

URBAN FOOD HIVES PROJECT



OXFAM

The future is equal



PROMOTING ACCESS TO SAFE AND HEALTHY FOOD

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge our partner Community Integrated Development Initiatives (CIDI) as well as other collaborators we worked with including Jero Farm and Food Rights Alliance (FRA), Soroti Demonstration School, the leadership of Soroti City Local Government and the Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) for their efforts in ensuring the successful implementation of the project.

Oxfam in Uganda worked with groups including CIVACT, Church of Uganda Primary School, Luzira, and Luzira Single Mother's group, and through their dedication, the Urban Food Hives (UFH) project was able to build resilient and sustainable food systems.

Special recognition goes to the different Oxfam staff and leadership who ensured the smooth implementation, coordination, monitoring, and documentation of the project.

Lastly, Oxfam in Uganda acknowledges the generous support from Oxfam America, which funded this initiative in and around major cities in five countries, including the Philippines, Uganda, Nigeria, Colombia, and Kenya. Together, we improved access to healthy, affordable food.

Church of Uganda Primary School, Luzira

ABOUT OXFAM IN UGANDA

Oxfam is a global movement for change that empowers people to create a secure future, just and free from poverty. We believe that everyone has a right to safety, security, a livelihood, and a say in decisions that affect them. In Uganda, our Vision is to see Uganda free of inequality and Injustice: A society where people, particularly women and young people, claim and exercise their rights and responsibilities and influence decisions that affect their lives. Our work is guided by the [Country Strategic Framework \(CSF\) \(2021-2030\)](#), organized around four themes: Governance and Accountability, Resilient Livelihoods, Humanitarian preparedness and response and Gender Justice and Women's Rights. All the themes work towards influencing policy and practice, youth and women empowerment, inclusive participation in decision-making at various levels, and capacity strengthening of national and local actors.

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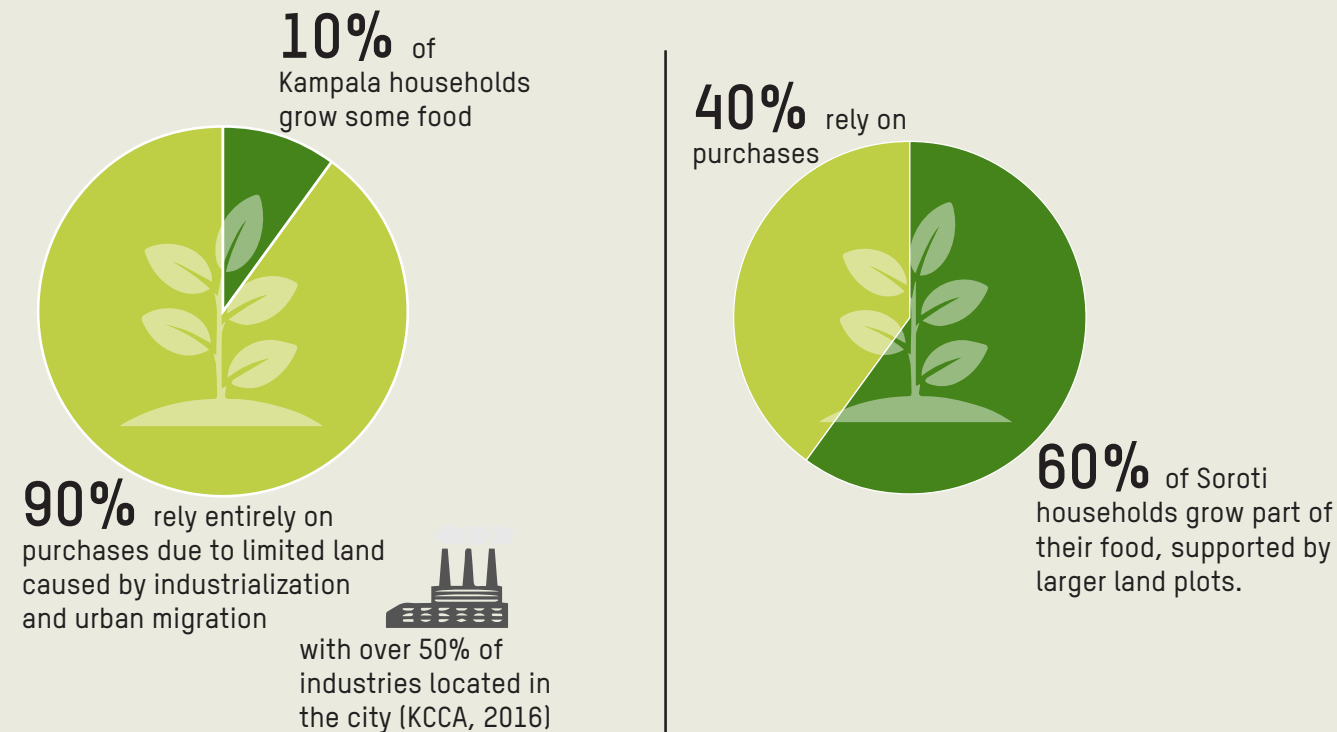
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EXISTING FOOD SYSTEMS

