

Success Stories of
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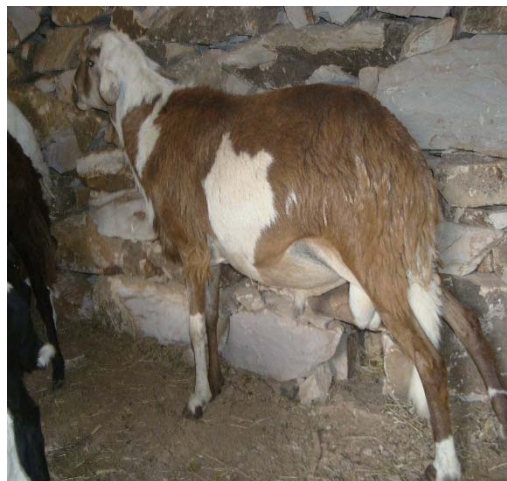
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Sheep Production - Income Generation for Rural Women in Tigray: The Case of Medebay Zana and Hintalo Wajirat Woredas

I. Introduction

Ethiopia has the highest number of sheep in Africa; in 2013, the country had 25 million heads. About 25% of the total annual meat yield and 90% of animal skin export come from sheep. Sheep production serves as an important source of income, source of meat, and other benefits for smallholder farmers, in general, and women-headed households, in particular.

In the country, however, only limited households own large number of sheep. The proportions of households which have more than four sheep are less than 20%. It is also obvious that women-headed households own fewer number of sheep compared to other types of households. Furthermore, productivity is very low due to poor management practices, inadequate veterinary services and poor market infrastructures, among others.

Considering this, Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG2000) demonstrated improved sheep husbandry practices, with particular attention to capacitating women-headed households. SG2000 established Women Assisted Livestock Demonstrations (WALDs) in selected project Woredas. WALDs included selecting the best local breeds, improved housing, improved feeding and veterinary services, and creating better market linkages.

SG2000 started Implementation of the WALDs in 2012 as part of the project "Strengthening Agricultural Extension Delivery in Ethiopia" (SAEDE), funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The project was implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)/Bureaus of Agriculture (BoAs) in two Woredas of Tigray Regional State.

This brief intends to highlight the performances of the introduced sheep with its improved management practices. Furthermore, it also discusses the effectiveness of the trainings and extension services provided through economic and knowledge empowerment of women.

II. Interventions:

The SAEDE project was implemented in two woredas (Medebayzana and Hintalo Wajirat) of Tigray Regional State. Adekemalke kebele from Medebayzana woreda and Hiwane and Amdi weyane kebeles from Hintalo Wajirat Woreda were selected to implement WALDs.

Participatory needs assessment and planning workshop was conducted in 2011 and 2012 to identify and prioritize needs, problems, and thus, interventions. Based on these assessments, introducing improved shoats' management to poor women-headed households was identified as one of the priority interventions in these areas.

Required improved technologies which need to be demonstrated in the WALDs were identified including among others selection of the best breeding stock, proper housing, utilization of improved feeds and feeding techniques, animal health services and record keeping.

Women who hosted the demonstrations were selected based on the following criteria: women having strong interest, relatively poor or school dropouts who live with their parents, and women-headed households with small landholding. Eighteen (18) women farmers were selected and were each given an average of 5 ewes and one ram. Following that, SG2000 organized different training sessions on improved shoat's husbandry technologies such as feed preparation and feeding.



Figure 1. Training of women on feed preparation

A study was conducted in 2014 to assess adoption of the shoat's husbandry technologies and overall performances of the shoats and income generated by the women. Semi-structured interviews, direct observations and review of secondary information were used to collect the relevant data from two woredas and three Kebeles from SG2000 project areas. Eighteen women headed households, who are hosting the WALDs, were selected for the data collection.

III. Results

Adoption of improved shoats' husbandry practice

All of the women who hosted the WALDs have practiced most of the improved sheep husbandry technologies. The women have

constructed sheep barns, used indoor feeding practices, parasite control methods and



Figure 2. A WALD host woman preparing feed

vaccinations. The percentage of the women who continuously used concentrated feeds, urea treated feeds and indoor feeding practices were 83%, 44% and 61%, respectively. However, the number of women who continuously used the technologies has reduced. In 2014, only 79.8% of the total stock have been sprayed with parasite control chemicals, and 73.8% have been vaccinated to prevent common communicable sheep diseases (Table1).

Table1. Percentage of women who continued to use improved sheep husbandry practices (N=18) after introduction

Type of practice	% who practiced on introduction	% who continued to practice
Sheep barns/housing	100	100
Urea treatment pit	72	50
Concentrate feeding	100	83
Urea treated feed	67	44
Urea cactus block	78	50
In door feeding	100	61
Parasite control	100	79.8
Vaccination	100	73.8

Change in income and number of shoats

In 2012, SG 2000 purchased and supplied 123 parent stocks (105 ewes and 18 rams) to participating women. In June 2014, 190 new born lambs were produced from the original shoats (Table 2). The average number of shoats holding increased from 6 to 15 per household.

In addition to the current number of shoats, the beneficiaries have sold 51 animals in the last 18 months. Thirty of the total shoats died due to diseases, accident and unknown reasons.

Table 2. Flock dynamics in the participating households (N=18)

Herd parameters	Quantity
Number of shoats at opening	123
Births, new lambs	190
Purchases	35
Total incoming shoats	225
Deaths	30
Sales	51
Total outgoing shoats	81
Current stock	267



Figure 3. A WALD host, w/ro Letekiros Tsegai feeding her sheep

Further to the increase in the number of sheep holding, the beneficiaries of WALDs have earned significant income from selling shoats. On average, each woman sold 3 sheep and generated a revenue of birr 2,950 from such business (Table 3). The maximum income recorded from the sales of sheep was about birr 6,720 from six sheep (at an average of birr 1,120 per sheep) and the minimum was birr 950.

Table 3. Income earned from selling sheep

Descriptions	Quantity /birr (B)
Total sold sheep	51
Average price	1,041
Gross income	53,091
Number of sheep sold/participant	2 - 3
Average income /participant	2,950

The women indicated that the money earned from sales of sheep was used to pay school fees, buy clothes for their families, purchase grains for food for the household and feed for the sheep, and purchase of better breeds of ewes and rams.

W/ro Letekiros Tsegai, a participant of the project, purchased one donkey with a cart and rented it for transporting construction materials such as sand and masonry equipment. At the current rate, renting such a donkey with its cart can generate an income of birr 80 to 100 per day. Another woman, w/ro Tirhas Negash, also diversified her business by purchasing and including three goats using income obtained from sales of the sheep.



Figure 4. W/ro Letekiros Tsegai arranging her donkey for renting

The participating women farmers diversified their businesses using the income they obtained from sales of their sheep (see box above).

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The intervention in Women Assisted Livestock Demonstrations (WALDs) has been successful in

empowering women economically through utilization of improved sheep rearing technologies. The WALDs contributed in generating income and asset creation for women headed households. The women have earned income from the sales of sheep and used it to cover family expenses and to invest in other businesses as well.

The change in income and skills of the women have also encouraged scale up/out of best practices of the WALDs. The women have gained sheep management skills and demonstrated the results to other farmers and development partners in the area. As a result, the woreda office of agriculture and some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have started to scale out the best practices to other areas outside SG2000 project sites. For example, World Vision has adopted this approach and implemented the WALDs in three Kebeles of Medebay Zana woreda and covered more than 180 households in 2014.

Some constraints, however, need to be addressed to sustainably benefit from the intervention on WALDs. These include shortage of raw materials for the preparation of concentrated feed (wheat bran, oil seed cakes, and other grain bi-products), difficulties to implement the indoor feeding practices, lack of veterinary services and frequent turnover of extension staff, which resulted in poor follow-ups and implementation.

For sustainability and to solve the above mentioned challenges, the following actions need to be taken:

- Strengthening the sheep producer cooperatives or establishing feed processing cooperatives which can help in solving the shortage of raw materials for the preparation of concentrated feed for the sheep.
- Intensive follow-ups and extension support required for women to apply the indoor feeding practices sustainably.
- Adequate attention should be given by the woreda office of agriculture to the WALD hosting women, for the proper follow-up of

veterinary services with the required quality and timing.

Compiled and reviewed by:

Crop and Livestock Productivity Enhancement Theme, and Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Sharing Theme

Contact:

Sasakawa Global 2000, Ethiopia

*Mike Leyland Street, Bole Sub City, Kebele 13,
H.No. 559, P.O.Box 12771, Addis Ababa,
Ethiopia*

Tel: +251 116 628810/11, Fax: +251 116 628818

E-mail: sg2000ethiopia@saa-safe.org

www.saa-safe.org/sg2000ethiopia



Commodity Association- Improving Access to Market for Smallholder Farmers in Ethiopia

I. Introduction

In Ethiopia, smallholder farmers face serious market challenges such as lack of market outlets, price instability, poor transportation services, involvement of illegal middlemen and high transaction costs. These and other marketing challenges have contributed to low profit margins.

The Ethiopian government has identified farmers' cooperatives as a vital mechanism to solve marketing problems of agricultural products in the country. Farmers' cooperatives, both Primary Cooperatives (PCs) and Cooperative Unions (CUs), are involved in input and output marketing. In output marketing, PCs role starts with assessing markets, create linkages, collect commodities from members, facilitate marketing and assess quality. CUs role in marketing extends to exporting some commodities.

Farmers' cooperatives, despite their relentless efforts, are challenged by lack of finance, poor governance, loan default by member farmers, meddling of local leaders, lack of regular auditing and high fraud. Many cooperatives are working within their capacity to address marketing problems in rural areas. The fact that they have large membership size and target diverse commodities limit their capacities. Their contribution can be enhanced with a focused

engagement that strategically addresses marketing problems of smallholder farmers.

As one of the development actors in Ethiopian agriculture, Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) is striving to improve marketing and market access by smallholder farmers in the country. SG 2000, with financial support from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), has designed an approach that complement with and add value to the role PCs and CUs play in marketing. The approach was framed around establishing and strengthening Commodity Associations (CAs) and capacitating Commodity Association Trainers (CATs). The aim was to increase farmers' access to improved technologies, market information, market linkage to input and output dealers and market channel opportunities.

This brief intends to highlight the importance and relevance of CAs in improving smallholder farmers' access to market.

II. Definitions, Concepts and Approach

What are CAs and CATs?

Commodity Association (CA) is an association of farmers voluntarily organized on the same commodity to access better market. CA supports member farmers to access updated market information, establish better link to input and output dealers and create market opportunities. It also helps farmers to access

improved farming technologies and agronomic practices. Commodity Association Trainer (CAT), on the other hand, is a well-trained and skilled person responsible to organize, train, and supervise CAs on improved production methods and marketing. CATs are based at the Woreda Agriculture Offices and work closely with Woreda Cooperative Offices.

