Independent Evaluation of GOAL's Capacity Building to PALM and PACHEDO

About Thuso

Thuso is a strategic consultancy operating in the humanitarian, development, health and nutrition, and education sectors, comprising an expert team of consultants and specialists with project experience throughout the world, including substantial experience in Sub-Saharan Africa, and for GOAL. Thuso prides itself on its strong track record of delivery for its clients, regardless of the operational and security challenges.

Team Profiles

Charles Edward Schulze

Team Leader

Charles is a specialist in strategic consultancy with an applied understanding of humanitarian response programming and operations. With over a decade of experience in the humanitarian and development sectors, Charles has a proven track record of leading successful DAC OECD evaluations from design through to deliverables, including on nutrition-oriented programming, capacity assessments and organisational capacity building, as well as for GOAL specifically. Building on his multidisciplinary background in education, health and applied research, Charles has outstanding analytical capacities and a demonstrated capacity to work collaboratively with multiple stakeholders to achieve excellent results.

Team Profiles

Matthew Goldie-Scot

Senior Consultant and
Capacity Building Expert

Matthew is an educational practitioner, researcher, consultant, and trainer, with experience in a wide range of international contexts. He has participated in, and managed, projects in East Africa, southern Africa, West Africa, the Horn of Africa (Somaliland), the Indian subcontinent, the Russian Federation, Central Asia, continental Europe, the United Kingdom, the Far East, and the Middle East. Born in Lesotho, and raised in Kenya and Uganda, he has spent much of his life living and working on the African continent. Matthew has extensive experience of building organisational capacity through mentoring, support and targeted training, across multiple stakeholders, including civil society, public and private organisations.

Team Profiles

Nina Schoonman

Project Consultant

Nina is a Project Consultant with Thuso. Formally trained in qualitative and qualitative methods at the University of Oxford, she has practical research experience across the biological and social sciences. With experience spanning Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Central Asia regions, Nina has worked extensively on community development and sustainability programming, including on health and nutrition-oriented projects, as well as capacity building. She has worked collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders – from Ministry officials to CSOs and NGOs.

Context

The Eleanor Crook Foundation implemented the Uganda Grassroots Nutrition (UGN) grant program between 2017 and 2020. The program focused on building the capacity of local CSOs implementing nutrition-focused projects to improve their engagement, programming potential and quality and governance. The selected CSOs were **PALM Corps** (Moyo) and **PACHEDO** (Amuru). Over the course of the project, GOAL was commissioned to build the capacity of the two ECF grantees to adaptively manage grants to achieve their project objectives, with the overall Goal to:

> *Contribute to improved nutritional status of children under two years and Improve Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition*

GOAL's Objectives

⇨ Provide mentoring, support and targeted training as per Organizational Capacity Development Plans;

⇨ Support Grantees to submit high quality and detailed final reports and verification documents to ECF;

⇨ Convene ECF and grantees, and a wider network of nutrition advocates in Uganda to share learning, hear recommendations and identify best practice in relation to:

   a. Community-based approaches focused on extending the reach of basic nutrition services to some of the most marginalized communities; and

   b. Strategies to building capacity for NGOs/CSOs in Uganda.

GOAL's Capacity Building Support

⇨ GOAL tailored its capacity building to grantee needs, based on OCAs conducted in 2019. Based on the priority short-term gaps identified, GOAL provided:

- Regular mentoring and on-the-job training: monthly monitoring visits, weekly Skype/phone calls;
- Short-term trainings by external consultants facilitated by GOAL on **Nutrition Strategy, Board Roles and Responsibilities, Finance Management**, and **KOBO training;**
- Review and support to develop operational policies, protocols and manuals;
- Review and support to submit timely, quality donor reports; and
- Quarterly learning and review meetings.

⇨ GOAL also commissioned a short study (Barrier Analysis) on underlying drivers and contributors to malnutrition to inform adaptive management

⇨ Hosting this final learning event to bring together ECF and grantees, and a wider network of nutrition advocates in Uganda to share learning, hear recommendations and identify best practice

GOAL

Purpose of this Engagement

? Evaluate the success and sustainable impact of ECF's (GOAL's) grantee capacity building approach, looking at both organizational capacity in relation to governance and management, as well as operational approaches and thematic technical expertise.

