

**The Northern Uganda Food Security Project (DERO)
Pilot Phase (1997-1999) and
Reconstruction Phase 2008-2012**



Part One: Pilot Phase (1997-1999)

**Cooperative Office for Voluntary Organisations (COVOL)
P.O. Box 6908 Kampala, Uganda
www.covol-uganda.org
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The pilot phase of the Northern Uganda Food Security Project (DERO) was implemented by the NGO COVOL Uganda from 1997 to 1999, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

During this initial phase, DERO was an integrated community-based activity reinforcing local food security through an Integrated Production and Marketing Program (IPAM) in partnership with a network of over 10,000 farmers organised into more than 300 community-based farming groups across the districts of Lira (Otuke County), Pader (Agago County) and Labwor (Abim District).

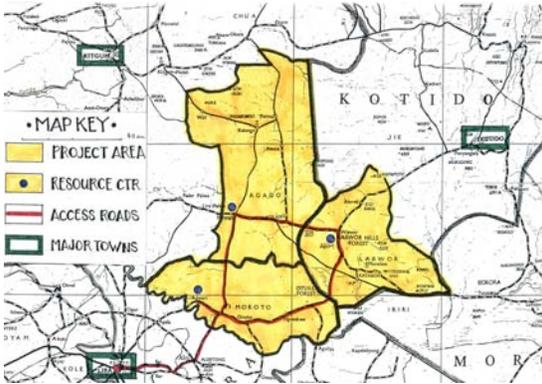
With the return of displaced farmers to their rural communities of origin, COVOL is re-establishing DERO as a means of increasing the productivity of newly-returned farming communities. During the 2008 first planting season, starting with the original project stakeholders, COVOL will expand its area of operations to include Aruu County (i.e. all of Pader District), and the districts of Amuria and Katakwi (see map, below). The lessons learned during implementation of the DERO pilot phase will be instrumental in rebuilding the agricultural productivity of rural communities currently returning to their ancestral lands.



Under the first phase of DERO, three county-based resource centers were established, serving as training platforms, and commercial ‘food banks’ where staple crops were purchased in season and stored for sale back to the community during the annual ‘hungry season’ when food stocks are scarce and prices their highest. The DERO resource centers provided quality seed and agricultural tools at cost, as well as simple veterinary medications and vaccinations.

At the farm level, DERO extensionists carried out a series of workshops on subjects related to cultivation and post-harvest processing, drying and storage, and provided animal traction training to local oxen to facilitate increased production. Applied research was carried out on local and improved varieties of cultivated food crops, as well as wild foods and semi-domesticated traditional food plants.

Project Area Maps



DERO Project Area, 1997-1999



DERO Project Area, 2008-2012

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Acronyms and Definitions

COVOL : The Cooperative Office for Voluntary Organisations, a Lira-based non-governmental organisation established in 1988, with a focus on food security and rural value chains development for agricultural and natural products (www.covol-uganda.org). Now a purely Uganda-based organisation, COVOL was registered in the US and with USAID from 1994 to 2000.

Dero: (pl. *dere*) the traditional granary of northern Uganda in the Lwo (Acholi, Leb Jobwor and Lango) language group, from which DERO (capitalised for emphasis) takes its name. Symbol of a project addressing food security from a comprehensive standpoint, the DERO 'brand' has become (and remained) very popular in the communities of northern Uganda.

NUFS : Northern Uganda Food Security (NUFS) Program

REDSO-ESA : (USAID) Regional Economic Development Services Office for East and Southern Africa

SO : Strategic Objective (USAID term)

USAID : US Agency for International Development

USDA : US Department of Agriculture

WFP : World Food Program

Background

1.1 Introduction

The DERO Project was first conceived in September of 1995, as a group of NGO representatives were brought together in Kampala by Dr. Gordon Wagner, then working as a consultant to the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Regional Economic Development Services Office for East and Southern Africa (REDSO / ESA), and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Dr. Wagner's experience in Southern Sudan gave him the inspiration for a large-scale integrated project for northern Uganda which would train farmers through local resource centers while encouraging production of surplus food within northern Uganda. The presence in northern Uganda of over 220,000 refugees from Southern Sudan was seen as a market opportunity for northern farmers, through local purchase by the World Food Program (WFP).

