

QUIP IN ACTION



COUNTRY: UGANDA

COMMISSIONER: AGDEVCO

INVESTMENT/PROJECT: GULU AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY (GADC)

SAMPLE SIZE: 48 II + 8 FGD (2019) / 36 II + 4 FGD (2020)

YEAR OF STUDY: 2019 / 2020

AgDevCo is an **impact investor** with the mission of supporting the growth of sustainable and impactful agribusinesses in sub-Saharan Africa. The company provides more than just capital; they are long-term partners with a focus on capacity building and technical support. As part of the solution to climate change in Africa, AgDevCo's primary aim is building successful African agribusinesses that support climate resilience and deliver impact at scale.

These two QuIP studies focused on one company within AgDevCo's investment portfolio: **GADC**¹. GADC started in 2009 with a single cotton ginnery and has since expanded to renovating and restoring 3 ginneries, across 14 districts. The company buys produce directly from smallholder farmers and then processes the crops to sell them onto national and international markets. GADC has a network of field staff who provide training and extension services to the smallholder farmers selling their produce to the company.

WHY QUIP?

In 2019, the QuIP approach was used to understand whether and how AgDevCo's investments into Village, Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) impacted the smallholder farmers supplying GADC. In 2020, a separate, but related, study was conducted to focus on the gender related impact of the investment. The aim was to understand whether there was any change in empowerment outcomes for female GADC employees supporting the smallholder farmers.

"We found that the QuIP method was able to provide us with really interesting and useful insights that we have struggled to get using other research methods."

– Mollie Liesner, Senior Impact Manager at AgDevCo

¹ AgDevCo invests in GADC as part of DFID's NUTEC (Northern Uganda Transforming the Economy through Climate-Smart Agribusiness) programme.

APPROACH

In both studies, the interview data was collected by a team of local researchers fluent in the local language. The researchers worked completely independently of the commissioning project team and were not informed that the intervention was sponsored by AgDevCo, nor that it was implemented by GADC. In the second study it was harder to maintain this blindfolding since the employees all mentioned their work with GADC, but the open-ended framing of the questionnaire meant that many respondents still shared a wide range of stories of change.

In the 2019 study with smallholders, the sample was split between region and sex² to capture any differences across these groups. The 2020 study was predominantly with female employees as they were the key population of interest, but the sample was again split by region. Two focus groups were conducted with men to understand any differences in their experiences of how formal employment affected their lives and livelihoods.

The smallholder farmers were asked about changes in their farming, finances (income, spending, savings, borrowing), relationships, and wellbeing. The female employees were also asked about relationships and wellbeing, as well as other changes in empowerment, divided into the following domains:

- human capital (professional development, knowledge, skills, and confidence in the workplace)
- social capital (relationships with managers and co-workers)
- financial capital (income, spending, saving, and resilience)

FINDINGS

Almost all the smallholder farmers stated that they felt more positive about borrowing compared to 3 years ago (before the intervention). In the interviews they explained that accessing VSLA financial services (including saving, borrowing, and financial literacy training) led to an increased ability to cover household or emergency needs, increased investment in business/farming, increased financial planning and management, and improved community relationships. The farming domain presented a more mixed picture of change. Some respondents cited market demand, access to inputs, and agricultural training as factors positively influencing productivity, yield, and sales. However, there were also negative stories of change, such as flooding resulting in reduced harvests (which affected one district more than the other) and fluctuating prices decreasing income and savings. [You can read more about this study in the AgDevCo report here.](#)

In the second study, female GADC employees mostly reported positive changes across the different empowerment domains, many attributed to GADC. The research revealed some unanticipated causal pathways, such as the link between delivering training and learning from trainees, and improved self-esteem resulting from success.

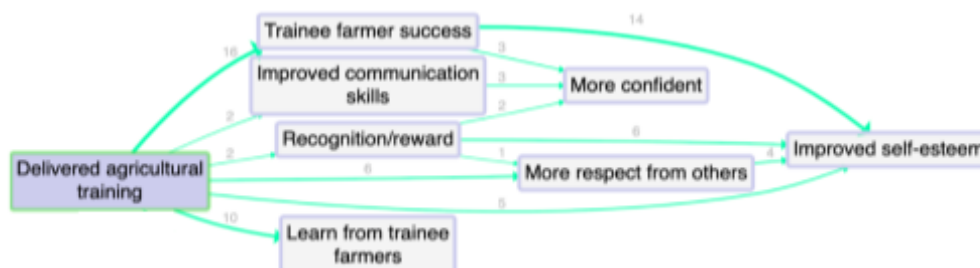


Figure 1: Causal pathways related to delivering agricultural training

² The strategy also intended for cases to be selected based on whether the smallholder had received an asset loan, but this was not possible due to availability of respondents.

However, the findings also provided somewhat of a **reality check**. Whilst most of the women reported improvements in their financial capital, including increased income, the interviews highlighted that these effects were not always sustained. Some women reported that when the GADC project ended, their income had decreased. For others there had been issues with delayed or non-existent payment, particularly in, but not limited to, 2020.

WHAT NEXT?

After the 2020 QuIP data had been coded and analysed, AgDevCo commissioned the research team to **revisit the communities** to host workshops with both GADC and the respondents³. These sessions served to unblindfold respondents to the purpose of the research, validate the results, and to seek clarity and further insight on specific findings. These additional insights and findings were then incorporated into a final report. You can read more about these workshops [here](#).

AgDevCo summarised their learning from the 2020 study into three key lessons to take forward:

- The skills and knowledge women gain from employment are a prominent contributor to their empowerment. Training initiatives should be praised and increased across AgDevCo's portfolio.
- The nature of the role women are employed in contributes to different domains of empowerment. Women should be given more activities which involve training or presenting to groups of people to help improve their confidence.
- AgDevCo investees should be encouraged to emphasise teamwork, mentorship, buddy systems and exchange visits to maximise the social networks and relationships women gain through employment.

AgDevCo reflected that the QuIP enabled them to:

- 1) understand changes related to confidence in a simple and **less biased** way than through a survey
- 2) reveal **specific mechanisms** of change, particularly in relation to confidence and self-esteem
- 3) capture **unintended consequences** or unexpected changes
- 4) identify **other factors** influencing and driving changes in outcome domains to provide a more rounded picture of the complexity

AgDevCo invited Bath SDR and the research team to collaborate on a [research paper which was published in the Journal of Sustainable Finance and Investment](#) in 2021. AgDevCo also wrote a guest post on our blog, which you can read [here](#).

³ Due to Covid restrictions the workshops with respondents were hosted online.