

In 2009, AVSI-USA received private funding to launch an innovative project to help improve the well-being of the most vulnerable women in the early recovery of Northern Uganda. The Women's Income Generating Support (WINGS) Project is also an opportunity to critically assess the effectiveness of AVSI's methodology and approach to economic strengthening for women and children within a post-conflict setting.

AVSI-USA has partnered with AVSI Uganda to implement project activities in Gulu and Kitgum districts, and with researchers at Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) to conduct a randomized impact evaluation of the activities and results. The WINGS Project will not only promote holistic empowerment of women and children, it will also contribute to the understanding of what works, why and for whom.

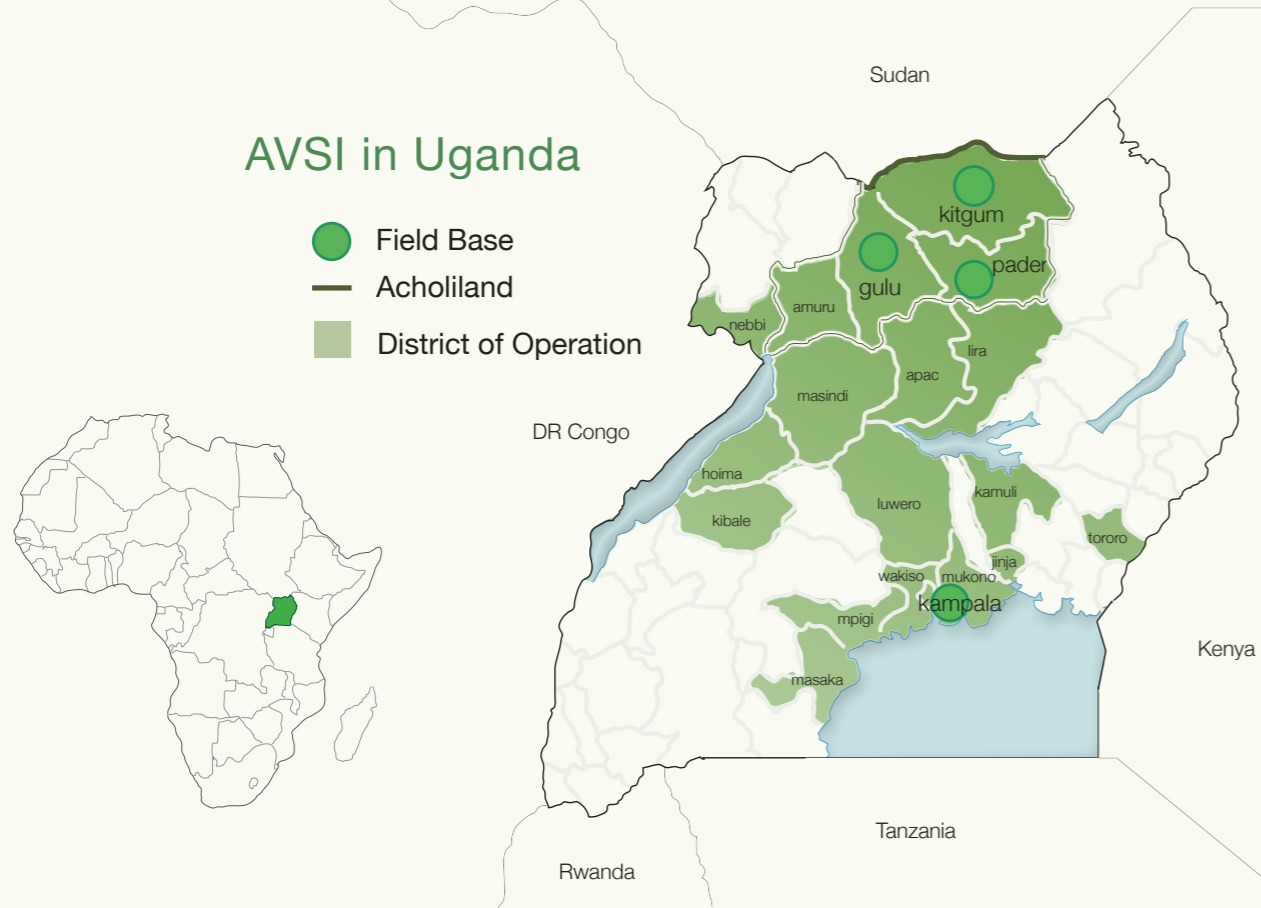
This book provides a glimpse into the WINGS Project as it approaches the end of the second of three years. All data presented is preliminary and intended only to give an overall picture of the current state of the project. The individual stories told by the beneficiaries, while shedding light on some general successes and challenges, will hopefully serve also as a reminder that behind each of the numbers is a person striving for a better future.

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Northern Uganda

AVSI in Uganda

- Field Base
- Acholiland
- District of Operation



Following the overthrow in 1986 of President Tito Okello, an Acholi by tribe, by the National Resistance Army (NRA) of current Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, numerous insurgencies resulted in Acholiland; the current, and most destructive being a rebel movement called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony. The LRA has since become notorious for their abductions, mass-murders, and seemingly inane terrorization of Northern Uganda.

After more than two years of tenuous peace negotiations, Kony ultimately failed to sign a peace treaty in April of 2009, citing fear of arrest by the International Criminal Court (ICC). While the LRA is currently inactive in Uganda, they have continued their patterns of abduction and killing in DR Congo, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic. More than twenty years of subsequent war and forced displacement have left virtually the entire population of northern Uganda impoverished. With the majority of the approximately 1.6 million displaced persons in northern Uganda having returned from the Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) Camps to their home villages, it will still take many years for households and communities to build up the assets to achieve pre-war levels of productivity and income.

Recent evidence suggests that women and girls in particular have suffered economically and educationally from the war. This evidence, along with program experience among NGOs in northern Uganda, suggests that the development of new economic opportunities and building social capital will be crucial ingredients in reducing poverty and improving the health, education and psychosocial well-being of youth in northern Uganda. Young women, especially those with children or orphans to care for, are in most need of such livelihoods assistance. This includes a disproportionate number of formerly abducted young mothers, most of whom do not return to school.

The evidence also suggests that even modest amounts of start-up capital and training can help these youth develop new and better livelihoods, especially alternatives to brewing alcohol, principally by helping them jump from low-skill and low-capital activities to higher skill and higher-capital ones. Earnings can be productively applied to school fees for the young woman herself or her children. AVSI's experience with similar programs suggests that such funds are well used and can be highly successful with sufficient monitoring and accountability.



