TIME USE AND WOMEN’S WORK LEARNING PAPER
GREATER RURAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN LEARNING SERIES
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ABSTRACT

Time use is an important dimension of women's economic empowerment. In order to thrive, women must be able to improve their earning potential, while maintaining workloads that are manageable. This learning paper explores how the GROW project, through the introduction of soybean production and keyhole gardens, has impacted time use and women's work. Two strategies that have impacted women's time use the most include improved access to time-saving technologies (particularly tractor services and tricycles) and improving gender awareness through community sensitization efforts such as Talking Book and Male Gender Activists (MGAs).

This learning paper highlights that women in the Upper West region are and continue to be time poor. However, their roles have changed since being involved in the GROW project and subsequently, their time allocation is evolving but they must still make tough decisions in terms of how they spend their time. Additionally, this learning paper finds that women's reproductive work is also work and must be considered alongside their productive activities. Finally, key recommendations include collecting time use data for both women and men. Programs must also prioritize effects that assist women with time management and design interventions with women's time use in mind. It is also important to shift gender norms around women's work appropriately, while prioritizing improved access to time-saving technologies.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

About the GROW Project

Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) was made possible with the generous support of Global Affairs Canada and is implemented by Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) with a total budget of CAD 20 million.\(^1\) With support from five Key Facilitating Partners (KFPs) – PRONET North, TUDRIDE, PRUDA, CARD and CAPECS\(^2\) – the GROW project operated in eight districts in the Upper West Region, empowering women farmers to create opportunities through cultivation, utilization and sale of soybeans, accessing extension services and markets to increase their household’s economic well-being.

GROW’s goal was to improve food security for 20,000 women farmers and their families in the Upper West Region of Ghana (Figure 1). Project activities included helping women improve the availability, access to and utilization of appropriate

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\(^{1}\) The GROW budget of CAD 20 million was made up of CAD 18 million from the Government of Canada and CAD 2 million from MEDA. The project began in 2012 and closed at the end of 2018.

\(^{2}\) MEDA’s KFPs are: CAPECS (Capacity Enhancement and Community Support), TUDRIDE (Tumu Deanery Rural Integrated Development Program), CARD (Community Aid for Rural Development), ProNet (Professional Network North) and PRUDA (Partnerships for Rural Development Action).

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and nutritious food by strengthening production, processing and linkages to markets. To achieve this, women Lead Farmers were identified to help train others in their communities on good agronomic practices to maximize crop yields, with a special focus on soybean cultivation. Entrepreneurial women farmers were trained and supported to become Sales Agents, buying and aggregating soy from other women and selling it to processors and markets. Women were linked to appropriate financial services, including Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups, financial institutions and insurance providers. Advocating for women’s increased agency, particularly as it related to decision-making within the household and community, was another key component of the GROW project.

During the 2017 harvest season, GROW supported 21,500 farmers to harvest 13,643 hectares of soybean (Figure 2), producing a yield of 14,632 metric tons. GROW farmers sold 11,169 tons of this soya at an average price of GHS 200 per 100kg, earning a total of over GHS 22.3 million, or approximately CAD 6.7 million (2017 harvest figures).³

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### Figure 2: GROW Project Soybean Infographic

![GROW Project Soybean Infographic](image-url)

**GROW SUPPORTED 21,500 FARMERS**

**HARVESTED 13,643 HECTARES OF SOYBEAN**

**PRODUCED YIELD OF 14,632 METRIC TONS**

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### The GROW Learning Series

Over seven years of implementation, the GROW project learned a great deal about food security and women’s economic empowerment in northern Ghana. The project team is happy to share the lessons learned in the GROW Learning Series. The Learning Series papers focus on time use and women’s work, nutrition and food security, financial inclusion, women and technology, conservation agriculture and women’s economic empowerment.

This learning paper explores the extent to which the promotion of agricultural value chain development (through soybean production and keyhole gardens) has impacted time use and women’s work. Secondly, it highlights key lessons learned related to time use and provides recommendations to improve future programming for improved women’s economic empowerment.

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³ In 2017, the average exchange rate was 1 GHS (Ghanaian cedi) to 0.30 CAD (Canadian dollars).
Time Use, Women’s Work and Economic Empowerment

Time use is about how people spend their time and time use statistics are helpful in exploring how women and men allocate their time (Box 1). Time use surveys (TUSs) are useful tools to collect data on how individuals spend their time on a daily basis (Box 2). Time use is also an important dimension of women’s economic empowerment (WEE) (Box 3). Leading frameworks on WEE highlight the importance of two dimensions: access and agency. Where in addition to increased income, women’s economic empowerment requires access to assets, services and opportunities, along with improved agency in areas of decision-making and manageable workloads. Related to time use and WEE, ensuring women have manageable workloads and the ability to control and make decisions around their time is vital for authentic agency.

Existing time use data demonstrates that women are less active in labour markets compared to men globally, especially in low-income countries (49% of women compared to 76% of men). Women also do the majority of unpaid work worldwide and often their care roles are invisible. The average woman spends 2.5 times more time (than men) on unpaid care and domestic work globally, which translates into women spending almost 5 hours per day on unpaid work caring for their families and homes, compared to only 1 hour and 30 minutes for men. The gap is wider in low-income countries. For instance, women spend 6 hours per day in India, compared to men who spend 1 hour daily on unpaid work. Global time use research illustrates that there are three differences between women’s (especially mothers) and men’s paid and unpaid work: women spend significantly more time on unpaid care work than men; women work longer hours than men.

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do overall; and when women enter paid employment, they do not reduce the number of hours they spend on unpaid work correspondingly.\textsuperscript{12} \textsuperscript{13}

\textit{Time Use in Ghana}

In the Upper West region of Ghana, women predominate over all unpaid and reproductive work, such as caring for children and other household tasks. Moreover, they play an important, but invisible role, as labourers (unpaid) on the family farm (for their husbands). Typically, women must first complete their domestic duties and work on the family farm, prior to working on their own personal farms; as women’s productive work has historically been more limited and is of less importance compared to their reproductive responsibilities.

