**Success Story: International Farmer-to-Farmer Extension Education Increasing the Competitiveness of Ugandan Women Farmers in the Marketplace**

**CoReporter(s)**

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**Relevance**

The current strategic plan for Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) describes the issue that “in times of heightened global conflict and misunderstanding, the importance of gaining an international perspective increases.” In meeting the objectives of the strategic plan, CALS is involved in a number of development, extension, research, and teaching initiatives around the world. The ISUEO Global Extension program through collaboration with the Center for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods, identified a need and source of financial support to assist women farmers in Uganda. Although women in Uganda represent nearly 70 percent of the agricultural workforce and provide nearly all food for consumption, historically, they have been excluded from or disregarded in development programs aimed at improving agricultural production and increasing food security in their country. Agricultural education and training for women significantly lags behind that of their male counterparts. Ugandan women farmers lack access to important agricultural resources such as extension workers, tools, and credit, and are constrained by other time consuming household activities. In addition to structural constraints, women also face intra-household barriers to food security and income generation. Programs that address and aim to resolve gender-specific agricultural roles and constraints are needed to help build women farmers’ capacity, increase their productivity, improve the livelihoods of women and their families and contribute to the general economic development of Uganda.

**Response**

“Bridging the Gap: Increasing the Competitiveness of Ugandan Women Farmers in the Marketplace” project was funded through two consecutive, one-year, USAID Farmer-to-Farmer grants. The focus of the project was to promote sustainable livelihoods of small landholder women farmers in the Kamuli District by strengthening their capacity for market oriented farming and establishing associations of such farmers to share knowledge, experience and market bases. The project hadfour objectives: improve maize grain quality by implementing better post-harvest handling strategies; increase soybean production; improve farm record keeping; and, develop collective marketing strategies for increased profitability. During the two-year projects, ISUEO co-leaders, Margaret Smith and Linda Naeve, hosted seven trips with 12 volunteer Iowa farmers. The project reached 180 farmers organized in 18 groups in the communities of Butansi and Namasagali. The staff and volunteers taught the farmers on improved post-harvest handling for improved grain quality and storage, seed germination testing and evaluation, the use of the Farm Record books for crops, and helped them establish collaborative market associations.

**Results**

A baseline and final survey was conducted of the farmers involved in the project to establish the beginning status and practices of individual farmers and their groups to monitor the progress of the project in the set targets as well determine changes in behavior and profitability as a result of the project.

The survey found that the farmers adopted most of the recommended practices through their farmer groups. They also strengthened their farmer groups through the support inform of inputs, trainings they have received from the project to enable them benefit from their agriculture. Farmer groups which were formed and well managed, have efficiently handled their post harvesting, marketing and record keeping. The majority of the farmers surveyed, (96.4%) said that the project has brought about a number of changes in their households, only 5 (3.6%) responded that there has not been great impact caused by the project in their households. They stated that they used the income they have earned from the sales of soybean and maize included the ability to pay school fees and scholastic materials for their children, pay medical bills, cater for household expenditures, purchase agro inputs and livestock, as well as rent additional land to increase production. These two successful, grant-funded projects led to another year of funding from the Gates Foundation to continue efforts in seed cleaning for improved quality and efficiency.

**Outreach:**

Volunteer participation: Through interviews conducted by an ISU graduate student, we learned that Ugandan and Iowan farmers learned through the program, and both groups felt empowered by what they learned. Ugandan farmers benefited by learning improved farming practices, by teaching these practices to others in their communities, and by increasingly seeing themselves as successful businesswomen. Every Iowan farmer interviewed believed that she could learn about farming from Ugandan farmers, and several Iowans made minor changes on their farms. The program benefited Iowan farmers primarily by expanding their vision of farming in a globalized world.

Presentations: Approximately 25 presentations were given to local groups and organizations, school classrooms, state and national conferences and conventions that reached over 800 people.

Media coverage: Blogs were written on three trips and posted on two websites; four ISUEO press releases were written, and five feature articles were written in volunteers’ local newspapers.

ISU student involvement: In 2012 and 2013, a group of students in the ISU sophomore engineering design course Mechanical Engineering 270, and later as a special project, designed a hand-operated seed cleaner, or fanning mill, that was piloted with the women farmers during this project. This project initiated a collaboration between the ISU mechanical engineering students and students and staff at St. Joseph Vocational Center in Kamuli, Uganda. The fanning mill was improved and manufactured as part of the 2013-14 Gates Foundation project under the direction of Dr. Margaret Smith.

ISU Master thesis: Lauer, Stephen. 2013. *Managing Dynamics of Power and Learning in Community Development: A Case Study of Iowan Farmers in Uganda*.