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## Sustainable NGO/CBO agricultural marketing initiatives. Proceedings of a workshop held at Mukono, Uganda 19-20 June, 2001

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NATURAL RESOURCES INSTITUTE



# **SUSTAINABLE NGO/CBO AGRICULTURAL MARKETING INITIATIVES**

**Proceedings of a workshop held at Mukono,  
Uganda 19–20 June, 2001**

*Edited by Tiago Wandschneider and Ann Gordon*



Natural  
Resources  
Institute

National Agricultural Advisory Services  
( N A A D S )

**DFID** Department for  
International  
Development

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	agricultural advisory services
AT	Appropriate Technology
CBO	community based organisation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FEWS	Famine Early Warning System
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
LG	local government
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MOLG	Ministry of Local Government
NGO	non-governmental Organisation
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Service
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organisation
NPTC	Nile Product Trading Company
NRI	Natural Resources Institute
PMA	Programme for the Modernisation of Agriculture
R&D	research and development
SME	small and medium enterprise
TDS	technology development services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VEDCO	Volunteer Effort for Development Concerns

# **SUSTAINABLE NGO/CBO AGRICULTURAL MARKETING INITIATIVES<sup>1</sup>**

## **Background**

The current workshop forms part of a research project on best practices in NGO/CBO agricultural marketing initiatives. This project is funded by the United Kingdom's (UK) Department for International Development's (DFID) Crop Post-Harvest Research Programme and will be implemented over 2001-2003. The Natural Resources Institute (NRI) is responsible for undertaking the research in collaboration with local organisations in India and Uganda, the two study countries. The National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAADS) is the main partner organisation in Uganda.

The idea behind this project is to identify and disseminate approaches and interventions in the agricultural marketing sphere that not only are cost-effective and commercially sustainable, but also have the potential for replication. The emphasis is on domestic agricultural markets. Lessons will be learned from existing experiences while action research will be undertaken to tackle new marketing issues. During the research, the capacity building needs of local organisations will be identified. A process of information exchange and dialogue with a wide range of national organisations in India and Uganda is moreover envisaged to facilitate the identification of priorities and to ensure wide dissemination of project outputs.

The need to identify and develop sustainable solutions to the agricultural marketing problems that farmers face in poor developing countries is supported by empirical evidence. When asked about their main problems and concerns, farming households often cite difficult access to markets and low and volatile prices. NGOs and CBOs are well positioned to support farmers in overcoming these problems, due to their strong presence in the field and the participatory and grassroots nature of their work with rural communities and households. Many have been developing initiatives with a strong emphasis on agricultural input and output marketing, apparently with mixed results. Lack of expertise, poor access to relevant information and contacts, or a legitimate focus on remote areas and the most disadvantaged farming households partly explain why interventions sometimes fall short of their intended objectives. This project aims to address such shortcomings.

## **Purpose of the workshop**

The purpose of this workshop was fourfold:

- i) to introduce participants to the NRI/NAADS research project;
- ii) to develop contacts between the project and local organisations and institutions;
- iii) to identify key issues in agricultural marketing in Uganda; and
- iv) to identify possible case study areas for future research.

These objectives were largely achieved. The workshop was very successful in sensitising participants to the issue of NGO/CBO involvement in agricultural marketing and in

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facilitating the establishment of informal contacts and links between participants. Moreover, workshop participants contributed actively to the working group and plenary discussions, openly expressing their views on a number of relevant topics. The workshop programme and list of participants are attached at Annexes 1 and 2 respectively.

### **Opening address**

In his opening speech, the Presidential Advisor on Agriculture, Dr. J. J. Otim, emphasised the appropriateness and timeliness of the workshop. The Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) now underway attaches great importance to agricultural marketing, which is seen as critical for raising smallholder incomes and facilitating the adoption of new technologies. While in the past the poor performance of the agricultural sector in Uganda used to be regarded merely as a consequence of insufficient production, increasing importance is now being attached to domestic and external market access issues as a driving force behind the transformation of the agricultural sector.

The PMA recognises an important role for NGOs, especially in the areas of farmer organisation and service provision. The organisation of farmers is seen as particularly crucial for producers to effectively voice their problems and needs, for example through the Agricultural Council of Uganda, and benefit from improved service delivery. According to Dr. Otim, workshops such as the present one offer an opportunity for the Government and the voluntary sector to discuss the terms of a future partnership within the context of the PMA.

### **Key note speech**

The keynote speech, delivered by Dr. Willie Odwongo, Director of the PMA Secretariat, set the stage for the workshop presentations and discussions. The general theme of the presentation was the role of NGOs and CBOs in agricultural marketing in Uganda.

Dr. Odwongo started by emphasising the poor performance of agricultural marketing systems in Uganda. These show little capacity to channel credit or spread risks. Risk aversion, high transaction costs, and complex entry barriers were identified as inhibiting factors to the development of competitive markets. The fact that state regulatory systems are often subject to manipulation by market players was also pointed out. These and other problems are most acute in remote areas, which are characterised by very poor farmer access to services and markets.

During the presentation, the distinction between welfare-oriented and business-like NGOs and CBOs was established. Interventions developed by welfare-oriented NGOs normally target the most disadvantaged households and groups and include an important subsidy element. Subsidies facilitate target beneficiary participation but are problematic from an intervention sustainability viewpoint. In contrast, business-like organisations follow a more commercial approach and tend to use subsidies more selectively. The sustainability of their interventions is enhanced as a result.

Common areas of NGO/CBO involvement were identified and discussed. These include farmer groups, training, access to agricultural inputs and processing technology, market linkages, credit, and market information. The importance of learning from the successful and

failed experiences was stressed. The need for holistic intervention approaches and a facilitating policy environment was also highlighted.

In concluding his presentation, Dr. Odwongo mentioned five unresolved issues that require special attention and research. These can be formulated as follows. First, what is the optimal balance between social and commercial objectives? Second, what are the necessary conditions for successful and sustainable farmer group development? Third, how to make resource-poor farmers more business oriented? Fourth, how to enhance farmers' capacity to compete in an increasingly globalised economy? Finally, how to develop effective partnerships between government, NGOs/CBOs and farmers?

