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IMPACT STORY

COMPENDIUM

Volume 1

Transforming Lives through Innovative Extension

From healthy soils to profitable markets to resilient livelihoods and dignity.

#	Country	Story Title	Key Innovation
1	**Malawi**	From a Grass Hut to a Motorbike	*Anchor Farm Model & Soybean Value Chain*
2	**Tanzania**	'Our Beef' and the Dairy Dream	*Climate-Resilient Pigeonpea & Market Linkage*
3	**Ghana**	Building a Cassava Business Empire	*High-Yield Varieties & Industrial Linkages*
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Introduction

Across Africa, 600 million people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Yet for generations, gaps in access to timely knowledge and advisory support have limited smallholder farmers' productivity, incomes, resilience, and opportunities. This compendium is AFAAS' testament to what becomes possible when that gap begins to close.

The African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), the continental body mandated by the African Union Commission to strengthen Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS), has spent over a decade building systems, partnerships, and innovations that put transformative knowledge in farmers' hands. Through its partners and its network of Country and Regional Fora, and anchored in its landmark Going Beyond Demos (GBD) approach, AFAAS is reimagining extensions not as a service to be delivered, but as an ecosystem to be cultivated.

The four stories in this Volume 1 compendium are proof of concept. They are drawn from the CAADP-XP4 programme and AFAAS' network of country-level activities in Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana, and Rwanda. Each story is a reflection of a real farmer whose life changed through access to the right knowledge, quality inputs, and reliable market, transforming not just their farm but their family's future.

As the continental platform mandated by the African Union Commission to provide technical support in designing, developing, and implementing continental initiatives to promote agricultural extension and advisory services, and innovation for development in Africa, AFAAS plays a critical systems role in translating continental agricultural policies into farmer-level impact. AFAAS is a continental, organization that convenes national, regional, and continental stakeholders in AEAS, coordinating

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collaboration, knowledge sharing, lesson learning, and innovation to professionalize and digitally transform extension services. Through its network of Country Fora, strategic partnerships, and innovation platforms, AFAAS strengthens the institutions, capacities, and delivery systems that connect research, policy, markets, and technologies to Africa's last-mile farmers. These stories therefore represent more than individual success; they demonstrate how effective extension systems operationalize CAADP commitments and drive inclusive agricultural transformation across Africa. These are part of a series of success stories providing evidence on the need to invest in extension, to feed Africa.

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STORY 01

From a Grass Hut to a Motorbike

Mchinji District, Malawi ◆ Innovation: Anchor Farm Model & Soybean Value Chain Support

There is a photograph that Divencio Chaduka keeps in his mind even though no camera captured it: the image of his family gathered under a grass-thatched roof during a downpour, moving pots and pans to catch the water dripping through, unable to sleep, unable to rest. For years, that image defined what farming meant in the Mlonyeni area of Mchinji District, not sustenance, not progress, but bare survival.

Divencio is a smallholder farmer. He grew maize and soybeans on a small plot of land, as his father did before him, and his grandfather before that. But the yields told a story of diminishing returns: less than 0.8 metric tonnes per hectare for soybeans; barely enough to eat; nothing left to sell. Without access to quality seed, affordable credit, or any reliable route to market, farming was a treadmill that moved but went nowhere.

THE CHALLENGE	Like millions of smallholder farmers across sub-Saharan Africa, Divencio was caught in the classic poverty trap of low-input, low-output agriculture. Degraded soils, high-interest informal moneylenders, and the absence of any buyer willing to pay a fair price for his surplus trapped him in subsistence. The extension-to-farmer ratio in his district mirrored the continental average: one extension worker to thousands of farmers, meaning professional agronomic advice was a luxury he had never received.
THE INTERVENTION	Through the Going Beyond Demos (GBD) approach, the Clinton Development Initiative, operating as a strategic partner within the AFAAS Country Forum network in Malawi, introduced the Anchor Farm Model in Mchinji District. The model is not a demonstration plot. It is a hub: a single, well-equipped commercial farm that serves as a living classroom, a credit origination point, and a market aggregation centre simultaneously. Divencio was enrolled in the programme and received structured technical training on Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM), learning to apply precise combinations of organic manure and mineral fertiliser tailored to his soil type. Critically, he was connected to a local financial institution through a credit guarantee mechanism that made a farm input loan accessible at rates he could service. And for the first time, he had a guaranteed buyer for his harvest.
THE IMPACT	The transformation was measurable, visible, and life changing. Divencio's soybean yields nearly quadrupled, rising from less than 0.8 to 2.75 metric tonnes per hectare. From a single acre, he earned USD 864 in revenue: more than twice the national GNP per capita in a single season. He used those earnings not to buy food, but to build. First, he replaced the grass-thatched roof with tin sheets. Then he purchased a motorbike; not a luxury, but a farming tool, used to transport goods, visit buyers, and expand his enterprise. He is now planning to add livestock to his operation. This model demonstrates how

