

ALUMNI ACTIVITY REPORT

Rwenzori Bi-Annual Danida Alumni Plant Clinic Launch

Organised by
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At
Munkunyu subcounty headquarters
13th July 2018

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Sustainable Agriculture
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1 Organizing the event

Mobilising participants for the event was done effectively starting in April 2018 majorly by the event organizer who engaged the sub county chief to sensitize the line officers at the sub county. Also three community persons of whom two are leaders of community based organisations (CBO) that are members of Sustainable Agriculture Trainers Network (SATNET) mobilized the farming community through their CBOs and one church leader also mobilized farmers through the church. This massive mobilisation resulted into participation of over 70 farmers, 10 sub county officers and 5 organisation leaders.

Brochures were made for the event and circulated by the mobilizing team.

On the side of the Danida alumni, the event was posted on the Danida alumni network facebook page. The chairperson of the Uganda Danida alumni publicized the event to the alumni in Uganda through social media. As a result, five Danida alumni were able to participate in the event.

The event was also made visible by the Danida alumni Network pull-up banner which was provided to the organizer by the Danish Embassy in Kampala.

2 Conducting the plant clinic launch event

2.1 Opening

The event was opened by the sub county youth councillor Honourable Expidito Bamuturaki with a purpose to encourage the youth who had attended the event to strongly participate in agricultural activities. The youth councillor commended Danida for supporting youthful agricultural experts to attain more knowledge and skills in Denmark and requested the alumni to share fully with their fellow youth about similar opportunities. He further requested the alumni present to continue being the ambassadors for the sub county to the Danida alumni.

The youth councillor also encouraged farmers who had attended the event in large numbers to continue embracing agriculture as an honourable profession.

2.2 Introducing the Rwenzori bi-annual Danida alumni plant clinic

The organiser of the event Mr. Thaddeo Kahigwa Tibasiima in his speech briefed the participants about the event as follows;

The Rwenzori Bi-annual Danida alumni plant clinic launch is one of the events organized by the Uganda Danida alumni Network funded by the DFC and the Danish Ministry of Foreign affairs under the Danida alumni activity grants.

A plant clinic is a platform where farmers and plant doctors interact to identify crop constraints and design feasible solutions to overcome the production related constraints (Boa, 2007).

Therefore, the Rwenzori bi-annual plant clinic provides a platform for farmers and experts to intervene in the climate change and to contribute to sustainable development goals (Sachs, 2012) 2,3,1,8, 12, 15¹.

The plant clinic is organized around the Farmer Family Learning Groups (FFLGs) concept (Vaarst, Nalunga, Tibasiima, Dissing, & Dissing, 2012) created by SATNET for easy outreach of farmers who bring their "sick" plants to the Danida alumni experts that offer advice on how to manage the presented crop constraints. The alumni work in pairs with the support

of the sub county (government of Uganda) agricultural extension officer to attend to consulting farmers. This synergy enhances the skills of the Danida alumni to work and learn from each other as a group of experts and to use their participatory farmer advisory knowledge. The result is that small holder farmers attain practically adapted knowledge and skills to better manage their agricultural enterprises.

For continuity of the plant clinic event that is being launched today, Munkunyu sub county and other interested sub county agriculture departments in the Rwenzori region in conjunction with SATNET and the Danida alumni Network will organize similar events twice every year preferably during the crop growing season at a timing when crop pests and diseases are pronounced. In the same sustainability lens, the future plant clinic consulting farmers will provide their own meals and pay a small fee that will be used to cover expenses of the expert team.

2.3 Plant clinic conduction

Four Danida alumni and one sub county agricultural extension officer attended to over 70 farmers who had brought sick plant samples for examination and treatment.

The Danida alumni (plant doctors) donned in white jackets closely observed the sick plants, inquired about the plant and field history and then offered the consulting farmers advice on how to prevent and control the presented constraints.

The crops that were brought for consultation were majorly; coffee, banana, maize, cassava, beans, cabbages and ground nuts. The plant doctors used laboratory equipment to identify pests and disease causing organisms using laboratory equipment such as magnifying lenses and microscope provided by the plant clinic. The scientific advice on what, how and when to prevent/control the pests/diseases was accompanied by description of how to make organic concoctions against the pests and diseases observed.