### **Overview of presentations**

Ann Gordon (NRI) presented an overview of agricultural marketing issues in general and then outlined the focus of the proposed research on marketing interventions. She explored five key features of agricultural markets in Uganda: uncertainty, high transaction costs, low income consumers, markets in transition and informality. Whilst these issues represent some of the problems that marketing interventions might address, they also place restraints on the range and potential impact of suitable marketing initiatives. Defining a marketing intervention as one that seeks to improve farmer incomes from agricultural marketing (and therefore not necessarily implying any direct role in agricultural marketing), the research will seek to identify best practice in NGO interventions, drawing on case studies from (1) recently finished initiatives, (2) currently ongoing initiatives, and (3) action research on the development of new initiatives.

Following this presentation, Andrew Mutengu (FEWS NET) provided a brief characterisation of the status of food commodity markets in Uganda. Major production areas for food crops were mapped and key agricultural problems and constraints identified. The latter include limited access to extension services, poorly developed input markets, high post-harvest losses, insufficient access to market information, and extreme seasonal price fluctuations. During the presentation, the main internal and cross-border product flows were also described. Kampala clearly stands out as the main destination market for food crops grown in other regions of the country and as a key intermediary point for maize and bean exports to Kenya. These two crops are also widely exported directly from border districts to neighbouring countries.

With respect to marketing channels and players, Andrew Mutengu stressed the fact that farmers rarely sell directly to final users, even when destination markets are located close to production areas. Small itinerant traders, medium-sized crop buyers, and large wholesalers are normally involved in conveying the produce to local and foreign markets. In concluding his presentation, Andrew Mutengu mentioned three success stories. One is the recent increase in cassava production and marketed volumes in eastern Uganda. Another is the development of stronger links between producers and crop buyers. A final cited example is the rise in exports by major dealers through NGO emergency interventions in neighbouring countries.

Francis Byekwaso introduced the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) programme, which is one of the cornerstones of PMA. The rationale of this programme is to develop a demand-driven, client-oriented, and farmer-led agricultural service delivery

system. A shift from public to private service delivery is one of the central elements of the programme. The other is the empowerment of subsistence farmers to access services and market information within a decentralised framework.

The development of community-level farmer groups and higher-level sub-county, district and national farmer fora are regarded as the key to farmer empowerment. Groups and fora enable producers to express their needs and priorities and facilitate interaction with government institutions and service providers. Funding will be available at district and sub-county levels to finance the procurement of identified priority services from a wide range of private providers. Commercial farmers are expected to share the cost of services.

The NAADS Board and Secretariat will oversee the programme at national level and develop links between the different stakeholders, including the National Research Organisation (NARO). Local councils and administrations will take such responsibilities at the sub-county and district level. NGOs are recognised as one of the programme stakeholders. On the one hand, they can significantly contribute to the development of farmer groups and support producers in selecting service providers. On the other hand, they can act as service providers, so long as they can develop a commercial wing and pay taxes. Different working arrangements and modalities will be field-tested in six districts before gradual scaling-up to the rest of the country.

In her presentation, Sarah Mayanja briefly outlined VEDCO's approach to farmer group formation and development for collective marketing. This approach emphasises the transfer of skills on areas such as group organisation and management, business planning, pre- and post-harvest crop handling, collective marketing, and negotiation skills. The general idea is to enhance farmers' capacity to intervene in markets and interact with different market players. The provision of market information and the development of linkages with input traders and crop buyers are also seen as critical ingredients in the development of viable market-oriented groups. Scale is considered important for improved market access and prices; for this reason, neighbouring groups are encouraged to get together and form marketing centres. These centres are expected to eventually graduate into fully-fledged marketing associations.

This presentation stressed many of the problems and challenges faced by self-help groups, which have to operate in an environment characterised by widespread market failure. Lack of transparency by marketing centre leaders is also a common problem. The experience of VEDCO moreover illustrates the difficulties in linking producers and traders. Farmers tend to identify VEDCO as the buyer while traders often see it as the producer.

Andrew Muganga described the present status of, and future prospects for, the market information system currently being set up by IITA-FOODNET. The long-term objective of this project is to develop a nation-wide, locally based agricultural market information service in Uganda, to be funded within the framework of PMA. Localised systems are being developed in three pilot areas, where market information on relevant crops is collected and disseminated through local radio stations and information bulletins. This service is regarded as more effective when used by farmer groups, given their greater scope to negotiate prices with traders. Although the system is seen as cheap and cost-effective, its future sustainability is dependent on some level of public and donor financial support. Several future ownership and financing options to ensure the sustainability of this initiative are currently under

consideration and were briefly discussed. Whatever the future arrangements, management autonomy is considered essential for the smooth operation of the system.

Andrea Gasparotti drew on his experience as Managing Director of Nile Produce Trading Company (NPTC) to highlight the main problems wholesale traders encounter when operating in the rural areas of Uganda. This presentation offered an opportunity for participants to hear the views of the private sector. Established in 1999 with the support of Technoserve, NPTC is a for-profit and export-oriented agricultural trading company that buys a variety of crops directly from farmer groups in Apac, Arua and Nebi districts. During the first two years of operation it faced various problems. Transport difficulties from the farm to the collection centres and from these to the main destination markets in the country and abroad, partly as a consequence of the poor state of road infrastructure and the unreliability and high cost of transport services, stand out as particularly important. The lack of storage facilities in rural areas and the poor quality of bought produce are two other areas of concern. Other mentioned problems include the insecurity situation in rural areas and difficulties in guaranteeing timely access to financial resources. In conclusion, Andrea Gasparotti stressed the importance of adding value to local agricultural produce and developing high-value crop trading opportunities through careful analysis of domestic and external markets.

Drawing on the experience of BUCADEF, Male Kyewalabye discussed the finance problems experienced by individual and organised farmers, and how they impact upon marketing activities. Access to capital and small farmers' lack of a savings culture were identified as key problems. Problems related to group dynamics were also highlighted, particularly weak group cohesion, mistrust between members, and unstable leadership. Finally, the presentation suggested some possible solutions to farmer funding problems, including joint marketing and value addition activities, market linkage development, and well designed credit programmes.

In the last workshop presentation, Rita Laker-Ojok described the experience of AT-Uganda in promoting farmer access to agricultural inputs in the northern part of the country, particularly seeds and simple irrigation and processing equipment. The main objective of AT-Uganda is to support the establishment of a private input retail network in the region. Its interventions include demonstration activities to develop demand, distribution of inputs on credit to local retailers, provision of business and technical training to retailers, and promotion of appropriate agro-processing technologies. Limited product range, business seasonality, low input demand by farmers due to poor access to output markets, and unfair competition by organisations that distribute inputs free of charge or at subsidised rates were some of the mentioned problems and constraints to the development of input markets.

