

Voices from the Field
Special Edition
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**Sasakawa
Africa
Association**



WHERE WE WORK

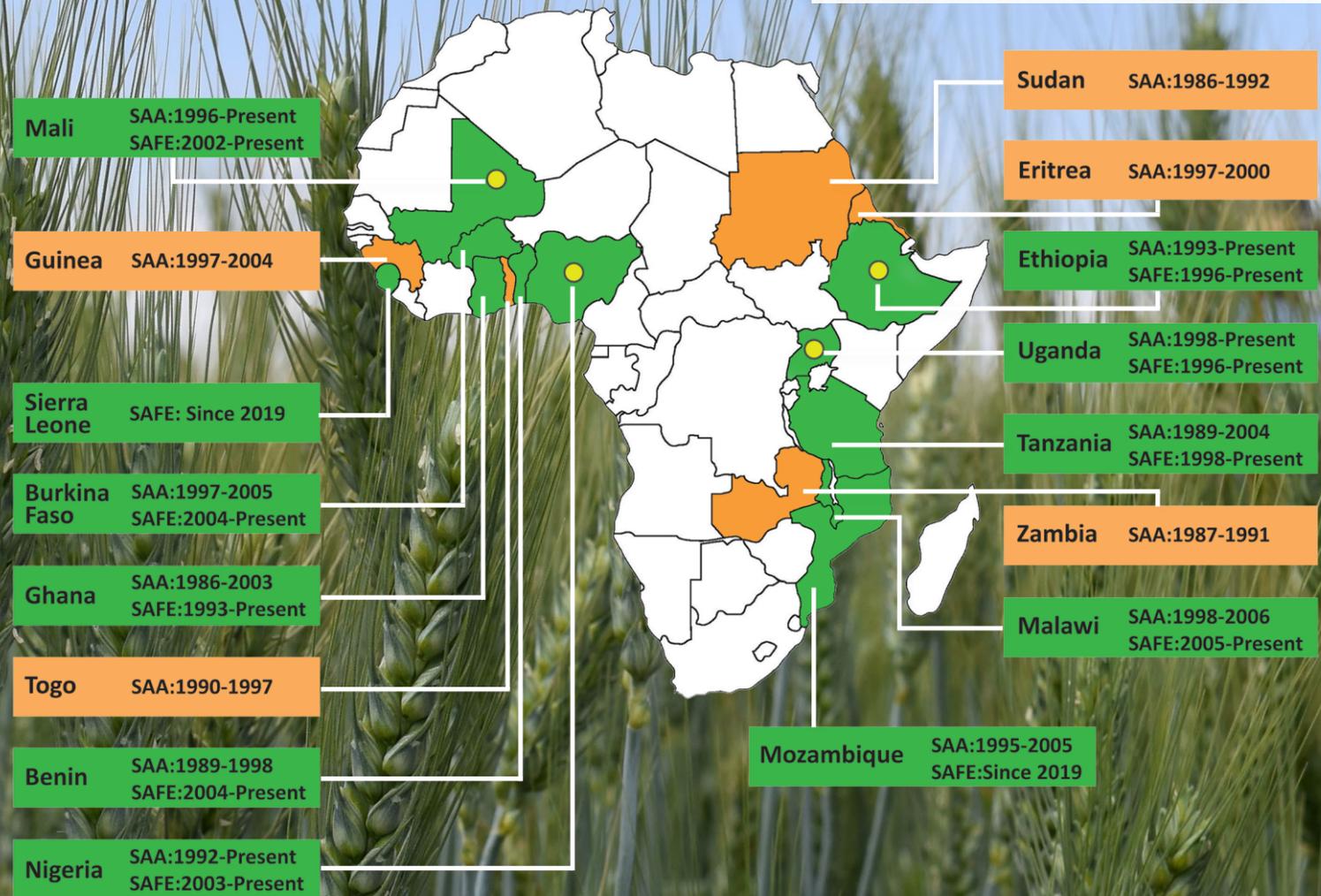
SASAKAWA AFRICA ASSOCIATION

The Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) was founded in 1986 in Geneva as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) by Mr Ryoichi Sasakawa, Founder of The Nippon Foundation, as it is known today; Dr Norman E Borlaug, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate; and President Jimmy Carter, former President of the United States of America.

