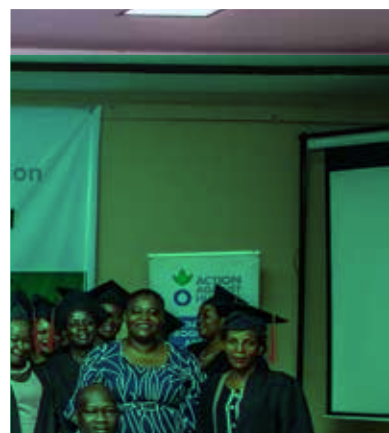
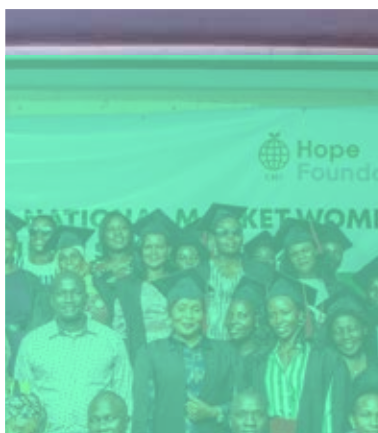


ANNUAL REPORT



INSTITUTE
for SOCIAL
TRANSFORMATION



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ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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ACRONYMS	
IST	Institute for Social Transformation
BOD	Board of Directors
UHOCU	Uganda Housing and Cooperatives union
LRF	Livelihoods and Right to Food Programme
TfT	Training for Transformation programme
KHF	Korea Hope Foundation
UAF	Urgent Action Fund
GALs	Gender Action Learning Systems
PDM	Parish Development Model
NDP III	National Development Plan III
UWONET	Uganda Women's Network
ACF	Action against Hunger
CEHURD	Centre for Health and
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment
CSBAG	Civil Society Budget Advocacy group
SSA	Shelter and Settlement Alternatives
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
MOLG	Ministry of Local Government
MGA	Market Garden Application
GiMAC	Gender is My Agenda Campaign
EWA	Empowering Women in Agriculture
CTI	
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
MRC	Medical research Centre
WIPC	Women International Peace Centre
URA	Uganda Revenue Authority

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



From partnerships to collaborations; women to youth empowerment and skilling activities; launching the roasting and brewing local coffee to firm handshakes; hallways and market stalls best describe 2023. The Institute for Social Transformation (IST) is fully persuaded that achieving an economically empowered society is possible especially for women and youth. Last year allowed us a taste of this conviction throughout our activity implementation, which registered significant impacts; notwithstanding the volatile context and political economy we operate in that sometimes forcefully determine the course of action on both sides

of the bargain, in terms of funding and program implementation.

While 2023 was an exciting year, our midterm review pointed out several specs that emerged as result of the constantly changing implementing environment: (mention examples of these changing environment, to be precise). Coincidentally, the time to review the strategic plan 2019 – 2023 had come and IST embarked on a rigorous process to update our strategic intent and direction.

Among the key priorities of the strategic plan update was mainstreaming risk management plan into all aspects of IST operations, including partnership building and collaborations, resource mobilization and budgeting processes. This strengthened risk-informed decision-making and embedded risk considerations when engaging opportunities and partnerships. The reviews further prioritized the role to expand implementation capacity and improve institutional development attuned to IST's contribution towards achieving NDP III, Uganda's Vision 2040, the Vision 2063 and ultimately the SDGs,

Thank you very much

Moureen Wagubi

GLOBAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT/ OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Uganda's economy is projected to expand by 6.0% in 2024 and 7.0% in 2025, sustained by strong investment in oils underpinning growth and future exports; stronger regional growth as well as normalizing global supply chains. However, the rising imports of goods and services remains among the key challenges for the economy, with direct impact on ordinary poor citizens, mostly women and girls who constitute the large segment in the bottom of wealth quintile (Africa Economic Outlook 2024).

Covid 19 also caused significant shocks on the economy affecting production, health and general welfare of the people. Despite those shocks, agriculture, notably food crops have remained stable over the years contributing significantly to the economy. However, the recent shift from agriculture to services, and manufacturing makes the economy incomplete. Agriculture's contribution to GDP has declined to 24% in 2022, with 7 of 10 Ugandans still subsistence farmers and working in low-value-added agricultural jobs (World Bank 2023). While productivity has advanced 294% in manufacturing and 164% in trade services, these sectors employ a small fraction of the workforce compared to agriculture.

Unemployment continues to hit hard on the country's population with many youths, men and women becoming unemployed due to the changing trends in the economy. Youth unemployment remains one of the major challenges facing Uganda's economic growth and development. At least 41% (approximately 9.3 million) youths aged 18-30 years are not engaged in any productive activity, according to Uganda National Labour Force survey 2022. The Agricultural sector which has the biggest potential for youth employment continues to suffer a combination of challenges including low access to, and control over productive resources (especially land), as well as limited knowledge and skills in modern farming techniques.

Evidence shows that youth engagement in agriculture is declining compared to industrial sectors which are growing at considerably faster rates (Makerere University 2014). This is feared to have implications on food security and may undermine the government efforts to drive economic growth through. The current capacity for the involvement of the youth in agriculture is further affected by limited youth organizing and participation in cooperatives. Uganda is still threatened by high levels of poverty, with large proportion (21.4%) of people living on less than 1.00 USD per day according to NDP III. Moreover, there are wide regional disparities with over 40% in the Eastern region. There has also been a frequent economic loss and human mortality from disasters driven by increasing hazards, exposure and vulnerability in areas that include Kasese and sporadic influx of refugees in West Nile and Western Uganda. Many households in these sub-regions depend on crop agriculture as their biggest source of income and this highlights

the major challenge to ending poverty among Ugandan population.

