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# SKIPI



## **Skills for Peace and Income (SKIPI)**

Project on Multi-Skills Training and Community Service  
Facilities for Sustainable Livelihoods and Poverty  
Alleviation in Northern Uganda



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The *Skills for Peace and Income (SKIPI)* Project was financed by the Government of Japan through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS).

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## UNIDO Framework

Skills for Peace and Income (SKIPI) is a UNIDO project that has been designed to support the social and economic re-integration of veterans, former rebels and their families in the post-conflict situation of northern Uganda. SKIPI is part of the Government of Uganda's longer-term efforts to re-integrate veterans and ex-combatants into civilian life. The project started operations in April 2006 and is to last until March 2010.

The \$1.4m project budget is financed by the Japanese Government through the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) and operates in the Yumbe district in the very north-western part of Uganda, bordering Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

SKIPI is implemented by UNIDO, in partnership with the Uganda Veteran Assistance Board (UVAB) and Participatory Rural Action for Development (PRAFORD), a Yumbe-based NGO. An independent impact assessment was conducted in April 2009. The findings are the basis of this publication.



UVAB was established to carry out down sizing of the National Army, to re-integrate those affected by demobilization, and to facilitate the reconciliation and reintegration of former rebels and their dependants into a peaceful, sustainable and productive civilian life.

PRAFORD has been strongly engaged in the regional peace process since 2002 and co-operates with different international development organizations. With UNIDO, its capacity for vocational trainings in Yumbe was significantly strengthened.

## Civil War in the Region

The West Nile region has experienced more than two decades of serious armed conflict between the government and rebel groups, with the devastating consequences on the social fabric, economic situation and infrastructure conditions. Four main insurgent groups have operated in West Nile – the Former Uganda National Army (FUNA), the first Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF), the UNRF II, and the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF). From their bases in the Sudan and Zaire/Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), most of the conflict has been played out within the West Nile region, seriously compromising its stability.

Although the level of violence perpetrated by the different rebel groups never reached the same intensity and media attention as the more infamous Lords Resistance Army (LRA) in the adjacent districts of northern Uganda, the consequent impact on the civilian population has still been profound. Subsequently, the war led to increased poverty, the loss of income opportunities and a lack of prospects for the youth.



The period of armed rebellion has all but ended with the signing of a negotiated peace agreement between the most recent rebel group, the UNRF II and the Government in late 2002. Although the event went virtually unnoticed by the rest of the world, it was a significant moment in the resolution of conflicts that have dominated Uganda's recent history. Various ethnic groups live in the area, including the Lugbara, Aringa, Alur, Madi, Kakwa, Lendu and the Kebu.

## Poverty & UNIDO approach

As is often the case in post-conflict situations, the official database on Yumbe district, where the project's activities are centred, is unfortunately extremely poor. However, there is no doubt that the district ranks among the poorest and most disadvantaged of the country. During the long conflict, most people in the area fled to neighbouring countries and regions. Only after the current government came to power in 1986, did people start to slowly return, but security problems persisted until the current peace agreement was reached in 2002.

Latest population numbers give a figure of 250,000 (2002), but estimations have reached 400,000 in 2009. No information is available on core economic indicators, but qualitative assessments by key resource persons on the over-all economic development over the last few years point to stagnation if not negative growth. At present, it is assumed that almost 95% of the population practice subsistence agriculture, with only a few cash crops, foremost tobacco, reaching a certain importance.

Market access is a problem due to distances and the largely dilapidated road infrastructure. Also, neither the district centre nor any other settlement is served by the electricity grid. It is estimated that in rural areas of Yumbe at most 20% of families have secure livelihoods, while the remaining 80% – including most of the around 3,500 ex-combatants – face serious problems with securing food, accessing health services and providing for children's education. The situation is slightly better in Yumbe town. The district thus has been, and remains to be, a post-conflict area with all related problems, where outside support is well justified.

Besides insecurity, other broader social, political and economic factors contribute to poverty in Northern Uganda. This is where UNIDO aims to have an impact. The key challenges in the North relate to the peculiarities present in this region. They also include the large influx of internally displaced persons and refugees, high levels of poverty, HIV/AIDS threat linked to migrations, and human rights challenges.

