'The Impact of Social Approaches on Agricultural Technology Dissemination' <Part 1>

Introduction

In agricultural extension projects in developing countries, social approaches such as gender consideration and nutrition improvement are often integrated. These approaches aim to promote poverty reduction, sustainable development, and better rural livelihoods.

The Northern Uganda Farmers' Livelihood Improvement Project (NUFLIP), implemented from 2015 to 2021, centered its activities on two core pillars: Market-Oriented Agriculture (MOA) and Quality of Life (QOL) Improvement. These were defined under a broader framework known as the Livelihood Improvement Approach. The activities within the QOL improvement domain aimed to help families make better use of income generated through MOA (see table below). Under the slogan "For the Family's Happiness," the project trained over 2,300 farmers across eight districts in Northern Uganda. As a result, the vegetable production area increased by approximately 135 acres (54 hectares), production rose by 527.4 tons, and household incomes improved by 75%. An endline survey two years later showed 63% of farmers continued applying practices they learned.

Model of NUFLIP Livelihood Improvement Approach

In this project, AAI was in charge of developing and disseminating MOA techniques, while members of the project's lead organization, worked on the QOL improvement aspect. Throughout this collaboration, we observed numerous instances where addressing social aspects positively influenced the adoption and dissemination of vegetable cultivation techniques.

This series aims to explore the impacts of social approaches on agricultural extension efforts, using NUFLIP as a case study. Since this perspective was not part of the project's objectives, no specific data was collected. As a result, quantitative data analysis is limited. However, we will share the experiences of AAI staff involved in the project and analyze qualitative information from field examples as objectively as possible.

The MOA activities in NUFLIP focused on vegetable cultivation. The target area had suffered from a prolonged civil conflict between 1986 and 2006, during which agricultural activities were severely disrupted. As a result, most target farmers were subsistence-level growers with little to no experience in cultivating vegetables for sale. Additionally, traditional farming practices, which could have supported new techniques, were lost during years spent in IDP camps.

Under such circumstances, establishing, disseminating, and embedding market-oriented vegetable cultivation techniques required addressing the following challenges:

1. Developing appropriate technologies
2. Practicing recommended technologies
3. Implementing effective marketing strategies
4. Establishing cropping systems
5. Securing cultivation funds
6. Sustaining farmer motivation
7. Encouraging farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing

As the technical lead, AAI approached these challenges from a technical perspective. Starting with the next issue, we will explain in detail how social approaches contributed to addressing these challenges and enhanced the project's outcomes.

Major contents of NUFLIP farmers' field training （45.0 hours／15sessions）

Market-Oriented Vegetable Production Technology [18 hours]	Quality of Life Improvement [13 hours]	Orientations and Extensions [14 hours]
- Market Survey - Production Technologies for Each Vegetable - Practice of Sowing and Planting - Fertilizer Application Technology - Growth Diagnosis - Pest and Disease Control - Marketing Strategy - Farm Planning for Vegetable Production	- Consideration of Gender and Socially Vulnerable People - Farming planning for crop production. - Family Goal Setting - Farm Planning for Food Production - Nutrition Improvement - Food Stock Management - Food and Hygiene - Cash Management	- Introduction to NUFLIP Livelihood Improvement Approach - Orientation of the Field Training - Action Plan Making - Farmer-to-Farmer Extension - Action Plan Revision. - Field Day