**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Background**

The terminal evaluation of the Uganda Green Growth Incubation Project (UGIP) – Songhai Model at Kampiringisa commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office (CO) Uganda was undertaken by an independent Evaluation Team (ET). The evaluation was conducted from 23rd November 2021 to 22nd February 2022 November. The evaluation process started on 23rd November 2021 was extended from 31st December to 10th April 2022 due to Christmas break and then non-availability of interlocutors mostly suffering from COVID-19. Due to emergence of Omicron, the International Consultant (IC) conducted interviews and managed evaluation process virtually from Canada while National Consultant (NC) conducted field visit and had in-person interviews.

The UGIP is a part of the Inclusive Green Growth for Project Reduction (IGGPR) Programme implemented by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) with a total input of US$ 17.9 million of which UNDP contributed US$ 10.28 million. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) is the lead institution and mandated to piloting of the Songhai Model pilot.

The overall purpose or the evaluation was to provide an independent assessment of the project progress, record the outputs achieved, identify implementation challenges, and draw lessons to inform the completion of the primary production phase and the design of activities to establish the secondary and tertiary production levels of the pilot, and the roll out of the Songhai Initiative to other regions of the country. The scope of the evaluation covered the entire implementation period from 2016 to December 2021.

**Methodology**

The terminal evaluation of the Project followed a mixed method approachthrough multiple methods to satisfactorily respond to the requirements of the evaluation. The primary data was collected through interviews and consultations with the Project team, staff of lead and line ministries and project direct beneficiaries. The secondary data was drawn through in-depth desk review of relevant documents and reports produced by the project, UNDP and Governments of Uganda (GoU). The ET faced a series of challenges during the evaluation process including restrictions imposed due to sudden emergence of Omicron, lack of required data and information, accessibility to stakeholders for interviews, and non-availability of progress reports providing consolidated quantitative and qualitative data on project progress and achievements, etc.

**Main Findings**

***Relevance and Design***

Relevance of the project objective and the strategy to the national, regional and local priorities was strong, as it appropriately addressed the international, national and local development priorities and needs and policy agenda of Uganda. In general, the design and output of the project activities were relevant. With majority of the population being the youth who are also unemployed coupled with biting poverty, the project has potential to impact social and technical transformation of the youth and other marginalized groups as well as revamp the economy. The Songhai model is also very relevant as it can also be used as a bedrock in operationalizing the current government anti-poverty strategies and policies such as the Parish Development Model, Operation Wealth Creation, National Advisory Agriculture Services (NAADS), etc. The project’s integrated development approach is highly key in ensuring youth and women empowerment and ensuring that community development needs are clearly identified through participatory processes in order to enhance government’s response to skills development, employment creation, natural resource management (NRM) and the resultant socio-economic transformation.

***Efficiency***

Whereas Project management arrangements and implementation are anchored on sound financial management regulations (ATLAS) by UNDP as well as embedded in MGLSD government systems, much as this is good control measure it has also generated red tape and bureaucracy which has adversely affected the operation and implementation of the project activities. The high staff turnover as a result of delayed/low salary payment and delayed release of project funds coupled with banking of the project generated revenues into the consolidated fund have all affected the project’s efficacy. However, some efficiency gains can be seen in the way the project is modelled by using locally available resources, material and communities which ensure cost minimization. The reported delays in funds transfer have hampered timely activity implementation, procurement of equipment and farm inputs, construction of infrastructure and subsequent delays in the realization of the results.

***Effectiveness***

The project is not on track and is seriously lagging behind contrary to its design strategy as well as regarding its implementation that has affected its medium and long-term realization of the desired outcomes and impact still requires more time. There is current scanty evidence pointing to medium- and long-term project outcome and impact achievement. Nevertheless, should the funding and management aspects of the project be streamlined, there is hope that the envisaged project results would be achieved at full implementation scale within timeframe of additional 3-5 years.

