

Voices from the Field

Special Edition 2022





Contents



Ethiopia

6

By participating in the project, I have gained new skills and knowledge on how to apply improved agronomic practices

7

Promoting Mobile Mechanical Postharvest Machines: The case of Private Threshing /Shelling Service Provision Model

9

Agro-dealership is more than just a source of income!



Mali

12

Because of the effects of climate change, all our old varieties are abandoned

13

I can now share with my community that food is medicine - A story about how SAA created awareness on nutrition at rural villages

14

A Rural Entrepreneur Producing Catfish to Supply Local Consumers in Mali



Nigeria

16

SAA-Nigeria is helping farmers overcome soil degradation with the Urea Super Granules (USG) Fertilizer Applicator - The story of Adamu Hotoro

18

From begging to production: The case of self-help group challenged in Billiri, Gombe State, Nigeria

19

I'm really grateful – the success story of Dorothy Anima Effa, one of SAFE's first graduates



Uganda

21

I present my heartfelt thanks to SAA Uganda - The Ugandan farmers' group benefitting from SAA initiatives

22

Meet Helen Edwe, a 73-year-old woman providing agro-technologies to her fellow farmers

24

Improving nutrition at vulnerable communities in Uganda



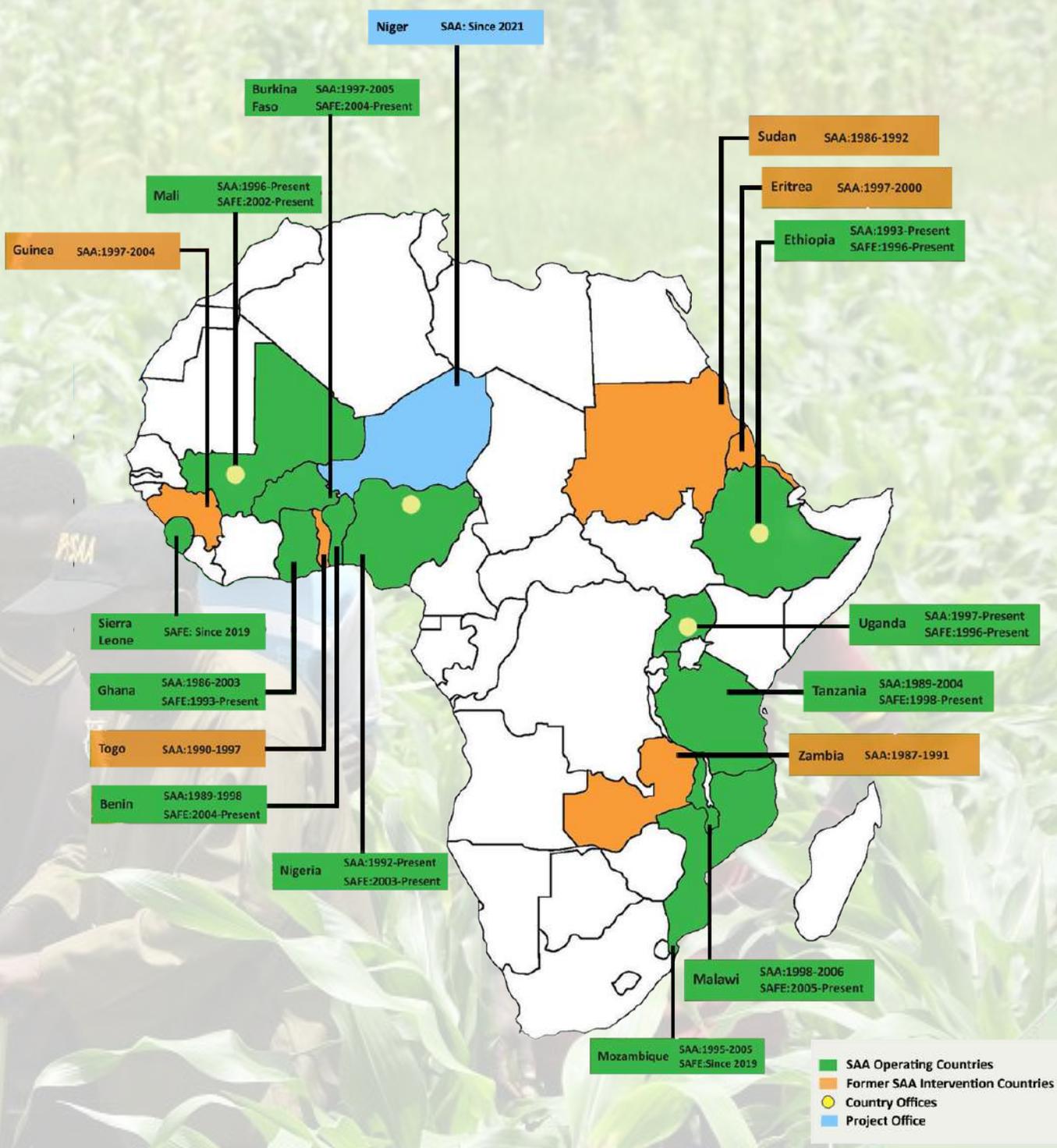
SAA top management visiting Debeso Sora's permaculture plot in Ethiopia



Sasakawa Africa Association

SAA was established in 1986 by Japanese philanthropist Ryoichi Sasakawa, Nobel Laureate Dr. Norman Borlaug, and former US President Jimmy Carter. Focusing on agricultural extension and smallholder farmer development, SAA is active in 12 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. SAA works with various partners, including universities and agricultural colleges, to promote improved appropriate technologies and practices that increase crop yields and household incomes.

