

COMIC RELIEF TRADE PROGRAMME EVALUATION



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Comic Relief's Vision is A Just World Free From Poverty

At Comic Relief, we do three things. We raise much needed cash, we allocate that cash to projects both here at home, and in the world's poorest countries, and we raise awareness of issues we feel strongly about.

This is one of a series of reports we've commissioned that aim to explore the impact of, and derive learning from, the work we fund.

Some of these reports are focused, specifically, on various projects we've supported; the impact they've had and what we've learned from them. Others look at various sectors in a wider sense and draw together information on key issues, from a range of stakeholders, in order to inform our thinking and promote debate.

This report aims to assess what the Comic Relief Trade Programme has achieved through the grants it has awarded since its inception in 2004. It examines the impact of the Trade programme on target beneficiaries and beyond; the factors supporting positive impacts and the effectiveness of the Comic Relief approach.

We welcome the insights offered, by this report, into what has been achieved and learned to date, and what can be improved in the future.

We're also committed to using the report's findings in practical ways, where possible, and sharing them with other relevant stakeholders.

This report was commissioned by Comic Relief and written by Valerie Nelson, Adrienne Martin and Fedra Vanhuysse from Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, and Sally Smith, independent consultant. The views expressed within it are the authors, and not necessarily those of Comic Relief.

Cover photos:

Twin/Gumutindo - Women hand sorting coffee, Uganda (Sally Smith)

Bees for Development project, David Tumwine, Board member of KABECOS, with traditional beehives, Uganda (Sally Smith)

Koriema Honey Producer Group – Beekeeper (Valerie Nelson)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this study is to assess what the Comic Relief Trade Programme has achieved through the grants it has awarded since its inception in 2004. It examines the impact of the Trade programme on target beneficiaries and beyond; the factors supporting positive impacts and the effectiveness of the Comic Relief approach. The study focuses only on Trade Programme grant-funded projects involving smallholder producers. 30 master grants¹ with total funding of £21,780,932 were identified for inclusion in the study. Data was aggregated from reports; a questionnaire survey was sent to grantees and partner organisations; an in-depth analysis was conducted of eleven grant-funded projects; and field visits were made to five case study projects in two countries.

Outcomes and impacts

The Comic Relief theory of change is based upon three interrelated intervention strategies that are important components of the pathway towards achieving widespread and lasting change in market systems. The strategies are: i) capacity building of producers, their organisations, and service providers; ii) creating more equitable relations and partnerships along supply chains; and iii) strengthening smallholder engagement in dialogue on trade related issues.

Grantees reported that most change has been achieved by Comic Relief projects in capacity building, closely followed by the strengthening of equitable supply chain relations. Change achieved with respect to smallholder engagement in trade dialogue was less marked than for the other two strategies.

The most important outcomes identified for Producer Organisations were improved business management, access to markets, improved profitability, equitable relations with supply chain actors and an improved asset base. The main outcomes for individual smallholder producers were improvements in their producer organisation capacity or performance, improved access to training, accessing new markets and an increased ability to save or make investments. Less emphasis was placed on outcomes relating to access to finance or advocacy.

The impacts of the Trade Programme most commonly reported by grantees were higher incomes for smallholders, followed by improvements in the ability of smallholders and their organisations to influence the terms of trade. Household level impacts included more sustainable livelihoods, improved health and children's education. However, there were important gaps in the data on impact level questions. Fewer grantees cited impacts in relation to social well-being among smallholder producers and their communities, resilience to climate change and healthier ecosystems. The majority of unexpected and unintended benefits reported were positive in nature.

Gender and social inclusion

Capacity and interest in gender issues varies among implementing partners. There are good examples of trade projects tackling gender inequality and women's empowerment, but in a few projects there appears to be no attention to gender. Some large international NGOs have mainstreamed gender, generating specific lessons on gender and trade. Private sector

¹ In cases where grantees had closely linked grants (e.g. research grants, main grants, follow-on grants, climate-change grants) these were combined into 'master grants' for the purposes of analysis, in order to reduce the risk of double counting.

organisations may have less experience and interest in gender sensitive approaches. Capacity building in gender analysis and integration is needed to improve partners' understanding of and commitment to action on gender inequality.

- **Grantees and partners should mainstream gender within their projects and programmes, seeking support from specialists or organisations with experience and a focus in this field and using organisational evaluation tools such as gender audits to identify gaps.**

There are relatively few grants in the Trade Programme which specifically focus on special target groups other than women. However, over half the grantees consider that women, the extremely poor, indigenous groups and geographically disadvantaged have benefitted moderately or a great deal from their project activities, with youth benefitting to some extent. Greater attention should be paid to generational dynamics and support for projects which provide income generation opportunities for young people.

- **Grantees and partner organisations should carefully consider how best to reach poorer groups without creating dependency and unsustainable outcomes. Subsidies will often be required in the short-term, but there should be a clear strategy for developing access to more sustainable inputs and services.**
- **Grantees should seek opportunities to support young people in Africa to engage in agricultural trade initiatives.**

Success factors for smallholder oriented trade projects.

Substantial time and resources are required to achieve significant change for smallholders, particularly where the aim is to build democratically-run producer organisations operating profitable businesses, or to establish national level advocacy bodies. However, avoiding over-dependency is critical and requires clear formulation of possible exit strategies so that both producer organisations and other partner organisations can make the transition to sustainability.

- **Grantees should provide long-term support but guard against dependency by developing and implementing clear exit strategies.**

Conducting sufficient research and analysis in the design phase of projects was raised as an important factor influencing success. Inadequate research and stakeholder consultation can lead to delays in achieving outcomes and overestimation of partner capacity.

- **Grantees should carry out thorough research and analysis in project design.**

Project design should provide sufficient space for participation by partner organisations to build a sense of local ownership. It should also provide a commitment to agree vision and roles, and to fit partner and producer priorities and needs.

- **Grantees should invest in participatory, joint planning with partners.**

Maintaining flexibility in project activities is particularly necessary for trade projects, because market conditions can change rapidly, presenting new opportunities or threats. Most of the case study projects have adapted their project design in response to unexpected circumstances, new opportunities or difficulties achieving objectives.

- **Comic Relief and Grantees should allow flexibility in project activities and encourage innovation.**

The configuration of partners in Comic Relief projects varies greatly. NGOs dominate the UK grantees, with only one grant awarded to a private company to date. Most partner organisations are producer organisations or NGOs, but there are also some private

companies and consultancies. Capacity and experience among the African NGOs and producer organisations varies, and there is a need for more investment in and better evaluation of partner capacity in the early stages of project identification.

- **Grantees should ensure project partners collectively have the right expertise and motivation.**

Although some grantees have strong development and commercial expertise in-house, NGOs often struggle to support producers to establish linkages to 'good' buyers. Capacity, skills and mindsets vary among private sector companies, and tensions can arise where partners have different perspectives and priorities. Several case studies showed that good trading partners had been found amongst more mainstream companies when the incentives are aligned with their interests. Communication, exchange and action research processes can be facilitated at all nodes of the chain to positive effect.

- **Grantees should partner with appropriate private sector actors based on common interests and understanding.**
- **Grantees should facilitate connections between producers and other value chain actors.**

Collaboration with government bodies, such as agricultural advisory services, can strengthen impacts and help ensure sustainability of project outcomes. However, much depends on their interest and capacity to provide services to farmers after the project has ended. In some cases advocacy to influence government policy long-term may be more appropriate. It is important that partners give sufficient attention to building relationships of trust with policy and decision-makers, so that when lobbying opportunities arise they can be captured.

- **Grantees and partners should explore opportunities for collaboration or advocacy in relation to government bodies.**
- **Grantees should seek to build relationships with policy and decision-makers early in the project cycle to support advocacy activities within the lifetime of the project.**

Building advocacy capacity is important to enable smallholder producers to have a means of influencing both the value chains they participate in and the enabling environment for their trading activities and broader livelihoods.

- **Grantees should seek to improve their advocacy capacity in relation to trade-for-development interventions, sharing findings and learning from best practice of other grantees and development practitioners.**

Good project coordination is essential to outcomes, particularly where there are many partners involved. Strong monitoring and evaluation systems, including regular meetings to reflect on progress against plans, can support tracking of impact and encourage corrective actions during the course of the project.

- **Grantees should ensure good coordination and continuous monitoring throughout the life of projects.**

Climate change

Many Comic Relief projects have assessed climate risks, but the extent to which these assessments are based on climate science and modelling is not very clear. Most projects tackle the generic underlying causes of vulnerability, and a smaller number are specifically trying to directly respond to climate change challenges and build adaptive capacity. More could be done by grantees to build up capacity and expertise in this area.

- **Grantees should ensure that the assessments of climate risks draw on up-to-date climate modelling and impact information on longer-term climate change, as well as local level knowledge of climate variability.**

The uncertainties of climate change require different kinds of responses:

- **Grantees should seek to develop trade initiatives that respond directly to climate change challenges, as well as tackling the underlying generic causes of vulnerability, to build the adaptive capacity of producers, producer organisations and service providers to respond to uncertain futures.**
- **Grantees should share information in relation to climate change initiatives in trade projects and programmes, because more lesson-learning is needed to respond to complex and uncertain challenges.**
- **Grantees should seek to engage broader agricultural innovation system actors in their trade initiatives, because responding to climate change cannot be done by local communities alone.**

While disadvantaged farmers in the global South generally do not have high emissions, there may be significant opportunities that could provide co-benefits for farmers.

- **Grantees should explore mitigation opportunities as well as adaptation initiatives, to maximize the co-benefits of interventions.**

Trade Programme Strategy

Given the success achieved, it is important that Comic Relief continues to invest strongly in Trade Programmes as a means of generating wealth. It can make an important contribution to support poor and excluded groups to participate in trade-for-development processes. A reinforced commitment from Comic Relief would encourage grantees to ensure they have a poverty focus. Greater priority should be given to gender in the next Trade Programme strategy as significant positive change in gender relations is occurring where practice, capacity and commitment are strong.

- **Comic Relief should provide a clear signal in the next Trade Programme strategy that it will be emphasizing an *inclusive* approach to trade, setting out the implications of this for applicants.**
- **Comic Relief should signal a clear and high organisational priority to gender in the Trade Programme and set out a strong rationale for this to encourage applicants to follow suit.**
- **Grantees should identify good practice in inclusive trade to ensure that trade projects and programmes support disadvantaged smallholders to participate in and benefit from these interventions.**

Comic Relief's theory of change for its Trade Programme is relevant and sound, with all three intervention strategies considered important and synergistic. Grantees have given greater emphasis to capacity building than market linkages or enabling engagement in dialogue around trade. For political reasons, direct engagement in national public policy advocacy is not always feasible.

- **Comic Relief should not dramatically alter its theory of change, although more direct reference to inclusiveness, gender and climate change is recommended. It should encourage grantees to work simultaneously in capacity building, market linkages and engagement in dialogue to maximise outcomes and impacts, but should accept reasoned arguments for not doing so, especially relating to national policy advocacy.**

For Comic Relief to become more of a learning organisation, investment is needed in staff capacity and capability. The learning function is critical for ensuring that funding is being spent effectively, and to maximise Trade Programme impact.

- **Comic Relief should set out a commitment in the next Trade Programme strategy to becoming a learning organisation, with respect to trade interventions, with indications of how it will achieve this.**

There could be benefits to the programme from concentrating on a slightly smaller number of commodities and countries, with the aim of emphasizing the inclusive focus of Comic Relief funded initiatives. It would also support the institutionalization of learning within the programme. However, this should not be a hard and fast rule.

- **Comic Relief should reduce the number of commodities and countries overall, in combination with an increased focus on learning. This would allow the programme to capture and share findings better, and ultimately increase impact.**

Grants and sustainability

Overall, there was a high degree of confidence as to the sustainability of outcomes and impacts among Comic Relief grantees. Comic Relief projects have played an important role in strengthening the capacity of partner organisations, largely as a result of long-term relationships between UK grantees and local partners. Several grantees would welcome programme partnership funding², both to support trade interventions and to help NGOs and alternative trading organisations to build their own capacity. However, a balance should be maintained between small and larger organisations, and between programme partnership funding and project grant funding.

- **Comic Relief should pilot programmatic partnership funding within the Trade Programme while retaining its support for project funding. It should start with one or two organisations and then evaluate relative benefits. This would involve multi-year core funding for organisations to carry out trade-for-development work in line with their strategic plans, rather than tied to particular project activities. A framework of programme objectives and outcomes would be agreed between partners and accountability would be based on achieving agreed benchmarks against strategic plans. Partnership funding may vary in scale, and should be open to African organisations with a proven track record of delivering high quality outcomes. This type of funding is similar to Comic Relief's Investment grants. It is suggested that Comic Relief consider the potential for direct funding to African partners who fit the criteria.**

Comic Relief support of research and stakeholder engagement is highly valued. It is critical that sufficient investment is made early on into participatory planning processes and stakeholder engagement, as well as good research into markets and value chains, gender, political landscape, and climate risks. As well as improving the quality of analysis, this should ensure that local project partners have a shared vision and take ownership of project outcomes.

- **To support sound project design based on thorough analysis, Comic Relief should continue to provide funding for research, and also open up a facility to fund participatory project planning processes (e.g. through creating a concept note phase followed by some funding for potential applicants to conduct participatory planning).**

² Programmatic partnership funding involves multi-year unrestricted grants for partner organisations with a programme of work that is aligned with the objectives of the funding organisation. A framework of programme objectives and outcomes is agreed between partners and continuation of funding is dependent on the partner organisation demonstrating progress towards outcomes through a diverse range of activities, rather than performance in relation to a stand-alone project.

To achieve an inclusive approach to trade interventions, guidance for applicants and assessment of proposals could be strengthened in relation to selection of partners and producer groups, the choice of commodity, market focus and gender issues. It is important to ensure that project partners *collectively* have the necessary expertise for carrying out inclusive trade-for-development interventions, recognising the market challenges and the need to sustain a balance between commercial viability and development goals.

- **Comic Relief should ensure that grant applicants demonstrate understanding of the poverty, social and gender dynamics of market participation in areas, products and markets where they plan interventions. They should show clear commitment, a coherent strategy and the necessary expertise for achieving inclusiveness and sustainability. If this is in place, Comic Relief should be willing to invest in building local organisational capacity on gender and social inclusion, including through an extended project start-up phase and support for private sector actors.**

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

The monitoring and evaluation system was not sufficiently robust in the past to fully assess and attribute impacts, due to the lack of baseline studies or counterfactuals among earlier projects, and the unreliability of and gaps in some of the monitoring data. Recently, the system has become stronger and is regarded among grantees as positive for improving project performance. However, the quality of reporting is mixed, partners' capacity in monitoring and evaluation skills and commitment varies, and the rationale for collecting detailed information for monitoring and evaluation was not always clear to grantees. There was some concern among grantees that Comic Relief's move toward results-based management might undermine the flexibility that has proven useful in trade projects.

- **Comic Relief should revisit its monitoring and evaluation system to ensure it is fit for purpose. Collection of baseline data should be a standard requirement, but should be focused on the most important indicators that the interventions are expected to affect. This is often more relevant and cost effective than large scale comprehensive surveys.**
- **An outline of plans for how impact will be assessed should be required as part of proposal preparation. Where feasible, comparisons of project participants with a similar group of non-participants (the counterfactual), could be included before and after the intervention. Comic Relief could provide guidance to grantees on low cost evaluation methods.**

Programme level information needs to be more systematically analysed and shared in order to support institutional memory within Comic Relief and encourage good practice among grantees and the wider development community. Information and insights generated through the monitoring and evaluation system should facilitate learning across the programme, organisation, and beyond. A learning function would be most appropriately located within Africa.

- **Comic Relief should consider establishing a comprehensive learning function within its Trade Programme, perhaps supported by funding from a corporate partner or another funding organisation to overcome internal restrictions on use of funds. Ideally this would be based in Africa (one post in East and one in West Africa) in order to support monitoring, evaluation and learning among grant recipients, to share learning more widely and support the identification of partners with appropriate capacity.**

Monitoring and evaluation capacity was found to be variable among Comic Relief grantees and African partners.

- **Grantees should seek to improve their monitoring and evaluation skills, capacity and systems. In particular, they should ensure a clear link between the grant proposal, annual reporting and the final evaluation, with clear reporting of changes of direction.**
- **As part of project preparation, Grantees should plan and budget for how project outcomes and impacts will be assessed, in order to be able to attribute change to their interventions. This would include plans for baseline data collection to allow 'before' and 'after' comparison, and, depending on the circumstances, collecting data on both participants and a similar group of non-participants. A range of quantitative and qualitative methods can be used, including participatory assessments, especially at producer organisation level.**
- **Grantees should support producer organisations to improve the gathering of accurate data at farm level on key indicators, drawing on participatory approaches to farmer record keeping, and should also support larger producer organisations to recruit and fund staff to fulfil a monitoring role.**
- **Grantees should mainstream gender within the monitoring and evaluation system, for example, collecting disaggregated data. Conducting organisational level gender audits is recommended to explore in a systematic fashion how to improve gender awareness. Similarly, gender analysis should be integrated within value chain preparatory research.**
- **Grantees should seek to mainstream generational issues and social difference within their monitoring and evaluation systems, since these intersect with gender inequalities to create disadvantage.**
- **Grantees should collaborate with a new impetus from Comic Relief to promote learning by engaging with new learning-post incumbents, if and when they are created, to help identify ways of improving the quality of outputs and to increase the extent of sharing of best practice.**

The evaluation identified four learning questions, where further understanding is needed to maximize impact from inclusive trade for development. The areas to investigate are: 1) the best approaches for achieving this goal; 2) the particular risks posed by climate change and appropriate responses and opportunities for adaptation, resilience and mitigation; 3) effective approaches in advocacy to change the enabling environment for producers and their organisations; and 4) the potential opportunities and challenges of information and communication technology.

- **Comic Relief should support research on the four learning questions within the next Trade Programme strategy and explore the possibility of collaborating with other organisations (e.g. private foundations, international NGOs, the Department for International Development) to fund this research, which would have the benefit of giving the findings a wider dissemination and a greater influence.**

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We would also like to thank Sian Herschel and Joanna Monaghan at Comic Relief for commissioning NRI to conduct this evaluation and for providing such valuable insights and support throughout.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of Comic Relief or any of the organisations mentioned above. NRI is responsible for the accuracy of information contained in the report and the recommendations have not necessarily been endorsed by Comic Relief.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACCRA	African Climate Change Resilience Alliance
ATO	Alternative Trading Organisation
BfD	Bees for Development
CIDI	Community Integrated Development Initiatives
COP17	The 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EAT	Environment Africa Trust
EMG	Environmental Monitoring Group
EU	European Union
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FTMP	Fairtrade Minimum Price
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
ICT	Information and communications technology
IDE	International Development Enterprises
(I)NGO	(International) Non-governmental organisation
JMI	Joint Marketing Initiative
KABECOS	Kamwenge Beekeepers Cooperative Savings and Credit Society Ltd
LYF	Lorna Young Foundation
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MCDI	Mpingo Conservation Development Initiative
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services (Uganda)
PLWHA	People living with HIV/AIDS
PO	Producer organisation
QMS	Quality Management System
TUNADO	Uganda National Apiculture Development Organization
UDN	Uganda Debt Network
VEDCO	Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Comic Relief Trade Programme is to contribute to sustainable and equitable wealth creation for both smallholders and workers, primarily in Africa. The programme has four high level outcomes:

- i) African producers and their organisations are more efficient and productive, and better able to add value to their products, as a result of which they, their families and communities benefit from increased and more secure incomes;
- ii) African producers increase their engagement in partnerships and networks, as a result of which they experience a measurable improvement in their competitiveness and access to market;
- iii) African producers and workers are increasingly engaged in influencing and advocacy, as result of which they experience a measurable improvement in their ability to influence the terms of trade that affect them at national, regional and international level;
- iv) African workers are increasingly engaged in negotiations with employers and key stakeholders, resulting in a measurable improvement in their ability to realise their labour and human rights.

The aim of this study is:

“to assess what the Trade programme has achieved through grants awarded since its inception in 2004. This includes overall programme outputs and progress towards outcomes; an analysis of Comic Relief’s contribution to the success of the projects we’ve funded; and the identification of factors which help or hinder changes in beneficiaries’ levels of social and economic security”

The findings should be of use both for Comic Relief in terms of its future investments and funding processes, but also for other organisations working on trade and development.

Six key objectives were outlined in the terms of reference:

- Collection and aggregation of data
- Assessment of programme impact in relation to programme key outcomes
- Identification of success factors, areas for improvement, and their relationship to Comic Relief’s grant-making principles and to the programme’s theory of change
- Identification of the number of grantees who have actively sought to address climate change and the action they have taken
- Understanding of UK-local organisation relationships and their influence on project progress
- Assessment of Comic Relief input into grantees’ projects in terms of outcomes and sustainability.

The review focuses only on grant-funded projects involving smallholder producers, excluding all grants with a sole focus on workers (given the latter were very limited in number and most had only just begun). For projects involving both workers and producers, the focus is primarily on the latter.

SECTION 2: OVERALL APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Our overall approach involved the development of an analytical framework which drew on Comic Relief's Trade Programme Strategy, and the evaluation questions outlined in the Terms of Reference. Comic Relief has developed a theory of change for its Trade Programme, as described in the 2009-2012 Trade Programme Strategy Document³. We developed an interpretation of this, teasing out the causal linkages (see Figure 1) and further refining the evaluation questions in collaboration with Comic Relief. They focus on three main areas: i) the impact of the Trade programme on target beneficiaries and beyond; ii) the factors supporting positive impacts; and iii) the effectiveness of the Comic Relief approach (see appendix 1).

The study design comprised a particular sequence of activities. A preparatory phase revolved around the collation of materials, design of the analytical framework and agreeing the scope of the evaluation with Comic Relief. A second phase involved data gathering and analysis, comprising: i) systematic data aggregation across smallholder producer Trade Programme grants; ii) a survey with all grantees and their key partner organisations; iii) in-depth analysis of a selection of grant-funded projects (11); and iv) field work focusing on five case studies in two countries, to explore impact pathways and stakeholder perceptions of relationships and the factors shaping outcomes and impacts. The final phase comprised report writing and revisions.

