



*Promotion of Sustainable Family Farming and
Social Economy for a Fairer World (2017-2021)*

**Final evaluation of Mpanga Super Farmers
Program in Uganda**

Final report

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AE	Agroecology
BD	Broederlijk Delen
DGD	Directorate-General for Development
FGD	Focus group discussion
FI	Farm innovator
GAP	Good agriculture practices
HH	Household
IdP	Iles de Paix
IFP	Integrated farm plan / planning
JESE	Joint Effort for Sustainable Environment
JFW	Join for Water
KI	Key informant
KRC	Kabarole Research & Resource Centre
LG	Local government
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries
MCP	Micro Catchment Plan
MMU	Mountains of the Moon University
MSFP	Mpanga Super Farmers Program
MTE	Mid-term evaluation
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organisation
NGO	Non-government organization
PAR	Participatory action research
PELUM	Participatory Ecological Land Use Management
PHH	Post harvest handling
PICS	Purdue Increased Crop Storage
RCA	The Association of Rwenzori Community
SATNET	Sustainable Agriculture Trainers Network
S/C	Subcounty
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
VLIR	Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad
WUR	Wageningen University and Research

Executive summary

Co-funded by the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) and implemented by Iles de Paix (IdP) together with local partners, the Mpanga Super Farmers Program (MSFP) aimed to reinforce the economic, social and environmental performance of family farmers in the Mpanga catchment in Western Uganda. MSFP started in July 2017 for a total duration of 4.5 years. It directly targeted 600 family farmers in Karangura and Kabambiro subcounties. The objective of this final external evaluation was to account for the results achieved and draw lessons for future interventions. Data was collected at different levels (beneficiary households, farmer groups, local government leaders and staff, implementing and collaborating partners, IdP in-country and headquarter staff, other development partners, etc.) and through different methods (focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, direct observation and document review).

Quality of the project strategy and design

Needs assessment – The choice of the country, geographical area and priority needs to be addressed followed a robust process. Very early in the formulation of the programme, IdP was able to spot potential partnerships and synergies, both from an operational and logistical point of view. What was partly lacking was a detailed and documented value chain analysis for some of the main crops (maize and banana).

Project strategy – MSFP sought to address some of the core problems facing smallholder farmers that were identified during the design phase. The project filled a gap in terms of access to agricultural extension services. In both target areas, optimising the use of the small available agricultural areas appears essential, and agroecological practices can largely contribute to this, thus making the promoted farming methods quite relevant. Building the planning skills of family farmers was also of high relevance. The project's intensive approach and the proximity of service provided by the field team was one of its main strengths. The design of MSFP was probably a little too ambitious, especially as regards the lobbying and advocacy work on agricultural policies. MSFP alignment with national agricultural policy appeared difficult due to contradictory visions (sustainable family farming vs. commercial conventional agriculture).

Activities & implementation methods – There is an overall high level of satisfaction of targeted farmers on the type of activities, with a special mention for trainings and exposure visits. The integrated farm planning (IFP) approach was a key factor of success of MSFP. It encourages collaboration at household level, helps develop longer-term vision and diversify farmers' activities, and it is a first steps towards their stronger integration. Participatory action research (PAR) was a good way to address specific technical issues while promoting agroecological transition by crossing farmer know-how with scientific knowledge.

MSFP promoted solutions that are adapted to the specific context of Kabambiro and Karangura, and use local knowledge and resources. Most of the introduced agricultural innovations proved to be relevant to the needs and capacities of farmers, but there are several pending questions around some of the technical choices (e.g. promotion of maize-beans in pure stands), and the central role of animals in agroecological production systems was somewhat overlooked in the definition of the project and at its start. In the absence of data on beneficiary households' socio-economic profiles (i.e. farmer typology), it is difficult to ascertain whether introduced innovations were appropriate to the different categories of family farms. The knowledge dissemination method was based on 60 "farm innovators" (FIs) who had to train the fellow farmers of their respective groups on IFP, and then follow up. While most FIs did play their part, the method had some weaknesses in terms of the facilitation skills of FIs and a risk of over-investing in FIs vis-à-vis other families.

Building the capacities of implementing partners' staff was an essential prerequisite for the success of MSFP's innovative methods. IdP adopted a needs-driven approach to staff training and used quality external resources. Taking advantage of the flexibility offered by the DGD format of proposal, the management team was able to adjust the project according to the

opportunities and constraints observed in the field, without losing the overall coherence of the project. MSFP had no specific activities targeted at women, but the project can be described as gender sensitive in that it has sought to reduce gender inequalities within households and has introduced a number of group activities in which women are usually the main actors, such as village savings and loan associations (VSLAs). By definition, the promotion of agroecological practices implies the integration of a strong environmental dimension in the project. MSFP design took into account the proximity of the Rwenzori National Park in Karangura and the presence of buffer zones to protect the banks of the Mpanga River and its tributaries, and the issues related to people's access to firewood and timber.

Targeting & coverage – The choice of selecting two hotspots in different parts of the watershed (upstream for Karangura and downstream for Kabambiro) was relevant, particularly for the purpose of replicating in areas sharing similar agroecological features. The targeting scale (subcounty) corresponds perfectly to the approach proposed by IdP. However, the poor financial situation of local governments affects their capacity to take an active part in projects such as MSFP. In addition, the coverage was low (20% of households in the 14 villages targeted in Karangura, and 12% of the total number of villages of Kabambiro). There were no reported complaints or tensions in targeted communities as a result of the self-selection of beneficiaries.

Project results and impacts: achievement levels and influencing factors

Planned vs. achieved activities – MSFP monitoring and reporting tools did not allow for an integrated, updated overview of achievements at activity level. MSFP start-up was relatively slow, but progress was very rapid following the first trainings and exposure visits on IFP and agroecological practices. Covid-19 restrictions and other main operational issues (in particular the termination of the partnership with SATNET in Karangura) were properly handled and had limited effects on the continuation of activities.

MSFP successfully introduced IFP to the beneficiaries, even though budgeting, resource mobilization and financial literacy could have received more attention. In both target areas, the PAR process was completed, with the notable exception of the full dissemination of results to producers due to delays by the National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO) in analysing and compiling them (partly because of Covid-19 and frequent travel/meeting restrictions). Using different knowledge transfer methods, including group training sessions, exchange learning visits, individual follow-up visits and demonstration plots, MSFP covered a wide range of topics on sustainable farming. Capacity building was complemented by the provision of farming inputs and equipment. Particular mention must be made of the quality with which the tree planting activity was carried out, which resulted in very high survival rates of the planted trees. The provision of improved drying materials (tarpaulins) on a cost sharing arrangement was a basic but highly efficient action to reduce post-harvest losses.

The efforts required to strengthen the productive capacities of beneficiary farmers limited the progress of other activities, notably the ones on marketing. The VSLA activity was implemented in a very professional manner, with rapid results in terms of adoption of the operating rules by group members. VSLAs were a critical structure used to deliver the project socio-economic objectives. The regular meetings were used as platforms for disseminating useful project information by the project teams and FIs.

Result 1 – Regarding IFP, the quasi-individualised support given to producers by the Field Officers has enabled real progress to be made, notably to motivate farmers to develop their farms so that they become profitable and sustainable. MSFP created a mind shift from conventional to sustainable farming methods. In addition, the effective application of agroecological and other good agricultural practices has resulted in an improved quality and quantity of agricultural produce. Apart from crop yield gains, which are impressive, farmers were increasingly interested in planting and maintaining trees in and around their plots. While the project has made significant contribution to conservation of both soil and water for farm

production, climate change remains a key risk, as illustrated by the effects of drought in 2020 in Kabambiro.

Result 2 – The project clearly increased producers' knowledge of crop storage, processing and marketing. However, while marketing opportunities are readily available for maize in Kamwenge District, the collective marketing of farmers' produce in Kabambiro has not yet really taken off. The project supported establishment of a maize mill but access to electricity remained a challenge. In Karangura only a handful of coffee farmers sold their produce to the local indigenous cooperative, Karangura Peak. Yet, the cooperative had access to external markets and would offer extension services to complement or continue the good work of MSFP. The project made some effort to link farmer groups to some buyers but overall, less success was achieved. In particular, matoke (plantain banana) from Karangura did not receive any value addition and thus farmers continue to sell off their bunches at very low prices.

Result 3 – In both Karangura and Kabambiro, VSLAs met regularly. The groups allowed people to save money, borrow some of it at a modest interest rate and then earn lumpsum money at the end of twelve months. Loan repayment rates were high. A relatively immediate and clear result of VSLAs on group members was to increase their capacities to bridge food and other urgent gaps by using their loans. As a consequence, beneficiary households have less recourse to short-term strategies such as the sale of standing or premature crops. However, this VSLA support has not yet led to an increased access to a wider range of financial services that could allow farmers to substantially invest in agricultural activities or related businesses.

Result 4 – Except for the very local level – that of the targeted family farmers and subcounties – MSFP has implemented few advocacy activities, partly due to Covid-19 restrictions on meetings. The most concrete ones was the organisation or participation in regional events such as food and indigenous seed fairs, and Farmer Field Days, which made it possible to broaden a bit the target beyond the 600 direct beneficiaries. Overall, MSFP had a limited influence on political decision-makers to promote sustainable family farming and agroecology at policy level, even at a regional level. While the project invested heavily in action research with NARO, and a number of innovative findings extracted, publication, replication and further experimentation were not done or were delayed.

Result 5 – Regarding implementing partners' capacities, it is unnecessary to comment on the progress made by SATNET and too early to assess the progress of RCA. Regarding JESE, it is clear that its capacity in promoting sustainable family farming was clearly strengthened on both operational and organisational aspects.

Project outcome and impacts – Testimonies from beneficiaries attest to the effects of agricultural production gains and development of home gardens on household food security, increased food consumption, diet diversification and generation of income from sale of the excess produce. MSFP supported beneficiary households to engage in economic activities that boosted their incomes and savings. The households used the money to buy items and assets – both productive and non-productive. This includes livestock especially chicken, goats, pigs, and sometimes cows as well as land. Some beneficiaries also managed to improve their housing.

One of the greatest contributions of the project has been the growth of human capital of the households. The entire model of the project was built on learning to acquire skills, new knowledge and a new mindset. It is difficult to conclude at this stage on the impacts of the project on the diversification of livelihoods. According to data from annual evaluation surveys, engagement in business has grown in both project areas. One of the strongest pillars of MSFP was mobilisation and grouping of beneficiaries into VSLAs, thus leading to greater financial inclusion. The MSFP impacted women beneficiaries economically, socially and psychologically primarily by improving their income levels and ensuring their participation in project management and leadership, especially within their VSLAs. The adoption of kitchen gardens, energy-saving cooking stoves and better drying platforms benefitted women the most. Through

group work, VSLA meetings and interactions between FIs and other beneficiary farmers, MSFP has led to growth in social capital and inclusion.

The agroecological approach of the project has played a key role in the proper management of water, land and plant resources in targeted areas. Some of the planted trees will provide firewood and timber, thus reducing the exploitation of forest resources. There has been reduced soil erosion and thus the fertility of the land in the project areas has significantly improved. MSFP also contributed to raise awareness of the negative effects of agrochemicals on both the environment and health, and demonstrated that more sustainable alternatives exist. The adoption of energy-saving cooking stoves improved significantly in both project areas, with likely long-term positive effects on environmental protection. The project supported the restoration and protection of the river banks through planting of trees and the formulation of specific bylaws. However, the project operated only in a small geographical area, implying that damage would still be done on the rivers in the non-project areas. The slow progress of the project to develop micro-catchment management plans, supported by Join For Water (JFW), limited the concrete results in terms of sustainable management of natural resources by local actors in Karangura and Kabambiro.

Participation, sustainability and potential for replication

Involvement of family farmers – IFP and PAR approaches call for an active involvement of beneficiary farmers in the different stages of programme implementation. Beneficiary farmers now value a lot more all the support they can get to build their knowledge and skills than the delivery of inputs or other types of material support. The focus on a family farm approach (vs. working with individual – often male – farmers) allows for collective participation at household level which improves ownership of interventions.

Replication of sustainable farming practices – The resolutely participatory approach of MSFP, with a significant proportion of the innovations promoted coming from the family farmers themselves and/or drawing from local practices, has enabled a very good appropriation of the principles of agroecology. Agroecological practices, which are low-cost and optimise local resources, ensure a certain level of financial and economic sustainability from the outset. However, concentration on a small number of households in a subcounty raises questions as to whether a sufficient critical mass of change agents in sustainable farming has been built. Good work has been done in the project area but in the non-project areas, destructive activities such as river sand mining, stone extraction, and deforestation among others still take place.

Group dynamics & collective actions – As regards the various groups created during the project, the evaluators observed relatively good internal dynamics, partly due to the intensive support provided by the field staff. Collective actions that already bring or are likely to bring a fairly immediate economic gain, such as VSLAs or joint marketing associations, will have a better chance of being sustained. The role of FIs and VSLAs in the target communities is likely to continue. Whether FIs will evolve to become lasting change agents is a subject of time. To guarantee this, proper training and a robust exit strategy would be worth thinking about.

Implementing partners – Knowledge transfer and capacity building of the local partners have been the subject of particular attention. JESE staff now have a clear understanding of the different approaches and methods developed during the project, including agroecological principles, IFP and PAR. RCA will need continued capacity building during the second phase of the project.

Institutional sustainability – There was a fair level of interest of subcounty leaders and technical teams in project activities and the promotion of sustainable family farming. However, local authorities clearly lack the financial and material resources to sustain these results and fully engaged in agriculture development and environment preservation. Interaction between the project and government technical staff at District level was found to be limited. It is unlikely that the District local government or other key government institutions will be willing to integrate MSFP intervention model in their agriculture or rural development programmes. Without external financial support from projects similar to the MSFP, spontaneous replication of

agroecological practices or other project innovations (such as VSLAs) is uncertain, even at a limited geographical scale.

Main strengths and weaknesses in project management

Project means & management method – IdP maintained a lean team in office and empowered its partners to make decisions and be in charge of their activities. Monthly planning meetings, involving programme managers and field staff, allowed for reflection on the relevance and delivery of each activity and ensured greater participation of field staff in planning. Reliance on expert human resources was critical to the delivery of the project. There was stability in the field teams that were deployed, allowing for continuity throughout the program duration. IdP and its partners have taken good advantage of the flexibility allowed by DGD by adopting a simple but effective project management strategy: build on what works and abandon what does not. In terms of human resources, this “agile” management method has resulted in appropriate adjustments to the changing needs.

Partnerships, synergies & coordination – IdP was able to leverage from JESE’s extensive local knowledge, mobilization process, subject matter expertise, goodwill and local networks. Positive synergies also took place between the different local partners (e.g. JESE-NARO). The decision to terminate the partnership with SATNET due to financial mismanagement was communicated to DGD on a timely manner and IdP managed this complex situation quite well. There was limited structural, long-term collaboration between MSFP and government institutions besides the involvement of NARO in PAR and the good relationships maintained with subcounty authorities and technical teams. The planned synergies with JFW, other Belgian or local organisations did not fully materialize. However, the strong lobbying by IDP, BD and other Belgian NGOs led to a greater focus on smallholder farmers in next bilateral cooperation programmes.

Monitoring & evaluation – In spite of the identification of relevant progress markers and a sound strategy to monitor them on an annual basis, the project lacked a robust information management system to compare achievements against targets at a lower level of the results chain, namely activities and outputs. IdP did not have a designated staff in charge of M&E and therefore consolidation of incoming information from the various partners was not done. Outsourcing of annual evaluations allowed the production of informative reports both in terms of quantitative and qualitative data.. The annual evaluation reports lacked a longitudinal approach to analytics which would have generated useful econometric model to guide decision making.

Lessons learnt and good practices

Assessment of needs and partnerships – (i) The various project identification and design documents pointed to high malnutrition rates in the intervention areas. It would have been necessary to better characterize the type of malnutrition and its causes, in order to better define an adequate response. (ii) The experience with SATNET demonstrates that partnerships are always risky. The close working relationship between IdP and its partners has enabled a relatively quick response and is in itself a risk control mechanism..

Potential of MSFP development approach and associated risks – (i) With IFP as a central component of the project, both implementers and beneficiaries develop activities based on experience and lessons learnt on a regular basis. The emphasis on the IFP model where beneficiaries experiment with innovations on their own farms implies that the project must have a good extension system, which was the case with MSFP. (ii) The project intensive design requires effective coordination if it is to be implemented in areas where other players exist. If not, beneficiaries may fail to afford the required intensity. (iii) For the IdP model to work, there has to be very low employee turnover, and where it occurs, proper succession planning and management has to be done. (iv) The cultural homogeneity of the households in both Karangura and Kabambiro seems to have played a role in the adoption of the project interventions. A more careful approach may be a key consideration in geographical areas where people are diverse.

Innovations and their adoption by target groups – (i) Innovations succeed when the beneficiaries live in proximity with each other to allow for cross learning. PAR worked well in part because all beneficiaries had access to each other’s farms. VSLAs seem a strong instrument for keeping members together, and support to strengthen these associations would ensure continuity in the adoption of sustainable farming practices. (ii) Continuous proximity to technical people helps alleviate errors in time and to keep people on track. Presence of MSFP staff fulltime in the field helped them to identify challenges and solutions in real time. (iii) The Covid-19 pandemic and the difficulties it imposed have certainly reinforced the awareness of farmers on the limitations of the conventional production system and created a larger basis for the adoption of agroecological practices.

Knowledge transfer and learning process – (i) FIs constituted a strong pillar for delivery of project results. Those who remained active until the end of the project served as fulltime resident trainers helping the project team to cement new found knowledge. (ii) In the target areas, schools gather children and teachers from different communities and therefore appear to be a good vehicle for disseminating the message on sustainable farming and environmental protection practices during next programme phases, with focus on areas such as kitchen gardening, tree planting and nutrition. (iii) The project was built on learning, and its structure supported regular information sharing within the implementation team but also with beneficiaries. This, together with linkages with external stakeholders (buyers, local authorities, successful farmers, etc.) helped beneficiaries move away from practices that were unsustainable to agroecological practices.

Overall assessment by criteria

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Performance level</i>	<i>Key findings</i>
1/ Project objectives, strategy and activities are relevant to the needs and capacities of farming families in the Mpanga watershed	Highly satisfactory	Project informed by clear analysis of needs and context MSFP activities covered the priority needs of local farmers Project flexibility and adaptation to the changing needs of beneficiaries Success factors: intensive extension work and proximity of services of Field Officers; combination of integrated farm planning (IFP) and participatory action research (PAR) Geographical targeting in line with the project intensive approach Lack of data on beneficiary profiles to know which innovations were appropriate to which categories of family farms
2/ The project has strengthened the economic, social and environmental performance of family farmers in the Mpanga watershed	Satisfactory	Overall good level of achievement, especially under R1 (farm productivity), R3 (access to credit) and R5 (capacity building of partners) Effective application of agroecological and other good agricultural practices resulted in an improved quality and quantity of produce (R1) VSLAs particularly effective in bringing farmers together to save money and get loans, but no access of supported farmer groups to wider financial services for farm or value chain investments (R3) Little progress on value addition and market access at a collective level (R2) Small coverage, few advocacy activities (under R4) and no guarantee that MSFP results will be disseminated (but first project in the country and context of Covid-19 restrictions)

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Performance level</i>	<i>Key findings</i>
3/ The project resources and management allowed the expected results to be achieved in an optimal way	Moderately satisfactory	<p>Skilled and experienced implementation team</p> <p>Resource intensive design implying small geographical areas coverage when resources are not plentiful</p> <p>Partnership model leveraged on existing expertise and capacity to deliver the project; it supported capacity building for local organisations; allowed for flexibility and learning throughout the years; but regular adjustment of project activities requires proactive monitoring, trust and regular accountability</p> <p>Limited structural, long-term collaboration between MSFP and government institutions</p> <p>Operational synergies with Belgian organisations operating in the Rwenzori region less intense than planned</p> <p>No comprehensive monitoring systems that capture data at activity level and provide an integrated overview of achievements</p>
4/ The project benefits – whether they are financial, social or knowledge gains – are likely to last after its closure and to be replicated	Satisfactory	<p>Significant knowledge transfer among beneficiaries through the trainings, PAR activities, IFP and extension services</p> <p>Good ownership of sustainable farming practices and likely continued implementation by targeted farmers; but total number of beneficiaries likely to be insufficient to spread them to non-beneficiary households and villages</p> <p>Good internal dynamics within farmer groups supported by MSFP; collective actions with a fairly immediate economic gain, such as VSLAs or joint marketing associations, will have a better chance of being sustained</p> <p>Good ownership of the principles of agroecology by the local authorities of both sub-counties, but critical issue of funding, which seriously undermines institutional sustainability</p> <p>JESE now well equipped to take over similar agroecological transition projects</p>
5/ The project has no or limited negative impacts and is likely to have positive impacts, notably in terms of living conditions of the population, natural resources preservation and women empowerment	Highly satisfactory	<p>Improvement in food production, nutrition and health</p> <p>Asset accumulation among beneficiary households, and growth of human capital</p> <p>Positive impact of increased harvests and product quality on prices and farmers' income, but still subject to price fluctuations (lack of collective bargaining & value addition)</p> <p>Significant progress as regards the role of women in financial resource mobilisation, household development planning and community service</p> <p>Direct and visible impacts of tree planting and trenching on the environment; overall improvement in the vegetation cover of the landscape</p> <p>Several other efforts made to protect River Mpanga and its tributaries: local workforce diverted from the mining of sand and stones in the river bed; ongoing process to promote a broader governance framework to the preservation of natural resources in Mpanga catchment</p> <p>Further efforts required to engage the rich people who have capacity to destroy the environment on a bigger scale than local farmers</p>

Recommendations

- 1/ Integrate livestock production as an essential component of the development of sustainable production systems from the outset of projects.
- 2/ Develop value addition and support market access using a market systems development approach.
- 3/ Strengthen the collaboration with Karangura Peak cooperative and their international partners (e.g. Trias), not only on coffee marketing but also on agricultural extension work.
- 4/ Strengthen collective marketing of farm produce through cooperative development and investigate possible ways of cooperation with government in this sector.
- 5/ Refine targeting and provide stronger support to the beneficiaries of alternative income generating activities.
- 6/ Strengthen internal coordination, coherence and cross-learning between implementing partners (need for stronger project coordination unit as more partners get on board and as activities increase).
- 7/ Strengthen the internal monitoring and information management system by putting in place a common tool for all implementing partners to monitor the level of progress of activities, to compare it with the initial targets and to establish the causal links between activities, results and impacts.

1. Introduction

1.1. Agriculture, food security and livelihood context

A land-locked country in East Africa, Uganda produces more food than it consumes. Around two thirds of the population are still directly engaged in agricultural production. Yet, poverty still limits people’s access to nutritious food, especially in rural areas. Major food crops are maize, millet, cassava and sweet potato. Coffee is the country top export-earning crop. The expansion of cash crop activities significantly drives deforestation in Uganda, where around 63% of the country forest cover has been lost from 1990 to 2015 (FAO, 2021)¹.

Located in the centre-west of Uganda, across the districts of Kabarole and Kamwenge, the Mpanga watershed is a predominantly rural area, with agriculture as a main livelihood. The overall development issue in this area can be summarized as follows:

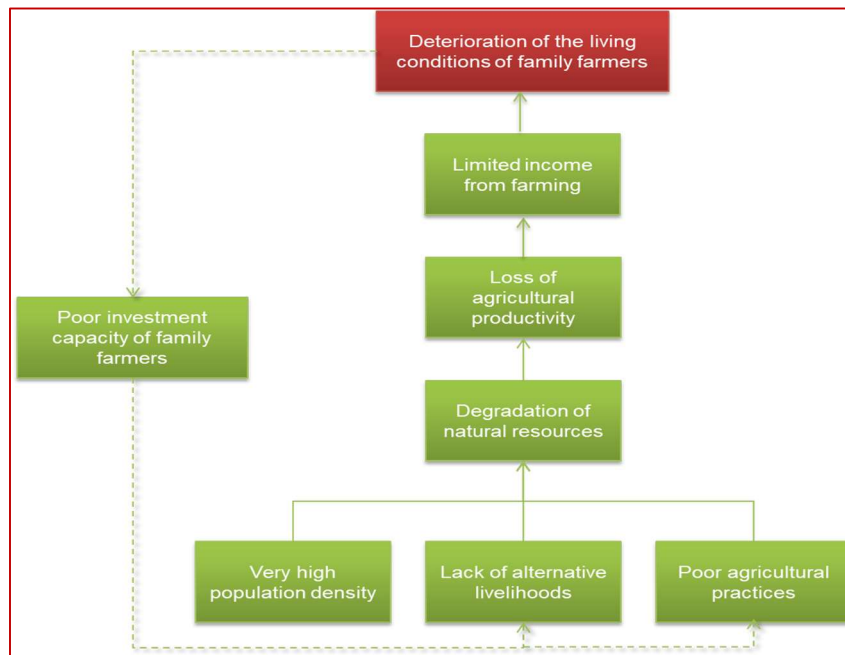


Figure 1. Core development issues in the Mpanga watershed

In Kabarole district, on the slopes of the Rwenzori mountains, the very dense population cannot expand its living space because the Rwenzori is a protected forest. As the population grows rapidly, access to land is becoming scarce. Households have only very small pieces of land, often on steep slopes. Major crops are plantain banana (matoke), coffee, maize, beans and cassava, as well as potato and garlic on the highest lands and steepest slopes. Men also look for casual labour, especially in the quarries where they work extracting sand and manually crushing gravel. Soils are fertile but subject to heavy erosion due to the absence of protective measures. Landslides are frequent and soil moisture quickly depletes during the dry season, thus affecting crop productivity. The area is relatively close to Fort Portal and has significant potential for agricultural development. However, one of the constraints is the collection of agricultural products in these sloping areas which are only accessible on foot. Collective marketing and value addition are also weak, notably for coffee farmers.

Located about 1.5-2 hours’ drive from Fort Portal, further downstream on the Mpanga River, Kamwenge District is hilly and less densely populated. Agro-ecological conditions are however less favourable than in Kabarole district, with a very dry season and less fertile soils. Maize is the predominant crop, often combined with beans. Due to limited access to markets, maize

¹ FAO, 2021. Migration, cash crops and deforestation in Uganda: Relationships and policy options. FAO Agricultural Development Economics Policy briefs, no. 40. Rome.

and other crops fetch very low price. There are very few if no alternative to the individual sale to middlemen, and storage barely takes place. Crop diversification is limited. There are virtually no gardens or orchards, although the area has great potential for these. The expansion of agriculture and deforestation in the Mpanga River catchment (with the conversion of wetlands into sugarcane and eucalyptus plots) poses threats to water resources. The area is also characterised by significant migration patterns.



