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**Support to implementing partners
of SORUDEV, ZEAT-BEAD and
FSTP**

Final Report

Period covered:

17 August 2015 to 16 February 2016

Prepared by Angus Graham
and Omotayo Alabi
on behalf of

**Cardno Emerging Markets (UK) Ltd
Lead Member of Cardno Consortium**



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Contractor: CARDNO EMERGING MARKETS (UK) LTD
Address Oxford House, Oxford Road, Thame, Oxon, OX9 2AH, UK
Phone +44 1844 216500 Fax +44 1844 261593
Web www.cardno.com/emergingmarkets

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**Report Quality Controlled by
Michael Gutteridge, Framework
Contractors' Project Director**



Signature: _____

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
BEAD	Bahr-el-Ghazal Agricultural Development
CAD	Community Association for Development
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CfP	Call for Proposals
COTS	Community Ox-Plough Trainers
CWW	Concern Worldwide
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
EUR	Euro
EU-RDP	EU Rural Development Programme
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer Field School
FSTP	Food Security Thematic Programme
GBG	Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal
GIZ-IS	German International Cooperation – International Services
HARD	Hope Agency for Rural Development
IPs	Implementing Partners
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAFCRD	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Cooperatives and Rural Development
MARF	Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHPPE	Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment
MTI	Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSA	Non-State Actor
OP	Open-Pollinated
PIN	People in Need/CESVI
QRM	Quarterly Review Meeting
ROM	Results-Orientated Monitoring
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SORUDEV	South Sudan Rural Development Programme
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
VSF-G	Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Germany
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WFP	World Food Programme
ZEAT	Zonal Effort for Agricultural Transformation

1. Background

The framework of on-going EU support to agricultural sector development and the enhancement of food and nutrition security in the country has three principal components (actions):

- The Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP);
- The South Sudan Rural Development Programme (SORUDEV);
- The Zonal Effort for Agricultural Transformation – Bahr-el-Ghazal Agricultural Development (ZEAT-BEAD).

FSTP (annual funding cycle) is concerned with the timely and sustainable reduction of food insecurity among groups of people in circumstances of transition and fragility who are vulnerable to internal or external factors. FSTP makes provisions for linking the recovery and rehabilitation of beneficiaries to the development of their livelihoods. This assignment focused on four priority ongoing FSTP projects in the GBG region being conducted by the following non-Governmental organisations:

- 1) People in Need (PIN) – Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal State;
- 2) Concern Worldwide (CWW) – Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal State;
- 3) World Vision Germany (World Vision) – Warrap State; and
- 4) Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Germany (VSF-G) – Warrap State.

The EU Delegation (EUD) has allocated EUR 10 million under the 2015 FSTP Call for Proposals (CfP) that will focus on the Greater Upper Nile states affected by the current ongoing conflict in the country. From this stem four new projects:

- 5) Cordaid – Upper Nile State;
- 6) IRC – Unity State;
- 7) OXFAM – Jonglei State;
- 8) ZOA – Jonglei State.

SORUDEV (which started in May 2014) is concerned with increasing the production and income of smallholder farmers in South Sudan through the strengthening of extension services, increased access to markets and improved links between value chain actors. The programme is orientated around community-driven development and mechanisms for the full cost-recovery of farm inputs such as through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). It is implemented by four NGOs as follows:

- 1) Concern Worldwide (CWW) – Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal State;
- 2) Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) – Warrap State;
- 3) Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) – Lakes State; and
- 4) The Hope Agency for Rural Development (HARD) – Western Bahr-el-Ghazal State.

ZEAT-BEAD (which started in January 2015) is concerned with sustainably increasing the food security and well-being of the population of the Republic of South Sudan through the development and enhancement of capacities to deliver agricultural inputs, supplies and services throughout the GBG region.

ZEAT-BEAD is implemented by one Government Cooperation Agency, three United Nations (UN) Specialised Agencies:

- 1) German International Cooperation (GIZ) – GBG region;
- 2) The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) – GBG region;
- 3) The UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) – GBG region; and
- 4) The UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) – GBG region.

2. Executive Summary

Under the second Technical Cooperation and Economic Governance Facility (TCEGF II), the EUD provides technical support and advisory services to both ongoing and planned projects managed by NGOs and funded under the FSTP and SORUDEV programmes in selected project areas, at all stages of the project life-cycle.

TA support to NGOs and implementing partners for monitoring and extension services is a recurring need. To be effective, support should be continuous and regular; interruptions risk derailing on-going processes that are core to the EU's approach to rural development and for which there is at present an unusually high level of consent.

Technical assistance (TA) services contract "Support to implementing partners of SORUDEV, ZEAT-BEAD and FSTP – FED/2015/362-919 was signed with Cardno Emerging Markets (UK) Ltd on 10 August 2015 and the service delivery covered the six-month period 17 August 2015 to 15 February 2016.

