

# Soroti Integrated Development Project (SIDP III)

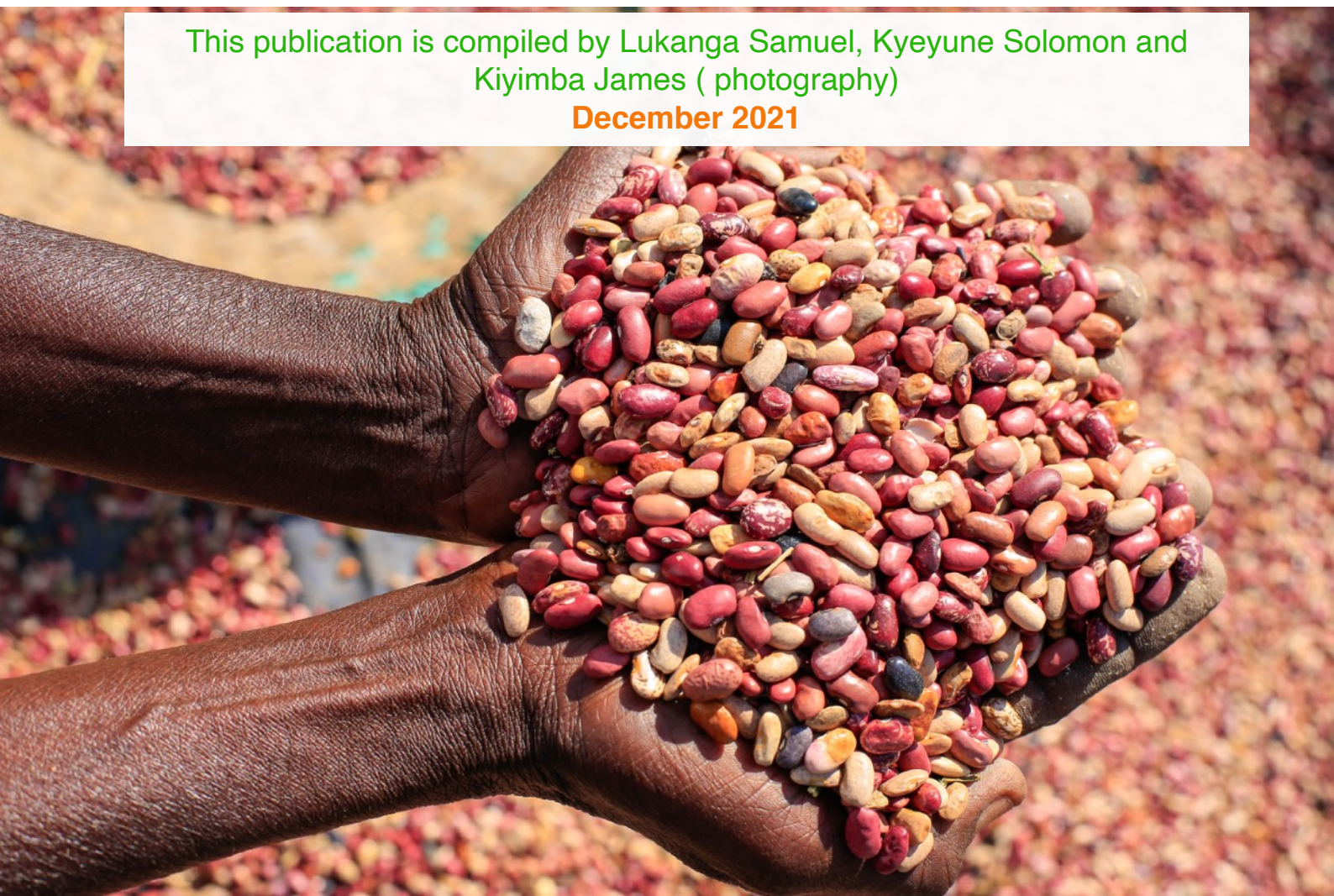


**Transforming Peoples Lives in Gweri,  
Arapai and Tubur, Sub counties,  
through Community Groups**

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# Message from the Director

**S**ince 2004 Community Integrated Development Initiatives (CIDI) with support from Caritas Denmark has been implementing the Soroti Integrated Development Project (SIDP), transforming peoples lives in the Arapai, Asuret, Tubur and Gweri sub counties of Soroti District.

To bring about the desired change and transformation in peoples' lives, we use the human rights based approach in the implementation of SIDP project activities. We have a strong focus on gender aspects, empowering vulnerable categories of people: the women, youth, PWDs, elderly and Orphans.



In this publication we therefore bring you human interest stories that highlight how SIDP is transforming people's lives in the project target areas. We also share with you our experiences, lessons learned and recommendations, if you are to implement a similar project.

In light of the above, I take this opportunity to thank our partners Caritas Denmark for their financial and material support towards the implementation of this project. I also appreciate the Soroti District leadership, all other like minded development partners with in soroti District, community members and all our supporters for contributing towards the implementation of this project.

With out your support, it would have been impossible to transform people's lives in Soroti district. On behalf of CIDI and the communities we work, we are very grateful and honoured to partner with you on this project. Your generosity and support is what gives these men and women in the sub-counties of Gweri, Arapai and Tubur of Soroti district the resources, knowledge and practical skills they need to emancipate themselves out of poverty.

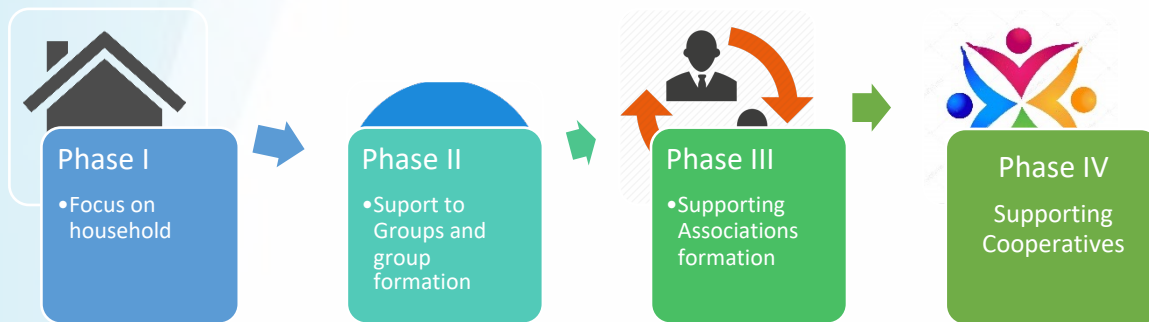
You truly make the difference for us, and we are extremely grateful!

