



# **MAMA LAYLA SMALLHOLDER FARMERS EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM**

The Farmers Journey





## Executive Summary

Mama Layla initiated an empowerment program aimed at supporting small-scale farmers. The approach is holistic and hands-on; Mama Layla walks the entire journey with farmers— from planting to harvesting to market, providing continuous guidance and support.

By equipping smallholder farmers with the necessary tools, knowledge, and financial backing, Mama Layla's program creates a sustainable agricultural model that fosters economic growth and community development. Through this initiative, we are committed to making a tangible difference in the lives of farmers and their families, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of food security and economic prosperity.





## Mama Layla's Farmers Journey Report

### 1. Christine Mbithe (Farmer)

**Crops:** 0.5 acres of Cabbage, 1.5 acres of Onion

**Location:** Sultan Hamud, Makueni

There are over 7.5 million smallholder farmers in Kenya accounting for around 80% of the nation's total agricultural output. (Farms between 1-5 acres).

These farmers mostly rely on rain-fed irrigation which makes them vulnerable to the erratic weather patterns caused by climate change.

Many financial challenges plague smallholder farmers such as access to the financial sector, due to the perceived high risk. Farmers are often burdened to pay the high interest rates of the only loans available to them.

Additionally, farmers often get a very low price offered for their produce by middlemen. Coupled with the low yielding of the crops due to poor quality of inputs invested in, the returns of the farmer are often very low or they only break even.

The following Farmer; Christine Mbithe, joined this farming project and had been benefited from the results, as indicated in her journey below.

#### **Journey Overview:**

Christine Mbithe's farming journey began with the other farmers enrolled in the project, and Mama Layla had a meeting where we explained the benefits of joining the project as well as how the project would be run.

#### **Meeting of Project Farmers**

Following our meeting, Mama Layla carried on with the crucial step of inspecting Christine's Farmland and segmenting 2 acres of it after expert testing assured us of the fertility and optimum chemical balance in the soil, ensuring a bounty harvest, and ensuring she had a



secure water source. Our teams worked on the preparation of the farm and since Christine was equipped with a borehole with water suitable for irrigation. Christine would irrigate her farm using basin irrigation methods.

### [Christine Farm Pre-Project](#)

Before joining the project, Christine Mbithe mainly planted subsistence crops such as maize and beans. She would harvest 5 bags each weighing 90 kgs of beans per acre each selling at Ksh70. As for maize, she would harvest 10 bags per acre each selling at Ksh3,000, leaving her with earnings of Ksh30,000 per season.

### [Maize crops at Christine's Farm](#)

### [Bean Crops at Christine's Farm](#)

Christine Mbithe was eager to increase the yield of her farm as well as the income she received from it, so, Once the land was approved, she eagerly started her journey with the project.

With the help of our financial partners, Kingdom Bank we secured a loan through the project for her. With the loan, we would purchase high-grade quality Farm inputs from our Partners Syngenta and Yara. In January of 2024, Christine Mbithe received the Fertilizer, Insecticide, seeds and other farm inputs and began the cultivation of her farm aided by our agronomy support. Christine Mbithe's farm was now set to receive much more yield and income.

### [Handover of Farm Inputs by Syngenta and Mama Layla](#)

#### **Onion Cultivation:**

- **Nursery Stage:**
  - Seeds Planted: 100,000 onion seeds
  - Germination Percentage: 90%
  - Crop Vigor: Excellent

The nursery phase was highly successful, demonstrating a strong germination rate of 90% and excellent crop vigour. This robust start laid a solid foundation for future growth.

- **Transplanting:**
  - Survival Rate Post-Transplanting: 100%

Following the nursery stage, all seedlings survived the transplanting process, maintaining their initial vigour and ensuring a promising outlook for the crop yield.

#### [Onion seedlings at Christine Farm](#)

#### **Cabbage Cultivation:**

- **Nursery Stage:**
  - Seeds Planted: 3,200 cabbage seeds
  - Germination Percentage: 90%
  - Crop Vigor: Excellent

Similar to the onions, the cabbages showed a strong start with a 90% germination rate and excellent crop vigour. This consistency in seed performance was pivotal for the crop's development.

