



Contents

Introduction	3
Mission	4
Why Measure Social Impact	5
Program Summary	6
Measurement Activities	7
Demographics of Survey Participants	8
Cents for Seeds Social Impact Model	9
Key Findings	10
The Impact of Cents for Seeds	11
Predictors of Wellbeing	15
Priority Needs	16
Findings by Parish	18
Challenges for Graduates	24
Donate	26
Get in Touch	27
The Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement Framework	28
Data Transparency Page	29



Improving Wellbeing and Preventing a Humanitarian Crisis

Uganda is an unfortunate example of how vulnerable communities are hit hardest by global crisis. Following years of drought, COVID-19 has compounded the challenges faced by communities across Uganda, and in 2021 quarantine measures increased as a second wave of the pandemic spread across the country.

Love Mercy Foundation and the 'Cents for Seeds' program came under direct threat. Incredibly strict travel restrictions threatened to prevent the Love Mercy teams travelling between communities to deliver seed loans and support services for the women to grow their crops and feed their families. With food supplies critically low following years of drought, the situation looked to be quickly turning into a humanitarian crisis.

Over weeks of sleepless nights and seemingly never ending video calls, the Australian and Ugandan based Love Mercy teams were able to meet the demands of the Ugandan authorities and have their work recognised as essential to receive a waiver to travel. Even with the waiver teams on the ground felt the weight of their risk, relying on local forces to honour the waiver or else face penalties. Yet in spite of these challenges the team achieved a heroic feat, reaching 18,000 women in 2021 and continuing the unbroken record of increasing the number of women assisted annually since the program's inception in 2010.

Committed to ensuring the program's effectiveness, this is Love Mercy's third annual Social Impact Report, part of a longitudinal study of the program's impact on the wellbeing of women and the communities. The measurement not only tracks overall progress in terms of wellbeing, but also provides data driven statistical insights on the changing needs of women and their communities to inform and strengthen the program over time.

In order to stay accountable to the women impacted, as well as celebrate their hard work, measurement focuses on the lived experience of the women and all results are shared directly with the women in Cents for Seeds.



Cents for Seeds is changing the lives of families in Uganda by empowering women and enabling them to provide for their families.





Why Measure Social Impact?

Social impact measurement is an emerging field that sits between continuous internal improvement and research. Huber Social's goal is to provide rigorous, independent assessment of social projects, in a practical and sustainable manner that allows organisations to make decisions about where to best invest their resources.

We measure the social impact of Love Mercy to both prove that their programs work and better understand how they can be improved to be as effective as possible.

1. Prove

To measure the impact of Love Mercy, Huber Social measures the shift in overall wellbeing and target outcomes achieved for the women in Love Mercy programs and their communities.

The process provides data and insights that allow Love Mercy to articulate their social value to internal and external stakeholders.

2. Improve

The measurement framework provides a holistic profile of the needs for women in Northern Uganda. This informs program improvements and facilitates effective collaboration.

Statistical analysis identifies priority needs to inform where resources should be directed to have the greatest impact.





Cents for Seeds

Program Summary

Love Mercy exists to empower communities in northern Uganda to overcome poverty. After decades of civil war, families returned home to their remote communities. Without support to rebuild their lives, many continue to live without their basic human needs being satisfied, including safety, employment, education, financial literacy, clean water, healthcare, and access to food.

Yet Uganda is home to some of the most fertile land in the world and many families who are struggling do have access to land. What they're missing is the start-up capital, agricultural tools and skills to utilise it.

The Cents for Seeds program aims to fill this gap and provide communities in Northern Uganda with the kickstart they need to build a sustainable source of food and income generation.

Participants receive two seed loans and a gardening tool. They work together with support from group leaders and head agriculturalists to harvest up to five times the original loan. After returning the initial seed loan women are free to sell, store or barter the remainder. Their returned loans are then passed on again the following season, meaning one single donation is reused repeatedly.

As access to financial institutions is low in rural Uganda, women in the program form Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA), and are supported with financial literacy training. VSLAs operate as local community run banks, allowing women to access credit to purchase larger items such as livestock or agricultural tools, and also acting as a social fund if households fall upon unexpected hardship and need access to emergency finances.