SAA originally operated as Global 2000 through a joint venture with the Carter Center of Atlanta, Georgia (USA), before becoming Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) in 1988. Funding for SAA comes principally from The Nippon Foundation, led by Chairman Mr Yohei Sasakawa. SG 2000 is still widely used to describe SAA country programmes.

In 2017 SAA became a general incorporated foundation in Japan, and in 2018 the Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education (SAFE) programme was incorporated into SAA, providing leadership in building the human resource capacity of mid-career extension agents.

SAA currently concentrates its field operations in four countries: Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, and Uganda. In addition to these four countries, the SAFE programme also operates in Burkina Faso, Benin, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Tanzania.



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Voices from the Field: Ethiopia



UNITY AND HARD WORK DOES PAY OFF: THE ANDINET PRIMARY COOPERATIVE

The Andinet Primary Cooperative is found in the Debre Libanos woreda of the Dire Jibo kebele, North Shewa zone, in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. It was first established in 1977, although it wasn't until 2004 that a new organisational structure brought renewed vigour and focus to the group. What started as a modest collective of 51 people now has a membership of 854, including 650 men and 204 women, and a working capital of 750,000 ETB (\$25,800), under the guidance of the Sasakawa Africa Association.

Provision of new services

According to cooperative Chairman Bekele Tesfaye, and accountant and Treasurer Teye Zewdu, the cooperative now provides services including commodity supplies, purchasing and

reselling grain from members, and accessing markets in cooperation with other unions. "We provide agricultural inputs like fertilizer and modern seed varieties, working with the Ministry of Agriculture," said Teye. "We also facilitate loan access for union members – amounting to a total sum of 600,000 ETB (\$20,600) – for their various needs, like buying fertilizers and seeds, which will enable them to obtain the required inputs for the next season on their own."

"The big grain storage units we now possess are the results of our unity and hard work, and so too our modern grain milling machines. Farmers living around here do not have to travel far like they did before in search of a milling machine."

Supporting local cooperatives

Demeke Tadele (left), the woreda's cooperatives affairs coordinator, praised the work of the Sasakawa Africa Association in supporting agricultural cooperatives in the area. "In the course of two-and-a-half years in this woreda, much has been done by SG 2000 Ethiopia's Farmer Based Organisations (FBO) project, supporting and in partnership with six primary cooperatives. Among the main contributions have been organizing training and experience sharing programs, and contributing computers, other office equipment, and money safe boxes. If Sasakawa continues with this capacity building and skills training, and the logistical support, we expect to achieve so much more."



Demeke Tadele, Cooperatives Affairs Coordinator, Debre Libanos woreda, Oromia region, Ethiopia



Bekele Tesfaye, Andinet Primary Cooperative Chairman, Debre Libanos woreda, Oromia region, Ethiopia

"THEY COME FROM GREAT DISTANCES TO OUR SHOP"



Tige Gelaw, member of the Alen Tesfa women's agro-processing cooperative group, Awabel woreda, Amhara region, Ethiopia

Tige Gelaw is from the Awabel woreda of the Amhara region in Ethiopia, bordered on the south by the famous Abay River, known as the Blue Nile. Tige is a member of Alen Tesfa, which translates to *We have Hope*, a women's agro-processing cooperative group set up by SAA in 2010. "SG 2000 came to our kebele" Tige recalls. "The first training we received was in home economics. [They] then provided us with peppers, chickpeas and Teff flour milling machines, which relieved us of the double burden of having to walk long distances carrying heavy weights."

Acquiring new skills

"We also received different training programmes from SG 2000, such as in basic business skills, cooperative management, home processing, packing,

labelling, and others." With the provision of such training, together with the right equipment, groups like Alen Tesfa are now able to process different agricultural products, including pepper, shiro (chickpeas), barley, and others. "Before acquiring the mills, we had to travel long distances to process these and other products and, at times, had to spend two to three days at our destination waiting our turn because of the long queues", Tige explains."

