

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



WHERE WE WORK

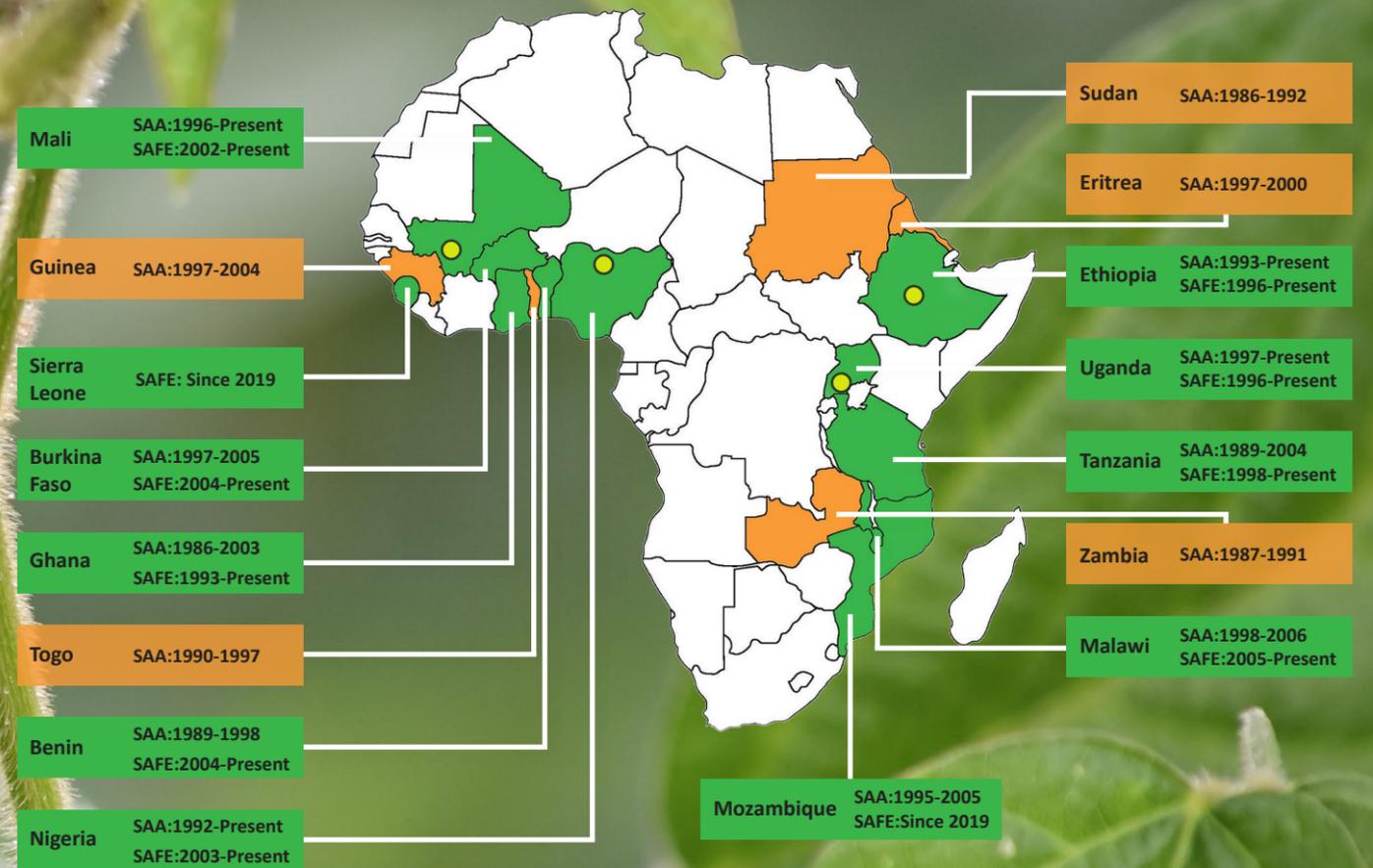
SASAKAWA AFRICA ASSOCIATION

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 Human Resource Development (HRD) programme also operates in Burkina Faso, Benin, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Tanzania.



