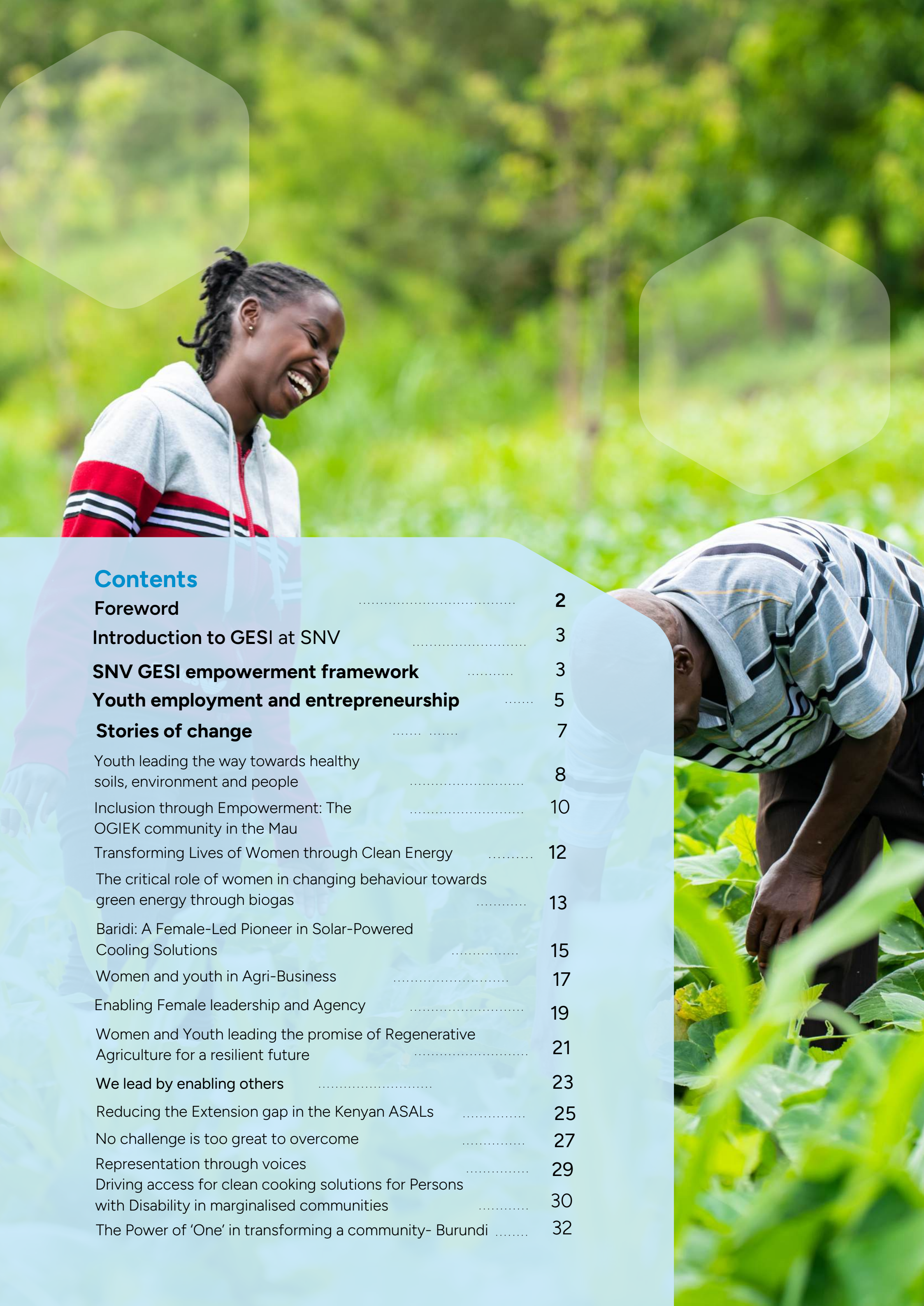


SNV



SNV Kenya and Burundi: Youth, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion stories



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Foreword



Rebecca Hallam - Country Director SNV Kenya and Burundi

SNV Kenya and Burundi are responding to and transforming unequal power relations through targeted interventions for women, girls, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups. We are moving from a GESI responsive approach towards a GESI transformative approach, going beyond improving the lives of women, youth, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups to recognising and improving their social position (how they are valued in society) with the full realisation of their rights and aiming for genuine and equal representation at all levels.



Ami Reza - SNV Global Theme Lead, GESI

SNV Kenya and Burundi are embracing SNV's 2030 inclusive empowerment pathway which focuses on access, agency and voice. These stories bring to life the lived experiences of women and young people who have led agri-food systems growth and access to and use of clean energy. Through our work with women and youth, persons with disability, their communities and businesses, we are working towards enabling and empowering them to demonstrate their potential as leaders and innovators, overcoming socio-culture barriers, inspiring change and negotiating better gender relations within their households and within different cultural contexts. GESI responsive upskilling, recognition of the deep contributions of women and young people to sectors and work on more inclusive mindsets for actors, both government and within markets has been instrumental. These examples provide insights and voice to the women and young people as they make decisions about their own lives.



Jean Muthamia Mwenda - SNV Global Lead, Youth Employment

Young women and men entrepreneurs present enormous untapped entrepreneurial potential. SNV's 2030 strategic framework places central focus on generating opportunities and strengthening the agency of young people" via employment and entrepreneurship opportunities that translate to improved incomes and decent and fulfilling jobs in high growth sectors. Over a decade, SNV has built a footprint of youth employment and entrepreneurship programs in more than 13 countries – including Kenya, impacting more than 600,000 young women and men globally. A recent light intensity impact assessment study of 2014-2018 regional program in Mozambique, Rwanda and Tanzania provides indicative results that young people are getting ahead and influencing change at community, regional and national levels. The stories of impact in this booklet are an indication that indeed, young women and men entrepreneurs in Kenya are joining their counterparts in the region in taking the lead in optimizing the untapped entrepreneurial opportunities in high growth sectors like agri-food, energy and in the emerging circular economy. Together with our partners - with young women and men at the core of our work - we are committed to creating meaningful change and unlocking the untapped potential of these young women and men, worldwide. Enjoy the read.

Introduction to GESI at SNV

SNV's 2030 strategy elevates Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) to a core theme. It also places central focus on generating opportunities and strengthening the agency of young people. The strategy, which started in 2023, reflects the intersectional nature of the challenges ahead and the importance of Youth and GESI for equitable sector outcomes.

Addressing inequality through Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

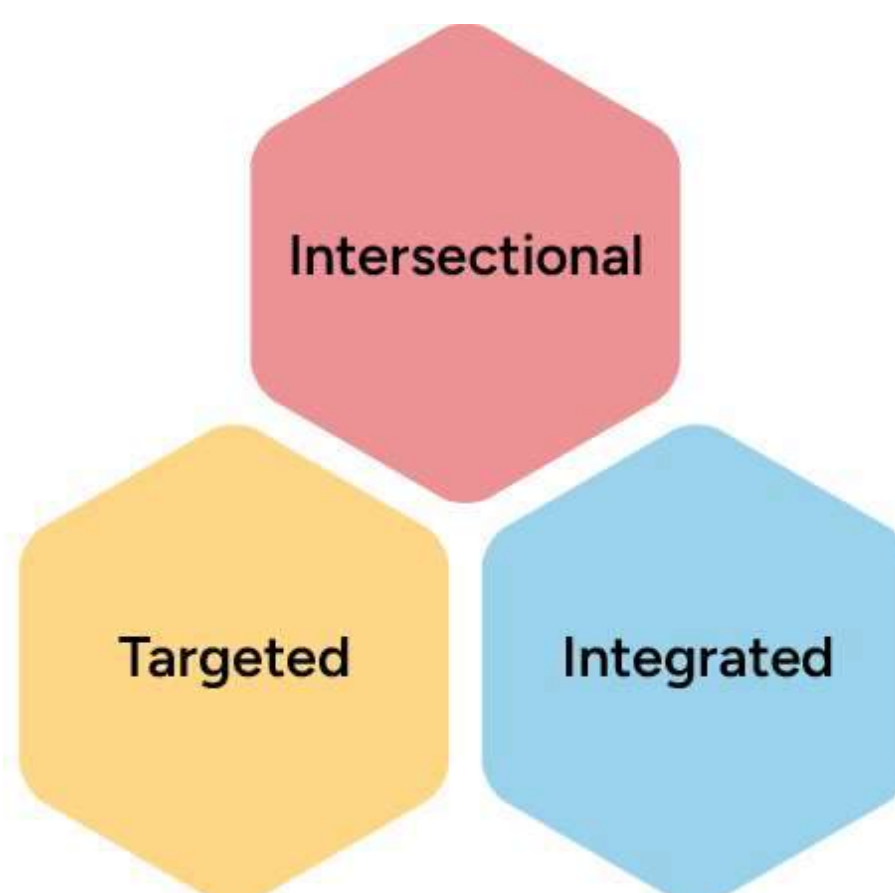
SNV has positioned Youth, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) as a global priority, aiming to integrate it across all levels of our work by 2030..

Our approach for strengthening GESI across sectoral work

SNV implements a refreshed, cross-sectoral GESI approach that supports our systems transformation work and contributes to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). This involves:

- **Mainstreaming:** Integrating GESI into all stages of the programme cycle, activities, policies, and practices, as well as embedding it into our organisational DNA through established minimum standards, targets, and participation in project activities.
- **Targeting:** Working to increase confidence and opportunities through tailored activities and outcomes focused on empowerment, as well as practical and strategic GESI outcomes (agency, access, and voice), acknowledging that we cannot 'add women and stir' i.e. addition of GESI targets only.
- **Intersectional:** Applying intersectional analysis to understand the dimensions of inclusion, exclusion, and power, as well as the relationships between them

This approach is grounded in 'developing from within', aligning our organisational structure with our commitment to GESI. This entails learning, evidence-building, and building partnerships with marginalised groups to support gender justice and equitable access to food, water, and energy.



