



RESEARCH ARTICLE

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF ASSET-BASED APPROACHES ON ENHANCING QUALITY COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS IN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

Uganda, a democratic republic with a decentralized governance structure, has implemented policies aligned with its Vision 2040 to uplift community welfare as part of its transition to middle-income status. Despite government, and NGO efforts, challenges persist in achieving sustainable community livelihoods, highlighting the need for innovative approaches. Asset-based approaches represent a shift from deficit-oriented frameworks, focusing on mobilizing existing community strengths rather than addressing needs only. This paper investigates the impact of asset-based approaches on enhancing quality community livelihoods in Uganda, focusing on community assets like people, natural resources, technology, and knowledge. The paper used a cross-sectional, mixed-methods design, collecting data from 338 respondents in Kabaale Township, Buseruka Sub-County, to analyze the relationship between asset-based approaches and community well-being. Results indicate a strong, positive correlation between asset-based strategies and livelihood quality ($r=0.833$, $p<0.01$), suggesting that investments in community assets significantly improve socio-economic conditions. Factor analysis showed that people's involvement in productive activities, access to natural resources, the adoption of technology, and knowledge on asset management are key components influencing community livelihoods. Regression analysis further revealed that asset-based approaches account for a substantial proportion of livelihood improvement variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.741$). The paper concludes that asset-based approaches are critical to enhancing community resilience, self-sufficiency and livelihood outcomes and empower communities to become active agents of change within their socio-economic landscapes. It recommends a shift in community development practices towards asset mobilization and empowerment to foster sustainable growth, aligning with Uganda's broader socio-economic goals.

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INTRODUCTION

Uganda is a democratic republic with a governance structure that includes both national and local levels. Articles 26 and 27 of the Ugandan Constitution outline the government's commitment to supporting diverse community livelihoods, emphasizing the importance of increasing livelihood quality (Lloydjones & Redin, 2017). Key players in this effort include the central government—working through ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Finance—as well as local and international NGOs, civil society organizations, and religious institutions. Collectively, these entities aim to improve the well-being and capacity of Ugandan communities, viewing enhanced livelihood quality as essential for sustainable growth, economic development, and Uganda's

progress toward middle-income status. The government in liaison with international organizations, NGOs, civil society organizations, religious-based organizations and development agencies has undertaken different mechanisms to improve the livelihoods of the communities. Uganda's Vision 2040 provides a roadmap for transforming the country from a predominantly agrarian society to a modern, prosperous nation. Adopted by the Cabinet in 2007, Uganda's Vision 2040 aims to elevate Uganda from a low-income to an upper-middle-income country, focusing on eliminating barriers to socio-economic development. These barriers include ideological limitations, a weak private sector, insufficient human resources, inadequate infrastructure, limited markets, lack of industrialization, underdeveloped service and agricultural

sectors, and democratic challenges. A key goal of this Vision is to increase community livelihood contributions to Uganda's GDP from 39.8% in 2020 to 56% by 2025 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Budget allocations reflect this focus on improving community livelihoods, with 12.5% of the 2020/21 budget and 13% of the 2021/22 budget dedicated to initiatives designed to boost community welfare, up from 10.1% in the 2018/19 budget. Notable government programs include Operation Wealth Creation (OWC), a military-led initiative to promote commercial farming and discourage rural-to-urban migration; the Skilling Uganda program, which aims to increase youth employability through practical skills training; the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), which supports agricultural input distribution and value chain development; and the establishment of Savings and Credit Co-operatives (SACCOs), promoted as inclusive mechanisms for economic empowerment (Rwamigisa, *et al.*, 2018; Makoba & Wakoko-Studstill, 2015). However, limited scientific evidence to support program effectiveness, and lack of sufficient resources to address Uganda's extensive needs, among other challenges, have hampered these initiatives (Renzaho, Kamara, & Kamanga, 2020). Community livelihoods are generators of economic growth and development among the many economies in other countries (Swahn, *et al.*, 2018). Despite efforts by local governments at the district and sub-county levels, several issues persist in Ugandan communities, including low educational levels, poor nutrition, inadequate healthcare, lack of access to clean water, high unemployment, and an underperforming agricultural sector (Mayne, Lee, & Auchincloss, 2015). Improved community livelihoods are essential for Uganda's economic development, yet the potential for growth has not been fully realized. Consequently, assessing the impact of asset-based approaches on enhancing community livelihoods is timely and relevant. The paper is significant for several reasons: (i) It provides policy makers or formulators with evidence of the viability of the asset-based approach in improving livelihoods of communities in Uganda, (ii) Its findings are actionable insights that local governments, development agencies, and other relevant actors can use to improve community management practices, and sustainable livelihood quality, (iii) It is reference for future studies concerning the salient determinants of quality community livelihoods for academics and other research actors such as community- or development-oriented think tanks, (iv) It expands the body of knowledge in this field of community livelihoods.

