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Acronyms

ACOD-UG	Action for Community Development Uganda
FaaB	Farming as a Business
GEF/SGP	Global Environmental Facility/ Small Grants Programme
IDFC	International Fertilizer development Center
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations office for Project Services
UNVFVT	United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture
VSLA	Voluntary (previously Village) Savings and Loan Association Schemes

Word from the Chairperson Board of Directors

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the ACOD-Uganda annual report 2016. On behalf of the board, management and staff, I express our gratitude to all ACOD-Uganda stakeholders; Government of Uganda, development partners, like minded civil society organizations, the media and the farmers for the technical, moral, financial and physical support extended to ACOD-Uganda during this year. The year 2016 has marked the eve of the ACOD-Uganda (11 years of existence) and the fourth year of the implementation of the ACOD-Uganda five years strategic plan 2013-2018. Our Eleven years of existence presents ACOD-Uganda as a steadily growing organization in terms of geographical coverage, outreach, services offered, staff capacity, systems and structures and strategic thinking.

During the first year of the five years, we have been able to expand our operations to benefit Ugandans in 8 districts as opposed to 2 districts in 2009. We have attracted new partners increasing the number of partners from 2 to 5. Notable partners are United Nations Human rights project supported by United Nations Fund for Victims of Torture, Uganda Fund, UNDP and IFDC. Our clientele has also increased to 16,760 households. We have also been able to realize 68.9% of the total annual budget indicating potential to meet the anticipated goals.

In the year 2016 our operations were challenged by political tensions associated with national elections with great impact to the economy and the unpredictable weather also incapacitated the little production at the country sides. Farmers experienced massive crop failures due to weather failure whilst the cost of doing business soared, compromising aspects of service delivery to our clientele. Nevertheless, we count the year a success to our side as we remained in service. The political tensions provided an opportunity for our farmers and staff to appreciate the role of good governance in the realization of their livelihood goals. We cherish the support from all of you.

Finally, I commend the work of my fellow board members especially in guiding the execution of the new strategic plan, management for the daily oversight role, the staff for the commitment and passion to our core business and the farmers for the will to continuously engage in agriculture and feed our country Uganda.



Ebong Bonny
Chairman Board

Word from the Executive Director

In the year 2016, ACOD-UG continued with her illustrious track record of contributing to poverty reduction, exclusiveness and powerlessness of rural communities especially among smallholder farmers. We rolled out our strategic plan 2013-2018 on equitable distribution of wealth among small and medium holder farmers in Uganda. The year recorded considerable success as well as challenges that characterized transformation of rural livelihoods. Farmers in Uganda constitute one of the most structurally vulnerable groups of the community. Over the years, the performance of the agricultural sector, their main source of livelihoods has been on a rather downhill trend and its contribution to the national GDP has been declining too; from 14.7% in 2014/15 to 13.9% in 20115/16 and an annual growth rate of 0.95% far below the CAADP recommended 6%.

Over the past 10 years, ACOD-Uganda put in place varying degrees of successes involving a number of development initiatives to support communities especially farmers in 8 districts in the region. The gesture sought to improve their living conditions to the basic recommended standards stipulated in various national and international instruments and policies such as ICESCR. The modest change achieved by the communities that we supported over the years recently come under threat due to the combined assault of the food, fuel and financial needs mainly due to drought and unfavourable economic policies. Most farmers felt short of attaining the basic needs of life, especially Food, shelter, health, clothing and educating their children. As the country grapples with rain-fed agriculture, most farmers/communities were severely affected by diverse effects of climate change. Furthermore, the absence of the rural smallholder farmer's voice in the evolving global economic governance has often led to their marginalization and their priorities falling short on the decision making agenda.

As the world economy is undergoes critical shift in structure and governance, rethinking the role of agriculture in poor countries like Uganda becomes enormously inevitable. The call for modalities of inclusion and integration of smallholder farmers in the new development paradigms and emerging decisions remains a major task being pursued.

While Uganda has maintained a high growth rate of 6.3%, these advances are skewed, fragile and unsustainable as the proportion of the population living in poverty and at the verge of hunger remains high and is estimated at 33%. This

indicates that the country has not yet made significant progress towards structural transformation as anticipated. The shortfall has continued to inhibit the country from embarking on an inclusive and sustainable growth over a long time. There is instead diminishing impacts on employment generation, poverty reduction and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Through our programs, we have evoked to interpret and so respond to basically unchanged economic status of the farmers who lacks the voice in: economic governance, strategic trade and investment policies, inadequacy of the traditional macroeconomic frameworks and low effectiveness of the international support among others). These issues have gathered new relevancy in the context of addressing the triple crises of food, fuel and finances. This has been our desire and focus for the last 11 years and we are humbled by the support from our development partners, similar minded organizations for whom we have collaborated, synergized and technically supported each other and the farmers for the commitment they exhibited. We pledge to continue and engage in agriculture and the government for the conducive political working environment. Finally, I commend the work, commitment and enthusiasm of the Board of Directors, Management and staff for all these years and especially during the first year of rolling out our five year strategic plan 2010-2015. Together we have made and will continue to make a difference.