SNV GESI Empowerment Framework

Empowerment of women and (potentially) marginalised people we work with to realise their basic rights, secure decent work, successfully establish and grow their businesses or increase their agricultural productivity, income and resilience to shocks



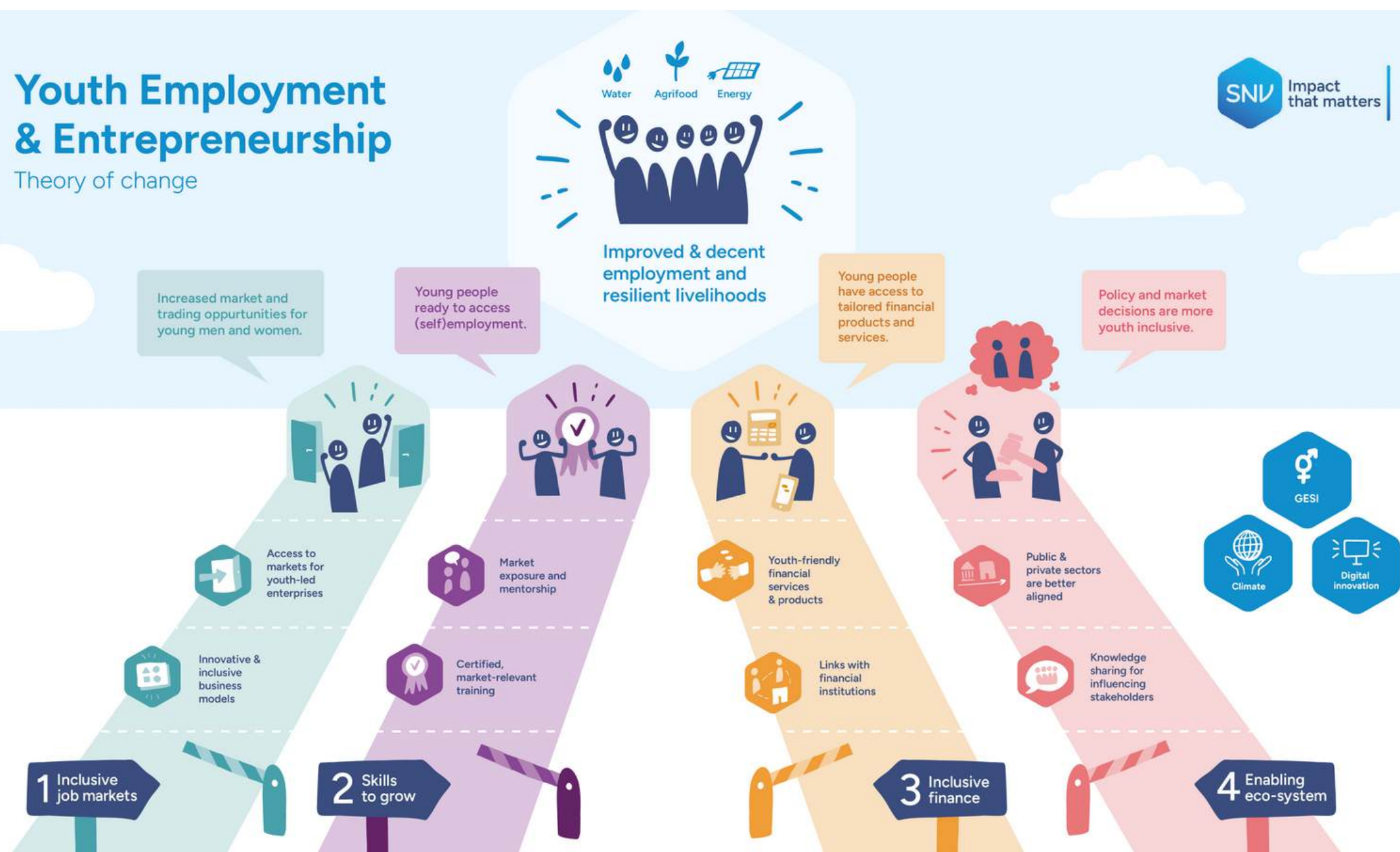
Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (YEE)

The increasing youth population in Africa and Asia can be a great asset if their potential is harnessed, developed and channelled towards the right opportunities. However, investments in the youth sector remain minimal and where available are uncoordinated. Youth unemployment remains a significant challenge, with a high proportion of young people facing difficulties in establishing sustainable entrepreneurial ventures, and/or finding decent employment opportunities. This is due to limitations accessing social capital, skills mismatch, accessing markets and finance by those with ambitions to venture into the world of entrepreneurship - mostly affecting young women and men MSMEs with scalable enterprises.

Climate change, while an opportunity for youth jobs, compound the challenge facing many young entrepreneurs - for example the flooding in East Africa in mid-2024 caused displacements – mostly affecting young people.

Despite these context specific challenges there is growing recognition of the potential of young women and men as catalysts of change in addressing issues related to climate crisis, food security and hunger.

Together with our partners, including local governments, private sector and other eco-system support organisations, SNV supports young people to build market ready skills and facilitating access to markets and assets. We collaborate with key actors in contributing to sustainable and inclusive enabling environments. SNV contributes to systems transformation via coherent Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (YEE) Theory of Change (ToC) as described in the next section:



SNV YEE Theory of Change

Embracing innovation

SNV employs customised, innovative strategies across various sectors of impact to spur the establishment and expansion of youth-led enterprises:

Innovative finance: We connect youth with informal and formal financial institutions and tailored financial products. This includes, among others, supporting digital Youth Savings and Loan Associations (YSLAs), inclusive Savings and Credit Co-operatives, blended finance modalities, and matching grants. Youth also receive training to build their financial literacy, money management, and decision-making skills.

Green entrepreneurship: Through public and private sector engagement, YEE identifies green economic opportunities and develops interventions focusing on the opportunities and risks associated with climate crisis responses. Resilience-building opportunities include renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture, and digital climate adaptation solutions.

Digital innovation: We employ digital tools to expand young people's access to market opportunities, training, mentorship, and business support. We also empower young entrepreneurs to leverage technology for sustainable development, fostering economic growth and environmental stewardship.



Stories of Change

Youth leading the way towards healthy soils, environment and people

As the global population grows, it becomes increasingly important to empower young people to lead in mitigating climate change and strengthening food systems. The agroecological conversation in Kenya is driving this critical topic that will pave the way for sustainable and equitable agricultural practises.

Fridah Wanjiku Irungu, a 26-year-old agroecology champion, has actively taken up this responsibility. She is not your average young person in Gathinja Village, Kiharu Constituency Murang'a County. When Fridah speaks, the entire community listens. She is one of the young agroecology champions working with Greener Greens Project funded by The Biovision Foundation and implemented by SNV Kenya and The World Vegetables Centre.

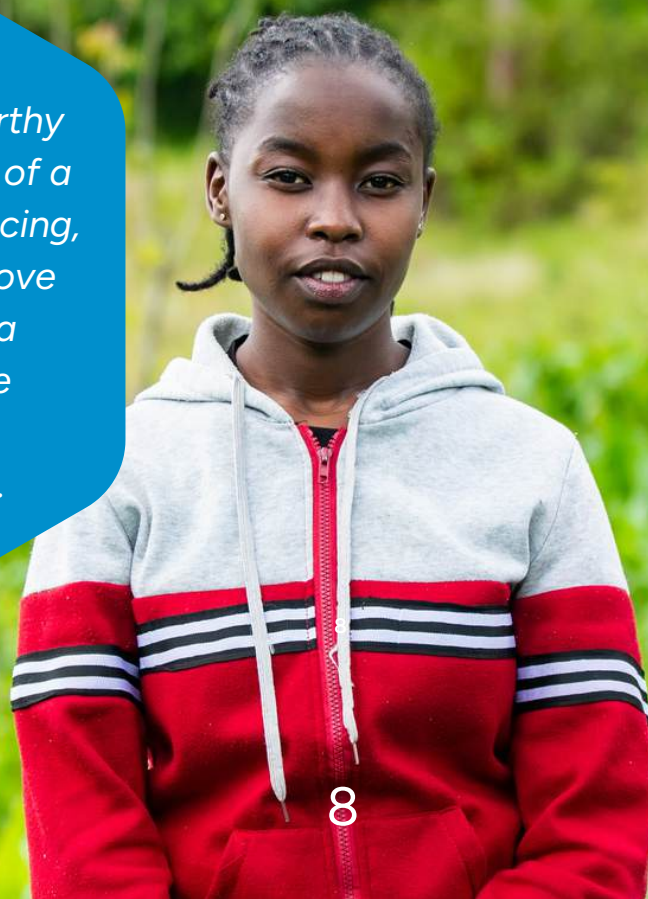
Fridah has created a trustworthy base that buys into her vision of a fully organic, vegetable-producing, consuming community. Her confidence and ability to lead, engage and train is clear for all to see, an expert in agroecology well established through her engagement with the project. Her love for nature has turned into a flourishing and sustainable livelihood, an important component of the project. 'The demand for organically grown vegetables is at an all-time high in Kiharu, *-Hapa hakuna mtu anataka mboga imepigwa dawa-*, nobody wants to eat vegetables pumped with chemicals.' she says emphatically.

The Greener Green's project overall objective is to increase the adoption of agroecological vegetable production at the systems level, contributing to long-term improvements in incomes, food security, and farmer resilience. This is done by building an evidence base for smallholder vegetable production systems based on agroecological approaches.