Since 2009, SAA has expanded its interventions across the entire agricultural value chain by strengthening the links between agricultural research, extension and advisory systems, and farmers. Recently, SAA endeavored a frontier of environment-friendly agricultural development in Africa through the above stated strategy. In its current strategy (2021-2025), SAA focuses on three pillars: Regenerative Agriculture (RA), Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) and Market-oriented Agriculture (MOA) while addressing capacity building, inclusiveness and Digital Transformation (DX) as cross-cutting areas.





Ethiopia



“By participating in the project, I have gained new skills and knowledge on how to apply improved agronomic practices”

Tesfaye Andualem is a smallholder farmer from the Womberma Woreda in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. Despite owning three hectares of land on which he grows the BH660 maize variety, Tesfaye produced 4.5-5MT/ha due to inefficient agronomic practices. Moreover, Tesfaye previously sold his grain immediately after harvesting, which is when prices are typically low.

In 2018, SAA Ethiopia introduced the AGRA funded IMPACT project, which seeks to improve market-led production of designated commodities in order to improve the income and food security of smallholder farmers. The project was rolled out in two regions, and Tesfaye was one of the many hundreds of farmers who participated in the project.

Farmers participating in the project were able to benefit from preseason training, demonstrations of improved crop varieties, good agronomic practices, and farmers’ field days. During the latter, Tesfaye learnt that the productivity of improved maize varieties, such as BH546, was close to 6.7 MT/ha in his neighbour’s field. This is much higher than the yield he used to obtain, and he therefore decided to grow the BH546 variety in his own farm plot.

“By participating in the project, I have gained new skills and knowledge on how to apply improved agronomic practices, and select improved varieties to



Tesfaye Andualem with his maize field



Smallholder farmer Tesfaye Andualem with his surplus maize grain stored in PICS bags

increase yield and income,” comments Tesfaye “I feel motivated in applying the new farming practices I’ve learned.”

To this end, he increased the amount of farm land allocated to maize and planted half of his land area with BH546 in the production season. According to Tesfaye, the performance of BH546 in his field is outstanding and several farmers who visited his plot were inspired by the variety and practices he followed.

Tesfaye also learnt about the use of PICS bag, which he uses to procure and store his surplus maize grain to sell in the lean season: “keeping maize for such a long time without any loss is amazing! I am lucky to participate in this project, and storage and marketing for my surplus produce is no longer a challenge.”

Tesfaye now owns 10 PICS bags, a knapsack sprayer, as well as other farm machinery and continues to seek innovative and productive methods of cultivation for increasing productivity and income from his produce.

“Participation in the IMPACT Project has helped me and my neighbouring farmers reassess our practices, and to reduce postharvest losses,” Tesfaye explains, “the adoption of improved maize production practices and grain storage technologies demonstrated by SAA has greatly increased my productivity.”

Promoting Mobile Mechanical Postharvest Machines: The case of Private Threshing / Shelling Service Provision Model

Traditional threshing is one of the major activities in the postharvest system which is very tedious and labor intensive and contributes much to the overall postharvest losses in Ethiopia. It involves pounding, beating and animal trampling. In addition to the quantitative losses that occur during threshing, it compromises the grain quality as the grain gets mixed with sand, soil, dirt and other impurities on the threshing floor. Feeding by the trampling animals, kernel damage/breakage, wastage through incomplete threshing, etc. are some of the quantitative loss factors related to the traditional practice. In general, conventional threshing is characterized by drudgery, human and oxen labor intensiveness, time taking, low grain quality and high grain losses. This calls for alternative ways of threshing/shelling methods that are faster and efficient.



Tesfaye Andualem with his maize field

Cognizant of the situation, SAA initiated demonstration of different postharvest technologies in 2003 to reduce postharvest losses and maintain grain quality for better market access and price. As a result, a mechanical cereal crop thresher was introduced from the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Nigeria, and modified in collaboration with Selam Technical and Vocational College (STVC) for threshing small cereal crops such as teff, millet, sorghum, wheat and barley. Locally, the Bako maize sheller was selected and modified in collaboration with AGE-Engineering Metal Works for its simplified

engine attachment. Then, the technologies were introduced to pilot districts producing surplus cereal crops such as teff, maize and wheat. The mode of intervention involved taking the machines to the targeted areas and demonstrating for the communities to observe and understand the advantages of the technologies.



A typical teff threshing service provision using partial cleaning thresher

The result of the demonstrations was very successful in some ¹belg growing areas of Shashemene district and its surroundings. Further, promotion of the technologies continued by providing a multi-crop thresher machine to a young and observant entrepreneur on terms of a partial credit. After obtaining training organized by SAA-Ethiopia on the operation and maintenance of the machine, the young entrepreneur together with his brothers served the two neighboring districts of Shashemene and Negele Arsi by threshing crops on rental basis. The service provision by the entrepreneur took place within the same year of demonstration and his acquiring of the thresher machine. In five years, the diffusion of the mechanical cereal crop thresher boomed in Shashemene district. Since 2-3 years' time of its introduction there has been no use of oxen for threshing teff and adoption is 100% in the area.

