



## The Mukono Micro-Livestock Farming Project Designed to Tackle Sustainable Development Goal No. 1, No Poverty

Awath Java Abdat, Babirye Esther, Emmanuel Kato,  
Kuteesa Jesse Kirule, and Owen Ssembuya (Uganda)

### Abstract

41% of Uganda's population live in poverty according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). Almost half of Uganda's population is under the age of 15, representing one of the youngest populations in the world. A young population indicates high potential but as the situation stands, poverty is high amongst the households that 45% of children drop out of school at primary level but the rate is speculated to be higher for girls. Not to digress, this problem amongst many others is the reason why poverty has been persistent in the Ugandan society. Our Team chooses to tackle the SDG Number 1, No poverty to see to it that such problems are done away with. The aim is to create a society that is financially independent and financially secure hence sustainable in the long run. The Team chose to work with a project that is easily executable and understood by everyone and that was micro-livestock farming, with cuniculture being the pioneer of this project we called the Mukono Micro-Livestock Project. The cost of setting up the project is not very costly, and the maintenance of the whole project depends on how its ran. Given our major aims, to conclude this project we decided that SACCOs are the way to go, with everything else being just a means to an end. This submission shows how effective the project can be and with funding, it will surely change the lives of people in the target area.

Key Words: Kigezi Health Care Foundation (KIHEFO), Mukono Micro-Livestock Project (MUMILI), Saving Credit and Cooperative Organization (SACCO), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

### Introduction

In Uganda's context, poverty is locally defined as the lack of necessities such as food, shelter, clothes, education, and Cash, which are greatly seen as the major challenges in communities. The poverty line in the country is US\$0.88 which is much less World Bank international figure of US\$1.9. The focus area is – which is in Mukono District, Namubiru Village. The SDG 1 No Poverty aims at halting poverty and if its successfully halted, most if not all SDGs are to be done away with. This is because in all the different SDGs developed by the UN, poverty sits at the heart of it all. Poverty breeds ignorance and from that comes all the other sins and atrocities since in scenarios where survival is the major obligation, the animal in man comes out and trembles the “human rights” without a flinch in thought. Only people who have secured a financially stable environment have a chance to develop other aspects of life. On the contrary a survivor's purpose is to live another day, a mind with only a singularity like that cannot think of education, cannot think about gender equality, cannot care about sustainable energy sources, a mind like that even

worries less about climate; not to mention all the psychological trauma that may come with it. What we are trying to point out is that it is illogical to ask a mind that lives to survive to look beyond the basic needs of life and pursue other ideologies and we dare say that Poverty is the root of all evil. The sustainable development Goals (SDGs) are the key to a better world as addressed by the United Nations. The team is focusing on SDG NO.1 which is “No poverty, to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.”

As all other countries, the economy suffered a great blow as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and this worsened the already bad financial status of many Ugandans. Basing on our project site Namubiru village, Mukono district central Uganda, the state of poverty has steadily increased following the negative Impacts of the pandemic covid-19 where most individuals lost their jobs due to the decline in the country’s economic activities, but it was on record that the agricultural sector of the country was less impacted. In the first half of 2021, Uganda’s Finance Ministry reported that 28 % of Ugandans were poor. That rate had increased from 18 % before the pandemic. In line with World Bank practice, the official poverty line is the equivalent of \$ 1.90 purchasing power per day and head. The Finance Ministry also noted that two thirds of Ugandans had lost at least some income due to the Covid-19 crisis. It was obvious that things would be challenging. In June 2020, the Uganda office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) prepared a report on what impacts the novel virus was likely to have. It expected some 4.4 million workers in Uganda’s informal sector to fall into extreme poverty. Women, people with disabilities and chronic conditions, youth and the elderly were said to be most at risk. The UNDP report also predicted that tourism, manufacturing, and services sectors would be disproportionately affected. Even before the pandemic, Oxfam, the international charity, had warned that inequality was worsening in Uganda example, that 80 % of rural households were vulnerable to poverty even before Covid-19, compared to less than 30 % in urban areas. The team after researching and discussing the best way to tackle the task at hand concluded that being part of the agricultural sector would be a nice start. The decide project plan was micro-livestock farming with the overall aim to establish a financially secure and independent society through savings groups (SACCOs). Sustainability means the state of being independent of help from others, this is exactly what the Team wants to achieve, and that’s why we choose a project that can make people financially free and secure, hence, sustainable. This means the challenge at hand is difficult with objectives like mindset change and development of money management skills. The choice of livestock was poultry and cuniculture (rabbits). It may not seem like much but with research we found that the products of these two commodities are both high and the later had a relatively young market with lots of room to grow.

