



# **NORTHERN UGANDA RESILIENCE INITIATIVE – EXTENSION 2023**


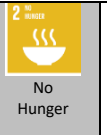



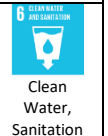






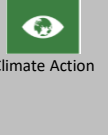
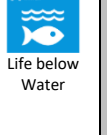
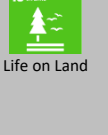
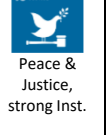

## **End of NURI Extension Report**



**Prepared by NURI Coordination Function**

**December 2023**

## Summary - NURI Extension to 2023 - DKK 26 M from CCE

<p><b>Key results:</b> Results from the original NURI programme strengthened and expanded and the following results were achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About 26,100 HH (870 groups benefited from Permaculture and 1,305 community Extension structures created to support various pilot activities.</li> <li>QDS structures created and 69 farmer groups trained and supported in LSB.</li> <li>In FMS, 181 farmer groups capacity built in marketing their agricultural produce.</li> <li>About 440 farmer groups supported in financial linkages, digitization, BDS and 22 farmer groups received value addition equipment on a cost-sharing basis.</li> <li>More than 15,000 farmer households (750 groups) actively participate in tree growing for climate adaptation and resilience.</li> </ul> <p><b>Justification for support:</b> The DKK 26 M from the climate change envelope will be used to further green the NURI programme, ensure that its benefits streams will continue beyond the programme's duration, and inform the design of the planned follow-up programme. The proposed intervention will thus target refugees and host communities in Northern Uganda where the impact of climate change is exacerbated by the high level of poverty and the refugee influx. The proposed intervention will have the principal objective of increasing climate resilience specifically for vulnerable groups as required by the Danish climate envelope</p> <p><b>Major risks and challenges:</b> Impact of weather, drought and floods on pilot activities. Mitigation is resilience design structures and individual, institutional or community ownership and maintenance plans</p>	File No.	2021-40801				
	Country	Uganda				
	Responsible Unit	2730 - Kampala				
	Sector	31120, Agricultural development				
	Partner	NURI Coordination Function (NURI CF)				
		DKK mill.	2022	2023	2024	Tot.
	Commitment		26.0	0.0	0.0	26
	Projected ann. disb.		1.5	23.5	1.0	26
	Duration	2022 - 2024				
	Previous grants	DKK 50 million				
Finance Act code	06.32.01.12 Uganda					
Head of unit	Signe Winding Alberg					
Desk officer	Victor Azza Vuzzi					
Financial officer	Asger Graae					
<b>Relevant SDGs [Maximum 5 – highlight with grey]</b>						
     						
     						
    						

### Strategic objectives:

Enhanced resilience to current and expected impact of climate change and variability and more equitable economic development in supported areas of Northern Uganda, including for refugees and host communities

### Environment and climate targeting - Principal objective (100%); Significant objective (50%)

	Climate adaptation	Climate mitigation	Biodiversity	Other green / environment
Indicate 0, 50% or 100%	100	50	50	50
Total green budget (DKK)	DKK 26 million*			

\*See also green budget overview in section 8 of the project note.

### Justification for choice of partner:

NURI CF has many years of experience from Northern Uganda. It is uniquely qualified to build on her achievements and share best practices and lessons. Implementing through NURI CF will reduce fiduciary risks and improve efficiency in project delivery building on the success of the current programme.

### Summary:

The DKK 26 million will make NURI greener. The documentation of NURI will be aligned with ongoing green activities to consolidate and sustain climate change work. Activities to further green NURI, both pilots and new green activities, will be implemented and documented. Activities to strengthen operational sustainability of NURI will be included. The programme will adjust and downsize existing implementation arrangements to the requirements of the extension. Lessons learnt will be documented to inform a likely future programme.

### Budget:

Output 1: Climate change adaptation measures adopted by participating farmers	21.0
Output 2: Climate resilient agriculturally-related rural infrastructure renovated and or constructed using labour intensive approach	1.0
Output 3: Agriculture-related physical & natural water infrastructure constructed and made more resilient to climate change	1.0
Coordination incl. TA and M&E	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>26.0</b>

## Executive Summary

The implementation of NURI extension built on the 4-year NURI programme activities, with the emphasis on greening initiative, sustaining the NURI results achieved and information dissemination activities. The Implementation was concluded successfully and covered the key output areas - Output 1 - Climate Smart Agriculture, Outputs 2 - Rural Infrastructure and Output 3 Water Resources Management. Output 2 and 3 targeted the improvement of projects implemented and sustainability which were concluded in the first half of 2023 whereas Output 1 continued in the second half of 2023.

The extension in Rural Infrastructures and Water Resources Management was to enhance resilience and sustainability of interventions through improvement of some selected projects, facilitate learnings and provision of technical support to the District Local Governments. The improvements involved gravelling community access roads, installing additional culverts, opening more mitre drains while learning involved organizing workshops for information dissemination.

Whereas, the extension under output 1 aimed at piloting new activities targeting farmer groups which included Permaculture, Local Seed Business, Farmer Market Schools, Farmer to Farmer Extension, Tree Growing, Business Development services and Food Forest Follow up. These were basically to document and share the lessons learnt.

Achievements included the completion of 256 infrastructure projects, with improved resilience to absorb climate related shocks hence anticipated longer lifespan. In the effort to foster sustainability of farmer groups and extension activities, a total of 1,305 volunteer community extensionists were trained, 69 farmer groups capacity built on Local Seed Business, trained 181 farmer groups in Farmer Marketing School methodology, 870 refugee and host groups trained on Permaculture using farmer to farmer extension approach, while tree growing reached over 35,000 households with different tree species or cost-shared household tree-growing.

NURI program engaged in a number of actions which included exit activities where staff contracts came to an end, documentations and sharing of lessons learnt through learning reflection workshops, archiving of the relevant reports with the Embassy and disposal of assets to the District Local Governments, NURI partners or disposal through public auction and also, the District Capacity Building support closed. A few of the staff that shall support with the closedown activities notably audit shall continue until June 2024 in phased manner.

The original NURI Budget 2023 stood at 44.7 million DKK. A number of project activities were discontinued leading to the NURI revised Budget 2023 at 40.3 million DKK. The discontinued project activities were "Community Initiatives" (2 million DKK), "Resilience Design Assessment" (0.5 million DKK) and "Information/Communication" (1.5 million DKK). The decision to discontinue these project activities was based on the risk of non-completion of the activities within the time available.

Budget utilization for the year against the NURI revised Budget 2023 is at 95%. The cost of the pilot project activities has been realized at 88% of the NURI revised Budget 2023, whereas the cost of NURI management and coordination and the NURI district capacity building scheme has exceeded the NURI revised Budget 2023 by 14%.



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## 1. NURI Extension – Background

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved the extension of the NURI programme (“NURI Extension 2023”) to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. The proposed intervention had the principal objective of *“Increasing climate resilience specifically for vulnerable groups as required by the Danish climate envelope”*. The grant for the NURI extension year was total of DKK 45m; DKK 26m from the climate change envelope, and DKK 19m from the Uganda country programme.

All programme activities under the NURI programme 2018-2022 were finished at the end of 2022 apart from a few project activities under output 2, Rural infrastructure, which were completed in the first quarter of 2023. This report does not cover the programme activities of the NURI programme 2018-2022, as these are covered by the NURI Completion Report incorporating the 2022 annual report.

The focus in the NURI Extension 2023 was on greening initiatives as well as project activities that supported the sustainability of the successful projects implemented in the NURI programme. Various activities were piloted in the extension which also gave the opportunity to extract, document and share lessons with the key stakeholders. These were guided by the principles of greening and sustainability, and building on the implementation of the main NURI program. The implementation was conducted in close consultation and collaboration with the District Local Governments with whom MoUs have been signed for the extension period.

During the one-year extension period, NURI piloted various CSA activities that included; farmer to farmer extension methodology, permaculture, tree growing, business development services, financial linkages and digitalization, local seed business and farmer market schools. These activities were implemented by the CSA implementing partners and Resilience Agricultural Units (RAUs) that had been formed by the programme. The CSA partners included AFARD, PICOT and ARUDIFA.

NURI CF led and coordinated activities, with various technical staff leading on the pilots, supported by staff from the units/partners with specialist skills and knowledge. Oversight, and motivation of field teams involved regular monitoring and mentoring visits, documentation and information sharing where rigorously done.

Prior to the implementation, several capacity building activities were conducted targeting extension staff as well as community-based facilitators / farmer-to-farmer extensionists. All extension staff were trained in targeted specialist skills as well as in tree-growing and business development services. These skills will be an asset to the communities in Northern Uganda which will enhance the sustainability of the results.

Rural Infrastructure and Water Resource Management activities were implemented by DRC, as in the main NURI programme, based on a contract extension and all the implementable projects were completed as planned.

NURI collaborated with UNFPA and CARE on the WAY programme relating to SRHR and GBV issues within the farmer groups. This included having coordination meetings with UNFPA, training of NURI staff by CARE, occasional joint review meetings at the CSA Implementing units as would be necessary and field monitoring.

## 2. NURI extension Pilots description and status

## NURI Extension activities related to Greening

### 1. Permaculture

#### Objectives

- Mitigate risks of crop failure
- Improve nutrition, income, and food security for the HH.
- Provision of knowledge and skills to the participating HH for improved productivity and sustainability of resources, particularly soil health and water storage capacity

#### Description

Permaculture activities focused on refugee groups in the settlements as well as selected national farmer groups in Koboko district. Due to continuous cropping, soils are exhausted and the adoption of permaculture can improve soils and increase production, while enhancing soil biodiversity. Farmer groups comprising of refugees and host community were trained on sustainable production which improved their household production and income. Under PICOT, 50 vegetable production groups were included to support own initiative of PICOT in the area of vegetable production, piloted in 2022. Permaculture training was delivered using Farmer-to- Farmer Extension (F2FE) approach, an extension methodology piloted in the NURI extension. Each farmer group elected their F2FE trainer termed “Community Based Facilitator (CBF)” whose role was to train the group members and households within the community. Permaculture targeted 870 farmer groups: 421 refugee women & 399 mixed groups across different refugee settlements and 50 national farmer groups in Koboko. The farmer groups received assorted vegetable seeds for two seasons and root crops (Orange Flesh Sweet Potato vines) as well as two types of fruit trees per HH, as per their choice. The permaculture pilot activities implemented are enumerated hereunder;

#### Activities

- Refresher training of NURI staff on Permaculture and vegetable production.
- Selection of farmer groups and Community Based Trainers.
- Procurement and delivery of assorted inputs – vegetable seeds, orange flesh sweet potato vines, tree seedlings, tools, establishment of demonstrations
- Training of farmer groups through F2FE approach.
- Quarterly review meetings and exchange visits for CBFs in a bid to reflect and share experiences.
- Monitoring of progress, lessons learnt and documentation.

#### Status

All the activities mentioned above were accomplished as planned including the application of resilience designs which involved significant physical work in terms of digging beds and contours.

Refresher training of staff: A total of 101 staff (86 AEOs, 12 AES’ and 3 CSAC) were trained on the principles and technology of both permaculture, tree growing and vegetable production. The trainings built the capacity of the staff who in turn cascaded the same training to the CBFs. As mentioned earlier, the extension approach used was F2FE and the CBFs were mandated to train the farmer group members and community.

Selection of farmer groups and Community Based Facilitators: A selection criteria designed by the program was applied in the selection of the beneficiary farmer groups and two categories of groups were considered in the refugee settlement i.e., Women refugee and Mixed farmer groups i.e. refugees and nationals. Key consideration was to target groups / households that were in need of the support and the exercise was done in close collaboration with the administrative structures such RWC, LC, LLG, DLG, OPM and UNHCR.

**Table 1: Category and location of selected farmer groups under permaculture pilot activity.**

Sn.	District – Settlements	Group categories supported under Permaculture			Total
		Mixed	Women Refugee	National	
1.	Adjumani – Settlements	87	113	-	200

2.	Koboko	-	-	50	<b>50</b>
3.	Lamwo – Palabek	80	100	-	<b>180</b>
4.	Obongi – Palorinya	112	88	-	<b>200</b>
5.	Madi-Okollo – Rhino Camp	70	65	-	<b>135</b>
6.	Terego – Imvepi	50	55	-	<b>105</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>399</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>870</b>

Note: in few cases there were males in women refugee groups.

From the selected farmer groups, the group members were guided on how to select their CBFs and this as well was guided by a set criterion. Quality of the CBFs considered were; ability to write, read, communicate, exemplary and train among others. In the end, 883 CBFs were selected, trained and they cascaded the permaculture training to their respective groups and communities.

**Table 2: Summary of CBFs by Gender and location under Permaculture pilot activity**

Sn.	District – Settlements	Status		Gender			Total
		Refugee	National	Male	Female	Youth	
1.	Adjumani – Settlements	142	58	74	126	60	<b>200</b>
2.	Koboko	-	50	36	14	04	<b>50</b>
3.	Lamwo – Palabek	181	12	46	147	86	<b>193</b>
4.	Obongi – Palorinya	192	8	106	94	55	<b>200</b>
5.	Madi-Okollo – Rhino Camp	100	35	63	72	40	<b>135</b>
6.	Terego – Imvepi	99	6	42	63	54	<b>105</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>714</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>883</b>

Procurement and delivery of assorted inputs: Each farmer group received assorted inputs guided by their choice and these included Vegetable seeds (Tomatoes, Okra, Egg plants, Onions, Cowpeas); Fruit trees (Papaya, Passion fruits, Jack fruit, Citrus, Guava, Mangoes, Avocado & Soursop); and other related agricultural equipment – hand hoes, watering can, planting string, spray pumps and tape measure among others. The inputs were for both demonstration /learning and individual planting at the household level.

Additionally, 13,004 bags of orange flesh sweet potato vines were distributed and planted by the households under the permaculture pilot. The choice of the OFSP varieties was due to their high nutritional value and production which supported in addressing alternative household nutritional needs.

Furthermore, a total of 76,901 tree seedlings were procured and planted across 25,993 households, 20,799 of which are refugee households. Over 40,000 seedlings were passion fruits and papaya, which are both fast-growing, short-lived plants, contributing more to household nutrition than to greening. This is because they are fast growing and therefore much favored by refugee households.

**Table 3: Number of Fruit Tree Seedlings planted by location under Permaculture Pilot activity**

Sn	Settlements – Districts	Citrus	Guava	Passion Fruits	Papaya	Mangoes	Soursop	Avocado	Jack Fruit	Total
1	Palabek – Lamwo	5,760	837	1,164	3,302	958		300	6,900	<b>19,221</b>
2	Settlements – Adjumani			11,970	11,970					<b>23,940</b>
3	Palorinya – Obongi	780	1,350	1,590	4,560	2,820	900			<b>12,000</b>
4	Koboko	1,500			1,500		1,500	1,500	1,500	<b>7,500</b>
5	Rhino Camp - Madi Okollo	1,175		1,321	3,082	2,522				<b>8,100</b>
6	Imvepi – Terego	1,356		784	2,392	1,608				<b>6,140</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,571</b>	<b>2,187</b>	<b>16,829</b>	<b>26,806</b>	<b>7,908</b>	<b>2,400</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>8,400</b>	<b>76,901</b>

Training of farmer groups through F2FE approach: The extension officers trained the CBFs who later cascaded the training to the group members. The training was hands-on and more practical through establishment of



demonstration plots/learning sites. The demonstrations were centered on muscle and memory learning for comprehension of the best practices in permaculture. All these activities were synchronized with the season to enhanced adoption by the beneficiary households and community.