¹Belg is the short rainy season in Ethiopia normally beginning in 8 February, which lasts for 2-3 months.

The rental service went beyond Shashemene to neighboring districts of Negele Arsi, Shala and Siraro in 2-3 years' time, increasing the profit of the private service providers. As the number of service providers increased in number and saturated the three districts, the service providers moved to other teff-growing zones seeking additional working hours in a year to maximize their profit margin. They travelled to distant places up to 320 km away from their home to Bale and Guji zones where the machine had not been introduced. Presently, adoption of the technology has reached West Gojam zone for maize shelling and East Shewa, West Shewa and South West Shewa for teff threshing.

The high adoption rate of the technology came as a result of the benefits associated with the advantages of quality produce which generates premium price, reduction of losses, and saving of human labor and oxen time. Furthermore, shellers/threshers generated job opportunities for machine operators and brought substantial income for their owners (Figure 1.) They also brought job opportunities for local machine fabricators and maintenance service providers. Generally, threshers and maize shellers contributed to increased farm income, improved farmers' working conditions and created a brand new rental service market with hundreds of new jobs.

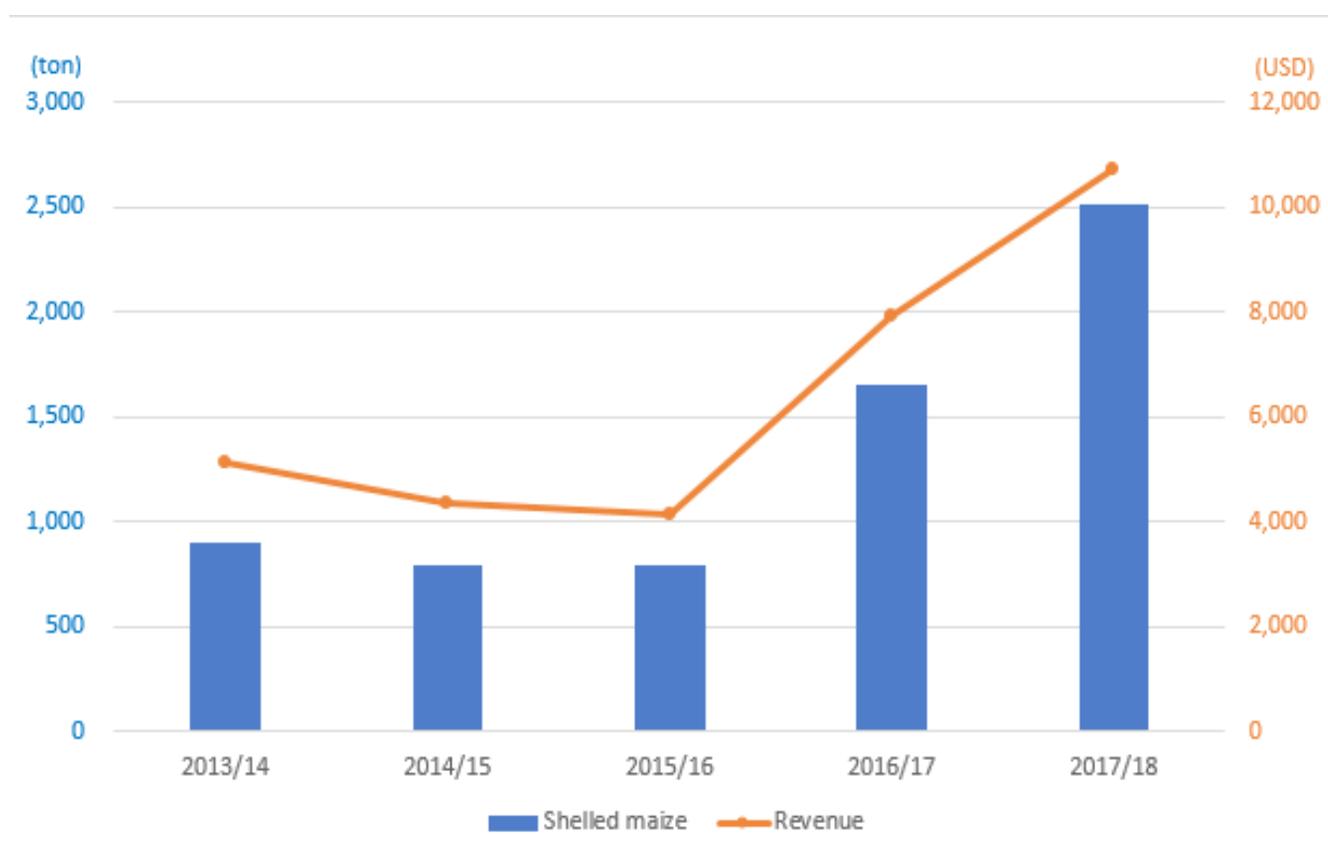


Figure 1. Total shelled maize and revenue generated by one of the prominent maize shelling Private Service Provider over five years' period

Agro-dealership is more than just a source of income!



There are two objectives of establishing Agro-dealer groups in the IMPACT project: The first is to address the challenges of the rural farming community's access to agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticide chemicals, etc.) in the required quality, quantity and time; and the second is to create jobs for the rural youth.