Fridah joined the project in March 2022. At the time, she was particularly interested in organic crop production, a farming technique that prioritises ecological balance and limits the use of chemical inputs. Like other farmers in Kiharu Constituency, she would use conventional farming practices such as fertilisers for increased yields and pesticides to control pests and diseases. 'I was very happy to see dead insects as a result of the knock-down effect of insecticides; little did I know that the same effects trickle down to beneficial microorganisms affecting soil biodiversity.' This knowledge was eye-opening for her and reinforced her resolve to adopt eco-friendly farming practices.

Fridah has received training from the Greener Greens Project and now uses locally available and environmentally friendly materials in and around her farm. She uses techniques such as compost, farmyard manure, vermicompost and bokashi to improve soil fertility and health, resulting in increased yields.

Fridah has created a trustworthy base that buys into her vision of a fully organic, vegetable-producing, consuming community. Her love for nature has turned into a flourishing and sustainable livelihood, an important component of the project.



Additionally, she has started using plant extracts such as *Tithonia diversifolia*, neem plant, and Mexican Marigold to control pests and diseases, alongside integrated pest management practices like the use of sticky and pheromone traps. She practices water conservation techniques such as Zai pits, sunken beds, and dry and living mulching. These methods have significantly reduced production costs while preserving and improving biological and ecological processes in agricultural production. Most importantly, they have created a conducive environment for soil microorganisms to thrive. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the impact of their food choices and are choosing organic food more often due to its positive effects on human health and the environment. This trend is driving better agricultural practices that prioritise quality over quantity. At the same time, there is now more awareness for farmers in vulnerable regions to adopt more sustainable methods to protect their livelihoods. Agroecological practices will significantly influence the future of agriculture as the global demand for healthy and sustainable food continues to rise.

[Watch Fridah's story](#)

Soil health is the foundation of our food systems and provides several vital ecosystem services, including land productivity, flood regulation, nutrient cycling, and carbon sequestration. To improve soil health, we must address critical implementation, monitoring, policy, and investment barriers that constrain farmers from adopting and scaling healthy soil practices.

The Government of Kenya (GOK) is highly committed to improving the food systems in the country. The main objective is to ensure that people have access to safe and nutritious food. However, the issues within the food systems, particularly in production, pose a significant challenge to Kenya's efforts to promote sustainable food and land-use systems and other social and economic advancements. Therefore, more partnerships and collaborations are needed across all levels of the government to realise this agenda.

Looking at this soil, you will notice an abundance of microbial communities such as earthworms, a phenomenon you will not come across in many farms in our area.

Fridah Irungu



Inclusion through Empowerment: The Ogiek community in the Mau

The OGIEK community now adopts better livestock practices, such as zero-grazing units, growing high-quality fodder varieties, and keeping improved breeds.

The OGIEK community in Kuresoi, South West Mau in Kenya, has faced a long history of exclusion and hardship, with forced evictions from the Mau Forest dating back to the 1930s. The situation escalated in the 1990s due to irregular land allocations and dispossessions, intensifying feelings of isolation and leading to conflict, displacement, and loss of lives.

In 2017, SNV, in partnership with IDH, KTDA, Finlay, and GAD-F, launched the Livestock Intensification Project (ISLA), piloting an alternative livestock production system to enhance income and promote environmental sustainability. Now in its fourth phase, the project has sustainably increased dairy production and efficiency, reduced cattle grazing in the forest, and strengthened farmers' business enterprises.

Transformative interventions

Initial interventions, including capacity development in livestock management and climate-resilient practices, have significantly boosted milk yields. The surge in production led to the formation of five dairy cooperatives to facilitate efficient and sustainable access to milk markets. Among them is the Tin Dairy Farmers' Cooperative, composed of the OGIEK community, with 230 members, 93 of whom are actively supplying 1.5 litres per day to the cooperative.

“Before the intervention, we grazed our animals in the forest and only managed 0.3ltr of milk/day. We were using cups to measure productivity. With better feeding practices and training, we have greatly improved our production.”

Mr John Keror

Being a marginalised group, the ISLA project trained the community members on the value of inclusion that has allowed them to foster an environment that values diversity and equity with the key principles of equity, participation, accountability and empowerment. Recognizing that gender equity is essential for sustainable growth and community development The project has brought a sense of ownership, hope, and community. Improved biodiversity and livestock management skills have reduced dependency on the forest as a grazing area for their cattle, easing tensions with local authorities. The OGIEK community now adopts better livestock practices, such as zero-grazing units, growing high-quality fodder varieties, and keeping improved breeds.

“We are accountable to each other. My wife questions me about the dairy enterprise, which I manage, while I can question her about the off-farm business that she manages.”

Mr and Mrs Barno

The OGIEK community now adopts better livestock practices, such as zero-grazing units, growing high-quality fodder varieties, and keeping improved breeds.



Capacity building for cooperative governance and financial literacy has increased accountability and transparency. Community members now appreciate the need for collective action and have moved from selling milk by the cup to delivering larger quantities to the cooperative. Social impacts are evident, with women empowered and actively participating in household decision-making. Livelihoods are improving among the OGIEK, as seen from the increased school enrolment and completion rates. The additional income enables families to pay school fees and transition away from hunting and gathering. At the household level, women have started kitchen gardens to provide nutritious food for their families.

Challenges and opportunities

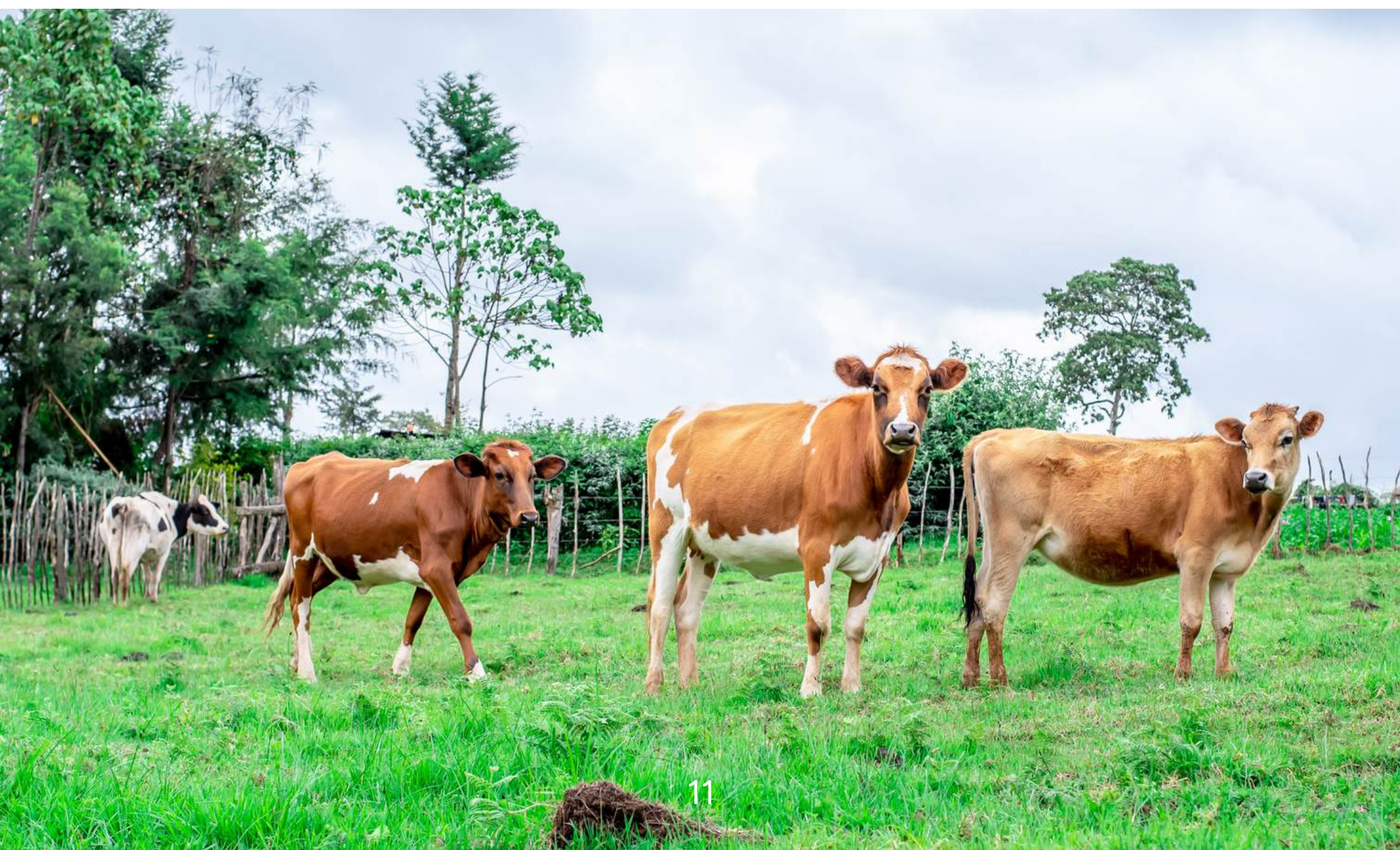
However, challenges persist despite progress. Previously, members sold milk at lower prices to a private off-taker, who often delayed payments, creating financial strain. Even after establishing the cooperative, the private off-taker continued purchasing milk directly from members and supplying it to the TIN Dairy Farmers' Cooperative Society. To address this, the cooperative intensified awareness efforts and onboarded extension officers. These efforts have increased daily milk collection to 188 litres, up from 120 litres in 2021—a 57% growth.

