



# FRG UPDATE

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EIAR-OARI-JICA COOPERATION

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*Farmers' participation is a key to agricultural innovation*

## Addressing Rural Womens' Needs in an Innovative Way: From Nothing to Something

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### Introduction

In our nation today, we are fighting against poverty. Many families are living under extreme financial constraints. Some of the constraints come from lack of knowledge to utilize the resources that they have at hand. Especially in the rural areas, much of the burden is on the shoulder of women as many household chores and responsibilities are on them, from reproductive, productive to community works.

The problems are interlocked and difficult to break the chain. In view of this, it is important to come up with an innovative approach that can break the chain of poverty and maximize the welfare of women in the rural community. To improve livelihood of women at rural communities where there are interlocking problems, integration of both scientific and indigenous knowledge using 'Kaizen' approach is very vital. 'Kaizen' approach is the popular term in Japanese that has been used in post war rural development. 'Kaizen' in Japanese means improvement.

By adopting this 'Kaizen' approach, we have started the project called Abdi Boru Community Development Initiative (ABCoDI) - hope of tomorrow. The goal of the project is improving the quality of life of the rural community and

empowering women through the promotion and integration of both scientific and indigenous knowledge. The rationale behind is that local communities have self support systems, skills and locally available resources. If we integrate these with new ideas, we can attain livelihood improvement and hence rural development.

### Launching ABCoDI project

It was in November 2008 that our activities started with a simple discussion under the shade of acacia tree at the small town of Adami Tulu Jiddo Kombolcha district (ATJK). We explained women that ABCoDI promotes utilization of locally available resources, step by step improvement and self support through groups.



Picture1. Women cooked sweet potato injera

We formed women groups in 8 villages of ATJK. The activities are undertaken with 11 women groups, nine of them supported by FRG project and two by SEDA, a local NGO (Table 1).

Table1. List of women groups

No	Group name	Number of members
1	Ashaba	33
2	Adish Mana	17
3	Dagis mana	17
4	Somayan	12
5	Goba	17
6	Ifa	31
7	Lalistu	29
8	Magartu	29
9	Biftu 1	22
10	Biftu 2	30
11	Gamachu	30
	Total	272

The main activities implemented by the groups are as follows;

- self funding micro credit
- kitchen garden activities
- hygiene and nutrition improvement
- integrated water harvesting
- backyard livestock farming
- installation of energy saving stoves



Picture 2. Installed energy saving stove

### Group management

Each group elected a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer. Purchasing and discipline committee was also set up by each group. Most of the group management is carried out by the women themselves with little support from DAs (Development Agents). Researchers provide mainly technical support such as trainings and overall monitoring and evaluation. Sometimes there is also logistical support such as car for the groups to transport purchased stoves from stove producer's site to farmers' house.

### Achievements

- ✓ About 122 members have purchased and installed energy saving stoves that helped them to save their time by more than 50 %, firewood and money. Their precious time was allocated to productive works.

- ✓ More than 30 households have built their assets: house furniture, kitchen utensils, cooking plates, dishes, cups, goats, etc. within six months.
- ✓ Household nutrition and hygiene condition has been improved, such as dietary diversification.
- ✓ Income of the groups has been increased.
- ✓ Productions of sweet potatoes, jateropha and forage for dairy animals at backyard have been undertaken by five group members.
- ✓ Two cooking contests held among the groups to promote dietary diversification. Two cooking recipes on sweet potatoes and moringa have been produced.

### Lessons learnt from the ABCoDI project

1. With little intervention women can do great to empower themselves as well as their families and ensure faster rural development. This entails grouping people, especially women, according to their needs can make a difference.
2. Research should continue working what kind of and how intervention should be made to empower rural women and develop livelihoods improvement projects that make life easier for women.
3. A research and development agenda which incorporates farmers perspectives along with womens' participation is likely to lead to a more appropriate and acceptable technology that would gain further and wider adoption

Finally, I will share with you what one of the womens' group member said. She said, "previously, our families starved while there is moringa and sweet potato leaves at my backyard, now we have recognized that we have ample resources around our yard that we can make life out of it."