Denberie Gizachew, is one of the agro-dealers in the Amhara region's Baso Liben district who is supported by the AGRA-funded IMPACT (Improving Market-led Production of selected Agricultural Commodities in Targeted woredas of Amhara and Tigray) project. Denberie, like many other young people in the country, has struggled to find work in her field of study after graduating with a BSc in Plant Sciences in 2019.

As a result, she was compelled to live with her parents in a rural village far from the district town. She did not, however, sit idle during her stay with her parents; rather, she assisted herself by starting a small business making candles from honey-wax and threading it for church service.

Her self-employment of a micro-enterprise later assisted her to be selected by the district agricultural office for the IMPACT project's agro-dealer assistance initiative, in which target groups are recruited based on predetermined selection criteria such as self-motivation and business acumen. In March 2020, the IMPACT project provided her with seed money of USD 2,700, which she matched with funds from her previous business. Furthermore, the project, in col-

laboration with government partners, provided her with business skills and agro-input management training, as well as assistance in adhering with trade and quarantine standards.

In May 2020, Denberie started an agro-chemicals shop in the district town, where there were shortage of agro-chemical vendors. Despite her lack of experience in the agricultural inputs supply business, she was optimistic that her company would succeed because the training had improved her confidence in her professional interest.

During one of their visits, the IMPACT project staff observed over 28 different types of agro-chemicals, hermetic grain storage bags (PICS bags), sprayers, and tree and vegetable seeds in her shop. She established relationships with a variety of wholesalers and a large number of farmer customers. As a result, her sales volume is considerably increasing. She supplied and sold approximately 2000 liters of chemicals, 150 liters of fungicides, 418 kg of vegetable seeds, 25 kg of tree seeds, 560 PICS bags, and 55 sprayers in a year. Denberie's capital increased by 30% in a year from her start-up capital. Besides, over 3,500 farmers (850 female) have got access to much-needed inputs within a walking distance from their houses as a result of her services.



Denberie Gizachew at her agro-chemicals shop

Denberie is so proud of her accomplishments that she is currently earning more than she would if she was employed. She is pleased with the changes in her life. She is recently married and could afford to purchase all necessary house utensils on her own. Denberie articulated her accomplishments, stating that “agro-dealership is more than just making money. I am very satisfied with the service I provide to the farming community where I am from.” She is indeed exceeding project expectations by delivering seasonal agricultural inputs to smallholder farmers over shorter distances and providing advice to farmers on their application and utilization.

About IMPACT Project

The IMPACT project is a three-year project funded by Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and implemented by three consortium member organizations, Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), Techno-Serve (TNS) and Farm Radio International (FRI), with SAA serving as the lead organization. The overall goal of the project is to contribute to improvement of income and food security of smallholder farmers and their families in selected woredas of Amhara and Tigray Regions of Ethiopia. The project is designed to increase productivity and strengthen access to output markets of wheat, teff and maize in the targeted woredas. It aspires to increase structured market-oriented production of target commodities value-chains in 20 woredas and 160 kebeles of the two regions.

In the Amhara region, the IMPACT project has so far organized 12 agro-dealers with a total of 26 (14 females) members. To date, 32,000 kg of agro-chemicals, 170 kg of vegetable seeds, 10,000 kg of improved seeds, 150 kg of forest seeds, 1,300 sprayers, 16,500 PICS bags, 10,000 kg of hybrid maize seeds and other related agro-inputs were supplied by these organized agro-dealers. The agro-dealers have mobilized more than USD 400,433.00 in revolving cash, providing input access to 47,200 farmers.

 Mali



“Because of the effects of climate change, all our old varieties are abandoned”

Assa Sanogo is a 66-year old smallholder farmer from the village of Monzomblena in Mali. In addition to engaging in the production and processing of agricultural products including groundnuts, Assa is also the President of the women’s group, comprising 223 members at the Postharvest and Trade Centre (PHTC) in Monzomblena, Dioila Region, Kerela Commune, Mali.

As a result of training administered by SAA on improved farming practices and technologies, Assa and her colleagues have seen their technical and operational capabilities greatly improve. “I was impressed with the technologies SAA encouraged us to test and adopt. At first I was reluctant – especially with the new variety of groundnut flower 11 brought for demonstration by SAA – as the first responsible for the women of the village. But, time proved SAA right after an initial agricultural test campaign,” Assa explains, “I was impressed by the quality and quantity of the harvest within our community, and SAA has helped ensure food security in our community.”

using the equipment safely and efficiently. “Over a two and half month period of activity, we processed 500kg of grain groundnut into 75 container paws. With a starting amount of \$786.70, we generated a revenue of \$306. In terms of capacity building efforts, SAA has supported members of the group in a variety of areas, including entrepreneurship in agriculture, business management, marketing, and contracting, among others.

“We are truly grateful and delighted with the training we received, as it has enabled us to manage our own business better, and to ensure financial profitability. Thanks to SAA, we have seen our revenues and livelihoods greatly improved.”



Assa Sanogo (right) and an SAA field technician standing in the groundnut pulp mill unit

In addition to training farmers on good agricultural practices, SAA also helped obtain a groundnut processing unit consisting of a sheller, roaster and groundnut pulp mill. Additional training ensured smallholder farmers are fully knowledgeable in

“I can now share with my community that food is medicine”- A story about how SAA created awareness on nutrition at rural villages.