The TA provided support and advisory services to projects managed by implementing partners (IPs) and funded under the EU's Rural Development Programme (EU-RDP) in South Sudan for the effective programming, implementation, monitoring and coordination of its actions. The TA team of Key Experts comprised of two persons from Cardno Emerging Markets (UK) Ltd:

- Angus Graham, Team Leader and Agronomist – Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Expert (Key Expert 1); and
- Omotayo Alabi, Extension Services Expert (Key Expert 2).

Each expert was allocated 100 working days over the six-month period. Work started with the arrival of Key Expert 2 on 17 August 2015. Key Expert 1 arrived on 26 August 2015. Both experts completed their work on 16 February 2016.

In addition, Cardno provided an Evaluation Expert (under category "Other Expert") for 50 person days to undertake evaluation activities under the themes of agricultural extension, rural finance and value chain development.

This report summarises the output and services provided over the period 17 August to 16 February 2016, and provides a summary on the main lessons learned as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the TA.

The assignment team completed all the assigned tasks for each of the key activities listed in the ToR. The outputs achieved are summarised in Table 1 below. The requisite deliverables are listed in the annexes and are provided on a CD-ROM accompanying the final report.

Highlights include: a total of 12 monitoring visits; one for each of the active on-going projects; two quarterly review workshops and a projects launch workshop; three evaluation workshops; two meetings with a panel of experts to review progress in the development of extension materials; consultative meetings with the donor working group and the heads of agencies, field staff and stakeholders of the various projects funded by the EU; and, the review of statutory documents presented for comment or analysis. In addition timesheets and activity plans were prepared on a monthly basis.

3. Objectives

The overall objective of the TA is to increase the effectiveness of EU-financed interventions to support the South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP) 2011-2016 to reduce vulnerability, enhance agricultural productivity and increase food security among rural communities in South Sudan.

The specific objective is to provide technical support and advisory services to the IPs and key stakeholders of the ZEAT-BEAD, FSTP and SORUDEV programmes in selected project areas, at all stages of the project life-cycle, in:

- 1) The effective monitoring and coordination of actions; and
- 2) The harmonisation of key approaches and facilitation of the implementation of extension services provided by IPs to beneficiaries.

Key Activities:

- 1) Monitoring the implementation of ongoing NGO and ZEAT-BEAD projects;
- 2) Supporting the coordination of actions by IPs and stakeholders of EU rural development programmes;
- 3) Supporting the launching of calls for proposals (CfPs) and new projects;
- 4) Evaluation of programme performance in key areas.

Outputs and deliverables:

- a) Individual field monitoring reports for each ongoing NGO project visited, consequent to regular field monitoring visits; All statutory reports that are submitted by ongoing projects (including all correspondence, requests for contract addenda, no-cost extensions, etc.) analysed and commented in support of the EU Delegation's contract management role;
- b) Coordination of actions by IPs facilitated in relevant forums; At least two meetings of the technical review panel on extension guidelines facilitated; Two State-level workshops for the SORUDEV programme facilitated (ideally for Western Bahr-el-Ghazal and Lakes States);
- c) Grant proposals from the 2015 CfP(s) analysed; Inception riders by the 3 or 4 NGOs contracted in 2015 revised with the concerned NGOs for final EUD approval; and
- d) An evaluation report on the performance of all relevant EU IPs in 3 key identified areas.

The team was also required to produce:

- An inception report with analysis of the existing situation and work plan for the project to be submitted one month after the start of the project.
- A final report to be submitted at the end of the period of implementation of the tasks.

4. Assignment Performance

The assignment team completed all the assigned tasks for each of the key activities listed above. The outputs (products and services) achieved are summarised in Table 1 below. The requisite deliverables are listed in the annexes and are provided on a CD-ROM accompanying the final report.

Table 1 Performance Against Expected Results ¹

Ref No.	Result	Planned achievements for the reporting period	Progress	Dates	Outputs
1	R1 -The implementation of on-going NGO and ZEAT-BEAT projects is monitored.	<p>A1 - Monitoring the implementation of on-going NGO and ZEAT-BEAD projects</p> <p>e) Individual field monitoring reports for each on-going NGO project visited, consequent to regular field monitoring visits;</p> <p>f) All statutory reports that are submitted by on-going projects analysed and commented in support of the EU Delegation's contract management role.</p>	<p>Field Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SORUDEV Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPA 15 December Concern 07 December NRC 30 November HARD 26 October FSTP Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VSF-G 18 December PIN 21 December Concern 14 December World Vision 03 December ZEAT-BEAD Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO-EIS 15 February FAO-Pastoralist 15 February UNIDO 15 February GIZ 15 February 	<p>dates reports submitted</p>	<p>Monitoring Reports, Annex 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SORUDEV Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report, Annex 1a Report, Annex 1b Report, Annex 1c Report, Annex 1d FSTP Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report, Annex 1e Report, Annex 1f Report, Annex 1g Report, Annex 1h FSTP Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report, Annex 1i Report, Annex 1j Report, Annex 1k Report, Annex 1h

¹ Dates indicated when the Products were formally delivered by Cardno UK via email, or the events held.