Looking to the future

Since 2010, the group's capital has grown from 4,000 birr (\$150) to 99,540 (\$3500). "We are now able to afford access to electricity, which enables us to transform from using diesel mills, which have been difficult in terms of service and maintenance, to an electric one", said Tige. The group uses

one mill for spices and pepper, and the other for grains. "We get great satisfaction from providing services to farmers and their families, even from other areas. They come from great distances to our shop to buy processed products as well. We are planning to open more shops in the immediate future."

Impact of SAA interventions

SG 2000 Ethiopia has so far established 30 women's agroprocessing cooperatives like Alen Tesfa in different parts of the country. "My group and the community have no words", said Tige. "Thank you" is not enough. From training to material provision, we are truly grateful and enormously indebted to SAA's intervention."



Fatouma Burka, a treasurer of the Borata Arjo Grain Marketing Primary Cooperative Society in the Bubata Arjo kebele of the Oromia region, Ethiopia

WOMEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF MODEL COOPERATIVE

Fatouma Burka is treasurer of the Borata Arjo Grain Marketing Primary Cooperative Society in the Bubata Arjo kebele of the Oromia region, Ethiopia. The group was established in 2010 with 27 members, all but one of whom were women, and the following year were registered and certified by the cooperatives promotion office. Current membership has now surpassed one hundred members, ten of them men. They are now a member of the Uta Wayu Cooperative Union – one of the most successful unions in Ethiopia, with a very high business and profit profile.

Value of comprehensive training

Fatouma explains that her primary cooperative society is engaged in different business activities, including running a food store built by the group, and purchasing items such as cooking oil and sugar at subsidized prices and selling to cooperative members and the community. "We received training from Sasakawa Global 2000 Ethiopia", said Fatouma. "All members have taken part in five days of training on basic business skills, and SG 2000 facilitated experience-sharing visits for us on service provision. Members have also received training on machine operation, enabling them to give services

to the community, like maize shelling and threshing services."

Enhanced service delivery

"The first maize sheller we started with was provided by SG 2000. When Sasakawa was encouraged by the strength of us women and our productivity, we were further provided with a multi-crop thresher as part of the Sasakawa-World Food Program project in the area. We are now providing threshing service to three kebeles." Explaining how SAA has supported the group's development and innovation, Fatouma said: "We have a thorough bookkeeping method for recording income and expenses – skills we've acquired from SAA training. Moreover, we have our own statutes. And, when the cooperatives promotion office does the annual audit, they always commend us for our impeccable record-keeping and management.

Empowering smallholder farmers

We have even been able to buy shares from the Oromia bank. On top of that, we have also built our own warehouse." Fatouma declared confidently: "We are empowered, and this is not the end. We will be moving forward and growing even more."



Voices from the Field: Mali



MALIAN NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE “VERY SATISFIED” WITH SAA INTERVENTIONS

As part of the partnership between SG 2000 Mali and the National Directorate of Agriculture (DNA), national supervisory field visits are held to identify and document achievements in each of the four intervention areas where SG 2000 works: Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, and Ségou. By recording these successes, they can be included in national annual reports and other databases, highlighting the successes of SG 2000 interventions, technologies, and innovations, and generating further adoption and buy-in from the government.

Value chain oriented

Since 2017, SG 2000 Mali has focused its interventions on the Production, Postharvest and Trading Center (PHTC) model, using a value chain approach. For this purpose, SG 2000 has established 12 PHTCs across the four focus regions. Each PHTC is composed of 10 villages, which include one central village and nine satellite villages. Each village is represented by at least one Farmers' Organisation (FO) primary cooperative.

These primary FOs are managed at the central village level into a union which leads all the activities of the PHTC. This way, the different villages collaborate to lead the activities intended to improve productivity, postharvest handling and marketing, thus intervening at each link of the value chain.

Garnering the government's support

Last year, National Director of Agriculture Oumar Maiga led one of these supervisory visits to the four intervention regions. He visited five of the 12 PHTCs established by SAA in 2018, in addition to a number of foundation seed production test plots established in farmers' fields and on-station. These plots were created under the framework of the Food and Business Applied Research Fund (ARF) Project, implemented by SG 2000 with the financial support of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific research (NWO).

