

Strengthening Smallholder Resilience in Tanzania: **Lessons and Recommendations from the Baridi Sokoni Project**

REVIEW SUMMARY REPORT

JUNE 2026



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
The Project Context	4
About the Baridi Sokoni Project	5
The Project Review Methodology	6
Project Impact	7
I. Improved Livelihoods through Increased Productivity	7
II. Building Climate Resilience through Adaptation and Agroecology	9
III. Gender Responsiveness and Women's Empowerment	11
IV. Improving Household Nutrition and Food Security	12
V. Advancing Community Participation and Cohesion	14
Conclusions and Recommendations	16

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Executive Summary

The Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF), through the Civil Society Partnership for GAFSP, led a review of the *Food Systems Supply Services in Rural Tanzania* (Baridi Sokoni) project, from 12 to 16 December 2025 in Mvomero, Morogoro rural and Wangingombe.

The Baridi Sokoni project—implemented by the producer organisation Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania (MVIWATA), with support from GAFSP—has significantly strengthened the resilience, productivity and market power of smallholder farmers across Morogoro and Njombe. By combining agroecological training, improved access to extension services, collective marketing structures and gender-transformative approaches, the project has contributed to higher yields, better producer prices, diversified incomes and improved household wellbeing. Women and youth have especially benefited from increased economic autonomy, participation in leadership, and enhanced decision-making at household and community levels.

Adoption of climate-resilient, low-input agroecological practices has reduced vulnerability to climate shocks while improving soil health and reducing production costs. Strong participatory approaches, farmer-to-farmer learning, and robust governance structures have increased ownership and sustainability of interventions.

The anticipated construction of processing factories for the project's priority value chains presents a strategic opportunity to further enhance impact. Local processing will reduce post-harvest losses, increase product value addition and strengthen farmers' bargaining power within markets. These investments are expected to create rural employment opportunities, stabilise producer incomes and deepen inclusive local economic development.

However, several challenges—particularly delays linked to supervising entity processes, gaps in forward market arrangements, limited post-harvest infrastructure, and the absence of dedicated nutrition activities—constrain the project's full potential.

Recommendations

- *Direct funding modalities:* Explore direct GAFSP funding to national farmer-led organisations like MVIWATA to reduce delays and improve implementation efficiency.
- *Streamline AfDB procurement:* Accelerate internal processes and develop PO-tailored guidelines to avoid bottlenecks
- *Strengthen market access:* Reinforce collective marketing, secure forward contracts and improve transparent pricing systems. [Tanzania_C...rt - Final | Word]
- *Invest in post-harvest infrastructure:* Build decentralised aggregation centres and enhance training on handling standards.
- *Integrate nutrition activities:* Pair increased production with behaviour change on food preparation, dietary diversity and household nutrition.
- *Deepen agroecology:* Expand support to social justice, land governance and animal health within agroecological systems.
- *Leverage digital tools:* Use digital platforms to improve market information flows and expand access to regional and international markets.

The Project Context

Tanzania's economy remains highly dependent on agriculture, employing over 65% of the population and contributing 29% of GDP. The sector is dominated by smallholder farmers, most cultivating less than two hectares and relying heavily on rain-fed agriculture. Despite the country's vast arable land (approximately 44 million hectares) and favourable agroecological zones, productivity remains low due to limited access to quality inputs, weak extension services, climate variability, post-harvest losses (estimated at 30 - 40% for perishable crops) and poorly structured markets.

Rural poverty persists, with nearly 70% of smallholder households living below the national poverty line. Recent shocks including the COVID-19 pandemic, fertiliser price spikes, global supply chain disruptions, and climate-related events, such as droughts and erratic rainfall, have further exacerbated food insecurity and income instability among smallholder farmers. Women and youth are particularly affected due to structural inequalities in access to land, finance, markets and decision-making spaces.

