

Recognizing the negative impacts of chemical fertilizers to increase farm production — Susay Kollie's Path to Empowerment



In Sugar Hill Community, Gbarnga in Bong County, Liberia, Susay Kollie, a diligent smallholder farmer, was driven by a simple dream: to provide for her family and community through her beloved cassava farm. Yet, her reliance on chemical fertilizers, initially intended to boost her yields and profits, led to unforeseen challenges. Her cucumbers were criticized for their lack of flavor, and her potato greens turned an unappealing yellow. As customers decreased, so did her income, leaving Susay at a critical juncture and not knowing how best to improve her farming method..

It was during this challenging time that Susay seized a life-changing opportunity. She attended a transformative training session organized by ActionAid on the production of compost. This event, led by experienced Ministry of Agriculture Extension Officers, brought together 50 young women from her community, all eager to learn sustainable farming techniques.

The training opened Susay's eyes to the world of organic farming and its myriad benefits—improved soil health, reduced input costs, and greater resilience to the ever-changing climate. Inspired and hopeful, Susay decided to dedicate a portion of her land exclusively to organic practices, determined to manage her farm without harmful chemicals.

The transformation was nothing short of miraculous. Her crops began to flourish, regaining their natural taste and lively colors. Word spread quickly through the community, and Susay's success story became an inspiration of hope. Other farmers, witnessing her thriving fields, were inspired to follow in her footsteps, eager to embrace the principles of agroecology.

Susay, now a passionate advocate for sustainable organic farming, dedicated herself to sharing her newfound knowledge. She organized workshops, informal gatherings, and community meetings, encouraging her neighbors to transition to organic practices. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and soon, a collective movement blossomed.

More than 50 women joined Susay, squatting on a family-owned 4-acre plot, working together to cultivate cassava and other crops using organic methods. This collaboration not only strengthened their agricultural skills but also forged deep community bonds. Together, they established a village savings group, pooling their resources to enhance their economic stability. This initiative enabled them to address their basic needs and improve their standard of living, bringing newfound hope and security to their lives.



Above: Women farmers now attending a compost preparation session conducted by Sussie at her farm

The project's objective—to empower women and young smallholder farmers by building climate resilience through agroecology and ICT—was coming to life. By enhancing household food security and preparing for emergencies, these efforts ensured a sustainable future for the entire community.

Susay Kollie's journey is a powerful testament to the transformative impact of education, collaboration, and perseverance. Her story inspires not only her community but also serves as a guiding light for others across the globe, demonstrating that with determination and unity, it is possible to sow the seeds of resilience and harvest the fruits of sustainable change.