### **Plenary discussions**

Although there were many issues raised during plenary discussions, the following deserve particular mention due to their persistent recurrence and their relation to the current research project:

- i) Capacity of NGOs to intervene in the marketing sphere. NGOs often lack the expertise and capacity to strengthen farmers' ability to interact in markets in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. Consequently, there is a need to support these organisations through

training initiatives and advisory services, whilst being selective in targeting those organisations with the capacity to translate this support into capacity building of farmers' organisations.

ii) Farmers' groups. This topic attracted repeated discussion focusing on the gap left by the collapse of the primary societies, and the potential role such groups can play in identifying farmers' needs and accessing services (extension, market information, output markets, input supply, credit etc.). Although there was wide agreement on the importance of developing these groups, several participants stressed the importance of not under-estimating the capacity-building task required.

iii) Type of NGO involvement in marketing interventions. There was a consensus that NGOs have a key role to play in supporting farmer group formation and development and in providing a variety of services to farmers. Training provision, market information, and linkage development are three areas where NGOs may enjoy a comparative advantage vis-à-vis other development actors. However, the extent to which these organisations should also become directly involved in marketing activities was a more controversial issue. For example, some participants felt that such involvement distorts market competition and may work against the much-needed development of a genuine private sector in rural areas. Unlike the latter, NGOs have access to grant funds and are not subject to taxation. Moreover, in the context of emergency interventions, free or heavily subsidised distribution of inputs pre-empts private sector entry, while free distribution of food procured in other countries depresses local farmer prices.

iv) Market information. There was much discussion of market information constraints and the nature of information and manner of delivery that would be useful to farmers. It was recognised that much of the experience with market information systems in other countries has not been encouraging, but the development of a useful and viable Uganda system is nonetheless viewed as a priority within the PMA framework.

v) Market orientation. A number of participants stressed the need to promote a more market-aware approach to farming. There seem to be several dimensions to this including, for instance: business planning, market information, product quality issues and relevant training. However, there is also scope to identify and test new ways of developing this orientation

vi) Policy linkages. Agricultural marketing is a key priority for the PMA and for Uganda, and it was stressed that the project should link closely with policy processes, contributing both to marketing policy and to an improved understanding of Government/private/NGO partnerships. Key organisations with which the project should work include NAADS (already a collaborating partner), the Agricultural Council of Uganda and two of the PMA sub-committees on agro-processing and marketing, and environment and natural resources.

### **Working groups**

During the workshop, participants were divided into two groups. Each had to select the most important agricultural marketing issues in Uganda. The two groups were then asked to identify the four issues each would like the current project to undertake research on. The results from these group discussions are summarised in boxes 1 and 2 below.

**Box 1: Key agricultural marketing issues in Uganda**

- Farmer groups
- Farmer training
- Quality of agricultural products
- Need for farmers to produce according to demand
- Market infrastructure
- Market services
- Financial services (savings, credit, insurance)
- Linkages and interactions (collaborative and conflictive) between different market players along the product chain
- NGO capacity to develop effective marketing-related interventions
- Role of NGOs in agricultural marketing
- Government policy (e.g. decentralisation, taxation, subsidies, standards, policies towards the commercial and voluntary sectors)

**Box 2: Issues for the project to study**

- Formation and development of successful farmer groups
- Development of sustainable market information services
- Improvement of smallholders' access to financial services
- Development of effective market linkages
- Simple methodologies to inform and guide NGO/CBO agricultural marketing interventions

**What next?**

The discussions and conclusions from this workshop will inform the selection of case studies and the focus of the research activities. Case study proposals will be developed in consultation with the relevant NGO partners. NRI and partner organisations will start research activities in October 2001. Concurrently, discussions with private sector players are envisaged to obtain their views on research issues.

Summary findings will be circulated as they emerge, and where possible new activities identified based on feedback and other information available. The research team will work closely with the PMA Secretariat and its relevant sub-committees to feed the results into relevant policy processes and initiatives.

A further workshop is proposed in late 2002 to review results with Ugandan partners and identify practical ways in which those results can be translated into action.

# **AGRICULTURAL MARKETING AND THE ROLE OF NGOS/CBOS IN UGANDA**

**By Dr Willie O. Odwongo, Director, PMA Secretariat**

## **Background**

Agricultural marketing in Uganda has been subject to some significant shifts in recent years. Notably, as a result of economic reforms, state intervention has generally been reduced with respect to:

- Abolition or curtailing activities of parastatal marketing boards
- Depreciation of overvalued currencies
- Reduced public sector role in delivery of agricultural services - research, extension, credit, input supply, etc.
- Shift away from pan-territorial and pan-seasonal crop pricing strategies and state administered prices.

## **Characteristics of the new liberalised markets**

However, although offering a broad framework that may serve the long-term development of the agricultural sector, Uganda's newly liberalised agricultural economy has certain characteristics that complicate and limit the scale and scope of benefits generated by the market reforms. For example:

- marketing systems continue to generally have little capacity to channel credit or spread risks
- high incidence of risk aversion and high transaction costs.
- dual role of households as producers and consumers.
- complex debt relationships between large and small producers.
- diverse institutional and contractual arrangements and collusive behaviour
- complex and diverse social barriers to entry.
- manipulation of state regulatory systems.
- situation is particularly grave in remote areas where poor access to markets mirrors poor access to other critical services as well.

Thus, when development agents working in rural areas ask farmers to prioritise their problems, agricultural marketing is repeatedly raised as one of the most important problems faced.

## **Welfare-Oriented and Business-Like NGOs & CBOs**

Many NGOs start with welfare (or social or altruistic) objectives in such areas as health, education, water, infrastructure and agriculture and gradually shift towards a longer-term development focus. In this shift, small business and income generation activities take on a greater role. In such cases, subsidies may be used to improve access to markets, as NGOs seek to make interventions whose benefits may eventually be self-sustaining. Support for the fair trade movement is a good example of business-oriented NGO interventions. Fair trade organisations use commercial methods to generate social development benefits through

improved terms of trade. Sometimes NGOs make selective use of subsidies that may nonetheless still lead to successful marketing initiatives. CARE's Egypt Agricultural Reform Programme, in which market information is provided to farmers, and the Intermediate Technology Development Group in Zimbabwe, which is involved in product development, are two examples where the cost of services is partly subsidised and partly met from farmer contributions.