The Morogoro region is home to the project's spice, beans and cowpeas and one of Tanzania's most agriculturally diverse and strategically important regions, with relatively fertile soils, varied agroecological zones, and proximity to major markets such as Dar es Salaam. Smallholder farmers in Morogoro produce spices (including ginger and other niche spices) and beans, which are critical for both

household food security and income generation. Beans are a key protein source for rural households and play an important role in soil fertility through nitrogen fixation, making them central to agroecological systems. Spices, particularly ginger, offer high-value market opportunities. However, producers face several challenges including high post-harvest losses due to poor drying, storage and handling facilities; limited access to structured and higher-value markets; price volatility driven by middlemen; lack of market information; and climate risks, particularly erratic rainfall affecting yields and quality.

Njombe Region is Tanzania's leading potato-producing zone, characterised by high-altitude agroecological conditions favourable for Irish potatoes. Potato farming is a primary livelihood source for thousands of smallholder farmers and contributes significantly to both local food availability and national supply, especially for urban markets. Despite its high production potential, the potato value chain in Njombe faces persistent constraints, such as seasonal gluts and price crashes, due to limited storage and processing capacity, high post-harvest losses caused by poor handling and lack of a structured cold chain, weak bargaining power of farmers in the absence of aggregation and value addition, and climate-related risks such as prolonged dry spells and soil degradation. Women and youth play a major role in potato production, sorting and marketing, yet they often capture the least value from the chain.

About the Baridi Sokoni Project

The Food Systems Supply Services in Rural Tanzania (F3SRT) project, popularly known as *Baridi Sokoni*, is supported by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) with a grant of US\$ 2.85, through its producer-organisation funding tract. The project is implemented by the producer organisation *Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania* (MVIWATA), a national network of farmers groups, which co-finances the project at US\$1.85 million. African Development Bank (AfDB) is the supervising entity responsible for external monitoring through supervision missions. The project is due to run from September 2024 to September 2027.

The project works to strengthen food systems resilience, improve agricultural productivity, enhance market access and increase incomes for over 4,000 smallholder farmers in Tanzania by promoting agroecological farming of spices (cloves, chili peppers, cinnamon and ginger) and vegetables (tomatoes, peas, beans and garlic) and potatoes. It provides access to training, nurseries and markets, helping farmers achieve higher yields, incomes and economic opportunities, with a strong focus on women and youth. The project is designed to strengthen

horticultural and spice value chains, addressing challenges that were worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, including market disruptions, income losses, and reduced access to quality inputs.

The project is being implemented in Morogoro (spices and beans) and Njombe-Iringa (potatoes) districts. The participants are farmer groups of MVIWATA with members already involved in the cultivation of potatoes, spices, beans and horticulture crops, but who have limited access to government services such as extension, finance, storage and structured markets and face significant market constraints, post-harvest losses and climate vulnerability.

The project is firmly aligned with national and continental development priorities supporting Tanzania's Development Vision 2025 by promoting inclusive growth, food security and resilience among smallholder farmers. It also contributes to the African Union (AU)'s Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) agenda, which seeks to boost agricultural productivity and strengthen value chains across the continent.

The Project Review Methodology

The Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF), through the Civil Society Partnership for GAFSP, led a review of the Baridi Sokoni project, with field-level support from MVIWATA, from 12 to 16 December 2025 in Mvomero, Morogoro rural and Wangingombe. The qualitative review used feminist and participatory methods, ensuring a people-centred evidence gathering process that encouraged women, young and vulnerable people to critically unpack their lived experiences, while also reflecting on the nature of gender power relations and social realities within their communities and the project.

The review entailed 11 key informant interviews with project key staff, farmer group leaders, women representatives and youth to harvest insights on the significance of the project to the smallholder farmers, implementation progress and the challenges being faced. These individuals were purposely selected for their first-hand experience, technical knowledge, participation and

institutional memory and gave insights on local food systems, market access and farmer livelihoods.