Region	Woredas	Total no. of CAs	Total members of CA	Commodity Type
Amhara	3 Woredas (Chilga, Guagusa, D/Telat)	18	2865	Teff, Wheat, Ginger, Honey, Spices, Maize, and Bean
Oromia	3 Woredas (L/Dulecha, D/Libanos & A/Negele)	18	2742	Teff, Maize, Wheat,
SNNP	2 Woredas (Gumer and A/Wondo)	12	1667	Potato, Barley, Tomato, Wheat, Maize, F/Bean

Table 1. CAs, members and focus commodities in the three SG2000 project regions

Membership in CAs

Organizing CAs is the primary responsibility of CATs in consultation with the Woreda cooperative desk. Membership in CAs is based on criteria set by SG 2000, and is open to any farmer having at least 0.5 ha of land, producing a specific commodity of interest for market and willing to sell in a group. A CA have a maximum of 150 members which is governed by a committee composed of 5 members. The committee includes Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, Production Coordinator and Marketing Coordinator. For easy management, each CA splits into three sub-groups with members not exceeding 50. This helps to promote specialization, facilitate follow-ups, reduce burden on CATs and enable each member benefit from CA membership. For each

CA, a Rural Assembler (RA) is identified among members. The RAs, along with the CATs, play a crucial role by collecting products from members, searching and linking with profitable markets and facilitating other extension services to members.

What makes CAs different from already existing Primary Cooperatives (PCs)?

It can be asked why it is important to establish and strengthen CAs where PCs are already operating in the project sites.

Basically, both CAs and PCs are farmers' associations and both share common objectives: to improve farmers' income and livelihood through improved production and access to markets. However, some peculiar characteristics distinguish Commodity Associations from PCs. Most Primary Cooperatives have over a thousand members and undertake a myriad of tasks starting from input delivery to commodity marketing and distribution of consumer goods. On the other hand, CAs, have smaller number of members (not more than 150), focus on a single commodity marketing with tasks and activities along the value chain – from production to marketing.

Working with the existing PCs, CAs can play a big role in improving marketing and access to market. CAs help smallholder farmers to produce what the market demands, reduce transaction costs of marketing and link producers to consumers. Well-established and operational CAs could ultimately lead to creating commercially-oriented farmers.

III. Implementation of CAs

SG2000 initiated and implemented CAs in 2012. Since then, a total of 48 CAs have been established in eight Woredas in Amhara, Oromia and SNNP Regions with total membership of 2865, 2742, and 1667, respectively (Table 1).

The number and type of commodities in each region was diverse - seven commodities in Amhara, three in Oromia and six in SNNP

regions. Wheat and Maize were the common commodities in all three regions.

Training of CAs and CATs

Initially, CATs received training from SG2000. The CATs, in turn, trained members of CAs. The training focused on the goal, objectives, and benefits of CAs. It also stressed the requirements of CA membership, business plan development, partnership and market linkage, financial and management skill development, production, postharvest and quality control. SG2000 has followed and backstopped CATs and CAs: supervised CATs and CAs regularly, collected feedback both on the progresses made and challenges faced, and took corrective measures, as required.

CAs in Gumer Woreda:

In Gumer Woreda, six CAs were formed around potato, barley and faba bean crops. Each CA had on the average 150 member farmers. Four CAs were legalized and successfully linked with diverse clients to market their products. Regional and Zonal Government (particularly Agriculture Offices) also facilitated market linkages of CAs with other Woredas in the Region.

CAs were closely followed by the CAT. The CAT received technical and financial support from SG 2000. Moreover, farmers were highly cooperative and participated actively in the initiative. As a result, remarkable progress was achieved at the woreda level.



Figure 1. SG2000 capacity building: A CAT training members of CAs

IV. Major Achievements

Functionality

About half of the CAs have performed well. Members of CAs were actively engaged, better market linkages were created and members' benefits have increased. Particularly, the case in Gumer Woreda, SNNP Region, was encouraging. Out of the six CAs, four have gained legal recognition and were performing exceptionally well serving as good examples for other kebeles in the Woreda.

It is important to note that CAs that have received legal recognition are the ones who were organized on specialized commodities such as potato seed production (in the case of Gumer Woreda), honey Chilga Woreda), irrigation (D/Libanose Woreda), and other products with market potential such as tomato production, and crop seed production.

Market linkage

Linking CAs to a profitable market was one of the objectives of the approach. Out of 48 CAs in eight Woredas, 20 CAs (~41%) were successfully linked to better markets. Three CAs in Debrelibanose were linked to a market and sold about 528 tons of teff. Gumer woreda seed producer CA linked to market and sold about 936tons potato seed and earned birr 1795 (87\$) more per ton than when sold in the local market. In Chilga woreda Ginger producer CAs were successively linked to market. In Debaytelatgn Woreda almost all CAs were successfully linked to market to sell their products.



Figure 2. A Consumer association processing payment for purchased products from a CA in D/Libanos

V. Major Success Factors for CA approach

Various factors contributed to the success or failure of the CA approach.

- The type of commodities selected and their demand in the market
- Negotiation skills and commitment of CATs and management skills of CAs
- Level of collaboration and cooperation with government sector offices at different levels (agriculture office as well as cooperative office)
- Ownership and active participation of CA members.

VI. Major Challenges and Lessons Learnt

The CA approach which organized farmers on specific commodities has improved access to profitable markets; availed current market information and improved their negotiation skills.

However, its implementation has passed through a series of challenges. The most daunting ones include lack of storage facilities, inadequate transportation options, lack of cash on hand for CAs to pay farmers during transactions, and unfair role of middlemen. Above all, CAs have also faced a challenge of getting legal status when they are organized on commodities that are handled by PCs. In this case, the CAs need to work through the PCs with some kind of arrangement. But legal status has been secured when the CAs are organized on specialized commodities such as potato, ginger and faba bean.

Therefore, to sustain the CA approach, legality of CAs is very important. Legality of CAs can improve access to finance, broaden market scope, boost bargaining power, and their ability to sign legally binding contracts. Legalizing CAs should not be limited only to those CAs which are working on specialized commodities like ginger and potato seed production. Other CAs which are working on cereals such as wheat, maize and barley need to also get legality as long as they focused their engagement on a specific commodity. This is crucial since CAs are operating along the value chain assisting members from production (through facilitating improved extension service) to marketing. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure CA's legality by closely working with Cooperative Offices.

However, even when CAs do not get a legal status a mechanism needs to be facilitated to interlink their activities within the operation of primary cooperatives to enable them to perform with their full capacities. Such arrangement of linking CAs with their respective local PCs can also improve effectiveness of PCs since CAs handle a specific commodity of interest. For instance, a CA specifically working on wheat will improve production, productivity of the crop, and facilitate marketing and supply of this product to the PCs as well as other markets.

Furthermore, CAs need to facilitate access to credit for their members. Access to credit affects access to input, which in turn affects production and marketing. Creating input market linkage is equally important as output market linkage. Therefore, CAs should facilitate access to credit and link farmers to input markets as well.

In general, CAs need to play comprehensive role in linking farmers to diverse services and markets (see Figure 3).

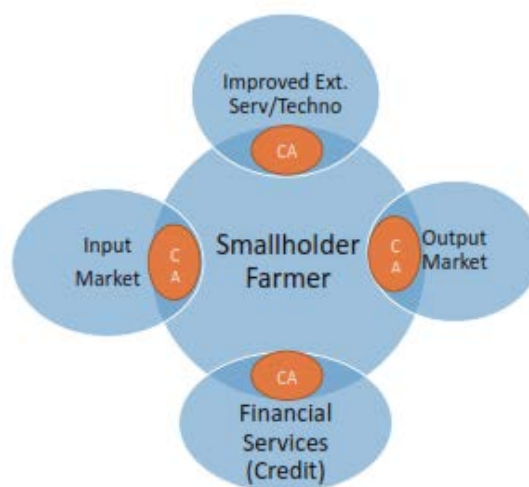


Figure 3: Linking farmers to input and output markets, extension and financial services through CAs

Compiled and reviewed by:

The Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Sharing Theme (MELS) and Public Private Partnership and Market Access (PPP-MA) Theme of the Sasakawa Global 2000 - Ethiopia

Contact:

Sasakawa Global 2000, Ethiopia

*Mike Leyland Street, Bole Sub City, Kebele 13,
H.No. 559, P.O.Box 12771, Addis Ababa,
Ethiopia*

Tel: +251 116 628810/11, Fax: +251 116 628818

E-mail: sg2000ethiopia@saa-safe.org

www.saa-safe.org/sg2000ethiopia.org



Village Input Shop for a Better Input Access by Small-Scale Farmers, Leading to Improved Productivity, Food Security and Income

By Amadou Diané, Mamadou O. Maïga, Ethiopia Tadesse, Dr. Abou Berthé, Boubacar S. Camara, Finemory Camara, Bokar Sissoko, Dr. Nouhoum Sangaré & Oumar F. Traoré

I. INTRODUCTION

Among the 25 poorest countries in the world, Mali is a landlocked country with about 80% of the labor force engaged in agricultural activities. Yet, the country is not fully food secured and import foodstuffs to fill this gap.

The poor production is due to subsistence agriculture producing mainly on unfertile farm lands. Having been continuously in use, arable land need to be enriched with organic manure and/or mineral fertilizers to increase productivity.

To inverse this trend and avoid foodstuff importation, the government subsidized the production of cereals. Despite this subsidy, farm inputs supply points are, most of the time, far from end users-thus, handling and transport charges making access difficult for producers.

Over the past decade, the government, through the Ministry of Rural Development supported by technical partners and local NGOs, is working to ease producers' access to farm inputs.

The SG 2000-Mali program is contributing to the achievement of this government attempt through the extension of three soil fertility/productivity **enhancement** approaches namely the mineral fertilizer micro-dosing, village input shop and the revolving fund. The main aim of these approaches is to facilitate producers' access to farm inputs in order to increase their productivity and production leading to food security and additional income.

The input shop approach, launched in 2010 to support the micro-dosing technology need to be acknowledged because of its tangible results. Despite some challenges, the majority of established input shops are still in operation providing inputs to thousand producers at their farm gates.

II. DEFINITIONS, CONCEPT AND APPROACH

The concept of input shop is not new in the development world. It is part of the latest techniques used by government, donors and NGOs in an effort to improve small scale producers' access to farm inputs. Approaches differ from one institution to another. This paper deals with the SG 2000-Mali approach with regard to the establishment and operation of agricultural input shops in Koulikoro, Sikasso, Segou

and Mopti Regions. Field data were collected between July and August 2014; almost 5 years after the establishment of the input shops.

2.1. What is a Farm Input?

Farm (agricultural) inputs are elements that contribute to the improvement of agricultural production e.g. seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, machinery and agricultural equipment.

2.2. What is a Village Input Shop?

A village Input Shop (IS) is a company, established by village Producers Organization¹ (PO) to improve supply of inputs and grain marketing to members in the first stage and to other producers over time.

