Uganda has the youngest and most rapidly growing populations in the world and a high total fertility rate (TFR) of 6.2%. A big percentage of Uganda’s population is younger than 15 years standing at 52 percent above Sub-Saharan Africa’s average of 43.2 percent (UNESCO, 2012). This situation translates into high youth dependency ratio. According to Vision 2014 blueprint, Uganda is envisaged to be a transformed society from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country, in the next 30 years (GoU, 2013). In order to achieve this economic expectation, all other aspects of the population including socio-demographic behaviour have to be improved upon to match the expected rise in income.

Solidaridad, with funding from FORD FOUNDATION, 2015-16, initiated activities that would enhance youth participation in the horticulture value chain. Access to planting materials has been indicated in several studies as the main challenge to production.

The baseline survey indicated that only 23 percent of the farmers plant hybrid seeds. The cost, access and availability were the main challenges to the low adoption rates.

The Young plant raising (YPR) innovation was tested with two youth groups: Tukole Bukozi Youth Group in Mpigi and Namulonge Youth Farmers association in Wakiso Districts. The project provided a package, which included the nursery structure, 10,000 seeds of assorted vegetable types (Capsicum, cabbage, and tomatoes), trays and media (Coco peat, water tank, seedling table and shade net structure). The project partnered with House of Seeds, a seed company based

Annet Nakibuule, a member of Tukole Bukozi in Mpigi District, displaying seedlings from their Nursery
in Uganda for high quality seed and seedling procurement. Through the company, the youth were able to access the hybrid vegetable seed such as RANDAH F1. To effectively manage the Nursery, the youths received training on seedling raising by the company and nursery management by Solidaridad. To effectively manage the nursery as a business, the services of a business advisor, Mr. Justus Twebaze, rendered. They were trained on record keeping and gross margin analysis. Participatory development of YPR Business case business plan was achieved.

The youths were mobilised to contribute US$ 200, towards the nursery management cost. They were able to open an account, with CENTENARY BANK, after registration of their business as a legal entity. Registered in 2015 as a youth group, with a membership of 28, Namulonge Youth Farmers association have since January to end of April, 2016, has been able to sell 7,837 seedlings to the neighbours, earning US$ 321. In MpigI District, Tukole Bukozi Youth Group, were able to earn US$ 651 over the same period. Initial challenge with the innovation was the resistance of the neighbours to the type of seedlings being raised. This significantly affected the MpigI group. The group decided to sell the seedling among themselves, to act as a marketing strategy for their nursery. The result was instant! In the month of May, the group has received an order to supply seedling worth USD 3,328.6, equivalent to 71,000 seedlings of Onions, Tomatoes and Sweet Pepper. The project learned that there is need to superimpose a demonstration, next to the YPR, to enable the neighbours learn about the seedlings, for higher adoption rates. Linkage to agro-input providers, for provision of media and planting trays remain a challenge to this group. Transportation of the seedlings to the customers is also a big challenge, as the seedlings are tender. Most farmers would want to carry the seedling with the trays. Replacing the trays is also costly.

‘When we couldn’t get market for our seedlings, the group members were frustrated. We thought we made a wrong decision to host this nursery. The members took the risk to buy the seedlings. We don’t regret as a group for what we did. We can see a brighter future in this business. We thank Solidaridad for giving us this opportunity’

Mr. John Ssenyonjo, Chairman, Tukole Bukozi Youth Group, MpigI District.