#### [Cabbage Seedlings at Christine's Farm](#)

- **Growth Stage:**
  - Head Formation: Uniform
  - Pests and Diseases: Under control

As the cabbages matured, the head formation was observed to be uniform, indicating a healthy and well-managed crop. Pest and disease management practices were effectively implemented, ensuring minimal impact on crop health.

#### **Solar Media and Agronomy support**

At the start of the project, Christine Mbithe received a solar-run device called Solar Media from Mama Layla. This device has information on farming practices with vivid illustrations and instructions in several local languages to help the farmer improve their knowledge base on agriculture. This agronomy education from the solar media educated the farmers on

previously unknown effective farming practices such as; making furrows on the farm, applying manure, effective weeding up to the storage of the harvest and many more topics.

Christine Mbithe has reported that her farm has greatly benefited from this additional knowledge and has improved the health of her crops. She has instructed her farmhands to watch the Solar media content and learn useful skills since the audio is also in Kikamba, their local language. Her farm hands own farms are also sure to benefit from their added knowledge as a result of the Solar Media.

The farm hands also benefit from the lightbulbs which the Solar Media is equipped with by using them to light up their living quarters and compound at night. Solar energy also provides a source of energy for charging their cell phones.

#### [Project Farmers Watching a Video on Solar Media](#)

Along with Christine Mbithe's education from Solar Media, she also receives regular agronomy support from the project agronomist who instructs and closely guides her throughout the farming cycle.

#### [Agronomist supervising transplanting of onion seedlings](#)

### **Harvest Preparation**

With the crops nearing harvest, the results of careful planning, diligent work, and effective management are evident. The onions and cabbages are thriving, with robust growth and minimal issues from pests and diseases. The meticulous attention and care provided to the farm through agronomy support and proactive measures taken throughout the farming process provided by Mama Layla have set Christine Mbithe up for a successful and bountiful harvest.

The onions are set to produce 18 tons (18,000 kg) per acre. Each Kg is going at Ksh 100 to 150.

#### [Onions near full maturity](#)



The cabbage is set to produce 5,000 heads per acre. With underestimated sales projections at Ksh 60 per head, Christine is on her way to making large profits.

### [Cabbages near maturity](#)

She can fully repay the loan financed by Kingdom Bank and still make a big profit. The project has enabled her to venture into cash crop farming using the highest quality inputs thus increasing her yield and connecting her with a high-paying market provided by Mama Layla, Christine can now self-finance for the seasons to come.

Christine Mbithe has been so satisfied with the project that she has decided to add another 2 acres to the land she allocated to enter the project. In addition, her neighbours have enquired about the project and wish to join the project.

Christine Mbithe's future is bright, she is now able to venture into lucrative cash crop farming and has access to a well-paying market. The high-quality inputs and agricultural education provided through Solar Media will continue to result in high yields.

### [Christine talks about the project](#)

## **Harvest Process**

Christine Pacino has successfully harvested her produce, marking the final stage of her farming project. The cabbages have thrived, showcasing robust growth, thanks to meticulous planning, diligent work, and effective management throughout the cultivation process. With her produce now ready for market, Christine is poised to reap the benefits of her hard work, culminating in a satisfying and productive farming journey.

### [Harvest at Christine](#)



## 2. Martha Munanie (Farmer)

**Crops:** 0.5 acres of Cabbage, 1.5 acres of Onion

**Location:** Kasikeu, Makueni

### **Project Initiation**

Martha Munanie began her farming journey with other enrolled farmers and Mama Layla during an introductory meeting where the benefits and operations of the project were discussed.

#### [Meeting of Project Farmers](#)

### **Farm Inspection**

Mama Layla proceeded to inspect Martha's farmland. After expert soil testing confirmed the fertility and optimal chemical balance, 2 acres were segmented for the project. Martha's farm, located near a permanent river, uses basin irrigation.

