



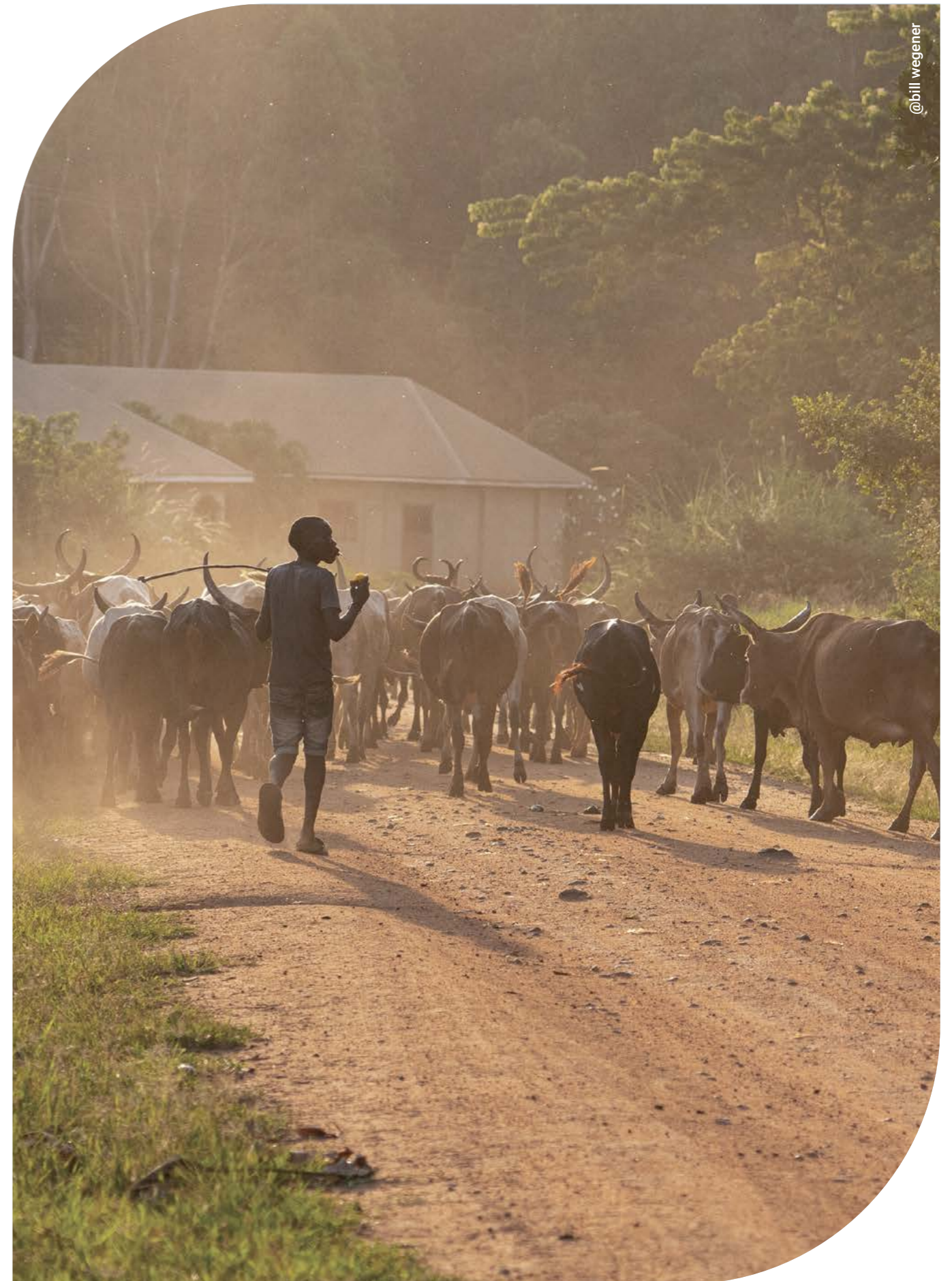
Building trust and long-term commitments in historically disadvantaged communities

A lessons learned report



Contents

Acronyms	05	05	Lessons for other project developers	15
Executive summary	06		5.1 Building trust takes time, patience and continuity	15
01 Introduction	08		5.2 Working with community leaders is key to mobilising other farmers	16
02 Social, environmental, and political context of Gulu, Uganda	09		5.3 Benefits driven communication and education about agroforestry can change behaviour and mindsets	17
2.1 Politics and conflict	09		5.4 Locally appropriate solutions help to build buy in	18
2.2 People and livelihoods	09		5.5 Get local government on board from the beginning	20
2.3 Forest and environment	10		5.6 CFMs are effective scaling partners	20
2.4 Climate	10		06 Opportunities for Lush and Alupalum to further strengthen the programme	21
03 Lush and Alupalum's agroforestry programme	11		6.1 Giving farmers the resources to support the project expansion	21
3.1 Project partners	11		6.2 Providing farmers access to more plant materials to increase success rates	21
3.2 Project approach	11		6.3 Consider expanding into other parts of Northern Uganda	22
3.3 Project aims	12		07 Conclusion	23
04 Lush and Alupalum's approach to building trust to mobilise communities and secure buy-in to agroforestry	13			
4.1 Project design and preparatory work	13			
4.2 Early implementation of the agroforestry programme	13			
4.3 Ongoing implementation activities	14			
4.4 Female participation in the programme	14			



@bill_wegener



@Clinton Mwebaze

Acknowledgement

This report has been produced by Partnerships for Forests in conjunction with external consultant Lucy Garrett. The lessons shared would not have been without the expertise and experiences shared by interviewees. Partnerships for Forests is grateful to Anthony Akera, Gavin Hollett, Akena Lamex Lambert, Otim Joseph, and the farmers associated with the Lush/Alumalum project: John Bosco Nyeko, Doreen Akello, Jennifer Acen, Jimmy Okello, Simon Peter Komakech, Ronald Ojak, and Willy Ogwang.

