

# Empowering farmers

## Building resilience



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Regina Mathew, a member of the Asanza Farmer Field School (FFS) in Yambio county, is mulching pineapples with dry leaves she just collected. Mulching is part of the improved agronomical practices she learned at the FFS.



# Foreword

*“During the last three years the FEED project has demonstrated that communities in South Sudan could be empowered and their food security improved by applying integrated interventions such as skills transfer in agriculture production, marketing, disaster management and increasing women participation in decision making at a community and household level.”*

**Hailu Tolasa, Chief of Party of the FEED Project**

South Sudan, the world’s youngest nation, is considered one of the most fragile states on the globe. Ongoing conflict has interrupted the lives of millions of people, forced more than 4 million to flee their homes and disrupted income-earning opportunities. As a result, more than half the country is severely food insecure and many people struggling to get enough food to eat.

Yet, in parts of South Sudan where some sense of security has returned, families that relied on farming and fishing have received assistance to recover and grow their agricultural ventures. As agriculture is central to the economy of South Sudan, it is a natural lever for family, community and the country’s development.

In April 2015, a consortium of three international non-governmental organizations (CARE, Oxfam and World Vision) started the three-year Fortifying Equality and Economic Diversity (FEED) project, designed to meet basic food security needs and reduce vulnerability among communities and households in seven of the former states in South Sudan. This project aimed to make communities more resilient to build the foundation for sustained economic growth and to foster stability.

The FEED project targeted 60,000 vulnerable households and ultimately improved the lives of 215,000 direct beneficiaries. The project provided employment skills, boosted family income and improved agricultural production.

Beneficiaries received seeds, equipment and livestock, were trained to pursue various income generating activities and learned about peaceful conflict resolution through awareness sessions, with a specific focus on empowering women and reducing gender-based violence.



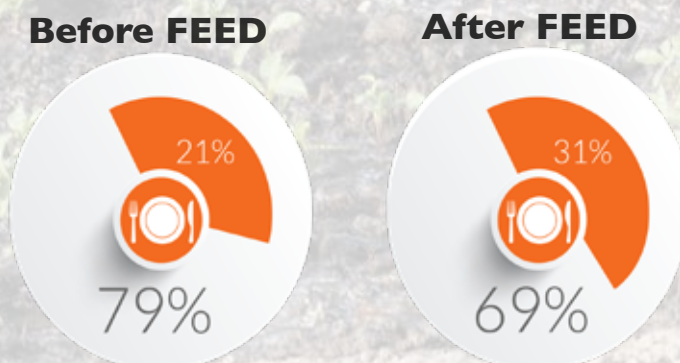
# Boosting agricultural production

During the three years of its implementation, the FEED project focused on boosting agriculture as a way to ensure food security and develop entrepreneurship. Agriculture is considered as crucial for long-term peace and development in South Sudan, which enjoys an adapted climate and fertile soil.

Up to 90 per cent of the country's population depends on farming or fishing to meet their food, income and other needs. However, the agricultural sector suffers from low productivity, due to outdated farming practices, and a lack of adequate equipment and seeds.

One of the most important programmes in the FEED project was the implementation of 688 farmers field schools, where 21,148 beneficiaries were mobilised to be empowered in innovative agronomical practices. Beneficiaries were also given adequate tools and equipment, and appropriate seeds. Farmers learned how to get the most out of available natural resources. Selected farmers were also given livestock, such as chickens, goats or oxen, to help them diversify their activities.

For most of the beneficiaries, joining the FEED project helped them generate enough food stock to fulfill their family nutritional needs. Additional stock was sold at the market to increase household income. On average, at the beginning of the project, farmers planted two different varieties of crops, whereas now, as the project closes, they planted an average of four varieties, which gives them access to more balanced nutrition. The FEED project increased the overall availability of food across the targeted locations and made rural communities more resilient.



■ **Households that have year-round access to sufficient food to meet family needs.**







Abuk Ajou Deng, from the Pagai Boma Farmer Field School (FFS), near Aweil, is watering rejila with the watering cans she was given by the FEED project. Rejila, as well as okra, are used to make a sauce and is eaten with sorghum.





