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**Challenges of Sustaining Community-Based donor Funded Farmer Groups: The Case of Six Selected Heifer International Supported Farmer Groups**

This study aimed at establishing the challenges of sustaining community-based farmer groups beyond the life cycle of donor support when the project winds up. A case study was conducted in six selected Heifer International supported farmer groups in the districts of Masindi, Busunju-Mityana, Mukono, Jinja and Mayuge. Before and during the time of this study, many groups have employed a number of strategies to sustain themselves after active donor funding had ended. However, their efforts have largely not yielded much success. This, therefore, called for an objective study into this state of affairs in order to get to the root of the matter. This study, therefore, aimed at establishing the factors that hindered the success of the strategies employed to run the activities of these community-based organisations/groups in the post donor period. Concurrently, there was need to examine the management of the different sustainability strategies employed by each group as a second objective, thereby assessing their contribution to the success or failure of the strategies to the sustainability of the group. Basing on the above, it was also prudent to pursue a third objective aimed at establishing an in-depth cause of the loopholes that affected the effectiveness of implementing the strategies in bringing about desired results. In order to effectively achieve the set objectives, the methodology used was mixed in nature whereby qualitative and quantitative approaches were used, backed by case studies and a cross sectional research design, all aimed to capture as much data as possible. Sampling was also chosen as the best way of accessing representative data and for that purpose six supported farmer groups were studied. The study considered a time scope of eight years from 2002-2009 in a sample size of 120 beneficiaries implying an average membership of 20 members per group. The fact that these people are already grouped and are led by focal persons, this meant that they are relatively clustered and easy to reach as they all know each other in their various groups in their parishes. But because of the high levels of low education levels, relevant data collection instruments had to be employed so as to maximise value and accuracy in the information gathered. So this led to the designing and use of interviewer administered methods. The key findings of the study include: limited involvement of beneficiaries in the project designs, sustained dependency attitude by the group members, lack of exit strategies by the groups, weak leadership and misappropriation of funds among others. Possible recommendations considered include: consideration of exit strategies during the project designs, operationalising of the constitutions, empowering of the leaders with skills and ethics of management, networking and collaborations among others.

**Keywords: Farmer groups, Donor funds**