

A Note From Sam Kawale, (Malawi, Africa 10/09)

GUSU PROJECT: A Hand Up, Not a Hand Out

Food Security Project: enough food in the home is a foundation for development.



The beginning of the food security project in Gusu village started on a high note with high expectations from the villagers and us. When we first informed the people that we will assist them with farming inputs, the villagers went ahead and started preparing their land, even before we said how many people will benefit. On a tour of their farming lands on August 5, 2009, we were able to see quite a number of farmers ready to receive their share of inputs.

The farmers were divided into two groups: Water Diversion group and Treadle Pump group.

1. Water Diversion

The first group consists of 31 families that participated in this project. There is a river near the village that has water all year round. A canal was dug two years ago for irrigation but most people did not participate because: 1. They were not trained how to use the canal to grow crops. 2. Due to lack on knowledge how to use canals, they created a myth that the water from the canal would make remove the fertility of their soil. Training was conducted for the 31 families that showed willingness to participate. After the training, farm inputs were handed out to them. The inputs consisted of the following items

- a. 20 kgs fertilizer
- b. 2 kgs maize seeds
- c. 1 pack onion seeds
- d. 1 pack tomato seeds
- e. 500 grams bean seeds
- f. 500 ml pesticides
- g. Two sprayer pumps for the group

The total cost for these items, excluding the sprayer pump, is \$36. This might seem like a small amount but for these families, it takes weeks for them to raise that.

Inputs handed over on august 13, 2009

2. Treadle Pump

A second group of 35 families will use treadle pumps. There is a swampy area next to the village that people use for farming. Vegetables and maize is grown there. In similar way, the farmers decided to start preparing their land in preparation for the inputs to come. This group also received similar inputs as the first group, but the addition is a treadle pump. For them, the total cost for their input is \$57. Inputs handed over on August 31, 2009

Organization

The two groups have are set up in a co-op (farmers clubs). They have a chairman, secretary, treasure. They also have a person who makes sure

1. everyone is following farming methods
2. people are repaying the loan money giving for inputs
3. treadle pumps are looked after

Helping those in need

We decided to take a different approach with the second group of 35 families. they are divided into groups of 4 and 5 families. the group still has the committee (chairperson, treasure, and secretary). In these groups of 4 and 5 families, they also have an individual who makes sure every family in the group is

1. following farming method
2. looking after treadle pump well
3. repaying loan for farming input.

After that, they report to the main committee. But to instill a culture of helping others, the fourth or the fifth member in the group is either disabled or old. They are adopting that family and farm their land for them, so that all the old and disabled families are looked after.

Marketing their produce

We engaged the services of Total Land Care to provide trainings and inputs for the farmers. They have an expert we work with and help the farmers on a regular basis. Once they harvest, another expert will come and train the villagers on marketing and also to direct them to markets that are readily available.

Repayment method

All the families that got the inputs will pay back the money after they harvest. This money will then be reinvested in the village to help another group of families with farming inputs. It is easy for them to pay back because the income in the inputs is, if they follow everything well, as follows:

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|----|----------|-------|
| 1. | maize | \$286 |
| 2. | beans | \$100 |
| 3. | onions | \$400 |
| 4. | tomatoes | \$700 |

A total of \$1,486 after other charges are removed. From this, a family that got \$36 and \$57 in farming inputs will definitely be able to pay back and have even more to buy more inputs on their own, and also help other people as they were helped. The money is collected by the treasure in the groups.

Expansion in April

Next April will see more farmers doing water diversion farming as we will dig another canal. Double or even triple the current number will benefit from this.

Raising animals

Meat is a very important source of proteins in everyone's diet, we intend introduce animal farming. Pigs, chicken (meat and eggs), goats (meat and milk) will be the first to be introduced. Apart from shortage in food, there is a huge market for these animals in areas around the village. Villager would easily sell their animals and continue to improve their economic independence.

Sam Kawale