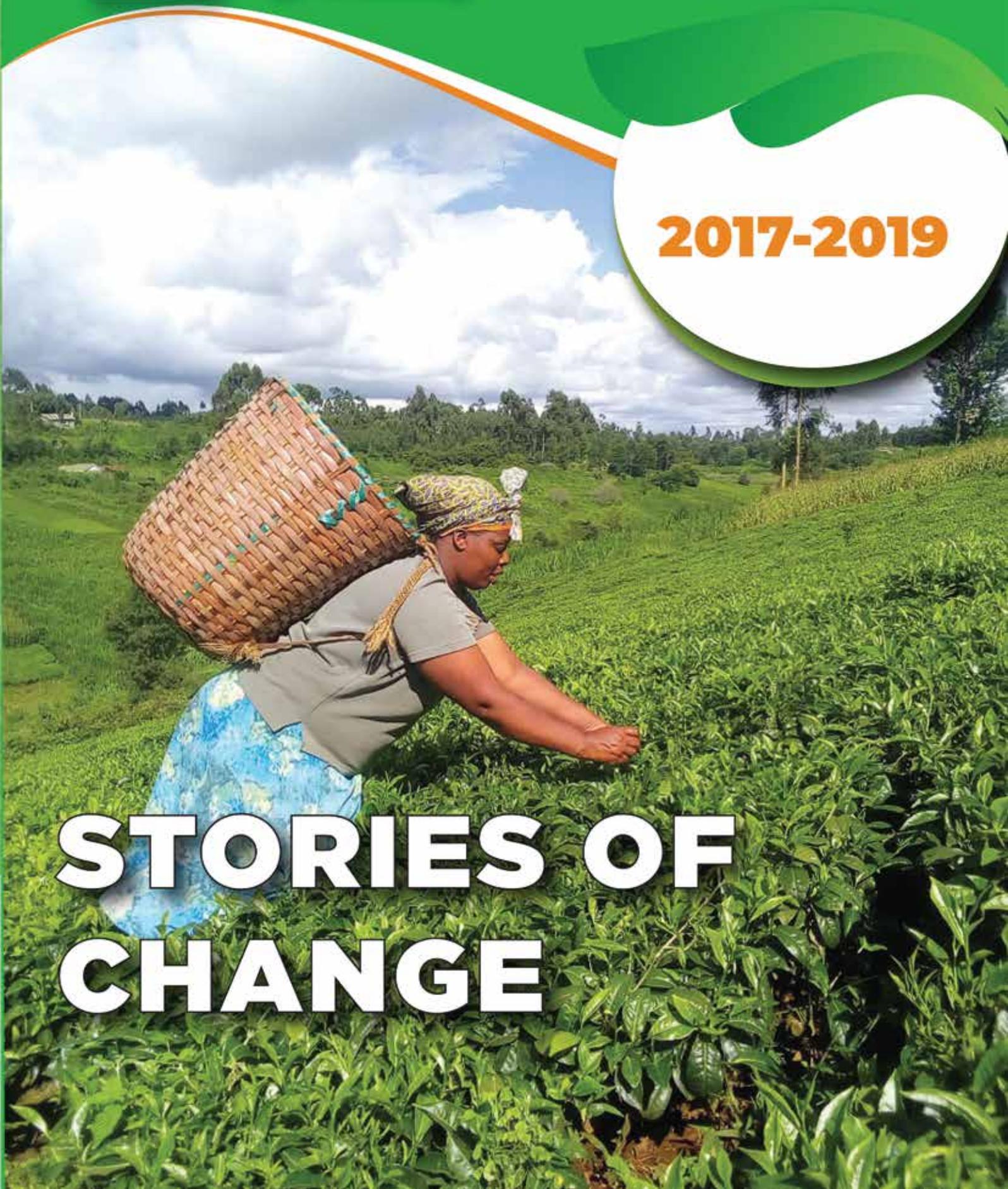


FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMME (FOSELI)

2017-2019



**STORIES OF
CHANGE**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful completion of this success stories booklet has been due to support of various people. First and foremost, we wish to express our gratitude to Tudor Trust for the financial support. Secondly, our heartfelt appreciation goes to PELUM Kenya's Country Coordinator, Mr. Zachary Makanya and CEOs of the five PELUM Kenya Member Organizations; Mr Martin Muriuki (ICE), Mr. Ngugi Mutura (SACDEP), Mr. Eliud Ngunjiri (RODI-K), Mr. Stephen Wainaina (OACK) and Mr. Stanley Kinyanjui (COSDEP)

Last but not least, our gratitude goes to the team that collected, validated and compiled the stories from the farmers: Ms. Evelyn Kaumba, Ms. Hannah Kigamba, Mr. Dancun Ndirangu, Mr. Muthike Mbiru, Ms. Caren Wekesa, Mr. Daniel Ndegwa, Mr. Jeff Kihoro and Mr. Patrick Kihoro.

This Publication has been prepared with the support of:

the
Tudor trust

The views herein shall not necessarily be taken to reflect the official opinion of PELUM Kenya's funding partners.