The main purposes of the input shop are among others to:

- Allow the daily sale of farm inputs at village level
- Avail input packages suitable to small scale producers and within their purchasing power.
- Strengthen Grouped input requests, purchase and handling of farm inputs
- Rent agricultural machinery: seeders, plows, motorized pumps, phytosanitary treatment equipment, carts, etc.
- Promote phytosanitary treatment
- Promote inputs and new technologies
- Promote the production and sale of improved seeds
- Provide information, training and advisory support on the use of agricultural inputs.

In addition to the above mentioned purposes, the village input shop supports the collective marketing of surplus farm produce. For that, input storage facilities are generally used for warrantage during off-season.

2.3. Approach

SG 2000-Mali input shop approach is an undertaking between an intervention village through its producer organization, the public extension services as a technical adviser and input dealers as suppliers.

Based on performances in technology adoption, a village is connected to an input dealer who will avail a stock of needed inputs to the input shop management committee. The latter is expected to receive the input, sell for cash on the spot, and reimburses directly and/or through a bank account, to the suppliers. Availed inputs will be sold to village producers as well as producers of surrounding villages giving priority to PO members.

In order to get important quantities of inputs, SG 2000-Mali advises and supports the negotiation of credit with financial institutions hosting POs bank accounts.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VILLAGE INPUT SHOP

The establishment of a sustainable village input shop requires some minimum precautions going from site selection to training through study tour, awareness creation and general meeting. Each step has its rational and contributes to the overall sustainability.



Figure1. MELs PO and Mali TC visiting Zambougou Input Shop at grain marketing period (February 2015)

¹ SG 2000-Mali Partner Producer Organizations generally cover all village producers.

In this approach, all the processes were led and facilitated by SG 2000-Mali. Also, for sustainability purposes, the Regional Directorate of Agriculture and the Circle Agriculture Office were involved in providing technical support and facilitation.

3.1. Site Selection

The input shop site selection involved the entire population under the leadership of the Chief of the village. This selection was supported by SG 2000-Mali.

3.2. Study Tour

In order to give Producer Organization a better understanding of the input shop concept and operation, SG 2000-Mali organizes a trip to bring benefiting village PO Leaders, seen as an organizing committee, to observe and learn from an existing and functional input shop.

3.3. Awareness Creation Meeting

SG 2000-Mali engages PO leaders to undertake awareness raising activities in order to motivate members to support the establishment process of their Village Input Shops. They sensitize member producers on the advantages and new opportunities related to the village input shop. This awareness meeting aims to encourage majority of village producers and producers from surrounding villages involved in the process.

3.4. General Meeting

After the awareness creation activities, SG 2000-Mali supports the General Meeting organized by the organizing committee led by the chief of the village. The main purpose of the meeting is to make major decisions including adoption of standard of conduct and administrative procedures, prioritization of inputs, determination of the quantity and type to be allocated to members and non-members, election of members of the various components of the management committees, type of structure, the official launching, etc.

The Management Committee (MC) of the input shop comprises of four (4) persons, namely: 1 President; 1 marketing officer, 1 manager and 1 deputy manager.



Figure2. Management Committee members and some producers in front of the input shop of Kolonto in Sikasso region (2014)

3.5. Training

SG 2000-Mali Public Private Partnership & Market Access (PPP&MA) Theme trained input shop manager, and where ever possible his deputy, on issues related to the input shop management: Revolving fund management, stocks management, sales and marketing, business management basic tools, costing and selling price and management of business relationship; and technical subjects such as products handling, knowledge and use of fertilizers and seeds, phytosanitary treatment among others.

IV. INPUT SHOP ESTABLISHMENT & MANAGEMENT

Rather than purchasing inputs to feed the shop, the village input shop gets supplied through collaboration with an input dealer facilitated by SG 2000-Mali based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed by the President and the Shop Manager, which set clearly the following:

- The management committee, namely its President and Manager, sign a commitment agreed to sell received inputs on cash basis and to deposit the cash equivalent of sold inputs into the dealer's bank account.

- The management committee evaluates village input needs and meets the input dealer for the provision.
- The input dealer, upon receipt of a signed form, availed an agreed quantity of farm inputs to the President and the shop Manager.
- The Manager sells the received inputs² cash on the spot and deposit cash in the input dealer's bank account.
- The sale statement is established by the shop Manager, at the end of each rainy season, in the presence of the President and the input dealers to ascertain that the amount of cash received is equivalent to the sold quantity.
- Together, input dealer and the management committee will decide on keeping the remaining stock or to take it away before the next season.

In all, the project established 23 input shops in 8 Circles of the 4 intervention Regions as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: SG 2000-Mali established Input Shops from 2010 to 2013

Region	Koulikoro		Sikasso				Segou								Mopti		Total					
Circle	Dioïla		Koutiala		Sikasso		Yanfolila	Baroueli				Macina		Segou		Djenne		8				
Host Village	Magnambougou	*Wacoro	Farakoro	Kolonto	N'Golognanasso	Diomatene	Kolokoba	Siramana	Selinkegny	Baroueli	Tingoni	Seguela	Bouadie	Kouankodian	Niantilla	Bouawere	Kondogola	N'Gakoro	Zambougou	Diaba Peulh	Tombonka	21
Input Shops (#)	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	23

[Source:](#) Output monitoring data

* villages in bold are those covered by the 2014 evaluation

V. BENEFITS OF THE VILLAGE INPUT SHOP

To shift from subsistence agriculture to a commercial one is a must for it leads to food security and better livelihoods. Input shops, for getting farm inputs closer to producers are essential tools for this shift to happen for the following benefits:

- **Easy access:** reduce producers' time and expense to travel to big market places to purchase needed inputs
- **Quality input:** the bulk purchase with wholesalers under contract help to ensure the quality of inputs and reduce losses due to handling small quantities
- **Price competitiveness:** the bulk purchase has the advantage of getting inputs at a competitive price at farm gate compared to individual purchases in remote areas and the related transportation costs.
- **Small package:** with the training received, shop managers can prepare small input packages within producers' financial capacity and promote the use of mineral fertilizer on rainfed crops such as millet and sorghum
- **Prompt reaction for lacking inputs:** Producers who might be short of inputs while busy with farming activities can always turn to the input shops, to get the needed inputs.

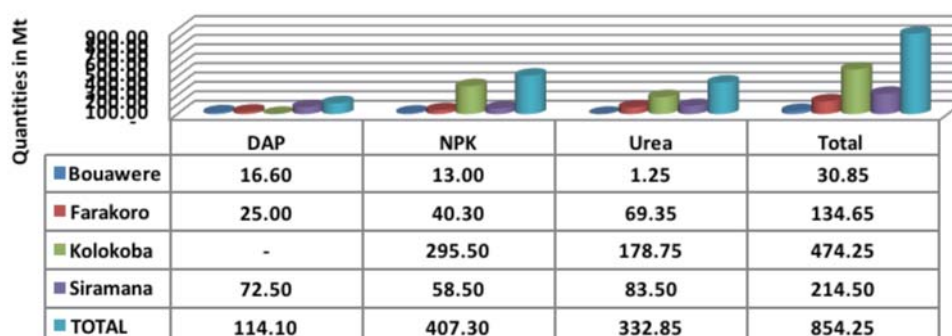
² Shop manager was also allowed to process mini kits of 34 kg and 17.5 kg for mineral fertilizer for micro dosing on dry crops.

VI. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

After three years of implementation, an evaluation was carried out covering 10 of the 23 established input shops in 3 of the 4 intervention Regions. During this evaluation, data were collected from 37 producers, 10 input shops management committees, technical partners and input providers. Below are some of the findings.

- **Input shops brought farm inputs closer to producers.** 70.3 % of the respondents reported to have been purchasing quality farm inputs within less than 20 km and at better prices with less difficulties in the input shops than before.
- **Input shops are providing quality inputs at competitive prices.** 96.3% of benefiting producers stated that received inputs are of good quality and 67.6% stated that they are less expensive than those from the open market.
- **Input shops are well managed according to producers.** 85.3% of respondents (n=34) see the input shop management as good or even very well and 85.7% of them acknowledged to receive feedback from management committees.
- **Input shops are effective according to producers.** Of the 24 producers who reported to have purchased inputs in these shops, 88.5% of them reported that their needed quantities were always available and of good quality. Furthermore, they also reported input prices to be less expensive compared to other supply sources.
- **Input shops are useful tools for producers.** 88.5% of those who purchased inputs from shops reported to have experienced production and income increase; 92.3% reported that the input shops met over 50% of their expectations.
- **Input shops are sustainable according to key actors.** The ministry staff, as well as, 84.6% of producers who purchased inputs from input shops see the input shop approach as sustainable in that they help producers save time and resources.

Graph I: Quantities of mineral fertilizers mobilized in 4 of 23 input shops from 2010 to 2013



Sources: [MELS Field data \(un-published\)](#)

VII. MAJOR CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Despite the above mentioned achievements, major stakeholders' satisfaction and optimism on the sustainability of farm input shops, they are facing some challenges which, if well handled, will positively impact producers' livelihoods.

Poor payment of Input credit: though advised against, some shop management committees are doing it and non-payment is seriously affecting their performance. There must be a need for critical thinking to make ends meet.

- **Reliance on Subsidized inputs:** most of the established input shops are strongly relying on the government subsidized inputs which is constraining them to acquire more inputs
- **High cost of transport to village:** input dealers bore charges related to transport of inputs and handling up to the village for the first year. In the subsequent years, these charges were levied on the shop, hence managers find this to negatively affect input prices compared to the market.
- **Insufficient Storage facilities:** Shop managers stated that current facilities are not appropriate for their activities. Using the same store for inputs and warrantage activities does not allow them to keep neither grains nor fertilizer for a much longer time.
- **Delays in Financial Transactions:** some management committees are experiencing delay in accessing credit from Financial Institutions and this may bring about delay in input purchase and delivery to producers.
- **Lack of confidence in using improved seed and mineral fertilizer on dry staple crops:** majority of the input shops are established in rainfed crop production areas where producers are dealing with subsistence agriculture and reluctant to invest much in production technologies despite the evidence from T₁ FLPs (Farmer Learning Platforms). Therefore, a continuous awareness creation is required to improve adoption of improved technologies.



Figure3. Housing facility for extension agents built by producers' organization at Boidie in Segou Region (2014)

VIII. CONCLUSION

The input shop approach is a very useful tool in SAA value chain oriented intervention, particularly in Mali, for these shops are of high importance in the sustainable adoption of our introduced technologies. Current experiences helped some villages like Boidie to build a complete house on their own for the field extension agent to stay longer with them. This will enable them have easy access to extension services as and when needed. Other Producers Organizations are eager to have their own shops rather than relying on neighboring villages. Up scaling the input shop approach in Mali will boost rainfed crop production leading to food security and a better income generation. It is then that the overall livelihoods of thousands of our rural farm families will be improved.