To aggregate the Comic Relief monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data, a review of all programme project documentation was needed (i.e. grant applications, grant budgets, assessment reports, annual reports, mid-term evaluations and final evaluations). An online questionnaire was designed using Survey Monkey and used to gather data from across the programme on outcomes, impacts and perceptions on Comic Relief as a donor (with 24 responses received out of a possible 30). A series of 11 in-depth case studies were undertaken involving key informant interviews and a more detailed analysis of project documentation. These were selected using specific criteria (e.g. having completed more than one annual report, grant size, duration, outcomes covered, whether they had responded to the questionnaire and country location). Five of these were chosen for in-country fieldwork (see appendix 2 for more details on the Trade programme grants, the in depth case studies and projects visited in the field).

The study has a number of limitations:

- A lack of baseline studies or counterfactuals in project design and reporting;
- Unreliability of and gaps in some of the monitoring data;
- Gaps in the survey responses;
- Time/resource restrictions, data limitations and the wide variety of projects also limit the ability to generalize findings from the case study material regarding the relationship between size or duration of grant and project outcomes, and the benefits associated with different types of markets.

³ See: <http://www.comicrelief.com/sites/all/assets/documents/resources/Trade-Programme-strategy.pdf>

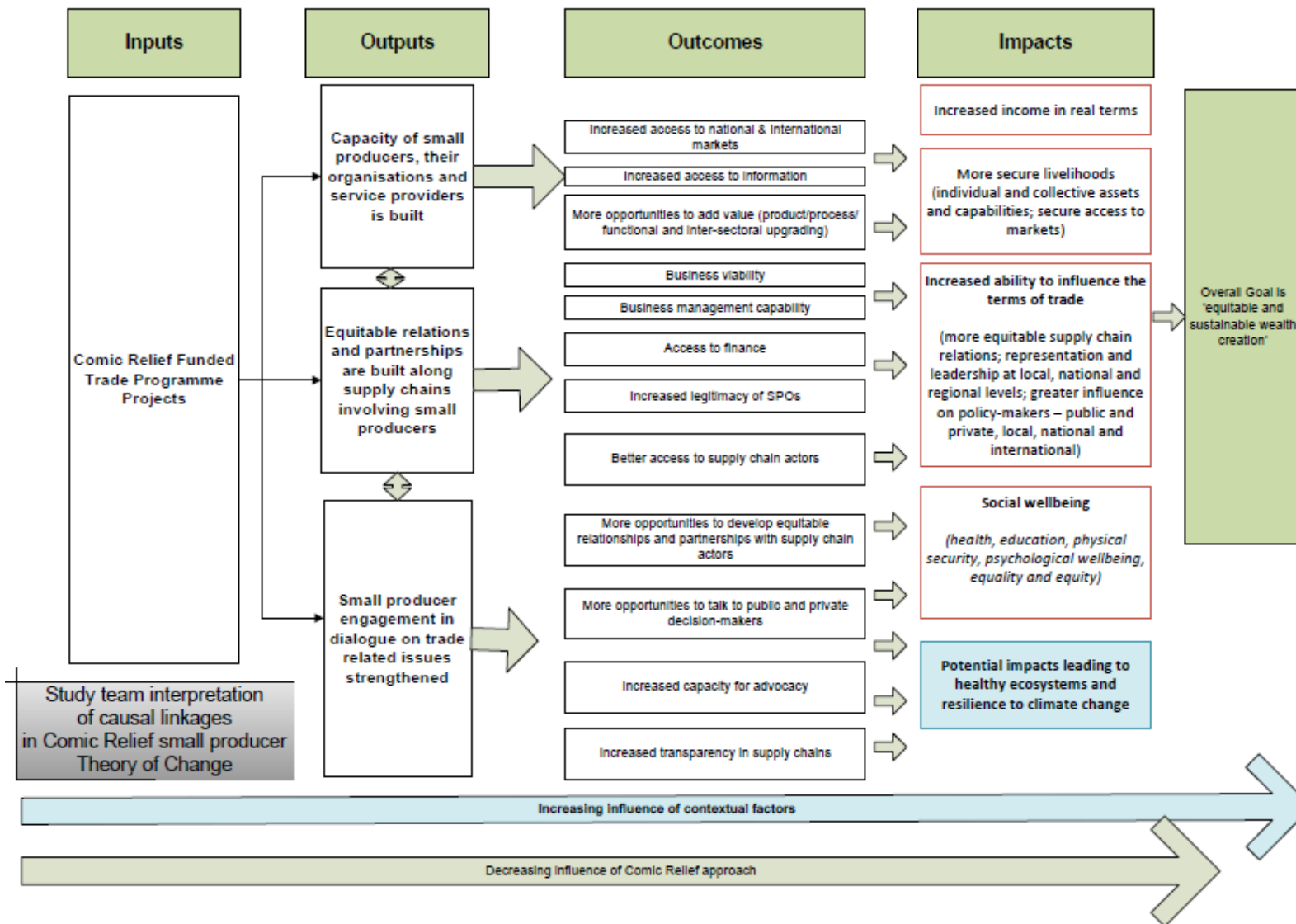


Figure 1: Interpretation of Comic Relief's theory of change

SECTION 3: FINDINGS ON PROGRAMME OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

3.1 Summary profile of Comic Relief Trade Programme grants

The Comic Relief Trade Programme was analysed to provide an overview of key patterns in relation to where funding has been concentrated. A summary profile is provided in table 1.

Table 1: Overall Trade Programme Profile	
Total number of grants made	40 in total
Worker/Smallholder/Joint (i.e. both worker & smallholder)	2 worker oriented projects (excluded from overall analysis) 35 smallholder oriented projects 3 joint worker & smallholder projects 38 grants included in the study
No. of Master Grants (single grants aggregated where they are closely linked) ⁴	30
Total programme budget of 30 master grants	£21,780,932.00
Average grant size of 30 master grants	£726,031.07
Spread of grant sizes funded of 30 master grants	Small (below £300,000): 9 (of which 4 are research grants ⁵) Medium (£300,000 to £600,000): 10 Large (over £600,000): 11
Average duration of 30 master grants	40 months (3 years and 4 months)
Duration of 30 master grants	Short (up to 36 months): 14 Long (over 36 months): 15
Commodity coverage of 30 master grants	A broad spread. 28 different commodities. Most common - honey (6 master grants) and coffee (6 grants). 11 master grants focus on more than 1 commodity (see appendix 3 for table of commodities).
Geographic coverage of 30 master grants (Some cover more than 1 region)	East Africa: 19 Southern Africa: 10 Central / West Africa: 8
Geographic spread by primary language region of 30 master grants	Anglophone: 24 master grants across 21 countries Francophone: 3 across 3 countries 1 grant covers whole of Africa More than 1 country - 7
Degree of completion of 30 master grants	100% (final evaluation completed): 10 50-100% (several rounds of reporting, and more than half-way in duration, but not reached final evaluation): 7 0-50% (some reporting, but grant not halfway through and mid-term evaluation not done): 8 0%: (when the grant has not been reported upon yet): 5

Source: Aggregation and analysis of Comic Relief M&E data

⁴ Out of the 38 grants, several of them are follow-up grants or are closely linked with each other (e.g. research grants, main grants, follow-on grants, or climate-change grants). To reduce the potential level of double counting, these grants have been combined into 'master grants' (in total 30) for the purposes of the data aggregation and analysis

⁵ 3 of around £25,000 and 1 of £50,000

3.2 Number and distribution of direct and indirect beneficiaries

The findings on the numbers of beneficiaries (direct and indirect) that have benefitted from the Comic Relief Trade Programme are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Number of direct and indirect beneficiaries

	Total	Male	Female
Estimated Direct Beneficiaries <i>(n=18 responses out of 24 grantees who filled in the questionnaire)</i>	1,089,530	771,281	307,872
Estimated Indirect Beneficiaries <i>(n=15 responses out of 24 grantees who filled in the questionnaire)</i>	5,378,380	2,470,184	2,679,707

Source: Questionnaire survey

However, these figures are a **significant under-estimate** of the total number of beneficiaries of the Trade Programme given that only a proportion of the grantees (24 out of 30), responded to the questionnaire survey, and not all of the 24 answered these specific questions. Historically, there has not been enough attention paid by Comic Relief and grantees to accurate reporting (e.g. lack of data collection by partner organisations, double counting of beneficiary figures in annual reports, some instances of likely over-estimation). Therefore, in some cases project staff did not have the data to share in terms of numbers, and were not able to clearly articulate how these beneficiaries had benefitted and by how much. Some organisations are not collecting gender disaggregated figures, but are multiplying by a common factor instead. The data being collected by some grantees and partners on indirect beneficiaries is also considered imprecise. However, the recent improvements in the Comic Relief M&E system should go a long way to addressing these issues (see section 5.3 for more information).

3.3 Impact Pathways

This section explores how, and to what extent, Comic Relief projects are achieving change. We begin by considering the primary intervention strategies that Comic Relief projects are employing and the aspects of these that have been effective in delivering change. We then explore the scale of achievement of outcomes and impacts by Trade Programme projects.

3.3.1 Outputs of the Trade Programme

The Comic Relief theory of change is based upon three key intervention strategies, namely: i) capacity building of producers, their organisations, and service providers; ii) creating more equitable relations and partnerships along supply chains; and iii) strengthening smallholder engagement in dialogue on trade related issues.

The majority of Comic Relief projects engage in the first type of intervention strategy, capacity building. Many of the projects are also engaged in the second – building more equitable supply chain relations – and a smaller number have engaged in advocacy related activities (see appendix 4).

According to the grantees, most change has been achieved by Comic Relief projects in capacity building (although less so with service providers than with producers and producer organisations). This was closely followed by the change achieved in the strengthening of

equitable supply chain relations. Different projects have focused on different linkages within their supply chains, but most strengthening was reported to have occurred between producers and processors and between producers and buyers, with smaller numbers making linkages with consumers, importers and exporters. A handful of projects are improving linkages between producers, and one reported creating links between producers and external markets whilst creating an iconic brand (rather than looking at supply chain trading). Effort expended and change achieved on the third intervention strategy – smallholder engagement in trade dialogue – was significantly less marked than for the other two strategies.

For many of the interviewees, **the three intervention strategies are all important components of their impact pathway for achieving widespread and lasting change in market systems, with the components being inextricably linked.** However, it is clear that the projects vary in the level of emphasis placed on each strategy, with activities tailored to the particular context in which they are operating and their own skills and development vision. Box 1 gives an overview of the most common types of activities undertaken.

Box 1: Type of activities funded by Comic Relief grants

- General capacity building – in 12 master grants (e.g. training of beneficiaries and staff, support and advice, etc.)
- Business development – in 8 master grants (e.g. training on financial management, good governance, documentation, etc.)
- Product development – in 8 master grants (e.g. training on seeding techniques, harvesting, milling, handicraft making, maintenance of bee hives, etc.)
- Marketing – in 11 master grants (e.g. value chain analysis, marketing skills, promotion, etc.)
- Standard systems (fair trade and/or organic) – in 10 master grants (e.g. awareness-raising on fair trade systems and organic farming, assistance with fair trade compliance, etc.)
- Research – in 7 master grants (e.g. market and value chain analysis, stakeholder consultation, laws and regulations, branding, etc.)
- Capital investments – in 3 master grants (e.g. investing in producer-owned businesses)

Source: Aggregation and analysis of Comic Relief M&E data

It is not possible to make comparisons between Trade Programme projects and draw conclusions about which approach is 'best', given the huge diversity in approaches, along with all the contextual factors (internal and external) that affect outcomes (see section 4), as well as significant gaps in data at the household level.. However, below we draw out some of the achievements in each area and identify successful intervention strategies, as well as some problem areas.

i) Capacity building of producers, producer organisations and service providers

Capacity building within the Comic Relief projects varies in nature; it can include technical advice, training and information sharing, business development services support, as well as organisation building.

Capacity building of producer organisations is an investment, which has the potential to sustain improvements for members for many years to come. However, long-term support is required (at least 4-5 years, often considerably longer) because of the likely challenges in trade interventions, particularly in young markets.

“As the market develops the groups are exposed to market fluctuations, new packers can come in, new standards and policies come up, food safety issues, transaction arrangements change and new technologies emerge – how will these be brought to bear?” (partner).

Producer organisations (POs) need support not only on issues relating to production and marketing, but on managing internal social dynamics. In some projects success has been more rapid in cooperatives with whom the grantee and/or partners have had a longer term relationship, compared to newly formed organisations or ones that the partner had not linked with previously (e.g. International Development Enterprises). However, this is not always the case as it also depends on the degree of capacity, motivation and leadership within POs (as discussed in section 4.1).

Fairtrade brings benefits to POs through the focus on good governance and democracy in its producer organisation standards – in some cases acting as a mechanism for the enforcement of national cooperative laws. **Establishing accountability to members of producer organisations** is critical for sustaining outcomes.

Improving productivity and developing a commercial orientation among smallholder farmers is vital to achieving sustainable livelihoods, but challenges arise because it can be a big leap for smallholders to make investments: for example, in new crops or processing equipment. There are often valid reasons why smallholders prefer to spread their risks across different activities and crops. Certain types of intervention can be important for overcoming scepticism and encouraging innovation among risk-averse smallholders. Examples are peer-to-peer exchanges to support horizontal learning, and field schools for farmers, which encourage changes in attitude and behaviour among smallholders – not only in production-related matters as has commonly been the focus, but also in processing, packing and marketing, and in institutional matters (e.g. producer organisation, gender). (See below for examples.)

As well as encouraging entrepreneurship and a commercial orientation among smallholders, some UK grantees noted the need to move away from direct or sustained provision of inputs to **avoid creating dependency**. However, there is a real need for support among poor and excluded groups of farmers, who may otherwise not be able to take the risks needed to participate in the trade process. While initiatives such as seed rotation schemes and revolving funds are important and preferable where they can be used, it is often also necessary to provide subsidies. However, this should be done with care and with consideration of real need, as well as with a view to sustainability. This issue is discussed further in sections 3.6 and 3.7 on gender and social inclusion.

Supporting producer organisations and farmers to achieve better quality through extension advice, processing innovations and control systems is an important activity for improving PO and farmer incomes. For example, Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative has introduced quality control mechanisms at both primary society and secondary cooperative levels, with financial quality-related incentives to farmers and hand-sorters. This has improved outturn rates and enhanced the quality premiums received in markets. Other internal control systems (instituted under the Quality Management System project) have also improved the organisation’s credibility externally, resulting in easier access to credit. If farmers are not fully supported to manage quality it can result in them being excluded from market opportunities, as in the case of the Mozambique Honey Company which took the decision to source only from farmers with improved hives after experiencing quality problems. MICAIA is trying to address this by, for example, providing access to improved

hives (which are relatively expensive) on credit, but it would have been preferable to have good quality management in place from the outset.

A number of different approaches based on peer-to-peer sharing have been tried by Comic Relief projects that are effective for producer capacity building. National and regional workshops are useful for bringing together smallholders to exchange experiences (e.g. the Environmental Monitoring Group/Gaia). Exchange visits between producers to each other's farms are important for 'learning by doing' (e.g. Bees for Development: BfD, SITE/Traidcraft). Exchange visits at the level of PO and management were generally considered useful for exposing people to new ways of doing things, and helped them to understand and compare their own situation with that of others (e.g. Twin, Oxfam). At the same time, the benefits were clearer for the leaders of newer or weaker organisations, than those of more established POs. Visits to buyers and trade fairs are very important in increasing producer knowledge of the value chain and of the requirements of export market actors (e.g. Twin/Gumutindo). Multi-stakeholder partnerships can be a useful mechanism for providing technical and market advice to POs, given that different organisations have different skills and sectoral experience, and thus varied types of knowledge to share (e.g. Lorna Young Foundation: LYF). However, finding funding to sustain such partnerships in the longer-term may require creative solutions, as it is not an area where donor funding is easily obtained, and private sector funding can pose challenges in terms of sustaining the independence of the advice provided.

While interventions that focus on knowledge management (e.g. information sharing, training and exchanges etc.) are important for PO development, **improving access to information and training may not be sufficient alone to effect significant change** – typically resources and continuing support are needed on business services development, linking to markets, etc (i.e. additional intervention strategies). Following up to ensure uptake of training (and address issues preventing uptake) is also important.

ii) Strengthening equitable market linkages

Ensuring linkages to markets and sufficient market demand is necessary to achieve sustainability and scaling up. Developing linkages to (profitable) markets is critical for success, but it takes time. Developing new value chains is particularly challenging. Many of the Comic Relief projects have been successful in helping producers and their organisations to strengthen their links to processors and packers in order to improve the marketing of their produce. Sometimes this has helped them reach new markets altogether, and in other cases it has increased the volumes they supply (e.g. Environment Africa Trust: EAT/Mpingo Conservation Development Initiative: MCDI, BfD, MICAIA). In some instances POs have diversified the number of buyers they sell to and developed new linkages with buyers, enabling them to benefit from improvements in quality achieved through capacity building support (e.g. International Development Enterprises: IDE), including receiving higher prices (e.g. Twin/Gumutindo). There are also examples where inefficiencies in the value chain have been identified and work is ongoing to capture margins for the benefit of producers or local communities through improved supply chain coordination (e.g. EAT/MCDI). **Close relationships with ethical buyers, such as fair trade companies, can support cooperatives to achieve greater stability and equitable terms of trading** (see Box 2).

For new products in export markets it is necessary to **grow international markets through investment in building consumer awareness**. Several Comic Relief UK grantees are utilizing innovative partnerships and strategies to do this. In one case it was noted that competition from other companies operating in different countries may be beneficial to build confidence

in the market (Phytotrade). In another case (Oxfam), Comic Relief used its connections to commercial partners to encourage the purchase of cotton for Red Nose Day T-Shirts. This hugely supported the partner organisations. However, for each commodity, different markets will have pros and cons. These will vary by context, but also according to whether they are low or high value, or the level of investment costs required to establish value chains, etc. Furthermore, **certain commodities pose more challenges than others in reaching export markets because of standards and regulations. Therefore any preliminary analysis of a trade intervention should consider who will be able to benefit and who will be excluded.**

Box 2: A joint marketing initiative for African coffee producers

Using a £450,000, four year grant received from Comic Relief, Twin is partnering with coffee cooperatives in Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and the DRC (collectively representing 14,585 farmers) to help them take advantage of strong market demand for African Fairtrade and organic speciality coffee. As well as improving production and business management capacity, the project has developed a joint marketing initiative (JMI) to strengthen the position of these producers in the market. Under the JMI, Twin provides commission-based marketing services to the POs, helping them to develop marketing strategies, to approach buyers, negotiate contracts and deliver customer service, as well as manage price risk. Key staff have been given intensive hands-on training in marketing by Twin, including at global coffee marketing events.

Twin has calculated that the total added value attributable to the JMI so far is US \$645,821, achieved through new contracts, increased sales on Fairtrade and organic markets and higher quality differentials. The benefits of the JMI for Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative were confirmed by its Managing Director Willington Wamayeye:

"We now have seven or eight additional buyers through JMI activities and the price we are getting for coffee has gone up – we now get a differential of \$ 0.40 over the Fairtrade organic price [i.e. based on NYC prices]. Last year we got \$ 0.90 over the NYC price, even though market prices were very high."

Chair of the Board, Nimrod Wambette said:

"Getting the best prices was hard for Gumutindo; African coffee is seen as inferior to coffee from Latin America in spite of being as good quality. JMI has vigorously helped with marketing; we have got the highest prices for our coffee. The strategy [of using a commission based system with Twin] is good; it serves our purposes, although in future we may want to review it."

Several Comic Relief projects demonstrate that there are **synergies to be gained through establishing and exploiting local markets as a first step towards building market access or creating new markets on national, regional and international levels** (e.g. IDE, BfD). Fewer projects have focused on collective marketing aimed at local markets, but this is probably because there are fewer incentives for producers to engage there. More opportunities to add or capture value are likely to exist in national and regional markets for some commodities – and national markets tend to be more accessible than international ones, although here too standards are becoming more stringent. Careful preliminary analysis of markets and value chains is needed to ensure that the right markets and products are being targeted.

Access to working and investment capital is often a critical factor for the development of financially viable businesses, with partners noting that insufficient access to credit can affect outcomes (e.g. below expected production levels and increased competition with informal traders). Different strategies are being pursued, including the more traditional revolving funds and microfinance loans, but also some innovations: one partner is exploring how to raise funds on the private equity market to expand their working capital and help them to “graduate from being a donor-supported small company to a viable financial commercial enterprise” (Treecrops), while a small beekeeper group in Kenya is about to issue shares to members to raise working capital (Plan Bee). Some of the larger POs can now raise capital more easily using their product contracts as collateral (e.g. Gumutindo).

In addition to improving quality and productivity, other forms of **upgrading in value chains** – such as Fairtrade or organic certification, gaining processing capacity, and moving into direct relationships with end buyers – are seen by many as an important focus for trade projects: “*The relationship with a new honey trading company is critical, and the producers own 34%... this direct relationship and equity engagement remains critical in the [project] design*”. In some cases a phased process is needed with an early focus on increasing volumes and quality: for example, before proceeding to more complex forms of processing, packaging, branding and labelling.