#### [Martha's Farm Inspection](#)

### **Prior Farming Activities**

Before joining the project, Martha cultivated maize, beans, and sukuma wiki. Her 2-acre bean crop yielded 14 bags per acre, sold at Ksh 150 per kg. She also cultivated maize on 3 acres, producing 15 bags per acre, earning Ksh 75,000 in total. Sukuma wiki was grown on a quarter acre with a high yield.

#### [Maize crop at Martha's Farm](#)

### **Joining the Mama Layla Project**

Recognizing the opportunity to increase her revenue, Martha eagerly joined the Mama Layla project after her farm was certified suitable. She received financial support from Kingdom Bank, which secured a loan with the help of Mama Layla for purchasing high-quality farm



inputs from Syngenta and Yara. In January 2024, Martha began cultivating her farm with the aid of agronomy support.

### [Handover of Farm Inputs by Syngenta and Mama Layla](#)

#### **Onion Cultivation:**

- **Nursery Stage:**
  - Seeds Planted: 100,000 onion seeds
  - Germination Percentage: 90%
  - Crop Vigor: Excellent

The nursery phase showed strong germination and crop vigour, setting a solid foundation for future growth.

### [Onion Nursery at Martha's Farm](#)

- **Transplanting:**
  - Survival Rate Post-Transplanting: 100%

All seedlings survived transplanting, maintaining their vigour and ensuring a promising yield.

### [Transplanting of Onion seedlings at Martha's Farm](#)

#### **Cabbage Cultivation:**

- **Nursery Stage:**
  - Seeds Planted: 3,200 cabbage seeds
  - Germination Percentage: 90%
  - Crop Vigor: Excellent

The cabbages also showed strong performance, with consistent germination and vigour.

### [Cabbage Seedlings at Martha's Farm](#)

- **Growth Stage:**
  - Head Formation: Uniform
  - Pests and Diseases: Under control

Uniform head formation and effective pest and disease management practices were observed.

### **Solar Media and Agronomy support**

Martha also received a solar-powered device, Solar Media, which along with regular agronomy support, significantly improved Martha's farming practices and crop health. The Solar Media device also benefited her farmhands, who used the information to enhance their farming skills and improve the yield of their farms.

[Project Farmers using Solar Media to farm](#)

[Agronomist supervising transplanting of onion seedlings at Martha's Farm](#)

### **Harvest and Sales**

On May 27th, Martha harvested 677 kgs of cabbage, which was sold on May 28th at Ksh 20 per kg. Buyers were satisfied with the quality and expressed interest in future purchases. The onions are nearing harvest, expected to yield 18 tons per acre, with an anticipated price of Ksh 100-150 per kg.

[Harvest of cabbages at Martha's Farm](#)

[Onions nearing harvest date](#)

Martha expressed immense satisfaction with her harvest and the assured market access provided by the Mama Layla project. The solar media device has been instrumental in improving her household and farm. Martha will repay her loan from Kingdom Bank with



profits from her first season and plans to expand her project participation by adding 2 more acres. Her success has also inspired her neighbours to join the project.

Here it in her own words: [Martha speaks about her harvest](#)

### **Future Prospects**

Martha Munanie's future looks promising with the Mama Layla project, enabling her to venture into lucrative cash crop farming and secure a well-paying market, ensuring economic prosperity for her and her family.

[Martha and her harvest](#)

### 3. Fidelia Kitivi (Farmer)

**Crops:** 0.5 acres of Cabbage, 1.5 acres of Onion

**Location:** Kibwezi, Makueni

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As detailed below, Fidelia Kitivi joined the Mama Layla farming project and has been very pleased with the outcomes.

#### **Project Inception**

Fidelia Kitivi embarked on her farming journey alongside other enrolled farmers, following an initial meeting where the project's benefits and operational procedures were clearly explained.

#### [Meeting of Project Farmers](#)

#### **Farm Evaluation**

A thorough inspection of Fidelia's farmland followed, during which 1.5 acres were designated for the project. Soil tests confirmed its fertility and optimal chemical balance, promising a bountiful harvest. With a borehole on her property, Fidelia was well-prepared for irrigation using pumped water stored in overhead tanks for drip irrigation.