Cover Image: @Gen Kennedy
Back image: @Gen Kennedy

Acronyms

CFM	Community Forest Management	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
CFR	Central Forest Reserve	Mt	Megatonne
CO₂e	Carbon dioxide equivalent	NFA	National Forestry Authority
Ha	Hectares	NTFP	Non timber forest product
LFR	Local Forest Reserve	P4F	Partnerships for Forests



Executive summary

This lessons learned report explores how an innovative agroforestry programme successfully built trust and mobilised communities in the Gulu district in Northern Uganda. The programme is being implemented by Lush Investments (Lush) and Alupalum Rural Investments Limited (Alupalum), with support from the Gulu District Government, and funding and technical assistance from Partnerships for Forests (P4F).

The agroforestry programme aims to transition 1000 farmers away from annual subsistence crops towards perennial agroforestry systems. Agroforestry systems are more resilient to climate shocks such as unpredictable rainfall and offer long term diversified revenue streams for farmers.

Communities in the Gulu region of northern Uganda have been subject to decades of hardship and trauma during a prolonged civil war. As a result of the 20-year conflict, more than a million people were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in Internally Displaced People Camps. Most of those displaced have now returned to their home and are rebuilding their lives.

It is in this context that Lush and Alupalum are implementing a novel agroforestry programme that aims to regenerate forest, sequester carbon, and increase farmer incomes. To mobilise communities in Northern Uganda into agroforestry approaches, the project partners needed to successfully establish trust and secure buy-in. The mechanisms, approaches and strategies used to do this are explored in this report.

The agroforestry project is delivered through a Partner Farmer Programme which focuses on changing mindsets and practices through educating farmers on the benefits of agroforestry systems compared to current farming practices, and the provision of free training and seedlings. This programme is delivered in coordination with local government and community leaders.

Individual farmers and Community Forest Management (CFM) groups are invited to sign up to the agroforestry programme through outreach and community engagement led by Alupalum's extension workers. Farmers that are interested in joining the programme and that meet the onboarding requirements become Partner Farmer Programme members, with their participation formalised by a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Member farmers elect a member to become a lead farmer. Lead farmers are responsible for co-delivering training alongside the extension workers and ensuring that members are progressing according to the programme and individual aims. This report compiles learnings emerging from

interviews with representatives from Lush and Alupalum, local government, Partner Farmer Programme members, and CFM group members. It identifies six main lessons relevant for other project developers in the agriculture, forests, and land use sector who are looking to build trust and mobilise communities in a post conflict setting.

First, building trust takes time, patience, and continuity. For example, regular monitoring visits from representatives from Lush and Alupalum are essential in reassuring farmers that they have not been left behind and ensuring their ongoing participation.

Second, working with and through CFMs and locally selected community leaders is an extremely effective and important approach to building trust and mobilising other farmers to engage in agroforestry. Lead farmers are instrumental in delivering training and ensuring the ongoing implementation of the programme. By empowering the community to select these representatives, Lush and Alupalum can reach a larger number of farmers and build long-lasting trust.

Third, clear articulation of, and education around, the financial and livelihood benefits of agroforestry crops in comparison to annual crops is essential to securing farmer buy-in. Perennial crops are new for many farmers, and they need to be confident of their benefits to consider transitioning to them.

Fourth, locally appropriate and considered solutions are required, both to secure trust, and to safeguard local livelihoods. An example of this is working with farmers on intercropping of annual crops within agroforestry systems. This gives farmers the confidence that they will have diversified food and revenue streams in the early years of transitioning to agroforestry (as many agroforestry crops take several years to be ready to harvest).

Fifth, getting local government onboard from the beginning is important and offers opportunities for projects to align with existing programmes and initiatives. For example, where possible, the project partners share resources and learnings with the local government.

And finally, CFM groups are an effective scaling partner in forest protection and restoration. They represent an effective, diverse, established group with a pre-existing mandate for forest protection. However, there is a need to increase the scope, coordination, and diversity of support for CFMs to maintain trust and continuity for further scale up.

