



# SNAPSHOT

## Building a platform for sustainable passion fruit production

### Local partner growing to commercialize thousands of smallholder farmers



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Zippy trains farmers on passion fruit seedlings during a Good Neighbours Community Program field day in Trans Nzoia County. To date, GNCP has engaged 11,900 smallholders in commercial passion fruit production.

**“As we graduate, we look forward to becoming a stronger, highly independent, and profitable business force that satisfies our efforts of recruiting and training farmers to be successful entrepreneurs.”**

-Zippy Simiyu, GNCP coordinator

Good Neighbors Community Program (GNCP), a woman-run organization based in Kitale, Trans Nzoia County, has been providing training to passion fruit farmers since 2004. However, they lacked access to the market information and high-quality seeds required to help farmers improve their incomes. In July 2010, the organization partnered with the Kenya Horticulture Competitiveness Project (USAID-KHCP) to help improve smallholders’ access to high-quality, disease-free seedlings and bring these farmers into the commercial value chain. USAID-KHCP helped GNCP develop a sustainable seedling distribution model, provided market information tools and linkages, and introduced them to good agricultural practices and technologies to help smallholders dramatically improve yields.

Since then, GNCP has engaged 11,900 smallholder farmers in commercial passion fruit production covering more than 3,000 acres, while also providing nutrition training reaching 3,000 households. In three years through GNCP support, these farmers’ passion fruit yields reached more than Ksh 230 million (\$2.8 million). “Progress on our part is largely owed to technologies and other interventions introduced to us by USAID-KHCP,” says Zippy Simiyu, the GNCP coordinator.

In September 2013, GNCP graduated from the partnership. This means that the organization will continue to independently provide high-quality technical assistance and training to households in eight counties: Trans Nzoia, Nandi, Uasin Gishu, Busia, Bungoma, Kakamega, Siaya and Homa Bay. The GNCP model works to commercialize smallholders along the entire passion fruit value chain, focusing on the biggest obstacle to production: access to clean and certified planting materials. Traditionally, farmers used local variety seedlings, which are highly susceptible to disease and result in very low yields. GNCP has mitigated this by building the capacity of 22 nursery operators to provide high-quality planting materials to local farmers. Over three years, the units raised 2,391,000 seedlings selling at a market price of Ksh 40 each (\$0.47) providing a sustainable revenue stream to the nurseries worth Ksh 95 million (\$1.1 million). Encouraged by this success, an additional 16 local commercial farmers have also invested in the seedling nursery technology independently.

At the GNCP collection center in Kitale, local farmers trade an average of two tons of passion fruit weekly during the low season and an average of five tons at peak season. With a market rate of Ksh 70 (\$0.82) per kilogram, high season market sales can earn farmers Ksh 1,400,000 (\$16,471) monthly. However, there is still room for growth in passion fruit production, because even with collective marketing and contracts to stock various supermarkets in Bungoma, Kitale, and Kakamega, GNCP collections from the contracted farmers still falls short of market demand. Some of these markets take as much as four tons of passion fruit weekly, meaning local farmers can earn up to an extraordinary Ksh 280,000 (\$3,294) per week!

GNCP will continue to encourage farmers – particularly women and youth – in commercial horticulture to take advantage of this huge market opportunity, while promoting increased processing and value addition. “There is a lot more potential in Kenya, which USAID-KHCP has placed us in a position to tackle. As we graduate, we look forward to becoming a stronger, highly independent and profitable business force that satisfies our efforts of recruiting and training farmers to be successful entrepreneurs,” concludes Zippy.