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integrated extension systems can operationalize CAADP priorities on productivity, commercialization, and inclusive rural transformation.

< 0.8 → 2.75 MT/ha	USD 864	2×
Soybean yield — a nearly four-fold increase	Revenue from a single acre in one season	The national GNP per capita — earned in one harvest

> *"Now I know that money lies in modern soybean farming. This tin roof means my family can finally sleep through rainy nights without worrying.*
> **— Divencio Chaduka, Smallholder Farmer, Mchinji District, Malawi**

Divencio's story is not simply about soybean yields. It is about what happens when a farmer is treated not as a recipient of charity, but as an entrepreneur deserving of the same access to knowledge, credit, and markets that any small business owner requires. The Anchor Farm Model, underpinned by the GBD framework, provided exactly that, and the result was not just improved agriculture, but restored human dignity.

Crucially, Divencio's success rippled outward. Other farmers in Mlonyeni saw his tin roof, saw his motorbike, saw his expanding operation, and asked the same questions he had once asked. The demonstration effect of lived transformation proved more persuasive than any extension agent's pamphlet. That is the genius of the Anchor Farm Model: it makes extension peer-to-peer, community-embedded, and self-replicating.

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STORY 02

'Our Beef' and the Dairy Dream

Kilosa District, Morogoro Region, Tanzania ◆ Innovation: Climate-Resilient Pigeonpea Varieties & Market Linkages

In rural Tanzania, pigeon pea is not just a crop. Women call it 'our beef', a protein-rich legume that has sustained generations of families through lean seasons. For Yulia Sehaba, a 60-year-old mother of three in the Kilosa District of Morogoro Region, it was also the crop that nearly broke her spirit before it became the one that set empowered her.

Yulia's relationship with her land was shaped entirely by what she did not have: improved seed, soil fertility knowledge, and a reliable market. Her pigeon pea yielded a meagre 500 kilograms per hectare, barely enough for household consumption, with nothing left for sale. With no reliable income stream, she had no buffer against drought, illness, or the cost of sending her children to school.

THE CHALLENGE	Yulia's situation was shaped by a convergence of interconnected disadvantages that define the reality of women smallholders across East Africa. Low soil fertility, an absence of improved variety access, isolation from formal markets, and the structural gender barriers that limit women's access to credit and land rights combined to keep her yields stagnant season after season. Climate variability added a further layer of risk; erratic rainfall and longer dry spells made traditional varieties increasingly unreliable.
THE INTERVENTION	AFAAS partner organisations, anchored by the Selian Agricultural Research Institute (SARI), introduced Yulia to a set of high-yielding, disease-resistant, and drought-tolerant pigeon pea varieties specifically selected for the agro-ecological conditions of the Kilosa area. The intervention supports AFAAS policy drive on Sustainable Development Goals- SDGs especially on (SDG 1-No poverty and SDG 2- zero hunger). Both goals are heavily interconnected and rely on steady income essential for people to afford nutritious food. Yulia received structured training in Integrated Soil Fertility Management, learning to combine organic manure with targeted mineral fertiliser applications to rehabilitate her soil's nutrient base. Most significantly, she was connected to the Export Trading Group (ETG), a commodity aggregator with guaranteed offtake agreements for export-quality pigeon pea. For the first time, Yulia knew before she planted what she would be paid for when she harvested. She was also enrolled in a producer-marketing group, building collective negotiating power alongside other women farmers.
THE IMPACT	The results exceeded Yulia's expectations. Her yields nearly tripled, rising from 500 to 1,300 kilograms per hectare. With a guaranteed buyer and a collective bargaining platform, she secured prices significantly above the local informal market rate. The income she generated enabled her to diversify beyond pigeon pea: she purchased dairy cows and goats, transforming her household's nutrition, income streams, and long-term resilience. Her children's nutritional

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status improved measurably. Her ability to manage household shocks: illness, drought, and school fees was transformed.

