



Hub Cymru Africa



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

Mbale Tree Growing Enterprise –METGE]

END OF PROJECT EVALUATION

Mbale Tree Planting Program [MTTP]

[3 Years - April 2020 to March 2023]

Commissioned by
Mount Elgon Tree Growing Enterprise (METGE)

Conducted and reported by

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List of Abbreviations

AWP	-	Annual Workplan
BRDC	-	Bungokho Rural Development Centre
CSOs	-	Civil Society Organizations
DAC	-	Development Assistance Cooperation
Dfid	-	Department for International Development
FGDs	-	Focus Group Discussions
IPs	-	Implementing Partners
KIIs	-	Key Information Interviews
MEACCE	-	Mount Elgon Agroforestry Coffee Cooperative Enterprise
M&E	-	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOUs	-	Memorandum of Understanding
MTTP	-	Mbale Tree Planting Project
NARO	-	National Agricultural Research Organization
NGOs	-	Non-Government Organizations
OECD	-	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PWDs	-	Persons with Disabilities
ROOTs	-	Running Out Of Trees
SAO	-	Share An Opportunity Uganda
SLM	-	Sustainable Land Management
TNBOs	-	Tree Nursery Bed Operators
UWA	-	Uganda Wildlife Authority
VSLAs	-	Village Savings and Loans
WHO	-	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Size of Wales and Mount Elgon Tree Growing Enterprise (METGE) commissioned an evaluation of its 3-year Mbale Tree Planting Program (MTPP). The overarching goal of the MTPP was to plant, nurture, and conserve millions of trees in the Mount Elgon Region of Uganda to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and improve sustainable livelihoods for the local people. The MTPP started in 2010 and has received Welsh Government's funding since 2013.

The evaluation assessed the project concept and design, progress, achievements, shortcomings in implementation, relevance, performance, effectiveness, effectiveness in achieving objectives, unanticipated results, lessons learned, and recommendations for future projects.

Project Concept and Design

The MTPP was designed to distribute and plant 25 million trees in the Mount Elgon region by 2025, with a target of distributing at least 3.1 million trees each year. The project also aimed to: increase the knowledge of local farmers and communities in sustainable agroforestry and tree diversity; provide participants with other associated direct benefits, such as fuel-efficient stoves and beekeeping training and resources; gender incorporated into program and organizational approach; and strengthen organizational capacity to deliver restoration of ecosystem systems and resilient community livelihoods outcomes and impacts.

Progress, Achievements, and Shortcomings in Implementation

The MTPP made significant progress in achieving its objectives. The project successfully established a network of tree nurseries with the capacity to produce at least 3.2 million trees each year of an appropriate diversity. The project also increased the knowledge of local farmers and communities in sustainable agroforestry and tree diversity. About 4,813 farmers benefited from the training (1,686 females and 3,017 males). Further, participants were provided with other associated direct benefits, such as 3,221 fuel-efficient stoves installed against a target of 3,000 and 600 beekeeping farmers trained and supplied with different assortments of bee equipment.

However, the project also faced some challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, frequent changes in leadership at the secretariat level, and frequent fluxes of extreme weather conditions. These challenges slowed the pace of implementation and led to some setbacks.

Relevance, Performance, and Effectiveness

The MTPP was a relevant project that addressed a critical need in the Mount Elgon region; i.e. increasing tree cover, enhancing livelihood initiatives such as growing of fruit trees, beekeeping and financial inclusion through village savings and loans. The project was well-designed and implemented, and it achieved significant progress towards its objectives. The project was effective in achieving its planned objectives, and it had a positive impact on the lives of local people.

Effectiveness in Achieving Objectives

The MTPP was effective in achieving its planned objectives. The project successfully established a network of tree nurseries with the capacity to produce at least 3.2 million trees each year of an appropriate diversity. The project also increased the knowledge of local farmers and communities in sustainable agroforestry and tree diversity, and provided participants with other associated direct benefits, such as fuel-efficient stoves and beekeeping training and resources.

Unanticipated Results

The MTPP had several unanticipated positive results, including an increase in women's participation in nursery management and tree planting activities, and an improvement in the quality of tree seedlings. Similarly, the community radio generated much engagement and knowledge sharing beyond what had been anticipated.

Lessons Learned

The following lessons were learned from the implementation of the MTPP:

- Capacity building is crucial for all METGE interventions.
- Diversify livelihood interventions to enhance households' engagement in tree growing.
- Leverage existing resources from complementary programs to avoid duplication.
- M&E and baseline data are as important as outcomes and ensure long-term capacity for higher survival rates and adoption of other interventions.
- Effective multi-stakeholder engagement at community and district levels is essential.
- Successful partnerships require stakeholder analysis and collaboration, working with partners with a mandate and expertise, strong project management, and improved collaboration between METGE and implementing partners.
- Conduct stakeholder analysis to identify opportunities for buy-in, political support, networking, and partnerships.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for future projects:

- Deepen the focus on integrating tree planting as a component of Sustainable Land Management (SLM), promoting agroforestry practices, and improving livelihoods.
- Ensure consultations with stakeholders at district and community levels to inform project objectives and activities.
- Ensure the organisation has a Theory of Change built into the project rationale/learning hypothesis and that METGE and partners understand its significance.
- Develop the capacity of METGE, partners, Tree Nursery Bed Operators (TNBOs), and Community Facilitators (CFs) to understand and integrate gender equity and equality principles.
- Encourage dialogue with men to support women's empowerment and decision-making in resource allocation, including land for tree planting.
- Ensure women's meaningful participation in community management and decision-making.
- Link with organisations with expertise in gender equity and equality to facilitate learning and capacity development.

- Ensure technical capacity development for partner organizations, especially on survival rates, gender equity, livelihood diversification, and climate resilience.
- Strengthen links between METGE and IPs, ensuring capacity development and regular meetings on integrating tree planting into household livelihoods.
- Engage more strongly with other tree restoration organisations at local, national, and international levels.
- Consolidate partnerships with district local governments, the National Forest Authority, Uganda Wildlife Authority, and the Ministry of Water and Environment.
- Establish a unit cost for the project and compare it across different approaches, countries, and overall.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Size of Wales and the Mount Elgon Tree Growing Enterprise (METGE) commissioned an exercise to evaluate the previous 3-year cycle of the Mbale Tree Planting Program (MTPP) which covered the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2023. The overarching goal of the Program was to plant, nurture and conserve millions of trees in the Mount Elgon Region of Uganda to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and improve sustainable livelihoods for the local people. The program aimed to contribute to several Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 1 (No Poverty). It also aimed to have some additional capacity each year to grow and distribute additional tree seedlings where additional donations for tree planting are made to the program via the Welsh Government / Size of Wales.

This evaluation exercise was conducted from 31st August to 5th September 2023 and covered the 3-year project; i.e., from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2023. This end-of-project evaluation serves to assess the achieved results against the stated objectives of the project using the Organisation Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria, assess the lessons learned, and give recommendations for future programming. A consultant was hired to undertake this task in line with the terms of reference found in Annex 1.

1.2 Evaluation Objectives

The objectives of this exercise, as stated in the consultant's terms of reference, were to assess:

- a) The quality of the project concept and design;
- b) Progress, achievements, and shortcomings in the implementation of the Mbale Tree Planting Program (MTPP) and meeting project objectives.
- c) The relevance, performance, and effectiveness of the project outcomes, objectives, and outputs
- d) The effectiveness of the project in terms of achieving its planned objectives arising from the project, with respect to METGE and Size of Wales mobilization and management of resources (budget, inputs, and activities);
- e) Whether or not there were unanticipated results, either positive or negative, arising from the project's implementation;
- f) identify lessons learned from the project implementation and recommend improvements to further project planning, design, and management
- g) Provide specific recommendations regarding any follow-up actions required by METGE and SOW management to effectively sustain or improve support to the project's programs in the future.

This evaluation is based on the review of relevant documents and stakeholder interviews. Documents reviewed included progress reports, financial reports, project activity reports, as well as other relevant documents from METGE and implementing partners.

Furthermore, the consultant conducted a series of focus group and individual interviews with stakeholders from implementing partners, tree nursery bed operators, beneficiary communities, District and sub-county technical staff, and local council I and II representatives.

1.3 Methodology Overview

A mixed method design that utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods was used for the evaluation to collect primary data.

1.3.1 Methods and approaches

This evaluation employed different methods and approaches as follows:

- a) Desk Review: a document map, linking key documents to the main areas of review for the evaluation was drafted and information obtained from documents was mapped against the areas of review/evaluation questions and key data extracted to inform analysis.
- b) Key Informant Interviews: in total, 12 key respondents (8M:4F) were interviewed in Sironko and Mbale Districts. Respondents included District natural resource officers, Agricultural extension officers, Community development officers, Political local leaders, religious leaders, and representatives of NGOs.
- c) Focus Group Discussions: a series of 10 focus group discussions were carried out in the project intervention areas in Bukedea, Mbale, Manafwa, and Sironko to gather information to complement the desk review and key informant interviews. In total, over 300 people including 74 girls, 15 boys, 33 teachers, and 86 parents/School Management Committee/Parent-Teacher Association Members were interviewed.

The above methods were chosen to broaden and deepen understanding of the processes and context through which the MTTP program results were achieved.

1.3.2 Sampling strategy and Sample size

Simple random sampling was used to select the beneficiaries (80% women, 20% men). 50% of both genders were youth for the evaluation survey. Yamane's (1966) formulae were used to determine the sample size for the evaluation. The formula is elaborated in detail below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the level of precision (5%). The resultant sample constituted 80% women, 20% men.

$$\frac{1200}{1 + 1200(0.05^2)} = 300$$

From a population of 1,200, a sample of 300 beneficiaries was randomly selected from the list provided. To edge against sample attrition, 5% more individuals were randomly selected, thus increasing the sample

to 315. Key informants were purposely selected based on their participation and knowledge of the project. Ten (10) focus group discussions (FGDs) were randomly selected from the beneficiaries and conducted in Bukedea, Mbale, Manafwa, and Sironko to gather information to complement the desk review and key informant interviews.

1.3.3 Data Collection

Mostly face-to-face interviews were used to collect data from respondents based on their availability. Survey data was collected by the enumerators while the project evaluation team undertook all the KIIs and FGDs. Their responses were recorded and scrutinized for quality assurance at the end of each data collection day. Mobilization of the beneficiaries to turn up for the data collection was conducted by METGE through their community facilitators. The evaluation team with the assistance of two supervisors and a data analyst oversaw the data collection for the evaluation.

1.3.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the survey was gathered and analyzed. The analysis focused on descriptive statistics and presented in tables, charts, and graphs. Qualitative data from KIIs and FGDs was transcribed into text format and categorized into themes using content analysis. From these, common conclusions and divergent views on specific questions were arrived at. Verbatim quotes emanating from the interviews were highlighted.

1.3.5 Ethical considerations

The evaluation team made every effort to address the ethical concerns related to this study in all different stages of research (i.e., evaluation designing and planning, data collection). Verbal consent was obtained from each respondent before interviews were conducted. No financial or other incentives were provided to participants to induce, coerce, or influence any results

1.4 Study Limitations

1.4.1 Scarcity of project documents: The program did not have baseline data and a full monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan. There was no baseline to gauge the progress against outputs/outcomes. Similarly, a full M&E plan would have provided a detailed reference of the indicators and their measurement. It would have further provided evaluation questions which would be a point of reference for the baseline, midterm, and end-term evaluations. This would have guided all project evaluations and thus made comparison of the findings from the evaluations quite possible.

1.4.2 Limited time: Although all efforts were made to meet with and talk to as many relevant respondents as possible during the course of this evaluation, some logistical and practical factors prevented this from being entirely successful.