CONTACT:

Sasakawa Global 2000 Mali (SG 2000-Mali)

Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Sharing Theme and
Public Private Partnership and Market Access Theme

Address

Magnambougou Faso Kanu, Rue 13, Porte, P.O. Box 3541, Bamako, Mali

Tel/Fax: +223 20 20 58 34

E-mail: sg2000mali@saa-safe.org

www.saa-safe.org/sg2000ethiopia.org

SG 2000 NIET@KENE (Village Development Center) in Mali

Amadou Diané¹, Justine Wangila², Dr. Abou Berthé¹, Dr. Juliana Rwelamira²

Bamako, Mali

I. INTRODUCTION

Since 1996 Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) has been working with the Ministry of Agriculture in four regions of Mali: Koulikoro, Mopti, Segou and Sikasso. The initiative has involved hundreds of frontline extension workers, several thousands of farmers, service providers and partners in Mali. The SG 2000 program has focused on crop productivity enhancement, improving soil health, collective action, financial intermediation, postharvest handling and agro-processing (PHAP) and market access. The extension approach has been mainly through demonstration of technologies and training of farmers.

II. BACKGROUND

Extension efforts have born fruits but have also faced new challenges including market access for surplus production of food crops resulting from the adoption of improved technologies. Collective marketing rather than the individual one was seen as one of the solutions for enhancing market access for smallholder farmers. However, because of the poor postharvest handling practices, the quality of marketable produce was low and appropriate storage facilities were lacking or insufficient. In addition, training sessions were mostly held in open yards, under trees or in farmers' houses. These meeting conditions were not always favourable or conducive to learning, especially during the rainy season and with extreme temperatures in the dry season.

In November 2006 SG 2000 Mali initiated the Village Development Centres to overcome the above and other challenges. These centres are locally known as Niet@Kene³. A Niet@Kene is a physical facility established on at least one hectare of land. The basic model of a Niet@Kene includes building infrastructures such as cereals and seed banks, a marketing store, meeting room, processing room, chicken pen, tree nursery, drying yard, fishpond, water source, phone booth, toilet, etc.



Figure1. Kondogola Niet@Kene in Segou Region

The main objectives for the establishment of the Niet@Kene were:

- To provide the community with facilities suitable for training, meetings and accommodation,
- To foster collective acquisition of inputs through bulking and collective marketing of surplus produce,
- To improve the quality of farmer's produce for emerging agro-processing and urban consumer markets,
- To facilitate human capacity building in terms of business management, entrepreneurial, and leadership skill development, and
- To promote income generation activities for the members of the Niet@Kene.

¹ SAA Mali

² SAA Ethiopia

³ Development Space

Since 2007, ten Niet@Kenes have been established in the Segou and Sikasso Regions of Mali as a joint effort of village cooperatives and SG 2000 to benefit all members of these villages. In every village where SG 2000 worked, there is an informal farmer association or a registered producer cooperative.

The following requirements are necessary for the establishment of Niet@Kene:

- ✓ A formally registered village cooperative,
- ✓ Availability of at least one-hectare piece of officially registered land,
- ✓ Farmers' willingness to contribute affordable materials and labour towards the construction of the Niet@Kene facility and share PHAP equipment costs,
- ✓ Members' commitment to undertake income generating activities,
- ✓ Transparency in management, and
- ✓ Cooperation with other development partners interested in the cooperative's activities.

SG 2000's inputs were comprised of sensitization, monitoring of technical aspects, roofing, flooring, doors, windows and general finishing of the facility, strengthening management skills of cooperative leaders, training farmers, offering input loans, providing machine operators and maintenance personnel in addition to subsidies on PHAP equipment acquired by the cooperatives.

III. CONSTRAINTS FOR ESTABLISHING NIET@KENES AND SOLUTIONS

In the establishment and the functioning of Niet@Kene (5 in Segou and 5 in Sikasso Regions), SG 2000 had to overcome many challenges including:

- **Weak motivation of cooperative members to build such infrastructure**

The meagre return on investment of farm products discouraged producers to spend time and energy to establish a Niet@Kene. The good harvest in 2005 and the resulting low prices of staple crops in early 2006 discouraged many farmers and few of them could not believe that Niet@Kene would help them handle this low return on investment issue.

Inter Réseaux AFD & CTA (2010) stated that "In order to be effective, farmers and their organizations need to be actors in the initiatives and projects that concern them, working closely with development actors. Adequate methods, tools and time are required as communicating and sharing experiences between these different families of actors call for preparation and follow-up to maintain the process". SG 2000 thus found it necessary to undertake series of sensitization and demonstrations in target villages to achieve its goals. Further training and demonstrations followed to support the process.

- **Weak postharvest handling skills**

Before Niet@Kene was established, farm products were stored wherever possible without any consideration for moisture and pests affecting grain quality. Most of the products marketed collectively were not of good quality. Consequently, sales were mainly made to retailers at weekly markets.

The demonstrations of improved postharvest practices through the use of millet threshers, maize Shellers, rice decorticators and grain cleaners allowed producers to send good quality grain to markets. National cereal stock exchanges were also used to connect producers' cooperatives to potential buyers (cereal dealers, agro-processors, WFP Purchase for progress project, seed dealers, etc.).

- **Capacity building and sustainability**

Formerly, SG 2000 collaboration with cooperatives focused mainly on the demonstration of technologies and collective actions. With the establishment of Niet@Kenes, cooperatives had to become more and more business oriented. Infrastructure and equipment were expected to generate money and create profit.

After completion of the first infrastructures (cereal banks and marketing stores), Cooperative management committees received training on grain conditioning and negotiation, and business enterprise management. The learning from the training was practiced during national seed and cereal stock exchanges. Also, cooperatives started to deliver services using existing infrastructure and equipment.

Finally, how to make Niet@Kene sustainably operational was another issue. Formerly partners occasionally sold their products individually, a situation that did not favour established infrastructure and equipment operations.

To ensure the sustainability of Niet@Kenes, management committees were shown how to deliver services and generate income with existing assets throughout the year. They were expected to engage a manager to make Niet@Kenes real agro-enterprises.

IV. WHAT HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY SUCCESSFUL AND WHY?

Storage Capacity

The marketing stores installed in the Niet@Kenes improved the collective marketing capacity of the village. From the establishment of the ten in 2007 until now, the beneficiaries of Niet@Kene are able to group their farm products and market collectively at least 50 MT of grains through National Cereal and Seed Stock Exchanges, the warrantage system, the P4P project, and direct contract with cereal dealers.

Access to financial resources

With their storage capacity and marketing opportunities, Niet@kene members easily access credit from financial institutions like the Malian Bank of Solidarity (BMS), the National Agricultural Development Bank (BNDA), Kafo Jiginew and Kondo Jigima. Management committees are thus able to pre-finance members and wait for the appropriate time to market farm produce.

The African Development Bank (AfDB - 2005) stated that access to credit and to financial services is a determinant factor in improving the livelihoods of the population who receive the essence of their subsistence from the agricultural sector.

Market access

The use of Niet@Kene equipment improved the quality of their grains and subsequently attracted more and more potential buyers. They even received premiums from sales, compared to other producers in the surrounding villages. DANAYA, a well-known agro-processor in Bamako, and the P4P project used to add respectively CFA francs 10,000 to 20,250 premiums per MT during their purchases. This is mainly due to the quality products they were able to deliver.

Table 1: Niet@Kenes' yearly sales through National Cereal Stock Exchanges

Main commodities	Quantities (MT)		
	2007	2008	2009
Millet	172	4	378.3
Sorghum	68	2	145

Maize	375	183.5	152.9
Rice	22	153	614
Total	637.0	189.5	676.2

Improved marketing skills and income

The establishment Niet@Kenes improved the negotiating skills of the cooperatives. With the possibility to safely store quality grains for a long period combined with access to credit, Niet@Kene producers are in a position to bargain and get better prices from their products. The immediate consequence of this is that rain fed crop prices experienced a significant rise. This was the case during the first National Cereal Stock Exchange, held in Bamako in 2006, where maize price moved from US\$180 to US\$220 per metric ton.

Niet@Kene infrastructure and equipment helped producers to improve their grain quality. Training and demonstrations also improved their access to credit and their negotiation skills. The result is that producers with the above competency and skills are able to get better prices through collective marketing. Better prices mean better income leading to better livelihoods. According to Inter Réseaux AFD & CTA (2010) "Improved product marketing is a key factor in order to increase farmers' revenue. This is an activity that should be given high priority"

Table 2: Annual incomes generated in Niet@Kenes through sales at national Cereal Stock Exchanges (Table 1)

Main commodities	Amounts (CFA francs)		
	2007	2008	2009
Millet	21,500,000	600,000	51,070,500
Sorghum	7,820,000	250,000	18,125,000
Maize	46,875,000	23,855,000	19,878,625
Rice	6,600,000	45,900,000	184,200,000
Total	82,795,000	70,605,000	273,274,125

V. LESSONS LEARNED

From this experience it became clear that, with elementary infrastructure and postharvest equipment managed by well trained and committed leaders at the village level, Niet@Kenes could be the real engine of economic development to be replicated at the village level for the country's overall economic growth.

To achieve any real development in Malian agriculture, therefore, producers need to acquire elementary post-harvest equipment and basic knowledge. Such kind of requirements could be easily acquired in the Niet@Kenes.

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Changing Farmers' Lives through Training on Best Production Practices for Dry Season Maize: The story of Danjuma Abdullahi



Introduction

It is currently estimated that the Nigerian population is over 166.2 million and agriculture is known to be the source of livelihood of 70% of the population. One of the challenges of agricultural development in the country is the inability of farmers to access vital information and/or that the information is poorly disseminated with inadequate feedback between farmers, research institutes and policy-makers in the agricultural sector.

Majority of farmers depend on radio stations for their source of information without necessarily been able to express their understanding, experience or opinion about an issue that concerns them. There is inadequate number of extension agents who would have helped the farmers. The limited number available are faced with many

challenges such as inadequate funds to enable them carry out extension outreach to the farmers. In addition, monitoring authorities are not able to get clear feedback on the quality of extension services being delivered in the villages. SG 2000, in the spirit of taking the needed technologies and services to the farmers, works closely with the government extension program to reach out to most nooks and crannies of the country.

SAA's mission is to transform extension advisory services to ensure greater family food security, and more profitable participation of smallholder farmers in commercial activities along the value chain, while respecting natural resources.

Exclusion of Extension Service among the Smallholder Farmers

Smallholder farmers in Jushin waje of Sabon-gari LGA, Kaduna state have been very far

from access to important extension services and information especially for dry-season maize cultivation. They lacked access to reliable agricultural extension support and information; such as understanding better package of practice, input access, market and other general information. Their crop yields were low because improved seeds were lacking. Village farmers were only exposed to unreliable suppliers of expensive and fake inputs. The most topical problem was that the few reliable sources of extension information such as ADPs were located long distances away from the farmers' localities.

Contact with SG 2000



Figure 1: The Face of hope, Smiling Danjuma at his Dry-season Maize Farm

Danjuma is a 53-year old farmer from Jushin Waje. He has one wife and blessed with eight children. Farming has been his main source of livelihood which he has been engaged in for over 30 years.