? Assess the success and sustainable impact of the grantees' interventions measured against each grantee's results framework and overarching project goals.

? Guide and improve future programming by GOAL, ECF and UGN grantees through lessons learned and best practices.

Research Questions

Effectiveness

- To what extent did the interventions of GOAL, PALM and PACHEDO achieve their objectives and meet their results and targets?

- Were the monitoring mechanisms effective in providing timely data to inform programming decisions?

Impact

- To what extent did the interventions of GOAL, PALM and PACHEDO achieve the intended outcome and impact?

- What was the performance against the stated indicators?

- Are there any ill effects or unplanned impacts (whether positive or negative) as a result of the interventions?

Efficiency

- Were adequate human and financial resources applied to delivering planned outcomes?

- Were outputs delivered in a timely fashion?

- Was technology deployed to improve efficiency?

Sustainability

- To what extent are the net benefits of the interventions of GOAL, PALM and PACHEDO likely to continue?

- Is an exit strategy developed to ensure sustainability?

- Is the intervention of GOAL, PALM and PACHEDO replicable/scalable?

Relevance

- To what extent did the objectives and design of the interventions of GOAL, PALM and PACHEDO respond to beneficiaries, country, and other partners' needs, policies and priorities?

- Did the interventions of PALM and PACHEDO effectively reach the most vulnerable households?

- Did they address their priority needs?

Methods and Sample Overview

A household survey and anthropometrics were conducted across 10 villages in the target communities. Focus Group Discussion with community members and community-based volunteers served to elicit qualitative insights, which were triangulated with the findings from the quantitative tools. In addition, key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were held with government stakeholders and local leaders.

KIIs were also conducted with stakeholders from both PALM Corps and PACHEDO, as well as GOAL and ECF. These were designed to gather rich data on grantees' projects, as well as capacity building by ECF and GOAL.

A dedicated organisational capacity assessment, designed to replicate the baseline assessment, was conducted with both grantees to provide a structured comparison of capacity change. Findings were triangulated with other tools, and verified using KIIs.

	Target	Achieved
Household Survey	800 HH	962 HH (c. 5,772 Ind.)
Anthropometrics	400 CU2	514 CU2
Community Members	50 Ind.	223 Ind.
Community-based Volunteers	10 Ind.	90 Ind.
Government and local leaders	5-10 Ind.	10 Ind.
Client and Implementing Organizations	10 Ind.	15 Ind.* (+5 scheduled)
OCAT	20 Ind.	13 Ind.*
Total		**6637*** (1,827 direct)

*ongoing

Findings

Limitations of data

⚠️ Stakeholder recall or knowledge

⚠️ Complex project milieu (shifting support, multiple locations)

⚠️ Self-reported data (especially for OCATs); findings diverge from external sources

⚠️ Constrained timelines and resources

⚠️ Client staff time and availability

⚠️ Challenging and complex subjects of investigation

⚠️ Absence of baseline data

⚠️ General limitations of social research

Status Update: OCA of PALM Corps

McKinsey OCAT (2.0) was used to quantify current organizational capacity at endline, using **self-scored metrics**, across seven key areas of organizational capacity:

		Description
1		Clear need for increased capacity
2		Basic level of capacity in place
3		Moderate level of capacity in place
4		High level of capacity in place