The Government of Uganda places utmost importance on guaranteeing peace and hence has undertaken numerous initiatives geared towards ending armed conflict and attaining peace in the North. They include the Amnesty process, diplomacy and peace negotiations, disarmament, involvement of civil society and targeted military operations.

Despite many external humanitarian projects in the region, sustainable development outcomes are difficult to achieve. Strategies for post-conflict reconstruction must be tailored to the circumstances of the respective regional situation. The development approach in this region should, from UNIDO's perspective, move from being largely of an emergency nature with high dependency on relief to increasingly becoming of a self-sustaining nature, enabling local communities to make a proper living and to be part of productive processes again.

Candiru Jane is of 25 years living in Ambelecú village. She had never been to school because her father did not want to educate his daughters. She was married at the age of 15 to an ex-combatant as his third wife and is a mother of four children. Her husband had not enough income to cater for all 15 children and three wives. She was a housewife who was only to do domestic chores and they could hardly afford to have two meals a day. Her children were miserably malnourished and sick.



*“I thank SKIPI for training me and hope that many more people will be trained by UNIDO. One thing that makes me proud is that I am now able to attract my husband’s respect”.*

C. Jane

She looked at SKIPI as her only hope to change this life. She was supported by her husband and lucky enough to be among the people who were trained as tailors. After completing the training and receiving a sewing machine, she started sewing all sorts of clothes at Kulikulinga Trading Center. She also joined a saving and credit group being operated in her village. Her average weekly income is now sufficient for herself and her children. Training on Functional Adult Literacy has changed her attitude about life ever since. It also helped her discover the importance of education, as she is sending all her children to school now.

## Objectives & Outputs

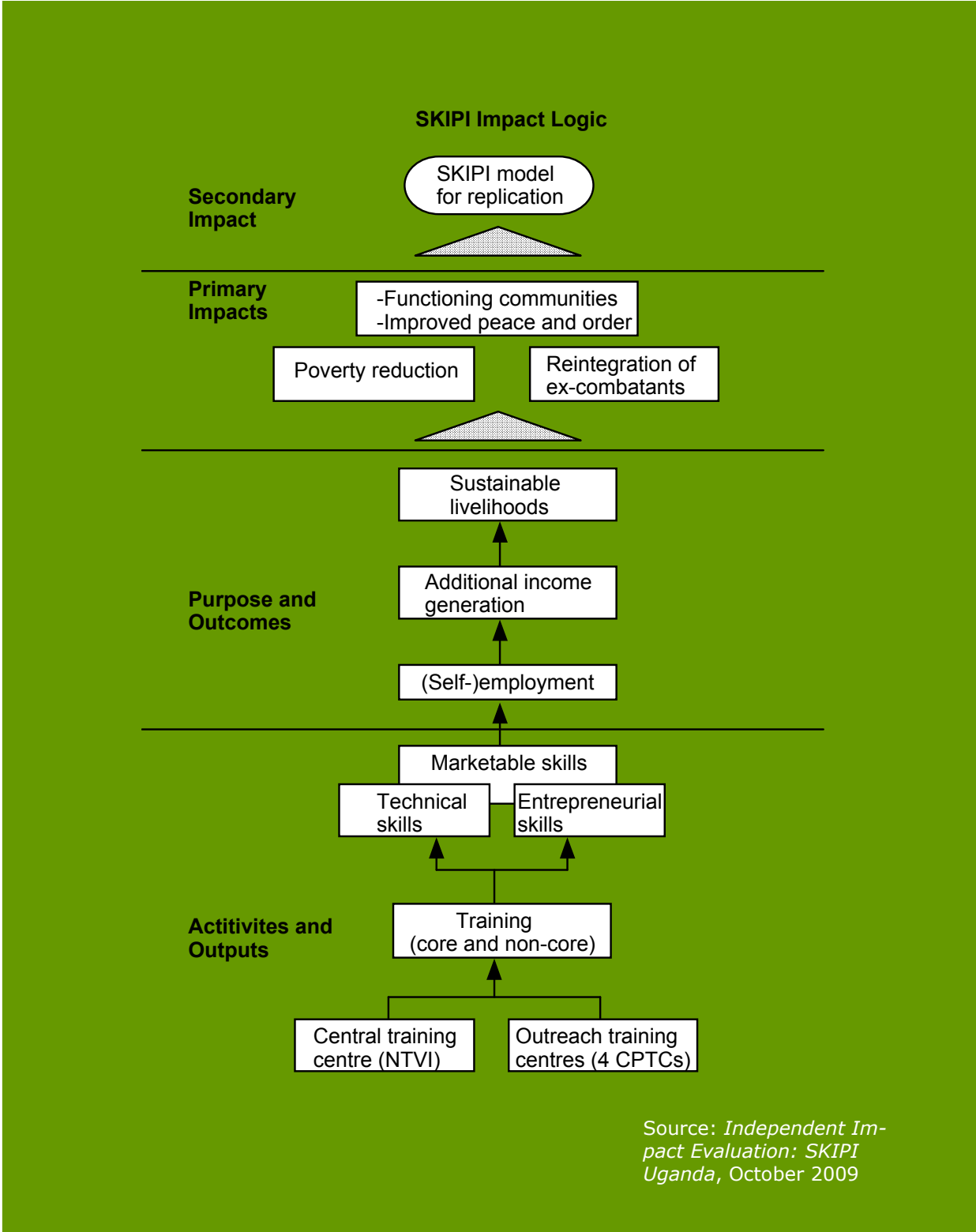
The overall objective of SKIPI is to contribute to the Government of Uganda's efforts aimed at the social and economic reintegration of Ugandan military veterans, former rebels and their families into a productive civilian life and the eradication of poverty in particularly rural farming communities. These challenging tasks are going well beyond the actual activity of mere demobilization. UNIDO's strategy therefore is built on four pillars:

- Strong community approach to include not only veterans, but to enable their families, neighbours and wider community to participate and benefit from the project,
- Counselling of veterans and former rebels to build civil skills,
- Provision of economically viable multi-skills to the target group through training modules on entrepreneurial skills development to eventually start micro-enterprises like repair and maintenance work shops, and
- Creation of facilities to conduct trainings and support self employment through technical services.





# Impact Logic



## Project Approach

To give an insight on UNIDO's SKIPI scheme, some steps of the implementation process should be highlighted. Several distinctively important parts made this project work, expectedly resulting in significant impact.



### **Participation of Veteran Committees and local communities in project planning and implementation:**

- Participatory community workshops started in October 2006, focusing on life skills and conflict management to foster social re-integration. More than 3,000 beneficiaries participated.
- Around 50 members of the Community Productivity and Training Centers (CPTC's) management committee and 20 link workers were trained to ensure the sustainability of the project.
- Additional workshops were conducted in the West Nile region with other re-integration organizations; Regional workshops were conducted in December 2006 and in February 2009, in co-operation with local stakeholders and NGOs.

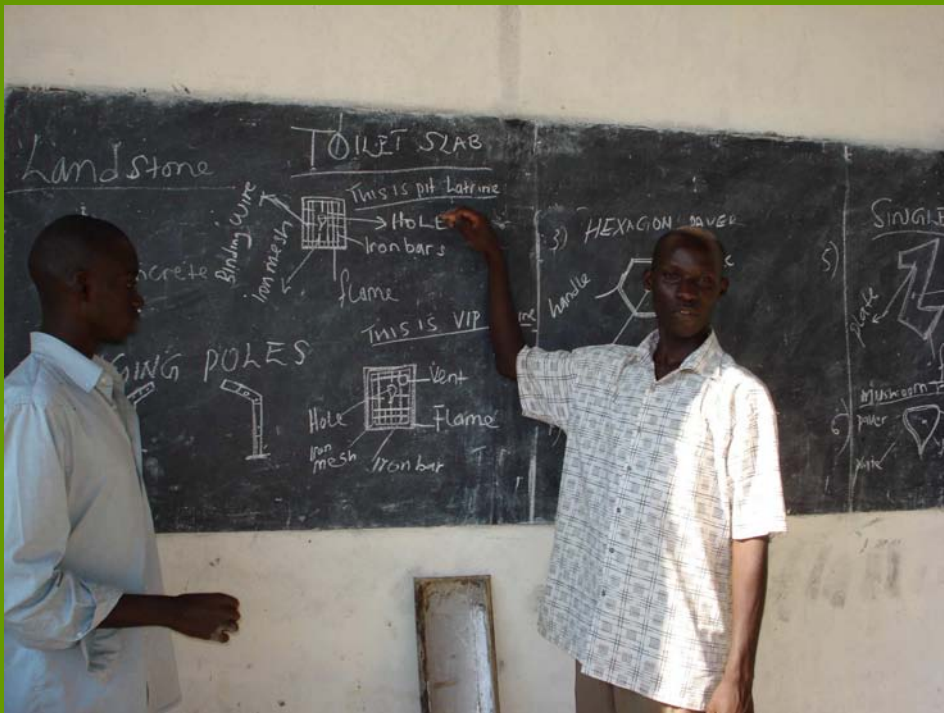
### **Creation of a central training center in PRAFORD and community training centers :**

- An in-depth skills training needs assessment was conducted, with beneficiaries using participatory appraisal tools. The marketability of skills profiles for self- and salaried employment in the region was assessed.
- Long-term training and workshop staff for the Yumbe training center were hired and trained in Yumbe and Kampala to ensure the sustainability of SKIPI.
- The respective curricula and manuals were developed by the trainers.
- The first group of training courses started in October 2006 for concrete block products, bee hive construction, metal products; Functional adult literacy (FAL) training was part of each core subjects.
- Advanced training was conducted for mechanics, metal works and joinery.

### **Reintegration of ex-combatants ensured through self-employment and income generation:**

- Counseling sessions particularly for veterans and former rebels were conducted, combined with courses on basic literacy and numeracy.