Quarterly review meetings for CBFs and exchange visits: Progressively, quarterly review meetings were conducted bringing together CBFs from different groups to brainstorm, reflect, learn, and share experiences on the implementation of the pilot. The meetings provided a platform to capture lessons learned during the pilot and refresh the experience for the CBFs. This enhanced easy interactions, positive competition and commitment from the CBFs. In addition, exchange visits were organized for CBFs and farmer representatives internally within the settlements or to another refugee settlement where they learnt by seeing/observations and discussion.

To incorporate flexibility to the pilot implementation, the farmer groups were introduced into value addition of preservation and marketing of the proceeds from the Perma gardens as a record high production was registered. However, the value addition was most specific to enterprises such as eggplants, okra, and onions.

### **Lessons learnt**

Lessons on permaculture pilot were documented in a Learning and Reflection workshop on Development work in refugee hosting areas, another on extension methodologies and an experience note on Resilience Design and permaculture in CSA. The captured lessons are described below;

**Support in assorted fruit tree seedlings:** Refugees will always prefer quick maturing fruit trees as this was evident by the type of seedlings selected. This helps to supplement their livelihoods in the shortest possible time. Some refugees also prefer transiting the fruit tree seedlings for planting to their homes in South Sudan.

**Recruitment of local communities into extension structures:** Involving local communities including refugees into the workforce as ToT facilitated easy interaction and commitment from the beneficiaries. This also improved the contact hours between the beneficiaries and the trainers. F2F extensionists have advantages in terms of local knowledge, the time available for group interaction, and local language skills, however, they will generally not have the educational background to explain complex technical issues.

**Initiation of CBFs coordination structures:** CBFs in some settlements organically initiated a coordination structure at zonal levels and this helped to coordinate their activities efficiently, addressed translation challenges and inspired positive competition among the groups.

**Integration of refugees and host communities:** Refugees and host communities integrated under C4W activities or in mixed farmer groups developed relations and peaceful coexistence that led to improved access to land at no, or relatively low cost by the refugees. However, where refugees and hosts are mixed, consideration for the dynamics of refugee life i.e., food distribution days and fluctuating numbers in attendance needs to be considered.

**Cost-effectiveness and sustainability:** Engagement of F2F extensionists is a cost-effective way to extend the extension provision, while contributing to sustainability. Community / farmer group involvement in selection of F2F extensionists ensures buy-in and ownership.

## 2. Household Tree Growing

### Objectives

- To Increased awareness, knowledge and skills of farmers on benefits of tree growing
- To Increased tree cover
- To Increased access of sustainable biomass energy to supported households
- To test tree growing by farmers under cost sharing model

### Description

Following a successful tree-growing pilot in Pakwach district in 2022, household tree-growing on a cost-sharing approach was expanded to 12 other NURI districts, targeting 440 NURI farmer groups. Based on an average of 25 members per group, this activity was expected to benefit approximately 11,000 households. The provision of tree seedlings on a cost-sharing basis was to enhance commitment and ownership among the benefiting households. The provision of training, extension support, and allowing farmers' choice of preferred seedlings, is in contrast to other programmes providing free seedlings. Extension support on tree growing was by NURI extension staff, supported by District Forestry officers, and additional forestry staff engaged on short term service contracts to support the activity.

### Activities

- Selection of farmer groups for Household tree growing
- District level consultative meetings
- Mapping of tree nurseries.
- Training of extension staff
- Mobilization of groups/registration of interested households
- Mobilization of farmers contributions for tree seedlings
- Training of staff on Household tree growing
- Farmer training
- Delivery of seedlings and transplanting following confirmation of land preparation
- Post distribution monitoring and support
- Linkages to other complementary interventions

### Status

All activities listed above were implemented as planned despite deviations from prescribed procedure of tree seedling sourcing by AFARD, and beneficiary selection process by nearly all 6 CSA Units. CF management and technical lead responded with appropriate measures to address the disparities in question. While mobilization was done at group level, actual implementation took place at household level, on cost sharing basis where farmers paid 30% of the cost of the seedlings they preferred. All NURI extension staff received basic training on tree-growing and backstopping from a private consultant hired by CF and technical lead respectively.

Selection of farmer groups for Household tree growing: Eligibility for household level tree growing was based on interest to grow trees by applicant and willingness of interested farmers to meet 30% cost of tree seedlings with NURI programme meeting 70% including other operational costs. Beneficiary selection was thus left open to all NURI groups and at farmers' discretion. However, in contrast to stipulated selection procedure, and due to restricted time and workforce, the CSA Units through the Extension Officers assisted by Extension Supervisors identified 670 farmer groups that exhibited significant group functionality and

interest to grow trees. Sensitization on tree growing to stimulate interest was therefore concentrated mainly among the 670 farmer groups including 8 mixed refugee/host community groups (01 in Terego district and 07 in Adjumani district). Content of the messages were mostly on benefits of tree growing and implementation strategies, especially using a cost sharing approach.

A total of 9,175 households participated in Tree Growing pilot with refugee households constituting 0.3% (27) and national households constituting 99.7% (9,148) of the total. Overall, slightly more females 54% (4,951) than males 46% (4,224) participated in this pilot while youth in age bracket of 18 to 28 years constituted 20% (1,839) of the total.

District consultative meetings: In each district, Natural Resource and production personnel including District Forest Officers and Environment Officers were consulted for technical guidance on recommended tree species based on their adaptation to local conditions in each district. This information was shared with farmers to inform their selection of tree species and used by the Implementing Units to identify potential sources of tree seedlings. In the districts of Adjumani, Moyo, Obongi, Kitgum, Lamwo, Madi-Okollo, Terego, Koboko, the DFOs also availed contacts of local private tree nurseries to support the mapping of locally available tree seedling sources.

Mapping of tree nurseries: The programme emphasized mapping of tree seedling sources to determine the planned varieties, quantities and average market price of tree seedlings and to ensure their timely availability within first season of rainfall (January to June). The CSA Units assessed a total of 65 tree nurseries in respective districts and/or sub regions out of which, 31 were recommended to procurement committees for further engagement in accordance to NURI's procurement procedure. Key among the eligibility criteria used are; availability of tree species recommended by the districts, quality of seedlings, production capacity of the nurseries and proximity of nursery sites to NURI's operational areas in order to minimize damage of seedlings during transportation. NURI programme therefore encouraged farmers to select species from the options available in the recommended tree nurseries.

Mobilization of groups/registration of interested households: Simultaneous with the sensitization, and informed by the list of recommended tree species and average market price of available tree species, Extension Officers issued expression of interest forms to farmers to aid their application. A total of 12,245 households in 447 NURI supported groups including non-NURI beneficiaries completed and returned interest forms reflecting willingness to grow at least 1,297,715 trees across the 12 districts. The most preferred tree species were woody species like pine, teak, eucalyptus, gmelina, giant lira, mahogany, grevillea, bamboo and fruit tree species like jackfruit, pawpaw, citrus, mangoes, guava, sour soap, avocado, cashew nuts and macadamia. Later, more farmers registered interest to cost share for tree growing upon distribution to those who responded timely but this was not honoured.

**Table 4: Showing expression of Interest by CSA Unit and Location**

CSA Partner	District	# of Groups by Category		Total	# of Households	Quantity of Seedlings
		Mixed Group	New national			
Arua DFA	Arua	0	44	44	1,212	43,127
	Terego	1	23	24	475	21,370
	Madi Okillo	0	5	5	115	3,790
AFARD	Nebbi	0	55	55	1,450	73,962
	Zombo	0	70	70	1,022	81,205
	Pakwach	0	20	20	1,068	25,354

RAU Moyo	Moyo	0	42	42	892	43,952
	Obongi	0	6	6	116	5,398
RAU Adjumani	Adjumani	7	44	51	2,787	126,648
PICOT	Koboko	0	30	30	620	24,033
RAU Kitum/Lamwo	Kitgum	0	50	50	1,168	420,038
	Lamwo	0	50	50	1,320	428,838
<b>Totals</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>12,245</b>	<b>1,297,715</b>

Mobilization of farmers contributions for tree seedlings: Upon receipt of interest forms, the AEOs commenced cost-sharing campaign in farmer groups whose members expressed written interest, to mobilize farmers' 30% contribution towards cost of tree seedlings. All the Units opened separate accounts with commercial banks to secure farmers contributions. Cumulatively, 9,175 households in 366 farmer groups across the 12 districts fulfilled their cost-sharing obligations timely (Within stipulated first half of the year) where Ugx. 82,192,864 was deposited into the bank accounts.

**Table 5: Beneficiary Population by Nationality Status, Age, Gender and Location**

S/no	District	Refugees					Nationals					Grand Total
		Adults		Youth		Total	Adults		Youth		Total	
		M	F	M	F		M	F	M	F		
1	Arua	0	0	0	0	0	263	432	73	98	866	866
2	Madi kollo	0	0	0	0	0	26	17	4	4	51	51
3	Terego	0	2	2	2	6	91	278	53	100	522	528
4	Koboko	0	0	0	0	0	181	225	62	81	549	549
5	Moyo	0	0	0	0	0	363	370	91	101	925	925
6	Obongi	0	0	0	0	0	15	28	14	35	92	92
7	Adjumani	2	14	1	4	21	283	711	95	132	1,221	1,242
8	Pakwach	0	0	0	0	0	342	475	105	75	997	997
9	Nebbi	0	0	0	0	0	742	436	133	99	1,410	1,410
10	Zombo	0	0	0	0	0	567	231	125	79	1,002	1,002
11	Kitgum	0	0	0	0	0	164	392	48	56	660	660
12	Lamwo	0	0	0	0	0	291	395	88	79	853	853
<b>Totals</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3,328</b>	<b>3,990</b>	<b>891</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>9,148</b>	<b>9,175</b>

Training of staff on Household tree growing: Capacity of 104 CSA staff (84AEOs, 13 AES, 3CSA Coordinators, 2 RAU Coordinators, 1 Assistant Coordinator and 1 Accountant) were enhanced on tree growing. The training enabled Extension Officers to technically prepare households participating in tree growing for transplanting, as well as cascade recommended management practices. The training took place at Acholi Inn Hotel - Gulu and in lots.

Additionally, 21 skilled personnel with minimum of diploma in Forestry were hired, on short term service contracts of 5 months to reinforce AEOs during peak of implementation. 2 Forestry Officers were planned for per district. However, AFARD hired 01 per district instead of 2, due to an oversight in their budget and were hesitant to revise the figure despite being cleared by CF to do so. They supported activities like verification of farmers' readiness to transplant tree seedlings, distribution, post distribution monitoring and mentorship.

Farmer training: The NURI AEOs and Forestry Officers trained a total of 366 farmer groups on tree growing to improve on their knowledge and skills. The topics/areas covered include; lining, pitting, transplanting, primary protection of the young trees, mulching to conserve soil moisture, pest and disease management,

pruning and general management practices. The extension staff continued to guide the farmers on the steps to be taken in the process of management of the trees up to 30th November 2023. The trainings were reinforced with tailored advisory services by DFOs in selected groups, mainly on pests and disease management. To increase provision of extension services, some farmers within respective groups were mentored and asked to provide farmer to farmer extension and this worked well.

Delivery of seedlings and transplanting following confirmation of land preparation: In accordance to farmers' contributions received and NURI procurement policy, a total of 366,322 assorted tree seedlings were procured and distributed to 9,175 households that are members of 366 groups, at varying costs. The District Forestry Officers quality assured the seedlings from the tree nurseries prior to their delivery to farmers and in phases. The phased distribution was guided by the cost sharing information and verification of farmers' readiness to transplant. However, AFARD deviated a bit and such excess seedlings were distributed than cost shared.

**Table 6: Tree Seedling Distribution by Location**

CSA Partner	District	# of Groups by Category		Total	# of Households	Quantity of Seedlings
		Mixed Groups	New National Gps			
Arua DFA	Arua	0	40	40	866	48,931
	Terego	1	23	24	528	21,500
	Madi Okollo	0	3	3	51	2,181
AFARD	Nebbi	0	48	48	1,410	51,736
	Zombo	0	40	40	1,002	29,175
	Pakwach	0	18	18	997	22,501
RAU Moyo	Moyo	0	37	37	925	47,140
	Obongi	0	4	4	92	3,822
RAU Adj	Adjumani	7	40	47	1,242	54,613
PICOT	Koboko	0	29	29	549	24,033
RAU K/L	Kitgum	0	39	39	660	32,212
	Lamwo	0	37	37	853	28,478
<b>Totals</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>9,175</b>	<b>366,322</b>

Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) and support: This was conducted to establish the actual number of trees transplanted, survival rate after transplanting and to offer tailored advisory on subsequent management practices to enhance tree seedlings growth and ecosystem services.

From the 366, 322 assorted tree seedlings procured and distributed to 9,175 households, about 98% (360,079) were confirmed to have been transplanted while approximately 2 percent were destroyed before transplanting due to negligence of some farmers. By the last phase of monitoring in October, 2023, about 76% (273,330) of the total tree seedlings transplanted were surviving. Most of the losses registered are attributed to dry spells experienced after transplanting coupled with negligence by some farmers.

Linkages to other complementary interventions: Attempts were made to link the supported farmers to other government programs, agencies and service providers. This took place in 5 districts of Adjumani, Moyo, Obongi, Kitgum and Lamwo districts. Approximately 1,479 households were linked to UNHCR/National Forest Authority, Kijani etc. and benefited from 56,405 assorted tree seedlings. Some households used the seedlings to gap fill while others expanded the land area planted with trees.

## Lesson learning

The following lessons from household tree growing presented here include those collected from both Learning and Reflection Workshops held in Pakwach in April and Gulu in October of 2023, as well as those captured during rounds of field visits by the Technical Lead:

**Involvement of beneficiaries and key stakeholders in species selection:** Consultation with farmers and key stakeholders in tree species selection and/or matching positively contributes to acceptance of species and timely remittance of their contributions.

**Management and care for the Trees:** Trees planted and managed by either women or children are well established with good survival rates compared to trees cared for and managed by men. This is attributed to the attention and interest rendered by women and children in early stages.

**Cost sharing:** Some farmers are willing to cost share for tree seedlings. However, this is often jeopardized by other programs giving free seedlings. On the other hand, the fact that beneficiaries invest their resources in tree growing is not a guarantee for their proper and timely maintenance. Majority of the beneficiaries do not attend to tree seedlings as required despite cost sharing. Mobilization of cost sharing is time consuming and requires good record keeping.

**Farmer to farmer extension:** The provision of extension services is key in tree growing as farmers lack the basic knowledge and skills. It also motivates them to manage and nurture trees for better quality of desired products and ecosystem services.