Awa Damba, a chair-lady of female farmer groups at the Production Postharvest handling and Trade Center (PHTC) of Siranikoto, Kayes Region of Mali, established by Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA). Awa is a host farmer of the Community Demonstration Plots (CDPs) set by SAA to promote improved farming practice for rice especially for women group and actively participates in several agro-processing activities including parboiling rice and groundnut butter processing. She is also a member of the control committee of Siranikoto PHTC.

Until I received the training by SAA, I did not know have any knowledge on nutrition and I did not know how the composition of the food I prepare everyday affects wellbeing of the human body,” Awa explains “During the theoretical session, SAA staff showed us, using their DigiSoft technology “shocking” images of problems caused by unbalanced diets/malnutrition (stunting, wasting, underweight, overweight or obese, micronutrient deficiency) which are actually commonly seen in our community.”



Awa Damba, a chair-lady of female farmer groups at the Production Postharvest handling and Trade Center (PHTC) of Siranikoto

“Until I received the training by SAA, I did not know have any knowledge on nutrition and I did not know how the composition of the food I prepare everyday affects wellbeing of the human body,” Awa explains “During the theoretical session, SAA staff showed us, using their DigiSoft technology “shocking” images of problems caused by unbalanced diets/malnutrition (stunting, wasting, underweight, overweight or obese, micronutrient deficiency) which are actually commonly seen in our community.”

“During the practical food preparation session, we learned hygiene is extremely important for food safety especially when we deal with raw ingredients. We also got useful advice by making our two major staple foods i.e. “Tô” and “Gningnin kini” rich in nutrition and flavor by reducing use of oil for health while replacing it with groundnut butter as source of plant protein and “soumbala” (fermented condiment from locust bean) and “datou” (fermented condiment from white hibiscus flowers) to replace artificial seasoning. We could also utilize locally available seasonal fruits such as mangoes, papaya, orange and banana.



A practical session during nutrition training

Awa has ambitious plans for the future. “I learned about importance of understanding nutrition composition and got practical skills to prepare nutritious food utilizing locally available ingredients for a healthy body, and I can now share with my community that food is medicine. I will start convincing all the members of our farmer organizations of the PHTC and our community to have knowledge about nutrition, especially of what kinds of foods to eat, how to prepare them in the right quantities and combinations and to avoid imbalanced and monotonous diets. To consume balanced diets utilizing locally available materials in each community is the cheapest way for us to be in good health. From now we know that our habit of eating balanced “Tô” and “Gningnin kini” makes food preventive medicine!”

A Rural Entrepreneur Producing Catfish to Supply Local Consumers in Mali

Bamba KEITA is 38 years old, married and has two children. He lives in the village of Nafadji, 45 km from Bamako. When he was selected for the SAA youth entrepreneurship project, thanks to an SAA agricultural adviser (CAT) in his locality, he was producing vegetables but was finding it difficult to grow his farm.

Following the selection, he received theoretical and practical trainings on fish farming and business management. In addition to the business training, he had several other training including finance. In his words: "These trainings opened my eyes and gave me opportunities. I realized that with my experience and knowledge from the trainings, I could develop my business." He also said, "SAA has given me a great opportunity. Before I joined the SAA project, I wouldn't have been able to tell you how much I earn every month. This is no longer the case. I am applying what I have learnt in the trainings to develop my business with a clear entrepreneurial vision. I am really satisfied with what I have learned and I am even able to transfer this knowledge to someone who has the same dream as mine."



Mr. Bamba Keita at his fish pond



Bamba's above ground aquarium for fish

After the entrepreneurship training, he joined a business plan competition and won because of the relevance of his project.

With the award, he installed a 9m³ water tank and fry house containing over 1,000 small fish. After 4 months of operation since the start of the project, he has recorded a mortality rate of only 1.65%. He feeds them three times a day and the average weight of the fish is about 300 grams. Twice a week he cleans the tank and changes the water. The wastewater is used to irrigate his vegetable garden. He says "I now feel like a bigger person in my community, I am able to take care of my family's bill and cover all the expenses of the whole extended family, including my father, mother and siblings. Being able to contribute to the creation of jobs in my home village makes me proud. Because of this, and despite my young age, I am respected in the community."

Mr. Keita shared with us three recommendations to guide someone who wants to start fish farming:

- Be prepared physically and mentally;
- Check the quality of the water to be used;
- Find a quiet and pleasant place for the business.

■ ■ Nigeria



SAA-Nigeria is helping farmers overcome soil degradation with the Urea Super Granules (USG) Fertilizer Applicator - The story of Adamu Hotoro



SAA-Nigeria beneficiary farmer, Adamu Muhammed Hotoro poses with a USG Fertilizer applicator on his Maize adopter plot in Kano State, Nigeria

“The old methods of applying fertilizer did not protect us from wastage. After applying fertilizers, most of it would be washed away by rain or getblown away by the wind, or even melt under the hot sun, leaving very little to be taken up by the crops.” - Adamu Muhammed Hotoro (Farmer).

SAA-Nigeria is promoting the Urea Super Granule (USG) technology through the Kano state agropastoral development project, KSADP to support farmers in maximizing nutrient uptake by crops using the Urea Deep Placement (UDP) method, which used to be a Japanese traditional practice. With Nigerian conventional fertilizer application methods, fertilizer is easily washed away by rain and wind after being applied, resulting in poor crop absorption, therefore, farmers sometimes have to reapply fertilizer to ensure a good harvest. Now that fertilizer prices have increased and are expected to remain higher, effective fertilization methods are more important than ever.

