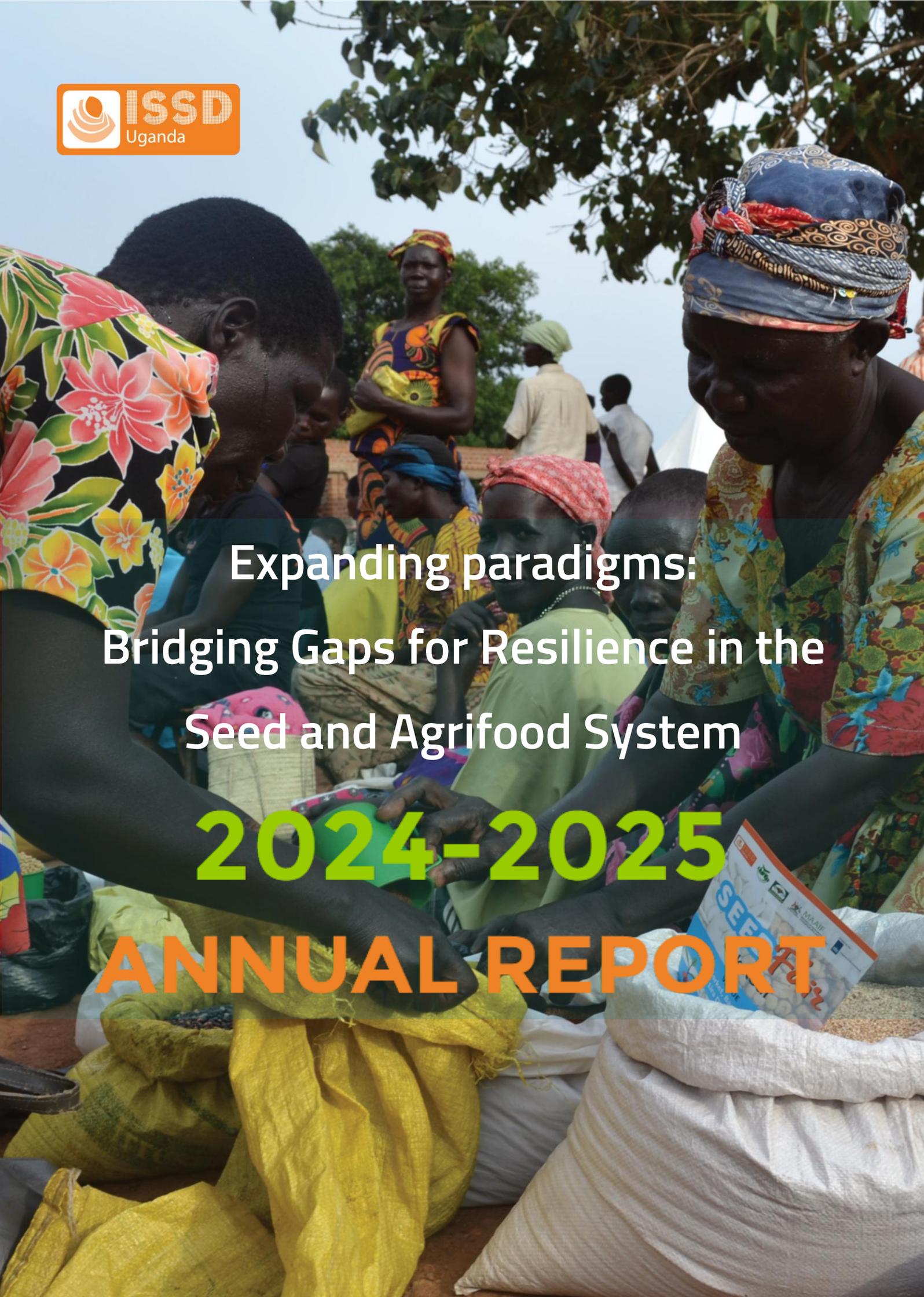




Expanding paradigms:  
Bridging Gaps for Resilience in the  
Seed and Agrifood System

**2024-2025**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**





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2024-2025 Annual Report.**

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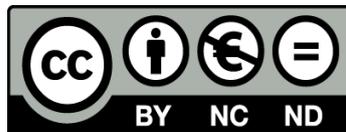
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## Message from the Managing Director

Greetings from ISSD Uganda!

It is with great honor to present our 2024–2025 Annual Report, which reflects our shared commitment to building resilient seed and agrifood systems. This year, we made significant progress across our six core programs: Resilient Seed Systems, Sustainable Agrifood Systems, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Research and Learning, Sustainable Natural Resource Management, and Policy Evolution. Each of these programs has advanced our vision of becoming a center of excellence for innovations in agricultural development and sustainable natural management.



We have strengthened local seed businesses and community seed banks, promoted climate-resilient practices, and enabled youth skilling and entrepreneurship. The CommonGround project has restored degraded landscapes and improved watershed management in the highland communities of Elgon, Kigezi, and Rwenzori. We also launched the two-year WeWork project in Busoga to equip vulnerable youth with skills for decent employment and entrepreneurship in tourism and hospitality sector in partnership with Enabel, the Uganda Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (UHTTI), the European Union, and Belgium.

Our local and international reputation for integrity, innovation, accountability, excellence and collaboration remains strong. Integrity ensures transparency and accountability; innovation drives practical solutions for farmers and communities; excellence inspires delivery of high-quality programs and measurable impact; collaboration fosters strong multistakeholder partnerships. In everything we do, inclusivity guarantees that our interventions address challenges facing women, youth, and other vulnerable groups.

Partnerships have been key to our success in scaling innovations, strengthening seed systems, and promoting sustainable agrifood practices. We particularly recognise our strategic partnership with UHTTI and Enabel, marking a paradigm shift into the tourism and hospitality space. Together, we have co-created assessment and training packages (ATPs) for empowering vulnerable youth and drive inclusive growth across Uganda. Our footprint as a knowledge broker was further reinforced through extension of technical expertise beyond Uganda, notably to South Sudan, Mali, and Niger.

As we look ahead to 2026, we remain committed to expanding our geographic reach, diversifying value chains, and deepening our impact in climate adaptation, regenerative agriculture, and youth empowerment. These priorities align with global sustainability goals and donor expectations, positioning ISSD Uganda as a centre of excellence for agricultural innovation.

We extend heartfelt gratitude to our partners, donors, and stakeholders for their unwavering support. Together, we will continue to bridge gaps, build resilience, and create opportunities for farmers and communities across Uganda and beyond.

**Patrick Oyee**

Managing Director, ISSD Uganda

## 1. About ISSD Uganda

Integrated Seed and Sector Development Uganda (ISSD Uganda) is a nationally registered non-governmental organization (NGO), incorporated under the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) (Reg. No. 80020003121951) and accredited by the National NGO Bureau (Reg. No. INDP165035732NB). Our work contributes to donor priorities, national development frameworks, including National Development Plan IV, the Parish Development Model (PDM), and Vision 2040, while aligning with the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Vision

To be a leading agricultural development organization championing resilient seed and food systems that drive the sustainable commercialization of agriculture in Uganda.

### Core values

Our work is grounded in a set of five core values that guide all aspects of our programming, partnerships, and operations.