A total of 79 (47 men; 32 women) farmers participated in four focus group discussions (FGDs) and were selected to ensure representation of the project's primary target groups, particularly small-scale producers actively involved in the Baridi Sokoni project. The selection intentionally included women and youth from different socio-economic backgrounds to capture diverse perspectives on production, market access, income changes, gender dynamics and climate resilience. Participants were drawn from organised farmer groups supported under the project in Pinde, Kibwaya, Kibogwa and Wan'gingombe villages. These were selected based on their active participation in project activities (training, collective marketing, agroecological practices and leadership roles), enabling them to provide informed reflections on project implementation, benefits and challenges at community level.

Civil Society Partnership for GAFSP

The Civil Society Partnership for GAFSP (the Partnership) is a consortium of civil society organisations that has been contracted by GAFSP to assess a selection of their grant-funded projects. The consortium is led by *ActionAid International*, together with the *Eastern and Southern Africa Small-Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF)*, *Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (AsiaDHRRA)*, and *Coordination pour des Actions en Santé et en Développement d'Haïti (COSADH)*.

Project Impact

I. Improved Livelihoods through Increased Productivity

The Baridi Sokoni project has enhanced agricultural production among smallholder farmers through a combination of capacity building, farm input support, infrastructure support and access to knowledge. Farmers have received training on good agricultural practices, including agroecological approaches, in production and crop handling, enabling them to adopt sustainable production methods. The project has also strengthened farmers' access to extension services through working with local extensionists to provide farmers with timely technical support, quality seed and practical solutions to pest, disease and soil fertility challenges. Smallholder farmers have been able to learn practical skills on sustainable production including sustainable on-farm seed production, improved post-harvest handling, soil fertility management, ecological pest control, tree spacing and mulching.

The project supports economic diversification by encouraging farmers to grow diverse crops rather than depending on a single commodity, which spreads climate and market risks and improves income stability. Connections within communities and between producers and markets are also strengthened through collective marketing, farmer groups, demonstration plots and farmer-to-farmer learning platforms. However, the project could further invest in economic diversification through greater value addition, processing and expanded market partnerships.

In Njombe Region, access to extension services has improved through closer collaboration with district agricultural officers, helping farmers adopt improved potato production practices. In Wan'gingombe district, potato farmers were trained on indigenous seed selection and production, management and post-harvest handling. Farmers are starting to produce their own seeds, freeing them from purchasing in informal markets. For example, Nganda farmers' group which received 10 metric tons of seed have planted it in demonstration plots and distributed to other groups for production. Farmers have reported yield increases from an average of

8-10 tons per hectare to approximately 12-14 tons per hectare, representing an estimated 30-40% productivity increase in some groups during the last production cycle. The planned establishment of a potato processing hub in Njombe is expected to add value to raw produce, meanwhile farmers are actively participating at the production stage.

Farmers in Wangin'ombe explained that they used to harvest 30 to 40 bags of Irish potatoes per acre, but under the project they are expecting to harvest over 70 bags.

Spice (ginger and black pepper) farmers supported through training in agroecological practices and improved planting practices, such as appropriate spacing between spice trees, reported an increase in production of approximately 30% due to improved disease management and soil fertility practices.

In Pinde and Kibwaya villages (Morogoro Region), cloves farmers trained in preparing organic compost and botanical pesticides using locally available materials, such as leaves and ash, reported reducing expenditure on chemical inputs while improving soil structure and crop health. Spice farmers have also adopted improved drying techniques using raised platforms instead of drying directly on the ground, improving product quality and market acceptance.

Potato farmers are appreciating getting better producer prices reduced spoilage from improved post-harvest handling, farmers were trained on sorting and grading before storage and sale. Previously, mixed-quality potatoes were sold together, fetching lower prices.

Farmers are benefitting from increased purchasing power through improved market access from the direct purchase of their products, such as spices, by MVIWATA. The organisation offtakes the farmers' products and later sells them at a higher price; the profits are then shared with the farmers. This has reduced farmers' dependency on middlemen who often dictate below market prices. Farmers participating in spice production have reported improved prices due to direct sales through MVIWATA,

eliminating exploitative intermediaries. For example, in Kibogwa village, spice farmers reported selling cloves at TZS 12,000 (US\$ 5) per kg to middlemen before the project. Through collective marketing arrangements facilitated by MVIWATA, farmers now sell at TZS 20,000 (US\$ 8) per kg. Collective selling has reduced reliance on brokers and enabled collective negotiation with buyers supplying urban markets.