Ref No.	Result	Planned achievements for the reporting period	Progress	Dates	Outputs
1	R1 -The implementation of on-going NGO and ZEAT-BEAD projects is monitored.	<p>A1 - Monitoring the implementation of on-going NGO and ZEAT-BEAD projects</p> <p>g) Individual field monitoring reports for each on-going NGO project visited, consequent to regular field monitoring visits;</p> <p>All statutory reports that are submitted by on-going projects analysed and commented in support of the EU Delegation's contract management role.</p>	<p>Statutory Reports Reviews</p> <p>submitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ZEAT-BEAD Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO UNIDO GIZ FAO FSTP Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIN VSF-G SNV Oxfam 	<p>dates reviews</p> <p>29 November</p> <p>28 September</p> <p>24 September</p> <p>20 September</p> <p>06 December</p> <p>15 October</p> <p>01 October</p> <p>04 September</p>	<p>Analyses and comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ZEAT-BEAD Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-mail E-mail E-mail E-mail FSTP Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-mail E-mail E-mail E-mail
2	R2 -The coordination of actions by implementing partners and stakeholders of the EU's rural development programmes is supported.	<p>A2 - Supporting the coordination of actions by implementing partners and stakeholders of the EU's rural development programmes</p> <p>h) Coordination of actions with implementing partners in relevant fora;</p> <p>i) Two meetings of the technical review panel on extension guidelines;</p> <p>j) Two state-level workshops programme facilitated.</p>	<p>Coordination</p> <p>meeting/coordination</p> <p>Heads of Agencies (Juba)</p> <p>Donor Working Group</p> <p>Project Roads & Bomas</p> <p>Project Managers (Wau)</p> <p>ROM Consultants</p> <p>November</p> <p>FAO Inception Validation</p> <p>November</p> <p>UNIDO, GIZ</p> <p>State Ministers</p> <p>WBEG</p> <p>NBEG</p> <p>WARRAP</p>	<p>dates of</p> <p>1 to 17 September</p> <p>10 September</p> <p>23 January</p> <p>25 November</p> <p>23 to 30</p> <p>November</p> <p>04 to 05</p> <p>November</p> <p>06 November</p> <p>-</p> <p>06 November</p> <p>11 November</p>	<p>Meetings</p> <p>Meetings</p> <p>Event, PPT Presentation, E-mail</p> <p>Map, E-mail</p> <p>Event, E-mail</p> <p>Meetings</p> <p>Event, E-mail</p> <p>Meetings</p> <p>Meetings</p> <p>Meetings</p> <p>-</p> <p>Meetings</p> <p>Meetings</p> <p>Meetings</p>

Ref No.	Result	Planned achievements for the reporting period	Progress	Dates	Outputs
2	R2 -The coordination of actions by implementing partners and stakeholders of the EU's rural development programmes is supported.	<p>A2 - Supporting the coordination of actions by implementing partners and stakeholders of the EU's rural development programmes</p> <p>k) Coordination of actions with implementing partners in relevant fora;</p> <p>l) Two meetings of the technical review panel on extension guidelines;</p> <p>Two state-level workshops programme facilitated.</p>	<p>meetings/reports</p> <p><u>QRM Workshops</u></p> <p>4th QRM September</p> <p>5th QRM</p> <p><u>Guidelines Review Meetings</u></p> <p>1st Panel Meeting 2nd Panel Meeting</p> <p><u>QRM Reports</u></p> <p>4th QRM Report 5th QRM Report</p>	<p>dates of</p> <p>29 to 30</p> <p>26 to 28 January</p> <p>30 September</p> <p>28 January</p> <p>05 November</p> <p>05 February</p>	<p><u>QRM Workshops</u></p> <p>Event Event</p> <p><u>Guidelines Review Meetings</u></p> <p>Event Event</p> <p><u>QRM Reports, Annex 2</u></p> <p>Report, Annex 2a Report, Annex 2b</p>
3	R3 -The launching of calls for proposals and new projects is supported.	<p>A3 - Supporting the launching of calls for proposals and new projects</p> <p>m) Guidelines for the 2015 Call(s) for Proposals prepared;</p> <p>n) Grant proposals from the 2015 Call(s) for Proposals analysed;</p> <p>o) Inception riders by the 3 or 4 NGOs contracted in 2015 revised with the concerned NGOs for final EUD approval.</p>	<p>dates reviews submitted/workshop</p> <p><u>2015 New FSTP Projects Review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Projects (4) Reviewed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CORDAID 23 January OXFAM 23 January IRC 24 January ZOA 22 January Launch Workshop 10 February 	<p>dates reviews submitted/workshop</p>	<p><u>Report, Annex 3</u></p> <p>PPT Presentation E-mail E-mail E-mail E-mail Event, Report, Annex 3a</p>

