

Food Drying Trainings Boost Nutrition and Income

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One of the food security topics which Global Service Corps-Tanzania is training communities to take up is food drying. GSC-TZ is helping the community members to know how to make simple food dryers to try to reduce the fruit and vegetable spoilage in rural areas which amounts to over 50% losses from gardens, and more from potential wild greens left ungathered. Food drying training helps rural community members to work together to dry their excess fruits and green garden produce for later use in the dry season, or for sale to augment incomes. Lack of food preservation knowledge and methods contributes to significant and common vitamin A deficiencies found in mothers' and children's diets, especially during the dry season. GSC-TZ is showing people how to dry some food and greens, to be able to use them when they are not available.

Travelling to Longido, immediately one is impressed how dry the area is, where rains may occur only once or twice per year. The village Elerai is a Maasai area which frequently experiences droughts and food shortages. GSC-TZ staff talked to community group members who attended the training.

Mr. Mersin Ole Saibul was very impacted by the training done in May 2011. He shared how much he appreciated the low cost dryer, and the education about appropriate drying methods. He also was interested to know how to reconstitute the dried foods for preparation and use in cooking. Mr. Mersin shared, "I dried tomatoes, onions, and greens for my family. The trainers and volunteers taught us. Some people were surprised that I as a man was interested because traditionally we Maasai do not eat greens. Our diet is maize porridge, meat and milk. The training was very interesting, and now I can see how my family can eat greens through the dry season and why it is important."

Participants included community members of both sexes. Mr. Mresi stated, "My family will always have a good stock of dried greens and vegetables whether it is dry season or rainy season. We Maasai men usually are not supposed to cook or build houses, but some of us are different. We do all these things in front of others' wives. We want our wives to cook dried greens. We will eat them. It is no longer just food for animals, women and children. This training has affected our lives. We know how important some kinds of food are to our health. By drying foods and eating them, we will not be so dependent on meat and milk."

During the May training, participants made their own simple home food dryers. In addition they learned drying techniques, methods of storage, and how to reconstitute and utilize dried vegetables and fruits. GSC-TZ also provides general training on improved nutrition, especially targeting vulnerable groups, pregnant and nursing mothers, and children under the age of 5.

GSC-TZ will return to Elerai after 3 months to see what participants have implemented as far as drying wild greens and fruits.



Drying carrots and bananas, Elerai village –May 2011



**Cooking dried reconstituted greens and vegetables in Elerai.
Participants also are holding dried vegetables which they packed and sealed in plastic bags.
A GSC-TZ volunteer assists with the cooking training.**