



**ENDLINE EVALUATION REPORT FOR
INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC
AND AWARENESS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT -
ISINGIRO**

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title	Integrated Agricultural, Socioeconomic and Awareness Development Project Isingiro
Project Purpose	The main purpose of the proposed three-year development intervention is to improve living standards and ensure sustainability for farmer households in Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama Sub-Counties in Isingiro District and empower people in the local communities to obtain the services and freedoms they are entitled.
Project Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) By January 2023 (M26) 60 groups comprising a total of 1200 farmer households in 60 villages are operating successfully according to the VIPAT model and are implicating another 1200 nearby households. 2) By June 2023 (M31) 70 SILC groups including a total of 2100 households are providing basic financial services for these households and equipping them with savings and investment opportunities that are adequate for their thriving and sustainability 3) By the end of the three-year project (M36) VIPAT members' civic competence is built to ensure effective demand and supply of quality extension services as well as enjoyment of rights for everybody in their communities.
Goal/Purpose level end of project targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 1,200 households increase income from agriculture by 20% compared with baseline • At least 2,400 smallholder households in 3 target sub-counties linked with agricultural extension service providers • At least 60% of the target 1,200 direct beneficiaries practicing integrated agriculture and diversifying income sources • At least 50% of the target 1,200 household reporting having participated in local level decision making forums; village, parish, sub- country and/or district level.
Implementation Duration	November 2020 to January 2023 (3 years)
Lead Implementing Partner	Mend the Broken Hearts Uganda
Co-Implementing Partner	Isingiro District Local Government
Implementation Sub-counties	Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama
Intervention Area	Livelihoods, Financial Inclusion, Sustainable Agriculture and Human Rights

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report details MBHU's 3 years of intervention activities aimed at improving the living standards and ensure sustainability for farmer households in Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama Sub-Counties in Isingiro District. The project with funding support from Civil Society Fund (CISU) also sought to empower local communities in the target sub-counties to seek and demand for services which they deserve from government. Tusemaidata Consultant Ltd. team prepared the report, according to TORs and agreements specified in its contract with MBHU.

Several people contributed to making this end term evaluation possible from the preliminary and inception phases to data collection and drafting of the report. With profound gratitude, we acknowledge all those whose names we cannot mention. In a special way, Tusemaidata Consultant Ltd. team would like to express their sincere thanks to all those who contributed in one way or another to the success of this evaluation. Sincere thanks to the evaluation participants for finding time and agreeing to offer the information on which this report is based. Their cooperation and insights were essential for the success of this evaluation.

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ABBREVIATION

ASSP	:	Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan
CISU	:	Civil Society in Development
DDP	:	District Development Plan
DLG	:	District Local Government
ED	:	Executive Director
FAO	:	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFS	:	Field Farmers Schools
FGD	:	Focus Group Discussion
FS	:	Field Supervisor
FSD	:	FinScope Development
GBV	:	Gender Based Violence
GOU	:	Government of Uganda
HH	:	Households
IASAD	:	Integrated Agricultural, Socioeconomic and Awareness Development
LLG	:	Lower Local Government
LPO	:	Local Purchase Order
M&E	:	Monitoring and Evaluation
MBHU	:	Mend the Broken Hearts Uganda
NAP	:	National Agriculture Policy
NDP	:	National Development Plan
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
OVI	:	Objectively Verifiable Indicators
PEAP	:	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
RA	:	Research Assistants
SACCO	:	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SILC	:	Savings and Internal Lending Communities
TOR	:	Terms of Reference
UGX	:	Uganda Shillings
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
US\$:	United States Dollars
VIPAT	:	Village Intervention for Participatory Agricultural Transformation
VSLA	:	Village Savings and Loans Associations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of the Final Evaluation of Integrated Agricultural, Socioeconomic and Awareness Development Project Isingiro which was conducted between September and November 2023. The Endline evaluation was commissioned by MBHU and was aimed at documenting evidence on the project's contribution in achieving its intended objectives. The evaluation looked at its relevance, effectiveness, sustainability efficiency, Challenges and lesson learnt. The Evaluation was guided by key evaluation highlighted in the TORs.

Report Details

The Report consists of nine Sections: Section 1 which is the background and introduction that summarizes Organisation MBHU and project details with its objectives and expected results. In addition, this section outlines the purpose of the evaluation and its objectives. Section 2 which is the approach summarizes the approach and Methods used in generating the answers to the evaluation questions. Section 3 summarizes the background characteristics of the respondents including the household respondents. Section 4 is Relevancy, which Presents findings on the relevance of the project to the primary and secondary beneficiaries. Section 5 presents findings on effectiveness of the project; SILC, Agriculture and Livelihoods, VIPAT and Rights awareness. Section 6 covers efficiency of the project. Section 7 highlights sustainability of the project after CISU exit. While Section 8 highlights crosscutting issues, lessons and challenges faced during the course of implementation and, Section 9 cover the conclusions and recommendations respectively based on the Endline findings by the evaluation team. Annex that provides more detail to various components of this report has been attached.

The Survey Design and Methodology

To arrive at the answers to the evaluation questions, Tusemaidata Consultant Ltd. Team used a mixed method approach that entailed both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. In order to collect relevant information and ensure that the evaluation findings fully responded to the purpose of the evaluation, the Team also used triangulation of data generated from the various methods. The latter included the following: (i) Document reviews; (ii) Key informant interviews; (iii) Focus group discussions (FGDs); (iv) surveys of beneficiaries (SILC, VIPAT and Agriculture) and MBHU staff. Gender components were integrated within the Survey Questionnaires; v) Stakeholder Analysis; and (vi) Observations vii) Transect Walk. For the beneficiary surveys, the Team used a random sampling method and purposive sampling.

Findings of Evaluation

Relevance

Relevance refers to the extent to which the objectives of the project were consistent with the beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' policies. This evaluation

found that the intervention activities of agriculture and livelihoods, financial inclusion and rights awareness was deemed consistent with and supportive of Government of Uganda (GoU) policies such as the PEAP, Vision 2040 and its attendant NDPs I, II & III. More so, secondary and primary data indicates that IASAD project activities were highly relevant as they all aimed at contributing to the enhancing of the national development priorities.

IASAD project activities implemented were aligned with the Isingiro district development plan and work plans (2020/2021-2022/2023) where it was implemented. The project sought to improve living standards and protect rights of target beneficiaries in 3 sub-counties of Ngarama, Nyakitunda and Ruborogota. It targeted to reach more than 5000 direct in indirect beneficiaries.

The objectives of the IASAD project were among other policies, in line with the Cabinet-approved National Agricultural Policy¹ (NAP, 2013) which elaborates GoU's framework for the development and management of the agricultural sector and some of the objectives of this policy include; *to promote food and nutrition security; to improve household incomes through coordinated interventions that enhance sustainable agricultural productivity and value addition and also to provide employment opportunities*. Likewise, the project was found to be in line with the Agriculture Sector Strategy Plan² (ASSP) of 2015/16-2019/2020.

Effectiveness of the project

Based on the project's data regarding progress toward achievement of the project results including intermediate and long-term results (IR) targets, the final evaluation findings indicate that the IASAD project interventions remarkable achievements in all the major components. The evaluation team proved that planned activities were implemented and envisaged targets/indicators achieved satisfactorily. For instance, in respect to SILC activities, the evaluation findings revealed that majority of survey respondents said after the intervention of MBHU value chain support activities, they earned profits of above UGX100,000 (US\$26.09) and, very few respondents; 36 (n=505) said they earned below UGX40,000 (US\$10.44). Ngarama sub-county scored the highest in the bracket of earnings above UGX100,000 followed by Nyakitunda and Ruborogota in that respective order. There was also another positive registered with respect to increasing access to financial services to women. Survey findings indicated that more women (48%)(n=505) said they borrowed money from their SILC groups against men (23%). Still, women borrowing from both SILC and SACCO (11%) were more than men (8%). Overall, the borrowing trend in the three-project intervention sub-counties indicated women borrowed more than men across all the credit sources respondents were assessed. Through VIPAT and other project trainings, beneficiaries reported increased capacity to manage their groups, advocate for the rights of others, able to demand for services from government and also improved knowledge in farming and marketing of their produce. All these attests to project achievements.

¹ The overall objective of the NAP is to promote food and nutrition security and to improve household incomes through coordinated interventions that will enhance sustainable agricultural productivity and value addition; provide employment opportunities, and promote agribusinesses, investments and trade.

² The Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan (ASSP) for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 was developed following a comprehensive review of the Agriculture Sector Development Strategy and Investment Plan (DSIP) for the period 2010/11 to 2014/15 that was conducted in 2015

Efficiency of the Project

The assessment of project efficiency focused on how well the various activities transformed the available resources into the intended results or outputs, in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness. The performance of the IASAD project was considered efficient, in as far as managing the project by MBHU with oversight from SSU were concerned. Furthermore, the achievement of most of the IASAD targets demonstrated the cost-effective nature of the interventions. Findings indicate that the project achieved intended results though some respondents demonstrated that some project components of the project did not hit the expected targets as far as beneficiary's knowledge improvement and awareness are concerned. Even if far below from the required level, the participative, presence of work plan, M&E guide, budget and consultative approach to implementation of the project activities by the project team enhanced some bit of efficiency. The functional units within the SSU management structure directly provided the necessary expertise required to achieve the results of the project. Even though there were managerial challenges registered at MBHU level there were marked evidence of efficiencies throughout the implementation process.

Sustainability of the Project

Sustainability refers to continuation of positive outcomes of the project and the flow of benefits after expiry of external funding for activities. Evaluation findings about financial sustainability present a promising picture in some areas. For instance, forming SILC and VIPAT groups in the three sub-counties proves the project will stand the test of time. More so the capacity building provided to lead farmers, farmers and the formed groups will enhance sustainability.

Challenges faced during Implementation

Weather variability, Poor, Pests, Diseases still hold to be a major challenge to farmers. There are cases of prolonged droughts. Likewise, some farmers groups complained of poor crop harvests as a result of pests and diseases. In addition, access to agricultural inputs remains a major challenge for farmers. Men were also reported to be passive participants in project activities as they preferred to send their wives for meetings.

Lesson Learnt and Best Practice

The activities directed at strengthening and development of human rights, Integrated agriculture and livelihoods through the approach of addressing gaps and bringing various actors such as political leaders, local council leaders and district leaders, along the value chain together has immense potential for creating a sustainable environment toward reaching the program goal and objectives in the target communities.

SECTION ONE: THE BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Integrated Agriculture Socio-Economic and Awareness Development (IASAD) project was fully implemented, ending with the 12th quarter. During the three-year period of the project life, all the proposed activities were conducted as planned across the three target sub-counties of Ngarama, Nyakitunda and Ruborogota. The project was implemented in 12 parishes and 60 villages across the target sub-counties. Many activities were conducted under this project which contributed much towards the realization of the project's purpose of improving the living standards of its beneficiaries and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for smallholder farmer households. Through the major project components of SILC, VIPAT and corresponding trainings, most project beneficiaries acquired knowledge and skills which influenced and facilitated the adoption of project ideas into their trade, farming and socio-economic behaviours.

1.2 The Project Goal

The main purpose of the proposed three-year development intervention is to improve living standards and ensure sustainability for farmer households in Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama Sub-Counties in Isingiro District and empower people in the local communities to obtain the services and freedoms they are entitled. The objectives of the project were;

- 1) By January 2023 60 groups comprising a total of 1200 farmer households in 60 villages are operating successfully according to the VIPAT model and are implicating another 1200 nearby households.
- 2) By June 2023 70 SILC groups including a total of 2100 households are providing basic financial services for these households and equipping them with savings and investment opportunities that are adequate for their thriving and sustainability.
- 3) By the end of the three-year project VIPAT members' civic competence is built to ensure effective demand and supply of quality extension services as well as enjoyment of rights for everybody in their communities.

1.3 Project implementation Strategy

Section three of this report presents the Project strategy and implementation arrangement, with special focus on the structure and coordination of the implementation team. It also explores the monitoring and evaluation aspects. In the proposal, SSU was working with MBHU as local partner to implement a three-year 3-year Integrated Agriculture Socio-Economic and Awareness Development (IASAD) project aiming at improved living standards of smallholder farmers in Isingiro District, targeting three sub-counties of Ngarama, Nyakitunda and Ruborogota. MBHU also identified district and grassroots structures to enable it implement the project successfully.

