



Securing workers' rights in a COVID-19 context in East African agriculture supply chains

Stories from beneficiaries of the project interventions in Kenya and Zimbabwe





Brief description of the project

Launched in August 2020, the ‘Securing workers’ rights in a COVID-19 context in East African agriculture supply chains’ project has supported over 10,000 workers in African supply chains. The project is led by the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) and implemented in partnership with Partner Africa, Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsbury’s, Waitrose, Coop, MM Flowers, Union Hand Roasted, Minor Weir & Willis and Flamingo. The project has supported 11 suppliers ranging from smallholder groups to cooperatives, cooperative unions, independent growers, large commercial growers and packhouses within the horticulture, floriculture, and coffee supply chains in Kenya (6 sites) Ethiopia (2 sites), Zimbabwe (2 sites) and Tanzania (1 site). This case study report gives voice to workers who have benefitted from several project interventions in Kenya and Zimbabwe and illustrates what they have learned and why it was essential for them and their families. It also provides testimonies from suppliers’ management on how certain trainings have helped their businesses in strengthening resilience against COVID-19.

The project is funded by the Vulnerable Supply Chain Facility (VSCF). The Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility (VSCF) is a rapid COVID-19 response fund set up by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and managed by Mott MacDonald Ltd. The Facility partners with 20 UK and international retailers and brands, and 7 not-for-profit organisations, supporting over 100 suppliers across Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Myanmar, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. It will provide economic, social, and health benefits to around 1 million women and men directly and indirectly.

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Type of project interventions for suppliers and key results



Business Continuity Training

Six suppliers received training on Business Continuity and mentorship in drafting their own Business Continuity Plan. The training outlined principles and strategies of Business Continuity Planning and provided worksheets and tools to undertake a business impact analysis and a risk analysis. This supported suppliers in strengthening resilience against COVID-19 and future shocks. You can access all the training materials and guidance on how to implement Business Continuity Planning via [this guide](#).



COVID-19 Management Training

53 managers of 9 suppliers took part in a virtual COVID-19 Management Training. They were provided with a range of checklists, tools and strategic outbreak procedures to support them in managing and mitigating a COVID-19 outbreak at their farms. You can access these materials and tools [here](#), and you can also participate in the virtual training yourself as we have published a recorded version for all suppliers [here](#).

Type of project interventions for workers and key results



COVID-19 Awareness Training

A COVID-19 training has been delivered to 187 workers and they have rolled out the training over their workforce of 11 suppliers, reaching more than 3,783 workers in total. The training provided information on the virus, symptoms, transmission, prevention, treatment, stigma, myths and vaccinations. During this training, AV videos were shared in WhatsApp groups with the rest of the workers. Posters (in local language) containing information on how to stay safe have also been distributed among the farms.



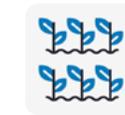
Kitchen Gardens

479 female smallholder farmers have been provided with seeds, such as kales and spinach, and trainings to establish Kitchen Gardens. This supported the women households that were most economically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthened their food security. In addition, 190 smallholder farmers were provided with seeds and fertilisers to boost their crops and most of them participated in trainings on Good Agricultural Practices.



Awareness Campaign (via SMS)

In addition to the training, 2,170 workers have received multiple text messages (in their local language) reiterating what they have learned in the trainings. The message contained more tips on how to stay safe and how to protect oneself against COVID-19, and information on vaccines and stigmas.



Nutritional Garden

We have provided one supplier with nutritional garden support. Since many of their workers do not own land themselves, a vegetable plot was established on site and managed by the farm. This supported all their 578 workers with free and fresh vegetables, such as cabbages and sweet potatoes, for home consumption.



Financial Literacy Training

143 workers of 5 different suppliers have been trained on financial literacy and good money management. As many workers suffered a loss in income due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the training supported workers in setting financial targets and drafting (monthly) budgets, and covered topics such as how to save money, how to borrow money (providing information about regulated loan options) and how to invest money. The workers who were trained have rolled out the training and will continue to share the lessons learned with their colleagues and friends, reaching another 850 workers indirectly.





THE FARM

AAA Growers

LOCATION / REGION

Nyeri

TYPE OF FARM

Vegetable farm and Packhouse

NUMBER OF WORKERS

2,858

PROJECT INTERVENTIONS FOR WORKERS



COVID-19 Awareness Training



Awareness campaign (via SMS)



