

Seeds of change

Focus on
Karamoja,
Uganda





Improving diets and resilience

In the remote, rural region of Karamoja in north eastern Uganda, poverty and chronic malnutrition are widespread, particularly among women and children. Most families eat a limited diet of cereal grains and wild leaves, and there is low awareness about the importance of a balanced diet. These rural communities rely heavily on natural resources, which leaves them vulnerable to climate extremes like drought and floods.

Farm Africa has worked in Karamoja since 2018 on projects that support rural communities, particularly women, to improve their families' nutrition, boost their incomes and withstand the effects of climate change.

Our biggest current project in Karamoja is called CASCADE, working in partnership with CARE International, with funding from the Dutch government.

Farmers are organised into groups to learn about the production, consumption and marketing of foods that are both climate-resilient and nutritious, like iron-rich beans, vitamin A enriched maize and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes.

The project improves farmers' access to the high-quality seeds they need to grow high-quality crops. Eight of the farmers' groups are now producing and selling their own certified seeds, ensuring other groups benefit from easier access to reliable and affordable seeds.

We've also used additional funding to help set up micro-irrigation schemes, bringing a much-needed supply of

water that is enabling groups to grow vegetables all year round.

In addition, CASCADE strengthens women's participation in decision-making and leadership, both at home and in their communities, and supports women to gain greater access to and control of resources.

Betty Napeyok, Farm Africa's Facilitator for Karamoja's Moroto District, said: "For me, the biggest impact of Farm Africa's work for the parishes I've been working in is malnutrition in kids is reduced. More and more parishes I am working in are no longer enrolling for the supplementary feeding programmes that feed malnourished children."

On pages 4, 6 and 8 you can read the stories of the farmers Florence, Annette and Ben, who are all now growing a range of nutritious foods, which they're using to feed their children as well as sell to earn more money.

Livestock for livelihoods

Our first project in Karamoja was the Livestock for livelihoods project, funded by UK aid from the UK government. It helped women to



set up small-scale goat rearing businesses as well as take part in Village Savings and Loan Associations.

We caught up with Agnes, Sylvia and Christine, three of the women who took part in the project, to hear about the long-term impacts the project has had on their lives. Turn to page 10 to find out how they're getting on.



"When families eat enough vegetables like iron-rich beans and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, malnutrition rates drop."

Betty Napeyok

Moroto District Facilitator,
Farm Africa



Healthier kids, stronger futures



Forty-two-year-old farmer Florence Otyang has her hands full raising her children, including two pairs of energetic twins. Life is not easy, but with support from Farm Africa, Florence has been able to improve her family's diet, increase her income and build a more secure future.

Florence has long farmed traditional crops like sorghum, beans, cucumbers and pumpkins. Her husband takes on casual labour whenever he can, but money has often been tight, leaving little money to buy food. The couple were not aware of the importance of a balanced diet.

"Before, we mostly ate beans, beans, beans," Florence recalls. "We never

knew that vegetables could better the lives of our children."

That changed when Florence joined Naukoi Riverside Farm Group, supported by our CASCADE project, where we tackle malnutrition by training smallholder farmers in climate-smart agriculture and supporting them to diversify their diets. The group, made up of 22 members – 13 women and nine men – grows vegetables together on a demonstration plot and runs a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) to support one another financially.

Through training, Florence has learnt how to grow a wider variety of nutritious foods such as dark green

vegetables, as well as biofortified iron-rich beans and vitamin A maize. She's also adopted new farming techniques, such as planting in ridges to help retain water in Karamoja's dry conditions.

"Now I feed my children with different vegetables, and they are doing well," Florence explains. "Most diseases have reduced. Like diarrhoea: when you over-feed one type of food you find you get diarrhoea. Now, I feed my children iron-rich beans and they are becoming stronger.

"I have also learnt how to improve my cooking, like instead of cooking sorghum alone, I put some butter, eggs and milk in it. Before, I would only serve a one-food meal. My children enjoy the new food."

As well as improving her family's diet, Florence has been able to boost her income. Her group has switched from selling cowpeas to more marketable crops like sukuma (collard greens), spinach and onions. Buyers come

directly to the farm, as word has got out that the group has good-quality produce for sale. From her earnings, Florence has saved 100,000 Ugandan Shillings. And the VSLA means she's able to take loans when needed.