The Impact of Asset Based Approaches on Quality Community Livelihoods:

Asset-based approaches are an alternative to the needs-driven approach. The asset-based approach focuses on the capacities, skills and social resources of people and their communities (Cunningham, 2021). Harrison, Blickem, and Lamb (2019) further explain that asset-based approaches activate and build upon existing community assets, bringing together individuals, associations, and institutions to enhance local strengths in a way that stands in stark contrast to deficit-based approaches, which prioritize identifying and responding to community needs. From the start, an asset-based approach identifies the assets of individuals, associations and institutions that form the community. This approach is a basis in mobilizing community assets to build local capacity to provide a wider range of support services. Studies have shown that asset-based approaches in community development contribute significantly to the enhancement of resilience and independence,

individualized care, preventive health, and self-management strategies (Reynolds & Colonna, 2018). By fostering local engagement and tapping into the capabilities and relationships of community members, asset-based methods promote holistic well-being and fortify communities against external stressors. The assets engaged in these approaches span interpersonal relationships, social networks, and community resources, including local amenities like libraries, parks, and recreational centers, as well as programs facilitated by the voluntary sector. MacLeod and Emejulu (2014) highlight that asset-based community development can also empower local groups, allowing them greater autonomy in setting priorities and making budgetary decisions—a practice known as co-production. This approach acknowledges the unique insight and expertise that local residents have regarding their communities and suggests that effective co-production requires that statutory bodies such as local authorities and health organizations share power with these communities.

Within asset-based frameworks, key resources identified for sustaining community development are people, natural resources, technology, and knowledge (Foot, 2018). Marmot (2016) posits that people represent the most critical asset in any community or organization. Organizations that recognize employees as assets, rather than expenses, often exhibit enhanced performance, as they foster cultures that prioritize and respect human capital. Engaging employees by valuing their contributions can cultivate an environment of shared responsibility and commitment, reinforcing a culture where the community's identity aligns with shared growth. Natural resources are another foundational asset within communities, encompassing elements drawn directly from nature, such as water, air, land, minerals, flora, and fauna (Schilling & Chiang, 2016). These resources hold commercial, aesthetic, scientific, and cultural value and can either exist independently, such as freshwater or timber, or be transformed by extractive industries into valuable commodities like petroleum or metal ores. These resources sustain local economies and, when managed sustainably, provide long-term benefits to the community. Technology, as Thoits (2016) explains, represents the application of scientific knowledge to achieve practical objectives and manipulate the environment to meet human needs. Technological advancements facilitate the systematic organization and enhancement of community assets, enabling the efficient distribution of resources, improving infrastructure, and supporting knowledge-sharing initiatives. Knowledge itself, whether implicit or explicit, underpins the acquisition and application of technology, and it is integral to the continuous improvement of community assets.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employed a cross-sectional, descriptive research design with a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach facilitated analysis of the relationship among variables, particularly in sampling, data collection, quality control, and data analysis (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The qualitative approach supplemented quantitative data with in-depth insights through individually interpreted information, enriching the overall analysis. The study focused on Kabaale Township in Buseruka Sub-County, Uganda, with a population of 2,802 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The sample size of 338 respondents was determined using

Krejcie's and Morgan's (1970) table. Simple random sampling selected 325 local residents, using a lottery method to ensure unbiased representation, while purposive sampling identified 13 key informants (political, civil, and religious leaders), allowing focused insight on specific community perspectives.

Data was collected through questionnaires, and interviews. Primary data collection relied on structured, closed-ended questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A panel of four experts validated the questionnaire's content, achieving a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.89, exceeding the 0.7 threshold (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A pilot study with 15 participants confirmed reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.792. Quantitative data was analyzed using Spearman's correlation and regression analysis to examine relationships and predict variations in the dependent variable. Thematic analysis of qualitative data provided structural and textural descriptions to capture participant experiences. The Asset-based approaches model by Foot (2018) framed the analysis, measured on a Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents: The total number of respondents who participated in the study was 338 respondents. These included the local people from the Township who were the primary respondents on which the study based its analysis and key informants who constituted officials in the area such the political leaders, civil servants, religious leaders, clan leaders, opinion leaders, organizations (NGOs and CBOs) officials and other relevant officials in the area.

