



# QSA Notes

## Many hands make light work

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Above L Women's work: a group of Lyantonde women. Photo: QSA

Hardly six months have passed since St Jude Family Projects set foot in Lyantonde, western Uganda, and already there is a tangible feeling of community and friendship amongst these women. They sing together whilst they are working, and trade jokes with each other. As in many rural parts of the world, the women grow most of the food and are also primarily responsible for fetching water and wood for the home. One year ago, these women did not know one another, yet the project had brought them together.

St Jude has come to Lyantonde at their request to tackle chronic food insecurity, which is all the more acute in their region now with increasingly unpredictable changes in climate. Speaking with these women, the camaraderie developing amongst them is warming.

Cooperation and team work, the women concede, is a result of the

project that has already been very valuable and was proving a more productive way to work. Some mention that learning about hygiene and having vegetables in their diet has already helped their own and their families' health, as many of them rarely need to visit the hospital anymore. One woman adds that she has regained her confidence and been able to begin to save some money as a result of small vegetable sales.

St Jude's model is designed to firstly meet the immediate household stresses experienced by women and their families, and works over a two-year span to build long-term resilience of affected communities and their livelihoods. Stabilising food security, increasing income and mitigating the impacts of climate change are achieved through training in agriculture using hybrid and resistant planting materials. Exercises in group dynamics help to foster social cohesion, which is not

only a good outcome in itself but will contribute to greater sustainability, and reinforcement of their sense of food and general security.

Not only amongst the women have these social bonds been formed, but within their own families the dynamics have begun to shift, and for the better. One woman explains that her husband was hesitant at first about her leaving the house to meet with other women. But after she had begun to put into practice some of her learning from an exposure visit to St Jude's training centre, he has begun to follow her into the garden, eager to help and curious to learn how she is bringing more food to the table.

'My family thought the land was not useful, but they have since learned how much they can use it,' another woman laughs, stating that her husband has become very supportive because of the change in diet he has experienced. An inquisitive husband has approached



**Healthy crops.** Caption: They have learnt how much they can use it.  
Permission obtained for the taking and use of each photograph.

from a nearby house with his young son in tow. Acknowledged, he beams, and his first response is to thank his wife for having approached St Jude. He muses aloud that everything in the household has changed, that his wife now has respect from all the community and that they continue to

learn more and more good ideas that are starting to diffuse through the community, even to members who are not directly involved in the project. It is exciting to think that positive change like this can happen in the space of such few months. And at a cost of \$200, paid by the QSA and

DFAT project, each woman can complete her second year of training. Personally, I can't wait to see what the coming year will bring for these women – or rather, what these women will not wait for, but will bring about themselves, together with their families and their community.

The end of financial year is fast approaching, so now is the time of year to consider making a tax deductible donation to QSA to support these women and other QSA initiatives. This can be done by sending a cheque made out to Quaker Service Australia to our new office at Unit 14, 43-53 Bridge Road, Stanmore NSW 2048 or direct credit to our CUA account in the name of Quaker Service Australia, BSB 814 282, Account number 50585902. Please include your name in the reference section of the direct credit and send an email to [donations@qsa.org.au](mailto:donations@qsa.org.au) to advise us that the donation has been sent. Remember that all donations to QSA are now tax deductible! Thank you, Friends.

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