



POVERTY GRADUATION PROGRAMMING IN AFRICA



TEN KEY LESSONS LEARNED IN 2023

1. Innovation in adapting targeting approaches is required to better address contextual needs.
2. Early-stage technical support and business development advisory are impactful.
3. Gender, youth and social dynamics are a must consideration for success.
4. Developing mitigation strategies towards migration and relocation among pastoral and refugee communities is paramount.
5. Building partnerships in implementation contributes to system strengthening and win-win benefits to graduation programming.
6. Youth graduation programming calls for innovative savings business solutions and approaches.
7. Capacity strengthening in technology and system integration a requisite in Government-led economic inclusion social protection programmes.
8. Mentorship and coaching that transcends business transactions amplifies success.
9. Shock preparedness in savings is core to building resilience in ASAL communities.
10. Multiple and diversified businesses are essential to sustained business growth in the ASALs.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

1. Innovating and adapting targeting tools and approaches to address contextual needs.

Innovating targeting approaches to meet contextual needs leads to selecting the need-to-fit target participants and leveraging the process to meet broader community needs. For instance, in addressing the challenges of youth joining extremist groups, BOMA adapted the targeting tools to encompass participatory vulnerability ranking (PVR) to identify the most vulnerable youths. We learned that to scale peer-to-peer mentorship among youths, we needed to target a proportion of skilled vulnerable youths to be catalysts and contribute to skill transfers.

2. Early start in technical and business development advisory impactful

BOMA delivers entrepreneurship training, and mentorship modules at both the savings group and business group level. We learned that by offering specialized technical support and advisory for skilled businesses earlier in the process- before business selection, the participants increased the likelihood of making informed decisions and built confidence to venture into non-common businesses registering faster turn-around business gains. As a best practice, engaging local subject matter experts helps in knowledge sharing and strengthening local information networks.

3. Gender, youth and social dynamics are a must consideration for success.

A majority of BOMA's program participants are poor and vulnerable women from largely patriarchal societies. By engaging community leaders and household-buy in strategies, the women are supported to manage thriving 3-member business groups. We learned that in a program with both young men and women, consideration for gender dynamics and social norms is key. For instance, issues regarding mixed-gender business groups, trust, and saving cultures are key factors to success. Our work with communities in diverse religious and ethnic affiliations has generated lessons that consider intersectional social dynamics in the design and implementation of the REAP programming, including a commitment to recruit local field staff.

4. Approaches to mitigating migration and relocation impacts in pastoral and refugee communities are essential.

Pastoral communities in African Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASALs) are characterized by temporary and sometimes, permanent migration in search of water and grazing lands. Droughts exacerbate migratory patterns among pastoral communities. Repatriation and relocation are equally common in refugee communities. As a best practice, hiring and working with mentors in the location where BOMA operates has engineered locally innovative solutions in addressing migration, ensuring continued mentorship and coaching. Working with regulatory bodies to identify and mitigate the impacts of repatriation and relocation among refugee communities has contributed to better participant targeting.



LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

5. Building partnerships for implementation helps in system strengthening and win-win benefits to graduation programming.

BOMA applies cost-effective approaches that aim to address livelihood opportunities, improved nutrition, and climate resilience. As a best practice, building lasting partnerships helps in the provision of complementary services and strengthening community systems. For instance, working with community health promoters (CHPs) and government agricultural extension services to strengthen health, nutrition, and agricultural advisory. Partnerships with the county government leadership in embedding climate policies and forest conservation strategies are beneficial for climate resilience.

6. Youth graduation programming calls for innovative savings solutions and business approaches.

BOMA's REAP for Youth flagship product targeted at vulnerable male and female youth, offers opportunities to integrate innovative and exciting approaches in graduation programming. We learned that the youths are attracted to faster turn-around investments and shorter loan repayment schedules offering diverse product options. From the lesson learned, BOMA has integrated a hybrid saving and loan approach, including low-cost banks and VSLAs.

7. Technology and system integration requisite in government adoption of poverty graduation

BOMA's role in providing technical assistance to the Government of Kenya to implement an economic inclusion program drew lessons and best practices. A key lesson is that effective technological adoption and integration of government safety net programs yields returns in economic inclusion programming positive impact. A best practice is harmonizing government systems across the cash transfer departments to help in efficient and effective identification, targeting, and continuous monitoring of eligible participants.

8. Mentorship and coaching that transcends business transactions amplifies success.

Effective mentorship and coaching of the 3-members' business groups is the key ingredient to the sustained success of poverty graduation programming. As a best practice, BOMA trains locally recruited mentors on entrepreneurial and business skills training, life skills, conflict management, and personal development. Mentors are equipped to handle other issues beyond entrepreneurial and business issues, for instance, referrals of gender-based violence and managing group conflicts. Mentors have established trusted relationships with the participants and offer holistic mentorship and guidance.

9. Shock preparedness in savings is key to building resilience in ASAL communities.

BOMA has integrated shock preparedness strategies as one of the indicators in measuring poverty graduation, shocks relating to climate and weather conditions, sickness, death, and other unforeseen stressors. A key lesson learned is that while savings structures are key to mitigating possible shocks, utilization of savings to further build resilience beyond consumption is integral in poverty graduation and in mitigating shocks. For instance, investment in business expansion, health, and furthering children's education.

10. Multiple and diversified businesses are essential to sustained business growth in the ASALs.

Livestock remains a major business opportunity for pastoral communities in Africa's ASALs. However, recurrent droughts have led to losses from livestock deaths. As a best practice, BOMA encourages and coaches participants to initiate secondary businesses to both mitigate risks from adverse climatic conditions and expand their profitability margins. Business diversification strategies are explored early in the program for better planning and adoption.



In Summary

In implementing poverty graduation programming in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) of Africa, key reflections and lessons learned include the **importance of innovating and adapting targeting tools to address contextual needs**, such as using participatory vulnerability ranking to identify vulnerable youths facing challenges like joining extremist groups. **Early engagement in technical and business development advisory is impactful**, especially when providing specialized support for skilled businesses. **Consideration of gender, youth, and social dynamics is crucial for success**, with a focus on community leaders and household-buy in strategies. **Mitigating migration and relocation impacts in pastoral and refugee communities is essential**, involving local mentors and collaboration with regulatory bodies. **Building partnerships for implementation strengthens systems and provides win-win benefits**. **Innovative savings solutions and business approaches are vital in youth graduation programming**. **Technology and system integration are requisite for government adoption of poverty graduation**, emphasizing harmonizing systems for efficiency. **Mentorship and coaching that transcends business transactions contribute to sustained success**, and **shock preparedness in savings is key for building resilience**. Lastly, **encouraging multiple and diversified businesses is essential for sustained business growth in ASALs**, particularly in the face of climatic uncertainties affecting primary livelihoods like livestock.

OUR IMPACT

OUR IMPACT SINCE 2009



155,217

PARTICIPANTS
ENROLLED



44,559

BUSINESSES
LAUNCHED



6,461+

SAVINGS GROUPS
ESTABLISHED



571,635

DEPENDENTS



804,612

TOTAL PEOPLE
REACHED TO DATE



ABOUT

This newsletter shares BOMA's key learning and reflections in 2023. The lessons learned and best practices are a synthesis of data and insights generated from periodic pause and reflections, in-depth assessment of BOMA's routinely collected data, and qualitative inquiries. Lessons learned and best practices are integral in building BOMA's program design and adaptive management. We share ten key reflections from lessons learned implementing poverty graduation programming in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) of Africa.