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ADVANCE HUMANITY



**ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN SUPPORT PROJECT NEBBI  
(2005/06)**

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**FINAL  
IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
REPORT**

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## **ACFRONYMS**

AFARD	=	Agency for Accelerated Regional development
OVC	=	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PDC	=	Parish Development Committee
PEC	=	Peer Educators-cum-Councilors
PLC	=	Parish Level Committee
UNICEF	=	United Nations International Children's Emergency Funds
ToR	=	Terms of Reference

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The views presented in this document are entirely the responsibility of the authors.

Dr. John Odaga



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### ***Introduction***

This evaluation sought to identify impacts of the OVC support project to the primary beneficiaries (the OVCs and support families), the community, whether positive or negative, intended or unintended. The study was commissioned by the Agency for Accelerated Rural Development (AFARD), and CARITAS – Nebbi, the joint implementing agencies of the project.

### ***Methodology***

The Impact Assessment study was carried out by way of a cross-sectional survey, which was descriptive in nature. Much of the qualitative data were collected by through separate Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with out-of-school OVCs, the teachers of the school going OVCs, host family members, and a combined group of the PLCs, LCs and Catechists. In-depth discussions or interviews were held with key informants, including selected sub-county chiefs, Assistant community development officers, and one of the project field officers. Relevant documents reviewed included PLCs financial reports and the Project Proposals (expansion phase), the Project progress Reports (Phase I & II).

Improvement class attendance was the profound impact, although the long term benefit of this hinges continued support to the pupils, especially to those still in lower classes. School attendance was noted to be high even in those areas where the project had closed 6 months prior to this evaluation. Improvement in attendance was noted to have been accompanied by high morale and self esteem amongst the OVCs and active participation in class activities. However, improvement in academic performance was mixed, and in any case it was only modest.

Virtually all the out-of-school established, self-accounting businesses, some of which were very successful. One significant change was that most of them had now gained sufficient skills and confidence to operate independently of the mentors on which they were very dependent previously. There was a noticeable improvement in the qualities of their products and a growing demand for them. However, most of these positive changes were observed mainly for the girls than for the boys, the demand for whose products was low and erratic, because of the preferences of the people in the localities.

Although their income has been modest in most cases, they are obviously much better off now than before, as they can cater for some of their basic needs instead of depending on their host families and other benefactors. Some have been able to save and diversify their investments, with most girls planning to go back to complete their basic education or further their knowledge in tailoring with a view of establishing bigger businesses at more strategic locations.

Although the major constraint to the growth of their business had been the lack of start-up capital, few of the OVCs had had access to the revolving loan scheme that was established, mainly because of inadequate communication.

However, many of the support family members had access to the loan scheme, with immediate and observable impact on their abilities to address some of the basic needs, such

as the provision of foods. The planting materials did better in Okoro areas where the weather was more favourable, and where agronomic advice seemed to have been followed better. The prospective gains from these improved plants seems high in these areas

The project has been successful in boosting the impetus of OVCs-centered planning and awareness among key stakeholders; with a good chance that the activities of the PLCs will be integrated into, and funded by the local government.

The savings from most of the grinding mill schemes have been disappointing. By and large, the mills installed during the expansion phase seem to be doing much better. The management practices and attitude of those at the PLCs is partly responsible for the observed difference in financial performance. Because of this crucial human factor, it has been proposed to outsource the management of the mill schemes.

There have also been a number of positive spill-over effects of the project to the wider community. For example the PLCs gained or broadened their knowledge and skills in business entrepreneurship and agriculture, as well as community dialogue. They, and the wider community, appreciated the need for altruism in helping the most helpless.

Tailoring, carpentry and milling services have been brought closer to the community. The community practice had changed from using wasteful time consuming traditional methods to powered and efficient means of grinding. Likewise, other children in the community were reported to be undergoing apprenticeship free-of charge from the OVCs.

### ***Conclusion***

From the foregoing, we do conclude that the project has largely succeeded. It has produced some significant changes in the lives of the beneficiaries albeit to different degrees. The most profound change has been in the school-going OVCs, although the long-term benefits of these changes will depend on the extent to which support can be sustained over the medium and long term. Although the changes experienced by the out-of-school OVCs were modest by the time of the evaluation, they are likely to be more long lasting. In a sense, the project purpose [reduction in vulnerability] has actually been realised already amongst the somewhat successful out-of school OVCs, whose number are likely to increase with time without any further intervention. If well managed the loan scheme could also produce a quick and tangle impact on the capabilities of the support families.



# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The OVC Support Project - Nebbi

On September 5, 2005 AFARD, and CARITAS – Nebbi, with support from UNICEF-Uganda, intervened to implement a joint Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Support Project in Nebbi. The first phase of the project, which closed in August 2006, was implemented in Wadelai and Erussi sub counties covering a total of 10 parishes. A key feature of the project was a focus on support of the support families. A total of 479 families, 400 school-going OVCs and 70 out-of-school OVCs were supported during this phase (AFARD & CARITAS, 2006).

A performance evaluation conducted in July 2006 provided valuable lessons for the extension of the project and expansion to 8 other subcounties: Kango, Zeu, Paidha, Jangokoro, Nyaravur, Akworo, Panyimur and Panyango. Kango, Zeu, Panyango and Akworo that were already ear-marked for expansion with respect to UNICEF CP investments.

This second phase was similar to the first in the sense that it remained family-centered, but differs in a number of respects:

- Only the school-going OVCs were considered
- More women on the Parish-level committees (PLCs)
- No Peer educators-cum counselors

There is one additional component, the introduction of a revolving fund, which has been extended also to the previous parishes.

This phase has been running for six months, and came to an end in December 2006.

