

BAMWENDA: A CASE OF IMPROVING SMALLHOLDER FARMER ADOPTION OF CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE

Laban Bamwenda, 46, is a resident of Irobe village, Pachwa parish, Pachwa sub-county, Kibaale district. He recalls how he came to develop interest in agriculture, “I was raised by a single mother, so at the age of seven, I joined her in subsistence farming.” In spite of Laban’s deep interest for agriculture, it wasn’t really productive business because of a number of challenges he faced while carrying it out, for instance, unexpected climatic changes, poverty, inability to effectively utilize his land and also lack of knowledge on the importance of saving.

Today, these challenges are history, thanks to training and support by World Vision. Laban has learnt a lot especially on how to do farming as a business. “I now use scientific weather and climate information to plan for my agricultural activities, a thing that was not possible before I received training and started getting updated weather information,” Bamwenda says.

From the trainings, Bamwenda says, he got an idea of how best to utilize his six acres of land that had fallowed for years. “I realized I could do a lot on my land. I could do commercial farming to cater for home consumption as well as earn income from the sales of the surplus,” he says.

Inspired and equipped with knowledge and skills on climate smart agriculture, the father of eleven did not waste any time. He turned his 3-and-a-half acres of his land into a commercial banana plantation, one-and-a-half acres for livestock and the other quarter of the land was put under agro-forestry and apiary. In addition, he hired two more acres for growing crops for home consumption.



*Bamwenda on the extreme left making sales of his produce by the road side despite the dry spell
(All photos taken by Jane Nakiranda)*

“I had had this land for years but I just needed awakening,” says Bamwenda. “And this is exactly what World Vision did for me when I participated in their training on climate smart agriculture.”

After the training Bamwenda now uses different climate smart agricultural technologies and information to improve his yield. He implements best practices activities like mulching, timely planting, pruning, digging trenches for water harvesting, agro-forestry and micro-irrigation using the farmer’s group water pump to access water from the nearby River Nguro. Bamwenda has also managed to construct a 2,000 litre tank for harvesting rainwater and using it to water his crops during the dry season.



Bamwenda mulching his garden.



A set up 2000 litre tank at Bamwenda n's home

Already the opening of land for commercial farming has had a significant impact on the wellbeing of Bamwenda's family, as he explains with a smile, "I don't buy food anymore at home. We have more than sufficient and from the surplus I am able to pay school fees for all my biological children and other children under my care."

Bamwenda is a father of eleven biological children and takes care of five dependents. From farming, he has constructed a five-roomed permanent house. And yes, his family no longer uses open three-stones for cooking. In a bid to protect the environment, they have adopted an energy saving stove.



Bamwenda's transition from a three stone stove to a newly constructed energy saving stove and kitchen area

Bamwenda attributes his success to World Vision for awakening him to open up his land and for encouraging him to join a farmers' group. Twegahaze farmers' group now boasts of 33 farmers with a goal of supporting each other in form of labour, bulking and collective marketing. "When we do it as a group – bulking and marketing collectively – we knock out middlemen who would have cheated us," says Bamwenda.



Bamwenda attends to his livestock in the farm.

But success does not come without a struggle. Bamwenda, like many farmers in his community, lack of extension services like veterinary services. "If I need vet services, for example, I have to travel 24 miles. This has often resulted into loss of livestock," he says.

With intentionality and determination, Bamwenda wants to see all his all children educated to the highest level possible. "I have discovered the gold in farming. I want to purchase two more acres of land and expand my production and continue to support education of my children. I also plan to purchase a truck to be transporting my produce to the market directly."

Bamwenda is a testimony that farming as a business is possible for smallholder farmers through adoption of climate smart agriculture practices.



This stone was found in front of Bamwenda's home and he used it to dry his cassava chips as a post-harvest handling technology to preserve food for the dry spell.