



CommonGround Project NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3: APRIL 2024



Table of Contents:

02	Way Forward CG project visits micro finance support centre	12	The Sessions (7, 8, And 9) Assisted PIP innovators In Developing Detailed Action plans For Their Household Visions.
03	Kariko-rwakanyweire Communities Start Livelihood Activities	13	The 2023 Implementation Period Was characterized By Both Successful And Unsuccessful implementations.
04	Training Of PIP Innovators On IPP Creation	16	Profiling And Selection Of Schools In Kigezi And rwenzori Regions
06	The First Awareness-raising Meetings In Elgon Region	18	Stakeholders Meet To Discuss Generic Market access Bottlenecks
07	Identifying Entrepreneurial Business Initiatives Among PIP Innovators. Rwamahano Community Establishes Trenches To Control Erosion.	19	Sub-county Awareness-rising Meetings Introduced stakeholders To Watershed Restoration Processes
09	PIP Innovators Trained On IPP Creation	21	Open Days: A Mobilization Strategy For Farmer -to-farmer trainings
10	Staff Have Been Trained In Tree Nursery, Slums, And Agriculture Methodology.		

Editorial

Compiled by
Andrew Masinde (Communications Officer)

- Edited by**
1. Josephine Nakanwagi (Regional Coordinator)
 2. Nielsen Flemming (Chief of Party)
 3. Felix Ochakacon (Ag. DCOP)

Forward by Nielsen Flemming (Chief Of Party)



2023 was the year when CommonGround transitioned from the studies and consultations of the inception period to full implementation.

Since July, all staff have been busy in the field, training and supporting households, communities, and local governments in the implementation of the PIP approach.

The response has been exciting. Many households and communities started implementing their PIP plans before they were completed. Relying on their own resources, they have constructed many kilometers of roads and trenches to control erosion in their fields.

Some farmers have, on their own initiative, started teaching neighbours how to apply PIP. The local government has been actively collaborating with the CommonGround project.

Government extension staff have both received and provided training; district officials have participated in decisions about priority areas, in joint evaluations, and contributed to inventories of bylaws and various studies.

Collaboration with other projects is strong and includes several permanent working groups that ensure synergy and coordination. CommonGround will continue to provide training in PIP to other projects that are new to this approach.

In return, CommonGround receives support in technical areas that are not covered by its own experts.

CG VISITS MICRO FINANCE SUPPORT CENTRE

The CommonGround Project held bilateral and consultative meetings with the Micro Finance Support Centre (MSC) in the Fort Portal to explore potential collaborations.

The MSC's role in providing loans to the 'active poor', particularly smallholder farmer groups, women, and youth, aligns with CommonGround's objectives. MSC also offers financial services and additional support to rural communities and partner organisations, including wholesale and retail loans tailored for Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs).

The MSC has contributed to farmer-based organizations by completing storage facilities and offering training programs in financial literacy, record-keeping, portfolio management, and crop financing.

The meeting revealed promising opportunities for collaboration, as both MSC and CommonGround share a focus on assisting smallholder farmers. The area manager proposed sharing their client database, conducting joint field missions, and preparing a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise the partnership.

KARIKO-RWAKANYWEIRE COMMUNITIES START LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES



PIP Innovators excited after receiving rabbits



Some community members receive their rabbits

PIP Innovators from the Kariko and Rwakanyweire communities in Kitumba sub-county, Kabale District, have taken proactive steps to address issues such as low income, soil exhaustion, and poor transport networks through a series of awareness meetings.

Community members have actively participated in various activities and enterprises aimed at tackling these challenges. For instance, the 25 PIP Innovators in Kariko have initiated a monthly contribution of Sh10,000 to purchase sheep and rabbits for their members.

This initiative has already seen the acquisition of five rabbits and sheep for five members, with the process continuing until all 25 members have their own rabbits and sheep. Furthermore, a separate savings group has been established, with members contributing Sh5000 monthly to ensure that each member receives two piglets by the end of the year.

The piglets will be distributed among members until each one has received their share. These initiatives not only aim to improve the economic well-being of community members but also foster a sense of unity and collaboration among them.

In the Rwakanwire community, 25 PIP innovators save Sh10,000 twice a week to buy rabbits for two members every month. 16 members have received their rabbits.

