



## Heifer Uganda Awards Young Agri-Tech Innovators in AYUTE Africa Season 3

Five women, five awards, one Heifer Uganda AYUTE Competition.



## Message from the Country Director



Greetings dear esteemed reader.

Welcome to this edition of the Heifer International Uganda newsletter. It spans July to December 2024 and shares remarkable achievements realized throughout this period as we journey towards impacting smallholder farming households.

Our engagements and achievements throughout the last six months are highlighted in this Biannual Newsletter. It provides insights on youth engagement in agribusiness, market opportunities for youth agri-preneurs, emerging

technologies in agriculture, adoption of renewable energy and new investment opportunities for agribusiness. Additional insights are in respect to initiatives made towards fostering gender and disability inclusion in Heifer's country programming.

Heifer International appreciates its development and implementing partners who have provided both funding and technical support in the development, implementation and monitoring of Uganda's programs. We are indebted to our Funding partners ; Mastercard Foundation, Mott Foundation, Hilton Foundation, Aqua For All, aBi Development Ltd, and Heifer Impact Capital for their support towards impacting the life of farmers. In addition, we appreciate Government-specifically Ministry of agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries; and Ministry of Energy and Minerals Development for their policy guidance.

Heifer International Uganda looks forward to a productive year ahead in efforts towards transforming the livelihood of smallholder farmers.

Enjoy this edition

William Matovu  
Country Director  
Heifer International Uganda



# SAYE Youth Tournament: Strengthening Youth Engagement through Sports



YOUTH ENTHUSIASM FOR  
AGRIBUSINESS

Heifer International Uganda, successfully mobilized and engaged youth, strengthened partnership with local leaders and promoted agribusiness as a viable pathway for economic empowerment. This innovative approach was implemented under the Stimulating Agribusiness for Youth Empowerment (SAYE) Project through a youth tournament that took place at St. Gonzaga Catholic Church, Magamaga in Jinja from December 6-17, 2024. The tournament was a resounding success, attracting 816 young people and youth groups from Butagaya, Buwenge, Kakira and other sub-counties in Jinja district. The tournament featured 13 football and 18 netball teams, providing a platform to foster unity, promote leadership skills and encourage youth participation in agribusiness, while, creating market opportunities for youth entrepreneurs.

Spousal engagement was a notable highlight with spouses supporting their partners by participating in matches, showcasing, strengthened family and community cohesion. The

Jinja District Youth Chairperson, Ramathan Matege, expressed gratitude for this engagement, pointing out the importance of bringing on board project participants' spouses in order to attain a clear understanding of the project and ensuring project success. Remarkably, top-performing teams were awarded seed capital for their enterprises.

In efforts towards building resilient and economically empowered youth, over 430 participants accessed free health services, including, HIV testing, cervical cancer screening, family planning, and blood pressure checks. Project incubatees showcased their agribusiness innovations, while, SAYE staff raised awareness about project opportunities, encouraging more youth to join the initiative.

Over **800 youth** participated in a sports tournament in Jinja district aimed at promoting agribusiness and creating market opportunities for youth entrepreneurs







# MOTT Foundation Vice President Visits Uganda

In October 2024, Heifer International, Mott Foundation and Conrad Hilton Foundation, partnered to scale up the productive use of solar energy in central Uganda. Subsequently, the Mott Foundation delegation visited its partners in Uganda, implementing, the Distributed Renewable Energy Ecosystem (DREEM) Hub project from October 15-18, 2024.

Led by Neal Hegarty, Vice President of Programs at the Mott Foundation and Robert Ddamulira, Program Officer at the Mott Foundation, the delegation's major aim was to review the Foundation's progress on sustainable energy under the DREEM initiative. The initiative, central to the Foundation's efforts, focuses on promoting solar energy solutions in agriculture, improving access to clean water, fostering sustainable incomes and bolstering farmers' resilience against climate change impacts, especially, in sectors such as aquaculture, horticulture and dairy farming across East Africa.

