



CONFIDENCE TO CHANGE

Social development in rural Africa





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BACKGROUND:

Placing the focus on people

Social development is the process of bringing about social change through the promotion of a learning attitude, positive self-awareness, and self-leadership; enhancing human relationships, social systems and structures; and increasing the knowledge and skills of people to improve their lives.

IDA MIKISA HADOTO, SEND A COW GENDER AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

In 1998, a group of British dairy farmers sent a planeload of pregnant heifers from their own herds to Uganda, then emerging from a long civil war. The milk provided subsistence farmers with a swift remedy for malnutrition, while the manure enabled them to enrich their depleted lands to grow more food. Training in livestock husbandry and follow-up support ensured that communities were equipped with the skills to benefit in the long term.

It quickly became apparent, however, that, while hugely beneficial, this practical package did not address the multiple causes of poverty. Men assumed ownership of the gift cow, yet did not always share the benefits equitably among the household. While Send a Cow always worked through community groups, not every group functioned effectively or provided members with adequate support. The farmers themselves frequently lacked the confidence and vision needed to gain the maximum benefits from their gift cows.

A significant step to address these issues was taken in 1994, when the Uganda team decided to place livestock with the

woman of the household. This was soon expanded to include other disadvantaged people: for example, disabled men and women, child-headed households, and widows or widowers with several children.

Send a Cow staff, experts in livestock husbandry, recognised their limitations in addressing the needs of such vulnerable people, and in 1997 a Social Development Department was set up. Its aim was and is to work with farmers to improve group cohesion and develop strong, positive groups and individuals. Such work is never viewed in isolation, but always as an essential strand of an integrated approach to development that encompasses organic agriculture; environmental sustainability; and livestock husbandry.

With all these components in place, Send a Cow has been able to expand and adapt its programmes to tackle the barriers to prosperity faced by a range of disadvantaged individuals and communities across sub-Saharan Africa. The Foundation Series is a vital illustration of the lessons learned, and potential ways forward.



INTRODUCTION:

What is the Foundation Series?

The Foundation Series is a collection of research papers introduced to share 20 years of Send a Cow's learning in Africa, and set out the foundations for a best practice approach to agricultural development that has small-scale farmers at its heart.

The series looks at the core components of the Send a Cow programme: social development, sustainable organic agriculture, animal wellbeing and climate proofing. It also illustrates how each of the components is intrinsically linked.

In addition, the series uses evaluations from a number of independent researchers to identify the elements of its programmes that have been responsible for transforming

the lives of so many poor communities in rural Africa – while highlighting the areas that still need to be developed.

Importantly, the series also illustrates how Send a Cow's 'pass-on' system – a system by which livestock and knowledge are shared throughout communities – has resulted in widespread implementation of best practices beyond the communities involved directly in Send a Cow projects. This includes those associated with activities such as animal care, environmental awareness, sustainable food production, and, crucially, gender positive behaviour.

by Martin Long, Head of Programmes, Send a Cow

PASSING ON LEARNING:

Over the past 20 years, Send a Cow has helped thousands of families work their way out of poverty through the provision of livestock, training and advice. Thousands more benefit through the **pass-on system**, by which livestock and knowledge are passed on to others within the community. Bright World Consult recently interviewed farmers in Uganda about this multiplier effect. The research suggested that for every one farmer trained in sustainable organic farming, those practices are then adopted by:

- an average of two children, when leaving the family home to set up on their own
- an average of seven community members, when they see increased productivity on their neighbours' land

Other benefits of Send a Cow's programme rippled informally through the community, such that for each direct beneficiary:

- An average of five people start sharing household chores more equally
- An average of eight families report improved family relations
- An average of nine families are positively influenced to send their daughters to school
- An average of seven people go for voluntary HIV testing and counselling
- An average of 15 people build and use drying racks (simple home hygiene methods)

CONFIDENCE TO CHANGE:

Social development in rural Africa

Poverty is more than low incomes. Poverty is also about vulnerability and marginalisation. Socio-economic issues such as low self-image; gender; social exclusion; unequal allocation of resources and sharing of benefits; violence; lack of access to information; lack of capital; and lack of knowledge and skills all incapacitate people's ability to reduce poverty. The provision of resources such as a cow or credit will not reduce poverty unless the other issues are addressed as well.

IDA MIKISA HADOTO, SEND A COW GENDER AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR, 2009

Poverty has traditionally been understood as the shortage of common effects such as food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water, all of which determine our quality of life. This led to consumption or income-based measures of poverty – classically per capita income levels – and the notion of acute poverty being defined as income of less than \$1 a day.

However, this narrow view has been broadened by Amartya Sen among others who defined poverty eradication as the process of expanding the freedoms that people value and have reason to value.

The United Nations Development Programme, meanwhile, initiated annually the now widely used Human Development Index (HDI), which collates a broad range of non-income dimensions of poverty such as access to services and infrastructure, education and health.