**Program implementation:** Tree growing should be integrated along other program interventions and not a stand-alone intervention for cost efficiency. Though easily adoptable, it requires a lot of extension services through home-to-home visits. This requires proper planning with ample time for preparatory and inception phases of implementation, e.g., when to start the activity, mobilization of farmers' contributions among others. This improves the results and outcome of tree growing.

**Preferences for species:** Women prefer fruit and short-term species while men opt for timber and pole species. Whilst species matching is a requisite for good survival, the influence of preference on ownership of investment by beneficiaries is a factor worth noting.

**Access to land:** Both women and men seemed to access land for tree growing without so much dynamics in the household decisions. e.g., no cases of domestic violence resulting from the pilot were registered but rather many cases of spouses co-financing were registered. Whereas boundary planting was common in fragmented areas with high population density.

**Adaptation to adverse weather variability:** Indigenous tree species are less affected by weather extremes as compared to exotic ones. The current shifts in weather patterns affect survival rates even with transplanting at onset of first season rains. Area-based species matching is not enough but should be furthered to microscale species-site and -species matching. Tree cover restoration and diversity would be realized more faster and cheaply by promoting and conserving indigenous species through FMNR approaches.

### **3. Food Forests follow-up**

#### **Objectives**

- Encourage sustainable management and utilization of food forests, protected springs and water ponds established under NURI outputs 2 and 3.
- Promote socio-economic and environmental benefits of the created assets.
- To improve ownership and maintenance of established food forests, protected springs and water ponds.

#### **Description**

The necessity for this follow-up activity was exacerbated by the COVID epidemic which delayed and interfered with Food Forest establishment in NURI, as well as undermining institutions and community ownership of the projects. In the NURI extension, the activity involved handover of information and documentation of 796 food forests, 228 protected springs and 78 water ponds across 13 districts, established by DRC under Outputs 2 and 3 of NURI. The project details were handed over to NURI CSA implementing units, for follow-ups in 2023. The handover transition involved site visits and assessment of the projects, with decisions made by CSA units on where to focus to ensure maximum impact. The food forests are potentially a significant contribution to vegetation cover and an opportunity for communities, including school children to learn about the benefits of tree growing. By the end of 2022 many trees in the food forests were still vulnerable to water stress, destruction by stray animals, wild fires and pre-mature harvesting. The springs and water ponds were prone to erosion and consequent silting if not protected and continually maintained. The role of CSA partners and units was thus to encourage ownership and proper management through training and mentoring of beneficiaries.

#### **Activities**

- Handover process of Food Forests and other sites, by DRC to CSA units
- Site specific introductory meetings
- Development of management plans for maintenance of institutional food forests
- Dialogue meetings
- Provision of extension services to institutions on maintenance of the projects
- Linkages to other complementary interventions

#### **Status**

Oversight role of about 1,102 project was handed over by DRC to NURI CSA partners and units through a documented process. Not all sites were assessed to be relevant for follow-up. The team responsible for this activity initially concentrated on implementing household tree-growing which was time bound, especially during its peak, and later freed to focus more on follow-up activities. Implementation was therefore slow during the first half of 2023 before pacing-up in the second half of the year when the workload under tree growing had subsided.

Whilst Forestry Officers were hired to support the AEOs, the responsibility of follow ups under this pilot largely rested on the AEOs with occasional support of Forestry Officers. Technical leads in CF conducted regular monitoring visits and backstopped the CSA Units on some of the challenging tasks.

There was no budget allocated for this pilot other than deployment of AEOs who were equipped with skills, means of transport (motorcycles), modest airtime and some stationary to facilitate documentation.

Handover process of Food Forests and other sites, by DRC to CSA units: Danish Refugee Council (DRC) during NURI program implementation established food forests, protected springs and water ponds in the 13 districts of NURI operation. The handovers by DRC to CSA Units were witnessed by DFOs and copies of the handover reports archived by CF for reference. In the NURI extension, the mandate of follow up on maintenance was shifted to the CSA Units. Handover of 796 food forests (517 established at institutions and 279 on individual land), 228 protected springs and 78 water ponds were formalized between DRC and CSA Units upon joint familiarization visits to the sites to inform subsequent follow up engagements. Based on the findings, the Units narrowed numerical scope of monitoring to 741 projects (496 food forests, 209 protected springs and 36 water ponds) leaving about 421 projects consisting mainly of individual food forests as well as those with either cases of land dispute, low survival, lack of access or shift in priority etc.

Site specific introductory meetings: The CSA Units held sensitization meetings with beneficiaries' of 368/741 projects (265/496 food forests, 77/209 protected springs and 26/36 water ponds) across the 13 districts of NURI programme operation. The meetings focused on implementation strategies of the pilot and key roles of the various stakeholders including; School Management Committees (SMC) representatives, Parents and Teachers Associations (PTA) representatives, Head Teachers, Local Council (LCI) Chairpersons and Project Management Committees (PMC).

Development of plans for management of institutional food forests: This activity mainly focused on promoting timely maintenance of institutional food forests. About 272 institutions were mentored on preparation of simple management plans to guide and inspire timely maintenance and preservation/expansion of food forests. A typical management plan developed stipulates specific activities, timeframes, responsible persons, resources needed and means of their acquisition. The common activities contained in most management plans developed include; pruning, weeding, pitting and re-fencing, creating fire lines and pest and disease management.

Dialogue meetings: Dialogues were intended to promote clarity of beneficiaries on ownership and access rights to benefits of institutional food forests. A total of 266 dialogue meetings out of planned 388 were held with key stakeholders and in some cases wider communities across the 13 districts. Most of the dialogues were held simultaneous with follow up visits while a few were merged with pre-planned activities like PTA and school executive/board meetings. The meetings enhanced implementation of management plans. In Moyo, Obongi and Kaoboko where attendance was captured, 460 (306M, 154F) stakeholders participated.

In Kitgum, 1 dialogue meeting inspired by CF's field visits led to major community dialogue meetings spearheaded by lower local governments as such held in Tefoyo West, Mucwini sub county, Kitgum.

Provision of extension services to institutions on maintenance of the projects: During the follow up visits, stakeholders met received tailored advisory support on appropriate management techniques including on the soil and water conservation structures established in the food forests, integrated pest and disease management, re-fencing, weeding and pruning. Some institutions planning to expand and/or refill the food forests received advisory on appropriate lining and pitting.

Linkages to other complementary interventions: In the course of follow up, 33 institutions; 6 in Obongi district, 1 in Moyo, 18 in Koboko district 8 in Agago district refilled their food forests with a total of 8,945 assorted tree seedlings; i.e., 1,015 in Obongi; 125 in Moyo; 1,915 in Koboko and 5,890 in Agago. This was as a result of linkage to other actors and programmes like Kijani, NFA/UNHCR/, Fin Church Aid, Better World, Kolping, and Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP). 01 of the 33 institutions (Amua primary school) refilled their food forest with seedlings mobilized by teachers and learners. The tree



species transplanted include vitex, teak, gmelina, shea, neem, orange, mango, jackfruit, avocado and pawpaw.

### **Lesson learning**

**Coordination and transition of ownership:** Involvement of end users of food forests (School Management Committee (SMC), Parents and Teachers Association (PTA), administrators and learners) from onset of food forest establishment albeit by Cash for Work groups (Independent entities) enhances seamless transition of responsibilities and requisite sense of ownership.

**Agro-forestry in Food Forests:** Most institutions found maintaining of food forests incorporated with crops was easy. Most trees in such food forests were better maintained in agroforestry system as weeding is more promptly done along with the crops. This was particularly visible in food forests with less tree canopy. Many also used this technique to safeguard trees from stray animals.

**Site-species matching Vs beneficiary preference:** Apart from inter-species and site-species matching to enhance survival of trees which is an incentive for maintenance, beneficiary preference to certain extent also influences degree of attention. For example, considering the institutions preference when selecting tree species to inform choice of tree species for establishing institutional food forests, regular and timely information sharing among others are incentives for increased ownership.

**Integration of theoretical and practical knowledge:** The water retention structures such as bioswales are being used as practical instruction materials for soil and water conservation in some institutions. This has yielded positive results and beneficiaries are actively adopting it.

**Governance and operational strategies:** To ensure sustainability of the food forests, a few institutions are spearheading establishment of governance bodies and operational maintenance strategies for instance allocating PTA funds to finance maintenance and involving parents in maintenance of food forest events on behalf of learners which is guided by the management plans developed. This initiative has a potential to be replicated by other institutions thus attainment of operational sustainability of the institutional food forests.

**Land ownership and tenure security:** Understanding the contextual land use tenures is critical consideration while siting food forests in communities. Therefore, inclusion of stakeholders at various levels during implementation of long-term and economically vital investment projects like food forests is paramount.

**Inter-species spacing and natural regeneration:** Much as the planting pattern of food forests is well outlined in the RI and WRM manuals, the indigenous species on ground were not documented to enhance integration of the exotic species with indigenous ones and hence gaps in terms of inter-species spacing noted during the monitoring exercise.

**Knowledge gap on FMNR:** There is significant knowledge gap among beneficiaries on the importance of indigenous tree species. Sensitization and advocacy on safe guarding indigenous species is key.

**Maintenance capacity:** Institutions scored high maintenance percentage due to availability of resources which was not the case at individual establishments but initial ownership is key for its success.

## NURI Extension Activities Related to Sustaining

### 1. Enhancing Rural Infrastructure and Water Resource Management projects

#### Objectives

- Enhancing resilience and sustainability of selected projects commissioned during “Phase 1” of the programme
- Facilitation of learning and enhanced technical support to districts

#### Descriptions

The activity implemented by DRC, in collaboration with the District Local Governments, consisted of improvements on 265 projects (comprised of 153 projects situated in the West Nile South region, 55 projects in the West Nile North region, and 57 projects in the Acholi sub-region), where further investment strengthened projects’ resilience to climate change, climate variability and extreme weather events and thus sustainability for the communities they serve. Of these, 264 comprise community access road projects within 73 distinct road links and enhanced resilience of Atego Sponge Village by constructing a catch drain, desilting the contour and valley dam, and planting teak trees. The improvement of roads was achieved through gravelling, opening mitre drains, placing new culverts, improving culvert tops and approaches, installing scour checks and river training on selected road links. These projects were selected and approved by the local government in the 11 districts.

#### Activities

- District Kick-off meetings
- Sensitization and Cash for work group formation
- Improvement of projects under NURI Extension
  - (a) Reshaping and gravelling of selected roads at locations prone to damage and requiring frequent and costly maintenance
  - (b) Installation of additional Mitre Drains
  - (c) Installation of culverts and improvement of culvert aprons and scour checks:
  - (d) River Training
- Final Inspection of Extension Projects

#### Status

All project activities planned were completed, and projects handed over to districts by the end of July 2023. DLGs have been highly supportive of this activity, which was much demanded by the districts. DLGs in many cases provided equipment for the implemented works, with NURI only paying for fuel and operators’ costs. The end of Extension report from DRC is complete and available, and contains additional detail.

#### Lessons learning

A Learning and Reflection Workshop on resilience design, involving representative of Districts, LLGs, DRC and NURI CF, was held in Arua in May 2023, and a document summarizing major lessons was developed and shared. Similarly, a 2-pager on lessons relating to NURI’s development work with refugees has also been developed and shared.

## 2. Farmer Marketing Schools

### Objectives

- To improve farmers ability to advantageously market their produce
- To train and mentor selected farmer groups on FMS methodology.
- To monitor and document activities of farmer groups that have been trained in the FMS curriculum.

### Description

Farmer Market School (FMS) approach, as developed by ADRA, adopted and adapted by NURI, aims to empower smallholder farmers, to independently, explore markets and learn how markets function while identifying opportunities. Farmers' understanding of the market is widened through facilitation and discovery learning, motivating them to explore the market. Farmers learn how to work within value chains and to better understand the importance of quantity, timeliness and quality, through participatory training methods.

The pilot activity started in 2022, targeting 89 selected CSA farmer groups in the NURI districts and was extended in 2023 to an additional 92 groups that demonstrated potential.

### Activities

- Selection of CSA farmer groups in the NURI districts
- Development of training guide (Group Marketing Facilitators Guide)
- Training of NURI extension staff
- Training of Group Marketing facilitators
- Group training sessions
- Marketing trips by farmer groups
- Exchange visits for participating groups
- Review of FMS activities implemented in 2022
- Monitoring of progress, evaluations, lessons learning and reporting

### Status

All training activities covering 14 sessions were completed for all selected groups except 3 from Kitgum and Agago districts due to conflicts among them. In addition, GMFs review meetings, market research visits by groups, graduations events etc were conducted. FMS training materials that NURI developed were printed and distributed while soft copies were shared with DCA and ADRA. FMS Lessons learnt, FMS training evaluation and NURI FMS groups lists will be shared with ADRA, who trained and supported NURI on FMS methodology. The details of activities implemented are briefly described below:

Selecting NURI farmer groups: The NURI CSA partners assessed and selected 92 groups for FMS in 2023 based on set criteria in addition to 89 groups trained in 2022. In total 181 groups benefited from FMS pilot training. These were spread out in all the 13 districts.

**Table 7: Number of groups per district in 2022 and 2023**

District	No. FMS 2022	No. FMS 2023	Total
Agago	0	12	12
Kitgum	15	12	27
Lamwo	18	12	30
Adjumani	12	12	24
Moyo	4	5	9
Obongi	6	4	10
Koboko	10	10	20
Terego	3	3	6

Madi Okollo	3	1	4
Arua	4	6	10
Zombo	5	5	10
Nebbi	5	5	10
Pakwach	4	5	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>181</b>

Training of NURI staff and review of 2022 FMS training: In 2022 while starting FMS pilot, all CSA staff underwent ToT training thus in 2023 only staff that were directly handling FMS training were provided with refresher training. A total of 83 staff (AEOs, AES', VO's, VS', CSAC and Unit Coordinators) were trained. The training lasted 2 days at Acholi Inn, Gulu city and was facilitated by a consultant from ADRA Uganda and 3 NURI Master trainers on FMS. This was aimed at addressing gaps that were raised by the staff during FMS training of groups in 2022 and provided training for new staff. The review meeting of FMS training in 2022 also helped to provide areas of emphasis during the refresher training.

Training of GMFs and farmer groups on FMS: Two models of training groups on FMS were used i.e. complementarity and cluster. In Complementarity model, the farmer group was trained singly by AEO supported by GMFs while in cluster model, about 2 – 3 groups were trained by GMFs supported by AEO. The GMFs are farmer trainers who receive FMS training from AEOs and they cascade the training to respective groups voluntarily. Each group elected 3 GMFs for training which was done weekly until 14 sessions were completed. In 2023, there were few clusters compared to 2022 with Agago 4, Kitgum 2, Lamwo 1, Adjumani 1 and Arua 1. The complementarity model was the dominant one and this resulted from the selection of groups being far from each other.

Development of FMS training materials: NURI adapted FMS training manual from ADRA for use. It also drafted a training guide for GMFs but a complaint came up that it was not user friendly to GMFs. NURI contracted a service provider to re-design this guide and also produce a booklet. So, NURI printed 185 flip books and 600 booklets for use by GMFs to guide in the training which were distributed to each group.

