

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other format. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

| Grant Recipient Details | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Your name | Imran Ejotre |
| Project title | Approaching Conservation through Women Empowerment: Improving Agricultural Practices among Rural Women in West Nile region, Uganda |
| RSG reference | 11163-1 |
| Reporting period | March 2012 to May 2013 |
| Amount of grant | £ 5,415 |
| Your email address | i.ejotre@iuiu.ac.ug / iejotre@gmail.com |
| Date of this report | May 13, 2013 |

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

| Objective | Not achieved | Partially achieved | Fully achieved | Comments |
|--|--------------|--------------------|----------------|---|
| Community mobilisation and needs assessment | | | √ | Baseline survey on needs assessment conducted in seven villages surrounding community forests of Mount Midigo ranges and communities mobilised to embrace group operations. |
| Formation and registration of an umbrella Community Based Organisation | | | √ | An umbrella Community Based Organisation (Oyabaku Women Group) duly formed and registered at district level. This CBO functions as a farmer field school for experience sharing. |
| Improve capacity and skills of local people on new agricultural technologies | | | √ | One hundred and twenty local farmers have been trained with the skills of preparing onion nursery beds, and the whole process of transplanting, weeding, harvesting and storage. Ten field visits by technical officers from relevant government departments and other stakeholders were organised. These created opportunities for farmers to share their experiences, learn from each other and acquire hands-on technical guidance from the visitors. |
| Linkages with vital institutions and government departments | | | √ | We managed to link the CBO to a number of government departments including the District Agricultural Office with extensive network of agricultural extension workers at sub-county, parish and village levels; the District Forest office, Environment Office, and Community Development Office. Through these linkages, our CBO also got linked to the district farmers forum and a number of special government programs for livelihood improvement such as National Agricultural Advisory and Development Services (NAADS), Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF phase II), and Community Demand Driven Development (CDD). With an extensive network, our CBO has been identified by the sub-county as exemplary organisation for piloting new government programmes and a centre for farmer knowledge sharing. |
| Linkages with financial institutions | | √ | | Yumbe district where the project is located does not have established financial institutions. The district only has one commercial bank branch (Stanbic Bank) with two staff that is |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | <p>supposed to serve a population of over 500,000 people. However, there are many mushrooming microcredit institutions trying to reach people to access credits. Like the commercial banks, their limitation is high interest rates and collateral for the loans in addition to introducing deceptive packages to lure people access loans from them. Based on these limitations, our CBO only managed to open an account with government initiated Savings And Credit Cooperative Organisation (SACCO) at sub-county level.</p> |
| Improving access to markets | √ | | <p>We were unable to swiftly provide appropriate market information to our farmers. Due to the remoteness of the place, bad access roads and fluctuating market dynamics, farmers had to keep their produce (onions and ground nuts) for sometime. This presented them with storage problems. Coupled with inadequate post harvest management skills, most of the farmers incurred losses through rotting of the onions and destruction of ground nuts by rats. However, after some months, onions became highly prized locally and farmers sold what was left at good price in the local markets. Improving market information would be great for these farmers.</p> |
| Access to improved seeds and tree seedlings | | √ | <p>I feel this objective was not fully achieved because the targets set in the proposal were not met exactly. For instance, 10,000 trees were targeted to be planted, 5,000 were promised by the district forest officer but only 3,000 were supplied and planted. However, I am confident this objective will be achieved in the sustainability phase of the group after RSG's project lifespan since government departments will continue to supply tree seedlings and other improved seeds to the group on yearly basis. For instance, the group already received improved cassava stalks under the NAADS programme.</p> |
| Extending sensitisation programs to neighbouring villages | √ | | <p>This objective was totally not achieved because we wanted to consolidate our success in the current villages in order to be able to share realistic experiences when extending sensitisations to other neighbouring villages. Plus funds ran short before tangible results from the project started becoming visible.</p> |

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The following were some of the unforeseen challenges that arose during the projection implementation:

- 1) Our project targeted to reach only 50 vulnerable women as beneficiaries of the grant but due to inevitable circumstances and overwhelming demand/interest of the community members in the project, the number of beneficiaries rose to 120 people in all training while the actual beneficiaries in every stage of the project (registered CBO members) was 60 from 50. The design of group formations also changed from five groups of 10 members each constituting the umbrella CBO to 12 groups with membership of five people per group. This was to accommodate men and reduce the size of smaller groups for efficiency in peer supervision.
- 2) Exposure of group leaders for hands-on training by taking them to model farms of Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (ZARDI) did not take place as planned. This was because the amount of planned for this activity was practically not enough plus the minimum number of days required to drill rural group leaders on new agricultural technologies should be a week. Instead, we increased the number of group site visits from five to 10 and facilitated technical people from the ZARDI and relevant district departments to offer on-site training. This proved more advantageous because it gave chance for all the 120 interested community members to attend.
- 3) Due to water scarcity, the onion nursery bed was prepared near an open well whose surrounding soils proved unsuitable for onion nursery. The resulting onion seedlings did were not sufficient for members to plant their prepared fields of one eighth of an acre. In addition, since the nursery bed was jointly prepared to provide for a training ground for all members, the group roster drawn to water and manage the nursery was not strictly followed. This further affected the performance of the nursery. The remedy to the under performance of the onion nursery needed another quick option to sustain members interests in the group. So an alternative crop was identified to be grown alongside the onions. Ground nut (peanut) crop was identified on the recommendation of the group members who knew the seasons of the crops well and part of the RSG was committed to buy groundnut seeds and distributed to the 60 members as alternative crop. This proved right since the outcome cushioned the inadequacies registered from the onion pilot project. For example, whereas the overall output from onions was 23 sacks generating £1250 pounds after selling, the output from the groundnut option was 150 sacks weighing 7500 kg sold at £0.5 per kg generating £3750 when sold in the local markets.

The challenges notwithstanding, lots of lessons were learnt and net improvement in household income was realised.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

The three most important outcomes of my project were:

1. A Community Based Organisation (CBO) in the names of Oyabaku Women Group (literally meaning Non segregative women group) was duly formed and registered at district level under the community development office and also registered with the district NGO forum.

The CBO has an operational account with Midigo Sub-county Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation (SACCO), a government supported rural microcredit organisation.

2. Successful skills/capacity enhancement of 120 rural farmers with the systematic approaches of onion growing and successful piloting of the project despite a few challenges. Members are now using the skills acquired from the series of hands-on training to prepare their own onion nursery beds for the current cropping season. The proceeds that accrued from the sale of onions and groundnut produce as alternative crop have enabled the farmers to buy their own seeds in addition to saving some money for other family demands.
3. Extensive linkages with relevant government departments and special community development programmes. Due to the high level of organisation of the CBO, it has been considered as one of the model farming groups in the district tipped to act as demonstration ground for new government programmes for rural communities in the sub-county. For instance, the group has received £550 under the community demand driven development (CDD) programme for buying more onion seeds; members have been supplied with improved variety of cassava stalk under the NAADS programme, and the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF phase II) is expected to donate the group 2 improved diary cattle under their animal restocking project.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

The communities have been involved in this project right from consultative meetings, identification of the beneficiaries and the formation of the group (including coming up with the name – Oyabaku [non-segregative] women group). Even as the group has male members, the suggestion that the group should carry the tag “women group” was suggested by the male members arguing that most support rendered to communities by NGOs and government programs target women as beneficiaries; so by the group carrying the “women” tag, it stands higher chances of receiving support from government and donors. This also explains the support of men for this RSG project.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Results coming out of this RSG support give one satisfaction and a hope that a lot can be achieved with the minimum of input. The structures created out of this RSG work have big potential to grow, so I am very enthusiastic to continue with a work that has started giving out positive and sustainable results. A few of the objectives were not fully achieved and the objective of replicating the successes of this pilot project to other areas was whole left out, and difficulties were faced in post harvest management, storage and swift marketing of produce. All these need to be harmonised.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

Locally, we have started sharing the results of our work through inviting different stakeholders and other farmer groups in the district to visit our sites and see what we are doing; we have received invitations for workshops and supported our group members to attend these workshops to share our experience.