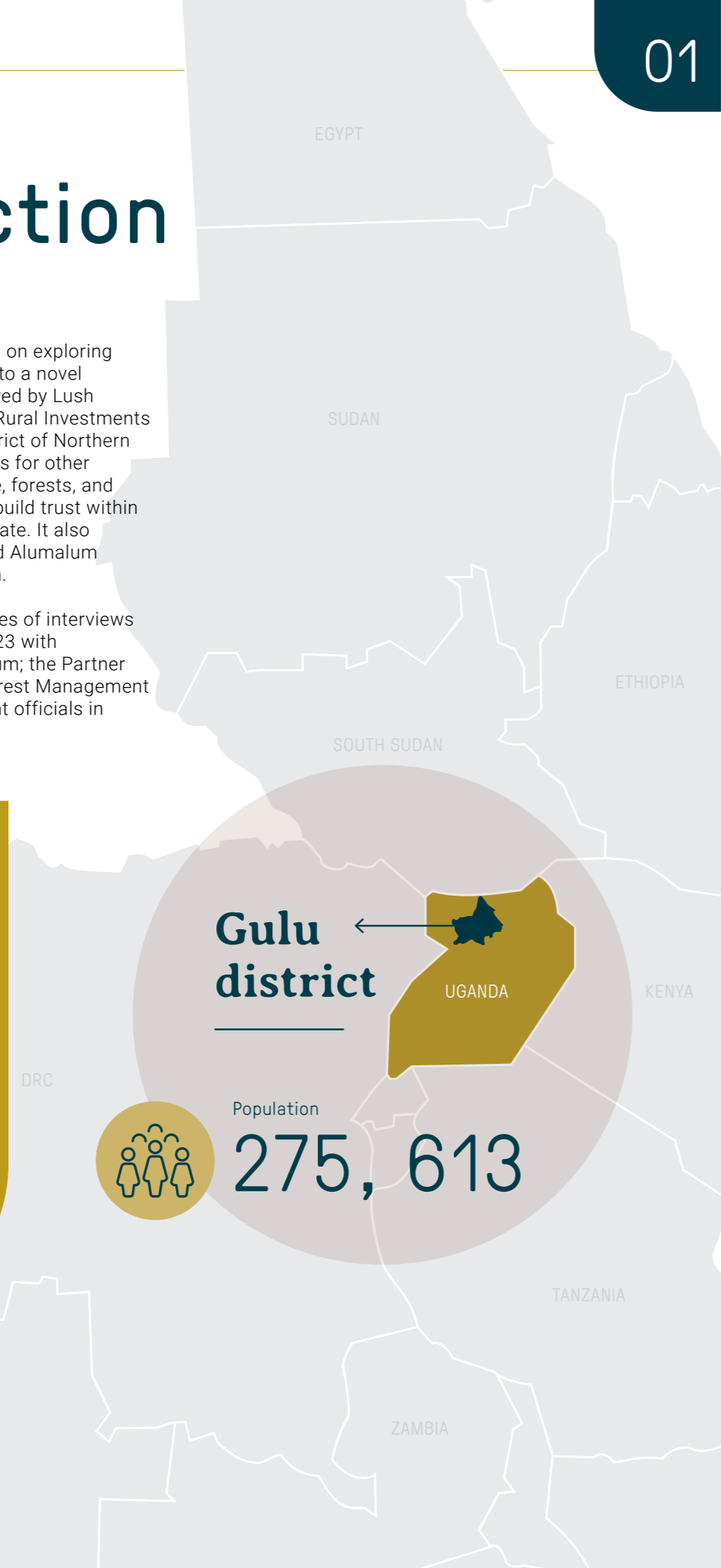


Introduction

This lessons learned report focuses on exploring and analysing how trust and buy-in to a novel agroforestry model has been achieved by Lush Investments (Lush) and Alupalum Rural Investments Limited (Alupalum) in the Gulu district of Northern Uganda. The report presents lessons for other project developers in the agriculture, forests, and land use sector who are looking to build trust within the communities in which they operate. It also identifies opportunities for Lush and Alupalum to further strengthen their approach.

Insights were generated from a series of interviews conducted in the first quarter of 2023 with representatives from: Lush; Alupalum; the Partner Farmer Programme; Community Forest Management (CFM) Groups; and local government officials in the Gulu region.

“In total, between 1990 and 2010, Uganda lost 31 percent of its forest cover. At the current rate of deforestation (about 200k ha of forest are lost a year), there will be no forests left in 2040.”



Social, environmental, and political context of Gulu, Uganda

The Gulu district is in Northern Uganda. Its commercial and administrative centre is the city of Gulu, approximately 330 kilometres north of Kampala. According to the 2014 national census, the population of the Gulu district is 275,613¹.

2.1 Politics and conflict

Uganda’s recent history is characterised by repressive leadership and conflict for power. From 1971 to 1979, the country was under the oppressive control of Idi Amin, during whose reign an estimated 300,000 - 500,000 people were killed. This was followed by the regime of Milton Obote (1980 – 1985), during which time an estimated 100,000 people were killed.

In 1985, Obote was deposed, and Yoweri Museveni seized control of Uganda, proclaiming a government of national unity. Museveni introduced democratic reforms and set about improving the country’s human rights records. However, the power struggle has continued, and since Museveni’s government has been in power, more than 20 militant groups have tried to displace it, most notably the Lord’s Resistance Army.

The Gulu district was the location of much of the fighting during the civil war which took place from 1986 to 2006. The conflict was between the Ugandan army and the Lord’s Resistance Army, led by Joseph Kony. Kony is alleged to have abducted up to 40,000 children to serve as child soldiers

or wives to other soldiers. It is estimated that 1.6 million people² from Northern Uganda were displaced over the 20-year conflict.

Today, more than 90 percent of the population has returned to their villages after several decades of living in what were known as Internally Displaced People Camps.