And in its 'Voice of the Poor' project in 2000 the World Bank recognized that poor people are also acutely aware of their lack of voice, power, and independence, which combine to subject them to exploitation. Their poverty also leaves them vulnerable to rudeness, humiliation, and inhumane treatment. Poor people speak about the pain brought about by their unavoidable violation of social norms and their inability to maintain cultural identity through participating in traditions, festivals, and rituals, and that this exclusion from aspects of community life can lead to a breakdown of social relations.

Empowerment, safety from violence, the ability to go about without shame, employment quality and psychological and subjective well-being are all ranked by many poor people as valuable aspects of life denied them by their poverty. And more recently the notion of well being has also emerged, defined as both 'doing well; feeling good' and 'doing good; feeling well', bringing out a moral dimension – often bearing a religious expression – that is extremely important to many people.

For 20 years, Send a Cow has been making a contribution to all these aspects of poverty. Through our work providing training in agriculture and animal welfare, coupled with livestock placement, very poor people have been helped to achieve food security, better health and incomes from the sale of surpluses.

Crucially, our focus on social development has also enabled them to transform gender relations within the family; attain status and respect in their communities; and reduce conflict and violence. But it is the combination of the practical support, such as the placement of a cow, and the training and awareness raising in wider social issues that makes both more effective than they would be separately. And such synergies transform lives, as this report shows.

by Martin Geake, Chief Executive, Send a Cow

By changing what they do, people move societies in new directions and they themselves change. Big simple solutions are tempting but full of risks. For most outsiders, the soundest and best way forward is through innumerable small steps and tiny pushes, putting the last first not once but again and again and again. Many small reversals then support each other and together build up towards a greater movement.

ROBERT CHAMBERS, 'RURAL DEVELOPMENT: PUTTING THE LAST FIRST', 1983

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The role of social development

Of all the elements of Send a Cow's work, social development is perhaps the hardest to explain. Self-confidence, self-worth, more cohesive communities – these are intangible concepts. Gender awareness workshops, for example, can seem a nicety, paling into insignificance in comparison to the provision of a cow.

Social development is both a process and a state in which a group of people in a given location, interrelated by several factors, are able to achieve an improved quality of life according to accepted standards. They come to an understanding of who and what they are, as well as what their needs, wishes and priorities are. They accept their responsibility for achieving their goals, and in society in general. They change their attitudes; acquire knowledge and skills; and find finances to support their aims. Social development also entails the implementation and enhancement of measures, systems, structures and processes to promote equality and sustainable social change.

More specifically, its role is to promote:

- **Positive changes of attitude, knowledge and skills.** Poor people are held back by their low expectations, and levels of education and training. Women especially suffer from the low position which they hold in the family and in society.
- **Equity and equality.** Improvement is needed in social systems, processes and structures to promote equity and equality. Consideration must be given to ensure fairer allocation of resources, and to enable people to participate fully in society.
- **Use of own resources.** In particular, this involves natural resource management: integrating crops and livestock into a sustainable system. Some inputs, such as seeds and livestock, are provided to farmers to enable them to utilise their skills to the maximum. Farmers are encouraged to look within themselves, rather than rely on external aid.
- **Participation in decision-making.** This applies at household, group and community level. Farmers should be able to have their say, and contribute to the successful running of the household and the community group.
- **Cohesive and sustainable groups,** capable of planning, implementing and managing the project as well as other development activities. Groups are also supported to articulate, advocate and work for their rights and those of others.
- **Self-worth and dignity.** Farmers should develop a sense of who they are, and what they can achieve. They should be able to make choices about their lives, be heard, and engage in society in a productive way. They should be capable of bringing about change by influencing and supporting others in their home, their group, their community and, ultimately, their country.

This report brings together several evaluations of Send a Cow's projects and shows that its work has tangible, measurable impacts on those social elements of poverty that the development community is increasingly appreciating are important to very poor people. It is enabling partner farmers to build happier families; make financial plans; improve their health and that of their children; increase education levels; build better houses; move towards food security; and influence their wider community.

Much remains to be done in all those areas. Yet just 12 years after Send a Cow introduced a formal social development function to its work, it is having a considerable impact on the lives of some very poor individuals and families. More and more, those people are in turn making a mark on their wider community, contributing to social change at national levels.

The report does not seek to separate out Send a Cow's social development function from other elements of its programmes. Rather, it demonstrates that agricultural interventions are far more effective and sustainable when coupled with social development, while social change can be brought about when coupled with a programme of practical support.

It is these synergies that are proving so powerful.

By Ida Mikisa Hadoto, Send a Cow Gender and Social Development Coordinator



A ROLE MODEL:

Building the foundations

A harsh landscape

Over 70% of the population of Africa are subsistence farmers, dependent on what they can grow from their land for survival. For centuries they successfully farmed this land. However, factors such as war, disease, population growth and, increasingly, climate change are making this ever more difficult.