According to 2016 poverty assessment report (World Bank 2017) Uganda remains among the poorest countries in the world. Major causes of poverty include limited safety net programs which increases the vulnerability of households to fall back into poverty. Agriculture provides main source of livelihood but is still affected by limited skilled labour especially among the youth and the informal nature of the sector, to effectively address poverty reduction. This also causes a deficiency in forward mobility, which preserves poverty.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION (IST)

Established in 2006, the Institute for Social Transformation (IST) is a women's rights, not-for-profit organization committed to a society where people value and enjoy socio-economic and gender justice. We facilitate the transformation processes of women and youth to champion through capacity building, innovation and advocacy. Over the years, IST has reached over 100,000 women and youth in the informal sector both urban and rural including refugees, through empowerment programs such as; improving women and youth economic productivity through financial literacy and entrepreneurship development, IST priorities Gender and Sustainable Livelihood initiatives. Collective organizing into groups such as VSLAs, and cooperatives, facilitating skills training, access to financing, promoting adult literacy, leadership participation and advocacy. IST also promotes sustainable initiatives to promote women and girls' safety through GBV prevention, enabling access to information and services on Sexual and reproductive health, climate smart agro business innovation, resilience and technology and social enterprise innovations.

IST is also a home of gender and transformative development approaches and provides technical capacity to individual women, youth and grass root organizations, women groups/ cooperatives and national level institutions in integration of gender and transformative community development approaches through application of proven methodologies that bring about sustainable change in communities. Thus, IST is a regional hub for training for Transformation programme and blends gender Action Learning Systems a participatory methodology with practical tools that seek to enhance practices that enhance good gender relations and transformative practices at individual, family, community and wider societal level.

In line with IST's strategic plan 2023-2028, IST supports empowerment of grass root women and youth especially those in the informal sector and rural women/youth because of their Centre stage role they play in shaping the social and economic development at both house hold, community and country level. IST programmes are well aligned with the national, regional and global programmes/ strategies and policies. Such as Uganda's NDP III, National and youth gender inclusion policies and the Global SDGs.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS.

During the year 2023, IST entered new funding partnerships while at the same time, it continued with ongoing partnerships. Notably, the new partnerships were with We Effect (Uganda Chapter), while the continued partnerships include UN WOMEN, Korea Hope Foundation (KHF), Women International Peace Centre, Center for Health Human Rights and Development (CEHURD), Action Against Hunger (ACF), OXFAM and Action Aid (Uganda), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), CTI Africa, Stanbic Bank Uganda and Uganda Revenue Authority among others. The new partnership arrangements saw IST enter into new programme areas and expansion to new districts such as Kasese, Kiryandongo, Napak and Mbale, with new target groups such as grassroot farmers' cooperatives, youth inclusion in Agriculture, climate interventions, youth entrepreneurship programs etc.

The year 2023 also, saw IST in a new level of growth, becoming stronger in execution of its mandate and wider in scale of its activities and its geographical scope.

Further IST continued to establish and also consolidate collaborations at different levels including government agencies MDAs, grass root, national and regional level CSOs and Private sector.

These partnerships enabled IST to effectively execute its activities during the year and it also increased visibility of the organization and its work. IST's influence and role in informing, framing and advancing policy advocacy also strengthened Africa region and beyond.

The Institute for Social Transformation (IST) is glad for the new partnerships and collaborations entered into which saw new projects and entry into new districts such as Kasese, Kiryandongo, Mbale and Napak.

PROGRAM AREAS

Thematic Area (TA)	Strategic Objective (SO)
TA1 - Transformative learning and leadership development	SO1 - To enhance the capacity of women and young people through transformative learning and leadership skills
	SO2 - To lobby and advocate for gender responsive programs policies and actions
TA2 - Gender & Economic justice	SO1 - To promote economic self-reliance among market women and young people
	SO2 - To promote ecofriendly entrepreneurship prog for the woman and youth
TA3 - Sustainability & Org development	SO1 - To strengthen ISTs sustainability through the SEM for efficiency and operational excellence by 2027.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS FOR 2023

This annual project report presents IST's activities, accomplishments and outputs for the year 2023. It also provides noticeable changes observed from some of the program beneficiaries and communities and the progress on Institutional development and organizational growth:

Influencing Youth Participation for Improved Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods (IYPIFS)

This is a five year (2023-2028) supported by We Effect – Uganda. It's aimed at improving food security and promoting youth participation in agriculture contributes to We Effect's broader Livelihoods and Right to Food (LRF) Program. It's implemented in 3 districts of Kampala, Kiryandongo and Kasese, targeting farmers groups and cooperatives.

The project objectives are:

Under this project IST plays both a strategic and technical role, to support 3 We Effect Partners in ensuring that their institutional policies, programmes and procedures are

gender responsive, as well ensuring youth inclusion in sector operations within the cooperative and strengthening their leadership participation.



Figure 1

These partners are Uganda Housing cooperative Union in Kampala, Isebwe farmers Marketing cooperative in Kasese District and Nyamahasa Farmers and Area Marketing cooperative in Kiryandongo District.

Activities implemented under this project include training and capacity building in gender mainstreaming within cooperatives, leadership, strengthening governance systems and establishing gender responsive policies and systems within the cooperatives.

