



NEWS LETTER



June 2023

Dear Readers

Welcome to ACSET Uganda's Quarterly Newsletter! ACSET stands for *Action for Child Social and Economic Transformation*; it is an indigenous national non-governmental organization working in Northern Uganda. With this newsletter, we wish to give you an insight into our work and ongoing activities. It will be published every quarter and can be found on our website as well as social media platforms. This is the first edition of the Newsletter for the financial year 2023-2024. Enjoy the reading!

Short overview of ongoing projects

Project 1: Promotion of Rural Development in Northern Uganda (PRUDEV) – (2018 – 2023)

PRUDEV is a GIZ GmbH tendered project being implemented by ICON-INSITUTE GmbH in consortium with ACSET Uganda in both Lango and Acholi sub-regions in Northern Uganda. Its aim is to improve the agriculture-based development of the rural economy and local economic development in the selected 9 districts in Lango and Acholi sub-region in Northern Uganda. These include; Amolatar, Dokolo, Otuke, Lira, Oyam, Pader, Agago, Kitgum and Gulu district. GIZ contracted the ICON-INSTITUT / ACSET Consortium to implement Output Area (1) of the PRUDEV project whose goals have been defined as follows:

The capacities of public institutions, civil society, and the private sector for the promotion of agro-based Local Economic Development (LED) are strengthened; and the Actions of governments and other stakeholders for mainstreaming Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) in local planning processes are enhanced.

For the first objective of building capacities of public institutions, civil society and the private sector for the promotion of agro-based LED; the following achievements have been met;

- LED has been integrated into 13 operating documents of District Local Government including 5 years Development Plan III, Model District Forestry plan, Model Environment Action Plan, Model District Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, Model Communication Plan among others.
- Capacity building and business development and strengthening of 35 business companies in the agri-based value chain where 23,000 jobs were created. Within the 23,000 jobs;

1,263 direct jobs and 21,737 indirect jobs were created. Of the 35 business companies; 6 are youth-led and 7 are women-led. Overall, the 35 business companies are able to raise a turnover of about 4.8 billion Uganda shillings. Key investment areas include but are not limited to Dairy, Apiary, Grain Milling, Biomass energy, and environment.

For the second objective; Mainstreaming CSA in Local planning and processes, all the project activities have been successfully implemented as explained below:

- **Capacity building training with District Local Government (DLG) staff from various key departments such as Production, Natural Resources, or Education;** the one-day training was conducted at each of the target district headquarters and **aimed at creating a basic understanding of climate change and relevant national policy and institutional frameworks as well as climate adaptation/mitigation measures specifically focusing on CSA practices.** .



- **Strengthening coordination structures for CSA in the districts;** specifically working with the office of the Chief Administrative Officers of all 6 districts to have a focal point person assigned with defined terms of reference, to improve coordination of CSA and other climate adaptation and mitigation actions in the districts. A one-day induction training for all 6 district Climate Change Focal Point Persons (CCFPP) was conducted with the participation of Technical Officers from the Climate Change Department in the Ministry of Water and Environment.
- **Supported districts to conduct climate vulnerability/risk assessments;** each of the six districts was supported to engage a wide range of stakeholders in conducting climate vulnerability and risk assessments which did not only highlight district-specific vulnerabilities but also provided recommendations that are being implemented in some of the districts to inform planning and decision-making by the DLGs and other stakeholders for adaptation/mitigation of climate change impacts.
- **Training stakeholders including religious leaders, traditional leaders, and media houses on the basics of climate change and CSA as one of the adaptation measures;** The 3-day training on the topics of CSA and LED aimed at empowering these stakeholders to use their own platforms for promotion of CSA and agro-based LED. While some local radio stations like Shine FM in Oyam and Hot Fm in Amloatar went on to introduce new programs that discuss climate change and CSA; others like Radio Waa FM in Lira strengthened their Farmers Program to include CSA topics. Other religious and traditional leaders have taken to speaking to their constituents on the relevance of CSA as an adaptation strategy to climate change impacts.
- **Studies were conducted on the status and utilization of natural resources in the districts of Agago Dokolo Kitgum and Lira.** The nexus between natural resources, livelihoods and climate change is close, with developments in one easily influencing the other. The studies were conducted to give the local governments insights into the potentials for sustainable utilization of natural resources by documenting best practices (green enterprises) and bad examples of natural resource utilization that should be discouraged in the respective districts.

Project 2: Transitioning Youth to Sustainable Livelihoods (TYSL) - (2022 - 2025)

TYSL is a project run in cooperation with the Swiss Academy for Development (SA4D) focusing on youth who dropped out of school in the districts of Oyam and Amolatar. Through access to quality vocational respectively agri-business training and certification, we aim at increasing young people's opportunities for sustainable (self-) employment and thus supporting their socio-economic development. In addition to acquiring technical skills, youth are also trained in basic life skills as well as employability and entrepreneurship skills using sport and play-based methods and linked to networks needed to find decent employment or set up their businesses. The project directly targets 2'000 youth aged 15-29. It further focuses on developing green skills and fostering ecological methods and practices, raises awareness on social issues related to gender equality and gender-based violence, and includes a wide range of local actors, thereby involving the larger community.

Out of the 2000 participants, 320 will receive **vocational skills training in a specific trade**, followed up by apprenticeships with local businesses. The training is carried out at the Skills for All Vocational Training Institute (S4A VTI). The first batch of 20 students finished their course program at the end of June 2023 and started their internships with local businesses in July. The second batch of 40 students began their training in July 2023.



Trainees as well as staff at S4A VTI have actively participated in various **sport and play sessions targeting soft skills** such as communication, decision making, or goal setting and received an introduction in business-related topics, especially regarding marketing. The training both with trainees and staff members will be continued in the following months and a practical handbook is going to be developed.

