

UPSIDE

**Northern Uganda Resilience Initiative (NURI) –
Extension 2023**

NURI

Danida



Pilot Activity report on Farmer to Farmer Extension

December, 2023

PILOT ACTIVITY REPORT

Pilot Title:	Farmer to Farmer Extension (F2FE)
Brief description of pilot	<p>NURI CSA Programme was centered on the provision of extension to farmers through group trainings, and individual farmer visits and supplemented by radio programs. The trainings were organised into training sessions / modules which were covered according to crop, farming calendar and the group type supported by the program. The trainings were carried out by AEOs supported by Agricultural Extension Supervisors (AES). The staff were trained on the technical areas by external and/or internal trainers so that they could deliver these training to farmer groups so they would replicate in their farms. While successful, the NURI extension model was limited in terms of outreach, due to the cost of operating a large extension team. After the period of support, such groups will have no AEOs when their contracts expired. In addition, training of some refugee groups required translation due to language differences in certain settlements.</p> <p>NURI program received a 1-year extension with a focus on sustainability of NURI outputs and greening NURI while also testing new ideas. During the extension period, NURI through its CSA partners continued supporting refugees in Lamwo, Obongi, Adjumani, Terego and Madi Okollo districts with extension services focusing on permaculture along with selected inputs. In Koboko district, the support targeted selected national NURI groups on vegetable production. The training was delivered using Farmer to Farmer Extension (F2FE) approach. Under F2FE approach, selected farmers (Community Based Facilitators) were trained by AEOs on specific subject matter and they cascaded this training to their fellow group members. In some instances, the Farmer-trainers can also be referred to as lead farmers, farmer-promoters or community knowledge workers. These groups were supported with vegetable seeds for 2 season, sweet potato vines (OFSP) for one season and 2 types of fruit trees per HH.</p> <p>Literature shows that F2FE approach has potential in lowering cost of extension services while reaching many farmers and leaving capacity with them. NURI therefore explored the possibility of piloting F2FE, by working with existing partners and targeting national farmers in Koboko and mixed groups of nationals and refugees as well as refugee women groups in all refugee settlements. Fact findings from other partners were also taken into consideration during the piloting.</p> <p>General objective: Sustaining NURI</p> <p>To test use of Farmer-to-Farmer Extension approach for provision of advisory services to farmers, with the added benefit of spreading the knowledge and learning that has been built in the NURI AEO/AES teams, and developing a sustainable knowledge resource in farmer groups.</p> <p>Specific objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To test F2FE approach in training farmers on crop production practices with different farmer group types 2. To assess the operational set up and logistics required in F2FE approach 3. To document lessons learnt from the pilot <p>NURI CF led the implementation of the pilot for one year through its CSA partners; RAU Kitgum/Lamwo, RAU Adjumani, RAU Moyo/Obongi, PICOT and ARUDIFA spread in the selected districts and refugee settlements. The activity targeted permaculture, vegetable production and fruits trees among the farmers. In total 870 groups (820 women & refugee groups and 50 national farmer groups in Koboko) benefited from this training. Overall, 883 CBFs were trained (486 females and 397 males) among which 301 were youth. In addition, it received support from DLGs in form of monitoring of the pilot and training of staff as well as two consultants from NARO Abi ZARDI who trained the staff on Permaculture. More details can also be found in the permaculture pilot report.</p> <p>A budget of UGX. 288 million was used to implement the program and this basically covered training of staff, CBFs and groups, quarterly review meetings with CBFs and exchange visits. The staff costs were not included here.</p>
Brief description of	<p>Erratic Weather: This was most challenging especially for first season crops which was characterised by prolonged dry spell which affected several crops including vegetables and fruit trees etc that were planted. It resulted into delayed planting, overgrown seedlings in nurseries, low survival of seedlings, less area planted and poor performance of the crops. Some seedlings and nurseries were totally</p>

