

## Terracing

50% of the farmers Excellent Development work with are subsistence farmers – they rely entirely on their land for their incomes. Even those with some income from elsewhere depend heavily on producing enough food to eat. In semi-arid environments, retaining water in the farm and maintaining soil fertility are vital to achieving food security.

In eroded lands rainwater run off is between 20% and 70%, whilst in conserved land water run off is between 0% and 10%. Plus, land can lose 50-250 tonnes of topsoil a hectare every year, if not protected by trees and terracing. It's always the most fertile topsoil which is affected, so soil erosion is the biggest enemy for farmers fighting to keep their soil fertile.

**Cornelius Kyalo, Field manager** – *'Terracing is very important for these trees because it is going to help in maintaining water in the farm. When we have the terraces they are going to act as a stoppage or they're going to stop water that is going to be running through the farm. From the top of the farm down the farm. Therefore when the water is going to be stopped in the farm it is going to infiltrate into the soil, and therefore it is going to be taken by the trees, therefore the trees are going to grow faster. Terracing is also going to help in the conservation of the soil, making sure that the topsoil which is fertile is not going to be washed away by rainwater. Therefore the nutrients in that soil are going to be used by the trees and therefore they are also going to grow fast.'*

So terracing is vital and a big part of Excellent's work is to encourage farmers to take on the arduous task of terracing their land.

Facing the prospect of terracing land, when it takes one person a full day to dig 10 linear meters is an almost insurmountable prospect. The communities Excellent Development work with come together and help each other to dig terraces on each other's farms. This way, they are able to make unbelievable progress. In two years, forty communities have dug an incredible 300km of terracing both on their farms and around sand dams.

**Charles, farmer** – *'Last season we learn alot, because some few people who had terraces in their shambas in the area, we saw them harvesting. That is why we are putting alot of effort in every member's shamba to dig terraces, so that we can harvest and we are sure that if we get the same rains, that we get most of the seasons we shall harvest – if we have terraces in every shamba.'*

The impacts of such a simple solution can't be over-estimated. As a result of terraces, farmers are able to grow more food, not only keeping them and their families alive but enabling surplus food to be sold to provide basic necessities and even school fees.