Opio Richard
Executive Director

Preface

Our focus on agricultural livelihoods has been the most driving pillar in all our projects during the reporting period. The central idea has been to emphasize stabilization of agricultural production and productivity given that it is the major means of livelihoods among our target beneficiaries. We realised that our intended primary beneficiary has always remained marginalized groups characterised by limited skills to engage in formal labour market, traumatized and resources constrained and hence agriculture became a priority entry point.

Lately, we started to gradually expand to engage meaningfully in other areas of social life such as human rights, gender and protection among others. Marginal communities are often poorly targeted given that most interventions are approached as macro-level concern and the focus is generally broad. Such programmes leave out the most disadvantaged in favour of average problem situation. For instance, victims of LRA war constituted the majority of our clientele; there are no special programmes to target them in their situation. Available programmes have always been implemented broadly in areas such as primary health care, education programmes and agricultural advisory services. These programming have tended to look at the problems largely at macro levels. We therefore sought to address issues at micro level thereby pooling out the marginal people from the lacuna of being in oblivion.

With the relationship already developed we envisage expansion and a proactive engagement of marginal communities in the development arena. We hope to derive necessary support to enable us move forward.

Finally, we salute our donors who have stood with the under privileged in northern Uganda by recognizing our capacity and commitment to the needy. Abundant blessing to you all as we wish for more to join us and help us to pursue social and economic justice and equity in our societies

Executive summary

The year 2016 was a successful year in terms of consolidating the gains made by ACOD-UG towards realizing her vision of being a “Home grown/grass-root-leader in promoting sustainable development and improved livelihoods in northern Uganda.” The fleet of project portfolios presented, attest to the commitment and especially the design of activities that were intrinsically made to produce the outputs desired. The growing number of projects is also a testimony of the confidence of the donor agencies in ACOD-UG; at the same time indicative of the capability of the organization to handle large volumes of resources and complex projects. The confidence on ACOD-UG is particularly exhibited by UNVFVT notwithstanding Uganda Fund and IFDC catalyst for persistently facilitating us more than once in our effort to transform marginal lives.

Some of key aspects of the projects that have made significant contribution in the lives of the community have been the initiation of Voluntary Savings and Loan Association schemes (VSLA) among beneficiaries. The VSLA has proven to be a very useful tool in promoting coherence and bringing finances closer to the marginal groups. We propose that more effort be made as this could be a better pathway to the high level formal financial arrangements.

The development of functional action groups were also very useful aspects contained in the projects. Functional groups provide formidable action base and outlets of reference. It provided the basic tenets of judging complementarity and compliance to the basic requirements of an intervention. It is obvious an intervention cannot fall in the thicket; as such functional groups are handy and brought in as required.

Targeting of beneficiaries was quiet elaborate and pragmatic as clear criteria was developed, and enabled effectiveness and efficiency in the selection process. Rarely does intervention focus on particular beneficiaries than be highly generalised and treated at macro levels.

Our donors and Projects Funded in 2016

Donor	Brief on Project Funded
 <p>United Nations Development Programme</p>	<p>Project Aim: To conserve the Shea parklands through community sensitization and provide alternative sources of income to the communities around Shea parklands</p>
 <p>United Nations Human Rights (United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture)</p>	<p>Aim: Livelihood Support to Victims of Torture from Lord's Resistance Army Insurgency in Lira, Oyam and Pader Districts</p>
	<p>Aim: " Increasing Competitiveness of conflict Sexual Gender Based Violence Survivors in soya bean and goat production for Increased Income and Poverty Reduction"</p>
 <p>International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC)</p>	<p>Aim: To establish and build capacity of cassava farmers on cassava post-harvest handling practices by 60% and increase access to market by 50%.</p>

1.0 Introduction

This report shows the performance of Action for Community Development Uganda (ACOD-UG) for the period January to December 2016 and highlights the lessons learnt. The performance is presented according to the project and subsequent outputs achieved. It also captures the organizational development processes to reflect commitment of ACOD-UG to transform itself into a more effective and efficient grass-root organization destined to contribute sustainable transformation in marginal communities. Overall, ACOD-UG has expanded and strengthened its leadership and technical capability to better manage large volume of resources and technical complexities. The following are the highlights of progress made:

1.1 Organizational overview

1.1.1 Governance

ACOD-UG is a national organization, registered in 2006 with mandate to operate in northern Uganda especially in Acholi and Lango sub-regions. The organization is a creation of a group of young professionals who derived a passion to collectively commit themselves to contribute to the alleviation of social and economic transformation of northern Ugandan communities. The creators of ACOD-UG are constituted by experts in fields of Agriculture & Rural Development, Economics, Forestry, Education, Sociology and Financial Services. They constitute the board of directors who oversees and give guidance in management and operations of the organization. In addition, the Board of directors automatically performs the following oversight roles:-