1.4.3 Other limitations included:

- Due to time constraints, it was not possible to hold Focus Group Discussions with boys as planned.

- As a result of external events such as market days and funerals, fewer women than men were available to participate in focus groups
- In some districts the long distance to travel to reach the project meeting points limited available time for comprehensive consultations
- Not possible to visit all implementation sites in each of the target districts.

2.0 PROJECT SUMMARY

2.1 Project background/concept

In March 2020, the METGE signed a funding agreement of up to £1,155,000 with the Size of Wales / Welsh Government for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2023 ("the 3-Year Funding Period"). This was for the Mbale Tree Planting Program ("the Program"). The new funding agreement was immediately signed following METGE's celebration of having hit the 10 million seedlings distribution target. It meant the new funding was to facilitate the production and distribution of the 25 million seedlings by 2025. The new funding was also at a time when METGE had just been registered as a not-for-profit non-government organization under Ugandan laws in December 2020.

Within the funding period, METGE and Size of Wales signed an additional funding agreement on a capital grant of up to £304,300. The purpose of this capital grant was to enable METGE to invest in some of the capital items to facilitate the delivery of the Program in the financial year 2020-2021 and subsequent years. The items purchased included pickup trucks, motorcycles, solar equipment, data collection systems, IT equipment, phones, conference – microphones/cameras, vehicles, overhead projector screens, etc.

The overarching goal of the MTPP was to plant, nurture, and conserve millions of trees in the Mount Elgon Region of Uganda to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and improve sustainable livelihoods for the local people. The program aimed to contribute to some Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land), SDG 1 (No Poverty), and SDG 5 (Gender and equality/safeguarding).

The other key aim of the program is that METGE increasingly becomes a financially resilient, Ugandan-run organization with strong governance and strong financial management and that the program becomes "Dfid ready" i.e., is run to the highest international development standards and suitable for Dfid funding. The program also aimed to have some additional capacity each year to grow and distribute additional tree seedlings where additional donations for tree planting were made to the program via Size of Wales.

To achieve the overarching goal and outcome the MTPP identified three broad outputs and several activities under each output. The stated project outputs are:

- Output 1:* The network of tree nurseries can produce at least 3.2 million trees each year of an appropriate diversity.
- Output 2:* Knowledge of the local farmers and local communities participating in the program is increased in sustainable agroforestry and tree diversity.

- c) *Output 3:* Program participants gain other associated direct benefits including fuel-efficient stoves and training and resources for beekeeping.
- d) *Output 4:* METGE and the two partners are effective implementing organizations

The key outcome of the program was that 25 million trees were distributed and planted in the Mount Elgon region and nurtured by an extensive network of knowledgeable local farmers and community members by 2025. This involved distributing at least 3.1 million trees every year – one for every person in Wales each year – as well as approximately 37,000 trees for every child born or adopted in Wales each year.

The MTPP had some constraints under which it had to operate:

- a) No clearly spelled program document
- b) COVID outbreak in FY 2020-2021 and FY 2021-2022 which slowed the pace of implementation. The pronouncement of COVID-19 in March by the World Health Organisation (WHO) made Uganda take restrictive measures that limited movements and interactions in program areas. This constrained the implementation of interventions such as community mobilization, sensitisation, and training which required gathering people together.
- c) Frequent changes in leadership within METGE
- d) Frequent fluxes of extreme weather conditions resulted in impacts like flash floods and landslides which led to loss of lives and property. Drought spells were also experienced in the last quarter and this affected the stock of seedlings and crops in areas with seasonal water sources.

2.2 Project design

There was no formal program document developed where a situation analysis, detailed description of expected outputs, expected outcomes, and planned activities including annual work plans as well as arrangements for project management and monitoring of the program was documented. However, there was a project log frame with outcomes, baseline, milestones, outputs, and indicators. Further, these were also aligned with the goals of Uganda's Vision 2040, National Development Plan III 2020-2025, and support the National Forestry Plan 2011-2022.

Despite the lack of the program document, METGE conducted a retrospective impact evaluation of the Mbale Tree Planting Program between 27th July and 14th September 2020. The recommendations from this evaluation did inform the MTPP for the period 2020-2023. The recommendations were:

- a) Nurturing strategic linkages with other climate action players focusing on livelihoods and climate change in the sub-region. METGE has been able to link up with several players including District Local Governments, statutory agencies such as the National Forestry Authority (NFA) and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), Non-government organizations and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), research and academic institutions such as National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) and Bangor University in the United Kingdom, respectively.
- b) Remuneration and welfare of staff: This should be critically assessed and matched with similar organizations to minimize staff turn-over. For very difficult areas, a hardship incentive

should be added to the staff working in hard-to-reach areas. This should be done through a salary survey. The Salary and benefits survey was conducted in Q2 of the FY 2021-2022. Except for the enhancement of compensation for the Tree Nursery Bed Operators (TNBOs) and Community Facilitators (CFs), the survey recommendations have not been implemented.

- c) Development of materials and documents. With support from Size of Wales, MTPP should develop the following: (i) IEC materials on the benefits of using Lorena Stove; (ii) Uses of the tree species promoted by the program; (iii) Tree planting and management guidelines; (iv) METGE Organisational Strategic Plan and (v) Gender Transformative Strategy for the program. This should be coupled with training in Gender mainstreaming for all staff of Implementing Partners to engender the planning and implementation of interventions. This would enhance fairer gender relations and help to overcome the leakages at the household level in the coffee value chain. All IEC materials should be translated in Lumasaaba language.

IEC materials were developed in some areas including the benefits of Lorena stoves, the use of tree species, tree planting, and management guidelines. Training on gender mainstreaming to both METGE and IP staff was accomplished and these improved household relationships.

- d) METGE should explore membership with the Environment and Natural Resources CSO Network that provides a platform for learning; participation in the annual Joint Sector Review Process under the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE); amplifies advocacy issues from the districts to the national level and ensures that the contribution of CSOs is captured in the MWE annual reports. In addition, IPs can participate in sub-county and district council technical planning committees for increased visibility

Though METGE has not joined the CSO Network, it is involved at the national level under the Running Out of Trees (ROOTs) in Uganda campaign program where three staff are members of the sub-committees on monitoring, planting and communication. These provide opportunities to bring local level issues to national level. Further, METGE staff are always being invited at District and sub-county level meetings and budget conferencing functions in the target districts particularly in Mbale and Namisindwa. This has contributed to increased visibility.

- e) There is a need to explore a business approach to the Lorena Stove promotion, whereby constructors become entrepreneurs and charge beneficiaries a fee. This will enhance ownership. However, special consideration should be made for households of persons with disability, the poor and the marginalised.

The promotion of Lorena Stove as a business has been planned and is to be rolled out on a pilot basis in FY2023-2024.

- f) Scale up the institutional tree planting program and widen the scope to cover health centres.

Institutional tree planting has been widened to cover health centres, schools and faith-led organizations such as churches and Mosques. To date over 800 institutions including health centres have benefited from the MTPP.

- g) Activities for slope stabilization and riverbank protection should be prioritized for the fragile ecosystem of Bududa, Bulambuli, and parts of Mbale that frequently experience landslides and floods. This needs to explore linking tree planting activities from the paradigm of Disaster Risk Reduction.

In response, two bamboo nurseries were established towards the end of Q3 in the FY 2022-2023. The aim is to undertake the stabilization and protection of rivers. And in the FY2023-2024, one river micro catchment will be planted with bamboo.

- h) Explore integrating the key concepts of resilient cities. Mbale was declared a city effective 1st July 2020. To ensure that physical planning does not undo the gains made over time, METGE should engage with stakeholders for a clean and greener city.

Initiatives on greening Mbale city have commenced. METGE is in partnership with actors like Rotary Club - Mbale City Environmental Office and Centenary Bank Uganda to green the city.

- i) Best Practice Awards: MTPP should organize competitions to recognize and award exemplary tree farmers and best-performing schools with trophies as part of mobilization and awareness raising. This should be highly publicized through national media so that the contribution of MTPP and the Size of Wales is known and other stakeholders can replicate the program in other parts of Uganda. This recommendation has not been implemented yet.
- j) Advocacy: MTPP and IPs should advocate for the enactment of a by-law in all the districts of Mount Elgon preventing people from harvesting medicines without the consent of the tree plantation owner. This should go hand-in-hand with sensitization on sustainable harvesting of herbal medicine. Further, MTPP should engage the factories making energy boost drinks to establish/devise ways of mitigating cutting down trees for firewood. The recommendation is yet to be implemented. However, the scope of the byelaws would among others involve the destruction of seedlings planted in schools and other public institutions. This is to be pursued in the subsequent financial years.
- k) Cost-efficient technology: Provision of Treadle pumps for irrigation (manual pumps) as a cost-efficient technology to help some of the TNBOs who have challenges of access to nearby water sources as it is in Sunu and Namatsale. This should be in addition to carts that are more automated than wheelbarrows for delivering seedlings by facilitators to distant areas, particularly for roadside planting and other public places. This recommendation has been implemented where over 6 solar-powered water pumps were installed to provide water to nurseries that are water-stressed. Similarly, METGE partnered with the Mbale District Local Government to install watered-powered pumps to three TNBOs.

- l) Financial literacy: There is a need for training in financial literacy and saving. Some of the groups are already saving and training can be a catalyst to ensure the effective use of funds accrued from the program benefits. This recommendation was embraced in all the workplan and budgets for the 3 financials in which the project was implemented. Over 300 farmers benefited from the training and this has gone a long way in improving the performance of the village savings and loans (VSLAs)
- m) Program expansion to Awoja catchment: The forthcoming program of 25:25 needs to expand to the districts of Bukedea, Ngora and Kumi. The reason for this is that these three districts are part of the Awoja catchment. This has not been implemented. However, once the jurisdictional issues have been addressed by making changes in the registration with the Uganda Registration Bureau (URSB), there will be an opportunity to expand to Awoja catchment

There was no overall Annual Workplan Plan (AWP), but beginning FY 2022-2023 one was prepared and is to become a feature in the subsequent FYs in a rolling project planning. The AWP has embraced the goals in the METGE strategic plan (SP) developed for the period 2022-2027, with tree planting a core feature. The activities planned within the outputs were adopted. As a consequence, the AWP, prepared on an annual basis and specifying the individual activities, become the most important project document, used to identify intervention areas, allocate funds and measure progress.

From the foregoing, all activities included in the AWP are aligned with the METGE SP. The SP was prepared during the course of this project in the period 2020-2023 in line with METGE's vision, mission, and strategic objective.

METGE implements its activities through implementing partners (IPs). The IPs submit proposals for activities to METGE, where they were discussed and eventually included in the revised Annual work plan. The final AWP contains the method of work. These methods of work show how the activity will be conducted.

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENT

3.1 Management structure

The METGE's role is to coordinate, promote, and facilitate the implementation of the MTPP. While the role of the Implementing partners is to implement the program activities. The IPs were Bungokho Rural Development Centre (BRDC); Mount Elgon Agroforestry Communities Cooperative Enterprise (MEACCE); Salem Brotherhood (SAB) and Share an Opportunity (SAO). The Program Manager at METGE was responsible for coordinating the day-to-day implementation and management of the MTPP. A monthly meeting of the IPs with METGE to consider performance and review the progress of implementation of the MTPP.

At the nursery level, the TNBOs establish, manage, and run nurseries. The Community Facilitators' role is to support in mobilisation and sensitization of the communities to take seedlings from the nurseries into their gardens.