IST conducted gender audit of the 3 core partners to identify gender gaps in their capacities, policies and governance/leadership structures. IST also conducted gender awareness training and supported the partners to develop gender mainstreaming strategies.



Figure 2: IST engaging cooperative members from the three groups—Nyamahasa, Isebwe, and Uganda Housing Cooperative—during various interactive sessions.

Nurturing a Culture of Peace and Tolerance in Uganda” in the Districts of Kotido, Kasese, Napak and Mbale.

The project seeks to build knowledge and skills of women and young women on the use of renewable energy infrastructure and eco-friendly technologies to prevent and mitigate natural and human-made disasters. It was implemented by IST in partnership Women’s International Peace Centre (WIPC) and National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE). It will be implemented for 4 year (2023-2026). The project targets women and young women in the specified districts to increase their capacity in mitigating and adapting to climate change as well as improve their livelihoods through saving using the VSLA model

It focuses on establishment of 20 women’s savings and lending groups, building capacity for 600 women in what? and support to 20 women-owned agro-enterprises with value addition. In addition, the project aims support WROs to train 200 women to influence DRR and climate change.

Strengthening market women collectives for improved socio-economic productivity and their livelihoods

With funding from KHF, IST implemented a one-year (2023) project aimed at Strengthening market women collectives for improved socio-economic productivity and their livelihoods in 3 districts of Kampala, Gulu, and Busia, implemented in four (4) markets of Kalerwe freedom, Nakawa and in Gulu and Busia Main Market.

This project conducted adult literacy trainings for in two markets (Kalerwe and Nakawa Markets) and a refresher training for Community Adult facilitators. A total of 110 market women and girls from Bardege Complex market –Lacor and Busia Main market, were trained (in what?) and 4 groups (where) mentored in both cooperative formation and strengthening, a hands-on skills and entrepreneurship training for the members respectively.

IST provided three (3) Market women groups with a total of thirty Million Ugandan Shillings (30,000,000UGX) revolving fund to enable them access financing to improve their businesses. Further, IST also organized and participated in advocacy and networking events throughout the project period.

The 5th Annual Market Women Symposium

The National market women's symposium is an annual event to celebrate women resilience and success in markets, as part of motivating women economic empowerment. June 2023, IST organized the 5th Annual National Market Women's Entrepreneurs Symposium. The symposium was attended by over 230 participants including development partners, Policy makers, Traders, Government departments and ministries, the market women and media. The theme of the symposium was "Women & the Economy: Celebrating women's resilience and re-strategizing innovations for sustainable livelihoods." The symposium was marked with a graduation of the 7th cohort of market women of Adult Literacy training program implemented by IST. One hundred and thirty (130) market women who completed the adult literacy learning lessons were part of the symposium to celebrate their success and motivate other women to take up the program to improve and better their business capabilities.



Figure 3: A cross section of Market women graduands of Adult Literacy program celebrates their success at the National Market Women's Symposium 2023



Figure 4: Some of the participants at the symposium, including Heads of CSO, Government representatives and Private sector actors.

During the symposium, a number of commitments were made by different levels of officials; both state and non-state actors including Ministries, Development and Agencies (MDA's) such as Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), Ministry of Trade and cooperatives, Ministry of Gender Labour and Social development (MGLSD), CSOs and Uganda Revenue Authority.

Further, they also pledged to improve decent work environments within markets as well as supporting access to economic opportunities for market women.

Specifically, CSOs on their part pledged to strengthen collaboration with IST to integrate interventions on promoting access to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services and ending Gender Based Violence in the markets. Action against Hunger (ACF) Uganda office pledged to work with IST in promoting the productivity of urban refugee women and youth in Kampala through intentions on livelihood options and business growth. Uganda Revenue Authority also pledged to intensify public awareness on taxation and the policy frameworks and also to put in place gender responsive tax policies with a focus on frameworks that allow women and youth in the informal sector participate in cross border trade.

Present were also financial institutions such as Opportunity International and Stanbic Bank who expressed interest to promote financial inclusion for women and youth through developing and scaling affordable financial products suitable for their businesses.

Promoting Safety and positive hygiene practices in Markets

Further, IST was supported by KHF to promote safety and positive hygiene practice in ten markets in Kampala, with hygiene and safety items to prevent the threat to spread of Ebola in Markets. Five hundred (500) hygiene kits including Jerrycans of hand washing liquid soap were distributed to Nakawa, 5 Kalerwe markets Ntinda, Nakasero, Kasubi, and Kiwaatule. An estimated number of 30,000 women, youth and men directly benefited from this support.

The objective was to promoting proper hygiene in markets as a risk mitigation measure, not only for the Ebola pandemic, but also to reduce potential spread of other infections and to promote hygiene and public health in the markets.

Fostering regional trade and market access for Women in the Informal sector in East Africa and harnessing opportunities by African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA.)

IST was support by Urgent Action Fund- Africa, through Rapid Response Grant, to advance women's human rights and promoting protection from cross border trade exploitation, for women in informal sector trade across Uganda's borders with other countries. The project aimed at increasing awareness on cross border trade regulations including tax regulations, custom clearance, gender related issues and other related trade barriers that put informal sector women traders at risk of exploitation, abuse and violence.

The Overall objective of the project was to promote supportive cross border trade procedures and policies and facilitate trade measures to allow easy and free movement of goods and services of informal business women across the East African region borders directly connecting to Uganda, Specifically the intervention was aimed at; 1. Advocating for reduced trade restrictions and simplify custom procedures for informal business women and, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the region., Empowering women in the informal sector across a broad spectrum on compliance with regulatory requirements and increasing gender awareness among customs officers and tax officers..