Every morning, Ayak Akol waters her plot at the collective field near to her house. Twice a week, she sells her vegetables at the nearby market.

***“I used to stay the whole day in the bush collecting firewood (...) Now I am farming my own vegetables”.***

Three years ago, the Kanajak Farmers Field School (FFS) was created near Kanajak village. During the last three years, 120 farmers were taught techniques to increase productivity, by improving agronomical practices. The farmers learned how to plant in rows, and to use mulch on their crops, as well as how to protect their products from pests. The group was given treadle pumps and watering cans to irrigate their crops during the dry season, enabling them to produce vegetables year round.

Ayak Akol Deng attends her plot every morning and evening. Before the project, Akol used to collect and sell firewood. This tiring work was not providing enough incomes to sustain her family. Upon joining the FFS, Akol attended trainings to strengthen her agronomic practices. She was also given farming tools, seeds, as well as two goats. Because of what she's learned, Akol has now set up her own vegetable garden and sells her vegetables twice a week at the market. This additional income helps her to take care of her four children, providing them with a balanced, nutritious diet, and pays for children's the school fees.





**Ayak Akol's sister-in-law is helping Ayak prepare food for the whole family, while Ayak is farming. She is preparing sorghum/pocho, which will be served for lunch.**



**Children from the neighbouring settlements come to have lunch with Ayak Akol. Ayak Akol had provided them with sorghum and dry fish mixed with groundnuts paste.**



Atak is sitting on 50kg groundnut bags the members of her Farmer Field School (FFS) just collected. Each bag is worth 4,500 SSP (20 USD). Recently, the FEED project built a storage facility where they can keep their produce safe.

***“Now my children can go to school and I can provide them with school uniforms and pay for the school fees”.***

Deng Deng Tiek and Atak Apath have recently harvested the groundnuts they cultivated with the 60 other members of their farmers field school. They all learned to develop groundnut production, which was the best adapted crop for their climate and soil. They received tools, seeds, oxen and an ox-plow, which helped them increase the groundnuts production.

The FEED project financed the construction of a storage facility near their fields, where the community can store their products, and protect it from rats and moisture. Now, the new storage facility helps the farmers get more income from their produce as they can wait for the market price of groundnuts to increase before selling them.

Atak believes new beneficiaries should be trained by FEED to improve their farming techniques. Before joining the programme, it was difficult for Atak to feed her children and care for their basic needs. Now, she has enough food to feed her children and provides them with school uniforms and school fees.





Anuie Rose Wilson is weeding the pineapples plantation from the Gitikiri Farmer Field School (FFS), a few kilometres away from Yambio. The pineapples will be harvested in December.

***“I feel comfortable training other farmers in the techniques I have learned during the FEED programme”.***

Anuie Rose Wilson lives near Yambio, in the south-west of South Sudan, in a region known for its pleasant climate and its fertile soil. In 2015, Anuie was part of the 30 farmers who received training on various aspects of farming, including best agronomic practices, gender and protection training, and post-harvest handling.

The group grows groundnuts, cowpeas, maize, and pineapples. During the last three years, agricultural experts have guided the group to help them increase their productivity. Anuie also cultivates her own garden, where she can reproduce the techniques she learned, and increase her own vegetable production.

Her group is now starting pineapples production, which they have planted in rows as they were taught. The revenue they generate from selling their products is reinvested in seeds and equipment, and it's also spread among the members to help them sustain their families.





Serezio was part of the group who dug the pond for fish farming. Now she comes twice a week to fish and maintain the pond.



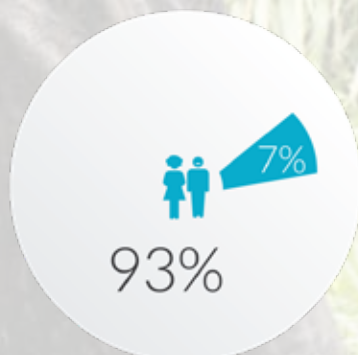
# Developing income generating activities

*During the implementation of the project, selected beneficiaries were assisted to create new income-generating opportunities.*

*In the beginning, the FEED project assessed that a significant portion of the farmers could not access markets to sell their products. To increase the access to the market, farmers' marketing associations were developed to add value to the products and to collectively sell the product at higher prices. Farmers were also provided with storage facilities, where they could keep their products, seeds, and tools safe.*

