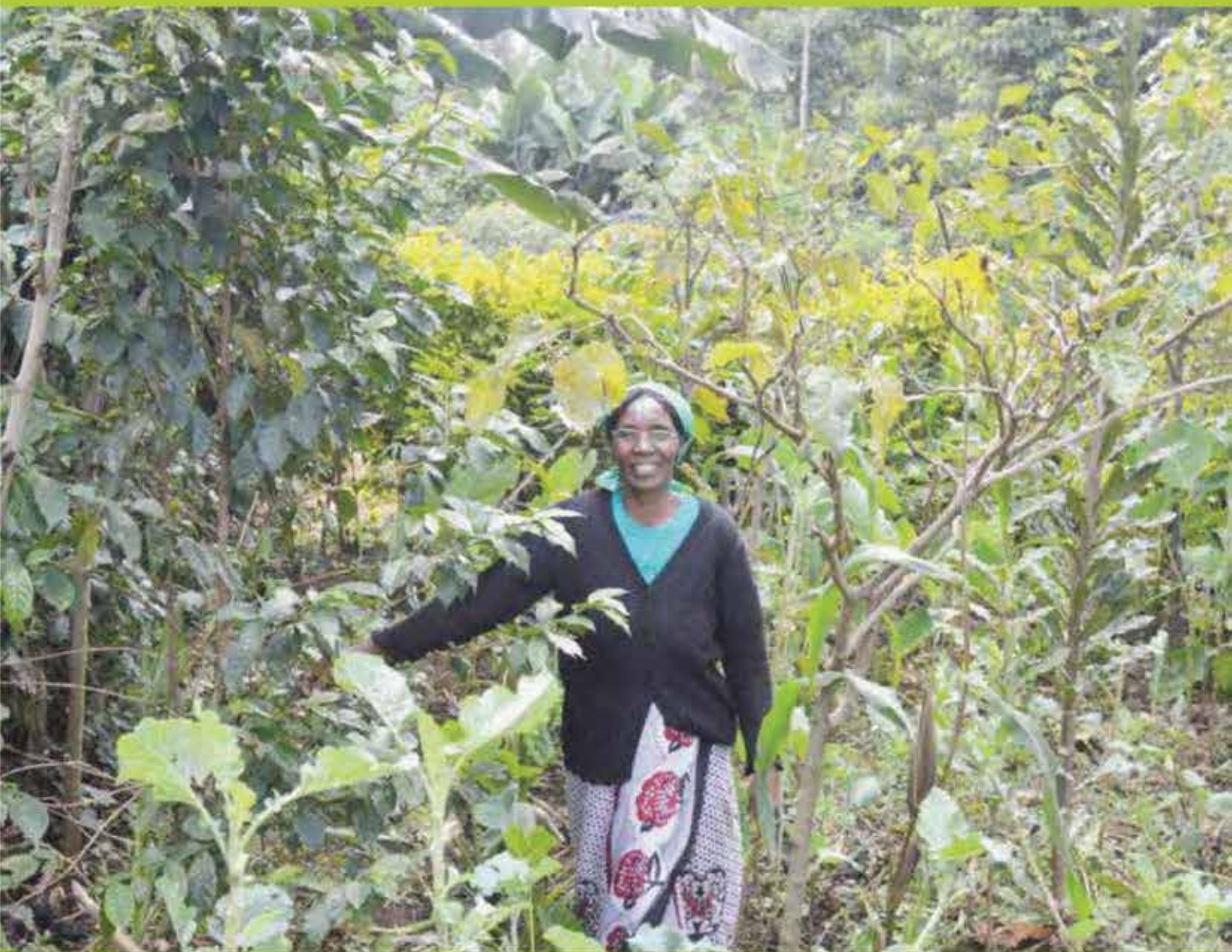


UPSCALING COMMUNITY ACTIONS FOR ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE



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Dear Readers,

In the face of increasing attention been given on the need to engage local communities and facilitate community resilience, ICE is mobilizing local community groups and networks for actions to combat climate change for resilience and healthy ecosystems and people. ICE has been actively engaged in ongoing national and county processes while empowering beneficiaries to strategically position themselves in actions through promoting sustainable land use practices.