Established in 1988 and registered in the US and with USAID at the time, the Cooperative Office for Voluntary Organisations (COVOL) became one of seven NGOs in a loosely based consortium, formed to develop the design of what was then called the Northern Uganda Food Security Project (NUFSP).

In March 1996, following a visit to COVOL by Patricia Rader of USAID's Greater Horn of Africa Initiative, and a second visit from Gayle Smith and USAID Chief of Staff Richard McCall to the NUFSP consortium, the USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) sent Christy Cook from Washington to assist in the development of the NUFSP proposal.

At this time, COVOL had become the primary NGO behind the Northern Uganda Food Security Project, which was christened DERO, the name of the traditional granary in many languages of northern Uganda and Southern Sudan.

However, in July of 1996 COVOL was informed that its registration with USAID was suspended due to a 'Privateness Percentage' (the amount of non-US Government funding relative to total cash budget) of less than 20%. COVOL was informed by USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Response (BHR) that it *could* seek a Waiver of Privateness Percentage Requirements from the USAID Director through the BHR, though in fact this had never been accomplished previously.

Six long months later, COVOL's Waiver of USAID Privateness Percentage Requirements was signed, effective through 1998. In the meantime, however, the NUFSP had been taken by USAID Kampala, becoming the Northern Uganda Food Security (NUFS) Program (later administered under SO-1).

In October of 1997, COVOL became one of several NGOs to receive funds under USAID-NUFS, and at that the lowest-funded (COVOL was informally directed to write a budget for DERO of "about \$100,000 – a very small amount for activities in three counties over two years of pilot activity).

The eventual DERO budget of \$311,000 reflected bare-bones necessities, with no funds for Allowances, a Coordinator's position, or even for Overheads. It was thought that DERO would be able to function alongside the expansion phase of the Shea Project, which was anticipated in October of 1997 (but would be delayed by a full year of negotiations with USAID, the US President Clinton visit to Uganda, and the Nairobi-Dar Embassy Bombings).

Between submission of the original proposal in January 1997 and the 21 October award start date, important historical developments necessitated modification of the original DERO proposal through the attachment of a memorandum dated 27 August 1997. In particular, the liberation of Yei by the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) brought the return of up to 150,000 Sudanese refugees to their homeland, greatly affecting WFP local purchase demand for northern Uganda. In addition, marginal harvests in the project area during 1996-97 – as well as Lira, Kitgum and Kotido District Administration policies - led to a re-thinking of priorities for surplus food distribution under DERO in favor of local storage and re-sale as opposed to export from the project area.

1.2 Project Implementation

Though the DERO Award Agreement was signed on 21 October 1997, the DERO funding advance from USAID was not received until immediately before the Christmas/New Year holidays; implementation of DERO was thus delayed or greatly impeded by several crucial months.

With the arrival of funding, full implementation of the DERO project began on 6 January 1997, with the return of COVOL staff from annual holiday leave. Field activities were centered at Corner Adwari, Otuke County, at the former offices of COVOL during the pilot phase of the Shea Project.

Less than three weeks later, in the early morning hours of 26 January, the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) mounted a large-scale attack on Otuke County. The Adwari Subcounty Headquarters was directly attacked and 52 houses burnt. A mechanised road roller was also burnt there. LRA rebels passed within one kilometer of the DERO Adwari office.

During the January 26 attack, dozens of people were abducted or killed outright, goods and food were plundered, and thousands displaced within Otuke and Agago counties.

From February through June of 1998, LRA incursions became alarmingly frequent, almost commonplace in the counties of Otuke and Agago (see Security Chart, Figure 1). DERO project staff spent an estimated 40% of potentially productive time tracing rumors and moving little in the field within Otuke County. Labwor County was cut off for long periods as the Adwari-Olilim road became insecure, and Agago County out of the question.

