

MAKING POSITIVE IMPACT IN THE LIVES OF THE ELDERLY PEOPLE IN THE SOCIETY THROUGH SUBSIDISED WATER CONSERVATION MEASURE

BY

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The abuse of the elderly and people living with disabilities by family members is a major concern that dates back to ancient times ([World Health Organisation Chapter 5; abuse of the elderly](#)). The abuse of elderly people may be defined as an act of commission or omission also referred to as neglect, whereby it may be either intentional or unintentional. Neglect is the refusal or failure to fulfill a caregiving obligation which may or may not involve a conscious and intentional attempt to inflict physical or emotional distress on the older person.

The realization that in the coming decades the population of older people will increase has raised concern over the mistreatment of the elderly. By the year 2025, it is predicted that the global population of those aged 60 years and older will more than double, while in some countries like Kenya and Indonesia the increase is expected to be more than fourfold.



Photo 1. Naomi Murugi in her Gatakaini farm weeds using a panga.

In Thika-Chania catchment, we conducted research and sampled 15 elderly farmers whereby 67% of them confirmed they undergo elderly neglect and need help. Being a tea zone, a farmer like Naomi Murugi claims that she cannot pluck even a kilo of tea in a day due to age, but she can be able to weed vegetables like cabbages using a panga. This calls for the need for a water pan that can supply water for the vegetables during the dry season.

The Upper Tana Nairobi Water Fund through the water conservation measures (water pans) has come in handy to salvage the neglected elderly people in the counties they operate in.

The extended subsidy is such that women-led families and those by elderly people are 75% of the full cost. The full subsidy

for a 100,000 liters water pan is Ksh.3,000 while the extended subsidy is Ksh.1,500. For 50,000 liters water pan, the full subsidy is Ksh 2000 while for extended subsidy it is Ksh.1,000.

This extended subsidy program has been of great help especially to the elderly farmers and others who happen also to be female-headed families like Naomi Murugi of Gatakaini Village.

Before the installation of the water pan, Naomi had planted in her kitchen garden cabbage seedlings costing her Ksh 700 which all dried up due to lack of irrigation water. It took her a lot of energy and time to go fetching water in the river, of which it overwhelmed her because it is cumbersome.



“...it took me a lot of time and energy to go downstream to the river to weed the arrowroots, but I heard about the water pans and my son supported the idea and we installed it. Now I can plant the arrowroots and cabbages in my kitchen garden and irrigate and still have a good harvest. I cannot go hungry and the energy to go downstream has been saved...”

But after the installation of the water pan, she has been able to plant arrowroots through irrigation where she earns a gross income of between 4000-6000 per season, and the season goes for 3 months to harvest. Most of it is for consumption because she likes traditional food.



Photo 2. cabbage plantation in her farm.

She has also been able to farm cabbages in a quarter piece of land and she harvests around 1500 heads which earns her not less than 15000.

The subsidy given to the elderly people has helped a majority of them to improve livelihoods and boost them economically. We have been able to achieve the goal of water conservation and at the same time impact positively on the lives of the elderly people.

If the water conservation measures were not conducted to the elderly, most of them could not be able to farm during the dry season and therefore could not be able to uplift their living standards.

If other stakeholders join hands with The Nature Conservancy, more subsidization even in the excavation of the water pans could be of much help to those elderly farmers who are not able to support the excavation process on their own due to lack of funds.