Love Mercy have been implementing Cents for Seeds since 2010. Beginning with just 100 women, the program has reached 18,000 people this year, helping families thrive and become more resilient as they continue their journey to recovery.





The Measurement

Activities

In 2021, measurement activities took place across seven parishes in three subcounties; Akura, Olilim and Awake. Measurement included participants from various stages in the program cycle, including first-time recipients, ongoing participants, and program graduates (Table 1).

Measurement took place between 27 May and 9 June 2021. In total, 1,026 surveys were completed in 2021. This is addition to 856 in 2020 and 1,102 in 2018.

Data was collected using paper-based surveys. The survey was translated by local Ugandan translators and completed in hard copy during seed distribution activities. Participation was voluntary and privacy protected with all data remaining deidentified. For more information on how Huber Social measures social impact, refer to the Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement Framework on page 28.

Due to travel restrictions, no Huber Social staff were present to oversee measurement activities; however, Huber Social facilitated a two-hour virtual workshop for the Cents for Seeds staff on ethical data collection methods and measurement activities. Cents for Seeds staff entered the data locally and sent digital copies of sample surveys for quality assurance review.

Table 1. 2021 Measurement Activities

Sub-county	Parish or village	# Participants	# Surveys completed	Time in project
Akura	Anyanga	217 (new)	198	1st year
Olilim	Angetta	156 (returning) 90 (new)	156 33	6 years
	Anepkide	179 (returning) 93 (new)	145 35	6 years
Awake/TC	Olec*	163	149	9 years
	Alangi *	46	97	
	Anepmoroto *	91	100	
	Alai	54	62	
Not in program			35	
Total		1089	1026	

^{*}Indicates site where previous measurements have been conducted.







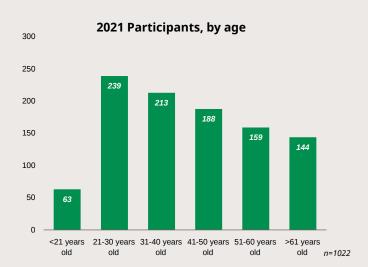
The Program

Participants

As women in Uganda are the caretakers of the family, many of those who participate in the Cents for Seeds program do so not to just better themselves but to support their partners, children and communities. The data used throughout this report includes survey responses from 1,026 individuals in 2021 (96% women), unless otherwise noted. The demographics of this sample are as follows:

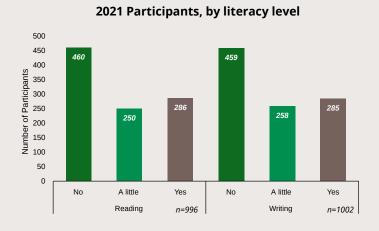
Age

The largest age group of participants sampled are between 21 and 30 years old (24%). There is a slightly larger proportion of participants over 30 years old in this sample as compared to the overall program distribution.



Literacy levels

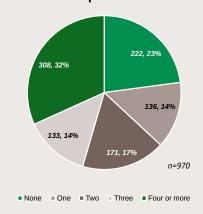
Just over half (54%) of all participants report having some level of reading and writing skills.



Financial dependents

Nearly one third (32%) of participants are financially responsible for more than four people in their family. This emphasizes the fact that the impact of one women's participation in Cents for Seeds extends well beyond herself.

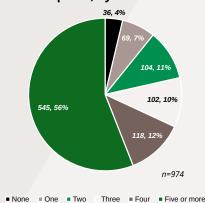
2021 Participants, by number of financial dependents



Number of children

The average number of children born to a participant is 5.37; this is 6% lower than last year's average (5.79).

2021 Participants, by number of children





Love Mercy Social Impact Model

The Love Mercy Social Impact Model outlines how the organisation impacts those who participate in their programs. Through measuring each level of impact, Love Mercy can use a data driven approach to demonstrate what works and what is needed to maximise impact and outcomes.

1. Impact

The overall impact of Cents for Seeds is to improve the wellbeing of people in northern Uganda.



