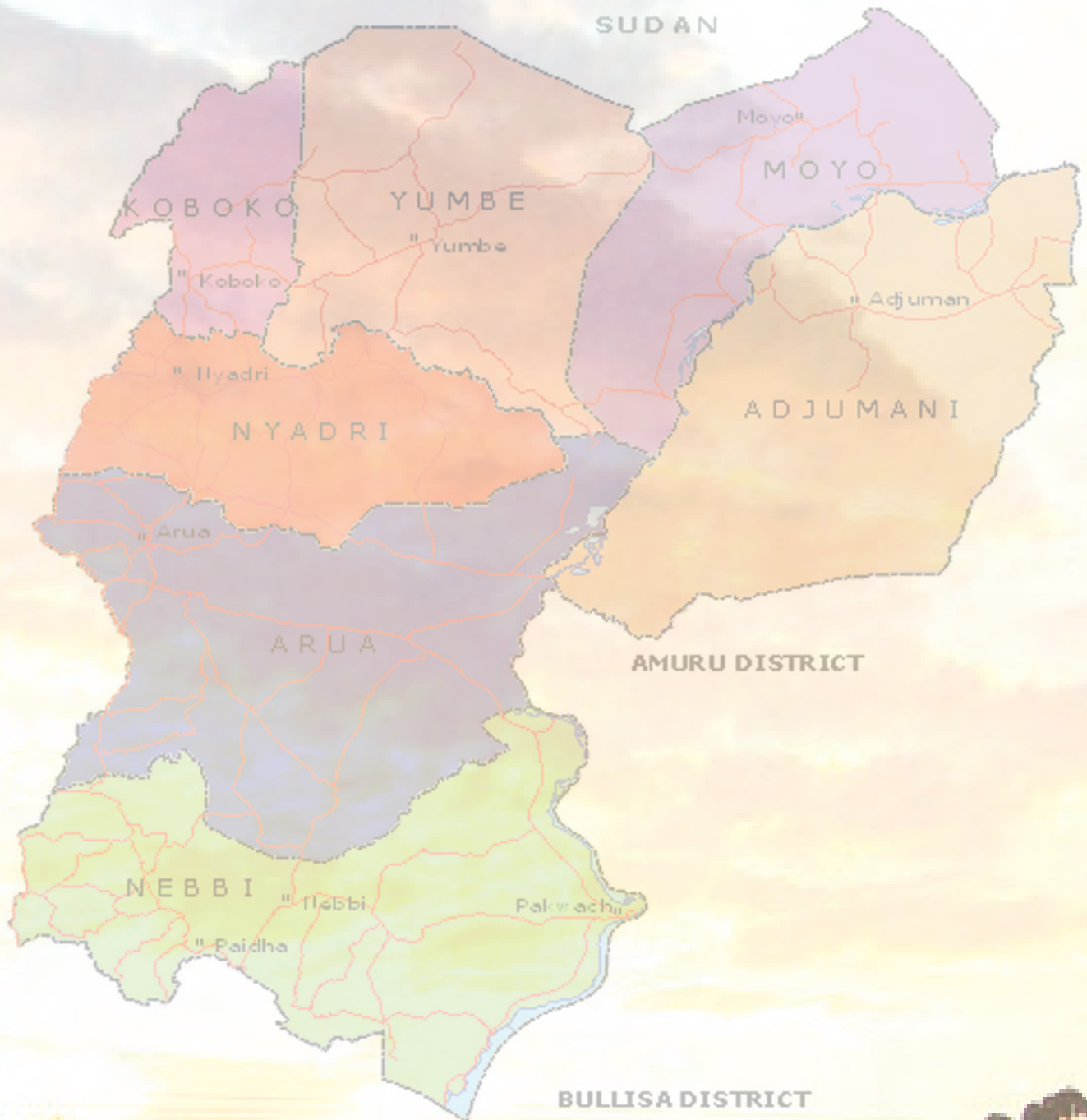


# West Nile

## Development Brief

Issue 1, December 2008



# EDITOR'S NOTE



Although AFARD was formally registered in 2000, the idea to start it was hatched in 1999 by sons and daughters of West Nile region. Then the founder members had only, as assets, their broad academic qualifications, exposure, and year-worked experiences. These assets were too inadequate to move the region forward.

