**COMPARATIVE**

**FIELD EVALUATION (2019-2020)**

**OF THE PHINEO FOOD SECURITY PROJECTS BY**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASAA Abyei Special Administrative Area

DMI Daughters of Mary Immaculate

DRC Danish Refugee Council

FA Farmer’s association

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization

FGD focus-group discussion

GIZ Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit

HHI household interview

HRM human resource management

IDP internally displaced person

IEC information, education, and communication

IFRC International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IOM International Organization for Migration

KII key-informant interview

LWF Lutheran World Federation

M&E monitoring and evaluation

MEAL monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning

MHA Mary Help Association

MSF Médecins sans Frontières

MUAC mid-upper arm circumference

NFI non-food item

NGO non-governmental organization

OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)

OPM Office of the Prime Minister

POC protection of civilian site (camp)

PBC peacebuilding committee

PRC peacebuilding and reconciliation committee

PSN person with special needs

ReHoPE Refugee and Host Community Empowerment

RRC relief and rehabilitation commission

SSJR South Sudan Joint Response

UN United Nations

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNMIS United Nations Mission in Sudan

UNMISS United Nations Mission in South Sudan

VSLA village savings and loan association

WFP World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Background: Insecurity and Food Insecurity*

In July 2011, South Sudan became independent. In December 2013, a vicious armed conflict broke out, which subsequently led to severe human suffering. South Sudan’s economy has been devastated and food insecurity has worsened considerably. In 2014, the UN Security Council modified the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) by giving it a protection mandate, including assisting the many internally displaced persons (IDPs). In addition, about 880.000 South Sudanese have fled to northern Uganda. In 2018, peace negotiations took place and the security situation stabilized somewhat in some parts of the country, while it deteriorated in others. The peace agreement is stronger on paper than in practice. In recent months, Covid-19 has further aggravated this dire situation. For example, food insecurity has increased due to closed borders, reduced transport of food commodities, and rising food prices.

*Evaluation Objective*

This field evaluation assesses three projects supported by Caritas Germany, which in turn has received funding from Phineo. The 3-year Phineo program started in May 2018. Its three projects differ in their set-up and regional focus, but all aim to enhance food security. Similarly to the previous field evaluation, the overall objective of the current evaluation report is *to assess the degree of realization of the objectives of the three food security projects in terms of food availability, access and utilization,* but this time for 2019-2020*.* It will also begin to assess the so-called Rucksack projects, which are small follow-up projects with new activities based on lessons learned from the Phineo-supported projects. In addition, it examines what the three implementing organizations, the Mary Help Association (MHA), the Bishop Gassis Relief and Rescue Foundation (BGRRF), and Caritas Gulu, can learn from each other in both their humanitarian and developmental work in order to achieve their goals and strengthen their management.

*Outcomes*

Overall, target communities are now better equipped to meet the challenge of food insecurity. In particular,

* The provision of food aid remains necessary because people generally cannot fully bridge the hunger gap. In time, the other measures of the Phineo-projects can further reduce the need for food aid;
* The agricultural/agronomic training is popular, because it enables higher productivity and results in produce that can be sold on the markets;
* The provision of seeds, tools, and seedlings has also enabled agricultural progress. Planting seedlings, as part of reforestation, can also help fight climate change at the micro-level. All organizations are now working in reforestation;
* Ox-ploughing is now rapidly gaining in popularity, despite cultural resistance. Farmers see how ox-ploughing leads to greater acreage under cultivation and higher productivity of existing plots;
* The current increase in production as a result of ox-ploughing can, by and large, offset the negative consequences of lower harvests due to climate change;
* The demonstration gardens provide seeds, seedlings, and produce and function as training grounds (e.g., for ox-ploughing and agronomic techniques). In this way, they constitute a step towards *sustainability*, and make the three organizations less dependent on—although certainly not yet independent of—donor organizations;
* The other forms of training, for example in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, village savings and loan associations, and vocational skills, are useful too. They are a form of capacity-building that facilitates better social organization within and among displaced and host communities, as well as income-generating opportunities that contribute to food access;
* The Rucksack projects contribute to the long-term impact of the Phineo-funded activities. On the one hand, they fill gaps that came to light during implementation of the project activities (e.g., by providing more seeds and additional food support to mitigate the impact of dry spells and flooding). On the other hand, they offer a higher number of beneficiaries a wider range of support (e.g., by establishing additional vocational and agronomic training opportunities and creating (more) demonstration gardens, as well as by working on reforestation, soap production, and energy-saving stoves). These activities can be expanded further. They directly contribute to a higher degree of food security and indirectly lead to a higher degree of environmental or economic sustainability;
* The independent audits showed that the management and expenditures were generally in good shape. The recommendations, on-the-job training, and follow-up by the auditors allowed the internal administrative controls of all three organizations to be improved. These audits are a valuable tool for professionalizing their management;
* Strengthening management of the three organizations is an important part of Phineo, and is enabled by the three-year funding period. Most progress is now being made in the areas of accounting, human resource management, and MEAL, but further professionalization still needs to occur within the organizations. The organizations can learn from each other in terms of strategy formulation, succession of central staff, and training, as well as in substantial areas, such as responding to climate change.

All in all, full food security has not been achieved, and will, in fact, be very hard to achieve as climate change, armed conflict, crime, poverty, and now Covid-19 will continue to pose severe challenges to the target communities. Understandably, there is a widespread desire on the part of the people in these communities to restore and uphold their livelihoods, which has resulted in a great pent-up demand for more services. The three projects could still easily triple in size, and the full demand would not be met. The *relevance* and *impact* of the three projects are very high, but their *sustainability* is not yet ensured.

*Capacity Sharing*

Through the 2019 Wau workshop and the subsequent rucksack projects, the organizations have begun to build and share capacities in the cross-cutting areas of climate change adaptation and reforestation, monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL), and establishing linkages (e.g., with markets, banks, transport companies, and international organizations (UN and NGOs)). In this respect, the organizations learn much from each other, for example through joint training and mutual field visits or joint evaluations. However, due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, some of these activities had to be delayed.

*Contingency plans*

It is not clear when—or whether—the armed conflict will end. At the moment, WFP is reducing its food rations and the UNMISS wants people in the “protection of civilians sites” (POC) in Juba to return “home.” However, violence has not ended and homes, villages, livestock, and fields have often been destroyed. It would be ideal if the three organizations, in cooperation with Daughters of Mary Immaculate (DMI) Juba, and Caritas Germany could prepare contingency plans for return, which could include occasional emergency food aid projects.

*Next Steps*

This evaluation report shows for each project’s objective some of the implementation issues, and preliminary results, as well as challenges and recommendations. In addition to working with the recommendation tracker, the organizations can hold another workshop to further discuss ways to implement the recommendations and strengthen their management further. They can also use this workshop to develop a follow-up project, plan learning visits to each other, and think about joint lobby activities to local administrations, UN organizations, NGOs, and donor agencies.

*Conclusions*

In sum, the three projects continue to show promising results under the adverse conditions of insecurity, climate change, crime, and Covid-19. They have improved food availability, access, and utilization, but more work remains to be done. The project will be finished in Spring 2021.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

South Sudan gained independence from the Republic of the Sudan in July 2011 after a referendum in line with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended the long armed conflict between the Arab-dominated regime in Khartoum and the mostly Christian black majority in the South led by the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army. In the same month, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) as a continuation of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). The original mandate of UNMISS was to promote capacity-building of the new national institutions, to carry out relief and rehabilitation, and where possible to work on development.

In December 2013, armed fighting broke out in the capital, Juba, between troops loyal to President Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar. A bloody war ensued. As a consequence, the Security Council reviewed the mandate of UNMISS, adapting the Mission to better respond to the protection and humanitarian needs of the South Sudanese population. Essentially, UNMISS now has a protection mandate.

Despite an initial peace agreement in 2015 and a “revitalized” one in 2018, the conflict, which to some extent follows ethnic fault lines, has not stopped. In February 2020, the main warring factions officially came together in the Transitional Government of National Unity, but several rebel forces did not join. Elections are supposed to take place within three years. Although South Sudan has achieved some stability over the last two years, political progress has stalled and armed violence continues in several parts of the country.

Soldiers and police receive their wages with considerable delays, if at all, and have started preying on the population. Gangs and other armed groups raid the country, and efforts to fight crime have ceased in all but name. South Sudan has a warlord economy, where violence sustains itself through the expropriation of resources.

Since 2013, thousands of lives have been lost due to direct violence and many more through the breakdown of social services (e.g., health and education), agriculture, transport, and markets. Currently, out of a population of more than 11.7 million people, approximately 2.2 million people have become refugees in the region (Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and approximately 1.6 million have become IDPs. Food insecurity is high and malnutrition remains shockingly common. In 2020, out of 7.5 million people in need, about 6.5 million are “acutely food insecure”.[[1]](#footnote-2) The latter number includes 1.3 million malnourished children.

Both international and local humanitarian organizations are attempting to address the emergency and the needs of the refugees and communities in the affected areas. In 2018, the government issued its National Development Strategy (July 2018-June 2021) and the UN System presented its Cooperation Framework (2019-2021). These are broad policy frameworks for international and national actors, and the UN Cooperation Framework has a section on food security. However, Covid-19 has hampered the realization of these policies, because the borders were officially closed, which led to a sharp reduction in the transport of essential goods such as food commodities and medicine. The pandemic also contributed to a reduction in oil-related government revenues. Consequently, the South-Sudanese pound has devaluated, so that the purchasing power of South-Sudanese people has declined.

In Uganda, where the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the World Bank lead the international aid community, the government has set up the Refugee and Host Community Empowerment (ReHoPE) strategy. In line with the Uganda National Development Plan II, ReHoPE focuses on progressively enhancing social service delivery in refugee hosting areas, with the aim of integrating services with local government systems and empowering refugee hosting communities. Currently, Uganda hosts almost 880,000 South Sudanese refugees.

Finally, donors are decreasing their funding to a dismally low level. In South Sudan, funding for the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan is only at 53 per cent—the lowest level since 2011.[[2]](#footnote-3) For the Regional Refugee Response Plan, it is only 9.9 per cent.[[3]](#footnote-4) Funding for ReHoPE is also falling short. Recently, the Ugandan government threw out some NGOs, but this was widely perceived to be a negotiation ploy for receiving better support from donor governments and NGOs.[[4]](#footnote-5)

## Food Security

This report studies the food security projects of three organizations: Mary Help Association (MHA) in Wau, South Sudan, Bishop Gassis Relief & Rescue Foundation (BGRRF) in Agok, close to the border with Sudan (still regularly referred to as the North), and Caritas Gulu in Uganda.

A person, household or community, region or nation is food secure when all members at all times have physical and economic access to buy, produce, obtain or consume sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life.[[5]](#footnote-6)

Table 1: Food security components: availability, access, and utilization[[6]](#footnote-7)

Table 1: Food security components: availability, access, and utilization

|  |
| --- |
| **Food availability** in a country, region or local area means that food is physically present because it has been grown, processed, manufactured, and/or imported. For example, food is available because it can be found in markets and shops; it has been produced on local farms or in home gardens; or it has arrived as part of food aid. This refers to all available food in the area, and includes fresh, as well as packaged, food.  Food availability can be affected by disruptions to the food transport and production systems, due to blocked roads, failed crops or changes in import and export tariffs, amongst other factors. Such occurrences can influence the amount of food coming into an area. In addition, food availability is dependent upon seasonal patterns in food production and trading.  **Food access** refers to the way in which different people obtain available food. Normally, we access food through a combination of means. This may include: home production, use of left-over stocks, purchase, barter, borrowing, sharing, gifts from relatives, and provisions by welfare systems or food aid. Food access is ensured when everyone within a community has adequate financial or other resources to obtain the food necessary for a nutritious diet. Access depends on a household’s available income and its distribution within the household, as well as on the price of food. It also depends on markets, and on the social and institutional entitlements/rights of individuals.  Food access can be negatively influenced by unemployment, physical insecurity (e.g. during conflicts), loss of coping options (e.g. border closures preventing seasonal job migration), or the collapse of safety-net institutions which once protected people on low incomes.  **Food utilization** is the way in which people use food. It is dependent upon a number of interrelated factors: the quality of the food and its method of preparation, storage facilities, and the nutritional knowledge and health status of the individual consuming the food. For example, some diseases do not allow for optimal absorption of nutrients, whereas growth requires increased intake of certain nutrients.  Food utilization is often reduced by factors such as endemic disease, poor sanitation, lack of appropriate nutritional knowledge, or culturally-prescribed taboos (often related to age or gender) that affect a certain group’s or family member’s access to nutritious food. Food utilization may also be adversely affected if people have limited resources for preparing food, for example due to a lack of fuel or cooking utensils.  Any imbalance in the above-mentioned factors can lead to food insecurity. |

This study focuses mainly on food availability and access. Food utilization will only be discussed to the extent that cultural barriers, limited resources for preparing food, and a trade-off between eating or storing seeds exists.

## Organizations

The program funded by Phineo for a period of three years (2018-2021) focuses on emergency and transitional aid. It provides relief for the hunger gap and fosters agricultural development in the hope of making the communities food secure. This evaluation looks at the second year of its activities. Caritas Germany has already collaborated for many years with the three organizations participating in this program.

### Mary Help Association, South Sudan

Mary Help Association is an NGO set up by Sr. Gracy Adichirayil, an Indian-Salesian sister, together with a group of Catholics from Kerala, India, in 2000. MHA works closely with the Catholic Diocese of Wau. In 2007, MHA established the first Nursing and Midwifery School in South Sudan. In 2016, together with the governmental Western Bahr el Ghazal University, it also started offering degree courses in Nursing and Midwifery. Importantly, it also operates a hospital in Alel Chok, just outside of Wau. Several departments of the hospital will be completed in the coming years.

### Bishop Gassis Relief & Rescue Foundation, South Sudan

The Bishop Gassis Relief & Rescue Foundation was founded in 2014. It has its Head Office in Nairobi, Kenya. This organization has grown out of the pastoral services and humanitarian and development programs implemented through the Diocese of El Obeid in both Sudan and South Sudan. Emeritus Bishop Macram Max Gassis established this foundation in order to continue the humanitarian work in the Diocese, as well as to be able to respond to other areas of humanitarian need. BGRRF has been responding to the conflict in the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan with a large-scale emergency program. It also continues to run development, humanitarian and pastoral service activities in the Abyei Special Administrative Area (ASAA), and in Twic State in South Sudan. Its activities include Health, Education, Women’s Groups, a radio station, WASH, and food aid and security.

### **Caritas Gulu Archdiocese, Uganda**

Caritas Gulu, the Emergency Relief and Development arm of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Gulu, has become one of the operating partners involved in providing life-saving relief and livelihood projects to the refugees and host communities in the Amuru, Nwoya, Omoro, Adjumani and Lamwo districts. It has branch offices in Kitgum, Gulu, Pader, and Adjumani. In addition, it also continues its more developmental work for Ugandans.