Market trips by farmers: FMS training entails that groups carry out market research by conducting 3 market trips or more with their own resources. However, most groups trained both in 2022 and 2023 only conducted first market trip with very few trips outside their districts. Most attested that market trips were beneficial in terms of price differences, value addition, linkages with buyers and other service providers. There is still more to motivate farmers to explore markets within and beyond their localities. One concern raised was lack of resources for such trips. As per ADRA, this takes time to develop and no need to hurry.

GMF review meetings and exchange visits: In 2023, NURI introduced GMFs review meetings which brought together GMFs from different groups to brainstorm, reflect, learn, and share experiences on the implementation of the pilot as well as network with the different FMS groups trained in the district. The review meetings were held at district level and CSA implementing units held 1 - 2 of such meetings. These review meetings provided a platform to capture lessons learned during the pilot and provided opportunity to mentor the GMFs. This enhanced interactions and commitment from the GMFs.

In addition, the units organized exchange visits for selected farmers and GMFs to other FMS/LSB groups or large buyers of produce or cooperatives for them to learn the aspects of marketing. This was highly appreciated by the participants as good opportunity for exposure.

Graduation of FMS groups: This was optional since it was organized by farmers with their own resources if they had a cause to celebrate their achievements from FMS training. In this case, some groups from RAU Adjumani and RAU Moyo/Obongi held graduations. The units provided certificates to the groups for the training they received on FMS.

Monitoring and reporting: This was done by the DLGs and LLGs, NURI CF, and CSA Partners. They provided constructive feedback as well as linkages.

### **Lessons learning**

A learning and reflection workshop on extension methodologies, including FMS was held to gather lessons learnt. In addition, reports and field monitoring were used to compile the lessons learnt in FMS of which some are listed below.

**Farmers made discovery learning from the market trips:** Farmers out of market trips conducted were able to discover certain things they had not known or taken for granted. Some discovered market opportunities within & others far, price differences were glaring, other needed services they could get that they did not know among other discoveries. This opened their eyes on market dynamics and some farmer groups changed their enterprises out of the market trip experience.

**FMS training boosted collective marketing by farmers:** Much as collective marketing was encouraged in the CSA program of NURI, it did not bear much fruit. The FMS training catalysed collective marketing among the groups trained as it had element of market research for better prices. Collective marketing by some groups was a precursor for formation of cooperatives e.g. AFARD supported groups in Nebbi, Pakwach and Zombo districts.

**Quality products fetched more money and had market:** FMS emphasised quality products and farmers were able get better prices and testified that market was available where some groups got local contracts for supply of commodities. They carried out simple value addition practices such as proper drying, cleaning, sorting and packaging. Some have started processing their commodities to fetch better prices.

**Use of farmer trainers (GMFs) and their selection:** some farmers appreciated the use of fellow farmers in the training saying they did a commendable job and they will remain after NURI closure. The monitoring really found out that they had done a good job. However, others did not consider the training by their fellow farmers worth and despised them. Hence, selection of GMFs is key to get desired results.

**A mixture of training methods is good:** FMS used a mixture of training methods; plenary discussion and experience sharing, role plays, pictorials, presentation, re-cap, refresher training, exchange visits as well as training by AEOs and GMFs. This was appreciated across the section of groups interviewed about the training approaches that NURI deployed.

**FMS requires time to see tangible impact:** You cannot see results from FMS training quickly but there are positive milestones that NURI was able see in the short period of implementation like formation of cooperatives, good prices fetched by farmers etc. If the groups continued with what they learnt, the impact would be big in a short time.

**Some topics are difficult for staff, GMFs and Farmers:** Not all can be well conceptualized by everyone, so in FMS training some topics were hard for farmers, GMFs and AEOs to understand. Such required refresher training, backstopping and mentoring is required. This also requires simple training materials for AEOs and GMFs. FMS approach should thus also start early in the program to allow for such to happen.

**Unfavorable weather:** Unfavorable weather in the two years was a great hinderance to increased production. This seriously affected expected results from groups like collective marketing.

**Distance between groups:** In some areas, groups and/or farmers were so scattered that it was difficult to cluster them. This affected training them as clusters, doing collective marketing and other joint activities. Some farmers were very far from existing stores for collective marketing.

### 3. Local Seed Business (LSB)

#### Objectives

- To initiate and support LSB as a business venture in well-functioning NURI groups
- To build the capacity of the selected farmer groups in LSB.
- To improve access to affordable quality declared seeds in NURI implementation areas and beyond

#### Description

Piloting LSB among well established and interested NURI farmer groups offers potential in sustaining the groups, as well as addressing the challenge of access to quality seeds in Northern Uganda. Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) Uganda, in collaboration with MAAIF and NARO have engaged in LSB for some years and are involved in the NURI pilot through training and monitoring, as well as supplying foundation seed. The NURI pilot built on the experience of earlier projects and engaged with the relevant stakeholders.

The LSB pilot was rolled out in 12 NURI districts with 69 selected CSA farmer groups based on their interest and capacity.

#### Activities

- Fact finding and/or learning from other partners or groups
- Notifying DLGs on LSB pilot especially the Production departments
- Identifying and selecting suitable, interested NURI groups
- Training of NURI staff and community-based trainers on LSB
- Training of NURI farmer groups by NURI staff
- Adapt training materials
- Procurement of foundation seeds and establishment of seed learning sites
- Exchange visits and twinning with successful groups for participating NURI farmer groups
- Field inspections and certification of seeds
- Marketing of quality declared seed
- Monitoring of progress, lessons learning and reporting

#### Status

All the activities mentioned above were accomplished as planned except marketing of quality declared seeds and certification of seeds. Marketing of quality declared seeds wasn't accomplished due to the closure of the program in December 2023. Additionally, few groups in West Nile areas who planted late in second season, had not harvested their learning sites. Looking forward, some farmers were also in the process of booking for foundation seeds for next year although they had fear of where to do it coupled with lack of trust with money for those selling the seeds. These are briefly explained below:

Facts finding and/or learning from other partners/groups: NURI CF held a meeting with ISSD Uganda in NURI CF Arua office to get better understanding of LSB methodology and its implementation in December 2022. Thereafter, we visited Abi ZARDI, Ngetta ZARDI, NaSARRI and 4 developed LSBs in Acholi and Lango trained by ISSD Uganda. This gave NURI CF some good insights on access to foundation seeds and experiences of LSBs from farmers perspective. It also had a zoom meeting with MAAIF / NSCS officials on operations of LSBs. Partners also continued to get more information on LSBs as the pilot implementation progressed.

Notifying DLGs on LSB pilot especially the Production departments: The seed multiplication is a regulated activity so the DLGs were informed on LSB pilot. With this, the DAOs have been pivotal in field inspection of the LSBs, inspection of foundation seeds procured and providing recommendation for groups registration

with NSCS. In addition, the DLGs were involved in monitoring of the pilot and are expected to continue mentoring the LSBs beyond NURI.

Selecting NURI groups and crops: NURI CSA partners assessed and selected 69 farmer groups for LSB pilot based on a set criterion similar to one in the ISSD training manual for LSB. Furthermore, the farmer groups selected crops they wished to multiply seeds under LSB. Each group choose one crop although a few added a second crop. From here, they selected particular varieties and most of them recent varieties although some few wanted old varieties.

**Table 8: Number of groups and crops selected for LSB pilot**

District	No. LSBs selected	Crops selected
Agago	8	Cassava, groundnuts, soybean
Kitgum	5	Cassava, groundnuts, soybeans
Lamwo	6	Sesame. Groundnuts, Soybeans
Adjumani	6	Groundnuts, soybeans
Moyo	6	Groundnuts
Koboko	8	Groundnuts, beans
Terego	1	Soybeans
Madi Okollo	2	Cassava, groundnuts
Arua	5	Cassava, beans
Zombo	10	Beans, potatoes
Nebbi	6	Beans, soybeans
Pakwach	6	Cassava
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	

Training of NURI staff on LSB: NURI CF contracted ISSD Uganda to train 55 NURI staff (AEOs, AESs, CSAC & Coordinators) on LSB methodology. The training took 8 days in Gulu split into two phases with phase one for five days and phase two for three days. The second training also aimed to address some of the challenges the staff met in the field. As part of the contract, ISSD also carried out two field monitoring visits to backstop / mentor the staff and groups. This was appreciated by both the staff and farmers.

Training of NURI groups and training materials used: The NURI staff trained all 69 groups selected on LSB methodology with main focus on these modules; the introduction, professionally organised, market oriented, technically equipped and strategically linked. The pilot used training materials developed by ISSD for training farmers on the LSB methodology. Both hands on and theoretical approaches were used during the training. Others were mentoring and monitoring visits that were conducted by different stakeholders to the various groups, exchange and twinning visits by other LSB as part of the training and linkages. ISSD in its reports said NURI LSBs had grasped the concept quite well although needed one more year of mentoring.

Procurement of foundation seeds: The units procured foundation seeds for establishment of learning sites of 2 acres per farmer group from various sources for different crops namely NARO Holdings Limited, Makerere University soybean project, companies and NARO institutes. The DAOs were involved in quality assurance of the seeds. Some seeds were in insufficient quantities while others were not. Cases of both good and poor-quality seeds were encountered which attracted criticisms and appreciation. Farmers were also mobilised to procure the seeds for their individual or group seed multiplication plots but the response was very poor. It is groups in Acholi, Koboko and Arua that tried something. The staff continued with mobilising groups to raise money to buy seeds next year. Some of the strategies groups have put are establishing seed box funds while others have grown crops which they will sell.

Establishment of learning sites: 68 out of 69 groups established learning sites which also served as seed multiplication plots. One group in Adjumani district did not plant citing it was late for them but preferred to keep the seeds. Out of these, one in Agago district for groundnuts completely failed due to prolonged dry spell. Generally, the performance of those already harvested is poor due to either prolonged dry spell or heavy rains. Despite this, the farmers remarked that these varieties posted better yields than home saved seeds. Almost all fell below the district averages although good yields were noted in Koboko for beans and Adjumani, Moyo and Lamwo for groundnuts and soybeans. To support them with better post-harvest handling, these groups were supported with 4 pieces of tarpaulins each.

Field inspections: The NURI program facilitated the field inspection of the learning sites by the DAOs as they also served as seed multiplication plots. In some cases, inspection was not timely done by DAOs. In addition, NURI facilitated NSCS / MAAIF to carry out one field visit to the sites and LSB groups. All the 11 cassava plots failed the test due to viral diseases incidence; CBSD and CMD. Similarly, all 06 potato LSB have failed the test as the fields were attacked by blight due to heavy rains in Zombo district. For the seeded crops, off-types were rogued as guided by DAOs and NURI staff and this improved on the purity.

Certification of seeds: Seed samples were collected by NSCS/MAAIF personnel in December 2023 for tests from 39 LSB out of 50 groups that had planted seeded crops. The remaining 11 groups had not harvested or threshed or dried their seeds by that time. The reports are expected early January 2024. LSBs were guided on what they needed to do once they got the reports to acquire the seed labels and packaging materials.

Marketing of QDS: This was not done as certification process was underway by the time of filing this report. Some groups said there was overwhelming demand of their seeds in the community.

Registration of LSBs: It is a requirement for seed producers to be registered with NSCS and each LSB pays Ugx 1,000,000. The list of LSBs and their application forms were submitted to NSCS. However, NURI LSBs were still undergoing training, thus it was not possible for them to register. NSCS gave them a window to develop into viable business entities before they can register but they were encouraged to register at district level.

Monitoring and reporting: This was done by the DLGs and LLGs, NURI CF, and CSA Partners. They provided constructive feedback as well as possible linkages.

### **Lessons learnt**

NURI did not have in-depth lessons on LSB, as it is a complex process and a single year is insufficient to claim replicable lessons. Here below are some probable lessons learnt during the short time of implementation.

**Farmers do not easily take up buying foundation seeds:** From this pilot despite selecting strong groups by the CSA implementing units, very few farmers quickly accepted to buy foundation seeds. Other farmers said they first wanted to experiment with the learning plots that NURI program established or had no money. Against this, it is not necessary to train all groups on LSB methodology since it requires resources and time consuming.

**Availability of foundation seeds:** During the fact finding, it was stated that foundation seeds can only be procured after pre-booking but after trying different sources, NURI was able to buy foundation seeds for learning plots and some individual farmers. Well in some cases the quality of seeds was poor and insufficient quantities.

**Period to train LSBs:** NURI has been able to train its groups within one year. This turn around period is short according to ISSD but commendable work was done. The groups are left with good level of understanding and if they continue practicing, they should be able to succeed in the seed business.



**LSB training biased to Agronomy:** NURI staff based on their training background had excelled in training groups on one module of being “Technically equipped” and this was evident from the learning plots established. In future it would be important to emphasize other modules especially “Market oriented” so that LSBs are strong on marketing aspects. It would be good to have staff with agribusiness training background in the team so that this is well delivered.

**Acquisition of superior varieties:** The varieties procured for learning plots were superior to the farmers grown varieties. They performed exceedingly well in the prevailing weather that was witnessed compared to farmers varieties and this had created seed demand from the group members and surrounding communities. Farmers said the LSB varieties were drought tolerant and high yielding compared to theirs.

**A combination of training methods is good:** NURI used a mix of training methods; training sessions by AEOs, exchange and twinning visits with other mature LSBs. This was appreciated across section of groups interviewed about the training approaches that NURI deployed.

**Weather vagaries:** Weather is a key success factor since this is a business. The weather in 2023 was generally bad especially first season which caused total failure for some learning plots for cassava and groundnuts; and such groups were totally discouraged. Again, second season in West Nile also receive too much rainfall and affected the crops – beans and potatoes. If farmers incur 100% loss, they may not again come back especially for beginners. The yields of most crops were also below the averages which can impact on the profitability of such enterprises.

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## 4. Farmer to Farmer Extension

### Objectives

- Test F2FE extension approach in training various farmer group types
- To assess the operational set up and logistics required in F2FE approach
- To document lessons learnt from the pilot

### Description

In the extension period, NURI program was interested in commercial extension model which did not materialize. It now zeroed on the Farmer-to- Farmer Extension (F2FE) approach to train farmers on Permaculture pilot activities in all refugee settlements where NURI operated, as well as Koboko district. Each farmer group elected their F2FE trainer termed "Community Based Facilitator (CBF)" whose role was to train the group members and households within the community voluntarily. The CBFs were trained by NURI extension staff, on specific subject matter after which they cascaded this training to their fellow group members. Farmer trainers' approach was also used in Farmer Market Schools, later incorporated in the household tree growing. VSLA training had also used Community Based Trainers but were paid.