Different dialogue engagements and awareness activities were organized and held with different level stakeholder such as Members of Parliament, CSOs at national level and Cross boarder women traders mainly in Eastern borders of Busia and Malaba. Key to the dialogue was engagement with members of parliament on localization of the information on AFCFTA in Uganda and ensuring that the country commits to implementation of the protocol on women and youth that will enhance their participation in regional trade.

Climate Smart Agribusiness Innovation; Champions National campaign to promote the growing of Candle Nut Tree (Kabaka njagala) a multipurpose and generational income tree.

Since 2020 IST intensified campaigns to promote awareness and planting Candle nut tree especially among the farmers to embrace livelihood diversification and prevention of adverse effect of climate change. IST continued to scale up the awareness on the candle nut, as a a high value chain multipurpose tree that can be used for food production, raw material for household products (body oils, soap, biofuel) as well as climate smart agro enterprise investment.

This particular project is intended to create a lifelong source of incomes among households since the tree's life span is 50 years of productivity and has marketable bi products which can be processed throughout the years. The tree is both an agro enterprise tree that has multiple bi products which are very marketable in Uganda, the region and beyond.

In addition to saving the environment as acclimate shock absorber tree, when planted, the tree promotes environmental recovery through afforestation, can add nutrients in the soul, and farmers can also earn income through sell of its seeds to make a variety of renewable energy products such as bio diesel, briquettes, organic fertilizers, bio-oil (body and hair oil).



The Candle Nut Multipurpose Tree Growing Project has been initiated in Mbale and Napak districts, targeting five groups. The objective is to promote eco-friendly and versatile income-generating trees. These districts act as demonstration to raise awareness about the tree's multiple benefits, including environmental protection and economic opportunities.

In partnership with Africa Power Initiative- a regional social enterprise company aimed at creating a region self-sufficient in the production of green energy, providing alternative green energy sources to meet current demand while conserving the environment, mitigating climate change as well as promoting sustainable social and economic development in Africa. The initiative provides technical expertise and information on value chain processing of the candlenut tree to make the above products and identification of market opportunities beyond the region. IST and API in partnership have established an agro processing plant in Busia district in Namaubi where the IST's training Centre is situated. Candle nut products such as Kukui Soap, Oil, fertilizers, briquettes, are locally being produced. This initiative has the double effect of promoting agroforestry for climate resilience. IST also has established a nursery bed in Wakiso to bring closer candlenut seedlings as a supply center for central region and beyond.

Empowering women entrepreneurs in East and Southern African region through capacity building, advocacy campaigns and skills training on the AfCTA.



Figure 5: Female traders from different regions of Uganda pose for a group photo following the AfCFTA workshop held in Busia.

The training served as an eye-opener for the women engaged in small-scale entrepreneurship, preparing them to get their affairs in order to be ready to trade across all other African countries once the AfCFTA officially commences operations: Fifty-Four female traders in Uganda took part in and benefited from the AfCFTA workshop, gaining insight into the opportunities the agreement presents to them at both regional and international levels.



Figure 6: Members of the 11th Parliament, representatives from various CSOs, and market vendors participating in an AfCFTA training at Fairway Hotel.

50 government officials and Members of Parliament had the opportunity to hear from Ugandan women traders. They gained insights and agreed on necessary actions, as well as how to collaborate to ensure that the laws and requirements under discussion are equitable and just for Ugandan traders.

The women were endowed with an understanding of the AfCFTA, instilling a newfound confidence in them to form groups and delve into digital collective marketing. They pledged to investigate the opportunities presented to them under the AfCFTA moving forward.

Catherine, a trader and female leader in the Nakawa market, voiced their newfound determination. She said, **"We are now filled with confidence and believe that this training will be the starting point for our cross-border trading."**

Media Engagement were also made which promoted public debate and discussion on the opportunities brought about by AfCFTA

The institute for Social Transformation (IST) is partnering with the Medical Research Council/Uganda Virus Research Institute and London School of Hygiene, Tropical Medicine Uganda Research Unit, Entebbe, Uganda (MRC/UVRI and LSHTM Uganda Research Unit (MUL)) to conduct a study titled: Sexual Harassment and abuse of women and girls in low-wage work in Uganda (SHARI): Conceptualising, defining and measuring sexual harassment.

This is an ongoing research study and IST plays key roles as; participation in data collection, analysis, interpretation, and supporting the study by facilitating access to the study communities, identifying key informant interviewees.

Commemorate the annual International Women's Day

Institute for Social Transformation (IST) in partnership with CTI organized and held a mobile health camp in Kalerwe market to crown the women's Month, during the commemoration of International Women's Day 2023. The event was celebrated under the theme: leveraging technology to bring affordable health care solutions and services to market women and young girls in the Informal sector. IST event aimed at raising awareness to increase access to health services among the women, men and youth vendors to enhance their productivity through; sharing information on women's health and technology, on Sexual and Reproductive health services and information, women's participation in health and technology and provide general health care services, information and referrals.

IST recognized and celebrated women/ girls by promoting technology transformation through digital education. The event was also characterized by awareness and sensitization on a number of health issues such as; SRHR and GBV prevention and referral and further provision of free access to a wide range of services that included; Voluntary Counselling and Testing for HIV/AIDS, Diabetes, High Blood pressure, Hepatitis, Cancer diagnosis, and Blood group. The event was also supported by other IST partners in

health; Inclusive Health Bureau (IHB), Kamwokya Christian Caring Community (KCCC) and Center for Health Human Rights and Development (CEHURD).

