



Enhancing Access to Quality Seed of Improved Groundnut Varieties Through Multi-Stakeholder Platforms in Northern Ghana

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Abstract

One of the main constraints to groundnut production has been the use of low yielding varieties, susceptible to biotic and abiotic stresses. Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) have been used by agricultural research organizations to help make their research more relevant and to facilitate the adaptation and dissemination of findings. In the implementation of TLIII project in Ghana, eight MSPs were set up with the objective to improve groundnut productivity among actors through improved access to varieties and related technologies. Through trainings, demonstrations and field days, the platform members totalling 347 (55% being female) were exposed to two existing improved groundnut varieties and several candidate varieties which were yet to be released. The actors have become important sources of high-quality groundnut seed in their communities and beyond with the production of 5 tons of seed of the new varieties. The seed farms where improved varieties were planted and managed using good agronomic practices (GAPS) yielded up to 1.6 tons/ha, 70% higher than the use of their old varieties and practices on their personal farms which gave less than 0.5 tons/ha. This form of experiential learning was observed to be very useful in the willingness of platform members to uptake technology. As unintended benefits, through the use of funds raised by the associations, the sanitation and health of some members and their households were improved, and many engaged in non-farm businesses. Going forward, good conflict resolution skills and access to funds for

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supporting platform activities and members' individual interests would be very important in the sustainability of these platforms.

Keywords

Quality seed · Community seed systems · Groundnut · Improved varieties · Multi-stakeholder platforms

Introduction

Ghana is mainly an agrarian country with over 50% of the population employed in the agricultural sector. Agriculture continues to contribute about 30% to GDP (Ibrahim and Florkowski 2015). Although the country has experienced rapid economic growth in recent years, nearly two million Ghanaians remain vulnerable to food insecurity. Like in many developing countries, most of the farm holdings are less than 1.2 ha per farm household and majority of the poorest, food insecure and malnourished people are predominantly rural dwellers. This phenomenon is particularly widespread in the north of the country, which is characterized by low rainfall with intermittent drought conditions, depleted soils and limited access to markets, making it difficult for households to raise agricultural productivity and earn adequate incomes.

Groundnut is the most important legume in Ghana both in production and consumption. It is of high economic value to most rural households in the country. In Ghana, as in the rest of West Africa, groundnut is termed as a woman's crop due to the major role women play in its production, marketing and processing. Women function as farmers, traders and in some cases as labourers in planting, harvesting and shelling. Groundnut is a very significant component of the diets of many Ghanaians contributing equal (or even higher in poorer homes) levels of energy, fat and protein compared to animal sources. It is reported to contribute 3% of total energy availability, 16% of total fat and 6.5% of total protein availability per capita (FAO 2013). Not only is groundnut a food crop for humans, the haulms are widely used as fodder for livestock especially during the dry season.

Groundnut cultivation is concentrated in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions which account for up to 94% of the national production of 437,770 tons and an area of 320,310 ha (DAI 2014; MOFA 2017). It is common to find up to 90% of household cultivating groundnut in a typical farming community in these regions (Tsigbey et al. 2003). Also, groundnut is usually the most likely commodity to be marketed among all the other crops produced. Hence it offers an important opportunity to improve household incomes and nutrition in these parts of the country.

There have been many interventions to improve groundnut production and ultimately the groundnut value chain. For instance, in 2009 the Millennium Development Authority (MiDA) as part of its strategies developed a programme to assist up to 4000 farmers to expand their groundnut farms. Support was also given in the form

of credit inputs, warehousing, cleaning processing as well as marketing. Cultivation and production of the crop increased by 47% and 67%, respectively, between 1999 and 2010 but yields remain lower (less than 1.2 t/ha) than the world average of 1.7 t/ha (FAOSTAT 2017). This was evidenced by the country's ranking dropping from fourth producer of groundnut in Africa in 2013 to 11th in 2015. Like most crops, groundnut yield in Ghana on farmers' fields is sometimes only 25% of the potential for the crop.

