



SUPPORTING FARMING AS A FAMILY BUSINESS: A GENDER-EQUITABLE APPROACH TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY FOR SMALL HOLDER MAIZE FARMERS IN UGANDA

In the Bugiri district of Uganda, farmers grow maize, sweet potato and beans for home consumption with any surplus of maize production being sold in nearby markets for cash. However, low yields, post-harvest losses and soil degradation limit these farmers' ability to maintain food security throughout the year. Significant improvements could be achieved by upgrading agricultural technical knowledge and collective marketing systems. Furthermore, while both men and women grow maize and other crops on plots they manage independently, the distribution of inputs and labor is unequal, limiting overall increases in productivity. Men often have more access to these resources than women.

Organizing farmers into cooperatives helps to overcome these constraints. Well-functioning cooperatives channel extension services equitably to farmers, creating collective marketing opportunities and providing loans to farmers. However, many cooperatives suffer from poor management, which often creates obstacles for women to participate, and some have been known to default on money owed to farmers. And yet, in places where cooperatives do work, they prove to be efficient at providing farmers with the knowledge and tools needed to increase productivity and enhance marketing efforts.

In response to these issues, Lutheran World Relief (LWR) is working with a newly established cooperative, NAMUBUKA Grains ACE and two of NAMUBUKA's member organizations, NACO Savings and Credit Cooperative

PROJECT DETAILS

TITLE: Supporting Farming as a Family Business: A gender-equitable approach to improving food security for smallholder maize farmers in Busoga, Uganda

DATES: July 2013 – January 2015

DONOR: Food Resource Bank

LOCATION: Busoga, Uganda

(SACCO) and the Kasita Kyowola Omwavu (KKO) Growers' Cooperative Society, to support local maize farmers. LWR is strengthening the capacity of the three organizations to increase farmer incomes and food security. This process is twofold: first, LWR builds NAMUBUKA's institutional capacity. Second, NAMUBUKA, NACO SACCO, and the KKO Grower's Cooperative Society provide agronomic trainings and work with households to develop more gender-equitable ways of increasing productivity.

ESTABLISHING A MEMBER-ORIENTED AND INSTITUTIONALLY-SOUND COOPERATIVE

Farmers can benefit a great deal from membership in cooperative groups but only if those groups operate effectively. NAMUBUKA is a new cooperative and needs capacity development to make its by-laws, membership and

FARMING IN MORE EQUITABLE AND PRODUCTIVE WAYS

Mac and Evelyn are a husband and wife who live in Nabukalu, Uganda. They farm 12 acres. Evelyn used to work as a laborer on Mac's portion of the land but did not have much decision-making power in the household. Mac explained that he kept the money from maize sales to himself and controlled family finances.

Since participating in the FaaFB training, Mac and Evelyn have decided to change their approach to farming. They now share work, produce and income. Together, they developed a business plan for the farm. They both have a say in household finances. Evelyn is especially satisfied with the change. She explains, "[this project] has changed my life as a married woman. Now we do all our farming together... this has brought a sort of love into my husband. Before I was overloaded with work. Now, working together, I am seeing a big change."

Mac agrees that the new division of labor is more productive. They have both attended trainings on improved practices and as a result, are expecting better yields this year. They plan to build some new structures on their land with the extra money that they earn.

constituent groups fair and gender equitable. Many of the systems, including financial systems and warehouse receipt services, are being built with the help of LWR.

Over the past year, NAMUBUKA has established a functioning Board of Directors. It has set up mobile banking systems and created Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). Because post-harvest storage is a big problem for farmers in Bugiri, NAMUBUKA built a 250,000 metric ton warehouse to store members' maize and is currently in the process of obtaining trade permits to allow members to collectively sell the crop. These services, once established, will allow men and women farmers to achieve higher incomes through collective marketing.

ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED CONSTRAINTS IN BUGIRI

According to one stakeholder, women farmers in Bugiri are "overloaded" with work. They spend time working on their own plots where they cultivate sweet potato, beans, cassava and maize, as well as contributing their time and energy to their husbands' maize plots. Women report that this system

is not only tiring but also inefficient. They do not have enough time to produce adequate amounts of food on their own plots of land nor do they have adequate access to inputs and hired labor, which consequently makes their plots less productive than men's.