<p>context</p>	<p>destroyed. Second season rains were generally better although delayed and also punctuated with few isolated dry places e.g. Obongi and parts of Palabek settlement and Adjumani etc. The poor weather demoralised the CBFs and farmers in their activities.</p> <p>Economic activities: Farming is the main economic activity the community in Northern Uganda is engaged in., However, the poor weather as reported above continues to affect it. The first season harvest was little thus little produce for sale compared to the second season which improved in harvest. The dry spell led to a spike in the average prices (UGX) per Kg of some commodities as follows; Sesame 5,200 - 6000, beans 3,500 - 5500, dry cassava 1300 - 1500, tomatoes 3,000, onions 7,000. Others were; maize grain 700 - 1,500, groundnuts shelled 4,000 - 6,000 and cabbage at 3,000 per head. There was high demand than supply due to failure in first season harvest. The supply improved in second season and saw a drop in prices. In Koboko district, there was over supply of eggplant and green pepper which was attributed to increased production from NURI groups.</p> <p>Security situation: There was relative peace in Northern Uganda which provided good environment for implementing the pilot. There were however isolated cases of insecurity in some settlements but did not affect the F2FE pilot implementation.</p> <p>Food security situation: Northern Uganda including West Nile was relatively food secure for nationals but for the case of refugees it was not. The food rations had been reduced and some phased out while others receive cash transfers which severely affecting the refugees. On the other hand, locals were not also benefiting from local markets provided by the refugees due to limited stocks they had. Because of this, prices were generally high for the food commodities from within and those brought from far. The situation improved with second season harvest and vegetable production that NURI supported farmers with. There was generally high demand for grains and pulses as a result of poor harvest.</p> <p>Refugee influx: The refugee influx continued during the pilot period. They came from South Sudan and DRC due to insecurity. The refugee population hosted in the region was over 500,000 people.</p> <p>Supportive infrastructure: the road network condition varied in the operational areas. It was generally good in West Nile than in Palabek settlement. Despite all this, it did not affect service delivery to the farmers.</p> <p>Other programs and social events: Within the communities, several events such as market days, funerals, food distribution, verification of refugees, marriage parties, other programs in the settlements affected implementation of planned activities like trainings, monitoring and crop production activities as the targeted group members took part in these events. The staff regularly rescheduled activities due to postponements.</p> <p>Access to Financial services: The main source of finance for most groups was VSLA. Formal financial services tended to be concentrated in urban areas. However, the SACCOs, Agent banking and mobile money points were increasingly spreading out. Few groups have been linked to financial institutions for account opening and other services. The Parish Development Model (PDM) funds have complimented financial sources for some beneficiaries especially the nationals.</p> <p>Coordination and Collaboration: NURI received good collaboration from UNHCR, OPM, RWCs and various livelihood partners in the different settlements and this enabled NURI to implement its activities without much challenges. Grameen offered to digitalise some of NURI VSLA groups in Palabek settlement under the Uthabiti project without any financial contribution. The DLGs and LLGs also supported by providing quality assurance services of inputs distributed and carrying out monitoring of the pilot activity. Two staff from NARO provided a training to NURI extension staff.</p>
<p>Key project successes</p>	<p><i>Key results include:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farmers trained in Permaculture: 870 groups were trained on Permaculture using F2FE approach with resounding success. Many groups and individual farmers were able to produce for home consumption and surplus for sale. Some farmers even preserved some of the food stuff through drying. Koboko district reported increased supply of some vegetables attributed to NURI intervention and led to drop in prices. Other innovations and farming techniques, including Integrated pest and disease management were effectively added to the training package. 2. F2FE approach works: The program managed to work with highly motivated CBFs to cascade the permaculture training although they were not facilitated by NURI. Thus, the use of CBFs to train farmers freed AEOs time to do other things like backstopping. The community members were aware of the work of CBFs, and there is interest from non-NURI farmers to participate in the