Innovation in the **use of information and communications technologies (ICTs)** shows significant potential across all three intervention strategies, although significant capacity building and technical support is often needed. The mobile phone revolution across Africa is leading to benefits for producers, particularly in relation to making direct payments. Producers and buyers are also using new connections made possible by mobile phones to negotiate with buyers that otherwise would be too distant to engage with – and thus ICTs are supporting market linking (e.g. Concern). PO managers are better able to communicate with members. Text messaging by producers to guide the content of radio programmes and to ask questions is another example of innovation within the Comic Relief programme (e.g. LYF). There was less experience in relation to using ICTs for accessing market information (e.g. on market prices): sharing market data with farmers is not always as straightforward as it might seem in theory. There are also ‘digital divide’ issues regarding the use of ICTs in trade as in other development interventions, i.e. that access to ICTs can be challenging for less affluent and marginalized groups.

iii) Producer dialogue in trade related issues

Most projects include considerable focus on farmer production, processing and marketing, but **a smaller number of projects tackle macro-level issues** as part of their project design (addressing policy issues and frameworks, identifying trade barriers, encouraging governments to see smallholders as entrepreneurs, etc). However, there are some projects which have engaged in policy advocacy in response to opportunities or needs that have arisen during the course of projects.

Advocacy targets vary, including different levels of government – local, national, and regional – and occasionally all three (e.g. Oxfam cotton programme). As well as public policy targets, there are also several Comic Relief projects supporting producers to lobby Fairtrade system organisations (e.g. Gaia Foundation/Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG); Twin).

There are several projects in the honey sector that are supporting the development of industry bodies and multi-stakeholder initiatives, and that are lobbying government to

obtain registration for EU exports, amongst other things (e.g. BfD, MICAIA, IDE). A broad-brush approach is taken by Concern, reflecting a more holistic livelihoods approach in its project. It is partnering with the Uganda Debt Network to create Community Based Monitoring Groups, which are informed about government policies in relation to agriculture and rural development, and can actively monitor implementation.

Some activities included within Comic Relief projects may not be deemed as advocacy *per se*, in terms of influence over decisions – especially in public policy arenas – but do constitute a building of advocacy capacity, in particular, by increasing access to information and understanding about public policy processes. For example, Oxfam has supported Malian cotton producers to visit other West African countries to learn about privatization processes, thus enabling them to prepare for future participation in negotiations as a formal stakeholder as and when this occurs in their own country. The farmers made tapes which were then broadcast across local radio stations in Mali. In Uganda (Concern) phone-in shows have been used to raise citizen awareness of government policy and their entitlements. Many projects have supported networking among POs and this may also lead to advocacy in the future. Thus a range of activities such as networking, popular mobilization and information sharing can be considered precursors to actual engagement in advocacy processes – activities that are needed to build confidence, understanding and the necessary relationships for future action.

Practical entry points can be identified to build producer confidence and capacity to lobby more influential groups and people. For example, organising a roundtable on a specific issue, can ensure that the discussion is concrete and relevant to producers.

As well as building capacity among managers of representative organisations to engage with policy-makers, it is also important to build understanding among the grassroots, so that they are well informed about issues and can hold their managers to account.

Changes of political leadership and direction can affect the ability of partners to influence policy. This was reported in an example of producers seeking to influence the Fairtrade system (Gaia/EMG) and regional policy processes (Oxfam).

It is important to note that there may be risks for producer and other partner organisations in engaging in advocacy type activities. In countries where freedom of expression is more limited and governments are sensitive to perceived criticism or challenges, some NGOs opt not to engage in advocacy activities as it may risk their ability to continue operating. Sometimes NGOs or POs may not want to become overly visible to government or competitors – a visibility deriving mainly from success that might bring unwanted attention, scrutiny and/or interference. A detailed understanding of the political landscape is needed to ensure that the risks are as well identified as possible.

Overall there was relatively little M&E information to draw on to build understanding of what works and what does not in relation to trade-related dialogue and advocacy. Further learning is recommended on best practice and on mapping the ‘routes to advocacy’ in trade-oriented interventions.

3.3.2 Outcomes of the Trade Programme

This section explores the extent to which different outcomes were achieved by the Trade Programme, building on the previous discussion of primary intervention strategies (encapsulated as outputs in the theory of change).

Data was gathered on the number of POs which have achieved positive outcomes in the five key outcome areas shown in table 3 below. Given these figures only relate to 13 of 30 master grants, the actual number of POs benefitting from Comic Relief's Trade Programme will be considerably higher.

Table 3: Number of Producer Organisations reporting improvements <i>n = 13 responses (out of 24 grantees responding to the questionnaire)</i>	
Outcome/Impact indicators	No. of POs
Improved business management capacity	604
Improved access to markets	402
Improved profitability	349
More equitable relations with supply chain actors	177
Improved asset base	84

Source: Questionnaire survey

Grantees were also asked for the numbers of individual smallholder producers who reported the following outcomes, shown in table 4. There were 16 responses to this question, so again the actual number of individual smallholder beneficiaries is likely to be higher.

Table 4: Number of Smallholder producers reporting improvements <i>n = 16 responses (out of 24 grantees responding to the questionnaire)</i>	
Outcome indicators	No. of producers
Improvements in their PO capacity or performance	132,281
Improved access to training	33,208
Accessing new markets	79,158
Increased ability to save or make investments	25,158

Source: Questionnaire survey

An analysis of what projects were seeking to achieve is illuminating (see figure 2):

- Few specifically advocacy-related outcomes were planned for (e.g. improved advocacy capacity, and opportunities to talk to people in a position of influence).
- There was also limited emphasis placed on local, traditional markets (perhaps because there is less need for supply chain coordination in some local markets, so the emphasis is instead on national and international markets).
- Limited emphasis was placed on improving access to finance. This is somewhat surprising given that, in our experience, access to finance is critical across all value chain programmes.

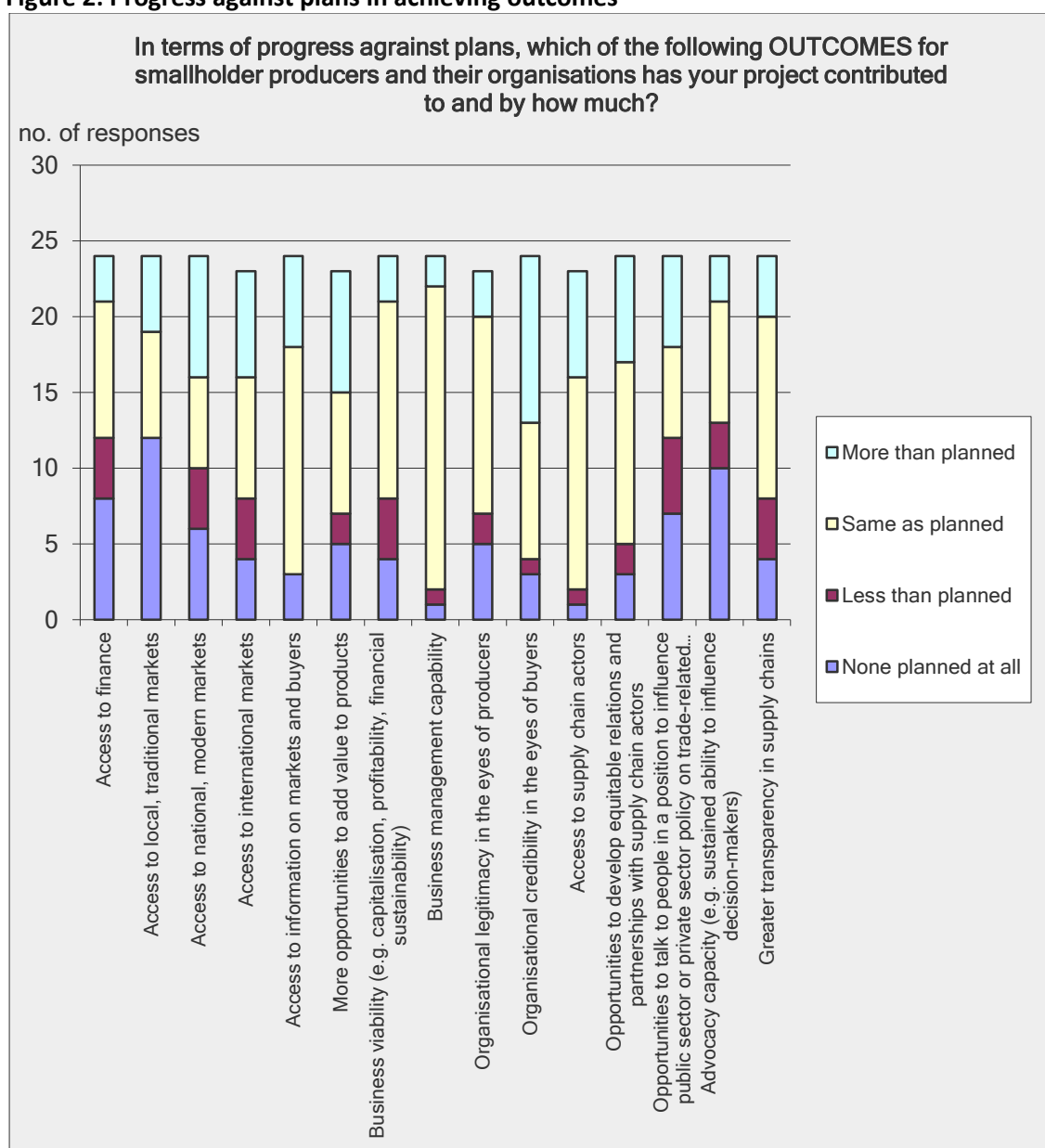
In terms of what has been achieved in each area the findings were as follows:

- Achievement exceeded plans in access to both national, modern markets, and local, traditional markets, but was the same, or less than planned in relation to access to international markets, indicating that this is perhaps more difficult than many envisaged.
- More was achieved than planned in improving access to information on markets and buyers.

- Achievements also exceeded plans in capacity building (improving organisational credibility in the eyes of producers), in supply chain linking (more opportunities to add value, access to supply chain actors, increased opportunities to build equitable relations) and in advocacy (e.g. opportunities to talk to people in a position to influence public sector or private sector policy on trade related issues).
- Progress against planned outcomes was the same or less than expected in terms of advocacy *capacity* (e.g. sustained ability to influence decision makers).
- Progress was the same as planned for building business management capacity and access to finance.

Areas where progress on planned outcomes has been less strong seem to be in advocacy (opportunities to talk to people in positions of influence), but also in business viability for some grantees and access to international markets.

Figure 2: Progress against plans in achieving outcomes

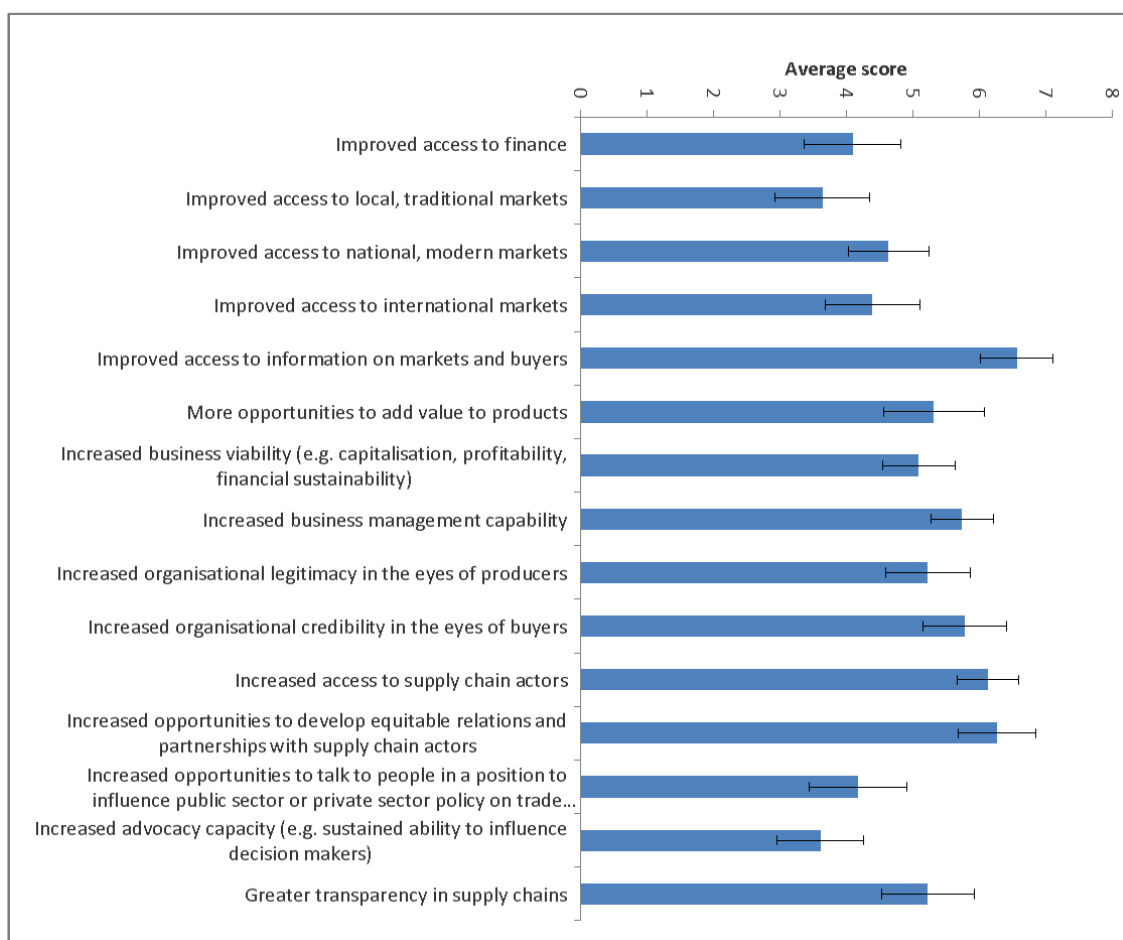


Source: Questionnaire survey (n=24)

Figure 3 illustrates the average extent of change achieved on each outcome, according to survey responses, but also the **variation in progress on outcomes amongst participating producer organisations.**

Some projects are not yet complete and so these findings are likely to underestimate change, but there is no reason to think that the patterns emerging will be different, except in relation to building advocacy capacity. A number of the projects that are still being implemented are planning to do advocacy activities later in their projects, moving from a focus on technical issues and buyer relationships at the beginning, to later efforts to support producer representation and lobbying of government to open up export markets. This may make sense when the aim is to support producers to engage in advocacy themselves, i.e. not overloading them with multiple project activities simultaneously. It may also reflect a limited capacity of organisations to act on all fronts at once. However, it may carry some risks in that achieving policy change takes times and typically requires substantial investments in relationship building to be effective – if it is left too late there may not be sufficient time to achieve the expected outcomes. It may also act as a constraint on achieving more substantial or widespread outcomes and impacts in other areas (e.g. if lobbying relates to export licenses or government support for smallholder farmers).

Figure 3: Extent of change achieved for different outcomes



Source: Questionnaire survey (n=23)

Box 3 gives a case study example of outcomes being achieved at various levels in a Comic Relief funded project in Uganda.

Box 3: Strengthening the honey sector in Uganda

Bees for Development have received two grants from Comic Relief (for a total of £521,215) to strengthen the honey sector in Uganda and develop beekeeping as a sustainable livelihood for poor, rural communities. The project has built business capacity among beekeeper organizations and honey companies (packers/processors), and improved market linkages between the two. It has also provided institutional-strengthening support to two honey sector bodies: the national industry association TUNADO and the pan-African trade body, ApiTrade Africa.

KABECOS is a beekeeper cooperative that has particularly benefitted. It has gone from being a small informal organisation to having 632 members organized in seven groups (each with a Collection Centre), a separate Board and Executive, and a staff of nine. It bought 10,386kg of honey in 2011/12 and is selling to a large number of buyers including supermarkets in Kampala. Members have received training on production, post-harvest management and value addition (candle making, beeswax creams, etc). One member, Eva Byakutaga, reported:

"I came to learn that beekeeping is also important. We used to just keep bee hives for honey in the home but from the training I discovered lots of important uses of bees, for candles, creams and so on. In future this will mean more income for the household."

The packer, Gates Honey, has also benefitted, as described by owner Christine Ogwang: *"TUNADO and ApiTrade have played a pivotal role in enabling me to start up and succeed as a honey packer... They introduced me to Ongica Beekeepers Association and gave me training on marketing in 2009, and processing and quality management in 2011, they organise trade shows, provide business advice, link me to other sources of support... I now buy from six groups in four districts and sell into all the leading supermarkets."*

According to the TUNADO's Executive Director, Dickson Biryimumaisho: *"Comic Relief funding and the technical expertise of Bees for Development has strengthened TUNADO to have policies in place... This has made TUNADO more relevant to members with transparency and accountability... The projects have helped us to develop, position ourselves and tap into other resources."*

Bosco Okello, CEO of ApiTrade Africa, reported that Comic Relief funding has *"provided stability and enabled us to look for projects to secure revenue... Although it is only a small percentage of our income, the timing was critical to stabilise ApiTrade and help us organise our first Expo."*

3.3.3 Impacts of the Trade Programme

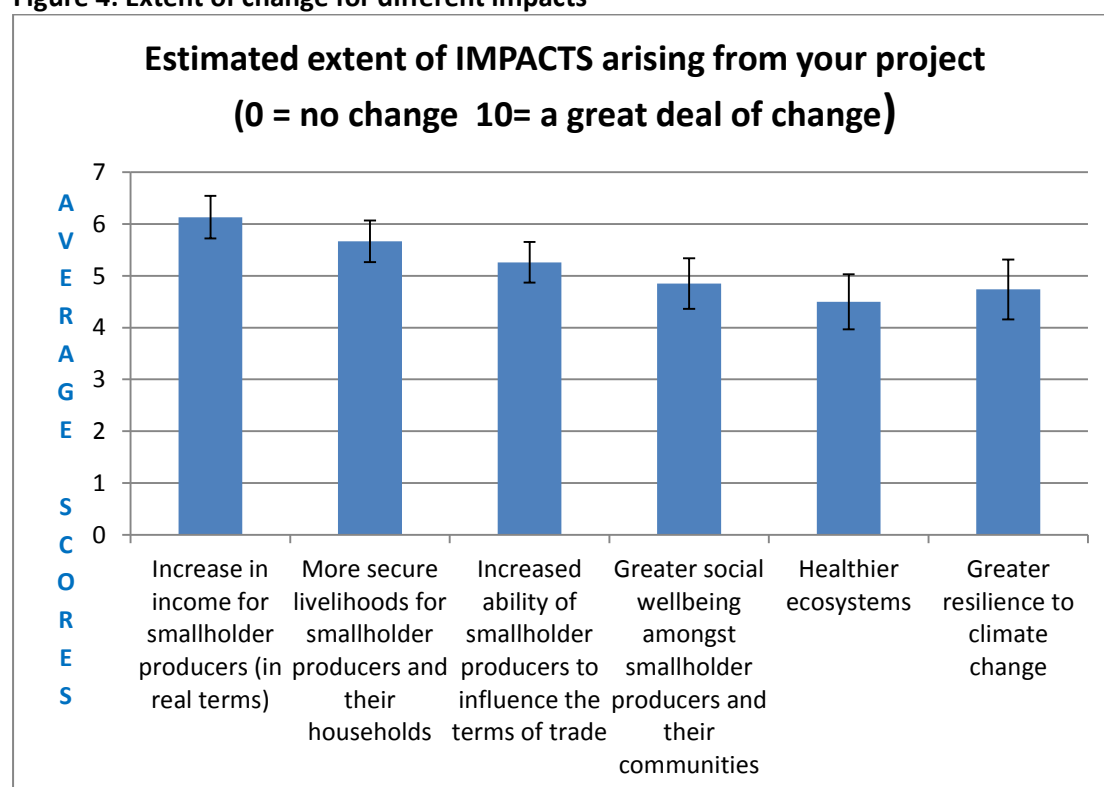
Comic Relief's theory of change indicates that impacts are expected to include increased income (in real terms), more secure livelihoods, greater ability to influence the terms of trade, and greater social well-being amongst producers and their communities. Greater resilience to climate change may be achieved, and healthier ecosystems could result, but the current theory of change does not include these as specific aims⁶. This section explores where the Trade Programme has been most successful in achieving impacts.

⁶ In 2009 Comic Relief piloted supplementary grants for project activities related to climate change. Climate change was then embedded as a cross-cutting issue in 2011.

The findings are as follows (see figure 4):

- The greatest amount of change was achieved in terms of increased income for smallholders (in real terms) and more secure livelihoods. **Achievement in increasing incomes was rated substantially higher than anticipated.**
- This was closely followed by the extent of change achieved in the ability of smallholders and their organisations to influence the terms of trade.
- Less impact was achieved in relation to greater social well-being amongst smallholder producers and their communities, greater resilience to climate change and healthier ecosystems. This is an unsurprising finding given the theory of change for a Trade Programme, which would undoubtedly seek in the first instance to build up incomes and secure livelihoods of producers.

Figure 4: Extent of change for different impacts



Source: Questionnaire survey (*n*=23 responses)

The impact of the Trade Programme for smallholder producers can also be assessed using data on the numbers of smallholder producers benefiting from improved incomes and assets (table 5):

Impact indicators	No. of producers
Increased income	256,429
Improvements in household asset base	14,040

n = 16 responses

Again, these figures will be an under-estimate because only a proportion of grantees have provided data. Taken together, the data indicates that **higher income for smallholders is the largest area of impact for the Trade Programme**⁷.

In terms of impacts at the household level, data was gathered on a number of indicators (see table 6). The findings are as follows:

- Household level impacts are highest for the achievement of more sustainable livelihoods, followed by a smaller number reporting improved health and children's education.
- These figures are likely to be a large underestimation of impact – as they were provided by less than a third of the survey respondents and an even smaller proportion of the overall master grants.

Table 6: Smallholder producers reporting household level improvements	
Impact indicator	No. of producer households
More sustainable livelihoods for household	64,276
Improved individual health	21,400
Improved children's education	27,626

n = 7 responses

3.4 Unexpected or unintended effects

All development projects may have unexpected and unintended outcomes and impacts. It is important in any evaluation to explore what these are and then identify how they specifically relate to the smallholder trade focus.