TABLE: Insecurity in the DERO Project Area, 4/96 to 1/99					ACTIVITY CODE EFFECTS	
YEAR	DATES	AREA				
		Otuke	Agago	Labwor		
1996	25/4/96	Okwang	Arom	-	LA	Nocturnal displacement
		Adwari	-	-	(R)	Nocturnal displacement
	20-21/7/96	Okwang	-	-	B.L.A.M	~8 killed, ~20 abducted
		-	Arom (Achol-pi)	-	B.L.A.M	~100 refugees killed
		-	Odokomit	-	B.L.A.M	Teacher killed
6-8/10/96	Adwari	-	-	B.L.A	~200 displaced to Lira town	
1997	3-4/7/97	Okwang	Arom, Patongo	-	L	Nocturnal displacement
	11-12/7/97	Okwang	Arom, Odokomit	-	L	Nocturnal displacement
	8-10/9/97	Okwang	Patongo	-	L	Nocturnal displacement
		Adwari	Odokomit	-	(R)	Nocturnal displacement
D E R O P R O J E C T B E G I N S (1/10/97)						
1998	12-13/1/98	Okwang	Patongo	-	L	Nocturnal displacement
	27/1/98	Adwari	Odokomit	-	B.L.A.M	Okeloamone and Okwongo burnt (55 houses)
		Orum	-	-	B.L.A.M	3 pregnant women killed at Alwang
	27/1-18/2/98	-	Lira Palwo	-	B.L.A.M	8 killed, 90 houses burnt, legs cut off 3
		Adwari (North)	Parabongo	-	LA	Displacement - rebel 'occupation'
		Adwari	Amot, Lukole	-	(R)	Nocturnal Displacement
	30/4-8/5/98	Okwang	Odokomit	-	LA	Displacement - rebel 'occupation'
		Adwari (TC)	Arom	-	LA	Displacement - rebel 'occupation'
		Orum, Olilim	-	-	B.L.A.M	LANDMINES: Anti-Personnel (Orum), Anti-Tank (Olilim)
	14-17/5/98	Okwang	-	-	(R)	Nocturnal Displacement
		Adwari	-	-	(R)	Nocturnal Displacement
	24/5-3/6	Okwang	Patongo	-	LA	Displacement - rebel 'occupation'
		Adwari	Okeloamone	-	R	Nocturnal Displacement
	28/8/98	Adwari	-	-	B.L.A	Attack on Okwongo (Adwari Subcounty Headquarters)
	1-2/7/98	Okwang	Patongo	-	(R)	Nocturnal Displacement
	17/7/98	-	Omot	-	LA	Nocturnal Displacement
	27/12/98	Orum, Olilim	Arom	Awac	LA	Rebel Movements
	28/12/98	-	-	Awac	B.L.A.M	Killings and abductions at mission
	29/12-31/12	Olilim	-	-	-	Karimojong destroy retreating rebels
1999	2/1/99	Adwari	-	-	-	LRA 'remnant' killed at Corner Adwari

Activity Code Key	
(Rumor)	(R)
Burning	B
Looting	L
Abduction	A
Murder	M

Figure 1: Project Area Insecurity Matrix, 1996-99

In May of 1998, during the worst attack, the LRA managed to reach the outskirts of Lira town, southeast to Amac, and even down into Orungo in Katakwi District – a range previously unheard of. Anti-personnel landmines were used at Alooi and Apala (Lira-Adwari Road) and at Orum (central Otuke County; one anti-tank mine destroyed a military vehicle just ahead of Presidential Adviser Salim Saleh, killing four senior officers – this at Olilim, Otuke County.

The DERO project struggled on through these impediments, but the first and second agricultural harvests were lost, and implementation of DERO’s Integrated Production and Marketing (IPAM) program was delayed until the October 1999 harvest – a full two seasons of surplus production purchase was thus precluded through late funding and subsequent insecurity within the project area.

2.0 DERO Pilot Phase Program Activities, Impact and Results

2.1 Data Collection Methodology

A study of the achievements and impacts of DERO was undertaken in 1999. Data was collected from 200 detailed case studies with individual farmers participating in DERO project activities case studies, and provides valuable information on complex farmer behavior and household agricultural production in northern Uganda during the pre-displacement period (2002-2007).

During pilot phase implementation, all field staff kept detailed daily activity reports. Data from individual reports was compiled by the Administrator and Coordinator. IPAM inventory, including both purchase and sales data, was also monitored and checked during periodic field visits by senior staff.

DERO senior field staff conducted 200 detailed case studies with individual farmers participating in IPAM sales and purchases as well as other DERO activities between February 1999 through July 23, 1999. The case studies consisted of a random sample of project participants taken from project records of produce sellers and farmer profile sheets. Case study interviews with farmers were at minimum thirty minutes in duration, although DERO staff reported that most farmers were eager to discuss project activities, noting most of the interviews lasted one hour. When necessary, female extension staff conducted interviews with female farmers.