2.4 Launch

The Rwenzori bi-annual Danida alumni plant clinic was officially Launched by the Munkunyu Sub county speaker Honourable Muhasa Evarest who expressed a big need for more plant clinics to be conducted. This was after the five Danida alumni who participated in the event conducted a state of the art plant clinic with modern equipment which enabled the farmers to better visualize the pests and diseases affecting their crops. In his speech, the sub county speaker encouraged the sub county councillors to pass a motion on sub county plant clinics which will enable the agricultural extension officer to conduct more plant clinics. *"I had never realized that plants just like a sick person need a doctor and I have seen most of my farmers expressing the same. Now we know how to solve this big constraint so that our farmers prosper"* Said the sub county speaker in his Launch speech. The sub county youth councillor also shared the same sentiment and encouraged the youth to take agriculture as a serious profession which requires the knowledge and skills of the youth. He encouraged particularly the youth to *"support the parents with the soft knowledge and skills needed in agriculture just as demonstrated by the Danida alumni plant doctors"*

2.5 Results

- Danida alumni bi-annual plant clinic launched in Munkunyu sub county
- 70 farmers equipped with knowledge and skills to better manage their agricultural enterprises to reduce hunger and poverty.
- Five Danida alumni and one agricultural extension officer enhanced their knowledge and skills to conduct a plant clinic.
- A platform for farmers to consult the agricultural extension officer established in Munkunyu sub county
- Farmers and sub county officers sensitized about the Danida alumni Network and the Danish support to the government of Uganda

2.6 Closure

The event was closed by the Munkunyu sub county chief who appreciated the intervention of the Danida alumni, DFC and the Danish Ministry of Foreign affairs in the improvement of the farming condition in the Rwenzori region. The chief encouraged all the farmers to be vigilant on their farms and report any strange observations on the farm to the sub county agriculture department. In the same line, chief pledged to continue cooperating with the Danida alumni in future events.

2.7 Evaluation of the event

Participants in different categories were asked to comment about the event on their expectations, achievements and regrets about the event. The categories included a representative for the above 40 years of age a female and male farmer, a male and female youth representative, a disabled persons representative and sub county officers' representative. All the category representatives recommended that the plant clinics should be more regularly conducted particularly towards the flowering period of the crops in the field since this is a critical moment for controlling pests and diseases.

They expressed that pests and diseases are on the increase in their fields due to climate change hence a need for more expertise advise on these new emerging pests and diseases of which the plant clinic offered a very practical solution.

The representative of the disabled in particular said "As farmers, we feel very supported by the plant clinic since we have been offered practical solutions to our farming challenges. This event has been timely, educative and practically enriching".

The evaluation of the event in general indicated that both farmers and the sub county leadership present were interested in organising and attending another plant clinic due to the practical advice provided by the Danida alumni.

2.8 Lessons learnt

- The plant clinic should be organised during the growth period of the crops such that March-June and August-November.
- Community based organisations are essential in mobilising local farmers into action for their farming activities.
- Plant clinic offer a bi-directional learning effect from plant doctor to farmer and vice versa hence being a very practical approach for confidence building between farmers and agricultural experts.
- There is limited knowledge among farmers about existence of sub county agricultural extension offices.

2.9 Challenges

- The Danish embassy was unable to send a representative due to the fact that most officials were on summer leave as communicated by Mr. Magala Charles of the Danish embassy in Kampala. Most sub county officials and farmers were hopeful for an interaction with the representative of the embassy.
- Limited Danida alumni in the Rwenzori region. The event would have been attended by several alumni since the few that participated appreciated the event however due to high transportation costs, still five Danida alumni out of the planned 6 alumni were able to attend.
- More participants than expected resulted into the crowding of the event. The event was prolonged by the many farmers who insisted that the Danida alumni answer all their questions. More than 70 farmers attended the event as opposed to the 60 farmers who had been invited.
- Increase in fuel prices which led to increase in costs of items that included transportation.