Plots are getting smaller and in many areas soils have seriously deteriorated. Deforestation, over-farming and the use of chemical fertilisers, which were once actively encouraged by governments and development agencies, are all to blame – and have resulted in reinforcing the levels of poverty experienced by rural communities.

Furthermore, parents often die before they have passed on their age-old knowledge to their children. HIV/AIDS, in particular, is debilitating the economically active generation – adults who would normally be bringing up children and caring for the elderly.

Over the past 20 years, Send a Cow has built a best practice model of development that addresses the issues head on. The following outlines the work that Send a Cow does in terms of laying the foundations required to ensure the long-term success of its programmes; and provides an overview of the work it does in ensuring animal wellbeing, introducing sustainable farming systems and, crucially, strengthening vulnerable groups.



Strong communities – a vital resource

Send a Cow works through local community organisations, often but not always women's groups, who have come together to find solutions to the problems they face. Strengthening existing groups and facilitating the formation of new groups is fundamental to the support that Send a Cow provides. Locally recruited members of staff decide which groups to work with and then help them define their own criteria for poverty within their local context – such as lack of land, disability, or widowhood. The group will then decide who among them is in most need of help.

Alongside courses in animal wellbeing, organic farming practices and natural resource management, Send a Cow also provides training in subjects such as gender equality, group dynamics, and HIV/AIDS awareness – as well as ongoing support from qualified staff and peer farmers (farmers who have become trainers themselves). Peer farmers play a vital role in helping Send a Cow enter new regions. Exchange trips are organised whereby promising farmers from the new project area are chosen to travel to existing programmes where they see Send a Cow's work in action, returning to encourage and train their own groups. As peer farmers take an increasingly active role, appropriate support networks are put in place and, over time, communities become self-sufficient with groups managing the process of passing on livestock and knowledge themselves.

Balancing people, livestock and the environment

Animal wellbeing is fundamental to Send a Cow's programmes. All recipients need to build a spacious shelter and grow a crop of fodder grass in preparation for their animal. The shelters protect animals from disease and extreme weather, while ensuring they receive a healthy, well-balanced diet. They also help protect the environment by preventing animals from roaming free, and facilitating the collection of manure and urine – vital ingredients for sustainable farming. By converting these by-products into compost, a natural fertiliser, it is possible for the resulting vegetation to absorb more carbon than is released by the livestock themselves (Preparing to Climate Proof, Send a Cow Foundation Series Report 2008).

This whole process can take as long as 18 months; a big commitment for a poor farmer. However, for those who have seen Send a Cow projects in action and appreciate the impact being part of the programme will have on their lives, it appears to be an investment they are happy to make.

Importantly, the livestock packages Send a Cow provides vary depending on local conditions and recipients' circumstances. For young orphan families, for instance, goats or beehives may be more suitable than a cow. In other countries, improving local livestock might be the answer – such as introducing a village bull scheme by providing a local farmer with a good quality breeding bull.

Send a Cow sources all its livestock in Africa.

A ROLE MODEL:

Send a Cow's social development approach

Send a Cow's social development work is built around five key components:

1. Strong, sustainable groups

Send a Cow focuses on the individual, providing livestock and training at household level – yet places that individual in his or her social context. It works through community-based self-help groups, selected on the basis of need, building their capacity so they can plan, manage and implement the project, and continue its work after funding ceases.

Groups are guided through an envisioning process in which they hone their aims and objectives for the project and other communal activities. Staff work with groups on project design, exploring members' needs and possible solutions (eg the most suitable types of livestock). They are supported in developing a democratic way of functioning, with a clear decision-making process and leadership roles. They also manage a revolving fund. Crucially, they are given extensive support in conflict resolution methods to enable them to function effectively.

2. Values/ Cornerstones

The guiding principles of Send a Cow's work are called the Cornerstones (see box). These 12 values are the same in all the countries where Send a Cow works, and apply to staff and partner groups equally. The 'Passing on the gift' cornerstone, for example, ensures that all provisions of livestock, training and other inputs are effectively 'start-up loans', as farmers pass the equivalent on to others as soon as they have benefited themselves. The 'genuine need and justice' cornerstone guides groups as they decide, with support from Send a Cow staff, which members are the poorest and will therefore be the first – or sometimes the only – members to receive livestock.

3. Attitude, skills and knowledge development

Through training in Cornerstones and group development work, an individual gains in confidence, develops a vision of a more prosperous future, and starts to challenge the personal barriers to success. This change of attitude is then coupled with training and education in several key areas. Much of this is practical training in livestock husbandry, sustainable organic agriculture, and environmental protection techniques, covered in other papers in the Foundation Series. Workshops and follow-up training are also provided to enable groups to manage and improve their income and livelihoods: in record-keeping; accountability; business skills; and savings and credit. Groups also cover topics such as family planning, home hygiene, HIV/AIDS awareness and nutrition; and, crucially, gender awareness.

