

Final Report

Mid Term Evaluation of the Project:

“Sustainable improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the people in the districts of Lira and Otuke in the Lango Region of Northern Uganda”

UGA 1032

BMZ: 2010.1883.7, Title 68720



Sequence of the evaluation in Northern Uganda, September 2012

Carried out on behalf of
Welthungerhilfe Bonn

by

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October 2012

I. Summary

1. Brief description of the project and framework conditions

With a GDP per capita of 370 US Dollars and a Human Poverty Index value of 34.7, Uganda still remains one of the world's poorest countries. However, the country has made tremendous economic recovery in the recent past. Especially northern Uganda, and Lango Sub-Region in particular, bordered by Karamoja in the East and North East, has been faced with lots of incursions and insurgencies by their neighbouring Karimojong. The transformation and recovery process was stamped by long spells of Lords Resistance Army (LRA) disturbances.

The project intervention zone is situated in the districts of Lira and Otuke in the Lango Region of Northern Uganda. The regional coverage thus includes the sub-counties of Aromo, Agweng and Ogur, as well as the sub-counties of Adwari and Okwang. The elevation of the project region is between 1,000 and 1,200 meters above sea level.

The Welthungerhilfe project UGA 1032 does more or less directly follow the former project UGA 1028, "*Reactivation of agricultural potentials and drinking water supply in selected regions of Lira District*". It is located in the same region as the completed project UGA 1028. The project is implemented by staff employed directly with the project. In the intervention zone of the UGA 1032 project additional funding is provided by the German NGO *Viva con Aqua* for drilling new boreholes for drinking water supply. In addition, a so called Millennium Village¹ is situated in the project region. The project objectives and attended results are as follows:

Project objective

Sustainable social-economic living conditions of the people in the districts of Lira and Otuke in the Lango Region of Northern Uganda have improved.

Result 1

Beneficiaries' knowledge and usage of methods to optimize the use of existing production potentials are improved.

Result 2

Linkage of project area to local and national markets is improved and primary schools are rehabilitated.

Result 3

Supply of drinking water is increased and the hygienic situation of the target groups is improved.

2. Relevance

The project has been designed to be fully in line with global, national, regional and sector specific rules and regulations. In addition, it respects all relevant cross-cutting issues and sector related strategies and development instruments.

From an agricultural perspective, the project region was a fertile and highly productive zone in the past, producing two yearly harvests without using chemical fertilisers. But

¹ The term "Millennium Village" is rather confusing as it concerns quite a lot of very widespread small villages, difficult to determinate regionally.

nowadays returned farmers are still only producing around subsistence level. Cash crop growing is starting stepwise, but it is still not very common. Nutrition is poor. Vegetable growing is unknown. This is as well the case with any savings and loan structure. Clean drinking water is scarce. Many of formerly drilled boreholes suffer from broken water pumps. As a classical self-help project, UGA 1032 “*Sustainable improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the people in the districts of Lira and Otuke*” fully complies with the Welthungerhilfe charter.

The direct beneficiaries of the project are progressive crop farmers, app. 50 % women and 50 % men in the selected five sub-counties Agweng, Aromo, Ogur, Adwari, and Okwang. The specific target group is composed of 71 farmer field school (FFS) groups. Each group comprises 30 members. A family can be represented by one member, the wife or the husband. [In addition approximately 100 to 150 families benefit from the rehabilitation of a borehole in rural areas \(all in all app. 5,000 households\). And, altogether at least 5,000 pupils are using newly constructed school buildings, latrines and water tanks.](#)

From the year 2002 to 2006, almost all beneficiary farmers had left their homesteads and lived in so called protected camps. These camps had been set-up close to regional urban centers for better protection of the local population and their military defense against militia and rebel groups. Since 2006, agricultural production restarted in the project region. As of 2008, all IDPs within the Lango Sub-Region had returned to their home areas.

3. Effectiveness

The project’s implementation concept is mainly based on the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach, originally developed by the FAO. The most characteristic issues of the concept are:

- FFS consist of groups of farmers who get together to study a particular topic.
- The topics covered vary from conservation agriculture, organic agriculture, animal husbandry, and soil husbandry, [to income generating activities](#).
- FFS provide opportunities for learning by doing.
- It teaches basic agricultural and management skills that make farmers experts in their own farms.
- FFS is a forum where farmers and trainers debate observations, experiences and present new information from outside the community.

