SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT GRANDMOTHERS PROJECT
IN MULAGI, KYANKWANZI DISTRICT, UGANDA

Six Month Progress Report from 1st August 2012 to 30th January 2013

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For the past three years, The Stephen Lewis Foundation has funded Action for Rural Women’s Empowerment (ARUWE) to support grandmothers and their Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in Mulagi Sub County, Kyankwanzi district. In this phase, SLF supported the “Sustainable and Resilient Grandmothers Project in Mulagi Sub County, Kyankwanzi district” as a continuation of the last project phase (August 1, 2011- July 31, 2012). The main goal of the project is to strengthen the capacities of 150 Grandmothers and orphaned grandchildren to learn new skills; increase household food security; earn, manage and reinvest income; serve as moral leaders to their families and communities; and keep their orphans safe, healthy, educated and loved. The project has supported 150 grandmothers with 1000 OVC households. Through the two HIV outreach campaigns through ARTS and VCT, the project benefited approximately 450 community members. In order to achieve, the project set the following objectives;
Increase household food security and income through increased skills, access to agricultural inputs and revolving loan and to Support health, nutrition and psycho-social enhancing interventions to 150 Grandmothers of orphaned grandchildren in Mulagi Sub County

**Mobilization and planning meetings**

After the identification and selection of new 50 beneficiary grandmothers, five mobilization and planning meetings with beneficiary grandmothers were organized. Through the meetings, the new project phase was introduced to both the old and newly identified grandmothers and local leaders.

The meetings were important as they enabled grandmothers understand their roles in the project. Grandmothers gave their views about the best seasons to grow crops. Beneficiaries too were categorized in their different groups and got a chance to interact with each other as they shared their experiences. This sharing platform was of great impact because grandmothers pledged to support each other as they all had a common cause. Grandmothers who had never got a chance to freely express their views in public were given the opportunity to speak. “I am encouraging all my fellow grandmothers to not only work hard but also together to build our families and communities. We have so much to give and with the support from this project, we are going to heights,” Nabwiso shared with fellow grandmothers during the meeting.
150 grandmothers’ households were supported with agriculture seed inputs including beans and pumpkins. ARUWE provided grandmothers with pumpkin and bean seeds first. Grandmothers and caretakers were also trained in sustainable practices including early land preparation, timely planting, weeding, appropriate seeding depth, plant population (seed rate) and crop management.

Beans and pumpkins have increasingly got market both in urban and rural areas due to their nutritional value and ease in preparation. Each pumpkin is sold at an average of Ugx 2,000 and 1 kg of beans at Ugx 3,000. In addition, pumpkins were a good cover crop that helped to retain moisture in the soil especially during the dry seasons.

From a short survey ARUWE carried out among grandmother households, it was discovered that beans contribute a lot to household food security. All grandmothers reported to include beans in their meals at least 5 days a week given the support from the project.
In order to boost grandmothers’ income generation, ARUWE established a Jjaja’s revolving loan fund. So far 33 grandmothers organized in 4 groups had received loan amount of 7,450,000 Ugx to be repaid in a period of six months. Grandmothers and their care takers diligently attended the trainings as they were eager to learn credit management, savings mobilizations and business skills. Individual grandmothers received between Ugx 100,000 to Ugx 300,000. Grandmothers were trained in simple records keeping, costing and pricing, entrepreneurship and among others.

Outcomes of savings and the small credit facility

- Grandmothers and caretakers were able to enjoy user friendly credit services. They didn’t require expensive collateral and got low interest rates.
- Grandmothers were able to diversify their agriculture activities. For instance two of them purchased cows which they used for income through sale of milk and manure making to add fertilizers to their soil.
- Through the trainings, grandmothers and care takers’ capacity in effective management of their savings and credit schemes was strengthened. They learnt that when they saved together in groups, they are able to access financial services because they would have built a strong voice. Each grandmothers group was able to save at least 10% of the total group loan that is Ugx 186,250. Through savings, grandmothers would be able to build their income security.
Nutritional education among 150 grandmother households

10 nutrition trainings were carried out among the 150 grandmother households. This was done to support health, nutrition among grandmother households. Grandmothers greatly participated in the training as food was central to a human life and their family well being greatly depended on the nature of nutrition. Nutritional education could not be complete without sensitizing grandmothers about the important value of vegetables and fruits in their diet. From the participatory exercises carried out in the training, there was a significant improvement of the household food security. Grandmothers reported 95% of the food they consumed came from their fields, and were able to share some with their neighbours. This was important as it showed that grandmothers were able to feed themselves and not rely on food handouts as was the case for some before the project.