4. Best use of resources

Key to Send a Cow's approach is the principle of maximising existing resources. In agricultural terms, this entails integrating crops and livestock into a sustainable system. In social development terms, it entails utilising an individual's skills, ideas, vision, knowledge and drive to build a more prosperous future. Families and communities learn how to pool their resources and work more closely to achieve common goals. While Send a Cow provides some inputs where these are lacking, such as livestock, seeds and tools, the emphasis is on looking within oneself and one's community for solutions to poverty rather than relying on external aid.

5. Holistic development

Poverty is multifaceted, and so is Send a Cow's approach. It comprises sustainable organic agriculture, livestock husbandry, environmental protection, and social development. All these components are essential for farmers to gain the maximum benefit from Send a Cow's work, and create new synergies. Becoming the owner of a valuable animal such as a cow is a huge boost to the self-esteem of a poor farmer; while the passing on of the livestock – converting the original recipient farmer into a donor – is the occasion for great communal celebrations, providing further motivation for groups and transforming social standing and self-worth.

SEND A COW'S CORNERSTONES

- Passing on the Gifts
- Accountability
- Sharing and Caring
- Sustainability and Self-reliance
- Integrated Animal Management
- Nutrition and Income
- Genuine Need and Justice
- Gender and Family Focus
- Improving the Environment
- Full Participation
- Training and Education
- Spirituality



The 12 Cornerstones of Send a Cow and its partner Heifer International, as viewed by the Tigwirizane Women's Beekeeping Project in Zambia.

RESEARCH:

The impacts

Independent evaluation, commissioned over many years across all programmes, demonstrates that the social impacts of Send a Cow's work are far-reaching and wide-ranging. They overlap with economic benefits, and encompass health, housing, education, food security, stronger communities, and better family relations.

Underlying all these are greater self-confidence and respect from others. Improving one's skills, playing a role in one's community, taking charge of one's own future and, in most cases, becoming the owner of a major asset such as a dairy cow all contribute to a greater sense of self-esteem, and a rise in social standing.

The cow is my first personal property. She gave us a reason to live and be active. Everyone in the household got involved in cleaning and feeding her. When we started getting and selling the milk, life became better... We bought better food and paid for school fees. We are no longer fearful, and loneliness has disappeared from our home.

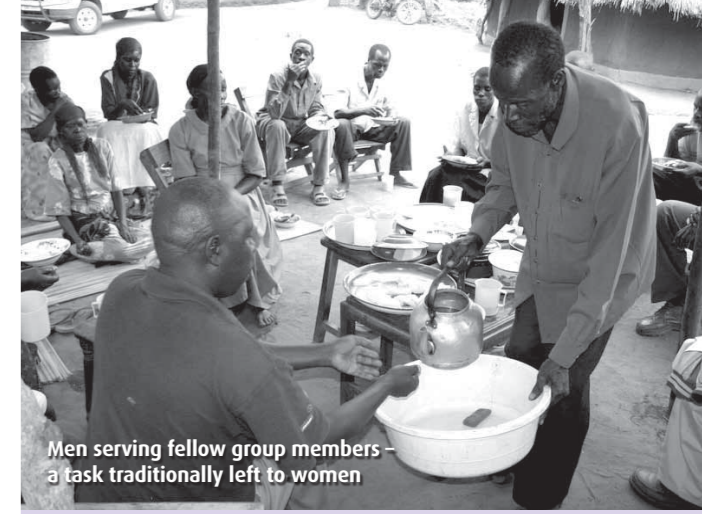
MRS NZAMUGURINYANA, GENOCIDE WIDOW, RWANDA

Confident and respected individuals are aware of their rightful place in their family and their community. They can resist the stigma of being female, disabled, HIV+, or simply poor. They can envisage a better future, make plans to achieve it, and effect the changes necessary. They can utilise their natural resources and newly-acquired skills to manage their own development, and support others in their families and communities to do the same. They can assess choices about available opportunities; articulate their opinions; and influence decision-making in the home, the farmers' group, and even, ultimately, in the wider community.

100% of those in Rwanda reported a lot of respect and esteem from their community as they were relatively better off than farmers who did not receive any livestock. (PCSAP)

Women felt more confident, loved, appreciated, supported, respected and valued. (NUSEP)

65% of those who received dairy cattle felt more empowered. (TZLR)



Men serving fellow group members a task traditionally left to women

This section brings together findings from several key evaluations of Send a Cow's work.

The Great Lakes Programme Evaluation Report 2001-2004 (GLP). This was conducted by independent consultants working closely with Send a Cow Uganda and Send a Cow Rwanda staff, for Comic Relief's Children's Promise fund. The programme targeted child-headed households, orphans living with relatives, and widows struggling to care for children.

The Northern Uganda Stockaid Extension Programme Mid-Term Evaluation Review 2006 (NUSEP). Conducted by an independent consultant working with Send a Cow Uganda, for Comic Relief. The review focused on the impact of the programme on gender equality and women's status.

