2014
International Year of Family Farming
Uganda to benefit from initiative to tackle food losses

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Family farming includes all family-based agricultural activities, and it is linked to several areas of rural development. Family farming is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, including both women’s and men’s. Both in developing and developed countries, family farming is the predominant form of agriculture in the food production sector.

At national level, there are a number of factors that are key for a successful development of family farming, such as: agro-ecological conditions and territorial characteristics; policy environment; access to markets; access to land and natural resources; access to technology and extension services; access to finance; demographic, economic and socio-cultural conditions; availability of specialized education among others.

Family farming has an important socio-economic, environmental and cultural role.

What is family farming?

• Family and small-scale farming are inextricably linked to world food security.
• Family farming preserves traditional food products, while contributing to a balanced diet and safeguarding the world’s agro-biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources.
• Family farming represents an opportunity to boost local economies, especially when combined with specific policies aimed at social protection and well-being of communities.

Why is family farming important?
Editorial

Dear Reader, Happy New Year!
This year has proved to be an important year in the food and agriculture sector in Uganda and this bulletin will feature some of the significant events and achievements. The United Nations declared 2014 the International Year of Family Farming. By choosing to celebrate this year, we recognize that family farmers are leading figures in responding to the double urgency the world faces today: improving food security and preserving the natural resources, in line with the Millennium Development Goals, with the debate on the post-2015 development agenda and the Zero Hunger Challenge. After a successful launch in Uganda, on 22nd November 2013, activities to mark the year are being spearheaded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, in collaboration with FAO and other development partners.

The African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, during its 19th Ordinary Session, held from 15-16 July 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, also declared the year 2014 to be the Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa, marking 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). It will be a year that gives opportunities to communities, state and non-state actors in Africa to interact, express their voices on what works and chart the focus and targets for the next decade.

Internally, FAO began its new way of working on 1st January 2014. We now have a new results framework which will allow us to map the results and impacts of our plans, activities and programmes as we pursue our Strategic Objectives. Successful governing body meetings held last year have fully endorsed the new vision and Programme of Work as well as expressed full support for the move to implementation from January 2014. In Uganda, we are winding down the implementation of the 2010-2014 Country Programming Framework (CPF) with the Government of Uganda and consulting on the new one for 2015 – 2019.

The year also started with the launch of another Government of Uganda project funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) to a tune of 7.7 million British Pounds or 32 billion Uganda Shillings. This project will be implemented in Karamoja with FAO technical support and will strengthen the resilience of agro-pastoral communities and build capacity of district local governments in order to reduce impacts of climate risks to livelihoods in the region. Uganda will also benefit from a $2.7 million project to tackle food losses in three African Countries.

You will also read about an EU funded campaign to reduce post harvest losses in fish that FAO carried out between December 2013 and January 2014, the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) experiential learning for Karamoja and how Ugandan Members of Parliament learnt from a learning trip to experience how local communities in Kenya and Ethiopia are surviving under dire circumstances.

The World Bank, in its new study on mobile applications for the agriculture and forestry sector recognizes FAO’s expertise on data collection technology and drought preparedness in Uganda. In this bulletin, you will find details of the technologies, the efforts to combat cassava diseases in the Great Lakes region and how farmers in Karamoja are earning millions from vegetable production.

Happy Reading

Alhaji M. Jallow
FAO Country Representative in Uganda

Your comments and contributions are always welcome at FAO-UG@fao.org

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The United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) has donated £7.7 million (32 billion Shillings) to the Government of Uganda through FAO, for a climate change project in Karamoja, a semi-arid region of Uganda.

The project will strengthen the resilience of agropastoral communities and build capacity of district local governments in order to reduce impacts of climate risks to livelihoods in the region.

Karamoja is one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change and rainfall variability in Uganda. It is generally characterized by poor rainfall distribution and reliability, manifested through prolonged dry spells and flash floods. The magnitude, frequency and severity of these hazards have increased over the past decades, seriously eroding the productive assets and traditional coping capacities that support livelihoods. From 2001, there have been extended dry spells every second year (2002 and 2004) and also during the three consecutive years (2007-2009). As a result, there have been repeated crop failures and low livestock productivity.

The project that will be implemented in the next two years will benefit 1.2 million people with improved access to livestock health services, increased agricultural production, drought early warning systems and better soil and water management.

Specifically, it will improve collection, processing, analysis and communication of climate and food security information for decision-making and response at both community and district levels. It will also improve coordination of early warning systems.

It is expected that about one million cattle and two million sheep and goats will benefit from the animal health and nutrition interventions, such as disease surveillance, improved diagnostic capacity, vaccination, rehabilitation of degraded rangeland resources and promotion of appropriate techniques for forage conservation and utilization.

The project will also build institutional capacity of the district local government in terms of equipment and transportation and practices and improve access to water for farming and livestock.

It will enhance the implementation of Agro Pastoral Field Schools (APFS); a community based extension system introduced by FAO, through which groups of farmers or pastoralists learn through observation and experimentation in their own context, based on methods of adult education. Over the years, FAO has implemented over 850 APFS in Karamoja and 3,350 in other regions, benefiting a total of 153,000 households.

The target beneficiaries of the project will be from all the seven districts of Karamoja: Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Amudat, Napak, Abim and Nakapiripirit.

The FAO Country Representative in Uganda, Alhaji M. Jallow, said “as climate change brings new uncertainties, adds new risks and changes already existing risks, one of the most effective ways for agriculture to adapt to climate change is to increase its resilience.” “Climate smart activities that are proposed in this project will sustainably increase productivity and resilience of the agro pastoralists and reduce their vulnerability to climate change”, he added.

The overall project strategy is aligned to, and has strong linkages with, the National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA), agriculture sector Development Strategy and Investment Plan (DSIP), Karamoja Integrated Development Plan, Karamoja Action Plan for Food Security and National Development Plan (NDP) of Uganda.

It will be implemented with the technical collaboration of the Ministries of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries and Water and Environment respectively, district local governments and NGOs that are yet to be selected.
On 16 December 2013, the EU funded project SmartFish, managed by the Indian Ocean Commission and co-implemented by FAO, launched the “Clean Fish, Better Life” campaign, a multimedia awareness raising package, that has been disseminated through 12 major landing sites around Lake Victoria.

The campaign included a video - realized with the direct involvement of beneficiaries - on the importance of hygiene and quality in small scale fisheries, cooking demonstrations from a fish recipe book produced by the project and concerts in fishing communities in Busia, Namayingo, Mayuge and Buikwe districts.

Speaking at the launch of the campaign, Alhaji Jallow, FAO Country Representative, said post-harvest fish losses were affecting the quality and quantity of fish coming out of Uganda. For example, fish exports increased from $5.3m in 1991 to the highest value of $143m in 2005, but decreased to $83.3m in 2010. Uganda also exports large quantities of fish to the regional market, which was estimated at $50m in 2007, declining to $30m in 2011. More than 500,000 people were reached by the awareness campaign’s activities.

Uganda has a high potential for fish production, coming sixth globally in fisheries production in 2006. The total fish production in Uganda is estimated at 560,000 tonnes, with about 82 per cent (460,000 tonnes) from fisheries and an estimated 18 per cent (close to 100,000 MT) from aquaculture.

Dr Edward Rukuunya, Assistant Commissioner in charge of resource management at the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, commended the initiative, and noted that it would go a long way in answering the call for quality and value addition in Uganda’s fish industry.

“The agricultural sector investment plan emphasizes value addition and this initiative has a component for capacity building for the local fishing communities to improve the handling of fish species,” he said.

