



QSA NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 8 - June 16

Welcome to the latest QSA Newsletter where you will meet new people, learn about our projects and join us in helping to change lives. In this edition, we visit our project partner Eco-Agric and the people of the project working to address food security and livelihoods in Hoima District, Uganda.

People

On the 14th of April 2016, thirty vulnerable single mothers who rely on subsistence farming attended a colourful ceremony together with 300 people from their village. The members of Tukurakurane (which means 'Let's Develop') Women's Group, celebrated the skills they have learnt, the income they have made, and the overall benefits that this project funded by QSA, has had on their lives.

"Before the project, we would spend two days without food and only eating porridge without sugar. Now, we get three balanced meals a day," explained the group members.

Monica Businge is one of the proud women from the Tukurakurane group. She was always a hardworking woman, but didn't previously have the knowledge on how to properly develop her garden to supply a strong yield. She was provided with good quality bean and maize seeds, banana plants, a watering can and a hoe. Learning and implementing sustainable agriculture practices enabled her to produce food even during the dry season. She has been able to sell excess produce, and has been saving money in her savings group at every meeting.



Monica in her intercropped garden of maize, beans and bananas

Projects addressing Food Security and Livelihoods

Since the start of 2015, Eco-Agric has received funding from QSA to promote organic agriculture for improved food security, livelihoods and environmental conservation. So far, thirty participants have received training on sustainable conservation farming practices, and established a savings group. The women have received beans, maize, sweet potato and banana plants, as well as water buckets, watering cans, and chickens. They have established farmer field schools and demonstration plots where women gain hands-on learning experience, a plant nursery, and a savings group. The women from Tukurakurane are now able to eat three meals a day as a result of the project. Each member is earning \$1.5 - \$2 a day from selling excess vegetables, and in addition, loans financed from the savings pool of the savings group has enabled the start-up of eight small businesses.



Treasurer receiving members' savings.

FACT BOX:

What does it mean to be food secure?

Food security means more than simply having enough to eat. It means helping communities to have access to a wide range of nutritious foods all year round, sufficient to enable them to have at least two meals per day for all members of the household, including the women. This is preferably managed via training in establishing their own food gardens on land they own or have access to, being able to harvest and store the produce for later consumption and saving seeds for the next year's crop. It also means being equipped to mitigate the impacts of climate change on their agricultural pursuits, and being aware of local markets and market prices to sell off produce which is surplus to their current needs.

Unfortunately there are many more women in Hoima who fall under the category 'vulnerable female-headed households'. They are also dependent on subsistence agriculture. Despite their best efforts of trying to copy the methods that the women of Tukurakurane women's group have learnt, poor seed quality and lack of knowledge is still preventing an increase in their production. They are only able to eat one meal a day, and they continue to use chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which has not only degraded their soils, but also their health.



Members during a training session

Prior to starting this project, Eco-Agric conducted a study called Participatory Rural Appraisal to identify local priority needs and the most vulnerable community members. They found that 90% of women in Hoima district are dependent on subsistence farming. Most of the women are illiterate, and almost half the female-headed households have lost their husbands to either tobacco related diseases or HIV/AIDS. Most of the women take Anti Retro Viral medication to stop the progression of HIV, and on average they have seven dependants who have never attended school. They only eat one meal a day, although some households were found to eat only one meal every two days. Lack of access to food not only affects their adherence to, and the effectiveness of, the Anti Retro Viral medication, but their children remain illiterate and malnourished as a result.



Given the development need in the area, and based on the success of the pilot project funded by QSA to improve the lives of vulnerable single mothers that rely on subsistence farming, QSA has agreed to a larger project budget for the coming financial year. Eco-Agric will receive funds from QSA and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade under ANCP, such that the number of participants can be increased to 90.

Nursery bed management

At QSA we are excited that with the additional funding this year we will be able to expand on the existing achievements with an additional two women's groups. The project will establish an additional six farmer field schools for participatory learning on sustainable crop production, poultry rearing and irrigation systems which involves season-long training activities. A further six demonstration gardens will be established on selected host-farmer's land and provide hands-on learning experiences, providing easy and quick learning of agricultural techniques. In addition, the women will learn about financial security, business management skills and establish two more savings groups so they are able to save and access credit from the group.

Written by Ragna Gilmour

Other News

Have you seen QSA's new website? Do let the office know if you like the new look of it, and can find the sort of information you are looking for.

<http://www.qsa.org.au>

QSA welcomes Ragna Gilmour to the office in Sydney, where she is managing the projects in Africa, currently in Uganda and Zimbabwe.



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Would you like to learn more about QSA and its project partners? If you would, please contact us at administration@qsa.org.au or by mail at 119 Devonshire Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010, or by phone on 029698 9103. We would love to hear from you.



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