

Biovision

Newsletter March 2016

From emergency help to self-help
Gobane Gamachu now has an income



A future for all, naturally

Tesfaye Fetenu, Project Manager
ECC-SDCOM



“By generating income from a range of sources and protecting natural resources, people can increase their resilience to drought.”



Food security in Siraro

The project in Siraro seeks to increase the value of natural resources and so reduce reliance on emergency aid.

- **Activities to 2017:**
 - Training for 1200 households in animal husbandry and seed production
 - Training in how to keep goats (800 people) hens (500 people) and modern bee keeping (85 people)
 - Training for 100 lone mothers in sustainable vegetable cultivation, composting and nutrition
 - Training for 500 people in erosion control, reforestation and soil fertility
 - Supply energy-efficient stoves to 500 households

• **Project Budget 2015 – 2017:** CHF 330'000

• **Account for donations** PC 87-193093-4

Building resilience to famine

Regular droughts mean that communities in the Siraro District of Ethiopia are often reliant on emergency aid. Biovision is helping strengthen their resilience by generating multiple sources of income.

Drought occurs regularly in Ethiopia and with it famine. The District of Siraro, 350 km south of the capital Addis Abeba is no exception. During five separate famines since 2005, long queues formed at the emergency aid centres dispensing food rations to those in need. The centres handed out 1.5 kg maize, 1.5 l oil and 1.5 kg chickpeas per person per month, i.e. some 2100 kilocalories per day for each family member.

Biovision is working with “Caritas Vorarlberg” on a project in Siraro that is looking at ways to reduce the vulnerability of the population to drought and their reliance on emergency aid. Someone with personal experience of what can be achieved is Gobane Gamachu, a lone mother from Luke Hada (cover photo); she has demonstrated an outstanding capacity for innovation and a keen eye for business.

Hardship and independence

The 27-year old farmer can now survive the regular crises without food aid. In 2010, as the second of three wives, her husband abandoned her and her six children. Since then, she has gradually generated new sources of income: It was not easy but she did it. Gobane can now use the extra income to buy food if crop yields are insufficient. It all started 8 years ago when despite personal hardship, she managed to save a small amount of money and bought chilli pods and garlic cloves from other farmers. Gobane

then sold the produce at market for a small profit. “From these small beginnings, I was able to save more money and bought hens and a cockerel. I now sell eggs,” she explains. This income allowed her to buy two young goats as a “living bank account” – if she desperately needs the cash, she can sell the animals. Three years ago, Gobane learned how to keep bees; she now produces honey. It is much in demand in town and she earns good money from the proceeds. “I was able to save more and five years ago I bought a cow and a bull,” she says proudly. The milk improved the family’s diet and provided another source of income.

The key to Gobane’s success has been diversification; she is able to save money from her various sources of income and so increase her assets in the longer term. She acts as role model for our project in Siraro, which is being implemented by ECC-SDCOM, the Social Development Coordination Office in Meki of the Ethiopian Catholic Church. In October 2015, Biovision funded three modern beehives allowing Gobane to significantly improve the quality and amount of honey produced.

Improving natural resources

Equally important is the retention of natural resources: The project has trained three local communities in how to prevent soil erosion by building plant-covered mud walls and ditches and growing trees for timber and fruit. The introduction of energy-efficient stoves will reduce the consumption of wood and maize straw; if less maize is used as a fuel for stoves, the amount of fodder available to the cattle is greater. | pl

For more information and photos:
www.biovision.ch/siraro-e



In the Ethiopian District of Siraro, drought and the destruction of natural resources cause food shortages (top). By generating a range of income sources such as cattle farming and honey production, Gobane Gamachu, a lone mother can now survive these regular crises without emergency aid.

As a result of climate change, we have noticed that the distinction between emergency aid and development aid is becoming increasingly fluid. In recent years, we have consciously adapted our project work and methods to cope with these new challenges, e.g., the drought-resistant Push-Pull method developed by our research partner icipe.

In the Ethiopian district of Siraro, we are working with local people and Caritas Vorarlberg – an organisation with many years of experience in emergency aid and agricultural development – to identify and integrate durable approaches to ecological land uses. Together, we are supporting local families to strengthen their resilience to crises and reduce their reliance on emergency and development aid. To achieve this, we not only have to build up short-term financial buffers but also to create synergies between income-generating measures and sustainable land use. Without this combined approach, it will be difficult to maintain the effects in the longer term.



