GRANDMOTHERS' LIVELIHOOD PROJECT

ARUWE Action For Rural Women's Empowerment

GRANDMOTHERS AND OVC LIVELIHOOD PROJECT REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

For five years now, the Stephen Lewis Foundation in partnership with Action for Rural Women’s Empowerment (ARUWE) Uganda has supported 200 grandmothers and their 1200 OVC to improve their livelihoods in Kyankwanzi district. The grandmothers and OVC livelihood project was implemented in Mulagi and Gayaza Sub Counties. The main goal of the project was to contribute to the improved well being of 200 grandmothers’ households with their 1200 OVC.

The project objectives included:

1) To strengthen the capacity of 200 grandmothers’ households to care for OVC through increased food production and income generation by the end of 2015.

2) To advocate for grandmothers and OVC inclusion in local government service delivery through holding dialogue meetings with local government leaders.

3) To provide sustainable income support to 200 grandmothers in Gayaza and Mulagi Sub Counties.
PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR THE PROJECT

Planned activities for the project

Project interventions included

1) Conducting one project inception meeting with the local leaders of Kyankwanzi district, Mulagi and Gayaza sub counties.

2) Three project mobilization and planning meetings among the 200 grandmothers.

3) Conduct seven trainings in group dynamics among 17 grandmother groups

4) Conduct ten refresher trainings in sustainable agriculture.

5) Procure and purchase seed inputs for grandmothers.

6) Conduct ten trainings in agribusiness, value addition and marketing

7) Increasing the grandmothers’ credit scheme.

8) Establishing a fund to buy grandmothers’ produce.

9) Conduct follow up trainings and on farm trainings in sustainable agriculture

10) Organize exposure visit.

11) Organize two training workshops to empower grandmother in lobbying and advocacy skills.

12) Organize two interfaces with local leaders.

13) Organize two community dialogues.

This report captures the interventions that were carried out in the first six months from 1st August 2014 to 31st January 2015.

**Conducting project inception meeting with local leaders of Kyankwanzi district**:

A Project inception meeting was conducted at Kyankwanzi district headquarters in Bukwiri with an aim of strengthening local leaders’ active involvement in the grandmothers’ initiative, bridging the power relations gap between local leaders and grandmothers and linking grandmothers to government programs that they could benefit from. The meeting was attended by ten local leaders and the two ARUWE project staff.

During the meeting, ARUWE shared the annual project plan with the local leaders. A report of successes and challenges from past grandmothers’ initiatives and possible solutions were also shared during the meeting.

Through the meeting, the district was able to capture ARUWE reports and plans in their report and district plans.
The meeting enhanced active involvement of leaders in the project from the outset and gave them an opportunity to engage with project staff and previous interventions. The meeting created a platform to engage leaders on the issues such as land rights, access to good quality education, health and agriculture information which impacted on grandmothers and their OVC. Due to illiteracy and gender roles the participation of women / grandmothers in leadership both in political and technical wings is still very low which causes them to have less influence over development issues.

There is therefore need to empower women/ grandmothers to actively take engage in leadership so that they can ably influence decisions concerning resource allocation.

**Conducting three project mobilisation and planning meetings**

Three project mobilization and planning meetings were conducted among the 200 grandmothers. One meeting was held in Gayaza subcounty among the 50 grandmothers while two were held in Mulagi Sub County among the 150 grandmothers.
These meetings provided a platform for grandmothers to discuss the interventions and enhance interaction and sharing of information. Issues discussed included the project objectives, activities and expected outcomes, the role and expected contribution of the grandmothers and the importance of involving all household members in the project to reduce the workload of the grandmothers.

Other issues that arose during the meetings included the violation of land rights of the grandmothers, high illiteracy levels that negatively affected the grandmothers in income generating activities, need for grandmothers to be more aware of existing programs especially for the government so that they can benefit from them, need for better markets for agriculture produce, post harvest management improvement and timely planting to ensure high yields.