Findings from Ghana’s TUS aligns with global estimates and indicates that a large gender gap persists, particularly around women’s and men’s unpaid work (Box 4\textsuperscript{14} \textsuperscript{15}). Women spent 3 hours and 59 minutes on unpaid work, compared to men who spent 1 hour and 28 minutes.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, men were more likely than women to be formally employed, while women were more likely than men to do paid domestic work. There are large regional variations across Ghana in the gender distribution of time. In the Upper West region, women spend 4.85 times more time than men in unpaid work (3 hours and 9 minutes per day versus 39 minutes per day), which was the second highest disparity in the country after the Northern region. Women also allocate less time on average to learning (1 hour and 31 minutes) than men (2 hours and 2 minutes).\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Time Poverty and Women’s Unpaid Work}

In its simplest form, time poverty is when individuals do not have enough time for rest and leisure after the time they spend working. The heavy burden of unpaid work for women often results in a severe lack of time availability or time poverty (Box 5\textsuperscript{18}). Studies show that being time poor is the combination of factors including working long hours, being monetary poor and not being able to reduce

\textsuperscript{12} International Development Research Centre. (2018). Developing care. \textit{Recent research on the care economy and economic development}.

\textsuperscript{13} Based on time use data from a wide cross-section of countries.


\textsuperscript{15} Ahmed, T. (2018). \textit{Ghana: Time Use Surveys and Policy Case Study}. Invisible No More? Data2x. See this resource for a complete discussion on findings and data limitations related to Ghana’s TSU such as a lack of disaggregation around care for children and no account of seasonality.

\textsuperscript{16} On average, women spent 2 hours and 51 minutes per day providing unpaid domestic services within the household and 1 hour and 8 minutes per day providing unpaid caregiving services to household members. Men spent 1 hour and 6 minutes per day providing unpaid domestic services within the household and 22 minutes per day providing unpaid caregiving services to household members.


one’s working time without increasing their level of poverty. Although anyone can experience time poverty at times in their lives, research shows it greatly impacts poor women disproportionately; that the subsequent trade-offs that must be made is considerably more serious for when they are already vulnerable, income poor, have fewer assets and less available labour or assistance. Although estimates vary, the Abbreviated Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (A-WEAI) defines an adequate workload or the time poverty line as less than 10.5 hours in the past 24 hours.

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Measuring Time Use and Unpaid Work

Despite its importance, unpaid work has traditionally been valued less than paid work as it is not considered as contributing to the economy. However, the high burden of unpaid work and the resulting time poverty for many women, means that they have less time for paid work, education, leisure and rest, especially when compared to men; which results in women having lower earnings, fewer opportunities and compromised health and well-being. Subsequently, women’s time use and time poverty, is a critical consideration for women’s economic empowerment as empowerment may be compromised when women’s time poverty is high, and their workloads are unmanageable.

In recognition of this, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and SDG5 for Gender Equality calls for unpaid care and domestic work to be both recognized and valued. TUS are increasingly being used by governments and institutions to measure the benefits of unpaid work; aiming to make the invisible visible by understanding the full roles of women and men.

Measuring time use can be challenging though. At the country-level, there is limited consolidated data available on women’s and men’s differential time use, no clear standards for international comparison, and the small-scale survey data that does exist is typically not representative and/or is out of date. Additional challenges exist with data collection because women often share conflicting

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22 The A-WEAI is based on a methodology similar to that of Bardasi and Wodon (2006), where the lower and higher thresholds were 10.07 to 13.4 hours per day from Guinea.
information or do not report domestic work appropriately as work, which downplays the intensity of their efforts; subsequently, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recommends that time use surveys are designed to capture work intensity, trade-offs and seasonal variations.\textsuperscript{26}

**GROW Project Strategies**

The GROW project has implemented various strategies that have impacted how women allocate their time (Box 6). Some strategies such as building gender awareness through community sensitization, which was conducted by KFPs, Talking Book and the Male Gender Activist (MGA) concept\textsuperscript{27,28}, may solely reduce women’s time for work; for instance, as husbands take on more domestic work within the household or assist their wives on their personal soybean farms. Similarly, the Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) have been seen to save time for women as they are able to contribute and reach financial services within their own communities, instead of travelling far distances to access funds.

Whereas with other strategies, the impact is not simply positive or negative. For example, the strategy of keyhole gardens has been seen to primarily increase women’s time, particularly in the dry season, as women take on new productive activities. However, despite the increase in time spent working (and the potential risk of increasing women’s time poverty), women have experienced many other significant positive benefits.\textsuperscript{29}

Moreover, some strategies, such as the Women Lead Farmers (WLFs) and Women Sales Agents (WSAs) approaches, have been seen to both increase and decrease women’s time at the same time through improved efficiencies. Additional strategies that are impacting women’s time in this dual manner include facilitating access to seeds, inputs, financing, tractor services, markets and time-saving technologies such as tricycles.\textsuperscript{30} For example, as women’s access to tractor services improves so does their efficiency and subsequently, women’s time per task is


\textsuperscript{27} MGAs aim to build gender awareness among husbands/family members. Through MEDA’s KFPs, Gender Focal Points (GFPs) are staff responsible for integrating gender within their organization and conduct gender awareness activities within the community. GFPs and MGAs were provided with information education and communication materials, such as gender sensitization cards to initiate dialogue and discussion. The gender sensitization cards display local images and key message on gender equity, such as “sharing household responsibilities, strengthens family bonds and guarantees a happy and stress-free family.” The role of the cards is to reinforce MEDA’s gender sensitization training and messages. GROW clients also had access to The Talking Book, an inexpensive, mass communications technology that delivers knowledge, including key gender messages, through pre-recorded messages to women farmer groups.

\textsuperscript{28} Gender awareness and community sensitization sessions included both women and men. For MGAs, they targeted men to discuss how they could be taking on reproductive work in order to shift some social norms.

\textsuperscript{29} There are distinct learning papers that explore the in-depth impacts of each of the various GROW project strategies and approaches. Please refer to MEDA’s website for additional learning papers as part of the GROW Learning Series for more information.

\textsuperscript{30} Only WSAs currently have access to tricycles through the GROW project’s Technology Fund. Please refer to MEDA’s website for the *Technology Fund Impact Study* as part of the GROW Learning Series for more information.
reduced. However, due to that improvement, women’s overall time increases since they are able to take on more tasks (i.e. cultivate more land faster).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This learning paper explores the extent to which the GROW project has impacted women’s time use. To do this, data has been collated from numerous sources. Foundational sources include the GROW project’s initial Soybean Value Chain Analysis (June 2012), which included an integrated Gender Analysis; the GROW Gender Strategy, which included expanded Gender Analysis findings (March 2013), the Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) Study (January 2018) and the Technology Fund Impact Study (2018).31 32

Using this data, daily activity clocks (Box 733) were developed for women and men in both the harvest and dry seasons34 for 2012 and 2017. The first set of daily activity clocks are based on the project’s initial Gender Analysis findings, which was pre-GROW project activities in 2012 (Figure 5).35 Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with women and men in two communities, Nadowli and Funsì, to explore gender roles and time.