Danjuma heard about SG 2000 long ago, but officially came into contact with them in 2014 when he was networked as one of the Dry Season Maize farmers to be trained at Sabon-gari location. He attended Pre-season training, Green-field day and Postharvest trainings on Maize production technologies under the dry season maize program which was conducted by Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) in February 2014. Danjuma is a member of the Kubanni-Jushi Farmers' Cooperative Society and was selected by the Extension Agent (EA)

from Kaduna ADP¹ to attend the training under Sabon Gari LGA.

Impact

Danjuma was motivated at a training organized by Sasakawa Global 2000-Nigeria in



Figure 2: One of the SG 2000 farmer field in Sabon-gari LGA

2014 that offered him skills and opportunities of understanding best farming practices. The farmer received several trainings in the area of crop production, postharvest and agro-processing, input sourcing and market development.

It was after these trainings that he decided to practice the whole package of practices he learnt during the training. The ADP extension agents has been another major source of his participation in the program. They helped him in securing the required seed and linked him with better markets for his produce.

Danjuma attended the pre-season and in-season trainings conducted at Shika Dam and Tsugugi areas respectively by SG 2000 staff. After the trainings, he decided to double his area for maize production from 0.5 ha to 1 ha and his efforts were rewarded with a bumper harvest and increased income.

" With the SG 2000 intervention my yield and income has increase and I never imagined it would be like this- I will surely continue with

¹ Agricultural Development Program

the practice and make sure my children, friends and entire community emulate the same."

The farmer confessed that he has benefited so much from the intervention and have specifically achieved the following;

- Ability to sell his maize at an average cost of N10 per cob, giving him a total net-income of N558,600
- Increased maize production of 68,882 cobs from 1 ha as compared to less than 20,000 cobs using traditional practices
- Ability to know when he made a net profit against the previous time when he doesn't calculate and cannot know the difference between the Cost and Profit
- Hosting other farmers during Greenfield day gives him a social pride
- The maize variety introduced to him by SG 2000 "SAMMAZ 15" was quite a milestone in his farming life. It matured earlier than his own variety and gave better yields
- Reduction in the cost of production related to fuel and labour is another benefit
- Learning how to apply fertilizer appropriately as against the days he was wasting instead of utilizing it.



Figure 3: Female Farmers at Danjuma's Farm during Greenfield day

Other Socio-Economic benefits

Danjuma added on quote - *"seven of my children can now go to school and I was able to settle their school fees with ease that I didn't have to borrow or struggled to settle their fees as was done in the past."*



Figure 4: Male Farmers at Danjuma Farm during Greenfield day

My family have discovered the route to financial stability and are happy that my determination is paying off. I recently bought a roofing sheet and some furniture with intension of building a better house to comfort my family and surely this partnership has improved our standard of living" end of quote.

Focusing on helping others

Danjuma believed that the increase in yield was due to the improved production technologies adopted in his farm. They include the use of improved seeds, plant spacing at 25cm by 75cm, sowing of single seed per planting hole, application of fertilizer between stands by burying rather than broadcasting and adequate irrigation schedules.

Danjuma has now become a trainer to the other farmers in the community including his group members. He confirmed that after the training he received from SG 2000, he has trained other members of the neighbouring communities and many farmers come to him

for guidance on how to source for the improved maize OPV² seeds.

Danjuma and his group members are already mobilizing youths to go into dry season maize production. According to him dry season maize is more profitable when compared to the wet season maize production because of lesser pest problems.

² Open Pollinated Varieties

From Begging to Bagging: How Nigerian farmers with special needs changed status



Farmers with Special Needs Association in Nigeria

1. Introduction

Promoting success in Agriculture for People with Special Needs (PwSN) and their families has been one of the core focus of SAFE-SAA-FBO Program in Nigeria.

Special need is a physical or mental impairment that limits (or perceived to limit) one or more major life activities of a person with such an impairment. People with Special Needs (PwSNs¹) have gained global attention in that they constitute a social group that is vulnerable to societal discriminations, which compound their distressing experiences.

The study on People with Special Needs among Nigerians shows that there is no part of the country that is immune from

people with special needs. The study gives a national average of 3.2 per cent prevalence of PwSNs, suggesting that about 4.8 million Nigerians are living with one form of special need or the other (even though the belief is widespread in Nigeria that they number up to about 10 million). The rates were significantly higher in the geo-political zones of North-West (5.0%), South-East (4.5%) and the South-South (3.3%) than North-Central (2.6%), North-East (2.4%) and the South-West (2.1%). There were variations in the gender distribution of PwSNs among the zones with more men than women living with a special need. Such observation was significantly elevated in the North-West (5.6% vs. 3.5%), South-East (5.3% vs. 3.8%), South-South (3.7% vs. 2.8%) and North-Central (3.4% vs. 2.2%)

¹ People with Special Needs

than North-East (2.8% vs. 2.0%) and the South-West (2.3% vs 1.6%).

2. Intervention

SAFE-SAA-FBO Project in Nigeria has been implementing various support programs for farmer groups with special needs in various states where of SG 2000 works. Those eligible for the intervention are farmers with amputations, arthritis, blindness, cerebral pain, deafness, developmental disabilities, stroke or spinal cord injury.

The project engages various farmer groups



Figure 1: A farmer with special need applying fertilizer in his farm

with special needs in Kano (KN), Gombe (GMB) and Jigawa (JGW) States by supporting them in their farming activities in selected crop value chains. The project involves 207 individual farmers through their groups (Table 1)

Table 1: Groups covered by SG 2000 - FBO Project intervention in Nigeria

S / N	Name of group with Special Needs	Members	State	Crop value chain
1	Mallam Madori joint Disable cooperative group	55	JGW	Sesame production
2	Billiri joint disable association	25	GMB	Maize production
3	Gurgun waziri malle multipurpose disable	22	GMB	Maize
4	T/wada joint disable group	45	KN	Maize production
5	Gwagwaran da disable group	25	KN	Cowpea production
6	Hadejia joint disable group	35	JGW	Rice production
	TOTAL	207		

3. Challenges of Farmers with special needs in Nigeria

- People's patronage to finished products of people with special needs is very low
- Lack of good price due to poor market
- High cost of raw materials such as inputs
- Lack of Government support
- Land tenure issues and small farm holdings
- Lack of access to improved inputs and technologies
- Lack of capital to hire enough labour and poor transportation
- Non-availability of fertilizer and improved feeds for both poultry and livestock

- Poor group cohesion and no group management skills
- Most of the groups don't have formal registration with government
Lack of knowledge on some hand crafts activities.
- No coordination between people with special needs groups

4. Objectives of the scheme for people with special needs

- Increase food productivity among the networked farmer groups with special needs
- Supporting the emergence of postharvest activities among farmers with special needs
- Supporting income generating activities among farmer groups with special needs
- Increasing access to market among farmers with special needs

5. Approach

Group of farmers under this category have special needs in agricultural production and extension delivery due to their deformities.

The approach used by the project is through farmer platforms comprising of fabricators, up-takers and other value-chain actors to accommodate farmers with special needs in Agriculture. In the process, it was critical to identify specific challenges for the people with special needs in accessing education, food, training and employment opportunities.



Figure 2: Training of Disabled farmers at Gombe State

This is the major reason that prompted Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education (FBO-Project) to devise a strategy for improving the livelihoods of farmers with special needs with a view to increasing their accessibility to quality food and increase income.

This has the potential to reduce/ mitigate physical stress, suffering and eradicate street begging in Kano, Jigawa and Gombe States.

6. Assisted Demonstrations for Farmers with Special Needs (ADFwSNs)

ADFwSNs is a demonstration of appropriate agricultural production technology package for farmer groups with special needs led by SAFE-SAA-FBO Project. Several ADFwSNs were established in Kano, Jigawa and Gombe states.

The size of the plot is a quarter hectare, 0.25ha per group and each state has 2ha i.e. 8 MTPs per state on different crops. The project has a total of 24 ADFwSNs reaching out to 250 farmers with special needs in three states. The ADFwSNs are the training platforms for Crop technology demonstrations.

7. Impact and Results of the Intervention

The impact of SAFE-SAA-FBO Project in Nigeria has been significant and far-reaching. The following are few examples of the impact created by the project in Nigeria;

- Training of various farmer groups with special needs in Kano, Jigawa and Gombe state has been the key issue in SG 2000 FBO Project in Nigeria. 3 workshops for farmers with special needs were organized in these states. Several presentations were made cutting across various activities across agricultural value chain by various professionals. A participant farmer in the group had this to say after the training in Gombe state;

"I now realized that you don't have to have two good hands and legs; it is what you make of it..... happy for the intervention and hope bestowed on us to compete with other farmers"

- Enhancing utilization of best Agricultural practices among the farmer groups with special needs. Several targeted trainings by the project created room for access to technological information, including postharvest handling and market access. Another farmer with special need; Musa Kuturu acknowledged as follows:

"SAFE-SAA-FBO Intervention gave us the supporting hand which no one else gave us, initially, I thought that people with special needs are completely forgotten, I have more hope now"

- In order to develop opportunities for collaboration, information dissemination, and resource sharing, the SAFE-SAA-FBO Project has sought linkages with a wide range of agricultural and people with special need organizations. Efforts have been made to collaborate with various stakeholders and groups.
- Several other trainings were given to farmers with special needs in areas such as;
 - ✓ Groups Dynamics and Management

- ✓ Skills and enterprises skills management on modern poultry keeping, small ruminant rearing, horticultural /Landscape soft materials.

- Training of farmers with special needs in handicraft activities for economic growth such as;
 - ✓ Production of morning fresh
 - ✓ Production of Izal,
 - ✓ Room freshener and hand fans
 - ✓ Bags making skills among others
- Skills on data collection from the Assisted Demonstration of Farmers with Special Needs field plots.

8. Sustainability of the Intervention

SAFE-SAA-FBO Project in Nigeria is implementing its project activities in collaboration with National Agricultural Extension system (NAES), Farmer's Group and Cooperatives. The partners are always actively involved in trainings (as trainee or trainer), meetings and in the day to day follow-ups of project implementation.

SAFE-SAA-FBO Project capacitate group members to continue to implement the best practices they learnt through demonstrations and other means. This collaboration and support will surely foster knowledge dissemination and sustainability.

Furthermore, sustainability of the farmers with special needs capacity development project could also be maintained through continuous sensitization and involvement of other stakeholders. The extension agents are also at the centre of every activity.