Household incomes have increased driven by higher productivity and better prices in selling spices through MVIWATA. Improved incomes have translated into better food consumption, dietary diversity, access to education and health services and improved housing for smallholder farmers.

Key lessons

- Agroecological training significantly boosts smallholder farmers' productivity.
- Collective marketing and direct off-take eliminate exploitative middlemen and improve prices and income stability.
- Farmer-to-farmer learning and demonstration plots accelerate adoption of sustainable practices.
- Post-harvest handling improvements (drying, grading, storage) directly increase product quality and income.

Stability through Farming

For many years, Mr. Zuberi Nasibu moved from place to place in search of stable employment to support his family. His turning point came after interacting with MVIWATA farmers and joining the Baridi Sokoni project. Through training and support, he decided to settle permanently in Kibogwa Village and engage in farming as a viable livelihood. Income earned from selling cinnamon enabled Mr. Zuberi to begin constructing his own house, an achievement that marks a major step toward independence. In parallel, he opened a barbershop where he also sells men's clothing, diversifying his income sources. Today, Mr. Zuberi no longer depends on his parents' household and takes great pride in living in his own home. He remains committed to agriculture under Baridi Sokoni support, confident that continued engagement will allow him to expand both his farming and business ventures.

He sold 117 kilograms of cinnamon through MVIWATA's structured market at 20,000 TZS (US\$ 8) per kilogram, earning a total of 2,000,000 TZS (US\$ 770) in one marketing cycle. Previously, he relied on middlemen who offered significantly lower prices and irregular payments. Through collective marketing and guaranteed purchase arrangements facilitated by MVIWATA, he secured a higher and more stable income. According to him, the improved earnings enabled him to meet household food needs consistently, buy farm inputs for the next season and diversify his income with opening barber and clothing shops.



Mr. Zuberi Nasibu Milila from Kibogwa Village, Morogoro standing at his house project site. [Watch this video for the full story.](#) PHOTO: ESAFF

Farmer-to-Farmer Learning and Education

Ms. Anna Maria Mbiki stands out as a model farmer and knowledge champion under the Baridi Sokoni project. After participating in farmer field school training conducted on demonstration plots, she gained the confidence and technical skills to establish her own demonstration farm. Her farm now serves as a learning hub, regularly visited by fellow farmers to observe best practices and exchange experiences.

Anna specialises in bean production, which has become a dependable source of income. One of her proudest achievements is using her improved earnings to support her younger sister's college education—a milestone that reflects the long-term social impact of agricultural investment.

Looking ahead, Anna plans to integrate livestock into her farming system to produce compost manure and further strengthen her agroecological practices. In addition to income generation, her harvest contributes directly to household food consumption, ensuring food security for her family.



Ms. Anna Maria Mbiki at her 1.5-acre farm in Pinde Village, Morogoro. [Watch this short video for the full story.](#)
PHOTO: ESAFF

Integrated Farming for Income and Soil Health

Mr. Theodory Mkude is one of the inspiring beneficiaries of the Baridi Sokoni project in Pinde Village. Through training and extension support, he strengthened his bean and spice production, turning it into a reliable and sustainable source of income. With the proceeds from bean sales, he invested in chickens and a pig, with plans to further expand his livestock enterprise.

Importantly, Mr. Mkude applies agroecological principles by using poultry waste as organic manure on his bean farm. This has significantly improved soil fertility and crop yields an approach he proudly attributes to the knowledge gained through Baridi Sokoni training.

Beyond farming, Mr. Mkude is an active member of a community savings and lending group established and strengthened under the project. Access to financial services has improved his ability to plan, save and invest, strengthening both his household resilience and community solidarity.