Financial Literacy Training

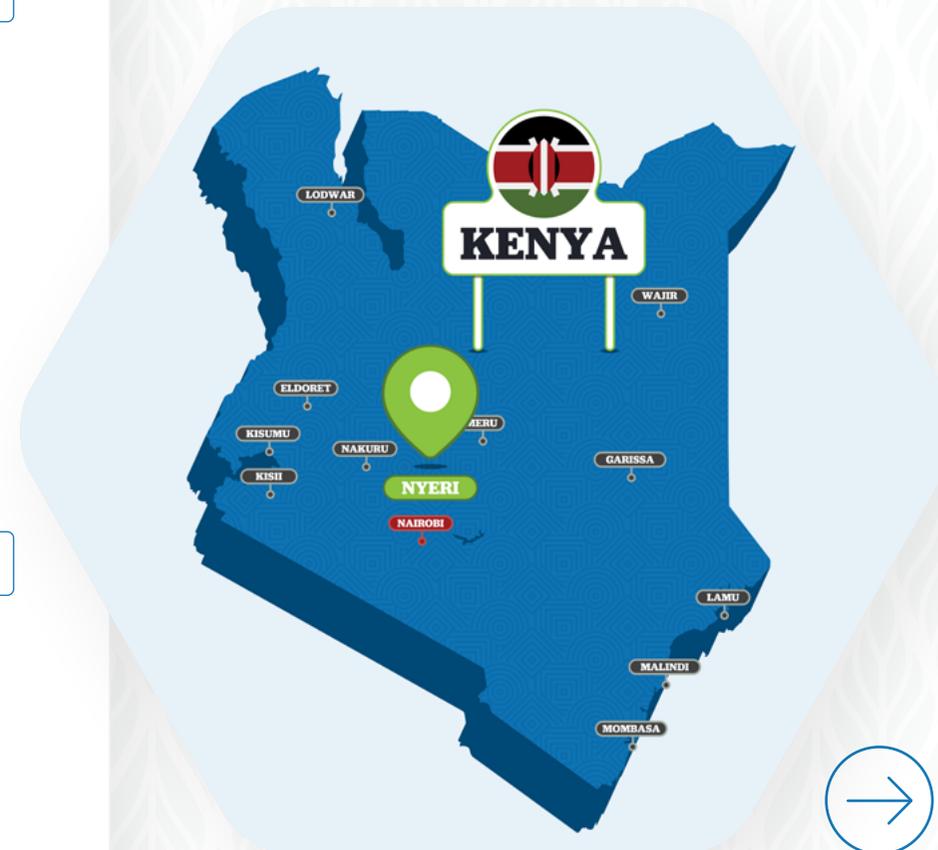
PROJECT INTERVENTIONS FOR MANAGEMENT



Business Continuity Training



COVID-19 Management Training





Jacob Merete

SECURITY DEPARTMENT | FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING

“Before the Financial Literacy Training, I thought that you could only save if you earn a lot of money.

A 100m race begins with a single step. For me to get to say 100k, I need to start saving now. I have been saving with the company Sacco. I decided to increase my share after the financial literacy training. I plan on joining another Sacco with a fixed deposit account, which will automatically deduct from my salary. **From these savings, I will be able to support my child's education when he joins high school.** I also learnt the importance of investing and having savings for an emergency.

Thank you Partner Africa for making us understand that there is no small or big money, and teaching us the importance of saving no matter how little we earn.”

“The Financial Literacy Training will help me ensure I save my money and do not waste it.

I learnt that it is important to invest some of my money. I used to buy things that I did not need. I have started saving and **I plan to buy a piece of land once I have saved enough.** I have been saving through the company's Sacco. All our questions on savings and investment options were answered during the training.”



Isaac Githinji

PAYROLL | FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING



Caroline Mwaniki

COMPLIANCE MANAGER | COVID-19 MANAGEMENT TRAINING

“As management, we learned a lot from the COVID-19 training.

We have seen that hygiene standards have improved to a great extent. The workers have understood the importance of hygiene in preventing bacteria and common diseases.

There were many myths about the COVID-19 vaccine. One such myth was that if one is under 30 years, it was not a must for them to be vaccinated. Other myths claimed that the vaccine causes infertility, changes one's DNA and is harmful to lactating mothers. During the training, the trainers emphasised the safety of the vaccine.

Before the training, we did not know how to handle a positive COVID-19 case. The training has taught us how to take care of a person who has contracted COVID-19 at work and at home. **The most important thing we were taught is not to stigmatise them.”**



“

I could not have drafted my Business Continuity Plan without the training and those tools.



Geoffrey Gomisie Amulavu

GROUP COMPLIANCE MANAGER | BUSINESS CONTINUITY TRAINING

“Before I attended the training, AAA Growers Limited had not documented a Business Continuity Plan.

I had thought about it, but I did not have the exposure and knowledge on how to document one. The training was very valuable to us. It was an eye opener, giving me new insights, information, tools and templates on how to develop a Business Continuity Plan. I could not have drafted my Business Continuity Plan without the training and those tools.

I now understand the importance of having a Business Continuity Plan much better. As an organisation, we need to focus on the future, and we need to forecast. If we do not have a plan in place and we face a disruption, we might not survive. With Business Continuity arrangements and planning ahead of time, we can still manage our operations and still do business in the event of a disruption. **My key take away is the importance of being prepared for times of trouble and coming up with alternative ways of handling that problem and having options on what to do next**, to stay afloat and to continue running your organisation. The plan will absolutely make us better resilient against COVID-19 and any other disruptions.

My main advice to other suppliers would therefore be to come up with a Business Continuity Plan if you do not already have one. If you are not prepared for a disruption, you are bound to go under and collapse. If you are well prepared ahead of time, and something happens, you can continue your operations.”