Gender of Respondents: As shown in Table 4.1 below, the gender distribution varied among both the local community members and the key informants of the study. The key informants were predominantly male than female. One factor contributing to the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions in the country is due to the "second shift" syndrome that many women face, which involves balancing household and caregiving responsibilities. These additional demands on their time and energy often limit their ability to pursue or advance in leadership roles within the workplace (Thevißen, 2023; Marandola *et al.*, 2021).

Table 4.1: Gender of Respondents

Local Community Members	Frequency	Percent
Male	156	48
Female	169	52
Total	325	100
Key Informants	Frequency	Percent
Male	09	69.2
Female	04	30.8
Total	13	100

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Table 4.1 above shows that 156 (48%) of the local community members were males and 169 (52%) were females. This difference in gender ratio has no negative implication on the findings since the focus of the paper is obtaining perceptions shared across genders. Secondly, these primary respondents were randomly selected, and equal chances of participation to both males and females were given.

Education of Respondents: Table 4.2 below indicates that the majority of the local community members 102(31.4%) were certificate holders, diploma holders 72(22.2%), degree holders 63(19.4%) and 88(27%) constituted the other education levels. Key informants included 07(53.8%) with degree, 04(30.8%) with diploma and 02(15.4%) with a certificate. The education level of respondents has been considered significant in this study because it determines their level of understanding and acquaintance with the research topic.

Table 4.2: Education of Respondents

Education Level (Local Community Members)	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	102	31.4
Diploma	72	22.2
Degree	63	19.4
Others	88	27
Total	325	100
Education Level (Key Informants)	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	02	15.4
Diploma	04	30.8
Degree	07	53.8
Others	00	0
Total	13	100

Source: Primary Data, 2026

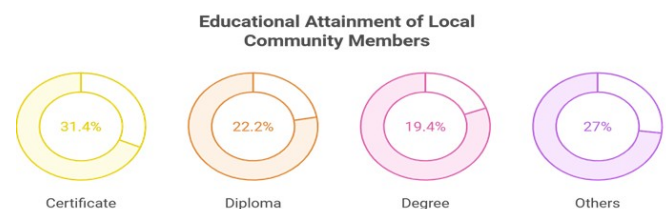


Diagram 1. Education Level (Local Community Members)

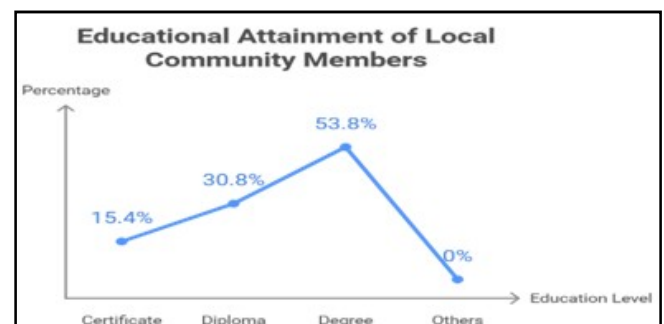


Diagram 2. Educational Level (Key Informants)

Age of Respondents: The age of the respondents was considered because the quality of data is influenced by experience and fairness. The results in Table 4.3 below show that the local community aged between 20-30 years were 103(31.7%), those aged between 30 and 40 years were 94(28.9%), 40 and 50 years were 72(22.2%) and those aged above 50 years were 56(17.2%). Key informants aged between 20 and 30 years were 2(15.4%), those aged 30 and 40 years were 5(38.5%), those aged 40 and 50 years were 4(30.7%) and those aged above 50 years 2 (15.4%). The table below indicates that the majority of the primary respondents were below 50 years of age, and therefore, in comparison to the total sample size, this constitutes 82.8% compared to the total percentage of respondents aged above 50 years summed up altogether (17.2%). The key informants equally displayed the same outlook, with many of them aged below 50 years. This is because Uganda is one of the most youthful countries in the world, and therefore it has more young people than the elderly people (UBOs, 2024; Daumerie & Madsen, 2010).

