

THEME: DOCUMENTATION FOR ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING.



A display of seeds in Soroti market

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Dear reader,

Welcome to the September issue of the PELUM Uganda E-Newsletter covering the theme '*Documentation for advocacy and lobbying*'

Documentation may refer to the process of providing evidence

or to the communicable material used to provide such documentation. Documentation understood as document is any communicable material used to explain some attributes of an object, system or procedure. **Advocacy** is explained as a deliberate process of speaking out on issues of concern in order to exert some influence

on behalf of ideas or persons and **Lobbying** is the practice of influencing decisions made by the government individually or groups.

It is the mission of all Non Government Organizations to ensure socio-economic empowerment of small scale farmers, vulnerable youth and marginalized poor and rural communities through lobbying and advocacy, capacity building, access to education and training and the creation of linkages aimed at reducing poverty for the attainment of decent livelihoods.

Recognizing that the causes of poverty, inequity and injustices are mainly systematic and cannot be solved by piecemeal interventions but by having a supportive policy and legal environment at all levels, Lobbying & Advocacy are a powerful voice of conscience in advocating for policy and law reforms in an effort to reduce suffering and address the root causes of poverty and marginalization.

While we as the civil society are advocating and lobbying for small scale farmers in Uganda, it is important to acknowledge that facts at our finger tips are very vital. We should ensure that we go to the ground and capture information about the situation from the rural communities because without the facts from the communities then

all the advocacy or lobbying being done by the development agents is a waste of time.

PELUM Uganda has carried out researches and studies with the purpose of informing the advocacy work of Member Organizations at the grassroots. Research has been carried out on issues like Climate Change [effects and indigenous adaptation methods], Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), the Special safe guard mechanisms and Sustainable Agriculture study on policy review

In this issue, you will read more about the PELUM Uganda support to small scale farmers on documentation during the past four years and how some Member Organizations intend to strengthen the capacity of farmers on advocacy. Enjoy.



EDITORIAL TEAM

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ADVOCACY FOR SEED SOVEREIGNTY TO PROMOTE FOOD SECURITY.

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Uganda is now in a crucial historical moment. This country has a population of about 35 million people and 87.5% of the population lives in rural areas. Uganda is undergoing a deep restructuring process in terms of policies in land management, agriculture, livestock and trade.

In Veterinaries sin fronteras (VSF) we firmly believe that most food in the world is grown, collected and harvested by more than a billion small-scale farmers, pastoralists and artisanal fisherfolk. This food is mainly sold, processed and consumed locally, thereby providing the foundation of people's nutrition, incomes and economies across the world. Small-scale farmers in Uganda and all over the world are feeding their countries using traditional production methods, rather than big and expensive industrial production systems that don't fit into their environments and are mainly used for export purposes.

However, the rules that govern food and agriculture at all levels – local, national and international – are designed *a priori* to facilitate not local, but international trade; not traditional, but industrial production models. This reduces diversity and concentrates the wealth of the world's food economies in the hands of ever fewer multinational corporations, while the majority of the world's small-scale food producers, processors, local traders and consumers, are marginalized.

Food Sovereignty is the new policy framework being proposed by social movements all over the world for the governance of food and agriculture, because it addresses the core problems of hunger and poverty in a new and innovative way. This principle is common to all the different interpretations of Food Sovereignty: they start their analyses from the local point of view, and from the perspective of those facing hunger and rural poverty.

The work of VSF consists of giving support to those initiatives established by local peasant's organizations, in order to improve their living conditions, and particularly those that comply with the goals of Food Sovereignty. In our daily work we realize that farmers as well as small scale farmer's organizations are becoming more aware of the strength of their local food production systems, and the fact that these help them reduce risks.

Throughout last decades, some farmers tried to improve their incomes by participating in cotton and vanilla “*market outgrower schemes*”: they obtained packages of seeds and chemical inputs from extension agents of big companies, who then bought up the harvests at the end of the season. Farmers were paid for their production, minus the cost of inputs. But this experience left many farmers in debt because of high investment costs, and in the process of specializing in a particular crop, they became vulnerable to an uncertain climate and volatile markets.



*A demonstration of Via Campesina
a peasant group meeting in Bali - Indonesia.*

Genetic material is crucial for all agricultural production systems and its management determines to a large extent the food sovereignty of a given community. In principle, all family farmers in Mozambique save their seeds because, as they say, “if you don’t save seed, you are not a real farmer”.

Many small rural farmers who have to struggle to make a living in marginal areas are custodians of important agricultural crop diversity. This makes them knowledgeable partners in its management. Crop and variety diversity, coupled with local knowledge of biodiversity management, have been one of the strategies used by smallholder farmers to stabilize production. However, other stakeholders in agriculture often do not know about the diversity of agricultural crops in village settings, and even farmers living in the same rural community may not be well-informed on the wealth of different crop diversity that exists and is available to them. Thus we want to collaborate with small scale farmers on issues that are really their concern.