Furthermore, the initiative, which brings together a network of partners in Uganda is

designed to provide farmers with access to solar skills, jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities. It targets over 1,500 underserved youth and women entrepreneurs across four dairy cooperatives in Nakaseke within Central Uganda.

Notably, the team visited Buganda Kingdom, where Hegarty witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Heifer International and the Kabaka Foundation. During the visit, he emphasized Mott Foundation's commitment to leveraging solar energy for agricultural development.

*In 2015, we launched the DREEM model in Tanzania with World Wide Fund for Nature to scale access to solar-powered services. The model addressed critical challenges like inadequate climate financing and limited access to sustainable energy innovations. Following its success in Tanzania, we expanded DREEM to Kenya and later to Uganda with Heifer International.*

**Neal Hegarty - Vice President of Programs Mott Foundation**

Correspondingly, Ddamulira, Program Officer for Advancing Climate Change Solutions at the Mott Foundation, highlighted the transformative potential of solar technologies in agriculture, while, William Matovu, Country Director for Heifer International in Uganda noted that the future of agriculture in Africa and Uganda is threatened by climate change, as well as, farmer's inability to build resilience for the food supply system and this explains our intervention.

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*As we strive to end hunger and poverty, it is important to enhance the capacity of smallholder farmers and this can be attained through embracing renewable energy technology as one of the solutions to this challenge. We are happy to partner with Mott Foundation to scale up this work of supporting production and productivity.*

**William Matovu – Country Director Heifer International Uganda**





# Mastercard Foundation makes a learning Visit to SAYE Project

From 2nd to 6th December 2024, the Mastercard Foundation team and the SAYE project team undertook a learning field visit to SAYE project sites in Busoga Region (Jinja, Kamuli, Iganga and Bugiri). The field visit was planned to enable the Foundation team to understand the approaches the project has deployed to mobilize, skill, and transition young people to work. The field visit was also intended to understand the efforts the project has put in mobilizing and engaging women in the program.

SAYE Project (Stimulating Agribusiness for Youth Employment Project (SAYE) is a five year long project that aims to support 250,000 youth (70 percent women) within Busoga region to secure dignified and fulfilling work in the agribusiness sector. It is implemented by Heifer International in partnership with Mastercard Foundation and consortium partners including ASIGMA, CURAD, FSDU and FSME.

The team interacted with Kamuli District leadership, project staff and youth farmers as well as youth entrepreneurs across the region. They visited CURAD incubation centre where they

interacted with incubatees who do value addition to agricultural produce as well as youth groups in Kamuli and Bugiri districts organised to engage in block farming in horticulture, watermelon and passion fruits.

During the visit, Gilbert Engulu Program Partner, Agriculture at Mastercard Foundation guided the youth within the groups to encourage their spouses to come on board so as to harness support that shall result into growth and expansion of their businesses. He also encouraged them to embrace a saving culture.

William Matovu, Heifer's Country Director resounded the same to the young people, but as well called upon Kamuli District Leadership to ensure that the young people benefit from the range of existing funding opportunities within the district to start and foster their businesses to profitability.

The Project Director re-echoed the need for the Government to introduce irrigation services to the SAYE project supported block farms owned by youth entrepreneurs to enhance their farming.



The Mastercard Foundation team and the SAYE project team visit Kamuli





## SEASON 3 AYUTE CHALLENGE

Five women, five awards, one Heifer Uganda AYuTe Competition.

## AYuTe Awards

AYuTe Africa Challenge is an initiative of Heifer International that was launched in 2022 to inspire youth-led agri-tech solutions. Innovators are awarded cash grants for ideas that merge technology and farming to tackle challenges faced by smallholder farmers across Africa.

In Uganda, season 3 of the challenge proved how female youth innovators are breaking

barriers to make an impact in the agribusiness sector. This was perceptible when female innovators claimed the top five slots during the challenge. Assumpta Nakalema, the overall winning innovator, bagged USD 13200, Angel Uwera, the second received USD 6500, Olivia Nakiwanuka, the third received USD 2650, while, Stella Nakirijja and Patricia Ninsiima Banura took home USD 9200.

