

External Final Evaluation of Support to Quality Assurance for Fish Marketing Project in Uganda



The government of Iceland, through ICEIDA, has been supporting the government of Uganda in efforts focused on quality assurance for fish marketing since 2001. Under the “Support to Quality Assurance for Fish Marketing Project (2009-2014)” the development objective (goal) was to reduce poverty and improve the livelihoods of fish dependent communities in districts around Lake Albert and Lake Kyoga. The independent external final evaluation of QAFMP was commissioned between March and May 2017. The purpose was to assess the performance of the project, take stock of its achievements in the project area, and build knowledge from lessons learned for evidence-based decision-making on future similar programming and investments. This evaluation brief provides highlights of the key evaluation findings and conclusions on project successes, failures and key lessons.

Evaluation undertaken and brief prepared by Green Star International with Dr. Pascal Odoch as team leader

The QAFMP was implemented in Uganda’s 12 districts, four districts around lake Albert (Ntoroko, Hoi-ma, Buliisa and Nebbi districts), and eight districts around lake Kyoga (Buyende, Soroti, Serere, Apac, Amolatar, Nakasongola, Kayunga and Kaberamaido districts). The project was supported by ICEIDA and implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF)-Department or currently Directorate of Fisheries Resources (DFR). The project utilised a total of 6.5 million US dollars (of which 5.6 million US dollars was contributed by ICEIDA) to deliver benefits to the target population of 52,400 (2014) in the project area.



Women drying Silver Fish, Sebagoro FHS

The Evaluation of the Support to QAFMP was commissioned in March and completed in June 2017. The evaluation acknowledged and documented efforts of partners over the project implementation period from 2009-2014, assessed results achieved (outputs, outcome, impact) and their sustainability, and how the project addressed the crosscutting issues of gender equality and environmental sustainability. It investigated the technical, financial and managerial factors that affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the project. It also assessed factors required at the community and higher levels to improve operation and maintenance of the improved infrastructure so that their functionality and service can be sustained.

Overall, **the final evaluation established that the implementation and performance of QAFMP was successful, to a satisfactory degree**, as demonstrated by the key findings based on OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, and on addressing of crosscutting issues of gender equality and environmental sustainability. This project evaluation brief presents highlights of key findings and conclusions in the main evaluation report which is available on-line.

Key conclusion 1: QAFMP was highly relevant to partners’ priorities and the project addressed the needs of target beneficiaries.

At bilateral level, the intersection of Uganda and Iceland’s policy frameworks converged on the prioritisation of reducing poverty and improving the livelihood of the poor population dependent on the fisheries natural resource. The project was relevant and in line with Uganda’s successive development planning frameworks, that is, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (2004/05-2007/2008), the first National Development Plan (2010/11-2014/15) and the second National Development Plan (2015/16-2019/20), agriculture sector development plan, fisheries subsector policy priorities, and decentralisation policy framework governing beneficiary local governments.



Fish laid on weighing platform, at Akampala improved fish handling site on Lake Kyoga, Kaberamaido district.

At the institutional beneficiary level, the QAFMP was based on formal request by Government of Uganda (MAAIF/DFR) to address the institutional and human capacity development needs at DFR and District Local Government level to improve service delivery in fish quality assurance, inspection and certification services as a means to ultimately address the needs of the fish-dependent communities.

At the community beneficiary level, the artisanal fisher groups and their families along the shoreline and the fish dependent communities in the immediate hinterland of the improved landing sites benefited from the project through: improved knowledge and skills for fish handling, access to fish handling facilities and water and sanitation for household use, and access to quality assurance, inspection and certification services by fish Inspectors.

Key conclusion 2: QAFMP was, to a satisfactory degree, efficient and effective in achieving key results of the project (outputs and outcomes).

The project deployed inputs and implemented activities that resulted in the delivery of planned outputs. Where the outputs were assessed as not sufficient to achieve the outcome, revisions were made after the mid-term review by adding extra outputs or deepening the scope of original outputs. Project outputs were achieved and some targets were exceeded:

- The planned capacity building for local fisheries management (“BMUs”) and awareness creation

through sensitisation campaigns were delivered at community level focusing on fish handling, quality assurance and effective use of water and sanitation (“WASH”) facilities and services.

