



**PARTICIPATORY IMPACT  
ASSESSMENT**

OCTOBER 2017

**ADRIAN CULLIS**

MARCHES SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

# Background

## ● Objective

In October of 2017, African Women Rising (AWR) commissioned an independent consultant to assess the impact and effectiveness of more than a decade of work in northern Uganda.



## ● Approach

The Participatory Impact Assessment, or PIA, approach is commonly used in instances where baseline information is unavailable, with project beneficiaries identifying and measuring their own indicators of change.

During the month of October 2017, a Participatory Impact Assessment of AWR's work in Northern Uganda was conducted by independent consultant, Adrian Cullis.

Fieldwork was prefaced by a literature review of the region, its population and the history of AWR.

In the field, the PIA approach blended qualitative and quantitative methods to produce statistically valid findings augmented with in-depth conversations to better understand why and how changes were taking place. In total, 415 individuals (315 women; 102 men) served by AWR were surveyed in the impact assessment.

The assessment also included meetings with local government representatives without AWR staff present to triangulate and verify findings.

**Results from this study will be used to:**

- **Optimize current programs**
- **Inform future program development and resource allocation**
- **Create a baseline for future evaluation**
- **Position the organization for strategic partnerships and fundraising opportunities**

# Key Findings | Overview

**The assessment confirms that African Women Rising's three activity areas: micro-finance, regenerative agriculture and adult literacy- are highly valued by the communities they serve and have helped create significant positive change in the lives of program participants. The findings highlight the mutually reinforcing and synergistic nature of the activities.**

- Micro finance provides people with **access to capital**. The capital enables them to invest in their farming.
- Better farming practices learned in the agriculture programs leads to **higher crop yields and more food at home** for the family.
- Literacy skills help provide **access to information**, resources and give people **confidence**, thus becoming better business people and having **greater control of their resources** (for example, knowing when to sell the grain they grow each year).



## **More specifically, the assessment confirms:**

- The primacy of the micro-finance activity area, saving more than **US \$1million** within a calendar year by the program's **4551 members**. These savings are **transforming the lives of the women** and families involved including paying for school fees, investing in livestock and crop production, building savings and supporting small businesses.
- The two-pronged strategy of the regenerative agriculture program focuses on both field crops and per-magardens. This strategy **improves** diets, **increases** household savings and **strengthens** community relationships. The program is known for improving food security, increasing access to a wider variety of foods, reducing household expenditure on produce while generating income through vegetable sales, and encouraging program participants to share and trade produce with other community members.
- African Women Rising is the largest provider of Adult Literacy in Northern Uganda. Since 2013, over **3800 learners** have attended one of 32 centers. Functional adult literacy is critical for women who have missed the opportunity of completing their education. In addition to learning to read and write, AWR's REFLECT methodology assists groups to identify and **solve issues related to local development, self-esteem, and social relations**.

# Key Findings | Micro-Finance

**“With the money saved from the micro-finance group in 2013, I hired a tractor to plough my land and plant.**

**With the income I bought cattle. Today I now have more than 80 cattle. AWR has changed my life.”**

**—Akumu Besentina,  
Kuc Odugu Group**



Since 2013, African Women Rising has worked with **161 village savings and loan groups** across Northern Uganda with a combined membership of more than **4500 women and men**. AWR’s approach is to provide: two trainings (village savings and loans and, 6 months later, income generating activities) a savings kit; a grant of US\$210 to ‘kick-start’ group loans; and, weekly mentoring visits.

Groups meet weekly with a goal to save between Ush1-2,000 (US\$0.28-0.56) per member. Savings are ‘banked’ in the group’s cash box that is triple locked, with keys held by different elected group officials. Members are eligible for loans up to 3 times the value of their savings and as many times as they choose, provided the loans are repaid, with 10%, within three months.