Project Background

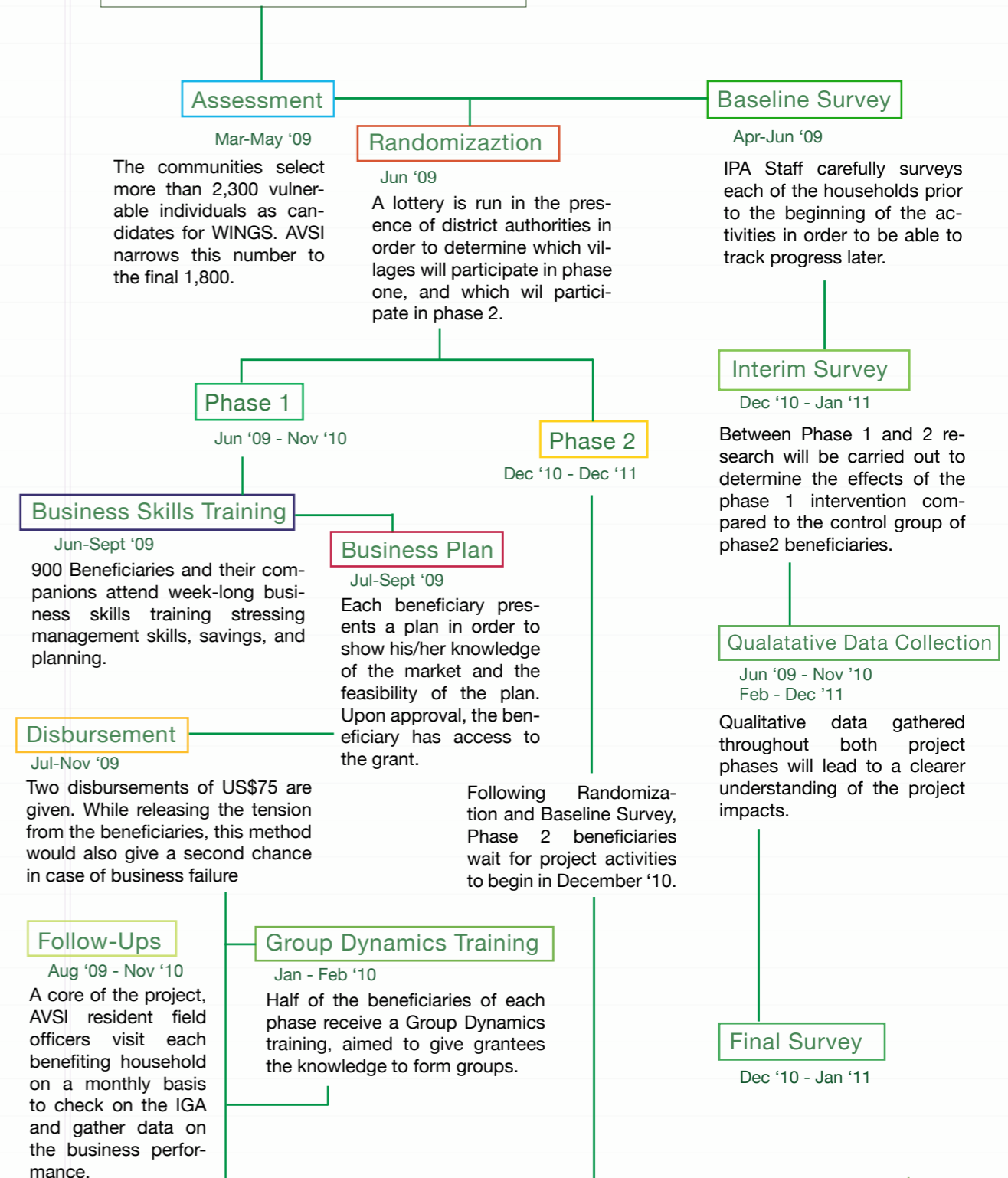
Since 1984 AVSI has been working side-by-side with the people of northern Uganda, assisting them in responding to their needs even in the periods of greatest insecurity and violence. Together, and supported by numerous collaborators and donors, much has been accomplished in terms of education, health, water supply, and emergency responses. As the period of displacement gradually ends and the transition to a peaceful recovery takes hold, AVSI has moved to a greater focus on programs that aim to restore human capacity for work and income generation.

Over time and through reflection on these experiences, AVSI has recognized the urgent need for serious attention to helping families and households regain the ability to provide for their basic needs and to build a stable future. Given the rural context of much of northern Uganda, prospects for formal employment are low while opportunities for self-employment through business, and particularly farming as a business, are many. The recent Survey of War Affected Youth (SWAY) – a large-scale study of children and young adults affected by the war in northern Uganda—confirmed that youth who are rapidly moving into their adult years lack the training and access to initial capital necessary to successfully build a micro-enterprise. At the same time,

these same youth display remarkable resilience despite their life experiences.

Drawing on these experiences and reflections, AVSI developed a livelihoods approach which starts from the positive—the assets of the individual, the family and the community—and extends a relationship, not just a service, within which risks can be taken and a business can be grown. The approach combines basic business skills training, guidance on preparation of a business plan, modest start-up capital in the form of a grant, and close follow-up support. When possible, AVSI encourages the formation of support groups which can facilitate savings, market linkages, economies of scale on labor and purchasing, and most importantly can contribute to the social fabric of the community. Interested not only in the economic results of beneficiaries, AVSI insists on a personalized approach to service delivery, including close follow-up of each beneficiary to help him/her address challenges and embrace opportunities. This feature is particularly important when in front of young women and men with significant vulnerabilities. The research team from IPA is also committed to studying the impact on personal and social empowerment of women as well as the well-being of their children, families and community.

Project Design



SWAY

In 2007 AVSI and its research partners surveyed more than 600 young females aged 14 to 35 affected by the conflict in northern Uganda as part of the SWAY II Project - a survey designed to promote evidence-based programming for youth in Northern Uganda. Together with the 741 males, and more than 1,000 households surveyed in '05/'06 as part of SWAY I, the project provides decision makers with the information critical to the implementation of policies and ways to prioritize funding for new programs and targeted assistance.

SWAY I Report:

<http://chrisblattman.com/documents/policy/sway/SWAY.Phase1.FinalReport.pdf>



SWAY II Report:

<http://chrisblattman.com/documents/policy/sway/SWAY.Phase2.FinalReport.pdf>



Several important conclusions for post conflict programming were found, ultimately pointing to an expansion of programs more targeted to youth with the most serious educational, economic, psychosocial, and health challenges. Such programs, SWAY suggested, would not need to specifically target former abductees, but could target beneficiaries based on self-selecting criteria and easily identifiable needs.