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ACRONYMS

COSDEP	Community Sustainable Development Empowerment Programme
FOSELI	Food Security and Livelihood Improvement
ICE	Institute for Culture and Ecology
KEFRI	Kenya Forest Research Institute
KFS	Kenya Forestry Services
KTDA	Kenya Tea Development Authority
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MO	Member Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OACK	Organic Agriculture Centre of Kenya
PBO	Public Benefit Organization
PELUM	Participatory Ecological Land Use Management
RODI	Resources Oriented Development Initiatives
SACDEP	Sustainable Agriculture and Community Development Programme
WRUA	Water Resource Users Association



FOREWARD



Over the years, PELUM Kenya has been planning to strengthen collaboration and networking among and between its member organizations in their regions. The overall key benefit of networking or working jointly is the ability to increase the impact of work done to the grass-root beneficiaries. Specifically, joint collaborations lead to dramatic reduction of the costs of running and operating networking; increased adoption of ecological land use best practices by farmers and communities at the grass root level; increase the visibility of PELUM Kenya in the country, and making PELUM Kenya do more as a network without becoming bigger.

In pursuit of these aspirations, five of the members in the Central and Nairobi Networking Zone and working with small scale tea farmers, SACDEP-Kenya, ICE, OACK, RODI-Kenya and COSDEP, joined hands and designed Food Security and Livelihood Improvement Programme (FOSELI) to address some issues experienced by small scale tea farmers. The issues include: over-dependence on one crop, tea; limited sources of income (only coming from the sale of tea), the gradual decline of tea yields due to reducing soil fertility due to poor management and food insecurity and nutrition insecurity due to inadequate variety of healthy food consumed among the local population. The Project was Funded by Tudor Trust and coordinated by PELUM Kenya Country Secretariat (Office). The key objective of the FOSELI project was to improve livelihood of the tea farmers in Murang'a and Kiambu Counties.

This publication includes stories of change and positive impact for some of the small scale tea farmers targeted by the project. These stories therefore give us pride and joy to see farmers articulating how great the interventions have worked to improve their lives both economically and health wise through healthy food production. In as much as there were some challenges, working in close collaboration with all the implementing partners made the challenges manageable. The stories have been verified as true and are based on diverse evidence based Agro ecological practices used by farmers and using locally available resources.

There is a great need to tell the successes of the farmers not only to celebrate them but also to educate other farmers elsewhere who are struggling to come out of poverty. These stories will also encourage upscaling and replication of good practices.

We recognize the huge role that KTDA played in this process and believe that the stories shared here will inspire even more tea farmers across the region. Much appreciation also goes to the groups and individual farmers who were willing to share their stories.

I also wish to appreciate all the CEOs of the five (5) implementing partners and their respective team for their efforts to implementing the project as per design. The PELUM Kenya Country Secretariat Team led by the Country Coordinator, Mr Zachary Makanya have done a good job to coordinating the partners in the implementing the FOSELI Project.

Lastly and not least, we thank Tudor Trust Foundation for supporting the FOSELI Initiative. Overtime, Tudor Trust has proved to be reliable partners in accompanying PELUM Kenya and some of its members in their quest to improve community livelihoods.

Mr. Collins Ochieng,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Collins Ochieng', written over a horizontal line.

**Chairperson,
PELUM Kenya Board of Directors.**

1

Introduction

1.1 Background Information

Food Security and Livelihood Improvement (FOSELI) programme was designed as a three-year pilot programme and rolled out in Central Kenya in Muranga and Kiambu counties in 2017. The programme is implemented by five PELUM Kenya member organizations of the Nairobi-central zone namely RODI, OACK, SACDEP Kenya, COSDEP and ICE and coordinated by PELUM Kenya. The three year programme funded by Tudor Trust aims at enabling tea farmers from Central Region Kenya to acquire skills that will boost agro-productivity by emphasizing on building long-term sustainable water shed management, sustainable cropping practices and increased incomes. One of key strategy for the project is building and strengthening partnerships with other key stakeholders including KTDA, MoA, KFS, WRUA, Rain-Forest alliance and KEFRI.

The goal of the project is to contribute towards improved livelihood of small scale tea farmers in the targeted project area. The goal is being pursued through six objectives with distinct indicators to assess performance.

1.2 The Programme Objectives:

1. To increase the food and nutritional security of 10,000 small holder tea farmers
2. To increase the diversification of income sources of small holder tea farmers in the targeted project area. through improved crop production, diversified on-farm enterprises and established market outlets
3. To promote environmental conservation and sustainable water shed management within the target project area
4. To promote energy conservation i.e. promoting use of improved jikos, solar energy, and biogas use
5. To develop a common training curriculum for train farmers in tea zones
6. To establish and create networking and learning forums where new members in the network can learn from the more experienced members

Why Joint implementation?