NAMUBUKA is piloting a new approach to working with men and women in the community to address these constraints. Using a Farming as a Family Business (FaaFB) approach to address unequal power relations in the household, community-based facilitators work with farmers and encourage them to reconsider how women and men allocate responsibilities, land and inputs on farms. According to the original estimates, the project aims to reach 500 households (500 men and 500 women) with the FaaFB activities. As of June 2014, 210 families - 42 percent of the project's original target - had agreed to participate in the FaaFB trainings, which is considered a significant progress for the first year. Additionally, the project overlooked the number of polygamous households in the area so it was incorrect to presume that targeting 500 households would mean reaching an equal number of men and women. As the results below show, many more women are participating in the trainings.

Among the families who have participated in these trainings, some report that men are allocating plots of their land to women and giving women more control of that land. On average, women who used to farm half an acre now report that they have access to two acres. They use their original plot for farming for home consumption while their new plots allow them to grow crops to sell for cash. The most recent progress report indicated that 640 women reported being able to produce more maize on their new plots, which, with the eventual support of marketing groups, they will sell. As part of the FaaFB program, men and women are encouraged to work on each other's plots, allowing women to be responsible for more land while also encouraging men to contribute their labor to women's plot as well as their own. Furthermore, 270 women have testified in community meetings that they feel more empowered as a result of the project. For them, this empowerment means they now sit down with their husbands to discuss how to invest the family's resources, instead of these important decisions being left to the husbands alone.

At the same time, NAMUBUKA and its member organizations are identifying avenues for increasing women's participation. Prior to the project, most women did not belong to cooperatives; while cooperative bylaws did not directly prohibit female participation, women were not actively encouraged



WAISWA'S STORY

Isufu Waiswa, 54, lives in Namayengo Village with his three wives, Nakidodo, Namukoma, and Takuwa Haren. They live on a seven acre plot, which they use to plant maize on. Participating in the FaaFB trainings has enabled Sowed to work in harmony side by side with his wives. He has started to support his wives by giving them one acre of land each. All of the gardens are doing very well and Waiswa, Namayengo and Namusobya anticipate improved productivity and greater incomes.

to join either. Now, 640 women farmers enthusiastically participate in cooperative trainings with the aim of increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions.

INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Farmers in Bugiri have the potential to produce as much as 1,500 kilograms (kgs) of maize per acre but in reality, both men and women produce far less than this: men only produce 550 kg per acre and women only produce 350 kgs per acre.

To improve productivity, NAMUBUKA and its constituent organizations organize farmers into learning clusters. These groups are more efficient for extension workers and farmers alike: extension agents spend less time visiting individual farmers and farmers learn new practices in a more participatory way. Training on improved maize production techniques, land preparation, early planting, weed control and herbicides, and integrated pest and disease management is delivered in this way. NAMUBUKA and its constituent organizations also provide improved seed varieties to their members.

Since the project began, 2,019 farmers in 35 learning groups have adopted improved agronomic practices. Farmers have access to both hybrid and high-grade open pollinated seed varieties that produce yields which are 17 to 20 times greater than those produced from farmer-saved seeds. As a result, projected yield for the 2014 season is at 4,038 tons, well above the baseline yield of 920 tons. This would amount to a 338 percentage increase over the baseline.

ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY AND INCOMES

With increased productivity, families in Bugiri will eventually have sufficient amounts of maize and other crops. At the same time, they will still need support reducing post-harvest losses, which can damage up to 25 percent of harvests. Selling maize for profit is also difficult and according to the baseline study, farmers in Bugiri cannot access markets.

NAMUBUKA's warehouse system will improve farmers' ability to store their crops and improve the prices for their produce. Farmers (268 men and 216 women) have been trained in collective marketing and warehouse receipt systems, representing 160 percent and 173 percent, respectively, of the project targets.

As the partnership between LWR and NAMUBUKA continues, farmers will continue to participate in trainings. They will also begin collective marketing and form VSLA groups. Upcoming data on yields, income and cooperative participation looks promising.

This project is a part of Learning for Gender Integration, an initiative of Lutheran World Relief to ensure that men and women have equal opportunities to benefit from LWR's work. The goal of the initiative is to enable LWR to better contribute to full human flourishing through gender-integrated programming. LGI projects are funded by LWR and the Foods Resource Bank. The initiative is also supported by Cultural Practice, LLC.