2.2 People and livelihoods

The long running civil war left many Ugandan farmers disadvantaged and traumatised. Ugandan farmers are predominantly involved in subsistence agriculture, and are reliant on cash crops including tobacco and cotton for their income. These crops are labour intensive, as farmers typically only have access to hand tools for weeding and cultivation. This makes it difficult for farmers to compete with mechanised farms and highly vulnerable to changes in market demand or pricing. Further, lack of access to global markets or processing facilities to add value to crops means that income from produce is very low.

Farmers are reliant on rainwater and typically do not have access to irrigation systems. This makes them highly susceptible to negative impacts of climate change. Climate shocks such as drought or changes in rainfall patterns can result in crop failure with implications for food security and livelihoods.

1. <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uganda/admin/>
2. The Ugandan Civil War – a Brief History - Edukid



2.3 Forest and environment

Gulu district is highly forested, with around half of the land covered by trees. However, following the end of the civil war, the area has been deforested for hardwood extraction, charcoal production, and firewood. Since 2000, 6 percent of tree cover has been lost, equivalent to 12.9 megatonnes (Mt) of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) emissions³. Deforestation is usually carried out by those living near the forest, who are either illegally extracting timber or harvesting non timber forest products (NTFP). Often these products are sold to local markets outside the forest reserves.

In the late 1990s the Ugandan forestry sector underwent a series of reforms. The century-old Forest Department was dissolved, and a semi-autonomous National Forestry Authority (NFA) was set up, along with a new forest policy, plan, and laws to guide forestry activities in Uganda. With the new institutional structures, the government sought to create an enabling environment to increase economic and environmental benefits from forests, particularly for the poor and vulnerable. Community Forest Management (CFM) and community forestry were the main approaches envisaged to deliver these benefits.

CFM aims to establish a mutually agreed upon and beneficial relationship between an eligible local community group and the governing authority of either a Central Forest Reserve (CFR) or a Local Forest Reserve (LFR). The NFA is the responsible body for CFRs, and LFRs fall under the jurisdiction of district local governments.

Under the terms of a CFM agreement, the CFM group takes on specific responsibilities, for example, forest patrolling and management, in exchange for specific benefits, such as access to forest resources and forest land for restoration. As such, CFMs are major stakeholders in ensuring that illegal forest encroachment and grazing activities do not happen in the forest reserves.

2.4 Climate

Gulu district has a tropical climate, with high rainfall in the summer and very little rainfall in the winter. Average temperatures across the year are 23.9 °C



and annual rainfall is 1584 mm⁴. Climate change is likely to increase average temperatures in Uganda by up to 1.5 °C in the next 20 years and up to 4.3 °C by the 2080s⁵. Changes in rainfall patterns and total annual rainfall amounts are also expected, but these changes are less certain than the predicted temperature rises. Uganda may become wetter on average but the increase in rainfall may be unevenly distributed and occur as more extreme or more frequent periods of intense rainfall⁶.

3. Gulu, Uganda Deforestation Rates & Statistics | GFW (globalforestwatch.org)
4. Gulu climate: Temperature Gulu & Weather By Month - Climate-Data.org
5. Climate change in Uganda: Understanding the implications and appraising the response - Uganda | ReliefWeb
6. Ibid

Lush and Alumalum's agroforestry programme

3.1 Project partners

P4F is providing £360,000 grant funding to Lush and Alumalum, who are partnering to improve farmer livelihoods through an innovative agroforestry programme. P4F is also providing technical assistance to the project partners through its East Africa team and Global team.

P4F's support builds on an existing partnership between Lush and Alumalum which began in 2013 when Lush set up Alumalum as a subsidiary legal enterprise, responsible for ethical sourcing and sustainable investments. Under this partnership, Alumalum is the implementer of an agroforestry initiative from which Lush has been off-taking sesame and moringa oil. Prior to P4F support, there were 150 farmers across the district registered with Alumalum's Partner Farmer Programme.

3.2 Project approach

With P4F support, Lush and Alumalum are scaling to 1000 new farmers in the Gulu region by the end of 2023, with a focus on agroforestry systems that include cocoa and vanilla. Under the partnership, Alumalum provides trees and technical support to farmers, whilst Lush provides a guaranteed market and fair price for agroforestry products. Alumalum adds value to agroforestry products by processing oils at its solar-powered factory on a former Internally Displaced Persons Camp.

Under the project, Alumalum are bringing four products to market: cocoa, vanilla, timber, and moringa. Each product will reach its market at a different phase to ensure there are diversified revenue streams for farmers over time.

Alumalum is partnering with individual farmers in selected villages, as well as CFM groups within the buffer zones of the remaining protected areas across Gulu. During the scale-up of the partner farmer model, P4F supported Alumalum in scoping CFMs that reside in and around the periphery of the forest reserves, who are primary beneficiaries within this agroforestry model. In addition to this, through partnering with CFMs there are opportunities to expand mixed agroforestry systems beyond the buffer zones, for broader restoration impact.

As an added incentive for farmers, Lush is providing funding for Alumalum to incorporate reforestation as part of the agroforestry model. This will enable farmers to generate carbon credits associated with tree planting. The credits will be verified and then purchased by Lush or traded on the global carbon market. Learnings from this approach are being captured through a study (finalised in June 2023) focused on identifying the potential for carbon sequestration as part of an agroforestry model and recommendations for Alumalum to benefit from the sale of carbon credits on the global market.





