

PROMISING RESILIENCE PRACTICES



PEACE, PROSPERITY AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION



Pastoralists appreciating education in Karamoja. Credit: KDF Pictures 2018

Enhancing Employability through Informal Vocational Skills Training

Introduction

Livelihoods for the youth in Karamoja are changing from traditional agro-pastoralism and shifting towards other livelihood opportunities, particularly in urban centres. However, urbanisation does not mean a definitive abandonment of rural livelihoods. It has resulted in livelihood adaptations and diversification that take into account the growing importance of the trading centres. Livelihood diversification is a risk management strategy that complements the crop and livestock production systems and is important for long-term development and resilience in the drylands.

Many youths migrate to trading and urban centres seeking casual jobs. Although the growth of trading centres presents employment opportunities, the youth lack the skills and knowledge to harness them. Low education rates in Karamoja have resulted in high levels of illiteracy. Only 25 percent of the population in Karamoja is literate, the lowest in Uganda.

Without formal education, it is difficult for the youth to access formal vocational skills training. There is, therefore, a need to provide vocational and informal training to equip communities and individuals with the skills and competences

needed to enhance employability, productivity and income without undue emphasis on educational certificates.



INTERVENTION AREA

Enhanced production and livelihood diversification



LOCATION

Karamoja sub-region



STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

- International and local NGOs, e.g. International Rescue Committee (IRC), DanChurch Aid, C&D, Caritas Kotido, Concern Worldwide, Matheniko Development Forum (MADEFO)
- Local communities
- Development partners, e.g. Belgian Technical Cooperation and Irish Aid
- District Local Governments

Methodological Approach

1. Delivering the training at community level to encourage participation and attendance of the youth.
2. Setting flexible timings to enable beneficiaries to attend

trainings without interfering with other productive and domestic responsibilities, and to account for seasonal shifts in the calendars of beneficiaries.

3. Ensuring that at least half the participants are women so that they too are empowered.
4. Having technical facilitators to train the beneficiaries.
5. Training is sequenced as follows:
 - Life skills training for all beneficiaries which focuses on building foundational skills like communication, goal visualisation and problem-solving.
 - Functional adult literacy classes if they require basic reading and writing skills and understanding of numeracy, or directly into vocational skills training.
 - Business skills training which supports youth to identify income generating activities for their skills. This component has a sub-component on Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA).
6. Beneficiaries choose the enterprise based skills they want to develop either; (a) On-farm skills e.g. agronomy, animal health, small livestock, and apiculture or (b) Off-farm skills e.g. block making, bicycle repair, snack making, installation of solar panels and carpentry. Other skills include hospitality, snack making for females in the peri-urban settings.
7. Link groups to financial resources to access funds needed to start business (mainly youth grants) or encourage them to start a VSLA.
8. Provide starter kits for some enterprises such as carpentry, block making, bicycle repair.

Results

- The beneficiary youth in regular employment increased by nearly 20 percent to 53 percent. The proportion of females in regular employment increased by 17 percent and males by 20 percent by the end of the four-year period.
- Improved competence in basic literacy and numeracy.
- Beneficiaries started businesses e.g. block making.
- Greater engagement in productive activities has increased household incomes.
- Reduced reliance on charcoal and firewood sales as income source.
- Improved numeracy and literacy made beneficiaries more confident in handling money, budget, cost, etc.
- Beneficiaries (mainly women) are able to do basic tasks like reading to select the correct health card for a sick child to take to hospital.
- Non-formal skills development is adopted widely by NGOs and government agencies in the region.

Validation

An independent evaluation through focus group discussion and informant interviews with beneficiaries and partners found that the beneficiaries were generally very satisfied with all the training they received.

Success Factors

- Enterprise based skills development with emphasis on practical learning to ensure that beneficiaries master the necessary skills to work independently after the training.
- Delivering training at community level to facilitate participation of women and girls.
- Flexible training times to enable beneficiaries to attend without interfering with other productive and domestic obligations.
- Integrating life skills (e.g. conflict resolution and peace-building, gender issues, environmental conservation, and hygiene and sanitation, etc.), functional adult literacy and business skills in the vocational (technical) skills training programme.
- Encouraging beneficiaries to take up training that is relevant to their setting (i.e. rural or urban) to enable them convert the skills gained into successful business enterprises.
- Encouraging members to participate in VSLAs in order to enhance access to credit to start their businesses.

Constraints

Some skills/enterprises require starter kits e.g. carpentry, block making, bicycle repair.

Sustainability and Replicability

Skills development has been taken up by more donors in line with the Skilling Uganda Policy e.g. Belgian Technical Cooperation and Irish Aid which are engaging local training providers and private sector actors to jointly and in a flexible way organise relevant and qualitative trainings to 2,000 youth across the region.

Additional Information

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