KAMPALA

SOROTI

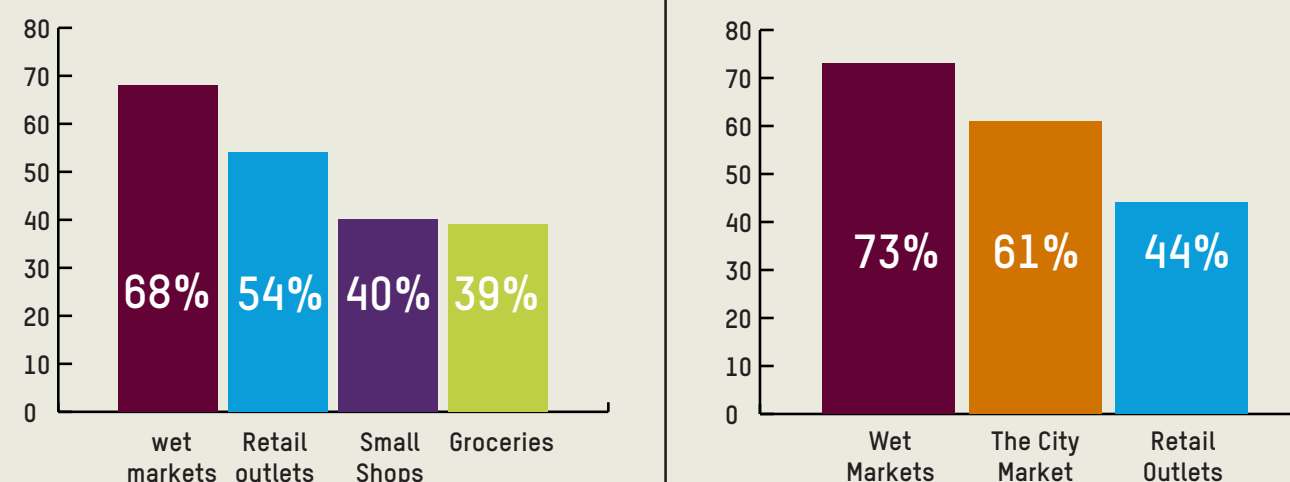
GROWING FOOD



Urban farming mainly serves as food supplementation in both cities.



WHERE FOOD IS BOUGHT



Both cities have diverse food supply chains, divided into formal (supermarkets, hotels, regulated markets) and informal (wet markets, street vendors, open stalls).

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

In the Luzira suburb of Kampala City and Soroti City, limited land access and availability has made it challenging for communities to maintain good nutrition. For four years, since 2021, Oxfam in Uganda implemented the Urban Food Hives (UFH) Project in partnership with CIDI.

