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FOOD SECURITY AND RESILIENCE IN TRANSITIONING ENVIRONMENTS (FORESITE) PROJECT



FINAL REPORT

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List of Acronyms

AVSI	The Association of Volunteers in International Service
BDC	Boma Development Committee
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CfA	Cash for Assets (CfA)
CIIS	Community Interventions Information System
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EWEA	Early Warning Early Action
EU	European Union
FGs	Farmer Groups
FMNR	Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration
FORESITE	Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
GMC	Gender Male Champion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GoRSS	Government of the Republic of South Sudan
ICLA	Information Counselling and Legal Assistance
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IGA	Income Generating Activity
IP	Implementing Partner
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PDC	Peace Development Committee
PMT	Project Management Team
PMU	Project Management Unit
PTA	Parent Teachers Association
S4T	Savings for Transformation
SC	Steering Committee
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWG	Technical Working Group
WV	World Vision (including both WVA and WVSS)
WVA	World Vision Australia
WVI-SS	World Vision International – South Sudan

1. Description

- 1.1. Name of Coordinator of the grant contract:** World Vision Australia
- 1.2. Name and title of the contact person:** Juliet Hanafie, Country Impact Manager
- 1.3. Name of beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies) in the action:** World Vision International, Norwegian Refugee Council, and AVSI Foundation
- 1.4. Title of the Action:** Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments - FORESITE
- 1.5. Contract number:** T05-EUTF-HOA-SS-49-02
- 1.6. Target Country or States(s):** South Sudan, Lakes, Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States
- 1.7. Final beneficiaries and /or target groups:** 21,826 individuals (54% of beneficiaries are female)

2. Assessment of the implementation of the action activities and its results

2.1 Executive Summary of the Action

Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project implemented by World Vision (WV), AVSI Foundation and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in collaboration with the relevant Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GoRSS) key line ministries, at national, state and county levels. The overall objective of the project is: To contribute to strengthening resilience of communities, improving governance and conflict prevention and reducing forced displacements due to loss of livelihoods. The project specific objective is: To improve food security of rural smallholders in Greater Bahr el Ghazal and to empower them to cope with environmental volatility and insecurity. This was achieved through the successful delivery of the following three interrelated outcomes:

- (i) Reduced barriers to engagement in resilience building, food security and income-generating activities, especially for women and youth.
- (ii) Increased anticipatory, absorptive, and adaptive capacity with respect to climate change and disruptive events including natural disasters and conflict.
- (iii) Improved and resilient food security and income especially for women and youth.

The final report (project completion report) covers the entire years of the project implementation period from the 26th July 2019 to the 25th March 2023. The project was implemented in the three states and four counties as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Operational Areas of the project partners and accompanying beneficiaries

Implementing Partner (IP)	State	County	Direct Target Beneficiaries
World Vision International	Warrap State	Twic and Gogrial East	8,037
AVSI- People for Development	Lakes State	Cueibet	7,504
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Western Bahr el Ghazal & Warrap States	Jur River and Twic	6,285
Total			21,826

Despite some challenges like the COVID 19 pandemic, unstable macro-economic environment, climatic shocks (flooding in some parts of the project area) and incidence of conflicts (inter-communal violence and cattle raiding), over the past 44 months the project accomplished remarkable achievements positively impacting the lives and livelihoods of the project beneficiaries.

The Final Evaluation conducted by an external consultant confirmed that the project successfully delivered all project outputs and key outcome indicators. According to the final evaluation, the average achievement rate for all 27 outputs is 100%. The evaluation also revealed that the project registered excellent results against all of its higher level (specific objective) indicator targets, as shown in table 1 below.

For example: % HHs in moderate or severe food insecurity reduced to 30% at end line evaluation, compared to 51.9% at baseline. The average Coping Strategies Index (CSI) score remarkably reduced to 15% at final evaluation in comparison to 29% at baseline. These are key food security indicators, among others, attesting that the project has made significant improvements in the lives and livelihoods of project beneficiaries.

S.N.	Specific Objective Indicators	Baseline value (April 2020)	Project life target value	Final Evaluation result (June 2023)	Percentage
1	% HHs in moderate or severe food insecurity	51.9%	25% (↓)	30.4%	80%
2	Average Coping Strategies Index (CSI) score ¹	29.2%	18% (↓)	14.92	126%
3	% change in HH subjective resilience score ²	14.3%	30% (↑)	29.1%	94.3%

The project's innovative approaches such as the cost-sharing modality, linkage of smallholder farmers with agro-inputs dealers, Gender Male Champions (GMC), input-output market linkages, and women and youth empowerment initiatives highly contributed to the project efficiency and allowed project beneficiaries diversify their livelihoods to achieving food security and resilience building.

Progress towards the three outcomes is elaborated below: Underneath each outcome, a table inserted to show progress of the key outcome indicators based on the findings of the final evaluation.

Outcome 1: Reduced barriers to engagement in resilience building, food security and income generating activities especially for women and youth.

The gender transformative programming employed by the project through the recruitment of Gender Male/women Champions (GMCs) and series of community sensitization and awareness sessions enabled the project to register remarkable achievements in improving attitudes and behaviors and hence reducing gender-based violence (GBV) in the project area.

The project monitoring survey (in Jur River County alone) on the impact of GMCs revealed the following:

- 67% reduction in GBV cases at the household level recorded;
- 73% of women don't agree that women are being subjected to violence at the household level;
- 90% of women don't agree with the idea that women are responsible for getting pregnant with the consent of the husband. They said it is a joint decision;
- Around 45% of men responded that men are not the final decision-makers at the household level and;
- Mentality of men towards women has been improved and as a result men allow their wives to participate in different activities and functions.

Moreover, the project supported women's groups carried out different livelihoods diversification activities which contributed towards their social and economic empowerment. Proactive participation of women in project activities and their work within the community in peacebuilding, S4T, farmer groups and mother gardens have significantly assisted to strengthen their solidarity and social cohesion, and therefore a reduction in GBV.

Further, the project's work and support to the Peace Development Committees (PDCs) and Youth-led peace clubs meaningfully contributed to promote peace and also strengthen their social cohesion for peaceful coexistence among community members. The quarterly conflict mapping analysis conducted by the project confirmed that the incidence of conflicts in most parts of the

¹ See https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual_guide_proced/wfp211058.pdf

² This indicator will be developed prior to baseline as part of an action-funded publication on building subjective resilience – see "Publication" section in Description of the Action.

project's operational areas significantly reduced. Such reduction in the incidence of conflicts has been attributed to the work of the PDCs and youth-led peace clubs including the implementation of sports for peace initiatives.

Results of the final evaluation showed that the project registered very positive results on all of the key outcome indicators as depicted below.

S.N.	Outcome 1 Indicators	Baseline value (April 2020)	Project life target value	Final Evaluation result (June 2023)	Percentage
1	% of respondents who feel that their community is a safe place for women and youth.	53.5%	65% (↑)	73.7%	113.4%
2	% of respondents who believe that the majority of their friends and community members currently agree with key gender attitude statements ³	6.9%	20% (↑)	25.9%	144.7%
3	% change in the measure of the likelihood of traditional court rulings on HLP being made in a woman's favour ⁴	62%	75% (↑)	69.5%	57.7%

Outcome 2: Increased anticipatory, absorptive, and adaptive capacity with respect to climate change and disruptive events including natural disasters and conflict

The natural resource base remains a key source of livelihoods for millions of smallholder farmers in South Sudan. Climate change and population pressure, however, pose lots of burdens or stresses on the environment, placing further pressure on intercommunal conflicts due to competition over natural resources. This in turn contributes to food insecurity and further erodes the resilience of communities.

Therefore, to increase the absorptive and adaptive capacity of the target communities, thousands of community members were sensitized on environmental care approaches and building of “green assets”. The project also promoted climate-smart agricultural approaches and strengthen smallholders’ knowledge of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Early Warning Early Action (EWEA).

During the reporting period (44 months), around 4,200 community members were sensitized on DRR and sustainable environmental management approaches and also participated in cash for assets (CfA) activities. Through the CfA, communities implemented different types of soil and water conservation activities to restore the environment including implementation of the Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) approach.

As part of improving the adaptive capacity of smallholder farmers, and most importantly with the aim to test and select high-yielding exotic sorghum and pearl millet varieties across the medium to dry agro-ecological zones of South Sudan, the project conducted a crop adaptive trial site. And after many years of evaluation, performance and ecological adaptability assessment of different exotic crop varieties, the Ministry of Agriculture officially released six sorghum varieties and one pearl millet variety on 12 May 2022. The release of these varieties could have significant

³ See <https://www.indikit.net/indicator/78-gender-equality/325-gender-equitable-men-gem-scale> and <https://www.indikit.net/indicator/78-gender-equality/315-perceived-social-norms>

⁴ Respondents would be asked “How likely do you think it is that traditional court rulings on HLP are made in a woman's favour? Very likely, somewhat likely, neutral, unlikely, very unlikely”.

importance to the smallholder farmers in South Sudan, to boost production and productivity and thus ensuring food security.

Under the same outcome, the project monitoring survey on the performance of the Saving for Transformation (S4T) groups revealed that, among others: 1) the cumulative savings of the S4T groups reached 112,812,384 SSP equivalent to USD 133,189; 2) The sum of loan distributed by all the groups is 61,877,950 SSP equivalent to USD 73,055; 3) Total loan amount paid back (recovered) is 53,401,700 SSP equivalent to USD 63,048;

In general, the S4T groups health check revealed that nearly 98% of the groups are functioning well and performing to the highest standard.

Results of the final evaluation exhibited that the project registered very positive results on all of the key outcome indicators as shown on below table

S.N.	Outcome 2 Indicators	Baseline value (April 2020)	Project life target value	Final Evaluation result (June 2023)	Percentage
1	% of HH reporting good social cohesion	60.2%	80% (↑)	80.2%	100.3%
2	% of HH who demonstrate knowledge and use of Early Warning Systems and know what to do in case of an emergency or disaster	10.5%	25% (↑)	23.5%	90%
3	Average value of member savings + disbursements including social funds per group member	0	SSP 20,000 per member per annum	39,000	195%
4	% of households reporting a reduction in incidents/conflicts	26.1%	9.1%	13.9%	72%

Outcome 3: Improved and resilient food security and income especially for women and youth

To examine the performance of the year 2021/2022 crop production season, a post-harvest monitoring survey was conducted in December 2021. Results of the assessment confirmed that the production of Sorghum increased by 15% (1.264 t/ha) compared to the national average baseline (1.0 t/ha). And the production of groundnuts increased by 68% (0.992t/ha) in comparison to the national average baseline value of Groundnuts which is (0.58t/ha). The climate-smart agricultural approaches promoted by the project combined with the provision of regular agricultural extension services and improved access to inputs directly attributed to these achievements.

In a bid to improve access to inputs for smallholders, the project conducted agricultural input sector assessment and following that facilitated the establishment of four agro-input dealers in the four counties of operational areas. On a 50% cost-sharing arrangement, over 1800 ox-ploughs were sold to smallholder farmers by agro-input dealers. Beneficiary groups mentioned that the use of ox ploughs, instead of traditional hoe has led to a 35% increase in the total area of land cultivated. The increased land cultivation leads to more production and opens up the path to market-oriented production, food security, and increased income.

At the same time, the commercial relationship between the smallholder farmers and the agro-input dealers has contributed to strengthening the agricultural inputs market sector in the area,

which is critical not only to bringing services and products closer to the farmer but also to achieving food security in the long term in a sustainable manner.

The contract farming arrangement made between the producer groups and the private sector (Pro-seed company Ltd) also resulted in increased income at the household level. Over the past two years alone, the producer groups produced more than 51MT of groundnuts from 50 feddans of farmland. The groups managed to aggregate 36.2MT of groundnuts and market/ sold it to the private sector at a better price. This arrangement has changed farmers' mindset from subsistence farming to commercialization of farming to ensure their food security and increase their income.

As part of project's youth empowerment approach and most importantly to enhance the employability and life skills of male and female youth, 165 youth trained on vocational training and provided with start-up kits to help them initiate small businesses. The post-training assessment carried out by the MEAL team revealed that, the average cash generated from self-employment (small business or IGAs) by Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students in a quarter was around 90,000 SSP. Profit generated from small businesses enabled female and male youths to support their families in terms of food, covering medical expenses including school fee payments for their own children and siblings.

Results of the final evaluation of the project showed that the project registered very positive results on all of the key outcome indicators as indicated on the table below:

S.N.	Indicators	Baseline value (April 2020)	Project life target value	Final Evaluation result (June 2023)	Percentage
1	Median household income (SSP/ (US\$)	USD\$62	USD 120 (↑)	USD 103.95	72.3%
2	Average metric tons produced in the last 12 months, disaggregated by crop type- groundnuts, and sorghum	Sorghum (1.0 t/Ha) ⁵ (National average yield from FAO)	Sorghum 1.1 MT (↑)	Sorghum 0.665MT	60.5%
		Groundnuts (0.58t/ha)	Groundnuts 0.7 MT (↑)	Groundnuts 0.467MT	66.6%
3	% of women and men reporting improved access to inputs needed for income generation	38.4%	85% (↑)	98.4%	128.7%

Challenges

Major challenges faced by the project during the reporting period are described below.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a major health and socio-economic concern for many developing countries including South Sudan. Due to restrictions of movements and border closure, the pandemic exacerbated the food insecurity situation in South Sudan, contributing to price spike on major staple foods and wider inflationary pressure throughout the economy. Most vulnerable households who depend on the market for their livelihoods was affected by this.

⁵ Special report FAO/WFP crop and food security assessment mission to South Sudan 15 March 2019

The security situation in most parts of the project areas remained calm and stable. However, there were some incidents of political insecurity and tension in some parts of Jur River (Udici and Kangi Bomas) and Cueibet counties which to some extent restricted project staff movements to the field for nearly a week. Incidents of cattle raiding and armed clashes were also reported in some parts of Twic County bordering Unity State.

Flooding was also a key challenge in some parts of the project areas such as Twic, Cueibet and Jur River, and Gogrial East Counties, resulting in crop damage and loss of properties.

Macroeconomic instability in the country, largely due to rising international pressures on food and fuel prices resulted in soaring inflation, driving up prices of foods and non-food items. For example, the price of fuel and agricultural inputs significantly increased. This has impacted, particularly very poor households who primarily rely on the market for their consumption.

The IPC projection for the period April - July 2023 indicated that the number of populations facing severe acute food insecurity (IPC phase 3+) in the project area has increased by 41% compared to the baseline. This figure has increased by 4 percentage points compared to last year's IPC projection for the same period. The food insecurity levels remain elevated due to the impacts of economic crisis, flooding/dry spells, conflict, and insecurity.

2.2. Progress toward Achievement of Results

A. RESULTS

Specific objective:

The project specific objective is to improve food security of rural smallholders in Greater Bahr el Ghazal and to empower them to cope with environmental volatility and insecurity. As confirmed by the Final Evaluation there is strong performance on the three indicators under the specific objective, as presented below:

Specific Objective Indicator 1: % HHs in moderate or severe food insecurity

The project aimed at reducing the percentage of households in moderate or severe food insecurity to 25% over its lifespan. At the endline evaluation period, there was a statistically significant 21.5 percentage point reduction in the percentage of households in moderate or severe food insecurity between the final evaluation (30.4%) and the Baseline of 51.9%. The reduction was statistically significant and the project achieved 80% of its target.

Generally, this is a tremendous achievement given that the project was implemented in the face of many challenges such as COVID-19, Macroeconomic instability (price spike on commodities and agricultural inputs), and very recently the impact of climate change (flooding).

Specific Objective Indicator 2: Average Coping Strategies Index (CSI) score

The average Coping Strategy Index (CSI) from the final evaluation survey was 14.92 compared to the baseline value of 29.2 and project life target of 18. This implies that the project has achieved 126% of its target.

The end line results indicate that households have acquired a reasonable capacity to produce or purchase enough food items and minimize or completely avoid resorting to negative coping strategies. This result vividly signals increased resilience of targeted farmer households in the project areas.

Specific Objective Indicator 3: % change in HH subjective resilience score⁶

The project performed well on improving the subjective resilience of targeted households. Final evaluation results revealed a 14.8 percentage point increase in the percentage of households who were fully resilient between the endline (29.1%) and baseline of 14.3% as measured by SERS. The measurement of this indicator revealed that the project accomplished 94% its target value.

Outcome 1

Reduced barriers to engagement in resilience building, food security and income generating activities, especially for women and youth

Progress towards the achievement of Outcome 1 is elaborated below.

Outcome Indicator 1.1. % of respondents who feel that their community is a safe place for women and youth.

73.7% of respondents feel that their community is a safe place for women and youth from a baseline value of 53.5% against the project life target of 65%. Measurement of this indicator shows that 113.4% of the target has been achieved.

This achievement can be attributed to the work of the peace development committees (PDCs) and youth-led peace clubs established and supported by the project. The prevalence of relative peace in the project operational areas created a conducive environment for the project to implement its varied activities with the full participation of project beneficiaries and government counterparts. Moreover, women and youth participation in different project interventions such as farmer groups, mother garden groups, TVET, PDCs and S4T groups have significantly contributed to strengthening the social cohesion of the community members and therefore ensuring peaceful coexistence. Peace and stability in the project area allowed smallholder farmers particularly women and youth to safely travel and access their farmlands and different social services such as markets, health and education.

Outcome Indicator 1.2. % of respondents who believe that the majority of their friends and community members currently agree with key gender attitude statements

Final evaluation results revealed an increase of 19 percentage points in the percentage of respondents who believe that the majority of their friends and community members currently agree with key gender attitude statements between the endline (25.9%) and baseline (6.9%) against the project life target of 20%. Measurement of this indicator shows that 144.7% of the target has been achieved. The above indicator was measured using the Gender-Equitable Men Scale (GEMS) of the UN Women.

This is a strong performance when compared with the findings of the Mid-term evaluation (MTE) which was at 1.8%. The Gender Male Champions approach employed by the project has been a game changer for this huge performance in relation to this particular indicator.

Considering the role that women play in local development initiatives as well as in peacebuilding, the project puts a gender transformative approach at the centre of its programming. Accordingly, through the Gender Male/women Champions (GMCs) and a series of community sensitization

⁶ Subjective resilience refers to households who report feeling fully resilient on the SERS Resilience capacity areas which include nine elements: Absorptive capacity; Transformative capacity; adaptive capacity; Financial capital; Social capital; Political capital; Learning; Anticipatory capacity; and Early warning (Jones, 2019).

sessions the project managed to register remarkable achievements and surpassed its target in influencing gender attitudes of beneficiaries.

The proactive participation of women in peacebuilding initiatives, farmer groups, mother gardens and S4T groups can be cited as a major accomplishment of the project in its effort to empower women both in the social and economic spheres.

Outcome Indicator 1.3 % change in measure of likelihood of traditional court rulings on HLP being made in a woman's favour

Percentage of respondents who reported that the likelihood of traditional court rulings on HLP being made in a woman's favour increased from 62.0% at baseline to 69.5% at the final evaluation. This represents 7.5 percent point increase and measurement of this indicator shows that 58% of the target has been achieved.