Mr. Theodory Mkude from Pinde Village, standing happily holding chickens at his farm. [Watch this short video for the full story.](#) PHOTO: ESAFF



Smallholder farmers in Pinde village during a focus group discussion. PHOTO: ESAFF

Stability through Farming

Smallholder farmers in Tanzania are achieving higher yields, incomes and economic opportunities from agroecological farming of spices and vegetables.

II. Building Climate Resilience through Adaptation and Agroecology¹

The project is reducing farmers' vulnerability to droughts, erratic rainfall and rising temperatures while restoring ecosystems. Farmers and their communities are adapting to climate change by practicing agroecological and climate-resilient farming practices. The project strongly aligns to many agroecological principles, in particular the principles of recycling, input reduction, soil health, promoting biodiversity and synergies (to enhance positive ecological interaction and complementarity among animals, crops, trees, soil, and water. As a result, farmers are increasing productivity and resilience while contributing to healthier soils, water systems and ecosystems laying the foundation for sustainable and climate-resilient food systems.

Such practices include:

- The project promotes soil and water conservation practices, including mulching such as the use of organic mulch around spice trees and perennial crops to retain soil moisture, regulate soil temperature, suppress weeds and improve soil organic matter.
- Biodiversity and synergy are strengthened through intercropping (e.g. beans and spices), crop rotation, and the integration of legumes, vegetables, spices and fruit trees, which create mutually beneficial interactions within the farming system and improves soil fertility.
- Farmers are recycling organic matter through composting and using crop residues and organic mulch, especially around spice trees thereby improving soil moisture retention and increasing soil organic matter.

1. The Civil Society Partnership for GAFSP (CSOs4GAFSP) is a consortium of civil society organisations that has been contracted by GAFSP to assess a selection of their grant-funded projects across seven countries: Burundi, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti, Lao PDR, Liberia

- Farmers are also trained in ecological pest and disease management, including the use of botanical pesticides, composting and organic fertilisers, reducing dependence on costly external inputs while protecting biodiversity and human health. The integration of agroforestry and tree-based systems also contributes to carbon sequestration.
- Farmer-to-farmer learning, demonstration plots, and participatory training has helped to strengthen local knowledge systems and is enabling communities to continuously adapt and innovate in response to climate shocks. Through participatory training, demonstration plots and peer learning based on local realities. Knowledge is generated jointly rather than transferred top-down and farmers actively contribute to it.

Overall, the project is integrating and getting co-benefits from observing agroecological principles, albeit skewed towards environmental sustainability. Additional support for social justice and economic fairness components of agroecology could include those in economic diversification, local food systems and nutrition (as

explored in other sections of this report). Land and natural resource governance could also be strengthened through community-led resource management initiatives, local environmental bylaws and dialogue on land security. In addition, animal health is not yet fully integrated and could be improved.

Key lessons

- Agroecology strengthens soil health, biodiversity and resilience while reducing input costs.
- Mulching, intercropping, composting and botanical pesticides enhance climate adaptation.
- Stronger emphasis on social justice, local food systems, animal health and land governance could further deepen agroecological practice.



Smallholder farmers from Pinde Village in Morogoro, Tanzania preparing pose for a group photo with the review team following a focus group discussion.
PHOTO: ESAFF

III. Gender Responsiveness and Women's Empowerment

The project applies a gender-transformative approach, explicitly addressing gender norms and power relations and integrating safeguards to prevent gender-based violence (GBV). The project encourages women and men to question harmful gender norms and work towards more equal relationships at home and in the community. During trainings and community meetings men and women are encouraged to plan together, respect each other's roles and support women's participation in leadership and economic activities.

Women are realising transformative benefits at economic, social and household levels. Economically, women small-scale producers have gained improved access to income-generating opportunities through practical agronomic training, enhanced production, collective marketing, input support and enhanced access to markets and fair prices. Increased incomes have strengthened women's financial autonomy and economic resilience.

