

QUIP IN ACTION



COMMISSIONER: SELF HELP AFRICA

COUNTRY: KENYA

SAMPLE SIZE: 24 INTERVIEWS, 4 FOCUS GROUPS

YEARS OF STUDY: 2022

PROJECT: EXPLORATORY RESEARCH INTO INSTAVEG'S IMPACT

Self Help Africa help to manage the AgriFI Kenya Challenge Fund. This programme supports agri-enterprises, like **Instaveg**, which received funding from their Covid-19 Pandemic Support Fund.

Instaveg has been operating since 2014 and aggregates and packs a range of horticultural produce for export companies, as well as for the local retail market. They aim to improve the financial **resilience** and **food security of farmers** by building farmer capacity, developing supply chain infrastructure and supporting business growth. They work with a mixed demographic of farmers and hope to support female farmers to increase their **decision-making power** and encourage **youth to participate in agriculture**. With the funding they have received from AgriFI they intend to improve packing and storage facilities and provide training in pre and post-harvest management. Instaveg work with individual farmers and farmer cooperative groups across three counties in Kenya; Laikipia, Kirinyaga and Nyeri. This QuIP study focused on Nyeri county, home to the largest Instaveg programme.

WHY QUIP:

Instaveg operates in areas alongside many different organisations working in the agricultural development sector, so understanding and isolating the impact Instaveg has on farmers is challenging. The QuIP was used to try to understand the broader context of change and isolate Instaveg's contribution to any changes in farmers' livelihoods.

APPROACH:

Interviews were conducted by a team of local researchers fluent in the local language. In this study both interviewers and interviewees had no knowledge of the hypotheses being tested and worked completely independently of the local project team. This 'blindfolded' approach was used to mitigate confirmation bias and ensure that respondents do not limit themselves to discussion of only one intervention or project activity. Informed consent was obtained by respondents prior to starting interviews.

The interview was divided into the following relevant domains, based on Instaveg's theory of change:

- Agriculture, including agricultural practices, yields and post-harvest management
- Income, both from agriculture and other sources of income
- Spending and saving, this also included borrowing habits
- Relationships, both intra and inter-household
- Overall wellbeing and confidence in the future

A final section asked respondents about community groups, programmes or organisations they engaged with; respondents were asked to detail their involvement with them and rank them in order of relative importance. This question is used at the end of almost every QuIP interview.

QuIP studies use purposive, stratified sampling – focusing on a small sub-sample of intended beneficiaries. There is no need for a counterfactual or control group, so only farmers who had worked with Instaveg were interviewed. Nyeri county is home to the largest number of Instaveg farmers and so was chosen for data collection. Kiamathaga and Gakawa wards were selected within the county; they both had a high number of Instaveg farmers, provided similar demographic and geographical context whilst avoiding potential anomalies by focusing only on one area, and were accessible logistically. The sample was split evenly between these wards, with 12 respondents in each.

To better understand the experiences of different genders and ages, the sample was split into women, men, adult and youth (classed as below 35). However, gaining access to an equal number of respondents from each sex and age group was not achievable due to incorrect contact details for some farmers and not enough young people available to interview. The table below shows the demographic of those interviewed.

Table 1: Sample for individual interviews

		Women	Men	Totals
Kiamathaga	Adult	2	6	12
	Youth	3	1	
Gakawa	Adult	4	5	12
	Youth	2	1	
		11	13	24

The age range of respondents was predominantly 36-55 (13 respondents), 4 respondents were 56 and over, and 7 were between 19-35 (youth).

In addition to individual household interviews, 4 focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted. FGDs are used to triangulate and expand on the data collected in individual interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences amongst peers without some of the power dynamics that can emerge in mixed groups. 2 FGDs were facilitated in each district. The groups were split between men and women as well as by age; one group were above 35 and classed as adult and another were younger than 35 and classed as youth. There were 6 participants in each focus group.

