



**Self Help
Africa**

**FINAL EVALUATION REPORT FOR MANZO YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT
(MAYEP)**

Submitted by:

SEFO Analytics Ltd,
Muyenga, Kampala.
P.O.BOX 4594, Kampala.
Tel: +256782272801
+256702490287
Email: sefoanalytics@gmail.com

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFARD:	Agency for Accelerated Regional Development
BTVETS:	Business Technical Vocational Education and Training Institutes
CDO:	Community Development Officer
CSO:	Civil Society Organisation
DAC:	Development Assistance Committee's (DAC)
DANIDA:	Danish Development Agency
DRC:	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC:	East African Community
EU:	European Union
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GT:	Grand Total
Kgs:	Kilograms
KNH:	Kindernothilfe
MAYEP:	MANZO Youth Empowerment Project
MTR:	Mid Term Review
NDP:	National Development Plan
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OWC:	Operation Wealth Creation
SACCO:	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SEFO:	Specific, Effective and Focused
SHA:	Self Help Africa
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
SWAPP:	Saving With a Productive Purpose
UBOS:	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UGX:	Uganda Shillings
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA:	Village Savings and Lending Association
WEP:	Women Entrepreneurship Program
YAG:	Youth Agri-business Group
YLP:	Youth Livelihood Program
YMF:	Youth Model Farmer

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	ii
List of Tables	v
List of Figures	v
Executive summary	vi
1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	11
1.1 Background.....	11
1.1.1 Background to the Organization/Client.....	11
1.1.2 Project Background	11
1.3 Objectives of the evaluation.....	12
2.0 EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY	12
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Evaluation approach and design	12
2.3 Sampling of the Evaluation Respondents.....	13
2.4 Data collection methods and tools.....	13
2.5 Data analysis, interpretation and management	14
2.6 Use of mobile data collection.....	14
2.7 Evaluation process	14
2.8 Ethical considerations.....	15
3.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS	16
3.1 Introduction	16
3.2 Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and geographical distribution	16
3.3 Relevance of MAYEP interventions.....	17
3.3.1 Relevance to the global development agenda	18
3.3.2 Consistence with national development priorities and challenges	18
3.3.3 Sectoral relevance	18
3.3.4 Consistence with local (district and community specific) context.	19
3.3.5 Consistence with SHA's/AFARD's priorities	20
3.4 Project effectiveness (achievements).....	20
3.4.1 Production and application of appropriate agronomic practices.....	21
3.4.2 Youth engagement with relevant local government on policy processes for increased economic benefit.....	25

3.4.3	Youth friendly policy environment and access to funding for self-employment	30
3.5	Project efficiency.....	30
3.5.1	Programmatic efficiency	31
3.5.2	Management Efficiency	31
3.5.3	Coordination with local government.....	32
3.5.4	Financial management, procurement and delivery.....	32
3.6	Project impact.....	33
3.6.1	Incomes, asset ownership and decision-making among female beneficiaries	34
3.6.2	Youth access to formal employment and self-employment	39
3.6.3	Sales turn over and adoption of collective marketing	43
3.6.4	Partner capacity development	45
3.7	Sustainability.....	47
3.7.1	Project strategies that are likely to ensure sustainability of project achievements	47
3.7.2	Institutional sustainability	48
3.7.3	Challenges to sustainability	49
4.0	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	51
4.1	Conclusions	51
4.2	Recommendations.....	52
Annex I:	Performance Indicator Matrix	54

List of Tables

Table 2.1:	Summary of evaluation respondents	13
Table 3.1:	Distribution of project beneficiaries	20
Table 3.2:	Production levels among the promoted enterprises	21
Table 3.3:	Adoption of modern agronomic practices by beneficiary youth	23
Table 3.4:	Average incomes of beneficiary youth	34
Table 3.5:	Female youth participation in decision-making at group level	37
Table 3.6:	Average number of youth employed throughout the production seasons	41
Table 3.7:	Sales turnover (amount sold in Kgs).....	43
Table 3.8:	AFARD's current donors	46

List of Figures

Fig. 3.1:	Respondents' sex	16
Fig. 3.2:	Respondents' ages	16
Fig. 3.3:	Respondents' levels of education	17
Fig. 3.4:	Respondents' districts of origin	17
Fig. 3.5:	Application of modern agronomic practices in individually owned gardens.....	24
Fig. 3.6:	Possession of savings among the beneficiaries	25
Fig. 3.7:	Utilised channels of saving	26
Fig. 3.8:	Trends in possession of savings in structured institutions by the youth	26
Fig. 3.9:	Feeling of self-worth	27
Fig. 3.10:	Most important lessons learnt.....	27
Fig. 3.11:	Trends in beneficiaries' life skills benefits.....	28
Fig. 3.12:	Trend analysis for increase in beneficiaries' incomes	34
Fig. 3.13:	Possession of productive assets	35
Fig. 3.14:	Possession of other assets	35
Fig. 3.15:	Trends in accumulation of assets (baseline, mid line and end line)	36
Fig 3.16:	Female youth participation in decision-making at household level.....	37
Fig. 3.17:	Employment of non-beneficiaries by beneficiaries	41
Fig. 3.18:	Proportions of beneficiaries employing non beneficiaries (mid line-end line)	42
Fig. 3.19:	Numbers of non-beneficiary youth employed by beneficiaries (mid line-end line)....	42
Fig. 3.20:	Respondents' own perceptions on sustainability	48

Executive summary

Manzo Youth Empowerment Project (MAYEP) was designed to contribute towards sustainable poverty reduction among youth in the West Nile Region, through increased access to employment opportunities for 3,000 youth aged 17-27 years. It was designed to support youth to lead their own economic development through effective participation in gainful access to employment and/or profitable self-employment; and dialogue with duty-bearers at community, district and regional level

Self Help Africa commissioned an evaluation for MAYEP to assess the projects' achievements and challenges and to capture the lessons learnt in the context of youth employment focusing on agricultural production and marketing. The evaluation adopted mixed methods, with qualitative data from key stakeholders augmenting quantitative data from beneficiaries. Respondents for the evaluation included 325 individual beneficiary youth distributed in 25 groups, 15 FGDs with 108 participants for beneficiaries, three FGDs with non-beneficiaries; and 37 key informants across the 3 target districts.

Out of the 325 youth, 50.61% were females, whereas 49.39% were males, a generally adequate representation of both male and female project beneficiaries. The biggest proportion of respondents (94.48%) were aged 18-35. Within this category, majority (46.32%) were aged 18-25, 27.3% were aged 26-29, while 20.86% were aged 30-35. Though about a third of respondents were aged above 27, this does not generally divert from the project's target group. Almost half (47.24%) of the respondents had only attained full or part of primary education, followed by 23.31% who had attained the first four years of secondary education. Some respondents (11.66%) had not attained any formal education and this is likely to have had a negative effect on level to which they participated and benefit from project interventions as compared to their counterparts who had attained some education. The evaluation sampled 35% of respondents from Nebbi district, 34% from Maracha and 31% from Zombo district.

Project relevance

The project was relevant to global, national, local and sectoral context development priorities. For example, SDG number eight targets to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities. It is also in line with Uganda's Second National Development Plan (2015/16 – 2019/20), which emphasizes the youth as they constitute 21.3% of the total population, and 57% of the labour force in Uganda. It further notes that 79% of the youth live in rural areas where poverty levels are high and the major economic activity is agriculture, hence, MAYEP tackled the NDP priorities. Uganda has been grappling with the dominance of subsistence agriculture, which perpetuates poverty, hence the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development recommends intervention such as those implemented under MAYEP for an increased fight against poverty.

Agriculture remains the backbone of Uganda's economy, accounting for 25.3% of the country's GDP. It employs about 72% of the total labour force (formal and informal), 77% of whom are women, and 63% are youth, mostly residing in the rural areas. Agricultural sector holds the largest share of the labour force in Uganda (73%), followed by the service sector at 21%. Also, the vast majority of Uganda's unemployed youth live in rural areas, with at least 70% mainly engaged in agriculture (UBOS, 2012). Therefore, MAYEP was relevant for creating employment for the youth, and in the right sector.

The project was clearly relevant to the local context and local challenges. Creating youth employment is a priority for all beneficiary districts, and moreover, it also tackled other youth challenges such as drug abuse and skills development. For instance, Maracha district was grappling with drug abuse by the youth. It was a serious challenge to the extent that Kijomolo sub-county was said to be leading in growing illegal drugs (mainly Mirungi and marijuana). This has since reduced as youth have an alternative that makes them productive.

Self Help Africa works to reduce extreme poverty especially in rural areas, where subsistence farming keeps people in poverty, working on poor-quality land, unable to sell at the market, and growing barely

enough to eat. The organization focuses on growing small-scale farmers and family-farm businesses into productive and market oriented business enterprises. Similarly, AFARD works to build economic resilience partly through accumulation of productive assets by her beneficiaries. There is therefore no doubt that MAYEP was relevant to the two organisations' focus.

Project effectiveness

There is evidence of a high increase in income at an average of UGX 573,791 per season. However, it raises concern that the average income levels for males (UGX 722,745) is much higher than that of females (UGX 429,237). Moreover, average income for beneficiaries changed from UGX 282,484, to UGX 324,847 at midline and UGX 573,691 at end line. The average income level increased by 14.9% between baseline and mid line, whereas it increased by 76.6% between mid-line and end line. Overall, average income increased by 103.08% against the targeted 25%, implying an impressive performance with regard to this indicator.

Findings reveal a relatively high level of acquisition of livestock related assets, with 63.8% and 50.3% of respondents who had acquired goats and chicken respectively. It is also interesting to note that a relatively big proportion of respondents (40.18%) had acquired pigs, which were promoted by the project. There was a dwindling trend in acquisition of productive assets later in the project as almost all assets increased after baseline, but reduced at end line. This was explained by the deteriorating incomes that resulted from negative seasonal changes. The evaluation revealed that female youth participated in decision making almost at the same level as their male counterparts in groups. Yet, previous studies in the project especially the MTR had revealed that female married youth had to take decisions that were agreeable to their husbands to avoid conflicts, and up to 66.6% of female married youth had expressed this response. This implies an improvement in female beneficiaries' participation in decision making at group level. At household level, female youth's ability to make decisions on how to use their earned incomes improved tremendously over the project period, with 67.5%, 82.5% and 87% that were able to decide on how to use their incomes at baseline, mid line and end line respectively. This presents an increment of 17.5% in female beneficiaries that had control of their earnings between baseline and end line.

A very significant proportion (96.32%) of respondents indicated that they had attained their main employment in the agricultural sector, specifically in their personal enterprises. This is very interesting given that previous studies had revealed evidence of low level of initiative to venture into self-employment. In 2015, a study by Uganda Bureau of Statistics on Labour market transition of young people in Uganda found that only 19% of young people in rural areas in Uganda desired to be self-employed. Close to three quarters (71%) of respondents had employed someone on their garden or enterprise. On average, each of the interviewed beneficiaries had employed 5¹ youths, whereas all beneficiary youth were estimated to employ 9,140 non-beneficiary youth. Average production increased by 111.08%, against the target of 50%. Average production of onions increased four-fold, with a 426.9% increase between baseline and mid line and by 398% between midline and end line, yet there were seasonal challenges that affected production. This implies very high potential for increasing onion production. Piggery production faced difficulties mainly due to diseases and high youth attrition rates as it emerged to be a complex enterprise that could not be easily promoted through group-based production, hence the lowest increase in production at 9.4%.

Most promoted agronomic practices were reported to be completely new to beneficiaries, as the communities are known to practice rudimentary production methodologies that they adopted from their fore fathers over generations. It is not surprising that soon after groups were formed (at baseline), only 3%, 17% and 51% applied pesticides in their gardens, mulched their gardens and applied manure respectively. However, there was an impressive trend in adoption of the modern agronomic practices with 80% of the sampled groups applying pesticides, 92% of them mulching their gardens and all

¹ Given the seasonality of agriculture and the small nature of these agricultural enterprises, these youth were not employed full time, but rather had been employed during the active seasons in enterprise related activities.

sampled groups (100%) applying manure to maximize production. More than four-fifths (86%) of respondents had some money in savings. This implies high levels of improvement among MAYEP beneficiaries when compared with the rest of Uganda. For instance, the Finscope survey report (2018) revealed that only 13% of Ugandans attempted to accumulate savings as a way of being financially secure in the future. There has been an improvement in possession of savings from 46% at baseline to 86% at mid-line and 85.6% at end line, yet these were achieved against the target of 85%.

Almost all respondents (98%) expressed the feeling of self-worth. This implied that they believed in themselves. When asked the most key lesson they learnt, more than a half (53%) of the respondents indicated that the most important lesson they had learnt was improving their own lives; whereas 44% indicated that the key lesson they had learnt was taking charge of their own lives at all times. Whereas the baseline revealed the feeling of self-worth among the beneficiaries at 78%, it improved to 96.7% at mid-line and 98.16% at end line. It is also important to note that the project achieved 98.16% against the target of 65%, hence impressively surpassing the target. The project customized the training content, which was also gender integrated. This was fundamental, for a project that supported females and males in equal numbers. The project was designed with deliberate attention to gender inclusiveness, and indeed groups generally had males and females equally represented.

The highest (565%) sales turnover was exhibited in the piggery enterprises, between midline and end line. The onion enterprise also enjoyed a high growth in terms of sales turn over, with an average increase 101.97% over the project period. It is important however to note that onion growing has always been a prominent enterprise in the sub regions as 34,339,600 kilograms were already being produced at baseline when the project started. The project therefore harnessed an already existing enterprise with better technology, improved breeds, skills development and marketing to realise the impressive increase in sales turnover. Collective marketing was not fully adopted as a strategy. Whereas there is evidence of collective marketing as a successful strategy for attaining markets and securing better prices, MAYEP beneficiaries could hardly uphold it. The most cited reasons for failure to execute collective marketing were lack of storage facilities and limited awareness of the benefits of collective marketing among the youth.

Nine (9) Youth Agribusiness Groups (YAGs) accessed the local government's Youth Livelihood Program (YLP) funds, whereas 5 YAGs accessed 25,000,000 Uganda Shillings, and 4 YAGs accessed 42,100,000 Uganda Shillings. The partner (AFARD) demonstrated ability to document best practices as they clearly pointed out VSLA/SWAPP, Youth Model Farmers, distribution of start-up kits and tailored vocational skills training as some of the main best practices. Indeed, beneficiaries also expressed appreciation for these interventions as their best. During project implementation, Self Help Africa provided capacity building to AFARD in gender and social inclusion. In line with project guidelines, Youth Agribusiness Groups (YAGs) constituted 50% males and 50% females. Training of youth at Vocational Training Institutes and selection of Youth Model Farmers also considered 50% males and 50% females. Indeed, this was reported to have driven gender equity participation in the project.

The partner indicated that they have attained funding for nine projects, with 8 of them won through competitive proposals. The partner senior management contended that MAYEP was their main European Union-funded project over the last three years (2016-2018), and that MAYEP enabled them to learn and master the guidelines for projects and resource management for EU funding, which has since yielded for them more project funding.

Conclusions

Agribusiness has immense potential to create employment and increase income for the youth in rural areas. This is demonstrated by the steady increase in incomes for the youth over the project period. It is interesting that average income increased 76.6% between mid-line and end line. Agribusiness interventions for the youth also have an enormous potential to create employment. The project has demonstrated that agriculture is the best possible employer for the rural youth, especially those that do not have educational qualifications. The trained youth have largely participated in the enterprises; and

they have applied appropriate agronomic practices. This is evidenced by the increase in production and financial returns from the enterprises.

Life skills development is an appropriate intervention as it empowers the youth with complementary skills not only in agribusiness, but also in other aspects of their lives. With close to a half of respondents (47.24%) that only attained primary education, it is important that agri-skills development is accompanied by relevant training packages that can enhance their ability to for instance communicate easily, use appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms, and believe in themselves among others social attributes. Indeed, 98% of beneficiaries expressed a feeling of self-worth, implying that they believed they were living worthy lives and in charge of the affairs that affected them, and could also improve their lives on their own. Locally grown interventions are capable of addressing the challenge of negative mindset against agriculture among the youth, and increasing youth participation in agriculture. The project had 2,575 youth at the time of its closure, out of the targeted 3,000 youths. This represents an attrition rate of 14%, yet there was anecdotal evidence that some youth had shifted to other areas specifically to do agribusiness.

The implementation partnership is key in building local capacity and synergies. Whereas SHA did not necessarily have an office in West Nile, the project was implemented through a partnership with AFARD. This has yielded benefits beyond implementation of MAYEP. The partner has attained funding for 8 other projects during MAYEP implementation period through competitive applications, and they have partly attributed this to capacity built through MAYEP. There is clear evidence of replicability of the interventions and good practices, with more youth taking on new enterprises and learning better skills from their colleagues that are doing relatively well. There were many cases where a group started with an enterprise such as onions, and as time went on, they realised that other enterprises were also productive and took it on. Consequently, there were many reports of beneficiaries that had started with specific enterprises but later diversified into multiple ventures.

Recommendations

Increased engagement with the youth on mind-set change for higher appreciation of agriculture. Stakeholders such as government, CSOs, religious and opinion leaders should come together and demonstrate to the youth that agriculture is a worthy sector to work in. More exposure visits should be organised to enable the youth see and experience more success stories in agribusiness, specifically by the youth.

Exploring potential export markets in the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. Some youth have been exporting their horticultural products to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, the civil conflict in South Sudan notwithstanding. Groups and individual beneficiaries took their own initiatives to find market for their produce by connecting to individual traders in both countries, hence, this could boost trade and marketing if it is harnessed further.

Review of the group based learning sites approach for each of the enterprises. Group based learning is a positive strategy as it is not only cost-effective, but it also enables beneficiaries to support each other through cross learning. However, some of the enterprises (such as piggery) are either labour intensive or highly susceptible to disease outbreaks. It is important that such an enterprises receives very close and constant attention for feeding, cleaning, watering, and monitoring among others. These delicate tasks were not easily executed in piggery, hence proving group based approach as a difficult strategy for this particular enterprise.

Partnership enhancement. The project took substantial efforts to engage with the beneficiary districts and sub counties. However, partnerships seems to have been built mainly with the community development offices, while almost leaving out the agricultural/veterinary offices completely. Though close collaboration with the community development office cannot be trivialised, there was need for crop or livestock related technical support from the district.

