

**A NARRATIVE REPORT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER
(JULY – SEPTEMBER)**

**SCALING UP and OUT SUSTAINABLE FARMING METHODS FOR IMPROVED
FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION AND INCOME AMONG NINETY WOMEN IN
HOIMA DISTRICT.**



PROJECT LOCATION OF THE PROJECT: Itara Village, Busiisi Sub-County Hoima District, Western Uganda.

REPROTING PERIOD: July-September 2016

SUBMITTED TO: Quaker Service Australia

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Author: Nakakande Josephine- project co-ordinator

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Eco-Agric Uganda is scaling up and out sustainable farming methods for improved food security, nutrition and income among 90 women in Hoima District. This aims at assisting communities to achieve a greater quality of life through improved food security, nutrition, income, water quality and reduction in poverty levels. The project is targeting ninety people in Itara village of Busiisi sub-county and is a continuation of a project that started in January 2015. During its initiation in 2015, the project started working with 30 women headed households but currently, the project is working with 90 households and 70% of these are women headed households. Eco-Agric Uganda is grateful to the Quaker Services Australia, which has been providing funding for the project from inception. However, the Australian government is providing 48,996,990/= through the Quaker Services Australia for the project that is being implemented from July 2016- June 2017. In this first quarter, 15,286,700/= was received for the implementation of project activities.

The project extension started on 1st July 2016 with sensitisation meetings to the target population, and latter, demonstration and Farmer Field School host farmers were selected by the group members. The FFS are being used to enhance learning on sustainable beans and maize production and they will be one acre each. After host farmers were selected, fields were prepared and are being planted as rains have now started.

Trainings in sustainable crop production, agro-forestry, poultry production and making energy saving cook stoves were conducted. Improved sustainable practices ranging from land preparation to harvesting are being promoted for improved sustainable agriculture production.

Procurement and distribution of improved crop varieties for FFS and DS has been done successfully. Increasing access to saving and credit has also been done with women in the old group (Tukurakurane group) starting a new savings cycle. The two new groups have also started saving, while trainings in business management training to all groups are still on going. Promotion of energy saving cook stoves is being done through their construction to reduce on the amount of fuel used in cooking as well as conserving the environment.

We are proud to have hosted Ragna Gilmour from Australia during the quarter, who came to monitor the project activities. We are happy and grateful for the technical guidance especially on permaculture plus soil and water conservation that she gave to the implementing team.

Acronyms

DS: Demonstration Site

FFS: Farmer Field School

GAP: Good Agronomic Practices

OFSP: Orange Fleshed Sweet Potatoes

PHH: Post Harvest Handling

TDS: Technology Development Site

QSA: Quaker Service Australia

VSLA: Village Savings and Loans Association

PROGRESS OF THE PROJECT

During this quarter, the project had a very good kick off with sensitization meetings conducted in Itara village. In the meetings, there was introduction of the project extension to the beneficiaries and the village local leaders. Earlier on, a number of consultations had been done with all beneficiaries on which enterprises that beneficiaries would be engaged in were selected. During the meeting, the objectives of project extension and planned interventions were clearly communicated to the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries and community members welcomed the project extension and pledged to provide maximum co-operation during project implementation to ensure success. The beneficiaries and community further promised to abide by the laid down procedures governing the project implementation most especially child protection.



Group members during a sensitization meeting

TRAININGS

Training on sustainable crop production: During this quarter 15 trainings on sustainable crop production were conducted by the project coordinator and field officer. While mobilizing beneficiaries for trainings, radio and telephone calls were used for communication. Five trainings were conducted to each of the three groups rotationally in household's demonstration and Farmer Field Schools. Farmers have been trained on using ecologically friendly farming methods, which do not harm the environment, with more emphasis on permaculture. During trainings the importance of sustainable agriculture was also emphasized especially the different ways in which different agricultural practices alter the environment positively or negatively; and the different sustainable conservation farming practices that are economically viable and environmentally friendly. In this project, more emphasis is being put on increasing income through planting better crops, lowering production costs, increasing yields, lowering costs of sales and increasing the selling prices, while creating a healthier environment by reducing the amount of smoke produced, and pesticides used.



