

AGROECOLOGY EMPOWERMENT



Prepared by Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM)

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What Works, What Doesn't, and Why?

Practical lessons for women, youth and persons with disabilities

THE CORE MESSAGE

Training alone is not enough. Knowledge needs to be connected to the resources, services and opportunities that enable people to apply it.

01 Introduction

Agroecology can contribute not only to sustainable food production but also to improved livelihoods, economic opportunities and social empowerment. However, access to agroecological knowledge alone does not automatically result in empowerment. Access to finance, markets, productive resources, leadership opportunities and supportive social environments also influence whether women, youth and persons with disabilities are able to benefit.

This Knowledge Product draws on the study “Does Agroecology Empower Women and Youth Entrepreneurs? What Works, What Doesn't, and Why? Evidence from Kilimanjaro, Tanzania”, presented by Angela M. Jesse and Edwin E. Ngowi of Sokoine University of Agriculture at the 4th National Ecological Organic Agriculture Conference in March 2026. The study was conducted in Moshi Rural and Siha Districts and examined the contribution of agroecological practices, VICOBA, gender-transformative approaches and inclusive entrepreneurship to empowerment.

The purpose of this knowledge product is to translate the study findings into practical lessons for agroecology practitioners and multipliers.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Agroecology practitioners • Multipliers • Trainers • Programme teams working on inclusive livelihoods, entrepreneurship and gender transformation.

02 What Did the Study Find?

The study highlights two areas where combined approaches contributed to positive outcomes, while also identifying groups and conditions where important gaps remained.

WHAT WORKED | Training + finance

The combination of agroecological training and VICOBA contributed to positive economic outcomes. The study reported increased business capital, income, adoption of

WHAT WORKED | Gender transformation

Women's participation in leadership and household decision-making improved, while the Male Champions approach engaged community actors in addressing gender-related issues.

agroecological practices and access to new markets.

WHAT REMAINED CHALLENGING

- Youth employment
- Participation and leadership of persons with disabilities
- Digital access
- Reporting of gender-based violence
- Access to productive resources, including land

03 What Are the Key Lessons?

LESSON 1: CONNECT KNOWLEDGE TO OPPORTUNITY

Training alone is not enough. Knowledge needs to be connected to the resources, services and opportunities that enable people to apply it.

The study found that agroecological training intensity and access to VICOBA loans were important factors associated with empowerment outcomes. The practical implications for multipliers are:

- Go beyond technical training: Connect production knowledge with enterprise, finance and market opportunities.
- Ask what prevents application: Identify whether farmers lack finance, land, inputs, markets, skills or information.
- Make inclusion intentional: Consider the specific barriers faced by women, youth and persons with disabilities.
- Engage the wider community: Work with men, community leaders and other influential actors to support gender transformation.
- Follow up after training: Check whether knowledge has been applied and identify barriers requiring additional support.

04 Key Knowledge Gaps

The study points to areas where further knowledge and practical guidance are needed. These gaps can help guide future KHEA knowledge dissemination and product development.

1	How can agroecological training lead to viable youth enterprises and employment?
2	How can agroecological producers access markets more effectively?
3	How can VICOBA and other financial mechanisms better support agroecological enterprises?
4	How can agroecology programmes become more inclusive of persons with disabilities?
5	How can digital tools be used while reaching people who lack digital access?
6	How can gender-transformative approaches be strengthened within agroecological programmes?

05 Recommendations

The source study provides both policy and programmatic recommendations. For this knowledge product, they are retained as practical reference points for programme teams and multipliers.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Institutionalize agroecology within national policy frameworks: Mainstream agroecology into agricultural, gender and youth development policies.
- Enhance land tenure and resource rights for women and PWDs: Review and enforce gender-responsive land and inheritance laws to guarantee equitable access to productive resources.
- Integrate gender-transformative and disability-inclusive strategies: Promote equal participation of women, youth and PWDs in leadership, entrepreneurship and environmental governance.
- Develop digital and market access infrastructure: Expand rural digital connectivity and e-commerce training to address digital exclusion and improve youth participation in agroecological value chains.

06 Programmatic & Practice Recommendations

01 Participatory financing

Scale up participatory financing models such as VICOBA by mobilizing new members, conducting needs assessments and tailoring training to local contexts.

02 Women's movements

Strengthen women's movements to engage duty bearers in localized advocacy and address harmful social norms that hinder women, girls and PWDs.

03 Capacity & mentorship

Integrate technical agroecological training with business management, leadership coaching and value addition to enhance entrepreneurial sustainability.

04 Male engagement

Expand male engagement in gender equality and GBV prevention, including through faith-based organizations, to sustain behavioural change and accountability.

05 Multi-stakeholder collaboration

Encourage partnerships among government, academia, civil society and private actors to co-create locally relevant agroecological innovations and monitoring systems.

EVIDENCE SOURCE

Jesse, Angela M. & Ngowi, Edwin E., Sokoine University of Agriculture. "Does Agroecology Empower Women and Youth Entrepreneurs? What Works, What Doesn't, and Why? Evidence from Kilimanjaro, Tanzania." Presented at the 4th National Ecological Organic Agriculture Conference (NEOAC), Dodoma, 3–5 March 2026.