

The Impact of Social Approaches on Agricultural Technology Dissemination <Part 2>

Effects on the Development and Practice of Recommended Technologies

The Northern Uganda Farmers' Livelihood Improvement Project (NUFLIP), in which AAI was involved from 2015 to 2021, focused on two core pillars: Market-Oriented Agriculture (MOA) and Quality of Life (QOL) Improvement. This series highlights how the social approach, Improvement of Quality of Life, affected the adoption and dissemination of MOA technologies.

Impact on the Development of Appropriate Technologies

In the process of developing appropriate technologies, vegetable production techniques were first tested at experimental plots and then verified in farmers' fields. As this was mainly a technical process, the social approach had only limited direct influence. However, when creating training materials, the QOL component, especially its emphasis on considering socially vulnerable people, contributed to the design. By using many photos and illustrations, the materials became easier for illiterate farmers to understand. This improved both the quality and accessibility of the training.

Impact on the Practice of Recommended Technologies

The impact of the social approach was more significant at the stage when farmers began practicing the recommended technologies. Training sessions on "Consideration of Gender and Socially Vulnerable people," which addressed gender roles and the inclusion of community members such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, and widows or widowers, and "Action Plan Making," which was developed with these considerations in mind, were especially effective.

Most of the farmers targeted by NUFLIP were small-scale subsistence growers with experience mainly in food crop production using extensive methods. They were unfamiliar with the intensive management required for market-oriented vegetable production. Practices such as daily monitoring of nurseries and fields, mulching, and staking were entirely new. It was necessary to change their mindset before they could begin learning these new techniques.

To support this, the project provided demonstration fields where group members could practice vegetable production and gain experience in intensive management. However,

the results varied depending on group characteristics. In more individualistic groups, members often prioritized personal convenience over co-working in the demonstration field. This led to lower performance and lower rates of technical adoption. On the other hand, cooperative groups worked together on the demonstration fields, achieved better results, and allowed individual members to adopt the techniques more successfully. In the first case, changes in mindset depended mainly on personal motivation, while in the second, group interaction helped influence many individuals.

Including socially vulnerable people in a profit-oriented activity like vegetable production also gave the work a deeper meaning. This helped strengthen group unity and increased motivation to learn and apply new techniques. Recognizing this, the project placed more emphasis on teamwork and encouraged groups to spend more time developing thoughtful action plans.

At the household level, the social approach had a positive effect as well. In the target area, gender roles were traditionally rigid. However, the intensive management required for vegetable production needed shared responsibility. Households that participated in gender training began sharing both farm and domestic tasks. This cooperation allowed families to continue vegetable farming together even after the training ended.

NUFLIP's training program consisted of 15 sessions covering 32 topics. "Consideration of Gender and Socially Vulnerable People" and "Action Plan Making" were introduced in Session 2, while technical sessions began in Session 6. Addressing social aspects early helped shift traditional attitudes and encouraged group cooperation. This laid a strong foundation for farmers to benefit fully from the technical training and to apply the recommended technologies effectively.



A scene from training on "Consideration of Gender and Socially Vulnerable People"