

GARDEN IN A SACK IN NAIROBI

Following shortages after the post election violence that hit Kenya early that year and to face soaring food prices of food stuff[1], Solidarites, a French relief NGO has implemented a "sack garden" project in the largest slum of Africa.

In Nairobi, 60% of the population lives in the numerous slums located around the city. Kibera slum is one of the 146 slums of the capital of Kenya. Around 1 million of people are currently living in Kibera and the population is increasing day by day. In the slum, land slides are frequent and the unemployment rate is very high. Most of the land is dedicated to the houses and the agricultural land remains scarce.

In December 2007, Kiambu and Kibera slums are knocked by the post election violence that hit Kenya in early 2007. These riots are the result of different compounded factors that are worsened by the level of poverty and increasing vulnerabilities. Most of the families living in the slum have recently settled in the slum, leaving the overpopulated rural areas. The inhabitants of the slum do have the appropriate know-how to crop vegetables, the main problem is the lack of land and the cash to buy the agricultural incomes.

The project implement by the French relief and reconstruction NGO Solidarites has implemented a small scale agriculture project. This project funded by the French government involves planting vegetable seedlings on the sides of earth filled sacks that are place on rooftops or doorsteps.

Each family has been given one to three sacks filled with earth and 6000 families are now cropping tomatoes, onions, kales or spinach. A nursery has been established in the slum. Some people are in charge of the management of the nursery whereas another group is in charge of training the beneficiaries.

Each sack is 1m3 wide which represent 5 m2. One single sack can contain 50 seedlings of kales or spinach and 20 tomatoes plants. Vegetables are used directly and indirectly by the household to obtain food, access cash when needed and educate children In average, each household increase its weekly income of 5USD. Given the fact that in Kibera the rent of the house cost around 6 USD/month, this income is an important source of income.

People living in urban areas are the particularly vulnerable to soaring of food prices. The engagement in urban food production is beneficial to low-income households. Solidarites strongly believe that urban agriculture should be one of the pillars of the food security strategy in the coming years. When the main limiting factor is the lack of land, to have a garden in a sack is a great opportunity.

Solidarites is currently looking for possibilities to replicate the same kind of projects in others slums in Nairobi and also in other countries.

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