The approach targeted 870 national groups, mixed groups and women refugee groups under permaculture. Permaculture aimed at improving soils and increase production, while enhancing soil biodiversity and worked with farmers on small plots notably the refugees. The F2FE approach shows potential in lowering cost of extension while reaching many farmers and building capacity within the community. The F2FE pilot activities implemented are briefly described hereunder;

### Activities

- Gathering facts on the approach from other partners
- Training of NURI staff on F2FE
- Selection and training of Community Based Facilitators (CBFs)
- Development of training materials for use by CBFs
- Training of NURI farmer groups through F2FE
- Monitoring and mentoring of community-based trainers

### Status

NURI extension activities developed, during implementation to integrate a wider range of farmer-to-farmer extension activities than initially planned. Other pilot activity like Household tree growing adjusted to integrate F2FE, than the initial plan focused on permaculture and FMS only.

In total there were 1,305 farmer trainers providing training and services to other farmers under NURI extension activities. These include Group Marketing Facilitators, Community-Based Trainers and Facilitators. Of the 1,305 farmer trainers, 684 (52%) were female and 621 (48%) were male. A total of 423 (32% of total) were youth, with 255 (60%) female youth, and 168 (40%) male youth.

In terms of F2FE in relation to Permaculture, all the planned activities mentioned above were accomplished except development of training materials for CBFs. However, a training manual for use by AEOs based on training from TEDDO and other F2FE literature was drafted and used to guide the training.

Facts finding and learning lessons from other partners: NURI conducted a fact-finding mission to Kulika Charitable Trust, TEDDO Soroti, DINU-ALENU in Omoro and Self-Help Africa (Adjumani office) to understand the implementation of F2FE approach from them. However, a meeting with Kulika was unsuccessful. From

this fact-finding mission, there were slight differences in implementing the F2FE approach and NURI decided to adopt the version used by TEDDO Soroti.

Training of NURI staff: A total of 49 staff (AEOs, AESs, CSAC and Unit Coordinators) were trained. The training lasted 2 days at Acholi Inn, Gulu city and it was facilitated by 3 trainers from Teso Dioceses Planning and Development Organization (TEDDO) Soroti. From the training, it was realized that the staff were already knowledgeable on most of the concepts in F2FE approach thus not complicated. This training aimed to prepare staff on how to implement F2FE in the Permaculture training. Some of the F2FE concepts were passed over to the groups and CBFs.

Selection and training of Community Based Facilitators: *The selection was for CBFs to train in permaculture and please refer to the similar section under permaculture for more details.*

The CBFs underwent training by AEOs in 4 phases of 1 to 2 days each so that they were able to cascade the training to their group members. First phase of the training covered F2FE approach, farmer institutional development, preparing CBFs to train and training methods. The three other phases of training were technical sessions on permaculture and most of them were hands-on. The CBFs were divided into small numbers of 10 – 12 for participatory learning. Refresher training was provided during field visits by AEOs at learning sites.

Development of training materials: NURI drafted a training manual for use by AEOs which was able to give guidance. No training materials were developed for use by CBFs during the pilot. Attempts to get some from TEDDO failed as they didn't have any.

Training of farmer groups through F2FE approach: *Please refer to a similar section under permaculture pilot.*

Quarterly review meetings and exchange visits for CBFs: *Please refer to a similar section under permaculture pilot.*

### **Lessons learnt**

While NURI Extension has failed to produce purely commercial extension services, the F2FE approach is a step forward, and some of the F2F extensionists – none of which are paid by the programme, are finding ways to earn income through parallel or bundled services. The F2FE approach is proved to be successful in the NURI extension.

Lessons on F2FE pilot were documented in a Learning and Reflection workshop on extension methodologies and what was observed or captured during field visits and in the reports.

*F2FE approach was designed specifically to implement permaculture pilot activity and please refer to the section of lessons learnt under permaculture.*

## 5. Business Development Support (BDS) and Linkage

### Objective

- To strengthen and build on NURI FG/VSLA achievements through mentoring and linking to business opportunities and services, based on group and individual farmer needs.
- To build the capacity of farmer/VSLA groups in business skills through support, training and/or linkage to service providers, based on their groups expressed demands.

### Description

The NURI extension provided an opportunity to further strengthen farmer groups with potential in business skills and linkages to enhance their capacity through business trainings and support in value chain equipment. In addition to business skills trainings and linkage to the value chain previously implemented, NURI supported and also linked the farmers to other development partners for value chain equipment that supported greening and sustainability. The NURI equipment support initiative was done through a cost sharing approach of 70-30% NURI- farmers respectively. This activity built on NURI success in the integration of Production and Marketing Planning (PMP) to VSLA linkage, where household visions and plans explicitly link savings and production activities. This initiative was done across the 13 districts of NURI implementation although some of the districts never qualified for equipment cost sharing.

### Activities

- Selection of groups to be supported based on developed criteria
- Hire consultants to develop the BDS manual and train staff on BDS.
- Train NURI VSLA and extension staff on business skills activities
- Sensitization and mentor supported farmer groups in BDS.
- Support interested farmer groups to develop business proposals for the equipment support and conduct assessment of the proposals.
- Linkage of groups to other development partners.
- Support the qualified groups to mobilize their 30% for equipment cost sharing.
- Monitoring, mentorship and coaching of the groups.

### Status of business development services

All activities listed above were implemented as planned with changes in the approach of cost sharing to only take on the cost of equipment. Despite this, responses were given with appropriate measures to address the changes and this enabled groups participation. A total of 440 groups participated in BDS implementation with only 4% (18) of groups accessing the equipment under the cost sharing approach.

Hiring of the consultant to develop BDS manual and train staff on BDS: To enable the programme proceed with the implementation of business skills, a consultant was hired to develop BDS manual and train the staff. This process started with a call of proposals were 31 consultants submitted proposals that went through assessment which saw NaNa consults emerge the best. NaNa developed the manual and trained 136 staff in 4 days session to enable them gain skills that was rolled out to the farmer groups.

Training groups on BDS: All the 440 groups were trained on all the business skills topics that included; idea generation, business goal setting and strategy development, business products, sales and marketing, business profit modelling and reinvestment, record keeping, business funding, customer care and gender mainstreaming in business. From the trainings, farmers appreciated and implemented mostly the customer care, gender mainstreaming in business, profitability analysis, record keeping, sales and marketing aspects.

Development of the proposals: After the trainings, many groups picked interest in development of the proposals to go through the competitive process. This was affected by the short period to come up with meaningful proposals since majority of the groups were illiterate and would require more support from staff in the process. A total of over 200 proposals were developed by the groups and submitted to the units for vetting.

Assessment and evaluation of the BDS proposals: The assessment and qualification of proposals was done at 2 different levels. The evaluation criterion was the same across board that saw units qualified and submitted 110 proposals to CF that included businesses like apiary for greening, milling produce, banana growing, irrigation etc. With consideration for greening and value addition, only 100 proposals qualified after a preassessment by CF and were submitted to a consultant for further evaluation process. After the consultant's evaluation, only 40 groups qualified to move to the next level of evaluation. The 40 proposals submitted by the consultant to CF were reviewed hence, elimination of 4 groups that had business ideas of irrigation while tapping the water from the Nile based on the complexity of the requirement to access the Nile as the source of water for irrigation.

Validation of the groups: CF constituted a team of 3 that included the NPC, VSLA coordinator and RAU K/L coordinator to conduct the physical visit to the groups to ascertain their readiness for cost sharing and understanding of the business ideas generated. This resulted into the visit of 36 groups across the districts of Kitgum, Adjumani, Moyo, Obongi, Koboko, Arua, Madi Okollo, Terego and Zombo. Following the assessment, only 22 groups qualified to receive the equipment that included apiary set (2), cassava/maize milling machines (14), groundnut sheller (1), cassava chipper (1), irrigation (1), maize thresher (1), groundnut paste machine (1), rice milling machine (1).

Contribution of the 30% cost sharing by farmer groups: Despite 22 groups qualifying to get the equipment, only 18 managed to contribute 30% of the cost within the timeframe provided. From the total cost of Ugx 155,295,600, farmers contributed Ugx 45,938,600 for the purchase of ricker hauler (1) maize hauler (2), milling machines (13), maize thresher (1), irrigation set (1), cassava chipper (1), apiary set (1).

Procurement, Installation and handover of the equipment: The supply, installation and training of the farmers on operations of the equipment was contracted to China North Machines and Lagweno Kiboo bees and multi-investments limited for the apiary. These were successfully done for 18 groups that had contributed their 30% across the districts of Kitgum (2), Adjumani(4), Moyo(1), Obongi(4), Koboko(1), Zombo(1), Arua(1), Terego(3) and Madi-Okollo(1).

Linkage of groups to other development actors: To enhance farmers capacity in the value chains, NURI supported other groups to gain opportunity for business initiatives from the development actors. NURI supported 5 refugee groups to develop proposals and submitted to UNHCR that had the opportunity for tricycle support. These proposals went through a competitive process since other partners in the settlement had bided for the same. Towards the end of extension 2023, 2 groups had already received the tricycles and the other 2 were in pipeline.

### **Challenges in the implementation of BDS**

Short rollout time for BDS: The BDS pilot has been appreciated by the farmers however, the short rollout period affected its implementation. The process that started with procurement of the consultant for the development of the training materials and training of staff took a longer time to take-off. This therefore left a short time for staff to train the groups, mentor, coach and support them develop proposals for cost sharing funding. For this activity to become more successful, the implementation requires a period of not less than 2 years to monitor the impact.

High level of illiteracy among farmers: With the high level of illiteracy among farmers, the quality of the proposals developed was compromised. The sections of goal setting, profitability analysis and budgeting were the most inadequate areas in the proposals since they couldn't relate to the goals set. This being a new concept within the groups, it required more time for mentoring and coaching to come up with meaningful proposals. This sections in the manual could be further simplified and use of pictorial to describe and conduct training facilitations.

None clarity of the 30% value of the cost of equipment: It was anticipated that NURI CF contributes 70% of the total cost of the proposal however, this changed in the last minute with farmers having to bear the total cost of putting up the structure to house the machines separately. With this, NURI CF only agreed to farmers contributing 30% of the cost of equipment, transportation, installation and training which they contributed 70%. This caused confusion and delay in contribution of the 30% by the farmers with some of the groups falling out due to the short notice period to beat the deadline for completion of the activity.

### **Lessons learnt**

Willingness to cost share: Despite farmers willingness to cost share, it's important to ensure that it's introduced after a time duration of over a year to enable them engage in other business initiatives to generate money. Cost sharing promotes commitment and ownership by the group members to ensure sustainability of the equipment and operations.

Implementation period: The BDS approach used in the programme requires a long period to implement and enable farmers adopt. The farmers require mentoring and coaching since most of them are illiterate in order for them to go through the process of development of competitive proposals, operations and sustainability.

Procurement of equipment: Centralised procurement of the BDS equipment increases its cost. This needs to be decentralised in order to reduce on the cost of transportation of the equipment to the various location. This directly reduces the total costs and leverages farmers' potential in contributions.

Communication of the cost of equipment: The cost of equipment for cost sharing needs to be determined and communicated clearly to the farmers to give them a range of amounts that the programme is willing to contribute. This will enable them restrict the proposal budget to the agreed terms and budget areas hence reducing last minute frustration due to changes in the amounts to be contributed.

Training period and methodology: The training approach of lectures, discussions and participation are appreciated by the farmers however, this needs to be coupled with the pictorial and translation of the training materials into the local languages for easy reference and comprehension by the illiterate farmers.

## 6. Financial deepening

### Objectives

- Link VSLA groups to financial institutions to secure their savings and access credit
- Pilot a digitalization model under development in Uganda
- Provide VSLA groups with smartphone technology to digitize their records.
- Enable proper and reliable group transactions to inform groups financial decisions
- Provide access to animal traction loans to farmers.

### Description

Across all NURI 13 districts, VSLA staff trained the groups on formal financial linkages. Those that got interested in the linkage were supported through the process of acquiring the necessary documentation. Meanwhile in Moyo/Obongi and Lamwo, NURI contracted a digitization partner to pilot digitalization. This pilot was for 176 VSLA farmer groups in partnership with a Ugandan NGO, Ensibuuko and Grameen. This involves group-level digitalization of interested VSLA groups participating in the program, using digital technology as a tool in addressing barriers and offering the opportunity to develop reliable records and savings history, making VSLAs more attractive to financial institution to access loans. Out of the 136 groups digitized, 66 were refugees from Palorinya and Palabek settlement

In a bid to support the farmers increase their agricultural production, NURI programme partnered with Talanta Micro Finance Ltd to offer animal traction loans as a pilot. The NURI program did not have animal traction services support for its beneficiaries yet there was high demand for such service. The option of linkage to financial institutions was thought and piloted in Agago district as a result of its high level of production and business mindset the farmers had in the previous program. This was piloted with 4 farmer groups in Patongo and Lira Palwo sub counties. Instead of cash loans, Talanta Micro Finance Ltd agreed with NURI programme to provide oxen and ox-ploughs to the farmers payable in a period of 2 years at an interest rate of 1.5% per month.

### Activities

- Development of training materials for both digitization and direct financial linkages.
- Assessment and selection of participating farmer groups
- Training of Digital Community Entrepreneurs (DCEs) and Community Based Trainers (CBTs) under Grameen
- Training of groups through Digital Community Entrepreneurs (DCEs)/CBTs
- Data migration into the digital platform and digitalization of groups
- Capacity building of NURI staff on reporting platform and supporting digitalization by Ensibuuko.
- Training of NURI staff on the direct formal financial linkage process and procedures.
- Provision of credit services to the qualifying digitize groups by Ensibuuko.
- Sensitization of farmers groups on the animal traction loans by Talanta Micro Finance Ltd
- Provision of oxen and ox-ploughs to the individual members that had fulfilled the requirements for the animal traction loans.
- Monitoring, mentoring and reporting

### Status of financial deepening

Financial deepening was done at three different levels that included direct financial linkages, digitisation and linkage for access to animal traction loans. These was done in partnership with Ensibuuko and Grameen for digitisation, Talanta Micro Finance for animal traction loans and Post Bank, Equity, Stanbic, Centenary, Bank of Africa, Moyo SACCO and others within the vicinity of the farmers that provided easy access. Under

financial deepening, 405 groups were trained for direct financial linkages, 176 for digitisation and 20 for animal traction.

### **Direct linkages to formal financial institutions**

Development of the linkage manual: To rollout the financial linkages, NURI CF developed a linkage manual that can be used by the staff to train groups on the different aspects of linkage like understanding of the different financial institution categories, different products offered and how to interact with them. This manual gives financial literacy incites to operations with financial institutions.

Training of staff on financial linkage: After development of the financial linkage manual, NURI CF trained the unit staff across the 13 districts on financial linkages to enable them pass on the knowledge to farmers. This training targeted all staff at the units with the VSLA team taking lead.

Sensitisation of the groups on financial linkages: To enable the groups pick up interest in financial deepening, the unit staff embarked on sensitisation of the groups that were picked for BDS. This resulted into 400 groups being sensitised on linkages. After the sensitisation, groups were assessed using the rating tool that categorised groups into 3 different tiers. The 1<sup>st</sup> tier was to only link for savings, 2<sup>nd</sup> tier for savings and credit of not more that 50% of the capital/savings, 3<sup>rd</sup> tier was for savings and loans at the discretion of the financial institution.