At the year-end, savings are paid out as ‘annual shares’, with members receiving their savings plus a share of the interest. **After working with AWR for three to four years, groups typically graduate and continue their activities with reduced supervision.**

**“I now eat 3 times a day and eat better food. I’m looking healthier and can buy clothes and braid my hair.”**

**— Doreen Lakop, Kuc Odugu Group**

# Key Findings | Micro-Finance

## Since 2013 AWR has:

- More than doubled the number of beneficiaries and partner groups
- Significantly improved drop out of participants and loan default rates
- Seen group members collectively save more than \$1 million in 2017 and more than \$3.2 million over the last five years



## Group members highlight impacts on:

- Ability to pay school fees
- Ability to invest in livestock and crop production
- Capacity to invest in small business ventures
- Increasing levels of savings
- Strengthening social networks



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Development objective</b>	Increase access to capital in order to facilitate income generating activities				
<b>Key Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased savings</li> <li>• Sustained income/increases income</li> <li>• Investment in farming, livestock school fees</li> </ul>				
<b>Numbers of groups</b>	83	93	108	141	161
<b>Numbers of members</b>	2,172	2,333	2,683	3,903	4,551
<b>Numbers of members dropping out</b>	43 (2%)	68 (2.9%)	32 (1.2%)	47 (1.2%)	23 (0.5%)
<b>Total savings (US\$)</b>	448,298	391,903	550,732	818,330	1,010,164
<b>Total loans (US\$)</b>	255,557	284,615	404,342	580,625	823,942
<b>Default rate (%)</b>	7.7	17.7	18.7	3.6	3.8

# Key Findings | Regenerative Agriculture

In response to repeated droughts over the last 10 years resulting in poor crop yields, spikes in childhood malnutrition and lingering lean season hunger, AWR launched **a two-pronged approach** to support regenerative agriculture in a region where more than 80% of the population derives its livelihood from farming.

Focused on field crops and intensive close-to-the-kitchen permagardens, the program **improves availability** of diverse, nutritious and adequate quantities of vegetables, grains and fruit as it helps build greater resilience to climate fluctuations.

AWR trains participants on core principles of regenerative agriculture: **water retention** and **building soil fertility** using **locally available resources**. Training is conducted in farmer-owned 'demonstration' plots and trainees are encouraged to take acquired knowledge and skills back to their own farms.

- **16 out of 17 members of one group say their permagarden doubled the group savings**
- **23/25 members of another group say they are now eating more than two meals a day on account of their permagardens**



**“The money that I used to spend on vegetables is now used to expand my diet and we now can eat more than twice a day.”**

**—Ayoo Dorothy, Lega Ber Group**

# Key Findings | Regenerative Agriculture

## Key findings confirm that:

- AWR participants produce better and healthier crops than their neighbors.
- More than 80% adopted 3 or more new practices and 2/3 sustained these practices for at least 2 planting seasons (according to the consultant this is an exceptionally high up-take of new ideas.)
- Participating farmers increased availability and access to food and positive coping strategies in the lean season (meaning less hunger in key months during the year)
- Participating farmers eat more meals and have greater dietary diversity

## According to the farmers themselves, the key impacts include:

- Reduced household expenditures
- Increased income and savings
- Improved food availability and food security
- Improved diet
- Improved social networks and relationships
- Improved soil fertility
- Reduced erosion and soil loss
- Improved soil moisture content

	2015	2016	2017
<b>Development objective</b>	To improve household food and nutrition security		
<b>Key indicator</b>	Farmers trained in the principles of soil and water and able to develop strategies and specific techniques and activities		
<b>Numbers of groups</b>	9	18	27
<b>Numbers of members</b>	225	450	675
<b>Numbers of members attending 2 or more training courses</b>	225	450	675
<b>Numbers of trainees adopting 3 new practices</b>	200	355	548
<b>Numbers of trainees sustaining new practices over more than 2 planting seasons</b>		189	364

