

MID-TERM EVALUATION

The Household Welfare Initiative (HWI)
Project in Rakai and Lyantonde districts,
Uganda

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CSO	Community based organisation
CDO	Community Development Officer
CHH	Child-headed households
FBO	Faith based organisation
ICA	Icelandic Church Aid
IGA	Income Generating Activity
GBV	Gender-based Violence
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
HWI	Household Welfare Initiative
LWF	Lutheran World Federation – World Service
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PLHIV	People living with HIV/AIDS
PWD	Person with disability
RACOBABO	Rural Action community Based Organisation
TOC	Theory of Change
TOA	Theory of Action
VHT	Village Health Team
VIG	Vashi Impact Group
VSLA	Village Savings & Loans Associations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Household Welfare Initiative (HWI) is an intervention that is being implemented by the Rural Action Community-Based Organisation (RACOBABO) with funding from the Icelandic Church Aid (ICA) through funds sourced from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The HWI project builds on the previous ICA funded project in Rakai and Lyantonde districts. The project aims at ensuring that vulnerable groups, especially people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV); as well as widows and orphans and vulnerable children from child-headed households (CHH), have improved household hygiene and sanitation and have improved capacity to challenge their vulnerability by 2025. Therefore, the major focus of this project is to improve the living conditions of the targeted people through construction of modest houses with latrines, kitchens, and 5000 litre water tanks, and improving economic welfare through provision of goats, establishment of simple kitchen vegetable gardens, and mobilising household members into village savings and loans associations (VSLAs). The members are trained to establish and manage income generating initiatives. The aim of the midline evaluation was to objectively assess the results of the MFA efforts in supporting the ICA funded project in Uganda. Since this was a midline evaluation, focus was on three OECD DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, and effectiveness. Additionally, the evaluation aimed to assess the factors of gender equality, innovation, environmental considerations as well as the implications of COVID-19 within the context of the programmes supported by MFA.

Approach and methodology

The approach to the evaluation was designed to be consultative in nature through engaging various relevant stakeholders at all stages to ensure participation and ownership of the results. These methods comprised the desk review, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). The primary data collection exercise was primarily carried out in the two districts where the programme is being implemented namely Rakai and Lyantonde. Review of programme documents helped in setting out the contextual background and framing against which the evaluation was conducted. KIIs were conducted with carefully selected stakeholders. During the data collection phase, a sum of 20 KIIs were carried out. FGDs were organised within the communities targeting specific groups, totalling 14 sessions with beneficiaries of the HWI. Ethical practices and respect for anonymity were maintained throughout the evaluation process, including adhering to the principles of do no harm and safeguarding principles. The data triangulation approach involving primary and secondary data ensured a comprehensive evaluation. Despite challenges like difficulties in mobilising programme beneficiaries and estimating the costs of the data collection exercise, the evaluation successfully utilised a multi-faceted methodology, providing a nuanced understanding of the HWI.

Findings

Relevance

The Relevance chapter revealed that the programme is relevant to the prevailing socio-economic environment in the two districts. As the primary focus of the project continues to be on vulnerable communities including those living with HIV/AIDS, elderly households, child-headed households, or people with disabilities (PwDs), many stakeholders have revealed how dire the situation was for the beneficiaries prior to the intervention. These challenges include economic hardships, domestic violence, insufficient food, social exclusion, and vulnerabilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite financial constraints and logistical challenges, the programme has managed to address some of the immediate and most pressing needs. The positive outcomes are evident in modest housing conditions, better hygiene, access to clean water, and positive health results, contributing significantly to the overall well-being of the targeted communities. The programme is conceptualised to target people who are living with HIV/AIDS especially child-headed households and widows. However, this has been

broadened to incorporate other forms of vulnerability such as disability. This is yet to be comprehensively documented and officialised. Whilst the selection process has been participatory, the lack of a defined 'vulnerability framework' warrant attention for future improvements. The alignment of project activities with its goals is evident in various aspects. The project effectively addresses access to public healthcare, support for education within families, provision of housing and mosquito nets, kitchen gardens, provision of goats, water tanks, VSLAs, and psychosocial support. These initiatives align with national policies and priorities related to HIV/AIDS mitigation, housing, and community development, as outlined in the Uganda National Strategic Plan and the broader international humanitarian standards. Additionally, the project's alignment with other internal stakeholders such as ICA and MFA, reflects a shared commitment to inclusive and rights-based development approaches. Overall, the chapter's comprehensive findings indicate that the HWI is making substantial strides in addressing the complex challenges faced by vulnerable communities in Lyantonde and Rakai.

Coherence

Data suggested that there is coherence across various facets within RACOBABO's initiatives in Lyantonde and Rakai Districts. The internal partnership arrangements between RACOBABO, ICA, and MFA showcase a longstanding, trust-based collaboration that extends beyond mere financial support. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' transition to Framework Agreements in 2020 signals a strategic shift towards more formalised collaborations, emphasising the significance of robust communication channels for effective engagement. Turning to collaborations with other CSOs, RACOBABO's concerted efforts towards community development are evident. Partnerships with various NGOs in health-related activities showcase a coordinated approach to addressing multifaceted challenges. However, challenges, such as the dissolution of activities by Rakai Health Science Programme due to legal issues, highlight the complexities NGOs face, necessitating adaptability and alternative collaborations. In terms of collaborations with government agencies, findings showed that these collaborations are pivotal to the programme. Challenges, including budget constraints and community dependency, are acknowledged, but overall, positive collaboration is emphasised. Examining coherence within RACOBABO's initiative, the organisation's comprehensive approach to community development in both districts is commendable. Overall, the chapter's findings depict a dynamic network of partnerships grounded in trust and effective communication, showcasing RACOBABO's commitment to community development.

Effectiveness

The evaluation has established that all the planned outputs have been achieved. This is the case across the three project objectives. The provision of the houses has not only addressed the housing challenges but has managed to elevate the social status of the households resulting in their integration into their communities to an extent. However, the fact that beneficiary households now own assets such as water tanks further elevates their status as neighbours are now the ones who must ask for support. This in some cases have raised conflict amongst the beneficiary households and the neighbours. Concerns were observed relating to lack of ownership, especially when it came to goat rearing. Findings showed that some households regard these as RACOBABO assets and revert to the organisations when these goats are attacked by diseases. Despite challenges such as the inability of some to participate to join VLSAs, the lack of access to land and poor health status, the potential of economic strengthening strategies is apparent. Some beneficiaries are already witnessing changes at outcome level such as the ability to send children to school. The efficacy of training volunteers is already emerging as changes at outcome level such as reduction in early pregnancies are starting to emerge. However, it would be premature to attest with certainty of the changes since these are backed by anecdotal evidence. Overall, the evaluation concludes that the implementation of the

project is on track as witnessed by the achievement of all the targets. It is also worth noting that the project is on track when we consider the target on the logical framework i.e., 50% achievement rate by the end of 2023. RACOBABO faces a monumental task ahead, as they must contend with the increasing workload of managing existing housing units while also accommodating the construction of additional ones in the remaining years.

Cross-cutting themes

This evaluation explored cross-cutting themes such as gender equality, implications of COVID-19 and environmental consideration within the programme. The insight into gender dynamics and equality revealed nuanced perspectives from stakeholders. For instance, in Rakai, positive outcomes in gender equality were highlighted. In Lyantonde, a focused approach towards women without husbands was also noted. The programme's commitment to gender equality, as outlined in its documentation, is evident. However, challenges in engaging men as active voices against gender-based violence, gender inequalities and maintaining a balance persist, possibly influenced by the prevalent patriarchal setup and family structures in the communities where most men often abandon their households. The impact of COVID-19 on project implementation emerges as a crucial aspect as it impacted on the pace of constructing houses, increased expenses, and limited counsellors' movements. The pandemic disrupted communication and reporting channels, highlighting the importance of flexibility and innovative solutions in overcoming obstacles. Despite these challenges, the commitment to continuing support during the pandemic, such as delivering medication to homes, reflects the project's dedication to community welfare. Finally, environmental considerations within the project revealed a conscientious effort taken up to an extent, towards environmental sustainability. The consideration of environmental factors during construction further emphasises a holistic approach to community development. However, there remains room for further enhancement of environmentally conscious efforts within the project.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Long-Term Vision and Dependency Prevention:** Develop a clear long-term vision for the project that goes beyond addressing short-term needs. Consider strategies to prevent the development of dependency among beneficiaries, such as incorporating skills development and economic empowerment initiatives to foster sustainable livelihoods. Further, strategies could also include strengthening advocacy work with governments to take up more initiatives to support the communities even after RACOBABO's interventions end.
2. **Define a Framework for Vulnerability:** Establish a well-defined framework for vulnerability within the project that aligns with the approach of RACOBABO for the purposes of clarity. This should include providing clear definitions of what 'deprivation', 'vulnerability' and 'marginalisation' mean and how each of the social structures interact with one another creating an individual or groups' social status leading to systemic inequalities.
3. **Improve Community Understanding and Ownership:** Strengthen community understanding of the project's objectives and ensure that beneficiaries perceive the houses and goats as their own rather than the organisation's. We recommend implementing targeted communication strategies to enhance community ownership and dispel any misconceptions regarding project resources.
4. **Address Challenges in Water Tank Management:** Develop sustainable management strategies for water tanks to prevent conflicts among beneficiaries. We recommend considering regular community-wide discussions on resource-sharing practices to maintain a delicate balance between individual needs and communal responsibilities.

5. **Diversify Usage of Resources:** Explore opportunities to diversify the usage of resources provided, particularly in the context of kitchen gardens and provision of goats. We recommend engaging the communities in discussions to understand their preferences and needs for better resource utilisation in the long-term ensuring power imbalances are managed effectively.
6. **Monitor and Reinforce Intended Use of Project Resources:** Implement robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure that resources provided, especially during training sessions, are utilised as intended. Our recommendation is to address the concerns expressed by beneficiaries regarding the inefficient utilisation of resources.
7. **Capacity Building for CSO Collaborations:** RACOBABO understand the intricate challenges that NGOs encounter, particularly those related to legal matters affecting collaborative efforts. As such, investing in capacity building initiatives for its staff becomes imperative. By providing training sessions focused on legal considerations, conflict resolution techniques, and adaptive strategies, RACOBABO can equip its team with the necessary skills to navigate complexities adeptly.
8. **Active participation of community members to build a sense of ownership and avoid dependency:** The positive collaboration with local leaders and government officials suggests a strong foundation for community engagement. RACOBABO should continue to strengthen the efforts in community sensitisation, creating a sense of ownership and active participation among community members. This could include awareness campaigns on the importance of sustainable development, reducing dependency, and encouraging a proactive attitude towards community well-being.
9. **Advocacy for Government Support:** Acknowledging the positive collaboration with local governments and the recognition of budget constraints, RACOBABO can engage in advocacy efforts to secure increased government budget allocation for community development initiatives but can also explore methods to encourage governments to assume responsibility, recognising that this is a monumental task that demands a well-crafted, long-term advocacy strategy. Demonstrating the tangible impact of projects and aligning them with government priorities can strengthen the case for continued and expanded support.
10. **Promote Inclusivity and Diversity in Collaborations:** Given the evolving partnership landscape and the call for expanded operations to other districts, RACOBABO should actively seek collaborations that promote inclusivity and diversity, especially when it comes to actively engaging PwDs, including men and boys to become champions of gender inequalities and GBV, and promoting climate change practices. Engaging with a diverse set of partners and communities can bring varied perspectives and approaches, enriching the overall impact of its initiatives.
11. **Balanced Gender Engagement:** Develop targeted strategies to engage men actively as voices against gender-inequalities and gender-related challenges. Even though there is a challenge of less men being present the communities, concerted efforts could still be taken place to engage these individuals to ensure a holistic approach to building and sustaining impacts for the overall community.
12. **Environmental Sustainability Integration:** Strengthen the project's commitment to environmental sustainability by expanding training on eco-friendly practices and technologies such as rainwater harvesting, clean energy, solar powers etc. This would mean building capacity of the communities to maintain these commitments. In addition, RACOBABO could explore opportunities to collaborate with local environmental organisations for additional thematic expertise and support where feasible.

13. **Collaborative Learning and Knowledge Sharing:** Facilitate knowledge-sharing platforms between Rakai and Lyantonde stakeholders to exchange successful strategies and lessons learned. We recommend encouraging cross-regional collaboration to leverage the strengths and experiences of each community.
14. **Gender Mainstreaming Training:** We recommend providing long-term regular training for RACOBABO project staff on gender mainstreaming, ensuring a consistent and gender-sensitive approach in all project activities. This will foster an inclusive work environment that encourages diverse perspectives and experiences among project staff.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the project

The Household Welfare Initiative (HWI) is an intervention that is being implemented by the [Rural Action Community-Based Organization \(RACOB AO\)](#) with funding from the Icelandic Church Aid (ICA) through funds sourced from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). ICA is an independent CSO in Iceland and eighty percent (80%) of its project funding stem from a Development Cooperation Framework Agreement with MFA Iceland. The remaining 20% of funds are collected through ICA fundraising efforts in Iceland. The funding has enabled ICA to fund both humanitarian and developmental efforts in several countries including Uganda. On the other hand, RACOB AO is an independent NGO and has worked directly with ICA after the phase out of Lutheran World Federation - World Service (LWF) in Rakai and Lyantonde Districts in 2015. RACOB AO is also a member of the Act Alliance that brings together faith-based organisations (FBOs) worldwide involved in humanitarian and development work. RACOB AO seeks to promote human rights of the most vulnerable people through community empowerment, engaging duty bearers and advocacy for accountability and quality services in the targeted districts.

The HWI project builds on the previous ICA funded project in Rakai and Lyantonde districts. The first phase of the project was from 2018-2021 where 80% of the funding was from MFA. During this phase, RACOB AO sought to improve household conditions through promotion of hygiene and sanitation and introducing income generation activities (IGAs) within the communities. This project (2022-2024) is based on the successes, lessons learnt and best practices from the first phase. The total budget for the second phase is set at 520,000 Euros.

1.2. Overview of the project

The HWI project aims at ensuring that vulnerable groups, especially people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV); as well as widows and orphans and vulnerable children from child-headed households (CHH), have improved household hygiene and sanitation and have improved capacity to challenge their vulnerability by 2025. The project has three main objectives which are:

1. Improved housing conditions among households of children living alone and people living with HIV and AIDS.
2. Improved nutrition and economic security.
3. Improved access to psychosocial support and protection among the households of children and people living with HIV and AIDS.

