

ACT

ACTION FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

Action for Community
Transformation

Annual Report 2012

SUPPORTED AND FUNDED BY:

The logo for SNV, consisting of the letters 'SNV' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font with a horizontal line underneath.

Koninkrijk der Nederlanden

The UNICEF logo, featuring the word 'unicef' in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font next to the United Nations emblem.

Transforming Precious Lives for Sustainable Development

Sustainable rural development for schools and communities solutions

Supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, UNICEF, District Local Governments and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation

Annual Report 2012

1.0 Introduction

Action For Community Transformation (ACT) is a Ugandan Community Based Organisation established in 2003. The mandate of the organisation is to ensure that the poor and vulnerable are able to meet their basic needs. The organisation's programme focuses on its three (3) strategic sectors namely; Livelihood (promoting sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources Management), Health (including HIV and WASH) and Education.

ACT was contracted by SNV- Uganda with contract number: 2011/CEP- SG/WNR:001 to implement school garden component in 5 primary schools of Ocoko, Bongova, Ajia, Oci and Obaru in Ajia Sub County, Arua district. The contract was for a period of one year. This was intended to establish the school gardens as an entry point to achieving improved school performance, rejuvenation of school-community partnerships and better agronomic practices.

ACT under CEP works closely with local government, communities, schools and other stakeholders. The programme focuses on building the capacity of the target communities and their stakeholders to fulfil their existing roles more effectively, in transparent and accountable manner, using existing resources. This programme has created a sense of ownership and empowers community to learn, adapt and adopt new attitudes, good practices and therefore sustain results and impacts. The school garden implementation has included the actual set up of school gardens that serve as an entry point for other interventions. The purpose of the garden at the school is to enable improvement in food security through increased productivity and incomes at house hold level. The school garden has acted as a transformation and social change centre for the improvement of the quality of education and community livelihoods.

Agriculture: School Gardens

Outcome1: Increased Community Participation in School garden programme in 5 schools.

In the whole year under the increased community participation, Action For Community Transformation (ACT) implemented and achieved (Changes recorded) the following:

ACT started the implementation of CEP through buy – in of the programme to Sub County officials. Orientation meeting was organised at Ajia Sub County Headquarters for Sub County leadership. There were 10 participants who attended (Male= 08, Female=02) representing 100% attendance. This was specifically to orient them on the concept of Community Empowerment Programme.

School Management Committee (SMC) and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) of all the 5 primary schools were oriented on the concept of CEP. We actually found out that all the 5 primary schools have SMCs and PTAs which are functional. 112(Male=70, Female=42) participants attended the orientation meeting.

5 School Garden Committees were formed in all the 5 primary schools. Each School Garden Committee comprising of 9 members of which at least 30% are females. These committees were all trained in their roles and responsibilities.

125 Community Model Farmers in total were identified and trained in all the 5 primary schools. In each school, 25 Community Model Farmers were identified and trained in Good Agronomic Practices.

5 Community dialogue meetings to discuss Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) Sustainability were organised in all the 5 primary schools. 283 (Male= 181, Female= 102) representing 40% of the parents in all the 5 primary schools attended the dialogue meeting.

CHANGES RECORDED IN 2012

The buy – in meeting conducted for the sub county leadership has motivated them to participate fully in Community Empowerment Programme activities. The sub county leadership has given 100% support to ACT in the implementation of school garden component under CEP. They have participated in community mobilisation, resource mobilisation and Monitoring & Evaluation of CEP.

The orientation meeting organised for SMCs and PTAs of all the 5 primary schools on the concept of CEP empowered them. In Bongova, Ocoko, Ajia and Obaru primary schools, ACT received 90% of support from their SCMs and PTAs. In Oci primary school, ACT received 70% of support from their SMC and PTA. The SMCs and PTAs of all the 5 primary schools supported ACT through: mobilising local resources, mobilising communities to participate in school garden activities and monitoring school garden programme at school level.

The trainings received by school garden committees are responsible for all school garden activities at school level. The school garden committees have supported ACT through: mobilising parents, pupils and teachers to participate in school garden activities and mobilising local resources like planting materials, tools, labour and so on. Because of the committees, there was 100% parent – led establishment of school gardens in all the 5 primary schools; which has been used by parents, pupils and teachers as a learning site or demonstration site.

Of the 125 Community Model Farmers identified and trained in all the 5 primary schools, 100 of the model farmers representing 80% provide Farmer- to- Farmer extension services to farmers within the communities. 100% of the Community Model Farmers participated in mobilising parents to participate in school garden activities at school level.

