

2024

JOINT EFFORT TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

“ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION FOR LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENT”







THE JESE ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**“ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION FOR
LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENT”**

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Acronyms

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals.
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion.
PAR	Participatory Action Research.
NDP	National Development Plan.
URSB	Uganda Registration Service Bureau.
FoW	Forests of the World.
HH	House Hold.
PCWR	Protection and Conservation of Water Resources.
ODF	Open Defecation Free.
JFW	Joint for Water.
JEFACO	Jese Farmers' Company.
NYP	National Youth Policy.
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training.
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association.
DIT	Directorate of Industrial Training.
UVQF	Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework.
IFP	Integrated Farm Planning.
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene.
FTE	Full Time Equivalent.
NARO	National Agriculture Research Organisation.
MHM	Menstrual Health Management.
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights.
RWHT	Rain Water Harvesting Technology.
CLTS	Community Led Total sanitation.
CRP	Cost Recovery Planning.
RA	Risk Analysis.
ODF	Open Defecation Free.
UPE	Universal Primary Education.
UNBS	Uganda National Bureau of standards.
AWMZ	Albertine Water Management Zone.
NYP	National Youth Policy.

About Jese

Jese is a Non-Governmental Organisation dedicated to reducing poverty amongst agriculture and natural resources-dependent communities; through empowering smallholder farming households to optimally engage in Sustainable Agriculture, Water and Sanitation and Integrated Natural Resources Management for their socio-economic well being.

Our Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Our Vision

We envision a community where people and nature flourish.

Our Mission

We facilitate people-centred innovative actions that foster equity, sustainable management of natural resources and livelihood improvement.

Our Values

Natural resources are free gifts of nature but we need to guard them carefully and share them equitably. In doing so, Jese is committed to the values of: Service above self, Environmental Stewardship, Transparency, and Teamwork, Integrity, Neutrality and Gender Equity (SETTING). These values are a key component of the Jesse Family culture.

Our Target:

Farming Households.

- Communities Adjacent to Natural Resources.
- Collaborative Forest Management Groups.
- Farmer organisations.
- Farmer Cooperatives.

How we work;

At Jese we work Through;

- Partnerships with; Government, other like-minded Organisations in the same sectors of work and Community organisations/structures.
- Networking with other organisations with the focus on development.
- Linkages with the Private Sector Actors.
- Knowledge Management, Sharing and Learning.

Our work is guided by the following approaches;

- Agro ecology.
- Agroforestry.
- Partnership and Collaboration.
- Watershed management.
- Participatory Action Research (PAR).
- Rights-based Approach.
- Integrated Farm Planning.
- Research and Innovation.
- Advocacy and Policy Influencing.
- Agribusiness development.
- Farmer Field Schools.

Our Contribution to SDGs and NDP III

As always, Jese work in communities continued to making contributions to the 2030 global development framework, and the following SDGs; #1, #2, #5, #6, #7, #8, #12, #13 and #15. All these SDGs are aligned to the Jese 2021-2026 strategic plan.

Uganda Vision 2040

As usual, Jese ensures that her strategic programming aligns with the national strategic objectives of achieving:

- Universal access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.
- Green and clean environment, conserving the flora and fauna, restoring and adding value to the ecosystems.
- Restoration of degraded wetlands, hilltops, rangelands and other fragile ecosystems through the implementation of catchment-based schemes, gazettement of vital wetlands for increased protection and sustainable use, monitoring and inspecting restoration of ecosystems (wetlands, forests, catchments).
- Reforestation and afforestation on public land, promoting participation of the population in tree planting on both private and public lands.
- Enhance food security and improved livelihoods for low-income groups.
- Functional agriculture system to increase access to information, knowledge and technologies among target farming communities.

The 3rd National Development Plan

The 3rd National Development Plan (2020/21 – 2024/25) was unveiled in July 2020 by the National Planning Authority, highlighting the key challenges that impede the country's development path. One key challenge that's central to Jese's mission is the *"Severe reduction in the forest cover, wetland degradation and encroachment leading to increased vulnerability of the country to climate change"*.

In view of the above, Jese program portfolio localises the NDP III focus within its mainstream programming, to enhance sustainable production approaches in the agricultural sector, sustainable exploitation of natural resources, stop, reduce and reverse environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change.

Local Government Development Plans

Jese works to complement and address development priorities and delivery of services to the communities as enshrined in District Development plans at the local level.

Where we worked

In 2024, Jese implemented various projects and Programs across various districts in Uganda, including; Agago, Buliisa, Hoima, Kikuube, Kabarole, Kasese, Kyenjojo, Kagadi-Kibaale, Bunyangabu, Kamwenge, Kitagwenda, Ibanda, Isingiro, Rubirizi, Buhweju and Kyegegwa.

Our program portfolio in 2024

In this reporting period, Jese implemented the following projects:

PROJECTS	LOCATION	DEVELOPMENT PARTNER
Equitable Access to safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.	Bunyangabu, Agago.	SIMAVI.
Engaging Farmers in the restoration of the Elephant Corridor.	Kyenjojo	Forests of the World.
Scaling up farmer field and business school in coffee growing communities	Kyenjojo and Rubirizi	Care International in Uganda
Scaling up farmer field and business school	Kyenjojo and Kyegegwa	Care International in Uganda
Building Resilience and Inclusive Growth of Highland Farming Systems for Rural Transformation (Bright) Project	Kabarole and Bunyangabu Districts	IFDC
Mpanga Super Farmers Program	Kabarole, Kamwenge and Fort Portal city	Iles de paix (IDP)
Integrated farm planning (IFP) project	Kamwenge & Kitagwenda	HereWeGrow
Green Entrepreneurship.	Kyenjojo .	Forests of the World.
Sustainable Family Farming Development II.	Kamwenge and Fort-Portal City.	Broederlijk Delen.
Protecting and Conserving Water resources and Forests Ecosystems in Mpanga and Semuliki Catchments- MYP5.	Kamwenge,Kitagwenda and Ntoroko.	Join for Water.
Development Response to Displaced Impact Project.	Hoima, Kikuube, Kiryandongo, Kyegegwa and Isingiro Districts.	Office of the prime minister (OPM).
Ripening of Cocoa and Vanilla/- DGBP	Kyenjojo.	Forests of the World.
Enhancing resilience and productivity of smallholder coffee farms.	Kitagwenda and Kamwenge	HereWeGrow
Restore Africa project.	Kamwenge, Kyenjojo, Bunyangabu, Ibanda, Kyegegwa, and Kitagwenda.	CARE International in Uganda, and CRS
Skill up project	Fort portal city, Kyenjojo town council, and Kabarole.	Wilt Hung , BMZ
WASH and Learn 3.0	Bunyangabu	SIMAVI, WASEU
Fill the Nutrition Gap (FNG) project – phase 2	Kyegegwa (Kyaka 11 Refugee Settlement)	CARE International in Uganda
Common Ground project	Bunyangabu	ISSD Uganda and Wageningen University Environmental Research (WENR).
Expansion of green collages	Kasese, Fort Portal and Kabarole	Wilt Hunger , BMZ

Where we are in Uganda



Message from the Chairperson

As we wrap up 2024, I am proud to reflect on the significant progress and accomplishments of JESE in tackling some of the most urgent global and national issues, such as climate change, food security, natural resource degradation, and youth unemployment in Uganda. Our efforts remain focused on fostering transformative change, empowering communities with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary for a sustainable future.



Climate change continues to be one of the most pressing challenges of our time, impacting livelihoods, food production, and natural ecosystems. In response, our Restore Carbon project, backed by CARE International in Uganda, is engaging farmers to plant six million trees over the next four years. This initiative not only aids in carbon sequestration but also enhances ecosystem resilience, ensuring a healthier environment for future generations. Our conservation efforts have resulted in the protection of 165.7 hectares of ecosystems in Kitagwenda and have reinforced local commitment to sustainable land-use practices.

Food security is another critical concern, especially in rural communities where smallholder farmers face challenges such as declining soil fertility and unpredictable weather patterns. Through the JESE Agriculture and Enterprise Development initiatives, strides have been taken to empower 6,783 farmers with integrated farm planning, participatory action research, and agroecology-based solutions. These approaches have enhanced sustainable food production, improved post-harvest handling, and strengthened market access, leading to increased household social economic well being and resilience. Notably, UGX 199,877,500 (USD 54,385.33) was generated from vanilla and cocoa sales, further solidifying our efforts in supporting sustainable agriculture and livelihood improvement in the region.

The degradation of natural resources continues to jeopardize the core of rural livelihoods. In response, the JESE Water and Sanitation Department has addressed this issue by promoting improved hygiene and sanitation practices, benefiting over 4,200 people through latrine construction and handwashing initiatives, in schools, health facilities and at local community levels. Open defecation rates have dropped significantly, and more than 2,600 individuals now have better access to clean water through rehabilitated water points and rainwater harvesting systems. By implementing sustainable water management solutions, JESE not only improved public health but also ensured the long-term availability of essential water resources.

Youth unemployment in Uganda remains a significant challenge, with many young people lacking access to formal employment and vocational training. In response, JESE's Skilling Department has trained 514 youth (251 males and 263 females) in green skills across 16 institutions in Kabarole, Bunyangabu, and Kasese districts. These young individuals have gained expertise in trades such as solar installation, fish farming, and artisan handcrafts, empowering them to create sustainable livelihoods. Furthermore, 268 skilled youth were assessed by the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) and certified to work independently. A Green College Network was also

established to promote collaboration and skill development. The JESE Skill Up Program provided training and start-up kits to 120 youth, helping them generate income and contribute to economic growth.

Strategic partnerships have been instrumental in amplifying the JESE impact in all her areas of program focus. During the 2024 period, JESE signed five-year MOUs with Ibanda and Buhweju district local governments, launched collaborative initiatives with Busitema University and War Child Alliance, and played a leading role in establishing the *Rwenzori Agroecological Actors' Platform (RAAP)* to promote sustainable food systems in the region. Additionally, JESE's continued engagement with key organizations such as the Uganda Small Scale Industries Association (USSIA) and Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI) has opened new opportunities for youth and entrepreneurs, facilitating mentorship and market access.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to the JESE mission to create positive change, promoting economic empowerment, and strengthening resilience of communities where we work. Our achievements would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our team, partners, and stakeholders. I sincerely thank everyone who made a contribution to our collective vision.

Together, let us continue to champion sustainable development, combat climate change, restore ecosystems, and create opportunities for the youth—building a brighter, more sustainable future for all.

Ms. Grace K. WAAKO



Chairperson, Board of Directors

Message from the Executive Director



As we conclude the year 2024, I am pleased to reflect on the remarkable achievements and milestones JESE has attained. The commitment to sustainable development, environmental conservation, and community empowerment has driven the organisation to new heights, enabling it to make a lasting impact in the served communities.

One of the JESE key achievements this year has been the commissioning of the *Restore Africa* carbon project, supported by CARE International in Uganda. This initiative focuses on recruiting farmers to plant six million trees over the next four years, a major step towards carbon sequestration and ecosystem restoration. Through the Natural Resources Department, JESE successfully mobilized 8,000 farmers, with 1,376 agreeing to join the carbon credit program. An additional 72,000 farmers will be recruited over the next four years. Moreover, our conservation efforts resulted in the protection of 165.7 hectares of ecosystems in Kitagwenda, while 256 farmers actively participated in buffer zone protection. Additionally, 173 vanilla and cocoa farmers obtained organic certification in the Elephant Corridor landscape, furthering JESE's commitment to sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing the incomes and livelihoods of farmers.

In the Agriculture and Enterprise Development sector, JESE reached 500 farmers through a holistic program that incorporated integrated farm planning, participatory action research, and agroecology practices. The program enhanced productivity, improved post-harvest handling, and strengthened market access. A total of 6,783 farmers (4,417 female and 3,983 male) benefited from various JESE interventions, and UGX 199,877,500 (USD 54,385.33) was generated from vanilla and cocoa sales.