The Impact Study of Farmers' Associations: AWA Masaka and BMW Iganga, Uganda 2006 (AWA BMW). Conducted by independent consultants for Send a Cow UK and Send a Cow Uganda. The farmers' associations are based in two different areas of Uganda, and comprise mainly women.

The Sustainable Organic Agriculture and Social Development Assessment, Send a Cow/ Heifer Kenya Western Region, 2007 (SOA/SD). Carried out by Send a Cow UK.

The Post-Conflict Sustainable Agriculture Programme Impact Assessment, 2008 (PCSAP). Carried out by independent consultants for Send a Cow UK to examine programmes in Rwanda and northern Uganda funded by the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

The Sustainable Agriculture for People with Disabilities Programme Evaluation Report 2008 (SAPED). Carried out by independent consultants for Send a Cow Uganda. The main focus of the project, funded by Comic Relief, was to work with disabled people to improve their livelihoods and support their participation in mainstream activities.

The Tanzania and Zambia Learning Review. (TZLR). An external evaluation, carried out for Send a Cow, of the first four years of work in these countries.

Send a Cow Lesotho Evaluation Report (LE). An external evaluation of all aspects of the programme, conducted in 2008.

FAMILY RELATIONS

As the material benefits of the projects accrue, so the lessons of gender awareness take root. Women gain new respect from their families as they prove themselves capable of keeping a valuable animal and earning an income for the household. Men, who may have initially opposed their wives' involvement in community groups, often report they stay away from home less as they no longer face a hungry family there. Their own burdens are lifted as they discover that their wives are capable of sharing decision-making and making practical contributions to a more prosperous future. Men and boys begin sharing chores around the home in order to free up women's time for farming. Some women report that domestic violence decreases; others say simply: "There is more love in our home." Child heads of household and disabled people report similar improvements in family harmony.

70% of women say that decision-making is now shared by all members of the household. Benefits are shared by all in 73% of cases, and labour in 69% (NUSEP).

90% of women now go to meetings and farmer exchange visits, whereas previously they did not travel far from their homes (NUSEP).

85% of women reported their relationships with their spouses were better than before the project (PCSAP).

Farmers say they place trust in those children who are honest, rather than simply in boys over girls (SOA/SD).

Levels of drinking have been reduced due to improved family relations and an increased sense of purpose. (NUSEP and TLZR).



FINANCIAL PLANNING

With a valuable asset such as a cow, plus increased income-generating ability, farmers acquire a measure of financial freedom. Generally, this income is at first spent on immediate needs. However, Send a Cow also provides training in how savings and credit can cushion farmers against future shocks and enable them to invest in income-generating activities. While access to financial services is severely limited for individuals, all community groups set up bank accounts, and members pay into revolving funds to cover the costs of communal enterprises. They can also apply to these for individual loans, e.g. to build a cow shelter. Group members are trained in book-keeping to keep track of the revolving fund, and to monitor their own growing finances. With income secured, farmers begin to have choices. They are encouraged to diversify and given training in basic business skills. They can invest in income-generating activities, and put their entrepreneurial spirit and skills to use. Their status and sense of purpose thus increases.

Some 57% of women now share decision-making about household income, against 18% before the project (TLZR).

A minority of farmers now have bank accounts in their own name – between 5% (NUSEP) and 22% (PCSAP).

91% of community groups keep a ledger book to record all financial transactions (PCSAP).

87% of farmers said their economic status had greatly improved. Even those who said their income had not increased very much report having more money, as they have learned how to manage it better (NUSEP).

HEALTH

Health topics are core to Send a Cow's training. All trainees learn the importance of animal protein and vegetables to health, and increased access to milk, eggs, vegetables and income gives them the means to implement that knowledge fully. Improvements in health are rapid. Home hygiene standards also rise, as farmers set up latrines and simple handwashers called 'tip-taps'; and drying racks (pictured). Farmers also learn how to make fuel-saving stoves that reduce smoke in the home which causes some 1.6 million deaths a year in the developing world, according to the UN. Such improvements in health often lead to a reduction in medical bills. For others, though, increased income enables them to invest in their health: several groups in western Kenya, for example, are now able to afford transport to their local clinics to obtain anti-retroviral medication.

96% of farmers report an improvement in their diet, with 82% of all respondents describing that improvement as good or significant (NUSEP).

81% of farmers set up a vegetable garden near their homes (PCSAP).

The number of farmers spending large amounts of money on medical expenses dropped from 47 to 24 (NUSEP).



EDUCATION

School fees and expenses are invariably among the very first costs that farmers meet with their new income, illustrating the widespread recognition of education as a route out of poverty. Secondary school fees are a particular priority – and whereas traditionally families might have prioritised boys over girls, now they report treating both more equally. Furthermore, by sharing household chores between boys and girls, parents free up their daughters' time for homework.