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Voices from the Field: Ethiopia





Wolde Gichamo in his wheat Community Demonstration Plot (CDP)

“I WILL KEEP PRACTICING THE LESSONS I HAVE LEARNED TO IMPROVE MY LIVELIHOOD”

HOW ONE FARMER BENEFITED FROM WORKING WITH SAA - ETHIOPIA

Wolde Gichamo, a 65-year old smallholder farmer, lives in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia. For farmers like Wolde, access to high-yielding wheat varieties has proved challenging and has forced his community to resort to local varieties, which significantly lowered their productivity.

A much needed help

Extension Agents (EAs) working as part of SAA-Ethiopia chose Wolde to host a 1000 m² Community Demonstration Plot (CDP) and to test a new wheat variety known as Ogolcho.

As well as hosting a CDP, Wolde was one of 43 smallholder farmers who benefitted from training provided by SAA-Ethiopia. The training focused on a range of improved agronomic practices, including line planting, appropriate fertilizer application, proper harvesting, and threshing and storage. After the training, SAA-Ethiopia provided 10 kg of the improved wheat basic seed, 10 kg of the 'NPS' compound nitrogen-phosphate fertilizer with sulphur and 15 kg of urea, in line with the extension package recommendation from the woreda.

Putting it in practice

Motivated by the technical support he

received from SAA, Wolde put into practice the technologies that were demonstrated to him, and reaped a bumper harvest of about 600 kg from his plot. Within his community Wolde became an inspiration, and hosted various field day events, during which he shared his experience with farmers, EAs and local government officials.

Impact of SAA's intervention

Reflecting on the value of SAA-Ethiopia's intervention, Wolde explains: "The local wheat seed we used to procure from the local market was vulnerable to yellow rust and various weeds, which affected the productivity and quality of the crop. Thanks to SAA-Ethiopia, I now understand the importance of using quality seed. I've also switched from the traditional broadcast sowing method to drilling seed in rows, which effectively lowered seed expenses and saved my energy. In addition, I'm now equipped with the required skills to properly manage crops and multiply the best varieties. I am proud to host SAA-Ethiopia farming technologies, and to share my experience with fellow farmers. I will continue working hard and keep on practicing the lessons I have learned to improve my livelihood."



FROM BANKRUPTCY TO A LUCRATIVE BUSINESS

Having gone bankrupt in his previous business, Furi Hirpo, a smallholder farmer and father of three, decided to follow his brother's footsteps and turn to service provision. With an initial investment of 10,000 Birr (\$340), Furi adopted a multicrop thresher, promoted by SAA-Ethiopia, to use in Shashemene, in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia, and the surrounding communities.

Modern farming techniques

SAA-Ethiopia country program regularly conducts demonstrations of different machineries through the Postharvest Handling and Agro-processing (PHAP) theme. Having attended one of the demonstrations, Furi observed how the multi-crop thresher operates, and was impressed by its ability to halve the winnowing time of Teff compared to traditional machineries owned by the majority of service providers.

SAA-Ethiopia was able to assist Furi in acquiring his own thresher through credit, and also linked him with the local fabricator. According to Furi, this was a turning point in his life: "My living condition has improved drastically. I have already built two houses and a shed, and have been able to provide a better education for my children. I'm now looking into engaging in an animal fattening

business. I'm sincerely appreciative of SAA-Ethiopia for their unreserved support."

Engaged in full gear

Since taking his thresher to the field, Furi's business has boomed, which has enabled him pay back his loans and procure new threshers, as well as engage in maize shelling. What started as a small-scale service provision has now become a lucrative business. Furi is now the proud owner of four maize shellers and six multicrop threshers – as well as a duty truck, which he is able to rent. Per annum, each of his threshers fetches him around 60,000 Birr (\$2,000), with each maize sheller bringing in 50,000 Birr (\$1,600). Renting the duty truck generates an additional 25,000 Birr (\$840) every month, and Furi now hopes to secure a tractor for the upcoming crop production season.

Tackling Challenges

But despite managing a flourishing business, Furi also notes the challenges facing smallholder farmers, such as the increasing cost of running engines: "The market is unpredictable, and the cost of maintaining machinery fluctuates. We request that government officials look into this issue and bring about a lasting solution."