Implemented under Oxfam's Resilient Livelihoods thematic programme, the project aimed to increase food and nutrition security, respectively, in urban centres.

In a country where about 13.7 million people live in Urban areas, with the number projected to reach about 21 million by 2040 (World Bank), urban farming paves the way for the population to grow their own fresh, nutritious food locally and build healthier, more resilient communities.

In Kampala city and Soroti, the UFH project empowered women, youth, and schools to build sustainable urban food systems, providing access to food for urban dwellers and generating income for urban farming communities.

The project equipped communities with practical urban farming techniques for cultivating nutritious vegetables and herbs. The communities were also equipped with innovative recycling practices, which also acted as grow containers. These practices improved access to fresh, nutritious foods, and the recycling reduced waste, protecting the environment from plastic pollution and degradation.

The UFH project also promoted entrepreneurship. Women and youth have gained access to markets, connected with financial and seed companies, and expanded their networks through events such as the Harvest Money Expo, where participants showcased their produce, gained exposure, and made meaningful sales.

Despite some challenges, the project reached 95 direct participants (72 Females and 23 males), and 600 indirect participants, with potential for growth and greater impact

THE URBAN FOOD HIVES PROJECT

The Urban Food Hives Project was a four-year initiative implemented in Uganda by Oxfam, in partnership with the Community Integrated Development Initiative (CIDI), with funding from Oxfam America, aimed at creating food systems that are equitable, resilient, and sustainable in urban settings.

Laying the Groundwork

Before the project began, Oxfam carried out a [baseline survey](#) in the Kampala and Soroti districts of Uganda to understand the challenges within existing food systems. The findings revealed multiple issues affecting both consumers and sellers, which shaped the project's direction.

Among the key findings was the high rate of urban poverty, with 50 % earning below UGX 600, 000 per year and the overreliance of city dwellers on markets, with 85-90% of food consumed being purchased rather than grown.

The baseline survey also showed that female and youth-headed households face higher food insecurity, and as their enterprises are growing, there's need for more supportive policy and finance.

From these insights, Oxfam identified three guiding concepts for the Urban Food Hives Project:

1. Pop-up farms and skill hubs – to enhance food production.
2. Entrepreneurship – to link producers and consumers.
3. Coordination – to strengthen collaboration within Uganda's food system.

Pop-up Farms: Growing in Small Spaces

Together with CIDI, Oxfam introduced pop-up farms in Luzira (Kampala) and Soroti, targeting women's groups, youth, and school children. CIDI worked

directly with these groups, while private companies like Jero Farm, an agroecological learning center, based in Entebbe, Wakiso district, provided training in innovative urban farming techniques such as:

- Creation of Micro gardens, including sack and tower gardens, which utilise small spaces for farming.
- Recycling waste materials like plastics, old tires, and bottles which ensures that they're used for longer periods promoting the circular economy and also reducing waste which reduces environment degradation.
- In schools, children were trained to grow vegetables such as eggplants, tomatoes, and onions, helping to supplement school meals while sharing the knowledge back home.

Over time, communities established demonstration gardens that served as learning centres. Households also created their own gardens, while children became ambassadors of change, sharing skills with their families.

Entrepreneurship: Turning Harvest into Income

To address challenges in selling of surplus food produced by Urban food farmers, Oxfam and CIDI focused on linking sellers with buyers.

Community groups began selling surplus produce locally and participated in major events such as the Harvest Money Expo, Uganda's annual agriculture and agribusiness exhibition, organised by the Vision Group and International Women's Day celebrations. These platforms allowed them to expand networks, meet service providers, and strengthen market access.

Coordination: Strengthening the system

Beyond production and sales, effective coordination was vital. Oxfam worked closely with the Food Rights Alliance, the main convener of civil society organizations in the food sector. Together, they brought stakeholders, including farmers, service providers, and duty bearers, around the table.