**Integrity**  
We uphold transparency, honesty, and ethical behavior in all we do



**Innovation**  
We continuously adapt, learn, and lead with forward-thinking solutions



**Accountability**  
We are responsible stewards of the trust and resources placed in our hands.



**Collaboration**  
We foster partnerships and inclusive approaches for greater impact



**Excellence**  
We strive for high-quality, evidence-based, and results-driven outcomes

### Geographic reach

ISSD Uganda operates at both national and regional scale to drive inclusive and sustainable agricultural transformation. The priority groups include women, youth, refugees, internally displaced persons, smallholder farmers and MSMEs. Our programs are designed to improve livelihoods, food security, and the economic independence of smallholder farmers and agri-entrepreneurs.

Outside Uganda, we partner with ZOA Dorcas and the University of Juba on the Accelerating Food Systems Resilience in South Sudan (AFSRiSS) Project, and with International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) on the ISSD Sahel Project to support development of the Seed Tracking and Tracing System (STTS) in Mali and Niger.

## Geographic footprint of ISSD Uganda

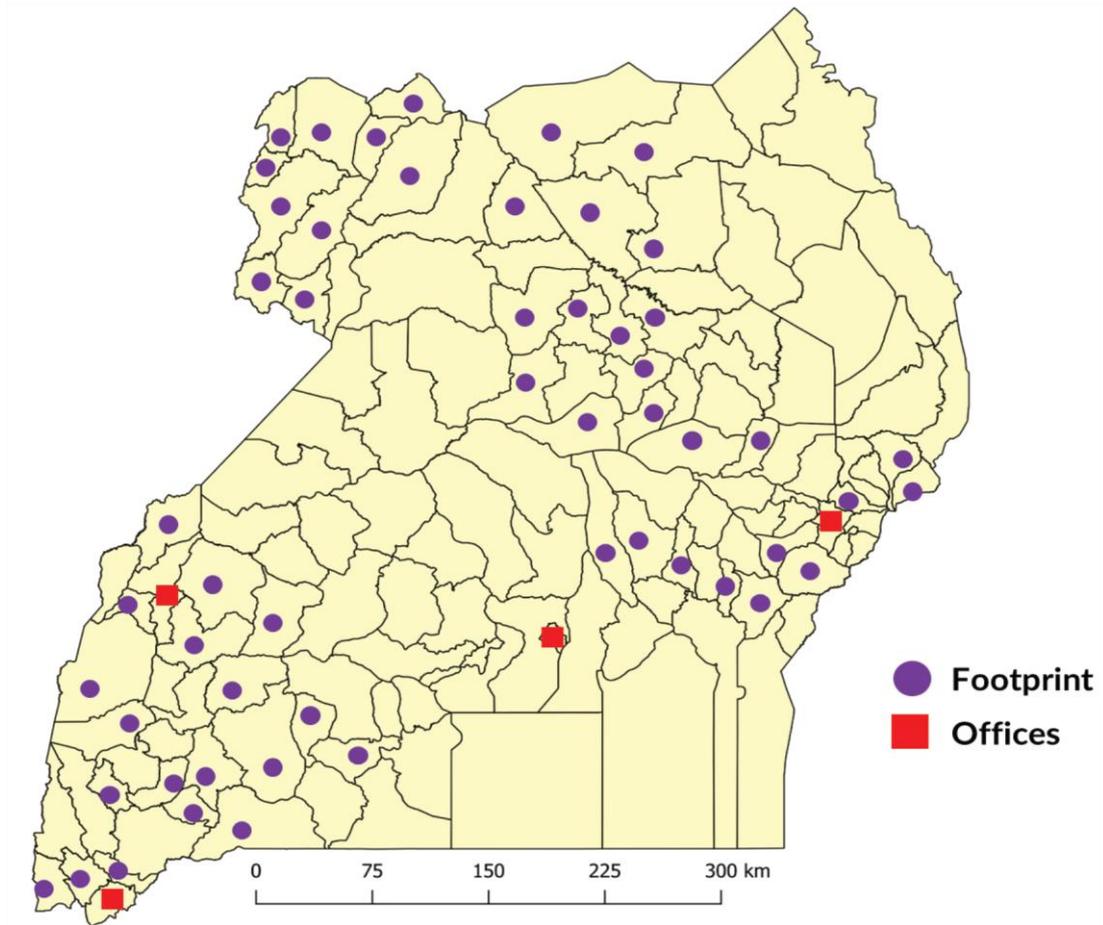
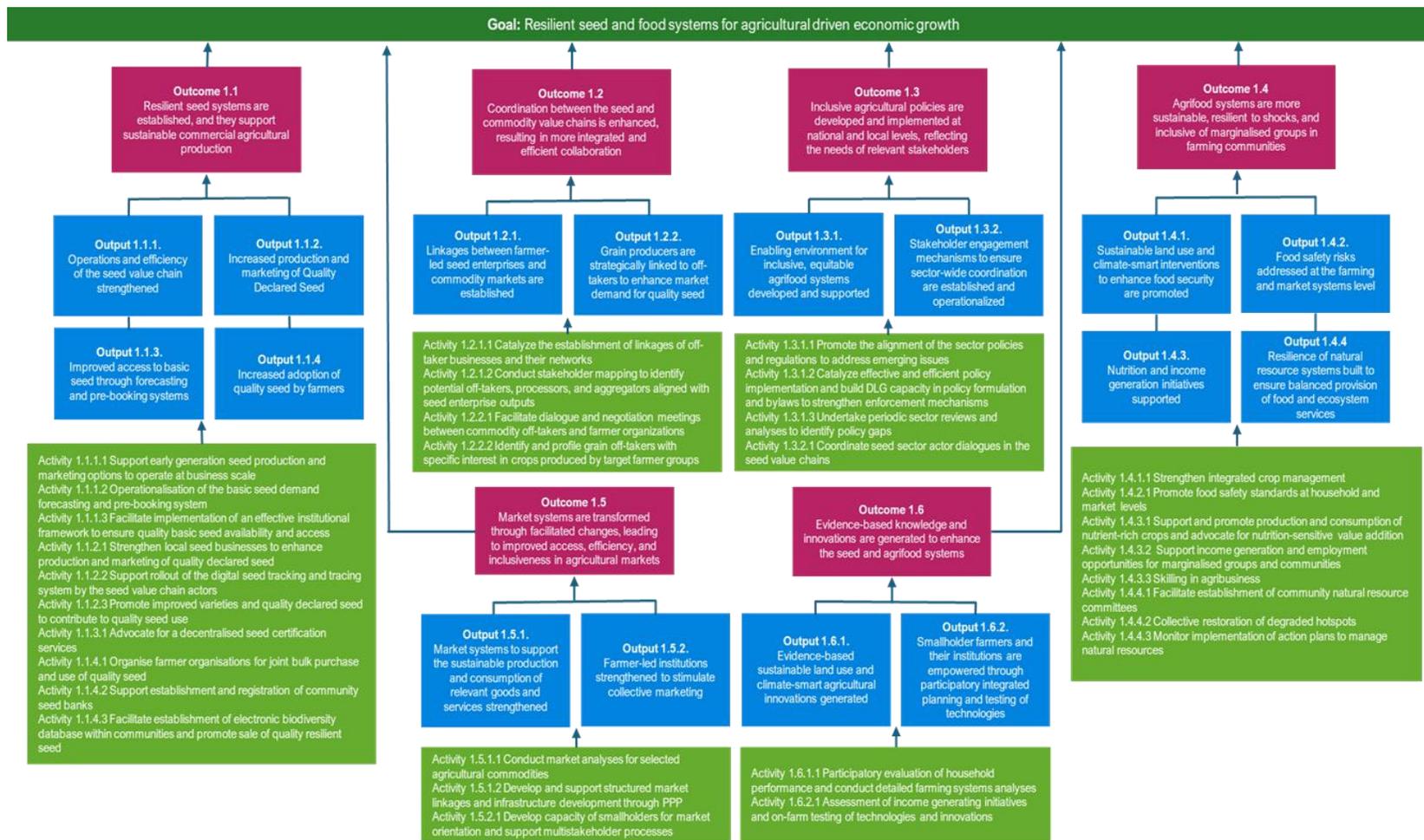


Figure 1: Footprint of ISSD Uganda 2011-2025



**Assumptions:** Farmers and seed producers have access to financial resources. Farmers are willing to invest in quality seed use. Seed certification structures run effectively. Commodity market conditions remain stable. Government of Uganda remains committed to the vision of the National Seed Policy, 2018. Farmers are willing and able to adopt improved farming practices. Food safety standards developed are enforced. Private sector actors are motivated to actively engage with the relevant value chain actors. Increased investment in research and development.