Ref No.	Result	Planned achievements for the reporting period	Progress	Dates	Outputs
4	R4 - Programme performance in key areas is evaluated.	A4 - Evaluation of programme performance in key areas p) Individual evaluation reports on the performance of all the relevant EU implementing partners in 3 key identified areas.	submitted Evaluation Inception Report Workshop Wau Workshop Kauajok Workshop Rumbek Debriefing Note Evaluation Report	dates reports 23 November 23 November 25 November 25 to 26 January 3 January 15 February	Report, Annex 4 Report, Annex 4a Event Event Event Report, Annex 4b Report, Annex 4c
5	Deliverables.	A5 – Progress Reports q) One indicative work plan and inception report r) Terms of reference for the identified short term inputs; s) Monthly written briefings by email to the EU Programme Manager t) One final report at the end of the assignment.	submitted Project Inception Report Evaluation ToRs Monthly Updates • Annotated Timesheets • Activities Undertaken Plan Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec Financial Report (submitted separately)	dates reports 17 September 09 October 31 August 30 September 01 November 30 November 18 December	Report, Annex 5 Report, Annex 6 Financial Report E-mail E-mail E-mail E-mail E-mail

5. Inception Findings

During the inception phase (August-September 2015) meetings were held with the senior management teams of available FSTP, SORUDEV and ZEAT-BEAD IPs in Juba over a two week period. The purpose of the meetings was: to meet the team members; obtain updates on project progress; obtain preliminary feedback in advance on the thematic areas (extension, rural finance and value chains) of the performance evaluation consultancy foreseen under this assignment; and, identify the types of support the IPs anticipated needing over the course of the Programme.

The management of Government expectations is an ongoing concern. Ministerial information, including decisions, agreements and commitments established in high-level meetings, is apparently not being effectively relayed to lower levels of government (e.g. Payams). A number of issues remain unresolved with regard to support to empowerment and capacity development of Government, human resource management, and transfers and capacity building at State and local government levels.

Coordination and communications with Government at Juba level are mostly emergency-orientated and a resilience platform remains largely undefined. There is a need to establish relevant avenues for building consensus through a Government and partners' forum, together with mechanisms for addressing capacity gaps in the field and increasing transparency at State level.

Considering Government expectations for capacity building support and continuing concerns around the role of Government and areas in which Ministry staff may be involved in projects, the need to establish a Programme Steering Committee that was highlighted at the start of implementation of the Programme is still relevant.

The potential to create synergies among programme component partners is an evolving issue. Since IPs started their projects at different times, challenges persist as regards the coordination of priorities, the geographical selection and mapping of activities, ensuring programme stability, respecting agreements and building on decisions while adapting to what is possible.

Commitment of resources to technical support between programme components and broader coordination, analysis of the resilience context, information exchange and arrangements for data streaming and the translation of project documents into joint action plans are needed.

The extent of engagement of farmers in local markets needs to be examined, value chains to connect food-insecure smallholder farmers to markets better identified and the effectiveness of: i) individual and group resilience strategies; and ii) different models of knowledge, skills and technology transfer and uptake evaluated.

In addition the performance and outcomes of the introduction of functional leadership models, market-orientated extension and group learning methodologies and practices for vulnerable rural households need to be assessed for various vulnerability and targeting scenarios. This is of particular interest where the performance of village or farmer savings and loan associations (accumulation of savings) is expected to have been affected by the availability of food and the performance of the cropping season (and therefore by the subsequent knock-on effect on local (re)investment in technologies and the uptake of improved practices).

A common institutional approach to rural finance mechanisms for value addition is needed, while the role of Government in value chains and public-private partnerships require further exploration. Means of enabling collective sales by building and linking farmer groups to bigger organisations through networks of cooperatives, civil society organisations (CSOs) and actors along the value chain from production to market also need to be further elaborated.

6. Lessons Learned and Observations made during the TA

General Observations

Over the period August 2015 to February 2016, the TA team has gathered useful lessons and made observations from its role in providing support to the EUD Food Security and Rural Development Programme. These lessons learned and observations are presented below.

The context in which the programme operates has been influenced by recent economic events in South Sudan and increasing insecurity in many States. Emerging constraints include a shrinking cash economy, limited availability of USD currency and a reduction in trading activities and volumes of cargo to and across the region following devaluation of the SSP. In addition to general insecurity and a looming food crisis in Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal, price inflation is an on-going concern that directly affects project implementation. The cost of supplies and services including fuel, spare parts, training (including training venue costs) is increasing. Market prices change every day.

At an overall level project IPs have engaged effectively in the programme harmonisation process, have aligned their projects with the development objectives of SORUDEV and the principles outlined in the Wau Resolution, and spent appreciable time explaining the principle of “no free input distribution” to beneficiaries. This has however caused some delay and uncertainties. Overall, the programme is progressing steadily, including the mobilisation and formation of FFS/farming groups and VSLA/loan groups.

