Women at the Center of Cowpea Value Chain Development in Nigeria

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7.1 Woman Transforming Her Family Life and That of Her Community

Ms. Hadja Salame Shaibu (Fig. 7.1) is a cowpea producer and processor in the Local Government Area of Dawakin Tofa. She grew up in a farming community where crop- livestock integration is a tradition. When she got married few decades ago, Salame continued farming and keeping livestock to support her new family, mainly in sorghum and cowpea production.

Few years ago, Salame also started processing cowpea into local dishes (Moi-moi, Accra, Danwake, and many other products). She also cooked and sold a special dish made from a combination of pasta and cowpea which was well appreciated by the consumers and made her successful.

It all started 2 years ago when Salame met with the project extension agents and was given a small seed pack of a new improved cowpea variety for testing. *"I used to produce 2 bags (200 Kg) of the local variety in a cropping season but with the improved variety, I harvested up to 5 bags (500 Kg),"* says Salame. "*After a farming season, I process my produce into various products and sometimes, I buy additional cowpea of 400 to 500 Kg for more processing. In a year, I can process up to 1,000 Kg of cowpea.*"

With the new improved varieties that are higher yielding, Salame explains that she could make more profit from her business. *"The new varieties produce more flour and taste better. I think it has improved nutrition within the community where many people were lacking some essential proteins in their daily diet. Now that cowpea has improved nutrition, it has helped me improve my incomes,"* she happily adds.

As a matter of fact, Salame has now expanded her business and is now the owner of a new car. *"I have bought two bulls to help with farming activities; I am building a new house made of concrete blocks; and I have purchased a new car that my son is now using for commercial purpose and to transport goods. Also, I am taking care*

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Fig. 7.1 On second left, Ms. Salame and family in front of their old house and right (Ms Salame—seen third from right) in front of their new house along with their new car. Also seen are Ms. Salame's husband (fourth right) and her son (second from left—with his hand on the car), Nigeria (Photo: Diama A)

Fig. 7.2 On left, Salame and husband with the bulls and on right, Salame's new car used by her son for commercial purposes, Nigeria (Photo: Diama A)

of everything in the house as I don't wait for my husband to pay for everything," she adds.

More recently, Salame increased her farm size and has money to pay laborers unlike before when she used to do all the work manually by herself.

Salame started with small seed packs of improved variety, growing later to producing on 2 ha. The first benefits were used to buy small ruminants and bulls which she later disposed and bought a car and concrete blocks for building a house. With average incomes of 500,000 Naira per year, Salame who has been in cowpea production and processing for 10 years says improved varieties have boosted her activities in the 2 past years. She is now the only woman who owns a car in the village (Fig. 7.2). This has inspired more women and created awareness in the entire community for a growing interest into cowpea production. Cowpea production has exposed Salame not only within the community but also to the local government area as a whole.

7.2 From Grass to Great: Tropical Legumes Projects Have Changed the Pattern of Agricultural Extension in Northern Nigeria and Nigerian Farmers Increase Their Cowpea Production

Cowpea remains vital for many smallholders in Nigeria where it is grown primarily for human consumption. Also, the fodder market of the crop has witnessed a considerable success in the animal feeding growing market during the past years. The Dawanu market in Kano (Fig. 7.3), Northern Nigeria, is the largest cowpea market in the world. In Nigeria, the Tropical Legumes projects have increased the adoption and uptake of improved cowpea varieties by farmers in Northern Nigeria. As a result, seed production and supply of improved and farmers' preferred varieties were significantly enhanced. Between 2007 and 2013, more than 530,000 tons of certified seed (CS) and quality declared seed (QDS) were produced in project target zones in Northern Nigeria.

As result of capacity building of the national breeding system in the Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR), 4–10 tons of breeder seed were annually injected into the groundnut seed value chain to meet the national demand against 500–1000 kg produced prior to the project interventions.