Picture 1. Landscape of the target areas: Kabambiro (left) and Karangura (right)

1.2. Overview of Mpanga Super Farmers Program

Iles de Paix (IdP) is an international development organization that supports sustainable family farming in the South and raises awareness in the North about the need to foster an alternative global paradigm through the development of sustainable food systems. IdP started its activities in Uganda in 2017.

Co-funded by the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD), the Mpanga Super Farmers Program (MSFP) is part of a larger, 5-year and multi-country program called “Promotion of Sustainable Family Farming and Social Economy for a Fairer World (2017-2021)” and referred to as the SIA program (standing for the 3 Belgian NGOs which implement it: SOS Faim, Iles de Paix and Autre Terre). MSFP has been implemented in two subcounties within Kabarole and Kamwenge districts, namely Karangura and Kabambiro (cf. map in Annex 1). The project started in July 2017 for a total duration of 4.5 years. MSFP beneficiaries include 600 family farmers in the Mpanga watershed (300 in Karangura and 300 in Kabambiro), who received direct support from the project. The intervention logic has five components, each associated with an expected result (R) and can be summarized as follows:

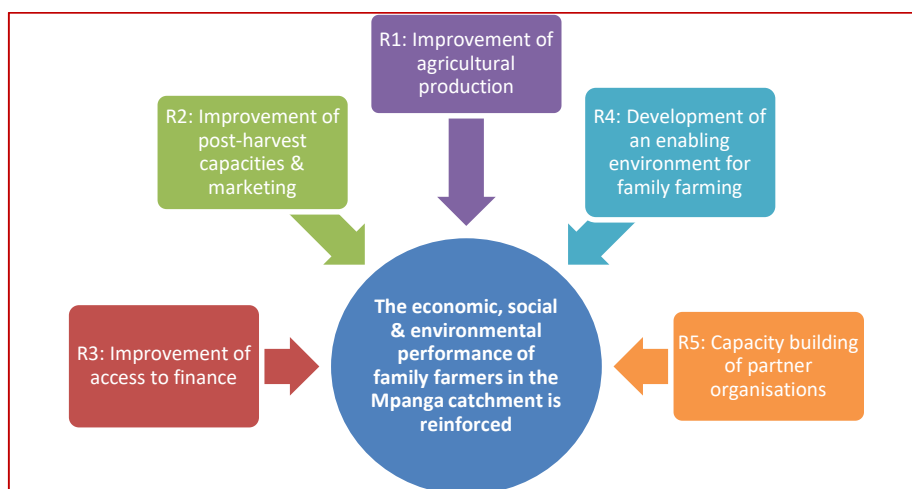


Figure 2. MSFP expected results and objective

Based in the city of Fort Portal in the centre-west of Uganda, MSFP was managed by IdP Country Director with the assistance of a Technical Advisor (up to the end of 2020) and a Finance and Administrative Manager. IdP has partnered with two local organisations which are also committed to supporting peasant farming and promoting a better management of natural resources:

- Joint Efforts to Save the Environment (JESE) is a local NGO established in 1993 implementing a diverse portfolio of projects in the greater Rwenzori region and beyond, including food security, agriculture, livelihoods, natural resources management and water and sanitation. JESE was in charge of implementing MSFP in Kabambiro subcounty. Its MSFP-dedicated team consisted of one Manager (part-time) and initially 2 then 3 Field Officers.
- Sustainable Agriculture Trainers Network (SATNET) is a union of farmer organisations with specific expertise on participatory learning methods for farmers. The partnership with SATNET was terminated mid-2020 due to financial mismanagement. The project activities were initiated by SATNET in Karangura subcounty, then implemented directly by IdP from mid-2020 (with 3 Field Officers previously working with SATNET). In addition, The Association of Rwenzori Community (RCA) was contracted by IdP from May 2021 to implement a small livestock / bee keeping component.

IdP also collaborated with the National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO) to conduct farmer-led research, draw lessons and disseminate good practices. According to the initial project design, other key partners included Join For Water (JFW, formerly known as Protos), BOS+ and Broederlijk Delen (BD), three Belgian NGOs which work in the same region and share a common objective of strengthening the capacities of local partners.

The measurement of the project performance is based on the use of a “progress markers matrix” that reflects evolutions observed for beneficiaries (farmers and implementing partners) in the economic, environmental and social dimensions (cf. Annex 2).

1.3. Objectives and scope of the evaluation

As the project came to an end in December 2021, a final external evaluation was planned to account for the results achieved and draw lessons for future interventions. This evaluation had the following specific objectives:

- Assess the level of achievement and quality of project activities carried out and their contribution to the MSFP expected results and specific objective;
- Assess the degree to which the crosscutting dimensions of gender and environment have been integrated into the MSFP;
- Identify the main difficulties encountered during implementation as well as good practices and activities that could be replicated;
- Propose recommendations for the design and effective implementation of future projects, notably in view of the second phase of MSFP (2022-2026) which will build on MSFP, with an additional emphasis on the promotion of sustainable food systems around Fort Portal.

This evaluation covers the entire project implementation period from the beginning of 2017. In terms of geographical scope, the evaluation has been conducted in both project intervention areas in Mpanga watershed, in the two districts of Kabarole and Kamwenge.

The main users of this evaluation are IdP management (headquarters and country office), MSFP staff, implementing and other local partners (JESE and RCA), the donor (DGD) and the Southern Technical Committee (SIA programme). Some of the evaluation results, such as the findings on peasant action research might also be useful to NARO and other stakeholders in the agriculture sector in Uganda, such as Kabarole Research & Resource Centre (KRC) which has been involved in MSFP annual progress monitoring exercises and will be a partner of IdP in MSFP phase 2.

2. Methodology

2.1. Evaluation team

The evaluation team was composed of two evaluators with complementary expertise: a team leader, Johan Pasquet, a French agro-economist with proven experience in the external evaluation of food security and family farming support projects; a senior associate evaluator, Celestine August Katongole, a Ugandan consultant and entrepreneur, also senior lecturer at Makerere University Business School. Both evaluators had no previous work experience with IdP and MSFP, thus ensuring the neutrality of this evaluation. In the field, evaluators were accompanied by MSFP field staff (in order to introduce them to communities and beneficiaries) as well as experienced translators who speak local languages (one for each target area).

2.2. Evaluation criteria and key questions

The evaluation aims to assess both the quality and performance of the project. To do so, it seeks to answer the standard questions for this type of exercise by analysing the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.² For a common understanding of the criteria and a better appropriation of the evaluation by the project teams and other stakeholders, evaluation criteria were spelled out as follows:

DAC criteria	Criteria used for the purpose of this evaluation
Relevance	Project objectives, strategy and activities are relevant to the needs and capacities of farming families in the Mpanga watershed
Effectiveness	The project has strengthened the economic, social and environmental performance of family farmers in the Mpanga watershed
Efficiency	The project resources and management allowed the expected results to be achieved in an optimal way
Sustainability	The project benefits – whether they are financial, social or knowledge gains – are likely to last after its closure and to be replicated
Impact	The project has no or limited negative impacts and is likely to have positive impacts, notably in terms of living conditions of the population, natural resources preservation and women empowerment

An evaluation matrix has been first developed based on the terms of reference. It has been reviewed and expanded upon at the start of the evaluation process, particularly with regard to data collection tools and information sources. The final version of the evaluation matrix (cf. Annex 3) thus includes a list of key questions, themselves broken down into sub-questions and indicators to measure the quality and performance of the project. Specific questions have been developed to analyse the cross-cutting dimensions of gender and environment.

2.3. Data collection methods and limitations

As much as possible, this evaluation was conducted in a participatory manner for learning purposes. The inception meeting was an opportunity to present and discuss the methodological framework with MSFP implementation team. During data collection, the

² As suggested in the terms of reference, the evaluation did not use the new DAC criteria recently released by OECD.

evaluators sought the largest possible participation of all project stakeholders, for example by taking account of the different types of family farmers and by minimising discrimination based on gender or other socio-economic or cultural factors. This was achieved through participatory facilitation of focus groups but also through a combination of different survey methods (individual or group discussion; formal interview or through field visits). The debriefing session in Fort Portal was an opportunity to share the evaluators' initial analyses with MSFP staff, thereby providing additional information and enhancing ownership of the evaluation results. The presentation following the submission of the draft report helped to clarify and specify some of the observations and statements, and it should also facilitate the appropriation of evaluation findings and recommendations by IdP and JESE management.

During the field mission in the project areas, data was mainly collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) with the members of different types of farmer groups as well as semi-structured interviews with beneficiary households. For crosschecking purpose, this was completed by a direct observation of production, storage, processing and marketing sites (e.g. demo plots, individual or collective equipment for storage or processing, etc.).

Since the inception phase was relatively short, and the inception briefing took place immediately before starting primary data collection in target areas, the evaluators derived data collection tools from the evaluation matrix questions and indicators, which mainly drew from three documents the evaluators received from IdP before reaching Fort Portal: (i) the technical and financial program proposal approved by DGD; (ii) the mid-term evaluation report; (iii) the annual monitoring report on progress indicators.

The evaluators used specific interview guides for each type of stakeholder surveyed. Annex 4 provides the main ones (FGD with farmers, household interview, farm innovator interview, programme management team interview).

The choice of sites to be visited and the activities to be specifically assessed was discussed during the inception briefing in Fort Portal. Considering that MSFP has no consolidated datasets or tables that would provide an overview of implemented activities since project start, the evaluators let both implementing teams (JESE for Kabambiro and IdP for Karangura) arrange field visits and meetings with beneficiaries. The main guidance provided by the evaluators in relation to the selection of the sample of sites to be visited and beneficiaries to be met was to ensure that (i) a large array of project activities can be covered within the limited time spent in each target area (2-3 days) and (ii) different degrees of performance can be assessed (from poor performing farmers or groups to best performing ones).

The evaluation sampling is provided in Annex 5. In total, the evaluators interviewed 28 farmers individually (18 male and 10 female respondents) – including 7 farm innovators (FIs) and 3 non-beneficiaries. A total of 15 FGDs were conducted with MSFP beneficiaries, gathering 184 participants (95 women and 89 men) from different types of groups (farmer/production groups, PAR groups, VSLAs, marketing associations and bio-briquette production groups).

The triangulation of information was done by cross-checking the information collected at different levels (beneficiary households, farmer groups, local government leaders and staff, implementing and collaborating partners, IdP in-country and headquarter staff, other development partners, etc.) and through different methods (focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, direct observation and document review).

The method of data analysis consisted of taking the different sub-questions and indicators from the evaluation matrix, and for each, comparing information from different sources (field surveys and observations, interviews with the project team and other key persons, documentation). For the analysis of some quantitative data, the evaluators also conducted a statistical analysis of the raw data from the annual surveys conducted by KRC, including a comparison of the baseline survey with the latest survey conducted in early 2021.

The evaluation went very well overall. MSFP team made every effort to enable the evaluators to maximise the time spent in the project areas. The whole staff approached the evaluation in

an open and constructive manner. One of the difficulties, for both the evaluators and the project team, was that the assignment started at relatively short notice after the evaluation team was selected. There was therefore little time for preparation and planning. Instead of taking place remotely a couple of days before, the inception briefing had to be organized after the consultants' arrival in Fort Portal, right before going to the field for data collection.

An important constraint for the evaluators was the lack of compiled data on the activities carried out by the project in both areas and for the entire duration of the project. Due to the nature of DGD proposal format, and some gaps in terms of data management at MSFP level (cf. section 3.3.3), there was little information about the actual activities that have been implemented in the ground, and little if no point of comparison with project targets.

Another limitation of the analysis produced in this report concerns the data on project outcomes. Project performance indicators were measured for the last time at the start of 2021, after KRC conducted the annual evaluation campaign. Since quite a lot of activities were implemented during the last year of the project, this annual survey does not capture the actual achievements, gains and gaps as of December 2021.

2.4. Work schedule

The evaluation mission started during the last week of November 2021 and involved 3 phases: an inception phase, a field mission in Uganda and a reporting phase.

The inception phase started with a desk review of the first documents made available to the evaluators, followed by the development of the evaluation matrix. The mission in Western Uganda took place from December 1st till 11th. It started with an inception briefing with MSFP implementation team (IdP, JESE and RCA) which was an opportunity to present the evaluation objectives and methods (including the evaluation matrix), clarify the implementation team's expectations from this evaluation, identify key informants, discuss on the sampling method and agree on the field visit planning for both Kabambiro and Karangura.

The field mission consisted in 6 days (3 days in Kabambiro and 3 days in Karangura) of field visits and interviews/meetings with family farmers, subcounty leaders and technical staff, and the private sector and was completed with 2 days of interviews with the project team and the main partners. This was completed by a debriefing session in Fort Portal with the project staff. Additional interviews were conducted remotely with headquarters staff, including the former Country Director. The list of persons met/interviewed and the detailed mission schedule are provided in Annex 6 and 7 respectively.

Due to the end-of-year holidays, the evaluators were not able to analyse the data immediately after the end of the fieldwork in December 2021. Data analysis and reporting mainly took place in January 2022, and the final version of the report was shared in February 2022

3. Evaluation findings

3.1. Quality of the project strategy and design

3.1.1. Identification and monitoring of needs and context

The choice of the country, geographical area and priority needs to be addressed followed a robust process that was initiated by an initial scoping mission by IdP headquarters in mid-2015. The context and needs analysis was also supported by discussions with other organisations already active in Uganda, including JFW/Protos. This mission resulted in the targeting of densely populated areas in the west of the country, in particular because of the problems linked to the fragmentation of agricultural land, the high rates of poverty and malnutrition observed, the presence of other Belgian organisations with which synergies could be envisaged, and the lesser “pressure” of humanitarian aid compared to the Kamaroja region (considered to be the poorest of the country). The mission also identified a number of local and international development organisations present in Fort Portal or the Rwenzori region, including JESE, KRC, Protos/JFW and BD. Very early in the formulation of the programme, IdP was therefore able to spot potential partnerships and synergies, both from an operational and logistical point of view.

The scoping mission was completed by a comprehensive feasibility study early 2016, including meetings with central level authorities, donors, district authorities, international and local partners, as well as field visits. In addition to some possible areas of intervention, this study also provided an analysis of the various partners, be they local implementing organisations, other Belgian/international organisations with which to seek synergies, or development actors with which to seek inputs for project formulation.

In Kabambiro, particular emphasis was placed on the marketing of maize, an important crop in the region both in terms of food and income. A detailed and documented analysis of this value chain would undoubtedly have been useful, in particular concerning the quantities of maize produced and sold, the local market opportunities for maize seeds and flour, the possible different issues for different socio-economic categories (women, youth, etc.). The same applies for coffee and matoke in Karangura, the two main crops that MSFP supported in this subcounty.

As explained in the following section 3.1.2, the intensive and proximity approach of MSFP allowed for a close, regular monitoring of farmers’ needs from the beginning to the end of the project. Observations made in the farms and villages by the field staff were communicated on a regular basis in the form of team meetings or written reports, allowing the management team to have a good understanding of the changing needs of the project beneficiaries.

3.1.2. Relevance of MSFP strategy to actual needs and capacities

Relevance of MSFP priority areas to family farmers needs and local context

MSFP sought to address some of the core problems facing smallholder farmers that were identified during the design phase: (i) lack of information, poor agricultural practices, low yields and limited income from farming; (ii) degradation of natural resources and productive potential; (iii) poor investment capacities and financial exclusion of family farmers; (iv) lack of markets for family farmer products. In addition, the project filled a gap in terms of access to agricultural extension services, which were completely absent in Kabambiro and limited in scope in Karangura (especially for farms located on uplands).

Building the planning and technical capacities of local farmers has been the first priority since MSFP started and received much attention throughout project implementation. In both project areas, there was virtually no planning at household level, either for crops, other farm activities and livelihoods, food consumption and food stocks, cash flow, savings or investment. This

observation appeared repeatedly and spontaneously in most of the FGDs and household interviews when respondents were asked about the main issues farm households were facing before joining the project. Building the planning skills of family farmers was therefore of high relevance.

On the slopes of the Rwenzori, in Karangura, deforestation was directly observable and there was no anti-erosion protection (no terracing, no planting), as described in the scoping mission report in 2015. In Kabambiro, there is less land pressure, but the area is more arid. The land is less well-watered and less fertile. In both zones, optimising the use of the small available agricultural areas appears essential, and agroecological practices can largely contribute to this, thus making the promoted farming methods quite relevant. As the use of chemical inputs by local producers was limited or non-existent before the start of the project, the introduction of organic alternatives proved all the easier. Producers and local people were not very aware of the health and environmental risks associated with the use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers, so the project came at an opportune moment to raise their awareness of these issues.

Considering the reported nutrition issues in the Western region by the time the project was initiated, improving the nutritional health of children was identified as a priority area of work³. As IdP is not specialised in responses to acute malnutrition, the avenues considered at design stage were the diversification of production, its increase, the development of alternative sources of income, as well as information and awareness-raising activities. The installation of school gardens and the training of teachers was also considered, but ultimately not adopted.

Relevance of IdP's intensive approach and proximity of service

As noted in the mid-term evaluation (MTE) report, IdP's rural development approach focuses on quality and hands-on services, which MSFP has translated into intensive work with a limited but well-defined number of beneficiary farmers in two demarcated intervention zones for a relatively long period (4.5 years). The project teams carried out tailor-made work by following the 600 beneficiary households one by one, especially during the initial step of building farm planning skills. During interviews, MSFP Field Officers pointed out that one of the keys for MSFP success was their proximity to beneficiaries, and the focus on quality over quantity. Field staff were few (average of one field officer for 100 family farmers during the last year of the project) but were locally based⁴ and spent most of their time in the field, thus ensuring a close follow-up and being able to quickly answer to the farmers' needs and difficulties. The coaching and facilitating role they played was critical to the central objective of building the capacities of individual family farmers as well as empowering the various groups supported by MSFP.

Feasibility of the project in the time and with the given means

The evaluators believe that the project was probably a little too ambitious, especially as regards the intermediate change 4 of the theory of change (ToC), "enabling environment for sustainable family farming". As IdP was new to the country, and the approaches promoted through the project were quite innovative, it was unrealistic to think that MSFP, even with the support of local partners, could have much influence on the establishment of favourable policies for sustainable agriculture development within the project timeframe. The range of project activities was also very broad (from production to marketing of agricultural products, including access to credit for producers, advocacy and capacity building of partners), with two areas with very distinct agro-ecological profiles, implying prioritisation of some activities over others.

³ It should be noted, however, that the malnutrition prevalence rate given in the scoping mission report referred to a 2010 source and did not specify whether it was acute or chronic malnutrition, for which the responses are very different. On the basis of the data table provided in the appendix to the report, the combined rate of moderate and severe chronic malnutrition i.e. stunting (38%, identical to the national average) was referred to.

⁴ Karangura is only 25 minutes drive from Fort Portal. MSFP had a sub-office in Kamwenge town, which is 15-20 minutes drive from Kabambiro.

Coherence with sectoral policies and other agriculture development interventions

As demonstrated in the proposal to DGD and MTE report, MSFP design is coherent with key sectoral policies and plans. This includes the Mpanga Catchment Plan and the Rwenzori Regional Framework. With regard to vision and approach, the alignment of a project such as the MSFP with national agricultural policy appeared difficult: while some of the observations and objectives are shared (e.g. need to improve agricultural productivity and increase access to markets), the means of achieving them differ considerably, with the emphasis in the policy promoted by the government on the development of commercial agriculture (agribusiness), leaving a relatively limited space for family farming. On the contrary, the latter is one of the pillars of sustainable food systems as defined by IdP.

3.1.3. Definition of activities and choice of implementation methods

Overall assessment by beneficiaries

All the FGDs and household (HH) interviews conducted show that there is an overall high level of satisfaction of targeted farmers on the type of activities, with a special mention for trainings and exposure visits. Beneficiaries also appreciated both the quality and quantity of inputs/equipment delivered by the project, as well as project implementation modalities. Targeted farmers and communities did not report any specific constraint in embarking in MSFP activities.

Approaches for transitioning to sustainable family farming

The integrated farm planning (IFP) approach was a central component of MSFP. The different types of stakeholders interviewed on this topic (beneficiary farmers, project staff, subcounty teams) all value this approach and consider this was a key factor of success of the project. Interviews thus corroborated some of the main findings of the MTE: (i) IFP encourages collaboration and collective decision-making at household level; (ii) it is a motivational tool which helps develop longer-term horizon for subsistence farmers; (iii) it encourages farmers to think broader and diversify their activities. As we will see in section 3.2.2, IFP was also a good way to introduce the notion of integration of different activities at the farm level, which is one of the main fundamentals of agroecology. IFP approach also proved to be adapted to the capacities of local farmers: it allows households to identify their own needs and solutions (without having to follow a preconceived opinion from above), it follows clear steps, it is suitable to illiterate people and is inclusive of all household members.

One of the key steps of the participatory action research (PAR) is to test potential solutions to the specific problems identified by farmers (e.g. pests, poor performing varieties). This was done by establishing field trials within the targeted communities, where PAR members (a group of about 15 farmers for each selected topic) work together and regularly meet with NARO researchers and MSFP staff. This way of experimenting agriculture practices was particularly innovative in the Ugandan context, where knowledge is usually passed on from experts/researchers to farmers. Crossing farmer know-how with scientific knowledge is one of the core principles of agroecological transition, thus making PAR particularly relevant to MSFP objectives. For farmers to actively participate and learn from the research, the choice of the partner is critical: the MTE considered that NARO, while bringing some scientific legitimacy to the research, initially followed a top-down approach, paying little attention to the participatory learning process and to the cooperation with MSFP field staff. Corrective measures were brought afterwards, notably with the engagement of an additional Field Officer in Kabambiro, with the specific task to supervise PAR activities more closely.

Main technical choices

MSFP promoted solutions that are adapted to the specific context of Kabambiro and Karangura, and use local knowledge and resources. There are multiple examples of this:

- the choice to prioritize indigenous trees (over exotic ones, such as eucalyptus and pines, which grow fast but have negative impacts on soils) and species with multipurpose, including nitrogen fixing;
- the use of local plants to make concoctions for pest management;
- the valorisation of animal manure to improve or restore soil fertility;
- the improvement and expansion of existing practices which reduce runoff and soil erosion by establishing Napier grass strips;
- building on local habits of rotational group sessions and joint labour for the preparation and maintenance of demonstration plots.

Most of the agricultural innovations introduced by MSFP proved to be relevant to the needs and capacities of farmers in Karangura and Kabambiro. However, there are several pending questions around some of the technical choices made by the project, such as the promotion of maize-beans in pure stands, which appears a bit contradictory with agroecological management principles (beans intercropping is usually associated with soil fertility improvement). Moreover, the central role of animals in agro-ecological production systems was somewhat overlooked in the definition of the project and at its start. Yet small livestock would be a key source of inputs into sustainable family farming. Crop-livestock integration became one of the strategic pillars of MSFP intervention in Karangura after RCA took over from SATNET, but this only materialised at the very end of the project (distribution of small livestock and beehives in December 2021). In Kabambiro, the integration of livestock and beekeeping into family farming practices has not been done other than as a pilot during the last months of MSFP.

In the absence of data on beneficiary households' socio-economic profiles at project level, which would make it possible to establish a typology of farms, it is difficult to ascertain whether introduced innovations were appropriate to the different categories of family farms and to their heterogeneous livelihood constraints. During FGDs, farmers themselves acknowledge that there were some “poor performing” households among project beneficiaries. They often attributed poor performance to a lack of motivation. However, this is also certainly due to a number of livelihood constraints, such as the lack of manpower (e.g. among elderly households), which the project has not clearly listed and factored in. One of the features of agroecological practices is that they are often more labour-intensive than conventional ones. In the last annual follow-up campaign, KRC reported that one of the challenges still facing beneficiary farmers was laborious farming techniques, especially for land preparation and planting (e.g. tracing rows and digging holes for plating). In the same report, KRC provided a qualitative description of the main successes and challenges according to levels of performance. Several of the statements are really interesting but may need to be explored further in order to establish the success and failure factors for the different categories of producers, e.g. *“the households performing [well] had animals in their possession before the start of the programme and it was easy to integrate the agroecological practices.”*

Knowledge dissemination methods and advocacy

The methodology put in place to disseminate knowledge within targeted communities, which was based on 60 innovative farmers (“farm innovators” or FIs), was intended to generate a multiplier effect by 2021 among the 540 other families benefiting from the programme in the Karangura and Kabambiro areas. In order to properly train the fellow farmers of their respective groups, FIs should logically have first developed the following knowledge and skills: (i) a strong understanding of IFP and its different steps; (ii) fair facilitation skills; (iii) a good technical knowledge of agro-ecological practices and, above all, the ability to apply them concretely to serve as a model and source of inspiration for other farmers. While interviews with active FIs showed that they met the requirements (i) and (ii) quickly after being trained by MSFP staff, their command of facilitation techniques is shallower and depends more on their background than on the basic training they received from MSFP.

This methodology also meant that the project teams had to concentrate their initial efforts to strengthen planning and technical skills on these 60 FIs, with the potential risk of over-investing in them and creating inequalities in terms of support vis-à-vis the other families, with no guarantee that the FIs would play their role of spreading knowledge. But the dissemination of knowledge was also partly based on the establishment of PAR groups and, more broadly, on spontaneous exchanges within the other farmer groups formed at the beginning of the project. In this respect, FGDs and interview with MSFP staff corroborated one of the findings of the MTE: VSLAs are an important instrument to build trust and strengthen group dynamics among farmers, which in turn have a positive impact on the functioning of other collective actions supported by MSFP, and on knowledge sharing.

The advocacy component of MSFP (under Result 4) was – in its initial design – overly ambitious in terms of geographical scale (local, regional and national level) and targets⁵, knowing that the national context was not very favourable, the agricultural policy and institutions being much supportive of conventional and commercial farming. Moreover, there is still a perception in Uganda and elsewhere that agroecology and livelihood improvement are contradictory. In the face of this, MSFP management team adopted a pragmatic approach, tightening the focus of advocacy around the production of practical evidence generated through small-scale efforts. The first phase of the MSFP did not reach the stage where concrete examples feed into evidence-based, nationwide advocacy, which would nevertheless be somewhat unrealistic after only 4.5 years.