It was at the registration time that Gorta intervened to provide a start-up fund for operationalizing the ideas AFARD had developed. This was a unique opportunity in an arena where how old you are in the NGO business determines donor funding. Since then, the development relationship between Gorta and AFARD has continued to grow stronger. The last two visits by David O' Connor and Deirdre Fox in 2005 and later by D. Fox, Kehoe Brown, and Martin Claire in 2007 were the pinnacles of this relationship. These visits resulted into Gorta's attention to a consolidated funding support to the West Nile region. Since then, Gorta has reached out to 2,146 households (51% of which are women-headed) and approximately 12,000 people with more than €600,000.

Gorta uses a multi-funding approach. Beneficiary organizations receive project funds directly onto their accounts. AFARD acting as Gorta's eyes, ears, and hands is also funded for organizational development and monitoring purposes.

This first publication is an endeavor to highlight what Gorta support is doing in the West Nile region. It specifies who is being supported, where, and for what development focus. The issue also demonstrates how simple projects undertaken by the communities can transform many lives. The objective is to provide information to the beneficiaries and the general public thus promoting cross-learning in the process. Sharing these insights do indicate that there is indeed a beacon of hope, a much needed message for transformation.

Nice reading!

Dr. Alfred Lakwo

# WHY THE FOCUS ON WEST NILE REGION

Dr. Alfred Lakwo, Programme Director



Visit by Gorta team

Gorta supports development projects in India, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Uganda. With respect to Uganda, in the last 2 years attention has been focused on the West Nile region. Why? This article attempts to provide the justification for such a consolidated support to the region.

First, West Nile has been politically marginalized because of the late Idi Amin. As a president, he cared less to start charity at home. As such, the region is always being asked: 'What did your own son do for you? If he did not, why should others? More so, the districts of Arua, Koboko, Nyadri, Yumbe, Moyo and Adjumani have been affected by dissident rebel forces against the National Resistant Movement (NRM). This created lost generation from refugee conditions that retarded the zeal for development in the region.

Second, the region has witnessed marginal trickle down effects from the current impressive

Uganda's poverty reduction. While nationally consumption poverty fell from 56 per cent in 1992 to 31 per cent (25 per cent reduction) in 2006, in West Nile like in northern Uganda the fall was from 71% to 61% (ten per cent reduction) in the same period. This means that while on average in Uganda it is assumed that only 3 in 10 people are consumption poor, in West Nile the number is twice (6 in 10 people).

Third, for nearly three decades, West Nile has been exposed and negatively affected by the political turbulence in southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Acholi sub-region. Thus, the region has experienced enormous roadblocks to development from forces such as refugees, ambushes, unstable market conditions and infrastructural deficiency.

Fourth, the current signs of peace in Southern Sudan and Acholi sub-region came along with NGO isolation of West Nile. A number of

humanitarian and rehabilitation services that benefited some of the districts in the region relocated. What has emerged are muscle-less village groups which lack management and technical skills, funds, and friends to drive local development.

Finally, Gorta has trust that the West Nile region has one of its long-term partners, AFARD, that has grown over the years in to a cock that can rock endogenous development drive in the region. AFARD's Board, Management, connections, and operational capacity reckon a firm leverage for building local development. This is why the acting Gorta CEO- Mr. Pat McFeely commented, 'Gorta needs more AFARD globally'.

It is for this reason that the region is the center of attention for Gorta funding in Uganda. Our task, therefore, remains to nurture this focused attention responsively and accountably. ■

# WHERE GORTA SUPPORT IS GOING

Florence Candiru, Finance and Administration Manager

In the last two years, AFARD and Gorta have been working in collaboration to jointly identify, vet, fund, and mentor beneficiary organizations for self-development. The selected beneficiary organizations are supported to develop own seven years concept as their change vision and annual plans towards that vision. Thereafter, they receive project funds annually to operationalize their plans.

