



Stories of transformation

Qualitative Research on the Green Business Training

*Creating opportunities for young people and
women in rural Kenya Project*

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WHH Journey with Mark, a Youth Trainee in Kakamega.



Mark, a youth trainee in Kakamega

The story of 34-year-old Mark Enoch Madiva Akaya, a husband and father of three, is indeed one of triumph over adversity. Mark studied up to college level, earning a Diploma in Mass Communication but later lost interest - like many other young people – after failing to secure a formal job. He had and still has a family that depends on him. Under pressure to succeed, he had to look for a way to become self-reliant.

As tradition dictates, the last born in the family is responsible for taking care of his ageing parents, and being the last born in his family, that meant he had to live with his parents in the same homestead so that he could take care of them. With this pressure building and Mark without a source of income, he jumped into something that to him was an old traditional way of life -farming.

This, however, was not always his dream. As a child, he admired lawyers and their affluent lifestyles, and he used to say to himself; “When I grow up, I want to become one of these lawyers”. His neighbour, a lawyer, lived the part. Mark’s parents, being teachers, piled pressure on him to seek formal employment. Farming, therefore, was far from his dreams.

engage in farming but it was the old way of doing it. After I married, I decided to venture into farming and so my aspirations to be a lawyer evaporated,” Mark revealed.

Life comes with challenges, and Mark faced many. However, he was determined to overcome, and he did. For instance, when he took up farming, he immediately faced a period of no rain not quite like drought but an unusual weather pattern that did not favour his farming practices. Farm production was low. As happens in such cases, his income was much lower than his expenditure. In addition, he experienced the usual family challenges of not having enough money to take care of his family and pay school fees for his children.

There was finally hope when he joined WHH project. This provided a way for him to ditch the traditional methods of farming and he took on new skills and knowledge to carry on agribusiness. He regrets having spent so much money on fertiliser when he could just make his own manure. Besides, commercial fertilisers can be detrimental to the soil and the environment. He is grateful that he now has such vital knowledge. Besides learning how to make organic fertiliser, he also received skills on banana

My lifestyle has changed. Many people call me a rich guy, I am not sure why but it could be because the farm is earning me money on a daily basis. I have confidence in myself because my quality of life has improved. And I am a leader now,” he says.

“When I was growing up, my mother and my grandmother used to

tissue culture.

“After joining WHH, I learned how to make compost manure which is cheaper because I use products from my farm. I don’t buy any product to make my manure, which makes it easier for me to save the money I used to spend on fertilisers. We used to get banana suckers from neighbours but now I know where to get wood suckers. We were practicing the old ways of farming, but WHH has really enlightened us,” he said of his learning experience.

His first encounter with Green Business skills training was through a mentor. The mentor was patient with him and allowed Mark to visit his farm, which, in Mark’s eyes, was flourishing. The mentor was doing it right and this excited Mark and he wanted to do it for himself. The mentor introduced him to green business skills and now he uses these skills to grow tissue culture bananas and vegetables, which he sells as a source of income. With this knowledge and skills, he has achieved much more. Apart from the income, he has empowered his family members to grow banana tissue.

“I am building a three bedroomed house from these activities because I am not employed elsewhere. I use the savings from the farm. My house is ninety percent complete, and I am sure it will be complete in six months. I have also taught my brothers, who are now practicing farming and are doing well, and I offer my help any time they need it. My parents are also in it, and so are my sisters, who have ventured into the business. One of my sisters told me she wants to quit her job and venture fully into farming,” Mark said.

The support he has received from the green business skills programme has been enormous. Once Mark received the training, his fortunes started turning around. He believes the training was worth a lot. To prove this, he got a job with the county government and for three years but did not see much development with his earnings and so he decided to go back and concentrate on his green business. Since then, he has experienced a lot of changes.

As part of the training, he learned how to prepare compost manure, land for tissue culture bananas, how to plant the bananas and harvest them and other post-harvest activities. He also learned value addition, like how to make banana crisps. His training was practical. During that time, he made trips to other farms to experience what they do. From that he ventured into vegetable farming, which now gives him money daily. He also learned to invest back into his business. Now he is self-employed, able to earn a decent living without an office job, save some money and he has one employee whose wages come from proceeds from the farm.

It took Mark around three months to stabilise, and he still hopes to improve and grow his business. There is still some knowledge and skills he would like to learn from Green Business training, like digital marketing skills. And despite some shortcomings here and there, he is forging ahead and his life has improved.

“With the many things I have achieved, it has made me see there was a lot of money in self-employment than in being employed. When you are employed, you wait for end of the month. At times, you go for two or three months without pay but being self-employed you get money on daily basis, whether little or a lot. It is up to you to save,” he says.

