

**ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ON PROGRAM
IMPACTS: A CASE STUDY OF VI AGROFORESTRY INTERVENTION
IN NDIVISI DIVISION, BUNGOMA EAST SUB COUNTY**

By

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DECLARATION

This research proposal is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in this or any other university

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ABSTRACT

Programs assess their influence through routine monitoring and evaluation to prove their performance, efficiency, relevance and effectiveness. For a long time, they have employed conventional methods where by the information to be collected are determined by the program team or donors. However, program beneficiaries who are actively involved in the project implementation are left to only give information required. The study therefore sought to involve the beneficiaries in the assessment of the VI Agroforestry's project. The objectives of the study were to: assess the extent to which the project created change in the lives of beneficiaries; components of livelihood perceived to have changed; changes in food security and credit access. The study was conducted in Ndivisi Division and the target population was individuals who were in active savings groups. The study employed the use of most significant change technique and the influence matrix which belong to tiny tools of program evaluation by the IDEAS to complement each other. The study adopted three steps of the most significant change that is, collection of stories from beneficiaries', panel analysis of the stories and feedback of the finding. The influence matrix was used during the focus group discussion to identify and rate program activities on the selected domains of change. A total of 43 project beneficiaries who were purposively selected participated in the study they included 19 individuals and 24 participants from two focus group discussions. The results from the stories narrated by the beneficiaries revealed the VI agroforestry had improved the livelihood of the beneficiaries. The key aspects that had changed were food security, credit access, income levels and health as there was increased farm yields. The produce is a source of food and the surplus is sold to generate income, credit was also easily accessible and repayment is on flexible terms. To improve on the program, impact the organization may consider more involvement of the ordinary beneficiaries not the group leaders as this will allow for more buy in and save on time involved in convincing others to participate in the program as well as provide grants on time to allow for enough time for implementation of the program.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The need to demonstrate the impact of a program has been on the rise among the international development community for the past two decades. This has given rise to impact evaluation which seeks to uncover both the intended and unintended, positive and negative effects of the program (Rogers, 2014). Donors and other stakeholders continue to put pressure on the implementing agencies to demonstrate results for funds and show evidence to the general public of their work. Therefore, impact evaluation helps provide information for accountability and clarifies goals, objectives, the challenges and inform evidence based decision making for program improvement (Hearn & Buffardi, 2016). This desire to demonstrate evidence on the effectiveness of an intervention in the development sector has not only raised interest for impact evaluation but also generate information that used by policy and development agencies to design interventions that address the needs of the people in relation to the available resources (ADB, 2011).

Developing nations, Africa included have also moved from project based evaluation which focused on the completion of program activities to assessment of impacts of the program putting into consideration the context of the intervention. This has led to a working partnership between the donors and stakeholders (Norgbey, 2016). Program evaluations are a key part in the implementation of development interventions as the information generated is used to assess the relevance, impact, effectiveness and worth of an intervention as well inform decision makers on evidence based decision making. Well conducted evaluation go a long way in informing

program improvements on what worked and what did not, build a knowledge base documenting the best practices that can be duplicated in other situations and encourage learning as provide accountability to stakeholders (UNDP, 2009).

A variety of methods are employed in program monitoring and evaluation depending on factors such as availability of resources, skills and purpose of evaluation. The methods are classified into two large categories; qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods collect information from respondents to explain a phenomenon, to understand the knowledge and beliefs of the respondents. It uses focus group discussion, open ended questionnaires interviews seeking to answer the questions 'why' and 'how'. On the other hand, quantitative methods collect numerical information for example changes in number and gives a description of the trends (IFAD, 2013). These two methods have both strengths and weaknesses but complement each other when used together. Quantitative methods are effective in large program as they give robust and numerical findings that can be easily analyze however they are costly, do not put into consideration the context in which the intervention is being implemented and no explanation on why the results are as they are. For qualitative methods provide insight about a situation, simple to organize and cost effective as they use small samples but it also has its limitations as the findings can't be generalized and information is difficult to analyze. IFAD employs mixed method at the different program levels to triangulate the information (IFAD, 2013).

Program evaluations, for a long time, have been done by external experts and program staff leaving out beneficiaries who are the main stakeholders. Involvement of the beneficiaries allows for reflection on the changes that have occurred in their lives, how the changes came about and identification of the aspects of the program brought about the changes. To do this, tiny tools of evaluation are employed. They include most significant change technique, trend analysis, and

causal effect analysis, influence matrix among others. This study will use most significant change technique as the key tool for the assessment (NGO-IDEAS, 2012)

1.2 Description of VI Agroforestry Program

VI Agroforestry is a Swedish development organization working in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda to contribute to environmental improvement and fighting poverty through agroforestry (VI means WE in English). The organization started its operation in Kenya in 1983 in West Pokot, it has since expanded to Trans Nzoia, Kisumu and Bungoma counties. As at 2017, the organization had 120 million trees planted and helped 1 million farmers out of poverty since its inception (VI Agroforestry, 2017). The organization uses a participatory model in the implementation of its projects by partnering with existing small holder farmer organizations in areas of their operations and where the groups are non-existent the farmers are facilitated to form them. These groups are core units in which the activities take place. The main activities carried out by the organization are to promote sustainable agriculture through adoption of agroforestry practices, economic security, gender equality and empowerment with focus on women youth and young children, systems of governance through organization development training, lobby, advocacy and communication fundraising and resource mobilization.

The core activity of the organization is agro-forestry; however, they have the economic security arm whose aim is to improve the livelihood of the small holder farmers to enable them set up profitable farm enterprises. This is in response to the challenges they face such as insufficient access to credit, limited links to markets for their products and lack of quality inputs. The farmers are facilitated to form groups of 12-15 members where they save and loan each other this is an alternative of the formal these groups are referred to as Village savings and Loans association. Through the loans and savings and loans, the farmers invest into income generating

enterprises which lead to their improved livelihoods. The program does this by offering extension services to the farmer groups, training on organization development, value addition and helping them in areas they need assistance (VI Agroforestry Strategic plan 2017-2021). In Ndivisi Division, the organization applied this model where they worked with about 20 farmer groups of 12-15 members to allow for effective operations of the activities. The program was implemented in three locations of Ndivisi division, which are Namarambi, Chetambe and Ndivisi locations. The organization was in operation for 5 years and ended its operations in 2015. Despite their exit, the effects of the programs are still felt in the community as the farmer groups are still active and growing in numbers (VI Agroforestry, 2016).

1.3 Problem Statement

Complex participatory community intervention sometimes results to outcomes that cannot be captured by indicators as the changes occur in the beneficiaries lives over the period of the intervention. Most conventional monitoring and evaluation methods use the quantitative and randomized controlled trials to conduct evaluation in order to attribute changes to the program. (Bamberger, et al 2010). This approach is top down and indicator driven, with an aim to prove the worth relevance, impact efficacy and effectiveness of an intervention to either the donors or project team. The control of information to be collected is mainly left to the evaluator and program team to decide leaving out project beneficiaries who are actively involved in the project (NGO-IDEAS, 2012). For these reasons, conventional methods do not exhaustively capture the changes on beneficiaries lives who are the main stakeholders in the intervention and yet the information on the experienced changes can be used in program improvement and for better planning in the future by the development agencies or even document the best practices (Tops small Grant, 2016).