Figure 2: Theory of change

## 2. Our programs

### Resilient Seed Systems Program

The Resilient Seed System (RSS) program aims to create an inclusive and robust seed sector by integrating formal and informal seed systems and promoting all seed classes. Its vision is simple yet transformative: ensure reliable access to quality seed for smallholder farmers - a critical pathway to higher productivity, improved rural incomes, and enhanced resilience to climate change. Leveraging its expertise in seed sector development, ISSD Uganda is scaling up sustainable Local Seed Businesses (LSBs), which serve as community-based enterprises producing and distributing affordable, locally adapted seeds. The program targets the establishment of 25,000 professionalized LSBs, directly engaging 625,000 farmers and reaching one million smallholders, with at least 60% regularly accessing quality seed.



Figure 3: Quality Declared Seed (QDS) of NARO Bean 3

This scale of ambition reflects both the urgency of the challenge and confidence in the proven LSB model. The program adopts a multifaceted strategy for LSB development and professionalization, equipping farmer groups with technical, managerial, and entrepreneurial skills to produce and market Quality Declared Seed (QDS). Recognized under Uganda's National Seed Policy, QDS meets rigorous standards and offers a reliable alternative to counterfeit seed, bridging the gap between informal and formal seed markets. By decentralizing seed production, farmers in remote areas can access quality seed without prohibitive costs or logistical barriers.

Climate risks are addressed by promoting crop varieties tolerant to drought, pests, and diseases. These varieties are selected through participatory breeding approaches, ensuring alignment with farmer preferences and local agro-ecological conditions. Productivity gains are pursued through the widespread adoption of quality seeds, which can increase yields by 30-50% when combined with good agronomic practices. To accelerate uptake, the program invests in training, extension services, and demonstration plots, showcasing the tangible benefits of improved seed and building farmer confidence in new technologies.

RSS also strengthens seed value chains by linking LSBs to input suppliers, agro-processors, and buyers, creating a more integrated and competitive marketplace. These linkages enable farmers to access complementary services such as credit, storage, and marketing support, fostering a holistic approach to seed system development. At the policy level, RSS engages with government institutions to advocate for reforms that support decentralized seed production,

enhance seed regulation, and improve farmer access to seed-related services and information. This policy engagement ensures that systemic bottlenecks are addressed and that the enabling environment for seed sector growth is strengthened.

### **Sustainable Agrifood Systems Program**

Sustainable Agrifood Systems (SAS) program is designed to foster climate-resilient, nutrition-sensitive, and market-integrated food systems that strengthen agricultural production, food security, and household incomes. With a strong emphasis on equity, SAS prioritizes women, youth, persons with disabilities, and refugees, groups that have historically faced systemic barriers to agricultural resources and opportunities. Targeting 400,000 farmers, at least 80% of whom are women and youth, the program operates across Uganda's highland regions, refugee-hosting areas, and high-potential agricultural zones. This strategic geographic focus reflects a nuanced understanding of diverse agro-ecological and socio-economic contexts, enabling SAS to catalyze inclusive growth and resilience where it matters most.



Figure 4: LSB farmer with their harvest of NARO Millet QDS

Pivotal to SAS is the development of robust value chains for field crops and horticulture, ensuring that farmers transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture. Enhanced linkages from production to market improve access to quality inputs and promote advanced agronomic practices. Special attention is given to crops with high nutritional and economic value, such as dark-green leafy vegetables, legumes, and fruits, which are particularly suited for women- and youth-led enterprises. These interventions not only enhance food security but also create opportunities for entrepreneurship and income diversification.

Climate-smart and agroecological practices are championed to safeguard natural resources and boost productivity amid climate variability. Techniques such as intercropping, conservation agriculture, integrated pest management, and water harvesting improve adaptive capacity and reduce vulnerability to shocks. Additionally, nutrition-sensitive farming, including kitchen gardens and small livestock integration are prioritized to enhance dietary diversity and household nutrition. Kitchen gardens serve as empowerment spaces for women and youth, supported through training and awareness campaigns that align agricultural practices with nutritional needs.



Figure 5: Training in the establishment of kitchen gardens

Building resilience requires more than crop production. SAS promotes enterprise diversification by supporting farmers to explore complementary ventures such as beekeeping, aquaculture, and agro-processing. These enterprises create additional income streams and employment opportunities, particularly for youth. Post-harvest management and food safety interventions address spoilage and contamination through improved storage technologies and handling protocols, enhancing the competitiveness of Ugandan produce. Value addition—through processing, packaging, and branding—enables farmers to capture more value and access urban and export markets. Training in these areas equips participants to move up the value chain, increasing profitability and unlocking new opportunities. Women and youth are especially encouraged to lead in this space, leveraging creativity and entrepreneurial drive to transform local food systems.

### **Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program**

Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IE) program serves as a launchpad for sustainable livelihoods and economic independence across Uganda. Targeting 300,000 women, youth, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the program equips participants with formal and informal skills to transition into decent work, agripreneurship, and value-driven enterprises. Training is tailored to high-value agricultural activities that meet both domestic and export market demands, with a strong focus on production, processing, and value addition—moving beyond raw commodity sales to competitive, market-ready products.

Enterprise development is anchored in collective structures such as farmer entrepreneur groups, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs), and cooperatives. These platforms enable resource pooling, knowledge sharing, and stronger market negotiation. Participants receive tailored support in business planning, investment readiness, and mentorship, equipping them to pitch ideas, attract funding, and scale operations. Market bottlenecks are addressed through interventions that improve infrastructure, streamline regulations, and foster linkages to formal markets and resource providers, ensuring rural entrepreneurs can compete effectively.



Figure 6: Horticulture farmers explore potential for quality seed production for African Indigenous Vegetables

MSMEs benefit from targeted support for upgrading and growth acceleration. The journey from ideas to income is facilitated through business modelling, incubation, and start-up support, including access to capital and financial literacy training. Entrepreneurs learn to manage resources, assess risk, and make informed financial decisions, while connecting to networks that sustain and grow their businesses. This holistic approach ensures enterprises are not only launched but positioned for long-term success.

The program also promotes diversification beyond traditional agriculture by venturing into emerging sectors such as agritourism and rural hospitality, creating new income streams and employment opportunities. Women and youth are trained in customer service, site management, and experience design enables participants to tap into Uganda's growing tourism industry. Recognizing technology's transformative role, IE integrates digital literacy and advanced applications into its training portfolio. Rural entrepreneurs learn to leverage e-commerce, data management, and online marketing to overcome geographic barriers and connect with broader markets.