Building commodity bulking centres. Collective marketing did not succeed mainly because of limited storage facilities for the perishable horticultural products. Even when some of the youth tried to sell collectively, they had to gather their products in open spaces and on the same day, they were sure that the buyers would come. This did not only expose their products to risks of contamination, but it also proved so laborious. It is therefore important that future interventions establish built up bulking centers, with appropriate storage facilities to facilitate collective marketing.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Background to the Organization/Client

Self Help Africa (SHA) is a non-government organization based in Ireland with operational offices in the United Kingdom and United States of America. The organization's vision is a rural Africa free from poverty and hunger. With a 3-year funding support from the European Union (EU), Self Help Africa in partnership with the Agency for Accelerated Regional Development (AFARD) implemented the "MANZO Youth Empowerment Project (MAYEP)" since 1st February 2016 in the districts of Maracha, Nebbi and Zombo² of the West Nile Region of Uganda.

1.1.2 Project Background

MAYEP was designed to contribute towards sustainable poverty reduction among youth in the West Nile Region, Northern Uganda, through increased access to employment opportunities for 3,000 youth aged 17-27 years. It was designed to support youth to lead their own economic development through effective participation in gainful access to employment and/or profitable self-employment; and dialogue with duty-bearers at community, district and regional level. A gender-transformative approach was employed throughout MAYEP, including a deliberate effort to ensure that 50% of the youth engaged in the project were female and that female youth were supported and encouraged to apply for leadership positions in groups and in the forums established under the project. MAYEP was designed to deliver its outcomes through local partnerships with Business Technical Vocational Education and Training Institutes (BTVETs), processors, traders and buyers. It was also designed to link the youth to ongoing business networks and training/mentoring opportunities, with activities to strengthen institutional and political support for youth development.

1.1.3 Overall project objective

To contribute to sustainable poverty reduction among youth in West Nile Region, Northern Uganda

1.1.4 Specific Objective

Increased access to employment / self-employment opportunities for 3,000 youth in Zombo, Nebbi, Maracha districts in West Nile Region

1.1.5 Results Areas

The project was designed to deliver the following results (R1 – R4):

- R1 – 3,000 youth in three districts of West Nile Region have improved capacity and skills for employment/ self-employment in agricultural value-chains
- R2 – 85% of 3,000 youth achieve increased income from sustainable employment/ self-employment opportunities in the agricultural sector
- R3 – The youth environment is conducive to youth employment and effective civil society-government dialogue platforms are established.
- R4 – One local development CSO (AFARD) has strengthened capacity for external communication and management of agricultural development interventions "

² The acronym 'MANZO' is derived from the letters of the three districts.

1.2 Background and Purpose of the Evaluation

1.2.1 Introduction

This was an end of project evaluation meant to assess the projects' achievements and challenges, and to capture the lessons learnt for SHA and partners in the context of youth employment focusing on agricultural production and marketing. It was done in view of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/ Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Equally important for the evaluation was project's replicability and coherence i.e. the extent to which the project coordinated with other similar initiatives, interventions or actors.

The evaluation finding brings out answers on how far SHA has achieved the project objectives, mainly as per the log frame indicators. Even in absence of baseline data for some indicators, the consultant assessed impact through use of qualitative data from beneficiary youth, non-beneficiary youth and other key stakeholders. The report also makes comparison of baseline, mid line and end line data to determine the exact change that resulted from the project. The evaluation also makes recommendations based on the study findings to inform future implementation of similar interventions.

1.3 Objectives of the evaluation

This evaluation aimed at:

- Measuring the level of achievement of the project against the target indicators at various levels
- Measuring the contribution of the project towards poverty reduction among youth in West Nile

2.0 EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This section of the evaluation report presents the sampling approach for respondents' selection, main data collection methods and tools; data analysis approaches and summary of the study process. It also presents the ethical considerations that were observed in the course of executing the evaluation to ensure that the evaluation did not only deliver a very high quality report, but it also adhered to conventional research and evaluation ethics.

2.2 Evaluation approach and design

The final evaluation adopted an impact assessment approach with a focus on the change achieved in the lives of the target groups (intentional or not, positive or negative, macro or micro, economic or social) as well as the aspects of the project that have brought about the desired change, those that should be strengthened for greater impact in future interventions. In so doing, the evaluation sought to assess the delivered outcomes and outputs vis a vis what was planned and explore in detail the strategies employed in the implementing project interventions. Though a very rigorous approach such as randomized control trial or quasi-experimental approach had not been planned at project design and implementation, the consultant conducted some Focus Group Discussions with non-beneficiary youth in an attempt to address the challenges of attribution of changes. Accordingly, the report presents findings from non-beneficiaries in various sections.

The evaluation applied mixed methods, with both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The main quantitative method was the beneficiary youth survey, which targeted members of the Youth Agribusiness Groups (YAGs). Qualitative methods included key informant interviews, focus group discussions and document review. Key informant interviews targeted project staff, YAG leaders, Youth Model Farmers (YMFs), and local government officials. Focus group discussions targeted YAG leaders and non-beneficiary youth to generate a detailed qualitative perspective for triangulating and enriching the evaluation findings.

2.3 Sampling of the Evaluation Respondents

Sampling of respondents was done at different levels, with utmost care to ensure representation. As earlier planned at inception stage, the evaluation sampled various key stakeholders of the project during data collection. These included beneficiaries themselves, higher local government officials, lower local government officials, partner project staff, SHA staff and some non-beneficiaries for comparison purposes. The consultant used Klejce and Morgan's sampling table to determine the number of beneficiary youth to take part in the evaluation. Accordingly, out 2,575 beneficiaries that took part in the project at the time of closeout, 335 beneficiaries had been planned to be selected. Out of the targeted 335 youth beneficiary respondents, the evaluation covered 325 respondents, indicating a 97.01% response rate. Though a minimum of 5 groups was originally targeted in each of the districts, 10 groups were selected from Nebbi and Maracha districts, as part of efforts to obtain a more representative sample and increase coverage of the Youth Agri-business Groups (YAGs). Whereas beneficiary-youth survey respondents were randomly selected from their groups to ensure equal opportunities for participation within each of the beneficiary group, qualitative data respondents were purposively selected, considering the nature of their roles in the project, their responsibilities in youth support programs as well as the knowledge they possessed by virtue of their positions. Table 2.1 presents a summary of evaluation respondents.

Table 2.1: Summary of evaluation respondents

Categories of beneficiaries	Numbers covered
Beneficiary youth	325
Group leaders	25
CDOs (at sub county level)	3
District officials	3
Project staff	3
Partner admin staff	1
SHA staff	3
FGDs with beneficiary group leaders	15
FGDs with non-beneficiary youth	3 ³
Most significant change stories	2

2.4 Data collection methods and tools

The evaluation applied both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods in line with the design. Whereas the main quantitative data collection method was the beneficiary youth survey, qualitative methods included Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with key stakeholders of the project. Two Most Significant Change stories were also developed through an interface with outstanding achievers in the project. Key Informants included SHA staff, key AFARD staff, project officers, group leaders, Model Youth Farmers (MYFs), higher and lower local government officials. Focus Group Discussions targeted group leaders and selected group members. Selection of FGD participants was informed by the various roles played by the youth in group leadership as well as the magnitude of participation in project activities.

In accordance to the selected data collection methods, quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were applied. The beneficiary youth survey questionnaire was the main quantitative tool applied to interview the youth, whereas the Key Informant Interview Guides were used to interview, SHA/AFARD staff and local government officials. The Focus Group Discussion Guide was also used to guide the discussions with the youth in the respective selected groups.

³ One Focus Group Discussion was conducted with non-beneficiary youth in each of the beneficiary districts to obtain responses for comparison purposes. This is meant to inform analysis and possible attribution of changes to project interventions.

2.5 Data analysis, interpretation and management

Quantitative data collected through Kobo Toolbox application was converted and exported to SPSS 24 for further checks and quality assurance as well as generation of statistical tables. The data in SPSS was tested for consistency and all possible errors were removed before conducting the analysis. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulations). To triangulate findings of the study, qualitative data from key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions was compiled and analyzed using thematic analysis, and it is incorporated in the report with some sections enriched by quoting respondents verbatim wherever it was deemed most appropriate. Similarly, the consultant uses secondary data from documents to analyze, compare and validate data or verify the change caused by this project in various sections. Throughout this report, the consultant makes interpretation of findings by integrating the qualitative and quantitative as well as primary and secondary data. It is through such interpretation more meaning is attached to the findings. Implications of findings and reasons as to why some phenomena exist they do are also explored through interpretation of findings. Through this interpretation, the consultant generates an informative and exhaustive evaluation report. The cleaned and analyzed data set is stored safely in strict observance of respondents' confidentiality and SEFO Analytics' and Self Help Africa's data protection and confidentiality policy requirements.

2.6 Use of mobile data collection

As part of efforts to exceed customer quality expectations, SEFO Analytics uses automated data collection, well knowing that pen and paper data collection increases risks of data errors, consumes so much time and poses other logistical and quality challenges. For this evaluation, all quantitative data was collected using computer tablets, with the help of Kobo Toolbox mobile application and server. On a given day of data collection, all interviews were cross-checked and uploaded into account that had been developed specifically for this assignment on the Kobotoolbox system.

2.7 Evaluation process

The study process was broken into four main phases composed of all evaluation activities. They include: inception, preparations for data collection, field data collection and report writing. Steps taken in the evaluation process are described below:

a. Inception phase

The assignment started with contract negotiation and consensus building. This involved discussion of the contract and review of the budget and assignment work plan. In this phase, the scope of work, the approach and methodology and reporting responsibilities were all discussed and agreed between the consultant and the client. The consultant then undertook an in-depth review of key documents, developed data collection tools and reviewed the approach and methodology, a process that culminated into a complete inception report.

b. Preparations for field data collection

Several activities were executed concurrently including screening of data collectors to identify the most competent ones for this assignment, arrangement of logistics, scripting of data collection tools and uploading them on computer tablets using the Kobo Toolbox application. The consultant assembled a team of eight quantitative data enumerators and two qualitative enumerators for the assignment. All enumerators were trained for a day to ensure a basic understanding of project activities, geographical coverage, targets and timing among others. Enumerators were duly taken through all data collection tools to enable them administer the tools to the various study respondents. Finally, they all received a refresher training on basic research and evaluation ethical requirements including but not limited to obtaining informed consent, maintaining respect for respondents, non-compromise to protection of respondents or those under their care and maintaining confidentiality.

c. Field data collection

Enumerators were deployed in project districts with support of the project officers who guided them throughout the data collection exercise. The data collection exercise was conducted in one district at a time, starting with Nebbi, followed by Zombo and finally Maracha. Whereas eight of the enumerators concentrated on the quantitative data collection, two of them concentrated on FGDs, and consultants were conducting Key Informants Interviews.

d. Compilation of the draft evaluation report

On return from the field, the team embarked on data cleaning and report writing. This was done alongside follow ups for clarifications and requests to the field and SHA office for more secondary data. Initial compilation of the draft report was completed and followed by presentation of the draft report in a validation meeting on 30th January 2019 in Nebbi district.

2.8 Ethical considerations

One of the consultant's main ethical values is to meet the clients' expectations with regard to adherence to ethical codes of conduct. The consulting team therefore sought guidance at the initial stage of the assignment, and ensured that policy principles were adhered to in line with the SHA policies. As part of efforts to commit to and fulfill the client's ethical guidelines, the consultant signed requisite SHA policies including the anti-bribery and anti-corruption policy, the whistle blowing policy, the data protection policy and the code of conduct. These policies were signed by the team leader on behalf of SEFO Analytics. All data enumerators sought and confirmed informed consent from respondents. The whole process of the evaluation ensured confidentiality and respected respondents' opinions and preferences. All respondents that have been mentioned in the report by names or positions offered informed consent in line with the consultant's policy and request. None of the presented response is considered as private personal information.

3.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS

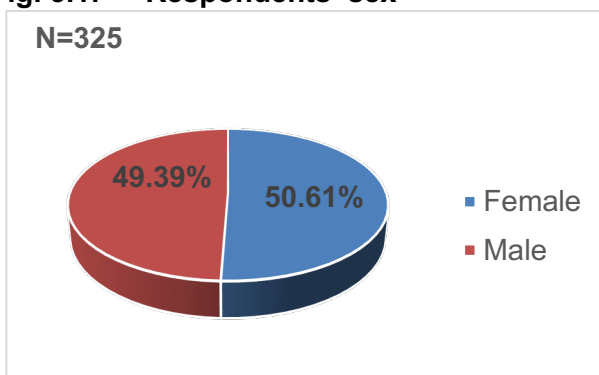
3.1 Introduction

The final evaluation of Manzo Youth Empowerment Project (MAYEP) adopted the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) criteria. Therefore, the evaluation report mainly analyses and presents relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project. Effectiveness, impact and sustainability themes run along the main result areas of the project including: increased female & male youth in sustainable gainful employment / self-employment in the agricultural Value chain; improved YAG support to sustainable female & male youth employability; and improved environment for female and male youth employment and development. Preceding the aforementioned major evaluation themes, the report presents the social and demographic characteristics of respondents, and wraps up with lessons learnt, conclusions and recommendations.

3.2 Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and geographical distribution

The project targeted beneficiaries across various categories and characteristics. It is therefore important to understand the key characteristics of project beneficiaries and later on put into context how findings differ in accordance to some of these characteristics wherever necessary. This section presents respondents' sex (Fig. 3.1), ages (Fig. 3.2), education levels (Fig.3.3) and their districts of origin (Fig. 3.4).

Fig. 3.1: Respondents' sex

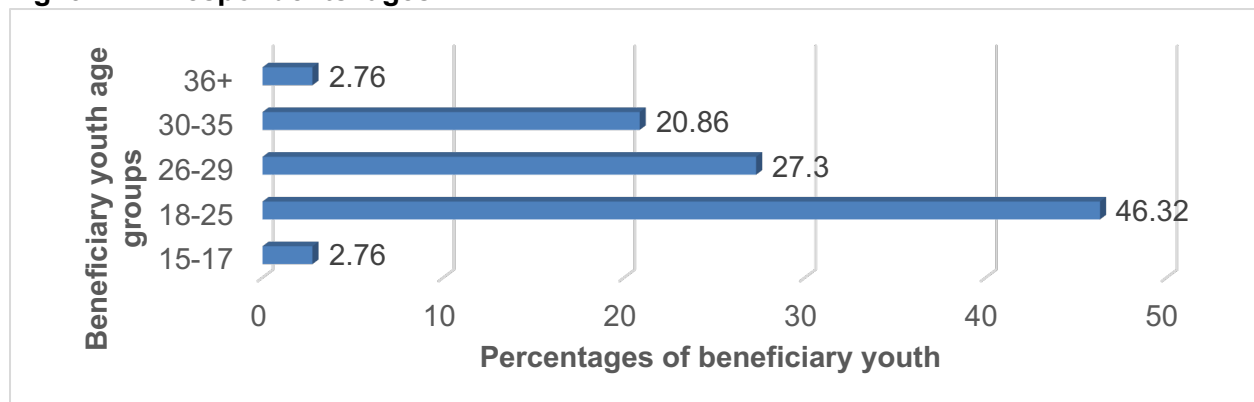


Source: Evaluation Primary Data

Given that MAYEP targeted to support both male and female youth in equal proportions, the evaluation also generally sampled equal proportions of males and females.

The sample constituted 50.61% females and 49.39% males, a generally adequate representation of both male and female project beneficiaries. This is therefore an appropriate representation of beneficiaries in accordance to the intervention design and implementation.

Fig. 3.2: Respondents' ages

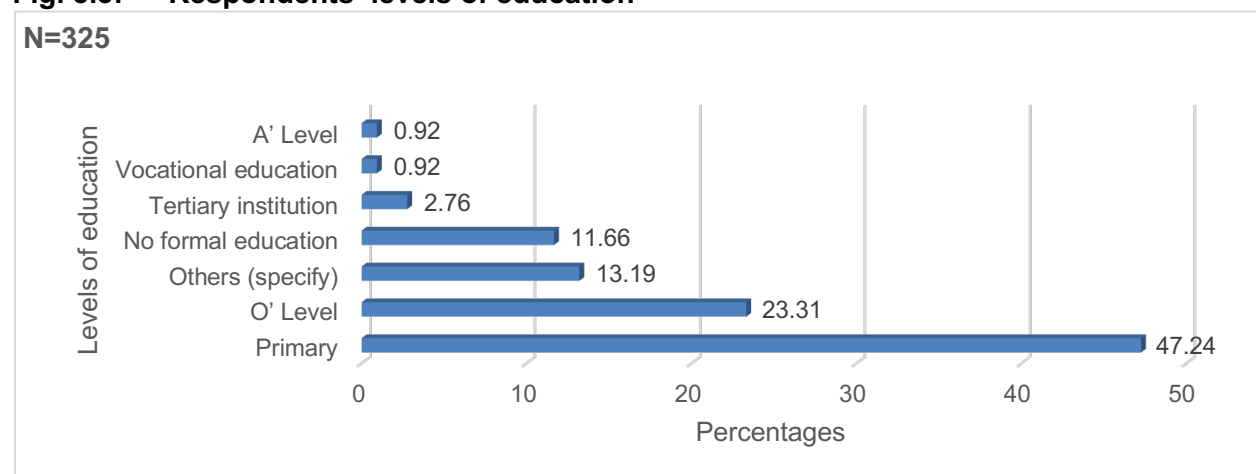


Source: Evaluation Primary Data

The biggest proportion of respondents (94.48%) were aged 18-35. Within the aforementioned category, majority (46.32%) were aged 18-25, 27.3% were aged 26-29, while 20.86% were aged 30-35. This is the category referred to as the youth by the constitution of the Republic of Uganda

(1995). Though the project targeted youth of up to 27 years, this sample does not create a divergence from target youth as it was randomly selected. Moreover those were generally the youth that live in the target communities, hence, this sample was a right representation of the youth that benefitted from the project. Besides, The National Population and Housing Census (2014) found that about a third (33.4%) of Uganda's population were aged 15-36. The sample selection was therefore representative even within the national youth context of Uganda's current population as this group forms the biggest proportion of the youthful population.

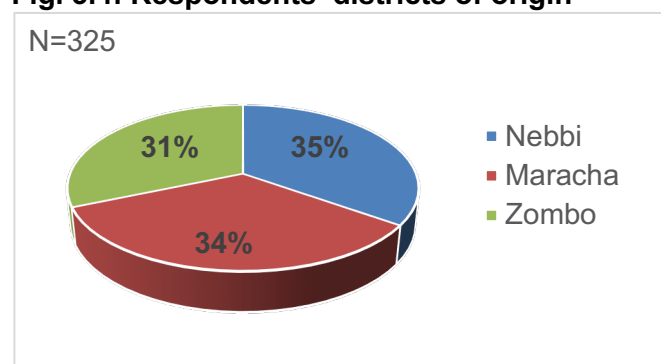
Fig. 3.3: Respondents' levels of education



Source: Evaluation Primary Data

Findings reveal that almost half (47.24%) of the respondents had only attained full or part of primary education, followed by 23.31% who had attained the first four years of secondary education (commonly referred to as Ordinary Level in Uganda). It is however important to note that 11.66% of the respondents had not attained any formal education as this likely to have a negative effect on level to which they participate and benefit from project interventions as compared to their counterparts who attained some education. Studies have shown that self-esteem, confidence, ability to appreciate and catch up with trainings, business management and other important parameters tend to reduce or increase proportionately with one's level of education. It is therefore important to consider respondents' education while contextualizing achievements with regard to various project indicators.