## The Three Projects

This field evaluation compares the projects of these three organizations, namely:

1. Mary Help Association: “Agriculture Training and Nutrition Support for 9 villages North of Wau, South Sudan, 2018-2021.”
2. Bishop Gassis Relief & Rescue Foundation: “Food Aid Relief and Food Security Project – Agok, Abyei Special Administrative Area and Turalei, Twic State and South Sudan – 2018, 2019, 2020.”
3. Caritas Gulu: “Integrated Post-Conflict Support for South Sudanese Refugees in Adjumani and Lamwo Districts, 2018-2020.”

In addition, this report will begin to assess the so-called Rucksack projects for each organization, because they build on the evaluation from last year and the subsequent 2019 Wau workshop, in which all three organizations and DMI discussed the lessons learned so far.

All three organizations also carry out several other projects and activities that are not part of Phineo and this evaluation, but will occasionally be indicated as background information.

## Objectives of the Evaluation

The objective of this evaluation is

*to assess the degree of realization of the objectives of the three food security projects, including the rucksack projects, in terms of food availability, access, and utilization.*

In addition, I examined what the three organizations can learn from each other about food security in order to achieve their goals and strengthen their management. Subsequently, I have attempted to indicate where and how the three organizations can learn from each other and perhaps cooperate with each other.

In 2021, the final follow-up evaluation will take place. This evaluation will be both an input and starting point for this follow-up evaluation.

## Scope of the Evaluation

In line with its objective, this evaluation:

1. assesses the challenges the organizations and projects face in bringing about their intended outcomes and what the unintended consequences are;
2. provides recommendations for strengthening the three organizations and their projects;
3. identifies areas in which they can learn from each other;
4. prepares the 2021 evaluation and workshop.

## Set up

The next chapter explains the methodology of this evaluation and can be skipped by the readers that are solely interested in its outcomes. Chapter three presents the empirical findings for each objective of the Phineo and the Rucksack projects. The fourth chapter compares the organizations and their activities to draw lessons for future activities. Subsequently, chapter five discusses some steps forward for Caritas Freiburg in the areas of climate change, food security, and cooperation with other organizations. Finally, the conclusions summarize the main results of this evaluation regarding food security and the ways forward.

## Acknowledgements

Due to Covid-19, this study had to become a remote evaluation. I carried out expert interviews on the organizations, food security and Covid-19 with the staff members of the three organizations over Skype and Whatsapp in South Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya. Once again, I learned a lot from the staff-members of the three organizations. In addition, three researchers carried out the field research: Sebastian Kämpf with MHA, Fr. Habeel with BGRRF, and Robert Esukuru with Caritas Gulu. Without them and their respondents in the villages and fields of the three project areas, this evaluation would not have been possible. I thank them, and of course all respondents, for their great contributions.

# METHODS

## Introduction

The methodology of this study is mainly based on the IFRC guide *How to Conduct a Food Security Assessment: A Step-by-Step Guide for National Societies in Africa*.[[7]](#footnote-8) I selected these guidelines because of their practical utility and depth. In 2019, I used the guide to select the data collection methods of this evaluation, and I combined the guide with the Sphere Guidelines to formulate a semi-structured questionnaire on food security. In 2020, the main data collection methods were a desk review of secondary data and project documents and expert interviews, by me, and field visits by the three researchers to the project sites, where they carried out community focus group discussions (FGDs), usually with separate male and female groups, individual key informant interviews (KIIs) with local leaders, observation tours of the project sites, and household interviews (HHIs). I always triangulated data from these data collection methods.

## Desk Review

The desk review, which mainly took place in Germany, consisted of reading scholarly literature on food security and livelihoods, and project documents from Phineo, Caritas Germany, and the three participating organizations. I also reviewed scholarly literature on the current political and economic situation of both South Sudan and Uganda. In addition, the review focused on updates, policy or strategy documents, and evaluations of international organizations, in particular from UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). I also reviewed documents from my 2017 mid-term evaluation of the Caritas Gulu refugee projects in Northern Uganda, my 2018 project evaluation of DMI in Juba, South Sudan, and the 2018 Caritas Gulu humanitarian strategy, as well as my 2019 evaluation of the three organizations and the Wau workshop report.

## Key-Informant Interviews with Staff Members

I carried out 16 semi-structured remote KIIs with staff members of the three organizations (See Appendix 1). With the staff interviews, usually only one respondent at a time replied. These interviews were carried out via WhatsApp and Skype.

## Participant Observation

The three field researchers carried out a limited degree of participant observation. In particular, Sebastian Kämpf had already been working with the project since its inception. Robert Esukuru had also worked with Caritas before on its 2020 strategy formulation. Finally, Fr. Habeel also knew BGRRF well.

## Field Visits to the Project Sites

The field visits enabled the three field researchers to gain an insight into the respondents’ workplaces, cultivation and living areas. For example, farmers showed their fields, irrigation and planting methods, harvests, and tools. They used four data-collection methods:

1. *Community Focus Group Discussions* (FGD), which are useful for collecting a considerable amount of relevant data in a relatively short time. They also functioned as an introduction to the (heterogeneous) communities. Usually, the researchers would hold separate male and female FGDs, because this allowed them to understand the overall situation of the community and debate different assumptions and preferences. In virtually all cases, the FGDs took place in the shade of a tree.
2. *Key-informant Interviews* (KII) with people with specific knowledge of and perspective on the community and the ability to express these. It was not possible to hold many of these, but where possible the researchers spoke with the village leader (*sultan*) and a priest/reverend, a women’s leader, or a teacher.
3. *Household interviews* (HHI), mostly with women, because men were less often present, with questions on how they make a living, whether they were selected for food aid, training or other support, their coping mechanisms, and consumption patterns. People would often show their household, *tukuls* (local Arabic for grass-thatched houses/huts), storage facilities, family members, and activities to make a living.
4. *Observation tours* through the community/village, which helped to double check or further explain what people said during the FGDs and both types of interviews; for example, the researchers looked at school-feeding at schools, storage facilities, land-use (e.g., the sorghum fields, community/vegetable gardens, demonstration gardens, stored seeds, irrigation, fencing, planting methods, livestock, boreholes, pests and insects, and yields). They also looked at the settlements and the conditions of nearby rivers.

Table 2: Number of data collection methods used

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Researcher | KII | FGD  Male | FGD  Female | FGD Mixed | HHI | Observation tours |
| Dennis Dijkzeul | 17 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Sebastian Kämpf | 3 | 6 | 6 | 1 (with MHA staff) | 30[[8]](#footnote-9) | 6 |
| Robert Esukuru | 18 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 6 |
| Fr. Habeel | 6 | - | - | 6 | 4 | 4 |

## Questionnaires

For the field questionnaire, we essentially simplified questions from the IFRC food security guide and combined them with information from the Sphere guidelines on food security. In 2020, they were updated to ask questions about Covid-19 and the functioning of the Rucksack projects. This semi-structured questionnaire was used for the community FGDs, KIIs, and HIs (see Appendix 1).

As the questions were open-ended, the researchers were able to ask more probing and specific follow-up questions during the FGDs and interviews. Whenever possible, Robert Esukuru and Fr. Habeel carried out the interviews and FGDs alone. Marko Amar, an MHA agronomist, accompanied Sebastian Kämpf and helped as a translator. Although this was suboptimal, as it could influence the openness and answers of the respondents, it was the only available option.

In addition, I also developed a questionnaire for the expert interviews with the staff-members of the organizations involved (see Appendix 2). Both these expert interviews and the research by the three local colleagues, as well as a review of various project documents, helped to assess the extent to which the recommendations from last year have been carried out.

## Data Analysis

The qualitative information from the observations and questionnaires was analyzed during desk research in the “field” and Bochum. I focused on the description of the project activities, their results, strengths and weaknesses in implementation, and possible improvements, including as stated, the Rucksack projects. In line with the scope of this evaluation, I also looked at some future possibilities and potential liabilities for the three projects and for the management of the three organizations together.

The staff-members of the three organizations, as well as Caritas Germany from Juba, reviewed the first draft of this report and provided feedback. Staff from Caritas Germany from Juba, Nairobi, and Freiburg gave feedback on the second version of this report.

## Limitations

The main limitation of the research was the remote nature of the evaluation due to Covid-19. The three field researchers also faced travel restrictions and also practiced social distancing. In contrast with last year’s evaluation, no government officials were interviewed.

Another limitation is that none of the three projects has a base-line study, and at this stage of the project activities, we cannot say anything definitive about their eventual impact yet. Instead, I focus mainly on a comparative assessment of the current degree of realization of their objectives and the management issues that were identified.

# FINDINGS

## Introduction

This chapter will describe the objectives of the three food security projects, their implementation processes and results, and their main challenges and recommendations, as well as the rucksack projects. The latter projects have received their name because they “piggyback” and build on the Phineo project.

## The Mary Help Association

The overall objective of Agriculture Training and Nutrition Support for 9 Villages North of Wau, South Sudan, 2018-2021 is *to contribute to the survival, food security, and improvement of health status of the most vulnerable communities in the Greater Wau area*. The 9 villages lie in a predominantly Dinka area, but there are also some predominantly Luo villages. Traditionally the Dinka and Luo were “pastoralists by inclination, and agriculturalists by necessity.”[[9]](#footnote-10) Nowadays, they live increasingly as agriculturalists; some already for several generations. This cultural sea-change has proven very challenging for them.

**Objective 1: 720 farmers in 9 villages around the settlement of Alel Chok, north of Wau, successfully commence with sustainable agriculture and are able to feed themselves and their 450 most vulnerable individuals throughout the year**

*Implementation Process*

The 2018-2019 project villages were Nyanpath, Khartoum Jedid, and Marial Agith. They are located relatively close to the hospital, so they were easy to reach even though the project facilities (truck and office) were not fully operational at the beginning of the project. In March 2019, the work in the next three villages, Baryar, Zokolona and Malwil, started. In contrast with Zokolona, which is located close to the hospital, and is a de facto suburb of Wau, the other two villages are a bit further away from the hospital than the first three villages are. In March 2020, MHA began project activities in the final three villages, Warathon, Numpal, and Kormolang (which will be evaluated in 2021).

Every year, this project aims to provide 240 families (approx. 1680 individuals)[[10]](#footnote-11) and 150 vulnerable individuals (some with dependent children), equally spread over three villages, with food aid (sorghum, beans, and cooking oil) during the hunger gap, which lasts from April to July.[[11]](#footnote-12) This hunger gap is the most critical nutrition period of the year, and the local population calls it “the terrible months” before the first harvest takes place. In this hunger period, people often eat only one meal a day or less.

Whereas the food aid to the 150 weakest individuals, generally disabled people, follows the humanitarian principles, food aid for the 240 families is intended to enable these villagers to start their labor-intensive field work. It concentrates on those farmers that can be successful pioneers in farming and can become examples for other villagers. In other words, it has a development goal.

A *selection committee* identified the actual farmer families for each village. The committee consists of the chief of the village, a farmer representative, a women’s group representative, a youth representative, a teachers’ representative, a local church representative, and an MHA representative. The representatives are chosen every year. MHA hopes that the selection committees can evolve into *rural development committees*, which can function as its counterparts at the village level.

Just like last year, the number of selected farming families was increased during project execution. Instead of 240 families, 260 families were able to participate (80 in Baryar and Malwil each, but 100 in Zokolona). They received basic food items (sorghum, beans, and oil) and seeds for the cultivation of staple foods (sorghum, beans, groundnuts, maize, sesame, and millet), and two selected tools (from long and short spades[[12]](#footnote-13) to rakes, axes, hoes, and machetes) (see objective 2). After the harvest, the 260 farming families are supposed to support the weakest individuals with food. In addition, the families were expected to produce and store seeds for the next planting season and to replace damaged tools.

*Results*

In 2019, the rains were good, and the project achieved the first two indicators of this objective. After the selection of the families, MHA successfully provided food relief, so that the farmers had enough energy to start farming their fields. As indicated, more people than originally planned were able to participate for the same costs. In addition, 50 vulnerable persons and their dependents received food aid in each village. Unfortunately, due to a mistake in the project calculations, MHA had to pay for some of this relief from its own resources. Respondents were satisfied with the aid (food aid, seeds, seedlings, tools and training) they received. It helped them bridge the hunger gap.

However, similarly to last year’s three villages, of the third outcome indicator—“90% of the most vulnerable, targeted households state that they receive sufficient food aid through MHA during the hunger gap and this support was satisfactorily continued by the trained farming households of the village”—only the first half, receiving sufficient food aid through MHA during the hunger gap, was achieved successfully. Realizing the second half is extremely challenging. Although the farming households now do have more food, which also lasts longer into the hunger gap (until the end of June/mid-July), and earn a little money to pay for school fees and medical care, they do not produce enough food to carry them fully through the hunger gap or produce seeds for the next planting season.[[13]](#footnote-14) As a result, they cannot support the vulnerable people sufficiently *and* they will need seeds for the next planting season.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

The dry spells and irregular rains are commonly reported, and in all likelihood related to climate change, which is a *force majeure*, but with an impact that can be expected to occur more regularly.

* *Continue to further develop a climate change policy (e.g., with water harvesting, drip irrigation, and solar panels);*
* *Help the local population with drying foodstuffs for the hunger gap.*

In principle, the idea of developing a rural development committee is very useful. MHA could study the farmers’ and women’s associations of DMI in Juba and the peacebuilding committees of Caritas in Northern Uganda to see how these forms of social organization function.

* *Assess how the selection committee is functioning, particularly the extent to which it has functioned or can function as a rural development committee.*

Last year’s evaluation report stated that no baseline study had taken place before the project. Nevertheless, MHA was already collecting data, such as MUAC and a rough measurement of the increase in land under cultivation on the basis of the growth in produce, that gave indications about the situation before and during the project.

* *Check what further information could constitute a baseline (for example, a set of indicators on the number of persons participating, nutrition, dietary diversity, number of meals a day, land area under cultivation, harvest yields, increased income, water availability, or seeds produced for the next season). The set of indicators should help assessing both components of, and the main obstacles, to food security.*

**Objective 2: 720 farming households have significantly improved and broadened their skills and agricultural techniques and have measurably increased their food consumption and the variety of consumed food**

*Implementation process*

In addition to seeds and tools, MHA also provides training in soil preparation and planting, tree planting and nursery, weed management, harvesting, and entrepreneurship, most of which took place at either the hospital compound or at the large demonstration garden in Nyanpath[[14]](#footnote-15) (see below). At the hospital compound, it has a staple food section (e.g., sorghum, maize, millet), a vegetable garden, and a fruit tree nursery.[[15]](#footnote-16) The demonstration gardens will start to play a bigger role, because they provide food, seeds, and seedlings, as well as training grounds (e.g., for ox-ploughing), while WFP is reducing some types of its food rations. These gardens have the potential to make the food security work of MHA more autonomous and the organization a bit less dependent on its donors. MHA is also working more with drought resistant crops. In terms of food utilization, only okra and tomatoes are being sun-dried as food reserves for the next hunger gap.