*These initiatives have helped farmers reduce waste and linked their products with the market. It also helped them generate more revenue out of their products, as they can wait for the market price to increase before selling. The FEED project also aimed to promote local resources and generate new sources of income. Therefore, in some specific areas, groups of farmers were trained in modern beekeeping and fish-farming. In the areas of implementation of the FEED project, the access to agricultural market has increased by more than 50 per cent.*

**Before FEED**



**After FEED**



■ **Women and men that are operating a viable income generating activity.**



***“Even though I have never been to school, I was able to create my own business and generate incomes for my family”.***

In the town of Yambio, the FEED project encouraged farming men and women to develop fish farming activities. Gloria Santo joined the project in 2015 and was accompanied to dig a pond where she could farm fish. She was also given technical advice in fish farming before starting her activities.

Twice a week, her group gathers at the fish pond, spends the morning fishing, maintaining the pond and feeding the fish. A part of the fish they catch is distributed among the group members and another part is sold at the market. The income generated is used to maintain the fish pond and shared among the members.

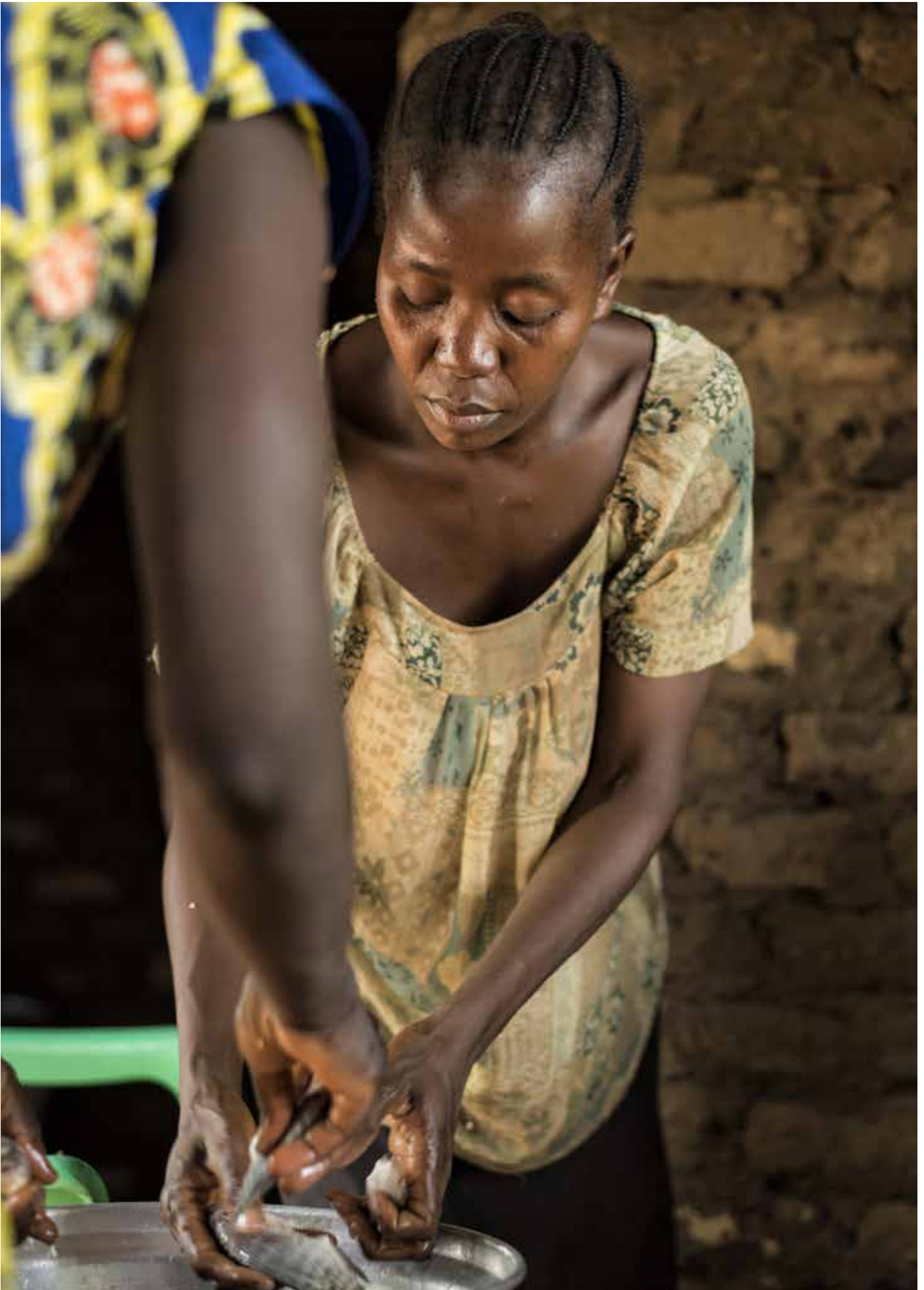
Before, Gloria could barely afford to buy fish, even though it is her family’s favourite dish. Now, she and her children eat it regularly. She likes to cook the fish with oil, tomatoes and salt. Whenever she cooks it, her children and her husband are very excited. She can earn up to 10,000 SSP per month (45 USD).