Technology innovation of the Market Garden App



IST has been implementing an Online Market System supported by UN WOMEN since 2019. The system was developed by IST with support aimed at promoting access to markets by Market women and youth. Lessons learnt reveal that digital inclusion is very key to driving business yet this remains a challenge to women and youth in the informal sector especially the grass root women farmers who hardly have access to technology. As such they rely on brokers or agents to market their produce.

This limits them from negotiating better and participating in lucrative business deals beyond their locality.

During the year, IST embarked on scaling up the MGA beyond Kampala City markets to cover markets in 12 cities and also enable access by the rural women farmers and grass root cooperatives. Planned to be up graded and scaled to the Farmers so that the Traders and Farmers can have a direct link to each other, thereby minimizing the brokerage practice which is very exploitative especially to small farmers who are largely women and youth.



Figure 7: Champions of the Market Garden App showcased during the 5th Symposium at Silver Springs Hotel, Bugolobi.

IST role in the GiMAC NETWORK



Figure 8: IST CEO, Ms. Moureen Wagubi, representing the organization at the 5th Strategic Engagement with the AU, RECs, and partners in Addis Ababa.

IST being Co- Founding member of the Gender is My Agenda (GiMAC,) global Network leads the cluster on agriculture and rural development and in February and July this year together with the GiMAC members organized and participated in the two regional summits to develop policy recommendations to the African Union.

In July 2023, the 5th Strategic engagement was held with AU, RECs and Partners in line with the AU Theme of the Year “The Implementation of the AfCFTA - Breaking Trade Barriers of African Women and Youth to Ensure their Inclusion” and IST was very proactive in this summit. The AfCFTA agreement is envisioned to bring about

market and people linkages, creating pathways for industrialization, job creation and protecting the ability of skilled African workers such as women, young women and youth to take up available employment opportunities in other African countries. The agreement also seeks to promote and attain sustainable and inclusive development, gender equality and structural transformation of state parties.

IST is a steering Member of the Civil Society Consortium for the effective and Efficient implementation of the PDM

IST is also a member of the steering committee of the Civil Society Consortium for Parish Development model; the national development strategy meant to uplift poverty at household level and up lift the country to middle income status.

Together with Action Against Hunger (ACF), Food Rights Alliance (FRA) Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) have steered engagements with relevant ministries such as MOLG, which responsible for implementing the Parish Development Model and other sectoral committees, to advocate for effect the implementation of the programme.

The aim of the consortium is to ensure that Government maintains its commitment espe-

cially to youth and women, considering that they are the main target in this program. As earlier noted during the interface with the Minister of Local government during the launch of the Market Act, IST strategically ensured that the Minister re-echoes government commitment and He emphasized the need for the Consortium to strengthen the relationship with the Ministry to ensure that government delivers its promise to the youth and monitors the programme. Consequently, while the pioneer organizations have a plan to mobilize more partners into the consortium, We are still following up on the request to for government to formally approve the partnership with the Consortium.

IST launched the campaign to promote local processing and consumption of Coffee to increase access to markets and business opportunities for women and youth



In December 2023 IST launched the first ever National Coffee roasting event in Kampala, which was officiated by the Resident Ambassador of Ethiopia to Uganda. The event was aimed at promoting local consumption and processing of coffee, in a bid to boost local market and revenue to women and youth coffee farmers. Women and youth were particularly selected to show case the roasting and sale of coffee

The event was seen as a platform to expand this innovation to partners and private sector actors engaged in Coffee farming and processing, with potential advocacy, publicity and inspiration to promote coffee farming, local processing and consumption.

Korea Hope Foundation Monitoring Visit Was an Opportunity to Strengthen Partnership with IST And the Beneficiaries Communities



Figure 9: Women vendors from Kalerwe and Nakawa Markets hosting delegates from the Korea Hope Foundation.

Close to the end of the year 2023, IST was privileged to host the team from Korea Hope Foundation (KHF) our long time funding partner who has supported projects aimed at empowering women and youth in markets. The KHF visit to implementing partners in Uganda was headed by the Executive Director Korea Hope Foundation. The overall objective of the visit was to better understand how well the Implementing Partners are delivering on the various projects, monitor project results and interact with project beneficiaries on the impact of the project and their experience of the beneficiaries with the interventions. The visit was also intended to strengthen Partnership Cooperation between Korea Hope Foundation and its partners in Uganda. This is an annual Donor's arrangement for such monitoring which aims at tracking progress project impact while also touching base with beneficiaries where possible to obtain their opinions for improvement.

KHF has supported IST since 2019 and together have implemented a number of projects aimed at promoting women and youth livelihoods, productivity and access to clean water and hygiene improvements in market communities. The markets that have been supported are found in different geographical areas of Uganda and these are particularly Gulu City, Kampala City, Wakiso District, Busia and in a total of eight (8) Markets.



Figure 10: Ms. Emmanuella Hyeyoon Jung, Chief of International Cooperation Team 2 at the Korea Hope Foundation, sharing a memorable moment with women vendors at Kalerwe Market.

Through field visits to the beneficiaries, market women beneficiaries' show cased their work and how these are transforming into outcomes/positive changes in the lives of women. And at the end of the week visit, Progress and impact stories were collected and partnership cooperation strengthened. The Project beneficiaries gained an opportunity to share and interact with the partners.