Participatory approaches advocate for the involvement of stakeholders in all project phases including monitoring and evaluation. As noted by Davies, most significant change technique can be employed in the evaluation as it allows for the beneficiaries to tell their stories on the changes they have experienced by participating into the program (Davies & Dart, 2005). Through this, they are able to capture the results that cannot be captured by the quantitative indicators. The stories also provide feedback to the program team on the areas of improvement in their implementation strategies and future planning (Davies & Dart, 2005).

A study by Simfors (2017), in Lukuyani Sub County, one of the areas of operations of VI Agroforestry, on the influence of village savings and loans association on women empowerment only focused on women therefore leaving out the opinions of men and the youths who are also active participants in the program (Simfors, 2017). It also did not employ the most significant change technique in its assessment and it was done in Lukuyani so no study has been done in Ndivisi Division. Therefore, the study will use of most significant change technique and influence matrix, which belong to the tiny tools of evaluation, to assess the influence of the VI program on domains of food and credit access with consideration to complexity of the social cultural environment.

1.4 Research Questions

The VI Agroforestry and Village savings and Loans Association project core philosophy was anchored on participatory approaches in program implementation and the key questions include:

- i. To what extent did the project create change in the lives of beneficiaries?
- ii. To what extent do the beneficiaries perceive the project as having contributed to change in their livelihoods?

- iii. What did the beneficiaries perceive as having changed?
- iv. Are there reasons to conclude that the project made improvements in the access to food, credit and other key objectives of the project?

1.5 Study Objectives

Based on stories and other reports from the beneficiaries and community members, this study seeks to assess the extent to which community members in the project area perceived the achievements of VI Agroforestry and Village savings and Loans Association project in terms of changes in their livelihood. Specifically the study seeks to:

- i. To assess the extent (level) of awareness of the project activities.
- ii. To assess components of livelihood which the beneficiaries perceived to project may have contributed to.
- iii. To assess the extent to which the project contributed to improved access to food.
- iv. To assess the extent to which the projects contributed to improved access to credit to enable them undertake their farming and other activities.

1.6 Justification of the Study

Involvement of project beneficiaries in the project not only outlines the initial need of the people but also uncovers outcomes that could not be captured by quantitative approaches. This is because community understanding of their socio cultural environment therefore can tell what aspects of the projects worked and what did not work (Fawcett, 2018). To capture these changes evaluators, use a variety of methods which include use of tiny tools. One of the tiny tools include the most significant, invented by Davies, who noted that most significant change technique can be used to do a retrospective evaluation of a completed project as well as help to understand the

experience of program beneficiaries. This promotes program learning to understand the changes and provide feedback to the program team the on areas of improvement (Davies & Dart, 2005). A study by (Simfors, 2017), was done in Lukuyani which is one of the areas where the organization had its operation, this study focused on Ndivisi which have varying social and economic contexts.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The study only used qualitative data since there was no baseline data to compare the situation before and after the intervention, it drew its sample from those who are still actively involved in the village savings and loans groups after the exit of the intervention therefore those who did participated but stopped were not be involved in the study. It also did not focus on other components of the program for example agroforestry except the economic arm which seeks to empower the small holder farmers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction of Literature

The literature focuses on the community participation in development programs, evaluation approaches, the most significant change technique its strengths and weaknesses as well as where it's been employed.

2.2 Community Development

Government and development agencies use community development as the vehicle through which to reduce poverty and improve the livelihood of the people. They do so by providing basic infrastructure such as roads, water, access to market among others. Community development entails the involvement of the locals in the projects that affect their lives. The logic behind this, is that the locals are aware of their socio-cultural and political environment and incorporating this knowledge into program design will lead to efficient and effective interventions. Through community development, governments and development agencies, are able to deliver services and projects to a wider group of people. Advocates of community development argue that, this should be a partnership between the people and the implementing agencies not driven by outsiders (Wong & Guggenheim, 2018).

2.3 Community Participation in Development Projects

There has been a shift from top-down approaches of development to participatory approaches which are bottom up, this means, locals are at the center of development. As described by Chambers (1994), participatory approaches involve the inclusion of the locals in project activities that affect their lives through empowerment so they are able to make decisions that

affect their lives. Shift in the power relations means the people have influence on decisions that affect their lives for example by deciding on the information to be shared as well as the expected outcomes (Chambers, 1994). Besides, participation allows for the community to share their skills and resources and prioritize their needs as they fully understand their social, cultural and political context. This not only benefits the beneficiaries but also the implementing agencies in terms of project effectiveness and sustainability. Participation should be incorporated in the whole project cycle from design to evaluation (Mubita et al., 2017).

Participatory monitoring and evaluation has also gained momentum over the years and has been applied by different players for different sectors. This is because allows for learning and reflections allowing the beneficiaries and program team be aware of their realities and context in which they operate for example, in Brazil, India, Mexico and Vietnam, farmers have used it to enhance decision making, planning, learning and selecting effective strategies. In Bangladesh and the UK funding and developing agencies have employed participatory approaches to improve their performance (Estrella & Gaventa, 2008).

Stakeholder's involvement is a key element in project monitoring and evaluation. It has several benefits which include: provides an opportunity for learning and capacity building as stakeholders identify and find solutions to their problems to allow them to actively participate in the project. Secondly, understand each other through dialogue as they identify their needs and expectation this creates mutual understanding that allows the smooth running of the project activity. Thirdly, it provides a platform for public accountability through involvement of local program beneficiaries in performance of government and donor agencies. For example, UNFPA has funded a project in Paraguay, the project is to create a network of male and females leaders

who will evaluate the reproductive service deliver and report to health administration ((Better Evaluation, 2004) .

However, in most scenarios participation has only been seen as a means to an end where the beneficiaries are only involved providing labor for the project. A study Ismail in 2016, on the assessment on the application of participatory monitoring and evaluation of Ugatuzi na Kazi project in Garissa noted that the youth participation was lowest in the project design, monitoring and evaluation and highest in implementation as they provided unskilled labor (Ismail, 2016).

2.4 Evaluation Approaches: Qualitative and Quantitative

Monitoring and evaluation has borrowed its methods from research which are broadly categorized to qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative methods for a long time, have been used as gold standard in the evaluation community as they apply randomized designs to prove the worth of the program. The information gathered through quantitative methods is analyzed to describe and predict relationship for example, the number of people reached in given period of time answering the questions of frequency amount. They use statistical analysis to provide information on the outcome of an intervention if the right sample is used. However, does not show causality since they do not give in information on the socio-cultural, economic and political context of the intervention (Mario & Wodon, 2001).

Quantitative approaches track specific indicators as the project progresses to assess the changes over time. Program may apply a pre-and-post evaluation where data on the specific indicators are collected at baseline and after the completion of the project or adopt ex- post evaluation where the focus is on the effects of the intervention after the completion of program activities (Khandker et al., 2010). Qualitative methods, on the other hand, collect information that explains

trends or a given phenomenon. Mostly they are employed when there is need to understand the attitude, level of knowledge and to seek to understand how change came about (IFAD, 2013).