The programmes of welfare-oriented NGOs and CBOs usually attract participation because of the subsidies and once they end there is little enduring impact. In the short run, these are attractive to NGOs because the results are usually immediate, particularly to the disadvantaged groups (poorest households, women, refugees, the handicapped, etc). However, these welfare-oriented interventions often fail because the activities promoted are not viable or profitable, whilst the high costs of running such programmes limits NGO coverage and undermines the prospects for long-term sustainability.

### **NGO Marketing Interventions**

Interventions ultimately intended to improve agricultural marketing cover a considerable range and can be categorised according to different types of characteristics:

- Intended Beneficiaries may be defined by whether they are individuals, groups or communities, or specific target groups such as the rural poor or women.
- Many NGOs and CBOs work with groups or associations – this makes it easier for the NGO to work with larger numbers whilst farmers may be able to sell their produce collectively.
- Skills and Training are a significant focus for most NGO & CBO market interventions:
  - Group formation and strengthening
  - Training and extension.
- Improving Access to Agricultural inputs:
  - Many approaches including input subsidies have been tried with disruptive results on input supply networks
  - A recent development involves innovative approaches to promote input stockist networks by NGOs
  - Information constraints are also important.
- Agro-processing Technology: Access to processing technology can provide new market opportunities for farmers, particularly in reducing perishability or adding value in other ways.
- Marketing Linkages: The main focus is usually developing strong linkages between farmers and the other players in the market chain such as produce dealers, processors, export marketing operators etc.

- **Credit Programmes:** Many credit programmes have been tried, with very mixed results, suggesting the need for careful review to draw out widely applicable lessons.
- **Marketing Information:** It is increasingly becoming evident that this is critical and must be part and parcel of any market intervention. In many cases the argument is made that for resource-poor farmers this should be provided as a "public good".
- **Holistic Approaches:** it is often argued that this is the best approach, permitting simultaneous related interventions. Single measures rarely succeed on their own.
- All the interventions will work only in the wider context of conducive policy environment and good governance.

### **Unresolved Issues**

When considering how NGOs can best promote improvements in agricultural marketing, there are a number of unresolved issues.

- What is the appropriate balance between social and commercial objectives particularly in remote areas?
- What are the critical elements associated with formation of good, functional and sustainable farmer groups?
- How do we train poor resource poor farmers to make them business oriented?
- Given the fact that in many cases the farmers have not yet even adjusted to market reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, how can they acquire the capacity to compete in a globalised world?
- How do we forge, strengthen and take maximum advantage of the dialogue and partnerships between government, NGOs/CBOs and farmers?

This paper has dealt with some of the key issues that shape and condition the outcome of NGO agricultural marketing interventions. It thus provides a framework within which the other papers on specific NGO interventions might be considered.

## **AGRICULTURAL MARKETING: OVERVIEW OF ISSUES**

**By Ann Gordon, NRI**

### **Introduction**

It is widely recognised that improvements in agricultural marketing must be a key component of economic development in Uganda. Whilst marketing is principally a private commercial activity, involving farmers and traders or processors, there is nonetheless a role for Government and other organisations in promoting development and facilitating access to markets.

The purpose of this paper is to briefly review some of the key characteristics of agricultural markets in Uganda, to provide a framework within which potential interventions may be considered.

### **Characteristics of agricultural markets in Uganda**

Agricultural markets in Uganda are characterised by:

- uncertainty and poor information
- high transaction costs
- low income consumers
- change and development, transition
- informality

All these factors are exacerbated in particularly remote areas. These factors influence the feasibility and sustainability of marketing activities.

#### *Uncertainty*

Supply-side uncertainty stems from:

- weather, affecting the crop and sometimes affecting distribution/access
- pests
- perishability
- inherent natural variation in agricultural products
- “invisible” attributes (for instance, pesticide residues)
- dispersed small-holder production
- poor information flows

Demand-side uncertainty reflects:

- weather-sensitive demand for some foods
- poor information
- unpredictable changes in markets (for instance in bordering countries, or for complements/substitutes)

*High transaction costs: “the costs of doing business”*

A number of factors contribute to high transaction costs in agricultural marketing in Uganda. For example:

- dispersed production, remote areas, poor roads and telephones
- farmers are not organised
- it is difficult to enforce contracts
- lack of standards/regulations
- risk and uncertainty
- poor rural services (transportation, finance, inputs)

*Low income consumers*

The local market comprises largely low-income consumers. This has the effect of:

- limiting the demand for high value products
- limiting the extent to which the market will reward quality improvements
- limiting the demand for processed goods
- potential displacement of local supply by cheap imports (rice, etc.)

Moreover, many consumers are both producers and consumers – with implications for farmer decisions on on-farm consumption versus sale, and the potential for a “retreat into subsistence” when marketing becomes difficult, risky or unprofitable.

*Markets in transition*

Markets in Uganda are presently subject to change – largely as a result of the implementation of economic reforms, whilst private sector development has still to emerge as a real force in much of rural Uganda. As a consequence

- state withdrawal from input and output markets has left some significant gaps in the provision of farmer services
- the private sector is extremely weak in most rural areas
- the primary societies have largely collapsed
- there is on-going change in the delivery of rural services (most recently with reform of the extension system)
- new mechanisms, partnerships and marketing models are still emerging
- remote areas are particularly disadvantaged

*Informal markets*

Agricultural markets in Uganda operate largely informally. They are characterised by:

- lack of organisation
- the marketing channels are not immediately obvious to outsiders
- the channels for support of marketing are similarly immediately apparent
- important changes in markets can take place unnoticed – at least initially

## **Sustainable NGO/CBO agricultural marketing initiatives**

It is against this background that farmers repeatedly cite marketing as the most important problem they face, and NGOs and other development organisations seek to identify interventions that will resolve some of the key problems.

The UK's Department for International Development, through its Crop Post-Harvest Research Programme is funding a research project focused on precisely these issues. The project is being implemented by the Natural Resources Institute, in collaboration with the National Agricultural Advisory Service in Uganda, and this workshop represents an initial forum at which these issues may be reviewed and discussed with Ugandan stakeholders. Parallel research is also being conducted in India. The research will be conducted over the period 2001-3.

