

# **A CASE STUDY ON THE PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY FARMERS ORGANIZATIONS IN SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURE, A REVIEW OF THE IMPACT MADE BY DETRA-AFRICA AND GRADIF KENYA IN THE PROJECT “INCREASED CITIZENRY PARTICIPATION AND GOVERNANCE IN SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN THARAKA NITHI, MERU AND NYERI COUNTIES”**

## **Introduction**

Through financial support from ACT! DETRA-AFRICA and GRADIF K have been implementing the above project for 2 years with a component of strengthening the capacity of farmers groups to influence agricultural policy frameworks development. The project sought to address degradation of natural resources, promoting cooperation among small holder farmers, promoting formation of marketing through cooperation to reduce exploitation by middlemen, promoting preservation and storage initiatives to reduce losses encountered by farmers through damages and delayed delivery of fresh produce to the market.

This was intended to be achieved through strengthening farmers groups through trainings, educational forums, exchange visits on how to sustain their livelihoods, to adopt strategies for managing these resources including engaging in policy and advocacy processes.

The project engaged selected farmers who represented various small scale farmers from the three Counties, who participated in number of trainings in advocacy, sustainable agriculture, natural resources management and climate change among others. The farmers also participated in organized exposure/ exchange visits from the three counties where they got demonstrations on sustainable farming methods. These people who benefitted from the above trainings and exchange visits were expected to replicate the knowledge acquired in their farms and also train the other farmers in represented groups. An average of 240 farmers benefitted from these visits and trainings in the 2 years of the project.

## **Background information**

Degradation of natural resources in the area addressed by this project has in many occasions been associated with land tenure and small farm holdings. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of these selected counties with most of the farming activities being carried out by smallholder farmers with small parcels of land and characterized by lack cooperation amongst themselves and are heavily exploited by middlemen, have no access to markets and suffer enormous losses through damages and delayed delivery of fresh produce to the market. Where farmer groups have been formed, they are characterized with poor production, processing, weak leadership, and marketing systems. The products are marketed in raw form and most often are perishable in nature. Small holder farmers incur losses in the farm and at post-harvest through poor handling in the farm, transit and in the store. The farmers lack capacity and facilities to prevent losses. This project was therefore initiated to address the above challenges in order to achieve a lasting solution.

The study was carried out in Meru, Nyeri and Tharaka Nithi Counties by the project team in order to ascertain the impacts that this project has reached to the target farmers. 2 staff members from DETRA AFRICA AND GRADIF KENYA participated in this study with the following objectives

- To ascertain the knowledge the knowledge acquired by the benefiting farmers from the trainings and exchange visits facilitated
- To verify how the farmers have replicated the knowledge acquired in the 2 years
- To ascertain key challenges and gaps faced by the farmers and farmer's organizations/ groups during the 2 years and future plans to address them.

The data collection entailed oral interviews and observation. The staff members also reviewed various documents like procurement notes, delivery notes, and receipts among others to track the progress of the beneficiaries. The study took place in the selected Counties of Tharaka Nithi and Meru. They were purposefully selected.



Picture above: Detra Africa staff (Flora Kaari) interviewing one of beneficiaries (farmer) in Tharaka Nithi County

## Findings

After conducting field visits in randomly selected farmer's households, all the farmers were able to showcase the practical projects that they have replicated as a result of the exchange visits and the trainings. They all admitted that there were significant changes in terms of quality and quantity of their farm produce comparing the time they had no knowledge about sustainable farming and then. Farmers expressed tremendous change/ improvements in returns hence improving household income as a result of the new initiatives introduced in their households through this program. Most farmers belong to a particular farmer association/ group/ organization, and therefore, the management, progress and challenges faced by these associations were addressed.

Below is an analysis of an in-depth interview with one of the beneficiaries who has demonstrated tremendous improvement in the project in Meru County

*Mrs Margaret Munene from Equator area in Meru County is on record of rearing local breeds of chicken. But according to her, they take long time to mature, they consume a lot and it's difficult to find market. Therefore, by the time they reach the marketing stage, the profit is very little or in most cases she makes losses. This has for a long time discouraged her. According to her, she got an inspiration as a result of attending numerous trainings and farmers exchanged visits to Nyeri and Tharaka Nithi Counties. The activities were facilitated and organized by DETRA- Africa and GRADIF-K.*

*During these visits individuals learnt best practices from each other and from organizations. Visiting poultry rearing farm in Brade Gate in Nyeri became her turning point.*



***Photo showing farmers participating in demonstrations on how to rear chicken in Nyeri-brade gate poultry farmers. The visit that was facilitated by Gradik Kenya and Detra Africa 15th November 2012.***