1.4 Rationale for the End of Project Evaluation

Review of the IASAD project proposal indicated that it builds on the concepts developed and refined in the two projects “Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children’s Households Development Project Kanungu” (15-1712-MP-sep, 2016–2017) and “Vulnerable Households Empowerment and Civic Engagement Promotion Project Kanungu” (17-2126-MI-okt, 2018–2019). These two projects were accomplished with support from the Civil Society Fund, bearing the novel concepts of agricultural practice. It is therefore, believed that IASAD successfully implemented the project borrowing from the lessons learned and knowledge gained from similar but different projects she implemented in a different location (Kanungu District) which shares similar context with Isingiro. Through endline evaluation, the funding partner wants to know whether the project has been able to achieve the intended objectives with functional activities which are key in the continuity of the project achievements. The funding partner and all stakeholders directly involved in the project would also like to know how best the project worked to achieve its intended objectives and how the achieved objectives will be sustained.

The overall purpose of this endline evaluation was to conduct an independent study aimed at generating information which can be used to inform decision-making on future project implementation through a methodologically sound, credible, impartial and independent assessment of the achievements and shortcomings while highlighting the outcomes and impacts of the project.

The assignment had a fourfold objective: Assessment of the effectiveness, Relevance, efficiency, sustainability, Reach, and quality of the various components of the program/intervention; Identify and document best practices and lessons learnt over the period of the program; Provide recommendations for future programming; Assess the relevance of interventions to the needs of beneficiaries, priorities of the stakeholders and general refugee response strategy; Assess the sustainability of interventions. Specifically, the evaluation intended to measure the contribution of the project towards overall improvement of living standards of the target beneficiaries and to propose additional ideas that may improve the sustainability of the Project; and propose and give recommendations for future engagement with local and international partners.

1.5 Scope of Evaluation

As understood in the Terms of Reference (ToR), this evaluation was based on the criteria of relevance (appropriateness of problem and need identification), effectiveness (achievement of purpose or the extent to which the Project activities were implemented), efficiency (sound management and value for money), impact (achievements of wider effects with focus on the Project benefits translated into achievement of the result areas), and sustainability (likely continuation of the achieved results).

2.0 SECTION TWO: EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overall Approach

The study was descriptive in nature, employing a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) approach to the evaluation. The quantitative approach generated statistical data that provided information on project performance against the quantitative indicators tracked as guided by the project's Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs). The qualitative approach in a complementary manner offered in-depth insights into the performance of the project as at endline. The descriptive design helped to facilitate contextual understanding of the subject under research. It facilitated understanding of the design issues, facilitating and inhibiting factors, as well as a description of key lessons and promising practices.

2.2 Study Areas and Participants

2.2.1 Study areas

The study was conducted in Isingiro district across three sub-counties of Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama. The study engaged 20 groups in different villages within the supported sub-counties under the Village Intervention for Participatory Agriculture Transformation (VIPAT) model, 70 SILC groups, as well as 20 persons from district extension offices – sub-county level administrators. All these three groups of individuals were represented in the sampling frame.

2.2.2 Study participants

Study participants included both primary and secondary project stakeholders. Primary stakeholders were those targeted to benefit directly from the project activities such as financial literacy, VIPAT and crop agronomy trainings.

Secondary stakeholders included leaders at district, sub-county and other development partners operating in the project areas, community and opinion leaders were also identified as relevant stakeholders to participate in this study. These (secondary stakeholders) were targeted to provide an overall project assessment in their respective capacities, the challenges and lessons learned during implementation, the relevance of project activities to the priority needs of the joint efforts to improve standards of living of the target beneficiaries.

2.2.3 Meetings with IASAD project team

The evaluation team conducted meetings that collected data from IASAD project implementation team. The meetings discussed how the project was implemented including; management of the project communication and coordination, successes and problems, and improvements that supported implementation throughout the project.

2.2.4 Site Selection and Sampling

Selection of study participants was done through random and non-random procedures. Purposive sampling was used to select secondary stakeholders and these were identified as the key leaders at district and sub-district levels based on their role in the implementation of the project. Random selection was used for selecting respondents who participated in key informant interviews.

The sample size for the probability sampling adopted the Morgan and Robert research approach. Based on the approach we sampled a total of 505 participants to participate in the survey. A random sample of 15 participants from the 70 groups was considered and a total of 7 participants from each VIPAT group was also considered from all the three sub-counties of Ngarama, Ruborogota and Nyakitunda. A total of 20 key informants were engaged from the District Local Government (DLG), Lower Local Government (LLG) – Sub-county level and local community structures. This approach took both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection to clearly gather and understand the respondents' views.

2.2.5 Data Collection Methods

A mix of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection was used for this evaluation. A team of four (4) Research Assistants (RAs) and one (1) Field Supervisor (FS) was constituted and trained to support the consultant in collecting data. Qualitative data, mostly obtained from beneficiaries and key stakeholders at district and sub-county levels, project staff and other stakeholders were collected by the Consultant assisted by the Field Supervisor. A questionnaire was administered to the respondents through physical interaction using Kobo Collect. Interviewers mostly supported in collecting quantitative data from target respondents; they administered the individual interviews with eligible respondents within project beneficiary groups of SILC and VIPAT.

2.2.6 Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

Quantitative data was collected using a structured questionnaire where direct beneficiaries from target sub-counties were asked to take part. At the individual level, issues investigated included participation in training activities of the project, knowledge acquisition and practice and the need for further awareness and capacity building to further enhance their ability to further improve their living standards. This data was specifically collected to help in determining the level of effectiveness and the impact of the Project on the targeted population.

Qualitative data used in this evaluation, included in-depth interviews with leaders of government and non-government community development structures. These study participants provided insights on the extent to which the project's objectives were achieved, factors that facilitated/constrained achievements of the planned activities, extent of project efficiency as well as enabling documentation of best practices and lessons learnt in the course of implementation. Sustainability issues were also explored through in-depth interviews. To corroborate data from

both direct project beneficiaries and the secondary stakeholders that took part in this study. Extensive review of reports, policies and other program documents including project proposal, project M&E plan, activity and quarterly reports etc. was also conducted.

The evaluation team reviewed documents availed and others accessed from government archives (like Government of Uganda [GoU] documents on the human rights and agriculture Sector and Isingiro District Development Plan 2020-2021 – 2024-2025. Document reviews was done both at inception phase and during data processing and analysis. The review of the documents informed the development of the Inception Report (IR) and the evaluation tools.

2.2.7 Direct observation

Observations enabled the team of researchers to gather enough information even before interviewing started. In many key locations that were visited, it was possible to observe project achievements as well as the interactions between them and their beneficiaries. Consequently, through this method the researchers were able to systematically observe existing trends, achievements and associated development and best practices. Additionally, observation helped in counting project beneficiaries in order to establish the relative magnitude and extent of the project achievements in each locality. The method was useful in the sense that it helped the team of researchers to observe the actual situation of smallholder farmers and the type of project activities that targeted them.

2.2.8 Transect walk

This tool was used as an icebreaker by the team of researchers to familiarize themselves with the physical environment and project established facilities and to identify the locations of the beneficiaries/community members. The research team walked the transects with members of beneficiary groups such as SILC and VIPAT in various key locations. The team visited the household as a spot check method, gardens and other project activity sites. In some instances, researchers walked long distances looking for project beneficiaries and their project supported activities due to scattered homesteads. In other areas, transect walks were difficult to conduct due to the scattered nature of the activities performed by beneficiaries in the target sub-counties. While transect walking, the researchers were taking notes. It was through transecting, however, that researchers, with the help of the insiders, managed to figure out the areas that seem to have positive project achievements.

2.2.9 Data Management and Analysis

All completed questionnaires were checked for accuracy and consistency of recorded responses before data analysis. After cleaning, data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and PowerBi. Frequency tables and cross-tabulations were produced. On the other hand, qualitative data

obtained was transcribed and typed into Microsoft Word. Transcribed data was then analyzed thematically and further interpretation made. Data analysis followed an inductive approach and all data sources were triangulated to produce this evaluation report.

2.2.9.1 Data Quality Control

To ensure that the consultancy service was provided in line with the Terms of Reference and at an appropriate professional level, the Consultant used the following quality control measures:

- *Adherence to international and sector standards:* At the study inception, clarification of the result chain using international and sector standards for human rights outcome measurements and foot soldiers' (project implementation staff) capacity improvement was done.
- *Design of study instruments:* In line with the above, the survey adopted and/or adapted the purposive sampling method in the selection of respondents for data collection tools. This was to strengthen the reliability, acceptability, question flow, and the duration of the interview.
- *Involvement of Project/M&E officer at all stages:* Maintained a close consultative relationship with the client's Project/M&E officer to ensure that indicators, tools and procedures meet internal standards.
- *Social mobilization for data collection:* To increase the response rate, the Consultant identified suitable research assistants and IASAD Partners to mobilize respondents for data collection.
- *Data management procedures:* The data management and analysis plan were discussed and agreed upon with IASAD before data collection and analysis began. The final evaluation team presented its data analysis in line with the reporting guidelines and the agreed upon indicators to be tracked. This data management strategy ensured that data storage, handling and the types of analyses were relevant for the final evaluation.

2.2.10 Ethical Consideration

To ensure adherence to international research standards, the consultant ensured that;

- Data collectors sought and confirmed consent from respondents to participate in the survey and interviews before data was collected.
- A statement of confidentiality for the beneficiary/participant was included in all the tools, explaining the purpose of the survey and committing not to divulge individual respondent details except when consented to.

2.2.11 Results

The final evaluation analyzed the context of implementation process and management, all the stakeholders / society and the development over the three (3) years of the project. The project had an initial consensus, both on the scale of livelihoods and human rights challenges that were faced by the target population. These resulted into the processes that were needed to address the challenges through the delivery of trainings and other project direct support components.

Therefore, the implementation of the project was ultimately influenced by the project targets which also have direct relationship to the future governance and sustainability.

2.1.11 Project area and target beneficiaries

The project was implemented in Isingiro district, western Uganda. It targeted three sub-counties of Ngarama, Nyakitunda and Ruborogota. The target beneficiaries were smallholder farmer households and LLG officials who participated in the trainings conducted by the project.

2.1.12 Project setup

MBHU has a legal status as an indigenous NGO in Uganda. It is well established with the overall purpose of serving the disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community through a multiplicity of interventions, taking an integrated approach. The organization adopts a people-centered strategy in working with mandated institutions, donors and the community to provide the much-needed support to target beneficiaries.

3.0 SECTION THREE: BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents summarized in Table 1 below shows that majority respondents in the survey questionnaire were females (63%) compared to males (37%). Attempts to have an equal representation of males and females in the sample were made, but in the majority of households, only women were found available for engagement while men were reported out of home for other livelihood engagements. However, given that the females in Uganda bear the major burden of performing domestic chores and as such, makes them to keep home almost all the time, this was a plausible justification for the excess female sample. The survey also revealed that majority of respondents across the three project sub-counties are married (83%) with Ngarama and Nyakitunda posting the highest (n=170) and (n=154) respectively. Of concern was the number of widows making 14.5% (n=505); suggesting there is a big number of orphans and vulnerable children in the district which requires special attention.

Table 1: Summary of Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Category	Characteristics	Sub-county			Total (#)	Total (%)
		Ngarama	Nyakitunda	Ruborogota		
Gender distribution	Male	68	68	49	185 (n=505)	37
	Female	147	103	70	320 (n=505)	63
Marital status	Married	170	154	95	419 (n=505)	83
	Single	5	1	0	6 (n=505)	1.2
	Window	36	15	22	73 (n=505)	14.5
	Divorced/ separated	4	1	2	7 (n=505)	1.4
Age	19 - 28	10	9	5	24 (n=505)	4.8
	29- 38	40	34	11	85 (n=505)	16.8
	39 - 48	64	68	45	177 (n=505)	35
	49 - 58	65	41	29	135 (n=505)	26.7
	59 - 68	30	16	26	72 (n=505)	14.3
	69 - 78	2	1	2	5 (n=505)	1
	>79	4	2	1	7 (n=505)	1.4
Members belonging to different community groups.	Farmer association	68	20	35	123 (n=505)	24
	VIPAT	15	1	10	26 (n=505)	5
	VIPAT & Human Rights	73	24	37	134 (n=505)	27
	Cluster leaders	16	0	10	26 (n=505)	5
	SILC	96	32	51	179 (n=505)	35
SILC & VIPAT	118	138	67	323 (n=505)	64	

Attempts were also made to assess whether households belonged to one or more self-help and/or community development associations. Majority of respondents (64%) reported belonging to SILC and VIPAT groups. These two groups are unique to the project and this finding could help to explain that prior to the project, majority of project beneficiaries did not see the reason to belong to and/or participate in activities of self-help or community development associations to their disadvantage. Again, another interesting finding was the number of respondents who reported belonging to both VIPAT and Human rights groups (27%), also unique to the project interventions.