Musika Dickson, a member of the PIP innovators, stated that after training, they realised they could work together to change their lives.

Richard Arishaba, a PIP innovator, explains that various groups developed various enterprises based on their capacity, aiming to address issues such as low income, soil

exhaustion due to the law's use of animal manure, and poor nutrition.

Shallon Turyahebwa reports that through awareness meetings, communities were motivated to open a five-kilometer road from Lake Bunyonyi to trading centers, with three kilometers completed thus far.

Twebaze Patrick, a PIP innovator, stated that the CommonGround project's intervention has helped them identify and solve their problems independently, despite the lack of external help.

The road will facilitate the transportation of their produce from upstream to downstream, as most of their land is on the downstream side. This initiative is a significant step towards sustainable development.

The Kariko-Rwakanyweire communities are setting a positive example of how collective action can lead to sustainable development and improved livelihoods.

PIP INNOVATORS TRAINED ON IPP CREATION



Kigezi Communities learning how to make A-Frame

Having completed Household PIP Creation (Module 2), which involved PIP innovators developing their household PIPs, which also included improving the farming systems on their land, it was deemed necessary to build their capacity for better performing systems through the creation of integrated plot plans and the integration of crop and land management practices, which is module 3 of PIP creation.

Better-performing farming systems focus on supporting farmers to achieve sustainable farm and land management, and therefore this result area aims to help PIP innovators establish a resilient farm with different crops and farm activities.

At least one cash crop, accessing different value chains, having a vegetable garden for improved nutrition, and all crops sufficiently productive.

Apply an integrated set of sustainable land and crop management practices to their land to be able to cope with environmental shocks, improve soil fertility, reduce land degradation, and control erosion, especially on steeper slopes where high runoff during intensive rainfall is an imminent threat.

The main objective of Module 3/IPP creation was to raise awareness about soil problems and best practices among the PIP innovators, equip PIP innovators with the knowledge and skills of creating an integrated plot plan, and guide and support PIP innovators in developing integrated plot plans.

All the 4-module sessions were successfully accomplished in the 24 project target communities, where 261 PIP innovators in Rwenzori and 268 PIP innovators in Kigezi fully participated.

Field visits were done in each community to a selected PIP innovator plot. The selected plots acted as example plots throughout the training to assess the current farm situation and suggest appropriate practices that can be employed to improve selected plot performance. While at the selected example plots, observations, discussions, and previous experience sharing with feedback were employed to execute the training sessions.

The soil fertility image box was used during the training, and the participants would be asked to identify what they saw in the images, and feedback on the images would be discussed with the support of the facilitators (field staff).

Open discussion was another approach used to discuss the possible solutions to the soil problems that were raised by the participants. Additionally, brainstorming on land degradation issues like erosion and soil fertility problems, causes, and consequences was done.



Rwenzori Communities learning how to make Vegetable Nursery beds n their IPPs



Elgon Communities learning how to make trenches

THE FIRST AWARENESS-RAISING MEETINGS IN ELGON REGION



Katebwa Sub county leaders attending one of the First Awareness Meetings

The first awareness-raising meetings in the Elgon region were held in 27 communities, aiming to communicate the transition from the MWARES project to the CommonGround project, sensitize them, and share project implementation strategies.

The meetings focused on selecting Community Vision Committees (CVC) in MWARES communities, identifying PIP innovators for training on Integrated Plot Plans (IPPs), and identifying restoration sites in target communities.

The meetings also aimed to gain insight into community priorities, aspirations, social, economic, and other forms of cohesion and discuss the roles and responsibilities of the CommonGround project team and communities during implementation.

The methodology used in the meetings was participatory, with participants fully engaged in discussions from start to finish. A total of 27 Community Vision Committees were formed, comprising 15–17 members, with one representative from each subcounty. 30 IPP farmers were also nominated, forming a total of 810 farmers.

The committees were assigned to identify two restoration sites within each community, with 62 sites identified. All community engagement meetings were conducted in collaboration with PIP Innovator leadership and local council chairpersons and attended by 3,195 community members

IDENTIFYING ENTREPRENEURIAL BUSINESS INITIATIVES AMONG PIP INNOVATORS.