THE FARM

**Mutira
Cooperative
Society**

LOCATION / REGION

**Kirinyaga County,
Meru**

TYPE OF FARM

**Processing coffee
cherry and marketing
members produce**

NUMBER OF WORKERS

5,767 smallholders

PROJECT INTERVENTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES
AND SMALLHOLDER FARMERS



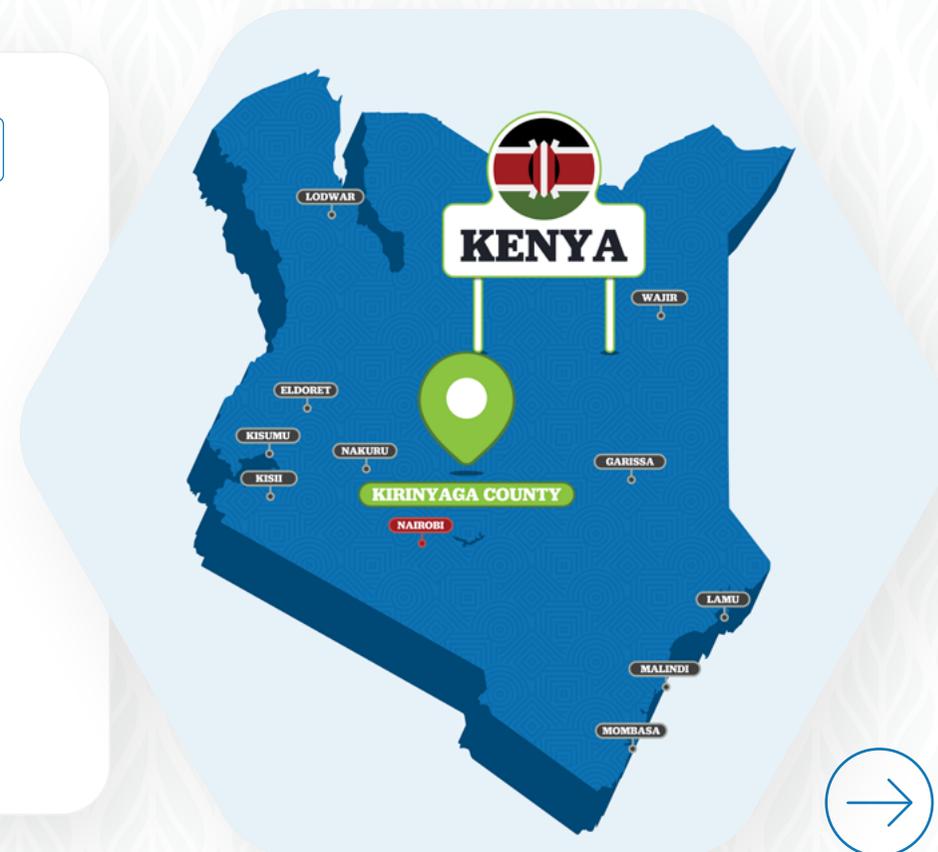
**COVID-19 Awareness
Training**



**Awareness campaign
(via SMS)**



Kitchen Gardens





Nancy Wambui

SMALLHOLDER FARMER | KITCHEN GARDEN SUPPORT

“My kitchen garden saves me money.

I do not need to buy certain vegetables, I get them from my farm. There is increased food in my home and I get income from selling surplus. **I have trained some of my neighbours on kitchen gardens, they are seeing benefits of growing vegetables in their farms, and not relying on buying from the market.** Kitchen gardens use less water compared to other types of farming.

Thank you Partner Africa for teaching us new skills – we did not know anything about kitchen gardens. We are happy we know how to utilise small pieces of land for planting crops.”

“I have planted kales, spinach and onions in my kitchen garden.

I no longer go to the market to buy vegetables, I simply go to the farm, harvest and cook for my family. Vegetables are important in the human body. I planted the first batch and they did not do well. My second plantation did well. **A kitchen garden is effective since you can use a small piece of land to plant more than one crop, you can harvest for your own use or even sell and make money.** We were privileged to receive the training and free seedlings. **This is something others only wish for.”**



Faith Melody Wanjiku

SMALLHOLDER FARMER | KITCHEN GARDEN SUPPORT



Lillian Wanjiku

AGRONOMIST | COVID-19 TRAINING

“During the training, I learnt how important it is to wear a mask, keep social distance, wash hands regularly and to get vaccinated.

I learnt that the vaccination boosts the body’s immunity in the fight against COVID-19. After the training, I trained my colleagues and other out-growers who bring their coffee to our factory. No farmer is allowed into the sorting shed without a face mask. We constantly remind them to follow what we teach them. Workers now wash their hands regularly, before and after visiting different workstations.

I shared the information I learnt with my family and church members as well. I wear a mask, wash my hands regularly, keep social distance, and avoid being in crowded places. Thank you Partner Africa for the text messages you’ve been sending to remind us to stay safe.”