Monitoring mechanisms planned for the project included monthly, quarterly, and annual progress reports submitted by the IPs and consolidated by the Program Manager, using a standard agreed-upon format with Size of Wales. In addition, several logs are kept to track issues, risks, and lessons learned. A monitoring schedule includes sports checks, quarterly assessments of nurseries, joint visits with partners, community participation, and beneficiary feedback to record key management actions and events.

The implementation of the program structure and procedures went on schedule as planned.

3.2 Financial Resources

The Size of Wales / Welsh Government made available funding of up to £385,000 to METGE per funding year over the 3 Year Funding Period ("the Funding"). Each funding year ran from 1 April to 31 March the following year. The amount of Funding to be provided each funding year was determined and agreed on an annual basis. The total funding was £1,155,000.

Size of Wales / Welsh Government provided additional funding to the Mount Elgon Tree Growing Enterprise for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 ("the Funding Period"). The amount made available was up to £304,300 to METGE as a capital grant.

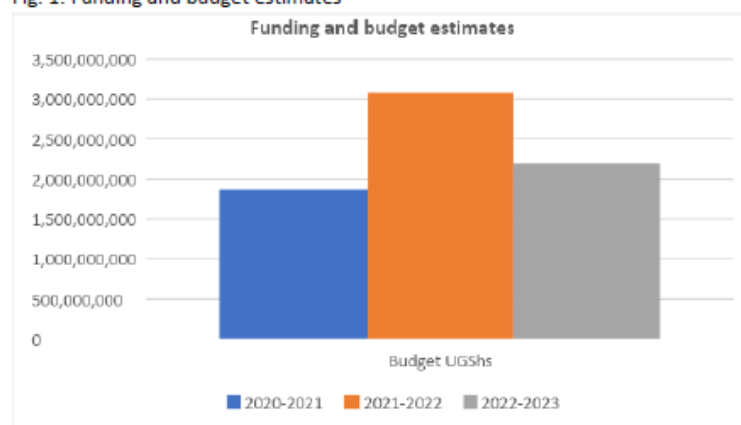
Table 1 below provides an overview of funding and budget estimates for the years 2020 to 2023. The total amount disbursed is UGX7,283,690,254; i.e., about £1,606,895. The breakdown by FY is given in Table 1 below. The general trend of increased budget can be explained mainly by the increase in planned activities and the carry-over of activities from the previous years. Additionally, during the implementation period, METGE received funding from the Welsh Government through Hub Cymru Africa.

The grant was £20,000 (twenty British Pounds), which is an equivalence of UGX90million.

Financial year	Budget UGShs
2020-2021	1,866,874,848
2021-2022	3,080,464,329
2022-2023	2,193,690,254
Gender project (FY2022-2023)	90,000,000
Total	7,283,690,254

METGE implemented the gender and climate justice project in the Bushiende sub-county, Mbale district. This was a one-year project from March 2022-February 2023. The project goal was to increase gender equality in Uganda regarding climate change action and natural resource management.

Fig. 1: Funding and budget estimates



3.4 Partnerships Working Together

METGE operates in a collaborative ecosystem, forging close partnerships with various stakeholders. Indeed, many of the notable achievements realized by METGE can be directly attributed to the strength and effectiveness of these strategic collaborations across all levels. The evaluation conducted sought to assess the efficacy and efficiency of these partnerships, particularly in the context of the MTTP program.

These partnerships extend beyond mere affiliations; they are integral to the success and impact of the MTTP program. The evaluation aimed to scrutinize the depth and effectiveness of these collaborations, evaluating their contributions to the seamless delivery of services under the MTTP program. It considered factors such as coordination, communication, resource sharing, and mutual support to determine the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the collaborative efforts.

The evaluation process delved into the mechanisms through which METGE and its partners synergize their strengths, ensuring that the objectives of the MTPP program are met with optimal efficiency. Additionally, it examined how these collaborations translate into tangible outcomes, identifying areas of strength and potential areas for improvement. The assessment further aimed to shed light on the level of mutual understanding, shared goals, and reciprocal contributions that characterize these partnerships.

3.4.1 Local Implementation Partners

Project implementation was primarily entrusted to four partner organizations, each playing a pivotal role in realizing the goals of the initiative. Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) was formally established with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that had well-established and enduring relationships with METGE.

These partner organizations, namely BRDC, MEACCE, Salem Brother, and SAO-Uganda have been actively engaged in the delivery of the MTPP under the Mbale Coalition Against Poverty since the project's inception in 2010. In a harmonized effort, funds were disbursed to these organizations, with METGE assuming the responsibilities of oversight, coordination, and facilitation. These relationships have since been reviewed in the recent past with some partners dropping off the list.

3.4.2 Strategic National Partners

Throughout the project period, the Ministry of Water and Environment emerged as a crucial ally, contributing significantly to the project's success. METGE was seamlessly integrated into the National Tree Planting Campaign, specifically the Running Out of Trees (ROOTs) campaign. This strategic collaboration with a national-level partner broadened the reach and impact of the project, underscoring the commitment of METGE to work synergistically with key government entities in fostering sustainable environmental practices. The Ministry's involvement not only amplified the project's visibility but also strengthened the overall effectiveness and influence of METGE's initiatives on a national scale.

In the period, METGE was involved in a partnership with Bangor University in Wales, in particular working with Bangor Bio Composite Centre and Uganda's National Agricultural Research Organization to trial seedling wraps using local materials such as maize stalks, casava, and banana leaves

In the Financial year 2021-2022, the British High Commissioner Her Excellency Kate Airey paid a courtesy visit to METGE field sites (see Photo A) in Naposhi and Bumaena in Mbale and

Bududa Districts, respectively. The visit was a demonstration of the recognition by the High Commissioner of the great work done by METGE in addressing climate change through tree planting in the Mount Elgon region. It is hoped that such visits will translate into enhanced collaboration in the future.

Findings on the effectiveness of partnerships

An in-depth scrutiny of the effectiveness METGE partnerships revealed the following:

Improved Service Delivery: Despite the initial challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic at the project's outset, partners on the ground demonstrated a commendable level of commitment and resilience. The majority of planned activities were successfully implemented to a satisfactory standard. In response to the constraints imposed by the pandemic, implementing partners received support to enhance their knowledge and capacity in critical areas such as planning, budgeting, extension services, reporting, and monitoring. This support proved instrumental in enabling partners to execute project activities effectively, contributing to improved service delivery.

Planning and Reporting: The timeliness of reporting, and to some extent, the capacity for strategizing and planning specific activities, emerged as key considerations in assessing partnership effectiveness. Partners, especially when delving into new areas of focus like incorporating tree planting into a broader set of practices under Sustainable Land Management (SLM), received ongoing support from Project Management Teams. This facilitated the seamless integration of tree planting practices, enhancing productivity, promoting agroforestry, and improving overall livelihoods.

Limited engagement in programme development: Acknowledging the challenges faced by partners in implementing centrally drafted proposals, it was noted that both METGE and implementing partner staff recognized the need for more engagement in the proposal development process. Despite this initial challenge, the overall percentage of implementation achieved indicated a substantial overcoming of this obstacle. Moving forward, there is an opportunity to enhance collaborative proposal development, ensuring that partners actively contribute to the shaping of project proposals, fostering a sense of ownership and alignment with on-the-ground realities.

Promotion of effective links with national stakeholders: The findings underscore the importance of strengthening links with key national-level stakeholders, including the Forum for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on natural resources and other organizations focused on restoration through tree planting. Effective collaboration with these entities can significantly enhance advocacy efforts, amplifying the potential for achieving project objectives through concerted advocacy work. This aspect presents an opportunity for further engagement and collaboration to broaden the impact of the project on a national scale.

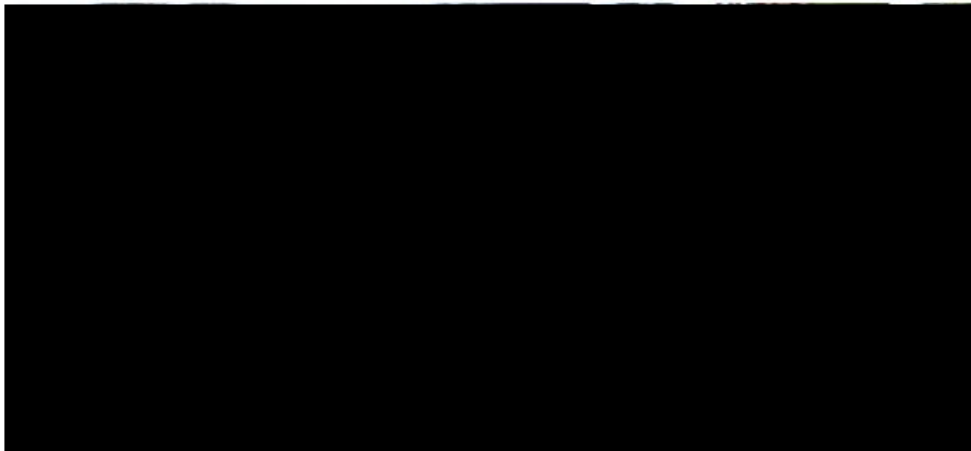


Photo A: Her Excellency Kate Airey, British High Commissioner to Uganda in Bumaena women's Nursery Mbale District

3.5 Gender mainstreaming

Women's rights and gender equality were at the heart of the project where implementation focused on women, men, girls, and boys' involvement in tree planting. By the end of the project, 15 nurseries were women-led. This initiative therefore successfully began to bring about improvements in women's involvement in tree planting through awareness raising and other activities such as Village Savings and Loans, which aimed to increase women, youth, and girls' confidence in their abilities. This perception was corroborated through discussions in all the districts of the target areas with women themselves citing their increased confidence to talk in front of others, be serious about their chores, and take on leadership roles as a result of the project.

Though the project took women's rights and gender equality into account during implementation, the significant changes in behaviour and attitude to the extent of adopting tree planting could be attributed to this project concerning tree planting.

3.6 Use of Consultants

The MTPP made some use of external consultants, mainly local experts. The activities carried out by consultants fell into the following three categories:

- a) Documentation of project activities and best practices
- b) Conduct specific trainings such as team building, and safeguarding
- c) Conduct assessments and studies to provide the baseline for further activities
- d) Data collection software and maintenance.
- e) Staff salary and benefits survey

The consultants were usually hired on a short-term basis to carry out specific single-program activities. The main reasons for this approach were twofold: to maximize the use of expert knowledge, and for budgetary reasons. Limiting the scope of work to a specific task allowed METGE to search for and hire experts with a specific, often specialized skill set. Thanks to their experience such experts would thus be able to accomplish a task in a minimum amount of time. The approach to relying on short-term consultants to carry out individual activities promised the best value for money

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE BASED ON THE PROJECT OUTPUTS

This chapter seeks to assess progress and performance based on each of the project's three outputs.

4.1 Output 1: The network of tree nurseries can produce at least 3.2 million trees each year of an appropriate diversity.

