Digital Tools for Women Farmers
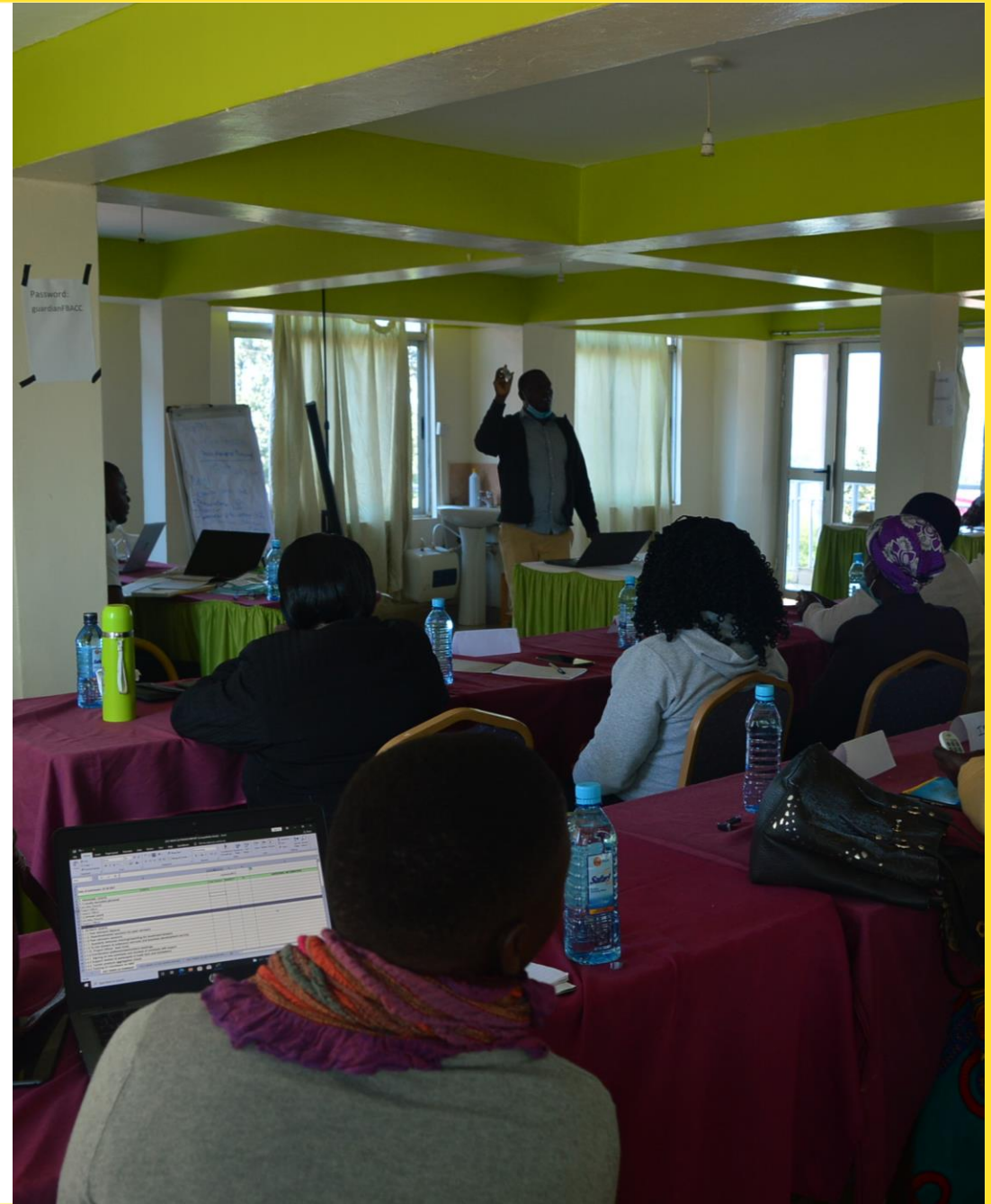
By International Solidarity Foundation

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Introduction

- One of our goals as ISF is to **strengthen the livelihood resilience of the women farmers** against different stressors and shocks such as

    - *adverse and unpredictable weather patterns,*

    - *climate changes,*

    - *Poor and unstainable markets,*

    - *seclusion from the financial services and constrained government services*

- On this goal, we are working with **2 local partners** (NNWS & BWCBO); about 1300 members –over 90% are women

- Our problem as project implementers: how do we address the stressors and shocks **better**? How can we ensure that women farmers…

    - *access market information real-time?*

    - *sell wide and at their convenience?*

    - *access payment platforms and other banking services at their convenience?*

    - *access extension services and advice at their convenience?*

    - *access weather forecasts on real-time?*

- Adoption of digital tools as one of the better strategies.

- Experiment: 132 beneficiaries, 22 of which were peer advisers

Collaborations

- ISF
- NNWS & BWCBO
- NIFTECS
- MoA

Results and Successes

Our expectation: adoption of the digital tools by the women farmers

Success stories

- 26 farmers bought smartphones.
- 45 farmers joined key WhatsApp farming groups such as *Kilimo Bora* PPP group
- 40 farmers joined/liked key Facebook groups such as BWCBO Facebook page and NNWS group
- selling via WhatsApp --Jane Kihugwa and Ngong Mushroom Group
- Mobile loans versus shylocks loans
- m-banking and payment USSD codes such as NHIF

Challenges and modifications during implementation

Challenges:

- lack of better phones
- lack of enough and constant data bundles and airtime
- low literacy levels and advanced ages of most of the beneficiaries viz-a-viz the languages of instruction
- farmers looking at the time spent on the digital platforms as time wasted –negative attitude

Strategies to address these challenges:

- Sharing devices and pairing
- testimonies

Principles for Digital Development

- Design with the user
- Understand the existing ecosystem
- Design for scale
- Build for sustainability
- Be collaborative
- Use open standards, open source
- Reuse and improve

Feasibility for scaling

- Yes, there are plans for digital inclusion in our programming.