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NRM ACHIEVEMENTS; HOW WATER MINISTRY'S SHS1.6BN IS BOOSTING YOUTHS LIVING AMONG COMMUNITIES NEAR 5 IRRIGATION SCHEMES



State Minister Kibule addresses a recent water sector gathering



Permanent Secretary Alfred Okot Okiddi speaks at a recent sector ceremony



PS Alfred Okot Okiddi (L) concurs with Minister Ronald Kibule



As PS, Alfred Okot Okiddi steers the technical leadership of the Ministry



State Minister Ronald Kibule is in charge of the water docket



Water Ministry officials engage with donors during a recent public ceremony

NRM ACHIEVEMENTS; HOW WATER MINISTRY'S SHS1.6BN IS BOOSTING YOUTHS LIVING AMONG COMMUNITIES NEAR THE FIVE IRRIGATION SCHEMES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

By **Mulengera Reporters**

The desire to expedite the impact of government programs and strategic interventions on the socio-economic transformation of people in rural communities upcountry has continued to cause the Ministry of Water & Environment leadership do more than just their core mandate of merely water provision and environmental conservation.

And the Ministry Permanent Secretary Alfred Okot Okidi says Farm Income Enhancement and Forest Conservation (FIEFOC) Programme (Project 2) is one such intervention being implemented using this unconventional approach. The PS says under the FIEFOC program a total of 158 youth agripreneurs have been trained and certified. The same beneficiaries have also been advanced with financial support through the ENABLE Youth Program.

Interacting with reporters on the status of youth program implementation under FIEFOC 2, PS Okidi said the program has seen male and female youths acquiring agribusiness skills development and hands on management. "Besides training and mentoring, 64 youth agripreneurs have already accessed financial support from the ministry through FIEFOC 2, worth Shs1.6bn for their respective agribusiness development initiatives. We are on track to create opportunities for the youth and address some of the unemployment challenges," he said.

The target youths are those living in communities around the five irrigation schemes developed by FIEFOC 2. These are Kasese district's Mubuku II irrigation scheme, Butaleja district's Doho II irrigation scheme, Oyam district's Tochi irrigation, Kween district's Ngenge irrigation scheme and Wadelai irrigation scheme in Pakwach district.

FIEFOC 2 is one of the Government of Uganda's interventions under the Ministry of Water and Environment aimed at improving household incomes, rural livelihoods, food security and climate resilience through sustainable natural resources management and agricultural enterprise development.

ENABLE (which stands for Empowering Novel Agribusiness Led Employment) is a pilot program developed by African Development Bank with financial support from the Nordic Development Fund. "The program aims at creating opportunities for young entrepreneurs in agricultural sector in order to upgrade their technical skills, adopt innovative agricultural management practices and access capital for agribusiness expansion," Mr. Okidi explained adding; "The overall goal of the program is to create gainful employment and income generation for the youth in Uganda through agriculture and agribusiness."

Unemployment remains a big challenge constraining majority youth in contemporary Uganda. And the cause relates limited job opportunities, inadequate employable skills or skill mismatch, limited access to productive assets like land and early marriages. More specifically, the National Development Plan (NDP II) which is the blue print guiding Uganda's long-term development planning indicates that 78 in every 100 youths are unemployed with 79% of them living in rural areas.

Mr. John Magezi Ndamira, the National Project Coordinator for FIEFOC 2 says that in order to address the challenges of youth unemployment, a number of businesses have been created under the youth program. "A total of 107 businesses have so far been created under the program and they are now operational," he said. He adds that "The major spectrum of the businesses includes ICT in agriculture, poultry, tuberous roots, oil seed, livestock, horticulture, grains and pulses, coffee, clean energy, apiculture and agroforestry."

The ENABLE youth program has built linkages with a number of organizations and institutions to support youth agripreneurs with capacity development and relevant skilling. Some of the partners include Curad, Makerere School of Food Technology and Business Incubation Center, Tunado, Uganda Industrial Research Institute, African Women's Fish Processors and Trade Networks.



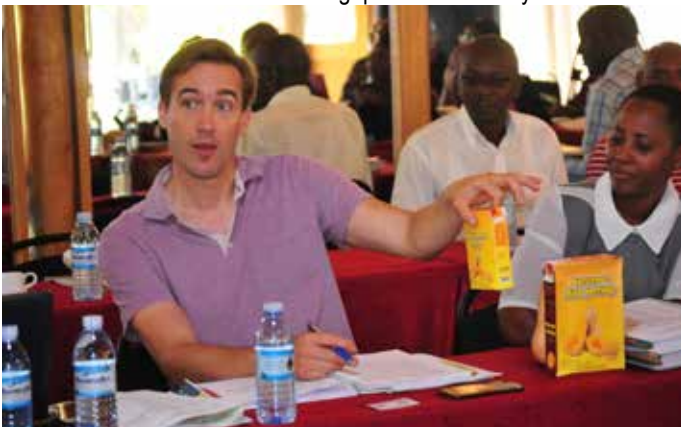
The PS Alfred Okidi takes a group photo with some of the FIEFOC program beneficiaries



FIEFOC Project Coordinator John Magezi handing over certificate to one of the succesful agriprenuers recently



The PS Mr. Okidi speaks at a FIEFOC-related event recently



Under the FIEFOC Project, signifcant emphasis has been put on supporting the agriprenuers to go into value addition



FIEFOC Project Coordinator John Magezi at a recent function



One of the youth beneficiaries of the FIEFOC program from Eastern Uganda



One of the youthful beneficiaries of the Enable Youth program in Eastern Uganda