The second set of daily activity clocks are based on the WEE Study, conducted five years later, during GROW project activities in 2017 (Figure 6).36 Daily activity clocks are developed by asking participants to recall the time spent on activities in the previous 24 hours, starting at 4 am (Figure 3). The WEE Study conducted FGDs

31 In recognising transport as a primary constraint for women farmers, a primary strategy of the GROW project has been to increase WSA’s access to time-saving technologies including tricycles and other means of transport. WSA’s access to time-saving technologies has been found to impact their time use. Please refer to MEDA’s website for the Technology Fund Impact Study as part of the GROW Learning Series for more information.

32 All findings have been collated for this learning paper and validated with GROW project staff.


34 In the Upper West region, farmers typically plant soybean in June and July (and sometimes also in August, depending on rainfall and weather patterns). The soybean growing season lasts until November. Subsequently, the harvest season for soybean is November (which sometimes extends into December, depending on when farmers planted). The dry season is long in the Upper West region, extending from roughly October to May. For the purpose of this learning paper though, the dry season starts after the harvest (December/January until May). There is also a peak rainy season in April and May.

35 Daily activity clocks were developed for women and men in the harvest and dry seasons (women only) from 2012. Harvest season data was harmonized from two FGDs with women farmers from the Nadowli and Funsì communities (and women were asked about men’s activities in Funsì). Dry season data for women farmers is from Nadowli only and no data exists on men’s activities for the dry season.

36 Daily activity clocks were developed for women and men in the harvest and dry seasons for 2017. The WEE Study report was finalized in 2018 but the daily activity clock activities were conducted in 2017. The 2017 daily activity clocks presented in this learning paper are harmonized from all 16 communities included in the WEE Study. Purposive sampling was used to select the 16 communities in the project’s districts.
in 16 communities. Several gaps in the data have been identified, such as limited FGDs and a long period of recall.\(^37\) Notwithstanding, despite that the daily activity clocks may not be conclusive, exploring the general trends pre- and post-GROW around women’s time use has proven valuable.

To build on the initial understanding gained from the daily activity clocks, further FGDs were conducted in September 2018 to strengthen MEDA’s time use evidence base. The FGDs explored the emerging trends around time use, as initially identified in the daily activity clocks. Women farmers and their husbands were asked to think about how they spend their time on a daily basis and how their time use has changed (or not changed) since the beginning of the GROW project.\(^38\) The FGDs also aimed to understand the challenges and constraints that women face related to their time, along with examining changes in gender roles (Box 8\(^39\)) and the division of labour (Box 9\(^40\)).\(^41\)

Time use allocation was explored across three primary dimensions of work and time: productive, reproductive and community\(^42\) (Box 10\(^43\)). All dimensions were explored in both the harvest and dry seasons, where possible, to account for seasonal variations. For the purpose of this learning paper (and the Upper West region), productive work firstly involves any agricultural activities related to cultivating soybean such as land preparation, planting, weeding, collecting water and irrigation, harvesting, marketing and attending association meetings. It can also include other income generating activities (IGAs), savings group activities, caring for animals and other trading activities. As part of productive time, time was transportation is also explored. Productive transport includes activities such as getting soybean threshed or to the market, for example. Reproductive work involves all household and domestic work such as caring for children and family

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\(^37\) The 2012 pre-GROW project daily activity clocks are based on the GROW project’s initial Gender Analysis, which was based on a limited number of FGDs. Thus, the 2012 daily activity clocks, based on this data, are not exhaustive or representative of all GROW project clients and are preliminary in nature. Secondly, the harvest and dry seasons from 2012 and 2017 are not clearly defined. Participants were asked generally about these seasons but were not tied to specific months or timelines.

\(^38\) It is important to note that the time use FGDs are self-reported and relied on the participant’s ability to recall. The period of recall for time allocation was also very long for participants. Recall beyond 24 hours is generally subject to higher recall error so asking participants about their time use prior to the GROW project (five years earlier) is not conclusive or necessarily accurate. Nonetheless, general trends and feelings about how one’s time use or how it has changed is still highly relevant.


\(^41\) In examining time use and women’s work, it is important to recognize the connection between gender roles and time use. At both the societal and household level, a division of labour exists. Subsequently, as gender roles and responsibilities change, there are also changes in the way women and men spend their time.

\(^42\) Community roles and work is an important dimension of time use. However, the community dimension was not included in the initial Gender Analysis as it was not cited by participants as making up a significant amount of their daily activities and/or was embedded within their estimates for productive and reproductive work. Therefore, the daily activity clocks do not include the community component. However, in the time use FGDs, participants were asked about the time they spend on community work (Section 3.3).

members, collecting water and fuel for household use, cooking and cleaning. Community work varies from community-to-community but involves any obligatory communal village work, such as preparing for funerals and festivals. Community work is generally an extension of reproductive work and is unpaid. In addition, time use was explored across two additional dimensions: personal and sleep. Personal includes time for leisure, relaxation and spending time with family and friends socializing. Personal time also includes any time spent as part of religious activities and watching television.

In total, five FGDs were conducted in five communities; three women-only FGDs were conducted in Bullu, Chogsia and Tabiesi, along with two FGDs in Kokya and Tokali with women farmers and their husbands (Figure 3). The majority of the participants were regular smallholder farmers, versus being Women Lead Farmers (WLFs) or a Women Sales Agents (WSAs).

**Figure 4: Map of GROW Project Areas**

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44 The Upper West region is made up of 11 districts and the communities within the region vary significantly. Cultural, gender and social norms are different across the five communities included in the time use FGDs. Other characteristics such as road access and polygamy are seen to be influences for both women’s and men’s time use.

45 For the time use FGDs (conducted in September 2018), participants were selected because they had previously participated in daily activity clock exercises conducted during the WEE Study (January 2018), so that they would be able to recall, along with compare and contrast their answers related to time use between different periods of time.

46 The GROW project has a maximum of one WLF/WSA per community (and some communities have none). Thus, there is a maximum of five WLFS/WSAs embedded within the FGDs. This distinction between regular women farmers and WLFS/WSAs is important as WLFS and WSAs likely face differing issues, constraints and liberties related to their roles and time use.
3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section summarizes findings from the daily activity clocks and time use FGDs across five dimensions: productive (including transport), reproductive, community, personal and sleep. Findings for each dimension are discussed briefly in-turn.

3.1 Productive Time

In the Upper West region, women’s productive work includes work on their own personal soybean farm and other IGAs, such as petty trading or dry season gardening. Women’s productive work is typically less visible and less valued than men’s work. Throughout Ghana, women and men have historically played different roles in the agricultural sector. In the Upper West region, women have tended to be concentrated in small scale food crop farming such as peppers, tomatoes, cow pea and groundnuts, along with small scale processing and marketing. Small scale food crops require less labour, less land and are generally less costly to produce. Men tend to dominate in higher value cash crops such as maize and corn on larger land holdings.

