

**UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE – GREAT LAKES URI-GL**

**RAPID ASSESSEMENT SURVEY**

**REPORT**

**ON THE IMPACT AND NEEDS OF THE SUGAR CANE SUB SECTOR**

**IN THE BUSOGA SUB REGION**

****

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report is the final result of the Rapid Assessment survey commissioned by the United Religions Initiative - Great Lakes (URI-GL) to assess the needs and the impact of sugarcane production on the governance and livelihoods support in the 6 major sugarcane growing districts in the Busoga Sub Region in eastern Uganda namely Jinja, Luuka, Mayuge, Iganga, Kaliro, and Kamuli. The respondents who participated in the assessment included farmers, traders, and suppliers while the Qualitative study carried out 4 focus group discussions (FGDs) in each of the districts with a sugarcane mill. Each group comprised of both men and women respectively. 12 key informants were interviewed who included the District technical officers such as the District Agriculture Engineer, The District Production Officer, The Resident District Commissioner, LC 3 Chairpersons, the Community development officers, the gender officer, the chairperson 5 and some councilors. The survey respondents were 108 and these were all sugarcane farmers. In summary the following key findings were established from the survey.

* The findings reveal that majority 97% of the respondents agree that many social, political and economic challenges and issues do exist.
* The findings further revealed that the issues of concern includedenial and delays in acquiring supply permits 23%, Regular price fluctuations 10% limited market options 8%, middlemen into the sector 6%, the prevailing land conflicts 5% the high sugarcane transportation costs 5%, the damage to feeder roads by heavy trucks 4% the long gestation period 3%, Bureaucracy within the mills 2%, corruption in supply permit acquisition 2%, mistreatment and discrimination of farmers by mill owners 2%, government’s failure to intervene in the issue 2%, infiltration of sector by politicians 2% and many other factors. This situation has also contributed to increased scenarios of sugarcane burning done out of frustration.
* The rapid assessment survey also revealed that the most pressing challenge in the sugarcane sub sector is the bureaucracy in acquiring supply permits 32%, followed by the poor prices 17% and the high transport costs 14%. The issue of the middlemen taking over the sector was ranked fourth at 9% and the lack of alternative markets was ranked 5th at 7% while the widespread corruption at the mill was ranked 6th at 5%.
* The findings also revealed that many governance challenges exist in the sub sector. The respondents were asked if they belong to any organized group of sugarcane farmers and only 27% belong to an association of organized farmers while 73% don’t belong to any organized groups of farmers. When asked why they don’t belong to any group, 27% shared that they are not interested while 26% shared that they don’t have any groups in their areas. 12% shared that the corruption in the groups is a hindering factor while 10% expressed the lack of support from some of the existing groups, 9% shared that they have no information about the groups while 5% shared that cooperatives consider registered sugarcane farmers as members. 4% shared that there is no value addition while another 4% shared that they have seen farmers being cheated by the same groups while another 4% shared that these groups favor the rich only.
* The findings also revealed that the local Leaders in the Busoga region have failed to find lasting solutions to the challenges in the sugarcane sector. When asked whether their leaders have played a supportive role, 87% disagreed while 11% agreed that they have played a role and 3% neither agree nor disagree. When asked whether they have ever raised a concern with any authority, 59% shared that they have ever while 41% shared that they have never and when asked whether the concern was addressed, 96% shared that concerns were not addressed while only 4% shared that their concerns were addressed.
* In regards to participation in community sensitization drives in the sugarcane sector, the findings reveal that 88% of the leaders have not participated in any community sensitization and awareness creation drives while only 12% have participated while the community shared that only 28% have participated in awareness drives while 72% have not participated in any drives. When asked what could be the hindrance to community sensitization, 4% shared that the leaders don’t know their responsibilities, 3% shared that they entered business individually, 3% shared that the same leaders are involved in the same business, 3% shared that they don’t care while 3% shared that there is a lot of divisionism in Busoga, 2% shared that there’s a lot of bickering amongst the union leaders while another 2% shared that the leaders are very corrupt and can’t do such.
* The findings also revealed that 80% of the respondents have not seen any organized farmer group creating awareness about the challenges in the sugar sector. 20% had seen organized groups creating awareness. The hindering factors were the lack of visibility in the communities 44% Leadership and Management issues 13% and the lack of financial resources to uptake their mandates. There was also corruption, embezzlement and limited trust among members.
* In regards to being responsive, 87% of the respondents shared that these cooperatives have not been helpful in addressing issues within the sugarcane sector while only 13% have tried addressing farmer concerns. The hindering factors to the sugarcane cooperatives to creating awareness is the corruption in the groups 24%, financial challenges 23% , Inactive groups 13% leadership challenges within the groups 11% and the influence of politics in the groups agenda are major hindrances to the groups development agenda.
* In regards to improving the farmers’ standard of living in the region, 65% of the respondents shared that their standard of living had not improved at all as result of sugarcane growing while 35% shared that their standard of living had improved. The main challenge to the improved standard of living of the sugarcane farmers according to the assessment was the loan issue. Many farmers 17% had acquired loans to produce sugarcane but hadn’t realized any resources back from the production while 16% had to deal with market challenges and the reduced prices.
* The findings also reveal that the system of acquiring supply permits is challenged with the majority 83% saying it’s not well streamlined and has a lot of inefficiencies across the region. 17% shared that it’s clear and well streamlined while 23%% shared that permit acquisition is free however many challenges have been observed with farmers sharing that it’s the middlemen who acquire supply permits supervisors have also been identified as major challenge to acquiring permits.77% agree that its commercial with a lot of inefficiencies and corruption tendencies exhibited by the many middlemen and supervisors while only 23% shared that it’s free.
* - Furthermore, the price of processing a supply permit is not always a constant. Majority 21% of the farmers shared that there is no fixed fee, 20% shared that it depends on the garden size while 19% shared that it’s below 1,000,000 shillings while 12% shared that it’s between 1- 2 million shillings, 10% shared that it’s between 3-6 millions, 6% shared that it’s between 2-3 million shillings while another 6% shared that they were not sure, while 4% shared that it depends on the broker.
* In regards to respect of the sugarcane farmers, 78% shared that the mill owners don’t respect the sugarcane farmers while only 17% shared that they respect them. 6% wasn’t sure about the behavior of the mill owners. We asked them about the kind of behavior expressed and majority, 25% shared that they don’t pay on time, while 19% shared that they take their time to attend to you and are often rude to the farmers respectively, while 14% shared that they are abusive while 6% shared that they deal with mafias and middlemen. Another 6% shared that they – unfairly deduct off some tones on the sugarcane tonnage while another 6% complained about the use of substandard weighing scales, 5% shared that they yell at them when they go to the mills to sell their sugarcane.
* The findings also revealed that the cost of sugarcane per tonne had reduced tremendously. Half the number of respondents, 53% shared that it was between 95,000-100,000/- while 18% shared that they didn’t know while 14% shared that it was between 90,000-95,000/= 11% shared that it was between 100,000- 150,000/= while 5% shared that it was below 5%. Because of the declining prices, most farmers 58% were selling their sugarcane to the middlemen while only 38% sold to the factory. 4% were selling to both the middlemen and to the mills.
* In regards to Innovations in the Sugarcane value chain, majority of respondents 78% shared that they had not heard about any Innovations promoting the use of sugarcane as an alternative raw material in the making of other commercial products, while 22% shared that they had heard about alternative innovations in the sugarcane sector focusing on sugarcane juice processing.
* In regards to the existing efforts aimed at addressing sugarcane issues, majority of respondents 78% shared that they had never joined any efforts aimed at creating solutions to the sugarcane issues while 22% had ever joined or attended meetings in the region to discuss the challenges to sugarcane growing in the region.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS**:

