

Minutes of the Livelihood and Resilience Sector Working Group (LRSWG) meeting

Date: 22 February 2022

Agenda

1. Opening remarks and updates
 - Sector Updates – Co-Chairs
 - Update on Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan (JLRIP) – MoGLSD
2. Knowledge sharing
 - Value Chain Assessment Report: SUPREME Team
 - Digitisation of VSLAs: ENSIBUUKO
3. Partner Announcements
4. A.O.B

1. Opening remarks and sector updates

Paul Mwirichia, co-chair from World Vision International Uganda, welcomed all participants for the first LRSWG meeting of the year. He informed participants that the meetings for December 2021 and January 2022 could not take place due to end of year commitments from partners. He further informed participants that based on feedback from partners, the co-chairs will structure the monthly meetings so that more time will be allocated to discussions. There will be two interesting presentations; the first by *Ensibuuko*, on Digitization of Village Savings and Loans Associations and the second is a value chain assessment report by SUPREME team; he noted.

Updates from Co-Chairs

Paul Mwirichia:

- The inter-sector coordination group has requested for all sectors to provide updates on available stocks of relief items that can be used for the on-going emergency in the Southwest. A tool will be shared with all partners for this purpose, especially those working in the Southwestern Uganda.
- The UNCHR Information Management unit has sent out the quarter 4, 2021 *activityinfo* reports to partners for review and feedback before the quarter 4 dashboard can be prepared.
- UNHCR has compiled data on active VSLAs in refugee hosting settlements, indicating over 8000 active VSLAs with about US\$ 3.5 million in savings. Partners were requested to cooperate with UNHCR to clean and validate the data.
- The sector will introduce additional fields on the *activityinfo* input tool to enable partners provide additional information on VSLAs, including financial data.
- The LRSWG in collaboration with the cash working group is organizing a study on digitalization of VSLAs to take stock of among other things: existing approaches, standards and experiences of partners, and the relationship between actors.
- Encouraged partners to participate in an online workshop on cash transfer organized by the cash working group on Thursday 24th February for stakeholders including Bank of Uganda-the Regulator, telecom companies, banks and NGOs.

Lilian Otiego:

- Emphasized the need for digitalization of VSLAs since most of the VSLAs were keeping manual records.
- To strengthen coordination through sharing of information, lessons learnt and best practices with sector working groups in the districts and refugee settlements, Sector Leads will request the sector working groups to make presentations to the national working groups on a quarterly basis.
- The Sector Strategy, which was developed in 2019, needs to be updated including aligning with the JLIRP and the Refugee Response Plan 2022-2025. Accordingly, Sector Leads are organizing a strategy review workshop before the end of March.
- Partners were urged to share good practices and lessons learnt from their projects- including from sub-sectors such as agriculture, skills training, business development services and access to financial services.
- UNHCR supported the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (MoGLSD) to assess the capacity of refugee hosting districts to implement the JLIRP. MoGLSD will present the findings in the subsequent LRSWG meeting.
- UNDP is working with the MoGLSD, National Planning Authority, and ILO in 5 refugee hosting districts to support Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and host communities.

2. Knowledge sharing**2.1. Value Chain Assessment Report (*Refer to attached presentation*)**

The study was conducted by Rhamz International Limited on behalf of the Security, Protection and Economic Empowerment (SUPREME) project partners that comprise of RICE West Nile, SNV and ZOA.

The study focused on commodities in refugee settlements and host communities from the four Districts of Moyo, Obongi, Terego and Madi Okollo in west Nile.

Some of the key findings of the study

- The average acreage of main food crop – cassava was 0.2 acres per farmer in refugee settlements and one (01) acre per farmer in host communities with an average yield of 4 tons per acre per season.
- Onions, okra, and soya beans were the main grown plants at 0.5 acres/ farmer in the host communities and 0.1 acres in the refugee settlement. The acreage for onions was 1.05 tons/ acre, followed by okra at 0.7 tons /acre and 500kgs/ acre for soya beans.
- The study found that the most profitable crops were tomatoes at 66.8%, sorghum- 59.3%, soybeans - 52.2%, okra – 42.5%, onions – 41%, cassava – 21.5 % and sunflower at 21.7 %. The least profitable crop was sesame with a profit gross margin of 21.5%.
- The major characteristics of the producers revealed that they are small scale ranging between 0.1 to 2 acres, dominated by women marketing small volumes of produce, men are responsible for land opening, low yields, people farm primarily for home consumption, among others.

- In terms of gender, the study established that, 80% of women are involved in production, 20% are involved in trading and processing activities on a small scale in village daily and weekly markets.
- Under input supplies, the study revealed that 56% of respondents reported agro input shops are in a radius of 5 kilometers from the household, varieties of agro inputs are stocked; low working capital of USD 1,422 to 2,844.
- The study revealed opportunities in business in areas of input supply, value addition, and trading and export across the districts.
- The study also revealed an opportunity in the increased cash flow in the local economy especially WFP's support through cash transfers and linkage with FSPs especially Vision Fund and Post Bank for access to various financial services.
- The study pointed out constraints in production including :- prolonged droughts, poor access to quality seeds, poor soils, and limited access to extension services.
- The major recommendations under the private sector were leveraging entrepreneurial skills- based training. Training focusing on building resilience against climate shocks, opening more land, supporting disaster early warning systems and support with inputs were also recommended.