In practice, project support to women has been through training at farmer field schools on better and sustainable spice and potato production, post-harvest handling and quality improvement training (e.g., drying methods), business skills and regular financial literacy trainings. Women participate at collective aggregation centres, receive starter input support (spice and potatoes seeds), and are benefitting from guaranteed extension service support.

For example, in Morogoro, women spice producers were trained on proper drying, grading and hygienic handling of cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and ginger. Before the project, most women sold individually to middlemen at lower prices. Through group aggregation, women sold to MVIWATA at prices 20,000 TZS higher than previous farmgate prices. In Njombe, women potato farmers received indigenous seed varieties and training on sustainable agronomic practices and post-harvest storage. Previously, many sold immediately after harvest, when prices were lowest, due to lack of storage. Through collective storage, women are now able to manage sales and negotiate better prices.



Ms. Idaya Mwalongo from Njombe holding a bucket of irish potatoes at Njombe Market. PHOTO: ESAFF



Ms. Sophia Mwakabelela standing at her spice and horticulture shop at the market where she sells various processed and unprocessed spices including ginger, cinnamon, cloves and cardamom. PHOTO: ESAFF

The project is supporting women's active participation by promoting their leadership and amplifying their voices. Women are supported to take on leadership and decision-making roles, strengthening their visibility, confidence and influence within community institutions and local governance structures. This support includes leadership and financial management training, workshops on governance and group management and the review of group constitutions to ensure gender inclusion.

For example, in Morogoro, women from Pinde and Kibogwa cooperatives and MVIWATA groups now serve as group treasurers and chairpersons of farmer groups, roles previously dominated by men. In Njombe, several women have been elected as treasurers of producer groups and the Savings and Credit Cooperative Society (SACCOS). This shift has increased women's visibility and confidence, strengthened their negotiation capacity, and enhanced their influence in local agricultural decision-making spaces.

At the household level, the project contributes to more equitable decision-making by promoting joint household planning, gender dialogue forums and financial literacy training and dialogue on gender roles. Awareness sessions on gender roles encouraged men to recognise women's contributions and support a fairer share of responsibilities at home. Trainings on savings and reinvestment have also assisted families to plan for the next farming season and desisting from spending their farm income at once. Women reported that after training, they now discuss and plan with their husbands how to use the income from spice sales, rather than handing over most of earnings. Previously, the husband was the sole decision-maker, but now families discuss together school fees, farm investments, food purchases and savings. Some men also reported helping more with childcare or farm activities.

Key lessons

- A gender-transformative approach improves household decision-making and women's control over income. Such economic gains enable greater autonomy and resilience for women farmers.
- Women's leadership grows with targeted capacity building and concerted efforts to promote their inclusion and promotion—shifting cooperative roles previously dominated by men.



Ms. Tumaini Kaoko, a smallholder farmer from Wangingombe Village in Njombe, standing in her potato and avocado farm. PHOTO: ESAFF



Faudhia Hamisi, the Treasurer of the Cooperative in Pinde Village, played an important role in supporting the group's activities by strengthening financial management and ensuring accountability in the cooperative's operations. PHOTO: ESAFF

IV. Improving Household Nutrition and Food Security

Increased production and incomes are directly improving household food security and nutrition, with families now able to consume more diverse and nutritious diets. These impacts are particularly significant for women-headed households, who have gained greater economic autonomy, resilience and decision-making power at both household and community levels.



Women Farmers from Njombe Market holding their produce. PHOTO: ESAFF

By managing post-harvest losses for spices and perishable vegetables, the project is promoting better food distribution, reducing food loss and waste, and increasing community self-sufficiency. The promotion of biological pest control measures, as opposed to chemical pesticides and fertilisers, is also improving food safety and safeguarding public health, contributing to good nutrition.

The project, however, does not implement specific nutrition activities, missing an opportunity to complement increased and diversified production with the promotion of good health and nutrition behaviours. Such activities could offer an opportunity to directly influence and improve the preparation and consumption of available food resources.

