

**Knowledge Network
Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation
Research Brief #4**

**Livelihoods and
Basic Services in
Lainya County,
South Sudan**

**Research by Helen Mountfort
October-December 2012**

This brief is part of a series of research briefs of the DCR consortium. The purpose is to communicate lessons and corresponding recommendations for programme quality improvement. For information on the research methodology please refer to the full report, available upon request.

The study looked at *how ZOA’s livelihoods interventions (of both on-farm and off-farm activities) improve access to basic services in Lainya County, South Sudan*. Field research was conducted from October to December 2012 in four Payams: Wujji, Kupera, Kenyi and Mukaya.

The research findings indicate that overall, ZOA is playing a key role in addressing issues of livelihood recovery in Lainya County, South Sudan. The livelihood programme, which encompasses Farmer Field Schools, Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA) and Vocational Skills Trainings¹, has supported the recovery process of beneficiaries in Lainya County.

However, due to the relatively new establishment of the livelihoods programme (2011) and without a solid baseline data set of programme beneficiaries directly involved in the livelihood interventions, it was difficult to draw firm conclusions on how ZOA’s livelihood programmes have contributed to the increase of access to basic services (and vice versa).

In semi-structured group interviews with livelihood groups, 6 out of 18 groups reported a general increase in income at the household level. Respondents noted that they could now put their children in school and the farmers noted that they have experienced an increase in crop yields. As illustrated in the data from the VSLA questionnaire, 56 respondents out of 61 interviewed had noticed an increase in income. They clearly stated that income generated from the group savings and from the income generating activities allowed them to put their children in school. Respondents also noted that their ability to pay for medical bills had increased as their productivity of their farms increased. The majority of respondents (87%, n=61) felt that the health of the members of the household had improved since joining the VSLA group.

Lesson 1:
The need to move from food security towards improved and sustainable livelihoods

Farmers in Lainya County are primarily engaged in subsistence farming. Each Farmer Field School is supplied with the same seeds and produces the same crops. Therefore, each farmer is selling the same thing at the local market, and in small quantities. All respondents noted that they do not farm their entire plot of land. With only hand held tools both

Recommendations:

- Create a savings scheme within the Farmer Field Schools which will allow them to move beyond food security.
- Provide basic numeracy and literacy training to all livelihood groups, ensuring that groups can move beyond their present form.

Recommendation:

- Reflect on how to address the challenges related to local/regional market development.

¹The Vocational Skills Training component could not be included in this study.
Page 2 of 4

women and men were physically unable to do it. Groups also stated that they were in need of large machinery to remove trees and other wild vegetation on their farms. If the groups would also be trained on a saving methodology, this could allow them to pool their money together in order to purchase tools and seeds themselves in future seasons. The savings group could include a welfare fund component to ensure that money is also available when individuals in the household get sick. Another issue is lack of knowledge of basic numeracy and literacy skills to deal with their loans. This was also the case for VSLA members.

Lesson 2:
The need for more reflection on how to develop the local/regional markets

The local markets currently do not attract outsiders to come and buy food. The bad roads have left huge gaps in business and market development. Vehicles are unable to gain access and the transportation costs are extremely high. Groups felt that if they were able to produce large quantities of food that it would just rot because they are unable to gain access to the market. There were also no (or limited) middlemen that link between the farmers and the market (or larger market such as Yei or Juba). In general, the researcher found limited information or clarity about how ZOA's activities would lead or contribute to its objectives 2 and 3 (2. the local/regional market has further developed and 3. the business climate has improved). The questions that could be asked are: what are the steps involved in order to make these objectives a reality? And what needs to be in place in order to move these groups to the next stage? Research on these questions (once further refined) and on some of the key assumptions made would be greatly beneficial.

Lesson 3:
Placing the Farmer Field Schools close to primary schools is an opportunity to feed school-going children

ZOA programme and project management staff suggested that the land surrounding the school could be used as the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) community garden. Parents could be chosen to form the FFS and a portion of what the community garden produces is given to the school in the form of a feeding programme. This would link the livelihood initiative of FFS with education. While the garden acts as the training ground to learn modern farming techniques it could also be used to supply a portion or contribution of food to the school. Many of the children have to walk long distances to get to school, they arrive hungry and don't get a chance to leave school for lunch until 1pm.

Recommendation:

- Where possible, place the farmer field school within the catchment area of the schools in order to provide a feeding programme for the schools in order to increase and sustain child enrolment.

Recommendation:

- Lobby for more support to primary healthcare in Lainya, or consider the integration of support for primary healthcare in the DCR/Lainya programme.

Lesson 4:

The need to improve the quality and affordability of primary health care

Household expenditure was prioritised on a number of items. Predominantly *sickness* was recorded as the most frequent response (followed by *food* and *school fees*). In general however, health services are limited and are often in a poor condition. The three payams ZOA is working in (Wuji, Kupera and Mukaya) are extremely remote areas of South Sudan. With limited infrastructure such as roads and communication, some of these areas are inaccessible during particular times of the year, which greatly hinders the supply of medicines and goods. In addition to this, some clinics do not have formally trained health officers and medicine/treatment is unreliable. The cost of health care is also increasing, and figures from the respondents highlighted that costs for consultation were doubling each year (from 5SSP in 2011, to 10SSP in 2012). While the medicines (if available) are free, the consultation and other items are not. For example, a needle for drip costs 3SSP, the cost to stay overnight is around 10SSP. If transport is required to the health care unit/centre, it can cost over 30 SSP one-way. These costs became a serious concern when respondents noted that children could require health centre visits up to 3 to 4 times a month. In general, most participants used local herb remedies when someone first got ill, and if there was no improvement, they would go to the health clinic.

Lesson 5:

The need to address the shortage of trained primary school teachers

Lainya County was severely impacted in 2010 when the Government let go of all teachers that were not trained to the national standard. Initially Lainya County had 294 government paid teachers and this number was reduced to around 40. It led to the (temporary) closing of some schools. To date, teachers have not been re-hired. The Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) have worked together to pay volunteer teachers in order to re-open schools and continue the children's education. Parents are asked to pay a set fee each term to cover the costs of the volunteer teachers. However, this has become a challenging task for some families that do not have the money to send all their children to school. ZOA's current programming which addresses school rehabilitation and construction and teacher training, is one step towards bridging the basic service gap, but more lobby and advocacy is needed to address the shortage of trained teachers.

Recommendation:

- Lobby and advocacy for more trained teachers in Lainya County.