

Evaluation Report of Farmer Market School Pilot



Photo: Market trip by farmers to Lokung trading centre, Lamwo district to interact with produce buyers

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NURI Evaluation of the Farmer Market Schools Pilot

Introduction

In 2022 and 2023 NURI CF and its CSA implementing partners decided to include Farmer Market School (FMS) training as one of the pilot activities during the NURI Extension period of one year - 2023. Four NURI staff had undergone a two-week intensive facilitator training in FMS in Mubende town in Nov/Dec 2021 by ADRA Uganda in preparation for FMS pilot. The FMS approach was new to Uganda, and it was first introduced by ADRA Uganda. The NURI program was implemented as a development and humanitarian nexus in that both refugees and nationals were beneficiaries. It wanted to see how it works in this context.

The reason for piloting FMS was because the CSA groups had completed the training in production of the strategic crops including planning, VSLA and marketing but farmers often complained about lack of market for their produce. The level of collective marketing was also very low. The FMS was an opportunity to strengthen groups sustainability through marketing of produce amongst strong groups that NURI supported. NURI wanted to pilot it for use in its future programming.

After successful training of master trainers, NURI trained 150 extension and VSLA staff in 2022 in FMS methodology who in turn trained 89 groups spread across 12 districts NURI operated viz Pakwach, Nebbi, Zombo, Arua / Arua City, Terego, Madi Okollo, Koboko, Moyo, Adjumani, Obongi, Lamwo and Kitgum as well as in Imvepi and Rhino Camp refugee settlements. In 2023 another training was done where 89 staff benefited which covered even new staff and in the same year 2023, another batch of 92 CSA groups now in 13 districts including Agago were trained bringing the total number trained to 191 FMSs. Their membership was between 25 and 30 members, so approximately 5,730 farmers were trained. Two models were used; complementarity and cluster models which are differences in the way trainings are conducted.

FMS is a participatory approach based on farmer-led facilitation and discovery learning on how markets function and where opportunities exist. The farmers on their own using their own resources undertake the research and make decisions. ADRA has documented good results from some countries namely Sudan, Uganda, Zimbabwe where FMS approach was introduced and evaluated. At the time of writing this report, there were more than 1,000 FMS groups existing in 11 countries in Africa and Asia. NURI was keen to find out how FMS pilot fared up in short period of implementation for possible inclusion in the future Danida program. The interest was to find out if this approach helped or had a potential to help marketing of produce for the small-scale farmers.

To document the result of this pilot, NURI carried out field monitoring and later learning and reflection workshop to document any lessons learnt. No formal evaluation was planned for this pilot however, in October 2023, ADRA consultant guided NURI to do FMS evaluation using livelihood self-perception forms. Due to time constraint, NURI used its implementing partners staff to carry out the evaluation. Each unit documented various kinds of impact of the FMS on the livelihoods of the farmers / farmer groups trained. The field work was done in October to December 2023 because of other work.

This is the report of the findings from what was gathered.

Methodology of Evaluation of the FMS pilot

The main instrument used in the evaluation was the **A - livelihood self-assessment forms**, which are directly based on the content of the FMS training. The farmers at an early stage in the FMS training filled these two charts containing a total of ten relevant livelihood issues. This was

at the third topic of FMS training and this served as a livelihood baseline. Each statement has six different alternatives to choose from.

The self-assessment was repeated 1 to 2 years after the training to serve as endline data. Farmers that did not fill livelihood self-perception forms at the beginning of FMS were asked to think and reconstruct what their situation was before FMS train to help generate baseline data. Comparing the livelihood outcomes at that stage with baseline at the start of FMS training illustrated impact on at least 10 different subjects relevant for smallholder farmers' livelihood. ADRA had used a similar method for Evaluation of FFS and FMS in Sudan, and recently FMS evaluation in Kyaka and Rwamwanja refugee settlements in Uganda^{1,2}. Apart from this exercise the evaluation also contained few **B - focus group discussions** with the participating farmer groups as well as **C - individual interviews** of few farmers.

A. Livelihood Self-Assessment

This part of the evaluation was the most central and important in both size and outcome. 74 FMS groups from all 13 districts participated with a total of 622 members (392 Females and 230 Males) comprising of 17 FMS from 2022 and 57 FMS from 2023. They had all been trained in FMS in 2022 and 2023, which meant that they were now able to look back and express how important this training had been to their livelihoods.

A template from the FMS manual was used (see the two charts below!). These charts were filled by the farmers at the beginning of FMS training and at end of FMS training. These scores were then compared, where the farmers have experienced how relevant the various statements have been.

In the charts, each livelihood issue had Likert scale of six responses. For example, under the question of the farmers '*knowledge about the market*', she/he chose between the following statements:

1. Almost nothing
2. A little bit
3. Some knowledge
4. Medium knowledge
5. Good knowledge
6. A lot of knowledge

The degree or criteria of 'knowledge' is not predefined - but is purely the farmers' self-perception.

The scores made at the beginning of FMS training were considered a baseline which were compared with how the farmer perceived it after 14 session of FMS training, including conducting market trips to explore markets on their own as well as practicing what they had learned in the training and their own discovery learning of market relations in real life. As mentioned earlier, where these were not captured in the beginning a reconstruction of the situation at the start of FMS training was done.

The NURI FMS pilot evaluation was conducted by 6 CSA implementing partners who through their field staff visited 74 FMS in October to December 2023. The units were briefed about evaluation by checking their records of livelihood self-perception forms at beginning of FMS training that farmers had filled. Some units did not have and others had them. The target was each district to have 50 farmers for the evaluation.

1 Evaluation of Farmer Market School amongst Refugees in Uganda by Christian Sørensen, FMS Coordination Unit October 2023.

2 Evaluation of FFS and FMS Approaches in Sudan by Christian Sørensen & Jonathan Zimuto of FMS Coordination Unit ADRA Denmark August 2022

In the units where the FMS groups did not have baseline data, they were asked to administer them and urged the farmers to think back to the time, before they underwent FMS training. It was assumed the farmers would reconstruct their scores at that time as accurately as possible. The charts were collected and farmers were left for one week. The same farmers were then asked to fill new empty charts again. But now they would fill in their present scores after the FMS training. These filled charts were then treated as endline data for the FMS training.

