



Organisation Profile



AIBIS

**AFRICAN INSTITUTE
FOR BIODIVERSITY
AND SUSTAINABILITY**

www.aibis.or.ug

AIBIS Board

Meet Our Members



Ms. Maureen Nakatudde
Chairperson



Mr. Allan Kalangi
Secretary



Ms. Brenda Namugera
Youth Representative



Ms. Joan Tumusiime
Youth Representative



Mr. Vincent Nyegenya
Cultural Institutions Rep.



Ms. Peninah Ruhindi
Member



Ms. Mellon Akankunda
Member

AIBIS

Staff Members



Allan Kalangi
Executive Director



Peruth Atukwatse
Senior Prog. Officer Administration, Gender & Chemicals Management.



Paul Keishaari
Programme Officer: Legal & Land Affairs



Ethol A Natukunda
Programme Officer: Agroforestry & Permaculture.



Shallotte Tusiime
Finance Officer

PROFILE SUMMARY

MAY 2024

INTRODUCTION

The African Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability (AIBIS) is a Ugandan registered non-profit making organization focused on fostering positive society outlook towards biodiversity sustainability through action-oriented research, knowledge sharing and collective interventions. AIBIS envisions sustainable communities in Uganda working together to attain and maintain social, economic and environmental justice. AIBIS is a youth and women centred organisation. Five (5) out of the seven (7) Board members of AIBIS are women.

AIBIS has its head office in Kiboga Town and mainly works in the Districts of Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Kassanda and Kalangala in Central Uganda, Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa

in Mid-Western Uganda and Buhweju in Southwestern Uganda. The target beneficiaries of AIBIS include among others, youth, women, small holder farmers, fisherfolk, artisanal and small-scale miners, and grassroots communities affected by, extractives such as the oil industry, large plantations such as those of sugarcane and oil palm, those exposed to the negative effects of agrochemicals and those experiencing hardships due to environmental degradation and climate change. The participation and involvement of youth and women is at the centre of all AIBIS programmes.

AIBIS was formed to contribute to addressing the contemporary challenges that have remained big impediments towards attainment of social, economic and climate justice. Most of these challenges are exacerbated by the government and its development partners that encourage commercialization of everything and profit maximization at the expense of human and environmental rights.

These new development trends are characterized by:

- (a) Displacement of people by large land-based investments without fair or adequate compensation.
- (b) Massive environmental degradation to pave way for large land-based investments with no clear plans to compensate for or restore the degraded environment.
- (c) The push for commercialising all forms of agriculture with little or minimal consideration for small-holder farmers. The new trends in agriculture are associated with extensive use of agro-chemicals such as synthetic fertilizers, herbicides for both large scale and small holder farmers leading to degradation of soils and making farming very unsustainably expensive for the grassroots citizenry. Farmers are being discouraged from growing indigenous seeds that used to drought and pests resistant and are being encouraged to turn to modern hybrid seeds which are expensive to buy and require the use of agrochemicals. This is a big threat to communities' food sovereignty.
- (d) Women who are the main

breadwinners of their families in Africa still have limited rights to land ownership and use and no decision-making powers in natural resources management.

- (e) There are no sufficient efforts to involve the youth in sustainable development debates and modern education methods discourage cross-generation learning.
- (f) Indigenous/natural forests that support biodiversity, are key to climate change mitigation and host varieties of medicinal plants are being cleared to pave way for large monocultural agriculture plantations such as those of oil palm and sugarcane.
- (g) Indigenous knowledge on the use and safety of herbal medicine is threatened by modern education which degrades it as backward and lacking in proper documentation.
- (h) In the extractives sector, for example the oil industry which currently carries the flag for Uganda's extractives, there are a lot of human rights violations and abuses ranging from land grabbing and evictions that have seen some people become destitute or live in camps for internally displaced people. The

extractive sector is also a key driver of environmental degradation.

AIBIS' THRUST

AIBIS' goal therefore is to contribute to efforts aimed at achieving sustainable development through building strong grassroots movements mainly composed of women and youth and equipping them with skills to advocate for their rights while doing those activities that are key for them to attain sustainable livelihoods.

AIBIS is focused on build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities that can effectively address the challenges highlighted in the previous section through promotion of agroforestry and food sovereignty, revival of using indigenous knowledge to sustain

[IMAGE BELOW] The AIBIS Executive Director Allan Kalangi (Centre in a T-shirt), the Mayor of Kiboga Town Council, Henry Kagali (with a black shirt and Jacket) and members of Mikono Women Development Initiative (MIWODI) that are being mentored by AIBIS on food sovereignty and climate-smart agriculture.