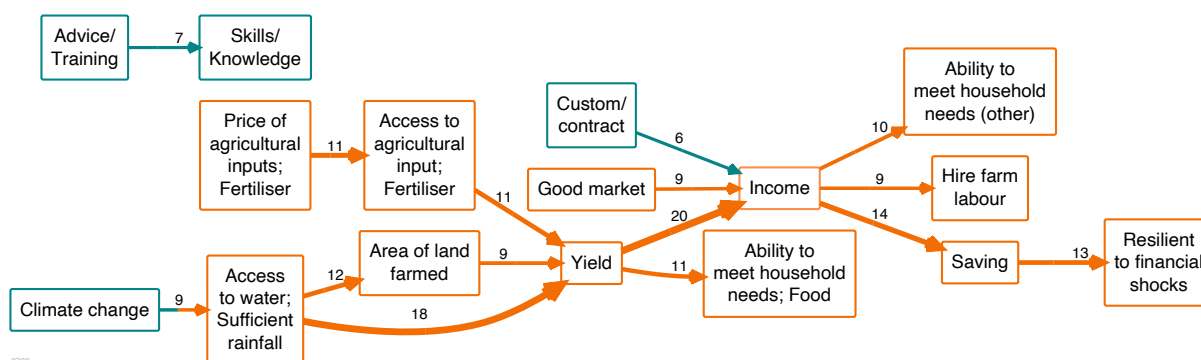
Table 2: Sample for focus groups

		Women	Men	Totals
Kiamathaga	Adult	1	1	2
Gakawa	Youth	1	1	2
		2	2	4

FINDINGS:

Analysis of the interviews highlighted that broader contextual factors including drought, the Covid lockdown and the rising cost of living are overwhelmingly contributing to negative changes in farmers' lives. External organisations in the local area were acknowledged to be effecting some positive change through the provision of agricultural inputs and water infrastructure, however this study did not find that farmers in Nyeri felt this outweighed the challenges they were facing. The causal map below details the connections that people made between changes which have happened over the last three years, with orange links representing a negative relationship, e.g. less 'Access to water' leads to less 'Yield'. Numbers indicate the number of individual respondents who made that causal link, out of 24.

Figure 1: Overview of change



Top 15 links with a frequency greater than eight

YIELDS

Yields have decreased in the district over the last three years, primarily because of scarcity of water, caused by climate change, and the high cost of agricultural inputs which has reduced their use. Farmers reported that despite moving away from cash crops and increasingly planting crops for household consumption, reduction in yields has meant households still have less food overall. Poor yields were also the main driver of decreased income and this was exacerbated by the rising cost of living; less income also made it harder for households to meet their food consumption needs.

For six respondents, provision of agricultural inputs from external organisations (including Instaveg) had improved their access to agricultural inputs. Water infrastructure improved access to water for 12 respondents, but still not enough for these farmers to improve their yields.

POST HARVEST WASTE

Overall, farmers reported they are now wasting *more* crops after harvest, as shown by the closed question responses (below) in which 14 farmers reported waste had increased. Instaveg aims to reduce crop wastage by improving crop storage facilities, however only four farmers mentioned their crop wastage was affected by storage and only two mentioned improved storage had led to a positive change. Poor market conditions and lack of contracted work was a larger driver of waste; several farmers reported crops rotting as they were unable to transport or sell their produce. Instaveg aims provide stable contracts to their farmers and improve their access to market, however there was little evidence of success in this area.

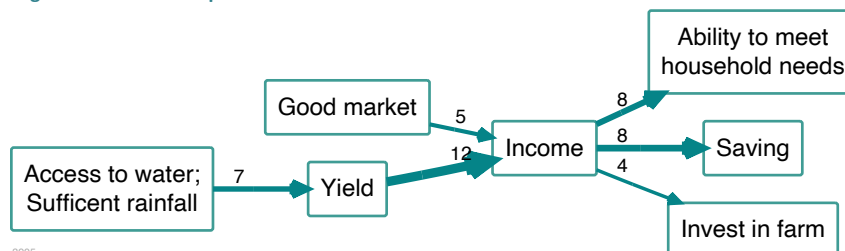
Figure 3: Responses to the closed question 'Overall, has the proportion of your crop lost/wasted after harvest changed in the last 3 years?'



IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Before the 2020 Covid pandemic, farmers reported higher yields, good access to markets and a better quality of life. Income from commercial crops allowed them to save, meet household needs and invest back into their farms.

Figure 2: Story of change before the Covid pandemic



Factor labels containing the time:pre, links with a source count greater than three, out of 24

Since 2020 Covid has been a negative driver of change for many respondents. Changes that started during Covid, such as reduced markets and poor access to water, continue to impact many farmers today.

FINANCES

Reduction in cash crop yields was the primary cause of decreasing agricultural income, mentioned by 20 of the 24 individual respondents and all the focus groups. Respondents reported no longer producing enough crops to be able to sell and make profit. This has influenced respondents' borrowing habits; farmers are borrowing less as they feel they do not have the income to be able to repay the loan in the future. Many farmers' ability to save was also reduced by their decline in income.

CONCLUSION

Organisations that provided access to water or agricultural inputs were mentioned as agents of positive change, including Instaveg and Wilmar. Other interventions such as training, commitments to buy crops, access to financial services and the provision of agricultural inputs were also mentioned and attributed to a range of organisations, including Instaveg.

However, some respondents reported that Instaveg's reputation and influence in the area had decreased over the last three years as the project had not collected a crop they had contracted farmers to grow. Farmers felt let down, particularly during the hardest Covid periods.