Key lessons

- Increased production and incomes improve dietary diversity and food stability.
- Reduced post-harvest losses improve community food availability and safety.
- Lack of dedicated nutrition activities limits the project's full potential to influence dietary behaviour.

V. Advancing Community Participation & Cohesion

The project adopts a participatory and farmer-led approach, ensuring that small-scale food producers (approx. 13,000 farmers from Morogoro, Same, Zanzibar, Wangingombe – Iringa) are actively engaged at all stages of the project cycle: planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning. During the planning phase, farmers and other organisations participated in needs assessments, problem analysis and the co-design of interventions to ensure that project activities could respond to local priorities and realities. Engagement is structured through organised producer groups rather than individual participation to strengthen collective marketing and institutional capacity.

The project has a multi-level governance and oversight structure. At the national level, MVIWATA headquarters provide strategic guidance through a Board of Directors, while a Project Steering Committee oversees implementation progress and compliance. The annual general meeting (AGM) receives, reviews and ratifies plans and progress reports. At the district and village levels, local cooperative leaders and elected farmer group leaders provide oversight to the project officer responsible to manage day to day activities, including training, aggregation, record-keeping and market engagement.

Information flows through a structured bottom-up reporting system. Farmer groups hold regular meetings to review progress and identify challenges, after which group leaders compile reports and submit them to district coordinators.



Smallholder farmers from Pinde Village in Morogoro, Tanzania, pose for a group photo with the review team following a focus group discussion. PHOTO: ESAFF

District-level representatives consolidate feedback and share it with MVIWATA headquarters. Reflection meetings, monitoring visits and participatory review sessions allow farmers to voice concerns and propose adjustments, with key issues escalated to the Project Steering Committee for action. This system ensures that farmers' input informs decision-making, maintaining the project's participatory and farmer-led character.

Implementation is carried out in close collaboration with local farmer groups and cooperatives, who play a central role in mobilising members, delivering activities and facilitating knowledge exchange. The project places strong emphasis on capacity strengthening, including training on organisational governance, democratic leadership, financial management, record-keeping and collective marketing. This strengthens the effectiveness, accountability and long-term sustainability of farmers' organisations.

Through the project, smallholder farmers in Njombe and Morogoro have formed producer groups (cooperatives) that are directly negotiating with buyers, securing better prices and collectively accessing inputs. This has reduced their reliance on middlemen and strengthened local farmer networks that will continue to support the community throughout the project and even after the project ends.

"The project has given us a stronger voice in the market and in our communities. Together, we can negotiate, plan and make decisions that benefit all of us, not just a few."
Mr. Zuberi Milila, Farmer from Kibogwa, MVIWATA.

Key lessons

- Farmer-led structures drive ownership, accountability and trust in the project.
- Multi-level governance (village to national) ensures inclusive decision-making and participatory monitoring.
- Strong cooperative systems improve negotiation power and are central to long-term sustainability.



A smallholder farmer and potato trader from Njombe displaying and selling potatoes at Njombe Market. PHOTO: ESAFF

Challenges in the “Baridi Sokoni” Project Implementation

While there is great determination from the Baridi Sokoni project to reduce poverty and economic burden among smallholder producers, it is not without challenges. Review participants noted the following challenges.

- Timely implementation remains an important consideration. Instances were noted of the internal processes of the supervising entity, AfDB, taking longer than anticipated, particularly in areas such as procurement, which contributed to implementation delays.
- In Morogoro, although spices were successfully aggregated and stored, the next buyer was not clearly secured or formally articulated at the time of the review. As a result, some processed spices remained in storage. This raised concerns about price fluctuations and quality maintenance during storage. Farmers emphasised the need for clearer forward market agreements to ensure predictable off-take arrangements.
- Political unrest following Tanzania’s election in October 2025 delayed the review of the project. Involvement of local community leaders, however, helped to build trust, secure permissions and encourage community participation.
- The implementing partner, IITA, funds are centrally managed and go through their headquarters in Nigeria before they are available in Burundi, delaying project implementation.