***Sustainability***

The possibility of project sustainability as the project was at design envisaged to be high so that it can also be rolled over to other regions of the country. At the current level, the project implementation has managed to integrate key tenets of project sustainability namely, use of government structures and systems, skills and empowerment of communities to ensure integration of locally available material and resources, project revenues accruing from open market sale of products, community participation, ownership, contribution and capacity building. The project sustainability however hangs in balance since its progress and funding is hampered and the rest of its value chain stages are not realized yet.

***Impact***

Whereas Songhai project has lagged behind its schedule and not completed its planned stages, the actual impact cannot be assessed at this stage. The current slight progress production level interventions have got potential to generate some short-term impact especially from the community workers who include Kampiringisa Juveniles and the youth generally who have been skilled and also gained some income and employment as a result of the project. Women community workers have also testified how they have managed to take care of their families and educate their children as single parents as a result of getting employed by the project. On the overall given the broad objectives and strategies of the project, it had not yet generated significant and observable changes in people’s welfare indicators. However, the project outcomes are well positioned to yield greater impact over time due to the challenges in funding and completion of the pilot.

**Challenges encountered by UGIP**

* UGIP has not yet completed even first phase- production due to delayed start, delayed release of funds and high turnover of project staff. At the outset, most of the equipment, seed, and other inputs were to be solicited from Songhai Center in Benin, this was a major challenge as there were extreme delays in shipments and customs clearance. The planned activities at secondary and tertiary levels have not yet been implemented. It appears that the Songhai Centre does not have a systematic way of attracting and selecting trainees. It was also not possible to establish the training targets against which performance could be measured.
* COVID-19 was also a big challenge to the project as it slowed down most of its activities. The Government of Uganda imposed the restrictions physical movement and introduced lockdown affected the businesses.
* As UGIP is a component of the wider IGGPR program. Its primary design lacked a comprehensive Results Framework which caused serious challenges in reporting as well as tracking and monitoring progress against its targets and indicators. Lack of specific measurement indicators against which performance of UGIP could be measured makes it difficult to develop cumulative workplans towards attainment of overall project targets. There was inadequate Management Information System/M&E/Reporting systems and function of the entire project as the evaluators noted serious lack of systematic information and knowledge management.
* At implementing partner (IP) level there is a management challenge since MGLSD does not have dedicated stand-alone project staff as the current ones are also charged with their other mandates. Another limitation of the Green Jobs Structure in effectively guiding UGIP implementation is that the structure in the Ministry is focused with inadequate provision for the various positions critical at the UGIP site.
* The project is prone to government bureaucracies in procurement and service delivery which slows down the pace of implementation of project activities, especially purchase of animal feed and crop seed. The model is built on the concept of ploughing back the proceeds from sales for sustainability.

* Delayed release of funds by UNDP to RP which also links with salaries for the community workers on site and implementation of project activities and inputs such as crop seed could not be procured in time that delayed the sowing of crops. Centralization of project site revenues to the consolidated government fund generated from open market products created a big challenge.
* High staff turnover due to lower remuneration compared to other jobs, lack motivation yet site is near Kampala City and COVID-19. Out of 14 technical staff trained in Benin, 10 staff left the job due to either one or more of these factors. For instance, there was a delay of 3-5 months in the payment of salaries.
* Given the labor-intensive nature of the model, it was extremely difficult to secure the required manpower from the neighboring communities in Kampiringisa. A foreseen challenge is attracting young entrepreneurs to remain in rural areas and revitalize agricultural, industrial and services, calls for important infrastructure, such as roads and irrigation systems.
* The project also faces competition from farmers who use conventional farming with application of chemicals contrary to Songhai model which emphasizes integrated organic farming which requires certification of Songhaï farm products. The yield and profitability in case of conventional farming is more.
* The livestock sector, apart from piggery and poultry units, is generally understocked, and a high mortality rate reported in fish. The district officials of Mpigi District Local Government are invited when the problem has already advanced leading to productivity loss.
* The project has also experienced levels of conflict of interest among line ministries and MDAs since the design was not clear from the start.
* The importation of technology from Benin as opposed to customization of local technology is another factor which would impede the uptake as well as affect the sustainability of the project benefits. A clear distinction between the Songhai model and integrated farming and organic farming systems is not well communicated.