Therefore, the major focus of this project is to improve the living conditions of the targeted people through construction of modest houses with latrines, kitchens, and 5000 litre water tanks, and improving economic welfare through provision of goats, establishment of simple kitchen vegetable gardens, and mobilising household members into village savings and loans associations (VSLAs). The members are trained to establish and manage income generating initiatives. The project is being implemented in eight sub counties and one town council in Rakai and Lyantonde districts. To ensure the proper selection of the targeted households, RACOB AO identifies and establishes working relationships with relevant community structures for interest groups and engages with them in selecting vulnerable families and individuals with the greatest needs. Deliberate efforts have also been made to embrace a gender sensitive approach in their project planning, implementation, monitoring

and evaluation. Within the HWI project, roles are strategically distributed among key partners to ensure effective implementation and accountability. RACOB AO takes on the pivotal role of the implementing partner, overseeing the day-to-day operations of the drop-in centres. RACOB AO also takes on the responsibility of monitoring and reporting to ICA. ICA, in turn, plays a central role in monitoring and reporting to MFA, the ICA governing board, and the public. Annual monitoring visits conducted by ICA to the project area contribute to the overall success and transparency of the project. Notably, MFA functions as the back donor of ICA, currently without a direct role in the project's execution but maintaining a significant position as a key supporter. This distribution of roles ensures a well-organised and collaborative approach to achieve the HWI project's objectives.

1.3. Aim and Objective of the Evaluation

The aim of the midline evaluation was to objectively assess the results of the MFA efforts in supporting the ICA funded project in Uganda. This evaluation adhered to the MFA Evaluation Policy 2020-2023 and followed the current OECD-DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluations. Since this was a midline evaluation, focus was on three DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, and effectiveness. Additionally, the evaluation aimed to assess the factors of gender equality, innovation, environmental considerations as well as the implications of COVID-19 within the context of the projects supported by MFA.

CHAPTER 2: APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Approach: a participatory and reflective process

The approach to the evaluation was designed to be consultative in nature through engaging various relevant stakeholders at all stages to ensure participation and ownership of the results. The evaluation process was both participatory and reflective in nature engaging all stakeholders. We facilitated inclusive discussions to validate the findings and recommendations of the report. In-depth conversations and discussions were conducted with RACOBABO, ICA, and MFA to actively seek their feedback on the recommendations, ensuring that the findings resonate with the evaluation's end users. The selection of a theory-based evaluation was appropriate for this assessment, considering the project's complexity. Evaluation designs for intricate projects, especially those involving households, often benefit from a theory-based evaluation framework, this includes critical gender analysis and intersectional analysis. The frameworks help triangulate the evidence gathered and refine the underlying assumptions, thereby enhancing the rigour and comprehensiveness of the evaluation process. It enabled the evaluation team to systematically test and review the relationships between project activities and intended outcomes. This is attained by investigating the causal relationships between context-input-output-outcomes-impact to understand the combination of factors that has led to the intended or unintended outcomes and impacts of the project interventions. Based on the objectives of the evaluation, our approach also included the OECD evaluation criteria with particular focus on relevance, coherence, and effectiveness to serve the purpose for the midline evaluation. The criteria are detailed below:

Relevance: this criterion was used to examine the alignment of the MFA and its CSO partners' actions with their stated objectives. It gauged how well the objectives and planning of this project addressed the needs of the beneficiaries, as well as institutional requirements.

Coherence: this criterion was used to estimate how well the project fit with other development interventions nationally and whether there were duplications of efforts and if synergies were maximised.

Effectiveness: this criterion was used to assess the extent to which the project achieved its objectives and intended results. Under this criterion, the evaluation measured possible gaps, analysed them, and identified success factors and bottlenecks.

Thematic criteria: the evaluation focused at the cross-cutting themes of gender equality, implications of COVID-19, and environmental considerations and was used to verify the extent to which these principles were considered in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

Three interrelated data collection methods were used to gather data for the evaluation. These methods comprised the desk review, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). The primary data collection exercise was primarily carried out in the two districts where the project is being implemented namely Rakai and Lyantonde. FGDs and KIIs will be conducted by VIG researchers. Additionally, VIG organised refreshments for the youth participating in FGDs, survey, and KIIs. Ethical practices, such as obtaining verbal consent, were diligently followed and all the interviews were recorded for the purposes of analysis. Focus Group Discussions played a key role during data

collection, encompassing various demographics, providing comprehensive review of the relevance of the project. Gathering data through the selected methods ensured methodological triangulation to contributing to the robustness of the results. Together, these methodologies enriched the understanding of project dynamics, facilitating a rigorous evaluation process. The different methods used are detailed below.

Desk Review was one of the data collection methods used during this evaluation. Review of project documents helped in setting out the contextual background and framing against which the evaluation was conducted. The set of documents were reviewed including the project log-frame, project work plans, field reports etc. We also reviewed external sources that help shaped our understanding on relevance and coherence of the project. A full list is provided in [Annex 1](#).

Key Informant Interviews were conducted with carefully selected stakeholders. The interviews aimed at obtaining insights into the relevance of the project, its strategic fit to other interventions and the efficacy of the strategies that were employed during implementation. The interviews also unveiled the challenges encountered, and lessons learnt during project implementation. The identification of stakeholders for the KIIs was dependent upon the project's outcomes and outputs. The KIIs encompassed discussions with the project focal persons at MFA and ICA headquarters, individuals directly responsible for project implementation and management. Additionally, interviews were extended to other pertinent stakeholders who played a direct role in project implementation. This broader group of stakeholders included implementing partners, government stakeholders, volunteers, and designated contacts for project beneficiaries. To facilitate the discussions, interview guides were tailored to suit each stakeholder. A total of 20 KII were carried out as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews	
ICA project/MEL focal point	1
MFA project focal points	2
Municipality officials in two locations	2
RACOBAS Senior Staff (Executive Director, Head of Programmes, MEL Lead)	3
RACOBAS field staff and volunteers	2
Health Professionals (primary and territory level)	2
VSLA members	2
Local Leaders	2
PLHAS (one female and one male)	2
Child-Headed Households	2
Total	20

Focus Group Discussions were an effective way to capture and validate qualitative feedback on project relevance and effectiveness usually from the target beneficiaries. Community-based FGDs were conducted with target groups within their respective communities. To ensure effective communication, the total number of members within each FGD did not exceed 12 and it included a

minimum of 8 members. A total of 14 FGDs were conducted with beneficiaries of the HWI. The following is a list of group discussions that were conducted.

Table 2: Number of Focus Group Discussions

Key Informant Interviews	Lyantonde	Rakai
Households	2	2
Programme Volunteers	1	1
VSLA Groups	1	1
Local Leaders	1	1
Health professionals	1	1
HIV+ Participants	1	x
RACOBABO Staff	1	
Total	14	

2.3. Data Analysis Process

The methodology adopted a multi-faceted approach to ensure a comprehensive evaluation. An evaluation matrix ([Annex 2](#)) was developed and that served as the foundation for aligning all project outcomes with specific evaluation questions. Furthermore, secondary data sources, particularly focusing on annual reports were aligned during the analysis. This process involved triangulating data from various sources to ensure robustness and reliability. The qualitative research strand aimed at identifying emerging themes and patterns, which were then organised in a matrix format using the OECD DAC criteria, directly linked to the evaluation questions. Common themes were systematically identified, and they were synthesised under the DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness.

Prioritisation of data and quotes: the research team was aware that compiling a comprehensive report involves addressing the challenges of data inclusion, primarily constrained by the need to limit the length of the report. Prioritisation of data was necessary for the research team to maintain the report's readability, emphasising relevant and impactful information while excluding less pertinent or tangential content. As such, data selection for the evaluation centres is based on its direct relevance to the evaluation's objectives and themes emerged while upholding criteria of quality and reliability, ensuring ethical handling of sensitive information. Quotes were selected based on their ability to enhance the comprehension of the findings, especially their contribution towards the project outcomes, representing diverse viewpoints and offering clarity and impact. Proper attribution and contextual understanding for a balanced approach between inclusivity and relevance was used in the report.

Value of singular quotes: the reader may notice that in some cases, a single quote has been used to make claims. This is because one quote can encapsulate the essence of a larger trend or ideology. By examining a well-chosen quote, the research team has gained insights into the thought processes and motivations of a broader population. A lone quote can act as an early warning sign of emerging issues helping us piece together a more comprehensive understanding of what is happening on the ground

and how the programme is progressing. As mentioned elsewhere in the report, truth is subjective, and what may seem insignificant to some can be profoundly meaningful to others. A quote that resonates with a particular audience can become a rallying point, making it important to analyse and contextualise even seemingly isolated expressions. These can also become critical areas of inquiry in the future.

Presentation of data: when presenting data, the research team has aimed at keeping the authenticity in participants' voices. Therefore, the research team has in some instances deliberately provided long quotes as opposed to short quotes. Incorporating colloquial language into the quotes can serve several valuable purposes in qualitative research, particularly when conducting interviews or gathering qualitative data from participants.

Depth of understanding: lengthy quotes provided more context and depth to the participant's response. They allowed researchers to capture the nuances of the participant's thoughts, emotions, and experiences in greater detail. For the research team, this has led to a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the subject under investigation. Long quotes also provided essential context for the participant's statements. They helped answer questions like "Why did the participant say this?" or "What led to this response?" This context was valuable for researchers in interpreting the data accurately. Some topics or experiences are inherently complex. Lengthy quotes allowed participants to express themselves fully, enabling the research to capture the multifaceted nature of their perspectives. This was particularly important in a study such as this which seeks to analyse complex data and intersected issues.

Preserving Authenticity: Colloquial language in quotes helped the research team preserve the authenticity of participants' voices. It reflected how people naturally communicated in everyday conversations, which is often less formal and more reflective of their true thoughts and feelings. Presentation of colloquial language also helped researchers demonstrate the rapport and build trust between researchers and participants.

Keeping the quotes anonymous: The research team subscribes to the principle of maintaining anonymity of participants. For this study, some organisations were represented by one individual. This implies that including the name of the organisation on the quote details would reveal the identity of the participant. For RACOBAG, ICA and MFA, the quotes were referenced as "internal stakeholders." In cases where this does not anonymise the person who made said the quoted statement, the quote has been censored. For other project staff such as field staff and volunteers, the term "project staff" was adopted.

2.4. Data Triangulation

Qualitative Data: Qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews, and focus group discussions, allowed the research team to gather rich, non-numerical information. By triangulating qualitative data, the research team has been able to uncover nuanced insights, understand the perspectives and experiences of stakeholders, and identify qualitative patterns that complement the quantitative findings. This approach provided a holistic view of the stakeholders under study.

Secondary Data: Secondary data sources, such as existing research, reports, or publicly available data, provided valuable contextual information. By triangulating secondary data with primary data sources

some findings were cross-referenced and ensured that the analysis was grounded in a broader knowledge base. It also helped in identifying trends and patterns, especially under the relevance and coherence chapter.

2.5. Limitations

The evaluation was successfully conducted, with only a few limitations encountered. These were mainly encountered during the data collection, and these are discussed below.

Absence of consolidated programme documentation: the HWI project do not have any specific “Theory of Change” (ToC) explaining impact pathways and intervention logic, nor its own “Theory of Action” (ToA) explaining its delivery model and the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved. Both could have been largely reconstructed based on desk review and preliminary stakeholder interviews during the inception phase, but due to the limited timeframe this was not done as diligently and participatory as would have been desirable. However, reference was made to the logical framework.

Mobilisation of beneficiaries: The challenge of mobilising beneficiaries presented another limitation in the evaluation, impeding the timely collection of data and introducing uncertainties in the evaluation process. The evaluation encountered difficulties in mobilising beneficiaries at the community level resulting in prolonged waiting periods and potential distortions in the representation of perspectives.

Difficulties in predicting field expenses: VIG encountered challenges in forecasting field expenses due to the unavailability of certain details. Specifically, predicting the travel costs for the data collection period proved to be particularly difficult. Nevertheless, the data collection process proceeded smoothly, and the costs were subsequently verified.

CHAPTER 2: FINDINGS: RELEVANCE

This chapter delves into the nuances underlying the relevance of the Household Welfare Initiative including contextual considerations, RACOBABO's criteria selection and approach in engagement with the community, the alignment of priorities across project stakeholders, alignment with national and international priorities as well as relevance of the activities, i.e. the different aspects of health, education, and economic empowerment woven into the project design. The findings reflect that the project has remained highly adaptive to the changing demographics, situations and needs of the communities it is based in. However, certain scope of strengthening the project lies further in its foundational approach of defining what it means to be 'vulnerable', to ensure a long-term vision within its approach through evidence-based means and outputs as well as maintaining a constant, direct and transparent engagement with the community members it works with.

3.1. Relevance to the context

Contextual Challenges and Issues within the project communities

In Lyantonde and Rakai, the project remains inclusive of the contextual challenges to a great extent. As the primary focus of the project continues to be on vulnerable communities including those living with HIV/AIDS, elderly households, child-headed households, or people with disabilities (PwDs), many stakeholders have shed light on the existing situations and needs of these targeted groups. The ICA RACOBABO Project Document (2022-25) also accounts for the dire situation within the local context which is represented by complex vulnerabilities experienced by HIV/AIDS as they are impacted by social and economic challenges. These are well corroborated through the findings within the primary data.

For instance, RACOBABO staff, particularly senior members, emphasise the broad and diverse needs faced by individuals within the community. They also acknowledge that given the extent of their vulnerabilities, it is not entirely possible for them to cover all needs of the participants, however, they do address most if not all. The project, having achieved around 90% sufficiency (self-reported by a stakeholder), recognises the expansive nature of these needs, indicating an understanding that the support offered is a significant but not exhaustive solution. Probation Officers, local leaders, and caregivers have also highlighted specific challenges faced by people living with HIV. Issues such as domestic violence, insufficient food, and the economic impacts of the pandemic that emerged causing the vulnerable populations to grow even more vulnerable.

"Effects of HIV may be either direct or indirect like a couple can be together but after some time will break up so the family or children can suffer aftereffects of the breakup. So, remain inclusive in a way that we don't leave out people who are disabled are not left out and we also use the local leaders and counsellors to identify the needy people in the community." KII, RACOBABO Staff

"Yes, there has been changes like there is a lady who has only one arm and the project helped her build a house and now she lives very well though still she is helped by other relatives, but life is better now. Other example is of a family of children where the project helped to build a water tank and this has helped to remove the problem of lack of water because they can now even store water" KII, District Chairperson

Furthermore, the FGDs with households and caregivers note the importance, especially in terms of improving living conditions of the individuals, who did not have shelter and were incredibly prone to being impacted by changing weather conditions. Beyond the provision of housing, there is also an emphasis on improved sleep, better hygiene, and enhanced overall well-being. Caregivers recounted stories of previously inadequate shelter and mosquito-infested living conditions which further relayed tangible and life-changing outcomes of the project.

The representation of needs extends to unique challenges faced by specific demographics, such as child-headed households. RACOBABO staff stressed the additional support required by these households, encompassing not only housing but also essentials like water tanks, toilets, and most importantly, educational support. This revealed that RACOBABO maintains an acute understanding that the needs of certain individuals may differ and have concentrated on tailoring their project accordingly.