To increase the benefits of horizontal networking among PELUM Kenya Member organizations and farmers and thus increasing the impact of work done with the communities. Key benefits include:

- ▶ Reduction of the costs of running and operating networking
- ▶ Increased adoption of ecological land use best practices by farmers and communities at the grass root level
- ▶ Pooling of resources and expertise amongst the organizations
- ▶ Continuous and close inter learning between the different organizations
- ▶ Increase the visibility of PELUM Kenya in the country and making PELUM Kenya do more as a network without becoming bigger

Challenges from Tea farmers

1. Over-dependence on one crop, tea.
2. Limited sources of income
3. Production of low quality tea and hence do not get prime prices for it.
4. The decline of tea production due to poor soil fertility management
5. Food insecurity.
6. Poor nutrition due to inadequate variety of healthy food

Approach Used

1. Diversification of Farm enterprises
2. Training on Organic farming and Biointensive farming
3. Market Linkages
4. Advocacy: with Key stakeholders e.g KTDA and County Government

Key Outcomes

1. Increased production of high range of healthy foods
2. Increased collaborations
3. Increase income due to increase on-farm enterprises and marketing opportunities
4. Increased protection and conservation of biodiversity

2

A brief Introduction of PELUM Kenya and its Member organizations in the FOSELI Project

1.3.1 PELUM Kenya

Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Association is a membership organization in East and Southern Africa. The organization was started in 1995 and has grown from the initial 25 member organizations to 210 spread in 12 countries in East, Central and Southern Africa: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland, and Ethiopia. Each country has its own member organizations referred to as the Country Working Group (CWG). The Associational regional activities are coordinated at the Regional Desk (RD), currently located in Lusaka, Zambia. All the PELUM Association network members promotes ecological land use management practices for improved livelihoods by the small scale farmers

PELUM Kenya is the Kenyan Chapter of the PELUM Association and has 52 member organizations located in 19 Counties and operates in 42 Counties countrywide. PELUM Kenya's Country Secretariat is based at Thika Road , Exit 14 along Kenyatta Road.

1.3.2. Organic Agriculture Centre of Kenya (OACK)

Organic Agriculture Centre of Kenya (OACK) is a registered PBO focusing on creating sustainable livelihood and landscaping for small scale farmers in Murang'a County. It works with farmers in the area of food security, environmental conservation and stable income improvement by the way of training farmers and information

dissemination. The purpose is to equip the small holder farmers with knowledge and skills on ecological farming particularly organic agriculture while conducting on-farm trials to validate best practices, this is meant to address the problem of nutrition and income insecurity, unsafe food production, soil fertility depletion and general environmental degradation as well as to generate verified knowledge for sustainability. OACK works with about 1,500 small scale tea farmers.

1.3.3 Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE)

Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE) is a national non-governmental organization registered in Kenya in 2006 under the NGO coordination Act. ICE mandate is to promote environmental conservation and natural resource management through buttressing traditional knowledge in community-based environmental and resource management initiatives and facilitating cultural-based learning that would lead to social and ecological wellbeing of the earth community. ICE partners with like-minded organizations, institutions and individuals nationally, regionally and globally in order to gather diverse knowledge systems and achieve effective implementation of innovative culture based strategies. ICE targets about 1,000 smallholder farmer groups in Kiambu, Nairobi, Machakos, Tharaka-Nithi and Meru counties. In Kiambu, it works with about 300 small scale tea farmers.

Pelum Kenya is mandated by its members to promote Ecological Land Use Management (elum) practises and principles in Kenya through networking, capacity building, information sharing and advocacy

1.3.4. Sustainable Agriculture and Community Development Programme (SACDEP-Kenya)

Sustainable Agriculture and Community Development Programme (SACDEP Kenya) is an indigenous Kenyan development Organization and has its headquarters located in Thika town, Kiambu County. It about 40 KM from Nairobi. Currently, SACDEP is working with 7,452 farmers in 12 Counties, in 4 regions of Kenya thus; Eastern, Central, Coast and Rift Valley. SACDEP promotes improved livelihood improvement for small scale farmers through application of sustainable agriculture development practices.

1.3.5 Resource Oriented Development Initiatives (RODI Kenya)

Resources Oriented Development Initiatives (RODI)-Kenya is a development organization started in 1989 as a Community Based Organization, registered as a Non-Governmental Organization in 1999 with NGO Co-ordination Bureau. RODI-Kenya has a mission of *promoting human dignity among communities in Kenya and other Eastern African countries, through enhanced food security and crime prevention*. RODI has a *Vision of A sustained food secure, healthy and crime free society*. RODI's headquarters are in Ruiru Town about 25 km Northeast of Nairobi. RODI is currently working with 35 prisons, 53 community groups and 70 schools in seven provinces in Kenya (Nyanza, Western, Rift Valley, Central, Eastern, Coast and Nairobi provinces). It is also currently working with over 200 small holder tea farmers in Mataara, Gitwamba,

Gatiiguru, Kagio and Kiringi who supply their green leaves to the following KTDA tea factories; Ngere, Mataara and Theta in Kiambu county. These farmers also supply fuel wood to the factories for the steam boilers used to dry the tea. The farms are hilly and they experience a lot of soil erosion. These farms are in the catchment areas where the wet lands have been destroyed by farm cultivation for food production, growing of eucalyptus trees and silting.