The supervisory mission also visited the University of Ségou and the Agricultural Training College of Samanko, both of which benefit from the support of SAA through the Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education (SAFE) programme for human resource capacity building. The Director and his team were also on hand to witness productivity improvement activities through Community Demonstration Plots (CDP) for both men and women; Climate Smart Village (CSV) plots and Community-Based Seed Multiplication plots (CBSM); postharvest and agro-processing activities through the application of postharvest equipment and hermetic storage tools; and Farmer-Based Organisation (FBO) activities through collective marketing, contract farming and warrantage.

Increasing agricultural productivity

At the end of his visit, Mr. Maiga expressed his satisfaction, praising SAA for establishing “many useful things such as the PHTC model.” “These are common actions for the benefit of the community and especially in relation to the applied technologies, which allow for increased agricultural productivity.”

“Most importantly, what especially amazed me was the foundation seed production by farmers as part of Sasakawa's ARF Project, supported by the NWO. This is the first time I've seen this in Mali. This activity was reserved only for research centers. But everywhere we visited we saw farmer groups that manage foundation seed production plots. We've seen women doing production of foundation seed for cowpea, groundnut, millet, rice and maize. These are things that I particularly appreciated. Then I saw that there was a strong involvement and a particular incentive for women around all activities implemented by SG 2000. Practically half of the participants are women, who are very active in learning production technologies, taught and promoted by SG 2000. I also saw some hermetic storage tools that I have never seen before – motorized seeders, multi-functional seeders – all popularized by SG 2000 Mali.”



Madoudjan Kéita (centre), host farmer of a Foundation Seed Production test plot in the Kayes region of Mali explains test plot practices to National Director of Agriculture

SUPPORTING FARMERS TO PRODUCE QUALITY SEED



Dr Fousseyni Cissé (third from left) and his team of researchers visit a demonstration plot, Sikasso region, Mali

Dr Fousseyni Cissé is a veteran scientist and rice breeder at the Malian Institute of Rural Economy (IER). SAA works in collaboration with IER to produce quality seed for farmers. At the demonstration sites for seed production in the Sikasso region, SG 2000 Mali supports an IER-led project to promote two quality seed varieties.

Research based engagement

The IER Lowland Rice Unit, based in the Sikasso Cercle at Lokorola village, is among the different agricultural research stations (Lowland and Upland) for different crops, and serves as an education platform where farmers can learn to produce good quality seed. “We have mainly rice, sorghum,

maize, and cotton”, explains Dr Cissé. “All research here is supported and financed by Sasakawa. I lead a team of three research assistants – a breeder, an agronomist, and a phytopathologist – as well as an entomologist.”

Tested and proved by farmers

Another project supported by SAA is the community seed demonstration plots, each comprising 2500m², and showcasing different seed varieties: DK-P17, DK-P28, and Nerica 4. According to Dr Cissé, many farmers have now become better acquainted with rice technologies and agricultural practices as a result of these demonstration plots, and understand the potential of new seed varieties such as DK-P17 and

DK-P28 (with a yield of 4 and 4.5 tonnes per hectare respectively).

Generating solutions

Dr Cissé explains that efforts are in place to understand and benefit from the production cycle of these new varieties. “In terms of research, IER develops many varieties for all ecologies of rice, like deep water, upland, lowland, rain-fed lowland, and so on”, he says. “But the farmers have problems accessing these varieties because of the issues around multiplying the breeder and foundation seeds. For that, Sasakawa has intervened to multiply these varieties, in order to produce increased quantities of quality seed for farmers.”



"Thanks to SAA, we understand better agronomic practices"

SAA PROGRAMS SUPPORT WOMEN SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

Women Assisted Demonstrations (WADs) are one of the Farmer Learning Platforms (FLPs) implemented as part of SAA's focus country programs.

In Mali, a total of 360 WADs involving 10 technologies were conducted in 120 villages in four administrative regions (Koulikoro, Kayes, Segou and Sikasso) during the 2015 cropping year. It is vitally important that women farmers are included in all stages of the agriculture value chain, and their involvement goes beyond gender specific programs like the Women Assisted Demonstrations (WADs). Education and training is provided in a number of key areas including nutritional information and guidance, crop diversification, and new agricultural technologies, which incorporate line/row planting, deep fertilizer placement and the use of improved seed varieties, among others.