The CommonGround project conducted dialogues and discussions in the Kigezi region to identify entrepreneurial business initiatives among PIP innovators. The facilitator presented market study findings and used the SWOT analysis tool to explore internal and external factors.

Participants were divided into groups to discuss their entrepreneurial initiatives and proposed business ideas. The facilitator introduced the three result areas of Pathway Three and outlined activities for participants. The workshop stressed the importance of collective action and collaboration.

Integrated Group Plans (IGPs) were introduced as the foundation of PIP, providing motivation, resilience, and stewardship. Farmers contributed ideas, aspirations, and business objectives through PIP.

The facilitator stressed the importance of developing integrated activities that are socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable, aligning with the village vision, and contributing to the long-term growth of the community.

The groups were encouraged to work together towards creating sustainable business opportunities that benefit both farmers and their communities.

RWAMAHANO COMMUNITY ESTABLISHES TRENCHES TO CONTROL EROSION.



Hellen Natukunda, a resident of the Rwamahano community in Muko subcounty in Rubanda district, faced challenges such as heavy water runoff and erosion during the rainy season. This was due to a lack of knowledge on how to control these issues, which led to low yields.

Like Natukunda, Martin, also from the Rwamahano community in Kitumba subcounty, also experienced erosion during heavy rains, leading to food shortages.

However, in July, the CommonGround Project was introduced in the community, and through the various Participatory Integrated Planning (PIP) Approach awareness meetings, Hellen and Ruyanje started discovering that the solution to protecting their land from erosion was through digging trenches and planting grass bands along the hills.

The core of the project is the PIP approach, which aims to build collaboration between farmers and rural communities and foster resilience-based stewardship through an interrelated set of activities.

The approach empowers communities from the bottom up, starting at the household level, and creates a solid foundation for development by motivating people and watershed stewards.

So, through the various PIP creation workshops in communities, emphasis was put on mindset change and intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it is intrinsically satisfying or enjoyable, based on the person's inner interest.

After a series of training sessions, Hellen discovered that she could solve soil and water runoff, which were the major challenges she was encountering on her land by herself.

“With support from the CommonGround Project Staff and other community members (PIP Innovators), I started digging trenches commonly referred to as fanya juu and fanya chini on all my plots of land with guidance from the project field staff,” she says.

She has also started planting elephant grass on both sides of the trenches to stabilize the soil and reduce sediment falling into the trenches. She also plans to rear sheep for manure, so the grass will also provide forage.

“I now have hope that I am going to improve on my farming, and I expect the production to increase. CommonGround is a very good project that has taught us to work as a community, not as individuals,” she says.

Samuel Ruyanje, the local leader in Rwamahano community, Kitumba subcounty, says that the community used to experience a lot of landslides and soil erosion during heavy rains, which would kill animals but also destroy household properties, and this led to a food shortage.

But after the PIP meetings, efforts have been made by community members to restore the degraded area. “80% of the area is now covered with trenches, and we are now planting elephant grass in each trench. We started the community work in August 2023 during the dry period,” he revealed.

The common crops grown in the community are potatoes, onions, cabbages, and sweet potatoes. As area leaders, we proposed Wednesday every week as a day for community work, so we moved household by household to dig trenches. “We are hopeful that with trenches in all gardens, erosion is going to be controlled,” she said.

PIP INNOVATORS TRAINED ON IPP CREATION



PIP Innovators from Kyatwa Community Drawing their IPP Plot during one of the IPP trainings in Bunyangabu District

Having completed Household PIP Creation (Module 2), which involved PIP innovators developing their household PIPs, which also included improving the farming systems on their land, it was deemed necessary to build their capacity for better performing systems through the creation of integrated plot plans and the integration of crop and land management practices, which is module 3 of PIP creation.

Better-performing farming systems focus on supporting farmers to achieve sustainable farm and land management, and therefore this result area aims to help PIP innovators establish a resilient farm with different crops and farm activities.

At least one cash crop, accessing different value chains, having a vegetable garden for improved nutrition, and all crops sufficiently productive.

Apply an integrated set of sustainable land and crop management practices to their land to be able to cope with environmental shocks, improve soil fertility, reduce land degradation, and control erosion, especially on steeper slopes where high runoff during intensive rainfall is an imminent threat.

