

The Samburu Project

Thanks to the MNS Foundation's generous donation, The Samburu Project completed a full-scale agricultural initiative in the Margwe community earlier this year. Margwe has become a model for the other well communities due to the oversight and maintenance of their well (drilled in 2007), initiative to start their own farm, and ability to effectively mobilize the community. Stephanie Ng, The Samburu Project's Project Coordinator, visited the farm on May 21, 2012 and had the opportunity to witness their progress and interview Iddi Letiatiya, the chairman of the Margwe community.

The Margwe Farm's Evolution

Letiatiya conveyed to Ng his community's appreciation to The Samburu Project and MNS Foundation for their partnership in the agricultural project. He explained how the Samburu people never knew that food could grow out of earth. The thought of growing plants and then eating them was very foreign to the Samburu people because they are traditionally pastoralists. Thanks to the expertise of Ruben Lekaldero, The Samburu Project's agricultural consultant, the Margwe community has benefited from his knowledge of farming, learning how to prepare the land, grow fruits and vegetables and harvest crops. Last season was the first time this community planted. Though this harvest did not yield much due to the drought, they were elated and are hopeful that with the drip irrigation system, the yield will be very high in the coming years.

Beans are the predominant crop in the Margwe Farm because they are rain-fed, however, kale, tomatoes, spinach and sorghum are also growing. Prior to the installation of the drip irrigation system, the community extended the farm to five acres with plans to expand their crops with fruit trees and maize.

There are 33 farmers working the farm with an estimated 165 people directly benefiting. The community is currently expanding the farm to include more people.

The farm is divided into two sections; half of the farm is for the community in which the crops or revenue go into a collective community account and half of the farm is divided into small plots for each individual farmer.



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The Completion of the Drip Irrigation System

At the time of Ng's visit, the water tanks, pipes and generators were on site and the community was installing the system. The first step was to dig trenches where the pipes would be laid. The trench is about 2,000 feet long, one foot deep and six inches wide.



Since May, the Margwe community completed the installation of the drip irrigation system, installing the new submersible pump and laying and connecting all of the pipes in the trenches which span from the pump to the tanks.



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The community faced many challenges when trying to collect sand, hardcore and other materials for the construction of the concrete slab and generator house. The slab or stand where the tanks are placed is about three meters wide and is made out of cement and stones. The community chose to place the generator near the well site so that the night guard can keep watch over both the pump and generator. To prevent anyone from tampering or stealing the generator, the community built a permanent structure to house the generator.



The Future

The first harvest with the new drip irrigation system will be in November/December. The Margwe community is hopeful that it will be plentiful. Currently, the farmers cannot predict the yield and/or the profits they will earn from the farm, but they will be able to make projections after their first post-drip irrigation system harvest.