Many adults are also inspired to seek education for themselves: learning to read, or acquiring a marketable skill such as tailoring. For many, though, Send a Cow's own training is a transformative experience, enabling them to discover their own capabilities. The best farmers are selected by their groups to become peer farmers, responsible for training new Send a Cow groups in sustainable farming methods, social development and livestock management. Becoming a peer farmer is a source of great pride. It is also a very effective teaching method, as new groups can see the organic farming methods in action, and witness the impact that they have had on the livelihood of their teacher.

Farmers believe that generally education is for both boys and girls – but some would still send boys rather than girls to school if they had to choose (SOA/SD).

66% of farmers spend some of their new income on school uniforms (PCSAP).

Secondary education – for girls as well as boys – is the second highest spending priority for farmers after food (NUSEP).

25% of farmers in Masaka cite education and training as the biggest single benefit of the project; 8% cite owning an animal. In Iganga, 40% cite owning an animal, and just 8% training and education (AWA/BMW).

HOUSING

Many farmers make improving their homes a priority. By replacing thatched roofs with metal ones, or building a permanent home with brick rather than mud walls, farmers increase their families' security, standard of living, and wellbeing. Many enlarge their homes, often creating separate sleeping quarters for boys, girls and parents; thus allowing a measure of privacy. Lessons in home hygiene also motivate farmers to improve their kitchens and latrines. They frequently also buy basic furniture, particularly mattresses and bedding, to create a more comfortable home environment. This also reflects the fact that women, who spend more of their time at home, are now making choices about how to spend income.

With improved housing comes increased social status in the community. Families often report they now feel able to welcome guests to their homes – and as one Lusoga proverb states, "A family with no guests is not a proper family".

50% of farmers spend some of their income on building better homes. The same proportion buy better bedding (PSCAP).

Many women feel able to receive and entertain visitors in their homes – a sign of increased status and respect (NUSEP).

Children receive many more visitors than before the project, and therefore feel less isolated (GLP).

Socially, I used to be very low. I was idle and lost. Since joining my group, my status has risen. Now I have realised I can do things for myself. Our family is happier and there is a lot of love in our home. When I go out, my husband stays at home and takes care of the children.

MARY OMONDI, KENYA

STRONGER COMMUNITIES

I have improved a lot. The main thing I have learned so far is that I can now feed myself. I sell some of my vegetables, and I now have the means of making some money. For 57 years I've been struggling – but this year, I'm turning the corner. I don't have to wait for anybody. I'm now independent. MALEBOHANG SENOKO, LESOTHO

Cohesive, supported groups can achieve an enormous amount. They are involved in every element of Send a Cow's projects, such as monitoring and evaluating progress, arranging veterinary care, managing and accounting for revolving funds, and, often, marketing milk and vegetables. Send a Cow's aim is that all groups will, with time, become self-sufficient, capable of running the projects and managing the pass-on process themselves.

As well as their Send a Cow project activities, many groups run their own initiatives. Some, for example, contribute to the care of orphans in their community. Others have communal income-generating activities such as making handicrafts. While Send a Cow is not directly responsible for these, such initiatives are often prompted or furthered by its work.

Send a Cow also supports groups to negotiate and lobby regional authorities. Such work is still nascent, yet some more mature groups have already achieved notable successes. Many individuals build on the leadership experience acquired in their group, and take on roles in wider community organisations, such as becoming representatives on district councils. In this way, the voices of women, disabled people and other marginalised groups are increasingly being heard at a regional level.

Children lobbied local government for gum poles for shed construction, and for a water supply, and take exploitation and land rights issues to local government for resolution. Three women from one group were elected as local councillors. (GLP)

76% of farmers reported improved relationships with their neighbours (GLP)

Women's influence rose by between 54 and 98%. They feel their status is "noticeably very much higher". (AWA/ BMW)

75-79% of farmers hold positions of responsibility in community organisations (AWA/BMW)

The Nampanga People with Disabilities group successfully lobbied their district authority for three wheelchairs. (SAPED)

