



**ROOTED  
WISDOM**  
A F R I C A



2022

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# ANNUAL REPORT

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# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## Kristy Hitchings

Executive Director  
Rooted Wisdom Africa

Dear Friends,

*Whatever it takes.*

Never has this statement resonated more than what it did in 2022, as we asked ourselves: 1) How does the future of Uganda look? and 2) Are we meeting the needs of our communities to the best of our ability? Posing these questions to the communities we serve led us to collectively evaluate the support we provide with the continued mission of empowering children and families through education and business development. By doing this these past 12 months, we expanded our programming, changed our name, and are purchasing land in Uganda.

### Education

This year, we awarded 353 academic scholarships, gifted new school supplies to 371 students, and fed over 450 students and teachers daily. We purchased new textbooks and sporting equipment for our partner schools. We promoted a sanitary pad initiative to prevent more Ugandan girls from missing school. And, for students unable to return to the classroom, we launched an out-of-school youth program coined The Elevate Youth Project.

### Entrepreneurship

156 small businesses, including many women-owned, participated in extensive programming to boost income and grow skillsets this year. We also initiated our first pilot cooperative of the Women's Enterprise Training Program, advocating for family farmers to increase their coffee seedlings from 2,500 to 20,000 trees.

### The Farmer Field School

In a world filled with hunger where too many do not have enough food on the table, Uganda is, unfortunately, no exception. The Farmer Field School cohort piloted this year teaches Ugandan farmers methods to increase their production and income using low-cost sustainable farming techniques. While the project is still in its infancy phase, hundreds of vegetable plants are growing at the demonstration site and individual farmer gardens, uplifting household food security, income, and overall nutrition.

I hope you are as energized as we are by the successes our dedicated community of donors and volunteers achieved in 2022. With your help, we will continue reaching farther than ever before. And if we all come forward, we'll continue onward, helping to leave a legacy to do whatever it takes to lift up others.

With gratitude,

Kristy

# HISTORY

Into Your Hands Africa (IYHA) first began in 1999 through a relationship with St. Denis Secondary School in Makondo, Uganda. The organization's founding members kicked off a fundraising project that supported building an examination hall, thereby making St. Denis a nationally accredited secondary school. In 2007, IYHA became a formalized nonprofit organization, and in 2022, IYHA began transitioning its nonprofit permit status in Uganda to a locally registered organization. In making this shift, it changed its name to Rooted Wisdom Africa (RWA).

# OUR MISSION

The mission of Rooted Wisdom Africa (RWA) is to empower children and families in rural Uganda to rise above the constraints of poverty through education and business development. Activities to meet the organization's overall mission include:

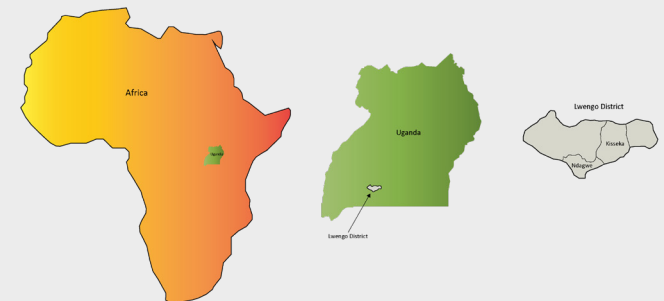
- Assisting youth and young adults in attaining a secondary or vocational education
- Providing 'hand- up' assistance to families, farmers, and women to develop their own revenue streams
- Empowering women with the tools to attain economic self-sufficiency and food security
- Teaching sustainable farming practices to improve crop production and income

## our values

- Be accurate, honest, and transparent
- Create a collaboration of trust
- Help those most vulnerable

## Area OF FOCUS

We currently operate in the community of Kikinene and the ten surrounding villages, located in the Kisseka sub-county of the Lwengo District of eastern Uganda.



# our magic BLUEPRINT

Success and sustainability come from working with communities to develop and support local leaders. While many organizations depend on an influx of foreign workers and investment, we know that communities want to create value and improve their own circumstances – we help them start that journey.



### Sustainability

We employ local leadership, long term investment, and bottom-up approaches.



### Community Centered

Our participants give back knowledge, time, and resources to their community.



### Focused

We are passionate about work in rural Uganda and committed to making an impact there.



### Connected

Our programs are founded on the belief that education and enterprise are intertwined to create positive, lasting change.