2. Outcomes

Love Mercy achieves this impact by targeting outcomes that not only address poverty but also work to empower women to support themselves and their communities. These outcomes include:

Building capacity in:

- Wellness
- Life skills
- Resilience

Providing the opportunity to access:

- Resources
- Services and structures
- Relationships
- Self-development



3. Outputs

Cents for Seeds delivers the following outputs:

- People given a seed loan
- Villages participating in Cents for Seeds
- Workshops/activities offered
- Seed loans returned
- Crop size harvested each season
- Income level



4. Activities

The program involves the following activities:

- Seed distribution / reverse distribution
- Agricultural workshops
- VSLA activities
- Fundraising



5. Resources

The above impact requires the following inputs:

- LMF staff (Uganda and Australia)
- Office space
- Transport
- Seeds (Sim sim, Soya, Beans)
- Agricultural tools
- Grants & donations
- Volunteers



Key Findings: The Impact of Cents for Seeds

1. Cents for Seeds supports participants' wellbeing despite a global crisis

In spite of wellbeing decreasing across all communities measured, wellbeing of Cents for Seeds participants is 6.8% higher than that of women not enrolled in the program.

2. Key progress made in feeling connected to land, being respected and having self-love

In 2021, Cents for Seeds participants felt more connected to their land and respected in their home as compared to participants in 2020. Self-love, the strongest predictor of wellbeing this year, was also the highest rated outcome, indicating that this important need is being satisfied.

3. Cents for Seeds participants are more resilient and have stronger connections

Compared to women not enrolled in the Cents for seeds program, participants feel more connected to their land and communities, are more confident in their ability to pay back their loans, and have stronger coping and problem solving skills.

4. Priority needs are physical health and feeling safe

Priority needs are determined by factors that have a significant relationship with wellbeing but are also the lowest scoring factors. In 2021, two priority needs were identified: physical health and feeling safe in one's living environment. Focusing on addressing these needs presents an opportunity for Love Mercy to have a greater impact on the wellbeing of its participants.

5. Alai wellbeing more resilient in comparison to other parishes

Across all parishes measured in 2021, Alai had the highest wellbeing at 3.85. Potential drivers of this include their greater access to food, higher perceived physical wellness, and stronger mental wellness. As many of these are also predictors of wellbeing for graduates in Alai, this provide further evidence for the success of Cents for Seeds' work in meeting their participants' priority needs and supporting their wellbeing.



Cents for Seeds Supports

Participants' Wellbeing Despite a Global Crisis

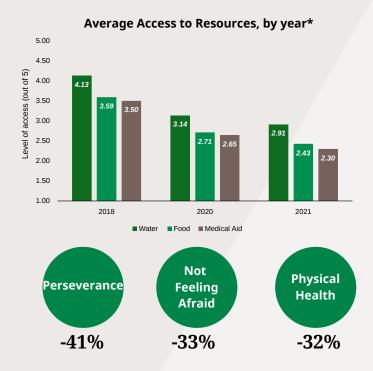
In spite of an overall decrease in wellbeing from 2020, the wellbeing of women in the Cents for Seeds program is 6.8% higher than that of women not in the program.

For women in the Cents for Seeds program, overall wellbeing decreased by 6.4% from 3.66 in 2020 to 3.43 in 2021. Overall wellbeing either stayed consistent or decreased across all program stages and even among women who are not enrolled in Cents for Seeds.

However, when compared the wellbeing of women not enrolled in Cents for Seeds at 3.21, the overall wellbeing of program participants is 6.8% higher. This indicates that Cents for Seeds still supports the wellbeing of women in the program, despite external factors that could be negatively impacting wellbeing at a community level.