- Review and approval of Technical Performance and Audited Financial reports.
- Review and approval of ACOD-UG's work Programme and budgets.
- Approval of structures and appointment of new members of staff.
- Review and amend working conditions, remuneration and of personnel

1.1.2 Management

The secretariat of ACOD-UG is under direct management of the Executive Director with personnel in the position of Programme Development and Management, Programme Monitoring & Quality Assurance, Finance Management, and Human Resource development jointly helping to constitute senior management team. The Board approved the structures to help streamlined and standardized the operations in terms of the management of: financial, human resources, PM&E, procurement and administration. The number of junior staff is regulated from time to time depending on nature of project and requirement at any particular point in time. Other positions that would be filled but is limited by finances are the positions of Internal Auditor and Procurement Officers who in the meantime is sourced as need arises.

In response to this internal organizational growth, the Human Resources Management and Administration unit, will coordinate and provide guidance to source for competent human resources, implementing policies and procedures and oversee development and implementation of internal capacity development to ensure that key talents is progressively acquired and retained in order to remain competitive to deliver on its objectives.

1.1.3 Communication & Information sharing

In order to increase effective and efficient communication and information sharing the Management of ACOD-UG has put in place portable internet modems to access internet anywhere at all times in addition to provision of airtime to field personnel. The structured provision of airtime credits has eased communication during the field activities, in the office and with external contacts. We hope that in future a LAN will be installed once our new office under construction is completed. Also in place is the established website, accessible as www.acod-uganda.org to provide updates on our programmes

1.2 Socioeconomic Background and Pillars of programming under ACOD-UG

The communities in northern Uganda suffered heavy economic setbacks following decades of civil and societal strife that destroyed their norms, cultures, traditions, socioeconomic setups, livelihoods, lives and properties. Most of the populations in the region is largely distressed, poverty stricken and inadequately skilled and less knowledgeable to enable them stimulate and/or accelerate economic growth to propel meaningful transformation without external assistance. The situations above thus provides the impetuous to intervention by /involvement of locally available intellectual stalwarts is seen as a quick fix to acceptance, adoption, and commitment to innovation and development while promoting a much more revered accountability.

ACOD is driven by set of closely knit philosophies namely:-

(a) Pursuance of development paradigms that is led by those who need to develop henceforth undertake to ensure beneficiaries are mobilized into institutions driven by common problems and strengthened to scale out locally adapted technologies.

(b) Solutions are provided for those who know their problems. Therefore beneficiaries must be self-aware of actual rather than their petty problems

(c) Innovation does not spring from education only but is refined in part by education and through repeated actions. Locally available innovations and knowledge is critical and constitutes a major part of intervention.

(d) Profitability and sustainability are coherent accelerators and drivers to transformation and development. Intervention should therefore take care of economic, social, cultural, legal and technical suitability.

1.3 Strategic Objectives of the organization

In response to the alarming situation in northern Uganda, ACOD-UG has set its feet on a mission to contribute to the improvement in peoples' wellbeing through participatory efforts. Our key strategic approach revolved in effective community mobilization and sensitization; awareness creation; participatory identification and prioritization of factors hindering development; Searching for and Provision of Scalable and sustainable solutions; Active involvement of beneficiaries and stimulating innovations in all spheres of life. The beneficiaries are therefore central, partners and main actors and are only facilitated by innovative minds, skills and actions to respond to their needs. We seek meaningful partnerships with local authorities, highly capable, specialized and experienced individuals and institutions such as research centers, universities, business owners and development organizations.

1.4 Key priority areas of intervention

- Food security and livelihoods including agribusiness development and other forms of economic and social empowerment.
- Environment and natural resources management
- Education: the driver being the promotion of
 - Life/vocational skills for out of formal school age groups
 - Support to formal school programmes for the young ones.
 - Care for orphans and other vulnerable children
- Health promotion that is focused on
 - HIV/AIDS prevention and care,
 - Adolescent reproductive health
 - Nutrition and feeding
- Water, sanitation and hygiene
 - Home hygiene and hygiene
 - Safe water
 - Latrine use and safe disposal of refuse
- Advocacy on cross cutting issues
 - Gender relations: Gender base violence and other forms of social exclusion/inclusion
 - Human rights, child protection and
 - Democracy and good governance,
 - Youth and Women Political empowerment

2.0 Implemented Projects in 2016

The year 2016, was an impact year for ACOD-UG. Presented below is a tease out of its performance derived through the projects implemented. Among the projects include the following:-

2.1 Project 1: Conservation of Shea Parkland in Otuke

2.1.1 Introduction

This was one of the intervention areas focused on natural resource and environment management implemented within the framework of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS); financed by the Global Environment Facility/Small Grants Programme (GEF/SGP) and implemented under the United Nations Development programmes (UNDP). ACOD-UG was subsidiary and a front line organization with direct contacts for the on the ground implementation of agreed actions. The project focused on awareness creation, sensitization and provision of alternative sources of



income for communities around shea parklands as a mechanism to promote conservation of sheanut trees. Despite known values, Sheanut trees are being threatened to extinction owing to the destructive exploitation for making charcoal to raise the much needed income for the largely distressed households/ populations.