Yours sincerely  
Dr. Jjuuko Fulgensio  
**Executive Director CIDI**

# Soroti Integrated Development Project (SIDP III)

## Introduction

The Soroti Integrated Development Project (SIDP) was started in 2004. Since this time, we have witnessed a number of changes, and these are in four stages as indicated in the figure below:



Initially the focus was to support household agricultural production. This was in response to the post conflict recovery period of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency and arrow boys. Over time we realised that supporting individual households was not effective in enabling the farmers to earn higher incomes. The approach was later changed to supporting the community groups which solved the challenges associated with working at an individual household. The groups were mainly informal and could not tap into the ongoing government development initiatives. After a period of about four years, the groups were supported to form to form farmer associations. The farmer associations were still not able to help the communities to achieve a more formalised status.

This was a key driving force to support communities to form farmer cooperatives. This arrangement enabled the individual group members to attain economies of scale and also be strong together. It has the following benefits:

- Aggregate produce and sell jointly
- Negotiate process due to bulk selling
- Improves access to markets
- Value addition to increase income
- Doing business on behalf of members



“ Before getting involved in SIDP project, I was a mere house wife, I was not in any group. When I joined CIDI supported projects I learn better farming methods, interacted with others community members and above all I'm an empowered woman, I have been elected three times as the LCI Chairperson for my village and treasurer for the cooperative society . **Ariongat Grace, 59, resident of Telamot parish, Awaliwali sub county**

## Ojuko James : From being a translator for a women’s farmers group to becoming chairperson of Asuret Community Integrated Farmers’ Cooperative



Ojuko James Michael, 60, is a resident of Ocokican Central village, Ocokican parish, Ocokican subcounty of Soroti District. Ojuko has a very interesting story of how being a translator for Egogong Amojong [Strong Old Women] Farmers’ Group that was receiving support from CIDI to becoming its member and there after elected to leadership positions and helping the group to grow to the level of cooperative society.

Ojuko James Michael, 60, is married to Aseko Sarah 50, together they have eight children ( two boys and six girls). Ojukogot to know about CIDI’s projects in his community in 2010 when he volunteered to be a translator for ( Egogong Amojong Farmers’ Group ) which had 30

members and his wife was the chairperson of the group but none of the members could speak English.

“ I was requested to translate for the group during one of the training sessions on modern farming methods, livestock management and there after distributed cassava cuttings all offered by CIDI,” explains Ojuko James Michael. “In the process I got interested in joining the group, but I was not a woman, I encouraged my wife (Aseko Sarah) to play key roles in the groups. Because my wife was literate; could read and write in 2011, she was elected as the chairperson of the group.”

### **Putting knowledge acquired into practice**

The group continued to receive training and support from CIDI in different aspects of improved farming and household income generation. Members were taught the importance of growing crops beyond household consumption. Putting the knowledge acquired from CIDI into practice, the group was given a demonstration garden for lemon, oranges, and vegetables, each of the group member was also given five seedlings of citrus to plant on their own. Ojuko together with his wife Sarah planted fifty lemon trees. The knowledge members acquired from CIDI enabled them carry out good agriculture practices leading to increased farm output.

### **Taping into government resources**

In this project, CIDI built the capacity of the farmers groups and encouraged them to become legal entities by registering with their districts. This was the case with Egogong Amojong Farmers' Group, the group was registered at Ocokican sub county, this enabled group members tap into available government opportunities. Egogong Amojong Farmers' Group members for example accessed more fruit seedlings from NAADs program to expand their gardens. This came in very handy because CIDI had previously given group members seven heifers and two oxen for ploughing.

### **From farmers' group to Cooperative Society**

In 2015, different farmers' groups within the subcounty joined other groups to form an association called Asuret Community Integrated Farmers Association. CIDI gave the association a milling machine and members agreed to sell the bulls given by CIDI to contribute to the construction of the produce store of the association. With capacity building and support from CIDI, group members started producing together to benefit from bulking and collective marketing and savings. In 2016, Asuret Community Integrated Farmers Association

transformed itself into Asuret Community Integrated Farmers' Cooperative Society and was fully registered as a primary cooperative in 2017.

### **Training of Contact Farmers**

When the members of the farmers associations agreed to transform their farmer association into a cooperative society, there was more need for the cooperative members to increase farm production to enjoy economies of scale through bulking and collective marketing. At this time, CIDI therefore focused on training of contact farmers in local communities whose role among others were to train other community members in improved farming methods, post-harvest handling and collective marketing of their produces. Study tours were organised for the Contact Farmer for exposure, CIDI supported them with farm in puts, Aseko Sarah wife to Ojuko James was selected to train as a Contact Farmer for her village benefiting from all the trainings and exchange visits to other successful farmers where she learnt skills of making mature a key ingredient to increasing farm production.

As a family they were able to increase their farm production through planting more citrus garden acreage from 50 lemon trees to 300 orange trees, there was increased farm yields for example from harvesting 200kgs of green grams to 500kgs on the same piece of land. This translated to increased household incomes, thereby able to educate their children in good schools.

Two of Ojuko and Sarah's children are university graduates something they give credit to the application of knowledge acquired from the project. One of the children graduated from Mbarara University as a medical doctor and one daughter graduated from Uganda Christian University with a bachelor's degree in education.



When implementing the Soroti Integrated Development Project in my village, CIDI started with training us in agronomy. Personally, I learnt about planting seeds in rows which minimises wastage of seeds. I was also trained in animal husbandry at Arapai Agricultural College as well as Serere Agricultural College, I use the knowledge acquired to improve and increase my farm output and to add value when selling some of my products.

For example, I no longer sell fresh ground nuts or soya, I roast them to sell them roasted or make Oddi (peanut paste). This way I earn more from my produce. I'm very grateful to CIDI for the knowledge imparted in me," **Aseko Sarah, 50, Asuret Community Integrated Farmers' Cooperative Society.**



### **Improved gender relations**

This project as supported by CIDI had a gender component, Cooperative members were trained on family protection where they learnt about the dangers of gender-based violence. "I was not an easy person but because of the training I got from CIDI on family relations, I transformed and started discussing and planning with my wife Sarah about family finances and education of our children," say Ojuko James. "My first born Ojuko Samuel is a trained medical doctor from Mbarara University, the fourth born daughter is a graduate in education from Uganda Christian University."