Under the project we decided to name the Mukono Micro-Livestock (Micro-livestock are animals that require limited space to rear hence there is no threat to the environment and climate at large) Farming Project, the aim is to create a society with financial independence and financial security. Financial independence is the state where one has income that he or she is free to spend on things that interests them. Financial security is simply a fall back plan for finances during a crisis. These two, working hand in hand, can without doubt end poverty and can be sustainable. With products coming from the animals being the main source of income, and SACCOs being the form in which finances are secured. The major resource we are to optimize is the human resource, the

participants themselves. The stakeholders need to be willing to learn and accept the terms at which we are going to be operating with.

## **Purpose**

The MUMILI Project is designed for strictly purposes of freeing the society of Namubiru from staunch poverty and acquire middle class income status. This is to be done by the involvement of 50 participants from the target community, training them the disciplines of rearing the respective animals and also educating and involving all the participants in SACCOs with a common product. But what is a SACCO? In full, SACCO is an acronym for Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization. SACCOs are voluntary associations where members regularly pool their savings and occasionally obtain loans which they use for different purposes. The general idea is to promote savings and make credit available to all members, talk about being sustainable. Normally, SACCOs operate on a basis of equality for promotion of economic interests, group ownership of property and resources acquired through these cooperatives is also acceptable since people have equal stakes and usually, SACCOs comprise of members in the same income status to avoid some members from acting privileged. SACCOs are democratic and have in many areas of the country helped to be an effectively participatory strategy to bootstrap low-income individuals into the socio-economic activities of the nation. Also, they reduce exploitation of powerless individuals by other individuals or institutions. With all the above being explained, other questions arise, how are members going to join the SACCOs? Where does one get the income to keep up with a SACCO?

Well, the project is designed in such a way to be self-sustainable, by this we mean that steps were taken to see to it that work is resourceful and yields results i.e., in these SACCOs, only members of the MUMILI project will have permission to join and only if they are registered and have yielded results from the respective fields of the micro-livestock project. This will help promote unity amongst members and also avoid interruptions from outsiders with little understanding.

What we are trying to describe is the methodology that will get us to the aims of financial independence and security. Members carrying out the project, after 6 months of operation will be introduced to the market. After earning from their own product, they will be inclined to startup different SACCOs in-order to further broaden their knowledge and influence over the area. Using them as an example, the team will see to it that we attract more people from the same area.

## **Why Micro-Livestock?**

The state in which most people in the area of Namubiru live is that of extreme poverty, and as for that matter, the team chose a more financially friendly solution, cuniculture and poultry. These two farm animals are not as hard to rear as say cattle. The main challenge with them is sanitation, and we believe with proper sensitization, anyone can learn how to handle them. The second reason is due to the fact that they don't require a lot of space and resources especially for starters as compared to other animals. One of the major driving factor for choosing this program is that, for rabbits, there is a higher level of output of products i.e. the gestation period of the rabbit female

is 30 days, and a litter at least has 7 kits; Proper breeds mature within 5 months making the rabbit a highly profitable animal when it comes to turnover (Mukasa, 2021)."One can start with only six rabbits (Mutua, 2016). In the beginning, I was the farmer, I was the vet, I was everything. I was small, but I had a big vision, a serious vision," Mutua reminisces. Unfortunately, his vision was one that was often met with ridicule. "If you tell people, 'Raise rabbits, there is a future,' they will tell you, 'No, rabbits are for kids.' It's challenging to change somebody's tastes. The Masai (a tribe in northwest Kenya) give rabbits to dogs. I spent two years going to trade shows and giving away rabbit meat for free, saying, 'Taste this!'" (Mutua, 2016)

With MUMILI, one can easily understand the full scope, from what they will be doing, how they will be doing it, how to earn, and how to keep earning. It secures the stakeholder. In conclusion to this question, all we are describing is that; one joins the project, rears the animals, takes the products from his own farm to market and gets the profits, then with those profits the registered members join a SACCO. It is under the SACCO that our major interest lies because as a cooperative society, the scope of one's economic activity is enlarged, both individual and on a group basis. We ought also to point out that MUMILI project can act as both a source of income and food to whoever becomes involved since the products are edibles. To add on, the waste material from both poultry and rabbits if collected in huge sums has high market value since it's a capable fertilizer. Also, the wool of the rabbits is also marketable. Given the fact that the market is still developing for the rabbit products and on high demand, the possibility of a highly productive supplier to set his/her own price is high (Mutua, 2016). And as a matter of fact, the price of rabbit's meat has a range, 25000 -35000 Ugandan shillings.