The first chart contained 5 statements about market, agriculture, savings and value addition, which can be scored against six degrees from Zero: ‘almost nothing’ to Five, which indicates: a lot of knowledge. The design of the charts is built on the popular **mood meter**, which was used each time they met in FMS training evaluation.

Focus group discussions and individual interviews were conducted by unit staff and these were also compiled. The farmer groups and farmers were asked a number of relevant issues and this would take around half an hour. These FGDs and interviews have been documented and are presented below. Some groups would also sing or act a drama in appreciation of FMS training and support.

Table 1: Number of groups and farmers interviewed per district during FMS evaluation







SN	District	Number FMS trained	Number of Groups interviewed	No of respondents
1	Adjumani	24	5	50
2	Moyo	9	5	50
3	Obongi	10	7	50
4	Terego	5	5	46
5	Arua / Arua City	10	7	49
6	Madi Okollo	5	5	44
7	Nebbi	10	4	50
8	Zombo	10	8	50
9	Pakwach	9	5	50
10	Koboko	20	10	50
11	Kitgum	27	4	50
12	Lamwo	30	5	50
13	Agago	12	4	33
		181	74	622

The number of women and men interviewed per group was not fixed however the sample was closely representative of the groups composition under NURI where women constituted about 68% of the members. The data on youth was not captured in this interview.

The collective scoring of the 622 respondents have been inserted in the two sheets (Tables 2 and 3) of the livelihood self-assessment exercise. A color code is used: **blue** for before training and **red** after training.

Self-perception of Livelihood - Chart 1

This assessed five livelihood self-perception areas related to farming, market and VSLA based on Likert scale of 6 scores. Numbers in blue color were recall figures before FMS training or those the farmers had filled before FMS in 2022 or 2023 and were kept as advised in the training manual which served as baseline data. Where they were missing, they had to reconstruct these with farmers by recall of what their situation was then. Red numbers are the present scores following 1 to 2 years of FMS training (Endline data).

Self-Perception of your Livelihood in relation to:	Zero 	One 	Two 	Three 	Four 	Five 
1, My knowledge about the market	Almost nothing	A little bit	Some knowledge	Medium knowledge	Good knowledge	A lot of knowledge
	39 0	165 4	239 46	120 231	52 274	7 67
2, How much I am saving regularly	Nothing	A little bit	Sometimes	Medium	A good amount	Very much
	22 0	103 5	250 67	171 241	62 271	14 38
3. My knowledge about agriculture	Almost nothing	A little bit	Some knowledge	Medium knowledge	Good knowledge	A lot of knowledge
	9 0	85 1	198 38	203 167	116 307	11 109
4. My participation in collective marketing	Never	Once	Two-three times	Several times	Very often	Always
	128 50	141 57	179 81	129 226	34 156	11 52
5. Some form of value addition before sale e.g. grade or pack	Never	Once	Two-three times	Several times	Very often	Always
	65 1	157 4	210 100	118 215	54 232	18 70

N= 622 respondents

Findings from analyzing Chart 1

All the statements in this chart have direct reference to the outcome of the FMS training. They all follow a pattern of low scores before the training and high scores 1 – 2 years after FMS training. This is thus the most important indication of a positive effect of the FMS training and the following process of discovery learning from market interaction. Below the results are discussed in detail.

1. My knowledge about the market

The FMS pilot was done with NURI groups that comprised of national farmer groups as well as mixed groups of refugees and host community. That means they had access to land for production and had received training on CSA including marketing for 2 to 3 years before FMS pilot. The NURI program had also promoted collective marketing by the farmers. The marketing was done by the group members themselves with sometimes NURI staff playing the linkage

role. Cases of farmers complaining of lack of market for their produce or low prices were not uncommon. Therefore, market knowledge was not completely new before the FMS training.

The scores of 622 farmers were thus – not surprisingly - that their pre-knowledge about the market were majorly ‘**a little bit**’ to ‘**medium knowledge**’. However, after the FMS training and discovery learning for 1 – 2 years there was a significant shift where 231 farmers said that they had ‘**medium knowledge of the market**’, 274 farmers said had ‘**good knowledge of the market**’ and 67 farmers said that they had ‘**a lot of knowledge**’ of the market.

The FMS training was a major boost to their knowledge on market that they had acquired in the CSA module. The FMS emphasized that the farmers should produce what the market wants which implies they have to first undertake market research before they produce or do research before selling. The ‘chicken and an egg what comes first’ discussion really played a key role in their understanding of the market. The market visits are central element for the FMS approach. However, most FMS groups are located in rural areas and thus accessing markets is a big challenge and this affected frequency of market trips.

In the focus group discussions (see below) several of the groups explain how they undertook the market trips: In one group in Zombo district, they said ‘*Group Marketing Facilitators (GMFs) visited the different markets and identified what commodities were demanded and this guided the group on what to produce the following season*’. Another group in Kitgum narrated: *they visited several markets and compared prices, they realized the price differences even in the same location and were higher than the prices middlemen offered. Still another group said, getting market information required skills as traders were not cooperating or willing*’.

Another group in Koboko district explained that ‘*before we selected what to plant, we visited the market for better planning. This helped to identify the crops that are demanded on the market. We conduct research in different markets in Koboko, Arua and Maracha to compare prices. The group found out that prices in markets were higher than prices of middlemen, who came to their homes and gardens. We got to know which crops would fetch more money at harvest time, when they are most demanded in the market which becomes the basis on the groups next planting plan*’ We sent out three (3) teams to do the market research, and they brought back the feedback to the group. We never used to do this’.

A GMF in Lamwo district in an interview remarked, ‘*Visiting the market opened my eyes as many potential buyers needed produce in bulk, they asked for tons of maize, soybeans and sunflower*’. I returned to the group to tell them of this opportunity. Now we have a group block garden, but we also have individual gardens all planned together, where we plan to sell in bulk’

2. Savings

NURI program had VSLA as one of the activities in the CSA intervention and all groups were trained. It was noted that Agriculture and VSLA were interlinked in that VSLA would fund agricultural activities and sale of agricultural produce would contribute to saving. The readily available funds were loans and savings from VSLA. Groups were encouraged to develop household goals which were followed for their implementation. Again, groups that were carrying out VSLA were stronger because they met regularly and thus easier for staff to meet them for training. For resilience of the farmer households, it is important that they were able to save. FMS training on savings was an added emphasis. Therefore, they were asked to score their savings status, by answering question ‘2. How much I am saving regularly’.