Essential elements of a FFS are:

- The group comprises of individuals [\(25 to 30 in number\)](#) who have a common interest, forming the core of a Farmer Field School.
- The FFS tends to strengthen existing groups or may lead to the formation of new groups
- The field is the teacher. It provides most of the training materials like plants, pests and other facilities.
- The facilitator is a technically competent person who leads group members through the hands-on exercises.

- The curriculum follows the natural cycle of the subject, [be it crop, animal, or soil](#). This allows all aspects of the subject to be covered in parallel with what is happening in the FFS field.

Even though the [saving aspect is part of the FFS approach, the Village Savings and Loan Associations \(VSLA\) practice provides more detailed methods and techniques for a better anchorage within the project implementation](#). The VSLA, implemented for a first time in Niger in 1991 by CARE International, have been fully integrated into the beforehand mentioned FFS setting. The basic principles and key components of the VSLA approach are as follows:

- The savings consist of regular cash deposits contributed by all members at each meeting and these savings form the loan capital.
- The loans start off with very small amounts but grow according to the rate at which the savings grow.
- The size of the Association is not more than 30.
- The savings deposits constitute the fund.
- VSLA loans are given out to members only.
- VSLA are autonomous and self-managing.
- In a VSLA there is no tolerance to arrears.
- VSLA members meet and save regularly.
- No outside funding is provided to the group.
- The VSLA Cycle runs for a minimum of 8 month to a max of 12 month

The VSLA cycle is related to the agricultural growth cycle. At the end of this period the accumulated savings, interest earned and other earnings are shared amongst the members in proportion to the amount that each member has saved throughout the cycle. Then, a new cycle starts.

Even though there are many scheduled activities mentioned in the logical framework of this project, most of them have been already completed or are almost accomplished. The quality of project executions, implemented so far, fully meets all particular quality requirements.

4. Efficiency

The practised FFS extension approach in Lira, combined with VSLA, provides a continuous attendance of each FFS group throughout the entire project cycle. Each of the seven extension officers meets with each of his/her particular ten groups once a week. From a cost-benefit ratio perspective a very high benefit faces rather modest expenditures.

The initially eleven school buildings planned for rehabilitation have been replaced by the construction of five new buildings, including rain water cisterns and latrines. Site visits clearly showed the weak brick-laid foundations of the old masonries, scheduled for rehabilitation, as completely inappropriate to carry rehabilitated walls without cracking in the long run

The still outstanding activities under result 3 (*Supply of drinking water is increased and the hygienic situation of the target groups is improved*), are under implementation. An assessment study for rehabilitation of water pumps has been finalised and tender documents for identifying service providers for rehabilitation have been prepared.

From a global perspective, the project applies an accurate monitoring. Data and information gained from this setup are efficiently and systematically used for updating and re-adjustment of project management. Sometimes monitoring efforts even appear more complex than necessary due to the Millennium Villages' monitoring rules of Welthungerhilfe head office.

5. Outcomes and impacts

Each FFS received six bulls and three ox-ploughs for land opening. During monitoring it was found that at least 24 out of 30 farmer field school members used bulls for land opening. An average of 1.5 acres (2.5 acres comply with one hectare) was opened per those households, using bulls. In addition to the bulls, all recipient groups received assorted veterinary tools and drugs. The following table provides an overview of distributed seeds and seedlings to FFS groups.

Distribution of Seeds and Seedlings as of August 2012						
Sub country	No of FFS	No of beneficiaries	Soya Beans kg 2011/2012	Peanuts kg	Citrus seedlings (Valencia) 2012	*Vegetables tins 2011/2012
Agweng	15	450	9,006	0	4,500	30
Aromo	10	300	6,662	0	3,000	20
Ogur	15	450	8,514	0	4,500	30
Adwari	20	600	5,760	7,200	6,000	40
Okwang	11	336	3,432	4,032	3,300	22
Total	71	2136	33,374	11,232	21,300	142

Source: M&E Department Welthungerhilfe Lira, September 2012

Joint vegetable growing in FFS gardens is complemented by household based construction of energy saving cook stoves, including trainings in appropriate cooking. In each of the 71 FFS, five of the most dynamic farmers were supported with citrus seedlings. Each member received 60 plants. The tree seedlings were distributed at individual household level after verification of sufficient available land and its proper ownership, in order to avoid future land conflicts between land users and land owners that could lead to destructions of the tree plots.