In Partnership with UN Women and IST hosted a very Successful Strategic Interactive Engagement with Women and Youth, Held in Kalerwe- Namisango Market On 26th April 2023.



Figure 11: UN Women delegates and Kalerwe Market women during a market tour as part of a successful strategic interactive engagement at Namisango Market, Kalerwe

Under the theme dubbed; Enhancing women's productivity and access to markets; identifying challenges and leveraging on existing opportunities. The Objectives of this visit was; to follow up on the success and impact of the project on the market women, and youth, Market women and youth to interact with UN Women by sharing their experiences, challenges and stories of resilience while proposing recommendations to inform programming and the country strategy.

The interactive visit was graced by Nine (9) UN Women officials across the region, representative from IST Board of directors, IST secretariat staff and 30 Kalerwe Market women, youth and leaders. Nakawa market women were also represented by their group leaders. The dialogue was climaxed with a tour of women stall in Kalerwe markets with Follow up questions that were answered by Women.



Figure 12: A UN Women delegate engaging market women in a discussion on value addition opportunities.

This dialogue was very fundamental to inform the future programs and engagements with the informal sector women and youth.

Participation in partnership Activities and capacity building by Other National and Regional Level CSOS.

Partnerships has throughout the year 2023, participated in CSO organized meetings and for and during the inception meeting at national level provided a platform for core partners interacting with the Existing coalitions and alliances such as the consortium members of the Parish Development Model, Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group, Women Economic Empowerment Coalition. It is intended that joining these voices will establish and strengthen collaboration in ensuring that the situation of CSOs space is improved. IST is also gaining strength in collaboration with line Ministerial Development Agencies such as; Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Trade and cooperatives, Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development and the Uganda revenue Authority intended to bridge the gap and change the mind set in the view that Civil Society and government are two opposites. We have sought formal partnerships with some of these and agreed to collaborate on relevant areas at different levels.

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

From Internal organizational capacity strengthening through improving programming, staff capacity enhancement and strategic plan reviewing to building and expansion of partnerships and collaborations, scaling and consolidation of IST work in empowering of women, youth and grass root groups and cooperatives. Further to innovations through social enterprise and technology advancement, the year 2023 can best be described as a very successful year with many registered achievements, lesson learnt and strategy development.

The year 2023 witnessed a very successful planning and implementation of projects and their activities with commendable progress achieved at the different levels. With its integration model of programme design and implementation, a number of activities under the different projects were implemented during the year and these were supported by development partners such as We Effect, KHF, WIPC, UAF, CTI- Africa, and thus the report is based on accomplishments from projects whose funds were received from the above partners. There were also activities that were directly implemented with Partners such as; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), UN Women, ACF, CEHURD, OXFAM and Uganda Revenue Authority.

With new capacity IST was able to implement projects as planned, although, with some exceptions caused by delays in release of funds by some donors and financing agencies. However, these projects were later re-aligned and completed.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1. *Promoting access to finance to women and youth in Markets*

- At the centre of our work, the comprehensive empowerment model focuses on improving women and youth access to financing. IST provided revolving fund to three groups of market women in Gulu city and Kampala city, with a total 30,000,000 UGX in 2023.
- In addition, IST has also integrated information and training package on the importance of VSLAs, and cooperatives, social protection systems within women groups and grass root cooperatives, emphasising the need for collective organisation of members especially youth and women with intention to address access to financing and fulfilment of entrepreneurship aspiration and initiation of group livelihood ventures.

2. Capacity building to Improve livelihoods

- IST empowered 81(eighty-one) youth from 3 cooperative on positive gender relations to promote gender equality at community levels. These youth have since become agents of change conducting gender mainstreaming training sessions within farmers and groups and at individual cooperatives.

3. Empowering women entrepreneurs in East and Southern African region through capacity building, advocacy campaigns and skills training on the AfCTA.

- The project led to increased awareness and capacity of trade Unions, trade associations, CSOs and Policy Makers to promote an inclusive trade opportunity for women traders under AfCFTA framework. Two level training workshops were organized and conducted for government officials in relevant ministries, CSOs, and business association with a focus on opportunities within AfCTA, women and youth protocol, cross border trade with a focus on opportunities within AfCTA, women and youth protocol, cross border trade: The training enhanced the women's comprehension of the AfCFTA and the opportunities that had previously been overlooked by the market women.

4. Contributing to gender Equality;

- IST has created awareness of gender equality in cooperatives and agricultural practice particularly on women and youth involvement in leadership structures and decision-making processes within cooperatives early indicators show commitments by men and women to champion gender mainstreaming through their policies, governance structures and all other activities.
- A total of 224 Members from the 3 cooperatives; Isebwe, Nyamahasa farmers' Cooperatives and the Uganda Housing Cooperatives Union were trained in gender and

Voices by participants voices on training insights;

"I will no longer leave all the work to my wife." one noted. Another participant added, "Now I know we are not poor, and I can actually use what I have to share with my wife and serve all in my family. Because all problems have been coming from lack of cooperation and poor planning for my family."

"The 'Cage Tool' really worked for me. As a local leader I have caged myself unknowingly and therefore, now that I have learned, I will take it upon myself to train others in my community." A male participant.

"This training is an eye-opener both spiritual and physical. As a spiritual leader, I will take the same knowledge to my congregation", A male pastor from Nyamahasa cooperative.

*"I used to think gender is about women but now I know gender is about everyone - men, women, girls and boys."*A male participant from Nyamahasa.

