

KARAMOJA RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS AND SELF-RELIANCE PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND THE NEXT PHASE VISION

The Karamoja Resilient Livelihoods and Self-Reliance Project (K-ReLIS) is a strategic initiative designed to deepen impact with the 2,640 households across Nakapiripirit, Nabilatuk, and Napak that we have previously supported. Rather than starting anew, K-ReLIS intentionally reinvests in these same families to guide them through the next stage of their journey toward economic self-reliance. This \$300,000, two-year commitment (with a potential \$100,000 third-year extension) evolves our approach from market-linked interventions to a truly market-driven, farmer-centric system. By building directly upon our previous collaborations, we are accelerating the transition from aid dependency to thriving, self-sustaining commercial agriculture.

To ensure these families achieve lasting independence and finally break the cycle of dependency, we have embedded three non-negotiable principles into the K-ReLIS design. First, the project follows a time-bound pathway to autonomy, establishing local systems—such as farmer-led seed enterprises—that can function without external oversight. Second, we require progressive farmer co-investment, beginning at 30 percent and increasing toward majority ownership to cement their role as primary stakeholders. Finally, commercial viability is our ultimate success metric: we measure the profitability and resilience of these farmer-led enterprises 18 months after Action Against Hunger has exited, proving these families have reached a permanent state of self-reliance.

CONTEXT AND THE COMMERCIAL IMPERATIVE

The Karamoja sub-region continues to face deep systemic challenges despite recent improvements in political stability. Data from the 2024 Uganda National Population and Census indicates that Karamoja has the lowest percentage of households engaged in agriculture for economic gain at just 7.2 percent. Conversely, over 90 percent of households farm primarily for home consumption, the highest percentage in the country. While national poverty rates in Uganda have declined significantly, the poverty rate in Karamoja has worsened, rising to 74.2 percent.

Traditional aid has reached its limits in this environment. Communities are often trapped by seed insecurity, where formal systems are absent and nearly 40 percent of available seeds are counterfeit. This forces farmers to rely on poor-quality grain for planting, which leads to low yields and persistent food insecurity. Furthermore, unpredictable weather and stressed ecological systems demand a strategic shift toward moisture-conservation and climate-smart practices. K-ReLIS is designed to capitalize on a growing momentum toward commercialization seen in districts like Nakapiripirit and Napak, where up to 70 percent of certain crops are now being sold rather than consumed. We aim to move these households from subsistence farming to becoming active commercial business partners.



PILLAR 1 – FROM INPUT PROVISION TO SYSTEM BUILDING

The primary barrier to profitability for Karamoja's farmers has long been the lack of reliable, affordable seeds. Instead of continuing the cycle of procuring seeds from external companies, K-ReLIS will invest in establishing farmer-led Quality Declared Seed (QDS) enterprises. This strategic pivot transforms farmers from passive recipients of aid into active owners of their most critical agricultural assets.

Our technical approach involves several key interventions to build this local seed economy. We will establish seed multiplication gardens in collaboration with the National Agricultural Research Organization to source foundation seeds for maize, sorghum, and sunflower. Selected farmer groups will receive intensive training to become certified seed multipliers, producing high-quality, drought-tolerant varieties that are early-maturing and disease-free. These groups will eventually operate as Local Seed Businesses, organizing community seed fairs to provide their neighbors with regular, local access to quality seeds. By the end of the project, our target is for 85 percent of households to see increased crop yields and for 95 percent of the community to be applying advanced, climate-resilient agronomic practices like mulching and organic manuring.

→ STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS:

Establishing Seed Multiplication Gardens. Action Against Hunger will collaborate with the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) to source foundation seeds for Maize, Sorghum, and Sunflower.

Building a Local Seed Economy. Selected farmers will be trained as certified seed multipliers. These groups will produce and supply high-quality, drought-tolerant, and high-yielding seeds to their communities at a cost.

Community Seed Fairs. These events will be organized by farmer groups operating as Local Seed Businesses (LSBs) to bridge the gap in rural access to agro-input dealers.

→ TARGET OUTCOMES:

Increased Productivity. We aim to increase the percentage of households with increased crop yields from a baseline of 65% to 85% by the end of the initiative.

Climate Resilience. 95% of households will apply at least three improved agronomic practices, such as mulching, organic manuring, and water retention.

PILLAR 2 – ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE & MARKET INTEGRATION

K-ReLIS moves away from market-distorting subsidies and instead invests directly in the financial and business capacity of farmers. We have identified high-potential value chains, specifically honey, sunflower, and maize, where immediate returns on investment are achievable. For example, processing 100 kilograms of sunflower seeds into oil can generate a net income of approximately \$74, which is nearly four times the value earned by selling raw seeds at the farm gate. In the honey sector, we will support processing and packaging initiatives that increase the profit margin by at least \$3.50 per liter compared to unprocessed honey.

