

# RIC-NET ANNUAL REPORT

‘Capacity Building for the Integration of ICT into Rural Development’

(UG077102)

*January* to **D**ECEMBER 2009



Approved by

**M John Silco**

**Chair person RIC-NET (2005-2009)**

This report briefly highlights the activities implemented by RIC-NET and member rural information Centres from January to December 2009.

The report describes the operating context, the key internal changes in RIC-NET and a summary of activities implemented at all levels (regional and rural information centers). The report presents a discussion of the activities' results, challenges encountered and actions taken.

Some details to this report are in the 2009 annual of report from RWECO; RIC-NET implemented activities under the RWECO consortium project that are not detailed here.

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## ACRONYM

BIC	Bwera Information Centre
BRIC	Busongora Rural Information Centre
CIS	Semuliki Information Centre
CPF	Community Process Facilitators
CPF	Community Process Facilitator
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CU	Coordinating Unit
EC	European Commission
GFS	Gravity Flow Scheme
GHFRD	Good Hope Foundation for Rural Development
HIVOS	Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries
HUMC	Health Unit Management Committee
IWDP	Integrated Women Development Programme
KALI	Karambi Action for Life Improvement
KACOICE	Kamwenge Communities Information Centre
KIC	Kabarole Information centre
KRIC	Kyaka Rural Information Centre
KRC	Kasese Resource and Research Centre
LC	Local Council
LG	Local Government
PAF	Poverty Action Fund
PRMT	Poverty and Resource Monitoring Tool
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
RIC-NET	Rwenzori Information Centres Network
RWECO	Rwenzori Consortium for Civic Competence
SMC	School Management Committee
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WUC	Water User Committee

## INTRODUCTION:

Founded in 2005, RIC-NET is an information sourcing, sharing and documentation Network. It's owned by farmers' groups and CSO who actively participate in processes and actions that enhance timely, relevant information sharing and documentation in the Rwenzori Region. RIC-NET's primary focus is to harness available resources and opportunities that strengthen knowledge and skills sharing for improved livelihood of the rural peasants.

### *1: Context of the Organization*

RIC-NET operates in the Rwenzori Region in the Districts of Kabarole, Kyenjojo, Kamwenge, Kasese and Bundibugyo in Western Uganda. These districts are in the process of being subdivided into seven. This will change much of the political boundaries as well as districts' jurisdiction hence fresh MOU with the new districts to work closely with them effectively. Though the region lies astride the equator, there have been serious changes in the seasons leading to unreliable rainfall and high temperatures.

The snow on Mt. Rwenzori is reducing, a sign of serious climatic changes; this affects food production which most people rely on.



According to the Population and Housing census of Uganda of 2002, the population of the Rwenzori Region is estimated at 1,730,826 with an estimated growth rate of 4.6% per annum. Such population growth rate hampers planning for development. The fact that the majority are female impacts on our activities of information sharing since cultural beliefs still limit women's access to education, movement and deny them access to the family radios or videos. Farmer to farmer information sharing has to be stressed in order for information to reach our target group, the majority of whom are women.

### **Socio-political**

The region is divided between two main political parties inclination with Kasese district and urban centres of other districts being of majority FDC (the opposition) and the other districts and rural areas being more of NRM (ruling party).

The kingship (cultural leaders) still command a lot of respect in the region and some times they have been politically compromised for government to attain their targets.

To some extent the political situation influences on how one presents information to the rural areas, so as not to be branded as the town opposition forces. In disseminating farmer to farmer information, we take some role of extension civil servants who are poorly facilitated to perform their duties.

There is increased demand for information by the communities and there is need for Government to increase access to information and the use of ICT. However, the current economic crisis in Uganda, which is characterized by shortage of fuel, has increased the costs of running Information Centres and hence information sharing.

## **2.0 Internal Organizational Developments**

### **2.1: Legal status**

There was no change in the legal status. RIC-NET is registered as a Non Governmental Organization by Kabarole District Board (CBO) with Reg. No: **CD/CBO/078** and Company Limited by Guarantee under the companies Act (Cap. 110) Reg. No: **85565**.

### **2.2: RIC-NET member Information Centres**

The membership increased by one county information centre. RIC-NET is currently comprised of eight (8) members as shown below:

<b>INFORMATION CENTRE</b>	<b>AREA OF COVERAGE</b>	<b>LOCATION (DISTRICT)</b>
1. Kyaka Rural Information Centre (KRIC).	KRIC Operates in three (3) out of six (6) sub counties of Kyaka County	Kyenjojo
2. Kamwenge Communities Information Centre (KACOICE).	KACOICE operates in one (1) of the six (6) sub counties of Kamwenge District	Kamwenge
3. Kabarole Information Centre (KIC)	Operates in one (1) out of eleven (11) sub counties of Kabarole District.	Kabarole
4. Semuliki Information Centre (CIS)	<i>CIS operates in three (3) out of six (6) sub counties of Bwamba County.</i>	Bundibugyo
5. Busongora County Information Centre (BRIC).	<i>BRIC operates in six (6) of the twelve (12) Sub counties of Busongora County</i>	Kasese
6. Bwera Information Centre (BIC).	<i>BIC operates in all of the eleven (11) sub Counties of Bukonzo County</i>	Kasese
7. Mwenge Information Centre (MIC)	Operates in one (1) sub county out of 8 in Kyenjojo District.	Kyenjojo
8. Kitagwenda Information and Resource Centre	Operates in one (1) out of five (5) sub counties of Kitagwenda County.	Kamwenge

RIC-NET regional head office is located at Kagote - Kabundaire Cell, (next to Mountains of the Moon University) in Fort Portal Town, Kabarole District.

RIC-NET has established a huge membership of over **8,890** people at the grassroots through her members and partners who are actively engaged in her activities.

There are **27** active rural information Centres (at sub- County) E.g. BIC alone has 1142 farmers under their farmers' database apart from other members who are not under this programme, Kamwenge and Kithagwenda has 2300 farmers and Busongora 1208 farmers in the database.