Evaluations, take a qualitative approach if the intervention is complex, when there is need for insight into the situations as well as when contexts vary. Information generated helps to understand the institutional, political and socio cultural context of an intervention and how the outcomes came about. For instance, it may explain how the strategies applied brought about certain results. This information may be used in program improvement and design by the program implementers. However, the qualitative methods cannot be used alone in program evaluation because they do not provide evidence on the situation in the absence of the intervention and it's biased depending on the beneficiaries, they cannot be used for large programs as they are costly and its findings cannot be generalized (Alcantara & Woolcock, 2014).

Donors, governments and the international development community are always seeking to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of their interventions on the beneficiaries. Different organizations choose different methods for their assessment depending on various factors. These factors include; evaluation objectives, resource availability, levels of skills and knowledge and the type of program to be evaluated as well as the target audience, staff available to conduct the data collection (Baste, 2018).

There has been an increase need to incorporate the two methods in an evaluation as they complement each other. The quantitative methods provide the numerical data while qualitative will give explanation this therefore will therefore help in the documentation of the lessons learnt and areas of improvement. Despite this, there has been dependency on quantitative methods

which seek to determine whether there are any changes that have occurred as a result of the program without seeking an explanation why and how the changes occurred ignoring the contribution of the qualitative methods which seek to put the outcomes into context by giving an explanation on why and how the intervention occurred (Adato, 2011).

Additionally, communities can be involved in the assessment of the changes they have experienced as a result of the program; this can be done by use of tiny tools. These tools can be used to tell the trends, cause effect relationships as well as narrative from the beneficiaries on the changes. These tools include trend analysis, lifeline to demonstrate changes in the quality of live, influence matrix, most significant change among others. These tools allow for reflection among the communities on what change is and also empowers them, fosters collaboration as well as generate more insights (NGO-IDEAS, 2012).

2.5 Most Significant Change Technique

Most significant change is a qualitative, participatory monitoring and evaluation technique to assess the outcomes of a project through systematic collection of stories from program beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The stakeholders are involved in deciding on the domains of change, analysis of the stories and to selection of the most significant story. It was developed in 1996 by Davies in an attempt to evaluate the outcomes of a complex participatory intervention. The stories collected provide an opportunity for organization learning, uncovers the unintended outcomes and provides feedback to the program team (Davies & Dart, 2005). Its participatory nature allows stakeholders to dialogue; reflect on program vision and objectives and hence creates mutual understanding on program performance and areas of program improvement. However, it cannot be used as a standalone evaluation for project outcome, to provide a clear picture of the results of the intervention. It can be employed together with other

methodologies like outcome mapping to enhance evaluation of complex programs. (Oliver & Serrat, 2009).

Most significant change technique is a step by step process. The steps include: Starting and raising interest of the stakeholders to encourage participation and commitment, next is to identify the domains of change to be evaluated. Then, define the reporting period to monitor the changes. The stories are then collected from the beneficiaries on the selected domains. After the collection, a panel then reads and selects the most significant story among those collected. Feedback is given to the beneficiaries on the selected story and reasons are given why it was selected. The stories may be forwarded to the next level for verification but this is optional. Then is the quantification, secondary analysis and Meta monitoring and finally revising the system. An organization may modify the steps to meet its needs as some steps are optional except for the collection, selection and feedback that are fundamental in the process. (Davies & Dart, 2005).

For successful implementation of this technique, depends on factors such as commitment from senior management, a culture of learning in an organization, skilled and knowledgeable personnel to facilitate the process, financial resources as it is costly and good communication strategies to provide frequent feedback to the stakeholders (Lennie, 2011).

2.6 Empirical Evidence on Use of Most Significant Change

Most significant Change continues to gain popularity in program evaluation and has been applied in the evaluation of several programs. It was employed in the evaluation of a farm agroforestry program to assess the changes in practice as a result of the intervention. The information generated from the technique assessed the social change which would not be captured by the indicators hence complimenting the quantitative information. It also provided an opportunity for

the program to discuss the program progress and how to achieve their goals. He, however, noted that MSC was time consuming and costly and there was need to incorporate it into the program budget (Moore & Leonie).

As stated earlier, most significant technique is appropriate for program that focus on social change, The Morwell Neighborhood House piloted the technique to assess whether the program activities were meeting the needs of the beneficiaries, assess areas of program improvement, reasons why they participated in the neighborhood houses as well as provide evidence for their work to the community and individual (Whyte , 2017). The intervention focused on social links and building relationships which could not be measured by quantitative indicators therefore the use of MSC to evaluate program activities revealed the impact on the beneficiaries' lives. However it was not without challenges, they faced resource and time constraints to do a comprehensive evaluation (Whyte , 2017).

In Malawi, the technique was employed to gather information on the community experience of the Feed the Future Program implemented by the USAID which focused on poverty reduction and reduction of hunger. The use of the technique allowed the participants to highlight the challenges and gaps in the program implementation as well as give their opinions about the intervention. It also highlighted the areas of program implementation the beneficiaries thought needed adjustments. For example, they felt the program leaders did not understand the situation at the ground as well as they did not receive sufficient support they needed. The implementation was not without challenges, the main challenges were the stories were similar for the different domains and summarized therefore difficult to select the most significant among them (Flax et al.,2017).

In Kenya, CARE applied most significant technique so as to understand and document the social changes in health as they relate to their RI project that were implemented in Ethiopia, Kenya and Rwanda. Most significant change technique was appropriate in this context as it provided an opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments and challenges faced by the different teams in the different regions. The findings from the evaluation were encouraging as they reflected positive changes in relationship women and the vulnerable had become confident and the intervention had managed to draw the support of other community members to support the beneficiaries. However, the process was not without challenges the team did not have sufficient time to pilot the instrument therefore took time to revise when doing the actual data collection and the team did not take into consideration the biases involved with the technique (CARE, 2010).

Tiny tools suite of methods for evaluation are used in assessment of programs with the beneficiaries so as to help them visualize, identify and reflect on the changes that have occurred. The study adopted three fundamental step if the most significant change technique as recommended by (Davies & Dart,2005). The steps include collection of stories, panel analysis of the stories and feedback to the stakeholders and adopted the use of the influence matrix which according to (NGO-IDEAS, 2012), is used to explore the changes and program activities linke to the changes. The two methods were used so that they complement each other.

2. 7 Summary of the Literature

As noted by (Davies & Dart, 2005) and (Limato et al 2018) most significant change technique is appropriate for programs that are participatory and focus on social change as well as for organizations that are interested in learning and receiving feedback from the beneficiaries and other stakeholders. From the studies above MSC has been used to get feedback from the beneficiaries to understand the influence of the interventions. However, most significant change

just like any other method has its limitation they include; its time consuming, requires people with skills on how to use it to achieve the desired results and it cannot be used to alone evaluate a program because of biases associated with it include leaning towards the positive stories, popular views and towards story tellers (Lennie, 2011). As highlighted above the study use MSC technique for learning and provide feedback to the program team on the intervention as well as test whether it can be adopted for routine monitoring of programs.

As cautioned by (Oliver & Serrat, 2009), most significant change technique cannot be used alone for evaluation therefore the study incorporated the influence matrix which helps identify the changes that have occurred and the causes of the changes (NGO-IDEAS, 2012). The influence matrix was used in the focus group discussion to identify the changes and the causes attributable to the identified changes.