The South Sudan Statutory Housing Land and Property (HLP) Rights Law explicitly recognize women's rights to own and inherit land and property. However, customary or traditional law system restrict women's ability to access their rights in land-related disputes or to own/inherit land from their parents, husbands, and relatives. Therefore, during the reporting period, to strengthen gender-equitable implementation of statutory and traditional law in relation to HLP, the project conducted several training and awareness sessions in all of its operational areas in which community leaders, local government authorities, traditional court leaders, women, youth groups, farmer/S4T groups representatives participated.

According to the project MEAL data analysis, the number of women who filed HLP-related court cases, in year 3 alone, was around 20 women. Of this 85% of them reported that the court rulings were being made in favour of them/women. This is a clear signal that the capacity building provided to the traditional court leaders improved their understanding of the policy and changed their attitudes.

Progress towards achievement of Outputs and Activities

Output 1.1: Institutions, communities and individuals have access to knowledge and skills to practice more gender equitable relations and support a more gender equitable enabling environment

Progress towards achievement of the output 1.1 is elaborated as below.

Output indicator 1.1.1: Number of government counterparts trained in gender context and strategies

A total of 169 (69 females) Government counterparts were trained on gender and women rights from a baseline value of 0, against a project life target of 130. Thus, 130% of this indicator has been achieved.

Activity 1.1.1 Train staff and government counterparts in gender context and strategies

The project team in collaboration with the Director General for the State Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare organized a three-day training session on gender context and strategies and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The main objective of the training was to increase participants' knowledge about gender equality and women's rights through a gender transformative approach to project activities, realizing gender mainstreaming and equality. The training was also aimed at enabling government counterparts to understand about appropriate management and protection of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) issues that are occurring within communities. The idea was to

enable local government authorities to be ambassadors of change to curb GBV cases in their respective counties.

During the reporting period, a total of 169 individuals (69 female) participated on gender training. Of which, 47 participants were from NRC, 58 from AVSI and the remaining 64 were from the WV project operational areas. Government staffs drawn from agriculture, gender, child and social welfare, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission departments at County, Payam and Boma levels represented at this training. In addition, 13 project officers and assistant officers (4 female) participated at this training. The training covered the following key topics: Gender Based Violence (GBV), root causes and consequences of GBV, Human Rights Basics, Psychosocial support, gender policies in South Sudan, Traditional chiefs and local authorities' roles in GBV prevention and response and removing barriers for women and girl's empowerment by accelerating progress for gender equality. The topics were addressed through small group discussions and brainstorming role-playing sessions.

The training was led by the World Vision Senior Technical Advisor for Protection & Gender and co-facilitated by the NRC Protection Specialist.

At the end of the training, participants were able to understand and explain gender-related policies under South Sudan law. They understood that most people have lesser access to information and resources, inequitable gender division of labour, and limited participation in decision-making.

The participants highlighted that the session was very useful in a way that it broadened their understanding about key concepts of strategic and practical gender needs. It taught them how to facilitate community-level training and events that encourage female participation and leadership, and that promote understanding of women's rights.

Output indicator 1.1.2: Number of people reached with community-level sensitisation on gender and women's rights and other gender related topics.

A total of 6,851 community members (3,626 Females) were sensitized on gender and women rights during life of the project from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 5,790. Thus, 118% of this indicator has been achieved so far.

Activity 1.1.2 Promote attitude and behaviour change of men and women

In the rural context of South Sudan negative attitude towards women is observed when it comes to ownership of or access to resources i.e. earning income. To reverse, this misconception and improve attitude of men towards women, the project staff organized a gender awareness session to those beneficiaries who are targeted for Farmer Groups (FGs) and Saving for Transformation (S4T). The awareness session was organized with the objective of promoting the attitude and behavior of men and women in relation to gender equity at community and household levels including prevention measures for any forms of GBV in project operational areas. To this effect, in the first year of implementation, the project organized several awareness sessions in which over 4,800 (2,500 females) community members (FG and S4T members and others) participated.

However, the Mid Term Evaluation (MTE) findings revealed slow progress towards achieving the outcome indicator on gender, despite efforts on delivering several training and awareness sessions. As a result, consortium partners agreed to change the business-as-usual approach and come up with a different implementation strategy that can make a difference in the mindsets of the community members. Accordingly, the project introduced a new approach of recruiting Gender Male Champions (GMCs) to positively influence/change the behaviors and attitudes of their peers

including the entire community members on women's rights and gender equity. The GMCs were selected in consultation with the community members and local government officials, and are considered respected members of the community with the power to influence their community members for a positive change.

Hence, to examine and shift gender norms held by both men and women, 36 Gender Male Champions (GMCs) were identified and recruited by the project (NRC=12, World Vision=12, AVSI=12) in Jur River, Gogrial East, Cueibet and Twic Counties. The project team provided on-the-job orientation and clarified the roles and responsibilities of the male champions. The project signed MoU with the male champions and Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare at the State level to ensure that the work of the gender champions are recognized and supported by the local government actors.

Following orientation and training, the GMCs conducted extensive community outreach and community meetings including house-to-house visits in their respective Payams and Bomas in a bid to promote attitude and behavior change of men and women on gender equity and women's rights. Accordingly, a total of 2051 community members (1,126 females) participated in the gender awareness sessions at different occasions. 95% of participants reflected that the awareness sessions were helpful not only to raise their awareness about the productive role that women can play in society but also their contribution to local development and decision-making processes that affect their private and public life.

"We appreciate the role played by the gender male champions in educating, empowering and also changing our mindset towards women and girls. We will now consider women in most of community meetings and gatherings" said Atek, a community member, from Toch West Payam, Gogrial East County.

Alek Makuac Akuoc, age 40, and a mother of six from Titchok Boma attested that the long-time debate between herself and her husband Malith Mayol Mourcinkegem came to an end after hearing the messages on the importance of girls' education. Their daughter was booked for marriage by a certain rich man; but after a long debate, they convinced themselves to decide in favour of their daughter to continue her education which was her choice and now she has started learning in school.

The work that GMCs are doing in our area is very important to our community, said Akuoch.

To support the day-to-day work of GMCs the project provided different materials such as bicycles to ease their mobility, shirts for visibility and megaphones.

Table 2. Training participants on gender and women's rights

S.N.	Partner	Number of trained community members			Counties where the training was provided
		Male	Female	Total	
1	World Vision	1360	1180	2540	Gogrial East and Twic (Wunrok Payam)
2	NRC	920	1374	2294	Twic (Turalei and Awen Payams) and Jur River
3	AVSI	945	1072	2017	Cueibet (Abiriu, Duony, Pagor, Mayath, Ngap, Malou-Pech and Cueibet payams)
	Total	3,225	3,626	6,851	

Output indicator 1.1.3. Number of women (both already in local government structures and those motivated to take on these positions) supported with political participation training

A total of 245 women were sensitized on gender and women rights and supported with leadership training and being represented in local level development committees/structures from a baseline

value of 0 against a project life target of 250. This shows that 98% of this indicator has been achieved so far.

Activity 1.1.3 Promote women's leadership in local government structures

There are several factors contributing for women's position to be on the lower rung of South Sudanese society. These include high illiteracy rates, early and forced marriage, limited access to information and resources, inequitable gender division of labour, and limited participation in decision-making. As a result, women are not able to meaningfully participate in any decisions that affect their private and public life. The low representation of women in local government leadership is evident in many parts of project operational areas. Field-level experience has shown that women's representation in local government structures such as Boma Development Committees (BDCs), Peace Development Committees (PDCs), and other county-level government structures were extremely low.

Against this backdrop and as part of the project's women empowerment approach, the project made maximum effort to promote women's participation and decision-making in leadership positions both in local government and community institutional structures. Accordingly, during the reporting period, a total of 245 women (NRC=73; AVSI=86 and WV=86) received leadership training to promote their participation in local government structures and public speaking in the four counties of the project operational areas.

The overall objective of the leadership training was primarily to boost women's confidence and increase their leadership knowledge and skills to practice more gender-equitable relations and support a more gender-equitable enabling environment in Local Government structures and community-level institutions. Major topics covered during the training include: what is leadership; Identifying the traits and skills of an effective leader; key leadership theories; examining the role, duties and responsibilities of a leader; how to develop and plan one's leadership potential; public speaking and basics of persuading audiences; and how to mitigate fears of public speaking. Participatory discussions, role model citations, creative, practical and group discussions, and dialogue among peers, were some of the methodologies used during the training.

At the end of the training, 100% of the participants reported that the training was very useful and helped them to understand the role that women could play in local government structures and local socio-economic aspects including exercising the rights of women in their respective communities. Following the training representation [leadership] of women in different committees such as peace development committees, Boma Development Committees, farmer groups, and, S4Ts has been significantly improved. For example, 24 Peace Development Committees (PDC) were established at Boma level with 44% of women representation. Women's representation in these structures helps improve their decision-making processes at the household and community levels and reduces the barriers that prevent women's engagement in food security and resilience building.

Output indicator 1.1.4. Number of traditional leaders (who arbitrate in customary courts) trained to understand and implement relevant South Sudan law

A total of 814 traditional leaders and local government officials trained on HLP compared to the baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 850. This shows that 96% of this indicator has been achieved.

Activity 1.1.4 Strengthen gender equitable implementation of relevant laws and policies

Statutory Housing Land and Property (HLP)⁷ law in South Sudan is progressive and explicitly recognizes women's rights to own and inherit land and property. However, enforcement of those rights remains limited in reality. Many customary/traditional law systems have also continued to restrict women's ability to enforce their rights in a land-related dispute, or to own land independently of their husbands or male relatives, with severe consequences for divorced women and widows.⁸ Since traditional courts are the main (or only accessible) institution of dispute resolution in rural areas, targeting them is key to improving women's land tenure status and legal outcomes more broadly.

With the overall objective of raising women's rights in relation to land and property rights, and helping participants appreciate the most important provisions of the legislation on HLP issues in South Sudan, the project on different occasions provided a series of trainings on HLP in which 814 people (353 females) participated. Training participants were represented from all counties of the project implementation area (WV=96; AVSI=178; NRC=540 participants). The participants included traditional leaders, Payam and Boma land authorities, local government officials, youth and women groups, the Directorate of Land authorities, and county authorities.

The training was facilitated by the NRC ICLA/HLP expert together with the Implementing Partners' project officers. And, the training covered the following modules: 1) Land and property rights in South Sudan; 2) The nature of land rights, their acquisition, transfer, and registration; 3) Nature of land rights, women's land rights, and pastoralists' rights 4) Land administration and management; 5) How government acquires land for different purposes; 6) Settlement of land disputes; 6) Land, housing and property rights at international level and land rights for refugees/IDPs.

After analysis of both pre-test and post-test, it was found out that around 95% of the participants including women understood their rights in relation to access to land and ownership including other properties. The community leaders agreed to support women to access and own land and urged the project team to continue supporting community members to better understand housing land and property rights.

On a related note, the project team in collaboration with the Boma development committees traced a total of 20 women who filed HLP cases to traditional courts. Based on discussions with some members of the traditional courts, it has been confirmed that 85% of cases received verdicts in favour of women. This is a very good step in improving women's ability to enforce their rights and improve their HLP status. This also demonstrates that the HLP training provided to the traditional leaders proved to be working and effective in achieving its purpose. Please see the below success story.

Apai Deng is a young widow, who lives in Udici, Jur River County and has a farmland that has not been used for the last 5 years since her husband died. Some bushes grew in the land. A certain man by the

⁷ Housing Land and Property (HLP) is one of NRCs five focal areas for ICLA. HLP rights are an essential steppingstone for displaced people to rebuild their lives, and disputes over land tenure are often at the centre of conflict. When conflict ends, disputes over occupied property are a continued source of instability. They often undermine long-lasting solutions for returning populations and may threaten fragile peace agreements. Even before conflict, women are disadvantaged when it comes to HLP. According to tradition and Law, land ownership remains restricted to men. These inequalities often worsen during conflict negatively affects women. Women access to land is often through inheritance or marriage and sometimes these rights are denied at the community level due to some tradition laws which restrict women from accessing land.

⁸ 2014. South Sudan Country Report: Findings of the Land Governance Assessment Framework. South Sudan Law Society.

name Mr XX came in to clear the farm wanting to cultivate it. That was the same year Apai was thinking to prepare the farm for her family. Apai prepares tea for sale in Udici Market to feed her 3 children.

During a visit to her farmland, Apai found that Mr XX was preparing the land for cultivation including cutting down the trees. When Apai asked Mr XX to stop working on her farmland, she was threatened to be beaten should she continue to talk. Mr XX claimed that the land is his own. Apai realized that her land was grabbed, and with the majority section of the community perceiving that Men have the right to own land and not women, Apai began to lose hope. "I was frustrated over the case. I asked some community elders to intervene but all in vain. Everyone was pushing me to give up my land in favor of Mr XX because he could threaten my children and myself. Claiming my own land was a question of insecurity to myself in the area," Apai narrated.

"When the FORESITE NRC team came in to train us on the right of women to own land; and that women can inherit properties from their deceased husbands. I gained some confidence and a sense of power. I planned to report my case to the traditional court of the paramount chief in the Payam," she explained.

Apai reported that the Paramount Chief ruled the case in her favour and Mr XX was asked to abandon the land for her. "The paramount chief knew the rights of a woman to own land and property because he had also attended the training that was conducted by NRC ICLA staff with us. Even when every man was against me during the court sessions, I was given my right to own land. I thank FORESITE project for the support and directives," Apai added.

Output 1.2: Community-based groups and actors have the opportunities and capacity to identify and pursue peacebuilding strategies

Output indicator 1.2.1 number of safety perception mapping exercises conducted

Thirty (30) conflict and safety perception mapping exercises were undertaken during the life of the project from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 36. Thus, 83% of this indicator has been achieved.

Activity 1.2.1 Conduct participatory quarterly conflict mapping analysis and safety perception mapping

In the context of South Sudan intercommunal conflicts and localized political conflicts are recognized as major threats to achieving local socio-economic development and food security-related actions. Disputes over natural resources also represent the main threats to livelihoods and food security in FORESITE areas of operations.

The key objective of the quarterly safety perception mapping exercise was to gain deeper insights into conflict patterns and trends including drivers of conflict and potential mitigation measures at sub-county levels in the project areas. During the reporting period, the project conducted 30 conflict mapping analyses (one per quarter) in the four counties of the project areas: Gogrial East, Twic, Jur River and Cueibet Counties. The information for the analysis was collected from various community-level actors through participatory discussions such as focus groups and key informant interviews using a mix of open-ended and closed questions. A total of 2,378 (933 females) individuals drawn from local government authorities, religious leaders, peace development committees, women groups, village Chiefs, school-aged youth, cattle camps youth representatives, elders, and customary leaders participated in the safety perception mapping exercises.

Table 3: Conflict mapping by partners

S.N.	Partner	# of mappings in Year 3	Participants			Counties covered/participated in the mapping exercise
			Male	Female	Total	
1	NRC	10	488	424	912	Jur river (Mariall Baii, Udici and Kangi payams) and Twic (Turali and Aweng payams) counties
2	WV	10	414	350	764	Gogrial East (Paton east and Toch west payams) and Twic (Wunrok Payam) counties
3	AVSI	10	543	159	702	Cueibet (Abiriu, Duony, Pagor, Mayath, Ngap, Malou-Pech and Cueibet payams)
	Total	30	1,445	933	2,378	

The mapping analysis helped the project team to take an informed decision in relation to mobility and project implementation including needed actions to be taken by the project. The conflict mapping was revisited on a quarterly basis to closely monitor and assess evolving situation.

Drivers and types of conflicts, the impact of conflicts, benefits of conflict resolution, dispute resolution techniques, the rationale for conflict analysis (Stakeholder conflict analysis), and communication skills [active listening] were some of the key points discussed during the mapping exercise.

For example, during the mapping exercise participants highlighted that Cueibet County was characterized by a high level of insecurity over the past years. However, inter-communal conflicts related to cattle raiding and counter raiding including revenge killing significantly reduced for the last couple of quarters. This improvement has been partly attributed to the work of the peace development committees supported by the project. The effort made by the government to restore the rule of law and order in collaboration with local leaders and community representatives is also worth mentioning here.

The quarterly qualitative information gathered from the perception mapping exercise confirmed a general improvement in the security situation of the project areas as described below:

- Free migration of cattle and people from one place to another;
- Looted properties are being returned to rightful owners;
- Traditional and special courts formed and tried long-pending cases;
- Schools that were closed due to fear of insecurity re-opened and this, in turn, resulted in high enrolment of children into school.

The safety perception mapping exercise findings indicate that cattle raiding and cattle migration [in search of pasture and water] are key drivers of conflict in the project implementation areas.

Participants of the exercise highlighted that conflict and insecurity hinder local development and other livelihoods initiatives. According to them, compared to the pre-project the overall security situation in most parts of their area has been improved.

Output Indicator 1.2.2. Number of Payam-level peace committees provided with operational funding support.

Twenty-four (24) peace development committees received operational funding support during the life of the project from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 26. This shows that 92% of this indicator has been achieved so far.

Activity 1.2.2 Support peace committee activities

Peace Development Committees (PDCs) already exist in many locations of the project area. However, most are not functioning on the level expected because of the lack of resources and other related factors. Hence, the FORESITE project, in collaboration with the Chief of the Area for each Boma and the local government authorities, identified existing peace committees and strengthened and supported them.

These are the key community structures through which the project promotes peace-building initiatives across its operational areas.

The previous experience shows that one of the main bottlenecks for the day-to-day functioning of the PDCs was the lack of resources, including furniture, stationery, and others. To address these shortcomings and ensure the everyday functioning of the committees, and make PDCs contributions more meaningful and visible, the project developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU sets clear milestones and outlines expected deliverables from each PDC. The MoU also serves as a basis to monitor the performance of PDCs and the proper utilization of the operational funding for the purpose it is assigned for. The release of the operational funding was made on a quarterly basis, following the evaluation of their performance and achievements against the set milestones. The funding support enabled PDCs to cover their expenses (transport allowance, refreshments) when reaching out to communities and doing follow-up activities.

The key tasks of peace committees as stipulated in the MoU include:

- Pre-conflict identification and reporting to local authorities for prevention.
- Facilitating peace dialogue among conflicting communities.
- Conduct sensitization on the importance of peaceful co-existence among their communities.
- Carrying out awareness campaigns on women's participation in peace programs and other socio-economic matters.
- They will not involve themselves in conflict but act as role models of peace within their communities.

To ensure sustainability of the structures, the project managed to link the committees with the local government structure. The link was done through the involvement of the Chief of the area, who is working closely with the local government. At a local level, the government authorities mostly involve the chief of the area in major decisions that they make in relation to any socio-economic and other aspects. And the work that PDCs accomplish is always within the knowledge of the Chief of the area so that they can easily get support from the local government.

Information derived from the conflict analysis and safety perception mapping enabled the PDCs to monitor any problems and mitigate disputes of pending rivalries and the discussion of ongoing skirmishes. In the meantime, PDCs play an important role in sensitizing communities about the dividend of peace and closely work with the local government actors and exchange relevant information to timely mitigate any potential conflicts/incidents.