The main objective of Module 3/IPP creation was to raise awareness about soil problems and best practices among the PIP innovators, equip PIP innovators with the knowledge and skills of creating an integrated plot plan, and guide and support PIP innovators in developing integrated plot plans.

All the 4-module sessions were successfully accomplished in the 24 project target communities, where 261 PIP innovators in Rwenzori and 268 PIP innovators in Kigezi fully participated. Field visits were done in each community to a selected PIP innovator

STAFF HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN TREE NURSERY, SLUMS, AND AGRICULTURE METHODOLOGY.



Extension officers from Rwenzori and Kigezi joined CG field staff in Rubanda District in practical sessions on how to use an A-Frame to make trenches

A training session was held in Kigezi to refresh CommonGround Project field staff's knowledge on nursery bed establishment and management. The training aimed to equip staff with skills and tools for sustainable land use management (SLUM) and Agritech practices, based on gaps identified during a June 2023 capacity assessment.

Key topics covered included tree nursery establishment, A-frame use, soil and water conservation techniques, integrated pest management, and soil fertility management. The training included theoretical presentations at the Heras Hotel in Kabale and practical hands-on sessions at the NFA tree nursery site in Bugongi, Kabale Municipality.

52 participants attended the training, enhancing their capacity to support communities in tree nursery establishments and sustainable land use management practices. Field Visit to Sagitwe Hill, Kisoro District.

A field visit to Sagitwe Hill in Buhima village, Nyarusiza subcounty of Kisoro district, was conducted to learn about the hill's history of collective action focused on slope management, conservation, and protection.

The team engaged with the Sagitwe Hill management committee and leaders from three villages to learn about their successful management strategies. One notable figure was 93-year-old Igirukwayo Jeremiah, the LC 1 chairperson for Buhima village.

The hill's management dates to colonial times when the community was mandated by law to implement effective land conservation practices. Today, the hill is collectively managed by 500 households representing three villages, with a nine-member committee overseeing conservation efforts.

Practical Session on Tree Nursery

A practical session on tree nursery operations and management was conducted at the National Forestry Authority (NFA) tree nursery site in Bugongi. The session covered procedures for nursery seed bed establishment, potting, soil mixing, seed sowing, pricking out, root pruning, pest and disease identification, control, and management.

The journey to a healthy seedling includes selecting a good mother tree, a suitable time for selection, proper seed collection techniques, careful seed handling and extraction, good packaging and storage, and effective pre-sowing treatment methods.

Justine Onyinge, the Watershed NRM Expert, highlighted the project's focus on group tree nurseries with limited project support. The long-term aim is for these nurseries to become fully owned by communities or groups, ensuring environmental education, capacity building, community tree species technology generation, innovativeness, and income generation.

Nursery management practices

During the training, nursery management practices were emphasized, including regular clean water supply, good watering habits, and checking leaf water status.

Staff were advised against using dirty water, watering during midday or fixed schedules, overwatering to prevent diseases, directing water to leaves instead of soil, and watering quickly and only wetting the soil surface. Overwatering can cause diseases and should be avoided.



Potting is the process of filling polythene bags with a potting mixture under a shade near the soil heap at the transplant bed site. It is crucial to avoid poor practices such as waiting until plants are large and have long roots, constructing shade after pricking out, and carrying seedlings without water.

A shade should be constructed to protect the seedlings from direct sunlight for 2-3 weeks after pricking out. Weeding reduces competition for water, light, and nutrients, and officers should remove weeds around beds with a jembe and leave rubbish around the beds unless it can be converted to compost.

Root pruning is essential to avoid intertwining the transplants' roots and enable them to develop a well-established root system.

Hardening is created by gradually removing shade and reducing water for 4 weeks before transplanting in the field.

Root pruning should be carried out frequently or rearranged to reduce stress. Pest and disease management includes regulated watering, nursery hygiene, clean materials, proper seedling spacing, and proper drainage. If prevention fails, control measures like pesticides and fungicides can be used.

THE SESSIONS (7, 8, AND 9) ASSISTED PIP INNOVATORS IN DEVELOPING DETAILED ACTION PLANS FOR THEIR HOUSEHOLD VISIONS.