Remarkably, Nakalema developed a Solar Egg Incubator, while, Uwera developed a rapid soil testing machine—the MAK Agro meter and Nakiwanuka, an Axis Solar. These innovations if exhaustively utilised could help farmers save on grid-power costs.

Since its inception, AYuTe has grown significantly with the first edition in 2022 receiving 261 submissions, while, the third edition in 2024 saw over 400 participants. Through application of their innovations, the innovators have impacted 4,915 smallholder farmers who in turn have increased their yields, improved market access, boosted household incomes and enhanced food security. The 24 innovators that attained support from Heifer International further created 18 direct permanent jobs and 47 casual jobs.

As Heifer International continues to invest in agri-tech startups, the goal is to empower youth-led businesses with a special focus on female innovators. AYuTe is set to play a critical role in creating job opportunities for Heifer Uganda's SAYE Project.







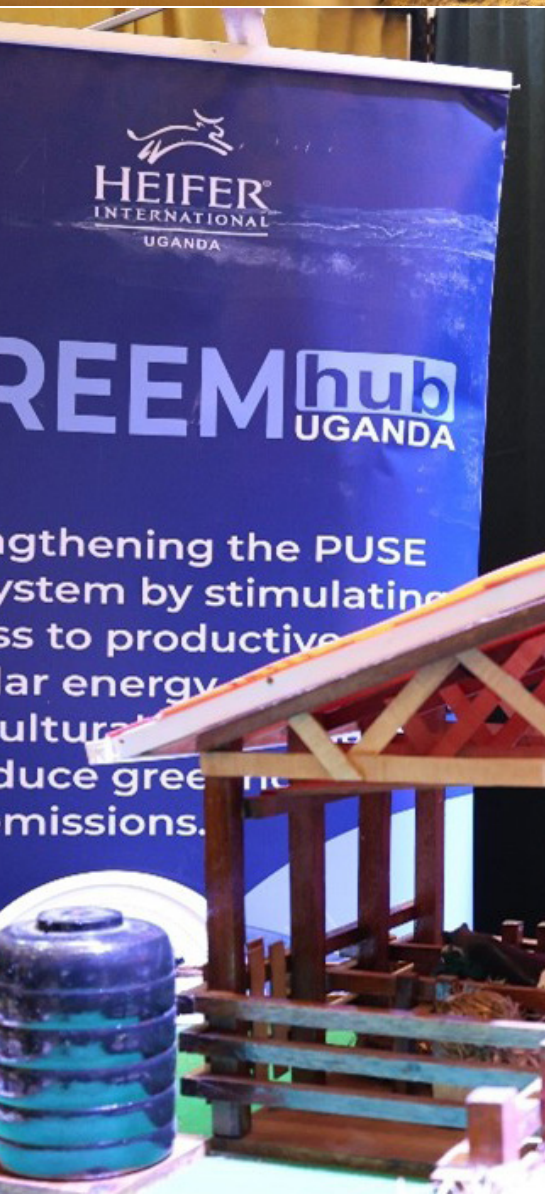
## Renewable Energy Conference & Exhibition: Watering the Clean Energy Transition

In October 2024, Heifer International and other partners supported the Ministry of Energy and Minerals Development—Uganda, in organizing the Renewable Energy Conference 2024 and Expo, which, took place during the 20th Energy and Minerals week. This engagement enabled stakeholders to share experiences, lessons and best practices in the renewable energy sector.

Heifer showcased and spoke about the extensive energy interventions undertaken for the dairy sub-sector in Uganda.

Edna Nyamwaka, the Project Manager for Heifer's Energy Department represented the organisation at the panel discussion on Watering the Clean Energy Transition which addressed the increased need for water in all sectors of the economy. She shared the ecosystems approach of the DREEM Hub project implemented by Heifer International Uganda, which, seeks to address energy and water challenges in the dairy value chain. These efforts, she noted, will increase the resilience and productivity of small holder farmers.