### **Research, Learning and Delivery Program**

Research, Learning and Delivery (RLD) transforms knowledge into actionable insights for smarter decisions and a resilient agricultural future. It embeds evidence-based thinking and adaptive learning across Uganda's agricultural development, fostering innovation and improvement. By combining data with dialogue and grounding evidence in local realities, RLD ensures that solutions are practical, inclusive, and responsive to farmers' needs.

RLD operates through a multi-stakeholder framework that brings together policymakers, farmer networks, extension agents, research institutions, and development partners. This inclusive approach breaks down silos and ensures that research outputs do not remain confined to academic circles. Instead, findings are translated into practical strategies that directly benefit farming communities. By engaging actors at national and sub-national levels, RLD creates feedback loops that strengthen policy, improve service delivery, and accelerate adoption of innovations.

Farming systems research uses tools such as simulation models and geospatial mapping to analyse interactions among crops, livestock, soil, water, and socio-economic factors, enabling targeted interventions for specific agro-ecological zones. By integrating agronomy, ecology, and farmer knowledge, it develops practical strategies for soil health and crop management,

which extension agents translate into actionable guidance for farmers. Seed systems research complements this work by addressing constraints in seed production and distribution while promoting high-yielding, pest-resistant, and climate-resilient varieties, strengthening farmers' access to quality seed.



Figure 7: Participatory training in farming systems integration

Beyond production, RLD focuses on market systems to help farmers capture greater value by reducing transaction costs, improving infrastructure, and enhancing pricing transparency. The research examines intermediaries, policy frameworks, and inclusion of women and youth to support fair, competitive value chains. Climate-smart approaches are embedded across farming and market systems through early warning tools, risk reduction strategies, and locally relevant adaptation practices, building resilience to climate shocks and protecting food security and livelihoods.

### **Sustainable Natural Resource Management Program**

Sustainable Natural Resource Management (SNRM) is a community-driven program that restores degraded ecosystems while promoting responsible stewardship through community-led governance and action. SNRM integrates ecosystem restoration with rural development, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Participatory Integrated Planning (PIP) is at the heart of the CommonGround project that is rehabilitating over 20,000 hectares of watershed areas in Elgon, Kigezi and Rwenzori. This initiative empowers farmers and communities to co-create solutions for sustainable land and water management through watershed platforms: watershed and sub-watershed committees. These structures provide an institutional backbone for inclusive decision-making, conflict resolution, and coordinated implementation. Communities jointly develop watershed visions and action plans, setting shared goals for land use, conservation, and equitable resource sharing.



Figure 8: Restoration site visit by the delegation from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN)

SNRM promotes equitable benefit sharing among community members through improved water availability, forest product access, and enhanced agricultural productivity—creating strong incentives for participation and reinforcing the link between environmental health and human well-being. By ensuring that all stakeholders benefit from stewardship efforts, the program fosters trust and long-term commitment to conservation. Implementation of action plans is supported through capacity building, technical assistance, and resource mobilization, with watershed platforms serving as hubs for collaboration, learning, and accountability. Restoration activities are organized at both group and site levels to promote collective responsibility and community solidarity.



Figure 9: Household presentation of their integrated family plans

Tree nurseries are established in every targeted village and restoration hotspot, supplying indigenous and climate-resilient species for reforestation, agroforestry, and soil stabilization. These nurseries double as centers for environmental education and income generation, particularly benefiting women and youth who often led nursery operations and restoration campaigns. Progress is closely monitored to enable adaptive management, identify challenges, and celebrate successes. Successful models of collective action are scaled to other communities, promoting horizontal learning and accelerating landscape-level impact. By aligning sub-watershed and watershed-level visions, SNRM ensures that local actions

contribute to broader ecological objectives. Embedding natural resource management into community development processes makes environmental stewardship a fundamental pillar of rural transformation and resilience, demonstrating that restoration is both an ecological necessity and a driver of economic and social progress.

### **Sector Coordination and Policy Evolution Program**

Sector Coordination and Policy Evolution (SCPE) advocates for inclusive, evidence-based, and progressive policies that support agricultural transformation through enabling regulations and institutional systems. Its goal is to create an environment where agribusiness can thrive, and sustainable livelihoods are realized. The program focuses on operationalizing existing sector policies and strategies by building robust partnerships across public, private, and civil society domains aimed at driving policy evolution agendas forward.



Figure 10: Training workshop on Seed Tracking Tracing System (STTS) in Mali

Uganda has developed several agricultural policy frameworks and strategic plans, yet their impact is often limited by implementation gaps, weak coordination, and lack of statutory instruments. To address these challenges, the program convenes national and regional multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together policymakers, farmer organizations, agribusiness actors, researchers, and development partners. These forums foster consensus-building, align priorities, and co-create solutions, ensuring policies are technically sound, socially responsive, and politically feasible. This collaborative approach mitigates fragmentation and duplication, creating a unified and strategic sectoral response.

Through strategic partnerships with government, research institutions, and development partners, the program mobilizes resources, supports the development of statutory instruments and strengthens institutional capacity for effective implementation. It provides technical assistance and promotes accountability, with a focus on land tenure, input regulation, and agricultural finance to unlock agribusiness development and rural prosperity.

SCPE also drives national awareness through media campaigns, workshops, and community outreach. These efforts disseminate information, build trust, and empower citizens to engage with and shape the agricultural agenda. By reinforcing public participation and institutional accountability, the program makes policy evolution a shared responsibility, ensuring that reforms are not only enacted but embraced at all levels.

### 3. Key highlights of 2024-2025

#### AFSRiSS: Insights from Uganda's LSBs and Community Seed Banks

Seed systems in South Sudan cannot meet demand for quality seeds of locally adapted crops. Commercial seed companies often prioritise seeds of high-value crops, leaving staples underserved. The reliance on home-saved seeds exposes farmers to pests, diseases, and low yields, which perpetuates food security vulnerability. The Accelerating Food Systems Resilience in South Sudan (AFSRiSS) project, funded by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) and implemented by ZOA Dorcas, is addressing these gaps through advocacy for a pluralistic, market-oriented seed sector. University of Juba and ISSD Uganda provide the technical support to transform farmer groups in Bor, Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), Torit, and Wau into functional Community Seed Banks (CSBs) and Local Seed Businesses (LSBs).

#### Leveraging community seed banks for agrobiodiversity and resilience

A learning visit to Adamasiko and Orungo CSBs in eastern Uganda aimed to build the capacity of 17 South Sudanese comprised of farmers and extension staff with the knowledge and inspiration needed to establish and sustain community seed banks that are locally anchored, inclusive, and technically sound. Direct engagement with Ugandan CSB members and field tours encouraged the delegation from South Sudan to reflect on the differences between farmer-managed and cooperative-run models, and to explore how these approaches could be adapted to the South Sudanese context.



Figure 11: Learning visit to Adamasiko CSB (Soroti District) and Orungo CSB (Amuria District)

Table 1 presents the lessons for strengthening the newly established CSBs in South Sudan based on the actionable insights for seed security, agrobiodiversity conservation, and farmer resilience from the visit to Adamasiko and Orungo CSBs. In summary, the success of new CSBs depends on strong community ownership, diversity and inclusion, and crop diversity for nutrition and climate adaptation. Innovative seed loan systems sustain seed flow, while partnerships with research institutions and NGOs provide technical support and access to foundation seed. Investment in storage infrastructure and quality control ensures seed viability. Simple documentation and benefit-sharing mechanisms strengthen governance and sustainability. Integrating CSBs into livelihood strategies and climate adaptation plans will enhance resilience, food security and rural transformation.