"When school fees were needed recently, the group helped me quickly and my children didn't miss much school. Before, they could miss weeks of school while I had to do petty work to get money. Farm Africa has brought that change," she says.

Looking ahead, Florence's ambitions are clear. "My plans are to educate my kids and build a nice house. Right now, we are renting, which is the most painful thing. Sometimes we don't have the money for the landlady. I want to buy a plot and build our own house. If I continue saving and get profits from our saving, I should be able to do it."

📍 Moroto District



"Word has got out that we have good vegetables for sale."

Florence Naukoi Riverside Farm Group

Seeds of success



“When it is time to dig, harvest, clean and weed, we do it together as a group.” Annette Lum-Orwenyo Farmers Group

Like most parents, Annette wants to give her children opportunities in life she hasn't had herself. Annette attended school for just six years, but wants a different story for her three young children, aged eight, five and two and a half.

“I want my children to study to earn a good living so they don't become poor and have to work in people's gardens like me.”

Until recently, Annette made a living doing casual work on other people's farms, earning just enough to support her children now, but not enough to pay for secondary school.

“Primary schools are not very expensive, but my problem will come when my children get older and go to

higher institutions. Their fees will be higher and I will need more money.”

With support from our CASCADE project, Annette's hopes for her children are now within reach.

She's a member of the Lum-Orwenyo Farmers Group, which is working with Farm Africa to grow and sell high-quality seeds for iron-rich beans. This means not just higher incomes and better nutrition for the farmers in the group but also better availability of seeds for other farmers in the region wanting to grow this nutritious and profitable crop.

After harvest, our support in obtaining certification for the seeds has been crucial to opening up new markets and higher prices for the group.

When packaged attractively, certified iron-bean seeds can command prices up to twice as high as when the beans are sold as food.

Beyond boosting incomes, the CASCADE project also improves nutrition. Each of the farmers keep some of the iron-rich beans for home consumption. They also grow a variety of vegetables in kitchen gardens at their homes, which they use to prepare tasty and nutritious new recipes learnt from Farm Africa.

“Before we attended Farm Africa's cooking demonstrations, we just used to eat beans, maize, sorghum and sweet potatoes,” explained Annette. Now, she's added pumpkins, cow pea leaves, protein-rich groundnut paste, and leafy green vegetables like sakuma wiki and malakwang (a type of hibiscus) to the family's diet.

Her children are thriving on the new foods. “I feel very healthy now

and my children are more healthy too. We have all put on weight since eating these different foods.”

Annette has been able to grow more crops at home using a loan taken from the savings group set up with Farm Africa's support. She added: “I am cultivating beans, maize, sunflowers and sesame. I am going to sell some to pay back the loan and will keep the rest for home consumption.”

The combination of better farming practices, higher incomes and healthier meals has set Annette's family on a new path. As well as schooling, their future plans include rearing animals and improving their simple thatched roof house.

📍 Abim District

Opposite: the Lum-Orwenyo Farmers Group with their sack of iron-rich bean seeds.



Annette (right) and neighbour Dorcas using pumpkin, cow pea leaves and groundnuts to prepare a nutritious meal.

Solar irrigation transforms lives

In Lotisan sub-county, many farming families struggle to grow enough food. Long treks to fetch water drain time and energy, and harvests often fail when water sources dry up. But today, thanks to a solar-powered micro-irrigation system recently introduced with support from Farm Africa, farmers in Amunyodoi village are able to grow vegetables all year round, feed their families better and boost household incomes.

For community-based facilitator Peter Aguma, the change has been dramatic. "I joined Farm Africa last year in 2024. I train the groups on vegetable growing and also train mothers, including breastfeeding mothers, on how to feed young children and what foods they should eat and give to their children so that they grow up healthy," he said.

Peter explained how irrigation has helped farmers take control of their crops and diets. "Irrigation is necessary here because we realised these people had no nearby market to access food, especially nutritious food. Mothers should be able to access food within the local community. The vegetables we pick right now from the garden are very good. You can just pick them, go and prepare them and enjoy them."