The training with oxen was intensified in 2019-2020. MHA trained 25 instead of 20 people for each of the new villages at the large demonstration garden. Farmers were enthusiastic about the training and use of ox-ploughs, and particularly about their new-found ability to increase the acreage under agriculture, which helped to increase output (all other factors, such as the amount of rain and destruction by pests, being equal). Farmers also appreciated that they did not have to do all the ploughing manually with a maloda, because this is exhausting, back-breaking work that wounds their hands. About 20 per cent of the families receiving training in ox-ploughing were female-headed households.

To some extent, the increase in acreage and growth in production due to ox-ploughing can offset the negative effects of climate change and insecurity. Currently, ox-ploughing faces two main constraints: 1) most people do not own oxen and need to rent them, which is expensive; and 2) the number of metal plows that MHA can provide is limited, because they are expensive and need to be imported. In Malwil and Baryar five participating households received one metal plow. As a consequence of the increased number of participating households in Zokolona, six families had to share one plow.

Respondents highlighted that many animals fall ill or die during the heat/dry spells, but they can now better afford veterinarian services. During these dry spells, pests and diseases also afflict crops, which severely decreased production. The natural method to fight pests, introduced by MHA, does not function well enough yet, partly because people lack tobacco leaves and need to pay for them, partly because people have not routinized its use yet. Moreover, the natural method does not remove all pests.

Moving herds are welcome, as long as they do not intrude when the crops are growing. But when the land is lying fallow, their manure can fertilize it. As more land is being ploughed and used (as well as being exposed to the sun and other elements), farmers may increasingly need other forms of fertilization, such as compost and artificial fertilizer.

Moreover, lack of water, including drinking water, has become a general problem. Many wells are running dry. The Jur river was once permanent, but at the end of the dry period you can now cross it without getting your feet wet.[[16]](#footnote-17)

*Results*

Farmers were able to participate in the training and visit and learn from the demonstration sites. With the seeds, the farmers were able to increase the number and quantity of vegetables and staple crops, but less than originally hoped for due to the dry spells and erratic rainfall.

Table 3: Nutrition MUAC in 9 villages of infants (6-59 months) in 2020

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Month |  | Nyanpath | Khartoum Jadid | Marial Agit | Maluil | Baryar | Zokolona | Warathon | Numpal | Kormolang | Over all Malnutrition Rate |
| May 2017 | GAM | 20% | 18% | 23% | 19% | 18% | 17% |  |  |  | 19.2 % |
| October 2017 | GAM | 17% | 17% | 21% | 18% | 17% | 17% |  |  |  | 17.8 % |
| May 2018 | GAM | 17% | 17% | 21% | 17% | 17% | 16% |  |  |  | 17.5 % |
| October 2018 | GAM | 10% | 14% | 17% | 16% | 16% | 15% |  |  |  | 14.7% |
| May 2019 | GAM | 10% | 12% | 15% | 16% | 15% | 15% |  |  |  | 13.8% |
| October2019 | GAM | 6.6% (5/75) | 10%  (5/50) | 12%  (6/50) | 10% (5/50) | 10% (5/50) | 9% (5/55) |  |  |  | 9.6% |
| May 2020 | GAM | 6.7% (2/30) | 10%  (3/30) | 13.3% (4/30) | 10% (3/30) | 10% (3/30) | 6.7% (2/30) | 12.5% (4/32) | 13.3%  (4/30) | 13.3%  (4/30) | 10.7% |

The participating farmers also increased the land area for cultivation. In the three “old” villages, which had already increased their cultivated land in the first project year, they continued to increase it further, from about 1.5-2 feddan to 5-6 feddan. In the three new villages, people shifted from 1 feddan to 3-4 feddan under cultivation. The rains in 2019 were so good that there was no drought, and only Nyanpath suffered from flooding. Importantly, increasing agricultural productivity with ox-ploughing can off-set some of the negative effects of climate change and insecurity. Of course, this is easier in rural areas like Nyanpath, where land is still available, than in semi-urban areas, such as Zokolona and Baryar.

In terms of food access and availability, the farmers were able to increase the amount and variety of their food consumption, but by less than originally hoped for. Nevertheless, a comparison of random nutrition surveys from May 2017 to May 2020, which measure mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) of young children (5-59 months), shows that although the global acute malnutrition (GAM) fluctuates seasonally, it has declined in the six supported villages.[[17]](#footnote-18) In addition, in 2019, the feeding center at the hospital was closed, and it has not been necessary to reopen it because malnutrition has declined to a comparatively low level.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

MHA continues to assess the project outcomes in Nyanpath, Khartoum Jedid, and Marial Agith over time. More generally, it will assess the evolution of agriculture and food security in the nine villages in the final project year.

* *Conduct a follow-up study on agriculture and food security in all villages, including the nutrition surveys.*
  + *Measure more exactly the increase in acreage due to ox-ploughing (and perhaps tractors), as well as the increase in productivity due to better soil preparation;*
  + *Measure more exactly the negative effects of ox-ploughing, such as soil degradation and (potential) tensions among farmers with oxen and those without.*

Ox-plows increase agricultural production in two ways. First, production per unit land increases through better soil preparation. Second, more land can be cultivated and thus planted until a new bottleneck (such as the availability of sufficient land, the availability of sufficient oxen and plows, or the availability of sufficient seeds) comes up.[[18]](#footnote-19) It would be useful to take these two factors into account when measuring the increase in harvest.

* *Assess to what extent an increase in harvest due to ox-ploughing is the result of better soil preparation of existing plots or of an increase in cultivated land.*

Most participating families do not own any oxen or only one instead of the necessary two, because most oxen were stolen during the war. These families either have to borrow or rent them. Renting, however, is expensive. One woman used a donkey to plow. Donkeys are cheaper than oxen and easier to feed, especially during the long dry season. Both farming tribes and pastoralist tribes accept donkeys, but unlike cows they are not likely to be stolen by the pastoralist tribes.

* *Examine whether an ox-breeding and distribution program is possible;*
* *Assess whether or to what extent donkeys can be used for ploughing and which kinds of plows would be or could be made available to do so;*
* *Assess whether different types of plows can be either be purchased and distributed or produced locally.[[19]](#footnote-20)*

Pests and diseases are a serious problem reducing the harvest and hampering food security. Some farmers grow tobacco plants locally, but there are not many of them.

* *Continue to teach the target groups natural and low-cost methods of pest and disease control;*
* *Examine whether alternative methods of pest control (e.g., with ashes) are possible;*
* *Investigate whether more tobacco plants can be grown locally. What inputs and other incentives do local farmers need?*
* *Check whether veterinary services can be provided on a more regular basis;*
* *Examine with Caritas Gulu the advantages and disadvantages of post-harvesting bags.*

Table 4: John (not his real name)

|  |
| --- |
| John, 65 years old, is a former soldier. Together with his wife and eleven children—two of which he adopted from his late brother—between the age of one and seventeen, he is living on a small piece of land at the outskirts of Zokolona. He originates from Kwajok, a town about 70 km away, where he still has relatives and some animals, but a previous war has brought him here.  John is happy and shows the crops he could already harvest. On the ground between the two poor tukuls in which the family sleeps, a part of the harvest is laid for drying. Next to the right tukul, an impressive amount of freshly harvested sesame is lined up, fixed on both sides of a long wooden frame, where it will hang for the next one to two months, allowing the sun to gradually ripen the grains still inside the drying plants.  Together with his wife and the five eldest children, he has cultivated 4 feddan (about 4 acres) of land in 2020: 2 feddan with groundnuts, 1.5 feddan with sorghum, and about 0.5 feddan with sesame. They had to do the ploughing by hand, because the family does not possess cattle in Zokolona, just of few goats and sheep. John’s family is clearly among the poorer in the village. They own only 1.5 feddan, too little to feed such a large family throughout the year. As a result, John had to rent some additional land from a neighbor and will have to pay him once the harvest has been collected. Fortunately, the neighbor does not charge him much, in fact much less than others do.  John is grateful, because his life has already improved since he was considered for support by the village selection committee. He is optimistic that his situation will improve further. Before the project, he cultivated only 1 feddan and had to make his living as casual laborer, earning at most 1,000 SSP (the equivalent of about 3 US-dollars) per day for ploughing or harvesting by hand the fields of other people. ‘It was very hard work!’ he says, ‘especially in July and August with almost nothing in the stomach!’ Now, at least he can focus on the land he owns and rents. |

**Objective 3: The participating farmers generate surpluses and successfully market a part of their products**

*Implementation process*

The participating farmers have harvested and sold a small part of their produce on the market, either in their village or in Wau. It seems that they usually can fetch a better price in Wau. MHA has put the farmers in touch with customers in Wau (e.g., markets, hotels, or restaurants). Some farmers now have regular customers in Wau. In other words, limited cash-production is now possible.

*Results*

The farmers judged the fact that they could sometimes sell their produce at the market positively. For example, rigila could be harvested quickly and regularly, and then sold for a good price. Some farmers indicated that it was difficult to determine the right price for their goods. The sold produce helped them pay for school fees, school uniforms and materials, as well as buy things on the market, such as clothes, shoes, salt, sugar, soap, and meat.

As indicated above, although food diversity has increased and the farmers could occasionally buy a few more products on the market, the farmers were often unable to produce enough seeds for the next planting season or to produce enough food to bridge the whole hunger gap. Similarly, some families still cannot afford the school fees. Nor are the farming families able to support the most vulnerable people in their communities throughout the year. Interestingly, some farmers participate in local saving associations.[[20]](#footnote-21) MHA could investigate whether it can help them expand these into village savings and loan associations (VSLA) and ultimately into farmers’ cooperatives.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

* *Check regularly whether the most vulnerable people, as well as farmers, require additional emergency aid due to the regularly recurring droughts and flooding;[[21]](#footnote-22)*
* *Assess whether there are any unmet training needs (on pest and disease control or entrepreneurship training (e.g., setting an optimal price, packing, transport, and presentation of the produce));*
* *Establish village savings and loans associations, based on the experiences of Caritas Gulu and the already existing local saving associations in the project villages.*

**Objective 4: MHA as an institution has improved institutional/physical structures to support future (intended or intensified) agricultural activities (e.g., in addressing more villages/villagers or introducing more advanced technologies, like irrigation)**

*Implementation process*

During the first project year the cruiser and small truck arrived and the office and storing spaces for the project were finalized. MHA now also has a motorbike, bikes, and laptops at its disposal. Having a dedicated office facilitates project work (e.g., writing computer reports) and the holding of regular meetings.

As part of their Phineo project, MHA and its activities were audited. Most recommendations focused on improving internal controls. The auditors provided on-the-job training and examples as well as a follow-up to their recommendations. This follow-up showed that MHA had implemented most of the recommendations; only with a few was it still in the process of doing so. The audit became an important learning process for its administration and reporting.

Several staffing changes have also occurred. Sr. Reena replaced Sr. Ruby to lead the Phineo project. The accountant from India, Anitta Babu, stayed on, but the field officer, Mr. Ceasar left. MHA also hired a driver and a field assistant. Five paid community volunteers are now also part of the team. Covid-19 caused delays as staff members that had gone on leave could not return, whereas others were forced to stay longer in Wau.

Some staff remarked that their remuneration was lower than that of other international NGOs. However, MHA is mainly a South Sudanese organization with some international funding, which limits its financial space. Nevertheless, MHA can evaluate how it can offer “in-kind” incentives, such as training, as well as visits and on-the-job training/internships at partner organizations from the Phineo project. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 such visits could not take place in 2020.

MHA has expanded and diversified over the years; its food-security projects, educational programs, the hospital, and now the rural development center are growing impressively. Several international organizations are also active in its area of operation. World Concern had provided goats and chickens to vulnerable people, but left for Aweil in 2019.

MHA also cooperates with Malteser International on a three-year project to support 600 people in two villages with seeds and non-food items (NFIs). These villages are not part of the Phineo project. Dorcas, a Dutch ecumenical organization, also works with MHA on a food and relief project, which includes support for survivors of gender-based violence and abandoned children, called South Sudan Joint Response 5 (SSJR5) in rebel-held areas (Greater Baggari Region). Dorcas also supports MHA’s capacity building and professionalization. It helped to formulate new HRM Guidelines and Accounting Guidelines, and MHA started working with Quickbooks accounting software. Save the Children and Dorcas also support raising awareness on Covid-19.

Importantly, UNICEF and WFP also cooperate with MHA. UNICEF provides milk, plumpy nut and medicine for severely malnourished children and immunization programs, as well as education materials and training of teachers for 9 primary schools, which are managed by MHA. WFP supports moderately malnourished children (<5), pregnant and lactating mothers and TB and HIV patients (and their families) with food and NFIs.

*Results*

MHA worked flexibly to achieve its objectives; for example, in 2018 it responded flexibly to the delay in starting the project. In both 2018 and 2019, it was able to help more people than planned with ox-ploughing and food aid.

It has finalized the infrastructure for this project and is fast professionalizing its management further. As a result, the organization is becoming better placed to extend its activities to other villages and to include new techniques, such as irrigation. All in all, MHA has made great strides forward in its capacity building and professionalization.

*Challenges and Recommendations:*

Importantly, MHA should discuss with Caritas Germany how it can professionalize further, because this would also help in maintaining and expanding the project benefits once funding has ended.

* *Assess the areas for further capacity-building and professionalization within MHA (e.g., strategy formulation), and include a time-schedule for implementation.*

MHA and Caritas Germany have to

* *Discuss synergies and hand-over strategies with WFP, FAO, UNICEF, Dorcas, and Malteser (and possibly how to work together more closely), so that the long-term benefits of the Phineo and Rucksack projects can be safeguarded or even extended.*

Finding good staff in South Sudan is challenging and international organizations generally offer higher wages. In addition, Covid-19 has shown that MHA needs a broad base of staff in case people cannot travel or, in the worst case, pass away.

* *Discuss the possibility of sharing replacement and/or succession plans for all crucial management positions as examples with Caritas Germany and the Phineo partner organizations.*

***Rucksack project***

This project is funded by Caritas Germany to implement the joint decisions of the September 2019 Wau workshop. The decisions were based on the recommendations from last year’s evaluation. The Rucksack project complements the Phineo project and has two objectives.

**Objective 1: Raising awareness and prevention of Covid-19 transmission among the patients and caretakers of Mary Help Hospital and within the surrounding villages**

This project focused more on Covid-19 prevention within the populations of the nine villages, as well as among patients, staff, and caretakers at the hospital. It had a three-month food aid component for patients and their caretakers, because the latter now also had to stay at the hospital.[[22]](#footnote-23) MHA also installed ten tippy-taps to help prevent transmission at water-points.