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## Towards food self-sufficiency through sweet potato production at district level

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### Introduction

Root and tuber crop is a very important commodity contributing for food self sufficiency for many countries in the world. In Ethiopia, as a result of cereal based feeding habit of the population, it has not got much attention for many years. The population is increasing at an alarming rate, the areas of land used for cereal production has now been shared among the household members and the productivity of the land has been decreasing at increasing rate. Considering that the southern part of the country which has been producing root and tuber crops like enset, taro, tania, cassava and sweet potato, have not been affected by famine, introducing those drought tolerant crops in the areas where production is not yet started is important to solve problems related to food self sufficiency.

### Importance of root and tuber crops

- 1) Produce relatively a large amount of yield per unit area of land compared to other cereals crops
- 2) Majority of them are drought tolerant
- 3) Possibility to produce in marginal land that can not support other crops production
- 4) Produced with a little care relative to other crops
- 5) Cheap sources of calories for resource poor farmers.

## History of sweet potato introduction to Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha District

The area is a number one food insecure district in East Shewa Zone. Farmers stated that food shortage of this district is mainly because there is a recurrent drought which is a major cause for crop failure from year to year. To minimize this risk, Adami Tulu Agricultural Research Center introduced drought tolerant sweet potato varieties being with FRG project. The local communities consume sweet potatoes by purchasing from market that was brought from the southern part of the country and they did not know whether the crop can be grown in this area or not.

### Past research achievement

Selection of a adaptable variety was conducted at Adami Tulu Jiddo Kombolcha district at farmers field by involving different influential stakeholders like development agents, district agricultural officers, NGOs working in the district with the farmers, researchers from multi-disciplinary team. The followings are the achievements so far;

- 1) best performing variety like Belela, Bareda and Guntute were selected by criteria's set by those actors
- 2) Farmers gain enough knowledge in sweet potato production by training given at different times of its growth stage
- 3) Awareness creation were made at different time for those stake holders by arranging field day, field visits experience sharing etc.
- 4) For food diversification, processing into different products and demonstration for farmers were made.
- 5) Different extension materials like (clip chart, brochures, leaflets and poster) were prepared by local language to make production sustainable

### Future prospect of the crop

- 1) Availability of all weathered lake that helps in maintaining the planting materials in sustainable manner
- 2) High market demand
- 3) Possibility to extend its shelf life by processing into flour
- 4) Government policy in popularization of root and tuber crops

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## Development is Growth

Mamo Abdurkedir (Member of Farmer Field School (FFS) organized by DAs after the experience in FRG in Shala Wereda)

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*This is a translation of the poem written by the FRG farmer; the poem was originally written in Afaan Oromo language.*



Development is growth  
Let's come and work together  
We can get a lot of advantages

We have energy, but why we suffer from hunger?  
We have land, but why we suffer from poverty?

Let's get advice from development agents  
Let's name ourselves FRG  
Let's get altogether and stand up side by side

We sow seeds in order to harvest and eat  
We ask the experts unclear things  
We join together and make ourselves strong  
We become a focal point for others  
We struggle to overcome poverty  
We develop the country to change ourselves by ourselves  
We show innovation to be a model for others

Thanks to Fikadu\* and Mekida\*  
They give us lessons and ideas  
They show us all kinds of work, means of transition for civilization

To be self sufficient to satisfy our stomach  
We fatten our cattle  
We prepare compost instead of buying them  
This is the advice we get  
We follow them and ask for guidance  
This is our message for the rest too

You all farmers, compete by working hard  
The winners will get the gold  
Surely, we will visit the 'Abba Geda' Hall  
Not by talk but rather practical work  
If we work hard, the gold will not refuse us  
Regarding this idea, what will be your response, Makida?

Endless thanks go to researchers at MARC  
They give us many crop varieties through research

We realized the advantages of these technologies  
Of course, this is not enough  
But we should not just wait for you, we will also work hard  
We will study different varieties together

We would like to say thank you!

\* They are both DAs

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### Resources available

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Extension materials in English, Amharic and Oromic are available on a number of technologies. Please contact the project office.

FRG UPDATE is a newsletter from the FRG Project for sharing experiences of researchers, extension agents and farmers who involve in participatory agricultural research through "Farmer Research Group" approach.

For further information and your valuable comments, please contact: +251 22 111 4622 or [jica.frg@ethionet.et](mailto:jica.frg@ethionet.et).