The project purpose is: to develop commercially sustainable and replicable NGO/CBO marketing and processing interventions that improve poor farmers' livelihoods. Project outputs will focus on:

- information on marketing constraints
- best practice guidelines
- identification of the support needed by NGOs/CBOs to implement these
- dissemination

The project will focus on edible crops, domestic markets and NGO/CBO initiatives including those involving farmer organisations. It will include some research on remote area issues. It will exclude livestock products and forest products (because these are outside the remit of the Crop Post-Harvest Research Programme) unless there is experience with these products that can be directly applied to other crops. Input marketing will not be considered – unless linked with an output marketing initiative.

For the purposes of the project a marketing intervention is defined as one that aims to improve farmer incomes from agricultural marketing. This need not necessarily imply a direct role in marketing. Examples include:

- facilitating contact between farmers' groups and traders
- training farmers to manage crop assembly and bulk marketing
- targeted credit interventions
- adding value – through improved quality or processing
- strengthening farmers' groups
- improved marketing information

For NGOs and CBOs seeking to work in these areas, they face a number of issues and potential conflicts in the way they approach the problem. For instance:

- balancing long-term commercial sustainability with social objectives
- whether to intervene directly or play a more facilitative role
- whether to work through existing channels or to develop new marketing channels
- should the middleman be viewed as a demon or saviour

- working with individuals or with groups
- balancing the use of direct and indirect subsidies with long-term sustainability objectives
- targeting the most disadvantaged within an exacting commercial arena

These are some of the issues this research project is likely to encounter in its case studies and action research.





## **THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES (NAADS)**

**By Francis Byekwaso, NAADS**

### **PMA Initiatives**

- Agricultural research
- Agricultural advisory services
- Rural finance
- Agro-processing and marketing
- Agricultural education
- Physical infrastructure
- Sustainable use of natural resources

### **NAADS Guiding Principles**

- Farmer empowerment
- Targeting agricultural services to the poor
- Mainstream gender
- Deepening decentralisation
- Market-oriented farming (farming as a business)
- Intensification of productivity and specialisation
- Fostering participatory processes
- Managing natural resources productivity
- Increasing institutional efficiency
- Contracting out services
- Better linkages (research-advisors-farmers)
- Harmonisation within PMA principles.

### **The NAADS Vision and Mission**

#### *Vision*

A decentralised, farmer-owned and private sector service extension delivery system contributing to the realisation of the agricultural sector development objectives.

#### *Mission*

To increase farmer access to information, knowledge and technology for profitable agricultural production.

### **NAADS Strategic Objectives**

- To promote market orientated/commercial farming (farming as a business)
- To empower subsistence farmers to access privately delivered AAS and foundation technologies
- To create options for financing and delivery of AAS for different farmer types, emphasis on subsistence farmers

- To shift from private delivery (contracting) of AAS
- To develop private sector capacity to deliver agricultural advise
- To stimulate private sector funding of AAS

### **NAADS Investments**

- Farmers empowerment in AAS
- Developing knowledge and skills
- Developing farmer institutions
- Capacity enhancement of the private sector
- Supporting technology development
- Developing information, communication and market systems for farmers
- Participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of service delivery

### **NAADS Funding**

- Pooling of resources (Government and Donors)
- Disbursed as conditional grants to LGs mostly at Sub-county level (75%)
- Trigger for funds will be farmer approved plans and reports
- At Sub-County farmer involvement in programme implementation is critical

### **Legal Framework**

- NAADS Board and Secretariat – to allow flexibility in programme implementation
- Farmer institutions – to enable farmer demand for service/contract providers under legal recognition
- Procurement of services – allowing contracting of services at sub-county with full farmer involvement.

These three legal issues will have been resolved by the NAASA Bill, which was passed by Parliament on May 2001.

### **NAADS Overall Management**

- Overall responsibility – MAAIF
- Oversight – PMA
- Support and supervision – LGs
- Primarily grass-root responsibility – farmer groups and farmer fora.
- Oversee compliance with LGs ACT 97 and linkages – MOLG
- Oversee operations and implementation – NAADS Board and Secretariat.

### **NAADS Role at National Level**

- Participate in overall agricultural development-policy and strategy issues
- Monitoring of technology development
- Participate in identification of windows of opportunities for investment

### **NAADS Role at District Level**

- Support adaptive research and provide linkages with researchers and service providers
- Participate in planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of zonal research centre activities.
- Contribute resources for technology development as demanded by farmers
- Consolidate sub-county technology development plans
- Contract R & D and access foundation technologies
- Monitor and evaluate district wide technology development programmes

### **NAADS Role at Sub-County Level**

- Participate in developing sub-county technology development needs and plans
- Contribute resources for technology development and demanded by farmers
- Contracting R&D access foundation seed
- Management of TDS
- Monitor and evaluate technology development & provide feedback

### **Farmers' Role**

- Organising themselves – interest groups, various fora
- Participate in needs identification, planning, contracting and M&E
- Managing TDS and procurement of foundation technologies

### **What is Really New in NAADS?**

- Guided farmer driven planing, monitoring and evaluation
- Planning and provision of advise with market orientation
- Sub-county-centred programme implementation
- Farmer and Sub-county controlled institutions governing the service
- Increasing availability of technologies based on demands
- Private sector provision of publicly funded services
- Pooling of Government and Donor funds in a common basket
- Direct funding through LGs to implement farmer plans

# **FARMER GROUPS IN AGRICULTURAL MARKETING: THE VEDCO EXPERIENCE**

**By Sarah Mayanja, VEDCO**

## **Background**

Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns (VEDCO) was founded in 1986 by a group of university students in Uganda. Its mission is to ensure sustainable economic empowerment of smallholder farmers and micro-entrepreneurs through improved quality of life for rural smallholder farmers and micro-entrepreneurs organised in self-help groups.

VEDCO's current mission is to promote sustainable economic empowerment of smallholder farmers and micro-entrepreneurs through capacity development, agricultural trade development and micro finance. The vision is focused on improved quality of life for rural smallholder farmers and micro-entrepreneurs through promotion of food security, economic activities for increased household income, and strengthening grass root organisations to advance the interest of the marginalised communities.