A technical staff demonstrating bucket irrigation. Florence harvesting her tomatoes

Trainings on poultry production: Three trainings on poultry production through semi-intensive method have also been done by the project coordinator & the Field Officer to enhance mixed farming.



Florence with her chicken



A demonstration on poultry management

Training on agroforestry: Six demonstration trainings specifically on Agro-forestry were conducted among the 90 women (three women groups) still by the project coordinator & field officer rotationally in households, demonstrations and farmer field schools. Trainings were mainly about the key criteria for agroforestry practices like frost buffers, windbreaks, alley cropping & forest farming. In this quarter, farmers started developing an agroforestry work plan.

Degree to which the outcome was achieved: The outcome was 100% achieved because all the trainings were conducted timely and successfully.

Constraints/hindrances: There were no constraints that prevented the outcomes being achieved

Lessons learned: capacity building especially in the local language is important in the adoption of the different technologies promoted

Challenge in achieving this outcome: The prolonged drought extended the planting period. Since most women are illiterate, establishing an agro-forestry work plan was challenging

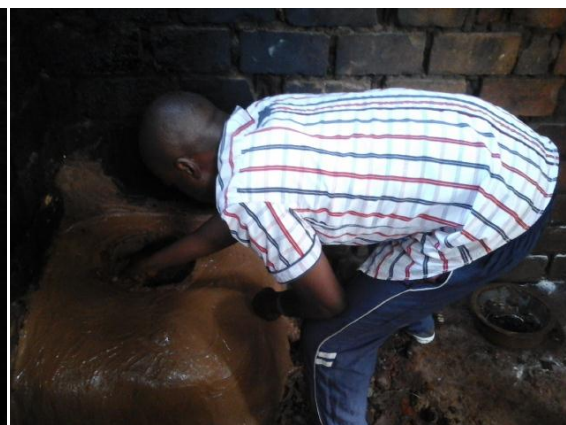
ENERGY SAVING COOK STOVES

Lorena energy saving stove is one of the important techniques in reducing carbon emissions while saving energy. They use little wood during cooking as they provide for the use of two to three cooking places at the same fire hence cooks faster, economises fire wood, while producing less smoke.

It is easy to use, affordable, and environmentally friendly and reduce the risk of children from accidents like burning because the fire is shielded. These stoves are constructed with a simple chimney so that smoke is emitted outside the kitchen reducing the risk of respiratory diseases. Because of the above advantages, Eco-AgriC Uganda is promoting construction and use of energy saving cook stoves among the beneficiaries. This is also helping beneficiaries to stop or reduce deforestation, save on the money spent to buy charcoal and wood plus the time spent collecting firewood.



Women preparing the mud to make a cook stove. Women working together to construct the stove



At a stage of removing banana stems

A field officer finishing the saving stove

Degree to which the outcome was achieved. The activity was 100% achieved whereby the targeted six energy saving cook stoves were constructed as demonstrations and other beneficiaries have adopted the technology

The **reason** for the success was the technology selected is using locally available cheap materials which could be afforded by all the members. Such include couch grass, clay or anthill soils, sweet potato leaves, banana stems and water.

The contributing **factors** were: the beneficiaries highly welcomed the technology and were ready to participate at all times. Timely preparation of the required materials and the trainings conducted prior to the demonstration made all the necessary applications easy.

Constraints/hindrances: The technology needs a lot of water hence women found it hard fetching water for the construction of the stoves.

Lessons learnt

The demonstrations made in a group enabled members to transfer the technology to their homes quickly. Group work reduces on the time spent when carrying out the activity

Challenge in achieving this outcome; The water sources were far away which was hectic for most of the beneficiaries to construct the stoves.

Progress towards sustainability

All beneficiaries have learnt how to construct the stoves hence replication to other households is very easy.