This inclusive approach ensured that food system challenges were discussed and some addressed at grassroots, sub-national, and national levels, with leaders committing to stronger coordination mechanisms.

Challenges along the way

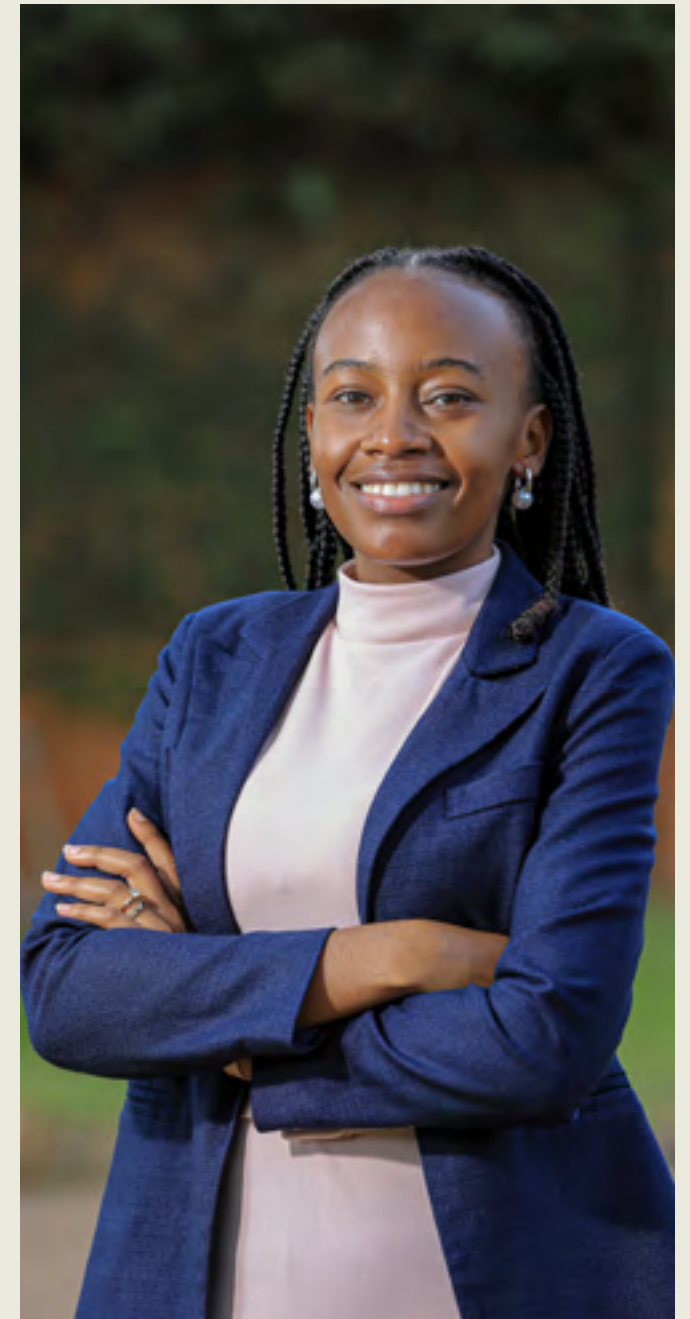
Despite the successes, the project faced several hurdles such as:

- Limited land in urban areas, with landlords sometimes restricting farming activities.
- Flood-prone areas in Kampala that disrupted production.
- Water scarcity, with many farmers relying on rainwater, hence struggling to produce year-round.
- High demand for support from urban and peri-urban communities, far exceeding available funding.

Nonetheless, farmers adopted creative solutions, such as rainwater harvesting and agroecological techniques, to adapt to these challenges.

Looking Back and Ahead

Over its four years, the UFH Project demonstrated that with creativity, partnerships, and community commitment, urban farming can thrive even in limited spaces. It provided households with food, generated income, and empowered children and youth as champions of change. The project left behind demonstration gardens, skills, lessons, opportunities, and a stronger network of actors working to build sustainable food systems and a hope for possible scale-up.