Increasing yield

In Komona village, Cercle of Bla, Segou region, Safi atou Mallé is a host farmer of WAD 1. In the village, there are three WADs based on peanuts. She said: "I really appreciate the practice; especially how it's implemented until harvesting. The yield is

higher. Even if SAA was not to come to the village next year, my group and I are prepared to scale up this variety. We understand the agronomic practices, the agricultural calendars, and other techniques essential for growing peanuts."

Utilising new practices

Salimatou Coulibaly is the host farmer of the village's WAD 3, which also grows peanuts. She explained: "We are 15 women growing peanuts together. We are committed to using best agronomic practices taught to us by SAA field officers. We are really pleased with the results we get from the plot. If you compare the production to the local variety, the yield has been double. I believe that if we didn't use the agronomic practices demonstrated in the WAD plots, we would have got almost nothing."

Prosperous visions

The key lessons from the demonstrations helped us adopt the best varieties, and next season will be even better. These two bags of peanuts are ready for adoption next season in our plot, and the strategy is to scale up this variety in the village. All this has been possible thanks to the Sasakawa Africa Association in Mali."



Voices from the Field: Nigeria



GSADP/SG 2000

COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATION PLOT
(CDP)
LOCATION POKKWANI 2
VARIETY DPM
DATE OF PLANTING 12 JANUARY 2018

LOP APE: A FARMERS' GROUP FOR THE LOVE OF ONE ANOTHER

Christiana Jeron Buba is from the Pokwangli II town, situated in the Tungo District of the Kaltungo Local Government Area of Gombe State, Nigeria. She is an active member of the Lop Ape farmers' cooperative group. 'Lop Ape', in the local parlance of Hausa, means "a farmers' group for the love of one another". The group has a membership of 20 people, 15 of whom are women. They mainly cultivate maize, as well as cowpea and rice.

Modern farming techniques

Christiana said that, thanks to Sasakawa Global 2000 Nigeria's (SG 2000) promotion of crop enhancement and productivity technologies, the

Lop Ape group had adopted new techniques in maize cultivation. These techniques resulted in a yield of bigger and stronger cobs than was produced when traditional practices had been applied.

"For example," said Christiana, "there is a big difference in fertilizer application. In the local practice I used to do –or we used to do as a group – we would only apply fertilizer to the top soil. But now, we dig deep and bury the fertilizer beneath the soil. That is why the penetration of the fertilizer is higher, and the absorption is also higher than when using our previous technique. That's also why it has produced two-to-three cobs per

plant, compared to just one before."

Improved livelihood

Asked about the progress made with the newly adopted technologies, Christiana said that she was "really happy about this type of technological practice". She further underscored the benefits that techniques promoted by SG 2000 have brought to her life and her family: "I now have an improved source of income generation. I am able to settle my children's school fees, unlike before. In general, this practice has increased the level of income earning amongst all of our group members."



Christiana Jeron Buba is from the Pokwangli II town in Gombe State, Nigeria. She is an active member of the Lop Ape farmers' cooperative group

"WITHOUT SG 2000 INTERVENTION WE WOULD HAVE BEEN BATTLING WITH POVERTY"

The Kafin Gana Farmers' Cooperative, in Jigawa, northwestern Nigeria, began life as a rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA) in January, 2000. At that time, the cooperative had 10 members, but by 2005 this had increased to 25, including 15 men and 10 women.

A humble beginning

In its early years the group struggled to invest effectively in profitable enterprises, explains Alhaji Abdu Gana, the group's chairman. "For over 15 years, there was no improvement at all in our livelihood, and most members could not afford three meals a day. In fact, most members could not afford to contribute the stipulated weekly amount due to poverty. There was poor leadership in the group and we all lacked good knowledge of Good Agronomic Practices [GAP], group dynamics and agribusiness management. The truth is, 75% of the members of the Kafin Gana community were living in poverty, with most of our children attending Quranic schools only."