The scores show that **600** respondents did save already before the FMS training. The savings ranged from ‘a little bit’, ‘sometimes’, ‘medium’ to ‘a good amount’ and to ‘very much’. However, 1 – 2 years after FMS training the picture had changed. **309** respondents (49.7%) said that they saved ‘**a good amount**’ to ‘**very much**’ compared to before FMS training of 12.2%. No respondent scored ‘**nothing**’.

VSLA appears to be connected with the concept of working together in a group. The groups have savings and welfare funds. These provide groups with funds accessible with ease compared to formal financial institutions. These funds have been used to meet various needs e.g., medical. School fees, farming and acquisition of assets by households or groups, and meeting emergency needs. It is the reason NURI considered integrating VSLA and farming as they reinforce each other and builds resilience in the households. Stronger groups in farming tended to have strong VSLAs.

One group in Adjumani district explained: *'Members do collective marketing by bulking their products especially maize, groundnuts and soybeans until prices are good. As they wait for better prices, they depend on VSLA savings or loans to meet the urgent needs. The group had over 10 million shillings as their savings by the time of this interview.'*

Another group in Agago district from the focus group discussions explained: *We contributed money and bought our foundation seeds for Local Seed Business (LSB) and have introduced seed box fund as part of our savings to buy individual foundation seeds to expand our business. 'Our group has been able to save regularly to investment. With this fund, foundation seeds will be sourced out and purchased for all the members in the group that saved'.*

Cweke group in Pakwach district narrated, *we save money in our group for various reasons; school fees, buying assets such as fishing nets and animals, help others in emergency cases like hospital, business and many other. VSLA has united us because we meet regularly. They appreciate VSLA because of what it is doing in our families.*

VSLA has been an important element of NURI CSA intervention because of the immediate source of money to group members. Since NURI was supporting existing groups, only some members were involved in the VSLA. Farmers were trained in planning, setting of goals and follow up was made to see their implementation. In addition, financial literacy and linkages were provided to the groups. Out of this, many farmers and groups testified having successes. The FMS training provided a further impetus in terms of seasonal income and expenditure that farmers should factor. NURI due to the importance it attached to VSLA even piloted the digitalization in Moyo and Obongi district while in Palabek settlement some groups were selected for digitalization by Grameen Foundation under the Uthabiti project. There are also many other development partners supporting VSLA under development and humanitarian contexts.

3. My knowledge about agriculture.

As reported above, the groups selected for the FMS pilot had gone through 2 – 3 years of extension service for specific enterprises which also included individual farmer visits, exposure visits and regular radio programs. This also tackled production and marketing planning, post-harvest handling and collective marketing. The NURI monitoring surveys and end of program evaluation indicated attainment of the monitoring indicators. That means training in agriculture had achieved what it intended. The FMS training came in to emphasize what was already covered in CSA; application of CSA and good agricultural practices, planning and monitoring of farm activities, good post-harvest handling practices, collective marketing etc.

Against this, the scores of 622 farmers were thus not surprisingly - that their pre-knowledge about the agriculture before FMS training was good as majority were in '**some knowledge**' to '**good knowledge**' accounting for 83% of the total scores. After the FMS training and discovery learning for 1 – 2 years there was a further positive shift where 167 farmers said that they had '**medium knowledge on agriculture**', 307 farmers said had '**good knowledge**' and 109 farmers that they had '**a lot of knowledge**' on agriculture and this accounted for 93.7% of the respondents.

From the interviews, one topic in FMS manual that was well appreciated is monitoring and planning farm production. A farmer in Koboko said, *his life with his three wives was difficult but*

after careful planning following FMS, they produced 33 bags of groundnuts from 3.5 acres which they have planned to sell together so that they can fetch better price.

From the FGD in Koboko, a group reported getting a contract to supply beans to a school at a better price because of clean beans and high quality. They negotiated for the price with confidence and that gave them market just in their neighborhood. The price they got was better than that for Arua when transport costs were factored.

4. How often I do collective marketing

This question is an indicator of how far farmers have progressed in their market strategies. As mentioned earlier, collective marketing was one of the topics covered in the CSA among the NURI groups. Some groups were already doing it even before the FMS training. While NURI had trained them on collective marketing, the data before the FMS training showed that **128 farmers** had never done it, **141** only once, and **179 farmers** had done two – three times. Following the FMS, there was another positive shift 1 – 2 years later: **434 farmers had done it 'several times', 'very often' or 'always' which accounted for 69.7% of the respondents.** The FMS training seems to have consolidated their understanding of collective marketing.

One of the GMFs in the focus group discussion in Lamwo district who went for a market trip narrated: *'Visiting the market in Lira opened my eyes as many potential buyers needed produce in very large volumes for maize, sunflower and soybeans. I realized that as an individual or even a group you cannot access such market. I have since disseminated such information that we need to increase our production and groups have to work together, the market is there.'*

Another success story of collective marketing happened in Kitgum district in January 2023 following FMS training. Two FMS groups plus two other NURI groups in Mucwini sub county bulked over 80 MT of sesame and 3 buyers approached them. Through the negotiation by the groups, they were able to get a price higher than local price of Ugx 5,200 per Kg. The surrounding community also benefited from this market opportunity and group members as well as the surrounding community appreciated this training. It empowered them to negotiate for better price for sesame where they eliminated buyers through competition. Farmers also realized the importance of volume and quality for better prices.

Many other groups from FGDs showed they had done collective marketing or were in process. In Nebbi, Pakwach and Zombo districts some of the FMS groups were in the process of forming cooperatives. Some of the groups had built their stores or are in the process. Some of those that built were in Koboko, Terego and Arua City. More collective marketing for 2023 groups would have happened but the pilot ended before the marketing season started and some of the groups were just bulking their produce waiting for better prices.

