

## Viable Sweetpotato Technologies for Africa (VISTA) Tanzania Project

During the past year, VISTA Tanzania completed and disseminated its formative gender evaluation study. The project provided 14,835 households with clean planting material and nutrition education counselling. A total of 146 community health workers received refresher training on nutrition education and orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) recipe preparation, while 30 seed and root entrepreneurs received refresher training on agribusiness development.



Fig 1. CHWs preparing nutritious OFSP-based porridge during refresher training (credit F. Grant).

### What is the problem?

Over a quarter of the Tanzanian population fall below the basic needs poverty line. An estimated 33% of children aged 6-59 months and 37% of women aged 15-49 years suffer from vitamin A deficiency (VAD). In this context, nutrition-sensitive agricultural development can play a crucial role 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. However, sweet potato 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. Provision of sufficient quantities of high quality planting material of these improved, beta-carotene rich varieties, especially during critical periods of planting, can improve production. To date, the focus of International Potato Center's dissemination work has been in the Lake Zone, but experience has shown considerable unmet demand in central, southern and coastal zones.

### 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 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 FTF zones of influence.



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### Partners

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



Fig 2. Representative of beneficiary households with children under five receive OFSP planting materials and information, education and communication materials from VISTA Tanzania staff. (credit P. Umbelto).



Fig 3. OFSP root production farm for a beneficiary household with a child under five. (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), the national agricultural research institutes and local government extension services to contribute to capacity strengthening, OFSP technology promotion and management practices, which consider 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 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 provided refresher trainings on nutrition education and OFSP recipe preparation to 146 community health workers (CHWs), including 74 women. These CHWs stepped down the trainings through counselling sessions on appropriate practices on maternal, infant, and young child feeding (IYCF) during the first 1,000 days of life to 12,576 caretakers of children under five from 140 villages in seven districts (Fig. 1).
- We trained 30 (13 of whom were women) medium-scale seed and root entrepreneurs (SREs) on agribusiness development. These SREs received coaching at individual level to assess their ability to translate previous trainings into practical skills for sweetpotato seed and root production as business and income-generating activities and for increasing OFSP vine availability to their localities.
- We supplied 2,591,029 cuttings of clean OFSP planting materials to 14,835 households with children under five for root production (Fig. 2). The varieties and the number of cuttings comprised the varieties Ejumula (424,958), Kabode (633,511), Kakamega (1,200,321), Kiegea (104,210), and Mataya (223,108). The beneficiary households also received training on improved sweetpotato cultural practices and nutrition education and counselling, conducted by trained CHWs using well-illustrated, proven Kiswahili language training resources.
- As part of our objective to disseminate technologies for improved storage and marketing of fresh sweetpotato roots,

we began implementing this adaptive technology test in all seven districts at selected high leverage sites for technology adoption. The three storage technology methods to be tested are local sand-pit, improved sand-pit and traditional granary.

- Project beneficiaries established 331.8 ha (Fig. 3) of OFSP - 322.8 ha for root production and 9 ha for basic seed production.
- We set up the second phase of mother-baby trials for evaluation new OFSP varieties.
- We completed and disseminated the findings of a formative gender evaluation to stakeholders. We also undertook the following studies, whose reports are being finalized: mother-baby trial evaluations of 16 OFSP clones/varieties; rapid market appraisals for producers, traders and consumers of sweetpotato in the project intervention districts; on-station testing of planting density on-station testing of effect of planted cutting length on establishment and vine cutting (seed) productivity; and effect of nitrogen source on vine cutting production for producing planting materials.

## Where do we go from here?

The project end date is now December 2017. In our next round of activities, we will continue to:

- Complete the delivery of OFSP planting materials to target households with children under five years of age;
- Conduct sweetpotato root storage technology participatory adaptive tests in selected villages in the project intervention district as an initial stage in preparation for technology dissemination among beneficiaries;
- Conduct regular monitoring to ensure alignment of project activities to deliverables and potential outcomes;
- Sensitize lead farmers and community leaders on the importance of OFSP in nutrition;
- Implement adaptive evaluation experiments such as mother-baby trials as well as participatory varietal selection;
- Collect data using performance monitoring tracking tools, as per FTF indicators disaggregated by sex;
- Implement the endline survey of the project;
- Provide oversight supervision of CHWs, with the assistance of district nutritionists, as they conduct IYCF support group club meetings on nutrition at the village and household levels;
- Implement the business model trainings of the selected SREs from the seven districts;
- Test three agronomic techniques for enhancing vine production for seed.