As is summarized in Table 1 below, in 2008 alone Gorta supported 29 beneficiary organizations who are working mainly in income, food, and health security building as their core development needs.

**Table 1: Beneficiary organizations receiving Gorta-support**

District	Lower Local Government	Beneficiary	Sector
Nebbi	Jangokoro	Utimkisa Group, JODPAC, and Congambe Women Group	Food and Income Security
	Panyango	Kwerkabucan, Anyegele and Mungujakisa Group	Food and Income Security
	Nebbi Town Council	Mungu Lonyo Group	Food and Income Security
	Panyimur	Lokokura Group, Dei Post Test Club and Panyimur Parish	Food and Income and health Security
	Erussi	Orussi Parish	Health Security
	Wadelai	wadelai Parish	Food and Income Security
	Zeu	Zeu Parish	Food and Income Security
	Paidha SC/TC	Paidha Parish and Valley Farm Group	Food and Income Security and Orphans Care
	Nebbi Town Council	Ave Maria Group	Food and Income Security
	Nyaravur	Nyaravur Rural Comm. Ini. For Dev't	Food and Income Security
	Kango	Kango Parish	Food and Income Security
	Pakwach Town Council	Pakwach parish	Food and Income Security
	Nyapea	Nyapea parish	Food and Income Security
Arua	Rhinocamp	Rhino camp Parish	Food and Income Security
Yumbe	Drajini	Naku Group, Matu Group, Okuvuru Group, Odokibo Group, Lodonga HH Dev't Assoc., OATC, Yiba Group	Food and Income Security





# Whose Needs?

## Empowering communities to identify their real needs

*Wilfred Cwinyai, Community Development Manager*

It is common practice that different development agencies the world over use different approaches to identify and fund development activities. For instance, local governments receive their funds mainly from central government and are expected to meet national priorities first.

What this local government approach that is also used by some NGOs means is that national or funders' priorities takes precedence over local ones however authentic they are. Such agencies are therefore 'commanded' as a must to dance to the tune of their funders even if they wanted to play their own tunes.

Contrary to this approach, Gorta and AFARD focusing on local endogenous development fund projects after careful selection of marginalized areas/beneficiaries. The beneficiaries are the ones who are facilitated to identify the main changes (goals) they desire in their lives, in other words creating their own vision. They are collectively challenged to identify how they can realistically reach those goals.

Collectively identified strategies and activities are the ones that receive funding. The funds come to provide an ignition for the beneficiaries to start building both collectively in groups and individually in their households' initiatives that can improve their livelihoods. Inherent in this approach is that the targeted poor are empowered to have their efforts and those of others directed towards fighting the root causes of their poverty.

The centrality of this approach is that people are not victims of poverty. Neither are they hopeless nor helpless. Rather, they are active actors who amidst all odds struggle daily to secure bread on their 'tables'. Thus, all they need is empowerment to do better what they are good at but not hand-outs that can bring shame to a people who pride themselves in being providers.

Gorta and AFARD therefore do not bring projects. We simply propel people to start their own projects. We also work with them to help them manage their projects well but also to hold each other accountable.

This approach has provided us very immeasurable insights into development challenges and what works. For instance, some beneficiaries that had initially submitted projects to Gorta for refrigerated fishing gears and scholarship funds for selected children, after a careful facilitation they realized they simply wanted seeds and start-up funds for loans to do what they already know and can help them achieve what they need like educating their children. They wondered for how long they will be given development if they can not be facilitated to fend for themselves.

This means the people are powerful and have great ideas for development. More importantly, this participatory approach has brought to light how often development agencies and (village) elites capture communities to implement 'imposed' and none vital projects that suit their needs rather than those of the communities. ■





# The Animal Traction Technology: Increasing Smallholder Productivity

*Kemiss-O-Pimundu, Field Officer, Crop Production Specialist*

## Farming practice

The people of West Nile mainly practice subsistence farming as their major livelihood activity. Like most activities, farming is gendered in the sense that the so-called 'hard' labor activities like slashing and opening up land are a male preserve while planting, weeding, and harvest are largely women's domain. Farming is still done largely on small scale using rudimentary tools with the hand hoes as the main implement used.

