

## NEWS STORY

Project on Integrated Seed Sector Development in Ethiopia

BENEFIT-ISSD project, Oromia (east) project unit, Haramaya University

Contact: Kemal Kasim, +251-913179853, [kemalkasim@yahoo.com](mailto:kemalkasim@yahoo.com)

### Farmers' field day conducted

The BENEFIT-ISSD project of Oromia (east) unit, aims at improving access of female and male smallholder farmers to quality seed of new, improved and/or farmer-preferred crop varieties through different project components. Informal seed system project through Crowd Sourcing (CS) and Participatory Variety Selection (PVS) intervention approach is among many project components gaining recognition among farmers and stakeholders in east and west Hararghe zones. The project has been implementing in eight woredas (Meta, Kurfachale, Gurawa, Jarso, Fedis, Chiro, Doba and Odabultum woredas) in east and west Hararghe zones nearly with 3000 farmers, of which 50% are women. Farmers, experts and partners have learned cost effective and simplest art of crop variety selection and dissemination to hundreds of farmers through CS and PVS approach. Both approaches (CS and PVS) are found to be effective and operative to identify superior crop varieties preferred for production by male and female farmers. The approach can enhance farmer's resilience in the era of climate change. Above all, the intervention outcome is changing biased narratives into positive results through empowering men and women farmers in seed selection and management. In some woredas, it is proved that women can quickly learn, participate, manage research trials and adopt technologies equally and/or better than men counterpart. Taking all this success recorded into account, the project organised field day in Doba woreda to facilitate knowledge sharing and scale up success stories among farmers, partners and stakeholders.

The objectives of the field day was to evaluate the status of the 2017 scaling up activities and 2018 PVS and CS research trials conducted by farmers, DAs, partners and stakeholders; promote best practices, and success stories among farmers, DAs, partners and stakeholders; and enhance networking among farmers, for seed exchange in the forthcoming harvesting season.

The field day was conducted on October 2, 2018 at Doba woreda, West Hararghe Zone. A total of 129 farmers (54 women), 46 stakeholders representing zone and woreda BoANR and respective development agents, CARE Ethiopia west Hararghe field office, researchers and lecturers from universities (Haramaya and Oda Bultum), and Chiro national sorghum research centres and media organizations was participated.

The crops visited during the event include scaling up common bean, maize and wheat crowdsourcing trials, chickpea, and maize and soya bean PVS, and potato productivity trials. Moreover, participants was visited FTC based demonstration and pre-scaling up of different crop varieties, which is conducted in collaboration of Haramaya university, Doba woreda BoANR office and BENEFIT-ISSD project of Oromia east unit.

Mr., Woliye Mohammed, Doba woreda deputy Administrator and Head of (BoANR) was made the welcoming and opening speech. In his opening speech he appreciated the contribution of BENEFIT-ISSD project of Oromia (east) unit, and Haramaya University for efforts they made to improve access of quality seeds of smallholder farmers. Following that, field day visit has been conducted simultaneously as follows;

The first stop was to see common bean scaling up activities and maize crowdsourcing trials on farmers' fields at Wolkituma Waji kebele. Accordingly, participants visited four farmers' fields, of which two fields was common bean scaling up activities. Yohanis Shiferaw, Doba woreda BENEFIT-ISSD project focal person explained the project approach and number of beneficiaries/farmers involved in the trials in their woreda. Farmers explained their views and preference of the varieties they are evaluating and scaling. It is confirmed that, both male and female households preferred different traits. For example in the case of scaling up of common bean men farmers replanted varieties that have good yield and market value such as Awash-1. While women farmers replanted common bean varieties that have large seed size that draw and rise water; nutrition content and

sweetness for making 'shumo or nufro', and 'shro or watt'. It is also observed during field discussion that seed exchange among farmers was booming. In our first stop visit kebele, farmers were exchanged the varieties for at least three to five farmers in and outside their village. In addition it is observed that most of the farmers were maintained all varieties they evaluated in 2017 cropping year, though they sow the first variety of their choice in large scale. In similar vein, the farmer's views regarding evaluation of maize crowdsourcing trials were collected. Compared with local maize varieties, farmers preferred these maize varieties they are evaluating in terms of earliness, and resistance to pests and diseases such as America army worm and fungus.

The second stop was to see chickpea PVS trials at Wolkituma Waji FTC. Experts from BENEFIT-ISSD, Oromia east unit and woreda BoANR respectively presented chickpea PVS research protocol involved, and different varieties being under evaluation. Stakeholders confirmed that chickpea production was not very known in the woreda despite suitable agro-ecology for chickpea production. They said sorghum and maize was the dominant crops. The farmers appreciated the chickpea PVS activity as it can serve as cash crop and help farmers to have the choice of varieties in the era of climate change. Farmers asked how they can get the seed of chickpea. They were informed that the recommended varieties will be facilitated for seed production and scaling up by different actors such as SPCs, Unions and through farmer to farmer seed exchange mechanisms.



Stakeholder's visit to common bean pre-scaling up activities on farmer's field in Wolkituma Waji kebele, Doba woreda. October, 2018



Field day participants visiting chickpea PVS trial at Wolkituma waji FTC, Doba woreda, October, 2018



Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN) documenting farmer's views and preferences about use and value of quality seeds at Wolkituma waji FTC, Doba woreda, October, 2018

During this stop, collaboration projects of Haramaya University (HU), Doba woreda BoANR and BENEFIT-ISSD project activities such as demonstration and pre-scaling up of improved technologies (potatoes, maize, sorghum, sesame, and forage) were visited. It is observed that farmers surprisingly appreciated potatoes demonstration work since the crop is new to the area. The farmers also asked for the timely deployment of varieties so that they can plant at an appropriate planting time.

