

**The Evaluation
Of
Child of Hope Outreach Uganda's
Support to Vulnerable Communities in
Namatala area, Mbale municipality.**

“FEEDBACK OF FINDINGS”

2008-2009

**Conducted By
HONADS Group.
P.o.Box, 1178 MBALE-UGANDA
Tel. +256-772-667-406
E-mail; hands_onltd@yahoo.com
© Feb-Mar 2010**

Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | | |
|---------------|---|---|
| COHOU | - | Child of Hope Outreach Uganda. |
| SOCO | - | School of clinical officers. |
| SAMA | - | Student Association for medical Aid. |
| TASO | - | The Aids Support organization. |
| HONADS | - | Hands-on advisory services Ltd. |
| HIV | - | Human Immune deficiency virus |
| IGAs | - | Income Generating Activities. |
| OVCs | - | Orphans, Vulnerable Children's |
| PLWAs | - | People Living With Aids. |
| AIDS | - | Acquired immune deficiency syndrome |
| Pple | - | People |
| CRO | - | Child Restoration Outreach. |
| UPE | - | Universal primary education. |
| USE | - | Universal Secondary Education. |
| BIG | - | Business incentive grant |
| OVI | - | Objective verifiable indicators |
| TORs | - | Terms of Reference. |
| UGRF | - | Uganda gender rights foundation. |
| UDHS | - | Uganda demographic health survey |

Contents Page.

Abbreviations and Acronyms.....2

Contents Page.....3

Executive Summary.....4

Introduction.....6

1.1. TORs for the review of COHOU's support to underprivileged communities.....7

1.1.2. Evaluation objectives.....7

Methodology.....8

2.1. Observations/findings as concerns COHOU.....8

2.1.2. Programmes attainments and challenges along support phases.....13

2.1.3. Position of COHOU & similar initiatives in the programme area.....15

2.1.4 Possible areas for support.....16

2.1.4 Address concerns for COHOU's sustainability.....16

2.1.5. Conclusion.....17

Executive Summary

Child of Hope Outreach Uganda hereby abbreviated as COHOU is a child-oriented and family empowerment programme currently supported by friends and well-wishers across the globe. Its purpose is to scale up care and support to vulnerable children and families through education support, counselling and home based care characterised by economic support interventions. These are expected to mitigate the impact of Poverty and HIV/AIDS pandemic in the pro-poor communities of Namatala. This is where thousands of children make their way through life uneducated, impoverished, abandoned, malnourished, discriminated against, neglected and are therefore vulnerable. For them, life is a daily struggle to survive. Childhood should be a time to grow, learn, play and feel safe but for these children this is impossible. Building a better, safer, more peaceful environment for the children and enabling their parents to uphold their responsibilities for the freedom and well-being of their children is the centrality of COHOU's efforts. Children's survival, development and protection are no longer matters of charitable concern but of moral and legal obligation because deprivation at an early age, affects human beings throughout their whole life cycle. Those who are neglected or abused in the first years of life suffer damage from which they may never fully recover, and that may prevent them from reaching their full potential as older children.

Support core programme areas include education sponsorship backed by feeding, family support through family spacing talks (family planning), health awareness campaigns that include a) sanitation & hygiene, b) road safety, c) malaria control, and business incentive grants to foster parents. This is all strengthened with capacity building in the form of sensitization and life skills training to underprivileged communities in the area.

COHOU commissioned a review of its support to the pro-poor communities of Namatala with the cardinal aim of establishing the extent to which the programme has achieved its planned objectives for supporting marginalised children and their families. The main reason for supporting such communities was to ensure that these marginalised children do not miss out on essential services especially education, health care and protection. Namatala children were identified by COHOU as children who are most in need, and whose rights were being abused and undervalued through being excluded from services; thereby subjecting them to marginalisation and exclusion from the millennium agenda.

Capacity building and strengthening in areas of education, family support and empowerment has been COHOU's strategy of support to underprivileged communities. The strategy ensures sustainability at every stage of implementation which will consequently consolidate and champion the cause for socio-economic rights promotion in the programme area. As part of managerial sustainability and consolidation, the use of locally based process facilitators became important for COHOU.

