



Gender Transformation & Empowerment

INVISIBLE BARRIERS

WE-CARE
WOMEN'S
ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT
AND CARE

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Programme Overview

Background: Rural women often face challenges in balancing caring for families with new leadership or economic roles. Care work—including direct care of persons and domestic work—is almost universally women’s responsibility. It is difficult and time-consuming limiting women’s opportunities in education, employment, politics and leisure.

WHAT IS UNPAID CARE WORK?

“Unpaid care work” refers to the direct care of people (in households and communities) and housework that facilitates this, such as cooking, washing clothes etc.

Table 1: Care Categories

Domestic work	Direct care of persons
✿ Meal preparation ✿ Fetching safe water ✿ Fetching wood fuel (energy) ✿ Clean space ✿ Clean clothes	✿ Child care ✿ Care of dependent adults ✿ Care of community members ✿ Care of the sick



WHAT IS WE-CARE?

The Women's Economic Empowerment and Care (WE-Care) initiative with support from OXFAM started in 2013, building on a history of efforts to recognise and address care work in programmes promoting livelihoods, gender justice and waged workers' rights. The Women's Economic Empowerment and Care: Evidence for Influencing Change (WE-Care) project in Uganda was launched in 2014 in Lamwo district with Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) coordinating the project and Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET) leading community Care Change actions this project aims to produce new methodologies and context-specific evidence about care activities to influence existing development initiatives and policy advocacy.

WE-Care aims to address the heavy and unequal responsibilities for housework and care that women face. Care work is an invisible barrier limiting women's time, mobility and ambitions to participate in economic, political and social activities. This is especially acute for families and women living in poverty.

Objectives and Indicators of Success

- ✿ To contribute to women's political, social and economic empowerment, and for overcoming poverty, the project aims to bring about the following changes in care work (also known as the four 'Rs'):
- ✿ Increase the recognition of care (e.g. care is considered "work", and men's and women's roles are more visible).
- ✿ Reduce arduous care tasks (e.g. total hours of care work of poor families go down, and women and men can choose to spend more time on other activities/work or on other forms of care like spending time with their children).
- ✿ Redistribute responsibility for care more equitably between women and men, and between households and the state/employers. (e.g. Women do fewer hours, and men do more; Government/employers invest to increase access to care services and infrastructure such as childcare or water).
- ✿ Facilitate the representation of carers in decision-making (with government/communities).

Why do we need to change how households and communities provide care?

Care has long been considered the natural responsibility of women. As a result the costs of providing care fall disproportionately on women. In recent years, significant evidence and research findings demonstrate that investments in care—by governments, civil society and employers—improve wellbeing, women's enjoyment of their rights, economic development and reduce inequality. Investing in care services also improves the wellbeing of those who receive care. Yet development and policy actors often neglect the issue.

Addressing care work is a critical precondition for women's political, economic and social empowerment.

Care work and its relevance to women's economic empowerment

Unpaid care work is relevant in all programs that have women beneficiaries and aim to contribute to women's empowerment. If women are spending up to two thirds of their weekly working hours on unpaid care (Budlender, 2008), this limits their ability to participate in political, economic, cultural and social life.

A Rapid Care Analysis and House Hold Survey carried out in Lamwo district in 2014 shows inequality in responsibility for care: on average, women spend **14 hours/day doing care work**. The implications of this inequality in amount spent on care include the following;

- ✿ **Time Poverty:** Women reported spending much more time on care work than on other forms of work. Women need time to participate and lead in livelihoods programs, women's political participation, food security or resilience.
- ✿ **Well-being and health issues:** Women reported fewer hours of non-work-sleep, leisure, personal care-than men. This has clear implications for women's health, choice and wellbeing. Where housework is arduous, dependents may receive inadequate personal care.
- ✿ **Inequality by Gender and Age:**
 - ⇒ Women estimated doing 25% to 1100% more hours of care work than men's estimates of their care work.
 - ⇒ Women's care work is 'intensive'. Women reported significantly more simultaneous work, or multi-tasking, compared to men.
 - ⇒ Care provision is unequal by age. Gender inequality in the distribution of care is most acute in younger adult groups, which are also the groups expected to be most productive and active in society. After adult women, girls provide the most hours of care work limiting their access to education and other rights.
 - ⇒ Heavy and unequal care is especially acute for poor rural women: Women's care work was significantly less in peri-urban as compared to rural areas, due to better water, energy, infrastructure and services.
 - ⇒ **Norms and perceptions** around gender and care have emerged as a fundamental reason for the gendered roles in care provision for women, girls, men and boys.

Interventions to Address Heavy and Unequal Care

1. **Gender roles and perceptions of care.** Using Change Agents and Role Model Families to champion discussions with community members bringing to light the norms and perceptions around gender roles and care work and encourage sharing of care responsibilities between men and women at the household level.
2. **Time and labour saving equipment** can go a long way towards relieving the intensity of care tasks. Community members are equipped with skills on the construction of energy saving stoves known as the Lorena stove. This kind of practical, immediate solution in communities helps build groups' enthusiasm for addressing care, and can greatly contribute to reducing time-consuming care tasks.

