



SOLAR DRYER IN KENYA

Description of technology transfer for the Laikipia Mjengo Housing Cooperative Society.

Libraries are rare in most parts of Kenya and where they are available the reading culture is lacking. A majority of the population are forced to look for information when undertaking an assignment. The other times, they choose to engage in other pastimes. The reading culture gap has thus necessitated civil society groups like Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) and Practical Action to complement the existing libraries by establishing special libraries to support their initiatives.

Apart from the resource centres, organisations and institutes have also established Knowledge Centres that are accessible to the general public. ALIN for example, has established a number of Community Knowledge Centres in rural areas all over Kenya and Eastern Africa that are open to members of the public. This helps in taking knowledge and required information to the end users.

Complementary support has been forthcoming for such initiatives in the country and the region. For instance, in support of ALIN's work, Practical Action has distributed their publications and other information through ALIN to the Community Knowledge Centres. The results from this venture have been immense. Charles Mureithi a teacher and a farmer of Ng'arua Focal Group in Laikipia District is one such beneficiary. Mureithi has been a member of Ng'arua Knowledge Community centre since its inception. His diligence has borne fruit since the information provided has helped him afford a solar drier.

'After I read a book with the information on solar driers, I explained it to a Jua Kali artisan who was able to fabricate the drier for me,' he explained" But when asked if he could remember the title of the book that he read, Mureithi only remembers that it was an appropriate technology book by ITDG (Now Practical Action).



Photo 1: The Solar drier

According to Mureithi, the piece of equipment is of great significant to his home; an area prone to long dry spells. 'It has affected our expenditure budget on food significantly' he said.



Photo 2: Mr. Mureithi explaining how the solar drier works

'These days it is not easy to get greens vegetables in this area during the dry season which are becoming more and more extended due to the changes in weather patterns. This is contrary to what used to be in the past – now experienced during the rain season. We have plenty of green vegetables that would sometimes go to waste,' he explained.

To him and the family, the drier has been a means to maintaining the flow of green vegetables throughout the year. His vegetables no longer go to waste since he discovered the solar drier. "Nowadays, we harvest the vegetables, cut them into pieces, dry them in the solar drier and pack them for use during the dry season," he explained.



Photo 3: Clean green vegetables sorted and cut into pieces ready for drying

"We take green vegetables all the year around, said Mrs. Mureithi as she explained how, with help from her children, she selects the vegetables, cuts them into sizes and puts them in the drier tray to dry.



Photo 4: Susan Kuria spreading the green vegetables in the tray ready for drying

“Our neighbours have also embraced the technology said Mr. Mureithi. A few who can not afford to fabricate the equipment are allowed to use our equipment, free.

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stories of change