Uganda launches the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF)

The IYFF was launched on 22 November 2013 at Hotel Africana in Kampala by Uganda’s Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Honourable Tress Bucyanayandi.

The Minister described the IYFF as timely and “spot on”, especially for Uganda, a country whose economy depends mainly on agriculture.

Speaking at the event, FAO’s Country Representative, Alhaji M. Jallow, accompanied by Gertrude Kenyangi, Coordinator of the National Committee for International Year of Family Farming, underlined the crucial role played by family farmers in the eradication of hunger. The launch included an exhibition of organic produce displayed by local smallholder family farmers.
Three Rome-based United Nations agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP) are teaming up on a $2.7 million project to tackle the problem of food losses in developing countries, beginning with pilot programmes in Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda.

Globally, around one-third of all food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted each year, amounting to 1.3 billion tonnes – enough food to feed 2 billion people.

The three-year project by the agencies is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation and focuses on food losses in developing countries, which can occur during harvesting, processing, transportation and storage, as a result of inadequate infrastructure or lack of skills and technology.

It will focus in particular on reducing losses of grains and pulses, such as maize, rice, beans and cow peas – staple foods that play a significant role in global food security and have a major impact on the livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers.

Grain losses in sub-Saharan Africa alone are worth potentially $4 billion a year and could meet the minimum annual food requirements of at least 48 million people, according to a 2011 report by the World Bank, FAO and the United Kingdom’s Natural Resources Institute.

The project will, among other things, identify critical points for losses in pulse and grain supply chains in Burkina Faso, DRC and Uganda, and identify and test potential solutions to issues such as ineffective harvesting and handling, storage moisture levels, attacks by rats, birds and other pests, and insect damage.

“When some 840 million people are going hungry every day, we have an ethical responsibility to ensure that food produced is in fact consumed and not lost or wasted,” said Jong Jin Kim, Director of FAO’s Programme Support Division, speaking on behalf of the three agencies.

“Reducing food loss and waste will make significant amounts of additional food available, and at lower environmental costs, which is also critical in view of the need to produce 60 per cent more food by 2050 to meet the demands of a growing population.”

In total, food losses and waste account for about 30 per cent of cereals, 40-50 per cent of root crops, fruit and vegetables, 20 per cent of oilseeds, meat and dairy, and 30 per cent of fish produced each year.
Every era has its challenges and each challenge demands specific responses.

In the 1960’s, famine threatened South Asia. New high yielding wheat and rice varieties responding well to high levels of fertilizer application and ample water availability significantly boosted food production. Developed under the leadership of Norman Borlaug, they helped launch the Green Revolution, credited for saving the lives of hundreds of millions of people. It was the right answer to the looming food crisis that the world faced half a century ago.

Today, we are not facing famine -- but we are at a crossroads.

Around 842 million people remain chronically hungry because they cannot afford to eat adequately, despite the fact that the world is no longer short of food. As we look towards 2050, we have the additional challenge of feeding a population that is eating more – and sometimes better, healthier diets – and which is expected to surpass the 9 billion mark.

At the same time farmers – and humanity as a whole – are already facing the new challenges posed by climate change. The degradation of land and water resources, as well as other negative environmental impacts, are showing us the limits of highly intensive farming systems.

We need a way forward that has the same novelty of the Green Revolution but which responds to today’s needs: we cannot use the same tool to respond to a different challenge.

So the quest is now on for truly sustainable farming systems that can meet the world’s future food needs. Nothing comes closer to the sustainable food production paradigm than family farming.

It is fitting, therefore, that the United Nations has named 2014 the International Year of Family Farming. It provides an occasion to highlight the role that family farmers play in eradicating hunger and conserving natural resources, central elements of the sustainable future we want.

Support to family farming need not and should not be done in opposition to large-scale, specialized farming, which also plays an important role to ensure global food supply and which faces its own challenges, including the adoption of sustainable approaches.

We, however, have much to learn about sustainable practices from family farmers, a group that includes smallholders and medium scale farmers, peasants, indigenous peoples, traditional communities, fisher folk, pastoralists, collectors and many others.

Much of the world’s experience in sustainable farming systems has been gained by family-run farms. From generation to generation, family farmers have transmitted knowledge and skills, preserving and improving many practices and technologies that can support agricultural sustainability. Using innovative techniques, such as building terraces and adopting zero-tillage practices, family farmers have consistently succeeded in maintaining production on often marginal lands.

The preservation and sustainable use of natural resources is rooted in the productive logic of family farms and sets them apart from large-scale specialized farming. The highly diversified nature of their agricultural activities gives them a central role in promoting environmental sustainability, safeguarding biodiversity, and contributing to healthier and more balanced diets.

Family farmers also play a pivotal role in the local production, marketing and consumption circuits that are so important, not simply in fighting hunger but also in creating jobs, generating income, and in stimulating and diversifying local economies.

Worldwide, there are an estimated 500 million family farms. In an FAO survey of 93 countries, family farmers account on average for over 80 percent of
all holdings. In developed and developing countries alike, they are the main producers of food consumed locally, the primary stewards of food security.

Experiences in many countries show that family farmers respond well with increased production, if the appropriate policy environment is effectively put in place.

Yet at the same time, over 70 percent of the world’s food insecure population lives in rural areas in developing countries. Many of them are subsistence producers who may not grow enough to meet their families’ needs. Typically they have access only to limited and often degraded natural resources and are particularly vulnerable to external shocks, including those induced by climate change.

Too frequently in the past, family farmers were considered a problem to be solved, the target of social policies with only limited potential.

That is the mindset we need to change. Family farmers are not part of the problem; on the contrary, they are part of the solution for food security and sustainable development.

There is a limit to what family farmers can achieve on their own. Governments, international organizations, regional agencies, civil society organizations, private sector and research institutions have a role to play in providing this support and creating the enabling environment in which they can thrive.

What family farmers need is similar throughout the world: technical assistance and policies that build on their knowledge and bolster sustainable productivity increase; appropriate technologies; quality inputs that respond to their needs and respect their culture and traditions; special attention to women and youth farmers; strengthening of producers’ organizations and cooperatives; improved access to land and water, credit and markets; and efforts to improve their participation in value chains.

The 2014 International Year of Family Farming gives us a chance to revitalize this critical sector. By choosing to celebrate family farmers, we recognize that they must be protagonists in responding to the dual challenge the world today faces: improving food security while preserving crucial natural resources.

This is the test of our era. Giving family farmers the attention and support they deserve, we can rise to meet it.

Following a demand for improved breeds that can provide more milk and meat and yet remain adaptable to the situation in Karamoja, FAO has introduced Artificial Insemination (AI) services in the region. “Demand for AI was generated from the Agro Pastoral Field Schools (APFS) during their normal learning processes on livestock health and production,” says Dr. Mark Ilukol, FAO Programme Officer, Livestock Production. Since the service was rolled out in October 2013, it has generated a lot of excitement and interest in equal measure. The sire breeds are Sahiwal and Jersey.

The initiative is part of the implementation of the Government of Uganda’s Karamoja Livelihoods Programme (KALIP) implemented by FAO. It is funded by the European Union to a tune of Euro 2.5 million. The project aims at improving food security and diversifying livelihoods of the agro pastoral communities in Karamoja.
FAO Director-General, José Graziano da Silva, welcomed a breakthrough commitment by African heads of state to end hunger on the continent by 2025.