#### **Previous Farming Experience**

Before joining the project, Fidelia cultivated cabbages, sukuma wiki, spinach, onions and maize. Her spinach sold at Ksh 50 per kg, but her sukuma wiki fetched only Ksh 15 per kg. Due to a lack of knowledge about appropriate pesticides, her cabbages were unhealthy, selling at Ksh 60-80 per piece. Despite healthy onion crops, she struggled to find a profitable market, selling them for just Ksh 40 per kg.

#### [Cabbage crop at Fidelia Kitivi Farm](#)



## Joining the Mama Layla Project

Eager to enhance her farm's yield and income, Fidelia eagerly joined the project once her land was approved. Through the project, Kingdom Bank secured a loan for her, with the help of Mama Layla enabling the purchase of top-quality farm inputs from partners like Syngenta and Yara. In January 2024, Fidelia began cultivating her farm with new fertilisers, insecticides, seeds, and the support of agronomy experts.

### Handover of Farm Inputs by Syngenta and Mama Layla

#### Onion Cultivation:

- **Nursery Stage:**
  - Seeds Planted: 150,000 onion seeds
  - Germination Percentage: 90%
  - Crop
  - Vigor: Excellent

The nursery stage was highly successful, with strong germination and crop vigour, setting the stage for robust growth.

- **Transplanting:**
  - Survival Rate Post-Transplanting: 100%

All seedlings survived the transplanting phase, maintaining their initial vigour and ensuring a promising crop yield.

### Transplanted seedlings at Fidelia Kitivi Farm

#### Cabbage Cultivation:

- **Nursery Stage:**
  - Seeds Planted: 2000 cabbage seeds

- Germination Percentage: 90%
- Crop Vigor: Excellent

Similar to the onions, the cabbages exhibited strong germination and vigour, crucial for healthy crop development.

#### [Cabbage Seedlings at Fidelia Kitivi Farm](#)

- **Growth Stage:**
  - Head Formation: Uniform
  - Pests and Diseases: Under control

As the cabbages grew, uniform head formation was observed, reflecting a well-managed crop with effective pest and disease control measures in place.

#### [Cabbage crop nearing harvest at Fidelia Kitivi Farm](#)

### **Solar Media and Agronomy Support.**

Fidelia also received a solar-powered Solar Media. She reported significant improvements in her crop health and instructed her farmhands to utilise the Solar Media, which they could understand easily due to its Kikamba audio content.

The farm hands also benefited from the lightbulbs equipped with the Solar Media, which illuminated their living quarters and provided a means to charge their cell phones using solar energy.

#### [Project Farmers Watching a Video on Solar Media](#)

Alongside the educational content from Solar Media, Fidelia received regular guidance from the project agronomist, who closely monitored and advised her throughout the farming cycle.

#### [Agronomist inspecting Farm](#)

### **Harvest**

As the crops neared harvest, Fidelia's onions and cabbages thrived with robust growth and minimal pest and disease issues.

## Onion Harvest

- **Expected Yield:** 18 tons (18,000 kg) per acre
- **Price:** Ksh 100-150 per kg

[Onions near full maturity](#)

## Cabbage Harvest

[Harvest of cabbages](#)

Fidelia Kitivi reaped the rewards of her involvement in the Mama Layla project as we harvested nearly 3 Tonnes of cabbages from her farm on the 6th of June 2024, and sold them to retail stores in Nairobi who bought them at a good price.

[Video of 1st cabbage harvest at Fidelia Kitivi Farm](#)

The buyers were very satisfied with the quality of the cabbages and we're eager to buy more from us.

Satisfied with the project, Fidelia, like the other farmers, plans to expand her involvement by adding another 2 acres to her farm. Her success has also inspired her neighbours to express interest in joining the project. With several eagerly asking for a tour of her farm. Fidelia farm is an oasis in the middle of an arid land.

## Future Prospects

Fidelia Kitivi's future looks promising, with the Mama Layla project enabling her to venture into profitable cash crop farming with assured high-quality inputs and market access. The



continued support from Solar Media and regular agronomy guidance from Mama Layla will ensure high yields and economic prosperity for her and her family.