Training of groups on financial linkage: While the target for training of groups for linkage was 176 groups, more groups showed interest that resulted into 405 groups being trained. These trainings covered all the sessions in the linkage manual.

Linking of groups to formal financial institutions: As a result of the training, NURI linked 166 groups to different financial institutions that ranged from commercial banks to SACCOs at the choice and convenience of the farmer groups. The choices were based on proximity, costs of operation of the accounts, the products offered etc.

Access to savings and credit: The groups linked were able to access both savings and credit products from the financial institutions. The 166 groups were able to save Ugx 364,075,000 with the institutions and accessed Ugx 96,500,000 as loans to boost their savings available for loaning to members. These loans were lent to members at the same interest rate that the groups had in the constitution although the interest rates charged by the financial institutions was 24% per annum.

### **Digitisation of the groups**

Inception meetings: Ensibuuko and NURI convened a project kick-off meeting to jointly review the scope of work alignment on key terms and definitions, especially with respect to NURI's operational calendar and upcoming commercial or programmatic priorities. This meeting involved a discussion on the approach to design and conduct the implementation.

Stakeholders' engagement meeting: Ensibuuko and NURI moved into conducting stakeholder meetings in the region (Moyo town) with the District Local Government, OPM, UNHCR, NURI Implementation Unit, the sensitization of all VSLAs, including the profiling exercise to ensure seamless digitization process.

Identification, selection and profiling of the VSLA groups: The Ensibuuko team based in the regional office in Yumbe collaborated with the NURI team in the field to conduct sensitization of the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) in Obongi and Moyo districts. This tool focuses on critical data points such as leadership details, locations, and network coverage, proximity to the nearest Mobile money Agent or Bank providing essential information for the profiling process. Consequently, a total of 176 Village Savings and Loan



Associations (VSLAs), (100 Ensibuuko, 76 Grameen) were effectively identified and selected for digitalization of which include 76 Lamwo, 49 in Moyo and 51 Obongi district with the refugee groups constituting 76.

VSLA onboarding and training of the leaders on data migration: The Ensibuuko team trained a total of 300 group leaders on digitization of VSLAs for 4 days. These trainings were phased out with 30 group leaders (3 per group) combining for specific sessions. The key training objectives were to help the participants to realize, learn, and to appreciate the benefits of digitizing their VSLAs, equip the participants with the skills and knowledge they need to drive the digitization of their respective VSLAs and teach the VSLA leaders how to use the Mobis VSLA Application, including migration of the VSLA data from their current record books onto the digital platform, ahead of the financial access phase.

Training of the Digital Community Entrepreneurs (DCEs): As part of the onboarding process, 100 VSLA leaders among the 300 that were trained were selected to be trained as embedded Digital Community Entrepreneurs (DCEs) i.e. one DCE from each VSLA digitized. This training focused on the roles and responsibilities as embedded DCE, support structures at Ensibuuko, and best practices for success and benefits as a DCE. It was accompanied by a simple 9-page Orientation User's Guide to enable participants to recall the key messages and practical information provided during the training.

VSLA digitization and migration of the records into the MOBIS platform: Ensibuuko and Grameen team with support from the DCEs/CBTs migrated all the paper-based records of all the 136 VSLAs from the previous 3- 5 months (January-May 2023) of savings for each VSLA into digital format on the application. This further involved specific information provided by VSLAs such as location and contacts, and establishment year, membership structure disaggregated into female and male, as well as leadership, Transaction patterns such as savings, loans, completion cycles, mechanisms e.g. metallic box, interest rates, and repayment methods, Smartphone and basic feature phone access and usage (Number of members with and without) as well as the governance of the groups (committees, and constitutions, member KYCs).

Modification of the dashboard and reports to suit NURI reporting needs: NURI in collaboration with Ensibuuko reviewed the already existing system to ensure that all the reporting indicators required are incorporated into the system. The indicators that were mostly considered included the agricultural ones that was not included and their disaggregation. Ensibuuko was also charged with creation of reporting forms in the system that summaries the information.

NURI staff capacity building: A total of 20 NURI staff members, predominantly extension workers, underwent training in Digitization to enhance their capacity for effective coordination and collaboration with Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) as well as their capacity to use the reporting platform. This training was conducted by Ensibuuko, aimed to equip them not only with an understanding of the project but also with the necessary skills to support the VSLAs during the pilot project.

Pre-assessment and disbursement of loans to VSLA groups: In total, 35 (16 Obongi and 19 Moyo) groups were identified for the pre-assessment with them qualifying for loans amounting to Ugx 132,252,964. Considering the algorithm that enabled the assessment of the amount to be lent to a group, a corresponding assessment of the amounts (in UGX) due to each group, over the same period was conducted. This therefore, qualified eight out of the 35 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) that pre-qualified for digital agriculture loans successfully applied for and received disbursements. The total disbursement amount for these eight VSLAs amounted to UGX 20,933,000.

Monitoring of the activities: NURI and Ensibuuko conducted joint monitoring field visits aimed to assess the progress of the digitization project, identify challenges and successes, and derive key learnings for future

initiatives. The monitoring visit highlighted the progress in terms of adoption and utilization of the digital platform, improved/accurate and secure record-keeping.

Collaboration with Grameen: In partnership with Grameen Foundation under a no cost agreement, in Palabek settlement 76 VSLA groups earlier supported by NURI were taken for digitalization. So far out of the 76 groups identified for digitization, only 36 were digitalized for improved record keeping. There is need for the programme to foster opportunities for cross learning between the various linkage and digitalization activities.

### **Linkage for animal traction loans**

Design of the animal traction product: Talanta Micro Finance Ltd in collaboration with NURI programme designed a loan product that had the following attributes; Proof of access/ownership of 5 acres of land, farmers contribute 30% towards cost of animal, a copy of National ID and Two passport photo, two (2) guarantors' photos, national IDs of each guarantor, letter of recommendation from group leader or LC1 office, loan commission of 3% of total loan amount, Insurance policy cover against death of animal/or borrower of 2.5% of total loan amount, interest rate on the loan is 1.5% per month, the maximum repayment period (loan tenure) is 24 months, monitoring fees of 0.5% per month, a grace period of 4 months.

Sensitisation of the farmers groups on the animal traction loan product: In the initial introduction of the product to the farmer groups, NURI programme introduced the staff of Talanta Micro Finance and the product and was done through joint visits with Talanta to 20 groups. This was to generate interest from the groups since they were required to pay the 30%, insurance, application forms and monitoring fee upfront before the disbursement of the animals as a sign of commitment.

Introduction of Talanta Micro Finance to Agago District Local Government Authorities: This was conducted in December 2021 and was successful. It was also agreed at the time, that Talanta Micro Finance would keep the DLG informed of the progress of the project by sharing information and reports from time to time.

Payment of 30% contributions by farmers: In order for the farmers to show commitment, they were expected to make an upfront payment of 30% of the cost of the animal which was 1,200,000 Ugx, insurance, monitoring cost and application as indicated in the attributes of the product.

Disbursement of animals: In 2021 May, a total of 66 animals and 6 Ox-ploughs were disbursed to 42 farmers from among the 4 farmer groups in Patongo and Lira Palwo sub counties that were sensitized and trained. The total value of the products was 81,000,000 Ugx of which Talanta Micro Finance had disbursed loans of 70% equivalent to 56,700,000 ugx, to be paid back by the farmers in two years. The farmers contributed 30% equivalent to 24,300,000 Ugx. In addition, the farmers were to pay a loan processing fee of 3% of the loan value and 2.5% of loan value for animal life insurance. From the time of animal disbursements, farmers were to complete the loans by June of 2023 which however didn't happen due to challenges like no details of account number for repayment, irregular presence of Talanta Micro Finance staff on ground, death of some animals among others.

Items	No	Rate	Total value	Farmers Contribution 30%	Loan Value	Insurance & processing fees (2.5% and 3%)	Interest & loan monitoring fees (1.5% & 0.5%)	Total repayment expected
Oxen	66	1,200,000	79,200,000	23,760,000	55,440,000	3,049,200	26,611,120	108,860,032
Ploughs	6	300,000	1,800,000	540,000	1,260,000	69,300	604,800	2,474,100
<b>Total</b>			<b>81,000,000</b>	<b>24,300,000</b>	<b>56,700,000</b>	<b>3,118,500</b>	<b>27,215,920</b>	<b>111,334,130</b>

Death of animals and clients: Following disbursement, a total of 13 bulls had so far died under different circumstances, however, 6 animals died within the liability period of 10 days. Under verbal agreement and reports provided, Talanta Micro Finance made a commitment to replace the animals that died within the liability period. The subsequent animals that died were not under any insurance cover since Talanta Micro Finance failed to secure an insurance provider yet farmers had contributed to it. Talanta Micro Finance agreed to take on an approach to deal with each case according to its own merits because of the varying circumstances. Within the same period, 2 farmers lost their lives and 6 animals that were received by them ended up being sold off to cater for their treatment needs leaving only 47 animals to date among the farmers that had acquired the ox traction loan.

**Table 10: List of farmers who lost the animals and deceased persons.**

The affected customers so far as per table below: Customer Name	No of Animals	Nature of incident	Loan Value for animal that died	Total loan amount (Principle + interest)
Aceng Hellen	1	One animal died	840,000	1,142,400
Otim David	1	One animal died	840,000	1,142,400
Olwoch Joseph	2	One animal died	840,000	1,142,400
Ocan Albert Denish	1	One animal died	840,000	1,142,400
Okidi Micheal	3	One animal died	840,000	1,142,400
Ojok David	1	One animal died	840,000	1,142,400
Omara Sam	4	Borrower died	3,360,000	4,569,600
Benson Ajal	2	Borrower died	1,680,000	2,284,800

Status of loan guarantee application: To enable Talanta Micro Finance absorb the shocks in case of defaults from the farmers, NURI recommend Talanta Mico Finance for a loan guarantee facility with aBi. However, during the due diligence that aBi undertook, it was noted that Talanat Micro Finance had governance and financial management issues. Despite the issues raised, Talanta Micro Finance failed to resolve them and that led to failure of the loan guarantee facility. This therefore, left Talanta Micro Finance to bear all the risk of loan defaults by the farmers.

Repayment methods: It was agreed that farmers would repay their money in the account given by Talanta Micro Finance at DFCU bank in Agago, however, DFCU closed its branch in Agago that left farmers without an option. A concern was raised by NURI on how to enable repayments to occur in light of the fact that DFCU Agago was closed, and it is impractical for the clients in Agago to pay through the Kitigum office. Talanta Micro Finance okayed their staff to be receiving money from the farmers which practice was risky and contravenes the operational procedures. Talanta Micro Finance therefore decided to open an account with

Bank of Africa which also farmers raised an issue that the account is in the names of three individuals not Talanta Micro Finance as an institution which still poses a challenge.

Loan repayment status: Due to challenges faced by clients in making the repayments as discussed above there has been a significant slowdown. Some customers who were ready and willing to make repayments could not get the opportunity to do so due to the unreliability of the accounts and staff of Talanta Micro Finance.

**Table 11: Loan repayment status by end of NURI programme – December 2023**

Name Of Group	Loan Amount (ugx)	Interest on loan	Un paid 30% Contribution	Unpaid Processing fees and Insurance	Total loan	Total repayments	Loan inclusive interest	Balance of
Can-Opwonya	19,950,000	7,182,000	521,400	487,000	28,140,400	3,063,844	25,076,556	
Ribe Aye Tyeko	5,040,000	1,814,400	90,000	26,200	6,970,600	2,192,680	4,777,920	
Roc Pac	11,130,000	4,006,800	90,000	26,200	15,253,000	12,537,634	2,715,366	
Bed Ki Gen	20,580,000	7,408,800		58,900	28,047,700	3,955,460	24,092,240	
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>56,700,000</b>	<b>20,412,000</b>	<b>701,400</b>	<b>638,300</b>	<b>78,451,700</b>	<b>21,639,904</b>	<b>56,811,796</b>	

### Challenges from implementation of financial deepening

High level of illiteracy: Many savings groups have high level of illiteracy that makes them timid to issues of financial linkages and digitization. Most of the leaders had limited experience with digital technologies and financial institutions that made it difficult to introduce and adopt the digital platform and banking services.

Infrastructure constraints: In some areas, we observed inadequate or non-existent infrastructure such as reliable electricity and internet connectivity hindering the seamless adoption of the digital platform and agent banking approach. There were also no bank network agents in the areas of operation making it hard for groups to access the services hence causing redundancy in the accounts opened and no payment of the loans for animal traction.

Trust and reluctance: In some groups, members were initially hesitant to trust the digital platform with their financial transactions, especially because they were accustomed to traditional, face-to-face methods. However, this was remedied through constant engagement with the beneficiaries.

Resistance to change: In some savings groups, some leaders and their members resisted to shift from their traditional, manual methods to digital processes, in fear of disruptions or loss of control over their financial activities.

Laxity on the partners: It was noted that the partners engaged didn't frequently conduct monitoring of the products to enhance adoption and repayment. This made the farmers to lose trust hence getting hesitant to use the platform and repay the money.

### Lessons learnt from financial deepening

Holistic needs assessment: Conducting a thorough needs assessment before implementing digital solutions or products can help to understand the specific challenges and requirements of the target communities; and ensure that the digital platform/product addresses real issues and adds significant value.

Adaptive technology integration: Designing technology solutions that can adapt to the diverse contexts and varying levels of digital literacy in rural areas can increase the likelihood of successful adoption and minimize resistance from users with varying degrees of technological familiarity.

Iterative development and feedback loop: Embracing an iterative development approach and establishing a continuous feedback loop with end-users/farmers can ensure that the digital platform evolves based on user experiences and needs, promoting continuous improvement.

Partnership synergy: Fostering strong collaboration and synergy between technology providers, network providers, financial institutions and NGO expertise creates a more comprehensive and effective solution.

Financial inclusion focus: Prioritizing financial inclusion by integrating features like digital loans and enhancing financial literacy to empower savings groups with access to digital financial services not only improves their economic well-being but also strengthens the overall impact of the initiative through adoption of the platform.

Financial literacy programs: Integrating financial literacy programs into the initiative to enhance the financial management skills of savings group members empowers farmer groups to make informed decisions, manage digital financial tools effectively, and maximize the benefits of the platform.

Potential of animal traction loans. Animal traction loan scheme poses a great potential in expansion of the number of acres open by farmers and the ownership of the animals since each farmer prefers individual loan as opposed to group loans. This was evident in more interest still within the groups and community members who continue to inquire from the members who got the loan on when Talanta Micro Finance will come back for sensitization so that they can also get the bulls on loan. This was also evident by farmers willingness to acquire and pay for the loan scheme which was evident with their commitment of the 30% down payments and all other charges involved.

The timing of the distribution of the animals. Distribution of the animals and eventual training of the animals should coincide with the agricultural season and calendar. The bulls should be of reasonable size/age to enable farmers utilize them and be able to repay the loans given the grace period when they have harvested.

Documentation of the process and agreements. Its critical for the programme and partner to document the process and have support agreements before distribution of the animals. The assessment of the partner should be done thoroughly before this is rolled out.

