



SHEEP

Approach

Smallholder Farmers Make Change for Success at Market.



Japan International Cooperation Agency



Agriculture Fisheries and Food Authority
Horticultural Crops Directorate



Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries
State Department of Agriculture

Eye Opening Moments

Many of the project players have experienced “eye-opening moments” during the implementation of the SHEP approach. The approach challenges the conventional way of farming and proposes a variety of innovative options that open up new windows not only for farmers but also for project implementers.

Voices of Project Headquarters

Embodying “Farming as Business”

Dr. Johnson Irungu
Director of Agriculture- Crops Management, State Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MOALF)



SHEP is the embodiment of Kenya’s national development policy, “Vision 2030”, and “Agriculture Sector Development Strategy (ASDS)”, which strive to raise living standards of Kenyans by sustained agricultural growth. The Ministry has the slogan “Farming as a Business.” But it was not underscored as intensively as in SHEP. The SHEP implementers have been able to conceptualize the slogan with the involvement of farmers as key players in the value chain. The farmers now grow crops with full knowledge of their target market. The SHEP approach starts with the market and ends with the market.

Sharing Knowledge with Farmers

Dr. Alfred Serem
Managing Director, Horticultural Crops Development Authority (HCDA)



The SHEP approach has close interactions with farmers and receives feedback from them. After our experience in SHEP, our institution now focuses on “sharing knowledge with farmers”, rather than “transferring our knowledge to farmers”, which was our previous attitude.

Motivated for Farmers’ Benefit

Ms. Francisca Malenge
SHEP Unit Leader, MOALF



When we started implementing SHEP, the farmers were not convinced they would benefit from the new approach. However, when they tried this new approach it did not take long to convince them since use of the approach increased their incomes. I feel motivated when I see farmers benefiting from our services.

Best Way for Maximum Results

Mr. Stephen Kioko
SHEP Unit Deputy Leader, MOALF



We didn’t think so carefully about the impact of our intervention on the ground before SHEP. But now the question we always ask ourselves is “What is the best way for the farmers?” We search for the way that will bring maximum benefit to the farmers, the FABLIST Forum, for instance, was created where only the most relevant stakeholders were invited in order to produce maximum results.

Voices of Sub-County Agricultural Offices

Confidence and Trust Increased

Mr. John Waihenya
Murang’a South Sub-County Agricultural Officer



In the past, the Sub-County Agricultural Office used to separate farmers from officers in training sessions and this acted as a “segregation tool” that demoralized farmers. The SHEP approach brings together farmers and officers in one training forum, which increases confidence and trust between the training participants. We learn together until the end as a team. Especially, farmers’ trust in us goes up because there is nothing to hide between us.

Come Down to Farmers

Ms. Eunice Anyango
SHEP UP Desk officer, Kisumu East Sub-County

Before, we used to encourage the farmers to “produce, produce and produce”. At the end of the day the farmers said, “How can I sell my produce?” or “Where is the market?” Before SHEP, we didn’t stress the importance of marketing so much. There was a false assumption that there was always a market out there. The SHEP approach has come down to the farmers now. Farmers now talk about business linkages and market surveys. Our communication with the SHEP Unit is active. We know all the staff of the SHEP Unit in Nairobi. It’s hands-on. It’s a “felt” project.

Voices of Frontline Extension Officers

Encouraged for Self-Improvement

Ms. Christine Anyango
Frontline Extension Officer, Kisii South Sub-County



Before SHEP, there was less interaction between our office and farmers. Similar to my colleagues, I had very low motivation to work because I only had basic extension skills and felt less confident in my work. But after the SHEP trainings, I saw the livelihoods of the farmers improve over time. I felt encouraged to continue improving my extension work and pushed myself to a higher level. My farmers are also motivated to work closely with me by practising what they have learnt to improve their situations on the farms and in their households.

