



Vi-agroforestry Project



Swedish Co-operative Centre

AGROFORESTRY IMPROVING LIVES WITHIN LAKE VICTORIA REGION

Vi-Agroforestry program operates in the East African countries within the Lake Victoria basin. The mission of the program is to make Agroforestry an engine of economic growth and a means to reduce poverty levels. Since its inception in 1983 in West Pokot, when the aim was to combat desertification, which was threatening the area, a lot has been achieved as a result of which various initiatives have been incorporated to make it more focused on addressing household needs through adoption of Agroforestry practices. Currently, two main objectives form the basis that the project is pursuing with the communities:-

- Increased firewood, wood, food and nutritional security to cover the needs of the family on their own farms.
- Increased saleable produce to boost cash incomes for the families



The production of various fruit trees promoted by Vi- Agroforestry project to enhance nutritional security and boost household income.



Farmers undergoing value addition on honey organised by Vi and LIFE staff in Kakoko community in Nyando district. This has increased market value for honey, thereby improving the community's income

Vi-agro forestry project together with SCC (Swedish CO-operative Centre) in 2002 formed Livelihood Improvement through Farmer Empowerment (LIFE) to address the rising marketing need of marketing Agro forestry produce.



A farmer in Nyando standing besides a batch of fast maturing *Sesbania sesban* (Osao sao) harvested for fuel wood. It has other several end use purposes and is very popular with the farmers

The objective of the collaborative venture was to contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction in developing countries through increased farm productivity using sustainable agro forestry technologies and improved organization and marketing among small-scale farmers. A contribution to finding solutions to the widespread problem of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is also included through awareness creation in collaboration with the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education.

- Continued funding as a result of success and arising needs within the lake basin has seen the project expanding to other geographical areas within the lake region Kisumu project started in 2002 in Nyando as a result of findings that came from various studies conducted by Government departments, research bodies together with community members. The findings showed the various factors impacting negatively on development of this region, like high poverty levels, massive soil erosion leading to siltation of the Lake as well as degradation of farmland like Katuk Odeyo gully in Lower Nyakach and high prevalence of HIV & AIDS. This warranted various interventions to combat the



Vi-Agroforestry staff explaining to Environment and Public works minister and guests on Moringa tree utilization during 2005 world environment day at Kenyatta sports ground Kisumu

situation. It is out of this scenario that VI agroforestry came in with the component of agroforestry and later LIFE project to address marketing issues. So far Vi-LIFE collaborative interventions have expanded to include the whole of Nyando district, Kadibo division in Kisumu district and Kabondo division in Rachuonyo district. The project is targeting 33,891 households spread in 110 villages with extension service. This is greatly enhanced through networks and collaboration the project is having with various players including relevant government ministries.

- To achieve a sustainable development, the project is using participatory agroforestry Extension approaches (Visioning and participatory planning, PRA, PME) targeting groups of women, men and youth participating at all stages from problem identification and analysis to implementation and evaluation. There is active knowledge transfer through capacity building of farmers during farm visits, farmer group trainings, radio program promotions, seminars, leader's trainings and sensitizations, farmer study visits, farmer field schools, critical mass approach among others. As a result of which, successes have been recorded in many areas which include:-

- * Fuel wood insufficiency within district (Nyando) as demonstrated by studies that showed 73% of households cover more than 1 km and spend more than 1 hour fetching fire wood, this has been addressed in the short term, through promotion of fast maturing agroforestry tree species such as *Sesbania sesban* (Sao sao). Apart from it being early maturing, it has other benefits like seeding prolifically, seeded directly, dries fast for use, fixing nitrogen through root nodules and, fodder for livestock, provision of poles and soil erosion control, when grown closely along the contours and hedges in steep areas. Another short term species that is giving good result is *Calliandra calothyrsus*, which is used for fodder and bee forage among others.

- * About 20% of the households have already planted fast maturing fruits like pawpaws, avocados, passion fruits among others. This has increased nutrition base at household levels and sale of excess produce to local markets to boost their incomes.

- Long term high value tree species have gained popularity with farmers for increased family income and various end use purposes such as *Cedrela*, *Albizia* (Ober), *Neem* and *Moringa* which has special value as vegetable and medicinal tree, thereby meeting nutritional and health needs of various households. Through promotion of drought resistant trees (*Gliricidia sepium*, *Balanites egyptica* (otho), *Albizia spp* (ober)), gullies and degraded areas are being rehabilitated (Katuk odeyo gully).

- * Organization of farmer groups which has resulted in mobilization of resources and marketing of various agroforestry products. Through capacity building in Farming as business, bee keeping has come out as an enterprise that assures quick returns. Strong groups like Kamwa in Sondu and Kakoko in Ahero have come out as producers and marketers of bee hives and honey within the region. Their incomes have been further enhanced through trainings accorded by LIFE projects on value addition.

- * Accessing market information has improved produce prices both at the farm and other markets outlets. This clearly depicts the power of information. The LIFE project in collaboration with Vi are now facilitating the farmers with market information and this has seen increase in commodity prices and opening up of new market outlets. The farmers for a long time now, have been price takers, this is for reasons that they have inadequate information on the prices of commodities they produce.

Use of Market Information Point



Community member updating the market information point at Sondu

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