There have also been contextual challenges within the project. One prominent challenge highlighted in the interviews was the issue of movement, particularly concerning patients accessing counsellors. RACOBABO staff note the difficulties arising from the distance between patients and the challenges patients face when trying to reach counsellors. This challenge is indicative of the broader issues related to accessibility, especially in remote areas. Financial constraints emerge as a recurring challenge. RACOBABO staff, including those involved in the selection process, mention the dilemma of limited funds and the disjunction between identified households and available support. The tension arises when local leaders identify more households needing assistance than the project can currently accommodate. This financial limitation underscores the ongoing need for strategic planning and careful allocation of resources.

The impact of COVID-19 is a significant external challenge acknowledged in the interviews. The pandemic disrupted regular activities, affecting livelihoods, employment, and overall community well-being. However, the findings also reveal an adaptive approach to this challenge. Differentiated Service Deliveries centres were introduced to ensure the continued provision of essential services, showcasing an adaptive response to unforeseen circumstances. Challenges in the form of missed appointments, domestic violence, and psychological factors affecting medication adherence are also highlighted by health workers. These challenges necessitate a holistic and responsive approach to healthcare. The acknowledgment of missed appointments due to transport issues and the implementation of strategies like group medication pick-ups demonstrate adaptability in overcoming barriers to healthcare access.

“So, we had DSDs Differentiated Service Deliveries centres where patients could go and pick the drugs then also there were groups of 10 who would get transport and give it to this one person to go and pick the medication for all the other members and this helped so much and we are still using these methods because others also had stigma” KII, PLHA, Lyantonde

“There were phone calls made, and online meetings though I know they lost touch during that time so even the RACOBABO team struggled to work at that time. Currently with ICA we meet like twice a year and give reports on the activities that we have been doing and we always have open conversations and give guidance and suggestions.” KII, Internal Stakeholder

Multiple stakeholders, including local leaders, caregivers, and households, consistently highlight the tangible positive outcomes resulting from the project. Improved housing conditions, better hygiene, and access to clean water contribute to enhanced well-being. Responses from households in various districts express gratitude for the alleviation of longstanding challenges, such as leaking roofs, mosquito-infested living spaces, and insufficient bedding. The impact goes beyond physical infrastructure, encompassing improved sleep and an overall better quality of life. Health workers note the positive changes in health outcomes, with reduced malaria rates attributed to the distribution of mosquito nets and improved nutrition resulting from kitchen gardens. The connection between improved housing, overall well-being, and health outcomes is evident in narratives from different stakeholders, providing a comprehensive view of the project's holistic impact. Local leaders attest to the project's success in addressing diverse needs, including education, income generation, and community empowerment. The distribution of goats and the introduction of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) contribute to stable incomes and the ability to educate children. The relevance of the project is evidenced in its ability to adapt and remain responsive to evolving needs, as highlighted in the adaptations made during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The enduring relevance of the project is emphasised by community members and leaders who express a desire for continued support. The project is not perceived as a one-time intervention but as an ongoing source of empowerment for the community. The testimonials from households and local leaders indicate that the impact of the project extends beyond the immediate beneficiaries, influencing broader community dynamics.

Criteria for Selection

The criteria for selection in the Household Welfare Initiative primarily involves individuals with HIV/AIDS, considered to be the most vulnerable in the communities, however, their overall approach in identification of households involves collaboration with local leaders embedded into the communities, to identify vulnerable households that require their assistance. A close connection with local government structures also aids RACOBABO in understanding the community's needs, and staff members tend to collect information, prioritising children and families requiring urgent support.

For us we have volunteers who work with people in the community, and we know people who are in bad condition in the community. It can be HIV people, child headed households, the poor ones in the community. So, we identify the most vulnerable in the community. We check the overall condition of the family when they can't even have food and money for the medication" FGD, Local Leaders, Lyantonde

For this their approach remains open and adaptive to the needs on the ground. For instance, RACOBABO's approach is inclusive of an annual participatory monitoring approach, where various stakeholders, including the community, HIV patients, widows and widowers, local leaders, education institutions, and RACOBABO staff collaborate in project activities and planning. The organisation emphasises building standard houses, and during the annual monitoring strategy, they engage with the community and meet beneficiaries, adapting strategies to address changing demographics and concurrent needs.

The project's approach towards inclusivity is also evident during the design phase¹, where needs assessment involves the active participation of the community. The community leaders play a significant role in the planning process, making the project community owned. Notable progress includes the construction of houses, provision of ARV drugs, support for livelihoods such as goat rearing and kitchen gardens, and the distribution of mosquito nets to combat malaria, resulting in healthier households adhering to treatment.

As the project is in its mid-term phase, evolving needs across the communities have emerged owing to shifts in demographics. For example, post the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a shift seen in the reduction of Child-headed households and another shift that took place vulnerable individuals battling HIV/AIDS, especially the deteriorating effect they experienced during the pandemic which reduced due to introduction of ARVs.

“There are changing demographics, like we used to have child headed but now they are not there, then we also used to have people dying because of COVID19 but now there is introduction of ARVs people are now living better and people are now becoming useful in the community, they are educating the children, involved in business and politics” KII, RACOBABO Staff

Finally, based on the evolving community needs especially as witnessed during the Project Visit in November 2023². The selection criteria were also noted to have become more inclusive of PwDs beyond the initially planned beneficiaries.

“They are constantly monitoring the situation in the community and it’s a situation of choosing the families. There are many families that want the support but they can only support 8 families and they look at the most vulnerable and sometimes they even help PwDs and yet it wasn’t on the work plan but they explained according to the assessment these people needed support and were suffering and we discussed to widen the beneficiaries and look at the vulnerability of the people so we have to put it in writing but on the ground they are considering the most vulnerable people for support” KII, Internal Stakeholder

Finally, though the selection criteria appear to be transparent, there exists room for improvement in acknowledging and addressing the risks and challenges linked to working with a limited number of individuals within the community. It is crucial to recognise how the selection and provision of facilities to a specific group may generate apprehension among their neighbours. Additionally, it is noteworthy that this selection criterion effectively caters to short-term needs but lacks clarity regarding the long-term vision, particularly in preventing the development of dependency among the beneficiaries.

Another challenge that warrants consideration is the absence of a defined framework for vulnerability within the project. This absence raises questions about the criteria used to identify and prioritise certain vulnerabilities. The lack of a clear definition may impact the consistency and fairness of the project's interventions, necessitating a thoughtful examination of vulnerability definitions to ensure an equitable and well-informed selection process.

In conclusion, while the Household Welfare Initiative has made commendable strides in its inclusive approach, proactive adaptation to changing community dynamics, and positive impacts on

¹ ICA RACOBABO Project Document 2022-25

² 2023 Field Visit Report

beneficiaries, there remains a need for continuous evaluation and refinement of the selection criteria. Striking a balance between short-term assistance and building sustainable, independent communities should be a pivotal aspect of the project's long-term strategy. By addressing these considerations, including the challenge of defining vulnerability, the project can enhance its effectiveness and contribute more comprehensively to the overall welfare of the communities it serves.

Participatory Approach with Community Members

RACOBABO's participatory approach with community members in the ongoing project depicts great strength in regular engagement with the community members through the support of local staff and volunteers visiting communities. This approach has been the foundation of RACOBABO's understanding and inclusion of people's needs within their project. The affirmation from the District Chairperson relays the perceived relevance of the project, citing its ongoing assistance in income generation and support for families.

"Yes, the project is still very relevant and is still helping people in the community and helped many get some income that can help to sustain the family and even at school" KII, District Chairperson, Lyantonde

Further, Field Mobilisers also mention dedication to regular visits and advice, particularly on education and safety. The Community Development Officer (CDO) in Rakai district also appreciates the project's inclusivity but offers limited insights into the collaborative mechanisms with local leaders. The Senior Staff member at RACOBABO candidly acknowledges a significant challenge related to community members' understanding of the project itself, and the support they are meant to receive. For instance, in terms of perceiving the project's houses as belonging to the organisation rather than the beneficiaries.

"We have a problem, when the houses are built, some people still call it a house for RACOBABO, and other things are still for the project so there is a problem because some people still don't take the houses as theirs. So, at the moment we are using the volunteer counsellors as our first line of defense and action because they are the ones who always bring the information to us about the issues in the community and we follow-up until the final and joint selection process. So, after we build the houses, we do hygiene sensitisation, so they help us to educate these people from the cleanliness, hygiene because others still don't use the beddings that we gave them that they are keeping for visitors, so the volunteers are helping. Then, others we have to train even on using a toilet, but RACOBABO go once in a while because we don't want people to have the picture of RACOBABO but be independent. That's why we use the volunteers instead of our own staff to be there always so we just keep a tab now" KII, RACOBABO Staff

In conclusion, the participatory approach with community members has undeniably yielded positive outcomes. However, a more elaborate and critical evaluation is imperative for a comprehensive understanding of the project's effectiveness. Addressing areas such as communication efficacy, depth of collaboration with local leaders, and community perception requires a nuanced and targeted approach to fortify the project's impact and relevance within the community. A strategic assessment, coupled with actionable improvements, will contribute to the sustained success of the initiative and its lasting positive influence on the community.

3.2. Alignment of the project

3.2.1. Alignment of the project activities with its goals

Based on the ICA RACOBABO Project Document (2022-25), RACOBABO has held a keen focus on building upon past experiences and aligning with national strategies for implementation of the Household Welfare Initiative. The provision of decent housing, water infrastructure, and economic empowerment through activities like goat rearing and kitchen gardening forms the core of the project's service delivery. Moreover, the initiative incorporates psychosocial support, aiming to instil behaviour change, promote healthy lifestyles, and provide counselling for adherence to treatment. Through these comprehensive strategies, the project has aspired to not only address immediate needs but has aimed to empower communities for sustained well-being and resilience. However, despite these goals, the service delivery has not been without challenges. The following subsections dive deeper into the different aspects of the services and activities undertaken within the project and their relevance in terms of the needs they have been responding to.

On access to public healthcare

In tackling the enduring effects of HIV/AIDS and diminishing vulnerability, the initiative in Lyantonde and Rakai has primarily focussed on improving access to public healthcare for individuals living with HIV. For this they have collaborated with local leaders to identify HIV/AIDS infected individuals and have simultaneously worked with health workers at different levels to provide systemic support.

For instance, Health workers at a facility (financed by an NGO) in Lyantonde outlined RACOBABO's approach in constructing houses and providing other facilities to support HIV/AIDS infected individuals, while their role was to facilitate access to medication and treatment. The facility offers comprehensive services, encompassing outpatient and inpatient care, family planning, deliveries, and antenatal care, underscoring a holistic approach to healthcare.

"We all have the same intentions and that is to support people living with HIV so that they can raise their family. So, they assist by building houses while we assist by providing drugs to them." KII, Health Worker, Lyantonde

"We give them the trainings and the drugs that help them have children who are HIV free and now we have less numbers of babies who are born positive like only 2 currently and yet a few years back we could have up to 180 babies" KII, Health Worker, Lyantonde

The facility also noted conducting regular follow-ups and appointments for individuals living with HIV, providing antiretroviral drugs, counselling, and monitoring CD4 counts. Despite challenges such as malaria, domestic violence, and missed appointments due to transport issues, health workers employ various strategies. Further, community volunteers and radio talk shows contribute to outreach as well, emphasising health talks, guidance, and reminders for scheduled hospital visits. The health workers in Lyantonde note changing perceptions and increased acceptance of medication, especially among men, signifying positive shifts in attitude.

In Rakai, the initiative's impact is evident through caregiver testimonials. The provision of long-term medications, coupled with counselling and psychosocial support, has helped in alleviating concerns about frequent hospital visits. Volunteer counsellors in Rakai describe the support for those who are

too shy to collect medications, ensuring a personalised approach to individual needs. Despite challenges like ulcers due to poor eating habits, the overall awareness and understanding of the disease have improved.

“We always get medication that can take a long time like 2 to 3 months so that we don’t have to worry about moving to the hospital every time and they always give them counselling to be strong and even me always I advise them to be strong and I try to take good care of them even the hygiene has to be good and even the water I always boil it so that they live healthy” FGD, Caregivers, Rakai

In both Lyantonde and Rakai, health workers highlight the positive impact of the initiative on preventing mother-to-child transmission, providing training, and ensuring sustained medication adherence. The testimonials from people living with HIV further affirm the initiative's success in reducing new infections and fostering a supportive environment. In addressing the long-term effects of HIV/AIDS and reducing vulnerability, the narratives from caregivers in the focus group discussions provide insights into the challenges and strategies employed in supporting family and caregiving responsibilities.

On support for education within families

Families across Lyantonde and Rakai have expressed mixed views regarding accessing education. Many challenges persist despite efforts by RACOBABO to promote education across households, especially, for children. For instance, financial constraints and family care needs act as a barrier for households in achieving education. Volunteer counsellors have noted that approximately 65% (self-estimated) of individuals in impoverished families, targeted by the project have managed to at least complete Senior 6. However, in terms of perspective, they also note that in the poorest families under the project’s support, even reaching Primary 7 is considered a significant accomplishment. This insight underscores the considerable hurdles faced by vulnerable families in ensuring sustained education for their children.

“They were at school but I failed to pay for them so they are just at home but there is one in primary 3 and is 12 years and the next one is in primary 4 and is 14 years” FGD, Caregivers

“For me all the 5 are at school, one is in primary 5, one in primary 4, 2 are in primary 3, and my primary 1” FGD, Caregivers

“I think around 65% finish senior 6 but in those very poor families and the project is looking to support, I see like the best that they do is to reach Primary 7” FGD, Project Staff

Further, despite financial limitations, there are still positive cases noted by caregivers wherein all five children are enrolled. The breakdown includes children in various primary levels, ranging from Primary 1 to 5. Interestingly, these caregivers mention receiving support from relatives, sisters, uncles, and even their own mothers to fund their children's education. This collaborative effort within the family network reflects a communal approach to mitigating the challenges associated with HIV/AIDS. Therefore, this is an approach that could be further strengthened and included within the project.

On housing/mosquito nets

In terms of the housing and mosquito nets provided to the households, the evaluation has noted substantial positive responses from the stakeholders. For instance, beneficiaries in Rakai express

gratitude for the provided houses, emphasising the improvement in their sleep quality and the alleviation of concerns related to coping with leaking roofs and/or extreme weather. In Lyantonde, households echo similar sentiments, stating that the project has not only provided shelter but also facilitated training sessions to cover essential aspects like maintaining cleanliness, constructing toilets alongside houses, and establishing kitchen gardens. This has helped in reduction of sicknesses, addressing sanitation concerns and enhancing overall well-being.

“For me the house has helped us so much and even grandmom is happy because before the rain could come then we have to first run off the bed because it could leak but now, we sleep without worries. Then for the mosquitos, the nets have really helped us so much but of course I first washed it” FGD, Households, Rakai

“They have also helped in trainings on how to keep the place clean, toilets were constructed alongside the houses which has helped us to avoid sicknesses because of sanitation issues” FGD, Households, Lyantonde

RACOBABO staff members express satisfaction with the project's outcomes, acknowledging the positive feedback received from the community. Despite budget constraints limiting the number of beneficiaries, there is optimism about expanding support in the future. Senior staff members emphasise the significant impact on the community, noting that the constructed houses represent an improved version of average local dwellings. They also appreciate the attention to privacy within the houses.

