

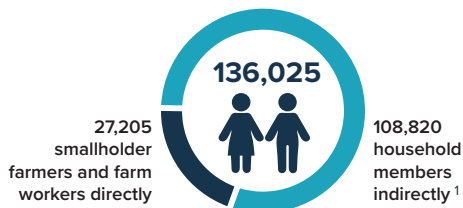


# HEALTHY DIETS FOR TEA COMMUNITIES

## KENYA PROGRAMME RESULTS

## PROGRAMME SUCCESSES IN KENYA

### TOTAL PEOPLE REACHED



The programme reached 136,025 people: 27,205 smallholder farmers and farm workers directly with interventions, and 108,820 members of their households indirectly.

# 9,509

The programme used existing communication channels effectively to reinforce nutrition messages: the programme reached 9,509 smallholder farmers with weekly SMS messages and used popular radio stations to reinforce messages.



**Diets improved.** The percentage of women in the programme meeting the minimum dietary diversity – that is, consuming 5 out of 10 food groups or more - increased.<sup>2</sup>



**More tea farmers were growing and consuming biofortified foods** like high iron beans and orange-fleshed sweet potato: the percentage of smallholder farmers growing orange-fleshed sweet potato in their kitchen gardens increased from 21 per cent to 34 per cent.



**Increased awareness of fortified foods:** more smallholder farmers had heard of fortified foods such as fortified cooking oil and understood that fortification was good for the health. The evaluation suggested that programme activities had influenced this shift.



**The programme adapted in the face of COVID-19,** disseminating key messages through churches; the support of local and national government systems was critical to this.



**Government support is key to sustainable impact.** The interest and ownership of the Ministries of Agriculture and Health at national and county levels increase the likelihood that the programme's messages will be integrated into their future initiatives, extending the programme's impact.

## BACKGROUND

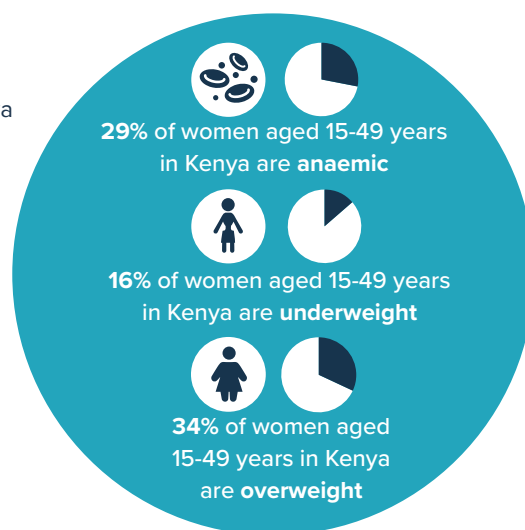
Poor diets are the leading cause of global ill health, resulting in malnutrition and deficiencies such as anaemia, decreased energy levels, diminished health, and decreased productivity.<sup>3</sup> A diverse diet containing a wide variety of food types is more likely to provide the vitamins and minerals needed for good health, to boost brain and body development, and bolster resistance to infections.<sup>4</sup> However, in 2021, more than 3.1 billion people in the world – or 42 per cent of the global population – were unable to afford a healthy diet.<sup>5</sup> Tea workers and farmers, predominantly women, often contend with high rates of malnutrition due to diets lacking essential nutrients. Healthy Diets for Tea Communities is a public-private collaboration between the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP), and eight leading tea companies<sup>6</sup> which aims to promote healthy diets in tea supply chains in India, Malawi, and Kenya. This document summarises programme results in Kenya between 2020 and 2023.



## MALNUTRITION IN TEA COMMUNITIES IN KENYA

Global tea production totals over USD 17 billion annually, and the sector continues to grow. In many countries, the tea sector contributes significantly to income and employment for millions of rural families, with smallholder farmers producing 60 per cent of world production.<sup>7</sup> Kenya is the top exporter of black tea in the world with about 23 per cent of global market.<sup>8</sup> However, tea workers and farmers often suffer from high malnutrition rates because their diets, which consist largely of staple foods such as rice, bread, maize, and wheat, often lack foods rich in essential nutrients and vitamins needed for good health. Nutritious foods are often less affordable and available to these populations, and they may be less aware of the importance of healthy diets.

