

PROJECT PROFILE

Twinnings Partnership



Location	Kenya
Project duration	November 2023 to March 2025
Activities	Kalenjin Farmers' Voice Radio programme Ekegusii Farmers' Voice Radio programme Biodigesters
Partners	UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office Work and Opportunities for Women Twinnings Lorna Young Foundation National Organisation of Peer Educators Sireet Outgrowers Association Sasini PLC Kass FM and Minto FM radio stations

The WOW programme aims to improve economic opportunities for women working in global value chains. The programme has developed business partnerships to reduce the barriers that prevent women from securing dignified, equal and economically empowering work. It is being delivered by an alliance of experts, led by PwC, working with CARE International UK and Social Development Direct.



In November 2023, FCDO's Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme partnered with Twinings to support smallholder farmers in Kenya.

Twinings had been working with the Lorna Young Foundation (LYF) to fund a Farmers' Voice Radio project which addresses matters such as farming practice, health, social norms and livelihood security.

With WOW support, this project was extended and the focus shifted to supporting smallholder tea farmers – in particular, women – to adopt agricultural practices that enhance resilience to climate change.

This profile looks at the project's activities and its impact on the lives of female smallholder farmers, their families and communities.

Farmers' Voice Radio

Farmers' Voice Radio is an LYF initiative that uses local-language FM radio stations to discuss the challenges smallholder farmers face. Each programme, hosted by the farmers, profiles real-life issues, giving practical solutions from their lived experience, teamed with expert advice

Topics range from farming techniques and health and safety to environmental conservation and building resilience against climate change. Importantly, the radio programmes have also raised awareness of gender dynamics and challenged attitudes and social norms.

For each radio series, a Programme Reference Group (PRG) of around 12 smallholder farmers is selected from the community. Together with technical experts (such as agronomists, researchers and gender specialists), they develop programme content based on the local seasonal and agricultural calendar, agreeing topics relating to key activities and challenges which arise at different times of year.

Once the plan is agreed, the PRG and the technical experts meet monthly to discuss four to five topics relevant to that time. Their conversations are recorded by a local radio station and edited into 30-minute episodes, each focused on one topic. Each episode is aired twice in one week, at times selected by the farmers to fit best into their daily routines. All episodes are also uploaded to a dedicated YouTube channel which can be accessed for free, when needed. At the end of each episode, a telephone number is shared so that listeners can submit comments and questions that are tackled in subsequent episodes.

Radio Champions play a vital role of the Farmers' Voice Radio approach. They organise communal listening sessions in public spaces, allowing the community to listen together and discuss the weekly topic.

Project activities

Delivering a Kalenjin-language Farmers' Voice Radio programme

From November 2023 to August 2024, WOW supported the design, development and delivery of a 10-month radio series. This series was broadcast on Kass FM and was developed specifically for Kalenjin speaking members of Sireet OEP (a smallholder tea processing cooperative) and Sasini Outgrowers (managed by Sasini PLC, a Kenyan tea producer).

Many of these smallholder farmers have faced production challenges due to destructive weather such as hailstorms and droughts. This has led to unstable incomes and some parents being unable to cover their children's school fees. This instability, together with social norms that create additional pressures for many of the women, have caused tensions within the home.

As a result, radio programme topics have included farm diversification, climate change risks and mitigation strategies, and household and community gender dynamics.

“Climate change has left us with losses in our farms. When it rains hailstones, it damages tea buds and this brings losses to us as farmers, especially women.”

Bridget

Delivering a Ekegusii-language Farmers' Voice Radio programme

Following the success of the Kalenjin Farmers' Voice Radio a similar programme with Ekegusii speaking smallholder farmers was launched in September 2024 and will run until June 2025. It is being broadcast on KBC station Minto FM for members of Kipkebe Outgrowers (also managed by Sasini PLC) and the wider Ekegusii-speaking tea smallholder community.

Procuring, installing and monitoring the use of biodigesters

At the start of the WOW Twinings partnership, a survey showed that women are more likely to cut trees for fuel and sale as timber, due to their role as the main providers of food for the family. The partnership team wanted to explore ways to encourage the planting of harvestable trees and shrubs within tea crops to preserve and enhance the productivity of the land, and to reduce dependence on trees (for fuel or income) amongst smallholder tea farmers.