There are a number of areas of concern related to: 1) capability and capacity development processes 2) direct beneficiary interest/participation; 3) linkage of the project to other value-chain segments and marketing; and 4) uptake of ox-ploughs to increase areas, which together are causing some drag in performance potential. Despite solid awareness among SORUDEV partners of the project design, inputs are often still expected for free, for example when local government officials request free seed from agencies.

The political administration of South Sudan is changing. There are new states and there is the peace initiatives been pursued to settle the conflict in the country. The creation of additional states which brings the current number states to 28 is a reality that the programme must deal with. It affects the way the projects are implemented, requires additional coordination inputs and brings another level of bureaucracy. The administrative and security environment will need to be monitored and the programme implementation strategy adjusted as necessary.

Coordination and Cooperation

Monthly State level coordination meetings and quarterly project steering committee meetings at county level are improving cooperation and support and should be continued. Government agencies currently do not have sufficient resources to meet the emerging needs and some IPs are filling gaps and initiating or continuing real development services and processes.

Government counterparts are very interested to receive from all NGOs monthly updates on progress and challenges and gaps, and to assist with solving any problems on the ground through sending people to mediate with communities where necessary. Community Association for Development (CAD) focal points for EU funded activities need to be identified and should work closely together with NGOs.

Nutrition Education

They are also highly interested in better nutrition education and awareness and highly appreciate projects seen to be empowering women to feed their children better. Community training in nutrition is urgently needed. This should take a preventative approach and should not focus on treatment of acute under nutrition. Topics that should be covered should include breastfeeding, food taboos, food consumption and increasing means of dietary diversity.

Agricultural Research and Demonstration

Further attention to the development of research centres is needed. Currently there is no capacity for testing seeds (purity, certification etc), soil analysis or conduct of agricultural field trials. Generally there is a large need for the development of effective experimental and model/demonstration farms. This is an aspect that requires urgent attention, and a special pool fund should be created for this purpose. Demonstration farms are very important. Counties are allocating land amounting to 60 Feddans each for the purpose of initiating a demonstration farm.

Vegetable Production

Prior to the efforts of IPs many communities did not know how to grow vegetables, only cereals such as sorghum. They have now learned how to use vegetable seed. It is important to increase coverage of all communities in this activity that should be continued and scaled-up. The EU projects do not cover all the Payams, and in those covered often less than 10 % of the Bomas are being assisted. Consequently the majority of the people in need are not being reached.

Nevertheless people now working in new vegetable gardens are facing difficulties in controlling plant pests and diseases. Watering of the gardens from existing water sources is proving to be very laborious, and the need for strong fencing of vegetable gardens is an issue highlighted by many farmers.

Implementing partners should introduce integrated plant production and plant pest control into the programme, and in addition to promoting early maturing varieties through seed multiplication should also evaluate/consider incorporating a broader range of good performing locally adapted seed varieties.

A broader joint review of seed selection and performance needs to take place in order to better understand local planting strategies, preferences, successes, strengths, weaknesses, constraints, and opportunities. Placement, storage conditions and timing of release of seeds to be provided should be reviewed with a review to being prepared for any climatic eventualities.

Fruit Tree Production and Agro-Forestry

Demonstration farms for fruit tree production should be a priority. These should include a seedling nursery and produce trees for transplanting. A mechanism whereby community members are rewarded for raising trees has been highlighted in meetings with county authorities.

There is a large potential in the country for fruit production, including indigenous trees. Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration activities (being piloted by WVI) are very simple. This activity needs to be expanded because there is a considerable threat of semi-desertification in the area and for the opportunities it creates. Farmers are benefitting from forest areas but are also destroying them. A major issue is lack of awareness and knowledge.

The idea of food security in the county needs to extend beyond cereals, and the use of trees and vegetable gardens needs to be taken up together with activities for nutrition education in schools. Knowledge in this regard from neighbouring countries would be highly regarded. Production of fruit trees for mothers and children is a priority, especially activities/projects for schools.

There are also complaints among farmers of the variation in rainfall pattern. Nearly 85% of the farmers supported by SORUDEV implementing partners were affected by the sudden seizure of rainfall during the critical period of growth of sorghum and groundnut in particular. All indices of measurement including the IPC and AFIS documentation show that there is food deficit in most homes, an indicator that the hunger gap period will lengthen in 2016. Though the situation in the Greater Bahr El Gazal is less dire but nonetheless it comes with significant consequences on household food reserve.

Farmer Training and Extension

Practical training of farmers groups is important to pursue. There is a need for additional support to government extensions staff in the form of training and refresher courses, transportation and the means for the development of model farms (40 to 60 feddans). The lead farmer or farmer-to farmer extension approach is still not widely understood and a number of different approaches exist to the Farmer Field School (FFS) model.