One of the main constraints to groundnut production has been the use of low yielding varieties which are susceptible to stresses. Increased investment in new crop varieties has been recognized by many workers as one of the most important tools for increasing groundnut production (Angelucci and Bazzucchi 2013). This has resulted in the development of many varieties including Nkatievari, Kpanieli, Oboshie, Yenyawoso and Obolo and in 2018, Sarinut 1 and Sarinut 2. However, these investments over time are not commensurate with the gains made in improving production and productivity. In growing groundnuts, farmers use very little good quality seed of improved varieties, fertilizers and other external inputs. Less than 5% of the crop is cultivated with certified seed purchased from the formal seed system, while the rest is sourced from farmers' saved seeds, gifts from family and friends and the grain market, often of questionable quality. Farmers' failure to use new varieties has been attributed to the unavailability, inaccessibility (located far from farming communities) and highly priced nature of seed in the formal system. Poor access to information about the existence of the varieties and their characteristics thereof have also been an impediment to the widespread use of new varieties. Most seed outlets are located in district capitals and cities, while farmers are predominantly in the rural areas hence creating a challenge of access because they need to travel long distances to buy seed.

Meanwhile, multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) are used by agricultural research organizations to help make their research more relevant and to facilitate the adaptation and dissemination of findings (Homann-Kee Tui et al. 2013). They have been used in various initiatives and were recognized under Tropical Legumes III (TLIII) project as a tool that could be used to accelerate variety dissemination and access to improved seed among others. The MSP concept was to be used to facilitate the dissemination of quality seed of improved groundnut varieties through community seed production as a start, quality declared seed production entities and grow them into full-fledged seed cooperatives.

5.1 Objective of the Platform

The objective of establishing these MSPs within the TLIII project was to improve groundnut productivity among actors through improved access to technologies.

5.2 Establishment of the MSPs

Prior to the establishment of these platforms, a multi-stage consultative approach was adopted in the form of meetings to map out actors of these platforms. First, meetings were held at the district level with District Directors of the Department of Agriculture of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), their technical staff, staff of the District Coordinating Councils and District Directors of the Department of Cooperatives. The consultations led to the identification of communities where these platforms were to be established. At the community level, actors were identified within the groundnut value chain. These actors were also drawn from neighbouring communities, taking into account distance in order not to overburden actors with transportation costs.

In 2015, five MSPs were formed and three additional ones in 2017. Each platform elected an executive committee responsible for the day-to-day running of the platform. The committee comprised of the Chairperson, Treasurer, Organizer, Secretary and Women Organizer. The MSP members agreed to hold monthly meetings to discuss the activities of the group, while quarterly meetings would have facilitators from the research team and other government institutions in attendance.

The platforms begun with a membership of 173 in the 2015 cropping season with an average membership of 35 each. Out of this number 70 were male representing 40.46%, 48 were female over 35 years of age representing 27.74% and 55 were youth (under 35) representing 31.79% of total participation. Due to the benefits derived from group members, membership of these MSPs has increased from 173 in 2015 to a current number of 347. With the current number of participants, 155 are males, representing 44.67%, 93 are female over 35 years of age, representing 26.80%, while youth under 35 years of age are 99, representing 28.53%.

5.3 Composition, Roles and Responsibilities of the Platform Members

Each MSP was made up of farmers (over 70%), agro-input dealers (1 per group), processors, traders and tractor service providers (usually 1 per MSP). Each group was assisted by an Agricultural Extension Agent (AEA). The representation of financial institutions on these platforms was completely absent. This short fall was addressed through the introduction of the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) scheme, with technical assistance from the objective one component of the project. This was the main reason for formation of the three additional MSPs in 2017. The savings scheme helped members to mobilize financial resources through weekly savings, where funds realized were loaned to group members. The roles and responsibilities of each actor are captured in Table 5.1.

Members of the platforms have been able to establish market linkages to facilitate the value chain of commodity from producers to end users. Groundnut producers on the platform use modern and improved ways of groundnut production as well as switched from their traditional low yielding varieties to improved groundnut

Table 5.1 Roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders participating initially in the platform activities

Stakeholders	Roles and responsibilities
Farmers	Groundnut farmers. They produce the groundnut
Processors	They process groundnut into pastries. They are small scale operating with simple tools. Women are mostly involved in this business
Traders (aggregators)	Buy the produce from farmers at the local level and sell in bigger markets or urban centres
Agro-input dealers	Sell agro-inputs (fertilizer, herbicides, insecticides, etc.) to farmers. The IP enabled farmers to get such input on credit from the input dealers
Agricultural Extension Agents	Provide technical backstopping on production related issues
Research, Ministry of Food and Agriculture (DoA, DoC) and District Council	These groups facilitate the whole process (Research, the department of agriculture, the Department of Cooperatives and a representative of District Coordinating Council)

varieties introduced by the project. This has been achieved through the involvement of group members in field trials and demonstrations by the project. Another remarkable development has been the introduction of Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLAs) concept into some of the MSPs, which is a self-help initiative aimed at mobilizing funds through group savings to enhance the financial fortunes of actors.

