

Irrigation Technology Changes Women's Agribusiness Dreams

Garissa County, Kenya, February 2018—56-year-old Habiba is seated with four other women under a mango tree. Today not all the 15 members of GarGar women group were able to join them to share their story because their farm is located 20 kilometers away from Garissa town the capital of Garissa County in Northern Kenya.

Habiba's husband died in 2013 after long illness, leaving her to fend for their 10 children. But just before Habiba's husband passed, she teamed up with a few other women with similar challenges (ailing spouses, poverty, etc.) to form GarGar women group primarily for income.



Closed Canals distribution Box
©CARE/Job. M



Kenya RAPID as a “technology game changer!”

Before Kenya RAPID intervention GarGar Women Group depended on open earth canals to channel water to the farm. This technology proved expensive to maintain, leading to low crop production compared to the capital invested. The cost of pumping water was high as well as over abstraction due to high water demand. Kenya RAPID introduced an improved technology of closed canals leading to efficiency in water flow, reduced unnecessary seepage and reduced hours of water pumping with relative reduced water abstraction from the river Tana.

“My husband sustained injuries from a motorbike accident. He is disabled and can't work because his hands were affected. He was the bread winner for this family. Before joining this group I had challenges in educating my children, at times, my children were sent home for school fees, it was painful seeing them stay at home while their peers were busy learning.” **29 year old Medina Moge**

Medina Moge is married with 8 children. Her husband is nursing injuries sustained from a motorbike accident. This means that Medina bears sole responsibility of fending for her children and educating them. In most days she could only provide dinner and sometimes breakfast. *“Ever since joining this group I get some income to pay school fees for my children. I help sell mangoes and vegetables for the group and earn a commission. I'm now able to prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner because I get vegetable and fruits from this farm.”*

Habiba and Medina's stories are echoed across the lives these women lived before the farming project was initiated, mainly for economic empowerment. *“It's better when I'm busy doing something than just sitting idle. Whatever little I get makes a difference especially when mangoes are in season I benefit more”* Median remarks with a smile.

25 Acre farm land:
Crops in the farm include;
Mangoes, lemons, bananas,
tomatoes, water and sweet melon,
kales, onions, sorghum, Sudan
grass.

Their initial farming method had adopted earth canals that proved futile due to heavy water wastage to ground seepage and trans-evaporation.



Habiba Hire Aden ©CARE/Job. M

“Farming is prosperous in Garissa, if we had started earlier with appropriate technology, most of these women could be wealthy. The problem is that we started with a small water pump engine that only covered a very small area in the farm. Also, during heavy rains the floods wreak havoc affecting our crops and beehives swept away after the Tana river bank outbursts. Our sales depend on which vegetables or fruits are in season for instance we expect to harvest lime (a hybrid citrus fruit) this season. This week we got KES 9,000 (\$90) from the lime harvest. Mangoes didn’t do well this season but we expect a bumper harvest in the next one.” **Habiba Explained.**

“Before Kenya RAPID, we spent 25 liters (worth KES 2,250 = \$22.50) of diesel daily to pump water for irrigating. The open earth canals couldn’t hold water sustainably to serve the whole farm. We didn’t even have an idea that a new technology would solve our problems,” Habiba said. The group is now spending less than 10 liters of diesel a day (worth KES 1,000 = \$10.)

The new irrigation facility mean more than 20 households continues to depend on the GarGar farm for food, clothing and shelter. The need to reduce the cost of irrigation has enabled the group to invest in clearing more land to expand crop production. Habiba said that, **“If we can secure a pickup truck we will be able to get competitive prices for our produce because currently we mainly trade at the farm gate. It will also help other members who had challenges shuttling between their homes in Garissa town and the farm to rejoin the group. We also have plans to expand the land but we need financial support to clear the Mathenge weed then reclaim the land to plant more vegetables.”**