[ABOVE] Members of Masode-Kalagi Community Development Association after receiving seedlings of Moringa and Calliandra from AIBIS for planting.

biodiversity and safeguard indigenous seeds and herbal medicines, advocating for enactment and implementation of relevant laws and policies to safeguard the rights of host communities of large land-based investments.

To achieve its objectives, AIBIS engages in action-oriented research, documentation, training and information dissemination using various methods including new media channels, movement building, capacity building for community volunteers, establishment of community learning centers and demonstration sites, stakeholder engagements and policy advocacy.

AIBIS works through building synergies with both local, national, and international networks to harness benefits associated with collaborative interventions.

ECOFEMINIST APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

In the quest for environmental justice, AIBIS draws from the principles of ecological feminism (ecofeminism). These principles include, recognizing the connection between the oppression of nature and women and including a feminist perspective in addressing ecological problems.

The ecofeminist approach is therefore prevalent in all AIBIS programmes and activities focused on nature/ biodiversity conservation and protection. AIBIS is already in the process of forming an ecofeminist movement in its areas of operation.

KEY PROGRAMME AREAS

AIBIS is currently focused on the following programme areas: Food Sovereignty, Agroforestry, African Medicinal Plants, Women's Right to Land, Youth and Climate Justice and Sound Management of Chemicals.

1. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labor, fishing, food and land policies, which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It means people having knowledge and means to

determine food and agriculture systems without being controlled by seed companies and agribusiness agencies. It recognizes and promotes the central role of women in food production. The Food sovereignty concept was developed in 1990 and was born out of the mobilization of groups of small-scale farmers who found that they could no longer take charge of their food systems.

Communities in traditional African societies were food sovereign since they determined when and how to grow their food, how to share it and what kind of seeds to keep for replanting. However, contemporary African Governments, including that of Uganda, in their attempts to commercialize agriculture, are coming up with policies that are bent on undermining the food sovereignty of communities. They are promoting large scale agribusiness which is highly mechanized, relies on agrochemicals and laboratory modified seeds which can only be accessed from the market. The new trends are making farming expensive for small holder farmers in addition to posing environmental challenges because of extensive use of agro-chemicals and mass clearing of forests to create room for large and usually monoculture

[BELOW] Millet is one of the few remaining indigenous African food crops that have not yet been much targeted by genetic engineering. AIBIS advocates that such a crop should remain fully in the hands of ordinary farmers.



farms. Another big problem is that unchecked commercialization of agriculture will not only take away the food sovereignty of the small-holder farmers but will lead to grabbing of their land by the agribusiness companies.

AIBIS is therefore keen on engaging stakeholders, who include farmers and policy makers on the importance of food sovereignty and how it can be safeguarded. One of the pillars identified and that is being implemented by AIBIS to promote food sovereignty is presenting agroecology as an alternative to the modern agricultural practices being encouraged by government agencies and companies. AIBIS has got its own demonstration farm for agroecology where a cross-section of stakeholders especially youth and women are being trained on practicing organic agriculture that is key in climate change mitigation, requires less capital investment and connects people more to their land. At the national and international levels, AIBIS will continue to advocate for policies to safeguard the food sovereignty of grassroots communities and join campaigns and networks with similar objectives.

2. AGROFORESTRY

Agroforestry is a system of land management where trees or shrubs are deliberately grown alongside crops and animal farmlands (pasturelands). As the name suggests, agroforestry combines both agriculture and forestry on planned pieces of land with the aim of creating diverse benefits for the farmers which include variety of harvestable products, increased

yields, controlled soil erosion and sustainability of biodiversity.

Profitable as agroforestry might be, there are currently misconceptions about it arising out limited knowledge about it, and promoters of monoculture agriculture who believe that having one crop on a given piece of land gives better harvests. Other farmers believe that agroforestry is only possible for those with large swathes of land. AIBIS on the other hand believes that agroforestry is actually very beneficial for small holder farmers and having many people engaging in it will not only help them to reap profits but will also be good for the environment. AIBIS therefore makes a commitment to sensitize farmers on the benefits of agroforestry and how it can be done practically through on-farm demonstrations. Agro-forestry and agroecology are very closely linked.