The majority of unexpected and unintended benefits reported were positive in nature:

- **a greater diversity and number of organisations received support through the Comic Relief project than had been envisaged, as partners respond to unexpected opportunities** (e.g. BfD supported ApiTrade Africa in its first project, having not planned to do so; MICAIA has signed MoUs with organisations to complement the provision of inputs to beekeepers with marketing support)
- Adoption of a **new, more effective, dissemination mechanism**, namely interactive, coffee-focused radio programmes (e.g. LYF)
- A **greater diversity of impacts** than envisaged (e.g. The holistic approach of local NGO partners in the Concern project led to a wide range of impacts such as better hygiene and sanitation, and access to fuel efficient stoves)
- **Unexpected recognition of successful organisation of farmers:** (e.g. EAT/MCDI were given a Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) project; the Hibiscus Farmers Association successfully organized and empowered farmers to engage in market systems and obtain access to funds from commercial banks, having qualified as legal creditors for their communities. They received unsolicited state recognition, as the local administrator recommended the strengthened producer group be invited to join the State Forum of Local and

⁷ Assessing the cost-effectiveness or 'value for money' of this level of impact was not within the scope of this study.

International Organisations, giving farmers a greater voice higher-up the decision-making process)

- **New connections and networks** (e.g. an advocacy process linked Fairtrade groups at a global event – communication has continued since and clarified the Fairtrade position on climate change)
- **Unplanned market access and opportunities** (e.g. Oxfam was able to support the sale of cotton by producer groups to TK Maxx for their Red Nose T-Shirts following linking by Comic Relief; international market access for Fairtrade honey for MICAIA)

Reporting of less positive unexpected outcomes was very limited (MICAIA's commercial partner's decision only to source honey from improved hives to maintain quality, which has had distributional effects; radio announcements by KABECOS beekeeper association of the readiness of hives for honey harvesting led to increased theft and increased competition from informal traders).

3.5 Sustainability

This section explores the sustainability of outcomes and impacts after Comic Relief funding has ceased, and how sustainability can be enhanced.

Overall, there was a **high degree of confidence as to the sustainability of outcomes and impacts** amongst Comic Relief grantees⁸. This is possibly a feature of trade interventions, which if successful can lead to arrangements providing on-going generation of wealth. Many of the projects have managed to secure other kinds of donor funding once Comic Relief funding has ended, and are actively identifying support from the private sector for follow-on activities.

Comic Relief funded projects have played an important role in strengthening the capacity of partner organisations, including POs (primary and secondary), producer networks, sector bodies, private companies and local NGOs. Although some of these organisations are not yet able to sustain themselves without continued support, this is a long-term process and there are positive signs that many organisations now have good institutional structures in place are able to access their own funding and support independently.

In many cases this is the result of **long-term relationships between UK grantees and local partners**, preceding beyond the life of individual grants. The value of long-term support came through strongly in several of the case studies (e.g. Phytotrade, SITE/Traidcraft, BfD, Twin/Gumutindo, Gaia/EMG, Concern, Oxfam), helping to build the capacity of African organisations over time, but importantly also improving understanding of African organisations' needs and priorities, and facilitating greater partner engagement and ownership in projects.

The need for a **long term approach is particularly relevant for trade interventions**, because developing capacity and linkages to (profitable) markets is critical for sustainability, but takes time. New challenges can also arise at any time, such as fluctuations in prices and market demand, introduction of new quality standards, the availability of new technologies, changes in government and international policies, regulations and tariffs etc. Accompaniment by alternative trade organisations, NGOs and companies is likely to be

⁸ 40.9% were moderately confident, 45.5% were very confident and 13.6% were extremely confident

needed over time, to ensure that new market linkages can be sustained and to enable POs to reach the stage where they can overcome staff turnover, external shocks and internal political dynamics etc.

Exit strategies are important in trade interventions and can include: i) progressive, but not sudden, reductions in external funding for core costs (BfD); ii) encouraging cooperatives to mobilize their own internal funds (Oxfam); iii) finding other strategies to raise income (BfD); iv) supporting the establishment of intermediary marketing bodies aimed at supporting the ethical value chain (EAT/MCDI); or v) developing market linkages between producers and processors/packers, addressing core problems in quality and volume, and building producer negotiating capacity such that producers can then negotiate and have links to buyers without external support (SITE/Traidcraft, MICAIA).

Follow-on grant funding from Comic Relief (or another funder) is particularly important for UK grantees without African based offices, because a gap in funding can lead to work to build stakeholder relationships and partnerships with local NGOs, companies and POs being undermined.

3.6 Gender

This section explores the gender distribution of benefits, costs and impacts of Comic Relief smallholder trade projects.

Reporting is limited on gender issues in M&E, so it is not easy to make generalizations about overall impact in this area. Women's representation in producer groups as members and in positions of authority are common indicators of women's empowerment in Trade Programmes, but other indicators should be monitored (e.g. participation in advocacy and trade dialogue, as well as the differentiation of numbers of beneficiaries). Intra-household relations are important in understanding the bargaining of power of women, and the position of different groups of women (widows, female-headed households) within a producer group and wider community.

There is varying capacity and interest in gender issues amongst implementing partners. There are both good examples of projects tackling gender inequality and women's empowerment through their trade initiatives, and others where women are included and there may be some economic empowerment, but there is no gender analysis. In a small number there appears to be no attention to gender-related challenges and opportunities at all. Some organisations have clearly mainstreamed gender across all their work, giving it a high priority and generating specific lessons on gender and trade (e.g. Oxfam, Concern, ACORD⁹), but experience and action is mixed amongst the rest. The self-evaluation by survey respondents is relatively confident in terms of how far they have taken concrete steps, but it is clear that for some progress is limited¹⁰.

⁹ The ACORD project, for example, promoted gender equality through: *"training female animal health workers and health agents, paralegals, sensitizing the population on laws and legal instruments that protect women's rights and discussing customs and traditions responsible for gender inequality. Women are now given more posts in government institutions and also compared to the previous situation there are more outspoken women appearing in various gatherings, which motivates others to follow suit"*.

¹⁰ There was a fairly positive response from questionnaire respondents about the extent to which they have taken concrete steps to tackle gender inequality and empower women: just over a third

Development NGOs are more likely to assign greater priority to tackling gender inequality, and tend to have more capacity and understanding to do so (especially large INGOs). Private-sector organisations may have less experience and interest in gender sensitive approaches, although some private-sector organisations are still keen to work with women as they are seen as more reliable partners.

Positive outcomes are possible when grantees and partners focus on gender issues and have the capacity to respond. Some positive changes in gender relations have occurred as a result of gender mainstreaming in project activities – see Box 4. The SITE/Traidcraft project is beginning to have success in Koriema village, Baringo, with more women engaging in production and gaining improved market access:

“Plan Bee helped further mitigate the stigma that beekeeping is a “no-go” zone for women. Consequently, the project increased livelihood options for women who... have less business opportunities than men and are more likely than men to spend income on meeting the essential daily expenses of their family.... Plan Bee also improved women’s access to honey markets. Unlike men, women cannot carry many kilograms of honey great distances and/or spend several nights away from their family while delivering honey to market. By piloting Plan Bee’s marketing arrangement, the project removed such requirements by providing an accessible, near-by selling point for women” (UK grantee)

While only a small proportion of Koriema group are women, and there are still barriers to their participation, these women may be vanguards that carve a path that others can follow.

Box 4: Changing gender relations in Uganda and Kenya

Peris Kibet, a female member and secretary of the Koriema Honey Producer Group, said:

“I was outside the group and saw how they were selling their honey in larger quantities. I asked to be a member and was accepted and I am now a member since 2008. The honey is better quality and I produce more. I have used the money to pay for school fees, clothing, family needs. I am now doing a little more farming and use a little more for this other business. Earlier, beekeeping was just for men and women could not be involved. But then in these projects, teaching people how to improve, we were told women can do beekeeping. Some husbands and heads of the household are still negative, but we lobby, make a negotiation, and there are now around ten women in our group. I am allowed to decide what to do with the money. I do not put the money into the bank, but I spend it on a cow or goats, like a saving. In the future I will look for other businesses”.

In Uganda, Concern has mainstreamed gender across all project activities, with a dedicated staff member periodically reviewing outcomes with project partners through a gendered lens. This has brought some important changes for the women and men they work with, as testified by Florence Alin, Chair of Teete Ogolai Farmers Association:

“Before when women cultivated, men would say they were only helpers and whatever they grew men would take and sell and keep the money. Now if a woman grows 10 bags of groundnut she says to husband ‘what shall we do, when shall we sell?’ and they decide together how to use the money. It has reduced [domestic violence] which used to be so rampant in families. It has stressed love in families and sharing roles. If a woman is busy the man will jump in and help, collecting plates together, caring for children.”

have done ‘a great deal’ and 45.5% have done a ‘moderate amount’. 22.6% said they have done ‘a little’, ‘not at all’ or ‘didn’t know’.

A few projects have more focused activities related to gender, notably Twin's Great Lakes project which involves piloting the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) among coffee cooperatives. GALS is a creative, participatory approach to engage with men and women and identify and address gender inequalities from the household level upwards.¹¹ Although the project has only recently been initiated, Gumutindo staff and members reported impressive results so far. Other grantees noted that **to achieve really significant and lasting improvements in gender relations requires intensive, focused support.**

Working with women does not equate with gender empowerment. Some grantees and partners appear to be working specifically with women or women dominated groups *more by accident than design*, and their work is not necessarily accompanied by an understanding of or interest in gender. For example, as the social group with traditionally ascribed responsibility for collecting a product, such as baobab, women are the natural partner for such a projects, but while benefits are clearly accruing to participants, at the same time it is not clear whether gender analysis has been conducted in the Comic Relief project focusing on ethical baobab sourcing or if gender relations are well understood. It is important to monitor whether women are able to have control over income derived from project activities, particularly where crops seen as traditionally their responsibility become commercialized. Further, changes in the gender division of labour need attention, otherwise there is a risk that women's already heavy workload will be increased. Projects that have done well on gender issues have a better understanding of gender relations than those that have not, and have paid more attention to how these power relations play a part in any project activities.

Some Comic Relief partners lack capacity and confidence to know how to analyse gender relations and to integrate gender across their operations. **Capacity building is needed and should involve improving understanding of and commitment to action on gender inequality amongst implementing partners.** The latter is currently lacking in some quarters; for example, one UK grantee said that Comic Relief was good because it did not respond to the "*latest fad, like climate change or gender*". Clearly, more efforts are needed to make the case to all groups – whether NGOs, market oriented organisations and private companies, or POs – as to why gender awareness has to underpin any development intervention and to explain the risks of gender blind interventions.

Gender audits can be a useful tool for organisations to use in self-evaluation or with facilitation from gender specialists to reflect upon their organisational performance. **There is also an opportunity to learn from those at the forefront of action on gender in trade interventions.** Trade-for-development interventions are relatively new in international aid and there are many lessons still to be learned, in particular how to best promote women's empowerment and gender equality. Some organisations, such as Oxfam and Concern, give gender a very high priority and other grantees could learn from them.

Gender norms can be deeply entrenched in mindsets. It is important to find ways to show to rural communities the benefits that can accrue to all members of the community from more equal gender relations and from women's empowerment, rather than this necessarily representing a threat. Many projects take practical steps to ensure that women are invited to join project activities such as training activities or exchanges (e.g. Lorna Young Foundation supporting women to participate in radio listening groups, training needs assessment, and a participatory video process).

¹¹ See: http://www.wemanglobal.org/2_GenderActionLearning.asp

As well as such practical steps, it is important to tackle strategic issues such as challenging leadership norms in relation to women's representation in positions of authority. Success has been mixed amongst Comic Relief projects. Less success occurred when there were no plans to engage in the management and selection of leadership positions of the cooperatives that were set up under the project:

"This meant that the traditional roles of men in the communities were replicated in the public arena of the cooperative and the project failed to achieve [targeted] female membership of the cooperatives of 35%. Instead, only 20% of the cooperatives were made up of women" (Survey Response)

A similar story was found in some of the other projects. A draft evaluation report on the Lorna Young Foundation project praised the concrete steps taken to support women's participation in radio listening groups, participatory video processes, and training needs assessments, but noted the entrenched informal and formal institutional inequalities embedded within Kenyan land inheritance systems. These mean that men are generally the landowners and coffee cooperative members, despite the fact that women do much of the coffee cultivation labour and do not have control of the income (Kitonga, 2012)¹². **The time taken to overcome entrenched gender inequalities and norms should not be underestimated**, and this makes it all the more important to plan well for gender mainstreaming and to seek clear agreement on pathways for action and targets.

There may be a **particular role for inter-group, peer-to-peer exchanges** to persuade women and men farmers that gender relations are not fixed and so can change. By visiting groups that have different underlying gender relations and/or have overcome aspects of gender inequality successfully can be useful in encouraging others to follow suit. This has occurred at part of the Twin GALS project, to positive effect, as noted by Gumutindo's GALS coordinator, Tabitha Namarone:

"Not all men have changed, some are very difficult, but even some of the difficult ones have changed. One of the most difficult changed after visiting Bukonzo Joint [an organisation that helped develop GALS], so much that he bought a motorbike and paid for his wife to be trained to ride it instead of him."

Participatory video could also be used to share more widely experiences amongst producers as a way of challenging constrictive social norms.

3.7 Social Inclusion

This section explores the distribution of costs, benefits and impacts of projects across groups that experience different levels of marginalization or inclusion.

There are **relatively few grants in the Trade Programme which specifically focus on special target groups** other than women (e.g. young people, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, People living with HIV/AIDS: PLWHA, disabled people, post-conflict and farm workers). However, over half the grantees consider that women, the extremely poor, indigenous groups and geographically disadvantaged have benefitted moderately or a great deal from

¹² Kitonga, M (2012) 'Lorna Young Foundation: Report of the evaluator'.

their project activities, with youth benefitting to some extent¹³. It would seem, therefore, that the programme is relatively successful in supporting disadvantaged and marginalized communities to participate in trade leading to positive livelihood impacts.

Given the variety that exists within the Comic Relief Trade Programme in terms of commodities, target markets (e.g. local, national, export), countries, types of partners, project approaches and theories of change (e.g. relative emphasis on capacity building, strengthening market linkages, advocacy), as well as limitations in M&E data, **it is not feasible within the scope of this study to draw clear generalisations about the best approaches for reaching marginalised groups**. However, it can be confidently stated that private sector decision-making is less likely to sustain a focus on disadvantaged groups (e.g. by wealth, age, gender, spatial marginalization). Commercial imperatives mean that it may be less viable for a company to source in more remote and under-developed areas, because of the additional costs of transporting goods or of providing technical support, but these are precisely the communities that need most help. There are some natural products that may be found in remote areas (e.g. baobab) and procurement may be viable as the crop is high value and non-perishable. In many cases, however, communities suffering from spatial marginality are not being reached. Donors can play a role in allowing trade to develop in such areas, where the incentives for the private sector are not yet in place. **Donor intervention is thus critical, in getting marginalized groups started and supporting them to become sufficiently viable to overcome the risks inherent in trade interventions (e.g. fluctuating markets, changes in policies, regulations or tariffs, etc).**

Currently, many other donors are not specifically focused on social inclusion within their 'making markets work for the poor' and 'value chain' interventions. **An inclusive approach through provision of support to marginalized and poor producers has been a strength of the Comic Relief programme to date, and this should be sustained and even enhanced.** A reinforced commitment from Comic Relief would encourage grantees to also ensure they have a poverty focus. This implies proper analysis of business viability for more disadvantaged groups, willingness to provide subsidies where these are needed, consideration of the different emphasis placed by POs on being inclusive themselves, attention to choice of commodity, market or approach.¹⁴ One example of targeting and inclusivity is presented in box 5.

Box 5: Inclusive trade-for-development

As well as working in a post-conflict area, Concern and its NGO partners, Community Integrated Development Initiatives (CIDI) and Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns (VEDCO), specifically target women as well as widows, child-headed households and people living with HIV/AIDS for inclusion in self-help groups alongside more commercially oriented farmers (which is key to the creation of viable collective enterprises). Project activities are tailored to participant needs and circumstances. For example, people with limited experience and/or access to labour are first supported to grow food crops for household consumption and then, depending on how they cope, to move into cash crop production for

¹³ Fewer grantees report benefits for the disabled and PLWHA, implying that these groups of vulnerable people would require more specific targeting if they are to benefit from the Trade Programme.

¹⁴ Some underutilised crops such as baobab are grown in dryland areas, but are high value and non-perishable. Staple food crops, such as cassava, are low value and have to be handled in bulk to achieve returns. Further, the investment required is quite large compared to the returns to be made. Some higher value crops such as horticulture or dried fruits lend themselves to rapid gains through use of small-scale processing equipment, but may not be feasible in lower potential zones (e.g. where there is insufficient rainfall).

sale on local markets. Being part of self-help groups gives them access to group labour exchange as well as knowledge and expertise through a lead farmer programme. M&E data suggest tangible impacts for 9,608 beneficiaries, 60% of whom are women: for example, 2,883 women and 1,922 men have increased agricultural production by at least 50% through increasing the amount of land they cultivate, growing a more diverse range of crops, and improving their agricultural techniques, and 5,765 farmers are now selling surplus produce.

Farmers talked about the impact on income and wellbeing: *“When we started this group I never thought we would get this far... I planted eight kg of groundnut seed and harvested eight bags. I sold five bags for UGX 55,000 each and managed to buy a cow. I use the balance for emergencies like sickness. It also varies our diet. This year I planted 1.5 bags.”* (Martha Alupo, Amuka Farmers Association).

“I am a widow and care for six of my grandchildren. I was given vegetable seeds to grow and was trained how to cultivate them and managed to sell the surplus for UGX 38,000. I used the money to buy a mattress - before I was sleeping on a mat. Because I did so well, this year I was given a bag of groundnuts and the rest of the group came to help me plant them... Before I wouldn't have been able to open up my land like this; I was only planting enough for food. With the money I make from the groundnuts I hope to buy a cow or goat so that I will have milk.” (Sarah Angero, Egangakinos Farmers' Group)

Other options being considered by case study organisations are for POs to apply for funding to enable them to provide extension services to farmers (mentioned by KABECOS), or for buying companies to set up their own NGOs which can apply for funding to provide services to poorer farmers (mentioned by Gates Honey). In global value chains, the approach may be different – with different forms of support needed to enable producers to reach international markets – but there are still changes which can be made to ensure that the projects are as inclusive as possible, without risking business viability. Some POs have specific policies in place to ensure the inclusion of poorer farmers (e.g. Gumutindo does not buy so much coffee from members with high volumes that they are then unable to purchase from those with smaller volumes).

The ageing of African farmers, in contexts where populations are generally trending towards burgeoning youth unemployment, is a significant challenge both for rural communities and national governments. Young Africans are often not interested in agriculture because they see it as a low return, low prestige sector. However, **trade interventions potentially offer a route to more profitable engagement in agriculture, including entrepreneurial activities that can attract young people.** Unfortunately, reporting and data disaggregation in Comic Relief projects in terms of age and generational issues is too limited to draw conclusions about the extent to which this is occurring. In future, greater attention should be paid to generational dynamics, with support for projects that set out to provide young people with attractive income generation opportunities through trade interventions.

3.8 Responding to climate change

Climate change adaptation has only come to the fore relatively recently in development arenas, although funding and activity is now quite intense. Since 2009 the Comic Relief Trade Programme has provided funding via supplementary grants to enable grantees and partners to respond more effectively to climate change. According to survey respondents, **most projects have analysed the risks posed by climate change a great deal or a moderate amount**, with the risks judged to be very serious for a third of projects and moderately serious for approximately a quarter.

It is not clear what capacity grantees and partners have to fully assess risks. For example, it is not clear if projects have consulted longer-term climate change projections for the locations in which they work and for the crops with which they are working, as opposed to focusing only on current climate variability.

- For some crops there is still little information on climate change impacts, but for others more information is emerging (e.g. coffee).
- Few projects have collaborated with climate scientists: The Lorna Young Foundation (LYF) was one of the few projects that indicated collaboration with climate scientists, involving them in visits to the partner coffee co-operatives and commissioning them to produce training materials. A website is planned with real-time weather data. LYF has drawn on multiple stakeholders for information (e.g. collaborating with the Kenya Coffee Research Foundation) and sharing this with producers via the radio programme.
- Beekeeping can be an important strategy in hard times for producers, but longer term climate change projections need to be taken into account. SITE/Traidcraft have built the capacity of beekeeper groups in productivity and volumes, quality, enabling linkages to market, raising prices, etc. Drought has affected many of these groups, and honey was said by the UK grantee to be particularly important in the recovery process, as cash income from honey was being generated within three months, and restocking of livestock would take much longer. However, they also reported that many bees absconded during the drought and a full analysis of longer term climate change challenges would also consider the potential impact of changing climate conditions on bee colony viability.
- Holistic responses are important and disaster risk reduction is critical in affected areas, but Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) should be adaptive. Concern takes a holistic response to disaster risk reduction in its project in north-eastern Uganda, an area affected by extreme weather (e.g. frequent floods and drought). They are supporting farmers to diversify into more climate friendly crops and species, working to increase income and livelihood security among extremely poor households, improving access to weather and climate information among local partners and farmer groups, and increasing the ability of farmers to influence policy makers. Access to a humanitarian wing which is able to respond rapidly to weather-related disasters is helpful, but DRR also needs to take account of climate change projections and challenges.
- Some projects appear to be supporting community resilience to climate change, but they have not invested specifically in analysing climate change risks – it is more the initial selection of a product that is drought resistant, which fits with a strategy to build climate resilience in areas already prone to drought (e.g. ethical sourcing of baobab in Southern Africa). Similarly, the IDE project in Ethiopia, supporting sustainable and fair access to pepper and bee product markets, has increased crop ranges and reduced dependence on one crop, but little information is provided about the climate change risks for pepper and honey production in the longer term, or of any other climate change impacts on the communities in question.

