

## SEED STORAGE FACILITIES TO BOOST LOCAL SEED PRODUCTION

Kitembe Farmers Group is located in Kitembe village, Rweikiniro sub-county in Ntungamo District. The group started in 2015, with six members with the aim of improving their livelihoods.

However, because of the poor quality seeds in the area, the group's livelihood did not improve. They would depend on home saved seed which was caused by insufficient availability of affordable high-quality seed and lack of trust in the certified seed available in the market.

In 2017 after a series of struggles, Kitembe group was linked to Integrated Seed Sector Development programme in Uganda (ISSD), who trained them on improved seed production and since then the membership kept on increasing as well as the production of quality Declared Seed.

ISSD Uganda Project is implemented by Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCID) in partnership with the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and is funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda.

As at 2019, Kitembe Farmers have increased their seed production from one ton to 25 tons of bean seed. However, due to lack of storage facilities, the group would store seed in members' homes something that compromises the quality and effectiveness of post-harvest handling.

According to Julius Barugahare, Chairperson Kitembe Farmers group, after harvesting, each member keeps a certain portion of the harvest and on many occasions, the quality of seed is affected due to improper storage and handling. This in-turn affects the market for seed.

Like Kitembe, Rwabaceneka Organic Farmers' Group was also faced with the challenge of lack of seed storage facilities.

The group that started small currently produces over 55 tons of seed but because of lack of storage facilities, the group resorted to using a group member's home as a local seed store which also doubles as the office for their activities. This on many occasions was compromising on their quality.

John Karangwa, the Chairperson of the group says they were losing the market for their seed because of the poor storage facilities.

However, the two groups and many others have a reason to smile after ISSD supported them with a matching grant opportunity to construct permanent affordable storage facilities.

The Local Seed Business groups contribute 25% of the total funds and are supported with a 75% top-up from ISSD towards the construction.

According to Patrick Oyee, the Chief of Party ISSD, after the farmers had increased the production of Quality Declared seed, post-harvest handling and storage had become a

challenge, yet the quality of seed is based on proper storage, hence without good storage facilities, then the seed is declared as not of good quality.

“After interacting with the farmers, it was discovered the farmers could not afford to pay for the construction of the storage facilities. Instead, they were keeping seeds in-group member’s homes. This is in one way or the other made people not to trust their seeds,” said Oyee.

Adding that this prompted ISSD to support the groups with the construction of stores to ensure seed quality.

“Over 30 seed stores are under construction countrywide in various Local Seed Business groups and each store construction costs approximately UGX 40-50 million. 11 seed storage facilities have been completed and the rest are nearing completion,” Oyee explained.

At Nyabyumba Farmer Field School Group located in, kamuganguzi Sub County Kabale District, a new store is under construction and the farmers have hope that their sales are to increase.

Nyabyumba farmer group was established in 1998, and today has a membership of 41 farmers. Its members were mainly involved in producing and marketing Potato. Like other farmers, the group was also faced with a challenge of storage facilities.

However, with the construction of a store, the group has hopes of increasing production of quality potato seeds.

According to Oyee, after the completion of the 40 metric ton stores, farmers will be able to store their seeds in clean, pest-free and safe places. The stores will also help farmers to bulk and in such a way the authorities will have one central place where they can sample the quality of seed and also buyers will be having one central place.

While touring and commissioning some of the seed stores under construction in South Western Uganda, Anno Galema, 1st Secretary Food Security and Private Sector Development at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN), said seeds are a very important starting point in agriculture.

Explaining that if the seeds are of poor quality then harvest will also be poor and when seeds are of high quality, the harvest will also be high. Hence having proper storage facilities is the only solution for quality seeds.

“Once the stores are complete, the quality of seed will improve hence calling upon the Government of Uganda to think of supporting the local seed farmers by buying their seeds,” said Anno.

Anno argued the farmers to use the stores appropriately such that they produce quality seed. “Handle them with care because you know where you have come from,” stressed Anno.

Esther Atwine, the District Agricultural Officer, Ntungamo district, said quality seed business has improved in many parts of South Western Uganda yet the ministry does not consider them as certified seed producers.

According to Atwine, the recently introduced Agriculture Cluster Development Project (ACDP) does not look at local seeds business as not eligible for the e-voucher system. It is only the big companies that are allowed to sell the seeds something that is not good.

“This is because many Local Seed Businesses are not trusted and one of the reasons is because of lack of proper storage facilities. As a District, we are constrained by the meagre resources. However, when the new stores are completed, the District will lobby Government to consider buying seeds from local farmers,” she said.

According to Atwine, there is a lot of seed produced by the local farmers which might be even of better quality so Government should think of revising the E-Voucher system such that the local farmer’s seeds are also considered.

## ***Notes from the Editor***

**About ISSD:** The Integrated Seed Sector Development programme in Uganda (ISSD Uganda) aims to support the development of a vibrant, pluralistic and market-oriented seed sector, providing smallholder farmers access to affordable quality seed of superior varieties. This will contribute to increased income for small-scale farmers and an increased number of rural households that are seed and food secure.

**Developing Local Seed Businesses:** The ISSD Uganda programme is working with 30 local seed businesses (LSBs) to produce quality seed of locally adapted crops and varieties for local markets. The purpose is to develop them into commercially sustainable local businesses. At the end of the programme these LSBs are well organized and technically equipped for quality seed production. They have improved their access to research (for varieties and technologies), extension (for advisory services), markets (to sell their produce), quality assurance (to guarantee seed quality) and finance and credit (to support their local business operations). They are commercially oriented with a marketing plan, financial system, saving, cash flow projections and demand projections. LSB model will be out scaled to reach additional 100 LSBs in year 3 and 4 of the project. LSBs are located in three geographical areas where ISSD is currently working in West Nile, Northern and South Western.

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