As a result, the grandmothers not only gained a greater understanding of the initiative but were also inspired to work towards addressing the identified gaps.

Conducting seven trainings in group dynamics among 17 grandmothers groups

Seven trainings were conducted; two in Gayaza among four grandmother groups and five in Mulagi among thirteen grandmother groups. Grandmothers groups were trained in various aspects of group dynamics including developing a constitution, defining group membership, registration, record keeping, roles and responsibilities, leadership skills, conducting meetings, minute taking, collective action, communication skills, team building, follow ups and savings mobilization. All groups were encouraged to be consistent, transparent and accountable to each other and in their group work so that efficiency and sustainability would be achieved. Each grandmother group set a meeting day on a weekly basis. The greatest challenge that arose during the trainings was the inability of 90% of grandmothers to read and write yet the activity required note taking. The 10% who could read and write were the group leaders.

Through the group dynamics trainings, grandmothers groups were strengthened. At least four grandmother groups registered at the sub county and were legally recognized. The rest were in the process of registration.

Through groups, grandmothers recognized that they could do collective action for issues such as recognition of their land rights and marketing of their agriculture produce.
"Through our weekly group meetings, we offer each other psycho-socio support. We call this kind of support ‘Muno mukabi’ which means ‘a friend in need’. Through our groups, we have become friends who look out for and shoulder each other’s life’s burdens. With our groups, one does not have to go through life’s challenges alone. Through sharing with each other, offering counselling and advice, correcting and guiding each other, we are strengthened and encouraged in every part of our lives. This has improved our mental health in that depression, worry and anxieties have greatly reduced”, said Nalinya from Ssuubi grandmothers’ group.

“It goes without saying ‘Agali awamu gegaluma ennyama’ meaning in unity we have so much strength and two heads are better than one. Through groups, we can accomplish much more than as individuals. Our collective voice in advocating for our rights and desirable services from local government and other duty bearers is stronger than an individual voice. Through our groups, we will start marketing our produce so we can have a higher bargaining power for our produce”, said 56 year old Namuli a leader in Agape grandmothers’ group in Gayaza sub county.
Conducting refresher trainings in sustainable agriculture

Ten refresher trainings in sustainable agriculture were conducted among 200 grandmothers in Gayaza and Mulagi Sub Counties. The trainings were aimed at promoting climate smart agriculture techniques. Grandmothers were trained in farm planning, vegetable gardening, land preparation, soil and water conservation, enhancing soil fertility, making organic manure, farm planning, pest and disease control, bottle irrigation, timely planting, post harvest techniques and storage, integration of livestock and crops.

These training sessions were conducted both theoretically, with visual aids such as pictures and charts for easy understanding (particularly for the illiterate grandmothers), and practically through demonstrations. The grandmothers gained more knowledge in sustainable agriculture practices which they have adopted resulting in increased crop productivity and potential for income generating opportunities.

Through bottle irrigation trainings, grandmothers were able to increase their vegetable growing since vegetables had a steady supply of water. Grandmothers also improved their banana growing with the application of the soil and water conservation.
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Supporting grandmothers with seed inputs:

The 50 grandmothers in Gayaza subcounty were supported with improved seed inputs of maize, vegetable and banana suckers. Each grandmother received thirty banana suckers, eight kilo grams of maize seeds, three packets of cabbage seeds, three packets of egg plant seeds, four packets of onions seeds, three packets of carrots and two packets of green pepper seeds. The project supported only 50 grandmothers in Gayaza because unlike the other 150 who had been in the initiative for over three years and had been supported with seeds inputs, they had been in the initiative from August 2013.

Having already received the necessary training these grandmothers were able to plant these seeds. The vegetables were planted both in individual kitchen gardens and group vegetable gardens for learning and demonstration purposes.
Increase the grandmothers’ credit scheme

The grandmothers’ credit scheme was increased by Ugx 10,000,000. The grandmother credit scheme grew from Ugx 12,380,000 in November 2012 benefiting 49 grandmothers to Ugx 25,993,850 to benefit 92 grandmothers. The credit officer monitors the fund to ensure that it grows and benefits more grandmothers.