During the reporting period, 24 PDCs (1 committee in each target boma) were strengthened through operational support having a total membership of 268 individuals (118 are female representatives). Some members of the peace committees are male and female youth who are identified and selected by the community as peace role models within their communities. To encourage women's participation in local leadership and also recognize their role in peacebuilding, at least 4 women were represented in each peace committee (1 PDC = on average 12 members). All the 24 PDCs (WV= 6, NRC= 9, AVSI =9) signed the MoU and continued to deliver their functions in a timely manner.

The operational funding is a kind of small allowance to help the peace committees cover some of their expenses, such as transport costs and refreshments while conducting peacebuilding activities in the community. The activities of peace committees include; community dialogues, mediating the conflicting parties and peacebuilding awareness and sensitization campaigns. It is also the responsibility of peace committees to make pre-conflict identification and report it to relevant authorities before it occurs. On average each peace committee received USD150 on a quarterly basis upon delivery of agreed milestones as per the signed MoU. As part of its exit strategy, the project gradually reduced the operational funding support provided to them and instead strengthened the linkage between the PDCs and formal government structures.

In connection to this and to build the capacity of peace committees on conflict resolution, mediation skills and the role of women in peacebuilding and gender inclusion, all 24 peace committees (WV=6; NRC=9; AVSI=9) with total memberships of 268 individuals (118 are female representatives) received two days training.

AVSI's Peace Building Officer, together with the Ministry of Child, Gender and Social Welfare facilitated the training. The topics covered included:

- Definitions, roles and functions of peace committees
- Advantages of peace committees
- Coordination and facilitation of peaceful dialogue and reconciliation forums
- Raising conflict awareness
- Understanding challenges facing peace committees
- Understanding the root causes of conflict and its dimension

Following the training, 95% of participants reflected that the training was helpful and equipped them to better understand conflict and resolution mechanisms including the roles and responsibilities expected from them.

Turalei community in Twic County is well familiar with conflict, often fuelled by cattle raids and adultery. *Manut is one of the nine members of the Peace committee in Twic County. He said: "in some cases, people take violent measures against one another to solve their differences." There are currently minimal issues in the community compared to the past where conflict issues were rampant. Cases of adultery are now reported to the peace committee and advocated for peaceful resolution of the matter, instead of the affected families taking the matter into their own hands." He underscored that unlike before, the peace committee is now able to advise communities to desist from violence when it comes to incidences of elopement and adultery as they can be resolved without violence in the community forum or before the court of law. Customary law courts or statutory courts are recognized and appreciated, recognizing that they help to reduce tensions among community members.*

Field-level discussions with community members and government officials revealed that the local governments and community members are happy with the work and performance of the peace development committees in promoting peace and bringing stability to their area. For example, in Cueibet County there were heightened conflicts between Pagor and Abiriu Payams which caused lots of damage to assets. However, the peace development committee in collaboration with local government authorities facilitated a mini-reconciliation meeting among both parties that led to

peaceful co-existence between the two Payams. Moreover, the incidence of conflicts in many parts of the project area has significantly reduced, and this has been materialized due to the work of peace development committees in collaboration with local government actors.

The County and Payam level local government authorities appreciated and recognized the essential role that these PDCs are playing and are committed to supporting and collaborating with them now and in the future. To improve the visibility of the PDCs, the project provided T-shirts to each member. Further, to improve their mobility and coverage, project also provided two bicycles for each PDC.

Output indicator 1.2.3 Number of peace clubs established for youth in cattle camps

Thirty-six (36) youth-led peace clubs in cattle camps were established during the life of the project, from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 24. Thus, 150% of this indicator has been achieved.

Activity 1.2.3 Promote youth-led peacebuilding

- ***Establish youth-led peace clubs in cattle camps***

Youth involvement in peace-building initiatives is crucial in enhancing the overall security and safety of the project areas. In the meantime, encouraging youth-led peacebuilding initiatives and supporting their establishment remains an effective tool for resolving conflicts. It is against this background that the project established 36 youth-led peace clubs (NRC=12; AVSI=18 and WV=6) in cattle camps with a total membership of 180 individuals (all male).

In South Sudan context, cattle keeping is primarily the responsibility of young males, and hence the clubs are male-dominated. Following the identification of the hotspot areas [cattle camps] where conflicts are common, the boma development and peace development committees in collaboration with the county chiefs, gathered those youth in cattle camps who were proactive and had the potential to support the project in peace-making. It was discussed how these youth could engage in the formation of peace clubs in cattle camps.

The selection process and establishment of the clubs were done in a participatory manner in such a way that the selected youth discussed the matter with their peers and persuaded them of the importance of peace and the formation of the youth-clubs in cattle camps. Following the establishment of the clubs, local committees together with the project team provided detailed explanations about the purpose/objective of the clubs and the role that youth are expected to play. Representatives of the cattle clubs also participated in conflict management and resolution training to help broaden their understanding of key drivers of conflict and its mitigation measures including the role that different actors could play in the peace-making process.

“Following the establishment of this peace club, our mind-set on how to deal with conflict situations has changed. I learned a lot about the devastating impact of conflict and changed my mind about peace”, said, Ambrose Makol Maleth, Youth led peace club member in Cueibet County.

Before this project, Mr. Amabrose said, his life was very difficult because of the land disputes between youth of his cattle camps and youth from neighbouring Payams and Bomas; with each group claiming that the land (cattle camps) are theirs. However, he said the disputes lead to killing of his relatives and friends which made him to spend 8 years in his village without moving with his cattle and goats to the nearest Payams and Bomas due to conflicts and revenge killing he expected from neighbouring communities. Ambrose believes that peace clubs have provided them with an opportunity to engage with communities and other youth groups in order to develop a culture of peaceful dialogue, instead of opting for conflict as the only solution.

Since the PDCs are responsible for the overall peace-making in their respective bomas, youth-led peace clubs in cattle camps are a subset of PDCs and therefore closely collaborate and work

with them in information sharing and other aspects. That is why the PDCs were involved during identification and selection of youth clubs from the very outset.

A conflict management and resolution training were provided to representatives of the youth clubs. The training was primarily aimed at improving the awareness of youth about drivers of conflict and conflict resolution mechanisms. Field-level observation showed that the collaboration between youth-led peace clubs and PDCs is very promising in a way that they support each other, and timely share relevant information related to any potential security threats in their respective localities. The local government authorities appreciated the youth's role in the peace-building process and expressed their support to them in every aspect.

Moreover, the FORESITE project initiated sports for peacebuilding through inter-boma football competitions to bring different communities together for peaceful co-existence. This started through the empowerment of peace committees in all the Bomas to help establish and organize football teams to play and compete for a trophy, under the theme "Promote Youth-led Peacebuilding". The tournament was organized by Sport Committees of 25 members in each Boma. In total 323 members (301 M; 22 F) participated in the tournament. Each team comprises of 21 members from the following areas: Nyiel Abiel, Majak Aher and Ayien Amuol of Twic County and Marial Baai, Alelthong, Kanyango and Udici of Jur River County.

The main objective of the competition was to:

- Sensitise and create awareness about peace among the local communities.
- Provide linkage between the local populations for peaceful co-existence.
- Equip youth with sports skills as a career.
- Support the professional skills development among youths and exercise the skills for peacebuilding intention in the local communities.
- Explore potential ways for strategic peacebuilding and conflict resolution engagement.

"Football does not only unite us the youths but also keep us healthy as it is a form of exercise", Says Deng, Marial Baai village team captain. In the same spirit of peace, another captain Moses says, "Youths who were involved in cattle raids in the communities in Jur River County are now actively engaged in different friendly and sporting activities, hence a significant change in their behaviors." Moses adds, "We hope the project continues to support our youths through sporting activities so that peace prevails among us. We now live in peace and harmony due to this initiative."

The State Director for Sports, Culture and Youth, Mr. Sebit Manoly appreciated NRC and the FORESITE project for working with the local population to achieve peace through the Sports for Peace Program.

The sport event was attended by local authorities and traditional leaders, who appreciated the project for organizing such a tournament and recommended further plans for the inter-Payam peace tournament. In addition, local communities also appreciated this kind of initiative and emphasized for more peacebuilding awareness to be prioritized in order to minimize crimes and violence in their areas. To facilitate the football tournament, the project distributed some sports items, refreshments, and protective wear (gumboots and raincoats) to peace clubs and incentives were paid to football players to cover their transport and food when they play outside of their home area.

At the end of the sport session, one of the youths underscored that "he has really learned the benefit of social cohesion in the community, respect for one another, the value of human life and also a way of working hard to provide food to one's home not through cattle raiding". The local government authorities appreciated the role that youth play in peace-building processes and expressed their commitment and support to them in an effort to bring lasting peace and stability for peaceful coexistence among different community members.

- **Establish male-female youth peace clubs in school**

During the reporting period, a total of 286 individuals (96 Female) (NRC=60; AVSI=160 and WV=66) drawn from Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) were trained on peacebuilding and the importance of establishing youth clubs in schools. The purpose of the training was mainly to raise awareness of PTAs on the importance of peacebuilding and their role in supporting students to establish school clubs and be a champion or an ambassador of peace for peaceful coexistence among communities. School activities play a paramount role in motivating students to positively contribute to the socio-economic spheres of community life and to the peace-building process.

The training was provided by the project staff and covered the following major topics: drivers of conflict, role of youth in peacebuilding, the importance of youth clubs in positive messaging and social cohesion.

During the reporting period, through the PTAs guidance and support, fifteen (15) peace clubs in schools (AVSI=9 and WV=6) were established having a total membership of 225 (117F). The peace clubs' debate on peace issues as well as promote peace within schools, families and their community at large. The clubs organized recreational activities, including encouraging storytelling that replaces vendetta histories with stories of times of peace.

Activity 1.2.4 Train women's groups in community-based peacebuilding

No specific indicator is set for this in the MEAL plan.

While it is generally acknowledged that women are the one most affected by violence, their potential as active contributors to peacebuilding are often overlooked. At the same time, peace processes that have witnessed women's active participation have turned out to be more successful and long-lasting. Therefore, to better harness women's capacities in promoting peacebuilding, the project organized several training sessions on community-based peacebuilding in which 89 women groups (2,125 women) [WV=25, NRC=27 and AVSI=37] attended. Participants were drawn from S4T groups, women-led farmer groups, mother gardens and women CBOs. The training was delivered in the four counties of the project operational areas as shown in table 4 below. The project staff in collaboration with PDCs and local government representatives were key resource persons in providing this training. The main objective of the training was to strengthen and support women to play an important role on community-based peacebuilding. The topics covered during the training include: 1) Impact and consequences of conflict, 2) the importance of conflict resolutions, 3) types of disputes, identifying the root causes of disputes and dispute resolution techniques, 4) the rationale for conflict analysis (stakeholder conflict analysis), 5) opportunities of collaboration, and 6) effective communication skills.

The project provided stationeries and refreshments to facilitate the sessions. At the end of the training, 98% of participants underscored that the sessions were helpful in improving women's understanding and knowledge about peacebuilding and the vital role they could play in mediating and promoting peace in their community. On a related note, the project's approach to encouraging women to work in groups (S4T, FGs and mother gardens) has helped in strengthening the social cohesion, solidarity and networking among members, which in turn contributed to peaceful co-existence.

The awareness sessions for the women groups increased their knowledge about the peace building and about women's role in community-based peace building process.

Table 4: Women's groups in peace-building training

S.N.	Partner	Groups	Participants			Counties where training delivered
			Male	Female	Total	
1	NRC	27	0	675	675	Jur river (Mariall Baii, Udici and Kangi payams) and Twic (Turali and Aweng payams) counties
2	WV	25	0	575	575	Gogrial East (Paton east and Toch west payams) and Twic (Wunrok Payam) counties
3	AVSI	37	0	875	875	Cueibet (Abiriu, Duony, Pagor, Mayath, Ngap, Malou-Pech and Cueibet payams)
	Total	89	0	2,125	2,125	

Outcome 2

Increased anticipatory, absorptive, and adaptive capacity with respect to climate change and disruptive events including natural disasters and conflict

Progress towards achievement of Outcome 2 is elaborated as below:

Outcome indicator 2.1 % of HH reporting good social cohesion⁹

In comparison to the baseline survey, the respondents who reported good social cohesion in their community increased from 60.2% (baseline) to 80.2% at the Final Evaluation. This represents a 20% increase in respondents that reported good social cohesion in their community. The difference between baseline and endline evaluation findings was statistically significant. Measurement of this indicator shows that 100% of the target has been achieved.

Key activities that contributed to the achievement of this particular outcome indicator include: Field observation and project monitoring assessment showed that 98% of the established S4T groups, women-led farmer groups, and mother garden groups are performing and functioning well. Groups meet on a regular basis to exchange information and strengthen their solidarity [social cohesion]. Training of women groups on community-based peacebuilding and women training on leadership and their role in peacebuilding contributed a lot to strengthening social cohesion. Moreover, the project's approach in encouraging smallholder farmers to work in groups hugely contributed to reinforcing social cohesion and thus peaceful co-existence among community members. Such an approach has the power to strengthen solidarity and therefore good social cohesion.

Outcome indicator 2.2 % of HH who demonstrate knowledge and use of Early Warning Systems and know what to do in case of an emergency or disaster

In comparison to the baseline survey, the households who demonstrated knowledge and use of early warning systems and knew what to do in case of an emergency or disaster increased from

⁹ % of respondents who score 'good' on 2 or more of the three Social Cohesion questions of the Adapted Community Capacity questionnaire. The three Social Cohesion questions in the Adapted Community Capacity questionnaire can be included in a Household Survey. The respondent is asked to rate their perception on a 4-point scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree to the following three questions: 1. People in this community readily help each other in times of need. 2. People in this community tend to trust one another 3. People in the community actively take care of those that are poor, weak or marginalized

10.5% (baseline) to 23.5% at final evaluation against the project life target of 25%. This translates into a 13% increase. The findings further indicated that the difference between the baseline survey and end-line evaluation findings was statistically significant. Measurement of this indicator shows that 90% of the target has been achieved.

In a bid to improve the knowledge of communities about early warning and early action, the project team in collaboration with the local government rendered several community-level trainings and awareness sessions. Moreover, early warning early action (EWEA) committees were established and become functional in each boma of the project operational areas. In addition, EWEA plans were developed and implemented.

Outcome indicator 2.3 Average value of member savings + disbursements including social funds per group member

The final evaluation confirmed that the average savings per member per annum were SSP 39,000 against the project life target of SSP 20,000 and a baseline value of 0. Thus, 195% of the target has been achieved.

Besides, the S4T groups health check, savings and loan survey revealed that 98% of the groups are functioning well and performing to the set standard. The survey shows: 1) the cumulative savings of the S4T groups reached 112,812,384 SSP equivalent to USD 133,189; 2) The sum of loans distributed by all the groups is 61,877,950 SSP equivalent to USD 73,055; 3) Total loan amount paid back (recovered) is 53,401,700 SSP equivalent to USD 63,048; 4) cumulative social funds accumulated by all the S4T groups was 14,005,300 SSP equivalent to USD 16,535.

Table 5: S4Ts status by Implementing Partners

S.N.	Implementing Partners	Number of Groups	Group membership			Group savings (SSP)	Group savings (USD)
			Female	Male	Total		
1	World Vision	32	562	398	960	40,050,000	47,284
2	AVSI	18	304	146	450	46,560,000	54,970
3	NRC	22	312	175	487	26,202,384	30,935
TOTAL		72	1,178	719	1,897	112,812,384	133,189

Outcome indicator 2.4 % of households reporting a reduction in incidents/conflicts

The percentage of households reporting conflict to have occurred at least once or more times over three months period reduced to 13.9% at final evaluation from the baseline value of 26.1% against the project life target of 9.1%. This is a huge achievement for the project given that this particular indicator was performed low during the Mid-Term Evaluation. Measurement of this indicator shows that 72% of the target has been achieved.

The incidence of conflict reduction can be attributed to the work of peace development committees, the role of youth in peacebuilding, sports for peacebuilding, and the social cohesion attained through different group works (S4T, Farmer groups and mother gardens etc). Moreover, training and awareness sessions provided to local government actors, community members and women groups on peacebuilding and conflict management hugely contributed to the positive achievement of this indicator.

Output 2.1: Communities plan, deliver and maintain communal assets which enhance local resilience and livelihoods

Output indicator 2.1.1 Number of functional community assets created

Seven (7) functional community assets were created during life of the project from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 7. This shows that 100% of this indicator has been achieved.

Activity 2.1.1 support BDCs to lead gender-sensitive community-based participatory planning

Natural resource degradation coupled with exhaustion of coping strategies has enacted a “tragedy of the commons” in project areas, causing key livelihood and natural assets to be over-exploited or not be maintained. By improving the availability and accessibility of productive assets, the project strengthens long-term food security and resilience by improving agricultural productivity and supporting the regeneration of the natural resource base through FMNR. To this effect and most importantly to improve awareness of project staff and community on natural resource management (environmental care approach), the project organized a training on landscape approach for integrated natural resource management.

Landscape approach for integrated natural resource management: To strengthen the knowledge and skills of the project staff and the community institutional structures (of which traditional leaders are key members) on environmental care approaches, training on landscape approach for integrated natural resource management (NRM) was provided to seven FORESITE staff (WV=3, NRC=2, AVSI =2, two female and 5 male) from February 03 to 06, 2020. The objective of the training was mainly to address the gaps and challenges facing the natural resource and the environment at large in the context of response to the present situations in South Sudan. The training was facilitated by the World Vision Australia (WVA) Senior Food Security and Resilience Advisor in collaboration with WVSS Food Security and Livelihoods Program Manager. The training employed a mix of methodologies to help participants comprehend the subject matter well. Accordingly, theoretical presentations, group discussions on selected topics and field visits and discussions with community members were among the techniques used. Group discussions were also part of the training methodology, in which participants, split into 3 groups and discussed the causes of land degradation, its impact and what can be done in the future.

Major topics covered during the training include, among others:

- Concept and principles of the landscape approach
- Why landscape approach in South Sudan
- Practical application of landscape approach
- Dealing with conflict in Natural Resource Management (NRM)
- Understanding gender roles in NRM

The training was supported by a field visit and provided an opportunity for the staff to interact with community members at the field level and get a broader view of the subject matter. During the visit the training participants discussed with men and women focus groups to understand the causes of natural resource degradation and what should be done in the years to come to reverse the situation [land degradation] and utilize natural resource base in an equitable and sustainable manner. The trained staff held discussions with Boma Development Committees (BDC) about the implementation of Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) in particular and the

development of participatory natural resource management plans for their respective areas in general.

On a related note, with the objective of strengthening the knowledge and skills of the project staff on FMNR approach, five project officers from each implementing partner (WV=3; NRC=1; AVSI=1) attended the three-month long online training on FMNR. The training was organized by World Vision Australia and upon completion of this training, participants were certified and served as a key resource person for FMNR-related activities for their respective organizations and beyond.

To help communities understand the current situation and care for their environment, the project team-initiated dialogue using community-based participatory planning (CBPP) approach. The participatory planning process led by Boma Development Committees (BDCs) enabled communities to identify and discuss key drivers of environmental degradation and propose community-based locally appropriate solutions. To facilitate the process, the project trained and supported (BDCs) on gender-sensitive community-based participatory planning (CBPP). The training was aimed at initiating a dialogue within communities to help them understand the scale of environmental degradation in their area, and the importance of practicing environmental care approaches in order to minimize and/or stop environmental degradation. The fact that the natural resource base remains key source of livelihoods for most of the communities, the discussion was helpful and primarily featured vulnerability and food insecurity as key issues that need to be addressed.