The seven, eight, and ninth training sessions focused on developing a detailed action plan for household visions within 3 to 5 years. Participants presented and refined their visions created by PIP innovators and presented their own visions and action plans for discussion and feedback.

The sessions also identified any training needs for implementing PIP actions. The selected innovators attended individually, without their spouses, using a participatory approach. Group discussions involved creating hypothetical families led by a father, mother, and children to develop action plans based on a member's vision. The father or another volunteer within the group would then develop an action plan, which would be presented by the hypothetical families.

At the end of each session, PIP innovators were assigned homework to discuss with their family members. Key tools, such as the image box, were used to facilitate the action planning process, with a specific focus on image 17.

Session 7: PIP Creation

In session seven, participants reviewed their completed "homework" assignments and shared their ideal farm scenarios. They were given five minutes to elaborate on their drawings, and those requiring enhancements were instructed to revise them before the next session.

PIP innovators who had not completed the assignment were encouraged to complete it during the week. The innovators were divided into groups of eight members, each assigned two pillars to develop an action plan to achieve their goals.

The group activity lasted about an hour, and each group presented their action plans to the plenary for further discussion and feedback. The session was attended by 276 individuals,

including 163 males and 113 females from the Rwenzori and Kigezi regions.

Session eight

In session eight, 266 males from Rwenzori were asked to create a PIP (Planned Innovator) project. They were given 10 minutes to present their current farm situation, vision, and action plan.

They also received feedback from other innovators and field officers. After the session, they added the feedback to their drawings and action plans and finalized their PIPs at home with their family members. The total number of participants was 266.

Session nine

Session nine focused on the presentation and discussion of the final PIPs and action plans of the PIP innovators. As all PIPs were already presented in Session 8, the focus was on those who had not finalised their PIPs or had difficulties drawing or creating their action plans.

The PIP innovators were given 10 minutes to present their updated PIPs, followed by 5 minutes for feedback from other PIP innovators and field officers. Some PIP innovators made changes to their PIPs.

Hanging the PIPs on the wall.

PIP Innovators were instructed to display their PIP drawings, including current and future situations, family tree, and action plan, on their homes' walls, using image 21 of the image box, to motivate them towards achieving their dream PIPs.

Achievements

The 9-week PIP creation process was successfully concluded, with 280 PIP innovators in Rwenzori and Kigezi, representing 93% of expected farmer innovators, participating in sessions.

The training needs for the implementation of PIP action plans were identified, indicating that the PIP innovators have a good understanding of PIP and have confidently presented and discussed their homework.

THE 2023 IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD WAS CHARACTERIZED BY BOTH SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATIONS.

The MEL team organised a 'Pause, Review, and Reflection Workshop' in December 2023 at the White Horse Inn in Kabale, involving 68 participants from various regions. The workshop aimed to reflect on the 2023 implementation period's successes and challenges, identify areas for improvement, and learn valuable lessons.

The goal was to strategize for the upcoming phase in 2024, fostering cross-learning, sharing best practices, and engaging with local communities. The workshop included presentations, interactive discussions, group work sessions, and field visits to project sites, providing a comprehensive and hands-on approach to reflection and learning.



CC staff having group discussions during a reflection meeting in Kabale

Highlights

The implementation of the project in the Kigezi and Rwenzori regions has been on schedule, with 24 communities involved in creating PIPs through 305 and 296 PIP innovators, respectively.

Key factors that contributed to the successful implementation included active participation from district, lower local government, and community leaders, support from administrative levels, and engagement of multiple stakeholders.

The commitment and collaboration between PIP innovators, support from PIP innovator spouses, assistance from project staff, and partnerships with other organizations funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kampala have been instrumental in driving progress.

The Elgon Region, which joined the project in July 2023, faced unique challenges and opportunities, with a focus on consolidating activities at former MWARES project locations and new sites selected under the CommonGround project.

Significant milestones have been achieved, including the establishment of offices, community selection, and awareness-raising in new locations. Aad Kessler advised staff on site restoration guidelines for 2024, stating that EKN was tasked with developing a paper on best practices for land restoration on steep slopes.



