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WEBINAR SERIES, 20 APRIL 2021

Q&A from Dr. Hadijah Mbwana and Victoria Gowele

Impact of agro-climatic variations and pocket gardening on dietary diversity and micronutrient status: Lessons from home gardening interventions in rural Tanzania

- 1) How many times can you replant the pocket garden? What is the function of the rod?
Pocket gardens can be replanted at least once every three months, though the material eventually wears and tears and will need to be replaced. The rod provides support to the pocket garden so it stands straight. It also supports the well of pebbles in the centre.
- 2) How can you add manure or other fertilizers to the pocket after the first harvest?
Manure and fertilizer can be added in water and poured through the well of pebbles at the centre of the pocket garden, whose function is to allow water to percolate into the soil.
- 3) How could you explain the relative greater nutritional needs of rural farming households?
In rural areas, households face increased challenges such as poor access to a variety of foods (purchase/ market). Their diets lack diversity because they depend more on what they are able to produce, which is usually cereal-based. Low incomes limit rural households' ability to purchase nutrient-rich animal-sourced foods, since livestock is usually sold off to obtain money to meet other household needs. For example, we observed in our study households which sold eggs to earn money for water services and milling cereals.
- 4) What is the cost of installing the garden considering the frequent wear and tear of the polythene?
The cost is approximately 1.5 USD if all materials are bought, or approximately 0.5 USD if some materials, such as manure, pebbles, rod, water etc, are available locally (most of the time they are).
- 5) How did you measure practice? Was it self-reporting?
Yes, we did measure self-reporting through a survey questionnaire. Additionally, we made observations during monitoring sessions.
- 6) Do we have an idea of the sustainability of this type of farming? Do households continue pocket gardening after the intervention?
The training provided to the local population disseminates and creates spill-over effects. In our study, for example, households in neighbouring villages that were not part of the intervention began practising pocket gardening after learning about it from households in project villages.

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7) What was the participation of men from the community?

Training was done using a participatory approach, where both men and women were involved at household level.

8) How transferable is your study to other developing countries, since the presentation only highlights climatic differences, rather than cultural influences?

As it is with many current challenges in developing countries, in different cultures some changes will be needed across societies to make the interventions acceptable in different settings.

9) Have you also assessed whether the plants in the garden differed between the two seasons and, if so, whether this might have affected the DDS with a delay (e.g. sowing of vegetables during the dry season, but harvest and consumption during the rainy season)?

The difference was observed in available vegetable varieties. This could affect DDS because during the rainy season there are plenty of other indigenous vegetables and crops that households can consume, thus contributing to dietary diversity.

10) Why wasn't an urban setting included? Certain food items are consumed more or less due to the social status or location of the individual, so an inclusion of an urban setting would have given a clearer indication of the effectiveness of the intervention.

We agree that there are other ways to design impact assessments with the inclusion of urban settings, but we observed rural settings only based on the design and purpose of the main project.

11) Did the project promote beta carotene- rich Orange Fleshed Sweet Potatoes?

We did not promote OFSP but on the scope of the larger project, we promoted production of other beta carotene-rich fruits such as papayas.

12) For quite a long time we have been promoting kitchen gardens, but the adoption is still low, what about in Tanzania?

Adoption in Tanzania is great in the semi-arid areas because it is dry for a longer period of the year there is a scarcity of food and vegetables; however, in sub-humid climates, vegetable production was not a main need due to access to markets and two rainfall seasons per year. These households had more access to other indigenous vegetables throughout the year. So, the issue of adoption should be linked to the need (i.e. is vegetable production the main need of a particular population?).

13) How effective was the kitchen gardening intervention?

We observed the following:

- Frequency of household vegetable consumption increased

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- Households earning income from sale of surplus vegetable produce (In Trans-SEC project)
- Increased men and women participation in household development activities
- Diets are more varied
- Extended availability of vegetables at a low cost (3 – 6 months depending on the type of vegetable)
- Regular supply of vegetables- in the kitchen
- Contribution to the reduction of prevalence of anaemia and Vit A deficiency (Scale-N project)
- Increased number of households that grow vegetables, also increased awareness about pocket gardening

14) In your study did you examine the land right status of the study households? Or did all households have access to land? I presume the size of land or size of homestead garden and the type of land might have an impact on dietary intake.

All households had access to a piece of land, though we did not establish the relationship between land right or size of the land with dietary intake.