### **Ojuko James elected chairperson of Asuret Community Integrated Farmers' Cooperative Society**

Because of his hard work and innovativeness, in 2019, Ojuko James was elected chairperson of Asuret Community Integrated Farmers' Cooperative Society. Now the cooperative society has 250 registered members. Membership to the group is by paying registration fee of UGX. 22,000, and buying a maximum of seven shares each at UGX. 10,000 and annual subscription fee of UGX. 5000 and a commitment to participate in the cooperative activities including collective marketing and saving a minimum of UGX. 1000 every fortnight.





### **Asuret Community Integrated Farmers' Cooperative Society leaps big advocacy initiatives**

One of the benefits of forming a cooperative society is the desire of having a stronger voice to influence decisions at different levels. Asuret Cooperative Society has used the advocacy skills acquired from CIDI to benefit from government projects and resources. The cooperative was given a concrete drying rack from the sub county, got several equipment including hydraulic press, grater and a milling machine which makes high quality white cassava flour, six silos from the district. The grinding mill generates income for the cooperative society because when people come to grind their produce, they are charged a fee. The Lobbying and Advocacy Committee has embarked on advocating from the district to fencing of their produce store premises. With support from Caritas Denmark, CIDI on the other hand provided the cooperative society with an irrigation equipment to be able to produce during the dry seasons.

### **Challenges faced**

**Long drought** is big challenge affecting farmers in Asuret, the long drought leads to poor harvests. The good news is that CIDI provided an irrigation equipment to Asuret Cooperative Society member to use even during dry periods. Initially the irrigation machine was installed at a community water source share with animals, this became a source of conflict in the community in the dry seasons when water is scarce. Cooperative

members are yet to locate another stable water source.

**Covid 19 lockdown** and enforcement of Standard Operation Procedures (SOPS) led to restriction of movements, suspension of community gathering or meetings, this greatly affected the Cooperative activities since members cannot hold meetings. The lockdown also brought about suspension of both public and private transport and closure of markets- farmers therefore had no easy markets for their produce nor could they transport their produce to buyers in in the long run translate to loss of incomes to members.

### **Future plan of the cooperative**

At individual level, Ojuko James is working on constructing a hand dug water well to enable him produce throughout the year using the irrigation equipment provided by CIDI. The members of the Cooperative are also working hard to acquire the e-voucher status.





The ox ploughs provided by CIDI helps to open the land

## **“Soroti Integrated Development Project empowers Women, improves food security and household incomes in Oculoi Sub county,” says Ageo Phoebe**

*If you want to know how the Soroti Integrated Development Project (SIDP) project has transformed lives of hundreds of people in Soroti district, Ageo Phoebe, 50, a single mother of four from Matali Village, Adamasko Parish in Oculoi sub county is among the best persons to share their experience of transformation.*

*She joined CIDI supported project way back in 2006 as a youth, today she is an elder in the community and a member of Ojom- Oculoi Olwelai Joint Farmers’ Cooperative Society (**OJFACOS**). Since joining CIDI’s supported projects, Phoebe’s life has been transformed; she has acquired knowledge in better and improved farming methods, women empowerment, safe water, sanitation, and good hygiene practices among others. Below is her story of positive change and transformation.*



My name is Ageo Phoebe, I'm 50 year old, a single mother of four (3 boys and 1 girl) and I live Matali Village, Adamasko Parish in Oculoi sub county. Before getting involved with CIDI supported projects in Katine Sub-county where, I was a small holder farmer. , I have been a farmer all my life but did not know good farming practice like; early field preparation, timely planting, right spacing, planting in rows, early weeding, timely harvesting, and post-harvest handling. My life was very miserable and full of self-pity. I Was ignorant of women's rights; I didn't know that women can make decisions, I would only wait for other people to make decisions on my behalf.

### Getting involved with CIDI supported projects

I got involved with CIDI supported projects way back in 2006 as a youth, I was a member of a youth group called, Adamasko United Farmers Group. Am grateful to CIDI, because since that time I have received several training sessions in different aspects: in agriculture, water, and sanitation & hygiene, constructing utensils drying racks, kitchen gardening, making energy saving mud stoves as well as women empowerment. I also received a bull from CIDI and ox ploughs to increase the size of gardens. Before training in agronomy, I was using poor planting method of just scattering seed (broadcasting) but I learnt the advantages of planting in rows, and post-harvest handling among other things.



### The change

Since 2006, up to date, I can say all what I own and what I'm proud of, the knowledge I got from CIDI has a big contribution. I have been able to buy two acres of land worth UGX 2,250,000, i raised this money through saving and borrowing from Adamasko United Farmers' village Savings and Loans Association. I also sold my bull to complete the payments.

CIDI has been very supportive in my journey of transformation. CIDI gave me ground nuts seeds, cassava, and sweet potato cuttings to plant. I also got a heifer and ox plough to open more land for agriculture. Today, I'm not only food secure but I grow different crops for the market there by improving my household income. I have managed to educate my children, and one of my boys has graduated from Gulu University.

CIDI has empowered me in women rights and gender, I have learnt that even women make decisions, prior I would only wait for others to make decisions on my behalf. As a woman, I have bought land breaking the cultural norm that a woman cannot own land. In my home I practice good sanitation and improved hygiene. All in all my income level has improved, I'm able to pay schools fees for my children, pay medical bills and my family is food secure.

### **Most significant change**

My most significant achievement from the project is the knowledge I have acquired. Knowledge is power. I have utilised the knowledge acquired from CIDI to increase my farm output and I feel more empowered to make decisions. Even if the project ends, I will continue using this knowledge to transform my life and that of my family.

### **Ageo Phoebe joins Ojom Oculoi Olwelai Joint Farmers' Cooperative Society**

Am one of the 328 members of Ojom Oculoi Olwelai Joint Farmers' Cooperative Society (OJOFACOS) but I call myself the founder of the Cooperative Society. I was elected as first chairperson of the farmers' association but in 2016 we transformed the association into Ojom Oculoi Olwelai Joint Farmers' Cooperative Society. , I was elected as its first chairperson and continued to be elected for another four terms, currently am serving as a cooperative treasurer.

Being a member of OJOFACOS comes along with benefits and opportunities; members learn better farming methods, bulking, collective marketing, and value addition to their agricultural products.

### **Ageo Phoebe future plans**

I plan to continue with farming, saving with the cooperative, build a permanent residential house, complete educating my children and establish a farmer's field school on my land.