In practice, MSFP advocacy work was confined to a very local level, that of the targeted villages and the subcounties they belong to. MSFP management hoped that the collaboration with NARO, a national agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, would be an indirect way to influence policies and promote agroecological transition.

Capacity building of implementing partners

Considering that sustainable family farming and agroecological practices are relatively new topics in Uganda, and that MSFP methodologies (IFP and PAR) were also quite innovative in the local context, building the capacities of implementing partners' staff was an essential prerequisite for the success of MSFP. In addition, IdP adopted a needs-driven approach to staff capacity building, organising training courses on more general or transversal topics. External resource persons or organisations were involved in order to provide quality training, in different forms (workshops, study tours, etc.) on a wide range of topics.

Adjustment of the project to changes

A number of project activities have significantly evolved since MSFP design and the approval of the technical and financial proposal by DGD. Taking advantage of the flexibility offered by the format of the project proposal (in which activities are not listed and set in stone), the management team was able to adjust the project according to the opportunities and constraints observed in the field, without losing the overall coherence of the project. A good example of this is the implementation of PAR, which was more focused than initially planned. During its initial stage of implementation, problems were identified with farmers and some solutions were proposed based on existing scientific knowledge. The range of PAR topics however became too vast and heavy in terms of follow-up. It was decided to continue the ongoing campaigns and to ensure tighter focus in the selection process of research topics for the next programme.

⁵ According to the proposal to DGD, the project had the following targets: 1/ 2 424 farmer families directly reached by activities of promotion of sustainable family farming based on lessons learned by the program; 2/ 80 marketing associations / cooperatives / producer groups in the Rwenzori region which access the proven practices & lessons learned by the program; 3/ 15 contributions to PELUM advocacy activities (contribution in meetings, contributions in position statement).

Integration of gender issues

MSFP had no specific activities targeted at women, but the project can be described as gender sensitive in that it has sought to reduce gender inequalities within households and has introduced a number of group activities in which women are usually the main actors, such as VSLAs. At the family level, the integrated farm planning approach promotes the participation of different household members – including women and youth – in the planning process. The action plan that results from this process is supposed to take into account the wishes, assets and capacities of each household member, and to assign tasks accordingly. According to HH interviews, this was indeed the case in a majority of beneficiary households. As further explained in section 3.2.3 on project impacts, the implementation of IFP led to positive changes in terms of the involvement of women in decision-making.

During the preparatory work of IFP, the MSFP team in Karangura conducted additional trainings in collaboration with the Rwenzori Women Forum, using the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology – a community-led empowerment methodology that promotes women’s rights and enables household members to negotiate their needs and interests to find innovative, gender-equitable solutions in livelihoods planning and interventions.⁶

Integration of environment issues

By definition, the promotion of agroecological practices implies the integration of a strong environmental dimension in the project. The proximity of the Rwenzori National Park in Karangura and the presence of buffer zones to protect the banks of the Mpanga River and its tributaries in Kabambiro make the planting of trees and the introduction of agroforestry practices by the project all the more relevant, as they allow local people to have access to firewood and construction wood and limit their depletion of the natural forest. With the introduction of bio-briquettes and fuel-efficient cook stoves, MSFP also looked at the sustainable management of wood sources. Access to wood for cooking was a problem in both target areas, and three-stone stoves that people use are very energy intensive.

3.1.4. Targeting and coverage

Geographic focus

The geographic focus on Kabarole and Kamwenge districts was justified and documented as early as the 2015 scoping mission, combining a range of criteria from socio-economic ones (precarious living conditions, low diversification of livelihoods) to technical (good agricultural potential, degradation of natural resources), logistical (access to the area, infrastructure in the main town) and partnership-related criteria (possible synergies with Belgian NGOs and presence of reliable local development organisations).

Considering the heterogeneity of the agroecological conditions in the Mpanga catchment area, the choice of selecting two hotspots in different parts of the watershed (upstream for Karangura and downstream for Kabambiro) was relevant, particularly for the purpose of replicating the models developed in each zone in others with similar features.

Subcounties are the lower local government (LG) level in rural areas. This targeting scale corresponds perfectly to the approach proposed by IdP. In theory, and according to the Ugandan legislation on decentralisation, this is also the right scale for community mobilisation both in defining needs and in participating in local development. In practice, however, the poor financial situation of LGs not only reduces their capacity to integrate communities into local development projects, but also affects the capacity of LGs to respond to community needs, and to take an active part in projects such as MSFP.

⁶ Source : Oxfam www.uganda.oxfam.org/policy_paper/gender-action-learning-system-methodology

Karangura subcounty has 31 villages but the project worked with 14 villages. The 14 villages had 1484 households but the project worked with only 300 households, representing only 20%. Kabambiro subcounty has 31 villages but the project worked in only 4 villages, representing about 12% of the total number of villages. The coverage of the project was therefore low, but this was a choice taken by IdP, which prefers to concentrate its efforts on small clusters of villages, thus avoiding the scattering that characterises other development interventions.

Beneficiary selection

The selection of beneficiaries was done by communities themselves based on criteria agreed with MSFP teams. There were no reported complaints or tensions in targeted communities as a result of beneficiary selection. The self-selection approach seems to have enabled to identify people with the proper “social skills” to act as innovators and group leaders. Most of the FIs met by the evaluators were able to play an active role in the dissemination of innovations, with a few exceptions. It would be interesting to further understand why some FIs performed better than others. This would probably require a more precise profiling of the selected FIs in order to determine the characteristics of their farms (land, labour, capital, etc.) but also of their own educational and social background (level of education, social capital, communication skills, etc.).

3.2. Project results and impacts: achievement levels and influencing factors

3.2.1. Level of completion and efficiency of implementation of planned activities

Overall assessment

As a preamble, it is important to note that the project did not fully use the existing monitoring tools to track achievements. Data has not always been consolidated over the years and across project areas, making it difficult for outsiders (such as external evaluators) to have an overview of the different activities that were carried out since the beginning of the project and their respective levels of achievement. This is clear from the documentation (or lack of it) to which the evaluators had access, and was also acknowledged by MSFP management team, both from IdP and JESE, in interviews. For the purposes of the evaluation, IdP has developed a summary of activities in 2021 in Karangura, but this document only covers the last year and only one of the two project areas.

During the first 6 months of MSFP, the work focused mainly on setting up the field teams, developing the action plan and identifying beneficiaries. As noted in the 2021 moral report to DGD, MSFP start-up was relatively slow. But once beneficiaries were trained on integrated farm planning and exposed to the potential benefits of applying agroecological and other good agriculture practices, progress was really fast – at least as far as the production and post-harvest handling components are concerned.

In 2020-2021, the Covid-19 pandemic brought some extra costs due to the need to split up some activities (to limit the number of participants per meeting), but only had minor effects on the implementation of MSFP on the ground. However, frequent travel/meeting restrictions played a significant role in delaying the dissemination of PAR results, and limited interactions with partners such as PELUM (regarding advocacy work) and Belgian NGOs operating in the Rwenzori region (with whom further synergies were planned). Besides the Covid-19 restrictions, there was another notable operational issues in 2020: and the termination of the partnership with SATNET. These issues, as well as the replacement of IdP Country Director (also acting as MSFP manager) were properly handled (cf. section 3.4) and had limited effects on the continuation of activities.

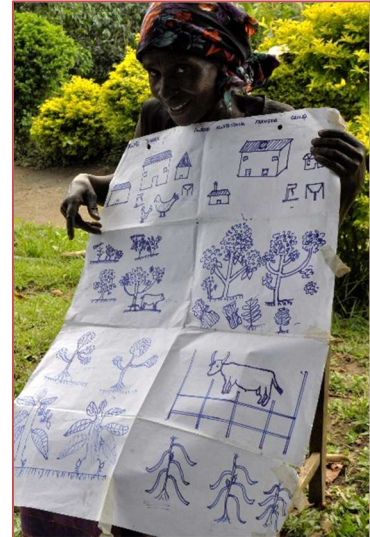
Integrated farm planning (IFP)

In Karangura and Kabambiro, a total of 60 family farms were selected as farm innovators (FIs) by their own communities. They were trained on IFP and “good agricultural practices” (GAP),

and participated in a number of exposure visits outside their village. The MTE report and HQ supervision mission notes attest to rapid changes observed on their farms by the end of 2019, including crop diversification, the adoption of improved cropping methods, the establishment of home gardens, and the preparation and application of farm-made fertilizers and concoctions for pest management.

Each FI was in charge of exposing around 9 fellow farmers from his/her farmer group to IFP and support them to develop their own plans. Even if some of them did not play their role, on the whole the IFP extension process seems to have been successful. Data from the last annual survey by KRC (early 2021) show that there has been a strong increase in the proportion of beneficiary households having a written farm plan, from 6.7% to 37.1% in Karangura and from 2.7% to 51.1% in Kabamiro.

Most plans looked at better housing, improved farming methods, livestock rearing, improved sanitation, child education and income generation among others. While the project successfully introduced IFP to the beneficiaries, the failure to integrate budgeting constrained households from setting realistic targets and from developing proper resource mobilization strategies to implement the plans. In Kabamiro, financial literacy received limited attention yet it is a sound component of economic success of the beneficiaries. For Karangura, a specific officer was appointed to strengthen VSLA groups and support marketing initiatives (this was considered a priority over an M&E officer). Towards the end of the programme, a lot of training on financial literacy was provided.



Picture 2. IFP poster

Participatory action research (PAR)

According to the 2021 moral report to DGP, almost all research trials were already on track by the end of 2020, with only a slight delay for the ecosan trials. In Karangura, 3 PAR groups were established: one on banana, with a focus on banana bacterial wilt prevention and control; one on coffee, comparing different organic pesticides and concoctions to control pest and disease; and one on ecosan manure, to study its impact on coffee and banana productivity. An additional PAR was conducted on bean preservation methods against the common bean bruchid. In Kabamiro, PAR groups were mostly involved in the identification of the most suitable seed varieties for beans and maize, and in comparing different methods for pest and disease management. In both areas, the research process was completed, with the notable exception of the full dissemination of results to producers due to delays by NARO in analysing and compiling them, as well as travel/meeting restrictions related to Covid-19.

Promotion of agroecological and other good agriculture practices

Using different knowledge transfer methods, including group training sessions, exchange learning visits, individual follow-up visits and demonstration plots, MSFP promoted sustainable farming practices and covered a wide range of topics, from basic crop planting and management methods (e.g. row planting of maize, pruning of coffee trees) to more advanced or specific topics (e.g. banana bacterial wilt prevention, passion fruit growing). Capacity building was complemented by the provision of farming inputs and equipment, such as seeds, pruning tools, pick axes, retention plants, etc.

In a bid to improve agricultural productivity on the family farms, the project introduced agronomic practices that improved management of both water and soil on the farm. These practices include application of mulching in the banana gardens, digging of trenches to control surface runoff and retain both water and top soil, application of animal waste in the gardens, as well as planting of specific tree species that helped to hold up the soil, create shed and thus help in soil water retention. Particular mention must be made of the quality with which the tree planting activity was carried out, which resulted in very high survival rates of the planted trees

(certainly above 90% according to the estimates of the Kabambiro field team). During their visits, the evaluators were able to observe trees in very good health and already reaching several metres in height and significant diameters. This success is partly attributable to JESE's strong experience in this field and its links with reliable nurseries and tree seedlings suppliers.

A part from the support provided to improve the management of the main crops, MSFP also strengthened home gardening, linking it to awareness raising on nutritious food and diet diversification. In addition, the project also introduced renewable and efficient energy technologies (provision of fuel-efficient stoves with multiple fire outlets).

In Karangura, in collaboration with RCA, numerous trainings were organised on different livestock options for farmers and related service providers. This was complemented by an entire campaign on livestock housing and management. Small livestock distribution took place late in the project (December 2021) and will require post-distribution monitoring and close follow-up by field staff during phase 2. In Kabambiro, small-scale livestock activities were introduced as pilots, but with already promising results at the level of the targeted households.

Storage, processing and marketing

The development of farmers' post-harvest handling (PHH) capacities was initiated mostly in 2020 and 2021. The introduction of improved storage method using Purdue Improved Crop Storage (PICS) bags⁷ through a collaboration with MMU was not successful in the end. PICS bags were damaged by rodents. The provision of improved drying materials (tarpaulins) on a cost sharing arrangement, together with associated trainings, was a basic but highly efficient action taken by MSFP to reduce post-harvest losses, and this for several of the major crops grown in the target areas. The beneficial effects of crop drying were repeatedly emphasised by the beneficiaries interviewed, particularly for beans and coffee. This has clearly contributed to improve both the quantity and quality of the produce.

The efforts required to strengthen the productive capacities of beneficiary farmers limited the progress of other activities, notably the ones on marketing. As noted in the HQ supervision mission report early 2020, the project has initiated work to better understand the coffee market in the Karangura region and to boost maize marketing in the Kabambiro region, but has not fully, for example, identified specific avenues for marketing quality products.

In Kabambiro, JESE has undertaken some activities in support of maize value chain, including the provision of 4 shelling machines, each one managed by a management committee, with the ultimate objective of facilitating the self-consumption and marketing of maize by MSFP beneficiaries. Mechanised maize shellers can greatly reduce the breakage of maize if compared with manual beating, thus increasing the quantity and quality of produce, which can consequently fetch better price and generate higher income. Mechanised shelling is also less time consuming than manual one. However, the results of this initiative were not conclusive.

A collective marketing association was established in 2019 in Kabambiro with the objective to pool its members' produce and sell maize in bulk to private buyers. MSFP provided training on basic business skills and organised exposure visits for some of its members. Several other steps have been taken including the self-construction of a common building by the group members and the provision of initial capital and equipment by MSFP to establish a maize mill. Further efforts are required (from JESE or other actors) to link Kabambiro farmers to potential local markets.

In Karangura, existing marketing associations were supported by MSFP but there have been limited interactions with private sector actors. Karangura Peak cooperative, which is located in the target area and has a good number of MSFP beneficiaries among its members, was on IdP's radar, but there was hesitation to join and support them. According to IdP, some MSFP

⁷ PICS bags are multi-layer bags that were developed in the 1980s to reduce post-harvest cowpea losses due to bruchid infestations.

farmers reported that Karangura Peak was more of a family business than a real cooperative defending the interests of its members. In early 2021, IdP conducted a rapid assessment of farmers' appreciation of the cooperative. This assessment showed the potential of the cooperative but also identified several challenges, including transparency towards the members. Karangura Peak made a proposal to IdP for funding but the cooperative's expectations proved not very realistic. For these reasons, IdP decided not to collaborate with this cooperative during this first phase of MSFP.⁸

Village savings and loans associations (VSLAs)

VSLA started up in March 2019. The design and implementation of this activity benefited from the strong technical expertise of the previous Country Director, which is reflected in the high level of mastery of the VSLA implementation method and the rapid adoption of the operating rules by group members, as the evaluators were able to observe by attending weekly meetings of some of these groups. In Karangura, one of the 3 Field Officers was specifically in charge of training and supporting VSLA groups, which has led to very rapid progress. The savings groups were fully registered with the local government and several of them held accounts in formal financial institutions where they kept their savings.

VSLAs were a critical structure used to deliver the project socio-economic objectives. The project supported creation of VSLAs and strengthening of existing saving groups to help beneficiaries save money and have access to finance for investment in farming, development projects and other family needs, which they would not access from formal financial institutions. More importantly, VSLAs served as instruments for maintaining group cohesion, building social capital, rotation of group leadership, and the regular meetings were used as platforms for disseminating useful project information by the project teams and farm innovators.

3.2.2. Extent to which activities contributed to the realisation of expected results

In the progress markers matrix, the realisation of each expected result was measured using one or several indicators. These indicators, as well as the planned targets at project completion are listed in the following paragraphs. Where available, the values reached have been mentioned as well. In all cases, we have commented on the achievement of results based on our own observations and investigations.

R1: Family farmers increase and sustain the management and productivity of their farm

Although there has not (yet) been a final survey to measure this, there is every indication that the two R1 indicators have been achieved: 600 farmer families (FF) have adopted one or more sustainable production practices promoted by the programme; 300 FF have adopted the use of integrated farm plans. However, both indicators relate to the management of the farms, not their productivity.

As they have been developed, the IFPs do not constitute a sufficiently precise tool for guiding producer families in the process of transitioning their farms, which involves successive stages of diversification of production and strengthening of interactions between the various components of the production system. The quasi-individualised support given to producers by the Field Officers has nevertheless enabled real progress to be made on Result 1. One of the key achievements of IFP is actually to make farmers proud of their farm activities, let them realise that this is a real occupation (and not just a subsistence activity that one does by default) and motivate them to develop their farms so that they become profitable and sustainable. Although IFPs are not always actionable, they should be seen as a way for farmers to give more value to their farm work, realize that there are linkages/interactions between different

⁸ When Trias (which is more specialised in institutional support to cooperatives) decided to start activities in the Rwenzori, IdP discussed with them the option of supporting Karangura Peak. Thus, from 2022 onwards, the cooperative will be a partner of Trias and IdP will continue to interact with it.

farm activities (with concrete examples of what the concept of integration means), and identify their own way to get into an “asset accumulation” process.

All interviews with beneficiary farmers converge to conclude that MSFP created a mind shift from conventional to sustainable farming methods. In addition, the effective application of agroecological and other good agricultural practices has resulted in an improved quality and quantity of agricultural produce, as already noted in the MTE. In Kabambiro, the introduction of improved planting methods, particularly row planting of maize and beans as opposed to the traditional broadcasting improved farm output. In Karangura, improved banana and coffee management practices led to an increase in the crop yields. The excerpts in Spotlight 1 below reveal that beneficiary households testified to achieving increased production from their gardens. The analysis of some of the raw data from KRC-led annual follow-up surveys support these qualitative findings (cf. Spotlight 2). According to the interviews conducted by the evaluators, the most impressive increases in yields were in bean production, with several testimonies indicating that the new farming practices allowed MSFP beneficiaries to increase their production by 10 times or more.

Spotlight 1. Voices of beneficiaries on farm productivity

“I used to plant badly and lost my seed, planting 8kg and harvesting 10kg of beans. Broadcasting would spoil the garden and crops would rot in the rains. But when JESE came, now we have high yields, over 150kgs from the same area.” Member of an FGD from Rushango Central Farmers Group, Kabambiro.

“... up in the hills, we don’t burn grass anymore. We simply spread the grass in the garden and now production is higher... I would harvest like 20kgs before but now I get over 200kgs. This season I expect about 400kgs of coffee.” Janet, beneficiary farmer in Karangura.

“I used to plant like quarter an acre and get like 20kgs of beans. But now, after the training I get about 100kgs of beans... We used to broadcast maize and beans and many of the seedlings would get spoiled in the garden. Now I planted and got 2 bags [about 300kgs] which I have never harvested before.” Jennifer, beneficiary farmer in Kabambiro.

“We used to fear cultivating on the hills because of erosion but we now grow coffee there because of trenches and tree planting. The coffee there is very green, better than what we have in the lowlands.” Vincent, beneficiary farmer in Karangura.

During FGDs and HH interviews, there was emphasis among the project beneficiaries that compost was helpful in rejuvenating soil fertility. Although it was difficult to ascertain the causal linkage between these practices and the overall productivity of the land, there was evidence that the sustainable soil quality improvement as well as crop and farm water management methods helped in improving productivity of the farms in both intervention areas. As an example, in Karangura, interviewed beneficiaries revealed that when they managed to control surface run-off on the hills, as well as in the banana gardens, coupled with application of better plant management techniques, annual harvests significantly increased.

Apart from crop yield gains, the evaluators found that farmers were increasingly interested in planting and maintaining trees in and around their plots. This was particularly the case in Kabambiro, where farmers value trees much more than before the project. This was reflected in the KRC annual survey in early 2021 by a sharp increase in respondents claiming to grow trees as a livelihood, either for wood or for the fruit they produce: only 1.7% and 2.5% growing respectively wood and fruit trees according to the baseline survey in 2018 compared to 15.2% and 72.2% in early 2021. According to the same datasets, the project seems to have had rather counter-intuitive effects on some of the cropping practices that characterize agroecological systems: in both areas, the proportion of farmers practising intercropping and crop rotations dropped significantly between 2018 and early 2021.



Picture 3. Composting of goat dung and planting nappier grass cuttings in a home garden in Kabambiro



Picture 4. Coffee-banana intercropping in Karangura

While the project has made significant contribution to conservation of both soil and water for farm production, climate change remains a key risk. As an example, in 2020, nearly all farmers in Kabambiro lost their produce to drought (cf. Spotlight 2). A key opportunity is integration of irrigation by use of either river water for the households within proximity to the river or through collection and use of home collected water during rainy seasons. The second option was promoted by MSFP as a pilot during the last year of the project.

Spotlight 2. Evolution of the production levels for some of the main crops according to the last annual follow-up

The baseline data was collected in 2018 and the last annual survey was conducted at the start of 2021:

- In Karangura, there was a statistically significant increase in the volume of coffee produced by the project beneficiaries ($F(1-263) = 14.183, p < .05$). The average quantity of coffee produced per household (in the last 6 months before the survey) increased from 48.8kgs at baseline to 130kgs at last annual survey. Some farmers produced as much as 1500kgs. Similarly, the number of bunches of bananas produced per household significantly increased between baseline and last annual survey ($F(1-279) = 4.828, p < .05$): a household produced an average of 54 bunches at baseline and 112 bunches at last annual survey.
- With regard to maize production from Kabambiro, it was evident that there was a statistically significant decrease in the amount of money that the beneficiaries earned from sale of maize ($F(1-268) = 26.885, p < .05$). The earnings from sale of maize fell from an average of UGX 211,145 at baseline to UGX 32,554 at last annual survey. It should be noted that this decrease in incomes was directly attributed to low yields that resulted from the drought that was experienced in 2020.

R2: Family farmers take informed actions on storage, processing and marketing of their produce

The measurement of R2 was based on two indicators, with the following targets: 600 FF improved their capacities to store, process or market their production; 400 FF improved infrastructure and equipment to store, process or market their production. Whereas MSFP clearly contributed to knowledge building and awareness raising on crop storage, processing and marketing, the objective of improving the related infrastructure/equipment for two thirds of the beneficiaries was certainly not achieved.

According to the last annual survey by KRC (early 2021), in Kabambiro, farmers who stored their crops were mainly using propylene / sisal / jute bags; improved methods such as PICS bags and well-ventilated stores were not in use. PICS bags were still in use in Karangura by the time of the survey, but propylene / sisal / jute bags and sisal bags appeared to be the most widely used technology.

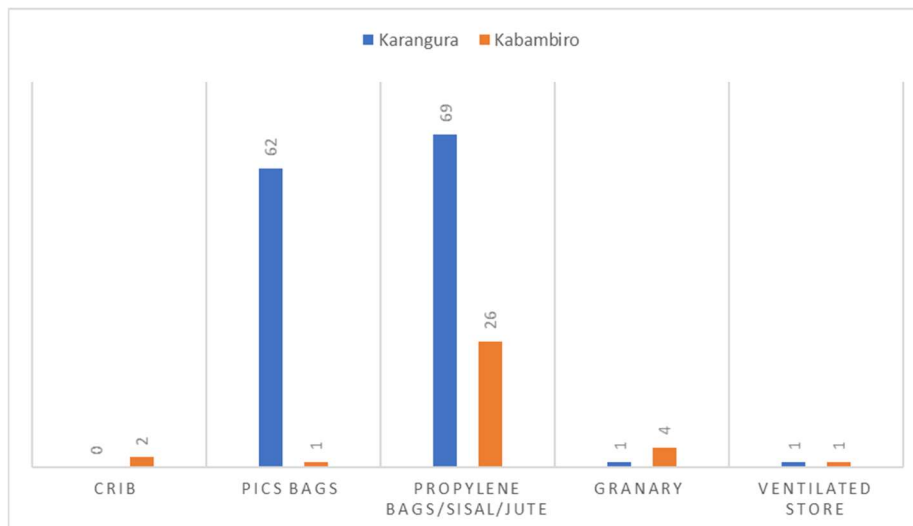


Figure 3. Main storage technologies used by MSFP beneficiaries according to last annual survey (absolute responses)

According to the data from the last annual evaluation, the main source for market information were still the buyers.

Table 1. Main sources of market information for MSFP beneficiaries according to last annual survey

	Frequency	Percent
My farmer group	51	13.6%
Neighbor/friends/relatives	65	17.4%
Crop buyers	161	43.0%
SATNET/JESE extension staff	72	19.3%
Government/other NGOs staff	4	1.1%
An agriculturalist	3	0.8%
Radio	18	4.8%

While marketing opportunities are readily available for maize in Kamwenge District, the collective marketing of farmers' produce in Kabambiro has not yet really taken off. As mentioned in the MTE, there is growing demand for maize in Kamwenge District and private buyers are willing to buy maize directly from MSFP farmers. The interview with the director of New Kakinga Maize Millers' Enterprises Ltd and the visit of the large, modern infrastructures he recently put in place at his factory clearly demonstrated the current expansion of this market. This kind of private buyers seek to increase their suppliers and they look for quality produce. As long as their quality standards are met, they are ready to purchase maize from MSFP farmers at a fair price. However, they still do not value sustainable farming practices.

Beneficiaries produced coffee in Karangura but only a handful of them sold it to the local indigenous coffee cooperative, Karangura Peak. Yet, the cooperative had access to external markets and would offer extension services to complement or continue the good work of MSFP.

Some value addition was done such as improving post-harvest handling but conversion of the produce into finished or semi-finished products was not done. This means that the farmers sold their produce as raw material, attracting low prices. Moreover, perishability of their produce especially of matoke subjected the farmers to the vagaries of price fluctuations. In part, these vulnerabilities were exacerbated by lack of collective bargaining since the newly created marketing associations had no capital to stock produce. By stocking produce, they would offer farmers some part payment to address emergency needs. But because they did not have sufficient capital, farmers had no option but to sell individually. This was particularly common among coffee groups in Karangura and among the maize and beans farmers in Kabambiro.

The project made some effort to link the groups to some buyers but overall, less success was achieved:

- Matoke from Karangura did not receive any value addition and thus farmers sold off their bunches at very low prices, usually defined by traders.
- Products such as potatoes (locally called Irish potatoes), matoke and garlic would have benefitted from being sold in standard measurements but the traders retained discretion of what constituted good measurement. In this way, farmers were often cheated. Where measurements existed, farmers indicated that buyers operated unreliable weighing scales.
- The project supported establishment of a maize mill to add value to maize grain in Kabambiro but access to electricity remained a critical challenge, and the drought limited and slowed down the mobilization of financial resources among farmers. In addition, it appears that the farmers may not have had sufficient entrepreneurial skills to run the enterprise as a business.