The Fertilizer applicator is a modern farm tool technology deployed by SAA-Nigeria under the regenerative agriculture pillar which is currently adopting effective approaches to Integrated Soil Fertility management (ISFM) to restore soil fertility while optimizing the application of chemical fertilizers to improve the agricultural productivity of smallholder farmers.

A 62-year-old smallholder farmer, Adamu Muhammed Hotoro from Hotoro community, Nasarawa LGA, Kano state is one of the thousands of farmers faced with the devastating effects of Climate change and soil degradation affecting crop production in Nigeria.

Hotoro recently benefited from the KSADP project seeking to improve the quality of life of smallholder farmers in the state. He says the Urea Super Granule (USG) fertilizer applicator he got through SAA-Nigeria has helped reduce fertilizer wastage through leaching and evapotranspiration effects.

Hotoro says, *“Thanks to SAA I learned a new method of applying fertilizer on my farm which has made life easier for me, before now, fertilizer application was very cumbersome, it took a lot of my energy and also required bending and walking on the farm for long hours, but now the process is faster and more efficient.”*

Currently, this farm tool is made in China, costing USD126 at N420/unit. However, under the SAA/ KSADP project, plans are ongoing to train local fabricators in the state to pioneer its mass production for scaling-up and sustainability.



A cross-section of beneficiary farmers during the distribution exercise in Kano, Nigeria.

Alhaji Hotoro explains that with the Urea deep placement method of fertilizer application using the USG applicator, the fertilizer is not exposed but is securely hidden in the soil for plants to take it up. Therefore, it has considerably reduced drudgery and increased productivity, now he is certain of a bumper harvest.

Alhaji Hotoro also explains that he is now stepping down the training he got on using fertilizer applicators to his children and farmers in his community.



USG Applicator beneficiary explaining the tool to his Children on his Maize plot in Kano, Nigeria

From begging to production: The case of self-help group for the physically challenged in Billiri, Gombe State, Nigeria

Physically Challenged Farmers MPCs Billiri in Gombe state is a group formed over a decade ago with the aim to support themselves in day-to-day wellbeing. Nevertheless, members continue to beg in the streets of Billiri town for survival until SAA's intervention in 2018, they were mobilised and sensitized on the benefits of self-help group.



A group of PWDs participating in SAA activities in Gombe, Nigeria

The group consisting of 15 members (M8, F7) was trained by SAA in 2019, 2020 and 2021 on group dynamics management, agribusiness and collective market access and supported with COVID-19 palliatives in 2020 (8 bags of fertilizer, 4 litres of herbicides and 20kgs of improved maize seeds). With support from family members, the group harvested 2.5 metric tons which was enough for their families as testified by Mr. John Emmanuel. As a result of the training on enterprise management, the group in 2019 cultivated 0.5Ha of maize and used the proceeds to buy three sheep in December 2019. The group now is into rearing of both sheep and goats (3 goats and 6 sheep). The last beggar among the group stopped begging in April 2021. Apart from group enterprises, members individually engage in petty trading and poultry rearing instead of begging.

Mr. John Emmanuel listed the following as the requirements for each member to continue being a part of the group:

1. Each member must keep poultry for family need and for business.
2. Each member must cultivate at least 0.5ha of cereal and some cowpea for the family.

3. The group will increase the number of ru minants until each member has a few to keep.
4. The group equally plan to procure a maize thresher for income generation, where youths will be em ployed as operators.

According to Mr. Emmanuel, "no member is seen in the street of Billiri town begging now". He said members can afford to eat good food as a result of their engagement in different enterprises apart from the group activities as advised by SAA. Madam Malata, a member of the group said "the poultry we keep are not only for making money but we eat as well, she continued that our livelihood did not only improve financially but our diet too."

Some female members are engaged in hair plaiting and petty trading to support their family in sending their children to private schools as testified by Mrs Malata Obidah. She pointed out that prior to SAA intervention, all our children were attending public schools and feeding the family was a big challenge which forced them into begging. No member is a beggar now and we don't intend to go back to begging. Madam Blessing Yakubu added, "we were wasting our time begging in the streets of Billiri town, humiliated by members of the community who consider us as nuisance but it is now over, am very happy". Mohammed Usman added his voice by saying, "our feeding has improved and our children are attending good schools unlike prior to SAA intervention where most of our children were either in public schools or not in school at all due to poor economic status of the members".

Some of the challenges mentioned by the group includes lack of access to farmland close to their houses, high cost of rearing sheep and goats, difficulty in accessing funds from banks due their disabilities and lack of support from government.

“I’m really grateful” – the success story of Dorothy Anima Effa, one of SAFE’s first graduates

An appraisal carried out by SAA in 1992 found that 83% of Extension Officers in Ghana were largely certificate holders from agricultural colleges. The Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension (SAFE) program was launched in 1993 to support the development of Extension Officers beyond the academic qualifications they had acquired from agricultural colleges. Since its inception, the SAFE program has graduated over 7,000 students across a whole range of disciplines. By developing the confidence of Extension Officers in transferring technologies from research to smallholder farmers on the field, enhancing communication skills and critical thinking abilities, the program has increased the opportunities available to farmers for both their professional and academic progression.