In addition, over 160 group profiles were analyzed, representing approximately 5,000 farmers in Labwor County and Otuke County (see: Vanderheiden, A. (1999), DERO mid-term evaluation report). Group profiles were also collected in Agago County after the mid-term evaluation. Group profiles currently provide information on **163** groups, comprised of approximately 10,000 farming households.

DERO field staff also conducted short interviews with approximately 1,200 farmers. Information from these interviews is recorded on IPAM Pre-Questionnaire data sheets. These data sheets contain valuable information illustrating household food security 'profiles' for the project area.

The case studies were designed to meet the following objectives:

1. Collect data from farmers on produce sales to IPAM and other household food purchases;
2. Collect feedback and suggestions from project participants on project Activities;
3. Track and assess project activities and their outcomes;
4. Track household income expenditure earned from produce sales to IPAM; and
5. To assess project impact on household farming activities and food security.

2.2 DERO Achievements and Impacts 1997-99

Farmer profiles and surveys conducted prior to post-IPAM case studies identified major constraints to improving agricultural production and increasing farm output, factors which ultimately reinforce or inhibit food security in the region. Project management and senior staff have prioritized project activities according to local needs and participation levels.

While it is important to state that smallholder farmers are by no means a homogeneous category, the majority of farmers surveyed by COVOL stated that access to fair markets and high transportation costs are major disincentives when it comes to expanding smallholder production in the region. This problem is compounded by the high volume of post-harvest losses, the lack of locally available improved seed at planting time, as well as the lack of locally available farm implements and improved technologies (including basic tools and access to animal traction).

Farmers often have to travel as far as Kitgum, Kotido or Lira in order to buy even the most basic inputs. Prices for farm inputs, when 'locally' available, are often priced much higher than prices found in towns – often double the urban cost - reflecting the high transportation costs tacked on to most goods by traders benefiting from imperfect markets. DERO Resource Center activities were thus geared towards minimizing the constraints of smallholder producers within the project area.

Farmers expressed a general lack of confidence in local markets, and a high degree of risk-taking when making the decision to invest precious labor and scarce income to increase agricultural production toward surplus, even when climatic conditions are favorable and cash needs are high. Without favorable market conditions and access to inputs, income generating activities involving intensified agricultural production – for which the potential is very high - remain under exploited.

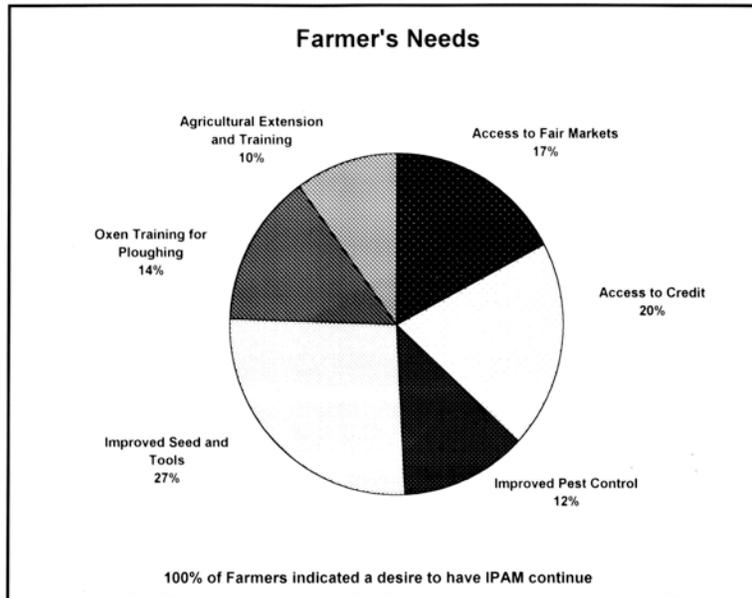


Figure 2: Farmers Prioritised Needs (from survey data, n = 200)

The DERO project substantially minimized production constraints and provided services which met farmer needs, reinforcing household and regional food security through integrated activities involving service delivery, training and extension, and improved market access through IPAM. Case study data demonstrates that DERO activities had a very high positive impact on agricultural production and household food security in the project area, even when taking into consideration the short duration of project activities.

The following conclusions are based upon data from 200 case studies project records, farmer participation in resource center activities, and assessments made by senior field staff based on farmer feedback.