Table 1: Lessons learned for strengthening CSBs in South Sudan

	<b>Community Ownership &amp; Organisation</b>	Community Seed Banks (CBS) anchored in cooperatives and Farmer Field Schools (FFS) have proven effective in building trust and sustainability. However, embedding CBS within organized farmer groups or cooperatives should be supported by clear governance structures and accountability mechanisms.
	<b>Inclusivity</b>	CSBs that actively engage youth and marginalized groups can achieve broader social impact. Hence, CSBs in South Sudan should adopt inclusive membership policies and leadership roles that empower women, youth, and vulnerable groups.
	<b>Crop Diversity for Resilience</b>	Maintaining diverse crops such as legumes, cereals, and indigenous vegetables has strengthened nutrition and climate resilience in Uganda. CSBs should prioritize crop diversification and establish systems for cataloguing and conserving local varieties.
	<b>Strategic Partnerships</b>	CSBs thrive through partnerships with research institutions and NGOs, which provide technical training and access to foundation seed. It is important for new CSBs to formalize similar collaborations to strengthen capacity and resource flow.
	<b>Infrastructure Investment</b>	Permanent storage facilities and equipment such as moisture meters and weighing scales have improved seed quality management in Uganda. New CSBs should invest in similar infrastructure to reduce post-harvest losses and maintain seed viability.
	<b>Governance &amp; Documentation</b>	Weak record-keeping and inconsistent participation limited impact of the CSBs. To avoid this, new CSBs should introduce simple documentation templates and incentivize member engagement through regular meetings and benefit-sharing.
	<b>Innovative Seed Loans</b>	Flexible seed loan models (e.g., borrow one kilogram, return two) ensures seed circulation and accountability among members. New CSBs should implement similar systems with clear agreements and monitoring to sustain seed flow and trust.
	<b>Capacity Building</b>	Training in organic input production, varietal selection, and seed quality management has empowered Ugandan farmers. South Sudan CSBs should develop structured training programs on agroecology and climate-smart practices.
	<b>Climate Adaptation Measures</b>	Climate shocks in Uganda have underscored the need for resilient crop choices and storage solutions. CSBs in South Sudan should promote drought-tolerant varieties and invest in climate-proof storage facilities to withstand environmental stressors.

### Building capacity through local seed business exposure

A16-member South Sudanese delegation visited Bedi Jo in Oyam District and Alito Joint Christian Cooperative in Kole District, gaining insights into seed business development at different scales (Figure 12a & 12b). The visits showcased QDS production protocols, post-harvest handling, seed testing, and marketing strategies, while emphasizing structured governance, business planning, and customer engagement. The delegation learnt that LSBs addressed low awareness of quality seed, climate variability, and limited credit access through solutions like community sensitization, internal savings schemes, and soft loans. The exchange highlighted the importance of inclusive leadership, technical training, and strategic partnerships, equipping participants with practical knowledge to adapt and replicate the LSB model in South Sudan.



Figure 12: Learning visit to Bedi Jo LSB (Oyam District) and Alito Joint Christian Cooperative (Kole District)

### Creating strategic research linkages with NaSARRI and Ngetta ZARDI

As part of the broader learning visit to Uganda under the AFSRiSS project, the South Sudan delegation engaged with scientists at the National Semi-Arid Resources Research Institute (NaSARRI) in Serere and the Ngetta Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (ZARDI) in Lira. These visits offered practical exposure to plant breeding pipelines, seed quality assurance, and climate-resilient agriculture. Participants were particularly interested in how Uganda’s research infrastructure supports foundation seed production, varietal improvement, and quality control, which represent critical gaps in South Sudan’s seed sector.

At NaSARRI, participants learned about breeding programs for oil crops, legumes, cereals, and cotton, emphasizing drought-tolerant and pest-resistant varieties suited to semi-arid conditions like South Sudan (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Visit to the National Semi-Arid Resources Research Institute

At Ngetta ZARDI, the focus was on seed testing protocols—moisture content, purity, germination rates—and dormancy-breaking techniques, underscoring the importance of laboratory capacity for maintaining seed standards (Figure 14). These experiences reinforced the need for institutional partnerships and technical infrastructure in South Sudan.



Figure 14: Visit to the seed testing laboratory at Ngetta ZARDI

### CommonGround: Transforming highland farming systems for resilience Strengthening farming system through community-led actions

The CommonGround project’s sustainable farming systems strategy pivots on the PIP approach, which enables smallholder households and communities to co-create development

pathways tailored to their unique contexts. By integrating visioning, planning, and implementation into a structured process, PIP fosters ownership, agency, and long-term resilience. Successfully deployed in Elgon, Kigezi, and Rwenzori regions, the approach has helped communities design practical, locally relevant solutions that strengthen farming systems and adaptive capacity. Pathway 1 of the project focuses on empowering households to engage in collective planning, improve farming practices through targeted technical training, and build community cohesion through shared visioning and coordinated action—guiding them toward sustainable livelihoods and a more resilient agricultural future.



Figure 15: PIP farmers learning the making of compost manure

#### **Transformative impact for technical innovation and local knowledge**

During the reporting period, notable progress was made in empowering households through the Participatory Integrated Planning (PIP) approach. A total of 3,261 household-level PIPs were developed across 93 communities, while 3,351 graduated PIP Implementers trained 27,971 Generation 1 farmers in collective planning and action. This marked a significant step in building local capacity for sustained engagement. To support learning, 5,504 training materials were distributed, and open days and intra-community visits were held across target areas. Refresher training was also provided for 33 Field Officers and 6 CommonGround staff. A needs assessment in 56 communities identified key challenges such as soil erosion, pest pressure, limited access to quality inputs, and market constraints. In response, demonstration plots were established, and five training leaflets were developed and translated into five local languages to ensure accessibility and relevance.



Figure 16: Monitoring visit to Kyatwa A & B with a delegation from the European Union

### Restoring degraded sites through community tree nurseries

CommonGround has incorporated the Tree Nursery Business (TNB) model as part of its community toolbox for landscape restoration, offering a locally driven solution to environmental degradation while enhancing livelihoods (Figure 17). During the reporting period, 108 community tree nurseries were established or revitalized across the Rwenzori, Kigezi, and Elgon regions, exceeding the 97 initial target.



Figure 17: Tree nursery operators showcase their seedlings

These nurseries are hubs for seedling production, environmental education, and community mobilization. All nurseries were assessed for viability, with 62 prioritized for continued technical and material support, while transitional and low viability nurseries received tailored interventions or responsible phase out. Collectively, these nurseries produced 1,154,002 seedlings, of which 470,665 were transplanted to restoration sites and household plots, while 640,720 remained in nurseries for future planting. Species diversity was notable, including Indigenous and multipurpose trees such as *Calliandra calothyrsus*, *Markhamia lutea*, *Grevillea robusta*, *Prunus africana*, *Cordia africana*, and fruit trees like mangoes, avocado, jackfruit, guava, citrus, alongside income generating crops such as Arabica coffee.