## 1.2 Project Goal, Objectives and Outputs

The project purpose, objectives and expected outputs are summarised in Table 1 on the next page. In short, the project under evaluation aimed “*to contribute to the reduction in vulnerability of OVCs*”, by enabling the ability of the support families to provide for the livelihoods of OVCs in a sustainable manner. In other words, apart from directly providing for the means of livelihood of the out-of-school OVCs, the project focused on the support of host families as a means of ensuring the long-term livelihoods of the OVCs, particularly the young school-going children. The project further underscores a long term community-oriented objective, aimed at raising community awareness and response to the plight of OVCs, including promoting their social standing in the community, and the potential of long-term integration of the support project in the local government development projects.

Table 1: Project Goal, Objectives and Expected Outputs

<p><b>Overall goal:</b> Vulnerability of orphans and vulnerable children reduced</p> <p><b>Project goal:</b> <i>To contribute to the reduction of vulnerability of boys and girls through strengthening family capacity to provide for the basic social services and community support.</i></p>
<p><b>Objective 1:</b> <i>A system for identification and follow-up of 2000 OVCs in school, 70 OVCs out of school and 1279 families strengthened/ established.</i></p> <p><i>Output 1.1: A system (committees) at parish level in place</i></p> <p><i>Output 1.2: 2000 OVC in schools and 70 OVCs out of school (at least half girls) and 1279 families identified</i></p> <p><b>Objective 2:</b> <i>Increased capacity of the OVCs and families to provide basic social services.</i></p> <p><i>Output 2.1: 2000 OVCs regularly attending school with decrease in absenteeism</i></p> <p><i>Output 2.2: 70 OVCs out of school trained in vocational skills, and running own business, generating income</i></p> <p><i>Output 2.3: 1279 Families engaged in income generating activities for provision of basic social services to the children.</i></p> <p><b>Objective 3:</b> <i>Increased community support, care and protection of the Rights of OVCs</i></p> <p><i>Output: 3.1 Social acceptability of and support to OVCs increased</i></p> <p><b>Objective 4:</b> <i>Enhanced capacity of CARITAS and AFARD in documentation, reporting and monitoring and evaluation.</i></p> <p><i>Output 4.1: computers and accessories</i></p> <p><i>Output 4.2: Quarterly reporting to UNICEF and District Local Government</i></p>

Source: AFARD & CARITAS (2005, 2006)

### 1.3 Assessing Impacts... theoretical arguments

The growing demands for value-for-money in development programmes has called for development organisations to adopt performance accountability and learning culture. One such way, beyond showing achievements quantifiable by inputs-outputs monitoring data is by conducting impact assessment (IA); that is accounting for the returns to investments made through the benefits beneficiaries gained.<sup>1</sup> (Cutt & Murray, 2000; Patton, 2003). Along this line impact is seen as: ‘... the lasting or significant changes—positive or negative, intended or not—in people’s lives brought about by a given action or series of actions (Roche, 1999).<sup>2</sup>

However, the main challenge has been that in main cases, impact is seen as a linear occurrence which comes in a long time of an intervention. This conceptual mist results from the logframe approach to development management where inputs, outputs, and effects are seen as processes to realisation of intervention purpose (the product)—where impacts reside. Important to point out is that impact, as changes in the lives of beneficiaries, are dynamic, multifaceted, contextually specific, path dependent, and are contingent on specific

<sup>1</sup> Many Development Organisations conduct IA either to prove impact, or to learn from it, and not for both reasons. Although learning and accounting are complementary, in practice, the two are treated in either/or manner because learning is intra-organisation (to management and governance team) oriented and accountability is done upwards (to donors) and downwards (to clients). Inward accountability is usually ignored.

<sup>2</sup> Impact is conceptualised as what changes occurred with the intervention and the situation if the intervention had not been made. This is measured by either gross or proportionate gain in the same clients longitudinally, or net gain between clients and non-clients in snap-shot studies.

events, conditions or the context of a given situation rather than the intervention *per se* (Herbert and Shepherd, 2001).

Following from this view, we therefore see impact as specific changes in beneficiaries' lives which they ascribe to both the intervention processes and purpose, captured as a filming process that takes into account the attributes described above (dynamism, multiple (f)actors, contexts, etc)

#### **1.4 The scope or TOR of the evaluation**

The ToR broadly sought to measure any lasting or significant changes—positive or negative, intended or not—in the lives of the beneficiaries (primarily the OVCs and support families) brought about by the project. In addition, the ToR sought to measure the level and nature of community response to the plight as well as their (OVCs') social standing. The consultants were also required to capture any externalities or spill-over changes in the community (benefits or disadvantages created).

In a nutshell, the consultants were to identify significant changes at the levels of the OVCs, support families, the community, in the pilot and the expansion areas, as well as the implementing organizations, whether they were planned or unplanned.

Due attention was also paid to specific contexts or critical success factors in different intervention sites. A summary of the variables, indicators, are presented in the analytical framework in Table 2 below.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Study design

The evaluation study undertaken was descriptive in nature and used a cross-sectional survey (snapshot assessment of performance).

### 2.2 Variables and measurement

Table 2 below further outlines the scope of work, specifying the impact variables and related indicators. Details of the related sources of information and methods of data collection are further summarised in appendix 1.