IPAM Component

During the first accessible harvest season, the Integrated Production and Marketing (IPAM) program purchased over 50,000 kilograms (50 Metric Tons) of grains and pulses from local farmers of Otuke County. The IPAM surplus food was then stored and sold to households within the project area during the annual ‘hungry season,’ extending from April through July.

Food bought and sold under IPAM included:

Total IPAM Surplus Food Purchases, Adwari Resource Center

ITEM:	QUANTITY (KG):
Sorghum	9,059
Maize	18,603
Millet	4,157
TOTAL GRAINS:	31,819 (32 MT)
Beans	6,012
Pigeon Pea	4,197
Green Gram	3,054
Groundnut	801
Simsim	2,874
TOTAL PULSES:	16,937 (17 MT)

Figure 3: IPAM Purchases, Corner Adwari Resource Center

IPAM

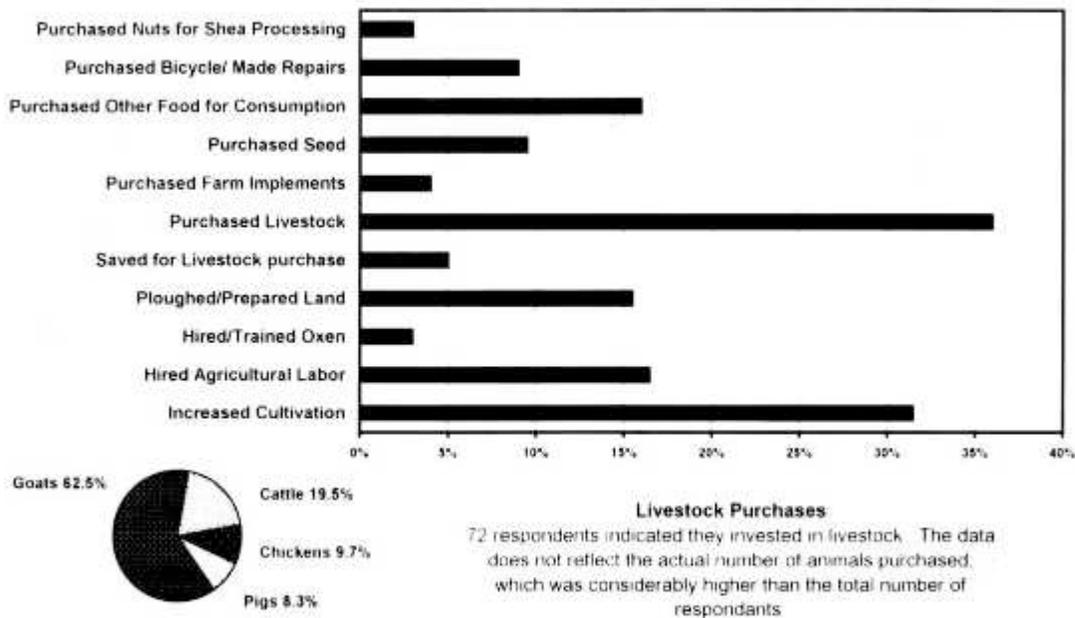
Case Study Analysis

All 200 case study respondents expressed high levels of customer satisfaction with DERO Project activities, especially the IPAM program. Simply put, in the words of one farmer from Okwang, **with DERO “farmers are given morale to dig because they are assured a market for [their] produce.”**

IPAM marketing and resource center support services provide tangible incentives for local farmers to increase agricultural production. By reducing transport costs and increasing local farm input availability, agricultural-based income generating activities also became more profitable for disadvantaged rural farmers, living far from regional markets and towns. One farmer from Agago expressed that, **“the DERO project brought better services than any other NGO because it offered something for every part of the agricultural season.”**

Food Security Indicators

Income Expenditure from the Sale of Produce Through IPAM



This chart represents case study data. A total of 200 case studies were completed representing 187 male and 13 female farmers. Farmers reported, on average, three activities that were supported through the income generated from the sale of produce. The above activities indicate a positive impact on food security.

Figure 4: Food Security Indicators of Project Impact

IPAM purchases allowed farmers to sell more produce in a single transaction, without having to haul surplus food long distances, pay high market dues, or spend time selling small quantities in the market. Income earned in these transactions was more easily allocated to larger investments to agricultural production - and most notably immediately after harvest, when new planting begins and cash needs are high.