3. **Advocacy to state and private sector for care-related infrastructure, services and changing norms.** Improving care-related infrastructure is a long-term, sustainable investment in relieving the heaviness and inequality of how care is provided. With multi-stakeholder approaches, programs emphasize the importance of everyone contributing to the development process. Actors beyond the household have a role to play in providing care. The state, community organisations and groups, and the private sector are important stakeholders to improve care-related infrastructure (energy, water systems, transport), services (e.g. childcare), to promote positive social norms for women's rights (e.g. men doing care).

Outcomes and Evidence for Advocacy

The four major outcomes expected in the WE-Care initiative are:

1. Addressing heavy and unequal care enables women to increasingly benefit from their participation in development programs.
2. Unpaid care is recognized, reduced, redistributed and carers are represented—contributing to women's empowerment.
3. Negative outcomes are mitigated. WE-Care will work to address violence against women and girls/gender-based violence, criticism of women who do less care work or men who do more care work, and reduce the pattern of women sleeping less as result of their participation in development programs.
4. Evidence is generated for influencing policy and practice: making visible both the current patterns of heavy and unequal care as well as what works to make positive change for women and the provision of care. This evidence is effective in influencing local, national and global level policy and practice on unpaid care work, and local development priorities in the area of women's empowerment.



SHE NEVER WANTED ME DOING CHORES

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www.oxfam.org.uk/care

This story highlights the change brought into a family's life in north Uganda after they received both **training** and **time saving equipment** through the WE-Care project in the area.

Issues touched in this story:

- ✳ **Attitude change** (husband, wife and their environment)
- ✳ **Reduction** of time spent on care activities (with use of Lorena stove)
- ✳ **Redistribution** of care responsibilities (sharing within the family—result of husband attitude change)
- ✳ **Violence against women**
- ✳ **Economic empowerment**

She Never Wanted Me Doing Chores

BETTY ANGEYO AND ALEX OTEMA STORY

Context

Lagot Opuk is a village in Lugwar parish, Palabek Ogili sub-county, in Lamwo district in northern Uganda. On its northern side is South Sudan which is just a few kilometers away. The area is sparsely populated by the Acholi who have lived here for over 1,000 years. The Acholi in this area are mainly subsistence farmers who also rear goats, cattle and sheep which they depend on for their livelihood.

There is some form of division of labour in this community, where the men look after livestock while the women grow crops for subsistence and carry out all the domestic chores. The Acholi are proud of their culture which places men at the forefront of all the decision-making processes that every aspect of life revolves around. Women mostly go by what the men say.

Water is scarce in Lagot Opuk, with a few boreholes serving much of the community surrounding it. It is mostly women who fetch water and firewood for domestic use. Some walk for as long as two and half kilometers to the borehole and make about 10 trips daily, starting out before everyone else gets out of bed.

The borehole serves a very big number of people within the community. This means that it takes up to 3 hours for most women to complete the rounds before moving even further to fetch firewood that is enough to serve an average family.

Before the WE-Care training

Alex Otema is a 44-year-old father of 5 sons and 3 daughters between the ages of 15 years and 9 months. He is married to Betty Angeyo who is two years younger than him. He is a small-scale farmer and a retailer whose first encounter with WORUDET, the Oxfam partner on the ground, was in 2015. This encounter that at first seemed inauspicious has revolutionized his life.



At first, the views expressed during the training appeared to be on a collision course with his cultural beliefs. However, with time, that changed when he realized there was so much benefit from sharing domestic work as opposed to his former cultural practices that hindered the progress of his family. Otema says one of the first benefits he noticed was the significant reduction of violence in his home. He was the chief perpetrator. His change took his friends by surprise. The violence, he says, was mainly caused by his love for drinking coupled with his wife's inability to cope with the heavy workload at home that left her extremely tired at the end of the day. And she could not engage in other productive work either.

At the end of the training, it soon dawned on Otema just how under appreciated Angeyo's role had been. The training also exposed him as a slightly irresponsible man. His failure to lessen her burden rendered her ineffective in other aspects of their life together. It was high time he made some changes.

As a wife and mother, Angeyo's work, as is the tradition with a typical Acholi wife, was 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It didn't matter whether it was night, weekends, holiday or sick days. She had to cook, bathe the children, do laundry for every member of the family, till the land and grow crops, fetch water and firewood and attend to the husband's other needs.

Otema was feeling frustrated because his wife couldn't help him with the business. But he was failing to understand that this was because she was overloaded with domestic work.

The training opened his eyes to the benefit of shared domestic responsibilities. As a result, Angeyo now has time to play a key role as a partner in their business, including running and managing the grinding mill which serves the community in which they live.

"Today my wife isn't well, which means I am cooking and doing all the domestic chores with the help of our older children. I made breakfast this morning and I am already preparing lunch. I used to not care to understand how much my wife was doing. If I found out she hadn't done something, I would get violent with her. I was ignorant, bound by cultural beliefs and practices", he says.