### 2.3: policy level

RIC-NET did not have major changes in the policies and modes of operation. It's now in the period of refocusing on strategic planning as an organization and as a region through actively participating in the open mind/ open space reflections.

### 2.4: Staff and Executive Members

The staffing structure was changed by December 2009. The head of secretariat is now referred to as the Programme Manager. Structure of the executive remained the same though personalities in different portfolio changed. Rev. Isaiah Mucuguzi is the Chair person, Mr. Azooli Bahati as the Treasurer. Other members remained the as before.

There was an increment of staff from two to five staff and one Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) Volunteer.

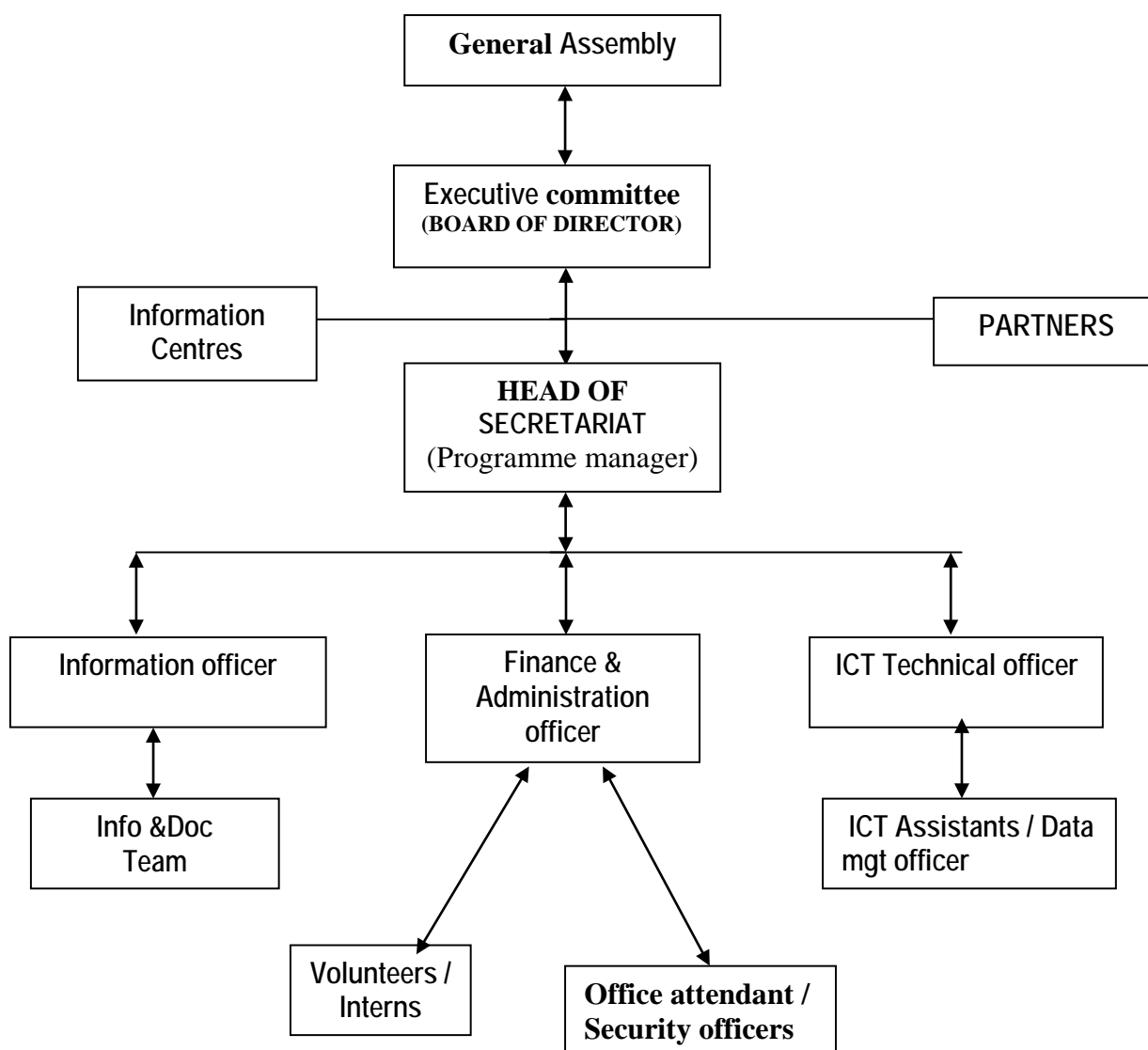
Name	Sex	Qualification	Title
Kamalha W. Peter	Male	BA. Social Sciences	Liaison Officer
Diana Kalyegira	Female	B. Urban Planning	Documentation Officer
Timothy Balikenga	Male	BA. Philosophy/Dip. Mass Communication	Information Officer
Tuhaise Geoffrey Rwaheeru	Male	BSC. Accounting and Finance	Finance Officer
Bwambale Edwin	Male	B. Information Technology	IT officer
Nynke Boersma	Female	M.A. Information Science	Information Advisor
Emily Asiimwe	Female	Dip. in Accountancy	Administrative Secretary

RIC-NET has three (3) females and four (4) males.

**Management:** There was change in the Executive board.

Name	Sex	Title
Murugahara John Silco	Male	Chairman
Kabaikya Agnes	Female	Vice Chairman
Rev. Isaiah R. Mucunguzi	Male	Treasurer
Kaatwire Mukama	Male	Secretary
Azoli Bahati	Male	Member
Isingoma John Patrick	Male	Member
Maurice J. Barnes	Male	Advisor
Patrick Muzinduki	Male	KRC representative

## 2.4 RIC-NET Organisation Chart



## 2.5: Major Policy Decisions in Regard to Mission, Objectives, Strategies

There was no major change in the vision, mission and objectives as from 2008.

## 2.6: Type and frequency of meetings at RIC-NET

In this reporting period, RIC-NET had six (6) board meetings. There were four (4) meetings for RWECO steering committee attended by some members of RIC-NET board. The staff had meetings on a weekly basis; every Monday morning.