A total of 1,521 participants (642 females) drawn from WV (467 participants), AVSI (267) and NRC (787) attended the environmental care dialogue sessions. Following the discussion, the community members acknowledged the magnitude and rate of environmental degradation in their areas and have agreed to restore their natural resource base for better environmental protection through the implementation of the Farmers Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) approaches.

During the reporting period, a total of 22 FMNR sites were established and, different types of public work (communal assets) activities were accomplished on the site through the cash for assets (CfA) activity. The communal assets implemented include small pond constructions (to hold water for dry season vegetable irrigation), soil and water conservation structures, fruit trees plantations, and enclosure of degraded areas. The selection of communal assets was made by community members considering their needs on the ground and the benefit it would bring to them. Field observations revealed that most of these communal assets constructed through the CfA are functional.

Output indicator 2.1.2 Number of community members participating in cash for assets (CfA)

4,250 community members (2,730 females) participated in Cash for Assets (CfA) activity during the life of the project from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 4,530. Measurement of this shows that 94% of this particular indicator has been achieved.

Activity 2.1.2 Deliver prioritized assets through Cash for Assets (CfA)

During the reporting period, a total of 4,250 individuals (2,730 female) mostly vulnerable women who are members of the S4T groups participated in the CfA activities. The CfA participants by implementing partners are shown in the below table.

Table 6: Cash for Assets (CfA) participants by location

S.N.	Partner	Participants			Counties participated in CfA implementation
		Male	Female	Total	
1	NRC	435	765	1200	Jur River (Mariall Baii, Udici and Kangi payams) and Twic (Turali and Aweng payams) counties
2	WV	710	1190	1900	Gogrial East (Paton east and Toch west payams) and Twic (Wunrok Payam) counties
3	AVSI	375	775	1150	Cueibet (Abiriu, Duony, Pagor, Mayath, Ngap, Malou-Pech and Cueibet payams)
	Total	1,520	2,730	4,250	

Through community-based participatory planning, communities identified and selected low-cost and easily replicable public work activities (communal assets) that could serve as productive and green (or environmentally supportive) communal assets. The CfA was implemented during the lean season (April to June 2022) to address the hunger gaps. The CfA activity provided short-term employment opportunities to poor vulnerable women and men households. It also assisted to increase households' purchasing power, stabilizing and smoothening consumption needs (food and non-food items), achieving better dietary diversity, and reduce reliance on harmful coping strategies (reducing sell of productive assets), and stimulate local economies (as most beneficiaries spend their cash in the nearby local markets).

The CfA activity was implemented for three successive months and each participant received USD \$45 per month. The cash transfer value was agreed upon in coordination with the Cash Working Group at a national level and other NGOs operating in the area.

The cash transfers prevented households from pursuing negative coping strategies in times of stress [hunger period] and as a result it significantly contributed to maintain the development gains of the project. Studies¹⁰ showed that “temporary cash transfers can provide protective benefits that promote certain types of economic recovery by preventing poverty backsliding and promoting resilience”.

Output 2.2: Local institutions lead inclusive, conflict-sensitive NRM, DRR and land use planning

Customary systems in Greater Bahr el Ghazal mandate community leadership to regulate the use of natural resources in accordance with traditional norms emphasizing access and reciprocity. However, this system is being overwhelmed by the scale of climate change and increasingly negative coping strategies. Cognizant of this and considering the primary role that customary systems and local government play in Natural Resource Management (NRM), the project executed varied activities that strengthen the knowledge and skills of the community institutional structures (of which traditional leaders are key members) to manage resources, anticipate and respond to shocks. The key activities implemented under this output are described below:

Output indicator 2.2.1. Number of Farmer Managed Natural regeneration (FMNR) established (at boma level)

¹⁰ A MILLION-DINAR QUESTION: Can Cash Transfers Drive Economic Recovery in Conflict-Driven Crises? Mercy Corps, July 2021

Twenty-two (22) FMNR sites were established during the life of the project from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 24. This shows that 92% of this indicator has been achieved. The selection of the FMNR sites was done in close coordination with community members and Boma development committees.

Activity 2.2.1 Support development of gender- and conflict-sensitive land use, disaster preparedness, natural resource management, and watershed management plans

In South Sudan, the overwhelming majority of smallholder farmers rely on the natural resource base for their livelihoods. However, environmental degradation and the impact of climatic shocks increased the vulnerability of smallholders and therefore food insecurity.

To help communities understand this situation and care for their environment, the project facilitated community-based participatory planning (CBPP) to initiate a dialogue within communities featuring vulnerability and food insecurity as key issues that need to be addressed. The participatory planning process enabled communities to identify and discuss key drivers of environmental degradation and came up with community-based locally appropriate solutions. In addition, as the natural resource base is one of the drivers of conflict, participants also discussed about equitable, gender- and conflict-sensitive NRM.

During the reporting period, community-based participatory planning (CBPP) training and discussion were conducted in all operational counties of the project areas, in which a total of 1,521 participants (642 females) drawn from WV (467 participants), AVSI (267) and NRC (787) participated.

The CBPP exercise culminated in developing 24 community-based (Boma level) natural resource management plans. The CBPP exercise employed varied methods such as focus group discussions (men, women, and mixed groups), transect walks and drawing maps on the ground using different tools. The map or the plan primarily captures: 1) boundaries for the mini watershed, 2) existing land use types, 3) degradation features, 4) areas of greatest shock/degradation, and 5) existing community infrastructures, 6) ownership and access to varied resources, 7) timeline of shocks, 8) role of different stakeholders. The plan also proposed key actions that the communities need to undertake in order to mitigate environmental degradation.

To reinforce communities' capacity to plan, deliver and maintain communal natural resource base and improve their resilience to predictable shocks/stresses, county-level consultation, sensitization, and mobilization sessions with various stakeholders were carried out during this reporting period.

The main objective of the session was to improve participants' awareness of FMNR as a low-cost and sustainable land reclamation approach to improve household food security and environmental resilience. During the session, participants were able to compare the status of their forest in the past with the current situation. The areas of discussion included the following:

- Comparison of forest status – Past vs Present
- What has caused the changes?
- What will happen if the present changes continue?
- What is currently done to prevent this problem?
- What are the possible ways to stop this from happening?
- The impact of environmental degradation on their livelihoods and food security

Moreover, a total of 165 participants (77 female) attended the two-day FMNR training which drew participants from the County Agriculture Department (CAD), Gender and Social Welfare Department, RRC local and community leaders (paramount chiefs, chiefs, elders), farmer pastoralist, women, youth representatives and faith-based representatives at Payam and Boma levels.

A post-training assessment revealed that their participation in the training enhanced their knowledge and skills about the importance of caring the natural resource base, which is key source of livelihood to thousands of smallholders in the project areas. Participants also reflected that the knowledge acquired from the sessions was useful not only to understanding the scale and magnitude of environmental degradation in their area, but also to pay attention and mobilize their communities to reverse the current situation through the implementation of different activities such as FMNR- a good strategy to restore/regenerate degraded environments.

Following cascading the training to BDCs on environmental care approaches (via FMNR) including sensitization of community members on the same subject, communities continued to manage the twenty-two FMNR¹¹ demonstration sites (AVSI=9; NRC=10; WV=3) established during this reporting period.

The size of FMNR plots varies from site to site, but on average each site covers a minimum of 5 hectares. Boma-level natural resource management plans that were established last year serve as a reference and guide for communities to implement different natural resource management activities within the FMNR sites.

The Cash for Asset (CfA) participants implemented low-cost and easily replicable public work activities in the FMNR sites such as the plantation of fruit trees, fencing of shrubs to regenerate, small pond construction, and some soil and water conservation practices. The different soil and water conservation activities implemented in the FMNR sites positively contributed to disaster risk reduction, environmental restoration, and peacebuilding (reducing conflict between pastoralists and farmers) now and in the future. However, community members still repeat concerns that FMNR sites are not beneficial for them in the short run, reducing their motivation; staff also lack the experience of having seen FMNR bring significant change for communities. The project planned to address this capacity gap by bringing a small group of staff to see FMNR adoption by agro-pastoralists in Kenya, improving the way they explain the approach to South Sudan farmers. The experience sharing visit to Kenya was not materialised though.

Participants of the environmental care approach training reflected that “20 years ago, their vegetation cover was widespread; rains used to start earlier at a regular time but now rains arrive later and tend to be unpredictable and patchy, affecting their crops and livestock”. The rate of environmental degradation is faster than before, and increasingly more trees are cut each year for charcoal, farmland and grazing. Hence, participants recognise the signs that indicate they are facing a changing climate and to withstand future disasters, they emphasised the importance of doing environmental care and natural resource management works which will build their resilience. FMNR is a good approach to environmental care and withstand any climatic related shocks now and in the future.

On a related note, to examine the positive and negative impact of the project activities on the environment, a comprehensive environmental safeguarding and climate risk assessment was

¹¹ FMNR is a low-cost, sustainable land restoration technique used amongst poor subsistence farmers to combat poverty and hunger in developing countries by increasing food and timber production, and resilience to climate extremes. It involves the systematic regeneration and management of trees and shrubs from tree stumps, roots and seeds on apparently treeless land. Applying the same principles, it is an effective technique for restoring land over run by ‘bush encroachment’.

carried out during this reporting period. The findings of the assessment revealed that the positive impacts of the planned project interventions outweigh the negative impacts and were deemed appropriate for implementation in the project locations. The assessment report also provided some good recommendations to effectively safeguard the environment and manage the climate risks by the FORESITE project.

Output indicator 2.2.3 number of relevant county, payam and boma staff trained in conflict resolution

122 local-level government staff (46 females) were trained on conflict resolution during the life of the project from a baseline value of 0 against a project target of 120. This shows 102% achievement of this particular indicator.

Activity 2.2.2 Train relevant county, payam, and boma staff in conflict resolution

It is understandable that Natural Resource Management (NRM) is a source of conflict in South Sudan. Therefore, the development of NRM and watershed management plans (described above in activity 2.2.1) at Boma and Payam levels may provoke disagreements among different parties. To mitigate this, it was found important to engage key stakeholders in the NRM planning process. That is why the project pursues community-based participatory planning to ensure the involvement of the key stakeholders who have a stake in the natural resource base. Further, training of County, Payam and Boma government staff and leaders of the customary institutions on conflict management and resolution has significant importance.

With this understanding, training on conflict resolution in which 122 people (46 females) participated was conducted in the project operational counties during the reporting period. participants by implementing partners are as follows: WV= 20; NRC= 30; AVSI= 72.

The main objective of the training was to equip participants with the knowledge and skills of conflict resolution management. Local Government staff, community chiefs, traditional/customary leaders, local government authorities, members of women groups, youth-led peace clubs and members of local peace development committees participated at this training. The training used different methodologies including group work discussions to explore the role of community leaders, women and government authorities during conflict resolution process. The training was provided by experienced project staff on the subject matter and covered the following topics:

- Types of disputes, identifying the main causes of disputes and dispute resolution techniques
- Rationale for conflict analysis (stakeholder conflict analysis) and effective communication skills
- Gender equitable dispute resolution, drivers of conflict, role of traditional leaders in conflict resolution, the role of formal and informal actors in conflict resolution.

At the end of the training, the local government authorities were appreciative of the EU-funded project for organizing such an event which assisted to build the capacity of local authorities to understand the nature of conflict and conflict resolution methods in their community. One of the County officials underscored that being part of this training enabled him to acquire new skills and knowledge, and committed to start utilizing the skills and supporting his community members to resolve issues in an amicable way in their respective areas.

Output indicator 2.2.3 number of communities with Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) plans in place

Twenty-four (24) Boma level community EWEA plans in place during the life of the project from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 24. This shows that 100% of this indicator has been achieved.

Activity 2.2.3 Support BDCs to lead the development of Early Warning Early Action plans.

To support Boma Development Committees (BDCs) lead in the development of Early Warning Early Action plans, 21 project and government staff (19 M; 2 F) received training on Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) from the 2nd to 4th of March 2021. The participants were drawn from WV (6 M; 1 F), NRC (5 M; 1 F), AVSI (4 M), Ministry of Agriculture (3 M) and Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (1 M). EWEA is among the concepts that focused on the empowerment of communities that are at risk of disaster to be aware of impending dangers and also to organize and equip them with knowledge and skill to manage disasters in their areas now and in the future.

The purpose of the training was to improve project staff and government partners' understanding of the key concepts of EWEA and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). More specifically the training was aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To analyze the roles & responsibilities of different stakeholders in EWEA and DRR,
- To analyze Government policies and strategies in relation to EWEA and DRR - Assess barriers to effective implementation of EWEA and DRR in the context of South Sudan,
- To build capacity of frontline project staff to have profound understanding and application of EWEA and DRR approaches, and to enable them to cascade the knowledge down to beneficiaries.

The training methodology combined both theory and practical sessions including group work assessments and some simulation practical exercises.

The training was facilitated by an early warning expert [a consultant] and the Head of Early Warning Systems from the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MHADM), and covered the following modules: Introduction to EWEA and DRR; Risk Knowledge; Introduction to EWS terminologies; Early Warning System Monitoring and warning services; Use of Early Warning monitoring instruments and equipment; EW Dissemination and Communications; EWEA Communication Development Plans; Development of EWEA IEC materials; Response Capabilities; Standard Operating Procedures; EWEA Plan of action steps.

"In the last few years, our communities have been hit by different types of disasters such as drought, flood, COVID 19, economic crisis and pests. Having an EWEA plan helps our communities to make necessary preparation in advance and be able to prepare and cope with some of these crises before it causes lots of damage to our livelihoods. Hence, we appreciate the FORESITE project for this important and timely capacity building," said one of the EWEA Committee member.

Participants highlighted that the training was very useful and helped them to understand the key concept of the EWEA approach and how to apply it in their everyday work. In addition, the training participants showed their confidence in being able to cascade similar training at the community level and to support the Boma Development Committees (Disaster Risk Reduction Committees) in developing early warning early action plans.

Trained project staff cascaded the EWEA training at the community level, and during the reporting period a total of 884 (416 women) individuals selected from community members received sensitization on EWEA and DRR. The participants were drawn from WV (334), NRC (350) and AVSI (200).

The purpose of the session was primarily to improve communities' understanding of the key concepts of EWEA and DRR and help them how to identify early warning triggers and put in place timely mitigation measures including dissemination of relevant EWEA information within the community and farmer groups.

Following the training, the project team in collaboration with the Early Warning Early Action committees developed 24 Boma-level community EWEA plans (NRC=9, AVSI=9 and WV=6). The plans helped to guide communities' day-to-day activities in a bid to act early before a disaster negatively affects their livelihoods strategies.

Output 2.3: HHs have access to savings and loans and social networks, and knowledge of positive coping strategies

Output indicator 2.3.1 Number of Savings Group Members by gender

Measurement of this particular indicator reveals that seventy-two (72) S4T groups having a total membership of 1,897 individuals (1,178 females, 719 male) strengthened from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 1,700 individuals (1100 Female, 600 male). This shows that 112% of this indicator has been achieved.

Activity 2.3.1 Identification of existing and formation of new S4T groups

According to WV S4T field guide “an S4T group is a group of people who save together in a safe, convenient and flexible way. S4T groups are owned, managed and operated by the members, using a simple, transparent method whereby groups accumulate and convert small amounts of cash into savings. The group's savings can be lent to members as credit. S4T projects are low-cost, requiring only facilitation staff and a small operating budget. They are self-replicating and community-led and, therefore, sustainable”.

During this reporting period, the project team in collaboration with the BDCs and the local government partners did a thorough field assessment and a series of discussions with community members to map, identify, and evaluate the capacity of existing S4T groups in the project implementation areas. Based on the findings of the field assessment, and considering the groups capacity, interest, understanding of group savings and previous performances, the project managed to identify, strengthen and establish 72 existing S4T groups. At the same time, the project encouraged the vulnerable women identified for the Cash for Asset (CFA) activities mentioned above, to form new groups or link to the existing groups as appropriate.

The establishment of the S4T groups encourages not only to promote a culture of savings but also to strengthen intra-ethnic social cohesion. Besides, savings can also provide personal development and growth, and it is also an entry point towards shifting of attitudes around gender, resilience and empowerment. The project provided all-rounded support to the group from capacity building to material support and facilitating linkages between different groups for experience sharing and proper functioning/performance of the groups. To this effect, 72 S4T groups (WV=32, AVSI=18 and NRC=22) having a total membership of 1,897 (1,178 Females) were supported with different materials such as metallic safe boxes, padlocks, recording books, sitting mats and chairs in order to help facilitate the smooth running of their day-to-day activities. The groups also received business management and marketing skills to allow them to engage in establishing small businesses as a means to diversify their livelihoods and increase income at the household level (please see detail in activity 2.3.2). In general, the establishment of the S4T groups encouraged members to cultivate a savings culture and most importantly serves as a source of social solidarity, social empowerment, intra-ethnic social cohesion, and a safety net for many poor female-headed households in vulnerable situations.

Please see the below short video links for a success story on S4T.

<https://storyhub.wvi.org/Share/6ki6sk0nr3ceke0fwdc0q0p1s733pg03>

<https://twitter.com/WVSouthSudan/status/1434768892753326081>

[Savings group helps empower women in South Sudan | World Vision International \(wvi.org\)](#)

Table 7 – S4T groups by location and membership

S.N.	Implementing Partners	Number of Groups	Group membership		
			Female	Male	Total
1	World Vision	32	562	398	960
2	AVSI	18	304	146	450
3	NRC	22	312	175	487
TOTAL		72	1,1178	719	1,897

Output indicator 2.3.2 number of functional Savings Groups

The project strengthened 72 functional saving groups from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 70. Measurement of this indicator shows that 103% of the target has been achieved.

During the reporting period, the project conducted S4T Groups Health Check, Savings and Loan Survey. The objectives of the survey were as follows:

- To examine the performance of S4T groups as far as management of the groups' daily activities by groups leaders like chairpersons, treasurers, secretaries, and bookkeepers.
- To enhance groups' linkage to each other based on their performance.
- To identify the best-performing groups, fairly performing groups and underperforming groups. This helps in finding out which groups need more support from the project.
- To know cumulative savings accrued by the groups.
- To assess whether the groups are lending to each other.
- To check the trend of savings, whether it's increased over the past periods.
- To examine the number and types of businesses ventured into by the S4T group's members.

The key findings of the survey are described below:

- All the 72 S4T group members attend meetings regularly, this is represented by a mean (average) of 4.51, which is close to the highest ranking of 5.
- Chairpersons of the 72 S4T groups fulfill their role. This is represented by a mean of 4.56 which is close to the highest rank of 5.
- Savings is regularly done in all the 72 S4T groups. This is represented by a mean of 4.73 which is close to the highest rank of 5.

- Loans are timely paid in all the 72 S4T groups, this is represented by a mean of 4.0 which is close to the highest rank of 5.
- Cumulative savings so far by the 72 S4T groups supported is 112,812,384 SSP equivalent to USD 133,189;
- The sum of loan distributed so far by all the S4T groups is 61,877,950 SSP equivalent to USD 73,055;
- Total loan amount paid back (recovered) is 53,401,700 SSP equivalent to USD 63,048
- Cumulative social funds accumulated by all the S4T groups is 14,005,300 SSP equivalent to 16,535 USD.