SECTION FOUR: RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT

4.1 Introduction

Relevance refers to the extent to which the objectives of the project activities were consistent with the beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, District and village priorities, and CISU priorities and policies. The measurement for relevance was based on the following Criteria;

4.1.1 Evaluation criteria for Relevance

The Relevance of the project was measured based on the following criteria.

- a) *The extent to which the project was consistent with, and supportive of, the national policy and programme framework.*
- b) *The quality of the problem analysis of the Project's intervention logic and appropriateness of the objectively verifiable indicators*
- c) *The extent to which stated objectives correctly addressed the identified problems and social needs*

4.2 Relevance of integrated agriculture and livelihoods interventions

The objectives of the project were in line with the Cabinet-approved National Agricultural Policy³ (NAP, 2013) which elaborates GoU's framework for the development and management of the agricultural sector. Some of the objectives of this policy (NAP) include; *to promote food and nutrition security; to improve household incomes through coordinated interventions that enhance sustainable agricultural productivity and value addition and also to provide employment opportunities.* Similarly, the project was found to be in line with the Agriculture Sector Strategy Plan⁴ (ASSP) 2015/16-2019/20. The ASSP was established to provide a framework for identifying sector investments that targets: increased production and productivity in selected priority commodities; increased access to critical farm inputs, improving access to agricultural markets and value addition and strengthening the institutional and enabling environment. Implementation of the ASSP was expected to spur growth in the agriculture sector through the establishment of effective linkages to and exploitation of existing and potential local, regional and international markets. In addition, the relevance of this Project was partly evaluated in as far as it was deemed consistent with and supportive of Government of Uganda's (GoU) long term strategic development plans including but not limited to; Vision 2040 – the master plan, policies such as the PEAP, and later the NDPII 2015/16 – 2019/20 and NDPIII 2020/21 – 2024/25 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); particularly SDGs 1 (No Poverty); 2 (Zero Hunger); 3 (Good Health and Well-being); 5 (Gender Equality); 10 (Reduced Inequalities); 13 (Climate Action) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and, improving health and National Agriculture Policy.

³ The overall objective of the NAP is to promote food and nutrition security and to improve household incomes through coordinated interventions that will enhance sustainable agricultural productivity and value addition; provide employment opportunities, and promote agribusinesses, investments and trade.

⁴ The Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan (ASSP) for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 was developed following a comprehensive review of the Agriculture Sector Development Strategy and Investment Plan (DSIP) for the period 2010/11 to 2014/15 that was conducted in 2015

4.2.1 Consistent with Uganda's National Development Policies

This evaluation found that the intervention activities of IASAD project was deemed consistent with and supportive of Government of Uganda (GoU) strategic development agenda broadly envisaged in Vision 2040. Other supportive policies are PEAP, NDP⁵ II & III 2015/16 – 2019/20 & 2020/21 – 2024/25, Agricultural sector policies and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on ending poverty and improving health and nutrition. Secondary and primary data indicates that the IASAD project activities were highly relevant as they all aimed at contributing to the realization of the national Agriculture Policy goals and objectives enshrined in the NDPs I, II & III.

4.2.2. Clarity and Consistency of the Project Objectives to address social problems

Clarity and consistence of Project objectives entails the extent to which stated objectives correctly addressed the identified problems and social needs in the community. The implemented IASAD project activities were directly derived from the District Development Plan (DDP) and work plans of Isingiro District Local Government (DLG) where it was implemented. The project was meant to support smallholder farmer households in an integrated approach that looked at increasing access to credit facilities to finance agricultural activities which in turn aimed at improving agricultural production and productivity and, enhancing citizens' participation in civic activities charged with making decisions that guides and determines their access and utilization of services intended for them. Evaluation findings indicate that agriculture, SILC and human rights awareness activities of the project were meant to improve the living standards of household in Ngarama, Nyakitunda and Ruborogota sub-counties in Isingiro District. It was determined that the project reached out to over 2400 HH and 10,000 people in the three target sub-counties in Isingiro district.

In terms of the geographical scope, areas where the interventions were implemented lacked the intervention services especially credit access which is hugely needed to invest in agriculture to feed the increasing population. Conferring project interventions with Isingiro DDP 2020/21 – 2024/25 which was built of the previous DDP, the project worked within the development objective on food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture;

1. Reduce hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations including refugees and infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round
2. Reduce all forms of malnutrition, including achieve agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and older persons

⁵ National Development Plan (NDPII & III) are the second and third in a series of six five-year Plans aimed at achieving the Uganda Vision 2040.

3. Double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets, and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment
4. Ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters, and that progressively improve land and soil quality

It further responded to Isingiro DDP's objective on increasing household incomes sustainably;

1. Reduce extreme poverty for all people in the District , currently measured as people living on less than shs 4,625= a day
2. Reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
3. Ensure that all men and women, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology.
4. Build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations especially refugees, their host communities , and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social, environmental shocks and disasters
5. Mobilization of resources from a variety of sources to implement programmes and policies that end poverty in all its dimensions

4.2.3 Addressed beneficiary needs as highlighted in the proposal

The findings of evaluation suggests that IASAD project addressed the major beneficiary needs namely; increasing household incomes, improving household nutrition, increasing access to credit and financial services and, increasing citizens' participation in decision making activities. For instance, 98% (n=505) of respondents said they are saving and borrowing from SILC groups, with the majority of these respondents being women. The findings on increased access to financial services for instance reveals that SILC intervention responded well to addressing the top three constraints/barriers to women's financial inclusion; Financial Literacy (75%), Collateral requirements (66%) and Socio-cultural environment (63%) - AFI Member survey on women's financial inclusion, 2016. Further, findings also revealed that 79% of respondents said they are able to advocate for their rights.

5.0 SECTION FIVE: EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROJECT

5.1 Introduction

Effectiveness is a multi-faceted concept that measures the extent to which planned activities achieve their purpose. Effectiveness in the context of this evaluation also assessed the real differences made in the life of beneficiaries by the project activities and how far the intended beneficiaries were reached/benefitted. The effectiveness of the project was measured based on the following objectives.

5.1.1 Objectives based on to Measure Project Effectiveness

- 1) By January 2023 60 groups comprising a total of 1200 farmer households in 60 villages are operating successfully according to the VIPAT model and are implicating another 1200 nearby households.
- 2) By June 2023 70 SILC groups including a total of 2100 households are providing basic financial services for these households and equipping them with savings and investment opportunities that are adequate for their thriving and sustainability.
- 3) By the end of the three-year project VIPAT members' civic competence is built to ensure effective demand and supply of quality extension services as well as enjoyment of rights for everybody in their communities.

5.2 Effectiveness of integrated agriculture and livelihoods interventions

5.2.1 Objective 1: Effectiveness Discussed

Objective one expected to form 60 groups with a total of 1200 farmer households; each group having 20 households, with each practicing VIPAT model. All these were implemented according to plan.

Indicator 1: *Farmers from 1200 households participate weekly in the FFS training*

Regarding the planned activities, it was expected that 1200 farmers would participate in weekly FFS training. The measurement of this indicator was based on the number of individuals who, by indication, represented households that reported being members of FFS.

Table 2: Membership in Farmer Field Schools

Responses	Ngarama	Nyakitunda	Ruborogota	Grand Total	%
No	50	41	13	104	21
Yes	165	130	106	401	79
Grand Total	215	171	119	505	100

Field findings indicate that 79% (n=505) respondents reported belonging to FFS and by extension, could mean participation in FFS activities. 21% (n=505) said they did not belong to the FFS. Further analysis indicates that membership by each of the 3 project sub-counties varied; Ngarama which recorded the highest number of respondents in this question had 165 (n=505) belonging to FFS and 50 saying they did not belong to FFS. This was followed by Nyakitunda – 130 (n=505) and Ruborogota – 106 (n=505) as belonging to FFS in that respective order. Although 79% representation of members belonging to FFS is commendable with respect to effective project implementation, 21% recording otherwise should be of interest to any project manager as it represents a big proportion of people who were not convinced adequately by the project implementers to find reason to belong to and participate in FFS activities which among others included establishment of a group field where farmers participate in weekly activities. Comparatively, there was overall improvement in the number of individuals belonging to associations, looking at the baseline data. In the baseline, respondents in the three project sub-counties were asked if they belonged to any form of association to which a combined response of males and females stood at 12.4%; Ngarama sub-county had 7 (2.05%) females being the highest, Nyakitunda and Ruborogota registered 5 (1.46%) females each. Nyakitunda had the highest number of males being 15 (4.28%) that belonged to an association and last was Ngarama and Ruborogota which tied at 5 (1.46%) males. This analysis therefore, shows that the project succeeded in creating awareness on the importance of belonging to community association which among them, offers social security for the members. Nonetheless, the findings will serve to inform management and staff of MBHU to ensure future success of project activities reaches at the lowest, 95% of the intended beneficiaries.

Indicator 2: 60 VIPAT groups have monthly meetings and share experiences with nutrition, kitchen gardens and crops

Review of project progress reports revealed that 60 VIPAT groups were formed where, activities associated with the model were implemented. Among the VIPAT model trainings was that on nutrition.

Table 3: Participation in Nutrition Training

Responses	Ngarama	Nyakitunda	Ruborogota	Grand Total	%
No	51	50	29	130	26
Yes	164	121	90	375	74
Grand Total	215	171	119	505	100

Field findings showed that 74% (n=505) reported attending trainings on nutrition and 26% (n=505) said they did not attend. Distribution by sub-county showed that Ngarama recorded the highest number with 164 (32%) of 505 respondents saying they participated in nutrition trainings. Ruborogota recorded the lowest of the three sub-counties; 90 (18%) of 505 respondents who said they attended nutrition training.

Further assessment of the other project activities directly related to nutrition component revealed that households engaged in different farming activities to give them varied sources of food with rich nutritional contents. The table below presents distribution by gender, of different farming activities respondents said they undertook for both nutritional and income benefits.

Table 4: Farming activities undertaken to provide income and nutritional requirements

Farming Activities	Female	Male	Grand Total	%
Animal husbandry and Crop Farming	264	166	430	85
Animal husbandry	21	12	33	7
Crop Farming	35	7	42	8
Grand Total	320	185	505	100

From the table above, field findings revealed that 85% (n=505) of respondents said they engaged in both animal husbandry and crop farming. This by way of analysis indicates that most households practice mixed farming which logically provides varied sources of food, with each containing different nutrients that are essential for human health and growth. The project's baseline data shows that 50% of respondents across the three sub-counties reported practicing animal husbandry with scores as follows; Nyakitunda 80 (24%), Ngarama 45 (13%) and Ruborogota having 40 (13%). Considering the fact that most rural households practice animal rearing as a secondary activity complementing crop growing, it can be argued that there was an increase 35% in the number of households practicing animal rearing. The possible reason for this increase could be the need to diversify income sources; something which was a key message from the project implementers as the Project Manager Mr. Ampumuza Rogers remarked; *"...our main message to the community is to have as many sources of income as possible...even if it meant providing labour in another person's farm at one's leisure time...we have wasted a lot of time sitting and waiting for things to be done for us, now is the time for us to wake up and catch up with other communities seriously pursuing development."* The project also undertook food preparation demonstration activities. The demonstrations were intended to equip project beneficiaries with different techniques to prepare healthy dishes for their households. Among the emphasis of the food preparation demos was food preparation using few ingredients so as to avoid too much usage of many ingredients which can in turn destroy the nutritional contents of the main dish.

Table 5: Participation in Food Preparation Demos

Food demos	Ngarama	Nyakitunda	Ruborogota	Grand Total	%
cooked_demo	15	29	4	48	9.5
Non response	51	50	29	130	26
pre_cooked_demo	24	32	6	62	12
single_ingredients_demo	131	73	84	288	57
Grand Total	215	171	119	505	105

Food preparation and nutrition which the project adopted as a key activity highlighted a range of healthy cooking techniques, how to create and follow a balanced diet, as well as becoming familiar with the nutrients in the beneficiary diet and how these impact on their health.

