

Executive summary

Project Background:

The Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities (ISNC) project is a 24 month project that is being implemented in the districts of Kabarole, Luuka and Maracha as a pilot by the Ministry of Local Government with financial support from UNDP and KoICA. The project design and implementation has been guided by the Saemaul Undong model; a Korean community development model that started in the 1970s in order to develop the underdeveloped rural sector. The SMU is an integrated rural community development movement for the betterment of living conditions of people through income enhancement, infrastructure development, improving living environment and community building. Its goal is to build better and sound communities by the community people using self-help efforts thereby contributing to national development. Thus, the model is aimed at making village communities to live the spirit of diligence, self-help and cooperation, mainly through deliberate community action. The model therefore focuses on inculcating the “we can do” spirit and confidence through voluntarily agreement to address the challenges that afflict a community with little dependence from outside.

Evaluation Purpose and questions: The project was launched in July 2015 and was slated to end in June 2017 but has been granted a no-cost extension up to December 2017. Although the project’s Mid-term evaluation was not timely, it was deemed by the stakeholders to still be useful for guiding the design and implementation of the scale up phase since this was a pilot project. Thus, this Mid-term evaluation was commissioned to assess project implementation focusing on how the design of the project has impacted on implementation, results, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. This report therefore articulates key project results, challenges and lessons learnt which form the basis of the conclusions and recommendations which is in response to the specific evaluation questions hereunder;

- i. How relevant and appropriate is the project design to the achievement of project results through community-led development as well as policies related to Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Economic Development, UNDP's mandate and UNDAF/Country Programme Document?
- ii. To what extent have project key objectives, goal and project specific outputs and outcomes been achieved? What were the unintended consequences of this project?
- iii. What relationships and partnerships are most effective in terms of delivering expected results? Specifically assess the strengths and weaknesses of direct and tangential partnership arrangements of the project with stakeholders in delivering project objectives?
- iv. To what extent were the project financial resources available and appropriately utilized? Appraise the value for money in the utilization of resources?
- v. Assess the role of the project in contributing to gender concerns/ equality and the empowerment of women?
- vi. What project sustainability measures were put in place and what factors are likely to affect project sustainability? How well has the project used the information generated by the performance indicators during project implementation to adapt and improve the project?

Results:

The project interventions are highly relevant as they resonate with both international, national and community level development priorities and aspirations as enshrined in the SDGs, NDP II and Vision 2040. The project is well aligned with the national development policies such as LED, Decentralization

and the community development policy among others. By bringing the community members at the forefront of their local development, the ISNC project is well positioned to promote responsive and participatory planning processes which in turn enhance the relevance of the interventions.

The evaluation noted that there is satisfactory progress towards the achievement of the set outputs which presents a high potential for supporting the realization of the desired outcomes and impacts. However, late implementation of some project activities has notably delayed the realization of the envisaged results; a factor that lowers the effectiveness of the project. Nevertheless, the evaluation noted a higher degree of consistence in the project results chain which would guarantee project effectiveness at full activity implementation.

The community based implementation approaches that have been adopted coupled with sound financial management regulations as well as decentralized implementation process have ensured cost effectiveness of the project. The evaluation established that the ISNC project has been implemented with low cost since it has been integrated in the National Implementation Modalities (NIM). The voluntarism spirit that the project has promoted coupled with the community wiliness to contribute local available resources has helped to ensure project efficiency.

Participatory implementation approach that has been adopted under the ISNC portrays the potential for enhanced project sustainability. This is because the communities have successfully owned the project interventions and as such are willing to contribute resources for sustaining the interventions. This coupled with the capacity strengthening interventions undertaken by the project, the possibility of project continuation beyond the finding period is ascertained.