The success of collective marketing is not surprising, but welcomed news. NURI had laid a foundation on this before where it constructed over 80 stores under cost sharing with farmer groups in 9 out of 13 districts NURI operated and some of these groups were selected for FMS training. The CSA training also had covered collective marketing and farmers were slowly embracing it. These findings also agreed with similar study by ADRA in South Western Uganda where farmers seem to have taken some big steps further in collective marketing. In the focus group discussions, there were examples of collective marketing under the two models used i.e., bulk & sell and bulk, store and sell. However, the volumes were still low.

Collective marketing is a subject, which is worth exploring in more detail. The NURI program constructed several stores under cost sharing arrangements with farmers to support collective marketing but some have remained closed from the time they were constructed. This adds to the list already built in the community by other programs. There is need to find out what hinders the operation of such stores when benefits from collective marketing are evident.

5. How often I grade or pack my crop before sales

The last question was also answered very positively. This was also not completely new in the NURI program as this was covered under post-harvest handling topic. **65** respondents had never done value addition before selling while **157** respondents had done it once and **72** respondents had very often and always done it. However, after 1 - 2 years following FMS training **302** (49 %) did it very often and always. FMS emphasized many simple forms of value addition every farmer can do, and that seems to have been taken up.

In the focus group discussions; proper drying and cleaning, grading and processing were mentioned. *One GMF from Lamwo district remarked ‘We saw the need, when we conducted market trip in Lira’. ‘The buyers wanted clean grain, well dried and realized that milling maize added value. Another quote from Koboko: ‘Our beans were well sorted according to variety / size which gave us better bargaining power with buyer’.*

In pursuit of value addition, NURI in another pilot called Business Skills Development (BDS) supported few groups with value addition equipment e.g., milling machines under cost shared arrangement. The groups were required to develop business proposals that were evaluated to select those that met the criteria. Some FMS groups benefited from this which demonstrated the desire to do value addition by the farmers.







In general, there were big positive changes in all five questions dealing with the market, agriculture, savings and value addition. NURI had covered these areas in its CSA program apart from farmers carrying out market research themselves using their own initiatives and resources. The FMS training came timely to emphasize this in a more applicable form that farmers were able to see in their lives - *‘what the market wants’*. It is good that the farmers have embraced value addition. There is no doubt that the market visits have benefitted many farmers in this respect. This is perhaps the most striking in FMS training which farmers had great experience and will remain talked about. Collective marketing as a result of FMS is another area appreciated. On the other hand, Savings have direct relationship with income and investments for farming, as earlier emphasized in the NURI CSA training.

Given the Government of Uganda inclusive policy towards the refugees where they have unconditional access to plots of land in a settlement of 30x30 meters for all households regardless of family size, but is often not enough to support a household in growing enough crops for sale or consumption. Due to this, refugees have been getting land from host community through hire or friendship built. NURI in its CSA intervention has been supporting co-existence of the refugees and host community by forming mixed groups of such categories of farmers. With this in place, the training of refugees in FMS is a welcome idea.

Self-perception of livelihood - Chart 2

This like Chart 1 also assessed five livelihood self-perception areas based on 6 scores Likert scale. Again, the numbers in blue color are recall figures before FMS training and those the farmers had filled before FMS in 2022 or 2023 and were kept as advised in the training manual. Where they were missing, they had to reconstruct them by recall of what their situation then which served as baseline data. The Red numbers are the present figures 1 to 2 years after the FMS training (Endline data). In total, there were 622 respondents.

Table 3: Results of Livelihood perception Form 2

Self-Perception of your Livelihood in relation to:	Zero 	One 	Two 	Three 	Four 	Five 
	Very bad	Not good	Average	Quite OK	Good	Very Good

1, My Household's situation in general	18 1	98 5	273 72	170 247	49 248	14 49
2. The health of my family members	Very bad	Not good	Average	Quite OK	Good	Very Good
	21 0	91 10	229 60	199 223	70 261	12 68
3. My own self confidence	Very low	Not high	Average	Quite OK	High	Very High
	21 1	114 6	227 69	166 213	67 245	27 88
4. My general happiness with my life conditions	Very low	Not high	Average	Quite OK	High	Very High
	35 6	104 6	244 73	166 248	56 227	17 62
5. Degree of male and female HH members sharing in management of their households' economy	Very low	Not high	Average	Quite OK	High	Very High
	38 1	112 7	201 32	183 199	67 275	21 108

N= 622 respondents

Findings from analyzing Chart 2

While Chart 1 dealt with market and economic related issues, Chart 2 dealt more with social issues. The first four statements all relate to aspects of general livelihood. The fifth specifically relates to intra household gender relation. A common result for all as in Chart 1 is, that the situation had improved resulting from FMS training. That is well documented in the findings above. But it is interesting to see the pattern of each statement, which focus on different livelihood aspects.

1. My Household's situation in general

Sixty-three respondents stated that their households' situation at the beginning of the FMS training were '**good**' or '**very good**'. But the statements after 1 - 2 years 297 farmers had developed to '**good**' or '**very good**'. This is a clear improvement, but this does not in itself indicate that this improvement in household situations were because of the skills they learned in FMS training. There could be many different factors.

The possible contribution from FMS training to improvement in the household situation could be attribute to the different sessions that aim to change the way farmers do certain things. For example; monitoring and planning, household economy, gender equality, seasonal income, savings and loaning, market, price and payment terms are geared to better the household in terms of resources and decision making. This changed the situation for the better. It opened the eyes of the farmers to do something about their households. These farmers save for the refugees have been engaged in farming but their situation was bad despite availability of land and settled.

As for the refugees, the situation was different. They now lived without fear and had access to important livelihood elements: land, training, savings which made it possible for newcomers to cope and improve their household situations. The refugees were having big plans. During a monitoring visit in Imvepi refugee settlement with a mixed group, they stated, *'we want to construct our produce store and then bulk our groundnuts and sesame and sell when prices are good'*. This means such a group can produce surplus for sale.

2. The health of my family members

The responses to this issue show a similar improvement, which could be caused and explained by all the same issues as under 1. The data showed that 82 respondents said, the health situation of their households was 'good' to 'very good' before FMS training and after FMS training, it jumped to 329 respondents. Health is a proxy of wellness of the household economically and better nutrition which FMS could have contributed. It could have contributed to better health care due to resources and better planning these households had. The refugee's case could be different as they went through difficult situations and some traumatizing incidents. However, the number of refugees in the FMS pilot was small.