Procurement and distribution of assorted vegetable seeds to grandmother households

Grandmother households were supported with assorted vegetable seeds to promote proper nutrition and income generation. The Vegetable seeds given included; Nakati, Sukuma Wiki, Bitter berries, Carrots, Green pepper, Red pepper/Chilli, Amaranthus, Cabbage and Fertilizers (Super glue). Grandmothers especially the new beneficiaries were trained in establishing kitchen gardens.
“Before the project, I used to neglect vegetables. It so happened that I have a sickler (a person with sickle cells) among my orphaned grandchildren. Every three months, I had to take him to hospital for blood transfusion. However, this has all changed, she says with a smile on her face. Since the project, I have been trained in planting vegetables and now we don’t miss having them in any meal. This has greatly helped my young grandchild to boost his immunity and level of blood in his body. I now take at least six months for his blood transfusion. This has not only reduced my hospital fees but makes me so happy to see my little grandchild’s health improving. Thank you so much for your love and support,” she concludes.

Namusisi Miriam- A disabled widow with 4 OVCs has boosted her nutrition through continuous growing of vegetables at home. She has sold some vegetable produce (a cabbage is at Ugx 1,500) to help her purchase other essential needs. In addition from her savings, she has managed to replace the grass thatched roof to corrugated iron sheets on her house which preserves her and her young OVC from rain drops through the house as was the case before she became a project beneficiary.
Grandmothers were trained to establish joint nursery beds of vegetables. This activity was greatly welcomed by grandmothers as it gave them opportunity to interact and learn from each other. Occasionally grandmothers threw jokes at one another and laughed about the issues of their lives and community during the establishment of the gardens. As grandmothers looked forward to this activity, they established more joint vegetable gardens than anticipated by the project. So far each grandmother group had established 2 vegetable gardens of different types which make a total of 30 joint gardens among the 15 grandmother groups.

Two grandmother groups have been able to realize sales out of their joint gardens. Each has realized average sales of Ugx 17,000. They decided to keep their savings on their group account in Mulagi Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCO). They hope that their savings will accumulate for them to be able to re invest in other activities.
Trainings in Liquid and Herbal soap making

The Liquid and herbal soap making exercise was one of the most interesting activities carried out in this project. Not only did it get the grandmothers very actively participating but got the attention of the community too. Mulagi community had not had such training before. The trainings were aimed at empowering women group members in skills of soap making both liquid and herbal, promoting better hygiene and sanitation practices amongst women and their family members and empowering grandmother groups with skills to produce soap for income generating activities for their households and their entire group. The training was attended by grandmothers and some of their caretakers. The soap was of great benefit in that, they used it to wash their hands at critical moments, utensils, clothes, mopping their houses, cleaning latrines and other cleaning in the homestead, and to a greater extent. Herbal soap was used for treating skin diseases and income generation.

The trainings gave grandmothers and caretakers opportunity to diversify their income generating activities. In addition, unlike the agricultural activities, liquid soap making was not dependent on weather conditions. Grandmother groups were in the process of organizing production of the soap and locating markets for the liquid soap both in Kyankwanzi and nearby districts.
Group counselling sessions for the OVC living grandmothers from 12 to 20 years

The sessions were carried out to address issues of adolescent pregnancy, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and adolescent hygiene. From the sessions, it was discovered that these young girls had a lot of questions about the above issues but had nowhere to go for answers. Many of them were misguided by the information they had. The sessions helped the young girls to open up and speak about issues affecting them that they feared to talk to their grandmothers such HIV, pregnancy, abortion, menstrual hygiene, relationships among others.