Basing on the findings from the Rapid assessment study, the following recommendations have been made.

* Government needs to prioritize sugar cane as one of the 14 strategic cash crops in the country. It needs to recognize sugarcane as one of the 14 strategic cash crops so that development and advisory programs can be developed to support the farmers in the sector.
* The Government needs to revisit the sugar policy so that it can favor the local farmers in the country. The current policy on sugar favors the foreign investors, mostly the Indian investors who operate the mills. Therefore, there is need to make policy review so that the structural challenges in the sugarcane sector can be addressed. It is also a matter of concern that the current policy is not being fully operationalized but also the sugar board is not functional.
* Though there are two cooperative unions in existence in the region, i.e. Busoga Out Growers Cooperative Union and Great Busoga Union which according to some farmers may not be a problem. There is need to convene a dialogue between the two parties to resolve the existing conflicts to have them play a more functional role that places the interests of the ordinary farmers at the forefront.
* The local community leaders and the politicians in the region have been widely cited in the sugarcane business as one of the main challenges affecting acquisition of supply permits. Therefore, it’s important that a regional dialogue is held between the political and security leaders to address the concerns of the local farmers especially in acquiring supply permits from the mills and the traffic hold-up caused by the politicians.
* The community leadership at the sub county and the district should put in place and / or enforce by laws (where they exist) to address the many cases of child labor, reckless driving, environmental degradation, road repairs by the mills and the issues of cheating farmers through substandard weighing scales. The continuous litter of sugarcane waste on the roads neighboring the mill sites is very regrettable for a country that has functional local government leadership.
* The government should support local farmers with alternative technological innovations such as soap making machines, Ethanol and juice making machines to curb the wastage of sugarcane yet the same can be used to manufacture alternative products.
* A comprehensive research needs to be done by URI or any interested organ on sugar cane growing to deeply understand the needs and challenges of the sugarcane farmers in the region. The above Assessment doesn’t provide conclusive information based on large samples. The research will guide the key actors in developing advocacy measures in the sector with clear focus on highlighted issues above and others related child labor, environment degradation, and farmer exploitation.
* United Religions Initiative and other likeminded stakeholders should establish and strengthen the capacity of the sugarcane farmer groups such as the cooperative unions and the Sacco’s so that they can provide a collective voice and bargaining for better prices. This can be done through government creating a more conducive environment for the cooperatives to expand and diversify their activities.
* The mill owners should consider scrapping the issuance of permits and decentralize the buying of sugarcane. This way the farmers will be able to sell their sugarcane at the source of production. The establishment of sugarcane buying centers at sub county level will also ease the process of supplying sugarcane to the mills and will ease on the destruction of the feeder roads.
* The issue of sugarcane growing has been politicized by the local politicians. It’s pertinent that the local leaders in the region build consensus and unity in addressing the challenges in the sugarcane sector.
* Different platforms on media and other avenues need to be availed or established for the local leaders within Busoga Region to discuss and air out the prevailing challenges surrounding sugarcane production probably that is when action will be taken especially by government.
* An awareness campaign on the benefits of farmers being in cooperative unions needs to be done to help them have the unbiased information on belonging to such Unions.