3. AFRICAN MEDICINAL PLANTS

There are over 50,000 plants in Africa said to have medicinal properties and these plants helped Africans to treat different types of diseases before colonialists started establishing modern hospitals in the last half of the 19th century. The colonial government together with the new religious faiths that they came with fought hard to discredit traditional African medicine often associating it with witchcraft.

Herbal medicine survived largely because for many people it was not easy to access the modern health facilities. However, with modern education and constantly demonizing herbal medicine by schools and religious leaders, many people especially the youth steadily turned

away from it, making it hard for the knowledge about it to be passed to the young generation. Additionally, modern methods of farming that involve extensive bush clearing and deforestation are making it hard for communities to access herbal medicine. At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Ugandans turned to herbal medicine after the hospitals became overwhelmed. There were fears however, that this herbal medicine could be abused due to limited knowledge on its prescription. Again, some herbs could not be easily accessed due to the rampant deforestation.

AIBIS will therefore continue to run campaigns against deforestation and turning natural forests into monoculture agriculture plantations as a way of preserving African herbal medicine. AIBIS will also work to amplify voices of community custodians of indigenous knowledge on herbal medicine by creating several platforms for them to share their knowledge. AIBIS will also encourage volunteers to grow as many these traditional herbal medicinal plants in their farms. On its own, AIBIS has established a demonstration farm for African herbal medicine varieties and more research and documentation on how this medicine can be used will be done. The bigger picture here is that once people realise the importance of herbal medicine that is freely provided by nature they will develop the urge for conservation and find it important to join campaigns against environmental degradation.

[BELOW] Some of the herbal plants at the AIBIS Agroecology Demonstration Farm



4. WOMEN'S RIGHT TO LAND

The responsibility of producing food for the households in Sub-Saharan Africa, has largely remained in the hands of women. While this one is a reality, women's rights to own land and use land gainfully are still not matching up with the responsibilities they have at family level. There are still cultural practices and norms that make it hard for women to own land or to enjoy proceeds of what they have produced on the land. At international level, efforts have been put in place to provide for women's equal rights to land. For example the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) affirmed that Women's right to inheritance and ownership of land and property should be recognised.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) also emphasises it referring to rural women's rights to equal treatment in land and agrarian reform processes. Women's property rights are also an integral element towards achieving the Millenium Development Goals specifically Goal 1 on eradicating extreme poverty and Goal 3 on gender equality. The Ugandan Constitution and all laws under it recognise equal rights for both men and women over land. However, society perceptions about women owning land are not changing at the desired pace. The situation has been made worse in Africa by the penetration of large land-

based investments which displace communities and are required to compensate them. In Uganda, those investments include oil extractive activities in the Albertine region and large plantations especially of sugar and oil palm in different parts of the country. Women most times lose out on this compensation, yet they have the primary responsibility of caring for their households. AIBIS is of the view that there is need for more advocacy and more information dissemination on the importance of women owning and using land. AIBIS believes that women know better the importance of land and are therefore more likely to use it sustainably if they get full rights over it. Women need to be fully engaged in land use debates and in contentious discussions like those on compensation.

Our interventions

At AIBIS, we focus on addressing the underlying gender hierarchies and relevance for addressing societal practices that propagate discrimination of women and girls. We believe that a patriarchy free world is possible. We therefore work towards challenging and eradicating harmful social norms, cultural practices and systems that enforce inequality and perpetuate violence against women and deter them from enjoying their rights. We also focus on empowering and building the capacity of women and girls so that they can actively and effectively take part in decision making. We advocate for the

implementation of existing human rights and gender equality legal frameworks and needed legislative reforms for improved gender equity and equality. We emphasise activities aimed at connecting and interesting all women, both educated and those with less formal education in land management matters.

5. YOUTH AND CLIMATE JUSTICE PROGRAMME

At AIBIS, the youth are a special target group. This is because we are strongly convinced that in a country where over 70 percent of the population falls under the youth bracket, for any interventions to be successful, youth need to be fully involved. AIBIS as an organisation out to contribute in the struggle for attaining climate justice therefore has decided to model the programme around the youth who not only have the numbers but also the energies to move things so long as they are equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills.

Why the Youth and Climate Justice Programme?