The review covered a cross section of 120 direct beneficiaries out of which 62 were children and employed a predominantly qualitative methodology. Appreciative inquiry and key informant interviews were the main techniques used in this methodology. The process was interactive and provided opportunity for continued self-assessment and reflection, which was very enriching for all involved.

It's been possible to establish through the review that so far, COHOU has attained commendable success in achieving the planned objectives for supporting pro-poor communities of Namatala slum area. Assessing the present status and comparing it to the original situations of the beneficiaries, it's evident that COHOU's support has, to some extent, caused a positive impact. These include the following; (though at varying degrees and levels of growth and development)

- (a) increased literacy levels
- (b) improved standard of living
- (c) reduced mortality & poverty rates
- (d) improved sanitation and hygiene
- (e) improvement to the image of Namatala
- (f) reduced crime and immorality rates,

However, COHOU's challenges to her service mandate relate to the community's ignorance & limited awareness about socio-economic right issues, beneficiaries unrealistic expectations, unfavourable strong cultural influence and poverty.

The review further established that the managerial challenges depicted at COHOU are not peculiar to it alone but similar initiatives in the area registered the same challenges. What is required therefore is to look at those challenges as learning points upon which efforts can be made for redress.

As a way forward therefore, COHOU's strategy for support to pro-poor communities should be drawn on the basis of experiences and findings so far reflected and fully elaborated in this report.

Introduction.

There is a growing concern about the impact of development assistance especially about the sustainability of social development programs, their effects on vulnerable groups such as children, the poorest of the poor and women. These concerns have rekindled interest in assessing how well development projects and social programs have been meeting desired objectives. The evaluation in force therefore, conducted by an independent group contracted by COHOU is intended to throw more light on any of the following;

- Implementation progress to date.
- Implementation issues or constraints during the last three years of implementation.
- Proposed/ revised mechanisms for implementing strategic programs at all levels.
- Up date of implementation targets and goals or recommendations for the forthcoming years.

Accordingly, the contracted firm (HONADS Group) has undertaken an extensive internal review of the programs spearheaded by COHOU in Namatala area which is the biggest slum in Mbale municipality with an area of 2,217 square mile in size and a population of over 16,000 people according to the Local Council Report on Namatala in 2006 report.

The project area is characterized by substandard and poor housing units, low standards of living and high illiteracy levels, especially among the children.

Namatala population is generally young, whereby the average age of the entire population is 6 years: an indication of high fertility that stands at 6.2% according to UDHS (2002). This entrenches the dependency syndrome that currently stands at the dependency ratio of 1:22 which has further subjected the community to higher vulnerability levels.

The community is characterized by small grass thatched huts that serve as accommodation units for an average family of between 7-14 members who overcrowd those small units (huts).

The undesirable situations that engulfed the targeted community have exposed the Namatala community to more serious problems specifically for the vulnerable children.

- Grass thatched huts have been a safe haven for idlers who find it easier to commute to town centre for survival using criminal or unfortunate means such as pick-pocketing, prostitution and all ruthless means for survival. Unfortunately children of the area were left with no alternatives other than picking food waste from garbage pits, doing odd jobs and begging, a situation that COHOU was established to address using thematic interventions hereby fully analyzed and evaluated against desired goals.

1.1. TORs for the review of COHOU's support to vulnerable communities.

Between Feb-March 2010, COHOU commissioned a comprehensive evaluation/review exercise related to its support to underprivileged communities within Namatala slum area of Mbale municipality.

The essence of the review as spelt out in the terms of reference (TORs) was to establish the following:

- The extent to which COHOU has achieved its planned objectives for support to vulnerable communities with specific references to the following indicators that are stated in the programme document of COHOU.
 - i) Number of vulnerable groups whose socio-economic status and literacy levels improved due to the Intervention of COHOU.
 - ii) Beneficiaries' responsiveness to COHOU's programs characterised by a strong desire of association, accountability & reporting culture.

Finally, the following will be analysed critically:

- Major lessons learnt during the implementation of COHOU's supportive programs.
- Issues and concerns that COHOU will need to consider whilst revising its strategy of supporting vulnerable communities focusing on children.

1.1.2. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES.