2.7.1 Key Steps in Most Significant Change Approach

Though most significant change technique has ten steps the study employed three steps which are fundamental for the process (Davies & Dart,2005). The steps included: collection of stories on the selected domains of change, panel analysis of the stories was done highlighting significant stories for each domain and feedback to stakeholders and beneficiaries on the findings from the stories be disseminated. The final report will be shared with the organization for adoption of the recommendation.

2.7.2 Key Domains for Assessment

The key domains for assessment are food access which entails availability, adequacy and quality. The second domain is credit access on availability, adequacy and use of the credit. The two domains were selected to assess the influence of the organization as they align with one of the

strategic objectives of the organization which is to increase agricultural productivity of the smallholder farmers and to enable them enjoy economic, social and other environmental benefits. This assessment will uncover how that was accomplished and the results of the intervention in the beneficiaries' lives. The study also employed the use of the influence matrix which is one of the tiny tools for evaluation. The influence matrix was generated during the focus group discussions to help in identification of changes and the activities that brought about the changes. The instruments for investigation are provided in the annex.

2.7.3 Influence Matrix

Influence matrix belongs to a suite of methods collectively known as “Tiny tools” by IDEAS project. It is used as a participatory tool between the researcher whenever there is a need for community reflect on its situation examine development efforts, in the community, for an evaluation or impact study, and to know more about the effects of specific development activities. It seeks to analyze the causes of change, visualize as well as quantify the change. It helps to attribute the changes in the beneficiaries' lives to program activities and external factors. More information on influence matrix and other tiny tools can be obtained http://ngo-ideas.de/mediaCache/Tinytools_Overview/Tinytools-Overview.pdf. The method is used during focus group discussions with between 10-15 select members of the community. The key steps to develop the matrix are: First, the participants a list the changes, secondly they list key project activities, thirdly they score the influence of the project activities on a scale of 0 to 2 where 0= no influence, 1 moderate influence and 2 high influence and finally the scores are summed up to identify the activities and their level of influence (NGO-IDEAS, 2012).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter presents methodology used in the study to collect information to answer the research questions. It provides information on the research design, study population, selection of community participants in the study, data collection methods and the data analysis plan.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to assess the changes that have occurred in the beneficiaries' lives as result of the VI Agroforestry Project.

3.3 Study Population

The study was conducted in Ndivisi Division, Bungoma East Sub County in Bungoma County. The main inhabitants of the area are the Tachoni and Bukusu sub tribes of the large Luhya community, whose main economic activities are farming both crop and livestock and trade. There are hospitals and schools in the area that serve the people. The study focused on individuals who participated in the VI Agroforestry intervention and are still in active in their village saving association groups which are about 12 groups whose membership include men, women and the youths that are in Namarambi, Chetambe and Ndivisi locations as well as other stakeholders like the extension officers and community leaders.

3.4 Selection of Community Participants in the Study

The study selected the participant to be interviewed purposively, this is the deliberate selection of participants into the study, individuals who have participated in the Village Savings and Loans and are currently actively involved. The participants selected from the different existing groups they included 3 from Mikwendo, 2 in Makuselwa and 2 in Marafiki groups in Ndivisi Location and 2 in Mitukuyu and 2 in Misimo which are in Namarambi location. The total respondents were 11 female and 9 male beneficiaries and 24 participants of two focus group discussion held bringing them to 43. The study used existing groups for the focus group discussions. Focus group discussions were held with members of Hambana and Yetana Self Help groups in Chetambe locations separately. These discussions were held in Chetambe location where individual interviews were not conducted this was to allow for varied views and inclusivity of many program participants.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The study used the of most significant change technique and influence matrix which belong to tiny tools suite techniques of evaluation techniques. The most significant change was for collection of stories on the significant changes as result of the project. On the other hand, the influence matrix was used in the group discussions to help in the identification of change, its causes, visualization of the project aspects that had brought about the change and the level of influence they had on the selected domains of change (NGO-IDEAS, 2012). According to (Davies & Dart,2005) most significant change technique involves ten steps, however, three are fundamental in the process: collection of stories, selection of significant stories and feedback to relevant stakeholders. The study adopted the three steps because of the time and resource limitations and because practitioners have found that other tools can complement MSC

methodology. An interview guide was administered to selected individuals to collect the stories of significant changes. The two focus group discussions were held with two existing village savings and loans associations. Each focus group discussion was composed of 12 members, male and female. The sessions were held at the homestead of the one of the group members as they coincided with their meetings, the discussions lasted for about an hour. A facilitator used a guide to steer the discussion, the proceedings were recorded and the note taker to note the key points from the discussion. The tools used, sought to capture information on the perceptions of the beneficiaries about the project and the changes they have experienced in the selected domains of change, that is, food access and credit access as these are the key areas the economic arm of the program seeks to influence. Data collection tools are shown in the annex I. Despite the project being broad, in agreement with the organization, the study only focused on two domains of change, this was due to time and resource constraints to cover all aspects of the program.

The influence matrix was used during the group discussion with an aim is to link the project activities to the changes as described by the IDEAS manual (NGO-IDEAS, 2012). It was derived during the group discussions where the participants were informed on its purpose before the exercise. With the help of a facilitator, the following steps were followed, the participants made a list of the changes experienced in the past five years on a flip chart, they then highlighted the main project activities that contributed to the change, then the activities were scored on a scale of 0 to 2 where 0 = no influence, 1 moderate influence and 2 = high influence. Finally, a summation of the scores is done to find out the activity with the highest influence on each domain of change. Scoring and summation of the scores gives important information on the outcomes and impacts of the various activities. The analysis is not linear (like in the Logical Framework) but it systemically shows the interrelations between all the changes and all the influences.

Communities often find these reflections very relevant and enlightening. Results of the activity generated the influence matrix in section four. The study used already existing groups for the focus group discussions.

3.5 Data Analysis

The study used content analysis of the stories so as to capture the perceptions of the beneficiaries. The stories were the raw data for analysis; the data was coded to the selected domains of change. A panel of four members, one field officer and two SACCO leaders and one program beneficiary who are all stakeholders in the program participated in the selection of the significant stories on the two domains. Information from the focus group discussion was also summarized to identify the significant changes the community experienced and contributing factors to the changes. This information on contributing factors is presented on the influence matrix in section 4. The results help to understand the changes and what the community makes of them and provide feedback to the organization on the strengths and weaknesses of their implementation strategies. The analysis plan focused on the following areas based on the study objectives.

- a) Awareness of project activities
 - i. Attitude towards the project management – strengths and weakness i.e. what was done well and what was not done well and reasons for the opinion
- b) Domains (components) of livelihood which the community perceived to project may have contributed to.
 - i. Identification of key domains of contribution
 - ii. How the key domains related to their lives?
- c) Perceived contribution to improved access to food.