The ISNC project has shown potential for stimulating inclusive community development given the way it has mainstreamed gender and harnessed partnerships with both public and private entities at national and sub national levels. As such, project implementation contains valuable lessons and best practices worth scaling up and replication in similar circumstances as seen hereunder;

Lessons Learnt:

- ✓ The use of community based implementation strategies contains enormous efficiency gains and facilitates community project ownership and contribution which enhance project sustainability potential.
- ✓ Collective engagements are key to mind change as it creates a sense of belonging and inclusion of the otherwise marginalized groups (women, youths, elderly and disabled). The ISNC project has demonstrated that the communities are considered poor can actually liberate themselves with little external assistance once they are well mobilized.
- ✓ The involvement of political leadership in community mobilization facilitates the process and fuels the success of community based initiatives. This is because in communities where the SMU groups were fully supported by the LC I chairpersons reported ease in mobilizing community members for community work unlike in communities where the LC I chairpersons were less supportive. In Luuka district where the LC 1 Chairpersons in Bukanga Sub-county have formed themselves into an SMU group as a means of supporting the SMU groups in their respective areas, the work of community mobilization for community work was

reportedly more smooth than in Kaina parish where several LC 1 chairpersons were reportedly not supportive.

- ✓ The integration of the project implementation arrangements in the National Implementation Modalities (NIM) has been associated with enormous efficiency gains as it lowers the overall administrative costs. The ISNC project is being implemented with only one directly supported project staff (Focal person at the Ministry of Local Government); a factor that has kept the implementation costs low without affecting the quality and quantity of project deliverables.
- ✓ Effective involvement of the community in the project implementation lays a solid foundation for project sustainability as the community members' willingness to own and contribute their resources for the project is stimulated. Thus, projects implemented with community based approaches are more likely to be sustained.
- ✓ The idea of integrating participatory planning at community level was key to implementation of the community priorities-parish development strategic plans feeding into sub-county development plans. As a result, the community members are motivated by seeing their local plans being work on by the Sub-county and district authorities.
- ✓ Leading by example is a key motivator for effective community engagements. The involvement of top technical and political leaders in the community work across all the implementing districts has been encouraging and motivated enhanced community involvement. In Luuka and Maracha districts for example, technical staff at the district have been assigned to specific SMU groups. The assigned staff participate and officiate during all the communal work undertaken by the groups. This arrangement has helped I timely identification of the needs and challenges which are presented for discussion and redress during the ISNC core team meeting at the district.
- ✓ Participatory engagement with the communities in planning process creates awareness of the economic resource potential within their midst that can be exploited for local economic development
- ✓ Revitalizing the theory of mind set change for self-help commonly known as Bulungi Bwansi can trigger development and self-sustaining initiatives within communities rather than looking up to central and local governments.
- ✓ For SMU model to take root and be a grounded approach in development there is need to vigorously involve and train and strengthen the local government and community leaders at all levels. Further still for any government to realize its strength there is need for a strong grass root structures such as PDCs, Parish chiefs, LCs for effective service delivery to be realized equitably.
- ✓ In Uganda, the model and formula of financing ratio 50:30:20 was surpassed by communities given their robust involvement and participation levels. This is also due to the fact that communities know what they want and can actually contribute enormously only if they are strategically guided by their respective leaders

- ✓ Building effective partnerships at both government and community levels is critical for effective building of sustainability of development initiatives. A case in point is the ISNC partnership with The Hunger Project and Kabarole Research and Resource Centre. It is on the basis of the findings and lessons learned as presented in the main report that the evaluation made the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1. **Production of a professional documentary and publications:** There is an urgent need for a high definition professional video documentary to capture the outcomes of the SMU model before the project ends so that it's able to empirically capture all the processes, activities, actions etc. The documentary will be a credible source of information since it gives the beneficiaries' experiences first hand. There are no quick documents to refer to for information on the outcomes of the ISNC project. There is need for some knowledge materials. A success story booklet with beneficiary quotes and supporting high quality photos, annual activity reports with well-presented findings and experiences as well as handbook/manual will be a good resource for future reference. With the good experiences from the beneficiaries of the ISNC, there is need for this information to be shared with the wider public if this is to be taken on and replicated by other non-participating communities.
 2. **Adoption of inclusiveness and Self-help model by Local Governments:** should be adopted and be resident within the local governments planning and programming processes. The ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development should be highly involved right from the initial stages of project planning throughout the implementation process. There is need for strengthening the lower level local government structures by reviving and re-awakening the Parish Development Committees (PDCs) and parish chiefs
 3. The results of this evaluation indicate that the ISNC is a successful project whose design, principles and lessons can richly benefit other projects. For example, the SMU principles should be used as the key guide in the selection community level beneficiaries of successor projects. The distribution of Operation Wealth Creation inputs should follow the ISNC principles as they have proven successful in causing desired changes at the community level.
 4. Exit strategy plans: whereas the project design document was silent about the exit strategy of the project, the consultant was able to note that some implementation strategies especially using the local government and community structures and systems were good for project sustainability. However, the consultant recommends that a consolidated smooth exit strategy should now be clearly focused on in order not to jeopardize the results and impact sustainability. This can be achieved through various actions such as:
 - Formalization and consolidation of community organizations and associations such as the VSLAs and SACCOs
 - Simplified ICT platforms that can help communities and leaders in management and marketing
- a) The ISNC should be implemented as an intervention intended to resuscitate and reinforce bottom-up planning process not as a detached intervention whose funding should be seen as independent of the usual service delivery approaches in local governments.