The JESE Water and Sanitation Department made significant strides in improving household sanitation. Through community-led initiatives, a total of 4,200 individuals benefited from JESE interventions through promotion of latrine construction and hand-washing practices. Open defecation rates steadily declined, with latrine coverage improving from 74% to 99% in targeted villages, setting the stage for official Open Defecation Free (ODF) declarations in 2025. Additionally, over 1,222 households and 1,800 pupils in primary schools were sensitized on proper hygiene practices. JESE efforts in rehabilitating five water points and constructing rainwater harvesting tanks further enhanced access to clean water, benefiting over 2,600 people.

In the Skilling Department, JESE achieved the following: A total of 514 youths (251 males, 263 females) were enrolled in technical green skills training across 16 institutions in Kabarole, Bunyangabu, and Kasese districts. Among them, 512 youths (250 males, 262 females) successfully completed training. Among them, 5 persons with disabilities participated, falling below the target of 5%. Training was conducted in green trades such as; solar installation and repairs, fish farming, vegetable farming, artisan handcrafts, tour guiding, hotel management, and beekeeping. The training spanned 4–8 months, including a two-month internship.

Moreover, JESE partnerships with technical and vocational training institutions in Kyenjojo District facilitated the integration of green skills training curriculum into the regular training of students and therefore extended her work beyond the Green Entrepreneurship project that closed in 2024.

Additionally, 268 youth (125 females, 143 males) were assessed by the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) and demonstrated competency, thus qualifying to work independently. A Green College Network was formed to enhance training opportunities, facilitate knowledge exchange, and market green skills.

Under the Skill Up Program, 120 youth (75 females, 45 males) were trained in trades including hairdressing, tailoring, carpentry, motorcycle mechanics, plumbing, solar installation, welding, and domestic electrical works. Of these, 115 successfully passed DIT assessments and received start-up kits, enabling them to create their own jobs, generate income and establish sustainable livelihoods. The projects also strengthened the capacity of training centers to deliver curriculum-based, holistic training tailored to green professions.

Strategic partnerships have been a cornerstone of JESE's success in 2024. We signed five-year MOUs with Ibanda and Buhweju district local governments and secured a project contract with Catholic Relief Services for the *Markets for Land and Livelihood Restoration (M4R)* project, a supplement to the Restore Africa project. JESE collaboration with NaCORI enabled evidence-based research to advance agroforestry systems. The New partnerships with Busitema University and War Child Alliance have strengthened JESE's our agricultural and enterprise development programs. Jese played a pivotal role in launching the *Rwenzori Agroecological Actors' Platform (RAAP)* to promote sustainable food systems and resilient communities in the region.

Through the ongoing collaborations with organizations such as the Uganda Small Scale Industries Association (USSIA), Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI), and Bunyangabu Beekeepers Cooperative, JESE continues to create opportunities for youth, graduates, and entrepreneurs, fostering mentorship and market access for skilled individuals.

Looking to the future, JESE will remain dedicated to broadening her impact, reinforcing partnerships, and fostering sustainable growth across all her program areas. I want to express my sincere gratitude to our devoted team, partners, and stakeholders for their steadfast support and commitment to our collective vision.

Collectively, we will persist in making a meaningful impact and shaping a sustainable future for our communities.

BAGUMA Patrick,



Executive Director.

Achievements against Jese 2021-2026 Strategic plan

The sections below provide a detailed account for each and every milestone that was **achieved** in 2024. These have been presented and organised per sector in the JESE Program Strategic Objectives (2021-2026).



STRATEGIC AREA #1:

NATURAL RESOURCES, GOVERNANCE AND ENERGY

Contributors: Nyakoojo/Lawrence/Davis/Busiinge

Overall, the natural resources sector is extremely critical in fostering national development and therefore influences the country's socio-economic development. There are a number of legal frameworks for effective governance and management of this sector and the most over arching one is the national constitution. However, there remains significant challenges in the sector, namely; Environmental Degradation in form of; deforestation, soil erosion, pollution, Illegal Resource Exploitation such as logging and reclamation of wetlands. These challenges certainly exacerbate climate challenges such as rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns that eventually threaten the sustainability of natural resources. It's for this reason that JESE has a dedicated department implementing various programs and projects designed to tackle the negative elements listed here.

In this reporting period, under this area, there were 3 programs running and each one of them contributed to the restoration of degraded areas, particularly targeting specific hotspots and micro catchments in Western Uganda. Overall, the milestones contributed to Sustainable Development Goals; # 13 -Climate Action and # 15- Life on Land as well as Goal # 7- Affordable and Clean Energy., # 1- No Poverty, #8- Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Milestone 1: The rolling out of the 1st ever Carbon program and the restoration of degraded hot-spots

Context: Globally, Carbon crediting is a strategy to tackle climate change. Though still a gray area in Uganda, it provides new prospects of engaging and motivating farmers to take part in the restoration activities as one approach to mitigating climate change. Carbon credits, or carbon offsets, refer to carbon emissions reductions or removals, measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e). In 2024, the Restore Africa (RESAf) program funded by Climate Asset Management (CAM) through Global Evergreening Alliance (GEA) took shape across Uganda through a Consortium led by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and more so in Western Uganda where JESE is a major implementer, in partnership with CARE international in Uganda. Carbon credits are created from projects that avoid the generation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or that remove GHGs from the atmosphere like the CARE funded Restore Africa project, whose goal is to improve landscapes and enhance rural household resilience to climate shocks by actively engaging smallholder farmers in tree planting, land restoration, livelihood improvement, and implementation of nature-based solutions. Overall, the Restore Africa project targets to plant a total of 25 million surviving trees in Uganda and 6 million surviving trees specifically for Mid- Western Uganda, where JESE/CARE are directly implemented.



Impact in Numbers

- 8,000 farmers Mobilized and engaged to participate in the carbon credit program in the six districts of Kyenjojo, Buhweju, Ibanda, Kamwenge, Kyegegwa and Bunyangabu in South Western Uganda.
- 1,376 farmers consented to take part in the carbon credit program.
- 165.7 Hectares ecosystems Protected in Kitagwenda
- 256 farmers in Kitagwenda took part in Bylaw enforcement targeting buffer zone protection.
- 173 vanilla and cocoa agroforestry farmers are organically certified by the Control Union.
- 567 males and 141 females received extension services in Agroforestry extension systems.



Community members of Rwenjaza Sub-county during the installation of concrete pillars

In this reporting period, we achieved the following;

- A total of 165.7 hectares of ecosystems have been protected, including the Kiburara buffer zone and Rwenjaza Sub Counties along the Mpanga River. Additionally, 12,583 trees have been distributed to nearby households for planting, contributing 15.7 hectares. Efforts have also been made to collaborate with local stakeholders to enforce buffer zone protection laws in this region. Notably, there has been significant regeneration of the ecosystems, particularly after many years of community interference with the buffer zone.



Photo: *Stakeholders during the official launch of the Demarcation of 5 KM Stretch River Mpanga in Kiburara Prison Ibanda District.*

- Enhanced collaboration between Matiri and Itwara forest adjacent communities and forestry custodians (NFA) through signing a 10 year collaboration agreement and management plan, This was achieved through supporting community application and follow up with NFA to hon-

or community application for CFM, participating and influencing win-win situations through negotiating the access, user and benefit rights to high value forest resources including land for tree planting and beekeeping in Itwara and Matiri forests respectively. In Itwara 150 Hectares are under community indigenous trees (Musizi, Termianles Superba, khaya Anthotheca, among others planted for environmental and economic reasons.

- A total of 256 community members (152 males and 104 females) from the downstream Mpan-ga area have been and continue being involved in the implementation and enforcement of existing bylaws, particularly focused on the protection and conservation of Cycad species and their habitats in the Nyabani, Kanara, and Ntara sub-counties.
- Recruited and consented 1,376/8,498 (16%) to take part in the carbon credit program, out of which 1,122 planted 158,000 seedlings in the SOND season of 2024.

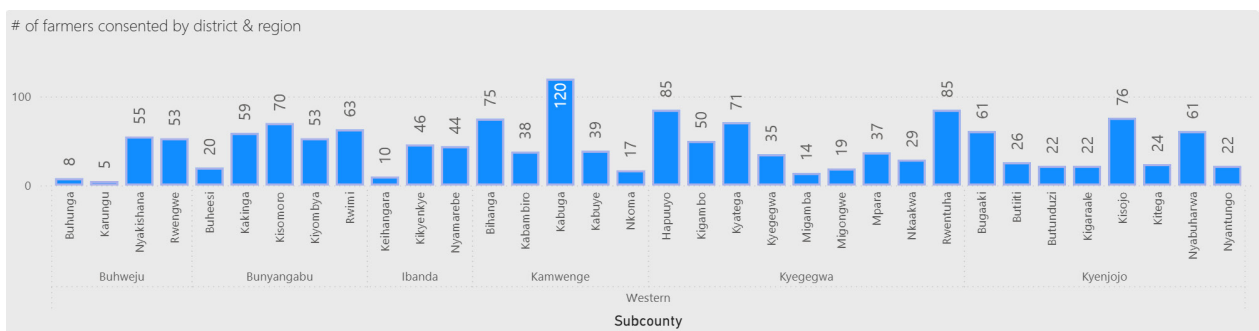


Table showing summary of enrolled farmers into the Restore Africa Carbon project across the six districts in Western Uganda.

- A total of 173 agroforestry farmers (124 males, 49 females, and 43 youth) with 160.5 hectares of farmland received organic certification from Control Union. The farms are now geo-referenced and mapped, with polygons formed, aligning with the EU market's traceability requirements. The organic certification has opened up broader market opportunities for cocoa and vanilla products, boosting farmers' negotiating power for premium prices. As a result, these farmers were able to sell their vanilla at a premium price of UGX 25,000, compared to UGX 9,000 for conventional vanilla, leading to higher income for organically certified farmers.



Community members in Ntara participate in a tree planting activity.

In order to reach the above achievements, JESE explored various approaches, namely;

- Supported the two cooperatives in the Kyenjojo/Elephant corridor landscape to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in vanilla and cocoa supply to Social Vanilla, a business company that buys vanilla based in Denmark. JESE played a facilitation role in this process, through mobilising and interpreting the MoU to coops, managing communications between the Social Vanilla and the coops. However in future as the coops are growing stronger in terms of governance and management, they will totally take up the communications and negotiation roles.
- Used a community structure of 35 Community-based Facilitators (CBFs) to mobilize and conduct engagement meetings for the Restore Africa project across the six districts of JESE implementation. These CBFs will work alongside tree monitors to ensure proper management of planted trees as a clear strategy towards full restoration of ecosystems.



Mr. Niwamanya Joseph, a CBT for Restore Africa facilitating a community meeting in Butunduzi, Kyenjojo district

- Conducted community engagement and carbon conversation meetings to explain the project objective, implementation models and technical specifications, participatory community visioning and the carbon sharing mechanism. Community members were mobilised into groups, through which carbon development agreements (CDA) will be signed between local farmers who have planted trees and Global Evergreening Alliance (GEA) to facilitate the payment process for generated carbon credits.
- Used Gender Action Learning System tools like the Community Vision Road Journey and Gender Daily Calendar to mainstream gender into the project. This approach has ensured appropriate planning for inclusive and balanced participation of both men and women in project activities, in view of the indicated time of their availability.

However, we faced the following challenges;

- Delayed distribution of seedlings for the carbon project to some of the farmers by suppliers sourced by the donor which resulted in postponement of some of the planting to the following season. The donor has been engaged to decentralize seedling production to enable timely delivery of seedlings to the farmers
- Pulling out from some project areas like Kitagwenda and some sub-counties in Bunyangabu, Kyenjojo and Kamwenge due to existence of other carbon programs to avoid the Carbon principle of "Double Counting". The project targeted new areas of operation like Buhweju district and moved to new sub-counties in Kyenjojo, Bunyangabu and Kamwenge to get enough operational space for the project
- In cases, there was delayed disbursement of funds from the donor that led to delay in implementation of some activities. The project team has been engaged on data management to facilitate timely accountability
- Low recruitment of farmers to participate in the carbon project. More CBFs will be recruited (from 35 to 91) to accelerate community engagement meetings processes as well as recruiting more farmers. The project will also target other existing projects to recruit more farmers.
- The PURE Program implementation faced three key challenges: bacterial infection in nursery seedlings- due to climatic challenges, community resistance to buffer zone protection, and limited local government participation. These were addressed through enhanced agricultural practices, community sensitization campaigns highlighting conservation benefits, and developing an inclusive facilitation model that encouraged active stakeholder involvement without heavy reliance on external support.