9. Lessons learned

There are six important lessons that can be drawn from the success of SAFE-SAA-FBO Project in Nigeria. The Targeted farmer groups, SG 2000, Nigeria office and partnering states share similar opinions on the factors to the

successful results of the FBO farmers with special needs project. Some of lessons learned;

- (i) More interventions needed to cover the higher number of farmers with special needs in the partnering states.
- (ii) Commitment of the farmer groups to implement the various technologies learnt and disseminating the same to fellow farmers.
- (iii) Improved commitment of farmer groups with special needs to work in stronger unions.
- (iv) Ownership of the scheme demonstrated by close supervision and support by the extension agents
- (v) Patronage and priority should be given to people with special needs through continuous training, workshops and other interactions, and;
- (vi) Intensive capacity building and technical support with practical training from SG 2000

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Contact:

Sasakawa Global 2000, Nigeria

Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Sharing Theme and Sasakawa Fund for Extension Education (SAFE)

Address

No. 8, Kura Road, Off Nassarawa G.R.A., Kano
Tel: +234-803-454-32000
E-mail: sg2000nigeria@saa-safe.org



Enabling Smallholder Farmers' Easy Access to Agro-Inputs

By R. Magambo and F. Nakakawa

Introduction

Access and use of quality improved agricultural inputs is key for improved productivity and profitability in agriculture. Unfortunately, access to inputs remains a big challenge to most farmers in Uganda, despite the fact that 80% of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihoods. In the same rural farming communities, the operational cost of production such as land hire, land preparation, planting, weeding and harvesting may not be significantly felt. However, the type, quality and amount of inputs (especially seeds, pesticides and herbicides) used in production, make a significant difference in the quantity and quality of the farmers' outputs.

Like many other parts of the Country in Uganda, smallholder farmers in rural Mityana were fetching low crop yields due to inadequate access to reliable quality agro-inputs, among other factors. The few who had access, were exposed to unreliable suppliers of expensive and fake inputs for which they had to travel for long distances majorly at main

trading centres. The most topical problem was that the few reliable sources of inputs were located long distances away from the farmers' localities. It is on this background that Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) under its Sasakawa Global 2000 Uganda (SG2000-Uganda) program chose Mityana district among others to deliver the concept of Public-Private Partnership and Market Access (PPP & MA).

SG2000 - Uganda's Interventions

SAA's mission is to transform African extension advisory services to ensure greater family food security, and more profitable participation in commercial activities along the value chain, while respecting natural resources. The third strategic goal aims at creating public-private partnerships that financially support delivery of extension services for enhanced smallholder farmers to accelerate agricultural development and enhance profitable market access. This is achieved through extending trainings (relevant to needs of target beneficiaries), specifically to farmers and extension agents. A number of

trainings are facilitated to cover different thematic areas across selected priority crop value chains in the area of agro-input market development and crop husbandry. Another area of focus is fostering linkages for both inputs to reputable input dealers and output markets to ease access for farmers.

Mr. Mpungu Ronald is an Extension worker, coordinating the interventions of SG2000 Uganda in Mityana district which is situated about 77 kilometres, west of Kampala since 2012. His major role is to facilitate and extend knowledge and skills to farmers participating in the SG2000 Uganda program in his coverage area mainly through extension agents. He has received a series of trainings ranging from improved technologies in agronomy, postharvest handling and agro-processing as well as partnerships and market access. During his first year of implementation, he realised that there was a problem, the farmers who received the trainings from SG2000 Uganda program were not applying the promoted technologies. *“I realized that accessibility to agro-inputs by the farmers was a challenge”*, Mr. Mpungu said on quote. He embraced the challenge as an opportunity to enable farmers access the needed inputs. Prior to working with SG2000 Uganda, he owned an input shop in town which also offered secretarial services. However, the sales were low as very few farmers patronized him at the time. He made a decision to *“take the inputs nearer to the farmers”*. He is currently the proprietor of a fast growing agro-input business, a Business Concern in the District (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Two locations of “Business concern”

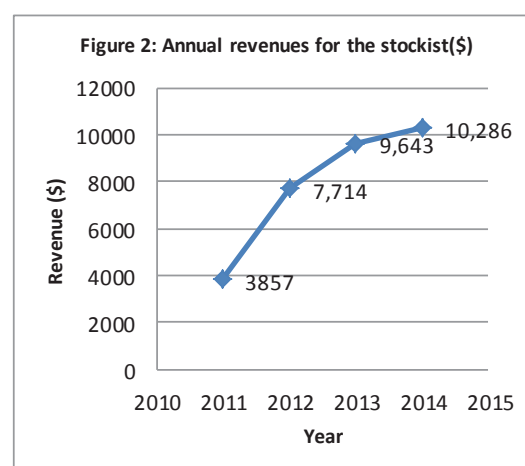
In 2012, Mr. Mpungu opened his first input shop in Sekanyonyi Sub-county, one of SG2000 Uganda coverage areas. Currently, “Business concern” is a chain of 5 input shops spread in Sub-counties of Sekanyonyi, Namungo and Busimbi of Mityana district to enable farming communities, access quality inputs. In addition to selling inputs, he offers after sales services to the farmers which mainly consist of extension advice and training on application/the use of these inputs.

Impact

Besides improved knowledge and skills not only to Mr. Mpungu Ronald and the farming communities under his coverage areas, other impacts include the following:

Improved Incomes

The business started as a single small unit selling a few inputs (seed varieties for maize, herbicides, fungicides, spray pumps, vegetable seeds and coffee seedlings) in 2011 in the District town. His initial investment was \$893, with only one employee but now boasts of stock worth \$10,714¹. The annual revenues realised have been increasing over the years as depicted in Figure 2 below.



According to Mr. Mpungu, the proprietor, SG2000 Uganda has supported him through promotional activities since the FLPs’ (Farmer

¹ Exchange rate is \$1=UGX2,800

Learning Platforms) establishment and management are handled by him, he is able to market and showcase the inputs at his shops.

Employment Creation for Youths

Ronald's mission is to run the business more professionally and that would address the distribution and marketing challenges of improved agricultural inputs and selected key products in the rural areas of Mityana. With a network of mainly qualified marketing agents/shop attendants, with certificates in agriculture, marketing of agro-inputs has been made easy. He is currently employing 10 young women (see figure 3) who earn a monthly income of \$36 each.



Figure 3: Some of the youths employed by Ronald

Improved access to quality inputs

Mr. Mpungu sources inputs mainly from reliable suppliers such as Bukoola and Nsanjja agro-chemical supplies. To enable access by even the poorest of farmers, he has re-packaged the seed and fertilizers into smaller portions and selling at farmer friendly prices (Figure 4).

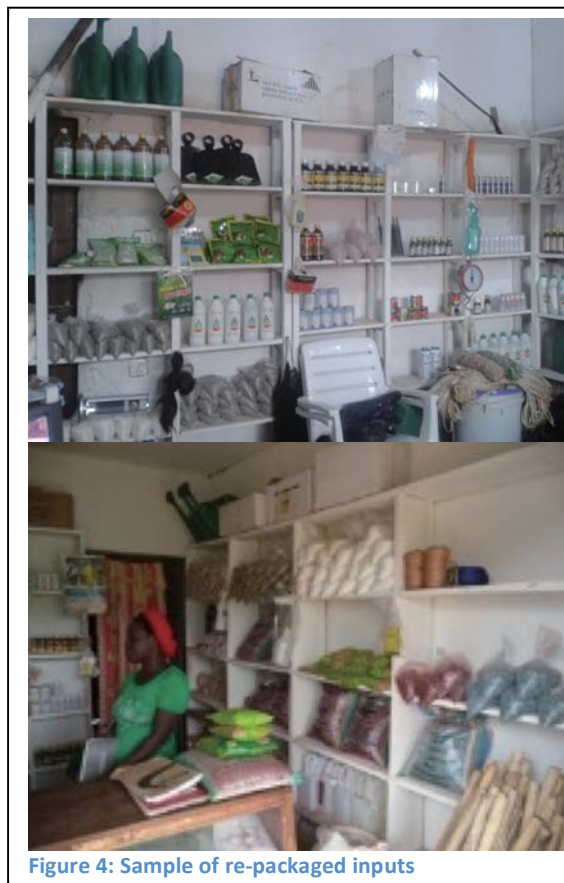


Figure 4: Sample of re-packaged inputs

Furthermore, he offers after-sales services such as on-farm visits to provide advice and trainings on safety and use of the inputs. In a typical season, his agro-input business currently offers inputs and after sales services to over 1,000 smallholder farmers from just 100 farmers that he used to serve in 2011.

The provision of quality Agricultural inputs to the farmers has earned Ronald an outstanding reputation from farmers and Stakeholders like input dealers.

Networking and exposure

Ronald revealed that through Sasakawa Global 2000-Uganda, his capacity has been strengthened in terms of management, input and output sourcing. He adds that because of the input supply network, he now operates openly and competitively with other agro-dealers in the District. Ronald appreciates that through this wide network, he has a benefit of

friendship, strong ties and platform for information sharing with 22 other agro-input dealers across the country. This has also enabled him to access a wide array of inputs from reliable sources.

Sustainability

Mr. Mpungu as a proprietor continues to partner with Sasakawa Global 2000-Uganda in delivering quality inputs and after sales services to the farmers. He believes that since his agro-input business is mainly community based and the established Farmer Learning Platforms (FLPs) act as promotional forums/billboards for agro-input demand. He further adds that he will continue being part of and strengthening his networks to enable him always stay informed and up to date.

Challenges

Ronald acknowledges that like any other business he has faced several challenges while serving the farming folks which include; (i) low performance levels of inputs like seeds that at times do not germinate due to low viability levels and chemicals that do not perform to expectations due to emergence of fake products, (ii) Seasonality of the business that requires continuous existence with expenditures and therefore high rate of investment to support the agroinput service provision, (iii) poor weather conditions which farmers in most cases perceive as poor quality inputs, iv) high rate of employee turnover.

Lessons learnt

The development of rural input stockists is critical for accelerating the access of the rural poor to quality agricultural inputs in Uganda. Their development significantly reduces accessibility costs faced by farmers, making much needed production inputs available in rural areas at the right time and in appropriate quantities, quality, packages and affordable prices.

To improve affordability of agricultural inputs, it is important that suppliers of agricultural inputs be encouraged to package their products in smaller quantities that are affordable to the rural poor. This helps improve effective demand. Mr. Mpungu is already selling seeds and fertilizers in smaller affordable quantities to the rural poor. However, adulteration which may exist could be avoided by certified supplying companies at the higher level of the supply chain developing appropriate smaller packages.



Enabling Access to Postharvest and Agro-Processing Services in Uganda: The Story of a Former Teacher

By F. Nakakawa, R. Magambo and J. Murangira

Background

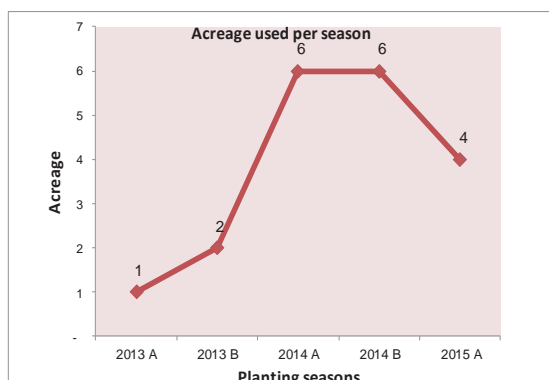
Yusuf Lubaale is a 39-year old resident of Bukuluba Village, Bugeywa Parish in Butansi Sub-county of Kamuli District. Before joining active farming, he was a teacher at Mpigi Simba Islamic Primary School (from 2006-2009) earning a gross salary of \$34 per month. As a supplement to the salary, he used to cultivate 5 acres of land and harvesting between 25-30 bags of maize in a given season. In 2010, he went for a Certificate course in Public Administration at Busoga University and in the same year, he quit teaching to get fully engaged in agriculture. He is currently engaged in crop production (mainly maize), purposely for sale, offering shelling services and providing access to agro-inputs in his community.

