



## **Agricultural Business Initiative (aBi)**

### **Building the Resilience of Small holder farmers through increasing access to Agro-Inputs**



#### **DOCUMENTATION OF SUCCESS STORIES**

*In partnership with*  
**MMACKS INVESTMENTS LTD, WESTERN REGION**

## INTRODUCTION

In July 2020, aBi rolled out a project titled *“Building Resilience of Small holder farmers through increasing access to Agro-Inputs”* as part of its COVID -19 response. The project aims at safeguarding the production, trade and processing of key food staples by enabling off-take partners to provide seed and fertilizer to about 40,000 smallholder farmers producing maize, sorghum, beans, sunflower and soy; generating total additional income of UGX36 Billion to the participating farmers and UGX 72 Billion to the participating agribusiness partners. The project is currently in collaboration with 6 of aBi’s implementing partners across Uganda; Aponye Uganda Limited, Agro ways Limited, Arise and Shine, Acila Uganda Limited in the cereals value chain. Others are Grow More Seeds and Chemicals Ltd and MMACKS investments Limited in the pulses value chain. Processes are underway for on boarding the implementing partners in the Oilseed value chain.

The project aims to achieve the following underlying objectives;

- Increase market value of agro-produce to facilitate high income for farmers
- Increase food availability during the pandemic.

The project will be implemented in 2 years, 3 crop seasons. In season B 2020, aBi met the full project cost. In 2021 season A and season B the cost will be met by aBi and the IPs at a ratio of 80:20 and 60:40 respectively.

aBi and MMACKS conducted a project monitoring visit in Western Uganda (Mubende, Kakumiro, Kyenjojo, and Kyegegwa districts) from 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 where teams interacted with the farmer groups, cooperative societies and farmers growing mainly beans and documented the benefits, successes, and anticipated outcomes.

## MMACKS’ IMPLEMENTATION MODEL IN REACHING GRASSROOT FARMERS

aBi supported MMACKS Investments Limited to procure seeds and fertilizers for distributing to beneficiary farmers. MMACKS’ employs a project manager who is charged with the overall implementation of the project, he works closely with a, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and Field Extension Workers. In some instances, MMACKS hires consultants and short term contract workers to boost its in-house staff. Each of the target districts has a resident Agricultural Field Extension officer whose main role is to offer advisory services, training and supervision to farmers. He/she also undertakes coordination between MMACKS and the communities.

At the community level, MMACKS identifies and trains some farmers to work as Local Market Facilitators (LMFs). LMFs support field officers in disseminating agricultural and market information to farmer groups and collective marketing. To ensure effectiveness, MMACKS is using 102 LMFs as opposed to the 40 planned for. Each LMF is charged with overseeing 4 farmer groups.

Each farmer group has a Group Leader who delivers updated information on agro-practices such as cropping calendars, collective bulking, storage and marketing among others.

To ensure skills transfer to more farmers, the project initiated Demonstration sites which are hosted by selected LMFs and or Farmer Group Leaders. Each Demo site is accessed by between 25 and 30 farmers on average.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
MMACKS' IMPLEMENTATION MODEL IN REACHING GRASSROOT FARMERS.....	1
ACRONYMS.....	4
KISAMBYA GROUP FARMERS REALIZE HIGH YIELDS IN SEASON B 2020.....	5
"AGRO-INPUTS HELPED US RECOVER FROM THE PREVIOUS DROUGHT" -- TUMUSIIME.....	6
FARMERS IN KAKUMIRO ADOPT BULKING, COLLECTIVE MARKETING.....	8
TWO METRIC TONNES OF BEANS COLLECTED AND STILL COUNTING... ..	9
HOW THE YOUTH IN KYEGEGWA DISTRICT ARE GAINING FROM AGRO-INPUTS PROJECT.....	10
TUSHABOMWE'S BEAN YIELDS TRIPPLE IN ONE SEASON .....	11
HARERA'S BUMPER HARVEST RESTORED COMMUNITY HOPES IN FARMING.....	12
KISEMBO ACQUIRES PLOT OF LAND FROM ONE ACRE'S HARVEST.....	13

