



■ Woman power in the Lambwe valley: **Paradise Cafe**

Heat lies heavy over the village of Nyabera in Western Kenya. Both humans and animals have taken refuge in the shade. All are waiting anxiously for the rains to start. It is the middle of March, time for the short rains. Sofia Okoth stands at her kiosk behind a metal grill. She hands some tomatoes through the grill and smiles as she takes the money.

Things were very different two years ago when there was little to laugh about. The animals were dying from

tsetse fly bites and the kitchen garden had dried up (see Newsletter No. 2, Autumn 2002). But Sofia did not give up. Together with a number of men and women of the Seredo Farm Group she went on a course on organic gardening led by Matilda Ouma, Eco-Trainer with ICIPE at Mbita Point, near Lake Victoria. Sofia's group learned about soil management, watering techniques, environmentally-friendly pest control and how to make compost. They were shown how to start a kitchen garden using different varieties of vegetables. This was great beginning and now, even during the driest months, they produce vegetables both for home consumption and for sale. Fresh vegetables are much in demand in the semi-arid climate of Lambwe, and trade is flourishing in the village.

Sofia has managed to put money aside regularly and has finally been able to make her dream come true. It is called Paradise Cafe. Here she sells vegetables across the counter, and, at the back of the shop, she cooks meals

for her customers. She serves chai (tea with milk and sugar), coffee and soda.

Meanwhile, her husband Raffael has taken on the fight against greedy goats and calves. The cost of wire netting for the kitchen garden is well beyond the budget of these farmers, so thorn bushes will have to do instead.

Life has changed

Further down the Lambwe Valley, members of the Bungkwach Women's Group stand in a field with their Eco-Trainer Matilda Ouma. There are only a very few sukuma wiki plants and osuga plants left in the carefully prepared beds. "Only a few weeks ago this was a riot of luxurious vegetables," says Hellen Ongany proudly. She is the group's leader. Her group has concentrated on producing the seeds of traditional vegetables. These seeds find a ready market and make a good profit for the women. By selling vegetables from their plots, they can make about 45 to 60 Kenyan Shillings



Editorial



Women work very hard in my country. The wellbeing of our children and families depends on us. In addition, there is the everlasting fight against poverty. When fate strikes, mothers, as the centre of the family, are directly affected. This is why, as an Eco-Trainer, I focus my work very much on women.

Living standards here will only improve if the people have enough food and can earn enough to cover their basic needs. I follow this strategy faithfully in the organic gardens projects I lead in the Lambwe Valley. "Organic" in Africa means low producer costs. The organic method enables good returns, because it avoids expensive fertilisers and pest control methods. I am happy to see how good the results are. After a very short time my colleagues in the women's groups produce more vegetables both to take home and to sell for good prices in the market. They are happy to be able to provide a safe environment, food and education for their children and to invest in their future. They are now more independent of their men folk because they themselves are earners. Life for these women has become easier.

Matilda Auma Ouma
Eco-Trainer, IPICE Field Station
at Mbita Point, Kenya.

Picture caption on Page 2: Comparing mangoes: (left to right) Using combined IPM methods, partial IPM methods, and no IPM methods.



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a day (about one Swiss Franc). At the market they can earn at least 100 Shillings, but this involves a strenuous walk plus carrying their goods. Compared to other households this is good money. With an appreciative look towards their Eco-Trainer, Margreth Oluoko says: "Our life has changed. We are much better off than before. We can feed our families more healthily. We are regularly able to buy fish, fats, soap and other household articles." Particularly important for these women is their newly gained independence. "We no longer suffer the humiliation of having to ask our husbands for money before going to the market. There is no longer any need to sell part of our maize or millet crop to get cash."

IP Mangoes from Maragua Not all the problems have been solved

With the help of the two BioVision colleagues, Brigitte Nyambo and Janet Maundu, a group of mango producers have tested protective measures against various fruit pests. They were able greatly to reduce the infestation with the aid of integrated pest control, but could not eliminate it entirely. The mango fruit fly proved particularly resistant. Tom Kameri, a mango grower, is quite impressed. "I learned a lot about mango diseases and environmentally-friendly treat-

Matilda Ouma listens with a smile. Just a year ago she organised a week-long training course for these women. She had a student from the Kenya Institute of Organic Farming at her side to advise her. And now she sees the fruits of her work.

Suddenly the air is full of thunder. Huge black clouds appear and the rain falls like heavy curtains. The women leave the garden. Soon the first heavy drops fall on happy faces. The short rains have started.

BioVision Project no 5207-01

ment. It's a pity that we didn't know about the IPM method earlier, we could have had higher yields". His colleague, James Irungu, is more critical. "The losses are still too great. I dare not move over entirely to integrated pest control."

The project is continuing and the problem of the fruit flies will be further researched. The farmers are also looking for competent partners to help with marketing their IP-mangoes.