DEMONSTRATIONS/FARMER FIELD SCHOOLS.

20 bags of Orange Fleshed Sweet Potatoes, 30 bags cassava stems and 675 tree seedlings were purchased and distributed to the beneficiaries.

Three Demonstration gardens of quarter an acre were set up to enhance educational efforts by providing hands-on learning experiences. These were to provide opportunities for meaningful training to the farmers. On the demonstration site, the host farmers provided land, the group members provided labour and the trainers from Eco-Agri Uganda provided improved inputs and technical knowledge.

Famer Field Schools: Three farmer field schools were also set up to enhance learning on sustainable crop and poultry production. They were quarter an acre each and were to foster participatory and interactive learning. They were sites where information about Integrated Pest Management practices, cropping systems improvement, agro-forestry, soil and water conservation and best agronomic practices in maize and beans were disseminated. They are providing farmers with the opportunity to learn together, using practical, hands-on methods of discovery learning. They are emphasizing observation, discussion, analysis, collective decision-making, presentation and taking appropriate action while combining local indigenous knowledge with new concepts, and bringing both into decision-making. The process has also built self confidence among women, encouraged group control over the process, and leaving behind group and community skills when the FFS was completed.



A FFS of OFSP intercropped with cassava A FFS of OFSP as a monocrop

Degree to which the outcome was achieved: The outcome was 100% achieved because all the quantities planned were purchased, distributed and planted by the beneficiaries.

The reason for the success was having a reliable source of the planting materials, availability of funds that facilitated early booking of seedlings at the nursery bed and presence of technical staff that were responsible for the identification, procurement and distribution of the items. The beneficiaries were willing to host the demonstration sites and farmer field schools

The contributing factors were: willingness of the distributors to have the materials ready by the time of need, continuous trainings on good agronomic practices, monitoring and guidance to help the farmers in implementing proper management practices. There was also timely provision of seed, availability of land and readiness of beneficiaries to provide labour.

Constraints/hindrances; There were no constraints that prevented the outcomes being achieved

Lessons learnt; Team work made the exercise successful and in the shortest time possible. When farmers are given the opportunity to take lead, they have their capacity built as well as feeling that they own the project. Training of beneficiaries prior to conduction of any activity smoothens the implementation process. Timely purchasing and distribution of inputs helped the beneficiaries catch up with the season hence adopting to climate change.

Challenge in achieving this outcome; The prolonged drought reduced the amount of moisture in the prepared mounds and ridges hence could not facilitate early planting of OFSP vines.

Progress towards sustainability: The members were given the task of taking lead in the management of farmer field schools which improved their skills. For sustainability of this activity, a revolving scheme amongst the members has been established so that all the group members access the improved planting material.

The outcome was 100% achieved because the demonstration sites and farmer field schools were well established.

Changes in conditions: There were no changes in conditions which affected the people involved in the project and prevented project activities happening on time.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the period, no challenges related to child protection were experienced. However, three trainings on child protection (one per group) were conducted. These aimed at enhancing child protection among the beneficiaries, building community awareness and commitment. A strong reporting and referral mechanisms, while providing quality support to vulnerable families, and building life skills and resilience to protect children was initiated. A child protection hot line 116 was also promoted and emphasised.

FAMILY PLANNING:

Three trainings on family planning were conducted by the field officer and the project coordinator, with the help of the VHTs. During the training, beneficiaries were trained on how family planning save lives. The total fertility rate in Uganda is 5.9 children per woman, higher than in neighboring countries¹. Ugandan women are having, on average, 1.7 more children than they plan. Therefore, the following were emphasized during the trainings.

1. Delaying motherhood, because adolescents are twice as likely to die in childbirth; since 77% of Ugandan girls are sexually active, and the teenage pregnancy rate in Uganda is 24%, the highest in Africa².
2. Women should limit their family size through avoiding riskier pregnancies as they get older.
3. Avoiding unwanted pregnancies, which lead women to undergo illegal and dangerous abortions since up to 25% of maternal deaths are thought to be due to unsafe terminations of pregnancy. Family planning was looked at as one way of reducing infant mortality, because it is known that children born less than two years after their sibling are twice as likely to die.

