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Assessing the relevance of marketing skills in community development and household progress in rural poor communities: a case study of Kasolwe and Ndolwa rural communities in Kamuli district, eastern Uganda, 2008

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Introduction:

This study reports on interventions made to enhance the orientation of rural poor farmers to a market economy. Like many rural smallholder farmers in Uganda, the rural fish farmers and fishing communities studied face two major problems that hinder their full orientation to a market economy: 1. remoteness in technology and distance from major and bigger fish markets; and 2. low marketing knowledge and skills, a combination that leads to relatively higher post harvest losses. Assessment was made to establish the level of marketing knowledge and skills, and marketing experience of those involved in fish trading and a strategy was designed to enhance marketing skills and bring the markets nearer to the communities. The following are the full results of the study.

Materials and methods:

Selected randomly out of the identified general fisher folk population in Kasolwe, Ndolwa and surrounding communities; eighty-eight (88) fish production, supply and marketing stakeholders were interviewed by the writer for this study. In this regard, (2) two sub county fisheries offices (Buyende and Balawoli sub counties), (12) twelve Local Council I Chairpersons, (12) twenty community members, (38) thirty-eight fish distributors, as well as (16) sixteen BOMOSA plot committee members were consulted for fish marketing discussions.

Areas of interest for the study were to: (a) identify the fish production, supply and marketing stakeholders near Kasolwe and Ndolwa community water reservoirs, (b) gain information on existing and potential markets and market centers for BOMOSA cage fish, (b) gain insight into the distribution channels of fish from Kasolwe and Ndolwa communities and (d) establish the condition of fish production and distribution support infrastructure like power availability, road network and accessibility of the BOMOSA plots and handling centers.

Data was collected through interviews, formal meetings and informal group discussions with the identified respondents guided by a checklist. Formal discussion meetings were arranged with sub county fisheries officers and Local council chairpersons while meetings and interviews with community members and fish distributors were informal and abrupt. This was highly supported by informal group discussions with the BOMOSA plot communities.

Results and discussion:

A survey of 88 fish producers and marketing stakeholders in Kasolwe and Ndolwa communities of Kamuli district, Eastern Uganda depicts that of the 14 local fish markets within 45 km radius only two (14.3%) fish markets (Buyende and Kamuli) attract major buyers. The remaining twelve (85.7%) markets have insufficient demand to uptake the produced fish (see figure 1). With poverty, looming rural communities have their biggest wealth as primary agriculture production. However, even with high production they yet again face a new challenge of low market opportunities. Buyende and Kamuli markets together make up a dwindling 7 tons (23.3%) of fish produced per month as compared to the production capacity of over 30 tons according to the stakeholders interviewed. In general Kamuli town market receives six (6) big fish buyers' 1 ton trucks every month and Buyende market receives only one (1) of such trucks, while the rest of the markets receive none per month. This leaves the other twelve markets dependent on the local infrequent fish consumer population. Generally, this situation is on one hand due to long distances between production points and major markets, coupled with poor transport and other infrastructure, and remoteness in technology to preserve and handle produced fish for a preferably longer time; but also largely because of low marketing knowledge, skills and activities held by the local populace. 83% of the stakeholders (majority of whom (57%) only hold primary (elementary) education are semi literate) interviewed had never received training or sensitization on marketing skills and appropriate marketing behavior, while 17% only employed their retail shops experience to trade fish.

A combination of low marketing skills, remoteness in technology and poor facilitating infrastructure like transport and processing facilities together causes low out flow of fish from these two rural and neighboring communities in the name of poor markets that result into huge fish and other production spoilage by rural farmers. Production spoilage however, does not only lead to financial loss but discourages production as it leads to falling motivation and inefficiency. Therefore with continued production loss to spoilage many farmers resign to low productivity suffocating markets further while facing income loss to individuals and the economy at large.