Table 4.3. Age of Respondents

Category	Age group (years)	Number	Percent
Local Community Members	20-30	103	31.7
	30-40	94	28.9
	40-50	72	22.2
	50+	56	17.2
Category	Age group (years)	Number	Percent
Key Informants	20-30	2	15.4
	30-40	5	38.5
	40-50	4	30.7
	50+	2	15.4

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Marital Status of Respondents: Table 4.4 below reveals that the greatest percentage of respondents (50.8% of the local community members and 69.2% of key informants) are married. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, all the study respondents based on the aforementioned age groups are considered adults and therefore, they are not prohibited from any form of marriage.

Table 4.4: Marital Status of Respondents

Category	Marital Status	Number	Percent
Local Community Members	Single	83	25.5
	Married	165	50.8
	Separated	44	13.5
	Widowed	33	10.2
Category	Marital Status	Number	Percent
Key Informants	Single	02	15.4
	Married	09	69.2
	Separated	01	7.7
	Widowed	01	7.7

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Period of Stay in the Area: This paper was interested in finding out how long the study respondents have been staying in the area. The findings in Table 4.5 revealed that the majority (66.1%) of the local community members have stayed in the community for at least 10 years. The same applies to the key informants (53.8%). This means that they had vital knowledge of the livelihoods in the community. Having lived there for long periods, they likely understand the dynamics and functioning(s) of the community.

Table 4.5. Period of Stay in the Area

Category	Period of stay in the area	Number	Percent
Local Community Members	Less than 5 years	38	11.7
	Between 5-9 years	72	22.2
	Above 10 years	215	66.1
Category	Period of stay in the area	Number	Percent
Key Informants	Less than 5 years	02	15.4
	Between 5-9 years	04	30.8
	Above 10 years	07	53.8

Source: Primary Data, 2026

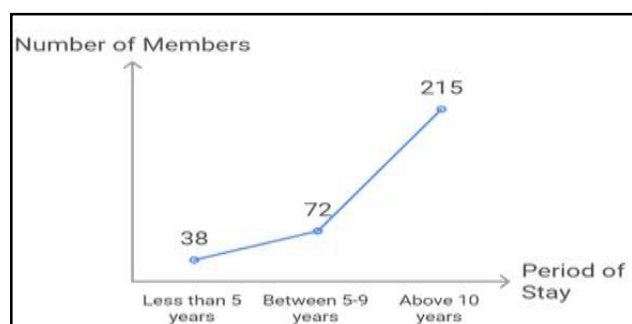


Diagram 3. Local Community Members

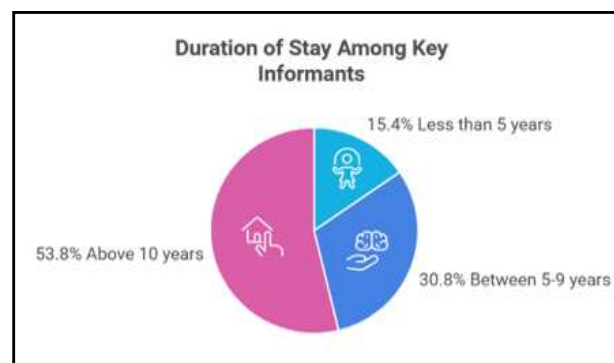


Diagram 4. Key Informants

The Relationship Between Asset-Based Approaches and Quality Community Livelihood: This section explores the relationship between asset-based approaches and quality community livelihood. Understanding this relationship is key to identifying the potential of asset-based strategies in enhancing community well-being. The analysis involved calculating Spearman's correlation coefficients to assess the strength of the association between asset-based approaches and quality community livelihood. A strong, positive correlation would indicate that communities implementing asset-based strategies may experience improvements in various livelihood aspects, thereby reinforcing the value of asset-based approaches in community development. Table 4.6 below presents the Spearman's correlation matrix for these variables, showing the extent to which Asset-Based Approaches are associated with Quality Community Livelihood.

Table 4.6. Spearman's correlation matrix for the study variables

Study Variables	Asset Based Approaches	Quality Community Livelihood
Asset Based Approaches	1.000	.833**
Quality Community Livelihood	.833**	1.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).; Source: Primary Data, 2026



Diagram 6. Quality Community Livelihood



The results in Table 4.6 above showed a significant positive very strong relationship between Asset-Based Approaches and Quality Community Livelihood ($r=0.833$, $P\text{-value}<0.01$).