To assess the extent to which the Trade Programme addresses the risks of climate change, we looked at different indicators of adaptive capacity. **Adaptive capacity refers to the potential of individuals, organisations, communities and systems to adapt to climate change** when required, as opposed to an act of adaptation. Having the right tools and enabling environment is critical for long-term adaptation, as the climate changes and in response to intersecting pressures. It is, therefore, context specific and multi-dimensional.

Dimensions of adaptive capacity have been outlined by the African Climate Change Resilience Alliance (ACCRA) 'local adaptive capacity framework' and were adapted for use here in reviewing the activities and progress of Trade Programme projects (see table 7).

Table 7: Responding to climate change through building adaptive capacity	
Types of Response	Adaptive Capacity Indicators
A. Specific responses to climate change – building understanding, response capacity	Improved producers' understanding of the global causes of climate change
	Improved producers' understanding of projected impacts of climate change on their key crops
	Improved producers' access to weather and climate information
	Improved access to mitigation options
	Diversification into more climate friendly crops and species
	Improved understanding of climate change among wider stakeholders in agricultural trading system (e.g. service providers, supply chain trading 'partners' and other relevant local stakeholders)
B. Responding to the generic underlying causes of vulnerability	Building up of access to and control over income and assets
	Building up overall household income and livelihood security
	Upgrading of position in the value chain
	Greater social capital (e.g. networks, participation in public life, organisational development)
	More ability to solve problems and innovate
	Enhanced ecosystem services to increase environmental resilience
	Diversification into other livelihood activities
	Ability to influence policy makers on climate change issues

Source: Based on ACCRA Local Adaptive Capacity Framework

The majority of project grantees report that they have contributed to indicators of adaptive capacity that fall under the category of **addressing the generic causes of vulnerability**¹⁵. In general, trade interventions can play an important role in supporting adaptation to climate change through strengthening livelihoods, building up income reserves, and diversifying income sources.

A smaller proportion of projects have directly tackled climate change understanding and response capacity¹⁶. An example of a project that is more directly tackling climate change is the Gaia Foundation, which is training farmers on climate change risks and adaptation, and has distributed an automatic weather station and equipment to one PO to enable them to understand, track and adapt to increasingly variable weather. They also supported smallholder participation in COP17, to showcase their own adaptation work, and enable

¹⁵ Questionnaire responses were as follows: 'building up overall household income and livelihood security' (70.6%), closely followed by 'Building up of access to and control over income and assets' (64.7%). More than half have contributed to 'Greater social capital (e.g. networks, participation in public life)' (52.9%) through their projects. Slightly less than half of respondents had supported 'upgrading of position in the value chain'; 'diversification into other livelihood activities'.

¹⁶ Slightly less than half of grantees report that they had built producer adaptive capacity on the following indicators: 'Improved producers' understanding of the global causes of climate change'; 'improved producer understanding of projected impacts of climate change on their key crops'; 'improved producers' access to weather and climate information'; 'diversification into more climate friendly crops and species'; 'ability to influence policy makers on climate change issues'.

them to learn from others working on climate change issues. Other examples include Oxfam, EAT/MCDI, and the Lorna Young Foundation.

Twin is supporting participatory, community based adaptation assessments in a number of POs in their Great Lakes coffee project, and is seeking to develop market opportunities that will provide financial support for climate change adaptation. They are also promoting demand-driven innovation and action research at farm and primary society level through a regional Coffee Adaptation Innovation Fund, and disseminating best practice regionally via exchanges and a coffee bulletin. It is too early to establish the extent to which these strategies have achieved their aims, as Twin has not yet submitted its first annual report for the project. Reporting on climate change adaptation is also generally rather lacking in detail or clear indicators.

Another example of a project that has invested in directly responding to climate change is the Lorna Young Foundation, which has been building the understanding of coffee cooperative members and management about climate variability, and has just piloted training which should build more understanding of longer-term climate change. A participatory video process was supported through Comic Relief to focus on climate change, but this appears to have been less successful. Participants were excited by the process in general, and had heard of 'climate change' as a result of their participation, but the agenda setting was rather top-down (farmers really wanted to talk about land inheritance, not climate change), the process appeared to focus more on climate variability rather than longer-term climate change, and there was no clear follow-on strategy for supporting and accompanying action, including a lack of linkages to more detailed, scientific climate change information and agricultural adaptation expertise to support local innovation processes. The interactive coffee radio programme supported by LYF has led to increased uptake of the Batian Arabica coffee variety, which is more resistant to pests, diseases and drought, and produces better yields and quality. It has also reinforced messages on sustainable farming practices, which should be building climate resilience.

Few project grantees have built producer capacity in terms of increasing access to mitigation options (a notable exception is the EAT/MCDI African Blackwood project which has used Comic Relief funding to build credibility, and lever-in further REDD funding), and this would indicate **a lack of attention to the co-benefits which can be achieved from mitigation activities for adaptation**. Although still in the early stages, the EAT/MCDI REDD project aims to financially benefit communities, protect forests and sequester carbon, and may support expansion of current activities:

"Investment costs are a barrier to expanding Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification to more villages – which is our priority – so we hope the carbon market will cover our costs. We are half way through the four year funding for REDD and there are technical challenges, but we expect the first carbon offset payments in 2016" (African partner).

Few grantees report progress on **improving the understanding of climate change among wider stakeholders in agricultural trading system** (e.g. service providers, supply chain trading 'partners' and other relevant local stakeholders), yet this is important for all agricultural adaptation. Because of the uncertainties that climate change brings, it is not possible for communities and disadvantaged producers to achieve longer-term adaptation on their own. Action is required from government at different levels, private companies providing agricultural inputs or finance, buyers, as well as supporting NGOs, etc. One exception is the Oxfam cotton Mali programme, which following a slow start, recognized the *"stronger and higher amplitude of climate shocks"* (two droughts over five years) for cotton

producers in West Africa, and supported local government to integrate climate change considerations into their municipal development plans, as well as building cooperative capacity to respond to climate change (e.g. through agricultural diversification).

Very few grantees reported that their projects are **enhancing ecosystem services to increase environmental resilience**, although we know that a number include aspects of improving natural resource management. The difficulty with some single-commodity focused trade projects is that perhaps insufficient attention is given to environmental sustainability more generally, as well as in the light of a changing climate. The African Blackwood project (EAT/MCDI) is different to the other grants in the Trade Programme, because the commodity is timber and the approach is based on improved landscape level management via participatory forest management with FSC certification. Support for marketing and increased returns add incentives for communities to protect these resources. The importance of forest conservation for secure livelihoods in the context of a changing global climate is outlined by the external evaluators: The *“highly significant institutional developments have created conditions favourable to sustainable livelihoods improvement and forest resource conservation for many years to come. The importance of effective forest management can hardly be overstated, both for providing stable and continuing local income, and for its contribution to global climate change”*.¹⁷

Few grantees report progress on the adaptive capacity indicator, ‘more ability to solve problems and innovate’, yet this is a critical dimension to responding to climate change. This is because it is rarely clear exactly how the climate will change in a particular location, and even less clear what the impacts will be. While a little difficult to measure, this is possibly one of the more important attributes that adaptation requires. This applies not only to individual producers, but to organisations, companies and governments. It is not enough to seek to build organisational capacity, for example, with a ‘business as usual’ approach. More forward thinking, flexible decision-making and governance are needed. In agricultural advisory services this translates into more interaction between researchers and extension staff, to less prescriptive messages because of climate change related uncertainties, and to more attention to scoping potential scenarios and planning future pathways.

3.9 Summary of findings in relation to Comic Relief’s theory of change

This section reflects upon the theory of change articulated for the Comic Relief Trade Programme (see figure 1) and summarizes where the emphasis has been placed upon intervention strategies, and what kinds of outcomes and impacts have been achieved.

In general, achieving any particular outcome usually requires a mix of intervention strategies. In turn a number of outcomes are likely to be needed to achieve particular impacts. For example, to achieve ‘an increased ability to influence the terms of trade’ (impact) is likely to require outcomes such as more opportunities to talk to decision-makers and greater access to information and advocacy capacity, but also stronger and more credible POs and increased opportunities to develop equitable partnerships with supply chain actors.

Capacity building (technical, marketing, institutional), and strengthening equitable market linkages are the most commonly used intervention strategies for achieving impacts such as improved incomes, secure livelihoods for producers and stronger POs. Broad-ranging

¹⁷ Gent, C. and D. Hadrill (2010) ‘External Evaluation Report on the Project: ‘Fair Trade for African Blackwood’, Funded by Comic Relief

capacity building (e.g. business management, organisational strengthening, internal control systems) for POs and sometimes entire communities – for example, in sustainable forest management – is critical to the majority of trade-for-development interventions. Support for market linkages covers a range of interventions, and it is not possible to generalize about what is ‘best’ in any one situation. Potential strategies for raising incomes and securing livelihoods include: commercializing under-utilized crops; creating new links with existing intermediaries and buyers on better terms; creating new intermediaries from scratch to support ethical trading; supporting producer negotiations with buyers; provision of broad business support services; and increasing producers’ product quality and processing, as well as volumes.

Advocacy activities have been given less emphasis, but projects tend to undertake activities that are part of longer-term strategies for influencing the enabling environment (e.g. building organisational advocacy capacity through networking, exchanges, improving internal democracy, representation in multi-stakeholder initiatives, etc). Of course, there are more immediate advocacy targets (e.g. lobbying African governments to achieve export licenses, lobbying within the Fairtrade system), but in other cases it is more broad-based or systemic in nature (e.g. building dialogue and information on cotton privatization in West Africa, understanding coffee value chain dynamics better, supporting community monitoring of public agricultural policy).

Trade Programme projects are targeting poorer communities, but it is not easy to say how far they are reaching the very poorest or whether some groups may be excluded. Impacts on gender relations range from quite transformational changes to likely reinforcement of pre-existing inequalities. A focus on inclusive *approaches* should be sustained and improved by Comic Relief and partners.

Many Comic Relief projects have assessed climate risks, but the extent to which these assessments are based on climate science and modelling is not particularly clear. Most projects tackle the generic underlying causes of vulnerability, and a smaller number are specifically trying to directly respond to climate change challenges and building adaptive capacity. However, more could be done by grantees in this regard to build up capacity and expertise.

Some tentative findings emerge from a review of the impact pathways of the Trade Programme projects (based on the in-depth case studies analysis) that are of relevance to the future Trade Programme strategy:

- There could be benefits to the programme from concentrating on a slightly smaller number of commodities, with the aim of emphasizing the inclusive focus of Comic Relief funded initiatives, but these benefits would only be realized if an adequate learning function was in place so that lessons were teased out and shared;
- While accessing export markets tends to require certain levels of skill, assets and organisation, it is also the case that the approaches amongst POs vary, and so support could be channelled to those that perhaps have less capacity and capability, and those that demonstrate some commitment to being inclusive;
- Traditional export cash crops tend to be more male dominated than food crops, but there are some difficulties with value chain development in lower-value food crops (e.g. cassava, roots and tubers, legumes), but some higher-value, underutilized crops present obvious opportunities to reach women (e.g. baobab), but only if interventions are gender sensitive.

In conclusion, all three 'intervention strategies' are important components of the impact pathway for achieving widespread and lasting change in market systems, and they are inextricably linked. There is also considerable debate in the broader development discourse and among practitioners about how best to achieve poverty reduction among smallholder farmers. Some believe that the focus should be on increasing incomes through improving production and strengthening market linkages, while others place as much or more emphasis on the importance of supporting democratic and inclusive organisation as a means to tackle the underlying structural causes of poverty¹⁸.

Some projects are delivering positive outcomes and impacts and may simply **require further resources to expand on successful activities** – either expanding to include new communities and producer groups, or moving to other locations. Advocacy type interventions may be important to scale up impact, because they can lead to government support for similar initiatives or can persuade other actors, such as Fairtrade or mainstream companies, of the value of the innovation in question.

At the same time, a single project should not necessarily include activities in every area, nor try to do them all at once. Project activities and inputs need to be tailored to the existing context/situation whilst drawing on best practice. This requires adequate analysis, drawing on specialist skills if necessary, and stakeholder engagement in participatory planning and consultations at the early stages of project and programme design. In some contexts one or more inputs may already be in place (e.g. strong POs may exist, or smallholders may already be engaged in dialogue through existing representative bodies), and it will therefore be necessary to focus efforts on weaker areas, finding collaborations with other partners to plug skills gaps. Comic Relief could play a supportive role identifying useful collaborations where organisations can match complementary skill areas. This could include north-south and south-south collaborations and is more likely to be feasible if a learning function is strengthened in Africa. At the same time it is also the responsibility of grantees to evaluate accurately their own strengths and weaknesses, and to collaborate where there are gaps.

SECTION 4: FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPACT

4.1 Internal factors

A number of clear messages emerge from the in-depth case studies as regards success factors for smallholder oriented trade projects. These are outlined below.

Provide long-term support but guard against dependency

- **Substantial time and resources** are required to achieve significant change for smallholder farmers, particularly when the aim is to build democratically run POs that operate profitable businesses, or to establish national level advocacy bodies from scratch. Key informants talked about needing 5-10 years to establish strong POs from a relatively weak base, and at least as long to form effective representative organisations at the national level.

¹⁸ See Smith (2011) 'Which aspects of the different routes to market most effectively support small-scale producers to achieve equitable and sustainable wealth creation?' Report commissioned by Comic Relief.

- A certain degree of **realism** is needed about the speed at which changes can be achieved. *“Be realistic about what to expect – this initiative is tackling an old and complex social problem. Any small gains are likely to be reflective of massive shifts in the system, and they are likely to have consumed great energy and resources. However, the long-term and accumulative benefit of this investment for later work and effect should not be under-estimated”*¹⁹. Approaches such as outcome mapping can be useful in identifying changes in attitudes, behaviour and expectations, which may precede concrete actions.
- Many of the **strong partnerships between UK grantees and local partners extend beyond the life of a particular grant**, reflecting the need for longer-term accompaniment and support than is usually available within the duration of one project. This continuity of support has been important in a changing environment (institutional, market, policy etc.). However, **avoiding over-dependency is critical and requires clear formulation of possible exit strategies**, so that POs and other partner organisations can make the transition to sustainability.

Carry out thorough research and analysis in project design

- **Conducting sufficient research and analysis** in the design phase of projects was raised as an important factor maximising success for some and an area for improvement for others. In some cases projects have been designed on the basis of inaccurate secondary information and/or outdated, incomplete information on partner organisations (e.g. BfD, MICAIA). Others highlighted the particular value of conducting studies on markets, value chains and action research to pilot marketing arrangements (e.g. IDE, Traidcraft/SITE, EAT/MCDI). Inadequate research and stakeholder consultation can lead to delays in achieving outcomes and overestimation of partner capacity.

Invest in participatory, joint planning with partners

- Project design should provide sufficient space for participation by partner organisations to **build a sense of local ownership and commitment**. There is a cost when projects do not fit well with partner (and producer) priorities and needs in terms of the strength of outcomes.
- Attention needs to be paid to the **level of the staff of a partner organisation** that is involved within the planning process – in some cases lower level managers who have not been involved in planning may cause delays, which are avoidable when they are included. (Twin, Concern).
- Within the participatory planning process it is critical that **clear agreement on vision and roles is achieved between partners**. Delays have been caused where partners did not understand their roles properly due to a lack of clarity, but also because of limited resources invested at this stage of the project cycle. This is particularly important for projects and programmes with large numbers of partners (Twin, Oxfam), but the full cost can be prohibitive. Flexibility in the project plan can allow for finalization of activities and plans and the distribution of tasks among partners during the inception phase. For example, Twin invited producers to put forward ideas for how to run specific activities at the inception workshop to encourage ownership. Oxfam found that a participatory process of more clearly articulating

¹⁹ Soal, S. and Collingwood, C. (2010) Community Development Resource Centre. Report to EMG, AFIT, MUPO and Gaia Foundation on the Evaluation of their Impact within the Comic Relief 'Support to Small Scale Farmers and Farm Workers Project'.

their theory of change was highly effective in clarifying roles and objectives amongst partners – something that had been lacking prior to this exercise.

Allow flexibility in project activities and encourage innovation

- Maintaining **flexibility in project activities is particularly necessary for trade projects**, because market conditions can change rapidly, presenting either new opportunities or threats which need to be dealt with. Most, if not all the case-study projects have made adaptations to their project design in response to unexpected circumstances, new opportunities or difficulties achieving objectives. Several partners brought in new expertise (Concern, LYF). Others have taken up opportunities arising to form national or international platforms for commodity sector coordination and advocacy (MICAIA, BfD). Some projects have had to adapt their business plans to ensure they are viable (MICAIA, Phytotrade/Zimbabwean partner), or have been successful at identifying better opportunities to capture value (EAT/MCDI refocused on margins in the supply chain rather than solely on consumer premiums paid for FSC fairly traded clarinets).
- Many Comic Relief projects involve trying out new ways of supporting smallholders to benefit from trade (e.g. Twin JMI, LYF knowledge transfer, Fulwell Mill biogas). While sometimes high risk from a grant-maker perspective, this **innovation is critical to develop more effective and sustainable trade-for-development interventions**, as this is a relatively new field of intervention. However, it is also important to **ensure that the learning from innovation is captured**.
- There is potential to enhance impact through greater innovation in the use of ICTs, particularly in trade projects. One of the biggest impacts of ICTs in agriculture in Africa has been improving financial transactions, such as payments to farmers. Radio has been used by various Comic Relief grantees in innovative ways, as has participatory video to support local learning processes, information sharing and to contribute to advocacy. Further applications of ICTs are being piloted in trade externally to the Comic Relief programme.

Ensure project partners collectively have the right expertise and motivation

- Finding appropriate partners is critical to any development project, and this was borne out by the findings of our evaluation. The configuration of partners in Comic Relief projects varies greatly and depends on how each grantee organisation is positioned, its modes of working, and the aims of the project. NGOs dominate the UK grantees, with only one grant awarded to a private company to date. The majority of partner organisations are POs or NGOs, but there are also quite a number of private companies and consultancies (fair trade and conventional). **Project outcomes are likely to depend more on the capacities, leadership and motivation of partners than on the type of organisations involved**. Project partners collectively need to have the right combined expertise and good coordination where multiple actors are involved.
- **UK grantees typically undertake project management and strategic oversight but capacity varies**. Larger INGOs, such as Oxfam and Concern, have an advantage over some of the smaller grantees, because they have programmes in a particular country or across a region and can draw from wider organisational experience. The in-country programme can accompany and provide strategic guidance to implementing partners. The smallest grantees sometimes struggle to provide this role effectively from a distance on small budgets. Medium sized organisations, such as TWIN and

Traidcraft, have local staff and programmes, and have particular specialist experience in alternative trade, so can provide this role quite effectively. However, both smaller and medium-sized grantees may not have the depth of experience and skills in some cross-cutting issues such as gender and climate change. Nevertheless, they may bring other important skills and experience (e.g. in innovation with ICTs, specialist experience in trade or in a particular product). There seems to be an untapped potential for partnerships between some of the small/medium-sized grantees and larger INGOs, to pull together these skills and experience, although the funding mechanism would need to keep the costs of collaboration down.

- Where the UK is an export market for the commodity or commodities in question, the **UK grantee may play a role in supporting the growth of markets**, in building consumer awareness and in practical value chain issues, such as warehousing and distribution. In other instances the UK grantee may **provide linkages to global learning and advocacy related to trade-for-development**. Both roles are important and should be supported where appropriate.
- **Capacity and level of experience among the African NGOs and producer organisations varies**. Some of the African NGOs are perfectly capable of managing their own grants and projects directly, and were they to be funded directly, might be able to grow stronger more quickly. Benefits of direct funding cited by African partner organisations were more direct communication channels, reduced costs and bureaucracy and a greater ability to direct funds to their strategic priorities, although there was recognition that this would only be possible for organisations with a good track record and accountability mechanisms. They should be able to provide the coordination role amongst the different African partners, where multiple organisations are involved. Although some African partners would like direct funding, this does not necessarily mean that they would not still work with UK partners on technical issues, market linkages etc. In other cases strong UK grantees are filling a gap in local capacity that is too big to overcome straight away.
- **While many UK grantees found that the partner organisation capacity in Africa was very good, there were several cases where capacity was weaker than expected, affecting delivery**. This indicates the need for more investment in and better evaluation of partner capacity in the early stages of project identification. African partner organisation leadership and motivation was also critical in shaping outcomes. Particular areas of weakness amongst some African NGO partners were: i) marketing and value chain analysis and support, as opposed to production led interventions²⁰; ii) supporting advocacy capacity building; iii) assessing climate change risks and facilitating adaptation processes; iv) gender/social inclusion analysis and mainstreaming; and iv) M&E culture and skills.
- **Technical capacity in a particular product is important, but has to be balanced with a good understanding of the overall livelihood systems and landscapes** (political, institutional, ecological and economic) of smallholder producers.

Partner with appropriate private sector actors

- NGOs often do not have a full understanding of market functioning and often struggle to support producers to establish linkages to 'good' buyers, so including

²⁰ ApiTrade Africa said Bees for Development has played a fundamental role in promoting a 'pull' approach to honey sector development, focusing on improving market coordination, rather than the 'push' approach of increasing production through 'modern' technologies, which is the focus of many others (NGOs, international organisations, governments).

private sector actors as partners in trade projects can be very important to outcomes by keeping a focus on marketing and ensuring the realities of current trading conditions are adequately understood. Private sector partners can also directly facilitate market access for smallholders, support skills development, transfer knowledge and, critically, can learn themselves about how to improve their own performance in meeting smallholder farmer needs. The **benefits of partnering with private sector actors may be maximised when they are directly involved in buying from smallholders**, rather than simply providing advisory or brokering services. This may relate to a mutuality of interests, but this requires further verification.