Six of their 8 children go to school. The two youngest ones are only 2 years old and 9 months old. During school holidays, the children are involved with the chores around the house and in the farm. They normally weed and harvest crops. At the time of this interview, they were all busy harvesting sorghum. *"We do everything together,"* Otema says.

The change

Before undertaking this training, Angeyo was a sad, tired and drained woman. Now, she is a businesswoman who operates the grinding mill whenever Otema is not around. Otema says he never thought his wife was capable of managing anything. Many of the men who never attended this training sometimes mock Otema saying he has been turned into a woman by his wife who has disempowered him. But that doesn't faze him. He knows what they don't know and much as he has tried to share it, some still don't see how going against their culture, as they see it, can be beneficial in any possible way. He has shared his experiences with 7 other families. Some of the men are receptive, while others still find it a challenge to engage in chores and share the responsibility.

"The Lorena stove has made it easier for me to cook. It uses less firewood, it takes half the time since it has two places where you can cook sauce and food at the same time and it doesn't smoke the place up that would have made it difficult for me.

"My wife used to be very negative about me being involved with housework. She used to say she couldn't eat food cooked by her husband. She couldn't even allow me to do the laundry. It was quite an adjustment for her too after my training to accept me sharing domestic chores with her," Otema reveals.

A woman with short, dark, spiky hair is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. Her right hand is raised near her face, with fingers slightly curled. She is wearing a bright yellow t-shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green foliage and a light-colored wall.

I COOKED ONCE EVERSINCE I MARRIED HER

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This story is about a couple in northern Uganda not involved with the WE-Care activities. The story focuses on perceptions of roles between women and men, on attitudes about care responsibilities and on the daily reality of women in this community.

I Cooked Once Eversince I Married Her

SIMON LUKWIYA AND EVELYN ACIRO (not taken part in the We-Care training)

Context

Lagot Opuk is a small village in the Lugwar parish of Palabek Ogili sub-county in Lamwo district, in northern Uganda. It is not heavily populated perhaps in part due to the armed insurgency that decimated its population for nearly 20 years. Until a few years ago, the Acholi people were confined to Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps for their own protection. These days the main economic activity here is farming mainly for subsistence.

Traditionally the role of an Acholi woman includes cutting grass for thatching huts, daubing walls with mud, decorating them with designs, cultivating the land to grow food crops like millet, simsim, groundnuts, peas, sorghum and vegetables. They also take care of all the domestic chores, including childcare in its every form. The Acholi also keep livestock which is mainly tended to by men. Men are the symbol of absolute authority.

Simon Lukwiya, 46, is a man shaped in the traditional Acholi mould. A father of 3 daughters and 2 sons, he is a symbol of authority at home. He and Evelyn Aciro have been married for 22 years, the same age as their first born daughter. Their last born is a 12-year-old son. Lukwiya says he didn't mind having daughters because children's sexes are determined by God. Like any Acholi in their



village, he and Aciro practice subsistence farming. They sell extra yields to buy other household items like salt and sugar.

Lukwiya has been breeding pigs for what he calls a very long time. He has a small business selling pork where he and his wife and sometimes the children work. Lukwiya splits his day between working in the garden and his shop. His wife Aciro oversees the business when he is sick. Their children work with her. She handles all the money while Lukwiya is away. On average, he wakes up at 6:00am and goes to bed at either 8:00 or 10:00pm depending on the number of customers he has.