The most disadvantaged farmers - those cultivating primarily at subsistence levels - also benefited greatly from IPAM purchases. Food insecure households, producing the minimum subsistence requirements, are forced to sell their produce just after harvest-when prices are at their lowest- in order to meet the cash needs of the household. Subsistence production is essentially monetized, even though most farmers know that selling their limited produce will potentially leave the household vulnerable to severe food shortages during the hungry season. It is common to hear farmers talk of being “cheated” by traders, who are accused of buying produce at unfair prices only to “sell farmers back their own food” in the hungry season at high prices.

DERO stores can function as a food bank for these small farmers. They can also help farmers eliminate some post-harvest losses. **Farmers expressed appreciation that IPAM purchases and sales made them feel secure that their food would remain in**

the area, and that they could buy it back at affordable prices during the hungry season.

Under current market conditions it is obvious that traders tend to benefit most from the surplus production of rural farmers in northern Uganda. Unfortunately, as long as market dynamics favor traders over producers, food security and economic growth are unlikely to be achieved in the region.

Case study data shows that a limited number of small local ‘traders’ took advantage of the higher purchase prices IPAM offered (approximately 5-10% higher than market price); however, the vast majority of sellers were smallholders selling their own produce. COVOL field staff report that ‘poor’ farmers interviewed from ‘deep in the village’ benefited from IPAM greatly - **thus expanding the project’s reach well beyond the proximity of the resource centers.**

Tracking of expenditure from IPAM purchase-generated income (the income earned by smallholder farmers selling surplus produce) reflects a **very high degree of reinvestment back in agricultural production and other income-generating activities.** Complex expenditure behavior also indicates high levels of investment in activities having a measurable positive impact on household food security.

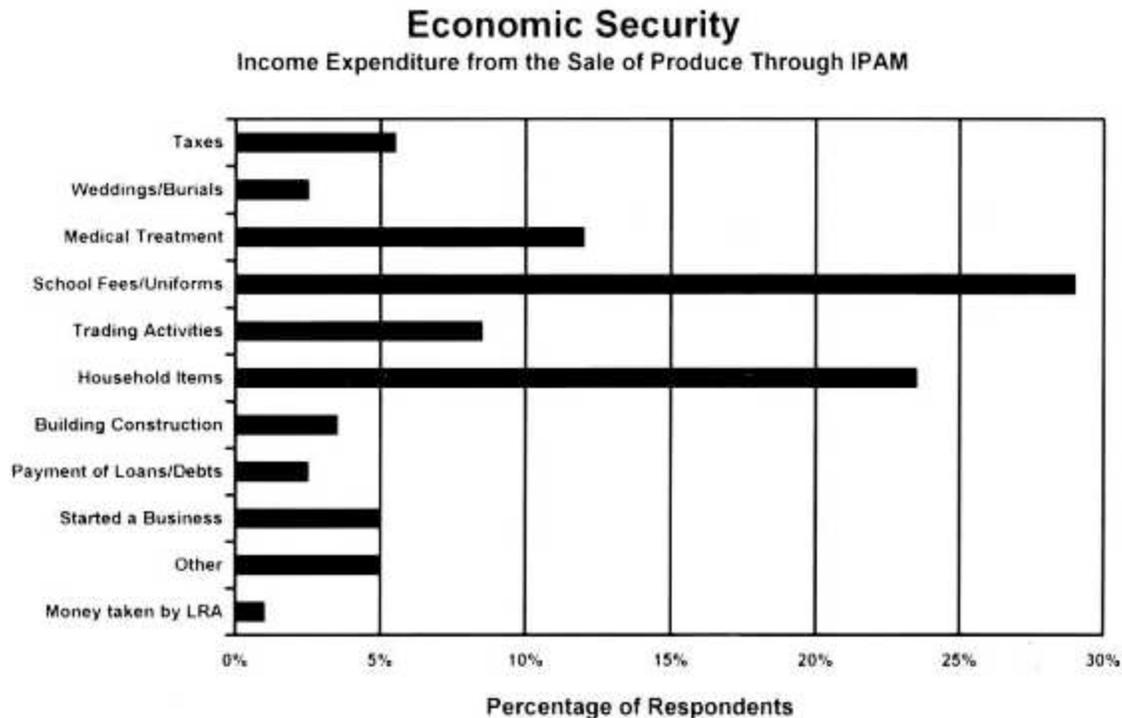
The following income expenditures were tracked to serve as proxy indicators of improved household food security. (see Figure 3, above).