- The planned infrastructure, consisting of clean water and sanitation for fish handling (12 facilities) and for community use (11 facilities) was developed. In addition, specific infrastructure and facilities, which responded to emerging needs that were included in the project, such as the fish market at Panyimur in Nebbi district (counted among 12), and development of 11 facilities for small fish processing (silver fish or *Mukene*) responding to the needs of women. Women are mainly involved in post-harvest fish processing and trading in dry fish (especially small fish species) while men specialise in fishing and sale of fresh fish to the fish trucks. Men thus benefited more from earlier infrastructure and facilities that were designed for handling fresh fish for the export market.

- The planned capacity building outputs at institutional level at DFR and Local Governments were delivered. These covered the renovation and equipping of fisheries inspectors’ office at national level, construction and equipping of 10 district fisheries offices at district level, production of fish inspection and quality assurance manuals, establishment of fish inspection data bases, and skills training for fisheries staff in fish quality assurance, inspection and certification services.

At project outcome level, the achievement of QAFMP was assessed as satisfactory, notwithstanding concerns about non-functionality of some infrastructure delivered. **The principal project outcome was reduced post-harvest loss of catch leading to increased volume and value of fish marketed in the project areas.** The performance against the outcome indicators considered was established as highlighted below:

- The evaluation found that there was significant increase in the prices of fish in project sites from baseline, and most importantly in comparison with the increase in prices in control sites. Prices of Nile Perch increased by 131% in project sites from baseline in comparison with 56% in control sites; prices of Tilapia increased by 95% from baseline in project sites and in comparison, with increase in price of 67% in control sites, while the price of *Mukene* increased by 197% from baseline in project sites and in comparison, with increase in price of 158% in control sites. **The comparison of changes in prices of fish between project sites and control sites presents a strong case of attribution of results to project interventions** because it rules out the alternative cause argument of inflation and declining fish supply since they affect both. Besides, the better prices of fish cushioned the fishing communities against the effects of declining fish catches for reasons outside the control of the project.

- Generally, there was a percentage decline in the volume of captured fish marketed but it was less pronounced at project improved fish handling sites compared to control sites. For example, the volume of Nile Perch decreased by 6% from baseline in project sites, compared to 11% in control sites.

- The improved infrastructure developed under the project have the potential to reach the target population, that is, 69.3% of the population or 36,171 people engaged in fishing, fish handling and fish marketing value chain, while the water and sanitation facilities have capacity to reach the entire population of 52,422. However, **there was a limitation arising from non-functionality of the facilities- only**



Stacks of Silver Fish Bags, Panyimur Market

50% of the facilities for fish handling and 45% of the facilities for community use were functional at the time of evaluation.

- The population with access to markets and market information increased significantly over the QAFMP period. In project sites, 69.3% were engaged in fish related marketing activity compared to 37% in the control sites; 73% of sold fish catch to fish buying trucks in project sites compared to 22% in the control sites. On the other hand, 49% accessed fish market information in 2016 compared to 13% at baseline (2009). Fisher groups with knowledge of prevailing fish market prices increased to 79% (2016) up from 43% at baseline (2009).

Key conclusion 3: Project achieved, to a satisfactory degree, the intended impact in the project areas.

The evaluation established that the project contributed measurable and perceived impact in the project area. The performance of the project measured against the three impact indicators considered was assessed as follows:

The Project contributed to increased incomes of men and women in the project area as reflected in better savings, and application of funds earned in alternative income generating activities, especially by women.

The report shows that **there was significant improvement in other livelihood indices**, derived from sustainable livelihood approach (SLA). Literacy rates in the project area were assessed as 75.4% (with females recording high literacy rate at 86.3% with males at 64.4%), compared to 66.3% (with males at 62.6% and females at 69.9%) in the control sites. The baseline average literacy rate for the original 9 project districts was established at 63%. In project area, 70% of the respondents reported accessing health services from their nearest facilities compared to the baseline figure of 64%. On food security, the households who ate three meals a day declined from 56.2% in 2009 to 32% in 2016. In the control area, the percentage was much lower, those who ate three meals a day stood at only 16.3%. This general decline was understandable as Uganda was experiencing food scarcity on account of rising food inflation occasioned by poor December 2016 harvests, and this food shortage continued into the first quarter of 2017 when the evaluation was conducted.

Finally, the report shows that **majority of the population (66%) perceived improvements in their livelihoods from baseline in project areas compared to 34% who did not.**

Key conclusion 4: Project addressed, to a satisfactory degree,

Key Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: Investments in infrastructure development require a strong in-built O&M mechanism for sustainability of functionality and service delivery.