**Objective 2: Establishment of a Rural Development Center and the start of hygiene and environmentally-friendly income generating pilot activities for the 9 villages involved in the Phineo project**

MHA is establishing a Rural Development Center next to its large demonstration garden in Nyanpath, which is at the geographic center of all nine project villages. At the Center, MHA will teach (medical) soap production, constructing and maintaining two types of energy-saving stoves, and vocational and agronomic skills. It uses the large demonstration garden for ox-ploughing, and producing seeds and seedlings, including shea trees, so that their oil can be used for medical soap production. In addition, the demonstration garden at the hospital is used to teach about growing vegetables and fruits. Finally, MHA is also planning to start a rabbit breeding program at the Rural Development Center (but will not work with guinea pigs, which are not accepted by the local population because they look a bit like rats).

The activities at the Rural Development Center will either enhance food availability or help with more hygienic food utilization, or they will increase access to food, partly through small income-generating activities. They have useful synergy with the other Phineo food security activities and they will help MHA to continue its activities in a less donor-dependent manner.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

The fruit tree seedlings are important, but they cannot address the (growing) need for timber, firewood, and charcoal. The future activities at the Rural Development Center are also important in terms of the overall strategy and sustainability of MHA.

* *Make plans for future activities for the Rural Development Center in Nyanpath (and perhaps also at the hospital). For example:*
  + *Start the rabbit breeding program;*
  + *Check which other animals, e.g., guinea fowls and chickens, can become part of the animal-breeding program;*
  + *Plant fast-growing woodlot trees and distribute their seedlings, which can later be used for timber, firewood and charcoal production in order to reduce deforestation in the long term;*
  + *Introduce bread, biscuit and noodle making;*
  + *Identify which other types of vegetables and fruits can best be sun-dried and start with teaching about sun-drying food;*
  + *Start with water harvesting and drip irrigation;*
  + *Introduce solar panels and/or cassava mills.*
  + *Think through the indicators for each of these activities and establish base-line data for later impact assessment.*

These activities complement the existing education, health, and food security projects. They will also make MHA and the Phineo project outcomes more sustainable.

## The Bishop Gassis Relief and Rescue Foundation

Abyei Town was destroyed in 2008 and 2011. Many IDPs, mostly Ngok Dinka, settled in Agok, which grew into a town of 130.000 people with administrative facilities, a large market, a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)-supported hospital, a government hospital, and several schools. Twic state borders on the Abyei Special Administrative Area.

The overall objective of the Food Relief and Food Security Project for the Agok & Abyei Administrative Area and Turalei, Twic State in South Sudan (2018-2021) is that *targeted households have improved access to essential food requirements at the household level through provision of food and agricultural inputs in both areas*. BGRRF works with three project objectives.

**Objective 1: 350 households from Agok/Abyei and Twic state (including returnees) have improved health and well-being through access to essential foods**

*Implementation Process*

This objective essentially entails a relief operation for 2,450 (= 350 \* 7) people. The local relief and rehabilitation commissions (RRC), which were set up in a 2012-2013 project with Cordaid and Catholic Relief Services, together with BGRRF staff, selected the 350 beneficiary households for 2019-2020. They received a basket of sorghum (50 kg), lentils (25 kg), cooking oil (7.5 ltrs), and 1 kg. of salt in both July and August, which are the worst hunger months. The relief operation needs to be repeated each year of the project, but as the economic status of the beneficiaries of the first year may change, the actual beneficiaries also change from year to year.

10 percent of the relief goods are distributed by the Missionaries of Charity (Sisters of Mother Teresa) in Turalei. The sisters verify “their” households, but reporting is done by the BGRRF.

*Results*

In 2019, BGRRF sampled 50 beneficiaries for interviews.[[23]](#footnote-24) They all confirmed that they had received the items, which helped them to get through the hunger period and improved their health and nutritional status, as they had enough food and did not go hungry. Children were also able to stay in their schools (until these were closed due to Covid-19).[[24]](#footnote-25) The focus groups and household interviews showed that many people struggle and only have one meal a day. Hence, they needed and appreciated the food aid.

Several communities reported that the Misseriya Arabs and the Nuer stole their cows and goats, during armed raids. Occasionally, people were murdered, for example when they went to fetch firewood. The raids severely threaten lives and livelihoods and worsen the already insecure food situation. Moreover, with Covid-19, people have started moving to Wau, Juba, and Khartoum, because they cannot make ends meet with rising food prices. When people go without food for four days, they eat tree leaves. billet—an edible grass and lalop – a wild fruit. In sum, the relief was necessary due to the overall situation of poverty, insecurity, raids, thefts, and high food prices.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

WFP works more with other organizations than BGGRF, but it helped BGRRF with school feeding until Covid-19 struck and the schools had to close. BGRRF prefers to concentrate on sustainable agriculture over emergency food distribution and would like to leave this task as much as possible to WFP. FAO provided sorghum seeds in 2019 and vegetable seeds in 2020, but they did not germinate well enough. IOM did some WASH, but only drills about four boreholes a year. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency left, but may want to come back. BGRRF shares the Agok office with the Green String Network, a peacebuilding organization, and may start working on joint activities in the near future. As a result of the limited aid by other actors, BGRRF is often the only organizations active in parts of ASAA.

* *Discuss the future plans of WFP and its partner organizations, because WFP is limiting itself to supporting school feeding programs in public schools. To what extent can FAO or NGOs take over or initiate follow-up projects?*

High dowry prices (e.g., more than 40 cows) explain the raids. It would be an important contribution to peace and economic development, as well as food security, if these raids stopped. It is therefore essential that the number of cows included in dowries be lowered.

* *Discuss with local partner organizations, local administrations, and religious officials, as well as traditional leaders how to lower the dowries, for example with an awareness-raising and peacebuilding campaign on stopping raids by lowering dowries among the different ethnic groups (Dinka, Nuer, and Misseriya Arabs).*

**Objective 2: 100 households are provided with ox-ploughs to support increased capacity for food production in order to improve household level food security**

*Implementation process*

Despite cultural barriers to using oxen and their limited availability, BGRRF has been able to expand its ox-ploughing from 20 HHs in Meyan Abun in 2018 to 20 HHs in Meyan Abun and 20 in Turalei in 2019. People are increasingly becoming more positive about ox-ploughing, because it saves time and effort, and they appreciate the higher productivity. People are now sharing ploughs in Twic. Unfortunately, the so-called black cotton soil in Abyei is too hard in dry periods, and in rainy periods that rain cannot drain out. As a result, ox-ploughing is more difficult in Abyei than in Twic.

*Results*

The project saw its first full-scale results from working with ox-ploughs in 2019. A 2018-2019 study compared ox-ploughed plots with plots that had been hand cultivated with a hoe and revealed that the ploughed areas had a 50 percent increase in harvest. However, no such study could be carried out in 2019-2020. Training and showing the positive yields of ox-ploughing is crucial to overcoming cultural resistance. “Working with an ox-plough is good and we want to try [to do it].” The quality of the plows is important: lost nuts and bolts[[25]](#footnote-26), as well as spare parts are hard to obtain.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

* *Continue with training and discussing cultural barriers to ox-ploughing with participating households/farmers. Show the positive outcomes of ox-ploughing;*
* *Invest in tractors for those areas where the (black cotton) soil is too heavy for oxen;*
* *Examine whether an ox-breeding and distribution program is feasible;*
* *Build capacity to repair plows quickly and to make spare parts available;*
* *Assess gender-ascribed roles for food production, incl. ox-ploughing, to find out whether one gender overburdens the other.*

Just as with MHA, it is useful to assess the different effects of ox-ploughing.

* *Replicate the 2018-2019 study to assess to which extent an increase in harvest due to ox-ploughing is the result of better soil preparation of existing plots or of an increase in cultivated land.*

**Objective 3: 1000 households are provided with seeds and tools to support increased capacity for food production and provide a more nutritionally diverse household food basket**

*Implementation process*

This objective has two components: *sorghum production* and *joint vegetable gardens*. During house-to-house visits in 9 different villages in June 2019, BGRRF staff, RRCs, and community leaders identified 380 vulnerable HHs. Each of these received 15 kg of sorghum seeds and two hoes. Beneficiaries in four villages received training in land preparation, spacing of seeds, weed control, and harvesting. Close monitoring ensured that they followed the right planting methods to obtain good yields.

The joint vegetable gardens were established close to the river Kiir, to wells, or to boreholes, so that they would always have enough water. Starting in November 2019, after the rainy season, BGRRF formed 17 local groups (with a total of 380 healthy individuals[[26]](#footnote-27) that were able to work). Just as in the MHA project, participants each have their own plot in the joint garden. BGRRF buys seeds locally, because these are generally more drought resistant and the targeted households like these vegetables. In October-November 2019 BGRRF provided okra, eggplant, and tomato seeds, as well as chicken wire for fencing, hoes and spades. Watermelon seeds were distributed in June 2019, as the fruits would have withered away if planted earlier due to a lack of rain. Two trainings took place: one on the economic importance and nutritional value of vegetables, garden planning, land preparation, seed varieties, planting dates, spacing, and planting methods, and one on irrigation methods, weed and insect control, harvesting, storage, distribution, and sales. The actual implementation was led by the BGRRF agricultural officer, who helped with fencing, land preparation, planting and irrigation, weeding, and monitoring of project progress.

Respondents almost always mentioned that the chicken wire is not strong enough, and that goats and other cattle can enter the gardens. Hence, they need more and better wire. Some farmers actually slept in the garden in order to prevent cow herds from coming in at night. In addition, they frequently mentioned pests and would like to use insecticides. They also would like to have pumps and more water-cans, because fetching water from rivers and wells is heavy labor.[[27]](#footnote-28) All participants mentioned the late, irregular rains and intense heat (above 40°C) as serious problems. They seem to help some pests survive, make crops whither, and make animals and people become seriously ill. The Kiir river is now also at a lower level than ever before, and older coping mechanisms, such as hunting hippos and crocodiles, are simply not feasible anymore, as these animals have left the river for most of the year. Fishing, however, continues.

Respondents close to Abyei indicated that they could not collect enough seeds for the next planting season themselves. As long as seed storage facilities are not rebuilt (see below) and seed markets do not function, they will need seed provision by organizations like BGRRF.

BGRRF is also changing its *management*. When both Fr. Biong and Ydo Jacobs left the organization at the end of May, 2019, their replacements were already working in Agok and Nairobi. BGRRF successfully incorporated the auditors’ suggestions to improve its accounting and administration. At the moment, there is criticism calling for all staff to be present more often “on the ground” and in the Agok office. BGRRF has already shifted some of its work (and staff) from Nairobi to Agok and Turalei, but BGRRF needs to move more (or all) of its Nairobi office to either Turalei, Juba or Wau in order to reduce costs and be closer to Agok and Abyei. It also needs to think strategically about how much the organization should focus on Agok and how much on Abyei. Finally, just as with MHA, Covid-19 has shown that the organization cannot depend on a few senior people. As a result, it needs to establish succession plans and replacement rosters. In this vein, it would be a good moment to review its strategy, accounting, and HRM in order to determine how BGRRF can professionalize further. It could learn from the approaches to professionalization taken by MHA and Caritas Gulu.[[28]](#footnote-29)

*Results*

In 2019, rains were good. As a consequence, most of the households needed less food relief. Unfortunately, in summer 2020, rains were late again, so that the next harvest may disappoint; however, BGRRF staff is paying greater attention to ensure that the selected sites for kitchen gardens are near water points that run all year round.

Generally, people were happy with the seeds they received, but some did not germinate well. Just as with the MHA community gardens, the vegetable gardens in this project seem to have a varying impact on income, food access and food availability. There are participants who mention that they have enough food for their households and can sell some surpluses, and use the money either for school fees, medicine, clothing or shoes, or to buy other types of food. Others have indicated that the harvests so far have been rather poor (also due to the heavy rains, pests, and goats or other animals that entering because of weak fences), and that they could only feed their families and not sell any surplus. “Beneficiaries are able to harvest more than four times from their gardens,”[[29]](#footnote-30) but there are differences among the households. In other words, food access and availability have increased, but not enough for all participants. Although participants are able to better deal with the hunger gap, they cannot do so without some relief in July and August.

Regarding food utilization, the respondents pointed out that they could not yet produce enough seeds for the next planting season. They faced a hard choice between immediate consumption and saving seeds for planting.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

* *Discuss with Caritas Germany and Phineo partners the possibility of temporary relief food distribution;*
* *Discuss with Caritas Germany and Phineo partners the possibility of alternative forms of pest control (ashes, other traditional means);*
* *Assess the functioning of the borehole gardens. Which of these gardens do not have enough water for the whole dry period? Can there be drilling for the gardens?*
* *Provide stronger wire to fence (and protect) the vegetable gardens;*
* *Elaborate a climate change strategy beyond reforestation with fruit trees. For example, include fast growing trees for timber, firewood, and charcoal, as well as biogas, water harvesting and drought resistant crops;*
* *Assess the management areas where BGRRF should professionalize further. Develop a plan for relocation to Turalei and/or Wau or Juba;*

Table 5: Nyandeng (not her real name)

|  |
| --- |
| “Before the project, we could only farm a small area around the house and sometimes make a little money by selling crops. As a result of the project, the situation has improved and we produce more food.  I have received some seeds and tools. BGRRF gave us sorghum, a maloda, and sickles. At the moment, I eat what I produce, because there is not enough to sell at the market. Fortunately, I own enough land. But I don’t have livestock because the Misseriya Arabs stole my animals and now I only have chickens. Some herds move here, but they belong to brothers from this area; we talk gently with them, when their herds get into our garden.  I do earn money from groundnuts and cutting grass (reed, DD), but you need to cut and run, because the area, where we cut is not safe. I was once taken captive by the Misseriya Arabs. We were with three women. The leader of their group said that we had to go with them and I told him that was no problem, “I will go with you, because I have nothing to eat here.” He then said “No problem” and gave me 10 SP for tea and left us. If they had been bad people, they would have killed us. Two other women had been killed earlier. One was pregnant, the other was old. We were just lucky. Insecurity is a bigger problem than the quality of seeds. At the moment, I can only eat one meal a day.  I have not worked with the ox-plow, but I can learn how to use it. We have a poor income, and it is even difficult to address our personal needs; just look at my feet. As a result, we do not have seeds for next year. The poor rains and the high prices due to Corona made us eat the seeds.  It is also very difficult to obtain work here. Our children have earned certificates, but they do not have work. They help me with farm work and within the house. They cannot go far, because they may get killed.”  Nyandeng can gather firewood and charcoal, but security and theft are a problem. She tells that she is always afraid. “My tukul is the last in the area, and I do sleep with fear.” “Corona as an illness is not as bad as the Misseriya Arabs.” |

***Rucksack project***

As a follow-up to the Wau workshop, BGRRF decided that it wanted to strengthen reforestation as well as seed storage in order to further contribute to improved food security. Deforestation and climate change are worsening and require countermeasures. Moreover, all seed storage facilities had been destroyed systematically during the war.