Furi Hirpo (right) posed with youths which he hired to operate his thresher



Voices from the Field: Mali





Kiné Sogoba, a member of the Dacoumani Postharvest and Trade Centers (PHTCs)

“BECAUSE OF THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, ALL OUR OLD VARIETIES ARE ABANDONED”

A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE FOR THE BENEFIT OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS – THE CLIMATE SMART VILLAGE MODEL INTRODUCED IN MALI BY SAA

The village of Dacoumani in Mali, like all villages in the Sahel, has had to endure the drastic effects of climate change. Notably, Dacoumani has experienced the gradual disappearance of local genotypes and decline in crop yield due to unpredictable rainfall patterns. In order to address this issue, SAA's office in Mali implemented a Climate Smart Village (CSV) extension model in 2018, as part of the Crop Productivity Enhancement (CPE) theme. The model is implemented at the Postharvest and Trade Centers (PHTCs) of Dacoumani and Guéssebougou, which comprise groups of ten villages, each sheltering forty technological demonstrations of the CSV model for approximately six hundred members.

Keeping up with the technology

The CSV model advocates for good water management practices, which include the pre-germination of seeds, as well as the use of early maturing crop varieties with high yield potential. The model also involves monitoring information from the national meteorological service, and carbon mitigation through the local application of mineral fertilizers and high doses of phosphorus.

Challenged by climate change

Kiné Sogoba, a member of the Dacoumani PHTC, shares the impact that climate change

has on smallholder farmers: “Because of the effects of climate change, all our old varieties are abandoned. Every year, rainfall ceases suddenly and often in early September when we need it the most. Nowadays, everyone is obliged to use new varieties, such as early maturing varieties, otherwise you will not harvest anything in your plot.”

Generating solutions

Following an assessment of CSV activities, the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Communication (MERC) unit of SAA found that 83% of those interviewed at the two PHTCs thought that the technologies introduced are effective in coping with the effects of climate change. A total of 85% found the technologies applicable in their own production plots.

Kiné reflects on the benefits of the new agricultural practices: “Seed priming is very beneficial because it allows for the identification, and subsequent removal, of seeds that are in bad condition. This encourages germination as seeds sown after priming begin to germinate the next day, whereas in previous farming methods it is typical to wait three to five days before seeing the seeds germinate. This demonstrates the value of the technologies implemented in the CSV model.”



Dr Nouhoum Sangaré, SAA's Thematic Director for Business Development, delivering an operational account training session to the women's group

“THIS FOUNDATION SEED PROJECT HAS BEEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE OUR LIVING CONDITIONS”

THE FOLODA WOMEN'S GROUP

The Monzonblena Postharvest and Trading Center (PHTC) boasts a membership of 10 villages, and is located south of the Malian capital, Bamako. In 2017, SAA identified the villages, including Foloda, which has a population of 450 and relies on subsistence agriculture as its main source of income, to follow a needs assessment survey organized in collaboration with the national agriculture sector of Dioïla.

Empowering smallholder farmers

Following the survey, a women's group in Foloda was chosen to host a new SAA extra-core project, funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), entitled 'Developing economically viable models of foundation seed production for vital food security'. The group, comprised of 69 members, trialed groundnut foundation seed production to test the economic feasibility of seed production for major crops.

During the 2018 cropping season, the group established a test plot of 0.25 ha in three replicates, under the technical assistance of an SAA/Applied Research Fund (ARF) project and national agricultural sector agents. The

group's results speak for themselves, and are a testament to the initiative and hard work of its members. From an initial investment of 96,000 FCFA (\$192), the group made a sale of 300,000 FCFA (\$600) – an impressive gross profit margin of 204,000 FCFA (\$408) on less than a hectare of field, maintained manually by the women.

Improved livelihood

Coumba Sidibé, who led the group, said: “As a result of the operational account training that the project has given us, we have found that production of groundnut foundation seeds is very profitable. We have put this amount of money into the account of the group”. Reflecting on the benefits of reinvesting their profits, Coumba adds that “members can now borrow money to carry out other income generating activities. We can say that this foundation seed production project has been an opportunity to provide us with resources to improve our living conditions. We now afford food for our children, care for them and send them to school. We will continue with this activity.”