Fig. 3.4: Respondents' districts of origin



As indicated in Fig 3.4, the highest proportion (35%) of respondents were selected from Nebbi district, followed by Maracha district (34%); and Zombo district with 31%. With each of the three districts contributing more than 30% of the respondents, the evaluation generally has an adequate representation of all intervention districts. This is in line with the project coverage as it benefitted the districts in equal proportions (100 groups in each of the beneficiary districts)

Source: Evaluation Primary Data

3.3 Relevance of MAYEP interventions

3.3.1 Relevance to the global development agenda

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number eight targets to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities. More specifically, it targets to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training by 2030. With the project aim of contributing to sustainable poverty reduction among youth in West Nile Region, project ability to respond to the global development agenda cannot be more emphasized. This projects responds to many other aspects of the SDGs as it eventually contributes to SDGs one and two, which aim at ending extreme poverty in all forms by 2030; and ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture respectively. With its ability to directly link with more than three Sustainable Development Goals, the project makes a significant contribution towards realization of the SDGs for the beneficiary youth and generally in the target areas.

3.3.2 Consistence with national development priorities and challenges

According to the second National Development Plan (2015/16 – 2019/20), the youth constitute 21.3% of the total population, and 57% of the labour force in Uganda. Seventy nine percent (79%) of the youth live in rural areas where poverty levels are high and the major economic activity is agriculture. More still, the youth in Uganda face numerous and multi-dimensional problems including the persistence of inadequate employable skills; and limited access to assets and other means of production. Moreover, youth unemployment rate remained high, estimated at 78% in 2016. Therefore, MAYEP directly feeds into the NDP II priorities, hence its full relevance to Uganda's development agenda.

The Ministry of Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (2014) in an evaluation report on government strategy on addressing the unemployment challenge, revealed that a large section of Uganda's labour force still depended on subsistence agriculture and informal enterprises. The ministry recommended that to raise living standards for all Ugandans, it was critical to also increase the productivity of these activities and enable disadvantaged sections of the population to access technical and business skills and start-up capital for self-employment generation especially in the dominant agricultural sector. This is evidence that the government policy has been to promote self-employment in the agricultural sector. In line with this government strategy, MAYEP worked to promote formal employment and self-employment, hence, its great relevance in the national development context.

3.3.3 Sectoral relevance

Agriculture remains the backbone of Uganda's economy, accounting for 25.3% of the country's GDP. It employs about 72% of the total labour force (formal and informal), 77% of whom are women, and 63% are youth, mostly residing in the rural areas. It was therefore appropriate that MAYEP interventions were implemented in the agricultural sector, where it evidently contributes to the country's main sector that does not only create employment for the youth, but also contributes overall economic growth by making a contribution to growth of the food and agricultural market.

Agricultural sector holds the largest share of the labour force in Uganda (73%), followed by the service sector at 21%. Also, the vast majority of Uganda's unemployed youth live in rural areas, with at least 70% mainly engaged in agriculture (UBOS, 2012). Consequently, the parliamentary forum on youth affairs (2017) recommended that government and her development partners institute mechanisms to encourage youth involvement in the agricultural sector across the value chains. It recommended mechanisms such as promoting the establishment of youth cooperatives and building capacities to boost production. This report also implored government and her development partners to support access to markets for youth engaged in agriculture at home, within the East African Community (EAC) and beyond to increase the likelihood of business sustainability

and maximizing the contribution to strengthening the economy. Even when MAYEP started before this report, its interventions ultimately appear as a direct response to this call.

Ahaibwe. G. et al (2013) in a study on youth engagement in agriculture in Uganda noted that factors like increased agricultural income tended to attract the youth towards farming. This was an indication that if agriculture is transformed from its largely subsistence nature to a form where the youth are able to sell their output and earn some income, they would not only be gainfully employed but they would also cut down on the current levels of underemployment being experienced in the sector. This study emphasises the available opportunities for the youth in agriculture as long as it generates an income, hence MAYEP project presents an appropriate answer.

A study by USAID-Uganda in 2014 revealed a mismatch nationally throughout the BTVET system, and emphasised that addressing it was critical if Uganda was to counter the traditional subsistence agricultural practices transmitted from parent-to-child as youth worked on family farms. It further noted lack of agricultural training targeted towards lower education levels of the youth and women as a setback towards creating employment for the youth and women in agriculture. These challenges were found deeply intertwined, as women were the vast majority of Uganda's smallholders and agricultural producers, and were most likely to leave the formal school system after primary school. It therefore recommended that Uganda had to create educational pathways that target Uganda's young men and women, and in particular, those who dropped out of school. This evaluation engaged 11.66% of the youth who had not attained any formal education and 47.24% who had only attained primary education. This is evidence that the project reached the category described above by this previous report. The project therefore brings out an appropriate approach of targeting the vast majority of the youth who are not highly educated for developing employability in the agricultural sector.

3.3.4 Consistence with local (district and community specific) context.

Youth employment is a priority for all beneficiary districts as they all confirmed the relevance of MAYEP interventions to their development priorities. Indeed, they all embraced the project and participated in it at higher and lower local government levels. For instance, Maracha district was grappling with drug abuse by the youth. It was a serious challenge to the extent that Kijomolo sub-county was said to be leading in growing illegal drugs (mainly Mirungi and marijuana). When the project was introduced to the district, the district officials themselves made a choice of Kijomolo sub-county, with hope that project activities could dissuade the youth from growing drugs, trading and consuming them. Indeed illegal drug hot spots in Kijomolo sub-county were targeted. The evaluation revealed that many of the youth had since given up on drugs and embraced MAYEP interventions as one of the beneficiary youth retorted:

“.....I had dropped out of school and I was just in the village, consumed by drugs. When the project came, I started growing cabbages and earned my own money. I even increased my production, to the extent that AFARD came and toured my garden, took my pictures and asked me a number of questions to support me better. I have experienced so many changes in my life. After discussing with my colleagues, we shared knowledge and advised each other on how to become better people. I am now married and I don't want to stay in a grass thatched house anymore. I have now made bricks and I will start constructing my own permanent house next month.....”

The above response portrays a story of transformation from a life of drug abuse to a life of productivity. It also indicates that the benefits of the project did not just end with generation of an income for beneficiaries, but it rather transcends income into social and emotional transformation of lives. The above response is also evidence of improved self-esteem and taking responsibility for the beneficiary's own future. This was similar to many other stories cited in the community of

Kijomolo. It is a testimony that what the district authorities envisaged in addressing drug abuse was coming true. It is therefore evident that the project fitted properly within the local government aspirations towards addressing local youth's social and economic development challenges.

3.3.5 Consistence with SHA's/AFARD's priorities

Self Help Africa works to reduce extreme poverty especially in rural areas, where subsistence farming keeps people in poverty, working on poor-quality land, unable to sell at the market, and growing barely enough to eat. The organization focuses on growing small-scale farmers and family-farm businesses into productive and market oriented business enterprises. Similarly, AFARD works to build economic resilience of her beneficiaries. Almost half (46%) households in West Nile have been in poverty and without reliable economic means to secure their livelihoods, with their average monthly income at UGX 141,400, which is half of the national average of UGX 303,700. They also own few productive assets that can be converted into cash to provide security for household consumption and well-being as 89% of them had no livestock and 73% of them did not have cash savings prior to the project. Both organizations focus on alleviating the aforementioned situation, hence MAYEP interventions and both organizations' participation are fundamental in local social and economic development of the target area.

3.4 Project effectiveness (achievements)

This section presents analysis of the extent to which the project attained its intended deliverables or set output indicator targets. Therefore, findings in this section are presented in accordance to the project outputs as set in the log frame. The project started with mobilization, training of Youth Model Farmers (YMFs) and group formation along the various agribusiness enterprises. Table 3.1 shows the numbers of youth in the respective enterprises across the project districts.

Table 3.1: Distribution of project beneficiaries

	Zombo			Nebbi			Maracha			GT
	Sex			Sex			Sex			
Enterprises	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	
Onions	445	471	916	226	201	427	297	225	522	1,865
Piggery	52	67	119	129	123	252	55	35	90	461
Tomatoes	14	14	28	95	92	187				215
Cabbages							18	16	34	34
Grand Total	511	552	1,063	450	416	866	370	276	646	2,575

Source: Project Implementation Data

Even though the project had targeted and indeed recruited 3,000 youth, it ended up with 2,575 (51.7% female and 48.3% male) youth as of 3^{1st} January 2019. This implies the project had an attrition rate of 14.1%. The cited reasons for dropouts were some youth returning to school, some of them shifting to other areas for more rewarding jobs and others that were reported to have lost interest with a belief that agriculture wouldn't be as rewarding. Interesting to note is that some youth reportedly shifted to areas such as Pakwach in search of more fertile land to engage more and better in agriculture. This was proved by various cases of youth that remained in VSLAs/ Saving With a Productive Purpose (SWAPP) groups and could send their contributions as members explicitly explained that their counterparts had shifted in search of more productive land. This implies that the project even created awareness among the youth that they could search for more production opportunities in the quest to improve their livelihoods.

It is important to note that negative mentality and expectation of quick benefits amongst the youth also affected some youth's ability to fully participate in the project. For example, Poo Youth Piggery group in Maracha district almost disintegrated as the youth did not seem to believe that piggery would work for them. The group remained with only 15 members out of the 30 that had been mobilized. More so, three of the members were reported to have gone to South Sudan to provide

casual labour. Interestingly, the leader of this group is a successful piggery Young Model Farmer (YMF) who by mid-2018 had turned into a renowned piggery trainer in addition to running a successful and growing piggery project at his home.

3.4.1 Production and application of appropriate agronomic practices

a) Production levels among the promoted enterprises

The final evaluation also documented and analysed the seasonal average output produced by participating youth in each of the promoted enterprises. This was an opportunity to measure the average change in outputs during project production seasons. Table 3.2 presents the findings.

Table 3.2: Production levels among the promoted enterprises

Enterprises			Change in production (Baseline-Midline)		End line	Change in production (Midline-End line)		Percent increase over project life
			Absolute	%		Absolute	%	
	Baseline	Midline						
Tomatoes (Kgs)	613.95	1445	831.05	135.36	1356	524.95	36.33	85.8%
Onions (Kgs)	332.7	1753	1420.3	426.90	1920	499.7	28.51	227.7%
Cabbages (Kgs)	369.13	1200	830.87	225.09	1413	213	17.75	121.4%
Piggery (Numbers)	0	645	645		766	121	18.76	9.4%
Average increase for all the selected commodities								111.08%

Source: Monitoring and study data

Analysis of implementation data show that average production of onions increased four-fold, with a 426.9% increase between baseline and mid line. Though increase in average production of onions reduced by 398% between midline and end line (from 1,753 Kgs to 1,920 Kgs) it remained the highest most productive enterprise. The reduction in onion production in 2018 was attributed to bad weather, which led to very low output in the first season of 2018. In addition to onion production being an prominent activity that was traditionally undertaken in the project area, the project emphasized adoption of improved breeds (red creole), which were not only capable of giving high yields, but was also reported to be the most preferred on the market, also fetching the highest prices. To ascertain if the growth in onion production was attributed to project interventions, a comparison was made of findings from an FGD with beneficiaries and that of non-beneficiaries in Ndewu sub-county, Nebbi district. Whereas a member of the beneficiary group boasted of harvesting 6 bags of red creole onions during the recent season, a non-beneficiary contended to harvesting close to 10 basins of local onions. When asked about the costs, the former indicted that they earned UGX 40,000-45,000 from each basin of the improved onions, whereas the latter indicated that they earned UGX 25,000 from each basin of local onions. The difference in prices is itself an impetus for improved production of onions by project beneficiaries.

Seasonal challenges notwithstanding, even production of cabbages and tomatoes increased in excess of the targeted 50%. Piggery production faced difficulties mainly due to diseases and high youth attrition rates as it emerged to be a complex enterprise that could not easily be promoted through group-based production, hence the lowest increase in production at 9.4%.

Change in production levels	
Targeted change	50%

Achieved change	111.08%
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Overall, all enterprises increased production at an average rate of 111.08%, far above the target of 50%, hence, it is concluded that the project surpassed its target with regard to this indicator.

A case of high-level piggery production by a MAYEP beneficiary.

Aziku Ben Thomas is a resident of Nyoo village, Kijomolo sub-county. Before 2016, he was casually working for Kakira Sugar works as a cane cutter. When he heard about the project, he returned home and made efforts to enrol into MAYEP. In 2016, he started with a training in piggery production at Nile Farm Institute under MAYEP. He then started with three mature piglets (2 sows and 1 boar), and he prioritised housing, feeding mainly with local materials as well as medicine for the pigs. He closely monitored his business and within a year, the sows were able to deliver, hence, his pigs started multiplying. Within two and a half years, he had sold 49 piglets at an average of UGX 90,000, giving him more than UGX 4 Million only from sales of piglets. At the time of the evaluation in January 2019, he had 11 mature pigs and 18 piglets, and his business was worth more than UGX 10 Million. He has been able to replace the traditional houses with modern pigsties as he can now afford to modernise his farm, in strict adherence to the modern piggery business requirements. The district agricultural officer has visited and appreciated him, and he has even tipped him for a possible opportunity as a youth trainer within a government program. His enterprise has made him so popular and he is now a renowned trainer in the area. Many people, adults and youth come for consultations and trainings from him. Being the main piggery farmer in the area, schools bring their learners to get practical learning on piggery from his farm, and he charges them UGX 100,000 per session, yet he gets at least a school visiting every month.

His piggery business has enabled him to pay school fees for his siblings (one in primary and another one in secondary school). He has constructed a commercial building in the nearest trading centre, and he plans to rent part of it and use another part for a new business of a pork joint. Once his house is complete, it will give him a constant income, as he will be renting it out at UGX 60,000 per month. He also plans to build a permanent house for his family to be able to live a better life.

Aziku's story of transformation is evidence that beneficiaries could even be moved from poverty to self-sufficiency in a short time, like he has managed to move from being a casual labourer to an enviable piggery entrepreneur over the three years of the project. It also demonstrates that agribusiness and entrepreneurship translate into socio-economic transformation; that could drive permanent changes such as helping family members to attain education and improvement of household welfare, through acquisition of productive assets and other investments.

b) Adoption of good agronomic practices at group level

Project output number two was improved YAG skill and Organisational capacity to support agribusiness value chain, which would see trained youth adopt good agronomic practices. This evaluation has focused on key agronomic practices as it was done at baseline and mid line; and Table 3.3 summarizes the findings.

Table 3.3: Adoption of modern agronomic practices by beneficiary youth

Agronomic practices	Baseline	Mid line	End line
Raising nursery		99	100
Applying manure	51	89	100
Timely weeding	91	95	100
Transplanting in time		84	100
Correct spacing		80	100
Timely land opening	69	93	100
Timely seasonal planting	19	56	924
Use of inorganic fertilizer	7	34	80
Use of pesticides	3	75	805
Spraying organic materials against pests and diseases	37	47	92
Mulching	17	54	92
Single cropping	22	100	100

Source: Evaluation Primary Data, mid line and baseline reports

Being an agricultural project, most promoted agronomic practices were completely new to beneficiaries, as the communities are known to practice rudimentary production methodologies that they adopted from their forefathers over generations. Moreover, horticulture deserves better application of appropriate agronomic practices. It is not surprising that soon after groups were formed (at baseline), only 3%, 17% and 51% applied pesticides in their gardens, mulched their gardens and applied manure respectively. These practices had increased to 75%, 54% and 89% respectively, at the time of the Mid Term Review (MTR). There continued to be an impressive adoption of the modern agronomic practices with 80% of the sampled groups applying pesticides, 92% of them mulching their gardens and all sampled groups (100%) applying manure to maximize production. The same change was seen across other agronomic practices, hence evidence that groups were capable of applying modern agronomic practices to increase production.

Change in application of good agronomic practices	
Targeted change	80%
Achieved change	94.67%

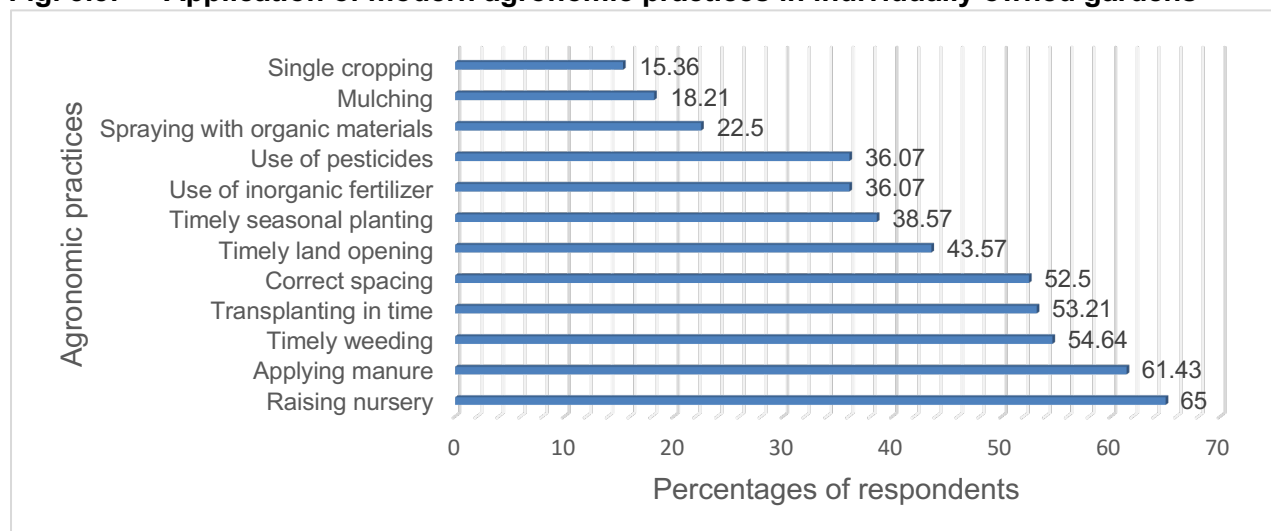
Whereas the project targeted to attain 80% adoption of good agronomic practices, it achieved an average of 94.67%. This implies that there is even room to attain full adoption in future interventions and the evaluation mainly attributes this to the evidence of increased productivity and proceeds that the youth experienced themselves after applying such practices.

⁴ Twenty-three (23) out of the 25 sampled groups reported this.