This means that the farming practices is characterized by small farm sizes that result into very low yield per unit area and inadequate food and money. Not a surprise, the region continues to experience high poverty incidences characterized in part by lack of basic needs like salt, soap, paraffin, sugar, clothes and also basic social services like health and education.

## Promoting animal traction technology

The above situation is compounded by the misconception that smallholders' farmers cannot change their farming habits. No! They can. Some of the projects supported by Gorta and AFARD have demonstrated this with blinding clarity. The Nyaravur Rural Community Initiative for Development Association, pilot tested the Animal Traction Technology (ATT) in 2006. The results were incredible and beyond imagination. This led to the ATT replication in Wadelai, Kalowang, Odokibo and Yiba in 2008, all with commendable success.

## The results this far

From the ATT, women have also taken on land opening roles that hitherto were considered hard labor demanding and a task that can only be managed by men. Farm sizes have increased from 0.5 acre to 1 acre per beneficiary. Equally, beneficiaries

have reported increased yields and improvements in food availability as well as cash incomes. In essence, the project is literally killing two birds with one stone, economically empowering the people and also bridging the gender gap and demystifying gender roles in the process. Mr. George Adubango of Nyaravur had this to say:

When you see our members, they look old and frail. You will simply conclude that they can no longer engage in active farming. You will be proved wrong. These women and men have a minimum of 1 acre from 0.25-0.5 acres before. All have at least cassava and maize as cash and food crops. They are also expecting a minimum of UGX 1.0000.000 each from their next harvest. This sum of money many of us never in our lives dreamt was possible.

It is such a thrilling result that has compelled almost all beneficiary agencies in the lowland terrain to request for ATT come 2009. The demand chorus is 'we all want to get rich'. There is no stopping a determined and empowered people whose perspectives about development have changed from succeeding, and they will. The ATT obviously provide more learning lessons of unlimited possibilities for development of local people. ■





# In Search For Incomes: From Cash Crops to Food Crops

*Atona E. Alex, Field Officer, Livestock Production specialist & Kemiss O. Pimundu, Crop Production Specialist*

In the early 1990s, few people thought globalization would impact on rural areas especially in Africa. They were mistaken. 'There is no where to run' remarked an elder in Rhinocamp Parish. The global village is what we are seeing everyday in our backyard. It is coming in various forms and its best medium is MONEY. 'With money one can have the key to even heaven' joked a woman in Yiba. 'Without money' the Programme Director AFARD, Dr. Alfred Lakwo remarked,

*You will die very early in the morning and get buried in the afternoon and by evening you are erased from societal history, forever. Yet with it, death will wait until evening because every ways and means will be tried to keep you alive. You will have more hours to live and longer time to be buried and remembered.*

It is in this spirit that Gorta support, that we know will not last forever, is also used to support the abilities of beneficiaries to make money. The more money they make will enable them to save in cash and material assets, invest, and start living sustainable livelihoods. In this way, Gorta-AFARD will be enabled to look for other people who have not yet been reached out to thereby spreading the fight against hunger and poverty.

This support outlook is considered vital because traditionally many households depend on one source of livelihood - farming or fishing. Intermittently for survival people sell their labor for salt or some women periodically brew local potent gin. Yet, profit maximization is

not considered a key issue.

That story is now changing with entrepreneurship skills development. Livelihoods diversification is taking shape. Many beneficiaries are now either growing crops specifically for sale or engaging in trade between cropping seasons.

In Ave Maria Kalowang and Nyaravur, group members planted improved cassava for sale. One year later they topped all other groups when they raised after selling only the cuttings for UGX 6 million and UGX 5 million respectively. With these funds, they were able to co-fund the building of their Gari-technology houses. Ave Maria Kalowang Group is now planning to start own revolving credit scheme. Meanwhile, the Sister's community with which the grassroots community is working was able to use the proceeds from its cassava cutting for roofing iron sheets for the Sisters' house under construction.

