

# HOPE

An AFARD newsletter (Issue 5)



## *Buzzing with the bees...*

Bees are the unsung heroes of our food systems. They pollinate our crops but, perhaps, are best known for providing us with honey. For one farmers' group in Atego sub-county in Nebbi district, bees are playing a vital role in their pursuit of different revenue streams.

Also, in this in this fifth edition of our newsletter, have feel good stories of how our projects are inspiring people to improve their livelihoods in Erussi sub-county in Nebbi district, Wadelai sub-county in Pakwach district and Jangokoro sub-county in Zombo district.

Pleasant reading

***Billy Rwothungeyo (Editor)***

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## Atego group making the most of bees

Many farmers venturing into apiculture (beekeeping) are solely interested in only honey. Once they harvest honey from the hive, it is a wrap.

For Dikiri-ber group (whose name translates to 'Unity is strength' in English), there is more to beekeeping than just honey. Based in Oboku village in Atego sub-county in Nebbi district, the group decided to experiment with products from beeswax. Beeswax is a yellow-like substance secreted by honeybees which they use for building honeycombs.

Under the Action for Livelihood Enhancement in Northern Uganda (ALENU) project, members in November last year received training on apiculture on topics, such as optimal care for beehives, safe extraction of honey, best storage practices among others. Upon expressing interest in adding value to beeswax, the group also received further training on how to make

***The first harvest of honey amounted to 10 litres of honey from just the first five hives.***

products from beeswax, and today, members are making body jelly, propolis, candles and soap among others.

"We did not know modern practices of beekeeping until we received training from AFARD under the ALENU project. As a group, we immediately set up 125 hives and we hope to have more hives," explains Jerry Obedirwoth, a member.

The group also received starter kits like hives and honey harvesting gear. The first harvest of honey from the hives amounted to 10 litres of honey from just the first five hives that were inhabited by the bees.

The group has showcased products in nearby markets and at district events. Buoyed by the first impressions many are having from their products, members are determined to expand production, especially as more bees occupy their hives.

"As of today, 51 of our hives now have bees. This means we are only going to harvest even more honey going forward, which in turn means we shall have more beeswax to make more products," says Obedirwoth. The group is looking for more capital to construct a storage facility, and also have an eye on a more reliable supply of packaging materials.

**About ALENU** ALENU is a project under the Development Initiative for Northern Uganda (DINU), a Government of Uganda programme supported by the European Union and supervised by the Office of the Prime Minister.

# 'Grass thatched huts belong in the past'

For a long time, Serena Oyanya wanted to raze down her grass thatched hut and construct a more modern iron roofed house in its place.

"Maintaining a grass thatched house is becoming increasingly difficult. You have to replace the grass on the roof many times to prevent leaking and you also have a lot to do when it comes to maintaining the floor," she says.



*When some of my friends saw me bringing down the old hut, they asked me why? I told them that grass thatched huts belong to the past.*

Oyanya's plan for her new house started taking shape when she signed up for the Action for Livelihood Enhancement in Northern Uganda (ALENU) project in her village, Jupugeta in Erussi sub-county in Nebbi district.

In addition to getting supplies, such as a watering can, hoes,



pump, white potatoes seeds and assorted vegetable seeds, Oyanya was introduced to the concept of savings through the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) component of the project.

VSLAs are designed to enable rural farmers access affordable capital to expand their agricultural enterprises and undertake household enhancing projects like building new houses and acquiring assets, such as animals, motorcycles among others.

Oyanya started saving for the house project. She also benefited from cutting edge agricultural knowledge which improved her harvests of white potatoes. With improved profits, Oyanya's savings received a big boost. Last year, she moved into the house that is almost done bar for a coat of paint that is in her plans.

## About ALENU

➔ ALENU focuses on improving livelihoods by enhancing market opportunities and diversification of foods for farmers.