**Richard Eruju: From being an internally displaced person to community based veterinary outreach support person in Acuna Parish Tubur Sub county**

Richard Eruju, 49, married father of eight children from Ongurio village, Acuna parish, Tubur sub county, grew up in an internally displaced peoples' camp due to the conflict perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels in northern Uganda and Soroti region. He did not have an opportunity to have good education, he dropped out of school in Primary Five class.

When the war ended, he continued to live a miserable life. However, in 2007, he got hope for a better life when he got involved with the SIDP project implemented by CIDI in his community. Richard Eruju is very grateful to CIDI and he is a living example of how the Soroti Integrated Development Project (SIDP) has transformed people's lives in the region over time. Below is his story.



My name is Richard Eruju, I'm 49 years and I live with my wife of eight children in Ongurio village, Acuna parish, Tubur sub county, Soroti District. I joined CIDI supported projects in 2007, as a young man, and vividly remember at that time my family and other community members had just returned from an internally displaced peoples' camp from Soroti town. Life was hard. We had lost everything due to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels' insurgency. Upon returning to our villages, we experienced many land wrangles in the community. CIDI came to our rescue with the first phase of SIDP project focusing on training us in peace and conflict resolution together with other development initiatives.

### **Training from CIDI**

When CIDI came to our community, I was among the first person they contacted. With support from CIDI, we formed Ongurio United Group, later we changed the name to Ongurio Youth Intergraded Group. At this time, CIDI trained us in conflict resolution, basic human rights and how-to live-in harmony with others in the community. CIDI also trained us in modern agriculture and gave us start up farm inputs including seed, hoes, axes, wheelbarrows, oxen, rakes, and watering cans among other things. I learnt how to establish kitchen gardens, make energy saving mud stoves. In our youth group of 25 members, CIDI gave us

livestock; four bulls and 15 cows, we were then trained in livestock management and apiary farming, the things I was very passionate about.

CIDI trained us in agronomy, this involved learning how to plant seed in lines instead of just scattering, we trained in making compost manure, sensitise community parents the benefits of educating children, resisting early marriages, and making reusable pads for mothers and young girls to use during menstruation periods. CIDI provided us with exposure visit to Serere Agricultural Research Institute, we went to Masaka to learn about village savings and loans Scheme, and Kayunga for pineapple growing.

### **How Richard Eruju became a community based veterinary outreach support person**

"After CIDI giving us livestock, I was trained in livestock management, at the time there was no veterinary doctor in our community, yet we are far from the sub county. CIDI would send a veterinary doctor to treat the animals, I would help him, and he also trained me on basic disease management in animals. I worked closely with the Vet and gradually started understanding how to treat different animal diseases.



After being convinced that I had learnt enough, the Vet gave me drugs and a motorcycle to treat the common things like ticks, on his behalf. After some time, I sold my animals to purchase my own stock of drugs. I had a motorcycle enabling me to cover the entire sub county. I instantly became a saviour in the community treating people's animals. Later on the Vet doctor Mr. Ogaro introduced me to the sub county and I was granted permission to treat people's animals. This enabled me to increase my earnings. Between 2005-2017 I would treat about 50 animals in a day earning about UGX. 500,000. The most common diseases I would treat were worms and ticks, but each disease has its symptoms, I would look at the dung if it is bloody or if the nose is dry, these were symptoms of sickness. Things have changed so much since then, after many people seeing that I was making a lot of money they sent their children to train in veterinary. These days we are many people treating animals, on average I treat between 7 -10 animals per day.

### **Achievements**

Starting from the earliest years I was the only person giving veterinary services in the sub county. My charges were very affordable, I made a lot of money which I invested in other

enterprises. My most significant achievement from SIPD is the knowledge I have acquired over a long period, I have applied this knowledge in agriculture, bee keeping and improved animal husbandry.

My poultry farm has increased because sometimes farmers gave me chicken in return for the treatment of their animals. I have bought two plots of land in two different trading centres, and I have constructed commercial structures in them, I bought five acres of land in Amuria, and I have built a permanent family house. I now own three bulls, four goats, 15 rabbits, over 80 chicken and bought a motorcycle. I have the capacity to educate my children, two brothers and one sister. My life is far better as compared to the time before I joined CIDI supported projects. This season, I have cultivated four acres of sunflower where I expect to earn UGX. 3,000,000. I have also started an apiary with 15 local beehives from which I expect to harvest 150 kgs of honey each selling at UGX. 10,000 per kg thereby earning UGX: 15 million per season. I save UGX. 5000 per week with our village savings and loans scheme (VSLA).



### Challenges

Since I have no certificate to prove my qualification as a community based veterinary support officer, I keep explaining myself whenever there are new staff at the sub county. In addition, I face competition from the many trained people. Most parents saw it lucrative; they sent their children to train in veterinary.

## Advocacy and lobbying skills acquired from CIDI enables Ejuku Juvenali acquire two fishponds

Ejuku Juvenali, 53, is a very proud father of eight children who lives in Ajako village, Ogolai Parish, Tubur Subcounty. Before joining SIDP projects, Juvenali's life was defined by abject poverty, domestic violence, and poor agricultural practices. He would mainly plant cassava for household consumption

### Group dynamics as a development approach

In 2011, **Ejuku Juvenali one of the community groups supported by CIDI, in here he was able to learn many things.** Group members have been trained by CIDI in many aspects including conflict resolution (especially land wrangles) and

management through music, dance and drama, agronomy and above all trained in lobbying and advocacy. The trainings in conflict resolution also enabled him deal domestic violence, helped him understand that if you keep quarrelling with your wife you cannot agree on the progress together.



“When CIDI started implementing project in our community, they trained us in many things such as better farming methods, conflict resolution and also encouraged us to form groups. In our group CIDI organised exposure visits to Serere, NaSSARI and organised several exposure visits for the youth to Lira,” says Ejuku Juvenali. “They also organised competitions among families for adaptation of basic home sanitation and hygiene, kitchen gardens management, which I won and was awarded an ox plough.”

### **Utilising advocacy and lobbying skills to acquire fishponds**

Ejuku Juvenali has been involved with SIDP project for more than a decade (since 2011), through this time he has acquired a wealth of skills and confidence to engage with his government officials and other people to

benefit from available development opportunities. For example, he used the advocacy and lobbying skills acquired from CIDI to tap into other government and other partner development projects.