Hon. Ruth Ssentamu Nankabirwa, the Energy and Mineral Development Minister was a Chief Guest at the Conference. She was quick to appreciate Heifer's contribution to the dairy sector over the years. While visiting Heifer's exhibition stall, Hon. Nankabirwa, confirmed that the organisation has stood the test of time and remained true to its vision of supporting smallholder farmers in closing the living income gap.







## Strategy Session: Uganda Hosts Heifer Africa's Bi-Annual Regional Strategy Session

In October 2024, Heifer International Uganda, organised and convened the Bi-annual Africa Regional Strategy Session in Kampala. The Session attracted teams from Heifer Global, Heifer Africa and African Countries implementing regional programs. Global teams gathered to build effective strategies that enable efficient delivery of Africa programs.

Worth noting was the presence and participation of Heifer's frontline team representatives from all Heifer Africa country programs, the Global Transformation Steering Committee and Heifer Global Board members.

Strategy sessions comprised of insightful research presentations, deep conversations, lessons learned and teamwork sessions. These were categorised under three thematic areas, namely: understanding and integrating local context into projects to achieve meaningful and sustainable outcomes; focus on the work of frontline teams for better service delivery in communities and; promoting accountability, organisational values and culture, transformational leadership, as well as, ensuring sustainable impact.

Heifer International is set to build on the momentum generated in Kampala. The organization's commitment to sustainable impact and transformational leadership will continue to drive its efforts to support African communities.







INVESTING IN AFRICA



## Heifer Africa Engages Investors at the 2024 AFSIC Investing in Africa Conference in London

In October, Heifer Africa participated in AFSIC 2024, an investor event in London which promotes trade and investment opportunities in Africa. During the three-day event, Heifer contributed to discussions on the future of African agriculture, investment opportunities in agriculture, agri-tech, innovative financing and partnerships for sustainable development. William Matovu, Country Director for Heifer International Uganda and Africa Country Strategy Lead for Heifer International also joined a panel discussion under the theme, Advancing Agriculture: Africa's New Harvest – The Agricultural Revolution. He offered valuable insights into how scalable technology and innovative financing are unlocking new opportunities for African farmers to increase productivity, improve market access and build sustainable livelihoods.

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*Africa is diverse with different complexities. Recognizing each country's context ensures that we can support smallholder farmers differently and attract more funding to improve their success rate. For instance, in Uganda, we have leveraged this understanding of context to support smallholder farmers by setting up solar stations to power key centres that help farmers prepare and preserve their produce for the market.” Doing this creates stability, de-risks farmers and cooperatives, making them more attractive to private sector and financial institutions. This framework, along with collaboration with governments and the private sector is key to driving economic empowerment.*

**William Matovu – Country Director Heifer International Uganda**

### FACILITATION

Heifer International Uganda aims to support 250,000 youth in agri-business to boost employment in the next five years.

So far **7,634** young men and women have been reached.

Heifer International participation at AFSIC 2024 also included networking and discussions at the Heifer exhibition booth, as well as, one-on-one meetings with potential partners. As such, Heifer is excited about the new connections made with like-minded organizations to scale impact in supporting smallholder farmers.





# A New Dawn for Youth Agripreneurs in Kamuli Uganda

In 2024, Heifer International continued to make strides towards youth entrepreneurship in agriculture by transforming youth from subsistence to commercial farmers. The initiative was made possible through the SAYE project implemented by Heifer International in partnership with Mastercard Foundation and four consortium partners namely: Consortium for Enhancing University Responsiveness to Agribusiness Development Ltd, Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises, Financial Sector Deepening Uganda and ASIGMA Group.