Area	Score	Comment
Aspirations	**3**	*'The organization has a mission to improve the quality of life of the poorest and most vulnerable communities through innovative, sustainable, evidence-based and people-centered programmes. This is upheld by majority of the staff who innovatively implement activities to achieve the mission'*, although some staff were unclear about the Aspirations.
Strategy	**3**	*'There are clear performance targets set by each project that the organization implements.'*
Organizational Skills	**3**	Regarding strategic planning; there has been *'Good improvement registered over the 3 years- need to establish semi-autonomous system for field officers (Moyo and Adjumani) to handle transactions and reporting in time.'* There has been an 'excellent success rate in proposals'.
HR, Diversity and Inclusion	**3**	'No staff vacancy and low turnover' but 'retention of staff remains a priority'. Field-level staff need to be more integrated in M&E, finance and operational management. Both the BoD and ED were highly praised.
Systems and Infrastructure	**2**	Technological infrastructure was adequate e.g., 'PALM Corps has electronic reporting system for field activities, and a complete data back up system on Microsoft One Drive cloud & G-Suite', however physical infrastructure could be improved.
Organizational Structure	**3**	'Responsibilities of every staff is clearly spelt out in their appointments letters and is a basis of appraisal', but not all organizational entities are clearly defined, or formalized. Nonetheless, Inter-functional coordination was reportedly evidenced by the fact that there are currently 9 projects implemented in different locations.
Culture	**3**	A common set of basic beliefs exists in some groups within the organization, but these could be shared more broadly and even better aligned with organizational purpose.

Source: OCA

Progress Relative to Baseline

Baseline	Area of GOAL Support	Endline (Outcome)
No Nutrition Program Strategy in place.	Nutrition Strategy Development	Nutrition strategy developed, informed through learnings of IACM, Barrier Analysis, and technical expertise. Malnutrition management training provided.
Fully constituted Board, but need for governance training, and orientation on fiducial and oversight roles. No Board Charter.	Board Roles and Responsibilities	Board Charter, Performance Indicators in place. Board is more engaged.
No resource mobilisation strategy or business plan. High dependence on external donations; any termination in funding would adversely impact operations. Limited, paper-based budgeting systems.	Finance Management (Quickbooks)	There is a system in place for the digital management of finances with staff are trained to use it (although based on a one-user package). Internal audits revealed some minor inconsistencies. Funding portfolio still donor-based, but has expended and become more diversified, with reported growth in 'PALM Business Consult'.
No M&E framework, and no operational central data depository (cloud system). Staff not trained on M&E.	M&E (Kobo)	M&E system instituted and staff trained on its use, although M&E , reporting and data/information storage could be strengthened further.
Donor reports were commonly 'very long and very late'	Donor Reporting	Quality of reports appears to have improved through GOAL review, and external deadlines met.

Strengths and Capacity Gaps

Strengths	Capacity Gaps
The organization's mission is upheld by the majority of staff, and the vision was referenced at work.	Several staff reported that there is a 'need to include in staff induction'. No metrics or time frame for measuring high-level goals.
Core programs and services are well-defined, and a coherent strategy has been developed and is linked to mission and vision, but is not fully ready to be acted upon. Top management drives benchmarking, and adaptive management.	PR and marketing is largely ad-hoc, although networking is effective.
Effectively built and leveraged some key relationships with relevant parties (for profit, public and non-profit sector entities). Involved with policymaking.	Despite the implementation of the Care Group model and local structures; local community presence, whilst regarded as positive, could be strengthened further.
Online Kobo-based M&E system developed for all projects; indicators tracked quarterly. Smart-phone based field reporting instituted.	M&E could be strengthened, especially, performance management in terms of data-driven social impact measurement. Knowledge management could be made more user friendly and comprehensive to encourage systems usage.
Funding nearly doubled over UGN project implementation period; PALM has developed some sustinable revenue-generating activity (WFP, EU, OXFAM, BMZ, ADA)	Some internal revenue generation activities, however financial net contribution is marginal; revenue generation activities may tie up senior management team.
Almost all positions are staffed, covering a range of experience and expertise. BoD provides direction, support and accountability. Executive leadership is very strong.	Some basic elements of incentive system in place, but turnover remains a challenge. Organization would continue to exist without ED, but likely in a very different form.
Technological infrastructure is well-equipped at the central level, with the satisfactory use of IT infrastucture by staff.	Technological infrastructure is adequate but may not be easily accessible to frontline deliverers. Coverage of electronic databases and management reporting systems is not yet complete. Website exists but maintenance could be more frequent. Physical infrastructure could be improved.