One of the key elements of the green business skills is mentorship. Mark says it was, and still is, beneficial.

“The mentor has always been good to me; he helped me practice the skills I learned. Instead of just

giving me money, I received education. My mentor has been there for me. If I get stuck, I just call him. So, I can say he is a phone call away. He supports us in meetings, helping us to learn and attend to our learning needs. He has been of great value to me. I can say it has been of hundred percent value because whenever I need any support, he gives it to me. When you have the education and skills, money just flows in," he says.

In addition to the improved income, Mark can now provide his family with a balanced diet with food crops from his farm. He does not worry about buying vegetables as these items come from his farm. He has also learned how to budget and keep business and farm records. As a result, he can save more due to the green business training.

He has no regret with his decision about his green business skills training and his decision to embrace farming as his only source of livelihood. He is comfortable and confident to run his business. He takes pride in the fact that he runs it competently, has opened a bank account, and joined a group where he later became group leader. Although he is the secretary of the VSLA, he often stands in for the chairman.

“ My lifestyle has changed. Many people call me a rich guy, I am not sure why but it could be because the farm is earning me money on a daily basis. I have confidence in myself because my quality of life has improved. And I am a leader now,” he says.

Other members of his community have also benefited through the same training. Once he had trained his parents and siblings, he started training his neighbours who now have left the old ways of growing bananas. They are now growing tissue culture bananas with knowledge received from WHH. Indeed, many of them are no longer struggling with raising school fees. As a result, their children have stopped loitering. He has also observed that relatives and community members who have benefited from the green skill business no longer come around to borrow little amounts like Sh20 or Sh50, something that was common some time back. They are now farming and getting enough money to sustain them.

Mark, like many others who have learned green business skills, wants to learn more and improve his entrepreneurship skills, grow his business and earn more. Mark particularly is looking forward to becoming a supplier in areas that do not have tissue culture bananas. He wants to invest in his own water supply so that he can venture into large-scale farming. He is ready to go back to class if an opportunity presents itself, specifically to learn more about agriculture.

“ I want to supply farm produce to the markets here and I want to train youths to come on board so that they will be practicing agriculture and not idle around. I will venture into large-scale farming because right now the main challenge is water, I depend on rain. Whenever there is no rain, my business goes down. I hope I will get the water soon. I can see opportunities ahead and the future is bright,” he says with optimism.

Mark agreed with many others that the project was on track to alleviate poverty in his community. The trainers have mastered how to keep older people captivated and motivated through practical activities which account for more than 70 percent of the course work. He is very appreciative of the programme and all the contributors, mentors, trainers, fellow learners and programme organisers. He particularly credits the startup kit, saying it went a long way in boosting his individual growth and he is of the view that he and his group still need to work on the group dynamics to grow together.

For the youth who are still unemployed but have access to a piece of land, he has a message for them: They should not give up. This project has yielded fruits and will continue for a long time, and if the youth are willing to be trained, he welcomes them to his farm and has offered to train them.



Nancy, a Kakamega WHH Woman Trainee

Inspirational story from Nancy, a Kakamega WHH Woman Trainee

Zizi Afrique foundation (ZIZI) is a Kenyan organisation committed to social change and envisions an Africa in which every person grows, learns, thinks and thrives. The foundation cooperates with governmental and non-governmental actors, like Anglican Development Services (ADS), the development arm of the Anglican Church. Through such partnerships, it generates well-founded evidence to contribute to informed decisions in the field of education.

A partner assessment was carried out to determine suitability of the identified two implementing partners. Both Zizi and ADS have a strong presence in Kakamega, the project area, and both have extensive experience in green skills development and the appropriate structures for the effective implementation of this project. Zizi engages in the pursuit of assisting households in the project area who depend on subsistence agriculture or dairy farming and many of who live in poverty.

Nancy, who hails from Vihiga, is one of the beneficiaries of the joint training by Zizi and ADS. After participating in the training, she obtained entrepreneurial

development skills in the dairy value chain.

“This programme has really helped me improve on my dairy farm yields and also take care of my cows, grow cattle feeds, do savings with table banking and process milk at home. For instance, I can make yogurt for sale. I earn from these skills because I can make fermented milk and yogurt. I also gained soap making skills,” she reveals.

Nancy, who is married with children, started her passion for livestock keeping when she lived in Narok, and when she moved back to Vihiga, she already appreciated the benefits of dairy farming.

“I visited Narok and that is where I experienced the beauty of dairy farming from my neighbours. They had quality breeds like Friesian and Jersey, and I could see them get a lot of milk from the cows. They

“One of them publicly praised me. They used to doubt what I was doing but now I am an inspiration to others. I told her there is training that I received and that helped me improve my skills,” she says.

could tell me the benefits they got by selling milk and the proceeds made it possible for them to educate their children, build houses and grow economically. So, I thought it was a good venture for me too," she says.

