Update From The Country Director On COVID-19

On the 21st of March 2020, the Government of Uganda confirmed the first positive case of COVID-19. Subsequent cases have led to more restrictive measures aimed at slowing down and hopefully containing the spread of the virus. The Corona pandemic will no doubt, profoundly change how organisations work in the coming months. More than ever food security and nutrition, incomes, access to basic services (water, sanitation and hygiene and Energy) are needed, during this and post COVID-19 period and here SNV, joining hands with others, can make a difference. COVID-19 is having immense impact on our health and food systems globally and as a country. In this global pandemic, SNV projects that support food security and nutrition and access to basic services (water, sanitation and hygiene- WASH) have become even more important.

SNV remains fully operational in all its regional offices across the country to ensure business continuity, and ultimately contribute to food security, incomes and access to basic services in Uganda. We have however taken measures to protect the health of our staff with all staff working remotely and/or practicing social distancing. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is the first line of defence against communicable diseases like COVID-19. That is not just about hand washing with soap, but also the continuous supply and safety of water and sanitation services. SNV has thus taken a collaborative approach by aligning our efforts to support government interventions in the districts where we work.

In order to avoid food shortages and ensure access to safe nutritious food for low income consumers, it is important that we keep food supply chains going. For SNV this means supporting our agribusiness SMEs and farmers so that they do not miss the current cropping season. While we have limitations to fully engage in field activities due to the current restrictions, we have been able to support a number of SMES during this lockdown who are now training their farmers on good agricultural practices as they commence the planting season. The proximity of these SMES to the local communities means they are well placed to innovate their businesses to adapt to the new normal and reach their farmers.

As we continue to work in these uncertain times, we remain committed to supporting the measures put in place by the Government of Uganda to contain the spread of COVID-19 and urge all our staff as well as partners to follow the standard operation procedures set out by government. Together we shall overcome this pandemic.

Our newsletter gives you insights to our work, during the first quarter of this year, enjoy your reading.

Phomolo Maphosa
Country Director, SNV Uganda

Protect yourself and others from getting sick

Wash your hands

• after coughing or sneezing
• when caring for the sick
• before, during and after you prepare food
• before eating
• after toilet use
• when hands are visibly dirty
• after handling animals or animal waste

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Food production in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda has to increase significantly to feed the population that is growing at an average of 3% in Uganda and Tanzania and 2.5% in Kenya. Adoption of climate smart production, harvesting and processing methodologies is key to improving productivity and efficiencies of the existing food crop production and supply systems. This however requires concerted efforts and joint investments by supply chain actors, service providers and public sector partners, working in the different targeted value chains to support effective adaptation and mitigation strategies.

The Climate Resilient Agribusiness for Tomorrow (CRAFT) project has co-invested EUR 2,061,445 in grants to 14 (9 from Uganda) private sector companies working in the sunflower, soybean, sesame, common beans and sorghum value chains in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The project’s climate innovation and investment facility (CIIF) is part of the overall goal to increase availability and accessibility of climate-resilient food in East Africa.

Co-investment with the private sector is one of the key strategies identified by the CRAFT project to achieve sustainable results. The project will thus work with and through the private sector to promote climate smart agriculture related innovations at farming systems and value chain level and support public sector partners in creating the institutional environment for wide-scale adoption of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices.

The formation of Sub-county Water Supply and Sanitation Boards (SWSSBs) is key in the IWAS model as support structures for Water User Committees (WUCs) to move towards preventive maintenance approaches. The project supported the establishment of 783 Water User Committees (WUCs) and 22 SWSSBs across the four districts. The SWSSB designates hand pump mechanics to carry out monthly maintenance and repair of functional water sources in their respective sub-counties. One of the responsibilities of the Water User Committees is collecting Operation & Maintenance funds from their communities of which they remit 80% to the Sub-county Water Supply and Sanitation Boards to organise and pay for monthly maintenance of the water sources.

Functional water sources continue to be the life source for communities, thanks to good O&M and the commitment of communities to collect funds for regular maintenance of water sources in Northern Uganda. According to Jimmy Otim, the Assistant District Water Officer for Lira, one of the IWAS II supported districts, the SWSSBs have continued maintaining their water sources with funds collected before the lockdown.

Our resources have been severely stretched during this lockdown as we try to ensure that all communities have access to safe water. It has thus been a great relief to us to have all the 9 Sub-county Water Supply and Sanitation Boards (SWSSBs) ably maintaining their water sources throughout the lockdown from their savings without requesting for funds from the Water Office. Most of the SWSSBs had savings ranging from UGX 300,000 to UGX 500,000. Notable among these are Agweng and Baar SWSSBs that had savings of UGX 1.4 million and UGX 800,000 respectively before the lock down. Both were established by the IWAS Project. When we talk about O&M and the need for communities to save, there is no better example than this. At a time when communities are depending on the limited resources from government for delivery of services, these SWSSB have managed to sustain and keep their water sources functional,” Jimmy said.

The 9 SWSSBs are currently overseeing 350 functional water sources in Lira district, giving 87,500 people access to safe water. Jimmy however noted that a number of the SWSSBs would soon run out of operation and maintenance funds if the lockdown continued since they are spending their savings with no additional remittances from the communities that are currently economically affected by the restrictions.

We will need more support from partners and donors in the short term to step in and support operation and maintenance so that we don’t end up with more water sources breaking down after COVID-19,” he added.