Status Update: OCA of PACHEDO

McKinsey OCAT (2.0) was used to quantify current organizational capacity at endline, using **self-scored metrics**, across seven key areas of organizational capacity:

1	Clear need for increased capacity
2	Basic level of capacity in place
3	Moderate level of capacity in place
4	High level of capacity in place

Aspirations	**4**	'The organization vision and mission advocates for meeting the needs of the most vulnerable categories of the communities it serves, and values are clearly displayed on walls of the offices to remind every staff of what PACHEDO is about'
Strategy	**3**	The five-year Strategy is in place but still under review'
Organizational Skills	**3**	'PACHEDO has a developing performance measurement and progress tracker', 'an experienced MEAL coordinator' and 'budget trackers are now used by finance teams across the organization' , although there is a 'need to develop the staff capacity and attract the high level and competent staffs'
HR, Diversity and Inclusion	**3**	Most critical positions are filled, and there is a 'strong HR department', but turnover remains an issue. The 'new BoD is constituted with highly experienced and diverse representation' and there is strong executive leadership.
Systems and Infrastructure	**3**	'PACHEDO has [an] improved data management and reporting system', but reporting and recordkeeping could be strengthened.
Organizational Structure	**3**	'Positions are clear and reporting lines are well-defined'.
Culture	**3**	'PACHEDO has shared beliefs among the staff, strengthened by the organizational policies'

Average Integer Score across the Organization, out of 4. Source: OCA

Progress Relative to Baseline

Baseline	Area of GOAL Support	Endline (Outcome)
No Nutrition Strategy Program in place.	Nutrition Strategy Development	Nutrition strategy developed, informed through learnings of ANIP, Barrier Analysis, and technical expertise.
Fully constituted and qualified Board, but limited engagement due to budgetary constraints to undertake oversight through board meetings to review performance. No Board Charter.	Board Roles and Responsibilities	Board Charter and Performance Indicators in place. Some field visits have been conducted and the Board meets regularly. Board of Directors reconstituted in 2019.
No resource mobilisation strategy or business plan. High dependence on external donations; any termination in funding would adversely impact operations. Limited, paper-based budgeting systems.	Finance Management (Quickbooks)	There is a system in place for the digital management of finances, but Internal Audit revealed several issues that require addressing. Remains dependent on donor funding.
No integrated M&E and reporting system, with tools that were not user-friendly or accessible to staff. System was Excel –based.	M&E (Kobo)	M&E system instituted and staff trained on its use, although M&E , reporting and data/information storage could be further strengthened.
Donor reports were commonly 'very long and very late'	Donor Reporting	Quality of reports appears to have improved through GOAL review. External deadlines met.

Strengths and Capacity Gaps

Strengths	Capacity gaps
Program relevance, integration, growth and replication all scored highly; strategic planning was deemed good	New program development could be strengthened to better assess and act on gaps
Committed staff drawn from diverse backgrounds, bringing a wide range of skills. Volunteers judged to be extremely capable.	Most critical positions staffed, but HR Plan not completely aligned to strategic planning activities
New funding opportunities leveraged	Fundraising and internal accounting could be improved further.
Sound partnerships and alliances development and nurturing: 'PACHEDO has a good knowledge of the players and alternative models in program areas … thus attracting partnerships'	Despite the implementation of the Care Group model and local structures; local community presence, whilst generally regarded as positive, was only somewhat recognized, and influence on policymaking remains limited.
Strong leadership by the ED. Performance was seen as a shared value and criterion for recruitment	Regular BoD assessment of performance, conflicts of interest, auditors, or IRS and state filings could strengthen PACHEDO; currently there is a high reliance on ED.
New M&E Coordinator recruited to manage digitized Kobo system	Timely monitoring and reporting could be strengthened.
Technological infrastructure improvements installed e.g. Quickbooks	Physical infrastructure could be improved, and telephone facilities are not easily accessible to frontline deliverers

Evaluation of GOAL's programming

Relevance: GOAL's support was informed by the baseline capacity assessment and priority needs were identified through a participatory process of stakeholder consultation with the grantees.

