



## Biofarm for the Blind New prospects for the visually impaired

The showpiece in Wide Kore's\* (*middle*) house is a red transistor radio with cassette player. There is a cassette in it. When the seventeen-year-old Ethiopian presses the 'play' button, her own voice booms out against the stark walls, accompanied by rhythm and the sounds of instruments: *Even from afar you are close to me. I long for you. And I know that your smile only hides your tears. Dear mother, leave the crying to me.*

„The hit *The Mothers in Oromia* is sometimes played on Ethiopian radio stations“, smiles Wide and explains almost casually, that she wrote the lyrics, composed the music and recorded the piece in the studio herself. But not a penny has she received from the producer; he kept the entire profit of 25,000 Birr (about CHF 3,300). With her fair share, she could have escaped her poverty. And most importantly, she would have had something with which to tackle her difficult fate.

Wide Kore has been blind in her left eye since birth. She has at most 30% vision in her right eye – and that is diminishing. Now she sits as before in her comfortless hut in one of the poorer areas of Sebeta, a small town 25 km southwest of Addis Ababa, and barely makes ends meet. But despite everything she has also been lucky. Because Wide has had two opportunities, both of which she has made a success of: firstly, she completed primary school at the *Sebeta Special School for the Blind*, and after that

changed to a regular high school. Here of course it takes great effort to keep up, since hardly any consideration is given to her and her disability. Secondly, she attended a special training course for the visually impaired in integrated, organic farming methods. Nowadays in her free time she produces carrots, beetroot, radishes, cauliflower and onions as well as vegetable seedlings of organic quality with a group of other visually impaired people, for their own use and to sell.

### Income and self confidence

The training of Wide and altogether 100 visually impaired people in vegetable production was made possible through the BioVision Foundation. It was implemented by the Ethiopian partner organisation, the *BioEconomy Association* (BEA), on 2 hectares of fertile land belonging

Continued on side 2 ▶



- PushPull  
A day in the life of  
Fridah Anday Page 3
- Honey for orphans Page 2
- Threatened biodiversity  
of species Page 3
- Help is a mouseclick away Page 4
- Stop Malaria Page 4
- BioVision Ambassador Page 4
- Award for Mercy Kiyapyap Page 4

\* Name has been changed

## Editorial



*Opinions differ on the problem of global hunger. Recently the FAO came to the conclusion that organic farming is indeed a realistic option for Africa. Meanwhile multinational agro-companies propagate intensive farming with chemicals and genetic modification as the only practical way forward. I am convinced that there is enough food in the world. In any case, the arguments of the agro-lobby seem cynical while 2 billion people worldwide are overweight and 25% of harvests are destroyed, as 850 million people starve.*

*I believe in family-based farms, and in self-responsibility. But the farmers have to generate a decent income. For this reason, I support fair pricing of agricultural products in industrial countries. This would increase the worth of food. And I support policies that promote research in the sphere of sustainable agriculture. If as much funding were to be invested in this approach worldwide as is invested in so-called 'modern agriculture', then some of the most pressing problems would already be addressed.*

*With its statement, the FAO made an important step. But further pioneers are needed to bring these things into action. BioVision supports ecological, socially responsible development in Africa and effectively furthers this cause.*

*Dr. Hans Rudolf Herren  
President of the BioVision Foundation*



*Continued from side 1*

to the Sebeta School for the Blind. The project shows that people with disabilities can also ensure their income sustainably with organic farming methods. Alongside practical work, extensive and diverse information was given to course participants on conservational agriculture, compost and waste recycling, honey production, marketing and health care. In life skills class, topics such as HIV Aids, family planning and protection from rape were given special attention. Visually impaired women are particularly vulnerable and are frequent victims of violence. Berihun Tefera Adugna, on-site BEA co-ordinator, has great faith in the integrated project and in the results: „Working with the visually impaired was very enriching for us and it confirmed the success of the chosen approach. They get the opportunity to do something to help themselves. That is a real contribution to the development of our country and, at the same time, it raises the self-esteem and safety of the participants.” In any case, new prospects have certainly opened up for Wide Kore. Despite severe visual impairment, she is looking optimistically to the future. And if the hurdles remain too high, she has hopes for her musical talent. “I still have many songs in the pipeline” she says promisingly, and she is determined to find a serious music producer soon.