500 → 1,300 kg/ha	Dairy cows & goats	ETG guaranteed market
Pigeon pea yield — nearly 3× increase	New income streams from diversification	Secured export-price offtake for the first time

> *"Through adoption of improved pigeon pea and ISFM practices, my income has increased, and food security has improved. I no longer fear the lean season."*
>
> **— Yulia Sehaba, Smallholder Farmer, Kilosa District, Morogoro Region, Tanzania**

Yulia's story carries a dimension that transcends yield statistics: it is a story about gender and power. Women farmers in sub-Saharan Africa cultivate up to 80% of household food yet receive a disproportionately small share of extension services, credit, and market access. By deliberately designing the intervention to include women-centred producer groups, guaranteed markets, and income diversification, the AFAAS programme created conditions that enhance the African union Agenda 2026 (aspiration 6& 3) and the Kampala Declaration on evidence for inclusive development for structural gender empowerment, not just agricultural improvement (Mathematica, 2023).

The collective bargaining power Yulia gained through her producer-marketing group also meant that her success was not contingent on the generosity of a single buyer. She negotiated. She advocated. She led. The extension system gave her the knowledge, but it also gave her a seat at the table.

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STORY
03

Building a Cassava Business Empire

Wenchi District, Brong Ahafo Region, Ghana ◆ Innovation: High-Quality Planting Materials & Industrial Market Linkages

Charles Bediako does not describe himself as a farmer. He describes himself as a businessman who happens to grow cassava, and that distinction, small as it might seem, is the whole point.

In 2010, Charles was indistinguishable from millions of smallholder farmers across West Africa: working a small plot in Wenchi District in Ghana's Brong Ahafo Region, growing cassava as a subsistence staple, unable to break through to the commercial scale that would make agriculture a viable livelihood rather than a means of last resort. His yields were modest. His market was local and informal. And cassava, despite being one of Africa's most resilient and widely consumed crops, was seen in his community as a subsistence staple, not a commercial opportunity.

THE CHALLENGE	The paradox of cassava in West Africa is striking. It is one of the most consumed foods on the continent, yet one of the most undervalued in its commercial potential. For Charles, the barriers were systemic. Access to improved, certified planting materials was limited. Knowledge of intercropping systems that could improve land productivity was absent. And the processing infrastructure that could transform raw cassava into a market-ready commodity: flour, starch, and chips simply did not exist in Wenchi. Without a processing market, cassava remained a food crop, not a cash crop.
THE INTERVENTION	The AFAAS Country forum network in Ghana with the GBD initiative introduced Charles to the Bankyehemaa variety; a high-yielding, disease-resistant improved cassava variety, alongside technical training in strip-intercropping with cowpeas. Agroecology practices enabled Charles to maximise land productivity while simultaneously building soil nitrogen through the legume companion crop. But the most consequential part of the intervention was the market linkage component. AFAAS-connected extension agents helped Charles understand that his highest-value product was not cassava roots for local consumption, but certified high-quality cassava cuttings; planting materials in demand from regional agricultural productivity programmes, including the World Bank-funded West African Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP). He transitioned from growing a commodity to supplying a value chain.
THE IMPACT	Charles's transformation was spectacular in scope and speed. He expanded his farm from 0.4 hectares to 25 hectares; a 62-fold expansion driven by commercial cassava cutting sales and the reinvestment of profits into land and inputs. His success became a visible catalyst: it attracted a cassava processing factory to Wenchi, creating a stable industrial market not just for Charles, but for every cassava farmer in the district. He was awarded Best District Cassava Cultivation Farmer in 2011, but his most significant contribution was not the award. It was the factory. His farm became the anchor that made industrial cassava processing viable in a district that had none.