“This is the first time in history that African leaders have made such a strong pledge to eliminate hunger and it is also a show of confidence that, working together, we can win the fight against hunger in Africa in our lifetime,” Graziano da Silva said after African Union (AU) Member States officially adopted the target at the AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 31st January 2014.

“Africa is witnessing economic growth of unprecedented proportions, but it is also the only continent in the world where the total number of hungry people has gone up since 1990,” he said.

“The challenge now is to transform the vision of a food-secure Africa into reality by tackling the multiple causes of hunger.

“Investing in agriculture, creating safety nets and social protection for the poor, guaranteeing the right of access to land and water resources and targeting small-holder farmers and young people will be key,” he said, adding that FAO will continue to support Africa in its efforts to eradicate hunger.

The 2025 target was initially hashed out at a high-level meeting on food security in Africa organized by the AU, Brazil’s Lula Institute - headed by former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva - and FAO in Addis Ababa in July 2013.

Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector agreed on the target as a means of promoting concrete actions that build upon the momentum of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

The Director-General highlighted the leadership of the AU Commission and Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma in taking this process forward.

“This is a fully Africa-owned effort. The commitment of the African Union Commission was crucial to get where we are today. FAO is committed to supporting the AU and African nations in reaching the 2025 target.”

With the objective of enhancing knowledge and appreciation for mainstreaming Drought Risk Reduction (DRR) in development planning as a sustainable strategy for building resilience, FAO and the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) organized an experiential learning event for Karamoja in the second week of December 2013. It focused on lessons emerging from the resilience initiatives that have been undertaken by development partners to strengthen the coping capacities of communities.

The activities are part of the implementation of the Disaster Risk Reduction Action Plan for the Horn of Africa (DRRAP), a project funded by ECHO that seeks to increase resilience and reduce vulnerability in local communities. The implementation focus is drought preparedness, response and the reduction of the underlying factors of drought risk.

The event brought together NGO partners, district local governments, donors and Members of Parliament (MPs).

**Practices discussed**
- Nutritional mineral blocks for livestock
- Energy saving stoves
- Apiary and honey production
- Animal disease surveillance
- Climate change and adaptation learning centre
- Cross-border contingency planning
- Ecological restoration
- Youth empowerment
- Cereal banking
- Early warning systems
- Irrigation agriculture and water management

James Okoth, FAO National Programme Manager, said drought and climate change issues continue to challenge both communities, especially in Karamoja. “This forum discussed and appreciated the current innovative approaches to disaster preparedness, early warning and risk reduction measures,” he added.

It generated resolutions on DRR, that will guide future engagement and coordination as well as key messages to influence policy formulation and implementation.
Uganda MPs embark on journey through Kenya’s and Ethiopia’s cattle corridor

From glowing green hills to dusty prairie fields - through the window of the car seven parliamentarians (MPs) from Karamoja, Uganda, watched how the dramatic Kenyan landscape is changing. The MPs were on a learning trip to experience how local communities in Kenya and Ethiopia are surviving under dire circumstances and what coping mechanisms they have in place.

The journey of 1350km from Nairobi to Addis Ababa – with over 350 km over rough roads – went straight through Kenya’s and Ethiopia’s cattle corridor. According to Simon Peter Aleper, MP for Moroto in Karamoja, the journey made him see his own municipality through different lenses.

“At one point we traveled through a long stretch of desert. We didn’t even see a tree, yet people lived here! How do they survive? I’ve come to realize that the situation in Karamoja is not that bad. We have water, pasture, trees…”

The field mission was set up through the Regional Initiative in Support of Vulnerable Pastoralists and Agro-pastoralists in the Horn of Africa (RISPA), a project supported by the European Union to strengthen vulnerable communities through better policies. The seven MPs were invited by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the FAO Subregional Emergency Office for Eastern and Central Africa, the main implementers of RISPA. During the five-day trip, the caravan visited local projects on drought preparedness.

“One of the main lessons I have learned is that we are missing coordination in Karamoja. How do we streamline the plans that come from the ministries down to grass root level? We want to have a situation where in case of a disaster the ministries of water, agriculture, health, and Karamoja work together and come up with a collective responsive action.”

As a first step Simon is planning to share his experiences with his constituency to try and shift people’s minds.

“When we go back we will first create awareness and tell our people: you have been gifted by nature. I will tell our people that what we have seen in Kenya is a lot worse, but these people are moving forward. We need to stop feeling sorry for ourselves and start working!”

RISPA aims to reduce the vulnerability of (agro) pastoralist communities by integrating top-down and bottom-up approaches to strengthen coping mechanisms on the ground and across the region. Activities are ongoing at the local, national and regional levels.

Implemented by FAO, in partnership with the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and funded by the European Union, RISPA is facilitating the consolidation of cross-border development and contingency plans through traditional institutions with endorsement from the national governments involved.
World Bank recognizes FAO ICT project in Uganda

A new World Bank study on mobile applications for the agricultural and forest sector recognizes FAO’s expertise on mobile data collection technology for drought preparedness in Uganda.

Published in December 2013, the study *ICT for Data Collection and Monitoring & Evaluation* assists development organizations to stay up-to-date with changing technology and to identify appropriate technology channels for data collection and monitoring and evaluation.

According to the report, FAO’s ICT work in Karamoja, Uganda, is an innovative best practice in implementing ICT in agriculture. As part of a regional initiative, community chiefs in 55 village centers in Karamoja were given mobile applications to collect and collate digital data on signs of drought. Via its social responsibility programme, Nokia provided the mobile phones and open-source software to collect the data, enabling remote access to real-time information. As a result, drought analysis is more accurate with the transmission period reduced to between five and seven days.

“This was a perfect partnership between FAO developing and technically supporting an ICT innovation solution, a local NGO rolling out the application at community level and national government assisting to make the project sustainable,” concludes Phil Fong, Regional Data and Information Coordinator at FAO Sub-regional Emergency Office for Eastern and Central Africa.

The funding, having come to an end in 2013 and following the positive results, the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) invested in a follow-up project. FAO Uganda is currently collaborating with the Ugandan ministry of agriculture to further embed the data collection technology in the ministry’s portfolio.

World Rabies Day marked

In commemoration of the World Rabies Day on 28th September 2013, FAO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) and the Uganda Veterinary Association, vaccinated 140 cats and 578 dogs against Rabies in Masaka district.

Rabies is a viral disease that causes acute encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) in warm-blooded animals. The disease is zoonotic, meaning it can be transmitted from one species to another, such as from dogs to humans, commonly by a bite from an infected animal. For a human, rabies is almost invariably fatal if post-exposure prophylaxis is not administered prior to the onset of severe symptoms. The rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death.
African Union declares 2014, “Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa”

Marks 10th Anniversary of CAADP

The African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, during its 19th Ordinary Session, held from 15-16 July 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, declared the year 2014 to be the Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa, marking 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

Over the last decade, through the instrumentality of CAADP, African agriculture and food security concerns remain high on the policy agenda at national, regional, continental and global levels. Thanks to such concerted actions, the performance of African agriculture has been encouraging – with annual agricultural GDP growth having averaged nearly 4 per cent since 2003 – well above the agricultural GDP growth rates for the previous several decades. It is absolutely necessary to sustain the momentum of such a positive change and development taking place in Africa well into the next decade. The AU Decision declaring 2014 to be the Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa, and marking 10th Anniversary of CAADP, is an important milestone and an opportunity that should be seized in the resolve to continue to uphold agriculture and food security as priority for policy and practical actions to generate concrete results and impacts.