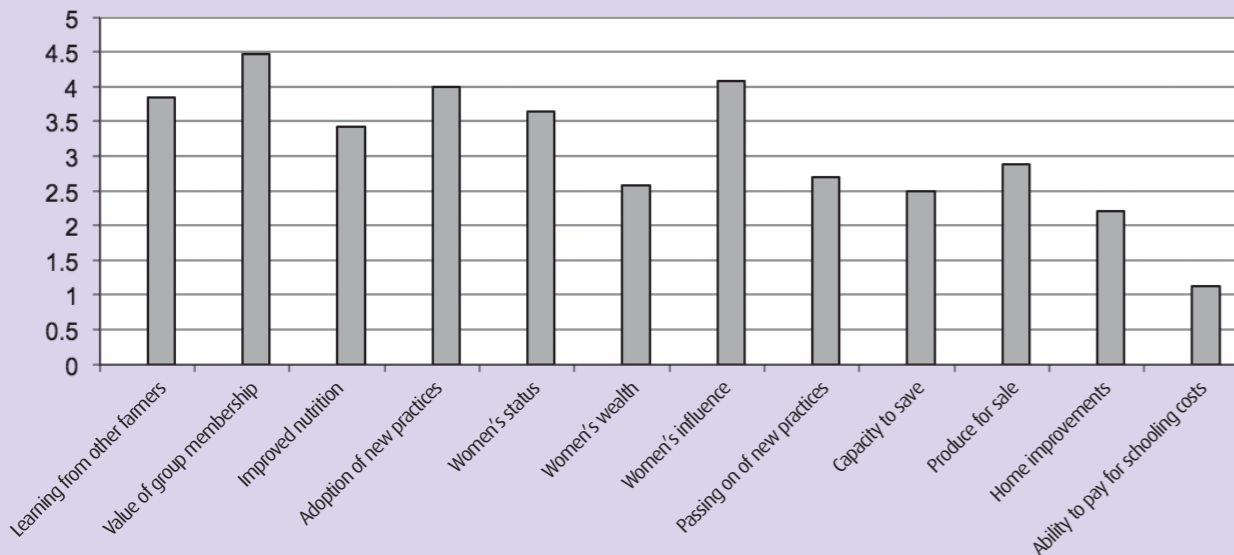
In Lesotho, keyhole gardens have been widely praised by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation and the Government, and adopted by non-governmental organisations. Many farmers also report their neighbours have copied the technique. (LE)

How much have farmers' lives improved?

Based on responses from farmers in Send a Cow projects in two areas of Uganda (AWA/ BMW)

Extent of perceived improvement (average mean response)

5 = considerable improvement
0 = little/no improvement



RESEARCH:

'Now people respect me'

"Before joining Send a Cow, I could not stand in front of my group to say anything as I was too shy. Now if I keep quiet, people ask me whether I am feeling sick!"

Aminah Nalweyiso's self-esteem after she lost her job as a cashier was at rock bottom. Her polygamous marriage collapsed under the strain, leaving her a single mother of five children. She had to cope with stigma, loneliness, and economic hardship.

"My life became very hard. I had trouble feeding my children, and I could not afford to send them all to school at once."

Despite her estranged husband's disapproval, Aminah joined her local self-help group, Bulimuttaka, which is supported by Send a Cow, and "entrusted all my hopes into the project". With training from Send a Cow, Aminah learned that she did not, as she had thought, need commercial fertilisers to make her family's three acres of land productive. She also overcame her own timidity around livestock after receiving her cow, Hope, in 1999.

"I grew up in a home where we never kept any cows. Whenever I came across one, I would just run away through the bush as I was scared of them! Now I like animals, and have acquired skills in handling them."

Aminah began to produce enough food to feed her family, as well as a surplus for sale. She topped up that income with a loan from her group, and invested in poultry farming. She even opened up a savings account.

Home life for Aminah and her family has since changed dramatically. She has been able to afford improvements to their housing, and to educate all her children – including the girls – to secondary level and beyond.

Relations with her estranged husband have also improved. Having discovered her capacity for independence Aminah has decided not to live with him again, but he is involved in family life once more. He now respects her involvement in Bulimuttaka.

"My family is happier after joining Send a Cow, as our social life has greatly improved due to improved household income, improved education, and better nutrition," she says.

"There is a better working relationship at home. All members of the family are involved in decision making. We no longer have gender-specific chores – my daughters and I help with milking, which is traditionally done by men, and it is no longer a surprise to find my sons in the kitchen preparing meals for the family."

Outside the home, Aminah is an enthusiastic member of her group. Bulimuttaka has set up a community savings scheme, which provides loans to members so they can set up new enterprises. The group is in the process of forming a cooperative to sell milk to the Masaka Dairy Development Organisation.



Aminah has also become a peer farmer, training others in the sustainable agricultural skills that she uses herself.

"Before joining Send a Cow, I used to concern myself only with my family. After training in values and cornerstones, my attitude has greatly changed towards sharing and caring about others in need."

Aminah is now becoming a person of some standing in her wider community. She is a representative on several local government bodies, including the sub-county Land Committee and its HIV/AIDS Task Force Committee. She even carries out outreach work for the authority, visiting failing groups to share with them the lessons of Bulimuttaka's success.

In the community, people respect me; they look at me as a role model.

AMINAH NALWEYISO



CONCLUSION:

Can farming change society?

When people are very poor they may not be able to get to the election centre, or even see the point of voting because they lack respect for themselves, they think that their voice is not important. But when a group like Send a Cow works with people it can give them a livelihood and they get that self-respect back. They feel like they have a say again, that they are a part of society.

DR TOMASI KIRYAPAWO, HEAD OF UGANDA ELECTORAL COMMISSION, 20TH ANNIVERSARY REPORT, SEND A COW 2008

All too often, international development work is pigeonholed into that which provides practical assistance to those in need, or that which encourages social change. The former is criticised for failing to tackle the root causes of poverty; the latter for its political nature and intangibility.

Send a Cow's programmes defy such simplistic categorisation. As this report shows, strong, focused individuals and supportive communities are essential to enable people to move towards food security and sustainable livelihoods. Likewise, a reliable source of food and income provides people with a secure platform from which to effect significant, lasting social change.