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0.4 → 25 ha	1 processing factory	District award
Farm expansion — a 62-fold scale-up	Attracted to Wenchi by Charles's commercial success	Best Cassava Farmer, Wenchi District, 2011

> *"Cassava production made me a businessman. I no longer think about how to survive the next season; I think about how to grow the next enterprise."*
>
> **— Charles Bediako, Commercial Cassava Farmer, Wenchi District, Ghana**

Charles's story illuminates one of the most underappreciated dynamics in African agricultural development: the catalytic multiplier effect of one farmer's transformation on the broader local economy. A single well-supported commercial farmer attracted an entire processing factory, creating employment, generating demand for other farmers' output, and fundamentally changing the economic possibilities of an entire district. This becomes evidence why AFAAS and its partners leading the African Union soil Observatory (AUSO) that aimed at addressing soil degradation challenges across Africa by strengthening the generation, harmonization and use of soil health data

This is what the GBD framework is designed to produce: not isolated successes, but catalytic ones. When extension goes beyond the demonstration plot to link farmers to capital, markets, and supply chains, the results are not additive; they are transformative. Charles did not just grow more cassava. He grew a local agri-economy.

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STORY 04

Redeeming the 'Barren' Land

Nyaruguru District, Southern Province, Rwanda ◆ Innovation: Agricultural Soil Liming for Acidic Land Restoration

In the Nyaruguru District of Rwanda's Southwest Central Plateau, there are fields that people in the community call 'barren.' Not metaphorically, literally. Generation after generation had planted in these soils and watched their crops wither and fail, the leaves turning yellow, the roots stunted, the harvests negligible. The soil pH in some plots was as low as 4.2; levels of acidity that render most crop nutrients chemically unavailable, regardless of how much fertiliser is applied.

Xaverine Murebwayire was one of the farmers who worked on these fields. She owned no house. So poor was her situation that she worked in her neighbours' fields in exchange for food; a woman of extraordinary resilience was reduced to labouring for survival on land that science would later reveal could have supported three times the yields with the right intervention.

THE CHALLENGE

Soil acidity is one of Africa's most silent agricultural crises. In Rwanda's highland areas, including Nyaruguru, decades of rainfall leaching and intensive cultivation without lime application had pushed soil pH below the threshold at which most crops can access phosphorus, calcium, and magnesium. At pH 4.2, even a farmer who applied every recommended input correctly would see minimal response because the nutrients were locked in the soil chemistry, unavailable to plant roots. The community's belief that their land was cursed was not ignorance; it was the only logical explanation available to people who had never received an explanation from science (Leal Filho et al., 2018).

THE INTERVENTION

The Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB), an AFAAS network partner, launched a targeted soil liming programme in Nyaruguru District. Xaverine was identified as a participant and received training in a three-component soil restoration system: agricultural lime to neutralise pH; farmyard manure to rebuild organic matter and microbial life; and targeted inorganic fertiliser to provide immediate nutrient availability as the soil chemistry recovered. The training was practical, locally grounded, and delivered through farmer field school methodology; not a lecture, but a learning process conducted on her own plot, with her own hands, producing results she could observe across a single season.

THE IMPACT

Xaverine's Irish potato yields leapt from 10 to 30 metric tonnes per hectare, a threefold increase that was not the result of working harder, but of working with science. The financial impact cascaded rapidly through every dimension of her life. She built a permanent house. She purchased two pigs, both an income source and a source of manure for continued soil improvement. She hired four field workers, becoming an employer in a community where she had once laboured for others. She enrolled her son in school and secured medical insurance for her entire family. The intervention illustrates how science-led advisory services can support climate-smart land restoration objectives under

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Agenda 2063 and national agricultural transformation plans National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs).

10 → 30 MT/ha	**4 workers hired**	**Full family insured**
Irish potato yield — a 3× increase in one season	From labourer to employer	Health coverage secured for the first time

> *"This programme is my redeemer. We have all the food we need, I can pay for school, and my family has medical insurance. The land was not barren; it just needed science-based evidence and innovations."*
>
> **— Xaverine Murebwayire, Smallholder Farmer, Nyaruguru District, Rwanda**

Xaverine's story is perhaps the most striking in this compendium precisely because the barrier to her transformation was invisible to the naked eye. She did not need more land. She did not need to work harder. She needed a scientist or someone trained by one to look at her soil and say: "This is not a curse, this is chemistry, and chemistry has a solution".