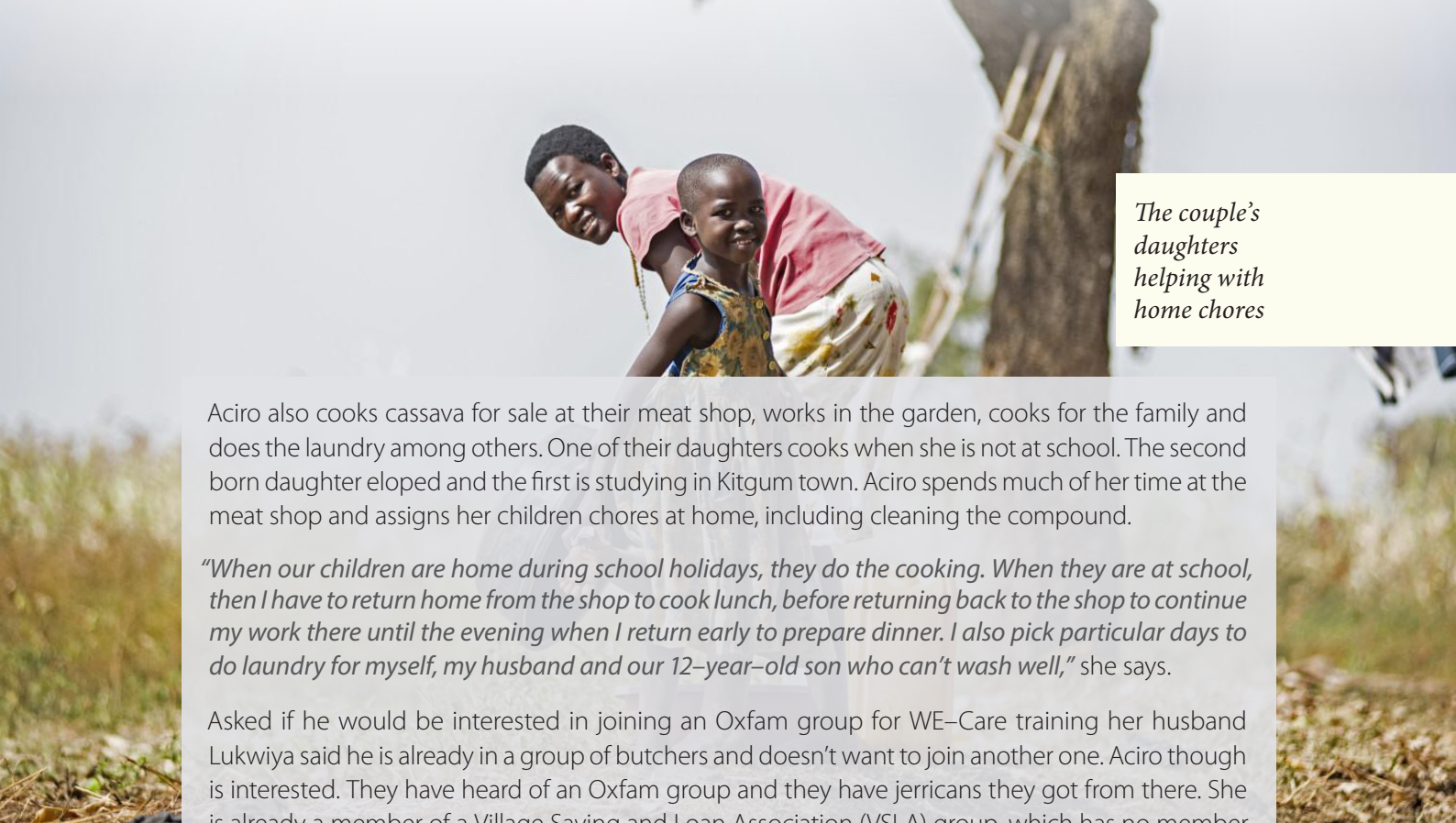
A day in Aciro's life...

Aciro wakes up earlier to collect firewood and fetch water to use at home and at the shop. She has to trek for two and a half km to fetch fourteen 20-litre jerricans of water a day. She carries one jerrican at a time because she says she has chest pains. Since the borehole serves a large community, the line of people fetching water is usually long. Aciro normally leaves her jerricans in the line to return home to prepare breakfast, sweep the compound and cleans the house before going back to pick them. They use plenty of firewood because of the traditional three-stone stove that consumes a lot of wood. They don't have the Lorena stove because they are not part of the We-Care initiative that helped other families build the stoves.

"It takes me about two hours to chop the wood which I carry in phases. Within a week, I carry this firewood, doing two trips in the morning and two in the afternoon. I normally fetch and store firewood at home to last us sometime," Aciro recounts.



Aciro Evelyn with the bunch of firewood she had just collected



The couple's daughters helping with home chores

Aciro also cooks cassava for sale at their meat shop, works in the garden, cooks for the family and does the laundry among others. One of their daughters cooks when she is not at school. The second born daughter eloped and the first is studying in Kitgum town. Aciro spends much of her time at the meat shop and assigns her children chores at home, including cleaning the compound.

"When our children are home during school holidays, they do the cooking. When they are at school, then I have to return home from the shop to cook lunch, before returning back to the shop to continue my work there until the evening when I return early to prepare dinner. I also pick particular days to do laundry for myself, my husband and our 12-year-old son who can't wash well," she says.

Asked if he would be interested in joining an Oxfam group for WE-Care training her husband Lukwiya said he is already in a group of butchers and doesn't want to join another one. Aciro though is interested. They have heard of an Oxfam group and they have jerricans they got from there. She is already a member of a Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA) group, which has no member taking part in any Oxfam group. On a good day, Aciro and Lukwiya make sales worth between Sh. 200,000 and Sh. 240,000. However, on days when there are few customers, they sell pork worth Sh. 140,000. Profits range from Sh. 5,000 on a very bad day to Sh. 50,000 on a good day.

"I don't pay workers because I use my family. My children benefit from the school fees I pay for them," Lukwiya says.

The couple's daughters helping with home chores

What about his wife who does a lot of work?

"I don't pay her because she is my wife. She works for the benefit of our family. She benefits from the nice clothes I buy for her and the love that I show her," Lukwiya says in his typical traditional Acholi man way.

And who does what she does when she is sick?

"When she is sick, the children do the work. And when they are at school, I hire some people to do the work she does at the butchers and I pay them for it," he responds.

