

THEORY OF CHANGE

Seed Change designed its program from the belief that the best way to lift people out of poverty – and for them to remain there – is through sustainable economic and social empowerment closely tailored to local circumstances. To achieve economic empowerment, small-holder farmers need to be integrated into well-developed agricultural value chains that deliver a product demanded by a sustainable market. To achieve social empowerment, small-holder farmers need to maintain control over their land and their decision making. Seed Change works to deliver both of these outcomes.

Globally palm oil is a highly valued and traded commodity. Oil palm trees are native to the Kigoma region however the local variety which is still cultivated is a low yielding, unimproved variety that was once widespread across Africa. The yield from these trees is so low that modern processing and marketing techniques are not economically viable. If this yield was increased this situation would change and private sector investment in downstream processing becomes readily more attractive. Seed Change believes that once the yield is lifted the other elements of the oil palm value chain will evolve and small-holders will realise economic benefits more commensurate with cultivating a high value oil crop. Examples of this value chain are seen across the tropical regions of the world where oil palm trees are grown – in South-East Asia to West Africa and Central America.

However for small-holders to benefit from their farming activities in the global agricultural market place, they must be socially empowered and assisted to become equal players, not exploited by larger and more resourceful actors. In this regard Seed Change works to strengthen land rights giving farmers control over land use choices as well as provide training and education to help farmers reach productivity and quality benchmarks. Seed Change works to align the various incentives of, and find common ground between, the public sector, donors and the private sector – both large and small operators, to achieve the goal of sustainably lifting small-holder farmers out of poverty.