In bid to improve marketability of the produced fish, a committee (BOMOSA plot committee) was set up at each of the two sites to take care of and develop appropriate market strategies for their produce, organize means by which to access bigger markets and attract better buyers. As a result, outsider buyers were enticed into venturing into these two communities in search of fish. There was also an increase in household fish production with new demand. This study confirms that with targeted practical knowledge and skills rural farmers can be brought into the market economy, and availing marketing skills for the rural smallholder producer communities can work to improve attitudes and creativity in accessing market and trigger higher productivity with a multiplicity of community benefits that lead to community and household progress.

Access to sufficient markets is a key factor in orienting small-scale rural farmers to the world socioeconomic and market trends in face of soaring agricultural prices and changing weather conditions. Marketing is the pivot of economic development in rural areas. It is an essential component in income and employment generation in farm and non-farm sectors. In no sense, a social cluster or village economy as a whole can be developed without effective and efficient rural marketing. However, access to sufficient markets can be achieved by good information of markets, good marketing knowledge and skills and ability to network and

attract sufficient demand for production. Another key element in elevating rural community production is the extension of reliable modern production facilitating infrastructure. Facilities like good transportation systems that involve good road networks and sufficient automobiles, reliable communication facilities, accessible credit facilities and good processing systems are necessities for rural production development, and are key aspects that support marketing strategies for their role in getting markets near to production.

Conclusions and outlook:

Poor marketing knowledge, skills and ability, remoteness in technology and poor production facilitating infrastructure are key impediments to rural market orientation and rural production and account for some of the leading reasons for rural production spoilage like discovered by this study.

Better-informed rural producers with good markets knowledge and marketing skills find it easier to market their produce to sufficient demand points minimizing production spoilage. By setting up plot committees and putting in place a process, rules and regulations for resource use and product marketing not only do the small-scale farmers gain better market but also better serious buyers pick interest in dealing with orderly and organized community systems that exhibit legality and low risk. This also suggests that farmer groups and collective marketing are the way to go for rural poor communities. Policy options that target market information flow, sensitization and training and community capacity building in better community resource management and marketing are thus inevitable in formulating future development projects for grassroots producer communities.

References:

- Bende, Andrew Julius BOMOSA Cage Fish Farming Project Baseline Survey Report for Kasolwe and Ndolwa BOMOSA sites Communities, Uganda.
- Entreprise Diversification, Improved Protein Intake and Communal Resource Utilization : A Case of BOMOSA Cage Fish Farming, Kenya and Uganda
- John Hoddinott, Methods for Rural Development Projects, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC, August 2002

Appendices:

Figure 1: Market centre details:

Reference plot	Market centre	Distance from plot (km)	No. of market days and days	Main sources of fish to this market	Distance from market (km)
Kasolwe community dam	Kasolwe centre market	0.5	7 (daily)	Lake Kyoga landing sites (L/S) as below:	All the markets fall within 31 to 41 Km from all the landing sites listed
	Namusita market	3	7 (daily)	- Ikanda L/S	
	Kikubi market	4	7 (daily)	- Iremerya L/S	
	Nawantale market	8	1 (Tuesday)	- Nduulya L/S	
	Makanga Kinambogo market	16	7 (daily)	- Kakoooge L/S	
	Mubeya market	19	1 (Saturday)	- Kigingi L/S	
	Masaka Ndolwa market	18	1 (Sunday)	- Nkondo L/S	
	Nabigwo Maseete market	19	1 (Tuesday)	- Bukungu L/S	
	Buyende market	18	7 (daily)	- Iringa L/S	
	Bugogo Kinambogo	13	1 (Thursday)		
	Bugobi Kiige	6	7 (daily)		
	Butemawa market	24	1 (Friday)		
	Ndolwa centre market	11	7 (daily)		
	Balawoli market	16	1 (Wednesday)		
	Kamuli town markets	30	7 (daily)		
Ndolwa community dam	Makanga Kinambogo market	1	7 (daily)	Lake Kyoga landing sites (L/S) as below:	All the markets fall within 30 to 40 Km from all the landing sites
	Bugogo Kinambogo	2	1 (Thursday)	- Ikanda L/S	
	Buyende market	3	7 (daily)	- Iremerya L/S	
	Ndolwa Kinambogo	4	7 (daily)	- Nduulya L/S	
	Nabigwo Maseete market	4	1 (Tuesday)	- Kakoooge L/S	
	Mubeya market	7	1 (Saturday)	- Kigingi L/S	
	Masaka Ndolwa market	7	1 (Sunday)	- Nkondo L/S	
	Bugobi Kiige	9	7 (daily)	- Kiige L/S	
	Butemawa market	13	1 (Friday)	- Bukungu L/S	
	Kasolwe market	15	7 (daily)	- Iringa L/S	
	Balawoli market	35	7 (daily)		
	Kamuli town markets	45	7 (daily)		