This magazine showcases stories from field from some of ICE project areas on initiatives being undertaken that are positively changing lives of rural communities by enhancing resilient of ecological systems and people. The stories have focus on importance of building networks and partnerships at the local level in implementation of community development projects. This is in line with the theme "upscaling community actions for adaptation to climate change". ICE also recognizes community indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices in building resilient communities.

Enjoy Reading!

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ICE PARTNERS



Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

Empowering Local Communities For Protection Of Kilimambogo Hill

In Matungulu, Sub-County, Machakos County, Community actions on conservation are now bearing fruits. This is the Sub-County that hosts Kilimambogo Hill, where in past there has been evidence of forest loss due to human-led actions and high cases of human-wildlife conflicts as a result of destruction of the vegetation in Ol Donyo-Sabuk National park which is around Kilimambogo Hill. "We are happy that the efforts are bearing fruits, as we have noted forest loss has reduced and food security improved" Says Mr. Samuel Wathome, a resident of Kyeleni location that borders Kilimambogo Hill.

This transformation is the result of community-led actions supported by Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) and other stakeholders such as Institute for Culture and Ecology, County government of Machakos among others. KWS has been supporting the local community who is organized as a Community Based Organization (CBO) in creating awareness in communities living along the park boundary and riparian, planting indigenous tree species on the mountain slopes. ICE on the other hand has been empowering local people to manage their forest resources and improve their livelihoods through promoting sustainable land use practices. These include promoting non-timber enterprises by encouraging communities around Kilimambogo Hill initiate enterprises that would motivate them in conserving the hill while making incomes



Community-led tree planting by Maisha Hai CBO in partnership with ICE to rehabilitate Kilimambogo forest ecosystem, Machakos County

Mt. Kilimambogo is located in Kyanzavi Division of Matungulu sub-county in Machakos County. It has an altitude of 2145 metres and is within Ol Donyo Sabuk National Park which is about 65kms East of Nairobi and 15kms from Thika town.

The success of the initiative is due to community empowerment where they are now able to understand the need for conserving their critical ecosystems. "The community is now actively involved in conservation by diverse stakeholders and are able to drive conservation actions" Mr. Paul Ngwili, Secretary of Maisha Hai CBO. Mr. Ngwili also stated that, the community through the CBO has been able to set by laws and working closely with government agencies has ensured laws and regulations are adhered to. "There used to be untimely fire bushes started by local communities and charcoal burners, however community by-laws and patrols carried out by KWS guards and community leaders has reduced the incidences," He concludes.

The efforts by Maisha Hai CBO in partnership with relevant stakeholders, is a wakeup call for communities living around critical ecosystems such as forests to give them attention they deserve.

Understanding Food Sovereignty in Practice

Food sovereignty is a term that has been described using different words by different parties working on agricultural development. The bottom line being practice that gives people's right to define their own food and agriculture systems through ecologically sound and sustainable systems. This is a term that can be challenging to farmers to understand, however one can feel practice this on the ground.

In Meru County, Ntima West Ward ICE has been working with nine farmer groups by empowering them on sustainable farming practices. These include agro-ecological farming, on-farm and house-hold water harvesting, farm-planning and management, diversification of livelihoods etc. These practices are helping farmers have enough diverse food for their families and earn extra income. Over 70% of ICE beneficiaries under this program.

To assess food sovereignty in practice, during on-farm monitoring, ICE visited two farmers in Ntima West ward, Judith Mwenda and Jerusha Muthoni of Meru Jitegemee B and Mwingene group respectively. The ward is located in agro-ecological zone UM3 which is an area that had been for long under coffee plantations. The cash crop areas have a history of not having control over food they take as farmers undertake mono cropping and rely on food from market for consumption, hence do not enjoy right of production on the food they take.