Table 5 above shows different food demos attended by participants by sub-county. Evaluation findings showed participation at different levels; single ingredients demo registered the highest number of responses (57%) followed by pre-cooked and cooked at 12% and 10% respectively. A big number of participants; 130 (n=505) respondents which is 26% chose not to respond to this question. It should be noted, this was a multiple response question where, some respondents chose more than one answer. This explains why the variance of 23 was ignored in the 'total row,' otherwise when the numbers are added by sub-county, it gives a total of 528 instead of 505. This is a normal scenario in data analysis to avoid the bias of double counting.

Indicator 3: *Extension officers participate regularly in FFS and in monthly and quarterly VIPAT meetings*

Review of IASAD project progress reports showed project staff (extension service providers) participated in several meetings organized under FFS and VIPAT project components. The project's 12th quarter report (the last IASAD project implementation quarter) shows that 36 monthly planning and review meetings were conducted and 12 quarterly stakeholders meeting held. Besides these meetings, the 12th quarter project progress report also shows that 121 groups were followed up through visits and phone calls; reaching out to 2436 beneficiaries. The report notes; "It was through these follow up visits that several ideas and actions were shared mostly on sustainability of these groups with members. Follow up visits were conducted amongst the different enterprises set by group members i.e., piggery, goat rearing, poultry keeping, passion fruit growing and plantation gardens of beans, Irish, maize." Although participation of extension officers was not assessed in the questionnaire, interaction with respondents showed that they attended the meetings where they were given platforms to sensitize people on good agronomic practices as well as knowing their rights. The views of respondents were corroborated with that of the key informant in Ngarama;

Through the project, we have had the opportunity to interact with community members and also get feedback from them regarding government programs and services. At times we lack resources to do our work that is why community members complain of our absence. But I want thank the project for the initiative, it has afforded as the chance to engage with the community...

Key informant interview; Ngarama Sub-county 18th/09/2023

Indicator 4: *At least five new villages are implementing VIPAT technologies (reached by lead farmers and extension service providers)*

Drawing from VIPAT model's strategic strength areas; increasing agricultural output to improve food security and nutrition, increasing access to financial services which allows members to save, invest and grow their own finances for further investment and finally, building capacity of Isingiro

DLG to provide relevant quality service to its population, the evaluation team assessed VIPAT intervention activities based on the three areas above. Trainings and other intervention activities were carried out across the three strategic areas. The trainings ranged from farming, human rights and overall VIPAT methodology.

Findings from the field showed that the project team undertook trainings in different topics. Among the topics covered were; education on nutrition and kitchen gardening, market access, harvest and post-harvest handling, value addition and pest and disease control.

Table 6: Summary of Trainings Conducted under VIPAT

Training types	Ngarama	Nyakitunda	Ruborogota	Grand Total
Education on Nutrition and kitchen gardening	2	8		10
Market access	182	129	93	404
Post harvest handling and kitchen gardening	180	128	91	399
Kitchen gardening		1	1	2
Market access and kitchen Gardening	1	1	2	4
Market Access and Education on nutrition	3	1	3	7
Market Access and Post Harvest Handling and kitchen gardening	5	1	3	9
Market access and value addition	14	7	8	29
Pest and disease control	179	128	91	398
Post harvest handling	2	5	1	8
value addition	1			1
value addition and Education on Nutrition		4		4
value addition and post Harvest handling	8	20	9	37
Grand Total	215	171	119	505

Evaluation findings indicate that of the trainings conducted across the three project sub-counties, market access was attended by the majority of respondents; 404 (n=505), representing 80%. Pest control was yet another training which registered many participants, with participation reported by 398 (n=505) of respondents, representing 79%. The evaluation also assessed respondents who participated in two separate VIPAT component trainings; post-harvest handling and kitchen gardening scored highest among the trainings that respondents said they attended; registering 399 (n=505) responses – 79%, followed by value addition and post-harvest handling; 37 (n=505) responses – 7%.

However, drawing from table 6 above evaluation findings show that the project team did not balance implementation of project activities. Only 1 ((0.20%) respondent acknowledged

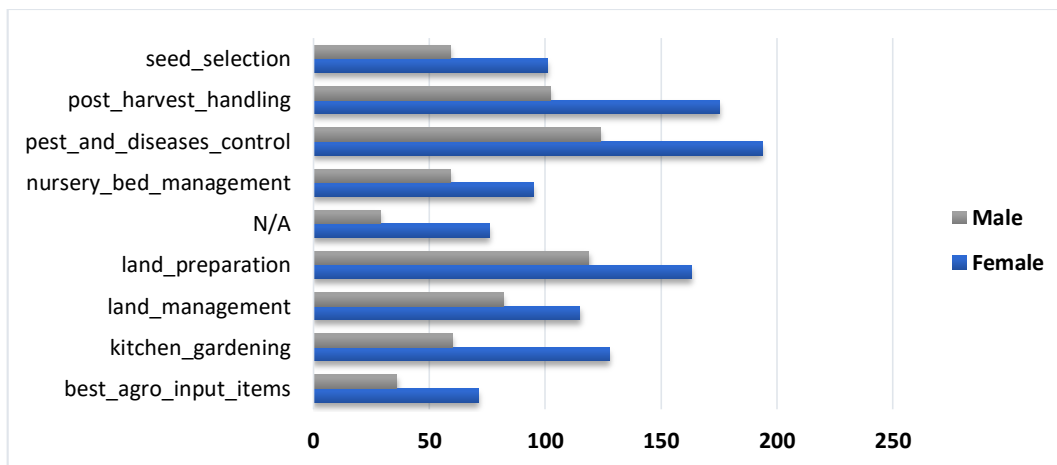
participating in value addition training. This finding presents potential challenge in realization of overall project purpose. The project was designed to integrate all activities that contribute to overall purpose including value addition and post-harvest handling. Post-harvest handling and value addition make an important part of efforts to increase household income by way of earning more from an item and/or produce whose value has been added. Value addition also presents farmers with opportunity to gain access to wider and new markets for their produce/products.

Thematically, the evaluation assessed how the different trainings impacted on the people as envisaged in OVIs. We investigated the following areas to assess impact and sustainability potential of the project interventions. They include but not limited to;

Objective I; Indicator 4.1: Benefits Attained from VIPAT Methodology

Survey respondents were asked to choose from a list of possible responses what they considered beneficial from VIPAT methodology trainings. Male and female respondents gave varying responses, notwithstanding the fact that female respondents made the majority, the following were the responses by gender for selected variables. 318 (n=505) respondents; 194 females and 124 males said they benefited from pest and disease control trainings. 282 (n=505) respondents; 163 females and 119 males said they benefited from land preparation trainings and last but not least, 277 (n=505) respondents; 175 females and 102 males said they benefited from post-harvest handling training.

Figure 1: Benefits from VIPAT Methodology Training



From figure 1 above, it is observed that some critical farming knowledge were not reported by the many beneficiaries as being the area they benefited most. For instance, seed selection and matters agro-input should be high on the agenda of any modern farmer. These two aspects of farming are very critical in determining crop yields and eventual harvest which translate into profits. It is concerning to observe from the graph above that, only 107 (n=505) respondents; 71 females and 36 males reported having benefited from the trainings on best agro-input items. Likewise, only 160 (n=505) of survey respondents; 101 females and 59 males said they benefited

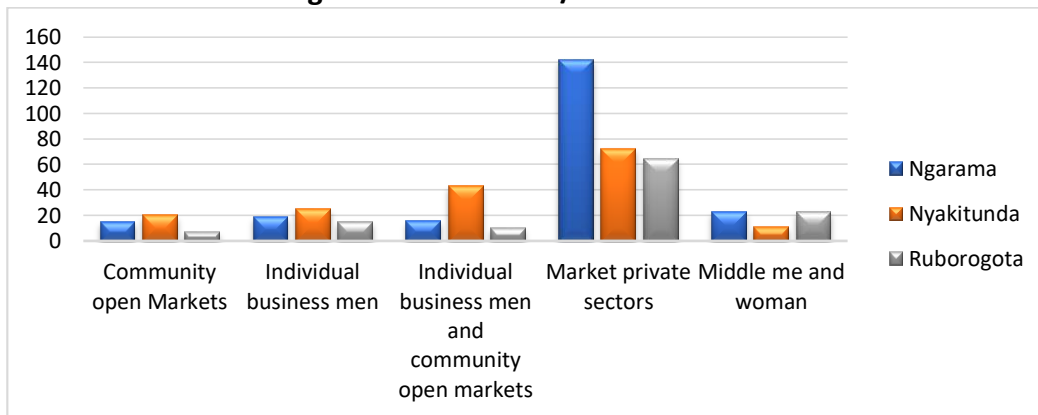
from seed selection training. the question these findings present is; did the field staff emphasize of these two issues while training? if yes, why do beneficiaries not see these two aspects as critical to their agricultural transformation and a key aspect of their household income improvement plan? These are questions that MBHU and the donor should consider while planning for similar future projects. The irony around responses on agricultural inputs gets even more interesting when one interrogates baseline data where; Nyakitunda sub-county recorded only 53 (n=341) representing 15.5% reported having challenges related to access to and utilization of agro-inputs; Ngarama; 30 (n=341) and Ruborogota; 12 (n=341) reported the lowest in that respective order. The low levels of responses in this area should have attracted interest of project implementers to find out the truth behind target beneficiary views. Participant's views in the FGD at endline also does not give satisfactory understanding of issues around access to and utilization of agro-input services. Broadly, several studies have found access to quality agricultural inputs a crucial area for smallholder farmers in Uganda yet, this determines agricultural productivity and profitability in a sector where close to 80% of the population still relies on agriculture for their livelihoods. The lack of reliable suppliers, high costs, and the prevalence of counterfeit products pose obstacles for farmers in rural areas.



Objective 1; Indicator 4.2: Market sources for Agricultural Produce/Products

To further assess whether the beneficiaries benefited from VIPAT training on market sources for their commodities, survey and KI respondents were asked to choose from a list of options where they sold their agricultural produce/products. The results of the findings are presented in figure 1 below;

Figure 2: Market Sources for Agricultural Produce/Products

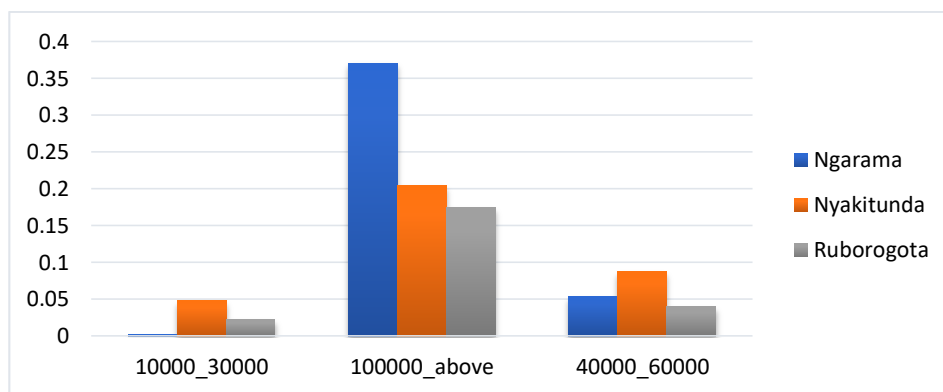


From figure 1 above, 278 (n=505); 55% of survey respondents across the three sub-counties said they sold their produce to market private sector. This was followed by individual businessmen and open community markets among other sources. What is important to note in this finding is the declining role of middlemen/women in influencing agricultural produce markets in Uganda. The role of middlemen/women has had a profound effect on the agricultural sector in Uganda to the extent that the farmers have overtime been the net losers in the game. There have been reports of middlemen/women supplying farmers with inputs on credit particularly seed and fertilizers and/or giving school fees loans to farmers at the start of the planting season and they take over the fields right at planting. It is said, they go ahead to supervise weeding and harvest to ensure the “dishonest” farmer does not sell part of the produce to another middleman/woman and claim the yield/harvest was not good. This practice has kept some farmers in the vicious cycle of loans and consequently poverty because they are tied to the middlemen’s exploitative schemes. This is why, the evaluation finding that shows farmers are selling more to registered buyers who offer competitive prices is good news to both the project and the country.

Survey participants were also asked why they chose the selected market sources for their produce. Majority; 321 (n=505) which is 63.5% said it is due to ease of access and, 125 (n=505) said increase in sales informed their choices. Surprisingly, only 17 (n=505) said they chose their market sources based on linkages they would get for high quality agro-inputs. This finding also begs for further scrutiny on where the emphasis was put during the trainings. The consultants’ review of literature showed that increasing access to quality agro-inputs should formed the priority list of any initiative seeking to fight household poverty through agricultural interventions.