The community dialogue meetings conducted resulted in to the integration of school garden programme in to main School Development Plan in all the 5 primary schools representing 100% integration hence; ensuring CEP sustainability.

"We are ready to mobilise and support the school garden programme to promote food security and if need be we shall contribute in any way (Financial, labour) or buy farm inputs"

Parent, Obaru Primary School, Arua district.

".....having dreams and aspirations unmet. One can be in a situation where they cannot express themselves, have no one to tell their problems and cannot decide on anything to address their own problems..... It is a state of helplessness. I am happy ACT/SNV has come to support us through CEP Programme".

Parent, Ajia Primary School.

Outcome: Improved primary school retention rate in 5 primary schools.

Action For Community Transformation (ACT) conducted the following activities under improved primary school retention rate in the 5 primary schools in Ajia Sub County and achieved the following:

5 Girls' Education Movement (GEM) clubs were formed and trained in all the 5 primary schools. 150 (Boys=50, Girls=100) representing 100% attendance because in each school we have 30 GEM club members. The GEM club members were trained in their roles and responsibilities and also in life skills. The main purpose of GEM club in all the primary schools is to retain both boys and girls in school as well as bring back those pupils who drop out of school to school.

5 community dialogue meetings on school feeding programme were held in all the 5 primary schools. A total of 324 (Male=204, Female=120) parents attended the dialogue meetings, representing 45% of parents in all the primary schools. The dialogue meeting was conducted to help parents to understand why children should remain in school and bring those who drop out of school back to school.

CHANGES RECORDED IN 2012

The trainings received by the GEM club members have empowered them to talk to their peers and convince them either to remain in school or come back to school. The GEM club members have been able to bring back 36 pupils in all the 5 primary schools in 2012, down from only 4 pupils in 2011.

The Table 1 below shows total number of boys and girls brought back to school by GEM club members.

SCHOOL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
Ajia	7	5	12
Bongova	4	5	9
Obaru	0	2	2
Oci	3	2	5
Ocoko	3	5	8
Total	17	19	36

Source: Action For Community Transformation (ACT), 2012

The community dialogue meetings have resulted in to the integration of school feeding programme in to School Development Plan in all the 5 primary schools.

In Ajia primary school, school feeding programme has begun as a result of a parent- led school garden established. A total of 771 (Boy=387, Girl=384) pupils were fed with food from school garden established by the parents, pupils and teachers.

The effort put by parents together with GEM club members has resulted in to improvement in school enrolment and pupils' retention in all the 5 primary schools. In 2012, the schools enrolled 3,780 pupils in total compared with 2,989 pupils in 2011. An increment of 21.1% of enrolment. The overall dropout rate in all the 5 primary schools has dropped from 15% in 2011 to 6.1% in 2012. 5.9% of boys dropped out of school and 6.8% of girls dropped out of school in 2012.

Table 2 below shows dropout of boys and girls in 5 primary schools

SCHOOL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
Ajia	65	59	124
Bongova	4	16	20
Obaru	15	14	29
Oci	16	21	37
Ocoko	9	11	20
Total	109	121	230

Source: Action For Community Transformation (ACT), 2012

Out of 3,780 pupils that enrolled in 2012 in all the 5 primary school, only 230 drop out of school representing 6.1% dropout rate. 1,257 pupils get something to eat regularly for lunch representing 33.2%. This gives an impression of improvement in the food security situation at house hold level in communities where the interventions are implemented.

Therefore, of all the activities conducted and changes recorded in 2012, we have achieved 60% of the 10% of improvement in primary school retention rates above the 2011 situation.

"We have begun realising our dream of feeding children within our school compound through our school garden programme. In the beginning of third term, we were able to feed our pupils with maize; the parents and pupils established with support from ACT. This alone has improved pupils' retention in the school"

Head teacher, Ajia Primary School.

"For the last eight years, Ajia primary school has not produced any first grade pupil which is why some parents near Ajia primary school send their children to the neighboring school (Abiki primary school). The school garden programme will be a motivation for both parents and pupils. We hope to be able to retain our pupils and attract others to join us now that the programme has started"

PTA Chairperson, Ajia primary school, Arua district.

Outcome: Increased adoption of good agricultural practices and innovations in 5 primary schools.