As the cooperative moves forward, it will be essential to prioritise:

- Expanding membership beyond the OGIEK community to include other tribes who feel marginalised, despite being leading milk producers.
- Increasing women's representation in leadership, currently at just 16% on the board, as women play a key role in the dairy sector.
- Revising the constitution to address the issue of members side-selling their milk.
- Developing value-added products such as mursik to access niche markets beyond the locality.
- Digitising the milk supply system to move away from the manual card system, further boosting confidence, accountability, and member loyalty.

“My farm management capacity has improved because of the training I have received from the project, through TIN Cooperative, which has reduced dependency on the forest as a source of livestock feed. I am now establishing a zero-grazing unit as my pathway to prosperity.

Mr Barno



Transforming Lives of Women through Clean Energy

Access to clean cooking solutions remains challenging in many refugee camps and low-income communities, where traditional cooking methods contribute to environmental degradation, economic hardships, and health risks. SNV's Humanitarian Market-Based Energy Access (MBEA) project, funded by Energising Development (EnDev), is working to address this challenge by fostering inclusive energy markets in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement, and the surrounding host communities in Turkana County.

At the heart of this transformation is the local production of improved cookstoves (ICS), which offer safer, cleaner alternatives to traditional methods. Sunken Limited, a key partner in this project, has been producing Improved energy-saving stoves since 2018 through its Stove Production Unit (SPU) in Kakuma. This SPU not only utilizes local raw materials but also provides employment opportunities to local residents, making the stoves more affordable for low-income families.

“People look down on this job, but it has given me the ability to support my family, pay school fees, and handle hospital bills. I now have financial independence and can even access credit. It's not about the job itself, but what you can achieve from it.”
Areymo Jane

The SPU now employs 16 staff members and supports over 114 vendors, including 69 men and 49 women, serving over 300,000 people across Kakuma and Kalobeyei. One such case is of Areymo Jane, a Kakuma resident who joined the SPU in 2019. Initially trained as an artisan in clay lining, she later taught herself iron fabrication, becoming the first woman to specialise in the craft at the SPU. Her determination and skill have transformed her life. 'People look down on this job,' Jane says, 'but it has given me the ability to support my family, pay school fees, and handle hospital bills. I now have financial independence and can even access credit.' She encourages other women in the community to join her, stating, 'It's not about the job itself, but what you can achieve from it.'

This story underscores the impact of local innovation on transforming energy access and economic opportunities in refugee and low-income settings. Through strategic partnerships, community engagement, and capacity building, the SPU in Kakuma not only meets the demand for clean cooking solutions but fosters local economic development. SNV's clean energy initiatives are thus transforming lives across the region.

The Stove Production Unit now employs 16 staff members and supports over **114 vendors**, including **69 men and 49 women**, serving over **300,000 people** across Kakuma and Kalobeyei.

The critical role of women in changing behaviour towards green energy through biogas

In Keringet, Kuresoi South, Nakuru County, women are now embracing the use of clean energy cooking solutions like Biogas, fuelled by knowledge and support from the African Biodigester Component (ABC) Project in Kenya. The ABC-K project uses a market-based approach creating demand, encouraging the supply of high-quality technology and services, and creating an enabling environment in order to achieve a sustainable, stable, and growing market for biodigesters thus contributing to meeting national energy access and climate targets.

The project is facilitating a shift of the biodigester market by targeting 20,000 small scale and 250 commercial biodigesters by the end of 2025, through a well-balanced mix of demand side, supply side, financing and enabling environment interventions, geared at boosting demand and supporting small-scale and medium scale biodigester companies in acquiring more clients

In Kenya, the use of firewood as a primary cooking fuel is prevalent, with implications on the health and well-being of women. The cultural expectation that women are responsible for cooking and food preparation places an additional burden on them, as they must often travel long distances to collect firewood.

According to the Clean Cooking Alliance, adopting and maintaining the use of clean cooking solutions requires the support of behavioural change initiatives to encourage the move away from traditional cooking methods to sustain clean cooking solutions. In 2023, Africa Bioenergy Programs Ltd. (ABPL), in collaboration with The Asili Initiative (TAI) and support from the ABC-K project, held an awareness creation event on biodigester technology. The event focused on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) sensitisation within the biogas sector, bio-slurry education, and financial linkages. The event attracted over 200 participants from the community.

Among the participants was Betty, who inspired by the GESI sensitisation meeting saw an opportunity to change not only her life but also the lives of those around her. Empowered with new knowledge of biodigesters, Betty approached the Soitaran Farmers Cooperative Society for financing and successfully secured KES. 135,000 loan to install a biogas system in her home.

I am grateful for the opportunity to learn about biogas at the GESI event. It has not only changed my life but also the lives of those around me.

Betty





With the financial support in place, Betty's household is now powered by biogas, an eco-friendly and cost-effective energy solution. "It's not just about having a biogas system; it's about improving our quality of life," she proudly shares. Betty's story has inspired others in the community to explore biodigester technology, creating a ripple effect of change.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to learn about biogas at the GESI event. It has not only changed my life but also the lives of those around me," Betty beams, embodying the project's impact. Betty's story shows effect that targeted awareness-raising, and capacity-building efforts can have on communities. Empowering women in the clean energy sector is key for enhancing their agency and decision-making power.



This leads to increased participation and adoption of these technologies, making them advocates for clean energy solutions within their households and communities and overall adoption of sustainable energy practises. By focusing on gender equality, sustainable energy, and accessible financing, the ABC K project is helping rural women like Betty create a brighter and cleaner future for themselves and their families.



Baridi: A Female-Led Pioneer in Solar-Powered Cooling Solutions

Baridi, a Kenyan female-led startup is breaking new ground in the sustainable energy space. Baridi's innovative approach offers durable solar-powered cooling solutions for urban meat, fish, and dairy markets to increase food security, save energy and reduce carbon emissions.

In 2020, Baridi secured 200,000-euro funding from EEP Africa, implemented by SNV to pilot a pay-as-you-store cooling service at Nairobi's central wholesale meat market, also known as Burma Market. While the initial business model aimed to generate revenue directly through cooling services, the pilot revealed that this model wasn't financially sustainable. As a result, Baridi pivoted its strategy, focusing on B2B cooling solutions as a more promising avenue for growth. Additionally, Baridi is actively cultivating partnerships to distribute Bulk Milk Chiller (BMC) technologies through its direct sale business model.

Baridi's scale into the fish & dairy sector has led to a notable shift in their clientele. Founder and CEO, Tracy Kimathi shares: 'The meat market is mostly male dominated, and now in the fish sector we mostly work together with female up takers and vendors.' Tracy explains that women often face financial barriers in acquiring high value assets, driving them into spaces with lower entry barriers such as cold-chain.

Something needs to change, as she also points out that even women with high quality education 'don't end up in the leadership positions.' Baridi is exemplifying this change as the company has a predominantly female workforce with women holding key leadership positions: 81% of shareholding belongs to local young women below the age of 35, 57% of the workforce are women, and 33% of the Board of Directors are women. This representation is a testament to Tracy's dedication to empowering women in traditionally male-dominated fields

Beyond gender inclusion, Tracy emphasizes the importance of south-to-south partnerships. By collaborating with other organisations and businesses in the region, Tracy hopes to create a more sustainable renewable energy landscape for all.

The meat market is mostly male dominated, and now in the fish sector we mostly work together with female up takers and vendors.
- Tracy Kimathi

81%

Shareholding of local young women below the age of 35

37%

Board of Directors are women

57%

Workforce are women

Beyond gender inclusion, Tracy emphasizes the importance of south-to-south partnerships. By collaborating with other organisations and businesses in the region, Tracy hopes to create a more sustainable renewable energy landscape for all.





Women and youth in Agri-Business

In the beautiful and green highlands of Kenya, where the landscape is as diverse as the communities that inhabit it, a quiet shift is happening. The Climate Resilient Agribusiness for Tomorrow (CRAFT) project, spearheaded by SNV in partnership with Wageningen University and Agriterro, is making significant strides in empowering women and youth. This empowerment is not just about improving agricultural practices; it is about transforming lives, enhancing decision-making power, and creating sustainable, climate-resilient communities.

Nandi Cooperative: Youth Taking the Helm

In Nandi County, the CRAFT project has catalysed a youth-driven transformation. The establishment of a youth council with CRAFT's support has been a game-changer. This council is not just a token gesture but a functional body with a well-defined investment plan. The youth council's achievements are impressive, with successful ventures in potato production and tree seedling sales.

Nelson Kosgei, a dynamic young leader from the Nandi Cooperative, is a shining example of the opportunities created by the CRAFT project. His journey began with participation in a youth forum organized by CRAFT at the Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF) in Nairobi. This exposure led to his selection for an exchange program in Germany, where he gained invaluable knowledge on mechanization.

Upon his return, Nelson assumed the role of acting cooperative manager and now heads the mechanization subcommittee. His leadership has inspired other youth members and demonstrated the potential of youth-driven innovation in agriculture. The youth council's efforts in potato production have been particularly noteworthy. By adopting climate-smart practices, they have increased yields and improved the quality of their produce. This success has not only boosted their incomes but also enhanced their reputation within the community. The production and sale of tree seedlings have further diversified their income sources and contributed to environmental sustainability.

Marakwet Highland: Women Leading the Change

The Marakwet Highland, known for its scenic beauty and agricultural potential, is witnessing a paradigm shift in gender dynamics. Historically, women in this region have been excluded from key decision-making processes. However, with the intervention of the CRAFT project, this narrative is changing. CRAFT's women leadership training programs have equipped women with the skills and confidence to take on leadership roles. These training sessions have been instrumental in fostering a new generation of women leaders who are now actively participating in board roles and community governance.

One remarkable outcome of these interventions is the significant investment by women in climate-smart agriculture (CSA) activities, including beekeeping, bean production, and tree nurseries.