ARUWE staff worked with professional counsellors to carry this activity.

Discussions

Some sessions were carried out among groups where the young OVC were given pieces of paper on which they wrote questions about issues they needed to understand better. Most asked questions were about relationships, sex, condom use, circumcision and HIV/AIDS cure.

These and more were answered by the counsellors that ARUWE worked with during sessions.
2 HIV/AIDS community awareness campaigns were conducted in Bukwiri and Nalinya. As always, ARUWE worked with the vibrant life club from St Joseph School Vumba to carry out the awareness through ARTS in form of music, dance and drama as the community was responsive to them.

The humour and reality embedded in the drama created greater attention among community and enabled them to understand more about HIV/AIDS in a more relaxed environment.

Community members and students were equipped with knowledge on issues of HIV/AIDS, which would help in prevention, care and support in families and communities and fight stigma. Students played a big role in their communities to raise awareness amongst other fellow students, siblings and community members.

Students also demanded to have access to condoms at school to be able to practice safe sex. Community people especially men demanded that condom prices be reduced to enable them access them. In addition there was need for practical demonstration of condom use and the female condom especially for students as few had knowledge of it.

**Mobile clinics for Voluntary Counselling and Testing**

In partnership with Kiboga hospital, Nalinya Health Centre and Infectious Disease Institute, ARUWE set up 2 Mobile clinics for VCT in Kiwaguzi and Kigando parishes. Approximately 450 people turned up for the exercise. It was good to see mothers with their children, couples, youths and school children come for the exercise and were so happy to know their status. Community preferred mobile VCT clinics to going to the health centers or the main hospital due time and distance involved in walking to the hospital. However some people were afraid to know their status which kept them from getting tested. This therefore called for more sensitization among people about the importance of VCT.
Community members who tested negative were happy and pledge to protect their lives and families.

One gentleman, Ssekamatte Charles, a resident of Munyaami village said he was going to show his results to his wife as a sign that their family was safe.

Providing simple medication to grandmothers

To improve health, ARUWE provided simple medication to grandmothers. These included panadol, syrups, bandages and aspirins. ARUWE worked with the qualified nurses of Nalinya Health Centre to attend to the grandmothers. Grandmothers selected Friday as their day to receive treatment and medication from the health centre to avoid them from making long queues that characterised all the other days. The program had greatly contributed to the improvement of health among the grandmothers.

Grandmother Anatolia says, “I have suffered from bodily weakness and continuous malaria but with the good treatment I have received through the ongoing Friday health care program at Nalinya Health center III, I have become better and hope that my health will stabilise so that I am able to attend to my work and OVC.”
Grandmother physical education campaigns

ARUWE organised two physical education campaigns among grandmothers to boost their physical and psychological health. Many grandmothers suffer from back aches, joint pains, stomach disorders some of which are attributed to failure to exercise.

With the help of ARUWE field coordinator, Timothy, grandmothers were taken through simple exercises to stretch and strengthen their leg, arms, knee joints and back bone. Here is what grandmothers say. “I am so happy about the exercises, says Grandmother Aliceste Ilia. Many were the times my back ached so bad that I could hardly sleep at night, but with the simple back stretches, my back is beginning to feel better.”

“What a good way to relax after the long day in the fields and doing housework. We are so glad that exercises help us to relax our minds. Oh, and the laughter we share is good for the soul,” says grandmother Joanita.

“The hand stretches are so wonderful. Due to the hard work in the fields, my hands and fingers have had difficulty in flexibility. With these exercises, my hand and finger movement is getting better. I wake up and do them every day. We are indeed returing to our youth,” says grandmother Teo.

Although they experienced muscle pulls, grandmothers were willing and able to continue the exercises during their daily lives. The exercises strengthened group cohesion among the grandmothers.
50 more grandmothers and their OVC have been included to benefit from the project work. Since the first phase in 2010, these grandmothers had always been waiting for an opportunity to be included in the grandmothers and OVC project. The joy of the grandmothers and their OVC was so great and they have been very active through the project implementation.