1.3.6. Community Sustainable Development Empowerment Programme (COSDEP)

Community Sustainable Development Empowerment Programme (COSDEP) is a registered NGO focusing on ensuring continued learning and practice of Ecological Agriculture in rural communities for improved food and dietary conditions. COSDEP Kenya's work with tea farmers started in the year 2014 aimed at assisting these communities to be able to use what is naturally theirs, ecologically develop its nutrition security and if possible earn some income from gardening initiatives. COSDEP is currently working with 400 tea farmers from Kambaa Tea factory in Kiambu. COSDEP Kenya is using the existing structures within the factory to create awareness and train them on the importance of farmers embracing sustainable farming methods and better tea growing skills. In this year 2016, COSDEP target to start working with Kagwe tea factory who have already agreed to partner with us.

3

Key Impact level Changes Noted in the FOSELI Programme

An End of Project Evaluation, noted the following as Key impacts made in the three (3) year period (2017-2019)

a. Enhanced access to required highly nutritive food resources thus better food and nutrition security for target households. There is evidence of increased number of meals and improved quality of meals with regard to nutritional requirements. The targets households access most of their food requirements from own resources and the periods without adequate food is significantly reduced.

b. Increased ability to adequately meet requirements for basic needs. The target households have significantly increased their ability to meet their basic needs like education for children, appropriate shelter, health care and social cultural responsibilities due to an improved economic status. Most household report increased income, a more diverse income base and access to reliable credit facilities.

c. Improved quality of life and social status of small holder tea farmers. There is a heightened sense of independence by the small holder tea farmers due to reduced dependence on the tea as the only source of income and reduced indebtedness to the tea buyers that they earlier had to live with.

d. Improved confidence and appreciation of individual potentials to realize their own change: Almost all the participants shared they felt more in charge of their own change processes and shared they have identified resources within their control that they could leverage. As shared by one woman *“Just by being brought together and learning how to save the little money we make as farmers and without any money from outside, we have managed to support each other and to diversify our businesses, almost everyone here has at least two sources of income. We are confident we will achieve our goals finally”*

e. Increased involvement of community structures in local governance and advocacy. There is an enhanced sense of the need to closely work with the local authorities, government agencies and the private sector by the groups that work with FOSELI. The groups are aware and make effort to claim their rights from duty bearers.

f. Heightened recognition of the implementing agency as a critical player in the areas of food and nutrition, environmental conservation and networking. The project has helped to further strengthen the position of PELUM Kenya and its MOs as a credible partners and players in its target areas and sectors. The organization is very well known and appreciated by key stakeholders .Other agencies have been mobilized to support the project initiatives like one agency is supporting the development of water pans to provide water harvesting and storage for farm use during the dry spells. The farmers who have benefited from the initiative expressed satisfaction and the model can be leveraged for PELUM Kenya to play a central role in a more multi stakeholder strategy to address the longer term needs for sustainable livelihoods for small holder tea farmers in the wider central Kenya and other tea growing zones.

4

Success Stories

4.1 A Shining Star In Kitchen Gardening



Lucy in her well planned garden inspecting the onions and amaranth on the right

By D. N. Kariuki

Lucy Wambui Ndirangu, a member of Mwhoko common interest group is a happy wife and mother. One great reason being that she is now able to provide all the vegetables that are required by her family throughout the year by maintaining a well planned kitchen garden. She looks back and regrets why she had not learnt how to grow and manage a provident and safe kitchen garden earlier in life. With a family of 4 and only one acre of land and less than a quarter acre left for food growing, she is now able to use organic farming skills to grow vegetables in every available space including in bag gardens which she has learnt from the Food Security and livelihoods improvement (FOSELI) initiative and the frequent visits by the trainer from Organic Agriculture centre of Kenya (OACK), a grassroots organization implementing the project.

Lucy who comes from Wakibugi village, was first introduced to organic agriculture some years ago, but due to minimal follow

up, she did not learn enough to enable her practice independently. Because of this, she continued with the conventional farming. She was left to long for the time she would gain adequate knowledge and skills to practice what she believed was what she and many like her needed. To save them from the sufferings associated with the foods contaminated by agrochemicals rampantly used in her area such as pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. Notably, she used to have frequent stomach and joint aches which she attributes to the quality and inorganic manner of food she used to consume and offer to the family to an extent of not able to walk a slight uphill. She had also disappointedly experienced decline in production due to soil damage as a result of what she says is use of synthetic fertilizers and chlorinated piped water.

FOSELI Intervention

The initiative trained farmers on Ecological, organic Agriculture, Bio intensive farming,



Lucy Ndirangu inspecting her coriander seeds in the garden

“This is when I learnt to plan by apportioning plots and planting different crops all at the same time” she says with delight. “Your constant farm follow-up and additional trainings have made it possible for my husband and I to grow more than we can finish and this is good because I also sell some to the neighbours at an average of 50-100 shillings per day”

- Lucy Wambui

farm planning, Kitchen Gardening and indigenous vegetable production.

