

# Adult literacy classes as a pathway for out-scaling innovations: The case of finger millet in Eastern Kenya

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## Introduction:

Smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa face tremendous challenges in securing household income and food security (Maeda *et al.*, 2011, Kabubo-Mariara, 2009). This applies to Kenya's Arid and Semi Arid Lands which experience prolonged drought with limited alternatives. Several agencies have tried many interventions but many of them fail to recognize and/or build on any existing local innovations.



Kenya ASALs



Drought effects



Stressed crops

## Context:

Through PROLINNOVA-Kenya, a 'farmer-led' finger millet nursery innovation was developed and tested in Kalama in Machakos county. This was in response to difficult finger millet seedling establishment and high cost of seed when using the recommended practice. The innovation was out-scaled through adult literacy groups which served as learning networks.



Millet nursery



Transplanted millet



The learners in these classes are mostly women with limited access to regular extension services because of illiteracy and the innovation has been used as a practical lesson in the literacy classes



Adult literacy learners

## Methodology

Finger millet seeds are planted in a nursery one month before the rains and the classes are divided into groups. Each group establishes one nursery and as they tend the seedlings, the members are imparted with practical millet husbandry skills. When plants reach 15cm they are transplanted in the learners' fields where visits are organized occasionally by the whole group. Field days are also organized for the community members during which the adult literacy group members explain to the community how to establish the nursery and care for the plant in the field. They also demonstrate how to make various finger millet food recipes



Group nurseries



Boot stage



Mature crop

## Results:

- ✓ Finger millet crop back into cultivation
- ✓ Seed rate reduced (*only what needed*)
- ✓ Increased yields and incomes
- ✓ Increased interest in adult literacy classes (large classes)

## Conclusions and recommendations:

- Need for recognition of local innovations
- Adult literacy groups effective networks for up-scaling innovations.
- Strengthening R & D links with other rural actors
- Policies to facilitate departmental links



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