Together with nine other group members, in 2021, Junenali lobbied from the NUSAF (government) program two fishponds that were previously mismanaged by another community group. After getting the rights to manage the ponds, in the June 2021, Ejuku and his team used the lobbying skills acquired from CIDI to approach a prominent sports woman ( Apolot- the Kick Boxer) married to a prominent politician to support them with fish fries.

Through their advocacy efforts, the sports lady gave them 2000 tilapia fries and 1000 catfish fries. Group members meet every Thursday to clean the pond



and make their weekly contribution of UGX. 2000 for feeds. When harvest time comes, all members have to be present, and the proceeds will be shared equally.

### **Other benefits**

In addition to the group project, Ejuku Juvenali is also a successful farmer. In his farm he applies the modern farming knowledge acquired from CIDI as a result his yields are far better compared to other farmers who have not been trained. For example, last season he earned UGX. 450,000 from maize, UGX. 210,000 from sunflower, and UGX.530,000 from oranges. He has learnt to add value on his crops, instead selling maize, he sold maize flour. From the earnings, he is able to take care of his family, educate the children, bought 2.5 acres of land at UGX.5.6 million

### **Challenges**

Climate change leading to long droughts is one of the biggest challenges Ejuku Juvenali has to overcome. The unpredictable seasons (short rains and long dry spells) lead to low agriculture yields. Another challenge has to do with theft of the fish from the ponds because they are not fenced. He recommends that CIDI should consider building capacity of other people in fish farming because the market is available.



## How Odeke David used knowledge acquired from SIPD to **transform his life and that of his community members**

Odeke David, 39, a father of eight kids from Amoru village, Awaliwal parish, Gweri Subcounty of Soroti District has been involved with CIDI supported projects since 2004. At that time, he was a youthful man and not married. At that time, he joined a youth group called Awaliwal White Action Group, and it's from being a member of the group that he benefited from the capacity building and skilling initiatives offered by CIDI in the sub county.



### **Capacity building from CIDI**

Together with other members of the group, Odeke was trained by CIDI in group dynamics, making it easy for group members to work together rather than as individuals. CIDI also came up with an initiative of selecting two people from each group to train as contact farmers at Serere Agricultural Research Institute. “While at Serere, Odeke says that he trained in “agriculture crop production, animal husbandry, chicken farming, goats, and piggery. As contact farmer, one of my responsibilities was to train other group members in all what we learnt from Serere Agriculture Institute.

Odeke is a very proud man seeing that through sharing knowledge he got from CIDI, many people’s lives have been transformed. “I have trained my group members in growing drought resistant tomatoes, planting rows- this makes weeding easy and there is no wasting of seeds,” explains Odeke David. “Before the training we used to just scatter seed, I have also trained my group members in in tree planting especially oranges.”

### **CIDI’s support to farmers’ group member**

When members of the different farmers’ groups started practising improved farming methods, their farm yields increased. CIDI, continued to support these farmers groups, encouraging them to form associations to enjoy the benefits of collective marketing. In addition, CIDI gave the group members farm inputs including cassava

cuttings, heifers, oxen, and a bull for cross breeding with local cows, each group of 30 members was given eight heifers.

“In our group, we were 32 members, each four people were given a heifer to share,” explains Odeke. “When the heifer produced, the person who has been taking care of it would take the calf and give out the mother cow to another person.” Under this initiative Odeke got a cow which was producing only bulls, he used the bulls to increase his farm production, after each harvest he would buy a cow, after some time he accumulated 15 cows.

### **Achievements over time**

In 2012, he sold two bulls to start constructing a new brick house moving away from the mud and wattle grass thatched house. He also vividly remembers that in one-year 2014 after bumper harvest of ground nuts and millet he bought four heifers at once. In 2018, after a good harvest of ground nuts and oranges he bought a motorcycle at three million shillings. In 2019, Odeke, sold five cows to buy an acre of land, then in October 2021 sold seven cows to buy more farmland. Odeke gives credit to CIDI for all what he has achieved in life.

“I thank God for what CIDI has done in my life. I’m now sleeping in a permanent house, it is the most beautiful house in my entire village,” says Odeke praising the contribution of CIDI in transforming his life. “I have 196 mature orange trees, last season I earned UGX. 3,430,000 from oranges alone. I have managed to take my children in good boarding schools. I’m very proud of the knowledge I have got from CIDI, and this is what has made me who I’m.”



# Odeke David steers Amoru Amoroto Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited (AAMCOS) to greater heights



In 2012, CIDI supported and organised different farmers' groups in Gweri subcounty to form an association. As a result Gweri Integrated Development Association (GIDA), as it was called by then, was formed and Odeke David has selected the secretary for savings subcommittee. In 2017, GIDA association was transformed and registered as a farmer cooperative called Amoru Amoroto Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited (AAMCOS). In 2018, Odeke was selected to be the chairperson of the cooperative.

## **CIDI's support to Amoru Amoroto Multipurpose Cooperative Society**

After registering as a cooperative society with 30 members, CIDI supported AAMCOS members with a grinding machine to help in post-harvest handling of cassava and millet, rice hauler machine, maize miller and tricycle to help in collecting agriculture produce from different farmers groups.



Under Odeke's able leadership, Amoru Amoroto Multipurpose Cooperative Society was reorganised, all old machines repaired and CIDI gave the cooperative a revolving fund of UGX. 16 million shillings to support bulking at cooperative level. With this financial support the cooperative invested more resources in buying maize, sorghum, millet, simsim, soya beans and cassava from farmers. The tricycle came in very handy moving from one village to another collecting the produce.

### **AAMCOS advocacy for a drying rack from Gweri sub county**

One of the challenges faced during the cereal bulking was that some farmers would sell produce which was not dry to standard. The advocacy committee of the cooperative society through parish councillors wrote to Gweri Sub County requesting for a drying rack which was granted. A concrete drying rack was constructed at 12 million shillings from the district.

### **AAMCOS gets E- voucher**

AAMCOS has been growing from strength to strength, from 30 member to the current 228 registered members of which 132 are male and 96 females. The cooperative has realised that when they get more organised there are huge opportunities to benefit from government resources.

“We contacted the Gweri Sub County Agriculture Officer and he Commercial Officer of Soroti district who trained us on lobbying and advocacy, tapping into government resources,” explains Odeke, the cooperative chairperson.

“We were 11 cooperatives that submitted applications for support at the district, only four were successful and we were the first. In May 2020, the government sent people from Enterprise Uganda to verify our work, these were happy with what they found on ground, they encouraged us to get E-voucher.”