Another important perspective has been offered by a child-headed household, who shared the challenging circumstances leading to the construction of their house. The project not only provided shelter but also facilitated the acquisition of land, symbolising a transformative journey from renting to property ownership. The individual highlights the impact on their education, determination to overcome difficulties, and the positive influence of community advice during tough times.

*“Before the rain used to hit us but now, we can sleep better so life is now better. **People now live better and not in leaky houses that also attract mosquitos.** We received 2 mosquito nets, and it has helped to reduce the spread of malaria in our family especially during rain seasons. I was 16 years old when I lost both parents and I stopped in primary 3. We used to rent a house in the trading centre and life was very difficult. The rent was 15,000/ per month but it reached a time when we failed to pay the rent and the landlord told us that we stay for free for 5 months and use the money to get a small piece of land and it’s the land that this project used to construct for us the house. I got the land of 10 feet, and I made an agreement with the owner to be paying slowly and up to now am still paying for the land. We agreed at 800,000/ shillings. When my mum died, we started to suffer, and I started to help my parents and our mum didn’t leave for us any piece of land to use so life was so difficult for us I almost gave up, but people kept on advising me how I managed to stay.” KII, Child-headed Household.*

“It has helped so much because someone who used not to have a proper house can now sleep well even when it has rained, the person can cook when it has rained so overall it has saved so much. They can even fetch water when it rains which wasn’t the case before” KII, Project Staff

Further, Field mobilisers in Rakai commended the project for providing proper housing, noting its far-reaching effects on the ability to cook during rainy weather and fetch water more easily. People living with HIV in Rakai also attest to the positive change, stating that the project enables them to live in fear-free, good-quality houses, fostering better care for their children.

While acknowledging the benefits of the project, a PLHIV in Rakai raises a concern about some individuals selling the items received during training sessions. This highlights the importance of monitoring and reinforcing the intended use of project resources. For this, the project could look into how the resources are utilised by the beneficiaries and whether they are supporting them in meeting their daily needs.

On kitchen gardens and provision of goats

In Lyantonde and Rakai, the project's efforts on kitchen gardens and provision of goats have played a crucial role in mitigating the long-term effects of HIV/AIDS and reducing vulnerability within the communities. Feedback from various stakeholders sheds light on the positive impact of these interventions. Local leaders in Lyantonde highlight that individuals living with HIV benefit significantly from the project's emphasis on cultivating kitchen gardens. This approach not only ensures better nutrition but also imparts knowledge on self-care and medication adherence. Beneficiaries in Rakai express gratitude for the training received on kitchen gardening, receiving seeds to plant vegetables like cabbage and *Sukuma wiki*. The flexibility in the frequency of meals is noted, with some beneficiaries mentioning the ability to eat twice a day when resources permit. However, households in Rakai also share challenges, such as the difficulty in securing regular meals, particularly during dry seasons. Some resort to hiring land for cultivation at a cost, reflecting the economic challenges faced by these families. The senior staff at RACOBABO also acknowledge the impact of drought on garden yields but stress the importance of strategically situating the kitchen gardens for easy access to water.

“For me I just left everything to God because sometimes it’s very difficult and for the dry season it’s very difficult to get what to eat. We just hire land to dig in like 30,000 shillings per season” FGD, Households, Rakai

“No, no might be because the of drought where we have set the gardens then these people give up because of the drought but they count fail to have a small space to set up the kitchen garden and we always set it up near the kitchen so that they can always pour the water on it easily after washing dishes and other things” KII, RACOBABO Staff

“It has helped to reduce on the spread of malaria, you will now find that most of the families are given like 2 mosquito nets that will really help” KII, PLHIV

Regarding the provision of goats, the responses are somewhat mixed. While some express optimism about future benefits, others mention challenges such as illness affecting the goats and instances of selling them to meet immediate needs are raised. The complex dynamics of goat ownership, including conflicts arising from jealousy among community members reflect the broader social implications of these interventions. Volunteer counsellors have highlighted the potential economic impact of goat ownership, with one respondent noting successful cases where families sell goats to meet financial

needs or fund farming activities. The multifaceted benefits of these interventions are further emphasised by RACOBAB staff, who stress that goats serve as a source of income, enabling families to pay school fees, address household needs, and even initiate small businesses.

“We faced some challenges during the distribution of goats. We do training on how to take care of goats and there are sicknesses like foot and mouth disease that affect the whole district and it's difficult for us to help the whole district. So, we try to talk to them to take good care of the goats and the project does not do compensations in cases of recklessness like theft” KII, RACOBAB Staff

Despite the positive outcomes, challenges persist, such as theft of goats and the impact of drought on kitchen gardens. The need for ongoing support, including additional training on vegetable disease management and the importance of vegetables to health, is articulated by various stakeholders. The overarching findings suggest that the project's consideration of both kitchen gardens and goat provision addresses do address immediate economic needs and are reducing vulnerabilities to a great extent. Future efforts of the project could look into diversifying the usage of these resources by the beneficiaries and engage the communities in a discussion for which resources could be best utilised by them, especially, in the long term.

On water tanks

In discussions with beneficiaries, it is evident that sharing water with neighbours is a common practice. However, challenges arise when the water levels reduce, leading to some individuals feeling compelled to cut the pipes of the tank. Despite occasional conflicts, participants highlight the overall positive impact of having water tanks. Beneficiaries across Lyantonde and Rakai have also expressed varying experiences with their water tanks. While some are able to share water with neighbours without issues, others have mentioned restricting access, especially when water levels decrease or when neighbours repeatedly access the water. These dynamics highlight the delicate balance of community resource-sharing and the need for sustainable management strategies to prevent conflicts.

“For me my tank is still fine and I share water with my neighbours but if the water reduces, I stop them especially when the person come back to pick the water several times but mine is fine” FGD, Beneficiaries, Rakai

“We used to take water that is dirty but now we collect clean water and has reduced the rates of sicknesses” FGD, Households, Rakai

“The water tanks have ensured that the families take clean water and also reduced the risk of water borne diseases like typhoid, measles and others so this has helped to improve on the health so we even want them that always construct tanks in all home” FGD, Project Staff

In discussions with households, there is a notable improvement in water quality. Previously, individuals relied on dirty water sources, contributing to a higher rate of waterborne diseases. With the introduction of water tanks, clean water collection has become a reality, leading to a reduction in sickness rates within the community. Volunteer Counsellors in Rakai also emphasise the health benefits brought about by water tanks. Clean water availability has significantly reduced the risk of

waterborne diseases such as typhoid and measles. The counsellors express a collective desire for the widespread construction of tanks in every home, highlighting the tanks' role in enhancing overall community health. Additionally, the Volunteer Counsellors appreciate the social aspect of water tanks. Beyond individual households, these tanks facilitate the sharing of drinking water with neighbours. This communal sharing not only promotes a sense of community but also contributes to collective health improvement. In conclusion, the introduction of water tanks in Rakai has not only addressed immediate water needs but has also positively influenced community dynamics and health outcomes.

On VSLAs

The VSLA initiatives in both Rakai and Lyantonde have emerged as integral components in mitigating the long-term effects of HIV/AIDS and reducing vulnerability within the communities. Beneficiaries in Rakai highlight the financial challenges they faced, leading some to leave the VSLA groups due to insufficient funds for participation. Individuals in these groups engage in various income-generating activities, such as farming, with the hope of financial stability. RACOBAS staff in Lyantonde on the other hand emphasise the creation of VSLAs to foster savings and investment among members, enabling them to grow and develop their families. The VSLAs operate as self-governing entities, allowing members to collectively save, invest, and share profits, promoting financial literacy and development. The tangible outcomes of this approach are reflected in the testimonies of VSLA members, illustrating how the initiative has facilitated capital for personal businesses, contributed to educational expenses, and improved overall financial habits.

“Also, some of the staff members work with the sub county officials and they train people on development, financial literacy. Also, the banks have helped them to save their money and train them on finances. The income activities that they do was decided by themselves according to their capacity” FGD, RACOBAS Staff, Lyantonde

“I work as a treasure in the group, we have a secretary, chairperson and other members. We get members through trust, hard work. So, we save the money then at the end of the year we share the money depending on how we have saved, and we even have meetings every month” FGD, VSLAS, Lyantonde

“Savings need to be kept so that you can use the money for schools’ fees, and we don’t need to go to another place to borrow money so there is cheaper interest here at our group” FGD, VSLAS, Lyantonde

Participants in the VSLAs, particularly in Lyantonde, express diverse success stories ranging from starting their businesses, paying school fees, and initiating agricultural projects. The impact extends to health improvements, with individuals reporting assistance for eye problems and the ability to provide medication for their families. The resilience of the VSLAs is evident in their ability to offer loans for various projects without cases of default, showcasing the financial stability they have achieved collectively.

In Rakai, beneficiaries praise the organisation for instilling a culture of saving and providing avenues for economic development. The VSLAs not only encourage financial independence but also contribute to reducing domestic violence within families. Respondents share personal achievements, such as

acquiring assets like land, livestock, and starting businesses. The multiplier effect of the VSLAs is evident as members borrow money for diverse ventures, from purchasing goats and piglets to engaging in agriculture and building homes. The success of the VSLAs is acknowledged by RACOBABO staff, highlighting their role as flagship projects with significant financial safety nets. Despite challenges such as limited resources and occasional dropouts, the VSLAs have become catalysts for positive financial changes within the communities. The impact extends beyond economic aspects, fostering a sense of community and empowerment among the participants.

The engagement with VSLAs is not limited to financial aspects; it also includes training on development, financial literacy, and collaboration with other organisations to enhance the members' skills. The testimonials underscore the transformative power of these initiatives in promoting economic resilience, empowering individuals, and contributing to the overall well-being of communities affected by the long-term effects of HIV/AIDS. In conclusion, the VSLA initiatives implemented by RACOBABO in Rakai and Lyantonde have emerged as powerful tools in mitigating the long-term effects of HIV/AIDS and reducing vulnerability within the communities. The success stories of individuals, the collaborative efforts with other organisations, and the transformative impact on economic resilience collectively highlight the significance and effectiveness of these initiatives in addressing multifaceted challenges and fostering positive change.

On Psychosocial Support

In addressing the long-term effects of HIV/AIDS and reducing vulnerability, the findings reflect the critical role of psychosocial support within the project. The frequency of visits from RACOBABO officials, especially the monthly presence in Rakai, stands out as a significant aspect of the project's approach. Counsellors, particularly in Lyantonde, emerge as trusted figures within the community. Beneficiaries express a preference for opening up to counsellors over doctors, indicating the strong rapport established. The counsellors play a multifaceted role, offering emotional support and training to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, showcasing a holistic approach to care.

The importance of the role of volunteers within HWI is highlighted in providing ongoing guidance and support. Beneficiaries form meaningful connections with volunteers, viewing them as more than just counsellors. The volunteers become integral to households, offering not only guidance but also acting as a vital link for the project. The deep appreciation expressed by beneficiaries underscores the volunteers' significance in the community. In contrast, a child-headed household indicates limited exposure to volunteer counsellors, reflecting potential gaps in reaching all beneficiaries consistently. However, the acknowledgment of efforts by volunteer counsellors within the community remains positive.

“They like the work of the counsellors and they even always open up more to me than to the doctor and we help them in referral. Others even come to our offices for assistance. We also train them to help them to avoid mother to child transmission of HIV” KII, Counsellor, Lyantonde

“Many have made friends in the community because when we RACOBABO are missing, the volunteers are always there and they have become friends” KII, RACOBABO Staff

“The beneficiaries appreciate the role of the volunteers because they provide guidance and even some household depend so much on the counsellors for everything and they explain everything to them so they have been so appreciative and others want them to be very regular in their homes” KII, RACOBABO Staff

Field mobilisers in Rakai shed light on the community's perception of counsellors, noting a belief that they receive substantial financial support. Despite potential misconceptions, the community members have expressed satisfaction with the efforts of volunteer counsellors, emphasising their crucial role in providing support to families and disseminating information about the need for assistance. By spreading awareness about the need for help, the project has prompted individuals to step forward and provide valuable support and assistance to families in need. This collaborative effort has helped in reinforcing the community-driven nature of the project and its positive impact on reducing vulnerability and building supportive community networks.

3.2.2. Alignment with national policies, strategies, and priorities related to HIV/AIDS mitigation, housing, and community development

In terms of national alignment, the programme is seen to be in alignment with the broader goals outlined in the [Uganda National Strategic Plan \(2015/2016-2019/2020\)](#) by the Uganda Aids Commission (UAC). Acknowledging the national context, where HIV prevalence stands at [6.3%](#), the programme addresses the evolving trends highlighted in the [UPHIA 2016/2017](#) report, emphasising the shift in HIV prevalence from younger to older individuals. Recognising the disparities between urban and rural areas, with higher prevalence in urban settings ([7.5%](#)), the programme strategically addresses the specific challenges faced by communities in both environments. Informed by national statistics, the programme considers the economic implications of HIV/AIDS, understanding that the disease significantly reduces household production, leading to economic challenges and a shift in agricultural activities. Aligning with the national focus on vulnerable groups, particularly women, the project acknowledges the higher impact on women ([7.6%](#)) compared to men ([4.7%](#)). It addresses gender inequalities, acknowledging the vulnerability of women and children in Rakai and Lyantonde districts. In terms of the primary data, a range of views also corroborate these findings, in terms of how the project addresses the diverse needs of vulnerable communities. However, some attention is also given to whether an alternative approach could have been taken place.

“It has helped so much because someone who used not to have a proper house can now sleep well even when it has rained, the person can cook when it has rained so overall it has saved so much. They can even fetch water when it rains which wasn't the case before” KII, Project Staff

“The project should help and give us what to do and can also help us with food because we don't have any piece of land to dig in” KII, Child-headed household

“For me I would also request for land instead because I have the kids that will help to dig and we get food to eat” FGD, Households, Rakai

In line with [national concerns about orphanhood](#) (OVC), the programme acknowledges the challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children, emphasising the breakdown in traditional family systems and the resulting violations of their rights. Aligning with the [national poverty reduction initiatives](#), the programme recognises the impact of poverty on PLHIV and orphaned children. The programme aims

to break the cycle of poverty through economic empowerment, education, and health services. In response to the increase in gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme also addressed social and gender norms contributing to GBV, emphasising a rights-based approach and gender sensitivity. Additionally, the programme strategy is inclusive of [Community-based Empowerment Approach](#), [Service delivery](#), and [Psychosocial support](#), all of which are exemplary approaches recognised by INGOs at the global level. The construction of houses, latrines, water tanks, kitchens, and provision of non-food items also aligns with international humanitarian standards, emphasising the holistic well-being and dignity of vulnerable populations. This corresponds with the [Sphere Handbook guidelines](#). The activities also correspond with certain [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) particularly contributing to SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

3.2.3. Alignment with the priorities and expectations of the funding agencies or donors

Alignment with ICA: RACOBABO's intervention strategy, rooted in community-based empowerment, aligns with ICA's commitment to [continuous learning, participatory development, and providing assistance to those facing social challenges](#). The intervention's emphasis on human rights, gender equality, and community engagement also resonates with ICA's values, reflecting a shared commitment to addressing humanitarian issues through inclusive and rights-based development approaches.