**Table 2: Analytical Framework**

<b>Intervention Purpose</b>	<i>To contribute to the reduction of vulnerability of OVCs through strengthening family capacity to provide for the basic social services and community support in ten (2 old + 8 new) subcounties of Erussi, Wadelai, Kango, Zen, Paidha, Jangokoro, Nyaravur, Akworo, Panyimur and Panyango.</i>			
<b>Impact assessment objective</b>	<i>To identify and measure any changes in the lives of the beneficiaries brought about by the project</i>			
<b>Target groups</b>	OVCs in school	OVCs out of school	Support families	Community leaders (PLCs and PECs)
<b>Primary assessment questions</b>	<i>Is there a difference in school performance of the OVCs?</i>	<i>What &amp; how much socio-economic change has occurred in the lives of the OVCs?</i>	<i>To what extent are the host families able to provide for the basic needs of the OVCs?</i>	<i>What is the level of awareness, and community response to the plight of OVCs?</i>
<b>Core assessment themes</b>	Education inclusion & participation	Economic independence & self esteem	Care and support of OVCs in basic services provision	Protection of children's rights
<b>Impact Variables &amp; Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Class &amp; examination performance</li> <li>• Retention</li> <li>• Esteem to be in school</li> <li>• Unintended effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of own-account ventures</li> <li>• Business management practices (planning, budgeting, pricing, forecast)</li> <li>• Enterprise growth (demand vs. supply)</li> <li>• Savings levels and diversification</li> <li>• Perceived quality of life and self esteem</li> <li>• Unintended effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food production (availability and adequacy), purchasing power, skills</li> <li>• Income generation potential               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Activity diversification</li> <li>➤ Consumption pattern</li> <li>➤ Investment diversification</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Knowledge and skills in proper agric procedures</li> <li>• Unintended effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciation of children's rights vs. stigmatisation</li> <li>• Joint action to support OVCs (G-mills &amp; CRFS)</li> <li>• Commitment of PLCs</li> <li>• Local government integration of child-centered plans &amp; budgets</li> <li>• Mobilisation of other projects</li> <li>• Unintended effects</li> </ul>

### **2.3 Methods of data collection**

Data was collected majorly through qualitative means (see appendix 1), although we made a quantitative analysis of the financial reports sent from some of the parishes, largely those from the new phase. At each parish, we held three separate FGDs, each with:

- the PLCs together with the LCs,
- support families,
- the class teachers and the OVCs (those out of school).

In addition, we had in-depth discussions with the following:

- Subcounty chiefs (and Community Development Assistants) where they existed
- The pastoral leaders
- Program staff (one field officers)

We made a quantitative analysis of the financial reports submitted from some of the mills, largely from the new sites in the second phase.

## 3 EVALUATION FINDINGS

### 3.1 Changes at the level of OVCs

#### 3.1.1 School-going OVCs

##### a) *Regularity of school attendance and progressive class performance*

To compare the attendance level before and during and/or after the project, we collated information from three main sources: the support families, the PLCs and the class teachers from selected primary schools. The class teachers were the primary sources of data on the progressive performance of the students over the period.

Evidence of improved class attendance was, by far, the most convincing. All the sources talked to reported remarkable improvements in school attendance, attributed mainly to the provision of the scholastic materials, but also to the sense of pride arising from the quality materials provided. Class attendance by the OVCs was comparable, or even, than the level for other children with living parents, and clearly higher than for unsupported OVCs. Absenteeism was reported to have reduced dramatically amongst the OVCs; and in any case it was not higher than observed amongst the population of other pupils. It was noted that, prior to the project, there was a higher rate of absenteeism among the OVCs. *“Even children [OVCs] who had dropped from school have resumed classes ... are proud, smarter, ... there is ‘big change’”* [one PLC member in Otheko Parish].

There was no report of any observed decline in the attendance levels in areas where the project closed in July 2006.

In addition to improved attendance, there was a strong indication of performance improvement in terms of participation in class on the part of the pupils. Attendance in class has not been matched by the same degree in academic performance. Improvement in academic performance have been modest, and reported mainly in areas where the project has run for at least one academic year, allowing time for the teachers to monitor the pupils' academic performance. The teachers underscored the fact that there are other determinants of academic performance, such as the levels of individual intelligence. However, none of the OVCs was reported to have declined in academic performance following the benefits from the project. On the other hand, one girl from Agwechi Primary school was noted to have improved significantly since being taken up by the project.

*Conclusion:* improvement in education participation has been the most visible achievement of the project. Evidence of class performance in particular [in terms of attendance and participation] is the most ever-present and irrefutable. Given that the stimulus to the heightened attendance rate was the scholastic materials provided, the challenge remains in maintaining a certain minimum level of supply of these materials. The possibility of this is discussed in section 3.3.3. The evidence on performance in examinations has been mixed. However, it should be noted that this is a result that is dependent on many facets, least of all might be an intervention such as this.

### **3.1.2 Out of school OVCs**

The states of the business ventures were established by talking to the OVCs themselves, most of whom were the subjects of the previous evaluation, and the PLCs and LCs. The following were the key findings.

#### *a) Presence of own-ventures*

In all the areas visited, nearly all the OVCs had established personal businesses; these ventures had been up and running, even by the time of the last evaluation (Odaga & Ocokdhogu, 2006). There was one exception in Pachaka parish, where one female OVC was reported to still be under going further training, and had been doing so since the last evaluation. As expected, the businesses were performing at varying levels, with most going through the struggles and difficulties normally experienced by any ventures at infancy. The female OVCs, though, seemed more grounded than the male counter parts.

#### *b) Enterprise growth (demand vs. supply) & Entrepreneurship skills*

A notable improvement was that most of the OVCs have gained sufficient confidence and skills to operate independently, only consulting their mentors from time to time when necessary. Further more, we observed that the quality of the products had remarkably improved particularly the variety and designs of clothes made by the female OVCs. Unlike previously, when the public underrated and shunned their products, public confidence in the OVCs, and respect for their products (especially the clothes made by the girls) seemed to have grown tremendously.

We also observed that the OVCs had taken responsibilities in maintaining and servicing their equipment and/or tools. For example, it was widely reported that some of the earnings were used either to acquire some vital tools that were not part of the toolkits given to them after training (e.g. scissors for the girl); or were used to acquire spares and general maintenance of the tools or equipment.

Another noteworthy finding was that, despite the widespread complaint of lack of capital during the previous evaluation (Odaga & Ocokdhogu, 2006), many had not taken advantage of the loan scheme. It is possible for some of them to improve on their products (quantity and quality) once they take advantage of the loan scheme. Instead some of them (especially in Wadelai and Pachaka) have been able to stimulate more demands through progressive improvements in the quality of their products. In the process, they have acquired more confidence and boosted their own share of the market. This was especially true of the female OVCs, the demand for whose products was said to be higher and more predictable than for furniture [made by the male counter parts]. For example, during the Christmas season, a number of girls received massive orders, overwhelming for some, and reaped big; on the other hand the boys reported a decline in the amount of orders received, and sales, during the same seasons, reportedly because people's priorities shifted towards other things.