- Incomes and employment reported by young women are devastatingly low—most work less than two days a week and earn less than US\$0.75 a day.
- The economic activities available to young women are fewer, less independent and skilled, and generate less income than those available to young men.
- The quality and quantity of employment and earnings depend on skills and finance: youth are able to improve their employment and earnings over time (and change their activities) if they can accumulate both resources.
- Women are partly constrained in their livelihoods by a relative lack of skills, but appear most constrained by a lack of capital and experience.
- The most common economic activity reported by women is alcohol brewing and distilling, followed by agriculture. Brewing alcohol appears to be the best use of very small amounts of inputs and capital, but women seek better alternatives when the capital is available.
- One in five female youth have received no education whatsoever, and only 33% are functionally literate.
- Rates of primary school enrolment are high among adolescent girls, but transition to secondary school is more rare in large part because of school fees and child care responsibilities.
- Part-time employment, particularly home enterprises, is a primary factor that enables adolescent and young adult women to continue their studies.



WINGS Profile

Of the 2,300 people identified as potential WINGS participants, AVSI selected 1,800 beneficiaries, 86 percent of whom are female. The average age of WINGS beneficiaries is 27. Half of all beneficiaries are married, and the average beneficiary has between 3 and 4 children.

The educational profile of beneficiaries reflects their status as vulnerable individuals who came of age during a conflict that interrupted school access, particularly for women. Nearly half of all beneficiaries have never attended school, and only 23 percent are literate. Only 5 percent have

ever attended adult education classes, and just 2 percent have received vocational training at a higher learning institution.

Throughout the selection process, AVSI staff has tried to reach the most vulnerable households among the targeted communities, evaluating level of education, household assets, income to household member ratio and general health situation. It is then staggering that 74% of WINGS beneficiaries represent the main breadwinner in their household.



Jera Atimango. Assorted Items Sales.

BST and Grants

Following a displacement such as that in northern Uganda where millions of individuals were forced from their homes, fields and livestock, resources are typically scarce for those rebuilding their lives and homes. Prior to the start of WINGS, beneficiaries reported incomes averaging US\$1.40 per week. Only 15 percent of respondents have savings — US\$11.20 on average.

AVSI provided a three-day course in basic business skills (BST) for all participants. This course covers topics necessary for the planning, starting, and managing of simple business activities. The course benefits both those already engaged in a micro-enterprise and also those who are beginning for the first time. The BST course covers the following topics and activities:

- Identification, planning, and start-up of a feasible, viable income generating activity or business, including business plan preparation.
- Available sources of capital.
- Possible constraints and problems affecting business growth and possible solutions, including problem-solving training.
- Entrepreneurial skills.
- Management skills.
- Value of savings and opportunities to save.

AVSI assessed the effectiveness of the course and teaching methods through the use of a pre and post test of participants' business skills knowledge. Two weeks after the Business Skills Training, clients submitted Business Plans to the AVSI team. Each plan was reviewed and discussed with the client. Upon approval, the client then became eligible for the start up grant.

All direct participants (1,800) will receive individual grants: 900 beneficiaries per year for two years in Gulu and Kitgum districts. On an individual basis, all participants received a start-up grant of approximately US\$150 to be used for the implementation of the approved business plans. As confirmed by the SWAY study, access to sufficient capital for the initiation of a minimally capital-intensive business venture is a key barrier for youth to enter the world of business. Through years of experience, AVSI has settled upon this figure of approximately \$150 as an appropriate level for a start-up grant among similar client populations, taking into consideration the beneficiaries' capacity to manage and utilize the money and the capital needs of the average income generating activity, and thus the actual funding requests received from clients.

Jera Artimango. 39, Namokora, widowed mother of 4.

“I was born here, grew up here, and was married here in Onyala. The earliest thing I remember is when I was young - growing up here life was easy... I can even say it was better! I began my studies in Onyala Primary but stopped in primary three when my father told me to stop studying and to start weeding the garden and helping around the house; in those days the parents did not value education. About 3 years later I was married. We always had enough food, and the problems we are facing now were not there. This was all before the insurgency. In 2001 we were all forced to move to Namokora, and then, 6 years ago, before we came back home, my husband was killed.

I am alone now, without anyone who can help me to support the children. Before the WINGS project we were just struggling to look for money but there is completely nothing which people can do to earn a living in the Camp. We were staying seated waiting for everything to be given; the basic needs of life – food, shelter, etc. - we were all waiting for them be given by the government and other agencies.

We returned home in 2006 and I decided now to work hard in order for my children to live well now and study so they are successful in the future. I want my children to be educated because I don't want them to suffer like me. After two years of planting simsim and ground nuts I saw that I was not going to consume it all, so I sold 3 basins full of simsim and ½ sack of gnuts. This was the beginning of my business activity. The other thing I found I could do was to

brew alcohol – Kwete – the local waragi. Family expenses would take the business money though and make the level of the business lower. After some short time there were no funds to solve either the family or the business issues.

“Family expenses would take the business money... After some short time there were no funds to solve either the family or the business issues. The business could not have succeeded to this point without the trainings.”

With the WINGS grant I was able to continue doing what I was doing, but more of it. I can know that since there's some money to take care of household things I don't have to worry. Because of the training we are so much more knowledgeable about business; the choices of businesses, the plan, the savings and management. The business could not have succeeded to this point without the trainings. After the training I gained so much self-confidence as well.

I'll add more to my business slowly slowly. For now I have 3 gardens and will harvest sorghum, simsim, maize and millet. I think next year the business will grow well if the harvest will be good this year. The profits will grow once more attention can be paid to the business now that these food needs will be taken care of. I can really thank the business for this empowerment in life.”



1. Jera weeds a garden of maize with her youngest daughter Ayubo. Weeding the three plots Jera has planted requires about 4 hours of work each day from Jera, and the help of her two eldest daughters when they are not in school. 2. Jera's second-born, Amona, cleans greens harvested from the garden for the daily meal. 3. Jera sells cooking oil to a neighbor. 4. Jera and Ayubo prepare locally picked mushrooms at home for dinner. 5. Millet and sorghum ground into flour serve as the foundation of most of the family's meals.

