marginalised. Young people are a group that also needs support, given the difficulties many have in finding jobs due to low skill levels. The poverty ratios of different groups are shown in the graph on the right.

Figure 1: Poverty levels of households including specific categories of the population, compared to the poverty level of all households¹¹



Based on the government’s four categories of poverty and using local government statistics, the project was able to effectively and strategically target the poorest of households.

To what extent did the project mainstream gender equality in these design and delivery of activities?

The project has gender-mainstreamed activities in a number of ways. First, the project understands gender issues as affecting both women and men. It sees men as key gatekeepers to gender equality and values the importance of engaging men fully. This will be critical if future projects are to ensure any income made from the farm is distributed fairly within the household. The project has aimed to engage both men and women in activities; for example, men were engaged in behaviour change work and in the distribution of assets (goats). Second, the project sees gender holistically, looking at the whole picture of gender equality (e.g. in health, education, income, savings, decision making etc.). In practice the program mainstreams gender; however, it does not effectively report on the changes it seeks to create.

EFFECTIVENESS

To what extent has the project delivered results that are value for money?

Reviewing VfM has become increasingly common in recent years as the public demands more accountability of international funds. As a tool it can provide evidence to strengthen public confidence in policy-making and justify

²⁷ Government of Rwanda (2011), National Social Protection Strategy, Ministry of Local Government: http://www.minaloc.gov.rw/fileadmin/documents/Minaloc_Documents/National_Social_Protectiion_Strategy.pdf

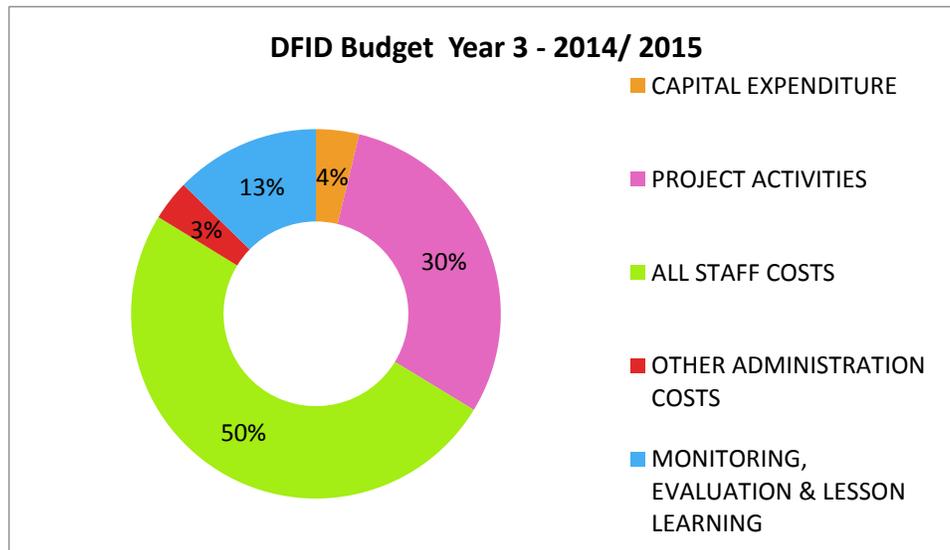
maintenance of development budgets. A number of development actors including UK Aid Direct (VfM), World Bank (Cost Benefit Analysis), African Development Bank (uses financial analysis), USAID (uses results-based management in addressing Congressional questions on value for money) use different types of VfM assessments.

VfM analysis has some challenges in that it can lead to a focus on activities that are easy to measure and implement rather than more risky and important activities. Measuring quantitative outcomes of aid is easier than complex behaviour change.

This section assesses three key areas. First, how well the project applied VfM principles of effectiveness, economy, and efficiency in relation to delivery of its outcome. Second, if the project has been cost effective. Third, what has happened because of DFID funding that wouldn't have otherwise happened. The evaluation does not perform an in-depth cost-benefit analysis; that would demand a separate evaluation in itself (e.g. review the cost of each activity and compare this to the quantitative and qualitative benefits of the project). This would entail giving each qualitative variable (e.g. less conflict in the home, lower rates of depression, less stress etc.) a monetary value. This final evaluation looks at the three areas above to assess the overall VfM of the programme.

Overview of VfM

The table below shows the overview of costs for the final year of the project. Half (50%) of the costs incurred were for staff, which includes 14 staff including the CEO, Project Manager, social worker, agronomist, literacy and numeracy teacher, child care workers (6), watchmen/guards (2) and finance administrator. However, this is **linked to the high amount of training conducted under the project**. The project has **gender parity in pay for like positions**. For example, the female social worker and male agronomist are paid the same wage of £2,856.50/year. The **cost paid for staff is in line with market rates** in Kigali, Rwanda. Based on the direct and indirect beneficiaries of 2,481 people reached, the cost of the project per head for is £66.