## ACRONYMS

aBi	Agricultural Business Initiative
AEO	Agricultural Extension Worker
FaaB	Farming as a Business
GAPs	Good Agronomical Practices
ISSD	Integrated Seed Sector Development
LMFs	Local Market Facilitators
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PHH	Post Harvest Handling
RFO	Rural Farmers Organization
ToT	Training of Trainers
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association

## KISAMBYA GROUP FARMERS REALIZE HIGH YIELDS IN SEASON B 2020

Kisambya Bataka Tweyambe group is located in Mpara Sub- County, Kyegegwa district, Western Uganda. It is made up of nine (9) farmer groups of 25 members each, on average. Farmers mainly grow beans as the main farm enterprise; other crops include maize, millet, sweet potatoes and cassava. The farmers highlighted that their soils had lost fertility and crop yields dwindled in the past few years, a situation that negatively affected quality and pricing of the harvest. Under the aBi- supported Agro-Input project, each farmer received 20 Kilograms of seeds and 20 Kilograms of fertilizer. Farmers were also trained in good agricultural practices and offered other technical on farm support by the Field Extension Worker from MMACKS, aBi's implementing partner in the area. The extension workers also disseminate agricultural information including; weather forecast, crop pricing, collection and bulking technology as well as other government programs. With these interventions, farmers were able to realize increased yields per acreage in Season B, 2020.



*"We have witnessed a big improvement in the harvest of this season from the past ones. Majority farmers have harvested between 5 and 6 bags of beans in 1 acre piece of land. A few farmers who realized poor harvests are those with 4 bags per acre [which is also good compared to our past bean harvests in this area]. Previously, one would harvest only 1 bag from an acre of land."* Group Chairperson, Barnabas Mbagumisirize

However, farmers also cited some challenges which they face during crop production process from pre - season, mid and post-harvest period. Among these were pests and diseases, weather variability (extreme hot and or rainy seasons) which affect the yields; lack of proper post harvesting materials to facilitate drying, sorting (e.g tarpaulins) and dryers.

The group intends to initiate a VSLA as an avenue for quick access to low interest loans, peer support and knowledge sharing and sustainability.

## **“AGRO-INPUTS HELPED US RECOVER FROM THE PREVIOUS DROUGHT” -- TUMUSIIME**

Tumusiime Justine, 43, is a member and Chair of Kabandole farmer group which is under Kyabwire Batuuze Group in Kyegegwa district. Like many farmers, she received 20Kgs of NARO bean 2 seeds and 20Kgs of fertilizer which she says arrived at the most critical time and gave her high yield.



*“The inputs were timely... We were badly off in our area following the long dry spell experienced in the previous season. Most of the farmers lacked seeds for this season [2020 B]. And the situation was worsened by the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Farmers were forced to consume the locally*

*preserved seeds during the lockdown; with no money to purchase others. Besides, access to quality seed suppliers was hard. Says Tumusiime*

Tumusiime adopted planting the seeds in lines, timely weeding, spraying, good post-harvest handling practices among others.

From half an acre, Tumusiime was able to harvest 2 bags of beans which she has already transported to the collection centre awaiting sale.

She was also selected as the group leader and demonstration host, a role she played well. Other farmers especially women learnt many skills from her demonstration garden. Tumusiime says that on average, the farmers in this group have harvested 2 bags from small pieces of land that are less than an acre. So far, she has received and bulked about 8 bags of 140Kgs weight each, approximately 1,120 Kgs from other group members.

Tumusiime mentioned the challenge of limited land which makes crop rotation impossible; added that she has encouraged farmers to undertake early field clearing and preparing for the next season. She requested change of variety from NARO bean 2 to NARO bean 3 (yellow) as well as timely distribution to enable farmers plant not later than February for the first season, 2021.



## FARMERS IN KAKUMIRO ADOPT BULKING, COLLECTIVE MARKETING

In Kakumiro district, some farmers started harvesting their beans in November 2020. These farmers are regarded as “early adopters” for having planted and harvested earlier than the rest of the farmers. With the help of their group leaders, the farmers delivered their beans to designated collection centres for bulking.