“Business here has always been centered around the needs of food, and I imagine that it will continue this way,” says Jera. Not surprisingly, the most common occupational activity in Acholiland is farming; 84 percent reported farming for cash or goods in the past 7 days. A quarter of respondents also reported engaging in casual labor in the past week. Before being enrolled as WINGS beneficiaries, brewing beer was another important economic activity for 20% of the beneficiaries.

Data from the baseline survey conducted prior to the start of the business phase of the project showed that while about 94% of beneficiaries had access to land, 44% of the beneficiaries had gained no income within the last week. “With the grant I was able to continue doing what I was doing, but more of it,” explained Jera. “At least now, with access to land, you can plant your maize, weed your maize, and expect maize in return. I can know that since there's some money to take care of household things I don't have to worry.”

14) How many hours per day do you spend on this business? None A little (1 to 4 hours) A lot (more than 4 hours)

15) How much does this vary from day to day? None A little (1 to 4 hours) A lot (more than 4 hours)

16) How much grant money have you used for the business/es up to now? UGSh Yes No

17) a) Have you borrowed money to invest in your business, from the last follow up? No Yes

b) If yes, how much money have you borrowed? From Friends: From Bank or Microfinance Group: Other:



Anna Laweno. Business Capital Stolen.

Evaluation Strategy

The WINGS program is an unconventional and innovative model of post conflict recovery and empowerment. IPA and a select team of experienced researchers has been working closely with AVSI to coordinate the integrated program-research design. Rigorous evaluation will allow the approach to be further refined, but more importantly, will demonstrate the usefulness of the approach within northern Uganda and for other humanitarian agencies. Hence, the evaluation is a major component of the proposed program in order to understand what aspects of the program work, for whom, how much, and why.

Such evidence is sorely needed. Helping the most vulnerable young women and mothers develop sustainable livelihoods is one of the most challenging tasks in humanitarian aid. The determinants of successful micro-enterprise development in such situations are not well understood. Moreover, the linkages between economic empowerment and social and psychological well-being are completely unknown. The evidence produced by an experimental study of the AVSI program could help to revolutionize several spheres of humanitarian aid.

The randomized evaluation relies upon two phases of intervention with program beneficiaries phased-in over two years. All 1,800 benefi-

ciaries have been assessed and identified in advance, with assignment to phase 1 or 2 of the program performed by lottery, thus using beneficiaries intended for Phase 2 as a comparison group for Phase 1 beneficiaries. Pre- and post-program surveys of all those are being undertaken as a way to more fully understand the effects of WINGS.

The indicators for measuring program impacts have been developed through extensive survey development and testing in northern Uganda. Several of the indicators—of social support, psychosocial well-being, and risky behavior, for instance—were developed by the SWAY researchers. Measures of consumption, earnings, assets, savings, and trust/cohesion have been piloted in an ongoing evaluation of a government youth training program in northern Uganda by one of the IPA researchers (Chris Blattman). Instruments and indices on domestic violence and women's empowerment and status are based on a recent Uganda-wide survey by a Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), and have been further pre-tested and adapted to the northern Uganda context by the researchers. Where possible, questions are written so as to be consistent with nationally representative data collected by DHS and the Uganda Bureau of Statistics.

Anna Laweno. 26, Married mother of 4.

Other people in the community saw the money I was given as a problem sometimes. In a jealous way they could look at you and think you were given richness while they have to climb another step still. What they don't realize is that we were at an even lower level than they were, and now we're not necessarily any higher; it's just that we were given some money.

I kept the money in a tin and put it deep inside of a bag of sorghum here in the house. There was a day when my child was sick so I went to pick the money, but found the tin laying on top of the sorghum and the money was gone. They stole about 276,000 shillings (\$138). As soon as the money was stolen I became confused and so depressed at how my life could be this way. We investigated but still they didn't find who did it. This is something that could have been solved if I had a bank. I thought of saving the profits from the business in the bank, but hadn't started yet.

My business plan was based on selling fish and cooking oil. I would buy the items from Kitgum town and could sell them at the local market here. Losing all that money, I lost the business. I'm still selling some of the fish and oil from the stock that wasn't stolen, but this is really very little... about 10K worth of stock, which can bring almost nothing. I wouldn't say that the business brought more trouble than good, but I can say it has been very difficult. It is still helping in a small way since there was the training and the sharing of ideas and business management. We want to

continue struggling to bring up a business, even if we're starting from very little. Once our food stock is comfortable we can focus on using this knowledge from the trainings to come up. We were lifted up to another level with the training and the grant, then dropped back when the money was stolen. We can still go back up again I hope.

"When there are sheep, cattle, milking cows, and people in the gardens with oxploughs... this is when we will have gotten past this insurgency."

People are saying that there is peace, but I don't think so. There's not total peace until people are digging in groups communally for Kwere or food. When there are people in their gardens with oxploughs I'll then feel like there's peace. When there's sheep, cattle, milking cows, and when people like us are comfortable again - this is when we will have gotten past this insurgency.

My dream was to have children and see them grow up educated. Now I'm seeing this happen somehow, but not exactly as I imagined it. Sitting around the fireplace helps us to interact with the children and educate them on the cultural ways and their kinship and the stories of personalities and of what happened a long time ago. I suppose this is a story that I will tell my children one day, but I hope that by that time the story is somehow positive.



1. Moving to the garden in the morning, Anna is devoted again entirely to the farming following the collapse of her business. 2. Anna at home with her youngest child, Oromo. 3. "Sitting here with my children after I've returned from the field and prepared the meal is the best part of my day," explained Anna.

The figures below show the expenditures patterns, of the 900 Phase I households for the month prior to the data collection. The three main priorities of our beneficiaries are food, school fees and household assets; these represent more than 2/3 of the total monthly expenses. Health and Agricultural expenses are following, respectively with 11% and 12%. Minor expenses go into traditional ceremonies, loans or gifts to family or friends, mobile phone airtime, alcohol and other entertainment.

Category	Percentage
Household Assets	22%
Health	11%
Agriculture	12%
Other	6%
Funeral/Wedding	7%
School Fees	21%
Food	21%



Apio Mary, Assorted Goods.

Challenges to Recovery

Beyond the challenges of the lack of services in the return areas - the difficulties in accessing overgrown and often disputed land as well as the lack of established governance at parish level – there also exists the fact that an entire population has been uprooted from largely agriculturally- based lives of relative solitude to a crowded existence in camps. While approximately 95% of the Acholi population displaced into camps have returned or are in the process of returning to the lives they knew before the conflict in their villages, the prolonged displacement has had an undeniable effect on society. The camps were essentially market hubs which became bloated with households from area villages. The dense social life in the camps brought with it changes in the nature of business, and in some cases changes in personal behavior. Those who made a life for themselves in the camps now face the choice of whether or not to move again from a life they have grown accustomed to; the habit of trading is now strongly rooted among many, and these new business centers considerably increase the market potential for those engaged in business. The habits of those who have taken up drinking or other unproductive behaviors are also served well by life in the camps.