Such change is crucial on a personal, household and community group level, and is widespread across Send a Cow's programmes. By introducing a social development aspect to its work in 1997, therefore, Send a Cow effectively secured the success of its livestock and agriculture programmes in the longer term.

Yet the full implications are greater still. Social change takes time, and some groups supported by Send a Cow five or 10 years ago are now beginning to reach their full potential. Many farmers are now reaching beyond their families and community groups. With their livelihoods secure, they are influencing neighbouring villages, other non-governmental organisations, and local authorities. As more and more groups supported by Send a Cow reach maturity, such influence can only grow.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

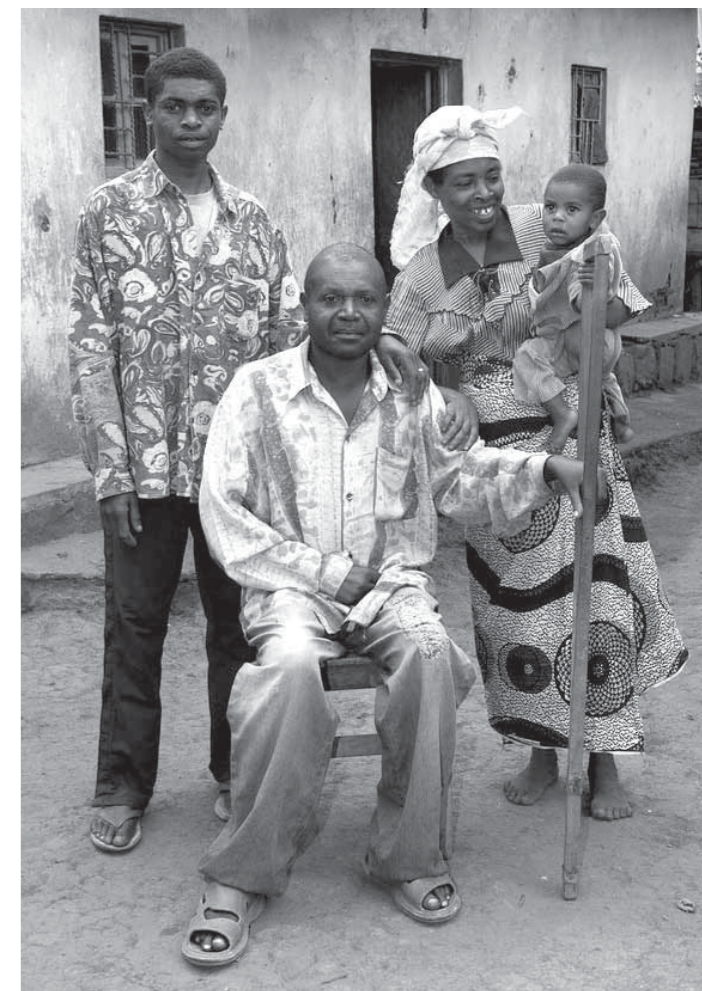
Practical advice

When I visited a Send a Cow project, I was extremely encouraged by the enthusiasm and sense of ownership on the part of the villagers. A lot of projects which have come and gone in Lesotho have tended to fall down because there is a sense of: 'This is not ours; these people are coming and helping us, but it is not our project.' People in Ha Maphathe were very proud of what they had achieved.

PRINCE SEEISO BERENG SEEISO, LESOTHO HIGH COMMISSIONER TO THE UK

Send a Cow recommends that:

- Policy makers should recognise the multi-faceted nature of poverty and invest in programmes that take a holistic approach to poverty alleviation. The distinction between rights-based and service delivery programmes should be rejected as artificial.
- Both men and women must be involved in the process of achieving gender equity. Women and men should be encouraged to include their spouses in training and project activities. However, working with mixed groups does not lead automatically to equity, even when there are more women than men. Women must be given extra support so that their voices are heard, and their practical and strategic needs met.
- Development agencies should set up gender equity projects for younger people, rather than targeting only adults. It is easier to influence people at a younger age.
- The needs of disabled people should be recognised in organisations' programmes and way of thinking. Staff should be given disability awareness training, and a disability policy developed. There is a need for more disabled people to be employed at head offices.
- People must manage their own development. The aim of development workers should be to work with people to build their self-esteem, capacity and confidence so they can break the dependency syndrome.
- Organisations and staff must be prepared to learn and to be flexible. The right attitude is far more important than the right qualifications, which can be gained relatively easily.
- Each development organisation, and each community group, must develop and adopt a shared vision, goal and values. These should be core to their work. Groups must look towards self-reliance; and work with development organisations on realistic, flexible and gradual exit strategies. Communities should gain the skills and confidence to continue their own development after a project ends through advocating for their rights.
- Where more than one development agency is operational in an area, care must be taken to ensure that programmes complement rather than replicate or compete with each other.



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