3.3 Project aims

Lush and Alumalum are committed to creating an environment for improving human wellbeing and the long-term recovery of forest cover via native species, which can foster development of healthy and resilient landscapes. By 2040, the project aims to:



Directly regenerate
400 ha
of land



Sequester
81k tCO₂e



Plant
1.2 million
trees



Increase the incomes of around
1,000
farmers by almost nine-fold

Building the skills, trust and expertise of local farmers is essential in achieving these ambitions. Together the partners take a multi-pronged approach. Lush is investing in building relationships with leaders in the community and is committed to off-taking farmers' produce at a fair price, thereby encouraging them to engage in agroforestry. Alumalum is driving sustainable landscape management and investing in farmer education to help them understand the future benefits of planting trees that produce high-earning final products.

Beyond engagement with individual farmers, the partners are strengthening landscape governance through their engagement with CFM groups. CFM members are trained on incorporating cocoa into their agroforestry models and opportunities to extend mixed agroforestry models into forest buffer zones for broader restoration impact.

This report explores in detail the approaches and methods that Lush and Alumalum have deployed throughout the programme to build community trust and mobilise farmers towards novel agroforestry approaches.



Lush and Alumalum's approach to building trust to mobilise communities and secure buy-in to agroforestry

This section summarises the approach of Lush and Alumalum in designing and implementing the agroforestry programme that successfully built trust and mobilised local communities.

4.1 Project design and preparatory work

Lush has been involved in supporting small grassroots initiatives focused on peace building in Gulu since 2010. Through this experience, it soon became clear that there was a need for building strong relationships with communities, individuals, and institutions to establish a platform for long term, ethical business.

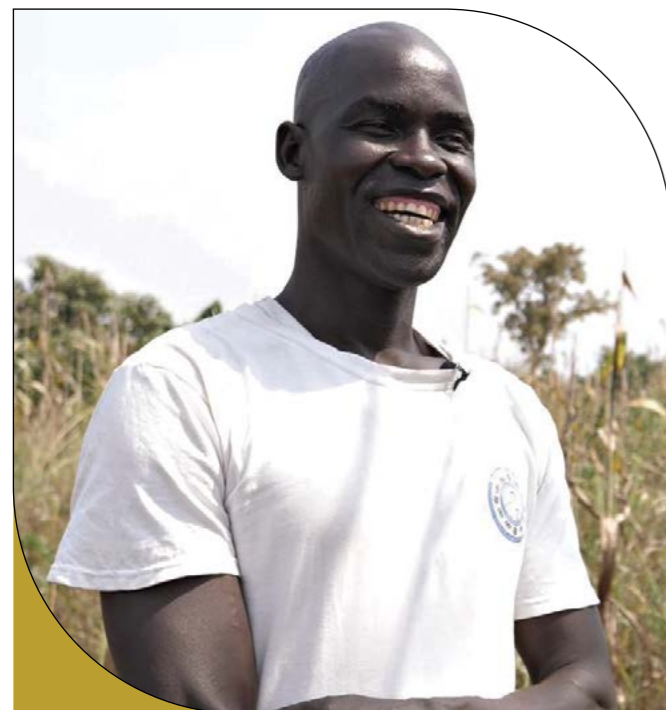
To understand how to achieve this, prior to the project implementation, Lush invested a significant amount of time in engaging and consulting key stakeholders in the design of the agroforestry project. This was particularly required as the project aims to move farmers from the status quo of subsistence farming focused on annual crops towards longer term agroforestry systems. According to Gavin Hollet, Manager, Lush, "there was a lot of investment in time in working through different planting designs, in engaging individual farmers, to more government-like institutions, to other like-minded organisations in the region to think differently".

4.2 Early implementation of the agroforestry programme

When starting to implement the programme in a new location, Alumalum ensures the involvement of local community leaders in the first mobilisation meetings before activities begin. This does not mean that local leaders are necessarily then included in the farmer programme (although they can be), but ensures that the project can proceed with their consent.

Another early-stage approach is the clear articulation of the entry requirements for farmers wishing to join the programme. These include a requirement that the farmers own their land so they can have secure tenure to reap the benefits of the agroforestry crops - which in some cases take 10 years to mature. Secondly, farmers must have the ability and capacity to work the land. Thirdly, farmers must have access to additional labour or workers which can be utilised if required.

Selected farmers' involvement is then formalised with a MOU which clearly states the role of each farmer and the role of Alumalum in the project. Onboarded farmers then select a lead farmer to represent them.



Jimmy Okello

is a lead farmer. He is growing trees and cocoa intercropped with peanuts, maize, sorghum, millet, and sesame. He lives with his wife and five children.

Lead farmers are responsible for mobilising more farmers and ensuring their active and aligned participation in the programme. According to Jimmy Okello, Lead Farmer, his work has several angles. First is to, "mobilise the community or the partner farmer in case of trainings or meetings that are necessary". Second is post-training, to "follow up to make sure that the partner farmers do as instructed by the trainer." And lastly if there is any training required, Jimmy Okello joins Galaxy, the extension worker as a co-trainer.