It may be recalled that Nebbi district was historically semi-gazetted for cash crop production of only arabica coffee in the highland and cotton in the lowland areas. 'Many people grew old without imagining they can raise money from other crops' commented an elder in Orussi community.

From these traditional cash crops farmers had two coffee harvest seasons and a single harvest of cotton. And with yield prices determined by buyers and their middlemen, many families could hardly raise UGX 100,000 after every harvest despite taking a lot of family labor and

time. More importantly, food crops were neglected. The other dimension to the cash crop production was that they were mainly managed by men there by consolidating their money power.

However, in order to engender farming practices agro-technologies able to generate incomes for poor women and men needed due attention. And Gorta-support is directed towards promoting crops for food and also generating income. Irish potato farming especially in the highland areas have been favored.

This 90-days crop has a high yield and market value. For instance, from one basin of seeds one is able to get at least 6 basins (worth UGX 90, 000). Besides, the crop is not a preserve of men. It is also grown by women without social hindrances. This has balanced women's and men's access to income; enhanced households' access to nutritious food; and promoted producer-buyer price negotiation in an arena free from middlemen exploitation.

Congambe women's group in Jangokoro in the first season of 2008 was able to earn UGX 900,000 with each member earning at least UGX 200,000. The group has now invested its income into a revolving fund wherefrom its members are accessing business booster capital in an area devoid of financial services.

If nurtured, this will serve as a real big push for the region as people focus on generating income and good food from the same venture. ■

# If Skills Training is Expensive, *Ask Zeu*

Wilfred Cwinyai, Community Development Manager

Many farmers lack access to extensive services. In West Nile only 4 out of 10 farmers access government extension outreach that largely favor 'contact farmers'. This approach of adding more to those who already have as the Bible postulates means that many farmers have resigned to their indigenous technology and knowledge (ITK). Good as ITK is, it does not suit well with modern research hybrid crops and livestock unadapted. Hybrid varieties come with their own demands of inputs and skills is but one of such demands.

## What happened?

With the desire to ensure that the 100 households in Zeu tap into their agro-ecological advantage for Irish potato farming Gorta-support in 2008 provided them the opportunity to farm improved Irish potatoes.

Through the network arrangement, improved seeds were procured for beneficiaries in Jangokoro, Orussi and Zeu from the nationally approved multiplication center in Kabale. The seeds bought at the same time were also distributed to all beneficiaries on the same day.

The only production difference between all these beneficiaries was that while the others accepted skills training with which to grow the new potato variety, those in Zeu claimed that they had adequate knowledge and skills for Irish potato production. In a meeting, their Coordinator emphasized that people in Zeu have grown Irish potatoes since time immemorial. They could be the best trainers for others. Attempts to explain to them that what they knew were deficient for the new varieties fell on deaf ears. 'What more?' the network wondered. Zeu team was resigned to what the Alur say, 'a male tortoise is judged by a burning fire'. This is what happened.

## Zeu beneficiaries: The female tortoise

The review meeting held around harvest time revealed that while beneficiaries in Jangokoro and Orussi were expecting bumper harvest those in Zeu were crying foul that they were supplied with diseased seeds. All their potatoes had been diseased and no one was expecting more than 5 basins of harvest.

Explanations by the Crop Production Specialist shed more light among the different members who were wondering on the root cause of such disparities. He noted that the new technology needed more than ITK for an effective management of the 90 days right from field choice, planting style, field hygiene, mandatory organic pesticide application and pre-harvest requirements. These he demonstrated were not followed. For instance, when he asked some of the Zeu leaders present, it was evident that instead of planting on top of ridges, they were planting their seeds in between the ridges and in some cases no ridge were made at all. Infected plants were also left in the field to further infect other crops instead of being uprooted and burnt. Besides, members planted their seeds where they had grown local Irish potato before thereby increasing susceptibility to blight infections.

All these gaps showed that skills training is indispensable in the acquisition of improved agro-technologies. The two – inputs and skills - must go hand-in-hand for better yields to be achieved.

