

Participant Questions from the HG4RR Webinar, 6 October 2020

Project Design

- Water is usually the biggest constraint to year-round production. How does your organization usually address this constraint?
 - **Ugo Bernieri** -- At ICRC we support irrigation activities if required, e.g. by supporting distribution canals rehabilitation (typically via cash for work projects), drip irrigation projects, rehabilitation of deep wells and small community dams, creation of small ponds frequently associated with small scale (HH level) fish farming activities (Ex: in DRC and CAR).

- Do activities in **ICRC** include promoting the sustainable use of wild edible plants by locals?
 - **U.B.** -- All available sources of nourishment are taken into consideration at the moment of the initial evaluation on the targeted communities, including the availability of “bush meat”, insects, and wild plants. In certain specific conditions, such as Papa New Guinea or DRC communities living in remote forests, people can hunt and harvest a significant amount of calories and proteins from the forest, which is a welcomed contribution in the effort to grant the required food intake for the assisted communities.

- How can small gardens with limited land supply vegetables year round?
 - **Regine Kopplow** -- The focus here is on complementing the diet, making it more diverse. The quantities produced in a small garden will most likely not be sufficient to meet all the micronutrient needs of a family. Yields can be increased through a number of measures for example:
 - Promote highly nutritious varieties e.g. prioritise dark green leafy vegetables and those that are red or orange in colour. A practical example: chose kale over onions; carrots over eggplant.
 - Promote produce that grows fast, does not require much space, and provides leaves to pick daily over months.
 - Consider crops that can be planted during dry seasons.
 - Promote the use of grey water from the household; promote vegetables that tolerate such water.
 - Make the most of what little space there is. Consider planting taller varieties mixed with those that grow underneath.
 - Plant in phases; e.g. do not plant all seeds at the same time but spread out over a few weeks so that they are not ripe all at the same time.

- One challenge with quality seeds is distribution, especially to rural communities. How do you overcome infrastructural and corrupt middlemen challenges?
 - **U.B.** -- All procured seeds at ICRC are non-GMO (we have a strict non-GMO policy in force for procured food and seeds). The vast majority of distributed

seeds are procured on the local market at the end of an open tender directly from certified seed producers and tested (for germination, purity, moisture, etc...), handled and transported by the ICRC Logistic to distribution points. There is no middleman involved in the process. In the (rare) case of “cash for seeds” operations, the ICRC will establish a coordination mechanism with the seed traders active at local market level, verifying the quality of commercialized seeds.

- Is wastewater incorporated into project design?
 - **U.B.** -- Yes, particularly in “Agro in Detention” activities (Agriculture /Food production projects implemented inside detention places)

Sustainability

- What support systems do home gardens need once they are established through field work/projects e.g. ongoing support? Are there methods to help such programs and gardens eventually function on their own, without support or intervention?
 - **R.K.**
 - If we promote home gardens for production all year round, support should be provided as people go through the various agricultural seasons. Activities vary and training should factor that in using practical demonstration. Stay away from training everything at once, instead phase your training according to when this piece of information is most relevant and use practical demonstration.
 - This requires a capacity building plan and system which could be linked to the governments agriculture extension services or any community-based groups or other programme activities. Ideally, the extension system/ community groups used is/ are already in place and system strengthening activities are designed to make them more robust. This will help with sustainability aspects.
 - Gardens can also be linked to village saving and loan groups, ensuring households have access to financial resources to obtain inputs without ongoing external support.
 - Access to quality seed is one of the big constraints when it comes to sustainability of gardens. Market systems should be assessed and restructured when weak points are identified.

Assessment

- Can the tool for home gardening assessment you referred to for Ethiopia be shared after the webinar as well?
 - **R.K.** -- Please see below.
- How do you measure the dietary diversity of women and how many food groups are considered?

- **R.K.** Minimum dietary diversity for women considers 10 food groups; the consumption of at least 5 in the last 24 hours is recommended and considered to be a diverse diet. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5486e.pdf%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B>
- Minimum dietary diversity for children considers 8 (previously 7) food groups and 5 (previously 4) eaten within the last 24 hours are considered a diverse diet.

Beyond the home garden

- If a majority of beneficiaries use their produce for consumption only (**as in your Ethiopia example**), how are they able to use the market for inputs and such?
 - **R.K.** -- Households usually have other sources of income, too. By selling some of the garden produce they further diversify their income. For many women, selling vegetables is a way to have access to cash.
- Has **ICRC** observed agriculture or home gardening for peace reconciliation with a focus on youth?
 - **U.G.** -- All ICRC Agriculture interventions are designed with the objective of stabilizing HH economy during difficult conflict times. The objective of these interventions is to activate an “Emergency food production” that can originate as well a certain income for the family if a portion of the harvest is sold on the market. I cannot recall ICRC agriculture interventions designed and launched with a “peace reconciliation” declared objective.
- Are the same lessons applicable on school garden programs? Would you share your experiences?
 - **R.K.** -- Concern’s focus is on home gardens, sometimes community gardens but less on school gardens. While school gardens can be a good way of teaching children the importance and value of vegetables and how to grow them, there is a danger that school gardens are too large and that students spend more time gardening than attending classes. This is especially the case when school gardens are established with the objective to contribute to school meals. During school breaks there is usually a problem with who is caring for the crops. Also, irrigation is often a challenge, depending on the size.
- Vegetables are grown year round in Uganda; however, the challenge women face is lack of ability to increase the shelf-life of vegetables. Innovations to add value to these vegetables have not been very successful for consumer adoption. Is this ever considered in your work?
 - **R.K.** -- Food storage, processing and preservation is essential to look into when production is higher than what can be consumed or sold. It also provides opportunities for value addition. There are different ways of food preservation from drying to canning. Usually it requires quite some input in the form of knowledge and equipment. It is also important to consider both supply and the demand. Only when there is demand -- people wanting to buy -- will there be a profit. In your example of Uganda it could be that because of all year round

production people do not see a benefit in consuming something that is preserved as it usually is poorer in nutrients, appearance and often taste. Why would you want to increase the shelf life if there is supply all year round? It might be a question of developing value chains for products that are made from the raw product. I suggest to carry out a market assessment to identify potential value chains and then do a value chain analysis to see at which stage of the value chain there might be opportunities for especially women to earn money.

Other Sources

World Vegetable Center has documented its approach to home gardens here:

https://avrdc.org/download/publications/medium-term_and_strategic_plans/strategy/eb0270.pdf