Four (4) reflection and planning meetings were held with the Executive Committee, the Staff of RIC-NET, Staff members of County Information Centres and partner organizations. In these meetings, we harmonized our working relationship and made work plans for joint



implementation of crosscutting issues especially those relating to information sharing and Gender, and reviewed some strategic focus issues.

### **2.7: Office premises**

RIC-NET shifted from their previous office located on plot 28 Mugurusi Road to plot 2 Babiiha Road in the Town Centre in September 2008. However, due to the increase in the number of staff and to attain close collaboration with the university, from January 2009 RIC-NET offices are now at Kagote-Kabundaire (next to Mountains of the Moon University).

## **3.0 Activities and Results**

### **Result 1:**

Enhanced community understanding of the need for Information Centres

#### **3.1 Sensitization meeting/ workshops**

RIC-NET organized a public sensitization workshop at each centre to explain and encourage farmers to participate in activities spearheaded by information Centres and participate in the information sharing process. Jingles were developed at different local radios with the message that encourages rural farmers to use Information Centres, report information at centre and seek for information from Centres.



Urban and Rural sensitization

**CASE:** *“Nearly all of the members and officers interviewed at the information centers/points were very clear about their targets, **the farmers**. They further justified this by mentioning that farming/agriculture is a major pre-occupation of the people in the region and therefore befitting focusing up on. However, there were those information centers that besides this known fact, they still wondered about everything and provided general development information. A case in point is Kakabara rural information centre.”* **By Regional evaluation team report**

#### **3.2 Training in use of ICT tools.**

All the county Centres have been given 6 computers to boost training of the community members in computer literacy. These members of the communities were also trained on how to effectively use the mobile phones to access market information.

Some progressive farmers and CPF have been given trainings on uses of Internet to source for required information. Intern students from Makerere University and [Nijmegen University](#)



who stayed for two weeks at these centres built capacity of our local trainers and trained more community members in other computer applications.



Training in computer literacy at BRIC

### **3.3 Interactive meetings:**

RIC-NET visited all information Centres on quarterly basis and met key stake holders and representatives from member CSO. These meetings helped to refine the conceptualization and practical utilization of the information Centres, give feedback from RIC-NET and community members, put in place sustainability plans and jointly plan for activities. Emphasis has been placed on issues of women's participation in the activities of the Centres.

### **Outcomes:**

Women have been encouraged to participate actively and their membership has increased to 60.7%. (Active membership of 2821 people; female: 1715, and male: 1106).

22 CPF participated in computer literacy trainings for MS word, MS Excel MS Publisher and introduction to use of Internet and Google packages.

226 community members have participated and satisfactorily completed in general computer literacy trainings from all the Centres.

### **Result 2:**

Well established and organized Information Centres that are accessible to the rural communities able to disseminate reliable, timely and relevant information.

### **3.4 Consultative and planning meetings with Centres**

A baseline information needs research was carried out and report discussed with each centre. Together with KRC, RIC-NET conducted a joint meeting with some members of staff, board and CPF from different information Centres for two days. Centers made their plans, priorities and set out results to be attained. Centres made these priorities into proposals which were evaluated and funded by KRC.



Joint meeting of CPF, Centres Staff and RIC-NET staff at KACOICE

### 3.5 Organization development process

Centres are encouraged to hold regular executive committee meetings, some of which are to be attended by RIC-NET and KRC staff. These meetings are avenues to reflect on information sharing process, assessing their potential for self reliance, getting feedback from members, setting up their strategies for improving the centres service to the community.

### 3.6 Launching Information Centres

All the new Centres were officially launched in a public function presided over by local government officials and farmers organization leaders. This launching ceremony was the occasion to officially hand in equipments supplied to these Centres. Items included radios, telephones, computers, internet modems, bicycles, video sets, generators and funds for facilitating community outreach programme on information sourcing and dissemination.



Computer delivery to rural information Centres and launching of centres

### 3.7 Procuring and providing basic infrastructure to Centres

Centres have been given several equipments (three (3) bicycles, a video set and telephones sets) each centre by KRC from its BD funding for information Centres. The value of these equipments and the authentic list was not available to RIC-NET to include in its official narrative and financial records.

### 3.8 Training Centres in managerial and knowledge sharing skills

Every centre underwent training / facilitation in “process continent development” with the help of Nynke the VSO volunteer. The training involved guiding the CPF and Information officers on how to work with the local community to identify their information needs and help them on how to document it in a form that they wish. This will result in a farmer led information documentation process.



Information process documentation training

*CASE: “Semuliki Information Centre (CIS) documented the process of growing and adding value to cocoa, a major cash crop grown there. In this, they included the best practices in growing cocoa, how it is harvested and processed and also included a complete list of the stakeholders involved in growing cocoa, the processors and the buyers. This was done in both text and audio visual format. It is important to note that this helped all the stakeholders (especially the farmers) to actively contribute ideas and learn from each other. The farmers in Mukudungu village impressed the participants with there rare, practical but simple methods of growing and adding value to their cocoa. The participants requested Semuliki Information Centre (CIS) to arrange such gatherings for other crops grown there, with technical support from RIC-NET.”*

### 3.9 Support supervision:

RIC-NET and KRC on monthly & quarterly basis visit Centres to get feedback on the implementation process and discuss the monthly/ quarterly reports on the community outreach programme process. Centres send to RIC-NET quarterly reports on the progress that are later discussed with them in subsequent meeting. There was a regional team that carried out evaluation of the information centre to generate report titled “A REVIEW OF THE REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY INFORMATION STRATEGY” members to this regional team were SATNET, KRC, FORMA and RIC-NET.



### **3.10 Exposure visits**

Two exposure visits were organized locally by KRC. Members from staff, CPF and some Board members visited BIC and info points under BIC to learn on how they have succeeded. BIC being the first centre to be initiated has moved a step ahead of the others.

The host Organizations shared their experiences with regard to information and RIC-NET did as well. RIC-NET learnt a lot from them and will incorporate it in carrying out her activities.

