



About **act:onaid** Kenya

Since 1972, ActionAid International Kenya (AAIK) has had operations in Kenya as a non-religious, non-partisan development organization to end poverty and injustices.

AAIK works in solidarity with communities living in poverty and exclusion to shift power to the communities and facilitate their own leadership by holding duty bearers accountable to Protect, Respect and Fulfill their rights in line with the constitution of the Republic of Kenya.

We have presence in twenty five counties working closely with local organisations and partners. The counties include: Baringo, Garissa, Homabay, Isiolo, Kajiado, Kilifi, Kisumu, Kitui, Laikipia, Makueni, Meru, Murang'a, Nairobi, Nakuru, Siaya, Taita Taveta, Tharaka Nithi, Turkana, Wajir, Marsabit, Elgeyo Marakwet, West Pokot, Embu, Mombasa and Migori.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About ActionAid Kenya	P1
How Young People in Tiaty Are Changing Their Story Through Agriculture	P2
Young People Growing Livelihoods Through Agroecology.	P4

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How Young People in Tiaty Are Changing Their Story Through Agriculture



Fetsus Apwat irrigates vegetables at the Kasilangwa Youth group farm in Chebelo, Tiaty East, Baringo County. In the background are other members of the group.

“ We were motivated by the desire for nutrition and food availability, but also because we realized that we could sell our produce and generate an income. Previously, we depended mainly on livestock,” says Fetsus Apwat, Chairperson of Kasilangwa Youth.

The group has since diversified its activities to include vegetable farming, poultry rearing, beekeeping and a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA). Members manage a group farm while also practicing various agricultural activities at their individual households. To strengthen ownership and accountability, responsibilities have been distributed among members, with different teams managing vegetable production, poultry and beekeeping.

The transition from predominantly livestock-based livelihoods to diversified agricultural enterprises has been supported by ActionAid Kenya through initiatives that seek to strengthen alternative livelihoods and build resilience among communities facing poverty and climate-related challenges.

For many years, Tiaty in Baringo County has been associated with drought, livestock keeping and insecurity. Limited economic opportunities have particularly affected young people, many of whom have had to navigate a challenging environment with few alternatives for earning a sustainable livelihood. However, a group of young people in Chebelo Village, Churo Amayo Ward, Tiaty East, is demonstrating that with determination, knowledge and the right support, agriculture can provide an alternative pathway to food security, income and employment.

Kasilangwa Youth is a group of 18 young people comprising eight men and ten women. The group was established in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many economic activities were disrupted and opportunities for young people became even more limited. The members came together with a shared interest in improving food and nutrition security while developing alternative sources of income.

Agriculture in Tiaty is not without challenges. The area experiences recurrent drought, making access to water one of the major constraints to food production. The availability of a community borehole has, however, provided an important opportunity for the young people. The community entrusted the group with the management of the resource and allowed them to use the water for agricultural production.

Through ActionAid Kenya’s support, the group received water storage tanks, seedlings and fruit seedlings, as well as training to strengthen their agricultural knowledge and skills. The water storage infrastructure has enabled the young farmers to irrigate their crops and improve their ability to produce food despite the area’s dry conditions.

The group has also adopted environmentally sustainable farming practices. Members use organic manure, including manure from livestock, as an alternative to synthetic fertilisers and other chemical inputs. This has enabled them to make productive use of locally available resources while reducing production costs and promoting healthier agricultural practices.

The group's vegetable farm currently supplies produce to approximately 500 households in the surrounding community while generating income for its members. For a community where food production has traditionally been heavily dependent on livestock and increasingly affected by drought, the initiative is contributing to both household food security and livelihood diversification.

For Fetsus, the initiative is also a practical demonstration of the potential of young people to create employment rather than wait for formal employment opportunities. Having attained a Higher Certificate in Agriculture, he could have chosen to wait for an opportunity in the formal job market. Instead, he decided to apply his knowledge within his community.

"I am a graduate with training in agriculture, but I chose not to wait for employment. I joined my colleagues to create employment through agriculture," he says.



Brenda, a member of the Kasilangwa Youth Group, harvests vegetables on the group's farm in Chebelo, Tiaty East, Baringo County, as other group members continue harvesting in the background.

His experience reflects the aspirations of many young people who are increasingly exploring self-employment and entrepreneurship in response to the limited availability of formal jobs.

Brenda Amoni, the group's secretary, says the decision to invest in agriculture was driven by the realities facing young people.

"We chose agriculture after realising that formal jobs are quite a challenge. If we continue waiting, we might do so forever. This idea was our solution," she says.

For Brenda and her fellow members, agriculture represents more than a source of income. It is an opportunity for young people to take greater control of their livelihoods and contribute to the development of their communities.

“As young people, we should embrace agriculture,” she says.

The initiative is also contributing to a broader effort to change perceptions about Tiaty and its young people. The area has for many years been affected by insecurity, which have contributed to a negative perception of the region. Through their work, the young farmers believe they can demonstrate a different reality, one in which young people are building enterprises, strengthening food security and contributing to positive change within their communities.

“For many years, Tiaty and Baringo have been known for banditry and drought, with a negative history. With our initiative, we believe we are changing the narrative to a positive one,” Brenda says.

The work of Kasilangwa Youth forms part of the wider GRACC (Gender Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change) Project, which works with women, young people and persons with disabilities to address the root causes of poverty and strengthen community-led approaches to sustainable livelihoods. The project supports communities to develop alternative livelihood opportunities, including agroecological farming, while also strengthening their capacity to engage with policy processes and advocate for greater support from duty bearers, including county governments.