The project was implemented in two subcounties of Ogor and Orum over 2years; it came to the end in September 2016. Sheanut trees is of the highest concentration in northern Uganda and has the most multiple uses known traditionally and scientifically as for fuelwood/charcoal, source of high quality edible oil, making of wooden households tools (Mortar & Pestles), Medicinal, cosmetics, shade and aesthetic values among others. At the peak of insurgency sheanut trees suffered great damages nearing extinction as it became the most immediate source of income for the largely incapacitated populations. Its extinction is further threatened by the long duration it takes to maturity and the slow regeneration ability. It was therefore deemed necessary to ensure the trees are rejuvenated given slow natural regeneration and its being continuously threatened by the increasing population pressures.

2.1.2 Project Objectives

The long term objective of the intervention was to ensure local communities take a central position in managing the natural resources within their environment. Sheanut trees were specifically singled out owing to the central role and contribution it plays in moderating the welfare and livelihoods of the people as noted in oral history and in various scientific studies. Three specific objectives were therefore chosen strategically in line with the aspirations of ACOD-UG and funding agencies to guide the implementation of the project as follows:-

1. Support conservation of sheanut trees in Otuke district
2. Promote use of sheanut products to improve livelihoods among members
3. Build capacity of local stakeholders for continuous and sustainable protection of the sheanut trees.

2.1.3 Status Performance of the Project

A protracted effort was made in yielding the anticipated outputs. Effectively the project made tremendous effort in mobilization, training and reorientation of the communities to commit their actions towards conservation of the sheanut trees dubbed "shea parkland conservation". Specifically the outputs achieved are outline in the following section.

2.1.4 Outputs achieved

There is produced a very responsive by-law, which does not only represented the views of many in Otuke district but an evidence of their own effort and commitment to address abuse on environmental resources. Consequently the district local government combined this effort with other stakeholders within the district and has developed an ordinance due for pronouncement, to regulate the protection /conservation of available environment and other the resources thereon. The ordinance will if finally adopted produced a district wide regulatory framework /tool upon which and investment community actions on sheanut trees and environment in general are promoted with all due safeguards. Past regulations had remained largely weak, coercive, top down and thus un-productive



Figure 1: Sacks of charcoal impounded at subcounty headquarters by environmental watchdog at subcounty upon being tipped off by community base of the understanding of the by-law

Illegal actions continued as seen in figure 1 above where vehicles and sacks were impounded by government operatives. Several members of the community now realize that the establishment of by-law as a community level legal system/framework upon which the awareness of a higher-level system is based and is favourable for the implementation of the by-law established within any such members of the community.

The project stimulated a heightened awareness on the issue of biodiversity conservation in many sections of the population, and with the various authorities at hand. Subsequently there is a reduction in the politically motivated disorientation regarding protection/regulation and conservation of sheanut trees which otherwise had hitherto constituted the direction and reason for/not effectively encouraging conservation advocacy. It has become a core responsibility of each household to protect the trees in his land and therefore production practices have been encouraged in such a way that, sheanut trees are protected with outmost effort and commitment.

There was apparently marked capacity building effort at many levels from local communities to project staff and members of the local government of Otuke district which has guided on ways to stimulate communities to take appropriate action on shared problems. Such capacity building initiatives have created a sense of collective responsibility among sections of the population reached by the project in Otuke district. There is visibly marked improvement in the knowledge base on the biodiversity, uses and strategies to make



Figure 2: A demonstration of seedling planting session in homesteads

diversity work for the country and specifically for particular communities. Many have a sense of pride in the biodiversity concept introduced to them and have taken steps with enthusiasm to conserve it. For instance it was traditionally known that sheanut nut trees are not good the oil and charcoal, but elders and have use it medicines, embalmment of dead bodies and making tools such as furniture, mortas and pestles. Such traditional are being reinvigorated with caution.

Apparently more exciting is the identification and engagement in various income generating activities which helped communities to sway away from the largely damaging exploitation of shea trees. Illustration of such efforts is seen below with beneficiaries of local wine brewing using indigenous fruits such as pineapples, bananas and wild fruits are excited with the tasty wine they produced. Other members are busy with the baking business.



Figure 3: Sample of homemade wine (left) and bakery products being displayed and marketed by participants after receiving training in the practice

2.1.5 Performance Analysis

The project was in general more successful in engaging with communities in guiding them to engage and in articulating their desire for a just and sustainable use of available resources at their disposal. Given their effort in identification and active participation in various responsive alternative income sources, coupled with the various uses of sheanut trees/products as have been applied in the communities over centuries have made them self-responsive. Arguable the communities now know more uses of the trees and do apply them locally for food/nutrition, feed, medicines, fertilizers and aesthetic values. However, a more marked success of the project is yet to be measured in terms of what happens next as it has instituted a first step on the path to improvements in the conservation of sheanut tree species in Otuke district.