1. **Study Purpose and Background:**

The Rapid Assessment survey was commissioned by the United Religions Initiative URI Great Lakes to assess the current needs and the impact of sugarcane production on the governance and livelihoods support in the 6 major sugarcane growing districts in the Busoga Sub Region in eastern Uganda.. This is so because sugar cane growing in eastern Uganda has become a contentious issue that has pitched leaders with their constitutes in various ways. The involvement of the elite and key government leaders either taking over land or influencing the sugarcane sales and management is evident in the many transactions made although in a covert way. The corruption involved in the sugarcane production and sale is too high. For example, the bureaucracy around acquiring a permit to sale sugarcane is full of corruption and also the requirements that range from having an own sugarcane truck, selling permit and being put on the list of those to supply is beyond measure. Many calls have been made to the leaders to help communities have better policies in place to protect the interests of these farmers to no avail.

The information gathered through the Rapid Assessment will therefore provide accurate and timely information on the needs, attitudes and motivations of the communities and further identify the underlying key issues to the sugar production challenges, the impact and grassroots needs. This information will be used by the project team and other stakeholers to offer support towards advocacy for legal reform and practice to ensure that all people in the sugar cane growing communities are able to have their voice heard on issues that are important to them and will Protect and promote their rights and further have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives.

1. **Study Methodology:**

The Rapid Assessment study adopted a two pronged approach i.e. qualitative research approach and quantitative research methods and further adopted purposive and random sampling techniques for the selection of respondents for data collection. The Quantitative survey sampled 108 respondents who comprised of farmers, Traders, and suppliers in the six districts sampled out randomly using a structured individual questionnaire. The information gathered was used to generate information that enabled statistical measurement of outcomes of the assessment and make recommendations based on measured parameters.

For the Qualitative study, Information was gathered from selected grassroots community members. In total we carried 4 focus group discussions (FGDs) in each of the districts with a sugarcane mill. Each group comprised of both men and women respectively. 12 key informants were interviewed who included the District technical officers such as the District Agriculture Engineer, The District Production Officer, The Resident District Commissioner, LC 3 Chairpersons ,the Community development officers, the gender officer, the chairperson V, and some councilors, The Qualitative approach enabled the consulting team to collect a wide range of responses of what was on the ground thus identifying successes, failures, gaps as well as draw recommendations necessary to attain the set targets and objectives.

## **Study Limitations**

## Some of the leaders that the study had targeted at the district and Sub County levels were not in office at the time of the interviews because some of them were out for planning meetings outside the districts while others where on leave. This affected the exercise since some of them couldn’t be found face to face. This however didn’t affect the original samples as most of the sub county department’s targeted got staff to represent them.

Some of the Security leaders in the selected districts such as Kaliro and Iganga requested the assessment team to formerly introduce the project before they could share any form of information however the local facilitation team managed to talk to other leaders in the other target districts

The mill owners didn’t agree to being interviewed which left the researchers to talk to the lower cadres in the mill. This also didn’t help with getting the real mill related information.

# Introduction:

The United Religions Initiative Great Lakes (URI-GL ) is an interfaith non-governmental grassroots network organization that cultivates peace and justice by engaging people to bridge religious and cultural differences and work together for the good of their communities and society. It was established in 2000 and registered in Uganda in 2010. It is an affiliate of the world wide United Religions Initiative (URI) with its Global Support office in San Francisco, California. URI-GL works with the different organizations and individuals who are dedicated to non-violence, and the respect for life. Its vision is a world at peace, sustained by engaged and interconnected communities committed to respect for diversity, non-violent resolution of conflict and social, political, economic and environmental justice.