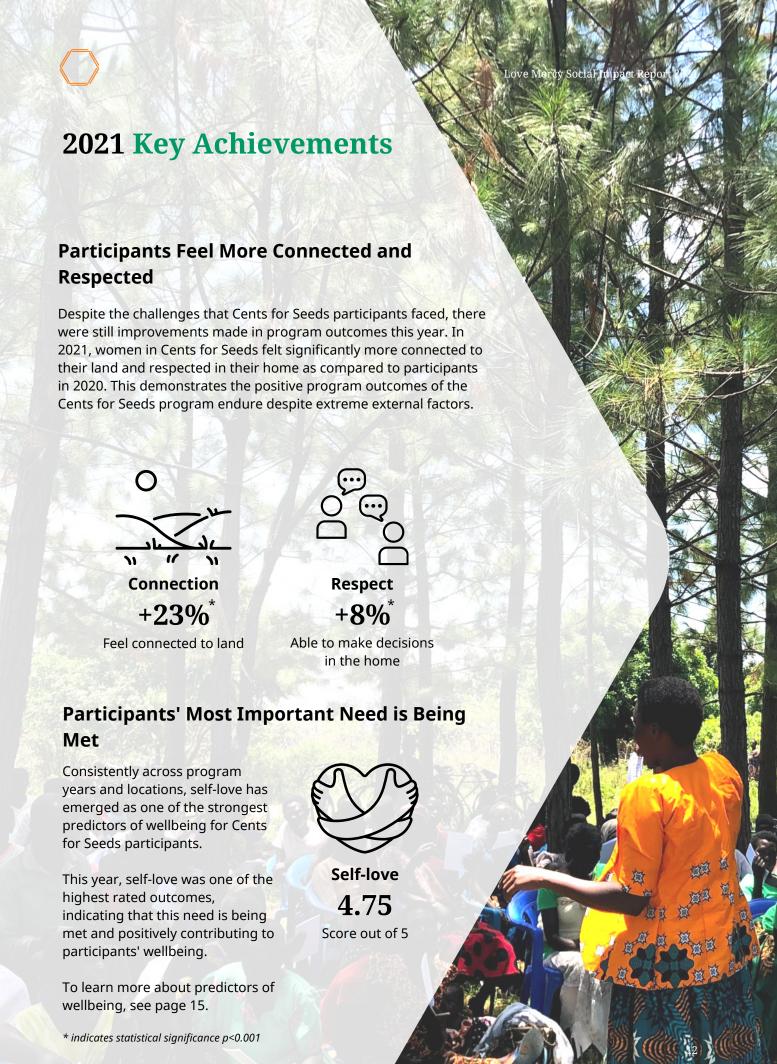
Results from this year's data provide additional evidence to support this finding. Participants reported poorer access to key resources as compared to previous years, all of which have been impacted by the pandemic and drought. Additionally, the largest decreases in outcomes measured were seen among factors of resilience, mental wellness and personal health. Based on the past year's events this was to be expected, and as these factors lay outside of Cents for Seeds' direct program activities it can be inferred that these negative shifts are not attributable to the program.

Overall Wellbeing by Years in Program, 2018-2021* 4.50 Overall Wellbeing Score (out of 5) 4.30 4.10 3.90 3.70 3.50 3.30 3.10 2.90 2.70 2.50 Not in program registered Time in program



^{*} indicates statistical significance p<0.001

[^] indicates statistical significance p=0.124





In 2021, Cents for Seeds Improved Resilience and Connections

To understand the impact of Cents for Seeds in the lives of the women who participate, Huber Social looked at the largest differences in program outcomes between women who are enrolled and those who are not in the program.

On average, women in Cents for Seeds are more resilient, more connected to their community and land and have greater access to key resources as compared to women who are not in the program. The outcomes below represent the ten largest positive gains for women in the program compared to those not in the program, as measured in 2021:



Data includes 1,026 responses from 2021.

^{*} indicates factors that were also amongst the highest shifts for 2018 and 2020 results.

[^] indicates shifts that are statistically significant (p<0.2), meaning the results are not due to random chance or sampling error and can be in part contributed to the effect of the program.





Predictors of Wellbeing

To have the greatest impact on its program participants, Love Mercy must first understand which needs are most likely to drive change in wellbeing for people taking part in Cents for Seeds.

To achieve this, Huber Social has determined which factors have the strongest positive association with high overall wellbeing. A positive change in these factors is statistically more likely to lead to an increase in overall wellbeing, as compared to factors which do not have a strong association with wellbeing.

