S E P T E M B E R 2 0 1 6

VISTA
VIABLE TECHNOLOGIES FOR SWEETPOTATO IN AFRICA

Viable Sweetpotato Technologies in Africa (VISTA) Tanzania project

During the past year, VISTA Tanzania completed and disseminated its baseline survey. The project provided 14,100 households with clean planting material and nutrition education counselling. A total of 674 community group leaders participated in the step-down training of trainers' course entitled "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Sweetpotato."

Fig. 1 A training session in progress demonstrating healthy eating from all food groups (Credit W. Kipondya)

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INTERNATIONAL POTATO CENTER
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What is the problem?

Over a quarter of the Tanzanian population fall below the basic needs poverty line. Thirty-three percent of children aged 6-59 months and 37% of women aged 15-49 years are estimated to suffer from vitamin A deficiency (VAD). In this context, nutrition-sensitive agricultural development can have a crucial role to play in rural communities for which farming is the main source of food and income. Food-based approaches are highly complementary to other interventions to tackle VAD, especially in rural communities where it is difficult to reach beneficiaries consistently with alternative interventions.

Sweetpotato is ranked highly as a food security crop in Tanzania, and is known as the crop that makes it when grain 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. Sweetpotato virus diseases are the most critical diseases affecting sweetpotato production in Tanzania. Sweetpotato virus disease (SPVD) can lead to yield losses of up to 50% of total production. Tanzania currently has ten orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) varieties that have either been released or are in the pipeline for release. 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. Therefore, it is now 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 in these areas.

What do we want to achieve?

The overall goal of this three-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, commercially-oriented producers in seven districts within the USAID's Feed the Future (FTF) zones of influence. Of these, 17,500 farmers and caregivers

Key Partners
- Sugarcane Research Institute, Kibaha (SRI Kibaha)
- Agriculture Research Institute, Uyole (ARI Uyole)
- Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA)
- District Local Government Agriculture, Nutrition and Health Extension offices

Fig. 2 Representative of beneficiary households with children under five receive OFSP planting materials and IEC materials from VISTA–Tanzania staff (credit F. Grant)

Fig. 3 An instructor from plant health services (left) giving instructions to seed-root entrepreneur trainees (credit R. Kakuhenzire)

will participate in a fully integrated agriculture-nutrition package. VISTA-Tanzania will support 28 entrepreneurs to become financially viable sweetpotato seed and root enterprises. We anticipate that around 102,000 sweetpotato farmers will be reached indirectly with planting material.

Where are we working?

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

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), the national agricultural research institutes 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. VISTA-Tanzania uses Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) approaches to promote appropriate nutrition-related behaviours in households with children under the age of five and women of reproductive age.

What have we achieved so far?

- We stepped down the "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Sweetpotato" training of trainers' course to 674 (231 of whom were women) community group leaders on OFSP production and utilization during two step-down workshops. These leaders stepped down the training to a further 18,363 child care-givers from 149 villages. We also trained 157 (74 of whom were women) community health workers (CHWs) from seven districts on nutrition education and counselling, and appropriate practices on maternal, infant, and young child feeding during the first 1,000 days of life (Fig. 1).
- We supplied 14,100 households with children under five 1,411,653 cuttings of clean OFSP planting materials for root production (Fig. 2). The varieties and the number of cuttings comprised Ejumula (292,383), Kabode (291,470), Kakamega (297,500), Kiegeya (251,930), and Mataya (277,770). The households also benefitted from nutrition education and counselling, conducted by trained CHWs using well-illustrated, proven Kiswahili language training resources (Fig. 2).
- Farmer field days, which showcase products as well as benefits of growing and utilizing OFSP, have continued to be held in each of the intervention districts.
- Project beneficiaries established 54.2 ha of OFSP - 43.2 ha for root production and 11 ha for basic seed production and mother-baby trials for evaluating new OFSP varieties.
- Triple S (sand, storage, and sprouting), net tunnel, quality declared seed, agribusiness trainings/ technologies were introduced to the VISTA–Tanzania project beneficiaries. We trained 154 people on net tunnel construction and use, and 155 people on the Triple S technology. Participants included community-based farmer facilitators, local government agricultural extension staff, research officers, and NGO extension officers.
- As part of the business enterprise development component for VISTA–Tanzania, Farm Concern International (FCI) profiled 46 farmers and selected 31 of them who were most suitable for business training as seed and root enterprise farmers. Twenty-nine of these farmers (of whom 13 are women) were trained on sweetpotato production agronomy, disease management and agribusiness (Fig. 3).
- We completed and disseminated the findings a baseline survey to stakeholders. We also undertook the following studies, whose reports are being finalized: gender analysis of sweetpotato production; and rapid market appraisals for producers, traders and consumers of sweetpotato in the project intervention districts.

Where do we go from here?

In our next round of activities, we will continue to:

- Bulk quality planting materials at mass multiplication sites in Mbeya (ARI–Uyole) and Morogoro (SRI–Kibaha) regions;
- Sensitize lead farmers and community leaders on the importance of OFSP in nutrition;
- Undertake adaptive evaluation experiments such as the mother-baby trials as well as participatory varietal selection;
- Collect data using performance monitoring tracking tools, according to FTF indicators disaggregated by sex;
- Monitor the seed vine conservation and multiplication sites in the project intervention districts;
- Work with district nutritionists to provide oversight supervision of CHWs as they conduct mother support group club meetings on nutrition at the village and household levels;
- Hold farmers' field days in remaining project districts.

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