With these challenges in mind, VSF together with some small scale farmer’s organizations is launching in Teso Region a study, trying to find out which seeds are currently in use, which of those are local seeds and what are their main characteristics, and which are commercialized seeds or improved. One big aim of this study is also to reinforce the local knowledge which is attached to this local seeds (the ways of conservation, propagation, exchange and storage) The study will be developed on Soroti, Amuria, Kumi and Bukedea districts.

VSF’s objectives are to:

- 1) Gain knowledge on the current situation of seeds in Teso region;
- 2) Promote the diversity of seeds used by small scale farmers;
- 3) Make farmers aware of the importance of controlling their own seed;
- 4) Exchange experiences on the production of varieties adapted to local conditions; and
- 5) Create an opportunity for small scale family farmers to exchange genetic



*Evaluation Committee Meeting
formed by 45 CBOs in Teso.*

material which was adapted to local conditions and customs;

The participation of the small scale farmer's organizations in the methodology and the contents of the study is one of the main issues. In VSF we are trying just to empower local initiatives that are coming from family farmer's organizations and owned by them, so will try to play a role of facilitation and provide analytical and methodological tools that can help to implement this study.

With the results of this study we will start working with the small scale farmers from Teso on a new strategy of conservation and use of local seeds. We will support them in the designing of an advocacy strategy based on seed sovereignty and we will also try to create opportunities to exchange local seeds among themselves and their organizations.

Unlike more formal agricultural fairs, which farmers attend as passive spectators of others' materials and technology, a seed diversity fair gives small scale farmers the opportunity of meeting to discuss and demonstrate not only

their own seeds, but also their local practices and knowledge that are linked to specific seed varieties, storage, processing and use. Many smallholder farmers continue to rely on their own farm-saved seeds for future crops.

At seed diversity fairs, they are able to show and exchange small quantities of these seeds, some of which will be unknown or long-forgotten varieties for other farmers. Through this, farmers can diversify their production with varieties that are well adapted to local conditions.

Seed sovereignty is the first needed step to reach Food Sovereignty. Maintaining and improving seed diversity can therefore be an appropriate approach to improving food security in rural settings.



The only lasting way to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty is through local economic development. One way to achieve such development in rural areas is to create local circuits of production and consumption, where family farmers sell their produce and buy their necessities in local towns. Money circulates several times in the local economy, generating town employment and enabling farmers to make a living. In contrast, if what farmers produce is exported, fetching international market (low) prices, and most everything they buy is imported, all profits are extracted from the local economy and contribute only to distant economic development. Thus food sovereignty, with its emphasis on local markets, local seeds and economies, is essential to fighting hunger and poverty.

Farmer Led Documentation and Advocacy.

Joshua Aijuka

PELUM Uganda Country Desk.

In the African traditional societies, people had their unique but effective ways of sharing information on good practices and their lifestyles. One of the most dominant ways of information sharing was the fire place where community members or family members would gather around a fire at night and the elderly would narrate to the young generation on the good practices in farming, other activities and morals. These good practices were effectively passed on from generation to generation until the era of so called “modernization” that was over taken with technology.

Modernization came along with education and urbanization, children had to go to school and later to towns to look for better paying jobs, there was no more time for the young generation to share wisdom from the elders through fire places and tales. For a moment, the practices which had worked effectively for centuries were rendered as old fashioned and ineffective, agriculture which was and still is a source of livelihoods to many began to be viewed as an activity for the poor and the uneducated; farmers were referred to as peasants, the lowest social class in any community.

This resulted into a generation gap between the young and old, good farming practices were no longer passed on to young generations which resulted into poor farming practices, low crop yield, land degradation and many more.

The only source of information was research which was hardly targeted to the needs of farmers and they never got to use it. Researchers would go to farmers fields, get whatever information

they wanted and put into their shelves. After all, “peasants could not read and write” a myth that has occupied many peoples minds for such a long time.

With all said and done, development partners began to appreciate the huge gap between research and farmers who were supposedly the beneficiaries of the information. They began to realize the need for farmers to become more actively involved in research and own the process. One effective way was to get farmers to begin documenting their own farming practices in a manner that is well understood by themselves hence Farmer Led Documentation (FLD).

FLD is an empowering process in which local communities take the lead role in the documentation process and where the results are used by the community members for purposes of internal learning and exchange between communities, and between a community and development workers / policy makers.

PELUM Uganda has been implementing a farmer led documentation project since 2006 with support from PROLINNOVA and Oxfam Novib. Other partners in the project, is a steering committee that is comprised of a representative from Oxfam Novib as well as PELUM and PROLINNOVA representatives from Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia to oversee the project progress as well as give technical backstopping to the planning and implementation process.



The writer (second from right) and REN member of staff interacting with “Patience pays farmers group members” in Kayunga district during the FLD follow up evaluation.