Dr Samuel Ledermann

Responsible for several grassroots projects in East Africa



Humanitarian aid today

The world faces a humanitarian disaster, the worst since the 2nd World War. Almost 60 million people have fled their homes and we are a long way from permanent solutions to the various crises. The humanitarian aid provided by Switzerland will continue to save lives and alleviate suffering. However, such aid can only be regarded as a first step towards a sustainable solution.

Even though the world has always faced humanitarian disasters, the concept of modern humanitarian aid only came into being some 150 years ago. It began in Switzerland with Henri Dunant, who founded the International Committee of the Red Cross and whose ideas led to the signing of the Geneva Conventions. Dunant's basic concept, which was to help the wounded and those in dire need on both sides of armed conflicts, remains valid today. This principle, combined with the pivotal role played by Switzerland in the development of international law in this field, probably explains the country's strong humanitarian tradition.

The fundamental objectives of Swiss humanitarian aid are enshrined in the Federal Constitution; the Swiss Confederation is obliged to help alleviate global need and poverty and to promote respect for human rights and democracy, peaceful co-existence between peoples and the conservation of natural resources. The assistance provided by the Swiss government takes the form of emergency aid for reconstruction, prevention, development cooperation and promoting peace. Several Swiss Federal departments work together to provide this assistance. The humanitarian aid is provided by specialist staff and operational teams from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit who supply emergency relief and help fund humanitarian partners such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or UN agencies. The primary objectives are to protect those in need and satisfy their basic requirements, i.e. medical care, food, drinking water and shelter.

Crises are increasingly complex and long-lasting

The Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit is part of SDC, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and has responsibility for humanitarian aid in Switzerland. It focusses on emergency aid and deploys resources where they are most needed. In the last twenty years, there has been a significant change in the nature of conflicts and crises and this has impacted on its humanitarian work. Crises are increasingly complex; they last longer and often involve a myriad of



Manuel Bessler, Ambassador
Federal Council Delegate for Humanitarian Aid
and Head of SHA, the Swiss Humanitarian Aid
Unit of SDC, the Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation

different stakeholders. For example, flash-points such as Syria, Iraq or the Horn of Africa demand emergency aid for prolonged periods – often for many years and extending over several front lines: In Syria, for example, Switzerland has been providing humanitarian aid since April 2011 and in the Horn of Africa since 1990.

The aim of Swiss humanitarian aid is to get the right aid to the right place in the shortest possible time. It seeks to strengthen local civil society, organisations and institutions so that they can take over the role of providing basic needs. It also seeks to develop the resilience of civilian populations to future crises by providing knowledge and building local capacity. Only then can countries receiving aid help themselves and continue to develop after the foreign aid workers have left.

Help by Switzerland after the earthquake in Nepal

The Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit has a global mandate. Nevertheless, before it intervenes following a disaster, it must be sure that it can add value: Can we get to the area in time? Do we have the required expertise? Is there access to the victims? If the answer to these questions is yes, we send a rapid response team (RRT): It evaluates the situation, initiates emergency assistance, establishes contact with local partners and authorities and prepares and coordinates plans for additional aid. The most recent example was Nepal, where two devastating earthquakes in Spring 2015 destroyed large swaths of the country. Immediately after the disaster, the Nepalese government asked for international help. Switzerland responded

quickly and sent a RRT to the Himalayan country within 24 hours. We were able to make use of existing contacts and experience built up over more than 60 years of development cooperation with Nepal. This allowed us to provide prompt and effective aid.

Once the immediate needs of those in the disaster zones of Nepal had been largely met, the emergency aid team was stood down and responsibility for providing medium and long-term aid handed over to the teams responsible for development and cooperation. In order to ensure a smooth handover, the reconstruction work will be integrated into longer-term infrastructure projects. In terms of road and bridge recon-

struction, the focus will be more on repairs to damaged infrastructure whereas in agriculture it is seeds that are in short supply. The example of Nepal demonstrates the need to coordinate humanitarian aid and development cooperation so that they are mutually beneficial.

By linking emergency aid to medium to long-term programmes, the SHA reinforces the sustainability of its local involvement. It has the experience, expertise and acceptance, which combined with its good network of international contacts, means it is well placed to continue saving lives throughout the world and alleviate human suffering. | Manuel Bessler



Government aid includes survival aid (Page 4, Ukraine 2015), reconstruction work (top, earthquake in Nepal 2015), development cooperation and promoting peace.