Relatedly, the evaluation team further assessed whether there was evident outcome and/or impact linked to earnings which can be attributed to MBHU’s value chain support to farmers. Survey respondents were asked whether they earned in the range of UGX10,000 (US\$2.61) and above UGX100,000 (US\$26.09). the responses are presented in figure 2 below

Figure 3: Estimated Earnings from Value Chain Support Activities



From figure 2 above, majority of respondents said they earned profits of above UGX100,000 (US\$26.09) and, very few respondents; 36 (n=505) said they earned below UGX40,000 (US\$10.44). Ngarama sub-county scored the highest in the bracket of earnings above

UGX100,000 followed by Nyakitunda and Ruborogota in that respective order. In the baseline, 35% of survey respondents across the three sub-counties said they earned above UGX100,000 (US\$26.09) from sale of agricultural commodities; Ruborogota 18%, Ngarama 9% and Nyakitunda 8%. In the endline, 75% overall of survey respondents (n=505) said they earned above the same amount; Ngarama with 37%, Nyakitunda 20% and Ruborogota 17%. Overall, the number of people earning above UGX100,000 from sale of agricultural commodities across the three sub-counties grew by 40%.

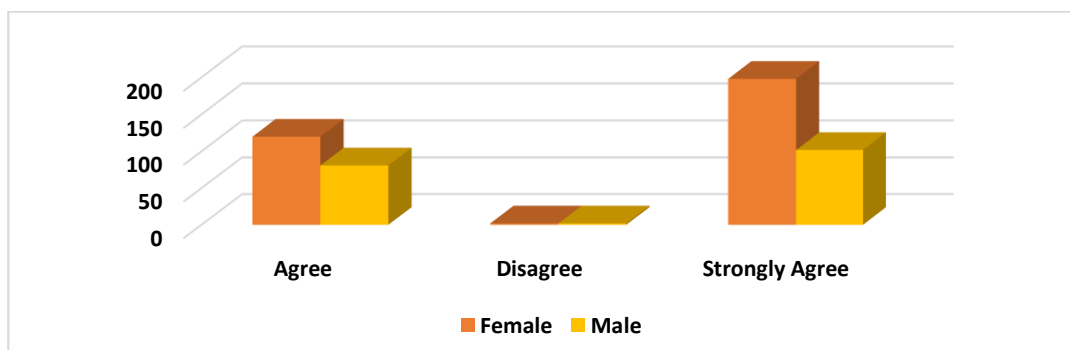
3.2.2 Objective 2: Effectiveness Discussed

This objective expected to form and train 70 SILC groups comprising of 2100 households. Well established SILC groups would in turn provide basic financial services to its member households and equip them with savings and investment opportunities that are adequate for them to thrive and sustain operations.

Indicator 1: *70 SILC groups have approved constitution and elected management-committee members who are trained*

The SILC approach to increasing financial inclusion among the poor has been an effective method in bridging the gap in credit access between the rich and the poor not only in Uganda but across the world. The SILC methodology can at times be used interchangeably with Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs); a self-managed financial group in which members make regular contributions to a common fund; members of the group can request a loan from the common fund, which they receive based on the approval of other members and must repay with interest. At the end of the funding cycle (mostly annually), all funds with interest are shared among group members – Bank of Uganda. Although the two approaches share a common goal of increasing access to credit and other financial services, a typical SILC model pursues a further unique element of integrating activities such as good parenting and emphasizes peace and harmony in the households. Household members are sensitized beyond savings and borrowing by going as far as sensitizing them on the importance of making joint decisions upon consultation with one another and respecting each other's views even where they do not seem to disagree. The study assessed participation of respondents in different SILC activities. The findings showed that female respondents; 198 (n=505) strongly agreed that they gained skills on SILC management, owing to the training conducted by the project against the 102 (n=505) of male respondents who also agreed strongly. Overall, 300 (n=505) respondents; representing 59% of respondents strongly agreed to having gained the knowledge and only 4 (n=505) disagreed with the narrative.

Figure 4: Rating of Knowledge Gained for SILC Management



We once had an NGO here who came to tell us about forming groups to help us solve our own problems. People were told to come together and list their problems which we did. When they collected our views, we thought they would come back and guide us on the way forward, they disappeared. This project came, organized us and gave us the training which we believe even if it is ending, we shall be able to carry on with the group. We were trained on how to manage our finances and also borrow money for the right purpose

FGD Participant from Kyamburara Cell, Kabale Parish, Ngarama Sub-county – 03rd/10/2023.



Indicator 2: Monthly meeting attendance in the 70 SILC groups is at least at 95% of the member households.

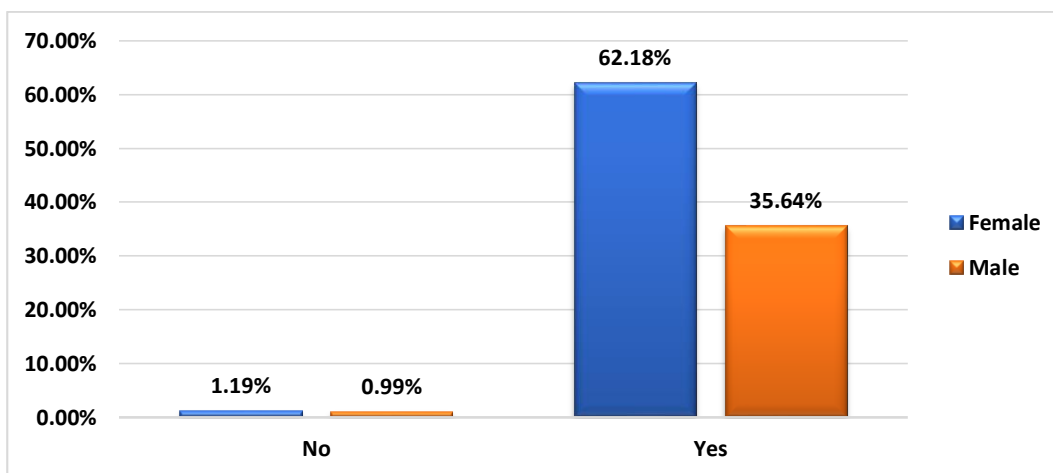
Key informant interview with the IASAD project team revealed this indicator was achieved as there was monthly follow up meetings with the groups. The project manager Mr. Ampumuza Rogers said participation of SILC group members in their activities was made possible because they have a binding constitution that compel members to abide by set rules. This he said made the attendance in most cases to be at 100% since members feared to be fined once they missed the meetings. Those who missed the meetings would communicate well in advance so as to avoid being fined. He also noted that participation in SILC activities was aided by other components of the project which kept members engaged since they were tagged alongside other SILC engagement activities. He for instance, cited food preparation demos as one of the pulling factors that attracted people to take part in other project activities such as SILC and VIPAT trainings. Interaction with FGD members from Mpoma I Cell, Ruborogota Parish, Ruborogota Sub-county

attests to this fact where they observed that their constitution was very strict on meeting attendance. One participant went as far as saying that they even want to adopt the practice of asking members to present evidence because there was a member who forged sickness but when it was investigated, it was confirmed that she was dodging to attend the meeting because she owed a member in the group and her repayment date was long overdue. Such cases of dishonesty were noted as areas where the group could start to disintegrate and as a result, committee leaders asked for members' indulgence to make provision of evidence such as medical forms a must for members missing meetings on medical grounds.

Indicator 3: 90% of the members in the 70 SILC groups have made savings of minimum UGX 500,000 (DKK 926)

Attempts to collect data on this indicator failed however, the evaluation team assessed related components which provided an insight into the activities of SILC group members. One area that was assessed was the proportion of members saving and borrowing from SILC groups. The findings revealed that both males and females saved with and borrowed money from SILC groups; females 62% and males 36%. It can therefore, be deduced that because majority; 494 (n=505) which is 98% of responses from both male and female respondents reported saving and borrowing from SILC groups, it is likely that a similar number of participants saved with SILC. It is therefore, logical that group members would only borrow what is saved which is likely to be less or above the minimum UGX 500,000 (DKK 926) envisaged at the project start

Figure 5: Savings and Borrowing from SILC Groups



Asked if they were facing challenges with finding money to save, FGD participants across the three sub-counties pointed to increasing cost of living which they attribute to increased fuel cost. They said prices of basic commodities are increasing every day and the retailers are telling them “Transport is expensive.” Views from FGDs were validated by a key informant from the district headquarters who blamed the high cost of living in the district on increasing fuel prices;

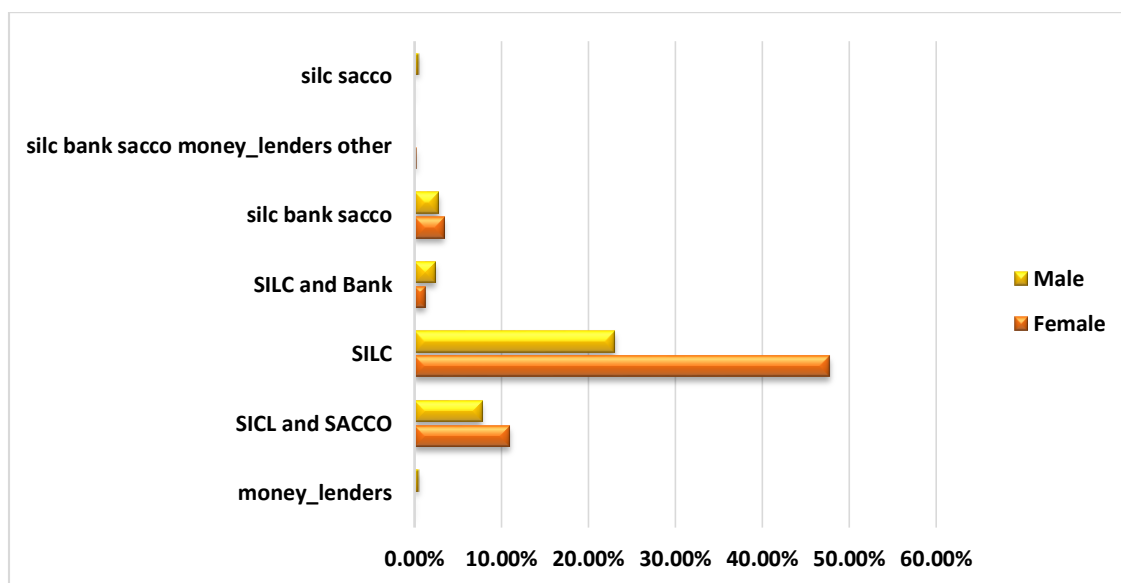
One thing that I know for sure is that fuel drives modern economy. You cannot buy diesel at over UGX5,500 (US\$ 1.43) and expect to make profits by charging the travelers cheaply if you are transporter – **Key informant interview, Isingiro DLG Official 28th/09/2023**

It is worth noting, most cargo trucks in Uganda have diesel engine. The KI’s view on fuel is a true reflection of the current situation on ground as fuel prices started rising more than two years ago; the period within which the project was being implemented. Prices rose from UGX3,700 (US\$0.97) for diesel to more than UGX8,000 (US\$2.09) before it started dropping gradually, reaching the current fluctuating rates of between UGX5,200 (US\$1.36) and UGX5,500 (US\$1.43) – source: Fuel pump price as of April 2024

Indicator 4: 70% of the members have taken loans to invest in small business, home improvement or education

Evaluation findings revealed where SILC group members preferred getting loans/borrowing. Survey respondents were asked where they would prefer to borrow money; majority of respondents 357 (n=505) said they borrowed from their SILC groups. A big number of respondents; 94 (n=505) said they borrow money from both SILC and SACCO. The rest of the respondents; 54 (n=505) said they borrowed money from other sources including money lenders.