The project did not provide sufficient capacity building on entrepreneurship and building of sustainable markets for the varieties of products that the beneficiaries produced. A typical example, in Karangura, was on the failed group that was meant to undertake the bio-briquette business as part of environmental conservation. While the project was profitable, the beneficiaries lacked basic business acumen to thrive.

R3: Family farmers use credit for investment

Under R3, MSFP had two indicators with the following targets: 400 FF access one or more appropriate financial services; 200 FF have borrowed funds for investment in the family farm. The evaluators did not find the corresponding achieved figures in the project documentation, but interviews with beneficiaries showed that a majority of them belonged to a VSLA, and can therefore save money and acquire loans. In both Karangura and Kabambiro, VSLAs met regularly, generally once every week. The groups allowed people to save money, borrow some of it at a modest interest rate and then earn lumpsum money at the end of twelve months. Loan repayment rates were high.

According to the raw data from KRC annual surveys, the proportion of respondents who got a loan/credit in the last 12 months before the survey increased from 52.4% to 78.1%, with a more marked increase in Kabambiro than in Karangura, knowing that Kabambiro certainly started from a lower base than Karangura in terms of access to credit and community savings practices. As regards the use of the loans granted, the observations made on the ground during this evaluation seem to confirm the KRC report of early 2021, which mentioned that the money borrowed (not only from VSLAs but from different sources) was mainly used for medical fees, school fees or topping up on the purchase of land or other assets. The evaluators also found that a relatively immediate and clear result of VSLAs on group members was to increase their capacities to bridge food and other urgent gaps by using their loans. As a consequence, beneficiary households have less recourse to short-term strategies such as the sale of standing or premature crops (and therefore of substandard products fetching lower prices).

Probably due its recent implementation by MSFP (from March 2019 onwards) and the limited number of saving cycles each VSLA has been able to perform by project end (one or two cycles), this VSLA support has not yet led to an increased access to a wider range of financial services that could allow farmers to substantially invest in agricultural activities or related businesses (e.g. food processing). Related to financial management is that whereas the VSLA groups mobilized finances on the one hand, they lacked access to significant finances for tangible investments on the other. Yet, they never allowed to grow their savings beyond 12 months. It would have been expected for these groups to save finances over a longer time so that members have access to bigger resources for their own investments. The groups eroded away a pool of resources that would have been helpful in building strong financial capacity. Although this is inherent in the standard VSLA operating methodology, IdP and its

partners could look into this issue in order to find ways to overcome this short-term “reset” and develop alternatives for longer-term commitments and scaling up.

R4: Favourable environment for sustainable family farming is created

The targets for R4 were: 2424 families were directly reached by activities of promotion of sustainable family farming based on lessons learned by the programme (through Farmer Field Days); 80 marketing associations / cooperatives / producer groups in the Rwenzori region access the proven practices and lessons learned by the programme; 15 contributions to PELUM advocacy activities (meetings, position statements). Except for the very local level – that of the targeted family farmers and subcounties – MSFP has only implemented a few activities to reach R4. At a wider level, the most concrete advocacy activity was the participation of MSFP staff and beneficiaries to food and indigenous seed fairs, in collaboration with PELUM. Even if the Field Days events in which the MSFP team and some of its beneficiaries took part made it possible to broaden the target beyond the 600 direct beneficiaries, the 3 targets above were certainly only partially achieved. It is however worth mentioning that the Covid-19 pandemic put a high pressure on this type of activities as large groups were not allowed to gather.

Overall, MSFP had a limited influence on political decision-makers to promote sustainable family farming and agroecology at policy level, even at a regional level. Besides the government support to conventional farming at national level, another major obstacle to upscale sustainable farming practices in the Rwenzori region is the still very limited development of the organic input market (lack of supply chains and still marginal demand). This is an issue that MSFP team attempted to address in Kamwenge by working with local (conventional) agro-input dealers but eventually dropped due to the difficulty to identify reliable suppliers and the lack of coherence with the promotion of agroecological practices by MSFP (the majority of the products on sale in these agro-input shops were chemicals). The certification of farmer-made concoctions (biopesticides) could be another constraint to their widespread use.

While the project invested heavily in action research with NARO, and a number of innovative findings extracted, publication, replication and further experimentation were not done or were delayed. This means that in the future the same processes may be repeated without building onto the current findings. Furthermore, without pursuit of copyright protection to such innovations, both NARO and IdP are likely to lose valuable resources that would be key in the innovation replication processes.

R5: Partners capacity in promoting sustainable family farming is strengthened

Two performance indicators were drafted in the DGD proposal, both dealing with the progress by partners towards promotion of sustainable family farming, one indicator focusing on operational aspects and the other one on organisational aspects. It is unnecessary to comment on the progress made by SATNET and too early to assess the progress of RCA. Regarding JESE, it is clear that its capacity in promoting sustainable family farming was clearly strengthened on both operational and organisational aspects. The 3 JESE Field Officers – but also the 3 “ex-SATNET” ones – have developed training and coaching skills on innovative approaches for co-creation and extension of agroecological knowledge (through the combination of IFP and PAR) as well as on agroecological principles and their application to the local context.

3.2.3. Contribution to the project outcome and most likely impacts

To measure the economic, social and environmental performance of family farmers, MSFP used three composite indicators (one for each dimension), with a progress point system under 100. According to the last annual evaluation report, the values of the values of these indicators have increased by 15.8 points for economic performance, 18.6 points for social performance and 5.9 points for environment performance if compared with baseline. Most importantly, the

report concluded that MSFP transformed almost half of the family farmers with poor & very poor performance at the start of the programme to average & better performance in 2020.

The economic goals of the project revolved around improving farm productivity and production, post-harvest handling, bottom-up financial resources mobilization, value addition, marketing and market access. The expectation was that these improvements would lead to increased household income, asset accumulation, food security and nutrition, and poverty reduction. The project specifically aimed at achieving positive impacts in terms of living conditions of the targeted beneficiaries, natural resources preservation and women empowerment. The following paragraphs look at these different aspects.

Contribution to household food security

MSFP recursively trained people in sustainable agricultural practices, provided them with improved seeds and farm implements. In particular, the provision of drying materials has considerably reduced post-harvest losses. The result has been increased production of food and other produce for both home consumption and sale. Training in home gardening and awareness-raising about the nutritious foods that households can obtain from their home gardens has also contributed to greater dietary diversification. Testimonies from beneficiaries attest to the effects of agricultural production gains on household food security, increased food consumption, diet diversification and generation of income from sale of the excess produce. The examples in spotlights 2 and 3 below are only a sample of so many MSFP beneficiaries have improved food consumption and are food secure. This is corroborated by the figures from the latest annual survey done by KRC, with the food security progress marker improving in both target areas.

Spotlight 3. Lawrence, the head of a large household who is now food secure

Lawrence is 53 year old and looks after 13 people in his household. Some are kids and others grandchildren. He owns about 3 acres of land and uses 100% of it. He benefitted from training on how to grow matoke and coffee. He also learnt how to plant good trees like *musizi*, not polluting the rivers, trenching, and mulching his gardens. He also learnt how to make his own fertilizer. From the time he put into practice the new knowledge, Lawrence and his family never lack food. The family now has enough food grown at home. They eat matoke, cassava, cassava flour mixed with millet, and vegetables from their kitchen garden. They feel healthy and it's rare to fall sick these days. He also earns money from his garden which he has used to buy a cow, 9 goats and to buy the foodstuffs that he does not grow in his garden. The cow gives him milk which helps to improve their nutrition.

Spotlight 4. The testimony of Mafaranga, an elder from Bwera, Kabambiro

Mafaranga, an old man aged 70 years has small household of 4 people. The family grows maize, beans, bananas, millet and lots of other crops and fruits. He also owns 3 cows and about 6 chickens. His main challenge before the project was small harvests because of poor farming methods. Because of this challenge, he was poor, always living without money and enough food to feed his family. He thanks the project for training his family how to grow and look after crops properly. Mafaranga planted bananas where he harvests food regularly to feed his family. He even sells the extra for money. He also planted vegetables, pawpaw and other fruits which he enjoys. His harvests from maize and beans improved significantly. He earns about UGX 600,000 from produce per season as profit compared to less than UGX 200,000 he used to earn before the project. Recently he fell sick and was put on oxygen in hospital. But he paid the bill with money from his garden. In his own words, "I used to buy matoke from the market but now I eat my own. My people now feed well. Even when we get visitors, we don't get worried about what to cook for them. We really have good nutrition. We eat *dodo*⁹ and see how I look. All of us are healthy. Personally, doctors told me to eat lots of fruits like lemon, and vegetables like cabbages, tomatoes and greens. I grow all of these things and I eat. Our nutrition has improved because my wife grows vegetables. Kids are no longer falling sick".

⁹ Amaranth leaves.

Contribution to household assets building

Assets are an important component of household welfare as they provide the means for achieving resilience to shocks and better livelihoods. MSFP supported beneficiary households to engage in economic activities that boosted their incomes and savings. The households used the money to buy items and assets at household level which they use to improve their lives and health as a pre-requisite to continued work. These assets include clothes, mattresses, saucepans and other non-productive assets. The beneficiaries further invested their earnings to buy livestock especially chicken, goats, pigs, and sometimes cows. This is partly reflected in the data collected in the latest annual survey (early 2021), which indicated an upward trend in the number of livestock per household (cf. Table 2). Some households further invested in acquisition of land, bicycles and motorcycles.

Table 2. Evolution in numbers of livestock kept by MSFP beneficiaries according to last annual survey

Number of livestock kept in the last 12 months		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Pigs	Baseline	81	1.94	1.155	1	7
	2021	76	3.55	3.575	1	19
Goats and sheep	Baseline	184	4.17	2.904	1	15
	2021	148	4.90	3.253	1	18
Cattle	Baseline	65	2.42	1.722	1	10
	2021	49	2.84	2.135	0	12

During both FGDs and HH interviews, beneficiaries very often insisted on the progress made in the field of housing, which appeared to be one of the priorities in their integrated farm plans. Using the raw data from the last annual survey, the evaluators tried to corroborate these findings. Generally, beneficiaries lived in houses made of poles and mud. These constituted up to 82% of the houses people lived in. In both project areas, there has been a significant reduction in houses made of mud alone. Overall, households in Karangura lived in better houses than those from Kabambiro. This finding implies that the earned incomes may not have been sufficient to support building of more permanent houses, at least until the beginning of 2021 when the survey was conducted.

One of the greatest contributions of the project has been the growth of human capital of the households. The entire model of the project was built on learning to acquire skills, new knowledge and a new mindset. This learning took place through workshop trainings, exposure visits, group learnings and on-farm trainings by the project staff and the farm innovators. As a result of this learning, beneficiaries have better knowledge of farm management, natural resources conservation, home management and management of development affairs in their homes and communities.

Spotlight 5. From the development of the farm plan towards the beginning of asset accumulation

“When I returned from the training, I sat down with my wife, I explained what had happened and we drafted the plan. The plan had a permanent house, kitchen, goat shelter, poultry house, food store, a good rack, a cow, permanent latrine, rubbish pits in the plantation, digging trenches, kitchen garden, improved agronomic practices. The plan was for five years from 2018. We decided to first renovate the latrine by plastering, kitchen, rack (added another step to become two). We have now built a better chicken house, roofed our house with iron sheets. We also bought a cow. I also own a goat. We are remaining with building permanent house, kitchen, and latrine (we want ecosan which is a bit expensive).” Stephen, Nyabitokoli A., Karangura.

Contribution to employment, income generation and livelihood diversification

The project trained farming households in focusing efforts on commercial crops for increasing household income. The focus on post-harvest handling, particularly through better drying and sorting of produce is helping to attract better prices and thus incomes. Because of increased quality and quantity of produce, beneficiary households are able to fetch better prices and higher incomes. The farmer households would attract higher prices but issues of collective bargaining and limited value addition continue to subject them to the vagaries of price

fluctuations. The marketing associations in both project areas are yet to become stronger in terms of capitalisation and infrastructure to be able to play a meaningful role in marketing and price regulation.

Despite these challenges, it was evident through the field mission that members of the households were meaningfully engaged, with very few cases of joblessness. Households were able to engage as family members into productive labour, and the groups collectively worked together on member farms. And while the project focused upon a few crops (beans, maize, matoke and coffee), some beneficiaries were able to intensify other crops such as Irish potatoes, millet, cassava, and garlic among others. These crops give households, especially those from Karangura a wide array of livelihood options, and as such would benefit from further support (in terms of agricultural diversification and risk reduction). In Kabambiro, following the support from MSFP, several households started growing matoke and had thriving plantations. Introduction of more perennial crops and livestock would go a long way in stabilising incomes of the households in Kabambiro.

It is difficult to conclude at this stage on the impacts of the project on the diversification of livelihoods in the project areas. According to the raw data from KRC annual surveys (baseline and 2021 survey), engagement in livestock rearing had increased (from 71.5% of respondents at baseline to 81.4% early 2021) and beekeeping seemed to have flourished in Karangura (from 7.5% to 30.7%). Engagement in alternative non-farm economic activities was higher among beneficiaries from Karangura than from Kabambiro over the project life. In particular, engagement in business takes a lion's share and has grown in both project areas.

Spotlight 6. The economically empowered household of Tiberindwa

Tiberindwa, 48 years old lives in Nyakitokoli B, looking after 12 people in his household. He is a farmer who is engaged in matoke growing, coffee and cassava. He owns about 3 acres of land and uses all of them. He owns 9 goats, 20 chickens and 3 cows. Tiberindwa never used to benefit from farming or livestock rearing because he didn't have any training. He had grown matoke for about 40 years but didn't know how to properly plant, care and maintain his banana plantation. The soil was good but he didn't know how to look after it. Rain was washing it off. With MSFP, he learnt how to manage his resources at home, the agricultural land and animals. He learnt how dig trenches; put the fodder for animals and look after both goats and cows. After receiving training from the project, Tiberindwa's life and family changed. With farming, he has seen his coffee farm significantly improve. He has planted over 600 coffee trees. He used to earn about UGX 300,000 per season from the coffee but currently he earns more than UGX 1,000,000 from the same coffee garden. Tiberindwa harvests 25-50 bunches of matoke from his garden where he earns between UGX 250,000 – UGX 500,000 per month, depending on the season. He never earned any income from his banana garden before the project. As a result, there is development in the family of Tiberindwa. He bought an improved breed of cow and the cow has helped him to generate income to pay for kids' education. He gets 10 litres every day (from about 1.5 litres before the project) which gives him an assured income of UGX 300,000 per month. The money helps him to pay fees for 9 school going children. He consistently saves money in his VSLA. In 2020 he borrowed UGX 400,000 for roofing his house and was able to pay the loan fully. He also started a retail shop for general merchandise. In 2021 he borrowed UGX 600,000, added some money and 720 pieces of timber for roofing his new house.

Contribution to household expenses management and financial inclusion

There is a relationship between household income, savings and expenditure. As mentioned above, there has been increased expenditure on household assets, both productive and non-productive. It was notable through the two project areas that the beneficiaries did not spend everything on consumption. Many of them invested in productive assets especially livestock, land and crops. People bought chickens, goats, pigs and cows. Others bought land and expanded farming while some started small retail shops. Ideally, the desire to multiply the income was fairly high. Once there was multiplication of income, households spent on medical care and education with some ease. Others spent money on food, especially on the types that they did not grow such as meat, fish and rice.

One of the strongest pillars of MSFP was mobilisation and grouping of beneficiaries into VSLAs. Some VSLA members earned large volumes of money and they were able to buy land, livestock and also to invest in their gardens. Some members complemented their savings with loans from the VSLA to build better and more permanent houses. Education of children became easy as well as dealing with family emergencies such as sicknesses and loss of loved ones.

Spotlight 7. Increased savings changed lives of individuals

Teopista, aged 49 years lives in Bwera Village, Kabambiro Parish. She is a housewife in a household of 7. The family owns 4 acres of land where they grow sugar canes, maize, beans and bananas. Before the MSFP, Teopista used to have challenges of access to quality seed, low yields, never had any savings and the family was always cash-stretched. Teopista used to suffer with lack of access to clean water. They didn't have any plans as a family and as a result, they didn't have money for education, health and family development. The project taught them a lot of things including how to plan as a family. The family sits together and discuss what to do. They agree how much to save, and invest for future earnings. No money is spent without a proper agreement as a family. When water service providers came to provide water, Teopista didn't have money. She borrowed from the VSLA, paid and the family got connected to piped water. Now people fetch from her tap, including those that lay bricks and they pay. Teopista and her whole family have learnt how to save. Before, the family would spend months working but would have no money. Nowadays, the family earns money which they use to implement their family plans. They earn about UGX 1million as net profit every season. They have bought a cow, a bicycle, two pieces of land, pigs, goats, clothing, feeding and many other things. The last time the VSLA members shared money (November 2021), Teopista earned UGX 650,000.

Impacts on women empowerment

The MSFP impacted women beneficiaries economically, socially and psychologically primarily by improving their income levels and ensuring their participation in project management and leadership. By taking an integrated family planning and development approach, the project gave women an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making processes of their households. Up to 95% of the women who were interviewed during the field mission were appreciative of the role of the project in helping them get involved in development of their families. Before the project, there were no discussions at family regarding investment and expenditure. The husbands made decisions alone and women were often expected to follow. They were rarely consulted even when important matters were being made. However, the concept of integrated family planning allowed women to discuss with their husbands and agree on family priorities. Such participation built family harmony and strengthened relationships. Family members openly disclosed their incomes and joint planning was done. The excerpt below from a FGD illustrates this claim:

“For the married people, we have learnt to plan together, work together, decide together and develop as a family. In the past, men planned alone and didn't consult anyone. There were no consultations. Now we are able to achieve our goals together such as buying land, and producing crops together. If the plan fails, there is no conflict. Blame games are no longer there.” Bwera Farmers Group, Kabambiro.

At the community level, the project gave women a platform to take leadership positions within their VSLAs as chairpersons, treasurers and responsibility holders in different capacities. Such participation and engagement helped to build women self-esteem and confidence as people who had a stake in development of their areas. They would openly engage in discussions, share ideas and make contributions in community meetings. They were given the opportunity to save their own money in the VSLAs, borrowed and even invested. The example of Jennifer, a widow from Kabambiro provides proof of how much the project economically empowered women.

Spotlight 8. Socio-economic empowerment of a female head of household

Jennifer is a 50-year-old widow from Bwera village. She takes care of 6 people in her household and owns about 1 acre of land only, mostly growing beans, maize, cassava, millet and sweet potatoes. Before joining the project, she had significant challenges of feeding her children as the yields were poor and her land was small. She was always money stricken, unable to get excess produce to sale and earn

some money. All her life, Jennifer had never travelled anywhere outside of Kamwenge. The project took her to exposure visits. She learned a lot of things and when she returned home, she gathered her children and they drew and implemented a family plan. First and foremost, she has been able to improve harvest from 20kgs of beans per season to over 100kgs. She used to beg neighbours for vegetables but now she has enough vegetables from her kitchen garden – the family cannot go three days without eating vegetables. For that matter, her children rarely fall sick. She bought goats and had raised up to 9 of them (only for thieves to steal all of them from her at night). Although originally neglected in the community, Jennifer is now the treasurer for her VSLA. She keeps all of the assets of the group. In her own words, Jennifer says: “The project has helped me. I would never go to meetings and even say anything. Now I can go to meetings and also discuss. I can ask questions, and I can demand for explanations or even clarifications.” From sale of her produce, savings and loans from the VSLA, Jennifer has been able to build a permanent, away from a temporary mud house she used to sleep in. Jennifer’s income has improved from UGX 170,000 to over UGX 450,000 per season. As part of her plan, she has taken her son to a mechanics school and she pays for him. She is also sponsoring her daughter to a hairdressing school. She now has the means to educate her children.

According to the FGD and HH interviews with women, the adoption of kitchen gardens, energy-saving cooking stoves and better drying platforms benefitted women the most. The kitchen gardens allowed women the latitude to prepare nutritious food for their children, and in the process disease incidence reduced. Since women are the natural caregivers to family patients, improved health of the family members released both time and expenses from them. Furthermore, the energy-saving cooking stoves not only helped in reducing the volume of firewood used (and therefore save time for fetching firewood) but also gave them the opportunity to prepare several dishes (food and sauce) at the same time, reducing cooking time and improving cooking efficiency. Activities such as winnowing produce were a social preserve of women. Using the traditional methods of drying beans, maize, millet and other produce was always associated with lots of stones in the produce. The women would spend a lot of time sorting the stones and winnowing. However, with the improved post-harvest handling technologies, women were able to save time and even grade their produce. Therefore, given some resources, training and opportunity, women can choose a path to economic empowerment which paves way for other forms of empowerment.

Impacts on social capital and inclusion

MSFP has led to growth in social capital and inclusion. The approach of having all beneficiaries working in groups ensured that people chose who to have in a group, they set their own rules and they adhered to them. The system of ensuring that members met regularly to save and borrow money from their VSLAs as well as having FIs engage people was helpful in getting people together. The members provided communal labour and always learned from one another, to pick what worked and drop what did not work for a given member. These benefits were further strengthened by the fact that the beneficiaries largely belonged to the same ethnic background together with shared problems, allowing them to work closely together. Members became united and carried out their activities as a group with similar objectives and goals. Even in times of adversity, they stood with each other as a family. There was team work in these groups and as a result, they were able to achieve their objectives. Some of the groups transcended into stronger ties where individuals relied on each other, bound by trust, reciprocity and networking. These assets are known to reduce transaction costs, improve learning and most importantly foster group activities such as saving and investment.

“Group learning allowed us to work together, build friendships, and learn from others. Group members visit to check on us. Our wives are asking us to go for training especially if we take long to participate.”
Kanyamura Super Farmers Group, Karangura.

Contribution to the preservation of productive potential and broader impacts on natural environmental protection in the Mpanga catchment area

The agroecological approach of the project has played a key role in the proper management of water, land and plant resources in targeted areas. The adoption of agroecological practices is expected to go a long way in restoring the fertility of the soil and thus support life in various forms. Planting of indigenous tree species is already starting to pay off as these are providing

shed to the coffee trees and helping in holding up the soil especially in Karangura, where most farmers cultivate on slope lands. Some of the planted trees are fruit trees which are expected to provide both essential food nutrients and income through sale of ripe fruits. Some other planted trees will provide firewood and timber, thus reducing the exploitation of forest resources. The project implementation team at IdP and JESE affirmed that the overall greenery in the project areas is improving, with the expectation that in the future, these two areas will have greener vegetation than non-project areas. As illustrated in the following excerpt, beneficiaries understand the value of growing these trees and the different benefits they can get from them:

“I have planted mahogany, musizi, mangoes, pine and these are healthy trees. I hope in the future these will save our environment. I took few because I’m weak and old. The forests are coming to extinction and I believe in the future these trees will help my family. I’m sure I will be long gone but they won’t suffer getting the wood they need as a family”. Philip, 61-year beneficiary from Kabambiro.

The project activities on soil conservation are starting to pay off. There has been reduced soil erosion and thus the fertility of the land in the project areas has significantly improved. The example of Vincent below highlights the amount of work the project has undertaken to support environmental conservation, and the benefits that the beneficiaries are counting.

“We learnt a lot about how to protect the environment most especially tree planting, leaving buffer zones on rivers and streams, and trenching to avoid soil erosion. Up in the hills, I have six trenches and down in the bananas I have two trenches. These things have changed the environment. Good soil that goes into the trench is removed and is put on the matoke, water is conserved well in our garden and so the bunches are big. The rivers are now safe because members respect the buffer zone. They no longer remove stones from the river as well as sand. Everyone left the river and the water is safe. People now get stones from their gardens.” Vincent, Karangura.

In addition, the project has certainly contributed to changing the way producers look at certain conventional farming methods, in particular the use of synthetic pesticides and other agrochemicals, by raising awareness of their negative effects on both the environment and health, and by demonstrating that more sustainable alternatives exist. It could be seen in many homes that biodegradable waste was put back into the gardens. In an interview with the subcounty leadership at Karangura, the evaluation team found that the beneficiary households had rejected use of industrial pesticides and fertilisers donated to them by some actors. The picture below shows some of the rejected materials, returned and kept at the office of the subcounty chief.

Picture 5. Agrochemicals rejected by farmers in Karangura in November 2021



According to data from the last annual survey by KRC, the adoption of energy-saving cooking stoves improved significantly in both project areas, from 27.4% to 72.6% in Karangura and from 13.5% to 86.5% in Kabambiro. This is likely to have long-term positive effects on environmental protection.

The project had specific interventions for protecting both River Rushango and River Mpanga. Some of the interventions included working with the LG authorities and other partners to stop extractive activities in the rivers. The most damaging activities were sand mining from the river bed and stone extraction, both from the river bed and the banks. The project succeeded in ensuring that these activities were stopped, and some of the local miners were enrolled into the project activities.

Additionally, the project supported the restoration of the river banks through planting of trees on both sides of the rivers, and by observing recommended buffer zones as per the national environmental regulations (only Kamwenge side for River Rushango). The project further supported formulation of specific bylaws meant to protect these rivers. However, by the evaluation time, these bylaws had not been passed into law, in part due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. Nevertheless, the bylaws were with the Solicitor General for final approval. It was evident that in the project intervention areas, the rivers had clear water and bank vegetation was thriving.

Picture 6. River Rushango



However, the project operated only in a small geographical area, implying that damage would still be done on the rivers in the non-project areas. This is indicative of the amount of work that both LGs and other partners need to do to protect the entire catchment area of Mpanga River. In this respect, the Mpanga Micro Catchment Plan (MCP) was formulated but its implementation has been marred by lack of adequate financial resources. The slow progress of the project to develop micro-catchment management plans, supported by JFW, limited the concrete results in terms of sustainable management of natural resources by local actors in Karangura and Kabambiro, in relation to intermediate change 6 planned in the ToC. Some steps were taken, digital mappings were made and the field workers enjoyed trainings to do so. Getting stakeholder feedback sessions done on the scope of the content of each plan was complicated due to meeting restrictions. Therefore it was proposed to prioritise the bylaw formulation because that process could be done progressively in smaller groups.