3. My self confidence

The FMS training in a way is expected to build confidence among the farmers. Before FMS training, only 94 respondents rated themselves to 'high' or 'very high' on self-confidence. However, after the FMS training this shot to 333 respondents. FMS training sessions on facilitation skills, negotiation, communication skills, market trips, VSLA and household economy help in building confidence among the farmers. Farmers are expected to go to different places, meeting different actors in the market, report such information to the group members or conduct training sessions as for the GMFs. In addition, the participatory learning approaches used in FMS also help to build the confidence of the farmers.

4. My general happiness with my life conditions

The responses follow the same pattern as in 1, 2 and 3 - and possibly for the same reasons. The farmers were coming up with bigger plans for their households. A few of such plans from the interviews and FGDs have been captured and they are generally very positive:

Mr. Delu Swaibu, GMF in Koboko was happy to harvest 33 bags of groundnuts in 2023 from 3.5 acres which they have planned to sell together so that they can fetch better price. They have bulked 25 bags of groundnuts for collective marketing. He further said he acquired some basic items for the household such as 10 pieces of iron sheets, 03 goats and is planning to mold bricks for a semi-permanent house.

Mr. Agarile Swadick also from Koboko district included his family members in planning for the family and out of this planted onions and green peppers seeds that NURI gave them. Due to participation of all the family members, they realized 75 kg of onions and because of market survey he was able to sell a kg of onion at 7000Ugx hence receiving 525,000/= and this encouraged him and the family members. Also collectively sold 1,560 Kg of maize grain in his group store at price of 1600 per kg.

*Mr. Mangwi Peter from Moyo district is so happy about the **FMS** training because it has changed his life. 'In my household we do the household planning together, we work together as a family and we are able to pay for our children at school. I have even constructed a permanent house as a result of selling my poultry'. He does market research with FMS knowledge and announced that even without NURI, he can stand on his own with the support of family members to sell in different markets and generate income.*

Ms. Maimuna Biangani, a widow from Obongi district had a difficult life following the demise of her husband that left young children who also missed education. The NURI program was her

turning point with the training on CSA and VSLA. Thereafter, training on FMS kicked off which was more of marketing and household empowerment-related topics that positively changed my way of thinking towards improved livelihood. I thought to myself that age wasn't an issue for one to progress. Now, with the help of other members, I was able to emulate and try doing what seemed to be impossible. She has been able to produce crops like ground nut, cassava, and sesame of good quality and sell, save money in VSLA, and later invest in production and other assets. With this, she bought three goats and acquired five pieces of iron sheets. 'I am planning to buy three more iron sheets to add up the number eight and lay bricks by Jan 2024. Next year, I will be able to build a sizable one-roomed house for myself' she asserted'.

5. Degree of male and female HH members sharing in the management of our Household economy.

This focuses specifically on intra-household gender relations. Here FMS training may have played a role, as gender is an important subject. 88 respondents scored 'High' to 'Very High' for intra-household gender relations before the FMS training and this jumped to 383 respondents (61.6 %) after the FMS training. It was the **highest amongst all the 5 subjects on this chart**. The same was actually also the case in the 2021 evaluation of FMS and FFS in Sudan by ADRA.

Women are the majority in the NURI groups membership. Women's' big role in the FMS training is also a cause for this development. NURI has been championing gender in the program through Women, Adolescents and Youth (WAY) program that CARE implemented but seems it did not concretize like FMS. The FMS sessions on monitoring and planning, household economy and family farm, gender and seasonal income, savings and loans seem to have created a very big impact on gender dynamics in the household thus leading to these scores. In addition, the participatory learning approaches such as role play illustrating intra-household dynamics was a plus. Farmers also reported shared roles in their households as a result of FMS training.

Gender Based Violence: women reported that there was no GBV in their households attributed to FMS training where joint planning was done. In some cases, spouses attended FMS training.

Farm activities is mentioned by the focus groups as a means of intra-household gender cooperation: *In our group, members share roles without saying, this is for women and that is for men, we do all activities as a team'.*

And also, **savings** has this outcome as reported in Moyo district: *"In our group, we save and borrow money for household plans and our spouses are supportive. We use the money for our household needs and we plan to use it together".*

In the **focus group discussions**, which we have described below, there were many similar and more detailed statements on the relation between men and women. They all describe details of the improved relationships between the gender in the households.

B. Focus Group Discussions

Besides filling of livelihood self-assessments, **focus group discussions**, were conducted where many other issues were raised. These FGDs lasted approx. 30 minutes. This exercise was meant to get farmers appreciation of FMS training on some of the major topics or areas and how they had applied them. These interviews were also very important illustrations of the scoring in terms of livelihood assessment before and after FMS training.

Twenty groups took part however only 5 groups are presented in this report. The gender breakdown was not captured.

Some of the major issues discussed are presented here were under the following areas / topics: Market Visits, Gender, Value addition / reduction and value chain map, and Planning and monitoring.

KIMATO IKANO IN AGAGO DISTRICT: We sent 4 representatives to visit the markets twice. Market trips were very exciting as we found prices offered in the market were higher than what we got in the village from the agents that moved around. In Lira town they wanted very large quantity of soybeans, maize, sorghum and sunflower. Many other activities were happening; cleaning, drying, packaging, milling, and transport. As farmers we cannot do all these activities. Big buyers were easily willing to give market information than small buyers. We realized that we need to increase our production and sell together. Training in gender and household economy has helped us in running our families better. We share information on income from sale of produce with spouses without fear.

CWEKE IN PAKWACH DISTRICT: 3 GMFs carried out market research and brought the information to the group unlike before where such sharing of information was not happening. It is not easy to send many members for market trips and set aside some money for trips. They went to Arua city for market research and also visited Alwi cooperative within the district doing cassava value addition. Here they found that clean cassava chips are required. They carried out market research to get better prices. They said, *'we found out prices of cassava chips in Arua City were high but transport costs were also very high'*. In April, they earned Ugx 4.7m from sale of cassava chips for the group garden and bought 2 bullocks and an ox plough. FMS training is good because of the unity it promotes in our homes. Many are interested in the FMS training because one nearby group also sent its members to attend the training and also sold cassava chips collectively with their group. The group has a plan of buying a tri motorcycle to ease transporting of their produce. They will also continue with market trips.

