

## **AQUAPONIC FARMING: TUNASHINDA NJAA**

### **What your project has achieved**

I am very proud of what we were able to achieve with our project. It was obviously not easy to execute and required good time management from us and a lot of hard work, but it was definitely worth it. Our project aimed to bridge the gap between food insecurity and financial independence by introducing women in Kenya to aquaponics sustainable farming, and this is exactly what we were able to achieve with the women we worked with. We worked directly with 15 women who were delivered the materials to create the aquaponics structure after taking them through how to do it. This started on the 8th of July, after preliminary research and discussion with the representative of Upendo Children Center. This NGO turned out to be very significant in our project. It was the bridge between the community and us; we would not have been able to mobilise people for our workshops at all without them. They also helped us source materials that would be the most affordable and connected us to local supplies. Most importantly, they helped us to identify which families we would directly impact, a task that would have been impossible for us on our own. They provided us with information on the financial situation of the families as they interact with many of them. In the first week of July, we reached out to target households, sourced materials, and prepared materials for our workshops.

The first week was the most hectic in my opinion., It felt overwhelming at some point. We realised that planning was important for our project to be a success, and therefore, the first week was quite busy, with meetings with different people, making arrangements, buying necessary materials, etc. It did make the rest of the week easier, though. In the following weeks, we conducted the workshop and passed on the booklets to other members of the community. Once done with the materials distribution and workshops in the last week, we focused on getting feedback from the community and assessing the success of our project. The community was very grateful for the work that we had done, and so many more people beyond the 15 people became interested in aquaponics farming. I had numerous conversations beyond our workshop with people who were curious about aquaponics and wanted to learn more.

### **– How do you think you made a difference**

I believe we are different in numerous ways, but sensitization is very important. A core pillar of our project was to spread awareness of a more sustainable farming method that would also curb hunger. The community was able to get knowledge on aquaponics farming and how to build a structure, and therefore, we made such crucial knowledge apparent to them. The majority of single-parent households that we directly impacted will now get food, hopefully

for a long time. With so many struggles being a woman in a community that I consider quite patriarchal and disproportionately unfair to single mothers, I believe that food should be a basic necessity. We made steps towards making the community more sustainable and helped lessen hunger.

– **What are you proud of**

I am very proud of our time management and being able to deliver on most of our project aims. It felt quite overwhelming at first, having so much to do within the summer whilst doing my schoolwork and finding time to catch up with my family and friends that I had missed. The first two weeks were stressful, to be honest, but despite all that, we followed our action plan and completed our project within the deadline. I am proud of our collaboration, living in separate countries, and that we were able to work together and share tasks. Most importantly, I am proud of bringing change to my community, and I am proud to be an inspiration to other young people to do the same.

– **What have been the enduring successes of the project?**

The enduring success has been that more people in the community have learn about aquaponics than we even expected. People were so curious about what we were doing and were very enthusiastic about implementing it; many were drawn to our mission, and we got so much support from members of the community. The awareness that there is an alternative farming method that is not only sustainable but also cost-effective is enduring. Knowledge is enduring, as it will be passed on to future generations, I hope.

– **How has the project made a difference for you and the project team?**

The project made a difference to me because it confirmed to me that I can make a difference, that I am powerful. A lot of times, I feel very helpless when it comes to change; it feels like there is nothing I could possibly do to change anything significantly, but working on this reminded me that change does have to be pronounced and loud, it has to make a difference, even if it is for one person. My project team was also impacted in the sense that we learnt what it means to work together for a shared goal. Although we might have great ideas, they are just that, and turning them into reality takes much more. The late-night meetings and early morning chores taught us that execution requires hard work and commitment.

### **– Where the money was spent**

The money was for the most part spent as we had planned in our budget, except in some cases where there was an over- or underestimation, such as the transportation costs, which cost more than we had estimated, but the miscellaneous money came in handy. Nonetheless, the money was sufficient for our project and allowed us to complete all we set out to do. We were able to buy all the materials, drums, grow media, and Plumbing supplies. Water pump, Fish, etc.

### **– What lessons have you learned from the project**

I honestly learnt so much from this project. I had to do it at a time when I had so much going on, so of course, time management was a major learning point for me. I also learnt to share tasks with my partner. Sometimes, I find myself wanting to do everything on my own and not ask for help, but this project helped me become better at asking for help and collaborating with other people.

### **– What would you do differently if you ran the project again**

I would start things way earlier, especially things to do with planning. At some point, it felt like I had a million things to do at once, so I think I definitely started the planning sooner and included more people in the project to make it easier to manage. But I believe that everything happened the way it did for a reason, and I learnt so much from it. The challenge made it more exciting.

## PHOTOS



