



QSA NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 10 – May 2017

Welcome to the latest QSA Newsletter, where you will learn about our projects and meet new people. Join us in empowering people to change their lives and livelihoods. In this edition, we visit Ugandan project beneficiaries who are working to improve their food security.



Food Security and Livelihoods in Uganda

As the humidity of the Ugandan morning builds, project beneficiaries Annette and David* are taking a break from their daily rituals. Upon our arrival, David demonstrates exceptional enthusiasm by shuffling to the keyboard to play and sing a song to greet us. Annette and David have been married for 30 years and are both blind. They live in an urban area in a very small house, on a very small plot of land, together with their six children and two grandchildren.

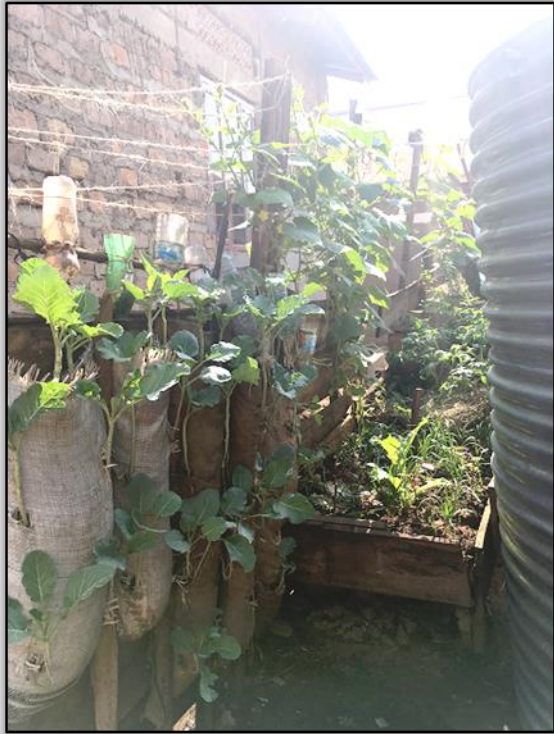


Annette tends to the kale with her son

The family shows us around their home: a small and barren, urban space full of very poor soil and strewn with rocks and pebbles. The first thing that stood out to us was the new water tank that was provided by the project. Previously, the children had to take turns to walk 3 kilometres to the well to fetch water for cooking, drinking and cleaning, which was always a potentially dangerous activity for reasons of personal safety, in addition to the arduous task of returning with a heavy load over uneven terrain. Particularly towards the end of the dry season, Annette mentions, the water quality is only good enough for the livestock. Now, the tank collects and provides them with a more reliable source of clean rain water across the year.

They now have four young goats, chickens and are growing kale in old sacks. David explains how they are implementing what he learnt at the training at St. Jude in Masaka. The sales of chickens and eggs have become their main income source, which is now able to cover their children's school costs that previously they could scarcely meet.

** Names have been changed for privacy purposes.*



Currently, they are only growing enough kale for home consumption, but with their next lot of savings they hope to buy pots to mix manure, which should help to increase yield so they can sell to market. Each leaf of kale, they have calculated, can bring them 1000 Ugandan shillings (35c of the Australian dollar). David mentions they are able to generate money despite the small size of their land, and thinks aloud about the possibility of starting a mushroom farm, which was another part of his training at St Jude. That would be another quick and effective way of generating further income for the family. Now, he says, he has several ideas and the knowledge to make them happen; he just needs the investment to set it up – but one thing at a time.

Arriving at another beneficiary's home, the parents were not around at the time of our visit. Instead, Amaka, the eldest daughter answers the door, and recognises a staff member from the project who supported her mother to become a confident organic farmer, and to start her savings scheme. She welcomes us to show us around. She explains that both her parents are hearing-impaired, and she is at home looking after her little sister who has Down's Syndrome.