Dr Dorothy Anima Effa, an Extension Officer from Ghana, is also a SAFE graduate who now supervises the doctorate program. Dorothy was among the first intake of SAFE students admitted to the University of Cape Coast, after the program launched in Ghana. Prior to joining, she was an Extension Officer at the Ghanaian Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA). After graduating with a first class degree, Dorothy went back to work and later applied for further studies, obtaining her doctorate degree. Whilst at MOFA, she served as the policy and planning directorate, working closely with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). Alongside her work, Dorothy now lectures at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration, where she also supervises two doctoral studies.

“I did not envision achieving so much, academically, even now as a PhD holder” Dorothy reflects, “this wouldn’t have been possible without the initial catalyst – the Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Extension from the SAFE program. I’m really grateful”.

Today, almost all of the District Directors of Agriculture in Ghana are products of the SAFE programme. Several hold key posts in the Cocoa Services, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as well as other agricultural organizations. The SAFE program has developed qualified professionals in the public and

private sectors, helping them achieve the agricultural growth and development needed to achieve food security in Ghana.



Dr. Dorothy Anima (middle) at her PhD graduation

This edition of Voices from the Field was written and supplied by Joseph Kwesi Sarpong, a Ghanaian national who was also among the first intake of SAFE students in 1993.



Uganda



“I present my heartfelt thanks to SAA Uganda” - The Ugandan farmers’ group benefiting from SAA initiatives

The Bulamu Tweweyo Farmers’ group was selected to participate in the Vegetable Oil Development Project (VODP), launched in 2016 by Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Uganda, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The project aims to alleviate poverty among rural communities by increasing production of vegetable oils, primarily soybean and sunflower oil, through the introduction of improved technologies and good agricultural practices.

Sarah Mutesi, a 46-year-old farmer based in the Kamuli district of Uganda, is a member of the Bulamu Tweweyo Farmers’ group. As part of the VODP, Sarah and her fellow group members received training on a range of subjects, including production processes and marketing. The group learnt about fertilizer application techniques, identifying and planting seeds, weeding, and postharvest handling methods – from drying techniques to storage systems.

Reflecting on the level of crop yield following SAA’s training, Sarah says “In the first season of 2017, from March through July, I planted one acre of soybean. Due to the long dry spell I only harvested 500kg, but as I had applied the post-harvest handling practices recommended by SAA, my grain was clean and free of debris, which gave my produce the higher price of \$0.68 per kg, compared to what other farmers were receiving for their soybean: \$0.46 per kg.”

The second season was also marred by dry spells, but climate-smart technologies and effective post-harvest handling methods introduced by SAA helped empower farmers to tackle challenges posed by unfavourable weather conditions. “In the second season, from August through December, I planted

half an acre as I had realized that adopting farming practices introduced by SAA, such as harvesting and drying on tarpaulin, enabled me to maximize production from a small field,” Sarah explains “the long dry spell meant I only harvested 320kg, but through providing higher quality produce, I generated \$81.74, which I put towards starting the construction of my permanent home.”



Sarah Mutesi, a member of Bulamu Tweweyo Farmer's group

“SAA helped me overcome my financial problems and earn a better income, enabling me to build a better house in which my family and I moved to. They are well-fed and healthy, and I now understand how the market works and am aware of the need to produce and supply quality products to the market. I present my heartfelt thanks to SAA Uganda for helping me grow.”

Meet Helen Edwe, a 73-year-old woman providing agro-technologies to her fellow farmers

Seventy-three-year-old Helen Edwe, a farmer and grandmother of eight children live in Achan Kumi village, in Inomo sub-county, Kwana district, Northern Uganda. She is the sole breadwinner for her family and has taken on the role of providing maize shelling services in her community.



Helen Edwe, the trendsetter of agro technologies services in Kwana district

In 2014, Helen attended a brown-field day that was organized by Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) under their then K+S project in Apac district. The field day sparked her interest to acquire a mobile maize sheller; she wanted to earn extra income for her family.

'Brown-field days' is SAA's end-of-season activity that involves demonstrating different time and labor-saving production, postharvest, and processing technologies to farmers.

Like most farmers who attend the brown-field days, Helen Edwe solely depended on subsistence farming for her family's survival. This changed the moment she was exposed and made up her mind to acquire a mobile maize sheller. Inspired by what she had been taught, Helen saved her income from

selling sunflower, maize, and beans with the hope of financing the procurement of her first maize sheller. At that time, her family was growing and so were her needs and responsibilities.

She bought her first mobile maize sheller at five million Uganda shillings (\$1,422) from one of SAA's machine fabricating partners. She is the first to tell you how pleasant it is to transition from barely getting by to being self-sufficient. She says, "I was amazed by how fast it works and the huge quantities it churns out in a short period," It shells up to 32 bags of maize per hour, and about 175 bags in a day. "My grandchildren ride it to the farmers and shell their maize at three thousand Uganda shillings (\$0.85) per bag. Farmers are not charged for transport" explained Helen. The sheller cleans the maize as it shells and the demand for its services has spread as far as Inomo, Aduku, Bala, and Akalo sub-counties.



