



CHAMPION STORIES

Writing for Food Security: Helping to Build Awareness in Uganda

Francis Kagolo is a Ugandan journalist that seeks to write about food security whenever he can. Mr. Kagolo has worked as a journalist since 2006 at *New Vision*, the leading daily newspaper in Uganda. At *New Vision*, Mr. Kagolo is one of the key writers that travels around Uganda profiling success stories of farmers, writing about the challenges that they face and the role they are playing to secure food in Uganda. Mr. Kagolo was invited and attended the USAID Africa Lead Module 1 training in September 2011 where he was able to learn more about food security while gaining leadership skills.

Mr. Kagolo believes that journalists can and do play a large role in helping to achieve food security. He found that the training re-energized his inspiration to write about agriculture and food security issues, reminding him of the importance of his own role in food security. As part of his thinking, Mr. Kagolo wants to create a sense of urgency and inform people about the issues, which he hopes can help raise awareness in officials and other key players that can make the needed social and political changes.

The impact of the training stayed with Mr. Kagolo and he went on to pursue a post-graduate degree in investigative journalism. While most investigative journalists in Uganda write about corruption, which Mr. Kagolo could have done, he chose to investigate food security because of the Africa Lead training. His studies allowed him to write a story on adulteration of animal feed in one of the slums of Kampala, Uganda where farmers were putting sand and small stones into the feed. Farmers were getting poor quality feed, which produced poor quality eggs, sometimes chickens die, which all lead to farmers losing money. In addition, to his journalism, Mr. Kagolo has also started a personal blog where one of the key issues is food security; his blog is connected to Facebook and Twitter where it reaches a large number of people.

***"I think it's because of the Africa Lead Training
that I said, let me investigate this [food security]"***

Mr. Kagolo's action plan from the training was to be a role model and since the training he has been mentoring individuals around the food security issue. This includes, encouraging other journalist to write about food security and agriculture, reading young journalists' articles about agriculture and food security before they submit them to be published and even helping one young journalist get a job writing stories for Makerere University College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, where she writes a story on agriculture research every week.



Another helpful aspect of the Africa Lead training was the fact that it included people from many different sectors and because of this Mr. Kagolo was able to meet people that would stay his contacts and help him with his stories; either by learning about agricultural topics or by them suggesting stories for him to write. For example, one of his fellow trainees got him information and encouraged him to write a story about value chains and how they can help small farmers. Another contact is a fellow journalist that just started the Uganda Agricultural Reporters Association that helps teach journalists about agriculture issues.

Mr. Kagolo sees the value in the Africa Lead trainings which he feels helps people to wake up and not be relaxed about food security issues. Mr. Kagolo will keep the impact of the training with him as he continues to write about food security issues, creating a sense of urgency through his writing. Part of his motivation for his work is to create change and education people by continuing to interview vulnerable people, telling their stories and showing that there are problems that need to be addressed.

“Champions for Change brings together people from different professions. They are professional agriculturists, they are journalists, they are Government officials – I think we can be a very important group to cause change.”■