While it is the goal of WINGS to improve the

wellbeing of beneficiaries irrespective of their particular demographics, it's clear that the WINGS program has the potential to have both positive and negative impacts at the community level. By increasing the incomes and social acceptance of the most vulnerable members of the community, a mild improvement in aggregate economic well-being and community cohesion is possible. Of concern is whether support for new micro enterprises could have negative consequences for existing small business owners and vendors, possibly by reducing sales and profit margins for all.

To assess these wider impacts, local market surveys of activity, sales and profitability among non-beneficiaries have and will be carried out. Non-beneficiaries in communities that receive the program in the first phase can be compared to non-beneficiaries in the temporary control communities. Variation in the size of the initial market (relative to the number of local beneficiaries) will also provide variation in aggregate impact that can be measured.

Market Survey Report:

<http://www.avsi-usa.org/docs/pdf/WINGS%20Market%20Study.pdf>



Apio Mary. 46, married mother of 9. Community Leader.

“When people were in the camps they wasted their time, were idle, and not up to any good at all. But now people are developing for themselves because they are able to farm, to form groups, and be together as families. I think the Camps are where so many of the problems have come from: this situation in whereby men are not able to provide for their families, and the women and children lose respect when he begins drinking the little they have.

It was this time of insecurity that I came up as a leader in the community. I’ve been elected as a Local Council Person since 1987, and I’ve also been a traditional birth attendant since then. The community placed great trust in me; people were fearing both the rebels and the army, and would run whenever they came by. I was the one who would remain at home to explain to either side that we weren’t helping the other side – the people were only running because they were afraid!

“...the Camps are where so many of the problems have come from: this situation in whereby men are not able to provide for their families, and the women and children lose respect when he begins drinking the little they have.”

I’m still handling all these roles at the same time, and somehow I’ve found that my personal wealth suffers because I spend so much time involved in community affairs. I helped to get a borehole here, and also tried to start my own business at the same time. The sorghum selling we were doing was not so successful as I spend enough time dealing with community issues that it is difficult to tend to that and the garden.

Still, I encouraged the WINGS beneficiaries to rightly implement this project because it will help them to send their children to school. This will have as much or more impact as everything else we try to do to bring up the community here. When we were in the camp the idea of business wasn’t common. After they came back home people saw again that business could improve their livelihoods and they interacted more and shared more of the loneliness and opened opportunities for each other. Education in the past was not so good. Hopefully this business will be a step towards solving that issue.

There is a healing part to war too; counseling and guidance, sensitization, and education of the community are all things that have come from this process. This process is needed to remove the trauma, but it also helps to make people stronger than when they started, I think. What the community urgently needs now is food. The benefit of these businesses is that they can be done together with farming, and are able to pay the children’s school fees. We have the knowledge to move ahead on our own.



1



2



3

“The number one issue to deal with here is the alcohol!” explained Jera. In 2006 it was found that nearly 55 percent of women were brewing alcohol, and nearly 65 percent of the men were consuming alcohol on a regular basis. The vast majority (85 percent) of spousal violence was related to alcohol. A staggering 77% of the beneficiaries acknowledge alcohol abuse problems in their family prior to the start of the project.

During the time of displacement, traditional grain-based beers taken after a long day in the field were replaced by cheap, high alcohol content waragi (gin). “When people return to their land this process is interrupted,” says Jera. “When a man is working hard in the garden and a woman is working hard in the home, people’s time for alcohol is not there as it was when all they could do was sit in the camp.”

11)	Before choosing...	1. Apio coordinates a community meeting to discuss the formation of a farmer’s group. Looked to for guidance in all matters of the community, a large portion of her time is spent away from personal business	
12)	a) Have you... b) If No: Why not? (select all)	2. After not realizing the profits she expected in the sale of assorted items such as fish and oil, Apio has now shifted to beekeeping.	
13)	How many days...	3. Together with her husband Olwoch, Apio continues to maintain the family garden near their home.	
14)	In a typical day...		
15)	How much does...		
16)	How much grant...		
17)	a) Have you borrowed money to invest in your business, from the last follow up? b) If yes, how much money have you borrowed?	From Friends/ From Savings Group:	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
18)	How much of your personal savings did you invest in this business from the time you received the grant up to now?	From Bank or Microfinance Group: Other:	UGS:



Lamwaka Pilimena and Ojok Charles, Produce Sales

Working Together

The WINGS lens is focused in a particular way on young women, with the intention of assisting them to reach their full potential. Fostering women's work and business activities in northern Uganda, as in many places around the world, one cannot look at women abstracted from the existing and basic relationships they have with their family and community. Most households rely on various income generating strategies and the work of each household member is not independent from the other's. These women are remarkably resilient in front of the challenges presented by their context and committed to the well-being of their families. Coherent with AVSI's method of work, this project starts from the positive; AVSI encouraged women to invite their spouses or a male companion to accompany them to the business skills training workshops to foster this cooperation and communication.

Early experience and data show that women who have enjoyed the support and cooperation of their husbands or male companion (brother, father, uncle) in the running of their small enterprise, have been more successful and satisfied with the experience. On the other hand, partner relationships are a significant obstacle for some female participants in developing their small-scale businesses from WINGS grants and

in improving their household income. Qualitative research has begun to show that while some marital relationships have improved with grants distribution, others have actually gone from bad to worse. This may be an important area for intervention in the next phase of the project, potentially having a significant impact on the lives of these women, their families, and their economic activity.

There is also evidence from group exercises and past experiences that participating in a group offers an array of potential benefits to individual benefits, even when they are responsible for separate businesses. Anecdotal evidence from other countries also suggests that women's groups took on positive action beyond that of enterprise development, including efforts at social change and the protection of women in the community. AVSI has seen that group members learn from each other's experiences and can often find ways to exploit economies of scale or overcome common problems, such as lack of access to reliable savings mechanisms. On a community level, AVSI supports the grouping of individual entrepreneurs into business support networks to enable them to effectively share information, ideas, challenges, and solutions. The groups will meet weekly or bi-weekly.

Lamwaka Pillimena and Ojok Charles. Parents of 3.

