

ISSD Uganda



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Women and youth participation

Making local seed businesses gender inclusive

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"I have not yet sold my millet and so cannot afford to order more foundation seed. I also can't afford to hire land even if I was able to buy more foundation seed because it's expensive in our area. As a household, we own three acres of land and we have about half an acre under banana plantation; this is not enough land to do all we would like to. Currently my husband is considering planting coffee seedlings provided under the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) programme. The land belongs to my husband; he makes all the decisions and gives permission on how to use it. I can't make decisions concerning land. I wish I had my own land that I could comfortably use for seed production." **A female member of Kalera Farmers Marketing Association LSB, South Western Region**

ISSD has strived to achieve gender inclusive local seed businesses (LSBs) through: increasing women's and youth's production and access to quality seeds of preferred varieties; improving business and entrepreneurship opportunities for women and youth in the seed business; enhancing women and youth participation in LSB decision-making and leadership; and enhancing women's and youth's access and control over land and financial resources for seed production. The programme looks at women's and youth's (aged between 18 and 35 years) empowerment. Identifying suitable activities for youth is an essential part of ISSD's gender and youth strategy.

In most rural farming families in Uganda, women generally have low income levels, little access to monetary and natural resources, and almost no voice in decision-making processes on resource allocation and use. So ISSD integrates gender inclusion in its training and other capacity development activities. Proactive measures are also encouraged, such as recording sex disaggregated data and LSB constitution reviews to ensure gender inclusivity and flexibility in training locations and timing to favour women's participation.

By promoting gender inclusive LSBs, women have assumed leadership positions including

in decision-making roles within LSBs. Seed acreage for women has increased and youth are now getting involved in the seed business and believe it can change their livelihoods.

Background

Women play a big role in Ugandan subsistence farming systems including the seed sector. Women carry out the majority of farming activities related to hard, manual labour such as weeding, land opening, and harvesting. Regardless of the fact that women carry the major burden of agricultural production, it is men who control and make decisions over the use of financial and natural resources. Women may or may not get a share in profits from agricultural produce sold.

One of the key ISSD programme outputs is to develop functional and sustainable LSBs. This includes attention for developing gender inclusive LSBs. When the programme started, a number of gender-related issues and problems were observed in some LSBs. For instance, Village Loans and Savings Association (VSLA) sessions, where periodic savings are mobilised and loans provided to group members for needs such as emergency needs, welfare, social issues, and school fees etc., revealed that women saved less money and not as frequently as their male counterparts. LSB constitutions did not take into consideration women's representation in leadership

positions (men dominated LSB leadership). Women and youth did not participate in selection of the most suitable adapted crop varieties for seed production, and generally youth involvement in seed business activities was limited. As a result, women and youth had little active participation in the seed business. Yet the seed business should benefit the whole household in the community. Often LSBs did not appreciate the importance of gender inclusiveness in their farming activities due to cultural factors and ignorance.

Limited access to ownership and control of resources

Culturally, women and youth do not own resources such as land, finances, harvested stock, or income, which results in unequal access to and control over these resources, which leads to unequal decision-making power between men, women and youth (e.g. regarding use of outputs or income). Even when most of the groups have a VSLA savings model, women still face challenges in accessing resources. As one woman explains: *"As a group, we have a credit and savings scheme but the money we have is still little and is not sufficient for all of us. In addition, women are not considered for borrowing. Priority is usually given to men as they are sure men will pay back. Men use the borrowed money to run several businesses, they also have land as a collateral."*



Figure 1: Women and men of Agetereine Rural Farmers' Organisation participating in a gender training. Men are seated on chairs and women on the floor as dictated by cultural norms

Men own and control larger household items such as land, money and furniture whereas women own smaller items such as baskets, saucepans and other household items. Furthermore, men are only involved in a few household or farming activities and predominantly play a supervisory role. Women carry out most household work as well as farming activities like weeding and planting. Although the seed business should benefit the entire household, women do more work than men as shown in the table below.

Because women do not own resources and have limited power, they always need permission from their spouses before using any resources. Some women missed a production season while waiting for their husbands to give them permission to use land.

Men first allocate a portion of land to themselves depending on the enterprise they want to be involved in. A female member from Alito Joint Cooperative Society LSB testified during a training session:

"I cannot spend money without permission from my husband; I can only sell produce at the local market and in small quantities to meet household needs. I must always tell my husband what I have done."

LSBs were introduced to the 'household approach' (which fosters the collective LSB membership of both husband and wife) to address the gender gap. One of the issues discussed is how men and women own resources and assets. Figure 2 below shows that men own almost everything in a home including large and valuable assets.