- **Capacity, skills and mindsets (e.g. the level of commitment to ethical sourcing) varies amongst private sector companies.** Tensions can arise where partners have different perspectives and priorities, particularly where NGOs and private sector organisations collaborate. In some cases the partnerships were not sustained. The degree of commitment to ethical principles is important when working with the private sector, but this does not imply that social enterprises or fair trade companies are always the best partners. Several case studies showed that good trading partners had been found amongst more mainstream companies when the incentives are aligned with their interests. Examples were MICAIA's partnership with the Mozambique Honey Company, which has voluntarily agreed to share ownership of the company with beekeepers; and honey packers in Uganda, who have mutually beneficial relationships with beekeeper associations whereby they provide inputs and training, and seek project funding to support beekeepers to improve production.
- **Some grantees have strong development and commercial expertise in-house,** because they have linked trading organisations, have acted as an intermediary and/or provided business support services. This may hold some advantages over bringing two or more partners together to jointly acquire the different kinds of expertise, in that there is less need to ensure alignment of interests and there may be fewer transaction costs (building relationships and communicating). They may also attract onward buyers by showing that they are actively supporting producers to participate in trade, both in terms of ensuring reliable supply as well as ethical branding. It can also be useful in situations where private sector partners who are willing to invest in (poor) smallholder farmers are in short supply.

Facilitate connections between producers and other value chain actors

- **Activities which bring farmers and producer organisation staff together with buyers and other value chain actors** can bring a number of benefits: i) better understanding of each other's needs and interests – all partners in the value chain need to benefit for a sustainable arrangement to be achieved; ii) building personal relationships and trust; iii) identifying new opportunities to tackle inefficiencies, improve supply chain coordination and for ethical sourcing; iv) improvements in transparency in the broadest sense (i.e. not just for prices, but in how actors relate to each other and in identifying where margins exist); and v) building commitment to the normative goals of ethical sourcing. Communication, exchange and action research processes can be facilitated at all nodes of the chain (and with other stakeholders such as service providers and local communities) to positive effect – the most extreme being bringing producers and UK supermarket buyers together, which is reported by one grantee to lead to buyer commitment to sourcing.

However, cooperation between private companies may be easier where demand for a product is outstripping supply.

Consider collaboration with government

- Collaboration with government bodies can strengthen impacts and help ensure sustainability of project outcomes, particularly in relation to working with agricultural advisory services. For example, Concern's partners in Uganda have successfully developed collaborative relations with NAADS through which they access complementary expertise and at the same time build capacity. However, much depends on the context, and the relative interest of government in the sector and in project activities, as well as its capacity to continue to provide services to farmers after the project has ended. In some cases it may be more appropriate to carry out advocacy work to influence government policy in the long-term.

Ensure good coordination through the life of projects

- **Good project coordination is essential to outcomes, particularly where there are many partners involved.** There needs to be clear agreement on vision, objectives and division of tasks from the outset – decided in a participatory process – as well as strong M&E systems that support tracking of impact and corrective actions during the course of the project. Having regular meetings, particularly in person, to reflect on progress against planned activities and expected outcomes helps to keep projects on track.
- **Several grantees said that they could have increased outcomes and impacts with closer on the ground involvement with the producer organisations.** Interestingly, Oxfam in Mali is supporting the cooperatives with self-evaluation tools. It is also helping them to improve their recruitment processes to reduce staff turnover and to improve the level of skills and experience available at management level.

4.2 External factors

This section explores the factors that have influenced Comic Relief Trade Programme projects but are external to their control.

- **Volatility in market conditions and international commodity prices pose challenges for trade projects** and have a significant influence on ultimate outcomes and impacts. For POs seeking to engage in marketing on a large scale, swings in commodity prices can be difficult to manage (Twin). Rising prices (e.g. of coffee) can help producer groups to achieve greater profitability and increase available investment capital, as well as increasing income for farmers, but it can be difficult for them to compete with buyers who have greater access to working capital to buy the product. High prices can also have a negative effect on quality if they are attainable even for low quality products, and this then leads to buyer disappointment. PO members also become resistant to lower prices when international prices drop, which results in lower profit margins for their POs. These factors all represent challenges to building sustainable producer organisation businesses, which jeopardises the long-term interests of smallholders. Rising commodity prices can also represent a challenge to Fairtrade, because high world market prices mean that the Fairtrade Minimum Price (FTMP) is temporarily redundant, straining relations between the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation and POs, and between PO managers and members – as impacts of Fairtrade are less distinct than when the FTMP is active.

- **The international economic downturn** has affected export markets for some of the commodities that are part of Comic Relief projects. The rapid expansion of organic and Fairtrade markets coincided with strong economic performance in Europe and the US during the late 1990s and early 2000s, and this provided considerable opportunities for farmers in Africa to enter these high value markets. However, the global economic downturn since 2008 has significantly affected the market for many (though by no means all) Fairtrade and organic products: recession in the UK reduced the demand for Fairtrade cotton significantly (affecting both Oxfam and Traidcraft projects).
- **The national political and economic climate** is of critical importance in shaping the enabling environment for trade interventions. One of the clearest examples was the situation experienced in Malawi, which was characterized by *“rapidly rising inflation, a currency black market and significant shortage of foreign exchange leading to shortages of essential commodities – including fuel. This has made travel to the rural areas wherein the communities live more difficult and expensive – although the outcomes have been achieved and largely exceeded. This situation has since eased with the transition to a new President and Government from April 2012 and these specific shortages have become less important, while the currency has been stabilised”*.
- The **relationships between state, private sector and civil society** vary between different countries, meaning that the space for action by NGOs and companies in trade projects differs. In Ethiopia, the government introduced new legislation restricting the activities of civil society organisations in relation to rights and governance issues, affecting CAFOD and its three implementing partners²¹. The government sees cooperatives as a major vehicle for development, which enables their buy-in, but has politicized cooperative leadership arrangements. Some governments are less tolerant of advocacy related activities by NGOs than others – this shapes the room for manoeuvre of partners.
- **Structural factors such as levels and distribution of infrastructure, shape project outcomes and impacts.** It may not be within the capacity of the project to overcome these given their scale, but it is still the case that projects can be designed to promote inclusion (e.g. by reaching more remote communities that would otherwise be excluded if decisions were purely commercial). Poor roads are a particular limiting factor, increasing the cost and complexity of getting farmers’ produce to market, and reducing the feasibility of providing business development services such as inputs and credit supply. Similarly, gender inequalities, land tenure insecurity and spatial marginality were noted by various interviewees as examples of underlying institutional and political factors shaping outcomes.
- **National and regional policies** can have a marked influence, both positively and negatively. Oxfam found the *“privatization process of cotton companies in Mali too slow to enable sustained change”*, but has supported producer research in other West African countries where privatization has occurred, to build awareness and prepare producers for future negotiations. The level of national government interest in a particular sector also has a bearing on outcomes. For example, honey is a small sector compared to other commodities and in countries where governments are supporting action to build up honey exports (e.g. Uganda) this creates an enabling

²¹The Charities and Societies Law in 2009 that governs the registration and activities of civil society organisations, and which states that organisations receiving more than 10% of their funding from non-Ethiopian sources are not permitted to engage in certain activities relating to rights and governance.

environment for project outcomes, compared to those where the government is not so interested (e.g. Kenya). However, in Kenya a recent collaboration between Christian Aid and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock is taking a sector-wide approach to engaging stakeholders, identifying challenges and finding solutions – a Comic Relief partner is engaged in this process and is drawing on previous knowledge generated from the Comic Relief project. Partial liberalization of the coffee market in recent years has driven demand for training and information on sales and marketing in Kenya (LYF). In Tanzania, national policies such as the Tanzania Forest Act of 2002 underpin the EAT/MCDI approach, which promotes participatory forest management, Forest Stewardship Council certification and value chain development. Additionally, international policy drivers are playing a key role generating demand for certified wood²². **Stringent international food safety regulations** were an issue for all of the honey projects.

- **Increasing climate risks.**
- **Changing security situations** have both worsened access to project locations (e.g. ACORD projects, Fullwell Mill), but also improved access in other situations (Concern) during the lifetime of the project.
- **Spillover effects of other NGOs or donors** active in the same location. There can be a mismatch in approach which creates difficulties – some partners reported that other NGOs, donors or government offer free subsidies which can create expectations that make it difficult for the Comic Relief partner to work in a different way.

SECTION 5: EFFECTIVENESS OF COMIC RELIEF APPROACH

This section explores the effectiveness of the Comic Relief approach for achieving positive impacts.

5.1 Effect of duration, size and type of grants on project outcomes

This section explores how the types of grants provided by Comic Relief have a bearing on outcomes and impacts.

- Despite the fact that Comic Relief does fund 5 year projects and provides follow-on funding, there were some comments from grantees and partners that indicate that perhaps the **availability of longer duration grants could be better communicated to them.**
- There was widespread agreement that 3 to 4 years (with the option of follow-on funding) is the minimum length feasible for trade projects. However, several grantees noted that **programme partnership funding²³ would be welcome**, rather than grant contracts, as a more realistic way to enable them to support trade interventions. This is because bringing about changes in markets and in the capacity of smallholders to trade on an equitable basis requires a long-term perspective, flexibility to allow changes to be made, greater ability to plan strategically, and

²² USA Lacey Act & Upcoming EU legislation on import of illegal timber has contributed to a slight increase of demand for certified wood.

²³ Programmatic partnership funding involves multi-year unrestricted grants for partner organisations with a programme of work that is aligned with the objectives of the funding organisation. A framework of programme objectives and outcomes is agreed between partners and continuation of funding is dependent on the partner organisation demonstrating progress towards outcomes through a diverse range of activities, rather than performance in relation to a stand-alone project

greater funding security, which helps to retain staff. Grantees also think such arrangements are also more likely to stimulate or support innovation and to improve performance, as not having secure funding can affect delivery. Partnership funding is not just critical for larger, more established organisations, but also for small ones: *“Although Comic Relief are the ideal funder in many ways (top of our recommendation list), there is always a need by small charities to secure non-project/strategic funds to help them to grow and ensure their sustainability so that their successes can continue to replicated”*. The risk of partnership funding is that the overall number of grants being made is reduced, which can lead to a concentration of funding and the possibility that smaller organisations could be left out. Therefore it is important that **a delicate balance is maintained between small and larger organisations, and between the types of funding provided** – programme partnership funding and project grant funding. The sizes of grants can vary. Not all partnership funding has to be large in scale, especially when it relates to follow-on funding to African partners to support continued progress (e.g. for POs or sector bodies). A pilot of partnership programmes could be undertaken, but a facility retained to provide project funding for the foreseeable future.

- Partnership funding is clearly important to help NGOs and Alternative Trading Organisations (ATOs) to build their own capacity. However, African organisations have not been able to apply directly for funds. There are several African NGOs/ATOs that can already manage their own grants and so **if there is a pilot for partnership funding, this should also include a trial with an African partner**.
- **No clear patterns emerged in terms of optimum grant size**, since this depends on the ambition of the project or programme.
- Loan guarantee projects were not included in the field case studies and are relatively new to the Comic Relief programme, so there is **little information available upon which to make any kinds of generalizations about different types of funding**. Grant funding remains critical for research and capacity building, but access to working capital is a key challenge for all businesses, but particularly smaller businesses where local loans have higher interest rates or are not available. However, the view was also expressed by some interviewees that loans are not the core strength of Comic Relief and that other, larger donors may have more experience in this field. Reinforcing the focus on poverty, it is necessary for Comic Relief to continue to provide funding that supports more marginal groups to benefit in inclusive approaches. Impact studies will be needed to assess the effectiveness of non-grant types of funding in relation to Comic Relief aims, and this assessment should take into account the level of inclusivity of the intervention.
- Funding for research and stakeholder engagement is not easily obtainable by NGOs and companies, and so **Comic Relief’s support of research and stakeholder engagement is highly valued**. There are indications that where undertaken it has improved overall project delivery (and the contrary is also true). It is critical that sufficient investment is made early on into participatory planning processes and stakeholder engagement, as well as good research into markets and value chains, gender, political landscape, and climate risks.
- Having a **concept note phase** would be useful, to spare smaller organisations from spending time and effort on project proposals that may not be of interest to Comic Relief.

5.2 Effect of Comic Relief inputs and conditions

Grantees were very positive about Comic Relief, indicating **high levels of satisfaction** with Comic Relief's approach as a donor (in the anonymous questionnaire survey). There were several aspects that, in combination, were said to be strengths: i) flexibility allowing changes to be made within a project to adapt to changing conditions, as well as a recognition of the complexity of development processes; ii) experienced staff and a supportive approach, in which advice is given and constructive questions asked, which has led to improvements in project design and implementation (including reductions in ambition of scale of projects, changes in M&E plans, and greater clarity among partners on the theory of change); iii) active engagement from Comic Relief staff, which means that they have an in-depth understanding of the context in which the project is being implemented; and iv) the approachability of Comic Relief staff. The provision of 125% of yearly funding to cover the reporting period gap is particularly helpful for small charities that might struggle with cash flow. Face-to-face meetings are valued and are particularly important in the early planning stages, but it was noted that the capacity of Comic Relief staff to hold direct discussions and meetings is somewhat limited. The overall view expressed by grantees is perhaps best summed up by the following comment: *“Comic Relief stands out as a supportive and experienced donor, that is willing to have an honest and supportive dialogue with grantees with a spirit of seeking to resolve problems while holding grantees firmly to account”*.

5.3 Monitoring and evaluation

This section explores how the Comic Relief approach to M&E and learning shapes outcomes and impacts.

- **Comic Relief closely monitors the progress being made in projects**, with in-depth questions asked in annual reports and provision of detailed feedback on submitted reports from programme staff. The annual reporting framework helps to ensure that the priorities and principles of Comic Relief's Trade Programme are clear to grantees, including a strong focus on learning.
- **The quality of reporting is mixed:** in some grants there is a clear link between the grant proposal, the annual reports and the final evaluation; M&E systems are in place, and progress is tracked against previously agreed outcomes. However, in several cases the connection between the grant proposal and the subsequent reporting is less clear, and indicators are not always reported upon. However, this is likely to be less of a problem going forward, following the introduction of the new grant application and reporting formats.
- **Comic Relief's M&E system was widely regarded amongst grantees as being positive for improving project performance.** Although early, in terms of implementation, one respondent said that: *“so far the learning elements have been very important internally. Comic Relief have funded an externally-led impact evaluation and we and our partners have enjoyed working with the researchers and have found baseline data collection to be a useful planning tool. We've also built in many learning activities and indicators of learning are key to project success – these help partners come together to plan and understand the kinds of change the project is aiming to facilitate”*.
- **Capacity amongst partners (grantees and African NGOs, companies and producer organisations) varies** in terms of M&E skills, experience and commitment. Many African NGOs lack capacity in this area, but improvements have been seen as a result of the Comic Relief funding and guidance. In several cases partners recognized themselves that there is still insufficient budget, time and training allocated by

partners to M&E and would welcome support from Comic Relief to share good practice on M&E and build capacity.

- While recognising the importance of gathering monitoring data at the household level, to be sure of project outcomes and impacts, **gathering accurate data at farm level presents challenges** (e.g. because of low literacy levels, inexperience in measuring areas being cultivated or quantity of seed sown, and suspicion that information may be shared with government revenue collectors). However, these challenges are not unique to trade projects and there is **a wealth of experience in participatory M&E nowadays (including amongst some of the partners) that can be drawn upon** and adapted to promote farmer record keeping – but investment and skills are needed. One PO (Gumutindo) is planning to hire specific staff to develop its internal M&E, but newer, less well-established and/or smaller POs may not be able to do this yet. Oxfam Mali suggests funding such a post, but with a clear exit strategy in which funding is gradually reduced and internal cooperative resources should be mobilized.
- There was **some concern among grantees that Comic Relief might be moving too far in the direction of a results-based management approach**, potentially undermining the kind of flexibility and willingness to accept changing conditions that has proven so useful in trade projects in the past. Some interviewees considered the new reporting formats to be quite onerous and repetitive, and the rationale for collecting so much detailed information was not always clear. For example, it may not be necessary to collect figures on indirect beneficiaries, but rather to provide a narrative description instead.
- At the **programme level it seems that information and insights being generated through the M&E system are not being used to facilitate learning across the programme, organisation, and beyond as effectively as they might**. For example, *“Comic Relief should have better information management systems to facilitate learning. Grantees spend a lot of time reporting [to them] and it seems like the information goes into a black hole.”* This may be because of Comic Relief policies that limit the resources that can be spent upon non-project based activities. However, it is critical that this function is carried out to maximize the impact of the overall programme and to avoid missing opportunities for new approaches and best practice. Alternative funding sources should be solicited by Comic Relief to enable it to play this role effectively without drawing on internal funds. A learning function would be most appropriately located within Africa.

SECTION 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section we first set out a series of recommendations for Comic Relief in relation to its Trade Programme strategy, grant making, grant management and learning. We then identify recommendations for grantee and partner organisations.

6.1 Trade Programme Strategy

Given the success achieved to date by the programme, it is important that Comic Relief continue to invest strongly in Trade Programmes as a means of generating wealth. However, it is important that the programme retains and even reinforces a focus on achieving **inclusive** interventions. Marginal communities and groups are less likely to be reached by private companies in sourcing products, because of structural barriers (e.g. poor

infrastructure, low levels of education) and higher costs (e.g. dealing with a large number of producers with small volumes). A number of donors are investing in ‘making markets work for the poor’ but not necessarily with a focus on social inclusion. Comic Relief can therefore make a specific and important contribution, aligned with its underlying principles, to support particularly poor and excluded groups to be able to participate in trade-for-development processes.

- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief should provide a clear signal in the next Trade Programme strategy that it will be emphasizing an *inclusive* approach to trade, setting out the implications of this for applicants. There are multiple ways in which trade-for-development projects can support inclusive outcomes, and it is likely that this relates more to project design and partner organisation orientation than type of commodity and market (see recommendation on grant-making below).

As part of an inclusive approach, greater priority should be given to gender in the next Trade Programme strategy. At the moment, practice, capacity and commitment is extremely variable among grantees and partners. Where it is strong, significant positive change in gender relations is occurring, particularly when there are gender-focused project activities. Nevertheless, there are currently risks in some of the interventions that gender inequalities will be reinforced and opportunities for women’s empowerment missed. However, experience shows that it is far from straightforward to change organisational cultures and individual mindsets to ensure gender sensitivity.

- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief should signal a clear and high organisational priority to gender in the Trade Programme and set out a strong rationale for this to encourage applicants to follow suit.

Comic Relief’s theory of change for its Trade Programme is relevant and sound, with all three intervention strategies considered important and synergistic. Historically grantees have given greater emphasis to capacity building than to market linkages, or in particular, enabling engagement in dialogue around trade, although this has perhaps changed in recent years with the rise of market systems approaches. Delivering good outcomes and sustainability almost always requires a focus on building market linkages at the same time as developing strong producer organisations and improving productivity and quality among smallholders. Assessing the benefits of building farmer capacity to engage in dialogue and advocacy is more difficult, given a lack of concrete evidence. There are a few examples of positive achievements, such as strengthening honey sector bodies and influencing policy in Fairtrade, but clearly there are also significant challenges. For political reasons, direct engagement in national public policy advocacy is not always feasible.

- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief should not dramatically alter its theory of change, although more direct reference to inclusiveness, gender and climate change is recommended. It should encourage grantees to work in all three areas simultaneously – capacity building, market linkages, and engagement in dialogue – because of the potential for this to maximise outcomes and impacts, but should accept reasoned arguments for not doing so, especially in relation to national policy advocacy.

To become more of a learning organisation, it is necessary that Comic Relief invests more in staff capacity and capability to undertake this role. Currently, Comic Relief is limited in its ability to take on this role, because of organisational commitments regarding the use of funds for non-grantmaking activities. However, this function is critical for ensuring that

funding is being spent to best effect, and to maximise the impact of the Trade Programme (i.e. through facilitating uptake of innovations and good practice).

- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief should set out a commitment in the next Trade Programme strategy to becoming a learning organisation, with respect to trade interventions, with indications of how it will achieve this (see section 6.3 below).

To support the institutionalization of learning within the programme it would be useful if the programme could reduce the overall number of commodities and countries covered, although this should not be a hard and fast rule. A slight rationalization, combined with a new emphasis on learning, should help to maximize learning and eventually impact.

- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief should reduce the number of commodities and countries overall, in combination with an increased focus on learning – to allow the programme to capture and share findings better and ultimately increase impact.

6.2 Grant making recommendations

To achieve an inclusive approach to trade interventions a number of different areas could be strengthened in both guidance to applicants and in assessing proposals:

- i) in the selection of partners (e.g. asking applicants to explain how particular producer groups are chosen, such as because they are particularly weak or have commitments to inclusion themselves);
- ii) in the type of approach adopted (e.g. understanding that subsidies and support may be necessary to enable disadvantaged groups to get started, to meet market requirements, capture value and eventually to upgrade their position in the value chain);
- iii) explaining how the choice of commodity in a particular market (international, regional, local) may lend itself to inclusive development or not;
- iv) identifying gender issues and how they can be addressed.

Another key area in which applicants should demonstrate expertise and understanding relates to market functioning. Ensuring that project partners *collectively* have the necessary expertise for carrying out inclusive trade-for-development interventions is critical. At the same time, it is important to recognize the unique and inherent challenges involved in trade-for-development interventions, such as a vulnerability to market and price fluctuations; the time required to establish new value chains from scratch; the need to accompany producer organisations over time as new challenges arise, until they are viable and resilient concerns; and the balance required between commercial viability and development goals.

- **Recommendation:** During assessment Comic Relief should ensure that applicants demonstrate understanding of the poverty and social dynamics (including gender) of market participation in areas/products/markets where they plan interventions. They should show clear commitment, a coherent strategy, and the necessary expertise for achieving inclusiveness as well as sustainability. The latter should include thorough market and profitability analysis (including pros and cons of different markets) and where relevant, strategic business plans. If this is in place, Comic Relief should be willing to invest significantly in building local organisational capacity on gender and social inclusion, including through an extended project start-up phase and support for private sector actors.