Beekeeping has provided a sustainable source of income and improved livelihoods for many women in Marakwet. The production and sale of honey not only boost their household incomes but also contribute to environmental conservation. Bean production, another CSA activity supported by CRAFT, has seen women take charge of the entire value chain, from planting to harvesting and marketing. This holistic approach has increased food security and provides a stable income stream for the different households under the CRAFT project.

Tree nurseries have also become a popular venture among the women, contributing to reforestation efforts and providing seedlings for other agricultural activities. The women are looking at fruits such as passions, apples to improve on their diets and as a means of income for their households. The establishment of both women and youth councils in Marakwet further underscores the commitment to inclusive governance. In the cooperatives youth and women are now part of the leadership as part of CRAFT interventions.


These councils ensure that the voices of women and youth are heard, their ideas are valued, and they actively participate in shaping their communities' future.

Starlight Cooperative: Inclusive Governance in Action

The Starlight Cooperative stands out as a model of inclusive governance and community empowerment. Through the unwavering support of the CRAFT project, both youth and women councils have been established and are in the process of formalization. This formalization is more than just a procedural step; it is a testament to the commitment to institutionalize the participation of women and youth in governance.

The empowerment provided by these councils has led to significant changes in the cooperative's governance structure. Women and youth now have representation on the board of both the Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO) and the multipurpose cooperative. This inclusive approach ensures that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making processes, leading to more holistic and effective strategies.

A notable achievement of the Starlight Cooperative is the introduction of a clause that mandates youth and women representation on the board. This policy change ensures that the empowerment of women and youth is not just a temporary phenomenon but a sustained practice. The youth council, driven by their newfound empowerment, has ventured into various farming activities, including compost making and potato production.



A notable achievement of the Starlight Cooperative is the introduction of a clause that mandates youth and women representation on the board.

Enabling Female leadership and Agency

SNV Kenya trains women and young people on leadership and business skills to support their participation and growth in leadership positions and in their enterprises. The ICSIAPL and LISTEN project used the Leadership Enhancement Adjustment Program (LEAP+) as a leadership and business model for MSMEs, cooperatives, CBO's and SHGs.

The power of exchange visits in empowering lives of Maa women

In the trans-Mara area, SNV's ICSIAPL project works among the Maa community. The Maasai have a rich culture that remains alive today. Previously the Maasai lived a nomadic lifestyle. Differing factors, such as climate change and land demarcation, force these communities to start farming as a business. ICSIAPL collaborates with community members in adapting to this change by encouraging and educating them on the topic of forage production and livestock keeping.

ICSIAPL has a special focus on the economic empowerment of women and youth, a focus that can be challenging. The culturally clear division of roles among men and women and the different age-sets, does not offer women and youth much space to work on personal income-generating activities. It has always been the responsibility of the husband and father to provide and exert authority and the mother's responsibility to take care of the household. As a result, many women were not allowed to partake in training or women's groups, unable to access or decide over the family income and subjected to the authority of their husbands. The only authority the women had was over the little money made from the sale of cowmilk.

ICSIAPL is working to alter this dynamic and include women in decision-making and economic activity. To inspire the women and youth, ICSIAPL invited them to visit a farm that is an example of effective forage production and the collaboration of a Maa husband and wife. The women returned inspired to work on forage production, increased milk sales and their new knowledge encouraged them to make their voices heard in the households. Even so, they were often met with distrust or conflict. Their husbands found it hard to include the household decision-making and farming activities, no matter how much their wives explained what they had seen. Women were

considered children, unable to make wise decisions or to be trusted with money. Even though ICSIAPL focuses on women and youth, the women asked for their husbands to be invited to the farm as well. During this visit, the men were shown the things that were possible on their lands. That trusting their wives and providing them space did not need to be threatening but could even increase household income and lessen conflict.

During the years that ICSIAPL has worked among Maa communities the power of providing proof by exchange visits became evident. After the men returned, women were given small pieces of land to plant seeds and money to invest in their groups. As a Maasai man explained: "Maasai need to see before they believe". Women can now work on providing the cattle with the proper feeding so that milk production increases, and with that their income. This growing income provides women the freedom to work on other income-generating activities and increases their inclusion in household decision-making.

Witnessing this transformation firsthand underscores the importance of finding the right tools to support a community. In empowering women, especially within Maa communities, it is essential to also involve men. The story above exemplifies how scepticism can be turned into support, illustrating the journey of women on a path to empowerment.

“
Maasais need to see
before they believe.”





Women and Youth leading the promise of Regenerative Agriculture for a resilient future

As we navigate the hilly terrain of Ainamoi Sub County, Kericho County, passing through the green, undulating tea plantations, my phone suddenly rings. *'Vijana wangu wako kwa barabara wanawangoja, walisikia mnakuja wakasema lazima wawakaribishe vizuri'*—my children are waiting for you by the road; they heard you were coming and insisted they give you a warm welcome, Isabella says, her voice full of excitement.

A few minutes later, we spot two young children waving with contagious enthusiasm. We pick them up; the youngest, Kipkalya, proudly takes on the role of our navigator. Animatedly directing us home.

Isabella Ng'eno is one of the Master Trainers in the REALMS (Regenerative Agricultural Practices for Improved Livelihoods and Markets) project. Her home serves as a hub of circular farming innovation. As we step out of the car, we are greeted by the familiar, earthy smell of a thriving poultry. From brooding to fully matured birds, Isabella's poultry business operates like a well-oiled machine.

'I started my poultry venture back in 2013,' she explains, 'and over time, I have expanded to selling both fully grown chickens and two-week-old chicks.'

Like many farmers, Isabella soon faced a challenge: what to do with the waste produced

by her flock. For years, she discarded it, unaware of its hidden potential. This changed in 2022 when she attended a training session organised by the REALMS project. There, she learned about the power of regenerative agriculture—specifically, how to convert poultry waste into valuable compost and even produce chicken feed. With the cost of chicken feed soaring, Isabella saw an opportunity. She embraced Black Soldier Fly farming and earthworm production, transforming what was once waste into a resource. Today, she produces enough feed for her flock and uses the nutrient-rich frass as an organic fertilizer for her farm. To see the real impact, Isabella ran a side-by-side test on her land, comparing crops grown with organic frass to those using conventional fertilizer. The results were remarkable—healthier soil, more resilient crops, and an overall increase in yield.

Isabella's farm has since blossomed into a model of circular farming where several community members join to learn and get training. In addition to poultry, she grows a variety of traditional vegetables and fruits, which she sells at the local market in Kapsoit town. This provides her family with a steady income and offers the community access to fresh, healthy produce.

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Isabella's journey from a poultry farmer to champion of regenerative agriculture is proof of the transformative power of REALMS. Her story inspires others in her community to embrace sustainable practices and highlights that farmers everywhere can become champions of regenerative agriculture with the right tools and knowledge.

Youth in Regenerative Agriculture

Tony Owen Kipkorir is on a mission, fuelled by a deep desire to spark transformation in his community. On International Youth Day, we met Tony at the SNV Eldoret office, where he joined fifteen other young farmers to share their learnings, challenges, and aspirations from their work across SNV projects. His passion is palpable as he enthusiastically engages, eager to both inspire and be inspired.

Born and raised in Buret Sub County, Kericho County, Tony is a Farmer Field School (FFS) facilitator under the REALMS project. He recalls the moment everything changed, 'Two years ago, I heard the REALMS Project was conducting a training in my area. That began a beautiful journey filled with growth, learning, and opportunities. Through the training, we delved into various aspects of Regenerative Agriculture, and from there I helped form five groups in my home area, each with 20 members. These groups have blossomed into thriving Farmer Field Schools: New Dawn FFS, Sach Angwan FFS, Maluktany FFS, Kapsenetwet Widows FFS, and Chelilis FFS.'

Today, the groups stand as hubs of activity, each with functional nurseries propagating vegetable seedlings for sale. Beyond this, they manufacture and market Regenerative Agriculture products, including ash brew, tea manure, foliar, Bio Slurry, and Azola. Every member has also committed to setting up a kitchen garden at home, turning their learning into practice.

Tony's leadership and initiative have not gone unnoticed. He works closely with Hon. Anita Byegon, the area's Member of the County Assembly, facilitating training on vertical gardens—a clear testament to his growing influence and active role within the community.

Beatrice Chebet and Sharon Chelagat, two youthful farmers working for Kericho County's Government Department of Agriculture, share a similar vision. Both are deeply involved in training and supporting farmers to adopt regenerative agriculture practices, demonstrating the growing network of young leaders championing sustainable farming in Kericho.

We need to see more young people engaged in agriculture, especially regenerative agriculture. The Farmer Field Schools have been excellent in driving them towards farming. Our experience shows that since we established the FFS, more young people are visiting to learn and understand Regenerative Agriculture.



I take great pride in my achievements over the past two years. I can confidently say that I have helped many people in my community embrace RA practices. If you have a farm problem, just call me. - Tony Owen Kipkorir

We lead by example by enabling others

Regina shows me a picture of herself and says, “This is a picture of me in 2018, just from university. This was my first training. *Nilikuwa nimeparara* -I had no money”, she says laughing. “Farming has changed my life. It has given me a voice, a purpose, and the ability to help others. I want to see more women and Persons with Disability involved in agriculture in ways that benefit them financially.”

34-year-old Regina Muthoni Luka from Mikinduri Ward in Tigania Central, Meru County wears many caps, she is a farmer, a businesswoman, a trainer on Climate Smart Agriculture and also supports and empowers Persons with Disability to explore opportunities in farming. A mother of five, Regina carries the true nature of women and power. She is confident, resilient, innovative, and a community voice, above all she gives back. Regina is a farmer growing sorghum, maize, Nyota beans, millet, cowpeas, groundnuts, and green grams.