At Kanyegaramire collection centre in Birembo Sub County, Bugangaizi County – Kakumiro district, the Local Market facilitator Aryatuha Teopista shared the benefits of bulking and collective marketing. She said selling as an individual is disadvantageous because in most cases the buyer is a middle man and can conceal the actual market price from the farmer. Aryatuha encourages all farmers especially women to embrace farming as a business, bulking, working in groups, and marketing their produce collectively to have a “bigger voice” on pricing.

Another collection centre reached was Rwamarengye, in Kawongera Sub-County, which is bulking produce from four (4) farmer groups. The Local Market Facilitators in this area, Tumwesigye Enock and Kabakyenga Justus explain that farmers bring their beans for storage and collective marketing to be able to fetch a higher price.

*“To date, I have received beans from twenty (20) farmers to a tune of 1.3 metric tonnes (1,357 Kgs) while Justus Kabakyenga is storing 720 Kgs, ready for sale. Collection is ongoing and soon MMACKS will purchase the beans – at a higher price than the prevailing market prices enabling the farmers to get an income.”*

These farmers also made similar recommendations to improve the collection centre approach. There is a need to upgrade the storage facilities and avail farmers with better quality PHH material for example, sorting and packaging tools, weighing scales, tarpaulins and others. This will improve and maintain good quality of the beans.



Bags of beans in the store at Rwamarengye (above) and LMF-Tumwesigye Enock (right)



## TWO METRIC TONNES OF BEANS COLLECTED AND STILL COUNTING...

For Kasharaba Farmers' group in Mubende district, farmers had collected over 2,000 Kgs of beans (approximately 2 metric tonnes) at the time of this monitoring visit.

The group Secretary and LMF, Prospera Nyiransaba mentioned that each farmer received 20 kgs of seeds (NARO bean 2) and 20 Kgs of fertilizer. They cultivated and planted the beans in lines and conducted timely weeding.

Before the project interventions, an acre of land in Kasharaba village could only yield at most 1 bag of beans. After the use of improved quality seeds, Nyiransaba says majority farmers harvested about 4 bags in 1 acre.

*"Fertilizers were so helpful because we had never witnessed such high yields from our soils here, previously."*



Prospera Nyiransaba (Right) narrates her group's milestones as another farmer, Korugyendo Scora looks on.

## HOW THE YOUTH IN KYEGEGWA DISTRICT ARE GAINING FROM AGRO-INPUTS PROJECT

Leila Kirungi, 22, is a young farmer and member of Rwibaale Farmers' Marketing Cooperative Society. The Cooperative is one of the largest and most functional farmer organizations in Kyegegwa district, Western Uganda. It is made up of 10 farmer groups (Rural Farmer Organizations) of about 30 members each. Among these groups is Rwibaale Youth farmers group to which Leila is a member.

When aBi/MMACKS rolled out the distribution of seeds and fertilizers, 6 groups including Rwibaale Youth were ready with prepared gardens and set to plant. A total of 12 (2F, 10M) were each given 20 Kgs of Seeds and fertilizers to enhance their farm productivity. Many of them harvested 4-5 bags from one acre as opposed to 1-2 bags previously. They have bulked their produce with the Cooperative and anticipate earning not less than UGX 500,000 each after sale.

The youth also benefitted from trainings in GAPs, FaaB and Financial literacy conducted by MMACKS/aBi. The trainings integrated COVID-19 awareness and prevention as well as digital communication to reduce on the physical contact. Kirungi adopted all these including hosting a demonstration site where fellow youth learnt and practiced better farming skills.

The youth are thriving not without challenges. Among others, they cited pests and diseases, lack of enough storage and post-harvest materials e.g tarpaulins, limited cultivable land hence need to hire additional land pieces, value addition tools such as winnowers, stitching machines, and trainings for all farmers in order not to "leave anyone behind". This would help to improve the attitude of many other youth.



Leilah Kirungi (2nd left) speaking to the aBi team about the youth achievements as other group members, including another youth Agondeze Saleh (with yellow mask) listen. Inset is Rwibaale Cooperative Society sign post.

## TUSHABOMWE'S BEAN YIELDS TRIPPLE IN ONE SEASON

Tushabomwe Roy, 47, is a member of Kawongera Development Farmers' Group in Kakumiro district. She is a demonstration host where her fellow group members as well as other community members come to learn the good agronomic practices; acquire skills and knowledge in farming.