True to its name, the African Year of Agriculture and Food Security will be commemorated across Africa, in Member States, Regional Economic Communities, Continental Organisations, and at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It will be a year that will give communities, state and non-state actors in Africa an opportunity to interact, express their voices on what works and chart the focus and targets for the next decade.
FAO smartphone app shows potential for improving disease surveillance and reporting in Uganda

FAO recently launched a pilot project for a mobile application to report disease outbreaks in ten districts in Uganda. Funded by the Government of Ireland under the One Health initiative, this pilot represents the first time the application is being introduced at national level for disease reporting.

In January 2013, a team of FAO animal health experts met with Ugandan authorities to identify challenges in disease surveillance and reporting. During the following six months, FAO and the authorities collaborated in implementing the pilot project on the EMPRES-i Event Mobile Application (EMA). EMA facilitates the exchange of information on animal diseases between farmers, the National Animal Disease Diagnostics and Epidemiology Center (NADDEC), ten District Veterinary Officers (DVOs) and the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO). Together with the national authorities, FAO established ten target districts, a list of participants and their needs, a workflow and a list of priority diseases.

For the pilot, FAO provided internet-enabled smartphones to the CVO, epidemiologists of NADDEC and DVOs. Two PCs and one power back-up were also distributed to the NADDEC offices.

Through its application at grass-roots level, the EMPRES-i EMA is able to guarantee a rapid, efficient and highly confidential communication channel. This allows for more immediate action during the occurrence of a disease outbreak. FAO is urgently appealing for additional funding to support the continued roll out of this system to benefit Uganda's disease surveillance and reporting at the national level.

World Food Day marked with a call for nutrition-sensitive research and development

Uganda joined the rest of the world to mark World Food Day on 16 October 2013. The national celebrations were held in Serere District under the theme, “Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition”. The aim was to promote understanding of the main causes of hunger and malnutrition in the world and inform about the strategies required to make a hunger-free and sustainable world.

Stakeholders at the event recommended that priorities for agricultural research and development become more nutrition-sensitive with stronger focus on nutrient-dense foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes and animal-source foods.

“Healthy diets are more than staple foods. They are diverse, containing a balanced and adequate combination of energy and nutrients, said FAO's Country Representative, Alhaji Jallow.

Although steady increase in agricultural productivity, especially of basic staple foods, will continue to be crucial in the coming decades, it is not enough to improve nutrition.

By definition, sustainable food systems produce nutritious food for all people today while protecting the capacity of future generations to feed themselves. They use resources more efficiently at every stage along the way from farm to fork.

Today, almost 870 million people worldwide are chronically undernourished. One out of every four children in the world under the age of five is stunted. This means 165 million malnourished children will never reach their full physical and cognitive potential.

In Uganda, one out of every three children are stunted and 15 percent of all child mortality cases are associated with undernutrition. In addition, 54 percent of the adult population in Uganda suffered stunting as children.

The cost of malnutrition to the global economy – as a result of lost productivity and direct health care costs – could account for as much as 5 percent of global income, which is equivalent to US$ 3.5 trillion per year or US$500 per person.

A recent study conducted by the Government of Uganda (The cost of Hunger in Uganda - Implications on National Development and Prosperity) found that Uganda loses some UGS 1.8 trillion (US$899 million)
The Vice President (3rd left), the FAO Country Representative (2nd left) and district leaders inspect a farmer’s orchard in Serere district during world food day celebrations.

The Vice President is welcomed to the FAO stall.
annually - as much as 5.6 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - to malnutrition. The study also estimated that child mortality associated with under-nutrition reduced Uganda’s labour force by 3.8 per cent. This represents over 943 million working hours lost to an absent workforce brought about by early deaths.

FAO attributes malnutrition to inadequate availability of (and access to) safe, diverse, nutritious food, lack of access to clean water, sanitation and healthcare and inappropriate child feeding and adult dietary choices.

To combat malnutrition, FAO’s Director General, Mr. Graziano da Silva makes the case that healthy diets and good nutrition must start with food and agriculture. “The way we grow, raise, process, transport and distribute food influences what we eat”, says Graziano.

Relatedly, reducing food and nutrient losses and waste could make important contributions to better nutrition and relieve pressure on productive resources.

Another promising area of work involves raising the micronutrient content of staple foods – either through “bio-fortification”, or by encouraging the use of varieties with higher nutrient content, or by taking a second look at underutilized, nutrient-rich staple crop species.

These interventions require integrated action and complementary interventions in agriculture, in natural resources management, in public health and education, and in broader policy domains. Because the necessary actions typically involve several government institutions, high-level political support is needed to motivate a coordinated effort.
The future of cassava, one of Africa’s most promising and climate-resilient crop, may be under threat if efforts to renew the fight against diseases affecting the plant are not renewed, the European Union (EU) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have alerted.

Over the past four years, the Regional Cassava Initiative, funded by the EU and coordinated by FAO, restored cassava yields and improved the food security situation of over 500,000 people. However, more resources are required to stop further spread. Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) and Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD) still pose a major threat to the food security of 135 million people in Central and East Africa.

While CMD hampers the growth of the plant, CBSD attacks the cassava roots, making it often difficult for farmers to detect the disease before it is too late. CBSD can cause yield losses of up to 100%, while it is estimated that at least 30% of the Africa’s cassava crop is annually lost to CMD. At least half of all plants in Africa are affected by one of these diseases. Cassava is mainly grown as a subsistence crop with surpluses finding their way to local markets. It grows well in poor soils with limited labour requirements. However, viruses continue to spread and a regional approach was required to reduce their impact.

The Regional Cassava Initiative was rolled out to support the beneficiaries – both farmers and value chain actors – in their efforts to mitigate, manage and prevent the effects of these diseases. Seven countries (Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) were involved in the four-year project, which closed in October 2013. During the project’s closing workshop ‘Upholding cassava’s potential in Africa’, over 70 experts from across the region gathered in Nairobi, Kenya from 10 to 12 September 2013 to take stock of achievements and elaborate on the way forward in addressing cassava disease threats.

Under the project, which was coordinated by FAO Subregional Emergency Office for Eastern and Central Africa, disease-tolerant or resistant cassava varieties were grown and clean planting materials made available to Aoron and other farmers. The accessibility of surveillance information was improved to ensure government authorities, donors and other decision makers can respond accurately when the diseases appear. Newly established national cassava commissions ensure movement of cassava vegetative material is better regulated.

“Cassava is moving up the national policy agendas. Uganda has already identified the plant as a priority crop under the Development Strategy Investment Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture,” added Patrick Seruyange, European Union’s project lead, “We are now calling upon all local governments and development partners to further support interventions along the value chain.”

Due to the consolidated efforts of the RCI and similar projects in the region, survey evidence suggests that although CMD is still highly prevalent, the rate of spread is gradually reducing. CBSD, on the other hand, is rapidly spreading towards West Africa, requiring more research and continued sensitization to limit its impact.
FAO has introduced new mapping technologies in Uganda that will help the country generate better, more useful forestry statistics and land cover maps.

The new tools and information will help the government monitor national forest resources and make informed decisions regarding long-term forestry and investment policies, as well as avoid unintended forest conversion and the degradation of the productive and protective functions of forests.

In the past, the management of Uganda’s forestry sector has often been hampered by a lack of reliable data. While new advances in remote sensing and free access to satellite data can now facilitate the production of forest area data, users like the National Forest Authority of Uganda (NFA) have had limited capacity to benefit from such developments - software licences alone can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

FAO’s innovations, on the other hand, do not require any large financial investments to implement.

To update Uganda’s land cover map, FAO and NFA worked together to classify recent imagery and produce statistics during a week-long training course in satellite image processing. The NFA team learned to use a suite of open-source image processing tools to undertake the work.

