

# Transcript of audio report

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## From field to pint: how farmers with disabilities are leading an inclusive business revolution

**[Male introductory voice]** Hi and thanks for tuning in. You are listening to an Inclusive Futures audio report, brought to you by our global reporter Kimberly Middleton.

[NOISE OF GRAIN LANDING IN A CONTAINER]

**[Kimberly Middleton]** There's a small crowd of people watching Selestine as she pours freshly harvested sorghum grain into a plastic bowl.

It's not a usual thing she'd do as part of the harvesting process, but today she's showcasing her yield for the cameras that have gathered.

Selestine explains in the Luo language, translated by Charles.

**[Selestine]** The sorghum was nice, very very nice, and they [the fields] were by the roads. When people were passing, people were excited and had to look at the farm.

**[Kimberly]** The sorghum crop isn't unusual – about 100,000 tonnes of it is produced in Kenya every year according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation. But this crop is groundbreaking.

It's first time that Selestine and 41 other farmers with disabilities have grown sorghum to supply to East African Breweries Limited, also known as EABL. They'll use the sorghum crop, which was grown on 76 acres of land, to make Senator keg lager.

It's a pilot as part of the Inclusive Futures work programme to find innovative ways to get people with disabilities into employment.

Selestine was really determined to succeed, especially when people in her community questioned her ability to farm because of her physical disability.

**[Selestine]** People were asking me, "Will you manage?" I told them I will manage because I went to it because I wanted to do it. And I was encouraged to do that because people were asking me if I would manage. But my encouragement is that I'm not the only who is disabled, but people are disabled in many different ways. But you love yourself and your disability and you become free.

**[Kimberly]** Today is the weigh-in of the crops, which is why the crowd has gathered. People with disabilities, and the organisations which represent them in this area, have come together to mark the weigh-in and celebrate what they've achieved. Selestine is going to use the money she's made to pay for her son's school fees.

But this hasn't been an easy journey – there's been lots of challenges for people along the way. There have been problems with rains and locusts. And, particularly for Selestine, scavenging birds have attacked the crops.

**[Selestine]** I grew, and when the sorghum became green, birds started attacking it. And I said: “Now this sorghum that I have spent my energy on, why do birds want to destroy it?” and I went to bird chase myself. I went with one of the girls that I live with here. Because the farm was long, she was chasing from lower and I was chasing from higher.

I would leave here at six in the morning and come back at seven in the evening. I did that until I harvested my sorghum. But it was difficult because of the birds – I would have harvested more. I would have harvested quite a lot.

**[Kimberly]** Despite the challenges (and as a government official comments during the weigh-in) this has been a really important start.

The driving force behind this work was a recognition that the supply and distribution – also known as value chains – of big companies like East African Breweries held lots of potential to include people with disabilities.

To find out more I spoke to Simon Brown, who is the economic empowerment expert on the project.

**[Simon Brown]** Value chains, and particularly agricultural-based value chains, were going to generate significantly more opportunity for employment than if we focused only on the core businesses of companies. If we look at East African Breweries Limited, of course we still work with them on how that core of the business becomes disability inclusive, both in the people they directly employ or they indirectly employ through contracted relationships with other companies. But it's still hundreds of jobs.

Whereas the value chain is massive. Just in terms of farmers, it's got 47,000 sorghum farmers just in Kenya. And then you look across the rest of their supply chains and distribution chains, which we collectively then term a value chain, and it's just tens and tens of thousands of jobs that are created – that are not all urban based, and that was a big risk, that we would tend to focus on urban jobs which primarily are for people who are more highly educated because they tend to be formal sector jobs. Whereas the value chains of course breaks that – it takes you very much into rural areas and across educational levels.

**[Kimberly]** So why is this work important?

[NOISE OF CARS, BEEPING HORN, SOMEONE WHISTLES]

To find out, we need to head east to Nairobi where the United Disabled Persons of Kenya – or UDPK – is based. They are a partner on this project, which is really important to make sure people with disabilities are involved in the decisions that affect them, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I spoke with Esther Mkamori who is a programme officer at UDPK.

**[Esther Mkamori]** I think the pilot is a great initiative. Because actually traditionally, no one ever thinks of persons with disabilities as being farmers.

The major barrier is attitudes about disability, where people perceive disability in a negative way, and so these people with disabilities will miss out on opportunities for education, will miss out on opportunities for decision making, even about disability itself. Then at the point where they need to engage in these economic activities they are at a disadvantage.

You don't really get these sorts of interventions that recognise that persons with disabilities take part in these other economic activities, producing farm produce for sale, actually in large scale, and especially dealing with a company at the level of EABL. It's something that we're very excited about – when we get to highlight these kinds of success stories it will definitely make our work easier in this kind of awareness raising and advocacy that we are doing.

**[Kimberly]** Esther is keen to emphasise that people with disabilities can be involved in economic opportunities.

**[Esther]** Actually the first thing that you need to do is actually work with persons with disabilities themselves, work with organisations of persons with disabilities, get to understand what needs to be in place, what can you do. But what you get to realise is it isn't an expensive affair, it isn't an overhaul of your whole system, no, and when you have persons with disabilities telling you that this is what I would need in this area, this is what would work, then it makes the whole process so much easier.

**[Kimberly]** So what was the motivation of East African Breweries Limited to be involved in this project, and how have they found it?

I asked Eric Kiniti, the group's Corporate Relations Director.

**[Eric Kiniti]** I want for us by 2025 to say that we have over three per cent of people in the value chain [being] people living with disabilities. I think we will get the three per cent, which I think is the target that everyone thinks is quite high but I think it's achievable. If we can get that before 2025 I'll be really happy.

**[Kimberly]** The pilot with farmers with disabilities is just one piece of work that the brewery is doing. They're also assessing the accessibility of their offices, making their website more accessible and providing more job opportunities for people with disabilities. Eric says that the work is being seen as a really positive example by the group's parent company, and global drinks brand, Diageo.

**[Eric]** We want to pioneer some of the initiatives that can be able to help drive some of the sustainability work and things that can help us also meet the Sustainable Development Goals. One of the challenges we had before is that we didn't know how to do it. But now that we've found a credible partner who has done this before we are very excited that we are able to roll this out and we're just looking at how can we scale it up so that it becomes a bigger platform and how can it also be scaled up in the other markets that Diageo operates in.

I think we live in a world where not everyone is given equal opportunities and I think that's what we want to address. That makes it very exciting for me – I think it's something that we walked in saying we have no answers, we don't know what's supposed to be done, but we're willing to underwrite to pay for the lessons, whatever it means commercially, but to ensure that we are doing something that makes a difference in our communities.

[NOISE OF DIGGING]

**[Kimberly]** Back in the fields of Homa Bay it's planting season again. The farmers, including Selestine, are really excited for the future of the project.

**[Selestine]** I will encourage farmers and organisations like breweries to continue encouraging people so that people engage in farming because farming is the ultimate thing, it is what does everything. I encourage them to continue training us, and they continue encouraging us, and they continue giving us good things, so that we continue working with those things. Even though we didn't harvest as much as we wanted, I hope we will do better next time. It is working with persistence that will change our lives.

**[introductory male voice]** If you would like to hear more, why not visit [www.inclusivefutures.org](http://www.inclusivefutures.org)