Consistency of information: Unclear and inconsistent information distorts the plans for repayments of loans since farmers will be in doubt. Farmers need clear information and should not contradict at any time later. Such information should also be timely and streamlined.

Leverage to choose financial institution: Farmers prefer an approach where they have the leverage to choose the financial institution. This enables them to actively participate in the utilization of the accounts opened since they have to contribute to the costs involved.

## NURI Extension Activities relating to information activities

### 1. Learning and Reflection Activities

#### Objectives

- To capture and document lessons learnt during implementation of the NURI programme.
- To capture and document lessons and experiences from the pilot activities carried out under the NURI programme
- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of learning and reflection workshops

#### Description

A range of activities, the most visible of which were learning and reflection workshops, aimed at capturing experiences and lessons from the NURI implementation including the extension period. Thematic learning workshops were for the whole programme, or regional/district specific, depending on the geography of the pilot activity. Regional workshops were organised when the areas of reflection cuts across all the implementation areas and/or a large number of stakeholders were involved.

#### Activities

- Learning and Reflection workshops
- Preparation of information and lessons learnt notes of 2 to 4 pages, with input from a variety of sources.
- Experience notes by pilot leads
- Sharing of experience notes, including inclusion in NURI completion report, on websites, and contributing to URRRI programme preparation

#### Status

The following Learning and Reflection workshops were held across the program areas:

- Resilience Design held in Arua.
- Tree Growing pilot for Pakwach district held in Pakwach.
- Tree growing pilot in NURI Extension held in Gulu.
- Extension methodologies (FMS, VSLA and F2FE/Permaculture) held in Gulu.
- Development work in refugee hosting areas in Northern Uganda held in Arua.

Participants for these learning and reflection workshops were purposively selected based on their experience, technical knowledge and participation in the NURI program and pilot activities. Specific notes for these learning and reflection workshops were developed and shared.

#### Lessons learning

Lesson learning reports were developed by the pilot leads based on the Learning and reflection workshops; and included in the NURI completion / End of Extension reports for easy access, as well as shared through a variety of fora, including the U-learn portal.

## 2. Information activities

### Objectives

- To increase stakeholders' awareness of Climate Change (CC) issues
- Share NURI lessons and achievements
- Share information on NURI pilot activity outcomes
- Enhance DLG/LLG information exchange on infrastructure maintenance activities

### Description

Workshops were organized at parish level to provide up-to-date information to key stakeholders in DLGs and LLGs on the understanding of climate change issues, mitigation and adaptation, focusing on Northern Uganda, including relevant examples from districts and sub counties of NURI operations among others.

Under the DRC contract extension, activities on facilitation of learning and technical support were included under information activities. It was assessed that District and Lower Local Governments experience challenges in consistently providing necessary maintenance to NURI created assets and investments. It was therefore agreed to organize learning workshops and field visits to inspire and motivate novel and cost-effective ways for DLG and LLG to maintain infrastructures created for their constituents. Participants were selected to share their experiences on community approaches to road maintenance and maintenance of any other created assets to motivate others.

### Activities

#### **(a) Facilitation of learning and enhanced technical support to Districts (by DRC):**

- Engagement of Parish Chiefs and CDOs supporting Project User Committees (PUCs)
- Peer-to-Peer Maintenance Workshops.
- Application of Traditional Approaches to Maintenance of Created Assets.
- Go-and-See Visits to Resilience Design sites.

#### **(b) Climate change workshops (by NURI CF)**

- Climate change information workshops for DLGs and LLGs including Parish Chiefs.

### Status

A total of **31 Maintenance and Climate Change workshops** were held across the 13 NURI districts, attended by 1,067 participants, of which 267 were female. The maintenance workshops, combining the first three of the DRC activities listed above, were further combined with climate change information sessions presented by NURI CF with support from CSA implementing units. Each workshop brought together participants from DLGs and LLGs of 3 to 4 sub-counties with participants made up of Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), Community Development Officers (CDOs), Parish Chiefs (PCs), Sub County Chiefs (SCs), District Water Officers (DWOs), District Engineers (DEs), Production Officers (POs) and District Forest Officers (DFOs). Presentations by NURI - CF and CSA aimed to encourage participants to understand and relate climate change issues like irregular seasonality, prolonged dry spells, floods, and rising temperature to their local context. DRC's presentation focused on triggering the participants to generate a debate on what they can and need to do to maintain assets created under the NURI program. This included topics such as: including NURI roads in Sub-County maintenance plans, allocating funds for maintenance, mobilizing communities for communal work e.g., desilting culverts, grubbing roads, opening mitre drains etc. Action plans for maintenance of assets were developed during the meetings. More details are in the DRC Extension End of Programme report.

**Go-and-see visits on Resilience Design** were organized at 3 sites with participants from across the programme districts. The learning workshops and field visits were organised for sub-county officials namely; Community Development Officers (CDOs), LC III chairpersons and sub-county chiefs. The sub-county officials from West Nile South subregion visited projects in Nebbi, while West Nile North sub-county officials visited projects in Adjumani and sub-county officials from Acholi region visited projects in Lamwo. The visits took two days per location, including travel to host district project sites. The workshops included a presentation by DRC on the successes registered through resilience design. This was followed by field visits with practical explanation and demonstration of resilience design and engagement of PUC/WUC by the stakeholders. The activity ended with debriefing and discussions on what worked well and what didn't, what should be done differently, and how the ideas demonstrated can be copied and adapted.



### **3. Status on Exit Activities**

NURI CF was responsible for the orderly closing of the NURI programme including activity and financial reporting, as well as disposal of assets, exit of staff and finalization of any ongoing agreements and contracts. This chapter captures specific activities relating to finalizing and closing the programme.

#### **NURI RI/WRM Partner - DRC**

DRC was engaged directly by RDE as per Addendum No. 3 and 4 to the main DRC Contract DC3264.

All project activities were completed by the end of August 2023, MoUs and staff contracts came to an end and program staff exited. The DRC project activities under the NURI Extension 2023 are covered elsewhere in this report. Details on implementation and project numbers are in the main NURI completion report.

The DRC Audit Report January to August 2023 is yet to be received and approved, why also the disposal of NURI fixed assets used by DRC under the implementation of project activities is still outstanding. NURI vehicles and motorcycles used by DRC for NURI project activities have been partly donated to DLGs (66 motorcycles), partly auctioned off in Kampala.

#### **NURI CSA Partners – AFARD, ARUA DFA and PICOT**

The NURI CSA partners, AFARD, Arua DFA and PICOT, which had been CSA partners to NURI 2018-2022, were engaged for the NURI Extension 2023 through an addendum to the bilateral agreement with RDE.

All project activities were completed by the end of November 2023. The bilateral agreements with RDE as well as staff contracts came to an end naturally as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. As per the bilateral agreement with RDE, each CSA partner is obliged to maintain accounts files and staff files related to the NURI programme including the NURI Extension 2023.

The Arua DFA/NURI accountant, who is specifically engaged by Arua DFA for the NURI programme, has been retained by Arua DFA under agreement with NURI CF to support and facilitate the accounts closure and the annual audit of the NURI Extension 2023.

Each NURI CSA partner has been donated NURI office equipment and furniture, one NURI vehicle and 10 motorcycles in consultation with and approval of RDE. Remaining motorcycles used by the NURI CSA partners for NURI programme activities have been auctioned off in Kampala.

#### **NURI RAUs – Moyo/Obongi, Adjumani and Kitgum/Lamwo**

The NURI RAU offices were retained by NURI CF for the NURI Extension 2023. Tenancy agreements with landlords were extended and a reduced pool of staff for the NURI Extension 2023 was retained.

All project activities were completed by the end of November 2023 with all except key management staff on leave in December as offices were refurbished and handed back to respective landlords. Proper and required notice was given on the tenancy agreements and staff contracts came to an end naturally by December 2023.

The two RAU accountants are retained by NURI CF to support and facilitate the accounts closure and annual audit of the NURI Extension 2023.

Fixed assets as at end of November 2023 were disposed-off through donation to DLGs and auction in consultation with and approval of RDE.

## **NURI CF**

NURI CF Kampala offices will be maintained until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 to cater for programme reporting and administrative activities – accounts closure 2023, annual audit 2023, transfer of files to RDE and disposal of NURI CF fixed assets.

NURI Regional Coordinators have been retained by NURI CF until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to cater for the final NURI programme reporting.

NURI CF – comprised of the Financial Management Adviser, the Finance and Administration Officer, the two RAU Accountants, the Arua DFA/NURI Accountant and the Accountants engaged by AFARD and PICOT will cater for the NURI 2023 accounts closure and annual audit 2023.

NURI RAU Coordinators will be required to attend meetings with the NURI auditors in March 2024; this engagement will be on a consultancy basis.

NURI financial system, QuickBooks, will be retained until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 to support the annual audit 2023 as well as the audit of January to June 2024.

## **District Capacity Building (DCB)**

The objective of the DLG Capacity Building activities was to strengthening the ability of the two relevant government departments (Production and Engineering) to play their roles in the implementation of NURI and to improve the capacity of the two departments in general service delivery. NURI built capacities in terms of; skills development through short- and long-term training and procurement of equipment, vehicles and motorbikes. Procurement of the relevant items were accomplished as planned.

However, COVID – 19 had a significant impact on the progress of skills training due to the closure of institutions.

Notably, some students for M.Sc. courses didn't complete by December, 2023. Out of a total of 18 M.Sc. students, 12 fully completed. The remaining students were only paid research fees (50%), whereas some students did not meet the requirements for financial support at all. The latter was due to a delay by the respective institutions to approve their research work, which was a pre-requisite as per the DCB guideline.

In other courses, 20 students completed post graduate diplomas in different areas of specialties and 04 completed their higher diplomas.

The DCB scheme was designed at a total budget of DKK 10m equal to UGX 5.6b. The total cost of the DCB scheme as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 was UGX 5.7b equal to approx. DKK 10.7m. In 2023, approx. DKK 0.8m has been spent bringing the total cost of the DCB scheme to approx. DKK 11.5m. the cost overrun compared to the original budget is partly due to allotment of extra vehicles to DLGs, partly the DKK/UGX exchange rate, where UGX has appreciated vis-à-vis DKK.

## **Audits**

The NURI annual audit 2023 will be carried out in February/March 2024 with the draft NURI Audit Report 2023 anticipated mid-April 2024. Following this, in 2<sup>nd</sup> half of June 2024, the NURI closing activities January to June 2024 will be audited.

## **Archives**

Upon closure of the NURI RAUs, accounts files and personnel files were transferred to NURI CF Kampala offices at the same time as the NURI RAU Accountants move to NURI CF offices in Kampala. NURI accounts files and personnel files with the three CSA partners will be retained by the partners as per bilateral agreement.

All accounts and personnel files, including contracts from NURI RAUs, were received by NURI CF for review and sorting, where after these files will be transferred to RDE.

The NURI CSA database including the MS SQL programme has been copied to a USB and is ready for handover to RDE.

The NURI website including all programme documents and reports as well as audit reports will be maintained by RDE.

Information on the NURI programme 2018-2022 is available in the NURI Programme Completion Report incorporating the annual report for 2022. The document can be found on [www.nuri.ag](http://www.nuri.ag) or with the Royal Danish Embassy in Kampala.

#### 4. Financial Status – NURI Extension

NURI CF is responsible for financial monitoring of Implementing Partners and Implementing Units. The CF Finance team worked in collaboration with the coordinators and accountants of each implementing partner and unit. During the reporting period, the activities accomplished are described below.

##### Budget Utilization – NURI Outputs

Revised Budget 2023/24 - Output Level (DKK)				
Output	Unit/Partner	Revised Budget 2023	Actuals 2023	
<b>0</b>	<b>Management &amp; Coordination</b>	<b>5,046,056</b>	<b>5,372,267</b>	<b>106%</b>
	NURI CF	5,046,056	5,372,267	
<b>1</b>	<b>CSA</b>	<b>21,800,634</b>	<b>19,243,368</b>	<b>88%</b>
	NURI CF (Projects)	2,346,977	1,535,233	
	RAU Kitgum	4,387,100	3,855,545	
	RAU Adjumani	3,199,402	2,958,011	
	RAU Moyo	3,362,279	3,166,263	
	PICOT	1,622,837	1,520,310	
	Arua DFA	4,096,435	3,676,020	
	AFARD	2,785,604	2,531,987	
<b>2</b>	<b>Rural Infrastructure</b>	<b>10,089,658</b>	<b>10,420,973</b>	<b>103%</b>
	NURI CF (DCB)	377,358	813,748	
	DRC	9,712,300	9,607,225	
<b>3</b>	<b>Water Resources Management</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	
	<b>TOTAL 2023, NURI CF</b>	<b>36,936,349</b>	<b>35,036,608</b>	<b>95%</b>
	Int. Advisers	1,750,000	1,591,049	
	Audit 2023	200,000	236,163	
	NURI CF 2024	1,366,842	1,427,288	
		<b>40,253,191</b>	<b>38,291,108</b>	<b>95%</b>

The Cost of NURI Management & Coordination has exceeded the NURI revised Budget 2023 primarily due to significant cost of servicing/repairing NURI vehicles and motorcycles to be donated to NURI CSA partners. 30 NURI motorcycles have been serviced/repared to proper standard and duties and taxes have been paid to URA ahead of the donation to CSA partners not being tax-exempt legal entities. Total cost of service/repair of vehicles and motorcycles donated to NURI CSA partners is approx. UGX 85m equal to DKK 160,000.

The cost of project activities under CSA is only at 88% of the NURI revised Budget 2023. This is primarily due to discontinued project activities such as “Community Initiatives” (DKK 2m), “Resilience Design Assessment” (DKK 0.5m) and “Information/Communication” (DKK 1.5m).

The cost of the NURI district capacity building scheme has significantly exceeded the NURI revised Budget 2023 by approx. DKK 440,000. This is primarily due to significant cost of servicing/repairing NURI motorcycles to be donated to DLGs. NURI motorcycles have been serviced/repared to proper standard and duties and taxes have been paid to URA ahead of the donation to DLGs not being tax-exempt legal entities. Total cost of service/repair of vehicles and motorcycles donated to DLGs is approx. UGX 265m equal to DKK 0.5m.

## Budget Utilization – Pilot Projects

Revised Budget 2023/24 - Unit Level (DKK)			
	Revised Budget 2023	Actuals 2023	
NURI CF - Staff Cost & Office Cost	7,373,415	8,013,227	
NURI CSA IUs - Staff Cost	7,387,914	7,696,156	
NURI CSA IUs - Office Cost	3,693,873	3,113,808	
	18,455,202	18,823,192	102%
Pilot Projects:			
Permaculture	3,852,435	3,610,035	
Tree Growing	1,793,100	1,316,240	73%
Food Forests Followup	0	0	
Farmer Market Schools	728,149	472,657	
Local Seed Business	1,454,429	1,103,999	
Farmer to Farmer Extension	616,715	543,859	
FG/VSLA Linkages	1,826,906	944,456	52%
Financial Digitization	182,962	179,151	
Community Initiatives	0	0	
Learning & Reflection Workshops	264,151	263,007	
RD Assessment	0	0	
Information/Communication	0	0	
	10,718,847	8,433,404	79%
DRC	9,712,300	9,607,225	
	<b>38,886,349</b>	<b>36,863,820</b>	<b>95%</b>
	NURI CF 2024	1,427,288	
		<b>38,291,108</b>	

The cost of NURI CF significantly exceeds the NURI revised Budget 2023 – this was due to the cost of district capacity building (DKK +0.5m) and the cost of service/repair of donated motorcycles (DKK +160,000) being included here.