More support is expected from partners in capacity development, more and regular refresher courses should be included in projects in this regard. More training is needed on FFS. Locations have been identified and prepared. Regular training of extension staff is needed in order to prepare them to train FFS facilitators. The resource needs of a cascaded training and extension model should not be underestimated and thorough broad-based-planning should take place before committing to such projects. FFS are a new methodology and county staff need training in many areas to run FFS.

A radio extension programme and a standard guide in local languages for extension agents and farmers is needed, with pictorial training and extension aids. These should include business guidelines for farmers (e.g. for cassava) along with well-contextualised, locally adapted and farming system-specific FFS manuals. Some aspects of the recently developed guidelines are too shallow, e.g. crop protection.

There is a high turnover of trained NGO extension and field staff, who leave in order to join other partners with more promising offers, undermining the efforts of supporting State Ministries. In the past many people have been trained through various NGO programmes, but disappear after a short period of service. Trained Government personnel who work with NGOs tend to become redundant when projects end. A career development programme is needed, for which persons selected should demonstrate some entrepreneurial initiative and be supported based on their motivation and commitment;

Private extension is generally absent in the Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal region and the focus of programmes so far has been on other types of extension workers – those employed in Government service and those hired by NGOs. Privatisation of extension services is perceived not to be taking place partly because Government and NGOs are absorbing qualified people and partly, because extension work is not attractive to graduates (since it is not perceived as a career that provides much opportunity to prosper);

The requirement that extension workers should have a primary school education should be reconsidered and agriculture should be incorporated into the primary education system. Community ox-plough trainers (COTS) are providing services but never completed primary school. A higher level of education and specialised training is necessary for some aspects of agricultural extension, e.g. use of agro-chemicals;

There is a need for a standard 3-month extension/training package, a formal application process and system for selecting trainees against well-defined criteria. This should target people who are settled and are doing practical farming (preferably, progressive farmers who can train other farmers);

There are some agro-dealers in the region but these generally do not practice any extension and the majority of farmers are unaware of the existence of these agro-dealers. A system is needed to support the roles of private extension agents and enable sales agents to work for agro-dealers based on commission. Sub-contracting to the Government may be one way of supporting private extension providers. There are numerous certified agriculturalists in the region that are present within rural communities and need to be organised under a single umbrella.

Generally agricultural extension services should be able to provide what farmers are looking for, e.g. pest management. Where this occurs (e.g. with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)), farmers have been willing to pay for services. Others see extension as a

public function that should be supported by a fully functional operational extension service training centre.

The roles and responsibilities of private extension agents should be established through a process of certification and licensing, based on sound capacity development criteria. This should include the identification of new programmes, piloting new technologies, linkage of farmers to suppliers/agro-dealers and the provision of reports to Government. Private extension should be supplied to farmer cooperatives and innovative private companies specialised in certain crops. They should provide inputs, services and FFS.

Private extension agents should be able to market their services to networks at all levels. They should have access to start-up capital and credit and receive cost-recovery based on the payback of produce in line with current market prices;

Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) Approach and Community Groups

The VSLA approach was initially unpopular among IPs and their counterparts; nevertheless its adoption is taking place rapidly. A key success of the VSLA activity is that it has brought the members together for joint learning and operations. Many VSLA groups are using their joint savings and internal borrowing to conduct trade activities, and would like to access credit to extend this and to diversify and increase their incomes by starting new activities. Poorly performing VSLA groups are in areas where free inputs distribution is still taking place in the vicinity and in some cases where the risk of lending is considered to be too high.

Smallholder farmers outside the original target groups are now forming VSLAs and have requested training support. Smallholder farmers generally seem to have conceptualised this aspect of the programme better than the local authorities.

Generally, the FSTP projects have targeted the most vulnerable host communities and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In some cases all activities have been implemented at group level. In the case of Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) Germany, two thirds of targeted project beneficiaries were vulnerable households and the remainder were smallholders. The smallholders were sensitised to the rationale behind the decision not to provide them with free inputs.

The capital base of vulnerable groups has tended to be small and saving has tended to be less than other groups, as can be expected, and consequently any borrowing and lending has mainly been used as a safety net. Generally, very little or no borrowing is taking place for business purposes under FSTP projects and there is a need for capacity building in business development in these situations.

VSLAs have proven effective in creating group cohesion and trust among members. As the economic and food supply situation deteriorates they increasingly tend however to be more welfare- than investment-oriented and their performance toward achieving project objectives is mixed. The constitution, laws, and structure of the groups are important. They should however comprise members of common interest, have a clear purpose and be well guided, and should receive regular training on group dynamics, supervision and monitoring. VSLAs should have well-articulated savings objectives and should receive regular training in how to conduct small business and exchange visits (e.g. chicken rearing).