Milestone 2: Supported nature based Ecopreneurship in Kyenjojo District

Impact in Numbers

- A total of **1500** subscribers actively using the JESE information alert system
- **15** eco-businesses supported in - the Elephant Corridor
- **8** eco-businesses supported to register with URSB. 980 youth (**462 women & 518 male youth**) **attained certificates.**
- **2** MoUs signed with TVETs to roll out green skills training in the Kyenjojo Landscape.



What we achieved

During the course of implementation of the Green entrepreneurship project significant milestones were achieved ranging from developing an information alert system with a total of 1500 subscribers actively using its functions such as; Whatsapp-e-community, Price updates page, E-marketing page, weather alert reporting illegal forest encroachment, and E-learning with courses originating from the curriculum, refer:- https://rise.articulate.com/share/ISPeIRLii-pCawIsPVIFb6EW-5suWWui_#/ Functions such as whatsapp e-community facilitated instant reporting of weather shocks, pest & diseases outbreak on farms where JESE & government extension workers provided solutions and feedback and advisory on reported cases using the same platform instantly in form of short videos, SMSs and voice notes to help manage the reported cases.



This intervention helped prevent farm losses, resulting in a boost in production and yields. This is reflected in the figures, with 2,300 kg of vanilla produced in 2023, rising to 3,559 kg in 2024.

As a result of the training a total of 15 start-ups, 3 women groups and 12 youth groups established viable green business entities and four (4) registered with Uganda registration services bureau. These enterprises have accumulated a total UGX 135,780,000 (35,732 US Dollar) from green business and created **200** equivalent full time jobs to the youth within the landscape. Through the green college approach a total of 980 youth and women



Photo: Exhibition of Green products at national level by Ecopreneurs.

were able to obtain hands-on green skills, where 30% of the youth started their own business and 70% employed within and outside the landscape. The green skills curriculum was successfully adopted by 2 technical vocational training institutions as part of sustainability and two memorandums of understanding (MoU) signed with these institutions to scale - up green skills training in the elephant corridor. This initiative has further fostered development of an E-learning platform for wider consumption within and outside the landscape. <https://elephantcorridorwatch.jese.org/reports/>

The program successfully developed and published an ecopreneurship model and it is being used by 15 ecopreneurs (refer:- https://www.forestsoftheworld.org/files/Artikler_og_rapporter/2024%20working%20paper%20-%20Ecopreneurship%20Model.pdf)

What we did to reach achievements

To support the achievement, JESE utilized a variety of strategies, including: enhancing partnerships and collaboration with green colleges, working closely with key government stakeholders, and directly engaging with the youth through a comprehensive approach to activity delivery. Additionally, the development of online resources and materials accelerated learning and adoption among the dot.com youth.

Challenges: In the course of implementation, there were a number of challenges, namely; youth fragility and mobility nature escalated dropout rates. Majority of the youth were not stationed in their areas of residence, have no homes/land of their own. Some youth dropped on the program in search of daily employment for their livelihood. There were also instances of youth disintegration after the training, this is because the project had limitations in providing cash, providing incentives, and start-ups.

Partnerships and collaboration: The project has been able to maintain good partnerships with its partners; Forest of the World (FoW), this also resulted to building other networks with Technical Vocational institutions (TVETs), Nyabyeya forest college, Countryside Environmental Conservation (CECO-Uganda), Kyenjojo District Local government, and the partner communities within and outside the operational area.

Lessons learnt in the course of implementing the Green entrepreneurship model include the following;

- Diversification with value added products offers an opportunity to strengthen local markets in the landscape.
- Exchange learning visits foster acknowledgement on similar challenges faced by eco-pre-neurs and entrepreneurs gain insights from experiential learning on how the challenges can be overcome.

Milestone 3: Improved Market Access and accelerated agroforestry extension support to Vanilla, coffee and Cocoa farmers in the Elephant Corridor.

Context: Access to markets for agricultural products in Uganda continues to be a significant challenge. During the year in review, prices for vanilla, cocoa, and coffee increased, except for vanilla, unless the farmers had organic certification. Jese and its partners continued to work towards finding better markets for farmers involved in these sectors, including offering support for organic certification to 173 cocoa and vanilla farmers, who ultimately benefited from premium prices from buyers.



Impact in Numbers

- A total of **567** males and **141** females were reached through Agroforestry extension systems.
- **173** *cocoa and vanilla farmers were organically certified.*
- **UGX 199,877,500 UGX (54, 385.33 USD)** generated from the sale of vanilla and cocoa.
- A total of 708 households, out of the annual target of 750, were supported through a programmatic approach (SPA and DGBP) focused on promoting conservation, adopting sustainable farming practices, conserving forest biodiversity, and integrating marketing opportunities for improved incomes. Integrated farm planning has been the key approach in fostering the adaptation and sustainability of these initiatives. Households have implemented various mitigation and adaptation measures, including the use of eco-friendly pesticides and fertilizers, and the environmentally sustainable pull and push method¹, where chili is integrated into agroforestry systems, although this approach is still evolving.

¹ This is an intercropping strategy for controlling agricultural pests and by using repellants "push plants and trap pull plants. by using repellent "push" plants and trap "pull" plants

In order to reach these achievements we did the following;

- Improved timely provision of farm extension services for agroforestry farmers through operationalisation of the outreach system at co-operative level enhanced farm productivity and improved quality of products
- We delivered field-based classes and learning promoted by the eco-preneurship bus and E-learning materials to harness knowledge and skills in establishing and managing the agroforestry systems for increased productivity and incomes. The community alert systems guided the extension services to farmers, tailoring the extension.

However, there were challenges, namely;

- Drastic changes in prices, especially for Vanilla, which affected farm operations and production processes, particularly pollination, thus resulting in low production.
- The Co-operatives being at their nascent stage of development, they generally still lack in terms of sustainability strategies and taking forward initiatives such as the extension outreach system. However, JESE remains optimistic that with time, they will be able to grow and take up these critical roles and therefore continue to serve without external direct involvement of JESE.

In the course of JESE operation in this reporting period, a number of critical lessons were learnt, including;

- Adoption of a market led approach enhances value chain promotion and development.
- Widespread adoption of agroforestry systems increases demand for timely extension support. This requires resources to effectively support the new adopting farmers which is not enough at co-operative levels.
- Timely extension service support to project/ program participants enhances adoption of promoted best practices.

CASE STUDY I: The Green Forest Program

Author: BUSIINGE Christopher



Photo: *Vanilla growing on an agroforestry farm in the Elephant corridor.*

Overview

JESE's Green Forest Program restores Uganda's Elephant Corridor by integrating agroforestry, green skills training, and eco-entrepreneurship—empowering communities (especially landless women and Youth) while conserving vital ecosystems in Western Uganda.

Established in 1993 as a non-profit conservation organization, JESE has been and remains dedicated to implementing programs in natural resource management, agriculture, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), and youth skills development.

Since 2019, JESE has been actively running the Green Forest Program in the Elephant Corridor of Western Uganda. This initiative integrates agroforestry, green skills training for youth and women, and eco-entrepreneurship development for landless individuals. Through a partnership with Forests of the World, program participants contribute to restoring pristine rain-forests, supporting biodiversity conservation, and rejuvenating centuries-old elephant migration trails.

Before launching the Green Forest Program in 2019, JESE had already initiated a forest governance project, mobilizing indigenous and Community Forest Management groups to protect and assert their forest rights in gazetted forest areas. These groups, now organized into farmer cooperatives, continue to restore degraded forests in the elephant corridor and practice sustainable agroforestry on their own land.

To further promote sustainability, Jese facilitated green skills training for landless women and youth, collaborating with institutions like Nyabyeya Forestry College and Countryside Environmental Conservation-Uganda. To date, over 700 trainees have been certified in green skills, with many becoming self-employed green entrepreneurs. Graduates have established businesses in honey production, green crafts, vanilla pollination, tree nursery enterprises, and more. Notably, a youth-led group that has emerged out of this initiative, Tembo Organics, has ventured into producing mosquito repellents using forest herbs, is successfully marketing their products at both local and national levels.



Photo: An agroforestry farm in Kyenjojo - under the program.

Story and Innovation: The Green Forest Program

The Elephant Corridor in Western Uganda was on the brink of disappearing. Once a thriving passage for elephants- Kyenjojo (Home of Elephants) and home to species like the several primates like the colobus monkey, the forest was rapidly shrinking due to human activities. As local populations grew, so did their dependence on forest resources for survival. Their agricultural practices, reliant on vast forest landscapes, were not economically viable, deepening household poverty.

Illegal logging, farmland expansion, and deforestation in the Matiri, Itwara, Kibego, and Muhangi forests escalated, threatening ecosystems that had sustained biodiversity for centuries. These forests, some over 100 years old, played a critical role in carbon sequestration, making their destruction a loss not just for wildlife but for global climate efforts.

A Transformative Solution

In 2019, Jese launched the Green Forest Program to restore the Elephant Corridor while creating sustainable livelihoods for adjacent communities. The initiative targeted former Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) groups, transitioning them from dependency on destructive forest practices to sustainable agroforestry and eco-entrepreneurship.

The program's first step was introducing agroforestry, integrating trees with high-value crops like coffee, vanilla, and cocoa. Farmers were trained to enhance productivity while restoring degraded landscapes. Since its inception, 750 farmers have been mobilized, with a vision to scale this to 3,000 by 2030.



Photo: Jese staff inspecting an agroforestry farm in the elephant corridor.

Beyond Agroforestry: Green Skills & Entrepreneurship

Recognizing that sustainable conservation must be economically viable, Jese bridged the gap between conservation and enterprise. The Green Forest Program launched a Green Entrepreneurship component, combining Green Skills Training with Ecopreneurship business development.

A key innovation was the development of a localized Green Skills Curriculum, now adopted by Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in the region. Over 700 youth and women have graduated, gaining skills that enable them to start green businesses, from honey production and vanilla pollination to tree nurseries and eco-friendly crafts.

By turning conservation into an economic opportunity, the Green Forest Program has shifted the narrative from deforestation-driven survival to sustainable prosperity, proving that environmental restoration and economic empowerment can go hand in hand.

Governance and Partnerships

The Green Forest Program thrives through strategic partnerships. Forests of the World (Denmark) provides direct support and technical guidance to the program, while CARE International Uganda previously funded the Forest Governance Project, establishing Collaborative Forest Management structures. The initiative collaborates closely with local government structures at district and sub-county levels to ensure effective implementation.

At the grassroots level, the program is strengthened by 8 Trainers of Trainers (ToTs), who support cooperatives, and 25 Community-Based Facilitators, who provide daily extension services to farmers—ensuring sustainability and local ownership of conservation efforts.

Environmental and Economic Impact



Photo: A farmer in Kyenjojo inspecting his agroforestry farm- a mix of tree growing and high value crops like coffee and vanilla.

The Green Forest Program has made a significant environmental impact by restoring 1,022 acres of degraded forests and therefore; protecting biodiversity, and mitigating climate change through reduced CO₂ emissions in the Elephant Corridor of Western Uganda.

Through agroforestry initiatives, the program has supported 750+ farmers in integrating high-value crops (coffee, vanilla, and cocoa) with indigenous trees, reducing reliance on destructive farming practices. This did not only enhance soil health and water retention on their farms but also significantly contributed to carbon sequestration, as mature trees absorb and store carbon dioxide. The program aims to expand to 3,000 farmers by 2030, increasing the positive environmental footprint in the landscape.

Biodiversity conservation is at the heart of the initiative. By restoring pristine rainforests in Matiri, Itwara, Kibego, and Muhangi, the program has contributed to rejuvenating centuries-old elephant migration trails and providing safe habitats for endangered species like the colobus monkey. The increased forest cover also enhances ecosystem stability, promoting pollinators and supporting wildlife corridors.



Photo: Cocoa and vanilla plants are thriving very well in a healthy ecosystem.

On its own, the Green entrepreneurship component managed to mobilise over UDS 100,000 that has been integrated in the local Green economy managed by the Landless Youth and Women.

