

Women's Economic Empowerment in the Pastoral Areas of Somaliland, Sudan & Uganda



- ❑ We are working with:
 - well-established women's groups in Somaliland & Uganda
 - women in Eastern Sudan whose husbands participate in other PENHA projects

Program areas:

- ❑ Uganda's semi-arid Cattle Corridor
(Sembabule, Mbarara & Kabale districts)
- ❑ Kassala State in Eastern Sudan
- ❑ Awdal, Togdheer & Sanaag districts of Somaliland

1. The Program

The program involves:

- Training women in basic business skills,
- Increasing their access to credit,
- Increasing their access to information
- Increasing their participation in business networks.

Three interrelated components:

1. **“Skills and Knowledge for Enterprise”**

Activities:

- providing business skills training for women’s groups
- providing information on new income-generating activities
- linking women’s groups up with business networks
- Study tours and exchange visits between the three countries

2. “Access to Credit and Productive Assets”

- ❑ We will make women more creditworthy
 - with training & formal registration of groups
- ❑ We will link women up with finance providers
 - local MFIs will participate in training workshops
- ❑ We will help women to acquire productive assets
 - livestock, beehives, sewing machines, juicemaking machines, etc.

3. “Influencing Policies and Practice”

- Identifying gaps in policy and practice
- Engaging in dialogues with all stakeholders
 - from banks to village elders.
- Disseminating issue briefs

2. Our Approach and the Issues

- ❑ Baseline studies in Uganda, Sudan & Somaliland

- ❑ The studies have:
 - produced valuable insights & baseline data
 - identified promising income-generating activities
 - shaped the design of the training
 - shaped the networking and policy aspects

1. “Skills and Knowledge for Enterprise”

Business Skills Training – Some Issues

Sudan:

- 70% of the women involved are illiterate.
- They have had very little access to information.
- Elementary level of training
- Adult literacy component
- Women’s resource centers
 - for training, and access to information (radio, TV, video).

Uganda:

- Literacy levels vary widely within women's groups – illiterate, semi-literate and literate.
- This is quite challenging for the facilitators.
- Some women with commercial enterprises require more sophisticated training & business development services.

Somaliland:

- “Training of Trainers” approach
 - training young graduates to deliver training to women’s groups.
- They can then provide on-going business advice to women’s groups
 - with a small fee on top of transport, food & accommodation costs.

Study Tours

- ❑ Women from Somaliland and Sudan will visit Uganda
- ❑ Participants:
 - businesswomen
 - women in leadership positions
 - NGO workers
 - members of pastoral-area women's groups.
- ❑ Goals:
 - To broaden participants' horizons
 - To generate new business ideas
 - To strengthen regional links

Why Uganda?

- The economy is vibrant
- Socio-economic conditions are similar, but changing rapidly
- There is freedom of expression and a supportive environment for gender equality

2. “Access to Credit and Productive Assets”

Uganda:

- Local MFIs exist and there are banks in the nearest towns
- But women still find it difficult to access finance

Obstacles cited by local women include:

- Lack of collateral (few own land)
- The need for husbands’ signatures in order to get a loan
- The small size of loans available
 - too small to buy capital equipment needed scale up IGAs
- Incomes area seasonal, but MFIs demand monthly repayments

2. “Access to Credit and Productive Assets”

Sudan:

- No local finance institutions or NGO microcredit schemes.

Somaliland:

- Only a handful of NGO microcredit programs.

In Sudan and Somaliland:

- We need multi-stakeholder discussions on financial services for pastoral areas.

Somaliland – new opportunities

- ❑ Dahabshil money transfer company
 - only major financial institution.
- ❑ Remittances are central to the economy
 - go to consumption (especially khat), not investment
 - go mainly to urban and settled communities.
- ❑ Mobile phone services - now used for Diaspora money transfers
- ❑ Mobile phone banking (Kenya's M-PESA)
 - great potential in pastoral areas with distant banks and high transport costs.

3. “Influencing Policies and Practice”

- Baseline studies identified gaps, and some opportunities.
- Issues Briefs - basis for multistakeholder meetings
- Draw attention to pastoral areas and bring in more actors

Challenges:

Security Issues and Political Uncertainties

- ❑ Political insecurity in the region has affected our program.
- ❑ Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda - involved in the crisis in Somalia.
- ❑ Islamist terrorists threaten neighboring countries and want to destabilize Somaliland.
- ❑ Somaliland – terrorist attacks by the Al-Shabab group in 2008, and on-going threats.
- ❑ Sudan – the Danish cartoons issue & the ICC’s indictment of the head of state.
- ❑ Islamists are strongly opposed to women’s empowerment, particularly in politics and governance.
- ❑ Uganda - political stability and openness, and strong government support for women’s empowerment.

The Value of Operating Regionally

- ❑ Country offices, Uganda, Sudan & Somaliland
- support and coordination from London office.
- ❑ PENHA-Uganda - regional coordination office.
- ❑ Differences and similarities across the region - new ideas from one country can be applied, or adapted in another.
- ❑ A comparative approach often yields useful insights
- ❑ Bringing people together across the region is valuable in itself
- ❑ Marginalized pastoralist women gain confidence from meeting similar women in other countries.

Examples of Valuable Regional Interaction

- ❑ Women in Somaliland can learn from Uganda's experience with affirmative action
 - PENHA's work with Ugandan MPs informs our work in Somaliland.

- ❑ Ugandan women producing honey for local markets can learn from their counterparts in Somaliland.

Links to other PENHA Programs

Uganda:

- Animal Husbandry training for FAO Farmer Field Schools
- Exotic Goats Breeding Center – supplying exotic goats to women's groups
- Provision of milk cooling facilities and sewing machines in Ssembabule

Sudan and Eritrea:

- Fodder production training with FAO

Regionally:

- Resource-Based Conflict conferences
(with Oxfam-Novib)
- Gender Mainstreaming Training
(with Oxfam-Novib)
- Contacts, linkages and lessons enrich our women's empowerment program.

Linking up the grassroots and policy levels

- ❑ Microprojects inform and enrich our policy work
- ❑ In Uganda, we have the support of women in senior leadership positions.
- ❑ Achieving real change at the local level requires:
 - actions at the policy level
(education, infrastructure, trade, taxes)
 - working with higher level business networks
(attracting investors)

Finally -

In the long run, the fundamentals are:

- ❑ getting pastoralist girls into schools
- ❑ transport & telecommunications infrastructure

Right now,

- ❑ pastoral women respond to any new economic opportunity
- ❑ our role is to support them in what they are doing.