“The training solved our biggest problem and gave us momentum to start land cover mapping for the whole country, something we wanted to do for some time,” said John Diisi, the Coordinator of Geographic Information System/Mapping at the NFA.

“The free provision of high-quality satellite data, combined with open-source image processing, geographic information systems and other statistical tools offers an amazing amount of utility and flexibility,” said FAO remote sensing specialist Erik Lindquist. “Now, we can easily introduce advanced image processing techniques and generate results efficiently with no software costs to the organizations we work with. That is important, given the resource constraints faced by national forestry agencies around the world.”

“This effort shows that finding flexible ways to use limited resources in the right time and place can produce substantial benefits. The initial direct investment was around $20,000 provided by the Government of Finland, but it unlocked Ugandan potential that is worth many times that amount,” noted Kenneth MacDicken, a Senior Forestry Officer at FAO.

The new land cover map and statistics will help Uganda improve its forest monitoring capabilities, and Uganda’s newly generated figures will also be included in the upcoming FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015 report.
During the 19th meeting of the Policy Committee on Environment that was chaired by the Rt. Hon Prime Minister, Amama Mbabazi, Uganda’s National Climate Change Policy 2013 was approved.

The policy comes at a time when scientific reports conclude from a global perspective that, without clear adaptation and mitigation strategies and effort, the world is headed for average temperatures of 4 degrees Celsius warmer than pre-industrial times by the end of this century.

The fifth Assessment Report, released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (IPCC), predicts that the impacts of climate change will lead to more flooding, famine, drought and disease, which could have a negative impact for millions of people in the poorest parts of the world, especially Africa.

To this end, Uganda is no exception as we continuously witness the extreme weather events resulting in landslides in the eastern part of Uganda, particularly Bududa and Manafwa districts, the recent Kasese floods that burst the banks of river Nyamwamba, the escalating drought causing famine among populations in most parts of eastern Uganda, among others.

However, all is not yet lost. The Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) reports suggest that it is not too late to prevent the worst impacts of climate change, if countries of the world act now.

The National Climate Change Policy estimates the need for approximately 4 billion US Dollars to address climate change over the next 15 years. This is a colossal amount of money that requires the support of all stakeholders, including the development partners and immediate action.

Approval and coherent implementation of the National Climate Change Policy should be seen as a resounding response to the call for action that was put out by the first IPCC Working Group.

The National Climate Change Policy underscores the need to identify top-priority adaptation and mitigation issues for Uganda, support appropriate awareness raising, information exchange, capacity building and technology transfer in addressing climate change. It recommends support to the integration of climate change issues into planning, decision making and investments in all sectors and trans-sectoral themes, research and the dissemination of scientific information and innovations on climate change, among others.

The approval of the policy is, therefore, just one milestone that we can count on as a framework to guide national response and action. However, expectations are high and the challenge now is how to manage the unequalled expectations from the public – by implementing the policy which calls for every one’s involvement to save the planet!
Karamoja farmers make millions from vegetable sales

Farmers in Karamoja are making millions of Shillings from vegetable production, thanks to simple irrigation systems that have enabled them to water their fields throughout the year.

For example, the average total monthly income for Kokorio Agro Pastoral Field School (APFS) in Napak district is 6 million Shillings.

Vegetables, including cabbages, tomatoes, onions and egg plants, now flourish, even in the driest months of the year. Most of these vegetables are growing in the region for the first time.

Losip Lokiru, 39, says he had never seen tomatoes growing until the project was introduced in the area. “Some people cannot believe that these vegetables are growing in Karamoja until they come to our garden”, he said.

The gardens are concentrated around water sources such as dams or boreholes. It is from these water sources that treadle pumps supplied by FAO are installed and connected to pipes that supply water to the fields.

Anna Tapew, 45, has cabbages and onions. Last year, she harvested eight bags of onions that she sold in the neighbouring Matany trading centre in Napak district.

After selling the produce, her earnings soared to Shs 800,000 compared to the Shs 2,000 she used to earn monthly from fetching firewood and water for well-off families in Matany town. With such income, Tapew has managed to set up a vegetable stall (in Matany market), a poultry unit and paid her children’s school fees.
Her husband, Michael Lokunoi, also abandoned cattle rustling in favour of vegetable production. Like other Karimojong warriors, Lokunoi’s main activity was herding animals (cattle and goats) during day and raiding neighbouring tribes in the night to steal from their flocks. But Lokunoi quit rustling and started growing “sukuma wiki” (Kale) - in 2012. One-and-half years later, Lokunoi has no regrets.

“We’re very happy as a family because of the income from selling vegetables. We can buy salt, soap and food to feed our children,” Lokunoi says.

Moru John, also a member of Kokorio APFS, gets an average monthly income of 600,000 Shillings from vegetable sales. “I bought land, ten hens and a heifer. I also buy school requirements for my four children whenever school starts”, he says.

Ongom Kirk Edward was a casual labourer, but has now been transformed into a millionaire, thanks to his four-acre piece of land on which he has planted a variety of vegetables in Abim district.

“I do not bother to look for market. The buyers find me in my garden”, he says proudly. Last year, Ongom earned 4 million Shillings from the total harvest. “From the proceeds, I bought 68 goats and saved 2 million Shillings in the bank”, he added. Ongom is now planning to hire or buy more land to increase the area under cultivation.

“For me, the knowledge I received from FAO on vegetable production is wealth. It is stored permanently in my head. Nobody can take it away. I am going to use it to prosper. I have already started stocking materials to build a permanent house”, said Ongom.

By sustaining the supply of fresh vegetables from Karamoja sub-region, these farmers have demonstrated how it’s people can transform their lives from nomadic to stable and commercially oriented production.

The farmers were provided with inputs such as seeds and pesticides, ox-ploughs, treadle pumps and pipes and training under an EU funded Karamoja Livelihood Programme (KALIP) implemented by FAO in the region.
In Apeitolim, Sub County in Napak district, members of 36 Agro Pastoral Field Schools (APFS) came together, under a Sub County Network, to harvest, process, package and market honey as an alternative source of livelihood. They set up and manage 370 bee-hives that were distributed in six nuclei sites. FAO also built a store, in which the farmers have installed the processing equipment. The production capacity has improved, registering over 90 percent colonization of all installed bee hives. About 6kg of unprocessed honey are harvested per bee hive. The processed honey is packaged in containers of 500gm that go for 7,000 Shillings each. It is currently sold in the region and to neighbouring districts. However, farmers plan to increase production and even export the honey.

“Our honey is very sweet and organic because we do not use chemicals and herbicides here. The future is bright if we step up our efforts”, says Locholo Marko, the Chairman of the APFS Network.

Karamoja Farmers enjoy sweet success from honey
What is the Situation?
The Horn of Africa (HoA) is one of the most food-insecure regions in the world as a result of a high number of natural and manmade hazards. In the last 30 years, the population has more than doubled, changing the demographic dynamics and placing further pressure on increasingly scarce natural resources. Communities in the Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASALs) of this region also face a combination of poverty, poor infrastructure, weak service delivery and limited market opportunities leading to social, economic and cultural marginalisation. The severity and frequency of droughts has increased, raising the vulnerability of the populations affected. The policy instruments required to address the root causes of this vulnerability are lacking. Mechanisms that reduce the communities’ exposure to risks must be put in place.