Economy: less cost, while bearing in mind quality

The project has been **effective in economising on money spent while maintaining good quality**. One of the most expensive trainings in the budget is for the positive masculinities training run by RWAMREC.²⁸ The project has been able to reduce the usual cost of these trainings by entering into a partnership with RWAMREC that has effectively

²⁸ Interviews with the CEO of RWAMREC and Senior staff at Aspire.



saved the project money. The table below shows the cost of the RWAMREC trainings through the contracted and partnership streams:

RWAMREC Payment Plans		
Item cost	Contract	Partnership
Trainer	\$300/ day	\$150/ day – Aspire

Using the partnership approach **Aspire has been able to reduce the cost of the trainer by 50%**. Other major organisations (e.g. INGOs and UN agencies) pay the contracted rate of \$300/ day per trainer. Two trainers are needed for each day – one to work with the women and one to work with the men. Despite this, the training still remains expensive. However the quality is high. Interviews with Aspire staff indicated they could not find a less costly alternative that was of the same quality. For future projects, Aspire may wish to look into the possibility of reaching a partnership agreement with RWAMREC for them to train up two Aspire members of staff within their current training of trainers programme. Dependent on the number of positive masculinities trainings Aspire wishes to run, this might prove to be cost effective.

Overall the project has purchased inputs at the lowest cost. The higher cost of the RWAMREC training is justified, as no similar quality of trainings exists in Kigali. Other trainings were offered at a reasonable rate. For example, Hagaruka provided trainers at a very reasonable rate of £100 per day per trainer. This included the women being able to access legal advice services free of charge after the training.

Similarly, the project ensured VfM through other partnerships with expert trainers, organisations and institutions at Hagaruka, Kayanga Health Centre and SACCO Rwanda Cooperatives Agency.

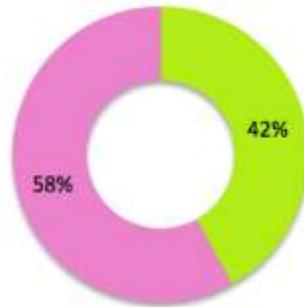
Efficiency: achieving outputs for inputs, while bearing in mind quality

The behaviour change and social work has been an efficient use of resources. For example, the value of the output has been – key qualitative changes in levels of joint communication and decision making between husband and wife, enhanced social capital between women through the development of sustainable Cooperatives. Key quantitative changes have included women increasing their savings, children improving health, nutrition and education outcomes and some smaller increase in livelihoods. The total cost of inputs for the behaviour change work was 58% while the cost of inputs for the agricultural work was 42%, as per the 2015-2016 budget.²⁹

²⁹ This has been calculated by reviewing the document entitled DFID BUDGET 2015-2016 to track agricultural and behaviour change/ training costs. There is indeed some cross over; for example, literacy and numeracy and business skills are key to market goods and products. To ensure no double counting all trainings that are non-agricultural (e.g. sexual health, government, HIV/AIDs, literacy etc.) are included under the behaviour change and training category. All explicitly agricultural costs (e.g. rent of land, agricultural inputs etc.) fall under the agriculture column. Overall project costs (e.g. CEO, finance, administrators, project manager, office costs and M&E) have been divided evenly between the two areas of agriculture and behaviour change/ training.

Cost of the Agricultural Work Versus Behavior Change and Training

■ Agriculture ■ Behaviour change/ training

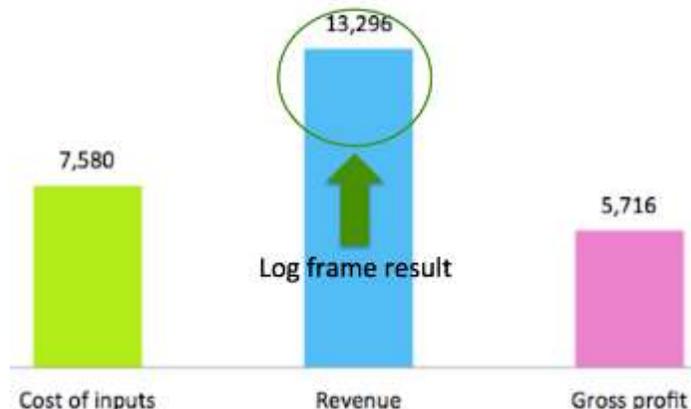


Effectiveness: achieving project outcomes, while bearing in mind equity

Effectiveness measures the impact of obtaining value for money. It can be quantitative (the amount of effectiveness e.g. amount of yield, number of children in childcare, number of women with increased literacy) or qualitative (the value of effectiveness, e.g. the quality of the childcare provides, the quality of the women’s literacy trainings).