- d) Perceived contribution to improved access to credit
- e) Use of credit.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ON PROGRAM IMPACTS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents result and discussions on the assessment of the VI agroforestry project. It provides information analysis on community participation in community projects, community participation on project impacts, influence matrix, discussions of the results and the conclusion

4.2 Community Participation in Project Activities

VI agroforestry project works with individuals who are facilitated to form groups where the core operation of the project is carried out. According to the project progress report, there are about 100 households involved in the project where they receive training and support from the organization. The main activities carried out in these groups are agroforestry, village saving and loaning and capacity building on various aspects including gender, financial literacy among others. There are about 2000 program beneficiaries of the program since inception, however out of these about 30 groups were involved village saving and loans association and about 20 of the are currently active which were the focus of the study. (VI Agroforestry, 2018)

4.3 Community Perceptions on Project Impacts

4.3.1 Analysis of the Perceptions of Individual Respondents

The study targeted to collect 22 stories from individual beneficiaries 11 male and 11 female, however, only 19 were included (11 female and 8 male). Therefore, total of 19 stories were collected for this category. The study sought to assess how the program had contributed to food

access, to answer this the beneficiaries were asked to describe what the situation was before and after the intervention and link the changes to the aspect of the program that had brought about the change.

Most stories narrated by the beneficiaries acknowledged that their lives had changed positively since they had plenty and variety of food. Below are four significant stories on food access as narrated by the respondents.

“I remember before joining the groups, we experienced the seasonal shortage of food especially between the month of June and July and we did not have variety of food. This therefore meant we did not have all the three meals because we did not have any in store. Our children were malnourished as we fed them on what was available and mostly that was ugali or porridge made from maize meal. However, after joining the group my life has changed, I got banana seedlings from VI, I was trained on intercropping and how manage my harvest in order to enough left to sustain me in the next year. Currently, I no longer experience shortage of food as I have enough to sustain me, I also have variety that supplements my diet and that of my household I can say we are healthier than we were before participating in the project.” (Female Respondent Number 4)

“Before, the number of meals we had in a day was dependent on what was available and money at hand to buy food. In most cases I did casual work at peoples farms to get the money to buy food and mostly we had one type of food since we did not have variety and money constraints. However, after joining the program and being part of a group, we were able to pool our savings together we also received training on intercropping. For example, maize, groundnuts, bananas and kitchen gardens, this has allowed me to have variety and plenty. I am therefore able to have three meals that are well balanced in a day. I have also invested in dairy cows and poultry which supplement our food and income when I sell them I attribute this change to training received and loans I have received from my group.” (Male Respondent Number 5)

“Currently, we have variety of food they include arrow roots, groundnuts, fruits from the seedlings provided by VI, maize beans and we were also trained on value addition. I am therefore able to make decisions on food we take in my home and ensuring it is balanced in nutrients. For example, I will give my child milk, fruits and proportion of carbohydrates this will help them be health. With variety and balanced diet there are fewer cases of malnutrition among children unlike before. This is as a result of the training and knowledge I received from VI” (Female Respondent Number 8)

“I have also been exposed through the field days and visits to other areas that are doing better than us in food production. For example, I remember we attended a field day in Kitale where there was a demonstration on good banana plantation management. When I came back I had to use the knowledge gained on my farm as the yield were low I could only harvest maybe one bunch in months however after the training I am able to have more bunches that not only I use for food but also sell which is a source of income” (Male Respondent Number 7)

Similarly, most beneficiaries acknowledged that their participation in the village savings and loans association had contributed to availability and easy access of credit. Most of them said, unlike before where they had fears of being auction, little savings and little knowledge on investment the situation has since changed and they were able to not only get credit but also invest in income generating activities. Below are the significant stories on credit access and its use.

“Initially, I was not aggressive to look for money and was afraid of getting loan from banks and other formal financial institutions because I was afraid of being auctioned as I had seen this happen to others. I also did not have any savings with those institutions in order to access the loan, I did not have knowledge on opportunities to invest in to repay the loans. However, after joining the program, first I became part of a group where I was able to learn on saving and getting credit. Depending on the number of my shares, I can easily access credit, my fears of being auctioned have need dissolved as the repayment terms are flexible, I am no longer poor I have money these days since I have investment like poultry, dairy and improved farm practices. I more aggressive now than before in

looking for money as I am motivated to look for more to repay my loans and invest to have more income, I attribute this to the training received, constant follow up by the extension officers as well exposure through field visits to areas where they were doing better than we were in our area. This has not only motivated me but our community and therefore our lives have changed.” (Male Respondent Number 6)

“Before joining the group, I did not have sufficient money and consistent source of income. When I lacked food I would do casual labor in people’s farm so as to get money to buy food for my family and attend to my other needs. However, after joining the group where we pooled our savings together and loaned each other my life has changed. I got loans that were affordable and accessible this has enabled me invest. For example I bought a goat from loan I received from the group, the goat has reproduce and I have 5 goats now, in case I am in a financial crisis I can sell the goats to attend to my needs. This is a result of the VI project.” (Male Respondent Number 12)

“If an emergency arises now I will rush to the group treasurer who is in my neighborhood, she will confirm the number of my shares. I will then fill a form as required and then she will issue the loan I need. This has made things easy for us. I am also able to do my own investment which generates income I therefore not dependent on my husband which was the case before.” (Female Respondent Number 10)

4.3.2 Analysis of the Significant Change Stories from FGD 1 Participants

The focus group discussions were conducted with members of the existing village saving and loan groups, the aim was to help understand the changes as well as find the program activities that had brought about the changes in the selected domains. For this focus group discussion, it was conducted with members of Makuselwa Self Help Group. The participants included were 12, 7 women and 5 men who shared their experiences. The participants were asked to describe what the situation was before and after the intervention. Below are significant stories on the domain of food access.

“As a community, maize is our main food and cash crop. There was therefore over dependency on it for food and the proceeds from its sell as a source of income to meet the basic of my family including as pay school fees for my children. This therefore meant that we had little to store for food to sustain me and my family till the next harvest period. We therefore experienced shortage and we sometime forewent some meals because of lack. However, after joining the program the program I received training on modern sustainable farm practices which include the use of compost manure and intercropping which has seen my seen my yield increase as well as have variety like bananas, maize and beans. This therefore means I have plenty food and no longer experience shortage like before. I sometimes sell the surplus.” (FGD 1, Male Respondent Number 3)

“Initially, I had limited food and variety therefore there was no guarantee on having three meals in a day or even when you did it was not balanced. However, after joining the program I received training from VI Agroforestry and fruit seedlings, I have been able to intercrop this means I have a variety of food crops in my farm they include passion fruits, bananas, groundnuts, beans and maize and I also have poultry. With all these, my family and I have plenty and variety of food at our disposal. This has not only contributed to our food security but also to improved health status in our family we rarely fall ill.” (FGD 1, Female Respondent Number 5)

“As a woman, before joining the program, my main role was to take care of my family rarely was I involved in any income generating activities. Therefore, it was my husband’s responsibility to provide food for the family. However, after joining the group I have started my own farm enterprise like I have a kitchen garden that had different kind of vegetables that I feed my family I also sell the surplus which am able to buy more food that I do not have in my farm. I also have poultry that lay eggs increasing my stock of food and when I need to meat I can as well slaughter it. All this is courtesy of the program.” (FGD 1, Female Respondent Number 9)

Similar discussion was done for credit access, below are some of the significant stories as narrated by the respondents describing the situation before and after the intervention.