The following factors were identified as predictors of wellbeing for 2021 Cents for Seeds participants:



Physical Wellness

Level of general physical health



Respect

Being able to have a say in important community issues



Self-love

Liking oneself



Resilience

Having goals and working towards them



Mental Wellness

Laughing and feeling happy



Hope

Having things to hope fore



Safety

Feeling safe in one's living environment

Factor	t-value	p-value
Physical wellness – Level of general physical health	3.475	p<0.001
Respect – Being able to have a say in important community issues	3.475	p=0.035
Self-love – Liking oneself	3.450	p<0.001
Resilience – Having goals and working towards them	3.078	p=0.002
Mental wellness – Laughing and feeling happy	2.413	p=0.016
Hope – Having things to hope for	2.243	p<0.025
Safety – Feeling safe in ones living environment	2.131	p=0.033

Statistical analysis was conducted using all responses collected, regardless of program status.

Please see the Transparency Page for more information on the treatment of data throughout the data lifecycle.



Priority Needs

A priority need is a factor that has been identified through statistical analysis as a predictor of wellbeing (see previous page), but which scored low among Cents for Seeds participants. Predictors of wellbeing are those factors that when improved upon, will have the greatest effect on overall wellbeing, and therefore any of these low-scoring factors offer the strongest opportunities to have a positive impact in the lives of Cents for Seeds participants. The lowest scoring predictors of wellbeing which therefore meet the criteria for priority needs are:



Physical Wellness

Average Score: 2.72 out of 5

One's perceived quality of general physical health was one of the most strongly correlated factors with higher wellbeing. It was also one of the lowest scoring factors among Cents for Seeds participants.



Safety

Average Score: 2.65 out of 5

Feeling safe in one's living environment was the seventh highest factor correlating with overall wellbeing and the fourth lowest factor across all those measured. This is a key concern for Cents for Seeds participants.

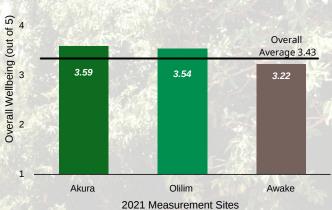




Wellbeing of the Community

To see the unique impact of Cents for Seeds at the community level, the following pages present the overall wellbeing, highest program outcomes and predictors of wellbeing for each subcounty.

2021 Overall Wellbeing, by subcounty



Overall wellbeing was found to be higher in both Akura and Olilim as compared to Awake. As all program participants in Awake were graduating this year, this is likely a contributing factor to the lower wellbeing observed. For further discussion on the challenges faced by graduating participants, see page 24.





The Participants of Akura

Impact

Average Wellbeing

3.59

This is the average overall wellbeing for program participants and will provide a baseline to measure progress against.

217

Program participants

Just registered

This is the first year of the program

Data includes:

2021: 197 responses

Program Outcomes

To better understand where these new program participants are starting their journey with Cents for Seeds, Huber Social looked to the highest ranked outcomes for Akura. The following factors were rated the highest by program participants, indicating areas where women feel more satisfied:

Spirituality	Connection to Land	Connection to Others	Mental Wellness
4.83	4.82	4.77	4.75
Able to freely practice their spirituality or beliefs	Connection to their land	Feeling part of their community	Having a sense of purpose and meaning
Self-Love	Mental Wellness	Connection to Others	Income
4.71	4.70	4.61	4.55
Liking oneself	Having passions and interests	Ability to make friends easily	Planning for expenses

Predictors of Wellbeing

Predictors of wellbeing are those factors that have a significant association with wellbeing, indicating which factors, when satisfied, will likely have the greatest positive impact on wellbeing.

Self-Love

Priority Needs

Priority needs are those predictors of wellbeing which are also among the lowest scoring factors, indicating that this need is not being addressed and should be prioritised to have the greatest impact on wellbeing.

Good Physical Health

Distance to Water

Life Skills



The Participants of Olilim

Impact

Average Wellbeing

3.54

This is the average overall wellbeing for program participants in Olilim; future measurements here will be able measure against this to determine progress.