Efficiency: Human and financial resources appear to have been adequate. GOAL leveraged internal capacity and systems to support the grantees, and built on GOAL's existing strengths, which is likely to have supported efficiency. Remote support is likely to have contributed to improved efficiency. However, some of the short-term trainings were outsourced to external consultants, which may have reduced budgetary efficiency. Most Outputs were delivered in a timely fashion, and delays appear to have been caused by external factors (e.g. handovers, COVID-19)

Effectiveness: GOAL delivered all Outputs set out in their proposal. Implementing a portfolio of capacity building measures is likely to have contributed to the effectiveness of the approach.

Impact: Qualitative assessments indicate that organizational capacity has improved (although quantitative measurements are lacking), particularly through the digitization of M&E and accounting systems, as well as within the Board of Directors. Both grantees developed a Nutrition Strategy, which GOAL supported through the Barrier Analysis and subsequent technical support.

Sustainability: The absence of the a detailed Exit Strategy, coupled with shifting support and constrained timelines, may have left insufficient time to consolidate learnings, as expressed by stakeholders from both grantees.

Contribution of GOAL's Programming:
A Qualitative Assessment of Impact

⇨ Starting a Ripple Effect: GOAL trained 20 grantee staff on Barrier Analysis methodology. PALM applied this to assess barriers to girls' education amongst refugees in Rhino Camp and host communities in Arua.

⇨ Increased visibility to international actors: PALM has partnered with WFP, UNHCR, and the Austrian Development Agency. PACHEDO has partnered with Care International and Johaniter International, amongst others.

⇨ Nutrition Strategy improved: 'key staffs were able to participated and draft the organization's Nutrition Strategy and … conduct mini surveys to re-examine implementation'.

⇨ Digitization of MEAL (Kobo) has built 'capacity to develop and implement robust results-based M&E systems'.

⇨ BoD following set roles and responsibilities; PACHEDO has a newly constituted BoD.

⇨ Finance and Internal Audits – Quick books – has facilitated financial accountability, although gaps remain.

⇨ **PACHEDO saw** *'Improvement in almost all managerial areas and implementation', and staff 'now see things are being done correctly as required with well laid procedures followed',* **however,** *'PACHEDO still need support in terms of capacity building and resource mobilization', as well as managing community presence, HR, finance, and M&E.*

⇨ **PALM has continued with** *'professionalizing user departments, functionalizing the board, [and] professionalizing processes and systems', but M&E, revenue generation and HR management could be further strengthened.*

Identification of Challenges in GOAL's Capacity Building

⇨ No quick or easy fixes

⇨ Constrained timelines, exacerbated by COVID-19

⇨ Monitoring mechanisms for timely data to inform programming decisions may require strengthening

⇨ Exit Strategy may require more systematic, early consideration: good practices, but lack of clarity on continuity and continued reliance on external support

⇨ Donor dependence remains an issue for both grantees

⇨ Budget sufficient, but could have been allocated more efficiently and effectively

⇨ Potential misalignment of expectations with regard to role and remit between parties, particularly with regard to project outcomes

⇨ Communication challenges – need for greater responsiveness

Identification of Strengths in GOAL's Capacity Building

➩ Good Practice approach to capacity building; portfolio of complementary measures targeting specific gaps, tailored 'on the job' mentorship

➩ Quarterly review meetings; good learning forum and accountability mechanism

➩ Created opportunities for shared learning across grantee project portfolios and diffusion to associated organisations

➩ Targeted trainings addressed priority, cross-cutting needs

➩ Adaptive management – responsive to changing needs and demonstrated willingness to provide flexible support

➩ 'On the ground' immersion supported the 'hands on' provision of support, but was not without its complications with regard to communication and internal process management.

Recommendations

⇨ Factor in capacity gaps and needs into planning from the outset

⇨ Further leverage in-house capacity for the provision of training to improve efficiency

⇨ Improve monitoring for adaptive management; OCATs were to be conducted regularly, but scores appear to be unavailable, making it difficult to quantify progress.