FLD was implemented in phases;

In phase one, a 5 day international exchange and capacity building workshop on FLD was held in November 2006 attracting representatives from 11 countries where participants shared their experiences and FLD of related practices in their respective countries. A dissemination workshop was later held where materials like DVDs and publications about FLD were shared widely. Further more, participating organizations were requested to submit project proposals to pilot FLD in their respective constituencies, 3 organizations; 2 from Uganda (Africa 2000 Network Kabale and Rural Empowerment Network) and Farmer Support Group from South Africa were supported to implement FLD pilot project for 6 months using different methodologies. A2N Kabale piloted the use of community information centers and still digital and video Cameras to document farmers’ experiences, REN piloted the use of Question and Answer Service (QAS) and digital cameras to capture farmers’ concerns and get responses from

fellow farmers (farmer experts). FSG piloted the use of photography for farmers to document their own experiences and activities.

After the pilot projects, reports were submitted to the PELUM Uganda country desk containing activities, achievement, challenges, lessons learnt and way forward for future implementation of FLD.

Later on, PELUM Uganda conducted a follow up evaluation of the FLD pilot projects to assess the relevance, perceptions and uptake of FLD by farmers after the project implementation period. Several interesting findings came out of the follow up visits amongst which were the repercussion of these polices by other farmer groups and the need to upscale FLD to bring more stakeholders on board. This among other findings informed the implementation the FLD phase two projects.

Phase two brought on board 7 more organizations from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia who

implemented FLD using several methodologies. Quarterly and end of project reports were also submitted to PELUM Uganda with several recommendations and lessons learnt from the different approaches piloted. This brought to light that farmers appreciate FLD and the encouragement brought on by the pilot projects would help them appreciate and use FLD for many more years.

Also under the FLD project, a 3 day capacity building workshop was organized for farmer led

organizations which attracted participants from 10 East and Southern African small scale farmers forum(ESAFF) districts and other development partners. By the end of the workshop, participants could fully understand the concept of FLD, the different methodologies and the benefits. Also, participants formulated action plans on how to integrate FLD in their work. A follow up evaluation was later carried out by country desk staff to assess how to what extent farmers were able to integrate FLD, challenges faced, how they were overcome and recommendations.



A display of Photographic Farmer led documentation by a women farmer Group in Jinja.

Benefits of FLD in promoting Advocacy in these different districts are stated below.

- Through knowledge gained at the FLD workshop, farmers in Mityana district wrote a small proposal and distributed it to the different authorities like the RDC, Local councils and the district chairman but the beauracracy was too long that they gave up. It was at this stage that the NGO forum came in and offered help to the Farmers in this district.
- Farmer led documentation helped a number of farmer groups in Mubende district to get support from NAADS. This was as result of community action plans that were drafted and shared with the sub county officials.
- FLD helped farmers to know the seasons within which they could receive seeds from organizations. Unlike before when they would get seeds out of the planting season and the seeds would be spoilt by the planting season.
- FLD has also helped small scale farmers to be recognized at sub county level where they wrote a proposal and a letter of request and as a result, every parish in Kamuli district got an OX plough.
- FLD is used by farmer groups to source for support from NGOs.
- Farmer led documentation helped a number of farmer groups in

Mubende district to get support from organizations through proposal writing and request letters.

- FLD helped condense farmers' voices into one strong concrete voice to lobby for favorable policy environment for smallholder farmers.
- FLD helped farmers to get facts of what they are advocating for through documenting their problems.
- Helps in quantification and evaluation of the problem to assess the magnitude of the problem to farmers for effective problem ranking in their advocacy work.
- It's a tool that can be used to derive the issues before farmers get an advocacy statement.
- FLD helps farmers in sourcing for strategic alliances with other organized groups lobbying for the same problem such that they can be more recognizable.
- Documentation can be a solution to some of the problems hindering soliciting support to advocate for the problem

By the end of phase two, a lot of knowledge and practical experiences had been generated pertaining the implementation and integration of FLD in different community settings. Such ideas had to be harmonized to bring create a common understanding on FLD among different stakeholders. As a result, a 3 day FLD write shop was organized by PELUM Uganda with support from Oxfam Novibb

from 13th to 16th October 2009 which brought on board stakeholders from different countries (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia) to bring their isolated ideas together pertaining FLD and develop a tool kit which would guide the promotion of FLD in communities.

A tool kit is in the process of being created to harmonize perception and understanding of the FLD concept and the different approaches, this would create the basics of FLD.

Also, it was realized that people were practicing FLD subconsciously (without knowing they are doing it), others are still using methodologies which are not working out yet somewhere else people know the effective methods. The write shop was also an opportunity for organisations to share the different approaches that were piloted and refine them accordingly.

The toolkit was also thought to bring about a systematic process in which FLD information would be disseminated among other stakeholders and make practitioners own the process as well as the outcomes. The write shop also pointed out the integration of technology in FLD approach to match the changing trends as well as involvement of media to reach a wider population.

With the tool kit being finalized by a team of technical experts and after it has been piloted, it's hoped that it will guide the integration of FLD in the work of various development partners. It will be a step by step guide to the integration of FLD and highlighting the potential benefits of FLD.



Please submit articles for the next issue to:

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Before 11th January, 2010.

UNDER THE THEME:

“Sharing of Testimonies from PELUM Asociasion Work”