I am staying here with my husband Ojok Charles and our three children. Ever since our marriage in 2000 we've been strong together, but the relationship is even better now. Even before the camp though, life was not easy because there was so few ways to get money. The place where we are here, deep in the bush and far from trading centers, means that our only way of survival is to dig/sow crops, selling some food to buy clothes for the family and these types of things.

"Working together has increased the amount we have been able to earn. I have no doubts about this."

When we had to flee we were forced to leave most of our belongings here at home. We left cassava in the garden, and sorghum and millet in the granary. In 2003, in the camp, we finished the food we had brought in 2 weeks. From there until 2006 we were relying completely on WFP food. We would go dig in other peoples' gardens near the camp for little money, but this paid very little. When you dig for others they measure with a "Tal" – a local measure that amounts to 40 square meters. If you clear that section of field you are paid 1,200 UgShs (\$0.56). During the dry season I'd brew Arege – the locally distilled alcohol.

After we came back here from the camp we had nothing, and had no support from anyone until I was selected for this project

by the community. I attended the training also with Ojok... This has been such a good thing for us to be involved in the project together. We were given the grant, and then we started selling g-nuts, then beans and simsim, and now we are selling sorghum again. We change items from time to time because of the demand from customers or the season. We buy the goods from within the village then sell them to businessmen who take them to sell in Kotido district.

We are doing well because of the mutual understanding between my wife and I, explains Ojok. We have bought 2 oxen and an ox-plough, and a new mattress we are sleeping well on each night. Going to the training together really helped. If one of us goes astray the other guides the thoughts back. We are working in a way that each is involved in the decision making process. If AVSI stops supporting us we will continue to do the same business each day with the skills and knowledge we have now; the household would manage well.

Working together has increased the amount we have been able to earn. I have no doubts about this. I travel by bicycle to buy sorghum while Pillimena remains here to buy from whoever comes to the home to sell. Our household was so unstable before. We had no money, but most of all we had no knowledge of business skills. This really opened our eyes to knowing business. If we work hard now we can solve much bigger problems.



1. Lamwaka and Ojok at home with their last born. Stock of sorghum is gathered in their home prior to sale. 2. Running their business from home, Lamwaka is able to maintain daily household activities such as washing at a nearby stream. 3. Sorghum 4. Ojok digs in the garden most mornings, then tends to the business in the afternoon. 5. Lamwaka takes a break from digging. Involved in the local farmers group provides the couple a chance to socialize with other like-minded families, explained Ojok.

marital status of beneficiaries	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
	36%	2%	3%	18%
Never Married	11%			
Other	2%	Separated from Partner	13%	Living with Partner 13%

Group Work

“We are seeing the group we’re involved in as a real piece of the support... especially in the social aspects,” explains Pillimena. “If a group member has problems you are able to talk to overcome. We can mobilize food, for example, and this makes the members feel like they have options. They don’t need to go selling everything they have just to eat.”

“We got the idea of being a group from the training. When you are alone, the way things are done these days, you will get little. Government programs target groups also... by being in a group you can receive much more attention so we will be able to access services from the sub-county. The group is a reference for the community, and they remember that you are here working. We are feeling like the work we are doing together is so good. We just need to trust it. “Gen Tici”, the name of our group, means “Trust Your Work.”

The way we are working is that each week we gather to work in one garden. Each group member is paid 1,000 Shillings (about US\$0.50) to work in another group member’s garden, but if we work in a non-group member’s garden then we charge 1,500 shillings. If one person were to

dig this field by themselves it would take them 30 days or more. This way we are able to remain, with the energy, and accomplish so much... this is like it was before the war, when communities would gather to share the work together. In a group you can have everybody with almost nothing, but you can make something.”

“Those outside are seeing what we have done and are looking to start their own groups, or join ours. We’ve had to turn down some of the people who wanted to join because we just don’t have space. Those we accept now are very qualified members of the community.”

“I have 5 children now, and am living with my husband here, explained Oyella, a new member of the Farmer’s Group. I was not selected as a beneficiary of the WINGS project, because my husband already runs a business in the trading center. But after I saw a lot of changes among the beneficiaries here in the community I went to the Chairperson and was told that there was a vacancy because one of the women did not want to continue. I imagine that someday this group is going to begin commercial farming and the livelihood of all involved will be improved.”



When the WINGS project was designed, part of the research agenda was also to focus on the cross-cutting element of group dynamics. After each individual client received the grant, the clients in 30 of 60 pre-randomized villages in phase one (437 clients trained plus 240 partners), were also trained in group dynamics and invited to begin forming their own groups. Most of the resulting groups have become involved in group-gardening projects, and have invited non-WINGS beneficiaries from within their communities to join the groups as well, hopefully leading to improved village cohesion.

This phase of the project will result in collection of rigorous evidence of the impact of group formation as a support mechanism for young women embarking on business endeavors by comparing women participating in group dynamics to women who do not. The ultimate aim of the integrated research design is to help AVSI and its partners analyze more carefully the impact of group dynamics on young businesspersons.



11)	Before choosing this	
	a)	1. Members of the Lakongera Farmer's Group travel to the groups garden each Friday morning. 2. A member of the Gen Tici group digs in another member's garden as part of their rotating labor scheme. The income made makes the work worth their time, members say, while the work received from the group is invaluable. 3. Gen Tici is primarily composed of WINGS beneficiaries. The weekly digging provides them with a chance to socialize, as well as share business insight. 4. Lakongera Group.
12)	b)	
13)	How	
14)	In a	
15)	How	
16)	How	
	a)	Have you borrowed money to invest in your business?
17)	b)	If yes, how much money have you borrowed? From Friends From Savings
18)		How much of your personal savings did you invest?



Immediate Needs

The beneficiaries of WINGS are the most vulnerable in a community: those in extreme poverty, those who are socially marginalized, and those with the least access to health and education for themselves and their children.

Among the WINGS beneficiaries, more than 51% of the enrolled declared to have had one meal a day during the initial assessment, with only 3% having had more than 2 meals a day. Recent surveys show that the number of meals a day has not improved drastically; instead, progress has been made on the diet, as the protein intake and the amount of available food has improved in the selected households. A particularly hard to measure indicator is the rise in school enrollment; one of the specific objectives of the WINGS project is to achieve a higher level of household spending on children's schooling, in particular secondary school enrollment for girls.

Households often tend to use the few resources available to invest in the education of males, especially for the secondary grades. An increase in the available resources for education will hopefully boost the number of females enrolled in school, but as this still isn't considered a priority within many of the households it may take time before concrete results can be observed.