⇨ Integrated sustainability considerations from the outset by developing a proactive Exit Strategy

⇨ Baseline data should be the cornerstone of future interventions, to allow for measurement of impact and adaptive management

⇨ Grantees to prioritize continued capacity building, particularly for M&E (data/information storage and reporting), financial management, and HR management for sustainable retention and impact

Any questions?
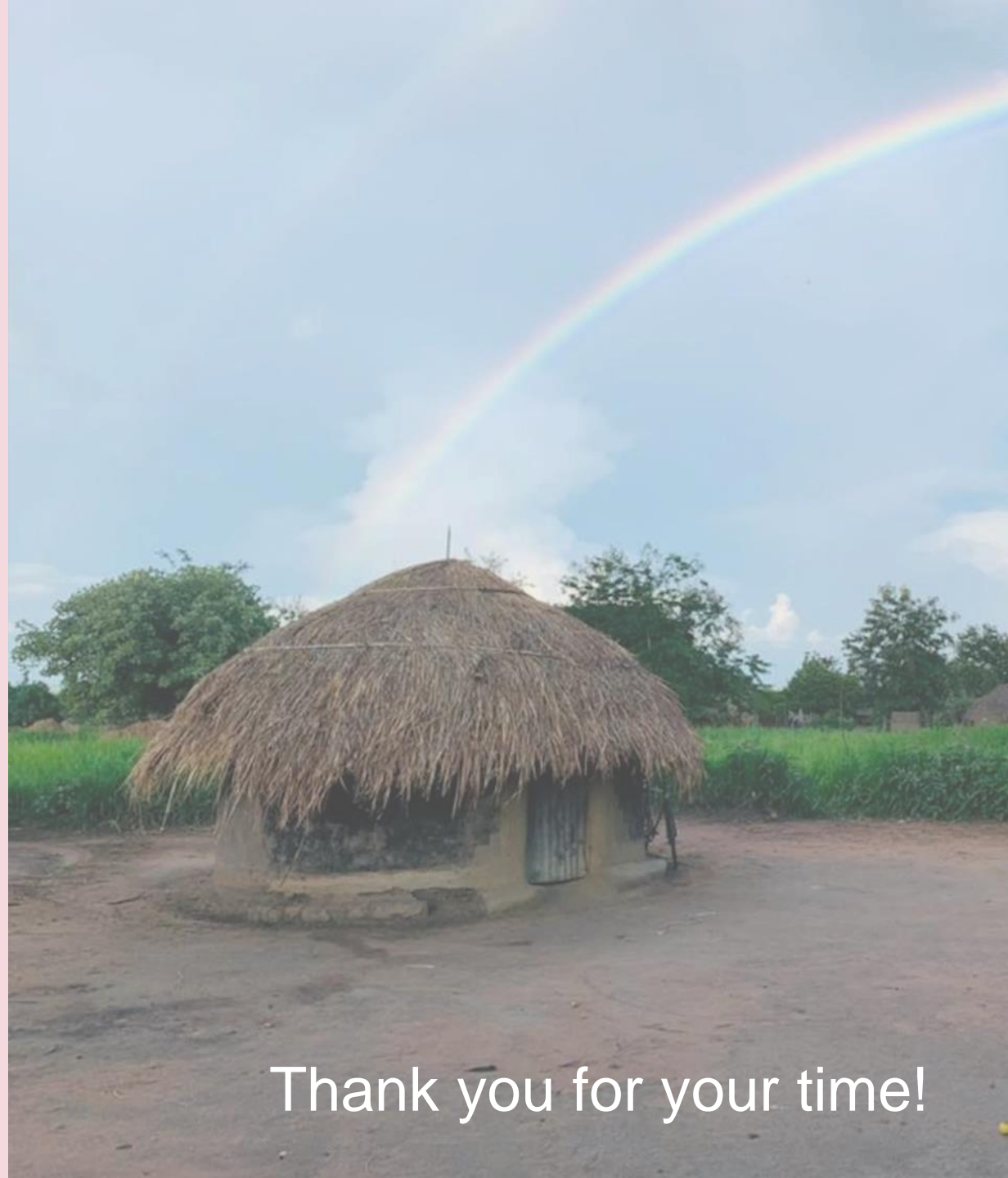
Thank you for your time!

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