"We hope, with future funding, we shall be able to scale up and support more people."

ANNA RUYONDO KABAUKYA
Seed rights Coordinator, Oxfam in Uganda

FARMING IN SMALL SPACES

JERO FARM



As part of the UFH Project, Oxfam partnered with Jero Farm to serve as the project's technical expert. Jero Farm is located in Kitale village, Wakiso District, where it operates demonstration gardens that showcase how farming can thrive even in the smallest of spaces.

At Jero Farm, the team demonstrated that farming isn't limited by land size - it's limited only by imagination. Together with CIDI, Jero Farm trained women and youth in Luzira, equipping them with practical skills in garden planning, recycling materials like bottles and sacks for planting, producing organic fertilisers, and integrating agroecology, which involved combining vegetables, spices, and even small animals into balanced ecosystems.

Beyond production, Jero Farm guided participants in product marketing and group management, assisting them in selling surplus produce and building strong community networks.

These trainings did more than teach new skills, they sparked a cultural shift. Families began reorganising their kitchen gardens, planting tomatoes, onions, spinach, and other vegetables for household use while selling the surplus to neighbours.

What began as small household gardens soon became learning centres, demonstration plots, and even agro-tourism attractions, proving that even limited urban space can generate both food and income.

In 2023, this transformation achieved a major milestone when the participants exhibited their produce at the Harvest Money Expo in Kololo for the first time. The exposure was invaluable. They gained new contacts, impressive sales, and the realization that farming could be more than survival; it could be a thriving business with potential to grow.

Through the Urban Food Hives Project, Jero Farm has demonstrated that even the tiniest urban corners like balconies, sacks, bottles, or small plots can become sources of food, nutrition, and income. More importantly, we've seen how farming can inspire confidence, foster livelihoods, and give hope to communities.

Jero Farm was founded in 2021, when Ms. Anne Arihomugisha left formal employment to address widespread malnutrition in her community. Motivated by a deep commitment to sustainable agriculture and health education, she turned to urban farming.

What started as Anne's personal response to a health crisis has grown into a movement empowering households, schools, and youth groups to see farming as both a lifeline and a future.



"These spaces can evolve into agro-tourism, learning, and knowledge transfer centers."

RICHARD MUGISHA, *Director*, Jero Farm



FARMING WITH RECYLED MATERIALS

SINGLE MOTHER'S GROUP

"I had to buy basic greens like sukuma wiki (collard greens) and spinach from the market, which was often expensive. Spices such as chamomile, stevia, or peppermint were completely new to me. I had never even seen them.

When the project reached our single mother's group, everything changed. We were introduced to new skills like vertical planting, garden design, portioning land, and keeping gardens neat and organized.

In the city, where land is scarce, I learned that we could farm using materials most people throw away. Old charcoal bags, plastic cups, and basins became our planters. Out of these recycled containers, we now grow dodo (amaranth greens), sukuma wiki, lemongrass, chamomile, and stevia. These spices and herbs enrich meals and also improve health. Stevia, in particular, is helpful for people managing diabetes.

This garden has become a great boost to my health. I live with anaemia, and eating plenty of dodo and cassava leaves from our garden has helped my health. Beyond household nutrition, we sell our vegetables and spices at the local market. The earnings support my family, and whatever remains is reinvested into the garden so that it can keep growing.

Water is our biggest challenge. We have to buy it for irrigation, and sometimes the women in our group cannot raise enough money to buy water for watering the garden. We dream of collecting rainwater but haven't yet been able to raise the money for a storage tank.