BioVision Project Nr 5203-02



■ A day in the life of **Margaret Oluako, grandmother and farmer in the Lambwe Valley**

When it is not the rainy season our day begins at 5am. We get up and go to the fields. Breakfast has to wait. We need to make use of the cool early morning hours to plough. My husband Johnson, who is 70, leads the plough. I lead the six oxen. At ten o'clock we return from the fields and I make breakfast. Porridge of maize flour and warm water. Sometimes I add cooked beans. After that, I go to the vegetable garden to do some weeding before the sun gets too hot. I am a member of the Bungkwach Women's Group. We produce different kinds of vegetables and seeds (see main article). The income from the vegetables is very important for us. It gives our family a secure food supply as well as cash. Not long ago I made 300 Shillings (about 6 Swiss Francs) in one day at the market. That was a great day! I bought a school uniform with the money.

The officials from the Ministry of Agriculture have discovered us and show us off as a good example. This makes us very proud.

At 2 o'clock the children come home from school. By then I have to have nyoyo ready. This is maize with cooked beans. The three girls - Sinthia, Nouren, Hanna - and the little boy - Miky - are the children of my eldest son who died in hospital, two years ago, of a short severe illness. We do not know what caused his death. Our daughter-in-law left us at that time but the grandchildren remained with us. Now, at 58, I am a mother for the second time. I am tired but I have no choice. I do what I can. After lunch I first wash the uniforms. The school demands clean clothes and we can only afford one set of clothing for each child.



Luckily there are enough trees and bushes near us so I don't have to spend too much time collecting firewood. Since I broke my arm I can no longer collect water from the well two kilometres away. We have asked our neighbour, who has a donkey, to bring us eight canisters, containing 20 litres each, every day. In the rainy season we collect water in a tank from the roof. My husband Johnson considers the lack of water as our greatest problem. For me, his illness is the worst thing. He used to be a teacher but he developed a severe psychological illness after he retired. Luckily he is now alright. But we had to spend all his pension on his treatment. Because of this the income from the vegetables is vital.

After supper Johnson or I read to the children from the Bible. We are Anglican Christians. The Bible is in Luo, our mother tongue. The three girls all sleep on a mattress on the floor, the little boy has a bed to himself. In the past this would have been my time to do handicrafts or housework. Nowadays I go to bed too, the moment the children are asleep. I allow myself this. After all, I have been a grandmother for a long time.

Interview by Peter Luethi

■ School roof provides water **Water for the school garden**

School buildings in Kenya normally look identical, but not the Osodo Primary School in Western Kenya. This school is remarkably different, flanked by two large water tanks each holding 45,000 litres. These fill up with water from the roof during the rainy season. The school now has enough water for drinking and to water the organic school garden. The 34 members of the 4K Clubs are taught to work in the garden, following organic guidelines. Once they have

learned this new way of doing things, they will take their new knowledge home to their parents and it will spread. This project is part of a strategy worked out by Eco-Trainer Matilda Ouma (see main article). The water tanks were financed by a private Swiss woman donor and supplied via BioVision.

BioVision Project no 5207-03





■ SF DRS in Mwea

BioVision on television

On Sunday 4th April 2004, Swiss television showed a report from BioVision about a project called "From help to self-help in Kenya". The report was filmed in March this year in villages surrounding Mwea National Park. Farmers showed how they fight the tsetse-fly with simple cloth traps. "We can only fight hunger and poverty if we can do something lasting for the health of the people and their livestock", says Dr Rudolf Herren, President of BioVision.

The 3 minute programme is freely available at <http://www.biovision.ch/presse/index.html> and from the BioVision Office, as a video cassette or DVD. A voluntary contribution is requested. Tel. 01-3419718 or e-mail: info@biovision.ch Subject: Mwea Tsetse Control, Project no 5204-1

Lucy Wangui, KIOF Extension Worker, Maragua (Kenya)

■ Feedback

Flowers for supporters

Lucy Wangui says: Our supporters' money is well invested. The project in Maragua, in which I am involved, works well. The farmers are right behind it. They are learning how to use integrated pest control (IPM) and will use it in the future. I myself, as a consultant on agriculture at the Kenya Institute of Organic Farming KIOF, have learned quite a lot too.

■ Grow for a future!

Workshop on Organic Farming in Kenya

BioVision is helping to expand local markets for thousands of small farmers in Kenya. Under the slogan, "Grow for a future!", a workshop on organic farming and marketing was held at the end of March in Nairobi. This was a total success. Over 300 delegates representing farming and marketing organisations attended, as well as European experts on certification, fair trade and marketing. Together they laid the foundation for the organic movement in Kenya.

One important result of the workshop was the setting up of KOAM (Kenya Organic Agricultural Movement) which now coordinates the different groups. The producers are particularly hoping to be able to work together constructively. As one of the smallholders in Meru, Joseph Mwai observed: "Our main concern is to have an affordable local certification system, following international guidelines. We need help with the selection of popular organic products, with correct processing and with effective marketing."

Project no 5209-01

Thank you for your help!

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- BioVision assists self-help in East Africa in two ways:
- Protecting the people from insect pests
 - Supporting income generation for rural communities

Many thanks if you can support us in this!
Dr Hans Rudolf Herren



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