⁵ Twenty (20) out of the 25 sampled groups reported this.

The project did not only aim at nurturing individual farmers from the YAGs, but also replicating the best practices in form of modern agronomic practices to the developed individual gardens. Individual respondents were therefore asked about their adoption of modern agronomic practices to their individually owned gardens, and Fig. 3.5 presents the findings.

Fig. 3.5: Application of modern agronomic practices in individually owned gardens



Source: Beneficiary youth survey data

Whereas groups had generally adopted modern agronomic practices, adoption of such practices seemed to be relatively lower on individual gardens. When this issue was probed further, the youth indicated that many of these practices required financial resources which they could not raise easily. This explains why among the least adopted practices were use of pesticides, spraying and mulching that were reported to require some money. One respondent in an FGD in Kijomolo sub county retorted:

“.....some of us start our own gardens but cannot afford to buy all that we need to have well maintained gardens. It is not that we do not know what to do, but the problem is that we cannot afford the other inputs. For example, last season I bought pesticides to kill pests, but I could not manage to buy fertilizer, yet I know very well that if I added fertilizers I would harvest more onions”.

This response is a clear indication that even after learning skills and accessing some financial resources through their VSLAs, beneficiaries have not been able to fully invest in their gardens for maximum benefits. It is interesting however, to note that they appreciate the need for such practices and are eager to practice them. It is therefore possible that once they stabilize their enterprises and earn more, they are likely to keep increasing on adoption of such modern agronomic practices.

Interactions with groups (in FGDs) and individuals also indicated better group ability to mobilize resources and execute modern agronomic practices. One other important factor is the contribution of the Youth Model Farmers, who generally took responsibility to ensure that such gardens were maintained in adherence to modern agronomic practices. For example, proper administration of manure and pesticides, correct spacing, nursery beds, timely transplanting and timely weeding were spearheaded by the YMF on the gardens for evidence-based learning to the entire groups. Future interventions should emphasize maximum adoption of agronomic practices at individual level, like it has been generally successful at group level. This should be done as part of the replication of group-learned activities and practices by individual beneficiaries.

When asked about application of good agronomic practices, non-beneficiaries either did not seem to take them seriously or even expressed ignorance of such practices. Some of them also indicated that they were aware of such practices but could not afford them or allocate financial resources to them. A participant in a Focus Group Discussion with non-beneficiary youth in Kijomolo sub-county responded:

“for me I hear about the improved breeds of tomatoes, but those seeds are very expensive. As a person who does not have a constant income, I cannot afford such seeds. It is even difficult to go and find them in towns. This means you have to add money for transport to Arua to look for them. I also cannot buy fertilizers to put them in my garden yet I hear that fertilizers can easily increase the yields”

The above response does not only demonstrate limited access to items that promote good agronomic practices, but it also shows the challenges that non-beneficiaries faced in accessing the necessary inputs and knowledge. In addition to access, there seems to be less confidence in the importance of such practices among the non-beneficiaries, who appear to be in doubt over benefits from such agronomic practices. The greatest challenge perhaps is limited access to financing for purchasing the necessary agro inputs. This contrasts with the beneficiaries that are able to access inputs after borrowing from the VSLAs/SWAPP, on the portion of savings that is meant for agro-inputs. This is evidence that ability of MAYEP beneficiaries to apply good agronomic practices resulted from their participation in various project interventions.

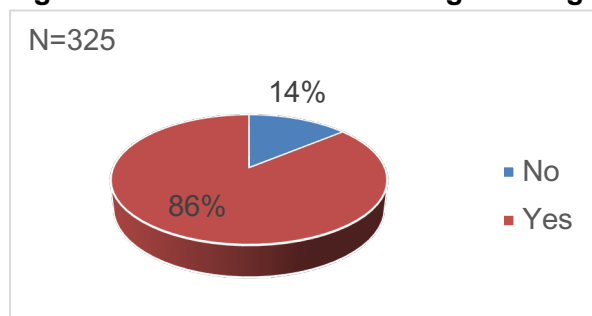
3.4.2 Youth engagement with relevant local government on policy processes for increased economic benefit

One of the project outputs focused on engagement of youths and youth networks with relevant local government and regional platforms on policy processes to drive increased economic benefit. Under this output, the project aimed at promoting saving for the beneficiary youth and empowering them with life skills. The following sections present findings on the two components.

a) Possession of savings in financial institutions

Savings is the portion of income that is not spent on current expenditures; and because a person does not know what will happen in the future, money should be saved to pay for unexpected events or emergencies (Family Economics & Financial Education, 2010). Savings have become a key focus of financial literacy and financial inclusion, with studies emphasizing that a poor saving culture is one of the main causes of poverty in Uganda. It is therefore important that youth support interventions promote savings for longer-term financial empowerment. Whereas the project had an indicator on possession of savings in financial institutions, it was important to highlight the level of possession of savings and channels used by beneficiaries to save. Figures. 3.6 and 3.7 summarise the findings on possession of savings and channels used by beneficiaries to save.

Fig. 3.6: Possession of savings among the beneficiaries

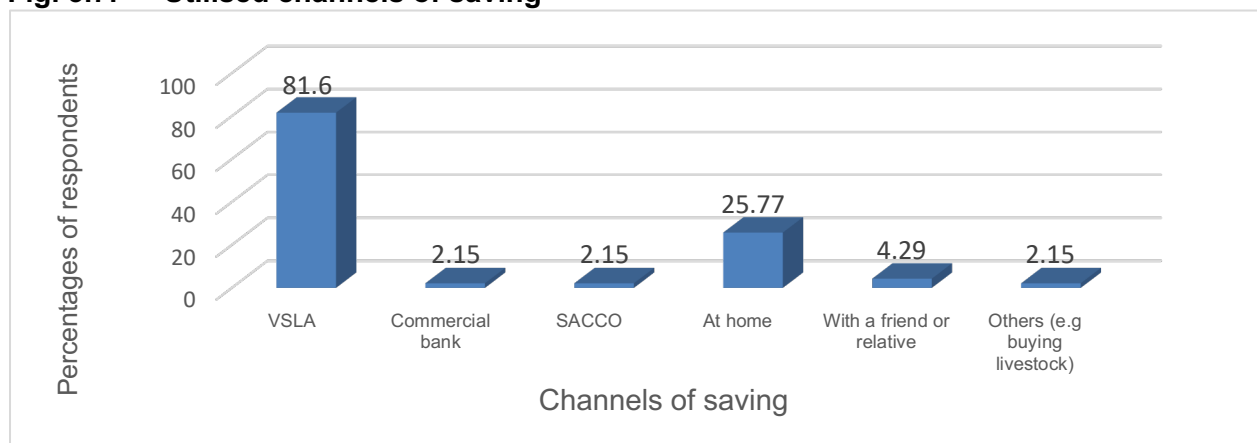


Findings in Fig. 3.6 reveal that more than four fifths (86%) of respondents had some money in savings. This implies high levels of improvement among MAYEP beneficiaries when compared with the rest of Uganda. For instance, the Finscope survey report (2018) revealed that only 13% of Ugandans attempted to accumulate savings as a way of being financially secure in the future. The evaluation revealed that every beneficiary of the project had enrolled into the VSLA/SWAPP, hence, it was

anticipated that everyone would hold some savings. However, the consultant conducted data

collection in January 2019, when many VSLAs were just starting their saving cycles. Therefore, it is likely that every beneficiary will hold some savings once the saving cycles fully start in 2-3 months.
Source: Evaluation Primary Data

Fig. 3.7: Utilised channels of saving



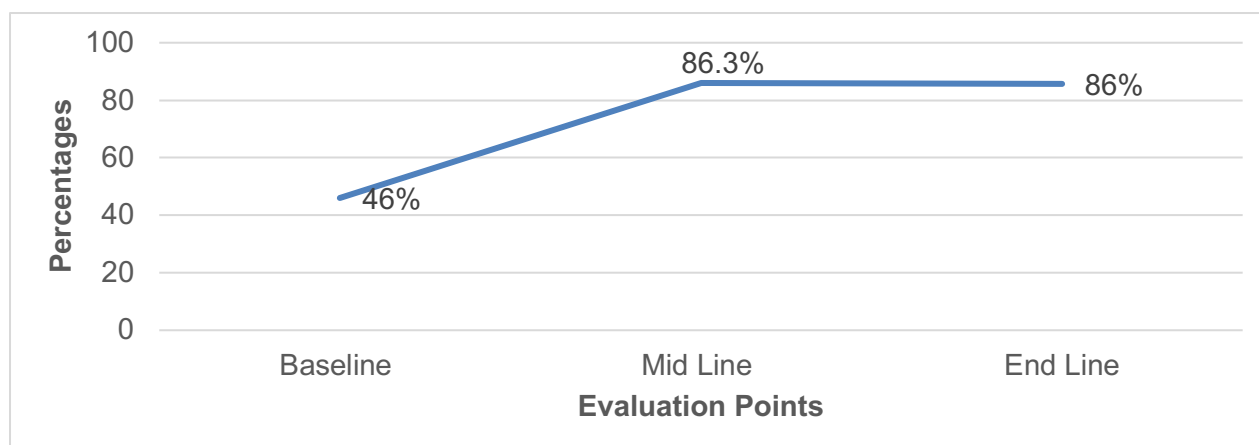
Source: Evaluation Primary Data

Findings reveal that more than four fifths (86%) of the beneficiary youth held savings in a formal or informal financial institution including VSLAs. Out of those that had savings in any institution, 81.6% were in VSLAs, 2.15% were in commercial banks, whereas 2.15% had savings in SACCOs. Therefore, out of those who had savings, 85.9% held savings in structured institutions including VSLAs. Moreover, primary data reveal that the average saving for each youth in the final year was 150,356.63, with all the 2,575 members saving about 236,811,692. There are high chances of this saved money generating profits and creating wealth for beneficiaries especially through acquisition of productive assets and acquisition of agro input loans to develop the agricultural enterprises.

These findings do not contradict other recent studies. For instance, the Finscope Survey (2018) indicates that, out of the people who had saved some money, 43% saved through the VSLAs, whereas only 34% of savers saved with higher-level formal financial institutions – i.e. on their mobile phones, with commercial banks, SACCOs, or microfinance institutions. More worrying was that one in three savers (27%); kept savings at home. It is positive to note that project beneficiaries have a much higher savings in financial institutions than the national average.

Though significant achievements have been made in terms of savings with financial institutions, future interventions should address the challenge of keeping money at home. Even when they had savings in other institutions, a quarter (26%) of respondents indicated that they kept some savings at home. This is a threat to the growing saving culture and wider financial inclusion, hence there is need to deliberately promote financial literacy and increase financial inclusion for beneficiaries.

Fig. 3.8: Trends in possession of savings in structured institutions by the youth



Source: Evaluation Primary Data, mid line and baseline reports

Youth's possession of savings in financial institutions	
Target	85%
Achievement (at evaluation)	86%

A trend analysis shows an improvement in possession of savings from 46% at baseline to 86% at mid-line and 85.6% at end line. Even though there was a slight reduction in savings in the final year of project implementation, savings remained higher than the targeted 85% increase in savings. The slight reduction in savings in the final year of the project was attributed to the harsh weather conditions that saw a low harvest in the first season of 2018, hence youth's inability to save as they had been saving earlier in 2017. The seasonal challenges and slight reduction in savings notwithstanding, the project evidently attained its target on this indicator.

b) Attainment of life skills and associated benefits

Life skills enable people to participate fully in their day to day lives. In the context of MAYEP project, life skills would enable beneficiaries to concentrate on their enterprises, live responsible lives and have a sense of focus in all things they do towards holistically improved lives. For purposes of this evaluation and the MTR, impact of life skills is measured by the feeling of self-worth amongst beneficiaries. Findings on beneficiaries' feeling of self-worth are also triangulated by beneficiaries' lessons on belief that they are responsible for managing their own affairs and improving their lives. It also presents the comparison of beneficiaries' and non-beneficiaries' findings for purposes of attribution. Fig. 3.9 presents the beneficiaries' responses on feeling of self-worth.

Fig. 3.9: Feeling of self-worth

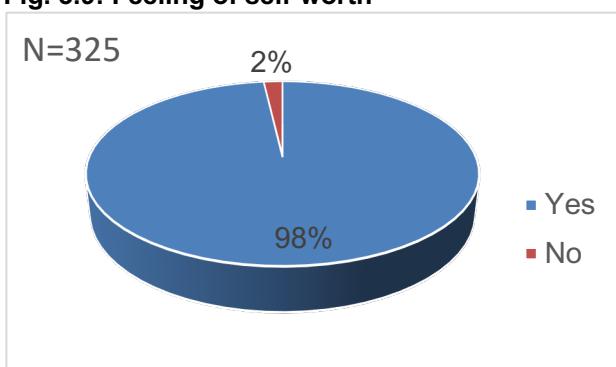
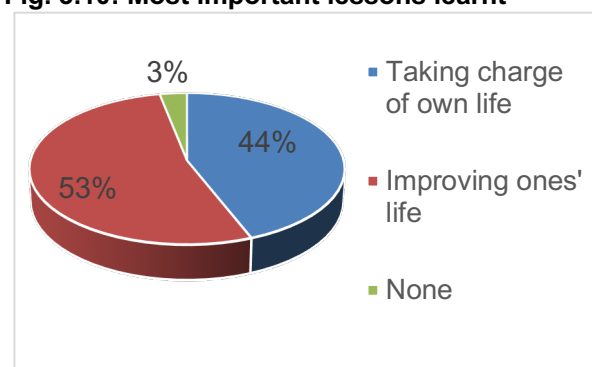
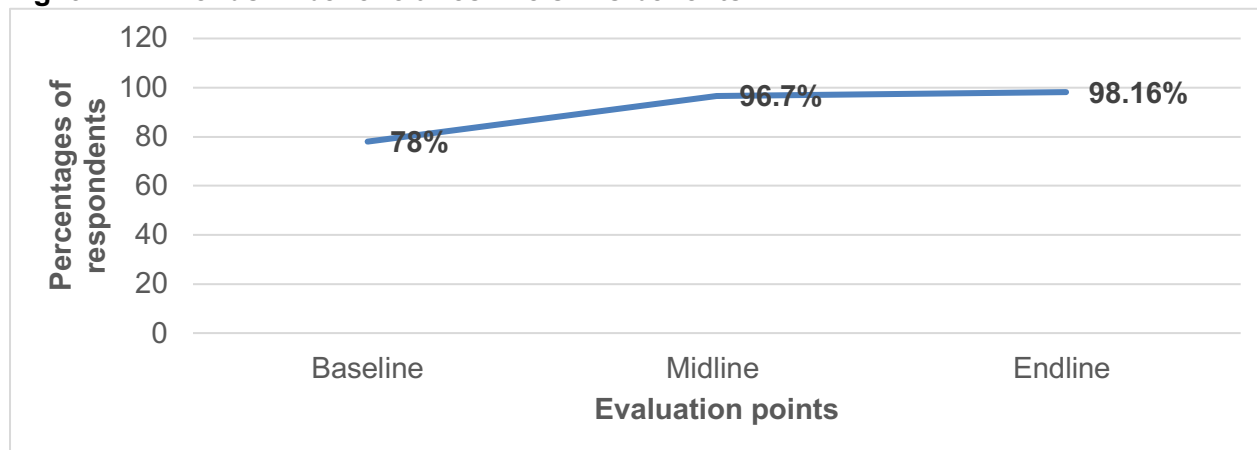


Fig. 3.10: Most important lessons learnt



As indicated in Figure 3.9 almost all respondents (98%) expressed the feeling of self-worth. This implies that they believe in themselves. When asked the most key lesson they learnt, more than a half (53%) of the respondents indicated that the most important lesson they had learnt was improving their own lives; whereas 44% indicated that the key lesson they had learnt was taking charge of their own lives at all times. Only 3% of the interviewed youth did not appreciate the aforementioned lessons learnt from life skills training. The key lessons learnt link appropriately to the feeling of self-worth as it was expressed by most respondents, hence it can be concluded that the life skills training was very key in enabling beneficiaries develop self-esteem and take responsibility for the affairs that affect them. This also posits to life-long capability to continue pursuing their own wellbeing across all spheres of life.

Fig. 3.11: Trends in beneficiaries' life skills benefits



Source: Evaluation Primary Data, mid line and baseline reports

Youth's reporting of positive benefits of life skills taught	
Target	65%
Achievement	98.16%

The evaluation and earlier studies (baseline and mid line) have shown a steady increase in achievement with regard to benefits from life skills training. Whereas the baseline revealed the feeling of self-worth among the beneficiaries at 78% at baseline, it improved to 96.7% at mid-line and 98.16% at end line. It is also important to note that the project achieved 98.16% against the target of 65%, hence impressively surpassing the target.

The aforementioned findings from project beneficiaries are also compared with those from non-beneficiaries to ascertain whether the responses could be attributed to the project interventions. In an FGD with non-beneficiaries in Ndewu sub-county, a youth noted:

".....we have so many challenges here in this village. Even when we try to work, it is very difficult to do anything. All things we try to do fail; we buy our local breeds of onions and we cannot harvest much. If we do not get government support or NGOs to support us with trainings, seeds and money for to go for trainings and other inputs, we cannot be able to grow our own crops, harvest and develop on our own. We need support from educated people with money to help us get out of this situation".

The respondents' colleagues shared this feeling, yet this FGD was conducted in a village that had a beneficiary group. It shows a very low level of self-esteem with high feeling of dependence among the youth. This portrays a feeling that they cannot make it on their own, yet they could have easily consulted beneficiaries to gain the same skills. This is evidence that beneficiaries had gained life

skills and consequently believed in themselves unlike their counterparts that never received life skills training. It is therefore plausible that beneficiaries gained better life skills as a result of project interventions.

c) Vocational training curricula-improvement and strength

The project developed a tailored training content to cover the specific trades. This was done through partnership with three agricultural training institutes namely: Nile farm, Adra and Jabara farm institutes. More interesting is that the content was also gender integrated. This was fundamental, for a project that currently supported females and males in equal numbers. The project was designed with deliberate attention to gender inclusiveness, and indeed groups generally had males and females equally represented.

When asked about content relevance to what they are currently doing, trainees expressed appreciation for the program as the skills obtained have helped them to improve their production. A successful youth in piggery enterprise in Maracha district noted:

“.....the skills we obtained were so relevant to our current businesses. Those of us who took them very seriously are now doing well and able to develop our business enterprises further. I have been able to build my business to the level of training other people outside the project, yet I had never even tried piggery before. We were helped to develop practical skills and this was done over a period of six weeks, which enabled us to learn. It is because of what I learnt from the institute, together with exposure to other enterprises by visiting people that were already doing it that I have been able to develop and enterprise that I never thought I would ever do.....”