WOW ran an alternative energy pilot with biodigesters, which convert animal waste into gas which is piped into homes for cooking. With WOW funding, Sistema.bio biodigesters and biostoves were purchased and installed on the farms of 10 women. These women then hosted a series of demonstrations and training sessions to raise awareness of the benefits of this clean energy technology amongst their peers. At the end of the project, 98% of women and 96% of men expressed intent to install one on their farms.

Impact

Women's leadership and financial independence

- Women are gaining respect and are more likely to put themselves forward for leadership positions in the community.
- Women are earning their own income and contributing to household finances, including education costs.
- Women have adopted a more businesslike approach to their farming, with 100% of survey respondents using financial and production record-keeping tools at project end (increased from 28%).
- There is increased joint decision-making in households, with women having greater financial control and involvement with joint accounts.
- There is an enhanced awareness of women's rights and laws protecting against gender-based violence. For example, the proportion of men who believed that 'sometimes a woman needs to be controlled' decreased from 72% to 60%.
- Men are supporting women in domestic and agricultural activities. Three-quarters of women acknowledged that their partners were taking a more active role in domestic and caregiving duties.

Farming practice, energy and climate change

- Annual tea yields have increased, and the project encouraged diversification, with many women and men adopting activities like poultry farming, kitchen gardening and avocado production. Over 80% of respondents credited the programme for their improved productivity and income.
- Farmers increased knowledge and adoption of practices such as pruning and plucking has improved tea quality. Both Sireet and Sasini's factories have reported an increase in the average leaf count that meets its quality requirements. This results in increased income for farmers.
- The farmers have a better understanding of practical measures to adapt to and mitigate against climate change, and have increased their use of practices such as mulching and planting drought-resistant crops.
- Farmers have a heightened awareness of the need to plant and protect trees for benefits including fruit production, water conservation and alternative energy.
- There has been a reduction in the amount of firewood used. Biodigester hosts also experienced a reduction in the incidence of smoke-related health issues.



126,225
female tea farmers
have been reached
(68% of female tea farmers
in five counties*):
16,380 directly and
109,845 indirectly.**



180,471
male tea farmers
have been reached
(65% of male tea farmers
in five counties*):
13,411 directly and
167,060 indirectly.



84
episodes
broadcast



96
Radio Champions
hosted weekly
listening sessions

* Nandi, Kericho, Bomet, Nyamira and Kisii

** We estimate the project is potentially reaching an additional 67,000 to 74,000 (unregistered) female spouses of male tea growers (after adjusting for any potential overlap). These figures have not been included in the final reach figures, as WOW only has qualitative data to confirm the influence of FVR on female spouses of male tea growers. In total, FVR is likely reaching 373,000 to 380,000 males and females in Kenya's West of Rift tea growing region. Of these around 193,000 to 200,000 are women reached directly and indirectly.

Vinic's story



Vinic is 33 years old and is married with four children. She is a Radio Champion. Her family faces financial challenges, and they sometimes struggle to afford school fees. As a Radio Champion, Vinic has gained confidence and community respect.

“There is a need for continued support and training to adapt to climate change and improve community resilience.”

The programme has improved her farming techniques and allowed her to train others on topics like financial management, soil erosion and climate change. Positive feedback has led to proposals for more topics and expert talks to groups in the community. Vinic aims to enhance her crop production through better composting and farming techniques. She believes education and community involvement are vital.

Nancy's story



Nancy is a 55-year-old mother of three farmer with 10 acres of land and has been part of the biodigester demonstration project. Nancy has been able to use the bio slurry in poultry feeds and fertilizer for the farm and her kitchen garden. She has also found that her

“I am looking forward to expanding my tea and pineapple farming in the near future.”

health has improved: she no longer has eye problems as she has reduced her use of firewood, which often fills the kitchen with smoke. Nancy's farm has become a learning centre for other farmers in the community who are interested in the benefits of the biodigester.