Overall the relationship between the **intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes) was negatively impacted by the poor agricultural production**. According to the log frame data in year four, the Cooperatives were able to generate a turnover of £13,296. Agricultural input costs for year 2015/2016 were £7,580.35. Thus the costs of inputs minus the revenue generated gives a **profit of £5,716** or a **Return on Investment of 2.3**. As mentioned above, the **log frame targets were not designed to take inputs into account**. Additionally, Aspire staff noted that more inputs were needed due to the land being virgin land. This points to the likelihood of a higher Return on Investment for future projects that do not require unexpected and additional inputs. It is important to note that **cost for renting land is not included in this calculation** and this appears as 0 in the budget line. This means that, should similar land in Cohort 3 (year 3) be accessible free of charge (e.g. government land, farmers/ Cooperatives own their own land), and the quantity and quality of the harvest output stays the same with other variables the same (e.g. number of people available to work on the land) then it is possible to turn a profit with a 2.3 return on investment.

Cost of Agricultural Inputs, Revenue Raised and Gross Profit for Year Three, 2014/2015 in GBP





Overall the project has **applied some VfM principles well**. The project has been able to **gain services at or under the market rate and has spent funds efficiently and effectively**. The main drawback in VfM has been in the project not reaching its agricultural milestones. This has majorly **hampered the ability of the project to show a stronger return on investment from an agricultural perspective**.

A number of outcomes would not have been achieved without the UK Aid Direct funding (e.g. improved nutrition of children, women better grouped, enhanced communication between husbands and wives). To refrain from repetition these are detailed in the overall findings section above.

Future projects may want to conduct a separate qualitative cost-benefit analysis of behaviour change and training activities. This could involve hiring an intern from, for example, Columbia University or the London School of Economics to spend two months in Kigali undertaking a qualitative CBA.

What are the key drivers and barriers affecting the delivery of results for the project?

Key drivers: The implementing organisation has good local networks and is well respected in the community in which it works and by other partner organisations. N4A also noted this in an interview:

*'Aspire is very good at working very closely with the beneficiaries, building up trust (which requires dedication, loyalty, and continued presence and provision of holistic support). The staff chosen (with the exception of the initial Project Manager) have worked very hard to gain the trust of the women and their families and build relationships with them. Several staff members were living in Rutunga, which meant that the women who were initially very cautious and untrusting of Aspire (having experienced other NGOs coming to Rutunga promising a lot and then never returning) began to realise that Aspire was intending to stay in Rutunga for the full three years of the project.'*³⁰

This means that beneficiaries are more likely to trust the organisation, attend activities and understand when things do not go as planned (e.g. low production in the marshlands). From a partner's perspective the range of organisation's networks has given the project many options to engage specialists from different sectors (e.g. rights work with HAGARUKA, positive masculinities work with RWAMREC) to conduct specialised trainings. This ensures a high quality in the trainings delivered as trainers come from a place of expertise.

The project has been able to **implement a holistic approach** that takes into consideration the multiple constraints that hold women back and lead to poverty and hunger. For example, the project is unique in coupling a package of income-generating and social activities towards women. **This is important as it leads to a greater depth of impact.**

Key barriers to the project's success include the need for forward planning, greater risk mitigation and enhanced communication between Aspire and N4A. A number of factors led to the reduced productivity of the land, compared to projected targets. A number of these (e.g. dramatic change in weather patterns, erratic rainfall/prolonged drought, insects/pests attack plants, sector authorities/private landlords take back land loaned to Aspire) are mentioned in the risk matrix; however, a number (e.g. private sector pulls out, government delays in releasing the land) are not.

The following details the barriers to the project's success:

- The holder of the grant liaised with DFID via email and phone to ensure funds were disbursed on time, but there were delays in receiving funds. The project was due to start in January 2013, but no funds were released until late February 2013, delaying the project by two months. This delay was critical and meant that women lost a planting season. This affected the overall yield, profitability and schedule of the Cooperative, affecting outcome indicator 3.

³⁰ Interview with N4A staff.

