

Lesson 1: **On-Farm Agriculture Production**

Lesson: **Availing inclusive skill transfer and mentorship support to the ultra poor in rural areas can remarkably transform household food security.**

The best practice for this lesson is drawn from *Tumus Livelihood Self-Help Group*, in Maragua Ridge, Muranga County. Tumus Self-Help Group applied good agricultural practices for increased on-farm food productivity, with outstanding results.

1.0. BACKGROUND

Women and girls in Africa are the key actors in food production both at commercial and at household levels. They make up 70% of the total 14.75 million labor force directly engaged in agriculture. The sector accounts for 29.3% of Kenya's national GDP estimated at US\$79.9 billion. Despite contributing more to land productivity, a range of factors have conspired to exclude women and girls from enjoying the benefits of agriculture even when it was so obvious that they were the backbone supporting agriculture development.

Limiting factors; include climate change, poor access and control to resources, poor access to gender friendly technology and equipment, inadequate engagement of women in food security decision making and the social cultural practices that limit equal ownership and control.

WEMIHS, in the *Strengthening Community Responses to Vulnerability through Livelihoods Initiatives (SCRALI) 2011-2016* project aimed to: (i) improve household food security by tracking successful agricultural practices and (ii) maintain sustained agricultural production despite poor weather conditions resulting from the impact of climate change.

The program engaged 1,500 households] reached through the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The mechanism established that 85% of the program

SUCCESS STORY

Peter Mwangi is a beneficiary of WEMIHS on-farm interventions affiliated to the *Tumus Livelihood Self-Help Group* in Maragua Ridge, Muranga County.

WEMIHS has seven groups in Maragua which bring together 154 ultra-poor households out of a total local population of 21,195 people. Cumulatively, the seven groups indirectly support 389 the livelihoods.

Peter was identified in 2010 through a WEMIHS social mapping exercise conducted in Maragua Ridge to identify the most vulnerable and deserving households. Peter's situation was dire and he was on the verge of giving up.

Besides being HIV positive, his wife had deserted him in 2006 over his leaving him to single-handedly fend for the couple's six children and his ageing parents. Since the productivity of his half-acre piece of land was low, Peter solely relied on casual labour to support his family.

This notwithstanding, he was stigmatized by his health status. Just when he was contemplating to send his children away, a timely encounter with WEMIHS marked a turning point in his life. Peter was shortlisted and placed in Tumus Livelihood Self-Help.

In 2010 WEMIHS mounted a series of trainings for groups in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and also the Ministry of Livestock Development. Members were exposed to good agricultural practices such as double-digging, compost manure preparation, livestock keeping and post-harvest management. The Ministry distributed certified seeds to the members for trial on their farms.

beneficiaries were vulnerable female headed households most of them affected by poverty and disease. They were initially marginalized in their own community and struggled for basic essential services and rights.



A vulnerable household

The baseline study conducted by WEMIHS at the start of program indicated that MHH earned income of 15.00 CA\$ per month and FHH: 12.73 CA\$ per month and at end of program MHH: 36.58 CA\$ per month. This represents 143% increase from baseline FHH: 32.47 CA\$ per month. This represents 155% increase from baseline.

1.1. STRATEGIES USED AND LESSONS LEARNT:

WEMIHS used a gender responsive empowerment approach using practical skill transfer for transformation and strengthening community own social support system. The beneficiaries were organized into 57 groups for ease of training and implementation of the various project interventions namely: **agriculture production, livestock management, enterprise development and linkages to market, savings and loans, and advocacy and capacity building.**

The objective was to enhance the resilience of target populations through a sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) that integrates food production and enterprise development with community-based responses to HIV/Aids.

WEMIHS learnt that while rural farmers thought they knew how to farm and produce food, they really did not because they lacked knowledge, information and skills to guide them in doing the right thing.

WEMIHS established Community Learning Sites in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, with a significant degree of success to support practical community learning and transfer of skills in innovative technologies.

Groups were taught climate change adaptation techniques key among them being double digging, zai pits, compost manure making, crop diversification and multi-storey gardening that promotes micro agriculture where land is scarce.

Success Story cont'd.....

Peter applied the skills and knowledge he acquired on his half-acre farm with outstanding results. For the first time, the same piece of land that previously could only yield one bag of maize and half a bag of beans, now yielded six bags of maize and three bags of beans! This enabled the family to have food for a longer period than ever before.

Motivated by the results, Peter focused on the productivity of his farm and acquired livestock assets. Today he has four goats, a dairy cow and 35 chickens to supplement the family's diet and income which now stands at an average Ksh 4,500. With time, Peter emerged the best performer in his group and was elected Secretary, a gesture that validated his acceptance by the community and helped to reduce the stigma he previously suffered.

Through WEMIHS VCT and Counselling services offered in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Peter was helped to reconcile with his HIV status and to choose to live positively. With a renewed will to live and improved income, Peter regained his health, became productive and remarried. He put up a bigger and better three-roomed house to upgrade the family's living standards and also and educated his children.

Peter has experienced total transformation for himself and his family. Without adding an inch to his original farm, his family now enjoys food security for up to eight months and their quality of life has significantly improved.

As a result of this experience, Peter has decided to live by the mantra: Forward ever, backward never'.

ENDS.

WEMIHS LESSONS LEARNT KNOWLEDGE RESOURCE

Strengthening Community Responses to Vulnerability Through Livelihoods Initiatives Kenya 2011-2015

The low cost but high production multi-storey gardening technology became most appropriate and popular particularly with female-headed households, with 898 women adopting the technology compared to 299 men. The project identified and promoted Food Security Community Own Resource Persons (FS-CORPs) in the various group to serve as community champions. CORPs are well acknowledged for their knowledge and ability to pass on new skills on agriculture best practices and climate change adaptation techniques in such areas as soil preparation, post-harvest and water management.

All 57 groups were trained, empowered and linked to relevant government Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and Health for sustained demand for extension services technical support, information, supplies and to advocate for streamlined policies and processes.

WEMIHS' also linked groups to private sector suppliers of farm inputs such as Dalas Agri-Business Solutions Ltd, a seed company that trained all 58 FS-CORPs on farm storage technologies, hence building their capacity to train group and other community members. The effort was intended to deepen WEMIHS capacity to respond to complex community livelihood challenges.

OUTCOMES / IMPACT

- Double digging and compost making were the most highly adopted practices by 96% and 94% of the households respectively, and intercropping by 90% of beneficiaries. Their crops have been doing comparatively well since project inception.
- The number of food secure months per household increased from **4.36 months** at baseline to **7.95 months for FHHs** and **7.71 months for MHHs**, representing **82.4%** increase in food security respectively.
- More women (898) adopted multi-storey gardening compared to men (299) making the low cost but high production technology more popular with female headed households. This was a result of women experiencing increased incomes which enabled them to buy quality seeds and other farm inputs besides increasing their knowledge and skills in improved agricultural practices. This served to strengthen our Lesson Learnt.
- The number of Households using post-harvest management doubled from 46% in SA-1 to 83% in the last survey. FS CORPs passed on post-harvest skills to a total of 1,197 (299 men, 898 women) beneficiaries at group level which represents a 79.8% success rate. This has helped prevent the loss of cereals through pests and contamination, which stood at about 40% loss of maize in post-harvest period.
- FS CORPS are now playing a more significant role as key contact persons linking community members with government offices as well as resource persons with updated information and skills useful to support agriculture research and services. This relationship will continue beyond the project.