What is the DRRAP?
The Drought Risk Reduction Action Plan (DRRAP) is an ECHO-funded project focusing on increasing resilience and reducing vulnerability in local communities in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland and Uganda. DRRAP is piloting projects that mitigate and respond to drought in order to identify successful models that can be replicated, scaled up and used to influence the policy environment. DRRAP supports practical solutions generated by communities. This promotes strong local ownership while promoting local skills. DRRAP coordination structure, made up of UN agencies and NGO representatives, provides support to national and regional coordination on disaster management. The European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) has been undertaking regional disaster risk reduction activities in the Horn of Africa since 2006. ECHO has so far contributed 90 million Euros in the region.

Achievements so far
Linking communities to institutions
Drought preparedness decisions have enabled partners to facilitate participatory planning processes through approaches such as Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR), Pastoralist Field Schools (PFS) and Watershed Management. This has seen the establishment and strengthening of community institutions, and fostering drought preparedness and momentum towards resilience.

- Improved rangeland management - Community Rangeland Management Committees (among the Borana, Dasenach, Gabbra, Karamojong, Pokot, Somali and Turkana) charged with managing natural resources within and across borders have been instrumental in ensuring range regeneration, health and harmonious utilisation of resources. For example, the Mana Soda community in southern Ethiopia have seen the results of their CMDRR efforts. Through the project, the community has reclaimed and improved the productivity of 1 250 ha of pastureland that is now a source of feed for 2 100 cattle and 3 000 sheep and goats. A significant change in attitude towards rangeland management has also been observed among the community with plans already in progress for continuing the reclamation work.

- Enhanced strategic water access and availability - since 2006, ECHO funding on drought preparedness has contributed substantially to the establishment and rehabilitation of hundreds of strategic water sources such as pans, dams, boreholes, rock catchments in many parts of Karamoja in Uganda, Marsabit, Moyale, and Mandera in Kenya and the Borana and Somali regions of Ethiopia. This has increased access to strategic grazing areas, eased pressure on traditional water sources and reduced resource based conflict. For example, in Afar region of Ethiopia, the Chifra communities were travelling 10 to 12 kilometres to fetch water in 2009. When eight of the non-functional water points were maintained within the first three months of the drought, this distance was reduced, benefiting 34 941 people and improving the water coverage in the district by three percent. The Motopondereva valley dam in Amudat district in Uganda, which was rehabilitated in 2008, now has a storage capacity of 12 500 cubic metres, serving over 50 000 head of livestock.
• Strengthening community organizations – CM-DRR has been effective in promoting community planning and broad-based community organizations. The DRR committees formed from this process have developed community development and contingency plans, which are increasingly informing governments and partners programming. It has also resulted in community forums around the structures built, such as in Lokiso, Ethiopia and Turbi, Kenya, which now serve as meeting places, as well as information and training centres.

• Enhanced community participatory learning and experience sharing – ECHO drought preparedness decision supported piloting of the PFS approach in Kenya and Uganda, which has since been adopted in Ethiopia and has been introduced in Djibouti. Evidence has shown impact on the technical and social domain. For example, through this approach, communities in Mandera County, northern Kenya, produced over 21,000 bales of fodder through the Pastoralist Field School approach. This has not only resulted in cash from fodder trade, but healthier livestock and year-round milk availability for children.

• Fostering Information Management for Programming and Advocacy - Information and knowledge management has been a key area of ECHO intervention support. The disaster risk reduction website has been instrumental in putting together most of the experiences and outputs of the ECHO projects, such as water resource maps, partners’ activity maps, REGLAP page and the drought online discussion forum. These have enhanced coordination, sharing of experiences through documentation, discussion and informed disaster risk reduction programming.

Below are examples of the work being done by some implementing partners of the DRRAP project in Karamoja. They are clustered under Consortium, led by Dan Church Aid (DCA) and include Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), the International Institute for Cooperation and Development (C&D), Caritas Moroto, and the Regional Learning and Advocacy Programme for Vulnerable Dry land Communities (REGLAP).

The Consortium operates in southern Karamoja in the districts of Nakapiripirit, Moroto, Amudat and Napak and across the border in Kenya in Pokot North. Through support by the European Union’s Office for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), this consortium implements Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) in 23 communities, supports local government to carry out livestock disease surveillance, facilitates the running of the Drought Early Warning System (DEWS), strengthens access to and management of natural resources through Natural Resource Sharing Agreements, and advocates for policy support for dryland and pastoral areas at the national level.

Improving Animal Health

In Karamoja, livestock are central to people’s livelihoods in the region; they are culturally important and also play a major role in communities food security and income. Almost 25 percent of all of Uganda’s livestock population can be found in Karamoja. In turn, having healthy livestock populations is a central component to a community or household’s resilience.
It is within this context that C&D has been supporting livestock disease surveillance (LDS) and manages the Karamoja Veterinary Laboratory (KVL). All work surrounding animal health is done in conjunction with the District Veterinary Offices (DVOs) of Karamoja and with support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF).

To accomplish this, C&D and the DVOs carry out routine collection of livestock samples from various kraals in all districts of Karamoja and then subsequently examines and analyzes the samples at the KVL. The main objective of LDS is to enable early detection of outbreaks, which then triggers an early response. The goal is to ensure effective management of diseases linked to drought, which are likely to have a major impact on local food security and health situations.

LDS results are used to create public awareness on the disease situation in the region. This has been done over the years through consultative meetings, kraal meetings, radio programmes and drought bulletins in order to support the regional veterinarians in taking informed decisions and advise the pastoralist populations appropriately. “Initially when there was no laboratory in the region, we were not very confident in our reporting – says Dr. Eladu Frederick, District Veterinary Officer for Kaabong – also thanks to the consultative meetings, we are able to share our information with other districts in the region and agree on possible common actions. Finally, we have now reliable and scientific baseline data from where to start building an appropriate veterinary strategy for the region”.

Stephen Setyanga, in Karita Sub-county of Amudat district, gives his opinion from a livestock owner’s point of view: “This surveillance has helped us to understand the disease challenges in our community and what drugs to use. Before, we used to treat our animals blindly and in most cases they never recovered but thanks to the results that we get from the laboratory nowadays and the advice that the C&D doctors give us when they bring the results, we know exactly how to behave and which drugs to use, so losses have reduced.”

Bashil Ibrahim, a Community Animal Health Worker (CAHW) from Karita Sub county, Amudat district explains how LDS has helped CAHWs in selecting the appropriate drugs to be stored and sold to the farmers: “If you sell ineffective drugs, farmers won’t buy from you again; C&D laboratory results help us in taking the most appropriate decisions. At the national level, Dr. Robert Mwebe of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries acknowledges the importance of what the LDS work accomplishes: “From the regular reports we receive from the laboratory we know exactly what the disease challenges for the Karamoja region are and we use this information greatly in planning. We are always kept up-to-date on the disease status of the region. In fact, this kind of activity needs to be replicated in other neighbouring districts as well so that all regions are at the same level in terms of disease surveillance and control measures. The KVL is actually one of our eyes in the region.”

