

SEED SAVERS NETWORK NEWSLETTER

SEED SAVERS NETWORK

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Newsletter Issue: 1



PROMOTING DIVERSE SEED ACCESS TO FARMING COMMUNITIES IN KENYA



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Seed Savers Network (SSN),

We are pleased to announce the launch of the Seed Savers Newsletter, designed to foster connectivity within our community. This newsletter will spotlight both the successes and challenges encountered by our organization across member communities. Through insightful narratives from fellow network members, the Seed Savers Newsletter aims to impart valuable lessons on navigating challenges and achieving success.

Throughout our journey, we have grown alongside our members and stakeholders, achieving significant milestones.

With a network now comprising over 85,000 members and more than 70 community seed banks, our local and international support has expanded.

We are proud to count research institutions, educational bodies, and international partners as part of network. This diverse network enables us to address member challenges comprehensively, employing varied methods and approaches.

We are grateful for governmental support, which has facilitated our engagement in crucial research and policy initiatives. Furthermore, our involvement in international dialogues, such as the negotiations on the international treaty for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and our participation in the CBD on biodiversity, underscores our commitment to advancing the rights and benefits of our network members.

Equally important is our focus on empowering network members to derive income from their biodiversity conservation efforts, thereby ensuring their continued motivation.

We encourage everyone to subscribe to the Seed Savers Newsletter, and to celebrate marking this significant milestone in our collective journey.

WANJAMA DANIEL – Director SSN

FLOURISHING FUTURES: THE LOMALOK SEED BANK AND DEMO GARDEN TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE IN BARINGO COUNTY.

In the heart of Baringo County lies Lomalok, a community rich in agricultural heritage but facing challenges due to climate change, soil degradation, and the loss of traditional seed varieties. Recognizing the urgent need to preserve agricultural biodiversity and enhance food security, the

Inside lamalok seed bank community, supported by Seed Savers embarked on an ambitious project to establish a seed bank and demo garden.

The Initiative:

Mid 2023, the Lamalok Seed Bank and Demo Garden project was launched with the vision of safeguarding traditional seed varieties and promoting sustainable farming practices by the lamalok community hosted by Naretoi yatoi farmers group. This aimed to create a centralized repository for local seeds, provide a learning space for farmers, and demonstrate the

benefits of diverse cropping systems.

Seed banking activities began with extensive community consultations to understand the needs, preferences, and traditional knowledge of local farmers. Workshops and focus group discussions were held to gather input and build consensus on the project's objectives.



Inside lamalok seed bank



The Seed Bank



The Demo Garden Establishment



Established Demo Garden

SEED COLLECTION AND CONSERVATION:

With the help of local farmers, agricultural experts, and volunteers, the project collected over 50 traditional seed varieties that were at risk of being lost. These seeds were carefully cataloged, stored, and regularly monitored to maintain their quality.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING:

Regular training sessions and workshops were organized to educate farmers on seed saving, sustainable farming practices, and the importance of biodiversity. These sessions included hands-on activities in the demo garden allowing farmers to see the benefits of diverse cropping systems firsthand.

The seed bank facilitated seed exchange events, where farmers could access diverse seed varieties and share their own saved seeds.

This initiative not only increased genetic diversity in local farms but also strengthened community bonds. One such exchange event was during International Women Day where farmers exchanged beans, colored maize and vegetable seeds.

The availability of diverse, locally adapted seed varieties has improved crop resilience to pests, diseases, and changing climatic conditions, significantly enhancing food security in Lomalok.

By adopting sustainable farming practices and using diverse seed varieties, local farmers have become more resilient to environmental and economic shocks for example the flooding that happened in the recent past.

It has also fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment among community members, who took pride in their role as stewards of agricultural biodiversity. Currently farmers are leaping from their saved seeds by selling the surplus especially during this rainy season.

Mary from the group has acquired a profit of 10,000ksh in a month alone from sale of her 100kgs bean (yellow). This has motivated other community members who have not started the seed saving journey. The group members are selling their own vegetables after these trainings and helping to boost their economic status.

Buoyed by the success of the seed bank and demo garden, the Lomalok community plans to expand the project. Future initiatives include establishing additional demo gardens in neighboring villages, creating a mobile seed library to reach remote areas, and launching educational programs in local schools such as Lomalok Primary to inspire the next generation of seed savers.