In Karangura, while improvement was achieved on the environmental front, there is worry that: (i) digging of trenches on the slopes of Mountain Rwenzori may need closer study as this could alter the structure of the soil and therefore induce landslides in the long run; (ii) constant growth of Irish potatoes on the mountain slopes is likely to be unsustainable as the practice makes the top soil loose and thus susceptible to surface run-off. Exposure to the bare rock is likely to happen sooner than later.

While the local people receive training and adhere to the environmental requirements set out by projects like MSFP, the rich and influential people are rarely targeted by projects. These usually own large estates and they rarely engage in environmental conservation. This argument appeared multiple times in the discussions with the beneficiaries from Kabambiro. This was particularly the case with the rich people and other influential people that refused to adhere to river protection guidelines. This issue relates to the fact that lots of big land owners stay in the city (Fort Portal or even Kampala) and is strongly linked with a persistent culture of corruption in the country. When it comes to enforcement of laws in the natural resources management sector even local authorities see themselves bypassed by higher level “agreements and deals”. The local leaders expressed disappointment as they could do nothing about the investors who were reluctant to adhere to environmental protection guidelines.

“We have rich government people who have farms. They are hard to see and they destroy the environment. They cut all the trees and make farms up to the river. We have talked to the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) and he promised to deal with them but we haven’t seen efforts.” Local government leaders, Kabambiro.

This was identified as a high-level risk in the proposal to DGD (“unwillingness of larger land owners in micro-catchment to adjust land management practices”) and is one of the reasons

why, when it became hard to organise stakeholder meetings for a micro catchment plan, MSFP management decided to support the set up of a local framework of bylaws to at least give local leaders the instruments to oppose to certain practices.

3.3. Participation, sustainability and potential for replication

3.3.1. Degree of involvement of farmers and their families in the project

IFP and PAR approaches call for an active involvement of beneficiary farmers in the different stages of programme implementation, from the identification of problems and needs to the follow-up of implemented solutions (by the family farmers themselves in the case of IFP and by group members in the case of PAR). Even if not all beneficiaries stayed on board (either by not adopting IFP in a concrete way or by leaving the PAR group), the overall result is a strong ownership of these methods by family farmers, especially in two essential aspects: (i) the importance of farm planning (including short- and medium-term planning for crops, harvests, food stocks and food consumption, as well as developing a longer-term vision for the household) and (ii) the need to test agricultural innovations in the local context and compare them before adopting any.

It was clear from the different FGDs and HH interviews that beneficiary farmers now value a lot more all the support they can get to build their knowledge and skills (through trainings, exchange visits, demo plots, etc.) than the delivery of inputs or other types of material support. Their main recommendation was to get more training to further build on what they have learnt. This is a good indicator of the degree of ownership of the project by its final beneficiaries, and of the sustainability of knowledge gains.

The focus on a family farm approach (vs. working with individual – often male – farmers) allows for collective participation at household level which improves ownership of interventions, sharing of information and knowledge, and involvement of all eligible family members in decision making. This model helps households to have a common understanding of their development path, family priorities as well as a shared appreciation of family needs and constraints. In all the project areas, this approach improved family harmony and created a strong foundation for family socio-economic transformation. The examples below demonstrate the importance of this approach:

- Household members collectively worked together to draw, revise and implement family development plans.
- In most of the households, husbands and wives worked together to make important decisions on how to spend income from sale of produce and other assets. In all cases, money was earned when families were fully aware of what the expected income was going to do.
- Transparency improved in homes where both husbands and wives openly declared their incomes. There were minimal cases of hiding one's income, including how much was in savings within the different savings groups. As a result of this openness, wives started to play an active role in contributing to the financial needs of their households.

3.3.2. Ownership and replication of sustainable farming practices

The resolutely participatory approach of MSFP, with a significant proportion of the innovations promoted coming from the family farmers themselves (e.g. plant concoctions to prepare biopesticides) and/or drawing from local practices (e.g. community loan groups), has enabled a very good appropriation of the principles of agroecology. The evaluators were able to observe this at different levels: that of the producers, the local authorities (at least at the level of the targeted sub-counties) and the project partners, including the NARO researchers. The latter, while initially used to top-down approaches and conventional farming methods, acknowledged that they learnt a lot from this project. Furthermore, a notable achievement of the programme

is the decision by JESE to adopt agroecology and MSFP methodologies (IFP and PAR) in its strategic plan, which may contribute to a wider dissemination of these approaches in the region.

As rightly noted in the 2021 report to DGD, agroecological practices limit the use of costly inputs and investments and help to reduce production costs by optimising local resources and applying on-farm inputs. It ensures a certain level of financial and economic sustainability from the outset, at least as far as the final beneficiaries are concerned. Since MSFP was mostly about capacity building, and agriculture production choices are essentially made at the farm level (and therefore at the household level in the case of family farmers) the continued application of agroecological practices will depend on the intrinsic motivation of each farming family as well as their access to a minimum of essential production factors over which the project has little or no influence, such a land and manpower. The project made a significant contribution to improving the local farmers' view of their own activity, recognising their farm as a true livelihood and better valuing its potential for income generation. The level of motivation to sustain the project results is therefore high among the beneficiaries.

However, concentration on a small number of households in a subcounty raises questions as to whether a sufficient critical mass of change agents in sustainable farming has been built. As mentioned in section 3.1.4, the coverage appears to be small, highlighting a potential risk of backsliding into the original practices, which unfortunately the majority of households in the neighbourhood still uphold. While it is difficult if not impossible to conclude on the optimal number of beneficiary households that would be sufficient to spread sustainable farming practices to non-beneficiary households and villages, there is no evidence that these practices have been replicated beyond the 600 MSFP farmers, with the notable exception of some non-beneficiaries who were integrated into VSLA groups and thus had the opportunity to discuss, exchange and learn from other group members (including on production/technical topics not directly related to VSLA). As rightly noted in the KRC last annual evaluation report, the agroecological system promoted by MSFP is challenged by the agribusiness model which is based on cash crop monocropping. It is for this reason, according to KRC report, that crop diversification tends to decline in Karangura subcounty.

Related to the above, the project targeted only two "Mpanga" subcounties yet the river catchment area is much bigger, spanning several subcounties and districts. Good work has been done in the project area but in the non-project areas, destructive activities such as river sand mining, stone extraction, and deforestation among others still take place. Such destruction is likely to undermine the successes of MSFP. A holistic intervention for the entire catchment area for Mpanga river represents an opportunity for project renewal and attraction of other stakeholders to conserve this vital natural resource in a more comprehensive manner.

3.3.3. Group dynamics and sustainability of collective actions

As regards the various groups created during the project, the evaluators observed relatively good internal dynamics, partly due to the intensive support provided by the field staff. For instance, no problems were reported regarding the management or sharing of collective assets. It is difficult to comment on the sustainability of these groups beyond the project. It depends on many factors that a project cannot always influence (e.g. cohesion or, on the contrary, conflict at community level, new external technical or financial support, etc.). On the basis of the FGDs with the different group types, it appears that collective actions that already bring or are likely to bring a fairly immediate economic gain, such as VSLAs or joint marketing associations, will have a better chance of being sustained, while those that rely more on knowledge building and sharing (typically, PAR groups) will be more difficult to continue without external support.

During FGDs, evaluators noted that in most of the farmer groups, membership has decreased by 25% on average. One of the explanations in Kabambiro was the departure of some households who migrate out of the subcounty. The intrinsic level of motivation of each

individual farmer is another factor. There may be other reasons for the departure of some members, which the evaluators were not able to identify.

The role of FIs and VSLAs in the target communities is likely to continue as this is built around social capital and social harmony. The benefits of maintaining the two appear to outweigh the costs of dropping them by the communities. However, whether FIs will evolve to become lasting change agents is a subject of time. To guarantee this, proper training and a robust exist strategy would be worth thinking about.

Creation of marketing associations is likely to provide a market-driven incentive to preserve the new found knowledge on the introduced agronomic practices, will help in collective bargaining, value addition and will in the long run attract new members and thus uplifting the local economy. But the associations may need further support to build learning systems that are able to steer them through the vagaries of economic seasonality.

3.3.4. Capacity of local implementing partners to take over

Knowledge transfer and capacity building of the local partners have been the subject of particular attention and were an expected result (R5) of MSFP. It is evident from discussions with both the manager and field officers of JESE that they now have a clear understanding of the different approaches and methods developed during the project, including agroecological principles, IFP and PAR. RCA, that IdP has entrusted the mission of implementing a component on small livestock and beekeeping in Karangura in 2021, in parallel with MSFP activities, will need continued capacity building during the second phase of the project. It is unlikely that interactions with IdP and its field team during the last half of the project were sufficient to strengthen RCA's capacity to get this community-based organization familiar with IdP approaches and methods.

3.3.5. Ownership by government structures and institutional sustainability

There was a fair level of interest of subcounty leaders and technical teams in project activities and the promotion of sustainable family farming. In Karangura, the subcounty agriculture officer was fully engaged in project activities and almost considered a member of MSFP team, which is a guarantee of good ownership of the project objectives and approaches. In Kabambiro, the involvement of the LG and subcounty technical team was more restricted to short-term and one-off collaboration (e.g. demarcation of Rushango swamp). According to interviews in Karangura and Kabambiro, local leaders and technical staff in both subcounties understood the importance of involving grassroot level farmers through participatory approaches to get lasting changes. As illustrated in the following spotlight, they appreciated the project and were able to mention several economic, social and environmental changes in the local communities as a direct result of project activities.

Spotlight 9. The voice of Local Government leaders from Kabambiro subcounty on the project

“Our people have achieved development. Our people used to buy (kusaka) food but now no one does this anymore. This is a sign of development. They never used to have any livestock but you go there now and find chicken, goats, and cows. Children eat greens and feeding has improved. We used to have high levels of kwashiorkor but this has significantly reduced. But those outside of the project, the disease is still prevalent. In the past, our people used to cut a lot of trees and the drought was really harsh. They have planted trees and we see that we have rain and the environment seems to be improving. There is a huge difference in the banks and quality of water of River Rushango and that of River Mpanga. Mpanga had no single tree but we have planted several. The project villages protect the environment but the other villages don't. They even come to cut our trees to burn charcoal. They don't understand the value of protecting the environment. As local government leaders, we are very happy with the project. People have learnt how to make fertilizers using their own local materials. The project gave them stoves which save wood. They also learnt how to make briquettes out of rubbish. This is helping to save the environment. There has been development and we believe this will help families to educate their children.”

However, local authorities clearly lack the financial and material resources to sustain these results and fully engaged in agriculture development and environment preservation. In particular, weak local administration structures may derail effective implementation of the bylaws which have been supported by the project. For instance, the local leaders in Kabambiro revealed:

“The budget for environmental protection and agricultural development at the subcounty is zero... The budget for Community Development Officer is UGX 100,000 per year. He has a bike but he really has no fuel. The bike consumes about UGX 80,000 for three days. With work, the bike can consume UGX 340,000 per month. There is no money for repair and maintenance. This means that these people can't reach the field and so won't be doing work in the field”.

Interaction between the project and government technical staff at District level was found to be limited. Although these staff were aware of the main lines of MSFP and shared positive assessments of its activities and results with the evaluators, there are still a number of barriers to further collaboration. The government appears to have contradicting policies on agricultural development in Uganda. In particular, the government through its Ministry of agriculture and several other development programmes is promoting conventional agriculture yet the government also formulated and passed the organic agricultural policy. In this context, it is unlikely that the District local government or other key government institutions will be willing to integrate MSFP intervention model in their agriculture or rural development programmes.

“There is a challenge as people [in government] pushing policies seem not understand the impacts of synthetic pesticides on the environment. These people have not yet understood sustainable farming practices. We may not be able to change things as NARO because most of the scientists are trained in cutting edge science for synthetic materials”. Interview with NARO researcher.

Without external financial support from projects similar to the MSFP, spontaneous replication of agroecological practices, GAP or other project innovations (such as VSLAs) is uncertain, even at a limited geographical scale (e.g. parishes and sub-counties). Indeed, apart from the farmers themselves and the groups they have formed, the main actor at this level is the local government (local leaders and technical teams at subcounty level), but the latter lack concrete means. To try to address this issue of resource allocation at subcounty level, the MTE recommended that MSFP liaised with PELUM, which has expertise on budget advocacy, in order to build its capacities to monitor the national budget that is allocated to LGs for the implementation of agriculture activities. Although long-term, nationwide advocacy work could make a difference, the task seemed beyond the scope of a project lasting less than 5 years and covering only 2 sub-counties.

3.4. Main strengths and weaknesses in project management

3.4.1. Management method, human resources and other project means

IdP maintained a lean team in office as most of the field-based work was done by the partners. By this, IdP empowered its partners to make decisions and be in charge of their activities while regularly updating IdP on what was happening. To ensure proper accountability, IdP required strict adherence to agreed positions, which were adjusted regularly through the weekly, monthly and quarterly meetings. Monthly planning meetings, involving programme managers and field staff, allowed for reflection on the relevance and delivery of each activity and ensured greater participation of field staff in planning. The partners reported regularly on their activities and discussions were held on the reports. IdP management also did regular field visits to be abreast with what was happening.

Reliance on expert human resources was critical to the delivery of the project. Whereas initially the staff at the implementing partners were specialized in specific fields, it turned out that they needed to quickly adjust and become all round advisors to the beneficiaries. This flexibility eased work flow and overall efficiency. The staff were able to learn and cope quickly to the new realities and to respond to the myriad of household needs. The staff learnt through

trainings, internally through meetings and discussions, and from the beneficiaries. Generally, the staff were young, dynamic, patient, well-motivated and had strong interpersonal skills which were key in dealing with the beneficiaries. There was stability in the field teams that were deployed, allowing for continuity throughout the program duration. This stability was essential in maintaining relationships of trust with the beneficiaries and other local stakeholders.

The way in which projects are designed within the framework of DGD funding allows for a fair degree of flexibility in the choice of activities that lead to the expected results. IdP and its partners have taken good advantage of it by adopting a simple but effective project management strategy: build on what works and abandon what does not, thus driving greater impact on the target beneficiaries. The project was able to adapt its interventions to emerging changes in the environment of operation, avoiding wastage of resources and maximising opportunities but without losing focus on the overall MSFP goal. For instance, whereas matooke and coffee were initially not part of the main crops supported in Kabambiro, the project team identified this need and helped the beneficiaries to expand the two crops in the project area.

After his arrival on the project, the current Country Director took over the direct management of the project in Karangura where he tightened the intervention strategy around 3 pillars: integration (of crops and animals through the small livestock activities), diversification (of cash crops, together with fruit and vegetable growing) and protection (of soil and water resources, mostly by accelerating trench digging activities). A couple of pilot activities were also initiated to support emerging crops such as Irish potatoes (by building a collective storage), but the fact of having concentrated efforts around the 3 above pillars made it possible to achieve tangible results and avoid dispersion of resources.

In terms of human resources, this “agile” management method has resulted in appropriate adjustments to the changing needs. This assertion is based on the evidence below:

- In 2020, two additional field officers (one for each zone) were engaged to look specifically at Results 3 and 4, with a focus on VSLAs and marketing in order to speed up the project achievements on these thematic areas. This decision led to strong gains as regards the capacity building of VSLAs. Progress has been slower in joint marketing of agricultural products, probably because this requires more detailed expertise and, above all, the means and time to identify market potential and constraints, taking the analysis beyond the project area.
- When one partner, SATNET could not implement their part of the bargain, IdP severed the partnership and took up the implementation directly after transferring the 3 Field Officers from SATNET to IdP. This helped to keep the project on track.
- After the MSFP Technical Advisor stopped working for IdP in the beginning of 2021, the Country Director decided to allocate the corresponding budget line to cover the cost of 3 Field Officers until the project end. Activities that were working well had already been identified, so the idea was to expand and even upscale them (e.g. trenching) by maintaining a strong presence on the ground, next to the start up of RCA.

3.4.2. Partnerships, synergies and coordination

IdP's implementing partners

Looking back on the experience of working with JESE, the partnership model ensured a seamless execution of the project activities – at least as far as Kabambiro is concerned. This saved IdP the cost of learning how to work in Uganda, more specifically in the selected project area. IdP was able to leverage from JESE's extensive local knowledge, mobilization process, subject matter expertise, goodwill and local networks which IdP did not have as a new entrant in the field of agroecology in Uganda. Positive synergies also took place between the different local partners. While each partner had their own area of focus, it turned out that they worked and shared together to impact the beneficiaries. The most fruitful partnership appeared to have been that between JESE and NARO. The good relationship maintained by JESE staff with

Lucky Millers (wholesale buyer of maize from Kabambiro) is also promising for the next phase of the project.

JESE, as a partner deployed expert staff, from the office up to the field-based manpower. As far as implementation of the activities was concerned, these staff delivered to the expectations of the beneficiaries. Their social skills, technical skills, and personal attributes such as hard work, motivation and efficacy were high. One of their biggest assets was ability to communicate with the beneficiaries in the language of their choice, and to respect their cultural values.

The problems with SATNET were mainly linked to transparency at management level. SATNET's mismanagement of programme funds became progressively apparent during 2019. IdP quickly took more stringent financial control measures and then joined a financial audit launched by BD. The decision to terminate the partnership, which was particularly delicate given the local anchorage of SATNET, was communicated to DGD on a timely manner and IdP managed this complex situation quite well. It is worth mentioning here that SATNET field staff was doing good work – and MSFP management rightly took the decision to keep them on board, at a later stage through IdP direct implementation.

The decision to partner with RCA for the last months of implementation, instead of going the easy way by expanding JESE geographical coverage, is based on two elements that make sense: (i) adding a complementary expertise (RCA having already worked on small livestock support); (ii) building the capacities of a partner that is anchored in Karangura subcounty, in view of the second phase of MSFP and for long term sustainability.

Government structures and other collaborating stakeholders

As pointed out during the MTE, there was limited structural, long-term collaboration between MSFP and government institutions besides the involvement of NARO in PAR and the good relationships maintained with subcounty authorities and technical teams in both Karangura and Kabambiro. As mentioned earlier, NARO's approach of PAR was initially not fully coherent with the MSFP's participatory, bottom-up approach aimed at co-creation of knowledge with farmers. Collaboration improved thereafter, but NARO's delays in analyzing the data somewhat hindered the sharing of research results with key stakeholders (farmers involved in PAR) and their wider dissemination to non-beneficiary farmers and other communities across Mpanga River basin.

In DGD proposal, emphasis was placed on the possibilities of synergies between the various Belgian organizations operating in the Rwenzori region in order to promote the complementarity of actions and avoid the dispersion of means. The logistical collaboration with JFW (i.e. sharing of office premises) took place as planned. The planned synergies with JFW to support local communities in the development of concrete natural resource management plans did not fully materialize, mainly due to poor progress of the MCP project by JFW. Another reason for this is the limited interaction between IdP and JFW in 2020-2021 due to meeting restrictions imposed by Covid-19. With BD the main areas of synergy that were foreseen concerned (i) linking producers with service cooperatives and (ii) disseminating the productive innovations promoted by IdP through the networks of farmer organizations supported by BD. These two objectives were probably quite ambitious and there was no significant progress during the project period. A new synergy was created with BOS+ through their local partner who got involved in the planting of indigenous trees on the farms of MSFP beneficiaries in Karangura subcounty. Also with BD and other Belgian NGOs involved in agriculture, IdP lobbied hard to assure the position of smallholder farmers was taken into account in the preparation for the next bilateral programme for Belgium. They organised for example a joint seminar and developed terms of reference for a study to better describe the potential for smallholders and the private sector engagement in the new programme.

Some of the partnerships that were planned at the design stage of MSFP never really took off, for example with VLIR and MMU. This could be due to not being able to identify the right person in these institutions, although the evaluators were not able to verify this.

A mission report from HQ early 2020 highlighted the excellent integration of IdP into the PELUM platform: IdP became a very active member of this platform and after only two years was already considered as one of its reference members, PELUM being particularly interested in its expertise in the field of participatory research. Subsequently, IdP could not take full advantage of the opportunities for learning and cross-fertilization offered by this platform. This was linked to the limited human resources, the priority given to outreach work with beneficiaries, but also to several external factors, notably the low number of sessions organised by PELUM since 2020 due to Covid-19.

3.4.3. Monitoring, evaluation and lessons learning

The project monitoring and evaluation system would have benefitted from further strengthening. In spite of the identification of relevant progress markers and a sound strategy to monitor them on an annual basis, which allowed the MSFP management team to have an overview of the progress and gaps in terms of outcomes, the project lacked a robust information management system to compare achievements against targets at a lower level of the results chain, namely activities and outputs. What was missing was a document, for example in the form of a summary table, which would progressively compile all the activities carried out during the 4.5 years of implementation and compare them to the initial targets, in a harmonised manner for Karangura and Kabambiro.

M&E functions were part of the role of the Technical Advisor. After his departure and the non-replacement of this position (the priority being quite rightly given to maintaining a sufficient number of field staff) IdP did not have a designated staff in charge of M&E and therefore consolidation of incoming information from the various partners was not done. While the information was available, it was scattered in different places, making it difficult to retrieve and utilise. While the annual evaluations conducted by KRC were useful, it would have been expected of IdP to have an extensive results matrix, perhaps updated as activities changed where progress information was captured. IdP did not have a robust internal activity monitoring mechanism to capture progress on the indicators of project performance. Furthermore, while the annual plans were done in December of each year, the annual evaluations were done around February of the following year. It was difficult to synchronize end of year and annual plans, leading to a number of missed opportunities to improve in certain areas in real time.

Outsourcing of annual evaluations allowed the production of informative reports both in terms of quantitative data (monitoring of performance indicators through a scoring system) and qualitative data (farmers' perceptions, identification of successes and challenges according to performance levels, etc). Each performance dimension (economic, social and environmental) was usefully divided into several thematic areas, which were in turn assessed by a composite score calculated on the basis of a set of indicators that were on the whole relevant but probably too numerous (as they led to a large number of questions in the household surveys). The scoring system allowed for easy comparison from one year to the next and between the two target sub-counties. Although the methodology used seems sound, and would probably have been difficult to carry out in the same level of detail in an internal monitoring system, it is difficult to ascertain whether the external evaluators have collected reliable and valid data. Early 2020, the HQ supervision mission pointed out that the data from 2019 annual survey – collected by external enumerators – did not seem at all consistent with what the MSFP team had seen in the field and the information contained in other monitoring tools, such as field reports.

The external evaluation analysis reports lacked a longitudinal approach to analytics which would have generated useful econometric model to guide decision making: while KRC researchers had data collected at different intervals, each dataset was analysed alone. They had longitudinal data but they took a cross sectional approach to analysis. This means that they missed the opportunity to observe trends as well as the factors accounting for these trends. An econometric model can help you assess the trend (changes) of a given variable (say household income, knowledge transfer, etc.) and tell whether the changes observed are

of significance. But it can also tell you which factors play a bigger role in influencing the observed change. That way, the project team can easily set priorities.

4. Lessons learned and good practices

4.1. Assessment of needs and partnerships at design stage

The various project identification and design documents (scoping mission report, feasibility study and proposal to DGD) pointed to high malnutrition rates in the intervention areas. This could be explained by the monotony of the diet (based on carbohydrates) and the low monetary income, but not only. It would have been necessary to better characterize the type of malnutrition in the project areas and its causes, in order to better define an adequate response. The feasibility study stressed the importance of better analyzing this aspect.

Dependence on external partners to implement key project interventions assumes that the partners are professional and committed to the values and goals of IdP. To ensure this, IdP has a system for assessing the capacity of partners. SATNET was quite well established in the region and had multiple donors. The problem of lack of transparency of SATNET's management was therefore difficult to anticipate. It was through close interaction with its local partners that IdP was able to identify the fund mismanagement issue. This proximity is in itself a control mechanism for partnership risks. Regular assessment of partner activities and progress on the projects can help to reduce partnership risks. The experience with SATNET demonstrates that partnerships are always risky and without trustworthy partners, the project can easily fail. To some degree, IdP was lucky to have JESE in Kabambiro, otherwise if the same experience that happened in Karangura had happened in Kabambiro, the project would have achieved much less.

4.2. Potential of MSFP development approach and associated risks

The project adoption of integrated farm planning allowed beneficiaries to work on their own farms thereby allowing for experimentation, intrapersonal learning and innovation. While the programme was designed based on specific themes and priority areas, it did not delve much into activities as everything was centered on IFP. This is a good way to plan as both implementers and beneficiaries develop activities based on experience and lessons learnt on a regular basis. On the other hand, the emphasis on the IFP model where beneficiaries experiment with innovations on their own farms implies that the project must have a good extension system. This was clearly the case for JESE in Kabambiro, but also for the field staff employed in Karangura (under contract with SATNET and then directly with IdP).

The project design requires high intensity in order to achieve the desired mindset change among stakeholders. This means that the project consumes a lot of time, and thus can only thrive in geographical areas where there are no other players. In the presence of other interventions, beneficiaries may easily suffer from over-occupation and thus fail to afford the required intensity. Such a design therefore requires effective coordination if it is to be implemented in areas where other players exist.

The design of the project is so intensive that if there is change in personnel and the new ones come in, it can be very difficult especially if the succession is not well managed. This means that for the IdP model to work, there has to be very low employee turnover, and where it occurs, proper succession planning and management has to be done. This is especially because the model needs a thorough understanding of beneficiary context, and a good implementation team is a key prerequisite for success.

A more careful approach may be a key consideration in geographical areas where people are diverse and thus do not share common cultural backgrounds. This cultural homogeneity of the households in both Karangura and Kabambiro seems to have played a role in the adoption of the project interventions. However, care needs to be taken where the beneficiaries are

culturally diverse. Furthermore, where cases of migration are high, it might be costly to implement the IFP model as there will be a high attrition rate. Such tendencies existed in Kabambiro and cause some level of discomfort to the project teams.

4.3. Innovations and their adoption by target groups

Innovations succeed when the beneficiaries live in proximity with each other to allow for cross learning and knowledge transfer. PAR worked well in part because all beneficiaries had access to each other's farms and they made efforts to visit, learn, share and apply. This particularly works well where there is positive competition in implementing innovations. None of the beneficiaries wanted to be a laggard. In addition, in areas where people live in harmony and where they have few conflicts, innovative ideas can easily thrive. This was the case in both project sites. VSLAs seem a strong instrument for keeping members together, and support to strengthen these associations would ensure continuity, recruitment of more members and expansion of investment in areas that promote sustainable farming practices and economic progress.

