



Sustainable Organic Agriculture and Social Development Kenya assessment

Send a Cow/ Heifer Kenya Western Region

**Ida Mikisa Hadoto, Send a Cow Gender and Social Development Coordinator
Sheila Taylor, Send a Cow Sustainable Organic Agriculture Coordinator**



SOA and SD Assessment - Kenya

Executive Summary

Send a Cow has been working with Heifer Kenya since 1994 to empower resource poor families by providing livestock and training. Currently over 70 groups of farmers in six districts are supported by this partnership, now known as Send a Cow Heifer Kenya Western Region (SACHKWR).

In August 2007 the International Programme Team of Send a Cow UK sent their Gender and Social Development coordinator (SD), and Sustainable Organic Agriculture (SOA) coordinator for an assessment and support visit lasting for two weeks. This report contains the findings of that visit and recommendations for the way forward.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the visit guided the choice of farmers and groups to be visited. Although an attempt to have random visits was built into the TOR, this was held in tension with the need to see those farmers who had been to the sustainable agriculture training institutions. The review concentrated on assessing successful SOA practices that were in evidence on the farms, and meeting groups and their leaders to discuss training and implementation of SOA and SD. The purpose of this was to then provide recommendations for the most suitable strategies for the next stages of implementation, and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the newly established Social Development department. SACHKWR Staff worked alongside the IPT members during the assessment. The mid-term review report had already recommended some SD strategies: the strengthening of group capacities; mentoring from the International Programme Team(IPT) SD Coordinator, and staff increase and strengthening. In order to meet these goals, a number of exercises have to be carried out, starting with this review.

Thirty four farms were visited to look at SOA practices and implementation; these farmers were from seventeen different groups. Sixteen of these groups were visited and interviewed by the Social Development team and in ten of these information on SOA was also obtained. During the visits field observations, semi-structured interviews, ranking, mapping and group discussions were used. Discussions were also held with staff at Heifer Project International (HPI) National office in Nairobi and the Western Region office in Kakamega.

Sustainable Organic Agriculture

Field visits and implementation of SOA training

Visits to the farmers' homes showed that SOA is being practised in the projects that have received training. Previously some farmers had been sent to training institutes and then were expected to come back and train others in their groups, with follow up and training support from the Project Advisors of SACHKWR. There is a correlation seen in the field between which institution a farmer had been to and how effective they had been in implementing SOA techniques at their farm. Generally farmers trained at St. Jude's were performing best, followed by Manor House and then SACRED Africa.

Some St. Jude's trained farmers were doing particularly well, and a general trend was seen on the visits for the implementation of SOA:

All farmers visited < Farmers trained by an institution < Farmers trained at St. Jude's



St. Jude's was separated out for analysis from the other institutions as farmers sent there were selected to be Peer Farmers.

Farmers' comments

Farmers commented that there was increased productivity of their field crops and vegetables. There were also benefits to the community: milk is available for sale, and the cow farmers provide a market for buying Napier grass. There were some challenges to them implementing SOA, which were mainly attributed to a lack of follow up.

In most of the groups one or two selected farmers had been sent for training to SACRED Africa (Bungoma), Manor House (Kitale) or St. Jude's (Masaka, Uganda). These farmers described the training there and how much of it they had remembered and found useful, as well as the style of learning of their course. Overall, incorporating comments from those who had been to more than one learning institution, St. Jude's had the most favourable reports. Farmers indicated a strong preference for very practical training which St. Jude's provided. Additionally St. Jude's reinforces the learning by using notes, accessible demonstrations and field visits. The effectiveness of this is seen in the better implementation of farmers who were trained there, compared to those trained elsewhere.

Training institutions, training preferences

The Kenyan training institutes were visited by the assessment team. The overall impressions made on the team, and their scores for applicability, approach and training styles agreed with the preferences of the farmers. Kenya Institute for Organic Farming (KIOF) is well resourced and able to train in the communities; Manor House is less able to release staff for this and is concentrating on in-house training using demonstrations. SACRED Africa is currently committed to a programme of higher education and research.

Farmers expressed overall preference for training to be done in the communities so that all farmers get a chance to learn directly from an experienced trainer, and there is not the risk of any 'loss of quality' of information by passing through another farmer; however it was mentioned that to have someone in the group who is available to answer questions is also useful. The ideal type of training is very practical and done on a group member's farm. Farmers agreed that for any individual the most thorough training would be to go away to a dedicated institutional site, but that for the whole group it is more efficient to have someone come to the group members.