5.4 Platform Governance Structure

To facilitate a smooth implementation of platform activities, each platform has an elected executive steering committee tasked with the responsibility of managing affairs of the platform. The committee is made up of the Chairman who is the overall head of the group responsible for chairing meetings and also serves as the main link of the group to the implementing partners and community opinion leaders. There is a Treasurer in each platform responsible for the management of group finances and properties as well as an Organizer who is tasked with the organization of meetings and coordinating activities within the group. The Secretary is tasked with the responsibility of documenting activities of the group, while the Women Organizer is tasked to handle women affairs in the group. She also coordinates and links activities of predominantly women traders and processors in the group.

5.5 Platform Activities Addressing Main Challenges Associated with Poor Access to and Use of Improved Varieties

Apart from regular meetings held by these MSPs, actors participated in a number of activities organized for them following the recommendations of a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis undertaken during the formation

process. Activities were designed to take advantage of opportunities and mitigate threats. The need to create awareness about groundnut varieties and related technologies was recognized as a major contributor to increased productivity. To address other challenges such as poor access to affordable capital, a savings scheme was instituted. Furthermore, a number of technical trainings were conducted for members to build their capacities in group dynamics and governance, good agronomic practices, financial management and entrepreneurship as well as groundnut seed production and delivery among others.

An important management issue addressed by MSP activities was conflict resolution. During the implementation of platform activities, poor consultation among MSP members and lack of clear-cut procedures on resolving conflicts were identified as major problems that needed to be addressed, because some members made up their minds not to actively participate at meetings or to leave the group all together. These conflicts resulted from the fact that actors were drawn from different sectors of the groundnut value chain and as such had diverse views and sometimes conflicting interests. To address this challenge, a training on group dynamics was organized for members. The training was geared towards enabling actors to be more tolerant and positive towards diversity in order to promote a peaceful coexistence to ensure successful implementation of activities. To further strengthen the platforms, a second round of trainings was on understanding the underlying principles governing Innovation Platforms. In order to improve their businesses platform actors were also taken through agribusiness training. A total of 93 people benefitted from the training; 55 males and 38 females as indicated in Table 5.2.

Another set of challenges identified were low productivity resulting from use of poor varieties and production practices. The most popular varieties within most of these communities were “Bulga” and “Chinese” which among others are very low yielding and susceptible to leaf spot diseases, respectively. To encourage experiential learning MSPs hosted groundnut demonstrations during the 2016, 2017 and 2018 cropping seasons with support from the AEAs of their area. The purpose of the demonstrations was to expose the actors to improved groundnut varieties as well as good agronomic practices (GAPs). The varieties promoted under the

Table 5.2 Beneficiaries for training on agribusiness planning

Region	District	Community	Male	Male under 35 years	Female	Female under 35 years	Total
Northern Region	Mion	Salankpang	15	9	11	2	26
Northern Region	Yendi	Kulkpanga	14	8	9	4	23
Northern Region	West Mamprusi	Gbeduri	13	5	9	3	22
Upper West	Nadowli	Tibani	13	7	9	2	22
<i>Total</i>			55	29	38	11	93

demonstrations were high yielding, drought tolerant and leaf spot resistant. As an added benefit, apart from the knowledge gained through the field days organized, about 1 ton of seed (not certified) was realized each year. The seed realized from the demonstration plots was sold by the platform to interested farmers on the MSP and funds raised added to the savings of the group. The seed purchased was then used on individual groundnut fields for production. One hundred and eighteen members (70 male, 48 females with 55 being youth) accessed this seed from the demonstrations annually (Table 5.3). Farmers on the MSPs were also introduced to good agronomic practices in groundnut production through the field demonstrations. Members admitted that they could vividly see the difference between their own farms and the demonstration fields. It is acknowledged that this approach to seed production is a stop gap measure because groundnut seed production still remains unattractive to commercial seed producers due to the high cost of production, low seed multiplication ratio, quick loss of seed viability, the self-pollinating nature of the crop, low demand especially by large farm enterprises and handling challenges as a result of bulkiness among others. To ensure the continued availability and accessibility of high-quality seed within communities through the MSPs, they were taken through principles of groundnut seed production and seed business trainings. During the training the platform actors were introduced to the various steps to take in becoming a certified seed producer. For the first year, the MSPs were assisted to produce seed. They would register as growers or become out-growers for seed companies through support from their AEA's.

