



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



Cecilia's family at the cowpea improved varieties demonstration plot

“WE NEVER HAD SUCH A GOOD PRODUCTION”

Cecilia João is amongst many other farmers' beneficiaries, a model and inspiring leader in Teterrene. Her path to success began in 2015 when Associação das Mulheres Olhasana (AMO in Portuguese), the local female association that she co-founded, became IITA's partner in fighting aflatoxin through the USAID-funded project named Aflasafe. As the institute promotes research-based development solutions for increased food security and income, the community farmers easily accepted working with the CGIAR Consortium on a seed business development partnership through the Feed the Future Mozambique Improved Seeds for Better Agriculture project (SEMEAR for its Portuguese acronym).

Regardless of being a women's association, AMO accepts members' husbands and it stimulates production in multiple ways. In fact, instead of farming minor isolated areas, associates are currently farming multiple hectares and investing household funds in high-quality inputs such as improved seed and inoculant. Moreover, men perform land preparation and other tasks that are usually hard for female – “we accept our men and don't prevent them to participate in any activity, (...) husbands are helping wives instead of the customary situation in which women help men”, Cecilia said.

At present, AMO association is composed of fifteen women and seven men that follow a simple principle: to never hide what they are learning, and incentivize outside farmers to observe and engage in agricultural practices, and use improved agricultural technologies. With large smiles, AMO's members confirmed that the SEMEAR initiatives already raised awareness and interest in improved seeds among farmers from many other



communities! Consequently, the local demand for improved seeds emerged and AMO is, for now, the only supplier in Teterrene community. From the three tons of certified seed harvested during the 2015/16 season, AMO reserved 500 Kg for non-members to purchase and reproduce. Therefore, each association member was able to save 10,000.00 meticaís (app US\$ 145.00): *“no one within the association suffers from hunger due to inputs and specialized technical support provided by SEMEAR, (...) we never have had such good production”*. Moreover, various farmers revealed interest on becoming associates and AMO is expanding progressively.

Cecília João represents one of the anticipated 100,000 beneficiary households of the project. Due to her straight collaboration with SEMEAR, Cecilia pioneered improved seed production and commercialization at Meconta district in Nampula province. Yet, three years ago Cecilia considered herself just a common smallholder farmer struggling to find good-quality seed, and facing difficulties to produce enough for family needs; with a vivid hope to become a mother for more than a decade.

Due to the SEMEAR initiatives, Cecilia has increased her cowpea yields five times, and in a couple of years Cecilia’s life shifted. She is no longer an introverted rural woman as she quickly became confident in front of the cameras and large audiences during project events. Now, besides being a trusted testimonial and motivational leader among her community, Cecilia’s family hosts a demonstration plot with four cowpea varieties, three improved (IT-16, IT-18 and IT-1069) and one local. The field is regularly visited by numerous farmers who become steeply interested in applying improved agricultural technologies, as they are able to compare the resilience and productivity of each variety.

Opportunely, Cecilia’s family was blessed with her firstborn and presently she is pregnant for the second time, so she enthusiastically affirms that *“now I feel glad to be a farmer because it truly represents food for my own children”*. Cecilia trusts that *“an empty sack cannot stand upright”* and prioritizes food crops since only well-nourished farmers are able to produce efficiently; therefore, the crop varieties being promoted by SEMEAR represent the perfect match between highly nutritious food and cash crops.



“After visiting Cecilia’s fields, we decided to work with SEMEAR as well, and we like the project a lot! (...) Now several farmers come to visit our demonstration plot.”
Serafina Manuel and Jorge Muachavo



“We were invited to make a cowpea seed multiplication field within the SEMEAR project (...) and we are enjoying.”
Olima Orrera Association

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