**Key lessons learned**

* As to setup a high-tech model such as Songhai model requires a heavy investment and technical support it cannot be established without the support of donors and partnerships with private sector, and to reach the desired scale at the longer term.
* Government ownership, political will and commitment is fundamental for the success and sustainability of such model. In case of Uganda, the ownership and commitment of UGIP is evident as H.E. President of Uganda himself launched this project. Additionally, MGLSD is made custodian of Songhai pilot.
* Songhai model once it’s all components and stages are completed can be a bedrock and good foundation for the successful implementation of the new Uganda Government Parish Development Model (PDM) as a means of integrated poverty eradication policy.
* When the activities offered match local needs, local communities and individuals are likely to adopt them. Songhai Model is successful because it enables farmers to improve their productivity while regenerating and preserving natural resources. It also offers dignified professional activity for youth by giving them the means to become innovative entrepreneurs.
* Communities by giving them the means to become innovative entrepreneurs, timely release of funds is crucial for the achievement project targets. Delayed releases affect the pace of implementation of project activities adversely.
* Attractive staff remuneration and motivation ensures retention of skilled and qualified staff as well as increased productivity and builds spirit of resilience and commitment. Employing local people/experts in this initiative is more effective as they are aware of the local conditions and system. They can easily learn and have easy adoptability of new technology in the local conditions.
* The organic products have a big demand and market in Kampala. Hence, the organic farming and organic products producing enterprises have a big scope for local as well as export markets.
* Systematic and continuous involvement of stakeholders from initial stages to all stages of project ensures the ownership, sustainability and success of the project’s interventions.
* Transfer of knowledge from Songhai Porto-Novo team coupled with training of youth in Benin was timely. Phased approach to showcase quick wins is important for such a model.
* Systematic planning and clear design of project helps in fast tracking progress against targets and indicators. Systematized mechanism of M&E applied within Project initiatives would ensure quality monitoring of the activities, on the one hand and provision of valid information for impact assessment, on the other hand. Sustained and close supervision and monitoring of project activities is also crucial in realizing long term project objectives.
* Localizing and use of locally available resources leads to project sustainability and efficiency gains. There is need to solicit as much as possible inputs and locally fabricated material rather than procuring from overseas. That not only is economically viable but also supports the local businesses.
* Involvement of local communities in project implementation is cost-effective and sustainable. Out-growers with communities can be good model for enhancing the Songhai model. Involvement of indigenous communities is also beneficial in the implementation of project activities. Community’s involvement also ensures that the interventions are need-based and demand-driven.
* Once the community is motivated, mobilized and supported, the chances of acceptability and adoptability are higher. It was noticed that the participating farmers around the UGIP-Songhai Center expanded their farming activities to generate more revenue.
* The main objective of Songhai Porto-Novo is to train young agricultural entrepreneurs who, once established, become examples of success and draw the attention of the surrounding populations to the new kind of agriculture practiced by Songhai. This training does not stop with the acquisition and mastery of techniques of agricultural production. Songhai follows up with its farmers from the installation stage to the establishment of their farms and beyond.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Conclusion**

The pace of Songhai Pilot progress was slow as project activities have partially been completed. The project has started the production phase and training of youth has generated employment for them. Many activities are yet to be completed to advance to value addition and marketing phases due to a variety of challenges. Delayed release of and inadequate funds, lack of full strength of staff and high turnover, bureaucratic procurement process and COVID-19 were the main factors which had adverse effect on the momentum of project. The government has displayed its commitment, political will and ownership of the pilot.