As a child, Nancy aspired for a white color job. Her ambition was to become a teacher, but this was not to be. When she got married, her husband wanted her to take a course in tailoring and venture into design and tailoring but this did not align with her expectations. Instead, she took on her passion for dairy farming. Her first attempt - with one cow - was disappointing. The cow died and her efforts went to waste. However, that did not deter her from one day achieving her dream.

“I was naive and never used to give it maize stalks. I continued feeding it until it delivered the first calf. The calf eventually died. I could not figure out what was the problem. I even thought it was witchcraft. I was demoralised because I had high expectations of gaining from that venture but all I got was a loss. I almost gave up but later I decided to still believe in it,” she says of her first failed attempt.

Nancy had seen a gap in the milk business within her community. She also noticed that many small scale farmers kept local breeds, which could not produce enough milk. She knew she could fill that gap.

After her initial disappointment, Nancy bought another cow and later two calves. At this point, she was introduced to a women’s group known as Sunrise Dairy Farming, and that turned out to be the perfect place for her. The group was to be trained by experts from Bukura Institute. That was how her journey to acquire skills and knowledge on green business was established. The group met the trainers every Tuesday and they were taught how to install a calf shed, something she was thrilled to finally have at her home. She received knowledge on the benefits of selling milk, and when she started making money, she started paying for the education of her four children. Later, she built a house and tiled it as she grew economically. Her growth is now evident. She has a 3,000-litre water storage tank and a dairy goat.

“My firstborn is in Form Three, the second born is in Form Two, the third born is in Grade Six and the fourth is in Grade One. I have educated all of them in private schools, they have never been to public schools. I have raised them that way with support from my farming venture,” she says.

Nancy has gained skills from green business training and this has been a boost for her personal development. She has decided to spread the benefits and now is able to uplift others in her community, including family and friends. She contributes positively to her community, and passing on knowledge and skills to others without monetising it makes her respected. She is rated as one of the main distributors of milk in her community. Those who could not get milk can now buy it easily from her and they are happy about it.

“One of them publicly praised me. They used to doubt what I was doing but now I am an inspiration to others. I told her there is training that I received and that helped me improve my skills,” she says.

She is now of service to her community and an inspiration. She teaches her neighbours in groups, sharing the skills she received from this programme. She is now a mobiliser for women to teach women in groups. And besides her milk venture, she enjoys making soap and distributing to schools. Already, several schools now order soap from her, including Ebusakami secondary school. The school says her soap is good quality due to the skills and training she received and the fact that she does not compromise on quality.



Edna, a Kajiado Woman Trainee

WHH Story of Hope with Edna, a Kajiado Woman Trainee

Zizi Afrique Foundation in partnership with Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and Anglican Development Services (ADS) conducted a green business project in three counties. The overall programme objective was to promote green skills of women and youth with the aim of reducing poverty and hunger in rural areas of Vihiga, Makueni and Kajiado.

Zizi Afrique is responsible for research, advocacy at national and county level, monitoring project progress and impact, and being an advisor on implementation and institutional development.

Edna was one of the women who greatly benefited from the overall programme of green skills. She is well known in her community for excellence in community service and her story stems from WHH green business training. Edna's journey of hope with Greening TVT is fascinating. Like many children in her neighbourhood, she wanted to become a farmer but did not understand the technology around farming. Life was difficult; her parents were poor, and livestock keeping was their only source of income at a time when drought was common in Kajiado.

prolonged ones, her family was thrown into desperation due to lack of food and school fees. This was the time she dropped out of school.

At 32, she became a single mother of three with no means of survival. She moved back to her mother's house because life was difficult and she could no longer live with her alcoholic husband.

Despite the challenges, she was determined to turn her life around. Today, she attributes her drive to succeed to green business skills training that she underwent. This helped her to refocus and change her fortunes. She reveals how that journey started.

“I was part of a church merry-go-round Hellen, ourmentor, approached us and asked if we could join the WHH project as part of the women group and we agreed as a group,” she says.

During the training, she received a startup kit for chicken, which helped her in beginning her agribusiness. In addition, she received soap making skills after she was trained on soap making and given the ingredients as a startup kit.

“I am able to provide for my family and improve their quality of life. I feel confident in my poultry business. I also have a bank account. People in the community can now see the need for poultry farming and how it can improve their lives,” says Edna,

Edna recalls that in one of those

She and other women in her group were also trained on table banking.

Members of the group now understand concepts like savings and budgeting their income, all of which are important in entrepreneurship. Edna is now self-employed, thanks to the startup kit. In addition, she is now able to mentor others in the community.