Livestock owners, Local Government and MAAIF all recognize the importance of LDS on the local livelihood and therefore expressed the need for the activity to continue. To make the laboratory more relevant to the ever growing demand of the pastoralists in Karamoja region, in April 2012, C&D signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government of Uganda. This MoU intends to upgrade the KVL into a regional referral veterinary laboratory capable of carrying out confirmatory diagnosis of all major diseases that affect food security, trade and public health in Karamoja region. By doing so, the sustainability of LDS work and the lab will be closer to being secured in the region, something that is vital to the livestock production systems that are central to the populations in Karamoja.
While the population of Sincholol, in the Pokot North District of Kenya, has long lived under semi-arid conditions, recurrent droughts have largely hampered their way of life, putting at risk their primary and often only source of livelihood, pastoralism. During the severe drought of 2011, Kenya’s worst in over 60 years, many people in Sincholol crossed the border into neighboring Uganda in search of water and pasture for their animals. Others stayed behind and received emergency aid from humanitarian organizations. Those who left and those who stayed incurred a heavy burden. Many human lives were lost, along with that of thousands of livestock, reminding the communities in the region and the humanitarian community at large that climate change, manifested through unpredictable and highly variable rainfall patterns in the region, would only worsen the likelihood of future droughts and associated crises.

In December 2011, ACTED began to support Sincholol to build the community’s resilience to drought and other climactic shocks, and therefore avoid future humanitarian crises.

ACTED worked closely with the community to raise awareness of the importance of building resilience to drought through livelihood diversification. To do this, the organization facilitated the establishment of the Sincholol Community Disaster Management Committee (CDMC), a body responsible for engaging the community to develop and implement a Community Disaster Management Plan (CDMP). Once formed, ACTED trained the CDMC in participatory techniques for assessing vulnerability to drought and floods, access to land and resources, and conflict/security issues, and through this analysis, drafting the Disaster Management Plan. The Sincholol Plan aimed to establish a goat breeding centre, which would be used to cross-breed goats to create breeds that produce more meat and are more disease resistant. ACTED supported the implementation of the plan through the provision of a EUR 5,000 grant to the Sincholol CDMC in late 2012. With the grant, the CDMC led the construction of goat pens and purchased 42 Galla goats. The remaining funds were saved to finance the salary of herdsman that would be responsible for rearing and herding the goats.

One and half years later, it is clear that grant has had positive impact on the community’s resilience and its livelihood. The community was able to cross-breed the 42 Galla goats with local breeds to create a crossbreed, which is more resilient to diseases and produces more meat. The goats are providing both milk and meat to the community and the surplus is sold to their neighbours.

“We’re now maize sellers not buyers,” says Jackson Loesereng, the chairperson of the Sincholol CDMC. With the additional income, members of the community have been able to engage in maize farming and selling as well as other income-generating activities such as the opening of restaurants and clothing stores.

According to Mr. Loesereng, such businesses have thrived on the increased purchasing power of people within the community, due to increased trade with the Karamojong (Pian clan) in Uganda, another area which has greatly improved since ACTED’s intervention.

Through the facilitation of exchange visits between CDMCs in Kenya and Uganda, the project has increased inter-ethnic understanding and facilitated peaceful interactions between the traditionally conflicting Pokot of Kenya and Pian of Uganda. Increased peace has brought freedom of movement and resulted in greater trade between the two communities. As Mr. Loesereng concludes, “no one in Sincholol spends their days idly sitting under a tree anymore. Things have definitely changed since ACTED came to our community.”
Lotome Sub-county in Napak District is one of those areas that demonstrates why Karamoja is referred to as a semi-arid region. Even by Karamoja standards, this stretch of land usually receives scarce rain and the low, unassuming vegetation is testament to this situation. So when a Community Disaster Management Committee (CDMCs) was created here in Kalokengel county at the beginning of ECHO Drought Preparedness IV in 2011, the community’s choice to implement tree planting as a CMDRR (Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction) pilot project might have seemed a dangerous one.

One of the group members explains how her village’s involvement began: “I am 45 years old and this is the first time that I participate in a community-based project – says Elizabeth Abura – my involvement started at the end of 2010, when a facilitator from C&D organized a meeting in Nachuka village to explain the project and select the 20 members that would form the CMDRR committee. Once the group was formed, it was unanimously decided that drought was the disaster that threatened our community the most, and as a pilot project we decided to implement a tree-planting activity. We knew other tree-planting projects in this area had failed, so we wanted to prove we could do it, and we also always thought that the area lacked proper shaded areas for both people and animals.”

The results of this CDMC have certainly vindicated their choice: the group was given 700 seedlings of acacia and neem tree, of which over 500 lived through their first two dry seasons and are therefore all virtually guaranteed to survive long-term. It is certainly an impressive result, which could not have been achieved without cooperation and cohesion within the committee.

“From the start, we developed good understanding with the facilitator and among ourselves – Elizabeth continues – the cooperation has always been good and we soon felt the project as our own, so we tried to be proactive when planning and we always respected each other’s roles and responsibilities. It has been really good to observe such developments and to notice that people were willing to work together. I would say that being part of this group has really helped the overall cohesion within the village”

Elizabeth’s ideas are also very clear when it comes to the future developments of her group’s CMDRR project: “Now that the trees are strong and have grown to a considerable height, all the group members have started getting firewood for their households, thereby saving vast amounts of time and effort as they usually had to travel far from their villages to get it. The woodlot has also provided a very useful shaded area for everyone. Soon we will be able to pick and sell large amounts of Neem leaves, and get seedlings from our trees to sell in the market. The sub-county agricultural officer [whose cooperation with the group was facilitated as part of the project’s activities] has taught us how to do that properly.”

Before leaving, Elizabeth feels there’s another aspect worth mentioning. “This project is doing something for the condition of women, too – she says – because the men in our villages are noticing that we’re involved in something which is bringing benefits to the families, they seem to appreciate our role a little more.”

Goat Breeding changing lives in Napak district
The Regional Learning and Advocacy Programme for Vulnerable Dryland Communities (REGLAP) has country programmes in Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia and a Secretariat in Nairobi. Regionally, the REGLAP consortium is composed of OXFAM, Save the Children, CARE, Cordaid, DCA, and IUCN. In Uganda, REGLAP has a country core group of members who jointly work on an advocacy strategy. This group is composed of DCA, FAO, IUCN, ACTED, C&D, OXFAM, COPACSO, and RiamiRiam.

Over the course of this last DRRAP phase, REGLAP in Uganda has worked on the following four objectives:

1. To influence the on-going Rangeland Management Policy development process to ensure that the key concerns of pastoral/dryland communities are addressed.

Activities implemented under this objective include facilitating community consultations in Karamoja on the Rangeland Management Policy (RMP), engaging and training parliamentary groups on rangeland/DRR/pastoral concerns, and supporting targeted policy reviews of the RMP and the Pastoral Code.

Following the decision by the Government of Uganda to integrate a Pastoralism Policy into the RMP, REGLAP will continue to monitor this development and input into the process to lobby for pastoral issue to be adequately addressed.

2. To influence and support national and local authorities in implementing and operationalizing the National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management.

The work under this objective has focused on three main areas: institutionalizing the Drought Early Warning System (DEWS) at national government level, institutionalizing the livestock disease surveillance (LDS) work that our partners support in Karamoja, and integrating DRR concepts into the Lower Secondary Curriculum. For the DEWS, after many meetings and a national consultative workshop, it was agreed that the Ministry for Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF) would be the ministry to take over the management of the system. REGLAP is now advocating that MAAIF will need both budgetary and personnel, which will be catered for under new projects the Ministry is creating for pastoral areas.

The LDS institutionalization, similarly, is taking place at MAAIF. REGLAP has successfully advocat-
ed for increased support to LDS at local, regional and national level through MAAIF’s new projects in the region. Support to district animal health staff, district and regional laboratories, continued training for staff, and to growing threats such as the tsetse fly and its impact on livestock, will be addressed.