That said, Lukwiya knows how to cook. His grandmother taught him and he has cooked for his Aciro once in their 22 years together when she was sick. He prepared silver fish for her.

"But I have never cooked for her when she is tired. The only love I show her while she is cooking and she is tired is conversing with her. I do sweep the compound and that is one way I make my contribution," he concludes.



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This story highlights the change brought into a family's life in north Uganda after they received both training and time saving equipment through the WE-Care project in the area.

The change is summarized in:

- **Attitude** change (husband, wife and their environment)
- **Reduction** of time spent on care activities (with use of Lorena stove)
- **Redistribution** of care responsibilities (sharing within the family—result of husband attitude change)
- **Increase in their income and economic empowerment** (more time to do productive activities)

HAPPY
WIFE,
HAPPY
LIFE



Happy Wife, Happy Life

The Story of Florence Alur and Zakayo David Opwonya

Context

Bordered by South Sudan to the north, Kitgum to the East and Pader to the south, Gulu to the southwest and Amuru to the west, Lamwo district is one of the newest districts in the area commonly known as the Acholi sub-region. The district is sparsely populated with clusters of homesteads separated by large tracts of land used mainly for subsistence farming. The Acholi tribe has called this and other neighboring districts home for over a millennium. They are a group proud of their cultural practices where gender roles are well defined.

The traditional Acholi women's roles include daubing the walls with mud, decorating them with geometrical or conventional designs. They are also accomplished agriculturists, growing and processing a variety of food crops, including millet, simsim, groundnuts, peas, sorghum and vegetables, among others. The Acholi also keep livestock. The society is generally patriarchal with women assuming subservient roles. Men's authority is absolute.

The Acholi are known to the outside world mainly by the 20 year armed insurgency led by Joseph Kony and his LRA outfit that severely disrupted their way of life.

Water is mostly got from boreholes that are few and far between and serve a very big number of people at a time. To some, the journey to the borehole is a kilometer or two and a half away. It is an activity mostly left to women who walk the distance between 8 to 14 times each day. An Acholi woman is traditionally expected to carry out all the domestic chores besides digging, weeding and harvesting of crops on which the family subsists.

31-year-old Florence Alur is married to Zakayo David Opwonya who is two years older than her. They have three daughters and two sons between the ages of 2 and 12 years old. Two of the children are at school.

Florence and Zakayo are small scale farmers who supplement their income with small trade Florence engages in.

A day in Florence's life

Women in communities in northern Uganda walk at least 16 kilometres per day to fetch water

For the most of their marriage, Florence was the typical Acholi wife, waking up earlier than the rest each morning to fetch water and firewood, bathe the children, prepare and serve them and the husband breakfast, before heading to the field to dig. At lunch time she would return home to prepare lunch and head back to the field to farm till the end of the day when she would get back home in time to prepare supper before Zakayo's return home from the bar.

"When we got married I was living at my husband's extended family home. We left after I had my second child. It was a big family of about 20 people and I was among the few who were doing most of the household chores and the farming. I would leave the field to go to prepare lunch and return back to the field until 6 pm. My brother-in-law's wife and I used to do most of the work. We would

A photograph showing a woman in a striped orange and yellow shirt and a blue patterned wrap, and a man in a white shirt and blue jeans, both reaching up to fill a large yellow plastic jerrycan. They are standing in front of a traditional hut with a thatched roof. The background shows more of the village under a clear sky.

"These days, we fetch firewood with my husband. We do most of the work together. This didn't use to be the case."

work a lot, just the two of us to produce food for the entire family. There was nothing like division of labour” says Florence.

Zakayo’s story

Zakayo says he was a drunkard and would resort to violence towards his wife whenever he found she had not done something she was expecting her to. *“I used to beat my wife”* he says. “I would expect her to wash my clothes for example and if she hadn’t done it that would make me beat her”.

The change

But all that was to take a complete turn for the better when Zakayo received training from Oxfam through the We-Care initiative. Zakayo says he is now a totally transformed man, taking up the responsibility of doing chores at home as part of his daily routine. He stopped drinking and started farming with his wife and planning for the family together.

He says: *“I started doing chores after the training and with practice I got better at them. After the training, I would return home and try to put into practice whatever we had been taught. Gradually I started thinking it could be beneficial to my home and that’s how it has turned out. The change I have seen in our house is that while my wife is doing other chores, I participate in doing others which helps us accomplish much more within a shorter time thus freeing us to do other things that are economically beneficial.”*

The training has changed Florence’s own beliefs as well: “Initially before the training, whenever I saw Zakayo washing his own clothes, I would get offended thinking he was taking up my role. It would make me feel like I had failed him as a wife. I would think it was his way of showing disrespect to me as a woman.

These days, we fetch firewood with my husband. It is about a kilometer away. We do most of the work together. This didn’t use to be the case. Before I used to fetch all the jerricans with water that we use as a family, all 8 of them, by myself. Our children also help with fetching water now and firewood and dishes and harvest sweet potatoes.