- The project **did foresee flooding of the marshlands in the risk matrix**. The marshlands are typically more fertile than the hills and are also known to be of higher risk (e.g. from flooding), although this risk is reduced with proper irrigation systems. The project may want to intersperse these high-risk areas with lower and medium risk areas to have a balanced portfolio of high and low risk areas.
- The project **did speak to women about the distance travelled** to and from the marshlands but women were optimistic about the new venture and the possibility of utilising free land from the government. Staff noted that the sector demanded that joining the project was opened up to the whole sector, and as a result they noted that women from far away joined the project. To reduce the distances travelled Aspire divided women into geographical units. Given women's time poverty, it will be key for future projects to continue to divide women into these geographic units and use time cut-off points based on distance travelled (e.g. no woman should have to walk more than 45 minutes one way to reach the land). These time cut-off points are used in other projects, and should be reached in consultation with different groups of women. For example, many gender sensitive WASH projects aim for no one to walk more than 30 minutes to collect water. These cut-offs are especially important for WASH and agriculture projects in which we know women and girls do the bulk (around 80%) of productive labour.
- The project predicted (risk 3 in the risk matrix) that **insects and pests** might attack the plants. At one stage early on in the project birds ate part of the harvest. This was considered by N4A an avoidable risk with proper planning and management of pests.
- The project acknowledged the risk of the **government or landlords taking the back the land** (risk 6) and recommended formal and informal agreements with the government. However, Aspire staff said that formal agreements between the government and the NGO/Cooperative were not possible and that only private sector companies were able to achieve formal contracts or agreements with the government. This is because the government owns the marshlands and decides whom to give the plots of land to based on the condition that they make it productive. Cooperatives are one of the government's priority groups to give land to. Where it was possible to sign contracts, Aspire did so. For example, when renting private land uphill for the banana and tamarillos, Aspire signed a 5-year contract with a private landlord. The fact that it was not possible to sign a contract or agreement between the government and the Cooperatives or NGOs puts them at a significant disadvantage and in a highly risky position should the government pull out, or should the landlords decide to take their land back. The project was perhaps too optimistic about this risk and did not adequately plan for these eventualities. That said, Aspire and N4A staff said a key learning from the project was that working with landless Cooperatives was high risk and that next time the project would only seek to work with farmers who already have guaranteed access to land.
- The project had **not planned to work with specific private sector (PS) companies prior to the start of the project**. N4A said that 'market linkage had not really been part of the project but should have been.'³¹ Market analysis and linkages could be strengthened. Aspire did have some success in creating market linkages for crops grown in the uphill land with two PS companies: MINIMIX, who bought crops, and the Women's Food Processing Company, who bought soya. Aspire staff noted that there were no other PS actors to work with in the area. Future projects may want to consider how more PS actors can be brought into a project from the start. For example, Aspire staff may be able to solicit contracts from a number of market actors in cases where there is a strong win-win situation for the business and for the women. Future work may also want to engage a market specialist³² to assess the feasibility of success for women to enter a variety of sectors.
- **When an opportunity did arise to work with the PS, the terms were mandated by the Rwandan government.** In 2014, the Cooperative had the opportunity to work with PS company Fresh Gardens Limited in the marshlands, which seemed like a win-win situation. However, a number of challenges arose. First, women were instructed by the Ministry of Agriculture to prepare the marshland for French beans (the crop that Fresh Gardens Ltd wanted) without a contract in place; this made the women vulnerable to changes in agreed conditions. It also put the women and Aspire in a difficult situation as there was no contract, but they were obligated to start preparing the land, as instructed by the government. Second, the government only allowed

³¹ Interview with N4A staff, May 2016.

³² This market specialist would be responsible for assessing the feasibility of projects that would benefit both the PS and women, the risk, analysing how the risk could be spread, assessing new gaps in the market and opportunities for market linkages. The market specialist would not focus on marketing the products.

the Cooperative to partner with one PS actor (Fresh Gardens Ltd) for crops grown in the marshlands. This made the women vulnerable to that one company pulling out. Market systems research suggests that at least two market actors should be worked with, as working with one is high risk. It is important to note that the government insisted that Aspire work with Fresh Gardens Ltd. exclusively. If Aspire had not agreed, they would have had to give back the land. Next time the implementing partner may be able to mitigate some of these negative impacts with more detailed risk mitigation and planning (e.g. seek out other market actors, have budget lines for risk mitigation, diversify into different types of land – as is currently being done by Aspire).

- The project **had a risk matrix** that was updated on an annual basis, submitted to and approved by DFID. However, there were no budget lines to counteract some of these risks. These **budget lines could be included in a future project** by including a risk mitigation budget line for the most likely risks. Once the project was underway it was not possible to request further funding from DFID. However, N4A did do some fundraising to pay for the clearance of channels that prevented further flooding of the marshlands, and was a government requirement. Additionally, Aspire secured an in-kind donation of goats that aimed to counterbalance some of the negative impacts from the low yields. Some risk mitigation budget lines were included in the project (e.g. cost of pesticides to counteract risk 3 - that insects and pests may attack the plants). There is a **need for a budget line for risk mitigation**, as funds were needed mid-way through the project and N4A had to raise additional capital for risk mitigation activities.
- The project had **key staff (Project Manager and social worker) leave at a critical period**. Although the project re-hired for these positions quickly (within 2 months), this had a significant effect on delaying the project. With the lean human resources and budget it is hard to see how this could have been reacted to any better.
- The land allocated by the government was **virgin land**. As a result it required a higher quantity of inputs and more time spent on clearing the land. Next time Aspire and N4A have said that they will use land that has already been opened up.³³
- The project **worked with women who were not already in a group**. For some this was the first time they had been in a Cooperative. This meant the project was starting from the ground up. Aspire and N4A staff said that it took time to build trust between the women, as well as between Aspire and the women. Aspire suggested that next time they should work with women who are already grouped.³⁴

External Factors

External factors such as **flooding, drought, pests (birds), and the private sector pulling out affected the ability of the project to deliver its projected targeted**. That said, **these were likely events and the negative impact of these could have been reduced**.