5. IST Partnered with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung supported the successful repeal and launch of the Markets Act, 2023

"On 22nd May 2023, His Excellency the president of the Republic of Uganda, assented to the markets bill 2023, making it a law. The new markets Act, 2023 then became effective on 8th June 2023",

On 21st July 2023, The Ministry of Local Government in partnership with The Institute for Social Transformation (IST) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) launched the markets Act 2023 and this landmark event was officiated by the Minister for Local Government. The multi-level breakfast meeting was such a national event that brought together a total of 115 stakeholders.

- The markets law was an achievement of IST's constant advocacy efforts and a it was milestone for IST in realizing gender equity and women's participation in decision making in markets. The women occupy the largest segment of market traders and customers but for long suffered discrimination and exploitation in the markets.
- To date IST has embarked of creating awareness of the new law among market traders, market authorities, city and municipality leaders and, general public.
- IST has linked women and youth within the informal sector women to opportunities for their participation and benefits through a series of empowerment programmes ushered in by other organizations and participation in national, regional and global discussions. We have also championed the innovation of the annually held National Women Entrepreneurs Symposium. This unique event brings together a multi-layer of both urban and rural market women from across the country to share experiences, network with fellow women entrepreneurs.

6. **IST leads Informal Trade Cluster of the Urban Informality Working Group:**

Since the beginning of the year 2023 IST expressed interest to join the Urban Informality working group which is hosted by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), IST is now a proactive partner and was nominated as the mobiliser for the informal trade cluster steering the implementation of cluster activities for the two quarters. By coincidence two We Effect Partners (Uganda Housing and Cooperatives Union and Shelter and Settlement Alternatives (SSA) are also members in this national working group. IST has during the period brought together members of the cluster and held divisional level focus group meetings in Kampala to identify and generate issues that affect the different informal trade categories within the market and supply chain who include; markets vendors street vendors, hawkers, farmers/ producers and supplies mainly of agricultural products. This is still an ongoing national process and to which the issues generated will be framed into policy recommendations to engage the different government Ministries and the Parliament on improving the informal sector.

LESSONS LEARNT

- Multi-level mobilisation and engagement was found to be very key in the efforts to drive the awareness agenda on fostering women participation in regional trade and localisation of the AfCFTA, support from the different power centres is also very critical. During IST's engagement with both the Cross-border women who are the primary beneficiaries and those mainly affected by the intra-regional trade policies, the Policy makers and civil society Organisations it emerged as very central in the drive for an advocacy agenda to influence a favourable policy environment for women participation in cross border trading.
- In addition, IST learnt that engaging different level key players also builds a critical mass of actors and a sense of ownership and collaboration which are all steps to sustaining the actions on the awareness on intra trade policies and AfCFTA sensitisation and support. IST has also learnt that evidence-based advocacy and policy engagement is very central to effective influencing especially when engaging with the technical and policy makers such as MPs, line MDAs and the tax body authority. When IST did consultations and simple assessment of opportunities and barriers for women to participate in cross border trade and through this process a policy brief was developed printed and disseminated, this tool was very powerful in that it provided actionable areas with evidence of the needs and recommendations of cross border women traders. This doc-

ument has since been used as a tool to engage more stakeholders and also influence a supportive environment for women participation in intra trade/ regional trade.

- During gender mainstreaming and transformative development trainings it emerged that there still exists long standing traditional systems which still uphold negative cultures, attitudes and perceptions around the role and empowerment of women in society. These continue to affect efforts to achieve gender equality. This was evidenced in the communities where the Isebwe and Nyamahasa Cooperatives, where women are still perceived to be housewives, domestic workers with unequal power relations to make and influence decisions. For instance, the Gender and value analysis exercise conducted with Nyamahasa and Isebwe along their respective crop value chains (maize and Coffee) revealed that women are mere recipients of decisions by men and did not have control and ownership of key resources such as land. This implies that the interventions are timely to address these emerging gaps.

CHALLENGES

- Despite youth being the majority in Uganda's population, they still decry minimal involvement and participation. The concept of youth inclusion grass root cooperatives and participation in agricultural is still an issue. Specifically, in cooperatives that IST worked with there are neither existing policies on youth nor an existing strategy for youth concerns/needs being integrated most notably in the human resource policy or even within the executive board. The implication is that the youth still lack a forum where they can express their views and are treated as a homogenous group within the cooperatives. This has prompted a joint effort together with the cooperative leaders to review existing policies and to make them responsive to the women and youth needs.
- Low literacy levels among women was yet another concern and limits their full participation in decision making within the cooperative and the community. This is also observed in agricultural/ farmer cooperatives and this affects marketing stage where the men dominate in market negotiations and control of proceeds after sell due the women's inability to read, write and calculate figures. As a result, they are excluded from market negotiations leading to exploitation by men who take advantage of this limitation. Gender is the basis of production in the cooperative. At household level, children, women, men are all to be involved throughout the value chain, Women provide much of the labour along the most labour-intensive stages in the value chain such as clearing of land, cultivation/ planting, weeding, harvest and post-harvest handling, while majority of men come in only at marketing time. Yet at household level gender issues arise during the most critical time of marketing and sharing of proceeds with high incidences of