There has been a significant increase in household food security and nutrition improvement in grandmother households. Since the project support, at least 80% of households have food (maize, beans and cassava) stored and kitchen gardens. This has improved grandmothers and OVC quality of life.

With the loan facility, grandmothers have been given the opportunity to invest in agriculture and other income generating activities that they would otherwise not have invested in. As some have ventured into cattle rearing, others have been able to expand their 1 acre farms to at least 3 acres, bought more seed varieties and were learning the saving culture. Supporting grandmothers’ self reliance is not only beneficial to them and their families but also the entire community as this once neglected group of people is now recognized as important and contributing to the community development.

Some grandmothers’ (40) quality of life has improved as they have been able to put up permanent houses unlike before the project. Many grandmothers lived in small weak housing structures that made living conditions not ideal especially during the rainy seasons. As grandmothers grow and sale the surplus agricultural output, they are able to put up brick houses with corrugated roof which has greatly improved their living standards.

**Project successes**

Grandmothers still face a challenge of storage facilities for their agricultural produce. A big number of them were storing their produce inside their homes which limited their space. Given the limited resources, the project could only theoretically train grandmothers and caretakers in granary construction. In addition, grandmother households still lacked harvest tools including talplins, sickle, weighing scale to properly preserve their produce. The lack of tools mainly affected grandmothers with young OVC who could not offer labour in the fields.

Poor storage too affects the quality of the agriculture produce. Grandmothers still value addition methods such as packing equipment, drying, sorting, branding, etc due to the limited resources. This at times affects the price at which they sale their produce especially the cereals.

Much as the project has a grandmothers’ health program at Nalinya Health Centre 111, some grandmothers had illnesses that could not be treated by the health centre. This at times interfered with their work as they have to travel to the main hospitals for treatment at a cost but with the caretakers and grandmother groups, weak grandmothers had been supported to cope or recover.

**Project challenges**
Community voices

Here is 71 year old Imelda a widow with 10 OVC from Kidada village. “I have managed to harvest three bags of maize corn (300kgs) and half an acre of cassava and with this I have constructed a better kitchen and an outside bathroom using burnt bricks and iron sheets. To my family and I, this is a great achievement since it was my goal at the beginning of 2013. Now my grandchildren and I can wash and bath comfortably which has greatly improved our hygiene. With the new kitchen, we are able to prepare our meals in a clean place,” She said.

Nansubuga Teopista a 70 year old grand-mother says, “I have managed to grow a variety of vegetables including nakati, carrots, amaranthus, sukuma wiki and bitter berries in her kitchen garden. My family’s health has greatly improved with the consumption of these vegetables. No longer do we suffer from stomach upsets like indigestion, mild ulcers and our meals are tasty.”

My name is Nakirunda Joyce from Kakuuto Village. I am a 76 year old widow taking care of eight OVC. I used to sleep in one of the poorest structure you have ever seen and I was worried that at one time it will collapse while we slept or during the rain. Through the project support and my hard work, I have been able to save from my agricultural sales of maize, beans and banana to put up a new strong good house of bricks and iron sheets. I am so grateful for having been empowered through ARUWE project for I know I would not have been able to do it on my own. Thank you,” says the happy old lady.

Rose is a 60 year old grandmother with 5 OVC. “With the small loan facility of Ugx 250,000, I was able to purchase ground nut seeds and afford labour to diversify my agricultural activities. From my 2 acres of ground nuts, I have harvested 4 bags (400Kgs). With the sales of approximately Ugx 700,000, I was was able to save 20% and use the rest to buy scholastic materials for my grandchildren, home products and I am in the process of renovating my house. I have also harvested 120 Kgs of maize which I sold at Ugx 72,000 and with the money; I have expanded my other one acre to two and a half acres to plant maize in the coming season.”
"I am proudly holding my solar system of Ugx 300,000 from my hard work. Through the savings I have made from my sales of my agricultural produce in particular beans, I have purchased this solar system. I am so happy that my school going grandchildren will be able to revise their books and do their homework at night with the bright light. Extra hours in study will enable them to improve their performance. This solar system is helping me save money that I was spending on paraffin. The night light also is a source of security as thieves are kept away unlike before when it was dark.”