Continuous proximity to technical people helps alleviate errors in time and to keep people on track. Presence of MSFP staff fulltime in the field helped them to identify challenges and solutions in real time. The project model also allowed for regular revisits by the MSFP teams which forced people to implement ideas to avoid embarrassment. The element of surprise and unplanned visits by the project teams was particularly helpful in having beneficiaries put effort in what they had been shown to do or on their own commitments. Moreover, promise-keeping and trustworthy relationship are key in fostering mindset change among local communities. The project team was ever present in the project areas and exercised no biases in its treatment of the beneficiaries. Over time, the beneficiaries realized that the team was there for them and thus trusted the interventions introduced.

As regards agroecological innovations, the Covid-19 pandemic and the difficulties it imposed (low access to inputs and to distant market outlets) have certainly reinforced the awareness of farmers on the limitations of the conventional production system and created a larger basis for the adoption of agroecological practices, as noted in the 2021 moral report to DGD.

4.4. Knowledge transfer and learning process

Farm innovators (FIs) constituted a strong pillar for delivery of project results. These innovators were locally-based beneficiaries who demonstrated capacity to be ahead of their counterparts in terms of knowledge and practical work on their own farms. They helped the project staff in training their colleagues, supervising their progress and served as local motivators for their fellow farmers to embrace project interventions. In other words, FIs – at least for those who remained active until the end of the project and beyond – served as fulltime resident trainers helping the project team to cement new found knowledge in the minds of the beneficiaries.

As the project was already ambitious, with a large number of varied activities, it would have been difficult to add an additional activity for the school public, as was suggested during the exploratory mission. Moreover, during the last two years of MSFP, schools were closed because of Covid-19. It is therefore "lucky" that the project did not try to work with schools.. Nevertheless, working with schools is of great interest, especially for the following phases of the programme. In the target areas, schools gather children and teachers from different communities and therefore introduction of the sustainable farming and environmental protection practices can help to spread the message far and wide, and would in effect help to create future ambassadors in these practices. An opportunity can be envisaged in areas such as kitchen gardening, tree planting, nutrition and this would be helpful to the children. This is an area to think about in future interventions.

The project was built on learning and mindset change, igniting change from a socio-cognitive foundation. The structure of the project supported regular internal team information sharing

through meetings, report writing and discussion of what happened in the field. The field teams stayed closer to the beneficiaries to share knowledge, to learn from beneficiaries and even connected them to external stakeholders such as buyers, local authorities, suppliers of inputs and to successful farmers through exposure visits. All of this helped to create a new normative consensus among beneficiaries, moving away from practices that were unsustainable to agroecological practices. Annexe 8 provides further analysis on the interactions between learning and development in poor rural communities such as the ones supported by MSFP.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Overall assessment by criteria

Criteria 1: Project objectives, strategy and activities are relevant to the needs and capacities of farming families in the Mpanga watershed

In terms of relevance, MSFP was considered highly satisfactory. The programme – the first one of IdP in Uganda – was informed by clear analysis of needs and context, with just a few shortcomings, notably on crop value chain analysis. MSFP activities covered the priority needs of local farmers and communities, drawing from their knowledge and locally available resources. Unmet or partially met needs include budgeting as part of farm planning to allow for resource mobilisation; and the full integration of crop and animal husbandry. The structure of the project allowed for flexibility, evolution and adaptation to the changing needs of beneficiaries as well as a revolving operational environment. Addressing the concerns of family farms through agro-ecological practices meant that MSFP could hardly be aligned with the government approach (focused on conventional commercial agriculture).

The success of the project is largely due to the intensive extension work and proximity of services of its field officers, as well as the choice to combine two innovative methods to introduce and develop knowledge on agroecology: integrated farm planning (IFP) and participatory action research (PAR). Through PAR, exposure visits, training sessions and individual coaching visits, MSFP was able to introduce a wide range of agricultural innovations and productive options, and let farmers use the most suitable ones. PAR appeared as a good way to solve specific technical problems but it was initially too ambitious in terms of the number/range of research topics.

The targeting approach of the project avoided spreading resources too thinly while achieving high activity intensity. The choice of two subcounties and eventually implementing the project in a few parishes was a strategic decision that allowed project implementers to remain in close proximity with the beneficiaries. The approach also ensured that beneficiaries can easily work together, learn from each other and can easily share successes with one another as they live within the same locality. The project lacked data on beneficiary profiles to know which innovations were appropriate to which categories of family farms.

Criteria 2: The project has strengthened the economic, social and environmental performance of family farmers in the Mpanga watershed

In terms of effectiveness, the project was considered satisfactory. Despite the limited availability of usable monitoring data at activity level, the evaluation team found through FGDs, HH interviews, direct observation and key informant interviews that the level of achievement of the various project components and activities was overall good, especially the ones under Results 1 (farm productivity), 3 (access to credit) and 5 (capacity building of partners). The effectiveness of several activities cannot be fully assessed due to late implementation (e.g. delivery of small livestock in Karangura).

The evolving nature of project activities has allowed for concerted focus on beneficiary needs thus making steps towards greater economic, social and environmental gains. MSFP delivered significant outcomes, notably on integrated planning at household level, crop yields, reduced post-harvest losses, improved quality of farmer produce, social capital and inclusion, soil erosion control and natural resource conservation.

Regarding R1, MSFP created a mind shift from conventional to sustainable farming methods among beneficiary farmers. The effective application of agroecological and other good agricultural practices has resulted in an improved quality and quantity of produce. The evaluation found that local farmers were increasingly interested in growing trees in and around their plots. This, together with other sustainable farming practices, is clearly leading to an improved management of both water and soil on the farm.

Supporting VSLAs (under R3) was particularly effective in bringing farmers together to save money and get loans. The operating rules are clear, well implemented and yield good results, including a high rate of loan recovery. However, this activity has not yet led to an increased access to a wider range of financial services that could allow farmers to substantially invest in agricultural activities or related businesses (e.g. food processing).

Nevertheless, the coverage remained quite small. Dissemination of MSFP results to non-beneficiaries and other communities in the Mpanga catchment is not guaranteed. Advocacy activities (under R4) were few and mainly focused on the target subcounties. So far, they did not lead to the emergence of an enabling environment for the development of sustainable family farming at Mpanga watershed level.

While the project made significant improvement on production, the aspects of value addition and market access at a collective level (R2) remained fairly weak. MSFP made some effort to link the groups to some buyers but overall, less success was achieved. Moreover, the lack of a differentiated market price for agroecological products is a major barrier to the agroecological transition. Several other obstacles still hamper the broader development of sustainable farming practices beyond MSFP targeted areas, including the current government policies, and the underdeveloped demand and supply market for organic inputs.

Criteria 3: The project resources and management allowed the expected results to be achieved in an optimal way

In terms of efficiency, the project was considered moderately satisfactory. Although MSFP had a rather small implementation team, both the management and field staff were sufficiently skilled and experienced to run this project. The design of the project is quite expensive because of the volume of work involved. It is therefore a resource intensive design implying that only small geographical areas can be covered when resources are not plentiful. While the Mpanga catchment area was broad, the project could only afford to reach a small portion of the area, leaving other sections of the river unattended to.

MSFP start-up was relatively slow. But once beneficiaries were trained on integrated farm planning and exposed to the potential benefits of applying agroecological and other good agriculture practices, progress was really fast. Even if some FIs did not play their role, on the whole the IFP extension process seems to have been successful.

The partnership model had its own merits and demerits. First, it leveraged on existing expertise and capacity to deliver the project: mobilisation, group management, extension services and field monitoring. Second, it supported capacity building for local organisations and this capacity is useful for continuity and adoption in other programmes (KRC example for phase 2). Third, the project allowed for careful flexibility and learning throughout the years. However, regular adjustment of project activities requires proactive monitoring, trust and regular accountability. The experience of SATNET offered lessons regarding how to avoid implementation delays and resource misuse.

In terms of synergies with external stakeholders, there was limited structural, long-term collaboration between MSFP and government institutions besides the involvement of NARO in PAR and the good relationships maintained with subcounty authorities and technical teams. Interactions with Belgian organisations operating in the Rwenzori region have made it possible, to a certain extent, to coordinate and avoid dispersion of resources. However, the complementarities initially sought did not materialise in the end, sometimes for reasons external of the project (example of Mpanga Micro Catchment Plan).

The project did not have comprehensive monitoring systems that capture data on a number of activities as well as some indicators of performance. It was hard to link impacts, outcomes, outputs and activities. Annual evaluations could benefit from more statistical and econometric analysis to provide direction on the changes taking place and the drivers of these changes. This would help in optimising resource allocation.

Criteria 4: The project benefits – whether they are financial, social or knowledge gains – are likely to last after its closure and to be replicated

In terms of sustainability, MSFP was considered satisfactory. There has been significant knowledge transfer among beneficiaries through the trainings, PAR activities, IFP and extension services. The focus on a family farm approach allows for collective participation at household level. The new-found knowledge on agronomic practices and the appreciation of agroecology is likely to continue among beneficiaries. In addition to the participatory approach of MSFP, several other factors have contributed to a good ownership of sustainable farming practices and their likely continued implementation: agroecological practices are low-cost¹⁰ and optimise local resources; by developing their own integrated farm plan, farmers have become more aware of the value of farming, which has increased their level of commitment. However, the total number of farm families that MSFP has reached is likely to be insufficient to spread sustainable farming practices to non-beneficiary households and villages.

The evaluation found that the internal dynamics of the farmer groups set up by MSFP were quite good. Collective actions with a fairly immediate economic gain, such as VSLAs or joint marketing associations, will have a better chance of being sustained, while those that rely more on knowledge building and sharing (typically, PAR groups) will be more difficult to continue without external support. Whether FIs will evolve to become lasting change agents is a subject of time.

There was also good ownership of the principles of agroecology by the local authorities of both subcounties. Agriculture and environment sectors receive little or no funding at the subcounty level yet this is the government structure that is closest to the people. Although it increases the relevance of this type of external support, this funding issue seriously undermines the sustainability of MSFP actions at this institutional level. Knowledge transfer and capacity building of the local partners have been the subject of particular attention. JESE staff now have a clear understanding of the different approaches and methods developed during the project, including agroecological principles, IFP and PAR.

Criteria 5: The project has no or limited negative impacts and is likely to have positive impacts, notably in terms of living conditions of the population, natural resources preservation and women empowerment

In terms of impact, the project was considered highly satisfactory. There has been improvement in food production, nutrition and health of beneficiaries (reflected by reduced disease incidence in member households). There is also strong evidence of asset accumulation among beneficiary households, including both productive and non-productive assets. One of the greatest contributions of the project has been the growth of human capital of the households i.e. learning to acquire skills, new knowledge and a new mindset.

The increase in harvests and product quality as a result of the project has had a definite positive impact on the prices obtained by producers and on their income. However, the problems of collective bargaining and limited value addition continue to subject them to the vagaries of price fluctuations. Crop diversification has been initiated, notably in Kabambiro with a real move towards banana growing, but it is too early at this stage to conclude on a possible impact of MSFP on livelihood diversification.

The role of women in financial resource mobilisation, household development planning and community service has significantly improved. At the community level, the project gave women a platform to take leadership positions within their VSLAs. The strong improvement in post-harvest handling has released time invested in sorting and cleaning of produce (by women), has improved the quality of produce and is attracting better prices. Energy cooking-saving

¹⁰ It is true that agroecological practices are often more labour intensive than 'traditional' or conventional ones, but the opportunity cost of family labour, in rural areas such as those targeted by the MSFP, is often close to zero.

stoves have reduced the time spent in cooking and health problems associated with smoke from traditional stoves, which primarily affect women.

Two types of activities had direct and visible impacts on the environment: tree planting, which leads to the integration of trees within home gardens and along farm boundaries, and trenching, which helps reduce soil erosion and retain water. A general improvement in the vegetation cover of the landscape was also reported. Activities aimed at both environmental conservation and revenue generation have so far had more mixed results either because implementation has not fully taken into account some business development aspects (e.g. bio-briquette making, eco stove construction), or because it has occurred late in the project and it is too early to assess the impacts (e.g. apiary).

Efforts have been made to protect River Mpanga and its tributaries, including planting of trees on the banks and adopting of soil conservation methods to reduce runoff and silting of the river. In Karangura, the project has diverted a portion of the local workforce from the mining of sand and stones in the river bed, which are known to cause significant environmental degradation in the area. By supporting the establishment of bylaws, MSFP also attempted to promote a broader governance framework to the preservation of natural resources in Mpanga catchment, and to engage the rich people who had capacity to destroy the environment on a bigger scale than local farmers, but this process has not yet been completed.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this evaluation, the key recommendations are outlined below. Most of these recommendations aim both at ensuring the sustainability of MSFP achievements and improving the next phase or future similar projects. They are ordered by priority level, from very high to medium. The entity responsible for each recommendation (“lead partner”) is clearly identified. Where appropriate, more specific tasks and the implications of each recommendation are also indicated.

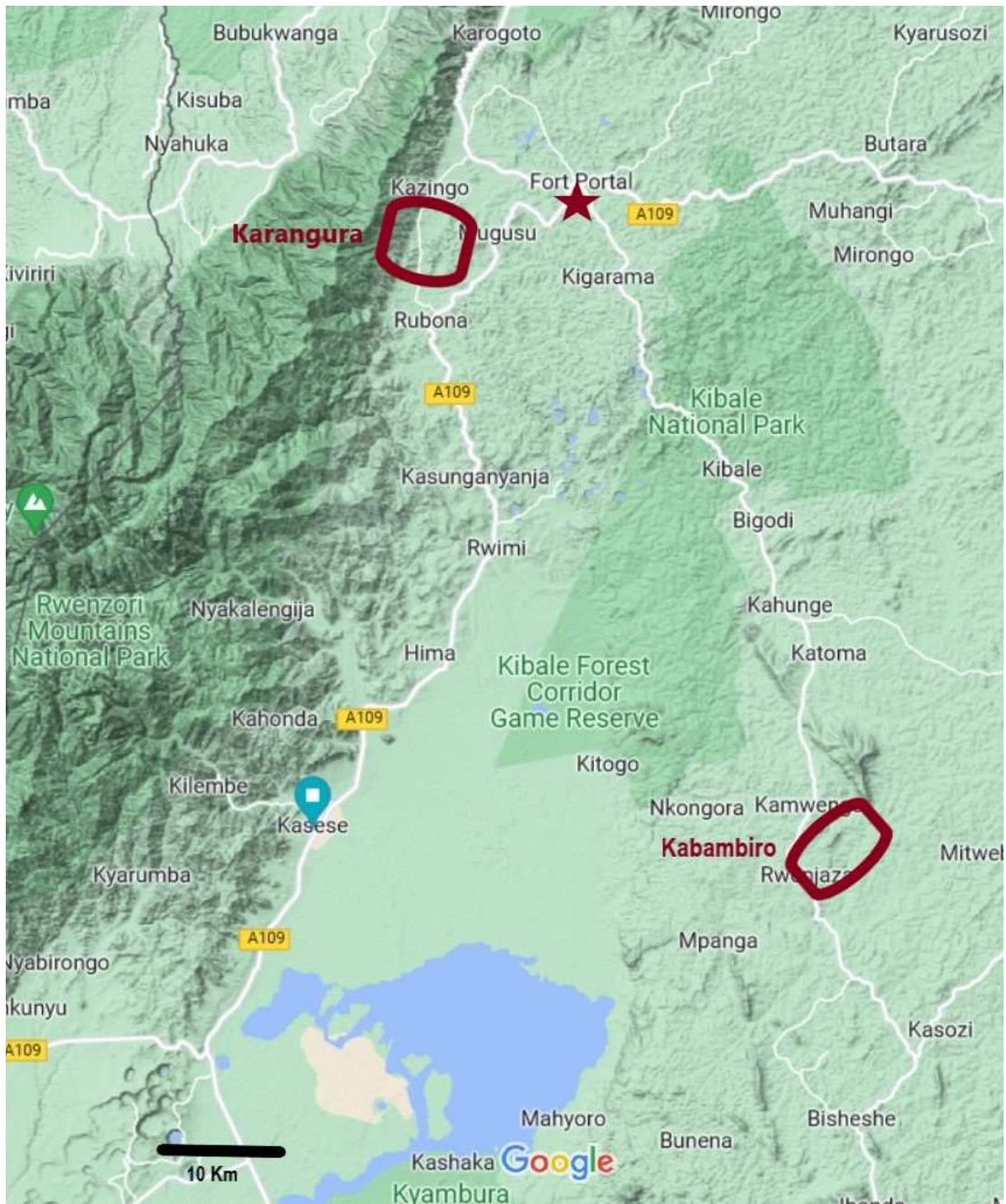
	Main recommendations and associated pathways or implications	Rationale	Lead partner	Timeline	Priority
1	<p>Integrate livestock production as an essential component of the development of sustainable production systems from the outset of projects.</p> <p>→ In Kabambiro, consider stronger integration of livestock and apiary into the family farms during phase 2.</p> <p>→ In Karangura, build upon the small livestock and beekeeping support implemented in 2021 by identifying, testing and disseminating the different possible interactions between livestock and crop systems.</p>	<p>This will help to provide important inputs into the agroecological cycle. Livestock will also serve as an additional source of nutrition and income, thereby taking away pressure from selling produce individually outside of the collective approach.</p>	JESE RCA	Beginning of phase 2 (2022) and future similar projects	High
2	<p>Introduce value addition and support market access using a market systems development approach.</p> <p>→ In Kabambiro, support the marketing association to connect the maize mill to the power grid, and help the group to strengthen its business approach.</p> <p>→ In the approach, help establish a profitable management structure, a fund to purchase produce from farmers, and a store where to keep the raw produce and finished products. The project may also consider introducing weighing scales to support sale of produce using standard weights as opposed to the current system where farmers are cheated. The same can be done to the marketing association in Karangura.</p> <p>→ Explore options to promote agrotourism (e.g. coffee tourism) and take advantage of the status of Fort Portal as a tourism city, and Kibale Forest as the primate capital of Africa.</p>	<p>Price fluctuations for farm produce tend to erode the profits that the farmers would generate from their hard work. High prices generally do not benefit family farmers because they do not usually have what to sell. This is because farmers have no capacity to store their produce, especially the perishable one such as matoke. Value addition and bulk storage represent important opportunities for future interventions. There is a need to support cottage industries that utilise the farm produce as raw material. As a long-term exit strategy, both project sites should have at least two processing units for learning. Support the existing one (maize mill) in Kabambiro to gain ground. Once appreciated, the project could set up others, for other crops. The support should be in form of training and helping to ensure the site operates at level of profitability. Overtime, these sites should be able to provide the important training and knowledge that the project is offering currently. Further, value addition could be done through linking the communities to the broader tourism industry where they can offer agritourism experiences to the visitors, especially for international export products such as coffee.</p>	IdP Uganda JESE	Phase 2	Very high

	Main recommendations and associated pathways or implications	Rationale	Lead partner	Timeline	Priority
3	<p>Strengthen the collaboration with Karangura Peak cooperative, not only on coffee marketing but also on agricultural extension work.</p> <p>→ Synergies with Trias to be foreseen as they will work to strengthen the governance of Karangura Peak.</p>	<p>In Karangura, there is a great opportunity to sell coffee through the existing cooperative – Karangura Peak – which appears to be more solid in terms of its internal functioning and the outlets it can offer to producers than was assessed at the start of the project. The cooperative could explore introduction of other crops grown in the Karangura area and then take on the duty of searching for markets and ensuring that farmers produce the right quality. This competency has already been built through the current enterprise – coffee.</p>	IdP Uganda RCA	Phase 2	High
4	<p>Strengthen collective marketing of farm produce through cooperative development and investigate possible ways of cooperation with government in this sector.</p> <p>→ In Kabambiro, support the marketing association to graduate into a cooperative and to formulate a SACCO, and play a similar role like the one proposed for Karangura Peak.</p>	<p>In order to consolidate the efforts begun in Phase 1, there is a need to further train the marketing groups and ensure that people do sell in groups. A strong cooperative will have financial resources to offset members' needs as they wait for prices to get better. It is therefore crucial to establish links with existing financial institutions or to set up new ones if necessary. As noted in the MTE report, the government policy of facilitating smallholder cooperatives matches with the MSFP approach of farmer group formation. There is therefore an avenue to explore in this direction to strengthen collaboration with local and national authorities.</p>	IdP Uganda JESE	Phase 2	Medium

	Main recommendations and associated pathways or implications	Rationale	Lead partner	Timeline	Priority
5	<p>Refine targeting and provide stronger support to the beneficiaries of alternative income generating activities.</p> <p>→ Follow a phased approach to business support that takes into account the need for local people to acclimatize to the business culture and the differentiated needs of social groups (based on gender, age, or other vulnerability factors).</p>	<p>In this phase of the project, it appeared that some beneficiaries were over engaged and they lost track on what they were supposed to do. This particularly happened to the bio-briquette group in Karangura. In the future, beneficiaries should not be engaged in multiple activities. This spreads them thinly. For income generating enterprises, the project should support smaller groups to pursue entrepreneurial paths. In such cases, only a few individuals can be allowed to undertake profitable enterprises. Within this recommendation, the bio-briquette project in Karangura should be given to one or two individuals who are most promising as entrepreneurs to do it as a business.</p>	<p>IdP Uganda and HQ JESE RCA</p>	<p>Phase 2 and future similar projects</p>	<p>Low</p>
6	<p>Strengthen internal coordination, coherence and cross-learning between implementing partners.</p> <p>→ Assign, at IdP level, a programme coordinator, in charge of supervising field operations and liaising between the different internal partners (while the Country Director can focus on external coordination and advocacy aspects).</p>	<p>Drawing from the experience with SATNET, IdP office may need strong project coordination unit as more partners get on board and as activities increase. Care and attention have to be paid to the selection of partners, particularly focusing on technical competency and political acceptance in the communities. The main focus should be on building coherence, cross-learning, and competence building to ensure that the target people benefit. KRC, RCA and JESE are the only partners for now – RCA may need particular handholding and training to ensure they live up to expectations. IdP may consider having a programme coordinator with a strong technical profile to support the partners and ensure the Country Director does not get overworked.</p>	<p>IdP Uganda and HQ</p>	<p>From start of phase 2</p>	<p>High</p>

	Main recommendations and associated pathways or implications	Rationale	Lead partner	Timeline	Priority
7	Strengthen the internal monitoring and information management system by putting in place a common tool for all implementing partners to monitor the level of progress of activities, to compare it with the initial targets and to establish the causal links between activities, results and impacts	The programme lacked a dashboard where to post information on a cumulative basis about project activities (planned vs. achieved), which would allow managers to have an overview and to better steer the project. Despite the advantages in terms of time saving and methodology, outsourcing the annual evaluation campaigns creates a gap between the analysis of the progress markers (by KRC) and the implementation or non-implementation of the activities, i.e. it becomes unclear how the implemented activities contribute to the observed results.	IdP Uganda	From start of phase 2	High

Annex 1: Map of project areas



Annex 2: MSFP progress markers matrix

Strategic Goals JSF	JSG5 (contribution to a thriving agricultural sector...): 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D JSG7 (conservation, restoration and sustainable management of the strategic ecosystems ...): 7B & 7D					Actor(s) involved
		Baseline	Year 3	Year 5	Sources of verification	
Outcome	The economic, social and environmental performance of family farmers in Mpanga catchment is reinforced.					
Hypotheses	(1) Favourable political and institutional context in Uganda & friendly local government / (2) No epidemics crisis (as Ebola) in the region / (3) Absence of armed conflict with rebel movements (as AFD-Nalu) and with DRC / (4) Economic stability at the national and international levels / (5) DGD funding continuity during the implementation period of the program / (6) Stability of the national partners (JESE, SATNET)					NGO ILES DE PAIX LOCAL PARTNERS JESE SATNET
Indicator 1	Economic performance progress (progress points under 100)	0	40	70	These composite indicator will be calculated based on family farmers surveys	LOCAL PARTNERS JESE SATNET
Indicator 2	Social performance progress (progress points under 100)	0	40	70		
Indicator 3	Environmental performance (progress points under 100)	0	40	70		
Result 1 :	Family farmers increase & sustain the management and productivity of their farm					
Hypotheses	(7) Extremely erratic & abnormal rainfall condition (low/high) does not occur / (8) Commitment of all stakeholders active in local development towards sustainable agriculture / Security for Family Farmers investments in agriculture (control of cattle and crops rustling) / (9) Open-mindedness and interest of the local population for new production technics and gender inequality reduction					NGO ILES DE PAIX
Indicator 1	Number of farmers families who have adopted one or more sustainable production practices promoted by the program	0	350 (865 women)	600 (1483 women)	Family farmers surveys	LOCAL PARTNERS JESE SATNET
Indicator 2	Number of farmer families (M/F) who have adopted the use of integrated farm plans	0	100 (247 women)	300 (742 women)	Family farmers surveys	LOCAL PARTNERS JESE SATNET
Result 2 :	Family farmers take informed actions on storage, processing and marketing of their produce					
Hypotheses	(10) The market is stable (does not suffer from economic crisis) / (11) International trade does not create unfair competition for local production / (12) Market information on medias (KRC 102FM, InfoTrade Uganda, AgriNet) remain available / (13) Areas of intervention remain accessible (rural roads are well maintained) / (14) Trust among the community members					NGO ILES DE PAIX
Indicator 1	Number of farmer families which improve their capacities to store, process or market their production	0	350 (865 women)	600 (1483 women)	Family farmers surveys	LOCAL PARTNERS JESE SATNET
Indicator 2	Number of farmer families which improve infrastructure & equipment to store, process or market their production	0	200 (494 women)	400 (989 women)	Family farmers surveys	LOCAL PARTNERS JESE SATNET