Malnutrition in Kenya is a significant challenge: 29 per cent of women are anaemic, and 34 per cent of women are overweight. In Kericho, one of the main tea-producing regions, 16 per cent of women are underweight.<sup>9</sup>



## THE HEALTHY DIETS FOR TEA COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME

In Kenya GAIN and the Ethical Tea Partnership focused on **improving the availability of - and demand for - nutritious foods**. The programme targeted: (i) smallholder tea farmers, who own their own plot of land and sell their freshly-plucked green leaf tea to tea factories to be processed into black tea; and (ii) farm workers who are hired by farm owners to produce and pick tea on their land.

> **Interactive activities in communities** to improve people's food knowledge and choices:

- 50 cooking demonstrations and competitions.
- Train 125 community health volunteers in nutrition and healthy diets and deploying them to disseminate key messages on nutritious diets at health facilities and weekly trainings, coordinating with the Ministry of Health.

- > **Target 10,000 farm workers and smallholder farmers with intensive activities** encouraging them to grow and consume more diverse crops in kitchen gardens:
  - Weekly training sessions at 150 tea-buying centres on how to grow nutritious vegetables at tea-buying centres, including demonstration plots.
  - Distributing seeds for high-iron bean seeds and vegetables, and orange flesh sweet potatoes vines.
  
- > **Promote nutritious foods at the point of purchase:**
  - Train 122 kiosk (shop) vendors to provide counselling services on healthy and nutritious foods.
  - Reinforce programme messages about healthy diets through a local popular radio station in local languages, and weekly bulk SMS messages to farmers and workers.
  
- > **Promote the importance of investing in workforce nutrition to businesses/governments:**
  - Establish partnerships with the government Ministries of Agriculture and Health to deliver the programme through agricultural extension workers and community health volunteers.
  - Partner with tea factories to disseminate information, education and communication materials to factory workers.
  - Work through tea-buying centres to disseminate key messages with posters and flyers and undertake nutrition training.

## SCORING DIETS: MINIMUM DIETARY DIVERSITY, AND WHY IT MATTERS

A diet that includes a wide range of different foods and food groups is best for ensuring the right balance of protein, essential fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals (also known as micronutrients) for good health. Dietary diversity refers to a diet that contains a higher concentration of micronutrients. Women who consume a minimum of 5 out of 10 possible food groups are considered to have achieved the minimum adequate diet diversity. To assess this, women are surveyed about their food intake over the past 24 hours and assigned a score. A score exceeding 5 suggests that they are more likely to meet the minimum required level of micronutrients; the higher the score, the more micronutrients likely consumed. Although the minimum dietary diversity indicator is obtained by surveying individual women, it provides valuable insights into the nutritional status of a population. A key programme objective was to increase the minimum dietary diversity scores for programme participants.



Grains, white roots and tubers and plantains



Pulses



Nuts and seeds



Dairy



Meat, poultry and fish



Eggs



Dark green leafy vegetables



Other vitamin A-rich fruits and vegetables



Other vegetables



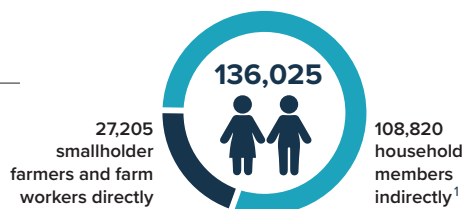
Other fruits

## PROGRAMME RESULTS

**The programme reached 136,025 people:**

27,205 farmers and workers directly with interventions, and 108,820 members of their households indirectly.

TOTAL PEOPLE REACHED



**Improvement in the diversity of participants' diets.** The percentage of women in the programme meeting the minimum dietary diversity – that is, consuming 5 out of 10 food groups or more - increased from 22 per cent to 32 per cent. Instead of food rich in carbohydrates, both farm workers and smallholder farmers were eating more animal source protein such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy, which contain key amino acids, the building blocks for a healthy body. They were also eating more nuts and seeds, leafy greens and a wider variety of vitamin A-rich nutritious vegetables and fruits. Kiosk vendors observed a shift in consumer demand for fruits, vegetables, and fortified cooking oil.



**Doubling consumption of biofortified orange-fleshed sweet potatoes.** The programme encouraged farmers to grow and consume biofortified crops such as high-iron beans and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes through training, demonstration plots and providing high-quality seeds. Biofortified orange-fleshed sweet potato is a highly effective tool for tackling vitamin A deficiency, which can cause vision loss and skin, heart, lung, tissue, and immune system issues. By the end of the programme, the percentage of smallholder farmers who were growing bio-fortified orange-fleshed sweet potatoes in their kitchen gardens had doubled from 24 per cent to 48 per cent.