Through the fund, grandmothers’ capacity in credit management and savings mobilization, records keeping and simple entrepreneurship has been built. Through the loan scheme, grandmothers have got access to user friendly loans that only require them group guaranteeing as security. This has eliminated the need for land titles as collateral for back loans, considering that grandmothers don’t have them.

The grandmothers choose their own enterprises where they want to invest their resources. This allows them to creativity think about what they can do their own.

Grandmothers use the loans to invest in agriculture inputs which enabled them to increase their agriculture productivity. 20 grandmothers were able to set up income generating activities ranging from small grocery stalls, livestock rearing especially piggery and goat rearing and participating in market days.

However most of the grandmothers lack literacy and numeracy skills hence find it difficult to practice book keeping for their businesses.
Conduct follow up trainings and on farm training in sustainable agriculture

The ARUWE agriculture officer conducted follow up trainings and on farm training in sustainable agriculture. This ensured that grandmothers were correctly applying the sustainable agriculture practices on their individual farms. Challenges that grandmothers faced on their farms were also addressed during these trainings. On farm trainings also enabled grandmothers to learn from each other as some of the trainings were carried out in groups.
GRANDMOTHERS’ LIVELIHOOD PROJECT

Through the project, grandmothers’ economic capacity and leadership skills were developed as stated below.

Since ARUWE streamlined gender, rights awareness and advocacy throughout its programs, grandmothers have increased in knowledge of their rights and have developed their communication and leadership skills. They are able to articulate their development issues ranging from agriculture in terms of tangible inputs, information and markets, health services and land rights awareness. Through group meetings, grandmothers have been given the opportunity to openly share out their views and opinions. This has built their confidence to plan future engagement meetings with their local leaders and other duty bearers to lobby for better qualitative and quantitative service delivery. This is a big achievement because initially grandmothers were shy and inhibited in expressing themselves given the patriarchal society that gives more voice to men. Empowering grandmothers with ability to express themselves is one step to fighting exploitation of grandmothers and violation of their rights especially land rights.

There is also increased involvement of local leaders in the grandmothers’ initiative. The contribution of grandmothers towards the care and support for the HIV/AIDS infected and affected children has been recognized by the district. There is therefore increased effort towards enrolling more ARUWE grandmothers in the SAGE program (An initiative where the elderly are provided with a monthly allowance to care for themselves)

The revolving loan scheme has contributed to the economic empowerment of grandmothers. With the small loans, grandmothers are able to invest in agriculture and other income generating activities, which has enabled them to increase their incomes to meet their household needs.

Grandmother Byekweso said, “I say this with such joy in my heart for my grandson has passed his ordinary level of education in grade one. With the small loans I get from our revolving loan scheme, I have been able to invest in my agricultural activities to earn income to take my grandson through school. I have been paying Ugx 450,000 per term which translated into Ugx 1,350,000 for the entire year (CND 540). I still have other three school going grandchildren who I am paying for. I am hoping to increase my farm holdings in terms of farm land, diversification in agriculture to further boost my income”.

Grandmother Nabuuso of Nakabiso village actively participates in local council meetings of Mulagi sub county. Though the ratio of males to females on local councils is still high, it is a good start for grandmothers to have a representative in council meetings which was not the case before.
In Gayaza Sub County vegetable farming was not previously practiced. As a result of this intervention ARUWE was able to train grandmothers in vegetable growing, helping to set up kitchen gardens for home consumption and sale at the market. Due to the constant supply of vegetables from their kitchen gardens, grandmothers and their families have improved their diet. Grandmothers said that diet related complications like stomach upsets, constipation and diarrhoea have reduced especially among their young grandchildren.

Grandmother Luva in her vegetable garden of bitter berries

Grandmother Lovinca holding a pumpkin from her vegetable garden
Additionally the piggery project in Gayaza Sub County has been successful with 30 grandmothers are now involved and the number of pigs/piglets constantly increasing. This will provide a further source of income for the beneficiaries which will improve their income to enable them to provide a better life for themselves and their OVC. In addition, grandmothers use the organic manure to fertilize their soils to improve their yields.