#### *c) Savings level, diversification and perceived quality of life*

The level of income earned by the OVCs was still modest, but steadily increasing, especially for the girls. However, all the OVCs admitted to be [economically] much better-off now than before as they can meet some or most of their basic needs, and also extend support to their families instead of depending on them. At Pachaka, for example, it was reported that

one OVC had received massive orders and had saved over the previous six months and did not even need of any loan any more. Interestingly, during the last evaluation, we noted that this particular OVC, despite the obvious potential, looked downhearted as there was low demand for her products for poor quality, and desperately needed capital to buy materials to practice with. She has over come these challenges by sheer determination, experience and time.

Most of the girls talked to were setting money aside to go back to school, either to complete their basic education, or to advance in tailoring with a view of setting bigger ventures in larger trading or urban centres. Because the boys' income had been meagre for the most part, they had not made any noteworthy savings. However, during bumper sales, a couple of them were able to invest much of the profits accrued in livestock, which were steadily increasing in number.

#### *d) Self esteem*

A number of the OVCs are reported to have adopted a more 'positive living'; that is they are spending much more time on their businesses instead of being idle and disorderly. They are thinking more and more about the future and using their income prudently. As noted previously virtually all the school-going OVCs have grown in self regard. We also noted that a good number of the, [and just about all the female] out-of school OVCs looked happier and more self-assured than was observed during the previous evaluation (Odaga & Ocokdhogu, 2006)

*Point to note:* During the previous evaluation (Odaga & Ocokdhogu, 2006), nearly all the OVCs expressed a need for start-up capital. Surprisingly, not many of them borrowed money from the set revolving fund scheme; lack of proper communication seemed to have been the main problem.

## **3.2 Changes at the level of Support Families**

### ***3.2.1 Food production ability***

One of the primary end points of this project is the increased ability of the support families to provide for the basic needs of the OVCs. To realize this goal, during both the pilot and extension phases, the families were provided with improved seeds/planting materials deemed most suitable in the specific contexts of the different parishes. A limited dose of agronomic trainings were also conducted. It was assumed that the families would eventually multiply the crops and use the foodstuffs to meet the nutritional needs of the OVCs as well as a source of income.

Unfortunately, the planting materials have proved a failure for most families, particularly in the pilot areas, largely due to adverse weather. In Okoro, where the weather is more favourable, and where agronomic instructions seemed to have been followed better than in the previous sites, the yields have been fairer, and there is a potential to multiply the materials further in future. All the sources were unanimous on the potential benefits that could accrue from the crops if the weather was favourable. In fact, at the end of every single meeting, there was a request for more of the planting materials, particularly at the pilot sites.



### ***3.2.2 Knowledge and skills in proper agricultural procedures***

Although there has been no noteworthy improvement in the food production ability of the families, they unanimously feel that they have gained immense knowledge in the best agricultural practices which they can apply to different crop husbandry.

### ***3.2.3 Performance and impact of the revolving fund scheme [income generation potential]***

Because of the dismal performance of the planting materials in most areas, and the unpredictability of the weather, the second phase of the project included a revolving fund component, which the OVCs out of school and care takers could borrow to start up or boost their existing small scale business ventures. The scheme was made available to families in both the pilot and extension areas of the project. Training in entrepreneurship and the revolving fund management were provided in order that the people are able to use their skills and labour with the availed funds to maximize profits.

It was observed that a number of care takers instead had borrowed money from the scheme, to the tune of 30,000/= to 40,000/= each. The money had been invested in a variety of small-scale businesses, including dealing in produce and fish. Others have used it for weeding of their crops. In only a few cases was the borrowed money used to solve some unforeseen problems like sicknesses.

The results thus far, only one month later, looked very promising. Although the reported proceeds were marginal, many beneficiaries said they had been able to meet some of their basic needs, especially ensuring that there was food on the table. For example, one mother at Otheko parish said she had even been able to support a child at secondary school with some of the savings.

Many of the borrowers were confident of paying back the loans on the agreed date, with some little profits in their bags, and were keen to have more chances to borrow, much higher amounts, again. There was evidence of much discipline in the management of the loan schemes, both among the borrowers, as well as the scheme managers.

In a nutshell, this particular intervention seems to have been the most successful and significant so far, with regard to improving families' means of livelihood.

#### *Unintended benefits*

The supply of scholastic materials for the OVCs also freed up some resources in some families, enabling the care-takers to provide for the school needs of their own children as well, especially those in secondary schools. Because the materials provided was substantial, some of them were shared with other school going children, helping to pre-empt potential, or resolve ensuing conflicts in the families. This indicates a good delivery strategy.

### **3.3 Changes at the level of the community**

One of the subordinate objects the project aimed to achieve was community-wide protection of children's rights. To achieve this objective, the project created a number of community-based structures to manage the community and beneficiary-oriented activities and ensure the continuity of OVCs' support after the project phase out. Consequently, considerable

resources were directed to build this aspect of capacity (in form of training of community resource persons [PLCs, & PECs], as well as investment in infrastructure [notably the grinding mills and rice hullers])

Accordingly, in this section, we examined the social standing of the OVCs, the extent of awareness about children's rights in the community and the degree of inclusion in local government agenda of plans oriented towards OVCs' support [including integration of PLCs]. Furthermore, we looked at other possible changes (in knowledge, attitude, practices/policies), including unintended ones, that might have occurred in the PLCs and PECs. In this context, we also examined the performance of grinding mill schemes, and the commitment of the PLCs in areas where the project closed 6 months prior to the evaluation. Further more, we probed for any other community-wide benefits [or adverse changes] that could be attributed to the project.