ACT conducted the following activities under increased adoption of good agricultural practices and innovations in Ajia sub county:

350 (Male= 202, Female= 148) parents were trained in Good Agronomic Practices like: site selection, land preparation, planting techniques, weed control measures, integrated pest management, maturity testing, pre- harvesting and post harvesting.

Crop performance monitoring and on-farm provision of advisory services by field officers of ACT in all the 5 primary schools. The field officers made 50 field visits to all the primary schools. These field visits were meant to give on – site advisory services on challenges identified in the crop field. This was also intended to assess the performance of the newly introduced technologies in the schools.

Joint Monitoring of school garden programme in all the 5 primary schools was conducted. This Joint Monitoring was between ACT and Sub County leadership of Ajia Sub County. The Joint Monitoring was attended by LCIII chairperson and Sub County chief of Ajia Sub County. This was intended to assess the progress of CEP and put in place strategies for sustainability of the programme.

CHANGES RECORDED IN 2012

The trainings conducted in Good Agronomic Practices resulted in establishment of 100% parent- led school gardens in all the 5 primary schools. In the school gardens high value crops were planted that is; onions, maize, cassava and grafted mangoes. The school gardens have been used as learning site by parents from within the primary schools.

The school gardens established has offered a very good platform for parents to learn from. This has motivated parents to adopt new Good Agronomic Practices representing 48.2% of the total number of parents in all the 5 primary schools.

50 field visits were conducted by field officers of ACT to offer on-farm advisory services. The provision of on – farm advisory services has helped parents in increasing production and productivity hence improved household food security within the surrounding communities of the primary schools.

"I am very happy that we have been able to realise up to UShs. 480,000/= with only one enterprise of onions that was established by parents and pupils in the school garden with technical support from ACT. Many parents who attended the trainings have adopted the new agricultural technologies introduced by ACT through school garden programme"

School Garden Committee Chairperson, Bongova Primary School.

"I feel privileged to have attended the training on effective enterprise selection and profit margin analysis conducted by ACT. This has opened my eyes to do my enterprise selection wisely for profit maximisation"

Parent, Oci Primary School.

"Most visitors I have seen including our own politicians come to our village tell us to have bigger gardens and produce more but thereafter; they all do not help us to get market and we end up losing all the produce. Now ACT/SNV is talking of improving household

food security and modernising agriculture but where will all this produce go? I feel we should wait to produce until markets are got. Then we can produce. BUT with CEP at hand, I know we shall succeed".

Parent, Bongova Primary School.

Therefore, of all the activities conducted in 2012, we have so far achieved 55% of the 30% of the parents of the targeted schools adopting specific good agricultural practices and innovations in the communities.

Outcome: Improved Community Access to quality extension services in 5 primary schools.

ACT conducted the following activities in improving community access to quality extension services in Ajia Sub County:

ACT has continued to share work plans with schools, Local Government of Ajia Sub County and other development partners. The sharing of work plans is aimed at enhancing the sustainability strategies of CEP put in place.

60 extension field visits were made by field extension officers of ACT to all the 5 primary schools and the surrounding communities.

18 extension field visits were made by Sub County extension workers to all the 5 primary schools mainly the Agricultural Advisory Service Providers (AASP) and Community Based Facilitators (CBFs).

15 extension field visits were made by Send A Cow extension workers especially to the surrounding communities of Bongova primary school.

CHANGES RECORDED IN 2012

The sharing of work plans with Local Government of Ajia Sub County and other Development partners has prompted the Sub County leadership to support school garden programme through National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) programme in all the 5 primary schools. This has also improved the working relationship with Ajia Sub County Local Government.

The extension field visits has resulted in to 53% increase in average number of field visit days for quality extension services compared to 25% in 2011 base line survey hence increase in the number of parents adopting new agronomic practices and technologies, which has; eventually led to increased production and also improved household income.

The extension field visits made by sub county extension workers to all the primary schools use school gardens as a learning site. 65% of extension visit days by sub county extension workers actually used school gardens as learning site hence an increased rate of adoption among parents.

The extension field visits made by Send A Cow extension workers especially to the surrounding communities of Bongova primary school, has complimented the work of ACT in the area hence visibly increased rate of adoption among parents.

630 (Male=370, Female= 260) parents accessing quality extension services in all the 5 primary schools.
The nature of extension services offered includes:

- Extension worker to Farmer extension model.
- Farmer to Farmer extension model.
- Demonstrations at school level model.
- Progressive Farmer Model.