In addition, the Green Skills Training component has empowered over 700 youth and women to engage in eco-enterprises such as tree nurseries, honey production, and vanilla pollination—providing sustainable alternatives to deforestation-driven livelihoods. Businesses like Tembo Organics, which produces natural mosquito repellents using forest herbs, showcase the innovative ways conservation and economic empowerment can bring about.



Photo: Trainees of the Green Skilling component of the program at Graduation.

By combining forest restoration, sustainable land use, and community-driven eco-entrepreneurship, the Green Forest Program has established a holistic, scalable model that combats deforestation while creating resilient, environmentally conscious communities.



Photo: Farmers in Kyenjojo observing their coffee and cocoa harvest from their agroforestry farms.

Sustainable Development Impacts

The Green Forest Program contributes to multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by integrating conservation, economic empowerment, and community resilience:

- **SDG 1 (No Poverty):** The program has provided sustainable livelihoods for landless youth and women, enabling them to establish green enterprises such as honey production, vanilla pollination, and eco-friendly crafts.
- **SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** Over 700 women and youth have been trained in green skills, giving them the tools to become entrepreneurs and participate in sustainable economic activities.
- **SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth):** The program has since its establishment mobilised over \$100,000 into the local green economy, supporting eco-entrepreneurs and expanding job opportunities in conservation-linked enterprises.
- **SDG 13 (Climate Action):** By restoring 1,022 acres of degraded forests, the program has enhanced carbon sequestration, reducing CO2 emissions and therefore mitigating climate change.
- **SDG 15 (Life on Land):** Restoration of centuries-old elephant migration trails and conservation of pristine rainforests in Matiri, Itwara, Kibego, and Muhangi have helped protect biodiversity, including endangered species like the colobus monkey.



Photo: Sophia, one of the ecopreneurs from the elephant corridor exhibiting bee products during the 2024 annual seed and food fair organised in Fort-Portal.

Through a holistic, scalable model, the Green Forest Program demonstrates how environmental conservation and economic empowerment can drive sustainable development across multiple SDGs.

Scalability

The Green Forest Program has a proven scalable model that can be expanded nationally through:

- Adoption of the Green Skills Curriculum by Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, enabling replication across Uganda. Jese has already signed MoU with local TVETs that have adopted the curriculum. It is already integrated in the training programs of Nyabyeya and CECO-Uganda training colleges.

- It is based on the impact of the program that the expansion of agroforestry and eco-entrepreneurship to new communities is planned, targeting 3,000 farmers by 2030 and it is highly expected that this will onboard two additional districts.
- The program will further strengthen partnerships with government, private sector, and NGOs to increase funding and technical support.
- The program is also leveraging existing cooperatives to train more youth and women, creating a regional wide network of green entrepreneurs.

Thus, this model has been found viable and can be adapted nationwide to restore degraded forests, create green jobs, and promote sustainable livelihoods.

Replicability

The Green Forest Program presents a replicable model for environmental restoration and sustainable livelihoods. Key elements that enable replication include:

- Adoption of the Green Skills Curriculum by TVET institutions, ensuring that green skills training can be integrated into national and international vocational programs.
- Proven agroforestry techniques (integrating trees with coffee, vanilla, and cocoa) that can be applied in similar ecological zones across Uganda and beyond.
- Eco-entrepreneurship models that support landless youth and women in starting green businesses, adaptable to different socio-economic contexts.
- Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) approach, which can be scaled across other conservation landscapes to enhance community-led forest restoration.

This approach can be replicated in other parts of Uganda and globally, especially in regions facing deforestation and biodiversity loss.

Resilience and Adaptability

The JESE Green Forest Program has demonstrated resilience by adapting to environmental, social, and economic challenges. Facing increasing deforestation and biodiversity loss, the program integrated agroforestry with high-value crops like coffee, vanilla, and cocoa, reducing pressure on natural forests while ensuring food security and income for farmers.

When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted markets, JESE pivoted by supporting eco-entrepreneurs to develop localized value chains, allowing businesses like Tembo Organics to thrive. The initiative also strengthened digital training for youth and women, ensuring continued skills development despite movement restrictions.

Economic instability post COVID-19 posed challenges for program sustainability, but the program mobilized over \$100,000 into the local green economy, enhancing community-led conservation efforts. Additionally, to counter climate change-induced agricultural risks, the program introduced drought-resistant agroforestry species, and therefore improving farm resilience in the landscape.

By fostering partnerships with local and international stakeholders, JESE has ensured adaptability and long-term impact, proving that conservation and economic empowerment can go hand in hand.

Contributing to social inclusion Goals



Photo: Youth from Tembo Enterprise displaying their products

The Green Forest Program actively reduces inequalities by fostering the inclusion of marginalized groups, including landless youth and women, and Indigenous communities in and around the elephant corridor in Western Uganda. The initiative provides green skills training, eco-entrepreneurship support, and sustainable agroforestry opportunities to landless individuals, ensuring they gain economic independence while contributing to conservation.

Since 2019, over 700 youth and women have been certified in green skills, enabling them to start businesses in honey production, vanilla pollination, and tree nurseries management. Notably, the youth-led enterprise Tembo Organics has successfully commercialized natural mosquito repellents from forest herbs.

JESE also empowers Indigenous and community groups by organizing them into cooperatives, allowing them to protect their forest rights and engage in sustainable land management. Through partnerships with Nyabyeya Forestry College and local NGOs, the program ensures that skills development remains accessible.

By integrating environmental conservation with economic empowerment, JESE's initiatives transformed vulnerable communities into active stewards of biodiversity while addressing social and economic disparities.

Addressing Gender

The Green Forest Program has significantly empowered women and girls, with a focus on creating sustainable livelihoods and promoting gender equality. The program provides green skills training, eco-entrepreneurship development, and agroforestry opportunities, particularly targeting landless women and youth. Through this initiative, over 700 women have been trained, equip-

ping them with the skills to start businesses in areas such as honey production, vanilla pollination, and eco-friendly crafts.

Women, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, are gaining economic independence by establishing businesses and contributing to environmental conservation. The program's efforts have allowed women to participate in previously inaccessible sectors, promoting their leadership and economic participation. Notably, the youth-led group Tembo Organics, which produces mosquito repellents using forest herbs, includes women entrepreneurs, showcasing the innovative contributions of women in the green economy.

In addition to green skills training, JESE organizes Indigenous and community groups into co-operatives, empowering women within these groups to protect their forest rights and engage in sustainable land management practices. This model fosters gender-inclusive environmental stewardship, where women are recognized as key actors in both conservation and local economic development, ultimately contributing to the advancement of SDG 5 **(Gender Equality)**.

STRATEGIC AREA # 2:

FOOD SYSTEMS + FOOD SECURITY AND INCOME

Authors; William, Dennis and and MURUNGI Samuel

Context: Food systems in Uganda are deeply connected to food security and income generation, as agriculture is the backbone of the country's economy and a source of livelihood for the majority of the population.

Uganda's food system is dominated by smallholder farming, with over 70% of the population engaged in agriculture. Crops like maize, cassava, bananas, beans, and millet are staples, while coffee, tea, vanilla and cocoa are key export commodities. However, the sector continues to face Post-Harvest Challenges, namely; Poor storage facilities, limited access to markets, and lack of infrastructure lead to significant post-harvest losses, reducing food availability and lowering farmer incomes.

Despite Uganda's agricultural potential, food insecurity remains a challenge due to climate variability, pests, and diseases. Apparently, stunting among young children due nutrition insecurity averages at 29% at the national level and 40% in the Tooro region.

In this reporting period, JESE continued to pay critical attention to the agricultural sector with the overall purpose of improving livelihoods, food and nutrition security of local populations in the areas of operation. Certainly the work in this sector goes without challenges, case in point is the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in Kyegegwa and the neighboring districts that significantly impacted program operation.

Milestone 1: Supported the improvement of Production, incomes and Markets Linkages



Photo: A post-harvest Handling training in Kyenjojo conducted by the Agricultural and Enterprise Department

What we achieved

- 1,750 households reached through integrated farm planning, agroecology and Participatory action research

A total of 500 farmers were successfully reached through a holistic initiative that incorporated integrated farm planning, participatory action research, and agroecology practices. The program emphasized effective post-harvest handling and marketing strategies, enhancing both productivity and market access. Regular household extension services and follow-up sessions provided continuous support, enabling farmers to adopt sustainable practices and improve their livelihoods. This comprehensive approach not only strengthened agricultural resilience but also fostered a community-focused environment, empowering farmers to thrive in a competitive market while promoting ecological sustainability on their farms.

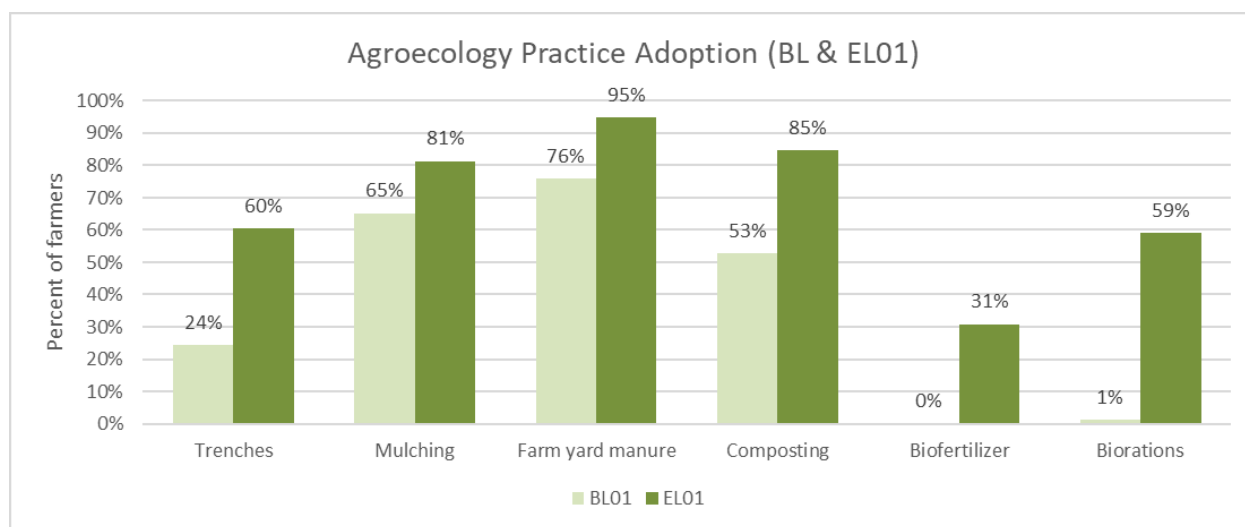
During the year, we embarked on the Participatory Action Research (PAR) process to generate evidence for advocacy for promotion of agroecology but also build capacity of family farmers in research and problem solving. With technical support from a NARO scientist and Mountain of the Moon University, we were able to prioritise research topics and set up 03 trials to investigate the effect of bio rations on control of diamond moths in cabbages. The results from the PAR trials showed bio rations can completely control/high efficacy to control diamond moth. The results have triggered the family farmers and enticed them to embrace these practices. We realized increased appreciation of agroecology by family farmers, political leaders and technocrats in the area of operation. This was evidenced by increased participation in program activities by farmers and other stakeholders.

Majority of the farmers registered increased productivity of major crops on farm which is attributed to increased adoption of the different agroecological practices and favourable weather characterized by adequate rainfall during the year. The improvement in application of agroecological practices on farms as evidenced by improved animal integration, improved soil and water management such as mulching in banana and coffee plantations, and improved environmental conservation further contributed to increased production and productivity.