	<p>trainings. This was seen from the results of the training that the CBFs showed. Most of them were now model farmers in the community which inspired others as well.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Interactions with farmers enhanced: Contact time of AEOs with farmers significantly increased due to the presence of the CBFs within the farming communities. 4. Competitiveness: The exchange visits and review meetings have created positive competition among groups on production scale, performance etc. The coordination structures of CBFs that were established were also about positive competition as they wanted recognition. 5. Language barrier: The use of CBFs partly helped address the challenge of language barrier with the refugees in the trainings. It also fastened the training as no translation was needed as was the case before. 6. Organisational set up of NURI program: The organisational set up of NURI helped it reach the planned number of groups and provided the training. In NURI, the existing staff structures were; CBFs, AEO, AES, CSAC, Unit Head. It also allowed some level of freedom for staff to learn and implement the lessons immediately as field conditions dictated e.g., some groups planted joint seedling nurseries, CBFs coordination structures among others.
<p>Project shortcomings and solutions</p>	<p><u>Low literacy levels of CBFs and farmers:</u> Not all CBFs were able to read and write hence unable to provide information unless contacted for verbal reports and also had difficulty of interpreting technical content into the local language. Thus, low literacy levels among CBFs required close support to groups by AEOs, to provide backstopping and record keeping and hands-on training. CBFs cannot handle complex subject matter hence AEOs become handy. In addition, practical sessions, exchange visits and quarterly review meetings should be conducted. Furthermore, in selecting the CBFs, basic literacy is an essential requirement for successful F2FE and such some groups also introduced FAL classes to improve the literacy of their members.</p> <p><u>Lack of training materials:</u> F2FE training had no training materials for use by staff and CBFs. There is need to develop user-friendly training materials to aid the CBF in training farmers.</p> <p><u>Poor performance by some CBFs:</u> Absenteeism of some CBFs due to laziness and/or having multiple roles in the community affected learning in some groups. There was also constant and spontaneous movement of refugee CBFs across to South Sudan thus affecting their performance. Replacement of CBFs was done in some cases as a mitigation.</p> <p><u>Limited market for produce of farmers:</u> There were challenges of marketing some of the vegetables produced. In Koboko district, there was increased supply of some vegetables which resulted in a drop of prices. Some farmers even tried to go to very far markets while other farmers dried or stored their produce. Some groups were also trained on marketing which was not planned earlier to improve their ability to market.</p> <p><u>Drop out of CBFs:</u> there were some drop-out of CBFs due to unmet expectation or as a result of relocation to South Sudan or to another refugee settlement. It is necessary to cultivate a spirit of voluntarism among CBFs right from onset to foster ownership and willingness.</p> <p><u>Language barrier:</u> In spite of the groups being self-selected, it still presented language barrier challenges where group members from different ethnic settings came together. To overcome this, some groups decided to elect individuals from different tribes to the group leadership to mitigate the language barrier and promote co-existence.</p> <p><u>Short period to implement F2FE pilot:</u> This pilot has been implemented for just one year and yet it required more time to see the best ratio of AEO: CBFs and CBFs: Farmers. The NURI pilot tried some ratios which need further validation and informed by the context of its implementation e.g. mixed groups which often have scattered and far nationals from refugees.</p> <p><u>Difficulty in training mixed groups:</u> Training mixed groups tended to delay due to scattered settlement patterns of refugee and nationals leading to absenteeism. In some refugee settlements, nationals were very far from refugees and bringing them together for the training was difficulty leading to unnecessary delays. In forming mixed groups, proximity of the members is key for effective interactions and training and there should be room for flexibility in the composition of membership by nationality. Depending on context, consider bicycles for transport of CBFs.</p> <p><u>Motivation of CBFs:</u> CBFs trained their groups voluntarily. However, some were demoralised to continue training and missed some trainings. It is necessary to identify ways of motivating the CBFs e.g.</p>