# CHALLENGES

## **Shortage of Jobs**

As the second youngest country in the world, Uganda is unable to create enough jobs for the number of people entering the workforce each year. Consequently, more than 70% of Ugandans are employed in agriculture. Most youth work in unpaid or self-employed positions on family-owned farms.

## **Marginalization of Women**

The focus for women is often placed on early family formation rather than receiving an education. As a result, girls don't attend school, they experience more health-related issues, and fail to access the same economic opportunities as their male peers.

## **Struggling Education System**

While major improvements have been made, Uganda struggles to create accessible, quality opportunities for students. The country faces a lack of school infrastructure, high student-to-teacher ratios, and teacher absenteeism.

## **Ongoing Outbreaks**

Over the past three years, Uganda has experienced two different pandemics. In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 virus resulted in district lockdowns, school closures, and stay-at-home curfews and mandates. In September 2022, Ebola was first confirmed in Uganda in September 2022, resulting in school closures, and area-wide lockdowns.

## **Inflation**

In 2022, the price of grain in our local communities has increased by 150%. We anticipate the issue of food security will continue to grow. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations states, "Due to growing populations and changing food preferences, estimates indicate that the world needs to produce up to 60-100 percent more food in 2050."

## **Livestock Illnesses**

Climate change and the raise in the heat index has increased the price of feed and cases of swine flu. As a result, we've put a hold on our student livestock projects and shifted our programs to provide basic needs, including increasing our lunch program and purchasing school supplies.

# SOLUTIONS & Framework

## **How We Help**

RWA has been in Uganda for over 16 years with eleven local staff members and advisors. Our focus is Uganda, evaluating success based on observable changes within the family and community units. Understanding that poverty is a complex issue, our model includes multiple services at various stages of development. As such, a family may have a student enrolled in our Life Skills program, another child in the Collegiate Education Training Program, a mother in the Women's Enterprise Training Program, and a father in our Farmer Field School Program. Our programs begin with a review of the community and are uniquely developed to address those specific needs.

## **Our Model**

Each region is considered its own ecosystem where resources are shared, and community participation is encouraged. Using clearly identified indicators that help illuminate challenges and opportunities for improvement, RWA is able to systematically gauge progress against targets and make programmatic adjustments as needed.



# Programs & Client Profiles

## Women's Enterprise Training Program

Women's Enterprise Training Program helps disadvantaged, vulnerable Ugandan women become self-sufficient by combining education with business opportunities, including classes on creating successful enterprises, providing exposure visits to successful businesses, offering vocational and technical training on starting a small family business, and seeding funding so that they may gain financial independence and employment.

### Examples of Lessons Taught in the Classroom:

Marketing, Budgeting, Record-Keeping and Savings, Goal Setting, Time Management, Working Together for Higher Buyer and Selling Power, Business Mapping, and Characteristics of a Successful Entrepreneur.

### Program Successes to Date:

- In 2022, 195 women graduated from the program
- 98% of WETP graduates are employed
- 58% have started a new business
- 15% have increased their ability to meet food requirements for their families
- More broadly, 83% of the program graduates say that they now have more say over what happens in their household; and 98% have more financial independence!



Client Profile:

## Namutaawe Grace

"My name is Namutaawe Grace, and I am 40 years old, married, and a mother of five boys. I am pleased to have gained knowledge and technical training in making books. This was a good experience because I always thought books were made only by factories and literate people. Now I know that isn't true. Thank you, donors, for this great opportunity and for thinking about us!"

Client Profile:

## Nakyanzi Goreth

"I am Nakyanzi Goreth, a 35-year-old professional teacher and secretary of our group. As a primary teacher, my salary is limited, and I desired to increase my income. To achieve this, I realized the importance of acquiring farming skills to make better use of my land, which was not yielding enough crops. Attending today's educational workshop has opened my eyes to the mistakes I made in my farming practices. For instance, I learned that overcrowding my matooke plants in the garden and applying manure incorrectly resulted in low yields due to excessive soil acidity.

Thanks to the agricultural workshop, I am confident that my yields will improve. I am determined to work diligently and implement the knowledge I gained today to achieve better results. This will help me fulfill my dream of generating additional income and increasing my savings. I am truly grateful for the valuable training provided today."