AZANGA WOMEN IN KOBOKO DISTRICT: The group sent 3 members to visit the markets in Koboko town and Lodonga in Yumbe district. They had money for the trips. They found out that sorted beans have a high price. Also, prices in Koboko market were higher than village price. They got phone contacts for some produce dealers. Furthermore, they appreciated collective marketing of groundnuts as they are able to bulk the produce together for sale and have production plan. They said they were not doing this before. Men and women were working very well in their group and both were involved in decision-making for selecting crops and other farming-related activities.

TANDUNDRU IN MOYO DISTRICT: FMS training is better because you produce what the market wants. Monitoring and planning has helped them in household vision and makes it easy to use family labour. Previously they were not doing joint household planning. Visiting the market as the first activity to guide selection of crops for the season to be planted is important. The group sent 5 people for market research in local market, Moyo town and Adjumani district. *'We have contacts for the buyers of groundnuts that we selected to produce and we call them to check on prices.* Because FMS training has opened them to bulking together, all have planted groundnuts. We produce what the market wants. In addition, the training on season income and savings and gender allows them achieve their goals as women are also involved in decision making. This has also reduced GBV³ among group members.

MUNGUFENI FARMER GROUP IN IMVEPI REFUGEE SETTLEMENT, TEREKO DISTRICT: They had no knowledge on market research before and appreciates NURI. They used to dump their produce because of lack of market but now they plan what to produce. FMS training has improved household matters e.g., not rush to market produce but research or store before sell. The group is looking forward to construct a store so that they can store their produce and sell when prices increase. They have already made bricks. The group conducted market research thus acquired knowledge of the different prices and found different crops fetched in different seasons. *'As refugees, FMS training has empowered us to plan for production and it has*

³ Gender based violence

improved the welfare of the families', they stated. The group is looking forward to acquire milling machine. They tried it under NURI Business Development Skills pilot but failed due to high-cost sharing since many members are refugees. The group plans to increase production at group and individual levels for collective marketing. To strengthen their marketing, a nearby group called Balala FFS members also sent 3 members to attend FMS training with them. In addition, the group has realized that market research is expensive and they need to get their own motorcycle for transport. The refugees and host community were coexisting and working very well.

C. Individual Interviews

Several individual interviews were carried out with GMFs and farmers as we wanted to hear the stories of these persons as regards their experiences of the FMS training for the groups and their personal lives. For this report, only six interviews have been presented in summary form. Many had great plans for themselves and their groups. The interviews demonstrated some success they registered from FMS training. They travelled to markets for better prices, they saved money, they paid their children school fees. They want development and better lives.

WORKING AS A FAMILY BY MR AGARILE SWADICK

Agarile Swadick is a 46 years old member of Jonyanita farmer group in Kilibi village Oraba parish kuluba sub county Koboko district.

He narrated his story that before FMS training, he used not to involve family members in the planning, there was division of labour according to gender, low production, selling at low price and no value addition. After FMS training, Mr. Agarile Swadick said now days he include his family members in planning for the family, he has increased and regular saving, regular income and increased access to market.

He stated, *'I benefited from permaculture pilot also under NURI where I was given 10 gm each for onions and green pepper seeds and with FMS training, I planned as a family with the spouse where we combined the 20 gm of onion and 20 gm of green pepper seeds. Due to participation of all the family members, we realized 75 kg onions and because of market survey, I was able to sell a kg of onion at 7000Ugx hence receiving 525,000/= and this encouraged me and the family members.*

He said he did his market survey as an individual on the vegetables like onions, green pepper, cabbage, tomatoes and decided to grow onions and green pepper during the dry season and planted the two based on the information he got from market.

Lastly, he is thankful to NURI and PICOT for the support and promised to keep monitoring the market to get information to guide him in production.

MY ROAD JOURNEY BY MR. DELU SWAIBU

MR. Delu Swaibu is a group marketing facilitator (GMF) of Azanga Women group in Bamure Parish, Ludara sub county Koboko district. He said the FMS training has really transformed him in a way that he can now communicate in front of any gathering without fear, conduct market research as opposed to the on-farm marketing he used to do in the past and gained him a lot of knowledge on marketing.

He also added that he has 3 wives and managing them before was a problem, however, the household economy session enabled him to plan well with his family members. Adding that, this year (2023), was good for him in terms of production. He said, *'each of my 2 wives planted 1 acre of groundnuts intercropped with cassava while I planted 1.5 acres totaling to 3.5 acres. Together as a family, we harvested 33 bags of groundnuts which we have planned to sell some*

together so that we can fetch better price'. They have bulked 25 bags of groundnuts for collective marketing.

He further said, the session on visioning has enabled him to acquire some basic household items such as 10 pieces of iron sheets, 03 goats and is planning to mold bricks for a semi-permanent house as he had planned from the start of the year.

On the group, he said that, there has been positive changes amongst the group members in terms of increased production, family unity and they have all agreed to sale together to eliminate the middlemen.

He however, shared some challenges such as absenteeism during other sessions which affected him, as he had other duties in the community, late delivery of the FMS training manual, and limited time allocated during monitoring. He therefore recommended that, training manuals should be translated to the local language, enough time should be given for interaction during external monitoring and government to take over the groups for some trainings.

FMS CREATING NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS BY OVONJI ALFRED

Mr. Ovonji Alfred aged 54-years is a member of Canberkumer farmers' cooperative located in Jupundeng village, Ossi west parish, Parombo Sub-County in Nebbi district. He is married to Ms. Ayenyo Jackline and is blessed with 3 children and is His story of change demonstrates how the Farmer Marketing School is restoring farmers' confidence in agriculture once again. With support from NURI, the group was assessed and selected under the NURI Farmer Market School Approach in 2022 and since then, he has been engaged in the production of several crops such as cassava, soybeans, and cotton on large scale for both home consumption and market but with lots of production and marketing challenges. This all changed when the group was trained on the Farmer Marketing School approach which focuses on empowering farmers in marketing. Immediately, we embarked on market research to produce what the market wants. "This was the beginning of my success," says Mr. Ovonji.