Communication and relationships between Aspire and N4A

Overall both Aspire and N4A said that communication and relationships had been **good** and that the organisations worked effectively together. N4A staff said that:

*'Partnership between Aspire and N4A has remained solid which has helped the project when it has run into difficulties with funding, agricultural issues.'*³⁵

N4A said that Aspire could have **communicated challenges sooner**. Staff at N4A said they could have supported Aspire in strategising about how to resolve the issues at hand. However, some staff at Aspire suggested that there were no agricultural specialist at N4A and questioned what N4A could have done if they were involved earlier as Aspire was the

³³ Interview with Aspire and N4A staff, May 2016.

³⁴ Interview with Aspire and N4A staff, May 2016.

³⁵ Interview with N4A staff, May 2016.



one on the ground with the technical know-how. That said, N4A may have been able to consult with specialists within their networks and on the board of trustees to strategise as to what actions could have been taken. Aside from providing technical assistance for future projects, it is important for the implementing partner to communicate challenges early on. This will enable the donor agency to potentially contact the implementing partner with additional technical experts (e.g. markets, agricultural experts that sit on the N4A board of trustees). Additionally, early on communication is key, as N4A needs time to raise additional resources for risk mitigation. N4A should communicate in contractual agreements the types of challenges they would like raised early on, the process for doing this (e.g. email, phone call) and the timeframe (e.g. within 48 hours, 1 week, 1 month). Most importantly the process should be made simple and easy-to-use for busy programme managers.

The process of feeding back negative results must also be coupled with a culture that welcomes **adaptive management**, failing fast and re-strategising on how this can be done. A recent development in the humanitarian and development arena has been ‘failure reports.’ These reports are published either internally or externally by organisations that are interested in documenting and learning from their failures, and using the process as a launch point for organisational change. The model is largely based on a process developed by Engineers Without Borders Canada, an organisation that has been publishing its **Failure Reports** publicly since 2008³⁶ and is closely tied to developing a culture of adaptive management.

Overall, the project was able to react and respond to changes during the project. However, adaptive management is a long-term process and should not be seen as an end result. Both partners may want to continue to think through how adaptive management can become further embedded into the cultures of both organisations. Further steps on this are outlined in the DFID blog that can be accessed by clicking [here](#). One useful way to track adaptive management can be to have a Key Performance Indicators that assess adaptive management practices in both implementing and donor organisations. In short, for future projects, enhanced communication, especially of negative results may lead to enhanced outcomes.

Who have these lessons learnt been shared with?

Lessons learnt were shared with the donor, N4A. Aspire communicated about the challenges the agriculture side of the project faced. Aspire communicated with both the local mayor and a national network of NGOs (the Joint Action Development Forum) to discuss some of the challenges faced (e.g. flooding in the marshlands) and to share ideas on what had worked, why and what could be enhanced.

EFFICIENCY

To what extent did the grantee deliver results on time, on budget against agreed plans and manage cost drivers?

Overall reports and M&E were delivered on time. Trainings were overall delivered on time. There was some overspend on the budget. This was mostly down to an underestimation of inputs needed, not thoroughly assessing the quality of the land and the inputs needed and challenges that meant the project had to respond by putting money into risk mitigation (e.g. rent new plots of land, purchase fruit tree seedlings).

Some issues in efficiency of implementing the project were, in the opinion of N4A, due to the ‘lack of agribusiness staff member.’ Aspire noted that agriculture staff did their best to increase yield during the implementation phase but that more **agribusiness and markets expertise was needed in the planning stage** and in the project design. As a result, Aspire said that implementation stage of the project was affected by a lack of agribusiness support at the beginning.

Additionally, agribusiness and markets technical support was **also needed as the project adapted to new opportunities in partnering with the private sector** and government. This meant that ‘a lot of the project work, especially with regards

³⁶ Engineers Without Borders Canada: <https://failforward.org/learning-modules/failure-reports/>



to the agriculture, was reactive to problems that were encountered, rather than being proactive and preventing problems in the first place.³⁷ In short, a **stronger business focus could have helped foresee and drive down some of these costs.**

How effective have the project's management, monitoring, learning and financial systems been? How have they helped or hindered the delivery of lasting change?