**Objective 1: Construction of a seed store to assist in seed recollection for redistribution in the next planting season for 1000 HHs**

Ten per cent of assorted food crops will be sourced, mainly from the community, for recollection and storage. The community will be informed about the need for seed recollection and storage. The main purpose is to improve access to seeds for more sustainable food security.

**Objective 2: Distribution and planting of tree seedlings (1,500 seedlings)**

This objective contributes to the improvement of livelihoods and increased resilience to climate change. The project activities include community sensitization (which includes taking note of their preferences for specific types of trees (fruit trees, short-rotation trees, or shrubs for fuel wood)), tree nursery establishment, and distribution and planting of the trees. The seedlings will be distributed to 500 HHs and 11 schools. Hopefully, in time some of the trees will also function as windbreakers for schools.

Finally, the rucksack project also provided for recruiting a MEAL coordinator, who will assist the program manager in monitoring project process, and who will compile project reports and data using project indicators. At the time of this evaluation, BGRRF was selecting candidates for this position.

It is still too early to tell what the outcomes of this Rucksack project are, but its objectives reinforce and complement the Phineo project activities.

*Recommendation:*

* *Carry out an impact assessment of the reforestation activities.*

## Caritas Gulu

Uganda is well-known for its relatively liberal refugee policies, in which refugee households receive a small plot of land for agriculture. However, these “individual arable plots of land … do not produce enough yield for refugees to become wholly self-reliant.”[[30]](#footnote-31)

The overall goal of this project is *to contribute to addressing the humanitarian needs of the South Sudanese refugees in Adjumani and Lamwo districts through an integrated approach with the aim of improving welfare and ensuring minimal living conditions*. In line with the official government strategy, 70 percent of the project resources go to the refugees and 30 percent go to the host community. Caritas Gulu has carried out similar projects since 2013. As a result, it knows the project components very well and its staff has considerable experience in implementing them.

**Objective 1: Empowerment of 360 South Sudanese refugee youths through offering short vocational skills training**

*Implementation process*

Every project year, 120 youths receive a 4-month intensive vocational training in seven thematic areas: 1) Block laying and concrete practices; 2) Hair cutting and hair dressing; 3) Tailoring and garments; 4) Carpentry and joinery; 5) Driving and basic motor vehicle mechanics; 6) Metal fabrication; and 7) Catering and hotel management. Entrepreneurship is a cross-cutting theme in the curriculum of this training. Upon graduation, each student receives starting capital and a start-up kit. Most settlements now have enough tailors, so that in the next round of vocational skills training, there will be less tailoring students. In addition, Caritas would like to lengthen the vocational training period to six months in order to be able to enhance the knowledge and skills of the participants and to conform to Ugandan education policies. In this way, the vocational skills diplomas will be recognized throughout Uganda.

Demand for this training, and secondary education in general, is high, so that Caritas in cooperation with local leaders is able to select promising students. From mid-August to December 2019, 72 men and 48 women took part in this training course. Half of them studied in Adjumani, and the other half in Palabek. However, due to Covid-19, the training of a cohort of 120 youths could not take place in 2020.

Recently, UNHCR paid brick layers and carpenters, who had completed the vocational skills training, to construct shelters for persons with special needs (PSNs). Similarly, youths who had learned tailoring made face masks. They earned UGX 1000 for each face mask. Some of them said they had made “100,000 masks.” These vocational skills graduates were able to make a living and support their families. In addition, some graduates from carpentry and joinery have set up their own workshops, which are profitable. They partner with other youths and share knowledge, skills, and tools, and they market their products to refugees and the host communities.

*Results*

Most of these students are now able to make a living from their new livelihoods. This form of diversification of the local economy supports non-agricultural activities that are more resistant to weather shocks than agricultural activities are. Although it is likely that the graduates who are able to earn more money can also improve food access and utilization, there is only anecdotal evidence, and as yet impact assessment to confirm this.[[31]](#footnote-32)

*Challenges and Recommendations[[32]](#footnote-33)*

* *Assess how and to what extent the graduates benefit from the start-up kits and start-up capital;*
* *Assess the extent to which these students, after graduation can establish their livelihoods and improve their food security;*
* *Discuss how to create more opportunities for secondary education with partner organizations, as well as OPM and UNHCR;*
* *Further develop vocational skills training. Which new types of vocational skills are necessary (e.g., digitalization and transport)?*
* *Work with UNHCR to regularly identify areas in which vocational skills graduates can earn money by assisting PSNs.*

**Objective 2: To strengthen 360 refugees and host community members in peacebuilding and conflict resolution**

*Implementation process*

The training of community leaders, especially from the Refugee Welfare Committees and Local Councils, (84 refugees and 36 host community members in 2019-2020) aims to build bridges between leaders of ethnic groups among the refugees, as well as between refugees and host communities, in order to help them promote peace and reduce violence. Community Development Officers, who are civil servants from Adjumani and Lamwo, provided the training with backstopping from Caritas Gulu staff. Representatives from OPM and UNHCR were also present. Topics included understanding different types of conflict, conflict causes and effects, steps and methods of conflict resolution, mediation, and referral pathways (e.g., to the police), and activities to promote peace.

Together with Sub-County Leaders and the Community Development Officers, these leaders engaged in peace dialogues with approximately 840 refugees and 360 host community members on the conflicts between their communities. The dialogues entail understanding context and root-causes of conflicts and tensions, acknowledging abuses and crimes on both sides, and mitigating (or preventing potential) conflicts. At the end of the dialogue, the participants pledge to address tensions surrounding such issues as water point use, fire-wood sites, food distribution centers, stone quarries, gender-based violence, alcoholism and drug abuse, and land conflicts, in a peaceful manner. In addition, Peacebuilding Committees (PBC) are set up to address: 1) Domestic violence; 2) Land disputes with host communities; 3) Drug abuse in the settlements; and 4) Theft and violence at water points.

In cooperation with OPM and UNHCR, Caritas also contributed to the so-called peace weeks, in which refugees from different ethnic and religious backgrounds carry out joint activities in which they imagine what a peaceful future in South Sudan would look like.

Finally, Caritas also produced information, education, and communication (IEC) materials, as well as radio spot messages. In 2019-2020, the IEC materials consisted of banners, and flyers on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Caritas also bought a zoom communication system to continue interaction with refugees and host communities during the Covid-19 epidemic. A nearby radio station broadcasts the spot messages in two local languages to 1,500 refugees and host-community members.

*Results*

Peacebuilding/conflict resolution is a lengthy process that requires continuous reinforcement. The peacebuilding and conflict resolution training brings together people from the various refugee groups and host communities, who get to know each other better and focus on issues of joint importance, such as responsible use of scarce natural resources, sustainable development, and mitigation of existing conflicts. “Some refugees have been intolerant and have fought over minor issues, especially during food distribution, at bore holes, in the market, and at health facilities. As leaders we have now been empowered to intervene before the conflict escalates to the community.” “We have also solved several disputes between refugees and host communities, especially on the issue of land. As a way of survival, some refugees hire land to cultivate crops. After tilling the land and planting crops, the landlord takes possession of the crops, which results in fights.” Given the high level of violence that many refugees have experienced before their flight and the high level of violence in the camps, which hampers in particular food access, peacebuilding is an important but indirect way to enhance food security.[[33]](#footnote-34)

*Challenges and Recommendations*

Several people involved in the peacebuilding activities mentioned that they sometimes had to get up in the middle of the night, or during rains, or had to walk long distances. Some CDOs are involved in training in peacebuilding and co-existence, but have not had much training themselves.

* *Study whether it is possible to provide these people with tools, such as bicycles, flashlights, and stationery, so that they can carry out their activities more effectively.*
* *Develop capacity-building for CDOs, including peacebuilding. This could include the contract approach that DMI uses to prevent land conflicts for marginal people and/or traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of host communities and/or refugees (see also objective 4).*

The effect of the radio broadcasts and IEC materials on peace is not clear.

* *Assess the impact of the radio-spot messages and IEC materials.*

This could be part of a larger impact assessment. In all likelihood, the impact of the peace activities can only be assessed in cooperation with the other organizations, especially UNHCR and OPM, that engage in these activities.

* *Carry out a joint impact evaluation of the peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities with OPM/UNHCR and their implementing partners (DRC and WLF).*

**Objective 3: Support 3,600 South Sudanese Refugee Persons with Special Needs**

*Implementation process*

Each year, 1,200 PSNs receive non-food items. The PSNs are identified either when they cross the border or during the annual joint PSN survey under the leadership of UNHCR. Each PSN receives several non-food items (NFI), namely 1 jerry can, 1 blanket, 1 saucepan, 1 mosquito-net, 1 basin, 3 pieces of assorted clothes (for men, women and children), 2 plates, 2 bars of laundry soap, and 2 cups.

During last year’s evaluation, it appeared that the PSN system does not always work well: for example, when a single parent dies but the remaining children do not become listed as PSNs. As only the head of household is allowed to receive goods (e.g., food and NFI), this severely complicates their already difficult lives. Although this research could not identify how frequently this happens, several respondents suggested that this still happened regularly.

As written above, participants from the vocational skills courses can also help PSNs, including the elderly, through building housing, which would also help to reduce theft of their remaining possessions.

*Results*

According to Caritas, these “essential household items [go] a long way to reduce the vulnerability of particularly unaccompanied girls, women, and male youth.”[[34]](#footnote-35) Respondents appreciated the NFIs they had received.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

Caritas should address the issues of whether and when the criteria for becoming listed as PSNs are fulfilled, in particular for PSNs that do not receive aid:

* *Identify why these persons do not get on the PSN list. Is the problem caused in the settlement or should Caritas enroll these PSNs at the UNHCR office in Adjumani?*

In addition, in corporation with OPM and UNHCR, Caritas should continue to assess and address specific vulnerabilities, such as those of children and survivors of gender-based violence:

* *Raise awareness on GBV and reporting mechanisms, including referral pathways;*
* *Continue with basic and/or community-based assistance for vulnerable individuals such as children and GBV survivors;*
* *Invest in infrastructure and assets, including security lights in common areas, safe spaces, child-friendly spaces, and counselling centers for women, as well as psychosocial, medical and legal support for GBV-survivors;*
* *Strengthen empowerment and livelihood support for GBV-survivors;*
* *Support elderly people and other PSNs with housing.*

**Objective 4: To support 3,600 refugees and host-community members with agri-based enterprises for sustainable food security and livelihoods**

*Implementation*

With support from refugee leaders, Caritas identified 120 farmers (84 refugees and 36 host community members) for training on agronomic best practices regarding the seasonal calendar, land preparation, nursery bed preparation, watering and moisture retention, transplanting, weed control, thinning, pest and disease control, and post-harvest handling. These farmers established their own demonstration gardens in order to transfer knowledge and practices to other community members. In addition, 36 lead farmers and 4 Caritas staff members visited two demonstration farms to learn more about growing crops and raising animals.

A total of 3,600 farmers (1,200 per year) receive support during the project period. They are all supported with agricultural inputs, in particular vegetable seeds, farm tools, and trainings. They also visit and learn at the demonstration gardens of the farmers that have received the agronomic best-practices training. In terms of food utilization, special attention was paid to sun-drying vegetables as additional foodstuff for the off-season.

As in last year’s evaluation, many farmers mentioned that long dry spells, pests, and diseases make gaining a livelihood far more difficult than before. Lack of water and late rains, as well as small plots, also hamper agriculture. Moreover, refugee farmers stated that they had rented uncultivated land from host communities to make it ripe for agriculture. However, the local owners would terminate the rent, sometimes even before they could harvest, so that the refugee farmers could not reap the benefits of their work. As indicated above, this has led to serious conflicts.

*Results*

New and effective agronomic practices have been introduced, but due to structural problems beyond the scope of the project (small plots, rent, etc.) food access and availability have improved less than intended.

*Challenges and recommendations*

Caritas should identify how it can help refugees protect land that they have started working on. Last year’s recommendations to address this problem have now been taken on in the Rucksack project (see below). Nevertheless, two issues remain:

* *Establish guidelines for dealing with stray animals to prevent destruction from crops;*
* *Introduce natural methods of pest control (perhaps in cooperation with the other Phineo partners and DMI).*

It remains important to help farmers to diversify further and to identify additional crops and/or uses of crops: for example, drought resistant crops and types of moisture retention and irrigation. In addition, farmers need support in getting their produce to the markets. For instance, with help from Caritas one successful farmer obtained a tricycle for transport.

* *Examine which other crops local farmers are profitably growing and selling (e.g., red chili peppers, sunflowers, and avocados);*
* *Check which farmers are interested in establishing medicinal herbal gardens;*
* *Identify and implement forms of moisture retention and irrigation (e.g., simple drip irrigation).*
* *Apply (new) forms of transport (e.g., tricycles).*

Similarly, in other parts of Africa, people improve their protein intake with guinea pigs and rabbits, which they can tend close to their homes. As these are rodents, they procreate quickly, but require relatively little space and food. If specific groups (e.g., pregnant women) suffer from a protein deficiency or anemia this would be a possible durable solution.

* *Introduce guinea pigs, rabbits and guinea fowls or other sources of animal protein.*
* *Carry out a study on the incidence of malnutrition in the refugee and host communities over the course of the year. If there is malnutrition, the reasons for it should be determined, so that the food security program can respond and achieve its objectives.*

This study could benefit from MHA’s experience in studying malnutrition and assessing the area under cultivation by measuring produce. Such a study is also important for Caritas Gulu, because it will help to examine the outcomes of its work more regularly, in particular as they relate to behavioral changes in the target groups, which are harder to assess than the direct outputs. In particular, it is not yet clear how the logframe indicators (in percentage points) will be measured. This issue will come back during impact assessment. Hence, such studies would also improve monitoring and evaluation. In a similar vein, the effectiveness of agronomic training is hard to measure because it is an outcome, not an output. A separate study could measure the impact that the training has in changing agricultural practices towards sustainable farming, food access and availability, and marketing of surpluses.

* *Carry out an evaluation study of the impact of agronomic training, which can help to identify how the training can be improved in the future and will simultaneously explain to Caritas Germany and Phineo the broader impact of the project.*

Finally, Caritas Gulu also received an independent *audit*, which recommended strengthening some internal controls, which Caritas was able to implement. The organization will start working with QuickBooks accounting software at the end of 2020.

***Rucksack project***

The Rucksack project builds further on the experiences the Phineo projects. It is also deeply influenced by the Covid-19 epidemic.