354

Program participants

6 Years

The program has run in this subcounty

Data includes:

• 2021: 398 responses

Program Outcomes

To understand how participants of Olilim benefit from Cents for Seeds, program outcomes were assessed against women not enrolled in the program. The following shifts represent the outcomes where Olilim participants are performing the strongest as compared to non-participants:

Resilience	Норе	Connection to Land	Connection to Others
+17%	+17%	+13%	+13%
Ability to cope	Having things to hope for	Feeling connected to their land	Feeling part of their community
Connection to Others	Access to Resources	Parenting	Income
+11%	+10%	+9%	+9%
11/0	+10 %0	+9% 0	+9%

Predictors of Wellbeing

Predictors of wellbeing are those factors that have a significant association with wellbeing, indicating which factors, when satisfied, will likely have the greatest positive impact on wellbeing.



Priority Needs

Priority needs are those predictors of wellbeing which are also among the lowest scoring factors, indicating that this need is not being addressed and should be prioritised to have the greatest impact on wellbeing.





The Participants of Awake

Impact

Average Wellbeing

3.22

There has been an 8.5% decrease in average overall wellbeing in Awake since measurement began in 2018.

As all parishes in Awake are graduating from Cents for Seeds this year, this may in part be contributing to the low wellbeing observed. See page 24 for further discussion on Cents for Seeds graduates' wellbeing.

518

Program participants

9 Years

The program has run in this subcounty

Data includes:

- 2018: 85 responses
- 2020: 210 responses
- 2021: 425 responses

Overall Wellbeing in Awake, by year and parish



Program Outcomes

Despite a decrease in wellbeing, there have been many gains among program outcomes for the participants in Awake over the past year. The following factors represent the highest shifts from 2020 to 2021, as compared within the subcounty:

Income

+39%

Ability to support their family financially

Connection to Land

+35%

Feeling connected to land

Safety

+5%

Feeling safe in their living environment

Respect

+3%

Being able to make decisions at home

Predictors of Wellbeing

Predictors of wellbeing are those factors that have a significant association with wellbeing, indicating which factors, when satisfied, will likely have the greatest positive impact on wellbeing.



Priority Needs

Priority needs are those predictors of wellbeing which are also among the lowest scoring factors, indicating that this need is not being addressed and should be prioritised to have the greatest impact on wellbeing.

Good Physical Health

Access to Clean Water



Wellbeing of Participants in Alai Remains High

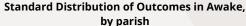
Within Awake, Alai had the highest overall wellbeing of all parishes measured in 2021.

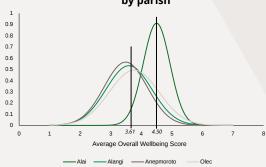
At 3.85, it is 25% higher than that of the three other parishes averages measured in Awake. There are a couple of reasons that may help to explain this.

Program Outcomes

Compared to the other Awake parishes, on average Alai scored significantly higher across all program outcomes in 2021. This includes many key program outcomes, which may in part be contributing to their higher wellbeing:







Mental Wellness

+175%

Participants in Alai are less fearful

Resilience

+81%

Participants in Alai have stronger coping skills

Resilience

+55%

Participants in Alai are more adaptable

Life Skills

+45%

Participants in Alai are more confident in their harvest skills

Predictors of Wellbeing and Priority Needs

In Awake, Alai scored significantly higher on program-wide priority needs as compared to other parishes, indicating that these needs are being satisfied and contributing positively to their higher wellbeing:







In addition, access to food was identified as a predictor of wellbeing specifically in Alai. The parish has scored relatively high on this outcome as well, further evidence of their elevated wellbeing due in part to key needs being met.

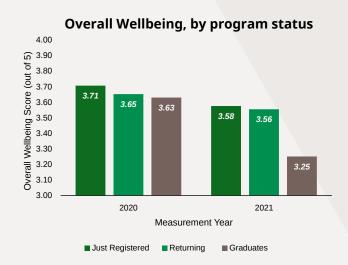




Challenges That Cents for Seeds Graduates Face

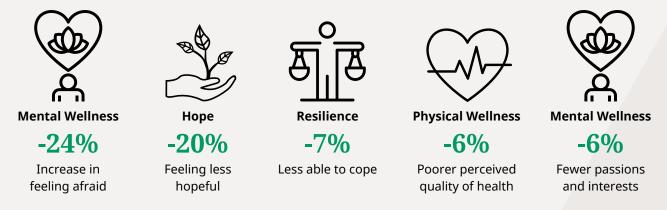
In 2021, graduate wellbeing was 8.7% lower than that of other program participants.