"When some of my friends saw me bringing down the old hut, they asked me why? I told them that grass thatched huts belong to the past. One way of bringing development and transformation to our community is by encouraging people to stronger iron-roofed houses," she says.

"Besides, not having to worry about replacing the grass on the roof, I am also now able to harvest rainwater for home use. That is something that I could not do while I still had the grass-thatched hut."





# Falling in love with vegetables

## About YADE

↓ AFARD is implementing YADE with the financial support of Medicor Foundation and Dka Austria through HORIZONT3000. The project is tackling the rampant youth unemployment in Wadelai sub-county, by equipping youth with skills across various agribusiness ventures.

From a far, growing vegetables, such as tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, peppers and carrots, among others, is an attractive prospect for many youths. One does not require a large chunk of land, quick maturity turn-around and, most importantly, always ready market for produce.

On closer examination, some youth ultimately shy away from taking on the lucrative vegetable growing venture because of challenges, such as inadequate extension services, among others.

Through the Youth Agri-skilling for Decent Employment (YADE) – a project AFARD is implementing in Wadelai sub-county in Pakwach district, AFARD is addressing these challenges by mentoring youth to embrace vegetable growing with strong conviction.

Minzini Okethi of Pacora East village in the sub-county is one of the youth successfully converting to the gospel of vegetable growing.

“For a long time, I thought growing tomatoes and onions was such a difficult thing. I have received training on best practices, such as how to care for the crops. I am actually in love with tomatoes now and I plan to grow more,” says the

***“I thought growing tomatoes and onions was difficult. I have received training on best practices.”***

twenty-eight-year-old.

In addition to the knowledge, AFARD has also given Okethi supplies, such as seedlings, hoes, watering cans, spray pumps to facilitate his new found love of growing vegetables.

Wadelai is located on the banks of River Nile. Many youth in the sub-county have little interest in the hoe and would rather be out in the boats casting out fishing nets in the river. With ever dwindling fish stocks, Okethi thinks growing tomatoes is a better deal than fishing.

“One advantage of growing tomatoes is they are an ingredient almost everyone uses when preparing dishes. This means there is always a ready market,” he says.

Peeping into the future, Okethi sees himself as one of the biggest tomato growers in Pakwach district.

# 'I now view farming as a business'

Coffee and tea are the most prominent traditional cash crops in Zombo district. In the recent past, however, traditional food crops have risen in stature and now rival traditional cash crops as money makers.

While more farmers are now enthusiastically growing traditional food crops, like maize, beans, peanut, white potatoes and bananas, among others, with the intention of accessing markets, many struggle to approach farming of these crops as a business.

Florence Orombi was such a farmer, until she signed up for the Northern Uganda Resilience Initiative (NURI) project.

A resident of Akokuro village in Jangokoro sub-county in the district, Florence was not taking note of her expenses at the planting and weeding phases and making comparisons with the market prices her products were fetching.

"Thanks to NURI and AFARD, I now have a lot of knowledge. I never used to keep track of how much I have invested in the growing of crops and comparing that against how much I earn when I sell. I was also not selling products in kilogrammes, I did not even know how much exactly I was selling," says Florence.



In addition to getting training on how to approach farming as a business, AFARD also advanced start-up seeds of white potatoes, beans and maize to Florence. She also received training on best farming practices.

"Before I was trained by AFARD, I did not know the importance of planting crops in straight lines. I was simply scattering



***She has so far bought several goats, pigs, chicken and purchased a motor tricycle to transport her produce.***

## About NURI

➔ AFARD is implementing NURI with the funding support of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).

seeds all over the place in a very disorganised manner," she says.

Improvements in the bottom-line of her agricultural products, coupled with savings from the group savings association promoted by the project, Florence is contributing to the improvement of the living standards in her household. She has so far bought several goats, pigs and chicken. She has so far also purchased a motor tricycle to aid with transportation of produce to the market.

Florence is planning to diversify her income sources by planting trees on two acres of land. The future looks good.