"If you want to feed your family, you can buy one female and one male. Keep the first two rabbits until the pair matures, around five months, and after that the breeding speed of the rabbits keeps up with the eating speed of the family. You will always have enough meat," boasts Mutua. "If you want to do it commercially, you'll need at least five female rabbits and one male rabbit. That can earn you USH 640,000 [\$200] or even up to USH 1,280,000 [\$400] per month." To put that in perspective, USH 640,000 is already more than many manual laborers in Uganda.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, rabbits convert 20 percent of the fodder they consume into protein, making them roughly twice as efficient as cows. They're also about as low-maintenance as livestock can be; they thrive with minimal space and virtually no attention. While more demanding farm animals require valuable cereal grains, rabbits will happily munch away on just about any greenery you throw their way. And unlike cows, which give birth only once a year, these little guys breed like, well, rabbits, producing litters of roughly eight kits at a time. A project such as ours can actually be used to tackle two SDGs that is; No poverty and Zero Hunger as the research provided above has clearly shown such potential. For poultry, chicken in particular, if one majors in the local breed (breeds indigenous to Uganda) the risk of disease is decreased. Although this comes at a cost of time, the products(eggs) from these breeds have a price that triples that of the usual layers that are imported. Being local breeds, these birds are more.

## Methodology

The execution of this program must have proper management of all aspects from people to funds. The way the team worked around this was to acquire a project site. A base of the first operation so as to act as the body that links the collective goods from the participants to the market. The level of hierarchy at the site will be democratic and imitate that followed in a SACCO with few adjustments from the experts we are to involve along the way. The project site will of course be within the target area so as its easily accessible to those who would be interested. The project site will also act as a place where the civilians would get all the training and information required to get involved into the project.

We are to make it clear through paper work and orally that whoever chooses to join our expedition is bound to join a SACCO. This is to ensure results from the farming practices and also help clarify that the major aim is financial independence and security. Well as involvement into the program will certainly bring income, for the equation to be complete one needs to join a SACCO for the equation to be complete. This is because a SACCO improves ones social network and makeup money needed for emergencies. Better decision making is therefore paramount and a member can rest assured that he has a backup plan. According to a study conducted by the Uganda Technology and Management University in 2017, in Uganda, savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) as financial intermediaries, channeling savings into loans, provide saving opportunities for the people, especially in the rural areas, but further improvements are necessary to make their services more efficient and sustainable.

A study done in Kampala by Makerere University found out that SACCOs have significantly reduced poverty, contributed to education, helped in saving mobilization, and provided emergency housing loans and funeral insurance. SACCOs were found to have contributed to strengthening social protection and social inclusion, reduction of risks and vulnerabilities facing women entrepreneurs and ability to make decisions. Inclusion of women workers and women entrepreneurs with disabilities, increase in responsibilities in the home and the ability to participate in the community activities, helping women to network and build relationships.

According to the research made from the different surveys we made across the target society, it was brought to our understanding that starting with places of worship like churches would simply make our work easier to get recruits. Not surprisingly, we got a good turn up of people who were interested in the project. Further surveys revealed to us what we proved us to be on the right track as we found many of those interested were actually carrying out cuniculture already. What more signs did we need to be confident, for one thing was made clear to us and it was that people were actually interested, they only lacked proper training and serious motivation. Those who were involved in the cuniculture lacked the proper facilities to enlarge their animal numbers as they would die off easily due to poor sanitation. This would kill motivation for many, not to mention that it was a hobby to some and yes, once in a while they used them for food. The other problem was the market. Markets for product such as these prefer large numbers of products, and require a steady flow of product within intervals. For example, some suppliers mentioned that on a monthly basis a farm ought to produce over 200 animals (Mukasa, 2020) This requires that one fully

commit to providing to the market with a sustainable source ensuring a steady flow of income and products for both supplier and buyer. To put it simply, people who do small scale are bitterly not able to access the full potential of this market share, but if all the people of the area have one single place (the project site) to work as the middle man between the market and the farmer, everyone is able to have a share of the full potential of the market.

