

AFIRD HISTORY STORIES

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My experience as a beneficiary of AFIRD

My name is Lydia Jemba, a retired social worker and a farmer, I stay in Namayumba. I was one of the pioneer farmers that AFIRD supported, they groomed me into the farmer I am now.

It is such a great honour to hear from AFIRD, I am overjoyed to know that AFIRD still remembers us and is reaching out for our support in this activity of documenting where AFIRD started.

I first learnt about AFIRD in 1999, when Mr. Sajabi and Mr. Musimenta Julius who are currently the Executive Director and the Deputy ED respectively, were doing a farmers needs assessment in our village of Namayumba. By then, I was a woman leader of the community and so I got the opportunity of interacting with them directly since they were most interested in working with women and youths.

During the farmer needs assessment exercise, we visited a couple of farmers. Among these was a farmer who had just harvested her green pepper field and she had left behind a lot of wasted green paper in the garden. This captured their attention a lot, and caused them to decide on trainings in post harvest handling and value addition techniques.

AFIRD was the first organisation to educate farmers in our sub county in sustainable agriculture and animal husbandry.

The trainings started in a village called Nzu in Namayumba Sub county. They started with a resource mapping activity, three farmer groups were created with thirty farmers in each group. We were trained soil protection, tree planting and nursery beds, grafting, animal husbandry, compost making, postharvest handling and a lot many some on schedule and some on demand by the farmers. The trainings were hosted in turns by group members.

During this period, many farmers' livelihoods changed, farmers adopted the new sustainable farming techniques. Our groups were supported actively by AFIRD for five years and after that when AFIRD moved to other sub counties, they still supported us less actively from time to time.

As a person, I have benefited massively from AFIRD, right from the core of attaining knowledge from the trainings given to me and other farmers, I was also given farm inputs and animals like chickens, cows and goats as was with my fellow farmers. Due to my activeness in adopting the different interventions as trained by AFIRD, for example 'Send A Cow' supported me with cows and in building a biodigester, this support was extended to me because I had already built a kraal for my cattle, and had a pasture stand both of which were AFIRD work.

My most memorable event was when AFIRD took us to the first farmer exhibition. It was from this exhibition that I saw a locally made fridge, it was made out of local materials and did not need electricity to keep things cool. This caught my attention, I made sure to study and when I went back home, I made it for my self, with a few improvements, I was able to make a fridge that I used for many years to keep my milk cool and fresh, and also extend it's shelf life. Besides the fridge, I learnt a lot from that exhibition, farmers shared many innovations that were practical and very useful and I always looked forward to exhibitions.

Today AFIRD has grown a lot, from AFIRD trainers moving by foot and bicycles to cars and motorcycles and from a small village to now more than one district, to me this means growth. I believe AFIRD can grow to spread its work to the entire country or even beyond. In future, I hope AFIRD can consider building a one stop training school that offers different courses in sustainable agriculture, where our children and grand children too can go and learn.