From the end-line assessment of the farmers on farm resilience, productivity and incomes in Kamwenge and Kitagwenda, the results indicated good progress based on the different indicators below;

Level	Indicator	Definition	End 2023	End 2024
Improved farm resilience, productivity, and income of smallholder coffee farmers	% of Farmers applying agroecology	% of farmers applying at least 3 of the trained on agroecological practices; Practices include: Mulching; Composting; Biorations; Biofertilizer; Trenches	47.6%	86.1%
	% of Farmers applying appropriate post-harvest handling practices	% of farmers practicing at least 3 of the recommended post-harvest management practices. Practices include: Drying on Rack or Tarpaulin, Hulling, Sorting/ Grading, Cleaning, Storing in improved or traditional facility	25.4%	73.0%
	% of households reporting improvements in income in the last year	Proportion of households reporting increased income from sale of farm produce.	-	75.7%

There is increased adoption of agroecology practices promoted by JESE especially trenches, mulching, composting, bio fertilizer, bio-rations and farm yard manure which has contributed significantly to increased farm resilience and yields as indicated in the table below;



JESE recognized the pressing need for food systems transformation to match the needs of the growing population in the face of climate change, soil degradation, and food insecurity in the Rwenzori sub-region. Having realized that collaboration was key to effecting change, JESE initiated a series of stakeholder dialogues aimed at raising awareness about agroecology—an approach that emphasizes ecological principles in agricultural production.

Through persistent outreach and engagement, JESE successfully brought together diverse stakeholders, including farmer organisations, non-governmental organizations, media, research institutions, and academic institutions with the support of Iles De Paix (IDP), Broaderlijk Delen (BD) and PELUM Uganda. This collaborative spirit led to the formation of Rwenzori Agroecology Actors Platform (RAAP) that is currently committed to promoting agroecology as a viable and alternative to sustainable food system.



Photo: Launching the Rwenzori Agroecology Chapter.

In order to reach this achievement;

- JESE with support from her partner; CARE international in Uganda conducted a gender formative study to identify the existing gender norms that hinder women's access to productive resources. This has helped us to develop area contextual specific messages to foster Joint planning and resources use among households.
- Increased adoption of good agronomic practices through household and group extension service provision through our project officers, Community structures formed by JESE (CBTs, and CBLFs) but also facilitating District Extension Officers to support the formed community structures.



Photo: shows PIP farmers in Katebwa Sub county practicing SLUM and Agritech practices in Bunyangabu district.

Milestone 2: Reduction in post-harvest losses and production of high quality produce.

Context: In this reporting period, the prices of Coffee, Cocoa suddenly went up. Particularly for coffee, the price increased from UGX 10,000-13,000. No doubt, farmers in this reporting period reported an increase in incomes and this certainly motivated farmers to invest in their farm enterprises and adopt good agronomic practices.

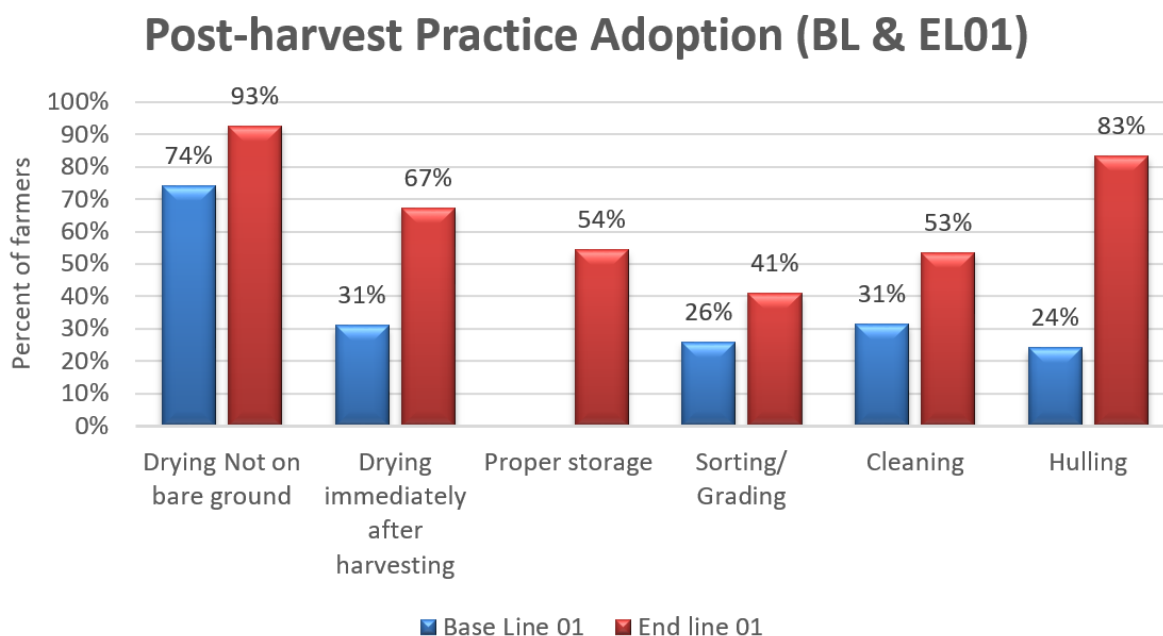


Figure showing study findings conducted on post harvest management in Busiriba and Kicheche sub counties in Kamwenge and Kitagwenda districts under the HWG supported project.

JESE interventions in Kitagwenda and Kamwenge districts made significant improvements in the adoption of Post-Harvest Handling practices among participating 500 households in the year 2024. For instance, survey results from the JESE project supported by her partners HereWeGrow indicated a remarkable increase in the proportion of farmers who dry their produce not on bare ground from 74% at baseline to 93% by the end of project, thus representing a 19% improvement over the baseline values. The practice of drying immediately after harvesting saw a notable rise from 31% to 67%. Similarly, proper storage adoption grew from 26% to 54%, and sorting/grading increased from 31% to 41%. Cleaning practices improved from 24% to 53%, while hulling saw a remarkable jump from 0% at baseline to 83% at the end line. These findings imply that the project has successfully encouraged better post-harvest practices, contributing to enhanced produce quality and reduced losses. However, some practices, like sorting/grading, still show moderate adoption and may benefit from further focus. JESE and her partners will continue investing in awareness efforts, more hands-on training, and improving access to appropriate equipment to ensure sustainability in these practices across all areas of her implementation.



Photo: Kyarusizi Bakyara Farmers Group during a farmer field day.

Impact in Numbers

- 54 marketing associations strengthened - Kamwenge, Kyegegwa, Kabarole and Kyenjojo Districts
- 950 households provided with tarpaulins
- 6783 farmers (4,417 female and 3,983 Male) reached with post harvest handling and management skills.

What we achieved

- Reduced food losses due to improved knowledge and skills in post-harvest handling. As a result, there was visible increase in reduction of postharvest losses in the communities where JESE works but also an improvement of food safety.
- Improved access to post harvest handling materials including storage silos and tarpaulins. Other than the direct support from JESE in the provision of these materials, the increased post harvesting knowledge and skills among community members saw a drastic increase in the number of farmers paying for these materials out of pocket to enhance the quality of produce and meet market standards.
- Demonstration of practical post-harvest handling practices at farm level significantly boosted peer to peer learning of farmers across our areas of work

In order to reach the above achievements, JESE deployed the following strategies;

- Facilitated market linkages with strategic private sector actors mainly with produce buyers/traders that eventually contributed to better market access for farmers operating in the marketing associations.
- JESE connected farmer groups with potential agro-product dealers and input suppliers, while also linking them to government programs that offered funding to support bulking and collective marketing efforts.

- Jese provided post-harvest handling materials to 950 farmer households in Kicwamba and Kabambiro, Kiceece and Busiriba sub-counties, in the districts of Kabarole, Kamwenge and Kitagwenda.
- Conducted capacity building trainings in post harvest handling and management to 6783 farmers (4,417 female and 3,983 Male) in Kamwenge, Kitagwenda, Kyenjojo, Kyegegwa, Kabarole and Rubirizi districts

However, there were challenges;

- Limited funds to support all project participants to access post-harvest handling materials (tarpaulins). As a measure, JESE also linked farmers to suppliers of these materials (tarpaulins) so that farmers can continue to engage directly with suppliers on their own. To escalate access, JESE initiated a cost-sharing approach where the farmers contribute 25% towards the costs of the tarpaulins and the institution contributes 75%. This ensured that only interested farmers were considered and not every one.

We also learnt that; There are a lot of agroecology value addition opportunities that are still untapped and JESE needs to trigger and support farmers to explore these opportunities. This will prolong the shelf life of agroecology produce and benefit farmers from the increased prices during the periods of scarcity/off season.

Case 1: The Farmer Field and Business Schools Approach.



How Pathways participants visualized the importance of integration of the FFBS components
(updated based on feedback after implementation in 28 projects).

Western Uganda is known for its fertile land and agricultural potential. However, despite these advantages, access to agricultural extension services—especially for women—remains limited. This hinders efforts to increase incomes, improve livelihoods, and overcome poverty sustainably.

The Farmer Field and Business School (FFBS) approach is a participatory agricultural extension service model focused on women and girls. Working in partnership with CARE International in Uganda, and the The SALL Family Foundation, JESE implements this approach among farmers in the region. The FFBS approach equips farmers with essential skills to enhance production, access markets, sell at competitive prices, collaborate effectively, engage in informed decision-making, and improve food and nutrition security. Through regular dialogues, farmers share experiences, identify challenges, and develop strategies to address them.

With the FFBS approach, farmers have not only increased production and productivity but have also been organized and supported to bulk and collectively market their produce. This has enabled them to bypass middlemen and establish a single selling point, thereby strengthening their bargaining power. A good example of where this approach has worked well is with The Kigambo Maize and Beans Value Chain Development Association in Kyegegwa. In 2024, this group bulked and sold a total of 37 tons of maize. In Kyenjojo and Kyegegwa districts, there are 55 similar Producer Marketing Groups that have been inspired by the FFBS approach and thereby enabled both livelihood and economic improvement for farmers.



Farmers of Kigambo Maize and Beans Value Chain Development Association, JESE and CARE International in Uganda at The Kigambo Storage facility in Kyegegwa.

Milestone 3: Gender Equality and social inclusion: supported the improvement in; social relations at households

Context: Uganda has made notable progress in promoting gender equity and social inclusion (GESI), but significant challenges remain, particularly in rural and marginalized areas. Despite progressive legal frameworks, socio-cultural norms, economic disparities, and increasing conflicts continue to affect vulnerable groups, especially women, girls, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and marginalized communities. However, persistent challenges such as GBV, economic exclusion, and limited access to essential services among these categories continue to impact their lives, more so in areas where JESE programs are implemented. The Agriculture and Enterprise department has pioneered gender transformative interventions and models that are working towards achieving equity at the household level.



In the photo above, Ms. Birungi Grace proudly displays the coffee she planted on a portion of land given to her by her husband. This comes after numerous advocacy efforts with the community to ensure women have access to resources. Birungi chose to plant coffee on her land.

Impact in Numbers

During the year in review, JESE worked with 369 role model men and 369 women mentors to promote gender equity and transformation at the household level. Overall, these groups and individuals reached out to 11,070 people through household and community outreaches with messages on promotion of gender equity and equality.

According to a recent study conducted by JESE in Kicecece -Kitagwenda District and Busiriba sub-counties, the percentage of women who reported having a role in productive decision-making at the household level rose from 64.8% to 93.3% during this reporting period. The survey included women who either had some input in household decisions, were involved in key decisions, or felt they could make decisions if they chose to, across at least two types of productive decisions. Further findings revealed that the proportion of women reporting sole or joint ownership of assets increased from 47.3% to 70.9%. This was deemed sufficient if a woman owned at least one asset, excluding chickens, ducks, turkeys, pigeons, non-mechanized farming tools, or small household items. For women living in households without any assets, this was considered insufficient.

JESE achieved this through a number of strategic interventions including;

- Conducted household and community gender dialogues to challenge existing negative and harmful gender norms. In addition, JESE formed community structures to support the gender component. These structures included Role Model men and Women mentors whose capacities were built in various gender components like workload sharing tool, Household joint planning, child care, Household joint decision making.
- Built the capacity of community structures like the role model men, women mentors and farm innovators in gender transformative approaches, gender based violence prevention, household dialogues and outreaches. This was through several training, mentorship and coaching sessions to equip them with skills and knowledge to promote gender equity and equality.
- JESE facilitated community structures and District Gender Officers to undertake men in the kitchen campaigns, community gender dialogues and household outreaches as well as referrals.
- Finally, it strengthened collaborations with the district and Sub County community based services unit and worked with Gender and Community development officers in addressing gender inequalities across the JESE operational geographical coverage.