Regina joined the CRAFT project in 2021, as one of the farmers contracted by Shalem Investments Limited to offtake sorghum. She was trained on and adopted a number Climate Smart Agriculture Practises including soil testing, rip lining, use of certified seeds, agrochemical handling, line planting, post-harvest management and storage.

“Before, I was planting kimerumeru - kienyeji (just planting for the sake of planting) without proper techniques, and my yields were low. Now, with CSA practices like soil testing, riplines to conserve water and certified seeds, I’ve seen a huge difference. I used to get only 2-3 bags of sorghum per acre, but now I average 18-24 bags,” Currently she maintains steady production while also aggregating produce from nearly 50 farmers, collecting up to 21 tonnes of sorghum, which she sells to schools and off takers like Shalem and Jufra Investment Limited. She is also an agrovet owner enabling farmers easy access to essential inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and storage materials like tarpaulin bags. This has reduced the need for farmers to travel long distances like to Meru town, saving time and transportation costs.

“I currently have 480 farmers who buy inputs from me. I link them to products and finance, like Vision Fund and Acre Fund, who then support them. It’s not just about selling inputs; it’s about helping farmers grow,” Regina says.

Regina’s work extends far beyond her own farm. She is deeply ingrained in issues social issues especially those affecting Persons with Disability. She works with six disability groups —Kaguata, Marega, Nkonju, Ruriie, Mulika, and Thuuri—totaling around 240 members. She links these groups to farming opportunities and training programs provided by organizations like Africa Harvest, ICRISAT, and Light for the World.

“Farming has changed my life. It has given me a voice, a purpose, and the ability to help others. I want to see more women and Persons with Disability involved in agriculture in ways that benefit them financially.”

Regina

Like many women in her community, Regina has faced gender-related obstacles, including limited control over finances generated through farming.

Through these linkages, they are trained in agriculture and poultry farming, empowering them to become self-reliant and business oriented.

"I look for partners who can support PWDs and link them to farming opportunities. They are trained to be business-oriented, and it's amazing to see them gain confidence and independence," Regina explains.

"Farming and life in general have not been without its challenges." Regina says, deep in thought.

Like many women in her community, Regina has faced gender-related obstacles, including limited control over finances generated through farming.

"Many women do not have a voice in their families. Sometimes they work and do not even know where the money goes. Our husbands sometimes take all the money, and how they spend it is not clear," Regina explains.

“Many women do not have a voice in their families. Sometimes they work and do not even know where the money goes. Our husbands sometimes take all the money, and how they spend it is not clear.
Regina

However, she has overcome these barriers through sheer determination and by leveraging the support of other women groups, applying the mantra of Power in numbers. Regina believes that more women can be empowered to engage in agriculture, especially CSA, by making financing opportunities more accessible and providing financial literacy training. "We need to make funding women led initiatives easier. Many of us lack basic finances to purchase inputs, let alone land. A simple approach which I believe can work is allowing women to get inputs on credit then pay once they have made harvests. Additionally, financial literacy training is crucial so that women can manage their resources effectively," she emphasizes. She also highlights the importance of continued support for PWDs, ensuring they have equal access to farming opportunities and resources. "I want to see more PWDs empowered through agriculture. They have so much potential, and with the right support, they can achieve great things," Regina says



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Reducing the Extension gap in the Kenyan ASALs

Extension officers play an important role in agriculture by providing farmers with knowledge, skills, and resources they need to improve their agricultural practices and increase productivity. They provide education and training, technical assistance and advisory services, community engagement, research and development, advocacy and policy development. Despite their critical role in agricultural development, the Kenyan government is yet to meet the FAO recommended extension ratio of 1:400. This is majorly due to the inadequate financial and technical investments into agricultural departments. This is more so a primary challenge for women where the prevailing perception is that agricultural decision-making is predominantly a male domain. Studies indicate that extension agents often prioritize male household heads when disseminating information, which marginalises women who play vital roles in agricultural production (FAO).

The situation calls for alternative models that can bridge the gap ensuing from this challenge. The Village Based Advisors model is one such alternative that complements the public funded government extension system and has the potential for providing sustainable private sector driven extension. The VBA business model uses farmer entrepreneurs (Village Based Advisors) to offer extension services to fellow farmers. It presents a complete cycle where all stakeholders in the agriculture sector are linked to the farmers through VBAs. The VBA, therefore, acts as a pivot of the model. The model is self-sustaining as VBAs do not receive any payment.

Meet Mercy Gatwiri, a 40-year-old female farmer from Mukogodo East Ward, Laikipia County. She is one of the 169 VBAs trained by the LISTEN Project in partnership with the County Governments of Laikipia, Isiolo & Samburu.

Mercy has progressed fast and is today one of the VBAs who are aggregating demand for farm inputs, with farmers purchasing various inputs such as seeds from her.


She now has 126 farmers under her from two locations in the Ward, who she is reaching with information on suitable agronomic practices. She has been linked with Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation (KALRO) from whom she purchases seed for the farmers under her.



Mercy has also been supported to establish an irrigation system that uses solar powered technology, making her production cycle continuous. With support from the LISTEN Project, Mercy has established strong market linkages, partnering with Medime to offload 250kgs of spinach and other vegetables daily. Additionally, she has secured a partnership with Kieru Ltd for the off taking of dolichos, ensuring a steady income stream and market access for her produce.

Mercy has undergone leadership capacity development program which draws from the SNV's Leadership Enhancement and Action Program (LEAP+). This strengthens leadership using a systemic approach focusing on three levels (i) self-leadership ii) Business leadership (iii) Societal Leadership and is aimed at enhancing leadership capacity and agency. The training involves surfacing gender norms and how these influence leadership capacity for women like Mercy and youth, giving them more voice and influence over community issues.

Mercy's farm is a training site for Good Agronomic Practices (GAP) for other farmers within and beyond her village. She cultivates both commercial and food crops. She is also a champion of climate-smart agriculture, employing a range of practices such as water harvesting, irrigation, integrated soil fertility management, integrated pest management, soil



Mercy's farm is a training site for Good Agronomic Practices (GAP) for other farmers within and beyond her village.

conservation, agroforestry, sequential crop rotation, and intercropping. These practices not only mitigate environmental degradation but also optimize productivity and resource efficiency on her farm.

Mercy has also enhanced production by integrating livestock farming and implementing drought-tolerant fodder and pasture such as African foxtail and Napier, alongside horticultural crops like Dolichos lab lab, pigeon peas, and indigenous vegetables. The project has also worked to connect her to input and output markets for certified seeds. Effective water management, irrigation techniques, agroforestry, and soil conservation has further contributed to her increasing productivity.

Access to water for irrigation as a Teleswani WRUA member has supplemented rain-fed agriculture she practiced before. Being a member of the WRUA, she understands the need for integrated water resource management at landscape level. Mercy anticipates benefiting from climate activities outlined in the Mukogodo East Participatory Climate Risk Assessment (PCRA) report, facilitated by the Mukogodo East Ward Climate Change Planning Committee.

Mercy has generated employment opportunities for one permanent employee and more than 10 casual workers, whose numbers vary with the cropping season. In addition to expanding the workforce, Mercy has increased water harvesting capacity by adding a new water pan that can hold up to 147,000 liters.

This addition brings the total water harvesting capacity on her farm to 390,000 litres. These not only support agricultural productivity but also contribute to sustainable water management practices on her farm. With support from the LISTEN Project, Mercy has established strong market linkages, partnering with Medime to offload 250kgs of spinach and other traditional vegetables while offtaking from other farmers in her area. Additionally, she has secured a partnership with Kieru Ltd to take off dolichos, ensuring a steady income stream and market access for her produce, with her unwavering dedication to sustainable agriculture and community prosperity.

Mercy's farm follows a market-based approach where production is demand-driven, ensuring that she will continue supplying the required crops.

[Watch Mercy's story here](#)



“
Since I am in the business of farming, it will be easy for me to demonstrate and train other farmers on which inputs work best because I will have used them too.
Wesley Korir
”

No challenge is too great to overcome

40-year-old Wesley Korir from Ndanai, Bomet County wears a defiant smile!. Despite living with a disability that left him visually and hearing impaired, Wesley has embraced Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) and has changed his farming practices and secured a better future for his family. His story is one of resilience, hardwork and determination.

Challenged but defiant

Wesley's life has been anything but easy. At the age of five, he and his younger brother were involved in a tragic home accident. While trying to save his brother from a pot of boiling water, Wesley slipped and fell in, suffering severe burns that left him visually and hearing challenged, scars he carries today. This life-altering incident forced him to drop out of school in class four, but he refused to let his disability define him. Instead, he turned to farming, a decision that would later become his lifeline. Today, Wesley is a husband and father of four children—one girl and three boys. His eldest child is 14, while the youngest is just five years old.

Despite his physical challenges, Wesley has taken on the responsibility of providing for his family. He owns 1.5 acres of land, of which he cultivates 0.7 acres. His wife and children have also established a kitchen garden, and his wife plants sorghum, which they use for both household consumption and sale.

Wesley's introduction to Climate-Smart Agriculture came in 2022 through the Kamukulya Farmers Group, where he met Sylvester, a Trainer of Trainers (ToT) from Kaplomboi Farmers Cooperative, a cooperative supported by the CRAFT project. Sylvester's training sessions on CSA practices provided a positive challenge for Wesley. "Through the demo plot, I was able to understand better because it was practical," Wesley recalls. "Sylvester taught us about climate change and how to adapt our farming practices to it." The training covered a range of CSA interventions, including the use of improved bean seeds, proper agrochemical handling, post-harvest management, and soil conservation.