In 2016, Gloria saved enough money from her fish farming activities to buy a small piece of land where she can cultivate her own vegetables. Now, she sells some of her vegetable produce at the market, and keeps the rest to feed her family. The fish farming activity, as well as her small vegetable production, generates enough incomes to take care of her family.



Gloria Santo is weighing the fish she caught at the FEED supported fish farm. The revenue generated will be used by the group to maintain the fish-pond, and a small part will also be shared among the members.





Gloria is preparing tilapia fishes they caught in the morning at the fish pond. It will be served for dinner.





Abraham Aduol Anyar is walking back to his home, where he will store the honey he just collected. When the bucket is full, he will take it to the bee farmers association.



***“I am encouraging the other members to increase the number of hives, to increase the honey production”.***

Traditionally, farmers from the Wulu county collected wild honey from the nearby forest. They would put tree-leaves around their arms to protect themselves from bee stings and would climb up the trees and extract the honey. To promote local resources and build knowledge, and to develop new sources of incomes, FEED helped farmers get training in modern beekeeping. Group members also learned about processing and marketing the honey.

Abraham Aduol Anyar, 35, collected honey the traditional way for the last 20 years. When he joined the FEED project, he was given the appropriate tools and equipment, as well as training in modern beekeeping. With his team, he now collects up to four 20-litre buckets of honey per harvest, which they sell to the bee farmers association. Abraham and his team try to reinvest the money they generate to buy more modern bee-hives and increase the production.

The bee farmers association was trained to market the honey produced from the modern bee hives. Through this assistance, they opened a small shop in the centre of Wulu, the nearby small town. On average, they sell up to 20 litres of honey a week. The members of the bee farmers association share the revenue generated among themselves. For Alice Momon, joining the association in 2015 was salvation, as at that time, her husband became very sick, and he could not support her and their 10 children anymore. Now, she gets income from the group and sustains her family.



Every day, twenty of the honey processed by the bee farming association are sold at the honey shop, in the center of Wulu town.



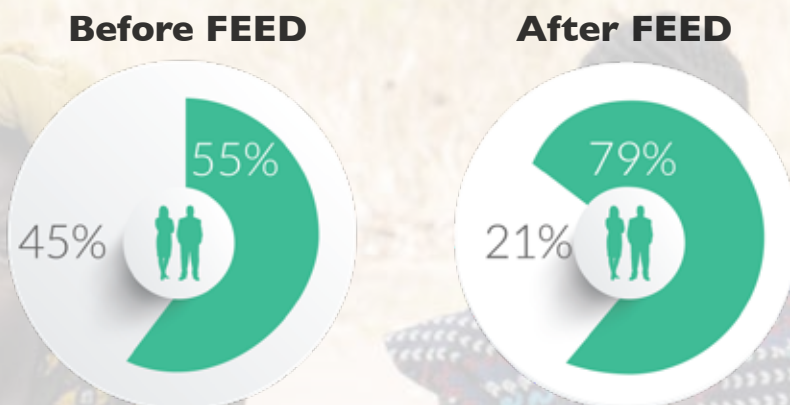
# Enhancing gender empowerment

According to prior assessment, gender-based violence was a preeminent issue in the areas of intervention. A low level of awareness was observed regarding women rights. The importance of women's contribution in farming and decision making for community development was neglected.

