Scaling Triple S PLUS with gender responsive tools and diverse scaling partners



Fig 1. Farmer irrigating planted sprouted roots in Northern Ghana (Credit: S. Namanda)

- Triple S is currently being scaled in Ghana and Ethiopia by two scaling champions, using gender responsive tools and a scaling strategy developed with diverse partners.
- We used the theory of scaling and tools to support responsible scaling of the innovation as a package.
- The project is validating different gender responsive communications such as stepdown trainings using printed materials, video and radio in both countries.
- In 18 months, this initiative, in close collaboration with scaling partners was able to reach 57,655 farmers (66.5% women) in Ghana. In Ethiopia, the project has reached 9,958 farmers (25% women) through stepdown training, video and healthy living club training approaches.
- Scaling is a very complex process, requiring flexibility in establishing and building partnerships, and navigating unforeseen situations.





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What was the problem?

Sub-Saharan Africa is increasingly experiencing prolonged dry periods during which sweetpotato plants desiccate, resulting in widespread shortage of planting material at the onset of rains. Triple S, a root-based system for conservation and multiplication of planting material, has been validated and piloted in nine countries in SSA. We want to make the Triple S technology available to many more farmers, especially women, growing sweetpotato in areas with a long dry season (Fig. 1). As scaling has multiple and complex pathways and diverse partners, we developed a strategy that goes beyond Triple S as a technical practice, but as an innovation package that required complementary tools and activities.

What objectives did we set?

By 2022, we want to reach over 80,000 farmers (50% women), with key messages on Triple S while ensuring that the scaling process is inclusive, sustainable and responds to needs of different categories of farmers (Fig. 2). We also want to understand how to ensure successful scaling in different contexts with different types of scaling partners.

Where and how did we work?

We worked in three regions in northern Ghana and in six districts of Southern Nations and Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) region in Ethiopia. These areas have a prolonged dry season where maintaining planting material is problematic and where sweetpotato root availability is very seasonal. To achieve impact with our Triple S PLUS innovation package, we wanted to move its use beyond a project context, up to a landscape and systems level. The innovation is divided into core and complementary components and the readiness of these components is assessed using the readiness assessment tools. We considered who should have access to the technology while at the same time ensuring our scaling strategy is gender responsive. We engaged with different types of scaling partners to ensure both short term impact and longer term, systemic changes. We recruited a scaling champion in each country to: facilitate the scaling process; establish and manage the partnerships; and train staff of scaling partners to ensure effective implementation of the communication strategies (Fig.2). All training and communication materials are available on www. sweetpotatoknowledge.org.

Core components of Triple S are: selection of healthy plants & pegging to obtain clean roots, root selection and loading of Triple S container, checking, de-sprouting and removing rotten/weevilled roots

Complementary components for Triple S are: Quality seed production for pre-basic and basic seed by national research agricultural institutes, workplans adapted to engage with existing extension systems.



Fig 2. A trained trainer conducting farmer training in Doyo Chale, Southern Ethiopia (Credit: F. Asfaw)

Were there any key challenges?

The establishment and evolution of partnerships have been both key challenges and opportunities in this initiative, depending on timing, location and type of partner. In Ghana, large scale NGO coordinated projects created great opportunities by exposing large numbers of farmers to orange-fleshed sweetpotato and planting materials before the Triple-S scaling project began. However, their relatively fixed workplans, diverse approaches and motivations and different time frames, did not allow us to sustainably scale the Triple-S innovation package with them throughout the planned scaling initiative time frame.

Were there any key lessons learned?

- In Ethiopia, the regional Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resource development office has a wellestablished structure reaching individual farmers in each locality. While initially progress was slow, in the longer term this is more reliable and sustainable. In Ghana, we used the same approach; increasing our collaboration with the regional department of agriculture who proved very effective in reaching large numbers of farmers even with limited resources.
- The adoption of core components of the innovation is determined by the level of readiness of the complementary components. For example, in Ethiopia trained farmers raised the lack of roots as the main limitation to adopt Triple S technology, and in Ghana availability of quality planting material of improved varieties was also a problem. The project therefore facilitated access to planting material to produce roots

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- New partnerships were formed, notably with a private sector seed company and an agricultural college in both Ghana and Ethiopia. Surprisingly enough, they were attracted to the Triple S technology by our communication tools (videos and printed materials) even though these were developed to target farmers and extension agents.
- Recruitment of the scaling champions with a combination of both technical knowledge and soft skills was essential to jumpstart the scaling process and establish and manage evolving partnerships.

What's next?

Potential partners in other countries are interested in the Triple S innovation package and some initiative has been taken to establish new partnerships to scale Triple S throughout dryer areas in Togo, Senegal and Burkina Faso.

In Ethiopia, the technology is now being promoted by government and non-governmental organizations, as part of their on-going programs in the Tigray and Amhara regions, using a similar communication strategy.

Partners

Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana • Regional Departments of Agriculture, Upper West • Upper East and Northern regions • USAID-Resilience in Northern Ghana (RING) project implemented by Global Communities • Generating Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) project, implemented by Mennonite Economic Development Association (MEDA) • Integrated Water and Agricultural Development (IWAD), private sector seed company and farm • Innovations for Sustainable Rural Development (ISRD) • Partnership for Rural Development Action (PRUDA) • Tumu Deanery Rural Integrated Development Programme (TUDRIDEP) • Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resource Development • People In Need







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