

SAFE-World Project/Initiative Summary

Country: Uganda

Project/Initiative Title: Rukungiri HPI

Nos. farmers: 31

Agro-Ecological Zone: V

Improvement types

1x	2	3	4	5x	6x	7	8x	9
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A. Key Impacts

A1 - Productivity

	Before/Without	After/With	% change
Milk			New food

D. Contact Point for Project/Initiative

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E. Project Narrative

Rukungiri Women's Cooperative Heifer Project (under Kiyenje Women's Heifer Project)
Location: Buhunga Subcounty of Rukungiri District, 400 km southwest of Kampala, Uganda

Responsible Organization: Heifer Project International (HPI)

Partners: Uganda Ministry of Trade and Industry, Bothar

This project provides in-calf dairy heifers to selected members of the Rukungiri Women's Cooperative and related training to all group members. The training emphasizes animal husbandry (shed construction, animal feeding and watering, animal health, calf rearing, milk hygiene), as well as soil and water conservation, pasture establishment, care of agroforestry trees, financial management, and gender sensitization. Additionally, the recipients of animals agree to pass on the first female offspring to another family who is a member of the cooperative. The recipients also return to the cooperative a portion of money earned through one of the cooperative's income-generating activities. There are eight such activities in all, the heifer project being the largest.

The project was formed to address essential needs in this rural area of Uganda, where protein deficient diets mean a high rate of child malnutrition and where families do not have enough income to pay for school fees, medical care or other essentials. Organized by the Ministry of Commerce, Cooperatives and Marketing (now the Ministry of Trade and Industry), the project began in 1992. With a grant of US \$83,000 from the USAID Cooperative Agriculture Agro-business Support (CAAS) project, HPI provided training, funded a project extensionist and organized the donation/shipment of dairy animals from Bothar, an Irish organization.

Results Achieved: Between 1993 and 1996, thirty-one families each received an in-calf heifer donated from Bothar. Plans for more original placements were temporarily impeded when the Ugandan government banned importation of Irish cattle in 1997, due to the scare over bovine spongiform encephalopathy (commonly known as *Mad Cow Disease*). As of January, 1997, eight female offspring have been passed on to other families. All group members have received training in and have implemented sustainable farming methods. They are sharing ideas with others in their village, many of whom have adopted methods of zero-grazing, soil conservation, and nutritional and family planning. The training has resulted in excellent management of the animals as evidenced by low mortality rates (5% for adult cattle, and 0-5% for calves) and by the overall healthiness of the animals.

There is a significant distinction in the community between those who now follow these practices and those who do not: increased income, improved housing, better nutrition/health, children going to school, and increased output of other farm products due to the utilization of manure as fertilizer, among others. Many of the project partners have purchased additional cattle with their increased income. Most have also diversified their farm activities; some group members are raising poultry, some are beekeeping, and others have improved the quality and quantity of their coffee and bananas for sale at market.

Sharing and caring has been enhanced as a result of the project. The spirit of giving, modeled by the passing-on-the-gift component of HPI, has translated into a larger aspect of this project. Many group members have freely provided their neighbors with milk or manure, and a few have given heifer offspring to needy relatives (beyond their pass-on requirement).

Lessons Learned: The importance of the following for the success of this project has been highlighted:

- ?? *A project design that is realistic, with clear, achievable objectives that addressed beneficiaries' concerns.* The group's objectives included the following: 1) to organize rural women into a viable, self-sustaining, self-managed dairy cooperative; 2) to improve family nutrition and health through improved milk supply; 3) to augment the income of rural women by nearly \$200 annually; 4) to protect the environment by intercropping pasture with fodder trees; 5) to train women in the zero-grazing system of dairy management; and 6) to improve livestock and agricultural development in Uganda.
- ?? *Sustained support from HPI in Kampala and Rukungiri - not only in providing animals, but also in supervision and training in animal, human and financial management.* There exists a dedicated, serious staff that anticipated potential problems and handled them before they could become serious obstacles. Because the extensionist became a group member and beneficiary, he had a stake in the project and, thus, more dedication to ensuring its success.
- ?? *Adherence to the HPI cornerstones for sustainable development, the supporting principles which guide HPI as an organization and all of our projects in their project design.* Briefly, they are: Passing on the Gift, Accountability, Sharing and Caring, Sustainability and Self-Reliance, Improved Animal Management, Nutrition and Income, Gender and Family Focus, Genuine Need and Justice, Improving the Environment, Full Participation, Training and Education, and Spirituality.
- ?? *A dedicated, hard-working project executive with democratic mechanisms for turnover.* The same persons have remained in the positions of Rukungiri chairperson and treasurer since the start of the project, and transitions on the executive level have been smooth.
- ?? *The enabling environment in the country and built-in mechanisms to ensure project*

sustainability. The project operates in an integrated manner with many aspects of sustainability -- infrastructural, institutional, economic, and social. The macroeconomic stability in the country favors sustainable development in general, with a low inflation rate, decreasing interest rates, and personal and property security. The presence of a good road network in the Rukungiri area and the fact that all beneficiaries are located near a main or feeder road also contributed to success. Beyond the early project stages, institutional support from the Ministry of Trade and Industry was not substantial, but support from the Ugandan vet department for insemination services, along with the HPI support, played a major role. It is clear that several layers of support for a project are important. Economically, the project has built-in mechanisms for sustainability. Members make contributions of Shs 5,000 for membership and Shs 10,000 for an annual subscription. Beneficiaries pay Shs 35,000 to transport the heifer gift and Shs 11,000 to buy the first quarter liter of acaricide. This money accumulates in the society as each member's share capital. Each beneficiary meets the cost of feeding, treating and vaccinating the animal, reducing dependence on HPI. Diversification of the cooperative's activities brings additional funds for group support, from the sale of handicrafts, the joint marketing of produce, the buying and selling of produce, and renting part of the society building. The cooperative maintains a bank account. The treasurer is responsible for financial management and reports regularly to the committee and to the membership. The group has funds available to pay for the extensionist when HPI support ends.

?? *Gender Focus.* Contract holders are women and the executive committee is composed of all women, but all beneficiaries say that the cow belongs to the whole family, and both wife and husband participate in training courses and meetings. The families who had the least successful results with their animal management were those in which gender roles were not examined.

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