In 2022, he cultivated 4 acres of cassava, 3 acres of soybean and 2 acres of cotton and



harvested 4,000kgs of cassava dry chips, 2,000kgs of soybean and 3,000kgs of cotton. He collectively marketed 3,500kgs of cassava at UGX1,200/kg and realized UGX 4,200,000, 2,000kgs of cotton at UGX2000/kg realizing UGX4,000,000 and 2,000kgs of Soybeans at UGX 2,000/kg realizing UGX 4,000,000. He earned a total amount of UGX 12,200,000. "We did not believe this, it was our first time to earn such an income from farming in one season," said Alfred with confidence.

He started building his semi-permanent house and a total of UGX 8,040,000 was used to procure bricks, cement, iron sheets and hire of labour, UGX 1,000,000 to purchase 8 pairs of piglets and the remaining balance of UGX 3,460,000 catered for production and other home expenses.



Mr. Ovonji Alfred and Ms. Jackline have pledged to increase the acreage under production since he has the plan to construct his rentals, poultry

unit, and piggery unit and start up a business. He appreciated the program (Farmer Market School) and promised to continue to support the program activities and dedicated himself to always be exemplary in the community and beyond.

The beauty of planning and monitoring & gender in FMS training by Mr. Alua Alex Jurua

Alex aged 45 years is a member of Munguleni Farmer group from Vurra Cell, Mite Ward, Adumi Sub- County in Arua city.

He is very grateful to the entire NURI program for having piloted farmer Market school training with them. Before FMS training, they lost a lot in production. They never planned for production and marketing activities. But with the FMS approach, they have learned how to plan by carry out gross margin analysis of the market researched enterprises; calculating projected expenses that he or she will incur cost in production and the profitability. He can carry out regular monitoring of the fields that he has planted with crops; where he's able to apply good practices such as timely weeding and control of pests & diseases.

Previously, also after harvesting his field crops, he wouldn't tell his neighbors about the yield and money earned from sales of the produce but with FMS training, they can do collective marketing, and records are kept well. Linkage to bulk buyers has been made easy since it is the collective responsibility of the group members. He has been empowered by the importance of value addition which has made him earn more money from sales of cassava. Alex said, *most importantly with FMS training, I have appreciated gender issues/roles in production and this has made me do household planning with my wife.*

Lastly, he wishes to thank the NURI-CSA program for the wonderful FMS training, they have been to train 95% of the community members who were not part of the FMS group.

Farmer Market School (FMS), my hope for a better life by Maimuna Biangani

My name is Ms. Maimuna Biangani, 68 years of age. I'm a member of the Yingasu farmer group, Obogubu village, Liwa parish, Gimara Sub County, Obongi District. I lost my husband many years ago and raised my children as a single mother. Since then, I had given up on life because I had no support from anyone, and my children were too young to support in productive activities as a result they grew up without being educated which wasn't my intention. There was nothing I could do apart from only producing for consumption to raise them not until the NURI program started empowering farmer groups with training on CSA and VSLA.

Biangani used that knowledge to produce crops, especially sesame, ground nut, and cassava for sale and save money in VSLA. This was still without proper knowledge of planning, marketing, and investment in a manner that could sustain life. Thereafter, training on FMS kicked off which was more of marketing and household empowerment-related topics that positively changed her way of thinking towards improved livelihood. *I thought to myself that age wasn't an issue for one to progress. Now, with the help of other members, I was able to emulate and try doing what seemed to be impossible. It was too early for me to give up in life as I had in mind previously.*

The FMS training enabled her achieve a few of the goals she set as a single mother. She produces good quality groundnut, cassava and sesame that she sells, saves



money in VSLA, and later invest in production and other assets. With this *“I have now bought three goats and acquired five pieces of iron sheets”, more so, I’m planning to buy three more iron sheets to add up the number eight and lay bricks by January*. This will able her to build a sizable one-roomed house for herself.

The concepts of market research, value addition, household economy, gender, and seasonal income impressed her so much and were the core to her success. She concluded by saying, *“Farmers, let’s take FMS as part of life, you will be successful”*.

My market trip experiences in Lira City by Otto James

Mr. Otto James is a member of Pe Nongi Labedo farmer group in Katum sub county, Lamwo district and a GMF for the group. Six of them all GMFs from 2 groups set out for a market trip to Lira City where most produce from the district is often sold. However, 3 GMFs stopped in Kitgum and returned home. Three of them were determined and they together with 1 one staff continued to Lira to accomplish what they had set out to do.

While in Lira they visited several points; maize and rice buying and value addition, soybeans, sunflower and sesame buyers and processors. The value addition of maize to flour was one striking aspect for maize flour sold at Ugx 2,400 – 3,000 Kg beside maize bran while maize grain sold back in Lamwo at less than Ugx 1,000 per Kg. They appreciated the role of value addition. They learnt that you can mill your maize without necessarily owning the machine. It means they can also add value to their maize. Mt. Meru was a mega industry for soybeans and sunflower value chains. They appreciated their roles in input, value addition, quality and market demand. They were told, the company require huge volumes of grain from farmers. They made contacts with several of these actors which will be central for market information and value addition. They also visited agro input dealers and made contacts for seeds of maize, sunflower and vegetables.

Key learnings from this trip were; you can add value to your produce e.g., maize and rice without owning the machines, have been selling their produce individually at low prices because of no market information or value addition, big markets need large volumes of produce hence many groups need to work together and market trips are essential for better prices.

He and his colleagues promised to bring what they saw and heard to the two group members and mobilize them for collective marketing, continue with market research yearly, carry out better post-harvest handling, use improved seeds for better yields, establish linkages with buyers etc.

Assessing the Evaluation Tools

We used three different tools to undertake this evaluation, with the **livelihood self-assessment exercises** being the core. This certainly was a strong tool, as it showed very clear changes before FMS training and 1 - 2 years after in terms of key impact areas. Its weakness is that some initial charts filled out by the FMS members were not kept and had to use recall to reconstruct them. This would have given a more correct basis for comparison. This is clearly mentioned in manuals used but was overlooked. They should be strongly followed in the future. Probably much emphasis was not done as it was regarded that they were just for learning. The focus was the learning and reflection workshop would be sufficient.