Figure 6: Borrowing Preferences of Respondents



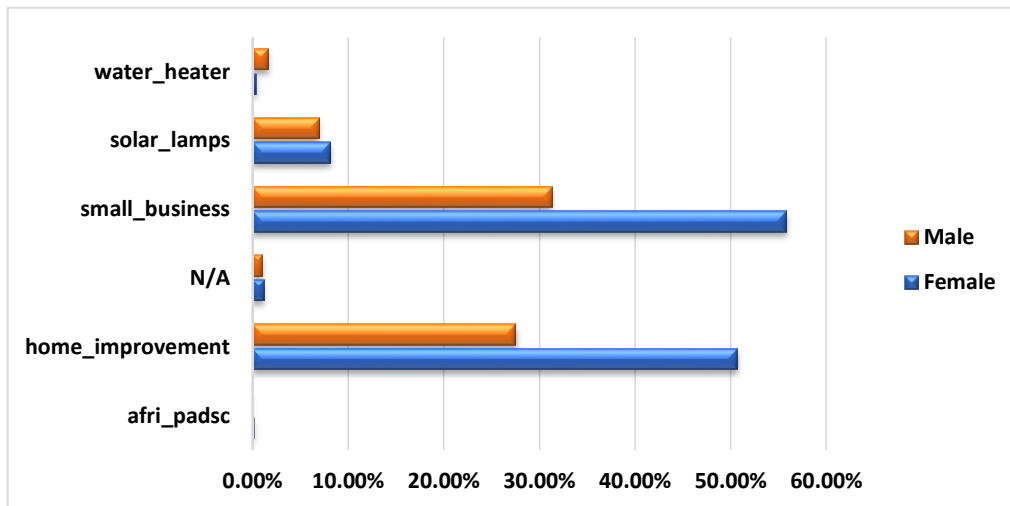
By comparison, more women (48%) said they borrowed money from their SILC groups against men (23%). Still, women borrowing from both SILC and SACCO (11%) were more than men (8%). Overall, the borrowing trend in the three-project intervention sub-counties indicated women borrowed more than men across all the credit sources respondents were assessed.

According to baseline data, self-help groups; commonly known as “Bataka” which SILC falls under, was the most preferred source for borrowing by farmers. In the baseline, Nyakitunda recorded 54 responses in favour, Ngarama and Ruborogota recorded 50 and 30 in that respective order. Another important source for borrowing which the baseline revealed was ‘friends’, here, Nyakitunda recorded 54 responses, 33 from Ruborogota and 30 from Ngarama. It should be noted, much as the endline did not consider borrowing from friends and family as an area worth assessing, it still forms a large source of income to many Ugandans. The Finscope survey between 2018 and 2023 revealed that seven out of every ten Ugandans were operating a personal budget deficit, stressing that they need more money than they are earning to cover their budget. According to the report, more Ugandans are relying on their family and friends, personal savings, and borrowing to manage their budget deficits than was the case in 2018. Comparing the baseline with endline data, ‘Bataka’ groups still form the most preferred source for borrowing largely due to ease of access, low interest rates and the idea of growing the ‘group’s’ financial pull to create more money. Members’ desire to borrow from their groups is also motivated by the hope of getting more money at the time of sharing; the more the profits a group makes in a year, the more members are given at the end of the cycle.

Further analysis of borrowing trends in Uganda points to a more interesting picture; women borrowing more than men from self-help groups. The significance of this find could reveal a very telling picture of how the role of women has shifted from home care to providing for their households. More women borrowing is justification that women are bearing more weight in a bid to provide for their families. The finding further corroborates FSD Uganda’s narrative of financial inclusion. FSD Uganda notes that, on the surface, overall financial inclusion trends in Uganda do not reveal a pronounced gender disparity, rather, a closer analysis of data shows a gap in the access to and usage of formal finance. The percentage of women depending exclusively on informal financial services (23%) is much higher than that of men (15%) due to prevailing economic and social factors. It can therefore, be concluded that the situation of women in Isingiro District, particularly those in the project sub-counties reflect the situation of women in Uganda with respect to access to finance from informal sectors which includes self-help groups such as SILC and SACCOs.

Respondents were further asked for the reasons why they borrowed money. The findings revealed that 78% said they borrowed money for home improvement; 87% said they borrowed to invest in their small businesses and 15% borrowed for buying solar lamps. Comparative analysis of the reason for borrowing by both men and women again shows women are taking a more center stage in ensuring that their households have the very basics of life even at the cost of borrowing.

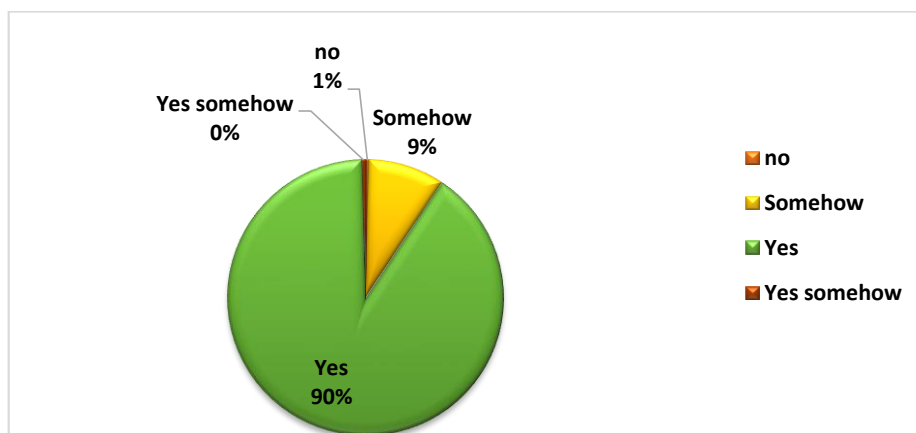
Figure 7: Reasons for Borrowing



The figure above shows gender distribution on the reasons survey respondents fronted for borrowing money from their groups. Women, 256 (n=505) which is 51% of respondents said they borrowed money for home improvement against men, 139 (n=505) which is 28% of respondents. Further, women, 282 (n=505) which is 56% of respondents said they borrowed money to invest in small businesses against men, 158 (n=505) which is 31% of respondents. Last but not least, women, 41 (n=505) which is 8% of respondents said they borrowed money to buy solar lamps against men, 35 (n=505) which is 7% of survey respondents. Although baseline survey respondents were not given the same choices when a similar question on the ‘reasons to borrow’ was asked, participants were asked, purchase of agricultural inputs was mentioned; Nyakitunda recorded 20 respondents who acquired money from SACCOs whereas Ngarama and Ruborogota had 15 and 10 respectively.

Endline evaluation also assessed the borrower’s capacity to pay back the loans. To which, the responses were presented below.

Figure 8: Ability to Repay Loans



When asked if they were able to pay back the borrowed money, 90% responded in affirmative, 9% said they were somehow able – this could imply they would pay but amidst difficulties. Only 2 (n=505) respondents said they would not be able to pay the loans. In trying to make sense of the 9% (n=45/505) who said they are “somehow” able to repay the loan, the evaluation and IASAD project team subjected this response to a brainstorming session to understand the real meaning of their response. Seven (54%) of the members involved in the session said it is likely that such members would go an extra mile to sell their valued assets such as land and other household items to repay the loan. They argued that, such individuals are credit worthy and thus, would not wish to be in public disrepute over failure to repay loans. This brainstorming session in itself revealed other dynamics of borrowing money, where, some borrowers and lenders/SILC groups do not carry out enough self-assessment and due diligence on the capacity to repay. The danger is that, if such credit facilities continue to be given out, the intention of increasing financial access to the population may end up causing more social problems than it will address.

In conclusion, SILC activities represent the most successful components of the project intervention. The initiative has increased access to finance which is in turn, improving household living standards and also increasing investment in small businesses. It has further bridged the financial inclusion gap between men and women as more women are accessing credit from SILC and SACCOs.

Objective 3: Effectiveness Discussed

This objective expected to build VIPAT members’ civic competence to ensure effective demand and supply of quality extension services as well as enjoyment of rights for everybody in their communities. The following indicators were measured

Indicator 1: *85% of VIPAT members report better dialogue with agricultural/extension officers on services*

One of the main objects of the project was, through the rights based approach, to empower community members to engaged actively with government and other service providers as they demand for better services. According to UNDP, the rights-based approach to development programming which the project adopted builds upon elements of traditional ‘good programming practice’, such as: emphasising the process as well as the outcome of programming; including the most marginalized in equitable service delivery; extending and deepening participation; ensuring local ownership of development processes; and strengthening the accountability of all actors. Evaluation findings revealed that the project was implemented, covering these principles where, sub-county leaders were involved in project activities, directly engaged them with beneficiaries.

Table 7: Respondents Participating in Dialogues with Extension Officers

Row Labels	Female	Male	Grand Total	%
No	10	4	14	3
Yes	310	181	491	97
Grand Total	320	185	505	100

An assessment of beneficiaries who attended dialogue meetings where leaders/duty bearers were invited recorded 97% of affirmative responses from survey respondents. Women, 310 (n=505) were the highest with 61% of respondents against men, 181 (n=505) of survey respondents; representing 36%. More women participating in dialogue meetings was informed by their active involvement in other project activities such as SILC and VIPAT trainings.

Indicator 2: *Duty bearers at local-government level act according to their responsibilities by providing VIPAT-like service*

The evaluation team attempted to assess this indicator by engaging with key informants at sub-county level. Research assistants were trained to probe the sub-county KIs in regard to their involvement with the project and how they viewed project activities as a complement of government interventions that they oversee their implementation. The duty bearers were also asked to point out, from this view point, where the project was strong that the government could borrow a leaf and also the weak areas that required fine tuning for future interventions. In their responses, they noted that the project had hit the right button; designed to address the local needs of community members in the target sub-counties.

Interventions of this project has helped us bridge the gaps created by the limited budget. As a sub-county, we do not have any direct income sources to help us respond to citizens' needs. Local revenue sources are very limited, mainly relying on weekly market collections, so, we rely on the central government through district allocations.

(Key informant interview; Ngarama sub-county, 19th/09/2023)

It is important to note that Uganda government's planning and budgeting process starts from local to national levels; village action points are fed into the parish agenda, from parish to sub-county, from sub-county to district and district to central government. The project approach of engaging the duty bearers from village to sub-county level is one way that local issues can be given the chance to appear in the budget framework paper for consideration. It was not therefore, not surprising that leaders at the grassroots lauded the project for helping them bring up issues which they would ordinarily fear to raise because of principles of collective responsibility which they have to adhere to while in active government service.

Indicator 3: MBHU staff and extension officers advise local communities on their rights and help claim them

The study also assessed the project activities with respect to implementation of citizens' rights awareness and how they are applying them through advocacy and public engagement foras. Interaction with project staff revealed that community members were sensitized on various human rights and civic competence topics including but not limited to; the right to demand for service from government, the right to participate in planning and decision making processes over issues that affect their welfare and the right to ask government and its employees to account for public resources through "Bararas" – literally meaning community dialogues where leaders are asked to account for their actions. Although the endline survey questionnaire did not assess respondent's level of access to extension service provided by government, the baseline did and the responses were as follows; respondents who had extension service providers included 5 (2%) females from each of the sub- counties of Ngarama, Nyakitunda and Ruborogota. Nyakitunda had 15 (4.39%) males with extension service providers followed by the 8 (2.34%) males from Ngarama and Ruborogota 6 (1.75%). Regardless of the absence of comparative figures from the endline, views from both KIs and FGD members suggest that there has been an improvement in the level of access to government extension services with respect to service delivery and human rights.

Survey respondents were also asked to highlight on which kind of rights messages they received from the trainings. A list of options was provided for them to choose.

Table 8: Messages Delivered in Rights Awareness Training

Human Rights messages	Ngarama	Nyakitunda	Ruborogota	Grand Total	%
child_rights_awareness	151	99	81	331	66
humans_rights_for_all	205	154	111	470	93
other	20	13	15	48	10
women_rights_awareness_GBV	184	98	84	366	73
Grand Total	215	171	119	505	

From the table above, survey respondents had options to select all that applied in a list of possible suggestions they were required to respond. A big number of survey respondents; 331 (n=505) – 66% said they received messages on child rights awareness; 470 (n=505) which is 93% of respondents said they received messages on human rights for all and 366 (n=505) which is 73% acknowledged receiving messages on women's rights including GBV. Comparing evaluation findings with Uganda Police Crime Report 2023, there were 14,681 cases of domestic violence recorded, sex related violence was 14,846 and child related offences at 10,741. This therefore points that the choice of awareness topics were spot on as it touched areas where rights were being abused most.

Participants in an FGD in Nyakitunda acknowledged that they were oriented/sensitized on their rights to access government services but also urged to seek and utilize the services appropriately.