The engine behind this economic growth is the intensification of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). We will focus heavily on women's economic empowerment by deepening financial literacy and building strong financial track records within these groups. Our goal is to use these established records to broker sustainable linkages between VSLAs and formal financial institutions. This creates a permanent pathway for farmers, particularly women, to access the larger loans necessary for productive investments, risk management, and independent wealth creation.





→ VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT:

Honey. In Phase 1, farmers harvested over 6,000kg of honey. In the "Next Phase," we will support processing and packaging, which increases the margin by at least \$3.50 per liter compared to unprocessed honey.

Sunflower. Processing 100kg of sunflower seeds into oil can generate a net income of approximately \$74, nearly four times the value earned by selling raw seeds at the farm gate.

Maize. We will build capacity in post-harvest handling and aggregation, encouraging co-investment in value-addition equipment like milling and branding.

→ VSLAs ARE THE ENGINE OF GROWTH:

We will intensify support for Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), with a focus on women's economic empowerment. By deepening financial literacy and building strong financial track records, we will broker linkages between these groups and formal financial institutions.

PILLAR 3 – HOLISTIC HOUSEHOLD RESILIENCE

While commercial agriculture is our primary focus, we recognize it is not a viable pathway for every household. To ensure no one is left behind, K-ReLIS integrates a structured alternative livelihood pathway. We will support ultra-poor households in developing non-farm enterprises, such as petty trade or local services, with start-up capital accessed through the VSLA network. We also provide training in improved poultry management, which builds on local chicken ownership to provide both income and essential nutrition for the household.

Resilience also requires a foundation of health and nutrition, as a household cannot be commercially productive while struggling with malnutrition. We utilize the Maternal, Infant, Young Child, and Adolescent Nutrition (MIYCAN) Care Group approach. Through this model, peer mothers and fathers are trained to cascade vital nutrition and hygiene lessons to their neighbors. This is complemented by the promotion of school gardens, which serve as practical learning sites for students and parents to adopt diverse, nutrient-dense food production. We also collaborate with local health facilities to provide integrated community outreaches that include immunization, vitamin supplementation, and nutrition screening in the most hard-to-reach areas.

→ STRATEGIC DIVERSIFICATION:

Non-farm Enterprises. We will support ultra-poor households in developing viable small businesses, such as petty trade and local services, with capital accessed through VSLAs.

Poultry Management. Building on existing local chicken ownership, we will train women in improved poultry management and feed formulation using by-products from sunflower and maize processing.

→ THE FOUNDATION OF RESILIENCE IS NUTRITION & HEALTH:

A household cannot be commercially productive if it is struggling with malnutrition.

MIYCAN (Maternal, Infant, Young Child, and Adolescent Nutrition). We will use a Care Group approach, where "Peer Mothers" and "Peer Fathers" cascade nutrition and hygiene lessons to their neighbors.

School Gardens. These will serve as practical learning sites for students and parents to adopt diverse, nutrient-dense food production.



Integrated Outreaches. Collaborating with local health facilities to provide immunization, vitamin supplementation, and nutrition screening in hard-to-reach areas.

SUSTAINABILITY, EXIT STRATEGY, AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

Sustainability is not an afterthought of K-ReLIS, it is the starting point. The project is designed for permanency through local ownership and the strengthening of community institutions. Our exit strategy revolves around a phased handover of market relationships to the farmer associations we help establish. By the final year of the project, Action Against Hunger will transition from an active facilitator to a monitoring role. We will ensure that farmer associations are operating as independent business entities and that their market linkages with private sector off-takers are stable and profitable.

The project's financial structure is intentionally front-loaded. This allows us to establish the necessary infrastructure and systems in the first year before tapering our support as farmer co-investment increases.

→ THE EXIT STRATEGY:

Our strategy revolves around the phased handover of market relationships to farmer associations. Action Against Hunger will transition from an active facilitator to a monitor, ensuring that:

1. **Farmer Associations** operate as independent business entities.
2. **Market Linkages** with private sector off-takers and agro-input dealers are established and stable.
3. **Local Seed Systems** are certified and self-sustaining through a business model.

→ BUDGET:

Year	Budget	Strategic Focus
1	\$150,000	Establishing seed gardens, training multipliers, and VSLA startup.
2	\$150,000	Value addition, equipment acquisition, and market brokering.
Subtotal (Years 1-2):	\$300,000	Core implementation phase
3 (Extension)	\$100,000	Final certifications, association independence, and formal exit.
Total Potential Investment:	\$400,000	



THANK YOU TO THE FIDINAM INTERNATIONAL CHARITY FOUNDATION!

With the continued partnership of the Fidinam International Charity Foundation, the next phase of K-ReLIS will advance sustainable, farmer-led livelihoods in Karamoja, strengthening commercial agriculture, resilience, and local ownership for lasting impact beyond the project period.

Thank you for your commitment to ending hunger, for everyone, for good.

For more information, please email Tori Sayanlar at tsayanlar@actionagainsthunger.org.