



THE GROUP APPROACH STRATEGY TO ENHANCE FARMER ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Send a Cow Uganda (SACU) shared experiences about their approach of farmer groups as a strategy to enhance farmer entrepreneurship.

SACU is a registered development Non-Governmental Organization founded on Christian principles and affiliated to Send a Cow - UK. SACU deliberately focuses on marginalized groups in communities such as women, orphaned and vulnerable children and people with disability. The organization works with self-reliant and sustainable groups which are supported to clearly articulate their development demands. SACU has also set clear selection criteria for groups and clear understanding of the partnership, roles and responsibilities to avoid dependency from the onset.

To SACU, a group means a number of organised people who mutually come together for a common purpose. SACU's experience is that Community Based Organizations (CBOs) can serve the interest of more community members who may not be members of the CBO. SACU facilitates the development and support of groups as opposed to working with individuals or whole communities because from experience, groups are a more effective way of working and easily form cohesive supportive bonds that enhance sustainability of projects. In SACU's approach, groups are mandated to be autonomous, self-governing, have a constitution governing them and be able to make their own decisions. Groups are registered which gives them a legal status. The group approach also enables peer support through individual to individual follow up within the group hence promoting sustainability.

Group members consist of farmer entrepreneurs. They have jointly handled income generating activities such as agro forestry, organic farming and rearing of livestock. Working in a group has enabled farmers to market collectively and link them to other service providers (financial services and extension services). In addition, the approach has also fostered collaboration with the local government.

Savings that have been pooled are ploughed into other income generating activities. *"Passing on the Gift"* - a multiplier effect programme, has touched and transformed the lives of over two hundred and forty thousand people even after SACU has weaned off the groups after they reach the "maturity stage".

Lydia Jjemba is a beneficiary of SACU whose testimony echoed the benefits and advantages of this approach. She manages a milk vending project for her group and runs several projects. She has a dairy project where she earns a profit of six thousand Uganda shillings daily in addition to a piggery and chicken project. She earns approximately nine million Uganda shillings from these projects. She testified that her skills in leadership and public speech have improved tremendously due to exposure and interacting with the group.

Quote; *"Sometimes opportunities come dressed as challenges and if one does not seize them, they will slip away. I seized mine which was lack of food" Lydia Jjemba said.*

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Lydia Jjemba: a Send A Cow Uganda beneficiary giving her testimony.

However, the groups are at times marred by issues such as internal conflicts, political interference, minimal adherence to their constitutions and corruption. Value chain development and management has not yet been addressed sufficiently leading to low levels of diversification and value addition.

Participants agreed that it is crucial for farmers to be part of a group as long as group members gather voluntarily and do share a common economic interest.

The following were suggested as means of up scaling and improving the group approach.

- Continuous innovative approaches and new strategies for the group on how to maintain and/or improve their activities
- Trainings and regular meetings of the groups are crucial.
- Planning and continuous monitoring and evaluation by the members.
- Building and maintaining trust and good leadership.
- Having clear set standards and procedures of operation
- Having clear policies that can be adapted, implemented and reviewed
- Ensuring transparent, rotational leadership and succession planning
- Have a functional group constitution

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