4.3 Ongoing implementation activities

Most community engagement activities are led by an Alupalum extension worker who is responsible for providing free education and training for the farmers on the benefits of perennial crops and agroforestry. Working closely with the lead farmers, the extension workers also distribute seedlings and planting materials and provide regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the plants are growing well and that farmers are participating in the programme.

Ensuring minimal barriers to entry for farmers - by providing free training and seedlings - is also an important part of the project partners' approach. Alupalum hope to transition to a self-financing model once the growers can sell their cocoa. As Anthony Akera, Operations Manager, Alupalum, stated, "when we buy the cocoa from them, the right word to describe them will no longer be partner farmers but raw material suppliers."

4.4 Female participation in the programme

Female participation in the programme is challenging, as typically in Gulu, women do not own land. Alupalum is trying to address this by finding ways for women to be involved and encouraging communities to move towards female land ownership.

As a result, the project has managed to secure a reasonable balance of female and male lead farmers. This has been further facilitated through working with CFM groups which bring together a wide range of demographics in terms of age and gender.

Lessons for other project developers

In this next section we explore lessons for other project developers looking to build trust in a post conflict context.

5.1 Building trust takes time, patience and continuity

Having a consistent individual in place as the extension worker seems to be important in building trust and confidence in the community. In the community interviewed for this study, Alupalum were represented by a single extension worker known as Galaxy. According to Jimmy Okello, Lead Farmer, "the trust was built in the way Galaxy spoke to us." For Jennifer Acen, Farmer and CFM Member, Galaxy has built trust from the beginning, "they started in a friendly way, and now the trust is built and is getting stronger and stronger."

Linked to that is the importance of the ongoing and sustained presence of Alupalum in the communities to maintain buy in and trust. For example, frequent monitoring and visits by Alupalum ensure farmers do not feel 'left behind'. According to Willy Ogwang, Lead Farmer, the visits give "assurance that we are not abandoned - it is not giving us seedlings and walking away. The frequent monitoring and visits encourages us and gives us the hope to continue what we are doing".

Beyond the agroforestry programme activities, Alupalum also played an important role in supporting the community more broadly during the COVID-19 pandemic by donating several drums of cooking oil to the district government. This oil was then given to local health centres and hospitals ensuring that those most vulnerable could benefit from it. Activities like these have been important in building trust amongst government officials and the community more widely.



Jennifer Acen

is a farmer and CFM group member. Before joining the project she only grew soya and beans. She lives with her husband and six children, four of whom are her biological children.



5.2 Working with community leaders is key to mobilising other farmers

Involving local community leaders at the initial mobilisation meetings (prior to training) seems to be essential to ensure the project gets off to a good start – if local leaders are not onboard, they may block the project. According to Anthony Akera, Operations Manager, Alumalum, if you want to succeed you need to involve local leadership and build rapport right from the start. As Anthony Akera puts it, “when you get to a place, if you don’t involve the local leadership in starting a project, they can go against it, because they’ll think that you’re using your entry to literally upset or grab land or fight the government.”

In terms of project implementation, using locally selected lead farmers has been an effective way to mobilise other farmers and build trust. This approach seems to be essential in mobilising other farmers. According to Willy Ogwang, Lead Farmer, “when the farmers were selected, because I was the one who mobilised them, the farmers then trusted me to lead them.” For lead farmers to be successful in their role they need to be trusted and well perceived in the community.

When we heard about Alumalum and what they do, me and my friends and colleagues, about six of us, came to attend a training. And when we went back, more people came in, about five, and we became 11 in number. Because I was the one who shared the idea with them, they said ‘now be our leader’. And that’s how I became the lead farmer.

Ronald Ojak, Lead Farmer



Willy Ogwang

is a lead farmer. He is growing food crops such as cassava, sorghum, beans, and peanuts, alongside trees such as mvule (a native tree), African mahogany, musizi, pine and eucalyptus.



Ronald Ojak

is a lead farmer. He is growing beans, cassava, maize, timber, and shade trees. He lives with seven people including three of his own children, his brother, and his sister’s children.

5.3 Benefits driven communication and education about agroforestry can change behaviour and mindsets

Empowering the farmers through education is essential in gaining trust and changing mindsets. Many farmers currently lack the knowledge and expertise to make an informed decision about farming options. According to Akena Lamex Lambert, Deputy Speaker, Gulu City, farmers “lack a lot of information and knowledge. We could be having these crops; we have the land. But because we lack the knowledge, nobody advises you to do this kind of farming.”

Overcoming this information gap encourages farmers to move towards a new model and way of thinking. As Anthony Akera, Operations Manager, Alumalum, said, “the major challenge for the project is the mindset, change of attitude.” This is not a small task given the historic context the agroforestry project is operating within. As Anthony Akera adds, “for centuries and centuries, the people in these communities we’re working with were used to seasonal crops and we’re trying to change them from the seasonal crops, which is immediate earning, into the perennial.”

The provision of free training by Alumalum is helping to overcome this. As Akena Lamex Lambert, Deputy Speaker, Gulu City, puts it, “you cannot get these services elsewhere free of charge.” However, free education is not enough. To change mindsets, it must be compelling and clear in its articulation of the benefits. A good example of this is the approach that the project partners took to demonstrating the benefits of perennial crops versus annual crops. The training was delivered by the extension worker with emphasis on the resilience of perennials to climate change and drought, alongside the long-term financial gains. Education around these benefits has mobilised farmers into agroforestry.