Alignment with MFA: RACOBABO's intervention strategy, focusing on poverty reduction, improved living conditions, and gender equality, aligns closely with Iceland's [international development cooperation goals](#) outlined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both entities share a commitment to contributing to global well-being and prosperity.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS: COHERENCE

This chapter delves into the pivotal aspect of synergies within the Household Welfare Initiative, examining the extent to which various programme activities are aligned. The findings highlight collaborations, and the potential overlap or complementarity of efforts with other stakeholders, including government and local NGOs. Engagement between internal stakeholders is also discussed here. By exploring the landscape of the sector and specific localities, this chapter aims to evaluate the overall coherence within the project. The overarching objective is to ensure that the project not only stands as an independent force for positive change but also harmonises seamlessly with broader efforts, maximising resources and collectively steering towards sustainable community development.

4.1. Internal partnership arrangements

The findings show that there has been a long-term and trust-based partnership that has existed between RACOBABO and ICA since the time RACOBABO was a part of Lutheran World Foundation (LWF). A similar long term and trust-based relationship has also existed between ICA and MFA. The strengthening of the partnership between ICA and RACOBABO occurred as ICA closely worked with RACOBABO to enhance their capacity as an organisation once they departed from LWF. Therefore, ICA's involvement exceeds mere financial contributions, as it actively participates in project activities and provides essential resources like motorcycles and furniture to RACOBABO. This collaborative model signifies a depth of engagement that extends beyond monetary support, reflecting a commitment to shared goals and outcomes.

“We have been long standing partners with ICA for about 15 years. ICA is one of the largest recipients and we see value in ICA.” FGD, RACOBABO Staff, Lyantonde

“Actually, ICA is our best donor that we have worked with. They are easy to work with in terms of communication like we can have issues with the exchange rates, they always come in to support and they have also helped our office by buying vehicles, motorcycles so they have been so supportive to us and easy to work with. No challenges we have faced with them, we just hope for better collaboration.” KII, RACOBABO Staff

“We like the approach of RACOBABO is that they so much involve young people as volunteers as counsellors to help people we are assisting for the project and they don't take a salary but they get financial support in form of garden tools, seeds for the farms so the project also works closely with the local government and they work closely with the community and they are very involved in the project in Rakai and Lyantonde so they are very rooted in the project so I really value their approach” KII, Internal Stakeholder

However, the evaluation also brings to light challenges within these partnerships, notably a reduction in funds faced by RACOBABO in collaboration with ICA due to funding priorities of ICA's sources. This reduction serves as a reminder of the inherent vulnerability of collaborations to external factors such as Covid-19, wherein most international and national organisations were at the facing end of depleting resources. The findings emphasise the necessity for strategic planning and adaptability in the face of financial uncertainties to ensure the sustainability of projects and initiatives.

“The barrier is that of funding. How much ICA gets depends on their ability to mobilise from the Iceland Republic. This determines the match funding they get” KII, Internal Stakeholder

Focussing on the broader context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has had an evolving partnership with ICA, which transitioned from external arrangements to Framework Agreements in 2020. This strategic shift indicates a concerted effort to streamline and formalise collaborations for more effective and structured engagement. The communication channels between MFA and ICA are highlighted as robust reflecting the pivotal role of effective dialogue in maintaining and nurturing partnerships over time. In summary, these collaborations portray a dynamic network of partnerships that are highly trust-based and rely on effective communication channels and adaptive approaches to ensuring the success of their collective efforts, even in the face of challenges.

4.2. Collaborations with other CSOs

The findings reveal a concerted effort by RACOBABO towards community development by utilising partnerships and collaborations with other CSOs, especially in areas of health. In Lyantonde, RACOBABO's collaboration with the NGOs is sought to amplify the impact of their activities as well as build a higher outreach. The partnership extends to disaster preparedness, HIV awareness, and economic empowerment, reflecting a coordinated approach to address multifaceted challenges. In Rakai, a similar collaborative spirit is observed, with organisations like Uganda Cares, World Vision, and Salaam Shields working in tandem with RACOBABO.

“They have been our partners for some time and helped in funding our projects on the ground. We have had a very healthy relationship with our partners. They always pay visits and participate in the project activities and be part of the project. They are strong partners in a way that they have helped to get us the materials that we need to work like the motorcycles for work, furniture and they also be part of the tracking of the project so that they know what is happening.” FGD, RACOBABO Staff, Lyantonde

“No, I only know of RACOBABO, child fund's aim is only helping in schools by educating but they are also quiet now. On nutrition, I have seen REPSSI and G-CODE that have been helping with backyard gardening. The organisations complement each other, and they give support since sometimes we can have overwhelming numbers of people and yet they all need support. HIV started from Rakai which Lyantonde was part of initially but now our number of patients are even higher than that of Rakai.” KII, Probation officer, Lyantonde

“We have CSO meetings, and we share and it's quarterly and it's on district and sub county level and we share work plans and agree on the approaches that we can support the community. And we are leading in Lyantonde. Also, we always call the other organizations like Rakai Health Science Program and Uganda Cares that are providing support in areas of health to community members so they ensure that there is adherence among the PLHIV and also there was a time that one of the beneficiaries was suffering from another sickness that we all couldn't cure but one of the members had a link to a health centre in Kampala that helped in treatment of this person so they are very helpful” KII, RACOBABO Staff

In the health sector, the collaboration between RACOBABO and health centres and hospitals in Lyantonde demonstrates a collective commitment to supporting people living with HIV/AIDS. However, certain challenges were also noted that posed limitations on RACOBABO's ability to partner up on certain issues. For instance, the dissolution of activities by Rakai Health Science Programme due to anti-homosexual laws reflects the complexities NGOs face, necessitating adaptation and reliance on alternative collaborations to continue their work effectively. In summary, the programme does showcase partnerships taking place to strengthen activities with the communities to a good extent. Further, the collaborative effort is not confined to information exchange but extends to practical support, such as referrals and joint initiatives. This cooperative approach ensures a more comprehensive and holistic impact on the community.

4.3. Collaborations with government agencies

Collaboration with the government constitutes a pivotal element of RACOBABO's strategy in Lyantonde and Rakai, reflecting a concerted effort to address community needs. Local leaders in Lyantonde highlighted RACOBABO's HWI as a distinctive project, particularly in the construction of houses, a task not undertaken by government institutions. However, the leaders acknowledge existing challenges, including the prevalence of poverty leading to domestic issues and the limited number of organisations like RACOBABO, emphasising the need for more committed entities to alleviate the suffering of the people. A crucial point was also raised by a local leader in Lyantonde is the call for increased collaboration between RACOBABO and the government. The leader stressed the importance of the government improving its budget to match the commitment shown by RACOBABO. RACOBABO staff members acknowledge the high expectations from the local government but highlight that their collaboration remains sincere. The involvement of local government in the identification, selection, implementation, and monitoring of projects is essential, even though managing expectations can be challenging.

"So most importantly, they should work with the government and to see that the government improves on its budget because RACOBABO comes as a partner and sometimes they end up doing more than the government does which is not good. The government should do more for the people and shouldn't overwhelm the project on its plans and budget." KII, Local Leader, Lyantonde

"Like I said, we work with the local government in identification, selection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and we even sensitize the community together. The challenge may have been that their expectations are always high because they may identify the households to support but we can only support a few but this has not affected our sincere collaboration." KII, RACOBABO Staff

"We have managed the relationship though sometimes their expectations are so high, and they look at service delivery and some of them the politicians look at quick mileage in success and the leadership can bring 100 beneficiaries and yet we can't help the 100 at once so they can sometimes see that we can't help to transform the community, but they appreciate" KII, RACOBABO Staff

RACOBABO Senior Staff members emphasised a positive collaboration with local government from the project's initiation. They also highlighted joint efforts in community mobilisation and linking

beneficiaries to government projects. Success with local leaders is attributed to their involvement in the entire project process. Despite occasional high expectations, the collaboration remains successful reflecting a harmonious relationship. In Rakai, the Chief Administrative Officer acknowledges the significance of collaboration, indicating that the government alone cannot undertake tasks like building houses. However, certain challenges have also been identified include a dependency mentality within the community and limited involvement of men in organisational activities. The budget constraints are also acknowledged, posing limitations on funding all necessary activities. Further, the Chief District Officer (CDO) in Rakai reiterated the various responsibilities that RACOBABO takes over including direct engagement with the health department for nutrition-related activities and registering Community-Based Organisations (CBOs). The respondents noted the importance of RACOBABO streamlining its activities with the government along with the suggestion to expand operations to other districts. Finally, district chairpersons also affirmed the seamless integration of projects into the community and emphasised the positive impact of government funding in uplifting individuals. However, they further mentioned the need for better road infrastructure to facilitate the transportation of agricultural produce to markets, indicating areas where government focus could enhance community welfare, hence scoping out a gap for potential collaboration between RACOBABO and the government. The following quotes are provided in support of the above findings:

“We collaborate with local governments right from the start and even the selection process and they must be part of it as a government. They also do mobilization of the community and sometimes they also help to open roads to the place where the project is to take place. We have a lot of success with the local leaders because others can even explain the whole process of the project from the start of the project to the end because they have been involved in it. They are also involved in linking the beneficiaries to government projects like EMOYGA, PDM” KII, RACOBABO Staff

“Challenges may not be on RACOBABO but on the community itself. People have the dependence syndrome because someone can be given a goat, but they want RACOBABO to help with everything as if the goat is not for the organisation, so this mentality has to change and its possible. Then the next challenge is that the men are not so much involved in the activities of the organisation. Then the budget is very small to fund all the activities” KII, CDO, Rakai

“[RACOBABO] needs to streamline their activities with the government and even give the workplan to the government so that they can work better so they need to sit with the officials, and they can expand their activities to even other districts.” KII, CDO, Rakai

“There are no challenges because when these kinds of projects come, we become part of the projects because we are part of the launching, commissioning, identifying the beneficiaries and so on” KII, District Chairperson

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS: EFFECTIVENESS

This chapter of the report seeks to present the extent to which planned project outputs and outcomes have been achieved. This is achieved by contrasting the midline quantitative targets against the obtaining outputs and analysing the anecdotal evidence gathered from beneficiaries and other key stakeholders. In this chapter, the factors that have impacted on project strategies and thus determining their efficacy have also been outlined. Due cognisance is made that this is a midline evaluation and some of the successes might still be emerging.

5.1. Progress towards attainment of outputs and outcomes

The overall objective of the project is to *“To mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS among OVC and people living with HIV/AIDS and reduce their further vulnerability to the scourge”*. This is to be achieved through access to clean and safe water, improved hygiene and sanitation, and descent shelter and psycho-social support. The evaluation has determined that there is progress that has been made as measured by specific indicators set under each objective.

Objective 1: Improved housing conditions among 32 families of children living alone and people living with HIV and AIDS

The target under this objective was the construction of houses, latrines, provision of water tanks (5000 litre capacity), simple kitchens, and provision of non-food items (domestic utensils and community hygiene and sanitation meetings) by end of 2023 as shown on table 3 below. The delivery of the outputs was staggered throughout the entire four years. Apart from the sensitisation meetings on hygiene and sanitation, the project targeted 8 families per year. This implies that by the end of 2023, half the targets should have been met i.e., 16. Data from both the secondary and primary sources show that by the end of the second year of implementation (2023), all the targets for year one and two had been met.

Table 3: Outputs achieved under Objective 1 (December 2023)

Activities	PROJECT TARGET	ACTUAL AS OF DECEMBER 2023
Construction of 32 houses	32	16
Construction of 32 kitchens	32	16
Provision of 32 sets of NFIs to OVC households	32 sets	16
Provision of 32 sets of domestic utensils	32 sets	16
Construction of 32 VIP latrines	32	16
Construction of 32 rainwater tanks	32	16
Conduct 08 sensitization meetings on hygiene and sanitation	08	04

(Data source: Updated Logical Framework and confirmed with participants in the FGD)

Construction of houses and kitchens

Data obtained from both primary and secondary sources shows that quality houses were delivered to the 16 households. The findings show that what is of essence is the quality of the houses that stand in absolute contrast to the houses that the households used to have prior to the intervention. Both primary and secondary data shows that all the households that have benefitted from the construction of houses are happy as they used to live in poorly constructed houses prior to the intervention as depicted on the Figure 1.

Figure 1: Examples of houses prior to the intervention



(Source: Annual report 2023)

The beneficiaries were appreciative of the houses as they not only prevent the entry of pests such as mosquitoes but only offer enough security to the households and protection from the weather elements such as the rains. Similarly, the project managed to construct simple kitchens for the households. These were supposed to be spacious, clean, and smoke free. The intention was to provide a clean and safe environment for cooking and storage of food and utensils.

Figure 2: example of a house and kitchen constructed under the project



(Source: Annual report 2023)

“And before they get the house and the latrine and the water tank and the kitchen they live in, in a half bath has no roof or partial roof” KII, Internal stakeholder

“Before the organisation came, I was living in a grass thatched house, but it used to leak whenever it rained but now, we got mosquito nets, a new house, new bedding and life is now better with my daughter and grandchildren. I have 8 grandchildren and for most of them I don’t know their fathers”
FGD, Caregiver

“I want to thank the organisation for building for me the house after we lost our parents when I was 14 years old and now, we can live well because the house has a water tank, latrine, beddings and even 3 goats so am very happy for the effort from the project. Am the one taking care of my 4 siblings and am now 21 years old.” **FGD, Beneficiary household, Rakai**

Primary beneficiaries, internal and external stakeholders all expressed satisfaction with the construction with the houses, latrines, and kitchens. This has contributed to a reduction in the incidence of malaria and gastro-intestinal infections which are associated with poor housing and poor food handling practices. Therefore, at an outcome level, the evaluation has established that the quality of houses, constant use of mosquito nets and the cleaning of environments is creating positive changes in the lives of the beneficiaries. The Updated Logical Framework for 2023, states that reports from Village Health Teams (VHTs) indicate that there is a reduction in the incidence of malaria in the project areas. The reduction in the incidence was also confirmed by internal and external stakeholders. The reduction in the rates was attributed to the use of mosquito nets and the clearing of the environment where mosquitoes breed. Furthermore, the construction of the facilities have elevated the social status of the households as they are now receiving visitors. Essentially, the households are now being integrated back into the communities which used to shun them. It was also learnt that the construction of the houses has also led to the reunification of families that had broken down.