Key Findings:

**General Demographic and Social Economic Characteristics of the Respondents**

### Respondents Occupation Category and Age

**Figure 1. Showing Respondents Occupation Figure 2. Showing Respondents Gender**

Figure 1 shows that 91% of the respondents interviewed were sugarcane farmers while 6% were traders and 3 % indicated that were employees in the sugarcane sector while 1% were suppliers in the respective sugar mills in the region.

Figure two shows the respondent’s gender distribution determined randomly. 81% of the respondents interviewed were males while 19% were women.

**Respondent Location and Age**

**Figure 3. Showing Districts of Interview Figure 4 .Showing Respondents Age**

Figure 3 Shows the district where the Assessment survey was conducted. 23% of the respondents interviewed were located in Jinja district while 19% were located in Mayuge and Iganga respectively, 14% are located in Kamuli while 13% were located in Luuka and Kaliro Respectively.

**Level of Education:**

**Figure 5. Showing the Highest level of Education.**

Majority of the respondents interviewed indicated that they have ever been to school and among these the distribution of the highest levels of Education attained was 70% had attained some primary schooling, 24% had attained some secondary school, 12% had some primary school education, 8 % had attained some college/ Technical education while 6% had no formal schooling and another 6% had attained secondary school. Those who had completed university were 3% while those with youth/polytechnic were 2% and 1 % had attained some university training.

### The Social, Economic and Political Issues in the Production of Sugarcane:

The Assessment team asked specific questions to clearly understand the underlying issues surrounding sugar cane production in the Busoga sub region. The respondents were asked to share whether growing sugarcane was an issue of concern to them. The findings revealed that many challenges do exist in the production of sugarcane.

**Figure 6 showing whether sugarcane growing was an issue of concern**.

Despite government earmarking sugarcane as one of the 14 strategic cash crops in Uganda, its production in the last 7 years has proven to be a raw deal for the farmers. The assessment team asked farmers whether sugarcane production was such an issue and the finding revealed that majority, 97% agreed that many challenges do exist in the sector and has not really transformed livelihoods and household incomes of the farmers who are commercially engaged in it. The challenges highlighted by the leaders included the fact that the factory owners had complicated the process of issuing permits to the farmers. It was very hard for an ordinary farmer to acquire a permit. Instead they were being issued to middlemen who are not sugarcane growers. When the middle man acquires the permit they begin to exploit the sugarcane growers by buying and paying them very little money for their sugarcane. The interference of the middlemen in the venture particularly in the acquisition of permits had resulted into blocking the opportunities of the sugarcane growers to access permits to sell their sugarcane directly to the sugarcane mills and had increased the exploitation of the farmers by the middlemen with large supply permits through buying their sugarcane cheaply and at times not paying them at all for the sugarcane. Besides the permit, there was lack of clear leadership for the Sugarcane growers to push forward their concerns. The existing sugarcane unions have not been effective in addressing the concerns of the farmers. The leaders were involved in political in fights while intrigue and corruption is still a huge challenge to organizing farmers in the region.

### The Underlying Concerns in the Production of Sugarcane:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Denial and Delays in acquiring of supply permits | 23% | Many Irregularities and forgeries at the mills | 2% |
| Regular Price Fluctuations | **10%** | Renting Land and not benefiting from it | **1%** |
| The Market is a huge problem | **8%** | Poor Contract Farming Arrangements | **0%** |
| The Middlemen have taken over the sector | **6%** | The Accumulated loan burden | **2%** |
| The many prevailing land based conflicts in the sector | **5%** | Heavy losses made | **1%** |
| High sugarcane transportation costs | **5%** | No voice & Leadership for the farmers | **1%** |
| Damage of the feeder roads by the heavy trucks | **4%** | The Indians Monopolizing the Business | **1%** |
| The long gestation period invokes losses | **3%** | The Weak farmer Unions/ Associations | **0%** |
| Bureaucracy within the mills | **2%** | Lack of cooperation from the Mill owners and workers | **0%** |
| Corruption in the acquisition of permits | **2%** | The seedlings are more costly than the sugarcane | **1%** |
| The business is not profitable | **2%** | Many cases of child labour in the communities | **3%** |
| Segregation of the poor farmers by the mills | **2%** | The many school dropouts | **3%** |
| Governments failure to Intervene in the issue | **2%** | The prevailing teenage pregnancies | **3%** |
| Infiltration by the Politicians | **2%** | Increased cases of domestic Violence | **1%** |
| Many lies and empty promises made by supervisors | **1%** | The Increasing poverty | **1%** |
| Delayed Payments | **1%** | Increased food insecurity in the communities | **1%** |
| Conmen and tricksters have emerged in the sector | **1%** | Increased SGBV cases and family Separation | **0%** |
| Lack of alternative cash crops to grow | **1%** | Increased fire outbreaks with no alternative  **Base n= 235 All respondents** | **0%** |
| Has increased environment degradation | **0%** |  |  |

**Figure 7 Showing the Underlying concerns in the production of sugarcane:**

Besides the above issues, the key informant’s discussions revealed that as a result of the current issues, many land based conflicts had emerged. Land issues were on the rise between land owners and those who hired land from them to grow sugarcane. As a result of the lack of market for the sugarcane, the sugarcane growers were stuck with the sugarcane in the gardens while the land owners were also getting impatient as they wanted their land back. This situation had also contributed to increased scenarios of sugarcane burning done out of frustration.