The cost of CSA implementation units (staff cost) – the three CSA partners and the three NURI RAU’s – exceed the NURI revised Budget 2023 by approx. DKK 300,000. This was primarily due to increased basic salaries, which were adjusted by the inflation rate 8.161%. Furthermore, DSA rates were increased from UGX 175,000 to UGX 280,000 per overnight stay.

The cost of pilot projects was only at 79% of the NURI revised Budget 2023. Probably, team leads for the pilot projects have been fairly ambitious in their activity planning, why also the project budgets may have been excessive.

In the case of the project “Household Tree Growing”, the expectations in respect of the participation of farmers were probably excessive – many farmers/households did not want or did not have the means to participate in the project given the cost-sharing requirement of 30% towards total cost of procuring tree seedlings.

In the case of the project “FG/VSLA Linkages”, the NURI revised Budget 2023 did include an ambitious plan of acquiring equipment for a number of farmer groups in support of their business development. This plan was subsequently scaled down due to time constraints to a limited selection and procurement of BDS equipment.

### **Utilization of the Grant for the NURI Extension 2023**

Of the total Danida grant for the NURI Extension 2023, DKK 45m, it is therefore foreseen that only DKK 38.3m will be used. DKK 36.9m has been used in 2023 and the budget for 2024 stands at DKK 1.4m.

In 2024, a few NURI staff will ensure the closure of the NURI programme including the final programme reporting, the disposal of fixed assets, the accounts closure, the audit 2023 and the final audit 2024.

### **5. Workplan for January to December 2023**

NURI extension activities generally proceeded and was accomplished as planned as indicated in the status up-dates for individual pilots, and in the Gantt chart in Annex 2.

#### **Pilot activities**

All activities were implemented and data/information gathered to completion except for LSB where final activity of seed sampling and certification couldn't be accomplished due to the program closure in December 2023. Hence, NURI CF explored avenues for linkages and partnerships with key stakeholders notably the DLGs and MAAIF to provide support, especially technical, to these farmer groups after the NURI engagement ended. The DLGs, NARO and MAAIF shall continue to mentor the farmer groups as it is stipulated in their mandates. List of LSBs with their contacts were provided. NARO had expressed interest in using LSBs for dissemination of new technologies.

## 6. Results Framework – NURI Extension

Status as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023

The target and results achieved are described below.

Engagement		Northern Uganda Resilience Initiative (NURI)	
Outcome		Enhanced resilience to current and expected impact of climate change and variability and promote equitable economic development in supported areas of Northern Uganda, including for refugees and host communities	
Outcome indicator		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greening – % of participating farmers contributing to greening (through e.g., tree growing / resilience design, maintaining food forests)</li> <li>Sustaining - % of participating farmers diversifying income sources to include less climate sensitive activities e.g., through learning business skills and expanded value-chain role</li> </ul>	
Target	Year	2023	1. 75% (of all targeted household tree growing, resilience design and maintaining food forests– 33,460) 2. 75% (of 22,000 households – LSB, FMS and Permaculture group members)
Achievements	Year	2023	1. 106% (35,168/33,460 HH) grew tree and fruit trees under both Tree growing and Permaculture, resilience design and food forests maintenance. 2. 94.5% (20,806/22,000 Household) participated in diversifying their income sources.

### 1. Greening - Farmer groups engaged in tree planting/ growing included:

- 440 groups engaged in household tree-growing – 11,000 households. The actual was - 9,175 households with an average 21 households per group. The 9,175 HH fulfilled their obligation to cost-share 30%.
- 870 refugee, mixed and national groups engaged in permaculture, including resilience design and fruit tree planting. The actual was - 25,993 households with an average 30 members per group. Enrollment at refugee settlements achieved an average of 30 members per group above the expected 25 factored as the target.
- Institutions and households engaged in management and maintenance of 796 food forests. Thus 9,175 households in tree-growing, 25,993 in permaculture, plus households involved with Food Forests totaled to 35,168 households. Follow up activities were more focused on institutional FF.
- This is beyond the target since initially the refugees were not part of tree growing however, they were provided with fruit trees to plant around their households.

### 2. Sustaining – Farmer groups engaged included:

- 69 LSB groups engaged in seed production and sale.
- 181 FMS groups engaged in bulk marketing of production and market engagement.
- 870 refugee, mixed and national groups involved in vegetable production – where a significant proportion of production was sold in local markets.
- 440 groups engaged in business linkage for specific businesses and 18 qualified for acquisition of processing equipment. Some groups benefitted from more than a project due to integrated approach.

Output 1		Increased agricultural output and diversification for resilience to climate change and climate variability	
Output indicators		1.1 % of participating farmers that have either planted trees, fruit trees and or agroforestry species in their households and/or farms 1.2 Number of extension service providers providing commercial services	
Annual target	Year 5	2023	1.1. 75% (32,750 household target) 1.2. 300
Achievements	Year	2023	1.1 107% (35,168/32,750 HH) grew tree and fruit trees under both Tree growing and Permaculture 1.2 1,305 provided extension services to the community.

**1.1 Tree growing** – This included:

- 440 groups engaged in Household tree-growing with cost-sharing – actual household participation – 9,175.
- 870 refugee, mixed and national groups engaged in permaculture, including resilience design and planting of fruit trees – actual household participation - 25,993. Under permaculture, there was high enrollment of HH at an average of 30 members per group, above the estimated 25.

**1.2 Community extensionists** – although the community extensionists trained and mentored in the various pilot activities of the NURI extension are not fully commercial, they have the potential to become so in future. A total of 1,305 farmers enrolled for F2FE approach in Permaculture, FMS and to a lesser extent in TG. These are not purely commercial extension services, however, a step forward. The community extensionists were not paid by the NURI programme and a number have demonstrated the potential to move in the direction of commercialization:

<b>Output 2</b>		<b>Climate resilient agriculturally-related rural infrastructure renovated and or constructed using labour intensive approach</b>	
Output indicator		2.1 % of participating households / institutions maintaining trees planted under RI	
Annual target	Year 5	2023	2.1 90%
Achievements	Year 5	2023	2.1 72% (311 out of 431 Food Forests maintaining trees planted)

**2.1** The final number of Food Forests maintained stood at 311 (72%) out of 431 that were followed up for maintenance by the CSA Units. DRC established 463 Food Forests and handed over to the intended beneficiaries. The CSA Units thus followed up 93% (431) of the 463 leaving out 7% not monitored due to among others; land wrangles, low survival rates and poor community attitude towards re-establishment.

The indications were that, even where survival rates are low, there is interest to re-establish the food forests and expand except for the planting season having elapsed and scarcity of free tree seedlings. Consequently, NURI linked some institutions to other actors like Kijani, NFA/UNHCR for supplementary seedlings which led to 55 Food Forests being either re-established or refilled.

<b>Output 3</b>		<b>Agriculturally-related physical and natural water infrastructure projects constructed and made more resilient to climate change</b>	
Output indicator		3.1. % of participating households / institutions maintaining trees planted under WRM	
Annual target	Year 5	2023	3.1 90%
Achievements	Year	2023	3.1 21% (59 out of 279 Food Forests) maintaining trees planted under WRM

**3.1** Under WRM, some food forests established belonged to individuals based on environmental hotspots selected for conservation. There was less follow-up of these individual food-forests, the focus was more on institutional ones. Thus only 30% (84) of 279 Food Forests created under WRM and handed over to CSA units for maintenance follow up by DRC were monitored.

The final figures show 21% (59) out of 279 Food Forests followed up were being maintained. The indication is that individual food forests established around water points have low survival and are less likely to be maintained by the users. Nevertheless, follow ups with sub county authorities by some CSA Units triggered community dialogues to protect and maintain the created assets.



Annex 1: Status Report 30 November 2023

## NURI Monthly Status Report, 30<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2023

*Prepared by NURI CF*

### A. NURI staffing levels as of 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2023

S/n	Implementing entity	Number of districts	Number of personnel	Comments
(1)	NURI CF	13	13	Includes 1 adviser. PMA left
(2)	RAU Kitgum/Lamwo, Agago	3	29	VS was terminated
(3)	Arua DFA: Arua, Madi-Okollo, Terego	3	28	
(4)	AFARD: Pakwach, Nebbi, Zombo	3	23	
(5)	RAU Moyo/Obongi	2	22	
(6)	RAU Adjumani	1	20	
(7)	PICOT: Koboko	1	13	
	<b>Total CSA</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>135</b>	
(8)	DRC	11	0	
	<b>Total NURI</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>148</b>	

### B. NURI Expenditure Performance by Implementing Entity as of 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2023

S/n	Implementing entity	Disbursement to date (UGX)	Expenditure to date (UGX)	% Absorption
	<b>(Total NURI budget)</b>			
1	NURI CF (DCB and some Output 1 expenditure included)	3,367,723,611	3,682,767,941	109.4
2	Kitgum/Lamwo RAU	2,178,606,864	1,944,297,529	89.2
3	Arua DFA	2,015,211,895	1,850,196,878	91.8
4	AFARD	1,417,520,478	1,268,047,313	89.5
5	Moyo / Obongi RAU	1,675,288,166	1,544,164,563	92.2
6	Adjumani RAU	1,587,890,044	1,453,791,405	91.6
7	PICOT	805,828,151	755,453,203	93.7
	<b>Total NURI</b>	<b>13,048,069,209</b>	<b>12,498,718,832</b>	<b>95.8</b>

1. Report excludes payments made by RDE on behalf of NURI CF
2. Retained earnings considered as part of the income for the extension period.
3. Some units are yet to update their QBO with the Oct 2023 transactions made

### C. NURI Physical Progress for Roll-over RI/WRM Projects as of 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2023

#### Commissioning of NURI projects

#### D. Targeted Extension Period RI and WRM Projects for improvement:

S/n	District	No of Road-links	Revised targets March 2023	Number COMPLETED	% Progress
1	Agago	6	12	12	100
2	Kitgum	28	29	29	100
3	Lamwo	31	16	16	100
4	Adjumani	51	34	34	100
5	Moyo	29	21	21	100
6	Koboko	17	18	18	100
	Arua	0	1	1	100
7	Madi-Okollo	4	4	4	100
8	Terego	48	75	75	100
9	Nebbi	22	25	25	100
10	Pakwach	15	15	15	100
11	Zombo	14	15	15	100
Total		265	265	265	100

Kitgum, Lamwo, Madi-Okollo, Adjumani and Moyo, final handover documents were signed in August.

### F. NURI Ext CSA Status of Pilot Activities as of 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2023

S/n	District	TARGETS				Total FG* Target	Number Completed	Number Ongoing	% Complet
		LSB	FMS	Tree	Perma				
1	Agago	8	12	-	-	20	20	0	100
2	Kitgum	5	27	50	-	82	82	0	100
3	Lamwo	6	30	50	180	266	266	0	100
4	Arua, M-O, Terego	8	20	75	240	343	343	0	100
5	Pakwach	6	9	20	-	35	35	0	100
6	Nebbi	6	10	55	-	71	71	0	100
7	Zombo	10	10	70	-	90	90	0	100
8	Moyo/Obongi	6	19	40	200	265	265	0	100
9	Adjumani	6	24	50	200	280	280	0	100
10	Koboko	8	20	30	50	108	108	0	100
Total		69	181	440	870	1,560	1,560	0	100

Training of farmer groups in the different pilot activities was accomplished as planned and the groups handed over to the DLGs

NURI extension activities integrate a range of **farmer-to-farmer extension activities**.

In total there are 1,305 farmers trained and under on-going mentoring currently providing training and services to other farmers under NURI extension activities. These include Group Marketing Facilitators, Community-Based Trainers and Facilitators. Of the 1,305 farmer trainers, 684 (52%) are female and 621 (48%) are male. A total of 423 (32% of total) are youth, with 255 (60%) female youth, and 168 (40%) male youth.

### G. NURI CSA Farmer Groups BDS and Linkage support, 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2023

S/n	District	BDS target	No of BDS gps training	No of BDS gps equipt	FL target	No of FL gps trained	No of FL gps linked
1	Agago	30	30	0	12	30	8
2	Kitgum	40	40	2	16	40	10
3	Lamwo	40	40	0	16	40	10
4	Arua	47	47	1	19	47	20
5	Madi Okollo	17	17	1	7	17	4
6	Terego	26	26	3	10	26	12
7	Pakwach	20	20	0	8	20	11
8	Nebbi	20	20	0	8	20	9
9	Zombo	20	20	1	8	20	9
10	Moyo	30	30	1	12	30	12
11	Obongi	30	30	4	12	30	22
12	Adjumani	90	90	4	38	55	25
13	Koboko	30	30	1	12	30	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>440</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>166</b>

BDS – Business Development Service. FL – Financial Linkage

Distribution of target across districts has changed as targeting of refugees is strengthened.

Additional groups trained in FL based on demand. Not all will qualify for linkage.

Financial linkage achievement 93.3% with linkage to commercial banks and SACCOs

BDS equipment support – 18 groups fully contributed the 30% with 3 being refugee groups

### H. NURI CF support to District Capacity building and NURI assets disposal, 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2023

S/n	District	Targer Number	Number Ongoing	Number Complete	% Completed / ongoing
(1)	Masters	18	7	12	61% complete, 39% ongoing
(2)	Post Grad Diploma	20	0	20	100% complete
(3)	Higher diploma	4	0	4	100% complete
(4)	DCB tools procurement				100%
(5)	Assets Disposal				Disposed by auction: 204 MCs and 2 vehicles. 11 MCs donated to Agago DLG. 10 M/Cs donated to Arua DLG, 66 motorcycles donated to other 11 DLGs, 3 vehicles donated to partners (PICOT, AFARD & ARUDIFA), 19 pedestrian rollers donated to 13 DLGs, 1 vehicle donated to Terego DLG. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Auction done for 14 M/Cs and 8 vehicles 1 vehicle, 4 laptops, 3 printers donated to UNWMZ/MWE, 10 MCs donated to Arua DFA, 10 MCs donated to PICOT, 10 MCS doated to AFARD, auction of 118 MCs ongoing, various fixed assets (office equipment) donated to various institutions in programme districts, files being transported from RAUs to Kampala/RDE storage.



Annex 3: Photos



Mungufeni Farmer Group in Zone 1 Palorinya – Tomatoes harvest from the Permagarden



Farmer to farmer extension services at the household level



Compaction of gravels on Goli to Omunda GR4W, Nebbi district



FMS training in peny wii FG in Akwang sc, Kitgum District



Installation and training of farmers on operations of a grinding mill



Monitoring of LSB garden by stakeholders in Koboko