Amaka could tell me the names of all the vegetables around her, how to take care of them, and how to cook them. Their home garden was amazing. It consisted of garden beds full of mulch to keep the moisture in the soil during the hot days and a water drip system made from recycled plastic water bottles hanging across the garden. Every inch of the garden space was being utilised, up to sacks that created a vertical garden at the far end. There was a large range of nutritious vegetables growing, and in addition, a water tank had just arrived and was waiting to be installed.

Above and below: Vertical gardens with bottle drip system



Amaka explained that her family had another small plot of land that had recently been

land-grabbed, so they could no longer grow crops on the farm land and had to make do with their immediate garden space whilst the dispute was being resolved.



Kia and her cabbages

An hour's slow ride out of town in the late afternoon, we meet Kia, who is currently supporting her husband who is recently out of work, and her five children. Her daughters, who are 6 and 12 years old, suffer from sickle-cell disease. The attacks mainly occur in their legs so that they are not able to walk. Kia explains that growing vegetables helps them a lot as the nutrition from the vegetables provides a boost to their health. Whereas she used to buy the vegetables, she can now grow them herself, and it makes a great difference to her daughters who often get sick because their immune systems are very vulnerable. For many years, Kia struggled to pay for the hospital and school fees, but now she is able to afford both, thanks to the sales of her surplus vegetables, which the project assists her to take to the local market.

One year ago, Kia had saved enough to buy a large plot of land, and has since been able to convert it into a highly

productive garden. As the plot is located far from her home, she rents some help from a neighbour who helps to look after the garden, whom she is able to pay with a portion of the income from her sales. She recalls how she started applying the agricultural skills she learned from her training at St Jude, firstly in her home garden, then transferred them to cultivate her new plot. With this new plot, she hasn't yet been able to keep much in savings, but with a few good harvests she can earn 5000-7000 Ugandan shillings (\$190-260 Australian) in a month, and will see her family's situation continue to improve.

The garden is beautiful and bountiful, and there seems to be a bit of everything growing! Cabbage, carrots, tomatoes, onions, taro, citrus, amaranth, papaya, passionfruit and sugar cane, and it is all looking very healthy. It certainly helps that she has access to river water nearby, and she has begun to buy manure as fertilizer. Kia mentioned she had problems with pest insects, and initially she used chemicals, until Josephine Kizza taught her that she could spray them with soya bean milk which also worked and was less harmful. The tomatoes are prone to fungus, but she has learnt with project support that staking and mulching can help the tomatoes to thrive.

These are but a few of the 'fruits' of our funded projects that revolve around food security and livelihoods in Uganda. Our project partners who work with the individuals we have encountered on this particular visit specialise in educating communities about disability whilst finding new ways for people living with a disability to contribute to their families and community. Through small-scale organic farming, the beneficiaries are learning life-long skills that will empower them, their families, and ultimately their communities, to transform attitudes around disability, and manage their own secure and long-term source of food, nutrition and income in a sustainable way.

Edited and adapted by Ai Leen Quah, using field notes by Ragna Gilmour from late 2016

Other News

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

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

QSA would like to welcome Ai Leen Quah to the Sydney office, where she is now managing our programs in the African region.



Friends, the end of the financial year is fast approaching, and so now is the time of year to consider making a tax deductible donation to QSA. This can be done by sending a cheque made out to Quaker Service Australia to our office at **119 Devonshire Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010** 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 us an email to donations@qsa.org.au to advise us that the donation has been sent and whether you would like your donation to go to our General Fund (not tax deductible) or to one or both of our tax deductible funds, Overseas Aid Fund or Aboriginal Concerns Fund. Thank you Friends, you will be contributing to the sharing of ideas among communities in Australia, Cambodia, India and Uganda.

Permission has been given for the photos, credit to QSA unless otherwise stated.

Would you like to learn more about QSA and its project partners? If so, we would love to hear from you:
[Email] administration@qsa.org.au [Mail] 119 Devonshire Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010 [Telephone] 02 9698 9103



ACFID
MEMBER

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. See www.acfid.asn.au for details and should you wish to provide feedback about QSA and its work.

Quaker Service Australia | ABN 35 989 797 918 | ACN 618 346 839