



MADRE Interim Report to Forix Foundation
September 26, 2019

With generous support from Forix Foundation, MADRE and our partner **Zenab for Women in Development (Zenab)** are empowering women farmers throughout Sudan with the resources, knowledge and skills to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change; build sustainable livelihoods; and ensure food security for themselves, their families and their communities.

Small-scale women farmers—typically between 20-50 years old—produce much of the food their communities and families eat and represent a large portion of the agricultural workforce, with over 70% of women relying on subsistence farming. Yet rural women in Sudan face ongoing crises of poverty, discrimination and climate change, which in turn have contributed to widespread food insecurity and malnutrition among Sudanese families. Nearly 6 million people in Sudan are estimated to be severely food insecure. In addition, communities in Sudan have consistently dealt with soaring prices of agricultural inputs, fuel and food, among other necessities; these challenges have been exacerbated by ongoing protests and violent crackdowns on civilians occurring throughout the country since December 2018, resulting in the April 2019 coup d'état that ousted long-time President Omar al-Bashir.

Despite political unrest, beginning in May 2019, Zenab traveled to four villages in Sudan to register 400 women farmers for sustainable agriculture programs. Zenab focused their outreach on remote, rural and underserved villages that are without or have limited access to programs — government-sponsored or otherwise — that provide support to women farmers. Priority registration was given to small-scale women farmers (those with less than five feddans¹ of land for each crop) as well as widows, women with disabilities and female-headed, low-income households.

In July, with Forix Foundation's support, Zenab purchased 1500kg of millet seeds that they distributed to the 400 registered women farmers across the villages of Wad Sanussi, Wad Daif, Kom Shitaa and Jomla. Millet is one of the most important food commodities in Sudan and a food staple for poor households across the country. Zenab also distributed sesame and corn seeds.

Zenab reports that women farmers faced three significant challenges this harvest season. First, the ongoing political situation throughout the country limited the availability of fuel for tractor use. With Forix Foundation's coverage of key costs for the harvest — including seeds and tractors — Zenab was able to use additional funds from MADRE to secure the necessary fuel. The tractor proved invaluable to cultivating 255 feddans of farmland to date for planting, an area of land that would have been too labor intensive for the women to cultivate for harvest on their own.

Additionally, following a pest attack on a portion of the millet and sesame crops, women farmers had to repeat some of the planting. To avoid additional pests, corn farming was delayed until early September. Since Forix Foundation's support provided tractors and enabled Zenab to purchase 500kg over the projected 1000kg of millet seeds initially budgeted, women farmers were able to adapt to and recover from the pest attack and replant this vital food staple. Lastly, women farmers reported experiencing low precipitation levels to date—10 days only—despite the rainy season that extends from April to December. With the majority of crops harvested and gathered by December,

¹ A unit of area used in Egypt and Sudan, equal to 1.038 acres

MADRE looks forward to updating Forix Foundation on the success of the planting season before the end of the year.

Due to the busy harvest schedule for the women and the associated challenges they faced, Zenab scheduled their technical trainings for the end of October. In a month, 200 women farmers will participate in one 2-day training on inputs and best practices in sustainable agriculture as well as one 1-day training on composting and sanitation. We plan to report on the progress of these Forix Foundation-supported trainings in our final report to the Foundation in December.

On behalf of MADRE and Zenab for Women in Development, thank you for your partnership and commitment to supporting the leadership and well-being of hundreds of women farmers and their families throughout Sudan. We could not do this vital work without you!

**Below are photos of the registration, seed disbursement and harvest progress.
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