Harvest Season

Since the beginning of the GROW project though, women’s farming roles have been expanding as women take on new roles related to production through the cultivation of soybean. In analyzing the daily activity clocks for women from 2012 to 2017 (Figure 5), it is seen that women’s productive time has decreased 6%, from 31% to 25%. It is thought that one reason for this decrease in women’s productive time is because women are now engaging the services of tractor operators. In FGDs, women farmers shared that improved access to tractor services has had the greatest impact on reducing their time on farm labour. Since the GROW project, women now engage tractor services to plough their farmlands, which is significantly faster than manually ploughing with hoes and cutlasses.

However, differing from the results of the daily activity clocks, women farmers in FGDs shared that they actual spend more time on their productive activities since starting soybean cultivation with the GROW project. This finding aligns with the fact that women are taking on new productive roles, such as marketing and larger scale trading, particularly during the harvest season. Additionally, in comparing the daily activity clocks (Figure 5), if transport time is combined with productive time, then an increase of 2% is actually seen in women’s productive time (31% in 2012 to 33% in 2017), which represents a change from 7.5 hours to 8 hours per
In FGDs, women’s estimates were slightly higher, estimating that their productive time has increased 1 to 2 hours per day, from 6 hours to 7 or 8 hours daily, representing an increase of 4% to 8% in productive time. Women shared that they feel more financially empowered, particularly as they expand their roles into trading. However, women’s levels of satisfaction ranged related to the time they spend on soybean production. Although they benefit from the additional source of income, they struggle with the high household burden that remains solely their responsibility.

In FGDs, women and men discussed that men’s productive roles and time have largely remained the same between 2012 and 2017. In comparing women’s and men’s daily clocks (Figure 5), both women and men spent 25% of time on productive activities because women help their partners on the family farm before working.

We are not satisfied because there is always so much to do and we end up not doing everything as planned.”

—GROW Woman Farmer from Bullu

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47 The 2012 Gender Analysis did not explicitly examine the time women spent on transport as part of the daily clock analyses (as was done in the 2017 WEE Study). However, it is likely that this time was embedded within women’s estimates for their productive time. Women’s time for transport was 8% in 2017. If transport is assumed to be unchanged and is included as productive time then women’s time in fact increased from 31% in 2012 to 33% in 2017, representing an increase of 2% in productive time.

48 The daily activity clocks for men (Figure 5) demonstrate a large decrease in men’s productive time. However, the men’s daily activity clocks from 2012 are only based on only one FGD, in which women estimated men’s time so this data set is not considered more accurate than the recent FGDs with both women and men in multiple communities.
on their own farms; noting though, that women are responsible for the household chores. As women’s daily activity clock demonstrate, women spent 34% of their time on reproductive work (in addition to their productive work), while men had significantly more personal time (29% versus 8%) and more time for sleep (34% versus 25%).

**Dry Season**

Since the GROW project, women’s productive roles have been evolving considerably during the dry season as well, particularly due to women’s improved business skills and productive capacities. Prior to the GROW project, the dry season was a period of time when women focused on activities outside of farming, and women shared a keen interest in having opportunities to increase their income during this season.\(^49\) Subsequently, a key strategy of the GROW project is keyhole gardens. Now, women farmers are active in dry season gardening, along with being more active preparing and selling soybean cakes and other IGAs such as petty trading. Women have also formed and now participate in new women’s VSLA groups under the guidance of the GROW project. Subsequently, as women’s productive roles change in the dry season so does their productive time use.

The 2012 daily activity clocks for women demonstrate that no time was spent on production in the dry season, compared to 11% in 2017, which represents an increase of 2.6 hours per day (Figure 6).\(^50\) In FGDs, women’s estimates ranged from 2 to 4 hours per day and activities included sowing, winnowing, selling in the market and watering their dry season gardens three times per day. Women

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**Figure 6: Daily Activity Clocks for Women and Men in the Dry Season (2012 and 2017)**

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\(^49\) MEDA. (2012). *GROW Gender Strategy.*

\(^50\) Although the daily activity clocks demonstrate that women’s productive time has increased (from 0% to 11%) between 2012 and 2017, it was stated in the initial Gender Analysis that women included their other IGAs. Thus, this increase may be smaller if women were undertaking some IGA activity during the dry season, however, the general increasing trend likely remains the same. Time for transport was also not included in the 2012 analysis, which could also be embedded in the productive time use data.

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During harvest, both women and men spend the majority of their time doing farm work, but the difference is that women wake up very early to attend to household chores and then later join their partners on the farm until evening.”

—GROW Woman Farmer from Chogsia
expressed great satisfaction with the time they now spend on production during the dry season, particularly because they have more free time during the dry season; thus, the time spent on production benefits them greatly financially.

Women’s productive time during the dry season is still significantly lower than men’s (11% versus 33%, as of 2017) (Figure 6). However, similarly to the harvest season, women’s overall time to work is higher as they spend an additional 50% of their time on reproductive activities, while men spent no time on reproductive work.

Although not obvious in the daily activity clocks, an emerging trend was discussed in FGDs with women and men; wherein some communities, men’s productive roles are evolving, albeit slowly. For instance, in Chogsia, some men are helping their wives with soybean production via sowing, threshing, harvesting and transporting produce from the farm. These changes are beginning to help lesson women’s overall workload. Also, in Chogsia, men have started supporting the expansion of soybean production by providing women more land and some have joined the local GROW association. Although there is variation across communities, it was also shared that men’s productive time in the dry season has also been increasing as they become more involved in helping their wives with their keyhole gardens.

Time Use Benefits, Challenges and Constraints
Across the board, women in all five communities stated that there have been numerous benefits to being involved in the GROW project. Women shared that they have experienced positive changes to their financial situation, along with seeing changes to their own health and the nutritional status of their children.

However, related to time use, women also shared that they experience challenges with their time management, particularly since their productive workload has increased (due to cultivating soybean). Related to their productive time, women shared that they are restricted in the amount of time that they can spend on their own, personal farming activities (including trading and travel to markets) due to three reasons. Firstly, for the most part, women are still required to attend to their reproductive responsibilities, within the household, first before engaging in any farm work. Secondly, after reproductive responsibilities, women are required to work on the family farm (which is run by the husband/partner), before working on their own farm. Thirdly, even though women’s incomes have increased, they shared that they still cannot afford to hire additional farm labour or support.

