Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Pastoral Areas of Somaliland, Sudan & Uganda
We are working with:

- well-established women’s groups in Somaliland & Uganda
- women in Eastern Sudan whose husbands participate in other PENHA projects

Program areas:

- Uganda’s semi-arid Cattle Corridor (Sembabule, Mbarara & Kabale districts)
- Kassala State in Eastern Sudan
- Awdal, Togdheer & Sanaag districts of Somaliland
1. The Program

The program involves:

- Training women in basic business skills,
- Increasing their access to credit,
- Increasing their access to information
- Increasing their participation in business networks.
Three interrelated components:

1. “Skills and Knowledge for Enterprise”

Activities:

- providing business skills training for women’s groups
- providing information on new income-generating activities
- linking women’s groups up with business networks
- Study tours and exchange visits between the three countries
2. “Access to Credit and Productive Assets”

- We will make women more creditworthy
  - with training & formal registration of groups

- We will link women up with finance providers
  - local MFIs will participate in training workshops

- We will help women to acquire productive assets
  - livestock, beehives, sewing machines, juicemaking machines, etc.
3. “Influencing Policies and Practice”

- Identifying gaps in policy and practice
- Engaging in dialogues with all stakeholders - from banks to village elders.
- Disseminating issue briefs
2. Our Approach and the Issues

- Baseline studies in Uganda, Sudan & Somaliland

- The studies have:
  - produced valuable insights & baseline data
  - identified promising income-generating activities
  - shaped the design of the training
  - shaped the networking and policy aspects
1. “Skills and Knowledge for Enterprise”

Business Skills Training – Some Issues

Sudan:

- 70% of the women involved are illiterate.
- They have had very little access to information.
- Elementary level of training
- Adult literacy component
- Women’s resource centers
  - for training, and access to information (radio, TV, video).
Uganda:

• Literacy levels vary widely within women’s groups – illiterate, semi-literate and literate.

• This is quite challenging for the facilitators.

• Some women with commercial enterprises require more sophisticated training & business development services.
Somaliland:

- “Training of Trainers” approach
  - training young graduates to deliver training to women’s groups.

- They can then provide on-going business advice to women’s groups
  - with a small fee on top of transport, food & accommodation costs.
Study Tours

❖ Women from Somaliland and Sudan will visit Uganda

❖ Participants:
  • businesswomen
  • women in leadership positions
  • NGO workers
  • members of pastoral-area women’s groups.

❖ Goals:
  • To broaden participants’ horizons
  • To generate new business ideas
  • To strengthen regional links
Why Uganda?

• The economy is vibrant

• Socio-economic conditions are similar, but changing rapidly

• There is freedom of expression and a supportive environment for gender equality
2. “Access to Credit and Productive Assets”

Uganda:

- Local MFIs exist and there are banks in the nearest towns
- But women still find it difficult to access finance

Obstacles cited by local women include:

- Lack of collateral (few own land)
- The need for husbands’ signatures in order to get a loan
- The small size of loans available – too small to buy capital equipment needed scale up IGAs
- Incomes area seasonal, but MFIs demand monthly repayments
2. “Access to Credit and Productive Assets”

Sudan:
- No local finance institutions or NGO microcredit schemes.

Somaliland:
- Only a handful of NGO microcredit programs.

In Sudan and Somaliland:
- We need multi-stakeholder discussions on financial services for pastoral areas.
Somaliland – new opportunities

- Dahabshil money transfer company - only major financial institution.
- Remittances are central to the economy
  - go to consumption (especially khat), not investment
  - go mainly to urban and settled communities.
- Mobile phone services - now used for Diaspora money transfers
- Mobile phone banking (Kenya’s M-PESA)
  - great potential in pastoral areas with distant banks and high transport costs.
3. “Influencing Policies and Practice”

- Baseline studies identified gaps, and some opportunities.

- Issues Briefs - basis for multistakeholder meetings

- Draw attention to pastoral areas and bring in more actors
Challenges: Security Issues and Political Uncertainties

- Political insecurity in the region has affected our program.


- Islamist terrorists threaten neighboring countries and want to destabilize Somaliland.

- Somaliland – terrorist attacks by the Al-Shabab group in 2008, and on-going threats.

- Sudan – the Danish cartoons issue & the ICC’s indictment of the head of state.

- Islamists are strongly opposed to women’s empowerment, particularly in politics and governance.

- Uganda - political stability and openness, and strong government support for women’s empowerment.
The Value of Operating Regionally

- Country offices, Uganda, Sudan & Somaliland - support and coordination from London office.

- PENHA-Uganda - regional coordination office.

- Differences and similarities across the region - new ideas from one country can be applied, or adapted in another.

- A comparative approach often yields useful insights.

- Bringing people together across the region is valuable in itself.

- Marginalized pastoralist women gain confidence from meeting similar women in other countries.
Examples of Valuable Regional Interaction

- Women in Somaliland can learn from Uganda’s experience with affirmative action
  – PENHA’s work with Ugandan MPs informs our work in Somaliland.

- Ugandan women producing honey for local markets can learn from their counterparts in Somaliland.
Links to other PENHA Programs

Uganda:

- Animal Husbandry training for FAO Farmer Field Schools

- Exotic Goats Breeding Center – supplying exotic goats to women’s groups

- Provision of milk cooling facilities and sewing machines in Ssembabule
Sudan and Eritrea:

- Fodder production training with FAO

Regionally:

- Resource-Based Conflict conferences (with Oxfam-Novib)
- Gender Mainstreaming Training (with Oxfam-Novib)
- Contacts, linkages and lessons enrich our women’s empowerment program.
Linking up the grassroots and policy levels

- Microprojects inform and enrich our policy work

- In Uganda, we have the support of women in senior leadership positions.

- Achieving real change at the local level requires:
  - actions at the policy level
    (education, infrastructure, trade, taxes)
  - working with higher level business networks
    (attracting investors)
Finally -
In the long run, the fundamentals are:

- getting pastoralist girls into schools
- transport & telecommunications infrastructure

Right now,

- pastoral women respond to any new economic opportunity
- our role is to support them in what they are doing.