Helen's first and second mobile maize shellers parked in her backyard

To work effectively, her grandsons, Peter Elem and Ario Desmond do routine maintenance, and repair it when it breaks down; SAA has equipped them with the skills to sustain its use.

Satisfied with the income she was generating from the mobile sheller, Helen acquired another mobile maize sheller in 2020 from the same supplier.



Helen Edwe's recent addition, the walking tractor with a double-disc plough, planter, and cart

Previously, Helen was earning between one hundred and eighty thousand Uganda shillings (\$51) and three hundred thousand Uganda shillings (\$85) per day from one sheller. With the acquisition of the second sheller, her daily income has increased to between four hundred thousand Uganda shillings (\$114) and six hundred and fifty Uganda shillings (\$185) per day.

This year, Helen with technical guidance from SAA acquired a walking tractor with a double-disc plough, planter, and a cart as auxiliary attachments using her savings. Helen and her grandsons have been trained to operate and maintain the tractor; they plan to start offering ploughing, planting, and transportation services.

She is happy that she has built herself a house and can fend for her grandchildren. She says, "My grandson recently finished a technical college; he does not have to go looking for a job because I employ him". She employs eight youth in her community including her grandsons. Helen continued, "Thank you SAA, I no longer have to live hand-to-mouth, and my community is satisfied with the services I offer."

Plato famously wrote, "Our need will be the real creator." This statement resonates with Helen Edwe's story.

Improving nutrition at vulnerable communities in Uganda

According to the global nutrition report 2021, 28.9% of children under 5 years in Uganda are stunted, 3.5% are wasting away and 32.8% of women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years) suffer from anemia. In 2020, the prevalence of vitamin A deficiencies was 8.9%. There is insufficient data on Uganda's progress towards achieving the low birth weight target, and its prevalence.



Aisha Nakibule, the woman Leader of Nkobazambogo farmers group (left in blue shirt), and SAA President Dr. Kitanaka

To combat ¹malnutrition and its effects, Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) under its pillar of Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture is empowering Smallholder farmers in Uganda to address malnutrition in the short and long term. Nkobazambogo farmers group in Mubende District, is one of five groups that is championing the cultivation and consumption of the nutrient-dense High Iron-Rich Beans and Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) promoted by SAA in collaboration with HarvestPlus to eliminate Vitamin A and iron deficiency. High Iron Rich beans and OSP are made accessible to malnourished, wasting away children and women of reproductive age. The group leaders, particularly women are taught on good practices during child-feeding and caregiving including meal planning, food preparation, processing, and preservation.

Aisha Nakibule the woman Leader of Nkobazambogo farmers group expressed gratitude for the training skills saying the skills helped her, and the community learn to provide nutritious food for their children. "As a mother of five, I appreciate and

put into practice the skills and tools taught to me because I now know how to combine a variety of foods to intensify nutrients in each meal for a balanced diet."



The nutrient-dense high Iron-rich beans and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes that farmers in Mubende district grow to curb nutrient deficiencies and improve their livelihood

The high Iron Beans and OSP have helped give many children a new lease on life and eliminated iron deficiencies among lactating mothers in the community. "It is rare to find underweight or malnourished children in our village; four years ago, it was a different story," Aisha explained.

Aisha says the beans are tasty and cook faster saving costs on charcoal and firewood. Last season, her group harvested eleven (11) bags of beans. "We sold the nine (9) bags and invested the money (\$416) in our savings initiative. Two (2) bags were divided among group members for home consumption and fifty (50) kilograms retained for next planting season."

Sasakawa Africa Association remains committed to supporting vulnerable communities through knowledge and technology transfer. During the peak of COVID-19 Pandemic, SAA distributed nutrient-dense crops to farmers in the intervention areas to address hidden hunger.



High iron-rich beans and groundnuts source served during Dr. Makoto Kitanaka's visit to Nkobazambogo Farmers group in Mubende district

¹Malnutrition is a deficiency, excesses, or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients.



Former Country Director, SAA Nigeria, Professor Sani Miko inspects a Maize seed multiplication plot during a visit to Boko community, Garun Mallam LGA Kano State, Nigeria





Visit to Entreprise Centre at M'pessoba agricultural college with SAFE program



An Extension Agent inspecting an iron-rich demonstration garden in Isingiro District, Uganda







Visit the SAA website at:
www.saa-safe.org

Contact us
info@saa-safe.org

Tokyo

SAA HQ
5th floor, Sasakawa Peace
Foundation Building
1-15-16 Toranomom
Minato-ku, Tokoyo
105-0001 Japan

Addis Ababa

SAA Strategic Partnership Office
SAA Ethiopia
Gurd Sholla Daminarof Building
3rd & 4th floor
Bole Sub-City, Kebele 13
P.O.Box 24135
Code 1000
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Bamako

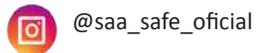
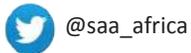
SAA Mali
Lafiabougou ACI 2000,
Rue 431, Porte 61, Pres
Place CAN et Mairie
centrale de la CIV BP
E3541 Bamako, Mali

Kano

SAA Nigeria
No.8 Kura Road
Off Magajin Rumfa Road
Nassarawa GRA
PO Box 5190
Kano, Nigeria

Kampala

SAA Uganda
Plot 15A,
Clement Hill Road
Ruth Towers
PO Box 6987
Kampala, Uganda



To subscribe to our E-Newsletter