Some interventions were deemed inappropriate depending on slope angle, and a combination of interventions was recommended, considering both slope angle and socio-economic factors within communities.

The Finance and Administration team had established project operations the regions, filled key positions, and procured essential machinery, accessories, and equipment. Service provider pre-qualification had been completed, and insurance service providers had been engaged to explain the various packages offered under the ISSD medical and accident cover.

The MEL team had also provided an update on planned activities, including setting up M&E structures and implementing the project baseline study. The project is finalizing guidelines for an investment strategy to support communities

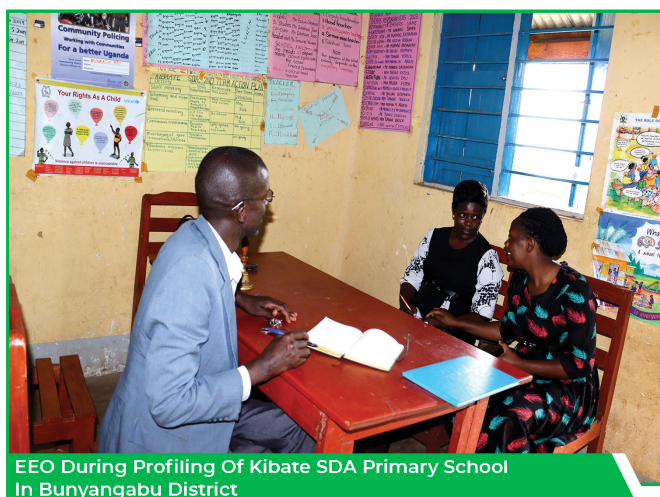
Challenges faced during 2023 implementation.

The 2023 implementation of project activities in the regions faced several challenges, including limited cooperation from community and sub-county leaders, unrealistic work plans.

There was inconsistency in attendance by some PIP innovators, low literacy levels, dropout rates, genuine expenses, conflicting incentive arrangements by other NGOs, and overstretching of staff in the Elgon region. These issues contributed to the project's inefficiency and inconsistency.



PROFILING AND SELECTION OF SCHOOLS IN KIGEZI AND RWENZORI REGIONS



EEO During Profiling Of Kibate SDA Primary School In Bunyangabu District



Nyakatoke SDA Primary School was also Profiled

The CommonGround Project, under pathway 1, aims to implement an environmental education component in primary and secondary schools, inspired by the PIP approach. This component aims to engage students in exploring environmental issues, problem-solving, and taking action to improve their school environment.

Environmental education plays a crucial role in schools as it helps young learners become future stewards of our planet. By participating in environmental education, students can understand the importance of valuing a healthy environment, develop the skills needed to act on their own, and encourage their school communities to actively participate in responsible environmental actions.

Overall, environmental education in schools is essential for building a generation of environmentally conscious individuals who are equipped to make a positive impact on the world around them. Therefore, the initial step in the environmental education process involved identifying, verifying, and selecting target schools.

This process included engaging in meetings with district education officials, schools, and natural resource management offices to introduce the environmental education approach of the CommonGround Project.

Subsequently, physical visits were made to the identified schools for profiling and to establish connections with school administrations. A selection criterion for the schools was developed, reviewed, and followed by visits to select the target schools.

In the Kigezi region, a total of 46 schools were visited, with 19 in Kabale, 18 in Rubanda, and 9 in Kisoro. Of these, 45 were primary schools and 1 was a secondary school, with 37 being government-aided and 9 being private schools.

In the Rwenzori region, 39 schools were visited, with 7 in Ntoroko and 32 in Bunyangabu. Of these, 32 were primary schools and 7 were secondary schools, with 31 being government and 8 being private schools.



EEO Interacting With The Deputy Head Teacher For Kasunga Nyanja Ps In Bunyangabu

Out of the 84 selected schools from Elgon and Rwenzori, 9 in Rwenzori and 8 in Kigezi were chosen as the initial schools for project implementation, with the remaining schools earmarked for future scaling up.

Many of the schools expressed willingness to participate in environmental awareness activities, had sufficient land, and lacked environmental clubs. The lists of schools in the target sub-counties were obtained from the respective districts.