Our climate is changing fast, with devastating impact on species and ecosystems. In the past 13 years, 87 per cent of disasters have been climate related. When floods and drought come, they do not discriminate between men and women. But there's a marked difference in how women and men experience the impact of climate change and climate disasters. To the young people, it is worse; some miss out on going to school due to lack of fees because livelihoods are destroyed and accessibility issues. Today, there is growing recognition of the differential impacts of climate change on women but still lacking for the young people. Their critical role as leaders and agents of change in climate action and management of natural resources is often overlooked in climate negotiations, investments and policies. The young people are

[LEFT] Some members of MIKONO Women Development Initiative attending to their vegetable garden at the AIBIS Agroecology Demonstration Farm. Women need unlimited access to land for equitable development to take place.



not only victims of climate injustice but also the hope towards a better tomorrow.

Therefore, at AIBIS, we believe that the first step towards tackling the challenges of climate change is empowering the young people with skills and a voice to safeguard the environment.

Our planned actions include the following among others;

National and community solidarity actions, climate education and training, establishment of local climate demonstration hubs, carrying out climate leadership trainings, writing petitions, forming a youth movement and connecting it with already existing youth movements in our areas of operation, organizing nature learning tours, women and youth led actions and campaigns aimed at amplifying the voices of the most affected by climate crisis, conducting community, national and international twinning /exchange , supporting local initiatives of the women and youth that are environmentally friendly to contribute to climate control and at the same time earn a living, supporting media interactions with the young people to interface with youths' rights concerns, supporting activities of the school going children like debates on pertinent issues in the country especially on human rights and biodiversity conservation.

6. SOUND USE AND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS

Many people and communities around the world are exposed to numerous harmful chemicals, chemicals products and chemicals wastes every day. In Uganda, very many toxic chemicals are widely used and handled unsafely in many ways, for example, chemicals are poorly, transported, handled, labeled, stored and poorly discarded. Unfortunately, most consumers are ignorant about the possible harm chemical products may cause to them and their environment.

Uganda has a National Chemicals Profile and a National Chemicals Policy and Legal Framework to regulate the use and Management of chemicals in the country, it's a signatory to many international



Ms. Peruth Atukwatse , the AIBIS Senior Programme officer in charge of Gender and Chemicals Management sensitising pupils of Wambabya Primary School in Kikuube District on sound management of chemicals at the household level, school and in public places.

instruments; including Minamata convention, Basal, Rotterdam, among others however, the implementation and promotion of these national and international legal frameworks is not adequate.

Chemicals continue to be misused in the country and most of the impacts from poor usage and handling heavily affects women more than their male counterparts, for example there are dangerous chemicals in cosmetics being used by women in saloons and other cosmetics which contain harmful chemicals.

Some chemicals like mercury that was banned globally through the minamata convention, is still widely being used in the artisanal small scale gold mining sector and unfortunately, its women that are doing activities that interact more with mercury in the gold mining sector, that's the panning stage where mercury is added to the ore for amalgamation. Largely, mercury is a serious threat to biodiversity as it poisons fish, contaminants water sources, food eventually circulates in the food chain. There is also lack of capacity to treat waste and chemical waste leading to chemical stockpiles. Natural filters (wetlands) are greatly threatened by improper disposal of chemicals.