Table 4.7. The Regression Model for Asset-Based Approaches and Quality Community Livelihood

Model		Coefficients ^a			T	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.018	1.991		2.521	.012
	Asset-Based Approaches	.704	.055	.488	12.784	<.001
Dependent Variable: Quality Community Livelihood						
R		.862				
R Square		.744				
Adjusted R Square		.741				
Std. Error of the Estimate		5.93205				
F Statistic		310.194				
Sig.		<.001				

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Table 4.8. Factor Analysis of Asset-Based Approaches

Variables	People	Natural Resources	Technology	Knowledge
I am involved in productive activities in the community.	.809			
I provide labour to the few organizations available in this area.	.695			
I have a better understanding of the livelihood activities in the community.	.803			
I have access to minerals such as oils accessible to the people		.642		
I have equal access to other natural resources that are accessible to the people.		.726		
I support the community's natural resources development.		.730		
I use computerization in the activities of the community			.867	
I use modern agricultural technology in farming			.718	
I use ICT for commodity marketing and general communication			.657	
I know asset management				.441
I have sufficient awareness of the means for survival				.786
I have an understanding of the community means of development				.707
Eigen Value	2.307	2.098	2.243	1.934
Variance %	76.907	69.917	74.751	64.465
Cumulative %	76.907	69.917	74.751	64.465

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Table 4.9. ANOVA Matrix for Asset-Based Approaches

Asset-Based Approaches		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	Between Groups	.010	1	.010	.000	.990
	Within Groups	21180.187	323	65.573		
	Total	21180.197	324			
Education	Between Groups	78.628	3	26.209	.399	.754
	Within Groups	21101.569	321	65.737		
	Total	21180.197	324			
Age	Between Groups	38.060	3	12.687	.193	.901
	Within Groups	21142.137	321	65.863		
	Total	21180.197	324			
Marital Status	Between Groups	10.596	3	3.532	.054	.984
	Within Groups	21169.601	321	65.949		
	Total	21180.197	324			
Period of Stay in the Area	Between Groups	9.763	2	4.881	.074	.928
	Within Groups	21170.434	322	65.747		
	Total	21180.197	324			

Source: Primary Data, 2026

This implies that Asset-Based Approaches in terms of people, natural resources, technology and knowledge lead to quality community livelihood. The qualitative results showed similar results as shown below.

One Local council official narrated that:

".... Many community members are now aware of their right to own, develop and sustain access and control over their God-given wealth such as natural resources, human talents and capabilities, and traditional and cultural values. This has greatly boosted the community members' participation in community projects geared towards community development."

One Religious leader added that:

".... Asset-based approaches contribute to a community's sense of pride and empowerment. Therefore, by choosing to frame Kabaale township community work using an asset-based approach, we will: Identify, affirm, and call upon the gifts, resources, skills, and knowledge that already exist in the community."

The Regression Analysis of Asset-Based Approaches and Quality Community Livelihood: The regression analysis was used to examine the level to which Asset-Based Approaches determine Quality Community Livelihood. The results in Table 4.7 were used to examine the degree to which Asset-Based Approaches can predict the dependent variable, Quality

Community Livelihoods. As Table 4.7 indicates, there is a strong, positive linear relationship between Asset-Based Approaches and Quality Community Livelihood ($r=.862$). This strong, positive linear relationship suggests that as Asset-Based Approaches increase, Quality Community Livelihood tends to improve as well, implying that the two variables are closely associated. Furthermore, the Adjusted R Square value of .741 means that Asset-Based Approaches as a predictor variable for Quality Community Livelihood can explain a significant majority of the changes in Quality Community Livelihood.

The Factor Analysis of Asset-Based Approaches: This section presents the results of the factor analysis conducted on Asset-Based Approaches. In this study, factor analysis was used to isolate and understand the core dimensions of Asset-Based Approaches that significantly influence community outcomes. By identifying these dimensions, we gain insights into which specific aspects of asset-based strategies are most impactful in promoting community livelihood improvements. Table 4.8 presents the results of the factor analysis, illustrating the primary components that define Asset-Based Approaches and highlighting their respective contributions to the overall approach.