To get E-voucher each cooperative member paid UGX. 148,500 after which, the member gets a top up from government amounting to UGX. 301,500 and their after each member who registered for the E-voucher was given farm inputs; 8 bags of cassava cutting, one tarpaulin, bags for storing produce and government would also plough for them land to plant. Members of the AAMCOS requested from the Soroti district to have knapsacker sprayers instead of ploughing for them since they had already accumulated bulls from the earlier CIDI support. From their advocacy initiative, 53 members got spraying pumps.

### **AAMCOS getting financial support from government**

After filling the Uganda Revenue E-voucher regulation coupled with its good governance

and management structures in place, AAMCOS received UGX. 154 million shillings from government to expand the cooperative store, building of a fence and installation of a machine that grinds wet cassava which was also provided by government.

### **Benefits of being member of a Cooperative**

Transitioning from an association to a Cooperative for the members of Amoru Amoroto Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited has numerous benefits. As members of the cooperative society, it is easy to access markets for their produce. This is because they plant the same crops and at harvest time they can harvest and sell in bulk thereby reducing middlemen. When organised at cooperative level it is also easy to benefit from government and other development partners.

### **Impact of covid19**

For the last two years, the covid19 pandemic and country wide lockdown greatly affected the activities of the cooperative society. The standard operational procedures in place stopped people from holding meetings, as a result cooperative members could not meet, the markets where farmers would sell their produce were closed. Additionally, public transport was also suspended yet most of the buyers of their produce used to come from Koboko District. The suspension of public transport also made accessing farm inputs impossible.

### **Future plans**

AAMCOS has bigger dreams for the future. To increase their farm production, the cooperative is planning to buy a tractor or have access to a tractor that can help members open up more farmland. In addition, they are planning to buy a truck that will transport produce from the different villages to the milling facility as well as to the markets.



## Joseph Okello and Ejangu Charles using lobbying skills acquired from CIDI to get welding equipment from Netherlands

Joseph Okello, 42 and Ejangu Charles, 43 are brothers living in Aloet Central village in Arapai sub county. The two brothers have been involved in SIDP project since 2003, upon joining they were trained by CIDI in different areas: agriculture, sanitation, and hygiene, group dynamics, lobbying and advocacy among others. After organising themselves into a group CIDI gave them start-up capital in terms of agricultural inputs including cassava cuttings for planting, heifers, ox ploughs.

After learning about the benefits of working as a group, the two brothers mobilised other like-minded community members to form Arapai Rural Initiative for Development (ARID) which later in 2011 became Arapai Farmers' Marketing Association (AFAMA). With more support and capacity building from CIDI, the association in transitioned into Amukaru Aloet

joint Farmers' Cooperative Society Ltd. (AJOFACOs) with Joseph Okello as the first chairman.

### Training in business diversification

Growing from a farmers' group to a cooperative society comes along with many opportunities and challenges. On this realisation CIDI continued to build the capacity of the new cooperative societies enabling them to meet the expectations of their members. For AJOFACOs, this entailed training in business diversification, welding, agriculture, and livestock management. The cooperative society mainly deals in bulking and collective marketing of agricultural products, now they have three collection centres in Aloet, Tukum and Angai trading centres.

Ejangu Charles has effectively put the business diversification knowledge into use,

he cultivates citrus on nine acres where he earns between 2-3 million shillings per season. Previously CIDI gave the two brothers heifers which have since produced four bulls, after some time they sold two bulls at UGX. 600,00 and UGX. 300,000 respectively, earning them a total of UGX. 900,000. Out of this money UGX. 300,000 was spent on rent and UGX. The 600,000 was spent on buying metal fabrication machine.

### Lobbying and advocacy into play

Through advocacy and lobbying skills gained from CIDI, the two brothers wrote a proposal to a company in the Netherlands that supported them with 3000kgs of welding machines; they set up a profitable metal fabrication business and trained 12 youth in welding. The trainees pay UGX. 300,000 for material to be used during the training.

### Achievement

Using profits from the metal fabrication business the two brothers have bought a tricycle which helps them transport both agriculture produce and fabricated materials to the market or owners. They have also diversified into other businesses including starting a bicycle spare parts shop, buying two acres of land, and constructed a three roomed commercial building, as well as paying school fees for their children. In their recommendation, the brothers recommend CIDI to continue supporting cooperatives with business diversification training, through these initiatives more and more people will be empowered.



## From a mere poor village man to one of the most successful farmers in Awaliwali village, Gweri Subcounty, Soroti district – this is the story of Orone Moses.

**O**rone Moses, 43, a father of five children is one of the successful farmers in Awaliwali village, Gweri Subcounty, Soroti district, whose life has been transformed after being involved in different phases of SIDP Project. Below is his story of how SIPD project helped him to stop focusing on producing for household consumption rather focus on a bigger picture of producing for the market thereby improving household incomes. His journey of transformation dates as far back in 2009.



Orone Moses says, “Before joining SIDP, I used to be a subsistence farmer growing crops for household consumption, I would only sell the surplus. When Community Integrated Development Initiative (CIDI) came I embraced their projects and joined. CIDI trained us on group formation, and we formed Awaliwali Youth Development Group at that time I was still a youth.

### **CIDI’s support and capacity building to the group**

Working through the youth group, CIDI trained us on good farming and agronomical practices. Here I acquired knowledge in modern agriculture, and I put it into practice. As a group, we also received from CIDI agriculture input such as the Ox-plough to open the land for food security and producing for the market. This helped us group members to improve our household incomes while attaining food security on the other hand.

We were also trained in advocacy and lobbying; this was my most significant training I got because it has helped me connect with many people. One day I heard on the radio that Church of Uganda TEDDO in conjunction with Heifer International promoting the use of biogas in the community. I followed up on the biogas program, after saving money from the sale of vegetables. I installed biogas at my home, the technology is good and save time while cooking, it gives me light in the house and I as well uses the residues as fertilisers in my garden.’





### **Putting knowledge acquired into practice**

#### **All year-round harvesting vegetable:**

Vegetable growing is one of the business ventures that Moses has taken very seriously, because they grow quickly to sell in the market, and he can harvest all year round since he has a movable irrigation system that supplies water even in the dry period drawing water from the four water ponds he dug. On his farm, Moses mainly grows green pepper, tomatoes, onions, egg plant, spinach, and watermelons.