VEDCO is currently implementing a three-year program whose overall objective is to promote household food security and viable income generation. The program is divided into two major divisions, namely Development Services Division and Rural Credit Financial Services (RUCREF) Division.

Development Services is divided into two integral components. These include Capacity Building for food security management and production of cash crops, reaching out 1,500 smallholder farmers, of which 55% are women. The outreach is expected to increase to 4,200 farmers within the next three years.

Agricultural trade is the second component and its main objective is to link farmers to markets and promote viable income generation at household level. The program is currently working with 200 households focussing on fruits, vegetables and cereals for the domestic and export markets.

## **Farmer groups: The process**

The capacity building section is the ground-breaker in the process of forming self-help farmers groups. Farmers participating in this program are mobilised and sensitised on services offered by VEDCO. They are then sensitised and encouraged to form self-help groups. Once a group is formed, it is trained in savings mobilisation and group management (this includes, among other areas, leadership, management of records, and internal accounting controls). The group is formally registered with the district and opens up a bank account. Members meet weekly to mobilise savings and other group activities like deciding on services they require from VEDCO, for example training in sustainable agricultural practices.

Once a group opts for agricultural trade services, it receives training in farming as a business in which farmers are able to select appropriate agricultural enterprise (where they would engage in production for the market) as well as coming up with production and marketing

plans. They are now trained in production management of the selected crops, and sensitised on the importance of collective marketing. It is important to note that farmers who opt for agricultural trade services must be food secure before they engage in commercial production.

At this stage, centre formation is encouraged and the practice has been that 3-5 adjacent groups form a production and collection centre. The centre is parish based and subscribes to a number of given criteria (e.g. have at least 15-25 farmers, elect leaders, enact by-laws, keep records, etc) to which farmers have to adhere for sustainability of their operations.

On a collection day, farmers carry their produce to the centre (presently there are no formal structures at the centre - it could be under a tree, shop veranda, or one of the members home) where it is sorted, graded and packed. Each centre has a leader who records the quantity delivered by each member and prepares a delivery sheet, which is given to the intermediary/buyer and later used as a payment schedule. He/she also supervises and guides other farmers on price information quality control practices, sorting, grading and packing of produce and initiating dialogue with buyers on prices as well as terms of payment.

Group marketing is quite rudimentary and in the current program that VEDCO is implementing, strategies have been developed to strengthen these centres to graduate into fully-fledged agricultural marketing associations by providing training and services listed below:

- Farming as business education
- Market information
- Field demonstrations in production management of selected crops
- Technical and advisory services on market center formation and development of business associations (i.e. leadership development, formulation of bye laws, savings education and arm credit management, input assessment, records management, production and market planning, opening bank accounts)
- Paralegal services on ownership and governance of business associations
- Facilitate strategic business planning meetings
- Facilitate and promote trade negotiation meetings between farmer associations and buyers
- Extension services in pre and post harvest handling
- Link farmers to reliable input services

## THE FOODNET MARKET INFORMATION SERVICE PROPOSAL

By Andrew Muganga, FOODNET

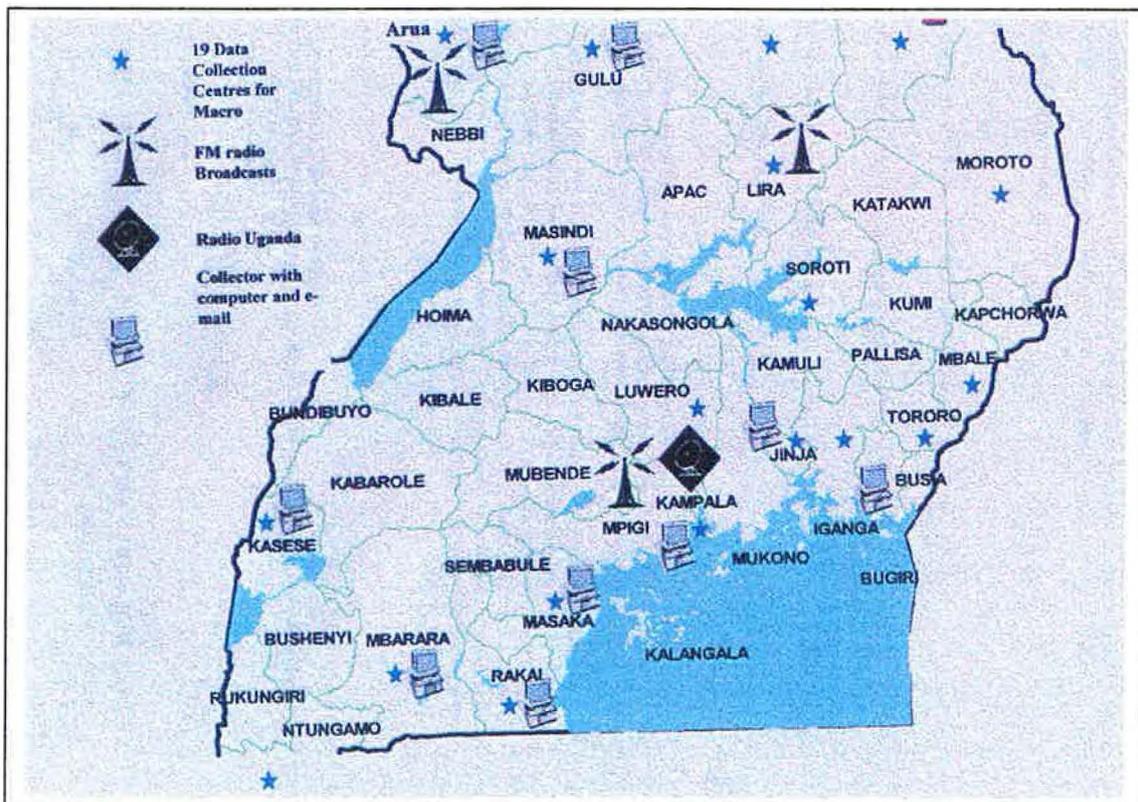
### Objective

To establish a PMA funded nation-wide, locally based market information service for the agricultural sector of Uganda.

### Market Information in Uganda

The Plan for the modernisation of Agriculture states that “the need for effective marketing information systems for improving market access is absolutely crucial”. It calls for such a service to be decentralised and flexible, bringing on board all the main stakeholders (e.g. local government, private associations, NGOs, local radio stations, etc).