THE FARM

Cenacle

LOCATION / REGION

Naivasha, Nakuru

TYPE OF FARM

Flowers

NUMBER OF WORKERS

161

PROJECT INTERVENTIONS FOR WORKERS



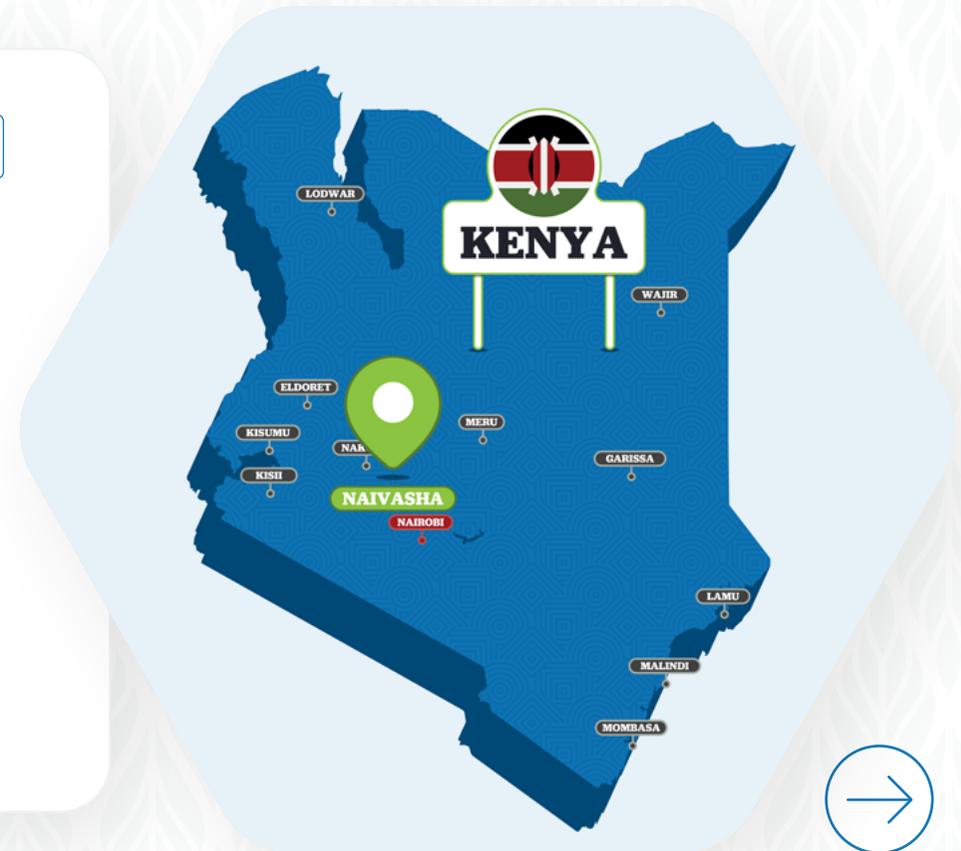
COVID-19 Awareness Training



Awareness campaign (via SMS)



Financial Literacy Training





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If I budget well, I can achieve a lot with my earnings.”

“The Financial Literacy Training will help me budget well.

I would spend money on unnecessary things that I would not have budgeted for. This made it difficult for me to save for my future. I used to think that my pay is too little to save. Budgeting will ensure I do not spend it on unnecessary things. **I intend to save enough to be able to buy land and build myself a house as well as invest in dairy cow and poultry farming.** I used to think loans and debts are a burden. I learnt that loans/ debts can be useful if you intend to take them to do things that will be of benefit to you. The training made me realise that if I budget well, I can achieve a lot with my earnings.”



Christine Joy

PLANTING | FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING



Esther Esho

GENERAL FARM WORKER | FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING

“I have learnt the difference between saving and investing.

I never knew how one can invest and save. I have a goal to invest in farming of crops such as maize and beans. I can use the harvest for food at home or sell it to make money. Despite my small earnings, once I earn my salary, I will prioritise paying off my debts and save the little I can.

I also learnt that I should avoid unnecessary borrowings. I am grateful for the training, it has expanded my knowledge. I was not aware about most of the things we were taught.”



Pancras Kariuki

HUMAN RESOURCES | COVID-19 TRAINING

“COVID-19 awareness charts that we received have enabled us to create more awareness within the company.

Trained workers trained other workers and other people in the community, the information got to everyone. This would have been impossible without the training we got from Partner Africa. As employers, it is always our wish for the workers to be empowered. As a company, we could not afford to train our workers on COVID-19, but because of Partner Africa we were able to.”

“The Financial Literacy Training made me realise that time is money.