Overall the M&E has been effective and has adapted over time. Aspire and N4A noted that 'most of the monitoring and evaluation tools were used'³⁸ including enrolment surveys; the end of year surveys each year and the final survey of the first two cohorts (from 2013 and 2014). Further, there was also a mid-year survey in 2013 but 'Network for Africa and Aspire agreed that the small amount of information gained from these surveys did not justify the time it took to carry out the surveys.' As a result the project stopped conducting mid-year surveys and replaced these with FGDs. The project retained the surveys of all women at the start (baseline) and end (final) of each cohort. Further, beneficiary attendance was also measured – this included women's attendance rates at sensitisations and in the field, as well as children's attendance at the childcare centre. This data was disaggregated by age, sex, and marital status, among other variables.³⁹

Additionally Aspire and N4A said there had been **regular emails and phone calls and two trips** to Rwanda a year. These enabled Aspire and N4A to share information not conveyed in the monitoring data and quarterly reports and were good opportunities for gathering qualitative feedback from the participants. Overall, both organisations said the tools were largely effective and that they have been able to 'measure all of our log frame targets using the tools' as well as testimonials.

N4A noted that the findings and recommendations of the mid-term review had been applied as lessons learnt in the following ways:

- The project diversified the crops to include banana trees and tamarillos. The fruit tree project is set to carry on for the next five years and will allow Aspire to stay in Rutunga working with the same beneficiaries;
- The project tried to form market linkages with organisations, including Fresh Gardens Ltd, but has had limited success due to the issues discussed in the drivers of success section above. The project successfully achieved other market linkages and had a contract with the Women's Food Processing Company who purchased soya and MINIMIX who purchased other crops.

Overall, this final evaluation finds there to be many questions asked of women (e.g. in the mid-term evaluation). Not all of these answers are used by the project. Additionally, the log frame has **too many indicators - 26 KPIs**, which **could be condensed to around 10-15 KPIs**. Further, as mentioned above, the log frame was updated after input from DFID and as a result the **agency indicators** were removed. Future projects may want to track agency and behaviour change indicators higher up in the log frame (e.g. at impact or outcome level). This is especially important if the project expects to see changes in these indicators.

SUSTAINABILITY

To what extent has the project leveraged additional resources (financial and in-kind) from other sources? What effect has this had on the scale, delivery or sustainability of activities?

On some levels the CEO has been very involved in the day-to-day running of the project and needs time to be able to mobilise resources. A future project should review how to set aside more time for senior management to do resource mobilisation activities.

³⁷ Interview with N4A staff, May 2016.

³⁸ Interview with Aspire and N4A staff, May 2016.

³⁹ Interview with N4A staff, May 2016.

The project has **leveraged 225 milking goats** from a local organisation based in Kigali, Rwanda. The goats were able to provide the women with some fresh milk and also an income. Most of women said that the type and amount of livestock they had **changed as result of the project**. A number of women also said they had **learnt and put into practice the use of goat and cow dung as organic fertilizer**. A small number of women said they received a goat but that it died after a few months, or that they had sold it off in times of an emergency. A few women said they had conflict with their husband over the women having more control over assets (livestock). Although Aspire confirmed that women and men both signed to receive the goat, a few husbands said they did not like their wives controlling a greater number of assets as this gave them a greater voice in the household. It is likely that more positive masculinities training would help reduce these conflicts and help men to see the shared value of women jointly owning assets. The provision of goats was a good opportunity to enhance the sustainability of outcomes. Although they do not increase the scale of the project (goats were given to women already involved in the project), they do provide an opportunity for deeper, more long-lasting changes.

To what extent is there evidence that the benefits delivered by the project will be sustained after the project ends?

The table below ranks five outcomes of the project and their likely sustainability. The results do not reflect how effectively the areas were implemented but rather focuses on sustainability. For example, the positive masculinities work may have been very effective and popular, but with a limited budget and only two sessions it is questionable if these particular results will be retained without follow up. Studies show that long-term behaviour change programmes that aim to create role model families and male positive deviants are the most effective at retaining results. This is not to take away from the considerable range of holistic activities that Aspire was able to implement effectively over a broad range of topics.

The highest ranked statements below are also based on the sustainability questions asked of women and men in FGDs and staff in KIIs. For example a large number of stakeholders said that the Cooperatives were very likely to be sustainable.

Area	Sustainability Statement	Likelihood of Retention
Cooperatives	Creating Cooperatives made it easier for the women to bulk agricultural produce and provided them with greater social networks and social capital that they can rely on. In short, grouping women in Cooperatives helped to build their resilience to future shocks and stresses. Cooperatives were also able to enhance women’s coping strategies and reduce their levels of loneliness and isolation. ⁴⁰	Medium-high
Agricultural training	Some of the agricultural training is likely to be retained. Although fewer women were practicing three or more methods, 85% of women were using at least one method they had been taught by Aspire.	Medium-high
Positive masculinity	The positive masculinities training positively affected relationships, but sustainability is questionable as this was only two sessions and there is no plan for follow-up. Although both women and men were very positive about the positive masculinities work, studies show that follow up is needed to make the results deep and long lasting.	Medium
Benefits to children	The nutritional and education benefits to children have given them a step up. However the lasting benefits are dependent on parents’ agricultural output.	Medium
IGAs	Women have received some IGAs (e.g. fruit trees). However the women are	Low-Medium