“Yes, when you visit the district health officer, the rates have reduced of malaria infections in the district and this has been reported by the DHO” **KII, Internal Stakeholder**

“The rates of malaria have greatly reduced because of the nets that we received. Now the nights are much better, we sleep with peace” **FGD, Beneficiary household, Rakai**

“It has helped to reduce on the rates of malaria because we are now sleeping in the nets because before we used to suffer so much from malaria” **FGD, Beneficiary household, Rakai**

“I feel so happy about the quality of the house, people used not to visit me but now I even have visitors come home and many people even come for water at home so am very happy” **FGD, Beneficiary household, Lyantonde**

“Also, the women that used to be rejects in the community are loved after the completion of the project and many even have men now, so there is a great change”. **KII, Internal Stakeholder**

Construction of latrines and rainwater tanks

The construction of VIP latrines with an accompanying bathroom area was meant to curb open defecation that can result in the contamination of water leading to water-borne diseases. It was also established that beneficiaries installed hand washing facilities at their latrines as a means of enhancing hygiene standards to provide safe water to such families and reduce the risk of water related infections. In addition, the project constructed 5,000 litre Ferro-cement tanks for each household. This

was done as a means of enhancing the water storage capacity of benefiting households. Family members and their neighbours were also sensitised on proper hygiene and sanitation practices.

“We used to take water that is dirty but now we collect clean water and has reduced the rates of sicknesses” FGD participant, Beneficiary, Rakai

“There is clean water available to the people now through the water tanks that they gave out” FGD participant, Local Leaders, Rakai

The provision of latrines and water tanks has been found to be effective as there are notable positive changes when it comes to infections related to open defecation. Beneficiaries also have access to potable water. The provision of the water tanks has also alleviated the burden of walking long distances to fetch water. The provision of knowledge on proper hygiene practices have also contributed to the positive shift among the beneficiaries and community at large. Therefore, the evaluation notes that there are positive outcomes when it comes to the reduction of water-borne diseases. On the negative side, there were cases of strained relationships with neighbours who now rely on the fetching clean water from the water tanks. These occur when water levels drop, and the beneficiaries find it necessary to limit the amount that the neighbours can fetch. It is essential for the project to concertise neighbours to appreciate that access to the water is a privilege and not a right, emphasising that priority goes to the beneficiary houses.

“For me my tank is still fine, and I share water with my neighbours but if the water reduces, I stop them especially when the person come back to pick the water several times but mine is fine” FGD, Beneficiaries, Rakai

Provision of non-food items (NFIs), domestic utensils and sensitisation meetings on hygiene and sanitation

The NFIs distributed to the households included mosquito nets, mattresses, and blankets. The project seeks to improve the living conditions of the beneficiary households. Both primary and secondary data shows that the targeted households received the NFIs. The beneficiaries also received sets of domestic utensils from the project.

“The project has done well because in every house that they constructed they even added beds, mattresses, beddings, clothes and water tank so I see that they have done so well, and the people are so happy”. KII, Counsellor, Lyantonde

“But once they have the house and they have you know, a bed and a mattress and mosquito net and they have water, and they have a kitchen with kitchen utensils, and they receive goats and they have kitchen gardens, and they receive information or education on how to how to produce legumes and such.” KII, Internal stakeholder

“I want to thank God for bringing to us this organisation because they have done a lot for us. They always come and visit me and advise me with their counsellors. They brought beds, mattresses, basins, blankets. I also pray that if the organisation can help me educate some children who are

bright in school and they succeed so that they can support the community in future” FGD, Beneficiary household, Lyantonde

The provision of mosquito nets has complemented the construction of modest houses and cleaning of the environment to collectively reduce the incidence of malaria in the targeted communities. The effectiveness of the strategy was alluded to by stakeholders and beneficiaries who felt that the nets were indeed contributing positively to the reduction of malaria incidence rate.

“The project has helped to reduce on malaria infections through the help of Mosquito nets that they have provided” FGD, Local Leaders, Rakai

Further to the provision of tangible objects, the project also supported the households through relevant information pertaining to hygiene, sanitation, and the proper utilisation of the constructed facilities. The latter was in recognition that there are possibilities of the facilities being used for unintended purposes such as keeping animals. Similarly, sensitisation meetings were done to facilitate the use of bedding by the beneficiaries themselves.

“The supported households sometimes abandon the constructed facilities in preference to the old, dilapidated structures because the old ones don’t require regular cleaning and maintenance. If not sensitized, the new homes turn into stores for food stuffs and houses for their animals. Therefore, RACOBABO conducted 8 sensitization meetings on hygiene and sanitization among target households to promote sanitation and encourage members to utilise the facilities in the right way” Project Annual Report (2023)

“So, the volunteer counsellor after we build the houses, we do hygiene sensitisation, so they help us to educate these people from the cleanliness, hygiene because others still don’t use the beddings that we gave them that they are keeping for visitors, so the volunteers are helping then others we have to train even on using a toilet. We have also had talks with them on the importance of having save water, they should boil the water before drinking and to also have a clean compound” KII, Internal stakeholder

In summary, the evaluation has established that the project outputs under Objective 1 have been achieved as planned and there is progress towards the attainment of outcomes. Anecdotal evidence confirms these changes but the evaluation envisages that these will become more apparent as implementation progresses to the second half of the project life-span.

Objective 2: Improved nutrition and economic security among the 32 families of children and people living with HIV and AIDS

The planned activities under the objective included the distribution of 200 local goats, establishment of 16 kitchen gardens, holding of 8 dialogue meetings with duty bearers to advocate for livelihood support for vulnerable households, formation of 40 Village Savings and Loans Association groups, advocacy meetings, ToTs for goat management and training on good agricultural practices (GAP).

Table 4: Outputs achieved under Objective 2 (December 2023)

Activities	PROJECT TARGET	ACTUAL AS OF DECEMBER 2023
2.1 Purchase and distribution of 400 local goats	400	200
2.2 Establishment of 32 Kitchen gardens	32	16
2.3 Hold 16 dialogue meetings with duty bearers to advocate for livelihood support for vulnerable household	16	8 (Supporting families to benefit from the government programs, maternal health, education, and agricultural extension services)
2.4 Formation of 80 Village Savings and Loans Association groups	80 TBD	40 19
2.5 Conduct 16 quarterly advocacy meetings	16	08
2.6 Conduct training of 30 benefitting households as ToTs in goat management skills	120	60 (M 19 F 41)
2.7 Conduct training of 90 benefitting household members in kitchen gardening and good agriculture practices (GAP)	90	45 (M 11. F 34)

Source: Updated Logical Framework (2023)

Purchase and distribution of goats, and training in goat management

The evaluation was able to establish that goats were distributed to beneficiaries as was intended. The provision of goats was meant to enable beneficiary households to start goat-rearing businesses and generate income through the sale of the goats. According to the project document, the idea is to breed the goats and sell the offsprings. Primary data shows that there are households who are now generating income from the sale of the goats. There were mixed feelings among the project beneficiaries about the provision of goats with some beneficiaries appreciating the potential of having goats in strengthening their economic situation, and some expressing their preference of food handouts. However, there is general appreciation of the potential of the goat-component among stakeholders. The potential is mainly based on the reality that goats generally do not need a lot of care and can survive under difficult weather conditions. However, land for grazing seems to be a challenge for some of the households. Therefore, a few beneficiaries without land were not given the goats.

“Around 98% received the goats because the beneficiaries who do not have enough land can’t have space to tether the goats and they can’t take them to another person’s land. Others want them, but they say that they don’t have space to graze them so it’s better not to give” KII, Internal stakeholder

“The project has done well to give goats to the people only that so people don’t have space to graze the goats from and we pray that they keep those goats so that it helps to develop them, and they can give up to 6 goats” FGD participant, Volunteer counsellor, Rakai

“On the kitchen garden is also the same on the land issues and others are very ill and don’t have children to support. So, its better not to add extra burden of looking after the goats and the kitchen gardens” KII, Internal stakeholder

At the outcome level, it was noted that some of the beneficiary households are already benefiting from the sale of goats as was intended under the project. The households use the income to cover family needs such as paying education costs.

“For me I have seen a woman who has really used the goats well by keeping them well and she can sell when the family is in need of some money and sometimes, they can use the money to hire land for farming which will provide food for the family” FGD participant, Volunteer counsellor, Rakai

Some of the beneficiaries have not benefitted as was expected due to loss to thieves and diseases. Primary data shows that some of the beneficiaries were able to avert the loss by seeking medical treatment for the goats. On the contrary, the loss of goats to thieves was noted in both districts and this was acknowledged by RACOBABO who highlighted that there is need to find a lasting solution to the problem. The loss of the goats has the ability of limiting the desired outcomes and contribution of the project component to the overall objective and aim of the project. Therefore, it is essential for RACOBABO and the beneficiaries to find a lasting solution although it might currently seem to be difficult.

“For me I had goats, but they were stolen at night because they used to stay outside.” FGD, Beneficiary household, Rakai

“What worries a lot are thieves, there are a lot of thieves around so it just depends on how to take care of them. If you just leave them out then there is a high chance that they will be stolen at night. It’s also better to rare them around home instead of taking them far from home” FGD, Beneficiary household, Lyantonde

In addition to the provision of the goats, RACOBABO conducted three trainings of the benefiting households in goats’ management targeting the vulnerable households (Annual Report 2023). A total of 60 i.e., 19 males and 41 females, benefitted from the training in 2023. The evaluations deem such trainings to be essential despite the fact that goats are generally easy to rear. It is important to sensitise the beneficiaries on the need to engage veterinary officer when the goats are sick rather than looking for RACOBABO officers first. Seeking RACOBABO first might simply be an indication of dependency on the organisation or lack of ownership of the goats.

“The project has been trying to remove the dependence through trainings and talks that they are only here to support, and they can’t provide all that they need. For example, they are told that they should rare the goats well so that they can use it to develop the family through investing in a business or joining VSLAs” KII, PLHIV, Lyantonde

Establishment of kitchen gardens

The nutrition gardens were established to improve the nutrition status of PLHIV. Therefore, each beneficiary household was assisted to establish such a garden. Although primary data indicates that the strategy is effective, its efficacy is limited by shortage of water for gardening. The project was

cognisant of this limitation at inception thus the gardens are situated close to the kitchens so that the water used in the kitchen can be used to water the plants. Findings also indicate that some beneficiaries might struggle to maintain these gardens due to ill health especially for those households that do not have labour.

“Kitchen gardens are always affected by the drought because this area is in a dry cattle corridor and the crops have always struggled and there is also a water problem in these areas where people walk long distances to fetch water, so they use the water for drinking and bathing, cooking and not for watering the crops” KII, Internal stakeholder

Although primary data shows that there are improvements in nutrition, at the outcome level, the reduction of cases of malnutrition requires statistical evidence to confirm the evidence gathered from the beneficiaries and stakeholders.

“There is improvement on the nutrition of people because they trained people on kitchen gardens where they grow vegetables and supply food in the family” FGD participant, Local Leaders, Rakai

Dialogue meetings with duty bearers

According to Annual reports for 2022 and 2023, a total of 4 dialogue meetings were held each year as was planned. Since this is the midline, changes that can be attributed to the dialogue meetings are still minimal. As stated on the quote below, the submissions are bound to be factored-in in the future.

“RACOBAG conducted 4 dialogue meetings at sub county level with duty bearers to advocate for livelihood support for vulnerable households. The meeting was attended by 96 people (58 females and 38 males). RACOBAG advocated for increased budget allocation towards agricultural extension services and primary health care as a way to ensure household food security, hygiene and sanitation among target households and the need to benefit from the government programs, especially the parish Development model. The duty bearers pledged their support to these beneficiaries and promised to consider them under the different arrangements from the government”. Project Annual Report (2023)

Formation of VSLAs

The target set for the first half of project implementation (2022-2023) for the formation of VSLAs was met. It is essential to note that the VSLAs comprise of project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. According to the project Annual Report (2023), most of the members are project beneficiaries. The mixing has been strategic in fostering integration of the beneficiaries back into the community and the broader economy. The strategy is also to cultivate a culture of saving.

“Each group has 30 members many of whom are from the targeted households. The groups are comprised of orphans, HIV+ persons, elderly, and some few community members.” Annual report, 2023

“The project has helped to open many groups and gave them 1 million each as start-up and has encouraged many people to join and they support each member and they invest the money together” FGD, Beneficiary household, Lyantonde

“This project has created over 60 VSLAs per year so for two years we have like 120 groups. Of course, the perceptions change with time and the interest is getting high and people’s minds are opened. Before others were not interested but are now very interested after seeing others successful from the groups that they belong in” KII, Internal stakeholder

“Yes they have been beneficial because they are a good platform in bringing these households into the money economy so they are encouraged to join the groups and save as little as they can and there are a lot of changes in the lives now and it has also helped people to feel better and loved because these are people who were neglected so they are also avenues to borrow money and start businesses so 80% of the households are now in the VSLAs the challenge is that some households are far apart from each other so the ones who are closer to each other join together in a group “ KII, Internal stakeholder

“There is improvement in the saving culture of people through the introduction of VSLAs in the community” FGD, Local Leaders, Rakai

“Members will then be able to borrow money and start up small to medium income generating activities through which they will be able to afford to meet their basic requirements.” Annual report 2023

However, there are some beneficiaries who have been unable to join the VSLAs because of lack of joining fees or subscriptions.

“For me I have failed to join them (VSLAs) because of the fee that is required because I can’t afford the fee that is asked for in the group” FGD, Beneficiary household, Rakai

In general, the economic strengthening activities are already contributing to the intended outcomes especially under the indicator of improvements in income. Resultantly, more children have access to education.

“More families are now able to educate their children because they can borrow and save from the VSLAs” FGD, Local Leaders, Rakai

“The livelihoods of the people have changed through the goats that they received, and they have a stable income now. Now from the goats they can sell and educate the children, buy medication, join the VSLAs which helps them save money that would be used to start-up businesses of their choice” FGD, RACOBABO Staff, Lyantonde

Through the VSLAs, they are able to educate the children and also, they have a sense of ownership because now they have a home. Then the local leaders now have other local leaders with them because we can share ideas which wasn’t there before” FGD, RACOBABO Staff, Lyantonde

Objective 3: Improved access to psychosocial support and protection among the 32 households of children and people living with HIV and AIDS

The project sought to identify and train volunteer counsellors that would provide psychosocial support to the 32 beneficiary households. Refresher courses were supposed to be held for existing counsellors, Furthermore, they were supposed to be supported with Income Generating Activities (IGAs). Every household is attached a counsellor not only for HIV purposes but for the whole family issues like welfare, general counselling and life and growth. The projects anticipates that if the beneficiaries are offered psycho-social support, the project will be able to reduce the number of schools drop-outs, teenage pregnancies and cases of property grabbing reported.

Table 5: Outputs achieved under Objective 3

Activities	PROJECT TARGET	ACTUAL AS OF DECEMBER 2023
3.1: Identify and train 120 volunteer counsellors	120	120
3.2 Conduct refresher training for 60 existing volunteer counsellors	60	60
3.3 Support Counsellors with Income Generating Activities (IGAs)	TBD	109

(Data source: Updated Logical Framework (2023))

Identification and capacity building of old and new volunteer counsellors

An analysis of the updated log-frames for 2022 show that refresher courses were not conducted during the first year. However, this was achieved in 2023 where all the targeted 60 existing counsellors were reached out to with refresher courses. The project has also managed to identify and train new counsellors such that by the end of 2023, the target had been met.