Farmers preferred to have SOA training not long before the animal arrived so that they could remember the SOA practices that used animal by-products. Staff preferred to use SOA implementation as part of the assessment of how 'serious' a project farmer is.

Training resources

Following the field work the need for a rapid method of assessing the 'level' of the groups in SOA led to the development of a field tool by the IPT coordinator and local SOA expert. This tool requires field testing.

The need for adequate resources to continue SOA training also led to a visit to Edwina Masalange, a former trainer from St. Jude's now resident in Bungoma. Project Advisors are able to do follow up as they have all received exposure to SOA, and the SOA specialist is well skilled to train and upgrade both staff and farmers in Western Region. Active farmer trainers can also be used for training others, and are of benefit to the communities as the knowledge is then within the group. Further training for the good Farmer Trainers in farmer-to-farmer extension and adult learning will increase their training capacity.

It is recommended that all staff members are trained in participatory field techniques, and in SOA. An assessment of all groups and their training background and implementation level in SOA is needed.



The training resources available include institutions, local trainers and staff. A strategy for future SOA spread in the project area is discussed: the actual strategy will depend on the spread and numbers of groups requiring different training input.

The use of some farmers as trainers will ensure expertise remains within the community. Farmer sub-groups or cells will help to share work-loads for some SOA techniques like compost making, encourage the groups and provide a monitoring framework.

Social Development

The overall impact of the programme is positive and promising with some aspects scoring higher than others.

Effect on beneficiaries

There has been increased farmer knowledge, skills and confidence as evidenced by increased productivity on the farms and consequently, food security and incomes. These have resulted in healthier farmers and their households, ability to pay school fees and gradual accumulation of assets and household items.

Effect on groups

Most of the groups that the IPT met have a strong democratic leadership that inspires commitment of the members to the group and its activities. Most of the members understand the need to support their groups financially and to mobilise resources from within the members for both group and individual activities. All the groups appreciate SACHKWR and value all the benefits they have received from the programme including training. At least three groups have activities that meet community needs.

Gender

Training was carried out and has improved family relationships especially in the sharing of household chores. Most Practical needs have been addressed through training.

Capacity to manage the training

The recruitment of a Social Development Officer is a positive sign. The officer is well trained and has experience in working with groups. His background of micro-finance will greatly enhance farmers' efforts in managing savings and credit scheme. Savings and credit schemes are some of the key elements of sustaining activities of phased out groups.

Areas that need strengthening

Envisioning

Most of the groups seemed to be of the view that the pivotal point for their existence is the cow. Out 19 groups, 17 did not have a collective vision. The group and group activities seem to be directed by their immediate needs. Making the cow the basis for group existence does not promote sustainability because once the cow dies, most of the members drop out of the group. This statement is proven by the facts on the ground from the two groups that were phased out, Ekeru and Esikyaye. In Ekeru all the members who lost the cows have dropped out of the group; in Esikhaye some have dropped out but those continuing to come are hoping for replacements.

Leadership

In about five groups leaders said they are not sure of what to do. They expressed a desire to get more training so they can be more efficient. More training is therefore needed in group



formation, management and diversification of activities plus support in form of follow up in order to ensure that groups are more effective, efficient and sustainable .

Training syllabus

All the Social Development training has been carried out with no guiding syllabus and no common content despite the fact that different people have carried this out for the different groups. Methodology used has been mainly lecture, which does not promote retention of what is taught. Hence failure of farmers to remember what their roles are. Major topics relevant for the sustainability of groups were omitted.



Gender

The programme is yet to address the strategic needs of members. These needs are more pronounced in some communities such as Mt. Elgon area and Luo land than the rest.

Capacity of the Social Development Officer

The social development officer has a lot to cover. The groups are too many for one person to handle. He will definitely need support from colleagues to implement the programme.

Priority areas of Focus

A training syllabus including course content was being developed at the time of this exercise. Goals, objectives and indicators for each topic also need to be developed in consultation with farmers and other trainers.

A training schedule for all topics from the four departments over the life time of the project is required. It should clearly show the process of phase out or exit.

Additional mentoring and support to the Social Development Officer will be needed in some of the areas that are key to the success of the programme such as gender and the overall development of the department.

The team needs more training in participatory methods that will enhance training

There is a need to carry out a gender analysis to establish key issues to be addressed in each community that is supported by the programme