The reinvigorated effort and desires with all the added detailed community knowledge about sheanut trees and biodiversity in general will help identify priority species requiring action and provide some baseline against which monitoring changes can take place in future. Indigenous knowledge which had served the communities for centuries was getting extinct due to the effect of the insurgence that locked up generations from access to information across generations.

2.1.6 Limitation/ non accomplishments

Though the project largely achieved what it was set out to do, it was limited by the available logistics that could not allow for the wider communities even within the

participating subcounties to be reached. Further, it was not possible to firmly strengthen the business development services initiated among the community, the little that is instituted though were seemingly building up. The business ventures adopted from especially farming communities required complimentary allocation of specific resources to stimulate and sustain change in livelihoods practices. For instance, strategies to make available seeds/seedlings for crops such as passion fruits, pineapples that blend very well with sheanut trees should be provide a major ingredient to stimulating key alternative income source. In-kind provisions to all or of start-up material for multiplication would act as motivator for diversion of communities from undertaking destructive economic activities. Further beneficiaries should also been equipped with skills on production methods, and guided on marketing of the products as alternative source of income.

2.2 Project 2: Increasing Competitiveness of conflict sexual gender based violence survivors in Soy Bean and Goat production for Increase Income and Poverty Reduction



2.2.1 Introduction

With a grant worth USD \$20,000 from Uganda Fund, Action for Community Development Uganda ACOD-UG implemented a one year project titled “Increasing Competitiveness of conflict sexual gender based violence survivors in Soy Bean and goat production for Increased Income and Poverty Reduction” in Otwal & Aleka Sub-Counties, Oyam District. The project reached 300 beneficiaries, spread out in 10 parishes of the subcounties. It concentrated on promoting income generating activities especially market oriented production of soya bean, rearing and breeding of local goats, Coaching and mentoring in leadership and management of groups, participation in voluntary saving and micro-credits schemes to create a revolving fund for investment in household, on-farm and off-farm ventures.

2.2.2 Project Objectives

The project sought to empower marginal households especially survivors of conflict SGBV, to increase and improve their food security, incomes and overall wellbeing. The following were the specific objectives of the investment:-

- (a) Mobilized, organize and re-orientate victims of conflict sexual gender based violence into functional groups for support
- (b) Promote responsive income generating activities among the beneficiaries
- (c) Facilitate beneficiaries with inputs and skills to improve household self-sufficiency in food security.

The project strategy revolved around strengthening agricultural production and productive capacity of intended beneficiaries involved in soybean and goat production to improve their livelihoods. The project therefore built mobilized and capacity of 10 conflict-related SGBV survivor groups to develop, implement and manage IGAs and to support conflict-related SGBV survivors with start-up kits, farm input and monitored their performance throughout the project period.

2.2.3 Status of Progress

The project came to an end in March 2017 and had largely achieved what it was set out to do. While compiling this report, the final evaluation had taken place and a report produced and indicated achievement of key targets such as mobilization of 30 action groups and orientating them members through VSLA practices and principles, crop (soybean) production and goat rearing. Subsequently various microbusinesses had taken off expanding spheres of livelihood options outside agriculture. The VSLAs have also facilitated increased access to finance micro investments among the beneficiaries. The challenge though was that the available logistics could not allow for the wider communities and in-depth coverage of the subject matter even within the participating subcounties reached. Further, it was not possible to, firmly strengthen the business development services initiated among the beneficiaries, the little that is instituted though were seemingly building up.

2.2.4 Outputs achieved

The key outputs of the projects included the following:-

1. There was an uphill task that effectively mobilized 300 survivors of conflict related Sexual and Gender Based Violence victims who were constituted into ten groups of 30 members each. The mobilization was an uphill task because the members targets were stigmatized/crown with fear and most had lost hope as they initially had no willingness to come out openly. On the overall 80% of members in the various groups are women. There was therefore equal distribution of membership spatially and numerically given that each parish had one group thus:- (a) Aleka subcounty had the groups in Agwar, Alibi, Ajul, Aleka and Abela parishes; while (b) Otwal subcounty had the groups in Wanglobo, Acokara, Ader, Okii and Anyomolyec. Basically the members of the group share a lot in common as seen from the filed reports and that made the groups more responsive and strongly adhered together.
2. In each of the group there was developed a microfinance scheme, the Voluntary Saving and Loan Association (VSLA) scheme which has helped to unite the members together and to undertake joint planning and provide a readily available source of capital to borrow without stress.



Figure 4: A VSLA session in Progress

3. The groups received tailored trainings and acquired inputs which stimulated them to fan into action the following elements of life transformation:-

Group dynamics (i.e. formation, development, leadership and effective management). Organizational and institutional development principles, strategies and practices were therefore provided to the members who by virtue of their circumstance were mobilized and supported to become an action group in the communities they lived.