We, therefore, learnt that ITK deserves its share of agro-technology to the extent that it must be enhanced with improved approaches if desirable increase in smallholder farm productivity is to be achieved. ■



# Engendering Family Nutrition

*Sr. Rose Orach, Diocesan Health Coordinator, Nebbi Catholic Diocese*

## Feeding is gendered

Few people realize or even understand that what they eat, its quality, quantity, and frequency matters a lot for a healthy living. Nutrition is a family obligation and should be the responsibility of both men and women particularly for children.

A simple nutrition analysis of what kinds of food exists in a given community and who eats what indicates there are a number of foods available that are ignored as non-traditional staple foods. For instance, the small silver fish (called Muziri) is considered food for lepers despite its nutritional values.

Another aspect often neglected is that feeding is gendered. Men eat first, followed by 'their' children (mainly boys) and women and girls eat last. In the face of food insecurity, women and girls are perpetually denied adequate food intake. Worst still, many nutritious foods like chicken, eggs and some fish/meat species are forbidden for women and girls in most cultures. This exclusion relegates women to eating less nutritious foods that cannot help them build their bodies for a healthy life.

At a training among Gorta supported beneficiaries which involved spouses, the information from the above analysis made an elderly man in Zeu to loudly wonder, 'so that is why my wife has been growing smaller and smaller every year? You mean I have been starving her for life'. An elderly woman who is also a member of the Women Council in Orussi had this to say,

You can see the injustices in our lives as women. It starts right from within our households. Men's greed is universal. Imagine even on food that we grow or care for, cook and serve them. Still, they treat us unfairly on it.

## Information is vital to engender feeding practices

This analysis brought to face a challenge for men and even some women who believe that such cultures should be upheld. They started to think that there is need for engendering food sharing and acceptance practices. It became important that a family should always eat together so that everyone gets the same food quality without any restriction because different foods play different roles in the body.

Very often it is little known that there are foods for energy generation, body building, and immunity building. At the said training, particular attention was focused on food intake demands by pregnant mothers, children, the sick, and the old.

The power of information cannot be underestimated. In the subsequent reviews that followed, it was realized that the project changed eating practices in many homes of the beneficiaries. It also demonstrated that people are not always resistant to change. An elderly man in Anyengele remarked, 'Now my brothers fear eating with me because they don't want to eat with children and women. But I don't care because I know in my home every one is treated fairly'. Meanwhile, a woman in Mungulonyo pointed out that, 'men are now eating muziri that they had refused before'. And another woman in Zeu pointed out that, 'at least some women have started eating hitherto forbidden foods'. While these are pockets of change, they can be cumulative in the very foreseeable future as long as more people are reached with this kind of information. ■



# Giving to Ceaser: Decentralizing Project Ownership

*Wilfred Cwinyai, Community Development Manager*

## Elite capture is tactical

Gorta-support is currently accessed through two channels. First, beneficiary organizations receive direct funding as Community Based Organizations (CBOs) whose members have their own leaders and work for their members' benefit. The second category is beneficiaries for whom support is provided through the church structures. These beneficiaries were initially excluded from the management committee positions and responsibilities. They did not know how they became beneficiaries and about their project funds. This exclusion meant beneficiaries were too far from what was going on in their projects.

## Empowerment through leadership positions

Aware that Gorta-support has an exit period and that such a practice is a replica of past and archaic development approaches where poor people were considered as needing to be managed, beneficiary empowerment became a central issue.

After studying the power-without-authority model in Zeu and Paidha parishes, a new model that put

beneficiaries in the management committee was crafted by the network. This is how the Project Management Team (PMT) emerged.

Every intermediary church funded project was required to set up a 10-person gender sensitive PMT. Of these 7 members were to come directly from the beneficiaries and one of whom was to be a signatory to the project bank account. The remaining three were the Coordinator, Accountant, and the Parish Pastoral Council chairperson.