Two women with reproductive health problems have been referred to Reproductive Health Uganda to access reproductive health services. The services included health education, treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive care.

Quotes from participants

I Businge Monica a resident of Itara village and a beneficiary from the project supported by QSA I am happy and greatly appreciate the project for all that I have gained from it. I had been struggling to make some money to save for domestic use and learning business skills. But, with the coming of this project, I have been able to get banana combs which enabled me establish a plantation. I was able to plant beans under technical guidance and sold the produce

¹The World Bank, databank, 2013

² Stella Neema, Nakanyike Musisi and Richard Kibombo; Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in Uganda: A Synthesis of Research Evidence, Occasional Report No. 14, 2004

to get money which improved on my savings. Bucket irrigation has made it easy to produce the vegetables throughout the year. In the due course I gained skills in vegetable growing where I was able to plant a 20mx20m garden of tomatoes with the seedlings provided by the project. Planting was done under the guidance of a technical staff from Eco Agric. Uganda. These have fetched me a lot of money because I am now able to earn Sh 20.000= a week (\$6). These vegetables (short egg plants and night shade) have not only empowered me economically but also improved on my food security and nutrition. This sustainable production has given me hope that there will be a positive change in my life and am aiming for higher horizons.

Furthermore, I have been saving money in our saving group and am still saving because it has improved my social life. Above all, I have been blessed to host the QSA donor at my home which has really shown that I am highly recognized by the group, Eco-Agric. Uganda and QSA.



Left- a technical staff demonstrating bucket irrigation, Right-Monica explaining to Ragna

MONITORING VISIT BY RAGNA

During the quarter, Ragna paid a monitoring visit to Eco-Agric. Uganda where she made a great contribution. Her areas of concern were programs, finance and field. While at Eco-agric, she shared and guided the staff on documentation and finance management. Tips on ways of project implementation were shared too. This was majorly on categories of people the project should target in addition to the women. She advised that the disabled should also be considered because they need help to improve their livelihoods. While in the field where she met the beneficiaries, Ragna challenged them when she informed them she also grows crops in her garden applying different farming methods like intercropping and crop rotation. This pleased the beneficiaries because she is exemplary and can easily understand their challenges. Narrating her experience in farming gave the beneficiaries courage to take on another step. Her visit has really created a positive change amongst Eco-Agric. Uganda staff and the beneficiaries. The community members in Itara and Kasingo felt the impact of QSA and many have picked interest in joining the project. We hope with the guidance offered, there will be best results in project implementation not only in QSA project but also others under Eco-Agric, Uganda.



Ragna on arrival (Left)



Ragna monitoring plant tea and slurry in Itara (Right)

Appendix 1: Chart detailing the total number of direct and indirect beneficiaries from the quarter's work

Direct beneficiaries							
				Disabled			
Men	Women	Boy	Girl	Men	Women	Boy	Girl
19	73	0	0	0	0	0	0

Data per indicator for Eco-Agri indicators 2016/17

1.400 - FAMILY PLANNING

Number (2) of family planning services provided

Direct beneficiaries								
				Disabled				
Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
	48							

2.500 - GENDER –Increasing women's voices in decision-making, leadership and peace building

☒ 2.513 - Number (22) of women's groups, organisations and coalitions supported

Direct beneficiaries								
				Disabled				
Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
	22							

2.600 - GENDER – Empowering women economically and improving their livelihood security

☒ 2.605 - Number (92) of people who participated in training and vocational training to assist them to access increased and sustainable livelihoods

Direct beneficiaries								
				Disabled				
Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
19	73							

3.100 - FOOD SECURITY and RURAL DEVELOPMENT – Lifting agricultural productivity

☒ **3.101 - Number (92) of poor women and men who adopt innovative agricultural practices**