Now that the workload in the house has been significantly reduced, I can also trade in baking and selling half cakes. And we go to bed earlier.”

The impact

The benefits have been surprisingly fast. Zakayo, by his own admission used to drink and beat his wife. Following the WE-Care training, he began participating in productive work which had up to then been left largely to his wife, like working in the field alongside her. The production has increased to the level that they were able to buy oxen within 6 months after training and a motorbike in January 2016 to make their transportation easier. The oxen are to help them cultivate a larger portion of land which will increase their production even more.

“We always farmed for subsistence”, says Florence. *“Right now I’m doing farming, in different grounds. For subsistence, we have a bigger garden. For selling, it’s a smaller one. Sometimes we produce a lot for subsistence and sell some of it”.*

The transformative power of the training Zakayo received is obvious and some friends can't help but want to emulate him.

Zakayo says, *"This would have never been the case before when I left all the domestic work and farming to my wife who couldn't be as productive on her own. As a man, I used to feel it was not my responsibility to engage in that kind of work. It was a mindset borne out of the patriarchal nature of our Acholi society that arrogated to the men absolute authority over their wives. Of course I now know it was wrong to subject my wife to such a punishing schedule that would not allow her to do anything else that was beneficial to all of us."*

"I also used to beat my wife" he continues. *"The last time I beat her was in February 2015 and the training came in April 2015. I was still waiting for a mistake from her but the training found me before she made another mistake that could have attracted a beating from me. I stopped for good. What used to cause me to beat her were things like expecting her to wash my clothes and when I found that she hadn't, that would make me beat her".*

Zakayo says, that before he received the training, he would do his laundry not because he wanted to but as an expression of his discontent with his wife. Now he has no qualms bathing the children, cooking and doing the laundry for all. He says the laundry is his favorite activity. "Now I do the laundry for all of them, wife and children, because it has become a normal thing to do." Cooking and ironing clothes are his least favorite chores. But he tries to cook more, since they got the fuel efficient Lorena stove through the WE-Care initiative, because cooking has been made easier now. Not only cooking time is cut by half, but also there is less smoke in the house and it uses less firewood. He says "Lorena stove is great. In a day, I can cook on it once and then go the field to do my farming work as well."

What do other people say?

Many of Zakayo's friends frown upon seeing a man doing domestic chores. Despite the noticeable progress he and his family have made. The common talk within Lagot Opuk village in the Lugwar parish of the Palabek Ogili sub-county where they live is that he has been emasculated by his wife through witchcraft. They can't understand how a married Acholi man can do such things as bathing children and cooking while his wife is there. Others politely express their disapproval by asking him each time they find him doing the chores, "Where is your wife?"

Even other wives engage in gossip about a woman who has turned her husband into a woman through witchcraft. They think a man doing chores at home is a direct affront to their womanhood. Majority among men think their wives might become disrespectful towards them if they engage in doing the household chores since such activities are perceived to be done by women only.

Zakayo's friends advised him never to allow his wife to trade in the market because she would become big-headed after getting exposed to money and leave him.

"Some other women when they saw how my wife was progressing from mandazi business to silver fish, they got jealous. However, my brothers advised me never to allow my woman to trade in the market saying she would start having money, become big-headed and attracting other men who are richer leading to her leaving me. But I never listened and she has never changed.

Other men who have not attended training don't act like me. There is a very big difference. They don't make decisions together with their wives, don't take household chores as a responsibility, they still beat their wives for the slightest mistake and don't consult them when taking something from the house to go sell to drink alcohol.

The reason I'm different is because I was open to learning and that made me more receptive to whatever the training taught us and more zealous to put them into practice."

"It is my home and I have to do whatever it takes to make it easy for me and my wife to live here."

Some people want to follow his example and try to do what he does after taking time to interact with him.

"I have tried to share what I have learnt with others and some people have warmed up to it. The rest have flatly refused to accept it. But they are in the minority. Most of them are very receptive to the idea because they can see from my own family the direct benefits of this practice. Those who are scornful towards me for doing what I do are the ones with problems. Their views don't affect me at all. It won't stop me. I take doing household chores as part of my responsibility and not a way of helping my wife. It is my home and I have to do whatever it takes to make it easy for me and my wife to live here. And participating in the chores is one of the ways on which I can help ensure that. I believe my wife is happier now and that makes life happy," Zakayo concludes.

A woman with dark skin is carrying a large, heavy bundle of harvested crops, possibly sorghum or millet, balanced on her head. She is wearing a colorful, patterned top and a purple skirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing a thatched roof and some greenery.

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- ✿ Reduction of time spent on care activities (with use of Lorena stove)
- ✿ Redistribution of care responsibilities (sharing within the family—result of husband attitude change)
- ✿ Income increase / economic empowerment

GRACE ACIRO STORY

Grace Aciro Story

Context

Loigolo village in Alaa parish, Padibe East sub-county is located in the extreme north of Lamwo district in northern Uganda. We visited this village in search of Grace Aciro hoping she would share with us her experience from the We-Care training she attended.