#### **Using advocacy skills to start fish farming:**

Besides the vegetables, he has established six fishponds where he has catfish. Getting his first fishpond, Orone used lobbying skills acquired from CIDI. He wrote a letter through his LC1 (local council leader) recommendation, then submitted the letter to the sub county office for endorsement and thereafter took it to the district fisheries department. Among the many applicants, Orone Moses was selected and received 2000 fingerlings of catfish and feeds which he put in the first fishpond. Since then, he has expanded his fish farming to six fishponds.

Orone, is a very hard-working man, he divides his time into three, he uses some of his time to work in his individual enterprises, then he must create time for both group and cooperative activities. As an individual, he has cultivated five acres for crops and

vegetables. He is a member of AAMCOS Farmers' cooperative Society where they grow cassava, on average he plants two acres of cassava every year, an acre for maize, vegetables, and green grams

#### **Earnings from agriculture**

From the agriculture training he has attained, Orone has learnt that when he grows vegetables, he gets more money during the dry season because in the market there are few suppliers. Vegetables take four months to harvest, in a rainy season for example he earns UGX.4,000,000 but growing vegetables but in the dry season after irrigation, on the same piece of land he earns between UGX. 10 – 15 million since he is selling off season. His major markets for the vegetables include Ocholimongin, Wera Cattle Market, Arapai Cattle Market, Soroti main market and several boarding schools. He also earns an average of 19 million shillings per mature fishpond harvest.

#### **Challenges paused by Covid 19:**

Covid 19 pandemic and the lockdown greatly affected the activities of the group and that of the cooperative society. As a measure to curb the spread of Covid 19, there was a burn on public meetings, closure of the markets and schools, as a result group members could neither meet nor could easily find markets for the produce.

## Orone's most significant achievement

“I am not well educated, I only stopped in primary seven class, but I have learnt a lot from SIDP project. My most significant achievement from this project is the knowledge I have acquired, I'm a more respected person in the community and many people come to me when they want to learn about better farming methods. I have used this knowledge acquired to achieve many things which I used to dream about. Currently, I'm building a permanent house, before I got involved with SIDP, I used to think that I would die a poor man, but SIDP has enabled me to realise that I can achieve more even with my poor education background.

“I'm building a permanent house; this is good for my security and my new acquired status in the community. The grass thatched hut is not very secure; the permanent house am building will be difficult for thieves to break. In the grass thatched hut, when thieves come and order you to open the door, if you refuse, they can easily threaten setting fire on the house,” explains Orone Moses

“Because of my active involvement and application of knowledge acquired from SIDP, I'm always contacted by other organisations to train their farmers on sustainable land management, kitchen gardening, energy saving stoves. Recently Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries took me to Jinja for an exhibition. PELAMU took me to Uganda Manufacturing Trade Show to exhibit agricultural produce. Hon. Musa Ecweru (area member of Parliament) contracted me to establish an irrigation scheme on his farm. I also competed in the best farmers' competition for Uganda, and I merged among the best 50.”

## Future plan

Orone together with his group members are planning to develop their farm into a farmers training site so that they can help many people out of poverty. As he is growing old, Orone has plans to develop permanent assets that is the main reason he is establishing fishponds, he also plans to buy plots of land in town to construct rental apartments.



## Knowledge and skills acquired from SIDP project was a game changer for Arionget Grace from Telamot Parish, Awaliwal Sub county



I am Arionget Grace, 59 years old, resident of Telamot parish in Awaliwal sub county my husband died in 1997, and my only son also died in 2019, leaving behind a wife three children in my care. I have always been a housewife but this time round, I had to find a way to fend for myself and other dependants. In 2012, I joined CIDI projects, this was a game changer in my life. He had several trainings and capacity building sessions in modern agricultural farming practices that included planting in rows, spraying, early planting, weeding and post-harvest handling, kitchen gardening and making energy saving mud stoves, irrigation, financial management and saving, advocacy and lobbying skills.”

Putting the acquired skills into practice, her firm yields increased tremendously thereby improving her household income. She now plants some cash crops and food crops, as a family they have since attained food security. She is a proud farmer with more than 500 citrus trees in her garden, of which 253 are mature yielding fruits. She has used the income from agriculture to buy a goat which has over time given ten kids. She sold the goat to buy a cow which has so far produced a heifer and two bulls.

Grace is very enterprising, she sold off the mother cow to buy an ox plough for the bulls to use in opening more farmland. Using proceeds from agricultural harvest of cassava, maize and oranges sales, she is

now constructing a permanent family house and has also purchase a small solar panel for lighting the home.

### **Sharing acquired skills with community**

Grace is not an egoist person, she is sharing the acquired skills from the project with her community members, teaching them about modern farming methods she learnt from CIDI, supporting her community with the ox plough free of charge. In her opinion, she believes the most significant contribution the project has done in my life is the empowerment in terms of financial literacy, growth, and leadership. Grace has been serving as her village (LCI) chairperson for three terms of office.



**“I’m now economically empowered, taking care of my family as well as pay my children’s education, I’m very grateful to SIDP,” Grace Asiko, Otaba village, Asuret sub county**



Am Grace Asiko, 64 years old, a single mother of two children residing in Otaba village, obule parish Asuret Sub County. I joined CIDI supported projects through Asuret Farmers’ Group in 2004 but started being active in 2006. After joining the CIDI supported projects I have learnt and acquired skills in good farming practices, vegetable growing, good seed selection, early planting, poultry farming, livestock management and post-harvest handling. I received a heifer from the SIPD project, this heifer kept producing calves and I kept selling the off springs to educate my children. Later, I sold the original heifer at UGX.1,000,000 and used portion of the money to finish construction of my residential house as well as constructing a poultry unit.

#### **Leaping big from SIDP**

“Being an active member in SIDP project has empowered me economically, I’m able to take care of my family and educate the children. I’m currently earning between UGX 1 to UGX. 1.5 million from agriculture alone person. Before joining the project, I use to cultivate two small pieces of land but after getting support from CIDI in terms of agricultural training and provision of an ox plough, I’m able to increase my farm size to cultivating on two acres from cultivating on small gardens for home consumption.

CIDI has also supported us to transit from Asuret Farmers’ Group to forming Asuret Community Integrated Farmers’ Association (ACIFA) which latter on grew



to become Asuret Community integrated Farmers' Cooperative (ACIFCOs) with 200 active members and am the vice chairperson of this cooperative society. Our cooperative society mainly supports members in bulking, collective marketing, and value addition of their agricultural produce.

### **Lobbying**

As a cooperative we have used advocacy skills to lobby for land from the sub county to put up a structure for the cooperative. We also got some equipment (Hydraulic press and drying rack) from the district through the sub county. Currently we are advocating for resources to fence the cooperative land and for electricity extension.