# Life Skills Scholars Program

Life Skills Program aims to facilitate revenue generation for youth – with a focus on girls – through small-scale student businesses and an academic scholarship. During the program, students gain tools and a vocational trade that enables them to begin a personal savings plan, increase their business knowledge, and through income earned, self-fund a portion of their educational needs. In 2022, the Life Skills program provided 353 scholarships, fed 450 students daily, provided new school supplies to 633 students, and equipped St. James with 60 new textbooks and science lab equipment.

## Program Successes to Date:

- After two years of school closures, 93% of sponsored Life Skills students returned to the classroom.
- 54% of students said that the Life Skills program motivated them to stay in school rather than wanting to drop out.
- 87% of students said that because of the Life Skills program, they wanted to continue their education beyond secondary school.
- Of the female students surveyed, 70% of girls said the Life Skills program helped them avoid early marriage, and 80% said it enabled them to avoid unwanted pregnancies.



## Client Profile:

### Nuwabiine Blessing

"During the lockdown, I worked in a diary store in Kampala where I earned some money to support my mother while saving to buy some educational materials. While working, some men wanted me to become their girlfriend. One of these men was a doctor who was ready to marry me, and he said I would become a 'doctor's wife' if I accepted his proposal. I was quick enough to tell him that this wasn't enough for me since my dream was to be a doctor myself and not just the wife of a doctor. Therefore, when school reopened, I gladly came back to school with the determination to fulfill this dream. I have been taught the value of education, and there's no way I can give up my studies to become a young wife."

- Nuwabiine Blessing, a senior three student (9th grade) at Ndagwe SS

## Client Profile:

### Nanyange Ruth

"The joy I feel right now seeing my daughter studying is unimaginable. As a parent, I didn't go to school, nor can I read or write. My daughter is the ray of hope I hold in my heart, and I would never want her to miss out on her education and a chance to live her dreams. Thank you, our dear donors, for the love and support you always give us."

- Nanyange Ruth, mother of Nakirangwa Joyce, Senior 2 Grade (8th) at Ndagwe SS

## Collegiate Education Training Program

Collegiate Education Training Program (CETP) identifies outstanding high school graduates, links them with partner vocational schools, and provides tuition and mentorship support during their programming to cultivate professionals that fill the most urgent gaps identified by our partner communities – such as nurses, teachers, mechanics, seamstresses, and veterinarians. In 2022, CETP supported 28 vocational college scholarships, with 54% of the selected students graduating from the organization's Life Skills Secondary School program.

### Program Successes to Date:

- Since its launch in 2016, CETP has had a 100% success rate – meaning that all our students have secured permanent jobs (most of whom are employed before graduation).



## Farmer Field School

Farmer Field School Program supports farmers by teaching sustainable agricultural techniques by using a low-cost approach. At the end of the season, they sell the produce and share the profits. Each farmer also has a home garden resulting in increased crop production and a growing and steady income. In 2022, RWA supported an initial pilot project of 26 farmers.

### Examples of Lessons Taught at the Demonstration Garden:

Sustainability & Ownership, Regenerative Agriculture: Early Planting, Soil Conversation and Fertility and Permaculture, Goal Setting, Water Conservation, Nutrition, and Increased Production.

While it's too early to measure program successes against expected outcomes, RWA has already noted:

- Increased Food Security & Sustainable Growing Practices
- Increased Savings & Income
- Community Cohesion / Reputation of FFS
- Increased participation and requests for joining the FFS program



Client Profile:

### Namutaawe Oliver

"Vocational education is one of the best choices I have ever made in my life. My life has changed for the better, and my family is proud of my achievement. I hope to go back to school and enroll for a diploma in primary teaching. I cannot overstate the value of education because it has made me proud and changed me and my family.

I thank my parents for all their love and support, and I can never take RWA support for granted; it came in at the time when I needed it most. RWA has nurtured me into a life of endless possibilities and I sincerely thank you."

Client Profile:

### Nanyange Ruth

"My son joined Mbuye Farm School in January, and he is going to fulfill his dream of becoming a veterinarian. I am very happy about this opportunity. Even though I am not among the invited parents to this year's Life Skills kickoff celebration, I came today because I am so grateful to this organization. I never want to miss anything or any activity organized by IYHA. My community is now going to have one more veterinarian in addition to the few we already have, all of which are graduates of Mbuye Farm School and previously supported students of IYHA."

- Mugasha Milton, father of Ninsiima Breens.