There were challenges while implementing these gender transformative interventions, for example; absence of referral pathways in most communities of interventions affects reporting of gender based violence. This also contributed to the attitude of men to report of GBV for fear of being underrated by their communities.

Most importantly, JESE learnt that;

- The collaboration with community structures, Sub County CDOs and District Gender Officers

enhanced ownership and sustainability of the impact. This collaboration reduced costs of operations/enhanced cost effectiveness by reaching more communities with few resources.

- Joint planning and reviews with experience sharing enhanced cross learning among role model men and women mentors. This contributed to increasing the numbers of people reached with psycho social support services, household joint planning and decision making, workload sharing as a way of promoting gender equity and equality.



Photo: Men taking part in a cooking event as part of the Men in the Kitchen Campaigns organized by the Department of Agriculture. These activities motivate men in communities to engage in household tasks alongside their wives.

From assessment of some women participation in decision making process, we registered tremendous achievement/progress on all indicators as results shows below;

Level	Indicator	Definition	End 2023	End 2024
Increased participation of women in decision making processes on the use and access to household production resources and income at household level.	% of women who report having input in productive decisions	% of women who have had some input, made decisions or felt they could make a decision if they wanted to, in at least 2 types of productive decisions.	64.8%	93.3%
	% of women who report having sole or joint ownership of assets	This is considered adequate if the woman owns at least one asset, as long as it is not only chickens, ducks, turkeys, pigeons, non mechanized farm equipment, or small consumer durables. For women who live in households that do not own any type of asset this is considered inadequate.	47.3%	70.9%
	% of women who report participating in decisions to buy, sell, or transfer assets	This is adequate if the woman has at least one type of right over at least one type of agricultural asset. For women who live in households that do not own any type of agricultural asset this is considered inadequate	23.1%	68.2%
	% of women who report having control over use of income	This is adequate if the woman has at least some input into decisions regarding the use of income from activities she participated in and if she feels she can make her own personal decisions on aspects of household life as long as it is not only household minor expenditures.	58.8%	95.5%



STRATEGIC AREA # 3 :

LIFE SKILLS, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYABILITY

Contributors: George Kaihura, Wamara Bright and Alex Nyesigamukama

Introduction: The milestones achieved here are a direct contribution to the JESE Strategic area focusing on; Life skills, Vocational Training and descent Employability. Certainly, the strategies directly feed into the Sustainable Development Goals, namely; #8 Decent Work and Economic Growth as well as Goal # 4 Quality Education.

In this reporting period, JESE with support from her partners (FoW & WHH) continued to make significant efforts towards equipping youth with the right skills and knowledge needed to gain resilience amidst uncertainties economic times and challenges, most importantly through orienting the youth to the needs of the local labour market thus improving household incomes.

The successes under this theme were enabled through the Government of Uganda's policies that stress the provision of quality education and the National Youth Policy (NYP). These have been the spring board and a vehicle for accelerating vocational Skilling at Jese while achieving the goals under the National skilling strategy.

Milestone 1: Vocational Training and Entrepreneurship Support.



Photo: Trainees under the Skilling program undergoing practical classes.

Context: Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world, with over **75% of its population under 30 years**. Despite this demographic advantage, **youth unemployment and under-employment remain critical challenges**. The **formal job market cannot absorb the growing labor force**, making **vocational education and skills development** essential for employment creation and economic growth. This is where the JESE skilling interventions fit in to address current gaps and particularly address the youth unemployment gaps.

JESE achievements in the reporting period;

- Under the *Expansion of Green Colleges* project, a total of 514 youth (251 males and 263 females) were enrolled , with 512 (250 males and 262 females) successfully completing the training. Of these, 268 youth (125 males and 143 females) were assessed for competencies and awarded Workers' PAS certificates by the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) under the Ministry of Education and Sports.

- In addition, the Skill Up Program enrolled 120 youth (75 females and 45 males) in training across various trades, with participants distributed among the districts of Kyenjojo (45 youth), Bunyangabu (45 youth), and Fort Portal (30 youth). Of those who completed the training, 104 youth (71 females and 41 males) were assessed for their competencies and awarded Workers' PAS certificates by the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT). Furthermore, 268 youth (125 females and 143 males) were assessed by the DIT, successfully demonstrating their competency and qualifying to work independently.
- A *Green College Network* was formed to enhance training opportunities, facilitate knowledge exchange, and market green skills.
- The projects also strengthened the capacity of training centers to deliver curriculum-based, holistic training tailored to green professions.

These efforts significantly contributed to equipping youth with market-relevant skills, fostering sustainable livelihoods in the target districts.

What we did

To achieve these results, JESE organized pre-training activities such as awareness campaigns, mobilization, career guidance, and counseling, working closely with various stakeholders. Mobilization efforts were carried out through local government channels, including LC3s and parish chiefs, ensuring that vulnerable young men and women were effectively targeted and reached.

JESE established partnership agreements with local community training providers, social enterprises, and MasterCraft persons within the communities. The project also collaborated with a network of institutions to deliver both technical and soft skills training.

The Challenges

- Youth skilling, being 85% hands-on, required significant provision of materials, leading to resource shortages. For instance, digital literacy was inadequately covered due to limited access to computers at training centers. Additionally, during DIT assessments, many youth faced language barriers, as they needed interpretation of English questions into local languages, causing delays in completing exercises.
- The changing economic conditions had a negative effect on skill development programs and job availability, posing challenges for youth training initiatives. Many skilled youth, particularly those in self-employment, experienced a decline in local demand for their products and services. This was further exacerbated by market saturation with cheaper or second-hand imported goods, such as garments and furniture, which are easily accessible and preferred by households.

To address these challenges, efforts were made to link youth with niche markets, promote the quality of locally produced goods, and encourage innovation in product design to increase competitiveness. Partnerships with local businesses and marketing campaigns were launched to raise awareness about the value of locally made products. Work-based training, along with collaboration with the private sector—especially involving the local market during training—proved successful in aligning skills development with market needs. Training tailored to the community significantly raised awareness and participation among stakeholders, strengthening the initiative's relevance in project areas.

However, areas for improvement include addressing resource shortages, such as tools and digital equipment, to enhance training quality. Expanding market linkages and promoting value addition for locally made products can further increase the sustainability and impact of the skilling program.

Then learnings from this reporting period were;

- **Leveraging Networking Opportunities:** Participation in industry events, exposure visits, conferences, and multi-stakeholder platforms allowed youth to expand professional networks, seek mentorship, and explore job opportunities in the green economy.
- **Customized Training Content:** Tailoring skills training to fit different demographics made it more relevant, engaging, and impactful, ensuring better participation and skill retention among youth.

Milestone 2: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in the skills development Program.

What we achieved

A total of 514 youths (251 males, 263 females) were enrolled, with 512 youths (250 males, 262 females) successfully completing training. Among them, 5 persons with disabilities participated, falling below the target of 5%. Additionally, 120 youth (75 females, 45 males) were trained under the *Skill Up Program*.

At the time of enrollment, young women were encouraged to choose trades based on their interests, supported by career guidance and dedicated counseling sessions for young mothers. To ensure inclusivity, all training institutions were equipped with child-friendly spaces that JESE provided with necessary childcare facilities. This initiative allowed young mothers to bring their children to the training centers and fully engage in activities. During sessions, participants received sanitary products, drinking water, and simple meals to promote regular attendance. Additionally, all training providers, community facilitators, project participants, and caregivers were trained on child protection, hygiene, and nutrition.

What we did;

JESE conducted non-formal skills training tailored to the interests and needs of all genders, ensuring inclusion of non-traditional fields for women. Gender-sensitive content was integrated into the curriculum, addressing topics such as gender equality and social inclusion. To reduce financial barriers, all training activities and resources were fully funded by the donor, encouraging vulnerable young men and women to participate. Peer mentoring **activities were** incorporated to enable participants to support each other throughout the training process. JESE also fostered collaborative engagement between training providers, local leaders, and other service providers to promote gender equality and inclusive education across all project areas.

The Challenges

The major challenge in promoting inclusive training for youth with disabilities was the lack of ramps and accessible restrooms, which hindered participation. Additionally, limited training resources and a shortage of translators for PWDs at most local institutions discouraged their involvement. To mitigate these challenges, JESE worked to improve physical accessibility at train-

ing centers and collaborated with partners to provide necessary resources, including translators. Efforts were also made to raise awareness and ensure that PWDs had the support they needed to participate fully in training activities.

partnerships and collaboration with local government officers, such as Community Development workers, District Labour officers, local council personnel for PWDs, and Civil Society Organizations like KADIP in Kabarole, proved effective in reaching youth with disabilities. These partnerships facilitated better outreach and support for PWDs in the training programs.

However, an area for improvement is the need to allocate separate funds specifically for addressing the unique needs of PWDs in skills development. This includes funding for structural improvements, transportation to training centers, and designing customized training packages to better accommodate their requirements.

Milestone 3: Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment

Context: Youth unemployment remains a major challenge, prompting many young people to turn to entrepreneurship and self-employment as viable economic opportunities. The government, private sector, and development partners have recognized entrepreneurship as a key driver of economic growth and job creation. It's one of the key goals of the Jese Skilling Department to promote entrepreneurship and self employment of the young people that go through the skilling programs.

What we Achieved;

- **100 males and 44 females employed under Green College Expansion**
- **72 females and 36 males employed under skill up**

The youth were equipped with entrepreneurship skills alongside technical training. These skills empowered them to identify market opportunities, manage small businesses, and improve their financial literacy. The youth trained under the Skill Up program specialized in trades such as hairdressing, tailoring, carpentry, motorcycle mechanics, plumbing, domestic electrical and solar installation, and welding. Start-up kits were distributed to support business establishment, enabling these youths to generate an estimated monthly income of UGX 150,000, significantly boosting self-employment and economic independence.

What WE did;

To support entrepreneurship and self-employment, JJESE integrated entrepreneurship skills into both green skills and Skill Up training programs, covering areas such as financial literacy, business management, and market analysis. Partnerships with local businesses and organizations, like USSIA and Bunyangabu Beekeepers Cooperative, helped create opportunities for trade fairs and linkages with commercial players. Youth also participated in exposure visits, gaining hands-on experience and expanding their professional networks. Start-up kits were provided to help youth launch their businesses, and post-training follow-up support, including mentorship and peer learning, ensured their continued success in self-employment.



STRATEGIC AREA #4:

EQUITABLE ACCESS & USE OF SAFE WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Contributors: RUGUMAYO Godfrey, TUSIIME Lawrence & ALITUHA Richard.

Context: Access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services is crucial for public health, economic development, and overall well-being. In Uganda, efforts have been made to improve WASH services, but significant gaps remain, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Equitable access to these services is essential in reducing waterborne diseases, improving hygiene, and enhancing the quality of life for all Ugandans.

Facts in the sector:

- About **71% of Uganda's urban population** has access to safe drinking water, while only **58% of the rural population** can access safe water sources.
- Rural areas still rely heavily on unprotected water sources such as wells, rivers, and ponds, which are prone to contamination.
- **Urban sanitation coverage** is estimated at **32%**, while **rural sanitation coverage** is about **19%**.
- Open defecation remains a challenge, with approximately **7% of Ugandans** practicing it due to lack of proper toilets.
- Handwashing with soap is one of the most effective hygiene practices, but **only 36% of Ugandans** have access to basic handwashing facilities.
- Poor menstrual hygiene management affects school attendance for girls, especially in rural areas where access to clean water and sanitary pads is limited.
- **Rapid Population Growth** – Uganda's high population growth puts pressure on existing WASH services, making it difficult to meet the demand.



Photo: Cluster members of Kasiya cluster in Butukuru village learning how to make a tippy tap for improved hand washing

Milestone 1: Supported the improvement of household sanitation in Bunyangabu and Kitagwenda Districts



Photo: Children at one of the primary schools in Bunyangabu participate in Painting a newly constructed Toilet at the school.

By promoting the construction and use of improved latrines, households reduced open defecation, leading to lower incidences of waterborne diseases like cholera and diarrhea through Community-led sanitation initiatives, combined with hygiene education, fostered behavior change,

particularly among women and youth, who became active sanitation champions. These efforts improved the quality of life, school attendance, and productivity by creating cleaner and safer living environments. Poor waste management systems and population growth further strained sanitation facilities especially at markets and other public places. The Bunyangabu sectoral performance report (2024) highlights that addressing these barriers requires integrating sanitation improvements into broader WASH programs and enhancing community ownership.