Drying of seeds at Jerusha Muthoni's farm in Meru County

In addition, most of farmers in these zones heavily undertake conventional farming and with little knowledge on use of agro-chemicals. There are cases of over use of external chemicals which leads to soil acidity and in turn low farm yields. Over use of chemicals also been reported to contribute to high incidences of cancer. With trainings on sustainable farming practices, farmers are changing this story through replicating sustainable practices show sound results. This is what we see from Judith and Jerusha. These two women took a brave step of experimenting practices learnt and have changed their livelihoods for better. Judith and Jerusha have adopted the practices which have not only increased food and income for their households, but they are environmentally friendly. These practices include composting and integrated pest management and reviving indigenous and traditional food crops and vegetables for their own families, which enhance nutrition security. At first, Judith and Jerusha confessed it was not easy, as change is not easily adopted. When I asked Jerusha whether these practices have improved their production as expected, she joyfully responded, "I do not have to tell you, but to show you". This achievement is something that makes these women feels proud of their work as farmers.



Diversity of food crops in Jerusha's farm

One would feel the fulfilled walking around the two farms of Judith and Jerusha, the happiness on their faces explaining the difference before and after adopting the practices, they have been learning. This was embossed by the beauty of their farms where each has over twelve variety of crops. These crops includes; Sweet and Irish potatoes, arrow roots, yams, pumpkins, onions, variety of indigenous and traditional vegetables, variety of cereals, fruit trees et al. Having control of food they produce and that they don't have to rely on market for everything for food is what motivates them to work hard on their farms.

In addition, Ms. Jerusha says that trainings on marketing and financial literacy have helped them develop basic business skills in marketing their farm produce hence reducing exploitation from middle business agents. She shares that before she sells her produce, she undertake local market survey, to know market price of a specific produce at particular time. She has also improved in planning her planting time to ensure she has harvest throughout the year, hence able to sustain the market for her clients who buy direct from her farm.



Judith at her farm



Jerusha's farm on top; left cabbage to be harvested in a months' time while on right cabbages to be harvested in 21/2 months' time integrated with rows of maize.



Push and Pull technology for maize and nappier grass

Keeping hope in farming

Mr. Peter Muriungi hails from Thambura sub-location, Nkondi ward in Tharaka-Nithi County. The area is relatively a semi-arid zone. That receives 500-1000mm of rains annually. Mr. Peter is forty two years old, married and father to three children. He is the chairperson of Karore self-help group which has twenty four members that started working with ICE in the year 2016.

Talking of a resilient farmer, one would easily point Mr. Peter, who has made a turning point in farming from a dry area. Before 2016, Peter used to do casual farming growing mainly maize and green grams. This has however changed three years down the line after undergoing trainings and exposure learning visits facilitated by ICE under a project supported by Biovision Foundation. "I used to grow crops in a very small scale and mainly for household consumption; this means it could not cover all needs for my family, which caused unhappiness to me as head of family and to my family too, which entrenched to frustration and poverty cycle".



Peter's farm- he has ensured intercropping and agroforestry to increase soil fertility and promote integrated pest management

After exposure on farming skills that would enable him increase his farm yield and make a living, the hard working Peter never turned back. He started by dealing with main challenge that demotivates farmers in his area such as water crisis due to short rains. This is by putting up on-farm water harvesting structures and also soil conservation technologies such as zai pits and terraces. This enabled him grow variety of food crops and helping him adapt to climate change as a small scale farmer. He reported to have been able to increase his farm yields by 40% in a one-acre farm, which he says he was apportioned by his father-in-law. The income enabled him to afford to connect farming water in April 2019 to his household which he is now using for farming. Even though water is rationed, hence flows twice in a week, He now has bigger plans and believes he is becoming a model farmer in his ward by utilizing his three acre piece of land where he is undertaking farming. In addition to green grams and maize, he now grows cow peas, sweet potatoes, yams. Water melon, vegetables et al.

He proudly confessed that he and his family lives a happy life and he is at peace since he never thought it is possible to practice such farming in a semi-arid area like there location.