### Ranking of Sugar cane production Challenges.

According to an in-depth analysis of the sugar sub-sector, there was a massive variance between the livelihood and the income levels of the people engaged in sugarcane growing, raising the question whether this economic activity is worth of the farmers' time or it is about time they ditched it for another viable venture.

**Figure 8 showing the ranking of sugarcane production challenges**.

The bureaucracy in acquiring supply permits was ranked as the most pressing challenge at 32%. This was followed by the poor sugar cane prices at 17%. To some farmers the mill owners sometimes announce the prices at their leisure and it is a take it or leave it. The more the sugarcane trucks parked the lower the prices. High Transportation costs were also ranked at 14%, as well as the Issue of Middlemen taking over the sector at 9%. These ones are usually stationed at the mill itself and take advantage of farmers who struggle to have their trucks weighed inside. The lack of alternative markets 7% and the widespread corruption at 5%. The irony was that there had been increased sugar cane production and milling capacity over the last two and half decades which essentially should have resulted into potential employment opportunities with better incomes, reduced poverty and guaranteed food security. However the situation had instead escalated into many negative economic and social impacts to the sugarcane growing communities. Most mill owners don’t commit to any Corporate Social Responsibility at all. For example most of the roads are impassable because of the many heavy sugarcane trucks. For some like Kaliro Sugar even the inside part where trucks park is in a deplorable condition and farmers have to pay extra to park in a better place within the premises. If a truck falls down inside the mill premises which is actually very bumpy one has to pay for that yet the inside compound is supposed to be worked on by the mill owner.

### The Governance challenges in the Farmer groups in the Region.

In Uganda today the government is promoting the revival of cooperatives in a bid to organize farmers for better production. However, it should be observed that even though many farmer groups have been formed, government, NGOs and other rural development agencies prefer to work with organized groups instead of individual farming households. There was still a huge challenge in the leadership of the farmer groups in the sugarcane sector. The limited coordination at production level has negatively affected the capacity of grower associations bargaining power. This is in addition to weakened coordination between growers and millers, resulting into emergence of new small mills which weakens out-grower schemes. The absence of a Sugar Board, which should be up and running by now remains a major concern.

**Figure 10 on organized groups** **Figure 11 on why respondent don’t belong to any**

The Rapid assessment team asked the respondents whether they belong to any organized farmers group and the findings revealed that only 27% of the respondents belong to an association of organized sugarcane farmers. 73% don’t belong to any organized group of farmers. When asked why they don’t belong to any organized group of farmers, 27% shared that they were not interested while 26% said that they didn’t have any groups in their areas. 12% shared that the corruption in the groups was a hindrance factor while 10% expressed the lack of support from some of the existing groups, 9% shared that they had no information about the groups while 5% shared that cooperatives consider registered sugarcane farmers to register members. 4% shared that there is no value addition while another 4% shared that they had seen farmers being cheated by the same groups and another 4% shared that these groups favor the rich only.

### Local Leaders finding Solutions to the sugarcane Issues.

The findings from the rapid assessment shows that the local Leaders in the Busoga region had failed to find a solution to the challenges in the sugarcane sector. The Government of Uganda through the ministry of trade and cooperatives has tried to regulate the sugar industry through establishing the sugar board to expand the cash crop's value addition beyond sugar. This however is still not realized. Although the act is in place, its operationalization can not be realized because of the failure to institute the different organs as stipulated in the Act. The divisions in the local leadership organs right from the sugarcane Unions, to Associations and government representatives is another challenge. The Union leaders have strong differences that need to be addressed since many are not people centered but rather economic and leadership based.

The survey team asked the respondents whether they had ever raised any issue with the relevant authorities for action in their community.

**Figure 12. Showing whether respondent raised any concern Figure 13. on whether concern was addressed**

Figure 12 shows that that 59% had ever raised concerns while 41% had never raised any concern with the authorities in place for action to be taken. While figure 13 shows that only 4% of the respondents with concerns had their concerns addressed. The majority, 96% had not had any of their issues addressed by the local leaders in their community. The assessment survey revealed that some of the local leaders were involved in the buying and selling of sugarcane from farmers and in doing this they had escalated the challenges in the sector as many poor farmers couldn’t get access to the mills. This also raises the very reasons as to why farmers concerns are usually not addressed.