Comments and matters that arose from the presentation on value chain study

- The working group noted potential duplication of assessments in Arua, Moyo, Obongi and Arua, thus sector leads reminded partners to visit the Uganda refugee portal to access information on assessments that have already been done before they plan any assessments.
- Access to land remains a big challenge among refugees and partners should support refugee initiatives aimed at increasing access to arable land from host communities.
- Agriculture financing remains a big challenge and all initiatives aimed at supporting agricultural productivity should be embraced.
- strengthen of farmer groups should be encouraged for collective action, including providing group guarantee for credit.
- The study elicited good lessons and recommendation that partners can use to strengthen their agricultural value chain interventions.
- Information sharing remains a key challenge among partners and that LRSWG should be utilized to bridge the gaps.

2.2. Digitisation of VSLAs – ENSIBUUKO (Refer to attached presentation)

Ensibuuko offers a digital platform that is composed of a SACCO management platform and android based smartphone application, USSD, and web platform for VSLAs. The company serves over 240,000 individual customers through 120 SACCOs and 1,200 VSLAs across 30 districts.

The VSLA platform capabilities include:- member register, digital member savings/ collections ledgers, digital loans management, digital welfare management, digital cash box, SMS notification, USSD member portal, marketplace, and e-learning.

Questions and issues arising from the presentation on digitization of VSLAs

Do VSLAs need internet connection to access the digital application?

Response: they need internet connection but not digital data/bundles to access the application

Do the groups pay for the smart phones provided by Ensibuuko?

Response: smart phones are provided to groups on cost-sharing basis - 40:60 between groups and the partners respectively.

Can the digital records created by Ensibuuko be accessed by Financial Service providers (FSPs) of choice to the groups?

Response: Ensibuuko platforms are open to integration with systems of any FSPs.

There is need to look at the cost of digitization critically as the costs presented by Ensibuuko may be high and unaffordable for an average VSLA.

Response: Support is given to the entire group to ensure that the costs is shared by 20-25 members of the VSLA.

Other points:

- VSLA group members including the Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary are trained at the onboarding stage to ensure that the team can manage its affairs.
- About data security, the primary custodian are the group members themselves, with the partner as the second custodian and Ensibuuko as a delegated custodian in the third place.
- More studies are being planned for knowledge acquisition to ensure the digitization is understood by all parties across the country.

3. Partner announcements

- Data collection for Food security and Nutrition Assessment(FSNA) facilitated by WFP and FAO, is on-going with an aim of concluding it by end of February.
- UNDP is conducting a feasibility study for marketplace creation in the districts of Adjumani, Lamwo and Obongi and will be engaging with stakeholders, including those supporting the creation of marketplaces.
- UNDP is also concluding a value chain and market assessment in Adjumani, Obongi and Moyo districts and will share the findings in subsequent LRSWG meeting.

Closure

The co-chairs thanked participants for attending the meeting and for the good deliberations in the meeting. Partners were encouraged to share information on the platform to inform collective decision making, learning and avoid duplication. LRSWG minutes and other sector documents can be accessed on the Uganda refugee portal. In a special way, the co-chairs thanked the two presenters from Ensibuuko and SUPREME team for the good presentations and for sharing knowledge.

Appendix 1: List of participants in the LRSWG meeting held virtually on on 22nd February 2022.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acema Cyril Albertson 2. Albert Gatibu Macharia-, Humanity & Inclusion 3. Alex Oloya Otenya, ACTED Uganda 4. Allen Kiiza, RHAMZ 5. Andrew E.Omara 6. Benjamin Chris Reese, World Bank 7. Bob Denis Odongo, DFA 8. Bosco Okello, KULIKA 9. Carlos Roiisen, EAAS Kampala 10. Cathrine Meda, Caritas Belgium 11. Cecilie Gundersen, WFP 12. Charles Data Alemi, UNHCR 13. Charles Herbert Matovu, UNHCR 14. Charles Ssekatawa 15. Christine Nandora, IRC 16. Dikua Robert, NRC 17. Drelionzia Omvia Simon 18. Emmanuel Emorut Ekakoro, UNHCR 19. Florence Ochola 20. Geoffrey Acana ,UNHCR Kampala 21. Gerald Otim, Ensibuuko Tech Ltd 22. Gerald Peter Emoyo, UNHCR 23. Godfrey Ocan, FAO 24. Grace Rwomushana, ILO 25. Granie Nangera 26. Haam Rukundo, RHAMZ 27. Ine Broos, UN Women 28. Isaac Kabazzi, UNHCR 29. James Male Kiwalabye, UNHCR 30. Jimmy Asea Uganda, Red Cross Society 31. JoAnneJogn 32. Francis Omusolo 33. Joseph Odumna 34. Joseph Waninda, Windle Intern Uganda 35. Lilian Otiego, Co-Chair, UNHCR 36. Magdalene Amujal, WFP 37. Martina, CESVI 38. Melle van Hilten, IMPACT/REACH 39. Meron Otong 40. Mesele Fitsum, ZOA Uganda 41. Michael , Caritas 42. Mike Tauras, USAID 43. Moses Oremo 44. Noel Anzo Alabi, WVI 45. Pamela Kyomuhendo, RGF 46. Patrick Marvin Odoch 47. Paul Mwirichia, Co-Chair, WVI 48. Paul Opio, FAO 49. Peter Okaje, FAO 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 50. Quinter Anyango 51. Raymond Mukisa, UNDP Kampala 52. Robinah Nannungi 53. Roger Nyakahuma, Ensibuuko Tech Ltd 54. Ronal Wanyama 55. Sahabo Michele, CRS 56. Samson, Samaritan's Purse 57. Sarah Besemera, RGF 58. Thomas Akol, ICRC 59. Vitaline Ajambo
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