However, there was no significant difference in graduates and other program participants in 2020. To understand this year's difference and identify ways to improve the wellbeing of women exiting Cents for Seeds, graduate data was analysed to determine any potential trends in program outcomes or wellbeing needs.



Graduate Outcomes

Compared to returning program participants, the following outcomes have been scored significantly lower by graduates across 2020 and 2021, indicating a potential trend among graduating participants that could explain in part why graduate wellbeing is lower than in-program participant wellbeing:

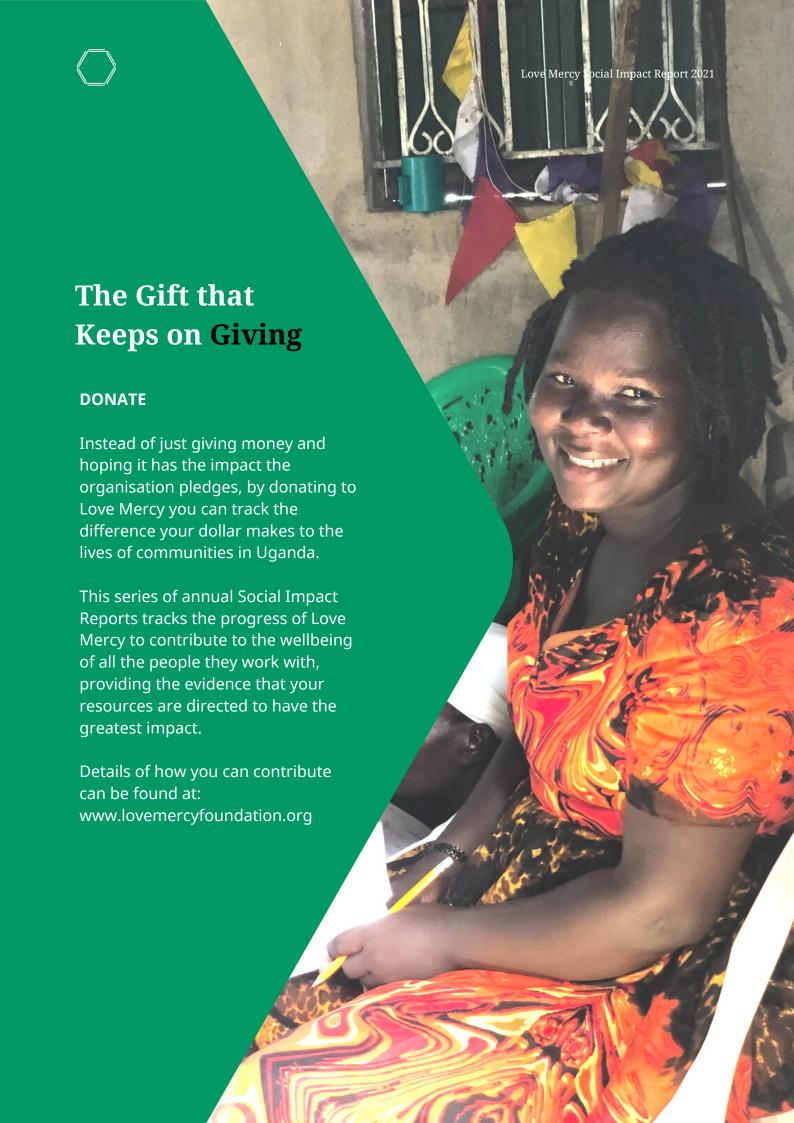


These results suggest that compared to continuing program participants, graduates may feel less mentally-strong and resilient and are therefore less prepared to leave the Cents for Seeds program. As mental and physical wellness are two predictors of wellbeing for graduates as well, the relatively low scores of these needs indicate that they are not currently being met for this group which could also contribute to their low wellbeing.