Direct beneficiaries								
				Disabled				
Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
8	46							

100 - FOOD SECURITY and RURAL DEVELOPMENT – Lifting agricultural productivity

☒ **3.102 - Number (89) of poor women and men with increased incomes**

Direct beneficiaries								
				Disabled				
Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
10	36							

3.200 - FOOD SECURITY and RURAL DEVELOPMENT – Improving rural livelihoods

☒ **3.201 - Number (92) of poor women and men who increase their access to financial services**

Direct beneficiaries								
				Disabled				
Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
19	73							

All of them are saving

3.920 - CLIMATE CHANGE – Reducing the impacts of climate change and other environmental factors

☒ **3.929 - Number (87) of people with a new income source from sustainable environment and natural resource use**

Direct beneficiaries								
				Disabled				
Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
12	58							

6.100 - CAPACITY BUILDING OF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

6.103 - Number (1) of local in-country partners reporting an increased organisational and project implementation capacity as a result of participating in ANCP funded projects/program

Direct beneficiaries								
				Disabled				
Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
4	6							

Baseline Expected Target

300	90	90
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Direct Urban Direct Rural

0	90
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Explanatory notes

FAMILY PLANNING

14 women are still in their reproductive age were sensitised on family planning methods for example the barrier method, moon beads and contraceptives. It was recommended that the services should be attained from a health worker. Pregnant women were referred for assistance to the health centre to enable further health education and safe delivery

GENDER –Increasing women’s voices in decision-making, leadership and peace building

12 women in Tukurakurane Women’s group have gained leadership skills. Whereby two are village health team workers, 8 are in church leadership and 2 are village mobilisers. This was attained after leading in their group which exposed their capacity that they could also be fruitful in the community. The empowerment provided in the group was a stepping stone in their leadership skill development.

GENDER – Empowering women economically and improving their livelihood security

The women in the group have been empowered economically in that they have been trained in sustainable agriculture which enabled them have a continuous crop production process and hence have been able to save some money. From their saving group they were able to acquire loans at low interest and this money helped them provide their domestic needs. This has highly reduced on their level of dependency. In addition, the money got from the sale of their produce has been invested in initiation of petty businesses and starting other enterprises like piggery. Some have also expanded on their cultivatable acreage which will increase the quantity produced and this will fetch in much income.

FOOD SECURITY and RURAL DEVELOPMENT – Lifting agricultural productivity

Through provision of seed and other planting materials like potato vines and cassava cuttings, the beneficiaries have been able to plant large areas of land which resulted in large amounts of produce.

The good agronomic practices trainings conducted enhanced the process of production as well as the quantity and quality of produce. Farming practices promoted by the project like intercropping and sustainable crop production enable food security because a variety is produced at different times. 00 - FOOD SECURITY and

FOOD SECURITY and RURAL DEVELOPMENT – Improving rural livelihoods

Having the beneficiaries producing in large quantities, they are able to meet their subsistence needs and the surplus is sold to earn income. Trainings in entrepreneurship skills have empowered them to grow their established businesses

FOOD SECURITY and RURAL DEVELOPMENT – Improving rural livelihoods

Number (92) of poor women and men who increase their access to financial services

The group members have been able to access financial services from their group savings in form of loans which are paid back with some interest. The group has been strengthened to a capacity of registering with the government and opening up a bank account. They have started soliciting funds from the government which are in form of female grants. At this level, the group can apply for a loan from financial institutions which can be used to start up other enterprises as desired by the group hence strengthening them economically.

CLIMATE CHANGE – Reducing the impacts of climate change and other environmental factors

Beneficiaries have taken part in planting of tree seedlings which were provided by the project as a way of mitigating climate change. They have gone ahead to construct energy saving stoves which will reduce on the amount of fuel wood used hence reducing the rate at which forests are cut resulting in environmental conservation thus prevention of climate change.

6.100 - CAPACITY BUILDING OF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Eco-Agri Uganda staff would like to attend some courses in project planning and management.