

Building Resilient and Inclusive Economies With Small Holder Coffee Farmers and Their Families in Bungoma County, Kenya



ECOM Foundation and BasicNeeds are partnering to improve the social, economic and health status of Small Holder Coffee Farmers and their families in poor, rural communities in Kenya. This year marks the 4th year of a 5-year project funded by the ECOM Foundation to replicate and upscale BasicNeeds' model for building resilient and inclusive economies in Bungoma County, Western Kenya, in three farmer coffee societies (FCS) of Kamusinde, Kimama, and Kapkurongo.

BasicNeeds recognizes that to achieve sustainable change, it is essential to utilize a multi-faceted approach and address mental health, social, and economic issues concurrently. With this in mind, BasicNeeds developed a five-pronged approach for building resilient and inclusive economies, as described on the right. Over-arching targets of the model are developing strong community infrastructure; empowering women to take charge of their social economic development; mentoring youth to improve their resilience and social integration; and supporting vulnerable groups.

There is much we can talk about in terms of BasicNeeds' positive impact and good works that contribute to improved wellbeing of farmers and their families living in the FCS. One achievement notable of highlighting is BasicNeeds' work to inject more equity into the coffee value chain through inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable populations. This

includes persons with disabilities, those with mental disorders, widows and orphans, and older persons.

Through the ECOM Foundation's funding in 2020, BasicNeeds' goal is to positively impact 2,200 Small Holder Coffee Farmers, including 390 women, 100 youth, 500 orphans and vulnerable children, 120 people with psychosocial disabilities/mental disorders and their families. Project objectives to better safeguard and support these vulnerable groups include organizing vital peer-support groups, mapping out vocational skills to create opportunity for employment and income generation, improving access to community-based treatment, tackling stigma and discrimination through inclusion and sensitization training broadly within the FCS, and advocating with vulnerable groups for representation in FCS governance.

It has been the ECOM Foundation's privilege to experience BasicNeeds' deep passion to improve the wellbeing of coffee farmers and their families. We are very proud to contribute to the promotion and safeguarding of vulnerable populations living in the FCS through the funding of this project.

Article By: Lynne Howard



We don't often think about this step in the process from field to market. It's useful to see the community spirit and donkey and farmer labor involved.

**- Project Director:
Charlotte Dougherty,
BasicNeeds US,
Executive Director**

- 1 CAPACITY BUILDING**
Building the capacity of our partners, including self help user groups, NGOs, government health workers, and community-based workers.
- 2 COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH**
Mobilizing psychiatric clinicians from the public sector and community health workers to provide mental health services in community health centers.
- 3 SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS**
Supporting individuals with mental disorders, their families, and self help user groups in engaging in productive activities.
- 4 RESEARCH AND POLICY**
Bridging the gap between policy and practice by conducting research on program outcomes and coordinating mental health policy reforms.
- 5 MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**
Managing partnerships, human resources, accounts, and information systems that inform effective program planning.



"We were delighted to be able to visit Bungoma at the end of January 2020. After the meetings in town, Rosemary, Rebecca, and Eric from BasicNeeds joined with Martin from ECOM SMS and we spent two long but important days visiting the FCS. The harvest was largely finished in Kapkurongo and other societies, but in Kimama the beans from small farmers in the highlands were still being brought down by donkey at the end of the day to be weighed. It was wonderful to see the farmers and donkeys arriving alongside women and youth who were dressed for a celebration. We were visiting Kimama because it was award day for the self-help groups of women and youth who were gathering to celebrate their planning work for investment of the small holder grants. The Chief, local Minister and leader of the society were all there. The groups had organized, set up banking arrangements, and developed a plan for the use of the grants funds. They were each handed checks for the equivalent of a year's wages for some of them. They were so excited to use the funds to start their work together. It was rewarding to see how the male leaders valued the accomplishments and supported the women. Small steps forward for gender equity perhaps, but forward nonetheless. As I recall there were also two youth groups there who were also really energized. Retaining many of those youth in their villages is really important for the FCS. The positive feelings in the air during that event were significant."

Richard H. Dougherty, BasicNeeds US, President