I will only borrow when necessary, save more and reduce my debts. Having debts can be a burden. I liked the example we were given, of digging a hole to fill another hole, which means borrowing money to pay a debt. That cycle cannot come to an end. I have not been saving but **I now know the importance of saving. I plan to save and invest in farming, and also support my younger sister’s education when she joins university next year.”**



Naomi Marau

PESTS AND DISEASE CONTROL | FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING



THE FARM

EAGA

LOCATION / REGION

Naivasha, Nakuru

TYPE OF FARM

Packhouse

NUMBER OF WORKERS

430

PROJECT INTERVENTIONS FOR WORKERS



COVID-19 Awareness Training



Awareness campaign (via SMS)

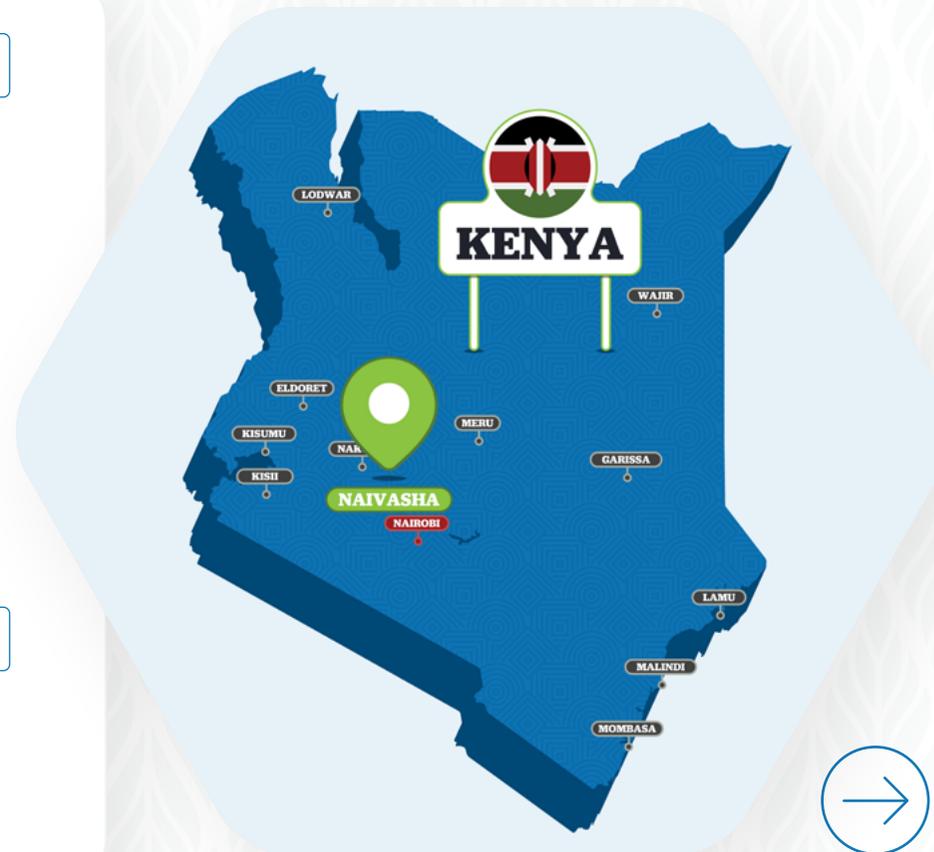


Financial Literacy Training

PROJECT INTERVENTIONS FOR MANAGEMENT



Business Continuity Training





Janet Nyamwitha

CULTIVATING ACTIVITIES | COVID-19 TRAINING

“I was curious to find out what kind of disease COVID-19 was, how it is treated, and what I can do to protect myself.

We started following what we were taught and this has helped us. I have taught my church members, and co-workers who live with me in the company quarters. Those of us who were trained continued creating awareness. That really helped and we have not had a single positive case ever since.

I taught my kids and they also observe high hygiene measures, they clean their hands every time they come back into the house. There has been a change as they know the importance of cleaning hands before every meal. **My hygiene has improved. I did not have water and soap at my doorstep before, now I do to ensure my family cleans their hands regularly.**

The management appointed workers from each workstation to act as representatives. I am a deputy soap steward. There is a health and safety and first aider representative as well.”

“Rumours had it that COVID-19 can be prevented and cured by using products such as pepper, ginger or alcohol.

I learnt from the training that these were just myths. I was fearful of being vaccinated. It was said that when women get vaccinated they can experience a lot of blood flow during menstruation. During the training, a lot was explained about the vaccine and I found out that it is okay to be vaccinated.

People would exaggerate a lot of things. The training made me differentiate the truths from the myths. I can use the knowledge I got to educate others so that they are informed. Not everyone will agree to what you teach them, but a few will make improvements in what they do.”