“The poverty levels were high I therefore had no savings to qualify for a loan from the formal microfinance institutions. However, after joining the program and facilitated to start our group where we pooled our little savings together. I have been able to save and easily access loan of an amount equal to the shares I have in the group. When we started we could only get loans of small amounts but over time we have increased the amount as we have invested in different enterprises with the help of the loans we have received from our groups. For me, I have been able to pay school fees for my children and left to repay the loans at my pace. This has enabled my children to learn without disruption which was not the case before.” (FGD 1, Male Respondent 4)

“I didn’t have knowledge on opportunities to invest in therefore didn’t see the need to get credit. After joining the group, we not only started saving and loaning each other but also received training on opportunities we could invest in for example, I now have two dairy cows as a result of the training and loan I received from the group. These cows produce milk that use at home and also sell as a source of income. I have also invested in solar panel business as a result of credit from my group.” (FGD 1, Male Respondent Number 10)

4.3.3 Analysis of the Significant Change Stories from FGD 2 Participants

A similar discussion was conducted with members of Yettana Self Help Group. The study participants were 12 which included 8 women and 4 men. The participants were asked to share the changes they had experienced by describing what the situation was before the intervention and what it was after. This is what they had to say on food access:

“High levels of poverty contributed to our lack of food because we could not afford to buy, our farming activities were minimal therefore the yield was little to sustain our family. Sometimes I was forced to do casual labor to get the money to buy food for my family this therefore meant that the number of meals and sufficiency was dependent on its availability. With these conditions, we were vulnerable to the perennial hunger mostly during the month of June and July. After joining the program, I have been empowered, we can easily access credit therefore make investments that generate income enhancing

our ability to buy food plus most of my investments are farm enterprise which means I have plenty food now than before.” (FGD 2, Male Respondent Number 4)

“Lack of knowledge on nutrition and importance of balanced diet was also a barrier to our access to food. We mainly focused on cash crops which are sugarcane and maize. We depended especially on maize for food and we were okay with it. We did not make any efforts to supplement this due to lack of knowledge. However, after joining the program we were taught on the nutrition and balanced diet and how it affects our lives. This has seen us become more aggressive to incorporate other crops for examples I have a banana plantation, groundnuts beans and maize which I include in my family daily meals. This has not only led to plenty of food but also a healthy family.” (FGD 2, Female Respondent Number 8)

“I remember I had challenges with storage of food to last me and my family to the next harvest season. This therefore means we experienced food shortage at some point before the next harvest season. After joining we were taught when conserving food after harvest, if a family has four members then we should reserve 8 bags of maize which will be enough to last us until the next harvest season and also having variety of crops also contributed to improved food security. I have applied this since and I can attest it has enabled us have sufficient food throughout the year.” (FGD 2, Male Respondent Number 6)

As a man and head of my house, before joining the program, I strained to provide for my family. Yes, I had land for cultivation however the yield was not desirable considering that the proceeds from this was my main source of income to meet the basic needs of my family. I just had enough to sustain me that means we were living on thin budget as family. After joining the project, I not only joined a group that we saved and accessed loan but I also received training on better farming practices which saw my farm yields improved I also started dairy farming therefore I have milk from my animals which supplements my stock of food and since my farm yields have improved. I am no longer strained instead I have plenty can even afford to sell.” (FGD 2, Male Respondent Number 7)

Like the participants of the other focus group discussion, they acknowledged that their access to credit was had improved and was available unlike before. The respondents described what the situation was before and it was after the intervention. Here are the significant stories from the respondents of this group:

“Before there was fear of being auctioned as we had seen it happen around because of defaulting to pay loans, for this reason I didn’t want this to happen to me I therefore kept away. However, after joining the group, my fears have gone as in our group I can get a loan depending on my saving. The repayment plan is also very friendly as I can pay little by little. When I have challenges I can easily get advice on how to go about them and in case I am sick I can postpone payment of my loan as the group will understand. I have been able to expand my farming activities” (FGD 2, Male Respondent Number 9)

“Before I belonged to a merry go round where we contributed and gave to one member. The challenge in such a group that at times it took long before being reached as we were assigned number and at other times one was forced to borrow in order to contribute therefore getting into debts. However, after joining the groups I have my savings under my name and I can get a loan to meet my needs at any time from the group. The procedure of getting the money is also simple as I will only need to fill a form and signed by a secretary who is in my neighborhood and the time to get the loan is short.” (FGD 2, Female Respondent Number 11)

“Availability of credit has enabled us as women have our own investment. For example, I have poultry and also I do outside catering for people in case I am called upon and I have no finance I can easily go to my group and get credit. There are no protocols and the procedure is very friendly. This was not the case before. Therefore I am empowered and also able to supplement my household income which has reduced conflict in my family because my husband listens to me and again our needs are satisfactorily met. This is directly linked to me joining VI and the group where I have received training and support.” (FGD 2, Female Respondent Number 5)

“I was not aggressive to look for more money this was due to lack of knowledge on available opportunities to invest as well as lack of motivation since my earnings were little. After I joined the group I was challenged because to be more aggressive to find

money since I had to save to receive loan. I was also trained and helped to identify investment opportunities like dairy, poultry and banana. For me I have banana and maize plantation that I have used the money I received from the group.” (FGD 2, Male Respondent Number 8)

4.3.4 A Synthesis of the Significant Change Stories

The stories from the study participants reveal the beneficiaries had experienced positive changes in the domains of food and credit access. Most of them acknowledged that they had plenty and variety. Plenty of food meant that the frequency increased from one or two to three meals a day since food was available. They also reported that they no longer experience the hunger season between June and July because they had surplus and also knowledgeable on how to plan and manage for their produce. The respondents also had kitchen garden that have a variety of vegetables this therefore means they do not have to buy instead its readily available to them. This had in turn affected health and economic status as they would sell the plenty. There was similarity of theme in most of the stories with most of them acknowledging to have plenty and variety of food a situation that was not the same

Most respondents attributed their previous state of low farm yield and lack of food to poor crop husbandry practices, for example, burning of maize stalk after harvesting, use of a lot of chemical leading to poor soil fertility and over dependency on one type of crop which was maize. They also depended on maize for food, proceeds from the sale of the same to raise school fees and personal upkeep. This, therefore, meant that less was preserved for food straining the frequency of the meals. The community also experienced seasons of hunger especially around the month of June and July where there was lack of food. Their knowledge on balance diet was

limited and could feed on the readily available food without consideration of the nutritional value.

After the intervention, the respondents acknowledged that they had plenty of food this was because they had diversified their farm activities which had led to increased yield; apart from maize they had groundnuts, bananas, arrow roots and fruits. Some had invested in dairy cows that produce milk which also supplemented their diet. They also sold the surplus of their produce and purchase whatever food they need to supplement their diet.

They attributed these changes to better crop husbandry, that is, mulching, intercropping, minimal land tillage and use of compost manure had increased soil fertility which in turn increased their crop yield enabling them to have plenty of food. These were strategies employed by the program.

These changes were attributed to various program activities which include: training on better crop husbandry which include, intercropping, produce management, that is, what proportion to sell and what to store for consumption, women empowerment through their participation in the group enabled them to generate their own income hence providing extra income for the family making it easy to access food. Additionally, the regular visits by the extension officers to follow up on them to check on whether they were implementing the activities as intended and advisory services when facing challenges motivated them to keep moving forward. Field trips to benchmark on the best practices was also mentioned as it exposed them to what others were doing right and challenged them to practice it at their place.