Domestic violence in many households and Men are in full control of decisions on how to plan and appropriate after sale, many women indicated that men often abandon their families and only return during the next pre-season planning. This implies that women do not benefit from their sweat of their hard labour and Women hardly influence decisions over family resources. Sustainability of livelihood productivity is much dependent on the level of women and youth inclusion and more so on the nature of house hold gender relations, the above situation presents a double dilemma and indicate IST needs to intensify the integration of adult literacy lessons in all project interventions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The recommendation is that awareness is needed beyond the cooperative members to the very households to ensure that there is a transformation of the existing gender gaps in family production, awareness and skills capacity are needed for members and equip them with skills that can enable them facilitate dialogues in their primary cooperatives and in their very communities. With all the above consideration, IST will also double interventions in engaging men and women through couple seminars and male separate engagements to promote equitable gender relations through joint family decision making and visioning.
- Women and youth still face a challenge of access to financing and other economic opportunities which inhibit the realisation of their entrepreneurship and investment aspirations. This is attributed to Women's lack of ownership of Value assets at the household level. Limited decision-making and as such they cannot access loans to invest in their entrepreneurship because of lack of collateral and local VSLAs are minimal especially for Nyamahasa that could increase opportunities for women and youth to access financing. Thus, the need to Increase women and youth asset ownership through their organized groups and positioning their Voices for advocacy at Cooperative level, district and national level to advocate for improved access to financing.
- There is need to also Build the capacity of organized farmer saving groups or VSLAs to leverage on peer-to-peer guarantor ship while accessing loans. - Organize very poor youth and women who are not able to join VSLAs into enterprise specific farmer savings groups through leveraging on collective labor to earn an income and start saving. In addition, Youth mind set change is deeply engrained in the cultural systems and thus IST will intensify youth tailored trainings and engagements with a full set of modules on mind-set change and transformative development practices.
- There is need for capacity strengthening and deepening awareness on quality assurance and standardisation of products for trade in the region and as well as formalisation of their businesses to meet the requirements for participation in such trade. In addition,

it was noted that if women are empowered along the different value chains. In addition, IST learnt that engaging different level key players also builds a critical mass of actors and a sense of ownership and collaboration which are all steps to sustaining the actions on the awareness on intra trade policies and AfCFTA sensitization and support.

- Engagement of women and youth in cross border/ regional trade is a growing area of interest and AfCFTA presents great opportunities which need to be tapped and maximized by the women to effectively benefit from this trade to become more economically empowered, yet also a lot still needs to be done to deepen the localisation through extensive awareness, facilitating more policy dialogues and engagements, capacitating women in the informal sector especially cross border women, farmers and those in markets to be equipped with skills and tools to effectively participate in this trade. The above calls for more financial support to implement these long-term actions that will create lifelong impact and scaling to reach a wider spectrum across all levels of stakeholders.
- The Baseline report conducted by NAPE in Partnership with IST and WIPC offers critical insights into the climate challenges faced by the communities in Napak and Mbale. In Napak, drought stands out as a pressing concern, with respondents consistently highlighting its adverse effects on hunger, thirst, and food scarcity. The prolonged dry spells are identified as a primary driver of these challenges, often resulting in crop failure and even triggering migration. Furthermore, respondents emphasized the intricate interplay between drought and other factors like pests, diseases, and wind damage, which exacerbate the negative impact on agricultural productivity. These call for more climate SMART initiatives for such areas.

Mirroring IST in the Future



The year 2023 presented a good progress and success for IST and signaled a great potential for its future, requiring strong strategic positioning and programmatic direction. Early signs of impact have started to emerge from the activities implemented, amidst some of the challenges identified earlier.

IST is committed to 2024 to improve on effectiveness, delivery and envisioning future strategic priorities. Thus, the year has been both a recollection and rethinking of what can foster our current need to increase our local revenue, remain relevant but also link women in Markets with Women on Farms to strengthen markets, quality of products and also address climate change issues which are starting to affect both women in Markets and Women on farms

The current national, regional and global context are both an opportunity to re-strategize and reposition IST's agenda, and also to consolidate and scale up some successful interventions. The future will see IST focus more, on redressing unemployment challenges through mobilizing youth to participate in agriculture and leadership, intensifying efforts to address gender inequalities through GBV prevention initiatives and gender integration in agricultural value chains, addressing Climate changes through Agro climate smart innovations. Increasing women's and youth productivity and participation in the development processes will also be a key priority. IST will continue with work on Transforming the informal sector through Digital transformation innovations for women to access more markets and collective organizing for increased access to key resources such as financing.

Ultimately, IST recognizes the Growing Need to strengthen collaborations and partnership both locally, regionally and globally. IST also strategizes to Increase her fundraising base through integrating a social business model in its work.

OUR APPRECIATION, OUR COMMITMENTS & REQUESTS

The Institute for Social Transformation, is grateful to the partnership and support by a number of Development Agencies, **Korea Hope Foundation (KHF), UN Women, WE Effect, ACF, UAF, FES, CTI- Africa, OXFAM, URA, CEHURD, CSOs** and media fraternities, Market women and men and all partners in development work and those that support the cause for women and youth advancement

- IST is committed to the transformation of the lives of women and youth in the informal sector (market Women, Refugee women, youth and grass root men and women) We are also committed to growing our family of beneficiaries and deliberately already bringing rural women farmers and expansion in our areas of operation.
- Currently the organization is in processes to review its strategic plan 2023 to 2028 and started engagements with different level stakeholders. We recognize that despite the significant successes registered as a result of our good work, the burden still remains for the organization to scale out the interventions to the bigger number of women in the informal sector especially markets in rural up country where a hundredth of women and youth are in need of such empowerment programmes to transform their lives and wellbeing.
- The Institute for Social Transformation therefore calls for more partnerships and support in the scale out of the programmes to other women and youth groups in Uganda.

OUR PARTNERS







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