



Weekly

Apr 10— 17

Katooko Rose, a member of Ailwantai group in Bukedea smiles that her maize garden. She may not bear the same smile this season due to the infestation of the Fall army worm. This simply means that the incidents of Ugandans starving to death will increase unless the Government addresses the problem!

The Fall army worm threatens livelihoods?



Maize gardens that have been affected by the Fall army worm. The pest is accentuating food insecurity, according to ActionAid.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries has confirmed that the fall armyworm, a new pest that attacks plants, has now invaded more than 20 districts across the country.

The fall armyworm could cost Uganda upto 450,000 metric tonnes of maize annually, the ministry said. Agriculture Minister Vincent Ssempijja said the deadly pest is hard to control and the ministry predicts serious negative impact on the economy. He said the most affected crops are maize and sugarcane, advising farmers to be vigilant and report the pest attack to authorities as soon as noticed.

Uganda produces close to four million tonnes of maize grain annually and the crop also contributes to the livelihoods of more than 3.6 million households. Simon peter Wolumeli, the Manager, Program development while speaking to the Weekly expressed fear at the speed at which the worm is spreading.

“The worm is a threat to Uganda’s food security. It is actually accentuating food insecurity”, he said.

Simon added that considering the Government’s bureaucracies, he does not expect the spraying to come in time to counter the worm which in nature spread very fast.

“As ActionAid, we are currently advising farmers to plant alternative crops such as cassava and Sweet potatoes as we wait on the government to act against the worm”, he revealed.

The pest was first detected in the three districts of Kayunga, Kasese and Bukedea last year. Unfortunately, the pest has now spread to the districts of Luweero, Mukono, Kamuli, Kibaale, Kamwenge, Masindi, Nwoya, Mayuge, Kyenjojo, Rakai, Kabarole, Kumi, Serere, Buliisa, Luuka, Kiryandongo, Bugiri and Iganga.

The government has set aside Shs1 billion to control the pest, asserting that they have also formed a task force to develop action plans for effective management of the pest in the short and long run.

“A technical committee comprising National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and Ministry of Health staff are already in place to guide on implementation of pest outbreak management and they are going to continue advocating and lobbying for financial support,” Mr Ssempijja said.

The Government has however recommended a number of pesticides that should be used in the meantime by the farmers. Unfortunately, majority of the farmers cannot afford the high costs of the pesticides.

About the pest

The fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) is part of the order of Lepidoptera and is the larval life stage of a fall armyworm moth. The pest is known to feed on more than 80 plant species, including millet, sorghum, sugarcane, rice, wheat, legumes like cow peas, groundnuts and soy beans, cotton and many pasture grasses that are sources of cattle feeds in the country.

Pallisa children excited



A sponsored child shows off her books!

The Pallisa cluster sponsored children sung, danced and cheered as they received the ActionAid custom branded exercise books. The books were given out during the massive message collection where the children got to communicate to their sponsors through letter writing. Unlike the previous years, this year’s children messages to sponsors were accompanied with the current photos of the children.



Children admire the books

It was exciting to see the beaming faces of the children across the different primary levels.

Groups of children were seen admiring and marveling at their new exercise books bearing pictures of children, as they figured out who the children were. The exercise books also have the children’s Rights charter at the back. This is aimed at teaching children about their rights both at school and in the community.

The children and their parents were great full to ActionAid for the Scholastic materials (books, pens, pencils and mathematical sets).

A total of 1,204 sponsored children received the scholastic materials and wrote messages to their sponsors out of the expected 1,368 children. During the same exercise, 455 parents who accompanied their children were reached with livelihood messages.

Busiki Pilots message collection template



A mother supports her children to write a messages to sponsors

Last week, Busiki Local Rights Program started the bi-annual message collection exercise to provide feedback to individual child sponsors. Most of the sponsored children in Busiki have their sponsors in Italy.

Unlike the previous photo updates that required children to take photos in a specific posture, the Local Rights Programs hosting ActionAid Italy sponsored children now have a new child message collection template that is being piloted.

In this pilot, each child is expected to take four photos in different postures such a close of the child smiling, funny free style photo, a child holding a message to a sponsor, etc. This has provided for flexibility as opposed to the staged managed pervious photos.

The parents were very excited at the developments and those that can read and write were seen supporting and guiding their children as they crafted messages to the sponsors.

Reflections from Washington



In our lead story about the Fall army worm, ActionAid’s Simon Peter Walumeli speaks about the Government’s bureaucratic processes that wont allow for the delivery of the pesticide against the worm in time. Well, Simon and the rest of us not only term familiar in Uganda, but also in Washington. Arthur makes interesting revelations that made him have second thoughts about the criticisms we often have of our own systems.

“Last week, I visited two agencies that we were prior warned would typify how ‘slowly things happen in the Washington bureaucracy’ - the first one was a visit to the National Social Security Office to apply for a Social Security Number and the other was a Library Visit to the Library of Congress. Both these visits challenged my understanding and made me have a second thoughts about the criticisms we often have with bureaucracies...”, he writes. [Click for the full story.](#)

Also read Arthur’s opinions published in the Daily Monitor on why Ugandans must outgrow the Museveni/Besigye mind-set [here](#) and another that emphasizes the importance of institutions rather than strong men [here](#).

WEEK AHEAD:

ActionAid will hold its first ordinary Governing Board meeting of the 1st quarter this Saturday at the ActionAid head office.