Result 3 :	Family farmers use credit for investment					NGO ILES DE PAIX LOCAL PARTNERS JESE SATNET
Hypotheses	(15) Stability of the local VSLA (no corruption facts) & trust among the community members / (16) Willingness of financial institutions to develop appropriate services to farmers / (17) Stability of the national currency (no uncontrolled devaluation) / (18) Security in the region (control of armed robbery)					
Indicator 1	Number of farmer families accessing one or more appropriate financial services	0	200 (494 women)	400 (989 women)	Family farmers surveys	
Indicator 2	Number of farmer families who have borrowed funds for investment in the family farm	0	100 (247 women)	200 (494 women)	Family farmers surveys	
Result 4 :	Favorable environment for sustainable family farming is created					NGO ILES DE PAIX LOCAL PARTNERS JESE SATNET
Hypotheses	(19) Government and local authorities open minded to collaborate with Civil Society Organizations (as PELUM) / (20) Aperture from the medias for collaboration with Civil Society Organizations / (21) Communication channels (cell phone, internet) are functional / (22) Open-mindedness of the urban population					
Indicator 1	Number of farmers families directly reached by activities of promotion of sustainable family farming based on lessons learned by the program.		1515 (3745 women)	2424 (5992 women)	Family farmers surveys in the 2 hotspots (impact of Farmers Fields Days)	
Indicator 2	Number of MAs/cooperatives/producer groups in the Rwenzori region which access the proven practices & lessons learned by the program.	0	---	80	Rwenzori Regional Framework Cluster Food Security	
Indicator 3	Number of contributions to PELUM Advocacy activities (Contribution in meetings, contributions in position statement)	0	9	15	PELUM internal statistics	
Result 5 :	Partners capacity in promoting sustainable family farming is strengthened					NGO ILES DE PAIX LOCAL PARTNERS JESE SATNET
Hypotheses	(23) The partners are motivated and available for the improvement of their capacities (they are not overloaded with other programs and inclined to give some time to capacity building) / (24) The partners are able to maintain stability in their team / (25) Collaboration between Iles de Paix, Protos and BD remain fully operational					
Indicator 1	Progress by partners on operational aspects towards promotion of sustainable family farming (progress markers TBD with the partners)	0	30 progress points	70 progress points	Partners surveys	
Indicator 2	Progress by partners on organisational aspects towards management of development programs (progress markers TBD with the partners)	0	30 progress points	70 progress points	Partners surveys	

Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

Criteria	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions & indicators	Information sources	Data collection tools
<p>1/ Project objectives, strategy and activities are relevant to the needs and capacities of farming families in the Mpanga watershed</p> <p>Relevance</p>	<p>Are the five priority areas around which the project was built relevant to the needs of family farmers and are they adapted to the local context in the Mpanga basin?</p> <p>Does the project model to identify, test and disseminate solutions meet the actual needs and capacities of family farmers?</p> <p>Are the geographical targeting, choice of project sites and beneficiary selection modalities relevant?</p> <p>Did the project target the right beneficiaries?</p> <p>Are the project objectives and choice of activities consistent with the interventions of other development actors, including government ones?</p> <p>Do the different partners – including local authorities and agriculture services – show an interest in the project?</p> <p>Are there still unmet priority needs at family farmer or at collective level in the target areas in spite of MSFP implementation?</p>	<p>How MSFP addresses the core problems that prompted design and implementation of the project</p> <p>Promotion of context specific solutions which use local knowledge and resources</p> <p>Appropriateness of introduced agricultural innovations for the different categories of FF and to their heterogeneous livelihood constraints</p> <p>Relevance of the main approaches used by MSFP (e.g. Farmer Participatory Research, Integrated Farm Planning) to the local context; whether IFPs are relevant to the needs and are actionable</p> <p>Level of satisfaction of targeted farmers on the type of activities, quality/quantity of inputs/equipment delivered by the project and implementation modalities</p> <p>Main constraints faced by targeted farmers in embarking in MSFP activities</p> <p>Beneficiary selection criteria and modalities; complaints/tensions in targeted communities as a result of beneficiary selection</p> <p>Relevance of the learning group approach (rotational group sessions, joint labour, etc.) to the local context</p> <p>Level of interest of local authorities and technical services in Farmer Participatory Research and the promotion of sustainable family farming</p> <p>Relevance to key sectoral policies and plans, the Mpanga Catchment Plan and the Rwenzori Regional Framework (RRF)</p>	<p>Program document approved by DGD</p> <p>Mid-term evaluation report</p> <p>Key sectoral policies and plans</p> <p>IdP management & technical staff (including at HQ)</p> <p>JESE technical team</p> <p>External stakeholders (local authorities, agriculture services, other development organisations in the Rwenzori region)</p> <p>Targeted family farms (FF)</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Focus group discussions (FGD)</p> <p>Direct observation</p>

<p>2/ The project has strengthened the economic, social and environmental performance of family farmers in the Mpanga watershed</p>	<p>What are the achievement levels of the various planned activities?</p>	<p>Level of achievements of MSFP components & results; MSFP outcome & results indicators</p>	<p>Project monitoring data & reports</p>	<p>Document review</p>
<p>Effectiveness</p>	<p>How far do implemented activities contribute to the project specific objective and expected results, in particular in terms of production techniques, integrated planning, commercial positioning and natural resource management?</p>	<p>Internal and external factors affecting program activities and results (including Covid-19 restrictions)</p>	<p>Reports to donor</p>	<p>Key informant interviews</p>
	<p>Has the peasant action research led to the adoption of innovations in terms of agricultural planning, production, post-harvest management or collective action?</p>	<p>Result 1 - Long term planning and higher levels of investment in the FF; % of beneficiary FF adopting the Integrated Farm Planning (IFP); concrete examples of optimization of the productive activities (crop associations, nutrient use efficiency, crop livestock interactions, etc.) as a result of IFP; improved quantity and quality of agricultural produce as a result of good farming practices</p>	<p>Baseline data (2018) annual evaluation data and 2020 annual evaluation report</p>	<p>Household interviews</p>
	<p>What is the actual project coverage in terms of dissemination of results to indirect beneficiaries and wider communities across the Mpanga basin?</p>	<p>Result 2 - Effective storage options are available at FF or community level and are used (e.g. temporary storage of produce within the homestead); reduced post-harvest losses</p>	<p>MSFP Progress markers matrix</p>	<p>Focus group discussions</p>
	<p>Have the advocacy actions and other project activities contributed to the emergence of an enabling environment for the development of sustainable family farming in Mpanga basin?</p>	<p>Result 2 - Farmers make informed decisions based on local evidence and market demand; improved practical skills on how to acquire information, analyse data and interpret its relevance for their farm; increased capacity of FF to respond appropriately to changing, dynamic markets; existence of marketing alternatives to individual sales to middlemen; target farmers able to sell their produce at a fair price</p>	<p>End-line (year 5) survey data (if available)</p>	<p>Direct observation</p>
		<p>Result 2 - Development of crop processing options at FF or farmer group level; value addition for coffee farmers through stronger involvement in the first processing steps</p>	<p>MSFP implementation staff</p>	
		<p>Result 3 - Small farmers have access to loans at affordable conditions; VSLA group members have access to a wider range of financial services and are able to substantially invest in agriculture</p>	<p>MSFP M&E staff</p>	
		<p>Result 4 - Development of local, regional or national policies that are favourable to sustainable family farming as a result of project activities; linkages between MSFP and PELUM advocacy activities; evidence that MSFP contributed to the advocacy work in favour of sustainable agriculture and agroecology in Uganda</p>	<p>JESE management team</p>	
		<p>Result 5 - Increased capacities of local development organisations to contribute towards the promotion of sustainable family farming</p>	<p>KRC researcher</p>	
			<p>External stakeholders involved in advocacy work (e.g. PELUM)</p>	
			<p>Targeted FF and farmer groups</p>	
			<p>Private sector actors (e.g. maize traders, coffee cooperatives)</p>	

Criteria	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions & indicators	Information sources	Data collection tools
<p>3/ The project resources and management allowed the expected results to be achieved in an optimal way</p> <p>Efficiency</p>	<p>Have human, material and financial resources been used in an optimal way? Was the project sufficiently dimensioned/equipped in this respect?</p> <p>Were project activities adequately planned and implemented on a timely manner?</p> <p>Could there have been a cheaper way of delivering the same or even better results?</p> <p>Was the agriculture extension methodology used by the project the most efficient one in the particular context?</p> <p>What are the complementarities and possible points of divergence between the project stakeholders, in particular Iles de Paix and its local partners?</p> <p>Did the monitoring and evaluation tools and methods allow for measuring the project progress and adjusting project activities as and when required?</p> <p>Was the project implementation flexible enough and did it make use of lessons learnt?</p>	<p>Level of adequacy between project resources and the extension model (direct support to FF); number of follow-up visits to targeted FF a year</p> <p>Cost efficiency of the geographical targeting (focus on 2 hotspots)</p> <p>Effects of incentives (subsidized agro inputs or productive equipment) on farmer participation in the project and the adoption of sustainable land management practices at farm level</p> <p>Effects of exposure visits on farmer awareness of the different productive options</p> <p>Appropriate use of social media channels to disseminate proven practices and to acquire knowledges developed in other regions</p> <p>Valorisation of existing national mobile market information systems (e.g. Infotrade, Agrinet) to reach expected results</p> <p>Programming decisions based on monitoring data and other evidence from the field (e.g. experimented farming practices); frequency of monitoring of field activities by IdP staff</p> <p>Balance between guidance/coaching provided by IdP and empowerment of local partners</p> <p>Level of coordination with local and international partners; frequency of program coordination meetings between the technical teams; number of sharing & review sessions to foster mutual learning</p> <p>Operational & logistical synergies with Protos/JFW and other development organisations (e.g. combination of expertise, complementarity of targeting levels, joint capacity building efforts)</p> <p>Added value of external stakeholders in terms of co-creation and mutual learning (e.g. WUR on IFP, NARO on PAR, MMU on storage facilities, etc.)</p> <p>Information sharing synergy with VLIR and MMU regarding the production and dissemination of knowledge on agriculture innovation</p>	<p>Project monitoring data</p> <p>Mid-term evaluation report</p> <p>Key sectoral policies and plans</p> <p>IdP management</p> <p>JESE management</p> <p>MSFP implementation team (especially field officers)</p> <p>Key external stakeholders & collaborating partners (JFW, WUR, NARO, MMU, VLIR)</p> <p>Targeted FF</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Focus group discussions</p>

<p>4/ The project benefits – whether they are financial, social or knowledge gains – are likely to last after its closure and to be replicated</p> <p>Sustainability</p>	<p>What is the level of ownership of project activities from beneficiary farmers and other stakeholders, in particular in terms of collective dynamics and knowledge transfer?</p>	<p>Level of involvement of target farmers & their groups in the different stages on MSFP implementation (including monitoring)</p>	<p>Mid-term evaluation report</p>	<p>Document review</p>
	<p>Will the farmer groups around which the MSFP agriculture extension methodology revolves keep on their activities after project closure?</p>	<p>Capacities of target farmers consolidated through refresher courses and intensive extension services by MSPF staff; continuation of the participatory farmer research process by targeted farmers without MSFP support; means available to farmers to support MSFP phasing out; proven agricultural practices are compiled in function of farmer typologies and shared with key sector stakeholders</p>	<p>IdP management</p>	<p>Key informant interviews</p>
	<p>What is the level of sustainability of the different activities, in particular those based on collective dynamics and on the joint management of assets?</p>	<p>Existence of structural, long-term collaboration between MSFP and local/national authorities; key institutions (e.g. MWE, District local government administration) convinced in the project intervention model and therefore willing to integrate it in their programs; potential for integration and scaling up of MSFP (or parts of it) into new government programs; willingness and capacities of local government structures to co-invest in sustainable agricultural development</p>	<p>JESE and RCA management teams</p>	<p>Focus group discussions</p>
	<p>Have the local partners of Iles de Paix the capacities to continue or reinforce some of the project activities after closure?</p>	<p>Internal management capacity of the supported farmer organizations; frequency of internal issues faced by farmer group executive committees (conflicts between members, contested leadership, etc.) and how these are dealt with; proper management of co-financed productive equipment by FF and their groups; linkages established between supported VSLA and formal financial institutions</p>	<p>MSFP implementation team</p>	<p>Household interviews</p>
	<p>What means or tools has the project developed to ensure the dissemination and replication of good practices and successful activities, in the Mpanga watershed or elsewhere in Uganda?</p>	<p>Strengthened farmer marketing associations; stronger relationship between farmer groups and traders / agro input dealers; farmer groups supported by MSFP are connected with the larger member organisations in the area (e.g. access to bulk market options and services, stronger voice in advocacy efforts under the Farmer Movement strategy of Broederlijk Delen)</p>	<p>Government institutions at local, district and regional level</p>	
		<p>Local partners developed training and coaching skills in innovative extension curricula; number and type of training received by local partners (e.g. on new extension models, evidence-based programming, transversal themes, etc.); development of guidelines on agroecology concept and practices</p>	<p>Other external stakeholders (e.g. BD)</p>	
		<p>Complementarities with other international organisations operating in Uganda in terms of knowledge sharing and learning (e.g. agroecological practices, gender, farmer access to markets, ICT in agriculture, etc.)</p>	<p>Targeted FF & farmer groups</p>	
			<p>Private sector actors</p>	

Criteria	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions & indicators	Information sources	Data collection tools
<p>5/ The project has no or limited negative impacts and is likely to have positive impacts, notably in terms of living conditions of the population, natural resources preservation and women empowerment</p> <p>Impact</p>	<p>Has the project contributed to reversing the degradation of natural resources, the loss of agricultural productivity and the deterioration of living conditions in the Mpanga basin?</p> <p>Have project activities contributed to the development and adoption of a sustainable natural resources management plan at community level?</p> <p>Is the project likely to have a positive impact on non-directly targeted localities and on non-beneficiary households?</p> <p>What is the project impact on women access to agricultural innovations, including post-harvest management and agriculture finance?</p> <p>To what extent might the project have had negative impacts on the target populations and their environment (local markets, governance structures, etc.)?</p>	<p>Significant positive changes in meeting household food & nutrition needs; evidence of asset accumulation at FF level (productive and non-productive assets); overall improvement in household welfare, incomes, savings and vulnerability (e.g. reduced dependence of FF on short cycle crops leading to increased resilience to climatic hazards), and beneficiaries' perception of the project contribution to these changes</p> <p>Likelihood of FF practices conserving the natural resources within the Mpanga River watershed; Karangura: reduced soil erosion on slopes; reduced occurrence of landslides in the area; improved rainfall retention and soil moisture; Kabambiro: reduced degradation of wetlands; sufficient time allowed for fallow regeneration on farm lands</p> <p>Better understanding of the importance of sustainable land use at community level; evidence that MSFP contributed to the adoption of micro catchment plans by local communities; community management structures play an active role in monitoring and regulating the different activities at micro catchment level; targeted communities adopt micro-catchment land use recommendations and adhere to locally developed regulations</p> <p>Increased women's role in decision making and planning within FF and at community level; evidence of shifting gender patterns as a result of project activities</p>	<p>Mid-term evaluation report</p> <p>Baseline data (2018) annual evaluation data and 2020 annual evaluation report</p> <p>End-line (year 5) survey data (if available)</p> <p>IdP management</p> <p>MSFP implementation team</p> <p>Key external stakeholders & collaborating partners (in particular MWE & JFW)</p> <p>Targeted FF & farmer groups (with focus on women)</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Focus group discussions</p> <p>Household interviews</p> <p>Direct observation</p>

Annex 4: Data collection tools

Checklist for FGD with targeted farmers & groups

Date	Village(s)	Main focus of the FGD	Number of participants	
			Men	Women

COMMON QUESTIONS TO ALL GROUPS

1. **Background** information: main livelihoods and sources of incomes, land access (farm size & tenure), main crops, access to market
2. General information about the **group** (location, number, men/women, when they began, how they came together and why, involvement in project design)
3. **Support** provided by MSFP: agriculture/other livelihoods, type of activities (training, exposure visits, input provision, equipment, market linkage, etc.)
4. **Level of satisfaction** on the type of activities, beneficiary selection, quality/quantity of inputs/equipment delivered by the project, timing and implementation approaches (e.g. Integrated Farm Planning, Participatory Action Research, group learning, co-financing)
5. Main **constraints** faced by targeted farmers / groups in embarking in MSFP activities
6. Key **achievements** of MSFP – for each dimension, explain what worked well, what did not work, why and what are the solutions / possible improvements
 - Production: farm planning, cropping practices / techniques, crop yields, quality of produce, access to services and inputs (especially organic ones)
 - Storage: knowledge & facilities, quality of produce, post-harvest losses
 - Marketing: information level, alternatives to middlemen, sale price & timing
 - Crop processing & value addition
7. *See optional / specific questions*
8. Significant **livelihood changes** in past 4 years + what is the project contribution to these changes:
 - Household food & nutrition needs
 - Asset accumulation at FF level (productive and non-productive assets)
 - Overall improvement in household welfare, incomes, savings and resilience to climatic hazards and other shocks
9. Observed impacts of MSFP's promoted farming practices on **natural resources**, e.g.
 - Karangura: reduced soil erosion on slopes; reduced occurrence of landslides in the area; improved rainfall retention and soil moisture; etc.
 - Kabambiro: reduced degradation of wetlands; sufficient time allowed for fallow regeneration on farm lands; etc.
10. Sustainable land use at community level: why is it important? Do community management structures play an active role in this? In which way?
11. Increased **women's role** in decision making and planning within FF and at community level; shifting gender patterns as a result of project activities
12. **Internal management capacities** of the farmer group(s)
 - frequency of internal issues faced by farmer group executive committee (conflicts between members, contested leadership, etc.) and how these are dealt with
 - management of productive equipment by FF and their groups
13. **Future plans** of the group
14. **Recommendations** for similar projects

OPTIONNAL / SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

a. **PAR:**

- What innovations have been tested? Which ones were adopted? Why/why not?
- Number/frequency of refresher courses and extension work by MSPF staff?
- Main knowledge gaps and remaining training needs
- Continuation of the PAR process by targeted farmers without MSFP support?

b. **VSLA groups:**

- Key achievements: access to loans at affordable conditions; access to a wider range of financial services
- Effects: main ways VSLA loans are used; ability or not to invest in agriculture
- Linkages with formal financial institutions

c. **Marketing association:**

- Relationship with buyers/traders and agro input dealers
- Connection with the larger farmer organisations in the area (e.g. for bulk marketing, access to farmer services, etc.)

Checklist for individual household interviews / case studies

Date	Village	Interviewee:	age	
			male	female

COMMON QUESTIONS TO ALL HOUSEHOLDS (HH)

1. General information about the **HH (current situation)**: HH size, gender of HH head, land size owned, land size in use, manpower (family/hired), main crops, main sources of incomes, livestock and other productive assets (e.g. farm equipment)
2. Specific **challenges** faced as a household **before** joining the project; and as a farmer
3. **Support** provided by MSFP: agriculture/other livelihoods, type of activities (training, exposure visits, input provision, equipment, market linkage, etc.)
4. **Level of satisfaction** on the type of activities, quality/frequency of training & extension service, quality/quantity of inputs/equipment delivered by the project, timing and implementation approaches (e.g. Integrated Farm Planning, Participatory Action Research, group learning, co-financing)
5. Main **constraints** faced by this farmer/HH in embarking in MSFP activities (e.g. availability/time, land access, illiteracy, etc.)
6. Participation in **group activities**:
 - o main focus/interest of this HH: learning on agricultural innovations; collective storage, processing or marketing; savings & loans; natural resources management; other focus
 - o level of involvement in group activities: leader/member, active/not + why?
 - o access to collective productive equipment/assets: which ones? If not, why?
7. Key **achievements** of MSFP – for each dimension, explain what worked well, what did not work, why and what are the solutions / possible improvements
 - o Production: farm planning, types of crops & varieties, cropping practices / techniques, crop yields, quality of produce, access to services and inputs (especially organic ones)
 - o Storage: knowledge & facilities, quality of produce, post-harvest losses
 - o Marketing: information level, alternatives to middlemen, sale price & timing
 - o Crop processing & value addition
8. *See optional / specific questions*
9. Significant **changes in the life of the individual and his/her household** in past 4 years + what is the **project contribution** to these changes:
 - o Household food & nutrition needs
 - o Asset accumulation (productive & non-productive) – quantity & value
 - o Overall improvement in household incomes & savings
 - o Resilience to climatic hazards and other shocks
 - o Other: education of children, HH health, social capital & inclusion
10. Observed impacts of MSFP’s promoted farming practices on **natural resources**, e.g. reduced soil erosion, improved rainfall retention, reduced degradation of wetlands, sufficient time allowed for fallow regeneration on farm lands, etc.
11. Increased **women’s role** in decision making and planning within FF and at community level; new/improved livelihoods; shifting gender patterns as a result of project activities
12. **Future plans** of the farmer/HH
13. Challenges currently faced, unmet needs + **recommendations** for similar projects

OPTIONNAL / SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- a. **PAR:**
- What innovations have been tested? Which ones this HH adopted? Why/why not?
 - Number/frequency of refresher courses and extension work by MSPF staff?
 - Main knowledge gaps and remaining training needs
 - Continuation of the PAR process by this HH and other farmers without MSFP support?
- b. **VSLA:**
- Key achievements: access to loans at affordable conditions; access to a wider range of financial services
 - Effects: main ways VSLA loans are used; ability or not to invest in agriculture
 - Linkages with formal financial institutions
- c. **Marketing association:**
- Relationship with buyers/traders and agro input dealers
 - Connection with the larger farmer organisations in the area (e.g. for bulk marketing, access to farmer services, etc.)
- d. **Small livestock / bee keeping:**
- Which type (pig, poultry, rabbit, goat, bee) and why (how relevant to the HH needs?)
 - Main purpose: manure, savings/capital, diet or income diversification, other
 - Main constraints faced or foreseen (e.g. shelter construction, management skills, etc.)
- e. **Cooking stoves:**
- Current condition and use (if not, why?)
 - Advantages if compared with traditional ones / main effect on HH (e.g. time saving, fuel consumption, etc.)
 - Wider effects on natural resources
- f. **Water/soil conservation measures (trenches):**
- Quality of work & current condition
 - Any challenges related to implementation modality (“food for labour”)
 - Observed impacts on water retention, soil erosion, other?

Checklist for Farm Innovator interviews

Date	Village	Interviewee:	age	
			male	female

1. General information about the **household (current situation)**: HH size, gender of HH head, land size owned, land size in use, manpower (family/hired), main crops, main sources of incomes, livestock and other productive assets (e.g. farm equipment)
2.
 - a. Specific **challenges** faced as a household **before** joining the project; and as a farmer
 - b. **Social capital before** joining the project: origin (native/migrant), social network and skills (ability to talk, guide, advice), level of inclusion in the community
3. **Selection** as FI: why? How selected?
4. **This HH’s Integrated Farm Planning¹¹ (IFP)**: how was it designed (with all HH members?); what are the different components; how integrated are they (incl. off-farm activities); was the IPF revised/updated over time; what has been achieved and how; if not achieved, why?
5. **Training on IFP**:
 - a. What training did the HH **received** + when, how, any refresher training, who attended? Which skills has the HH acquired?
 - b. Training from FI **to other HHs**: how many HHs, how, when, where, how many times?
 - c. **Follow-up** of fellow HHs: how many, how, what kind of extension advice (give concrete examples), any other role that FIs play in their respective farmer group?
6. **FI group**:
 - o his/her level of involvement in group activities: leader/member, active/not + why?
 - o purpose of this group? Frequency of meetings? Main topics discussed? Key challenges as a group? Future plans
7. **Scaling-up & dissemination**: have the “2nd generation” FIs developed a farm plan? Are they now able to train others? Is there any replication of this IPF approach further away (non target farmers, neighbour villages, etc.)?

Complete the interview with **direct observation** of the main innovations that have been adopted in the FI’s farm (e.g. home garden, storage, trenches, fodder production, trees, compost, biopesticide, etc.)

¹¹ Discussion and questions based on observation of the IPF drawing.

Checklist for key informant interviews: program management

Date	Name	Organisation
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1) Background information: arrival date in organisation / on project; previous job/position

2) Program design, strategies, implementation modalities, and their evolution over time

- Large number of activities and expected results (from production to marketing; including advocacy and capacity building of partners): too ambitious in 4.5 years?
- Project document / DGD format (vague about actual activities): advantages & weaknesses; how actual implementation differs and why?
- IFP: strength/weakness of this approach? Actionable? (e.g. allows for integration of cropping/livestock systems & off-farm activities; much emphasis on non-productive assets; not always complemented by budget & workplan)
- FIs: trained on facilitation skills? Played their multiplication role?
- FIs and PAR: good channels for dissemination of research results & agri innovations to other farmers and the broader community? Room for improvement of the dissemination model?
- (Self-)selection of beneficiaries: did MSFP target the right beneficiaries (incl. for FIs and PAR)? How specific economic vulnerabilities / different types of farm HH taken into account?
- Rationale for some technical choices in the “basket of AE options”:
 - AE vs. GAP: rationale for promoting the separation of crops in pure stands (e.g. maize / beans in Kabambiro)
 - Water/soil conservation: any alternative to trenches? (considering the limited land size)
 - Diversification vs. MSFP training/research on limited number of crops
- Local gov.: targeted under R4/advocacy, but what about training/capacity building (especially on AE)?

3) Key achievements and internal or external factors impacting on results

- a. Overall implementation status & budget spending by result/component (and if possible, by activity)
- b. Result 1 / production
 - % of beneficiaries adopting IFP
 - Delays in sharing the PAR results with farmers: why? Which consequences on achievements of program targets?
 - Crop yields/productivity: measured? Evolution before/after MSFP? External factors?
 - Agroforestry vs. planting trees: examples of AF systems that MSFP enhanced; promotion of multipurpose trees (incl. fodder)?
 - Availability of organic inputs: need for external/commercial supply? Link with local agro-input dealers?
- c. Result 2 / PHH, value addition & marketing
 - Reduced post-harvest losses: measured? Evolution before/after MSFP?
 - Crop processing & marketing: key achievements & remaining gaps

- Collective action (for PHH, VA & marketing): examples of success stories? Main challenges/obstacles? Potential risks (e.g. mismanagement of collective assets)
 - d. Result 3 / access to credit
 - VSLA / VSLA+: strengths and limitations; % of loans used in agriculture; evidence that savings are re-invested in (sustainable) agriculture?
 - Progress in access to a wider range of financial services for farmers?
 - e. Result 4 / advocacy
 - Focus at community / local gov. level, but initial plan to help develop regional or even national policies: any achievement?
 - Wider dissemination of MSFP results (e.g. on AE options that smallholders can easily adopt)
 - f. Result 5 / capacity building of partners
 - Number and types of training, which topics?
 - Achievements in terms of training skills / extension methods; any gap?
 - Achievements in terms of AE concept and principles; any gap?
 - Development of guidelines on AE? Or use of existing ones?
- 4) Program management, steering and M&E
- HR and their evolution + effects on program activities; hand-over between former and current PM; adequacy of resources vs. extension model with direct HH support
 - Activity planning: which tools (IDP and JESE)? Any common workplan?
 - Steering committee: who? When/frequency? Usefulness? Examples of key decisions made? Other internal coordination mechanisms? Strengths/weaknesses?
 - Internal (IDP and JESE) monitoring tools to track activities and outputs (e.g. # of training, participants, trees planted/growing) + how aggregated between the 2 areas?
 - Training / capacity building: how progress is measured? Existence of pre- and post-training assessment tools?
 - Programming decisions based on monitoring data (including outsourced annual evaluation): to what extent? Examples?
 - Linkages between annual evaluation findings and implementation of activities? Any example of significant change made to MSFP activities?
 - MTE: usefulness? What were the main recommendations? Have they been implemented? If not, why?
 - Budget follow-up and forecasting: which tools at PM level? Partners level?
- 5) Complementarities / points of divergence with implementing partners
- a. NARO
 - Top-down approach (cf. MTE): addressed? How?
 - Feedback/interactions with MSFP staff
 - MTE reco that PAR should be fully managed by FOs: not followed, why?
 - Proper channel for MSFP/IDP to advocate for agroecology at MAAIF level?
 - b. JESE
 - Differences/complementarities in terms of approaches, expertise, thematic areas

- Balance between guidance by IDP and empowerment of JESE
- Kabambiro and Karangura activities run as 2 separate projects? Evidence of common steering, information sharing and mutual learning?