The study also sought to assess the extent to which the project contributed to improved access to credit to enable them to undertake their farming and other activities. One of the key principles of the organization is to work with small holder farmers who are in groups. In these groups they are

facilitated to do several activities which include saving and loaning. It is for this reason that the study sought to find out the changes they had experienced by being part of the groups. The beneficiaries were to describe what the situation was before the challenges they had encountered while accessing credit and compare it to the situation after the intervention as well as inform on how they had used the credit.

Most stories had a similar theme of credit was readily available depending on one's savings and the repayment terms were friendly. Initially, they had challenges such as high levels of poverty, fear of being auctioned as it had been happening because of defaulting, they did not have knowledge on available investment opportunities, some were not motivated and aggressive to look for money, and also they did not have savings to qualify them for loan with formal microfinances. However, having their own groups, which were created with the help of VI agroforestry, they had been able to save, get loans and receive training on investment opportunities and other areas. Accessibility was also a challenge including the source, for example they depended on merry go round which took longer to get to someone and also they did not have knowledge on available opportunities to invest the money they received from such venture. This money was also not adequate to meet their financial needs.

There were notable changes that took place in the lives of the beneficiaries since their joining of the groups. These groups were formed and facilitated to start with the help of VI agroforestry and received training on how they were to operate. Joining the groups allowed the beneficiaries to pool their little saving together and able to loan each other. A member was able to access credit from the group depending on their available savings. Beneficiaries admitted that the credit was accessible as their groups were in their neighborhoods and the process to access was flexible. The training they had received had also enabled them access credit as they needed to

invest in the different project like their farm enterprises, this was an antidote to the lack of available opportunities. For those who were unable to repay their loans, receive advice from group leaders on how to manage their finances and repay the loan hence curbing their initial fear of being auctioned. The different enterprise and investments have motivated them to get the loans as they have source of income to repay for example one said they could sell milk or poultry to repay their loans. The groups have grown and merged to form community based organization that host several groups. The community based organizations have merged to form a SACCO which allows members to take loans of greater amount that the groups cannot provide. Below are responses of two beneficiaries.

From the credit received the farmers have been able to invest in different enterprises and made different investment. They include; paying school fees for their children, increased the land under cultivation especially maize farming, vegetables farming, banana enterprises, dairy cows, poultry, trees and business like motorcycle, shops and hotel. All these enterprises generate income that has resulted to improved livelihood.

4.4 Influence Matrix

Influence matrix is one of the tiny tools for evaluation that seeks to analyze the causes of change, visualize as well as quantify the change. It helps to attribute the changes in the beneficiaries' lives to program activities and other external factors. The matrix is derived by beneficiaries listing all the activities and the changes that resulted from the activities. Each activity is then scored on a scale of 0 to 2, 0 is no influence while 2 is high influence. The scores are then summed up, the result reflect the significant changes and the activities that influenced the results greatly (NGO-IDEAS, 2012).

The influence matrix below, presents the results of the main activities of the program and their contribution to the selected domains. The activities were listed and scored on a scale of 0 to 1, 0 being no influence, 1 moderate influence and 2 high influence.

Table 4.2 Influence Matrix on impacts of VI Agroforestry activities on food and credit access

Activity	Training on sustainable farm practices	Farm enterprises	Village Savings and Loans association	Extension services	Field trips/days	Total
Result						
Food security	2	2	1	1	1	7
Credit Access	1	0	2	1	0	4
Score	3	2	3	2	1	11

Source: NGO IDEAS 2012

The aim of deriving the above matrix was to help link and rate project activities influence on the selected domains of change. The activities were listed and scored on a scale of on a scale of 0 to 2 and the scores summed up to get the activity with the greatest influence. From the table, training on sustainable farm practices and the village savings and loans had greatest influence on the selected domains, with a score of three, then the farm enterprises and extension services and followed by the field trips/days which had the minimal influence with a score of two, two and one respectively. Therefore, from the results presented above we conclude that the program had influenced selected domains of change directly and indirectly. Food security had been highly influenced by the program while credit access was slightly lower.

4.5 Discussion of the Results

The first objective was to assess the level of awareness of beneficiaries of the project activities from the secondary data provided by the project team showed that a total of 100 households were still active. The beneficiaries were still actively involved in the program activities which include village savings and loans, agroforestry and sustainable agricultural practices this is according to the Ndivisi VI agroforestry report (VI Agroforestry, 2018).

The second objective of the study was to assess the components of livelihoods of the beneficiaries that had been impacted by the project. From the stories narrated by the beneficiaries, health, education food security economic status had changed as a result of the organization this supports the VI annual a report that highlights that their program indeed affects these aspects of life of most of their beneficiaries (VI Agroforestry, 2017) and a study by Simfors in 2017, on the influence of VSLA where she noted as a result of women participation in VSLA there was improved livelihoods in terms of food security economic security among other areas (Simfors, 2017).

The third objective was to assess the impact of the project on the lives of the beneficiaries on food access. The findings reveal that through the capacity building and extension services had contributed to increased food production, the beneficiaries had also adopted intercropping which led to variety therefore a balanced diet for their families these findings are also in project reports on it impacts on food security (VI Agroforestry, 2017).

The last objective was to assess the impact of project on credit access; the organization had a direct influence as they had facilitated the farmers to form groups. In these groups they were able to pool their little savings together and loan each other. This was the beginning of a journey that

they are still reaping the benefits as their savings have increased they are able to access credit of large amounts and have been able to invest and expand on their farming activities because of the credit they access. These results are in concurrence with the finding of (Simfors, 2017) on the influence of VSLA on women in Lukuyani Division that highlighted that women had been able to increase their income hence pay school fees for their children and also the increased income had improved their quality of living. As well as similar to the VI agroforestry 2017 annual report that highlighted the changes in the food security as beneficiaries were now able to plan the future as they had plenty of harvest and variety. (VI Agroforestry, 2017).

As reported by (IFAD, 2013), qualitative methods of monitoring and evaluation help in identifying the why and how the changes came about. The use of most significant change technique and the influence matrix helped in identification of the changes they had experienced as well as tie the changes to the program aspect that influenced it.

4.6 Summary of Results

According to the study findings, the VI agroforestry intervention has contributed positively to the lives of the beneficiaries in aspects of credit and food access through their intervention this was revealed from the stories of the study participants. The findings also reveal that the program contributed to food security through their capacity building activities on sustainable agricultural practices, extension services by the field officers and provision of tree seedling for intercropping among other activities. It is clear that through participation in the village saving and loans associations the beneficiaries have been able to access credit on flexible and convenient terms. This has helped them invest in other income generating enterprises like farming and businesses that have enabled them meet their basic needs like paying school fees for their school going children.

Field work was not without challenges, one of the group meeting was rescheduled therefore we did not conduct the discussions. Most stories were almost similar but the incorporation of the focus group discussions helped as the members recalled some details that would otherwise have been left out.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter gives a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the assessment of the intervention on the lives of the beneficiaries.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study aimed to do assessment of the impacts of VI Agroforestry intervention retrospectively. The objectives of the study were assessment of the level of awareness the program activities among the beneficiaries, assess the components of livelihood that had changed as a result of the program, the contribution of program activities to food access and credit access. The information was collected of program beneficiaries who are still actively involved in their groups and focus group discussions with other groups where individual interviews were not conducted.

