



SEND A COW

NORTHERN UGANDA STOCKAID EXTENSION PROGRAMME (NUSEP)

MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

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NUSEP EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a mid term evaluation report of the Northern Uganda Stockaid Extension Programme (NUSEP) that was implemented by Send a Cow Uganda (SACU) and jointly funded by Comic Relief and Send a Cow UK. The overall purpose of the review was to assess progress against objectives, with particular focus on the status of women and gender equality and equity, and learning lessons to inform the remaining phase of the programme.

The general overall conclusion is that NUSEP programme has been highly effective, generating tangible and replicable impacts at its' mid term stage. Of particular significance were the training components that were repeatedly referred to by respondents as having changed their lives in several ways. Farmers on their part seemed eager and committed to implement what they learned, putting knowledge to work as it were. Consequently diets have improved, incomes increased and gender roles revolutionised. There was excitement, pride and hope among beneficiaries.

Progress against programme objectives

To improve the intervention methods in accordance with the StockAid Evaluation findings

The evaluation recommendations were to improve the quality of livestock, through provision of improved breeds together with breeding and extension services:

- **The programme aimed to introduce improved breed livestock plus exotic breeding stock to increase livestock quality. At the time of the mid-term review the programme had placed 116 crossbred dairy cows, 18 Boer billy goats for breeding and 535 cockerels. The placement of breeding bucks has been slower than planned (target 223) because of the limits on livestock movement, whilst the placement of improved cockerels are on schedule, with the remaining 285 to be placed in the last half of the programme.**
- **To support the provision of semen banks in the programme area and train personnel in AI skills. Two staff members had been trained in AI and provided with AI equipment but the establishment of semen banks has stalled because of the national shortage of liquid nitrogen to facilitate transportation and storage of semen.**
- **To increase follow-up support for farmers. An additional 17 extension workers were employed by NUSEP, taking the total to 23. Of these, 11 are new social workers. The programme has also trained 37 peer farmer trainers to support their group members**

Challenges: The ban on livestock importation, quarantine on livestock movements and the limited access to liquid nitrogen all hampered progress on improving breeds and placement of livestock.

To provide 2,900 households (5,400 individuals) with training and livestock suited to their needs in three years

Livestock "suitability" in the NUSEP project area covers a wide range of functions including means of production (animal traction), source of food in terms of milk, eggs, meat, and increasingly manure for crop production. Livestock ownership is also a sign of prestige, wealth, evokes respect, preparedness and fore planning, and are important for marriage being the most important element in the dowry package. To date 2072 households have benefited, from 153 crossbred cows, 1656 local cows, 1546 goats, 18 breeding bucks, 3588 hens and 535 cockerels. Of these 37 crossbred cows, 293 local cows and 316 goats were pass-on gifts from farmers that had received original livestock gifts from SACU. Giving livestock to women offered opportunities to them that



traditionally were impossible to imagine. As custodians of the most important asset in the household, women can now dialogue with their husbands, own and manage money, buy assets and contribute to decision making in the home and community.

The second aspect of this objective was to train 5400 individuals in the various topics in the curriculum. The training function of the programme emerged as an effective tool towards changing attitudes, increasing knowledge and skills and sustaining good practice. The training function covered three main areas: agriculture, social and livestock. A number of these topics were assessed during the review to determine farmers' perceptions on the usefulness of the training function. All training components were assessed by farmers as extremely useful, very useful or useful. Only one topic, advocacy, was assessed as somewhat useful, basically because farmers did not understand it due to confusion in translation and combining the training with another topic

To date 5,437 farmers commenced training, although not all of these have completed every subject. Direct benefits associated with the training were numerous ranging from improvements in group management, group cohesion, improved diets, shared roles in the home, gender equity, reduced domestic violence, diversification of crops, improved incomes, increased land productivity, increased visibility of women and recognition of them as leaders. The conclusion was that training is the most important factor in adoption of new approaches and subsequent benefits from livestock and organic farming. Farmers valued the training and gained freedom from it to explore options, experiment and put knowledge to work.

To increase crop production by 40% through improved draught power and implementation of organic farming practices in five years

Four main factors seemed to influence crop production: i) Livestock and its boost to organic farming; ii) Diversification of crops; iii) Use of improved seed; and iv) Re-introduction of animal traction. The four factors operated concomitantly towards the overall achievement of this objective. Organic farming, a term used by SACU to refer to a wide range of applied techniques, was instrumental in the improvement of soil productivity and crop husbandry. Testimonies from farmers included major increments in productivity way above 40%, e.g. production moving from 2 basins to 6 sacks of ground nuts and many others reporting a large surplus of vegetables with which to supply market vendors.