The project was able to establish and maintain an average of 58 nurseries spread over seven districts (See Photo A). In the 3 years, records accessed by the consultant showed that METGE established and maintained over 55 nurseries spread in 7 Districts as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Number of Nurseries by Districts

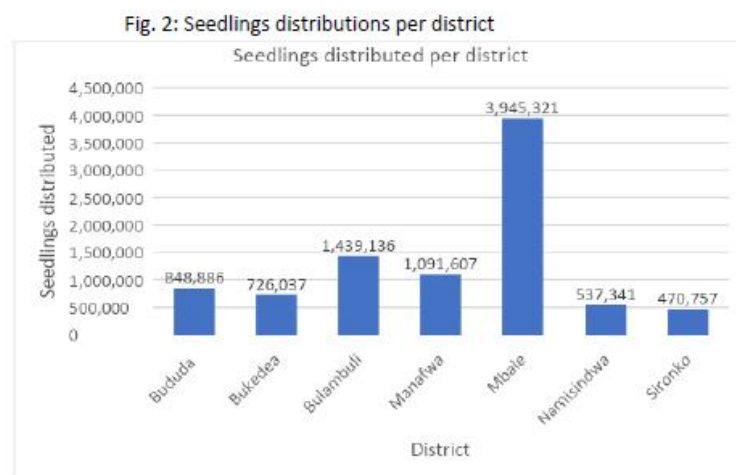
Districts	FY 2020/2021	FY 2021/2022	FY 2021/2022
Mbale	26	26	25
Bukedea	03	06	06
Manafwa	06	07	07
Bududa	05	05	05
Sironko	03	03	03
Bulambuli	08	09	09
Namisindwa	04	04	04
Total	55	60	59

Table 3 shows that about 9,059,085 seedlings were produced over the 3 years. This was 94.4% of the overall target of 9,600,000 seedlings. This is an average of 3,019,695 per year (See the breakdown below). The annual target of 3.2 million seedlings was exceeded, in both FYs 2020/2021 and 2022/2023. However, in 2021/2022 the annual target was not achieved (only 1,939,263 seedlings were distributed).

Table 3: Number of seedlings distributed by District

District	2020-2021			2021-2022			2022 -2023			Total
	General Trees	Fruit trees	Fodder	General Trees	Fruit trees	Fodder	General Trees	Fruit trees	Fodder	
Bududa	232,004	34,412	33,583	111,187	20,295	30,124	239,140	53,305	94,836	848,886
Bukedea	139,203	20,647	20,150	133,424	24,354	36,148	217,423	48,464	86,224	726,037
Bulambuli	371,157	55,053	53,726	200,136	36,531	54,223	412,671	91,985	163,654	1,439,136
Manafwa	278,405	41,295	40,300	155,661	28,413	42,173	312,052	69,557	123,751	1,091,607
Mbale	1,130,820	167,731	163,689	578,170	105,534	156,643	1,014,363	226,103	402,268	3,945,321
Namisindwa	185,603	27,530	26,867	88,949	16,236	24,099	103,773	23,131	41,153	537,341
Sironko	139,203	20,647	20,150	66,712	12,177	18,074	119,665	26,673	47,456	470,757
Total	2,476,395	367,315	358,465	1,334,239	243,540	361,484	2,419,087	539,218	959,342	9,057,085
Annual Totals	3,202,175			1,939,263			3,917,647			

The total number of seedlings planted per district is shown in Figure 2 below.



To a large extent, the project has been successful in establishing a network of tree nurseries with the capacity to produce at least 3.2 million trees each year of an appropriate diversity. 100% of planned activities (See Photo B) were delivered in all 7 districts and the shortfall could be explained because of the persistent drought in the period July to September in FY2021-2022.



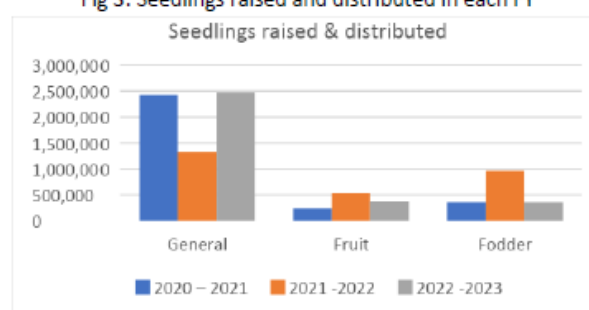
Photo B: Nursery Maintenance at Salem Central Nursery

The indicators selected for this objective are mainly outputs rather than outcomes indicators and therefore, since most activities were carried out, the majority of outputs were also realized in each of the FYs (2020-2021, 100%; 2021-2022, 60.6%; and 2022-2023 122.4%). Some of the outcomes of the tree planting program include a diversity of indigenous tree species including timber, fruit, and fodder. Table 4 below gives a summary of diverse trees planted categorized as general, fruit, and fodder. The breakdown by category is given in Figure 3 below.

Table 4: Summary of Tree Seedlings raised, distributed & planted by category for FY2020/21 –FY2022/23

FY	General	Fruit	Fodder	Total
2020 – 2021	2,419,087	243,540	361,484	3,024,111
2021 -2022	1,334,239	539,218	959,342	2,832,799
2022 -2023	2,476,395	367,315	358,465	3,202,175
Total	6,229,721	1,150,073	1,679,291	9,059,085

Fig 3: Seedlings raised and distributed in each FY



This sharply contrasts with the before project period when the community mainly planted exotic species such as eucalyptus and pine planting obtained through government interventions and or/purchased from nearby nurseries. The fodder tree species such as calliandra is fed to livestock such as goats and cows. It is believed to hasten growth rate as well as increased production of milk. For instance, milk yields from local cow breeds fed on Calliandra were reported to have increased from 3 to 6 liters. In addition, calliandra is also nitrogen fixing hence contributes to the replenishment of soil nutrients as well as soil erosion control.

MEGTE staff reported direct employment opportunities for 122 staff. 60 of these were Tree Nursery Bed Operators and the rest were Community Facilitators at the nursery and community levels. All these employments are attributed to the program.

Strong engagement occurred at the district local government level through the signing of MOUs. Six MOUs were signed with the District Local Governments (DLGs) of Mbale, Bukedea, Sironko, Namissindwa, Bududa, Manafwa, and Bulambuli. The involved authorities encompassed the environment, natural resources, and production departments, contributing to awareness, buy-in, and action. Their involvement

from the outset resulted in immediate and concrete outcomes, such as joint awareness and sensitization, training provision, and adoption of technologies for irrigation and record-keeping. These successes can pave the way for enhanced advocacy and implementation of livelihood and climate-resilient initiatives in the next project phase.

The project implemented a multifaceted approach to enhance data capture, baseline collection, and overall data management. To increase data accuracy and completeness, the organization transitioned from paper to digital data collection using tablets, facilitating real-time entry and reducing errors. Geo-tagging collected data further enhances spatial analysis, linking information to specific locations and aiding in monitoring tree-planting initiatives. Trained field staff on data collection protocols to ensure consistency and minimize missing information, contributing to a more reliable dataset. In strengthening baseline data collection, METGE continues to conduct comprehensive periodic surveys to gather data, particularly on those that touch on distribution targets, tree establishment, and survival rates. This enables effective tracking of progress toward project goals.

4.2 Output 2: Knowledge of the local farmers and local communities participating in the program is increased in sustainable agroforestry and tree diversity.

The MTPP made notable progress by placing a strong emphasis on the involvement of women, girls, and youth in project implementation. Over the three years, 15 nurseries were successfully led by women.

The project achieved significant strides in enhancing community capacity through various training programs, focusing on community engagements, village savings and loans association (VSLA), construction and installation of Lorena stoves (see Photo C), beekeeping, and collaboration with institutions such as Support Uganda Community Initiative Africa (SUP).



Photo C: Training on Construction and installation of Lorena stoves

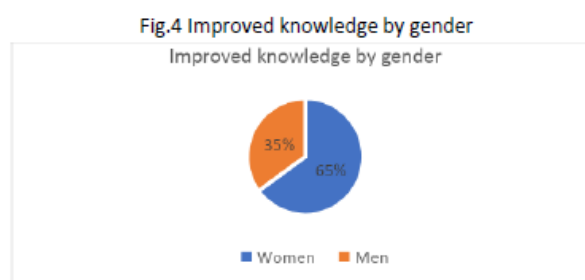
The training initiatives were conducted exclusively in the FY2022-2023 due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent government-imposed lockdowns, which restricted training activities in the FYs 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

A total of 4,813 individuals benefited from the training initiatives, with a breakdown based on gender - **Women: 65%** (1,686 individuals) and **Men: 35%** (3,017 individuals) as shown in Table 5 by district.

Table 5: Improved knowledge by gender

District	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		Total	Comments
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male		
Mbale	0	0	19	91	1,076	1,585	2,771	Trainings in the first two FYs were affected by COVID-19 restrictions.
Bukedea	0	0	0	0	84	283	367	
Manafwa	0	0	0	0	93	260	353	
Bududa	0	0	0	0	48	129	177	
Sironko	0	0	0	0	92	264	356	
Bulambuli	0	0	0	0	107	243	350	
Namisindwa	0	0	0	0	186	253	439	
Total	0	0	19	91	1,686	3,017	4,813	

Figure 4 below shows the breakdown by gender. The emphasis on inclusivity was evident in the targeted approach, with a substantial focus on capacity building for women.



When asked about the impact of the program on beneficiaries' knowledge from FYs 2020 to 2023, respondents highlighted the acquisition of skills and knowledge in various domains, spanning nursery management, soil conservation, tree planting, and maintenance. The acquired expertise encompasses species matching, determining hole sizes, honey harvesting, plant tea production, records management, and tracking for savings. Additionally, participants gained proficiency in maintaining Lorena stoves, creating trenches for soil and water conservation, and utilizing trees for medicinal purposes.

As a tangible outcome of the acquired skills and knowledge, several noteworthy achievements have been recorded to date. Notably, there are now 12 Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), 30 active beekeeping groups, and 3,221 functional Lorena stoves. Honey production has experienced a substantial increase from 100 kilograms to an impressive 3.45 tonnes. Furthermore, there has been successful cultivation of vegetables, and more than 360 households have adopted sustainable land management practices.

Under Sustainable Land Management (SLM) initiatives, a total of 2,600 cashew nut seedlings were planted as high-value crops, involving 210 farmers. Additionally, 360 households established vegetable gardens as part of the program. A follow-up evaluation assessed 89 out of 266 households (150 direct and 116 indirect beneficiaries) that received vegetable seeds from Wanale and Bumaena communities. Despite a dry spell, the evaluation revealed that vegetables served as an alternative food source for most households thus improving nutrition. Notably, one farmer reported earning UGX 500,000 from selling carrots alone, while the average income from vegetables across the two communities during the period was UGX 166,900 per household. The interventions are showing promising signs of achieving their intended impact, including diversified household income and improved food security, which aims to alleviate pressure on the planted trees.

The impact of the training and improved knowledge is also reflected in the enhanced confidence levels, leadership skills, and abilities of women and youth participants (see Photo D). Key informants and focus group discussions revealed that the various training sessions have made a significant difference for women and youth, empowering them to confidently express themselves and seize leadership opportunities within their communities.

This positive transformation can be attributed to the establishment, training, and support provided to women-led nurseries, along with other initiatives such as Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs).

The Hub Cymru Africa gender-funded project, implemented in Mbale and Masaka districts in Uganda, aimed to address gender inequalities in various contexts. Focused on improving equitable access to natural resources, especially for women, enhancing the capacity of women and marginalized groups in climate-related decision-making (see Photo D), promoting gender-responsive approaches to climate change, building community resilience through sustainable livelihoods and natural resource management, and strengthening local organizations' capacity to integrate gender and climate considerations into policies and practices. The outcomes of the gender and climate change justice project were diverse and impactful. It led to enhanced livelihood activities, empowerment of women and girls through leadership roles and renewable energy enterprises, increased financial literacy and management skills, improved income generation, enhanced resilience to climate change, increased awareness and sharing among farmers, transfer of skills and knowledge, strengthened partnerships, and positive impacts on the environment and economy.