Wesley learned about the importance of certified seeds, such as the improved Nyota beans and maize varieties, which he now purchases from agrovets and the Kaplomboi Cooperative. He also adopted practices like using tarpaulins for drying his produce and planting Napier grass to control soil erosion and pests. Before adopting CSA practices, Wesley faced numerous challenges. He lacked knowledge about the right seeds and agrochemicals to use, and his farm produced only 60 kgs of beans, which was insufficient to meet his family's needs. Financial constraints further compounded his struggles, as he relied on manual labor and had limited access to credit.

However, the CSA interventions have brought remarkable improvements. Wesley now harvests 2 bags (180 kgs) of beans from 0.4 acres, a tangible increase from his previous yield. He sells each bag at KES 12,000, using the proceeds to pay school fees and support his family. "Having harvested 2 bags, I sold each at 12,000 KES. I used this money to pay school fees," Wesley shares. His family is now food secure, and his wife has started planting sorghum, for household consumption and selling.

Wesley has become a role model in his community, demonstrating that disability is not a barrier to success. His journey has inspired others, particularly Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), to take up farming and adopt sustainable practices. "I would like to involve more PWDs in farming," Wesley says. "With the right support, we can achieve self-sufficiency and contribute meaningfully to our communities."

Despite his achievements, Wesley acknowledges that more needs to be done to support PWDs in agriculture. He calls for subsidized farm inputs and equipment, financial support, and more awareness to ensure that PWDs are included in community activities. "PWDs feel like burdens, which hinders them from wanting to be involved in community activities," Wesley explains.

“I would like for more PWDs to be to involved in farming. With the right support, we can achieve self-sufficiency and contribute meaningfully to our communities.
Wesley Korir

"We need more training and support to empower them." He also recommends adopting interventions targeting PWDs to be user specific as disabilities vary.

Wesley envisions a future where he expands his farming and tries his hand at fully commercialising an animal fattening business. He dreams of opening a farm inputs shop and a mobile money business while leveraging his farming experience to train and support other farmers. "Since I am in the business of farming, it will be easy for me to demonstrate and train other farmers on which inputs work best because I will have used them too," he says.

Wesley's ultimate goal is to create a sustainable and inclusive agricultural system that benefits everyone, regardless of their abilities. For Wesley, it's more than farming; it's about hope, perseverance, and the belief that no challenge is too great to overcome. Through his determination and the adoption of CSA practices, Wesley is not only securing a better future for his family but also lighting the way for others to follow. His journey is a reminder that with the right tools, knowledge, and support, anyone can thrive, even in the face of adversity.




Representation through voices

Vulnerable and marginalized groups are often spoken about – but get limited space to speak out themselves. In SNV Kenya we actively promote the inclusion of our community members in public fora to speak about their own achievements and challenges faced. The representation of voices of women, young people and other vulnerable groups are important for the audience to understand their needs, challenges, and successes. But it also shows other women, young people, pastoralist, people living with disabilities, refugees, and other groups that their voice is important, and they have something to contribute to a wider debate.

The celebration of international days like International Women's Day, International Youth Day and International Day of Persons with Disability are important to show the work and progress that young people and women have done to improve their livelihoods and establish businesses. Besides an active online campaign SNV Kenya also organizes events to celebrate the progress made. In 2024 various women were invited during International Women's Day to celebrate their achievements but also to understand the path they took to become successful and what barriers they had to overcome or are still facing in their growth. In 2023 women from various projects visited women from other projects to learn from each other and discuss leadership skills among women.

Alex Simorei is one of those young pastoral people who travelled to Ghana for the Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship conference organized by SNV Ghana to voice his experience as a starting entrepreneur in the Maasai community. His video about his work on Integrated Landscape Management was both featured at the conference as well as at COP27 highlighting his work on creating a healthy natural environment with business opportunities for young people. Meanwhile the conference has been an opportunity for Simorei to connect with other entrepreneurial young people from the continent.

Reverend Loise is an agro-pastoralist in Kajiado who adopted forage production as a preventative method to the impacts of potential droughts in Kenya. Coincidentally the drought started while her efforts to secure enough feed also started. However, thanks to the combination of grazing plans and hay production Reverend Loise was able to withstand the drought reasonably well. In anticipation of El Nino by end of 2023, beginning of 2024 she was invited to speak on national tv on the topic of 'El Nino preparedness: Mitigating the effects of El Nino in the livestock sector. She was the only women and agro-pastoralist on the panel and was able to speak about the lived experienced of both the drought and preparedness for El Nino from a community perspective – next to policy makers and the private sector.



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Access to clean cooking solutions for PWDs in marginalised & underserved communities in Kenya presents unique challenges. While the general population faces barriers to accessing clean cooking solutions, PWDs experience additional layers of difficulty in ensuring access to safe & efficient cooking solutions.

Driving access for clean cooking solutions for Persons with Disability in marginalised communities

Access to clean cooking solutions for Persons with Disability (PWD) in marginalised and underserved communities in Kenya presents unique challenges majorly driven by structural inequalities. While the general population faces barriers to accessing clean cooking solutions, PWDs experience additional layers of difficulty in ensuring access to safe and efficient cooking solutions. Approximately 90% of rural households rely on biomass fuels, which poses health and environmental risks; for PWDs, barriers extend beyond affordability and awareness to physical accessibility and stigma associated with disability. This community stigma and discrimination isolates them, preventing them from engaging in fully adopting these technologies.

Clearly, efforts to transition to cleaner cooking methods often neglect the specific needs of persons with disabilities. Under The Government of Kenya Vision 2030, the KOSAP project is working to close the access gap to clean cooking solutions by providing clean cooking services to remote, low density, and traditionally underserved areas of the country, with a drive to target PWDs.

32-year-old Steven Ngari, decided to move to Kilifi from Kisumu in 2022 because of the uncertainty of the 2022 elections, having

previously experienced post elections turmoil. This was preceded by his excellent performance in primary schooling which allowed him selection into the Equity Bank Ltd Scholarship Wings to Fly program for his secondary school education. Steven has lived with visual impairment, which to him has not been a barrier but a motivation a clear proof that when presented with lemons, we must make lemonade "Sometimes things happen to challenge us and prove that we are more than capable of delivering beyond our expectations. I truly believed disability is being abled differently."

While undergoing the Equity scholarship program, Steven showed a keen interest in clean energy solutions and was given the opportunity to attend trainings for potential sales agents offered through the support of the KOSAP Project. In September 2022 upon moving to Kilifi, he was then given the opportunity to join the clean cooking program in Kilifi County as a clean cooking activator with the responsibility of raising awareness around the adoption of clean cooking solutions within the county, training and mentoring other sales agents and community members.

"This also included identifying market gaps in energy access.

Coming from a low-income household and raised by a single mother who worked tirelessly to provide for him and his siblings, the training was a welcome opportunity for him.

My interest in clean energy and solar solutions started during my time with the Equity scholarship program, where I was fortunate to receive training through KOSAP. That experience was a platform understanding the potential of sustainable solutions. When I moved to Kilifi in September 2022, I took on the challenge of being a Clean Energy Activator."

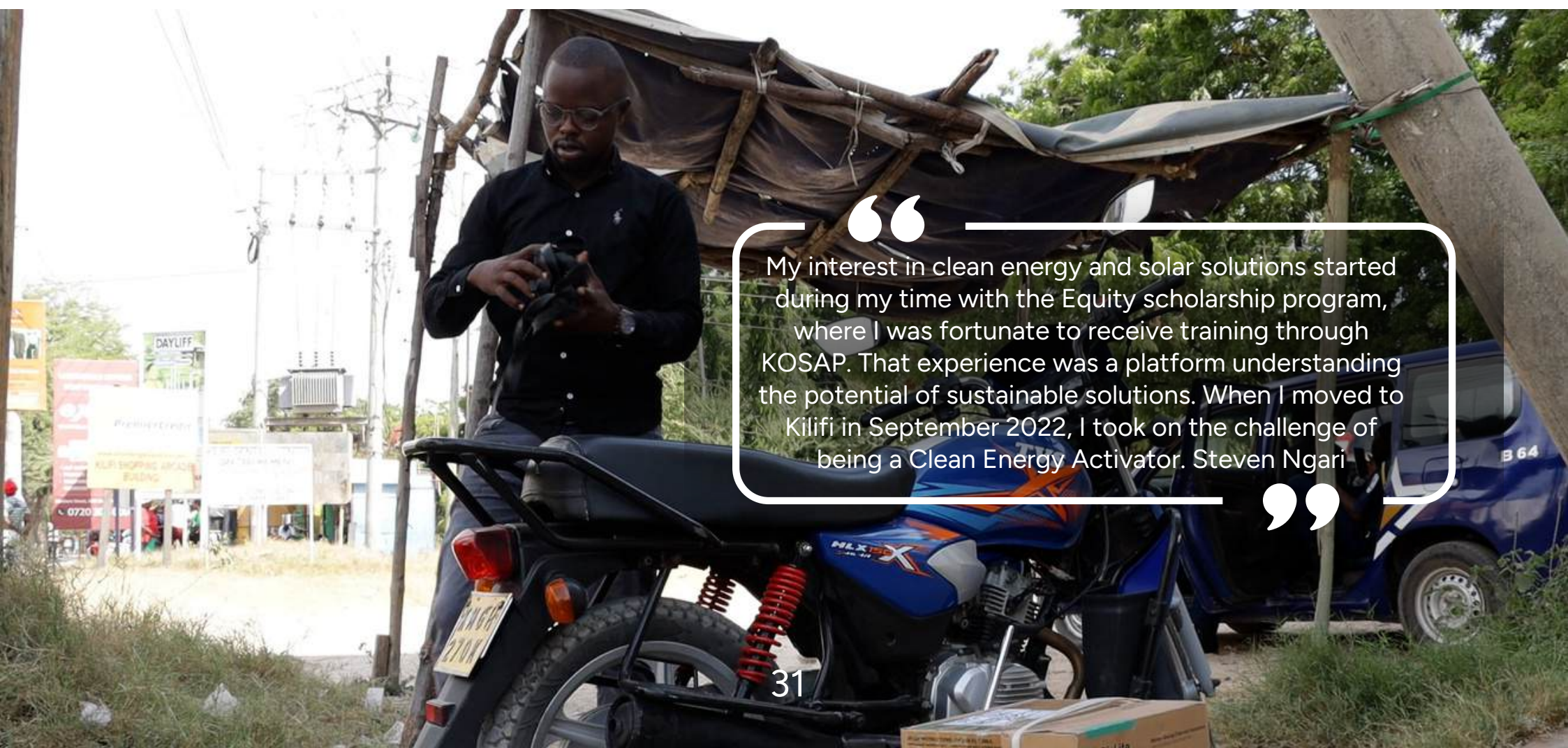
Despite living with a visual disability, Steven has defied the odds and improved his life. The market entry funds provided by KOSAP has enabled him to expand his reach into the most remote parts of Kilifi, through purchase of marketing materials and training of other sales agents in the region, making it easier to extend clean energy solutions to more households across Kilifi. He can easily recruit, train and mentor other sales agents. One of these agents is Irene, based in Malindi. Since joining as an agent, Irene has played a key role in expanding the availability of clean cooking products, ensuring that more households in Malindi and its surroundings benefit from these technologies. He helps to facilitate products on loan for his agents, who don't have the capital to get these products.