Training matters

Attempts at making the group viable proved to be of no avail, according to Alhaji Abdu Gana, and the SG 2000 intervention in 2016 came at just the right time. "We were trained on GAP, group dynamics and agribusiness management by an extension agent and Commodity Association Trader [CAT] posted to our community by SAA/JARDA. With the help of Mr Sadiku Abdu, we reorganized the group and elected new leaders in 2016, and registered the group as a legal entity on 14th December, 2018," said Alhaji Abdu.

Engaging in sustainable activities

At the start of the project, each member contributed an initial fund of 10,000 Naira (\$28), making a combined total of 25,000 Naira (\$70). By December 2018, this figure had risen to 2,245,000 Naira (\$6,240) due to the reinvestment of funds into profitable businesses, and



Alhaji Abdu Gana (center), chairman of the Kafin Gana Farmers' Cooperative Jigawa State, Nigeria.

sustainable activities such as fattening ruminants, buying and storing farm produce, service provision, and applying interest on loans. "Based on the training received from SG 2000, we started giving out loans to members with a 10% interest rate. In 2018, 110 non-members benefited from our loan scheme and no defaulter recorded. In 2017, the group bought six work bulls and three ox-drawn ploughs, which we used for service provision to members and non-members of Kafin Gana community, as there is no single tractor in the community up to date."

Service provision

"The group also procured a rice mill in 2018 for service provision in the community. Members of the village no longer trek long distances to mill rice and all the female members of the group are into rice processing", Alhaji Abdu explains.

Measurable impact

In 2015, only six group members were living in concrete houses. As of March 2018, 17 members were able to build concrete houses due to the increase in members' farm sizes and the results of the SG 2000 intervention. Alhaji Abdu also announces that four female members of the group now own deep freezers and are able to sell soft drinks, yoghurt, Zobo (a locally processed drink), and bottled and sachet water with a significant profit.

Appreciable impact

The secretary of the group, Mallam Yahya Kafin Gana, sums up the difference that SG 2000 has made to the group in the last three years. "Without SG 2000 intervention, we would have been battling with poverty in this group, and the community as a whole."

AGRO-PROCESSING ENTERPRISES: A SOURCE OF INCOME FOR RURAL WOMEN IN NIGERIA

Since 2012, the Postharvest Handling and Agro-processing programme (PHAP) of Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) in Nigeria has been promoting improved agro-processing technologies and techniques in rice, maize and soya production, with the aim of empowering women – particularly those in rural areas. Through SG 2000 interventions, several agri-business enterprises were established, and women's agro-processing cooperatives currently operate in Adamawa, Kano, Gombe, and Jigawa States.

Need-based intervention

Several technology packages have been delivered through PHAP in these areas. Their aim is to improve agro-processing techniques and produce more marketable, value-added food products by facilitating access to more efficient technologies that save time, improve the quality of produce, and increase processors' income.

SG 2000 works closely with government partners at different levels, including in agriculture and women's affairs departments, to identify women's groups and cooperatives operating in a variety of areas and provide bespoke interventions. In each project area, needs, priorities, and the capacity gaps of these collectives were assessed in order to select and prioritise commercially viable enterprises. This approach facilitates ownership and guarantees continuous follow-up and assistance from government, at least until they are able to effectively manage their own business.

Enhanced processing activities

The Bunkure women's rice processing group was

trained on quality processing, agri-business development and group management. As a result of this training they were able to improve their processing activities. Over a two-year period, women processors of rice saw an increase in their income, from \$939.3 in the dry season and \$1089.3 in the rainy season to about \$2346.4 and \$1996.4 respectively.

A survey found that 49 per cent of trained cooperative members reported gaining new skills in agro-processing and value addition, while 51 per cent had learned new business competencies such as business selection, saving, and customer handling, amongst others. Reported changes for cooperative members (women) of the agro processing group also included better family nutrition (51 per cent), a better social life (49 per cent) and increased job opportunities (40.5 per cent).

Value of team work

SAA believes women's agro-processing cooperatives are better ways of empowering low-income rural women and changing misconceptions about gender in society. Through establishing platforms for efficient agri-business enterprises and collaboration between different groups, these cooperatives can make a positive impact on the incomes and livelihoods of women and their families. Such collaborative efforts between different development partners, including governments, are required to give appropriate attention to women's cooperatives in order to support them with the necessary financial and technical guidance to foster their successful development.



