Project Title:- Improving food security and income of farmers in ASALs through commercialization of gadam sorghum (Karanja D.R., Kamau C. K., Muthoni L., Kaguma A.M., Dr Kariuki C.W., Kavoi J, Dr Ochieng A., W. Wafula J., Ariithi C.C.K. and Kega V.)

Project Description
Sorghum is well adapted in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL’s) and is appreciated as a food security crop. To promote the crop, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) has developed high yielding varieties and supporting production technologies for even higher yields. In Recognition of the role sorghum can play in food security, the Ministry of Agriculture initiated projects like the Eastern Province Horticulture and Traditional Food crops project (IFAD project) and Orphan crop project targeting to increase traditional food crops production in order to improve food security. Sorghum is one of the traditional food crops. Despite these efforts, sorghum production in the ASAL’s has remained low. Farmers in traditional sorghum growing ASAL’s are placing more land under maize that does not do as well hence more farmers are experiencing greater food insecurity; lower incomes and increased poverty.

Some constraints cited for the low sorghum production are: inadequate soil moisture, low soil fertility, bird damage, pests and diseases, high cost of inputs, low adoption of improved varieties, lack of markets and limited utilization options. Farmers consider poor markets as the main constraints to increased sorghum production. KARI Seed Unit (KSU) at Katumani indicate that provision of sorghum market induces farmers to put more land under sorghum.

In Kenya, a potential market for brewing substrate has been in existence for a long time. Gender Sensitive Initiates (GSI) and KARI seed unit analyzed barley, maize and sorghum samples for carbohydrates and found sorghum to have high carbohydrate, low oil and proteins making it a good alternative for industrial processing.

GSI established that Kenya breweries currently required 24,000 tons of white grain sorghum per year. Further analysis has shown this quantity is not available in the market.

The main objective of this initiative was to increase production of Gatiga sorghum variety at farm level and marketing. The Initiative started in selected pilot areas/launching pads for the various actors in ASAL areas to see models that work in production and marketing of Gadam sorghum. KARI/ KARI seed unit is providing basic seeds, capacity building of Stakeholders and research on emerging issues while the MOA, OP and NGOs in mobilization of farmers into production cells and marketing groups, capacity building them on production and marketing and provision of the initial seed for production, EAMC/EABL and their appointed agent Smart logistics in lower eastern in procurement and utilization and financial institutions (Banks) for financial services.

The project will increase the sorghum production and contribute indirectly to more employment as there will people needed to work on the farms, processing and marketing of the produce.