

MTTI supports AGARU SACCO LTD with RIS center establishment



F. Ahimbisibwe (SCO) demonstrating staff of Agarú SACCOS how RIS works

Agarú Savings and Credit Co-operative Society (AGSCS) located in Pader District on the foot of Oret Rock in Kalongo town was formed to provide sustainable financial services to its members.

THE SACCOS' Motto is: Unity is wealth

In a bid to promote Ware House Receipt System in Pader the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry supported the society with Rural Information System (RIS) equipment to facilitate farmers who are members of Agarú SACCOS to access market information. The purpose of RIS initiative is two fold: *1. Provides market information for the farmer co-operatives*

2. Provides commodity information for the market. Hence it is this 2 way information stream which makes the RIS initiative so valuable.

Agaru Savings and Credit Co-operative Society has branches in Pader and Kalongo Town centres and has been in operation since 2002. The Organisation is operating in Pader district in Northern Uganda, one of the districts most affected by the insurgency of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) that forced Most of the people to live in Internally Displaced Peoples' camps (IDPs). Although the security situation has improved and most of the IDPs have moved into satellite camps/transit sites and others to their villages in a bid to access their original farm lands, Agaru SACCO still serves a much stressed peasant population living in uncertain conditions whose primary pre occupation is subsistence agriculture. Agaru serves a community of 6728 members with an average annual output of 5,000 tonnes of rice, 8,000 tonnes of sorghum, and 4,000 tonnes of simsim. The other enterprises that members are engaged in are maize, Ground nuts and Soya beans.

The Ministry facilitates co-operative societies in accessing market prices by giving the Co-operatives internet connectivity and ICT equipment. Once farmers undertaking collective marketing through their co-operative are able to access timely and accurate market and marketing information, they can bargain for better prices.

Coupled with that, Research shows that if and when farmers are able to access relevant and quality information regarding their commodities, they are able to increase their production as well as get better prices for their products. This benefits farmers and their families as well as the nation as a whole, and links in directly to the PMA and the NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FRAME WORK.

In the same vein a web portal for Agarú SACCO (<http://www.uce.co.ug/ris>) has been created at Uganda Commodity Exchange website that gives the location of a particular co-operative society the enterprises its members are dealing in and tonnages harvested in any one season. The portal enables buyers to quickly locate the crops and the society and its contact. This will enable the members of the beneficiary cooperative to sell with out moving from their locality.