### ***3.3.1 Social standing of OVCs, community awareness of children's rights and support to OVCs***

There were clear indications that the OVCs were held in high regard in the society as shown by the overwhelming requests to increase the number of beneficiaries. In addition, wherever we went, there was the sentiment that the OVCs (especially the school-going ones) were somewhat better than the rest of the pupils; and it was reported that the OVCs themselves tended to feel the same way. Whereas many people shunned the "*products made by the orphans*" shortly after their training as revealed in Odaga & Ocokdhogu (2006), the attitude was quite different this time round, especially for the girls' products. As described above, there has been growing confidence in the OVCs themselves as well as their products as exemplified by the growing demands for them. Another vote of confidence is the case of youth seeking apprenticeships that is being provided by the OVCs free-of-charge.

The project has been able to cause awareness about the plight and rights of OVCs at different levels, right from the family level to the district level; among the technocrats as well as the politicians [as elaborated in 3.3.2 below].

The guardians and PLCs were clearly more aware now than before, of their roles in upholding the rights of, and providing support for the OVCs specifically, and for children generally. A number of the guardians talked to conceded that "*we no longer hold them at home to help with domestic chores*" after being counselled by the PLCs (and/or PECs) that that would be a violation of children's rights.

It was evident that support for OVCs had become an issue that featured high on the agenda of the local government, right from the subcounty to the district levels. Although this was not only the result of this project [under evaluation], the general consensus was that it [the project] had clearly provided the impetus through the wide consultations and targeted awareness campaigns; and, most importantly, by demonstrating tangible and cost-effective benefits within a short space of time.

### ***3.3.2 Mainstreaming the OVCs support project and PLCs into Government project***

The need, possibility and modalities of mainstreaming the OVC support project and community structures (especially the PLCs) featured prominently during the performance evaluation (Odaga & Ocokdhogu, 2006).

This evaluation sought to find out if there was any progress in this direction. What was reported at all the subcounty offices visited was that the project had brought the issue of OVC support on the discussion table. At all the centers, there were plans to include OVCs support in the next work plan, although the amount of support would depend on the sub-counties' resource envelopes. It was only at Wadelai subcounty where we observed a more systematic plan to incorporate the project into the workplan, beginning with establishment of a data base next year.

The district officials, during the district fednack meeting, believed that if the *Bona Bagagamale* program materialized, the PLCs would be the first groups to be considered given their level of knowledge and organization. Being a government program, modalities would be developed such that they are implemented through the PLCs.

Despite the good will on the part of government officials to work with the PLCs in future OVCs support programmes, there were still no clear modalities by which to operationalise this partnership. With the project closed (pilot areas) or coming to a close (extension areas), the PLCs were at a loss as to how they could put their agenda on the planning table of the sub-counties. They were all hoping and waiting to be invited to do so. The PLCs did not seem to be aware of the existence of the Parish Development Committees (PDCs) that presents a good entry point for them. Therefore, they will need to be more proactive and try to push in their agenda through the PDCs [where they are active].

### ***3.3.3 Commitment of the PLCs where the project had closed in July 2006***

Although it was apparent that the PLCs were still carrying out their responsibilities in the areas where the project had long ceased (6 months prior), there were indications that the impetus was evaporating at some parishes. Indeed at one parish it was acknowledged that the morale for the work had declined; the reason being the poor performance of the grinding mill, resulting in diminishing returns for the PLCs. Nevertheless, at one of the parishes visited, the work spirit seemed particularly unshaken even though their grinding mill had been down for nearly three months [since end of September 2006, and only repaired just before Christmas 2006]. The major reason for this contrasting picture is down to the personality of the committee members. Therefore, the long-term commitments of the PLCs (and the schemes) hinges greatly on the mix of personalities of the committee members, and particularly on the leadership.

Having noted that, it was also apparent that nearly all of the committees still look to the implementing agencies for continued (financial & other) support, and one is tempted to question their commitments over the long term (say 2 -3 years) without external support. Fortunately, the prospect of this seems bright as the district officials seemed convinced to extend funding to the PLCs for OVCs' support under the Government program of *Bwona Bagagamale*, because of their level of organisation and experience in OVCs support. It was hinted that the funding through this programme would be much higher than was invested by the project. Therefore, with proper coordination at the subcounty levels, the OVC support

project could turn into a long term program. Besides, NUSAF has offered an opportunity for some of the PLCs in Wadelai to generate community support project proposals in order to widen outreach to cover those OVCs who were not supported under this project.

### **3.3.4 Performance of the mills**

#### *a) Have the schemes in the pilot areas improved in financial performance?*

Unfortunately, it was not possible to gather the financial returns for the period since the last evaluation; in fact we obtained none from the pilot areas, apart from anecdotal evidence from the field officer. We obtained reports from only 10 of the 17 parishes in the extension phase. The reports available are for October and November, 2006, for 7 of the 10 parishes that submitted, but only for November for 3 of the parishes.

During the last evaluation, we observed that, for the grinding mill schemes to sustain the level of the support the project had offered thus far to the 40 school-going children in each parish, the minimum beneficiary-specific saving needed to be at 173,917/= per month. However, it was also noted that a lower level of net savings in the order of 100,000/= per mill per month could suffice if the levels of support to the OVCs were scaled down<sup>3</sup>, and the materials bought locally to minimize transport cost<sup>4</sup>.

It was further noted that a number of the schemes at the time had gotten off to a promising start, with each generating income above 100,000/ per month; however, the operational costs were unacceptably very high (over 70% in most cases). Consequently, the net savings were very dismal. The low level of saving was attributed to high operational costs, notably high fuel prices, frequent breakdowns and low demand for the services because of shortage of foodstuffs arising from the drought (Odaga & Ocokdhogu 2006).

During this evaluation, we observed that most of the mills had since stabilized (engine-wise), although the support structures were still experiencing some breakages. The amount of foodstuffs in the market had also increased and there was a general preference for using the grinding machines rather than the old fashioned traditional methods. Therefore, it was expected that the financial performance should have improved.