*BioVision-Project BV PH-04*

## Mully Children Honey for orphans

Those who produce honey use nature in an environmentally friendly way and so generate an income. Honey production can even be done in barren areas. This is a chance to ensure survival, especially for those who have no farmland. In the *Mully Children Family Home* (MCFH), an orphanage and children's



### Sebeta Biofarm for the Blind

In 2004, the *BioEconomy Association* (BEA) ran courses in integrated organic farming for members of the Ethiopian development organisation for disabled persons (DOPD) and through that made possible the building of a dairy farm and plant nursery at the *Sebeta Special School for the Blind*. Currently in this BioVision project, 100 disabled people are trained in organic agriculture and equipped with the necessary tools. The DOPD model farm is to be developed as a training centre for neighbouring farms and for disabled men and women farmers from all over Ethiopia.

home in Ndalani (Kenya), children have been able to learn beekeeping skills and how to produce valuable quality honey since 2003. Now special teaching tools for schools have been developed. In a specially founded beekeeping club, the children produce beeswax candles, which are also available in Switzerland: in Claro shops and at [www.terraverde.tv/biovision](http://www.terraverde.tv/biovision). The MCFH collects the honey of small-scale producers from the whole region and is now developing into a beekeeping centre of excellence.

*BioVision-Project BV EH-04*

**Virginia Maribe (17):**

*I have learned so much and later on I want to produce honey!*

## ■ A day in the life of Fridah Anday **PushPull-Farmer and Eco-Trainer in Ebuchewe Village**

„When I wake up at 5.30am, it is still dark. At most I lie on for 10 minutes, and plan the day. I am alone with my five children and one grandchild. My husband lives in the city. We are separated, and he doesn't look after us. I often feel lonely. But I don't want to get a divorce, because then I would lose my children according to Luyha tradition. Thankfully I own the house. The land belongs to my husband, but I am free to choose how I farm it.

After I get up, I bring the cow out of the house and give her fresh desmodium and napier grass. These two plants are not only good feed for livestock, they are also important for the organic PushPull method against maize pests. I heard about it at a farmers' meeting, and later I saw the good results that my neighbour achieved. That impressed me, and I took part in a PushPull course at icipe\* in Mbita Point. In 2002 I started the PushPull methods in a field that hardly produced any crop, since it was so infested with the striga weed. Since then the harvests have increased every time, and after four years I had the maximum harvest. From the fields that previously only produced 4 kg of maize kernels, I now get 135 kg with PushPull! That changed our lives. We don't have to buy maize meal anymore- quite the opposite. I can save, and even earn money from the sale of available maize, livestock feed and goats. That allowed me, along with a payment from the communal account of my farmers' group, to buy the cow. She gives us 2 litres of milk a day. She also produces manure for the plants. All of this is a great step forward for us.

I was chosen by the community to be a PushPull teacher, and I was trained by icipe. Questions come mostly during planting season, and I go out about twice a week to advise. It is mostly the beginners

*\*icipe: African Insect Science for Food and Health, Headpart of BioVision in Africa*

## ■ Threatened biodiversity of species **Better harvests – less chemicals**

*The Eastern Arc Mountains and East African Coastal Forests* in Tanzania and Kenya are noted for their very high level of biodiversity. They belong to the 25 global *Biodiversity Hotspots*. This natural diversity is threatened by, amongst other things, commercial and chemically-intensive vegetable cultivation- in particular



who want support from me. I value my job as Eco-Trainer greatly. As an acknowledgement of my work I received a bicycle – like all PushPull teachers.

When the children are at school and I have done the housework, my oldest daughter Gladis and I go out to the plantations to weed, spread manure or harvest. She has a baby and is a single mother. We farm maize and beans, sweet potatoes, bananas, cassava, kale and tomatoes.

At one pm it gets very hot, and we go back to the house, where it's cool. Then the children come home from school and I look through their books. If I have the feeling that something is amiss, I talk to the teacher.

At 5 pm I fetch vegetables from the garden, leave the maize kernels to be ground in the motor-operated mill and buy firewood. At about 6 pm I start cooking. Most of the time it's Ugali (a maize dish) with vegetables or beans, every now and then also rice with beans. But Ugali is definitely our staple food.

