

Sabina Fila update on Karamoja Livelihoods and Income Opportunities Project (KLIO)

February 7, 2024

Ritah Kabanyoro provides an overview of ACF-Uganda:

- The Uganda Country office had a great start to the year with full implementation of programming. They are currently conducting an impact assessment across their programs to ensure impact.
- Uganda overall still has floods of refugees coming into the country and is about to hit 6.1 million refugees. 9,000 people came into the country in January alone. Ritah anticipates that the situation will get worse, especially with upcoming elections in South Sudan. This puts a strain on organizations and programming.
 - o There has also been a cholera outbreak in some of the refugee camps, which spreads rapidly in close quarters.
- Regarding the Karamoja region, the food security situation continued to struggle this season, with almost 20% of people in crisis level food security. Climate change has made the planting season harder with unpredictable seasons.
- Karamoja is currently in the harvest season of its first planting season.
- The Karamoja Livelihoods and Income Opportunities Project is progressing really well. Additionally, and because of its successes, the Uganda team has seen increased interest in other donors as well. The French embassy and others are interested in supplementing the project. This will lead to improved resilience and food security.
- Karamoja is the poorest area in Uganda with 60% of the population living under the poverty line. The region has resisted many other attempts at development and improving food security and poverty. The KLIO Project proves that it is possible to improve food security in this area and create behavioral changes that have been thus far resisted.

Robert Okuku delves into the details on the KLIO project (shares presentation):

- Robert provides an overview of the project's successes throughout its first year. The project began with inception meetings, in which it recruited and selected participants, and formed farmer groups. The farmer groups were then trained in improved agricultural production and climate-smart farming methods.
- 341 participants learned how to develop and use organic pesticides using locally available materials, such as cow dung, to prevent crop failure.
- The program supported 390 farmers in planting seeds of green, leafy, and nutrient dense vegetables, such as cowpeas, eggplants, spinach, tomatoes, green peppers, and carrots. So far, the harvest has already seen improved dietary diversity and nutrition, along with income generation. 9 farmer groups earned over 1,000,000 UGX so far.
- The project is facilitating kitchen gardening and OLUM (Optimized Land Use Model), which are climate-smart agricultural methods. 13 farmer groups were trained on using limited land, conserving soil and water, and using various household materials to produce kitchen gardens.
- The farmers have also been taught how to use organic manure and local materials to fertilize their gardens and apply mulch.

- Next, the project also supported six model couple farmers in becoming agents of change. These community members are intended to lead and encourage their peers in participating in the project.
- 200 farmers were trained on pre- and post-harvest handling practices to reduce harvest losses.
- The team was able to acquire an additional 210 acres for block farming this year. 100 acres have already been ploughed. The project plans to plant macadamia trees on this land within the block farming.
- Our teams supported the farmer groups with seven small-scale, solar powered irrigation equipment that support production year-round of vegetables. These irrigation systems help overcome the challenges presented by climate change and dryness.
- Some challenges faced:
 - o Some of the farmers have to travel far distances to the program's activities.
 - o The region faces insecurity due to frequent cattle raids, which impacts the execution of scheduled project activities.
 - o Unpredictable rainfall patterns have disrupted specific crop enterprises reliant on seasonal rainfall calendars.
- Planned activities for the next period:
 - o Procure and distribute seeds to farmers at a cost sharing basis for block farming.
 - o Provide farmers with macadamia and apiary equipment.
 - o Link farmers to microfinance institutions.

Ritah officially invites Sabina to Uganda. Sabina says she hopes that she can come this year.

Sabina and Sophie ask questions following presentations:

- Sabina asks about the fact that there is a lot of investment in the area, but the community has still resisted development or improvements in hunger/poverty. Sabina asks, what is the understanding of why it has been difficult for development to stick in the region. Ritah answers that Karamoja is naturally very difficult because it is the driest area in Uganda. There are also cultural differences they must overcome that affect the ability to make a difference. Until five years ago, people resisted education. A lot of organizations have not considered the cultural values of the area, such as open defecation. Many organizations have tried to change this practice and came into the area as outsiders to tell the community to stop and it is bad. Ritah says that as an organization you must incorporate a knowledge of these values into your programming. Another example is that the community used to only plant during one rainfall season because the other had cultural implications. To overcome challenges like these, our teams work with a local partner/church who promotes the interventions we are conducting and helps us overcome the cultural resistance. Ritah believes that hearing about improved practices from a local leader, like a priest, is more effective in creating behavioral changes than when imposed by an outside organization.
 - o Creating a mindset change in this region is key to overcoming the resistance to development.
 - o Also because of the cattle raids people have been more open to agricultural production and learning from our teams.

- Sophie asks about migrations and why people must migrate far distances to the program. Robert says that this is due to the rainy season and looking for pasture for cattle. People leave and come back to protect their cattle.
- Sophie asks if the program has seen improved health, education, and other indirect impacts. Robert shares that he recently met with a farmer group of 30 households that had harvested and sold onions, tomatoes, eggplants, etc. The group had seen improved nutrition, had enough to eat, and saw increased income, which allowed them to pay for books and other school fees for their children. Additionally, after seeing the income generated, more men wanted to get involved in the programming and were open to our teachings. It has also led to other people establishing their own gardens and using what we teach.
- Sabina asks about the model couples who become agents of change. Is there an incentive program or reward program to involve them? Robert answers that there is not but the couples become go-to community members. They have acquired more knowledge and skills than their peers. They go on to teach other members of their community.
- Sabina asks how many staff are involved in this project. Robert says that we also have staff from Caritas, our partner organization. Action Against Hunger has one staff member that is focused 100% on this program, but there are other staff members who focus part of their time on the project. But they are adding another staff member to focus fully on the project this year.

We wrapped up and say thank you. Ritah again invites Sabina to the field.