Training of the CommonGround staff

A training session was held for CommonGround staff in both regions to introduce and implement environmental education using the participatory integrated planning (PIP) approach.

The goal was to enhance staff's capacity in environmental education and demonstrate how PIP can be integrated into it. The training included 23 field officers and four field supervisors, who were guided through the process of environmental education in schools and provided an overview of the modules included in the Environmental Education Guide.

Review of school PIPs in the Elgon region.

In Elgon region, Environmental clubs in 12 target schools have been active for four years. A review of their school PIPs was conducted by club members, which involved visiting schools and showcasing the PIPs.

Assessments were conducted to determine the club members' achievements, failures, and reasons for their actions. A summary of the PIP creation process was presented, and patrons and assistants were encouraged to assist in developing revised PIPs using the Environmental Education guide.

The objectives were to provide technical guidance, evaluate the implementation level, document lessons learned, identify challenges faced, discuss solutions, and support the environmental education clubs in creating new school PIP plans based on the review process.

STAKEHOLDERS MEET TO DISCUSS GENERIC MARKET ACCESS BOTTLENECKS

A comprehensive analysis of problems hindering generic market access in the Kigezi and Rwenzori regions involved key stakeholders, including project staff, PIP innovators, sub county officials, farming opinion leaders, commodity traders, agro-input suppliers, and district officials.

The goal was to identify and prioritise key bottlenecks, which would inform the development of interventions under Pathway 3. Participants were divided into groups to explore the difficulties farmers face when selling their produce, using a problem tree analysis to uncover the underlying causes of market access bottlenecks.

Solutions were proposed collectively, leading to the identification of four critical market access bottlenecks for intervention by the project and relevant stakeholders.

To ensure inclusivity and gender equality, men, women, and youth were all involved in validating the workshop findings. The focus was on recognising existing opportunities to address them.

In the Rwenzori region

In the Rwenzori region, it was discovered that farmers are facing several challenges in the agricultural sector, including low market prices, poor quality produce, inadequate storage facilities, a lack of marketing and business skills, poor market access roads, and high market dues.

Farmers are also unorganized in groups and marketing associations. To address these issues, the community proposed solutions such as tailored training to improve seed quality, post-harvest handling of crops, hiring storage facilities, collective bulking, cost-sharing with organisations, marketing skills training, collaboration with district and development organisations, strengthening group collective cultures and savings, and increasing savings portfolios.

The meeting in Rwenzori, attended by 215 people, aimed to improve the agricultural sector, and enhance market opportunities for farmers in the region.

In the Kigezi region

The Kigezi region faces several challenges in the agricultural sector, including poor-quality produce, inadequate storage facilities, limited marketing and business skills, poor market access, disorganisation among farmers, and insufficient access to finance.

To address these issues, participants proposed tailored training programmes to improve seed quality, post-harvest handling of crops, joint hiring of storage facilities, collective bulking, cost-sharing with organisations, tailored marketing skills training, collaboration with district and development organisations, and strengthening group collective culture and savings among farmers.

To improve access to finance, participants suggested increasing farmers' savings portfolios, linking them to credible SACCOs, and collaborating with other financial institutions. By implementing these solutions, the agricultural sector in the Kigezi region can overcome these bottlenecks and thrive.

SUB-COUNTY AWARENESS-RISING MEETINGS INTRODUCED STAKEHOLDERS TO WATERSHED RESTORATION PROCESSES.



Katebwa Sub county leaders attending one of the First Awareness Meetings

Pathway 2 focuses on watershed restoration at three levels: village, sub-county, and district. It involves awareness-raising, vision-building, and action-planning processes to create responsible stakeholders for highland watershed resilience.

First awareness-raising

The first sub county awareness-raising and visioning meetings were successfully conducted in specific project sub-counties and town councils within the Rwenzori and Kigezi regions.

These meetings served as a platform to introduce the CommonGround project and share the implementation methodology known as the PIP approach. During these meetings, leaders actively participated in discussions surrounding various social, economic, and environmental challenges prevalent in their communities.

They delved into the root causes, effects, and potential solutions for these issues. Through collaborative efforts, five key problems impeding development were identified and prioritized.

The leaders collectively voted to involve the CommonGround teams in their respective sub-counties and town councils, recognizing that it is not solely the responsibility of ISSD Uganda to drive development initiatives.