Conclusion

The establishment of the Lomalok Seed Bank and Demo Garden stands as a testament to the power of community-driven initiatives in promoting food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture.

Through collaboration, innovation, and a deep respect for traditional knowledge, the people of Lomalok have created a resilient agricultural system that will benefit their community for generations to come.

Seed Savers Network (SSN) is a community organization and network comprising farmer organizations, like-minded organizations, and various stakeholders, including government agencies.

Our organization's existence relies primarily on our farmer members and stakeholders who participate in our dialogues, advancing our mission of conserving agrobiodiversity.

We extend our gratitude to all stakeholders, particularly the 82,500 farmer households' members who belong to 4,230 farmer organizations within our network. They play a crucial role in advocating for policy amendments that align with local seed conservation.

We also acknowledge the supportive participation of government agencies in our forums, contributing to policy changes beneficial to our mission.

JULIA KAMAU – Head of Programs SSN

EMPOWERING WOMEN FARMERS: VIRGINIA'S JOURNEY WITH SEED SAVERS NETWORK WOMEN SACCO.

Seed Savers Network Women Sacco, established in 2022, is a Savings and Credit Cooperative Society (SACCO) with a mission to provide free financial education and mentorship to farmers.

The Sacco fosters a sense of community by encouraging neighbors to form mutual groups, where monthly training sessions are held in their respective villages by Sacco community trainers. This approach ensures that members receive the support and guidance needed to develop healthy financial habits and access loans to boost their microenterprises.

The Sacco primarily targets small-scale women farmers who face numerous financial constraints and are often denied credit due to lack of collateral. Members are encouraged to save for six months and actively attend meetings before applying for their first loan.

Through this initiative, the Sacco has helped its members acquire assets such as dairy cows, dairy goats, chaff cutters, water harvesting tanks, land for farming, and motorcycles for transporting farm produce to the market.



Virginia, a 56-year-old farmer from Naivasha sub-county, Kenya, is one of the beneficiaries of the Sacco. She narrates her story, exemplifying the transformative impact of Seed Savers Network Women Sacco.

Before joining the Sacco, Virginia struggled with saving due to a lack of financial discipline. "It was hard for me to save money consistently. I lacked funds to boost my farming enterprise," she shares. "I even lacked the confidence to speak before others."

Virginia's financial struggles made her feel burdened and ashamed, preventing her from participating in self-help groups (chamas) that the Sacco encourages women to join.

However, in May 2023, everything changed. Virginia applied for a loan of KES 20,000.00 from the Sacco, which enabled her to purchase a dairy goat. "After the approval of my loan, I acquired two high-quality dairy goats," she says. After successfully repaying her first loan, which had a 1% monthly interest rate on a reducing balance, Virginia applied for a second loan and purchased a chaff cutter machine.

"Before acquiring the machine, I would spend a lot of time chopping fodder for my goats with a panga, which was tiresome," she explains.

Now, with the machine, she can prepare fodder such as maize, lucerne, and nappier grass in less than 10 minutes. The addition of the dairy goat has significantly improved Virginia's life.

She now earns income from the sale of goat milk, which is richer in nutrition compared to cow milk. "At the end of every month, I have something to put in my pocket like other employed community members," she notes. Her family also enjoys the nutritious goat milk.

With the income she earns, Virginia saves a portion with the Sacco, paving the way for future loans to expand her enterprises. Her relationship with her neighbors has strengthened as well.

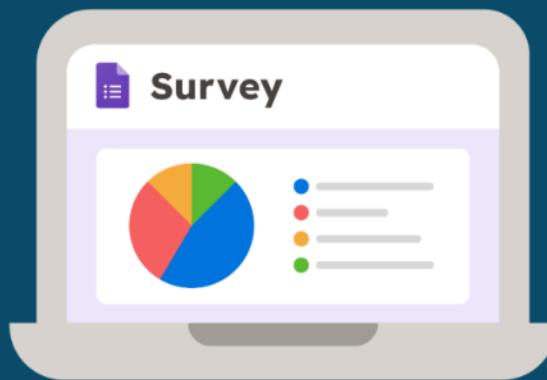
"Now I am stress-free," she says, explaining that her tendency to beg from neighbors has diminished, and she now has a voice in public activities without fear.