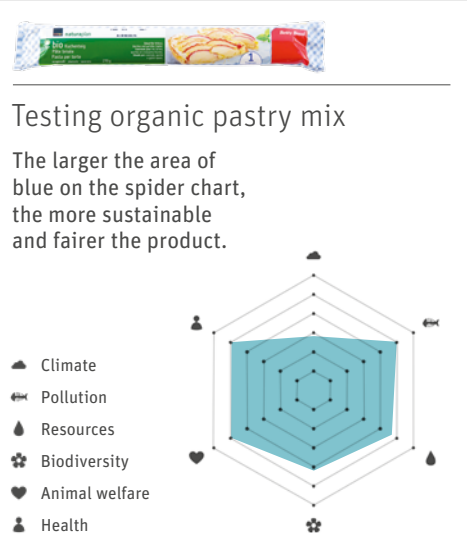
Is what you buy sustainable?

You are standing in a shop looking at various pastry mixes, which do you choose? The organic version of the Leisi classic or the shop’s own brand? – You opt for the organic mix.

Yet when you reach the checkout, you are somewhat disillusioned. True, you have chosen the best product in terms of ecology, but the pastry mix contains palm oil and so is not as sustainable as you might think. It may meet the criteria established by the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and meet the Bio Suisse standards but the palm oil might have been grown on land that was previously tropical rainforest. Our recommendation: Make the pastry yourself using Swiss flour and organic butter.

With our new online shop (only available in German), you can check your shopping list before you leave home. You can compare a range of products and produce spider charts identifying which products are sustainable – both ecologically and socially.

In this way we help you to improve your shopping behaviour and make a personal contribution to global development goals. | pl



Successful fruit-fly control

A scientific impact assessment has shown that the use of integrated pest management can reduce the incidence of the destructive mango fruit fly and increase farming incomes on average by 48% compared to conventional methods.

In 2013 and 2014, a total of 828 mango producers in the Biovision project “Fruit Fly control” took part in an impact assessment conducted by icipe, the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology in Nairobi. Chosen by random selection, the assessment included 694 farmers who used IPM (Integrated Pest Management) to combat mango fruit flies and 134 farmers who acted as the control group and treated their mangos with conventional methods, i.e. chemicals. A range of IPM measures were used, but all the IPM participants released parasitic wasps to decimate the fruit fly larvae and consistently removed affected fruit. These measures were supplemented by other methods such as odour traps, selective spraying of trees with a biopesticide that attracted the pests and the use of fungal spores to control the fly larvae.

The impact assessment compared yields, the cost of chemicals and other resources and the income from fruit sales.

Results were better with IPM

In all cases, the comparison showed that the combined use of several IPM methods reduced yield losses and increased incomes compared with conventional methods of fruit-fly control. In the IPM cohort, the best results came from those who combined the release of parasitic wasps and the disposal of damaged mangoes. On average, the IPM farmers had a 48% higher income than those using traditional pest management systems. In addition, yield losses declined by an average of 19%. | pl

For details of the impact assessment by Murithi et al. (2015) see www.biovision.ch/fruitfly-impact



Thanks to Integrated Pest Management, mango producers were able to reduce yield losses from fruit-fly infestations and significantly increase their income.

Biovision to visit Pfäffikon/Zurich

Several times a year, Biovision organises events that allow the public to meet the people behind the Foundation and gain a deeper understanding of its work. This year, Biovision will make a guest appearance at the Chesselhuus in Pfäffikon/Zurich as part of the programme “1816, the Year without a Summer”. Biovision will present information on a range of projects, including those providing emergency aid projects during crises and sustainable agriculture projects that encourage self-help. The Member Event will be on Wednesday 25 May 2016 starting at 19.30 hours. It will last about an hour and be followed by drinks.



Biovision president Hans Rudolf Herren and the entire team will be present at the Member Event to answer questions.

Global food supplies and Switzerland

The 11th eco.naturkongress, called Global Food Supplies and Switzerland, will be held in Basel on 27 May. Hans Herren will give a keynote speech and Biovision is organising a workshop in conjunction with the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture on the subject of “Global Food Supplies 2030/2050:

What investment does the agriculture and food sector need?”



Züri Oberland helps

The Zürcher Oberland experienced its last serious famine some 200 years ago when some communities lost up to 10% of their population. The famine had been preceded by a wet, cold summer in 1816 when harvests failed. It became known as the “Year without Summer” and remained etched in local memories for many years. Partly to blame – according to findings some 100 years later – was the eruption of Mount Tambora in April 1815 that claimed more than 100’000 lives in Indonesia. However, more recent research has identified some additional factors. The association “Project 1816” is planning to raise awareness of this latest research, particularly amongst young people under the motto “Dem Gestern gedenken, das Heute bedenken, das Morgen sich denken” [Commemorate the past, think about today and imagine the future].