One of the most exciting moments for us was attending the Harvest Money Expo in Lugogo just after our very first harvest. We used the earnings to buy sukuma wiki seedlings, which we later planted in our garden

The skills I've gained from the project have gone beyond my own group. I've trained other community members and even shared what I've learned with a friend from upcountry. My income has grown, my confidence has increased, and now I'm planning something bigger, which is starting a sorghum farm in the countryside, while continuing to grow chamomile in our garden."

Narrated by Aparo Jennifer



"Hoping is to expand and get more money to sustain me and my family."

APARO JENNIFER.

Treasurer, Single Mother's Group and member of the Urban Food Hives Project.

FARMING DRIVEN BY PASSION

SINGLE WOMEN'S GROUP, KAMWANYI LUZIRA

I was already farming to feed my family, selling the little surplus I had. When the UFH project came to Kamwanyi Zone in Luzira, the single mothers in this area were brought together and gave us a new sense of direction.

We learned skills like vertical gardening, which showed us that even the smallest space can produce a surprisingly high yield. We were also taught how to make organic insecticides and natural medicines from herbs. This is new knowledge that has changed the way we farm and care for our crops, including in my own garden.

Our methods are simple but effective. We cut containers, punch holes in them, and fill them with fertile soil. To keep the soil healthy, we dig through it regularly, so it doesn't harden. Seeds are first nurtured in nursery beds until they're strong enough to move into the containers.

With this system, we grow sukuma wiki (collard greens), spinach, jobyo (spider plant), and more. Spices like mujaaja (basil) and lemongrass, which we used to buy, are now part of our gardens. I've even started drying some of these spices and turning them into powder to sell. We also grow peppermint and stevia perfect for people who want a natural alternative to sugar.

One of the challenges was finding land to expand for cultivation. We reached an agreement with a local landlord who offered us land. We now face additional issues, such as chickens from neighbouring homes sometimes damaging our crops. During the dry season, we have to rely on tap water, which is costly.

The project also gave me the opportunity to attend the Harvest Money Expo. It was an eye-opener. We sold a lot of produce, and also gained inspiration from other farmers and exhibitors. That experience taught me something I'll never forget: without passion, you can easily give up.

Our work has made an impact beyond our gardens. Neighbours now buy the vegetables and spices we grow, and the income helps me pay school fees, buy books for my children, and reinvest in the garden.

I hope the UFH project continues to share knowledge and offer support. With its guidance, I believe we can keep growing, improving, and inspiring others to see farming not as a burden, but as a passion that transforms lives.

Narrated by Maimuna Umar Nakato



“Without passion, you can easily give up.”

MAIMUNA UMAR NAKATO

Manager, Single Women's Group, Kamwanyi Luzira



“Our plates are greener and healthier. Even at home, vegetables are no longer a rare treat.”

AJILONG GRACE
Teacher in charge of the Food Hives, Church of Uganda Primary School, Luzira

NOURISHING OUR SCHOOL

CHURCH OF UGANDA PRIMARY SCHOOL, LUZIRA

What first drew us to urban farming was the constant fluctuation in vegetable prices. Vegetables were something we could easily grow ourselves, yet we kept buying them at unpredictable costs. At Luzira Church of Uganda Primary School, we also wanted to improve the diet of both our staff and pupils.

The UFH Project completely changed the way we looked at farming. Before, we believed farming belonged only in rural areas, where land is vast and fields stretch far. Now, we know that even the smallest corner of space can be turned into a thriving garden.

With the skills we learned, we began reusing plastic bags, buckets, and old water bottles as planters, items that would otherwise pollute the environment.

The journey has not been without challenges. Our biggest hurdle remains water. During the dry season, we depend on piped water, and the bills are painfully high. Without a proper rainwater harvesting system, keeping the garden alive is difficult. The lack of water harvesting equipment like troughs and water tanks slows us down, but the desire to grow and feed our community keeps us going.

Despite these struggles, the transformation has been remarkable. Before the project, the daily meal at school often lacked vegetables because we couldn't afford them most of the time. Today, the children's plates are greener, healthier, and more balanced. When the children go on holiday, the extra produce from our garden is sold in the community. The income we earn goes straight back into maintaining the garden, ensuring it keeps thriving.