**Objective 1: Support the most vulnerable people affected by Covid-19 with food items**

Due to the Covid-19 epidemic and the subsequent lockdown, Caritas needed to provide food aid (beans, maize flour, and cooking oil) to vulnerable populations. As a result of the lockdown Caritas could only provide this food aid through church structures.

**Objective 2: Support the handling of land disputes handling and sensitization among the local communities in the parishes**

Caritas aims to support a legal aid program, community sensitization on Ugandan land law, and mediation, as well as demarcating and seeking land parcel titles. However, these activities had to be postponed due to the ban on large gatherings during the Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, Caritas staff members could not travel to DMI Juba to see how this organization approaches the problem of prematurely terminated rents.

*Challenges and Recommendations:*

* *Contact DMI in Juba to learn from the ways that this organization has used negotiations and group contracts to ensure that displaced and marginalized people can continue cultivating on rented land they have started working on.*
* *Examine whether there are other traditional conflict resolution methods that can be used or adapted to prevent further conflicts about land.*
* *Establish new ways for community sensitization on land disputes, e.g., through radio-programs in local languages and call-in question and answer sessions.*

**Objective 3: Promote climate change adaptation through tree planting and production of drought-tolerant crops—cassava and maize**

Northern Uganda suffers from prolonged droughts, severe land degradation, high levels of deforestation, and over-utilization of natural resources, which are exacerbated by climate change and the presence of a high number of refugees.

Alarmed by growing food insecurity during the lockdown, the government encouraged farmers to continue to farm for their own families and for commerce. Caritas Gulu planted 76 acres of cassava, 76 acres of maize, as well as woodlot seedlings (eucalyptus, teak, musisi, and mvule) and fruit tree seedlings (hass avocado and jack fruit) at the St. Isidore Farm, given by the Archdiocese of Gulu.

*Challenges and Recommendations:*

* *Assess with the other Phineo partners and DMI which other drought-tolerant seeds and seedlings (woodlot and fruit trees) they are using (e.g., local sorghum varieties, mango, moringa, and banana) and how these can be used optimally;*
* *Check alternative ways of agriculture that involve tree planting, such as the food from forest.[[35]](#footnote-36)*

It is important to note that neither the Phineo project nor the Rucksack project are able to address structural aspects of climate change, war, and corruption. Nor are they able to address problems such as small plot sizes (and the often rocky and infertile soil) and environmental degradation.

**Objective 4: Support staff capacity building, learning visits and consortium formation**

This objective focuses especially on the managerial follow-up to the 2019 Wau workshop. First, the organizations planned to strengthen their MEAL-activities, because they noticed that their MEAL activities were not strong enough. They were often concerned with description of activities (e.g., the delivery processes of goods (NFI, seeds, seedlings) and services (training and peacebuilding)) and remained at the output level instead of focusing more on (quantitative) outcomes and/or impact.

In response, Caritas is selecting new MEAL staff members and training existing ones on MEAL. Second, it wants to set up a consortium with the other Phineo partners and DMI focusing on:

* Joint resource mobilization;
* Joint advocacy (with church organizations and other NGOs or with UN organizations);
* Planning for joint capacity building (e.g., strategy formulation, contingency planning, MEAL, human resource management, and accounting)
* Common projects to further improve existing activities in reforestation, return of displaced people, etc.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 no mutual learning visits were possible since March of 2020. Realizing this objective will be facilitated greatly by the end of the pandemic.

# COMPARING THE ORGANIZATIONS

## Introduction

What does the preceding description and analysis mean for building capacity of the three organizations? I will first look at the similarities and differences among the organizations to determine in which areas they can learn from each other. Next, I will look at substantial areas where they can benefit from developing new activities and adapting or expanding old ones, particularly addressing climate change. Finally, I will look at the managerial areas, where they can support each other.

## Similarities and Differences

All three organizations are Roman Catholic organizations that provide relief and development services to displaced South Sudanese and host communities. All projects address crucial needs of these populations related to food security and forms of social organizing (e.g., vocational training, peacebuilding, and integrating displaced people). In this way, they promote food security as a form of self-reliance. The number and magnitude of their activities are growing, and they receive support from Caritas Germany. After the September 2019 Wau workshop, the three organizations and DMI began working on the Rucksack projects.[[36]](#footnote-37) In agriculture, the organizations all work with seeds, seedlings, and tools, but they differ in the types and amounts they provide. Similarly, they also differ in their types of training and use of ox-ploughing. MHA and BGRRF are expanding ox-ploughing, whereas DMI also works with tractors, and Caritas Gulu is limited in using ox-ploughing due to the relative small plots in the settlement camps. All organizations now have demonstration gardens, and they can discuss how to expand these to provide more training on food security issues varying from rabbit breeding to seedlings and from peacebuilding to seed storage. The organizations can further compare the implementation and evaluation of activities, such as vocational skills training, rabbit breeding, and reforestation. In other refugee projects, Caritas Gulu works more with VSLAs and cash-based assistance. With its Rucksack project, DMI has now begun setting up VSLAs. MHA and BGRRF can also introduce VSLA for more income-generating activities. MHA, BGRRF, and DMI can also discuss whether they should offer cash-based assistance. DMI and Caritas can compare their vocational skills trainings.

Regarding these similarities and differences, this section identifies two groups of cross-cutting themes that the organizations can work on. The first group are substantial ones, namely climate change, reforestation, demonstration gardens, and peacebuilding, in particular relating to dowries. The second group is more managerial: capacity-sharing, contingency planning, training, and linkages with other actors, such as (public) transport companies, banks, and international organizations (UN and NGOs). The ways in which the organizations are working on these issues requires careful comparison to tease out what works best. Generally, it is

Table 6: Comparison of MHA, BGRRF, Caritas Gulu (and DMI Juba)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Professionalization / Capacity-building** | Continue working with Dorcas Aid International and share experience with the Caritas Germany and the other organizations  Develop and execute a plan for further professionalization | Use changes in staff and leadership could be used for further professionalization  Develop and execute a plan for staff replacement and succession | Works with consultants from Caritas Germany and GIZ on strategy formulation, strengthening M&E and more generally organizational development. | Works with consultants from India and Plan International Khartoum, as well as with Caritas Germany, to improve M&E, HRM, and finance and accounting. | Compare strategy formulation, M&E, HRM and organizational change. Compare outcomes of activities.  Work with Phineo capacity-building project and link organizational change to (improving) service delivery. Caritas Germany has now started working on safeguarding (against GBV by staff-members of Caritas and its partner organizations). |
| **dPeacebuilding** | Does not works directly on peacebuilding | Is deeply influenced by cattle raids (and large dowries). Could introduce peacebuilding | PBCs and other peacebuilding activities could also address raids and the size of dowries. | Peacebuilding and reconciliation committees could also address raids and the size of dowries. | All organizations could think about what they can do reduce the number raids and the size of dowries |
| **Social organizing**  **(to strengthen livelihoods and self-reliance / resilience)** | Promote joint community gardens and ox-ploughing. Some women’s groups and savings associations have formed spontaneously | Works with RRC for identification of the target groups.  Promote joint vegetable gardens and ox-ploughing | Works with PBCs, VSLAs in other projects, and farmers that train/disseminate best agronomic practices | Works with women’s groups, FAs, peacebuilding and reconciliation committee, health promoters, and local teacher’s incentives, parent-teacher-associations, and village education committees. Especially within women groups, FAs and PRCs, it has also promoted savings. Also works with women’s and farmers’ federations. | Compare different forms of social organization. Focus especially on FAs, women’s groups, PRCs/PBCs and saving/VSLAs and identify the diffusion of agronomic best practices |
| **Health** | Has set up a hospital, and nursing and midwifery education, and feeding center  Carries out MUAC studies that are relevant to study the impact of the food security project. Also Covid-19 sensitization | Not relevant (MSF operates a hospital in Agok) | Works less in the health care sector | Works with medical camps, including health promoters.  Carries out health and hygiene education at schools.  Carries out counseling. | The organizations can learn from each other, but the degree to which they want to work on health is a strategic choice |
| **Food security/**  **Agriculture** | Food security project (food aid, seeds, seedlings, tools, training, ox-ploughing). Now operates two demonstration gardens. Plans rabbit breeding. Further develop natural pest control. Introduce post-harvest handling with bags. | Food security project (food aid, seeds, tools, training, ox-ploughing). Boreholes need to be well-fenced. School feeding. Develop natural pest control and seed storage Introduce post-harvest bags. | Food security project (seeds, tools, training)) Some food aid, Works less with ox-ploughing due to small plots. Has set up a demonstration garden.  Agricultural work increasingly linked with VSLAs. Further develop natural pest control. Already works with post-harvest-bags. | Works with joint cultivation area/demonstration garden, seed and tool distributions, boreholes, and vocational/agricultural training  Employs contract approach to obtain and develop land for IDPs and other marginalized landless people Further develop natural pest control. Introduce post-harvest bags. | Many similarities, which means that the various differences in execution offer important learning opportunities  Expand working with small livestock (e.g., guinea pigs or rabbits), ox-ploughing and contract approach. Compare the utility of the different combinations of seeds provided. Further develop natural pest control. Introduce post-harvest bags. |
| **Sector** | **MHA** | **BGRRF** | **Caritas Gulu** | **DMI (this information is based on research in 2018 and 2019 and its activities may have changed recently)** | **Learning opportunities for all organizations** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Synergies among different projects** | Synergies health, education, food aid and food security, peacebuilding, and strengthening management/  professionalization | Synergies education, and food aid and food security (e.g., school feeding), peacebuilding and strengthening management/  professionalization | Displays important synergies, especially with food aid and food security, VSLA and strengthening management/  professionalization | Many synergies through social organizing and combining activities and strengthening management/  professionalization | Compare synergies among the projects and strengthening management/  professionalization |
| **Return of displaced people** | Continue/expand food security and other programs | Continue/expand food security and other programs  Discuss strategic choice to which extent it should help people return to Abyei, as this may also affect activities in Agok | Help refugees with their return | Continue/expand food security and other programs | Develop contingency plans  Exchange information and experience in case of peace and return to help refugees prepare the return and/or help them upon arrival. Check policies of fUNMISS, UNHCR and WFP |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Education** | School of Nursing and Midwifery  Degree courses in Nursing and Midwifery, supports elementary schools, Agronomic training | Primary and secondary schools in Agok | Considerable experience with vocational training (in combination with VSLAs), less with schools. Sees need for more secondary and adult education | Has expanded vocational training beyond masonry and beautification.  Expands schools further.  Plan secondary and/or adult education | Compare vocational training activities with each other; Caritas Gulu has long experience in this area. MHA has important experience in nursing and midwifery education, BGRRF and DMI have more experience with primary and secondary education. DMI has rapidly expanded vocational skills training. |
| **NFI and cash-based assistance** | Has introduced soap production. Could do more with NFIs and cash-based assistance | Could introduce soap production, NFIs and cash-based assistance | Distributes soap and other NFIs; also has experience with cash-based assistance | Education on different forms of soap production very popular. Limited experience with other NFIs. No experience with cash-based assistance | MHA, BGRRF, and Caritas Gulu can expand local soap production. Compare need for and work on NFIs. Cash-based assistance could become a new service-delivery modality. |
| **Safety and security**  (also with effects on deforestation and health) | Has two types of energy-saving stoves and/ provides training to make (and protect from rain) energy- saving mud stoves | Has no experience with energy-saving stoves and/or explaining how to make (and protect from rain) energy-saving mud stoves  Severe problems with raids by Misseriya and Nuer | Has experience with different types of energy-saving stoves | Has no experience with energy-saving stoves and/or explaining how to make (and protect from rain) energy- saving mud stoves). | Learn more about best practices with different types of energy-saving stoves, so that people need less charcoal and women and children need to fetch less firewood |
| **Climate change / Reforestation** | Has started to do more on climate change adaptation. Introduced tree planting / reforestation. | Wants to do more on climate change adaptation. Introduced tree planting / reforestation. | Would like to do more on reforestation and climate change adaptation, e.g., in agriculture and in reforestation, Introduced tree planting / reforestation. | Wants to do more on climate change adaptation. Introduced tree planting / reforestation. | Compare new and already established methods and activities for moisture retention and irrigation, as well as drought-resistant crops  Develop a reforestation approach further to include measuring its effectiveness. All organizations could work more with a locally adapted forest for food approach |
|  | **MHA** | **BGRRF** | **Caritas Gulu** | **DMI (this information is based on research in 2018 and 2019 and may have changed recently** | **Learning opportunities for all organizations** |

important to search for the optimal combination of short-term humanitarian aid and more long-term development activities. In other words, these cross-cutting themes are not just important for enhancing food aid and food security, but also have a broader economic and ecological relevance.

In addition, the four organizations need to *professionalize* further, and a comparison of their similarities and differences shows ways in which they can continue to learn from each other. Moreover, if the refugees from Northern Uganda and IDPs in South Sudan can—or are forced to—return “home”, these three organizations should be in close touch in order to exchange information about the refugees, their needs and their return plans. Currently, WFP is decreasing its food rations, so that some refugees will (have to) leave the settlement camps in Uganda and the IDP camps in South Sudan.

Deforestation intensifies the negative effects of *climate change*, in particular droughts, and is also a manifestation of the *general lack of resources* that can contribute to local conflicts. These two issues lead to greater vulnerability of the population and could reduce, or even wipe out, the gains of the three projects. Like Caritas Gulu, MHA has now introduced *energy-saving stoves*, so that people need to fetch firewood less often, which enhances their security. In the end, people can then spend less money and time on firewood or charcoal and inhale less smoke leading to less respiratory infections; deforestation may also be slowed.[[37]](#footnote-38) BGRRF and DMI can do the same. Especially with the Rucksack projects, all organizations have taken up reforestation, in particular with fruit trees.

## Substantial Issues

The issue of *climate change* overlaps with *deforestation*, which necessitates food aid and food security activities. Worsening climate change also leads to more conflicts. Although this study is not a climate survey, respondents mentioned the same points as last year indicating climate change:

* The weather has become more extreme with irregular and late rains and intense heat (above 40°C), but also with uncommon heavy rains. It seems like the rainy season is starting later and getting shorter;
* More dry winds from the Sahara, less humid ones from the Indian Ocean;
* Later harvests due to later rains also mean less optimal use of second planting season;
* Army worms that are not washed away by the rain and reduce the harvest;
* Wells running dry;
* Crops that are less productive (“They are withering away”);
* Armed raids in the ASAA now occur over a longer period of time, because they normally cease during the rainy season;
* Rivers are at a very low level and river vegetation is disappearing;
* Some coping mechanisms, such as hunting crocodiles or hippos, are not possible anymore.

Climate change will deeply influence farming over the next several decades (if not longer). The organizations have already taken on reforestation and drought resistant crops. The organizations and Caritas Germany could set up specific programs to plan for and address climate change.