Experience has demonstrated to AVSI that on-going support for young, new entrepreneurs is essential to help them succeed and address the challenges that arise with every nascent business endeavor. AVSI understands that the importance of follow up visits to the individual and the groups comes from two sides: the interpersonal and the business dimension. On the inter-personal side, the targeted beneficiaries can be expected to have generally low levels of self-confidence and social connectedness. An on-going dialogue from a concerned, respectful AVSI social worker helps a young woman to not only keep her focus on the business activity and its progress, but also helps her to do so in light of her other goals of caring for her family.

Small enterprises are very capable of being managed with 10 or 15 hours a week. This part-time employment is meant to supplement other incomes (e.g. from agriculture) or allow full-time school enrollment. In the SWAY surveys conducted in 2005-07, employed adolescents were the most likely to be enrolled in school. AVSI and the research team will ensure that training sessions and consultations of program participants will be scheduled so as to not conflict with school.

Alum Joy, 14. Caretaker for ailing father and two siblings.

I left school in 2005 because I was coming here to our land to dig. If I go to school there is no one to dig or to provide food for the family. I regret that we had to drop out of school, but there was no other choice. There was no one to cook food for us, no one to dig in the garden for us, or even fetch water. My brother Geoffrey was forced to quit school in 2008 when the family responsibilities became too great.

It was difficult for us to succeed with the business because of our lack of food... We have immediate needs. When we returned from the Camp the beans we grew only harvested 9 cups, so by the time we received the grant money the first thing we needed to do was to buy food. We hired people to dig in the garden because my father is now too sick, and we are too young to dig a big garden. These days we dig with the brothers of my father, who are also members of the kalulu group doing revolving labor in each member's garden.

Now we've completed digging gardens of cassava; the maize and beans are waiting for harvest. These should give a good harvest, so the money we invested is not necessarily all lost... By the end of this year we should have enough food in the stores to begin to think about what to do next for business.

If my mother were here things would have been so different than they are now. It's not an easy situation to take care of so many people, but really there is not another op-

tion as I see it. I don't dwell on our situation or wish that I was someone else. It is operating a business that will solve the problem for now and in the future, but we weren't able to operate any business for the future because of what we needed now. The fact is that I am a young girl with so many responsibilities that it's difficult for me to succeed with business. If the initial needs of food were met at the beginning of the program the potential for success would have been much greater, but that did not happen.

"If my mother were here things would have been so different than they are now... The fact is that I am a young girl with so many responsibilities that it's difficult for me to succeed with business."

In terms of going back to school, I don't think this will ever happen. I have been out for so long now, and if I were to go back I would have to enter in P2. I'm too old for this now, and then there would be nobody to care for the family here. All of the hope for schooling lies in our youngest brother Okot, who is in school now and doing well. If I can see him through school then I feel like this would be a success.



1



2



3



4



5

AVSI recognizes the concern regarding possible incentives for child labor, yet responds with confidence and from experience that participation in income generating activities tends to increase rather than decrease school enrollment. For youth between 14 and 18 years of age, AVSI has been careful to tailor the business proposal to the family / household level, whereby the beneficiary participates in or leads the activity but is not the sole implementer. In these cases, the youth and a parent or caregiver have been invited to attend the Business Skills Training course together. In other cases, including child-headed households in which all members are under 18 years of age, the supported business are ones that can be implemented outside of school hours or in conjunction with the youth's participation in a vocational or technical training institution.

7) 1. Joy's brother Geoffrey is one the only other family member to help her maintain the household. 2. Together with her neighbors Joy participates in a kalulu group whereby the group rotates through each member's garden each week. 3. Often left to dig alone, Joy explained that she lacked the time to tend to all of her responsibilities at home and maintain a business. 4. Joy travels home from digging to tend to family issues. 5. Joy's father.

8) 600 -

9) 500 -

10) 400 -

11) 300 -

12) Why not? (select all) Best of the best Money diverted Money stolen Did not like the work

13) How many days per week did you spend on business in the last two weeks? N/A

14) In a typical day, how many hours per day do you spend on the business? N/A

15) How much does this vary from day to day? 0 None A bit (more than 4 hours) A lot (more than 4 hours)

16) How much grant money have you used for the business(es) up to now? UGS:

17) a) Have you borrowed money to invest in your business, from the last follow up? No Yes 31 Yes

b) If yes, how much money have you borrowed? From Friends: From Savings Group: From Bank or Microfinance Group: Other:

18) How much of your personal savings did you invest in your business from the time you received the grant up to now? UGS:



Achiro Levisis, Grain and Livestock Trader.

On Sustainability

Long-term sustainability of the program and its impacts are a concern of AVSI and the research team. For the 1,800 program participants, AVSI anticipates that all will gain an improved understanding of the importance of saving and reinvestment and the options for how/where to save. Addressing the management of revenue is a topic of continued attention in the first business cycles during which AVSI staff follow-up each business client consistently. Most businesses generate profit very quickly and initial uptake of savings mechanisms is the norm. More difficult is helping clients to commit to long-term savings plans. Through the follow up consultation, AVSI carries on a data collection and counseling process in order to aid the beneficiaries to keep their business running in a profitable manner.

AVSI is committed to helping spur economic development among the most vulnerable households and hopes to utilize the findings from this program and study to shape future initiatives. As northern Uganda shifts into reconstruction and development mode, donor governments are beginning to respond accordingly. AVSI expects that similar programs for small business development and microfinance will only increase in the near future.

Over time, we would like to evaluate all four components of the AVSI program: business skills training, grants, group formation, and follow-up support. Each is important, and evidence is scarce across the board. Yet group formation—and the social capital gained or nurtured through effective group interaction—may play a role of special importance among our target beneficiaries, in part because of their relative social exclusion. Rural NGO programs have long relied on group-based lending and cooperative formation, and yet the role of groups has almost never been tested.

In a country in which more than half of the population is under the age of 15, it's clear that education is now of utmost importance. It is also clear that there exists a fine balance in the decision making process of the most vulnerable as they choose to pursue more long-term goals such as education versus the more immediate needs of food and shelter. The educational profile of beneficiaries reflects their status as vulnerable individuals. While only about one-half of beneficiaries have attended school and only 23 percent are literate, the involvement in business may be the key to the future of their household's ability to pursue an education.

Achiro Levisis, 39. Widowed parent of six.

The reason I remained here in the camp is because of the challenges and costs of going back home and reconstructing a hut. I was so vulnerable, with 6 dependants, so the community saw me as needing to receive this grant. After I was trained, I thought the buying/selling of sorghum would be a good business because I knew that even if I did not make money I would still be left with the food to feed the family. Because I am still here in the trading center there is much more of a market than in the village.