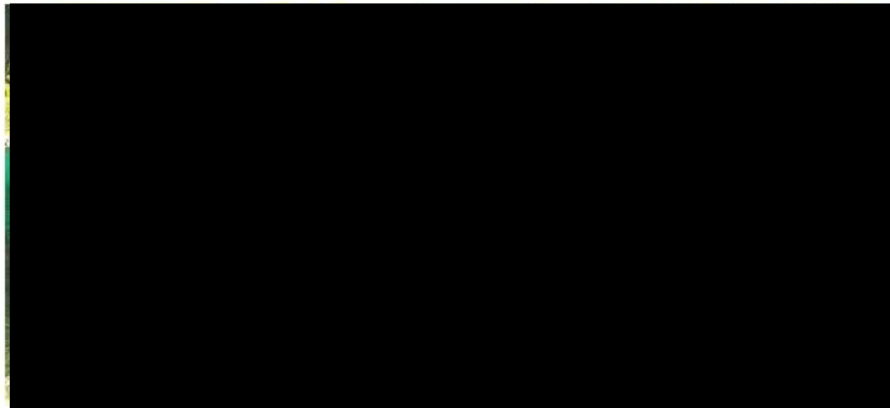


Photo D: Gender assessment study and consultations under the gender and climate justice project in Bumaena

4.3 Output 3: Program participants gain other associated direct benefits including fuel-efficient stoves and training and resources for beekeeping work.

4.3.1 Lorena stoves

In addition to the positive impacts derived from the tree planting program, two other interventions that significantly benefited the communities were the construction and installation of Lorena stoves and beekeeping initiatives. Since the project's inception in 2021, a total of 3,221 households had Lorena stoves constructed and installed in their kitchens, surpassing the set target of 1,000 Lorena stoves per year (i.e. 3,000 Lorena stoves in three years). Notably, 2,602 women, constituting 80.8% of the beneficiaries, and 619 men, representing 19.2%, reaped the benefits of this initiative (refer to Table 4 for details).

Fig 5: Training on Lorena Stoves



The success of Lorena stove construction and installations can be attributed to the heightened awareness and mobilization efforts conducted through various platforms, including extensive community engagements and broadcasts on community radios. These activities played a pivotal role in disseminating information about the benefits and techniques associated with Lorena stoves, thereby driving the substantial uptake witnessed in the communities.

Table 6: Number of Lorena Stoves distributed by Households

District											
	2020 – 2021			2021 – 2022			2022 – 2023			Total	Comments
	Male	Female	Inst	Male	Female	Inst	Male	Female	Inst		
Mbale	50	331	0	113	349	7	41	348	9	1248	
Bukedea	3	86	0	29	261	0	30	229	1	639	
Manafwa	10	47	0	15	57	0	105	163	1	398	
Bududa	2	4	0	1	53	0	14	95	0	169	
Sironko	2	16	0	0	0	0	38	76	0	132	
Bulambuli	2	10	0	43	125	2	58	119	0	359	
Namisisindwa	9	50	0	20	27	1	12	156	1	276	
Total	78	544	0	221	872	10	298	1,186	12	3,221	

Significant strides have been made in the construction and installation of Lorena stoves at the household level, reflecting remarkable progress (Photo E). The number of stoves constructed and installed surged from 622 in FY 2020-2021 to an impressive 1,113 in FY2021-2022 and 1,484 in FY 2022-2023, giving a total of 3,221 indicating a substantial increase. Testimonies from beneficiaries underscored the positive impact of this initiative, with a notable reduction in the use of fuelwood (Calculation¹ of Lorena stoves efficiency indicated that in FY2020-2021 622 stoves saved 430,816.20kg of wood compared FY2021-2022 1,113 stoves saved 7770,897.9 kg in FY 2022-2023 1,486 stoves saved 1,029,249 Kg).

Clean cooking utensils, resulting from diminished soot, have become a common sight, contributing to improved hygiene in households. Furthermore, reports highlight enhanced women's health due to significantly reduced or eliminated exposure to smoke, a stark contrast to the challenges posed by traditional three-stone open cooking stoves.

¹ Calculations of wood saved due to Lorena stove use was made based on estimates in Habermehl, (2007).



Photo E: Lorena stove in use

The benefits of Lorena stoves extend beyond individual households to community institutions, such as schools. [REDACTED], the Deputy Head Teacher, highlights the positive impact of trees planted through the project, providing shade to learners. Students now have a comfortable space to rest during breaks and enjoy their meals, accompanied by the refreshing presence of fresh air. In a proactive move, project staff constructed a Lorena energy-saving stove specifically for the school, addressing the challenge of acquiring firewood for cooking meals for approximately 70 pupils.

[REDACTED] attests to the efficiency of the Lorena stove, stating, *"As a school, the issue of buying firewood was a challenge, but this stove is wood-efficient. We use less firewood, making it a manageable and sustainable solution."* This dual impact on household and institutional levels highlights the multifaceted benefits of the Lorena stove initiative, contributing not only to environmental conservation but also to the well-being and efficiency of local institutions.

4.3.2 Beekeeping and honey production

The synergy between beekeeping and tree planting emerges as a noteworthy finding, underscoring the interconnectedness of these two initiatives. Over the course of 3 years, the project successfully mobilized and sensitized 27 beekeeping groups comprising 800 farmers (i.e. 523 females and 277 males), contributing to the expansion of beekeeping activities in the community. Starting with 624 beehives in 2020, the number saw a significant increase, reaching 1,641 by the end of the period as shown in Table 6. This growth is attributed to the intentional planting of forage trees preferred by bees, creating a conducive environment for their proliferation.

Table 7: Summary of beekeeping and honey harvesting.

YEAR	Number of hives			Beekeeping groups			Production(kgs)		
	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022
Mbale	122	258	312	03	04	08	103	27	33
Bukedea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manafwa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bududa	17	51	51	02	02	02	28	0	0
Sironko	190	536	617	04	05	06	536	1,445	2,757
Namisindwa	55	168	228	01	01	02	03	187.5	139.5
Bulambuli	240	416	433	07	07	07	860	227	520
Total	624	1,429	1,641	17	19	25	1,530	1,886.5	3,449.5

The training provided to 27 groups in beekeeping has significantly enhanced their capabilities, covering essential skills such as hive inspection (Photo F), seasonal management, apiary management, and hive installation methods. With consistent monitoring and technical support, the colonisation rate increased impressively to 74%, leading to a substantial surge in honey production from 1,530 to 3,450 kilograms as shown in Table 6 above.



Photo F: Apiary and colony inspection in Sunnu Mbale District

This resulted in a remarkable revenue boost from UGX 15,300,000 to UGX 34,495,000, signifying an outstanding improvement of over 1,000% from the preceding fiscal year. The financial gains, totalling UGX 22.6 million, have had tangible impacts on beneficiaries, addressing basic needs, including school fees and household necessities. Additionally, the income has facilitated strategic investments such as acquiring more beehives. Notably, individual groups, exemplified by one harvesting over 2000 kilograms of honey in three years, showcase the significant economic opportunities unlocked through successful beekeeping practices.

Moreover, the project has contributed to the empowerment of local carpenters by enhancing their capacity to construct beehives. As a result, these carpenters now produce beehives that are sold at a more affordable price to local beekeepers, fostering a sustainable and mutually beneficial economic ecosystem within the community. This interconnected and holistic approach to beekeeping not only improves livelihoods but also promotes environmental sustainability and community resilience.

Over the specified period, significant strides were made in providing technical support to beekeeping groups for the revision of seven existing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). These MoUs were established between various beekeeping groups, including Bulera Environmental Beekeeping, Savings and Credit Association, Bulera United Beekeeping Group, Bumasifa Beekeeper Association, Kinyofu Beekeepers Association, Ganzo Youth Beekeepers and Diary Group, Gibuzale Women Beekeepers and Diary Group, Nakibunje Sisiyi Beekeepers' Group, and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). The primary purpose of these MoUs was to grant permission for the placement of beehives in Mount Elgon National Park.

This achievement is of particular significance to UWA, as the strategic placement of beehives within the national park serves as an integral component of local community policing. This not only aligns with UWA's objectives but also contributes to the seamless integration of the interface/boundary between the national park and local communities.

Another notable accomplishment is the facilitation of easy access to bee suits within the community. Through the training of a local tailor, the community now has a reliable source for bee suits, addressing a previous challenge where farmers found it difficult to obtain suits and were hesitant to inquire about their prices. The district has recognized the beekeeping group in Bupoto as a "rescue team" due to their effective response in handling incidents of wild bees, showcasing their essential role in community safety and beekeeping management.

Over the years, METGE has prioritized the integration of Safeguarding and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) into the TPP program at both METGE and implementing partner levels. In Namisindwa and Sironko districts, beekeeping groups, including Bunesene Beekeeping Enterprise, underwent training on group leadership and gender roles, emphasizing equal participation of women in project activities. Despite challenges like low attendance by persons with disabilities (PWDs), community engagements in tree planting underscored inclusiveness with representation from women and youth.

METGE takes safeguarding measures seriously. Visitors are provided with comprehensive safeguarding, security, and safety briefings, including the signing of safeguarding policies including supporting organizations to develop and implement safeguarding policies. The safeguarding policy was drafted in line with the Dfid safeguarding policy.

5.0 ASSESSMENT BASED ON THE DAC CRITERIA

The Consultant has used the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria by Kennedy-Chouane 2020, Picciotto 2013 to inform the extent to which effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and coherence were achieved during the implementation of the 3-year project year as discussed below. The specific questions asked under each of the criteria included:

- **Relevance:** *To what extent the project activities have been responsive to the needs and priorities of the target group? Did the project answer real needs in the intervention areas?*
- **Effectiveness:** *To what extent were the objectives stated in the project document and logical framework achieved?*
- **Efficiency:** *Were activities cost-efficient, e.g., have the least costly resources possible been used to achieve the desired results?*
- **Impact:** *What were the project impacts?*
- **Sustainability:** *ensuring ownership and lasting change: To what extent will activities be sustained by local beneficiaries/partners after the funding comes to an end?*
- **Replication:** *Which elements of the project could be replicated/scaled up elsewhere?*

5.1 Relevance

According to the respondents, the project sought to address challenges that the communities faced such as the negative effects of climate change, limited income sources, food insecurity, limited knowledge of climate-resilient agricultural practices, and unreliable water resources, among others.

Though these challenges were not captured before the design and rollout of the project, the collaborative nature of the project built during implementation demonstrated that the project interventions were indeed a priority for the community. This promoted local buy-in to the project's areas of focus and garnered support from the DLGs, Sub-counties and parish level, and local councils/villages. These areas of priority covered the social, economic, and environmental needs of METGE areas of jurisdiction in the larger Mount Elgon region

Indeed, the evaluation findings indicate the flaws in the program design, chief among them the lack of baseline data collection and analysis. The lack of this data/information did not adequately inform the project design, in as far as priorities identified by the target communities were concerned. To mitigate this, there were attempts to establish it later during project implementation as an activity of the project itself, rather than as a preliminary step in the process. Therefore, rather than being based on priorities identified by the target communities there was a clear feeling that the project was prescriptive as the main areas of focus had already been identified in advance.

[Are the project objectives still relevant?]

From the consultant's perspective and that of the beneficiaries as well as other stakeholders, the project objectives are still relevant. From the tree planting project, in the period under study, changes to knowledge were found to have been relatively easier to achieve than changes to attitudes and practice.

During this period, the project succeeded in raising awareness of why it is important to plant trees and their wider values. Additionally, it identified potentially successful strategies for addressing issues of low survival rates, low land productivity, and limited livelihood options. Such strategies included sustainable land management practices under the landscape approach. However, much remains to be done.

Overall, the project needs to continue, albeit with a deeper focus on building an integrated tree-planting program that not only seeks to achieve increased tree cover but also enhances resilience to climate change and improved livelihoods

[How did the intervention adapt to changes if any, in design, to ensure relevance?]