The FEED project adopted a unique gender-sensitive approach, where agriculture and economic development were closely linked to gender equality. According to the survey, the amount of women operating viable income generating activities has multiplied by 7, with positive impacts on all the households.

At the beginning of the project, a normalization of domestic violence was observed, and in some cases, early forced marriage regularly occurred. Similarly, women were not involved in taking collective decisions, and could not raise issues that affected them at community levels. Awareness campaigns were conducted to sensitize the project beneficiaries, as well as the entire community about gender-based violence issues. It permitted, in most cases, a framework where women and men could raise this problem and discuss domestic issues.

According to the final FEED project evaluations, the perception of men and women regarding the ability of women to take a role in decision making has risen by almost 50 per cent. Anecdotally, a significant decline in early marriage and gender based violence has also be reported among beneficiaries.



■ **Positive perception regarding the ability of women in taking a role in decision making.**





Helena Ayen is calling for more gender equality at a meeting of the Wulu gediem gender empowerment group.





Mary Magei is the first woman who join the local court, which deals with issues at a community level. She struggles to have women better represented in decision making.

***“Participating in the gender empowerment group brought common understanding in the family, between a man and a woman”.***

In Wulu Gediem, a gender empowerment group of 50 women and 25 men participated in awareness sessions about gender equality and preventing gender based violence. In the sessions, women were encouraged to take the lead at a household and community level. It was a shift from the past, when men mostly made the decisions without consulting women. When women contribute to decision making, they are able to propose solutions to daily issues they are involved in, which were ignored by men.

In the past, Mary Magei observed a lot of domestic violence among couples in her community, mainly because of a lack of communication. The empowerment group created a framework for men and women to discuss issues affecting them. Nowadays, if domestic violence is observed, members can calmly talk with the man and woman and convince them to avoid violence. Mary is also the first woman to join the local tribal court. This local court, previously run by only men, resolve conflict and make decisions at the community level. Now, Mary is now defending the interest of women whenever a decision is impacting women or the community.





Catherine Charles, her husband Simon and their youngest child are sitting on the bed of their tukul (local hut). Since they took part in gender-based violence awareness sessions, they solve problems by discussing the issue.

***“Now, we do not fight with my husband as it used to be. We sit down, we discuss issues, and we come up with solutions”.***

In the south east of South Sudan, Torit, one of the largest towns in the county, has recently faced armed conflict. Despite this difficult context, the FEED project has accompanied farmers to develop their agricultural skills in various farmers field schools in the nearby villages.

As well, farmer field school members attended gender-based violence (GBV) awareness training. The GBV training enabled members to discuss the problems they face and reduced the level of tension at the household and community level. Catherine Charles and Simon, her husband, participated in the GBV awareness programme. According to them, this training has been very important for their relationship, as before they used to have communication problems.



## In conclusion

After three years of implementation, the FEED project has been successful in decreasing the vulnerability of households. More precisely, the food production has increased as well as additional revenue streams generated. Women have been empowered to become decision makers and more fully participate in community development, and the number of gender-based violence incidents has decreased.

The most encouraging aspect of the FEED project is the sustainability of the programmes. Farmers have been trained and equipped to cultivate their farms and to generate revenue on their own. Women and men are now aware of gender equity and are observing the positive impact at a household and community level. The FEED project has strengthened community cohesion, with the beneficiaries now acting collectively to resolve issues.

*“We have observed a great change in these three years. Farmers now grow enough crops and sell the surplus at the market. At a household level, there is an improvement in their diet. They can now eat three times a day, which was not the case in 2016. We have carried out a massive awareness campaign on gender-based violence, and we have realised the impact through our community leaders and the farmers. There are now less women beaten or harassed. This decline is very encouraging for the future. Most farmers who have engaged in FEED project are now free of hunger due to the intervention of the project ”.*

**Justin Charles Mbarote, Feed Project Officer in Yambio**



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