The Success

Her kitchen garden consists of container gardens around the houses and well made soil beds which accommodate more than a dozen crops some of which are indigenous and common vegetables such as amaranth, Spider plant, night shade, cherry tomatoes, onions, carrots, cabbages, local maize, runner beans, coriander, kales, Swiss chard, sweet potatoes, besides fodder for her cattle. As a result of the project, she can now produce even during the dry seasons and the farm now has different traditional vegetables that she didn't have before whose seeds have become another

source of income for her. Learning to make and continued use of well rotten manure (compost) and better yields has made her accept as true that the soil is recovering since she is able to have better crops even during water scarce periods. This makes her neighbours wonder about her secret but she knows that compost and the pest management products she has learnt to make and apply have the answer. “The yields are better than when I used to apply fertilizers, besides I also now enjoy better taste and assurance that what we eat as a family is safe. I make sure there is always enough from my garden because I don't trust the quality of what otherwise I would buy. I can with confidence say that my health particularly has improved greatly for



Mary in her kitchen garden.

“I’m able to work, walk long distances and the frequent illnesses have ceased.”

Her family’s unity has also improved overtime. She recalls how no one including the husband ever thought she would succeed. Overtime, this has shifted since the husband; Mr. Ndirangu is very supportive as he readily helps in composting and other farm activities whenever he is available. “At first I thought there could not be any harvest without use commercial fertilizers, but now I have seen and tasted the goodness of ‘chemical free farming.

Challenges faced

In her farming journey she considers lack of direct markets for the organic produce as one of the greatest challenges encountered. “The people around us do not appreciate the fact that what we have is safe and better. They just buy from wherever cheap products are offered therefore denying us market opportunities for our superfluous”. Lack of enough rain is another obstacle which she encounters in her farming although she attempts to solve this by installing a water pan so that she harvests surface runoff in the rainy seasons and use later during the dry seasons.

Lucy or Mama Peter as we call her, remains passionate and a shining example of organic

Benefits of Kitchen Gardening

- Cost Effective
- Saves time
- Easy to manage without chemicals and synthetic fertilizers
- High nutritive value crops

gardener among the group members as well as in her village whose accomplishments are both enthusing and inspiring.

In conclusion, she wishes that all people in her area would turn to this kind of what she calls ‘good farming’ for the sake of their own health and that of their loved ones.

4.2 Farmers use Table Banking to Fight Poverty

By D.N Kariuki

Do not despise the day of small beginnings, or so they say. Kwimenya group in Kiarira village has set the bar on group saving and loaning too high for the other groups to emulate. The group started with only 17 members in Kiarira village, Kigumo Sub-County in January 2017 but has since grown to 50 members thanks to the table banking concept that was introduced to them by the FOSELI project.

The Problem

Although table banking is a common phenomenon a quick appraisal conducted revealed that very few rural inhabitants in reality practice regular saving, proper budgeting and sound debt admin. This being a tea growing area means that the payments for growers' tea have to go through the bank and there lies the trap. The monthly payouts are meager and individuals have to wait for the 'bonuses' only twice in a year forcing them to survive on very expensive loans from the commercial banks that keep increasingly in debts.

The Intervention

The Project trained Kwimenya focassio on Village savings and Loaning (famously called a Table Bank). The intention was to enable members to save and access affordable loans which they can use to improve their farming and also meet some of the emerging financial needs in the family. The soft loans are paid back with a small interest which is the profit for the group and later shared among the members depending on one's savings and repayments.

The Success

Three (3) years since its establishment, Kwimenya Focassio Group has grown steadily to support the welfare of member farmers to access micro - small credit.

The group's funds have also increased substantially in the 3 years to slightly over One (1) million Shilling from a Sh.5,100 the members were able to save in the first meeting since each only had sh.200 for registration and sh.100 as savings. "This money has mainly grown from the interest that we get from our members when they pay back loans" Says the group's chairman, Mr. Reuben Mwangi. Its membership has continued to grow, almost triple membership in just the three years.

The group adopted the name Kwimenya which in kikuyu means self-conscious in an endeavour to know themselves, their problems and how to solve them. This led them to evolve from a Farmer's Field School to a saving and loaning group upon receiving training on financial management; - importance of saving, budgeting and debt management, co facilitated by Ikumbi Tea Factory and Organic Agriculture Center of Kenya (OACK) staff through the FOSELI project. The group have also been connected to Focassio services who are expert trainers in Table banking.

Did You Know?



The performance of the tea industry is vital to the Kenyan economy. Tea is the largest foreign exchange earner in Kenya contributing over 114 billion. The tea industry contributes about 4% to the GDP and more than 20% of the foreign exchange. More than 650,000 Kenyans directly earn a living from tea. Tea is grown in 15 countries and is therefore an effective catalyst for development. Tea is also the only cash crop grown widely in geographically dispersed areas in Kenya. The small scale tea farmers account for over 66% of Kenya's production with the rest being produced by the medium and large size tea estates (Batiano, 2004).