- b) All service delivery interventions aimed at improving livelihoods should be mainstreamed through the ISNC model to enhance resource allocation and contribution from government, reduce duplication as well as promote the roll out within the pilot districts.
- c) Local governments should contract out development projects (infrastructure and energy and conservation technologies) to community IGAs as a way of reciprocating their contribution and strengthening their incomes bases. This approach could further strengthen community participation in planning and implementation SMU model in pilot communities and beyond.
- d) There is urgent need for the local governments to equip communities with knowledge and skills in technologies to exploit local economic potential like rain water harvesting, solar for production, energy technologies like briquettes. Public/ Private partnerships can be exploited as the potential avenues to scale up the interventions based on business models that could enhance community incomes as well as expand tax base of the local governments.
- e) The operational manual provides a menu of labelling and identifying ISNC SMU projects and groups. These guidelines should be shared with the communities and facilitated to implement them in order to enhance project visibility.
- f) Local government leaders will need to be continuously mentored and supported to drive the change management processes that ISNC brings and the SU model should be considered a crosscutting implementation model by all development players.
- g) An activity planning and reporting template form community level which is user friendly, be designed to enable communities improve their documentation reporting by cycle two of the assessment. Documentation skills will further help them score more and also facilitate knowledge management and sharing.
- h) Continuous practicing of the SMU model to address the individual production and marketing mentality, training in appropriate technologies on energy, water and environment, together with routine monitoring by LLGs, HLGs and the MOLG will address the challenges under the LED parameter.
- i) There is need to put strong emphasis on knowledge management, sharing and documentation within communities, districts and national level.
- j) The distribution of income generating enterprises should focus on maximizing benefit to the group other than individual group members. The project should put up measures to ensure that the acquired enterprise revolves around the entire group members. This particularly applies to Kabarole and Maracha districts where the distribution of these enterprises took an individual approach. There should be arrangements to ensure that the young ones say of pigs or hens should be passed on to other members until all members have got.
- k) The project put much emphasis on production enhancement while paying little attention to post-harvesting facilities, yet the two are so integral if price volatility is to be reduced. It is critical that post-harvesting interventions are integrated in the design and implementation of ISNC projects in future.

- l) The aspect of intra and inter group competitions needs to be more emphasized in order to keep the SMU principles on top of the community development agenda. Both financial and nonfinancial incentives should be employed to motivate and reward hard work but all this needs to be done in a manner that is sustainable. This can be designed to feed into periodic farmer exhibitions at Sub-county, district and national level.
- m) The next ISNC projects should focus more on enabling communities to access low cost investment loans other than grants. This can be made possible through targeting support to VSLA, Village Banks and other financial institutions that can easily be accessed by the communities. This will potentially encourage hard work and increase a sense of responsibility over effective utilizations of resources.
- n) End of project evaluation should largely be quantitative in order to capture measurable changes in the lives of the beneficiaries as a result of the project. This is because the quantitative data presented in this report have been extracted from other reports which poses challenges of data verification.