During the same implementation period, METGE developed and launched a strategic plan. In it, some approaches such as sustainable land management practices were adopted. MTTP had to adapt to this strategy to enhance its effectiveness. Indeed, several trainings were rolled out to introduce this strategy.

The project targets were revised downwards after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which slowed down the implementation of activities. This was to take cognizant of the fact that gatherings were banned, travel restrictions were also enforced and businesses as usual were disrupted.

5.2 Effectiveness

[To what extent were the objectives stated in the project document and logical framework achieved?]

The evaluation noted that the project had achieved 100% of the planned activities under the program 3 output areas.

The evaluation of Output 1 revealed a commendable achievement in establishing and maintaining a network of tree nurseries, surpassing seedling production targets in most fiscal years. Despite facing challenges such as persistent drought, the project demonstrated resilience, achieving 94.4% of the overall seedling target over the three years. The diversification of indigenous tree species contributed to environmental sustainability, contrasting sharply with the monoculture of eucalyptus species before the project. Direct employment opportunities for 122 staff and successful engagement with district authorities through MOUs showcased the project's positive impact on local communities.

Output 2 highlighted significant progress in enhancing knowledge within local communities, particularly among women, girls, and youth. The strong emphasis on inclusivity, with 16 nurseries led by women, demonstrates a commitment to gender equity. Despite COVID-19 challenges affecting training activities in the initial years, the project's impact on beneficiaries' knowledge was substantial. The acquired skills in nursery management, soil conservation, and other domains led to tangible outcomes such as the establishment of VSLAs, beekeeping groups, and Lorena stoves. Empowering women and youth to take leadership roles within their communities showcases the project's transformative impact.

The progress in output 3 illustrated the successful provision of direct benefits, including the construction and installation of Lorena stoves and resources for beekeeping. The substantial increase in the number of stoves from 622 to 1,484 in FY 2022-2023 reflects a positive trend, contributing to reduced fuelwood usage and improved household hygiene. The project's impact extended beyond individual households to community institutions, such as schools, showcasing a holistic approach. Testimonies emphasized the positive outcomes, including improved health and reduced exposure to smoke. The success in surpassing the annual target for Lorena Stoves underscores the effectiveness of awareness and mobilization efforts.

[What are the factors (internal or external) influencing the delivery of the results of the project or lack of it?]

The qualitative evaluation findings on output indicators reflect good performance based on responses from the entire beneficiary population and KII respondents. It is worth noting that the delivery of project results was influenced by both internal and external factors that either contributed to the achievement of the intended outcomes and outputs or undermined success in areas that recorded failure or underachievement.

Internal Success Factors

During the FGD and KII's, respondents attributed the positive reception towards the project and specifically the training on effective tree planting and sustainable land management practices.

- Staff self-capacity building and motivation: The key informant however singled out that they were able to research and obtain, improve, and retain the skills, knowledge, tools, equipment, and other resources needed to do their jobs competently, especially with a focus on the formulation and delivery of the training modules. This was an important factor that facilitated the delivery of requisite knowledge for the specific project.
- Consistent training and Follow-ups with groups: The delivery of training was strengthened by exposure forums, targeted group practical training in SLM, and later awareness creation through community radio which motivated the groups to understand and enjoy the learning experience. The model of the project embraced by community facilitators who are assigned to work with groups and follow them motivates groups to remain consistent and embrace tree planting while incorporating sustainable land management practices.

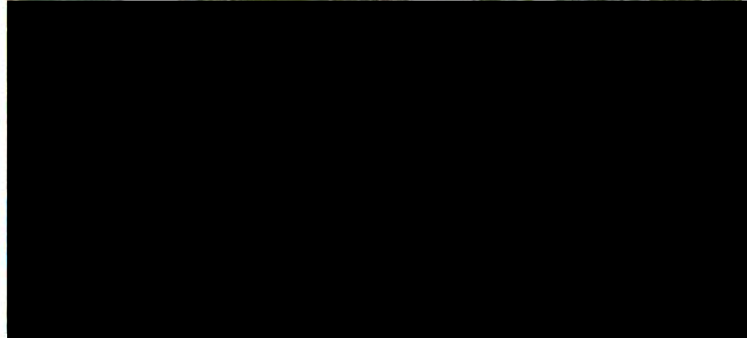
Positive External factors

Stakeholder Collaboration and Partnerships: The project objectives were significantly achieved through implementing partners' collaboration and all stakeholders.

Linkages with already established groups: Community groups such as women's groups, bee keepers' associations, Village savings groups, etc. all played a vital role in implementing MTTF and ensuring its success.

Community Support: The project enjoyed immense support from the community, and particularly from participating farmers who were committed to growing trees and implementing the skills and knowledge attained from MTTF engagements and support.

- Community radio: though launched at the tail-end of the project was a big success and was very effective in bringing communities together and sharing knowledge and ideas (Photo G).



Internal Barriers and Challenges to Success

- Limited technical capacity: Critical to the delivery of this project was technical capacity in landscape approach and other project cycle management skills. Due to the expanded MTTP program work, it became evident that METGE needed to enhance internal skills and capacity to be able to effectively and efficiently deliver the set outcomes. Financial resources remained to be the driving factor towards limited capacity not only in terms of hiring and retaining the best talents but also in terms of optimal staffing levels.
- Minimum beneficiary participation: Beneficiary involvement from the project's outset was limited, particularly in the program design stage. However, a robust feedback mechanism, including farmer's voice radio, community sensitization, facilitation meetings, follow-up visits, and exchange visits, served to inform and engage beneficiaries. Continuous engagement and demonstration plots played a vital role in ensuring accountability to beneficiaries.

External Challenges and Barriers to Success

- COVID-19 Pandemic: The effectiveness in the implementation of the project was challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 affected the achievement of the objectives because a lot of members closed their already established enterprises. Diversification of income was affected as farmers were not able to move and get to the markets. The pandemic posed a significant challenge to the women and youth as it affected their livelihoods.
- Challenges with market linkages: In other instances, market linkages did not work as planned. Some of the beekeepers did not access markets, particularly for the honey. However, efforts are currently being made to improve this.
- Climate change: climate remains a big external challenge. In areas that receive little rainfall, farmers experienced challenges in growing trees, food crops, and accessing water. Similarly, in areas that receive high rainfall like Bududa, there were some incidents of mudslides and washing away of their crops.

5.3 Efficiency

[Were activities cost-efficient, e.g., have the least costly resources possible been used to achieve the desired results?]

Under efficiency, we assessed performance in terms of converting inputs into outputs. The testimonies from the project implementing partners and project participants showed that the project outcomes were of value for the investment done throughout the project cycle. For instance, it was cost-effective to use existing structures for groups (i.e. bee-keeping and VSLAs) in beneficiary mobilization in addition to collaborating with government authorities for ease of success.

5.3.1 Economic efficiency

To assess the economic efficiency of the MTPP, it is essential to scrutinize the value added by the program in comparison to its transaction and other costs. Size of Wales / Welsh Government contributed funding totaling £1,155,000 over the 3-year Funding Period. A thorough analysis reveals that approximately UGX 3,038,119,096 was allocated to management support, while UGX 2,569,901,384 was dedicated to program activities. Evaluating the extent to which these resources enabled the project to achieve results is challenged by the absence of comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) data, as highlighted in the Impact section.

5.3.2 Financial Management

Efficient financial management was prioritized from the project's inception, with comprehensive training provided to the financial management staff of all 5 Implementation Partners (IPs). Ad hoc support, such as the provision of scanners, facilitated reporting. Quarterly reviews, conducted by Fiduciary management agency [REDACTED] and Size of Wales, ensured accountability and adherence to documentation standards. Despite challenges, including late submission of financial reports, timely disbursement from reserves by METGE facilitated smooth project implementation.

Internally, METGE, through the support of [REDACTED] deployed sound financial systems and practices to ensure prudent use of resources. Such practices included procurement, tax management, and periodic audits (both internal and external) among others. SOW provided oversight of all the general use and management of the resources.

5.3.3. Procurement management

Rigorous efforts were undertaken to ensure cost-effectiveness in procurement and implementation. METGE's financial and procurement policies and procedures, outlined in the funding agreement, guided partners in securing value for money. Partners leveraged their contacts and networks to maximize fund utilization, particularly in the procurement of seeds.

5.3.4 Delivery of Program Results

Grant management requirements, based on METGE's internal standards, were not overly complex. Clear reporting structures aligned with monthly, quarterly, annual, and end-of-project reporting cycles, providing a straightforward framework for the delivery of results. Deadlines were met by staff despite their overstretched capabilities.

5.3.5 Management and Leadership

Well-defined management and decision-making structures, including monthly meetings between METGE and IP partners and quarterly meetings involving METGE, Size of Wales, Welsh Government, and IP representatives, served as an advisory body. This facilitated clear communication and oversight. The METGE Board played a crucial role in providing oversight and policy guidance to program implementation.

5.3.6 Risk Management

Though there was no comprehensive risk matrix developed for the project, risks, and other issues continued to be identified and mitigation strategies implemented by the project. This evaluation did not find any major risks that threatened the smooth implementation and realization of the project results. External factors, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, were considered and appropriate adaptive management was implemented. Failure to meet distribution targets was accordingly mitigated in the subsequent years. Other risks which emerged towards the end of the project was

5.4 Impact

While it was not possible to achieve impact over the short project period of 3 years, the following outcomes were realized:

5.4.1 Outcome 1: Enhanced environmental sustainability through diversified seedling production

The project's shift from monoculture eucalyptus to a diverse range of indigenous (over 70% of the total trees distributed) tree species has significant environmental benefits. Indigenous trees are better adapted to local ecosystems, providing habitat for native wildlife and contributing to biodiversity conservation. They also play a crucial role in soil erosion control, watershed management, and carbon sequestration. The diversification of seedling production ensures that the project's reforestation efforts align with sustainable land management practices and contribute to long-term environmental resilience. One noteworthy contribution is the recognition that tree planting is intricately linked with Sustainable Land Management (SLM). Beyond the restoration of land productivity, SLM emphasizes agroforestry practices, thereby enhancing livelihoods in addition to promoting environmental sustainability. This holistic approach accelerated adoption rates and scaling up agroforestry practices, consequently impacting the broader adoption rate of tree-planting initiatives.

5.4.2 Outcome 2: Empowering women and youth through knowledge-sharing and livelihood opportunities

The project's emphasis on inclusivity and gender equity has had a transformative impact on women and youth in local communities. By providing training and support to women-led nurseries, the project has empowered women to take on leadership roles and generate income. The acquired skills in nursery

management, soil conservation, and other domains have enabled beneficiaries to establish sustainable livelihoods initiatives, such as VSLAs (Photo F), beekeeping groups, and the adoption of Lorena stoves. This empowerment has not only improved the economic well-being of women and youth

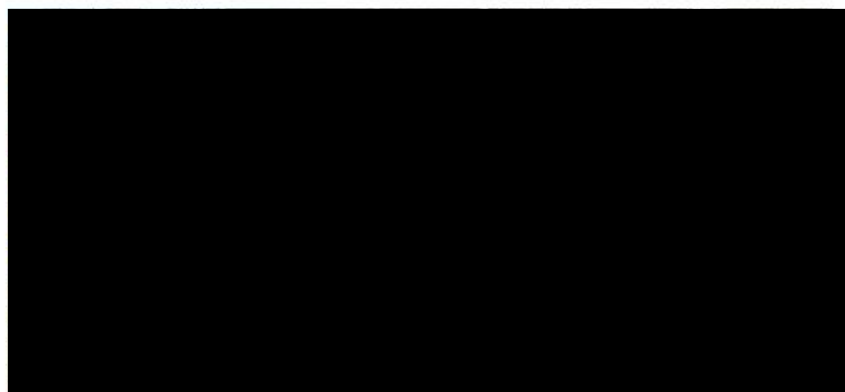


Photo G: Monitoring and Follow on Village Savings and Loans

but also fostered their social and environmental consciousness. Similarly, mobilization of stakeholders at district, sub-counties, parish, and local Council 1 level in support of the tree planting program and related interventions. This resulted in buy-in and support by the leadership and technocrats at the district and sub-county levels. This also allowed linking government extension staff and government interventions to the MTPP. For instance, the Ugandan Government's irrigation scheme where METGE guaranteed 3 farmers 25% of the total cost, while the Ugandan Government, through the District Local Government, contributed 75%.