To enhance sustainability of the TNB model, operators are encouraged to reinvest earnings, diversify seedlings to include marketable vegetables and fruit trees, and develop business plans linked to restoration initiatives and markets. A performance-based payment system incentivizes quality and accountability, with 50% paid at procurement and 50% after three months, contingent on survival rates and field verification. This approach ensures quality, restoration-relevant species are prioritized while discouraging overproduction of ecologically unsuitable species like eucalyptus or cocoa. By combining technical rigor with business innovation, the model strengthens local ownership and long-term viability.

### Scaling land restoration through community-led action

A total of 528 restoration sites were validated across the Rwenzori, Kigezi, and Elgon regions, anchored by 522 site groups with leadership committees guiding planning, implementation, and monitoring. Among these, 200 active groups received targeted support (tools, seedlings, and grasses) to strengthen their capacity for coordinated restoration. Communities

implemented interventions to improve soil health, water retention, biodiversity, and climate resilience. Key practices included retention ditches, terraces, and check dams to reduce runoff and erosion, alongside vegetative barriers like Napier grass for slope stabilization (Figure 18). Organic matter and mulching enhanced soil fertility and moisture, while agroforestry integrated indigenous and fruit trees supplied by community nurseries.



Figure 18: Integrated Plot with grass bunds

Restoration efforts extended to landslide-prone areas through bioengineering techniques such as bamboo planting and grass cuttings for gully rehabilitation. These practices were embedded in Integrated Production Plans (IPPs) at household level, promoting contour farming, crop rotation, and cover cropping to align farm productivity with landscape restoration. By combining structural measures with agroecological practices, CommonGround strengthened ecosystem services, reduced climate vulnerability, and improved livelihoods, demonstrating that restoration and production can be mutually reinforcing.

### **Empowering communities and promoting stewardship**

Integrated Plot Plans (IPPs) were developed and monitored in all 93 communities, providing a structured framework for implementing improved farming techniques. Learning visits to Kachwekano, Rwebitaba, and Serere research stations enriched farmer knowledge, while participation in the Harvest Money Expo and the Indigenous Seed and Food Fair facilitated exposure to innovations and market opportunities (Figure 19). Community empowerment remained a central focus throughout the year. In 33 communities, shared visions and action plans were developed, laying the foundation for coordinated local development. Awareness campaigns reached 6,375 households across 57 communities, fostering greater understanding and participation. To support collective action, tools and equipment were distributed to 84 communities. Environmental Education (EE) activities were implemented in 33 schools, involving the training of 35 patrons and 34 school administrators. These efforts led to the establishment of tree planting campaigns and demonstration gardens, and training in eco-friendly income-generating activities.



Figure 19: Farmers affiliated with the CommonGround project exhibit their products at the Harvest Money Expo

### **Watershed management through institutional collaboration**

To complement site-level restoration, watershed management was strengthened through coordinated engagement with local and national institutions. Activities were aligned with the Ministry of Water and Environment’s Water Management Zones (WMZs) covering the Albert, Kyoga, and Victoria zones, ensuring compliance with national standards and integration into catchment-level goals. This alignment embedded restoration within governance structures capable of sustaining long-term impact. Participatory planning was successfully integrated into six district and twenty-five sub-county governments, enabling communities and institutions to jointly plan and implement watershed interventions. In the Rwenzori region, five sub-watersheds within the Rwimi catchment were mapped, providing a spatial foundation for targeted restoration and resource management. Catchment management committees were formed and strengthened in key sub-catchments, including Upper Manafwa and Mpologoma, to coordinate restoration activities, mobilize community participation, and enforce local bylaws on land and water conservation. These committees now serve as critical governance platforms, ensuring that interventions address both upstream and downstream degradation and remain ecologically coherent. By combining participatory planning, spatial mapping, and institutional collaboration, the program has established a robust framework for watershed governance that links local action to national priorities and accelerates landscape-level impact.

### **CABI PlantwisePlus: Youth skilling and mentorship for seed entrepreneurship**

Youth participation in the seed sector is essential for building resilient agrifood systems and driving inclusive economic growth. Through the PlantwisePlus program, the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI) partnered with ISSD Uganda to support ten youth groups from Luwero, Kayunga, and Nakaseke affiliated with Ziropwe Agaliawamu Agribusiness Training Association (ZAABTA). The initiative focused on developing youth-based LSBs, equipped with technical skills and business acumen. This effort marks a significant step toward creating a pipeline of youth-led seed enterprises capable of driving innovation, sustainability, and inclusive growth within their communities.

### **Foundations for youth innovation and entrepreneurship**

A five-day Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop equipped 31 youth leaders from ZAABTA-affiliated groups with the knowledge and skills to establish and manage LSBs grounded in sustainability and market responsiveness (Figure 20). The training was structured around four pillars: technical competence, governance, business planning, and market engagement. Participants received hands-on training in seed production planning, crop protection, fertilization, and post-harvest handling to ensure the production of quality seeds that meet agronomic and market standards. Governance sessions guided youth groups in refining structures, developing SMART visions, and forming LSB committees to strengthen decision-making and accountability.



Figure 20: TOT trainees engaged in group work on QDS production planning

Business-focused modules emphasized enterprise planning, marketing strategies, and financial management, enabling participants to position their seed businesses competitively and manage resources effectively. Proposed seed enterprises included beans, Nakati, red amaranth, soybean, and pasture grasses, reflecting both market potential and adaptability to local agroecological conditions. To support implementation, knowledge materials and customized monitoring tools were distributed, and groups were linked to key stakeholders such as MAAIF, NARO, and agro-input dealers for technical support and market access. These connections, combined with performance tracking, aim to build a pipeline of youth-led seed enterprises capable of driving innovation, sustainability, and inclusive growth.

### **Strengthening seed quality assurance**

To strengthen district-level capacity in seed quality assurance, a two-day technical training was conducted in collaboration with MAAIF National Seed Certification Services (NSCS), bringing together District Agricultural Officers (DAOs), Agricultural Officers (AOs), and farmer representatives (Figure 21). The training covered legal frameworks, crop policies, and certification processes, clarifying roles and standards across the seed value chain. Practical sessions focused on field inspection and laboratory testing, equipping participants with skills to assess seed quality, maintain accurate records, and adhere to national protocols and

ensuring seeds reaching farmers are viable, pure, and disease-free. Beyond technical knowledge, the training fostered collaboration between MAAIF officials and farmer representatives, creating a shared commitment to improving seed systems at the grassroots level. Customized monitoring tools and discussions on systemic challenges especially inconsistent attendance and delivery gap provided insights for future capacity-building efforts. Recommendations include improving outreach, tailoring content to diverse audiences, and ensuring continuity in technical support. By strengthening local capacity and promoting accountability, this initiative lays the foundation for a more reliable and inclusive seed sector.



Figure 21: MAAIF NSCS official training youth farmers on quality assurance for QDS production

### **Capacity development through coaching and mentorship**

To strengthen youth-led seed enterprises and ensure continuity in learning, two field-level coaching visits were conducted in February and July 2025. These visits served as critical touchpoints for assessing progress, providing tailored mentorship, and reinforcing agronomic and business skills. During the February visit, seven youth groups had established demonstration gardens, with four harvesting QDS. A notable achievement was the Bakuseera Group receiving formal certification from MAAIF for 210 kilograms of bean seed. However, challenges such as flooding, governance gaps, and limited irrigation access were observed, prompting targeted support strategies.