"We have four sons and three daughters. Our first born son is 17 years old and our last born is an 11 months old boy. The girls come in between," says Aciro. All their children of school age are in school. The 17-year-old is in S.3. The second and third girls are both in P.7 and the other two are in P. 2. *"I am not sure about my age but I think I started having children at the age of 15,"* she says.

Aciro started working with WORUDET, Oxfam's partner in Uganda, in 2014. She was part of a group that received training and was advised to share what they learnt with those who did not attend the training. *"The training revolved around women's rights, children's rights and human rights with emphasis on the need for our husbands to respect both our rights and our children's rights,"* Aciro says. They were also given tips on effective parenting and how to build a Lorena stove.

A day in the life...

Aciro gets up at 6:00 every morning to fetch water. She cleans the house and heads straight to the garden. She returns to find her husband and children have prepared lunch which they eat together before she rests. Later in the evening, she prepares supper. The all go to bed at 8:00pm.

"We walk about 5 km to collect firewood. The Lorena stove saves me a lot of time because it uses less firewood. Also, it doesn't emit much smoke and it has two cooking places that enable me to cook two meals at a time" she says.

"I was trained alone," she adds "my husband didn't come along at first. But later he attended the training too."

Attitudes before and after training ...

When Aciro's husband finally managed to make it for the training, he returned with good news for his wife about what he had learnt—the importance of shared household work. He felt he needed to participate in household chores to give her time to participate in other activities in their community. He was so receptive to the extent that he immediately implemented the lessons he learnt.

"It is very rare for men to share what they have learnt with women. They only share something if it involves women. However, I was surprised when my husband voluntarily shared what he had learnt. I attribute that change of heart to the training," Aciro says.

Life has not always been this favorable for Aciro. *"When we had just started living together he told me that he had married me to do all the household activities. But he totally changed after training. It was a pleasant surprise."*



It was difficult to convince the boys. But they slowly started participating, when they saw their father doing the work.

“Before training, we allocated work to boys and girls differently. Boys used to sweep the compound. However, after the training, we all started participating in whatever chore there was irrespective of the difference in sexes. Now, any of us can bathe the baby, fetch water and collect firewood regardless of whether one is a boy or a girl, woman or man. The boys only used to sweep the compound. However, all that has changed,” says Aciro.

At first, it was difficult to change the boys’ perception and get them to do whatever their parents were training them to do. However, slowly they started participating when they saw their father do the work.

Aciro’s household uses an average of 8 jerricans of water a day. Since the borehole is near her home, she fetches 4 in the morning and the children fetch the remaining 4 in the evening. On school days, Aciro and her husband take turns to prepare meals. Farming is their main source of income, but Aciro also trades in silver fish while her husband rears and sells goats.

... and the income has increased

“The training not only has elevated my household but has also improved the yields in my farmland because we now do the farming together. We weed and harvest together. We use the ox-plough to cultivate bigger chunks of land.

This was very difficult before the training because we didn’t even know the importance of farming. We practiced it on a small scale subsistence level where we would sell just a little bit of our yields

to buy things like soap, sugar and salt. However, this training has turned our farming into a profitable economic venture. My husband and I are knee-deep into it for commercial purposes,” Aciro shares.

Aciro and her husband are real partners in agreement. They plan how to spend their income from the sale of their farm products and other businesses together. They budget for school fees for their children, food and medical bills. From her silver fish business, Aciro saves in the Village Savings Loan Association (VSLA) and uses the surplus income for upkeep. When she gets some disposable income from her savings in VSLA, she still plans with her husband how to spend it. For instance, she and her husband agreed recently to withdraw her savings and use them to buy a goat and two chickens. But if a matter is urgent and he is not around, she makes a decision and later explains to him.

What do other people say?

The community is still aloof to Aciro’s way of life. Few appreciate the change and admire Aciro and her husband. “Most still find it hard to accept the changes they have seen in my husband. They mock him and say I have turned him into a wife and married him instead of the other way round. Some say he has been turned into a woman. They ask him, *“What has this woman done to you?”*”

Aciro tries to explain to the skeptics in her community that life as they knew it in the past has evolved. She says, *“Our cooperation, between my husband and I, is good for our home and the progress is evident for all to see”.*

During the training Steven, a facilitator from WORUDET, encouraged Aciro and her husband to identify other families to share their newly acquired knowledge with. Aciro has shared what she learned with five other families in the community and they are doing very well.

Before she enlisted on this training, Aciro didn’t know she had a right to livestock. Culturally, it was up to her husband to do whatever he wished with the livestock whenever he decided and as a “good” wife, she would not question his decision. He didn’t even have to tell her.

All that has changed: *“I am grateful for the discovery that I also have a right over all these things. In most cases, we also involve our 17-year-old son in the decisions we make,”* a beaming Aciro reveals.