With Farmers for Whole Time

Ms. Redemptor Oigo
Frontline Extension Officer, Kisii Central Sub-County

My way of providing extension services has changed since my participation in SHEP. I used to give knowledge and show skills on crop production to the farmers. My work finished right there before. I didn't know if farmers were actually using what I taught. I didn't even know how farmers were selling their produce. But during SHEP, I was with the farmers when they conducted market surveys, made decisions on what crops they would grow, grew the vegetables and finally sold their produce at the market. I was with them for the whole time, seeing the whole cycle. I saw how farmers moved from point A to point B. Now I can confidently show the path to the farmers' group. I apply the knowledge I learnt from SHEP to my daily extension services.

Voices of Farmers

Decide and Work as A Unit

Mr. Simon Ngige
Kimuri Avocado Self Help Group, Murang'a South Sub-County

Before we attended the SHEP Gender Awareness Training, I was making decisions on farm activities without consulting my wife. One day I left home in the morning to look for a market for my tomatoes which were ready for harvesting. I used to plant the crops and then looked for a market. While I was away busy looking for a market, a buyer visited my home and found my wife. He asked if she could sell the tomatoes to him. Since she had no authority whatsoever to make decisions and never knew my plans, she declined. My search for a market was unsuccessful so I headed home where my wife reported to me the events of the day. I really felt bad and my tomatoes got spoilt since I couldn't find a place to sell them. This was my worst experience. Now that I learnt from the SHEP Gender Awareness Training the importance of working with my wife to create "a household management unit", we shall avoid these problems in the future.

My Life History for Children

Mr. Bernard Oluk
Piny Ber Self Help Group, Kisumu East Sub-County

Previously, I used to count my money in the toilet to avoid being watched over by my wife. After attending the SHEP Gender Awareness Training, I started valuing the role my wife played and started to include her in the management of our income. We are all very happy since we now respect each other and also because our livelihood has actually improved a lot from horticultural farming. We purchased motorcycles and are planning to buy a pickup truck in future so that we can carry our group's produce to the market easily. I also started writing down everything about my farming business since SHEP stressed the importance of record keeping. I not only record how much I earn and spend, but also write daily events and write about my thoughts so that this record would serve as a proof of my life. When my father passed away, I realized he didn't leave us anything written to show who he was and what he did. That's why I keep records of my life history for my children and future grandchildren. I want to be better than my grandfather and father. I want my children to be better than me. I want to show them how important it is to work hard and make improvements.



Mr. Bernard Oluk and his family

Can Be A Millionaire

Ms. Peres Olwande
Ne Gi Wang Self Help Group, Gem Sub-County

SHEP provided us with a chance to build linkages with the stakeholders through the FABLIST Forum where I met someone from a community-based agribusiness organization. He said, "You can be a millionaire practicing farming. What you lack is time planning rather than the agricultural techniques". At the time, we were still not sure about our future outputs, but decided to take a step forward. I had never questioned the conventional way of farming, i.e. production-oriented farming, until then. But after SHEP, we started planting kales not only in the rainy season but even in the dry season so that we could harvest them in the peak demand month, which should be considered as market-oriented farming. At first, our neighbours saw us and said, "You are mad!". Now they have stopped laughing at us and want to join our group instead.



Ms. Peres Olwande and her vegetable garden

Stories of Farmers: Their Success Goes On

Here are some of the stories shared during the SHEP Phase 1 (2006-2009). New stories are born every day among the farmers' groups who met SHEP. Their success will go on not only in Kenya but in all Africa.

Moms Run Successful Business!

The Kenyuni Women's Group opened its shop in Kisii Town in 2009 after having successfully completed the SHEP training. The group started selling ripe bananas that the members produced and slowly expanded its line of business over the years.

The shop now carries a variety of items the members produce and process, such as avocados, papayas, dried local leafy vegetables, banana biscuits, crisps, and flour. The members are now able to sell all the produce they grow at the shop without facing the problem of post-harvest losses.



Group Chairperson and Frontline Extension Officer at the shop

The group carefully selected the products the local customers would prefer by conducting market surveys and listening to what their customers had to say about their products. For instance, the tiny packages of banana biscuits have become the shop's biggest hit which constantly attracts a flow of school-age customers.

The business has been running well and the members now enjoy improved livelihoods and have their children receive a higher education.