That scientist arrived in the form of an extension worker trained by the Rwanda Agriculture Board and supported through the AFAAS network. The solution cost relatively little: agricultural lime, manure, and an afternoon of field school learning. The return: three times the yield, a permanent house, four jobs, and a family insured against illness was immeasurable.

Soil liming is replicable. The acidic soils of Rwanda's highlands are not unique; similar conditions affect significant portions of highland East Africa, Southern Africa, and the Congo Basin. AFAAS, through its Country Fora, is systematically documenting and sharing this evidence so that Xaverine's transformation does not remain an exceptional case but becomes a continental blueprint.

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Cross-Cutting Lessons: What These Four Stories Tell Us

These stories demonstrate that sustainable agricultural transformation does not occur through isolated projects, but through coordinated extension systems that connect policy, science, markets, finance, and local institutions. AFAAS' continental role is to strengthen these systems so that innovation consistently reaches last-mile communities across Africa. Taken together, these four stories from Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana, and Rwanda reveal five structural insights about what makes agricultural extension work:

1. **Knowledge alone is necessary but not sufficient.** Every story in this compendium was triggered by a knowledge transfer: a new variety, a soil management technique, an ISFM practice. But in every case, the knowledge became transformative only when it was accompanied by access to inputs, credit, and markets. Extension that stops at the demonstration plot leaves farmers halfway across the bridge.
2. **Market linkages are multiplier.** Yulia's pigeon pea, Charles's cassava cuttings, and Divencio's soybeans all achieved commercial returns only because someone connected them to a buyer. Yield gains without price certainty are agronomically interesting but economically precarious. The GBD framework's insistence on market linkage as a core extension function is validated by every story in this volume.
3. **Science can undo myths.** Xaverine's 'barren' land was not cursed; it was acidic. Across Africa, millions of farmers are labouring under similar misconceptions, not because they are unscientific, but because science has not reached them. Every extension worker trained in soil chemistry is a myth-breaker.
4. **Gender equity is a system design choice.** The fact that Yulia's producer group was deliberately women-centred did not happen by accident. The 62% women participation rate in the GP-SEAP programme did not emerge naturally. These outcomes required intentional design (Mathematica, 2023). Extension systems that are not designed for inclusion will exclude by default.
5. **Transformation is catalytic, not isolated.** Charles's success attracted a factory. Divencio's tin roof recruited his neighbours. Xaverine's four new employees are farming households whose livelihoods improved because hers did. The return on investment in agricultural extension is not calculable by looking at one farm; it compounds across communities and across time.

CALL TO ACTION

Be Part of the Transformation

These four stories prove that agricultural extension is the bridge that turns ideas into reality; that turns a grass roof into a tin one, a subsistence plot into a 25-hectare enterprise, and a 'barren' field into a 30-tonne harvest. But reaching the millions of African farmers who have never received any advisory service requires investment at a scale that matches the ambition.

1. Invest in strengthening integrated continental and national AEAS system coordination through AFAAS and its country fora.

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2. Expand the Going Beyond Demos framework by funding programmes that link farmers simultaneously to knowledge, credit, and markets, not just demonstration plots.
3. Strengthen Country Fora across Africa's 54 nations in scaling inclusive, climate-resilient, and market-oriented extension systems, and to ensure that knowledge generated at the continental level reaches the last-mile farmer.
4. Fund women-centred extension programme design that treats gender equity as a system architecture requirement, not an afterthought.
5. Commission and disseminate evidence: success stories, case studies, and policy briefs that build the political case for consistent AEAS investment.

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ABOUT AFAAS

The African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) is the continental body mandated by the African Union Commission to promote lesson learning, knowledge exchange, and innovation in Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) across Africa. Operating through Country and Regional Fora spanning over 28 countries, AFAAS serves as the primary continental platform for coordinating and strengthening AEAS in support of CAADP, the Malabo Declaration, and Agenda 2063.

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