Voices from the Field: Nigeria



THE STORY OF GRACE YOHANA, AND HOW SHE IS COMMITTED TO WIDENING ACCESS TO QUALITY SEEDS

Access to quality seeds has been a critical challenge for smallholder farmers in the Mararaba Rido Local Government Area of Nigeria, where Grace Yohana lives. As a way of addressing this issue, Grace trained as a community based facilitator (CBF) to provide value chain extension services focusing on maize, rice and soybean. Upon completion of her training, Grace decided to go further by sharing her knowledge and skills with the wider farming community using platforms provided by SAA-Nigeria and Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) in Kaduna State.

Exploring prosperous endeavors

One of the ways in which Grace has utilised the opportunities made available to her by SAA Nigeria and AGRA, is to become a representative for Value Seeds Limited – a crop seed production solution and development company based in Nigeria. By becoming an intermediary between farmers and Value Seeds Limited, Grace assesses the requirements of farmers and then relays this information to the company, in order to ensure smallholder farmers are provided with

what they need.

Measurable impact

"I was already serving my community as an extension agent by delivering services on crop production and enhancement," Grace explains, "however, the series of training sessions I attended through the joint project implemented by SAA-Nigeria and AGRA enabled me to understand key components of the agricultural value chain system. It broadened my horizons, and made me realise that I can increase my income from this new venture.

"My hard work paid off and in addition to increasing my income, I'm also now engaged in solving the challenges that we have in the supply system of quality seeds."

As part of her role with Value Seeds Limited, Grace also procures seeds and then packages them accordingly in 2kg and 5kg bags, with appropriate labels. She also places orders on behalf of customers, and provides advisory services to smallholder farmers who visit the store.

Grace Yohana is a community based facilitator. She supplies seeds and provides advisory services to smallholder farmers

“OUR HARD WORK PAID OFF”

THE MULTIPURPOSE COOPERATIVE SOCIETY REAPING THE BENEFITS OF SAA TRAINING

The Rebuild Nigeria Multipurpose Cooperative Society is located in the Cross River State of Nigeria, and comprises 30 members. Despite Cross River State being one of the highest rice producing states in Nigeria, the local variety available in the market is limited. In 2019, SAA's office in Nigeria was introduced to the cooperative through the Extension Agent of the Bekwara Local Government, as part of the Cross River Agricultural Development Project (CRADP).

Experimenting new farming techniques

Janet Ushie, a high school graduate from Bekwara Local Government, is a hardworking member of the cooperative. Though Janet is engaged in Cassava farming – a staple food in her community – she was convinced experimenting with other commercial crops would improve the revenue she generates from her plot. Training provided by SAA-Nigeria introduced farmers, including Janet, to new crops – including high performing rice varieties, endorsed by the local government extension bureau – as well as new planting methods, fertilizer application and weeding techniques.

“Our cassava production is low due to the traditional heap farming system we've been

practicing for years,” Janet explains “SAA-Nigeria taught us that different varieties of crops, planted in the same heap, compete for resources in the soil, which results in low productivity. They also trained us on how to become successful in rice production. Among other important lessons, the training included fertilizer application techniques. We've never used fertilizer before, and I now understand its essential role.

The hard work paid off

“We've put a lot of effort in practicing what we have observed in the practical sessions, and our hard work paid off. We are expecting increased yield this season. Fellow farmers also visit our plots, and we tirelessly share the knowledge we have acquired.”

SAA actively encourages women and youth to engage in farming as a way of improving their livelihoods, and as a business. Due to SAA-Nigeria's support, Janet can realise her dream of going back to school: “I'm confident that the revenue I generate from my rice plot will be enough to pay for school fees and stationaries. I'm really grateful to SAA-Nigeria as this wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for their intervention.”



Janet Ushie, a member of the Rebuild Nigeria Multipurpose Cooperative Society



Voices from the Field: Uganda





Steven demonstrating a motorized maize sheller

“I AM GRATEFUL TO SAA FOR EMPOWERING ME TO BECOME A YOUTH ENTREPRENEUR”

Steven Sseruma is a 27-year-old smallholder farmer, engaged in service provision, from the Nakaseke District of Uganda. Owing to training administered by SAA-Uganda, Steven was selected as a community-based facilitator in 2018, and was tasked with training farmers in his community on how to improve their farming methods. Through the private service provision extension model, SAA supports the capacity-building and development of youth farmers along the agricultural value chain, which covers Crop Productivity Enhancement (CPE), Postharvest Handling and Agro-processing (PHAP), and Business Development (BD).