Over the past year, REGLAP has been working with the National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC), which is currently re-writing and re-designing a new lower secondary curriculum (S1-S4) to fulfill their mandate as per the National Policy on Disaster Preparedness and Management, and mainstream DRR into their curriculum. In turn, NCDC is integrating DRR into the science and social studies learning areas. Together with UNISDR, REGLAP trained NCDC curriculum specialists in DRR themes and supported them in the curriculum development process.

3. Facilitating participation of dryland communities in the various processes surrounding regional frameworks on resilience in the drylands (IGAD/AU).

Over the past two years, the Horn of Africa countries have seen a rise in support to regional programmes that are aiming to increase investment and development interventions in arid and semi-arid environments that are prone to drought, most notably the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI). Not only has REGLAP attended regional level meetings to help shape IDDRSI and the Country Programming Papers that have been developed in each country, they have also supported consultations with communities, local government and civil society on IDDRSI and Uganda’s CPP. REGLAP continues to monitor the IDDRSI process in Uganda.

Additionally, REGLAP also supported the Eastern African Regional Pastoralist Symposium, which brought together pastoralists, CSOs, academia, government policy makers, government technical officials, and development partners from South Sudan, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. The Symposium sought to increase pastoralists’ knowledge about regional and continental frameworks, programmes and institutions that impact their livelihood, and how best they can utilize them to seek solutions to the challenges faced by pastoral communities.

4. Harmonise the natural resource management statutory (government) and customary/traditional structures for water governance and rangeland management.

This objective has centered on generating lessons from the piloting of a participatory rangeland planning tool that helps plan and manage rangeland resources that are central to mobile livestock production systems. Implemented by IUCN, 3 rangeland resources management institutions have been established in the parishes of Mogoth, Naponga and Koya in the districts of Moroto, Kotido and Abim respectively. These institutions incorporate traditional and statutory structures and are being recognized within the community and district local government structures. The lessons learned from this experience will be shared at both local and national levels to advocate for the importance of utilizing customary and traditional structures for natural resource management.

UNISDR
Providing policy and technical support to DRR actors

UNISDR, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Secretariat of the United Nations, works as the focal point in the United Nations System for disaster risk reduction. Pursuant to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-1999), the UN General Assembly adopted the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) in 1999 and established UNISDR as its secretariat. UNISDR is also tasked to coordinate the implementation of the ‘Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-15’ (HFA), which is the international blueprint on disaster risk reduction that was adopted by 168 countries in 2005. In essence, UNISDR provides policy and technical support to disaster risk reduction actors as well as strengthening systems for their effective coordination.

Most recently, the ‘UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience’ was endorsed by the UN’s Chief Executive Board for Coordination. UNISDR will be ensuring its implementation, including coordinating the efforts of programmes and specialised agencies of the United Nations.
In Uganda, UNISDR primarily works with partners in the Office of the Prime Minister, sectoral ministries and local governments.

**Key Result Areas**

UNISDR has been working closely with the African Union, Regional Economic Communities and national governments, to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Africa Regional Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction.

In Uganda, the following actions and results have been achieved, with financial support from the European Commission's Directorate General, Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), under each of the five HFA priority areas:

**Priority 1: Making Disaster Risk Reduction a Priority through strong institutional basis for implementation**

- **Institutional and Legal Frameworks for DRR:**
  With UNISDR support, the East African Community (EAC), where Uganda is a Member State, successfully endorsed a Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Strategy. Subsequently, Uganda conducted public hearing for the EAC Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Bill which would soon be ratified by the East African Legislative Assembly. UNISDR has supported the mainstreaming of DRR in Uganda's National Disaster Preparedness and Management Policy, which decentralizes responsibilities down to the village level.

- **National Platform for DRR:**
  UNISDR has developed guidelines and a toolkit for the establishment of National Platforms on disaster risk reduction. As many as 38 countries in Africa have a National Platform or equivalent coordination mechanism for disaster risk reduction. In Uganda, the National Platform for DRR was established in 2003 with the support of UNISDR. The multi-sectoral Platform is anchored in the Office of the Prime Minister/Department of Disaster Management and Refugees, with membership from government, the UN, NGOs, civil society and the private sector. The National Platform also acts as the National Disaster Management Technical Working Group. The Platform has clear terms of reference and meetings are held on a monthly basis to guide disaster preparedness and management strategies.

**Priority 2: Know Risks and Take Action**

- **Risk Information System:**
  UNISDR has supported the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in the development of a national disaster loss database, which is modelled on the global risk information platform called DesInventar. It is a useful tool for capturing disaster losses and for documenting disasters in the country and serves as a low-cost, high impact strategy for visualizing risk patterns. The DesInventar database is regularly updated and plans are in place to build the capacity of partners to utilize the reports and for the public to access the website. Information on other hazards is available on the OPM website.

- **Early Warning Systems are in Place:**
  Weather forecasts are regularly updated by the Department of Meteorology, with information disseminated on a monthly basis via emails and publications. UNISDR has supported the establishment of six weather stations in the Karamoja region. A sub-committee on early warning systems has been established under the DRR platform, with the media and the Directorate of Information and National Guidance creating public awareness and disseminating information on weather projections.

**Priority 3: Build a Culture of Safety and Resilience**

- **International Day for Disaster Reduction:**
  UNISDR builds up the momentum for advocacy on disaster risk reduction through the International Day for Disaster Reduction, started in 1989 with the approval by the United Nations General Assembly. Celebrated on 13 October, UNISDR initiated the ‘Step-Up’ approach to focus on a vulnerable community every year. In 2013, the focus is on people living with disabilities.

- **Integration of DRR into Relevant Sectors:**
  In partnership with Dan Church Aid, UNISDR have supported the Ministry of Education-National Curriculum Development Center to integrate DRR into the lower Secondary Schools Curriculum that is being developed. The Ministry of Education is conducting a review of school curriculum, under which it will consider including disaster management in the primary school curriculum. Some educational institutions, especially at the tertiary level, have started to include course units and subjects on disaster management. Training on integration of DRR into lower secondary level curriculum have been conducted in partnership with UNISDR.

Access to information is critical to successful disaster risk management. You cannot manage what you cannot measure.

*Margareta Wahlström, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction*
Similarly, UNISDR, in partnership with the World Health Organisation supported the integration of disaster risk reduction into the health sector in Uganda.

**Priority 4: Reduce Underlying Risk Factors**

- **Integration of DRR into Development:** Through policy and coordination support, UNISDR has been making steady attempts to integrate disaster risk reduction into regular development activities. Development partners are expected to utilise the available risk information to plan and target activities, ensuring that development initiatives are ‘risk-informed and risk-smart’, and at the same time, ensuring that the normal development activities do not lead to accumulation of risks.

**Priority 5: Be Prepared and Ready to Act**

- **Disaster Preparedness Plans and Contingency Plans in Place:** It is essential to have preparedness measures in place to address possible disaster events. Hence, UNISDR has developed principles on contingency planning with the involvement of relevant stakeholders and resource mapping has been carried out by different partners. Training on contingency planning has been conducted in all districts in Karamoja and Acholi sub-regions, with sample plans developed for Moroto and Napak districts, ready for replication to other districts in the region.

Disaster Risk Reduction is a comprehensive concept and practice to prevent disasters or mitigate disaster losses. The HFA has brought in a paradigm shift, altering the focus from reactive crises management to proactive disaster risk management, which is not only effective in saving lives and livelihoods but also has proven to be economically more efficient than humanitarian responses. Since the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action, Uganda has been regularly reporting to UNISDR on the progresses made in implementation of the framework in the country.

For additional information on UNISDR activities, visit [www.unisdr.org/africa](http://www.unisdr.org/africa).
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