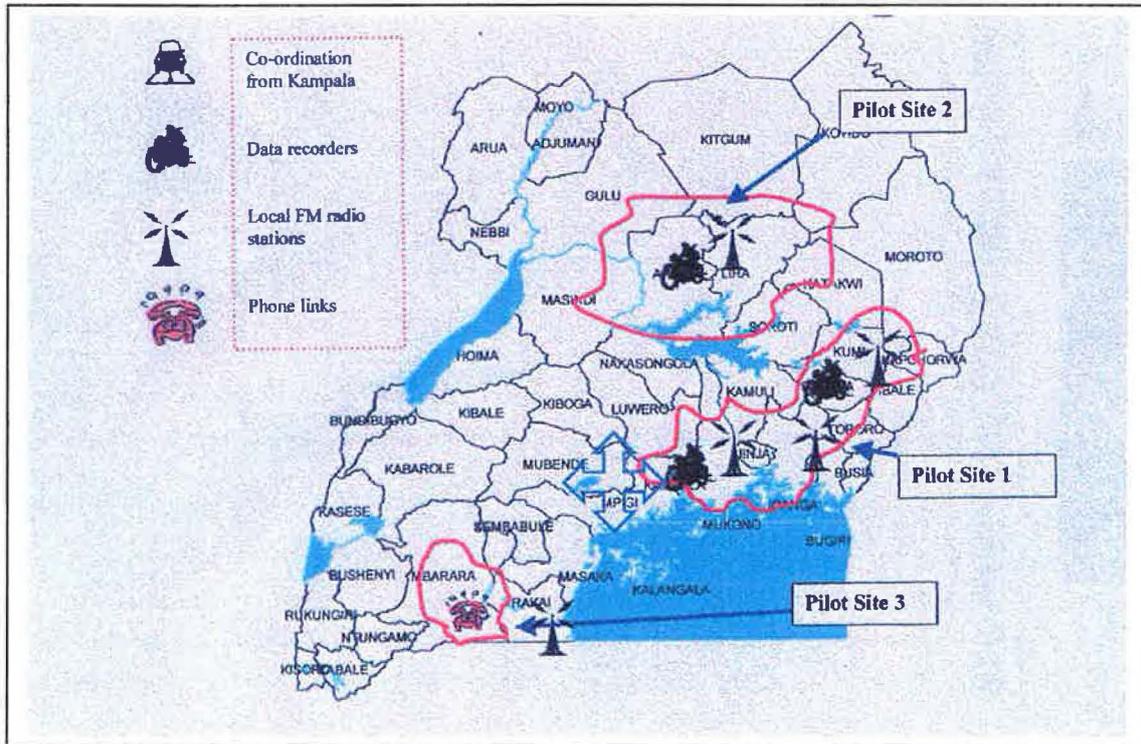
### FOODNET National Market Information System



### FOODNET local Market Information System

- Information targeting a district or 2-3 district area
- Collects information on relevant crops for that area
- Collects market information from sub-county level and integrates this with the national market information service
- Disseminates information in local language

- Disseminates information through local FM radio stations
- Information bulletins aim to inform listeners about how to use market information in negotiating for better prices, assist them in collective marketing activities, build community awareness through radio links
- Ideally, the service is linked to collective marketing training



### Sustainability and ownership

#### Options:

- Government owned in Ministry of Finance/Trade but with full financial autonomy. Past record in Sub-Saharan Africa of Government controlled Market Information Systems has led to almost universal financial failure.
- Government owned in Ministry of Finance/Trade, set up as an autonomous unit but with finances paid through an endowment fund, set up by donors. (example: USAID – Honduras)
- Private sector owned institute with partial funding from government, donors, and private sector.
- Totally private sector owned with support from media companies, market levies, producer associations and export levies.
- Community based Market Information System, funded and run by the community.

### Sustainability and finances

- System designed by IITA-FOODNET is cheap and cost-effective and can be maintained, as such, if it is managed autonomously but housed within PMA/NAADS initiative.

- Most market information systems require some level of central government support (level is important – avoid bloated bureaucracy)
- In the future maybe some percentage of local taxation can be levied from markets or market operators.
- Sustainability can be improved via the decentralisation process.
- Sustainability can only be provided via profitable private sector.

## **TRANSPORT AND WHOLESALE ISSUES**

**By Andrea Gasparotti, Nile Product Trading Company (NPTC), Technoserve**

### **Problems and constraints at farm level**

- General lack of transport between farmers and local bulk buying centres or markets
- Lack of community road linkages to rural feeder roads
- Lack of road worthy motorization

### **Problems and constraints at trading centre level**

- Lack of storage facilities
- Lack of reliable transporters
- High transport costs
- Poor maintained roads
- Insecurity
- Lack of accessibility to funds

### **Problems and constraints at the export level**

- High cost of transport
- Unreliable transportation means
- Weight load restrictions

### **NPTC Cost structure**

High cost of procurement from dispersed supply base	30%
High level of waste due to low quality	10%
Managing supply of quality crops	8%

### **Provisions**

- Provision of extended collection points nearer to the producer/farmers
- Private sector provision of motorized transport
- Provision of funds for regular road maintenance
- Provision for upgrading community and rural feeder roads

### **Investment focus**

- Value added products
- High quality
- Access to markets willing to pay for quality

### **Resulting in :**

- Assured markets
- Steady Income

- Increased demand

### **Consumer overview**

Consumers are willing to pay a premium for:

- Hygienic products
- High quality products
- Convenient packaging

## **FINANCE ISSUES IN MARKETING**

by Male Kyewalabye, BUCADEF

### **Practical problems facing farmers groups and CBOs**

Group marketing activities are critically dependent on access to financial services because of the need for working capital (particularly to fund the purchase of the large crop volumes demanded by traders) and lack of existing savings within the community. In addition, a number of other problems exacerbate access to financial services and undermine the profitability of marketing activities. For example:

- Poor group cohesion
- Mistrust amongst producers
- Poor linkages between market information and production
- Unstable group leadership
- High costs due to poor rural roads and poor communications

### **Strategies to improve agricultural incomes**

- Take steps to secure a larger share of the final price for farmers
- Value Addition, through quality improvements or processing
- Increase marketed volumes
- Sensitise farmers to agricultural production and marketing opportunities
- Identify new markets

### **Possible actions for NGOs, donors or government**

- Organising farmers into producer groups
- Encouraging farmers to do joint marketing
- Encourage farmers to add value
- Link farmers to viable markets
- Extend credit facilities to the producers
- Improve on the rural road network

# **THE ROLE OF AT-UGANDA IN INPUT MARKETING**

**By Rita Laker-Ojok, AT-Uganda**

## **Introduction**

AT (Uganda) is a branch of an International NGO based in Washington D.C. called Enterprise Works Worldwide (formerly known as ATI - Appropriate Technology International).