In the interim, Lira district task force with support from the IWAS project is using community radios to disseminate messages pertaining to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by the Ministry of Water and Environment.

IWAS II is implemented with funding from the Austrian Development Agency.
Adapting to The ‘New Normal’ to Keep Agribusinesses Operational

As a private business working in agriculture, we cannot afford to fold our hands and wait for COVID-19 to go away. Business must go on because seasons don’t wait for you and if you miss a season, you have lost a whole cropping cycle and yet people have to eat.” This is what John Tusasirwe, the CEO of Transformation for Rural development Limited (TRA-FORD), one of the Climate Resilient Agribusiness for Tomorrow (CRAFT) project partners had to say while distributing improved climate resilient soybean seed to farmers in Dokolo district, Northern Uganda.

John and his team have been distributing improved early maturing and drought tolerant seeds (Maksoy), and agro inputs (pesticides and tarpaulins) to 625 of their contracted farmers at UGX 4,500 (EUR 1) per kg. This follows two weeks training of 50 selected lead-farmers as Trainer of Trainers (ToTs) by TRAFORD’s team of 10 Master Trainer of Trainers. The ToTs were trained in climate smart agricultural practices so that they in-turn can train the targeted 1,250 small holder farmers (60% of whom are youth, including women) that TRAFORD will be working with in this season. Their initial plan was to train 50 ToTs in groups of 10 over a period of five days. With the government COVID-19 directives restricting meetings to not more than five people, John sought the Resident District Commissioner’s permission to allow them train five ToTs each day.

The most important thing for any business right now is to be flexible and adaptive to whatever changes one is confronted with. We had to increase the number of days for the training from five to 10 days so that we could operate within the standard operating procedures set out by government. We provided all the farmers with face masks to wear during the training and provided handwashing facilities with soap for all the groups. The RDC made a follow up with us and was happy that we were applying the government COVID-19 protocol,” John added.

Field training for ToTs during COVID-19 allows for groups of only 5 participants with everyone wearing protective masks.

Speaking at the closing ceremony at the SNV office in Kampala, Martha Naigaga, Sanitation and Hygiene Coordinator at the Ministry of Water and Environment of the Government of Uganda, drew attention to a key sustainability investment of the project. She said,

“A sanitation plan is a key resource document in the district. I am very happy that SNV invested in supporting the districts to develop their district sanitation plans. Now districts have guidance when budgeting and implementing WASH activities within their communities.”

Her statement highlights one of the aspects that made the SSH4A project unique and successful.

Read the full story here
The Africa Biogas Partnership Programme (ABPP) II has created inroads in the domestic energy sector, demonstrating to farming communities the potential benefits that can accrue to them from using biogas. ABPP II has supported 3,988 households to construct bio digesters, improving the lives of 23,928 people who now have clean energy for cooking and lighting. Besides access to clean energy, farmers have tapped into the immense potential that exists in bio-slurry (a bi-product from biogas) use as an organic fertiliser. Bio slurry not only enhances agricultural productivity but sustains soil fertility which is critical for Uganda’s agricultural sector.

**ABPPII impact at a glance**

- 3988 bio-digesters constructed
- 23,928 people with access to affordable clean energy for cooking
- 20,334 people improved their agricultural productivity as a result of bio-slurry application
- 20 Biogas Construction Enterprises supported to become operational across the country
- 5 Biogas Marketing hubs established and fully functional
- 3 Bio-slurry business cases operationalised with the capacity to bulk and sell bio-slurry
- 52,888 tonnes of CO2 emissions reduced

With the rapidly growing population and high demand for energy and organic fertilizer, the work that ABPP has done in Uganda is and will continue to be a driver of innovative, sustainable development. Read more about ABPPII here

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**IAP II Launches 2nd Call for Innovative Inclusive Business Proposals**

The Innovations Against Poverty (IAP) Challenge Fund has launched its second call for inclusive business proposals. Innovations Against Poverty (IAP) is a specialised fund project funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). IAP is implemented in four countries: Uganda, Zambia, Ethiopia and Cambodia with a focus on Agriculture, WASH, Energy and ICT as a cross-cutting sector. The project aims to invest in private business initiatives that are innovative, inclusive, commercially viable, scalable and environmentally sustainable.

The first phase of the project which started in September 2016 – December 2019 supported eight inclusive business projects in Uganda (three in agriculture, three in clean and sustainable energy, one in ICT and one in sanitation) with total grant co-funding disbursement of EUR 591,503 in addition to business advisory services provided.

Under IAP Phase I, the following impact was realised:

- 390 new jobs created at business level- majority of which are for youth;
- Increased income for 12,400 low income individual’s working in the business value chains;
- Over 1.4 million people at the base of the pyramid with access to basic goods and services.
- Over EUR 4 million generated in additional sales revenue by the IAP investees over the 2 years of implementing their inclusive business projects.

The application process for the new call is organized around three phases: submission of a concept note and if shortlisted, face-to-face pitch, followed by submission of a full business plan.

Companies can apply for inclusive business co-investment/matching grants ranging from EUR 50,000 up to EUR 200,000, to cover a maximum of 49% of the total cost of investment into proposed inclusive business idea.

Applicants are invited to propose innovative, inclusive and commercially viable solutions to pressing development challenges that will benefit low income people and the environment. All materials are submitted online through IAP’s application centre on www.innovationsagainstpoverty.org. Visit the IAP website and start your application process today!