**Recommendations**

* As UGIP has not even completed the first phase. Enormous amount of time and resources are required to complete all the phases of Songhai pilot. ET strongly recommends for an extension of the pilot phase for 3-5 years to allow consolidation and completion of remaining activities and enhance long term sustainability. Rapid Feasibility Report proposed that UGIP should be established in 3 phases (phase I year 0-year 2, phase II: year 3-5 and phase III year 6-10).[[2]](#footnote-2) (UNDP, MGLSD, MWE, UGIP)
* Since UGIP is implemented as a component of IGGPR, the specific targets and measurement indicators were not developed against which performance of UGIP could be measured. UGIP should have its own separate project document with clear line of direction, objectives, components, time bound outcome and output targets, activities and performance indicators for all levels with an adequate supporting budget and an organizational structure with clear mandate and jobs description for the staff. The financial support is further required for completing unfinished activities. A comprehensive implementation roadmap (given in BSMP) may be adopted to guide implementation in the short, medium and long term. UNDP should renew its funding window until the pilot project components and stages are accomplished in order to give a meaningful platform for its replication holistically. (UNDP, MGLSD, MWE)
* The financial and technical support is further required for completing the unfinished interventions to operate at full scale capacity. UGIP currently relies on donor support, with minimum funds generated from sales of farm products. UNDP should renew its funding window until the pilot project components and stages are completed in order to give a meaningful platform for its replication holistically. The Rapid Feasibility Study 2017 estimated proposed US$ 32.38 million for fully piloting UGIP using integrated production system spread over three phases period. The study recommended a budget of US$ 9.05 million for Phase l, US$ 14.97 million for Phase ll and US$ 8.35 million Phase lll. The total direct income of UGIP from sales of services (training, incubation and hospitality) is estimated at US$ 32.52 million in 10 years. (UNDP, MFPED, MGLSD, MWE)
* Whereas government through Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MFPED) is positive in mobilizing the future financing of the program, the project should in addition to the Rapid Feasibility Study develop a Resource Mobilization Strategy which can also be used to mobilize more resources from other sources. There is also a need for Songhai Model to be included in the government budgetary allocations. The profit producing is also essential to demonstrate that its organic and integrated production model is economically sustainable. To cover the costs of operation, maintenance of the programme and for sustainability, various income streams are envisaged including sale of services, products, charge of royalties from incubatees. The programme can also receive endowments in form of, donations, grants, gifts, awards, legacies and government grants / allocation. UNDP, FAO, IFAD, European Union are also the potential donors for funding and technical support. (UNDP, MFPED, MGLSD)
* UGIP should have an independent financial management system. This is because Government financial management regulations do not facilitate or favour a busy and ever changing commercial environment that needs quick financial decisions. (UGIP, MGLSD)
* There is a need to bring on board other key stakeholders including relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to play an active role in rolling out Songhai model both at the national as well as sub-national local government levels. The sister ministries, Mpigi District Local Government (LG)and donors should harmonize their inputs and develop synergy especially in the youth training, farming system development, entrepreneurship development, value chain development by integrating UGIP activities with domestic local initiatives. However, the risk of working with development partners should be managed through clear partnership negotiations. A mechanism for regularly meeting with the different stakeholder categories should be developed to foster information sharing and project ownership. UGIP may sign Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with all partners defining the roles and responsibilities. The Mpigi District LG should mainstream Songhai initiatives into its district development planning processes for financial and programmatic sustainability. (UGIP, MGLSD)
* UGIP faced problems of delayed approvals and release of funds which has adversely affected the pace of implementation of its activities. The restructured project management systems and structures allowing it to become semi-autonomous with its own project finance accounts and management system may help to resolve this crucial issue. (UNDP, MGLSD)
* There is a need for an effective and systematic monitoring and reporting mechanism in UGIP presenting a comprehensive picture of achievements against specified performance measures and problems and actions taken to resolve them. Baseline and SMART targets indicators should be determined for the project activities. The quarterly and annual progress reports should be prepared encompassing the progress against the targets, financial data, problems encountered, actions taken to resolve them, good practices, success stories, lessons learned and recommendations for informed decisions. The reports should be shared with partner ministries and other key stakeholders. (UGIP, MGLSD)
* The capacitating is an iterative process. Therefore, there is a need for continuous capacity building, trainings and sensitization in order to enhance the conceptualization of the model comprehensively as well as change the mind sets of participating communities. (UGIP, MGLSD)