Table 4.8 above shows the factor analysis results of Asset-Based Approaches variables, four factors were extracted, component one explains 76.907% of the variance of Asset-Based Approaches, the second component explains 69.917% of the variance of Asset-Based Approaches, the third component explains 74.751% of the variance of Asset-Based Approaches and the fourth component explains 64.465% of the variance of Asset-Based Approaches. People: People were the dominant component of the Asset-Based Approaches (76.907%) and were characterized by involvement in productive activities in the community (.809), providing labour to the few organizations available in this area (.695) and having a better understanding of the livelihood activities in the community (.803). Therefore 80.9% of the variance by the component was accounted for in involvement in productive activities in the community, 69.5% of the variance by the component was accounted for in providing labour to the few organizations available in this area and 80.3% of the variance by the component was accounted for in having a better understanding of the livelihood activities in the community.

Technology: This was the second dominant component of the Asset-Based Approaches (74.751%) and was characterized by the use of computerization in the activities of the community (.867) which had a high factor loading to the component, followed by the use of modern agricultural technology in farming (.718) and lastly, the use of ICT for commodity marketing and general communication (.657).

Natural Resources: This component accounts for a variance of 69.917% of Asset-Based Approaches and it was determined by having access to minerals such as oils accessible to the people (.642), having equal access to other natural resources that are accessible to the people (.726) and supporting the community natural resources development (.730).

Knowledge: This component accounts for a variance of 64.465% of Asset-Based Approaches and it was determined by knowing asset management (.441), having sufficient awareness of the means of survival (.786), and having an understanding of the community means of development (.707).

ANOVA Results for Asset-Based Approaches: Table 4.9 shows the ANOVA results of the demographic characteristics in terms of the Asset-Based Approaches. As Table 4.9 indicates, there is no significant difference between all given conditions with scores above 0.05 with regard to all the demographic characteristics, that is: gender of respondents, education, age, marital status, and period of stay in the area.

DISCUSSION

A significant positive very strong relationship was noted to occur between asset-based approaches and quality community livelihood ($r=0.833$, $P\text{-value}<0.01$). This implies that asset-based approaches in terms of people, natural resources, technology and knowledge leads to quality community livelihood. The findings agreed that indeed Quality community livelihood is greatly associated with emphasis on asset-based approaches. The results are in agreement with the studies by Cassetti *et al.* (2020), Garven, McLean & McNeice (2017), Garven, McLean & Pattoni (2016), and Carter (2007). Peoples 'involvement in productive activities will enhance their livelihood. Rural households with a source of income or income-earning activity have better chances of survival financially than a household which has no source of any income or no income-earning activity. Having a better understanding of the livelihood activities in the community will enable the people to easily take on the available initiatives to improve the quality of their lives. The key informants involved agreed that possessing knowledge of the existing livelihood activities in the area will trigger someone to try to have access to those activities in the hopes of taking them on to build themselves. Kabaale Township, Buseruka sub-county, Hoima district is endowed with natural resources, such as oil, land, air, sunlight, water among other natural resources. Once these are accessible by the people and utilized without any hinderances, they boost the livelihoods of the people. The use of modern technologies can contribute to better access to information, markets, prices and can boost production. The fact that majority of the rural households in Uganda are engaged in agriculture, including the people in Kabaale township, technology uptake in their agricultural activities can increase production and thus quality of their livelihood enhanced. Investment in livelihood assets normally helps to build resilience from different livelihood shocks, however the management of assets and livelihood activities pursued is important to ensure quality community livelihood.

CONCLUSION

Asset-based approaches positively impact community livelihoods. Asset-based approaches to Quality Community Livelihood have become increasingly popular as a way to tackle education problems, health inequalities, water and sanitation problems, assets issues, savings and safety nets issues by empowering people in more disadvantaged communities to use local resources and increase control over them. The approach brings needed focus on how different resources contribute to quality community livelihood. As it is about how communities engage in the important work related to their livelihood, this approach holds great potential in revolutionizing the way in which community members define their roles as contributors to their own and the community's development, and in effecting sustainable changes in the contexts where community members aspire to make contributions.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that:

- Community leadership adopts the approach because it builds on the strengths, gifts, talents and resources of individuals to create strong, inclusive and sustainable communities.
- Community members first consider community work before thinking about what is missing and what is needed.
- Community members focus mostly on the problems instead of putting their time and effort into identifying and mobilizing assets and using them to address the community's issues. This will make community members see their problems as not challenging ones.
- Focus on social change. Asset-based approaches are about change for the better as defined by the community itself.
- Focus on local communities. An Asset-based approach is a place-based approach focusing on the assets of an identified geographic area, a place resident describes as 'home'.

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