

Farm AFRICA

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Case Study: Micheal Obiero

As a child Micheal Obiero developed the crippling disease polio. Forty-five years later and Michael is now a beacon farmer for the Africa 100 Cassava Project, inspiring people from miles around with his new and innovative approach to farming.

Living near the Kochogo location, with his nearest town of Kisumu around an hour's drive away, Michael farms a new variety of cassava.

With a wife and XX children to feed, school fees to find and extended family to look after, Michael has his work cut out. And in Kenya there is no special treatment or support to make up for the fact that he can't walk.

Instead Michael has invested hard labour and dedication into making his farm a success, working with his cousin Bedrem Obiero. To get around, Michael uses a three-wheel bike as a wheelchair, with adapted handle bars as pedals, and the people from his community love him for the success and prosperity he has brought to their region. Working as part of the Kamicha self-help group, Micheal's farm is changing lives.

He pulls himself from his wheelchair and sits on the ground to tend his healthy-looking cassava crops. He uses a Jembe, or type of mattock, for digging, planting and harvesting. This is his only tool.

David Muagua, a member of the Kamicha group, explains more: "Michael has conducted his community through thick and thin. We have struggled with the drought but cassava has saved our community from hunger."

Other members of the Kamicha group gathered on Tuesday October 18 to meet with representatives from the NFU and FARM-Africa to give an update on how the Africa 100 Appeal money was being spent, developing their cassava project.

Chairperson of the Kamicha farming group Charles Ouma said: "The NFU and FARM-Africa have helped Michael to be where he is today. He is an innovator. Members of the group all wanted to come and meet you. They have seen the results of growing the new cassava and they want it to spread.

"There are challenges living here with drought and we have to find new ways of coping. Our next aim is to get a pump to deliver water from the river Nyando. We believe that if we can get more water to the cassava crop it would do even better."

Working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Michael is helping to spread the word about new cassava varieties by running a farming school in his village. Not only can people learn about cassava, he is also demonstrating silaging, planting, harvesting and various other technologies. The focussed group approach means farmers learn new skills and then take away their new-found knowledge back to their communities.

Michael is also leasing another two acres from neighbours, those who have jobs in towns, to ensure he makes the most of the land available. Not bad for someone with only four years in school. A total of 35 houses are currently part of the project – and the numbers look set to continue growing.

Michael summed up his own feelings on life and his current situation:

"I may be disabled but I am not a beggar. I will lead my people out of hunger and starvation," he said.