Before SACU interventions less than 5% of the respondents grew vegetables, but at the time of review 51% were growing vegetables as a source of food and income. Some had learnt how to grow new crops such as rice, sunflower and bananas (which were once thought to be incompatible with the area) plus other fruit and vegetables. With the support of SACU, farmers accessed improved seed (groundnuts, cassava, and millet), which they multiplied and shared among themselves. Besides this, farmers were also equipped with skills to graft fruit trees and many had orchards. Diversification also supported the integration of crops and increased the value per unit area utilized as most of the vegetables and orchards generated incomes all year round, something farmers were not able to do before from traditional seasonal crops.

Animal traction was particularly important for people living in Soroti, Kumi, Lira and Apac, for land preparation and was directly associated with total acreage under production. 189 households have been supported with local oxen to date, 30 in Kumi and 159 in Soroti. Acreage under cultivation increased from a fraction of an acre using a hand hoe to over 5 acres per household with draught power. Increasingly, hiring out the cattle to others was becoming an important income source as farmers earned 20,000 Uganda Shillings per acre.

The resultant impact from the four factors has been to increase crop production considerably. The household survey results indicated improvements in the nature and productivity of subsistence farming to levels of sustained income way above the target of 40% in about 57% of the respondents' households. This was very significant at this mid-term point for a population that barely survived through the hunger periods a few years back.

To double the household income of participating households in three years

An average of 89% of farmers interviewed in the household surveys said their economic status had greatly improved. Farmers explained that once daily household expenses are provided for, they convert their incomes into other enterprises, especially livestock, and their expenditure patterns change in proportion to income increments. Diversification of income generating activities was both a means, as well as a result, of increased incomes.

There were two main factors that particularly affected changes in income, the duration of support from SACU and the type of support provided. Older partners had more benefits to show than newly recruited groups. However in general terms the beginning point for all groups had been grim. The situation was such that people could hardly afford daily needs like salt, matches or sugar. They slept on mats, without sheets or blankets. Children were out of school, especially secondary level, and those who still attended school hardly had scholastic materials. Food items like cooking oil, milk, meat, and fish were only eaten on feast days, such as Christmas or Independence, and in small amounts. They could only afford to buy second hand clothes. Farmers summed up the situation as having slipped below the conventional subsistence farming that generated surpluses for cash. They barely lived.

What were the changes and the magnitude of change? Firstly, with SACU support, farmers received livestock from which they sold milk, eggs, goats and chickens. This money was used to start other enterprises or invested in more livestock. Secondly the organic farming practices and animal traction yielded bumper harvests that lifted them from below subsistence farming to sustained incomes. They produced and sold vegetables, groundnuts, millet, cassava, fruit, rice and many other crops. Eggs, milk, vegetables and fruit were new income generating activities directly attributed to the programme. For others, new knowledge helped to boost old businesses, such as hotels, bakeries, and trade in small livestock. Farmers were unable to do any of these activities before the programme.

The increased income was also demonstrated by the changes in expenditure. All farmers were more than able to afford salt, matches, sugar, and much more. What they now called basics included cooking oil and milk (for those without cows), meat, fish, rice, paraffin and bread. For most, the biggest change indicated was in investment in better education for their children. Increased income had contributed to improving their diet and purchase of livestock, radios, permanent houses and bicycles. An increasing number of widows were able to raise or buy local cows to pay the dowry for their sons. Many farmers were building up their livestock numbers as means of livelihood security and boosting their resilience levels, and others to target larger markets. In view of the financial constraint people faced before the programme and the level of financial freedom they had at the time of the review, it was evident that incomes had multiplied several times over.

To increase the number of times animal protein is consumed to four times per week in each benefiting households in five years



The change was “big”, most farmers said. The situation before was described as miserable, with long hunger periods, small harvests, low productivity and depleted or non-existent food reserves. People were eating only one meal a day, or in several days, and child malnutrition was higher than the national average. They hardly ever ate meat or fish. The change was big because at the time of the review people were consuming meat, chicken, eggs, milk or fish several days a week! They not only had food reserves, but had surplus to supply markets. From their kitchen gardens they had a wide range of vegetables, and from orchard, fruits – pineapples, oranges, passion fruits, papaya and mangoes. Access to three meals a day was normal for all farmers, besides the fruits snacks.

To conduct action research on the impact of training 500 young people in gender issues and organic farming practices

The purpose of this objective was to create gender awareness among the young people with the view to influence their current relationships with the other gender groups, and in future their households and society at large. A total of 386 youths from Nebbi had been trained in gender, group management, animal husbandry, SAC Cornerstones and organic farming. The youths were being monitored as part of action research, to capture changes in attitudes and practice, which will in turn inform scaling up to other target groups and districts. Some of the youth were already implementing what they had learnt and changes in attitude and practices were beginning to emerge. Eleven youths out of 13 boys interviewed for the review said that they now carry out chores they previously considered to be women’s work including sweeping compounds, cooking, fetching water and washing plates. All said they respected their parents and those of other gender groups. Extending this kind of training to secondary schools was felt to be an important function in citizen education that would equip future farmers with agricultural and life skills.