Assuming all goes well, and we actually achieve our first goal of hitting the market in the first 6 months of our operation, the profits that will come off the success will be used for SACCO registration from all the first participants without exceptions. SACCOs are given an annual probation for operation.

### **Relevant Literature**

In October 2013, The Kigezi Healthcare Foundation (KIHEFO) opened the Rabbit Breeding and Training Centre, in Kabale, Uganda. With 120 rabbits for breeding and distribution the project began giving to poor households and currently has 700 rabbits housed at the main center-with capacity for 3,000-and additional rabbits distributed to more than 60 farmers within the region. The main center located in Kabale-town is now fully functioning and has 16 breeding cages, 60 weaning cages and 1 mobile rabbit cage for demonstration with community members. Rabbit training manuals have been designed in both English and Rukiga, the local language. since the start of 2016, more than 800 people within the community have been trained in rabbit rearing and management and equipped with skills and knowledge about the benefits of keeping rabbits. The success of this project has spread since then and mini-breeding centers have been built in 6 additional communities, including Bukoora, Muyumbu, Rubira, Nyabikoni, Kasinde and Ikumba-all in Kabale district.

In October 2015, Trina Moyles, a KIHEFO volunteer, visited 6 farmers who'd benefited individually in August 2014 with 1 cage (4 units) and 3 breeding rabbits. She reported that "one farmer had tripled her meat intake over the course of 14 months. Farmers were eating the rabbits, and also selling them to generate income. It was a balance of eating/selling. An unintended outcome was the amount of rabbit manure produced, which was used to make compost for their field crops. Another unintended outcome was that some of the rabbit farmers were organizing amongst themselves-donating rabbits to other farmers who weren't necessarily direct beneficiaries of the original project."

### **Limitations**

All projects face limitations and problems that threaten their success. The MUMILI faces a few like these but they can be dealt with the most serious limitation in our project is the project site. Well as the participants can do the work from their homes, the whole operation of connecting them and training them needs a center of command, a base of operation. This site is where the local participants will have to bring their products so as we can put out to the market. What we are trying to point out is that the project site will be the place where animals are slaughtered in huge quantities and delivered to the meat market. This is because the market has a lot of demand

and obviously a single farmer cannot meet the weekly demand but as one unit, receiving from all over the village, the MUMILI project site can act as the middle man. To add on, the setting up of the different infrastructure is also sophisticated. The greatest expenses are used up by the wood for the modified hutches that are needed to run cuniculture (Mukasa, 2021).

The other would be limitation is disease but with proper training, a farmer can raise the animals in a clean environment and not worry about disease. Also, the best way to fight against coccidiocis, the most notorious disease towards the rabbit's life is immunization. This can be done by mixing coccidiostant in the feeds of the kits during the weaning period. This is information got from experts we tried to interview.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the MUMILI project has a high success rate if it gets sufficient funds to setup all the required infrastructure and carry out requires sensitization of the people in the area of focus. It ought to spread through different communities across the country and more projects like this can be developed to help fight poverty amongst Ugandans. It should be noted that the major goal/aim is to create a financially stable society, with the attributes money security and independence. The project described above also shows the potential of handling two SDGs namely; No poverty and Zero Hunger. This is because the products can be used for both commercial and nutrition services.

## References

- Hubbell, D(2016) Available at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/78mmdg/meet-the-man-kenyans-call-mr-rabbit> (Accessed on: 26/02/2022)
- Kaaya, R(2018) Available at: <http://dissertations.mak.ac.ug/handle/20.500.12281/8099> (Accessed on: 26/02/2022)
- NTVUganda(2020)SEEDS OF GOLD. 6<sup>th</sup> September. Available at:<https://youtu.be/lzW2n2NQ85Q> (Accessed on: 21/03/2022)
- Ssegujja, R.S(2021) Available at: <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/many-african-countries-covid-19-has-exacerbated-inequality-uganda> (Accessed: 19/03/2022)
- Uganda Bureau Of Statistics(2019). Available at: [https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/02\\_2020Poverty\\_Map\\_report\\_\\_Oct\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/02_2020Poverty_Map_report__Oct_2019.pdf) (Accessed on: 3/03/2022)
- USAID(2021)UGANDA: Nutrition Profile. Available at: [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/tagged\\_Uganda-Nutrition-Profile.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/tagged_Uganda-Nutrition-Profile.pdf) (Accessed on: 3/03/2022)