“60 counsellors were trained in the reporting period with the aim of increasing accessibility to counselling services and improving adherence to anti-retroviral therapy and other health services for people most affected by HIV/AIDS. The counsellors were mainly trained in provision of anti-retroviral therapy (ART) services and follow up. The trainees also received community-based monitoring skills for clients. In addition, counsellors received training on nutrition practices of home care givers”

Annual report 2023

“They used to call us for refresher training after like 3 months. However, they can add us training on child protection and handling people with HIV because things keep changing”. KII, Volunteer

Counsellor, Lyantonde

A significant aspect of RACOBABO's impact is evident in its contribution to HIV awareness and testing in both Lyantonde and Rakai. The organisation plays a pivotal role in sensitising the community about HIV, encouraging testing, and providing support for those affected. The trained counsellors have been linked to members of households supported under the project. This is aimed at providing continuous psychosocial support to children living alone and those affected by HIV/AIDS. They also provide general counselling to the households. The project needs to constantly monitor the availability of equipment and job aids needed by counsellor so that they are well equipped to conduct their duties. Due consideration is made that the counsellors have been supported with income generating activities (IGAs) for their own sustenance.

“The beneficiaries appreciate the role of the volunteers because they provide guidance and even some household depends so much on the counsellors for everything and they explain everything to them, so they have been so appreciative and others want them to be very regular in their homes” KII, District Chief, Lyantonde

“For me, they come and counsel me, advise me and reduce on the stress on me, they always visit me and check on me and all has been well and they sometimes call me on phone too and if they were not there, I don’t think I would still be alive” FGD, Beneficiary household, Lyantonde

“We are taught on how to keep secrets of the people who are HIV positive and not to move around the village talking about what the patients of HIV have told me” FGD, Volunteer Counsellors

“For me I work mostly with the youth because of my age, and I can relate well with HIV patients of my age that’s why I introduced myself as youth counsellor, but we are all the same” FGD participant, Volunteer Counsellor, Rakai

“They like the works of the counsellors, and they even always open up more to me more than to the doctor and we help them in referral. Others even come to our offices for assistance. We also train them to help them to avoid mother to child transmission of HIV” KII, Volunteer Counsellor, Lyantonde

“For me I also than the organisation for training us so that we can help the people in the community and I have been doing this through sports and MDD because am counsellor for youths” FGD participant, Volunteer

They should also see if the counsellors are still having enough equipment to do their work so that they can work well”. KII, Counsellor, Lyantonde

We always give them health talks to encourage them, and we also use community volunteers who talk to them so they are always reminded about their schedules in the hospital” KII, Health worker, Lyantonde

At an outcome level, it was learnt that there is a reduction in teenage pregnancies among the beneficiary households. The Annual report (2023) states that such cases have not been recorded since the start of the project. In both districts, it was established that the project has contributed to a reduction in gender-based violence. This is not necessarily a focal area of the project. Therefore, the evaluation notes that the project is already generating positive unintended outcomes.

“Yes, there has been an improvement because even people testify and I have even seen the cases of domestic violence has reduced and I attribute this to RACOBAG” KII, CDO, Rakai

“There have been water tanks, toilets, sensitizing the community on nutrition through kitchen gardening and I also benefited from this bit of the gardening, they have also helped in following up cases of GBV and domestic violence” KII, Probation Officer, Lyantonde

“Women are now empowered and GVB has reduced now because they are empowered now” FGD, RACOB AO Staff, Lyantonde

5.2. Success Factors

Two factors were identified as having significantly contributed to the success of the project. These are the personnel and partnership arrangements. The personnel were hailed for being transparent. On the other hand, partnerships were said to be a success factor since RACOB AO works with stakeholders. The evaluation has taken note of the duration of implementation and considers that as more successes are registered, more casual factors will be identified.

“I remember we were trained about transparency and telling the children to respect their parents and we should put our hearts in what we are doing” FGD, Volunteer Counsellors

“We are trained to be transparent and having a heart to help ours especially the ones who are in need because we work with people whose conditions are really bad so we can sometimes support where we can then also, we are trained to talk to the parents to respect their parents to ensure that they can teach their children” FGD, Volunteer Counsellors

5.3. Challenges and risks

There are a few challenges and risks that were noted pertaining to the provision of facilities and goats and these are presented below;

- **Transportation costs** - The cost of transporting the building materials to the two districts is high and has the potential of affecting the budgets. It is imperative for the project to be vigilant and ensure that such costs do not affect the delivery of the support in the remaining period.

“There is also a problem on transportation of materials and the cost of materials for the houses for the construction of homes for families that have qualified for assistance in the community. So, this affects their budget and planning” KII, Local leader, Lyantonde

- **Sale of houses/land** - the evaluation has however noted possibly risk that might result in the loss of the houses. From the 16 beneficiaries, it was established that one had sold the land where the house was built and thus lost the house in the process. RACOB AO acknowledged this occurrence but stated that all efforts were being made to recover the house.
- **Loss of the houses due to cultural beliefs** – cultural practices were identified as posing a risk to the continued ownership of the houses by the selected households. It was established that at times houses are deserted after the passing on of the owner. This has potential negative implication on the surviving members of the household as they might lose the house in the event of the demise of the household head.

“There are a few situations because of cultural factors that if the owner of the house dies, some people abandon the house and they leave a very good house to get wasted and they don’t clean them” KII, External stakeholder, Lyantonde

- **Property grabbing** - the benefiting households might lose the houses in the event of “property grabbing” during the administration of the deceased’s estate. Primary data shows that poor administration of estates still happens owing to lack of proper knowledge.

“The major factor is land, land is scarce and when people died, the people who remain don’t know the land laws and they don’t know how to handle the estates of the late” KII, External stakeholder, Lyantonde

- **Shortage of ARVs** – this poses a risk particularly to the general well-being of the beneficiaries. The project promotes adherence to medication and shortages not only pose as a danger to the health status of beneficiaries but also work against the aspirations of the project.

“Yes, there are times when the drugs get done or even, they can take long to refill. We normally face problems with patients in the third line of treatment because the drugs are few and expensive. Then also the ARVs for babies can sometimes get done in the hospital” KII, External stakeholder, Lyantonde

- **Loss of goats to thieves and diseases** – details pertaining to this challenge have been discussed in the preceding section. This is an aspect that must be deliberated on by RACOBABO, beneficiaries and community at large.
- **Vandalism of assets** – Although this risk did not come up prominently, it was obtained from one of the internal stakeholders and it is worthy considering the damage that occurred to water tanks due to jealousy among the neighbours.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS: CROSS-CUTTING

This chapter focuses on the cross-cutting themes that shape the multifaceted dynamics of the project in both Rakai and Lyantonde. In the exploration of gender dynamics and equality, nuanced perspectives from stakeholders reveal complex interactions within the project. Rakai stakeholders perceive a focus on supporting women, acknowledging positive outcomes in gender equality and reducing gender-based violence. However, concerns arise about potential oversight of equally vulnerable men. In Lyantonde, a targeted approach towards women without husbands is observed, raising considerations of potential gender bias. The section on impact of COVID-19 on project implementation including delays, increased expenses, and necessitating adaptations in housing projects and counsellors' interactions. The section on environmental considerations showcases a conscientious effort to integrate sustainable practices. Insights from Lyantonde emphasise training on environmentally friendly agricultural practices, and innovative technologies with environmental benefits, such as tippi-tap hand washing devices and energy-saving stoves, contribute to ecological sustainability. This chapter reflects the project's overall adaptability, commitment to gender equality, economic empowerment, and environmental stewardship, positioning it as a catalyst for positive and sustainable change in both regions.

6.1. Gender Dynamics and Equality

The findings reflect the complex interplay of gender dynamics and the pursuit of equality within the project, with nuanced perspectives emerging from stakeholders in both Rakai and Lyantonde. In Rakai, stakeholders hold a perception of the project, that it primarily supports women, emphasising their vulnerability. The sentiment suggested that women were perceived as more vulnerable and, consequently, in greater need of assistance. Positive outcomes were acknowledged, such as tangible advancements in gender equality, evident through women's increased financial autonomy and a commendable reduction in gender-based violence (GBV).

“We thank the project because now there is equality among men and women and women can now pay fees and support the husband in the family. GBV is also reducing, and they should continue training people on issues of the family.” FGD, Local Leaders, Rakai

“RACOBABO trains women to also stand on their feet and make decisions that support the family, and they now know the laws of the government” KII, Counsellor, Lyantonde

“On the children and orphans, yes, there is gender equality but on others, there is more support for ladies than men, like 60% to 40% respectively, because it's always difficult for females to cope up when the husband dies.” KII, Probation Officer, Lyantonde

“Activities targeting women participation will be emphasised. However, the project will not ignore men's contributions to achieving gender equality. Therefore, to have an effective and inclusive partnership for gender equality, both men and women will be supported to fully understand the mutual benefits of having both men and women actively participating in decisions affecting their wellbeing.” ICA RACOBABO Project Document (2022-25)

Yet, even though the project showcases an equal focus on men and women, in building access to healthcare, education and/or savings groups, there is lack of evidence to support if and how men are

being engaged in terms of building awareness and playing an active role in promoting gender equality. Although, this could potentially be a result of the men in the communities abandoning their families, leaving more vulnerable women and households. For instance, the following response was noted:

“So, we are in a patriarchal setup and when the challenges came, men left the women struggling with the children. So we come in to help this family then also most of the families are families of widows so women are taking the burden of the problem. And women are prone to abuse and even the children are abused sexually. Like there is a home that were 2 disabled girls, and they were pregnant. So, these families lack a father figure who would provide security and protection in the family, so the support is more in the family because they don’t have sufficient support. But we also have gender guidelines that we follow, like project has to be gendered but if the situation on ground finds that there are more vulnerable women, then we have to change and support more women so that to strike a balance in the community” FGD, RACOBABO Staff

“This is challenging because most of our beneficiaries are women because they are vulnerable compared to men however, we also support the men that we identify that are really in need” FGD, RACOBABO Staff

In Lyantonde, the findings reflected a targeted approach, focusing on women without husbands and with children. While recognising the specific vulnerabilities of female-headed households, this strategy may inadvertently contribute to a perception of gender bias in assistance allocation. The nuanced dynamics within households and communities were further explored, revealing the multifaceted nature of gender roles and the challenges faced by both men and women. The FGDs with local leaders in Rakai expressed gratitude for the project's positive impact on gender relations, highlighting improved financial capacities for women. The recognition of women's ability to contribute financially, including paying fees and supporting their families, reflected positive efforts and impact in building gender equity.

“The project has helped to empower me as a woman, and I have been able to support my husband in developing the family. I have learnt to also save and know the saving culture and even being a worker, so I work as a counsellor and am respected as a person in the community” KII, Counsellor, Lyantonde

“Economic empowerment is one of the ways of ensuring gender equality like in VSLAs there is a balance and even on leadership of the groups, there is a balance” FGD, RACOBABO Staff

“There is gender equality because there are both female and male counsellors that are working with the organisation” KII, Counsellor, Lyantonde

The FGD with RACOBABO staff emphasised the importance of economic empowerment through balanced participation in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and leadership roles. Strategies included ensuring a gender balance in VSLAs and leadership positions to empower women economically. The staff also highlighted the positive impact of the project in training women to make decisions that support their families and understand government laws.

Further, even internally, RACOBABO went through changes to reflect gender equality within their staff, with more women taking up leadership roles and building 2:1 women to men staff ratio. The recognition of the transformation from an initially imbalanced gender representation to a more equitable distribution of men and women within the organisation reflects a commitment to inclusive practices, both within and beyond project implementation. The commitment to gender balance within the organization and strategic foresight in addressing challenges reflect a visionary approach to sustainable community development in Rakai and Lyantonde. Through continued collaboration and forward-thinking planning, the project positions itself as a catalyst for positive change in the years to come.

6.2. Impact of Covid-19 within the project

The project also saw certain innovations that emerged across various stakeholders in both Rakai and Lyantonde in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on project implementation. Local leaders in both regions discussed delays in project implementation, specifically housing projects, and limitations on counsellors' movements. The pandemic affected the housing project and counsellors' ability to interact with patients, demonstrating the need for adaptations to address challenges posed by restrictions. RACOBABO staff in Lyantonde and Rakai highlighted the challenges faced during the pandemic, including delays, increased project expenses, and the need for adaptations such as wearing protective gear. The data suggests that the pandemic significantly disrupted project activities and necessitated adjustments to continue supporting communities. Lastly, there were also disruptions in communications/reporting to ICA by RACOBABO, and simultaneously ICA's reporting to MFA on the project.

"The works of counsellors were affected because they could not easily move from village to village on food talking to the patients" FGD, Local Leaders, Lyantonde

"It affected the work of so many people and movements were difficult and there are people who died because of COVID-19. For us we used to work but when covered with gloves and face masks" KII, Counsellor, Lyantonde

"We were all affected like reduction of funding, reduction of staff, some projects were not completed or not done at all and some beneficiaries really missed out during that time" KII, Probation Officer, Lyantonde

"Covid-19 disrupted the success of some programs like before they could get food supplements, but the resources of the government were depleted and now, they are not getting the support and also some leaders died because of covid and also the economy of the people was affected" KII, RACOBABO Staff

"So at that time I was not able to travel to Uganda and communicate directly to the beneficiaries and it was just second hand information so COVID-19 affected our communication aspect and reporting then even the monitoring aspect but the Director of ICA was in constant contact with the Director of RACOBABO but the project on housing continued moving but the meeting was always with fewer people and also there was a problem of inflation during and after COVID-19 and now came the

invasion of Ukraine by Russia so right now we are living in very difficult times” KII, Internal Stakeholder

“Few patients could turn up for treatment. Not all of them could come but we could always take medication to them in their homes and villages so that they continue taking the drugs” KII, Health Centres, Rakai

6.3. Environmental Considerations

Environmental considerations within the project remain quite limited yet reflect a conscientious effort to a certain extent in aligning development initiatives with sustainable practices, particularly in Rakai and Lyantonde. Stakeholder insights reveal a multifaceted approach to addressing environmental concerns and promoting eco-friendly practices. In Lyantonde, according to RACOBAB staff, a focus on environmental impact emerged. The project incorporates training sessions on sustainable practices, such as the promotion of natural fertilisers and discouragement of artificial ones during kitchen garden training. This reflected a commitment to mitigating environmental degradation by encouraging environmentally friendly agricultural practices.

“Yes, when we are doing the trainings for kitchen garden, we tell people to adopt natural fertilizers and avoid artificial ones, so I think it helps so much” KII, RACOBAB Staff

Additionally, RACOBAB senior staff highlighted the introduction of innovative technologies with environmental benefits. The utilisation of tipi-tap hand washing devices, a low-tech and water-efficient hand washing solution, exemplifies a practical approach to hygiene that minimises water wastage. Moreover, the promotion of energy-saving stoves serves a dual purpose by reducing deforestation, as less firewood is used, and providing a clean cooking alternative for households.