Review meetings were also organized to bring together leaders of the MSPs, seed companies, traders and other stakeholders. The objective was to foster linkage and establish bonds for sustained performance after the end of the TLIII project. These meetings also offered the members of the MSPs to learn from shared experiences and learn from each other.

In a study conducted at the formation stages of the MSPs, members indicated that it was difficult getting money to plough their fields and buy the needed inputs such as seed and herbicides. Although there are rural banks and savings and loans institutions in many areas, high cost of borrowing and demand for collateral is a disincentive to many farmers. More so, these institutions are of the view that farming is a very risky business resulting in one of the highest interest rates applied (about 40% p.a) when lending to actors in agriculture. To address this challenge of

Table 5.3 Beneficiaries of seed produced from demonstrations

Region	District	Community	Male	Male <35 yrs	Female	Female <35 yrs	Total
Northern Region	Mion	Salankpang	15	9	11	2	26
	Yendi	Kulkpanga	14	8	9	4	23
	West Mamprusi	Gbeduri	13	5	9	3	22
Upper East	Bawku	Tampizua	15	11	10	4	25
Upper West	Nadowli	Tibani	13	7	9	2	22
<i>Total</i>			<i>70</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>118</i>

funding, the platforms were introduced to and adopted the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) concept. This self-help microfinance initiative was rolled out to help group members put monies together through weekly savings for a given period of 9 months amounting to an average savings of GHS 203.00 (USD39, April 2019 exchange rate) per member over the period. Members were also able to buy shares at GHS 1.00 (USD0.19) per share and each member could buy a maximum of five shares per week. With this initiative, members could borrow monies from these savings for their farming and other income generating activities and repay with an agreed interest rate of up to 10% per annum. This is very low compared to the industry of 25–40% per annum interest rate. This strategy has since relieved members of financial burdens associated with high interest rates from banks and other institutions.

5.6 Facilitation of Platform Activities and Decision Making

Facilitation of these platforms was done through the adoption of broad approaches to reach the wider audience in the platforms. Meetings were convened by the Chairman of the platforms, who also directed affairs during the meetings and other activities. In general, the use of participatory and collective action tools was employed. Decisions were arrived at, after a cast of votes by raising hands. Some sessions were also facilitated by dividing the members into smaller groups to come up with a consensus that represents that small group and then share with the larger platforms membership for decision making. Through this approach, a systematic joint analysis, documentation, and experiential learning and information sharing among platform members were always employed. This helped the executive committee members with assistance from the TLIII project team to develop strategies to improve and effectively run activities within the platform.

5.7 Achievements of the Platforms in Terms Access to Technologies, Social Assets and Improved Livelihoods

The MSPs were able to access seed of improved varieties in the form of small seed packs (10 kg of unshelled groundnuts to 112 farmers per year). Some of the varieties which were near release were given to them to put in demonstrations and apply the trainings they had received in agronomic practices and seed production. In 2018, a total of 25 acres of seed fields was cultivated to produce about 5 tons of high-quality seed. The noted low production per unit calls for increasing farmer sensitization and training on the GAP, but also investing in labour alleviating devices such as small planters and groundnut strippers especially for women farmers who often resort to broadcasting to save on labour cost and time. The quantity of seed required by the platform members for their personal use was taken and the rest sold to community members as seed.

The MSPs have become ambassadors of new groundnut varieties in their communities and neighbouring villages. In order to accelerate the access of these groundnut producing communities to information on new varieties, the platforms, after receiving the trainings on seed production were given seed of three candidate groundnut varieties for multiplication. This was to allow them to appreciate the potential of the new varieties, to speed up variety adoption and also serve as seed increase. Each group received 20 kg of unshelled groundnut seed of each line for planting half an acre, resulting in a total of 1.5 acres per platform. At the end of the season, the actors had the opportunity to observe the performance of the varieties and could easily identify them. Most of them had already chosen their favourite. This exercise resulted in close to 2 tons of seed which SARI paid for upon delivery. Two candidate varieties out of the three received were officially released in the last quarter of 2018 and have since been given the denominations, Sarinut 1 and Sarinut 2.

