

# Strengthening rural institutions

## GRANT RESULTS SHEET



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The **goal** was to bring about a sustainable **rural transformation** process by strengthening the **institutional infrastructure** for integrated natural resource management, food security and poverty alleviation

## Goal and objectives

The programme, referred to as the Strengthening Rural Institutions (SRI) project, was implemented by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) Eastern and Southern Africa Region from 2011 to 2014.

The project aimed to bring about a sustainable rural transformation process by strengthening the “institutional infrastructure” for integrated natural resource management, food security and poverty alleviation in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

The project’s main goal was to support grassroots organizations to meaningfully participate in governance processes where their livelihoods and well-being, and the environment, are at stake, with an emphasis on enabling poor rural households to aggregate, mobilize and access rural services.

The project had the following objectives:

- Enhance the capacity of grassroots institutions and provide support to harness broader collective action for rural service delivery
- Improve enterprise development within the context of conservation, and community-level asset accumulation
- Build a regional institutional platform for knowledge-sharing, scaling up and representation/participation in sustainable land management policymaking and development processes in East Africa.

## Beneficiaries

The project mostly benefited farmer organizations made up of rural households, including women and marginalized groups. About 65 farmer groups (approximately 2,300 households) benefited directly from project activities, and 519 farmer groups benefited indirectly. The 65 farmer groups were directly involved in capacity assessment and capacity-building activities, while the remaining 519 groups were only surveyed at an initial stage. However, many more groups benefited indirectly as the project set up local steering committees that facilitated the transfer of knowledge and best practices emerging from the project to all groups in their areas, including the groups that were not directly targeted by the capacity-building activities funded by the SRI project.

## Main results

Findings from an independent external review carried out in August 2014 show that the project provided substantial support to smallholder organizations in the context of organizational development. Institutions in the three countries have benefited from the participatory action research approach of the project. For example, the IFAD target group in Embu and Bungoma (Kenya) benefited extensively from the capacity development initiatives, which resulted in improved organizational capacity, increased group cohesiveness and improved linkages among farmer groups and local government institutions. These improvements led to better market access and returns due to adoption of bulk marketing, increased knowledge dissemination among groups and improved dairy and horticultural production. In Uganda, the target groups integrated gender-specific aspects of the training provided by the SRI project, which brought about changes in entrenched cultural norms. In Tanzania, lending capacity among the savings and credit groups (SACCOs) to community members improved, as did household investments in high-value assets such as land (1-7 acres bought), cattle dip, cow sheds, storage facilities, water tanks, biogas plants and water canals. Women's participation in income-generating activities also increased, resulting in a higher contribution to household income.

The project was lauded for its efforts to ensure gender-inclusiveness as well as for its results in improving partnership between several public offices and civil society institutions at the local level. The steering committees set up by the project and made up of local actors with responsibilities in rural development provided a platform for knowledge dissemination among farmer groups, especially in the domains of technology adoption and sustainable land management practices, resulting in increased agricultural production and food security.

The following quantitative results were captured by the external review:

- 61 per cent of the groups started new income-generating activities (e.g. sale of agricultural produce, enterprise development) and adopted cost-saving technologies (e.g. zero grazing) and new farm, livestock and business management practices.
- 25 per cent of the groups had accumulated high-value assets (e.g. land, cattle dip, water tanks, biogas plants, milk coolers).
- Up to 53 per cent of the groups had achieved between 75 per cent and 100 per cent of their planned overall targets.
- 55 per cent indicated improvements in trust, cohesion, transparency and conflict management through their adoption of better governance mechanisms.
- 70 per cent indicated a 40 per cent increase in membership, as well as increased participation of young farmers and vulnerable individual farmers.
- 70 per cent improved their market access by engaging in various activities with partners (e.g. contract marketing, milk value-addition and joint input-purchasing).

The project was able to accomplish its objectives by introducing a practical model that involves farmer organizations, the government and other stakeholders in the entire agricultural supply value chain. The model provides a methodology to map, analyse, strengthen and monitor the capacity of smallholder organizations through a participatory approach and appropriate training.