- Entrepreneurial support was granted to graduates with micro business start-ups.
- Tracer studies of graduates in the communities were conducted on a regular basis to enable UNIDO to measure SKIPI's impact on local livelihood.
- Plan and organize participatory community workshops to evaluate the progress (incl. final evaluation activities) and raise awareness on SKIPI relevant issues.
- SKIPI training opportunities were promoted through veteran committees, community leaders, NGO's and over the radio.

**Support to micro-business startups and community members, also in marketing and product design:**



- Markets for products deriving from product-oriented training modules were assessed and community based product development seminars conducted.
- Product exhibitions and micro-fairs in the region and eventually Kampala were organized; PRAFORD is exhibiting products through outlets at Yumbe and Arua and through radio adverts.
- Stakeholder training seminars on business management were conducted.
- Immediately after completion of training programmes, all the trainees were provided with sets of tool kits to start businesses and improve their economic situation through self employment.
- Further business plans for income generating activities by the established SKIPI structures were established.

Kassim Abdalah is from Lobenga village. He is 38 years old. He joined UNRF II and went to the bush at the age of 20. After the signing of the peace agreement, he received a lump sum and household items from the Amnesty Commission of Uganda.

This money and goods were not sufficient to support his family members over time. Since he had not attained formal education and did not have any professional skill for gaining income, life became very difficult for him.

At the age of 38, the SKIPI Project shed some light after these dark days. He applied for building training and was selected. During the training he was very happy constructing the Omba CPTC for the Project.



*"I am very lucky to have benefited from SKIPI and I am a happy man today. I also thank SKIPI for paying pocket money during the training. I used it for supporting my family while I was being trained."*

K. Abdallah

After completion of the training and receiving a tool-kit, he joined other local builders and started constructing private houses. Currently, together with some other SKIPI trained builders, he is constructing a mosque in Yumbe. His daily income is now finally enough for himself and his family.