This should cover clarity of ownership of investments, management and institutional responsibilities on O&M modalities, provide for partnerships with organisations having comparative advantage in appropriate business models; financial management arrangement with provisions for escrow accounts to ringfence the funds for intended O&M purpose.

Lesson 2: Projects that target elevating socio-economic status of women should make them an integral part of the intervention

The QAFMP implemented an affirmative action on women empowerment through targeting the silver fish value chain development (drying racks) and relevant phyto-sanitary skills training, which cemented the woman's position within commercial fish value chain.

Key lesson 3: Projects which are relevant to partners' priorities and respond to beneficiaries felt needs are more likely to succeed.

QAMP was highly appreciated by beneficiaries which translated into spin-offs to other unintended income ventures such as women boat and fish gear ownership, cash crop (cotton) production, and other mainstream merchandise businesses.

the crosscutting issues of gender equality and environmental sustainability.

The issues addressed were as follows:

The project capacity development interventions emphasised participation of at least a third of females in accordance with Uganda's constitutional principles on gender equality, except where there were gender inequalities for personnel in approved public-sector posts.

The installation of technology/facilities for processing silver fish (*Mukene*) and other small fish where women are nested was added as an extra output/indicator to address the particular needs of women.

The introduction of extended water and sanitation for community use was a deliberate intervention to increase access to improved WASH facilities and services, and more specifically respond to the needs of women and the girl child that carry the burden of fetching water, hence reducing time poverty.

The reduction in post-harvest loss decreased the need for smoking fish thus lessening the pressure on forests for firewood.

The development of all infrastructure supported was approved after Environment Impact Assessments were conducted and cleared by designated authorities.

It suffices to add that the inclusion of HIV/AIDS interventions in training modules addressed an important crosscutting issue relevant to especially fishing villages in Uganda.

Key conclusion 5: Sustainability of the outcomes and impacts of QAFMP was a concern, largely because of gaps in the O&M of infrastructure that was established.

The major concern was in the arrangements established for operation and maintenance of the project infrastructure, which was found as not appropriate. The community based management model that was established was not adequate as it was suitable only for point water supply systems like spring wells, boreholes and shallow wells. **The piped water supply system required a more**

robust operation and maintenance (O&M) mechanism defining the service authority, scheme operator, business service delivery model, financing arrangements of piped water supply scheme, which are already operating in the country.

Overall Conclusion: The implementation of QAFMP was successful and its performance was assessed as satisfactory, notwithstanding concerns on sustainability of outcomes that can be corrected as recommended.

The project was highly relevant to partners' priorities and addressed the needs of the immediate beneficiaries at institutional level and the primary or ultimate beneficiaries at community level, and it was environmentally friendly, socially acceptable by both men and women, and was politically well received and supported at national and sub-national levels. In terms of efficiency and effectiveness, QAFMP delivered the planned outputs, which to a greater extent achieved the expected outcome of improved fish value that cushioned the fishers, as volume did not improve. The project deliberately empowered women through support to the silver fish infrastructure improvement, especially construction of drying racks, which raised their profile as a dominant force in silver fish trade, with some progressive women acquiring boats and fishing gears to directly engage in fishing that has traditionally been a male-dominated trade. The installation of clean water and sanitation facilities to the village compound was a genuine affirmative action for women, especially the girl child, as it reduced their burden of travelling long distances to fetch water, hence reducing on time poverty. Ultimately, the project contributed to improved household livelihoods and community well-being. Much more could have been achieved if appropriate O&M mechanisms were established with the centre-local service delivery mandates and allowing partnership with private sector and civil society entities that have comparative advantages in O&M business model application.



Woman Trader Drying Silver Fish

Key Recommendations

1. *The partners led by ICEIDA, in collaboration with beneficiary districts and the relevant sector Ministries, should revisit and address the weaknesses in the operation and maintenance of the infrastructure developed under the project, which should be considered as an outstanding issue in the project exit strategy; to restore the facilities to full functionality and subsequently hand-over the vital piped water systems to the relevant service authority in line with the Ministry of Water and Environment institutional arrangements for managing such schemes in major urban areas by National Water and Sewerage Corporation, and in rural areas and small towns by UMBRELLA public company, using a business model.*

2. *In future programme or project support, partnership frameworks that involve public sector, civil society organisations and the private sector should be built to leverage resources and expertise for efficient and effective execution as well as sustainability of interventions.*