Interactions with the above youth revealed that he has developed his enterprise with the attained practical skills, and he is currently training students and entrepreneurs, at the cost of UGX 100,000 per day or per group. He has also developed a piggery business now worth more than UGX 10 Million. He is not only earning income by selling piglets and mature pigs, but he is also earning from his training sessions. Equally important is that he has generated social capital through use of his skills, hence enlightening him more and further building his self-esteem. There were reports that the local government was in early stages of courting him to contract him as a youth trainer in piggery for one of the government programs. It is important to note that this beneficiary was a cane cutter with a sugar company, until he came back home to enroll into the project. This is therefore clear evidence that the curriculum applied is appropriate and relevant for the kind of beneficiaries that MAYEP supported.

When asked about the approach of tailoring the vocational skills training curriculum, a local government official in Zombo district expressed appreciation for it and linked its success to tailoring it to the local market and the youth. He responded:

“.....the main difference between MAYEP and other projects that come to the district is that it was based on well thought training modules. At the beginning of the project, they worked with the vocational training institutes to develop modules that matched the needs of the youth and our local challenges. This approach also misses in most of Uganda’s training programmes. That is why we appreciate it as a district because it really tackles the challenges and it was developed through a consultative process. We actually support it and believe that it is capable of causing change in our districts.....”

The above and other related responses do not only indicate testimony of relevance of the tailored curricula, but it also reiterates the buy in that was secured from the local government officials through the process of developing the curricular and the demonstration of its usefulness. It is

therefore important that interventions maintain such approaches in future to ensure maximum support from stakeholders and maximize benefits from such training packages.

3.4.3 Youth friendly policy environment and access to funding for self-employment

a) Youth-friendly policies and access to local government funds for self-employment

In efforts to ensure that the political and socio-economic environment is conducive for youth employment, the project aimed at establishing an effective civil society-government dialogue platform that would culminate into youth-friendly policies developed and adopted by beneficiary districts. The project held seven advocacy forums together with regular quarterly review meetings through which the project and the youth themselves advocated for youth friendly policies. However, the policies were not realized, owing to various complexities related to policy development. Whereas various engagement could be done by the partner, policy development requires so much time and involvement of the district council through many processes.

The Local Governments' Act, 1997 stipulates the procedure for enacting by laws, ordinances and policy positions. Under this Act, every member of the district council or city council has a right to introduce a bill for an ordinance in the council and receive technical guidance. The bill has to be published to the general public, councilors and technical teams. More so, the Act states that a bill for an ordinance introduced by a member shall, before its publication, first be introduced by a motion to which the proposed bill is attached, and if the motion is carried then the bill will be published. There shall be attached to the bill for publication a short memorandum signed by the person introducing the bill, setting out the policy matter of the bill and how the bill seeks to implement that policy. The aforementioned lengthy parts of the Act indicate just a few of the conditions that have to be met before any policy is passed by a local government. It is therefore clear that so much effort and engagement of various stakeholders would have to be undertaken and over a long time.

With policy development complexities, it was quite ambitious for MAYEP to target the level of advocacy that that would have youth-friendly policies in place. Future programming should devise simpler and more attainable options of engagement to ensure a conducive environment for youth employment. For instance, the districts should be engaged to increase budgetary allocations for youth employment and skills development interventions. A mainstreaming approach to planning and budgeting is a potential mechanisms for ensuring youth friendly environment for employment creation. For example, projects should lobby to ensure that districts are encouraged to always designate proportions of poverty alleviation funds for youth skilling and employment. Programs such as Operation wealth Creation (OWC), Women Entrepreneurship Program and other local economic development projects should have appropriate allocations reserved for the youth. Such efforts could easily achieve youth employment as opposed to the local government policy change approach.

Even though the policy change efforts did not yield directly, it is important to note some of the benefits that arose from the partner and beneficiary youth engagement in advocacy related activities. As a result, nine (9) YAGs accessed the local government's Youth Livelihood Program (YLP) funds. Whereas 5 YAGs accessed 25,000,000 Uganda Shillings, 4 YAGs accessed 42,100,000 Uganda Shillings. Therefore, advocacy efforts leveraged 67,100,000 from the YLP over project implementation period. These findings posit to potential higher employment related benefits from government for the youth.

3.5 Project efficiency

This section presents an analysis of both technical and resource allocation/utilisation related efficiency. The former focuses on the pace and strategies of implementation and overall execution of planned project activities, whereas the latter focuses on appropriate allocation of resources to specific activities, their actual utilization and management.

3.5.1 Programmatic efficiency

Implementation of project interventions was done through an existing local organization. The Agency for Accelerated Regional Development (AFARD) is a local, not-for-profit, non-denominational, non-governmental organization (NGO) that was formed in July 2000. With its headquarters in Nebbi district, it has been operating in West Nile with a mission of contributing to the molding of a region in which the local people (men and women), including those who are marginalized, are able to participate effectively and sustainably and take a lead in the development of the region. This partner brought into the project close to two decades of experience and local content, which easily delivered the project interventions closer to the beneficiaries. With Economic Security as one of its strategic impact focus areas, the partner's suitability for implementation of such a project couldn't be reemphasized. With an established office, human and other resources already in the target community, SHA saved finances, time and other resources that the organization would otherwise spend on efforts to directly implement the project in the three districts.

The project was generally implemented within the stipulated timeframe of 3 years, 1st February 2016 – 31st January 2019. During this period, the project implemented most (about 97%) of the project activities. This is evidence of proper use of time as a key resource in project implementation. Project impact and effectiveness as described in other parts of this report were evident, hence the project generally attained its intended objectives in the stipulated implementation time.

The project demonstrated value addition by developing a tailored VSLA methodology referred to as "Saving with a Productive Purpose (SWAPP)". This model came with a unique approach to the VSLA intervention, in which part of the savings is set aside for members to borrow for agro-inputs. This ingredient of the model made it closely tailored to the rest of the project interventions. Similarly, unlike other VSLAs that save and share out all their savings at the end of the cycle, under SWAPP model groups retain 20% of the savings at the time of share out. This portion of savings does not only provide a start-up fund for the group in the following cycle, but it also keeps them committed, and maintains group cohesion among the members. This model puts the resources invested to maximum benefits, from both programmatic and resource perspectives.

The project implemented a peer farmer-extension model with the Youth Model Farmers (YMFs) that trained the youth within their communities. The YMF was a resident of the same community and a member of the group, at times training various beneficiary groups in the community. This has easily and quickly yielded benefits such as buy-in from beneficiaries, while maintaining the YMF's own interest as he/she does this on their own garden. It is shows the best example of evidence based and practical agribusiness learning. This is one of the most cost-effective models as it saves resources that would otherwise be spent on items such as training venues, training workshop refreshments, payment of trainers and transport refund for beneficiaries, among other costs. It also saves time that would be spent in travels and preparations for such activities, hence maximizing on project efficiency.

3.5.2 Management Efficiency

Self Help Africa deployed a project manager to be based at AFARD offices in Nebbi. This was an important step to close the usual gap between the main grantees and sub grantees/implementing partners. With the project manager at the partners' office, reporting was faster as she was always in constant communication and closely worked with the rest of the project staff. Her presence also reduced on the costs that would be incurred on the field visits that would otherwise made by the SHA team from Kampala. This deployment therefore generated programmatic and resource savings for the project, hence promoting efficiency. Relatedly, the project deployed a field officer to each of the beneficiary districts. These were dynamic young persons, with requisite agribusiness related qualifications, which enabled them to coordinate and support the many groups (100) in each

of the beneficiary districts. This also closed the gaps that would have been created in coordination and resulting resource and programmatic losses if there were staff vacuums.

Findings further noted that SHA constantly provided the necessary technical backstopping in form of regular support supervision and monitoring, guidance as well as general capacity building. For example, the programs director and the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) officer always came in to support the partner directly or through the seconded project manager. This support was instrumental in facilitating a quality and cost-effective implementation of project interventions.

3.5.3 Coordination with local government

Project interventions were implemented in close collaboration and agreement with the higher and lower local governments in the respective intervention districts. Key informant interviews and document review indicated that AFARD worked well with the local governments, especially the community development offices. Close collaboration with the District Community Development Officers (DCDO) and sub-county level Community Development Officers (CDOs) yielded various benefits in form of capacity building, but most importantly access to government program funding such as the Youth Livelihood Program (YLP). Though still at a low level, it is a promising strategy for resource leveraging and an avenue to save on resources and reap maximum benefits from project interventions. By attracting more resources and enabling groups to organize themselves better and use their existing resources, this approach spearheaded cost-effectiveness of project interventions.

3.5.4 Financial management, procurement and delivery

The evaluation established that standard financial control measures were applied by the both SHA and AFARD during implementation of the project. In a bid to address any possible emerging finance management issues, the SHA finance team and internal auditor made routine checks on the project and audits were made to ensure that the project interventions were implemented in accordance with the planned schedule and costs. More importantly, there were efforts to ensure that the partner was implementing interventions in accordance to SHA's and EU's financial management policies and guidelines. Indeed, no major financial management breaches were reported during project implementation or during the final evaluation.

3.4.2 Challenges to efficiency

Though the project took efforts to enable beneficiaries develop business plans, findings reveal that the project had not attained much in this area. It was reported that not even half of the groups have been able to develop business plans. This low achievement was attributed to limited appreciation of the importance of business plans in their agricultural work and the low level of literacy among project beneficiaries. Most of them could not even try to write down the very basic plan as they were unable to make sense of it even after efforts to train and sensitize them.

Findings in section 3.1.1 of this report reveal that 11.66% of the respondents had not attained any formal education, almost half (47.24%) of the respondents had only attained primary education, whereas a fifth (23.31%) had attained the first four years of secondary education (commonly referred to as Ordinary Level). The aforementioned levels of education is a manifestation of very low literacy levels, implying low capacity to develop a flowing and logical document like a business plan. Previous studies have revealed related evidence. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2014), while almost 10% of Ugandans started a business in 2014, a fifth of individuals aged 18-64 discontinued the business in one year. Young entrepreneurs in particular had "generally low" growth expectations; few innovate or varying product lines. The study partly attributed this to limited business planning. To address this challenge for the target beneficiaries, future interventions should further train, sensitize beneficiaries, and popularize the importance of business plans. They should also simplify business plans to the beneficiaries' capacity and even support beneficiaries to write business plans in local languages.

Though the project worked well with the community development offices, it did not work very closely with agricultural related technical departments at the local governments. For example, the veterinary officers were reportedly not closely involved in the project until piggery groups lost their pigs to African swine fever. One of the district veterinary officers noted:

“Our deeper involvement as a district came so late during project implementation. They engaged us at the start to get an entry into the community, then, they somehow did not get in touch moving on. When groups lost pigs, project staff got back to us for support. We later realized that some pigs got out of the pigsty and strayed in the community, where they got infected with African swine fever. This is a problem that could have been avoided if we were engaged earlier because we know that place to be prone to African swine fever. There are always outbreaks in that community, and we would have alerted the groups about that and helped them to beef up their pigsties and ensure that the pigs would not stray. There were not much efforts to engage the veterinary officer at Atego sub county as well, yet he could have easily offered technical support to the youth. There was also a case when the pigs were starved and then later given cassava peelings, and this lead to pig deaths due to sayaline poisoning. All these losses could have been avoided, if we had been approached earlier to advise the groups because as specialists we know the common risk factors that are likely to affect piggery enterprises.....”

The above response is evidence that limited engagement of veterinary officers compromised efficiency as indeed the project could have averted such losses, if the aforementioned offices were well engaged in advance. It is therefore important that future interventions use an integrated approach where timely support is sought from all relevant offices rather than depending on community development departments. Whereas community development offices were important for group formation, registration and linkage to other possible sources of financial and other forms of support; veterinary offices were important for livestock related enterprises, whereas crop related offices were fundamental for the horticultural enterprises during MAYEP implementation.

Though the project and both organizations demonstrated strong financial management controls, interventions were reported to have suffered delays due to delays in expediting financial transfers for execution of field activities. This was reported to have delayed a number of activities within various implementation periods. Similarly, the evaluation revealed delays concerning procurements of start-up kits, which caused delays in down-stream activities such as planting. Given that agricultural projects are seasonal, such delays posed far reaching negative consequences. For instance, the Mid-Term Review (MTR) revealed less adoption of timely planting, and in-depth analysis of the MTR findings clarified that it is the project that delivered inputs late after the season had run for almost a month as per the KII data of the MTR. This implies that such delays could delay the start of key seasonal activities and at the same time negatively affect the entire yield of the season. Such incidents could also demotivate the youth and cause them to abandon the project, yet they had generally embraced the interventions. A similar challenge was cited as a reason as to why the project could not deliver the business hubs during the project life as had been planned. It is therefore important for future interventions to understand and consider the sensitivity that comes with agricultural interventions and plan properly for timely and appropriate interventions.

3.6 Project impact

Findings in this section are presented in accordance to the main result areas (impact and outcome indicators) of the project. Impact indicators focus on change in average incomes of target youth; increase in ownership of productive assets; and increased decision-making power of female youth. Outcome indicators focus on: increased female & male beneficiary youth in sustainable gainful

employment / self-employment in the agricultural value chain; improved YAG support to sustainable female & male youth employability; and improved environment for female and male youth employment and development

3.6.1 Incomes, asset ownership and decision-making among female beneficiaries

a) Respondents income improvement

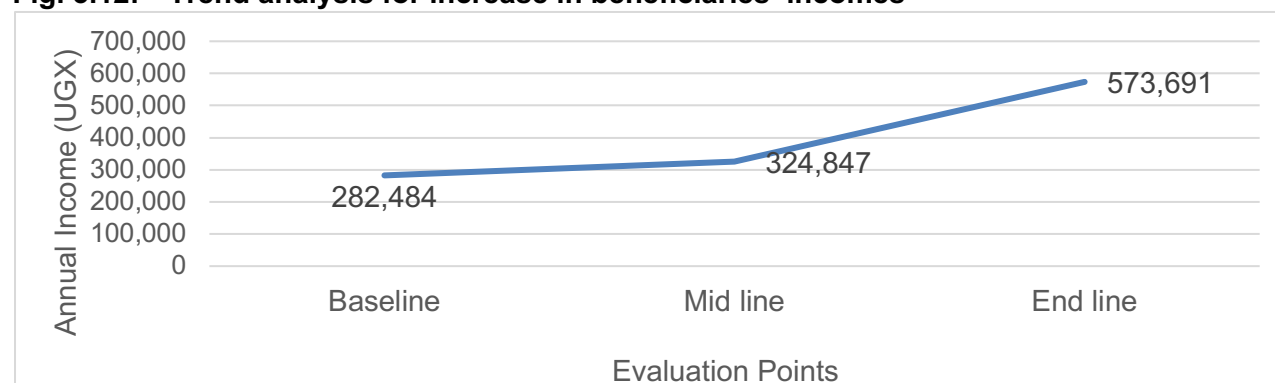
Respondents were asked their annual incomes from the MAYEP promoted enterprises. Table 3.4 presents respondents' incomes from the target enterprises, disaggregated by sex of respondents.

Table 3.4: Average incomes of beneficiary youth

	Total	Females	Males
Maximum	5,500,000.00	5,000,000.00	5,500,000.00
Mean/average	573,691.22	429,237.65	722,745.22
Minimum	20,000.00	20,000.00	40,000.00

Findings in Table 3.4, reveal a high level of income at UGX 573,791. However, it raises concern that the average income levels for males (UGX 722,745) is much higher than that of females (UGX 429,237). These findings call for more efforts in enabling girls take a more active role in income enhancement interventions.

Fig. 3.12: Trend analysis for increase in beneficiaries' incomes



Source: Evaluation Primary Data, mid line and baseline reports

Analysis of the changes in incomes show that the average income for beneficiaries changed from UGX 282,484, to UGX 324,847 and UGX 573,691 at end line. Average income level increased by 14.9% between baseline and mid line, whereas it increased by 76.6% between mid-line and end line. These findings imply that the increase in incomes between mid-line and end line is far above the one between baseline and mid line. This was explained by the higher level of diversification among the beneficiaries that proved to take root in the final year of implementation. For example, in an interview with one of the group leaders of *Karongo Youth Business Group*, Kijomolo sub-county, Maracha district, noted that he explained:

....when I earned UGX 850,000 from onions, I purchased dry beans worth UGX 350,000 and stocked them for sale at a later time. I used the remaining money to set up a kiosk in which I sell general merchandise. My kiosk is now making more profits, and I plan to sell my beans, get money and first add into the kiosk. I also expect UGX 500,000 from the onions that I have harvested and add up my money to buy a second hand motorcycle. I will then use a motorcycle to do public transport (commonly known as boda boda).

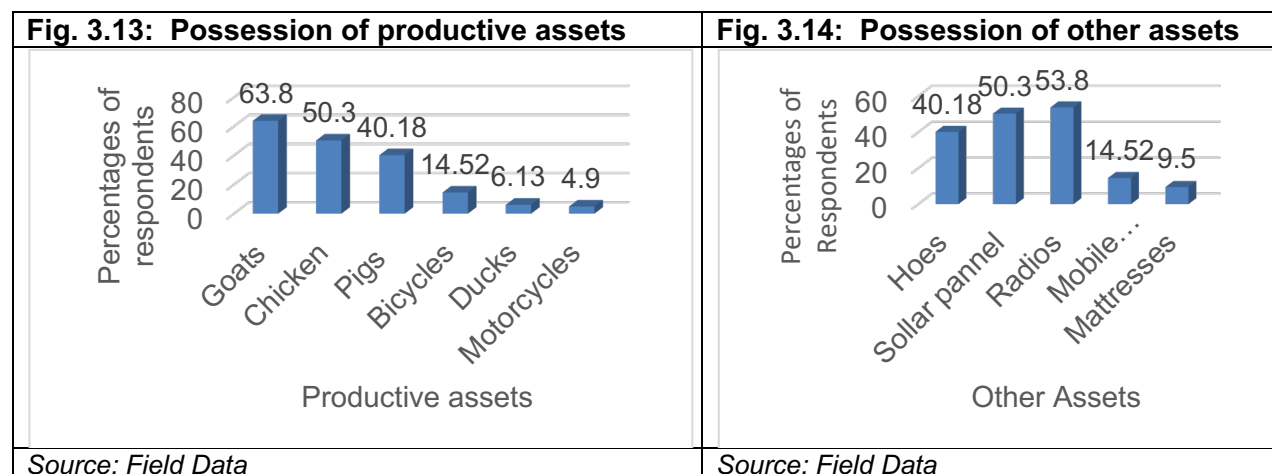
The above voice reflects youth capacity to diversify and generate more incomes from various enterprises. Such stories were common among the groups, including growing various horticultural crops to expand their income base. It is therefore not surprising that incomes changed highly between mid-line and end line evaluations. Important to note is that there is likely to be further multiplier effect as the money invested in enterprises is likely to help them make more profits.