Cocoa pod

The training that Galaxy gave us really gave that assurance, because we were able to compare the advantages of having seasonal planting and then perennial farming. We had to go back to the drawing board and realise that we were breaking ourselves doing seasonal and that’s why we’ve gone in for perennial. The benefit for us that was eye catching was you planted now, and then you harvest for a long period of time.

Ronald Ojak, Lead Farmer



John Bosco Nyeko

is a farmer. He is growing cocoa with shade trees including African mahogany, musizi (a native Ugandan tree), and Gliricidia, (mother of cocoa). He has a wife and six children.



Peter Simon Komakech

is a farmer. He is growing cocoa, banana, cassava, soya beans, beans, ground nuts, oranges, and mangos. He grows trees such as the musizi and Melia volkensii (Giant Lira). He lives with his wife, mother and six children.

The focus on education helps to deliver immediate benefits to the farmers. As John Bosco Nyeko, farmer, put it, "the immediate change that I've seen is the knowledge that I've gained, with this knowledge I'm able to maintain my trees and garden."

Also key to mobilising others to try agroforestry systems was through farmers that can demonstrate the benefits of agroforestry through established farms. For instance, Simon Peter Komakech, Farmer, sees his farm as a demonstration farm, and noted that "it created interest even to the nearby farmers to get in." According to Simon Peter Komakech, "people from other districts are coming to learn from here and they want to apply the same skill in their respective gardens."

5.4 Locally appropriate solutions help to build buy in

A key learning from the approach of Lush and Alupalum is to ensure that the agroforestry approach being promoted is locally appropriate. For instance, ensuring that farmers still retain income through intercropping annuals as they wait for perennial crops to deliver not only built trust but safeguarded local livelihoods.

For example, in our case, when we came in with the perennial farming, we didn't tell them to stop the seasonal farming, but we gave them alternatives of 'okay, since you used to do seasonal farming and we're bringing perennial farming, do your seasonal farming within this same field'. That means you can intercrop your seasonal crops with our perennial, as opposed to getting another garden for seasonal and another garden for perennial.

Ronald Ojok, Lead Farmer

This approach ensures that farmers can choose an approach that works for them. For example, Willy Ogwang, Lead Farmer, plants cassava, sorghum, beans, and peanuts for food security alongside his maincrop of trees as part of the agroforestry programme.

Further, as labour constraints are a major consideration with most farmers working their land by hand without mechanised tools or equipment, it is important that the project does not increase the amount of time and effort farmers need to put in. Discussions with farmers indicate that the project has in fact reduced the burden on farmers. Doreen Akello, farmer, described how, in comparison to annual crop farming, agroforestry is "much easier." Doreen Akello only started the programme last year and is already, "very happy seeing the trees like this."

Iterative programme design approach helped to ensure that the programme was locally appropriate. This involved consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and experts at the beginning and modelling many different planting models, species and dynamics. Gavin Hollett, Manager, Lush, noted

there was, "lots of trial and error as well, in terms of taking advice from various sources, putting it into practice, then working through it". For example, cocoa is not typically grown in the northern region of Uganda, so Alupalum bought a plot of land and trialled growing it before promoting it through the project to ensure they were offering a locally appropriate solution.



Doreen Akello

is a farmer. She is growing trees intercropped with maize, sorghum, millet, and sesame. She lives with five of her siblings' children.



5.5 Get local government on board from the beginning

Demonstrating the benefits to local government is vital. For example, Akena Lamex Lambert, Deputy Speaker, Gulu City, supports the programme in terms of its social and environmental impact, as he puts it, "Alumalum is planting trees. These trees are going to help us one, conserve the environment, but also providing money because the cocoa we plant will provide cocoa beans".

Beyond convincing officials of the impact of the programme, Lush has strategically ensured it is aligned with existing government programmes and approaches. As Gavin Hollett, Manager, Lush, stated, their approach has focused on, "strengthening and involving key members of various government offices in the process, really standing in solidarity with government programs when applicable, sharing resources, sharing knowledge, hosting trips, hosting various levels of engagement."

5.6 CFMs are effective scaling partners

CFMs enabled the project to reach more communities at a faster rate. This is because CFMs are pre-existing groups of around 25 people with established leadership structures. A pre-existing leadership structure means that there is already a high degree of trust within the CFMs which the project partners can align with. For instance, by working with CFMs, the project partners were able to access the CFM community network leading to more rapid farmer recruitment.

Another interesting quality of CFMs is that they tend to contain a mix of demographics. In particular, a diversity of ages has proved to be extremely beneficial in the success of the project.

But with CFM, when members come in groups they have a lot of social capital, they have different morals that they get because we have the elderly, we have the young and we have the medium. So, in that age difference we've seen the benefits, and I think that has given us some heights and it has made the programme a bit of a success.

Anthony Akera, Operations Manager, Alumalum

CFM groups are most effective at protecting the forest due to their proximity to the forest and because they already have a mandate for forest management and monitoring, as Otim Joseph, Chairman, NFA puts it, CFMs "can be the ears and the eyes" for protecting the forest. From an institutional perspective, CFMs are governed by existing bylaws to prevent illegal deforestation. Anthony Akera, Operations Manager, Alumalum explains, "CFM groups actually help to protect the tree cover a little better, because they're the immediate adjacent communities."