*Challenges and Recommendations:*

* *Develop a strategy for climate change adaptation:*
  + *Implement (new) irrigation techniques (e.g., drip irrigation) and where possible use motorized irrigation, for example based on diesel motors or solar panels;*
  + *Identify (more) drought resistant crops and implement techniques to deal with drought (e.g., rain harvesting);*
  + *Identify ways to have more food access and availability during longer dry spells (e.g., sun-drying vegetables, forest for food);*
  + *Identify successful experiences, which can be copied under similar conditions;*
  + *In line with the Rucksack projects, discuss the possibility of short, small emergency food emergency aid/relief projects that accompany the food security projects in cases of extreme weather, such as drought and floods;*
  + *Identify experts who can further develop and implement this climate change adaption strategy.*

The organizations are increasingly—and quite successfully—working with demonstration gardens, for example for agronomic training, ox-ploughing, breeding small animals, this puts them in a position of being able to provide food aid, seeds, seedlings, and cassava cuttings. These gardens are central to improving local farming and food security, and also contribute to dealing with climate change. The organizations could therefore compare the ways in which they work with the demonstration gardens and the plans they make to extend them.

*Challenges and Recommendations:*

* *In addition to developing a strategy for climate change adaptation (see above) also work to:*
  + *Ensure that demonstration gardens have seed storages and/or help building seed storages (e.g., by brick laying and carpentry students from the vocational skills training);*
  + *Assess the extent to which the demonstration gardens can provide seeds, cuttings, and seedlings on an annual basis;*
  + *Compare the activities and plans for the demonstration gardens of the partner organizations.*

The organizations use slightly different terms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. So far, they have not worked consistently on preventing raids. Due to the raids people are killed and kidnapped, goods and livestock are stolen, people live in fear and are being impoverished and they sometimes move cattle to safer places, which undermines food security and economic development. In economic terms, their property rights are not respected, so that they either cannot or dare not invest in cattle or agriculture. Stealing cattle for high dowries plays a central role in the raids. The communities served by BGRRF are especially susceptible to raids. The organizations could discuss ways to reduce the size of the dowries in cooperation with traditional leaders, local officials, religious authorities, traders and other people, who are influential within their own community and are able to establish linkages across communities.

*Challenges and Recommendations:*

* *Identify approaches and contacts to bring down the size of dowries and end the raids.*

## Managerial Issues: From Capacity-building to Capacity Sharing

MHA, BGRRF, and Caritas Gulu, as well as DMI, are growing rapidly. This growth should be accompanied with a professionalization/capacity-building process, if the organizations want to maintain or increase the quality of their work. In response, the three organizations are *improving* their *management*: MHA with a temporary accountant from India and support from Dorcas Aid International, BGRRF with new staff-members and now moving activities and staff from Nairobi to Turalei, Caritas Gulu with the help of the *Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ). The audits have also indicated management improvements.

The organizations can learn from each other in terms of substance and process. In their program management, all three organizations are working on becoming more outcome-oriented. In terms of professionalization, they could further strengthen their MEAL, HRM, strategy formulation, and reporting and accounting systems. In addition, they can carry out more needs assessments and baseline and impact studies. They are appointing MEAL staff members and engaging in training. Once the Covid-19 pandemic subsides, they can also consider joint training for their staff members, and *learning visits* to each other. Such regular learning visits, for example once a year, are useful to observe and discuss which changes and learning that has taken place. During such visits, members of these organizations could work out parts of comparative table 6 in more detail, for example on irrigation, demonstration gardens or seed storage.

*MEAL, Baseline and Indicators*

None of the three organizations had a baseline in its original project proposals, because the needs were obvious. Nevertheless, MHA has already worked with MUAC and was able estimate roughly the growth in area under cultivation due to ox-ploughing by counting the bags of produce. A set of indicators that could provide a baseline for impact assessment in food security include

1. MUAC measurement of malnutrition as MHA has done;
2. Increase in households using ox-ploughing;
3. Land area under cultivation/the increase in cultivated land due to ox-ploughing;
4. Number of all year usable wells/water availability;
5. Number of persons participating;
6. Dietary diversity;
7. Number of meals a day;
8. Harvest yields;
9. Increased income;
10. Amount of seeds produced for the next season;
11. Number of children that have to leave school, because parents cannot pay school fees;
12. Number of people leaving the villages or camps.

The current indicators of the organizations and the food security projects are mostly output-oriented. Such indicators are useful, because they show whether the project activities have been carried out. However, and especially with more development-oriented activities, it is also useful to include outcome-oriented indicators. This implies that measures of quality and behavioral or institutional change should be included. For evaluations, such indicators would provide more information on effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Other examples include accounting for graduated vocational skills students who train their employees or farmers, who in turn train others in ox-ploughing or employ other people, or measuring the impact of agronomic training in terms of output and behavior. As the organizations are working more with reforestation, they should now think about measuring its impact. This can become challenging, because its effects on food security and micro-climate can take years to come about.

Although the overall project objectives and most sub-project goals are in all likelihood being reached, the three organizations cannot yet sufficiently prove that they are doing so, or how specific external factors are influencing their operations. It is insufficiently clear how they are going to measure their indicators, especially when the organizations use percentage points. This issue should be clarified in the near future.

In their logical frameworks, they could include colons with the baseline value, the current value, and the goal value of such indicators so that the value of (key) outcome indicator can be tracked over time. Explaining why, how, and to what extent these objectives have been realized is as important as achieving them because this helps to draw the relevant management lessons.

More generally, the organizations are developing their M&E into monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL). They are already appointing specialized MEAL staff. As they differ in their reporting, but work on similar projects, they can actually learn a lot from each other. Over time, they could establish (joint?) MEAL positions or even a (joint) MEAL unit.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

* *Evaluate the degree of realization of the projects’ objectives for the final 2020-2021 evaluation. There was no baseline data, yet the organizations used percentage points to measure change with their indicators. They are increasingly measuring the (quantitative) degree of realization of their objectives, which should now be presented in their official documents.*

Taken together, these measures on internal capacity building will make these organizations more accountable to their donors and target groups. In all likelihood, they will foster organizational learning when they are integrated into their daily work. Overall, working further on the internal capacity issues noted above can make the organizations more effective in obtaining funding in particular with diversifying their donor base.

*Contingency planning*

Nobody knows when the war will stop, or when or how many of the IDPs and refugees will return. Despite the peace agreement, violence continues. Locusts can also become a sudden pest. There were some close to Agok, but by and large the Phineo target groups did not suffer from the recent locust pest in eastern Africa. Simultaneously, it is not known how severe climate change and its effects will become. Unfortunately, international funding for IDPs and refugees is in relative decline; UNMISS and WFP seem to be providing less support and have suggested that the IDPs and refugees return home. The higher living costs due to Covid-19 also negatively affect food security and economic development. Hence, the organizations need *contingency planning*.

In the *worst-case scenario*, climate change and the security situation worsen, while Covid-19 continues, leading to more people requiring aid. The organizations can then intensify their projects and see whether they can help introduce more food security activities, in particular establishing more demonstration gardens. This may also include the execution of emergency aid projects.

If the *current level of insecurity* continues, the organizations should carry out projects similar to those from the worst-case scenario but at a smaller scale. After all, it is not clear whether or how refugees and IDPs will be able to return or rebuild their lives in the areas they come from. The organizations could help prepare visits to home regions to see whether and how they are able to reestablish their lives and livelihoods. They could also help with return kits and returnee projects. The emergency aid and climate change projects under this scenario can piggyback on the development projects.

In the *best-case scenario*, peace will be established and hold. In that case, the three organizations can, in cooperation with their partners and the clusters/sectors, help ensure that the refugees and IDPs can return and rebuild their lives. They should then build further upon their social organizing in their food security and other programs. The effects of climate change will still require long-term activities.

*Challenges and Recommendations:*

* *Start with formulating a contingency approach, which could become part of a long-term strategy.*
* *Establish whether and how IDPs and refugees can contact their source communities and/or look for family members, for example with family tracing services and telecommunications (e.g., with Telecommunications Without Borders or the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement tracing services).*
* *Organize home visits for (potential) returnees? Which areas of origin are able to receive returnees? How? And which are not?*
* *Preparing receiving/home areas: What is there to go back to? How can the situation in this region be improved? Which forms of social organization (e.g., farmer’s associations or markets) function?*
* *Can refugees/IDPs receive return funding and/or start-up kits? What should these kits include?*

*Linkages and connections*

Through their social organizing, the organizations attempt to realize long-term synergies among their various activities. An important part of such organizing involves establishing linkages among participants, for example between experienced and less experienced farmers. Such activities can be taken a step further to enhance local self-reliance (compare Humphrey 2019). In general, establishing linkages among displaced people, other actors, activities, and markets is a strategic question about what the organizations can do in-house and what they can leave up to other actors, including private enterprises.

*Markets*, for example for food, seeds, tools, energy-saving stoves, plows, and other products, are hard to establish, but could improve food access and availability. There are organizations working on creating markets in camps in Northern Uganda, which could offer a learning opportunity for all four organizations.

Similarly, the lack of *transport* hampers income-generating activities for the participants in vocational training and farming. The organizations could see whether they could work with regular bus companies or find other ways of transport. A successful refugee farmer in northern Uganda bought a tricycle with support from Caritas Gulu. He now brings produce from his farming plot and those of other farmers to the market in Adjumani, where they fetch slightly higher prices than in the settlement camps. In addition, the organizations could determine whether they would like to work more with banks to access financial services, including saving schemes and VSLAs.

As indicated above, this report does not discuss in detail the relationships with *other organizations*, but it is possible to distinguish two types of organizations relevant to food security, namely UN organizations that (partly) support and cooperate with (some of) the four organizations, and other international NGOs such as Dorcas or GIZ, and Caritas Germany itself, which have established long-term relationships with the organizations and also want to work at strengthening their organizational management.

This evaluation could not study in detail what other organizations are doing on the issues of food aid and food security, but it is crucial that UNHCR and WFP in Uganda, and UNMISS and WFP in South Sudan (and their partners) continue to support the forcibly displaced. However, due to low levels of international funding and the effects of Covid-19, they are now suggesting that refugees and IDPs should slowly return home. It would be useful to know the plans of WFP, FAO and their partners for food relief and food security in more detail. At the moment, WFP is reducing some types of its food rations. To what extent is it leaving and to what extent can FAO assist (e.g., with sorghum and vegetable seeds)? These organizations may also have ideas or activities that the four organizations and their target groups can benefit from.[[38]](#footnote-39)

The second group consists of NGOs that also support (some of) the four organizations, in particular as far as food security and strengthening their management. Malteser and Dorcas are examples of these NGOs that work on similar topics in areas close by (e.g., see table 7). As food security and professionalization require long-term investment, it would be wise to examine the synergies and potential cooperation with these NGOs.

In addition, many displaced persons move regularly among camps searching for jobs or looking for family members. It would considerably help them mentally and practically—perhaps even financially—if they could trace and contact their family members either in South Sudan itself or in neighboring countries.

Table 7: Programs and Key Activities of Dorcas

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Project | Key Activities | Locations |
| South Sudan Joint Response (SSJR) (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) | WASH: Drilling of boreholes, construction of latrines, general sensitization  FSL: Food distribution, agricultural training, provision of seeds & tools | Wau and Jur River County, Western Bahr El Ghazal State |
| EU | Vocational Skills Training (e.g., Bakery, Masonry, ICT) Hairdressing, entrepreneurship training, and start-up grants | Western Bahr El Ghazal and Warrap States. |
| Nutrition (WFP/UNICEF) | MAM & SAM | Warrap State |
| Nazareth | Children’s home | Wau |

*Challenges and Recommendations*

* *Determine in which areas the organizations need to work, lobby, or advocate with other aid organizations (e.g., Dorcas, or WFP and FAO), embassies, donors, or local actors. Prioritize areas for cooperation with these organizations (e.g., protection or reforestation).*
* *Incorporate comparative lessons from the other organizations.*
* *Select specific areas of expertise where the organizations can learn more from each other, for example in the areas of relief, development, climate change adaptation, or linkages.*
  + *Think about the optimal combination of short-term humanitarian aid and more long-term development activities.*
    - *Determine the extent to which short-term and long-term programs can be integrated and evaluate the synergies among the activities.*
  + *Examine areas where the organizations can complement or hand over activities.*
* *Indicate where and how the organizations want to build their capacities:*
  + *Professionalize further in M&E/MEAL, HRM, and reporting and accounting;*
  + *Training program for staff-members in the area of food security;*
  + *Combine this professionalization with a training program;*
  + *Use broader (joint) evaluations;*
  + *Use learning visits.*

Finally, the linkages, cooperation, and impact of the whole aid system for the displaced people and host communities should be studied more often. The organizations can evaluate each other and/or carry out (joint) evaluation(s) of the forms and effectiveness of cooperation by the organizations in communities they serve.

*Training*

Training is an important part of capacity-building and professionalization. It can take place in courses, but also on-the-job and during learning visits.

Although each organization can work alone to implement the recommendations in this (and last year’s) report, the organizations have already begun to work together. They would like to compare progress reports and audits on the different recommendations, go on joint field visits with the aim of improving existing activities, or take up activities that the other organizations are already working on (usually with a slightly different approach), as is now happening with soap production, energy-saving stoves, and reforestation. Comparative table 6 provides an initial framework for working together, but staff should work out the activities and learning opportunities in more detail. To give a small example, all organizations provide seeds, but they all differ in the types of seeds that they provide. Would it be wise to learn more about the types of seeds other organizations provide, and the subsequent problems and successes in enhancing food security, so that they can offer more types of seeds and accompany or monitor the farmers better?

Regarding MEAL, training staff from the different organizations can also take place through carrying out evaluations together or exchanging staff-members (temporarily), which is also a non-financial incentive. It is crucial that staff members learn more about *reporting*, *indicators, baselines,* and *impact assessment*, in particular in the area of food security. They can then also discuss how they write their project reports, because their reports are set up differently but deal with many similar topics. They could compare, for example during joint training, which reports or parts of reports they like most, and come up with the optimal reporting procedures and outlines.

In general, the organizations should learn more about food security, climate change and reforestation. This can be combined with courses on (participatory) *proposal development, M&E/MEAL, accounting, HRM, and reporting*. Taken together such utilization-focused training and evaluation would help these organizations build their capacities and report in a more professionalized manner, which is also important for writing follow-up project proposals.

## Preparation of Workshop “Capacity Building/Capacity Sharing II”

The September 2019 workshop was a great example of South-South cooperation. The four South-Sudanese organizations present enthusiastically shared experiences, discussed lessons learned, and explored areas where they could join hands. Although no follow-up visits could take place due to Covid 19, the Rucksack projects were a tangible follow-up to the workshop.