Agro-Chemicals

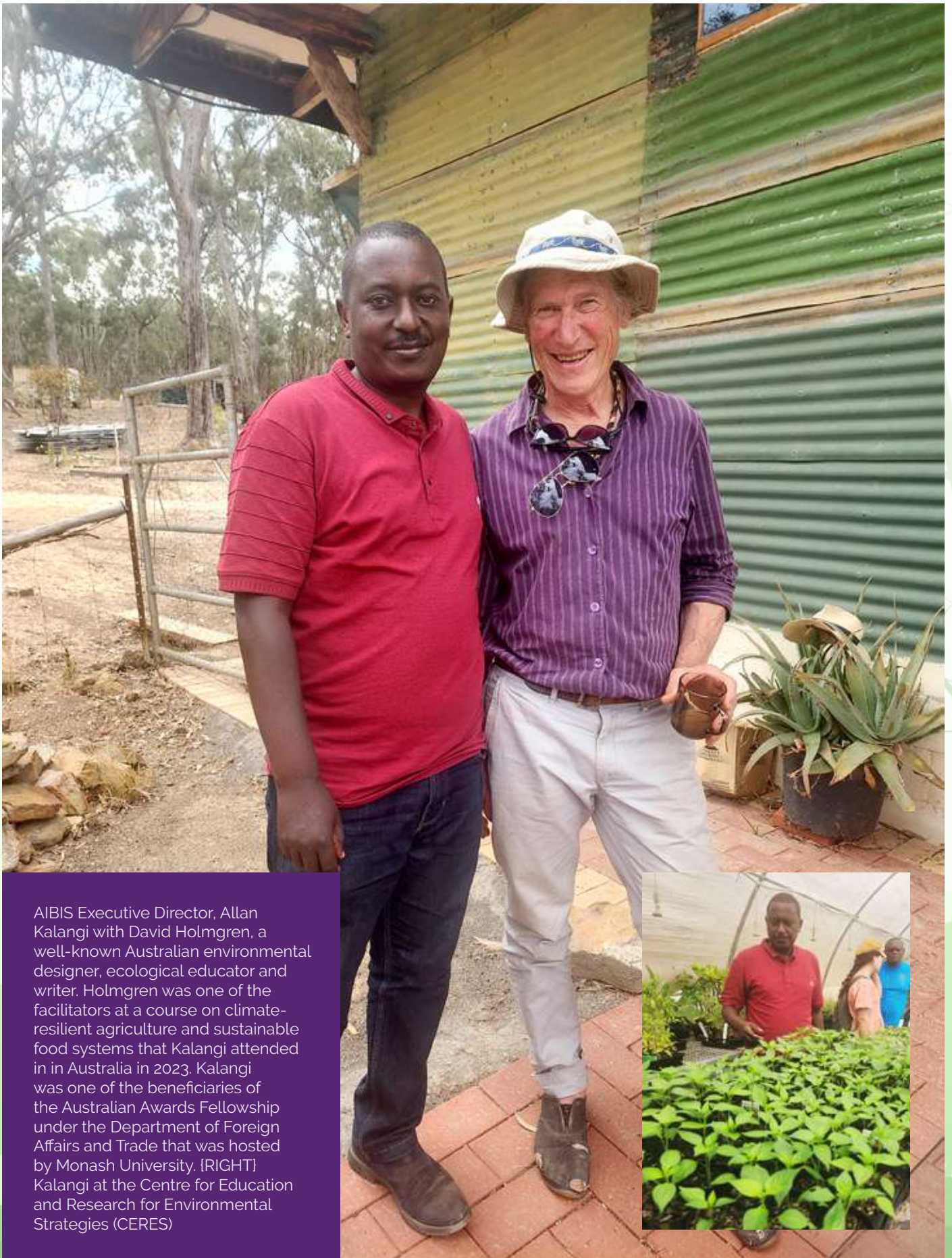
Agrochemicals include all those artificial chemicals that are used

on farmlands as fertilizes or to kill weeds (herbicides) or pests (pesticides). The move by many African Governments to make agriculture more commercially viable has resulted in extensive use of agro-chemicals on large commercial farms and now even on small holder farms. Over reliance on agro-chemicals leads to contamination of soils and killing the biodiversity there but also introduces toxins to water bodies and foods consumed by both humans and animals. Reliance on agro-chemicals also makes agriculture very expensive and will eventually kick small holder farmers out of the food production chain.

Our Intervention:

AIBIS advocates for sound use and management of chemicals in line with SDG 3 on ensuring healthy lives and SDGs 12 which calls for responsible consumption and production patterns. Our focus is on raising awareness on the harmful impacts of chemicals on human health and the environment targeting different stakeholders including farmers, artisanal small scale gold miners, local leaders, schools among others.

We also support communities to revive their indigenous methods and knowledge of managing pests and weeds without resorting to dangerous chemicals. We advocate for proper regulation of the use of these harmful chemicals and products on the market.



AIBIS Executive Director, Allan Kalangi with David Holmgren, a well-known Australian environmental designer, ecological educator and writer. Holmgren was one of the facilitators at a course on climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable food systems that Kalangi attended in Australia in 2023. Kalangi was one of the beneficiaries of the Australian Awards Fellowship under the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that was hosted by Monash University. [RIGHT] Kalangi at the Centre for Education and Research for Environmental Strategies (CERES)



Contact Us:

Waligo Building, Plot 506 Kiboga, Opposite Stanbic Bank, Kampala-Hoima Highway, Uganda

Tel: +256 200 912 849 / +256 781 065 995

Email: aibis@aibis.or.ug Website: www.aibis.or.ug