Access to finance is challenging for producer organisations and intermediaries, but this is critical for success. As well as supporting a better understanding of what works, appropriate roles, etc, it is also valuable to provide grantees with sufficiently secure and flexible funding so that they can innovate and retain staff over long enough periods: for example, through piloting programmatic partnership funding. Smaller organisations face some particular challenges, but should not be excluded from Comic Relief support as they can bring specialist skills. Thus not all funding should be tied into programmatic partnerships, but a balance maintained. Potential partnerships could be explored to enable smaller organisations to link with larger ones to match skills and experience.

- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief should look at ways of increasing the level of finance available to target smallholders.
- **Recommendation:** To support sound project design based on thorough analysis, Comic Relief should continue to provide funding for research but also open up a facility to fund participatory project planning processes (e.g. through creating a concept note phase followed by some funding for potential applicants to conduct participatory planning). As well as improving the quality of analysis, this should ensure that local project partners have a shared vision and take ownership of project outcomes.
- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief should pilot *programmatic partnership funding* within the Trade Programme while retaining its facility to support project funding. It should start with one or two organisations and then evaluate relative benefits. This would involve multi-year core funding for partner organisations to carry out trade-for-development work in line with their strategic plans, rather than tied specifically to particular project activities. A framework of programme objectives and outcomes would be agreed between partners, and accountability would be based on achieving agreed benchmarks against strategic plans, rather than specific project outcomes. Partnership funding may be large or small in scale, and should be open to African organisations that have a proven track record of delivering high quality outcomes. This is similar to Comic Relief's Investment grants, which provide long term, core funding to local organisations over a five year period. Funding for investment grants must be channelled through UK organisations. It is suggested that Comic Relief consider the potential for direct funding to African partners who fit the criteria.

6.3 Grant management and learning recommendations

Currently, only limited use is made of the M&E data gathered. The M&E system has evolved and become stronger, and grantees and partners spend significant time in reporting. While improvements can still be made (see recommendation below), the most important change would be at a programme level, with information more systematically analyzed and shared on a regular and wider basis. This would also support institutional memory within Comic Relief in situations of staff turnover, as well as encouraging good practice among grantees and the wider development community. This would mean that the learning is institutionalized rather than held in the heads of a handful of individuals. It requires Comic Relief to accept this as an essential function for a donor and to take practical steps to increase capacity and capability.

Ideally a learning function would be located in Africa with the following objectives: i) to support sharing and learning among grantees and partners within the programme; ii) to support sharing of best practice and coordination among partners and local organisations; iii) to help in evaluating the organisational capacity of applicants; iv) to build capacity of

African organisations in M&E where performance is currently weak, or where they are funded directly by Comic Relief; v) to communicate lessons to Comic Relief to inform decision making in the programme; and vi) to share findings with the wider development community.

- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief should consider establishing a comprehensive learning function within its Trade Programme, perhaps supported by funding from a corporate partner or in collaboration with another funding organisation to overcome internal restrictions on use of funds. Ideally this would be based in Africa (one post in East and one in West Africa) in order to more effectively support M&E and learning among grant recipients. As well as capturing and sharing learning more widely in trade-for-development interventions, it would also facilitate identification of partners with appropriate capacity (as per objectives outlined above).
- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief should revisit its M&E system to ensure it is fit for purpose. It was not within the scope of the evaluation to do a full assessment, but concerns raised by grantees about repetitive reporting formats and overly onerous data collection seem merited. At the same time, it is clear that M&E was not sufficiently robust in the past to fully assess impacts (and their attribution to Comic Relief funding). Collection of baseline data should be a standard requirement, but should be focused on the most important indicators that the interventions are expected to affect. This is often more relevant and cost effective than large scale comprehensive surveys.
- **Recommendation:** An outline of plans for how impact will be assessed should be required as part of proposal preparation. Where feasible, comparisons of project participants with a similar group of non-participants (the counterfactual), could be included, before and after the intervention. This is more appropriate for projects of sufficient scale to justify the cost, or where project activities are being rolled out over time and so there is an ethical way to capture information from control groups. Comic Relief could provide guidance to grantees on low cost evaluation methods.

There is already a strong system in place for assessing applications, but more needs to be done to better assess the capacity of partner organisations. Learning posts in the region would support the identification of partners with appropriate capacity – both as partners of UK grantees and as lead grant managers, as would the move towards programmatic funding.

6.4 Future learning priorities

The evaluation indicates a number of areas where further learning is needed to enable the programme to maximize impact. These are set out in table 8 below.

Table 8: Priority Learning Questions

Learning Question 1: What are the best approaches for achieving inclusive trade-for-development (e.g. appropriate roles for the private sector, the role of subsidies and strategies for avoiding dependence, the relative effectiveness of different types of funding for inclusive trade, and how best to support women’s and female headed households’ participation in value chain interventions)?

Learning Question 2: What are the particular risks posed by climate change for trade-for-development initiatives and commodities, and what are the appropriate responses in different contexts? What opportunities exist to achieve adaptation, resilience and mitigation goals?

Learning Question 3: What are the most effective approaches in advocacy to change the enabling environment for producers and their organisations, and to thus achieve inclusive trade-for-development?

Learning Question 4: What are the potential opportunities and challenges of ICTs for promoting inclusive trade-for-development initiatives?

- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief should support research on the four learning questions outlined above within the next Trade Programme strategy. As for the learning function more generally, it may be possible to collaborate with other organisations (e.g. private foundations, INGOs, DFID) to fund this research. This would have the benefit of wider dissemination and influence of findings.

6.5 Recommendations for Grantees

Most of the recommendations for grantees are linked to the findings on internal factors influencing outcomes (section 4):

It is important that trade-for-development interventions are inclusive, otherwise there is a risk that they exacerbate rural inequality. However, there are challenges in balancing commercial and poverty reduction goals, and more lesson learning is needed.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should identify good practice in inclusive trade to ensure that trade projects and programmes support disadvantaged smallholders to participate in and benefit from these interventions.

Substantial time and resources are required to achieve significant change for smallholders, particularly where the aim is to build democratically run POs operating profitable businesses, or to establish national level advocacy bodies. However, avoiding over-dependency is critical and requires clear formulation of possible exit strategies so that POs and other partner organisations can make the transition to sustainability.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should provide long-term support but guard against dependency by developing and implementing clear exit strategies.

Conducting sufficient research and analysis in the design phase of projects was raised as an important factor influencing success. Inadequate research and stakeholder consultation can lead to delays in achieving outcomes and overestimation of partner capacity.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should carry out thorough research and analysis in project design.

Project design should provide sufficient space for participation by partner organisations to build a sense of local ownership, as well as a commitment to both agree vision and roles and to fit partner and producer priorities and needs.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should invest in participatory, joint planning with partners.

Maintaining flexibility in project activities is particularly necessary for trade projects, because market conditions can change rapidly, presenting new opportunities or threats. Most of the case study projects have adapted their project design in response to unexpected circumstances, new opportunities, or difficulties achieving objectives.

- **Recommendation:** Comic Relief and Grantees should allow flexibility in project activities and encourage innovation.

The configuration of partners in Comic Relief projects varies greatly. NGOs dominate the UK grantees, with only one grant awarded to a private company to date. Capacity and experience amongst the African NGOs and producer organisations varies, and there is a need for more investment in and better evaluation of partner capacity in the early stages of project identification.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should ensure project partners collectively have the right expertise and motivation.

Although some grantees have strong development and commercial expertise in-house, NGOs often struggle to support producers to establish linkages to 'good' buyers. Tensions can arise where partners have different perspectives and priorities. Conversely, good trading partners have been found amongst mainstream companies when the incentives are aligned with their interests. Communication, exchange and action research processes can be facilitated at all nodes of the chain to positive effect.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should partner with appropriate private sector actors based on common interests and understanding.
- **Recommendation:** Grantees should facilitate connections between producers and other value chain actors.

Collaboration with government bodies, such as agricultural advisory services, can strengthen impacts and help ensure sustainability of project outcomes. However, much depends on their interest and capacity to provide services to farmers after the project has ended. In some cases advocacy to influence government policy long-term may be more appropriate.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees and partners should explore opportunities for collaboration or advocacy in relation to government bodies.

While all organisations need to prioritize what they will work on first, it is important that partners give sufficient attention to building relationships of trust with policy and decision-makers, so that when lobbying opportunities arise they can be captured. This will increase the likelihood of achieving advocacy targets within the lifetime of the project.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should seek to build relationships with policy and decision-makers early in the project cycle to support advocacy activities within the lifetime of the project.

Ensuring access to finance is of critical importance for producer organisations and intermediaries for achieving outcomes.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should seek to support producer organisations and other partners gain access to finance.

Good project coordination is essential to outcomes, particularly where there are many partners involved. Strong M&E systems can support tracking of impact and encourage corrective actions during the course of the project. Having regular meetings to reflect on progress against planned activities and expected outcomes helps to keep projects on track.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should ensure good coordination and continuous monitoring throughout the life of projects.

Several areas of under-capacity were identified amongst African partners, and it is important that grantees improve performance in these areas.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should seek to build their capacity in M&E, in advocacy, in analysis of climate change risks and facilitation of adaptation processes, in gender analysis and mainstreaming, and, critically, in marketing and value chain analysis.

Some additional recommendations linked to those outlined for Comic Relief are given below.

There are relatively few grants in the Trade Programme that specifically focus on special target groups other than women (section 3.7). Greater attention should be paid to generational dynamics and support for projects which provide income generation opportunities for young people.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees and partner organisations should carefully consider how best to reach poorer groups without creating dependency and unsustainable outcomes. For example, including commercially oriented farmers alongside farmers with low initial production capacity may lead to more sustainable outcomes than focusing solely on the most marginalised, since it enables economies of scale for collective marketing and (potentially) cross-subsidisation of service provision. Subsidies will often be required in the short-term, but there should be a clear strategy for developing access to more sustainable input and services.

Capacity and interest in gender issues varies among implementing partners (section 3.6). Capacity building in gender analysis and integration is needed to improve partners' understanding of and commitment to action on gender inequality.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees and partners should mainstream gender within their projects and programmes, seeking support (where they have capacity gaps) from specialists or organisations with experience and a focus in this field, and using organisational evaluation tools such as gender audits to identify gaps in their programmes.

Many Comic Relief projects have assessed climate risks, but the extent to which these assessments are based on climate science and modelling is not very clear. More could be done by grantees to build up capacity and expertise in this area.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should ensure that the assessments of climate risks draw on up-to-date climate modelling and impact information on longer-term climate change, as well as local-level knowledge of climate variability.

The uncertainties of climate change require different kinds of responses:

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should seek to develop trade initiatives that respond directly to climate change challenges. They should also tackle the underlying generic causes of vulnerability, to avoid ‘business-as-usual’ and to build the adaptive capacity of producers, producer organisations and service providers to respond to uncertain futures (e.g. promoting adaptive management).
- **Recommendation:** Grantees should share information in relation to climate change initiatives in trade projects and programmes, because more lesson-learning is needed to respond to complex and uncertain challenges.
- **Recommendation:** Grantees should seek to engage broader agricultural innovation system actors in their trade initiatives, because responding to climate change cannot only be done by local communities given the uncertainties in climate modelling and in how impacts will play out in interaction with on-going local pressures.

While disadvantaged farmers in the global South generally do not have high emissions, historically or currently, it is still important that opportunities are identified to reduce them. There may be significant opportunities that could provide co-benefits (e.g. adaptation) for farmers.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should explore mitigation opportunities as well as adaptation initiatives, to maximize the co-benefits of interventions.

Building advocacy capacity is important to enable smallholder producers to have a means of influencing both the value chains they participate in and the enabling environment for their trading activities and broader livelihoods.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should seek to improve their advocacy capacity in relation to trade-for-development interventions, sharing findings and learning from other grantees’ and development practitioners’ best practice.

Given the exodus of many younger farmers from rural areas and the associated challenges of youth unemployment, it is important for rural communities and national governments that young Africans are supported to find attractive livelihoods within the agriculture sector. Trade interventions offer a potential route to more profitable engagement in agriculture.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should seek opportunities to support young people in Africa to engage in agricultural trade initiatives.

Monitoring and evaluation capacity was found to be variable amongst Comic Relief grantees and African partners. More attention needs to be paid to improving M&E systems and skills.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should seek to improve their Monitoring and Evaluation skills, capacity and systems. In particular, they should ensure a clear link between the grant proposal, annual reporting and the final evaluation, with clear reporting of changes of direction.
- **Recommendation:** As part of project preparation, Grantees should plan and budget for how project outcomes and impacts will be assessed, in order to be able to attribute change to their interventions. This would include plans for baseline data collection to allow ‘before’ and ‘after’ comparison; and, depending on the circumstances, collecting data on both participants and a similar group of non-participants. A range of quantitative and qualitative methods can be used, including participatory assessments, especially at producer organisation level.
- **Recommendation:** Grantees should support producer organisations to improve the gathering of accurate data on key indicators at farm level, drawing on participatory

approaches to farmer record keeping. They should also support larger producer organisations to recruit and fund staff to fulfil a monitoring role.

- **Recommendation:** Grantees should mainstream gender within the M&E system: for example, collecting disaggregated data. Conducting organisational level gender audits is recommended to explore in a systematic fashion how to improve gender awareness. Similarly, gender analysis should be integrated within value chain preparatory research.
- **Recommendation:** Grantees should seek to mainstream generational issues and social difference within their M&E systems since these intersect with gender inequalities to create disadvantage.
- **Recommendation:** Grantees should collaborate with a new impetus from Comic Relief to promote learning, by engaging with new learning post incumbents, if and when they are created, to help identify ways of improving the quality of outputs and to increase the extent of sharing of best practice.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Evaluation questions

A: Impact of the Trade Programme on target beneficiaries and beyond
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) In total, how many people have benefited directly from the Trade programme and how have they benefitted (with gender and social disaggregation where feasible)? 2) In total, how many people have benefited indirectly from the Trade programme and how have they benefitted (with gender and social disaggregation where feasible)? 3) To what extent has the individual and organisational capacity of small producers, and their service providers, been built? 4) What are the outcomes of this capacity building? 5) What are the impacts for small producers of this capacity building? 6) To what extent have relationships along small producer supply chains been strengthened? (i.e. between small producers, service providers, exporters, importers, processors, end buyers, consumers, etc.) 7) What are the outcomes of this strengthening of relations in small producer supply chains? 8) What are the impacts for small producers of this strengthening of relations in small producer supply chains? 9) To what extent has smallholder engagement in dialogue on trade-related issues been strengthened? 10) <i>What are the</i> outcomes of this strengthening of smallholder engagement in trade dialogue? 11) What are the impacts for small producers of this strengthening of smallholder engagement in trade dialogue? 12) In addition to the above three areas (capacity building, strengthened relations and engagement in dialogue), are there other key outputs that small producer oriented projects have set out to achieve? To what extent have these outputs been achieved in practice and what are the related outcomes and impacts? 13) What unexpected and unintended outcomes and impacts have there been for small producer oriented projects? 14) What sustainability issues arise in relation to small producer oriented projects? What happens after the end of CR engagement? Does the availability of follow-on funding increase the risk of dependency on CR? Are organisations planning projects for longer time frames than the duration of CR grants? Do projects envisage follow-on funding from other donors and sources after CR funding? 15) How are benefits, costs and impacts of small producer projects distributed across or experienced by different social groups (e.g. gender, age, other forms of social marginality) and by the wider community? 16) What are the wider social or environmental impacts of the small producer oriented projects? 17) What information gaps exist on outputs, outcomes and impacts for small producer oriented projects?
B: Factors Supporting Positive Impacts (Policies, Processes and Institutions Shaping Impact Independent of the Comic Relief Approach and Inputs)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18) What insights can be gained as to what is the most effective overall approach for achieving sustainable and equitable wealth creation (e.g. market orientation i.e. local, regional or international markets, type of commodity, value chain versus market systems approach, grant-funded capital investment versus loans, etc.)? 19) What are the key success factors in terms of the design, implementation and evaluation of projects (e.g. strengthening organisations and networks, identifying key stakeholders and working in partnership, building access to resources, etc.) for achieving livelihood security for

<p>producers and workers?</p> <p>20) What are the main areas for improvement in terms of project design, implementation and evaluation (e.g. more analysis at the design phase, more systematic involvement of government bodies, etc.) for maximizing impact?</p> <p>21) What influence do internal factors (e.g. grantee and partner organisation capacity; producer/worker buy-in and leadership; supportive relationship with commercial partners etc.) have on project success?</p> <p>22) What influence do external factors have on project success (e.g. government and private sector policies; regulatory and legislative frameworks; infrastructure, public sector and business development services; climate change etc.)?</p> <p>23) How far and in what ways are grantees responding to climate change risks (understanding potential impacts, and taking steps to build adaptive capacity)?</p> <p>24) To what degree are relationships between UK and local organisations contributing to or hindering project implementation and success (e.g. transfer of knowledge, local partners as equal partners in design and implementation, UK partners gradually exiting/focusing on markets, local partners ability to access own resources)?</p>
<p>C: Effectiveness of Comic Relief Approach for Achieving Positive Impact</p>
<p>25) How effective is the Comic Relief theory of change in achieving positive impacts?</p> <p>26) How effective are Comic Relief grant-making principles (GMPs)²⁴ in achieving positive impacts, considering all stages of the project cycle? How could these be improved?</p> <p>27) What effect does the size and duration of grants have on achieving positive impacts?</p> <p>28) What can be learned about effects related to the type of grantee organisation (e.g. NGO, private sector, doubly specialised organisations; large UK organisation versus predominantly African-based organisation, etc.) and type of local partner organisations (e.g. formal/informal producer organisations, service providers; NGOs, private sector, doubly specialised intermediary, etc.), and the overall configuration of actors and roles, in terms of achievement of desired outcomes? (including consideration of the added value from funding organisations which play a wider role in achieving trade justice (e.g. through influencing consumers, peer organisations, the policy agenda, etc)?)</p> <p>29) How have CR inputs and conditions²⁵ shaped grantee projects and to what effect (e.g. in terms of their ability to achieve outcomes and sustainability issues)?</p> <p>30) What kind of support is provided for an exchange of learning and information between grantees before/during/after grants and how effective/useful is such activity? Is there any value from being part of a cohort of grantees all working on the same commodity (i.e. for cross-learning and alliance building)?</p> <p>31) What information gaps can be identified and what information can realistically be gathered by grantees and what measures can be taken to improve grantee capacity to collect data?</p>

²⁴ Understanding the context; consulting with key players; building on good practice; involving local people; investing in local organisations; working with others; implementing learning strategies; applying learning

²⁵ Consider effect of: conditions placed on grants; reporting processes; use/role of evaluations; CR communications expertise and commercial contacts.

Appendix 2: Details of Trade Programme grants included in the evaluation**Table A1: The 30 master grants included in the evaluation**

No	Grantee organisation	Project description (short)
1	Africa Now	Research on coffee farmers in Rwanda
2	ACORD	Ethiopian pastoralist livelihoods support
3	ACORD	Burkina Faso pastoralists support
4	Bees for Development	Strengthening trade in Ugandan honey/bee products
		Ugandan honey trade project
5	CAFOD	Towards resilience in Borana, Ethiopia
6	Concern Worldwide	Sustainable and Equitable Wealth Creation in Amuria (SEWCA), Uganda
7	Environment Africa Trust	Fair Trade for African blackwood, Tanzania
		Fair Trade for African blackwood II, Tanzania
		Achieving self-sufficiency in African blackwood, Tanzania
8	Fairtrade Foundation	Fairtrade development in Africa (Special Initiative)
9	Fullwell Mill	Fairtrade processing with biogas, Burkina Faso
10	Gaia Foundation	Securing rights to GMO free seeds, South Africa
11	Gaia Foundation	Supporting South African farmers through fair trade
		Supporting South African farmers through fair trade II
12	Hunter Foundation	Rwandan Farmers Food Limited and Rwandan Farmers Fresh Produce
13	Hunter Foundation	Rwandan Farmers Coffee Company
14	International Development Enterprises (IDE)	Markets for farmers in Zambia
15	IDE	Markets for Ethiopian pepper and honey farmers
		Markets for Ethiopian pepper and honey farmers II
16	Light Years IP	Intellectual Property Rights for Maasai people
		Asserting Maasai ownership of its IP
17	Lorna Young Foundation	Knowledge transfer, Kenyan and Ethiopian coffee
18	MICAIA	Mozambique honey trade project
19	Oxfam	Empowering cotton producers in Mali (Special Initiative)
20	Phytotrade	Supporting ethical baobab producers in Zimbabwe and Malawi
21	Practical Action (ITDG)	Making hibiscus markets work for poor farmers in Sudan
22	Shared Interest	Networking handicraft producers in Swaziland
23	Sustainable Alternative Solutions	Promoting market access for Ugandan farmers
24	Traidcraft Exchange	Plan Bee action research, Kenya
25	Traidcraft	Fairtrade cotton Kenya
26	Tree Aid	Northern Ghana NTFP trade
27	Twin	Securing added value for African farmers
28	Twin	Ethical nut company, Southern Africa
		Liberation nut company, Southern Africa
29	Twin	Joint Marketing Initiative for African coffee farmers
30	Twin	Sustainability in Great Lakes coffee, East and Central Africa