Members who Did Not Give Up

The Wihoki Self Help Group members in Nyandarua North Sub-County used to believe their ancestors' saying that the traditional farming was the best. They were afraid of the extension officers who tried to bring changes to their lives. When SHEP came in, they quickly realized that the SHEP approach was something easily acceptable. After conducting market surveys, they planted cabbages. However, in that year the group lost the entire crop due to a serious drought. The group members wept and were disheartened. Still, they did not give up. The following year, they conducted market surveys again and decided to grow a new crop, snow peas, on top of other crops under contract farming. The group was successful and their incomes increased substantially.



A Wihoki Self Help Group member and his neighbor farmer in the snow peas field

Some members repaired their houses and other members bought motorcycles with the extra income they earned. Several years after SHEP, the Wihoki Self Help Group has scaled up its farming activities. Now they are discussing the possibility of transforming the group into a horticultural cooperative society.

The group also repaired and maintain a 400 meter section of road using do-nou technology (a technology to repair rural roads using gunny sacks) that SHEP promoted. In the past, most rural feeder roads were damaged due to heavy rains. As a result, the lorries of traders are able to use the roads and reach farmers transporting their produce with donkey cart.

Extension Officer: Drastic Change in Group Behavior!

In the advent of SHEP, things just certainly took a positive turn with the Wihoki Self Help Group. I have never seen such a drastic change in group behaviour since becoming an extension officer in 1986. While production techniques promoted by various other projects phased out within one or two years, the SHEP approach has continued to be implemented by farmers themselves. You see that farmers find it hard to abandon the approach because it helps promote entrepreneurship and increase the prospects of the farmers' getting better returns.



Ms. Salome Njonge

SHEP Approach Brings Change to Smallholder Horticultural Farmers



The SHEP approach - the innovative approach for farmer empowerment - has been bringing about a multitude of changes and transformations to smallholder farmers in Kenya. The SHEP approach, by causing such changes based on market-oriented farming, is giving both immediate and medium-to-long-term impacts on the lives of the smallholder farmers and their communities.

“The Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Project (SHEP Phase 1)” (2006-2009) and “The Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion Unit Project (SHEP UP)” (2010-2015), which have been implemented jointly by the State Department of Agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MOALF), the Horticultural Crops Development Authority (HCDA) in Kenya and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), developed an innovative approach to address the challenges of stagnant subsistence-based smallholder horticulture in Kenya. The innovation, subsequently entitled “the SHEP approach”, shows the farmers the effectiveness of practicing market-oriented horticultural farming for improving their livelihoods. Inspired by the approach, the smallholder farmers have taken action to practice “farming as a business” by establishing linkages with business service providers through interactive forums, identifying the market demand through market surveys, producing what the market requires, and finally selling quality horticultural crops to their target market. The approach promotes a “grow to sell” concept with a focused purpose of producing what the market needs, as opposed to the conventional “grow and sell” concept, where farmers produce crops without thinking about market demand in advance. The farmers who took part in SHEP have significantly increased their income from horticulture farming and their living standards have subsequently improved after their participation in SHEP.

It all begins right here at the MARKET.



The SHEP approach believes that understanding and addressing the market is crucial for success of smallholder horticulture farmers. By connecting them with the market, “thinking farmers” who can make improvements in their own right, come into being. Here are some examples of how innovations start at the market, where people meet and exchange ideas and aspirations.

Knowing the market - The market is a vast repository of information. The farmers are encouraged to go to the market and conduct market surveys on their own to understand what the market wants from them. (left)

Connecting with key stakeholders - The Farm Business Linkage Stakeholder (FABLIS) Forum is organized to bring together the key business service providers such as buyers, agricultural input sellers, financial institutions and so on, who operate within the locality of the farmers. Through the business talks that take place in the FABLIS Forum, the farmers can realistically explore the economic and technical feasibility of their horticultural farming business. (right)



The “SHEP” approach was born through the technical cooperation project between Kenya and Japan. With this approach, the project achieved increasing income of 2,500 smallholders only within 2 years.

JICA is now promoting this “SHEP” approach all over Africa.