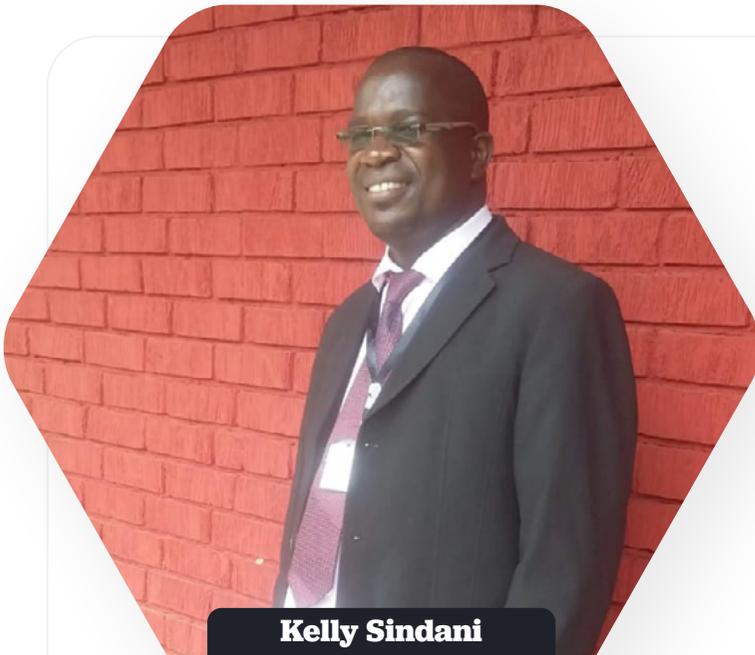
Pamela Kakai

PRODUCE GARDENER | COVID-19 TRAINING



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A Business Continuity Plan makes us resilient to a disaster in a holistic way.



Kelly Sindani

TECHNICAL MANAGER | BUSINESS CONTINUITY TRAINING

“The Business Continuity Planning training and the tools that were provided enabled us to start drafting a Business Continuity Plan.

This is very important for us because disruptions are bound to happen, and we need to make sure that we don't stop producing when they do.

A Business Continuity Plan makes us resilient to a disaster in a holistic way. It makes us look at reputational, organisational and company impacts, plans for alternative options to keep delivering our products and determines who handles what and who talks to the media for example. It will truly benefit our workers too for it will make them aware of the alternative methods put in place and how to adapt to a disruption. It is holistic also in the sense that we are not only looking at impacts to one particular packing hall or pack house, but all the way to our suppliers for raw materials (without raw materials there is no processing) and other critical processes and equipment (such as critical machines necessary for processing).

A Business Continuity Plan will also help strengthen resilience against COVID-19. Some issues we have faced during the outbreak of COVID-19 are for example restrictions of movement, rerouting and rescheduling of flights because of airport delays and spoiled produce. **A Business Continuity Plan can help with these disruptions, because you will already know in such a situation where to go and what other options you have to bring you back to normal.** For example, it can outline other airport or logistic methods available to you or list alternative homes to your product to see if you can sell it to someone else, locally perhaps.”



THE FARM

Flamingo

LOCATION / REGION

Timau, Meru

TYPE OF FARM

Horticultural Produce

NUMBER OF WORKERS

200 smallholder farmers

PROJECT INTERVENTIONS FOR SMALLHOLDER FARMERS



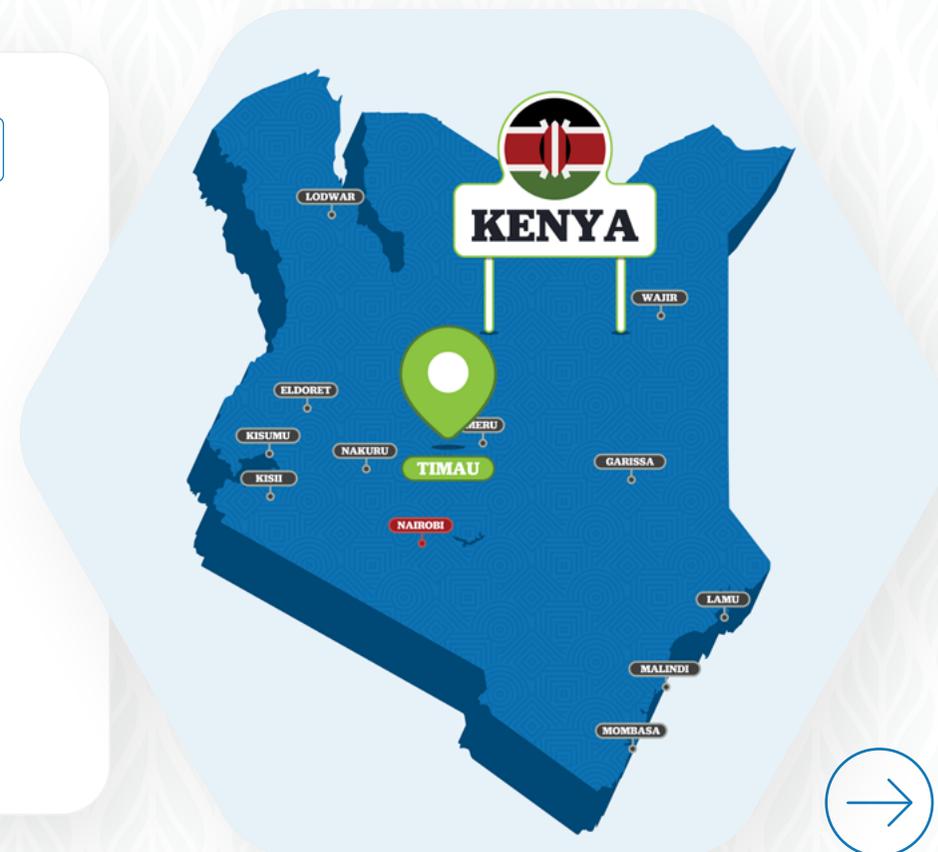
Financial Literacy Training



Awareness campaign (via SMS)



Kitchen Gardens




Wilson Onguko

 FARM ASSISTANT | FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING
AND KITCHEN GARDEN SUPPORT

“I have planted spinach, kales, French beans and potatoes in my kitchen garden.