There is a need for literacy and numeracy training to enable VSLA members to check their records and track their savings and loans. New criteria for the monitoring of VSLAs should be introduced (e.g. the ratio of savings to loans, to track how much is being utilised) and a basis for better understanding of how money is being used should be established. There is a general risk of losing track of VSLA funds due to limited capacity for keeping records. Eventually VSLAs should be formed into a cooperative linked to formalised banking;

Possibilities for the provision of capital to farmer groups should include revolving grants to VSLAs, matching grants based on business plans and the establishment of links to institutions specialised in low-rate agricultural loans, including micro-finance institutions and banks. A

VSLA Union should be established. Mobile phones or cash transfers/loans are an option that should be pursued, considering that communication networks exist where micro-finance institutions cannot go. Collateral or guarantors should be obligatory for VSLA non-members;

Revolving funds involving both CBOs and community banks where they exist is an option that should be considered. In order to increase production savings group need a rapid injection of loan capital. Supporting CBOs as lending intermediaries to VSLAs is a vital potential role in linking traders to farmer VSLAs, and sources of funds to community banks and to traders.

Before selection of CBOs takes place, a process of critical review and verification of candidates needs to be undertaken for all projects. This should involve County Government staff and community leaders. CBOs must be recognised and contracted together with local authorities. They must have systems in place, be known on the ground, have a local base and local representation, and must have adequate capability and capacity to undertake any work assigned to them. They should not be an organisation in name only run by two or three people.

Another key success has been allocation of land to farmer groups and the training provided them. Joint investments of inputs into collective efforts are showing results. Some progressive farmers who were trained in a group are now farming at larger scale individually. Avenues (Government, NGOs and CBOs and their partners) to provide continued support to these progressive farmers need to be sustained.

The strength and cohesion of groups are often hinged on common self-interest, identification and close relations. Groups should be properly formed and have clear identities, leadership, objectives and constitutions. Some of the groups supported are keenly interested in becoming cooperatives, and more effort is needed to form cooperatives and improve post-harvest management and the marketing of surplus farm produce.

The community conversation approach to risk management is increasingly seen as essential to efforts to reduce aid dependency. Community ownership of this process is important, as is the engagement of youth. Monthly community conversation groups, including women's groups, are effective at raising awareness among farmers of evolving problems in order that they may identify locally appropriate solutions, such as the diversification of crop production, the multiplication of drought-resistant crops and the application of effective cultural practices to grain storage.

An on-going challenge is how to develop farmers' associations and ensure they are represented at County and State level. The current State-Level Farmers' Union has a few politically selected members, but does not meet the functional needs of the sector or sub-sectors. The role of an agricultural union in market identification to support farmers' groups needs to be supported.

Diversification of Production and Developing Value Chains

The diversification of production is an important strategy when developing the resilience of livelihoods and household food security. For example, the introduction and promotion of mosaic-resistant cassava varieties should be expanded, as well as other additional crop options to widen the food basket. Possibilities include papaya, mangoes, tamarind (Ardeb), shea butter (Lulu) and sour plum (Abu camera).

All the implementing partners need to strengthen their working relationship with UNIDO in order to develop the post-harvest, value addition and marketing components of the programme. This is essential if the value chain activity activities are to benefit the farmers currently being supported.

A key concern raised was the need for seeds and tools to be available in the markets at fair prices. Currently the availability of good vegetable seed is poor and only found in a few main markets in each State. What is available is often limited to supplies from project interventions. Saving of open-pollinated (OP) vegetable seed is still limited to only a few crops such as okra

and ladyfinger.

Nevertheless, most inputs are now available locally and only vegetable seeds, planting materials and fishing kits still need to be imported into the region. The region is well endowed with fish resources. There is a widespread shortage of capture fishing equipment, development of input and product value chains for this resource should be prioritised. Scaling up of fishpond piloted farming should also be a priority.

Local artisans and seed suppliers need support. Options should also include contracting of farmers or financing credit-worthy traders to contract farmers. There is a pressing need to conduct a rapid market assessment of the availability of inputs, to identify and map established agro-dealers and to register them for training in the development of business skills. Development of input specifications and standards and capacity building in their quality regulation and control are also needed.

Continued coordination among donors in value chain promotion activities is needed, along with the building of synergy in these activities among UN agencies and NGOs. Also important is the need to work with local authorities in order to create better understanding of value chain creation. Priority should be given to supporting the organisation, legalisation and registration of producers, especially those who gather and process vegetable seeds (e.g. okra and Jew mallow).

Most of the projects are endeavouring to put farmers in contact with traders. Some farmers have saved to procure inputs only to discover upon return to the market that the prices of inputs (e.g. ox-ploughs) have increased significantly. Traders are reported to be increasingly disinterested in supplying farmers as their interest shifts to NGO contracts to supply inputs.

Linking traders to farmers has faced a number of complications, such as assuring traders with guarantees and registration of farmers who wanted to procure but also wanted to know the price of items in advance of registration.

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Groundnut/simsim processing (mechanical shelling and oil extraction) has been identified as a priority value addition demonstration activity needed in the region which is currently facing a drought year but in normal times is a large producer of groundnuts. There is an immediate need for groundnut shelling machines.

