

GUM FOR PEACE: UNCOVERING SOLUTIONS FOR NATURAL RESOURCE BASED CONFLICTS

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Sector: Agriculture (non timber forest products)

CHALLENGE

Could community based natural resource development and economic activities be tools for enhancing peaceful co-existence for notoriously conflicting pastoral communities? This is the question that our client, Galcholo Community Based Rehabilitation, attempted to answer through an innovative project – **Gum for Peace**.

The Kimatong community neighbours three fierce warrior communities, the Toposa, Murle and Lopit. All four tribes live in a vast savannah area with a thick cover of Acacia Senegal and Acacia Sahel. The four tribes experience widespread conflicts resulting from cattle rustling and even theft of children. Over the years, Galcholo Community Based Rehabilitation, a local community based organisation has convened a number of community meetings, conferences, and workshops to initiate peaceful dialogue among these tribes. Yet all these efforts have yielded very little results. Galcholo realised that there is a natural resource dimension to these community conflicts.

Acacia Senegal and Sahel trees contain natural gum (Gum Acacia) which is of great industrial importance in the developed world (Europe and USA). Gum Acacia is the dried exudates produced from the trunk and branches of Acacia trees¹. It has food, pharmaceutical and industrial applications. Its largest use however, is as an emulsifier in soft drinks and in the confectionery industries. Sudan is the world's largest producer of Gum Acacia, one of its four important agricultural export commodities along with sesame, livestock and cotton.

CLIENTS

Galcholo Community Based Rehabilitation is a local community based organisation in Southern Sudan. Galcholo set out to find an innovative way in which this natural resource could provide a possible solution to the persistent conflict between the tribes. Galcholo sought support from SNV to assist them develop an economic activity that would enable the communities earn incomes from the Gum Acacia and at the same time increase interaction and collaboration between them.

METHOD / SNV INTERVENTION

What did SNV Do?

1. SNV and Galcholo undertook a **Natural Resource Assessment** to ascertain the economic quantities. In addition, SNV worked with Galcholo and the Department of Forestry to assess the occurrence and spread of the Acacia trees to determine whether it were feasible to commercially exploit the Gum Acacia. This study has been used widely to inform policy formulation for the Gum Acacia sector.
2. SNV supported Galcholo to **understand the trade dynamics** between the Kimatong community and the other neighbouring communities. This



A close-up look at Gum

¹ Gum from Acacia Senegal trees is known as hashab gum, Talha is the gum from the Acacia sahel tree.

information revealed that the tribes never attacked each other at market centres and that there was brisk barter trade going on amongst them. Jointly SNV and Galcholo developed the concept of Gum for Peace in which Galcholo would promote exploitation of Gum Acacia and encourage the tribes to use it in exchange for the goods they need.

3. SNV organised a **community training** on how to harvest, dry and store Gum Acacia. This training enabled over 80 community members to understand and learn the techniques of sustainable harvesting and grading and storage of gum.
4. SNV **invited an international buyer of gum** to visit the Kimatong community and to buy the harvested product. This was the first time in which money had been used to pay for any commodity from the community. Through this linkage, Galcholo has maintained a commercial relationship with an exporter and this has become one of the major marketing channels for gum produced in Kimatong area.
5. SNV **linked Galcholo to the Karamoja Cluster Network for Peace and Development and the international development organisation PACT.** Through the Karamoja network, Galcholo is learning different approaches to peace building and conflict mitigation. The knowledge has been useful in helping Galcholo address potential triggers of conflict, as well as to create activities that enhance collaboration between communities. PACT provided financial resources to enable Galcholo to scale up the Gum for Peace project.
6. SNV worked with Galcholo to **establish a cooperative shop.** The community members bring the gum they have collected to the shop, where they are paid in cash or they get other commodities in exchange. Members from other communities also sell gum to the cooperative. Galcholo has further established selling centres in different areas to enable members of other communities to sell gum.

SNV added value



*Closer look at gum acacia:
Government officials conducting
an assessment*

SNV has worked consistently with Galcholo Community Based Rehabilitation to build institutional capacity of the organisation. Galcholo is now recognised by donors as an important actor and partner. We did this through providing advice, direct training on financial management skills, exposure to important meetings/workshops that relate to Gum Acacia marketing in Southern Sudan. We have been their partner in all proposals they submit for funding, and in many cases we have given them reference. Our work with Galcholo has raised their profile considerably.

SNV knows and understands the gum value chain - where gum markets are and the market requirements. We facilitated face to face discussion between the international gum buyers and Galcholo management. This market facilitation has been critical to the success of the intervention.

SNV's rich networking ability coupled with our active participation in multi-stakeholder processes enabled Galcholo Community Based Rehabilitation access funds from the Karamoja Cluster Network and PACT. These funds have enhanced the capacity of Galcholo and enabled them to purchase gum more consistently from the community.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Gum Acacia was previously unknown as a commercial product. Through this initiative, interest has been generated about Gum Acacia among the Kimatong community. More than 400 people are now involved in the harvesting and selling of gum.
- Internal capacity of Galcholo to plan and coordinate development activities has been enhanced. This has enabled increased flow of funds and grants to Galcholo for implementation of projects. A more effective organisation will enable community members to access services.
- However the most important outcome so far is that the communities around Kimatong have found a common reason for peaceful interaction. Over the last two years, no major conflict has occurred in the area where the communities harvest gum. There are more trade activities between the tribes and interaction between youth from different tribes has increased. This has improved overall security for the community in general.

A wealth of ideas exist among our clients, we need to develop ways of applying appreciative enquiry to bring such ideas to light for implementation. Only ideas that are close to the heart of our clients, where they put their enthusiasm and can relate to the outcomes in their unique circumstances, will be truly successful. The gum for peace project is not only an economic activity, but also an activity to promote peace and security. Our efforts as a development agency should be focused on building confidence and providing support required for local organisations to act on their problems.