## 4. Solomon Musimba (Farmer)

**Crops:** 0.5 acres of Tomato, 1.5 acres of Onion

**Location:** Kibwezi, Makueni

### Overview of Solomon Musimba's Journey

Solomon Musimba embarked on his farming journey alongside other participants of the Mama Layla project, eager to leverage the benefits and structured support the project offered.

### Initial Project Meeting and Farmland Assessment

The journey began with a meeting where the project benefits and operations were clearly explained to all farmers, including Solomon Musimba. Following the meeting, Solomon's farmland underwent a thorough inspection. Expert testing confirmed the soil's fertility and chemical balance, which is ideal for a bountiful harvest. The assessment led to the segmentation of 1.5 acres for onion cultivation and 0.5 acres for tomatoes. Equipped with a borehole, Solomon planned to use drip irrigation to ensure efficient water use for his crops.

### Meeting of Project Farmers

### Pre-Project Farming Activities

Before joining the project, Solomon cultivated mangoes, cucumbers, and melons, harvesting three pickups of mangoes per season while the cucumbers and melons yielded average results. Additionally, he raised livestock and chickens. Eager for greater success, Solomon embraced the opportunity presented by the project

### Musimba Farm Pre-Project

### Securing Resources and Commencing Cultivation

Through the Mama Layla project, Solomon secured a loan from Kingdom Bank. This enabled him to purchase high-quality farm inputs from Syngenta. In January 2024, equipped with fertilisers, insecticides, seeds, and other necessary inputs, Solomon commenced cultivation

with the guidance of agronomy experts. His farm was now poised for increased yield and income.

[Mr Musimba receives farm inputs from Syngenta and Mama Layla](#)

### **Onion Cultivation:**

- **Nursery Stage:**
  - Seeds Planted: 100,000 onion seeds
  - Germination Percentage: 90%
  - Crop Vigor: Excellent

The nursery phase for onions was highly successful, with a 90% germination rate and excellent crop vigour. This strong start ensured a promising outlook for the crop yield. All seedlings survived the transplanting process, maintaining their initial health and vigor.

[Planting of onion seeds](#)

[Onion seedlings at Musimba Farm](#)

[Onion crop at Musimba Farm](#)

### **Tomato Cultivation:**

- **Nursery Stage:**
  - Seeds Planted: 2000 tomato seeds
  - Germination Percentage: 90%
  - Crop Vigor: Excellent

[Planting of tomato seeds at Musimba Farm](#)

[Tomato seedlings at Musimba Farm](#)

The tomatoes mirrored the onions' success, with a 90% germination rate and excellent vigour. This solid foundation was critical for the crop's development. As the tomatoes matured, they

exhibited uniform fruit formation. Effective pest and disease management ensured the health and quality of the crop.

[Mature tomato crop at Musimba Farm](#)

[Tomatoes at Musimba Farm](#)

## **Solar Media and Agronomy support.**

[Mr and Mrs Musimba receive the Solar Media device.](#)

Solomon and his wife received a solar-powered device known as Solar Media at the start of the project. This device provides comprehensive farming information, illustrated in several local languages, enhancing their agricultural knowledge. It includes valuable topics such as furrow making, manure application, effective weeding, and harvest storage.

Solomon uses Solar Media to access solutions to farming challenges, which he then implements with his team. The device has proven to be an invaluable resource, offering verified agronomy knowledge at their fingertips. In addition to Solar Media, Solomon receives regular support from the project's agronomist, who provides close guidance throughout the farming cycle.

[Project Farmers being introduced to the Solar Media](#)

[Agronomist inspecting the health of tomato Fruit at Musimba farm](#)

## **Harvest of produce**

The fruits of Solomon's labour, supported by the Mama Layla project, have begun to materialise. The first harvest was delivered to buyers in Nairobi on May 28. The onions, nearing harvest, are expected to yield 18 tons per acre, while the tomatoes, harvested on May 6, produced 24 crates (over half a tonne), which were sold at a favourable price.