- Increased cultivation (land area under production)
- Hired agricultural labor
- Hired or trained oxen for ploughing
- Ploughed or prepared land (money spent on)
- Savings for livestock purchase
- Purchased livestock (chickens, pigs, goats, and cattle)
- Purchased farm implements (tools, seeds, etc.)
- Purchased seed
- Purchased food for household consumption (what the HH was lacking)
- Purchased bicycle or made repairs (for produce transport)
- Purchased shea nuts for shea butter processing (an important food oil)

Most farmers engaged in complex strategies geared at increased production and income generating activities. **Most significant were investments made in increasing land area under cultivation, reflected in high levels of expenditure towards hired agricultural labor, ploughing and land clearing, and purchase of livestock.**

Household Economic Security

Though not directly related to household food security, IPAM income also was directed towards household expenditures such as school fees, medical treatment, investments in business and trading, house construction, and taxes. **These expenditures reflect an improvement in overall household economic security and general quality of life conditions.** (see figure 5, below)



This chart represents case study data. The activities recorded are indicators of economic security and general improvements in quality of life.

Figure 5: Economic Indicators of Project Impact

Gender Issues

Men were generally more actively involved in produce selling involving larger transactions. In the 200 case studies, some 187 men sold produce to IPAM to only 13 women . However, women are more actively involved with buying food from IPAM during the hungry season, as women are generally responsible for shopping and preparing meals.

Men are more likely to transport and sell produce because of the strength it requires to balance heavy sacks of grain and pulses on bicycles. Men are also more likely to own a bicycle than are women.

Whereas men may benefit more from IPAM purchase, women and their families benefit to a greater extent from IPAM sales during the hungry season. Data suggests that even though a disproportionate amount of men participated in sales to IPAM, the benefits from the income earned accrued to the household overall, with a significant amount of income contributed to household expenditures (see Figure 5, above).

Even though produce selling to IPAM has been largely to the benefit of men - as is much of the income earned from produce sales - tracking of income expenditure allowed COVOL to monitor impacts to entire households, which has been considerable.

COVOL planned to conduct similar case studies of IPAM buyers (mostly women) during the hungry season, however, staff constraints due to early closure of the project prevented an extended follow-up.

DERO Resource Center Activities

Under DERO, county-based rural resource centers were established in at Corner Adwari, Otuke County (Lira District); Abim TC, Labwor County (Kotido District); and Patongo TC, Agago County (Kitgum District).

The DERO resource centers have served as regional operating centers as well as the actual site of coordination for many DERO activities, including; IPAM purchases and sales, training and extension workshops, nursery demonstrations, field staff meetings, and vehicle maintenance and storage.

The construction and establishment of DERO Resource Centers consumed a significant amount of time, energy and financial resources; however, once fully operational, resource center activities gained momentum and produced tangible results, particularly from January to June 1999.

Extension visits, group meetings, and training workshops generated a great deal of enthusiasm for DERO activities. Farmers were also very pleased to be able to purchase affordable farm implements and seed from the DERO stores. There were numerous requests for COVOL to increase the number of IPAM stores within the project area (27% of all case study respondents).

The main objective of DERO's training program was to **train farmers in new skills and techniques** which would benefit agricultural production, reduce post-harvest losses, and increase income generating opportunities.

A summary of the training activities conducted by DERO staff to date include:

1. Nursery management and construction
2. Animal traction training: of ploughing techniques for farmers and bulls
3. Crop production
4. Traditional food plants
5. Food storage and post-harvest loss
6. Food processing: improved shea-processing methods and technology
7. Animal/herd health: prevention, diagnosis and treatment training
8. Fishpond construction

Once familiarized with the project's activities and services, participation levels soared and farmer requests for other activities led to DERO staff to initiate an Animal / Herd Health program, and a training program in fishpond construction. Although these activities were never discussed in the original DERO proposal, COVOL proceeded to include them in resource center programs in response to popular demand, and in recognition of their obvious impact on food security.