⁴⁰ This related to the question ‘assess the long-term impact the psychological well-being of the women as a result of being part of a cooperative rather than working individually.’ Such an assessment would demand a longitudinal study or psychical assessment of women. Data on an assessment of long term income is discussed in the overall findings section.



	still reliant on Aspire for inputs and technical assistance. Successful sustainability will mean they need to build their capacity and willingness to invest in agricultural inputs.	
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IMPACT

To what extent and how has the project built the capacity of Aspire? ⁴¹

Aspire attended training on strategy and report writing led by a consultant, training by FAIM Africa Ltd. on how to grow tamarillos and bananas, training on interactive literacy and embedding literacy in vocational skills and training on communication skills for health care professionals. Most of these trainings were not embedded in the action plan and Aspire suggested there may be a need to plan for more structured capacity building of staff in future projects.⁴²

There were **obstacles to building the fundraising capacity of Aspire staff**. N4A and Aspire conducted a joint strategic planning process and N4A suggested that Aspire start mapping possible funders in Kigali and paid for a temporary staff member to support with the process. In June 2016, this had not yet started. Additionally, a consultant conducted report writing and strategic planning session with Aspire in December 2014. Aspire staff have numerous competing demands on their time, balancing different holistic projects. Staff at Aspire also noted the **need to utilise senior managers for fundraising**, and to pull more senior staff away from implementing projects 100% of the time to part implementation and part resource mobilisation. In short, there is interest on both sides; what remains is to see how these obstacles (e.g. no time, de-prioritisation of fundraising etc.) can be jointly overcome. It will be key for Aspire to feedback on what is working in developing fundraising capacity, what are the key obstacles and what can be enhanced.

Aspire staff wanted to build their capacity in two interrelated areas:

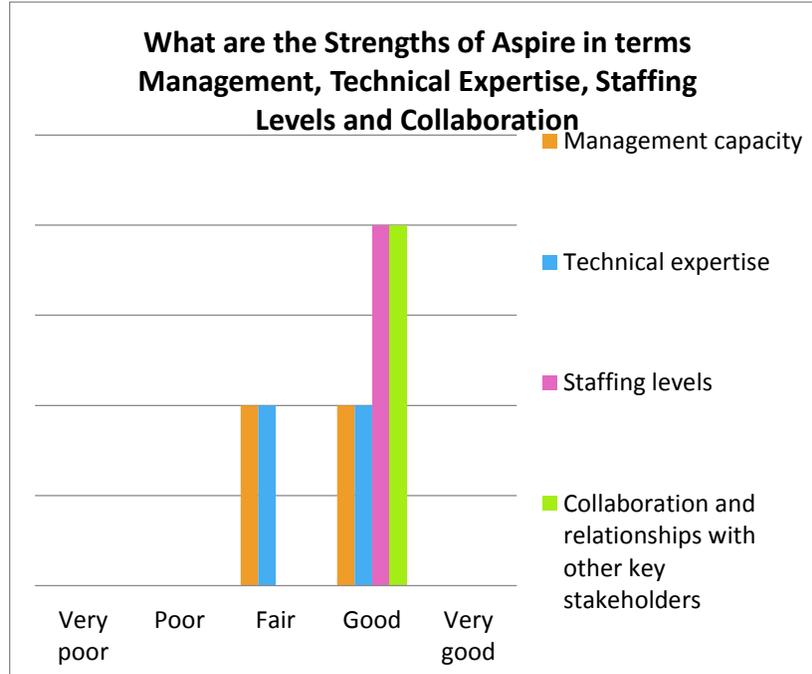
1. **In writing proposals⁴³**
2. **In fundraising.**

Aspire staff capacity was evaluated as shown below by N4A and Aspire.

⁴¹ The overall findings section discusses the project outcomes and the extent to which the projects theory of change has been effective at creating lasting change.

⁴² Interview with Aspire staff, May 2016.

⁴³ Interview with two Aspire staff, May 2016.



Recommendations

The recommendations below are targeted at Aspire and N4A.

Recommendations for N4A

- **To create a process for communicating negative results** e.g. within what timelines, how and when this should be communicated by the implementing agency
- **To ensure future projects track agency and behaviour change indicators higher up in the log frame** (e.g. at impact or outcome level). To ensure future agriculture, livelihoods and food security projects have indicators on women's agency (e.g. confidence, joint decision making, control over assets, increased access to savings)
- **To have more realistic outcomes** for agricultural outputs
- **To conduct a separate qualitative cost-benefit analysis** of behaviour change and training activities. This could involve hiring an intern from, for example, Columbia University or the London School of Economics to spend two months in Kigali undertaking a qualitative CBA.