*“I have been rearing the “kienjeji” type of chicken for years which took long time for them to mature; but after visiting brade gate farm in Nyeri; I learnt about chicks that grow and mature in 48days and have a ready market and other benefits like being provided with feeds and free veterinary services; Detra Africa Linked us with brade gate chicken farmers who supplied me and other farmers with 1 day old chicken. As a result I reared chicks worth 45,000 including feeds and free feeding instructions and transport services. After 48 days gate came to pick them and was paid 75,000. I therefore earned a profit of KES 35,000 within 48 days. I then decided to invest the capital and profit earned to double the number of chicks which will be bought anytime from now.” She said. When Detra Africa team visited her, the brade gate had already picked the chicken and then preparing to deliver more chicks to the farmer.*



*Mrs Munene and her husband Mr Munene demonstrating how they feed their chicken before they sold them to bradegate in Nyeri.*

*Being a board member of Ruiga girls high school, she introduced the idea to them and brade gate supplied 2000 chicks and have so far sold chicken worth 317,000 to brade gate for a start and are now planning to increase the number to 3000 chicks this time round; The project will be used as an initiative to educate needy children in the school.*

*"I discovered that I needed to transform my community to bring about change by demonstrating that there are options other than the traditional way of farming which brings low returns, she shared.*

*However am disappointed that though I make a lot of effort to provide for my community with information voluntarily as Detra and GRADIF did to us, many are willing but they lack capital to start this profitable venture" I would wish that Detra-AFRICA and GRADIF-K finds a way to support them to replicate this venture in their homes she said.*

## **AGRICULTURE PROJECT SUMMARY ECONOMIC BENEFITS DATA PER COUNTY**

COUNTY NAME	Type of Livelihoods (Horticulture, Cereals, Livestock/goat rearing, Poultry, Fish Farming etc.)	(Total amount received after sale (Kshs.
MERU COUNTY	POULTRY 1200 LIVE MATURE CHICKEN SALES& KSH 700 EACH 3600 EGGS @ KSH 10 EACH	840,000/=
	BANANAS 958 BUNCHES @420	36,000/=
	FROM FRUIT/TREE NURSERIES 18,062 SEEDLINGS SOLD @10/=	402,360/=
	GOAT REARING • MILK 26 LITRES X 30DAYS @Ksh 75 per litre • LIVE GOATS 2 GOATS @ 25,000	180,620/=
	TREE BUDDING OF MANGOES AND AVOCADO SOLD 12,000 SEEDLINGS @ 10/=	58,500/=
	FRUIT TREE NURSERIES (PASSION) 8123 SEEDLINGS @50	50,000/=
	ARROWROOTS 312 PLANTS@60/=PER KG	120,000/=
	COFFEE TREES 5,000KGS,@ 50/=	406,150/=
	LIVESTOCK/COWS 76 LITRES PER DAYX30 DAYS X @ 40/= PER LITRE	18,720/=
	THARAKA NITHI COUNTY	BANANAS 3000 BUNCHES@ 500 TISSUE CULTURE BANANAS FOR PLANTING 1800 SEEDLINGS @ 35
	CEREALS MAIZE 15 BAGS @ 3200	91,200/=
	8 BEANS X 6500-	63,000/=
	18 GREENS GRAMS X 8000	48,000/=
	SORGHUM- 21 BAGS X 2800	52,000
	FRENCH BEANS 416 CARTONS @150	144,000
	FRUITS PRODUCED: PASSIONS 255 cartons @200 PAWPAWS 1000kg @15	58,800
	TOMATOES1000kg@30PER KG	62,400
	ARROW ROOTS180kg@50PER KG	51,000/=
	LIVE GOATS SOLD 23@6,000EACH GOATS MILK 12 LITRES X 30DAYS @80	15,000/=
	COFFEE 684 KILOGRAMS @ 33 PER KG	30,000
FISH FARMING-78KGMS @1000PER KG	9,000/=	
		138,000/=
		28,800/=
		22,572/=
		78,000/=

	DAILY CATTLE MILK- 72 LITRESX30DAYSX @Ksh 40 PER LITRE	86,400/=
	LIVE CHICKEN SALES- 344 @700	240,800/=
<b>NYERI COUNTY:</b>	RABBITS:168 SOLD@555 EACH LIVE	93,240
	TREE NURSERY:115,500 SEEDLINGS SOLD@12	1,386,000
	GOATS:62SOLD@6335	392,770
	SHEEP:8 SOLD@4000	32,000
	BANANAS:182 BUNCHES@280	50,960
	BEEHIVES: 5 LITRES OF HONEY@1200	6,000
	CABBAGES:4316@13	56,108
	CARROTS:1200KGS SOLD@30PER KG	36,000
	ONIONS:7918kgs @ 80 PER KG	633,440
	POTATOES:50SACKS @2500	125,000
	QUAILS:2200 BIRDS@500	1,100,000
	COFFEE:1200kgs @28 EACH	33,600
	LIVE HEIFERS :7@5000	35,000
	GOAT BREEDING 30@1500	45,000
	<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>8,704,080</b>