As regards the second component of **agri-business training** with the goal of engaging youth along the soybean production and value chain, activities have recently started. In June, we conducted engagement with community representatives in order to inform about the project, mobilise potential participants and start forming of farmers' groups.



Project 3: Women Livelihood Improvement Project II (We Live II) – (2023 – 2025)

We Live II project is being implemented by ACSET Uganda in partnership with Feed the Minds UK, and it **aims to improve the economic resilience, health and food security of 1,200 women and young adults** of Amolatar district in Northern Uganda by 2025.

ACSET Uganda implemented a similar project in 2018 and 2019 in Alebtong District (Women Livelihood Improvement Project, [watch here](#)).

Bringing experience from the previous project implemented in Alebtong and contextualizing the needs and findings in Amolatar district, we anticipate that the We Live Project II will impact communities in the Amolatar district.

On 6th April 2023, we successfully conducted an impactful inception meeting at Awelo sub-county Hall. The meeting served as a ground-breaking event for the project kickoff, and a platform to bring together stakeholders and establish a shared vision for the project's success.



We have identified and registered ten farmer groups from Etam sub-county and Etam Town Council. These groups will play a crucial role in fostering collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and support among the participating beneficiaries.

To ensure effective monitoring of the project progress, we conducted a comprehensive baseline survey involving 161 households from Etam sub-county and Etam town council. The survey provided us with valuable data for tracking the impact and success of our interventions.

We have identified and registered **ten demonstration sites** with each farmer group having its own host farmer. These demonstration sites will serve as practical learning spaces for showcasing sustainable agricultural practices and techniques. The demonstration site hosts have been trained on demonstration management and their roles as hosts. They were equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge in establishing and maintaining the demo sites effectively.

Using the **formed farmer groups**, we have trained 146 farmers on the kitchen garden approach for vegetable production and kitchen garden establishment. These kitchen gardens will help with the constant provision of highly nutritious dense vegetables to the households. Self-help groups of ten members from within each farmer group have been formed to aid the establishment of kitchen gardens in each household. So far 72 kitchen gardens have been set up.



Our next activities will be to train the farmer groups on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and CSA practices and to provide quality foundation seeds to the farmers as a one-off start up.

Project 4: System strengthening to enhance solar energy use and Services in Uganda (SESEUS) - April 2023 - August 2024

The **SESEUS project** funded by BMZ is implemented by ACSET Uganda in partnership with Urbis-Foundation in the districts of Amolatar, Dokolo, Lira, Otuke, Alebtong, Kole, Apac, Kwanja and Oyam, of Lango Sub-region.

The project targets to recruit **40 rural women and youths** (aged 18 – 30) who have attained an ordinary-level certificate with good grades in science subjects and come from the 9 districts mentioned above. Recruitment of the intended beneficiaries is still going on. Successful applicants will begin their 3-month training of the solar extension course in October 2023.

To facilitate training, the **SESEUS project** targets **two Vocational Technical Institutes (VTIs)** and is building their capacity to deliver the three-month course in solar technology. As a first step to helping the VTIs adopt the course, 4 instructors and 2 laboratory attendants coming from the 2 selected VTIs attended and successfully completed their training as solar course trainers at Human Technical. The VTIs will receive training materials for delivering theoretical and practical training for the three-month course and facilitation to design and provide appropriate training materials as additional support to enable them to adopt the solar course as their permanent training course.



45 DLG staff and leaders shall also be trained on Renewable energy and Solar Technology, planning, budgeting, and policy formulation. The capacity building will be conducted by organizing workshops and targeting both the technical staff and other staff of the districts. Other beneficiaries include schools, health centers, government administrative units, private companies, and households that will benefit from an enhanced solar services and maintenance market.

Organizational Capacity Development

Retrospect Team Retreat - June 2023

ACSET Uganda organized a capacity development retreat at Murchison National Park in Packwach from 21st June to 23rd June for all staff. The aim of the retreat was to develop and build capacity, reflect on the achievements and lessons learned from the financial year 2022-23 and strategize for the coming year. The 4 areas which we covered during our sessions included:

- Soft skills (especially effective communication, decision making, and risk management)
- Stress management and mindset change
- Reviewing the Vision and Mission statements and the thematic areas of implementation
- Training on Outlook applications to help us manage our schedules and plan our days well.

On 23rd June, we all proceeded to park for a game drive appreciating different animal species big and small, some of which were up close.

The retreat not only allowed us to address important business-related topics, but also helped shape our personal life and further strengthened the good team spirit and the collaborative and encouraging work environment at ACSET Uganda. We came back full of energy and new ideas and look forward to the new financial year and upcoming activities with a fresh mindset.



Sport for Development

Building on the Swiss Academy for Development's (SA4D) *Sport for Development* approach, ACSET Uganda has started to integrate sport and play methods into its daily work. The reasoning behind sport for development is to use sports activities and games as a means to address certain topics. By actively engaging in games and group activities, participants get to experience certain values and competencies that are reflected at the end of the game. These discussions help to relate the experiences made in the game to real-life situations and thus support the development of skills that can be used in professional and personal life. In the case of ACSET Uganda, the sport and play methods are specifically addressing employability and entrepreneurship skills for youth participating in the TYSL project and contain both business knowledge and basic life skills such as communication, goal setting and decision-making.

The sport and play methods are introduced by Nicole Emch from SA4D who joined ACSET Uganda at the end of April and will be staying until the end of the year 2023, thus allowing both ACSET staff and teachers at S4A to gain in-depth theoretical and practical understanding of the

used methods and approaches to ensure, sport and play can continue in the future. For this purpose, both a detailed manual as well as practical sessions and training of teachers are foreseen and have already started to be put into practice.



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