Figure 2: Market centre vs. stakeholder details:

Reference plot	Market centre	Stakeholders	Fish marketing functions	Comments		
Kasolve community dam	Kasolve centre market	Wholesalers	Fisher folks	Marketing activities are still slow in both Kasolve and Ndolwa communities and this is mainly attributed to the barter way exchange largely practiced in most rural communities in Uganda.		
	Namusita market	Fisher folk	- Fishing function/capturing fish			
	Kikubi market	Retailers	- Movement of fish from fishing points to market/retailers			
	Naventale market	Market supervisors	- Setting up fish stands to sell fish in the market			
	Makanga Kinambogo market	Consumers				
	Mubeya market					
	Masaka Ndolwa market		Market Supervisors			
	Nabigyo Maseete market		- Controlling the quality of all merchandise sold in the markets fish inclusive			
	Buyende market		- Issuing selling permission to fish retailers and other marketers			
	Bugogo Kinambogo market		- Collecting market dues			
	Bugobi Kiige					
	Butemawa market					
	Ndolwa centre market					
	Balawoli market		Retailers:			
	Kamuli town markets		- Buying fish from fisher folks and wholesalers and in turn selling it to consumers			
	Ndolwa community dam	Makanga Kinawambogo market			Consumers	There a few wholesalers found in selected markets due to the size of the markets. The bigger the market the bigger the number of wholesalers.
		Bugogo Kinambogo			- Buying of fish and other products from fisher folks and retailers	
Buyende market						
Ndolwa Kinambogo			Wholesalers:			
Nabigyo Maseete market			- Buying fish from fisher folks, transporting it to market centers and near market centers and selling it to retailers			
Mubeya market						
Masaka Ndolwa market						
Bugobi Kiige						
Butemawa market						
Balawoli market						
Kasolve market						
Kamuli town markets			- Selling fish to processing plantings			
			- Exporting raw and processed fish to bigger markets			

Figure 3: Community infrastructure information:

Market centre	Indicator	Current condition	Reliability	Other comments
Kasolve & Ndolwa community dams	Electricity	Present	Not reliable	Kasolve stock farm has electricity but not easily accessible by community members, however, with the inclusion of the stock farm management in the BOMOSA project, access to electricity can be tremendously made reliable.
	Roads	Present	Reliable	Kasolve community and BOMOSA site at Kasolve community dam lie on the 1 st class mumum road to Lake Kyoga landing sites, thus reliably accessible by road and the road network within the community is fairly reliable
	Storage facilities	Absent	Not reliable	There being no electricity and gas being expensive, storage facilities are not reliable here in terms of fish storage. However, traditional granaries are present and to a big part reliable as regards grain and other dry food storage
	Public transportation	Present	Reliable	There are a number of taxis (Matatus) and lorries that ferry people and commodities from the Lake Kyoga landing sites and other rural dwellings to the Kamuli centre and beyond.
	Other means of transport	Present	Reliable	- There are a number of motorcycles for hire to use for transportation - Bicycles for hire to use for transportation - Private lorries carrying other merchandise can also be easily hired
	Public Retail /wholesale market facilities	Present	Reliable	- Market stands to facilitate selling of fish and other merchandise
	Banks	Absent	Not reliable	- The nearest bank to the two communities is at least 32 Km - However, there are at least three (3) Savings and Credit Cooperatives societies (SACCOs)
Other Non-Banking institutions	Present	Reliable	- Schools - Churches - CBOs	