Methodology

ACT has continued to undertake literature review where applicable and informally engaged school garden stakeholders to develop a fair understanding of operational environment. The preliminary analysis has helped ACT to develop useful tools for establishing the Institutional Framework of school gardens and to provide relevant agricultural skills and practices which serves as demonstration centres for the pupils, teachers and communities.

Some of the other methodologies used by ACT in implementation of school garden programme activities include the following:

- Open discussions
- Brainstorming
- Interviews
- Observations
- Practical demonstrations
- Field visits
- Use of Farmer Field school approach to enhance learning and transfer of knowledge.
- Lectures
- Adaptive research

4.0 Governance for Empowerment

Action For Community Transformation (ACT) participated actively in the formation of school garden committees in all the 5 primary schools. The composition of the committees is in such a way that at least 30% of the members are females. The school garden committees have taken full control of all the school garden activities in their schools. At community level we involve all community members both males and females in school garden programme.

ACT has worked hard to strengthen issues of Governance at service delivery level. This has been done through strengthening the capacities of school garden committee members in leadership skills, documentation, financial management, resource mobilisation and advocacy. Other activities under Governance include monitoring of the school garden programme and strengthening information sharing as well as learning.

Major break through

The major breakthroughs we encountered in the whole year include the following:

- Completion of annual work plan successfully.

- Identification and sustainable use of local resources e.g. land, planting materials etc.
- Changing gradually community attitude towards school garden programme in all the 5 primary schools.
- Conducted a joint Monitoring of Community Empowerment Programme with Ajia Sub County Leadership.
- One (1) staff of ACT trained in Human Rights Principles by Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC).
- Timely documentation of field activities.
- Establishment of parent – led school gardens in all the 5 primary schools.
- Parents (Farmers) demanding for our extension services indicating quality extension services offered by staff of ACT to communities around the primary schools.
- Timely submission of timesheets, work plans and reports.

Deviations from agreed plans that would affect the programme/ challenges encountered.

In the due course of implementation of our activities, we experienced the following Deviations:

- Mobilization of planting materials which were not planned for in the contract agreement.
- Integration of cross cutting issues such as climate change, HIV/AIDS, gender mainstreaming& WASH.
- Revitalization of debating clubs in all the 5 primary schools.
- Purchase of pre- P. L.E Question papers for revision for Primary Seven candidates in bid to improve performance.

Challenges encountered:

- Inconsistent financial disbursement, contrary to terms and conditions stipulated in the contract agreement.
- The issue of negative community attitude is still a challenge.
- Erratic and unpredictable weather patterns.
- Low turn up of women for trainings at school level.

Recommendations:

- Timely and consistent financial disbursement.
- There should be consistent CEP implementation strategy for all implementing partners.
- In future, there is still need to reconsider some hard ware component under CEP especially for school gardens which is a practical aspect.
- Need to train farmers more on strategies to adapt to climate change.
- Need to integrate Gender issues in school garden activities.
- Need to emphasize more on Adaptive research.

What can we do to sustain/improve on the results registered so far.

We can do the following to ensure sustainability of the results under CEP:

- Promote integration of school garden activities in Local Government work plans.
- Focus on building the capacity of target communities and stakeholders to fulfill their existing roles more effectively in a transparent and accountable manner, using existing resources.

- Continuous presence and support of Local Capacity Builders is another strategy of sustainability.
- Joint monitoring with all relevant stakeholders.
- Process documentation will provide a systematic way to capture what happens in the processes of change and how it happens, within the context of an explicit theory of change. Process documentation will be used for more and better socio- economic impacts by improving the process itself.
- Strengthen community contribution in Community Empowerment Programme (CEP).
- Keep focus on community empowerment, attitudes and practices beyond technical issues (integrate social development).
- Have vision beyond Community Empowerment programme implementation.
- Conduct continuous needs assessment for effective interventions.
- Need to fully involve the programme beneficiaries to ensure sustainability.

8.0 Conclusion

The school garden programme implementation has been used as an innovative teaching tool and strategy that lets educators incorporate hands – on activities in a diversity of interdisciplinary, standards based lessons. The garden engages pupils by providing a dynamic environment in which to observe, discover, experiment, nurture and learn. This underscores the need to give prominence to agriculture at school level as a means to improving agricultural practice skills and knowledge for children and parents (Communities). This would enable agriculture to be emphasized at rural households as the relevant and sustainable solution to their challenges of food security, nutrition and household incomes, among others. The school garden strategy has been used as an entry point for other interventions too.