They underscored the crucial role of the project in fostering community development and encouraged beneficiaries to collaborate closely with the team to achieve sustainable progress.

Second sub county awareness



The second sub-county awareness raising and visioning meetings primary focused on assessing social, economic, and environmental challenges. A total of 16 sub-counties and town councils participated, with 218 attendees from Rwenzori and 295 from Kigezi.

During these meetings, participants engaged in a thorough analysis of the current social, economic, and environmental landscape, identifying key issues, their root causes, impacts, and potential solutions. Stakeholders also delved into an examination of their internal capacities, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as external factors influencing their operational performance.

Furthermore, the gatherings shed light on the presence of various committees within each sub-county, such as land committees, LC III courts, Executive committees, and technical planning committees. The meetings were conducted using participatory methods to effectively achieve their objectives.

Third awareness session



Rogers Mfitumukiza - farming systems expert addressing Nombe S/County leaders during the third awareness meetings



Katebwa Sub county leaders having Group discussions during the third awareness meetings

The third awareness meetings were dedicated to crafting a vision for each subcounty and prioritizing goals for action planning. A total of 16 workshops were held across the sub-counties and town councils in the Kigezi and Rwenzori sub-regions.

Participants in attendance included LC III executives, members of the subcounty/ town council, representatives from the community vision committee, as well as youth and women representatives. The sessions involved conducting a SWOT analysis, identifying aspirations, and developing action plans.

In total, 268 individuals took part in these meetings, utilizing various methods such as brainstorming, group activities, plenary sessions, and presentations to contribute their ideas and insights.

OPEN DAYS: A MOBILIZATION STRATEGY FOR FARMER-TO-FARMER TRAININGS



Nyakabugo PIP Innovators pose for a group photo after the Open day Celebration in Buhara sub county Kabale District



Kaisenda PIP Innovators pose for a group photo after the Open day Celebration in Kyamukube Town Council Bunyangabu District

Following the completion of the Participatory Integrated Planning (PIP) approach trainings with PIP innovators, an open day was organized to introduce them to the community members.

The primary objective was to educate the community about the advantages of the PIP approach, gather support for future initiatives, and engage in the inaugural PIP competition.

The open days also served as a platform for PIP innovators to exhibit their household PIPs, inspiring community members to partake in PIP training and develop their own PIPs. The event featured a brass band performance, speeches from community and subcounty leaders, and representatives from CommonGround.

During the presentation, the Community Vision Committee (CVC) showcased community PIPs, outlining the current situation, future aspirations, and action plans. PIP innovators displayed their household PIPs, emphasizing enhancements in soil fertility management and integrated plot plans.



PIP Innovators from from Nyakatoke posing for a group photo during the Open Day celebrations



Engaging drama skits illustrated the PIP approach and its transformative impact on mindsets. Additionally, PIs composed songs in local languages, and exhibitions of PIP innovators' farms and kitchen gardens were on display.

To promote tree planting and resilience, tree seedlings were planted in designated areas. Participants had the opportunity to visit PIs' plots, witnessing the successful implementation of sustainable land use management (SLUM) practices like trench construction and kitchen gardens.

Prior to the open days, PIP innovators were encouraged to share their knowledge and advocate for the PIP approach through music, dance, and drama. The CommonGround project and PIP approach garnered significant community awareness, leading to the selection of farmers for training by some PIP innovators.

The project's target communities successfully hosted open-day events at churches, schools, and open grounds, fostering awareness and collaboration. The community's understanding of the CommonGround project and PIP approach increased, with PIP innovators already identifying farmers for training in the upcoming PIP competition.





Kingdom of the Netherlands



Office Locations

Fort Portal (Project Head Office)

Plot 193, Binanata Fort Portal

Kampala Road

Tel: +256 755049188

Email: info.commonground@issduganda.org

Kabale Regional Office

Plot 28, Mutambuka Road

Kabale Uganda

Tel: +256 755049188

Email: info.commonground@issduganda.org

Mbale Regional Office

Plot 42, Wanale Road Senior Quarters

Mbale City

Tel: +256 755049188

Email: info.commonground@issduganda.org