


Vegetable production training helps a mother pay for family's health care

Mariam is a wife and mother of four. She lives in the Arusha area of Tanzania. Several years ago, she had little money to pay for her family's health care and school fees. Looking for ways to increase her income, she started agricultural training, learning how to grow African Indigenous Vegetables (AIVs) through the CABI-led  **Good Seed Initiative (GSI)**.

This project looked at AIVs from the production and sale of seed, all the way through to vegetable growing, trade and consumption. This was beneficial to farmers as it meant vegetable producers would have access to good quality seed and seed producers would have an assured market with vegetable producers. AIVs are not only important for income generation, but also food security, since they are high in nutrition and help ensure a well-balanced diet.

The GSI project built capacity and shared skills that communities need to thrive. 200 vegetable producers were trained in the growing and marketing of AIVs. Each of these farmers then trained at least another 10, meaning new skills were shared with a total of over 2,000 farmers. CABI's approach achieved a much wider scale of knowledge sharing compared with conventional methods.

Farmers then went on to train other farmers working through Farmer Field Schools overseen by support or 'extension' workers. 'Learning-by-doing' training and demonstrations at the schools improved the farmers' skills with hands-on practice.

When Mariam finished the training, she started growing amaranth – a leafy vegetable. During the first season, she grew two rounds of amaranth, harvesting 66 bags and obtaining a total of 760,000 Tanzanian Shillings (US\$258).

From the proceeds, Mariam paid for her children's school fees. But most importantly, Mariam is proud of having bought medical insurance for her entire family. The vegetable training has made a concrete and practical difference to her life and the life and health of her family.

"Ever since I paid this insurance, my family feels rest assured of medical care at any time. I really thank this project for giving us the training. Each member of our group has a story to tell, especially women. We have really benefited from vegetable production."

Mariam Daudi Msemu, Farmer, Tanzania

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