“Our objective for smallholder farmers through table banking is to use this opportunity to beat the high bank interest rates and reduce dependence on tea by engaging in other income earning activities which can lift our livelihoods”. Said Mr. Kariuki of Focassio Services during the group induction.

When asked, all the members agree unanimously that being in the group is one of the best decisions ever made. “We can now access affordable loans against our savings to cater for important obligations such as paying school fees and sometimes buying food unlike before when we depended only on banks for every borrowing”. Said Mrs. Rose Wambui Wangui, the group secretary and a beneficiary.

Mr. David Ndung’u started with a short term loan of Ksh.1,500 to buy house hold items and later a long-term one to purchase a lactating dairy cow which changed his fortunes ever since. He also started a business that deals with distribution of dairy concentrates by taking collective orders and delivering to fellow farmers in the village. “This group has made it possible for me to learn many things including making silage, a skill I use to earn income when I make the same for other farmers. I think I now know more than the one who taught me” says David.

James Karanja, one of the initial training facilitators and a member, borrowed Ksh. 100,000 to supplement what he had to buy a car that he uses as a taxi while Njau Murima 22 years old, borrowed Ksh. 70,000 to purchase a motor bike he relies on for transport business and repaying the loan.

On her part, Mrs. Mary Njeri got a loan of Ksh. 50,000 which she has since repaid to procure a chaff cutter to enable her

improve her dairy project. Monica Wambui Njiiri has been able to put up a cemented floor of her house, thanks to the loan just enough for that from the group. They all credit their success to the low interest rate of 10 percent charged on loans and the opportunity to negotiate for differed repayment when circumstances weigh heavily on the indebted member.

Kwimenya Focassio group, having started as learning group has chosen to remain cohesive, continue seeking knowledge together and where possible help one another. As such they established a social welfare fund where each member contributes Ksh.100 per month to benefit any member with Ksh. 5,000 in case of hospitalization or of any of the family members. This was prompted by one Mr. Gikeri when he borrowed some money to pay for his wife’s medical bills. Besides, since the group is hinged on food security, the group manages a common and local vegetable nursery in order to ease access to seedlings and ensure that they keep up with the need to be food secured. Members are now able to grow and consume traditional vegetables.

The group’s strength as some members believe, lies in their commitment, openness and consultations. However, they are keen to point out that in the beginning of the social welfare initiative, some members were not keen to adopt it or contribute to an extent that in some instances, it drew from the main scheme’s coffers. Absenteeism by some members was at some point a concern.

They all agree to hold the vision that one day the group shall have enough reserves so as to invest for their children such as purchase fixed assets like land or plots.



4.3 Diversification of Farm Enterprises, Benefits Small Scale Tea Farmers



Ms Grace Wanja in her pumpkin farm

By Hannah Kigamba

In Iri-ani village, Kamburu Ward, Kiambu County, meet Ms. Grace Wanja of Triple T self-help Group. The group is one of beneficiary for FOSELI (Food Security and Livelihood Improvement) project. ICE started to engage the group in 2017 under the project among other ten groups in the area.

The Problem

One of the key problem faced by Ms. Grace was over dependence on one crop tea for income which she then uses to buy food. Another problem was that despite having a substantial piece of land (3 acres), the only crops that were planted were tea and nappier grass. This was because of inadequate knowledge in farming and more so on chemical free farming.

The Intervention

Under FOSELI project, Ms. Wanja was trained on diversification of farm enterprises to compliment income from tea. She has been exposed to skills on organic farming, which she says, she is happy that she is not only growing enough for her family

but also healthy foods which she is able to sell the surplus. In additional to training on farming, she also benefitted on trainings on marketing which has empowered her to make more income. She is now able to know best timing for specific farm produce



Ms .Grace wanja in her tea farm



Grace at vegetable seedbed.

and also undertake market survey to be able to know how much to sell her produce based on market rates. This has reduced over exploitation by middle persons

The Success

When the project was starting, Grace Wanja was among the very first farmers to start replicating lessons learnt in her farm. This was the time some farmers were resistance to change as they were not ready and as it happens, change of attitude is hardest part in any community project. Some had reservation to alternative farming with a perception that it is tiring and requires a lot of labor. Some farmers have been having perception that alternative farming can only be possible with a small piece of land, relatively quarter of an acre. However, Grace Wanja started to replicate and she says she has no regret.

Grace's advice to farmers is never to give up or be scared to begin because once you begin, you start enjoying with time. She has 3 acres of land covered with tea and at 3/4 acre where she has her homestead and now have diversified with variety of food crops including vegetables and keeping livestock. Her farm has become a beautiful orchard where she has over ten variety of food crops such as arrow roots, yams, pumpkins, sweet



Grace at her farm where she has diverse crops

and Irish potatoes, maize, beans, variety of vegetables including traditional ones and fruits trees for agroforestry. As a result of the diversification she has been able to multiply income from her farm. This is reducing her risk of over relying on tea only. Grace is also an evidence that it is possible to grow food crops on a large piece of land – over a quarter without using external inputs. Grace looks forward to when her and other members practicing sustainable agriculture practices which do not rely on external inputs farming will have a space in the all open markets for organic produce, they can reap more from this farming.