In addition to forest protection, CFMs have the skills and expertise to partner with Alumalum on tree nursery management, thus directly contributing to the expansion of the agroforestry model through provision of seedlings to other farmers.

CFMs offer a key mechanism for Alumalum to further expand its farmer-based governance model in the future. However, there is a need to increase the scope, coordination, and diversity of support for CFMs to maintain trust and continuity for further scale up.

Opportunities for Lush and Alumalum to further strengthen the programme

This section collates potential opportunities for improvement that were suggested by interviewees.

6.1 Giving farmers the resources to support the project expansion

Access to phone credit is still a barrier for some farmers. Alumalum provided phone credit to farmers, for example, for attending training. Ojok Ronald, Lead Farmer requested for this to be scaled up a little, as the current amount "is limiting me and the others in the area from reaching out to other farmers." In a similar vein, another lead farmer requested access to a bicycle to provide them with the means and transport to work with Alumalum as it expanded into other communities.

6.2 Providing farmers access to more plant materials to increase success rates

Several farmers requested access to more plant materials, either to hedge against those being destroyed by pest and disease or drought, or for short term crops while tree crops mature.



@Francesco Gallarotti



The biggest challenge that we have here is the timing of seedling distributions. When the seedlings are brought a bit late, then it falls in dry season, and that's when the seedlings rate of mortality is a lot higher. You lose a lot. My recommendation is that if they could be brought at the onset of rain, it would help a lot, and make sure their survival is good.

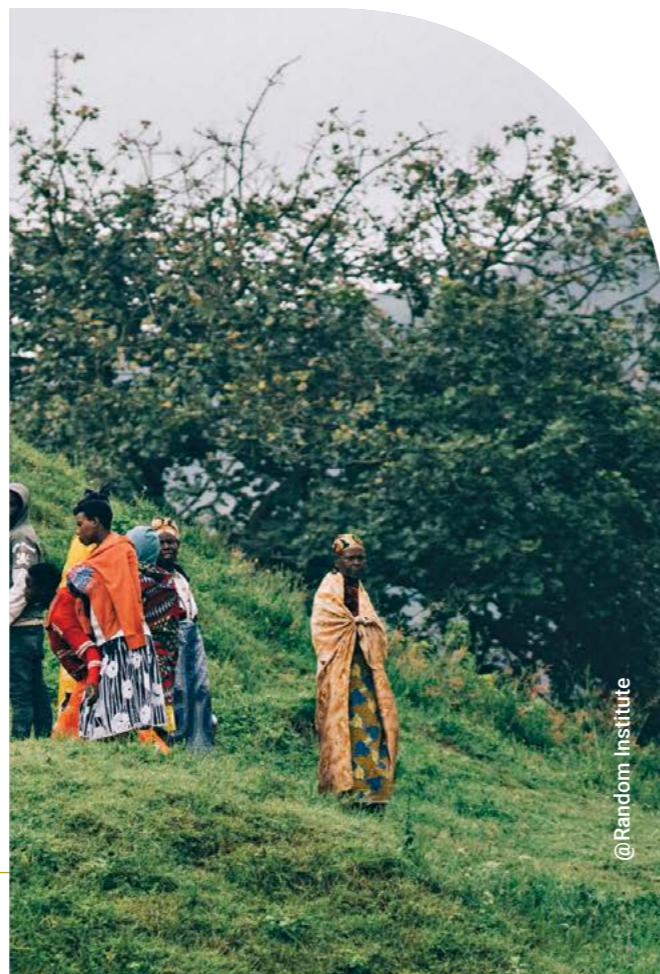
Jennifer Acen, Farmer and CFM group member

It is worth noting that with climate change anticipating the weather is becoming increasingly difficult, making the timing of seed distribution a challenge. As Simon Peter Komakech, Farmer, puts it, the rain in particular is hard to predict, "sometimes it comes late, sometimes it comes so early. So, if you don't time well, you find that you fail in the production cycle."

6.3 Consider expanding into other parts of Northern Uganda

Akena Lamex Lambert, Deputy Speaker, Gulu City, suggested that the project partners could look at expanding their approach to a broader part of Northern Uganda which were also affected by the war. Akena proposed that research could be undertaken to test the suitability of other areas for cocoa cultivation, "let us do samples of the soil", potentially via a partnership with Gulu University.

CFMs are ideal community-based landscape management partners for the expansion of the model to other parts of Uganda.



@Random Institute



Conclusion

Lush and Alumalum's approach, supported by P4F, has been successful in building trust in the Gulu region of Uganda, an area of historic conflict and marginalisation. Key to that success is their work to empower local leaders and farmers to mobilise the local community directly. Lush and Alumalum also successfully changed the mindsets of farmers away from annual crop production towards the inclusion of perennial

agroforestry. This was successful because they offered a locally appropriate solution which reduced farmer vulnerability to the main challenge facing them, namely, climate and rain unpredictability.

The approach Lush and Alumalum took to community mobilisation and building of trust is highly replicable and offers a valuable blueprint for other project developers.



Partnerships for
Forests | Catalysing investments in
forests and sustainable land use