### **3.11 National knowledge sharing**

RIC-NET participated in the National knowledge sharing conference on market access for smallholder farmers in Uganda. This meeting organized by SNV and SCAPEMA was aimed at discussing issues in regard to value chain and market access. This has helped RIC-NET to initiate partnerships with Organizations that provide market prices like FIT Uganda. This will enable RIC-NET to provide up to date market information to our farmers for better planning and incomes.

### **Outcomes**

Centres capacity to source, document information improved. Information generated from Centres increased by about 50% as evidenced from the report sent to RIC-NET. 22 CPF were adequately empowered to document farmers' information needs and guide them in identifying information sources.

With support from KRC, the bicycles and financial facilitation given to the information facilitators at the centre has enabled them to move twice a week to the community to disseminated information and carry out process information documentation activities.

### ***Result 3:***

Relevant, timely and reliable information suitable for the development of the rural communities of the Rwenzori Region.

### **3.12 Research and documentation:**

- a) Worked with the Department of Horticulture of Mountains of the Moon University to document value chain of several crops in the Rwenzori region. This process is ongoing. So far completed documentation is on Soya bean, Sunflower, Pineapples. Research about pineapple wilt is going on, documentation to be done later in 2010.
- b) Six (6) quarterly magazines were produced; two (2) focused on best practices in Agriculture and four (4) focused on Civic competence in the Local Government planning and feedback processes. (PDF copies on RIC-NET website under RESOURCES)
- c) Twenty four (24) CTA packages translated to Rutooro and Lhukonzo on fish, bees, tomatoes, goat rearing and others as shown annex below.
- d) Communities have effectively participated in documenting their on local content.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAWtKo36Sfg>



- e) When interviewed, some of the community members who are also members of information points ideally knew what their information needs are. They mentioned areas such as crop prices, markets for their produce and weather information. The following enterprises were common but not necessarily the focus by the centers and information points.

#### **Make a list of sources of information**

In a bid to easily identify the information sources and also effectively share information, RIC-NET together with SNV, Community Agribusiness Capacity Services (CABCS), Tooro Development Network, KRC and KANCA embarked on designing a data base where the different sources of information are mapped. This data base will be maintained by RIC-NET. Some of the sources have been mapped, more effort are being made to ensure that it is up to date so that the communities can effectively use it and benefit from it.

### **3.13 Publication of Newsletter, Brochures, Poster under RWEKO**

RICNET has a key role of developing Information and communications materials for the consortium. This includes producing a bi-monthly newsletter – both soft and hard version – for the members, which highlights project activities, achievements and challenges. In the year RICNET published 4 editions of the Rwenzori People's Voice newsletter. The newsletter, brochures and other literature were shared among several stakeholders including the EU Court of Auditors, Local Governments in the region and in schools. The publication of these materials helped raise the visibility of the project and also to sensitize the communities on the various project activities taking place hence calling upon them.

RICNET covered on video the proceedings of the meeting between CSO and local government authorities aimed at citizen feedback process. In these meetings the community members committed themselves to give in their local contribution by whatever means towards improving water service delivery in their respective villages and promised to act as watch dogs against those local members who would serve to destroy the water taps and misuse water and report them to authorities for disciplinary actions.

### 3.14 Working with RWECO on documentation

RICNET, on some occasions, moved with the project focal persons from KALI, IWDP and GHFRD to the sites to document, on video, key findings. A detailed report of the baseline study was compiled and published. It was disseminated at district forums in Kasese and Kyenjojo during the review of the education sector performance.

RICNET on its part, made a video documentary of the project sites and also compiled a data base of the identified projects in all the three districts, with specific particulars like name of contractor, project cost, project Bills of Quantities, etc, which the monitors used to track the implementation of the projects. This data base is available at the resource room at RICNET and the coordinating unit.

RICNET and the CU had several meetings with Marc Lepage of IICD and other ICT experts in Fort Portal and Kampala to enrich the concept of e-society being piloted in Kasese.

An ICT round table workshop, which was attended by 44 participants (35M, 9 F), was organized in Kasese to provide stakeholders with a platform for identification, prioritization and formulation of one logical programme (which can consist of several components) to create opportunities for access to and sharing of information, knowledge and services in order to improve overall dialogue between civil society and local Government.

<http://www.rwenzururu.com/education.html>

The RTW was facilitated by [IICD](#) with Ms. Jane Nakintu as the lead facilitator. The workshop focused on three key issues:

- Building and strengthening interaction (using ICT) between stakeholders
- Guaranteeing a coherent approach towards improving the dialogue between civil society and local Government,
- Encouraging government – civil society interaction and collaboration through the development of a digital government information platform, in co-operation between these stakeholders (civil society and local government).