GRACE ALOYO AND MARK OLARA STORY

WE-CARE (Women's Economic Empowerment and Care) is Oxfam's initiative in 10 countries that supports women's empowerment by addressing excessive and unequal care work—by building evidence, promoting positive norms, new investments and policy advocacy.

www.oxfam.org.uk/care

This story highlights the change brought into a family's life in north Uganda after they received both **training** and **time saving equipment** through the WE-Care project in the area.

The change is summarized in:

- ✿ **Attitude change** (husband, wife and their environment)
- ✿ **Reduction** of time spent on care activities (with use of Lorena stove)
- ✿ **Redistribution** of care responsibilities (sharing within the family—result of husband attitude change)



Grace Aloyo and Mark Olara Story

I WILL USE MY LEADERSHIP POSITION TO DO MORE

The context

Olik Olony is a small village in Pangira parish, at the extreme north of Lokung sub-county in Lamwo district, just few kilometers away from the Ugandan border with South Sudan. It is a semi-arid area where the predominant economic activity is small scale agriculture mostly for subsistence.

Grace Aloyo, 23 and Mark Olara, 30 years old, have been married for 7 years and they have 5 children, including a pair of twin girls. The three older children go to school.

This family uses about 8 jerricans of water a day. Aloyo fetches 3 or 4 while Olara fetches the rest. They are farmers who grow millet, maize, sorghum, pigeon peas and simsim. "I mainly sell sorghum. I put aside 3 acres of land for maize and pigeon peas. We use oxen to cultivate the land," Aloyo says.

In a good season, the couple makes about 200,000 Ugandan shillings from one bag of simsim. However, when the market price is low, a sack of simsim only gets them about sh100,000. A good harvest can bring them about 7 sacks. If a season is hit by draught, the harvest may amount to about 3 bags of simsim from 3 acres of land. If they harvest five sacks, they are able to sell 3 and consume 2.

"We earn shs1.5m from each season. We agree on how to spend this money together. I use the money for small business, like trading in mukene(type of fish) for more profit in the market and pay school



fees for our children. We save some of the money in the bank and use it for medical care in case the need arises. We use money also to buy other necessities at home. I know how much Grace makes and see how much more she needs and I raise it for her. When we just got together, the first two years in our marriage, we had fights about money and other things but that has since stopped,” says Olara.

A DAY IN THE LIFE ... AFTER THE TRAINING

Olara’s typical day begins early when he gets out of bed. He washes up, goes to fetch water from the borehole before preparing breakfast (usually porridge) for the children. He also sweeps the backyard and prepares lunch. While he is doing that, Aloyo goes to the garden to look after the crop. She returns later for lunch with the family, which Olara has prepared.

Then Olara goes to the trading centre to chat with his friends while Aloyo gets some rest. He returns in the evening to fetch another round of water and, while Aloyo prepares the dinner, he gives the children a bath. He also takes a bath and then they all sit around the fire to have dinner. They go to bed at about 8:00pm. *“We interchange our roles”* Aloyo says. *“This started happening when we attended the WORUDET training in May 2015. Very few men do these things.”* WORUDET is one of Oxfam’s partners in Uganda who run training and other activities as part of the WE–Care initiative.

Aloyo and her husband help each other. She can decide to fetch water as he prepares porridge. Or he could go to mind the cows where they graze while she cooks.

Some men tell Olara that he has been emasculated, calling him stupid for doing work meant for his wife. Others, especially those who know him for longer, appreciate what he does because they have

observed him for a long time. "My mother died when I was still very young and I grew up seeing my dad doing all these things. So it came naturally to me after the training to share the load with Aloyo. Even my brothers do these things," he says.

TIME-SAVING EQUIPMENT

As it is with most homes in this community, Aloyo used to cook on the traditional three-stone stove (seen above on the left). This is totally inefficient. It consumes too much wood and takes too long to cook on. The wind blows the fire in all directions and you can use only one pot.

Apart from training, Aloyo and her family received also a Lorena stove (seen above on the right) through the WE-Care initiative. A Lorena stove has two hobs and you can cook two meals at a time. It also uses less firewood and retains the fire for longer, which means they don't have to keep warming up the food every time. Due to its efficiency L For instance silver fish takes about 30 minutes to cook on the other stove but half the time on the Lorena stove.

CHANGING ATTITUDES....

"I have learnt to appreciate Mark's ways. It was hard for me at first to let him do chores around the home because I felt that was my duty. I grew up in a home where girls and women did everything and men never did much. So I felt this was an affront to my womanhood as an Acholi wife. But he later told me that he was doing this to reduce my time of doing all these things so I could get time to rest and I appreciated that," says Aloyo.

Olara is standing for office in the community. If he gets elected he wants to use his position as a platform to sensitize and mobilize other men to live by his example. Becoming the community's spokesman, he hopes to get across the message of improving household welfare.

This couple has great plans for the future. "Although we have positively influenced between 5 to 10 families to date which are doing well, we would like to train more people and regularly check on them. We do hold regular meetings with couples that we have influenced in our home to monitor their progress and we are not about to stop," Olara says.



In partnership with



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