After dinner we light the petrol lamps and sit together to chat or listen to the radio. At 10pm we lie down to sleep.”

*Recorded by Peter Lüthi in  
Ebuchewe Village, Kenia*

the cultivation of tomatoes.

BioVision has taken on co-financing of an agricultural project in the *West-Usambara Mountains* (Tanzania) and in the *Taita Hills* (Kenya). There, icipe Eco-Trainers together with local and regional partners introduce the step-by-step implementation of environmentally friendly methods of agriculture. Through this, biodiversity can be conserved and work and income ensured for the resident farmers. In the first phase of the project, groups of farmers were sensitised, trained and supervised during practical work. Seeds of more robust species of tomato were reproduced and distributed. According to Janet Maundu, Eco-Trainer with *icipe*, the use of chemicals in tomato cultures has already greatly decreased. Farmer Martina Esther, member of the *Chawia Group* in the *Taita Hills*, is also satisfied with the project: „We are very proud that we have produced such good seeds. In addition I could sell more vegetables of better quality.“

*BioVision-Project BV PH-02*



■ Nairobi, 9. October 2007

## Launch of information platform for farmers

Congratulations from the Head of Government of Liechtenstein, Otmar Hasler (left), to BioVision for the newly launched information platform [www.infonet-biovision.ch](http://www.infonet-biovision.ch). „We are proud that the Development Service of Liechtenstein finances this forward-thinking project, and we see in it great potential for the promotion of sustainable methods of agriculture”, he says on the occasion of the launch to project leader Monique Hunziker and project initiators Sofia and Raphael Kadwaro Okoth, farmers from Nyabera (Kenya). The website offers Africa-specific and scientifically proven information on the most common diseases and pests, with instructions for prevention and organic counter-measures. Target groups are farmers, agricultural advisers, teachers and

goal-related organisations. For interested parties with a computer but no internet access, Infonet-BioVision is available in an offline version on CD.

*Infonet-biovision.org* is a complementary information channel accompanying the *The Organic Farmer* newspaper, published in Kenya, which informs 100,000 farmers monthly on ecological cultivation methods.



■ Stop Malaria

## Large donation for malaria projects

*The Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas* (FAWCO) supports the BioVision Foundation with great loyalty. On the occasion of the FAWCO Annual Conference in Lyon, Prof. Em. Peter Lüthy (third from left), one of the world-leading experts in the organic control of mosquitoes and scientific adviser to the 'Stop Malaria' projects, together with Stephan Gisi, finance officer for the BioVision Foundation, received a cheque for \$54,000. The cheque was presented by Arline Coward, Paula Daepfen and Sunny Eades (from left). The contributions of FAWCO support the fight against malaria. Heartfelt thanks to all donors!



■ BioVision Ambassador

## New book about Simone Niggli-Luder

Now there is a beautiful book filled with photographs: *Simone Niggli-Luder – Out and About with the World Orienteering Champion* by Beat Hugli and Rudolf Steiner. Published by Stämpfli Verlag, bound in 21 x 26 cm format, 180 pages with over 60 full-page colour images. For every book that is ordered through [www.biovision.ch/Simone](http://www.biovision.ch/Simone), CHF 10.- goes to the BioVision Foundation. Price: CHF. 38.- plus CHF. 8.- Postage and packing. The 14-time orienteering world champion and biologist is committed to socially responsible development that is close to nature, and to a world without hunger. „I hope to raise awareness for BioVision and its method of help for self-help in Africa through my high profile and popularity“, says Simone of her dedication to the post of BioVision ambassador.



■ Women in the fight against hunger and poverty

## Award for Mercy Kiyapyap

Great honour for the representative leader of the BioVision project Cabesi. Mercy Kiyapyap, together with 13 women from four continents, was awarded the *Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life 2007* by an international jury. *The international award of the Women's World Summit Foundation* encourages her to go further with her work in West Pokot, Kenya. „This award increases awareness of women's lives in rural areas and helps to improve our status in society. The prize is not just mine but ours, it belongs to all women in this part of the world”, says Mercy proudly.



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