The third stop was to visit wheat crowdsourcing trials at Lenca Wadesa kebele. Accordingly, six farmers' fields of wheat CS trials visited. Participants asked farmer's view and preference on different wheat varieties they are evaluating. Farmers were evaluating and recording different traits of the varieties such as earliness, drought and disease tolerance, spike length, yield and others. Development agent's presented with scoring card they are using to recording farmers criteria and other agronomic data. The scoring card was appreciated by stakeholders. Participants also realised that different varieties were selected by different farmers at different farmer's conducting CS trials during different growing stage. Overall, the stakeholders appreciated the trials underway as a step to ensure seed security in the area.



Field day participants visiting chickpea crowdsourcing trial at Lenca wadesa kebele, Doba woreda, October, 2018

The fourth and last stop was to visit maize and soya bean PVS, and potato productivity trials at Lenca Wadesa FTC. Woreda focal person, and BENEFIT-ISSD project, Oromia east unit seed expert briefly explained each trial to participants. Stakeholders appreciate Maize PVS trials because of significant performance difference observed among varieties such as earliness, large head size and numbers of head per plant, seed size, vigour, pests and disease incidence including American army worm and fungus respectively. Farmers were selected different varieties of maize. Regarding soya bean PVS trial, it is a bit found to be a new crop in the area. The growing stage of soya bean trial is at vegetative stage. Only very few number of farmers knew the crops. As a result farmers selected only varieties that have strong vigour, wide leaf size and high dry matter. We realised also that an exchange visit for neighbour farmers will be facilitated to further popularize the crop in the area. The participants were also visited potato productivity trial. Doba woreda BoANR head acknowledged the BENEFIT-ISSD project and Haramaya University for introducing quality seed of potato technologies in their woreda for the first time.



Field day participants visiting maize PVS and potato productivity trial at Lenca wadesa kebele, Doba woreda, October, 2018

### Testimonials

My name is Jemal Mohammed. I am a farmer and live in Wolkituma Waji kebele, Doba woreda.

 This visit has great advantage for me and other farmers participated on field day. It gives a learning opportunity for farmers to learn different varieties with different agronomic practice; they are not applying in their farm before. I believe the participated farmers in today field day learned different varieties that have different traits. In general I appreciated the knowledge and information about use and value of quality seeds I got out of the field day.

My name is Mustefa Mohamed. I am a farmer and live in Wolkituma Waji kebele, Doba woreda.



Today we observed and evaluated different chickpea varieties. I was identified varieties performed very well than others based on different criteria. I was also visited seven varieties of chickpea. This is an interesting opportunity for farmers who even not grow improved varieties of chickpea. I benefited from field day by getting information and experiences about different quality seeds of chickpea. I also got the information to get the recommended varieties when harvested by development agents and plant for next cropping season.

My name is Hindi



Hasen. I am a farmer and live in Wolkituma Waji kebele, Doba woreda. I was gained different information from today visit. I learned different crop varieties such as common bean, maize, chickpea, wheat, potatoes and soya bean. Previously we used to grow local crops for long years. The training I was acquired from BENEFIT-ISSD already changed my knowledge regarding the use and value of quality seeds. In addition the today visit further consolidated my knowledge and information about diverse quality of seed traits and management practices.

My name is Ahmed Abdureman. I am development agent working at Wolkituma Waji kebele, Doba woreda.



The biggest lessons farmers learned from today visit are that about different varieties of chickpea PVS trial evaluation, and new technologies of different crop varieties conducting in collaboration with Haramaya University. To solve seed shortage BENEFIT-ISSD project, Oromia east unit was making large contribution in our woreda. Through farmers led research approach known as 'crowdsourcing approach' the project is empowering and improving farmer's experimentation capacities in their farms. Moreover, this project improved our extension and research advisory knowledge and skills we are responsible for in the kebele.

### **Lessons learned and participants' feedback**

Participants have given feedback and appreciated BENEFIT-ISSD project of Oromia east efforts to ensuring seed and food security in the zone. BoANR and DAs found to be a relevant partner to implement extension activities provided that they acquired appropriate training and technical backstopping. Injection of different crop varieties which have different traits and multiple benefits is highly acknowledged in a situation where farmers confronted with diverse challenges and problems such as climate change, diseases, pests and lack of moisture. Collaboration with partners and stakeholders is indeed appreciated which was success factors for achievement registered so far.

In addition, during the general discussion participants were raised different issues. Farmers were asked crops that have market value including vegetables. In order to rapidly disseminate the recommended varieties out of CS and PVS, stakeholders put way forward for the operationalization of primary cooperatives as seed producers to multiply the selected crops in large scale. Due to different challenges such as climate and pests that damage crops during emergency time, farmers asked the BENEFIT-ISSD project of Oromia east unit to improve the amount/seed rate used for crowdsourcing trials. They also commented the research recommendation of seed rate which is far below farmers practice in the era of climate change. They also added that, the participatory variety evaluation and breeding work of technology generation should consider farmers practices such as intercropping.