**Increased awareness of fortified foods:** the percentage of smallholder farmers who had heard of fortified foods increased from 64 per cent before the programme to 77 per cent afterwards. Farmers and workers understood that fortification was good for the health and understood benefits such as strengthening the immune system and improving productivity. The evaluation suggested that programme activities such as messaging on popular local radio stations, training on growing healthy plants at tea buying centres, cooking demonstrations and training of kiosk vendors had influenced this shift in awareness around fortified foods.

**The programme used existing communication channels effectively to reinforce nutrition messages.** The programme reached 9,509 smallholder farmers with weekly SMS messages; messages were also disseminated through a three-week campaign on a local radio station popular within the tea catchment area, with listeners ranging from 90,000 to 410,000 daily. Participants reported radio as one of the top sources of information regarding fortified foods.

**Adaptability of the programme in the face of COVID-19.** The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture supported the programme to continue the programme during COVID-19: adaptations included Community Health Volunteers disseminating programme messages through churches when other forums were affected by COVID-19 restrictions.



Nancy Chipkorir Korgoren, 50 years old, plucking tea in Kericho country, Kenya. © ETP

## TEA FARMERS NOURISH THEIR FAMILIES

Kericho County is one of the leading tea-producing counties in Kenya. But Kericho's under-5 stunting rate is 19 per cent<sup>9</sup>. Many households in Kericho solely farm tea, leaving no farmland for vegetables. When they prepare vegetables, they often cook them for over 30 minutes, robbing them of most nutrients. The programme worked with tea farmers like Nancy Chipkorir Korgoren to educate them about how to grow nutritious vegetables in small spaces of land available to them, known as kitchen gardens, and how to cook vegetables to avoid losing their nutrients. "The Project has taught us the value of building your body," says Nancy, who cooks for her grandchildren, her mother-in-law and herself. "Training...has taught us what type of food to take in the morning so you have strength. You have to be ready to go-go-go when you're off to pluck."



Woman with sweet potatoes. © GAIN/ Frederick Dharshie.

**Gender Dynamics changed.** Although not a stated programme aim, the evaluation suggests that the programme influenced gender dynamics within households, with women reporting increased decision-making power about how their own income, their husband’s income and overall household income is spent, including major purchases and food. In addition, men were participating more in some project activities, such as cooking demonstrations (in a highly patriarchal community), resulting in greater awareness of how to cook foods to retain nutrients.

**Sustainability. Government support was key to continuity during COVID-19 – and sustainability longer term.** The interest and ownership of the Ministries of Agriculture and Health at national and county levels were significant factors in the success of the programme: disseminating messages through community health volunteers and agricultural extension officers allowed the project to continue during COVID-19. It also increases the likelihood that the programme’s messages will be integrated into their future initiatives, thereby extending the programme’s impact.

## LEARNINGS

**Shops offer an opportunity to improve access to nutritious foods and raise awareness of healthier diets.** 122 kiosk vendors – owners of small shops within the tea factory catchment area – were trained to disseminate key nutrition messages, and the programme saw a 39 per cent increase in the sales of vegetables with these vendors. There is an opportunity to build on this with more regular training on nutritious diets for kiosk vendors, and support to the vendors to manage stock and track sales to better understand how customers’ diets are changing.

**The affordability of nutritious foods declined,** due to increases in global food prices. Smallholder farmers reported that the support to grow nutritious crops on their small plots had offered some protection against price increases, allowing them to sell surplus produce to offset price increases.

## GET INVOLVED

GAIN and partners are committed to reaching farmers, farm workers and estate workers with healthy diets in the workplace, and to improving nutrition in workplaces at global and national levels. If you’d like to get involved, contact us to explore partnering with us:

- Christina Nyhus Dhillon: [cnyhus@gainhealth.org](mailto:cnyhus@gainhealth.org) | GAIN Knowledge Leadership Senior Manager.
- Bärbel Weiligmann: [bweiligmann@gainhealth.org](mailto:bweiligmann@gainhealth.org) | GAIN Workforce Nutrition Programme.

The Workforce Nutrition Alliance was launched by the GAIN and The Consumer Goods Forum in October 2019. It aims to support employers to adopt and expand workforce nutrition programmes to positively impact over three million employees in member organisations and supply chains by 2025 and over ten million by 2030. You can become a **Workforce Nutrition Alliance signatory** or make an official public commitment, or sign up for our **workforce nutrition newsletter**.

## PROGRAMME PARTNERS



## REFERENCES

Photo cover © GAIN / Frederick Dharshie

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