It is generally believed that the activities carried out within these MSPs and other components of the TLIII project were key contributors to the increased groundnut seed production (Fig. 5.1) and productivity (Fig. 5.2) together with a resultant estimated US\$ 340.00 change in gross margin on farmer's fields within the three Northern regions where project activities were implemented.

Furthermore, access to good land for women farmers was increased slightly by the advocacy by platform leaders to community opinion leaders. Land for women especially was a challenge in some communities. But after discussions with the families and some opinion leaders, some of the women making up about 20% were given good pieces of land for cultivation. Unfortunately, promises by some community leaders to release large parcels of land to MSPs were not honoured.

The sanitation and health of some platform members and their communities were improved through construction of hygiene facilities. Some MSP established collaboration with an NGO, IDE Ghana, promoting health through the abolishing of open defecation. This NGO used a cost sharing approach where interested community members contributed part of the money required to build a toilet within the

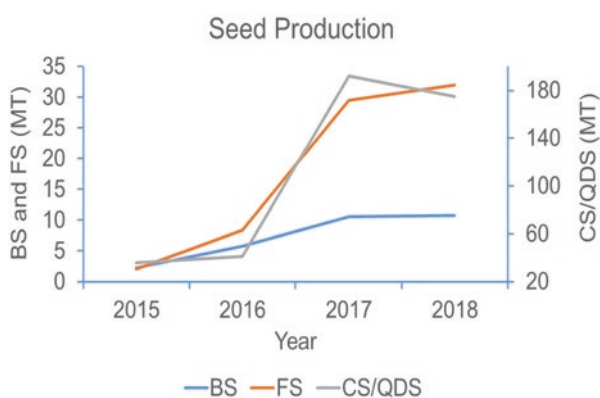


Fig. 5.1 Trends in groundnut seed production in the lifespan of TLIII

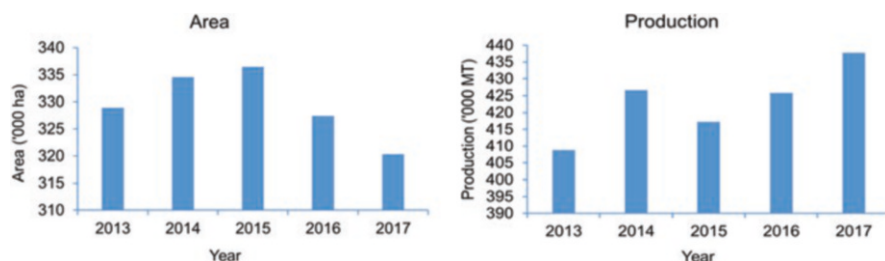


Fig. 5.2 Area and production levels of groundnut in Ghana

household. Through the loan facility available to platform members using their savings, the actors of one of the MSPs in Walewale borrowed money to undertake the construction of these toilets, nicknamed “Sama sama”. This in turn has helped promote good sanitation and hygiene among the people in the community. Also, this initiative (Sama Sama) is said to prevent certain diseases caused by many of the lower quality pit latrines available in the community.

Most members of the MSPs borrowed funds from the savings to renew health insurance (National Health Insurance, NHIS) and those of their households. Some of these members said their renewal in the past could be 2 years over-due because of other competing needs for money they generated through farming and petty trading. This has helped to reduce the burden of paying a lot of the bills (cash and carry) for medical care which people without NHIS have to bear.

A major partner of the TLIII project, Social Enterprise Development foundation (SEND) Ghana, educated the MSP members on conflict resolution at home and within the community to earn the support of other members of the households. Through the family gender model, conflict resolution and inclusive decision-making capacity within the household have improved. More importantly, creating an environment where women have the opportunity to express their opinion in the household in order to create a harmonious environment in the family has been highly appreciated by members.

The introduction of the savings system and the village savings and loans concept was viewed as very useful. Members, especially women on whom most of the day-to-day management of the home relied on, said they walk with their heads held high. According to them, their social status has increased since they joined the MSPs. They have stopped borrowing funds from lenders whose high interest rates were difficult to accommodate coupled with the harassment from these lenders in the community. Hence, they have gained respect among their peers.