Hellen Tibikobwa (30years) and Doreen Tumwebaza (18 years) have been major beneficiaries of this initiative. For instance, Tibikobwa was a subsistence farmer who almost gave up on agriculture because she saw no hope of survival. A resident of Kibuye village, Bandali Parish, Kagumba sub-county in Kamuli district, she grew food to feed her family but hoped for an opportunity to end poverty within her household. Heifer International presented this opportunity through the SAYE project. Resultantly, Tibikobwa joined Elite B Youth Farmers Group, formed by Heifer International, to empower youth in Kibuye village to start up money-making ventures as a form of financial, mental and social empowerment.

The group Hellen joined set out to grow watermelons and passion fruits on a 23 acre piece of land for commercial purposes and she was able to harvest 625 water melons and make an earning of Shs, 980,350.

On the other hand, Tumwebaze's life was marked by adversity from a young age. Orphaned at 4 years, she was forced to drop out of school at 15 years due to lack of school fees. At 17 years due to economic hardships, she ended up getting pregnant with a young man 2 years older than her. Tumwebaze, who is currently 18 years has 1 child with her partner Wakoolo Zubair (20 years)

## FACILITATION

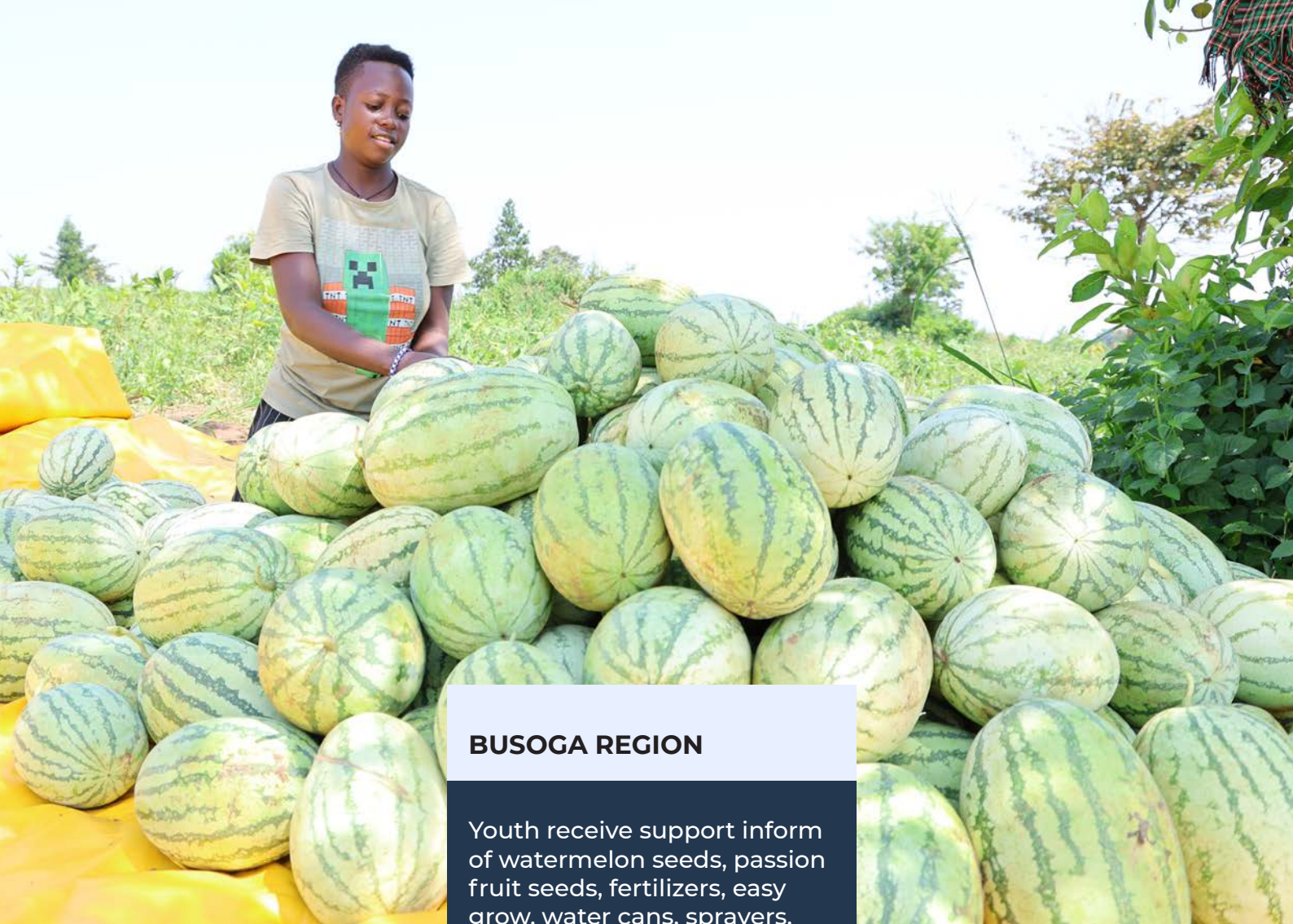
Heifer International Uganda aims to support 250,000 youth in agri-business to boost employment in the next five years.