- To establish and assess the extent of positive change to the beneficiary community compared to the situation before COHOU's intervention. Children & their immediate families are the cardinal focus.
- To determine whether the desired social and economic changes have occurred in the intended target populations. Families were asked to assess whether they considered their present conditions better, the same or worse than before the intervention of COHOU's programs.
- To establish the extent to which these changes can be attributed to COHOU's interventions rather than to other independent factors such as the general changes in the economic environment or the effects of other programs or policies.
- To establish the direct and indirect impacts caused by COHOU's interventions on other population groups.
- To assess the projects achievement in relation to its objectives.

Methodology.

The evaluation literature presented here is a true representation of a randomised evaluation design that was adopted and critically adhered to by the evaluation team. Instead of following the methodologically rigorous quasi-experimental design which is unrealistically complex, slow and expensive, the team ensured that other interventions irrelevant to the project do not influence the outcomes.

The team was conscious of the fact that an intervention may have either an immediate or delayed impact depending on the nature of the situation on which it is focused. Evaluators were specifically sensitive to delayed effects because sufficient post-intervention observations have been made to allow a program's impact to occur and COHOU's interventions are hereby not being evaluated too soon after their implementation.

In the interest of time, cost or convenience, impact evaluation is a simpler and more economical design that requires creativity and flexibility.

Assessments, observations & interviewing project beneficiaries before the program began were conducted to establish their status in terms of income, literacy levels and quality of life. Observations are repeated at some interval after exposure to the project. Differences in the key indicators (dependent variables) are assumed to be attributable to the impact of the project.

2.1. OBSERVATIONS/ FINDINGS AS CONCERNS COHOU.

For the purposes of establishing the extent to which COHOU's programme interventions has achieved its planned objectives, appreciative inquiry and key informants interview techniques were adopted. The process was fully interactive and provided opportunity for continued self-assessment and reflection, which was very enriching for all involved.

It was interesting to note that, the economic burden that the vulnerable households of Namatala area bear is directly linked to their relatively high dependency ratios (ratio of non-working to working-age population). Economic assistance should be provided first and foremost for those underprivileged households whose high numbers of children make them particularly vulnerable to extreme levels of poverty. Economic support should ideally occur in collaboration with poverty-alleviation programmes carried out by various NGOs and governmental ministries.

Irrespective of a multitude of needs faced by the Namatala community, **education support programme focusing on OVCs** was ranked as the number one priority under the baseline survey carried out in 2003. Education is thus regarded by COHOU and other stakeholders in the area as an instrument of change considering the important role it can play in the future of a child, household,

community and the nation at large. A larger and equally compelling issue in the project area is the empowerment of immediate families who more often than not, are struggling to meet their basic needs. Even though these populations are struggling for their very survival, education still may be secondary to food, water, clothing, shelter and personal security.

It is evident that once the basic nutritional needs are met, the motivation for education doesn't only increase, but the performance and plight improves.

Recommendation.

- Early childhood and primary education could well be the only education vulnerable children receive, therefore the quality of primary education under COHOU should be examined closely and timely improvements made where possible especially in areas of (a) provision of school materials, pencils, uniforms, exercise books, etc
(b) Availability of study space fully equipped with study materials. However, getting children into school is only the beginning, ensuring that they attend school regularly and complete their studies with the skills that will allow them to achieve future success, is the ultimate goal of COHOU.
- More educational opportunities should be made available for OVCs by;
 - (a) Providing scholarships for exceptional children who are really disadvantaged. This will necessitate COHOU to form support groups and networks in this regard. Innovative mechanisms that can assist OVCs and their immediate families over the long term should be identified, replicated and brought to scale.
 - (b) Increasing the scholarships for qualifying vulnerable children to attend secondary and tertiary institutions. This would necessitate the establishment of a skills development centre for life skills. Support to this venture (quick impact initiative) would leave a lasting impact.
 - (c) Establishment of skills development centre which would ensure acquisition of life skills. The benefits of such investment would be immeasurable in terms of the health, productivity and social well-being of children today and of future generations.

The following is the representation of what transpired between 2008 to date as far as education sponsorship is concerned.