Recommendations for N4A and Aspire to mobilise resources for future projects

- **To review how the team can build on their strengths in behaviour change work** and apply to the UN Women Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls for a joint grant between Aspire and Network for Africa.
- **To build internal capacity to write and apply for proposals** and ensure that senior staff set aside time for fundraising, proposal writing and capacity building. One senior staff member at Aspire said there was an interest to build internal proposal writing skills. That said, some resources had been available to Aspire to build their internal capacity (e.g. offers of support, donor mapping meetings in Kigali, providing a staff member to help with fundraising). Crucially there is interest from Aspire in building this capacity; what remains is to address the obstacles that prevent Aspire from applying for future funding. Obstacles may include staff feeling stretched and time short in writing proposals, not knowing which organisations to



contact and how to contact them. Future projects may seek to assess these barriers and implement strategies to overcome them

- **To conduct a joint 2-day in-country proposal writing and project planning workshop** with the implementing partner and provide the **implementing partner with key proposal writing deliverables in the contract**

Recommendations for Aspire

- **To ensure there is someone on the team with agri-business/ markets technical expertise** before going into any agri-business activities. Aspire noted that this is most crucial during the planning and project design stages.
- **To create a budget line for risk mitigation.** These would focus on the most likely risks and the include budget lines to reflect the strategies to mitigate these risks that are outlined in the risk matrix.
- **To have more detailed assessment of risk throughout the lifespan** of the project and for new initiatives (e.g. fruit trees, working with the PS, pests) in order to aim to foresee and act on risks faster.
- **To reduce risk of outcomes not being met by, for example, not working with landless Cooperatives, ensuring women are already grouped in a Cooperative, not entering into agri-business without a business specialist**
- **To devise clear ways that the women can pay back a percentage of agricultural inputs** to increase sustainability
- **To set a time cut-off point on distances travelled by women to reach the farm** (e.g. no woman should have to walk more than 45 minutes one way to reach the land)
- **To have contracts with the PS before starting work on the land**
- **To fully assess the cost of production** before starting the project (e.g. assess the quality of the land by taking soil samples and project the cost of inputs and labour etc. accordingly).
- **To not use free land from the government unless a thorough risk assessment has taken place and only with strong mitigation strategies**
- **To get at the true amount earned by the Cooperative,** and the likelihood that this can be financially sustainable, it may be useful to subtract the costs of inputs (e.g. seeds, pesticides, fertilizers) from the final amount earned by the Cooperative.
- **To look into the possibility of reaching a partnership agreement with RWAMREC** for them to train two Aspire members of staff within their current training of trainers programme. Dependent on the number of positive masculinities trainings Aspire wishes to run, this may prove to be cost effective.

Recommendations for UK Aid Direct

- **To ensure that funds are disbursed as planned**
- **To include agency as well as agricultural productivity indicators** at the outcome level of the log frame

CONCLUSION

Overall the programme shows some good success in the behaviour change and training components. The agricultural work on training women in new agricultural techniques has been effective and most women surveyed in May 2016 were using at least one of the agricultural practices. There have been big wins for women in being grouped and joining the Cooperative, many for the first time. This has facilitated the building of networks that women can rely on in times of crisis. This has helped to build the long-term resilience of women to shocks and stresses. There has been some attitude shift among men and a reduction in conflicts.



Further a number of women have been able to save money and open new bank accounts as a result of joining Aspire. Women have also noticed a positive attitude shift in their husbands, more joint decision-making and fewer conflicts in the household.

A number of challenges have arisen from the agricultural side of the project. There is a need for stronger agribusinesses, market assessments, risk mitigation and communication of negative results early on. All projects fail on certain areas at one point or another; the key is failing fast and learning quickly from experience. With enhanced agribusinesses, market assessments, risk mitigation and communication of negative results the team would have enhanced capacity to mitigate negative results.

The IGAs such as the fruit tree project have the potential to yield good harvests and have the long-term potential to achieve sustainability. However, the Cooperative relies on the agricultural inputs and access to land provided by Aspire. To become sustainable, the Cooperative will need to start investing in agricultural inputs, even if this is in small amounts and incremental. This will not happen overnight, but it is important that once the land starts producing a profit women are asked to reinvest part of their earning in the cost of production (e.g. inputs). Indeed, Aspire has already started these conversations with women, preparing them to put aside money from the first yield's profits. This is key in setting the groundwork for future cost sharing as it involves shifting mind-sets away from dependency. Studies show that cost sharing is possible with Base of the Pyramid customers. The growing number of private sector East African agribusinesses, solar energy and input companies that targeted BoP customers is testament to this growing market segment. Uptake happens fastest when beneficiaries see the added value of the product and when those involved target fast adopters (e.g. women who have access to finance, women who are educated, already grouped or community leaders).

In summary, the project has effected many positive changes in people's lives that go beyond producing greater yields. For future projects that aim to empower women it will be key to step up the work with men, continue improving risk mitigation in agricultural activities and ensure that future projects continue to track agency, as well as agricultural results.

Annexes

Please see attached document, including the bibliography.