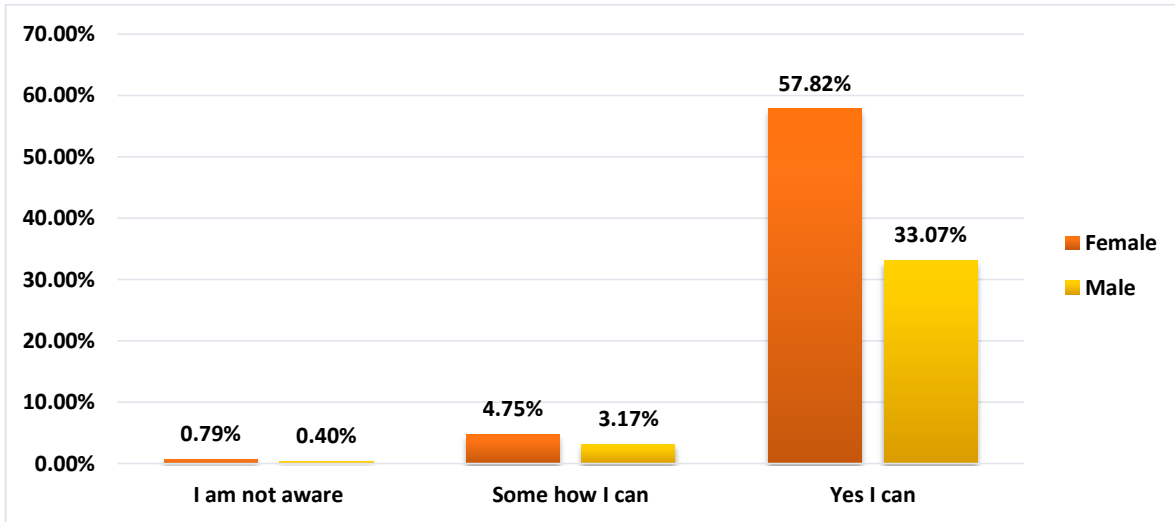
“...the trainers also told us not to misuse the information we were being given by demanding for what we do not need. They told us the government and other development partners get annoyed when they provide a service and we do not utilize because it leads to wastage of public and donor resources. We were warned if such a thing happens, we would suffer in future because the government and other development partners would not come to our rescue when we need help. They told us to only demand for things that we can use when provided...” **FGD in Omukihangire Cell, Bugongi Parish, Nyakitunda Sub-county, 22nd/09/2023.**

Indicator 4: *VIPAT members aware of human rights and actively engaged in promoting them for neighbours*

Human rights advocacy is any activity that aims to create or implement human rights norms, law, or policy. At the heart of human rights advocacy is effective use of information and shifting power dynamics. Taking this definition and the success factor of human rights advocacy being information, local communities especially in a developing country like Uganda hold more power to make their advocacy issues count. This is because, they reside where majority of problems are found including but not limited to; high incidence of domestic violence, child rights abuses such as defilement, poor service delivery by government and deliberate actions that hinder their involvement in decisions making processes over issues that directly affect them. Empowering community members to know and understand that they hold the power to change their deplorable conditions is a big step towards bridging the gap between rights holders and duty bearers.

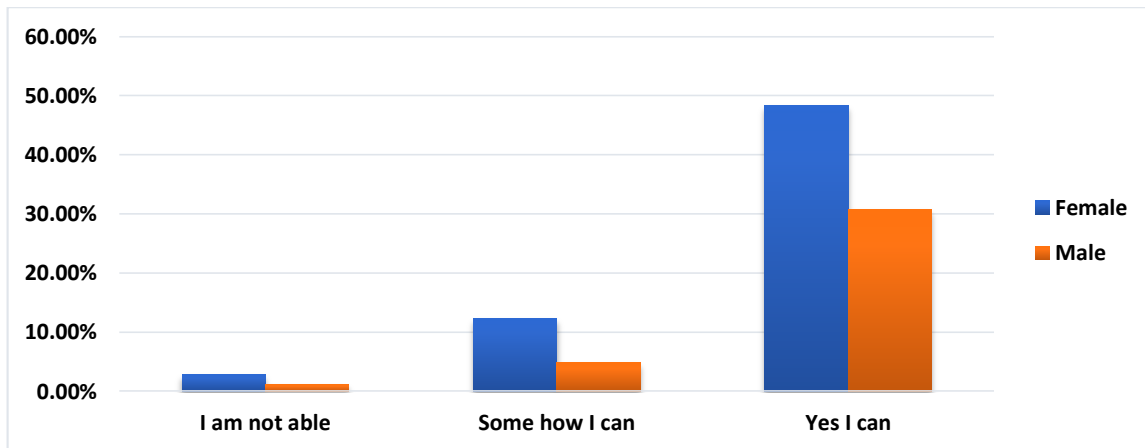
Endline evaluation assessed beneficiaries' ability to engage duty bearers through dialogue and advocacy activities. The variable measured was their ability to speak out on issues that affect them as individuals and as communities. Survey respondents were asked to choose from a list of three options; “I am not aware”, “Somehow I can” and “Yes I can.” The findings revealed that 91% of respondents; 459 (n=505) said they can speak out on issues that affect their rights. Comparing female and male respondents; female 292 (n=505) accounted for 58% against 33% of male respondents who said they can advocate for rights. 8 percent of respondents said they can somehow advocate and 1 percent said they are not aware that they can advocate for their rights

Figure 9: Ability to Speak-up of Rights Issues



Survey respondents were further asked if they can advocate for rights for other people. A total of 79% of respondents said they can, 17% said they can somehow and 4% said they are not able to advocate for others' rights as presented in the figure below;

Figure 10: Ability to Advocate for Rights for Others



In conclusion therefore, the project's design adopting to integrate a rights-based approach in its implementation was a smart move that served to ensure all fundamental aspects of human rights were covered by the intervention activities. One would argue of what benefit it is for a person

to have food security when his/her rights are being abused unknowingly. Empowering people economically and socially which the project adopted attests to its design strengths. Implementation challenges could have affected the desired end of the project purpose but that does not take away the fact that this project's overall purpose was achieved to a greater extent as according to the baseline, the level of female respondents participating in decision making was low compared to men. Overall participation by each gender was very low across all the sub-counties of intervention. Overall, in the baseline, only 12% of males participated in decision making processes of their community against 9% of females. According to the findings above, individuals and by extension majority of community members are able to express themselves and speak out on the issues that affect their welfare.



Promotion and demonstration of energy-saving brick stoves

The IASAD project had another important component that looked at protecting and conserving the environment. This involved training project beneficiaries on how to make and utilize energy saving brick-stoves to provide households with wood efficient cooking stoves. According to the world Bank Uganda Wood Overview Report 2019, domestic cooking consumes the largest share of wood (about 27 metric tonnes) annually, followed by industrial use estimated at 2.7 tonnes, while commercial consumption is estimated at 2.36 tonnes. Ugandan institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, army and small medium enterprises like confectionaries and brick-making are also some of the ever-growing users of fuelwood. Most of these institutions buy from traders with no regard to the source of the wood. In Uganda, it is not uncommon to see trucks of firewood entering urban areas, most of which probably harvested illegally from public forests, woodlands, riverine forests and farmers' gardens. Review of literature suggests that some of the above reasons are what motivated the project designers to integrate environmental conservation component in the project. This data compares well with the project's baseline data where; 310 (n=341) which is 90% of respondents said they use firewood to cook – this is a near accurate finding because it is estimated that 90% of households in Uganda use firewood and charcoal to cook. Further, the baseline also revealed that 239 (n=341) which is 69% of survey respondents

said they obtained their firewood from forests and 26 (n=341) which is 8% said they got from their own farms.

The evaluation team made efforts to assess the performance of this components vis sa vis planned activities. Review of the application showed that this activity was to be one of the performance measurement areas that the success of SILC would be measured; the number of SILC beneficiary households introduced to useful high-benefit household investments including the means with which meals are prepared – quality. In the evaluation, we assessed whether in the first place, beneficiaries were trained on how to make energy saving cook stoves and whether they were sensitized on the benefits

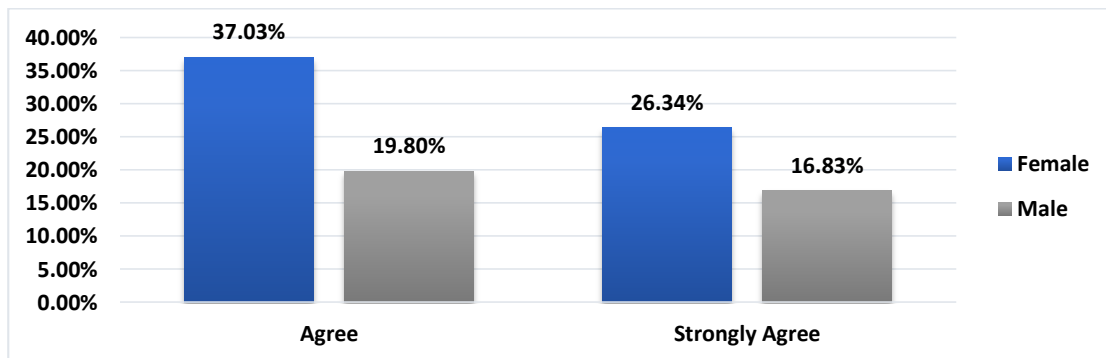
Table 9: Members who received training smart energy stove making

Row Labels	Female	Male	Grand Total	%
No	60	27	87	17
Yes	260	158	418	83
Grand Total	320	185	505	100

Respondents were asked to confirm if indeed the trainings took place. From the table above 418 (n=505) which is 83% of respondents acknowledged taking part in the training and only 87 (17%) said otherwise. Females; 260 (n=505) which 52.5% of respondents acknowledged attending the trainings compared to 31.3% of men acknowledging the same. It is logical that more women attended this training because they are the ones who bear the brunt of looking for firewood. So, any initiative that works to save them will always be a welcome idea.

We also assessed whether the respondents saw any relevance of using energy efficient cook stoves in their households. This question sought to understand whether the beneficiaries appreciated the training, invested in the cook stoves and are actually using them effectively. The figure below presents their responses

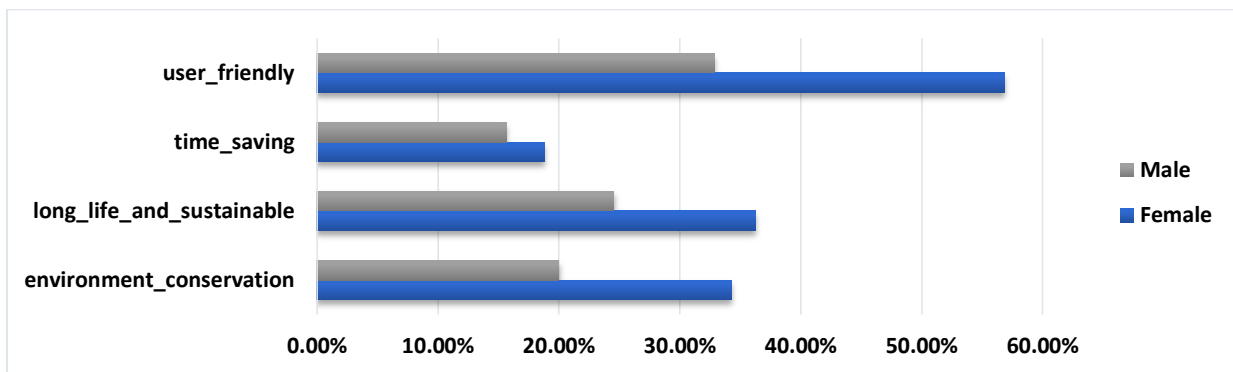
Figure 11: Relevance of smart energy stoves to households



The figure above shows how the beneficiary households perceived the use of energy saving stoves. Respondents were given two options; “Agree” and strongly agree.” Still, women scored high in both sets of answers compared to men; female 37% (n=505) and males 20% (n=505) for those who agreed. For strongly agree, females 26% (n=505) and males 17% (n=505) were reported. Baseline data presented some interesting find where men were reported to be more involved in collecting firewood. For instance, females; 115 (n=341) which is 34% of respondents reported collecting firewood from the forests compared to males; 130 (n=341) which is 38% of respondents. This finding could point out to the changing role of women in the families. In rural Uganda today, it is common to find families tilling the land together in the morning then in the afternoon, mostly women are engaged in their informal businesses as the men take time off to join leisure parks such as drinking joints. It is therefore, possible that some men, take the responsibility of fetching firewood in the afternoon while their wives go for their informal businesses before they join colleagues for leisure.

Finally, the evaluation team also assessed the survey respondents whether smart energy stoves benefited the environment. The responses are presented in the figure below

Figure 12: Importance of smart energy stoves on environment



A list suggesting the importance of smart energy cook stoves was provided to the survey participants to choose from. Highest among the choices was that the stoves are user friendly; followed by durability, environmental conservation and time saving came last. One most important benefit of smart energy stove on the environment is reduced high risk of environmental degradation. As earlier noted, more than 90% of households rely on firewood as energy source for cooking. Therefore, having a technology which is wood fuel efficient has a direct impact on the environment; reduced cutting of trees with all its trickle-down effect.