Unfortunately we could not assess if the financial performance of the schemes in the pilot areas had improved because of the data limitations afore mentioned. However, anecdotal reports obtained from the field officers, and through the FGDs suggest no encouraging change in the financial performance of the mills; if anything, the savings from many of them are reported to have declined further.

There were also reports suggesting mismanagement (and out right abuse of office at times) by some of the PLCs, exemplified by some of them refusing to submit financial reports, or submitting what seemed to be 'doctored' data that could not be relied upon.

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<sup>3</sup> e.g. if fewer exercise books, with smaller pages, were provided, and if the uniforms and school bags were bought once a year

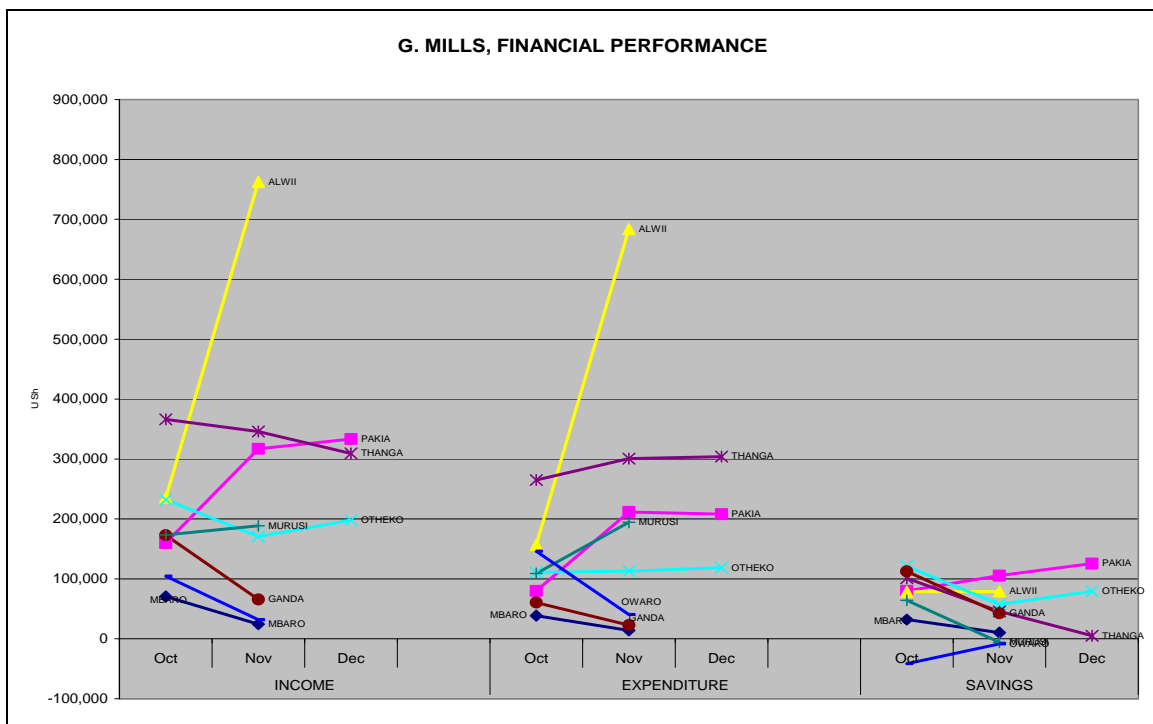
<sup>4</sup> Because the parishes in the extension phase have 100 school-going OVCs to be supported, it follows that the minimum savings in these areas need to be more than doubled.

b) *How do the new schemes compare with those in the pilot phase?*

A review of the financial reports from the new schemes shows that they have started off in a more promising way than was observed in the pilot phase. For example, the average income across all the new grinding mills rose from 201,562/= (median 187,481/=) in October 2006 to 280,117 (median 294,683/=) in December 2006. However, like in the pilot areas, the expenditures have been high, averaging about 60% of the income in October, through 77% in November to 75% in December. As such the savings in a number of schemes have been equally miserable, and declined over the period reviewed.

The trend in income, expenditures and savings is depicted in the graph below

**Figure 2: Trend in Income, Expenditures and Savings from the Grinding mills**



However, there were two exceptional schemes (Table 3), Pakia and Otheke. Pakia has been particularly outstanding; although the operational cost was still high (50% - 62% of income), the net saving remained high and kept rising over the period. With an average monthly saving of 100,000/= (Pakia) and 85,000/= (Otheke), each of the two schemes would comfortably cater for 40 school-going OVCs, albeit at a lower scale than the project was able to do. To cater for 100 school-going OVCs, their present levels of savings need to be doubled, at the very least.

**Table 3: Average savings from various grinding mill schemes**

PARISH	AVE SAVING/MONTH
MBARO	21,225
PAKIA	103,600
ALWII	78,718
OTHEKO	85,867
THANGA	50,600
GANDA	77,550
MURUSI	29,307
OWARO	-25,050
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>67,295</b>
<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>60,817</b>

In conclusion, most of the schemes have been disappointing, with the exception of a few. Although technical constraints are to blame for the most part, especially at the start of the operations, human factor (mismanagement and abuse) can not be ruled out.

### ***3.3.5 Ways to improve performance of the mills***

We brainstormed on the best way of improving savings from the schemes. One suggestion that came forth was to outsource the grinding mills such that the contractors would submit an agreed fixed amount to the PLCs, from which the latter would also draw their allowances. After a lengthy deliberation, the consensus was that the schemes should be privatized. However, the following undertakings were to be fulfilled before the process commenced:

- The PLC chairpersons would consult with other committee members on the idea, the terms of the contract, the monthly remittance, modalities of payment, the recipient of the remittance, etc
- AFARD-CARITAS would assess the technical worthiness of the mills so as to give confidence in the would-be contractors
- The two parties would feed each other on the outcome of their undertakings, and discuss the details of the way forward.
- AFARD-CARITAS would coordinate the process, including deciding on the appropriate means of obtaining feedback from all parties concerned

### ***3.3.6 Externalities (spill-over of benefits to the wider community)***

We also probed for any other changes (positive or negative) that the respondents and other community members could have experienced and the respondents felt worthy of mention. Their main findings are summarised below

#### *a) Changes in the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices/Policies of the PLCs*

At the level of the PLCs, the changes that were consistently cited as unintended benefits acquired by them during the projects were the following:

- Knowledge in project planning and management, particularly in bookkeeping, and writing grants

- Knowledge and skills in modern agricultural methods, and exposure to high-yield strains of crops.
- Entrepreneurship skills: how to set up businesses, and manage them.
- Community dialogue: how to set up self-help groups, how communities can grow, parenting skills, causes of vulnerability other than loss of parents (e.g. separation and poor feeding) and how to prevent or resolve them.