4.4 Agro Ecology changing lives of farmers in Limuru



Farmers field day organized by Bibirioni group

Bibirioni farmers group is one of the groups located Limuru sub county in Kiambu. The area being a highland is favorable for growing tea, and majority of the community rely mostly on tea.

COSDEP began working with Bibirioni farmers group through the farmers' field schools organized by KTDA. The group has 27 members. A baseline survey was conducted and through this we were able to understand the challenges they faced

within the community. We found out that farm ers rely mostly on tea for their livelihood; there was nutritional deficiency and soil depletion due to over dependence on synthetic fertilizers.

The Intervention

In 2017 FOSELI project was introduced to the group, COSDEP began the FOSELI project with Bibirioni farmers group and through this they were trained in different agro ecological techniques. Among the various techniques that they were trained on included establishment and management of kitchen gardens, raised beds, double dug beds, portable gardens, sunken beds and how to make rich-in-nutrients compost manure to be used in enriching the soil nutrients. They were also trained on how to make organic pesticides and also farm diversification. Being impressed with the skills acquired the group decided to come up with a demonstration farm as a training site for the group members, the larger community and visitors.

Other than a learning site, the Demo farm is also a source of income for the group. On

Agroecology



Agroecology is the study of ecological processes applied to agricultural production systems. It is working with nature and not against nature. It combines different methods of ecological farming e.g Biointensive, Permaculture, Organic farming, agroforestry and biodynamic farming.



Farmers benefiting from other stakeholders during a field day

Principles of Ecological Organic Agriculture



1. **The principle of Health:** Healthy soils, plants, animals and humans. All these leads to a healthy planet
2. **The principle of Ecology:** Emulating and sustaining natural systems
3. **The principle of Fairness:** means equity, respect and justice for all living things
4. **The principle of Care:** means keeping land safe for generations to come

The farmer, among other farmers, was trained on agro-ecological farming and on how to grow food crops alongside tea production so as to improve the food availability and accessibility amongst themselves. Initially, he had dedicated a lot of his time on tea production with little time spent on food crop production and was applying synthetic fertilizers on his farm. He was able to adopt the technologies and immediately established a productive kitchen garden with a variety of vegetables in his 1/4 acre farm. Vegetables such as; spider plant, amaranthus, spinach, kales and onions. He also practices agroforestry on the same piece of land, and from this he realized the benefits of the FOSELI project

average the group is able to get ksh.2000 per week from the sale of vegetables and seeds. This has attracted more people who come to learn. The group also extends their training during field days, in barazas, churches and schools. Since the inception of the project the group has been able to reach more than 500 farmers directly and over 2000 farmers indirectly.

The success

From the Demonstration farm, several farmers have been able to replicate the practices in the Demo farm in their households. Mr. Mburu one of the group members was identified as a model farmer who championed very much on the implementation of the Ecological Agricultural practices at his farm and volunteered to train the other group members.



Mr Mburu's farm before training



His nursery for both domestic and commercial production



His planned farm after training.



Mr Mburu inspecting his spinach farm

Mr. Mburu quoted, “I have learnt the importance of growing my own food organically and I am very happy for that. Growing my own food has assured me of enough and healthy food for my family and this has reduced my expenses of buying food from the market. Growing my own food has also enabled me to generate income from the sale of my excess produce

locally, save more for expansion of other enterprises like dairy and poultry”

His hard work and determination has attracted many and he is very happy to help others learn and improve their livelihood. He has a plan to expand his gardens so that he can increase his production capacity and reap more.

Challenges experienced

Initially there were challenges in controlling pests and diseases in his farm but it has become something of the past after FOSELI project was started. He is able to prepare and use his own organic pesticides in controlling pest and disease losses in his farm.



Mr. Mburus poultry and dairy units





Second right: Mr Mburu training other farmers in his farm.



Bibirioni group members in their demo farm

My dream



“My dream in the field of organic agriculture is to act and be a role model to other community members so that they can copy and adopt what am doing towards food security enhancement and poverty eradication. I wish other members can integrate production of food crops and tea farming so that they produce their own food and instead of going to the market to buy food, they can save that money and use it in other useful production systems and other enterprises.”

Making Animal manure tea

Requirements

Animal manure (cow dung/poultry manure), Drum, Water, Sack and string, A strong stick, Polythene material

Procedure

- Take a drum and add water till it reaches half
- Take a sack and add animal manure
- Tie the sack and supporting it with a stick, put into the drum. Ensure that the water does not pass the tied point and the sack is not touching the drum
- Cover with a polythene paper
- After 7 days, shake the sack
- Repeat that till 21 days are over when it will be ready for use

Making Plant tea

Requirements

Drum, Water, Tithonia diversifolia plants (vetch, comfrey may also be used)

Procedure

- Take a drum
- Put the Tithonia plants into the drums. The plants should be tender, just before they flower.
- Add some water till they cover the leaves
- Cover the top of the drum with a polythene material
- After 7 days, shake the drum and cover
- Repeat the same procedure until day 21 when it will be ready for use.