## Facts at a glance

### Grant implementing agency

World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)

### Theme

Institutional stability, community development, knowledge management, microenterprise support and policy dialogue

### Benefiting countries

Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

### Total programme cost

US\$1,871,000

IFAD contribution: US\$1,500,000

Cofinancing (other donors):

US\$371,000

### Partners

Selian Agricultural Research Institute (SARI), Australian Landcare Network (ALN), Kapchorwa District Landcare Chapter (KADLACC)

### Effectiveness and duration

December 2010 – December 2014

### Linkages to IFAD investment projects

- In **Kenya**: Smallholder Horticulture Marketing Programme (SHOMAP); Smallholder Dairy Commercialization Programme (SDCP); Mount Kenya East Pilot Project (MKEPP, later scaled up to Upper Tana Natural Resource Management Project (UTaNRM))
- In **Tanzania**: Agricultural Sector Development Programme (ASDP)
- In **Uganda**: District Livelihood Support Programme (DLSP)

## Lessons learned

The project set out to enhance the capacity of grassroots institutions and provide support to harness broader collective action for rural service delivery. Lessons learned include the following:

- There is need to integrate a multidimensional perspective, including the development of institutional and organizational skills in agricultural systems. Community development is not only about investments in technologies but also about improving institutional infrastructure to effectively address the needs of the rural poor, who constitute the primary actors of agricultural systems.
- Involving stakeholders and target groups from project design to implementation is very important to enhance the project's impact and sustainability. The project's participatory approach translated into increased ownership and impact. The capacity-building enabled the groups to identify whom to link with. Therefore, government extension can integrate its agenda with the priorities of the farmer groups.
- Constant feedback between project sponsors at IFAD, project staff, implementers and the target groups is important to increase impact.
- Joint facilitation of activities led to the development of deep relationships and partnerships in which communities are at the centre of the development process. However, better synchronization of grant activities with loan projects through written agreements would have eased coordination between the SRI and IFAD projects.
- Working with various actors within the steering committee – set up by the SRI project to run operations on each of the six project sites – is very beneficial as it supports linkages and brainstorming opportunities and avenues for supporting farmer initiatives. The steering committee remains a relevant entity even after the SRI project phased out.
- Success of this project was enhanced by the fact that it was building on what the farmers and other stakeholders already had on the ground. This increased ownership and the degree of sustainability.
- The project demonstrated the need for all development projects to include both research and development agendas, and that the participatory approaches can identify the local gaps that need to be filled and built into the global picture.



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Farmers in Bungoma (Kenya)

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## Way forward

The project has developed a number of knowledge products, including manuals that are suitable for development practitioners in the field. It is currently developing a software to perform maturity analysis of a large number of farmer groups. Demand for these products is high, as witnessed by two IFAD supervision missions, from IFAD projects inside and outside the SRI project area as well as from the private sector. In order to achieve greater impact, the ICRAF team will need to develop a dissemination plan to reach out to wider audiences. In this regard, the team will work further on the knowledge products, adapting them to a development-practitioner audience and simplifying the language to suit different users.

The ICRAF team will continue to nurture the good relationships built with local stakeholders in order to apply the model in IFAD projects as well as with IFAD partners and other development practitioners in the countries where the project had already set up stable multistakeholder mechanisms (such as the steering committees).

## Knowledge generated

The project generated several knowledge products, including: the model (which is the overarching guiding paper documenting the entire graduation process); one policy brief; two hands-on manuals for practitioners (Capacity Needs Assessment Manual and Rural Facilitators Manual for Strengthening Rural Institutions); two analysis frameworks (Enterprise development framework and a Platform development framework and manual); several journal papers; posters, brochures and fliers for wider dissemination; and contributions to the IFAD Policy and Technical Advisory Division Toolkit on Strengthening smallholder institutions and organizations.

All project knowledge products can be downloaded from  
<http://www.worldagroforestry.org/project/sri/outputs>

IFAD-specific knowledge products developed in cooperation with the SRI team can be downloaded from [https://www.ifad.org/topic/institutions/overview/tags/knowledge\\_notes](https://www.ifad.org/topic/institutions/overview/tags/knowledge_notes)



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