

## AGRA Impact Series



# Village Based Advisors (VBAs) help farmers to gain access to farm inputs in their villages

Regina has transformed from a low-income farmer to becoming a successful Agripreneur.


### How Regina Kamande Nzioki's life was changed by becoming a Village Based Advisor

Regina Kamande Nzioki, a mother of 4 children, a farmer and a Village Based Advisor (VBA) in Makueni County, has credited Regenerative Agriculture Practices with healthier and increased crop yields on her farm. Since she joined the Regenerative Agriculture (RA) project as a VBA being implemented by the Cereal Growers Association (CGA) and supported by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), she has enjoyed improved production due to the adoption of the Regenerative Agriculture Practices.

The project, which began in July 2020, has trained 114 Village Based Advisors (VBAs) in Regenerative Agriculture practices and Climate Smart Agriculture technologies. These VBAs have in turn transferred their skills in the same to over 10,000 smallholder farmers, with an aim to improve food security, boost both community and ecosystems resilience, and strengthen the community-based Public-Private extension system in Makueni County.

Before the project, Regina ran into losses in her Agro vet because majority of the farmers in the village were not aware that farm inputs were then available in their community, as a result most farmers did not use improved seeds or apply Regenerative Agriculture (RA) and Climate Smart Agricultural (CSA) practices and technologies. However, this changed in July 2020 when Regina was identified and selected as a VBA through collaboration between CGA and the Makueni County Government's ministry of agriculture. She is one of 114 VBAs in Makueni County who have been trained on; Establishment of RA mother and baby demonstration plots, Regenerative Agriculture practices and Climate Smart Agriculture technologies. She has in turn been able to train over 150 farmers on RA practices and CSA technologies in Kathekakai Village, Kibwezi West Constituency.

"Before CGA brought the RA project to Kathekakai village, our yields were very low due



to the use of traditional farming techniques and poor farming practices. For example, we didn't know that we can intercrop maize and pigeon peas, cowpeas or green grams," says Regina.

Regina was also trained and empowered to provide other farm level service lines ranging from crop protection, value addition and other diversified services to farmers to promote business sustainability.

In September 2020, Regina began training farmers in her village. She taught farmers how to prepare land, space seeds and how to apply fertilizer and proper use of crop protection chemicals. The success of her training and on farm demonstrations resulted to over 70 % increase in demand for improved seeds, fertilizers, as well as RA and CSA practices and technologies by the farmers. This has enabled her to get a lot of customers who are buying inputs from her directly and she is also advising farmers how to use them the right way.

Using the Village Based Advisors (VBAs) business model, the project demonstrates improved RA practices and technologies, using Mother-Baby approach. This approach facilitates farmer learning from the demonstration site - 'mother' and trialing on their own plots - 'baby'. Comparison is then made on performance of 'mother and baby' plots to assess level of learning and adoption of trained practices and technologies by farmers.

Regina is now a well-known agrodealer in Makindu town. "It's like a dream. I never got an income of more than KES 5,000 per week. But this season I earned KES 15,000 per week from my business. I can say that my life changed as soon as the RA project came along," she says. Regina also offers door-to-door vaccinations to poultry farmers and charges KES 10 per chicken.

Due to the increase of income from her Agro shop and commissions she is earning from value chain actors to aggregate demand for agricultural inputs and services as well as source of output markets for farmers, Regina has resumed to build her house that had stalled and was able to pay Ksh 70,000 school fees for her children who are enrolled in secondary schools. She has also bought goats and expanded her poultry farm.



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**Regina Kamande Nzioki**

VBAs are taking advantage of increased demand by aggregating demand for improved seed varieties, and opening farm input shops to supply seeds, and fertilizer to farmers in their Villages.

CGA is working with the County Government of Makueni to introduce a private sector-led Extension Approach, which involves the identification and training of self-employed Village-based Advisors (VBAs) to practically train farmers on regenerative agriculture and climate smart practices and technologies. CGA has identified and trained 114 VBAs, who have assisted to directly reach over 13,225 smallholder farmers with the promoted interventions.

The project which is supported by Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and implemented by Cereal Growers Association (CGA) runs from July 2020 to October 2021.