- ✓ Paid school fees for 42 OVCs (primary children) during 2009-2010 fiscal years. Scholastic materials (shoes, bags, and uniforms) that are prerequisite for holistic educational support were also secured and distributed. Taking them to school has caused a tremendous impact to themselves and the community at large. Before, they were seen as societal outcasts roaming the streets fuelling street crime (security threats) and were liabilities to the community but today they are potential community assets more disciplined and productive. However, this comes with a cost because if COHOU wish to increase these numbers they will require additional resources.
- ✓ Operated a nursery school project effective from 2008 to date characterised by the steady increase of kids' enrolment from 45 to 70 and currently 80. However, this intervention is a drop in the ocean which has provoked COHOU to respond by acquiring land, so far under intensive development. This development will enable them to help additional numbers. Indicators already are signalling a better picture once the school project complex is fully launched and operational. It has been noticed that income-poor families tend to have more children than richer ones. These poor children are more likely to be engaged in child labour, which could mean missing out on an education and, as a result, on the opportunity to generate a decent income that would allow them to escape poverty in the future.
- ✓ Instituted Spiritual and life-skills guidance programme during school holidays and Saturdays implemented whereby all beneficiaries of the education sponsorship program are assembled for career guidance. For it to be more effective, foster parents should be involved in the exercise because parenting and nurturing a child is a collective responsibility.
- ✓ Intensified School visitation for the purposes of (a) assessing the performance of the sponsored OVCs, (b) creating awareness on HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and road safety. Much as the awareness program is a key intervention in the program area, COHOU seem to have not built enough capacity to efficiently and effectively handle it especially in thematic areas of HIV, malaria and road safety. There is need to identify and strengthen strategic networks in the above mentioned thematic areas. A partnership with SOCO, Hospice and SAMA is ideal but collective approach to planning and implementation

should be embraced since they are interested party in the above thematic areas. Undoubtedly such collaborative networks will spur multifaceted benefits to the entire community.

- ✓ Implemented a feeding program to 62 primary children and 80 nursery children during school days effective 2009 to date. The insufficient food at the households is shared among the un-schooled children leaving the school going brothers and sisters to fend for themselves. The feeding program has and will reduce stress and household poverty because the more mouths to feed, the more poverty you're bringing into the family of such vulnerable communities. For consolidation purposes, efforts geared towards the establishment of an agricultural scheme and operation of a kitchen should be applauded. Nutrition is a key aspect of individual and household survival especially for young children. An immunocompromised child needs an adequate and balanced level of food intake to improve chances of survival. This can be justified by comparing the health of COHOU children with other neighbouring children.

Commenced a Family support programme focusing on raising income (IGAs) at households within the projects area. The poverty, coupled with the HIV epidemic depicted at households in the project area, casts a dark and menacing shadow over a generation of the young generation of Namatala. As we enter the 21st century, we can no longer afford to remain in the midst of an evolving and deepening tragedy that is overwhelming the social structure of hundreds & thousands of families. This is because the crisis extends beyond the families of those directly affected and strains the ability of government to maintain the improvements in social and economic developments. The current interventions by COHOU are commendable, but as a young and relatively small organisation they cannot provide such services to all of the underprivileged households. The numbers of additional vulnerable children are more than COHOU can currently cope with. Such envisaged challenges can only be met by a renewed and more robust answer/strategy from all stakeholders. Irrespective of the above challenges, COHOU effectively implemented the following programs in fiscal year 2008-2009.

- ✓ Distribution of free insecticide-treated mosquito nets to 70 families. Malaria is the number one killer in Uganda killing about 70,000 to 110,000 people annually of which rural-based populations are most vulnerable. However, children who grow up in poverty, malnourished, uneducated and vulnerable to abuse, are unlikely to develop the physical,

social or intellectual skills necessary to become productive citizens. Those fortunate enough to grow at all are at high risk of becoming transmitters of poverty to the next generation. This is already experienced in the project area. The health of children in Uganda in general and Namatala in particular is compromised by the state of the household impoverishment. Namatala area was prone to cholera outbreaks before the intervention of COHOU unlike today, when cholera is a problem of the past. Cholera was rampant in the area due to poor waste disposal since most people lacked pit-latrines.

Recommendation.

