

## THUNGURURU INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (FARMING GOD'S WAY) - JANUARY 2021

### The Project Officer Julius Kimondo reports:

#### October

The month started with the hot, dry weather borrowed from the previous month. However, a few days before mid-month, the rains came as was expected by the farming community. The farmers had earlier been advised by the Anglican Development Services (ADS) officer to plant their seeds immediately after the onset of the rain, so immediately the farmers, after having prepared their lands on time, got busy planting their seeds. The meteorological department had warned that the rains might be shorter than normal, so the farmers were advised to plant early maturing crop species. The crops germinated well but the rainfall pattern has not been very satisfying so far because the rains will come down one night and stop for a whole week. This has made the ADS officer to embark on emphasizing on zai pits (planting holes which will help in moisture and fertility retention). This has proved very helpful and, learning from the previous season, many farmers have embraced this technique. Along with this, farmers are being encouraged to continue putting their resources together towards collective buying of water tanks. The project managed to buy 5 more (5000 litres) water tanks in the month of October with the joint effort of ADS and Hand In Hand East Africa. This brings the total number of tanks bought to 36. The contributions continue.

#### November

The rainfall pattern this month has not been very favorable for the farming community as had been earlier been warned by the meteorological department. The trend has been one rainy night followed by a week or two of very hot sun. This has made the field crops to suffer from water stress and most farms will hardly produce enough for the family consumption - apart from those farmers who have followed ADS advice especially in the area of water harvesting using all the trained techniques for sustainable crop production.

All the farmers following and practising these techniques have shown a great difference from the rest of the farmers and it is hoped that more and more farmers will continue seeing the reality in Farming God's Way in ensuring food security for the family and join in. The crops in the field are still in progress and expected to be harvested beginning early January. An important point to note is that farmers have been requested to be more serious than ever before with farming advices from ADS especially during this period of Covid 19 pandemic since movement in search of livelihood has been greatly restricted and discouraged to avoid transmission of the virus. Therefore the only option for the family to have food on the table, especially in the project area where the climate is semi-arid, is to give priority to farming and farming sustainably. ADS has therefore widened its scope in order to reach more and more farmers and looks forward to starting active demonstration farms in strategic points and also include tree planting as a long term solution to drought mitigation in the project area.

#### December

The month of December was characterized by hot weather for most of the month and was only punctuated by one or two rainy days towards the end of the month. The crops in the farms, especially beans, have now reached harvesting stage but, since the weather conditions have not been very favourable for field crops, most farmer will have very little to harvest. However, it is all rejoicing for farmers practising **Conservation Agriculture / Farming God's Way** as trained by ADS. They have every reason to smile and to thank God after practising all the soil and water harvesting techniques which have in turn rewarded them with very good harvests. Along with continued trainings on these techniques, ADS wishes to emphasize and strengthen on tree planting and therefore train the community to make sure all groups start tree nurseries as a way of **drought mitigation** in the project area in order to have a long term solution to food security. This can be achieved even by involving school children to participate in environmental conservation. This can be organized by ADS in liaison with school head teachers. School children can be very good ambassadors for environmental conservation. Stiff follow ups and more training on different conservation techniques have been planned for year 2021 and it is hoped that the big and marked difference in harvests witnessed this season will ignite a multiplying effect to farmers in practising and attending ADS trainings.

**Activities of note:**

6 groups of farmers with an average of 20 farmers each have been trained on preparation of tithonia (a locally found herb) solution in irritating and repelling fall army worm in maize and most other field pests. 60 out of the trained farmers prepared and sprayed the solution in their field crops. 20 untrained farmers also prepared and applied the solution in their crops after learning from the trained farmers. The rate of armyworm attack in maize was greatly reduced as compared to non-practising farmers and also looking back to the previous seasons, hence, increased harvests.

Two new groups of farmers with an average of fifteen members each have been trained on different techniques of tree nursery establishment. 10 out of the trained farmers each have established a small tree nursery involving different tree species including fruit trees to plant in the coming up rainy season.

**Funding:**

Thanks to many generous donations, support from Exeter Diocese has enabled funding for the project to continue until at least June 2021. The Project Coordinator says: We are very optimistic that the project management committee and the ADS board will still carry on with the empowerment of the Thungururu community as well as other parts of the Diocese.



A farmer tends her tree nursery. In the background are container vegetable gardens for intensive kitchen gardening



A farmer happily displays bananas (harvested in the dry period) grown after harvesting water in trenches



Maize planted in a piece of land using zai pits as way of moisture and fertility conservation



Maize planted in a piece of land (same day) using the normal way.





Multiple cropping in a maize field to enhance food security



A farmer inspects his maize crop for fall armyworm infestation



Farmers are encouraged to erect a fence around their shallow dams to protect them from damage and other outside influences



Farmers converge at a shallow dam water point to seek water for domestic use. (ADS continues to encourage more and more farmers to enroll in the water tank buying project)



A pest trap (mango fruit fry) mounted on a mango tree



A farmer happily prepares to carry his 5000 litre tank home