Transport Time
Transport is an important component of women’s productive time. Transportation is also a major gender-based constraint for women in the Upper West region, where a lack of transport is both a barrier to getting product threshed but also
in getting it to the market for sale.\textsuperscript{51} Research has shown that transportation is particularly burdensome for woman farmers, who can spend as much as three times more in transport activities compared to men.\textsuperscript{52} It has also been found that many women rely on their husbands to transport their crops to the market and thus, often lose control over the crops and profits gained through that transaction,\textsuperscript{53} which can have considerable impacts on women’s overall economic empowerment.

**Harvest and Dry Season**

In comparing the daily activity clocks for women and men from 2017 for both seasons (Figure 5 and Figure 6), it is seen that women and men spend the same amount of time on transport. In the harvest season, both women and men spent 8\% (2 hours daily) of their time on transport, whereas in the dry season, both women and men spent 4\% (1 hour daily).\textsuperscript{54} In FGDs, women from three out of five communities reported that their transport time had decreased, due to greater access to tricycles/bicycles, motorbikes or donkey carts. Women’s estimates ranged but prior to the GROW project, they spent anywhere from 1.5 or 2 hours to 3 hours transporting products to the market (by carrying on their heads) and currently, post-GROW spend less time, estimated to be 45 minutes to 1 hour on transportation. Women also shared that their new means of transportation is easier, faster, less stressful and safer in many cases.

In two communities though, women shared that their transport time has increased since before the GROW project. In Chogsia and Tabiesi, women’s transport time is estimated to be 1.5 hours and 3 hours per day, respectively. This is partly because they have more goods to get to market but also because they must still transport these goods by carrying them on their heads. For instance, in Chogsia, the conditions of the roads are very poor, so using motorbikes is still not feasible.

Despite women’s and men’s time being equal in the daily activity clocks, in FGDs, it was discussed that men’s transport time is typically less than women’s because men do not walk and have greater access to transportation. Moreover though, men’s transport time is also thought to have reduced since the GROW project has started, due to the increased availability of motorbikes and donkey carts.

Data from the GROW project’s Technology Fund demonstrates a dramatic decrease of 13\% (37\% to 24\%) in WSA’s productive time after they acquire time-saving technologies such as motorized tricycles and donkey carts.\textsuperscript{55} Women’s


\textsuperscript{52} MEDA. (2012). GROW Gender Analysis.

\textsuperscript{53} MEDA. (2012). GROW Gender Analysis.

\textsuperscript{54} Transport was not included in the 2012 Gender Analysis.

\textsuperscript{55} Only WSAs currently have access to tricycles through the GROW project’s Technology Fund. Please refer to MEDA’s website for the Technology Fund Impact Study as part of the GROW Learning Series for more information.
Even university lecturers in regional capitals want to buy a tricycle as an additional business. Imagine how valuable it is to a rural woman.”

—Tanko Mahamudu, GROW M&E Manager

Reproductive work is always the first to be done because as a woman reproductive work is the most important thing in your life and therefore is always the first thing to be done when we wake up.”

—GROW Woman Farmer from Bullu

Access to tricycles has significantly reduced wait times and made travel safer; for instance, waiting for unreliable public transportation to take them to their farms, market and to neighbouring villages for social events or personal needs. Women estimated that they previously spent hours, even full days travelling to farms or markets due to the unpredictability and lack of transport. Moreover, WSAs explained that before acquiring technology, many agricultural processes were extremely labour intensive and required mobilizing several people in their family and community to plant, harvest and thresh crops. Though this mobilization is communal and workers do not receive pay, these efforts add to women’s unpaid workload burden as they must provide food for the workers. With improved access to new technologies though, women could complete these tasks alone, in a matter of hours, saving both time and cost. The same efficiencies were seen to be applied to both processing and other economic activities, where efficiency significantly increased, time was reduced.56

3.2 Reproductive Time

Gender and sociocultural norms in the Upper West region have historically dictated that men do not have time for reproductive work because of their heavy productive workload so domestic work is the sole domain of women. Women undertake the vast majority of reproductive and domestic work such as childcare, cleaning, cooking and collecting firewood and water. As the head of the household, men typically have a more limited role in taking care of the family and house, but they are expected to provide for their families and make the majority of the household’s decisions.57 Due to this, women’s productive work has tended to be of secondary importance to their reproductive responsibilities.58 Therefore, women must often first complete their domestic duties and then work on the family farm, prior to working on their own personal farms or any other productive work (which is completed alongside their reproductive duties). The role women play on the family farm is an important, but often invisible role, as unpaid labourers for their husbands. Since this work is unpaid, it falls under their reproductive workload and adds to their high work burden.

Harvest Season

Since the beginning of the GROW project, women’s reproductive roles have been evolving. In comparing the daily activity clocks for women from 2012 to 2017 (Figure 5), it is seen that there has been a 5% decrease in women’s reproductive time from 39% to 34% (9.3 to 8.1 hours), which represents a decrease of 1.2 hours daily. This decrease was supported in FGDs, where women discussed that they have less time for their reproductive activities because of their new

56 Please refer to MEDA’s website for the Technology Fund Impact Study as part of the GROW Learning Series for more information.
productive roles related to soybean cultivation. However, women’s estimates in FGDs were lower from 6 to 8 hours daily for their reproductive work during the harvest season.

In contrast to this finding, other women shared that their reproductive time has been increasing because they no longer have any family support, since their friends and family are now as equally engaged in soybean cultivation (and no longer provide assistance). Similarly, data on WSAs demonstrates that their time spent on reproductive work also increased from 21% to 26% of their day. One explanation for this is that women frequently state that they do not have enough time to complete all the domestic tasks they are expected to do in a day, so any decrease in time that they experienced in productive time now goes to completing outstanding reproductive work. In FGDs, women’s discussion reflected these findings, where women from all five communities expressed dissatisfaction, particularly during the busy harvest season because they are now engaged and busier with soybean farm work. Women shared that pressure remains on them to prioritize their reproductive responsibilities but that they must often forgo their household work in order to get their productive work done. Consequently, they struggle to complete their reproductive work satisfactorily.