5.8 Achievement in the Areas of Gender Equality and Youth

Joining the MSPs has boosted the women’s confidence and earned them the respect of family and friends. Regarding gender equality, one major challenge women faced in the community was asking for money from their husbands for the upkeep of the

home. Almost all (over 80%) of the women were able to establish or maintain non-farm businesses such as petty trading and selling of food with money borrowed from the platforms' funds. This way, they earned money and were able to contribute more, financially to support the household needs. Moreover, women are now better involved in decision making in the community and household since they are able to support in the provision of household needs such as payment of school fees, health insurance and even help support farm size expansion (support in ploughing larger areas) with money they make. The power to contribute financially has also led to reduced household conflicts between the husbands and wives. The wives say they do not need to request for money from their husbands as much as they used to do which was one of the major causes of disagreements.

In most parts of the three regions in the North, groundnut though widely known as a women's crop is one of the crops with the highest commercial value. According to the youth in the MSPs, unlike maize, sorghum and millet which most families rely on for subsistence and hence are considered to be family owned, groundnut does not fall within that category. While a young man or woman would need permission from the head of the family to dispose of the cereals and other crops, they are at liberty to sell their groundnut without any authorization from the family. The youth in the MSPs, with support from the group in light of the trainings and funds at their disposal for borrowing, are now able to own groundnut farms. These young people are more responsible towards other members of the household and contribute to the family's growth. All this is through the groundnut production since it is not considered as a family commodity, hence they solely own the output from the production. Through the access to good seed and credit from the platform, they can decide to even increase their farm sizes.

5.9 Members' Perception of Platform Performance

To most members of the platforms, baring conflicts that arise in any human society, the platforms have been a great source of relief. Some say they have acquired a second source of income through the off-farm businesses they started with funds from the platform, have gained knowledge to improve their crop production, marketing and peace in their homes.

They perceive the platform as an avenue for training and skills development. Any entity or institution they approach is willing to listen to them and help them if possible since they belong to an organization. The habit of saving inculcated in them would be very useful too in the future.

Also, members in the platform see it as a source of power to take control of their access to quality seeds of superior groundnut varieties. They are now able to produce quality seed and with the seed of the new varieties obtained they have the seed at their communities. The platforms are also able to set the prices of the improved groundnut seed since the production of the seeds is done by themselves. Also, because members are now linked to the research institute and they believe that they could always contact the institute for any information regarding varieties.

The members also see these platforms as a form of strong social network. They are able to support each other during funerals, baby christening and other social events. Apart from them attending to support such programs of members, they also help in kind and in cash. The women would usually help with cooking the large pots of food required to feed guests during such occasions. The group's social fund which was instituted to support such things is also offered to help relieve part of the financial burden on members during such occasions.

Furthermore, the being part of a group has given them a stronger bargaining power, market linkages, access to tractor services and access to agro-inputs. For instance, members are accessing tractor services more readily than before. Since most tractor operators are more attracted to large acreages of land compared to the one acre or so most of them have. One merit of this platform is that accessing improved technologies is easier since agencies like working with groups rather than individuals.

5.10 Sustainability of the Groundnut MSPs

It is envisioned that training of the platforms on group dynamics and conflict resolution in the home would help maintain the MSPs even after the end of the TLIII project. There is mutual respect for diverse opinions and democratic decision-making processes. This is a key factor for the members in the sustainability of any group.

The members of the MSPs were equipped with knowledge and skills in production and how to become registered seed producers. They have the opportunity to go into seed business as seed producers or seed cooperatives. They could register as producers of quality declared seed (QDS) and produce seed to serve their communities and neighbours. Also, the platform has created a linkage between the groundnut producers and seed companies through meetings. Through the trainings received in seed production these platforms can now act as out-growers to seed companies when enough seed has been supplied to members and the communities.

Another opportunity for sustainability and for that matter the most important one is the financial support these actors derive from being members of the MSPs. The access to funds in the form of affordable loans would serve as a great incentive for actors to remain members of the MSPs. Some platform members also serve as ready market for businesses (farm produce, seed, petty trading, agro-input, etc.) of other members of the platform. For instance, agro-input dealers and farmers on the platform can go into negotiation to supply the farmers with agro-inputs on flexible payment terms. Such synergies would be motivations for both the farmer and the input dealer to stay in the group.