Peter Muriungi farm in Nkondi Ward, Tharaka Nithi County

Joy of working together

Iregi Self Help Group is a farmer group based in Maragua Sub-county, Muranga County. The group was formed in 2015 with purpose of working together to empower themselves as farmers. In 2016, when one of the member heard about ICE, she informed the others and made a step to approach ICE for a possible engagement. This happened a time when ICE was initiating a livelihoods project in the area and Iregi group was engaged among the first groups.

The group main drive to work with ICE was for its members to improve on their skills on sustainable agricultural practices. This is because most of farmers in Maragua had experienced constant crop failure for several seasons due to unreliable and short rains. This was worsened by lack of knowledge and skills among farmers on climate adaptation farming technologies including water harvesting.

In the first phase of project when ICE started to work in Muranga 2016-2018 supported by Biovision Foundation, the group benefited from trainings on composing and management of farm manure, on-farm water harvesting technologies, and diversification of livelihoods by integrating small livestock and recuperation of indigenous and traditional food crops and post-harvest management. In addition, the group benefited with seven water tanks and ten energy saving stoves but currently all members have water tank and installed energy cooking stove.

As a result of these interventions, the livelihood of members of Iregi self-help group has improved positively where they appreciate farming not only as a practice, but as an enterprise activity. They have for sustainability, the group established a tree nursery where they sell tree seedlings and growing of vegetables for sale at group level in addition to kitchen gardens established at every household for family consumption. These income-generating activities are helping group to raise resources to continue with initiatives supported by ICE in the first phase. In addition, the group has established a table banking initiative where members are able to save and access soft loans to expand their farm initiatives.

Members of Iregi group are proud of the project, which they say it came at the right time. The chairlady Mrs. Ngichiri quotes, "were it not for the training and exposure by the project, we would still be experiencing challenges on food security and with unpredictable incomes. We are now able to produce foods sustainably and make savings from farm produce. We now have a stable table banking initiative which is something we could not have done before or have access to loans on our own as individual, this is evidence there is power in working together".



Peter together with Ms. Ngirichi the chairperson of Iregi group at the section of Peter's farm where he has planted variety trees and fruits

Step by step, Making Tharaka farmers' food and income secure



Meet Mary Kaindi, a member of Kibuka group in Tharaka-Nithi County. The group has fifteen members has been a working with ICE for more than three years now. Tharaka is in Eastern part of Kenya and is a semi-arid area. Mary and her husband depend on farming for their livelihood and bringing up their 5 children

When the group started working with ICE, the first initiative was to revive traditional and indigenous seeds which were disappearing making farmers plant only maize and beans perceived as the staple food in the country. This contributed to exposing farmers to high risk of food insecurity since maize is not suitable crop for the climatic condition of Tharaka.

Within two years, the groups in Tharaka started multiplication of the traditional and indigenous seed varieties which they adopted for growing as they are drought tolerant. These seed crops include; sorghum, cowpeas, pigeon peas, green grams, millet and beans. This was aided by development of eco-calendars which she says helped them not only revive the seeds but also understands changes that have occurred in regard to climate hence helping them plan better. Farmers also taken up use of organic farming and development of on farm water harvesting structures. As confirmed by Mary Kaindi, these have increased farm yields and the direct beneficiaries are now relatively food secure.

According to Mary Kaindi, diversification of livelihoods such as goat and poultry keeping has also played a key role in enhancing food security among many farmers. She pointed out this giving example, with her household with her husband, they keep a capacity of one hundred goats and atleast fifty chicken. Mary could not hide her happiness by saying that before, her family would have chicken meat only during Christmas once in year but now they can afford atleast once in month. Her husband is also happy that she has been a member of the group and whatever she learnts they implement with the husband whom she says is very supportive.



Some of small livestock that Mary is keeping to diversify livelihoods

Moving forward, Mary said most of her group members have changed positively through project initiatives and earning more income from the farm, the next step they would wish to be trained is running and management of the village saving and loaning associations to enable them save more as a group and upscale the initiatives. "We want to change, perception of Tharaka as food insecure dry area to be food secure area!" she concludes

Stories of change

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