Another interesting trend is seen in comparing men’s reproductive time from 2012 to 2017 (Figure 5); where notably, men’s reproductive time has increased from 0% to 4%, representing an increase of 1 hour per day. In FGDs, this emerging trend was seen to be community-specific. For instance, in Chogsia and Tokali, women discussed that some men have started to make small shifts, spending less than 30 minutes per day, to support their wives in the household by taking care of children, bathing children or sometimes cooking in their wife’s absence. In Chogsia, women also expressed that their husbands/partners are now enlightened on the need to support them with household activities and that even though many of them still do not do this...[we] believe it is changing, since it is a gradual process. However, in communities Tabiesi and Bullu, women shared that men are still not engaging in reproductive activities and that this has remained mostly constant, since the beginning of the GROW project. However, irrespective of this emerging shift in roles, in comparing women’s and men’s time on reproductive work, women still spend 30% (7.2 hours) more time than men (34% versus 30%) on reproductive work in 2017 (Figure 5).

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59 As noted above, women’s productive time, including transportation, in the harvest season has increased by 2%.

60 The 2012 Gender Analysis identified that it was commonplace for women and family members to help each other with their reproductive activities and work.


Dry Season

In comparing the daily activity clocks for women from 2012 to 2017 for the dry season (Figure 6), it is seen that women’s reproductive time has decreased by 15% (from 65% to 50%). However, if you combine all of women’s time for work (productive including transport) and reproductive) then women’s time for work has remained exactly the same at 65% (15.6 hours).63

Despite this shift in time allocation, the 2017 daily activity clock shows that women now spend 50% (12 hours) of their time on reproductive work in the dry season. In FGDs, women’s estimates were slightly lower at 10 to 11 hours daily (42% to 46%). Women also shared that it is easier to help from family and friends during the dry season because everyone is less busy. Women expressed satisfaction with the time that they can spend on their reproductive work in the dry season, since they have more time to complete their chores (due to less productive work). In comparing women’s and men’s time for reproductive work in 2017, a notable gender gap still exists with women spending 50% (12 hours) of their time, compared to 0% of men’s time (Figure 6).

Time Use Challenges

Related to women’s reproductive time, women shared three challenges with their time management, since their productive workload has increased (with soybean during the harvest season and keyhole gardens during the dry season). Firstly, even in the dry season, women shared that their reproductive activities must be completed first. Secondly, there is no/less support with their reproductive activities; given that most husbands/partners do not share in the household work64 and moreover, other women such as family (who helped previously to the GROW project) are also now busier and engaged with their own soybean farming. Thirdly, women from Bullu shared how the changes in their time for sleep and leisure brings a lot of stress to women in the community.

3.3 Community Time

Throughout Ghana, women tend to have lower profiles in public decision-making and community leadership, whereas men dominate in community and public spheres.65 In the Upper West region, communal work revolves primarily around funerals and festivals. Families also rotate between each other’s farms to help each other with farm work. Social and cultural norms dictate that everyone helps each other, otherwise no one would help you on your farm and you would risk being socially isolated. Women’s primary community roles involve supporting

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63 The 2012 Gender Analysis did not distinguish between women’s reproductive and other IGAs, thus 65% from the initial analysis likely includes women’s reproductive and any productive time related to IGAs including transportation.

64 As discussed in Section 3.2, in some households and communities, men’s behaviour is changing and men are taking on some household responsibilities but for the most part, women are still constrained in this area.

other women with cooking for festivals and funerals, which is a huge task, taking
upwards off all day. Men’s community role also includes contributing to funerals
but through manual work such as setting up chairs and tents. Men are also
required to support the community after flooding or other disasters by digging
channels and repairing roads.

In FGDs, women and men were asked about the time they spend on communal
community work. Women shared that their communal roles and responsibilities
have been changing, since the beginning of the GROW project. Firstly, as seen
with their reproductive work, they simply have less time for community work
because they are busier with soybean production (Box 11). Women estimated
that they spend less than 1 hour per week on community work. Secondly
though, women discussed that they are increasingly active in the GROW project
associations and women’s groups. Moreover, the GROW project associations
are influencing how community work is undertaken in communities like Tokali;
whereby the associations are working together to mobilize resources and labour
services for the community’s needs and to complete community work faster.
For example, one VSLA took on a community project to pay for fixing the local
borehole pump.

Men’s community roles and subsequently, their time is also changing, particularly
as they also start to engage in the GROW associations. In FGDs, it was estimated
that men also spend 1 hour per week and that this amount of time has remained
relatively constant. Women shared that men have been generally supportive on
women’s increasing involvement in the GROW associations and communal labour.

3.4 Personal Time

Personal time includes time for leisure, relaxation and spending time with family
and friends socializing. Personal time can include activities such as watching
television or movies and listening to the radio. In time use research, although
subjective, women’s level of satisfaction is particularly important when considering
time for leisure and sleep.

Harvest Season

In comparing the daily activity clocks from 2012 to 2017, women’s personal
time doubled from 4% to 8%, representing a change of approximately 1 to 2
hours (Figure 5). Data for WSAs demonstrates a similar amount of time with

66 Community roles and work is an important dimension of time use. However, the community dimension
was not included in the initial Gender Analysis as it was not cited by participants as making up a significant
amount of their daily activities and/or was embedded within their estimates for productive and reproductive
work. Therefore, the daily activity clocks do not include the community component.

67 Women’s time spent at the GROW association meetings have been coded under productive time.
However, women shared that there is a social component to these meetings where they enjoy socializing with
other women, which is not currently included within these estimates.

68 (2012). Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index. United States Agency for International
Development’s Feed the Future Initiative.

BOX 11: DECISIONS
AND TRADE-OFFS

This learning paper highlights the importance
of decisions and trade-offs for women’s time use,
particularly related to their reproductive time. Time
is a limited resource and consequently, choices must
always be made in how one spends their time.

In FGDs, women from all communities shared
that their household responsibility and domestic
work must be their number one priority, due
to the social and cultural expectations placed on
them as women. When women are particularly
time constrained, trade-offs must be made. Women
shared that they cope by reducing the amount of
time that they sleep (or their time for leisure) in
order to finish their chores. Other coping strategies
included asking family or community members
for help or forgoing other commitments like
community work.
WSAs reporting 10% (2.4 hours) prior to the introduction of the Technology fund and 9% (2.16 hours) after introduction of the fund. However, despite this doubling of personal time in the daily activity clocks, women shared in FGDs that they barely have enough time to relax, particularly during the harvest season. In FGDs, women’s estimates were similar in that they shared that they spend less than 1 to 2 hours per day on their own personal activities; and felt that this time has decreased since the beginning of the GROW project, due to their increased productive workload. This finding differs from the daily activity clocks, which illustrate an increase in personal time. However, one explanation for this is the varying types of GROW clients, where it is expected that there have been greater shifts in personal time for WLFs and WSAs compared to regular, female farmers.