The findings from the beneficiaries' stories reveal that they identified with the program activities as they could easily remember the activities and explain their impact on their live. Most of the activities mentioned were capacity building activities, extension services by the field officers, provision of tree seedlings, use of the improved jiko that was fuel efficient and field trips to benchmark on best practices.

The major components of livelihood affected by the program were health, education as they were able to support through school with much ease unlike before, food security had changed as households were able to have three meals in a day sufficient in nutrients and of adequate amount. Their farming practices had changed they were practicing sustainable farming that had led to

increased yield and good farm management. Lastly by their participation in the village saving and loans group they had been able to access credit more readily and able to invest in various ventures.

On food access, the program had contributed mainly through capacity building of the farmers on sustainable farm practices such preparation and use of compost manure, intercropping and how to manage their harvest. The beneficiaries were knowledgeable on what they needed to do on how to increase their yields. Majority had reported that their yield had increased this in turn has led to sufficient food as well as they have variety of food with made it easier to have food more frequently, in sufficient amount and balanced in nutrients. However, this was done in collaboration with other organizations that provided farm inputs on credit, provided loans that the farmers used to purchase farm inputs.

For credit access, the facilitation of the beneficiaries to participate in saving and loans groups had enabled them readily access credit at their convenience, save earn dividends at the end of every financial year which is a source of extra income and aware of available investment opportunities. The money received from their groups was invested in farm enterprises like banana enterprises, dairy farming, businesses and some had used it to pay school fees for their children.

5.3 Conclusions

The impacts of VI Agroforestry continue to be felt among of the program beneficiaries and their stories are evidence that their lives have been transformed as a result of the program. The program not only affected the selected domains but also influenced the gender roles and responsibilities in the community for this, women and men have embraced the idea of women

holding leadership positions. The use of most significant change technique and the influence matrix helped point this out. The derivation of influence matrix with the participants was more useful as the group discussions encouraged the linking of activities to change and vibrant participation among the beneficiaries as well as uncovering of aspects that would otherwise have been left out with the use of most significant change only. This, therefore recommends use of more than one tiny tool methodology for triangulation of information gathered.

5.4 Recommendations to VI Agroforestry

The following suggestions were extracted from the respondents on the areas of improvement of the program. To involve the beneficiaries from the initial stages of planning in order to get their input this will allow for buy in and save on time taken to convince members to participate in the program; the trainings should be done at the group level not for leaders and selected individuals this will allow the members to get beforehand information as well as improve on the implementation rate as they will move at the same pace; increase grants and disburse them on time to allow sufficient time to implement and to avoid rushing the activities to meet the deadline which may influence the results; increase the number of field officers so as to be able to reach a greater percentage of the program beneficiaries in the different location of the program area

5.5 Recommendation for Monitoring and Evaluation Practitioners

Most significant change alone may not suffice since it brings only aspect of learning which is only good during monitoring. Combining most significant change together with other tiny tools such as the influence matrix, cause effect analysis, trend analysis among others, is more suitable especially during evaluations. For this reason, monitoring and evaluation practitioners should incorporate these tools of evaluation in their regular monitoring and periodic evaluation for

learning and project improvement. It will also will allow the incorporation of the perspectives of the beneficiaries which will help in improving project ownership, the operations of their projects as well as provide information on the status of their project. Additionally, it will help them identify activities and strategies that generate the intended results and those that do not hence make adjustments where necessary. For instance in this study, the use of most significant change technique and influence matrix revealed impacts of the program to the beneficiaries and the aspects of the program that brought about the changes. Information gathered from the stories can be used as evidence to internal or external stakeholders to prove their organization worth as it focuses on the changes on outcomes and impacts of the project on the beneficiaries

This study employed use of most significant change and influence matrix, which are qualitative in nature, to assess the influence of VI Agroforestry further research may be done using mixed methods. This study only focused on groups under VI agroforestry a similar study can be carried out to compare results of the participants in the VI agroforestry groups and non VI agroforestry group.

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Annex 1: Individual Interview Guide

Name _____ Contacts _____ Location _____

Sex Male..... Female.....

Do you belong to a Village Savings and Loans association Yes () No ()

Level of awareness

1. Are you aware of any Non-Governmental organizations that worked in this area in the last 5 years or are still present?

YES () NO ()

If yes, please list them

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____
- iv. _____

2. What changes have you experienced as a result of the operations of the organizations in this area?
3. Have you heard of VI Agroforestry? YES () NO ()

If yes, what aspects of the program do you remember?

4. In your opinion, what were strengths of the program?
5. In your opinion, what were the weaknesses and what are your recommendations?

Livelihood

Do you think participating into the Village Savings and Loans Association has affected your life?

Yes () No ()

6. Please list the components that changed and explain if possible give an example?

i.

- ii.
- iii.
- iv.
- v.

Food Access

- 7. Do you think the project contributed to improved security? (Access, availability, quality and frequency)
Yes () No ()
- 8. Please describe what was the situation before the participation into the program? (Access, availability, quality and frequency)
- 9. Please describe to us the significant changes after your participation into the program? (Access, availability, quality and frequency)
- 10. What aspects of the program brought about the change described above? (Please give an example)

Credit Access

- 11. Please tell us, what was the situation in terms of credit access before joining the Village Savings and Loans Association? (Accessibility, challenges, adequacy)
- 12. Please describe, what has changed significantly since you joined a Village Savings and Loans association? Please give an example
- 13. Please tell us enterprises and other investment you started as a result of the credit you received?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
- 14. Do you have any recommendations to the organization?

Annex 2: Focus Group Interview Guide

The purpose of this guide is to help communities reflect, discuss and assess the changes in their lives and assess the extent to which the activities of VI agroforestry brought about the changes. It will help understand their perceptions about the program, the changes they have experienced and the components of the program that brought about the change.

1. Key steps

- a. Make a list of the changes the community has experienced in the last 5 years both as a result of the organization and other external factors. Prioritize the 5 key influences (*Let give the changes as well as prioritize them*)
- b. List the key project activities and the associated organization that may have contributed to the highlighted changes?
- c. Score the influence with the community members on a scale of 0-2 where 0 = no influence, 1 = moderate influence, 2 = strong influence. (ask how strong they think of the changes they highlighted in 1 and 2)
- d. Find the sum total on score of influence (this will help to identify the activities with highest influence)

2. State key domains for Discussion and possible probes

Food access

- a. Please tell us what was the situation in food access (frequency, adequacy, quality and accessibility) on before participating in the group?
- b. Please tell us, what has changed in terms of food access since you joined the VSLA (Frequency, adequacy, quality and accessibility)
- c. Why do you attribute the changes to joining the group? *Please probe for more information*

Credit Access

- a. Please tell us, what was the situation before joining group? (What are the challenges, adequacy, and its influence on your farm activities?)
- b. What is the situation now and how has your life changed? (Please describe what has changed, how did the project help in overcoming the challenges mentioned in and give some examples of projects you have invested in as a result of the credit?)

3. Discussion on the reasons for change, focusing on the contributing and hindering factors and the consequences of change.
 - a. On the changes described in 2, please explain the aspects of the program that brought about the changes?
 - b. What factors contributed to the success?
 - c. And what are factors hindered you from achieving better results?
 - d. What are the individual, organization and external factors that contributed to the change? The different contribution y parties involved (*Please ask for the factors separately i.e individual, organization and external*)