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Rice yields of Small-holder farmers in Mvomero district increase by 500% through the use of an improved variety and good agronomic practices

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Imagine being able to increase your rice yields by over 500 per cent? Small-holder farmers in Hembeti Village in Mvomero district dismissed it as a daydream until 250 farmers did it for themselves after receiving training in Good Agronomic Practices (GAP) from the NAFKA (Tanzania Staples Value Chain) Program.



They are now able to harvest well over 25 bags of paddy rice - an increase from 5-6 bags.

Isike Zuberi is the NAFKA Mvomero District Coordinator who has supervised the activities of 52 Village-based Agricultural Advisors (VBAAAs) and helped them to make these dramatic changes

amongst farmers in their Villages. Each VBAA trains 300 farmers in the Village on GAP around a demonstration plot and gives them a small (100 g) pack of seeds of an improved rice variety to enable them to try out on their own plot.

This approach has allowed thousands of small-holder rice farmers in Mvomero district to improve their livelihoods since training started in 2011.

Bakari Shaban, the VBAA from Hembeti Village, has trained 70% of the farmers in his village around two demonstration plots he established along roads which can be easily accessed by hundreds of farmers.

TXD 306 is the improved variety of rice that NAFKA promotes in the small packs



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amongst the farmers. From a 100 g pack of seed, farmers are able to harvest as much as 30 kg grain which they can plant again over larger areas to increase their yields. Bakari uses simple tools (planting rake and rotary weeder) to show farmers how to space their seeds in rows and how to weed between the rows.

“Since NAFKA gave us VBAs training, the small packs and these simple tools, I have been able to reach larger numbers of beneficiaries in my village,” he said.

“No one from Hembeti village is now planting rice in a random way as they did before, as we proved we could produce 25 bags instead of the 5 that farmers here used to harvest before.”

As a result of their increased harvests, farmers have been able to invest in more land, and farm equipment.

Shamankuu Hassan is a small-holder farmer and among the NAFKA beneficiaries from Mvomero. He began farming many years ago with no success, but says GAP training has turned his world upside down.



“I was totally poor even though I was farming more than 5 acres,” Shamankuu said.

“I harvested very few bags and couldn’t even feed my family.”

“But now I’m harvesting more than 70 bags of rice a year from 3 acres and I now live in a much better house.”

Shamankuu used to broadcast seed of the traditional ‘wahiwahi’ (Swahili name means early) rice variety before the NAFKA training. As he is able to irrigate his plot from a nearby river, he is now planting twice a year and further increasing his crop production. He’s gained respect from his village peers, who in turn have copied his success through implementing more modern farming techniques.

He is planning to purchase a *Power Tiller* after selling the produce in January 2015.

Petro Kiliwa from Hembeti village doubled his harvest following the GAP training from his VBAA.

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Like many other farmers in the village, Kiliwa never used fertilizer or improved rice varieties, and thought that spacing seed at planting was a waste of time. But things changed immediately after training from his local VBAA.

“In 2012 I trialed a quarter of an acre with the TXD 306 variety using fertilizer,” he said. “I got about 13 bags from that small plot. I was so happy that I decided to buy another 2 acres to expand rice production.”

With the extra 2 acres, Kiliwa produced 60 bags of rice and made a profit of TZS 600,000 (\$375). He managed to send his only son to secondary school and bought him a bicycle.

For many small-holder farmers, the NAFKA training has given them an opportunity to not only stop their families from starving, but to generate a poverty-ending income.

“*Kilimo Kwanza*” is a Kiswahili phrase that translates to “*Agriculture First.*” Basically it means every human life depends on agriculture and every farmer has a dream of having enough food and income from farming.

“Really the Program aimed to help us reduce hunger and generate income through minimal changes,” said one farmer, Mr Funge.

“Harvesting such a yield is a miracle. Thanks to the training and access to the improved variety, 70 per cent of farmers in this village are now harvesting more than 20 bags from a one acre plot.”