In FGDs, women also highlighted the extremely positive change in being able to access tractor services, which has reduced the manual labour in their productive time, yet still, they asserted that they still face challenges (similarly in balancing their productive and reproductive workload) in not having enough time for rest, leisure and relaxation. They also shared that much of the free time they had previously, prior to the GROW project, now goes towards their soybean production activities (noting, that for many women, they also discussed that this change is well worth it but notwithstanding, in regard to time use, is a persistent challenge).

**Dry Season**

Women have slightly more personal time in the dry season. Between 2012 and 2017, there was an increase of 4% in women’s time for leisure (from 6% to 10%), which represents an additional hour per day (Figure 6); where women originally reported having 1.4 hours daily, they now have 2.4 hours daily for their own leisure or free time. Similarly, to the harvest season (and despite the increase seen in the daily clocks), women discussed in FGDs that their personal time has decreased because of the increase in productive activities and dry season gardening.

These estimates aside, women shared that they are satisfied with the amount of time that they have for leisure. They also discussed that they enjoy the time they get to socialize with other women as part of the GROW project associations, which allows them to come together as a group. Despite their struggles with not having enough time for their work, shared that they are mostly or very satisfied with the amount of time that they have for their personal activities because they feel they are benefiting from the additional work and time that they spend. With one exception, in Bulu, women discussed not being satisfied with the changes in

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2. Although the GROW project association work and meetings have been coded as productive time, the meetings have an apparent social/leisure component to them that women expressed enjoying in FGDs.
their leisure time and shared that they are under a great deal of stress because of the increased workload during the harvest season.

Despite women’s satisfaction, there still remains a significant gender gap between women’s and men’s personal time, with men enjoying far more free time in both seasons. In 2012, men spent 23% (5.52 hours) of their time for personal activities, whereas women spent 4% (almost 1 hour), representing a 19% (4.56 hour) difference, during the harvest season. In 2017, despite the fact that women’s personal time doubled (from 4% to 8%), men’s time for leisure was also higher (from 23% to 29%) so subsequently, the difference between women’s and men’s personal time remained similar, with men having 21% (5.04 hours) more time for their own personal activities during the harvest season, compared to women.

Similarly, in the dry season, men had 19% (4.56 hours) more time for leisure than women (29% versus 10%). In FGDs, women’s estimates reflected these numbers and estimated that men spend 4 to 6 hours daily in both seasons visiting friends and drinking pito; and they shared that this time has remained steady since before the GROW project. Interestingly, women highlighted one emerging trend, where in the households that men are beginning to help their partners to cultivate and harvest soybean, they see men’s leisure time is decreasing.

### 3.5 Sleep Time

Sleep plays a vital role in women’s overall health and well-being and is critical for overall physical and mental health. For both the harvest and dry season, women’s time for sleep has largely remained the same. In comparing the daily activity clocks from 2012 to 2017, women’s time for sleep reduced slightly from 26% to 25%, which represents a change from 6.25 to 6 hours nightly (Figure 5). In the dry season, when women typically have more time for sleep (than in the harvest season), their sleep time decreased by 4% or 1 hour per day, from 29% to 25%, which is down from 7 to 6 hours per day (Figure 6).

In FGDs, women discussed that they are sleeping less in both seasons due to the increased workload for soybean production; whereby they have less time to sleep and/or must reduce the time they sleep in order to get their work done. Women’s estimates for their sleep prior to the GROW project are higher (than the daily activity clocks), where they estimated that they slept 8 hours per night prior to the GROW project but now sleep an estimated 5 to 6 hours nightly. Women also shared that they wake up earlier in order to fit in all of their work, both productive and reproductive. Women’s satisfaction with their sleep ranged. Some women expressed satisfaction with the reduction in sleep because they felt that they are benefiting overall and that economic benefits outweigh any lack of time for sleep. However, women from Bullu, expressed dissatisfaction with the changes in

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71 Pito is an alcoholic beverage brewed from sorghum, which is made throughout the Upper West region.
their sleep and asserted that they would prefer to find a greater balance in their productive/reproductive responsibilities and having longer time to rest.

Although time for sleep for regular farmers has been decreasing, the data for presents a more promising situation.\(^2\) WSAs experienced a dramatic increase for sleep before and after accessing the Technology Fund, from 24\% to 35\%, which is an increase of 11\% or 2.64 hours (from 5.75 hours to 8.4 hours nightly). It is expected that such a dramatic increase in time for sleep would be expected to have a significant positive impact on women’s overall health and well-being.

Men typically have more time to sleep, compared to women, which has remained constant pre- and post-GROW project. In the harvest season, men’s sleep remained constant between 2012 to 2017, at 33\% to 34\% (8 to 8.2 hours daily). For the dry season, men’s sleep was the same as the harvest period at 34\% (8.2 hours daily) in 2017.\(^3\) As of 2017, with women’s time for sleep decreasing, men slept an additional 2.2 hours (34\% or 8.2 hours for men versus 25\% or 6 hours for women) than women in both seasons.\(^4\) Women discussed that the difference in time for sleep is because men do not carry the burden of domestic responsibilities. Due to the fact that they can focus on their productive work, men tend to go to bed earlier so that they can wake early and head to the farm.

### 3.6 Time Use Summary

Although not conclusive, the daily activity clocks are most useful in highlighting general trends around women’s time use between 2012 and 2017 (Figure 7). The daily activity clocks highlight that women’s productive time has increased in both seasons with there being a larger increase during the dry season (due to the introduction of keyhole gardens). Women’s time for their reproductive responsibilities has subsequently decreased and FGDs highlight the challenges that women are facing in balancing their time between productive and reproductive activities as their time use shifts. Women’s time to sleep has decreased in both seasons, due to the increase in their overall workload. However, their personal time has increased slightly in both seasons.

Despite seeing a shift in women allocating their time from reproductive to productive work (as seen in Figure 7), women’s total work time has remained largely the same (Figure 8). In comparing the change in women’s total work time (including production, transport and reproduction) during the harvest season from 2012 to 2017, women’s time decreased slightly from 70\% (16.80 hours) to 67\%.

\(^2\) MEDA. (2018). *Putting Technology in the Hands of Women: Impact Study.* Please refer to MEDA’s website for this learning paper in the GROW Learning Series for more information.

\(^3\) The 2012 Gender Analysis does not include data on men’s time use in the dry season for 2012.

\(^4\) In FGDs, women estimated that men sleep an average of 8 to 10 hours per night, which increases this difference to 2.2 to 4 hours, depending on the situation. It was also estimated that in the case that men are also cultivating soybean or assisting their wives/partners with production, then their time to sleep has also reduced to 7 or 8 hours per night, but that they still sleep longer than women.
(16.08 hours); whereas in the dry season, women spent 65% (15.6 hours) on work, which did not change in 2017.