Narrated by Ajilong Grace

FROM CRIME CENTER TO GREEN SPACE

CIVACT YOUTH GROUP

In Kitintale's Zone 12, what was once an empty piece of land known for crime has now been transformed into a thriving green space.

This remarkable change began when the LC1 chairperson entrusted the land to a group of young people, who saw its potential and turned it into a demonstration garden. Today, the site is no longer a hiding place for criminals but a vibrant space of learning, opportunity, and hope. It is conveniently close to a fresh water source.

"We are the CIVACT Youth Group, a youth-led organization registered as a Community-Based Organisation (CBO) dedicated to urban farming. In our garden, vegetables, herbs, and spices grow abundantly. For many of us, farming once felt like something reserved for rural villages with wide, open fields.

But the UFH Project showed us another reality: farming can thrive even in the tightest spaces, just like those in our ghetto neighbourhoods where houses stand shoulder to shoulder.

Through the project, we learned to give new life to discarded plastics. Water bottles and old tyres, once considered waste, are now planters. Cut, cleaned, and filled with soil, they hold crops."

These innovative methods not only make farming possible in small urban spaces but also help us adapt to climate challenges such as flooding. The gardens are easy to manage, simple to water, and provide these youth with fresh, chemical-free vegetables right where they live.

"Our lives have been transformed. With the knowledge we gained, we now design gardens for community members, sell fresh vegetables, and provide seedlings to those eager to start their own farms."

These efforts not only generate income but also inspire others to see farming as a solution to food insecurity. Along the way, these groups built valuable partnerships, including with the Network for Active Citizens (NAC), whose grants have supported them in keeping their work alive.


What began as a fight to reclaim a crime-ridden space has become a movement of resilience.

Narrated by Nassif Mukalu Abdallah



"We now earn from designing gardens, selling fresh vegetables and seedlings to those starting their own urban farms."

NASSIF MUKALU ABDALLAH, *Team Leader*, CIVACK Youth Group



"I first heard about the Urban Food Hives project through a friend who mentioned the training opportunities in urban farming. That sparked my curiosity, and little by little I became more involved. Today, I'm proud to be part of this great work that is transforming our community.

Growing up in the city, farming was never something I thought I'd be interested in. But this project completely changed my perspective. I've come to embrace farming not just as a way to grow food, but as a valuable life skill that brings independence, health, and opportunity."

NABATANZI STELLA, *Personal Assistant, CIVACT Youth Group*

Seedlings are expensive, making it difficult to start or expand our gardens. In addition, insecurity in the area is a constant concern. Thieves sometimes uproot our plants, empty soil from containers, and litter our garden space with old bottles and polythene bags.

Despite these setbacks, my journey has been incredibly rewarding. I've gained valuable skills in urban farming and am now able to set up my own garden at home. The project keeps me active, tending to plants and teaching others in the community how to start their own small gardens. These skills have not only enriched my life but also created opportunities to earn an income. I remember one instance when a lady admired the design of my garden and hired me to set up a similar one at her home. Moments like these make all the effort worthwhile and show the true value of what we are building.

KANSIIME ZUENA KHALIL, *Community Journalist, CIVACT Youth Group*

THE IMPACT

DIRECT BENEFICIARIES



IMPACT



The Urban Food Hives Project supported the school feeding programme for over **800 pupils** by establishing a school garden that supplied weekly vegetables.



Miamuna Umar, a local resident, generated **200,000 Ugx** from her small garden through the sale of eggplants and greens.



JERO Farm



For more information, please contact:

OXFAM IN UGANDA

Plot No. 3459, Tank Hill Rd, Muyenga

P.O. Box 6228, Kampala, Uganda.

Tel: +256 (0) 31 22 65 384

Web: uganda.oxfam.org

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