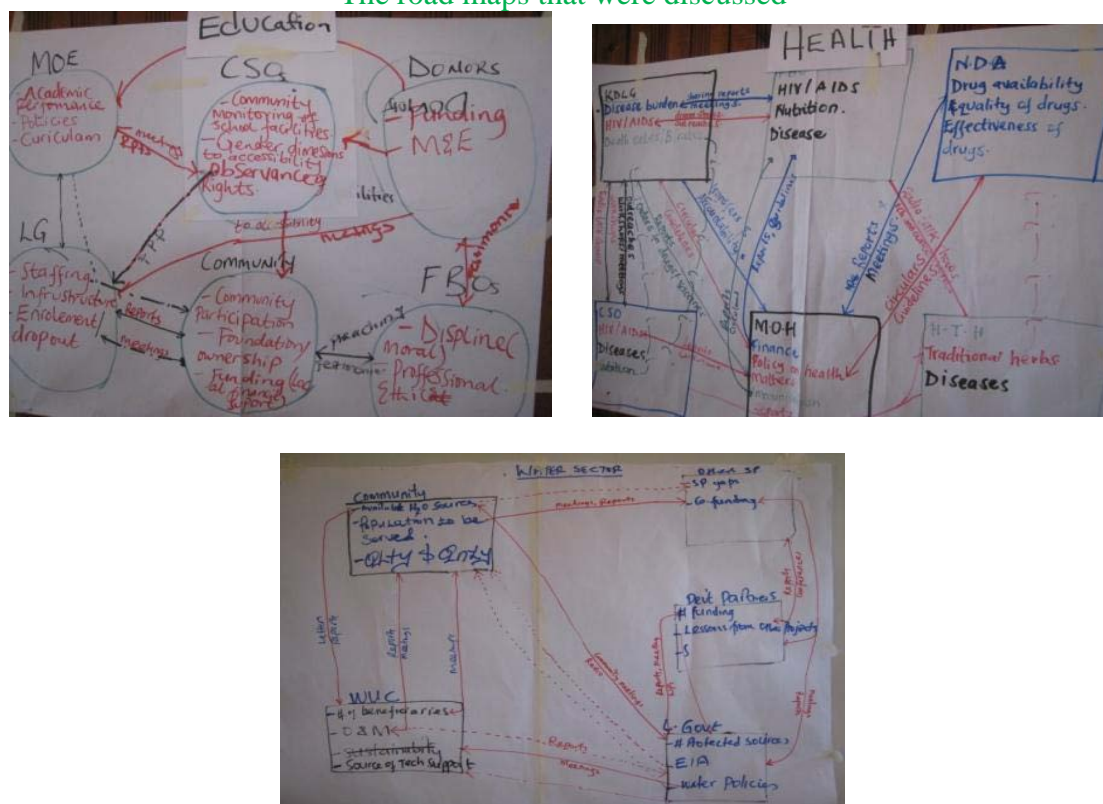


Round table meeting in Kasese, present is Marc from IICD



The highly interactive 3 day workshop, that involved both group work and panel discussions, was attended by key leaders including the District Chairman, the Bishop of South Rwenzori Diocese, LCV Council members, Heads of Department and Civil Society Representatives. The immediate output of the meeting was a road map for operationalization of the e-society concept in Kasese District. The road map was discussed at several follow up meetings between Kasese District Local Government and RICNET, and also between RICNET/CU and IICD among others.

The road maps that were discussed



Group work mapping information processes



In implementing the road map a number of activities were held in a bid to operationalize the e-society. This included [training the District Leaders and selected CSO](#) members in the on line content and Web 2 tools management (2 workshops were conducted by RICNET in Fort Portal and Kasese).



This has significantly led to improving the computer literacy of the district officers. Other activities implemented involved preliminary design of the Kasese District CSO Portal. [www.kasesecso.org](http://www.kasesecso.org)

RIC-NET in conjunction with the Kasese district local government officials are redesigned and updated the district website. The district web site [www.kasese.go.ug](http://www.kasese.go.ug) is one of the components of e-society in which electronic information can be shared among the community members.

As part of operationalization of the pilot e-society in Kasese, RICNET in conjunction with the RWECO Coordinating Unit signed a memorandum of understanding with Kasese District Local Government. <http://rwecovoice.blogspot.com/2009/11/kasese-district-starts-e-society-centre.html>

An electronic discussion platform (D- group) has been put in place in which topical subjects in the district are discussed and key matters of monitoring expressed. For instance, when a citizen learnt that a health unit in-charge at Nyabirongo HCIII in Kasese District had chased away patients allegedly due to lack of drugs and staff, he posted the information on the D-Group which was accessed by among others the district health officer (DHO) and the local medical houses. The latter ran the story in their news bulletins. The monitors on their part caused a public dialogue meeting with stakeholders of the said HCIII. This prompted the DHO and the CAO to take swift action against the said officer. Since then a lot of discussions have been going on the D-Group. <http://dgroups.org/iicd/kasese>

RICNET also conducted ICT needs assessment to establish the existing capacity gaps among the intended users of the e-society and District information ICT centre. The data was analyzed by IICD that informed the planned training and capacity enhancement in web based content development.

<http://rwecovoice.blogspot.com/2009/11/ict-self-needs-assessment.html>

RIC-NET supplied Kasese District e-society ICT centre with equipments and software in form of 12 computers, 1 photocopier, one year Internet subscription, a Local Area Network, licensed antivirus software.



### **OUTCOME:**

These interventions have contributed to making local governments more accountable to the citizens in a more ethically acceptable manner. At the same time local government structures such as the SMC, WUC and HUMC have started playing a more active, oversight role and it is expected that service delivery will soon improve. With the advent of the e-society a platform for faster communication has realized between the citizens and their leaders at the district level. This is set to enhance access to reliable information between the district and the citizens.

In soft copy, there is a data base on information content and sources both books and human resources in the Rwenzori Region, nationally and internationally.

### **Case:**

“During our short visit to BUBANDI Information centre, there were pieces of paper with cocoa prices written on them and displayed on the desks. Although we saw no farmer who came to view the information on the desk, there was tangible evidence in the centre register to show that some farmers had previously dropped in at the centre and asked for agriculture related information. The members at the centre also informed the review team that, some of the information that they didn’t have, they referred the farmers to NAADS officers or sought the services of technical officers like district veterinary officers. We also learnt from the members that they networked well and had a cordial relationship with the local government in the area. The centre had also taken advantage of an existing community radio, peace fm to disseminate additional information to the wider community in Bubandi.”

BY regional evaluation Team

### **3.15 Symposiums / farmers fairs**

The Region is sometimes hit by diseases which affect agricultural produce. There is need to employ collaborative action with other Organizations to help in discussing and solving the problems. RIC-NET has documented and supported some progressive farmers to attend to

multi stakeholders' symposiums or platforms. These platforms are avenues of sharing information among different farmers and the experts from universities and research institutions.

RIC-NET supported farmers to show case their success stories on the annual farmers trade fairs held in Kabarole.



RIC-NET stall at the annual fair 2009

#### 4.16 The trade show

This is an activity organized by SATNET and Kabarole District Local Government. In this event, farmers and different Organizations are invited and a lot of information is shared. RIC-Net was able to share a lot with other people and a local farmer from Busaiga was invited. He is also a member of Kabarole Information Centre (KIC). He gave information about how to grow bananas, sweet potatoes and demonstrated how to make the energy saving stoves.