# Key Findings | Regenerative Agriculture



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Development objective</b>	Increase access to diverse, nutritious and adequate quantities of food				
<b>Key indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved soil fertility</li> <li>• Improved water harvesting/ rainwater retention</li> <li>• Improved farm management, knowledge and skills</li> <li>Increased food production and availability</li> </ul>				
<b>Numbers of groups</b>	15	30	45	60	75
<b>Numbers of members</b>	375	750	1,125	1,500	1,875
<b>Members attending 2 training courses</b>	375	750	1,125	1,500	1,875
<b>Trainees establishing permagardens</b>	65	180	334	624	871
<b>Trainees sustaining permagardens for more than a year</b>		25	126	251	376



# Key Findings | Adult Literacy

**Launched in 2009, AWR is now the largest provider of adult literacy in northern Uganda.** Close to **1300 adults** come to their centers each year. In contrast to other activity areas, which operate through a group structure, functional adult literacy (FAL) is **delivered through community centers** and therefore **offered as a community service.**

Typically, learners meet twice- weekly and are coached in literacy and numeracy using the REFLECT methodology that structures learning around discussions and action on

important community issues. A wide range of participatory methodologies are used within the REFLECT process to help create an **open, democratic environment** in which **everyone is able to contribute.**

Since 2013 participants have started community schools in areas where there are no primary schools, cleared roads, built bridges and market places, repaired wells and cleaned primary water sources. The skills and confidence gained in the program has empowered dozens of graduates to **run for public office** in local elections.



**“I have been elected a women representative in my village because of my ability to read, write and properly represent issues, the skills I got from FAL.”**

—Orma Jennifer, Gwoko Lim Ber Group

# Key Findings | Adult Literacy

- Through the FAL centers AWR has supported a total of **3682 learners** in 32 centers.
- Since 2013, the **annual graduation rate** has ranged from **87-89 percent**.
- The mobile eye clinic linked to the FAL centers has carried out more than **2000 eye tests**, supplied **728 pairs of glasses** and treated an additional **1590 patients** for eye-related illnesses



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Development objective</b>	To increase the literacy rate				
<b>Key indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased rates of literacy among group members</li> <li>• Increased group member engagement in community leadership</li> <li>• Increased involvement of women members in household and community decision making</li> </ul>				
<b>Number of centers</b>	7	12	12	34	32
<b>Number of registered learners</b>	221	403	498	1,280	1,280
<b>Drop-out rate</b>	12.3%	11.8%	11.7%	13%	n/a

## Methodology

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AWR selected the Participatory Impact Assessment methodology as it combines participatory field tools with basic statistical approaches that measure project impact.

This methodology has been found particularly helpful where baseline information is unavailable, as the project beneficiaries identify and measure their own indicators of change.<sup>2</sup>

The Participatory Impact Assessment was conducted by international relief and sustainable agriculture expert, Adrian Cullis.

In total, the sample consisted of 415 people - 313 women and 102 men. In addition, the consultant met non-sample groups including an AWR supported 'ox ploughing' group, a 'town' group and farmers not involved in the programme.

The consultant also interviewed representatives of local government and local opinion leaders. As a result, more than 450 people were involved in the PIA at some level.

<sup>2</sup>Catley, A., et. al. (2008). *Participatory Impact Assessment: a guide for practitioners*. Feinstein International Center, Tufts University



### Adrian Cullis

has a successful career in international development and sustainable agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Recent positions include Senior Program Officer for the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as well as Emergency Relief Coordinator for FAO in the Horn of Africa. Prior he worked for Save the Children and USAID in Uganda and Ethiopia.

He has published books and articles more than a dozen times on topics including sustainable agriculture, food security, livestock management and rain water harvesting.

In 2017 Adrian worked as the Senior Program Manager for the Tufts University-led Agriculture, Knowledge Learning Documentation and Policy (AKLDP) program. This was a collaboration with USAID's \$350 million Feed the Future portfolio in Ethiopia.