6.0 SECTION SIX: PROJECT EFFICIENCY

6.1 Introduction

In simple terms, efficiency means doing the right thing in the right way. Efficiency measures how well and productively resources are used to achieve set goals. The assessment of Project efficiency under this project focused on how well the various activities transformed the available resources into the intended results or outputs, in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness. The efficiency of the project was evaluated by assessing how the project's resources/inputs such as funds, expertise, and time were converted into results.

6.2 Parameters of Project efficiency

- i. *Operational work-plan, and budget management*
- ii. *The quality of information management and reporting.*
- iii. *Staff technical capacity*
- iv. *Quality of Monitoring/Logical framework to Monitor and Evaluate the project*
- v. *Human resource and Staff skills*

6.3 Implementation of Project Activities

According to findings from the interviews carried out from the staff of MBHU, there was evidence of clear understanding of the objectives of the Project as it aimed at improving living standards and ensure sustainability for farmer households in Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama Sub-Counties in Isingiro District and, empowering people in the local communities to obtain the services and freedoms they are entitled.

In evaluating the project's efficiency, the consultants assessed the existence of a work plan, implementation framework, budget and financial accountabilities as one of the parameters to measure efficiency. From the assessment, the consultants verified that the project had an operational work plan, budget and financial accountabilities which were some of the key tools to facilitate efficiency of work. Also, efficiency was assessed by looking at budget performance (budgets against outputs), the income source, and the costs of the programme activities against known benchmarks and the proportion of programmatic costs versus management costs.

The project also had Monitoring and Evaluation Officer who guided the project team's performance and quality management. Through the M&E Officer, we were able to obtain progress information that was documented over the implementation. Although we could not find a standard project logframe in place, the team was able to use the OVIs that was attached to the application and this guided this evaluation.

Human Resource Management and staff skills to manage the project: Human Resource is one of the parameters to ascertain the project efficiency. At the time of evaluation, some project staff had left the organisation due to better offers, this however, did not affect the implementation and project performance because MBHU was able to retain key staff that understood the project

well. New staff that joined the project were well oriented into the project and carried on well effectively and efficiently.

Key Stakeholders, especially local leaders were adequately informed about the project activities and participated in the planning and monitoring of activities. Similarly, lower-level stakeholders, such as village level leaders were involved in the local level implementation of project activities. No project activity would be implemented without prior knowledge of the lower-level stakeholders; particularly those at the sub-county level.

6.4 Financial accountability

Taking a process evaluation approach, we engaged the Finance Department to describe how effective and efficient the project funds were managed and utilized. Our findings established that MBHU has Financial Management Policy which provides finance principles and procedures required for preparation of financial information. Finance and Administration Officer said a Concept note is always made giving details of activities to be executed or expenses that are expected to be paid and that all payments must be made on the basis of request for funds. The Officer outlined among other documents; approved activity plans, approved budget, local purchase order, an original invoice or delivery note as support for all request for payment.

After this process, the finance officer then verifies and recommends all requests for payment to the relevant authorities for approval. Upon receiving the above documents, the payments are then initiated by the accountant and effected through means such as issuance of cheques and other electronic procedures. Finance Department said payments were done as demonstrated below;

- Payment for contractual services were done through Cheques or electronic transfers
- For workshops, whenever they got an approved requisition detailing the activities and expenses to be covered in the field like hotel fees, allowances, transport refund to participants, fuel, trainer fees and so on, payments were made to the hotels through directly using an agreed channel of payment.
- Payment of staff salary. The payroll was prepared by the Finance and Admin Officer, checked by the Project Manager, approved by the ED. Payments were then made through electronic fund transfer to the respective staff accounts.
- Request for cash advance was prepared by the concerned employee, approved by the finance officer and authorized by the executive director or deputy director.

Accountability

The payment vouchers were raised from the system containing reason for payment with the correct amount that was requested and properly chargeable to specific heading. Support documents like invoices, LPO, Goods Received Note, receipts, requisition form and activity

reports were attached to the payment voucher. The payment voucher would then be signed by the responsible person, the Finance Officer and the ED.

7.0 SECTION SEVEN: SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROJECT

7.1 Introduction

This section tries to explain various factors expected to contribute to the sustainability of the project interventions on different aspects. It was observed from the field study that there are several issues that were likely to contribute to the sustainability of the project at the grassroots level even in the absence of direct interventions. The evaluation of sustainability was based on the following objectives.

7.1.2 Criteria for Measuring Sustainability

The evaluation of the sustainability component was measured using the following criteria;

- 1) *The ownership objectives and achievements including the extent stakeholders were consulted.*
- 2) *Leadership arrangement at the grassroots Level.*
- 3) *Financial sustainability*
- 4) *Technical (technology) issues.*
- 5) *Local authorities in the sustainability of the project*

7.2: Sustainability of the project through government institutional structures

Observation and interactions with government staff at the district and sub-county levels revealed that the project had government backing. Institutional personnel at district and lower local government praised the project for involving them in their activities and, pledged continued support to project implementation structures such as SILC and VIPAT groups which will remain in the community even after the termination. This level of commitment by government personnel to continue overseeing project activities after termination is a rarity in Uganda; it takes for a project whose implementation team was close to the government personnel to achieve.

7.3 sustainability of SILC and VIPAT activities

The project had well established SILC and VIPAT management structures to keep them active long after the project has terminated. SILC management structure is for instance hinged on their respective constitutions which are approved by group members. Every decision in the SILC group is guided by this constitution, making it difficult for individuals with self-interests to derail their operations. Likewise, VIPAT activities were closely implemented with the involvement of government local structures such as sub-county and village level leaders. These too, were integrated into the project system and have been integral to the project's success. It is therefore,

fair to say the sense of ownership at SILC and VIPAT activities by both community and government personnel will ensure project sustainability beyond its lifespan.

7.3 Sustainability of Integrated Agriculture and Livelihoods

Various trainings conducted by IASAD in the project sub-counties were intended to enhance sustainability. Review of the project progress reports highlight trainings in proper agronomy and organic management, identification and management of pests and diseases and marketing of produce. A considerable number of project beneficiaries trained on farming topics were applying these practices; females taking the lead, according to observations from their garden practices. The youth have also engaged themselves in practicing of the trained practices especially in using local methods to manage pests and diseases. Through trainings, farmers have adopted the practice of planting of crops (maize, beans among others) in lines other than the usual way of scattering seeds that was a common practice before. This has also been done by farmers who do not belong to the project due to the beauty that it comes with. Spacing was not an issue before but after the trainings, farmers considered proper spacing of crops. As a result, farmers have noted the benefits of proper spacing and planting in lines. *“My maize cobs grow bigger now days because of proper spacing and ensuring that they are in proper lines...”* one of the farmers happily testified in Ruborogota.

Training of different project implementation structures such as SILC leadership in community mobilisation and sustainability strategies strengthened the ownership of the project at the grassroots. In addition, during the implementation of project, committee leaders were identified and assigned roles based on individual capacity. All these structures of competent leaders will ensure the project stays after termination.

8.0 SECTION EIGHT: CROSSCUTTING ISSUES, LESSONS LEARNT AND CHALLENGES

8.1 Introduction

In this evaluation, some cross cutting issues as well as lessons that can inform future project implementation were identified. Also identified are the challenges that were encountered in project implementation, which form the basis for learning and project replicability. Arising out of the evaluation results and challenges encountered in project implementation, recommendations have been generated aimed at promoting sustainability of project benefits, scaling-up and replicability.

8.2 Cross Cutting Issues

In this evaluation, we considered gender and disability as key cross cutting issues

Efforts were made to mainstream gender and disability issues from the project start throughout the project implementation. At the time of beneficiary identification, project staff were encouraged to ensure women, men, youth and disabled were incorporated in all project activities. However, IASAD project complained of inadequate participation of men and youth in project activities. They observed that men often sent their wives to represent them. Various mechanisms were put in place including joint mobilization with other key stakeholders, although this did not yield much positive result. This possibly explains why women made the majority of survey and FGD respondents/participants.

8.3 Lesson Learnt and Best Practice

The success, effectiveness and sustainability of grassroots projects will depend on formation of leadership committees and, raining of project implementation committees and farmer groups is critical for sustainable agriculture and livelihoods. The activities directed at the strengthening and development of individual and community participation through rights-based approach as well as addressing gaps and bringing various actors such as political leaders, local council leaders and district leaders, along the value chain together has immense potential for creating a sustainable environment toward reaching the program goal and objectives.

It is worth noting that, Leadership and effective participation of local leaders in project implementation is critical not only in ensuring smooth undertaking of activities but also eventual sustainability. Available evidence shows that SILC and other project formed groups were characterized by active involvement of community leaders at all levels and group leaders. Through joint monitoring, follow ups, group visitation etc. there were key motivations and commitment that were created by group leaders themselves.

8.3 Challenges faced during Project Implementation

Most group members interviewed during this Endline evaluation reported long period of no rain that destroyed their crops. This affected many members who expected to use money from sales of produce to repay their loans and even made the cost of living at home high since they had to buy food that they would have got from their gardens.

Some committee members are inactive and have little contribution towards managing of project activities for sustainability. Some often-missed group meetings which affected the operations of these groups as decision making would be delayed pending recommended attendance to make up the quorum for any action point to be adopted. Likewise, it also hindered the effective sharing of ideas, opinions, knowledge and skills for better performance.

Poor soils, pests, diseases and weather variability still hold to be a major challenge to farmers; there are cases where there was persistent drought. Likewise, some farmer groups complained of poor crop harvests as a result of pests and diseases. It should be noted, due to climate change effects, there are many new pests and diseases that emerge time and again, making it hard for the authorities and farmers to be prepared for unknown enemies at all times.

Market linkages and market information for the project beneficiaries was inadequately addressed. One of the aims of the project was to create market linkages between farmers and buyers (markets). There was insufficient market intelligence among farmers resulting into farmers selling their produce at low prices and very often at the farm gate.

Increased cost of fuel affected the project operations. As noted earlier in this report, increase in fuel prices automatically drives the cost of other goods and services higher. This project was no exception as it started in Covid-19 situation.

Covid-19 rendered a big blow to the successful implementation of the project in the early stages. It can be argued that the project could have achieved more had the situation been normal.

9.0 SECTION NINE: RECOMMNDATIONS

9.1 Introduction

The evaluation team presents its conclusions and recommendations based on the substantive evidence presented in answering the questions that IASAD raised in its TORs.

9.2 Recommendations

The following form the thrust of the evaluation teams' recommendations based on the findings from the various instruments.

MBHU should plan for more follow up activities in the subsequent projects. Some groups reported that the follow up by the project team was not enough. Although these cases were not wide spread, the complaint by project beneficiaries should not be taken lightly in future projects since they affect project achievements.

Exchange visits to successful groups and individuals either within or outside the project location should be organized since it enhances replication. Exposure and cross-learning give rare opportunities for experiential learning through sharing of experience.

Expanding the project reach to other sub-counties within the district so as to cover the entire district. The officials in government institutions argued that expanding the project to other sub-counties increases the chances of sustainability through information sharing and adoption.

Although women have benefited from IASAD interventions, women participation in future project activities needs to be actively upheld by ensuring that gender is a key criterion for project formation during mobilization.

There are still problems with linkage to markets especially through bulking; some farmers prefer to sell at farm gate, reportedly due to lower costs involved in practice but for many others it was because of need for immediate cash. To ensure that farmers are linked to profitable markets in a bid to strengthen and develop market linkages, the evaluation team recommends that MBHU should build the market forecasting capacity of farmers and produce buyers.

With regard to increased incomes for the vulnerable resulting from better productivity and SILCs, MBHU should consider the development of sensitization packages targeting both men and women beneficiaries of the program, focusing on control of and decision making on household resource and management of savings. In addition, influencing the gender balance to increase women participation in project activities and farmer groups at the grassroots.

Involve the beneficiaries and key stakeholders such as farmers and government officials during the planning process. As it has been mentioned in the earlier sections, farmers should continue to be involved and asked on what they can grow and what is favorable on their soils.

MBHU should carry out market research to provide ready market to the smallholder farmers. The biggest challenge during implementation was the lack of market for smallholder farmers.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: REFERENCES/BIOGRAPHY

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