## Results & Achievements

Three main categories of beneficiaries of SKIPI activities can be distinguished:

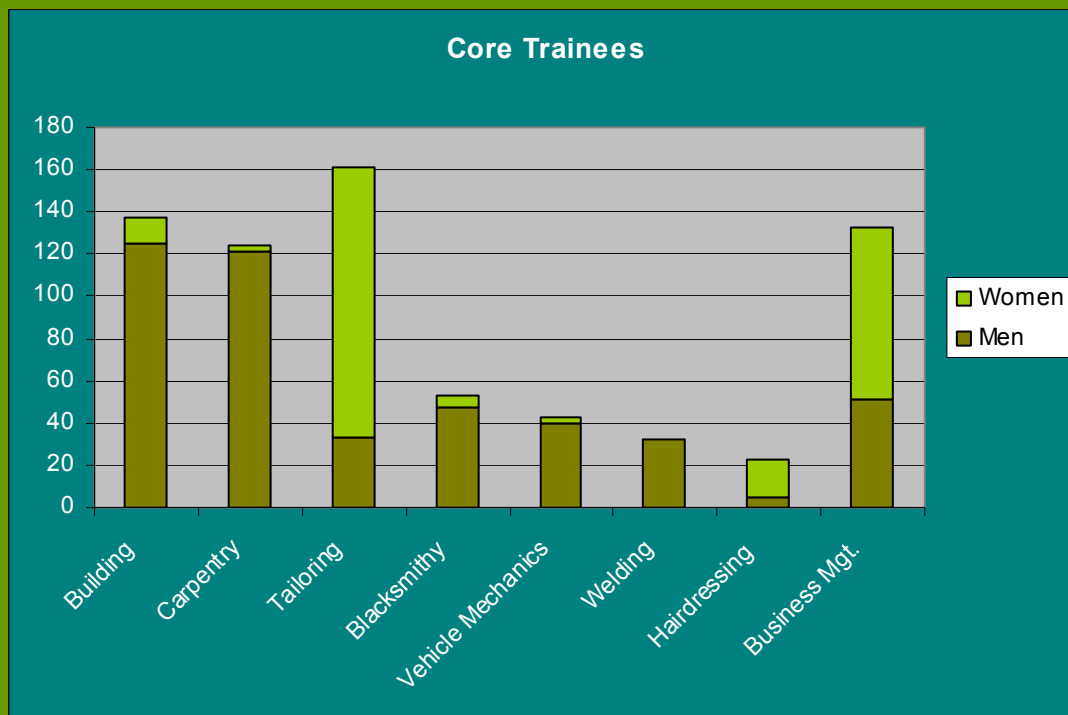
The primary clients have been selected for two types of training, the core and non-core subjects. In relation to primary clients, skill transfer was in the focus of activities. In core subject trainees received training for a new full-time profession, non-core trainees for an additional source of income. Approximately 1,100 beneficiaries received training during the project, two thirds of them in core subjects.



The secondary clients consisted of local intermediaries that were required to organise and conduct the training and to involve the communities and government representatives. Over 100 people were secondary clients during the project.

The third, and largest, group consisted of participants in workshops, village meetings and other project events. This audience allowed SKIPI to disseminate its positive message and gain wide attention and recognition. This group reached approximately 3,000 people, lifting the overall number of SKIPI beneficiaries to about 4,200 in the Yumbe district.

Approximately 650 people graduated from the core trainings, of which ~150 also attended advanced courses. With 34%, the relative share of women was quite high, given the dominance of 'male' professions due to the main focus on ex-soldiers and combatants.



It is important to note that almost all trainees attended the additional modules on Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) and Entrepreneurship as part of their multi- skills education. As 30% were combatants and another 50% combatants' family members, trainees also received intensive counselling on psychological and social issues.

Training participation was certainly made an attractive package: training – and lodging for residential courses – was free and trainees also received a small daily food allowance. After successful completion, graduates were provided with formal UNIDO/SKIPI certificates as well as a professional tool kit, to support micro-business start-ups.