Seed Savers Network Women Sacco trains and encourages its members to engage in saving strategies, promoting a culture of regular saving. This creates a fund for loans at a low interest rate of 1%, supported by a peer guarantee system. The Sacco offers flexible, affordable, and low-interest loans, empowering women like Virginia to transform their lives and communities.

Virginia's journey with Seed Savers Network Women Sacco is a testament to the power of financial education, community support, and the unwavering determination of women farmers. Through the Sacco, Virginia has not only improved her financial stability but also gained confidence and independence, inspiring others to follow in her footsteps.

A SURVEY OF SGBV SERVICE PROVIDERS IN KENYA: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Seed Savers Network (SSN) conducted a comprehensive survey on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) service providers in Nakuru and Baringo Counties, Kenya. The study aimed to map the available services, identify challenges, and evaluate the overall effectiveness of these providers.

The survey identified 121 SGBV service providers, with 107 in Nakuru County and 14 in Baringo County. These providers addressed various forms of SGBV, including:

Sexual Violence: This was the most frequently reported form of SGBV, with 112 providers handling cases. It includes rape, sexual assault, and forced prostitution.

Physical Violence: Reported by several providers, this form encompasses acts like beating, battering, and physical coercion.

Psychological Violence: This includes emotional abuse, intimidation, and harassment, often less visible but equally damaging.

Economic Violence: Involves controlling a person's access to financial resources, thereby restricting their ability to support themselves and forcing dependency.

Harmful Cultural Practices: Practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriages were also reported, particularly in more rural areas.

The report also identified multiple underlying causes of SGBV, including deeply rooted gender inequalities, cultural norms that perpetuate violence against women and children, economic dependency, and a lack of awareness about rights and available services.

CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING SERVICES

The accessibility of services for SGBV survivors varies significantly across the surveyed regions. Key challenges include:

Police Stations:

Survivors often encounter a lack of sensitivity and professionalism among law enforcement officers. The intimidating atmosphere can discourage victims from reporting cases. The availability and processing of P3 forms—crucial legal documents for prosecuting SGBV cases—are inconsistent, with many survivors struggling to access these forms.

Healthcare Centers:

While immediate medical care is sometimes available, there are notable gaps, particularly in the provision of Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) drugs, essential for preventing HIV transmission. The lack of trained personnel to handle SGBV cases means survivors often receive inadequate care.

Legal and Counseling Services:

Many survivors have to navigate a fragmented system to access comprehensive support, including legal aid and counseling. This process can be overwhelming, especially for those in rural areas with limited resources.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The report suggests several measures to improve service provision and support for SGBV survivors:

Training and Sensitization:

There is a need for targeted training for law enforcement and healthcare providers to ensure sensitive and appropriate handling of SGBV cases. This includes making P3 forms readily available and ensuring that all healthcare centers can provide PEP drugs.

Public-Private Partnerships:

Engaging private actors in providing critical services, such as legal aid and medical support, can help fill existing gaps and ensure timely and comprehensive care.

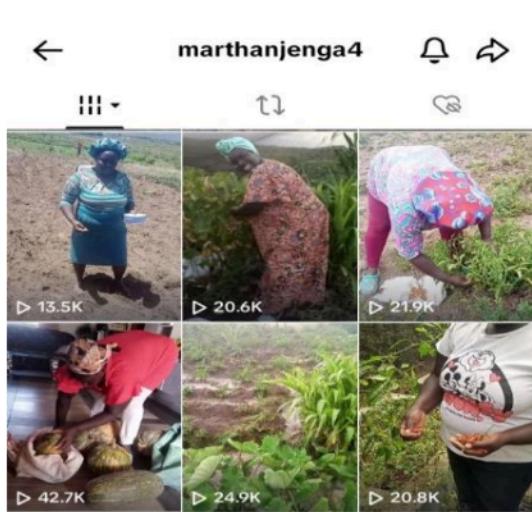
Expansion of Services:

Extending similar studies to other counties will provide a broader understanding of SGBV service provision in Kenya. Expanding services, especially in rural areas, is crucial to ensuring that all survivors can access the necessary support.

Conclusion

The findings from this survey underscore the urgent need for a coordinated and inclusive approach to addressing SGBV in Kenya. By improving service accessibility, addressing underlying causes, and implementing the recommended actions, Kenya can create a safer and more supportive environment for all SGBV survivors.