## **Background**

1994 U-PRESS Pilot Project started a revolving fund for distribution of technologies. One major constraint was the lack of an existing distribution system in Northern Uganda that would allow commercialisation of technology sales on a sustainable basis. Identification of this constraint led to inclusion of the creation of commercial input distribution networks as a major component of three new food security projects in Northern and Eastern Uganda beginning in 1997.

All three projects include input marketing, agricultural extension and agro-processing promotion activities. DFID, USAID, PL480, McKnight Foundation, and FICAH provide the funding for these projects.

## **Business development services which AT (Uganda) seeks to provide**

AT (Uganda) has sought to create a distribution network of private sector input retailers. Its role is to provide the wholesaling function.

- Market research on agricultural input demand.
- Demonstration activities to build demand.
- Cost effective procurement and co-ordination services to supply regional wholesale distributors with inputs. Emphasis is on customer service - meeting farmers' needs in terms of quantity, quality, time, place & price.
- Training for rural retailers in business management, record keeping, produce knowledge, marketing, and safe use handling.
- Provide 60-day credit to suppliers for inputs (such as tools, seeds and chemicals). Repayment terms are gradually being made increasingly commercial. We currently demand 50% down payment, and an interest penalty of 5% per month is charged on all overdue balances.
- Appropriate agro-processing & production technologies, are also promoted. This includes oil presses, treadle pumps, cassava slicers, peanut butter mills, shea presses, etc.

## **Constraints Still To Be Addressed**

- Retail stockists still lack detailed product knowledge to provide the necessary advice to farmers, especially with respect to soil fertility and crop protection questions which represent new product lines to be added when funds allow.
- Continued investment in marketing is needed to create farmer awareness and achieve sustainable levels of throughput.

- AT(Uganda) has insufficient working capital to be able to stock in inventory the full range of inputs and supplies required by farmers. The current product range includes only seeds, technologies and limited quantities of fertilisers. Animal feed supplements have just been added. The challenge is how to attract private sector investors when volumes in these marginal areas are still low.
- Limited product range restricts volume of business for retailers. Seasonal variability and risks are high, limiting retailers willingness to invest in the business. Additional product lines (like animal feeds and hardware) are required to smooth out the volume of business over the entire cropping calendar.
- Farmers complain of lack of markets for their agricultural produce. They have insufficient access to market information and storage that would enable them to maximise profits and encourage adoption of productivity enhancing inputs.
- Distribution of free or subsidised inputs undermines sustainability of commercial networks.

### **Objective**

AT(Uganda)'s objective is to fully commercialise the input distribution system and register it as a for-profit company by the end of 2001.

### **Progress**

In just three years since the start-up of the Farmer to Farmer and SAFE projects at the end of 1997, AT(Uganda) has provided extension services to 20,850 farmers, multiplied 15,500 acres of improved cassava varieties, trained 120 rural retailers, sold 516 metric tons of improved seed, and established over 1,300 SME'S.

## ANNEX 1

### WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

**Tuesday, June 19, 2001**

**Session 1: Opening**

*Chairperson:* F. Byekwaso  
*Rapporteur:* T. Wandschneider

17:00 – 18.00 Registration and welcome drinks  
18:00 – 18:10 Opening remarks by the chairperson  
18:10 – 18:20 Opening remarks by the Presidential Advisor, J.J. Otim  
18:20 – 18:30 Introduction of the workshop programme by A. Gordon  
18:30 – 19:00 Keynote Paper by W. Odwongo: Agricultural Marketing and the role of NGOs in Uganda  
19:00 – 19:30 Discussion  
  
20:00 *Dinner*

**Wednesday, June 20, 2001 (morning)**

**Session 2: General Issues in Agricultural Marketing in Uganda**

*Chairperson:* D. Kisauzi  
*Rapporteur:* F. Hartwich

09:00 – 09:20 Presentation by A. Gordon (NRI): Agricultural marketing - overview of issues  
09:20 – 09:40 Presentation by A. Mutengu (FEWS NET): Status of food commodity markets in Uganda  
09:40 – 10:00 Presentation by F. Byekwaso (NAADS): Introduction to NAADS and its activities with community-level organisations  
  
10:00 – 10:15 Discussion  
  
10:15 – 10:30 *Coffee Break*  
10:30 – 12:00 Group work: Identification of key issues to agricultural marketing of NGOs  
Moderation: Ann Gordon and Frank Hartwich  
  
12:00 – 13:00 *Lunch*

**Wednesday, June 20, 2001 (afternoon)**

**Session 3: Issues in NGO marketing interventions: Experiences from Uganda**

*Chairperson:* B. Ekoot  
*Rapporteur:* T. Wandschneider

13:00 – 13:15 S. Mayaja (VEDCO): Farmers groups in agricultural marketing  
13:15 – 13:30 S. Ferris (FOODNET): Market information issues  
13:30 – 13:45 A. Gasparotti (Technoserve): Transport and wholesale issues  
13:45 – 14:00 M. Kyewalabye. (BUCADEF): Finance issues  
14:00 – 14:15 R. Laker-Ojok (AT-Uganda): Agricultural input marketing issues  
14:15 – 14:45 Discussion

*14:45 – 15:00 Tea Break*

15:00 – 16:00 Group work: Identification of key issues to be studied by the project  
Moderation: Ann Gordon and Tiago Wandschneider  
16:00 – 16:30 Plenary Discussion

**Session 4: Closing**

*Chairperson:* P. Ngategize

16:30 – 16:40 Closing remarks by the chairperson  
16:40 – 16:50 Summary of achievement: by the rapporteurs: T. Wandschneider and F. Hartwich  
16:50 – 17:00 Closing by Presidential Advisor J.J. Otim

*At the end of the Workshop a Cocktail was organised.*

## ANNEX 2

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