Abibu Musema is 18 years old and from a village in Yumbe. His father was working in Uganda Peoples Defence Forces and deployed far from home, leaving the family in constant need and poverty. It is not even known whether Abibu's father is dead or alive. Due a lack of to school fees, he dropped out early and started helping his mother farm. He also had to work in other farms for food and very little money.



*"I thank UNIDO for what I am today. My life was very difficult before training but I am now very happy because I am able to buy whatever I like for myself and support my mother and siblings".*

A. Musema

For Abibu, UNIDO's SKIPI Project came as a savior. He was trained in carpentry and joinery at Omba center. After training and receiving a tool-kit from the project, he started his own carpentry workshop in his village.

Now he produces and sells furniture like beds, tables, chairs, office desks, benches etc. His average monthly income is nearly Sh100,000/- (\$50), which is good enough for himself and his family members. He is now able to purchase more special tools and started training three boys from his village.



## Immediate Impact

The overall impact of SKIPI has been independently evaluated focusing on five main impact categories: Employment; Income; Livelihoods; Social impact; and Gender-related impact.

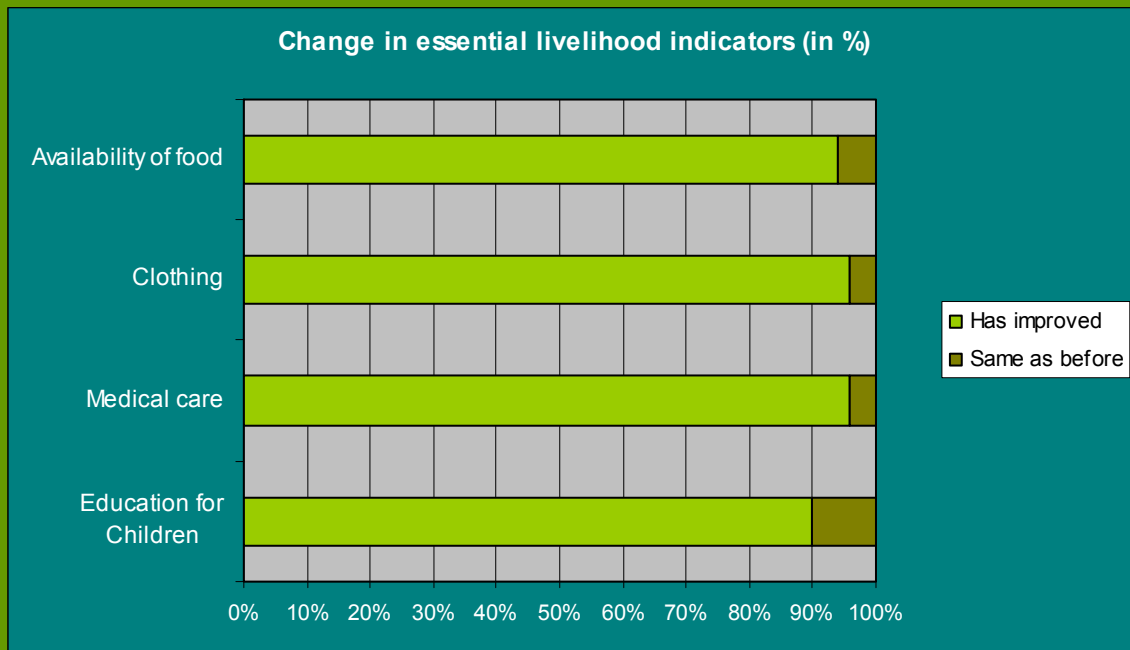
The findings of the quantitative survey and the focus group discussions show that SKIPI had a direct and very tangible impact on the people trained, their families and communities, both economically and well as socially.



The fact that more than 90% of the core trainees today practice their new skills as main profession and main source of income is a clear and undisputable success story. The former trainees have become proficient in their new jobs, are able to earn a comparatively good income and have thus been enabled to save money. Current savings range from USh 20,000 to 100,000 (or \$10 to \$50). Even such relatively small savings constitute a life belt for emergency times. Being able to save any money at all puts a family clearly above the relative poverty line as perceived in the villages.