Mrs. Hajiya Hinde, Chair of Zangon Buhari Women Rice Milling Enterprise received one of her customers who brought bags of rice for quality milling service, Bunkure Local Government, Kano State, Nigeria



Voices from the Field: Uganda



INCREASING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE



Katamba is a farmer from Bulera sub-county, Mityana district, in the Central Region of Uganda. He started working with SG 2000 Uganda in 2015, as a host farmer under the Nabumbugu Youth Development Group

29 year-old Katamba is a farmer from Bulera sub-county, Mityana district, in the Central Region of Uganda. He is married and has three children. He started working with SG 2000 Uganda in 2015, as a host farmer under the Nabumbugu Youth Development Group, made up of 30 members (15 men and 15 women). He was motivated to join the group in 2014 after being impressed by the outputs from a maize demonstration.

Expanding networks

In the same year that he joined the group, he was selected to host a maize demonstration Technology Option Plot, and in 2016 he was appointed as a Community-Based Facilitator (CBF) to train farmers in his community.

In addition to the knowledge and skills acquired through his duties as a CBF, Katamba has also benefited from new experiences and opportunities that have greatly expanded his networks. Other organizations often look to CBFs as focal points in local communities. These have included Akorion, CAFÉ-Africa, and NARO. Over the years, Katamba observed that the farmers in his community,

particularly those he was training, had issues with accessing agro inputs. There was only one agro-input shop in the Bulera subcounty, and sometimes what the farmers wanted was not available, so Katamba decided to bring the inputs to the farmers. In the second season of 2017, he served 200 farmers with different inputs – mainly seed and chemicals. Katamba reported that “it is easy to train the farmers when one had a sample and in a way, it was an advertising strategy”. He operates demonstration gardens to showcase his products, and also offers after-sale services, visiting farmers' fields to see how the products are performing. With the profits he made in 2017, he secured a plot of land to construct a better house for his family.

Service provision as a business

Since the demonstration he hosted in 2016, Katamba's fields have been a popular attraction. He reported that farmers would ask him about the kinds of chemicals he was using on his garden. He used to say: “You buy the required chemicals and I'll spray them for you the way I did on mine” an offer that soon turned into a fully fledged

spraying service provision. Katamba charges UGX 1000 (\$0.27) for every emptied chemical pump, and UGX 1500 (\$0.41) for every emptied foliar fertilizer pump. Last season he served about 100 farmers with an average of three pumps per person. In a season, he earns an average of UGX 200,000 (\$54) and has two pumps which he bought at UGX 60,000 (\$16) each. He plans to employ two more people in order to increase service provision.

Future endeavours

Katamba is now proposing saving plans to his group, whereby farmers wanting inputs can register and access those inputs from the shop. Farmers would be granted a loan from the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), with the funds directed to the input shop, allowing the farmer to access the required inputs and service the loan thereafter. Members are currently consulting on the plans.

Katamba also aims to promote the same idea to other farmer groups in the community, and also to promote collective purchases from farmer groups.

“I AM PROUD OF BEING ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE”

The Ziobwe Agaliawamu Agri-business Training Association (ZAABTA) is a dynamic and award-winning youth agri-business association situated in the Luwero district of central Uganda.

Engaging the youth

The success of the group rests on its ability to inspire African youth to view agriculture as an employment choice with a bright future, rather than as a last resort.

The Nokia Youth Farming Agricultural Innovation Platform (NOFAIP) is a member of the ZAABTA association, and comprises over 300 young people, 123 of whom are women. Established in 2004, NOFAIP provides a range of services, including planting, threshing, shelling, as well as market support and water crop management.

Benefiting the youth

Kiyingi John, a 24-year old member of

NOFAIP, said: “We have done a lot of activities. I am proud of being engaged in agriculture. We are providing agricultural production support services to the farmers, and the services are timely and commercial based. We are a mobile team; where there is demand, we are there.” Speaking about the benefits that membership has brought, Kiyingi added: “I personally have been able to buy more land, as well as my own field motorbike. We are so grateful to SAA because it has really given so much support to the Nokia youth through various training, which has enabled me to keep records and manage my funds, and that's why I am able to move from one step to another and also improve my livelihood.”