Before the system, farmers were limited to using what water they could carry from ponds two kilometres away. "We tried before to grow vegetables here without irrigation. We were fetching water from a pond. But when the pond dried up, it became a challenge for us. Farmers lost morale managing their garden. They gave up. But since the irrigation has come in, it will be continuous," Peter said.

Community-based facilitator Peter in the irrigated vegetable plot.



The health benefits have been striking. "Before, we had a lot of cases of malnutrition. Hospitals were full of malnourished children: ones who were receiving Plumpy nuts," Peter explained. "But currently, I don't see any doctor giving a referral letter in the village, meaning malnutrition has totally ended. You see children looking healthier. They have more energy and are playing more. When children are healthy, the whole community is happy."

Farmer and group member Ben Lokut agrees: "Having fresh vegetables has contributed to nutrition in the home. It has removed hunger."

For Ben, the irrigation has opened the door to a new livelihood: "I used to make charcoal to sell. But charcoal burning is restricted, it's not a good thing. So now I cultivate and sell vegetables. I would like more tanks, so this farm can become more commercial."

As to the future, the group is excited to start a savings group with proceeds from the vegetable sales, as Peter explained: "Tomorrow, these vegetables are going to sell and begin savings. I believe in future if you come and visit us, you'll realise this place has changed for the better."

"We can grow food all year round now."

Ben farmer

📍 Moroto District



Livestock for livelihoods

Farm Africa's Livestock for livelihoods project, funded by UK aid from the UK government, supported pastoralist women living in Karamoja to set up sustainable, small-scale goat-rearing enterprises to generate income and provide their families with more nutritious diets.

The project first helped the women organise into groups of 30, with ten women from each group receiving two pregnant goats on the understanding they would each pass on two goat kids to the next 10 women once their herds had grown.

The women also set up Village Savings and Loan Associations to save together, making funds available to pay for care of the goats as well as to invest in each other's businesses.



Sylvia

Mother of seven Sylvia Teko says the project has transformed her life. "Farm Africa taught us how to care for the goats. We learnt to build a good house for them and keep it clean so the goats don't fall sick. We learnt to treat and spray the goats. We still do this today."

As well as providing nutritious milk for her children's porridge, the goats

have enabled her to educate them. "I had 10 goats but I sold six to send my children to school. I have been able to send them to boarding school, where they have learnt to read. They couldn't read before. I didn't go to school myself. I want my kids to study."

Through the savings group, she can now borrow enough money to buy seeds to farm three acres, and bring in much bigger harvests of maize, beans and sorghum than previously. "A good harvest can be 30 bags. Before, sometimes I would harvest just one bag. My life is so much better."



Christine

For 33-year-old mother of five Christine Lomongin, 33, the project brought empowerment: "I love Farm Africa because they empowered me. Here in Karamoja, it is men who own animals, but now I own my own animals. It is my first time to have animals."

"I also now have the power that I can sell my own goats. My husband is very happy because it helps us. Before I worked with Farm Africa it was just my husband who paid for everything, but now I contribute a lot too."



Agnes

Mother of six Agnes Longes, 33, says goats boosted her livelihood and reputation. "In total, I reached 25 goats. I still have 15 of them. Before, I had no animals. These goats have helped us so much. They pay for treatment when we are sick and when

there is hunger they pay for food for our family. The community respects me. I have the most goats of anyone in my village and this motivates others, I am seen as an example."

Like Sylvia, Agnes is now able to grow more crops thanks to the VSLA. "I borrowed money for maize and sorghum seeds to cultivate on two acres. Before, I just used to cultivate one acre."

 Nakapiripirit District


"We use the goats' milk to feed our young children. We put it in porridge or just drink it."

Sylvia





“Before we attended Farm Africa’s cooking demonstrations, we just used to eat beans, maize, sorghum and sweet potatoes. Now we’ve added pumpkins, pumpkin leaves, cow pea leaves, aubergines and okra...I feel very healthy now and my children are more healthy too.”

Annette Amoi
Karamoja, Uganda



1 St John's Lane
London
EC1M 4BL
info@farmaffrica.org



www.farmaffrica.org

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