More than two-thirds of the graduates are self-employed and successfully run their own micro-enterprises. It is evident that the entrepreneurship training has been important for these self-employed graduates. Some training groups, like welder or construction works, have even become the nuclei of new companies in the region. Most strikingly, the average income of SKIPI beneficiaries has almost tripled since the skills training.

For the SKIPI graduates, the new profession has changed their livelihood situation fundamentally, as they now are able to earn cash income through their work and purchase the basic services necessary.



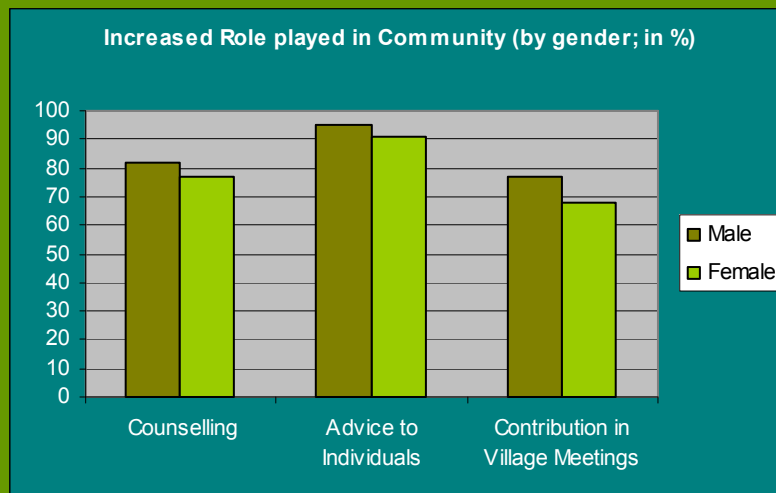
The chart confirms that the four essential livelihood indicators have all improved for the graduates and their families, with only few exceptions claiming that the situation has remained the same as before.

Equally important is the indirect social impact on the trained individuals, who have clearly gained in stature in their communities and have become important community members. Consequently, village people no longer regard acquisition of vocational skills as an activity for 'academic failures' but a sought-after privilege, due to the prospect of earn a substantial income and improve one's social standing in the community.

One third of the SKIPI graduates were women, who are now financially independent and contribute towards family needs by paying for fees, medical expenses, clothing and other requirements. Due to their new economic potential, women have assumed leadership status in their respective communities and have become a source of inspiration to others. Finally, women especially praised the Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) and Entrepreneurship training, which have given them confidence in their operations both at home and at work.



Next to improving the economic situation and livelihoods of beneficiaries, SKIPI intended also to lead to better integration and social fabric in the communities. Almost all graduates (98%) interviewed were of the opinion that their social status and standing has definitely improved after they had successfully graduated and found work, leading to a significant rise in their active community participation, for male as well as for female beneficiaries.



The overall findings confirm the impact logic of SKIPI, first and foremost for the direct beneficiaries but also for their communities. Veteran and ex-combatant trainees have been re-integrated in their villages, but also in the wider society, and the other village people have indirectly profited as the graduates contribute to a better functioning of the communities. And better functioning communities are undoubtedly an essential pre-condition for an improved peace and order situation.

## Indirect Impact

A secondary objective of SKIPI has been dissemination of skills by trainees to other people. This has indeed happened. The figures have been calculated on the basis of the sampled interviewees and the total number of trainees in each profession. Building, tailoring and business skills have been most disseminated, according to the group discussions, foremost within the family or to close acquaintances. Including those first steps of dissemination, approximately 2,100 people have gained different knowledge levels in core skills through SKIPI.



Sustainability was a main concern of the project design. The main focus was given to individual beneficiaries and the improvement of their long-term livelihoods.

A very high level of ownership with beneficiaries and authorities at all levels has been achieved. The future for the trained professionals offers plenty of new opportunities. They have learned new skills, found new jobs, can be expected to remain active in their professions and continue to earn an improved income for their families. The participants in the non-core training have been exposed to new ideas and skills that should enable them to earn at least a side income, independently from further international interventions.