Since planting, my farm’s produce has increased. Before then, I would go to the farm to buy the vegetables. **Now I harvest from the farm and cook, I do not incur expenses on buying vegetables.** When the produce is a lot, I will be able to sell.

Kitchen gardening is beneficial. There is minimal use of chemical fertilisers. **You take good care of the crops knowing that you will feed from them.** The harvest from the farm will feed my family. We no longer spend money on greens like before. I will use the money that I will make from selling the vegetables to meet other household needs. I know I cannot lack food in my house.”

“The workers in this farm no longer spend money on vegetables.

They get vegetables directly from the farm. We have already started making money from selling the produce. **I thought it would be a small project that would not be profitable, but you get people walking in to buy the kales and spinach. This motivates me to plant more.**

Kitchen gardening is faster, can generate income faster, you can harvest and sell immediately to customers from your farm. It does not require a lot of expenses; little fertiliser and few management practices. It can be done in small spaces and using gunny bags too. It takes less time. They have taught me to make small investments that generate income, the input is generally low but the output is profitable. Before then, I didn’t know what to do whenever I lacked money.”


Sylvia Kanari

SMALLHOLDER FARMER | KITCHEN GARDEN SUPPORT


Damaris Wanja

CLERK | FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING

“I have learnt that it is never too late to start saving and investing.

I can save the little that I get through minimising unnecessary expenses. I can benefit from loans if I intend to take a loan with a certain goal and not misuse the money but use it for the intended purpose. Saving will help me during emergencies. **In case anything happens, I will not need to get a loan from shylocks or mobile loans which usually have high interests.** I have also learnt that it is important to cut costs.

I will educate others who did not get a chance to attend this training. Most people do not believe in taking loans but loans from banks and Saccos can be beneficial. This will enable me achieve my goal faster and focus on other projects. I have also learnt the importance of minimising my bills. **At my age, I will be able to save and be in a stable position in future.”**



THE FARM

**Vitacress,
Subati Group
Ltd**

LOCATION / REGION

**Kibwezi, Makeny
County**

TYPE OF FARM

Herb Grower

NUMBER OF WORKERS

700

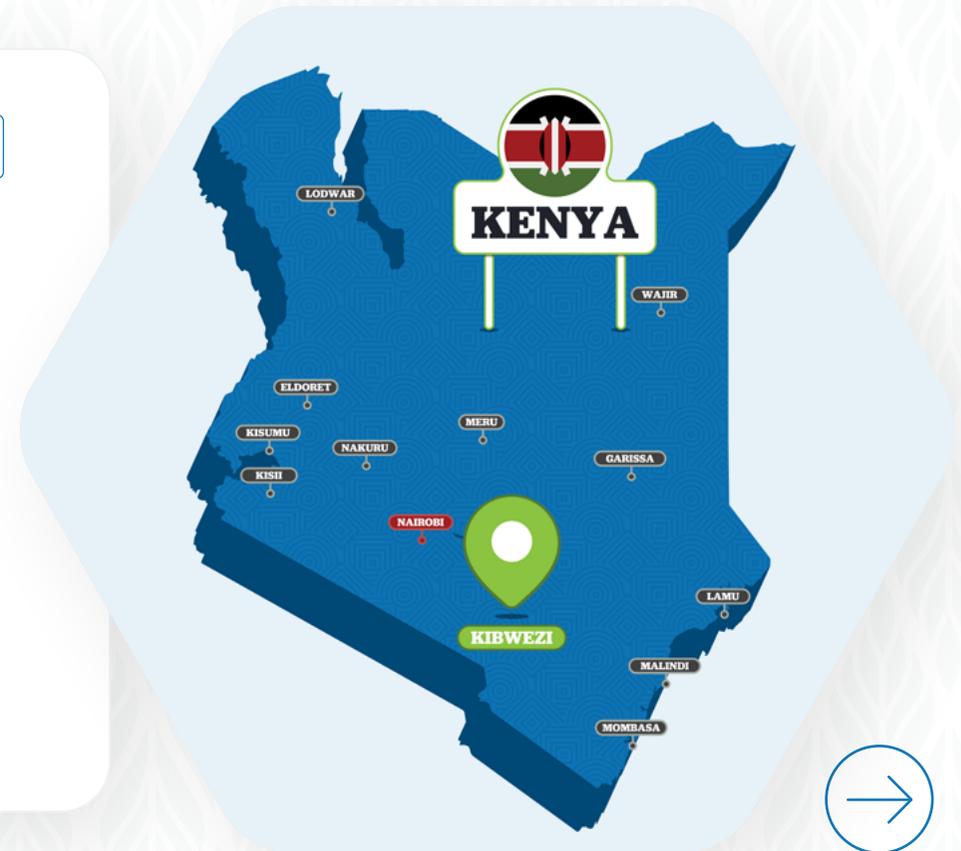
PROJECT INTERVENTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES
AND SMALLHOLDER FARMERS



