

Name: Cynthia Mwendu

Country: Kenya, East Africa

Position: Director: Community Sustainable Agriculture Development Initiative. (COSADI)

Date of birth: 1980

Place of birth: Mbooni, Eastern Kenya

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I grew up in an environment where poverty surrounded us at home and in the neighbourhood and little could be done to escape it. Poverty was the order of the day in that we would skip meals and if any was found, it was very little for the family and not balanced in diet. Food would be shared amongst all the people in that family even if it was not enough. Relief food from friends, relatives and the government was what we depended on. This is a real experience that made me want to know why it was happening to us and what we could do to solve it. At the age of 14 I realized that the main reason was that my community lacked knowledge on kitchen gardens and farming methods and use of recycled water to irrigate vegetables that could have been used and help reduce poverty at some point. Some of the neighbours didn't own farms then and so depended much on shops to buy food while they did not have money to buy it. Despite that we had some land but the weather could not favour us as well because of the dry spells which went on throughout the year.

After so much experience of that and a lot of other problems related to hunger and lack of water for domestic use in my family and the neighbourhood and that my mother worked hard and made sure that we did not lack food on the table; I decided to work hard in studies and requested her that after the secondary education that she enrol me in an agricultural college since that was my area of interest, so that I could help my community especially the women and children whom I saw suffer most including me and other communities by disseminating information on different ways of farming without so much dependence on the weather. I was lucky to have an opportunity to join an institution here in Kenya that trains students on organic farming for 2 years. After the graduation I managed to work for 2 different organizations with different communities. While working I was able to change the farming methods of the communities. At least 2000 farmers were able to adopt organic farming as their new way of farming since it only required them to use the available resources on their farms while maintaining unpolluted environment and eating healthy foods. While still working, I enrolled for a community development course and later graduated in it. That was because I was still aiming at my former dreams of assisting communities with information sharing and so resigned and formed the community based organisation (COSADI). With other members which I coordinate I mobilized farmers and we are currently training working with communities in Githunguri and peri-urban areas of Nairobi in organic farming and matters concerning the environment and income generation as well as food security. Our Vision as COSADI is to reach many farmers from the target areas and extend to other communities to help fight poverty through sustainable food production methods especially organic farming.

The best that I love about myself is "Being and working with the community." The best achievement I have made in COSADI is that we have a group of 600 farmers breeding rabbits and are now selling meat for income generation and protein for their families in a period of 8 months. They just walk smiling and see how much COSADI is doing for them and we as COSADI aim for more activities that could still continue improving their farming methods.

Personal Data

Status: Single

Children: Two

Qualifications: Diploma in Community Development and Diploma in Organic Farming

Employment: Currently working in COSADI as the coordinator