Through the project support, improvement in household food security and nutrition has been registered. Grandmothers attested that through knowledge attained from the trainings in sustainable agriculture, supporting them through seeds inputs and continual follow up on farm trainings, they were able to increase their crop yields. This has increased their crop productivity hence household improved food supply. 90 grandmother households reported that they now have three nutritious meals a day as opposed to the one meal that they previously had.
Through the trainings, there has been significant improvement in post harvest handling in terms of storage where by grandmothers have constructed granaries using locally available materials. 20 grandmothers have been able to construct granaries in their homes. Granaries have helped grandmothers to store their cereals and grains for long periods (six months), which has improved their household food security as they are able to preserve their food. ARUWE will continue supporting the storage initiatives through training the other grandmothers and their household members in constructing granaries for better storage.

Grandmother Josephine with ARUWE programs officer standing next her granaries filled with maize harvest.

Grandmother Bereth with her maize harvest stored in her granary.
The challenges identified provide basis for lessons learnt and action for strategic planning and delivery in the community.

**Illiteracy**

Lack of literacy and numeracy skills is a major challenge among grandmothers. This makes it difficult for the trainers to ensure that all the learning is taken on by the grandmothers through note taking. Furthermore, some of the learning, i.e. record keeping, farm planning and management, cannot be implemented as grandmothers are illiterate.

Due to illiteracy, grandmothers are also subject to exploitation by middle men as they can not accurately read scales and measurements for their produce especially grains. They are also not able to keep proper farm records.

"Because I am not able to read the weighing scale figures, I am at times cheated by middlemen who come to purchase my crop produce especially maize and beans. I am only saved during those times when a neighbour is present to help me make accurate readings. This not only affects my income but my independence and privacy as a person because I have to depend on others to help me ascertain the accurate prices for my produce. I hope grandmothers can be supported with literacy and numeracy programs”, said Esteri.

Some of the grandmothers have unknowingly bought expired herbicides and pesticides from the agricultural input supply outlets in the area. This has caused loss of money and efforts.

ARUWE seeks to develop an adult literacy program aimed at promoting literacy and numeracy skills among grandmothers to enhance development in every part of their lives.

**Land rights violation**

There is gross violation of grandmothers’ land rights in Gayaza Sub County. Issues of land rights violation include evictions, high land rent fees and land grabbing. This is due to a number of factors ranging from ignorance of Uganda National land laws, Acts, Policies and land conflict redress actions, customary laws which inhibit women from owning land, negligence of local leaders and absence of land tribunals. This has hindered agricultural and economic development activities for some of the grandmothers since their rights to land are not secure. This situation is aggravated by the illiteracy among grandmothers that hinders them from utilizing the available redress system which requires reading and completing forms.
“Most of our leaders have neglected our cry for help concerning the immense land rights violations in our sub county. We the women farmers have been most affected by land conflicts because we are taken advantage of by the land owners all of who are men; our leaders want us to bribe them to help us but we have no money to do that since we take care of families singlehandedly”, said grandmother Najjuma.

In a bid to increase access to farm land to grow crops for sale especially, some of the grandmothers resort to hiring land. However this too has its short comings as it subjects grandmothers to unreasonable demands from their land lords who charge them high rent fees which affect their incomes.

“We are at the mercy of our land lords who make demands that exceed our means. We all have a right to use land but we especially the women are unfairly treated. Our ignorance about the land laws of our country has also worked against us. Much of our income is spend on land legal matters and this greatly affects our livelihood. We appeal to ARUWE to educate us on land laws of Uganda so that we understand our rights to land use. This will boost agriculture as our main economic activity”, said grandmother Namuli.

ARUWE has integrated land rights in its food security, nutrition and income generation program, rights awareness and leadership program. There is need to educate grandmothers on their land rights, national land policies and acts to empower them to engage their leaders, land management structures and other duty bearers in addressing land security issues. This will enable them be actively involved in their development issues.

