

A U G U S T 2 0 1 5

## Viable Sweetpotato Technologies in Africa (VISTA) Tanzania project

VISTA Tanzania got underway with diagnostic studies, setting up multiplication in 41 farmers groups, and conducting Trainer of trainers' courses for 31 extension personnel. All is set to go for the coming year.



Fig. 1 Harvesting of OFSP roots at ARI-Uyole in Mbeya region (credit R. Kakuhenzire)



### What is the problem?

Over a quarter of the Tanzanian population fall below the basic needs poverty line. Thirty three per cent of children aged 6-59 months and 37% of women aged 15-49 years are estimated to have vitamin A deficiency (VAD). In this context, nutrition-sensitive agricultural development has a crucial role to play, in particular for poor rural households for which farming is the main source of food and income. Food-based efforts are highly complementary to other approaches to tackling VAD, especially for rural communities where alternative interventions face greater difficulty to consistently reach their beneficiary population.

Tanzania is the second largest producer of sweetpotato in East Africa. Sweetpotato is ranked highly as a food security crop, and is known as the crop that makes it when local staple crops like maize and rice fail. Sweetpotato production is constrained by unavailability of sufficient quantities of high quality planting material of improved varieties, especially

during critical periods of planting. In addition, sweetpotato virus diseases in single virus and combined infections (e.g. SPVD) are the most critical diseases affecting sweetpotato production in Tanzania. The disease can lead to yield losses of up to 50% of total production. To date, the focus of CIP's dissemination work has been in the Lake Zone, but experience has shown considerable unmet demand in central, southern and coastal zones. Tanzania currently has ten orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) varieties that have either been released or are in the pipeline to be released; so now is the time to leverage the potential contribution which these beta-carotene rich sweetpotato varieties can bring to reducing VAD and malnutrition, particularly among vulnerable groups of the population.



### What do we want to achieve?

Our overall goal of this 3 year project, which began in October 2014, is to contribute to improved dietary diversity, food security and incomes in Tanzania, especially among households with children under five years of age. The purpose is to extend the production, consumption and marketing of OFSP products among 21,000 smallholder farmers and 20 medium sized farmers in seven districts within the USAID's Feed the Future (FTF) zones of influence. Of these, 17,500 farmers and caregivers will participate in a fully integrated agriculture-nutrition package. We will support 28 entrepreneurs to become financially viable sweetpotato seed and root enterprises (Fig 1). We anticipate that around 102,000 sweetpotato farmers will be reached indirectly with planting material.



### Where are we working?

We are implementing the project in seven districts in Mbeya, Iringa and Morogoro Regions which are part of USAID's Feed the Future (FTF) zones of influence.



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#### Key Partners

- Sugarcane Research Institute at Kibaha (SRI Kibaha)
- Agriculture Research Institute at Uyole (ARI Uyole)
- Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) in Morogoro
- District local government agriculture and health / nutrition extension offices





**Fig. 2 Graduate of the TOT course receives his certificate**  
(credit F. Grant)

## How are we going to make it happen?

VISTA Tanzania contributes to FTF's intermediate results as follows:

- *Intermediate Result (IR) 1: improved agricultural productivity.* We are partnering with Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and the national agricultural research and local government extension services to contribute to capacity strengthening, OFSP technology promotion and management practices, which take into account gender-specific needs.
- *IR 6: improved access to diverse and quality foods; and IR 7: improved nutrition related behaviours.* We are promoting the production and consumption of OFSP as part of a diversified cropping system and diet. This includes demonstrating different gender sensitive root storage technologies to extend availability at the household level. Working with local leaders, male and female decision makers, we plan to use Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) approaches at community and group levels to provide a supportive environment for appropriate nutrition related behaviours. Messaging will be targeted at households with children under the age of five and women of reproductive age.

## What have we achieved so far?

Since the beginning of October 2014, VISTA Tanzania has been in a diagnostic/inception phase, to (1) enable all partners and stakeholders to know their roles before rolling out full project activities, (2) carry out rapid appraisals to better understand constraints and opportunities for exploiting OFSP in the project intervention districts, (3) identify partners at both district and village levels, (4) adjust project work plans and budget based on results from the appraisals, and (5) design preliminary interventions with partners in a participatory manner. In June 2015, we held the project inception meeting, where

partners and sub-grantees presented their work plans to the stakeholders. The inception meeting was attended by more than 40 partners and stakeholders.

54 farmer groups in 41 villages selected from the seven districts were supplied with 54,000 cuttings of four varieties for vine conservation and multiplication during the dry season (June–November). This was to ensure availability of planting materials for the project at the onset of the rainy season in December and January. Two rounds of the training-of-trainers (ToT) course on “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Sweetpotato” were conducted for 31 district level local government and non-governmental agriculture and health/nutrition extensionists (Fig. 2). A step-down training was conducted at district-level for 700 ward and village agriculture extension officers and farmer group leaders. We also submitted our monitoring and evaluation plan to USAID Tanzania mission for review and approval.

## Where do we go from here?

In our next round of activities, we will continue bulking of quality planting materials at various mass multiplication sites in Mbeya region (ARI-Uyole) (Fig. 3) and Morogoro region (SRI Kibaha). Private enterprises interested in OFSP root and seed vine production will be identified, nutrition promoters will be identified and trained through the step-down training from the ToT course. We have put in place planning and documentation of various trials, such as the “Mother and Baby” trials and participatory varietal selection in preparation for the next rainy season in December–January. We will also continue rolling out and testing the performance monitoring tracking tools, according to FtF indicators disaggregated by gender and implement a baseline survey in the targeted districts. We will continue supervising the training of district- and village-based trainers as well as the monitoring of the seed vine conservation and multiplication sites in districts. We will develop work plans for sweetpotato root production at district level for the 2016 cropping season as well as undertake the construction of the first set of net tunnels for vine conservation.



**Fig. 3 Bulking of quality OFSP planting materials at ARI-Uyole in Mbeya region** (credit F. Grant)