Introduction to SAA

“In 2018, SAA organized a field day in the Nakaseke sub-county to demonstrate postharvest handling equipment,” Steven explains. “I was impressed with the motorized maize sheller and, given that the services for shelling were in high demand in my community, I paid a deposit of \$273.97* to secure my own. In the same season, I was engaged in the maize shelling business and

was able to recover the cost of the machine.

Service provision

“As I become known in my community, the number of customers and bags of maize I shell has increased significantly. At the end of each season, I earn a profit of \$547.94. In addition to the maize shelling service, I provide extension advisory services to farmers. I offer competitive prices to farmers for their produce (maize and beans) so that they are not cheated by middlemen.”

Appreciable impact

Despite working on a small field, Steven was able to maximize his productivity due to the knowledge, skills and technologies promoted by SAA. Consequently, his maize production has increased from one to two acres per season: “My income has significantly increased which has enabled me to support my family and acquire a plot of land. I am grateful to SAA for the capacity development and linkages which have empowered me to become a youth entrepreneur, as well as an inspiration to others in my community.”

*One machine costs \$683.93

“MY INCOME AND LIVELIHOOD HAVE IMPROVED”

THE FARMER’S MULTIPURPOSE COOPERATIVE REAPING THE BENEFITS OF COLLECTIVE SEED PRODUCTION

Bulunguli Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative is located in the Iganga district of Uganda. A needs assessment was conducted in 2016 as part of an agreement between SAA-Uganda and the Ministry of Agriculture, together with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), during which many farmer groups requested capacity development in oil-seed crop production. SAA worked with eight of these farmers' groups to form the cooperative, and to support them by delivering relevant training in soybean production and value chain management.

Value chain oriented

The cooperative incorporates eight groups and boasts a total of 316 members and eight board members. Working across the value chain, the cooperative, which is mainly engaged in the selling and multiplication of soybean, also engages in value addition by making confectionery using cassava and soybean. To enhance market linkages and connections, the group also explores opportunities in grain markets in Kenya and Rwanda, as well as Uganda.

Empowering smallholder farmers

Members of the cooperative receive 100 kg of soybean seed on credit, and are encouraged to double this original investment by growing at least one acre of soybean per season. At the end of each season, members are provided with eight gunny sacks to be used

for bulking.

The chairman of the cooperative, Buyinza George, reflects on some of the tangible achievements. “From April to July last year, we planted 117 acres of soybean for seed, and bulked 106 tons. In September through to December, we planted 125 acres for seed and harvested 169 tons. We earned a collective revenue of UGX 35,760,000 (about \$9,710) from sales and loan repayments made by members. We are now encouraging other farmers to engage in seed production, because seed has more market value than grain.”

Training matters

As part of the training provided by SAA-Uganda members were able to benefit from effective practices in oil crop production, and gained an insight into the value chain and marketing.

“Sasakawa trained us on how to grow seed,” explains Namutamba Siida, a member of the cooperative. “Selling seed is more lucrative than selling grain, because 1 kg of soybean seed goes for UGX 3,000 (\$0.81) while 1 kg of soybean grain is sold at UGX 1,500 (\$0.40). I harvested 720 kgs of soybean from my one acre of land in the first season and sold it to the cooperative, earning a revenue of UGX 2,160,000 (\$586.95). I was able to buy a cow from the proceeds, and my income and livelihood have improved.”



Namutamba Siida, member of the cooperative, in a soybean field.

SAA Operations During COVID-19 Pandemic

SAA will continue to 'take it to the farmer', and to work hard to mitigate the impact of the pandemic through short, medium and long-term interventions, using innovative technology – such as e-extension platforms – to strengthen the resilience of the African food system, in response to COVID-19



An input dealer from Debre Elias Woreda, Amhara Region, Ethiopia



Women smallholder farmers during distribution of palliatives at Kano state



Women group in Mali preparing juice from locally grown fruits



SAA program officer with Odong Betty examining her rice field during training of adopters in Otuke District, Uganda



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