What we achieved;

- Improved household sanitation in Bunyangabu benefited 4,200 people, including 2,800 males, 1,050 females, and 350 youth, by promoting latrine construction and handwashing to enhance overall well-being.
- A total of 971 households, comprising 4,415 individuals (2,230 males and 2,185 females), were sensitized on proper sanitation and hygiene practices during a house-to-house baseline survey. Additionally, 500 people (255 males and 245 females) were directly engaged in community sensitization meetings across nine villages in Nyakachwamba and Rwentuha Parishes Kitagwenda District to promote better sanitation and hygiene at the household level.
- JESE achieved significant improvements in household sanitation by increasing access to and usage of latrines and promoting hygiene practices. Open defecation rates are gradually reducing, leading to a decrease in waterborne diseases such as diarrhea and cholera. Over 700 households adopted safe sanitation practices, benefiting 4,200 people, including men, women, and youth. Through Community-led total sanitation initiatives, locals maintain and manage facilities, fostering sustainability. Hygiene education programs in schools and communities enhanced awareness and behavior change, creating healthier living environments. These efforts collectively improved health and reduced disease burdens.
- A total of 971 households, comprising 4,415 individuals (2,230 males and 2,185 females), were sensitized on proper sanitation and hygiene practices during a house-to-house baseline survey.
- Additionally, 500 people (255 males and 245 females) were directly reached through community sensitization meetings in nine villages(Kapapali, Mpanga, Rwengwe, Kalere, Karubuguma I, Karubuguma II, Nyakachwamba I, Nyakachwamba II and Rwentuha North) of Nyakachwamba and Rwentuha Parishes. Following these efforts, latrine coverage improved significantly from 74% during the baseline survey to 99%, as verified by the Medical Department Kitagwenda District. These villages are now set to be declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) in February 2025.
- JESE, in partnership with SIMAVI and AFRIPADs, donated 250 AFRIPADs to support the pupils and teachers of Kyamatanga Primary School. This initiative aimed to promote menstrual health management, ensuring that girls can attend school without interruptions. The collaboration emphasized the importance of access to reusable sanitary pads, empowering young learners and teachers with the resources needed for improved hygiene and education continuity. This donation positively impacted the school community's well-being and academic performance.

What we did;

To achieve improved household sanitation in Bunyangabu, we implemented a comprehensive approach. We conducted hygiene promotion campaigns to raise awareness of the dangers of open defecation and the benefits of using improved latrines and a clean environment generally.

At household level JESE promoted waste management, improved nutrition and created a safe environment for the household members. Partnerships with local community leaders such as cluster leaders, opinion leaders and administrations helped promote behavior change and sustainability. Children in school were trained as sanitation ambassadors to enhance community engagement. Regular monitoring and follow-ups ensures progress and addresses challenges effectively.



To achieve improved sanitation and hygiene at house level in Nyakachwamba and Rwentuha parishes, Kitagwenda District, a number of approaches were used and these include sanitation awareness, sanitation meetings, active community home improvement and house to house verification Latrine Open Defecation and general Sanitation.



Photo: Shows staff JESE and the Health teams during house to house baseline survey on basic WASH Practices in Kalere

These are some of the challenges that were encountered;

- The latrines constructed by local community households often fail to meet the required standards, resulting in poor sanitation.
- Community leaders, who serve as project focal points, dedicate limited time to project activities due to their primary focus on personal businesses, as they are volunteers.
- The unwillingness of some of the household heads/ members to actively participate in community sensitisation sessions and other activities that are linked to the promotion of better sanitation and hygiene practices.

These are Lessons we learned;

- Engaging communities in all stages of project planning and implementation fosters responsibility and ensures long-term maintenance of sanitation facilities.
- Assigning dedicated, well-trained focal persons improves project coordination and ensures consistent attention to key activities, even in volunteer-driven initiatives.

Milestone 2: Supported the improvement of access to safe and clean water in Bunyangabu and Kitagwenda

Contributors: Tusiime Lawrence & Alituha Richard

- 6,800 people benefited from improved WASH in Bunyangabu District (2,720 males, 3,400 females, and 680 youth)
- 883 households.
- 3,985 people (2,024 Males and 1,961 Females) with access to safe and clean drinking water in the 08 villages of; *Kalere, Mpanga, Rwengwe, Kapapali, Karubuguma I, Karubuguma II, Nyakacwamba I, and Nyakacwamba II* Nyakachwamba Parish Kiagwenda District but with a capacity to serve over 5,000 people.

Context: Challenges such as insufficient water infrastructure and the need for regular maintenance have limited the full realization of the benefits. Seasonal water scarcity and population growth strain available resources, requiring more sustainable water management systems. Lack of community ownership in some areas also affects the long-term functionality of water points. The Bunyangabu district Water Sanitation Coordination committee meeting report of December (2024) highlights that access to clean water improved health outcomes. In Bunyangabu, targeted interventions such as community-led water management and additional funding could address these.



What we achieved;

- Improving access to safe and clean water in Bunyangabu District greatly boosted public health and community well-being. Through the rehabilitation of water points and the construction of Rainwater Harvesting Tanks (RWHTs), schools and communities saw a reduction in waterborne diseases such as diarrhea and cholera, particularly among children. This increased access also led to better school attendance and supported hygiene awareness campaigns in schools. Furthermore, women and girls, who typically shoulder the responsibility of fetching water, now have more time and energy for education and economic activities.
- Improved latrine coverage in Kyamatanga 1, Kyamatanga 2, Kaburaisoke North, Kaburaisoke South, Bukambi, and Butukuru villages 67%. From 44% at baseline that was conducted in May 2024.
- Improved awareness on WASH in 1,222 Households and 1800 pupils from Kyamatanga Primary school, Rubona Primary school, and Kaburaisoke Primary school in Buheesi, Rubona and Rwimi Town Councils respectively.
- Access to clean water was improved through the rehabilitation of five water point sources in Kyamatanga 1, Kyamatanga 2, and Kabuarisoke villages, benefiting more than 260 households, or approximately 1,568 people. Additionally, two Rainwater Harvesting Tanks (RWHTs) were constructed at Kyamatanga and Kabuarisoke Primary Schools, benefiting over 1,100 students. To ensure the proper management and long-term sustainability of the water points, water user groups established five Water User Committees (WUCs) at the rehabilitated sites.
- Reduced latrine stance ratio at Kyamatanga and Rubona primary schools by constructing girls VIP emptyable latrines and 90% increase in hand washing with water and soap at critical times due to availability of handwashing stations in strategic places within the 3 target schools in Bunyangabu.



Photo: Shows the official commissioning of the water facility at one of the tap stands in Kalere trading centre with the Chief Environmental, Social, and Governance Officer, at Serengeti Energy and other stakeholders

- Access to water has been a significant challenge in Kitagwenda District, particularly in Nyakachwamba, Ntara Sub County. In response, JESE, in partnership with Kitagwenda District and other stakeholders, and with funding from Join For Water and Serengeti Energy, enhanced access to safe and clean drinking water for 883 households, benefiting 5,000 people (2,976 males and 2,024 females) across eight villages: Kalere, Mpanga, Rwengwe, Kapapali, Karubuguma I, Karubuguma II, Nyakacwamba I, and Nyakacwamba II in Nyakachwamba Parish. The system is designed to serve over 5,000 people, ensuring sustainable water access for the long term.



Photo: stakeholders pose for a photo at the newly constructed water Reservoir tank in Ntara.

What we did;

- To improve access to safe water in Bunyangabu District, we conducted needs assessments with DWO- District Water Office and District Education office to identify priorities and collaborated with, Parents, school administrations, local authorities, and communities to construct RWHTs in schools and rehabilitate water point sources. Community mobilization and training on water management and hygiene practices fostered ownership and sustainability. Schools received water tanks, handwashing stations, and hygiene training for students and teachers. Advocacy efforts focused on increasing access to better WASH facilities to the underserved schools and villages and integrating projects into district development plans, ensuring long-term impact.

These are some of the challenges that we encountered;

- Inadequate local contribution from parents during construction of RWHTs. The affected schools face a challenge of lagging behind while other schools move fast ahead in project implementation. To mitigate the challenge, the schools were advised to organise fundraisings, lobby from the well wishers, and OBs and OGs.
- Prolonged dry seasons reduced water availability, affecting functionality and sustainability. For example, for the RWHT to cure, it needs frequent rainfall that is able to fill the tank and the water remain unutilised for about 9 days. This mainly affected us in Kaburaisoke primary school whose RWHT has not received a fully filled capacity since its construction in November 2024.

- The construction of the second reservoir tank at Rwentuha water source for the water extension system was delayed, following challenges in securing the land from land owners.

We also learnt that;

- Engaging communities in planning, implementation, and maintenance ensures sustainability and long-term functionality of water facilities.
- Combining infrastructure development with hygiene education and capacity building enhances the impact of WASH interventions.
- Collaborating with local governments, schools, and stakeholders improves resource mobilization, project implementation, and long-term success.

CASE II: The Rwentuha-Nyakachwamba Water Extension Project: A Community and Environmental Success in Kitagwenda District.



Community members in Ntara sub county collecting water from the recently completed Rwentuha-Ntara water project that was implemented by Jese in 2024

A decade ago, women and children faced dangerous journeys to fetch water from the River Mpanga, often risking their lives and leading to school dropouts. Their reliance on the river also contributed to environmental degradation, including the burning of cycads in the gorge.

The Rwentuha-Nyakachwamba water extension project has been successfully completed, funded by **Join for Water and Serengeti Energy**, and implemented by Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE) with support from the Kitagwenda District Local Government. This initiative is currently serving 3,938 people and is designed to serve over 5000 people, aiming to protect and conserve the River Mpanga downstream.

Today, the new water extension has transformed the community's access to clean water, significantly improving their quality of life. Residents express gratitude for the reliable water supply, which not only meets their needs but also supports the conservation of the ecosystems in the surrounding areas.

Strategic Partnerships

Jese in 2024 galvanised and also initiated new relationships with the overall goal of strategically finding enablers to achieving the Jese Strategic goals. Below are some of the relationships that either initiated or sustained;

- JESE signed 5-Year MOUs with Ibanda and Buhweju district local governments
- Jese Signed project contract with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) for implementation of the Markets for Land and Livelihood Restoration (M4R) project
- JESE signed a one-year contract with HereWeGrow (HWG) for implementation of a pilot project titled integrated farm plan (IFP) project in Kitagwenda and Kamwenge districts to enhance the resilience of coffee smallholder farmers.
- Maintained JESE- NaCORI partnership in promoting evidence based research in advancing agroforestry systems in Kyenjojo. During this reporting period, NACORI conducted comprehensive soil sampling in view of cocoa and vanilla growing in Kyenjojo District. The study gave confidence for the agroforestry interventions and guided on appropriate interventions to be taken.
- In this reporting period through the department of Agriculture and Enterprise Development, Jese has initiated partnerships with Busitema University and War Child Alliance.
- JESE in collaboration with other actors facilitated the formation of Rwenzori Agroecological actors' platform (RAAP) and was launched in November 2024. The purpose of this is to provide a platform to facilitate collaboration, knowledge exchange, and collective action towards building sustainable food systems and resilient communities in the Rwenzori region.
- Improved collaboration with Control Union the organic certify to enhance program capacity in internal control systems establishment Production and supply contract with Social Vanilla has boosted farmer confidence to engage in agroforestry systems establishment and promotion
- JESE has had good engagement with the following partners; Uganda Small Scale Industries Association (USSIA), Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI), Bunyangabu Beekeepers Cooperative (BBC) and Margarita Training Institute (MTI) to bring unique skills and perspectives, enriching learning experiences including exposure for the vulnerable youth in training. For the graduates and the young entrepreneurs, these partnerships have created opportunities for mentorship and market entry for products and services offered by skilled youth.