Resource Center Results

Animal Traction Training

Animal traction training was one of the most popular training programs carried out. With the massive depletion of cattle herds in northern Uganda over the last 14 years, an entire generation of youth and young males have not had access to animal traction to enable the expansion of land area under cultivation. In addition, knowledge of this important skill is being lost, and few farmers possess actual skills in animal traction ploughing. Even fewer bulls have been trained properly to carryout land clearing.

Animal traction training is quite time intensive, and requires a minimum two weeks of training for both farmers and bulls.

The Animal Traction Training Program achieved the following results:

- In Otuke County, 179 participants representing 59 groups attended the training workshops, with a training of trainers potential impact reaching 2,188 group members.
- In Labwor County, 54 participants representing 28 groups were trained, with the potential impact of reaching 524 group members.
- Animal traction training was to begin in Agago County but the limited time-frame of the project did not permit implementation of these activities.

The resource centers began to offer trained bulls and equipment for hire at a rate of 4,000= shillings per day. Although demand was high for the animal traction rental, late rains prevented farmers from utilizing the service to its estimated potential. Land in Otuke and Labwor was too hard and dry to begin ploughing at the time of the project's shut down date of July 31st.

Animal Health Program

The Animal/Herd Health Program began in January 1999. As DERO began to expand its presence in Labwor County, an area frequented by Karimojong during seasonal grazing movements, the resource center staff began to receive requests for veterinary drugs. COVOL initiated the program to build positive relations with the Karimojong, to ensure future security in the area. Farmers in Otuke soon began requesting the same services at the Adwari Resource Center.

Although the actual scope of the program is small, it is quite popular and requires very little administrative cost to the project, other than maintaining inventory in stock. A training curriculum was established and visual training aids were developed.

DERO staff conducted approximately 17 consultations and trainings, impacting 28 farmers. A total of 223 animals received treatment. A variety of basic veterinary medications and antibiotics were made available for sale through the project.

Traditional Food Plants (TFP) Program

In recognition of the nutritional significance of traditional food plants in northern Uganda, COVOL assembled respondent data, photographs and recorded interviews with local elders in order to document the utilization of 118 indigenous food plant species, including undomesticated famine foods.

In an area where food security is delicate even in years of normal production, TFP trainings have facilitated the transfer of valuable and practical indigenous technical knowledge from the elder generation to society as a whole.

Though the publication of Traditional Food Plant information was not possible given early termination of the DERO project, TFP results will be compiled and published in English, Lango, Acholi, Leb Jobwor and Ateso under the On-Farm Biodiversity Program of the Shea Project.

Crop Production Training

DERO staff could not keep up with the demand for improved crop production extension. Crop production extension visits were conducted in Agago County with an attendance of 951 participants representing 104 farmer's groups. The potential outreach passed on from the participants to the remaining members of their groups is 4,431 farmers. In Otuke County, crop production trainings were attended by 1,188 participants representing 42 groups with the potential outreach of 1,805 farmers. In Labwor County, 206 participants were trained from 24 groups with the potential outreach of 328 farmers.

Aquaculture

In Okwang, a single sub-county in the project area, farmers approached DERO staff for assistance in fishpond construction and procuring fry to stock ponds. Small fishponds are simple to construct and maintain, and can provide valuable protein and can be a source of income and nutrition during the annual 'hungry season'. With COVOL's facilitation, farmers initiated the construction of 18 fishponds totaling 2,273 square meters. In addition, 5 ponds were in the progress of being completed at the time of the project's closure.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Viewed objectively - as a pilot project in a difficult area during a difficult time - DERO was a success, proving and disproving the practicality of a number of low-cost interventions in an area where food security (as well as physical security) is a perennial concern. High levels of farmer participation in DERO project activities and case study data demonstrate how small, low-cost resource centers can effectively deliver much needed services. Small, integrated interventions can have a large impact on food security in northern Uganda.

That the DERO 'brand' remains strong to this day - nine long years of war and social disruption since the DERO pilot phase – is testament to the popularity of the project among local farming communities of the northern Uganda project area.

With the return of relative security to the rural heartland of northern Uganda, farmers – and women farmers in particular – should be supported to rebuild their livelihoods through rehabilitation of the productive potential of their land and labor.

The DERO project provides tangible examples of effective, low-cost and high-impact innovations along local value chains for agricultural and natural products can provide added value and increased returns to women's labor, building the productive resources of the household and reinforcing food security based on a balanced and nutritious diet. The need for such a project to serve the rebuilding of northern Ugandan agriculture has never been greater.