3 Way forward

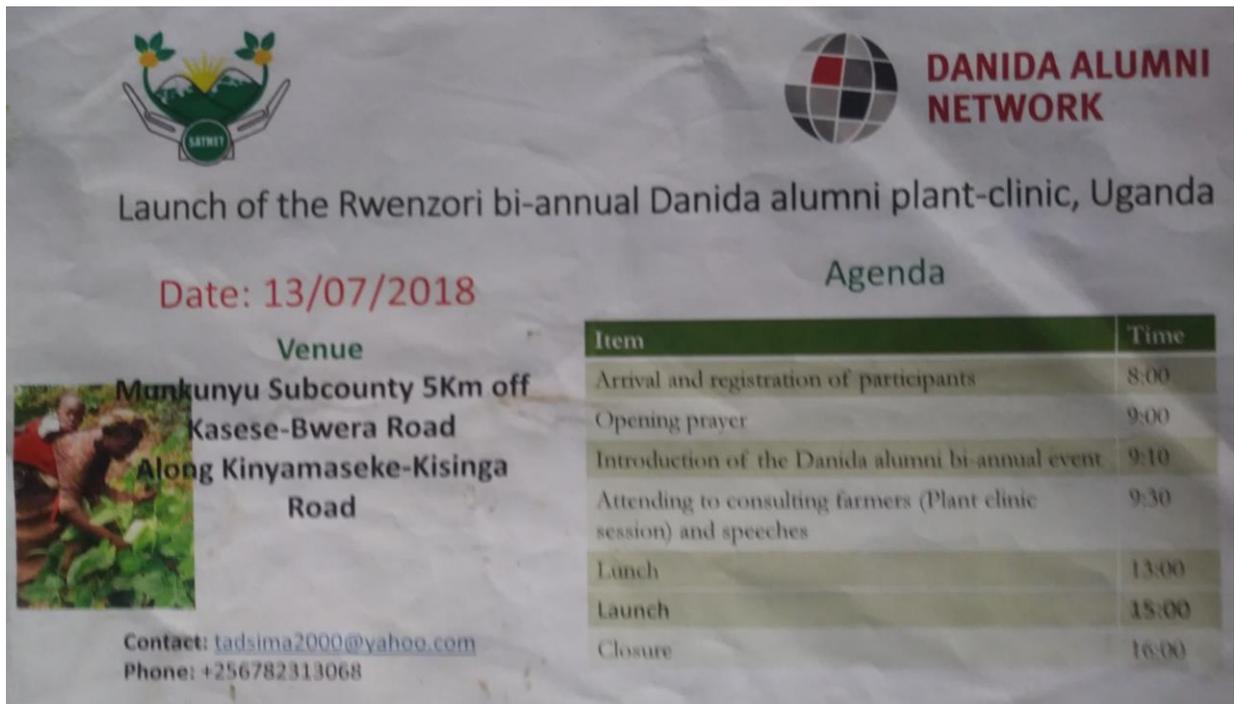
- Organising more similar events in different parts of the country:

The five Danida alumni who participated in the event thanked Danida for the activity support that enabled them to come together after a long while and work together as an expert team. Mr. Wesonga Sifu one of the Danida alumni said "I am glad that I participated in this event. Most of the pests, weeds and diseases that farmers have presented to me as of concern are the same as those I meet in the fields where I work about 370KM away from the venue of this event. We therefore need to continue supporting each other as an alumni team.

"I am sure my farmers would be encouraged by participating in a similar event". Tracy Najuna one of the Danida alumni said. She also indicated that she now has a big interest in organizing a plant clinic in her own community and was going to do whatever it takes to conduct one including seeking support from the Danida alumni activity support.

- Excited by this big turn up, Mr. Thaddeo the Danida alumnus and organizer of the event pledged that SATNET would work hand in hand with the subcounty agriculture department to organize a similar event in the near future.
- The Munkunyu sub county agricultural extension officer will mobilise SATNET to organise another plant clinic during the August-December 2018 crop season

4 Agenda of the day



Launch of the Rwenzori bi-annual Danida alumni plant-clinic, Uganda

Date: 13/07/2018

Venue
Mankunyu Subcounty 5Km off
Kasese-Bwera Road
Along Kinyamaseke-Kisinga
Road

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Item	Time
Arrival and registration of participants	8:00
Opening prayer	9:00
Introduction of the Danida alumni bi-annual event	9:10
Attending to consulting farmers (Plant clinic session) and speeches	9:30
Lunch	13:00
Launch	15:00
Closure	16:00

5 Gallery



Figure 1: Farmers listening to speeches during the launch of the Rwenzori bi-annual Danida alumni plant clinic



Figure 2: Danida alumni ready to conduct the plant clinic



Figure 3: Farmers consulting the Danida alumni plant doctors during the plant clinic launch



Figure 4: Farmers engage a plant doctor about organic control of cabbage pests during the plant clinic launch

ⁱ 2 Zero hunger, 3 Good health and wellbeing, 1 No poverty, 8 Decent work and economic growth, 12 Responsible consumption and production and; 15 Life on Land