The role of the agricultural extension agents was crucial in the promotion of these improved varieties according to Mr. Sayi Ado Oumar (Fig. 7.4), an extension agent working with nine (09) communities in the Local Government Area (LGA) of Tsanyawa, Kano State Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (KNARDA). He recalled how much Tropical Legumes projects, especially in its third phase of implementation, was key in changing the extension pattern in Northern Nigeria.

Fig. 7.3 A scene in Dawanu grain market, Northern Nigeria (Photo: Diama A)

Fig. 7.4 Mr. Sani Ado Oumar was able to buy a new car from the benefits of his product, Nigeria (Photo: Diama A)

> *Before TL, our institution used to provide us with pre-season training. TL has strengthened these efforts with a more targeted trainings and capacity building of extension agents in agronomic practices, pest management, safe and effective use of pesticides, data collection and record keeping, post-harvest management including cowpea storage as well business and marketing of agricultural products. The impact was tremendous,* says Mr. Ado.

According to Ado, the greatest impact of a large uptake of technologies was achieved because of the trainings offered to all extension agents within the local government area. *"I have always provided a training to fellows who did not benefit directly from the project trainings. It has changed the pattern of extension activities in the Local Government Area of Tsanyawa. The training made a change in me which I was able to translate into 28 other extensions workers in the nine communities covered by the project in our Local Government Area."*

The project capacitated the extension agents with means for transport, and thus increased their mobility and facilitated a closer contact and monitoring of outreach activities. *"We started with few farmers in 2015 and with time, farmers took interest into cowpea production and wider acceptance and adoption rate has been registered due to our extension work. Trust has increased in new varieties and farmers have more confidence in using improved agronomics practices,"* explains Mr. Ado.

On a more personal level, Mr. Ado says that TL projects were a huge opportunity for development and progress. *"This project has enabled me to start my own cowpea production farm. Providing training to farmers has motivated me to embrace cowpea seed production. The project inspired me to create and register my own seed company, Ausye Agro-chemicals and seed company Nigeria Ltd,"* says Ado who is now the owner of 2 ha where he produces cowpea. *"It has changed me from grass to great; an extension worker has started from grass to great due to TL projects,"* he

Fig. 7.5 Mr. Sani Musa, cowpea producer, Nigeria (Photo: Diama A)

adds. Mr. Ado was not only able to improve his revenues, but he was able to invest in a new car to improve his mobility in the field and reach out to more farmers.

With the support of the projects, several technologies that have consumer-preferred traits were developed and released. These improved technologies include newly released cowpea varieties that are high yielding and fast maturing with resistance to some of the major diseases, pests, nematodes, parasitic weeds and adapted to sole planting or intercropping. The cowpea varieties have increased the interest of farmers to convert to cowpea production.

The success of Mr. Ado is not an exception in Tropical Legumes projects' interventions zones in Nigeria. Mrs. Samale Shaibu from Tsanyawa Local Government Area has a fairy tale. *"With the improved varieties, I produce up to 45 bags per season which I then process into various products including Danwake, a local dish which is well appreciated by the consumers. From the sales, I bought small ruminants, two bulls, and a commercial bus. I am now building a new house with concrete blocks in my village."*

Mr. Sanu Musa (Fig. 7.5) from Bagadawa Local Government Area is not new in cowpea production, but he started a new experience with the crop in 2017, when he cultivated his first improved variety of cowpea. *"I harvested 14 bags where I could barely get 3 bags with the local variety. I sold 13 bags and used the earnings to build a house. I can pay school fees for my children and have improved their clothing as well other enjoyment. Many fellows have witnessed my success and are willing to start cowpea production in 2018."* Musa who appreciates the improved varieties of cowpea says he hopes that the project will continue supporting farmers.

> *In 2017, I built a house; in the coming year I hope, I wish, and I am willing to construct 3 additional houses for the comfort of my family,* Mr. Sanu Musa concludes.

7.3 Enhanced Production of Early Generation Seed of Cowpea

> *The quantity of breeder seed of improved cowpea was raised up to 4-10 tons annually to meet the national demand. Before, only a few kilograms (500 to 1000) of different varieties were available in the system,* says Prof. Abubakar, cowpea breeder, Institute of Agricultural Research, Nigeria.