



FROM SUBSISTENCE TO BUSINESS FARMER: OCHIENG'S TRANSFORMATION

Like many other poor subsistence farmers in the area, David Ochieng earned a living from his small plot. Two years ago, IIRR started working with a group of farmers in Omoro District 380 km from Kampala, the Uganda capital. He joined the group to access improved seeds and farm implements provided by the Ministry of Agriculture through IIRR.

For starters, Ochieng got 3 kg of improved sunflower seeds and 80 kg of soybeans. Putting his newly-acquired skills in improved farming practice, Ochieng harvested 20 bags (each bag weighing 65 kg) of sunflower seeds and sold it for UGX 1,200 per kg which fetched him a total of UGX 1,560,000 (\$487). Additionally, he sold 12 bags (each weighing 130 kg) of soybeans for UGX 1000 per kg bringing in a total of UGX1,560,000 (\$487).

Ochieng invested the cash from his sunflower and soybean crops on two plow oxen and a cow. With this team of working animals, he now farms more land. The cow (although native) has calved. His family of five (three children, his wife and himself) enjoy fresh milk every day. Ochieng sells the excess milk to neighbors or to local food shops. His improved income enables Ochieng to send his three kids to a boarding school. Ochieng intends to replace his native cows with improved breed for better milk production. He plans to open more land for high-demand and readily marketable oil seed crops. Ochieng has his eyes set on running a post-harvest storage

facility in the market center. There, he will store his own crops in bulk and for others who wish to keep their crops until the market prices improve. Ochieng cherishes his ambitious dreams to build a “powerful house” for his family. He plans to someday purchase a motorbike, and beyond this, even a transport vehicle to ferry both passengers and goods. In his own words, Ochieng says:

“IIRR taught us how to select good seeds and plant in rows rather than broadcasting as we used to. IIRR has introduced oil seeds that are bringing in big money. Now we don't farm only for our consumption but farm for business. In two year's time you will see a lot of change in this area.”

Ochieng is not only making a difference for himself and his family. His success extends to the community: he is hiring his siblings and neighbors to help him in his farm and to care for his cattle.

In Gulu and Omoro district, IIRR has organized 175 farmer groupswith a total membership of 4,473 farmers. If all these farmers become as successful as Ochieng, the communities can soon wave goodbye to malnutrition, unemployment and ultimately, poverty.