# FACES OF IMPACT

## Agaba Sanyu Jackie

Meet Jackie, a widow with four children and a graduate of the Women's Enterprise Training program. With no one to turn to after the death of her husband, Jackie entered the program looking for skills to improve her farming and livestock business so she could better provide for her family. The knowledge Jackie gained from WETP helped her to increase her corn yields and use that money to start a small grocery stall. Jackie is extremely pleased with her progress and is now able to send her children to school and support herself. She also recently bought a new plot of land which she will rent out to other farmers to generate a third source of income.

## Kamoga Godfrey

"I am Kamoga Godfrey; 20 years from Lubanda village. At the age of 13, I was in primary six when I lost my father who was catering for my education and my personal needs. Being the second born and the only boy with five siblings all girls, I dropped out of school in order to look for money to care for my sisters who were still young and also the daily expenses at home. Since I was under age, my mother registered me in her names with this group so that I could move with the builders on different sites working as a porter/carrier hence gaining building skills. Given the fact that our country is facing a financial crisis, I have long wanted to get an extra job so as to increase my income. I started a chapatti stall in our trading center but it failed because I did not have any skills so the quality was very poor. For these skills and knowledge that I have gained in this vocational training today, I am very sure that I am going to use them and make my dream a success."

## Luuta James

"My name is Luuta James. I am 53, married, and blessed with 11 children from Kalagala Village. I am a middleman (buyer and seller of products), but coffee farming is my main source of income. I am very happy because I've implemented the skills and knowledge from the inspiring workshops. Before I joined the programs, my coffee plantations had been affected by coffee wilt. I had used a lot of pesticides, but it was all in vain. Having used the preventative measures I learned in the workshop, my plantation is giving me hope, and I expect a great yield increase next season; and I'm planting 100 new coffee trees!"

## Nabasumba Mary

"I am Nabasumba Mary from Lubanda village. Being a single mother I have always fought for economic empowerment and I am grateful to RWA for having provided this to me through their program. You are great people that have given me great purpose with all this training which is mind opening and exciting. On my farm of two acres, I grow matooke, coffee beans and maize while also rearing some chicken and pigs to provide me with manure. I assure you that in today's exposure all these businesses have been trained to me by other more experienced farmers and it's no doubt that what they have taught me is going to change my life positively and I will come back with happy stories to tell. Thank you RWA for making my dream come true."

# NEW INITIATIVES

## The Elevate Youth Program

The Elevate Youth Project was first launched in response to the increasingly urgent needs of youth within our partner communities on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic. The program uses existing RWA programming to leverage already tested and proven activities. It is built on the foundation of RWA's successful Women's Enterprise Training Program and Life Skills Program while also meeting the unique needs of its target population, including additional components such as emergency stipends and cohort-specific training and support to address urgent issues (e.g., trauma-trained counselors, nutrition classes for young mothers). Each cohort's program will be tailored to meet the immediate needs of its members by adapting lessons and program activities of the incoming cohort, and to lay the foundation for success.

The project aims to provide youth with practical education, equipping them with the knowledge, skill sets, mentorship, and seed funding to secure independent and sustainable employment. It aims to support education and facilitate livelihoods; furthermore, it aims for transformative change in the form of gender equality, dignity, and self-sufficiency, ultimately enabling better outcomes in health, education, and economic success.



## Ssuube Means Hope Campaign of 2022

The initiative, Ssuube Means Hope was originally launched in 2021 in response to the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the overwhelming needs identified at our partner secondary schools. In 2022, Rooted Wisdom Africa offered a secondary year of support. The Ssuube Means Hope that included 75 new academic scholarships, gifts of school supplies to 249 Ndagwe students, the continuation of a school lunch program, and the funding for an expanded community garden to help supplement future food costs at Ndagwe Secondary School.

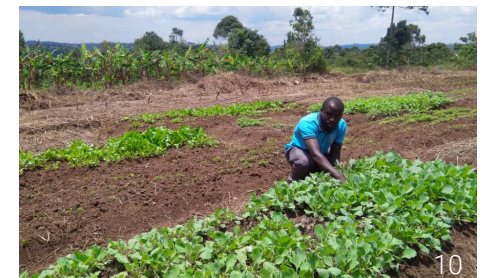


# FUTURE INITIATIVES

## Master Farmer Program

The Master Farmer Program is designed to increase participants' confidence to develop and manage their own businesses by offering agribusiness classes and technical training to help local community members improve and expand their crop production, income, and overall well-being using a low-cost or no-cost approach to environmentally sustainable farming.