5.11 Reflection on the Process

At the onset of setting up an MSP, things were quite rough. At the beginning, the platform was bedevilled with many arguments which led to meetings not usually ending with common consensus. Others even left the meetings in anger in the middle. Because, actors were drawn from different backgrounds and social standing, integration to forge a common goal was a challenge. They were slow in having a common understanding on issues and taking decisions as a group.

Patience and emotional intelligence are key attributes a facilitator need to have when setting up such platforms. One must work hard to win the trust of prospective platform members. For instance, it took a lot of effort to convince some members about one of the objectives of the project, to improve farmer access to high-quality seed. Some narrated the bad experiences they had with seed they purchased from seed dealers. They reported that the resultant crop was very poor and hence they had lost trust in seed from the formal sector. The use of experiential learning through trainings followed by demonstrations was very efficient tools in convincing the farmers to take up the new groundnut varieties and related technologies.

The various milestones chalked by the MSP benefitted all actors in different spheres of their lives. Producers were exposed to superior groundnut varieties. The varieties multiplied by the platforms yielded about 70% more than their old ones. They have acquired seed for their next planting at a very affordable price. The producers have also gained knowledge in post-harvest handling of their produce to reduce post-harvest losses and improve the quality of the grain especially with respect to lowering the levels of aflatoxin contamination. Secondly, there is an organized market system without middlemen which would help traders to realize good profits after sales of their produce. To the groundnut processor, the platform experience serves as a ready source of raw material for their businesses. The agribusiness and entrepreneurship training they received by the traders and processors would be useful in improving their businesses and livelihoods.

To the communities in which these MSPs are located, there is now a reliable, easily accessible and affordable source of quality seeds of improved groundnut varieties to farmers. Community members and those from neighbouring villages also participated in demonstrations which is hoped to translate into better farms and higher yields. It is hoped that they will experience the 70% yield advantage portrayed by the improved varieties and good agronomic practices. Members on the platform are helping their friends who are not members to also adopt these improved technologies.

One of the great advantages is that it has also created a harmonious living in the community. Many homes of the platform members are sharing their success story with others. Homes are now happier and there is more understanding and cordiality. Sanitation and general well-being in some areas within the communities would have improved.

5.12 Future Perspectives and the Way Forward

It would be very useful to include recipe development, value addition and related trainings in future activities of groundnut MSPs. This would diversify groundnut uses in the communities while enhancing nutrition and incomes.

Creating linkages with financial institutions would be essential in improving financial management of the MSPs as well as security of their savings. This will increase the safety of their money since the little boxes used in keeping members' savings as practiced by the platforms would be eliminated. Financial institutions prefer lending to groups because they feel this practice minimizes their risk of non-recovery of loans. Building a relationship with financial institutions will be a useful addition. The presence of the financial institutions would help increase group members' access to bigger loan facilities which may be beyond the amounts the platforms can afford from their savings. The platform actors would need minimum or no collateral to qualify for such facilities.

With the right form of management and commitment, these MSPs could become a great source of seed in their communities. With the training gained in various subjects, they could gradually grow into full-fledged contract growers for seed companies or form a company themselves. They may formally register as quality declared seed producers to improve their income earned through seed production and serve as a sustainable source of high-quality groundnut seed to their communities.

Land tenure is also a major challenge faced especially by women in the communities. More work need to be done in convincing husbands and the Chiefs to free fertile lands for women to undertake farming activities.

The progress of the groundnut MSPs would need to be followed over an extended period of time to be able to adequately measure change. Unfortunately, the current MSPs are relatively too young to be fairly appraised.

5.13 Lessons Learned Through the Implementation of the Groundnut MSPs

- MSPs are effective in variety promotion and valuable seed sources for low value and high-volume crop seeds such as groundnut.
- Getting the buy-in of community and family members is important for the success of MSPs. The MSPs activities if carried out in a participatory manner are capable of improving women's involvement in decision making in the household.
- The MSPs have the power to improve livelihoods and social status of people. They could be a good mechanism for reducing rural-urban migration if the youth can reap adequate benefits from their membership. For instance, members were able to make about 40% on their savings which is capital they can use for developing themselves and curb the need to migrate for menial jobs in the cities.

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