Knowledge management, communication and Advocacy

- Participated in awareness sessions; 3 radio talk shows to the audience of Rwenzori on the importance of sustainable land-river resources management. This was leveraging on the WO-RIA stakeholder engagement and community mobilisation on the sustainable land-water resource utilisation and management.
- Jese Organised a Press Field Visits and coverage of advocacy concerns on buffer zone and ecosystem protection and these helped in Raised public awareness about buffer zone protection, generated media coverage highlighting ecosystem conservation challenges and conducting a press field visit to the Mpanga catchment area is essential to bring attention to

the critical environmental issues that are affecting the health of the Mpanga River and its surrounding ecosystem. Link to the video: https://youtu.be/W6dymAWwGFg?si=H4D_E2InUQ3_X3

- Jese also participated in the National Dialogue on Wetlands under the theme “Solutions to the Wetland crisis in Uganda. Stakeholders’ perspective in Uganda”- The keynote speaker recommended strengthening the National Wetlands Policy, conducting regular wetlands assessments, and developing community-led wetlands management plans to address the ongoing crisis. Additionally, the development of eco-tourism guidelines for interventions and enhancing stakeholder engagement and collaboration were emphasized as critical measures. The speaker concluded with a call to action, stating, “Together we can address the wetlands crisis by having the right stakeholders.”.

Institutional and Capacity Development

Funding: New funding was available from the following organisations; CARE International in Uganda, WHH (Green Colleges Expansion project, HereWeGrow (HWG). The total Financial value of these and other projects is included in the financial report.

Staffing: In this reporting period, the number of Jese technical staff reached 73 Staff members deployed in the different areas of our work. This team grew from 60 members of staff in 2023. The increase in the number of staff was attributed to fundraising efforts under the AED and Natural resources Department both of which brought on board new staff members in the reporting period. These new programs also came along with new capacity building areas through which all the new staff were trained and deployed.

Jese Investments



Photo: *Workers at the Jefaco Coffee Factory.*

JEFACO: Progress and Achievements in Coffee and Vanilla Processing

Jefaco ramped up coffee processing at its factory in Kihuura, successfully conducting a test run of 14.5 tons through a collaborative effort between the cooperative and the private sector actors. The profits generated have been reinvested to support factory operations.

Jefaco is set to enter into a tripartite agreement with the District and the Kihuura Coffee Cooperative Society Ltd to oversee factory management.

In the course of the year, we also agreed on the shareholding structure for Jefaco (U) Ltd as follows:

- Farmer cooperatives: 40%
- JESE: 30%
- Individual farmers: 20%
- Private investors: 10%

The next step is to have an amendment to the current articles done and the registrar of companies formally notified about the changes.

In addition, Jefaco secured an organic certification for vanilla and cocoa on behalf of farmers in the Elephant Corridor. The company facilitated its first-ever supply of 3,190 kg of vanilla to Social Vanilla, a private business based in Denmark, earning UGX 63.8 million, which was directly transferred to farmers.

The coffee business at Jefaco showed strong financial potential in 2024, with a gross test revenue of UGX 79,765,946. These developments highlight Jefaco's growing impact in the coffee and vanilla sectors.

Makoroigo - Umoja Eco-Farm: The Farm at Makoroigo in Kihuura continues to go through natural regeneration and rehabilitation of the coffee system. All indications are that the previously stumped coffee has gained improvements; some harvest is expected in 2025.

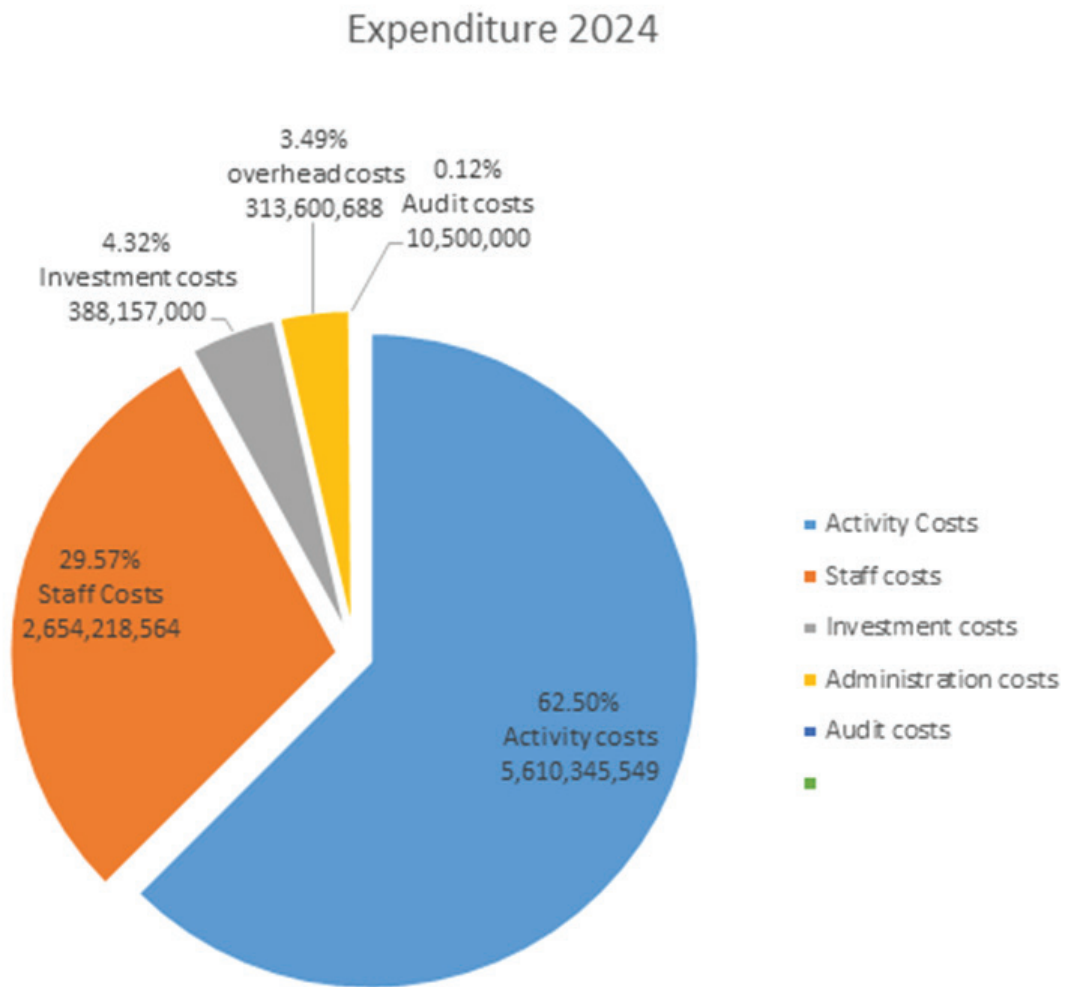
Financial Summary

In the Financial year 2024, a total of UGX 9,112,000,502 was received, registering an increase in funds realised by UGX 1,834,379,276 compared to UGX 7,277,621,226 received in 2023. UGX 9,041,725,374 was mobilised from our long term and new funders and UGX 70,275,128 was mobilised from local contributions and small short term projects. Below is a summary of the funds as received from the different sources.

Funders/Projects	2024 Ushs
GREEN COLLEGE (Welthunger Hilfe)	956,801,125
SKILL UP (Welthunger Hilfe)	267,804,090
Mpanga Super Farmers (IDP)	973,665,204
GREEN ENTREPRENEUR (Forests of the World)	292,417,639
FOW SPA (Forests of the World)	412,848,226
DGBP. (Forests of the World)	137,609,014
CARE INTERNATIONAL (RESTORE Africa)	847,197,732
CARE INTERNATIONAL (SUFFBS)	507,373,274
CARE INTERNATIONAL (DREAMS)	56,887,771
CARE INTERNATIONAL (FNG 2)	1,313,633,975
CARE INTERNATIONAL (STARBOX)	286,426,652
IFDC	99,872,097
HERE WE GROW (IFP)	275,369,090
(SIMAVI) WASH & LEARN	414,592,166
Climate resilience	24,896,850
OXFAM	
ISSD	348,478,508
JFW (IWRM)	1,108,279,628
MICT	413,468,270
(SIMAVI) WASH ALLIANCE	37,788,862
BD (SFFB)	266,315,200
Total Grants	9,041,725,374
Other Incomes	
Community contribution for Tarpaulins	15,600,000
vehicle cost recovery	36,053,300
funds from ministry	6,094,508
interest on savings account	368,340
Funds from IHE - Careful Irrigation	4,740,000
contribution from PELUM Uganda for food fair	2,000,000
Refund from SIMAVI	2,370,000
Sale of bids	3,048,980
	70,275,128

Expenditure in 2024

Below, is a graphical highlight of our expenditure in 2024



List of Staff in 2024



Photo: Jese staff after the End of Year Meeting in Fort-Portal.

BAGUMA Patrick- Executive Director

RUGUMAYO Godfrey- Deputy ED/Head of Department, Water and Sanitation

ANGUMYE Rebecca

TWESIGE Jude

ALITUHA Richard

AMANYA William- Head of Department, Agriculture and Enterprise Development

KUGONZA Fred - Program Officer

MURUNGI Samuel - Project Coordinator

TUMUSIIME Collin - Program Officer

KOBUGABE Consulate - Program Officer

MWESIGWA Dennis - Project Coordinator

MWANGUHYA Sam - Program Officer

KIIZA Felix- Program Officer

KUGONZA Keneth - Project Officer

NUWAGABA Rogers - Project Officer

MWEBEMBEZI Alex - Program Officer

TWINOMUGISHA Lucky - Project Officer - Gender

NAMARA Esther- Project Officer

KENTE Catherine- Project Officer

MUGORE Ritah- Project Officer

KAGABA Julius- Project Officer

ORISHABA Davis- Project Officer

KISEMBO Timothy- Project Officer

BWAMBALE Godwin- Project Officer

NUWAHABWE Caleb- Project Officer

KICONCO Prima- Project Officer

Abesiga Joseph - Project Officer

Bahemurwaki Protazio - Assistant Project Officer

Muhirwe Patrick - Volunteer

KAIHURA George- Head of the New Skilling Department.

NYESIGAMUKAMA Alex- Training Fund Coordinator

TUSIIME Kate- VSLA and Entrepreneurship Coordinator

Wamara Bright Raymond-Project Coordinator Skill Up!

Karungi Phiona- Project Officer

Baguma Derrick- Project Officer

SIIMA Salome-Head of Department, Finance and Administration

KIRUNGI Agnes- Accountant

KATURAMU Sandra-Accountant

KIMARA Betty - Admin

KIIZA Stuart- Driver

MUGGA Billy- Driver

MUGAMBWA Kenneth- Driver

BUSIINGE Christopher- Head of Department- Natural Resource-Energy/KMC

SAGULA Festo-MEAL- Coordinator

ALITUHA Emmanuel- Content Creator

Athieno Caroline- Communications + Advocacy - New

ISINGOMA Edward- Information Systems Manager

NYAKOOJO Sam- Program Manager- Forest Program

MUHIMBO Edward- Program Officer

TUSIIME Lawrence- Program Manager- MYP5

MUTEGEKI Cyprian- Program Officer

TUSUBIRA Faith- Program Officer

MUGISA Gabriel - Program Officer

Keijukyo Prillah Annita - MEAL Assistant- New

Lamuto pascal - MEAL Assistant- New

Board Members



Mrs. Grace **WAako KATURAMU**
Chairperson



MUGUME Sam Koojo (Phd)
Member



Mr. KATURAMU Albert
NYAKAHUMA
Member



Ms. TUHAIRWE Gertrude
Member



Mr. MAGEZI Charles
Member



Ms. Ellen K. **BAJENJA**
Vice Chairperson



Ms. KABAKAMA Jane
Treasurer



Mr. MUBIRU Vincent
Member

Appreciation

Jese wishes to thank all the development partners who financially enabled us to implement our program interventions in 2024.

We are grateful for the good working relations with the Local Governments of; Kabarole, Bunyangabu, Buliisa, Agago, Buliisa, Hoima, Kikuube, Kamwenge, Kyenjojo, Buhweju, Ibanda, Rubirizi, Kyegegwa and the involvement of the Local Government technical staff in the planning, implementation and ensuring that there is quality assurance of the interventions throughout 2024.



HereWeGrow.org

Watershed
empowering citizens



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