But still the exercise was used with the ‘before’ scoring based on recall and real time data for some groups. Where the recall was necessary, a period of one week was provided before end FMS scoring was done. Again, the Likert scale seems to be wide (6 scores), this needs to be reviewed. The tendency was clear: positive changes were documented by the scores by comparing before and after FMS training.

The second evaluation tool was **focus group discussions** which proved to be a very valuable illustration of what was found in the self-assessment exercise. Most striking were the cases of successful market trips where they discovered differences in prices, what is demanded in the market, and improvement in household planning due to joint decisions by men and women. The FGDs tended to agree with livelihood perception forms.

The **individual interviews** of GMFs and farmers added more information to livelihood perception forms and FGDs by putting personal tones on the benefit of FMS training to them and their groups.

Conclusion

Considering that NURI was piloting Farmer Market School approach for possible inclusion in the future Danida programs in the country and also taking the nexus of humanitarian and development, this pilot ran for approx. two years with different categories of groups – nationals and mixed refugees and nationals - that had received complete CSA training. Many lessons were drawn from the learning and reflection workshop which are not captured in this report.

Generally, the FMS approach seems to be relevant for the refugees and nationals. ADRA Uganda also piloted FMS approach in two settlements, Kyaka2 and Rwamwanja in South-Western Uganda that are hosting refugees mostly from DRC and their findings were equally positive. ADRA trained 30 groups in the two settlements with an average of 27 members – mostly women. This training took part in 2021-2022. The training was meant to prepare the members to improve their access to markets for better prices.

This evaluation was called to document the impact of FMS to the livelihood of the participating farmers. It was not initially planned for this pilot. The thinking was that learning and reflection workshop would suffice but it came as a recommendation from ADRA consultant on FMS, Mr. Christian Sørensen in October 2023. Due to limitations on time due to eminent closure of the pilot field activities by November 2023, there was less time to prepare for it. The program staff were thus used to collect the data where 74 groups were reached and three research instruments were used. The most important was **self-perception of livelihood** followed by the **focus group discussions**. In addition to these two exercises, **individual interviews** with some farmers and GMFs were conducted. The main findings of these combined were the following:

Findings

The Livelihood exercises showed substantial improvement for the respondents for 2022 and 2023 groups in terms of 10 statements.

The three biggest changes were in relation to **'knowledge about agriculture'**, **'knowing about the market'** and improvements on **'intra-household gender relations**. Knowledge about agriculture was a big surprise because these groups had gone through 2 – 3 years of CSA training. In FMS evaluation in Sudan in 2021 and South Western Uganda in 2023, knowing the market and improvements on intra-household gender relations were among the top three out of the 10 areas assessed. The lowest score in terms of difference before and after was **collective marketing**. Others that had low scores were; savings, value addition, general household situation and health status of the household. This was not surprising for collective marketing and savings because these were well covered in CSA training of the NURI program. Furthermore, the FMS pilot closed before marketing season for 2023 production opened as it is usually done in December and January / February of the following year, so many farmers had not done collective marketing yet. The scores for **collective marketing** were much higher for ADRA FMS evaluation in South Western Uganda, which means that the farmers had started benefitting a lot from new market relations.

The main findings from the farmers' answers to livelihood statements were a very important proof of the ability of smallholder farmers to **do market visits and respond to market demands**. In summary the following conclusions can be made:

- a. Smallholder farmer living away from major markets and with very poor structure, can actually by their own initiative obtain useful market knowledge and information. Their surprise to find prices in market better than those paid by local buyers became a strong motivation to use the market information to guide them in their agricultural activities.
- b. They changed their enterprises as per market demand they found.
- c. They realized the importance of large volume of produce for big buyers
- d. They realized the importance of storing produce till the market prices had risen. Some rented while others'-built stores for this purpose.
- e. They realized importance of quality products and value addition in the market place.
- f. They found that some distant markets were not lucrative as people would think when transport costs are put into consideration thus in some cases local market is better.
- g. The importance of the market information was clearly a result of the FMS training that farmers received in market research.

Regarding social issues, the most striking result of the FMS training was the emphasis on **intra-household gender cooperation**. Men and women save together, they farm together in group farming and make decisions on what to grow together, households do joint planning, share farm work in their households. The training improved relations in the household as a result of joint planning, household economy and family farm.

The FMS pilot is really good considering the direction Danida support in Uganda is headed to. Supporting the refugees with livelihood option rather that depend on the humanitarian assistance is welcome considering that such assistance is dwindling and not guaranteed at all time. ADRA FMS pilot with refugees is welcome and is a very important lesson, which also has a lot to do with respect to the Ugandan Government's refugee policy. It is not everywhere in the world – including in Africa, where refugees are being given access to land to cultivate and market their produce. For them FMS also means livelihood. As mentioned, a similar evaluation was undertaken by ADRA in Sudan in 2021. And the findings there very similar. The Sudanese beneficiaries of FMS though were not refugees, but just ordinary smallholder farmers in White Nile and West Darfur. However, West Darfur province also went through a terrible war and situations.

Thus, FMS has proven to be applicable to various conditions of smallholder farmers. And it certainly bridges the transition from humanitarian assistance to developmental development.

Recommendations

- It is important that the results from the first self-assessment exercise in the FMS training manual are retained by the facilitators and kept by the organization responsible, as the charts are important as the baseline for an evaluation after two years. This must be mentioned more clearly in the FMS training manuals. It is a task for FMS facilitators and Program staff. This was not well stressed at the start considering that no formal evaluation of FMS was planned for in the NURI FMS pilot
- There is need to revisit the Likert scale in the self-perception forms and possibly the assessment areas. This will give farmers better evaluation.
- FMS training could be integrated in other agricultural training that have aspect of market. Market access by rural farmers is often a big challenge in Uganda and Africa at large.
- This evaluation report may be shared with all relevant humanitarian actors and stakeholders providing development or humanitarian assistance to refugees in Uganda.