One of Steve's biggest challenges was accessing the interior parts of Kilifi and market centers due to the scarce population and high travel costs. Over time, he was able to acquire a motorbike from his savings as a sales agent, which has improved his mobility allowing him to penetrate previously inaccessible areas, thereby increasing his operational efficiency and market reach. This has improved his ability to supply stock to his agents efficiently, ensuring they never run out of products and has ensured his efficiency as he is able to meet so many customers with a shorter period.

Beyond his professional achievements, now employed full time as a sales agent, his personal life has improved. He is now able to comfortably support his mother with daily needs and pay school fees for his siblings. "Looking back, I really appreciate the opportunities I have received. Kilifi county is very remote, with a lot of challenges especially poverty. However, strong systemic approaches like the introduction of such technologies is changing and improving lives. Families are together, they are making income and persons with disabilities like myself have not been left behind.

Sometimes things happen to challenge us and prove that we are more than capable of delivering beyond our expectations. I truly believed disability is being abled differently.
Steven Ngari

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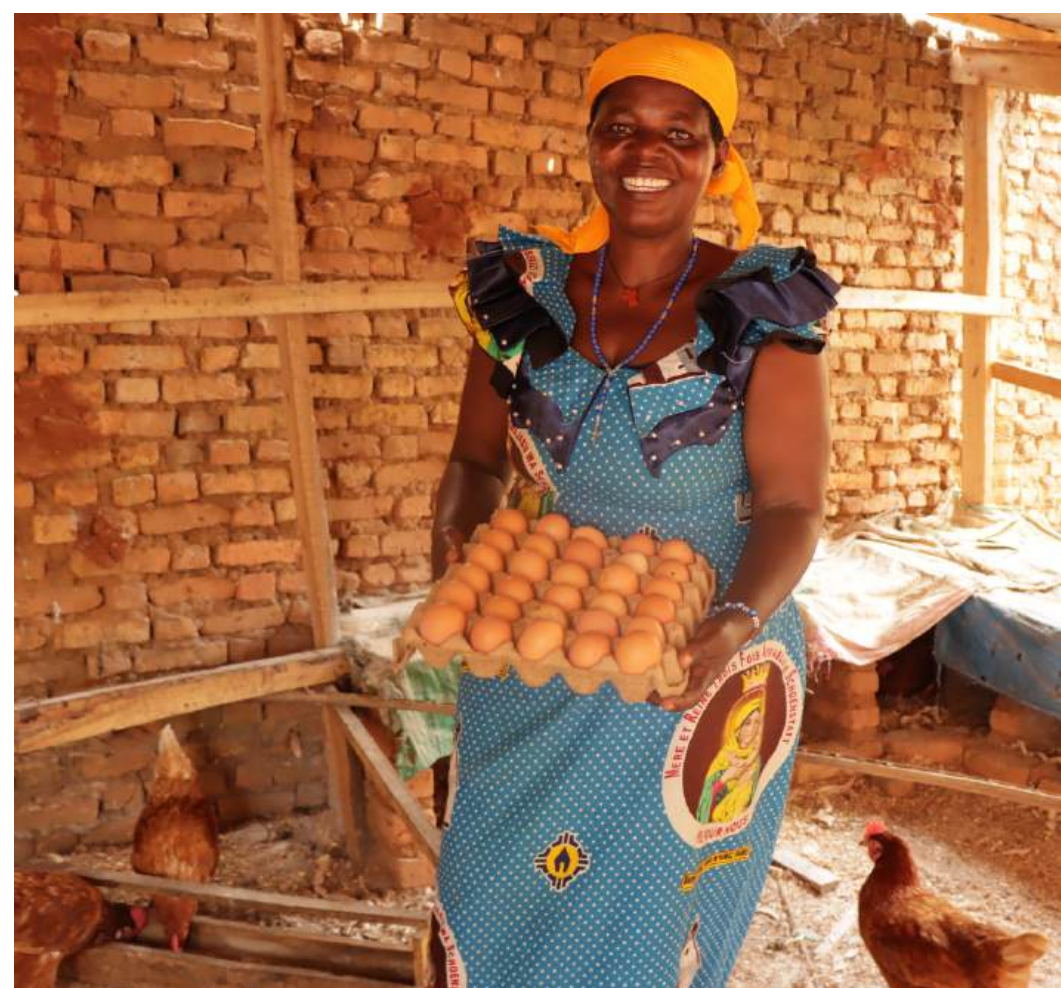
Suzanne, passionate and driven by change, has not only transformed her own future through poultry farming but has inspired an entire community to follow in her footsteps.

The Power of 'One' in transforming a community- Burundi

In the heart of Gatete colline, Rumonge Province, a single spark of determination ignited a movement that is changing lives. Suzanne, passionate and driven by change, has not only transformed her own future through poultry farming but has inspired an entire community to follow in her footsteps. With the support of the PADANE project through the Innovation Fund and educational training, Suzanne has become a catalyst for change, proving that where there is will and knowledge, success is inevitable. Suzanne's journey began humbly - selling eggs at the local market. But her ambitions stretched far beyond that. She dreamed of owning her own poultry farm, of creating something sustainable. Recognized by SNV's partner, AST, as an active and determined member of her community, Suzanne was connected with experienced farmers and underwent specialized training. Her passion only grew stronger, pushing her to invest everything she had into her first batch of 50 chickens. However, success did not come easily. Her initial attempts fell short, but giving up was never an option.

Her resilience paid off when she was selected to participate in a business plan training. With a well-crafted plan in hand, she secured funding through the Innovation Fund and received 700 chickens - an opportunity that changed everything. Her dedication and hard work turned her farm into a thriving enterprise, and the impact of her success rippled throughout her community.

Among those deeply influenced by Suzanne's journey is Renata, a neighbour who had struggled with poultry farming in the past. Though she worked as an egg aggregator and understood the market demand, she had never been able to establish a successful poultry business of her own. Inspired and guided by Suzanne, Renata restarted her venture with 75 chickens, achieving an impressive 75% production rate. Fueled by her newfound confidence, she built a larger poultry house and expanded her flock to 700 chickens. Now, she stands as a testament to what is possible when knowledge and encouragement are shared.



Suzanne's influence also reached Brunel, a young high school graduate eager to build his future. Encouraged by her success, he launched his own poultry business with 50 chickens, quickly attaining a 75% daily production rate. But Brunel didn't stop there - he took an active role in agricultural innovation, volunteering to participate as a Training as Trainers (ToTs) in feed formula experiments to optimize poultry production in the region. His enthusiasm and willingness to learn exemplify the potential for youth to drive change and innovation in farming.



Hawa's story adds another layer to this growing wave of transformation. Inspired by Suzanne's achievements, she took the leap into poultry farming with the support of her family, starting with 50 chickens. Producing 40-41 eggs per day, she quickly realized the business's potential and is now expanding her operations. "If I had started earlier, I'd be wealthy by now," she says with a smile, her eyes set on an even brighter future.



The ripple effect didn't stop there. Hawa's neighbour, Steve, observed her success and decided to try his hand at poultry farming. Starting small with just 10 chickens, he was thrilled to see a daily production of 6-7 eggs. Encouraged by his initial results, he now plans to scale up to 100 chickens, proving that with the right guidance, even the smallest beginnings can grow into something remarkable.



Suzanne's story is more than a tale of personal success - it is a testament to the power of one individual to inspire an entire community. Women and youth, often overlooked in development initiatives, are now finding their footing in the poultry industry, proving that this sector holds immense potential for empowerment and economic growth. Gatete colline is no longer just a village; it is a symbol of change, where ambition, resilience, and shared knowledge are paving the way for a prosperous future.

And to think - it all started with one woman, one dream, and the courage to never give up. Suzanne's farm is now becoming an experimental learning hub for other farmers, where they can gain hands-on experience in feeding formulas and best practices in poultry farming. Even the local administration has taken notice, actively participating in training sessions and sensitizing more community members to learn from her journey. The transformation she has sparked is not just inspiring - it is reshaping the future of farming in the region.



Impact
that matters

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