Assessment of the impact of the programme with regard to the status of women and gender equality and equity

The review focused on the aims of the programme that centre on gender and the status of women. Findings show that significant progress and impact had been achieved with regard to empowerment of women. The major changes were that women felt more confident, loved, appreciated, supported, respected and valued. Specifically, women were more confident in planning and managing group projects and through organic farming their land holdings were more productive. Women expressed more confidence in being able to talk in public, participate in meetings, lead, participate in discussion groups, and decide on spending of cash. Women were elected to leadership positions outside of their groups and were consulted by neighbours, which made them feel respected within the home and community. A total of 1171 women (and many of their husbands) were trained in gender and reported enhanced family cohesion as a direct result of the gender training. Key areas of improvement included reduced conflict in the home, shared roles, shared ownership of resources and joint decision making on assets. Women reported increased love, peace and faithfulness and improved communication. Men were participating in SACU training and women had more freedom to travel; they were trusted to keep and manage household income. The gender training made a huge difference to the lives of women, but there was still a lot of work to do. Clans and extended families still hold power over individual lives and they have a lot to learn and appreciate before they will accept and support the new changes as part of societal norms.

Issues where men are still advantaged over women

A number of issues related to areas where men still dominate over women were listed and indicators proposed. These indicators need to be revisited, together with the current indicators, with community members and with Comic Relief before they are adopted. Areas of gender disparity included the will, boys being preferred to girls, land ownership and access, ownership of children, household leadership, access to decision making, mobility, access to leisure, control and ownership of household assets, access to education and exposure, physical strength and extra-marital affairs. Root causes were identified as a culture that is biased against women, absence of proper pre-marital counseling, women that took pride in their men "taking control", the culture of silence and sons being viewed as insurance for the future and a source of material comfort.

Issues and challenges identified by participating groups

The household survey asked farmers to propose ways in which SACU could improve its delivery. A long list was generated but the most frequently raised issues included: Provide more frequent training workshops; Provide regular farm visits, M&E and supervisions; Provide loans, revolving funds and financial assistance; Give equal and improved livestock; Improved seed; Support towards farm tools and other inputs; Extension services; Cross breeding and Diversification of IGA. The review recognised that responses were not so much about the effectiveness of current services as about farmers need for more of SACU services and the ability of farmers to shoulder their own responsibility. Other needs emerging from focus group discussions and home visits included cows that repeatedly failed to get pregnant, others that miscarried and calves that died.

Key Lessons and Recommendations

Capacity building in terms of training, exchange visits and hands on experiential learning were extremely important to farmers and are central to the adoption of practices and subsequent magnitude of benefits. Particular areas of importance include the design and

delivery, follow up support, regular reflection and learning, refresher courses and targeted capacity building of extension workers.

- More targeting and involvement of men: **More targeting and involving of husbands directly emerge as necessary to sustainability of benefits and growth of enterprises as men can then support and invest in further development.**
- Explore ways of widening scope of the current youth programme: **to provide the youth that are out of school with the “whole” package and consider targeting secondary schools with training.**
- Continued learning and building on lessons learned. **A review participant commented that “what gets monitored gets done”. The review recommends SACU to continue to carefully consider and target capacity building on key impact and progress areas to ensure their success.**
- Staffing: **To enhance their presence as farmers embark on implementing new knowledge; Regular visits to facilitate the much needed reflection and learning by groups; document case studies to draw out lessons to inform the growth, development and evolution of support by SACU; Support to peer farmer trainers; and enhancing staff mobility by exploring a range of options.**
- **Adopt a phased approach to the delivery of livestock packages.** The recommendation is to retain the flexibility of livestock packages, but to develop a process where the whole group is targeted with some form of livestock early on with other livestock delivered subsequently.
- **Reaching more farmers.** The review’s conclusion was that the programme was highly effective and that it should begin fast tracking its delivery to reach more farmers, in particular by identifying alternatives to the AI and semen bank challenges or developing other alternatives to improved breeding and emphasizing pass-on livestock as the programme draws to the end.
- **Review the loan support provided to farmers:** It seems the financial support provided by SACU at the time was not enough to go around all farmers intending to start with livestock.
- **Collaboration with development agencies doing work similar to the programme.** There are further opportunities for collaborating with other development agencies that SACU could take advantage of. However if this route is adopted, care must be taken to check on quality of services, principles followed and partnership implications. SACU should forge partnerships with organisations that complement their support, and who uphold similar support and operational principles.
- **Revisit and strengthen the cornerstones:** As principles they speak to the morals, values and behaviour of groups and individuals, and they facilitate decision making in cases of conflict and benefit sharing.
- **Need for further participatory and action research on gender indicators.** SACU needs to review the current programme indicators with groups and donors to identify those that are most relevant for all stakeholders before including them in the monitoring system.
- Advocacy. **There is a need for SACU and SAC UK to develop an advocacy strategy to inform its position, priorities and practice.**



- Reporting requirements. **SACU and group leaders need to strengthen their monitoring and reporting systems to ensure that information is collected and used to inform programme development and to adhere to reporting obligations**