## Handing over projects to beneficiaries

Beyond this inclusive leadership approach, where the beneficiaries demonstrated the will to self-management like in Zeu, a new wave of direct decentralization of projects also evolved. This new approach was adopted from Yumbe where Odokibo Center had to relinquish its authority over 6 CBOs. Likewise, Zeu and Paidha parishes are currently having their former zones under self-autonomy granting facilitation.

In this way, it is believed the poor beneficiaries will take responsibilities and gain confidence over their

own destiny. All they need is co-management rather than being managed. Besides, such an approach provides the church centers with the opportunity to identify other areas that need support and mentoring before eventual hand-over for self management.

By so doing, we have learnt that elites think they have the monopoly to identify projects, beneficiaries, and manage them. Robert Chambers in *Putting the Last First* was right to hint that professional captures has in the past been a roadblock to hastening the pace of grassroots development.

In all, it is time for poor people to be given a chance to identify what they want, how they want it and how to manage their destiny. Doing so will also enable in part avoiding finger pointing at development agencies as detractors of community development. Meanwhile it will also provide space for co-management learning let alone building poor people's capacity for future actions and self-governance. All that poor people need is mentoring and exposure to new ideas: an avenue where development agencies have comparative advantage. ■





# The Code of Conduct (CoC) Pendulum

*Dr. Alfred Lakwo, Programme Director*

This article is a reflection of the experiences learnt in the last two years in working under a network arrangement. The network is an umbrella body that coordinates the operations of all Gorta funded beneficiary organizations. It has CoC that cherishes professionalism, participatory leadership, transparency and accountability, among other issues.

The importance of the CoC is that it binds all beneficiary organizations as a simple one-size fit all agreed upon regulation outside which any action is construed as a gross misconduct.

By using the Code, in the last 2 years the network has also been able to bring sanity in the project management and accountability. From experience, lack of such a CoC has in the past provided a free-rider attitude among many Project Managers to do as they wish. Or personal conflicts emerged where the Project Managers were faced with checks and balances against their desired impunity.

Three cases in point highlight this internal and peaceful management. First, in 2006 Nyaravur group divested funds meant for seeds into the purchase of hoes and pangas that the members direly needed. While the intention was good, doing so without the internal approval of the network was tantamount to

budget indiscipline. The network reacted by freezing the bank account of Nyaravur until a clear adjusted budget was done. This reaction was also emphasized as a signal to other organizations to desist from simply spending project money as they wished.

Second was the case of diversion of funds in Paidha Parish. While the Project Managers innovatively saved UGX 6m and they also requested the network to invest the fund in a revolving fund that will improve their beneficiaries' access to cheap capital, a request they were granted, wonders were yet to come out.

It later turned out that the loan was given to non-beneficiaries who were single handedly identified without the involvement of the Parish Committees. Repayments of credit were also directed into a personal account. When this news leaked to the network, it was resolved that Paidha parish be suspended from the programme and the concerned persons prosecuted personally for fraud. This decision led to a quick response to refund the money as well as handing over the scheme to the Parish Committee.

Finally, was the stage managed Zeu's story. The Coordinator and Zonal Managers diverted UGX 6.8m into the rehabilitation of the church. Zeu hid this information from the network.

When the time for quarterly audit of their books of accounts came their accountant denied AFARD access to those books.

When threatened that they will receive no more funds, they hesitantly provided the books of accounts. Questions about the fund diversion met with the arrogant reaction that Zeu beneficiaries approved the expenditure contrary to the network guidelines. Zeu Coordinator promised that their partner in Germany was due to send them money from which they will refund the internal borrowing. The network also responded by blocking the bank accounts of Zeu until refund was effected. Zeu reacted with a hot worded letter; a letter they shamefully feared to send to Gorta.

As a response, the network simply isolated Zeu leader. A representative was elected to write a counter letter and in their word, 'Zeu's reaction was not called for, it is an isolated case, and should be treated as trash'.

These reactions have given confidence in Gorta that West Nile partners are mature and responsive to collective interest over and above personal interests. This co-management approach has also in part promoted beyond discipline aspects like cross-learning and multiple accountability practices. ■