The past is something that haunts me, and I don't want to see it come back again. My husband died in 2003 as he was transporting alcohol to Kassese. After this there was no other support and it was a bit overwhelming. This is when I dedicated myself to doing whatever I could for the family. Each Monday I leave here with the sorghum I've bought over the weekend. We sleep wherever the driver feels tired, and usually reach Kotido by Tuesday night. I sell the goods on Wednesday; when we reach Kotido people just start buying immediately. Sorghum is not there, so there are so many people buying. We normally return to Gulu by Thursday night.

What they do have in Kotido is livestock. I'm able to buy goats there each week with the profits from the sorghum, and sell them for a profit in Gulu Town on Friday.

As much as the work is tiresome these days, it is so much better than brewing. I used to work in other's gardens and buy cassava

flour to brew alcohol. Savings were not thought of, and feeding was a problem. Brewing \$1.00 worth of materials would bring in \$0.50 profit. Brewing was not an easy way to make money. The profits are small, and oftentimes it's the same customers who give you this small money that then destroy the business when they are drunk... their deeds are often very bad.

"The past is something that haunts me... As much as the work is tiresome these days, it is so much better than brewing."

If I were to sit and consume the money, the old life would come back. The thing I did learn from brewing was business skills. I had dedicated myself to providing for my family, as my main objective in life is my children. I see myself as a woman with a talent for this selling, and now there is something that I can really work at. If I am not there tomorrow, at least there will be an account with money to help them continue to pull themselves up.

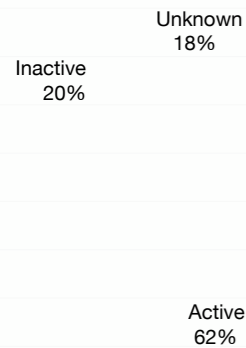
At the moment now the family is fair. For the first time all of the children are in school. Two years ago the children were going to school with no uniforms. I hope that the business continues to expand because what I have is still not enough. Children's education needs a constant source of income after all!



7)	Death of the beneficiary or	300	Money retained by somebody
8)	about your main IGA. [If this is not the first follow-up, skip to Q4.]	250	Waiting for the right season to start
9)	Identify the main IGA.	200	Not sufficient number of children per household amongst beneficiaries
10)	Are you or anyone else doing a similar business?	150	Other
11)	Are there other people who are good at business?	100	Yes, many
12)	Have you worked in the business in the last 2 weeks?	50	Yes, one or two
13)	Have you worked in the business in the last two weeks?	0	Yes, many
14)	In a typical day, how many hours per day do you spend on the business?		the business did not make money
15)	How much does this vary from day to day?		household's member/s disagreement
16)	How much grant money have you used for the business/es 1 to 2 w? 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14		Money retained by somebody
17)	a) Have you borrowed money to invest in your business, from the last follow up?		Waiting for the right season to start
	b) If yes, how much money have you borrowed?		Other, Specify:
18)	How much of your personal savings did you invest in the business from the time you received the grant up to now?		

Impacts

business status at third follow up



While going through this data, it is important to consider that our beneficiaries cannot devote all their time to the businesses. Though it is their main source of income, there are numerous daily activities that take away a significant amount of time from the business. Such tasks are key to the survival of the family: digging the garden to secure food against price fluctuation, collecting firewood, cooking, maintaining the home, fetching water and taking care of the children. For all these reasons the active businesses in the month of June/July 2010 amount only to 62% (561 out of 879 grantee), in fact the vast majority of those not engaged in the IGA are taking advantage of the rainy season and are working hard to achieve their household food security.

In phase one, a total of 879 individual grants have been approved leading to an overall disbursement of roughly \$131,200. The most common business among our beneficiaries is Produce (28%), consisting of trading in cereals and legumes. The same rank is occupied by Mixed Items (28%, when two or more of the following business are carried out at the same time), while Assorted Items (dealing in food items used in everyday life, such as oil, sugar, and soap) is slightly less common (22%). Finally, among the most popular businesses, we find Dry fish selling, mostly carried out by our vulnerable beneficiaries from their homes. Other businesses include livestock keeping, butchery, restaurant businesses, street food vending and specialized jobs such as bicycle repair and barbers.

business distribution



Outputs

Based on past research experience, we anticipate observing and measuring the following improvements among beneficiaries, relative to non-beneficiaries in the WINGS project:

- 10 to 20 percent increase in earnings and consumption levels, and increased days employed;
- Higher levels of household spending on children's schooling and health;
- Increased primary and secondary school enrollment among adolescent girls (both direct beneficiaries as well as adolescent girls in the household);
- A more-than-proportional increase in household assets and formal savings;
- Lower levels of participation in risky sexual behavior, including transactional sex;
- Improved self-reported trust in and cohesion with community members;
- Improved psychosocial well-being (fewer self-reported symptoms of depression and higher reported levels of pro-social behavior, confidence, and family connectedness);
- Among female beneficiaries, higher reported rates of independence and empowerment in their household.

The evaluation of the project by IPA will strive to answer many questions that have plagued development organizations and policy makers for years, such as:

- What are the direct economic impacts of program participation?
- What are the determinants of economic success among the most disadvantaged women?
- What is the link between economic activity and women's empowerment and status?
- What are the indirect effects of earned income on child health and education?
- What is the cost-effectiveness of providing social and business networks and training to women?
- What are the community and market level impacts of the assistance, especially on other micro-enterprises in the community?
- How do economic activity and group participation contribute to the reintegration of former combatants?
- What is the impact of group participation on trust and social cohesion?
- What is the relative contribution of the self-help group and the grant to program success?
- What effect does group formation and training have on collective action and the community at large?



AVSI has gained considerable experience in what is necessary to carry-out high quality economic development initiatives with the most vulnerable populations thanks to the many people we've worked with over the years. Every aspect of program implementation- from identification and recruitment of participants to start-up and on-going support - requires a significant degree of human and personal commitment along with professional skills on the part of the staff. Thank you to all staff past-and-present on all levels of this project. Precisely because this program targets the most vulnerable young women, many of whom have suffered trauma, the need for dedicated and capable staff is greater than in other circumstances. Program staff stationed in the specific areas chosen for program implementation are especially important for close follow-up throughout rural areas. Thank you. All of this is possible thanks to the close contact with the communities and local government officials whose involvement and support is greatly appreciated. Thanks as well to the Research Team for their tireless support and invaluable improvements to the program. Thank You All.

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