4.5 Making Money from Organic farming



Mr Mburu (2nd from left) with other inmates, prison officers and the trainer from RODI (in white)

By Muthike Mbiru

Mr. Mburu, a farmer in Gituamba Location, Gatundu North Sub County, is a testament that negative attitude is indeed one of the major hindrance to community development. Prior to joining the FOSELI Project, Mr. Mburu was a policeman who later as fate would have it became a prisoner at one of the Kenyan prisons. It is during his stay at the prison that he received some basic training on farming from RODI Kenya. When he left prison in 2015, his mind was clear on what he wanted to do in his 2 acre piece of land. He wanted to settle down in the village and implement the skills he had acquired from RODI.

On arrival, many of his village mates were skeptical of his ability to work in the farm since he had spent the better part of his life working as an Administration Policeman. One of his immediate neighbours openly



asked him whether he would survive in the village as a casual labourer. Mburu was startled to learn the kind of attitude and perception his fellow villagers had. He however decided to remain focused and formed a farmers group called Triple K self-help group.

The Intervention

Triple K group was one of the groups selected to be part of the FOSELI project. They received training on enterprise diversification, bio intensive training, agroforestry, farm planning, bio fertilizer formulation and organic farming. Mr Mburu did not hesitate to replicate what he learnt in his farm. From his 2 acre land, he stopped using synthetic fertilizers and chemicals in his tea farm and integrated pineapples, assorted indigenous vegetables, assorted fruit trees such as avocados, passion and Mangoes.

Below: Mr. Mburu with his diversified farm enterprises

The Success

Three years down, Mr. Mburu has become one of the farmer champions in the village. From his various enterprises, he has been able to get enough income to sustain his family and pay school fees for his college going children. He has been contracted to supply organic passion fruits and pineapples. Additionally, he prides himself in the ability to bust the myth that organic farming is unsustainable in a large piece of land since he has been able to produce all crops in his land chemical free.

Other than crops, Mr. Mburu has been able to incooperate indegenous poultry in his farm from which he gets eggs and meat. On avearge Mr. Mburu is assured of a daily amount of about Ksh 500 and in a good season goes upto Ksh 3,000 a day.



4.6 Making Money from Organic Tree tomato

By D. Ndegwa

Many farmers have diversified their farming since the inception of the project. Vegetable farming for domestic and market has gained popularity with almost every group member having portions on their farms occupied by both indigenous and exotic vegetables. Fruit farming has equally gained popularity with Tree tomato (Ribena) taking the lead. SACDEP has supported farmers with 5,000 seedlings of tree tomato which is contributing towards income diversification.

Mr. Thuku is a young farmer who is a member of Kigomo Central Group, One of the groups in the FOSELI Project. He spent most of his years working on his family's tea plantation. Besides working on his mother's tea farm, he reclaimed a small portion of land that was not being utilized and initiated a tree tomato project.

The Intervention

Other than training on Agro ecology, soil fertility, bio fertilizer preparation and fruit tree farming, Kigomo Central group, was a



Mr. Thuku on his tree tomato farm enterprise

part of the groups that were taken for an exposure learning visit at Kirinyaga and Embu by the project. During the visit, they interacted with tea farmers who grew tree tomatoes and made more income from tea based on their agro ecological practices in their farms. One thing that stood out for Mr. Thuku was, the tree tomato farming, he gained interest and started a small project on tree tomato. More tree tomato seedlings were distributed by the project to the interested farmers and Mr. Thuku was one of the beneficiaries. "I was trained on soil fertility management. This has helped me a lot since I no longer depend on synthetic fertilizers for the production of my fruits.

The Success

Mr. Thuku uses compost manure and he has started a vermiculture project. So far he has more than 500 plants with the mature trees yielding approximately 10kgs each and selling at Kshs. 80 per kilo. "To date, I have made over Kshs. 85,000. This amount cannot be realized from the tea for such a

I never thought that farming is rewarding in the beginning. I was brought up by a tea farmer and the only farm enterprise that I knew could perform on our farm was tea. My mother had a lot of challenges to bring us up and educate all of my siblings. The income from tea was just a handful. We were used to buying our foodstuff from the market

- Mr. Thuku -

short duration and small portion of land. My target is to earn Kshs. 1 million in one year from the same farm that used to give us less than Kshs. 100,000 per year” says a delighted Mr. Thuku. In addition to the tree tomatoes, he has started growing vegetables for both family consumption and for the market. “Am very grateful to FOSELI project since it has turned around our lives and is restoring hope to the young and old farmers. ” narrates Mr. Thuku.

The goal of PELUM Kenya is to enhance the capacities of local communities and empower them to manage and sustain the natural resources around them. PELUM Kenya, pays particular attention to Agriculture and Ecological Bio-diversity.



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