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Despite pressing challenges, their determination and resilience has been visible. The couple recognized the potential of agriculture to transform their lives. After getting information about the SAYE project from the chairperson of Rumlaa youth group, Tumwebaze and Zubiari decided to join as Rumlaa Group Members. The group through Nabigingo Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation were able to receive 40 kilograms of soyseed worth Ugx. 320,000 /= repayable at the end of the season. The couple hopes to cultivate in at least three acres of land to increase on household income in the next season.

Tumwebaze's story demonstrates how spousal approval and support are key in attracting young women into agribusiness.

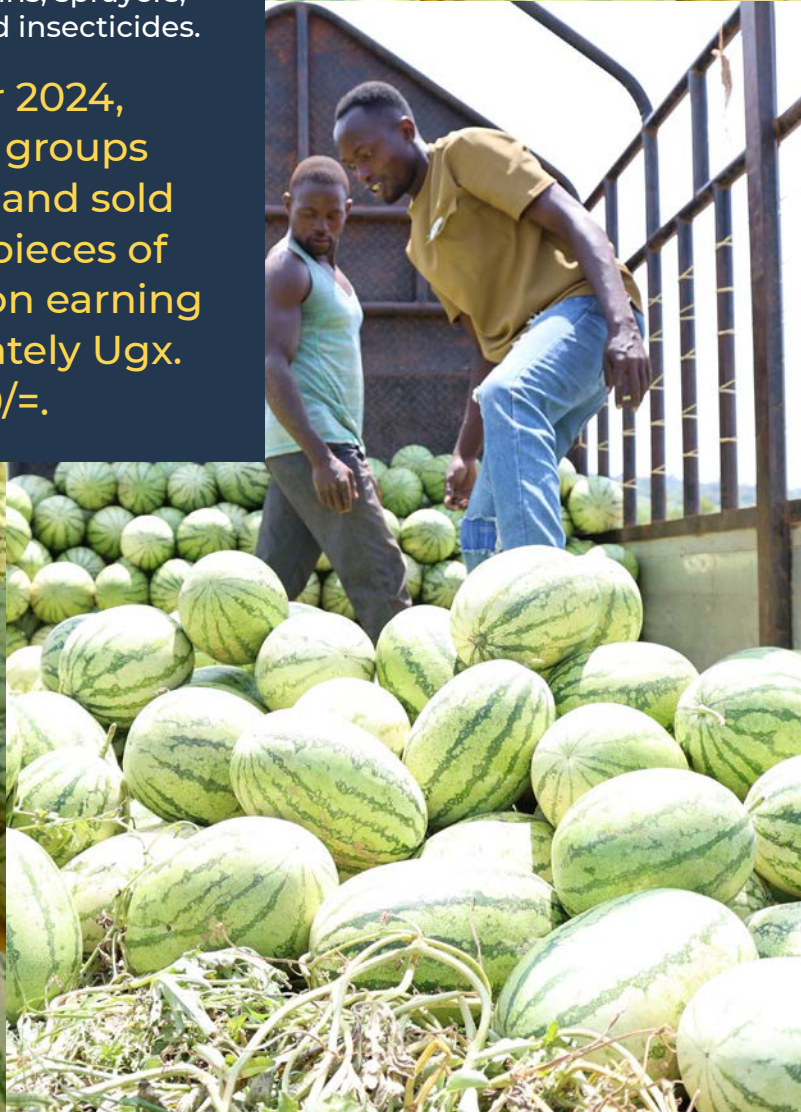




## BUSOGA REGION

Youth receive support inform of watermelon seeds, passion fruit seeds, fertilizers, easy grow, water cans, sprayers, fungicides and insecticides.

In October 2024, two youth groups harvested and sold over 8815 pieces of watermelon earning approximately Ugx. 12,000,000/=.





# Journey to Safe Gender-inclusive Implementation

By Hajira Nakiyimba

## GENDER AND DISABILITY SAFEGUARDS

Heifer International Uganda develops a comprehensive gender policy and introduces disability inclusion in its programing.



Heifer International Uganda set-out on a ten month journey towards gender and disability inclusion in its programing. The journey has been a thrilling, fulfilling and challenging one, considering that, there has been a lot to unlearn, learn and adapt, which, has presented opportunities and spaces for self-reflection and innovation among staff at the organisation.

Together as a team and with the support and collaboration of senior management, staff have strived to make sense of Heifer's operational processes, identified opportunities to drive integration of the yet demanding and core cross cutting aspects of gender, disability and safeguarding in day-to-day implementation.

As a result, Heifer International Uganda is wholly complaint to gender and safeguarding needs. As such, the SAYE project has taken it a notch higher by adopting compliance

to safeguarding. To attain this, a comprehensive policy has been put in place within the SAYE project, to include: a safeguarding policy; gender SAYE project strategy; reporting and response mechanisms enhanced with 10 project staff and 36 gender champions, a toll free line and safeguarding email. Correspondingly, to ensure equitable, as well as, accessible reach and participation in the SAYE project, Heifer International Uganda, recruited the first ever disability inclusion community facilitators to lead on targeted mobilization of people with disabilities.

