

OVERVIEW OF AWARENESS CREATION THROUGH SCHOOL PROGRAM IN SONGWE REGION TANZANIA



Overview of Awareness Creation Through School Program in Songwe Region Tanzania

Document: Training Report

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Project name: Accelerated Varietal Improvement and Seed Systems in Africa (AVISA)

Project sites: Momba in Tanzania

Crops: Sorghum

Funder: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Project leads: CIMMYT

Project implementers: Center for Behaviour Change and Communication (CBCC)

Collaborators: TARI, local seed producers, local government

Photos: Courtesy of CBCC

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In collaboration with TARI, CIMMYT, local seed producers, and the local government, the Center for Behavior Change and Communication (CBCC) embarked on a proactive initiative aimed at accelerating the adoption of new, improved sorghum seed varieties, TARI SOR 1 & 2, through the school feeding program in Momba district, Tanzania. This initiative responded directly to the persistent food and nutrition insecurity prevalent in the area.

The project targeted 20 schools, aiming to bolster productivity on school farms and thereby ease the financial burden on parents who contributed to the school feeding program. Concerns raised by teachers regarding the limited yield of local seeds, which yielded less than 200 kg per acre, underscored the urgent need for sustainable solutions. The low productivity observed on school farms was attributed to poor farming practices and inadequate extension support.

To address these challenges, over 2,000 students and 50 teachers underwent training on good agronomic practices facilitated by dedicated youth champions. Already, the initiative has shown promising results, with parents visiting the Youth and Women Quality Centres (YWQC) to purchase the new seeds.

Challenges before the intervention

Community-related challenges

- Low productivity and yield due to the use of local seeds and poor farming practices.
- Poor farming techniques, including broadcasting instead of spacing, inadequate weeding, and poor pest management.
- Limited access to information about improved seeds and good agronomic practices.
- Preference for white sorghum among farmers and traders, leading to the dominance of local white seed despite its lower yield.
- Food and nutrition insecurity, especially from October to April, due to insufficient yields.
- Inadequate extension support exacerbating farming challenges.

School-related challenges

- Food deprivation during certain months leading to poor student performance and attendance.
- Inability of parents to contribute sufficient sorghum to the school feeding program due to low yields.
- Limited sorghum production on school farms and reliance on parents' contributions.
- Lack of information about improved seeds and farming practices among schools.
- Reluctance of some parents to contribute to the school program due to financial constraints.

Solution

The pilot initiative at Mkama Secondary School in Mpapa village yielded promising results during the 2022-2023 farming season. The school witnessed increased yield by allocating space for demonstrating the performance of the TARI SOR 1 & 2 varieties. Following training on good agronomic practices, the school harvested 350 kg per acre, a significant improvement from previous yields.

Encouraged by this success, the intervention expanded to 19 more schools in 14 villages. Through collaboration with women and youth champions, the initiative introduced new seed varieties and

provided training on farming techniques. The program aimed to increase seed adoption by at least 5% in surrounding communities.

Implementation through YWQC model

The program leveraged Youth and Women Quality Centres (YWQCs) to provide extension support and distribute seeds to schools. Training materials tailored to the school environment facilitated practical learning sessions on agronomic practices.

Expected success

Success entailed increased yield on school farms, extended provision of meals, reduced financial burden on parents, and accelerated adoption of new seeds in communities. Positive feedback from stakeholders indicated growing interest in the new varieties.

Way forward

To ensure sustainability, education officers engaged with more schools, and YWQCs provided seeds on credit, with schools repaying after harvest. The initiative aimed to foster long-term resilience and food security in the region.

Impact of the Initiative

The initiative not only enhanced nutrition and food security for schoolchildren but also alleviated financial strain on parents and accelerated seed adoption in communities, fostering long-term resilience and food security. Positive outcomes were evident through increased adoption of new seed varieties and heightened awareness among parents. This can be attested to through the voices of participants below:

"The new improved sorghum varieties have higher yield, and TARI SOR 2 makes a good Ugali." - Mkama Secondary School Headmaster

"A few days after implementing the program, the number of farmers visiting the Youth and Women Quality Centre to purchase seed increased significantly." - Mr. Kevin Juma, Youth Champion Lead at Kamsamba YWQC

"In the next season, 4 out of the 10 farmers purchasing improved seed at YWQCs will choose either TARI SOR 1 or 2." - Mr. Michael Amson, CBCC

This intervention is one of its kind, and it will bring a huge impact to farmer communities in Momba district." - Mr. Emmanuel Mwenda, National Sorghum Coordinator from TARI

Conclusion

The initiative to promote awareness through the school program has yielded promising results in addressing food and nutrition insecurity in Momba district, Tanzania. By introducing new improved sorghum seed varieties and providing training on good agronomic practices, the project has not only increased yield on school farms but also extended the provision of meals, easing the financial strain on parents. The collaborative effort involving various stakeholders, including CBCC, TARI, CIMMYT, local seed producers, and the local government, has been instrumental in driving the success of this initiative.

Through pilot interventions at Mkama Secondary School and subsequent scaling to 20 schools in 14 villages, the project has demonstrated its potential to enhance food and nutrition security at both school and community levels. Positive feedback from stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, parents, and farmers, underscores the value of such interventions in addressing pressing agricultural and nutritional challenges.

Recommendations

1. **Continued Collaboration:** Sustaining the momentum of this initiative requires ongoing collaboration among stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, and local communities. Strengthening partnerships will facilitate the sharing of resources, expertise, and best practices.
2. **Expansion of Outreach:** While the project has made significant strides in reaching 20 schools, efforts should be made to expand outreach to additional schools in the district. Targeting schools with limited sorghum production and providing them with training and support can further amplify the impact of the initiative.
3. **Enhanced Training Programs:** To ensure the long-term success of sorghum cultivation and food security initiatives, continuous training and capacity-building programs should be implemented. This includes training sessions on sustainable farming practices, seed selection, pest management, and post-harvest handling.
4. **Community Engagement:** Engaging local communities through awareness campaigns, farmer field days, and participatory workshops can foster greater acceptance and adoption of new seed varieties and agronomic practices. Community involvement is crucial for the sustainability and ownership of interventions.
5. **Access to Credit and Inputs:** Facilitating access to credit and inputs, such as seeds and fertilizers, through innovative financing mechanisms can empower farmers and schools to invest in agricultural activities. Seed distribution on credit, as demonstrated by the initiative, can alleviate financial constraints and promote uptake.
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular monitoring and evaluation of the project's progress and impact are essential for tracking outcomes, identifying challenges, and making informed adjustments. Monitoring systems should be established to collect data on crop yields, adoption rates, and nutritional outcomes.

When these recommendations are implemented, stakeholders will have the potential to build upon the successes of the awareness creation through the school program and further contribute to the sustainable development of agriculture and nutrition in Momba district and beyond.

