



# Alice Wamuyu

**Meet Alice Wamuyu, banana farmer, value addition champion and proud owner of a five-bedroom bungalow in Kahumbu Ward, Muranga County.**

Alice joined the movement in 2016, when GROOTS Kenya conducted the Public Land mapping Project. At the time, she had a very small plantation and limited knowledge about value addition and markets. Her farm did not provide any income and the yields were not even enough to feed her family.

In 2018, the Rural women Economic Empowerment Project (REEP) was introduced with the objective to strengthen farmer organizations, promote agribusiness and build capacities for advocacy. Alice became one of 32 members of Kairi Banana Growers, while planting bananas on less than half of 1/8 of an acre and only harvesting bananas every 3 - 4 months at the time.

The REEP project promoted banana farming, and extension officers trained the group members for eight weeks.

Capacities were built on land preparation, planting, choice of planting materials and seedlings, plantation care and maintenance to take on banana farming as an agribusiness. With the learnings, the group members planted at least 30 stools each, fertilized and cultivated consistently. This made a tremendous difference; the plantations were soon considered role models and other community members picked up the techniques. Alice's production rapidly increased.

**“Now, I have 80 stools in my field and I sell 20 - 30 stems every few weeks. Throughout the year I have a continuous banana supply for value addition, ripening and selling.”**

Since the bananas grew so well and the yield was high, they started to overflow the local market. At this point the benefit of the value addition training kicked in. The group members started making banana flour for porridge together, each bringing different ingredients, such as arrow roots, sweet potatoes and cassava to mix with the bananas. First, they produced for their families and the nutritional values for, then they started selling it and the product stormed the local market.

“Everybody started picking up the idea and soon there was a surplus of banana flour in the community and we had to expand our market”, Alice recounts. She started marketing at her church and looked for opportunities outside her ward. Whatsapp is now a successful marketing channel for her and she even reaches customers in Nairobi.

Also, the banana sales are thriving. Alice sells green bananas on the local markets and has supplied ripe bananas to Sweet Tunda, buying even from the community when her own yield is not enough. As next steps she plans to get certification from KEBS and improve packaging to take her products to supermarkets.

Alice has also taken up leadership in her community and the church, she is not afraid to make her voice heard and members come and seek her advice. After the advocacy training by GROOTS Kenya, together with other farmers she advocated for a milk cooling machine for her ward and her community members elected her chairperson of the dairy.

“Bananas have transformed my life. We generate money from the bananas and the flour and having money in my pocket is an achievement. My son entered college in 2020 and I have been supporting my husband to pay the school fees. I think the future is good in the banana farming sector, as even our children have taken interest”, Alice shares.

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The REEP project activities by GROOTS Kenya have been Alice's stepping stone to thrive. Her story reminds us that continuous learning, an entrepreneurial spirit and taking on leadership make us achieve great heights.