## **Most significant change and sustainability of SIDP**

The most significant change of SIDP project is the knowledge the project has imparted to community members. SIDP target population has acquired skills in improved agriculture sustainable agriculture practices (SAPS), lobbying and advocacy, gender relations, and business diversification among others. Even when the project ends, these will continue using the knowledge and skills acquired to transform their lives, emancipating themselves from poverty for generations.

## **Key challenges faced during SIDP implementation**

**Covid 19 pandemic:** When the Covid19 pandemic hit Uganda, government put in place measure to curb its spread. A total lockdown came into force banning meeting, public transport, closure schools and market. These measures greatly affected farmers and the activities of these cooperative societies. Members could not hold planning meetings and experienced limited markets for their produce.

### **Cooperative societies are not yet strong enough to stand on their own:**

Under SIDP project, CIDI has supported many farmers to organise themselves in forming farmers' groups these transited into associations and thereafter formed farmers' cooperative societies. The benefits of cooperative societies are enormous, but these can best be exploited when these societies have the right human resources and financial systems in place. Unfortunately, these farmers cooperated are still young, and the lack most of these things hindering them to benefit from several opportunities available. It is therefore recommended that CIDI continues to strengthen the institutional capacity of these cooperative societies instead of leaving them in the struggle.

**Climate change vulnerability:** Agriculture activities in Soroti region, north easter Uganda have been greatly affected by unpredictable weather. Sometime the rains are too much leading to floods and spoiling of crops in the gardens. While on the other hand the region also experiences long droughts leading to water scarcity and poor harvests.

## Key Lessons learned

With support from Caritas Denmark, CIDI has been implementing the Soroti Integrated Development Project (SIDP) since 2004. This period is long enough to draw several key lessons that inform development work.

### **Cooperative societies participating in the fight against COVID -19**

Cooperative societies through their community-based structures have actively participated in the fight against COVID 19 in their respective communities, working hand in hand with COVID 19 task forces, sensitising community members on COVID 19 prevention and control measures. In Tubur Sub County, for example members of the Awasi Tubur Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited (ATUMCOS) joined the parish and village task force in sensitising community members on COVID 19 prevention and control measures. As a result, 37 members of the ATUMCOS were integrated in their respective villages and parish COVID 19 task force covering Ogolai, Obulei, Awasi, Ongurio and Palate parishes.

### **Community empowerment and development is more effective in long term projects:**

CIDI has been implementing the SIDP in different phases and each phase had a big contribution it was making in community empowerment. For example, the first phases focused on peace and conflict resolution, then training in agriculture improvement, other phases included group dynamics, lobbying and advocacy until the level of formation of cooperative societies where bulking and collective marketing are among the priorities. All these activities cannot have meaningful and long-term impact in short term projects. Community development and transformation therefore requires a phased long term programmatic approach.

### **Working in organised groups leads to stronger voice and bargaining power**

Another key lesson to draw from SIDP project is that community transformation is more real and effective when communities are organised into groups rather than targeting individual members. In this project CIDI mobilised community members into forming farmers' groups, then associations and now cooperative societies. Organised groups of community members are easy to train, to target when development opportunities arise, and it is easy for the knowledge and skills acquired to trickle to other community members. Farmers associations and cooperative societies have stronger bargaining voice when selling their produce since that way, they enjoy the benefits of bulking and collective marketing as compared to an individual farmer.

### **Integration of gender perspective in program implementation**

In Soroti district, like elsewhere in Uganda, rural women, because of their gender roles usually have less power in decision making as well as owning property. However, CIDI while implementing the SIDP project, integrated the gender perspectives in all project activities, empowering women as a means of poverty reduction in the district. In all the sub counties where the SIDP is implemented, there are many success stories of empowered women owning or having access to economic assets such as land and are taking part in decision making process at different levels. Many women in the project have acquired business management skills and as a result many are also involved in small scale business where they get money, as well as saving in their village saving groups.

### **Lobbying and advocacy:**

The SIDP project has built the lobbying and advocacy capacity of members of the five cooperative societies. Using the lobby and advocacy skills provided by CIDI under the SIDP project, members of the five cooperative societies are actively influencing decisions, participating in planning, and budgeting process in their sub counties. Members of the advocacy committee chairpersons from the five cooperatives have presented their issues papers on behalf of their members to the district but the most interesting thing is that this lobbying even goes beyond SIDP priorities.

For example, the advocacy committee of Arapai Farmer Cooperative (AJOFACOS) used the advocacy skills to lobby for grading of the road from Olegei to Angai Trading Centre and new boreholes in Amotot and Alilioi villages have been drilled. In Awaliwal Primary School members of the farmers groups who are also the parents lobbied and received 100 iron sheets from the Office of the Minister of Teso Affairs through the District Education Officer, also Amoroto village got a new borehole with support from Gweri Sub- County.

### **Promotion of climate resilient farming:**

Climate change vulnerabilities is one of the biggest challenges affecting farmers in Soroti region, leading to poor harvest. Under the SIDP project, CIDI has continuously promoted climate resilient farming practices such as sustainable agriculture, diversification enterprises, and irrigation in the target project area enhancing community resilience and adaptation to climate change. This approach is good because it has enabled farmers maximise their benefit from agriculture. And with irrigation, they can grow vegetables throughout the year at the same time leaping big during the long droughts. Many farmers are now aware and planting drought tolerant varieties and other have bought small scale irrigation equipment. At least 75% of the target communities have adopted climate change resilient practices such as variety selection, diversification in enterprises, fruit tree planting, inter cropping, pest management, sustainable agriculture and use of energy saving stoves among other things.

## **Key project recommendations**

### **Seed capital to Cooperative societies**

CIDI has supported farmers' associations to become cooperative societies, but these cooperative societies need more support to run profitable business ventures. A close look at the cooperative societies, you find members having different enterprises and they need money to expand their farm output which money is not readily available. As a recommendation, CIDI should help in sourcing more financial resources as seed capital to the cooperatives so that members can borrow and pay back at a smaller interest rate.

**Institutional strengthening and e- voucher awareness:** CIDI should continue supporting the cooperative societies in strengthening the institutional capacity – putting in place human resource and financial institutions. In addition, CIDI should continue helping the cooperative societies to meet the terms and condition of registering for the e - voucher, this will help them tap into available government opportunities. So far only one cooperative society has registered for the e-voucher.



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