Division of labour in household farming activities

Table 1: Division of labour in the seed business among the men, women and youth in a household

Activities	Men	Women	Youth
Securing foundation seed	✓		
Preparing garden	✓	✓	✓
Planting	✓	✓	✓
Weeding		✓	✓
Spraying	✓	✓	✓
Harvesting		✓	✓
Sorting		✓	✓
Grading		✓	✓
Storage	✓	✓	✓
Marketing	✓		

Source: Gender training report (2015), ISSD Uganda, Western Uganda



Figure 2: Results from a group discussion on gender in one of the LSBs showing resources/assets owned by a man (on the left) and assets owned by a woman in a home (in the middle) and jointly own assets (on the right)

Table 1 shows women, men and youth participation in seed production activities, as discussed during gender mainstreaming training in Mbarara district, Uganda. Women reported that they do more activities than men yet share little in the proceeds after sale.

Marketing of seed and other agricultural products is considered men's responsibility. This also limits women's participation in the seed business as they see little benefit.

Participation in LSB trainings

Generally, women's participation in training and skill development has been low. Yet training to improve agronomic practices such as pruning, mulching, weed control, fertiliser usage and rainwater harvesting, could significantly impact women's production. Participation is often low because training is far from the farmer group's location e.g at sub-county level. This makes it difficult for women to attend or they need to leave the training early to attend to other family needs.

"You know I have a young child and I also take care of my husband's mother who is sick. This cannot allow me to attend a training for which I have to walk very far." **Lamented Janate Bukenya after missing one of the trainings.**

Issues around gender such as lack of transparency within a household leads to mistrust, stealing of produce among family members and side selling, which reduces household profits. These gender issues may result in limited participation of household members if business does not benefit them. One woman from Kyamulama Mixed Farmers Group, Lyantonde district confessed she pretended to be sick during activities such as shelling and sorting of beans:

"I always pretend to be sick since I know I do not gain much by participating. I never get new clothes when we sell the harvest. Why should I bother if I don't get anything?"

"I don't touch money from our agricultural produce sales. When we harvest and clean everything, my husband takes the produce to the market but he does not return with any money for us to benefit from as a family." **A female member of Turibamwe Mixed Farmers' Rural Producer Group in Kamwenge district.**

Youth attitudes towards seed production and marketing

The young people in Uganda are generally not interested in LSBs and other agricultural-related activities because they regard agriculture as a lowly activity. They prefer jobs with quick returns, such as riding motorcycle taxis (boda boda) to carry goods and people. Young people also spend time in unproductive activities such as playing pool and betting. Young people from homes without good parental role models thus do not see farming as a viable venture and resort to activities such as gambling.

Approaches towards gender inclusive local seed businesses

Gender inclusive approaches initiated by ISSD helped to overcome gender challenges within households and in LSBs, enabling men and women to work better together and complement each other at group and household level. Approaches used include:

- a** Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) methodology;
- b** household approach;
- c** affirmative action on leadership; and
- d** prudent scheduling of LSB trainings.

The **GALS** methodology jointly involves husband and wife in seed production and contributes to changes in gender responsiveness (involving creating an environment that reflects an understanding of the realities of both men and women's lives). GALS is a community-led empowerment methodology which aims to transform economic, social and political aspects for gender justice. GALS works with women and men to develop visions for change, appreciating their strengths and achievements, and to analyse and address gender inequalities within the family and community which prevent them from achieving their vision, including in the seed business. GALS empowers women and men - as individuals and collectively - to collect, analyse and use information to improve and gain more control over their lives.

The **household approach** aims to involve both sexes in group meetings. The approach encourages household planning to enhance equal participation and joint decision-making on resource and labour allocations in the seed business. Both wife and husband are advised to join the LSB and do seed related

activities together. The household approach is a non-confrontational way of addressing gender inequalities within households and organisations.

Affirmative action refers to deliberate actions taken to ensure a more equal number of women participate in LSBs activities. To create space for women and men to participate in decision-making, LSBs constitutions were reviewed to include a quota (one third) of women's representation. This enabled women to better contribute to LSB activities and to be actively involved in the seed business and decision-making.

Prudent scheduling of trainings. Training and coaching sessions were held in gender friendly locations near LSBs to avoid women travelling long distances. Timing was discussed well in advance to avoid women not being able to attend. Both sexes were invited to participate in community and regional networking meetings.

To address gender issues, LSB members elaborated action points detailed in Table 3 on the next page.



Figure 4: Women brainstorming gender issues in seed production during a gender training in Latyeng LSB, Gulu district



Figure 5: Men brainstorming gender issues in seed production during a gender training in Latyeng LSB, Gulu district

Table 3: Gender issues, current status and actions taken to address it

Gender issues in LSBs	Current status in LSBs	Group action points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing women and youth production and access to quality seeds of preferred varieties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men override women and youth on decision-making about production resources (quality seeds and land). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint planning to involve women and youth in decision-making on production resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender equality for quality assurance in seed production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low participation of men in quality assurance since threshing, sorting, drying and grading are done by women and children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal participation of men and women in threshing, sorting, drying and grading to build men’s skills in post-harvest handling and reduce women’s workload in seed production.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving seed business opportunities for women and youth; strengthen women and youth seed entrepreneurship in LSBs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women and youth are more involved in production compared to marketing in LSBs. Women and youth have low access to credit compared to men. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of marketing committee membership to include women and youth. Joint marketing to promote transparency and build women and youth marketing skills in LSBs. Empower women to access credit from financial institutions by facilitating their access to collateral like land and animals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing women and youth participation in LSB decision-making and leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low participation of women and youth in decision-making and group leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review constitution and LSB leadership structure. Elect women and youth in key leadership positions. Conduct leadership training to build capacities of women and youth. Advocate for equal participation of women and youth during group meetings.

