

SMALLHOLDER FARMERS GROUPS FORM IN THE VILLAGE OF NAGIS, TURKANA COUNTY



Four smallholder farmer's groups formed predominantly of women have recently formed in the Nagis village, Loima Sub-county in Turkana County. The four groups, Nadome, Namakat, Nadunga and Nasanyanite, each have 25 members. Mostly pastoralist, many group members have relied on agriculture as their primary livelihood. Regular droughts and resulting losses have forced farmers to look for more stable work, shifting their farming activities to a secondary livelihood. For years, their investments in agriculture yielded little compared to the high costs of inputs. In most cases, what little was produced was consumed by the household. Only on rare occasions was enough left over to sell.

Main reasons for the traditionally poor harvests were:

- Hot, dry weather and inadequate water supply caused crops to wither. As a result, farmers were required to pay high costs for water, yielding a lower economic return.
- Inadequate technical knowledge of good agriculture practices.
- Low-quality seed variety; use of openly-pollinated varieties without consideration for hybrid seeds.

IMPROVING AGRICULTURE TO INCREASE PROFITS

Determined to improve local agriculture, the Livelihoods Department - Diocese of Lodwar dug shallow wells for the four newly-organized groups and installed a solar pumping unit and 5,000L reservoir tank to support irrigation. **Kenya RAPID** and the Department of Agriculture-Turkana County also supported the groups' ability to produce high-value fruits and vegetables (kale, onion, tomato, watermelon, etc.) in greenhouses and with open-drip irrigation systems. The farmers were offered technical training on crop husbandry, integrated disease and pest management, value addition, and marketing.

The Kenya RAPID program, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Services and the Department of Agriculture, supported the groups' formal registration, which gave them access to increased services from the county government and the private sector.

Partnerships established with local banks ensured that the groups could open accounts, save income, and access low-interest loans to expand their enterprises.



SUCCESS SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

So far the groups have been linked to markets in Turkwell and Lodwar (headquarters-Turkana County). As of February 2017, they had recorded sales of more than US \$2000 from tomatoes and onions. The success of the Nagis smallholder farmers' groups demonstrates that the planting of hybrid seed materials coupled with technical trainings on good agriculture practices ensures increased yields and income for the groups.

MWA'S FIVE-YEAR KENYA RAPID PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

Kenya Resilient Arid Lands Partnership for Integrated Development (Kenya RAPID) is a five-year program of Millennium Water Alliance — Kenya that brings together public and private institutions to increase access to water and sanitation for people, and to water for livestock. The program also works to rebuild a healthy rangeland-management ecosystem.

Kenya RAPID strongly supports the Ending Drought Emergencies Common Program Framework launched by the Government of Kenya in November 2015, which recognizes that “sustainable management of rangelands, water, crops, and increasing the contribution of livestock to the pastoral economy are critical to resilient livelihoods in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands.”

From 2015 through 2020, Kenya RAPID will focus on five Northern Counties with high poverty rates, chronic food and water insecurity, and low access to basic services: Garissa, Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir.

With at least US\$35.5 million being invested in Kenya RAPID, the program seeks to increase the average water access coverage in the five counties from 37 percent to more than 50 percent, and to **bring improved water, sanitation, and hygiene education to more than 450,000 people by the end of 2020**. Since the February 2016 launch of the Kenya RAPID, more than 30,772 people have gained access to safely managed water services

LINKS WITH PRIVATE SECTOR, FOUNDATIONS, AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

Kenya RAPID rejects the “business-as-usual” approach to development. All five counties and every one of the partners are co-investors. Four non-governmental organization members of MWA – **CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Food for the Hungry, and World Vision** – work directly at the county and local level to build capacity within the county government to increase service delivery and build resilience to climate change, hunger, chronic malnutrition, and other factors. Private sector organizations and foundations **Aqua for All, Acacia Water, SweetSense Inc., Davis & Shirliff, IBM Research–Africa, the KCB Foundation, Vitol Foundation, and The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation** are partners, contributing skills and resources.

ENGAGING WOMEN FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION OUTCOMES

One specific goal of Kenya RAPID is to increase the diversity of household diets by providing sufficient water to communities, allowing multiple uses of water for humans, livestock, crops, and conservation. Kenya RAPID is working in target communities to form community women’s groups that receive training to apply improved technologies, including shade nets and solar powered irrigation systems, and improved management and agricultural practices.

The Ali Mao women’s group in Wajir Country drastically improved quality and yield of kale by using of shade nets and solar pumps for vegetable production. Shade nets served as pest control, cutting costs of pesticides and agrochemicals; solar pumps phased out the costs for consumption of petrol. Combined, these interventions reduced the production cost of the vegetable, helping the women earn a higher market value. Money saved went to finance children’s education. Kenya RAPID will continue its work with the Ali Mao group, providing training and sensitization to embrace food diversification for improved diet.