Change in average income of targeted youth	
Targeted change	25%
Achieved change	103.08%

As indicated in Fig. 3.12, there has been a 103.08% increase throughout project life, which is far above the target of 25%. Therefore, the project performed impressively in regard to this indicator.

b) Ownership of assets

According to UBOS (2013), any item of economic value owned by an individual or a household that can be converted into cash is usually referred to as an asset. Indeed limited access to productive assets has been reported to reflect economic and social vulnerability. It is therefore important to analyze the ownership of productive assets among MAYEP beneficiaries, and Figures 3.13 and 3.14 present the findings.



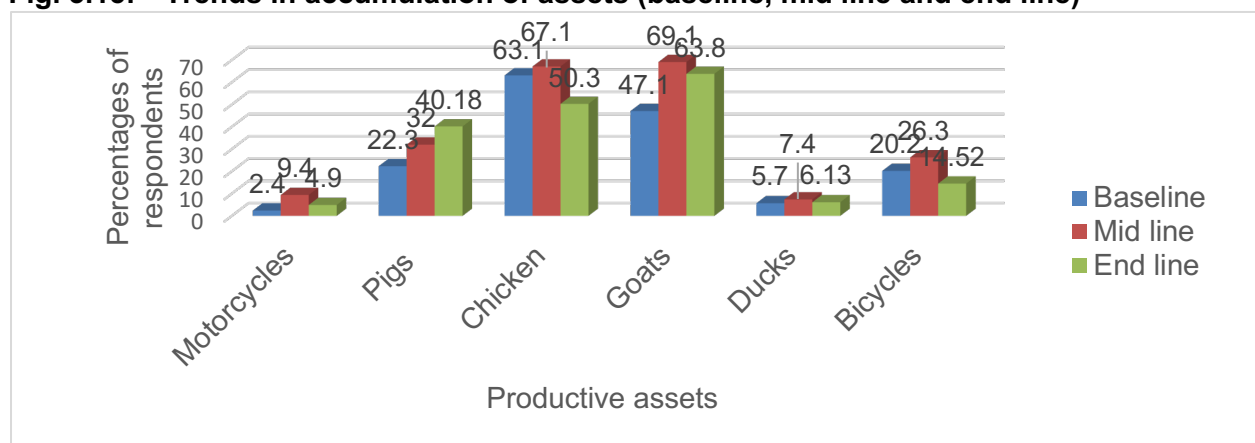
Findings reveal a relatively high level of acquisition of livestock related assets, with 63.8% and 50.3% of respondents who had acquired goats and chicken respectively. This is not surprising as these are relatively easier to purchase and manage within the homestead. It is also interesting to note that a relatively big proportion of respondents (40.18%) had acquired pigs, which were promoted by the project. This does not only reflect ability to acquire assets, but also beneficiaries' ability to diversify their enterprises. Indeed, this was also noted with other enterprises. For instance, two of the groups had diversified into Irish Potato enterprise. Acquisition of assets was also reported to have been facilitated by the VSLA/SWAPP Model, through which beneficiaries saved for specific purposes, which were in most cases asset acquisition targets. A participant in an FGD with Odukulu YAG confirmed this when he noted:

".....last year (2018), in the first season of onions, I earned 250,000 from my onions. After paying my debts and buying a few things that I needed, I remained with about 100,000. I then borrowed 150,000 from our VSLA and bought two pigs. After some months, I sold both pigs at 500,000, used some of the money and bought two piglets again. I now plan to sell one of them, pay my sisters' school fees, and then buy some goats.....".

Positive to note is that there were common stories of this nature that were told by beneficiaries across more than 10 of the 15 FGDs with beneficiaries. The above voice demonstrates the complementarity of the agricultural enterprises and VSLA/SWAPP interventions. Beneficiaries have generally been able to use interventions as “a stepping stone” to diversification into other projects within or outside MAYEP. This best practice should be promoted so as to encourage replication across the beneficiary and non-beneficiary youth.

According to World Food Programme’s Productive Assets and Livelihood Support Factsheet (2008), households with less less-productive assets, become even more vulnerable to shocks in the long-run such as economic recessions and extreme weather events associated with climate change i.e. droughts and floods. It is therefore positive that there are significant efforts to attain productive assets, which increases opportunities to develop resilience to economic shocks and beefs up long-term poverty reduction efforts.

Fig. 3.15: Trends in accumulation of assets (baseline, mid line and end line)



Source: Evaluation Primary Data, mid line and baseline reports

Findings in Fig. 3.15 reveal dwindling acquisition of productive assets as almost all assets increased after baseline, but reduced at end line. Even the most common assets (goats and chicken) have followed the same trend. This is explained by the dwindling incomes that resulted from unfavorable seasonal changes. All groups and individual respondents noted that the first season of 2018 generally yielded very low harvests. This is a general challenge as all beneficiaries were practicing rain fed agriculture. There is evidence that instead of adding on assets, the youth even sold off assets to deal with the challenges of the drought in the first half of 2018. In extreme cases, even some beneficiaries suffered pests that attacked their gardens especially those that grew cabbages and diseases especially those that were doing piggery. In instances of disease attacks, piggery groups were the most affected. For instance, 2 groups in Nebbi district lost all their pigs to African swine fever. The district veterinary officer confirmed cases of African swine fever in accordance to the results of the postmortem examination his office conducted on the dead pigs.

Average respondents' ownership of productive assets	
Target	10%
Achievement	18.3%

Even when individual assets dwindled, the average ownership of assets increased by 18.3. Analysis of the trends indicate that the general increase would have been much higher if there had not been hostile seasonal changes. There is therefore room for a reasonable accumulation of productive assets even for agricultural enterprises that are heavily dependent on nature.

c) Decision making power of female youth

The project took a gender transformative approach, which aimed at ensuring a 50% female youth engagement, encouraging them to take on leadership positions and aiming to challenge negative gender norms. MAYEP interventions could only achieve this gender equity when the female youth substantially took part in decision-making. The evaluation sought to analyze the level of decision making exercised by female youth in their groups, and Table 3.5 summarises the findings.

Table 3.5: Female youth participation in decision-making at group level

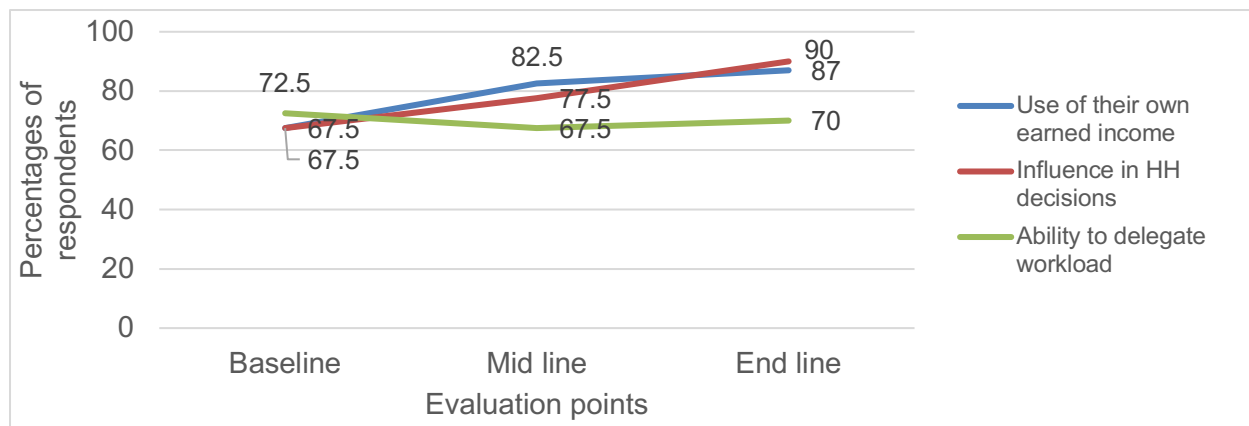
Key decisions in groups	Sex of the respondents	
	Female (%)	Male (%)
Suggesting new ways of work to be taken	70.3	75.6
Deciding on what is taken to the market	36.4	41.3
Selecting leaders	71.5	79.4
Deciding what to do with group money	47.9	54.4
Scheduling activities of the group	51.5	64.4
Making other decisions	7.3	15.6
Average participation in decision making	47.48	55.12

The evaluation revealed that female youth participate in decision making almost at the same level as their male counterparts in groups. When expressed as a percentage, female participation stood at 47.48% at the time of evaluation. Indeed, this was reflected during the Focus Group Discussions with group leaders as well as on the executive committees of the groups across the project districts.

Previous studies in the project especially the MTR had revealed that married youth had to take decisions that were agreeable to their husbands to avoid conflicts, and this was at rank 3 out of 4, which could be expressed as 66.6%. This implies that average female independent decision-making was exercised at around 33.4%. Young women felt that they had the freedom to suggest but their husbands had the final say and had to be informed or consulted at all occasions. Universally, the married female youth felt a slight increase in their freedom to take choices and influence choices too. Interestingly, the general level of participation of female youth in decision-making was seen to have increased from 33.4% at mid-line to 47.48% at end line, portraying a 14.08% improvement in females' decision-making. This is an important milestone in a Ugandan society that has been known as patriarchal over generations.

Women decision making should not just end at group level, but rather should translate into greater empowerment at household level and day to day life. This is why it is fundamental that beneficiaries develop life skills for related life-long empowerment benefits. The evaluation was keen to analyse the change in decision making for female beneficiaries at household level. Fig. 3.16 presents the findings, comparing baseline, mid line and end line results.

Fig 3.16: Female youth participation in decision-making at household level



Source: Evaluation Primary Data, mid line and baseline reports

Like decision making at group level, findings reveal an improvement in female beneficiaries participation in decision making at household level. Their ability to make decisions on how to use their earned incomes improved tremendously over the project period, with 67.5%, 82.5% and 87% that were able to decide on how to use their incomes at baseline, mid line and end line respectively. This presents an increment of 17.5% in female beneficiaries that had control of their earnings between baseline and end line.

Qualitative data clearly demonstrate an improvement in women participation in decision-making at group and household levels alike. In an FGD in Nebbi district, a female youth retorted:

"Before we joined the project, we had not known that we could also be responsible for taking decisions in such groups or even at home. Here in the group, we always give our ideas on how we should do our activities or manage the money even in the VSLA, like our male colleagues. At home, I used to have frequent quarrels with my husband over deciding on how to use the money we had. After the trainings and sharing with colleagues here in the group, I started engaging him and telling him what we learnt. I also told him that I wanted to help him on suggesting how we can use our money and other resources, but not overlooking him. Things have improved so much, I now decide with him on how we spend the money we have and other resources, as well as the activities we do. This has not only enabled us to do things together, but it has also created peace in our family, which we never had before"

The above response is not only testimony to improvement in decision making by female youth, but it also explains the steady transformation that happened as a result of the project, starting with group activities, and eventually translating into change in the beneficiaries' households. It also indicates that improvement in female youth participation and decision-making does not only improve resource allocation and use, but also social harmony at household level.

Interestingly, when asked if the project had negatively affected their decision-making levels or had negative consequences such as domestic violence as result of attempts to take decisions, none of the FGD participants answered in affirmative. They all gave testimonies that demonstrated different forms of participation and improvements in decision making, as well as taking more active roles in their YAGs and households. Whereas one cannot assume complete transformation with full women empowerment, this evaluation reveals evidence of a positive change with regard to female youth decision-making, that is likely to build a firm foundation for female beneficiaries to take a significant role in their own socio-economic development.

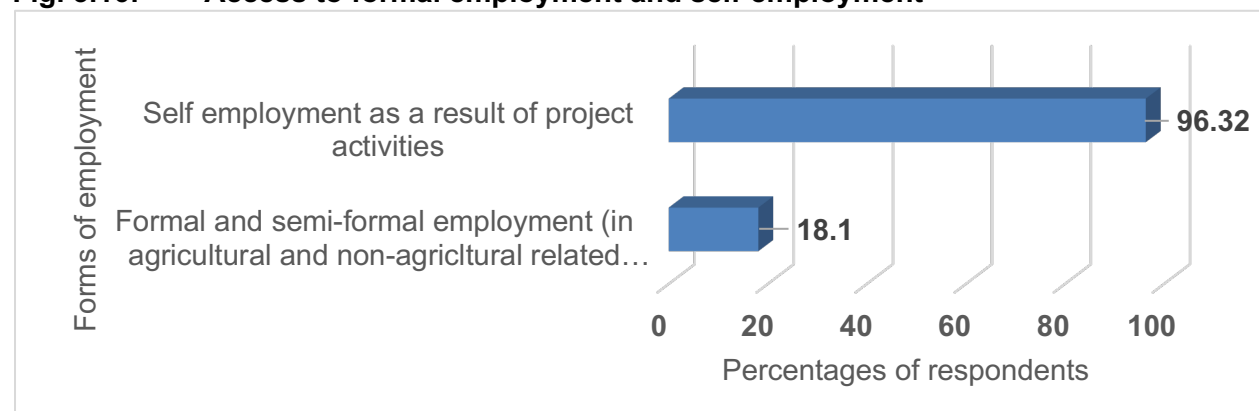
Delegation of work by female beneficiaries has been unstable, with 72.5% of females who were able to delegate their work at baseline, yet it reduced to 67.5% at mid-line. There was again an improvement to 70% at end line. When the issue of delegation was explored further, qualitative data indicate that beneficiaries prefer to delegate work that they believe is not so delicate or cannot be postponed. For example, one would feel free to delegate attendance of a VSLA meeting, but may not delegate spraying their garden. For those that delegated, interactions during FGDs indicated that they mainly delegated their work to family members. This is a positive trend as it increases opportunities to build on family ties and sharing experiences. Interviews with group leaders indicate that many group members would freely share information from the project with their family members, and consequently, replication of enterprises was increasing. Anecdotal evidence indicates that many non-beneficiaries had learnt and adopted similar enterprises, after learning from their family members that were MAYEP beneficiaries.

3.6.2 Youth access to formal employment and self-employment

a) Access to formal employment and self-employment within the promoted value chains

According to the Ministry of Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (2014) in an evaluation report on government strategy on addressing the unemployment challenge, a large section of Uganda's labour force still depended on subsistence agriculture and informal non-agricultural enterprises. The ministry recommended that to raise living standards for all Ugandans, it was critical to also increase the productivity of these activities and enable disadvantaged sections of the population to access technical and business skills and start-up capital for self-employment generation. This is evidence that the government policy has been to promote self-employment in the agricultural sector. In line with this government strategy, MAYEP worked to promote formal employment and self-employment. A multiple response question was asked to ascertain the youth participation in self-employment and formal/semi-formal employment, and Fig 3.16 presents findings on these indicators.

Fig. 3.16: Access to formal employment and self-employment



Findings reveal a very high level of self-employment in the agribusiness sector, with 96.32% of respondents that indicated that they had attained their main employment in the sector, specifically in their personal enterprises. This is very interesting given that previous studies have revealed evidence of low level of initiative to venture into self-employment. In 2015, a study by Uganda Bureau of Statistics on Labour market transition of young people in Uganda found that only 19% of young people in rural areas in Uganda desired to be self-employed. Therefore, the very high level of self-employment among project beneficiaries in this evaluation does not only indicate availability of potential and opportunities in the sector, but also a change in mindset of the youth. When asked whether they desired to keep in self-employment, the youth were seen to prefer self-employment

as they pointed to benefits such as making their own decisions, changes of expanding their enterprises and ability to support their families among others. In an FGD in Zombo district, a female participant noted:

These days I do not bother to look around for jobs because I am making my own money. I am actually employing myself in my gardens. This has enabled me to do more things as I have decide on how I plan and do my activities depending on the needs of the gardens. For example, I have now decided to start poultry besides my garden.I believe this will help me to increase my sources of income and enable me earn more money. I also have more time to spend with husband and children, as I do not have to ask for permission from anyone to do something at home at any time of the day.

The above response and many others are evidence that the youth are not only taking initiative to employ themselves, but they also appreciate the benefits of being self-employed. Such appreciation is likely to drive sustainability of the intervention benefits and wider participation in the sector for self-employment and poverty reduction.

The World Bank (2013) has noted that creating quality jobs (including formal employment opportunities) is a major policy challenge for Uganda. It further argued that Ugandans were working hard, but too many of them were involved in low productivity and in most cases informal sector activities, which greatly hindered structural transformation required to drive Uganda's economic development. The need to prioritize support towards formal employment in all forms therefore cannot be overemphasized. Almost a fifth (18.1%) of the beneficiary youth have obtained some sort of formal or semi-formal employment. The consultant refers to some of the jobs as semi-formal as they do not come with many characteristics and benefits of formal employment (such as paying taxes, social security and medical and social insurance benefits among others). Again, this is understandable as most of them do not have higher-level qualifications and are employed in semi-formal business enterprises. The commonest forms of employment that the youth have accessed include working in mobile money shops, SACCOs, wholesale shops, with monthly salary payments. Important to note is that beneficiaries' ability to seek and obtain formal employment has been largely attributed to the rigorous trainings that they went through and the social networks that they managed to attain and expand through participation in project activities. Life skills training has been fundamental in building self-esteem and confidence as reported on in this report. When beneficiaries developed a feeling of self-worth and learnt from their colleagues who were doing better, they were able to come out and seek more and better opportunities.

Employment related indicators	Target	Baseline	End line
Beneficiaries in formal/semi formal employment	10	0	18.1 ⁶
Beneficiaries in self-employment	85	47.6	96.32

Source: Evaluation Primary Data and baseline report

A comparison of targets and actual evaluation results indicate that the project exceeded its targets with regard to these two indicators. The high level of self-employment in agribusiness among the youth also points to higher opportunities for sustainability as these enterprises are practiced mostly at household level, hence they are likely to continue to grow even after the project has closed out.

