

On behalf of everyone at Oxfam, and particularly the Tanzania Country Team, thank you for your generous support. Since 1999, the Tanzania Fund has raised over £640,000, and helped improve the lives of many individuals, families and communities. By continuing to support this work, you will help Oxfam make the biggest possible impact, enabling the sisal value chains project to provide a sustainable source of income for small-holder farmers and entrepreneurs. Once again, thank you for making a difference.

Oxfam's work in Tanzania

Oxfam works with partners to overcome poverty in Tanzania through facilitating market system changes that benefit people living in poverty. Interventions are designed to improve smallholder agriculture production, or facilitate the development of viable agro-enterprises. Oxfam in Tanzania works towards the vision that "vulnerable people, especially in rural areas, can better protect and strengthen their livelihoods through secure access to assets, markets and effective organization" (Economic Justice Programme).

Sisal Value Chain

Vision

The vision of the project is to see sisal become a major agro-industrial sub-sector in the drought-prone Lake Zone of Tanzania, providing income and food security to thousands of farmers in food-insecure areas.

Aims

- Achieve changes in the Lake Zone sisal market system, making it work more effectively and sustainably for the rural poor, particularly women, so as to improve their livelihoods and consequently reduce poverty.
- Sisal business models will support smallholder farmer agricultural development which is economically viable, socially acceptable, environmentally sound and sustainable.



Members of the women's group Neema (Swahili for 'blessing') share a joke. The group have come together to grow sisal as a cash crop.

Strategies

The sisal value chain strategy seeks to improve smallholder sisal growers' skills and capacities to provide better quality sisal leaves to processors. It also supports the development of sisal processor enterprises in the Lake Zone, improving information exchanges across the sisal industry to increase transparency in marketing, pricing and quality decisions. Work is undertaken to influence rules that govern sisal fibre grades and prices set by the Tanzania Sisal Board (TSB) to reflect the true sisal fibre values. More widely, the project challenges social norms that reduce women's equal and full participation in the sisal market.

The impact so far

The recognition of the value of hedge sisal that many farmers had on their farms has been significant. Now every sisal plant yields \$1-\$2.7 p.a. to the farmer. Prior to this project, the only yield to the farmer from sisal was the pole (stem) that was obtained after the plant died. The value of the pole is \$0.6 per pole. Consequently there has been a significant increase in farmers' income each year - most farmers have doubled their income.

There is now a local technician who can fabricate the sisal processing machines, thereby reducing costs and increasing availability. A significant secondary impact of this has been the availability of machines to hire to farmers, who no longer have to rely on processors to buy the leaves. The farmers themselves hire the machines, process their leaves, and sell the fibre to fibre traders, thereby doubling their income.

Another major impact that is becoming more noticeable is the collaboration, for lobbying purposes, of the various local stakeholders in the sisal value chain (farmers, processors, traders and village authorities). These groups are now seeing the value of proper regulation for good farming practice and high-quality sisal plant / fibre / product. They are also calling for good and properly enforced laws.

The project has generated employment across the value chain, helped farmers access financial services from informal financial institutions, and seen sisal farmers in Kishapu become more organised and with better access to market information. All of these contribute to the reduction of poverty.

Activities and objectives until 16/17

- Scaling up of the project by including as many additional farmer beneficiaries as possible (40 new villages and 6,000 new farmers)
- More emphasis will be placed on improving institutional capacity-building of sisal producer groups, networks and associations
- It is expected that the crop cycle will become sustainable (the farmers who have planted sisal in the last 2-3 years will be harvesting)
- Focused activities will be; establishing new technologies, infrastructure support, new enterprises in yarn and rope making, and having a pro-active and inclusive marketing system
- Encourage investments in secondary / tertiary processing (yarn and rope)
- If funding allows, replication in other nearby districts / regions is an achievable and desired outcome



Project sustainability

The project is building towards long-term sustainability as support services, infrastructure and secondary / tertiary enterprises are established. The strong increasing international market demand for sisal fibres and products compared to the current supply means a guaranteed constant need for the supply of fibres and products.

Oxfam's intervention approach plays a facilitation role through influencing market system changes, thus minimizing overdependence from one stakeholder in the market. The approach creates linkages between market players; farmers, producers, buyers, government regulators and financial institutions.

Technical skills are imparted to the value chain actors through training sessions; study visits to entrepreneurs (producers, raspadora owners, and traders) promote continuous co-operation and learning; and actors can make informed business decisions for the life of the project and beyond. The project is also linking beneficiaries with formal and informal financial services providers, to ensure sustainable capital availability.

Sisal is a drought tolerant crop that is well adapted to the semi-arid conditions of Kishapu, Meatu and Maswa districts, making it well suited as a long-term sustainable enterprise.

The project demonstrates that the whole value from a value-chain can be retained within a local area, with the benefit / impact being not just in terms of farmers' income but also real development of the whole local community. This is achieved through introducing different skills, technology innovation and development of support services and infrastructure, growth of enterprises and employment, citizen agency, and the involvement of local authorities. Most of all, it builds the confidence of women and men within and outside the community, through engagement in a successful economic activity.

The sisal value chains project has been attracting a wide group of people to become involved in sisal farming and processing. One young man, Thomas Mavula, heard about the sisal project on the internet. After seeking further information, he obtained some land, in order to grow his own sisal, as a cash crop. His farm is now part of the 115 new acres of sisal farms that are operating in the Kishapu district, allowing him to derive an income, and provide employment opportunities.



How you can help

The success of the project so far has been due, in large part, to the generous support of the Tanzania Fund. Over the next two years, your annual gift could achieve the following:

£5,000 – Train 200 farmers (at least 50% women) on the management and development of sisal hedges.

£10,000 – Introduce one new sisal brushing machine, and train 20 processors on business management and leadership skills.

£15,000 – Introduce five new sisal processing machines in a new district.

(Cost examples given relate to both currently planned and possible future activities.)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE SISAL VALUE CHAIN PROJECT