### Participation in Community Sensitization on the challenges in the sugarcane sector:

**Figure 14. On Awareness creation** **Figure 15. On leaders Involvement in sensitization drives.**

Whereas sugarcane production has presented many challenges, the community was not fully sensitized about the challenges and how to overcome them. The survey team asked respondents whether they had participated in any awareness and sensitization drives on the issues and challenges of sugarcane growing and 72% shared that they have never been involved in any drives while 28% shared that they had participated in some community sensitization drives. The areas for sensitization included all aspects of land usage. Individuals that rent out their land for sugarcane growing who are caught in the cycle of debt or end up selling the land to the person who initially rented. Normally, whoever has rented the land needs it for at least 54 months or three planting seasons.

### Hindering Factors to Community Sensitization on the Sugarcane growing Impetus:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Hindrance | Percentage |
| 1 | No one has mobilized us | 31% |
| 2 | We don’t have time | 12% |
| 3 | No one is interested | 10% |
| 4 | They politicize issues every time | 9% |
| 5 | The permit issue is complex | 8% |
| 6 | The leaders are self-seekers | 8% |
| 7 | The farmers are discriminated | 8% |
| 8 | They don’t know their responsibilities | 4% |
| 9 | I entered business Individually | 3% |
| 10 | The leaders are also involved in the business | 3% |
| 11 | They don’t care about us | 3% |
| 12 | Divisionism within Busoga | 3% |
| 13 | Bickering amongst union leaders | 2% |
| 14 | They are very corrupt and can’t do such. | 2% |
| 15 | I don’t know | 2% |

Figure 16 showing hindrances to community sensitization.

The above figure shows that majorly the farmers 31% were not mobilized to address the prevailing issues in the sector. While 12% had no time, 10% were not interested and 9% shared that most issues were politicized by the politicians and failed to provide solutions when needed.

### Whether organized groups were creating awareness

Figure 17 showing whether groups have created awareness

With the declining prices and permit issues, it would have seemed obvious that the Union leadership would create awareness for solutions. However, it has become obvious that the prices have been in free fall since 2017. The assessment data revealed that 80% of the respondents had not seen any organized farmer group creating awareness about the challenges in the sector while 20% had seen organized groups creating awareness.

**Hindering factors:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Hindrance | Percentage |
| 1 | I don’t know /No information | 23% |
| 2 | They are simply not active | 21% |
| 3 | Leadership challenges | 13% |
| 4 | No financial resources | 10% |
| 5 | Their locations are unknown | 9% |
| 6 | Farmers are disorganized& not united | 9% |
| 7 | They are caught in the middle of the issues | 3% |
| 8 | The corruption amongst the leaders | 3% |
| 9 | Information doesn’t reach the farmers | 3% |
| 10 | They are selfish and only serve their interests | 3% |
| 11 | They are interested in rich farmers | 2% |

**Figure 18 showing hindrance factors to leaders’ participation in awareness creation**

Whereas efforts had been made by the sugarcane farmers to have organized groups of farmers in the region, these had to some extent created awareness about the challenges of the sugarcane sector however, these were not devoid of challenges. The challenges included the lack of visibility in the communities, 45% Leadership and Management issues 13% and the lack of financial resources to uptake their mandates. There was also corruption, embezzlement and limited trust among members.

**Figure 19 showing Hindrances to undertaking mandate Figure 20. Showing whether groups are helpful.**

The sugarcane cooperatives undertake, wholesale trading, retailing of both farm inputs e.g. seed and cooperators products and sometimes the production and processing of consumer goods. The concerns regarding the relevance of the sugarcane cooperatives are many. 87% of the respondents shared that these cooperatives have not been helpful in addressing issues within the sugarcane sector while only 13% have tried addressing farmers’ concerns. To fully revive cooperatives in the region, extensive community mobilization and sensitization as well as general education about the advantages of farmer cooperation needs to be carried out through meetings and workshops with a view of raising the communities’ awareness about co-operatives, improving their financial literacy and banking culture, gender awareness, climatic change and health management. The hindering factors to the sugarcane cooperatives to creating awareness is mainly around corruption at 24%, financial challenges 23% , Inactive groups 13% leadership challenges within the groups at 11% and the influence of politics in the groups agenda were major hindrances to the groups development agenda.

### The Impact of sugarcane growing on the Livelihood of the communities.

**Figure 21. Showing whether the respondent’s standard of living has improved.**

In regards to improving the standard of living in the region, 65% of the respondents shared that their standard of living had not improved at all as result of sugarcane growing while 35% shared that their standard of living had improved. It should be observed that about 25% of people in the Busoga sub region live below the poverty line according to the UBOS statistics. This clearly indicates how badly spread the distribution of benefits emanating from sugarcane growing value chain is. The farmers who play a central role in supplying cane to milling companies remain largely excluded in the governance and decision making structure. The irony is that there has been increased cane production and milling capacity over the last two and half decades which essentially should result into potential employment opportunities with better incomes, reduced poverty and guaranteed food security. However, this is far from reality as 65% of the respondents shared that their standards of living had declined.