In addition to the knowledge gained, the following were also noted as important changes in the way of thinking, working or policies of the PLCs:

- The importance of bottom-up approach where the community structures are the main decision makers, and the project staff mere facilitators. They felt that this approach to community projects was not only effective but also empowering.
- Net working: some members of the committee had never met or known each other prior to the creation of the PLCs. The creation of the committee had resulted in new-found friendship amongst the PLC members, as well as between the committee members on the one side, and support family members on the other.
- Altruism: the project exposed the PLCs, and other community members to opportunities to appreciate each other's difficulties, and the need to be selfless worse off of society were to be uplifted. This line of thinking has been echoed even during the previous evaluation.

*b) Easy access to vital services by the wider community*

*The grinding services:* at all the sites, the community had embraced the culture of taking foodstuffs to the grinding mills, rather than use the traditional means of pounding on rocks, or using mortar and pestle, or using grinding stones. It was said using grinding mills was not only efficient and convenient, but also saved foodstuffs; the traditional means were considered wasteful. There were widespread complaints from the community whenever the grinding mills failed

*Tailoring and repairs of furniture:* although the demand for the products of the OVCs was still considerable, most minor repairs (mending and repairs of furniture) were being taken to them. "You no longer have to walk several kilometres, just to find someone to mend your clothes" [one informant]. The girls were making school uniforms not only for the OVCs, but also for other children. The quality of their products was largely felt to be better than from other sources.

*c) Apprenticeship*

Some of the OVCs are spreading out their skills by offering on-the-job training to interested boys and girls in carpentry and tailoring respectively, at no cost. Apart from providing vocational skills to the respective boys and girls, this is also a sign of confidence in and admiration for the OVCs in the communities in which they live

*d) Changes at the Organisational level*

Although the project has been conceived and implemented by professionals with a wealth of knowledge in project planning and management, they were staff who were employed and specifically dedicated to this project, and have deepened their knowledge and acquired new skills in project planning and management generally, and got to understand more deeply the issues of OVCs.

This project has also set a pace for inter-organizational partnership building for a common cause. AFARD reported exploring new opportunities with Action Aid (DI- Nebbi) for strengthening Women's Right beyond the usual sub-contractual arrangement. This is seen and praised as a new working modality in an environment where organizations compete for resources, impacts, and image.



## 4 CONCLUSION

This evaluation study sought to assess the extent to which the OVCs support project, as implemented by AFARD and CARITAS-Nebbi, contributed to the reduction in vulnerability of the OVCs in light of four major realms; viz. participation in education by the school going OVCs; economic empowerment and social status of the OVCs that are out of school; economic standing, and the capacity of the support families to provide for the basic needs of the OVCs; and finally, the level of awareness and response of the community to the plight of the OVCs.

The evidenced reviewed shows that the project has been exceptionally successful in boosting the morale and improving the participation, in education, of all the school-going OVCs. Improvement in class performance in particular [in terms of attendance and participation], as well as the pupils' self-regard, were probably the most visible and irrefutable achievements of the project. The evidence on performance in examinations was mixed. This was not surprising, given that performance in exams, or intelligence for that matter, is dependent on many factors; least of all might be an intervention such as this.

Given that the stimulus to the heightened attendance rate was the scholastic materials provided, the challenge for the PLCs and support families now remains in maintaining a certain minimum level of supply of these materials.

Regarding the economic standing of the out-of-school OVCs, the results, thus far, have been modest and show mixed fortunes. Nonetheless, all the indications were that they [the OVCs] had generally become much better economically at the time of the evaluation than they were before, or at the start of the project. Although the majority were still struggling, they were all earning some income, were able to provide for some of their basic needs and their host families; and some of them were planning more sensibly for their future (e.g. planning to go back to school, diversifying their incomes, etc). They were also being regarded highly by the society, clearly more highly now than before acquiring the means of livelihoods through the project.

Of all the intended impacts, improvement in the capability of the support families to provide for the basic needs of the OVCs was probably the most marginal, having been undermined by unfavourable weather. However, the introduction of the revolving fund scheme seemed to have produced an immediate and a very tangible impact in this regard, and could probably go along way in realising this goal if well managed.

The sustainability of support to the OVCs and the capability of the families depend on two major factors: the successful integration of the project into the local government programmes and/or the performance of the community-based structures [the mills and the commitments of the PLCs.

The project has been successful in boosting the impetus of OVC-centred planning at the sub-district levels, as it has been in raising and reinforcing awareness about children's rights amongst key stakeholders—politicians and technocrats alike. However, apart from the goodwill expressed, no concrete steps have, so far, been taken by the local governments, as a way of continuing support to the beneficiaries of the project. There is need for AFARD and CARITAS-Nebbi to still provide leadership in pursuing this partnership, through their various platforms, to its logical conclusion. Left to the two parties alone [the government on the one hand, and the PLCs on the other] nothing much might come out of the potential partnership or integration.

Moreover the financial basis for the continued community support also seemed as shakey, as the waning commitments from some of the PLCs from where the project had ended much earlier. Given the significance of human factor in the long-term performance of the schemes, the idea of out-sourcing the management of the schemes seems prudent way forward.