MARTHA'S JOURNEY: CULTIVATING HEALTH, WEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH AGROECOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA



In Kamathatha village situated within the Gilgil constituency in Nakuru county, 6 KM from Gilgil Town nestled in a ditch and enduring a somewhat arid climate rises a farmer's champion Martha Njenga from phase 2 of the project.

She is training other farmers on sustainable agroecological farming practices to produce their food amidst the harsh environmental conditions.

This vital as agriculture remains a cornerstone of the village's economy, with hardworking farmers utilizing innovative techniques from trainings to maximize crop yields.

Despite the challenges including unpredictable rains and absence of water for irrigation, the spirit of togetherness and communal support thrives within the village exemplifying the resilience and determination of its inhabitants.

"I was facing numerous challenges, one of them being that Gilgil is a dry region which makes it difficult in timing the planting period since the planting holes does not hold moisture for a long time. I was trained on how to use sunken beds in my farming practices. For seed conservation, I was using sacks for storage.

Due to high temperatures in Gilgil they were easily attacked by weevils, but I was trained on using glass bottles and ash to control the weevils and preserve the seeds.

Before, farming and storage of farm produce was a problem but after several trainings I have seen some changes," Martha said.

Martha now trains different local groups on how to make Multi-storey kitchen gardens and has witnessed the members implementing them in their homes.

She also uses her social media platforms like TikTok to train people from outside. In One year, she has managed to train over 40 farmers from Subukia and Kamathatha a proof that farmer-to-farmer extension model is working.

Martha was motivated to join TikTok and train people on agroecology because she wanted to reach many farmers from different locations and teach them on the importance of -



In her farm, she produces pumpkin leaves, cowpeas, Amaranthus and African night shade for her family consumption and the surplus is supplied to Nyakazi Organics. The vegetables she supplies to Nyakazi is then processed and packaged. The ready products are then advertised through her TikTok page to reach wider customers.



growing their own food, fruits and vegetables organically since she believed that consumption of food products with agrochemicals can lead to serious health problems.

True to her word, her training videos has recorded 5,891,180 views between 14-08-2023 to 13-06-2024. Interestingly giving the farmer, a new role as social media influencers in agroecology through tutorial videos.

Seed highlights trainings in seed production, selection, processing, preservation and storage as well as other practices including biofertilizers, seed saving, water harvesting and conservation, crop diversification amongst others.

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Martha is also a beneficiary of Seed savers women Sacco which provide women access to credits and loans, she has been a member for close to two years and she has managed to acquire some items like Tank and she had the following to say "Before the Seed saver women Sacco Tank came into my life water scarcity was a challenge, Irrigation was irregular relying on rainfall meant enduring periods of drought with little recourse.

But with introduction of the tank a gained a life reservoir of hope that transformed the way I farm.

Firstly, the tank provided a reliable source of water, essential for sustaining crops through dry spells. With its ample capacity of 10000 litres, I could store rainwater during wet season, ensuring steady supply during the time of scarcity.

This allowed me to diversify my crops and cultivate throughout the year breaking free from constraints imposed by the unpredictable weather.

In three years to come, she plans to have seedbank which will help her to reach and teach more youths and women about farming of indigenous crops and their importance since they are pillar in farming, and this will help to change the nation general.



She also reported that people come to her farm for learning at a charge of Ksh.1000 per person who are motivated by her farm from her TikTok videos that reaches over 50,000 people and from referrals. This is an additional source of income for her and is helping her to invest more in agroecology.

THE IMPACT OF THE SEED EXCHANGE KENYA APP

In recent years, the agricultural landscape in Kenya has faced numerous challenges, including limited access to diverse, high-quality seedlings and restricted market opportunities for smallholder farmers.

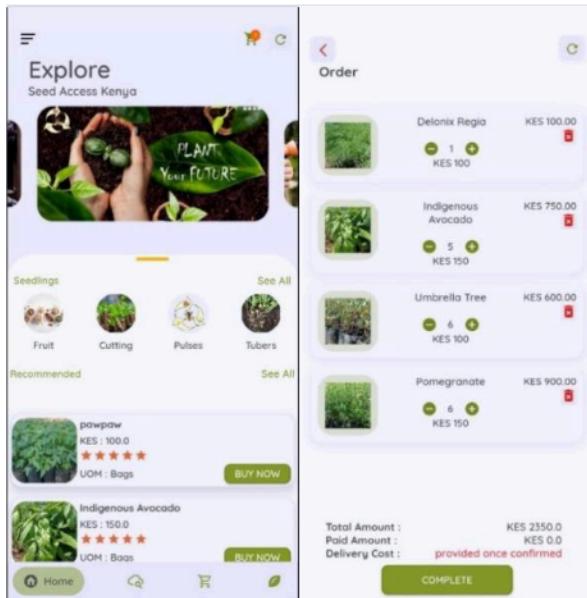
The Seed Exchange Kenya app, developed by the Seed Savers Network (SSN), has emerged as a transformative solution, addressing these challenges and empowering farmer groups across the nation.