According to some of these farmers, the reasons for clinging on this type of farming is the lack of alternative income generating activities. Many had been strong maize farmers, but the market for maize was deplorable and there were no efforts from the leaders to provide better market alternatives even in Kenya. They also ventured into other cash and food crops like vanilla, coffee, rice but the market wasn’t forth coming. Fishing on the other hand was so militarized that fishing as an income generation for these communities is between a rock and a hard place.

**Figure 22. Showing declined standard of living**

### Hindrance to improved standard of Living

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hindrance | Percentage |
| We are operating on loans | 17% |
| No market for the sugarcane | 16% |
| Many losses have been registered over the years | 13% |
| Prices have reduced tremendously | 11% |
| The business is not Lucrative anymore | 9% |
| There is bureaucracy in permit acquisition | 9% |
| The middleman has taken over the business | 6% |
| There is no alternatives to sugarcane growing | 4% |
| Many discrepancies at the mill | 4% |
| The process of selling sugarcane is discriminative | 4% |
| The government is suppressing the farmers | 3% |
| The politicians are the ones with the muscle to trade | 3% |
| Everything is at a standstill | 1% |
|  |  |

**Figure 23 showing hindrance to improved standard of living.**

The main challenge to the improved standard of living of the sugarcane farmers according to the assessment was the loan issue. Many farmers 17% had acquired loans to produce sugarcane but hadn’t realized any resources back from the production while 16% had to deal with market challenges and the reduced prices. It should be observed that historically, sugar milling was based on an out grower system by the then, big millers like Kakira, Kinyara and Lugazi which had nucleus estates complemented by an out grower system. It is emerging today that the newly licensed mills have no nucleus estates and had by 2016 began engaging in sugarcane poaching. And in return the big millers have also engaged in sugarcane growing and therefore competing with smaller farmers hence weakening the prices of the product.

### Permit Acquisition process:

**Figure 24 showing whether permit acquisition is free**. **Figure 25 showing whether it’s commercial or free.**

The system of acquiring supply permits was challenged with the majority 83% saying it was not well streamlined and had a lot of inefficiencies across the region. 17% shared that it was clear and well streamlined while 23%% shared that permit acquisition was free. However many challenges were observed with farmers sharing that it’s the middlemen who acquire supply permits and supervisors had also been identified as major challenge to acquiring permits.77% agreed that its commercial with a lot of inefficiencies and corruption tendencies exhibited by the many middlemen and supervisors.

### The Cost of purchasing a permit

**Figure 26 showing the price range:**

The price of processing a supply permit is not always a constant. Majority 21% of the farmers shared that there was no fixed fee, 20% shared that it depends on the garden size while 19% shared that it was below 1,000,000 shillings while 12% shared that it was between 1- 2 million shillings, 10% shared that it was between 3-6 millions, 6% shared that it was between 2-3 million shillings while another 6% shared that they were not sure, while 4% shared that it depends on the broker.

### Behavioral Issues in the sugar mills:

**Figure 27. Showing whether mills respect farmers Figure 28 showing behavioral issues**

The increased production of sugarcane and the current impasse in the sector had created many behavioral issues and challenges around the sugar mills. In regards to respect of the sugarcane farmers 78% shared that the mill owners don’t respect the sugarcane farmers while only 17% shared that they respect them. 6% wasn’t sure about the behavior of the mill owners. The team asked them about the kind of behavior expressed and majority 25% shared that they don’t pay on time while 19% shared that they take their time to attend to you and are often rude to the farmers respectively while 14% shared that they are abusive. Furthermore, 6% shared that they deal with mafias and middlemen, another 6% shared that they cancel off some tonnes on the sugarcane tonnage while another 6% complained about the use of substandard weighing scales, and 5% shared that they yell at them when they go to the mills to sell their sugarcane.

### The Cost of Sugarcane

The cost of sugarcane apparently had reduced tremendously. Half the number of respondents 53% shared that it was between 95-100,000/- while 18% shared that they don’t know while 14% shared that it was between 90-95,000/=. 11% shared that it was between 100- 150,000/= while 5% shared that it was below 5%. Whereas Sugarcane is a perennial crop that takes 18 months to mature it’s very disturbing that the farmers can’t pick any money from growing sugarcane. Therefore, because of the declining prices most farmers 58% sell their sugarcane to the middlemen while only 38% sell to the factory, 4% sell to both the middlemen and the mills. This is amidst cries of renting land for that long amidst declining sugar prices that definitely has implications on incomes, food security and is a breeding ground for poverty.