#### ***Result 4:***

Having a more organized Network in the provision of technical support to all the Information Centres.

##### **3.17 Procurement and installation of software**

Software was procured and installed in the computers at the Information Centres. These softwares include anti-virus, and other relevant soft ware. This will enable the to perform all the required operations without hindrance.

##### **3.18 Repairs and maintenance**

RIC-NET IT officer conducts regular maintenance for equipments of all the Centres, mentors the IT officer at the county centers to trouble shoot and handle minor maintenance issues.

##### **Outcome:**

Reduction in maintenance costs for Centres and efficient operation of centre without several break downs.

#### ***Result 5:***

Strengthen the capacity of information sharing, lobbying, networking and advocating for the rural communities in their development endeavour.

##### **3.19 Hosting the website**

The Network currently has a website where she uploads information for the Information Centres to use [www.ricnet.info](http://www.ricnet.info) and maintains the website for Kasese District in line with the e-society project [www.kasese.go.ug](http://www.kasese.go.ug)

RIC-NET is facilitating the design and development of the CSO portal [www.kasesecso.org](http://www.kasesecso.org) and has developed blogs for the CSO to use in reporting issues on human rights, good governance and community monitoring of Local government projects findings.

<http://rwecovoice.blogspot.com>

#### ***4.0: Progress Information Sharing***

RIC-NET shared information on the progress of the project with Centres and other stakeholders through the reflection meetings, Executive Committee meetings, multi stake holders meetings, meetings with partners and Information Centres. The website, blogs, d-group, videos, brochures, posters, the quarterly magazines provide a more permanent way of information sharing that can be referred to later.

##### **4.1 Case success story:**

“There were some exceptional cases of success such as in Harugale Sub County in Bundibugyo district. Here, Semuliki Information Center (CIS) sourced for price information and mobilised farmers who bulked 7 tones of beans that were sold to a buyer from Kasese in April 2009, and who offered to buy at 500 UGX per kilo better than the price offered, in Bundibugyo at the time. The review team was informed by some of the beneficiaries that they earned a better price compared to previous sales.” By Regional evaluation team



## **5.0 Lessons learnt**

During the implementation process of project activities, some lessons were learnt and these can be highlighted below.

- a) The concept of information and knowledge sharing is still new to majority of the people and therefore it takes long time for people to conceptualize it and once conceptualized it creates a very positive impact in the development of the community.
- b) The people in the community we serve have the capacity and potentials of influencing and causing positive change with in their localities but what is lacking are the skills and awareness.
- c) The radio and community meetings are the most commonly used and effective to disseminate information. The radio strategy is however quite expensive and the centers/the NGOs will have to bear the cost of airtime on the commercial radios. Although this may appear not sustainable, a good number of community members acknowledged listening to radio particularly talk shows that focused on production and providing market information as was the case in Kasese.
- d) Information centers that are purely initiated by farmers or have good charismatic leaders are more successful than those built on just democratic election.

The increase in women's participation in the Information Centre activities was mainly through increasing activities that are of particular interest to them. This created more awareness to them and hence gave them the empowerment, confidence and ability to actively participate. The major lesson learnt here is that we should package and make our information very attractive to our audience if we want to have information shared and used efficiently.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJJDlqpMiH8&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qd2-yAVucy4&feature=related>

- e) For sustainability, especially sustainability of information there is needed to coach the members of the Information Centres and the community at large in to taking their own initiative to search and bring in information.
- f) Hands on training, as was the case with the farmer field days, is a very practical way of sharing information. This teaches the farmers on spot and is very interesting.

## **6.0 challenges**

Inadequate staff skills in quality video production and ICT solution production, pedagogical skills to mentoring and coaching staff at centre/farmers and innovative methods of information contextualization.

The fuel crisis in Uganda has been a set back in carrying out our activities. Due to changes in prices, our budgets are constrained.

Some members of the Information Centres and the community at large have not yet appreciated the importance of the Information Centers in their areas.

**CASE:**

“The team noted that a few information centers were interested in providing information on social issues such as politics and human rights but most of them the priority was on production information. It also emerges that this orientation came from outside rather than from inside and not of their immediate interest.” By the regional evaluation team

RIC-NET relies only on County Information Centres and a few CPFs to disseminate information which delays its flow. Need to form more partnerships especially at the grassroots.

**CASE:**

“The team further noted that most of the centers were at the receiving end. In other words they waited for some one to bring them information from outside and there is a limited initiative to collect information that is around them...

The major delivery mechanism is through the information centre/point structures that have been established with external support by the NGOs. This is rather a closed system, that when examined very closely it creates an impression that the community should be dependent on...” By regional evaluation team

Challenges for mobilizing funds to establish the community radios even though the key equipments (antenna and transmitter) have already been procured.

RIC\_NET does not own any vehicle. Therefore she relies mostly on public means (taxis) which causes a lot of delays in implementation of activities as staffs have to travel to distant places and sometimes arrive later.

## ***7.0 Summary of the Results***

**Objective:**

To initiate new Information Centres and strengthen the capacity of the existing five (5) Information Centres in the Rwenzori Region through offering technical, equipment, coordination and advisory support vital for efficient information and knowledge sharing for 5,000 peasants by 2010.

Eight (8) Information Centers have been initiated

Technical support and equipment have been given.

Five (5) Information Centres have been nurtured and three (3) more Information Centres were initiated, making a total of eight County Information Centres.

We have one hundred forty CSO/farmer organizations as members of the County Information Centres with an active membership of 2821 people (female: 1715, and Male: 1106); i.e. Female: 60.7% and Male: 39.3%

Area of concern are: Sustainability of Information Centres has not yet been determined; Women participation reached 60.9% but needs to be maintained; Multiplier effect of information shared at the Information Centers is not yet determined.

