

AGRA Impact Series



Youth find gainful employment as village-based agents, Justine Nayiga's profile – Uganda

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THE REGIONAL EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY TRADE IN STAPLES PHASE-II (REACTS-II)

“Every challenge a farmer faces presents an opportunity for business.”

Justine Nayiga is a 30-year-old village-based agent (VBA) in Kabatende village, Mubende district and a thriving entrepreneur in her own right.

However, success was not handed to her on a plate. She recalls the years of unemployment and near despair before her first introduction to the village agent concept by USAID Feed the Future's Commodity Production and Marketing Activity (CPMA) in 2016.

“By the time the project ended, we had not really fully grasped the concept,” she recalls, “We were not fully utilizing its potential, and still putting in applications for government jobs rather than concentrating on building the business.”

At the time she was aggregating produce on a commission basis for Sanyu Investments Ltd, a commodity buyer, as well as providing grain drying services for farmers.

Her interactions with the Regional East African Community Trade in Staples, Phase-II (REACTS-II) project, funded by AGRA and implemented by Kilimo Trust over a three-year period from April 2018 to March 2021 exposed her to bigger opportunities and a more focused approach to the business of agriculture. She has received training in business skills; entrepreneurship; financial literacy; grading and standards; safe use and handling of agro-chemicals; backward and forward linkages. In addition to networking with other village-based agents in other parts of the country, business mentorship has been a continuous process in the life-span of the project.



“I have come to realize that business too is about building trust, paying attention to the economies of scale and having a big network of farmers to make the high sales turnover, as well as providing better services to farmers,” she adds. “Every challenge a farmer faces presents an opportunity for business.”

When the project co-financed the acquisition of a mobile bean thresher and spray pumps on a 50-50 basis, it opened up avenues for interactions with various credible input companies such as NASECO Seeds, Bukoola Chemicals Ltd, Africa One, Nsanja and Hanghozou.

“Most important, however, was the linkage by our off-taker, Sanyu Investments Ltd., to markets in Kenya, creating a demand for quality products and the benefits of these transactions trickling back down to the farmers,” she adds.

Today, Justine has several revenue streams.

From her savings of UGX20 million, she set up an inputs shop. She also offers production support and post-harvest handling equipment services as well as trade in produce. When she aggregates produce for Sanyu Investments, she earns a minimum of UGX10 per kilogram of maize and UGX30 per kilogram of beans respectively. Each season, Justine aggregates a minimum of 140MT of maize, earning her UGX1.4 million in commissions. From the post-harvest handling services to farmers, she earns UGX1 million in profits and UGX 350,000 per season from providing spray pump services.

Having been introduced to input promotion events by the project, Justine regularly invites agro-chemical companies to sell inputs to her network of farmers, further earning herself sales-based commissions. She also owns a nursery school and has finished constructing her house as well as three rental properties.

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