### Innovations in the sugarcane sector.

**Figure 31 showing awareness of Innovations Figure 32 showing respondents efforts.**

In regards to Innovations in the Sugarcane Value chain, Majority of respondents 78% shared that they had not heard about any innovations promoting the use of sugarcane as an alternative raw material in the making of other commercial products while 22% shared that they had ever heard about alternative innovations in the sugarcane sector focusing on sugarcane juice processing. In regards to the efforts aimed at addressing sugarcane issues in the region, majority of respondents 78% shared that they had never joined any efforts aimed at creating solutions to the sugarcane issues while 22% had ever joined or attended meetings in the region to discuss the challenges to sugarcane growing in the region.

# RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the findings from the Rapid assessment study, the following recommendations are made.

* The region greatly depends on sugarcane and having a streamlined sugarcane marketing plan for the farmers is important in addressing the poverty issues in the region. This is also on the back drop of the government’s advocacy for commercial farming that is beyond subsistence farming only. Therefore listing this crop among the priority cash crops that the ministry of agriculture and animal industry has is very important for economic development in the region.
* There is need for to revisit the sugar policy so that it can favor the local farmers in the country. The current policy on sugar favors the Indian investors who operate the mills. It is also a matter of concern that the current policy is not being fully operationalized and also the sugar board not functional.
* There is need to establish and strengthen the capacity of the sugarcane farmer groups such as the cooperative unions and the Sacco’s so that they can provide a collective voice and bargaining for better prices and subsidies from the mills. The history of the cooperatives in Uganda greatly affected by the government’s interest in their activities. It should be observed that the full potential of the cooperative enterprise in fostering development is yet to be harnessed due to internal problems related to governance and leadership, poor capitalization, inadequate, knowledge, management information systems and expertise in managing cooperatives. Therefore there is a great need for the government to create a more conducive environment for the cooperatives to expand, and diversify their activities in the sugarcane growing sector.
* There is more need for awareness creation on the need for farmers to be interested in being part of the available sugarcane Associations and Unions but also for the leaders to be more professional and cohesive in sharing the benefits for such memberships.
* The mill owners should consider scraping the issuance of permits and decentralize the buying of sugarcane. This way the farmers will be able to sell their sugarcane at the source of production. The establishment of sugarcane buying centers at sub county level will ease the process of supplying sugarcane to the mills and will ease on the destruction of the feeder roads with sugarcane litter.
* A streamlined pricing system for the sugarcane at the different mills needs to be looked into. Impromptu pricing depending on how the owners deem it fit is unjust to the farmers. Most farmers are operating in desperate situations and some simply want to either burn the sugarcane or want to see it taken at whatever cost hence the mill owners benefiting from such situations.
* The local community leaders and the politicians in the region have been widely cited in the sugarcane business as one of the main challenges affecting acquisition of supply permits. This is a major issue because it makes it hard for the farmers to acquire permits on time because of the bulk tonnage given to such leaders at the expense of the farmers. Therefore, it’s important that a regional dialogue is held between the political, security leaders and the farmers d to address the concerns of the local farmers especially in acquiring supply permits from the mills and the traffic hold up caused by the politicians and how these can find a better working relationship that is based on ensuring favorable economic support for the farmers.
* The government should support local farmers with alternative technological innovations in the sugarcane value chain such as soap making machines, Ethanol making and juice making machines to curb the wastage of sugarcane since these same can be used to manufacture alternative products.
* The community leadership at the sub county and the district should put in place by laws to address the many cases of child labor, reckless driving, road repairs by the mills and the issues of cheating farmers through substandard weighing scales.
* The issue of sugarcane growing has been politicized by the local politicians. It’s pertinent that the local leaders in the region build consensus and unity in addressing the challenges in the sugarcane sector.
* There is need for the United Religions Initiative to conduct a baseline survey on sugar cane growing specifically to understand the needs and challenges of the sugarcane farmers and the key stakeholders in the region. The above Assessment doesn’t provide conclusive information based on large samples of the population. The above baseline will guide the organization in developing advocacy measures in the sector especially with clear focus on child labor issues in the sector, environment degradation through tree planting, and addressing farmer exploitation.
* Different platforms on media and other avenues need to be availed or established for the local leaders within Busoga Region to discuss and air out the prevailing challenges surrounding sugarcane production probably that is when action will be taken especially by government.

### CONCLUSION:

Much as sugarcane growing is lucrative and has greatly changed people’s lives, there is need to encourage people to also engage in growing food crops to ensure families are not hit by hunger. A lot of trees have also been cut down by the communities in the interest of growing sugarcane hence impacting on the environment. The communities therefore need to be encouraged to plant more trees. It should also be observed that the weakened coordination between the growers and millers, let alone the limited government support to sugarcane sub-sector as evidenced by the delay to establish the sugarcane board, means the industry is in for a long haul. Therefore, more efforts should be put in place to ensure that both farmers and the mill owners benefit from the production of sugarcane. On the other hand though, government needs to find supportive ways of helping these farmers get the best out of sugarcane farming since it looks to be current main income generating activity in the region.