In comparing women’s total non-work time (including personal time and sleep), their time has increased during the harvest season slightly from 30% (7.2 hours) to 33% (7.92 hours). In the dry season, women’s non-work time has remained the same at 35% (8.4 hours). Comparing work to non-work time highlights that although women are allocating their time differently and in some cases the time shift is dramatic, the overall gross time spent has largely remained the same.

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**Figure 7: Changes in Women’s Time Use (2012 and 2017)**

Figure 7 is based on the data from the daily activity clocks. Productive time includes time for transportation.

**Figure 8: Changes in Women’s Time Use (2012 and 2017)**

Figure 8 is based on the data from the daily activity clocks. Work time includes productive (including transport) and reproductive time and non-work time includes personal and sleep time.
Outside of any trends, women in the Upper West region are time poor (Box 12). When compared to men, women’s total work time (including production, transport and reproduction) of 67% (16.08 hours) is well beyond the time poverty line of 10.5 hours and almost double that of men’s who spend 37% (8.88 hours) of their day working in the harvest season (Figure 9). Similarly, in the dry season women’s work time totals 65% of their day, compared to 37% of men’s time. The large gender gap persists in comparing women’s and men’s total non-work time; wherein women spend 33-35% of their day on sleep and leisure, compared to men who spend 63% of their time.

**Figure 9: Changes in Women’s and Men’s Time Use (2012 and 2017)**

### 4.0 LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MEDA has delivered women’s economic empowerment programs in many countries around the world and gains valuable experience in each new context. The following are lessons learned from the GROW project related to time use and recommendations for future programming opportunities.

#### Challenges and Lessons Learned

1. **No systematic time use data has been collected for the GROW project.**

   Subsequently, data has been collated from several sources in order to examine emerging trends; and subsequently, there are some gaps in the existing evidence base, as previously discussed.

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78 Figure 9 is based on the data from the daily activity clocks. Work time includes productive (including transport) and reproductive time and non-work time includes personal and sleep time.
2. **Women in the Upper West region are time poor.** The high reproductive burden for women, which is underpinned by gender and sociocultural norms, constrains their ability to work and their time for work. A heavy workload may also undermine their earning potential, health and well-being.\(^79\)

3. **Women’s quality of work matters, and reproductive work is still work.** This learning paper highlights the importance of focusing on both women’s productive and reproductive work together. Although women are allocating their time differently, their total workload remains mostly unchanged. Although women have expressed great satisfaction with their involvement with the GROW project, they struggle with how to balance their gender roles, work and time; and some women, at times, feel pressure and stress related to the changes in their role. It is important to remember that economic empowerment is about more than just production or increasing women’s participation in labour markets but involves a holistic approach on numerous factors such as better infrastructure, affordable childcare, decent work and shifting gender norms.\(^80\)

4. **Women must make decisions and trade-offs related to their time use.** Time is not an unlimited resource and consequently, women are having to make choices, sometimes tough choices between their roles and the expectations placed on them as women. Coping strategies include reducing the amount of time that they sleep, reducing their personal time, not completing their reproductive work satisfactorily or not fully engaging in their productive work.

**Recommendations for Future Programming**

1. **Measure and collect time use data for women and men.** Standardized, sex disaggregated time use data is required to inform overall programming design. Time use data is needed to ascertain time poverty and whether this is an area for support, along with understanding how interventions are impacting (or not impacting) women’s time use. Comprehensive data also measures the true work and time burden for women, which allows for informed strategies to be developed that would assist women in balancing their roles.

   Measuring changes in time use is also critical in ensuring that there are no unanticipated consequences such as a transfer of time burden. Research has shown that women’s heavy workloads can have consequences for their

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\(^79\) This finding is supported by research including International Development Research Centre. (2018). Who cares? Exploring solutions to women’s double burden. Policy Brief. Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women.

children, ranging from neglect to a transfer of work. Subsequently, collecting appropriate time use data helps to ensure there is no transfer of burden.

2. **Prioritize efforts that assist women with time management and design interventions with women’s time use in mind.** It is important to understand that women’s roles are not static, and they are continually evolving and shifting, and in transition. Prioritizing efforts that assist women to both manage and reduce their time will help to ensure they have manageable workloads, along with ensuring programs consider the pressures women face in regards to their time.

3. **Prioritize shifting gender norms around women’s work (appropriately).** Building on MEDA’s efforts to strengthen gender awareness through KFPs, Talking Book and MGAs, this learning paper suggests that gender and social norms are changing slowly, particularly in communities where men are being engaged as stakeholders, which is having an impact on women’s time use and work burden. Deep-rooted gender and social norms change slowly but as long as women bear the sole responsibility of unpaid work, their economic empowerment may be compromised. Men must be part of the discussion and engaged in dialogue. Appropriate gender awareness and community sensitization is an important step is supporting women with their time use constraints; whereby men understand that they have an important role to play with reproductive labour. It is recommended that additional program strategies are considered that allow women to achieve a better balance between their paid and unpaid work.

4. **Prioritize improved access to time-saving technologies for all women.** Building on MEDA’s current efforts to improve access to time-saving technologies, particularly for WSAs, it is recommended that these efforts are expanded. Time-saving technologies can support women to do more work in less time. This learning paper highlights the dramatic impact that time-saving technologies such as tractor services and tricycles, have had in reducing women’s time poverty and overall work burden.

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5.0 CONCLUSION

This learning paper reveals important trends around time use and women’s work for the GROW project. Women farmers in the Upper West region are and continue to be time poor; working as much as 16 hours per day. They spend just as much time as men on their productive activities including soybean cultivation and keyhole gardening. But they also carry the heavy household workload on their shoulders.

Since the GROW project, women’s roles have been evolving. Women are now allocating their time differently, between their productive and reproductive responsibilities, which allows them to increase their earning potential. However, women are struggling with time management and balancing the trade-offs that must be made with these changes such as a lack of sleep or having any personal time for leisure.

Two strategies that have impacted women’s time use the most include improved access to time-saving technologies (particularly tractor services and tricycles) and improving gender awareness through community sensitization efforts. This learning paper highlights a promising trend where men’s roles are beginning to shift slowly, where men are starting to help women with their farms and household work.

In order to support women’s economic empowerment in future programs, it is recommended that time use data is measured and collected for both women and men. Programs must prioritize efforts that assist women with time management and design interventions with women’s time use in mind. It is also important to shift gender norms around women’s work appropriately, while continuing to prioritize improved access to time-saving technologies for all women.
Offices in Canada, the United States and around the world. Visit our website for a complete list.

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