The Seed Exchange Kenya app is an -

innovative online platform designed to connect farmer groups with buyers nationwide.

By offering a user-friendly interface and robust functionalities, the app enables farmers to upload and sell their seedlings directly, creating new market opportunities and promoting agricultural biodiversity.

The app focuses on traditional and underutilized fruits and crops, helping to preserve Kenya's rich agricultural heritage while enhancing food security and sustainability.



EMPOWERING FARMER GROUPS

One of the most inspiring success stories is that of the Mukini Youth Group, a beneficiary of the Seed Exchange Kenya app.

This group of young farmers, dedicated to cultivating a variety of seedlings faced significant challenges in accessing broader markets.

The Seed Exchange Kenya app provided them with the perfect platform to reach a wider audience. Mukini Youth Group successfully sold 30,000 seedlings, including guava (*Psidium guajava*), avocado (*Persea americana*), loquats (*Eriobotrya japonica*), Markhamia lutea, Leucaena (*Leucaena leucocephala*), and Sesbania (*Sesbania sesban*), generating an impressive income of approximately 800,000 Kenyan Shillings in the last one year.

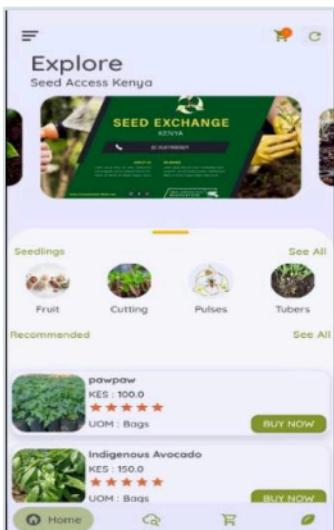
This success not only improved their economic situation but also had a ripple effect on their community. The income generated has created employment opportunities for youth and women, contributing to local economic growth and stability.

PROMOTING BIODIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Seed Exchange Kenya app goes beyond facilitating seedling sales.

It plays a crucial role in promoting and conserving biodiversity by encouraging the cultivation and exchange of traditional and underutilized fruits and crops.

This biodiversity is essential for building resilient agricultural systems that can adapt to changing environmental conditions and market demands.



User-Friendly and Accessible

The app's design ensures that even those with limited technological experience can easily navigate and benefit from its features.

Farmers can quickly upload their products, monitor sales, and connect with buyers, making the entire process seamless and efficient.

The app also provides valuable information on the availability and biodiversity of seedlings in various locations, easing access for farmers across Kenya.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

- ✓ Looking ahead, the Seed Exchange Kenya app aims to expand its reach and continue supporting farmer groups across the country. By establishing more local nurseries, providing high-quality seedlings, and creating further employment opportunities, the app is set to make an even greater impact on Kenya's agricultural landscape.

- ✓ The Seed Exchange Kenya app stands as a beacon of innovation and empowerment in the agricultural sector. By leveraging technology to connect farmers with markets, it promotes sustainable practices, conserves biodiversity, and fosters economic growth. The success of beneficiaries like the Mukinyi Youth Group highlights the app's potential to transform lives and communities.

Dear Readers,

As we conclude this inaugural edition of our newsletter, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each one of you for your readership and support. This newsletter is a reflection of our collective efforts and the vibrant community we have built together. By staying informed and engaged, we strengthen our bonds and drive our mission forward.

I encourage you all to subscribe to our newsletter to ensure you never miss an update. Your continued engagement is vital to our success, and we are committed to delivering content that is both insightful and inspiring.

Moreover, if you or anyone you know is interested in advertising in the SSN newsletter, we welcome you to reach out to us on info@seed saverskenya.org.

Thank you once again for being an integral part of SSN. Together, we are making a significant impact, and I look forward to all that we will achieve in the future.

TABITHA MUNYIRI

Advocacy and Communications Officer