### **Challenges encountered by the Agriculture organizations (AO's) and Individual farmers**

Irrespective of the gains made within the 2 years of implementation of this project, there are various gaps identified which has hindered realization of set goals and needs to be addressed

- Training in group dynamics, leadership skills, book keeping and record keeping has led to promotion of transparency and accountability in some AOs. However, the smaller ones who are still in the formative stages struggle with the problem of accountability as the interim officials have been in office for too long without holding election and seeking fresh mandate through the AGM.
- Most groups and organizations are still in formative stages and have not been able to influence any policy change, this therefore calls for capacity building and continued exposure to understand how and when to engage in lobbying and advocacy.
- Lack of leadership and little democratic space which negatively affects participation and trust between the group members.
- Most members of the executive committee are inexperienced in dynamics of viable commercial production, pooled marketing and market linkages.
- Lack of written constitution and rules that would clarify roles and responsibilities, and record keeping for transactions undertaken.
- Lack of income generating activities and business plans. Lack of resources limits the scale, scope
- Dependency on donors
- Political patronage making it difficult to separate AO leadership from politics.
- Volatile commodity prices leading to drop out by some member groups.
- Policies by the government that do not favor progressive development, Some commodities like bananas, eggs and chicken are yet to be given national priority and importance.
- Poor infrastructure that increases overhead costs, e.g. collection.
- HIV/AIDS and other diseases have become a major threat because they deplete the labour force and the skills imparted into the group members.

## Recommendations

We recommend following measures to enhance sustainability of the Agriculture groups:

- Capacity building on internal management structures, democracy and transparency should be provided by the mentoring organizations, as well as training in resource mobilization and market linkages for group leaders.
- Establish an appropriate legislative environment, which supports independent, transparent and clearly defined AO's auditing functions.
- Support from public institutions, donors or NGOs for agribusinesses should not distort the value chain.
- External support to FOs should be on a long term, minimum five years, so as to help Agriculture groups learn from their mistakes and build their capacity in organizational, financial management and democratic process. However this should be with an eye on developing leadership and management in the institution.
- The Agriculture groups should conduct an internal assessment through SWOT analysis to identify opportunities that are yet to be explored. This will enhance their management and thus attract more members; be focused leading to the achievement of their goals and objectives. However, farmer groups must avoid being too ambitious and expanding the scope or scale of activities too fast. Agriculture groups need to institutionalize learning in their management, monitoring and evaluation.
- The private sector (input dealers, agro-processors and market dealers) should be encouraged to invest in Agriculture groups/ organizations, especially for those willing to work with organized farmer groups to build their capacity and thus avoid

Harmonization of taxes and levies charged on farmers. The numerous taxes and levies borne by farmers are a disincentive to production and greatly distort market prices. Taxes levied on small businesses need to be reviewed and harmonized. All relevant taxes and levies can be charged as lump sum, similar to single business permit arrangement. AOs and other key stakeholders should enter into a dialogue with the government and determine appropriate fees and modalities for their collection.

- There is a need to lobby for construction of market stalls and sheds by the local authorities. This type of infrastructure is crucial for enhancing commercial production, especially for indigenous vegetables. Private investors can also be encouraged to venture into the same through provision of incentives such as the build-operate and - transfer schemes.
- The governments can play a bigger role in ensuring that legal regulations are in place to ensure reliable, accessible and favorable credit and saving services for farmers and agri-businesses through commercial banks and MFIs. AAs can play a bigger role in advising on appropriate terms and conditions for financial services.

AOs must continuously be creative to engage members in commercial oriented production and link them with the private sector resulting in increased incomes beyond household food security.

- To increase access to finance for farm production or establishment of agribusinesses, farmers need to be linked to special schemes which offer reasonable interest rates and repayment conditions. Disbursement of such loans however needs to go with training to ensure proper use and recovery of the loans.
- To provide more services to its members, the FOs should form networks within the region to gain numerical strength, merge resources and thus attract other service providers for enhanced services and other benefits access for its group members.

- The associations can serve as platforms for lobbying with the government to formulate and implement appropriate lending policies and better business development services. To ensure coordinated and well-focused training for farmers and agri-businesses, government needs to play a key role by identifying and strengthening key institutions that can provide the requisite training. The department of Extension Services in the ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in the three countries should be strengthened to provide quality services to the farmers. The governments can support the establishment of farmers' business schools (different from farmer field schools) to promote business orientation among farmers

AOs need to explore the market for processed and value added products and identify opportunities that are yet to be exploited. There is need to build the capacity of executive committees to understand and undertake value chain analysis, marketing intelligence and relay relevant information to their members on different commodity prices and demand of the same product.

- AOs need to conduct an intensive market research to identify and articulate the costs of investment and meeting the quality and standards as set by the government authorities involved in regulation (Bureaus of Standard) within the region and beyond.
- Strengthen existing contractual linkages and explore new ones to widen the market scope.
- Partnership with the private sector to invest more into value addition and use some of the dormant or underutilized facilities within