According to the GRACC Project Coordinator, Lucy Ntongai the approach places young people at the center of community transformation.

“We are engaging young people to make transformative changes in their communities through alternative livelihoods, especially through agroecology,” the coordinator says.

The experience of Kasilangwa Youth demonstrates the potential of investing in young people as partners in development. Through access to training, agricultural inputs, water infrastructure and opportunities to organize collectively, the young people have been able to turn local challenges into opportunities for action.

Their journey also demonstrates the importance of supporting locally led solutions. Rather than waiting for employment opportunities to emerge, the young farmers are using the skills and resources available to them to create livelihoods, improve access to food and strengthen resilience within their community.

As Tiaty continues to face the impacts of drought, insecurity and limited economic opportunities, the experience of Kasilangwa Youth offers an alternative narrative. It is a story of young people choosing innovation over dependency, enterprise over waiting and opportunity over adversity.

Young People Growing Livelihoods Through Agroecology.

The search for a job after completing his studies had become frustrating for Chillion Origa. He had trained in engineering and earned a Certificate in Engineering from Ugenya Technical and Vocational College, hoping to secure employment and build a career in his field. But as the months passed, the job he hoped for remained out of reach.

With limited opportunities, Chillion began looking for another way to make a living. Through support from his family and money he had earned from casual labour, he managed to raise Kes 2,000. He decided to put the money into farming.



Chillion Origa at his arrowroot farm in Kitilo Village, Kwabwai Ward, Homa Bay County, where he practises agroecological farming to produce food, generate income and build a sustainable livelihood.

Chillion comes from Kitilo Village, Kwabwai Ward, Homa Bay County, an area where ActionAid Kenya implements the Nyokal Local Rights Programme (LRP). The programme works with communities to address challenges affecting livelihoods and food security, while strengthening people's ability to claim their rights, participate in decisions that affect their lives and hold duty bearers accountable.

Through the programme's Human Rights-Based Approach, ActionAid Kenya works alongside communities to identify and address the barriers that contribute to poverty and exclusion, while supporting locally driven solutions that strengthen resilience and livelihoods.

The land Chillion chose was prone to flooding and remained waterlogged for much of the year. To many, such a piece of land might have seemed difficult to use, but Chillion saw an opportunity. His approach to farming was later strengthened through training facilitated by ActionAid Kenya. The training introduced him to agroecology and farming methods that encourage farmers to work with nature while producing food and generating income. Chillion learned how to make better use of available natural resources, care for the land and reduce reliance on chemical inputs.

The training helped him recognise the potential of the swampy land. Knowing that arrowroots thrive in wet conditions, he realised that the swamp could support a crop while providing food and income. Rather than draining or eliminating the swamp, Chillion has chosen to work with its natural conditions. He uses furrows to draw and direct water through the farm, helping to maintain the moisture needed by the arrowroots while allowing the swamp to continue supporting the farm's ecosystem.

For Chillion, this approach is a practical example of agroecology: working with nature to produce food and build a livelihood while caring for the land and its natural resources.

“Through this type of farming, I have learned that I can create a livelihood while taking care of the land. I invested KES 2,000 in arrowroot farming and earned KES 8,000 from my first harvest. That return gave me the confidence to continue farming and to work with the swamp instead of destroying it. I am protecting the land, producing food and creating employment for myself.”

That first return changed Chillion's outlook. Farming, which had initially been an alternative to formal employment, was beginning to offer him a pathway to self-employment.

The training also helped him understand the benefits of avoiding chemical inputs and encouraged him to adopt farming practices that protect the quality of the soil, crops and surrounding environment. As a result, Chillion has since chosen not to use chemicals on his arrowroot farm.

“I don't use chemicals on my farm, so my clients are assured of good arrowroots,” he says.

The knowledge has helped Chillion see his farm differently. It is not simply a place where he grows a traditional crop. It has become a source of food, income and self-employment, while allowing him to manage the land in a way that respects its natural characteristics.

During his second planting season, Chillion harvested four sacks of arrowroots, earning Kes 30,000. His enterprise has continued to grow, and he now also sells arrowroot suckers to other farmers, creating an additional source of income. As he has expanded the furrow system to adjacent arable land, he has been able to increase the area under arrowroot cultivation and further grow his enterprise. From the arrowroots currently growing on his farm, he expects to earn about Kes 70,000.

For Chillion, the success has reinforced his belief that agriculture can provide young people with an alternative to waiting indefinitely for formal employment. “I encourage young people to embrace agriculture,” he says.



Chillion Origa makes furrows on his arrowroot farm in Kitilo Village, Kwabwai Ward, Homa Bay County, using the natural flow of water to maintain the wet conditions needed for arrowroot production while preserving the swamp's natural ecosystem.

His own story is an example of that possibility. A young man trained in engineering, who once hoped to find employment in his area of study, has transitioned into agriculture and is creating an income. Through agroecological practices, he produces food, protecting the wet conditions that sustain his farm and building an enterprise that can grow.

Chillion now plans to diversify into poultry rearing, creating another potential source of income and strengthening his livelihood.

His journey shows that climate action can take root in everyday decisions. By adapting agriculture to the conditions of his environment, maintaining the swamp through water channels and embracing agroecological farming methods, Chillion is finding a way to produce food while caring for the land.

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