- Community outreach and awareness campaigns that stress the importance of personal hygiene coupled with waste management and community hygiene education should be stressed.
 - Nutritional programmes that are innovative and community-based need to be put in place, utilising the schools and health units as outreach vehicles to get to the households.
 - The psychosocial needs of children and their parents need to be recognised and sensitization programs carried out in communities to improve awareness about health related issues.
 - A stronger focus should be placed on ensuring universal access to routine preventive care, primary immunization for all children.
- ✓ Family spacing talks intended to fill the gaps identified in family planning methods. Many women in the project area desire to space their pregnancies but do not use contraception because most of them don't have adequate knowledge or even access to reproductive health supplies. There is need for COHOU to strengthen the existing collaborative networks in this area of family planning and health management.
 - ✓ Construction of pit latrines in congested homesteads for sanitation and hygiene issues where an approximation of 500 people benefited. Some extent, usage and maintenance of them is not adequate which may affect the intended goal. There is thus need for streamlined and clear management arrangements.
 - ✓ Establishment of Seed funding programme with 30 benefiting directly though with little impact because of the minimal financial input. Resources should be mobilised and committed to this fund. This should be coupled with arranged tailoring training (business incubation) to the household heads for sustenance.

- ✓ Home visitation programme by the projects staffs which led to 70 families to be visited during the fiscal year 2009, where critical analysis of grassroots' problems, coupled with counselling & promotion referrals to networking organisations were carried out.

Further, some families in the project area were sampled and visited with an intention of establishing the impact caused by family support and education sponsorship program. It's worth noting that the project is receptive to the communities in force though the project's outputs seem to be a rain drop in an ocean. This is characterised by high numbers of children roaming in the area eagerly waiting to be equally recruited by the project. Even if there is UPE and USE government program, the basic scholastic necessities are too expensive for their parents. It's not surprising to find only one sponsored child in a home (hut) of 15 occupants needing schooling. There is thus a need for COHOU to draw and adhere to a project log frame because when you address one problem many more others are consequently created and if the projects mission is towards lifting the socio-economic plight of the populace, then multifaceted approaches must be embraced.

It was gratifying to come across some female beneficiaries who have really benefited from COHOU support and they are full of praises about the programme. What they get from COHOU supplements on what they already had implying that they are active of the poor.

2.1.2. Programme attainments & Challenges along COHOU support phases.

The process of empowering underprivileged communities socio-economically by COHOU at the grass roots level is faced with several challenges, which include the following:

- The community's ignorance and limited awareness about socio-economic rights issues, which makes it hard for COHOU to efficiently and effectively sensitize grass root communities. This is attributable to high illiteracy levels in the area. The education sponsorship and sensitization program is therefore spot-on.
- Higher expectations from communities. Beneficiaries' expectations are beyond what COHOU can offer because what is offered is really a drop in an ocean. Some beneficiaries seem not to view themselves as the owners of the programme and thus may not show commitments in case they are called upon for support where necessary. This puts sustainability issues to test.
- Community ignorance about development projects and programmes: underprivileged grass root communities are ignorant about government, developmental systems and

other development programmes existing in their localities. This hampers effective participation.

- Strong cultural influences can lead to socio-economic rights violation. For instance denial of women to improve their socio-economic status by making them subjective and submissive to their husbands as depicted at households in the project area. This slows down their vigour and development momentum.
- Poverty. Most of the cases of socio-economic rights violation are associated situations of poverty.

Whereas more effort is needed to consolidate the achievements and address factors limiting the program's progress, what comes out very clearly is that COHOU's education sponsorship and family support interventions have made an indelible mark in the lives of the beneficiaries and therefore religiously acknowledged at the grass roots in championing development in the right direction.

The socio-economic rights promotion at community level was a consequence of the need to integrate and consolidate organizations efforts for sustainability. Some of the trained members under COHOU's beneficiary family have gone further in their socio-economic recovery though at a slow pace. There is thus community excitement and willingness to work with and be part of COHOU in her development paradigm.

In further gauging the extent of socio-economic promotion at community level, the evaluation team sought opportunity of meeting with recipients of COHOU's services.

A closer look at the activities of the recipients or beneficiaries of COHOU reveals a great need for more financial and human resources to the programme. Resource mobilisation strategies must be clear and take a centre stage in organizations activities roster. Further, socio-economic rights promotion at community level must be influenced by the communities' perception about the organization and reasons for which they joined it.