The program is not targeting part-time farmers but rather people who do not yet farm or have only small household plots to supplement their food. The program will give preference to mothers and community members providing a service to the local community (teachers, nurses, veterinarians, etc.) so that they can supplement their ongoing incomes.



# RESULTS FROM 2021 INITIATIVES:

## Seeds of Change Project:

The Seeds of Change campaign use the Community Development Association program which supports farmers in expanding their gardens, increasing their income, and improving the overall availability of diverse, nutritious food that they and their children can access.

The program is designed in three phases: (1) educational workshops; (2) exposure visits to demonstration farms; and (3) implementation through group mentorship and start-up kits in the form of seedlings, livestock, business stipends, tools, veterinary services, feed, organic fertilizer, infrastructure support, and monthly support visits.

Through the generosity of our donors, the Seeds of Change project taught 50 Ugandan farmers how to grow their incomes and the amount of food they have available. Before and after test scores were raised by an average score of 38% through these classes.

RWA is pleased to announce that 69% of members also reported that they had increased their income since implementing these teachings and over 90% have increased their income since attending these workshops. This additional income has funded vital needs for our farmers and their families; including all 50 farmers who say it has allowed them to purchase basics that their family has been lacking, and 76% say it has allowed them to pay for their children's school fees!



## Meet Mulindwa Fred

Fred was forced to drop out of school as a senior because his family could not afford to pay his school fees. After dropping out, Fred began doing manual labor to earn money but always hoped he would one day learn the skills he needed to run his own livestock business. "I want to thank IYHA because of the knowledge I have gained from these workshops...With the knowledge, skills, and connections I have attained, I am going to begin [my business] now".

## Ssuube Means Hope Campaign of 2021:

"The lunch and sports equipment have all been much appreciated and excited the students a lot, making them happier and increasing their participation. Students would dose off a lot in class during the afternoon, and this was attributed to fatigue and hunger, but all of this has reduced as they all remain active all day long."

- Muteesaasira Julius, Headmaster St James Secondary School

"I am at a loss for words, I am so happy to receive my materials today, but my greatest joy is in getting this art book and crayons. I have always loved drawing and want to be an architect someday. I, therefore, see this gift as one big achievement. Thank you so much! I am so grateful and will make this dream a reality because of your love and support."

- Namatovu Shadia, Ndagwe Secondary School Student





# Impact

Applying a 'bottom-up' approach, Rooted Wisdom Africa measures impact through the transfer of skills, increased market opportunities, and agricultural expansion.

## **Total Impact:**

- 2,306 Successful Businesses Launched
- 1,498 Secondary & University Scholarships
- 780 Female Entrepreneurship
- 3,400 Commercial Agriculture Graduates

## **In the past five years alone, our efforts have had the following impacts:**

- The number of girls in school has increased by 60%, and total high school enrollment has increased by 48%
- 100% of RWA-supported vocational college graduates have secured jobs and reported an increase in salary
- 56% of WETP graduates increased their income within just 3-6 months, with an average increase of 55%



“I have loved my lesson today on Entrepreneurship which has taught me how to invest the small earnings that I get from my mother.”

- Olishaba Esther, Senior One Grade,  
Ndagwe Secondary School



# Financials

## Assets

Cash	239,610
Investments	3,717

**Total Assets** **\$243,327**

## Net Assets

Unrestricted Net Assets	210,725
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	32,602
Total Net Assets	243,327

## Income Statement

For the Year Ended December 31, 2022

**Total Income** **\$246,197**

**Total US Personnel Expense  
Program Expense** **\$34,717**

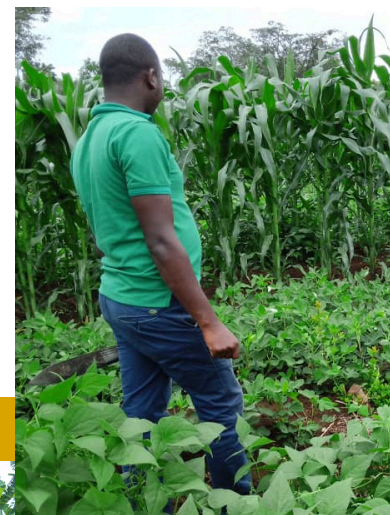
• Community Engagement	21,955
• Adult Enterprise Development	66,771
• Post S4 Support	14,687
• S1 to S4 Support	70,552