Lack of market

There is challenge of limited access to profitable markets for grandmothers’ surplus produce. This is due to many underlying factors including the care economy and the gender roles that limit grandmothers in terms of time and efforts spent towards marketing, limited transportation, limited or lack of materials for value addition including drying materials, packaging and branding, limited access to market information and poor transportation. At times grandmothers are forced to sell their produce while it is not ready for harvest which limits their income generation.

With the support of SLF to establish a fund to purchase grandmothers’ produce, ARUWE is in the process of developing grandmother marketing associations and creating linkages to consumers to ensure that the fund is effective. There is also need to address some of the underlying issues mentioned above that limit access to profitable markets.
Meet grandmother Constancia.

Constancia is a 65 year old grandmother living in Kasubi village in Gayaza Sub County. She looks after ten grandchildren between the ages of two to fourteen years.

“Through my involvement in the grandmothers’ initiative, I have been able to benefit from the grandmothers’ loan scheme. I have been able to get small loans that have enabled me get capital to invest in my retail business.

This is the first loan facility of its kind in our area that does not require giving collateral of land titles. In a day, I earn a profit of an average of Ugx 10,000 (CND 5). Though I still have a big challenge of inability to read and write to keep proper records for my business, I am now able to take care of my young grandchildren unlike before. I am grateful for the grandmothers’ project that has changed my life for better”.

Innovation

From this intervention, the impact of gender issues on the livelihood of grandmothers is evident. Gender influences property rights and access to productive resources, gender roles, care economy, access to markets and education. These issues play a key role in the livelihood of grandmothers. Some of the above issues affected the economic empowerment of grandmothers. It was therefore important for ARUWE to design interventions that address these root issues for a holistic development approach.
Internal Impact on the project

In terms of organizational development and strategic program delivery, ARUWE has developed a resource mobilization policy, advocacy policy and gender policy. ARUWE is continuing to streamline her operations by developing a communication strategy and implementation standards which will improve strategic delivery of services for the grandmothers’ housing initiative.

Impact of external factors to the project

Communication in the project area especially in Gayaza Sub County can be difficult due to poor roads and poor mobile phone network coverage. This means that it usually takes a longer time to reach out to communities especially during rainy seasons. Ease in mobility will greatly contribute towards organizational efficiency in the strategic delivery of its programs.

Project activities for the next six months from 1st February to July 2015

For the next six months, the activities to be implementing include.

1) Monitoring the grandmothers’ credit scheme.
2) Establishing a fund to buy grandmothers’ produce
3) Conduct follow up trainings and on farm trainings in sustainable agriculture
4) Organize Exposure visit.
5) Organize two training workshops to empower grandmother in lobbying and advocacy skills.
6) Organize two interface meetings with local leaders
7) Organize two community dialogues.


**Issues arising**

Since agriculture is a labour intensive activity in terms of time and effort, grandmothers face a big task as all of them depend on it for livelihood. Given their dwindling strength and increasing family demands, grandmothers are limited in their ability to increase productivity. Labour saving techniques such as animal ploughs and simple irrigation schemes will enable grandmothers and their households increase their productivity using less time and effort.

The care economy and gender roles drain the strength, time and finances of grandmothers because they shoulder the sole responsibility of taking care of their grandchildren. Grandmothers are also inhibited from participating in activities outside their homes which hinders their ability to be fully involved in community affairs and leadership. Supporting grandmothers with household energy saving technologies and rain water harvesting will help reduce domestic workload shoulerded by grandmothers. This will improve the health of grandmothers and will give them more time to spend on other activities outside their homes.

ARUWE hosted Allan Muhari from Stephen Lewis Foundation for a monitoring visit and assessment of ARUWE grandmothers’ initiative. It was a learning experience for both ARUWE and the grandmothers as important issues some of which are highlighted in this report were brought out.
Allan Muhari from SLF during the monitoring visit to ARUWE