The next workshop of the partner organizations will be crucial to finalize the project despite the delays due to Covid-19. All in all, the three South-Sudanese Phineo partner organizations have made solid progress. They can now capitalize on this progress, and build on the former workshop and the recommendations of this report, to enhance the impact of the whole Phineo project and ensure that its benefits—and their partnership—will continue once the Phineo project ends. In particular, they could work on the following topics:

* Professionalization
  + Further improving MEAL: sharing experiences, baselines, proposals and reporting, as well as impact assessments, including more quantitative outcomes;
  + Strategy formulation, HRM, and accounting;
  + Contingency planning for—forced or voluntary—returnees;
  + (Joint) strategy, training program and learning visits among the partner organizations;
  + Implementing safeguarding as an important topic for all organizations that Caritas Germany is working with.
* Peacebuilding, including dowries, and other forms of social organization (associations and committees);
* Climate change and reforestation:
* Forest for Food;
* Irrigation and moisture retention;
* Long-term impact:
* Demonstration gardens: how are they functioning? How to develop them further?
* Working with other organizations (e.g., a session with Dorcas and a session on joint strategies and networking) to learn more about possible cooperation and synergy.

# CARITAS GERMANY

The Phineo projects are also important for Caritas Germany. Phineo can also become part of a lessons learned exercise. For example, it may be desirable to work more often with longer-term projects in crisis areas and to use regular independent audits. One of the strengths of the Phineo projects is that the 3-year funding period lasts long enough to build capacities within the participating organizations. All organizations work on improving their management, and when the organizations have explicit management objectives in either their Phineo or Rucksack projects, it becomes easier to work on their professionalization in a structured manner.[[39]](#footnote-40) There are several managerial issues to consider.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

* *Prepare the final workshop;*
* *Include at least one managerial objective in each (new) project proposal;*
* *Continue with the audits, if the donor allows and funding is sufficient;*
* *Develop specific managerial areas of expertise further, such as capacity building for strategy formulation, MEAL, accounting, reporting, and HRM;*
* *Develop specific substantive areas of expertise further, which can range from reforestation to VSLA and from vocational skills and energy-saving stoves to demonstration gardens;*
* *Examine whether specific impact assessments are necessary, for example on peacebuilding or reforestation;*
* *Foster more intensive cooperation among the local organizations Caritas supports;*
* *Include safeguarding as a cross-cutting theme for all project-partners.*

At its worst, climate change can lead to permanent emergencies, but even if it turns out to be less disruptive, it will still be necessary to rethink the relationship between long-term development and short-term relief aid.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

* *Caritas Germany should develop a climate change policy. This could include*
  + *Temporary relief projects to strengthen or maintain the benefits of ongoing development-oriented projects;*
  + *Special attention to agriculture, reforestation, irrigation, and demonstration gardens.*

The local partner organizations work with a broad array of farmers’ associations, women’s groups, village committees, and peacebuilding groups. Although it is likely that these forms of social organizing contribute to the overall success of the project, their actual functioning, impact and sustainability are more often assumed than proven.

*Challenge and Recommendation:*

* *Carry out a longitudinal and/or ethnographic study to make an inventory of these associations and assess their strengths and weaknesses, sustainability, and impact.*

In its peacebuilding, Caritas may have to work in several countries simultaneously—in this case, in both Sudan and South Sudan, and perhaps Uganda—in order to prevent or at least reduce raids:

*Challenges and Recommendations*

* *Just as with Caritas Gulu in Uganda and MHA, BGRRF and DMI in South Sudan, Caritas could support more exchange or cooperation among the organizations it supports in Sudan and South Sudan.*

Working on climate change and food security cannot be done by Caritas alone. The same holds true for further strengthening the management of the organizations involved.

*Challenges and Recommendations*

* *Find ways for Caritas to team up with organizations, such as Dorcas or Malteser International, to be able to establish synergies among projects and make long-term investments.*

# CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation has *assessed the degree of realization of the objectives of the three food security projects in terms of availability, access, and utilization, including the Rucksack projects.* It has provided recommendations to strengthen the three organizations, as well as DMI, and their projects. In addition, this evaluation has identified areas in which MHA, BGRRF and Caritas Gulu can learn from each other in their humanitarian and developmental work.

The organizations greatly appreciate the Phineo/Caritas Germany projects because the three-year funding cycle makes longer term investment and capacity-building possible. For the 2021 evaluation and workshop, MEAL—in particular the extent to which the indicators of the logframes can be measured—should receive more attention.

In general, the displaced South Sudanese and host communities lack resources, skills, and linkages with other actors and markets, so they struggle with their lives and livelihoods. If the current level of insecurity continues, or actually improves, the three organizations will probably reach most of their objectives, but this will nevertheless be occurring against a backdrop of many other unfulfilled needs of the displaced people and host communities. The three projects have a very high *relevance*, and *are in the process of realizing most of their objectives; in particular, food availability and access are improving* (e.g., with more vegetables and better yields). *Food utilization* is also improving with methods such as sun-drying food, seed storage, and hygienic preparation (soap) becoming more widely utilized, but altogether the Phineo projects focus more strongly on food availability and access.

Nevertheless, issues such as climate change, ongoing insecurity and violence, and now Covid-19, could wipe out project gains at any time.

MHA and BGRRF can cooperate with Caritas Gulu (and DMI) on learning visits and training. In this respect, this report provides several ideas for further capacity-building and professionalization. As no one knows how the conflict in South Sudan will develop, the organizations need to adopt a contingency approach. They need to plan for longer-term capacity and institution-building for refugees, IDPs, and host communities—and themselves—in the areas of climate change and reforestation, establishing linkages, contingency planning, and training.

It is important to note that many of the above issues cannot—and should not—be addressed by the organizations alone, and that they require cooperation with other humanitarian organizations, embassies and donors, as well as local IDP, refugee and host organizations.

Appendix 1: Semi-Structured Questionnaire

**Personal introduction**

**Introduction of the research**

**Composition of community (demographic profile)**

**History and sequence of events**

**How do people make their living (Livelihoods)?**

1. Is cash production in agriculture possible?

* Before the project?
* After the project?

2. If there are surpluses, where are they being sold?

3. Any problems with land-ownership?

4. Do you have livestock? Which ones?

5. Do herds move here?

6. Have people received aid?

* From MHA/BGRRF/Caritas Gulu?
* From other organizations?

7. Do people earn money? How?

* Agriculture?
* Pastoralism?
* Casual labor?
* Wage labor?
* Mix?
* Other?

8. Has this changed due to the project? Other reasons?

**Agriculture (more specific)**

9. What effect did the seeds and tools have on your harvest?

10. How was their quality?

11. Did you have more food for the hunger gap?

12. What agricultural problems do you face?

* Pests
* Dry Spell/Drought
* Flooding
* Other? Which ones?

13. Have you worked with the ox-plough?

* If not, would you like to work with it?
* What effects does ox-ploughing have?

**Livestock (more specific) See question 4**

14. What livestock do you have?

15. Who owns them?

16. What do they produce?

17. Any problems with your livestock?

**Income**

18. What are your sources of income?

19. Are they changing?

* Due to the project?
* Other reasons?

**Expenditures**

20. How do you spend your income?

21. Is this changing? How? Why?

**How do people obtain their food?**

22. How do people obtain their food?

23. Are you able to produce seeds for the next year? How? If not, why?

**Labor (for wages or food) See question 7**

24. Is it difficult to obtain work? How?

25. Do children work? What work do they do?

**Food consumption patterns**

26. What kinds of food did you eat before the project?

27. What kinds of food do you eat now?

28. How much food do you produce yourself?

29. What food comes from the market?

30. Other food sources? Fishing?

31. Have there been any changes to your diet due to the project? Other reasons?

32. How many meals a day are you eating? How does this change over the year?

**Market prices and evolution**

33. Do you sell your agricultural surpluses on the market?

34. Do you have shortage in production that you can address on the market?

**Perception of the main problems (related to the project)**

35. How do you obtain firewood or charcoal?

36. Are there changes in the prices of firewood?

37. Are there changes in the prices of charcoal?

38. Do your children attend school?

39. Can you pay the school fees for your children?

40. Is the climate changing? How?

41. Do you feel safe?

42. Is theft an issue?

43. What about corruption?

44. Is security improving? Why?

45. Do people leave the village? Why?

**46. Do Saving Schemes exist in your village? How are they functioning? Does your family participate?**

**47. How is the Rucksack Project going? Does it affect you? If yes, how?**

**48. How is the situation of the poorest households? (Especially those who were selected to receive temporarily food support?)**

**49. Perception/Impact of the Corona/Covid-19 Crisis?**

Do you have any questions?

Thank you

Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Questionnaire for Expert Interviews with Staff-Members of the Three Organizations

**Personal introduction**

**Introduction of the research**

1. Pls explain your title & role in MHA/BGRRF/Caritas Gulu.
2. For how long have you been working now at MHA/BGRRF/Caritas Gulu?
3. Did the personel changes in management at Agok influence BGRRF? How?
4. How is the Phineo project functioning now?
5. Were there any important changes over the year (e.g., new villages or new activities)?
6. What are the results of the Phineo project so far?
7. How do you judge these results?
8. To which extent are they according to plan?
9. Which recommendations from last year's evaluations did you implement (to which extent)? Why?
10. Could you explain MHA/BGRRF/Caritas Gulu's follow-up to the Wau Workshop?
11. How has MHA/BGRRF/Caritas Gulu dealt with the Covid-19 epidemic?
12. How did the audit go?
13. What were the outcomes of the audit for your organization?
14. Do you agree with these outcomes?
15. What do you consider MHA/BGRRF/Caritas Gulu's strengths?
16. What do you consider its weaknesses?
17. What would you like to change? Why?
18. Are there any other points that should come up during this evaluation?
19. Do you have any questions?

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4. See d’Orsi, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. IFRC, 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Ibid., p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. But not the complete questionnaire with all 30 households. Instead Sebastian Kämpf focused on specific parts of the questionnaire. He did 1 FGD for men, 1 for women, and one observation tour for each village he visited. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. I would like to thank Ydo Jacobs for suggesting this phrase. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Usually, NGOs assume that there are seven persons per household in Bar el Ghazal, in particular in Dinka families. This number is based on the 2008 census. In recent years, more organizations count with 6 members per household. In general, the correct number is hard to establish; with severe famines families fall apart. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. As late rains are becoming more regular, harvesting is also taking place late, so that the hunger gap currently extends into August. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. The long spade is locally called maloda. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Some households with vulnerable family members (e.g., the elderly, persons with a disability) provide some food to them, but they rarely do so outside their family. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. This garden should not be confused with the several small fenced vegetable gardens established just during the dry season. This garden is 500 x 500 m large and is properly fenced. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Although this is not part of the project, it also has a chicken and duck farm in the compound. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Fish, a useful, additional source of protein, are also caught in these rivers. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. The surveys were carried out by students of the Mary Help College of Nursing and Midwifery. In the last study, the number of children per village, namely 30-32, is relatively low. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Respondents never mentioned weeding as a constraint. In contrast to Agok and Abyei, respondents did not mention fencing as a constraint. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. If NGOs would stick with one or only a few types of plows this would reduce the problem of spare parts. It seems that momentarily different types of plows are being sold locally, which enhances the problem of spare parts. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Most local saving associations operate without interest, but its members have made clear that they are interested in more advanced forms of micro-credit associations, such as VSLAs. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. See also the Rucksack project below. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Normally, caretakers, usually family members, come with food for the patients twice a day. However, this now needs to be avoided, because it raises the risks of the transmission of Covid-19. Caretakers now also have to stay in the hospital. They and the patients, as well as the staff-members, need food. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. The sampled beneficiaries did not include any of the beneficiaries of the Missionaries of Charity sisters. As indicated in the project proposal, BGRRF is in constant touch with the sisters and staff-members often go to Turalei to meet them and discuss the distributions. The sisters provide details on how they conduct the distributions and their impact. According to BGRRF staff, in many cases, the number of beggars who come to seek the sisters’ support drastically drops. The charism of Missionaries of Charity does not allow for publicity of any charitable deed by them. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Notice that many schools also have child-feeding programs, so that children usually receive more food aid than their parents. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. The importance of tightening nuts and bolts should also be emphasized during training. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. 190 women and 190 men. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Culturally, women usually fetch water in addition to the many other productive and reproductive tasks they fulfill. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. BGRRF should also consider integrating better in the church structure of the Diocese of Wau, which could constitute a protective umbrella. Wau now has a new Bishop. As a result, this would be a good time to reconsider the position of BGRRF with the Diocese of Wau. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. 2nd Interim Report, P.163-004/2018, May 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. UNHCR (2019) South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan, January 2019-December 2020, Nairobi, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. A 2018 impact evaluation indicates that the vocational skills graduates from an earlier project are generally better able to make a living than they were before their training. See Caritas Gulu Archdiocese (2018) Integrated Post Conflict Support for South Sudanese Refugees in Adjumani District 2017-2018. Final Evaluation Report. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. For more information on this topic, in particular on problems during execution, see Dijkzeul, D. (2017) ‘Report of the Project Mid-Term Evaluation of the Integrated Post-Conflict Support for South-Sudanese Refugees in Adjumani District (March 2017-February 2018) and Strategy Development for Caritas Gulu with Support from Caritas Germany; Adjumani, Gulu and Bochum,’ 27 August -11 September 2018, in mimeo, pp. 1-37; and Dijkzeul, D. (2019) *‘Comparative Field Evaluation of Three Food Security Projects by Mary Help Association – Wau, South Sudan, Bishop Gassis Relief & Rescue Foundation – Agok, South Sudan, and Caritas Gulu – Gulu, Uganda’*, in mimeo [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. After armed inter-ethnic violence and killings in the Palorinya refugee settlement, UNHCR moved 750 people to Palabek in November 2020. UNHCR mentioned Caritas’ peace-activities there as a reason for this transfer in the hope that future conflicts could be prevented. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Caritas Gulu Archdiocese (2018) “Interim Report for Integrated Post Conflict Support for South Sudanese Refugees in Adjumani 2018-2021”, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Contact Christof Ruhmich, a Caritas consultant, and see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCJfSYZqZ0Y. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. As Caritas Germany also works with DMI on food security in South Sudan and this organization has already cooperated with the other three organizations, in particular at the Wau workshop, I have included DMI in the table below for comparison. Although I have tried to update the information, I have not studied DMI in detail and I may have missed some recent developments. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. The organizations should now prepare impact or trend studies on the effects of their tree-planting activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. I did not have time to study the role and impact of the three organizations in the coordination clusters. A subsequent, broader evaluation should take the other organizations and their implications for capacity-building/sharing and the project activities of the three organizations into account. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Several organizations are now working with QuickBooks accounting software. It may be wise to institutionalize that for all participating organizations. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)