**Objective:** To increase knowledge and information sourcing, documentation, repackaging and sharing among the community through initiating a Regional Information team and conducting knowledge sharing seminars/symposiums focusing on about 210 farmer's groups before the end of 2010.

The Centres have regularly disseminated information on Agriculture (best practices in production, crop pests and diseases and their control, farmers' production capacity and market information)

There is an observable increase in the production of pineapples as a result. This is attributed to the information on the best practices in pineapple production, control of pests and diseases (both text and audio visual). There was an increase in the number of farmers getting involved in the enterprise because of the availability of market information.

There is increased quality in production as evidenced on increase in marketed crops.

There is a better marketing strategy; farmers now store their products in clean and attractive utensils, distinguishing produce according to grades and weight.

The increment in women participation at household level especially in agricultural and health issues, there is better livelihood of households as evidenced from the reduced occurrence of sanitation related diseases especially in Nyakiumbu.

**Objective:**

Four (4) audio visual information packages were generated on best practices in pineapple growing; a case of Busiriba Farmers' Group in Kamwenge District, control of pests in pineapples in Katolhu, in Kasese Disease, how to control Banana Bacterial Wilt in Kyenjojo and the best practices in cocoa production in Bundibugyo District, about farmer led experimental field schools.

**Expert to farmer knowledge sharing:** in collaboration with SNV, farmers from different Information Centres were brought together to share knowledge and best practices under the guidance of experts from the Faculty of Agriculture, Mountains of the Moon University. The enterprises covered were Sunflower, soybean, pineapples.

Also in collaboration with SATNET and Mountains of the Moon University, farmers have been organized into farmer led experimental field schools for the purpose of carrying experiments on how specific enterprises perform in particular locations. So far, experiments have been done in enterprises like egg plants and cabbages in Kasese, Irish potatoes in Bukuuku, Kabarole District, Beans K31 in Kigoyera, Kyenjojo District.

**Quarterly magazine on best practices:** Six (6) quarterly magazines where two (2) focused on best practices in Agriculture and four (4) focused on Civic competence in the Local Government planning and feedback processes.

Other publications done; 24 CTA packages on fish, bees, tomatoes, goat rearing and others brochures translated to Rutooro and Lhukonzo.

In soft copy, there is a data base on information content and sources both books and human resources in the Rwenzori Region, nationally and internationally.



## **Evidence of at least 30 farmers' groups benefiting from the information.**

[www.youtube.com/watch?V=jAWtKo36Sfg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?V=jAWtKo36Sfg)

**Evidence of improved information access from Local Governments:** To improve access to information, RIC-NET has piloted an ICT resource centre in Kasese with twelve (12) computers connected to internet. The centre has copies of development plans, council minutes, and sectoral committee planning papers.

RIC-NET hosts radio programs where Government officials are invited to share information with the community. Depending on the topic, several officials are invited to the programs, they include; health, education, agriculture et cetera.

We have created blogs for the Local Government staff and CSOs to use for sharing information. They are; <http://rwecovoice.blogspot.com> [www.kasesecso.org](http://www.kasesecso.org) <http://kasesenews.blogspot.com>

There is a D group which has been created to facilitate information sharing among the community members and the Local Government staff. <http://dgroups.org/iicd/kasese>

## **Progress**

RIC-NET understands that financial sustainability of the Information center, as the extend the centers generate local income necessary for the day today expenditure such as human/personnel costs, rent, administrative costs, stationery and communication, general utilities (electricity, water et cetera).

## **8.0 The Level of Sustainability as at 2009**

<b>Name of IC</b>	<b>Operational expenditure</b>	<b>Locally generated income</b>	<b>Percentage sustainability For operation cost</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>% as per total project fund</b>
Kabarole Information Centre (KIC)	20,432,320	18,456,320	1,976,000	90	35
Busongora Rural Information Centre (BRIC)	3,338,200	1,974,000	1,364,200	59	15
Kamwenge Communities Information Centre (KACOICE)	4,327,300	2,328,400	1,998,900	54	17
Kyaka Rural Information Centre (KRIC)	4,538,400	3,412,400	1,126,000	75	23
Bwera Information Centre (BIC)	20,641,050	21,799,850	-1,158,800	106	45
Semuliki Information Centre (CIS)	8,562,340	6,560,700	2,001,640	77	27
RIC-NET	26,505,350	6,215,000	20,290,350	23	

One evaluation on internal information sharing process was carried out in February 2009; another evaluation on “operational assessment and capacity of centres to meet its objectives” was done by the regional team in December 2009.

## 10.0 Implementing the Recommendations for 2008

**MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON UNIVERSITY**

**SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCE**

**PUBLIC HEALTH STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**

**THEME: BETTER HEALTH A RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL**

**Certificate of Appreciation**

This is to certify that

**RIC-NET Fort Portal**

Contributed in supporting the 3rd annual Scientific Conference held on

**30th April, 2010.**

At Mountains of the Moon University Main Campus Saaka.

*Prof. John M. Lumena*  
Vice-Chancellor  
Mountains of the Moon University

*Prof. Kevin Semwua*  
Patron, PUHDSA

2. Policy documents on Finance, Personnel and ICT have been written and approved by the Executive Board

4. Web mail addresses have been used by all the centres.

## RIC-NET IN THE MEDIA

2009 was a year of real making news in both local and international media or in partner organisation magazines; RIC-NET got coverage and recognition from different people and organisation than before, and this is going on well.