By July 2025, all youth groups had planted seed crops for the 2025A season, including beans, Nakati, soybeans, groundnuts, and red amaranth, which were selected for market potential and adaptability. The visit revealed significant improvements in crop management, market readiness, and planning for the next season. Persistent issues in governance and record-keeping highlighted the need for continued mentorship and capacity building. These coaching visits have proven effective in reinforcing technical training, nurturing leadership, and fostering accountability, positioning youth groups to gradually build viable seed enterprises. Sustained follow-up and targeted support will be essential to unlock their full potential in the seed sector.

### **Peer learning and experience sharing workshops**

Peer learning and experience sharing proved to be powerful tools for building confidence, fostering innovation, and accelerating the growth of youth-led seed enterprises. In May 2025, representatives from eight ZAABTA-affiliated youth-groups visited Kyazanga Farmers' Cooperative in Lwengo District - a model enterprise with over a decade of experience and

seasonal production of more than 200 metric tons of bean QDS. The visit provided practical exposure to governance, marketing, and sustainability strategies, as well as seed production and postharvest handling techniques (Figure 22). Participants observed strong governance structures, the “Change Agent” model for managing large farmer networks, and strategic planning practices that ensure resilience against climate challenges. Key takeaways included the profitability of seed businesses, the importance of teamwork and long-term vision, and the potential to make any soil productive with proper management.



Figure 22: Field visit to seed production plot at Kyazanga LSB

In June 2025, an experience-sharing workshop brought youth-led LSBs together to reflect on their progress using participatory methods such as gallery walks and problem tree analysis. Groups shared successes, challenges, and lessons learned, committing to action plans for the next two seasons focused on vision alignment, marketing strategies, and governance reforms. Key learnings included distinguishing between seed and grain, improved pest and disease management, better record-keeping, branding, and stronger stakeholder collaboration. Proposed solutions to challenges included soil and water conservation, financial literacy training, savings culture promotion, demonstration gardens, and community sensitization. Recommendations emphasized re-engaging groups in visioning, promoting QDS at community gatherings, strengthening leadership mentoring by Agricultural Officers, and encouraging local government extension teams to actively support QDS promotion.

### **WeWork – green and decent jobs for youth: Skilling of vulnerable youth in Busoga**

ISSD Uganda, in partnership with the Uganda Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (UHTTI), is implementing the WeWork-green and decent jobs for youth (WeWork) project to address youth unemployment in Kamuli and Jinja districts. The two-year (2025–2027) skills development initiative in Busoga targets 500 vulnerable youth, women, and girls aged 16–35, equipping them with market-relevant competencies in selected tourism and hospitality occupations, including barista and bartender, reception, site tour guide, coffee farm guide, and cookery. WeWork project also seeks to facilitate a smooth transition into decent employment or self-employment by supporting entrepreneurship through start-up kits.

### Information sharing with stakeholders

Two information sharing workshops were held in Kamuli and Jinja on October 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> to raise awareness about the WeWork project, harmonize stakeholder expectations, validate operational areas, and identify potential Work-Based Learning (WBL) providers. The workshop attracted 41 participants comprised of representatives from the respective districts, WBL providers, MAAIF, UHTTI, ISSD Uganda and Enabel (Figure 23).

Opening remarks from local leaders and Enabel emphasized the transformative potential of the project, urging stakeholders to create an enabling environment for youth empowerment. Sustainability emerged as a recurring theme, with participants highlighting the provision of start-up kits and business development support to ensure income generation post-training. Language inclusivity was emphasized, particularly for trades like tour guiding, where cultural authenticity matters. Stakeholders also called for equitable beneficiary selection across all sub-counties and flexible training schedules to accommodate working youth.



Figure 23: Participants of the information sharing workshop in Jinja

The workshop explored the tourism landscape in Kamuli and Jinja, noting Kamuli's underutilized sites and Jinja's declining hotel standards due to oversupply of graduates. Participants stressed the need for innovation, such as integrating AI-driven virtual tourism and promoting agro-tourism beyond coffee to include sugarcane. Concerns revolved around trainee confidence, safeguarding against harassment, and the provision of PPE during WBL placements. Recommendations included integrating digital marketing skills into the curriculum and enforcing quality control through regular supervision, mentorship, and pre-training of WBL supervisors. In addition, there was call for scalability, innovation, and improved working conditions in the hospitality sector.

### Development of assessment and training packages

A five-day residential workshop aimed at developing competency-based Assessment and Training Packages (ATPs) held in Jinja from November 18<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> (Figure 24). The opening remarks called for integrating tourism principles, green skills, and decent work elements into all modules, while condensing bulky apprenticeship content into practical components deliverable within a 24-week schedule. It was emphasised that the current apprenticeship ATPs at UHTTI were originally designed for learners with higher academic qualifications and therefore unsuitable for the vulnerable youth targeted by the WeWork project, who have education levels ranging from P7 to S4. Therefore, the ATP development process had to adapt content to suit this audience while maintaining compliance with the Uganda Vocational and

Technical Assessment Board (UVTAB) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) standards.



Figure 24: Participants of the ATP development workshop in Jinja

A participatory workshop approach combined group work, plenary discussions, and iterative reviews with industry experts. Skilling experts highlighted that the proposed trades needed to align with recognized industry occupations, as the original titles did not reflect job roles listed under UVTAB standards. They proposed that aligning the titles with actual occupations would help clarify duties, tasks, and competencies, making the ATPs practical, measurable, and relevant to industry expectations (Table 2).

Table 2: Alignment of proposed trades to industry occupations

Proposed trades	Defined industry occupations
Food Production Techniques	Cook
Tour Guiding (Culture and Eco-tourism)	Site Guide
Guest Relations Management	Receptionist
Barista and Mixology	Barista and Bartender
Coffee Tourism Experiences	Coffee Farm Guide

Key achievements of the workshop included refining occupational profiles, structuring modules around knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and integrating entrepreneurship and customer care as cross-cutting modules. Recommendations emphasized mindset coaching for receptionists, inclusion of backyard gardening for cooks to promote sustainability, and incorporation of coffee science and seed sourcing for coffee farm guides. Barista training was enriched with modules on coffee by-products and quality analysis, while tour guide ATPs were revised to balance cultural diversity, conservation principles, and employability.

Despite notable progress, participants identified critical challenges, particularly time constraints, which limited thorough validation and feedback. Participant evaluations reflected strong alignment of ATPs with labour market needs and comprehensive stakeholder engagement. Moreover, the workshop enhanced participants' skills in curriculum design, competence frameworks, and collaborative development. This solid foundation underscores the importance of sustained collaboration, timely planning, and adherence to quality standards to ensure that the project delivers transformative outcomes for Uganda's tourism and hospitality sector in Busoga.

## 4. Financial information

### Statement of comprehensive income

The organisation recognizes income on an accrual basis, meaning income is recorded when it is earned rather than when it is received. This approach ensures that revenue is systematically matched to the periods in which it is realized. Accordingly, donor funding from various donors is recognized in accordance with applicable accounting standards and the terms of the respective funding agreements.

### Income performance

Figure 25 reveals a substantial 52.8% increase in project income, which reflects a successful fiscal year in terms of project acquisition, execution, and strategic pricing. The largest share of project incomes is attributable to the CommonGround project, which has entered a more intensive phase of delivery and community engagement. Other incomes also experienced a modest uplift of 15.5%. This includes earnings from non-core activities such as grants, interest income, and asset utilization, indicating a stable and diversified revenue base. As a result, total income increased by 48.7%, a growth that reflects the organization's expanded operational footprint, supported by strategic partnerships, enhanced service delivery, and favorable funding conditions.