Here is 57 year old Mariah.

Langwida Elibanje, here is what she says

"I am in the Jjaja’s revolving loan fund and I begun with borrowing Ugx 300,000/- which I used to clear and plant 5 acres of maize. I have sold 1000Kgs and used the money to roof my newly built house. In 2 months, I would like to acquire another loan Ugx 600,000 to enable me expand my cassava garden to 2 acres, bean garden to one and half acres and plant more banana varieties in my garden. I am so grateful for with the user friendly loans provided to us grandmothers; I am able to do what I would not have done before. As for me regardless of my old age, the sky is the limit, she smiles as she concludes.”

Unexpected out comes

As a result of this project work with the grandmothers, ARUWE has become of great interest to interns and volunteers from Europe and USA. Many want to learn from ARUWE and build it with their knowledge. So far, with in a period of 3 months, ARUWE has worked with 3 interns to provide capacity in revolving loan scheme.
The piggery and goat rearing project from the last phase has expanded to benefit more grandmother and OVC households. One of our grandmothers Maria, a widow taking care of 7 OVC is one of those who have benefited from the piggery. Her pigs have multiplied from one female pig to eight. She was able to construct a pig sty for her self. With the school term coming close, she planned to sell off 4 piglets for at least Ugx 160,000 to purchase scholastic materials for her grandchildren.
As a result of this project, ARUWE beneficiary grandmothers participated in the first ever commemoration day for the elderly in Uganda that was held on 1st October 2012 in Bukwiri in Kyankwanzi district, presided over by the Prime Minister of Uganda. ARUWE grandmothers got to show case their work in agriculture and crafts to guests all over Uganda. The grandmothers were greatly encouraged to work harder as their work was recognized nationally and they saw the important role they played in the development of the country.
**Our approach**

ARUWE reaches down to the grassroots people and involves them in every project stage from needs assessment to monitoring and evaluation. Beneficiaries (grandmothers and OVC) were active participants as they knew that it was within their power to bring change in their lives.

ARUWE focused on developing grandmothers into leaders so that they could effectively bring positive change in their families and communities through decision making. This was done through basic leadership trainings, encouraging grandmothers to contribute during meetings, forming and training grandmother groups. As the project progressed, more grandmothers became outspoken about issues that affected them and their communities.

**Internal changes**

ARUWE’s acting executive director; Irene Sentudde left ARUWE to further develop her career. Currently Agnes Mirembe the Programs Manager is overseeing the daily operations of the organization and is the main organization contact person.

ARUWE changed Kampala offices from Willis Road to Rubaga road for better visibility. ARUWE too changed her Kyankwanzi field offices to the main road- Hoima road since it was more convenient for beneficiaries. So far, there had not been any major external changes that have affected the project work.

**Major activities to be undertaken in the next six months of the project include the following**

- Procurement and distribution of agricultural inputs (Maize seeds) to grandmothers
- Two Business management, savings mobilization and credit management skills trainings
- Extending the revolving loan fund to more 20 grandmothers
- Five nutrition education trainings
- Four physical education campaigns (in case funds are available as this activity was not budgeted for due to the limited funds)
- Four group counselling sessions for OVC living with grandmothers
- Two HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in Luwawu and Kalagi parishes
- Two mobile VCT clinics set up in Luwawu and Kalagi parishes
- Grandmothers health program through purchasing simple medication

“We have ARUWE and The Stephen Lewis Foundation to thank for the socio-economic level we are at today. We, the once neglected group people are now recognized throughout our Sub County and entire district of Kyankwanzi for our tenacity. We are very happy and we have got so many plans for our lives and grandchildren. Thank you ARUWE and The Stephen Lewis Foundation,” says Ruth Nakimera—the spokes person for the beneficiary grandmothers.
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