Crop production

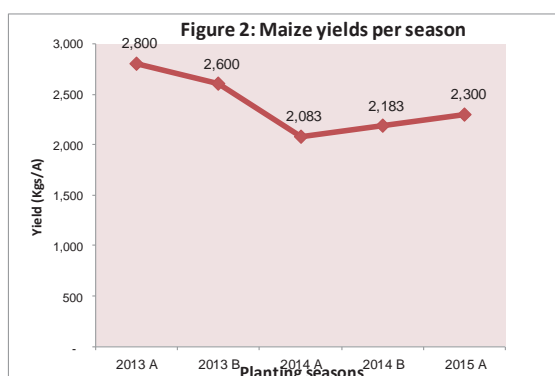
In 2010, Yusuf joined Kamuli Agri-business Institution Training Association (KAIDA).

KAIDA is one of the One Stop Center Associations (OSCAs) established by Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG2000-Uganda). In the same year, he was elected to the executive committee of KAIDA and appointed as acting treasurer. He was among the members of KAIDA who received extension services in the form of training from SG2000-Uganda in the same year. These trainings focused on improved agronomic practices and technologies, postharvest handling and agro-processing practices and technologies, as well as, access to markets and credit. He benefited from the breadth of SG2000-Uganda's demonstration gardens of maize and soybeans in the first season of 2013. This is actually when he hosted 1 acre of maize and 0.5 acre of soybean demonstrations. From the maize demonstration, Yusuf got a yield of 2800 kgs/acre, and 1600kgs/acre of soya beans. He applied the recommended technologies and practices such as proper use

of fertilizers-DAP and Urea, improved seeds, spacing and line planting. This made Yusuf a model farmer in the area.



During the second season of 2013, Yusuf insisted on using DAP, new improved seed for maize and expanded the garden to 2 acres. He got a good harvest of 5200kg which he sold at even a fair price of \$0.24¹ per kg to earn him \$1664. In the two seasons in 2014 Yusuf planted 6 acres where he harvested 12,500kgs and 13,100kgs of maize for the first and second seasons, respectively, all of which was bulked at the OSCA. In 2015, first season, Yusuf planted maize on 4 acres, beans on 2 acres, soybeans on 1.5 acres (Figure 2). He harvested 9,200kgs of maize which was sold at \$1840, 980Kgs of soybeans and 700kgs of beans which were paid in-kind for school fees (worth \$1,315).

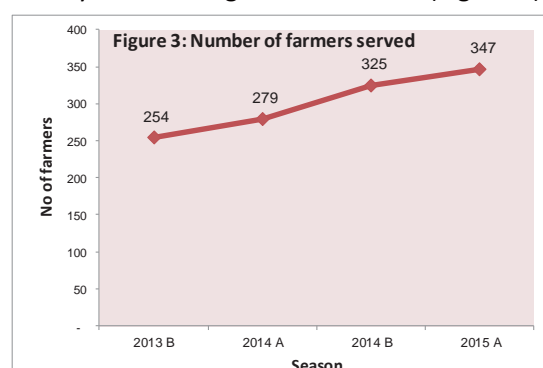


Shelling services

After realizing large quantities of yields from the demonstrations, Yusuf noted that his

major challenge was on postharvest handling, particularly shelling.

He had to transport his produce of maize to the OSCA to be shelled at a cost of \$0.70 per bag. This, he found costly. He further observed that the challenge was not only his but to his community as well. He made a decision to reduce on these costs and also improve his income by offering the same services to his community. With the acquired knowledge and skills from SG2000 Uganda, he has been able to identify better market requirements and services needed by the farmers and other clients. Yusuf asserts that, ***“SG2000-Uganda’s interventions have offered me a competitive edge over other service providers in the area”***. This he attributes mainly to quality and timely service provision. From the 2014 first season proceeds, Yusuf used \$1,429 to purchase a mobile motorized maize sheller. In that season, he used the motorized sheller to shell 1,540 bags of maize for fellow farmers at a service fee of \$0.71 per bag from which he earned \$1,100. In the second season of 2014, he shelled 1,450 bags and got \$11,030. In the first season of 2015, Yusuf shelled 2,020 bags of maize earning him \$1,434. The number of farmers served has been increasing in the last three years although at a slow rate (Figure 3).



Employment for the Youth

In 2013, Yusuf started with 4 Youths as his employees on part-time basis. The job was mainly to operate the maize sheller. In 2014,

¹ Exchange rate was \$1=UGX 3300

he recruited two more youths. Currently, Yusuf employs 6 youths each paid at a rate of \$3 per day (Photo 2). However, this depends on how the season has fared and in most cases, the peak periods are in the middle of the season. At the beginning of the season, he pays between \$2-2.5 per day per worker. This is because harvests are less at this time.

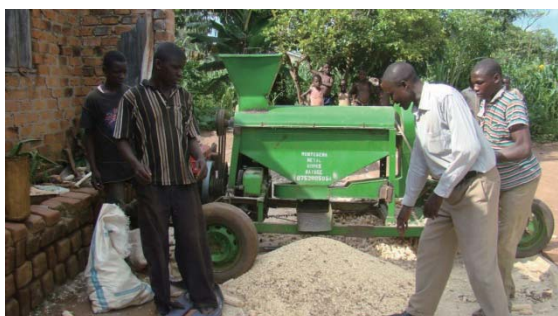


Figure 4: One of the youths employed by Yusuf

Input access to farmers

After a fruitful harvest from both the demonstrations and own garden, fellow farmers in the community started asking for the type of seed Yusuf was using and he directed them to KAIDA. When he realized that KAIDA would not meet the high demand he made a decision to venture into selling inputs (mainly maize seed) to his fellow farmers. SG2000 Uganda has linked Yusuf to credible input companies which include FICA, NASECO and Export trading company for seed supplies. Over the last two years, Yusuf has been supplying seed (mainly maize) and fertilizers (DAP and Urea) at varying quantities. It is very clear that Yusuf's niche lies mainly in maize seed varieties of Longe series 10 and 5 (Table 1). In just the first season of 2014, he made profits worth \$320. Yusuf reported that between 2014 and 2015, he has supplied farm inputs to over 530 farmers. Sometimes he offers seed on credit but to only trusted farmers. In the first season of 2015, he sold maize seed on credit to 10 farmers (each not exceeding 5kgs).

"They pay me back at the end of the season once they sell their produce. Sometimes I take their produce worth the quantity of seed taken. This I seldom do due to the market complexities", says Yusuf.

Given the training he received from SG2000-Uganda, Yusuf offers after sales services to his clients. These depend on the type of inputs sold. The services mainly come in the form of advice on safe use and handling of chemicals, application of chemicals and fertilizers as well as use of proper seed rate at planting time.

Table 1: Quantity and value of inputs supplied to farmers

2014A				
Inputs		Qty (kg)	Value (\$)	Profit (\$)
Seed (Maize)	Longe 10	500	857	143
	Longe 5	250	214	71
Fertilizer	DAP			
	UREA	2500	714	257
2014B				
		Qty (kg)	Value (\$)	Profit (\$)
Seed (Maize)	Longe 10	850	1457	243
	Longe 5	400	3430	114
Fertilizer	DAP	1500	1200	1172
2015A				
		Qty (kg)	Value (\$)	Profit (\$)
Seed (Maize)	Longe 10	550	943	157
	Longe 5	650	371	171

OTHER OUTCOMES

After his engagement with SG2000 Uganda interventions in his district, Yusuf boasts of the following outcomes;

- Yusuf is able to pay school fees for all his 6 children. Four children are in boarding schools (with total fees per term, worth \$578). The remaining two young ones are in day schools of P.4 and P.1 where he pays \$34 per term.
- He bought 3 acres of land valued at \$2,200 in 2014.
- Yusuf also bought a motorcycle at \$1,100
- He installed solar light at his home costing about \$500
- He now has a saloon which generates him about \$2 per day.
- He bought a leased plot (\$606) at the OSCA site and is currently constructing a 3- room warehouse (worth \$1,060) to reduce on costs incurred in storage and input shop space rent as well have space for other output shop (see picture 5)

Figure 5: Yusuf at his warehouse project near the OSCA



Challenges

Some of challenges experienced by Yusuf include;

- Frequent breakdown of machines yet technicians are very far in Luuka District and it's costly to get them.
- Transporting produce to the bulking centre (OSCA) is costly. At times decisions have to be made to sell the produce at farm level which picks lower prices.
- The surge in prices for maize in particular is also another challenge.

Sustainability plans

To make sure that Yusuf stays in business while growing his enterprise, he plans to do the following:

- ✓ Acquire more skills and knowledge on diagnosing problems and making simple repairs on the sheller. This will reduce costs incurred on service providers.
- ✓ Construction of a 3-room warehouse close to OSCA to be used partly for storage, inputs and then output shops. This will reduce costs of renting the facilities.
- ✓ Purchase of additional shellers to increase number of farmers reached to as far as other neighboring sub-counties.
- ✓ Investing more money in the input business. This will increase maize production within the area and therefore high demands for shelling services.

Putting smiles on farmers' faces: The story of Mr. Yoshihiro Kawasaki, a Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) in Buikwe District, Uganda



“Akwata Empola Atuka Wala. Nawolovu Atuka Ku Kibuga”
“Whatever you do with perseverance and patience you can get what you want”

Introduction

For the last 10 years, SAA/SG2000 Uganda has worked with Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) with the main objective of improving rice productivity among farming communities. So far, 16 Japanese have participated in this program to promote NERICA among smallholder farmers not only to increase production, but also improve their incomes through practical trainings and close follow-ups on production, postharvest, agro-processing and marketing of rice. Currently SG2000 Uganda is working with 3 JOCVs assigned to Mityana, Namutumba, and Luwero Districts and 2 more will be assigned to Mukono and Buikwe Districts in 2016 and 2017. JOCVs design their own projects related to NERICA and work together with the local people in the community. A number of outcomes have been reported from the program, one of which is the story of, Mr. Kawasaki a JOCV.

Activities

Mr. Kawasaki is 25 years old and a JOCV assigned to SG2000 Uganda based in Buikwe District from July 2014 to June 2016. He has carried out a number of activities with the communities in this district which include promotion of NERICA, agro-processing and confectionary. These are highlighted herein.

Supporting rice production in the local communities

Under this activity, Mr. Kawasaki mobilized 2 youth groups engaged in rice farming. These 2 groups are Buwagajjo Rice Farmers Group with a membership of 29 (20 F; 9 M) farmers and Gulama Rice Farmers Group with a membership of 21 (6 F; 15M) farmers. Buwagajjo Rice Farmers Group is registered up to sub-county level. The major activities carried out with the 2 farmer groups included promotion of rice cultivation, seed multiplication and savings among members.