Baridi Sokoni

Enhancing Incomes, Resilience and Gender Equity

Implemented in Morogoro, Njombe, Kilimanjaro and Zanzibar



A documentary showcasing the results of the Baridi Sokoni project, produced by CSOs4GAFSP. [Watch it here.](#)



Conclusions and Recommendations

The project has strengthened farmer organisations by building capacity in governance, financial management and collective marketing. This has increased interest in joining MVIWATA, with more farmers applying for membership, reflecting growing trust in the organisation and recognition of the benefits of collective action. There is demonstration of strong institutional sustainability through MVIWATA's established farmer-led structures, which enhance ownership, continuity and long-term impact. There is also high potential for learning and replication across other regions and value chains due to its participatory and scalable approach.

The project complements ongoing government and partner initiatives, including the ended GAFSP-funded TANIPAC project, by supporting similar interventions aimed at improving produce aggregation, storage and market access. Complementing government efforts to advance potato production and post-harvest handling, the project is benefitting from strengthened coordination efforts. The project has strong evidence of promoting women's economic empowerment, leadership and decision-making at household and community levels.

Noting the ambition of the project to build resilient and sustainable food systems, the review makes the below recommendations to address existing gaps:

- *Explore direct funding modalities for farmer-led organisations.* The GAFSP should explore the possibility of direct funding to eligible national farmer-led organisations such as MVIWATA, rather than routing funds through a supervising entity. Clear criteria, safeguards and accountability mechanisms should be established that would allow projects to be implemented without a supervising entity, where institutional capacity and risk management requirements are met. This could improve efficiency and reduce implementation delays.
- *Streamline supervising entity internal procurement processes.* The AfDB should accelerate internal processes and procurement timelines to reduce delays that affect timely delivery of project activities, infrastructure and services to improve overall project efficiency. Separate guidelines should be developed specifically to accommodate producer organisations (POs), such as MVIWATA, and other well-established farmer-led groups. These guidelines would recognise the structures, governance and accountability systems already in place within POs, making it easier for them

to access funding and implement activities efficiently.

- *Strengthen market access.* MVIWATA should continue to support farmer-led collective marketing structures and transparent pricing systems to ensure fair returns for small-scale producers and long-term sustainability beyond the project period. Considering market access, storage and market volatility challenges noted in the review, however, it is recommended that MVIWATA continues to strengthen the collective marketing structure, ensuring farmers can coordinate aggregation, storage and sales effectively. At the same time, transparent pricing systems should be reinforced, including clear agreements with buyers and predictable market arrangements.
- *Integrate nutrition activities.* MVIWATA should integrate specific nutrition activities into the project, to complement increased and diversified production with the promotion of good health and nutrition behaviours. Such activities could offer an opportunity to directly influence and improve the preparation and consumption of available food resources.
- *Expand support for agroecology.* While the project is already benefiting from integrating agroecological principles, MVIWATA should explore how to further integrate social justice and economic fairness components. Land and natural resource governance could also be strengthened through community-led resource management initiatives, local environmental bylaws and dialogue on land security. In addition, animal health is not yet fully integrated and could be improved.
- *Strengthen post-harvest management through building of aggregation centers.* MVIWATA should hasten and expand investments in decentralised post-harvest handling infrastructure and aggregation centres. This would reduce post-harvest losses for spices, Irish potatoes and other perishable produce to stabilise farmer incomes, especially during peak harvest periods. Training farmers on post-harvest handling standards should complement infrastructure investments.
- *Leverage digital solutions for market linkages -* MVIWATA should explore digital platforms to improve market information systems and buyer-seller connections especially when targeting the international markets for spices. Also explore other regional markets.

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COVER PHOTO: A smallholder farmer and potato trader from Njombe displaying and selling potatoes at Njombe Market. (ESAFF)

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A decorative horizontal border consisting of a repeating pattern of small triangles in yellow, orange, and grey, some with internal geometric patterns.

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