6) Sustainability

- Farmers / communities: continuation of the PAR process without external support? Groups dynamics and management of shared assets?
- Local partners: JESE capacities to roll out similar projects (without IDP or another INGO)?
- Local gov. & District:
 - Level of involvement (in Kamwenge/Kabarole)
 - Ownership of MSFP approaches (IFP, PAR, group work & learning)
 - Willingness (capacities?) to invest in sustainable family farming & AE?
 - Integration of MSFP approaches/activities in gov. programs
- Other local stakeholders: compilation/dissemination of proven GAP / AE options?

7) Impacts

- Significant positive changes in terms of HH income & food security
- Social and organisational aspects e.g. strengthened farmer groups
- Evidence of shifting gender patterns as a result of project activities
- Further resilience to climate hazards and other shocks at HH or community level?
- MSFP contribution to reversing the degradation of natural resources: what are the changes already observed on the ground? What are the other and broader impacts at watershed level? Is coverage enough to make a change?
- Links with Mpanga Micro Catchment Plan and NRM initiatives at watershed level
- Any potential negative impacts on the target populations and their environment (local markets, governance structures, etc.)?

Annex 5: Evaluation sampling

The following tables show the number of households interviewed by the evaluation team and the number of farmers who participated in focus group discussions (FGD):

Table 3. Number of households interviewed (excluding Farm Innovators), by subcounty and gender of respondent

	Kabambiro	Karangura	Total
Female	2	5	7
Male	8	6	14
Total	10	11	21

NB: This includes 3 non-beneficiary households (1 in Kabambiro and 2 in Karangura).

Table 4. Number of Farm Innovators interviewed, by subcounty and gender of respondent

	Kabambiro	Karangura	Total
Female	2	1	3
Male	1	3	4
Total	3	4	7

Table 5. Number of FGD participants, by subcounty and gender

	Kabambiro	Karangura	Total
Female	53	42	95
Male	46	43	89
Total	99	85	184

Table 6. Number of FGD participants, by type of group and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Farmer group	45	54	99
PAR group	17	5	22
Marketing association	16	5	21
VSLA	7	28	35
Bio-briquette group	4	3	7
Total	89	95	184

Table 7. Number of FGD participants, by type of group and subcounty

	Kabambiro	Karangura	Total
Farmer group	72	27	99
PAR group	11	11	22
Marketing association	16	5	21
VSLA	-	35	35
Bio-briquette group	-	7	7
Total	89	95	184

NB: In Kabambiro, discussions on VSLA were included in FGDs with farmer groups.

Annex 6: List of key informant interviews

	Name of person	Organisation	Position	Date of interview
1	Habasa Donosio	Kabambiro S/C	Chairperson	04/12/2021
2	Tusiime Charles	Kabambiro S/C	Speaker	04/12/2021
3	Lucky Edison	New Kakyinga Millers Enterprises	Executive Director	04/12/2021
4	Mibiiri Davies	Karangura Peak cooperative	Secretary Manager	06/12/2021
5	Mibiiri Johnson	Karangura Peak cooperative	Field Officer	06/12/2021
6	Kahuzo Elkanah	Karangura S/C	LCIII Chairman	08/12/2021
7	Muhindo Ali Kisuki	Karangura S/C	Speaker	08/12/2021
8	Muhindo Janet	Karangura S/C	Secretary for Production	08/12/2021
9	Biira Betty	Karangura S/C	Councilor for old persons	08/12/2021
10	Kajumba Maureen	Karangura S/C	Subcounty Chief	08/12/2021
11	Mugabe Rogers	Karangura S/C	Vet Officer	08/12/2021
12	Mpuga James	Karangura S/C	Parish Chief	08/12/2021
13	Aloysius Tumihimbise	Kamwenge District LG	District Agriculture Officer	09/12/2021
14	Sam Mwanguhya	JESE	Field Officer, Kabambiro S/C	09/12/2021
15	James Kwesiga	JESE	Field Officer, Kabambiro S/C	09/12/2021
16	Alex Mwebembezi	JESE	Field Officer, Kabambiro S/C	09/12/2021
17	Rabson Katya	KRC	Researcher / M&E Officer	09/12/2021
18	Tumwine Venancio	NARO	Research Officer, Crop Entomology	09/12/2021
19	Lieven Peeters	IdP – Uganda	Country Director / MSFP Manager	10/12/2021
20	Colline Tumusiime	IdP – Uganda	Field Officer, Karangura S/C	10/12/2021
21	Apollo Saturday	IdP – Uganda	Field Officer, Karangura S/C	10/12/2021
22	Eriah Byaruhanga	JESE	Head of Department, Agriculture	10/12/2021
23	Muhindo Beneth Misaki	RCA	Project Coordinator	10/12/2021
24	Aaron Byakutaga	RCA	Executive Director	10/12/2021
25	Simon Sunday	Karangura S/C	Agriculture Officer	10/12/2021
26	Apuuli Abigaba Saturday	Kabalore District LG	District Production Officer	10/12/2021
27	George Bwambale	JFW	Programme Officer	16/12/2021
28	Denis Hees	IdP – Headquarters	Responsible for Development of Institutional Partnerships	16/12/2021
29	Olivier Genard	IdP – Headquarters	Head of Programme support unit	16/12/2021

Annex 7: Field mission schedule

Day	Date	Location	Activity	Comments
T	30/11/2021	Entebbe to Fort Portal	Travel	
W	01/12/2021	IdP office, Fort Portal	Start-up meeting with MSFP team	with staff from IdP (3), JESE (2) and RCA (2)
T	02/12/2021	Kabambiro S/C	Field data collection: 5 FGD with farmer groups	
F	03/12/2021	Kabambiro S/C	Field data collection: 10 HH interviews	
S	04/12/2021	Kabambiro S/C	Field data collection: 2 FGD + 3 FI interviews + 2 KI interviews	FGD with PAR group & marketing association KI interviews with maize trader & subcounty leaders
S	05/12/2021	Fort Portal	Desk review	
M	06/12/2021	Karangura S/C	Field data collection: 3 FGD + 4 FI interviews + 1 KI interview	FGD with members from different farmer groups & with marketing association KI interview with Karangura Peak cooperative
T	07/12/2021	Karangura S/C	Field data collection: 9 HH interviews	
W	08/12/2021	Karangura S/C	Field data collection: 5 FGD + 2 HH interviews + 2 KI interviews	FGD with VSLAs, PAR groups & bio-briquette group KI interviews with subcounty leaders & technical team
T	09/12/2021	IdP office, Fort Portal	4 KI interviews	KI interviews with JESE field staff, Kamwenge District LG, KRC & NARO
F	10/12/2021	IdP office, Fort Portal	6 KI interviews	KI interviews with IdP field staff, IdP Country Director, JESE manager, RCA, Kabarole District LG & Karangura S/C Agri Officer
S	11/12/2021	IdP office, Fort Portal	Debriefing session	with staff from IdP (3), JESE (3) and RCA (2)
S	12/12/2021	Fort Portal		
M	13/12/2021	Fort Portal to Entebbe	Travel	

Annex 8: Links between learning and development in poor rural communities

Learning and development are interactive activities, and the implementation of MSFP provided evidence of this:

- People learn from those they consider better and will choose only that knowledge which rewards them. There was a lot of learning from the MSFP team, the FIs and all those that beneficiaries considered better. Likewise, MSFP teams picked important learnings from the ideas which the beneficiaries raised and considered better.
- In order for learning to take place, the “better people” must be in proximity of the learners to provide guidance, pass on knowledge and challenge the status quo. When tools and inputs are provided, the learners have a chance to practice what they learn. The project taught people, provided inputs and had its team consistently available to support the beneficiaries.
- It is also evident from the project that the technical staff of the project were the key bridges via which the beneficiaries accessed the “external world” (e.g. buyers who offered better prices, local government officials and other actors such as input dealers).
- Regular interactions create a platform for interpersonal learning which is the foundation for intrapersonal learning – allowing the learners to try new things, abandoning what does not work and picking up what works. When people met in groups and when the project teams met up with the beneficiaries at their farms and households, learning took place through instruction, observation, coaching and mentoring. However, there was evidence that many of the successful farmers reflected upon the new knowledge and tailored it to suit their own circumstances. This was the foundation for creative thinking and innovative actions. This was reflected in the application of some of the bio-concoctions on treating animal pests, use of the same on other crops and planting of crops outside of the project scope.
- Interactions with outsiders challenge common beliefs, allowing adoption of new progressive practices. In Kabambiro, beneficiaries first ran away from the project teams on several occasions. They all believed that nothing would come out of these teams and that what they did as a community was adequate – the burning, seed broadcasting, drying, saving, etc. However, interactions with the project teams challenged these beliefs, gradually the beneficiaries drew closer and eventually the old beliefs were abandoned.

Annex 9: Presentation of the evaluation results to Iles de Paix and partners



Final evaluation of Mpanga Super Farmers Program in Uganda

Presentation of the evaluation results

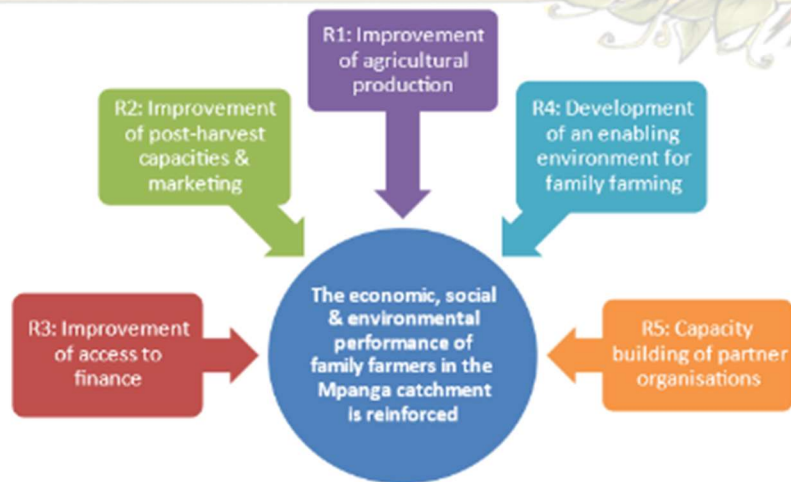
11 February 2022

Presentation plan



1. Project overview
2. Objectives & methodology of the final evaluation
3. Main findings (assessment by criteria)
4. Recommendations
5. Questions & discussion

MSFP objective and expected results



11/02/2022

3

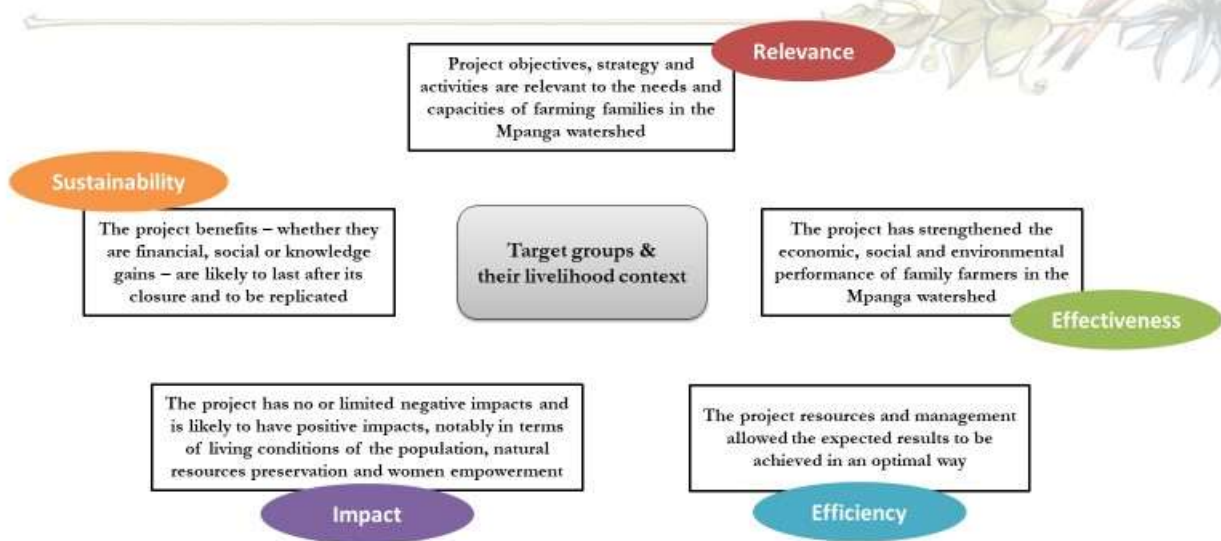
Objectives of the final evaluation

1. Assess the **level of achievement and quality** of project activities and their contribution to the MSFP expected results & objective
2. Assess the degree to which the crosscutting dimensions of **gender** and **environment** have been integrated into the MSFP
3. Identify the main **difficulties** encountered during implementation as well as **good practices** and activities that could be replicated;
4. Propose **recommendations** for the design and effective implementation of future projects, notably in view of the 2nd phase of MSFP

11/02/2022

4

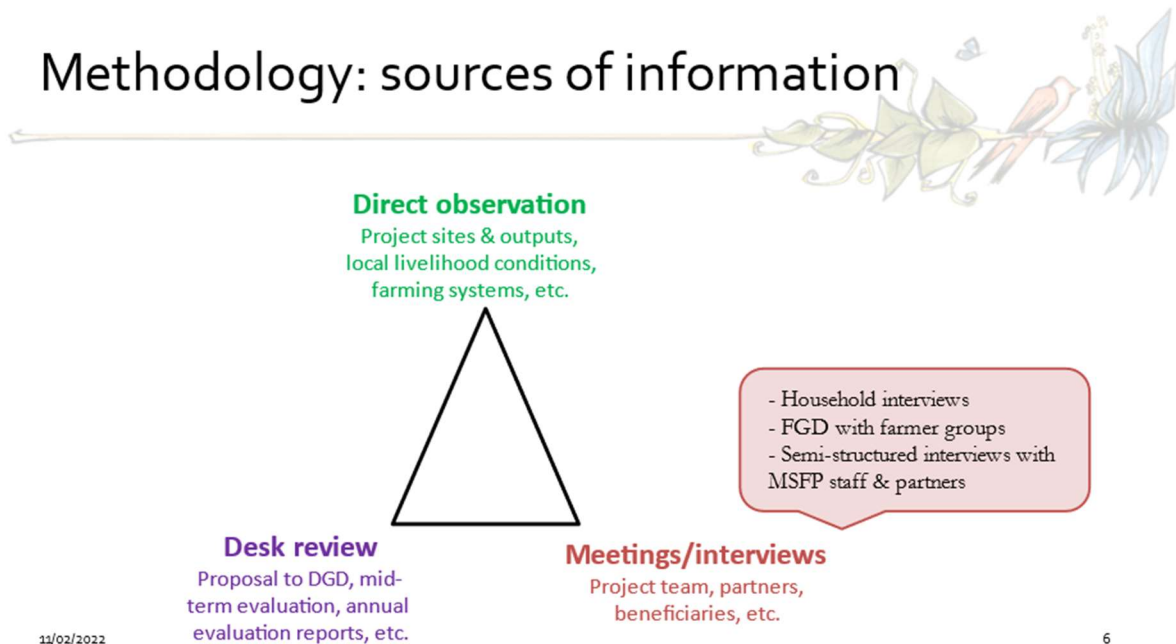
Methodology: evaluation criteria



02/03/2022

5

Methodology: sources of information



11/02/2022

6

Relevance



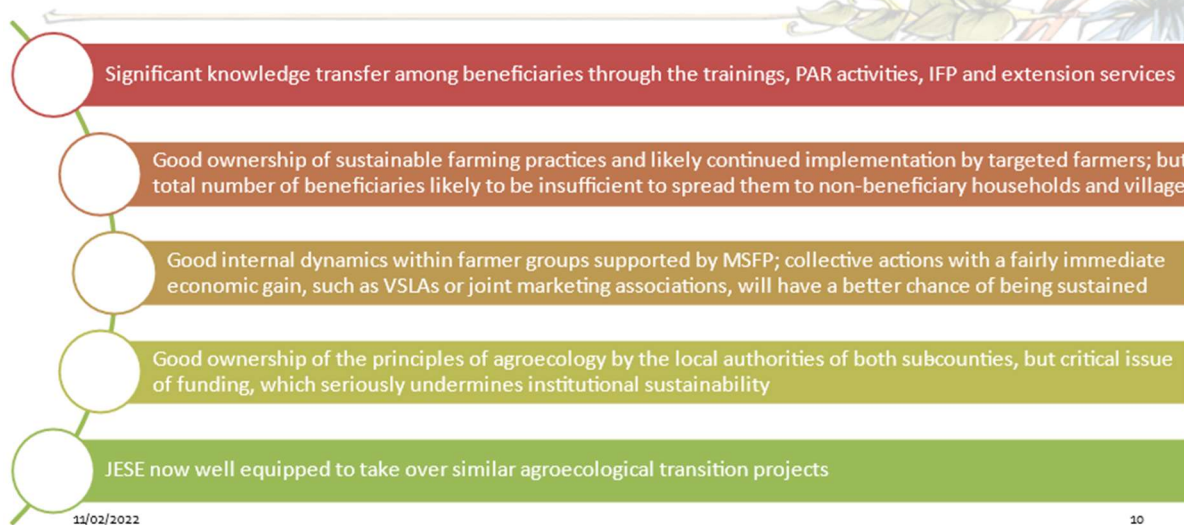
Effectiveness



Efficiency



Sustainability



Impact



Recommendations

- 1/ Integrate **livestock production** as an essential component of the development of sustainable production systems from the outset of projects.
- 2/ Develop **value addition** and support **market access** using a market systems development approach.
- 3/ Strengthen the collaboration with **Karangura Peak** Cooperative, not only on coffee marketing but also on agricultural **extension work** (and synergies with Trias to be foreseen on governance issues)
- 4/ Strengthen collective marketing of farm produce through **cooperative development** and investigate possible ways of cooperation with government in this sector.
- 5/ Refine targeting and provide stronger support to the beneficiaries of **alternative income generating activities**.
- 6/ Strengthen internal coordination, coherence and cross-learning between implementing partners (need for **stronger project coordination unit** as more partners get on board and as activities increase).
- 7/ Strengthen the **internal monitoring and information management system** by putting in place a common tool for all implementing partners to monitor the level of progress of activities, to compare it with the initial targets and to establish the causal links between activities, results and impacts.

11/02/2022

12

Annexe 10: Key message note

Co-funded by the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) and implemented by Iles de Paix (IdP) together with local partners, the Mpanga Super Farmers Program (MSFP) aimed to reinforce the economic, social and environmental performance of family farmers in the Mpanga catchment in Western Uganda. MSFP started in July 2017 for a total duration of 4.5 years. It directly targeted 600 family farmers in Karangura and Kabambiro subcounties. The objective of this final external evaluation was to account for the results achieved and draw lessons for future interventions.

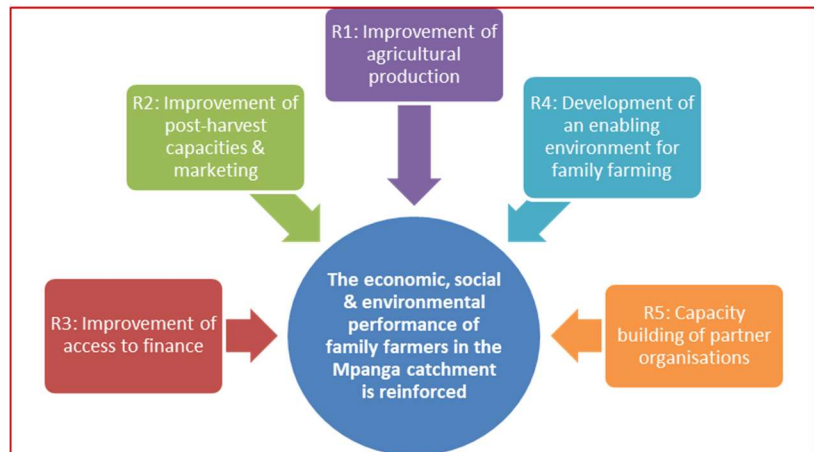


Figure 4. MSFP expected results and objective

Project performance and key findings

<p>Criteria 1 (relevance): Project objectives, strategy and activities are relevant to the needs and capacities of farming families in the Mpanga watershed.</p>	<p>Highly satisfactory</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSFP was informed by clear analysis of needs and context. MSFP activities covered the priority needs of local farmers. The project was flexible and adapted to the changing needs of beneficiaries. There were two main success factors: (i) the intensive extension work and proximity of services of Field Officers; (ii) the combination of integrated farm planning (IFP) and participatory action research (PAR). The geographical targeting was in line with the project intensive approach. There was a lack of data on beneficiary profiles to know which innovations were appropriate to which categories of family farms. 	
<p>Criteria 2 (effectiveness): The project has strengthened the economic, social and environmental performance of family farmers in the Mpanga watershed.</p>	<p>Satisfactory</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The level of achievement was good overall, particularly for results R1 (farm productivity), R3 (access to credit) and R5 (capacity building of partners). The effective application of agroecological and other good agricultural practices by beneficiary farmers resulted in an improved quality and quantity of produce (R1). VSLAs proved to be particularly effective in bringing farmers together to save money and get loans, but the project has not really enabled the supported farmer groups to access wider financial services for farm or value chain investments (R3). Little progress was made on value addition and market access at collective level (R2). The project coverage was small, advocacy activities (under R4) were less than expected, and there is no guarantee that MSFP results will be disseminated – it was nevertheless the first project of IdP in the country, in a context of travel/meeting restrictions linked to Covid-19. 	
<p>Criteria 3 (efficiency): The project resources and management allowed the expected results to be achieved in an optimal way.</p>	<p>Moderately satisfactory</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The skills and experience of the project team greatly facilitated its implementation on the ground. 	

- The resource-intensive design of MSFP implies coverage of small geographical areas where resources are not plentiful.
- The partnership model leveraged on existing expertise and capacity to deliver the project. It supported capacity building for local organisations, and allowed for flexibility and learning throughout the years. However, regular adjustment of project activities requires proactive monitoring, trust and regular accountability.
- Despite good cooperation with the sub-county teams, there was limited structural, long-term collaboration between MSFP and government institutions at higher levels.
- Operational synergies with other Belgian organisations operating in the Rwenzori region were less intense than initially planned.
- MSFP lacked comprehensive monitoring systems that capture data at activity level and provide an integrated overview of achievements.

Criteria 4 (sustainability): The project benefits (whether financial, social or knowledge gains) are likely to last after its closure and to be replicated.	Satisfactory
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- The project has led to significant and lasting knowledge transfers among beneficiaries through the trainings, PAR activities, IFP and extension services.
- There is good ownership of the sustainable agricultural practices promoted by the project. Their implementation will most likely be continued by the targeted farmers.
- However, the total number of beneficiaries is likely to be insufficient to ensure the dissemination of these practices to non-beneficiary households and villages.
- There are good internal dynamics within the farmer groups supported by MSFP. Collective actions with a fairly immediate economic gain, such as VSLAs or joint marketing associations, will have a better chance of being sustained.
- The local authorities in both sub-counties have shown great interest in the project and have appropriated the principles of agroecology quite well. However, they face a critical and structural problem of funding, which seriously compromises the institutional sustainability of the action.
- Local partner JESE is now well equipped to take on similar agroecological transition projects in the Rwenzori region and beyond.

Criteria 5 (impact): The project has no or limited negative impacts and is likely to have positive impacts, notably in terms of living conditions of the population, natural resources preservation and women empowerment	Highly satisfactory
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- MSFP led to improvements in food production, nutrition and health at household level.
- The project has also initiated a process of asset accumulation for most of the beneficiary households, but more importantly it has contributed to the growth of human capital.
- Increased harvests and quality of agricultural products have had a positive impact on the prices obtained by farmers and on their income, but farmers are still subject to price fluctuations (due to the lack of collective bargaining and value addition).
- The project has significantly enhanced the role and position of women in financial resource mobilisation, household development planning and community service.
- Tree planting and trenching had direct and visible impacts on the environment, and a general improvement in the vegetation cover of the landscape was reported.
- Several other efforts have been made to protect the Mpanga River and its tributaries: local labour has been diverted from sand and stone mining in the riverbed; a process is underway to promote a broader governance framework for natural resource conservation in the Mpanga catchment.
- Further efforts are required to engage the rich people who have capacity to destroy the environment on a bigger scale than local farmers.

Recommendations

- 1/ Integrate livestock production as an essential component of the development of sustainable production systems from the outset of projects.
- 2/ Develop value addition and support market access using a market systems development approach.
- 3/ Strengthen the collaboration with Karangura Peak cooperative and their international partners (e.g. Trias), not only on coffee marketing but also on agricultural extension work.
- 4/ Strengthen collective marketing of farm produce through cooperative development and investigate possible ways of cooperation with government in this sector.
- 5/ Refine targeting and provide stronger support to the beneficiaries of alternative income generating activities.
- 6/ Strengthen internal coordination, coherence and cross-learning between implementing partners (need for stronger project coordination unit as more partners get on board and as activities increase).
- 7/ Strengthen the internal monitoring and information management system by putting in place a common tool for all implementing partners to monitor the level of progress of activities, to compare it with the initial targets and to establish the causal links between activities, results and impacts.



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