**Total Program Expense** **\$173,965**

**Total US Operating Expense** **\$20,138**

**Total Expenses** **\$228,820**

**Net Income** **\$17,376**



# FUTURE GOALS

## Strategic Vision

In the next 5 years, Rooted Wisdom Africa will reach a minimum of 63% of the over 8,000-strong population in the Kikenene area and its 10 neighboring villages that we serve through education, economic self-sufficiency, and sustainability. We will do this through:

- Reducing unemployment rates, student dropouts, and childhood marriages by graduating 922 students through secondary and vocational schools
- Raising individual income levels by 40.5% from 2,576 new student, family, and women-owned businesses
- Expanding the Life Skills program to a third secondary school
- Building a Rooted Wisdom Africa educational center and demonstration farm

## How We'll Get There

To help facilitate our scaling and impact, we developed a in-depth five-year strategic plan. Our current organizational targets include:

- Strengthening and growing our individual network through enhanced communication plans, partnerships with women's engagement groups, community service organizations and younger audiences
- Strategically diversifying our US Board to expand our in-house skills-based competencies and build capacity to allow members to be empowered ambassadors as storytellers, advocates, and fundraising stewards
- Expanding our revenue-earning opportunities to include youth clubs and US-based school
- Implementing 'Coffee Kiosks,' to build awareness and relationships for peer-pairing, event sponsorships, payroll giving, and volunteerism)



# 2023 PRIORITIES INCLUDE

## **Capacity Building/Governance:**

Build board capacity to allow members to be empowered ambassadors as storytellers, advocates, and fundraising stewards

## **Finance and Resource Development:**

Support an annual growth rate of a minimum of 4% annually

## **Finance/Resource Development:**

Review and update financial structures in place based on best practices

## **Communication:**

Create a clear, inviting, and easy-to-understand message about Rooted Wisdom Africa and its programs

## **Programming:**

Be a presence not simply in our communities but for them by building upon their vision and strengths and investing in infrastructure support to realize the shared vision

## **Human Capital Management:**

Ensure RWA has staff with the skills, knowledge, and guidance to support our goals

## **Programming:**

Support the needs of our community in the niche area we serve and where we can uniquely fill the gaps

## **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Use data as our point of reference for programming impact and design

## **Governance:**

Strengthen organizational structures to ensure compliance





# STakeHOLDers

## Partners

PB and K Family Foundation  
Theda & Tamblin Clark Smith Family Foundation  
Posner Center for International Development  
St. James Secondary School  
Mbuye Farm School  
Nelson Family Foundation  
International Foundation  
Nile Vocational Institute Ndagwe Vocational Institute  
Spirit of Christ Church  
Kathryn B. McQuade  
Circle of Sisterhood  
Africa Development Promise  
DCB Construction  
Rakai Vocational Institute  
Ndegeya Primary Teacher's College  
Ndagwe Secondary School  
Development in Gardening

## U.S. Board Members

Dan McComb, Board Chairman  
Christopher Moore Board Vice Chairman  
Laura Andes, Secretary  
Kelly Witte Treasurer

## Ugandan Board Members

Bassajja Vincent, Board Chairman  
Kasule Denis, Board Vice Chairman  
Nabakka Bena, Member at Large  
Namatovu Gerrald, Member at Large  
Kajjubi Nurudini, Member at Large  
Namely Cate, Member at Large  
Ssimbwa Joseph, Member at Large

## Staff

Kristy Hitchings, U.S. Executive Director  
Nantege Stella, Ugandan Operations Manager  
Mwanje Eric, Ugandan Operations Manager  
Evelyne Namutaawe, Ugandan Community Empowerment Officer  
Lulungi Emmanuel, Farmer Field Officer  
Nnyombi Godfrey, Community Field Officer (Volunteer)

## Volunteers

Aaron Halbmaier, U.S. Volunteer  
Lisa Goda, U.S. Volunteer  
Callie Coleman, U.S. Volunteer  
Jordan Yates, U.S. Volunteer  
Simonne Gallaty, U.S. Volunteer  
Julie King, U.S. Volunteer  
Lorene Joos, U.S. Volunteer  
Tom Srsich, U.S. Volunteer