In general, the S4T Groups Health Check, Savings, and Loan Survey reveals that 98% of the S4T groups are functional and properly performing all required functions expected from the group. This includes regular meetings, savings, loan disbursement, loan repayment, social funds, etc.

Activity 2.3.2 Train S4T groups in core S4T functions and complementary topics

With the objective of enhancing the financial management, group performance and functionality of S4T groups, World Vision and implementing partners organized four days training on basic business management skills and S4T module in which 1,327 (819 females) participants participated (WV=390, NRC=487, AVSI=450). The training was provided by the project officers who have extensive experience, skills and knowledge in the area of S4T and capacity building.

Major topics covered during the training include:

A) Identification and formation phase:

1. Tools and assets of S4T; 2. Social fund, saving, and loan repayment; 3. Leadership and election; 4. Procedures of share purchases and fines; 5. Saving in kind and investment of cash; 6. Sources of capital /businesses linking mechanism; 7. Meaning and importance of S4T; 8. Principles of S4T; 9. Challenges affecting S4T at rural level.

B) Basic Business management skills:

1. Basics of financial literacy and numeracy skills; 2. Income-generating activities; 3. Softs skills; 4. Social integrity; 5. Basics communication skills and customer care; 6. Basic record-keeping types; 7. Basic business plan; 8. Sources of capital at the rural level; 9. Business failures and success testimonies.

Participants of the training highlighted that the training was very helpful to improve a culture of savings but also build institutional capacity of the groups in the area of: 1) group new saving terms and conditions; 2) improve business efficiency; 3) group functioning 4) keep records of their business expenses, 5) COVID-19 preventive measures including social distancing, the need to use face cover and hand washing. The project team used the World Vision S4T field guide resource material for the training.

Similarly, with the objective of strengthening the knowledge and skill of the project staff on WV's S4T approach, one project officer from World Vision attended a three-month online training on S4T. Following completion of the course, the trained person received a certificate and, served as a key resource person for S4T-related activities to the project.

Outcome 3

Improved longer-term food security and income especially for women and youth.

Progress towards achievement of the above outcome is elaborated below:

Outcome indicator 3.1 Median household income

Final Evaluation results revealed that median household income increased to US\$103.95 from US\$62 at baseline. This translates into an increase of US\$41.95 or 72.3% increase in median income.

Varied interventions implemented by the project enabled households to improve their income. These include: 1) Small businesses established by members of S4T groups have generated income at household level; 2) members of mother garden increased their income from sale of surplus vegetable production, and 3) farmer groups who used improved technologies [ox ploughs] managed to increase production, and thus a portion of produce was sold at the market to increase household income, 4) market linkages with a private sector (input-output market linkages) also helped to boost household incomes.

Outcome indicator 3.2 Average metric tons (tonnes per household per ha) produced in the last 12 months, disaggregated by crop type- groundnuts and sorghum

Final evaluation results revealed that sorghum production increased by 60.5% between the baseline of 1.0MT and Final Evaluation result of 0.665MT per hectare. Due to the impact of flooding, the FY2022 cropping season harvest was very low compared to the previous year's production.

Endline evaluation also revealed that groundnut production increased to 0.467MT compared to a baseline value of 0.580MT and project life target of 0.7 MT. The increase is around 67%.

These results were achieved due to the project's continued support to smallholder farmers to practice climate-smart agriculture through improved agronomic practices, improved access to improved agricultural technologies (ox ploughs, local improved seeds), provision of agricultural extension services and linkages to input suppliers.

Outcome indicator 3.3 % of women and men reporting improved access to inputs needed for income generation

98.4% of respondents reported improved access to inputs from a baseline value of 38.4% *against the project life target of 85%. This shows that 128.7% of the target has been achieved.*

The market linkage between smallholder farmers and agro-input dealers serves as a key strategy to improve access to inputs needed for income generation.

The project facilitated the establishment of four agro-input dealers in the four counties (1 agro dealer in each county) of the project operational areas.

In general, the project carried out the implementation of different activities to improve women's and men's access to inputs. This includes: 1) facilitating the establishment of agro-inputs dealers to provide essential goods and services to smallholder farmers on commercial basis, 2)

"An agro-input dealer in Gogrial East County attested that "the business linkage between the input dealers and the farmers including the cost recovery modality has increased the demand for their products and enabled them to play a meaningful role to their local economy". He also noted that "the free distribution of inputs through different actors undermined and distorted local businesses and made it challenging for them (traders) to compete in the market. Hence, the market-based approach introduced by the FORESITE project is very commendable and paves the way to ensure sustainability and reduce farmers' dependency syndrome".

provision of small farm tools and assorted vegetable seeds to mother gardens, 3) Input-output market linkages (seed multiplication groups linked with private sector- seed company), 4) female and male youth trained on varied TVET trades and thereafter received different start up kits to help them start small businesses.

Output 3.1: Farmer Groups intensify and diversify sustainable and market-oriented agricultural production of nutritious food

Rainfed agriculture plays a significant role in the lives and livelihoods of smallholder farmers in South Sudan. Farming is key source of food and income for millions of smallholders in the project implementation areas. However, climatic shocks, conflict, reliance on traditional farming practices, and the growing presence of pests are some of the factors, among others, contributing to low agricultural production and productivity in the area. As a result of this, farmers' absorptive and adaptive capacity to cope with the impacts of climatic change and related stresses are generally very low.

Therefore, to reverse this trend and improve longer-term food security and income in the project area, and most importantly promote sustainable and market-oriented agricultural production, the project provided all-rounded support to smallholder farmers: This includes: 1) improve farmers knowledge and skillsets in the area of group management, 2) market-oriented production, 3) promotion of climate-smart agriculture; 2) commercial farming or farming as a business, 3) market linkages, 4) linkage to agricultural extension services, and 5) improved agronomic practices and NRM to boost production and productivity including income.

Activities implemented in relation to this output are described below:

Activity 3.1.1 Conduct adaptive trials of seeds identified in LVCA

No specific output indicator set for this, although the activity contributes towards the success of output 3.1.

Experience showed that smallholder farmers in South Sudan are often reluctant to continue experimenting with imported (exotic) seeds and unfamiliar varieties. Meanwhile, farmer-preferred local varieties have not been rigorously evaluated against imported crop seeds. Therefore, in an effort to identify and select appropriate and environmentally suitable and adaptable crop seed varieties (exotic or local seed varieties) that are early maturing, high yielding, drought-tolerant and disease and pest resistant, the project in collaboration with International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and local research centres established four crop adaptive trial sites in the first year of project implementation period. The sites were located in different agroecological zones of the project operational areas (1 in Twic, 1 in Jur River, 1 in Cueibet and 1 in Gogrial East).

However, due to a shortage of foundational seeds from the ICRISAT side, the project was forced to shut down the three sites and remain with only one site (Alelthony crop adaptive trial site in NRC operational area) during year 2 and 3 implementation periods.

The following crop varieties were planted in the adaptive trial sites:

- Sorghum, 16 varieties (14 improved imported by ICRISAT from Kenya, 2 locals used as a check)
- Pearl Millet, 16 varieties (14 improved imported by ICRISAT from Kenya and 3 locals as a check);
- Sesame, 12 varieties (11 improved imported varieties obtained from the National Ministry of Agriculture Department of Research and 1 local as check).

To evaluate the performance of the trial sites two events were carried out:

1) Farmers field day: before harvest, a one-day Farmers Field Day in which 90 individuals (45 Females) attended was conducted in each crop trial sites. The main objectives of the event were as follows:

- To evaluate the performance of different varieties of pearl millet, sorghum and sesame crops in terms of plant stands, insects and diseases incidence, vigour and general performance.
- To exhibit new agricultural practices to farmers and agricultural extension workers/agents.
- To create networking between farmers, WVI-SS, CAD and Researchers.
- To create a sense of ownership about the varieties that will be promoted for release or further evaluation or improvement.

The event was attended by County agricultural staffs, agricultural extension workers, Boma administrators, researcher from Catholic University, project staff agronomists and farmers.

Participants were split into groups and walked around the field to observe the planted varieties of sesame and millet [exotic varieties], and later provided their observations and comments on best-performing crops at the vegetative stage for future use. The field day assisted local farmers to learn more about various challenges and factors affecting crop performance and select the best-performing local varieties together with high-performing open-pollinated improved varieties that are suitable to the local agroecological zone. Participants also reflected that they were happy with what they saw [mainly on the performance of Sesame and Pearl millet] and expressed their interest to adopt the seeds and plant on their farmlands once approved and released by the government.

Experts review meeting: World Vision organized a day-long review meeting with the aim to bring all the stakeholders and partners working in the seed sector to update World Vision's efforts in seed systems improvement, evaluate the performance of last year crop adaptive trials, and draw key lessons for future planning. During the meeting and based on the data collected from each site, an in-depth statistical analysis report scientifically evaluating the performance of each crop (Sorghum, Maize, Sesame, Pearl Millet) was presented and discussed. Thereafter, researchers and participants proposed a way forward for the next planting season. Accordingly, and based on the performance of the crops over the past few years, the consultant and participants recommended the following: apply for MAF release of 3 sorghum varieties: IESV 92162 DL, IESV 99034 DL-2, ICSV 142010; and 3 pearl millet varieties: ICMV 167006, SOSAT-C88 and ICMV 221 White.

Seeds source institute (ICRISAT), representatives from AVSI, WV, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security from the Directorate of Research and Development, Pro-Seed Company, WVA, and a lead consultant participated at this review meeting.

Due to factors related to late planting, dry spell, inadequate seeds, and pest and diseases, the performance of sorghum was not good during year 2021 crop adaptive trial site. However, Sesame crop and Pearl Millet performed very well.

On a related development, after many years of evaluation on the performance and ecological adaptability of different exotic crop varieties, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) officially approved the release of six Sorghum varieties and one pearl millet variety on 12 May 2022. World Vision's several years work on crop adaptive trial sites significantly contributed for MoA's decision in the

approval of these varieties. The release of these locally adapted varieties will have significant importance to the smallholder farmers in South Sudan, as it will increase production and productivity per unit area, which in turn contributes to food security. Dissemination of these varieties to the farmers is expected to be materialized in the next cropping season, depending on the availability of enough stocks.

Output indicator 3.1.2 number of Farmer Groups (FG) with access to information on marketing and opportunities

132 farmer groups have access to information on marketing and opportunities from a baseline value of 0, against the project target of 106. This shows that 124% of the target has been achieved.

Activity 3.1.2 Support FG to increase resilient, market-oriented production

Discussions with Farmer Groups and field observations revealed that low crop production and productivity in the project areas were mostly attributed to the following factors: limited knowledge and skills on improved agronomic practices, the effect of climate change (drought/floods), limited access to improved agricultural inputs and technologies, inadequate access to extension services, and undeveloped farming practices, usage of poor land tilling technology (most of them use traditional hoes), poor agronomic practice [not planting in rows] to mention but a few. During the discussion farmers also highlighted that crop harvest [yield] obtained from cultivated area as a group and individually were not sufficient to cater for year-round access to food consumption and income generation. As a result, most family members particularly children under five and pregnant and lactating women are more vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition. It is with this line of thinking that the project promotes and support farmer groups to practice climate-smart and market-oriented agricultural production.

Support provided to smallholder farmers include: 1) training of smallholder farmers on improved agronomic practices; 2) training on market linkages and post-harvest handling; 3) improved access to agricultural technologies like ox ploughs on a cost-sharing basis, and 4) provision of improved variety of local seeds. The project also supported farmers in the construction of three standard granaries (grain store size of 10m*15m) to be used as an aggregation centre, for the three registered producer group associations: one in Gogrial East County and two in Jur River Counties. Farmers contributed locally available materials for the construction.

Akuol Majak, a lead farmer in Warrap State, Gogrial East County, explains “Agriculture is the backbone of our economy, so we believe it is wise to venture into it. We want to combine agriculture and business. Any profit made by the group is saved as capital for investing in new enterprises. Through the provision of seeds and tools (ox-ploughs, rakes and hoes), the farmer group is able to increase production both at the individual farm and also group farm level which in turn helps us to ensure our food security”.

In an effort to significantly increase agricultural production and food availability in the project areas, one of the key activities, among others, was to identify, select and assess the capacity of the existing Farmer Groups (FGs) that could be supported and strengthened by the project. Accordingly, and during the reporting period, the implementing partners in collaboration with County agricultural offices strengthened and established 132 Farmer groups (FGs). On average each group consists of 25-30 members, and with a total membership of 3,474 farmers (1,748 women).

To ensure the sustainability of project interventions, the project employed a market-based approach in two ways: 1) a cost-sharing modality for ox-ploughs in which farmers paid 50% of the cost for the ox plough and the remaining 50% cost covered by the project; 2) facilitate the establishment of agro-dealers, who provide essential agricultural inputs on a commercial basis to local farmers.

Further, as part of the market system development, the cost-sharing approach introduced by the project helped to strengthen linkages between producers and buyers and local businesspeople. In addition, the private sector partnerships through agro-input dealers and the cost-sharing arrangement have changed farmers' mindsets on handouts and paved the way to project sustainability and reduction of the dependency syndrome. The proactive engagement of the local business people in the input market sector also contributed not only to strengthening the local economy but also to ensuring the provision of vital agricultural goods and services to smallholder farmers in a sustainable and affordable manner.

One of the lead farmers in Mariall Baii, Jur River County, underscored that “the farmland in our area is abundant. However, we were not able to open large size of plots due to labour and farm tools constraints.

Most of the farmers use traditional farm tools such as Malouda and hoe which are neither efficient nor labour and time saving. The introduction of ox-ploughs through a cost-sharing modality, however, enabled farmers not only to cultivate large acreage of land in a short period of time, but also significantly reduced labour and time needed to open same size of land using the traditional tools. The utilization of improved technologies coupled with extension services significantly increased production. This helped us to feed our families throughout the year, which was not the case before.

With increased production, we have now ensured our food security and generated incomes from sale of surplus production. We are thankful to the FORESITE project”.

Field observation displayed that most smallholders in South Sudan employ traditional farm tools [hoes] to cultivate their farmlands. Due to this, the overwhelming majority of farmers struggle to open more land for cultivation, which in turn contributes to low production/harvest and therefore food insecurity. Thus, increased access to ox ploughs has significantly enabled farmer groups to open more acreages of land in order to increase production and subsequently contribute to improved food security and income at household level.

During the reporting period, agro-dealers sold a total of **1805 ox ploughs** to the farmer groups. Out of these **1565** ox ploughs were sold on 50% cost-sharing modality, and the remaining **240** ox ploughs were distributed freely to youth-led farmer groups and vulnerable women groups. In addition, **185.36MT** of improved local seeds (168.25MT of ground nuts and 17.11MT of sorghum) were distributed to the farmer groups (please see table 9 below)

As a result of this support, farmer groups managed to cultivate a total of **8,204 feddans¹² (3,445 hectares)** of farmland as a group and individually over the past three cropping seasons/calendars. Of which, sorghum was planted on 2,896 feddans and the remaining 5,308 feddans were covered by groundnuts, as depicted in table 8 below.

Life was very difficult before I was supported by the project. I thought we would not survive from hunger as a family, after all of our livelihoods were looted or destroyed during constant inter-communal violence", says Achol. Rebecca Achol Gurke is a 29-year-old mother of 5 children living in Barget Payam, Cueibet county, Lakes State of South Sudan.

Before joining the project in 2020, she did not have a job and used to cultivate a piece of land using hand hoe to support her household. The harvest was insufficient to support family members consumption needs throughout the year. As a result, they often faced hunger during lean seasons.

Through the farmer group, however, we were able to increase our farm size because cultivation became easy with the ox-ploughs and seeds were availed to us by the project. We had a good harvest at the end of the cropping season", said Achol.

The group shared the produce from the harvests and Achol received 50 bags of groundnuts. "This is just 5 times higher than from what I used to produce in the past", said Achol. Achol earned 12,000 SSP from the sale of one bag [50kg bag] groundnuts only.

Now, thanks to the support I can fulfil my basic needs like buying clothes for my children, paying school fees and meeting other petty household needs in addition to ensuring my food security.

Table 8 – Number of Feddans cultivated and ox ploughs sold by agro-dealers

Implementing Partners	FY 2020				FY 2021				FY 2022		
	Farmer groups	Ox ploughs	Feddans		Farmer groups	Ox ploughs	Feddans		Farmer groups	Ox ploughs	Feddans
World Vision	16	50	129 (00)		57	208	561		57	456	1,572
NRC	39	6	514 (00)		39	274	587		39	350	1449
AVSI	24	41	832 (00)		30	132	990		36	288	1,570
TOTAL	79	97	1,475		126	614	2,138		132	1,094	4,591

Table 9 – Types of inputs (seeds) distributed by implementing partners

Implementing Partners	FY 2020				FY 2021				FY 2022		
	Farmer groups	Sorghum (MT)	Groundnuts (MT)		Farmer groups	Sorghum (MT)	Groundnuts (MT)		Farmer groups	Sorghum (MT)	Groundnuts (MT)
World Vision	16	1.2	4.050		57	1.7	53.05		57	3.75	21
NRC	39	0.7	12		39	6	23.5		39	0	19.5
AVSI	24	0.36	4		30	1.6	13.15		36	1.8	18
TOTAL	79	2.26	20.05		126	9.3	89.7		132	5.55	58.5

In connection to this, one of the factors, among others, contributing to low production in the project area was limited knowledge and skills of farmers on improved agronomic practices, use of

¹² 1 Feddan is equivalent to 0.42 hectare

technologies and conservation agriculture techniques. Hence, a 3-day training on improved agronomic practices and market-oriented production skillsets including animal traction was conducted for 354 lead farmers (152 female). Training participants by implementing partners are as follows: NRC (120), WV (182) and AVSI (52). The objective of the training was: 1) to increase farmer's knowledge of agronomic practices and market-oriented production techniques; 2) to support farmers to focus on market-oriented production for ensuring year-round consumption for their families and increased income. The training was provided by the project agronomic specialist and business management and marketing specialists in collaboration with the County agricultural experts. Afterward, these trained lead farmers held 1-2 sessions with their respective group members and shared/cascaded their skills and knowledge acquired from the training through on-farm learning or adaptive approach i.e. learning by doing.

Major topics covered during the training included:

- Before planting: site selection, land preparation, and seed selection;
- Planting operation: time of planting, planting methods, spacing and appropriate plant density;
- Post-planting operation: weeding, thinning, and insect pest and diseases control;
- Harvest and post-harvest operation: stage and timing of harvest, drying threshing, grading, transportation, and storage;
- Concept of conservation agriculture, and climate-smart agriculture;
- Farming as a business (commercial farming).
- Input-output market linkages

Participants of the training mentioned that the training was very useful and helped them to broaden their understanding and knowledge about improved agronomic practices and conservation techniques. Moreover, the participants reflected that opening up more land for farming coupled with the use of improved agricultural techniques significantly increased production and food availability at the household level and therefore contribute towards ensuring their food security and building resilience. A mid-term result assessment conducted by FAO¹³ supported this statement: "Increase in food production translated into increased food availability and access at the household level, and improved consumption".