Love Mercy may want to consider ways to increase support for their graduating participants, such as offering an alumni program for graduates to take part in. By maintaining a connection with Cents for Seeds, graduates can still benefit from the program's trainings and resources while continuing to strengthen their resilience, mental wellness, and ultimately their wellbeing.

Graduate outcomes assessed relative to returning program participants (excl. just registered) for 2020 and 2021. All scores reported are statistically significant (p<0.001). No significant difference detected between 2020 returning participants and graduates' average wellbeing; -8.6% decrease in wellbeing for 2021 graduates compared to 2021 returning participants (p<0.001).







Get in Touch



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Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement

To be able to fulfil their potential and achieve wellbeing, each individual needs to have the capability and the opportunity to do so. Everyone has different needs within these categories depending on their context.

When it comes to measuring the social impact of a service, Huber Social measures the change (shift) the service creates in terms of wellbeing and the specific programs outcomes achieved to create this. Results are then consolidated at a sector, community and global level.

The goal for each of us is the same; wellbeing. The part that differs are our individual needs.

Longitudinal measurement monitors effectiveness of programs to meet these needs; ensuring resources are directed to have the greatest impact. The vision is a wellbeing measurement system that delivers us the whole picture, to put each of us in the best position to achieve wellbeing and leave no one behind.

The Huber Social Wellbeing Measurement Framework

IMPACT

Wellbeing

To be in the best position to fulfil your potential and live a life of value. The overall goal for all services working with people.

OUTCOMES

OUTCOMES

Through building

Capability

Resilience Life skills Wellness - mental, physical and spiritual and providing

Opportunity

Resources
Self development
Societal structures
Relationships



Data Transparency Page

To ensure the integrity of findings always, Huber Social includes a Transparency Page for every project. This ensures both the rigour of evidence and rigour of analysis is clear for each project, across every stage of the data lifecycle.

DATA LIFECYCLE 1. Design

2. Data Collection

3. Cleaning

4. Analysis

5. Reporting

Phase	Questions on the	Treatment of the Data	Points allocated	Yes or N
		Everyone in the program included in the measurement	2	-
Design BASELI	SAMPLE	OR Survey sample population designed to be representative of group	1	Y
	JAIVII LL	Confidence in the sample: 95% Confidence Level, 5% Margin of Error (10% Margin of Error for data at village level)	N/A	N/A
		Control group (independent of the intervention)	3	-
	BASELINE	Group baseline measured (pre -intervention)	2	-
		Baseline inferred from time in program (e.g. 1 vs. 3 years)	1	Υ
	EXCLUSIONS	Details of people specifically excluded from the measurement: Measurement was conducted at three locations. Women in the program outside of these locations were excluded. Distance and other practical reasons may have prohibited women within those villages from attending the measurement.	N/A	N/A
		Online surveys		
		OR hardcopy surveys		Υ
		Data collection supervised by Huber Social consultant	1	-
	DISTRIBUTION	Translation or guidance provided		Υ
Data Collection DATA SOURCES		Details on translation or guidance if provided: Verbal translation of English questions into Swahili by a consistent lead translator. Staff received virtual training on ethical data collection methods from Huber Social prior to beginning measurement activities	N/A	N/A
		Data Mining of other sources	1	
	Data included from previous years/measurements	1	Y	
		Partial responses removed or no partial responses	1	Y
Cleaning	CLEANING	Details of any responses removed: Responses removed if missing wellbeing data or <50% outcomes data. Quality assurance check performed found 95% on data entered.	N/A	N/A
	SHIFT MEASUREMENT	Calculated on time in program		Υ
		Calculated on group average	1	Y
		Calculated based on individual scores	2	-
Analysis	TEST APPLIED	Basic analysis		Υ
		Statistical Correlation Test	2	Υ
		Multiple Regression or Lasso Regression Test	3	Y
		Details on statistical analysis: Multivariate linear regression and linear mixed models.	N/A	N/A
		Client published Outcomes Report (prove)	1	-
Reporting	REPORTING	Client received Social Performance Report (improve)	2	-
		Client published full Social Impact Report	3	Υ
RIGUOUR S	CORE: LOW: 1-9; ME	ED 10-14: HIGH 159	13	MED





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