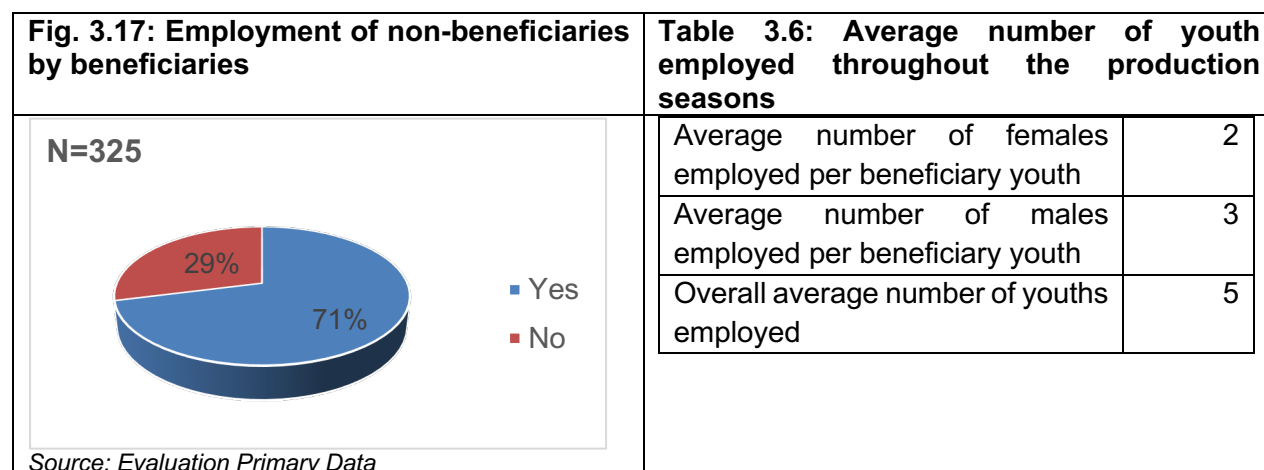
A case of a youth in formal employment

Ayiku Michael is a 23 year-old Youth Model Farmer and chairperson of Odukulu Youth Agribusiness Group, In Zombo district. His group was formed in February 2017, with 30 member (15 males and 15 females). Prior to the project, he was working for Kinyara sugar works as a sugar cane cutter. When the project started, he went through agribusiness training, was supported to do internship for two weeks. He also trained in VSLA/SWAPF methodology and later went for an exposure visit in Mbale, where he experienced what other youths were doing in agribusiness. Given that all the trainings he attended offered him certificates, he later presented them to Kijomolo farmers' Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation, and he was considered for the position of Mobile Money

The above case demonstrates the multiple benefits that can be generated from the interventions. For example, trainings could market the youth beyond the agribusiness sector. Beneficiary youth have demonstrated ability to diversify enterprises on their own, by scanning and utilizing the opportunities in their communities.

b) Youth access to employment in beneficiary youth's enterprises

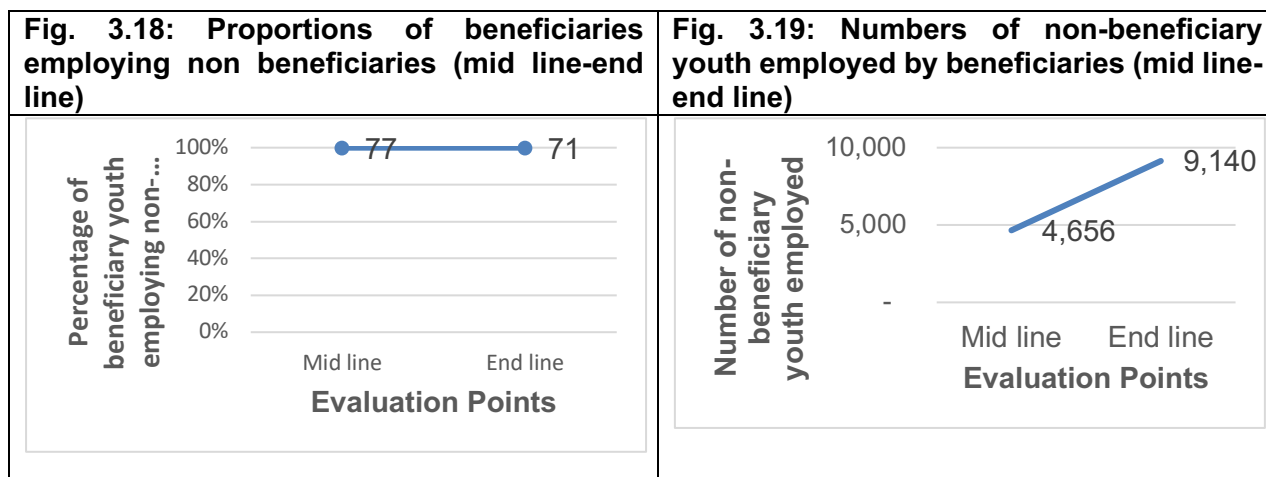
The specific objective of the project was to increase access to employment and self-employment opportunities for beneficiaries. As a way of ensuring employment benefits for the wider community, the project aimed at facilitating beneficiary youth to increase production, which would in turn require more human resources, hence, creation of employment opportunities for non-beneficiaries as well. This section presents the summary of the youth that had employed non-beneficiaries, average number of youth employed and the analysis of trends in this indicator over the project period.



	Estimated number of youth employed by project beneficiaries	9,140 ⁷
Source: Evaluation Primary Data		

Findings indicate that close to three quarters (71%) of respondents had employed someone on their garden or enterprise. This reveals a high level of multiplier effect for employment opportunities. It also shows the relatively growing financial capabilities for the beneficiaries, as they are now even able and willing to invest more in the enterprises and increase production.

Findings were further analysed to ascertain the numbers of non-beneficiary youth that were employed by the beneficiary youth. On average, each of the interviewed beneficiaries had employed 5 youths, whereas all beneficiary youth were estimated to employ 9,140 non-beneficiary youth. Though employment in small-scale agriculture is not constant, the seasonal placements provide opportunities for non-beneficiary youth to sustain themselves and even accumulate productive and other household assets, hence social and economic empowerment. One other possible benefit of such employment opportunities is that the employed youth could learn and replicate the enterprises, hence eventually increasing uptake and development of the promoted enterprises. When asked on the skill requirements among the employed youth, respondents noted that they always trained their employees to enable them execute their assignments appropriately. Consequently, employed youth had acquired basic skills in agronomic practices such as spraying, weeding, nursery bed management and appropriate harvesting among others.



Source: Evaluation Primary Data and mid line report.

Findings reveal that the proportion of beneficiary youth employing non-beneficiaries reduced from 77% at mid line to 71% at end line. This was attributed to the seasonal related challenges, which saw most of the beneficiaries get very low yields and make losses in the first season of 2018. With very high level of dependence on nature and insufficient technologies, horticultural enterprises were affected by drought, hence forcing them to scale down. There was a reported common trend of unfavorable weather during the first season in the year, which usually affects productivity during that period. It is therefore possible that the level of production and employment was low at the time of the evaluation (January 2019), but it is likely to pick up and increase again in the second season.

⁷ This figure is obtained by multiplying the average number of youth employed by the beneficiaries by 45% of all beneficiaries.

Unlike the proportion of youth employing non-beneficiaries, the actual numbers of employed youth increased from 4,656 at mid line to 9,140 at end line. This was attributed to the reported steady increase in production and enterprise diversification efforts undertaken by the beneficiaries. There was evidence of some youth who originally employed 1 person, but as the enterprises continued to stabilize, they were now employing 2-3 people. It is therefore not surprising that the actual number employed was increasing even the numbers of those employing them was dwindling. Besides, the reduction in those employing non-beneficiaries had reduced temporarily due to drought, and is likely to increase when the better season comes in the second half of the year. **3.6.3 Sales turn over and adoption of collective marketing**

a) Sales turnover from youth enterprises

The project tracked amounts of produce that was sold over project implementation time. this data has been categorized in accordance to the time frames. The evaluation has considered secondary data, which was collected and aggregated around the same time as the baseline; mid line and final evaluation points. The monitoring data has been analysed further to ascertain the percentage increase in sales turnover from baseline to mid line, mid line to end line and finally the overall percentage change over project implementation period. Table 3.7 presents the data on sales turn over across the promoted enterprises.

Table 3.7: Sales turnover (amount sold in Kgs)

Enterprises	Baseline	Mid line	Absolute increase Baseline -Mid line	percentage increase Baseline -Mid line	End line	Absolute increase Midline-End line	%age improvement 2017 & 2018	Average % age increase over the project period
Tomatoes (kgs)	0	22,817,995	22,817,995		20,780,000	- 2,037,995	-9	-4.47
Onions (kgs)	34,339,600	101,371,600	67,032,000	195	110,232,000	8,860,400	204	101.97
Cabbages (kgs)	7,071,300	8,191,200	1,119,900	16	9,430,000	1,238,800	31	15.48
Piggery (kgs)	0	14,314,000	14,314,000		176,180,000	161,866,000	1,131	565.41
Total (kgs)	41,410,900	146,694,795	105,283,895		316,622,000	169,927,205		678.40
Overall improvement in sales turnover across all enterprises								169.60

Source: Implementation data

Findings in Table 3.7 reveal the highest sales turn over in the piggery enterprises (565%), between midline and end line. Important to note is that piggery was a completely new enterprise for beneficiaries; hence, this percentage increase was realised between midline and end line. The onion enterprise also enjoyed a high growth in terms of sales turn over, with an average increase 101.97% over the project period. it is also interesting to note that sales turn over for onions increased by 195% between baseline and mid line and then 204% between midline and end line. It is important however to note that onions has always been a prominent enterprise in the sub regions as 34,339,600 kilograms were already being produced at baseline when the project started. The project therefore harnessed an already existing enterprise with better technology, improved breeds, skills development and marketing to realise the impressive increase in sales turnover. Tomatoes

suffered a reduction between mid-line and end line, with a change of -4.47%, which implies slight fall in the amount that was sold. Like piggery, tomatoes was also a new enterprise as there were no sales at baseline. The final evaluation also revealed that tomatoes were the ones most affected by drought, which heavily affected production. It is important that future interventions in the tomato enterprise take significant efforts to promote small-scale irrigation. Challenges with tomatoes and cabbages notwithstanding, an average increase in turnover of 169.6% was realized across all enterprises. This implies that the project still managed to drive a commendable increase in sales amidst the challenges.

b) Adoption of collective marketing practices

Findings reveal that collective marketing was not fully adopted as a strategy. Whereas evidence has revealed collective marketing as a successful strategy for attaining markets and securing better prices, MAYEP beneficiary could not uphold it. The most cited reasons for failure to execute collective marketing were lack of storage facilities and limited awareness of the benefits of collective marketing among the youth. Participants in all FGDs noted that they were sharing market information, as confirmed by one of the respondents in Maracha districts who noted:

“.....for us when someone gets information on where the price is good, he or she informs other colleagues so that they also take their produce there. If a buyer comes and finds little produce, the seller informs other colleagues to bring their products and sell”.

The high potential for collective marketing was also evident in Nebbi and Maracha districts. In Nebbi district, it was reported that traders from DRC usually communicate the days they intend to come to purchase horticultural produce. On the specific days, the youth usually gather their produce in one place where traders come and purchase from several beneficiaries at once. The same strategy was reported in Maracha district, with traders from South Sudan. Though this is not actually collective marketing, it's a good indication that the youth are willing to work together and if rendered more supported, collective marketing will be a reality.

Youth Agri-business Group access to local government financing

The project intended to among other things build the youth groups' capacity to access funding from local governments under the ongoing government programmes. This was done through trainings to build the self-esteem and confidence of the beneficiary youth so as to enable them fulfil the funding requirements for such government programmes. Consequently, nine (9) Youth Agribusiness Groups (YAGs) accessed the local government's Youth Livelihood Program (YLP) funds, whereas 5 YAGs accessed 25,000,000 Uganda Shillings, and 4 YAGs accessed 42,100,000 Uganda Shillings.

Project activities were linked to groups' ability to access funding as illustrated by the interview with AFARD's program manager:

“.....after trainings, they youth are now empowered to actively seek support of the local government structures. Many youth groups have approached lower local governments (sub county authorities) and requested for information on how they can benefit from government programmes. They have also approached the sub county authorities and requested them to come and build their capacity in various areas. This has consequently enabled some youth groups to access government funding”.

An interview with the sub county community development officer for Ndewu sub county confirmed her interface with the youth groups in her sub county and she indeed indicated that some youth had accessed government funding for poverty alleviation through the Youth Livelihood Program (YLP). Though the target of 30% group access to government funding could not be achieved, the

aforementioned achievements demonstrate youth's ability to build on already attained capacity and access government funding.

3.6.4 Partner capacity development

a) AFARD's capacity to document and disseminate best practices

Interviews with AFARD indicated that the partner had taken efforts to document best practices including:

i) VSLA mainstreaming:

After group formation, VSLA was included as an intervention across all groups. Most importantly, the SVLAs were tailored to the needs of the beneficiary youth as well as the project interventions they were involved in. MAYEP's VSLA was referred to as Save for A Productive Purpose (SWAPP), implying that all savings had to be made for a specific purpose. The youth saved a portion of their money for agro inputs, social fund and the ordinary savings to be shared out at the end of the cycle. One other attribute of MAYEP VSLAs that was not ordinary was the 20% that each member left in the group at the time of share-out. This money would be the start of the next cycle for the youth. The remaining 20% of savings was not only found to be a motivation for commitment, but also a good starting point at the beginning of the cycle when most youth are off season for their crops.

ii) The Youth Model Farmers

The project applied a peer farmer-extension model, where trainable youth were identified and trained in modern agronomic practices. These were easy to reach youth who were trained and later trained others. These were also members of the groups, which made it easy for other beneficiary youth to listen to and learn from them. On the other hand, the YMF's trained the youth on their own farms, which enabled them to maintain interest. This model was not only practical, but also evidence based as they trainers indeed reaped more in most cases, hence demonstrating the purpose of training and better agronomic practices to the beneficiary youth. Unlike project officers who could only follow a structured training program, peer extension workers (YMFs) train their colleagues depending on specific needs that arise in the groups. This enhanced relevance of this training model as it addressed the actual needs of the beneficiary youth.

iii) Distribution of start-up kits

Start-up kits have proved to be an 'ignition' for the youth to start off with their agribusinesses as 95% of the youth have been able to start up after receiving the start up kits. This contrasts the previous Food and Agricultural Organization-funded project, in which start up kits were not offered, and 70% of the youth could not start up agribusinesses. This is evidence that the start-up kits were able to help the beneficiary youth start their own agribusinesses.

iv) Tailored vocational skills curriculum

The project developed a tailored curriculum through engagement with the partner vocational training institutes. These courses have proved to be relevant and helpful in addressing the needs of the youth. The training content was practical and engaging for the youth, hence, it emerged as the most applicable especially for the project where more than 50% of beneficiaries have either attained some primary education or never attained any formal education.

The above documented best practices notwithstanding, there is evident need for more organizational capacity building with regard to documentation. Though AFARD has taken some internal efforts to develop such capacity, other donors specifically USAID, KNH and AWO international were reported to have recently noted the need for more capacity building in this area.

b) AFARD's capacity to integrate and monitor gender and social inclusion activities within programming

During project implementation, Self Help Africa provided capacity building to AFARD in gender and social inclusion. AFARD contended that this training was very important as it enabled them as a partner to take measures and fulfil the gender and social inclusion requirements. Youth Agribusiness Groups (YAGs) constituted 50% males and 50% females. This was the main pre-requisite for any group to qualify as a beneficiary group. Training of youth at Vocational Training Institutes and selection of YMFs also considered 50% males and 50% females. Indeed, this was reported to have driven equitable participation of both female and male youth in the project.

The project instituted executive committees to manage affairs of the groups. Though members voted their own leaders, one of the conditions was that a committee had to include at least two females. Practically, this condition was even surpassed as 20% of all groups managed to have more than two females on the committees. The above benefits notwithstanding, AFARD management contended that more training in gender and social inclusion is required. There are occasional staff turnovers in the organization, which necessitates recruitment of new staff. For instance, after the training in gender and social inclusion had been conducted, two MAYEP staff resigned and left the organization, hence there is a clear necessity for continuous trainings to build capacity for the organization's continuity in addressing gender and social inclusion issues.

c) AFARD's ability to seek institutional funding from external donors

During implementation of MAYEP, the partner (AFARD) made break through with numerous projects obtaining funding through competitive proposal writing or referrals. The following donors have since started funding AFARD projects, as presented in Table 3.8:

Table 3.8: AFARD's current donors

Donors	Number of projects funded
USAID Feed the Future	01
Sall Foundation	01
Awo International	01
Manos Unidas	01
Austrian Development Agency	01
Private Sector Foundation Uganda	01
DANIDA ⁸	01
Kindernothilfe	02
Total	09

In total, AFARD has attained funding for nine projects, with 8 of them won through competitive proposals. The partner senior management contended that MAYEP was their main European Union-funded project over the last three years (2016-2018). Management further notes that MAYEP enabled them to learn and master the guidelines for projects and resource management for EU funding. It was reported that MAYEP directly enabled AFARD to win funding for projects. For instance, during application processes for funding from Awo international and Austrian Development Agency, the donors came to conduct due diligence and they were taken to MAYEP sites. This reportedly left the donors contented that AFARD could manage and implement their grants appropriately, hence their selection of AFARD as the funding recipient.

⁸ The donor had expressed interest in funding the farmers' association in the district. However, the district objected to the arrangement, citing limited capacity of the farmers' association in the district. The district instead recommended AFARD for funding basing on the organisational capacity as well as known previous experience and excellence in implementing such projects.

3.7 Sustainability

3.7.1 Project strategies that are likely to ensure sustainability of project achievements

Agribusiness is a sustainable intervention as it does not only have capacity to absorb the largely unemployed rural youth, but it also builds on already existing agricultural enterprise streams in the communities. For examples, these communities were growing the horticultural crops though mainly on a subsistence level. Project interventions have made the enterprises structured and boosted production; hence, they are likely to progress further and continue beyond project interventions. Improved breeds have been introduced and skills have been developed, making the sector more interesting for the youth. Interestingly, the project has indirectly steered diversification, with many youth venturing into many other enterprises concurrently. As a source of both income and food, agribusiness is likely to keep growing even beyond project implementation.

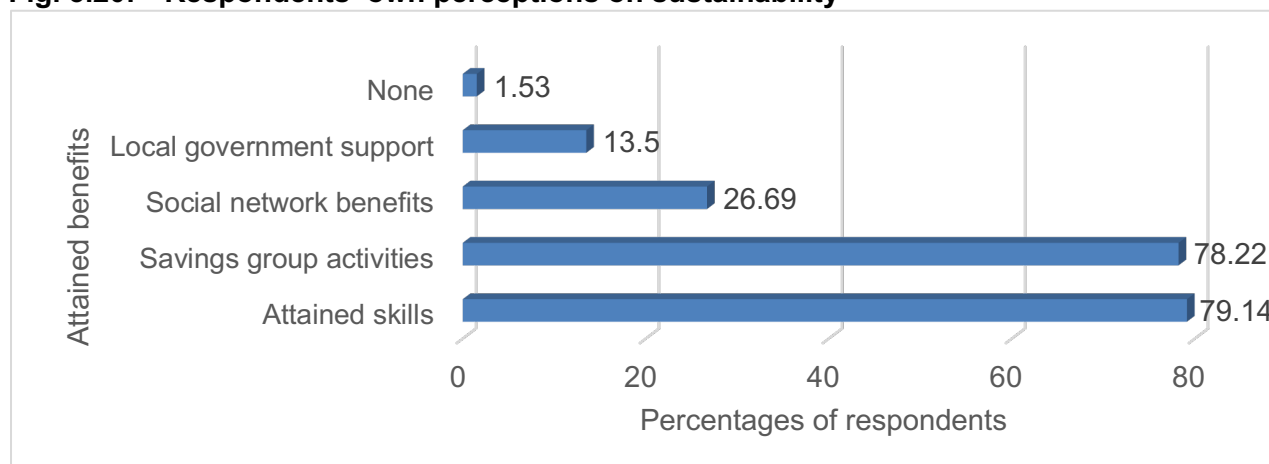
Skills development is a sustainable approach as these skills are likely to be applied beyond project intervention. The Young Model Farmers have proved to be key players in their communities as they train people even outside their communities. For instance, one of the YMFs in Maracha district was now training other people including non-youth and students in local schools. He has developed a piggery farm that is frequently visited by other people including students to gain practical learning on piggery. He is also in early stages of collaborating with the districts to develop capacity of the youth in other projects. This is evidence that such skill development strategies will not only scale out to the community, but they can continue without MAYEP project support.