Heifer's approach ensures that initiatives are both gender-responsive and inclusive of the rights of persons with disabilities in its country programs.

## The Ray of Hope

By Doreen Asiimwe



Working with small holder farmers has proved to Heifer International how much life can be changed by a single ray of hope.

"Anna" not her real name lives in one of the rural villages of Kamuli District. During Heifer's first encounter with her, it was perceptible that, the young mother aged 30 years had an implausible smile and was in despair. However, she joined horticulture and block farming during one of Heifer's initiatives to promote agri-business in Kamuli District.

Two months later, Heifer International visited Anna's block farm, her watermelon had sprouted and she was weeding! The joy that day was so overwhelming it looked like she wanted to hug staff and hold a conversation about changes in her life! During the visit, Anna was still investing in her garden, but was so full of life, her smile was so bright, she looked much younger and less vulnerable, she was so full of hope! With a smile she said to Heifer International "I will never die of poverty."

Keep doing what you are doing, so much change is happening from your effort!



# Transforming Livelihoods for Family Farmers through Inclusive Rural Communication and Technology



As part of her PhD thesis, Dr Connetie Ayesiga, Heifer's Partnership & Technical Lead, published a Chapter in the Food for Agriculture Organisation new book, Collaborative Change:

Towards Inclusive Rural Communication Services. The book provides a different perspective and understanding of transforming livelihoods for family farmers, through inclusive rural communication services and technology.

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*This has been a long time coming and seeing part of my PhD work published in FAO book reminds me of the hard work that I spent on my PhD research. Our book chapter (chapter 7) unravels how current communication services provided by different ICT platforms enhance value chain coordination to improve farmers' access and use of agricultural technologies and their future pathways!”*

**Dr Connetie Ayesiga – Partnership and Technical Lead Heifer International Uganda**





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