Promotion of Ox-Ploughing

Increased uptake of ox-ploughs is still critical to any strategy to increase agricultural production in view of a general lack of capacity and a shortage of ploughs in particular. So far the uptake of ox-ploughs under the provisions of the programme is not proceeding well, except perhaps for the use of spare parts produced by local artisans.

This requires remedial attention, and greater awareness is needed on appropriate management of animal traction working livestock. They require special treatment and care that is different to that of other free-range stock. Ox-ploughs are still not generally available and additional animal-drawn, labour-saving implements (such as for weeding) need to be rolled out and scaled up to avoid low productivity among larger areas planted and ploughed due to the effects of weeds.

There is a general gender imbalance to agricultural labour that is affecting food security, with women increasingly doing all the agricultural cultivation work. In Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal the community response to the animal traction component has been good, especially among women. Animal traction training is generally conducted for a total of 3 weeks over a period of 6

weeks. Changing attitudes toward agricultural labour and increasing the involvement of men in cultivation will be essential to easing the burden on women and increasing production.

Animal traction has played a key role in opening up larger areas to cultivation. However, the availability of labour is a significant constraint to productivity and animal-drawn implements for planting and weeding urgently need to be rolled out. Less than 10% of locally made ox-ploughs have been sold to date and less amongst those pre-placed with traders. Locally made ox-ploughs are of better quality and sell at half the price of imported ones. In some areas most farmers already own or have access to ox-ploughs due to previous efforts to diffuse this technology, in others they are still viewed to be unaffordable. At present farmers mainly buy spare parts for the maintenance and repair of their existing implements.

Mechanisation

Many of the project beneficiary groups contacted expressed an interest in hiring tractors for land preparation. The feasibility of introducing appropriate mechanisation should be explored. This should include not only land preparation but also water delivery systems for expanding dry season vegetable production. Water supply and availability and use of appropriate water technologies (pumps, water barrows, watering cans) was a common concern expressed by the groups.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

1. The establishment of viable agro-dealership and produce marketing groups is proving to be the most challenging aspect of the projects. Little progress was made in this regard during 2015, but some headway is expected in 2016. The signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between dealers and Payam management committees on the behalf of farmers is promising. The involvement of Payam administrators, Boma Chiefs, women's associations and technical units in the identification of potential suppliers and the unification of farmer representatives with dealers has helped forge commitments. In addition arrangements that allow farmers to buy now and pay later, such as revolving funds, are being encouraged.
2. Marketing groups will depend on farmers bringing produce to the groups for eventual sale. These groups should effectively link farmers to bigger markets. Training in post-harvest handling will become increasingly important and should cover good practices in processing, sorting and grading, crop and grain storage and product pricing. Farmer representatives should be included in marketing groups. Possibilities of providing start-up capital should be explored, with avenues for profits to return to farmers. At present support seems to focus on farmer production and business groups, and to a lesser extent on markets or inclusive market
3. Good progress has been made to identify all Bomas in the areas covered by the projects, at least those being serviced by the programme, however there is still much to do to know the population and bulk production of the main crops produced in each Boma and the proportion of settlements and households in each Boma that are supported by the project (for which the agricultural census could be used). A more elaborate Boma-level information system is needed to determine which NGO is operating where and which extension worker is working where. Current tools for recording production at household level are disjointed and time-consuming and a better system needs to be developed. There are some broad gaps in general data management and capacities for GIS-based planning and coordination among projects. There is need for more attention and technical assistance in this regard to support IPs to plan, monitor and report on their projects.
4. The FAO has established Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) for crop assessments,

but the accuracy of estimates remains dependent on the number of field observations. This process needs the support of NGOs to improve crop forecast and production estimates. Implementing partners should ensure to participate in the relevant FAO training, and participate in this process as it necessary for determining the overall and specific results of the programme. They should also cooperate in establishing broader networks for the monitoring of markets and rainfall, Sentinel satellite ground truthing. Such information is essential for decision making, e.g. to support climate-smart agriculture;

5. The quarterly review meetings (QRM) are an important opportunity for networking, review of the agriculture livelihoods situation, drawing evolving lessons learned and assessing project designs and progress in implementing work plans and results. It is important that planning extend beyond general project work layouts to detailed plans of surveys and studies, organization and communication; Training / workshop events; Curriculum and knowledge tools development; Functional leadership and group mechanisms, M&E data collection strategies, and exit strategy. However, the focus on presentations reporting on measures of performance every three months is perhaps too frequent, and every second one could perhaps more useful substituted by presentations on specific themes.
6. It should not be assumed that state governments will form and sufficiently fund structures at the various administrative levels. It is also important to communicate clearly what is understood, such as community and extension worker (community or local extension worker etc.) as there may be various actors involved with different roles and responsibilities which may also vary by administrative level. An understanding of functions of government extension workers, including monitoring and reporting, and some pragmatic realism regarding their mobilisation is necessary.