The tailored VSLA methodology (SWAPP) has been well embraced by beneficiaries and is likely to continue beyond project life. This intervention was highly regarded by the beneficiaries as it fits into their needs. For example saving for agro-inputs is a unique ingredient of the VSLA methodology that attracts interest of the beneficiary youth. It is also important to note that VSLA keeps the youth together, hence generating the group and social capital benefits for mutual support. Some of the youth had dropped out of the groups; but opted to remain as members of the VSLAs. In Nebbi district, a group of youth was reported to have left their community for Pakwach for better land to pursue their agribusiness interests. However, they informed their groups and asked to remain in the VSLA group. They were indeed sending their savings whenever it was time for saving. In Maracha district (Odukulu Youth Agribusiness Group), some youth had left the community, and enrolled in school or gone for other business ventures. However, their parents and other family members were still saving for them and participating in other VSLA related activities. This is all evidence that such groups are likely to evolve and continue beyond project interventions as all these positive dynamics without project support or suggestions.

There have been significant efforts to integrate the project groups into government programs and, though this has not been so widespread, it is growing. Access to funding through programs such as the Youth Livelihood Program. Indeed, nine groups have already accessed the government program funds. With the ongoing government efforts to organise the youth into groups and support them collectively, this is evidence that the groups can continue getting funding and other forms of support. This has been achieved by integrating groups into the existing systems at local government level. For example, these groups are all registered at the local government offices and are in close connection with the community development offices at the sub county and district levels. During data collection, the community development officer at Ndewu sub-county (Nebbi district) gave testimony to this and pledged support for the groups as she is already knows them and contributed significantly in building their capacity. This will continue beyond project implementation.

In efforts to triangulate data on sustainability, respondents were asked the benefits they believed would continue after the project has closed out. Fig 3.20 presents the findings.

Fig. 3.20: Respondents' own perceptions on sustainability



When asked their opinions on benefits they believed would continue beyond the project, 79.14% of respondents believed that the skills they attained will always help them to sustain themselves. This is indeed true as the skills go beyond agribusiness. Life skills for instance help the beneficiaries to take charge of their own lives and socially pursue their dreams and fit in their communities. Similarly, 78.22% of respondents believes that saving group activities and associated benefits would continue. This has been demonstrated by qualitative data as stated in the above section. It's not surprising that a less proportion (13.5%) of respondents perceived sustainability of local government benefits as government support is usually overwhelmed by those in need. There is also a tendency of the youth to only believe in money as a benefit from government, hence creating unrealistic expectations in some cases. Future programming should emphasise other benefits such as trainings, information sharing and other forms of capacity building that can be tapped from government offices and programs.

3.7.2 Institutional sustainability

Manzo Youth Empowerment Project was designed with a strong partnership strategy that was meant to build local capacity and generate synergies from other key implementing partners. This strategy brought a local partner on board (AFARD) right at the time of project design. This was AFARD's first major EU-funded project. The partner contends that they have learnt a lot through this project, and this has enabled them to enhance their capacity in implementation and management of such projects. The evaluation revealed that MAYEP has given the organization substantial experience with regard to guidelines and procedures for managing EU grants as it came with intensive training on the guidelines and fundraising as well. Consequently, the partner already won two grants on presentation of MAYEP as their main implementation strength. For instance, on visiting MAYEP sites, AWO international and Austrian Development Agency offered the partner funding for two more projects. This is evidence that AFARD currently has better capacity as an institution as is likely to continue such benefits.

The project was implemented with participation of the local government at higher (district) and lower (sub county) local government levels. This has given the project an advantage in terms of key skills contribution, and linkage to government programs. The production departments at the districts and community development departments at sub county levels were involved. Indeed this has demonstrated benefits during implementation and posits to possible benefits in the future as groups are now registered and known to government for possible support. The community development officers at sub county levels have pledged to continue supporting groups with capacity building and linking them to other government programs such as the Youth Livelihood Program.

However, there is need for integrated approach while building these partnerships. Whereas there was overwhelming evidence of participation of community development officers at sub county levels, engagement with the extension workers was almost missing, yet with an agribusiness project, they are very key to supplement skills development and offer technical expertise. For example, it was reported that the local veterinary office was only engaged at the at the time when piggery groups got a disease attacks. This is a challenges that could have been averted on time if the veterinary office had been engaged earlier. An interview with the district veterinary officer at Nebbi district revealed that authorities have always known the area to be prone to African Swine Fever, and they would have closely watched the groups and offered specific technical support. Therefore, an integrated approach would have brought to the project all the necessary local government support for the groups. Stakeholder engagement should not just focus on districts, but rather on all relevant departments within the beneficiary districts.

3.7.3 Challenges to sustainability

Like other areas in Uganda, West Nile faces a challenge of the youth's a negative mindset on agriculture coupled with the very high mobility of the youth. It's common for the youth in Uganda to look out for business ventures that are perceived to bring money very quickly, such as the motorcycle public transport commonly known as *boda boda*. Given the location of project districts at the border with South Sudan, it's common for the youth to go to South Sudan to do casual work. Whereas agribusiness is one of the fastest growing sectors and evidently capable of resolving the challenge of youth unemployment, many youth may not appreciate it easily. Poo piggery group in Maracha district almost disintegrated completely as members dropped off for other activities, including three that reportedly went to South Sudan for casual jobs. Another one (Rikaboo piggery project) in the same district lost seven out of the 30 members to other activities in and outside their community. This is a challenge to sustainability if stakeholders do not continue efforts to address the challenge of negative mindset.

Agriculture continues to suffer unique challenges including drought, pests and diseases. These make agribusiness a very delicate venture that requires adequate skills, drastic actions and improved technologies. These challenges were found to be so frustrating for the youth, worsening the negative mindset and on many occasions pushing the youth into other ventures. For examples, after loosing their pigs to African Swine Fever, many youths in piggery groups unceremoniously switched to horticultural projects, yet they had not received training in horticulture. In Maracha district, after experiencing challenges with cabbage diseases, a number of youth abruptly switched to onion growing. After abruptly switching to other enterprises, it likely that productivity will be so low as they don't have adequate skills to grow their enterprise in the short run. It is also likely to grow more frustration as efforts get fragmented on various projects. These challenges are likely to compromise sustainability with more youth either running to other ventures prematurely or even shunning agribusiness projects.

Access to land remains a risk to activity continuation and sustainability of project benefits. Mmany youths are operating their enterprises on rented land. Beneficiaries expressed complaints and fears of landowners turning against beneficiaries in cases where land was rented. For instance, after intensive efforts in clearing and treating the soil with manure for one season, the landowners could come up and claim their land to use it for other purposes. This may not only fuel conflicts in communities, but it could also frustrate beneficiaries, pushing them out of agribusiness. Future programming should find mechanisms for addressing the issue of access to land to ensure continuity of activities and benefits.

The group activity approach has proved to be unsustainable for agribusiness development. After group formation, some youth dropped off gradually from the groups. Even in cases where the groups survived, cohesion within the groups became difficult, as beneficiaries could not take individual responsibility for the groups. The project took efforts to address challenges, where the

young model farmers owned the gardens and used them to train their group members. This changes however has its own challenges as the YMF may not be able to train all beneficiaries in a number of groups in their own garden. It is therefore important that future programming re-think the group based approach to ensure that individuals take responsibility and look forward to continuity of activities and project benefits.

Collective marketing is a potentially successful strategy for attaining markets and securing better prices for farmers. However, there has been inadequate infrastructure to promote this strategy. There are no suitable storage facilities for the perishable horticultural products, together with limited awareness of the benefits of collective marketing among the youth. Even though some groups tried to do collective marketing by aggregating their produce on the days of making sales, the project has not consolidated it as a key strategy. It is therefore likely that even the few gains that were made during project implementation will be lost after project closeout.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

Agribusiness interventions for the youth have immense potential to create employment. The project has demonstrated that agriculture is the best possible employer for the rural youth, especially those that do not have educational qualifications. The project was implemented in line with national development agenda (National Development Plan II), which focuses on creating employment opportunities for the youth. Evaluation data has proved that the sector even has potential to employ non-direct beneficiary youth, with 71% of beneficiaries who were able to employ at least one other person (fellow youth) in their enterprise. With 96.32% of the youth who contended that they had obtained a worthy self-employment opportunity in agribusiness by taking part in the project, the potential for such projects to create employment cannot be overemphasized.

Agribusiness is capable of increase income for the youth in rural areas. This is demonstrated by the steady increase in incomes for the youth over the project period. It is interesting that average income increased 76.6% between mid-line and end line, and this is not surprising as it is evident that beneficiaries increased their efforts to produce more, diversified their incomes and engaged more in the VSLA/SWAPP groups. On average, beneficiaries' incomes increased two-fold, indicating that project efforts yielded real change. Moreover, increase in incomes came with an increase in ownership of productive assets and other household assets. The former imply increase in investment whereas the latter projects a possible improvement in beneficiaries' social welfare. The increase in income is therefore not a mere change in the money they earn, but rather reflection of a possible change in the socio-economic welfare of project beneficiaries.

The project demonstrated that agri-skills development is a suitable and sustainable approach for empowering the youth in rural areas. The trained youth have largely participated in the enterprises; they have applied appropriate agronomic practices. This is evidenced by the increase production and financial returns from the enterprises. Whereas it is important to acknowledge cases of inadequate application of such modern agronomic practices that resulted into challenges like death of pigs and loss of cabbage gardens, great success has been registered. The successful skills development and application of agronomic best practices should be scaled up in future interventions to increase or create benefits for the already existing and new beneficiaries of such interventions.

Life skills development is an appropriate intervention as it empowers the youth with complementary skills not only in agribusiness, but also in other aspects of their lives. With close to a half of respondents (47.24%) that only attained primary education, it is important agro-skills development is accompanied with relevant training packages that can enhance their ability to for instance communicate easily, use appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms, and believe in themselves among others. Indeed, 98% of beneficiaries expressed a feeling of self-worth, implying that they believed they were living worthy lives and in charge of the affairs that affect them, and could also improve their lives on their own. Interestingly, female married youth contended that life skills development had helped them to be better in their marriage lives, hence being able to address their family challenges in a better manner. This demonstrates the far-reaching impact of the life skills training intervention.

Locally grown interventions are capable of addressing the challenge of negative mindset against agriculture among the youth, and increase youth participation in agriculture. The interventions in MAYEP project built on already existing potential for agribusiness enterprises in the target districts. Various studies have revealed a very low mindset against agriculture among the youth, yet other studies have confirmed that agriculture has potential to transform Uganda through employment creating for the youth. The project had 2,575 youth at the time of its closure, out of the targeted 3,000 youths. This represents an attrition rate of 14%, yet some youth were reported to have shifted

to other areas specifically to do agribusiness. This is evidence that the biggest proportion of the targeted youth had embraced agribusiness.

The implementation partnership is key in building local capacity and synergies. Whereas SHA did not necessarily have an office in West Nile, the project was implemented through a partnership with AFARD. This has yielded benefits beyond implementation of MAYEP. The partner has attained funding for 8 other projects during MAYEP implementation period through competitive applications. During this period, MAYEP was the main European Union-funded project. Findings reveal that MAYEP enabled AFARD develop institutional capacity to understand the guidelines for projects and resource management for EU funding, hence their ability to win funding for other projects. For instance, during application processes for funding from Awo international and Austrian Development Agency, the donors came to conduct due diligence and they were taken to MAYEP sites. Both proposals were eventually selected for funding. This is evidence that the project has contributed greatly towards longer-term capacity building for the partner.

There is clear evidence of replicability of the interventions and good practices, with more youth taking on new enterprises and learning better skills from their colleagues that are doing relatively well. There were many cases where a group started with an enterprise such as onions, and as time went on, they realised that other enterprises were also productive. Consequently, there are many reports of beneficiaries that had started with specific enterprises but later diversified into multiple ventures. Interestingly, some beneficiaries were even able to scan the market and venture into completely new enterprises that has not been promoted by the project. Three of the groups had decided to venture into growing irish potatoes after scanning the market on their own and realising that irish potatoes were a profitable venture. With such personal initiatives growing rapidly, the enterprises are likely to continue growing after project closeout.

4.2 Recommendations

The consultant makes recommendations based on the findings of the evaluation; most especially the challenges faced and needs of the beneficiaries. It is important that future programing by SHA, implementing partner (AFARD) or even other stakeholders consider the following recommendations to ensure maximum benefits and sustainability.

Increased engagement with the youth on mind-set change for higher appreciation for agriculture: Various stakeholders including government, CSOs, religious and opinion leaders should come together and demonstrate to the youth that agriculture is a worthy sector to work in. More exposure visits should organised to enable the youth see and experience more success stories in agribusiness, specifically by the youth.

Exploring potential export markets in the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan: Some youth have been exporting their horticultural products to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, the civil conflict in South Sudan notwithstanding. Groups and individual beneficiaries took their own initiatives to find market for their produce by connecting to individual traders in both countries. This was a good opportunity, but mainly for those that live very close to the borders. With deliberate support and efforts to create a formal structured market arrangement, the growing markets in the two neighbouring countries could boost production and income for the beneficiary and non-beneficiary youth

Review of the group based learning sites approach: Group based learning is a positive strategy as it is not only cost-effective, but also enables beneficiaries to support each other through cross learning. However, some of the enterprises (such as piggery) are either labour intensive or susceptible to disease outbreaks. It is important that such an enterprises receive very close and constant attention for feeding, cleaning, watering, and monitoring among others. Fulfilling the aforementioned needs requires individual responsibility, which has not been fulfilled by groups. It is

therefore important to analyse the challenges and address them to devise coping mechanisms and improve the group based strategy of implementation.

Partnership enhancement: The project took substantial efforts to engage with the beneficiary districts and sub counties. However, the partnerships seems to have been built mainly with the community development offices almost leaving out the agricultural/veterinary offices completely. Though close collaboration with the community development office cannot be trivialised, there was need for crop or livestock related technical support from the district. Indeed when the piggery groups lost pigs to disease attacks, it's the district veterinary officers that conducted post-mortem tests on the carcasses and gave the affected groups relevant technical assistance. These losses could have been averted if district and sub county officers had been involved earlier. Veterinary specialists could have detected risk factors and advised accordingly. There should be an integrated partnership building approach, with all relevant higher and lower local government departments to seek their support with specific roles.

Early planning, procurements and transfer of funds for project interventions

Delayed planning and transfer of funds or procurement processes can potentially stall many interventions in the project. In the case of MAYEP, beneficiaries experienced losses as result of delayed start up kits including planting materials. Future interventions should therefore ensure that planning, procurements and transfer of funds are done in a timely manner to avoid delay of interventions, or even failure to execute some interventions during project life.

Construction commodity bulking centres: collective marketing did not succeed mainly because of limited storage facilities for the perishable horticultural products. Even when some of the youth tried to sell collectively, they had to gather their products in open air and on the same day, they were sure that the buyers would come. This did not only pose quality related challenges, but it also demotivated the youth as they were not assured of their products' safety. It is therefore important that future interventions establish built up bulking centers, with appropriate storage facilities. These can help the youth to store their produce for some time and coordinate with buyers. It is also likely to give beneficiaries an assurance that they will be supported beyond project implementation as such infrastructural facilities would remain for them in their communities.

Annex I: Performance Indicator Matrix

Project performance indicator level	Indicator	Target	Achieved	Remarks
Impact				
Contribute to sustainable poverty reduction among youth in West Nile Region, Northern Uganda	% change in average income of target youth	25%	103.08%	Exceeded target
	% increase in ownership of productive assets	10%	18.3%	Exceeded target
	Increased decision making power among the of female youth		14.08%	
Outcomes				
Outcome1: Increased female & male youth in sustainable gainful employment / self-employment in the agricultural Value chain	% of targeted unemployed youth gain formal employment. (Where formal employment means being engaged at a salary in whatever field of work)	10%	18.1%	Exceeded target
Outcome2: Improved YAG support to sustainable female & male youth employability	% of trained youth working within the promoted agricultural value chains	85%	96.32%	Exceeded target
Outcome3: Improved environment for female and male youth employment and development	% of self-employed youth employ non-targeted youth (total: 1,500)	85%	71%	Target not attained
Outputs				
Output1: – Improved female and male youth skills and knowledge to benefit economically through employment/ self-employment and nutritionally from selected agricultural value chains	% increase in average production levels for selected commodities	50%	111.08%	Exceeded target
Output2: Improved YAG skill and Organisational capacity to support agribusiness value chain	% of trained youth that adopt good agronomic practices	80%	94.67%	Exceeded target
Output3: Engagement of youths and youth networks with relevant local government and regional platforms on policy processes for increased economic benefit	% of youth have savings in financial institutions	85%	86%	Exceeded target
	% of youth that report positive benefits of life skills taught	65%	98% ⁹	Exceeded target
	Vocational training institutions have improved and strengthened curricula			Achieved
ER2 – 85% of 3,000 youth achieve increased income from sustainable employment/ self-employment opportunities in the agricultural sector	% increase in sales turnover from youth enterprises	50%	169.6%	Exceeded target
	% of youth groups adopt collective marketing practices	85%		Not achieved
ER3 – The youth environment is conducive to youth employment and effective civil society-government dialogue platforms are established	3.1 1 youth-friendly policy developed and adopted per district			Fully achieved
	% of groups that access local government funds for self-employment	30%	3%	Target not attained
ER4 – One local development CSO (AFARD) has strengthened capacity for external communication and management of agricultural development interventions.	AFARD have improved capacity to document and disseminate best practice			Achieved
	AFARD have improved capacity to integrate and monitor gender and social inclusion activities within programming			Achieved
	AFARD have increased ability to seek institutional funding from external donors			Achieved

⁹ This is the proportion of beneficiary youth that reported a feeling of self worth as a result of participation in life skills trainings and other project activities.