The major approach for support was mainly through trainings. The farmer groups were trained on proper agronomic practices for rice production (including planting, weeding, bird chasing, harvesting), postharvest handling and agro-processing as well as mobilization of savings among group members. Currently, Buwagajjo Rice Farmers Group is mobilizing funds through the members' savings association to purchase a rice thresher which will enable them not only add value to their rice produce but also earn income through offering threshing services in their community.



Figure 1: Farmers preparing a rice field

Mr. Awaza Hassan, a 25-year old farmer and chairperson of the Gulama rice farmers group narrated that he started rice production in February 2016 and harvested 391kg rice by planting 25kg of rice seed with no source of water for the first time. In the second planting period, he used 10kgs of seed and harvested 120Kgs. Through the support of Mr. Kawasaki, he was invited to participate in training on rice production by National Crop Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) at Namulonge. After the training, with the support of the JOCV, he mobilized a number of youths to make a group of 30 members with a common goal of rice production as a business in the community. The group started a savings scheme with each member contributing 5,000 Ugandan

Shillings (USD1.5) every month. The group resolved to mobilize funds to buy a rice thresher so that they can provide the services in the community. Besides receiving trainings and frequent follow-ups by the JOCV, the group members received gumboots from Mr. Kawasaki's Post card project. On a personal note, Mr. Awaza reports to have benefitted from working with the JOCV which improved his knowledge and skills, increased incomes from rice production resulting in food security, networking and exposure. With this experience, he is now able to train other farmers in his community. Since then he has continuously been producing rice renting land. He confidently says that change of mindset into growing rice as a business was very important to move forward. Mr. Awaza Hassan was able to sell 300kgs in the 1st season, kept 20kgs as seeds and consumed the balance at home. He gave other farmers 10kgs as seeds on loan which they are supposed to return after harvest. In the 2nd season, he sold 80kgs to group members and the balance of 40kgs was used as seeds for the next season. He sells a kilo at 2,200 Ugandan Shillings (USD0.7). *"All the above achievements also helped to further establish and strengthen friendship with Namulonge research station",* said Awaza proudly.

Supporting agro-processing among farmer groups

Mr. Kawasaki was able to mobilize 6 agro-processing groups (Table 1) which have been registered up to sub-county level. He trained the groups on confectionary, group management and book keeping. The groups have a variety of products they are engaged in which include banana pancakes, doughnuts (mandazi) and baggia (snack). Important to note is the fact that, although the trainings are done for the groups, agro-processing enterprises are individually

owned. Each group is trying to expand their business and one of the groups is planning to invest their profit in livestock farming.

Table 1: Group membership and products engaged in

Name	Membership			Products
	Ttl	M	F	
Bakuseka Majja	10	2	8	-
Bugoba Agaliawam	7	0	7	Banana pancake
Twekembe	19	2	17	Dough-nuts
Buki Coffee Farmers	6	2	4	Dough-nuts
Kyowola otudde	17	2	15	Dough-nuts, Snack
Kiduusu Youth Group	13	13	0	-

There has been an increase in the incomes of the farmers. At the beginning, those carrying out the business were getting Ush.500-1000 (USD.0.15-0.3) per day as profit but currently are getting Ush. 1,500-2000 (USD0.45-0.6) per day on average.

Madam Annet Kyokiba, Chairperson of Kyowola Otudde farmers group, is a 42-year old widow with 6 children (2 girls and 4 boys). She and her group members met Mr. Kawasaki at the 1st workshop of rice production conducted in this area. Mr. Kawasaki introduced a confectionary business activity to her and she became very interested in the venture. After that workshop, some members started serious engagement in rice production. About the same period, the group members decided to engage in a business venture and they zeroed on confectionery products (mainly focusing on selling banana cake,

dough-nuts, and sweet potato pancake) at a trading center. For the group business venture, members work as teams of 3 per day in shifts to make the products for only 1 hour in the morning 6 days per week. They are a group of 17 committed members (15F; 2M). Within four months into the business, the group realized 100,000 UGX (USD30) in profits which they decided to use in purchasing 17 chickens (one for each member). The plan is that each member returns that chicken to the group after it produces chicks (which the farmer can now use to reproduce more poultry). The chicken brought back is to be sold off to buy livestock (goat for Muslims and pigs for non-Muslims). Annet reported that Kawasaki gave her and her group-members important skills and knowledge to become rich.

At this juncture, it is worth mentioning that this group through the guidance and support from Mr. Kawasaki had a slogan as their group's motto: ***"Akwata Empola Atuka Wala"***. This literally means – ***"If you prepare slowly, you can go far"***. And ***"Nawolovu Atuka Ku Kibuga"*** – meaning – ***"finally, the chameleon reaches town"***. The overall meaning of this is that – **whatever you do with perseverance and patience you can get what you want!!!** This shows the level of guidance and motivation accorded this group by Mr. Kawasaki, the JOCV.

Madam Annet further narrating benefits derived from confectionaries had this to say – *"with the confectionaries, families are now getting morning snacks which they were not having before. Even the children's nutrition is improving as we take the products to the school where most children attend. Improvement in income for participating farmers. Improved skills as individuals in operating our own business. Some have their own small shops where they sell the confectionaries. We can now*

*assess the profit we get through the training on bookkeeping we received from Mr. Kawasaki. For me as the chairperson, I make pan cakes for myself and family 3 days a week and realize a profit of 1,800 Ugandan Shillings. These days let me say that I know how to make money in easy ways. Those days before, I had bananas and we eat them only with my children. I did not know how to make pan cake and other products. Now when I add bananas and cassava flour and cooking oil, I get money and with this money I buy soap, sugar and other things. I am a farmer, a tailor and a gardener. I produce potatoes and get money to pay school fees for my children one of whom is now in a Senior 4 school. **In a nut-shell, we are going to miss a hero and we don't know when we are going to get another one**", she concluded with almost tears rolling out of her eyes on her cheeks.*

Bakuseka Majja Farmers Group

This group was established in 2003. It is registered at the sub-county with 20 members (14F; 6M). Mr. Tamale Asadi, the chairperson of the group narrated that the group worked with Kawasaki for 2 years starting in September 2014. The first cooking training was done in October 2014 and they started first with sweet potato chips and then shifted to doughnuts, "mandazi". Unlike Kyowola Ottude group where the business is owned by members, members of this group have individual businesses which vary from mandazi, banana pancake, cassava flour, banana juice tomatoes and vegetables. The group has a common selling point (stall) where they sell in the evening. Members make their own products at home and take them to the stall. One person sells for everyone at a time on a rotational basis and at the end of the day, distributes the sales to the members according to what has been sold from their submissions. This has instilled

trust within the group, selling together with controlled bookkeeping. They have a long experience of bookkeeping and savings and loan scheme. They also have a group cafeteria with furniture made by themselves. They call this place the "Blue Sky Café" and is where they sell tea, porridge and pan cakes at night.

Mr. Tamale Assadi in his own words had this to say – *"we thank Mr. Hero for his ability to keep us in the mood, guidance and advice. Tables and chairs well appreciated, training on banana cakes, potato chips and now getting money from these products. The Japanese Mandazi, training in record keeping, rice growing (upland and lowland), the gumboots given to each member and an SAA cap all contributed to our success as these were not available before. We have now realized food security from Hero's ideas. We eat enough and sell the surplus to get income which enables us to send our children to school, do home catering and other activities as well. Knowledge from the trainings has enabled us to keep records and differentiate between profit and capital which we did not know before. We now have a group savings of 1.2 million Ugandan Shillings (2016) USD364, with a minimum of 2000 Ugandan Shillings (USD0.6) saved by each member per week. Loans are given to members at a rate of 10% interest for a period of 4 months".*

Mpamulungi Zanu, another member asserted as follows: *"we greatly benefited from the trainings. We used to grow crops with no source of daily income but now get something on a daily basis through the confectionaries".* Namusisi Mwajuma, another member reiterated as follows: *"Mr. Kawasaki has been following us regularly and that contributed a lot to our success. Now we don't bother our husbands to give money to buy small things like soap, sugar, salt for the households. This has greatly improved our relations. Look at my feet –*

they are now smooth because of the gumboots. It protects us from insect bites”.



Figure 2: Enjoying a snack at the blue-sky cafe

Gumboots-Postcards Project

One of the challenges Mr. Kawasaki observed among the farmers was lack of protection during farming. The farmers could work on their farm with bare feet and as a result; their soles were injured around ankles from stepping on sharp branches or being bitten by a snakes and insects. When he asked them why they did not protect their feet, the response was that they could not afford to do so. It was on this background that he thought of an innovative way through which he could enable the farmers access gumboots. Mr. Kawasaki used his hobby of photography to provide farmers with gumboots. He named this project “Let’s put on BOOTS and FARMING project”. However, these were only given as rewards to hardworking model farmers of rice production. He took photos from different parts of Uganda, such as beautiful sceneries, and smiles of the people in local areas, and made postcards which he sold especially to Japanese nationals living in Uganda. The proceeds were used to purchase pairs of gumboots. Each post card costs Ush. 625 (\$0.18) and is sold at 3000 (\$0.9) or Ush.2500 (\$0.75) if a person is buying over 10 copies. The gumboots cost Ush. 15000 (\$4.5) to Ush. 16000 (\$4.8). So far, 104 (36M; 68F)

farmers have been provided with gumboots through this project.

Madam Annet, the chairperson of Kyowola Ottude group also received Gumboots from Mr. Kawasaki last year (2015) with some of her group members. Madam Annet in her joyful mood narrated the benefits derived from the Gumboots – *“we are happy, it protects us from body insects, snakes, we are very happy because some of us don’t buy. Our friend here is very friendly, taught us how to get money and be rich as our group for us to have better life”*. Another member of the group, Mrs. Assiya Logose, a 40-year old rice farmer also mentioned – *“I feel so good that every morning I put on the Gumboots so that morning dew does not wet my feet. It really helped us because we had no money to buy such. It is indeed protecting us very well”*. Mr. Kawasaki, the JOCV in his own words said – *“Protect Gumboots for me protect their hearts and lives”*.



Figure 3: A happy farmer with new gumboots

Lessons and challenges

In agricultural development there are various actors, with the aim of improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, who are in fact the largest players in the country. According to Mr. Kawasaki, *“the strength of JOCV lies in the fact that they sit, stand, walk and run together with local people closely in the community”*. This closeness

enables the JOCV to notice change of farmers' mind and attitude through their daily communication which can be a great input in designing appropriate approaches for addressing farmers' needs.

Some of the challenges mentioned by the farmers includes long distance to access milling service for maize and rice, cost of raw materials sometimes high leading to low profits. They mentioned that they need a thresher to help them reduce workload and save time for other activities and also expand in rice production. The group plans to save and buy a thresher and mill to enable farmers add value and get more profit from the rice enterprise but also attract more farmers into rice farming.