In connection to this, to bring extension services closer to the farmer groups and households, the project team in close partnership with government extension workers provided day-to-day technical advice and support to the FGs to help them boost production and productivity. The County Agricultural Department nominated 2 Agricultural Extension Workers from Jur River and Twic Counties to further support the 5 Community-Based Extension Workers (CBEWs) who are based at Boma Level. As per the service agreement signed with the Ministry of Agriculture, seven extension agents (3 in Jur River and 4 in Twic County) are paid a monthly incentive from the project in order to provide day-to-day extension service to the farmer groups. To ease mobility during monitoring, the Lead Farmers were supported with 38 bicycles. Moreover, 10 Motorbikes and three Vehicles (Toyota Land Cruiser, 3 doors 13-SEATER) were procured by the project to facilitate the movement of Field Staff and Extension Workers to support project implementation.

Table 10 below shows the trend of annual Feddans cultivated by supported farmers disaggregated by crop type and year of support. The statistics show that in the just concluded cropping season of the year 2022, average land under cultivation increased among supported

3. Mid Term Results Assessment (FAO, 2020), Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency Program in South Sudan, OSRO/SSD/709/USA

farmers in comparison to previous years of 2020 and 2021. This increment was a result of the project's effort in increasing access to ox ploughs and therefore increased area of cultivation in its final year of implementation. While this was viewed as a positive effort by the project, smallholder farmers were not able to harvest high production from the cultivated area due to the impact of climate change, mainly flooding in the concluded cropping season (year 2022).

Table 10: Trend of Annual Average Feddans Cultivated by farmers disaggregated by Crop Type

	Average Feddans Cultivated	
Cropping Year	Sorghum	Ground-Nuts
2020	2.4	1.9
2021	3	2.36
2022	4.2	4.5

Based on the project post-harvest assessment survey, table 11 below presents a comparison of yield data from the year 2020 to 2022 disaggregated by crop types of sorghum and groundnuts.

As shown in Table 11, the average yield drastically dropped for FY2022 cropping season compared to the year 2020 and 2021 average crop yields for both crop types.

Sorghum dropped from 1264 Kgs average yield in 2021 to 536 Kgs average yield in 2022 thus a 728 average Kgs variance. While Groundnuts dropped from 992 kgs average yield in 2021 to 422 Kgs average yield in 2022 hence a 570 average Kgs drop.

The sharp fall in average crop yield for both crop types in year 2022 can be fully attributed to the effects of flooding which hit almost all the 4 Counties of project implementation areas. On a related note, there was an increase in the land area cultivated in year 2022 due to the increased utilization of ox-ploughs sold through the agro-input dealers. However, farmers have experienced a reduction in yield due to severe floods which have affected nearly 32% of the project-supported farmer groups.

Table 11: The trend of Annual Average Crop Yield disaggregated by Crop Type from year 2020 to 2022 farming/cropping seasons

	Average Crop Yield in Kgs per hectare	
Cropping Year	Sorghum	Ground Nuts
2020	622	503
2021	1264	992
2022	536	422

Despite some of the challenges such as flood, the key factors that contributed to production increase in the project area include: 1) the climate-smart agriculture approach pursued by the project farmer groups to boost productivity and climate adaptation; 2) improved access to ox ploughs enabled the FGs to open more acreages of land and therefore increased production, 2) adoption of improved agronomic practices by smallholder farmers resulted in an increase in yield, 3) regular agricultural extension services rendered by the project also positively contributed towards increasing production.

Overall, the climate-smart agriculture approach pursued by the project combined with increased cultivation areas using ox ploughs led to market-oriented production, and thus ensuring food security and resilience building of smallholder farmers in the project implementation areas.

Output indicator 3.1.3 Number of private sector extension agents/ “sales agents” commissioned or employed by agricultural input dealers or value addition facilities.

A total of 20 sales agents were recruited by agro-input dealers to promote their products and services during the life of the project from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 13. This shows that 153% of this indicator has been achieved.

Activity 3.1.3 Strengthen and network agro-input dealers and other value chain actors

Previous experience showed that most smallholder farmers access vital inputs and services through direct service delivery (free distribution) from different humanitarian organizations operating in the area. This has contributed on one hand to raise the dependency syndrome of farmers, and on the other hand, it discouraged the local economy as local traders were not able to compete freely in providing needed services and goods to smallholder farmers.

Therefore, to challenge the status quo and change this deep-rooted conventional practice [handouts] and gradually transition to a market-based development approach, the project conducted two assessments:

1) **Local value chain and market systems assessment:** The objective of this assessment includes 1) documenting the current state of market systems and value chains; 2) mapping out the key market actors along the key value chains and; 3) identifying potential economic opportunities or value addition opportunities in the project area. Key findings of this assessment, among others, are:

- Assessment results show that major crops being produced in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Jur River and Twic Counties are sorghum, groundnut, maize, beans, millet, sesame, okra, and tomato.
- The main livestock being reared are local goats, local cattle, local sheep and local chicken.
- The grain market segment is composed of a market structure mainly dominated by retailers; their scale of operation is quite low with a limited constellation of market channels and limited product differentiation. Sorghum and maize are mainly sold in grain form and also processed into flour, while groundnut is sold as unshelled, shelled, and groundnut paste.
- Engage emerging local seed companies to produce seed on behalf of the project beneficiaries, import foundation seeds and provide technical support on community-based seed production and conduct adaptive trials of seeds produced in other locations.
- There is a need to introduce systems to govern the informal lending mechanisms, modernize production and value addition systems using appropriate technologies, and support rejuvenation of farmer cooperative (read groups) in terms of developing constitutions, by-laws, board charters and operating manuals, strategic plans and business plans.
- Improve the market infrastructure by constructing standard stalls in the markets, establishing sanitary systems in the market, improving the road infrastructure,

removing the multiplicity of marketing fees and taxes, and standardize the units of commodity measurements in the market.

- Other challenges in the market systems in the priority counties include the lack of standardized units of measurement. Cups, malwas, buckets and basins are used as unit for measuring grains in the marketplace as opposed to standard weighing scales.
- Personalized relationships exist in the priority value chains where trust is built over time through repeated transactions. Although this relationship is non-contractual and informal, it is considered a very effective mechanism that facilitates businesses.

2) **Agricultural inputs sector assessment:** the objective of this assessment was three-fold:

- a) to examine the current state of agricultural inputs market systems and agro-inputs value chains in the project area; b) to map out key market actors who have stakes in the inputs sector, and identify potential economic opportunities or value addition and, c) understand the demand and supply side constraints and opportunities of the inputs sector market in the project area.

The findings of this assessment allowed the project team to vividly comprehend the key challenges and opportunities in relation to the inputs sector market, which in turn led for the establishment four agro-input dealers¹⁴ (1 in Cueibet, 1 in Jur river, 1 in Kuajok and 1 in Twic).

The linkage between farmers and agro-input dealers serves as a key strategy to improve the availability of agricultural inputs in the area and bring services closer to the smallholder farmers. Agro-input dealers reflected that the business linkage between them and the farmers greatly helped to generate demand for their products and enabled them to play a meaningful role to the local economy. Agro-input dealers appreciated the project's initiative to establish partnerships with them, and most importantly in introducing the cost-sharing modality which helped to generate demand and ensure the continuity of their business. According to the agro-dealers, the free distribution of inputs through different actors undermined their business and made it challenging for them to compete in the market. This market-based approach, therefore, is very encouraging and paves the way to ensure sustainability for both parties. It also helps to reduce dependency syndrome from the farmer's side.

On the same note, smallholder farmers appreciated the effort made by the project in bringing the service closer to their area. Farmers said: "In the past we were struggling to easily access improved technologies such as ox ploughs, unless we travel to Wau, which is very far from our place. But, now the establishment of these agro-inputs dealers has an advantage not only in terms of proximity of services but also it saves us lots of money which otherwise could have been spent for transport and accommodation to buy inputs in big towns such as Wau".

Please see below link for a success story on agro-input dealers.

<https://www.wvi.org/stories/south-sudan/solving-south-sudans-hunger-crisis-developing-markets-and-boosting-farmers>

¹⁴ Agro-input dealers are local traders who provide vital agricultural inputs and services to smallholder farmers on commercial basis in the project area.

During the reporting period, the project facilitated linkages between agro-input dealers and farmer groups. As a result of this linkage, the agro-dealers managed to sell over 1800 ox ploughs on a 50% cost-sharing basis.

In connection to this, 20 individuals (sales agents) were recruited by two agro-dealers in order to promote their products and most importantly to widely disseminate information to the community about the availability of improved agricultural inputs (ox ploughs and spare parts) in their locality. The agro-dealers pay these agents in kind and other assorted means. With the help of these agents, many people came to the agro-dealers shop looking for ox ploughs and other services.

One of the agro-input dealers underscored that “the cost-sharing approach has changed farmers' mindsets in a way that it has created a sense of ownership and reduced their dependency syndrome. Moreover, it encouraged private sectors participation to contribute to their local economy, by bringing services closer to the farmers at affordable prices”. He added “The idea of cost-sharing is really a good approach and attracted many smallholder farmers to bring a paradigm shift in their approach to farming: a shift from traditional means of farming to a modern farming technique using ox ploughs”.

On another development, the project completed an assessment that examines the capacity of existing financial service providers in the project's operational areas. Please see activity 3.2.2 for details on this.

Output indicator 3.1.4 number of marketing associations formed

Eight (8) marketing associations were formed in year 3 of the project from a baseline value of 0 against the project target of 10. This shows that 80% of the target achieved.

Activity 3.1.4 Support mature and motivated FG to form aggregate marketing associations

During the reporting period, mature Farmer Groups (FGs) that have been in existence for more than a year were facilitated and supported to form marketing/producer associations. Through these larger associations and resulting collective social capital, members were able to access quality inputs and extension services as well as linkage with private sectors (traders). As part of this endeavour, the project facilitated the establishment and registration of eight (8) farmer cooperative associations/producer groups (NRC=3; WV=2 and AVSI=3) with total memberships of 650 (319 Females). To facilitate their formation, the project pursued a two-phased approach. For the first phase, the project team in collaboration with the State Ministry for Cooperatives and Rural Development provided training to the associations to help them improve their awareness about the importance of forming an association and working as a group. The second phase focused on ensuring the functionality of the association.

Major topics covered during the two-phases training sessions include:

Phase 1: Introduction:

- a) Defining a farmer Group Association; Benefits of working as an Association; b) Goals and Objectives of the Association; c) Roles and responsibilities of various members of the Association; d) Development of Bylaws/Constitution; e) Registration of the Constitution; f) Linkage to Financial institutions.

Phase 2: Running the Association:

a) Institution Strengthening: Training on management, Marketing, Production; Market Linkage; b) Group Dynamics: Solving common problems in group decision-making Unequal group commitment and involvement; c) Monitoring Association performance: Keeping the Board and members properly informed, Financial record-keeping and reporting; d) Managing growth: Expansion of scale and complexity, Planning for growth; e) Member education, Reaching out and cooperating with outsiders, Keep the information flowing.

According to Lawrence Paul, Director General for Rural Development and Cooperative, Warrap State, "it is impossible to end hunger and reduce poverty unless we significantly increase production and incomes for smallholder farmers through improved farming practices. To realize this, formation of producer associations is essential for farmers to fully exploit market opportunities through economies of scale, and transitioning from subsistence to commercial farming through market linkages".

After the training, with support from the local government and project team, the marketing associations developed constitution (bylaws) that governs them and officially registered with the State Ministry of Cooperative and Rural Development. Please see the attached sample certificate provided to each Association by the local Government.



Registration
Certificate- Farmer as:



Certificates of
Registration.pdf

The associations were also encouraged to integrate peacebuilding and conflict resolution approaches and ensure marketing associations have the skills and attitudes not only to ensure that inter-communal tension does not affect their functionality, but also to employ the association as a tool to improve and strengthen social cohesion for peaceful coexistence.

On a related note, in an effort to facilitate linkages between producer associations and private sector, the project signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Pro-seed company, representatives of two producer groups, NRC and the local County Authority. The MOU clearly stipulates the roles and responsibilities of each party including producer groups [out-growers]. This initiative, which is essentially a contract farming arrangement¹⁵ is the first ever implemented in the project area- Jur river County. With the objective of market-oriented agricultural production, the project in collaboration with Pro-Seed company selected two seed multiplication groups from the existing functional Farmer Groups (FG) and facilitated them with all necessary support and training. As part of this initiative, 103 smallholder farmers (55 females) participated in contractual farming. The seed company covered 50% of the seed cost. The remaining 50% was covered by the farmers themselves, as part of ensuring a sense of ownership.

In the meantime, the head of the Pro-Seed company provided a two-day training to these farmers. During the first day, farmers were familiarised to understand the MoU signed with PRO Seed Ltd its objective, and the benefit behind local crop seed multiplication. Day two training primarily focused on the practical aspect and practices to multiply and obtain good quality seeds which will be able to meet the market demand and improve household income. The following topics were

¹⁵ Contract farming is widely perceived as a pro-poor arrangement that enables rural farmers to participate in a market economy through establishment of forward and backward linkages. Forward linkages constitute distribution chains connecting producers or suppliers with customers, while backward linkages create channels through which information, material, technical support, and credit flow between a contractor and its suppliers, leading to a network of economic interdependence- Source- RIU Policy brief, Tanzania.

covered: 1) Land preparation, 2) Seed selection and sorting, 3) Spacing, 4) Thinning and removal of off-types, 5) Harvesting, drying, shelling and storage, 6) Packaging and labelling, 7) Marketing.

Through the contract farming arrangement, a total of 80 feddans (33.6 hectares) of farmland was planted by Sorghum and Groundnuts. The contract farming provides an opportunity for farmers [out-growers] not only to participate in a market economy but to ensure a guaranteed market and better price for their produce. The contractor [seed company] provided farmers with input supplies [on cost sharing], technical advice, and guaranteed market services. The farmer, on the other hand, commits to producing a specified quantity and quality of an agricultural product [in this case farmers agreed to plant sorghum and groundnuts on 80 feddans of land) which later to be sold exclusively to the contractor (seed company), usually at a better price.

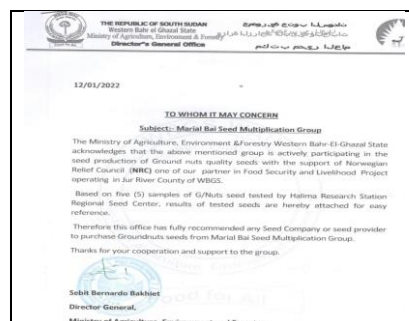
The contract farming was implemented for the first time in the project area and had multiple benefits: 1) farmers gained knowledge and skills on row planting [which was not practiced in the area before- they used to plant crops on broadcasting instead of row planting], improved crop management practices at different cycle of the crop, post-harvest handling etc; 2) increased farmers awareness and knowledge on commercial farming and or market-oriented production; 3) farmers produced in large quantity, sold their produce at a reliable and better price and therefore increased household income and food security, 4) looking at the agricultural potentiality of the area, the approach will help to attract/crowd in more private sectors in the future.

Due to accessibility and transactional-related issues, only two of the producer groups linked with the private sector (pro-seed company). The private sector preferred to work with those producer groups located near to town.

Output Indicator 3.1.5 Volume of quality assured seed produced by producer groups

During the reporting period two (Marial Baii and Majak- Alel) producer groups collectively produced 51.7 MT of groundnuts from a *baseline value of 0 against a target of 66.8MT. This shows that 77% of the target achieved so far.* The group received a certificate of quality assurance for their produce from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Through the contract farming arrangement, the two producer groups in Jur River County produced a total of 51.7 MT of groundnuts on 80 feddans. The State level Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forestry took a sample of their products for a quality check [germination rate etc..] and thereafter officially issued a quality assurance certification letter recognizing that any company in the country can buy their produce. This is a major step for the producer groups not only to get recognition from the government but also paves the way for market linkages and sustainability going forward. Moreover, it also benefits farmers to get a better price for their products and improve linkages between buyers and producers. Please see a screenshot of the quality assurance certification letter.



Output Indicator 3.1.6 Volume of Local Value Chain Development (LVCD) product sold collectively by producer groups

During the reporting period, two producer groups located in Marial Baii and Majak-Alel sold collectively 36.2 MT of groundnuts to the private sector (Pro-Seed Company), from a baseline value of 0 against a target of 66.8 MT. This shows that 54% of the target was achieved. This value

is just for two producer groups alone. However, the total project life target for the 10 producer groups were 334MT (33.4MT= 1 producer group).

During the reporting period, 103 farmers (55 females) entered a contract farming agreement with Pro-Seed company. As part of this arrangement, the producer groups cultivated 80 Feddans of Groundnuts and produced 51.7 MT of groundnuts. The farmers stocked portion of their produce in an aggregation center (warehouse) and then sold it to a private sector (pro-seed company) at a better price compared to the local market. The total volume of product sold collectively by this producer groups was around 36.2MT of groundnuts. The balance 15.5MT was used for home consumption purposes. It is worth noting that, unlike previous seasons, crop production for the year 2022/2023 cropping season was affected by a severe flood.

This is the first kind of intervention in Western Bahr el Ghazal State when producer groups collectively aggregate and sold their produce to the private sector. Members of the producer group reflected that “we are so happy with this contract farming approach and will continue to work as a group to open more land, increase our production and ultimately transition from subsistence farming to commercial farming to boost our income, ensure food security and build our resilience”.

In connection to this, to scale up, replicate and disseminate this best practice (contract farming), the FORESITE team facilitated a high-level experience-sharing visit on 2nd December 2022. During the visit, 85 individuals (37 M; 48 F) including high-level State Government authorities, local government authorities, representatives from the EU-funded NGOs (VSFG, HARD) including smallholder farmers attended the on-site experience learning session, particularly on group formation, crop quality, grading, packaging, storage, and marketing. The State level Director General for the Ministry of Agriculture mentioned that “this is a kind of intervention that our area needs in order to ensure food security and high income for smallholder farmers.” He added that “this is a unique and exemplary intervention that needs to be adopted and replicated by different partners”.

Furthermore, in order to reduce post-harvest loss and encourage safe storage of food crops, the project in collaboration with communities constructed four standard seed stores (5 X 10 meters) in Jur river, Gogrial East and Twic Counties. All the stores were handed over to the respective farmer associations or producer groups.

Output Indicator 3.1.7 # of blacksmiths trained in production/repair of ploughs and other tools

100 blacksmiths were trained in production and repair of ploughs from a baseline value of 0 against the project life target of 100. This shows that 100% of the target has been achieved.

Working directly with Market actors is crucial for sustainable market-based approach system development and to bringing services closer to smallholder farmers. To this effect, the project team conducted an assessment and identified 100 blacksmiths (48 M; 52 F) and trained them on Ox-plough repair in Jur River from the 16th to 17th of June 2021.

The main objective of the training was to equip farmers with the skills and knowledge on the repair, use and maintenance of Ox-ploughs. After the training participants highlighted that training equipped them to know about the different types of ox plough parts and their functions. The participants also expressed willingness to become ToTs to train others and deliver services in their respective communities.