	<p>through review meetings, provision of in-kind items such T-shirts, bicycles, giving best performing CBFs recommendations or certificates.</p> <p><u>Conflict between CBFs and group leaders</u>: Some groups misunderstood the roles of CBFs which has led to conflict between group leaders and CBFs. Clarification on the roles of CBFs and group leaders should be given to minimize conflicts.</p> <p><u>Unfavourable weather</u>: this was a great hinderance to increased production. This affected the performance of first season crops. Early planning and delivery of inputs to farmers is key.</p>
<p>Lessons learned</p>	<p>Use of farmer trainers (CBFs) and their selection: the use of fellow farmers in the training has been commendable. Our field visits really found some had done a very good job. The selection of trainers is very important as there have been differences in delivering trainings with high turn up where the CBFs conduct household follow-up visits. In a few cases in Imvepi and Rhino Camp settlements, student CBFs were selected and proved very effective in cascading the permaculture knowledge to the farmer groups.</p> <p>Use of mixed training methods: The training of CBFs and farmers is hands-on supplemented by other methods, plenary discussion and experience sharing, role plays, presentation, refresher training, exchange visits and breaking into mini groups. This was appreciated by a cross section of groups interviewed about the training approaches that NURI deployed.</p> <p>Motivation of CBFs: Some farmer groups motivated their CBFs in-kind e.g., offering produce from learning sites and labour at learning sites. NURI also gave transport and refreshments in cash to CBFs during meetings and trainings, and this motivated them. Recognition of hard working CBFs with certificates and facilitating exchange visits.</p> <p>Cost-effectiveness and sustainability – engagement of F2F extensionists is a cost-effective way to extend the reach of extension provision, while contributing to sustainability as NURI was able to reach 870 groups with 39 staff. Community / farmer group involvement in selection of F2F extensionists ensures buy-in and ownership.</p> <p>Contact time and local knowledge vs technical knowledge – 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. It also increased the contact time of the staff with farmers.</p> <p>Support systems for empowerment of F2F extensionists – a solid support system, that aims to empower F2F extensionists and ensures quality training, relevant training materials and on-going mentoring, as well as relating to local government systems, is needed to ensure the quality of F2FE, and enhanced community trust in the information provided.</p> <p>Relations to group leaders: CBFs roles as it relates to group leaders needs to be clearly defined from the onset to avoid conflicts and overlap.</p> <p>Integration of refugees: Working with refugees requires integration of fellow refugees into the F2F extension methodology. This builds trust and helps address issues of multiple languages and translation challenges.</p> <p>Joint nurseries were better managed: Groups that pooled their individual seeds together to establish a communal nursery tended to produce better seedlings.</p> <p>Refugees with fruit trees: Some refugees took the fruit trees seedlings given for planting in South Sudan while some species e.g., Jack fruit were rejected by some refugees due to cultural beliefs. On the other hand, they preferred quick maturing species like paw paws, guavas and passion fruits.</p> <p>Organisational culture and innovation: allowing extension staff some freedom to experiment and learn from mistakes, has resulted in a number of innovations within both the employed and volunteer extensionists. It is out of this that the CBFs organically initiated a coordination structure which was not planned in the pilot. The CBFs zonal structures created helped to coordinate their activities, helped in translation and inspired competition among the groups. Its therefore prudent that some level of freedom be allowable for staff to learn and implement the lessons immediately.</p>

<p>Follow-up Actions</p>	<p>Implementation period of 2 years: F2FE requires two years to measure the results. It is early to predict the results of F2FE pilot but prospects were very promising. Some partners like TEDDO in Soroti has used it for over 10 years for various activities including advocacy.</p> <p>Organisational set up: Any future program should have clear organisation set up like NURI for effective delivery of F2FE training to the groups. It should have structured staffing from top to bottom who will interface with the farmers.</p> <p>High ratios of AEOs to CBFs and CBFs to Farmer: There was a feeling that 1 AEO to 25 CBFs and 1 CBF to 30 farmers is high for effective training, follow up and backstopping. Partners need to give this a further thought. A suggestion was, it should not be looked at in terms of numbers but effective learning.</p> <p>Strong engagement of local governments: for enhanced sustainability, transparency and community trust, real and regular engagement with local governments is essential.</p> <p>Development of training materials for use in F2FE: There is need to develop the F2FE training materials and translation into local languages so that they are user friendly with farmers.</p> <p>Conclusion: F2FE pilot has been a success with great learning and is recommended for inclusion in future programs of Danida. It has generated a lot of enthusiasm from participating groups who have seen the results of it and pledged to continue with permaculture even without NURI, arising from the training they received. This approach was also introduced under the tree growing pilot to increase outreach among farmers and showed promise. The groups appreciated the capacity this approach leaves behind for them. The farmer trainers emerged as model farmers and this has inspired them and group members.</p>
---------------------------------	---