1. [http://www.i-network.or.ug/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=350:kasese-district-starts-an-e-society-centre&catid=148:newsletter-q4-2009&Itemid=185](http://www.i-network.or.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=350:kasese-district-starts-an-e-society-centre&catid=148:newsletter-q4-2009&Itemid=185)  
“The project aims at creating a vibrant electronic society where there is cordial sharing of information ...”
2. [http://uganda.cs.ru.nl/icap\\_members.php](http://uganda.cs.ru.nl/icap_members.php)  
“Together with the Rwenzori Information Centre Network (RIC-NET) a plan was created to help assess and improve the quality of their information centres.”
3. <http://ictupdate.cta.int/en/Links/Projects/Rwenzori-Region-Information-Center-Network>  
“The network has adopted an approach that involves the local communities in the Rwenzori region in identifying their needs, designing of possible ICT solutions and monitoring their own progress. This has proved to be a more sustainable and cost effective approach in addressing the abject poverty in the region.”
4. <http://www.webfoundation.org/2009/12/fourth-day-in-uganda/>  
“...running a project on e-governance and transparency. The project, called e-society, is running in the Kasese district and helps, on one side, the local government to put online its data and news (see the Kasese local government site, and also helps NGOs, citizens to access and exploit these information, and send feedback. See a more detailed description of the project. This new initiative is very interesting, and inline with one of the topic the Web Foundation is interested in. It will be interesting to see in the future the impact of this project.”
5. <http://www.ngonewsafrika.org/2010/04/uganda-ngo-coalition-adds-1500.html>  
“...The Rwenzori Consortium for Civic Competence (RWECCO), itself a partnership of 4 human rights organisations, already has a 700-strong electoral observation team in the Rwenzori region. ...”
6. [www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/18/676303](http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/18/676303)
7. <http://my.stockholmchallenge.se/data/467>  
“A centre of excellence where community development workers, youths, .... like *Rwenzori Information and Communication Network (RIC-NET)* an ICT4D community.”
8. <http://www.pamoya.com/node/12419>  
“...The network has adopted an approach that involves the local communities in the Rwenzori region in identifying their needs, designing of possible ICT solutions and monitoring their own progress. This has proved to be a more sustainable and cost effective approach in addressing the abject poverty in the region.”
9. <http://www.rwenzururu.com/education.html>

## **WAY FORWARD**

RICNET will look into a strategy of investing in community radios as there are already examples of success story of community radios operating at basic level but powerful in information provision. This will also require to undertake a specific regional study on how community radios have worked else where before it is implemented.

RIC-NET and member centres will reflect on how to start using the clinic model in sourcing and disseminating information to the farmers. RIC-NET will support existing structures instead of creating new ones. We shall strengthen cooperation between farmers groups and information Centres, partnership among several CSO and institutions that support the existing information centers through mentoring and coaching and helping them to focus on the farmers needs.

There are many capable and committed individuals working for the information centers but these individuals will need a lot of inspiration from what they are doing and from the effective mentoring from outside by giving them tools they need such as focused best practice documentaries on particular enterprises for their learning.

A strategy of information centers specifically focusing on few key enterprises should be tested. This will no doubt give them a comparative advantage over others but importantly so, win over their client response.

## **COCLUSION**

With increase in peoples thirst for development information and their desire to read and put into practice what they have read, there is need to put in more effort in generating data that is tailored to their needs.

More emphasis will be placed in user friendly formats like graphics, audio visual and information translated to their local languages.

With more partnerships with other organizations specifically dealing with information, we hope to improve on the perceptions of the people towards reading and also encourage them to help in generating information hence the farmer led content development.

Next year, 2010, will definitely prepare the centres towards a clinic approach in providing information to farmers at individual / house hold levels. Our focus will definitely be on individual organisations or persons that a whole multitude of the community.

We shall move towards being a service organisation with good information database/systems, for enhance sustainability, than the traditional conduit for handing over information and equipments freely.

## Annex 1: RIC-NET Results Chain (2009)

### Main Issues in RIC-NET Project

Inadequate information sharing process in the Rwenzori region to ably and effectively harness the local potentials to boost rural peasants' livelihood

- Inadequate capacity of RIC-NET to offer technical, co-ordination and advisory support.
- Inadequate coordination & collaboration amongst info centre.
- Weak information sharing mechanisms of the Centres.
- Low self sustainability of centres and RIC-NET.
- Inadequate community access to information from LGD.

- Limited skills in Information documentation & sourcing for centre staff & community members.
- Low capacity of information centres in lobbying, networking and advocating for the rural communities in their development endeavours.
- Low women participation in information sourcing and sharing.

### Impact

### Outcomes

### Outputs & Activities

### RIC-NET Results Chain (2009)

An improvement in livelihood of over 2800 peasant farmers as result of increase in knowledge base that increase agro production, enables better marketing strategy, reduces

- Increased cooperation and collaboration amongst CSOs and information centres evidenced by 8 active county centres and 27 rural info points.
- 140 CSO/farmer organizations members of the County Information Centres with an active membership of 2821 people (Female: 60.7% Male: 39.3%); many for info points.
- Increased Information sharing on better farming skills/methods, crop disease/ pests process.
- Improved performance of centre and staff use of online tools in documentation.
- E-society ICT centres and platform piloted in Kasese districts with sound & up-to—date databases, leading to improved planning, resource allocation & equity in distribution.

- 76 computers delivered to centres, 95% of computer well serviced and operation with regularly updated Software.
- 6 quarterly magazine, 12 repackaged pamphlets, 3 videos, monthly radio programmes, website multi-stakeholder platform
- Qualified two IT officers, finance officer and information officer recruited.
- Well qualified VSO volunteer recruited to advise and train other staff.
- Quarterly staff training conducted in key documentation and online web 2.0 skills e.g. <http://rwecovoice.blogspot.com> <http://www.kasese.go.ug> <http://ric-netnews.blogspot.com> [www.kasesecso.org](http://www.kasesecso.org)
- 24 process presentation trainings done to CPF and CSO members of all centres.
- Computer literacy training for community done at all centres.
- Internet connectivity boosted at five centres out of eight.
- All county centre and 12 info point given video sets, bicycle and telephone sets

## **Annex2:**

### **Enterprises for farmers' information needs**

District Maize	Enterprise	Key Concerns for the farmers
Kyenjojo	Maize Pineapple (in Kyaka)	Prices Weather Pest and disease control Planting Varieties Markets
Kabarole	Bananas Pineapples Maize	Pests and diseases Weather
Bundibugyo	Vanilla Cocoa Beans?	Prices Quality Vs prices
Kasese	Coffee Maize Cotton	Bulking/collective marketing Prices/markets Weather information