Per FFS group a VSLA has been installed. At the very end of an agricultural growth cycle, accumulated savings and interest earnings are shared amongst the members in proportion to the amount that each member had saved throughout the year. After the first round with the VSLA, redistributed deposits of the cash boxes amounted, including interest earnings, to approximately 120 to 130 % of the amounts; contributed weekly by the FFS members.

High quality school buildings offer working space for hundreds of pupils and their teachers. They are completed by water cisterns and latrines. However, appropriate usage of sanitary installations is sometimes still poor, depending on the personality of the respective headmaster.

Besides already finalised cash for work activities, the mechanical parts of road construction are still delayed due to problems with the contractor. Even though the total distance of the rehabilitated road does not exceed 7.5 kilometres, this shortcut is connecting two main roads, thus connecting the agricultural production sites in between.

Considering the micro level, the organisational capacities of the FFS groups have been significantly strengthened. The project UGA 1032 is directly contributing to the following millennium development goals:

- Number 1, “Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger”;
- Number 3, “Promote gender equality and empower women”, and
- Number 7, “Ensure environmental sustainability”.

6. Sustainability

The project provided all necessary preconditions for a self-contained development on different levels. As an integral component of the weekly on-the-job trainings in the field, the FFS will establish formal leadership structures for a self-reliant and appropriate steering until the projects end. All visited VSLA groups underlined their willingness for restarting a new round of saving together with the next agricultural growing cycle. Some of them had even completed their second year already.

The project supports that smallholders will be empowered to produce and market their products in sustainable partnerships with the private sector. And, although the project’s concept aims at increasing (cash) cropping, implementation centred on the cross-cutting challenge of environmental degradation and climate change. Practical opportunities to better cope with a changing environment and to sustain it as a source of income are provided within the FFS courses.

The following potential for sustainability is part of the project approach:

- Increasing mechanisation will enlarge cultivable land, thus leading to increased harvesting and subsequent selling of agricultural produce.
- Animal traction is a major source of labour for crop production. At the project’s end available equipment and technical know-how can be used for profit making, even by small scale and landless FFS farmers. They can earn their lives not only through cash crop growing, but as well through “selling” their ploughing services.
- From a mid-term perspective, new jobs in the services sector of ploughing and/or food processing might be generated.
- Farmer groups will have the ability to select the right enterprise and to practice bulk marketing.
- Long term relationships can be built with private agro-processing investors.
- Through increased family incomes targeted households will be able to invest more money in the education of their children and to afford better health care.

7. Most important recommendations

- Working on the basis of a decentralised FFS approach produced impressive results so far and should go on without any changes.
- Also the VSLA component should be intensively kept going until the project's end.
- The applied FFS approach is considered as the most appropriate one at that time. An ongoing project support of the now trained FFS groups could finally strongly facilitate a FFS network to be registered as a cooperative society.
- Experiences made so far clearly showed the importance of agricultural diversification within a more and more cash crop oriented context. Instead of investing in food processing or/and storage facilities now, where a frequent follow-up will stop soon due to the project's end, intensified crop diversification measures seem far more appropriate and are strongly recommended.
- As a result of a rather peaceful evolution in the project region, the budget for Provision for conflict management and resolutions is still unspent. Together with other unspent and only partly spent budget lines it is recommended to plan additional investments in borehole drilling and/or school reconstruction.
- The different sub-counties covered by the project are not at all equal. Especially the ones in Otuke suffer from little rainfall, decreasing soil fertility, and low access to clean drinking water, thus causing increased risks for poverty. Ongoing project support should therefore take aspects of vulnerability into consideration.
- The ongoing employment of a veterinary doctor, who supports the health of 426 distributed bulls, is highly recommended until the project's end.
- Project management through national staff is part of the Welthungerhilfe longer-term strategy. In Lira this could be feasible at a mid-term perspective.
- Intensified WASH activities should be used for improving an appropriate use of latrines and water facilities in schools.
- Looking on the project results achieved so far, in combination with the still unexploited potentials in the region, intensified efforts for funding of ongoing project activities in the Lira/Otuke region is highly recommended.

8. "Lesson learnt"

The practice of the decentralised FFS approach in Lira and Otuke, including VSLA, should be analysed and put together in a written form at the end, in order to serve as a practitioner's manual for similar Welthungerhilfe projects. The latter could be done through an internship and/or the thesis for a development-related university diploma.