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An Assessment of the Role of Village Savings and Loans Associations in Improving the Lives of Farmers in Kiryandongo Sub-County, Kiryandongo District.

This report reflects an assessment of the role played by Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLAs) on improving farmers' livelihoods as a result of a study conducted in Kiryandongo sub-county Kiryandongo district. The major objective of the research was to find out the role of VSLAs service in improving farmers' livelihoods in Uganda using Kiryandongo sub-county as a case study. The research design was a case study which employed only qualitative approaches. The study had a total population of 330 with a sample size of 30 people targeted from six VSLA groups in Kiryandongo sub-county. Data was collected using interviews and success story methods. Furthermore, data was analysed and presented using a narrative form by categorisation method using themes. The study findings revealed that use of loans was a relevant intervention that was worthy further pursuit. Participants attributed the improvements in their state of life to the loans they had acquired. The study largely also revealed that basing on savings, VSLA members accessed loans and acquired assets for their homes, even acquiring houses, purchase of land, farm equipment, agricultural inputs among others which transformed greatly their livelihoods. Through BDS trainings, members were able to acquire business skills amongst themselves which has assisted them to invest wisely compared to those without the BDS skills.

The study, however, recommended the following: since at a later stage, the financial needs of some individual VSLA members surpass what the VSLA's can provide, there is huge need to link VSLA to established financial institutions. This would also reduce on the risks associated with keeping money in a cash box. Saving meetings become routine and monotonous for individual VSLA members; there is need to liaise with government agencies like NAADS to enable VSLA access other government services like agricultural trainings; whilst the VSLA model guidelines require 15-30 individuals to become members, it is evident that in some communities, opening up membership slightly would be quite useful.

Key Words: Village Savings and Loans Associations, Farmers, Kiryandongo District