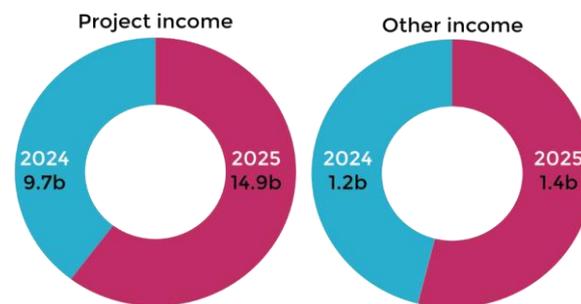


Figure 25: Income performance

### Expense analysis

The expense profile shows that project expenditure rose by 53.3%, indicating that the cost of delivering projects scaled effectively with revenue, maintaining consistent margins (Figure 26). In contrast, administrative expenses (e.g., field activities, management, administration and governance costs) decreased slightly by 4.3% showing improved cost control and operational efficiency in managing overheads, possibly through streamlined processes, digital tools, or more disciplined budgeting. Moreover, the 16.4% rise in employee benefits is attributed to strategic investments in human capital, including salary adjustments, recruitment of technical staff, and welfare programs (e.g., Insurance).

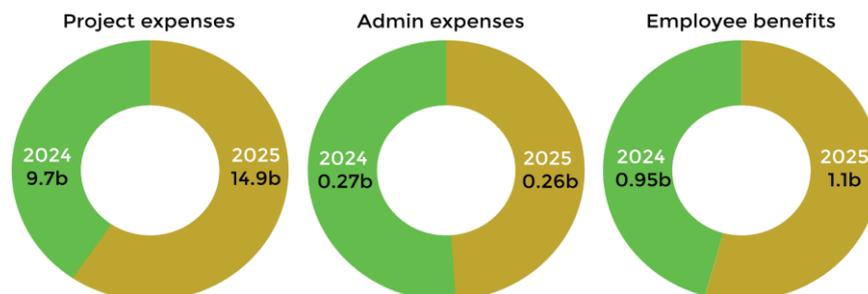


Figure 26: Results of the expense analysis

## Statement of financial position

The statement of financial position for ISSD Uganda reflects commitment to operational delivery and fiscal discipline. A notable shift in financial structure between 2024 and 2025 is driven by changes in project implementation dynamics, donor funding utilisation, and operational liquidity. As the organization moves forward, maintaining liquidity, strengthening reserve buffers, and managing short-term liabilities will be key to sustaining financial resilience and supporting future growth.

### Assets

Total assets declined in 2025, primarily due to 61.1% reductions in receivables signalling a transition from funding accumulation to active expenditure and delivery (Figure 27). This suggests improved collection efficiency or a lower volume of outstanding donor commitments at year-end, due to timely disbursements and project closure activities. Cash at bank and in hand declined by 16% reflecting increased utilization of funds during the third year of the CommonGround project.

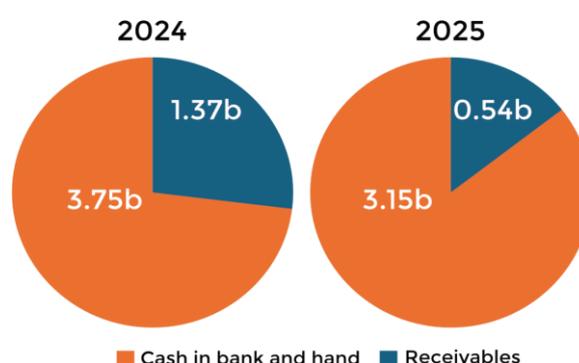


Figure 27: Total assets

### Liabilities and equity

Deferred income dropped by 30.2%, indicating that a substantial portion of previously received donor funds was recognised as income during the year, consistent with the active implementation phase of ongoing projects (Figure 28). Other current liabilities witnessed a 29% rise, reflecting short-term obligations related to project execution, such as pending supplier payments or accrued expenses. General reserve remained unchanged at a negative, reaffirming the organisation's break-even financial model. No surplus was transferred to reserves, as all income was fully utilised to support programmatic activities.

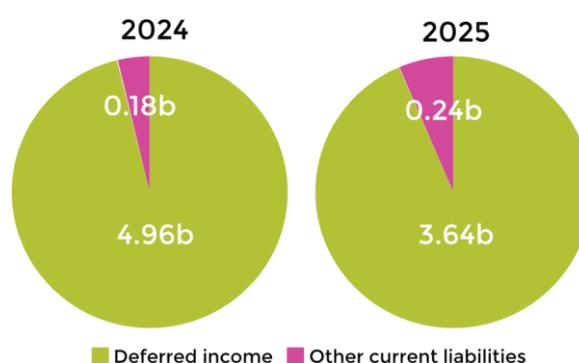


Figure 28: Liabilities and equity

## Key financial insights

### Evolution of ISSD Uganda in response to changing donor priorities

ISSD Uganda has undergone a significant transformation, evolving from a seed sector focused projects into an independent organisation with a broader mandate to impact the agricultural sector. This strategic shift has required a deliberate realignment of both financial and human resources to better reflect and support the organisation's expanded vision and mission. In response to changing donor priorities, many of which now emphasise integrated agricultural development and sustainability, ISSD Uganda has actively diversified its funding base and strengthened its resource mobilization strategies. This has enabled the organisation to remain relevant and responsive to the evolving expectations of development partners.

As the agricultural landscape continues to shift, ISSD Uganda has identified new strategic opportunity areas that align with current global and local challenges. These include:

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Regenerative agriculture practices
- Nutrition and income generation for fragile communities
- Restoration of highland watersheds through sustainable natural resource management.

These thematic areas not only offer pathways for transformative agricultural impact but also align with the strategic interests of contemporary donors seeking to support initiatives with long-term sustainability and systemic relevance.

### Elevation of ISSD Uganda to Medium Taxpayer category

Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) has elevated ISSD Uganda to the category of Medium Taxpayer and assigned a dedicated Client Relationship Manager (CRM) under the Domestic Taxes Department. This CRM will serve as our primary point of contact for all tax-related matters. This recognition is based on our substantial annual contribution to URA, of about UGX 1 billion in Pay As You Earn (PAYE) and With Holding Tax (WHT). In addition, it also reflects our consistent compliance with monthly and annual filing obligations.

While the elevation does not carry direct monetary benefits, it presents a strategic advantage. Notably, the assigned CRM can provide timely support on tax-related issues, including expediting processes such as tax exemption applications and ensuring smooth communication with URA. This enhanced engagement positions ISSD Uganda to manage its tax obligations more efficiently and proactively, contributing to stronger institutional compliance and operational effectiveness.

## 5. Our strategic partners

In addition to the strategic partners who have supported us in strengthening resilient seed and agrifood systems for agricultural driven economic development during the previous financial year 2023/24, this year marks the welcome addition of ZOA Dorcas South Sudan and Enabel. ISSD Uganda is leveraging its knowledge brokering expertise to support the Accelerating Food Systems Resilience in South Sudan (AFSRiSS) project to empower local communities to develop inclusive, equitable, and resilient value chains and agrifood enterprises rooted in their own entrepreneurial ideas and initiatives. Our engagement in South Sudan through the community seed banking and local seed businesses underscores ISSD Uganda's commitment to fostering a vibrant and pluralistic seed sector of South Sudan.





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