Previously, Tushabomwe would harvest only 1 bag or even less from an acre's land. She says this was due to infertile soils from over cultivation, poor agronomical practices including broadcasting of seeds, untimely weeding, mixed cropping and crop diseases.

In July 2020, Tushabomwe was given 20 kilograms of NARO bean 2 seeds and 20 kilograms of fertilizer as part of the *Building Resilience of Small holder farmers through increasing access to Agro-Inputs* project. Coupled with training in improved farming practices, she realized a better harvest than never before, atleast in about 8 years time. *"I never knew my gardens could be productive once again. I harvested 3 bags of beans which are already bulked at Kawongera Development Farmers' stores. I have realized the benefits of improved agronomical practices, Knowledge and skills."* Says Tushabomwe

She also gave some recommendations to improve on the project: i) Demonstration hosts should be facilitated for the extra labour and time incurred while training other farmers ii) The inputs should be distributed to farmers early in time to aid in planning. Finally, Tushabomwe appreciated aBi/MMACKS for the timely intervention and offering a higher price for their beans. *"This will help us sail through the COVID-19 times."* She adds.



L-R: aBi Project Manager- Agribusiness, Caroline Wamono, Tushabomwe Roy, aBi Communications Officer, Rose Mugabe, MMACKS Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Charity Keitesi and aBi Results Measurement and Monitoring Officer, Pamela Twikirize in a discussion outside Kawongera Farmers' Collection Centre.

## HARERA'S BUMPER HARVEST RESTORED COMMUNITY HOPES IN FARMING

Harera, Amiyerij 50, is a resident of Kiseke village, Igayaza Sub County in Kakumiro district. He



is a project beneficiary who tells of how the received seeds and fertilizers restored his hopes in agriculture.

*"Our soils here are not fertile and I had actually abandoned farming...joined other enterprises but also with little profits. I had spent about 8 years without growing beans and especially NARO Bean 3."* Says Harera

Harera adds that when he heard about MMACKS/aBi, Agro- Input supply project, he registered to become a beneficiary. He received agro-inputs equivalent to 20 Kgs of NARO Bean 3 and 20 Kgs of fertilizer from MMACKS on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020. He says the inputs were a relief since availability and access to seeds was not easy during the COVID-19 lock down. He planted the beans on half an acre piece of land. He was further trained in GAPs, FaAB, the knowledge he

put into practice. He planted the beans in lines, ensured timely weeding; sprayed to protect the crops from pests and hot weather effects. He harvested 320 Kgs; sold 150Kgs and got UGX 525,000 as an income.

Harera is also a Local Market Facilitator. He used his garden as a demonstration site for other farmers in his community. *"People had abandoned beans growing for other IGA's but after witnessing my good harvest from just half an acre, they are now back into the enterprise."*

He requests that if MMACKS/aBi could increase on quantity of seeds supplied to each farmer, it would facilitate planting on a large scale say about 3 acres and more.

## KISEMBO ACQUIRES PLOT OF LAND FROM ONE ACRE'S HARVEST



Kisembo Nuuru of Rwibare Town Council Kyenjojo district is a beneficiary of the “Agro- Inputs” supply project. She is the Chairperson of Rwibaale Farmers Marketing Cooperative Society. In July 2020, Kisembo received 20 Kilograms of seeds (NARO Bean 2 variety) and 20 Kilograms of fertilizer. As a demonstration host, she also received 1 bottle of pesticides. She planted the seeds in 1 acre. After four months, she harvested 4 bags of beans (150Kgs each). She later sold off 3 bags (450Kgs) at Ugsh 6,000 per kilogram due to the very high quality of produce. The total income after sale was Ugsh 2,700,000 which she used to purchase a plot of land (valued at Ugsh 3,500,000) at Rwibaale trading centre. She adds that she intends to clear the balance of Ugsh 800,000 with the stored bag of beans plus other savings.” *I have fully embraced Farming as a*

*Business and hope to continue growing more crops for commercial purposes to improve my status.”* Kisembo attributes her success to the access to improved seed varieties, trainings in good agronomical practices, FaaB, Planning, monitoring and supervision and improved marketing.