5.4.3 Outcome 3: Improved household health and reduced environmental impact through Lorena stoves and beekeeping

The widespread adoption of Lorena stoves has significantly reduced fuelwood consumption by about 50%, contributing to improved household health and environmental protection. Lorena stoves are designed to minimize smoke emissions, thereby reducing exposure to harmful pollutants that can cause respiratory illnesses and other health problems. The stoves also promote energy efficiency, leading to a decrease in the demand for firewood and reducing deforestation pressure. The project's support for beekeeping groups has not only provided an additional source of income for beneficiaries but also contributed to sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation. Beekeeping practices enhance pollination, leading to improved crop yields and agricultural productivity.

5.4.4 Outcome 4: Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Improvement

The project's integration of beekeeping with tree planting has yielded a significant economic impact on the community. The intentional planting of bee-preferred trees and the establishment of 27 beekeeping groups led to a substantial increase in the number of beehives, from 624 to 1,641 over the 3 years.

The comprehensive training provided to these groups enhanced their beekeeping capabilities, resulting in a remarkable 74% colonization rate and a surge in honey production from 1,530 to 3,450 kilograms.

This surge in honey production translated to a substantial increase in revenue from UGX 15,300,000 to UGX 34,495,000, marking an impressive improvement of over 1,000% from the preceding fiscal year. The financial gains generated have had tangible impacts on the beneficiaries, empowering them to meet basic needs, pay for school fees, cover household necessities, and strategically invest in acquiring more beehives. The economic success at the individual and group level, with one group harvesting over 2000 kilograms of honey in three years, highlights the substantial economic opportunities unlocked through the project's integrated approach to beekeeping.

5.4.5 Outcome 5: Sustainable Economic Ecosystem and Community Resilience

Beyond individual economic gains, the project has contributed to the empowerment of local carpenters by enhancing their capacity to construct affordable beehives. This collaborative effort has fostered a sustainable and mutually beneficial economic ecosystem within the community. Local carpenters now produce beehives at a more affordable price, supporting local beekeepers and promoting a self-sustaining economic model. This interconnected and holistic approach to beekeeping not only improves livelihoods but also promotes environmental sustainability and community resilience. By creating synergies between beekeeping and tree planting, the project has established a resilient economic ecosystem that benefits both individuals and the broader community, showcasing the potential for integrated and sustainable development initiatives.

5.5 Sustainability: ensuring ownership and lasting change

[To what extent will activities be sustained by local beneficiaries/partners after the funding comes to an end?]

The assessment of sustainability revolved around the pivotal question of to what extent activities will endure among local beneficiaries and partners after the cessation of funding. Early indications suggest that the community engagement and group-based approaches employed by the project lay a foundation for potential long-term sustainability. This is attributed to the high levels of buy-in and engagement fostered from the project's outset, notably in its ability to mobilize households and key stakeholders for tree-planting initiatives.

A crucial shift in perspective was noticed, recognizing the necessity to integrate tree planting as a holistic component within a broader set of practices delivered to farmers. Notably, Sustainable Land Management (SLM) is spotlighted for its dual focus on not only restoring land productivity but also championing agroforestry practices and enhancing people's livelihoods. This integrated approach seen by the consultant, presents opportunities for a sustained, enduring impact by ingraining adoption rates and scaling up agroforestry practices even beyond the project's lifespan.

To ensure the lasting success of tree planting initiatives in the target areas, a strategic emphasis on building capacity, skills, and understanding among various stakeholders becomes imperative. This strategic approach particularly extends to District Local Governments and the Uganda Wildlife Authority, key entities that play a pivotal role in the post-project phase. Collaborative efforts and engagement with these stakeholders, even after the project concludes, contribute to a seamless transition into the long-term sustainability phase.

The emphasis on capacity development and stakeholder engagement underscores a commitment to the consolidation of knowledge and skills necessary for continued tree-planting initiatives. This post-project engagement strategy, with a focus on key entities at the district level, not only enhances collaboration but also reinforces the groundwork for sustained efforts beyond the immediate project timeline. also ensured to trickle down the knowledge and skills gained to the rest of the community who were not part of the project.

Sustainability is a multifaceted aspect. Largely, the evaluation exercise was more concerned with the sustainability of the project's program activities, long after funding stops. The sustainability aspect can only stand the test of time if it is stemmed from the project design through to the implementation.

5.6 Replication

Interviews with respondents showed that the project's approach was widely applicable and that there was a potential for wide learning and replication. The following were suggested as areas for replication or scaling up:

5.6.1 Tree planting program

The flexibility and adaptability of the tree planting program were due to its being connected to the livelihood components of the local communities through beekeeping, improved land productivity, and village savings and loans. METGE should continue to maintain a robust network of tree nurseries through:

- Constructing and equipping additional nurseries to meet farmer's demand.
- Enhancing nursery management practices to ensure production target, optimal seedling growth, and survival rates.
- Cultivating a wider variety of tree species to cater to local ecological needs and preferences.
- Engaging local communities in nursery operations, tree planting, and fostering ownership and sustainability.

5.6.2 Farmers and Communities empowerment program: to empower local farmers and communities with comprehensive knowledge and skills in sustainable agroforestry through:

- Regular training sessions for farmers and community members on sustainable agroforestry practices.
- Setting up demonstration plots showcasing the integration of trees into agricultural landscapes.
- Encouraging peer-to-peer learning among farmers and communities through knowledge exchange platforms.
- Identifying and nurturing local champions to spearhead agroforestry initiatives within their communities.

- Continuing support to farmers' access to knowledge through Farmer's Voice Radio
- Continuing promoting gender rights and access to resources for all

5.6.3 Livelihood benefits expansion: Enhancing additional income-generating opportunities and improved living standards. Such work package may include:

- Continued livelihood enhancement through SLM practices
- Continued promotion of fuel-efficient stoves to reduce their reliance on deforestation for firewood.
- Continued work on beekeeping techniques and management practices to promote honey production as well as supporting beekeeping groups to enhance collective action and market access.
- Promotion of kitchen gardens for improved food security (nutrition) and household income

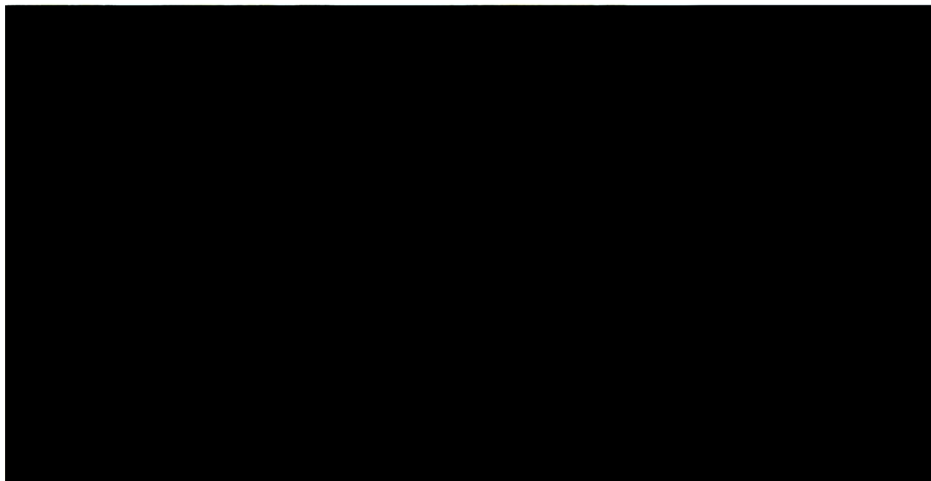


Photo H: Women from Mausii, Bumaena Parish Mbale District with seeds for Kitchen Gardens

5.6.4 Community Radio: Known to have had a great impact in reaching out to the unreached in terms of knowledge dissemination, community radio should be replicated to continue to impart skills and assist in the exchange of knowledge and ideas. Community radio could also be used to link farmers to markets as well as disseminate early warnings such as impending drought and heavy rains.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

6.1 Conclusion

The 3-year project successfully shifted the focus from mere tree planting to tree growing, emphasizing integrated sustainable land practices and livelihoods. This approach, based on lessons learned, can be replicated for broader impact. Despite the limited timeframe, stakeholder engagement in participatory processes enhanced understanding, buy-in, and actions for improving ecosystem resilience and livelihoods.

Despite being predetermined, the project's focus areas remained relevant, and progress was made in all seven districts. Key achievements include community mobilization, inclusivity, stakeholder buy-in, addressing early tree-felling root causes, and women's empowerment.

To consolidate gains and ensure wider impact and sustainability, more efforts are needed in integrating tree planting with Sustainable Land Management (SLM), promoting agroforestry practices, enhancing livelihoods, and strengthening stakeholder engagement and partnerships.

- a) METGE needs to strengthen its M&E approach, using clear outcome indicators and simple data collection tools to track progress regularly.
- b) The project's administrative costs relative to implementation costs are relatively high, but this may be justifiable over a longer period, especially if learning and buy-in are maximized.
- c) Longer-term sustainability requires continued buy-in at all levels and fostering partnerships to address the interdisciplinary nature of the challenges.

6.2 Lessons Learned

The following were the lessons learned:

- a) Capacity building is crucial for all METGE interventions, including tree planting and livelihood interventions like beekeeping and SLM.
- b) Diversify livelihood interventions to enhance households' engagement in tree growing, such as livestock for zero grazing.
- c) Leverage existing resources from complementary programs to avoid duplication.
- d) M&E and baseline data are as important as outcomes and ensure long-term capacity for higher survival rates and adoption of other interventions.
- e) Effective multi-stakeholder engagement at community and district levels is essential.
- f) Successful partnerships require stakeholder analysis and collaboration, working with partners with a mandate and expertise, strong project management, and improved collaboration between METGE and implementing partners.
- g) Conduct stakeholder analysis to identify opportunities for buy-in, political support, networking, and partnerships.

6.3 Recommendations

The following are the recommendations:

-
- a) Relevance: To enhance project relevance, it is crucial to deepen the focus on integrating tree planting within Sustainable Land Management (SLM), emphasizing agroforestry practices, and striving for improvements in livelihoods. Consultation with stakeholders at both district and community levels is essential to inform and align project objectives and activities with local needs and aspirations. Additionally, to provide a clear framework, it is recommended to have a well-defined Theory of Change incorporated into the project rationale and learning hypothesis. Ensuring that METGE and its partners comprehend and acknowledge the significance of this theoretical framework will contribute to a more impactful and relevant implementation of tree-planting initiatives.
- b) Women's Participation and Empowerment: To enhance the impact of the project, with a particular focus on women's participation and empowerment, it is recommended to undertake several key initiatives.
- First, build the capacity of METGE, partners, TNBOs, and Community Facilitators to comprehend and integrate gender equity and equality principles effectively.
 - Promote inclusive dialogue with men to actively support women's empowerment, especially in decision-making related to resource allocation, including land designated for tree planting.
 - Ensure the meaningful involvement of women in community management and decision-making processes.
 - To further strengthen these efforts, establish connections with organizations specializing in gender equity and equality, fostering collaborative learning and capacity development for sustained and impactful outcomes.
- c) Partnerships: METGE should:
- Enhance project effectiveness by fostering technical capacity development for partner organizations, emphasizing survival rates, gender equity, livelihood diversification, and climate resilience.
 - Strengthen collaboration between METGE and IPs through consistent capacity building and regular meetings to seamlessly integrate tree planting into household livelihoods.
 - Foster stronger engagement with local, national, and international tree restoration organizations. Additionally, consolidate and fortify partnerships with district local governments, the National Forest Authority, the Uganda Wildlife Authority, and the Ministry of Water and Environment for a comprehensive and sustainable impact.
 - Identify and support community-based organizations as they are more efficient in-service delivery and cost-effective to run and manage as opposed to big IPs. There are vehicles for sustainability too.
- d) Value for Money: To enhance the value for money in the evaluation of our tree planting project, we propose an integrated approach encompassing several key strategies.
- Firstly, establish a standardized unit cost for the project, allowing for cross-comparisons across various approaches and countries to optimize financial resources.