**COVID-19 Awareness
Training**



**Awareness campaign
(via SMS)**




Fridah Njorage

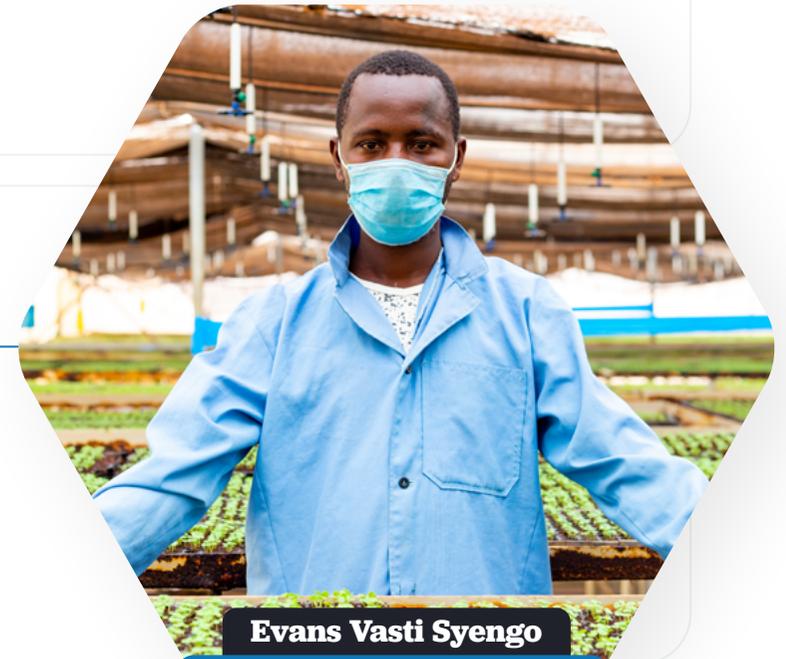
TECHNICAL MANAGER | COVID-19 TRAINING

“I found out that masks can still transmit the virus.

I also learnt that the virus can stay on surfaces for up to 24 hours.

I have been creating awareness at my place of work by asking my colleagues to wear their masks, informing them that COVID-19 is real, reminding them to sanitise and ensuring they maintain social distance.

Through the training, I am now able to keep myself and my family safe. I am also able to train others on COVID-19 prevention. **I believe that knowledge is power and I am empowering others by teaching them what I have learnt through the training.”**


Evans Vasti Syengo

NURSERY SUPERVISOR | COVID-19 TRAINING

“Through the training, I learnt how to address my fellow colleagues and my family about COVID-19,

so that they do not forget that it is here with us and know the actions to take accordingly. I was able to explain further on the signs and symptoms, how to protect oneself through maintaining social distance.

Most of them took action on the advice I gave them. For example, at my workstation, we sanitise, maintain social distance and wear masks throughout. My family has been positive about implementing these changes.

The training made me understand the importance of hygiene, washing my hands, maintaining social distance and avoiding crowds.”



THE FARM

Wiserow

LOCATION / REGION

Marondera

TYPE OF FARM

Fruit Grower

NUMBER OF WORKERS

578

PROJECT INTERVENTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES AND SMALLHOLDER FARMERS



COVID-19 Awareness Training



Awareness campaign (via SMS)



Nutritional Gardens





Elizabeth Tigere

GENERAL FARM WORKER | NUTRITIONAL GARDENS

“During the lockdown there was no access to vegetable markets due to national lockdown measures implemented by the government.

Therefore, having vegetables daily is appreciated. There is no stressing as to where to find relish for dinner. This even brought harmony in our family as there was no fight over food or relish.

As vegetables were readily available, we did not need to go into the market. This gave the family more time to spend together rather than spending time trying to bargain with vendors to buy vegetables cheaply. Therefore, it helped keep the family together and mend relationships. **The free vegetables have gone a long way in ensuring pay money is channelled to other important responsibilities such as paying for school fees.**

Lastly, the project is appreciated because as tenants we do not own any pieces of land to grow the vegetables. Therefore, **this project has improved our situation as tenants and landless women.**”

“During the national level lockdown, markets or vendors were not available to supply vegetables.

With the project in place, there is no worrying about the markets or vendors being unable to supply vegetables. There is a constant supply of vegetables now every day to balance our diet or meal plan. The project therefore, has health benefits for my family.

The free vegetables have a significant cost effect on my home budget. There have been savings with the issuing of vegetables. A bunch of vegetables costs about \$1 among the vendors or market. The bunch of vegetables received once a week means I save \$3. This cumulative saving from vegetables can be channelled elsewhere.”



Maxwell Charehwa

GENERAL FARM WORKER | NUTRITIONAL GARDENS