Output Indicator 3.1.8 # of “ploughing master trainer” and “ploughing service provider” trained

Five (5) ploughing master trainers were trained *from a baseline value of 0 against the project life target of 5. This shows that 100% of the target has been achieved.*

As part of strengthening and networking of the Agro-input dealers and other value chain actors, NRC project identified and selected 5 Ox-plough master trainers to train farmers on Ox-plough use and repair in Marial Baai Payam of Jur River County. This is critical to ensuring sustainability in market systems development. The main objective was to train ToTs at the community level with the potential to cascade the knowledge on Ox-plough use, repair and maintenance to the entire community. In addition, this helps to buy down the risk of the private sector in providing commercial solutions to farmers as of now and long after the project ends. The project monitoring report showed that the master trainers helped smallholders with the usage of ox ploughs and provided maintenance service during the breakdown of ox plough parts.

Output 3.2: Increased and diversified income-generating activities especially for women and youth

Diversification of income-generating activities is a recommended resilience approach, as it allows households to, following a shock (or before a shock, with sufficient information), shift from a non-viable to a viable income-generating strategy. Increased and reliable income assists in smoothing consumption over the year, feeds into savings, and allows households to invest in health and education which enables an eventual, transformative shift from fragility to resilience. With this line of thinking and under this particular output, the project implemented the following activities.

Output indicator 3.2.1 Number of S4T groups trained in business skills

80 S4T groups were trained in business management and marketing skills from a baseline value of 0 against the project life target of 70. This shows that 114% of the target has been achieved.

Activity 3.2.1 Support S4T groups and individual members (m+f) to start small businesses

With the objective of improving the business, marketing, and financial management skills of the S4T groups, WV in collaboration with the local government department (Ministry of Cooperative and Rural Development) organized a series of training on business management and marketing skills in which 80 groups with a total membership of 1,897 (1,178 females) attended.

The training was facilitated by the project Business and Market Development Officer and covered the following topics: 1) financial management skills, 2) entrepreneurship, 3) record keeping, 4) customer care, 5) marketing and market research, 6) identification of different types of feasible income generating activities, 7) business plan development skills.

I used to stay at home idly, life for my family was tough as we barely ate after the loss of my husband to a disease I didn't know," Nyanut recalls. Through the participation in the 'Achugam' S4T group and with the help of the loans from the group, I managed to establish my own business. Nuanut admits she no longer begs with her relatives or friends for food support, school fees, and money for medical treatment of her children. The mother goes ahead to claim that the bread making business gives her an average of SSP10,000 per day on sales. She also confirms that she is saving part of her business profit by contributing it to Achugam saving box. "My dream is to expand my bakery shop by purchasing more assets like sitting materials and construction of a bigger oven" says Nyanut.

At the end of the training, 98% of the participants highlighted that the training was useful, and the knowledge and skills acquired from this training helped them to smoothly run their day-to-day activities/businesses.

Participants also underscored the training enabled them to build the institutional capacity of the groups mainly in 1) improving business efficiency; 2) group functioning; 3) understanding their customers' needs and establishing their businesses; 4) keeping records of their business expenses; 5) managing the business effectively. In the meantime, participants highlighted that the training provided an opportunity to share their experiences with one another and strengthen their social solidarity/cohesion.

Output indicator 3.2.2 Number of businesses established by S4T groups or individual members

A total to 574 small businesses from a baseline value of 0 against the project life target of 600. This shows that 96% of this particular indicator has been accomplished.

As mentioned above under activity 2.3.1, with the objective of promoting a culture of savings and subsequent investment for income diversifications, the project managed to strengthen 72 Saving for Transformation (S4T) groups. The groups were provided with different support ranging from capacity building to material support to small grants, and lateral linkages for experience sharing.

Following completion of the business management and marketing skills training, 574 members (442 females) of the S4T groups established and run small businesses (income-generating activities) using loans secured from the groups. The income-generating activities established by these members enabled members to diversify their livelihoods and increase household income. Most of the businesses are managed by individuals. The type of business undertaken by members include tea making, bread making, small kiosk shops, groundnut paste, buying agricultural produces and selling at a higher price during peak seasons, sale of clothes and shoes, and others.

"My life was so difficult before People for Development (AVSI) came with the FORESITE project. I thought we would not survive as a family from hunger", shares Yar Laat Goljok, a 35-year-old with 7 family members. She articulates that, she did not have a job; and used to cultivate a piece of land near her house but the harvest was not enough for all her family members.

Yar Laat Goljok continues, "I am doing fine with my tea making business, which I started in March 2019. She adds, if it was not for the money, I loaned from the Saving for Transformation (S4T) group, we would have given up on life.

I borrowed SSP10.000 from the group to start my business of tea making. During the dry season, "I earn about 2,000 SSP per day from this business. I could earn up to 8,000 SSP per day because many vehicles would get stuck in the mud, so people used to come to my shop to drink tea or coffee." She happily shares.

I'm grateful to the FORESITE project that "Now four of my children can go to school and I have enough food at home for my family".

Impact of Savings groups on the lives of the poor

"Before I joined this mother garden group, there were no vegetable farms, saving groups, and no farming as a business in this area. The income-generating activities I used to do were only limited to tea making in the local market. Today, it's different", says Martha Nyabut, a 43-year-old mother of four.

Martha said: "I did not know how to plant vegetables properly but rather through the loan that I got from S4T groups I engaged to selling tea in the local market that earned me a little income."

She has identified three types of vegetables that are quick to mature and of high demand in the local market. These were purslane, amaranthus, and Jew's mallow. "Through my vegetables, tea and cereal sales in Marial Baai and Wau local markets, I managed to buy five goats, 3 'he' goat and 2 she-goats at **140,000 SSP (\$300)**", Martha said.

With her income, Martha shares, "I'm able to buy household food and non-food items as needed" With her new skills gained, Martha feels she has better opportunities than the others in her community who are not part of the FORESITE project.

In an effort to strengthen the capacity of the S4T groups and based on the findings of the S4T group's performance health survey, the project provided a small grant to the groups (WV=32, AVSI=18 and NRC=22), who developed a good and feasible business plan. The grant primarily contributed to boost the volume of group savings/capital, which in turn opened an opportunity to members to take loans and carry out varied small income-generating activities.

The small grants dispersed to the groups enabled members to boost their working capital and smoothly run different businesses. The total amount of grants disbursed to the groups was around USD 20,000. Each group received on average 150,000 SSP (\$250).

Overall, the project support to S4T groups led members to promote their culture of savings and to an improvement in financial inclusion, household business outcomes, and women's empowerment both socially and economically. Members who run small businesses already started to generate some income, which can be cited as evidence of a pathway to improved resilience.

Activity 3.2.2. Link S4T to advanced financing mechanisms

No specific indicator set for this output indicator in the MEAL plan.

The linkage of S4T to advanced financing mechanisms [formal and or informal financial institutions services] are believed to open new economic opportunities within and beyond the agricultural farming sector. Studies showed¹⁶ that 'savings and internal lending activities of VSLAs are considered protectional (income smoothing) microfinance, the link to external credit signifies a more promotional (income generating) use of microfinance'.

One of the most significant outcomes that could be achieved through the linkage to advanced financing mechanisms is that S4Ts will have access to loans up to four times the amount of their accumulated savings, which enables them to engage in bigger and potentially more profitable enterprises.

Against this backdrop, the project completed an assessment to examine the capacity and readiness of the financial institutions and S4T groups for a potential linkage. The key findings of the study are summarized below:

Financial Service Providers (FSPs):

All the financial service providers interviewed have not developed products that target S4T groups. This is because they don't have previous experience in dealing with S4T groups and thus don't have an understanding of how the group works. There hasn't been a clear awareness of the existence of the groups since most of the S4T groups are located in remote areas, and insecurity has been a major challenge for service delivery in these areas. Hence, according to the FSPs view, the S4T groups are a market segment that doesn't yield much profit to them.

¹⁶ Linkages between CARE's VSLA's with Financial Institutions in Rwanda, CARE, 2007

S4T groups:

The findings showed that 90% of the groups that were interviewed have neither the understanding of how FSPs work nor the benefits of establishing a relationship with them (FSP). This can be attributed to less exposure of the groups as well as absence of FSPs in the nearby areas.

Conclusion:

Following completion of the assessment, of the eight (8) FSPs interviewed only Eden bank showed interest to potentially work with few mature S4T groups. Accordingly, a representative from the Eden Bank visited a few mature S4T groups in Gogrial East and Jur River Counties. The aim of the visit was to: 1) explore the opportunity to working with the FORESITE project, 2) understand how the S4T groups are functioning and, 3) explain to the groups the advantages of being connected with the Bank and inform the groups about available financial products that the Bank will offer to the group.

For the purpose of this linkage, the project already selected ten (10) matured S4T groups (WV=5 and NRC=5) in Jur River and Gogrial East Counties. However, due to various demands from the financial institution's side, the linkage has not materialized.

Output indicator 3.2.3 Number of mother gardens established

80 mother gardens were established and supported during life of the project from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 77. This implies that 104% of the target has been achieved.

Activity 3.2.3 Create mother gardens

With the objective of increasing household horticulture and dietary diversity, the project supported formation of 80 mother group gardens (NRC=21; WV=22, and AVSI=37 groups) with group membership of 2,027 (1,604 Females). Access for mothers and proximity of water sources was taken as key criteria when establishing the groups. Some of the vegetable group members are selected from S4T members to help produce vegetables and sell surplus as part of their income-generating activities.

To help mother groups undertake the dry season vegetable farming, the project provided different types of assorted vegetable seeds such as purslane, watermelon, okra, eggplant, kale, amaranthus, tomato, spinach, Sukuma (collard greens) and onion. Small farm tools such as hoes, rakes, treadle pumps, watering cans and water pump generators were also provided to the mother gardens.

The project team also provided on-site training and technical advice on vegetable production techniques to all mother garden groups.

Provision of seeds and tools helped the mother gardens to produce vegetables primarily for direct consumption. The women farmers were also encouraged to market the surplus production to help them generate some income.

I had the most difficult time this year after my houses and crops were destroyed by floods last year. Had it not been for the income I earned from vegetable farming, my children and I would have starved a long time ago", says Ajok Makuei a 38-year-old mother of six and member of mother garden in Wunrok Payam, Twic County. Ajok sells vegetables from her farm and uses the income to buy food, cover medical expenses, and other basic needs for her children.

She says, "I earn about SSP 2500 (\$8) per day which I use for our feeding and buying medicine." Ajok who had two sets of twins says that if it were not for the vegetable farm, life would have been worse for her. "My child Bol-dit was vomiting and having diarrhoea, I took him to the clinic and paid the bills using the money I had saved." She adds, "Since the father of my children is jobless, I work hard and depend on the sale of vegetables for survival."

The main objective of this particular activity was to identify nutrition champions to discuss barriers to good nutrition as well as gender-related concerns to eat, grow or buy food. The intervention also aims at promoting dietary diversity and addressing malnutrition in children under five years, and pregnant and lactating mothers. Surplus production from vegetable gardening was sold to the local market to generate income for mother group members. The activity also offered an opportunity for women to network, share experiences and strengthen solidarity within their communities.

Output indicator 3.2.4 number of individuals completing TVET courses

A total of 165 male and female youth completed a three-month Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 160. Hence, 103% of this indicator has been achieved to date.

Activity 3.2.4 Link youth and S4T group members to TVET and coaching

Youth unemployment and underemployment is a major developmental challenge in many African countries including South Sudan. Youth are the future of their country and if given the opportunity, they can meaningfully contribute to the socio-economic development aspects of their nation.

Previous Labour Market and TVET Assessments conducted in Juba, Wau, Jonglei and Twic as part of NRC's EU-funded TVET project found extremely low rates of participation in technical and vocational training, as well as low rates of completion of secondary school.

Hence, to have a deeper understanding of the project's operational context and most importantly to identify key factors influencing small businesses and Income Generating Activities (IGAs) in the FORESITE project intervention areas, the project conducted a labour market and TVET assessment. The result of the assessment informed the project team to understand the existing gaps and opportunities in relation to the supply and demand side of the labour market in the project implementation areas and equip youth with market-demanded skills. The assessment covered all project operational areas and was discussed with a broad range of stakeholders.

The findings of the labour market assessment revealed that most of the youth in the project area lack the skillsets required by the jobs market.

Against this backdrop, and with the objective of enhancing the employability and life skills of the female and male youth in the project areas, the project team in collaboration with local government authorities and TVET centres trained 165 youth (101 females) [AVSI=50, NRC=75, WV=40] on different TVET courses for three months period. The training courses were selected based on the needs and interests of the youth and considering the existing capacity of the TVET institutions in the project area. Criteria used for selection of the TVET trainees included: people aged between 18-35 years, youth with minor disabilities to be given priority, willingness to participate and complete a three-month long course, being a member of S4T group (most vulnerable women), youth association including youth farmers.

The TVET courses were designed in a way that it balanced theoretical and practical aspects so that youth acquired adequate knowledge and skills that prepare them to start their own businesses (self-employment) or access wage employment, after graduation.

During the reporting period, all 165 trainees successfully completed the three months long course and graduated. During the graduation ceremony, State and County level government authorities, TVET centre representatives, graduate students, their families and parents, and other invited guests attended the ceremony. At the time of graduation, all graduates received full set of start-

up kits to help them kickstart their own businesses. Please see below links for a story from the graduates:

<https://www.wvi.org/stories/south-sudan/vocational-education-enhances-income-opportunities-south-sudans-youth>

<https://storyhub.wvi.org/Share/2gvau653846c5261jg60083f448cn7o5>

Congratulating the students, the Warrap State Minister of Education Hon. Ustaz Ater Kuei Thiep says, “World Vision is not new in Gogrial East, they first came for emergency response in 1998, which we appreciated at the time but now I am prouder because it’s not relief anymore but skills and knowledge which will remain with the people should it leave today.”

Ustaz Ater adds, “The syndrome of dependency must change and that’s only possible if the people are equipped with knowledge, for that reason, I appreciate World Vision for great work done but also urge them to train more youth to alleviate hunger in Warrap state as well as the Country.”

The Lakes State, State Minister of Labor, Public Service and Human Resource Development, Debora Akech, urged “the graduates to put skills acquired into practical use. Appreciated FORESITE project for its commitment in delivering livelihoods skills to most vulnerable youth. We expect more training to be done targeting more youth because it is very vital to changing lives”, Akech said.

Student representatives from Cueibet County reflected that “We appreciate the skills given to us by the project with funding support from EU. We promise to put the acquired skills into use to support ourselves and the community”, Gabriel Gum Magar said.

Representing the students in Gogrial East County, Andrea Mangong 27years old says, “We all looked forward to this day and finally we are here excited and over the moon. Attending the training is not enough but putting the knowledge gained to use is important.”. Andrea adds, “I urge us to take up the challenge and use the start-up kits provided to us by the project as a tool to bring change to our families as well as the community.”

Table 12: TVET courses by implementing partners

S.N.	Trades	AVSI				NRC				World Vision		
		F	M	Total		F	M	Total		F	M	Total
1	Bakery					51	4	55		13	3	16
2	Masonry					1	9	10				
3	Tailoring	4	4	8		8	2	10		8	16	24
4	Catering	16	0	16								
5	Carpentry	0	18	18								
6	Mechanic and Iron works	0	8	8								
	TOTAL	20	30	50		60	15	75		21	19	40

The trainings were facilitated by experienced TVET mobile trainers. To bring the training closer to the place where rural youth residing, the project signed MOU between TVET centres and local

county authorities and selected 6 mobile trainers to be stationed in each county until the completion of the course. The mobile trainer's arrangement was not only a better value for money for the project (reduced logistical costs), but also ensured 100% participation of youth throughout the training due to the proximity of the service.

During the reporting period, all 165 trainees successfully completed the three months long training and officially graduated. State and County level government authorities, TVET centres representatives, family members and other invited guests attended the graduation ceremony.

Output indicator 3.2.5. Number of TVET graduates supported to start businesses/employment (through start-up kits or link to employer)

During the reporting period 165 TVET graduates were supported with start-up kits to initiate business/self-employment from a baseline value of 0 against a project life target of 160. Hence, 103% of this indicator has been achieved.

Following completion of the vocational training, the project provided a complete set of start-up kits to 165 graduated youth in order to help their transition to meaningful employment, livelihoods, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Table 13: Start-up kits provided to the youth:

Trades	Assorted start-up kits provided per individual
Tailoring	Material cloth; drafting paper, pencils, tape measure, scissor, box chalk, thread rolls, sewing machine, plastic chair, buttons
Bakery	Oven, Grinder for baking, pan for frying, sugar (50kg), oil (5lit), dry yeast, tin of milk, baking powder
Catering	cooking saucepans, scoops, plates, cutlery, knife, cup, sieve, kettle, glass tray, jug, bowl, thermos, jerrican, spoon, baking tray, baking oven, bucket frying pan and local saucepan
Masonry	Metallic Trowel; Spirit level (hard plastic stabile 600 mm size); Spade; Wheelbarrow; Measuring tape; Gumboots etc..
Mechanic and iron works	Overall; Compressor; Air gauge; Wrecking bar; Plyer; Wrecking bar; Screwdriver; Safety shoes; Hammer; Wheel spanner; Tube valve spanner; Locking plyer; Adjustable spanner; Eyeglass; Electrode; Hallow; Grinding disc; Cutting disc; Hand saw; Welder; Sheng dong generators etc...
Carpentry	Overalls; Ripping bar; Gloves; Carpentry hammer; Spokeshave; Spirit level; Auger drill beats; Nails 3 inches; Timbers-12*1; 10*1; 4*2; 3*2; Wood glue; Adjustable spanner big size 14' & 15'; Chisel; Hand drill; Square; Eyeglasses, safety shoes.

2.3 Log frame matrix updated

Please see the updated log frame matrix in Annex 1. The log frame captured progress of indicators at output and outcome levels.

2.4 Activity Matrix

Please see Annex 2 for Target (DIP) Vs actual by Implementing Partners and beneficiary matrix.

3. Beneficiaries/affiliated entities, trainees and other cooperation

3.1 Beneficiaries/affiliated entities and other cooperation

To deliver the project objectives in a quality and collaborative manner, the project consortium members set up a strong partnership, supported by the three levels of the Project Management Structure which helps to strategically guide the project implementation in an efficient and effective manner.

The project was governed by an in-country Steering Committee (SC) and chaired by the Operations Director (WVI-SS), with the participation of the Project Director, Head of Programs from AVSI and NRC. EU delegate and a representative from the National Government (Ministry of Agriculture Undersecretary) were also represented in the SC meetings. SC meetings happened every six months.

The Project Management Unit (PMU) was led by a Project Director (WVI-SS), and consists of Project Managers (AVSI, NRC and WVI-SS), Monitoring and Evaluation Manager (WVI-SS) and Finance Manager (WVI-SS). These roles were responsible for implementing strategic guidance provided by the SC, and for the coordination of the Project Management Teams (PMTs). The PMU meeting was conducted every two months.