Unleashing the potential

Kiyingi, who holds a degree in development studies, added: “Most of the youth look at agriculture as a last resort,

but we say it can be a choice. As long as you have the social capital in your village, you can provide market to the farmers, and you get commission through linking the farmers to the market.”

Kamoan Daniel, a graduate of Makerere University, and an extension officer at ZAABTA Extension said: “In Nokia and the whole association [ZAABTA], I work as an agronomist and extension worker. I have poultry and livestock [cattle] projects, and I am aiming to buy more to improve my standard of living.” The energetic duo added: “We promote agriculture as a choice of employment to the youth. When recruiting, we look for those who have the spirit of teamwork, commitment, and innovation. We want to train individuals who can earn from any kind of activities based on the resources, and the demand, around them.”



Kamoan Daniel (Left) and Kiyingi John working in the green house, Luwero district, Uganda



Nyarakot Farmer Field School is located in Tororo district, Uganda. Members of the group save collectively. Their savings are properly administered by members entrusted by the group

“WHY DON’T YOU JOIN SASAKAWA?” THE STORY OF THE NYARAKOT GROUP

The Nyarakot Farmer Field School 1 is situated in Asinge C of the Nyarakot parish, in Tororo District, Uganda. It consists of 30 members, 18 of whom are women, and its activities include rice, groundnut and maize production. Formed in 2012 and fully registered, it received an initial investment of 10,000,000 Ugandan shillings (USh) (\$2,700) from SG 2000 Uganda under the Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs) project. They were able to pay back the loan within a year, and the profits from their farming business are now being reinvested in their activities.

Introduction to SAA

Hellen Epuruge, a member of the group and mother of two young children, recently won the women’s Best Business Plan Concept at the SG 2000 Uganda Agribusiness Clinic Awards for 2018.

Otwani Terensio, Chairperson of the Nyarakot group, explains their success: “We started with 12 members in our collective farming enterprise”, he said. “We used to grow maize and groundnuts, but at that time we didn’t have any technology. We just planted this local maize and plant anyhow. In the end, our maximum yield per acre was just three bags – and imagine that for all twelve members! We don’t forget the times when we were eating poorly, let alone thinking of taking up farming as business.”

“It all began with one trader’s visit to our group, who changed the whole story when they said: “You people in Nyarakot, why don’t you join Sasakawa? You will get training and it will enable you to increase your yield.” “That was when SG 2000 came into our lives.”

Adopting new farming techniques

“First they trained us at a One Stop Center as a group, suggesting that we adapt our farming

methods, start using diammonium phosphate (DAP) and urea, and buy improved seeds. We also learned new planting techniques. “We farmed as a group and increased our yield. Then, in the next meeting, Sasakawa took us to BAIDA (Bugiri Agri-business and Institutional Development Association) to follow a training course on postharvest handling and storage under the aBi [Agricultural Business Initiative] Trust project, which I attended as a village agent along with another member. We didn’t know how to dry grain yet; we had just been drying it in bare grass, resulting in our maize becoming dirty and spoiled. We got training on how to use tarpaulins, how to use shelling machines. We came back to the group and we practiced these methods. The next time we planted our maize, we dried it in tarpaulins after harvest and shelled it in the shelling machines, and the maize came in amazingly white. We sold that maize at USh 550 per kilo, compared to the USh 300 per kilo the previous yield, obviously because of the quality. From that we said: “Eh, it is God who brought Sasakawa to Uganda.”

Farming as a business

“All the members of the group have now taken up farming as a business. We have bought our own motorized maize sheller, earning the association USh 3,000,000 (\$810) per season on top of the manual ground nut sheller [provided by SG 2000] that is earning us USh 900,000 (\$243) per season. Members are now able to pay school fees for their children, from primary education at boarding schools up to university. The community around us is changing, eager to copy and apply our methods. We appreciate SG 2000 Uganda for what it has done for us – and all it has been worth!”

Neo Godi is a fabricator based in the Apac District of Uganda. Having received training from SG 2000 Uganda, Neo now fabricates maize mills, groundnut shellers and maize hullers.



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