- Secondly, seamlessly integrate baseline analysis into the project cycle to provide a reference point for monitoring progress and engaging stakeholders and beneficiaries in understanding project objectives.
 - Finally, develop a streamlined monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system that is both simple and robust, facilitating the collection of key data aligned with project goals. Implement an annual assessment within this framework to gauge progress towards defined outcomes, enabling adaptive management and continuous improvement.
- e) Sustainability: To ensure the sustainability of the tree planting project, it is imperative to implement a comprehensive approach.
- Firstly, solidify METGE's approach and theory of change, emphasizing ownership, capacity development, and sustainability throughout the project lifecycle.
 - Direct targeted activities at both district and sub-county levels to enhance awareness and garner support for the tree planting initiative.
 - Capitalise on successful practices derived from multi-stakeholder Advisory Committees, ensuring strategic support during implementation, and thereby, increasing the likelihood of project adoption and continuation even after closure. This integrated strategy will fortify the project's foundations, fostering long-term success and positive environmental impacts.

Annex I

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A CONSULTANT TO CONDUCT AN END-OF-PROGRAM EVALUATION FOR THE MBALE TREES PROGRAM

Program Title: Mbale Trees Program

1.0. Program Description

1.1 Background

METGE was established and registered as a not-for-profit organisation in November 2017. It took over from the Mbale Coalition Against Poverty (MCAP), to expand, focus and manage the activities of the Mbale Tree Planting Program (TPP). In December 2020, METGE was granted foreign Non-Government Organization (NGO) status.

METGE's work is concentrated in the Mount Elgon region of eastern Uganda currently covering the Districts of Mbale, Namisindwa, Manafwa, Sironko, Bunambuli, Bududa, and Bukedea. It is anticipated to expand in the future to the other districts of Kapchorwa, Kween and Bukwo, which also surround Mount Elgon National Park. They may be included in this program as METGE develops, grows, and funding becomes available.

METGE works through implementing partners. The major roles of METGE are to coordinate, facilitate and promote the interlinked interventions under the program. The four implementing partners (IPs) are Bunghokho Rural Development Centre (BRDC); Mount Elgon Agroforestry Communities Cooperative Enterprise (MEACCE); Salem Brotherhood (SAB) and Share an Opportunity (SAO). The IPs are responsible for implementation. They ensure availability of tree seedlings of different purposes for distribution to beneficiaries; conduct awareness raising on the importance of trees and risks associated with deforestation; train beneficiaries in tree planting and management practices to mitigate environmental risks and promote livelihood opportunities that are integrated with the trees.

1.2 Objectives of the MTPP

METGE has been implementing a 3-year MTPP which commenced on 1st April 2020 and ended on 31st March 2023. The overarching goal of the Mbale Tree Planting Program (TPP) was to plant, nurture and conserve millions of trees in the Mount Elgon Region of Uganda to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and improve sustainable livelihoods for the local people. The program aimed to contribute to a number of the Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 1 (No Poverty). The program also aimed to have some additional capacity each year to grow and distribute additional trees seedlings where additional donations for tree planting are made to the program via Size of Wales.

1.3 MTPP Outcomes

The key outcome of the program is that 25 million trees are distributed and planted in the Mount Elgon region, and nurtured by an extensive network of knowledgeable local farmers and community members by 2025. This would involve distributing at least 3.1 million trees every year – one for every person in Wales each year – as well as approximately 37,000 trees for every child born or adopted in Wales each year.

1.4 MTPP Outputs

The program will have 3 key outputs:

- e) Output 1: The network of tree nurseries has the capacity to produce at least 3.2 million trees each year of an appropriate diversity.
- f) Output 2: Knowledge of the local farmers and local communities participating in the program is increased in sustainable agroforestry and tree diversity.
- g) Output 3: Program participants gain other associated direct benefits including fuel efficient stoves and training and resources for bee keeping. The other key aim of the program is that METGE increasingly becomes a financially resilient, Ugandan run organisation with strong governance and strong financial management, and that the program becomes “Dfid ready” i.e., is run to the highest international development standards and suitable for Dfid funding.

2. MTPP Evaluation

The implementation of the MTPP 3-year program ended in March 31, 2023. A final evaluation of the program is being proposed.

2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The Evaluation is being undertaken in order to independently assess:

- h) The quality of the project concept and design;
- i) The effectiveness of the project in terms of achieving its planned objectives arising from the project, including with respect to METGE and Size of Wales mobilization and management of resources (budget, inputs and activities);
- j) Whether or not there were unanticipated results, either positive or negative, arising from project’s implementation;
- k) It should also ensure that lessons learnt and best practices from the project are identified for program design and implementation. It will also provide specific recommendations regarding any follow – up actions required by METGE and SOW management to effectively sustain or improve support to the project’s programs in the future. They should constitute proposals for concrete action, which could be taken in future to improve or rectify undesired outcomes. Specifically, the evaluation may recommend abandonment, modification, or continuation of the project.

Recommendations may also be made in respect of issues related to the implementations of management of the program.

2.2 Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation will be a final project evaluation and shall cover the time period from July – August 2023. The geographical coverage of the evaluation shall be the seven districts the MTPP activities are being implemented. The evaluation should assess the project concept and design, specifically:

- a) The immediate objective/s and planned results and activities as compared to cost effective alternatives;
- b) The clarity, logic and coherence of the project document;
- c) The executing modality and managerial arrangements for the project;
- d) Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation;
- e) The relevancy and impact of partnerships established between stakeholders and the civil society;
- f) The adequacy of the identification, assessment and mitigation of risks (including COVID 19 and climate change) to the program; and
- g) The adequacy of prior obligations and prerequisites to be met by METGE.

3.1.1. Questions to be addressed

The key (guiding) questions to be answered by the evaluation are as follows:

Relevance:

- a) *Was the program consistent with relevant national, regional and international strategic priorities and policies?*
- b) *Are the objectives of the project still relevant, now and in the future?*
- c) *To what extent does the current organisation structure of METGE support MTPP implementation*

Quality of design:

- a) *Were project objectives clear, realistic and appropriately documented?*
- b) *Were project stakeholders (including staff) appropriately involved in project formulation/design?*
- c) *Did the project have adequately clear/SMART indicators (and targets), and were the proposed 'means of verification' (sources of information) and risks/assumption appropriate and practical?*
- d) *Was there adequate/appropriate baseline data/information available, or plans made for its collection?*
- e) *Was the project design consistent with and supportive of relevant partner government priorities and policies?*
- f) *Was the project document aligned/relevant to the METGE Strategic Plan*

Efficiency of implementation and quality of management:

- a) *Were activities effectively planned, managed and monitored on an ongoing basis?*

- b) Were sound financial management systems and practices used, which provided timely, accurate and transparent information on project expenditures and procurement?*
- c) Was the pace of activity implementation satisfactory (or were there any significant delays)?*
- d) Are stakeholders generally happy with the quality of program management?*
- e) Has the project adequately documented, reported and disseminated information on what it is doing/has achieved?*
- f) Do what extent did the IPs contributed to the project implementation (positive or negative)*
- g) Do what extent did COVID 19 affect project implementation?*

Effectiveness:

- a) Has MTPP achieved its objectives and results, as per the program document? If not, has some progress been made towards the achievement or results or have other results?*
- b) which are not explicit in the project document, been achieved?*
- c) Were program results delivered as planned?*
- d) Were the quality of project results satisfactory, and was this appropriately monitored by the project?*
- e) How effective is the Program on the dissemination of information on MTPP to the general public? How could it be improved? Describe how community radio has achieved towards this end?*
- f) Have project results directly contributed to the achievement of desired/planned objectives, and what is the evidence?*
- g) Is there any evidence of unplanned results or objectives, either positive or negative?*
- h) Where unforeseen challenges to the implementation of the project handled creatively and effectively?*
- i) To what extent is the progress made so far, the result of MTPP activities rather than of external factors? How did external factors impact on the effectiveness of MTPP activities?*

Impact and sustainability:

- a) What are the intended or unintended (positive and negative) long-term effects of the MTPP?
What difference has the MTPP made to the partners, key stakeholders, on regards to initiatives towards tree growing to mitigate against and adapt to climate change?*
- b) What, if any, are the identified threats to sustainability of benefits, and have these being appropriately addressed/managed by the project?*
- c) To what extent will the benefits generated through the MTPP be sustained beyond the program period duration?*
- d) Has the beneficiary's taken ownership of the objectives to be achieved by the MTPP?*
- e) Are they committed to continue working towards these objectives once the program has ended?*
- f) Can sustainability be strengthened by expanding MTPP initiatives to other Districts?*
- g) Does Project MTPP receive sufficient financial and human resources to adequately meet its objectives and mid and long-term objectives and priorities?*

Lessons learned and best practices

- a) *What lessons can be learned from the project implementation in order to improve performance?*
- c) *What best practices emerged from the project implementation?*
- d) *What recommendations can be made to improve MTPP in order to increase relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability? In general, what can be done to make Project MTPP more effective?*
- e) *What lessons can be drawn from the partnerships established in the scope of MTPP?*
- f) *What lessons and recommendations could be drawn from the interruptions of COVID 19?*

4. Evaluation Methodology

The Consultant will propose the appropriate methods to meet the objective of the study, including the structuring of the teams. In addition to the review of all the program documentation, provide for the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. As such, the consultants will have to organise stakeholder engagement meetings/interviews/focus group discussions.

The proposed methodology should bear in mind the wide coverage and diverse group of program stakeholders and show clearly how reliable and meaningful information will be collected in an efficient, transparent and participatory manner.

5. Evaluation responsibility

A consultant will be required to undertake this consultancy assignment. He/she will be supported by the METGE program staff and the IP staff of MEACCE and BRDC.

6. Recruitment

Required area of expertise of the independent evaluation expert includes:

- a) University degree;
- b) Master's degree in forestry, agroforestry, environmental science, natural resource management, or related areas;
- c) Expertise in technical evaluation on at least two different projects;
- d) Fluency in English (oral and written);
- e) Specialisation in evaluation, social statistics, qualitative research and/or analysis;
- f) Prior experience in planning, designing, analysing and reporting results of qualitative studies (survey design and implementation);
- g) Knowledge and familiarity with climate change and climate resilience

7. Expected Deliverables

The evaluation will produce the following:

- a) A detailed inception report with: the evaluation plan, the methodology and the evaluation instruments to be developed by the evaluator;
- b) Presentations of findings as appropriate;
- c) A draft evaluation report with findings, lessons learned, and recommendations; and

d) A final evaluation reports

8. Timing and Duration

The consultancy period is from the 1st August – September 2023.