Gender mainstreaming at family, business and organizational levels and Integrating crosscutting issues in production of agricultural enterprises and non-agricultural businesses

Principle and practices of voluntary saving and loan scheme (VSLA); Business skills and Enterprise selection and production using improved production skills

Different microbusinesses were made operational through the effort: petty trade, confectionery, producer buying and resale, buying and fattening of livestock especially goats and pigs for resale, micro-groceries and roadside restaurants among others.

The promotion of diversified livelihood options presents a necessary transformation required for a community which is constrained and affected by factors of climate change, land degradation and fragmentation. Careful choice of enterprises will promote wise use of available resources through intensification of practices while promoting increased incomes and food security in the entire community.

The picture galleries on the next page show some of the livelihood options taken up by some of the beneficiaries up receiving trainings and engaging in VSLA which provided access to startup capital.



Members of the groups upon training took on various enterprises for income generation. The choice of enterprises was made possible through understanding of own capacity and availability of start-up capital derived from VSLA



2.2.5 Performance Analysis

This project presented a very significant relevance to both the community and the local authorities of Aleka and Otwal subcounties in Oyam district as constituent of Uganda. The groups have become known and attractive to development programming by other agencies including government. The hitherto isolated and inadequately reached members of the society is now recognised, mobilized and ear marked to be provided necessary services that helps them in their pursuit of their livelihoods and mitigation of risk and vulnerability. For instance one group (Kica a Rwot in Aleka subcounty) has been selected to host the government implemented ATAAS programme demonstration on cassava seed multiplication. This communities had since disintegration of internally

displace persons' camps had never received any direct support from either government or other development partners. On the side of beneficiaries, they now know and have taken all necessary steps to demand for responsive services from the relevant authority. They also believe in themselves and realised their roles as being critical in problem solving and stimulating development.

There is also an on-going process of capital generation through collective actions among the beneficiaries thereby promoting investment in agriculture and creating wealth. Notably, the development Voluntary Saving and Loan Association (VSLAs) schemes have in particular created a platform for information sharing and a focus on social development.

Available testimonies indicate gradual understanding and promotion of household stability due to availability and the recognition of the commitment of all members of the households. The understanding of gender concept is gradually becoming clearer as actions taken had provided mechanisms of solving problems at household levels. The incessant building of social capital and order that was being recognized by the groups is eminently indicative as communities learned to mediate conflicts, provide counselling in their situation and make business initiatives. In confessions, the community level counselling has tremendously contributed to relief from trauma. Further, they are able to articulate their challenges and initiate or provide alternatives ways of addressing their problems.

2.2.6 Limitations, Lessons Learnt and recommendations

Limitations

The overall project value was inadequate to run the planned activities or meet/adequately service the needs of the large number and widely spread beneficiaries to make meaningful achievement of the planned results. For instance, there was limited involvement of the wider community who contribute to the social capital safety nets desired across the community. The limited financial volume could not allow for comprehensive follow-up and mentoring of farmer organizations nor provide all the

necessary start-up inputs that would thrust the achievements to scale. Further, though the activities undertaken were very critical and requires in-depth uptake leading to adoption, it was being thwarted by the limited time the project had to take.

Lessons learnt

- a) Promotion of self-help effort is realized here as an excellent stimulator of social order and discipline. However, some local community Leaders such as parish chief of one of the parishes in Aleka subcounty was very instrumental especially in sensitization and supporting orientation of couples on the values and household responsibility and stability. It is therefore important to detect and involve charismatic leaders while undertaking any initiative.
- b) Access to marginal groups in society appears to be apparently more realistic if tackled in as micro targets rather than the generally perceived problems at macro levels
- c) Adequate sensitization and making the community take center stage, ensures their effort, participation and any given resources is not wasted. Henceforth it was imperative that this should always be continuous effort rather than short lived.
- d) VSLA is a very responsive programme for not only ensuring access to financial resources but also in promoting social cohesion, business development and self-responsibility. However, the VSLA and institutions of the farmers ought to be strengthened further.

Recommendations

We propose to continue with this group with a paradigm shift from production to a market approaches. It is also important other development partners who may have interest in the environment could have consider action that builds on what ACOD-UG has so far accomplished. There should a feasibility review to inform decision.

It also imperative that development link up to formulate strategies bearing in mind the achievements already made by others in particular locations.

2.3 Project Three: Livelihood Support to Victims of Torture from Lord's Resistance Army Insurgency in Lira, Oyam and Pader Districts



2.3.1 Introduction

This project falls within ACOD-UG's strategic intervention under advocacy on cross cutting issues (gender i.e. social exclusion/inclusion), Human rights, Child Protection, Democracy and Good governance. In its form ACOD-UG had joined hand with the international community to ensure humans receive fairness and lead comfortable lifestyle despite shortcomings they might have gone through. This project was implemented with funds derived as a direct assistance from the United Nations Funds for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT). The primary target had mainly been youths and young adults whose lives have had primary torture thereby distorting livelihoods, education and social development. The project commenced over 4 years ago covering the districts of Lira, Oyam and Pader (including newly created Agao) districts. The

districts did not only go through the brunt of war but became host to many victims of the over the 20 years of unrest in northern Uganda. The effect of the conflict had made the communities in this districts ill equipped to address the needs of such victims and therefore requires external assistance to help in the mitigation of the misfortune.