“Yes they are so many like vulnerable families are at the forefront of destroying the environment for example they use the bushes to defecate and when looking for firewood, they cut trees and they also use the poles mostly to construct the kind of houses that they were staying in. So now all the contractors that we get now, we tell them to consider environmental factors when building the houses and also we have encouraged the occupants of these houses to use energy saving technologies like the energy saving stoves that will ensure they use less fuel to cook” KII, RACOBAB Staff

“We have a tipi-tap which is a hand washing technology used for washing hands after visiting the latrine and it’s used by stepping on the stick on the bottom then it triggers the water to come, and someone can wash the hands. Then also we have encouraged people to use energy saving stoves which means less firewood is used and it’s clean to use” KII, RACOBAB, Staff

In Rakai, the consideration of environmental factors is evident in the discussions with Probation Officers. The focus on vulnerable families, often engaged in practices detrimental to the environment, presents an opportunity to integrate environmental consciousness into project activities. Encouraging contractors to consider environmental factors during construction further emphasises a holistic approach to community development. The findings also touch upon the indirect environmental impact

of the project. However, there is still quite a lot of scope for realising environmentally conscious efforts within the project.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Relevance

The findings in the chapter reflect the project's significant relevance within the communities of Lyantonde and Rakai. It effectively addresses contextual challenges faced by vulnerable groups, including individuals living with HIV/AIDS, child-headed households, and people with disabilities. These challenges encompass economic hardships, domestic violence, insufficient food, and the exacerbated vulnerabilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite financial constraints and logistical challenges, the project has achieved around 90% (self-estimated) sufficiency in addressing participants' diverse needs, indicating a significant yet not exhaustive solution. The positive outcomes are evident in improved housing conditions, better hygiene, access to clean water, and positive health results, contributing significantly to the overall well-being of the targeted communities. The criteria for selection in the Household Welfare Initiative demonstrate a comprehensive and inclusive approach. While the primary focus is on individuals with HIV/AIDS, collaboration with local leaders and a connection with government structures ensure a nuanced understanding of community needs. The participatory approach, including annual monitoring and engagement with the community during the design phase, fosters a sense of community ownership. However, challenges in potential apprehensions among neighbours and the lack of a defined 'vulnerability framework' warrant attention for future improvements. The alignment of project activities with its goals is evident in various aspects. The project effectively addresses access to public healthcare, support for education within families, provision of housing and mosquito nets, kitchen gardens, provision of goats, water tanks, VSLAs, and psychosocial support. These initiatives align with national policies and priorities related to HIV/AIDS mitigation, housing, and community development, as outlined in the Uganda National Strategic Plan and the broader international humanitarian standards. The multifaceted impact of the VSLAs in promoting economic resilience and community well-being. The participatory approach with community members emerges as a strength, fostering regular engagement through local staff and volunteers. However, challenges in community understanding of the project, especially regarding house ownership relay the importance of effective communication. Additionally, the project's alignment with other internal stakeholders such as ICA and MFA, reflects a shared commitment to inclusive and rights-based development approaches. Overall, the chapter's comprehensive findings indicate that the Household Welfare Initiative is making substantial strides in addressing the complex challenges faced by vulnerable communities in Lyantonde and Rakai. While successes are evident, there are still opportunities for improvement, emphasising the importance of continuous learning and adaptation to evolving community needs. The project's holistic approach, alignment with national policies, and engagement with the community position it as a vital force in mitigating the long-term effects of HIV/AIDS and reducing vulnerability within the targeted communities.

Coherence

The chapter's findings shed light on the theme of coherence across various facets within RACOBABO's initiatives in Lyantonde and Rakai. The internal partnership arrangements between RACOBABO, ICA, and MFA showcase a longstanding, trust-based collaboration that extends beyond mere financial support. This resilient partnership model, however, faces challenges, notably funding reductions due to external uncertainties such as COVID-19 or dependency of ICA's funding on their ability to mobilise supporters, underlining the importance of strategic planning and adaptability. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' transition to Framework Agreements in 2020 signals a strategic shift towards more formalised collaborations, emphasising the significance of robust communication channels for effective engagement. Turning to collaborations with other CSOs, RACOBABO's concerted efforts towards community development are evident. Partnerships with various NGOs in health-related activities

showcase a coordinated approach to addressing multifaceted challenges, emphasising practical support beyond information exchange. However, challenges, such as the dissolution of activities by Rakai Health Science Programme due to legal issues, highlight the complexities NGOs face, necessitating adaptability and alternative collaborations. In the realm of collaborations with government agencies, RACOBABO's strategy involves a pivotal collaboration with local leaders and government officials in Lyantonde and Rakai. Challenges, including budget constraints and community dependency, are acknowledged, but overall, positive collaboration is emphasised. Local leaders and government officials stress the need for increased government budget allocation to match RACOBABO's commitment, highlighting potential areas for improvement and collaboration. Examining coherence within RACOBABO's initiative, the organisation's comprehensive approach to community development in both regions is commendable. Beyond traditional activities, such as disaster preparedness and economic empowerment, RACOBABO's significant impact in HIV awareness and testing reflects a holistic commitment to community well-being. Challenges, such as limited resources and dependency syndromes within communities, are recognised, underscoring the need for ongoing sensitisation efforts. Overall, the chapter's findings depict a dynamic network of partnerships grounded in trust and effective communication, showcasing RACOBABO's commitment to community development. The challenges identified underscore the importance of adaptability and strategic planning, while the organisation's tangible impact on HIV awareness, economic empowerment, and disaster preparedness highlights the coherence and effectiveness of RACOBABO's initiatives in Lyantonde and Rakai.

Effectiveness

The evaluation has established that all the planned outputs have been achieved. This is the case across the three project objectives. The construction of facilities for the 16 households is apparently the most appreciated, especially by the beneficiaries themselves. This could be owing to the fact that these addressed immediate needs and the benefits are apparent. The provision of the houses has not only addressed the housing challenges but has managed to elevate the social status of the households resulting in their integration into their communities to an extent. However, the fact that beneficiary households now own assets such as water tanks further elevates their status as neighbours are now the ones who must ask for support. This in some cases have raised conflict amongst the beneficiary household and the neighbours. Previously, neighbours were the ones assisting the beneficiaries; the power structures have now shifted. In terms of the effectiveness of the objectives, the households experience immediate benefits under Objective 1, which focuses on providing infrastructure support and non-food items aligned with humanitarian assistance. In contrast, Objective 2 emphasises economic strengthening as a development activity, and its benefits may not be immediately evident. This discrepancy leads to a preference for immediate relief, such as food handouts, over activities like goat rearing where the participants highlighted limited capacity to manage the goats, as participants favour options that align with their immediate needs in addition to preferences for sustainable economic activities. The participants also felt they did not have ownership over the activities provided, especially when it came to goat rearing. Similarly, some households have been unable to benefit from the economic strengthening activities due to different reasons that include the apparent inclusion and exclusion criteria around eligibility, which includes lack of access to land and poor health status. However, the potential of the economic strengthening strategies is apparent as noted from those who are already witnessing changes at outcome level such as the VSLAs. The efficacy of training volunteers is already emerging as changes at outcome level are starting to emerge. However, it would be premature to attest with certainty of the changes since these are backed by anecdotal evidence only. Overall, the evaluation concludes that the implementation of the project is on track as witnessed by the achievement of all the targets. However, it is important for RACOBABO to take note of the

challenges and risk factors that have the potential of affecting attainment of outputs and hinder progress towards outcomes and the overall objective of the project under the remaining phase. It is also worth noting that the project is on track when we consider the target on the logical framework i.e., 50% achievement rate by the end of 2023. It is pertinent for RACOBABO to note that the workload will continue to increase in the coming years as they have to cater for the existing houses and additional ones that will be made in the remaining years.

Cross-cutting themes

This chapter explores cross-cutting themes such as gender equality, implications of Covid-19 and environmental consideration within the project in both Rakai and Lyantonde. The insight into gender dynamics and equality revealed nuanced perspectives from stakeholders. For instance, in Rakai, positive outcomes in gender equality were highlighted. In Lyantonde, a focused approach towards women without husbands was also noted. The project's commitment to gender equality, as outlined in its documentation, is evident. However, challenges in engaging men as active voices against gender-based violence, gender inequalities and maintaining a balance persist, possibly influenced by the prevalent patriarchal setup and family structures in the communities where most men often abandon their households. The impact of COVID-19 on project implementation emerges as a crucial aspect, showcasing the project's adaptability and resilience. Delays in housing projects, increased expenses, and limitations on counsellors' movements reflected the challenges faced. The pandemic disrupted communication and reporting channels, highlighting the importance of flexibility and innovative solutions in overcoming obstacles. Despite these challenges, the commitment to continuing support during the pandemic, such as delivering medication to homes, reflects the project's dedication to community welfare. Finally, environmental considerations within the project revealed a conscientious effort taken up to an extent, towards environmental sustainability. Stakeholder insights highlight the integration of environmentally friendly agricultural practices and innovative technologies in both Rakai and Lyantonde. Training sessions on practices such as regarding the usage and promotion of tippi-tap hand washing devices and energy-saving stoves demonstrate a commitment to mitigating environmental degradation. The consideration of environmental factors during construction further emphasises a holistic approach to community development. However, there remains room for further enhancement of environmentally conscious efforts within the project.

CHAPTER 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

15. **Strengthen Long-Term Vision and Dependency Prevention:** Develop a clear long-term vision for the project that goes beyond addressing short-term needs. Consider strategies to prevent the development of dependency among beneficiaries, such as incorporating skills development and economic empowerment initiatives to foster sustainable livelihoods. Further, strategies could also include strengthening advocacy work with governments to take up more initiatives to support the communities even after RACOBABO's interventions end.
16. **Define a Framework for Vulnerability:** Establish a well-defined framework for vulnerability within the project that aligns with the approach of RACOBABO for the purposes of clarity. This should include providing clear definitions of what 'deprivation', 'vulnerability' and 'marginalisation' mean and how each of the social structures interact with one another creating an individual or groups' social status leading to systemic inequalities. This should include clearly defining the inclusion and exclusion criteria to identify and prioritise different challenges faced by households to ensure consistency and fairness in interventions. This will contribute to a more equitable and well-informed selection process.
17. **Improve Community Understanding and Ownership:** Strengthen community understanding of the project's objectives and ensure that beneficiaries perceive the houses and goats as their own rather than the organisation's. We recommend implementing targeted communication strategies to enhance community ownership and dispel any misconceptions regarding project resources.
18. **Address Challenges in Water Tank Management:** Develop sustainable management strategies for water tanks to prevent conflicts among beneficiaries. We recommend considering regular community-wide discussions on resource-sharing practices to maintain a delicate balance between individual needs and communal responsibilities.
19. **Diversify Usage of Resources:** Explore opportunities to diversify the usage of resources provided, particularly in the context of kitchen gardens and provision of goats. We recommend engaging the communities in discussions to understand their preferences and needs for better resource utilisation in the long-term ensuring power imbalances are managed effectively. This should include identifying a facilitator from the community who can initiate the discussion and encourage participants to express their preferences based on their social and economic needs without fear of losing existing support.
20. **Monitor and Reinforce Intended Use of Project Resources:** Implement robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure that resources provided, especially during training sessions, are utilised as intended. Our recommendation is to address the concerns expressed by beneficiaries regarding the inefficient utilisation of resources. There seems to be a lack of consideration for the overall needs of the community and households. It is crucial to reinforce the importance of adhering to the project's objectives and responding effectively to the needs of the community.
21. **Capacity Building for CSO Collaborations:** RACOBABO understand the intricate challenges that NGOs encounter, particularly those related to legal matters affecting collaborative efforts. As such, investing in capacity building initiatives for its staff becomes imperative. By providing training sessions focused on legal considerations, conflict resolution techniques, and adaptive strategies, RACOBABO can equip its team with the necessary skills to navigate complexities adeptly. This proactive approach will not only empower the organisation to overcome hurdles effectively but also promote enduring and productive partnerships with other CSOs to deal with various challenges faced by the disadvantaged communities in Lyantonde and Rakai.

22. **Active participation of community members to build a sense of ownership and avoid dependency:** The positive collaboration with local leaders and government officials suggests a strong foundation for community engagement. RACOBABO should continue to strengthen the efforts in community sensitisation, creating a sense of ownership and active participation among community members. This could include awareness campaigns on the importance of sustainable development, reducing dependency, and encouraging a proactive attitude towards community well-being.
23. **Advocacy for Government Support:** Acknowledging the positive collaboration with local governments and the recognition of budget constraints, RACOBABO can engage in advocacy efforts to secure increased government budget allocation for community development initiatives but can also explore methods to encourage governments to assume responsibility, recognising that this is a monumental task that demands a well-crafted, long-term advocacy strategy. Demonstrating the tangible impact of projects and aligning them with government priorities can strengthen the case for continued and expanded support.
24. **Promote Inclusivity and Diversity in Collaborations:** Given the evolving partnership landscape and the call for expanded operations to other districts, RACOBABO should actively seek collaborations that promote inclusivity and diversity, especially when it comes to actively engaging PwDs, including men and boys to become champions of gender inequalities and GBV, and promoting climate change practices. Engaging with a diverse set of partners and communities can bring varied perspectives and approaches, enriching the overall impact of its initiatives.
25. **Balanced Gender Engagement:** Develop targeted strategies to engage men actively as voices against gender-inequalities and gender-related challenges. Even though there is a challenge of less men being present in the communities, concerted efforts could still be taken place to engage these individuals to ensure a holistic approach to building and sustaining impacts for the overall community.
26. **Environmental Sustainability Integration:** Strengthen the project's commitment to environmental sustainability by expanding training on eco-friendly practices and technologies such as rainwater harvesting, clean energy, solar powers etc. This would mean building capacity of the communities to maintain these commitments. In addition, RACOBABO could explore opportunities to collaborate with local environmental organisations for additional thematic expertise and support where feasible.
27. **Collaborative Learning and Knowledge Sharing:** Facilitate knowledge-sharing platforms between Rakai and Lyantonde stakeholders to exchange successful strategies and lessons learned. We recommend encouraging cross-regional collaboration to leverage the strengths and experiences of each community.
28. **Gender Mainstreaming Training:** We recommend providing long-term regular training for RACOBABO project staff on gender mainstreaming, ensuring a consistent and gender-sensitive approach in all project activities. This will foster an inclusive work environment that encourages diverse perspectives and experiences among project staff.

Annex 1: List of Secondary Documents reviewed

1. Guide for RACOBABO
2. ICA/MFA Framework Agreement
3. 2023 Field Visit Report
4. 2023 HWI Activity Plan
5. Annual Report for HWI, 2023
6. Draft Cooperation Agreement RACOBABO/ICA
7. HWI Log frame, 2022
8. ICA RACOBABO Project Document (2022-2025)
9. HWI Logical Framework
10. RACOBABO Project Status, December 2022
11. HWI Log frame, 2023

Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix (Attached separately)