“I am applying those skills in my business to be successful. I am also training others in the community to help them grow. I am teaching them how to take care of chicks to maturity, how to use manure from the poultry to grow organic vegetables. The green business training contributed so much to that,” she says.

Since joining the programme, Edna does not lack food or fees for her children. She is excited about her own and her children’s future because she can take care of them with income generated from poultry farming, selling eggs, goat rearing and soap making. Even though there are the usual challenges like lack of a constant market, she has experienced personal growth and that her family. And as her business grows, she plans to buy a phone and, later on, buy her own land and build a house. She even feels smarter than before.

“I know the medicines involved in poultry farming and do not have to look for a vet to treat the chicks,” she says.

Edna’s story could have been a different one. She could have looked at her circumstances and said; “It is hopeless.” She could have lost patience and pursued an easier path. But she did not. After the training changed her life, her prayer is that trainers and the programme continue to benefit more people.

“I am able to provide for my family and improve their quality of life. I feel confident in my poultry business. I also have a bank account. People in the community can now see the need for poultry farming and how it can improve their lives,” says Edna, 32, who has since been elected chairperson of a community group



Francis Atele, a Kakamega WHH Youth Trainee

Success Story for Francis Atele, a Kakamega WHH Youth Trainee

The agricultural sector is the backbone of the economy, contributing about 21 percent of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, agricultural productivity has stagnated in recent years, partly due to prolonged drought and high cost of inputs such as seeds and fertilizer. Smallholder farmers and agricultural enterprises continue to face challenges growing their businesses and improving the quality of agricultural goods. They lack relevant agricultural knowledge and skills to match emerging challenges.

As part of the initiative to equip farmers with practical knowledge, Zizi Afrique foundation (ZIZI) a Kenyan non-governmental organisation, has embarked on extensive programme in green skills development. It has invested in appropriate structures for the effective implementation of this programme to address the recurrent challenges by educating farmers on modern farming.

One of its partners, Welthungerhilfe, noted that low reading and numeracy skills were among the barriers to effective uptake of these skills. Currently, Welthungerhilfe is implementing Green Business in different parts of

Kenya. One of the beneficiaries of this programme is Francis Atele, who hails from Kakamega County and who took up the Green Business skills training through the 30 percent theory and 70 percent practical module.

Francis joined Green Business in January 2021 to learn more about horticultural business. He graduated at Level Three after his attachment. He worked for a while to save money and later started a home garden, growing sukuma wiki, tomatoes and cabbages. This did not come as a surprise to many because as a child, his aspiration was to become a farmer and entrepreneur.

Growing up, he experienced many challenges with school fees in secondary school. It was a difficult time for him because his father was also paying fees for three other children in high school and three in primary school. Due to his family's financial constraints, Francis was always absent from school although eventually completed his secondary education. Though now 20 and single, Francis says all his siblings depend on him for upkeep.

After I left my internship, I focused on horticulture and saved some little money to start me off. I also learned so much of sales and marketing skills that have helped to sell the products," says Francis proudly.

“As a grown up, you are independent; you have to work hard and fend for yourself and others. That is why I started the journey of horticulture. My greatest challenge was accessing capital to start the business and because my father had other children to raise, I could not ask him for support on that issue,” says Francis.

At some point, while he was looking for capital to buy seedlings, he was worked as casual labourer in construction sites, earning between Sh500 and Sh1,000 a day. Even as he was doing this, he enrolled for his training, combining his day job with working for one of the Green Business trainers, taking care of his tomatoes and vegetables. That was when he appreciated that the business was lucrative, and this enticed him to take the course more seriously.

During the training and attachment, his mentor was helping him whenever the teachers were not available. He encouraged Francis and the students not to give up. Through this, they were motivated to learn as much as possible and apply their skills and knowledge on their farms.

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His personal growth and improvement in the quality of life are evident. His income has increased, he has joined a Sacco known as Solution Sacco and through savings and borrowing, his business continues to grow. He hopes that as his disposable income increases, he will enroll in a university for a degree course once he completes his diploma course in December.

One thing he appreciates is that his experience with Green Business has changed his budgeting; and what is more he now receives money daily instead of waiting an entire week or month for his wages.

To grow his business, he is now exploring the possibility of owning dairy cows. He hopes to build a house one day and be able not just provide for his immediate family but others in the community. He is inspired to work with local government agencies and private corporations to sell his farm produce.

His only challenge has been capital; he needs more money to expand his business, including trying his hand at growing French Beans. And once his financial position improves, he hopes to take care of his large extended family.

As a Green Business training beneficiary, he recommends that the project continues and be expanded to include more courses. He also recommends that the students be issued with certificates to show that they have Green Business skills in case there is a job or some form of employment that requires such proof.