The programme includes “Züri Oberland hilft”; running throughout the summer, this campaign will support two sustainable agriculture projects in Ethiopia and Guatemala run by Biovision, the Protestant NGO Bread for All and the Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund. The projects will help communities already living in precarious conditions and at particular risk from climate change. The Biovision project in Siraro is a follow-up to emergency aid provided by a range of organisations and will seek to secure the livelihoods of local people in sustainable ways. The three charities will give presentations on the two projects in schools, sessions organised by clubs and associations and hold fundraising events.

www.biovision.ch/siraro-e

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Cover photo Gobane Gamachu, a beneficiary of the Biovision project in Siraro, now survives drought without emergency aid. Photo: Peter Lüthi/Biovision

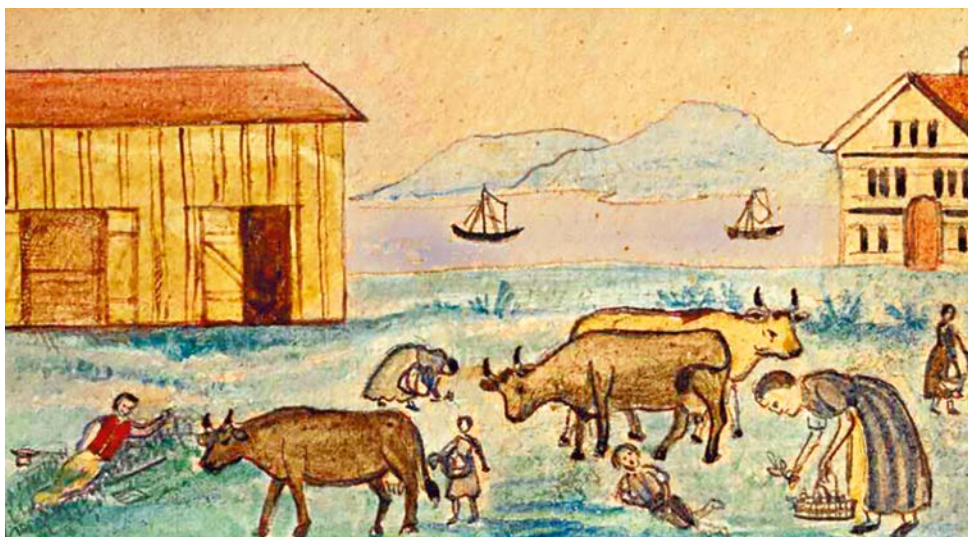
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Unknown artist: Humans and animals eating grass. Toggenburg Museum Lichtensteig.



A day in the life of Elizabeth Ngina Maive I survived two deadly diseases

According to her family, the great-grand-mother from the village of Kianjugu in Kenya is 107 years old. In Newsletter 38, we told the first part of her story. But there is more to tell:

“When the white man arrived many things started to change. They came from Europe and arrived on

horseback. They did not trust us because they believed we practised black magic,” remembers the old lady. “They brought us coffee beans to grind and as children we would pinch a few and chew them like sweets.” However she also has bad memories. “The Europeans sent the black ‘Paramount Chiefs’; they took our menfolk and sent them to fight for the white man. Every family had to send at least one member and most were never seen again.”

“I was a gorgeous bride, they all wanted me.”

“The diseases were also bad,” says the old woman. Particularly dangerous was “dhungu”. It claimed many lives as did measles and chickenpox. “I survived dhungu,” she said. Although the traditional treatment was to use thorns, Elizabeth was not treated in this way. Possibly, she was lucky because the abscesses healed. She also survived measles.

She looks back fondly to her wedding. “If a young man wanted to marry, his father first spoke to the girl’s father,” explains Elizabeth. They would negotiate a dowry and then the young man would be introduced to the girl. The girl could reject a suitor but that was very difficult to do and most would not have dared. “I was much in demand,” explains Ngina Maive “because my father was rich”. She rejected many suitors - something her parents accepted. She did eventually marry.

“My dowry was 60 goats, 2 oxen and 2 cows,” she says. “The festivities lasted a week. Everyone brought food and we danced to the rhythm of big drums.” The high point was the actual ceremony when she had to stand in front of the village elders and drink “mura-tina”, a strong alcoholic drink made from fermented honey and tree resin. “It tasted foul,” laughs Elizabeth.

When asked whether she was a beautiful bride, her eyes sparkled. “Yes, I was gorgeous, they all wanted me!” | pl

To read more about Elizabeth see www.biovision.ch/elizabeth-e

