



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



REACH FOR RESULTS

Cheminy-Atar Road: Bringing Services Closer During Covid-19

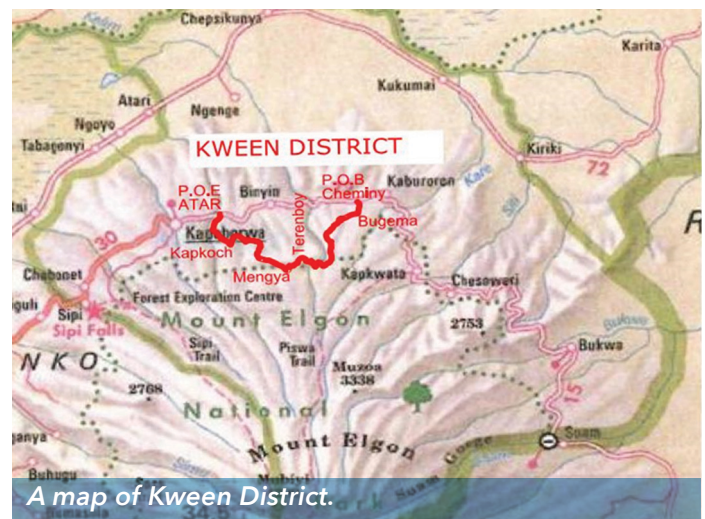
Before the COVID-19 global pandemic in the hilly relief of Kween District, the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC)'s Resilient and Efficient Agribusiness Chains in Uganda (REACH-Uganda) Project in partnership with the District Local Government embarked on the process of rehabilitating a 26.1 km road that links the major sub-counties of Kwozir, Kitawoi, and Benet in a bid to increase market access for over 13,000 potato farmers in Eastern Uganda.

Kween District's topography borders Mt. Elgon National Park and has abundant rainfall. Prior to the REACH-Uganda initiative, farmers and community members suffered from narrow, poorly drained roads, worsened by heavy rainfall, and further damaged by heavy trucks transporting potatoes from farmers' fields to the neighboring districts of Mbale, Soroti, and other major markets in Eastern Uganda. Many times, the trucks would get stuck in ruts and ridges on the roads, leaving potato produce stranded for days, and thus reducing shelf life and increasing farmers' losses.

The poor state of the roads in Kween further inhibited locals' livelihoods by limiting access to essential services such as health centers, schools, and police stations. During rehabilitation of the new 26.1 km Cheminy-Bugema-Terenboy-Mengya-Kapkoch-Atar road, the COVID-19 pandemic hit Uganda, with 121 confirmed cases in the country as at 10th May, 2020.

THE CHALLENGE

This country-wide shutdown has not only led to increased unemployment country-wide, but it has also slowed the supply of food, especially to the central region, leading to increased food scarcity. It is essential now more than ever that farmers are able to efficiently supply produce to ensure food security in heavily affected regions.





Contractors and casual laborers at work.



Ongoing rehabilitation construction works.

With the new Cheminy-Atar road, the REACH project has contributed to ensuring that farmers in Kween are able to access agro-inputs, fertilizer, and seeds so agricultural production can continue with minimal disruption. At the same time, farmers are now efficiently transporting potato and other produce to markets across the country. Trips that previously took a full day to make are now reduced to hours, with farmers' transportation costs reduced up to 50%.

The Kwasir, Kitawoi, and Benet communities can now easily access health facilities, and the road has made it easier for medical practitioners and local media to travel to these remote areas to increase awareness of COVID-19 and the proper guidelines to combat the virus.

The rehabilitation of the road has been completed and the REACH-Uganda Project officially handed over the road to the District Local Government at a ceremony held at Kwasir Sub-County in Kween District. Present at the ceremony was the Resident District Commissioner, The District Chairperson, and the District Engineer.

"Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the IFDC REACH Project will continue supporting resilience among the potato farming communities in Eastern and South

Western Uganda. Positioning farmers to positively respond in terms of household resilience is one of our goals. With the rehabilitated road, we believe that the farmers can continue with production to feed their families and access supply chains on the market in order to avoid a hunger crisis as a result of the pandemic" noted David Slane, Chief of Party, IFDC-Uganda.

As a sustainability measure, the REACH project has involved community members during road rehabilitation to pass on skills needed for maintenance of the roads amidst heavy rains to ensure that the road remains strong, stable, and well-drained to serve the community for years to come. The District Local Government has also proven to be a valuable partner by providing special authorization for work to continue during the country's lockdown.

The REACH-Uganda project is funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda. The road rehabilitation activity will serve more than 13,578 community members in Kween District to not only increase productivity and income for household resilience but also access information and health care during the unprecedented global pandemic.



BEFORE: Roads were often unusable after a heavy rain, and conditions delayed delivery of produce.



AFTER: Faster, less expensive transportation and better community access to important services.

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