



SUCCESS STORY

From Land Mines to “Gold Mine”

SAREP supports Angolan communities to benefit from their natural resources.



A mother showing off her money from the selling of the devil's claw at one of the buying points in Savate, Angola

“The selling of Devil's Claw has really helped us. We didn't even know that we could properly benefit from this plant. I am very happy with the money and I am going to buy a goat. I look forward to the next Devil's Claw harvesting season!”

- Rosaria Mahungulo, a trained Devil's Claw harvester in Savate.



Pictured above, a woman displays ground seed-pod for the Devil's Claw that has become a windfall for her community.

Since the Angolan civil war, life for communities in the Cuando-Cubango province has been characterized by chronic hardship. Unreliable rainfall, poor soils, and abundance of active land mines have long challenged the region's lives and livelihoods, underscoring the need for a productive and viable source of revenue.

In early 2013, the Southern Africa Regional Environment Program (SAREP) introduced a new livelihoods opportunity that would not only generate income for the province's rural communities; it would also provide a potential mechanism to slowly transform the province's reputation from an active minefield into a productive “gold mine” for a high-demand product. Devil's Claw, an internationally marketable plant with proven medicinal properties, has become the centerpiece of SAREP's diverse efforts to generate sustainable revenue for rural communities in Angola's Cuando-Cubango province. With its high demand in Europe, prized curative properties, and natural prevalence in the region, the plant represents a viable opportunity to bring tangible revenues to the province's rural populations.

SAREP has trained 34 trainers from locally Community Based Organizations to harvest, process, and sell Devil's Claw. Through close mentorship and instruction, the trainers have learned to gather the plant's tubers, process them to meet required standards, and package the product to for sale to wholesale buyers. These trainers have transmitted their knowledge to more than 625 community members, who have formed producer groups to legally harvest and sell the plant. SAREP has trained the groups on the use of harvesting equipment, including stainless steel knives for slicing the tubers, nets for constructing drying racks, and bags for packaging.

This fall, SAREP brokered the first legal Devil's Claw transaction in Angola, linking 135 harvesters with a Namibian trading company recognized for its fair trade practices. The resulting sale generated close to \$4,000 in total revenue, averaging \$30 per harvester. For rural Angolans, this is enough to pay school fees, clothe children, buy seeds for cereal and vegetable crops, and improve family nutrition.

According to Mr. Barata, the Deputy Administrator for the border town of Calai, “it is only through initiatives like this that development programs are successful; this is when there are results and people are able to feed themselves.”