Table A2: In-depth case study selection

	Project Name	Grant size	Duration (months)	Commodities	Countries	Outputs covered
1	Oxfam: SPECIAL INITIATIVE	Large £3,245,025	60	Cotton	Mali	Build capacity Strengthen SC relations Engage in dialogue
2	Gaia: Supporting small farmers and workers via fair trade	Large £864,717	36+36	Various	South Africa	Build capacity Engage in dialogue [Workers rights]
3	Concern: SEWCA	Large £1,000,000	60	Cereals, nuts	Uganda	Build capacity Strengthen SC relations Engage in dialogue
4	Twin: Joint Marketing Initiative	Medium £450,000	48	Coffee	Uganda, Malawi, DRC, Tanzania	Build capacity Strengthen SC relations
5	MICAIA: Honey trade	Medium £325,093	42	Honey	Mozambique	Build capacity Strengthen SC relations
6	Phytotrade: Ethical baobab	Medium £517,150	36	Baobab	Zimbabwe, Malawi	Build capacity Strengthen SC relations
7	IDE: Fair/sustainable honey and pepper markets	Medium £391,895	6+36	Honey, pepper	Ethiopia	Build capacity Strengthen SC relations Engage in dialogue
8	EAT: Fair Trade in African blackwood	Medium £547,751	6+36+12	Timber	Tanzania	Build capacity Strengthen SC relations
9	Bees for Development: Honey trade	Medium £521,215	12+48	Honey	Uganda	Build capacity Strengthen SC relations Engage in dialogue
10	LYF: Knowledge transfer	Small £183,000	24	Coffee	Kenya, Ethiopia,	Build capacity Strengthen SC relations
11	Traidcraft: Plan Bee action research	Small £50,000	12	Honey	Kenya	Build capacity Strengthen SC relations

Table A3: Case studies included in field visits

	Field visit projects	Country	Grant size	Grant duration	Type of market
1	Concern SEWCA	Uganda	Large	60 months	Local
2	Twin: Joint Marketing Initiative	Uganda	Medium	48 months	Export FT organic
3	Bees for Development: Honey trade	Uganda	Medium	12 + 48 months	National
4	LYF: Knowledge transfer	Kenya	Small	24 months	Export FT organic
5	Traidcraft: Plan Bee action research	Kenya	Small	18 months	National

Appendix 3: Commodity and geographical profile of Trade Programme grants**Table A4: Commodity focus of Trade Programme grants**

Commodity	No. of master grants	Commodity	No. of master grants
baobab	1	livestock	2
cashew nuts	1	mango	1
cereals	1	milk, incense	1
cocoa	1	nuts	3
coffee	6	pepper	1
cotton	2	shea nuts	2
fruit	1	soy	1
grains	1	sunflower	1
gum arabic, aloe vera	1	timber	1
handicrafts	1	tomatoes	1
hibiscus	1	various (non-specific)	4
honey	6	vegetables	1
intellectual property	1		
		Total: 28	

Table A5: Geographic distribution of Trade Programme grants

Country	Number of master grants
Africa Wide	1
Burkina Faso	3
Cameroon	1
DRC	2
Ethiopia	4
Ghana	1
Kenya	4
Lesotho	0
Madagascar	0
Malawi	4
Mali	1
Mozambique	3
Rwanda	4
Sierra Leone	1
South Africa	2
Sudan	1
Swaziland	1
Tanzania	5
Uganda	2
Zambia	3
Zimbabwe	1
Total: 21	44

Appendix 4 : Summary of the 11 in-depth case studies in relation to Comic Relief's theory of change

Project	Building the capacity of smallholder producers, their organisations and service providers	Building equitable relations and partnerships in supply chains	Supporting producer engagement in dialogue on trade-related issues
Knowledge transfer LYF	Knowledge management approach with coffee cooperatives (Information sharing, training on various topics including governance & exchanges)	Multi-stakeholder partnership approach to information sharing and training on sales and marketing, but not direct link-making (e.g. making direct links to buyers).	Not a public policy focus, but building relationships and capacity of PO may indirectly lead to greater advocacy capacity.
Fairtrade in African Blackwood EAT/MCDI	Village-level governance capacity-building for forest management, rather than a producer organisation focus.	Handling FSC certified timber in value chain – capacity built and linkages made to sawmill, importers and manufacturers. Plan is to create new intermediary to capture gains and return benefits to producers. Includes a consumer focus (e.g. eventual consumer premium sought), but for now mainly focused on supply chain dynamics.	Does not seem to be a particular focus – enabling environment is supportive (national policy enabling participatory forest management and international level regulations driving demand for sustainably managed wood).
Plan Bee SITE/Traidcraft	Producer organisation capacity-building was on-going as part of other projects, and was strengthened by Plan Bee, especially in relation to marketing.	Action research to understand the value chain helped all actors to better understand each other's needs and to pilot new marketing arrangements, which are now bearing fruit. Analysis of EU markets and opportunities for Kenyan POs to export, but Kenya not yet licensed to export to the EU at the national level.	Not a particular focus of Plan Bee, but SITE is now part of an on-going multi-stakeholder process facilitated in part by government and an INGO to identify Kenyan honey sector challenges and solutions.
Access to bee and pepper products in Ethiopia IDE	Capacity building of new and existing producer cooperatives (quality, productivity, marketing)	Supporting marketing of honey on national markets as prices are currently higher than on international markets, but also looking to the future at higher export volumes	Participation in national multi-stakeholder initiatives to lobby government. Government and the Bill and Melinda Gates Programme have approached IDE to scale up their micro-irrigation and trade work across the country, but they are seeking to change smallholders' view of government and to balance quality with quantity.
Ethical Baobab Phytotrade	Capacity building of baobab producer groups is being undertaken, although not all producers selling to Treecrops may be part of a formal group by the end of the grant.	Intermediary in Malawi, Treecrops, is sourcing and selling baobab into European markets, as well as on national markets. Work is underway to grow baobab markets in the UK and Europe and to identify warehouse and distribution capacity in Holland.	Not a particular focus of the Comic Relief project.

<p>Joint Marketing Initiative project TWIN/Gumutindo</p>	<p>Conversion to organic coffee production, improved coffee processing, development of export and marketing capacity.</p>	<p>Very strong, through developing Joint Marketing Initiative in which Twin provides marketing advice, introductions to buyers, help in negotiating contracts etc.</p>	<p>None in relation to public policy, though support for POs to network that may (indirectly) end up with them taking on advocacy role. Most advocacy likely to be in relation to Fairtrade (Twin provides some direct support for POs to input into Fairtrade system, but not within the Comic Relief project).</p>
<p>Honey Trade Project, Uganda Bees for Development</p>	<p>Capacity building support for POs, packers, and national and pan-African apiculture industry bodies – for industry bodies this is mainly covering operational and capital costs in formative years (reduced contribution from project over time, to ensure sustainability).</p>	<p>Linkages made between producers and packers in the first project. In the second project industry bodies are being supported to develop market coordination (e.g. trade fairs, newsletters, etc).</p>	<p>National industry body strengthened to advocate for greater government support. Support for the pan-African body – Apitrade – increases the networks' ability to play an advocacy role.</p>
<p>Sustainable and equitable wealth creation in Amuria Concern Worldwide</p>	<p>Direct support for farmers to increase and diversify production, including subsidised inputs. Support for newly formed marketing associations.</p>	<p>Some market linkage work done and will be major focus for second half of project. Trying out different routes to market and have had some challenges in finding the right expertise/approach.</p>	<p>Working with national advocacy organisation to form Community Based Monitoring Groups to monitor and advocate for government support for small farmers.</p>
<p>Supporting South African small-farmers and farm-workers in fair trade Gaia Foundation</p>	<p>Focus is on building the capacity of the Fairtrade producer/worker network. Progress is being made and benefits to SPs and workers delivered, but the network is still dependent on local partner.</p>	<p>Some ad hoc interventions to support smallholders with their trading relationships.</p>	<p>Role of FT producer/worker network is to give them a voice within FT system – there has been significant success in doing so. Smallholders also attended CoP17. EMG (local partner) has played a minor role advocating with govt. bodies on an ad hoc basis. Gaia undertakes global advocacy on cultural and biological diversity.</p>
<p>Transforming livelihoods through the honey trade in Mozambique MICAIA</p>	<p>Development and capacity building of beekeeper organisations at local, regional and national levels is key focus of project – on quality, productivity and marketing.</p>	<p>Supporting producers to collectively participate in honey processing and trading company in which they have 34% of shares.</p>	<p>Local partner involved in establishing National Honey Council – MSI to lobby govt. e.g. on getting export license. Producers not yet able to participate (not enough organisation or capacity).</p>

Appendix 5 : Case study examples of Trade Programme grants

Box A1: African Blackwood Project, South East Tanzania

Environment Africa Trust (EAT), the Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative (MCDI) and partner Kilmanyika received three grants from Comic Relief (totalling £547,751) to support local communities in South East Tanzania to protect their forests and increase the returns on sales of the valuable 'Mpingo' African Blackwood. This wood is prized by local wood carvers and used internationally for clarinets, oboes and bagpipes. This is a new market, and the project includes a campaign, 'Sound and Fair', to generate demand.

Participatory Forest Management (PFM) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification form the basis of the project at local level. The capacity of six local communities has been built in order to manage their forests, achieve certification and manage increased revenues equitably. Project documentation (e.g. an external evaluation of the second grant) and interviews with the partners suggest that progress has been positive, but there are bottlenecks in the supply chain still to be overcome. An intermediary organisation is being established to introduce competition and overcome these blockages. Sales (amounting to ≈\$20,000) have been achieved at the time of writing, and these *"have already increased returns to local communities by sale of hardwood at the government royalty rate, but there is still significant potential to raise returns further"* (MCDI staff pers. comm.). Prices have already been raised, but there is potential in the long run to increase prices through consumer premiums, and in the shorter term to capture value chain margins through better management of the timber trading element.

Revenues are split 50:50 on forest management costs and community profits – the latter have been invested in water boreholes and accommodation for a village midwife. MCDI are encouraging villagers to consider paying for services (e.g. agricultural extension advice), as well as capital investment projects. One group is investing in an office to help them increase their capacity to secure their land rights:

"For instance Kisangi (the biggest earners in the recent harvests @ ≈£3,600) have indicated they intend to spend the bulk of their proceeds on a new village office which will allow them to establish a Village Land Registry there. The existing office is not sufficiently robust to reliably house important legal documents. Creation of the Village Land Registry should strengthen villagers' tenure over their private land holdings, potentially opening the way to obtain small loans secured on their land" (Annual Report, 2011).

In 2010-11 MCDI expanded its FSC group certificate from 2 to 6 villages and from 2,420ha to 20,961ha. MCDI estimates it requires 100,000ha+ of forest to deliver the economies of scale that will be required in order to achieve financial self-sufficiency, so the drive to expand continues. It is hoped that MCDI's pilot REDD project will provide a new avenue of funds from the carbon markets to cover the significant transaction costs of expanding its scheme into new villages.

Approximately 2,988 villagers have benefited from blackwood sales (£6,700 approx.) and 7,688 villagers have FSC certified Village Land Forest Reserves, allowing them to charge a higher price for timber. Further, around 50 local loggers from Kikole have been better paid for their labour after adopting methods required under FSC, and 49 men and 90 women have enrolled in village savings and loans groups, raising their financial literacy (Annual Report, 2011).

Box A2: Sustainable and equitable wealth creation in Northeast Uganda

In 2010 Concern Worldwide received £1,000,000 of funding from Comic Relief to undertake a five year project in Amuria, one of the poorest districts of Uganda, which has suffered from decades of conflict. The project aims to support previously Internally Displaced People (IDPs) to improve agricultural production and processing, begin marketing their goods collectively, develop business skills and understanding of markets, and influence government service provision. It also aims to reduce gender discrimination, mitigate the effects of HIV and AIDS and build resilience to extreme weather²⁶. Concern is working primarily with three well-established Ugandan NGOs (Volunteer Effort for Development Concerns: VEDCO, Community Integrated Development Initiatives: CIDI, and Ugandan Debt Network: UDN), but has also contracted in private sector expertise from Shares!, a national (organic) commodities buyer.

After two years of implementation, there are tangible impacts for 9,608 beneficiaries, 60% of whom are women. Monitoring data indicate that 2,883 women and 1,922 men have increased agricultural production by at least 50% through increasing the amount of land they cultivate (through group labour exchanges, and oxen and ploughs provided by the project), growing a more diverse range of crops (with new seed varieties provided through the project), and improving their agricultural techniques (through extension advice, demonstration plots and Farmer Field Schools) (Annual Report 2011). Production of the cash crops groundnut and sesame has increased markedly, as has production of vegetables for consumption and sale. More commercially oriented farmers produced an average of 18 bags of groundnuts in 2011, selling on average 10 of these, earning Uganda Shillings UGX 650,000 (£171), while households targeted for food security harvested an average of 8 bags. Farmers received an average price of UGX 2300/kg for sesame and with an average harvest of 165 kg: this equates to UGX 379,500 (£100) of potential income. In total 5,765 farmers are now selling surplus produce. Farmers talked enthusiastically about their achievements: for example, *"I've produced 15 bags of groundnuts and have been able to pay secondary school fees. I sold 10 bags for UGX 55,000 each, and then had 1.5 bags for seed and the rest for food. It is a big achievement to pay school fees."* (Robert Enyiru, Amuka Farmers Association)



Bulking warehouse, Amootom Farmers marketing association, Uganda

3,660 households are also diversifying their livelihoods using loans of up to £53 through the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), which are held within the farmers self help groups. Approximately 80% of households are now engaged in some kind of trade on a small level (e.g. selling livestock, operating retail shops, selling grocery and food items in local markets), with some enterprises growing to middle level businesses as households have constructed small kiosks at the village level. During the field trip a discussion was held with

Ekeunos Farmers Group which was formed in 2010 with 50% women members and 30% of members from vulnerable groups (PLWHA, widows, child-headed households). Their VSLA already has UGX 2,269,200 capital with UGX 2,102,000 out on loan. As a group they have

²⁶ Peace building activities were originally a strong focus of the project, but this area has been de-prioritised as the government is taking concrete steps to improve the security situation in the area.

contributed to the cost of a plot on which to build a bulking store, an ox plough, a savings box, and a groundnut grinding machine. The groundnut machine was bought for UGX 70,000 in January 2012 and they have already earned UGX 100,000 from charging people to come and use it.

Six Marketing Associations have been formed and trained to date, with two more planned, and they have had some success in their first season of trading by connecting to traders in the nearby town of Soroti, and in most cases achieving somewhat higher prices than selling individually. However, Concern recognises that this component of the project will need considerable focus in the coming years if the project is to develop financially sustainable, democratically-organised, collective enterprises.

UDN's role in the project is to support Community Based Monitoring Groups, which are trained to find out about government policies and budget allocations related to agriculture and rural development, and then monitor implementation at the local level. They also facilitate community dialogues with local government and have made formal submissions on both district and national budgets, the latter focused on the need for greater investment in agriculture and tax relief on agricultural inputs (UDN compiled the issues into a Civil Society position paper which was presented and discussed at pre- and post-budget dialogues.)

Richard Opio, a community monitor, talked about his role:

"In our villages we are being elected and we have to deliver what we have been assigned to do. We have to fulfil the needs of people who elected us using the knowledge we have been given by UDN and Concern. We are like consultants, people come to ask us things... I learned so much from the training, I learned what a budget is and how to plan for needs at village, parish and sub-county levels."

Box A3: Plan Bee Kenya: Action Research with Beekeepers and Honey Packers

Serious drought in Kenya has severely affected the livelihoods and food security of rural communities in large parts of the country. Many have turned to beekeeping as one of the only available sources of income. Prior to Plan Bee, Site Enterprise Promotion (SITE), (a not-for-profit company in Kenya), collaborated with the NGO APT in a project to Reduce the Vulnerability of Communities Living on Fragile Lands (REVCO). This has Big Lottery Funding. This project focused on organising beekeepers into producer groups and improving their honey production, but paid little attention to marketing.

In 2006 SITE and Traidcraft Exchange (TX) were awarded a one year research grant (£50,000) to explore power dynamics in the honey value chain in Kenya, and to assess the feasibility of addressing potentially unequal or exploitative power dynamics between traders and producers in the chain. Traidcraft and SITE adopted an *action research approach* to improve understanding of the value chain by engaging key stakeholders and actually piloting value chain development. During the research, SITE acted as an intermediary to pilot the marketing arrangements that would support producers to sell higher quantities of honey. This became known as 'Plan Bee'. Follow-on funding was obtained from the Big Lottery Funding. Although Plan Bee was sandwiched between two larger projects, it played a pivotal role in helping the development of marketing linkages among beekeepers and honey packers, which are now benefitting producers.

The main outputs of Plan Bee were as follows: i) a report mapping the honey market chain in Kenya; ii) a marketing arrangement, developed in conjunction with honey producers and honey buyers (both jointly and separately); iii) a pilot test of the marketing arrangement involving producer groups and buyers; iv) a report on EU market opportunities for African honey and beeswax; and v) a synthesis report of project achievements.



According to the Annual Report, Plan Bee was partially responsible for 1,600 of REVCO's small scale beekeepers participating in the marketing pilot, selling a combined total of 23.055 tonnes of honey. 1,637 smallholders were direct beneficiaries (412 women, and 1,225 men) and there were a total of 8,185 indirect beneficiaries (4,093 women, 4,092 men). A key impact was increased income for 1,673 smallholders (questionnaire survey).

According to the synthesis report, the key achievements of Plan Bee were:

- 23 tonnes of honey handled and sold to packers over an 8 month period (2 honey flow seasons).
- The quality of the producer groups' honey improved considerably, meeting minimum specifications to sell the honey to packers. An easy-to-use honey press was introduced in the later honey season, further improving honey quality.
- Prices paid to producers increased and stabilized during the study. In Keiyo and Baringo, for instance, producer prices improved by up to 43%. Prices improved by up to 20% in Laikipia. Total revenue received from honey sales during the pilot was Kshs 2,437,140/- (£18,694) of which Kshs 2,209,846 (£16,950) went directly to beekeepers – a

confirmation that beekeepers can increase their incomes through better market access and bigger quantities of good quality honey.

- Packer prices remained at pre-pilot test levels or fell. Prices were erratic. The price offered by the intermediary varied. The price change along the chain (from producer to packer) dropped by about 30% to 40%. The costs of intermediary servicers were factored into the operations and pricing structure.
- Honey packers (Nasali Limited, Winnie's Pure Health and Hillside Honey) obtained higher quantities and qualities of honey during the project pilot, enabling them to meet existing demand but also to grow the market. Receiving large quantities from a single source reduces their transaction costs. They reported improved market demand for honey as a result of the quality improvements, with a demand of approx. 10 tonnes of honey per month at the market prices.

All 6 of the REVCO honey producer groups participated in the Plan Bee pilot and retained on average K Shs 10/- (£0.08) per kg of honey sold to fund operating expenses: the groups recovered K Shs 227,294/- (£1,743) in total. However, most importantly, the groups obtained



an understanding of market demand and how value-added practices (e.g. quality assurance, sorting, etc.) can improve the saleability of their honey (Annual Report). This capacity building represents an investment in future honey production and business activities.

William Arusei, a member of Koriema Honey Producer Group and SITE field manager said,

“Now we are assured of market, we have opened the market outside, we have formed groups and buyers come”. The group now communicates with packers:

“When the season starts we set a target of x quantities. We can estimate by the flowering we see. If we see quantities increasing we talk to the packers and ask for the price/kilo for semi-refined honey. We talk to a few, decide which is better, go direct to companies, talk with them about tonnage, they issue us with purchase order, they tell us the quantities they will need and it is probably more than we have. Payment occurs when honey is delivered, we make a call to the finance managers and money is paid into our account. Before we started we got prices of 340 KSh/gallon and now it is 900 KSh/gallon. We keep some for the group for running capital”.

This is the kind of marketing arrangement that SITE and Traidcraft piloted through Plan Bee and which the groups are now independently undertaking, with light touch support from SITE. Osotua Honey Producer Group beekeepers also reported that they are now getting 160 K Sh/kg for comb honey. Koriema beekeepers have lately received between 150 and 170 K Sh/kg (Jane Ndungu, SITE). William Arusei of Koriema group said that *“we now get prices of 163 K Sh/kg and in the past it was 61 K Sh/kg. This is a great improvement in prices”*. The two groups sold comb honey at 180- 200 KSh/kg to packers (Jane Ndungu, SITE).

Additional incomes are used by beekeepers to pay for their children's education, to access medical services and to buy food. William Arusei said:

“Prices have gone up because we are dealing with packers, not the local market and a few buyers. We are in a position to supply more honey – buyers used to come for a few gallons and no quality measures – now it is taken care of. People have constructed many more hives... one had 10 and now has 20, one even has 200 hives! Now because of increased income many more beekeepers can afford to send their children to school, some even to

high school. Some beekeepers if sales are too little they cannot access medical services. We have improved nutrition – now we have three meals a day, only 1 or two before. We have 583 members in Koriema group”.

The honey packer, Joseph Ndiwa, from the Keriyo Valley Development Authority (KVDA – a government development agency in North West Kenya), explained how KVDA is reaping the rewards of the work done by SITE with beekeepers. He praised SITE’s support, which has helped the beekeepers to become organized and registered, as well as helping them establish bank accounts, build up stock, and create linkages to buyers. KVDA is processing and packaging the honey – they are also seeking capital from Equity Bank so that they can buy more honey.

Joseph noted the spatial marginality of these communities:

“It is not easy to get the honey to market. Some of these areas are very difficult to get to, bad roads, distances are enormous! For these farmers to benefit they have to be in groups and to increase the honey they have so the packer can come and for it to be economical. For us to go to North Pokot groups we need to be able to collect 5.5 tonnes for it to be economical for example. The money paid to the groups and individuals is really helping in food security, payment for school (uniform), even to travel for health care and medical services”.

There is significant potential to scale up as well: *“There are many more areas that are not covered, we have not even reach half. The distances are very limiting”.*

More women are being encouraged to join the beekeeper groups, especially at Koriema. Peris Kibet, a female member secretary of the Koriema Honey Producer Group, said:

“I was outside the group and saw how they were selling their honey in larger quantities. I was selling honey at Koriema. I asked to be a member and was accepted and I am now a member since 2008. The honey is better quality and I produce more. I have used the money to pay for school fees, clothing, family needs. I am now doing a little more farming and use a little more for this other business. Earlier beekeeping was just for men and women could not be involved. But then these projects, teaching people how to improve, we were told women can do beekeeping. Some husbands and heads of the household are still negative, but we lobby, make a negotiation, and there are now around ten women in our group. I am allowed to decide what to do with the money. I do not put the money into the bank, but I spend it on a cow or goats, like a saving. In the future I will look for other businesses”.