2.3.2 Project Objectives

Overall, the project was intended to support victims of torture recover and regain their lost values in the post conflict era. Specifically, the objectives include:-

- i. Facilitate and promote education of school going age victims through provision of needed scholastic support
- ii. Provide support to promote alternative livelihoods options especially among youth and women
- iii. Support increase in food crop production and marketing to improve food security in affected families.

2.3.3 Status of Progress

The year 2016 phased of the commitment of the UNVFVT with ACOD-UG produced tangible achievements as noted in subsequent section under outputs achieved. What is at hand is the desire to track the beneficiaries to map out their performance and progress post intervention.

2.3.4 Outputs achieved

Through the intervention, An accumulation of Fifty (50) youths (10 Males/40 Females) who otherwise had lost hope in life have been mobilized and enrolled at Abia memorial vocational training

Figure 5: Beneficiaries in practical sessions in tailoring at Abia war memorial technical and Vocational training institute



school to acquire skills and knowledge appropriate for livelihood improvement. The key training areas are Metal fabrication, Carpentry and Joinery, Tailoring and cutting of Garments, brick laying and concrete practice. Thirty five of the graduates have upon completion been reportedly employed by organizations or by self thereby filling in the labour gaps among the communities where they hail from. Their employment has also helped them with a steady source of income leading to improved livelihoods. Five (2 Females/3 Male) though are students still studying at primary and secondary schools and are in normal progress.

The beneficiaries who could not be engaged in vocational schools remained as farmers in communities; had been constituted into functional farming groups. The functional groups were trained in specified commodity production and organizational disciplines and further supported to undertake life skills appropriate for their situation. They were provided with basic farm production skills, knowledge and technologies in which they have shown increased uptake and adoption, especially improved crop varieties, production skills, and product handling and management leading to improved agricultural productivity. Key practices widely adopted are line planting, timely planting and weeding and better post-harvest handling practices (using tarpaulins for drying). They were also provided with female goats as breeding stock upon which they had to multiply and generate income. At least by the time of compiling this report, up to 50% of the beneficiaries had multiplied the goats to twice



Figure 6: Beneficiaries who could be enrolled in schools/vocational areas were provided agricultural inputs (seeds and breeding stocks) as a means of livelihoods to pursue

the number that had been provided to them. Subsequently there is improved and stable food security save for whenever there is weather failure, increase income and improved living conditions in households of beneficiaries.

Market linkages: Owing to the improved food security, there is often surplus production marketed by beneficiaries to meet their other needs. Efforts were therefore made to developed marketing arrangements between beneficiaries who were mobilized into farming groups along with host communities and agro-processors in urban centres especially Lira town. The communities as such were trained on how to develop agricultural production and marketing plan, small and medium business plans to boost on their income and sustainability. Consequently they have developed basic marketing skills and are improving on their capability to meet the market demand and conditions. Key commodities that have been developed with functional market linkages include Maize and Sunflower. The development of market linkages have ease marketing and reduced the tendency to cheat and sell poor quality products. Farmers have access to market information and guided through pricing intelligence as they go about their businesses.

Institutional developments of beneficiaries have been forged and have helped in the establishment capital accumulation mechanism to raise microfinances they needed. Each the groups formed have is operating a Voluntary Saving and Loan Association (VSLA) schemes which helps in holding the members tightly knit to one another. Further, the groups are also promoting sustainability of their various interventions. For instances the members now use VSLAs funds to procure seeds of improved crop variety, tools and other households. Membership in such situation is paramount thus the coherence. Finally, confidence has been built among the victims of torture as they are now able to freely express themselves and make contributions towards their lives in both decisions and actions. This is a great relief from the bondage of psychological effects and stigma that had marred their lives.

Trainings: Besides training in technical aspects related agricultural disciplines, there has been additional effort undertake social orientation of the victims and their host on basic gender concepts with emphasis on managing domestic and gender based

violence. Practical and strategic gender skills and analysis among others has been greatly imparted. The beneficiaries have now started to appreciate the notion of equality between women and men in all walks of their lives as they have learnt to shun cultural behaviours and stigma that had so much struck them.

2.3.5 Performance Analysis

Given the continued presence among the victims over the years there is clear testimony that the intervention has achieved its targets. The approach is considered highly relevant and addresses the actual needs. Such micro interventions have for a long time been overlooked in most interventions. The lessons learnt from this approach are adequate to be scaled out for further management and servicing. For instance the initiation of VSLAs has seemingly become a common future in livelihood interventions which could as well be adopted as a nationwide strategy for ensuring access to finances among marginal communities.