* UGIP should be more open to research and to more objective analysis which would allow its development approach to reach higher echelons. The role of research in this context will be to analyse flanking measures to assist the trained farmers in setting up successful enterprises. To achieve this objective the project should develop networking with the academia, research institutes and Makerere University. (UGIP)
* For the project to improve its visibility and inclusivity and get the communities sensitized about its benefits, a costed comprehensive marketing as well as multimedia communication strategy should be developed and implemented. The project should launch an effective publicity and visibility campaign for UGIP activities to create awareness among communities and partner ministries on all concepts of the organic products. The effective tools include attractive advocacy material, brochures, pamphlets, videos, etc. The project achievements and success stories should be documented in the form of videos, newsletters and reports and shared with partners in the conferences, workshops on its website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. (UGIP)
* The high turnover of project staff and trained persons has been a serious problem for the project. The project should work out innovative ways to stimulate good work morale and high performance through financial incentives. These ways include performance-based enhanced salary, training opportunities, performance-based awards, study tours, in- service staff development program, establishment of staff Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation etc. to attract and retain qualified staff. (UGIP, MGLSD)
* The project organizes a “market garden” for farm produce especially fresh vegetables. This market is organised at the MGLSD head office in Kampala and targets the ministry officials, hence the farm produce is sold to the MGLSD staff, under a “monopoly market” and distorts the market prices, which may not give an accurate market scenario.[[3]](#footnote-3) The Center generated approximately UGX 800,000 per week through the sale of its products in MGLSD. The volume of revenue generated by the project will increase beyond the current estimated amount once all the project phases are completed and market outlets are expanded beyond the MGLSD market. (UGIP, MGLSD)
* Public private partnership (PPP) is essential for the success of UGIP Model as it involves processing, value addition and marketing of organic products. Also, such a model requires partnerships with private sector given the high investments required to reach the desired scale. The return on investment for Songhai model is 10 years to ensure that it becomes self-sustaining, such investments need private sector partnership other than relying on public and donors/development partners funds. The project may explore the opportunities to collaborate with National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda (NOAMU), GoU Private Sector Development Programme, Rural Industrialisation Development Program and Farmers’ Associations. (UGIP, MGLSD)
* The project should foster and improve collaboration with FAO, IFAD and other international agencies to benefit from their resources such as advanced technology and knowledge. Linkages should also be developed with Samuel Undong Community Project at Ministry of Local Government and Parish Development Model (PDM) for sharing resources, knowledge and experience. UGIP can extend its training facilities to PDM. (UGIP)
* It was prudent for UGIP to procure some resources from Benin e.g., Effective Microorganisms (EMOs) which is imported from Benin to make pesticides and fertilizers for the market garden. That the sourcing of some materials from Benin was proper, however going forward, the UGIP needs to domesticate such technologies. (UGIP)
* There is a need to revamp and strengthen the Project Steering Committee (PSC) which because of its unique nature is chaired by UNDP Resident Representative and Co-Chaired by Permanent Secretary MGLSD. A review meetings’ plan for PSC may be developed and implemented. The Technical Committee formed for the project should also be strengthened and hold regular project reviews. (UGIP, UNDP)
* It is strongly recommended the project should implement the strategy proposed in the Business Sustainability Strategy and Marketing Plan Study and adopt the recommendations of Rapid Feasibility Study 2017 in their entirety to complete the all phases of Pilot and then upscale it to other regions of the country. (UGIP, MGLSD, UNDP)
* COVID-19 pandemic has provided the organizations, governments and academic institutions the opportunities to explore and try various approaches of management, performing jobs and conducting academic activities. Many governments and institutes have successfully performed these activities virtually. UGIP can conduct training and other information services via digital platforms; harnessing digital platforms for communication and marketing as well as adoption of a hybrid model that takes into considerations for remote learning and collaboration in order for the model to benefit a wider and larger audience. (UGIP)
1. An Overview Context, Economic Overview and Performance World Bank, http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/

Benin/overview (accessed 12 September 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It is suggested that the comprehensive strategy and recommendations should be adopted given in ‘A Business Sustainability Strategy and Marketing Plan (BSMP) for the UUGIP-Songhai Model’, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, June 2021; and Rapid Feasibility Study, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)