On the institutional level, a strengthened local NGO, PRAFORD, and built structures have been established and are prepared for future training activities.

Maliamungu Alahai is 21 years old and from Odropi, a village in Yumbe. His uncle was a combatant in UNRFII. He dropped out of the school early when his father fell sick and could not afford to pay his school fees anymore. Income from farming was insufficient for the family's basic needs — without hope for a change.



However, he got a new spark when he heard of the SKIPI Project. He was among the first people who applied for carpentry training and was selected. After successfully completing the training programme and receiving a tool-kit from the Project in July 2007, he started his own carpentry shop at the Odropi Trading Center and now produces furniture for sale. He used his training allowance to buy timber, nails, glue, varnish and other necessary materials.

During the last six months, he established his business. His customers have been individuals, nearby schools, local offices and organizations. Now Maliamungu can save more than Sh75,000/- (\$35) a month which is enough to cater for his family's basic needs and to pay school fees for his brothers and sisters. In October 2007, he was able to join a saving and credit group called *Gumbiri Youth Carpentry Association* in his locality. The association grants small loans to their needy members with small interest. Recently he himself also started training 10 community members — at no fee.

## Lessons Learned & Potential for Replication

SKIPI has been successful and enabled 90% of its graduates to work and earn their living. The former trainees have become proficient in their professions and the economic and livelihood situation of their families has improved substantially. Poverty was reduced, certainly for the direct beneficiaries and their families. Equally important is the indirect impact of opening new and positive prospects. Local village people, which have gone through decades of hardship, experienced first hand that professional success is possible, provided the necessary skills can be acquired.



The findings of the independent evaluation of SKIPI also confirm its impact logic, first and foremost for the direct beneficiaries but also for their communities. Veteran and ex-combatant trainees have been re-integrated in their villages, but also in the wider society, and other village people have indirectly profited as the graduates contribute to a better functioning of the communities. Solid built communities are an essential pre-condition for an improved peace and rebuilding process in Yumbe.

- SKIPI can claim to have a model character for post-conflict situations, where basic skills are scarce and demand for them is correspondingly high. Potential for replication under similar circumstances is evident, within and beyond Uganda.
- SKIPI has shown that the careful selection of candidates was essential to identify trainees that are fully dedicated and committed, both during trainings as well as afterwards, when searching for employment. The initial candidates' selection process, based on need and ability, is one of the most crucial elements for project success.
- The community pre-selects the most deserving candidates who are then screened individually by the project to identify the most promising candidate from the short-listed applicants. The core advantage of this process is that it results in highly motivated and committed trainees, which in standard training programmes is often not the case.
- The focus of activities has been kept on the core business of transferring immediately applicable skills. Expanding activities in other directions should be avoided. Only hands-on, directly applicable skills should be taught in the SKIPI 'training through production' mode.
- Thorough demand analyses are required beforehand to ensure that the selected prioritised professions are as close as possible to the actual demand in the service and labour markets in the region.
- Given the high percentage of self-employed graduates, the entrepreneurship and functional adult literacy modules were an integral and important part of each training course.
- Given the assets created by SKIPI in terms of its approach, its training systems but also its training infrastructure, the path is paved for a follow-up project.

## Outlook & Potential

### **SKIPI in Northern Uganda...**

The demand for SKIPI was indeed much higher than SKIPI could supply. The concept itself inherits the potential to be spread throughout the region. Other parts of Northern Uganda could easily benefit from large scale or, as demonstrated, small projects, using the knowledge gained throughout the whole project cycle of SKIPI. A follow-up project in Yumbe itself would ensure the organisational sustainability of the existing PRAFORD structures. Future beneficiaries in the region would certainly benefit from another phase of SKIPI.

### **... and beyond!**

An adapted version of the successful SKIPI project in Yumbe would also benefit other countries. Replication of SKIPI therefore represents a viable and efficient option for countries facing similar problems as Uganda. SKIPI showed impressively that the vicious cycle of conflicts everywhere can be broken.





Printed in Austria

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