When communities are involved in planning and simulation of their needs, there are possibilities of ensuring sustainable improvement in ensuring poverty alleviation.

Market linkages and production planning are the basic tenets upon which livelihood interventions should lie. AT the end of every action, there is that aspects of beneficiaries taking productivity skills. This is especially so where the beneficiaries have no formal training and would end with agriculture. Production and marketing planning well-articulated to ensure income flow in households rather than remain dependent.

2.4 Project Four: IFDC CATALIST PROJECT –ABC CONTRACT & GRANTS Components



2.4.1 Introduction

The CATALIST-Uganda project was designed to Catalyse Accelerated Agricultural Intensification for Social and Environmental Stability. It was implemented as a 4-year project financed by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands and implemented by the International Fertilizer Development Centre (IFDC) which subcontracted ACOD-UG among others as a frontline organization in its implementation over a period of 1 year. This contract was is as a follow-up assignment to a grant provided in the previous year with focus on strengthening farmer institutions and addressing challenges associated with post-harvest handling practices among farmers in Bala and Ayer subcounties of Kole district.

2.4.2 Objectives

The overall objective of this contract was:-“To enable agribusiness clusters create value by selling into national, East Africa regional and international /Dutch markets and agribusinesses; thus development of a market Pull. The specific objectives under this agreement were therefore:-

- a) To institute and strengthen the capacity of 17 farmer group clusters in Lira, Kole and Alebtong districts to produce and engage in commercial activities by March 2016
- b) To increase the capacity of the 17 farmer group clusters to competitively produce and market high quality cassava products by March 2016
- c) To improve the agribusiness skills of the 17 farmer group clusters that are engaged in production and marketing of cassava by March 2016
- d) To support the development of internal savings and loan schemes as a mechanism for raising investment capital among the 160 farmer group members by March 2016.

2.4.3 Status of Progress

This was a yearlong project and has reached its mandatory end date. All planned activities were accomplished in time as scheduled. The major outputs have been realised but given the short duration of the project meaningful achievements would be realised from transformative behaviours of the beneficiaries. One unfortunate aspect was the lack of project evaluation exercise which made the ascertainment of level of uptake and adoption inadequate.

2.4.4 Outputs achieved

- a) Key aspects of the project had been in mobilization and development of communities/ farmers into functional agribusiness groups and clusters. Further trainings were conducted to strengthen the groups in the following areas:
 - Group dynamics, leadership, good governance and accountability
 - Development of gender sensitive constitutions and promotion of gender responsive actions in farm businesses.

The clusters were prepared through coaching and mentoring to meet the requirement with local government as an institution of farmers with clear agenda and roles. At least 17 of the targeted FOs were mobilized and developed.

- b) The business oriented nature of the project had helped ACOD-UG to focus on stimulating the mobilized FOs to undertake collective marketing as a key agribusiness strategy for the rural population. As a business, collection centres were established for each group and each FO was linked to value chain actors in the downstream. Arguably, this enable the members to strengthen their bargaining power, increased the volume of products marketed and observed the quality of products being put to market. Additionally, linkages to the input market enabled bulked procurement of essential and difficult to purchase inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides from reputable suppliers. There was therefore effort to quality the inputs used by farmers during the project period.
- c) In strengthening the business antics of farmers the members of each FO underwent tailored trainings in Farming as a Business (Faab). In the training they were guided and made aware of the need for records (Asset, production, Sales, financial and procure ment). They also went through production and farm planning, enterprises selection and for smallholders and financial management and accountability requirements.
- d) Finally, as a way of raising and making available investment capital for increased investment in production. Voluntary savings and credit Association (VSLA) schemes were developed for each FO. There received training on the principles and methodological approaches of the VSLA. They received start up inputs and for running of their VSLAs. Subsequently more and more farmers including those not in the group have adapted their livelihoods to the VSLA schemes and have been able to access the micro credits from what they accumulated themselves. The VSLAs have made the groups more accountable and cohesive as confidence is built alongside ease with which micro financial requirements are met from a common pool.



2.4.5 Performance Analysis

The project in general terms provided remarkable stride in mainstreaming the agribusiness components in the smallholder farming fabric. The focus on market and market conditions specifically provided eye openers to both producers and immediate buyers.

The cluster level which was not skewed and the interphase among actors constituted a good team required in the value chains. It also provided good testimony of perpetuating collective responsibility in responding to problem solving by value chain actors. However, the challenge therefore remains in the quality of actors that formed the cluster and their individual commitment towards the promotion of the already initiated system. Further, the need for clear accountability system at the producer level stage need to be tested over a period of time given the inadequate skills and capacity they possess.

Notably, there was observance of product quality and elimination of fake products often induced by having too many actors midway. The farmers themselves made effort

The effort to create direct linkage was an important aspect of reducing the cost of operation and reduction in the chain thereby a possibility of reducing the overall cost of during business. If such arrangements is strengthened, it important