The other ways we plan to share the results of this work will include:

- Taking media to cover stories of change in livelihoods that has arisen due to our work.
- Presenting the results of our work in stakeholders meetings at the district.

- Sharing the outcomes of our work in external workshops and conferences.
- Publishing the results in peer reviewed journals.
- Plan to design a website for the CBO to continuously update progress of our work and use the social networking sites Facebook, Twitter etc. to reach a wide network of friends and organisations.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The RSG was actually used up in 9 months period as opposed to the 12 months plan in the proposal. The undue delayment of the final project report is based on the fact that unforeseen changes occurred during the project implementation phase yet reporting is tagged on the level of success of each objective including waiting to market the produce which is highly determined by supply and demand. So I had to wait a little longer than the project lifespan to wait for some results to show up before compiling the final report. In a nut shell, it is hard to stick to anticipated plans; money gets diverted to other crucial issues that keep arising and could jeopardise the success of the project and hence money is used faster than planned; but one has to do what is necessary to realise some results which also involves waiting for the results before reporting the level of achievement of the objectives.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

| Item | Budgeted Amount | Actual Amount | Difference | Comments |
|---|-----------------|---------------|------------|---|
| Community mobilisation and needs assessment | £650 | £450 | £200 | Work was done in less days than planned and money saved was to cover impromptu costs |
| Registration of an umbrella Community Based Organisation | £200 | £130 | £70 | Registration process took less than budgeted since the community development office owned the activities drastically reducing the costs. However, bank account was opened with a value of £100 |
| Linkages with vital institutions and government departments | £250 | £850 | £-600 | Linkages made with more than 15 stakeholders who also happened to reach the sites. Whenever we receive visitors, we provide refreshments for all members after sharing experiences |
| Training costs | £3105 | £2770 | £335 | Despite hosting training and increasing the number of field on-site visits for hands-on training by technical persons from five to 10, and members supported to attend workshops where we were invited, the cost was less after ruling out taking group leaders for |

| | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|------|--|
| | | | | training in model farms. |
| Field preparation and planting (buying onion seeds, nursery preparation and buying groundnut seeds as alternative crop to cushion onion failure) | 0 | £1055 | £605 | Money for extension of sensitisation programme and creation of woodlots to other villages was diverted for this activities since that objective was left out |
| Extension of Sensitisation programme and creation of woodlots to other villages | £450 | 0 | £450 | This activity was left out |
| Administration costs | £760 | £600 | £160 | It became necessary to compromise this section to realise other objectives. Camera was not bought, and a second hand laptop was acquired. |
| Total | £5415 | £5415 | 0 | |

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

I would wish to see the following gaps filled and activities implemented in the next steps:

- a) Training of members on post harvest management and storage of produce.
- b) Improving linkages with financial institutions in order to access low interest loans.
- c) Training of members on market information and improving links with external markets.
- d) Explore possibilities of value addition to the produce to fetch higher prices.
- e) Introducing the communities to agro-forestry practices, energy efficient technologies and emerging techniques of climate smart agriculture.
- f) Increased sharing of our experiences in relevant fora and widening the scope of our current activities to neighbouring areas sequentially.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

The story of the formation of the CBO is a brainchild of RSG project. Each time we receive visitors or get invited to attend workshops to share our experience, we give the story of the RSG which lead to these activities. It will continue as long as we exist. As we have started to share our results (after some wait), all materials produced prominently feature the RSG logo. As we grow the formation, we would wish to continue telling the story of our seed support by Rufford Foundation.

11. Any other comments?

I would wish to acknowledge the support rendered to me by Islamic University in Uganda by allowing me take time off to concentrate in the implementation of the RSG. Due thanks to the many government departments in Yumbe district and Midigo sub-county in particular that supported us technically, materially supplying seedlings and for owning the activities on ground.