Achievements towards developing gender inclusive LSBs

Paying attention to gender issues among LSBs has improved a number of areas. These include: increased acreage of seed production; youth participating in LSBs; and savings innovations initiated. Also observed is joint planning in households, a change in attitude to women LSB leadership, economic growth and generally more stable families.

a) Women and youth participation in the seed business

With improved joint planning and collective decision-making at household level, women in LSB households are now active in seed production and joint marketing decisions,

including on spending income earned from seed sales. Latyeng LSB in the northern zone has established a youth wing. Through communal savings, the LSB funds a mechanics apprenticeship for one youth member. This investment is part of the group vision to have their own truck and being able to maintain and operate it as a group. By investing in the youth member, he has an incentive to participate in the group.

Other young people are also benefitting from their participation in LSBs. Kyamulama LSB youth members in the south-western zone explained: *"We have many youths in the group. We have learnt that if you work in seed production you can do it for business."*

We left activities like drinking and gambling, now we concentrate on farming because we saw from others it can be beneficial.” Another youth member added: “Now we have the confidence to speak up and even disagree with the elders. We feel empowered to express our views.”



Figure 6: Both men and women are now working together in land preparation.
A photo taken from Bedi Irwot LSB group

“My husband and I attended a GALS training for three days at Marikulu farmers’ store. Since the training many things have changed in our home, we no longer fight like we used to do. We now sit and plan together. There is peace at our home, we discuss things freely and understand each other better. In May 2015, we sold simsim seed and earned 2 million Uganda shillings. My husband consulted me on how we could use the money, unlike before where I could not know exactly how much money was earned from the sale of produce because he was the one to decide. I am happy and have energy to support him and we invest more to secure a better future for our children.” **A female member of Marikulu Farmers’ Association LSB in Koboko district, West Nile.**

b) Women involvement in LSB leadership and seed business

In many LSBs, women now occupy important positions such as chairperson, general secretary, treasurer of sub-committees of production, marketing and internal quality control. This has given visibility and confidence to women to take up leadership positions and influence decision-making, which has inspired other women in LSBs to engage in elective positions in the local council election at different levels.

“Before I was an ordinary member of the group. Training in GALS gave us a lot of confidence to believe in ourselves to serve the group in a leadership position. I do my work well and members are happy with my services for inspecting fields,” said **Bunya Concy, chairperson, internal seed quality controlling committee of Amadrima Farmers’ Association LSB**

c) Innovations in savings and lending

More flexibility was also allowed in the approach used for saving and lending to accommodate female LSB members. Small amounts are saved on a weekly basis under the resource mobilisation strategy known as “**seed box**” which increased women’s ability to save for inputs such as foundation seed, “one by one makes a bundle.” The seed box enables members to pool resources, which facilitates women to invest in their seed business. With this weekly frequency they can cope better than providing a large sum of money for foundation seed at once given their nature of income generation.

d) Increased access to, utilisation and control of resources

Access to resources, combined with training on entrepreneurship and market orientation, also enabled women to invest their money in addi-

tional profitable activities: "I grew bean seed, sold it with the group then bought a pig and now I have a piggery - I became a supplier!" says Ngamitta Lilian, a member of Agieramach Ogiebu Womens Group for Development.

e) Gender sensitive business planning

When developing gender sensitive business plans, women's preference in crop varieties is now taken into consideration. During this process, LSBs need to ensure that they also know community variety preferences, otherwise it would be a problem to market their seed to farmers within the localities. Gender sensitive business planning ensures that the seed varieties selected for production suit both men and women with regards to agronomic and marketing activities. Women participation in developing the business plans is of paramount importance.

f) Cross learning among LSBs members

LSBs have been facilitated to visit other LSBs for learning and improving themselves. Through twinning visits, LSBs have been able to learn from their counterparts (those at an advanced level) in terms of gender.

New LSBs under the outscaling programme appreciated the strategy used in Omutiima Gwa Ruhira Society where both spouses are LSB members. This makes participating in the LSB activities easier as both the wife and husband's interests are met. The LSBs members are now coaches of other LSBs. In West Nile, LSBs use the GALs approach to support other LSBs to stimulate change and commitment in LSB development. This attitude enhances LSB sustainability and strong networks and relationships are created.

Concluding remarks

While building capacity of community farmer groups to produce seed, gender is one aspect that must not be ignored. Change is necessary, so that men and women participate equally and each have the ability to contribute economic development in their own way. Gender inclusive LSBs are in contrast with Ugandan communities' norms and values and have now effectively shown how a change of beliefs and attitude can make a difference. The power to work together as a household and as a community makes local economic growth possible.

Colophon

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