Swisscontact is the organization of the Swiss private sector for development cooperation. Its aim is to promote sustainable private economic and social development in selected developing countries through advisory services and vocational training. Cooperation with local partners is a priority, as Swisscontact's key principle toward effective poverty alleviation is: "Helping others to help themselves."

Vocational education and training and skills development have been a key area of focus of Swisscontact since its foundation over 50 years ago. In Uganda, Swisscontact currently conducts a project entitled Local Skills Development for Youth in Uganda. By applying the Learning Group Model it builds young people's individual capacities through local skills development. The ultimate goal is to promote sustainable income generation.

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Rationale

Education plays a major role in the Government of Uganda’s Poverty Action Eradication Plan. Efforts have been made to improve state access to primary and secondary education. Indeed, Uganda is the first African nation to establish a Universal Post Primary Education and Training policy that aims to provide free secondary education. However, in practical terms the educational system, as conceived by the Education Sector Strategic Plan, continues to face numerous challenges. Acquisition of funds is difficult and the system does not develop the necessary competencies required for employment. The majority of Ugandan youth do not have access to vocational training or skills development. The system fails to cater to the large number of early school leavers (dropouts from both primary and secondary education). This is particularly the case in rural areas, where 85% of the population survives on subsistence agriculture.

Modern sectors of the Ugandan economy are limited. Therefore, agriculture and related rural trades have the greatest potential to provide youth with economic and social opportunity. The successful integration of youth into economic markets depends on the effective implementation of Uganda’s Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture, a vital part of the government's poverty eradication strategy. In light of this, experience shows that broad agricultural modernisation is unlikely to take place without adequate standards of education and basic vocational skills. Therefore, access to skills development is imperative to alleviate poverty.

Taking into consideration that Uganda’s population is projected to double within the next 20 years, it is clear that formal educational and training systems need to be complemented with mass-effective, low cost and efficient skills development. This will assure that the new generation has the opportunity to integrate into economic life, which will, in turn, promote social stability.

For the forgotten majority, those young people who have limited to no formal education and virtually no access to skills training, there is a dire need to develop innovative, non-formal and informal modes of skill training, as well as opportunities to catch up on accessible and affordable basic education. Undeniably, the gap must be filled in both urban centres and in rural communities.

1.2 Project Goal and Purpose

The Goal: To create a sustainable economic environment that leads to employment for the young and contributes to the reduction of poverty.

The Purpose of LSDY is to develop a model for reducing poverty through informal and adapted skills training for young unemployed men and women in both rural and urban areas.

1.3 Interventions

The overarching aim of this project is to support Local Skills Development for Youth (LSDY) in Eastern Uganda, providing skills training in two rural and two urban areas. The skills training is agri-business oriented in the rural areas, while it is more craft-oriented in the urban areas.
The project entails the creation of Learning Groups, and all respective training is closely developed along with the target youth. The Learning Groups not only receive training, but also develop business projects. LSDY supports the Learning Groups by facilitating contacts to resource persons and business people within the region.

The overall project outputs are as follows:

**Output 1:** A wide range of local skills development opportunities offered to young adults and early school leavers are developed in two rural and two urban communities.

**Output 2:** Skills training development: Local Skills Development for the Youth responds to the needs of young men and women.

**Output 3:** Training Implementation: Skills training programs in technical trades and appropriate agri-business is implemented.

**Output 4:** Institutional Setup: Dialogue between all key players towards establishing a comprehensive local skills development training system is conducted.

**Output 5:** Project Management: Necessary services to the projects main activity lines are provided.

**1.4 Duration**

The LSDY project is currently in a two-year pilot phase that started on January 1, 2009 and will end on December 31, 2010. The pilot phase has been deemed successful by the donor agency, Medicor Foundation, therefore an implementation phase is already in the works (January 2011 – December 2012).

**2 Key Facts and Figures**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Iganga District</th>
<th>Mbale District</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Participants that Completed Training</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 463</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female : Male Ratio</td>
<td>53% female : 47% male</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mavuno Groups Established</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 15</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Participants in Employment</td>
<td>206 (75.2%)</td>
<td>119 (63.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL: 325 (70.2%)</strong></td>
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**3 External Evaluation**

An interdisciplinary team of external consultants is currently conducting the *End of LSDY Project- Evaluation* (October 15 – December 10, 2010). Initially, the team reviewed an abundance of project reports and further documentation provided by Swisscontact staff, in order to assess all relevant issues. Subsequently, extensive fieldwork was conducted by using a range of quantitative and qualitative tools. The evaluation comprised key informant interviews, focus group discussions, large group discussions, process analysis, as well as several Participatory Rural Appraisals involving more than 200 people (including Swisscontact staff, partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries). The major findings that have emerged from this evaluation to date are discussed within this section.

The evaluation team found that the LSDY project has maintained an excellent working relationship with the local communities, local governments in Iganga and Mbale (where both communities and local governments provided land), and training venues and project coordination offices. In general, **Swisscontact and its partners in**
Uganda have made considerable progress toward meeting the majority of its project objectives. Throughout the evaluation, it was evident that Swisscontact in Uganda has had an immensely positive impact on the lives and livelihoods of the young people in each pilot area. All focus groups reported positive changes in employment, income, savings and living conditions since the beginning of the project.

The LSDY project has successfully increased community awareness regarding the importance of proper skills training for youth. This ‘awareness’ ranges anywhere from education regarding improved farming practices (e.g. post harvest handling and storage techniques), to the urgent need for proper nutrition in individuals suffering from HIV/AIDS. The LSDY project has also been successful in promoting the many benefits of forming savings and lending groups (Mavuno groups).

The evaluation team established that the growing number of women-led households and mothers is usually the most vulnerable demographic within the communities. The LSDY project has been praised for the special attention it continues to give this target group, which has enabled the women to earn and save money right from the start within their respective Mavuno groups.

It is clear that the project has completed its pilot phase and is now ready to scale up both geographically and in scope. All parties involved recognize that the valuable lessons learned from the pilot phase must shape and direct the succeeding implementation phase (January 2011 – December 2012). Quality indicators should be identified and efficient information gathering tools need to be developed, so that reliable information can be gathered regarding the quality of impacts. The consultants would like to specifically emphasize that Swisscontact has been flexible and proactive in re-evaluating the activities of the project.

Additionally, there is significant potential for more reinforcement within communities where Swisscontact and its partners have already worked. In addition to expanding coverage, it would be equally valuable and beneficial to provide more support to communities and villages that have already been trained.

The project has invested in developing an equipment fund, which operates as a rotational fund to support vulnerable young people in acquiring the immediate tools they need to begin their businesses. So far the funds management is running very successfully, and the youth who acquired an equipment fund have already begun to pay it back. However, the consultants have recommended that Swisscontact should only continue this scheme for another 8 to 12 months, and should instead look for a commercial bank to continue it.

Swisscontact has been proactive in re-evaluating the activities of the project. Most of the changes initiated by the management are in line with the consultant’s recommendations during the SWOT Analysis. Some examples of changes in management initiated prior to the final evaluation include: a) improving the capacity of the current Monitoring and Evaluation Unit; b) trimming down the training material; and c) posting additional staff in the field to help monitor activities. Meanwhile, many further activities proposed by the evaluation team have already been integrated into the Swisscontact restructuring process.

In the same vein as LSDY, Swisscontact continues to effectively implement the learning group methodology in similar Ugandan projects such as SEAL (Skills Empowerment for Alternative Livelihood). These projects come as a resource to LSDY, and will contribute towards building a strong phase II for the LSDY project.

Once completed, the external evaluation is available upon request.