Therefore, it is quite clear that the project has produced some significant changes in the lives of the beneficiaries albeit to different degrees. Although the most profound change has been in the school-going OVCs, the long-term benefits of these changes will depend on the extent to which support can be sustained over to the medium and long term. On the other hand, the changes experienced by the out-of-school OVCs, though modest, are likely to be more long lasting. In a sense, the project purpose [reduction in vulnerability] has actually been realised already amongst the somewhat successful out-of school OVCs, whose number are likely to increase with time without any further intervention. If well managed the loan scheme could also produce a quick and tangle impact on the capabilities of the support families. From the foregoing, we do conclude that the project has largely been successful.

## APPENDICES

### *Appendix 1 ToR, Variables, Indicators, Sources and methods of collecting, data collection tools*

VARIABLES	INDICATORS	SOURCE OF DATA	METHOD OF COLLECTION	TOOL
<b>Changes at the level of OVCs</b>				
<i>In-school OVCs</i>	Attendance, participation and progressive class performance	teachers, support families, PLCs	FGDs	Interview guide
<i>Out-of-school OVCs</i>	Establishment of personal ventures	OVCs	individual interviews with OVCs	questionnaires
	Performance of personal ventures as compared with previous evaluation (including quality of products, amount of demand, ability to meet the demands)	"	FGDs with PLCs	Interview guide for FGDs with PLCs
	Level of income	"	"	"
	Ability to apply the business skills taught in course (planning, budgeting, pricing, forecast, use of proceeds from sales, diversification, etc)	"	"	"
	Perception of the quality of life now, as opposed to the period prior to the project	"	"	"
		"	"	"
<i>All OVCs</i>	Sense of self-worth	"	"	"
	Unforeseen changes	"	"	"
<b>Changes at the level of the support families</b>	Ability to provide for basic needs of the OVCs (food, especially regular meals)	support family members, PLCs, LCs, catechists or priests	FGDs with support families, separate FGD with a combined team of PLCs, LCs, Catechists/priests	Interview guide
	Awareness regarding children's rights	"	"	"
	Knowledge in agricultural procedures	"	"	"
	Entrepreneurship and agronomic knowledge and skills	"	"	"
	Performance of improved seeds or planting materials	"	"	"

	The loan scheme	"	"	"
	Engagement in and performance of the IGAs	"	"	"
	Spill-over benefits of the scholastic materials	"	"	"
	The benefits from improved crops	"	"	"
Changes at the level of the community (community spin-offs/wider network of beneficiaries)	Increase in knowledge of PLCs, and other community members	PLCs, LCs, catechists or priests	FGD with a combined team of PLCs, LCs, Catechists/priests	Interview guide
	Entrepreneurship skills	"	"	"
	Agronomic skills	"	"	"
	Future commitment	"	"	"
	Accessibility to services (grinding mills, tailoring, furniture workshops)	"	"	"
	Integration of plans/PLCs into the LGDP	"	"	"
	Community awareness about and response to the plight of OVCs (planning & diversification)	"	"	"
	OVCs standing in the community	"	"	"
	Others (e.g. community cohesion, dialogue, apprenticeship)	"	"	"
Changes at the organizational level	Planning, budgeting, supervision	Project staff (Field officers)	Interview	questionnaire
	Integration with food security???			

*Appendix 2: List of participants for the feedback workshop*

No	Name	Designation	Location
1	Mawa Walter	C/person	
2	Onegiu Vincent	Vice C/person	
3	Oronya Emmanuel	C/man	
4	Anirwoth Jane	C/person	
5	Acen Lucy	C/person	
6	Cikawun Hudson	For subcounty chief	
7	Omyer Patrick	Ag. Subcounty chief	Nyaravur
8	Kope Patricia	C/person	Mbaro
9	Ovon Magdeleine	C/person	Oweko
10	Iwutung Jenety	C/person representative	
11	Pimundu Andrew Assa	C/person Nyaravur	
12	Kakura Michael	C/person	Pajur
13	Alarukudi Remijo	C/person	Jangokoro
14	Urombi Emmanuel	C/man LC III	Erussi
15	Othuba A. Amos	C/person	
16	Ocoun Enesmus	Ag. Subcounty chief	Akworo
17	Omar Kasamba	Ag. C/man LC III	
18	Anecho Combe	C/person PLC	Pachaka
19	Hon. Yoacel Joseph	Secretary Social services	LC V, Nebbi
20	Mandhawun Margaret	C/person	
21	Kumakech Ephraem	Community devt. Officer	
22	Fred Onyai	FPO/UNICEF	Nebbi district
23	Opio Isaac	C/person	Padolo
24	Atona Ellyson Alex	Field Officer	
25	Pimundu A. Kemiss	Field officer	
26	Nyodober Christopher	Subcounty chief	Jangokoro
27	Oyirwoth O. Norbert	Accountant	AFARD
28	Opio Denis	C/person	
29	Sinyere Jadys	C/person	
30	Javuru Justino	C/peron PLC	Ragem
31	Oaikane Mary	C/person	
32	Ocungi Grace Joy	C/person	
33	Manano Florence	C/person	
34	Muswa B Anjelo	Ag. LCIII C/man	
35	Aliker Beatrice	C/person PLC	
36	Oyenyboth Agness Teopista	” ” ”	
37	Ajoga Aldo	” ”	
38	Akwii Sunday	” ”	
39	Opio Hannington	” ”	
40	Olama A. John	” ”	Wadelai
41	Adobango (Dr.)	Subcounty chief	Wadelai
42	Hon Okwonga Jimmy	C/man LC III	
43	Okaba Terence	Parish chief	
44	Penjonga Nestore	Ag. SAO	
45	Kumakech O. David	Ag. SAO	Kango
46	Okumu S. Oyuyu	Ag. Subcounty chief	Panyango
47	Okumu BS	SAS	
48	Lucy Adhoc	C/person	Ganda
49	Waiswa Osaga Emmanuel	Vice C/person	Boro

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