Technical Specialists drawn from each organization was responsible to lead separate Technical Working Groups (TWGs). In total, three TWGs were set up under the project, and led by each implementing partner. TWG meeting happened on a monthly basis. Please see the details below in table 14:

Table 14: project management structure

S.N	Platform	Lead Agency	Member
1	TWG on Peace Building	AVSI Program Manager	WVI-SS Business and Market Development Specialist NRC Project officer
2	TWG on TVET and ICLA	Team Leader (ICLA)	WVI-SS Business and Market Development Specialist AVSI Program Manager
		Education Specialist (TVET)	
3	TWG on Agronomy and FMNR	WVI-SS Project Officer, Agronomist	NRC Project Officer, Agronomist AVSI Agronomist

The regular meetings enabled the project team not only to regularly check on the progress of the project activities but also to timely address any challenges encountered in the course of the project implementation. Further, conducting these platforms in a consistent manner contributed to smooth communication between the project implementing partners, allowed partners to share knowledge, experiences and lessons learned, and ensured robust management of the consortium.

WVA Country Impact Manager, Senior Advisor for Food Security and Resilience, Senior Advisor for Inclusive Market Systems Development and Monitoring and Evaluation Team provided required technical support to the project remotely and in person during their visits to South Sudan.

3.2 Coordination with the State Authorities

The project ensured the GoSS engagement at all levels of the project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Accordingly, pertinent local government actors (State and County level agricultural offices, Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare, Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports and Ministry of Cooperative and Rural Development) were actively consulted and involved in various stages of the project implementation period. Particularly County, Payam and Boma level government authorities constantly engaged and supported the project implementation in many ways including community mobilization and joint monitoring visits to different project sites.

Additionally, to share project experiences and to learn from other development and humanitarian actors operating in the area, the project team regularly participated in zonal-level Food Security Cluster Meetings. The project team also established a good working relationship with Wau Catholic Agricultural University for crop adaptive trials site-related activities, and with the Department of Early Warning Systems from the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MHADM) in Juba for an early warning early action-related activity.

3.3 Relationship with Contractors

During the inception phase, the project entered into an agreement with different consultants in order to carry out various project-related studies and assessments. These include: 1) the baseline survey, 2) the gender assessment, 3) the market systems and integrated value chain assessment, 4) the environmental safeguarding and climate risk assessment, 4) the mid-term evaluation (MTE), 5) annual expenditure verification audits, and 6) the Final Evaluation. All these assessments were completed successfully and the TORs for all the assessments were reviewed and approved by the EU.

Final beneficiaries and target groups

The consortium members in collaboration with the pertinent local government actors carried out the state level project start up workshops. The workshops provided a great opportunity to connect the project with the local actors and community representatives, discussed what the project could bring to the community and identified opportunities for layering and complementarity. It also covered the importance of coordination among the partners and the government, as well as the involvement of the key project stakeholders including target beneficiaries in all stages of the project implementation cycle.

The project implementation plan was prepared in consultation with the community and target groups. During the reporting period, the project in collaboration with the concerned partners established and strengthened multiple community level groups (PDCs, S4T groups, Mother Gardens, Farmer Groups, youth-led peace clubs) and closely worked with its final beneficiaries and target groups for joint planning, implementation, monitoring and compliance feedback. The entire community in which this project was implemented was expected to indirectly benefit from its results, e.g through the peace building initiatives, promotion of gender rights, natural resource management including Early Warning and Early Action related interventions.

The project also established Boma Development Committees that served as a bridge between the project and the community. The local level County, Payam and Boma government

counterparts and beneficiaries proactively involved in all stages of the project cycle from joint planning to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Local traders, seed companies (private sector representatives) were considered in the project as target groups.

Moreover, the project established a community feedback mechanism in each operational county involving Boma Development Committees as the key channel for the beneficiaries and communities to provide their feedback. Accordingly, during the reporting period 23 lockable wooden suggestion boxes were placed on visible and safe community locations. 11 suggestion boxes for WV; 5 for NRC and 7 for AVSI. Beneficiaries dropped their written complaints in these boxes. For those who can't write and read or use the suggestion box, community meetings and help desks (including BDCs) were used as a platform to receive complaints from beneficiaries.

Some of the feedback received from the community included: 1) the project performed well, but needs to cover additional Payams and counties to reach more people, 2) Request for more ox-ploughs through cost sharing.

The entire community in which this project was implemented indirectly benefited from the project results, e.g. through establishment of agro-dealers, the peace building process, promotion of women and gender rights, natural resource management activities including Early Warning and Early Action related interventions.

To raise awareness of partners and project beneficiaries about the child and adult safeguarding, the project team organized different awareness sessions. The sessions primarily focused on various forms of child and adult abuse and or harassments and the mechanisms to prevent it from happening. The role and responsibilities of duty holders and duty bearers, referral mechanisms, accountability and sexual or other unlawful harassments were some of the topics discussed during the sessions.

Furthermore, the local level State and County Government offices were actively involved during the provision of different trainings to community members and joint monitoring visits.

Juba level Ministerial offices such as Director for research and development [support crop adaptive trial sites], Head of Department of Early Warning Systems from Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MHADM) [to support Early warning early action interventions], and Ministry of Agriculture Undersecretary [representative for the project Steering Committee meetings] were also some of the key actors/stakeholders that the project worked with.

At the end of each implementation year, the project conducted annual stakeholder review meetings in which key government partners and community level representatives participated. Project progress, challenges, lessons learned and development of work plan (DIP) for the year ahead were key topics covered and discussed during the annual review meetings.

Other third parties involved

During the reporting period, the project established good working relationship with different private sector actors such as seed companies (Pro--Seed Company Ltd) and the four agro-input dealers. The collaboration between the project and the private sectors enabled to improve access to agricultural technologies, facilitate input-output market linkages and extension services for the benefit of smallholder farmers in the project implementation area.

3.4 Synergies developed with other actions

The Implementing Partners (IP) regularly attended the humanitarian coordination (Chaired by UNOCHA) and the Food Security and Livelihoods partners' meeting (Chaired by FAO) at the State levels. These meetings were conducted at State levels and primarily aimed at sharing key updates and facilitate potential linkage and synergies among different development partners.

Moreover, during the reporting period the EU-TAs organized a couple of learning events and invited all EU financed partners to share their experiences on different topics. The topics include: 1) Community Interventions Information System (CIIS), 2) projects sustainability approach, and 3) S4T groups health performance survey results. The learning events were very useful and provided an opportunity to the FORESITE project to share its best practices and also learn from other partners. The sessions were also helpful in enhancing coordination and building synergies among other EU-funded projects/actions.

Moreover, the EU TAs organized Quarterly Review Meetings (QRM) in which all EU-funded partners participated. All EU funded partners participated at the QRM meeting and provided updates on their respective projects and discussed the contribution of their projects to the South Sudan Food System.

As part of experience sharing, the FORESITE project initiatives (agro-input dealer and producer group activities), in Jur River County, were visited by the EU delegation, EU TAs and Other EU-funded partners such as FAO and WFP.

3.5 Complementarity and layering with previous EU grants

Cueibet County (AVSI Operational Areas)

During the reporting period, there was no other active EU-funded food security project implemented in Cueibet County. However, the FORESITE project tried to build on the SORUDEV, the past EU-funded project aimed at contributing to increased food security, reduced vulnerability and enhanced livelihood of rural households in South Sudan. The project was implemented by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) between 2014 to 2017 in Lakes State Counties including Cueibet. To build on the previous EU-funded intervention in the area, FORESITE project selected the same bomas that were targeted by the NPA project earlier.

Gogrial East and Twic Counties (WV Operational areas)

World Vision implemented the EU Food Security Thematic Programme (TFSP) project in Gogrial East and Twic Counties between 2014 to 2017. Hence, when selecting the FORESITE project intervention villages, the project team in discussion with the Local Government counterparts intentionally targeted those areas/villages previously supported through the previous EU-funded interventions. For ease of access and complementarity, the FORESITE target villages were selected near to the EU constructed feeder roads.

Furthermore, VSF-G was implementing the EU-funded food security project in Gogrial East. WV and VSF-G established good coordination and discussed potential areas of collaboration to share experience and learn from one another.

Jur River County and Twic Counties (NRC Operational areas)

The FORESITE project activities in Jur River and Twic counties were complementing the following EU funded projects implemented in both Counties. In Jur River Hope Agency for Relief and

Development (**HARD**) was implementing Productivity Enhancement and Resilience Strengthening (PERS) project, while **FAO** and **UNIDO** (Jur River and Twic) were implementing Food Security Projects. In the past Vocational Training Skill Development (**VOSDO**) implemented the EU Food Security Project in Jur River County but it already phased out. The FORESITE project intentionally targeted project areas along the United Nations Office for Project Services (**UNOPS**) constructed roads in both Jur River and Twic Counties. Additionally, NRC also implemented SORUDEV project between May 2014 to March 2017 in Twic County.

Therefore, the FORESITE operational areas in Jur River and Twic Counties were selected in consideration of the previous EU investments to maximize synergy and achieve complementarity and layering.

In terms of coordination, NRC regularly attended the monthly food security cluster meetings chaired by the FAO.

In summary, with the intention of maximizing projects' complementarity and building on the previous EU investments, the FORESITE project target villages were selected in consideration of the following criteria: access, areas previously supported through the EU-funded projects, and areas close to the EU-constructed feeder roads.

Table 15: complementarity with other EU grants:

S.N.	FORESITE	Synergy with other EU grants		
		Organization	Active (Present)	Phased out
1	NRC	HARD	X	
		UNIDO		X
		FAO	X	
		VOSDO	X	
		UNOPS	X	
		ACTED	X	
2	WV	VSF-G		X
3	AVSI	NPA		X

4. Visibility

In line with the project Communication and Visibility plan, the FORESITE Implementing Partners ensured that the project beneficiaries and key stakeholders were well informed about the project either verbally or visually (using banners/posters or signposts). The project acknowledged that the European Union generously funded the FORESITE project and the partner organizations (AVSI, NRC and WV) as implementers during different meetings and occasions with the key stakeholders such as the local community and the GoSS. The Implementing Partners also ensured that the EU logo was displayed on the banners used for various project events, as well as on the key assets procured by this project including laptops, motorbikes, tables and project vehicles.

Status of the project visibility action plan

As per the Communication and Visibility plan the following activities were implemented during the reporting period:

- To increase the visibility of the project, different forms of communication were produced acknowledging the European Union as the donor and World Vision, NRC and AVSI as the project implementation partners. The donor and partner logos were displayed at varied trainings, and signposts were fixed in the project activity areas, such as at the crop adaptive trial sites, farmer groups' sites, agro-input dealers, mother gardens, S4Ts TVET centres and others;
- A brochure with key details about the project was developed and shared with the partners to promote awareness of the key stakeholders about the project activities.
- To share successful achievements of the project with the public, around 17 short human stories (success stories) developed and shared with the donor and also posted on social media (Twitter, Facebook), please see table 16 below;
- A short project profile video infographic (see the links below) was also produced and posted on the WV website and on social media.
<https://twitter.com/WVSouthSudan/status/1389492429787697153?s=09>
<https://www.wvi.org/stories/south-sudan/vocational-education-enhances-income-opportunities-south-sudans-youth>
<https://twitter.com/WVSouthSudan/status/1436218871372029952>
- The project was visited twice by the EU delegation representatives including the EU Ambassador for South Sudan. Please see below links:
<http://europa.eu/!7GymyN>
https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/south-sudan/ambassador-bader-wbgs-hails-smallholder-farmers_en?s=121
- The target communities and the key project stakeholders actively participated in the project cycle. Positive feedback about the project was received during various trainings, annual community review meetings and during joint monitoring visits with the BDCs.
- Periodical joint monitoring of the project activities was conducted with the County and State level government experts to inform the stakeholders about the progress of the project. Furthermore, key project stakeholders and community annual review and planning meetings were conducted every year in all operational areas. The objective of the review meetings was primarily to reflect on the overall progress of the project and develop the work plan for the year ahead.
- The implementing partners used various visibility materials when implementing the project activities. This included the use of the banners displaying the EU and partner logos at the

project trainings, the use of the signboards for adaptive trial sites, placing the EU logo on different equipment purchased by the project.

As part of the FORESITE's legacy plan, FORESITE project documented and preserved important results, lessons learned, success stories, case studies, evaluations and impact studies, in reports, publications, posters, newsletters, leaflets, videos, etc.

All legacy materials will continue to be kept on the WVISS websites. The major FORESITE project communication products are listed in the table below.

Table 16: FORESITE Communication products

Type of product	Title	Language	Web link/ Date published
Success Story	Green Assets Creation in South Sudan	English	
Success Story	The culture of savings helps transform the lives of South Sudan's families	English	
Success Story	Impact of livelihoods diversifications on household income- A case study of FORESITE women beneficiary in Jur River County.	English	
Success Story	Vegetable gardening turns Akuac Aguer's life around	English	
Success Story	The role of youth in peacebuilding- a success story	English	
Success Story	A market-based approach to improved agricultural inputs sector A case study of an agro-input dealer and farmer group in Marial Baai, Jur River County	English	
Success Story	Gelweng Youth Leader Denounces Cattle Raiding & Joins Peacebuilding Initiative	English	
Success Story	Hunger must go through cultivation: A story of Rebecca Achol in Cueibet County	English	
Success Story	Resilience Building- Use of Ox-plough and Its Impact on Enhancing Agricultural Production	English	
Success Story	Community Peacemakers: A story of Turalei Peacebuilding Committee, Twic County.	English	
Success Story	Saving for Transformation for Strengthening Essential Livelihoods Skills for Vulnerable Communities	English	
Success Story	Vocational education enhances income opportunities for South Sudan's youth	English	
Success Story	Diversifying income through small business- a story of S4T member in Langdit Boma, FORESITE Project	English	
Success Story	Youth groups in South Sudan promote peacebuilding toward a resilient and hunger-free future	English	

Success Story	Vegetable gardening helps South Sudanese mothers cope with hunger and the effects of the floods	English	
Success Story	Sports Activities Promote Peace among Youths in Western Bahr El Ghazal State	English	
Success Story	Fighting hunger with climate-smart farming methods in South Sudan	English	
Video Clip	Santino's Story https://storyhub.wvi.org/Share/2gvau653846c5261jg60083f448cn7o5	English	
Video Clip	Amiir Akot's Story https://storyhub.wvi.org/Share/6ki6sk0nr3ceke0fwdc0q0p1s733pg03	English	
Video clip (Infographic)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=070yGYEnjao	English	
Twitter	https://twitter.com/WVSouthSudan/status/1389492429787697153?s=09	English	
Twitter	http://europa.eu/!7GymyN	English	
Twitter	https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/south-sudan/ambassador-bader-wbgs-hails-smallholder-farmers_en?s=121	English	
Report	BASELINE SURVEY REPORT IN LAKES, WESTERN BAHR EL GHAZAL (WBEG) AND WARRAP STATES	English	
Report	GENDER ANALYSIS REPORT IN LAKES, WESTERN BAHR EL GHAZAL (WBEG) AND WARRAP STATES	English	
Report	INTEGRATED MARKET SYSTEMS & LOCAL VALUE CHAIN ASSESSMENT IN LAKES, WESTERN BAHR EL GHAZAL (WBEG) AND WARRAP STATES	English	
Report	ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDING & CLIMATE RISK ASSESSMENT IN LAKES, WESTERN BAHR EL GHAZAL (WBEG) AND WARRAP STATES	English	
Report	LABOUR MARKET AND TVET ASSESSMENT IN LAKES, WESTERN BAHR EL GHAZAL (WBEG) AND WARRAP STATES	English	
Report	MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT	English	
Report	FINAL EVALUATION REPORT	English	

5. Challenges

Key challenges encountered during project implementation are described below:

i) COVID-19:

COVID-19 poses substantial health risks to the project staff, partners and the communities in which the FORESITE project was implemented. In accordance with the directives from the GoRSS as well as the partners' COVID-19 response plans, the project team developed a business continuity plan to incorporate the preparedness activities within the project to prevent the spread of the virus and integrate COVID-19 response into the project implementation. While

most of the activities could continue without interruption, the pandemic disrupted some project initiatives, for instance Cash for Work, some trainings, assessments, and community meetings.

Mitigation: Business Continuity Plan was developed and appropriate safety and precautionary measures were taken to ensure safety and wellbeing of the project staff, partners and community members. Protective equipment was provided to project staff and project participants as required. Some activities (e.g. cash for work) had to be postponed in order to prevent spreading of the virus. Some of the project assessment requiring an international consultant travelling to the country were conducted remotely (e.g. Gender Analysis) or delayed until the international travel was possible. Moreover, when the project team travels to the field, it was accompanied by the Government Health Office representative to raise awareness of the community about the pandemic.

ii) Security:

On February 21, 2020 on the road from Tonj to Cueibet counties, the AVSI project vehicle was attacked by a road ambush when returning to their project areas after attending a gender training in Wau. As a result, two staff were seriously injured. The incident did not have significant impact on the project, and the injured staff returned to work shortly after receiving medical treatment. Following this incident, AVSI updated some of its security procedures to help prevent similar incidents in the future.

Mitigation measures: AVSI revised its security protocol and the decision about any travels outside of the project area to be informed based on the security assessment/guideline.

Generally, during the reporting period, the security situation in all of the project areas remained calm and stable. However, there were few incidents of political insecurity and tension in some parts of Jur River County (Udici and, Kangi Bomas) which to some extent restricted project staff movements for nearly a week. Incidents of cattle raiding, and armed clashes were also reported in some parts of Twic County bordering Unity State.

iii) Environmental shocks:

During the reporting period, heavy floods affected project implementation in some parts of project areas resulting in crop damage and loss of properties. Fall armyworm also caused significant damage to late-planted crops in many areas.

Mitigation measures: as a coping mechanism, smallholder farmers moved to higher grounds where crops can't get damaged. Through WFP funded project, NRC engaged farmers in cash for asset work to construct flood control dikes in areas prone to flooding in Twic County. In all project implementation areas farmers are advised not to cultivate in areas that are vulnerable to flooding every year. Farmers were also advised to plant flood tolerant varieties- such as rice.

iv) Macroeconomic environment:

Macroeconomic instability resulted to soaring prices of foods and some non-food items. For example, the price of fuel has been doubled. This has its own impact particularly for very poor households who primarily rely on market to purchase supplies for their consumption.

During the reporting period, the overall macroeconomic situation in South Sudan is not stable for most parts of the year. Low export earnings, low oil price, and import dependency has continued to fuel hyperinflation, which in turn skyrocketed the price of food and non-food items in the market. In this kind of situation, smallholder producers are the ones affected most since majority of them rely on market for their basic needs and their purchasing power has significantly declined.

Unstable economic situation is not an incentive to the local traders since they were not able to expand their businesses and increase supply of goods and services to the market. The impact of this to the FORESITE project was as follows: 1) some members of saving groups were not able to expand their businesses due to commodity inflation; 2) some S4T members ended up borrowing loans from the group to supplement household expenditures instead of investing in small business. In response to this, farmers and S4T members were advised to invest their money in valuable items that can generate income rather than keeping the money in the box. In the meantime, the cash for asset transfer helped to increase the purchasing power of most beneficiaries, which was an important strategy to cope with economic shocks.

6. Annexes

Annex 1: Project Log frame Update

Annex 2: Plan versus Actual (DIP) and Beneficiary tracking matrix (Consolidated and by IPs)

Annex 3: Impact brief paper (success stories)

Annex 4: Transfer of Assets

Name of the contact person for the action:

Juliet Hanafie, WVA Country Impact Manager

Signature:



Location: **Melbourne, Australia**