Reasons for which the beneficiary groups joined COHOU varied. However, common to all, was looking at COHOU as means to assist them educate their children and fight poverty. What is deducible is indeed the strong expectation of addressing beneficiaries concerns which are more closely linked to socio-economic independence.

2.1.3. Position of COHOU & similar initiatives in the programme area.

There are several other initiatives in the area mandated to champion the cause of the vulnerable communities. To mention but a few, CRO, Compassion International, TASO, UGRF, JENGA Community development outreach e.t.c.

It was of interest to the review/evaluation team to establish the nature of linkages and collaboration with relevant organs in the project area and draw learning from them that would enrich COHOU's support to the vulnerable groups.

There was a strong sense of competition, suspicion, duplication of roles in the project area and yet some of the organizations that serve the needs of the underserved communities in the area are not adequately empowered to do so.

A historical perspective is that the emergence of various organizations in form of NGOs, CBOs and Associations in Bugisu area was a consequence of vacuum created by weak & unfocused NGOs in the area, particularly regarding governance, reporting and their exclusiveness in resource mobilization.

This situation causes to question how these voices for CSO view each other, where is each others comparative advantage in terms of serving the voiceless and how best can they complement each other? What becomes a major concern is how the roles of both COHOU and other relevant organizations in the area can be harnessed for the good of the underserved communities.

Preferably a conference targeting all organizations operating in Namatala area should be conducted so as to harmonise perspectives and come up with a concrete plan of how to engage each other for the good of society.

However, it remains a challenge to COHOU on how to create pathways for linkages, synergy and cooperation between the various and different socio-economic actors. On a positive note however, COHOU already took an initiative by collaborating with SAMA, HOSPICE-Mbale, University of Glamorgan-UK and many others for collective achievement. Hopefully the act may unfold into healthy developments for civil society in the area.

2.1.4. Possible Areas for Support.

There is need for a discussion to nurture clear understanding and sharing on the issues following the review, devising way forward & developing action points, jointly agreeing on framework actors & roles. This should be in a way that nurtures autonomy, self-reliance and limits dependency.

Further, clear and open frameworks for COHOU's support where all parties are aware of the nature of support and obligations due to them should be in place and as a matter of fact, the following should be adhered to:

2.1.4 Address concerns for COHOU's sustainability

The support should encourage and enable COHOU to diversify her funding base. This could involve consolidation efforts coupled with skills and knowledge in resource mobilization and fundraising while building credibility of COHOU to attract alternative funding. Efforts should be towards linking COHOU to any available opportunity.

- ✓ Enable COHOU to acquire own office premise, than having to rent. This calls for re-allocation of funds for rent of office premises to purchasing or constructing own premises. It's gratifying however to note that strategic efforts have been made in this direction.
- ✓ Strengthen COHOU's ability to obtain information and always take chances on available opportunities within the environment, such as local governments and development projects existing in the area while collaborating with other actors.
- ✓ Social sustainability through networks that are towards the development of best practices for COHOU's image and operations should be embraced and intensified. A condition that will render COHOU to attain her mandated objectives and functions.
- ✓ Broaden the scope of outlook to poverty issues in order to accommodate for total and full responsiveness to socio-economic rights concerns. There is therefore need to increase community awareness and internalisation of social and economic rights while drawing linkages to specific organs that address similar concerns.
- ✓ Streamline socio-economic rights monitoring and reporting: The review established lack of clear mechanisms and capacity for monitoring and reporting on programme interventions. There is need to target support appropriate to this gap. It also remains necessary to support COHOU to internalise the monitoring and evaluation systems developed so far, develop indicators at each level of the system and also develop organizational capacity in establishing monitoring and evaluation systems in other areas of concern beyond socio-economic rights.

Conclusion

Efforts towards sustainability of COHOU both financial and social, should be the focus of COHOU. This should aim at encouraging more underprivileged ones to be recruited while setting benchmarks for core support involving government, providing training in resource mobilisation and building capacity in financial management, ensuring sustainability in terms of human resources, and encouraging COHOU to access support from other sources such as districts, IGAs & international NGOs.

It's unfortunate to note that COHOU has not yet FULLY attained the desired indicators for sustainability.

However, as the efforts are underway, it's necessary that processes that will reflect attainment of desired attributes as clearly highlighted in this document be intensified.

END.