[Agronomist talks about tomato harvest at Musimba Farm](#)



With these results, Solomon anticipates repaying his loan and making a significant profit. He expresses great optimism about the project and satisfaction with its outcomes. The Solar Media device has also benefited the youth on his farm, equipping them with modern farming practices.

### [Tomato harvest at Musimba Farm](#)

Solomon Musimba's future with the Mama Layla project looks bright, promising further improvement in his life and the lives of those around him.

### [Second Harvest of Tomatoes](#)



## 5. Peter Muthengi (Farmer)

**Crops:** 1 acre of Onion

**Location:** Kibwezi, Makueni

### Overview of Peter Muthengi's Journey

Peter Muthengi began his farming journey with the Mama Layla project alongside other farmers, starting with an introductory meeting where the project's benefits and operations were thoroughly explained.

#### Meeting of Project Farmers

#### Initial Project Meeting and Farmland Assessment

Following the meeting, we inspected Peter's farmland and designated 1 acre for onion cultivation. Expert soil testing confirmed its fertility and optimal chemical balance, ensuring a potential for abundant harvests. Peter's farm, situated near the Athi River, allows for efficient irrigation using pumped water stored in tanks and distributed through drip irrigation.

#### Pre-Project Farming Activities

Before joining the project, Peter grew tomatoes, maize, mangoes, avocados, pawpaws, and bananas. His monthly earnings included Ksh 8,000 from tomatoes, Ksh 50,000 from maize, Ksh 30,000 from exporting mangoes (seasonally), and Ksh 20,000 from avocados. Pawpaws and bananas were primarily for subsistence. Peter aimed to increase his income steadily and recognized the Mama Layla project as a pathway to accessing a reliable and profitable market.

#### Securing Resources and Starting Cultivation

Through the project, Peter secured a loan from Kingdom Bank, enabling him to purchase top-quality farm inputs from Syngenta. In January 2024, he received fertilisers, insecticides, seeds, and other necessary inputs, and began cultivating his farm with support from agronomists. This set him on a path to achieving his financial goals.

## Peter Muthengi Receiving farm inputs

### **Onion Cultivation:**

- **Nursery Stage:**
  - Seeds Planted: 100,000 onion seeds
  - Germination Percentage: 90%
  - Crop Vigor: Excellent

### Peter Muthengi's onion seedlings

The nursery phase was highly successful, achieving a 90% germination rate and excellent crop vigour. This strong start set a solid foundation for future growth.

- **Transplanting:**
  - Survival Rate Post-Transplanting: 100%

### Onions at Peter Muthengi's Farm

All onion seedlings survived the transplanting process, maintaining their initial vigour and ensuring a promising outlook for the crop yield.

### **Solar Media and Agronomy support.**

At the project's onset, Peter received a solar-powered device known as Solar Media, which offers comprehensive farming information in several local languages, illustrated vividly to enhance agricultural knowledge. The device covers essential topics such as furrow making, manure application, effective weeding, and harvest storage. The Solar Media device also includes three solar-powered light bulbs, which have enabled Peter to extend his work hours into the night.

Peter has greatly benefited from the new farming practices he has learned, which have helped him overcome challenges and increase his yield. The project has also positively impacted his



community, as the increased activity on his farm has created job opportunities for young men, helping them support their families.

In addition to the educational benefits from Solar Media, Peter receives ongoing support from the project's agronomist, who guides the farming cycle.

[Agronomist supervising transplanting of onion seedlings](#)

### **Harvest Preparation**

As the harvest date for onions approaches, Peter's efforts have resulted in a crop of healthy onions. He is confident that he will be able to repay the loan financed by Kingdom Bank and still make a substantial profit. The project has allowed him to engage in cash crop farming with high-quality inputs, leading to increased yields and access to a lucrative market. Peter is now in a position to finance his future farming activities independently.

[Video of Peter Muthengi's Farm](#)

Moreover, Peter's success has sparked interest among his neighbours, who are keen to join the project. His future with the Mama Layla project is promising, and the continued use of high-quality inputs and agricultural education from Solar Media will ensure ongoing high yields.